



**Food System Collaborative
September 6, 2011
Sierra Health Foundation, Sacramento**

MEETING SUMMARY

Participants: (see below)

Next Steps:

- The next quarterly meeting is scheduled for January 10, 2012 (time and location TBD).
- Valley Vision will spend time over the next few months conducting outreach in order to increase representation in the FSC. We will develop and fulfill a plan to strategically target individuals and organizations representing the interests of agriculturalists and the rural communities.
- See below for many upcoming events!

Outcomes:

The meeting agenda included two sections: a panel discussion on **changes to the Farm Bill & their effects on our region** and a discussion regarding **FSC steering committee outreach**.

Farm Bill Panel Discussion

- Carolyn Ramirez – Office of Congresswoman Doris Matsui
 - The Congresswoman is seeking more funding for youth and family nutrition programs, commodity agriculture, and watershed. She is gathering input from this meeting to help inform the Congresswoman of constituents' concerns.
- Armando Nieto – California Food & Justice Coalition
 - The 2008 Farm Bill included, for the first time, provisions for beginning farmers and specialty crops.
 - It is important for the public to be informed on the Farm Bill because it encourages focus on the importance of food and feeding people, not just food production.
- Julie Manes – United Fresh Produce Association
 - Agriculture, food, and nutrition policy is getting more attention in Washington.
 - Challenges exist in outreach and education of new members of government, but this provides a real opportunity for education on the importance of these programs.
- Tim Johnson – California Rice Commission (click [here](#) to view presentation)
 - Title 1 provides a safety net for farmers, since they face a lot of risk (weather, insects, etc.) which can significantly affect their livelihood.
 - Changes implemented in the 2008 Farm Bill are working: crop insurance, etc.
 - Cutting areas of the Farm Bill other than the SNAP program (food assistance programs such as EBT, WIC, and school lunch) make little difference because SNAP is such a large piece of the overall cost.
 - Farm Bill is really no longer about farming, but about food policy for the nation.

- Question & Answer Session (○ = audience questions; ▪ = panelists' responses)
 - Is it possible that enough lobbying can bump up the specialty crop share of the overall funding within the Farm Bill?
 - There is a fair amount of uncertainty in the next steps the bill will take, but the “Super Committee” – 12 members of Congress tasked with reducing the federal budget deficit – may make recommendations for a range of cuts at a variety of levels.
 - We may see some programs get reconfigured and in the process receive some additional dollars, but given the push to cut funding, an increase in funding is unlikely.
 - Many different organizations came together in 2008 to fight for certain pieces of the Farm Bill; what can we learn from that process that we can use for this Farm Bill?
 - There was significant unity within the specialty crop industry for the 2008 Farm Bill; they worked through their differences to provide a united front.
 - Need to be prepared to speak to why Farm Bill programs are valuable and important to growers when particular issues are raised.
 - Unite agriculture and health sectors, since the Farm Bill is no longer just about agriculture but includes provisions related to health and nutrition.
 - With the number of new legislators in Washington, it is important to find an angle where any legislator can see the value of food, nutrition, & agriculture policy.
 - What is the panel's stance on the issue of genetically modified crops and does this come up in funding conversations related to the Farm Bill?
 - Markets are not ready for them (e.g. Asia, a large importer of California rice, will not purchase genetically modified rice)
 - What biotech can offer in terms of resource issues is huge (e.g. rice that is drought resistant), so genetically modified crops do offer some opportunities that are needed both in the US and worldwide to address the number of people that will need to be fed.
 - Until we know the purpose and affects of genetically modified food, we should not go down that road.
 - Genetically modified crops are not a part of the Farm Bill, so do not expect the USDA to start promoting this as a part of the Bill.
 - Being that there are limited funds and cuts are being made, we as a region need to decide where to invest, so where do you recommend we put our energy? Areas of potential focus: food security, infrastructure reinvestment, new grower training assistance, agriculture research, safety net services
 - Agriculture research
 - Any issues related to nutrition and food security
 - There is a strong ag sector in the Sacramento Valley and resources and infrastructure are needed to support it
 - If people increase their understanding of agriculture and support production agriculture more, it will help our region thrive
 - Research at UC-Davis from production to organics can help farmers through extension programs
 - Strengthen production agriculture safety net system regardless of size or crop
 - Figure out which priority area is best for your organization and for the region, and focus on those

