



Northeast Iowa Food & Farm Coalition Minutes, July 2011

The NIFF Coalition met on July 7, 2011 at noon at the Winneshiek County Extension office. Present: Carolyn Corbin, Lyle Luzum, Gary Sandholm, Johnice Cross, Craig Watson (Sysco- Sustainability), Saul Morales (Sysco- Food Safety and Quality Assurance), Steve Gress (Sysco of Iowa), Eric Nordschow, Randy

Uhl, Rick Clink, Francis Martin, Steph Conant, Maren Stumme-Diers, Teresa Wiemerslage, Mary Steen.

FFI/Farm to School

1. Farm to School: Update on the school food bidding process (Johnice and Steph).
Created spec sheets for 15 foods that farmers can grow for a competitive price.
2. Update on county FFI team tours in July/August
 - a. July 21: Winneshiek – Kymar Acres and Given Gardens
 - b. Aug 9: Howard – Garden Tour; Cresco & Decorah Hospital, Pepperfield
 - c. Aug 17: Postville – Back to School – Garden Tours
 - d. Aug 23: Fayette – Active Living Tour
 - e. Aug TBD: Clayton – Orchard Tour (Still needs a county WG member)
 - f. Oct 3: Allamakee – Allamakee Partnership – feature FFI & 21st Century Fitness
 - g. TBD: Chickasaw –
- B. Gary Sandholm and Lyle Luzum are representing NIFF at the WKKF FFI Networking meeting in Detroit this month. Our case study of financing for producers has been selected for discussion.
- C. FFI will be launching a Messaging campaign targeting parents of K-3 graders in Postville, Elkader, Decorah this fall. This is our first attempt at consumer and advocate education.
- D. Staff Changes
 - a. Americorp Anna Wikan and Heather Pecinovsky will be completing their year of service.
 - b. Rachel Wobeter, school wellness liason will be leaving in August.
 - c. Steph Conant will be contining as one of two FoodCorp positions with the initiative. Leah Chapman is the other FoodCorp.
 - d. Received notification this week that FFI will be getting 3 Americorp positions to work with schools. Watch for job post.
 - e. Funds will be shifted to a Sustainable Food Systems Liaison. Joint position with FFI and Luther College. The liaison will assist institutions with procurement of local food, support educational gardens throughout the region, assist school wellness committees in implementing Farm to School activities, and coordinate educational programming related to sustainability, wellness, and the food system. Will coordinate a learning community of institutions and value chain partners. (Maren Stumme-Diers)
 - f. Food Value Chain Coordinator positions funded by USDA RBEG grant. Winneshiek County Extension will receive \$90K for 2 years to hire position. ISUE position. Hope to have position filled by Sept 1.
<http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/STELPRD4010833.html>

3. Update on regional processing discussions and kitchen projects

1. From Dan Moris: FYI, we will begin construction of Sharing Spaces Kitchen one week from 6/28. It is expected to be a 90 day project with a schedule completion by September 30th.
2. Article about the Innovation Kitchen in the Telegraph Herald:
<http://www.iowafreshfood.com/site/news/131.html>
3. Bill Menner, IA USDA Rural Development, visited the Innovation Kitchen recently. http://blog.sustainablework.com/2011/06/thank-you-beautiful-iowa-multi-state.html?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+sustainablework+%28SustainableWork%29
4. Distribution and food hubs was the focus of the Driftless Region meeting on June 16. <http://www.driftless.wisc.edu/>
5. Would like to apply for a Leopold Center grant to do some intensive planning on a regional food hub in NE IA. Letters are due Aug 15. Looking for a committee: Teresa, Maren, Johnice, Steph

4. Update on regional food sales/purchases data collection

1. For Farmers: To report local food SALES.
<https://spreadsheets.google.com/viewform?formkey=dDFhblpFMDISXzFNajlNSE NzMWifMHc6MQ>
2. For Buyers: To report local food PURCHASES
<https://spreadsheets.google.com/viewform?formkey=dEIVRmV5ck1uS19VR1BE LU1NR0Z0S3c6MA>

5. Update on the evolution of the Regional Food System Working Groups in Iowa

The Leopold Center will end its convening role of the RFSWG in Dec. The oldest and most developed of the RFSWGs have been meeting to talk over options to manage the convening function that the staff at the Leopold Center handled in the past. To maintain the valuable cooperative structure that the RFSWG has built, we need to look at all potential alternatives including a possibility that the groups, as partners, could provide the convening function themselves. The proposal includes the formation of a steering committee to guide discussions/decisions and to convene the RFSWGs each quarter. The next RFSWG is Aug 15. Anyone who would like to attend should contact Teresa.

6. Update on the Iowa Food and Farm Plan

The Ag Appropriations bill still contained funding to establish a Local Food and Farm Program and appropriates \$75,000 for the program and a program coordinator. IDALS received the funding and the position will be with ISU Extension.

