



SONOMA COUNTY FOOD SYSTEM ALLIANCE MEETING NOTES

Wednesday, March 18, 2014 • 2:30pm-5:00pm

Sonoma County Ag Commissioner's Office Conference Room • 133 Aviation Blvd., Santa Rosa

	Misti Arias, SC Ag Preservation & Open Space District		Tucker Hemquist, Spiral Foods Collaborative
✓	Erin Axelrod, LIFT Economy	✓	Wendy Krupnick, CAFF/Community Garden Network
✓	Phina Borgeson, Interfaith Sustainable Food Collaborative		Krista Lindley, Earthworker Farm
✓	Amy Chestnut, Sonoma Land Trust	✓	Tony Linegar, Sonoma County Ag Commissioner
✓	Laura Colgate, Council on Aging	✓	Shan Magnuson, Kaiser Santa Rosa
✓	Angie Corwin, Community Alliance with Family Farmers	✓	Leah Murphy, Department of Health Services
	Cathryn Couch, Ceres Community Project		Tanya Narath, Leadership Institute for Ecology & Economy
✓	Paula Downing, Sebastopol Farmers Market		Jason Nichols, Workhorse Organic Agriculture
✓	Michelle Dubin, F.E.E.D. Sonoma		Linda Peterson, UC Cooperative Extension
✓	Rachel Gardner, Food for Thought		Karen Shimizu, Catholic Charities
✓	Terry Garrett, Sonoma County Go Local		Tim Tesconi, Sonoma County Farm Bureau
✓	Suzi Grady, Petaluma Bounty	✓	Julia Van Solen Kim, UC Cooperative Extension
✓	Brittnay Heck, Gold Ridge Resource Conservation District		Evan Wiig, The Farmers Guild
✓	Trathen Heckman, Daily Acts		

Ag Innovations Network:

- Lisa Badenfort, lisa@aginnovations.org
- Katie Pease, katie.pease@aginnovations.org

Guests:

- Andrew, [Ag Commissioner's Office](#)
- Paul Wirtz, [Paul's Produce](#)
- Candi Edmondson, [Paul's Produce](#)
- Michael Girkout, [Alvarado Street Bakery](#)

Action Items

#	Activity	Who	When
1	April Meeting Presentations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Marin-Sonoma, distributor • Redwood Hill • Outlet • Food service/MOW 		
2	Send suggestions to Katie for April presentations	Members	ASAP

Meeting Objectives

- Learn about the Sonoma County Food Supply Chain, with special guests:
 - Production Overview- Sonoma County Ag Commissioner
 - Production Produce- Paul's Produce
 - Processing & Distribution- Alvarado Street Bakery
- Listen and develop questions for dialogue for our May & June meetings
- Share and discuss the facilitation needs of the Alliance

Welcome & Agenda Review

INTRODUCTIONS & DIALOGUE:

What do we want to know about the supply chain and access in Sonoma County?

What are you curious about that you hope will be addressed today?

- What is really working – and where are the gaps?
- Is there a causal relationship that makes system/chain
- How is Sonoma County leading supply chain improvements?
- What are pinch points? What are the hardships for farmers?
- How can we as a community help you increase the amount of money you get?
- Outside of the normal methods – How can people get more closely connected with local producers?
- Waste – How does it fit? How do we minimize it?
- Emerging best practices/food system solutions – Where are they now? Hubs, market match, F2S
- What would it take to keep more of your produce in Sonoma County?
- What are the pressures/constraints in the system that perpetuates inequality among food system workers?

INFORMATION SHARE

Julia: CA Statewide Agritourism Summit

- Wednesday, April 8, 2015 - 8:30 - 4:00 p.m. Heidrick Agricultural History Center, 1962 Hays Lane, Woodland CA 95776 Travel funds available. [See more info.](#) [JPG Flyer](#)

PRESENTATION: Agricultural Snapshot, Past and Present, Ag Commissioner, Tony Linegar

