12 Community Insights for a North Carolina that "Does Food Differently"

NC Food Action Plan Project

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NC Food Action Plan project team

Beth Katz - Food Insight Group (FIG)
Abbey Piner - Community Food Strategies, CEFS
Gini Knight - Community Food Strategies, CEFS
LaShauna Austria - Community Food Strategies, Kindred Seedlings Farm, & Seeds of Change Consulting
Yasmeen Lee - NC Food Action Plan Project Coordinator
Shorlette Ammons - Farm Aid (previously: CORE, CEFS)

CEFS
CENTER for ENVIRONMENTAL FARMING SYSTEMS
NCSU | NCA&T | NCDA&CS

COMMUNITY FOOD STRATEGIES

FIG
FOOD INSIGHT GROUP

CORE
FOOD SYSTEMS

Project Kick-Off
November 2019

Over 100 Advisory Committee Members

How do we "do food differently?"

" ...i have hindsight, insight, and foresight," which all come with aging. with hindsight, insight and foresight, we are likely to be better equipped to navigate currents of change in our lives and in our organizations"
-HUILAN KRENN, WKKF1

HIND·SIGHT

/ˈhīn(d)ˌsīt/

"the ability to look back at a situation or an event and have a clearer understanding of it and how things could have been better or different."

METHODOLOGY

To guide these conversations, our team used the following questions:

1. From your perspective, what shifts/innovations/creative/beautiful responses recently [due to the COVID-19 pandemic] have made you feel like "the food system we want is possible?"
2. Given all that has been happening/made clear/highlighted, what has made you say "wow" about the responses and innovations in our food system since COVID?
3. What should we do more of in order to do food differently?

IN·SIGHT

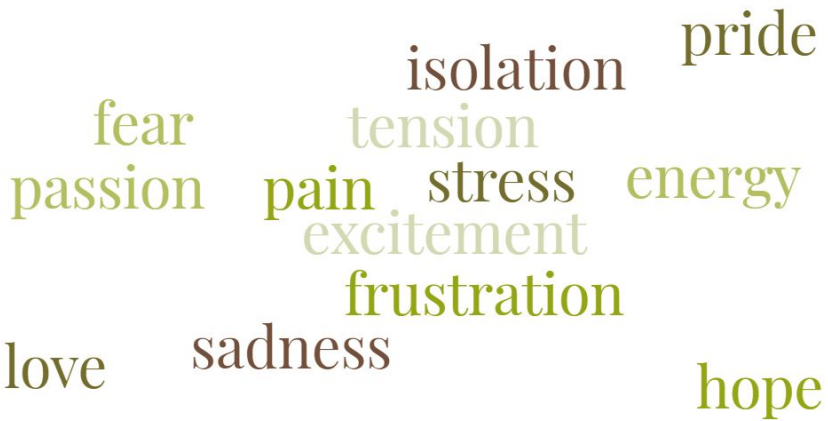
/ˈinˌsīt/

the capacity to gain an accurate and deep intuitive understanding of a person or thing. "the ability to empathize and connect with human suffering"

Ruby Sales

INSIGHT 01

SPACE TO CONSIDER AND PROCESS EMOTION IS CRITICAL IN MOVING FORWARD.



Calls to Action:

- For change to happen, we need to seek out and encourage emotional intelligence training and understanding.
- All leadership can benefit from more emotional awareness. This includes community leaders, organizational leadership, and institutional leadership.
- "Doing food differently" is both head and heart work.
- Deepening food-related organizations' and leaders' ability to work from a place of emotional awareness/justice/intelligence allows us to value our experience. The emotions that are invoked during this process can be used as important guides in what to do and how to do it.

INSIGHT 02

AN INTERSECTIONAL APPROACH TO FOOD IS FOUNDATIONAL.

Calls to Action:

- More intentional work and collaboration are required to view food through an intersectional lens. This work is already underway across the state, but needs to be expanded upon, with a focus on better addressing gaps in health and wealth.
- Adding food access into Medicaid expansion in North Carolina would bring the health and food systems together to create preventative solutions.
- Providing safe and equitable working conditions to the agricultural workforce will lead to a more just food system.
- Any solution addressed within communities needs to take into account the different impact on each identity group.

INSIGHT 03

MISMATCHES OF AVAILABLE RESOURCES IN THE CURRENT SYSTEM INCREASE EXISTING DISPARITIES.

Calls to Action:

- We need to redistribute resources instead of reinventing the wheel.
- Government subsidies should support small farmers that can't compete with large farmers or can't access facilities needed to grow their production (food hubs, aggregators).
- Audits of community resources should be conducted regularly, so that they are equitably divided depending on a communities' needs.
- Continued investment into farmers of color —beyond that which was available in 2020— is crucial.