- To what degree are jobs related to agriculture and the changes to the Farm Bill?
 - Agriculture jobs have been a bright spot in this dim economy because the agriculture sector tends to be counter cyclical to the general economy.
 - Trade helps jobs and keeps agriculture healthy because it allows farmers to mitigate some of their risk, so it is important to focus on trade agreements.
 - Farmers and agricultural workers deserve to make a decent living wage, and this needs to be a part of the conversation.
 - Jobs are not a part of the current Farm Bill discussion.
- Do you anticipate cuts to the SNAP program?
 - In Washington, not hearing about potential cuts in nutrition & education, but instead the cuts will probably focus on commodities.
 - The SNAP program cost is entirely dependent on the number enrolled, so in a tough economy, the cost of SNAP will be higher; if Congress wants to reduce the amount spent on the program, they make it harder for people to get food stamps.
- Does the Farm Bill address the fact that the nutritional quality of our food is being reduced in order to improve shelf life?
 - No, it does not deal with nutritional content of foods, but instead focuses on nutrition education programs and teaching people to eat the right foods.
- Nutrition education as defined by the current Farm Bill is not having the impact it needs to improve health; it should focus more on hands-on education (e.g. cooking) but funds are restricted for such programs. Will changes allow for expanded educational programs? Also, there are discussions about limiting SNAP purchasing to focus more on nutritious foods. Does the Farm Bill address this?
 - Grocery Management Association has been very engaged in this discussion because they do not want limitations on what their customers can purchase.
 - There is a large conversation happening around choice, but no decisions have been made.
- Does the Farm Bill deal with the food pyramid?
 - Not addressed in the Farm Bill, but the USDA administers it as a separate program
- Are there any discussions about reinventing the next Farm Bill, i.e. trying to do more with less, or just sharing the funds that are available?
 - In a time where legislators are more motivated to cut costs than they have been in the past, it is possible that some restructuring may occur.
 - Focus seems to be on recommendations for how to increase efficiency/effectiveness, which could lead to changing how programs are operated.
 - There is a chance that some titles could be collapsed into a fewer number of broader ranging programs.

FSC Steering Committee Outreach

- Context: Valley Vision has reached the mid-point of our grant from The California Endowment, and has decided to use this as an opportunity to take a step back and see where we are, what we have accomplished, and what we've learned.
- Conclusion: The FSC has been challenged in including voices from the rural areas of our region. In order to have an effective steering committee for the Collaborative, we need to do more outreach, particularly to those areas.

- Valley Vision will spend time over the next few months conducting outreach in order to increase representation. We will develop and fulfill a plan to strategically target individuals and organizations who are able to represent the interests of agriculturalists and the rural communities.
- Participant suggestions:
 - Have the agenda and topic of discussion at quarterly convenings be something that attracts people from further regions, such as the topic of this meeting.
 - Have quarterly meetings be a multimedia opportunity with webinars so people can attend from a distance.
- Email [Robyn](#) and [Adriane](#) individuals and organizations whose input you think would be of high value to the Food System Collaborative. Also, anyone not receiving our newsletters or meeting notices should sign up for mailing list (at www.foodsystemcollaborative.org).

