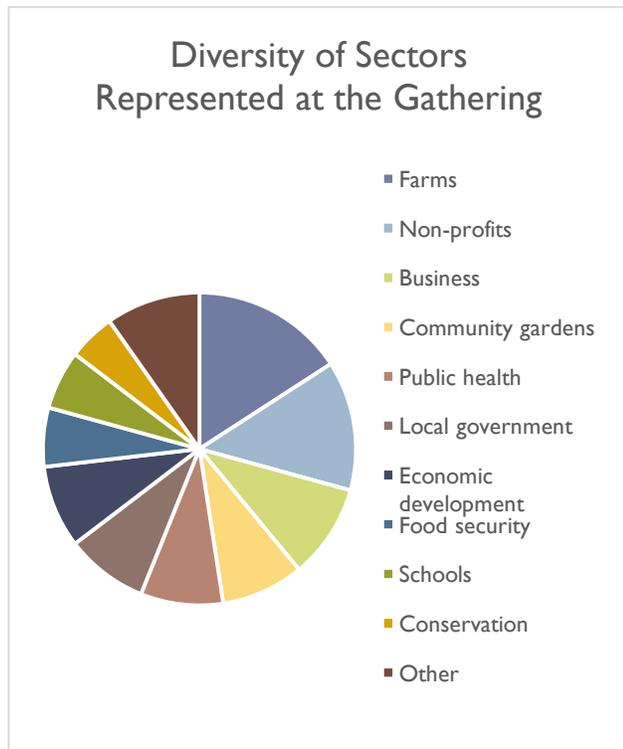


Charlotte Regional Food Council Gathering

March 10, 2016

Strengthening partnerships to create a thriving, resilient community-based food system

In early March, more than 50 people from eleven counties gathered to discuss how to best support the local food economy and everyone having access to healthy, local foods. Cabarrus County Farm and Food Council co-hosted this regional event with Community Food Strategies (CFS) and the Local Food Council of North Carolina (LFCNC). Food councils foster cross collaboration of all stakeholders and sectors working in food and farming systems. The graph below shows the diversity of sectors present.



“The LFCNC is co-hosting six regional gatherings to learn about the opportunities, innovative ideas, and barriers for this work. These listening sessions are critical for state representatives to understand each community’s realities and to prioritize our own work as a state council,” says Karen Stanley of the NC Division of Public Health and a LFCNC representative.



Council Happenings

Six regional food networks gave brief presentations on their work, sharing current priorities and projects as fodder for later conversations and connections. Below is a listing of the local food councils or networks:

- Bread Riot, Rowan County
- Cabarrus County Farm and Food Council
- Catawba Farm and Food Coalition (SC)
- Charlotte-Mecklenberg Food Policy Council
- Davidson County Local Food Network
- Upper PeeDee Farm and Food Council

Regional Indicators

Smaller groups worked through a facilitated process using everyone’s experiences to better understand the region’s assets and needs for growing the local food economy. Community Food Strategies is helping Food Councils develop regional priorities so that local communities and organizations can better align programs and determine how to best contribute to common goals. The groups agreed on a shared result: *a thriving, sustainable community-based food system in every county.* The group developed the following top indicators to track the shift toward that result:

1. ↑ # of school, community, home gardens
2. ↑ # of farmland acres in production
3. ↑ farmers earning a livable wage
4. ↑ local foods purchased by restaurants

Each group brainstormed various partnerships, actions, and resources that would help advance this work even further. The attendees felt grateful for the opportunity for collaboration and felt that more regional gatherings would be beneficial. Review more data from this process on the next page or view the full summary of this event at www.communityfoodstrategies.com.

Selection of Results Based Accountability Data from attendees

Shared Result:

A thriving, sustainable community-based food system in every county.

Experience

What you would hear, feel, or see if the shared result were true:

- Food & agriculture curriculum and experiences for youth
- More local foods & products in stores, markets, and restaurants
- Diverse farming operations
- Farmers earning a livable wage
- People cooking at home
- Active children & healthy weight people
- Food & farms at the forefront of planning and development
- More school, community, and home gardens
- Better transit options or access to purchase local foods
- Institutions purchasing more local foods
- Hearing chickens
- More \$ staying in the community

Indicators

What you could measure to track a shift towards the result:

- # of farmland acres in food production
- % of healthy weight people
- % of food secure families
- Pounds of local food purchased
- # of GAP certified farmers
- # of school and home gardens
- \$ of local food sales
- % of population with chronic disease
- # of people attending food and agriculture workshops
- Average distance for residents to purchase local foods
- Average age of farmers
- Average distance for farmers to processing facilities
- Healthcare \$ spent compared to local food \$ purchased
- % of government budget toward local foods efforts

What's happening

What is already happening in our communities to reach this result:

- Regional community assessment
- Successful school garden implementation examples
- Urban farm-to-table events
- SNAP/WIC vouchers promoted at farmers markets
- Lomax Incubator Farm
- Growth of farmers markets
- Comprehensive plans incorporating food and farm initiatives
- Federal & State conservation dollars
- Local foods grocery stores
- Some County funding and support to expand meat processing facilities
- Food Corps, pilot program for food, gardening and nutrition
- REACH, a Federal corner store initiative

Greater Impact

What we could do more of to have greater impact:

- Increase consumer awareness of and engagement with local food options through events and promotion
- Use statistics and data on buying local to create economic development campaign
- Foster collaboration between local food community stakeholders within county and region
- Provide more resources and funding to local foods development and staff
- Offer more educational and infrastructure opportunities for farmers to improve their businesses
- Strengthen relationship between councils and planning departments

This is a portion of the ideas generated at this initial regional gathering. Local food councils will continue collaboration at future networking events. View more at www.communityfoodstrategies.com.