- Presentation attached
- 1880s; needed entity to regulate pests and agricultural material
- Sealer of weights and measures
- Produces Annual Crop Report; what is grown, its value (anonymous reporting; reliant on surveys)
- **What was grown in Sonoma County; why we no longer grow it**
 - Russians settled Sonoma County – wheat, apples, pears, cherries (1st Gravs → apple industry)
 - Mid-1800s = wine industry begins; 1881 = Italian wines, Gold Rush facilitated popularity
 - 1920 = Prohibition; -50 wineries by the end
 - 1875 = Luther Burbank moves to Sonoma County (700 strains)
 - 1910 = 48k residents in Sonoma County
 - 14m fruit trees
 - \$20m of freight transported annually
 - Bodega Red Potato
 - Sonoma County becomes agricultural leader
 - Land = \$50/acre; \$15/ton of grapes
 - 1928
 - Producing 10.5k tons/apples
 - Producing cherries, peaches, plums, pears, blackberries, walnuts
 - Petaluma Creamery begins distributes dairy products
 - Dairy = 2/3 of dairies have gone organic; 20-30 in Sonoma County today
 - Wine = Late 1960s = wine/grapes starts skyrocketing
 - 20k acres/grapes (60k today)
 - Petaluma Egg Basket – Now only 2 commercial egg producers; Petaluma Farms, Liberty Farms
 - Hops: 1940s = peak (2700 acres); post-WWII problems with mildew, prohibition
 - Apples
 - 13k acres (peak) in 1930s
 - International competition from Chile, NZ, AUS, China (7-1 production ratio; China-US)
 - Very few fresh market apples today

- Coddling moth; difficult to farm clean apples; not much to do to farm w/o pesticides
- Cider apples increasingly popular
- ♦ **What drives the crash?** Scale, moved to central valley
 - [Farm Gate](#) = \$848, 726, 000; 605m = wine grapes
 - Fresno = still the largest
 - Sonoma County = 17/52
- ♦ **Crop Report** survey response rate; especially cattlemen

PRESENTATION: Vegetable Production with Farmer Paul Wirtz, Paul's Produce

- ♦ Family grew cranberries (2 generations)
- ♦ Grows/sells exclusively locally (save for FEED Sonoma); deliver to Glen Ellen
- ♦ Leases property – Williamson Act benefit
- ♦ Sells out, no extras; donates to Meals on Wheels Sonoma
- ♦ CSA; no delivery (pickup)
- ♦ Farming is incredibly costly and complex – aiming to keep it simple
- ♦ 4.5 FTE/winter; 7 FTE/summer (field) + sales team = 15 max
- ♦ 50/50 sales vs. field work; payroll = ¾ field
- ♦ Biggest regulatory hurdles = building permissions; pests
- ♦ Appreciate regulators and their role in industry

PRESENTATION: Alvarado Street Bakery, President Michael Girkout

- ♦ Organic since inception (self-regulated designation at the time)
- ♦ 30 trucks running/day; Chico to Monterey to Placerville; producing 50k loaves/day
- ♦ Cooperatively owned; challenges with the cooperative model; needed leadership and structure, using a hierarchical business model; democratic workplace, 120 members and shares
- ♦ **Product**
 - Sprouted wheat company; sprout wheat, purchase directly from organic wheat growers, soak in filtered water, grind and turned into dough → flourless bread
 - Triple cleaning process (stones, 3-4/year)
 - No mills; organic grain only
 - No local wheat produced; purchase from Utah, Canada, others
 - Process lends itself well to freezing; allows for global distribution; frozen bread business
- ♦ **Workforce**
 - Retains long term employees; rarely hire; excellent benefits
 - 50% Hispanic
 - 10% African American
 - Production = Predominantly male
 - Distribution = Predominantly female
 - Management = 50/50 male/female
- ♦ **Distribution/Growth**
 - Sells to retail, institutions, school districts – wide ranging distribution
 - Cost limitations (schools); recent federal policy changes have encouraged schools to focus on nutrition
 - Healthy School Lunch Programs, Obama Administration focus on obesity
 - Currently working with higher education; changing health at an institutional scale

DIALOGUE

What were the highlights from today's presentations? What are your questions for further exploration?

