**Material for Workgroups – January 20th Meeting**

In the following pages, the notes from the November meeting have been organized into three groups with subgroups as follows:

* Sales and Marketing – Growing Demand
  + End User
  + Tie in with Health
  + Schools
  + Education
  + Access (by limited resource and underserved groups)
* Getting Product to Market
  + Aggregation
  + Distribution
  + Collaborations
  + Regulations
* Operational
  + Financing Operations
  + Structure/Management

Attached you will find a section for each of the above with the challenges identified first, the existing activities listed second and the opportunities listed last.

For our next meeting, participants are being asked to determine which group they would like to work on based on their area of expertise and interest. In addition, prior to the meeting, participants are being asked to begin thinking about the best way to address the issues in their particular group. Each group will be charged with developing a strategy and implementation plan to address the specific area.

So, if the end game is to ultimately have the following:

* Sustainable farms – profitable farms, farmers that are making a living
* Sustainable families – customers that are healthy and have access to healthy foods
* Sustainable land – land that can support producing crops, that is not paved over and converted to other uses, healthy soils, etc.

And the objectives we listed in the grant are to:

* Develop a strategy to move forward to a more sustainable food system in the San Joaquin Valley that will benefit small farmers and consumers.
* Connect farmers beyond the five foundation producers through farmer to farmer networking and co-learning opportunities. Expose all to resources and engage them in a strategic planning process.
* Integrate the farming community with resources that will be brought to the region through the Foodshed and Food System Alliance projects.
* Develop a plan that will attract implementation funding from sources such as the Specialty Crops Block Grant Programs, Farm Credit/US AgBank and others.

Then we need to (in each group) answer the following questions:

1. What are our goals in this area?
2. How are we going to get there?
3. Look at the list of obstacles/challenges we identified at the last meeting
   1. Add to the list if need be
4. What are some of the realities of this obstacle/challenge? (For example, if selling to retailers, they require a vendor I.D.)
   1. Can we create an alternate reality? If so, how would one go about it?
5. What additional information about each obstacle/challenge do we need?
   1. Do we need research done? If so, what kind of research?
   2. Has other research already been done? If so, how might we collect it and analyze it?
6. Are there others out there that have dealt with this obstacle/challenge?
   1. Identify (research) who has dealt with this obstacle/challenge –are there other models out there to learn from?
      1. What did they do to address this obstacle/challenge?
      2. Did it work or not?
      3. What were their lessons learned – good and bad?
7. Look over the list of activities for this area
   1. What do we currently know about these activities?
   2. What more do we need to learn about these activities and what they are trying to achieve?
   3. What activities might we interact with?
8. Who might be a collaborator on this obstacle/challenge and solving it.
9. How do we seize some of the solutions/opportunities that we listed and make them work for us?
10. What else do we need to know?

**An important thing to remember** - Our job is not to solve the problem – we do not have enough time or funding to do that. However, with the Western SARE grant, we do have the resources to determine and outline how we are going to approach solving the problem. **Put another way, with this grant, we are identifying the steps that need to be taken to determine the best approach to solving or addressing the issue.**

And last but not least, we will need to prioritize which steps we want to take first – what area do we want to work on first. Each group will need to prioritize within their subgroup. Then when all three groups come back together, we will do another level of prioritization.

**Group #1 - Sales and Marketing – Growing Demand**

**Obstacles/Challenges**

* End User
  1. Information gap between consumers/end users and producers – getting access to end user.
  2. Terminology – Pesticide free (IPM) is cost effective, feasible for “local” greenhouse gas – needs to be recognized as a safe label as is organic
  3. Farmers are our own worst enemies resulting in our very real public relations problem
  4. Teaching people to recognize the value of “unprocessed – off the farm” fruit and veggies vs. washed, waxed, shinned etc. – organics have bug holes.
  5. Relating the importance of farms and farming to our city neighbors – especially business neighbors and organizations. Recognition regarding the interconnectedness – economically, socially (Rescue Mission work goes up when freeze in agriculture)
  6. Educating from the grass roots up
  7. Educating the public around seasonality
  8. Consumer confusion with too many choices
  9. Consumers making the connection and seeing the value in supporting local Ag. (M)
  10. Feeding programs – how do we tap - deal with under-subscription
  11. Farm education in our area (foothills) – who we are and what we do. Marketing is challenge in foothills as people are spread out.
  12. Marketing directly at a volume that sustains the operation. (Growing markets)
  13. Building Pool of People – building demand for product
* Tie in with Health

1. Making the food/health connection
2. Health Related Illness
3. Obesity
4. Food as part of your health care
5. Connection between food and health

* Schools
  1. Food Service Directors at Schools knowing who the farmers are from which to purchase direct.
  2. School Lunch
  3. Organizing Local Farmers to be able to Take advantage of the school meals and snacks markets
* Education

Lack of basic food preparation skills in general population – especially with youth

Teach people to use what we produce

3. Knowledge of cooking

4. Don’t know how to cook

5. Educating from the grass roots up

a. Regarding schools – they have limited budgets, so it is a challenge for them to take kids out to the farm.