INSIGHT 04

POWER AND GATEKEEPING TACTICS THAT IMPEDE ACCESS TO OPPORTUNITY FOR COMMUNITIES OF COLOR NEED TO BE ACKNOWLEDGED AND ADDRESSED.

Calls to Action:

- **Leaders across the food system should build power analysis into their work as a decision making tool.** The power analysis tool helps create a common language and understanding amongst your community so you can work together effectively.
- **Understanding power dynamics helps you make strategic decisions about which actions to take.** Taking a step back and thinking strategically about collective power is one way we can begin to make necessary changes.
- **People of color need to have space in roles of leadership and influence within their communities and at the local, state, and federal government levels.** To create this room for opportunity, white people must step down from some seats of power.
- **Shifting power isn't a binary system. One can both shift power without being powerless, just as someone can gain power while still experiencing oppression.**
- **Emotional fortitude (see insight 1) is necessary to reconcile feelings within white identity conversations about white folks stepping away from the table versus white folks working alongside folks of color.**

INSIGHT 05

CAPITALISM NEEDS TO BE TAKEN OUT OF THE FOOD SYSTEM.

Calls to Action:

- We need to shift towards work that is bold, regardless of whether it elicits **fear** and apprehension.
- The food system is ready to move away from short-term innovations. We need to move towards long-term changes in the system that pay farmers for their production and make food accessible to consumers.
- Rather than using temporary solutions such as micro loans, there is a desire to use equitable strategies to fund communities.

INSIGHT 06

THERE IS A NEED FOR A STRONGER AND SHARED ANALYSIS ON CHARITY VS. JUSTICE AS IT RELATES TO FOOD SYSTEMS CHANGE.

Calls to Action:

- We need a cultural and policy shift towards viewing food as a fundamental right and fair wages/compensation for agricultural work as a priority.
- Representation of community needs at the policy level by individuals that are members of those communities is crucial.
- We need to have a framework for food justice and mutual aid that benefits communities more than charity and reliance on rapid response. Promoting small farms was also a suggested approach to responding to future disasters and crises.

INSIGHT 07

SMALL FARMS ARE A DESIRED SOLUTION BUT STRUGGLE WITH VIABILITY.

Calls to Action:

Supporting the viability of small farms requires direct action. Specific actions include:

- Investing in and financing regional food systems infrastructure.
- Including small and minority business owners in decision making about that financing.
- Creating more capital for food-oriented development.
- Encouraging contracts with small farmers to provide food for local institutions.
- Increasing access to education on how to maintain farmland for small farmers.
- Promoting the increased awareness and support for buying local after COVID-19.

INSIGHT 08

YOUTH VOICES DRIVE THE FUTURE AND NEED TO BE CONSULTED.

Calls to Action:

- Support youth involvement in all aspects of the food system.
- Food should be incorporated into the education systems to promote interest in agriculture careers early on.
- Intergenerational collaboration is necessary for youth to be fully supported within the system.
- Although there are generational differences between elders and youth, the hindsight and foresight perspectives of both identities are necessary to craft the future of the food system.
- Identity conversation participants emphasized the need for youth to receive agricultural education from grade school through early adulthood.

INSIGHT 09

COMMUNITY GENERATED SOLUTIONS HOLD THE KEYS TO PROGRESS.

Calls to Action:

- Institutions and local governments should be funding community-generated solutions.
- We need to develop mechanisms to hold funders more accountable for how they spend their money and for which programs or solutions they are supporting.
- Projects/organizations should be funded in a way that reflects the interests of those most impacted by the system.

INSIGHT 10

BIG "P" AND LITTLE "P" POLICY ARE NECESSARY.

Calls to Action:

- We need to address all sides of the policy spectrum, including organizational partnerships and collaborations, changes in procedures, advocacy and mobilization, and legislation at local, state, and federal levels.
- For policy reform to be effective, communities must have a voice and resources to share information and act upon changes.
- By embracing transformative policy change, communities can leverage their existing assets and strengths.
- Develop communication and learning strategies about how policy and politics intersect. This helps to educate communities of how their voting decisions and advocacy are tied to federal, state, and local spending on the food system.

INSIGHT 11

IDENTIFY AND FOCUS ON WHAT DRIVES INNOVATION, OUTSIDE OFA CRISIS.