- ♦ Context/systems-level information
- ♦ Producers – best practices
- ♦ Ag Commissioner – Land prices and global market; driving economics

- Context of distribution
- What's the opportunity in cooperation for small farmers/business owners; shared equipment
- Opportunities – To connect; worker cooperatives
- Connections – UCCE, training, Sonoma RCD; to discuss crop diversification and wine grapes
- Would like to hear more about the integration/intertwined issues of climate change
- Value of organic – marketability
 - Definitions lacking (sustainability); organic designation = challenges
 - Organic = discuss in terms of best practices
- Was today an accurate picture of Sonoma County?
 - Would like to hear from other farmers – newer farmers – new challenges – how they have changed
 - Challenges – more specifics, especially meat producers, how has dairy changed?
- Would like to hear more from FSA members themselves

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS/THOUGHTS

- Average size farms= Capay Valley 200 acres vs. 10 acres Sonoma County
- Land Access is a huge issue
- Farm to school is a huge opportunity for Alvarado- why not farmers?
- How do existing companies teach/share new food start-ups that are growing? Intergenerational learning
- I want to hear more about Ag possibilities- new crops, etc... in light of climate change
- I wonder if the scope of Paul's Produce is an important factor, small enough geographical compass to develop relationships, perceive patterns over time, etc
- I also wonder about land availability. What can we do? What happened to that county regulation allow public land to be used for farming/ranching?
- Local food production is so important but only a portion of the supply/value chain. The more food we keep in the county the more economic, social and environmental benefits accrue, as well as food access and resiliency.
- The economies of scale in specialization of production such as wine grapes may provide some market advantages, but there is a cost in loss of crop diversity.
- It would be good to hear from a meat and dairy operator
- I like hearing about good models but also like to hear about folks who are having challenges
- I would like presentations from FSA members about their own relevance to the Food system
- I have ideas for field trips which could be extra curricular
- Hard to have a comprehensive conversation with two examples
- Huge system out there- both examples were vertically integrated for the most part;
 - Where are examples of :
 - Producers making X
 - Distributors making X
 - Retailers making X
 - = Consumers paying X
 - How much of consumer dollars go to each and why? Who is making the money?
- What is the available acreage for growing
 - Ag land
 - Parks
 - Small lots, home scale, etc.
 - Would love to know this!
- Great reference by Michelle on difference in farm size served here vs. Capay for their business
- Question of what the need is in Sonoma County for local food vs. availability (i.e. crop report)
- How can FSA help promote successful worker owned model in food production (e.g. Alvarado St)
- How can FSA help promote idea of local farmers having access to renting more farming land?
- Example of Sonoma Valley vintners doing fundraiser to raise charitable funds- could this \$ be paid to vineyard workers instead of to non-profits?
- From producers best practices on production yields

- Higher wages and income
 - Steady market demand
 - ♦ From Ag Commissioner: Land prices and global market prices have shrunk market opportunities for Sonoma County crop selection and marketability
 - ♦ Highlights of today:
 - Ag Commissioner overview was in-depth
 - Perhaps more time on comparing trends, which crops have come and gone and why?
 - Paul
 - Good to hear one farmer's experience that made it
 - What are challenges that newer farmers face that you didn't
 - Having Ag Commissioner here doesn't allow as open a conversation
 - ♦ Tony: What are the biggest potential opportunities for increasing food production in the county?
 - ♦ What is hindering the growth and financing of viable local food industry?
 - Need to leave to process for example
 - Cost of Ag Land
 - What else?
 - Is there opportunity to create farmer cooperatives with groups of smaller farmers?
 - Rewards: sharing infrastructure like equipment, market booths, CSA programs
 - ♦ **Reflections from presentations:**
 - Audit to identify and find local products that could go into local stores in a big way similar to WIC package
 - Worker cooperatives- how do we share knowledge with new business start-ups
 - Price-point- these are expensive products. How do we make affordable to everyone while paying fair wage?
 - Scale- How do we help supply chain actors identify their right scale and help them get there, whether larger or smaller, more management time or less management time.
 - ♦ Marketing Breakdown
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APRIL Alliance Meeting

- ♦ Presentations
 - Marin-Sonoma, distributor
 - Redwood Hill
 - Outlet
 - Food service/MOW
- ♦ Send suggestions to KP for April meeting presenters

TABLED FROM MARCH AGENDA

- ♦ Review: What are the needs of the Alliance regarding facilitation?
 - ♦ Fundraising Team
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Next Alliance Meeting: APRIL 15th, 2:30-5pm, Location TBD

2015 Meeting Schedule (meetings always held the 3rd Wednesday of each month at 2:30-5pm)

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|------------|---------------------------------|
| • April 15 | • September 16 |
| • May 20 | • October 21 |
| • June 17 | • November 18 |
| • July 15 | • <i>No meetings in Aug/Dec</i> |