



SONOMA COUNTY FOOD SYSTEM ALLIANCE MEETING NOTES

Wednesday, April 15, 2015 • 2:30pm-5:00pm

O'Reilly Media • Sebastopol, California

✓	Misti Arias, SC Ag Preservation & Open Space District		Tucker Hemquist, Spiral Foods Collaborative
	Erin Axelrod, LIFT Economy		Wendy Krupnick, CAFF/Community Garden Network
✓	Jake Blem/Cathryn Couch, Ceres Community Project		Krista Lindley, Earthworker Farm
✓	Phina Borgeson, Interfaith Sustainable Food Collaborative		Tony Linegar, Sonoma County Ag Commissioner
✓	Amy Chestnut, Sonoma Land Trust	✓	Shan Magnuson, Kaiser Santa Rosa
	Laura Colgate, Council on Aging		Leah Murphy, Department of Health Services
✓	Angie Corwin, Community Alliance with Family Farmers		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
	Brittney 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:

- Gail Atkins, Redwood Empire Food Bank
- Jennifer Brice, Redwood Hill Farm & Creamery
- George Malachowski, Human Services Department

Action Items

#	Activity	Who	When
1	None		
2			
3			

Meeting Objectives

- Learn about the need for increased food access in Sonoma County
- Listen and develop questions for dialogue for our May & June meetings

Welcome & Agenda Review

ANNOUNCEMENTS

- **Growing Our Farms Forum**, April 23, 1-5:30pm at the Sonoma County Fairgrounds
 - Hosted by the Ag & Natural Resources Pillar Team; details [here](#)
- **California Food Policy Council**: SCFSA Coordinating Committee discussed rejoining the CAFPC
 - Leah Murphy and Lisa Badenfort will continue serving as organizational partners (DHS & AIN)
 - SCFSA members interested in representing SCFSA = Cathryn Couch, Suzi Grady

- Coordinating Committee
 - **SCFSA Publication** in production (will be internal report to DHS on Food Action Plan implementation effort); will distribute document to Alliance in May
 - **Daily Acts' Community Resilience Challenge** underway! (Trathen)
 - 2015 goal = 7000 actions, highlighting actions happening around the community
 - [Website](#) in English and Spanish
 - **Julia** working on modified CSA project proposal; requesting collaboration and feedback
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Presentation: Supply Chain Management, Redwood Hill Farm & Creamery

Jennifer Bice, Owner

- Grew up in Sonoma County agriculture; farming apples, 4-H member (livestock)
- Purchased farm from family in 1978
- Creamery moved to historic apple processing center; long-term lease; zoned agricultural, shares space with other local food production businesses
- Producing goat cheese, yogurt, kefir
- [Green Valley Organics](#) (lactose free); 13 times more consumers are lactose intolerant than gluten intolerant
- Cannot compete locally on price
- 3rd party certified as Sonoma County green businesses; 1st goat farm to be certified humane in US
- Pasture rule (120 days and take in 30% dry feed intake) = goat dairy cannot qualify
- Working to become non-GMO certified in 2015
- **Sustainability is a major concern**
 - 100% solar power, using recycled water, composting, manure/mulch, beehives, bird-friendly environment
 - 586 kw solar system (2 acres of roof space = 85% of RH's utility costs)
 - Conservation; reuse, repurpose, recycle as much as possible
 - Reduction in packaging; cardboard and plastic containers
- **Supply, materials, ingredients**
 - Main ingredient (goat milk) dairy was #1 agricultural product (before the ↑ in grape production)
 - **Lack of land to produce local animal feed – alfalfa** imported from out of county; all grains
 - Lucerne Tree orchard (high protein, drought tolerant, seeds from France); growing feed for goats now – tremendous potential, considering removing apple orchard to plant feed
 - Bringing in cultures, fruit, honey, maple syrup, packaging materials, equipment, office supplies
 - Aim to purchase as local as possible; purchases milk from 7 local dairies
- **Production Mon-Fri**, pasteurization, production, packaging, cleaning and sanitation (each day)
 - After production, packaging → distributors pickup M-Food
 - Cultured products sold nationwide
- **Workforce & Benefits**
 - Starting wage = \$14 to start
 - Production = \$17 to start
 - Full benefits structure; free products
 - Workforce is happy, low turnover
 - 40% Latino, 1% Bulgarian, 40% women, wide range of ages, all live in Sonoma County
- Community Involvement; supports numerous organizations with product and cash contributions (Daily Acts, Ceres, Sonoma Land Trust, Veteran's)
- Producing sustainable, local food is costly; high and rising cost of housing is a key barrier