FSC Member Announcements

- Sign up to be a part of our [Action Alert System](#), which will keep you informed of FSC-related happenings in our region (only sign up if you did not submit a card at the meeting)
- Submit your listing for the [FSC Directory](#), an online hub of information on participating organizations to be unveiled at the January meeting (only submit if you did not fill out a card at the meeting)
- Food Day – October 24th is being celebrated as Food Day (think Earth Day, but for food). Plan an event, participate in an event, or collaborate on an event. Visit www.foodday.org for more information.
 - The Hunger Coalition is coordinating a Food Day event – email [Bob Erlenbusch](#) for more information
- Whole Kids Foundation – 1000, \$2000 scholarships available for school gardens. Visit www.wholekidsfoundation.org for more information.
- Slow Food International event on September 17th from 11AM-2PM, focusing on school gardens and how to cook a healthy meal for \$5
- Soil Born Farms Autumn Equinox Festival on September 17th from 4:30PM-8:30PM at Hurley Way Farm (3000 Hurley Way). Tickets \$60, more information at www.soilborn.org.
- Hoes Down Festival at Full Belly Farm in Capay Valley on October 1st. Visit www.fullbellyfarm.com for more information.
- Organic Heroes: Amigo Bob Cantisano, September 30th from 6PM-8:30PM at Sacramento Natural Foods Co-op. Tickets are \$20 and include an organic supper and wine sampling. Visit www.sacfoodcoop.com for more information.
- Urban chicken keeping is now legal, as are community gardens on private property in City of Sacramento.
- Fresh Spin Farms is having workshops on managing food plots for community gardens, school gardens, and urban farms on September 17th. Visit www.freshspinfarm.com for more information.
- The Department of Labor last week released proposed revisions to child labor laws in agriculture and is seeking public comment. If you wish to comment on these revisions, please do so on the Department's website before November 1st. Click [here](#) for more information.
- The Center for Land-Based Learning Beginning Farmer program will begin accepting applications in mid-October, with the program starting in January 2012.
- The Center for Land-Based Learning is hosting a movie night on September 23rd, screening [Green Fire](#). Tickets are \$15; more information at www.landbasedlearning.org.

- The National Heirloom Expo is being held in Santa Rosa September 13th to the 15th. More information at www.heirloomexpo.com.

**If your organization is having an event that you would like to share with Collaborative participants, please email adriane.lepage@valleyvision.org.

Participants:

Cecilia Aguilar-Curry – City of Winters
 Lisa Bates – Sacramento Housing & Redevelopment Agency
 Janice Cooper – California Wheat Commission
 Tony Cortese – Newman Catholic Community @ Sacramento State
 Glenn Destatte – Sacramento Vegetarian Society
 Dawn Dunlap – Sacramento Food Bank & Family Services
 Wes Ervin – Yolo County Dept. of Economic Development
 Ed Garrett – Fresh Spin Farms
 Shawn Harrison - Soil Born Farms
 Josh Huntsinger – Placer County Agriculture Commissioner
 Tim Johnson – California Rice Commission
 Adriana Jones – Sacramento Natural Foods Co-op
 Trish Kelly – Applied Development Economics
 Mary Kimball – Center for Land-Based Learning
 Lisa Kresge – California Institute for Rural Studies
 Robyn Krock – Valley Vision
 Stephanie Landrum – Kaiser Permanente
 Alan Lange – Community Services Planning Council
 Molly Lawrence – Sacramento Food Bank & Family Services
 Cathy LeBlanc – Camptonville Community Partnership
 Adriane Lepage – Valley Vision
 Brandon Louie – Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs
 Julie Manes – United Fresh Producers Association
 Dawn Martin – Health Education Council
 Bill Maynard – City of Sacramento Community Garden Program
 Kristine Mazzei – Valley Vision
 Cheryl McKinney – Heifer International
 Louie Mendoza – Yuba County Agriculture Commissioner
 Jim Mills – Produce Express
 Bill Mueller – Valley Vision
 Armando Nieto – California Food & Justice Coalition
 Paul Philley – Sacramento Metropolitan Air Quality Management District
 Juan Prieto – California Human Development
 Carolyn Ramirez – Office of Congresswoman Doris Matsui
 Tina Reynolds – Uptown Studios
 Myrna Rivas – Kaiser Permanente
 Jim Rodgers – West Sacramento Youth Resource Coalition
 Josh Rolph – California Farm Bureau Federation
 Brenda Ruiz – Slow Food Sacramento
 Karen Strach – Community member
 Susan Sundell – Renaissance Society @ Sacramento State

Christine Tien – The California Endowment
Matt Yancey – Sacramento Metro Chamber