7. Update on IDALS Specialty Crop Grant

The 2011 Specialty Crops Block Grant review committee met on Wednesday, June 22nd to evaluate proposals and make funding recommendations. There were 25 proposals considered (requests totaled \$583,404.38) but only eight proposals were recommended for full funding and six proposals for partial funding (totaling \$260,500). Our proposal titled "GAP/GHP Cost-Share Program for Iowa Fruit and Vegetable Producers" was not recommended for funding.

8. Visit/presentation by corporate managers of Sysco

Several years ago, Sysco recognized that local food is not a fad. It will gain traction. Craig was charged with coming up with a plan for Sysco to procure and distribute local food. 30 of 90 major distribution companies have local food programs.

Sysco is trying to be innovative in their approach to helping figure out how to supply local

- The President of Sysco Iowa is VERY into sourcing more local food and is excited to help build the regional food economy. This is something that he knows his customers are interested in.
- Sysco Iowa President and a few other quality control/produce guys are in from California meeting with Johnice and Teresa this week. They are interested in holding a GAP training for producers on Aug 31. This will be a refresher course specific to the Primus GAP audit. When producers ask Sysco whether they should keep on with certification?, the resounding answer is "Yes".
- Huge commitment of corporate level to put together a training. Looking for a long-term relationship/partnership.
- 4 primary food safety risks: people, adjacent land use, water, soil amendments.
- Producers get to keep their "identity" even when they sell product through Sysco. The president recognizes the value in maintaining this name recognition because local produce is more "sexy" than things that come with a generic Sysco label.
- Grower concern: when working with a distributor, price driven down and hard to be competitive. Sysco: Producer determines input cost and sells it. Sysco will mark up from there.

Odds and Ends:

The minutes from the June meeting are posted here:

http://www.iowafoodandfitness.org/uploads/PDF_File_37591700.pdf

AgriStar Producer Outreach

Thanks much for your help on the phone yesterday. As I noted, Agri Star, the new owner of the Postville, IA plant needs to expand its producer/feeder outreach. Please send me the format of the info you need from us for posting on the website as well as any appropriate livestock groups we should be in touch with. I'll be in Postville all next week, though my email address below and cell will be the best way to reach me. Thanks much.

Kevin McCullough, Beef Industry Consultant
207 Woburn St, Reading, MA 01867
781 779 1085 land, 413 326 0528 cell

From Jim Russ re: processing kitchen. New Hampton has a closed pizza place called the Renegade Pizza that might fit the bill.

USDA Value Added Producer Grants are due Aug 29

A pdf version of this year's NOFA can be obtained from the following web site

<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2011-06-28/pdf/2011-16121.pdf>

- Assistance available from NE IA RC&D. Act soon. www.northeastiowarcd.org
- Assistance available from Agricultural Marketing Resource Center
<http://www.extension.iastate.edu/article/agmrc-assists-producers-applying-usda-value-added-grants>

New posts to website:

- Equipment field day focuses on small farms:
<http://www.iowafreshfood.com/site/news/128.html>
- Farmers Encouraged to Update Iowa Hay and Straw Directory Listings:
<http://www.iowafreshfood.com/site/news/127.html>

- Five Reasons to Buy from Your Local 4-H:
<http://www.iowafreshfood.com/site/news/126.html>
- Organic Valley, the nation's oldest organic farmer-owned cooperative, and National Cooperative Grocers Association (NCGA), a business services cooperative serving 120 consumer-owned food co-ops nationwide, today announced they are joining forces to improve school lunch. It is great to have them on the team!
http://www.csrwire.com/press_releases/32520-Organic-Valley-and-National-Cooperative-Grocers-Association-Join-Forces-to-Improve-School-Lunch
- Congratulations and Good Luck to the Walleser and Weighner families! FFI is proud to have been part of your project. Here is a toast (with a tall glass of milk) to your success!
<http://www.agrinenews.com/ww/homestead/dairy/will/produce/and/process/milk/in/allamakee/county/story-3677.html>

Events:

- July 5, Pasture Walk at Jason Klinge Farm, Farmersburg, 10:30 am.
- July 7, NIFF Coalition meeting, noon, Winn Co Extension, 325 Washington Street.
- July 13, No-Till and Cover Crops Field Day, 11 am, Craig Embretson Farm, 19513 Gunder Rd, Farmersburg
- July 13, Pasture Walk at Kyle Wedel Farm, 1 pm, 13551 Douglas Ave, Riceville
- July 16, MOSES Field Day: Organic Orchard Workshop, LaCrescent
- July 16, PFI Field Day: Fencing and Watering for Organic Beef, Sheep and Dairy, Dan Beard Farm, Decorah, 10-4 pm.
- July 18, Farmer Transportation Costs and Alternatives Workshop, 7 am, Lanesboro, MN
- Aug 4, NIFF Coalition meeting, noon, Winn Co Extension, 325 Washington Street.
- Aug: Farmland Leasing meetings, Sites in NE IA.
- Aug 25: ISUE Program Showcase, NE IA Dairy Center, Calmar
- **Other events??**

DRAFT Iowa's Regional Food System Working Group (RFSWG)

The RFSWG is a network of geographically based food and agricultural working groups that brings together producers, businesses, practitioners, and state and federal organizations. It offers a collaborative environment for a diverse group of farmers, community leaders, and non-profit, government, and private organizations to share resources and support.