Calls to Action:

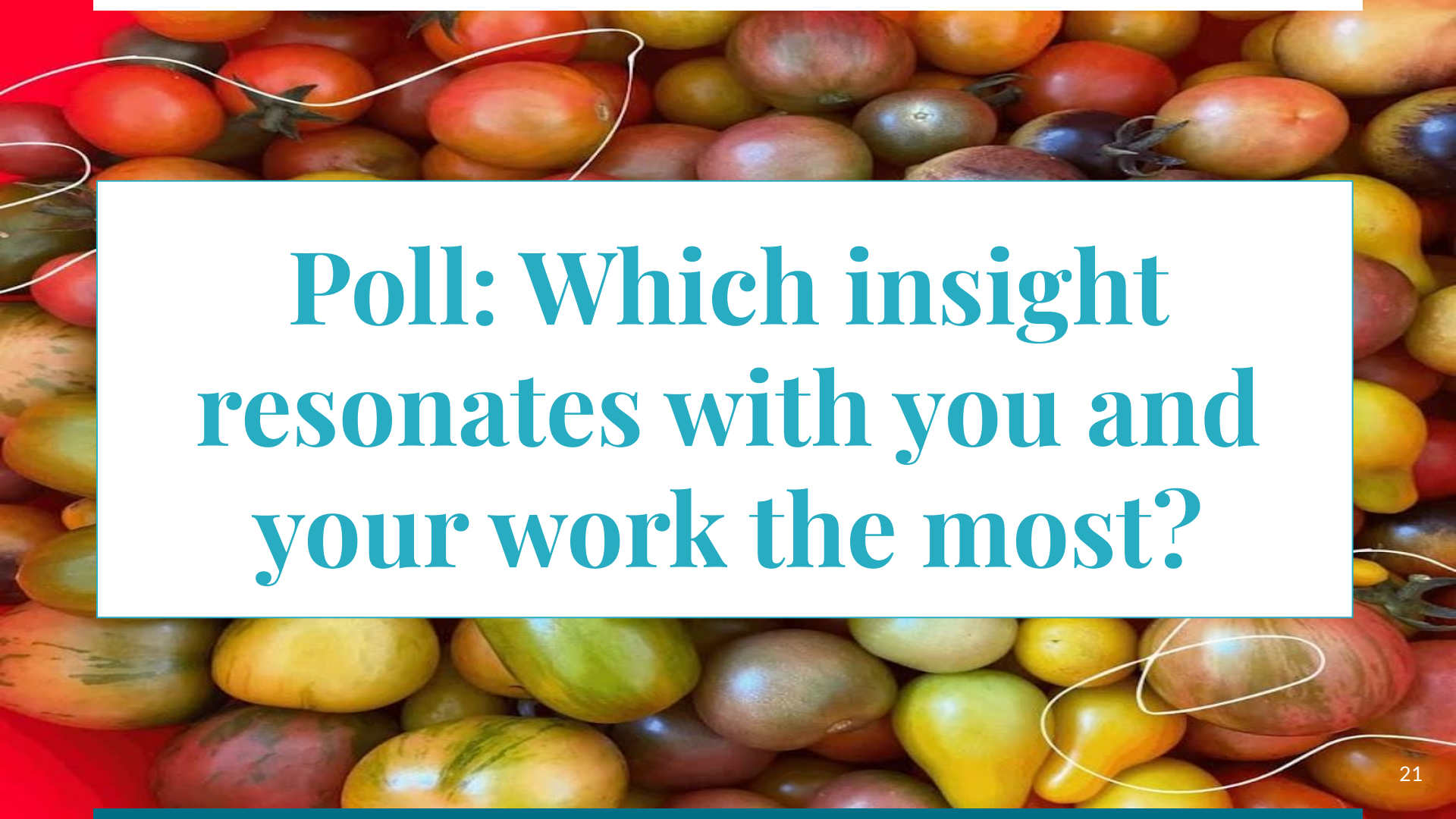
- Explore what strategies promote innovation outside of crisis response.
- Create tools for long-term change based on those strategies.
- Build upon the momentum and innovation created by the response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Work in multi-racial coalitions that are grounded in power analysis (see insight #4) as a step in crafting a better food system beyond crisis.

INSIGHT 12

LEVERAGE THE CURRENT MOMENTUM TO CREATE A NEW FOOD SYSTEM.

Calls To Action:

- The first step is to find your place within the 11 actionable insights above. You have a place either as an individual, as part of an organization, or as part of an institution.
- Each person, regardless of affiliation, must recognize their multiple intersecting identities.
- Accountability is not limited to one institution. Many of us are members of multiple communities and have accountability to those communities as well.
- Work with community leaders, community members, and emerging leaders to keep momentum for change moving forward.



Poll: Which insight resonates with you and your work the most?

FORE·SIGHT

/ˈfôrˌsīt/

Care or provision for the future. The ability to judge correctly what is going to happen in the future (based on past occurrences) and take care to plan accordingly

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Contact Yasmeen Lee, NC Food Action Plan Coordinator with questions at ncfoodactionplan@gmail.com