Q&A

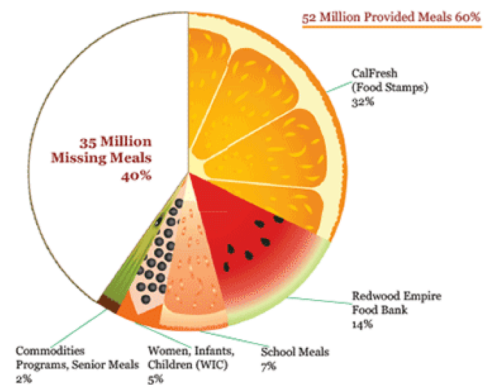
- **What was the difference for you and your family vs. the experience of someone starting today?**
 - Barriers to entry for new/young farmers; high cost of land, housing
 - Additional costs for dairy infrastructure

- Bureaucracy, regulation, infrastructure has changed significantly
- FSMA compliance; RH hired new FTE to handle compliance, policy, regulation, etc.
- Everything is more complex, more expensive
- Cheese = Grade B product so requirements/regulatory burdens are lower
- **Any particular insights on overcoming challenges?**
 - Collaboration with landowners; sharing/partnerships, succession planning
 - Creative property/resources sharing agreements
- Sharing property, farming practices, business with consumers (Spring Farm Tours)
 - Treat workers well; assured a committed and engaged workforce

Presentation: The Need in Sonoma County by the Numbers, Sonoma County Hunger Index
 George Malachowski, Program Planning & Evaluation Analyst, Sonoma County Human Services Department

If you created solutions to hunger, how would you know it had any impact?

[Press Democrat](#) article on the Hunger Index Forum; The County estimates there are about 200,000 people who need assistance to be able to afford three square meals every day. That’s 216 million meals in a year, estimated by the federal government to cost \$2.27 per meal. Low-income families are able to purchase about 129 million meals, while food banks, Meals on Wheels, soup kitchens and other organizations provide about 52 million per year. That leaves a gap of 35 million meals a year. The figure is not meant to be a precise measure of the meals people are missing. The county has no way of knowing whether people skip meals to make ends meet or just eat smaller meals or eat very modest meals.



Project Background: In 2013, a team of organizations released the [first Sonoma County Hunger Index study](#), announcing a 47 million meal gap. The project continued in 2014 and the team organized the 2015 Hunger Index Forum.

Hunger Index Forum

George presented the HI project to the Social Equity Team in September 2014 – the SE Team partnered on the production of the Forum as their 2015 project - the SE Team joined the Hunger Index Team in October 2014.

On February 19th, over 200 leaders and change-makers came together to confront the Sonoma County meal gap and advance a countywide conversation on hunger at the 2015 Hunger Index Forum. Co-moderated by Oscar Chavez, Assistant Director of Human Services, and Joseph McIntyre of AIN, the event featured representatives from food access, health and human services providers across the county, city and grassroots levels.

- Biggest barriers, income, limited access, cost of housing
- Strategies to close the meal gap, provide resources, public education about resources, outreach to community, smarter collaboration
- See George/Human Services Department’s handouts

Presentation: System of Free Food Collection & Distribution

Gail Atkins, Director of Programs, Redwood Empire Food Bank

- Supplemental food; a REFB is a one component of a spectrum of food organizations
- **Funding**
 - 18% = government

- 2 commodity programs (USDA); seniors and general population programs
 - School meal programs (after school and summer meal and snacks)
 - 48% = individual donors
 - Completes lot of grant writing
 - Part of Feeding America Network (44 food banks in California alone); provides capacity-building support
 - Serves Lake, Mendocino, Humboldt and Del Norte with food access services
 - CA Assn of Food Banks provides produce (farm to family program; produce for \$0.13/lb)
 - Range to Table (new) working with local ranchers to raise meat; REFB will pay for slaughter, cut and wrap
 - Tremendous need for protein in food banks; challenge to find markets
 - Lacking capacity to take all food offered; efficiency of scale
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Dialogue

What were the highlights from today's presentations?

What are your questions for further exploration with the Alliance?

- Workforce (wage, benefits, employee care)
 - What can be done to spread it?
 - How can we support strong employer benefits across the county (as the Food System Alliance)?
 - Wages to improve community/public health
 - Inspiring to hear how employers are caring for
 - **Business/Industry** – presentations were excellent; Alliance wants to know how to start a business/farm today – today's challenges are very different – **want to learn from proprietors that have navigated the current system?**
 - Expenses, regulation, scale = all are prohibitive today; how can we
 - Who is thriving in spite of the current challenges??? We need to hear from them.
 - Niche markets are key to survival
 - Bright spots = business making it work and thriving in Sonoma County
 - Hunger Index = Can the FSA explore... what are the best strategies for improving access (practical project – we should look into it)
 - Drought
 - Bright spots niche, not community food securing
 - Designing solutions for wage gap; for farmers and farm workers
 - How can we leverage health outcomes and money to fill gaps
 - Values shift is needed (workforce, food system)
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Next Meeting: May 20, 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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|----------------|--------------------------|
| • May 20 | • October 21 |
| • June 17 | • November 18 |
| • July 15 | • No meetings in Aug/Dec |
| • September 16 | |