- **Purpose, Mission, Values, Objectives, Function, Goals and Outcomes**

(Developed by Brenda Ranum)

- **Purpose:**

The RFSWG's purpose is to support local food system efforts through quarterly networking meetings designed to share information, support education, address challenges, and facilitate access to tools between new and existing partners.

- **RFSWG Mission:**

The RFSWG supports education, conducts research and facilitates partnerships to increase investment and support of community based, economically sustainable and environmentally and socially responsible regional food enterprises

- **RFSWG Values:**

- Shared leadership
- Collaborative partnerships
- Collaborative funding
- Learning community
- Engaged participation
- Local and regional community based agriculture
- Researched-based information
- Economic and environmental sustainability
- Social justice

- **RFSWG Objectives:**

- Identifying key elements found in specific geographic areas that create a vibrant and sustainable food system
- Procuring funds for development of RFSWG as a whole and individual regional food working groups
 - To aid in convening and leadership of RFSWG
 - To provide seed grants to local groups for strengthening key elements such as planning, assessment, coordination, leadership development, and other activities needed to build a more resilient food system
- Working with leaders in food businesses to identify key elements not yet developed
- Helping identify and measure key indicators in different regions to determine change and impact
- Developing and implementing a continuous learning process across Iowa to determine what it takes to make a regional food system more vibrant and sustainable

- **How RFSWG Functions:**

- The group meets quarterly to share information, network, and identify new opportunities
 - Experienced groups provide support and feedback as new groups develop
 - **RFSWG's Short Term Goals (Tactics):**
 - Share resources (grants/speakers/research/information) available in and out of state
 - Facilitate access to new and existing tools
 - Identify core and strategic partners
 - Showcase best practices
 - Secure funding to continue ongoing convening of Iowa's RFSWG
 - **RFSWG's Desired Outcomes**
 - Engage food and agricultural producers, businesses, and state and federal organizations to network, share information and tools and collectively address challenges
 - Steadily increase the capacity and effectiveness of each regional food system group
 - Document increases in food sales by key producers in each region across the state
 - Document increases in food purchases by key institutions/organizations in each region of the state
- **Proposed Plan to Fund, Organize and Convene Future RFSWG Functions and Quarterly Meetings: (Developed by Detra Dettmann)**
 - **Vision**

The proposed plan to move the function and convening of RFSWG includes an integrated and shared leadership approach. Central to the proposed plan is the development of a **STEERING COMMITTEE**. The steering committee will be the leadership entity responsible for overseeing the organization and implementation of RFSWG
 - **Steering Committee Members**

At the outset, it is suggested that the majority of the Steering Committee be comprised of leaders and representatives from the longest established regional food groups, including:

 - NE Iowa Food and Fitness (Brenda Ranum and Teresa Wiemerslage)
 - Northern Iowa Food and Farm Partnership (Kamyar Enshayan and Andrea Geary)
 - Hometown Harvest of SW Iowa (Detra Dettmann and Elisabet Humble)
 - Southwest Iowa Food and Farm Initiative (Bahia Nightengale and Mel Houser)
 - Flavors of Northwest Iowa (Laura Kuennen and Sherry McGill)

In addition, more recently organized groups will be represented by:

 - Healthy Harvest of North Iowa (Jan Libbey)
 - The Iowa Corridor Food and Agriculture Coalition (Jason Grimm)
 - **Steering Committee Structure and Responsibilities (Phase Two):**

The Steering Committee will oversee three areas related to the continuation of convening RFSWG meetings, including: **FISCAL AGENT**, **LOGISTICS**, and **PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT**. The responsibilities for each as well as how each is to be chosen are described in the following table.

Area	Duties	Selection for Fulfillment
Fiscal Agent	Be the official applicant and administrator to manage grant funds received on behalf of the RFSWG to continue ongoing convening of RFSWG (i.e., Leopold Center competitive grant)	The Steering Committee will evaluate and determine the best entity to assume this role for each grant opportunity. The Steering Committee will assist with proposal development. The Fiscal Agent will report to the Steering Committee.
Logistics	Plan and prepare local logistical needs to host a regional RFSWG meeting. Duties include, but are not limited to organizing: meeting location, meal arrangements, meeting invitations and RSVPs, and registration.	This task will rotate for each meeting and will be assigned to a different local food group(s) for each meeting. With 16 groups now in place, responsibility would only fall on an individual group once every 4 years. The Logistics Committee will report to the Steering Committee.
Program Development	Develop the program content, meeting structure and evaluation for each quarterly meeting.	This will be a volunteer committee comprised of interested individuals from different disciplines, regions and experience in regional food system work. The Program Committee will report to the Steering Committee.