* + - * 1. Most farmers who used to have a direct hand in sales have turned sales over to brokers. They have lost their skills to sell. The skills need to be “reshaped”
* Access

1. How do we make what we grow accessible to the underserved:

* + 1. Payment methods
    2. Available in store that they patronize
    3. Price point
    4. Feeding programs
* Other

1. Most farmers who used to have a direct hand in sales have turned sales over to brokers. They have lost their skills to sell. The skills need to be “reshaped”.

**Activities**

* End User

1. Year round sales – seasonality
2. Farm to Fork Dinners held on the farm – customers see how their food is grown and get to taste it prepared by local chefs.
3. Organic Stone Fruit Jubilee – OSFJ – Get the word out to the local community.
4. Organic Stone Fruit Jubilee – summer event bringing growers and community together
5. Organic Stone Fruit Jubilee
6. Stone Fruit Jubilee
7. Stone Fruit Festival
   1. Fruit Trail
   2. Wine Trail
   3. Market Based Food Service – comes from Food Service Farm to Fork Program.

Locally Grown

* Tie in with Health
* Schools
  1. School Gardens
  2. School Lunch
  3. School invited out to our farm – engage students with hands on farming
  4. Food 4 Thought – buying small fruit for schools – we would throw away
  5. Works with local high school and enviro science dept. (C. Velez)
  6. Farm to School Work Group – South Tulare Co. Pilot project? Funding?
  7. Farm to School Work Group to learn who the local farms are – (Clint)
* Education
  + 1. Farm to Fork Dinners held on the farm – customers see how their food is grown and get to taste it prepared by local chefs.
    2. Chef challenge at farmer’s markets: chefs are invited to compete in a cook-off, usually consist of a featured item: Asparagus (example). Teaches consumers different ways of cooking produce.
    3. Host a local field day to see what is growing seasonally – 4 times a year, spring, summer, fall, winter
    4. Tulare County Farm Bureau – Bounty of the County
    5. Exeter now has a “Foodie Fest” – displays/sampling
    6. Foodie Fest in Exeter

5. Sunset’s – Savor the Central Coast

6. Art in the Orchard – Cherry Blossom Festival – spring event bringing community members to a local farm (Mika)

7. School invited out to our farm – engage students with hands on farming

8. Local classes on organic growing

9. Internships (Mint)

* + 1. Statewide “Know a Farmer Campaign” – December 13th at Fresno State
    2. “I Love Farmers – They Feed my Soul” – Cal Poly – SLO
    3. U Pick Weekend at Fresno State – education and outreach answering questions on seasonal, specialty crops
* Access
  1. Community Gardens – work with Fresno Metro Ministries and Community Garden Coalition to reach all corners of a community.
  2. Donation/Gleaning at FSU:

a. Working with local food pantries

* 1. Bulldog Pantry

ii. Volunteer/schools come and harvest

* 1. Fresno Rescue Mission will come and pick up donated fresh produce.

**Solutions/Opportunities**

* End User
  1. Feeding Programs
  2. SNAP – underdeveloped markets.
  3. WIC is $6 billion underutilized
  4. Better marketing and education of consumer
  5. Most people don’t eat 5 fruits and vegetable – unlimited potential if people ate that instead of fast food
  6. Subsidized in store demonstrations on how to prepare items
  7. Developing value added products
  8. Value added – invest in process instead of throwing out, juices, ciders. Use undersized

and blemished, etc.

* 1. Tie in with existing activities, i.e. Weight Watchers, environmentalists, Chef’s, Garden

Clubs.

* 1. Create local San Joaquin Valley food culture on the order of France and Italy
  2. Focusing on quality and consistency of product sold and be progressive in customer

requests

* + 1. Change the World – connect with consumers
    2. You should be able to buy fresh fruit pies, shortcakes, etc. at the local diner in small rural communities. Slow Food Concept. Use fresh fruit.
    3. Establish a Valley brand – brand our region
* Tie in with Health

1. Cure diet related health issues
2. Collaborate with health providers to encourage better eating habits as RX

* Schools

1. School Gardens
2. Farmers meet School Food Service Directors – call them.
3. Request from Food Service Director – a list of available farms, type of fruit, transportation methods.
4. Website for Schools – information and seasonality and availability. Access for other entities as well.
5. Increase availability for school meals of locally grown produce that is affordable and conforms to USDA Regs.
6. Farm to School – can we utilize the existing programs while making them more beneficial for farmers?
7. Have farm stands set up at schools where CSA’s are having boxes picked up of extra local produce so other parents can buy.
8. Working with local high school farm to school – Sierra High School
   * 1. Schools – cooking – local and seasonal
     2. Nutrition education and cooking to teens

* Education
  1. Revitalization of Fresno Chili Pepper Festival
  2. Build respect and positive energy for the Valley and product produced here
  3. Convince local communities to properly value fresh food (especially local food) (economics, health – what aspects?)
  4. Increase education levels to improve ability to pay and eat.
  5. Somehow re-establish public recognition of the importance of local agriculture and how important favorable public opinion is
  6. Field Day to Farm to learn
  7. Advertising and mass media exposure educating the public]
  8. Get involved in community education, jam making, biscuit making, school gardens.
  9. Agri-tourism – develop regional identity (or smaller region) of farm stays, visits, B&B’s

10. Agri-tourism – schools, day care, public learning Center for people to see firsthand what

it takes to raise crops.

11. Educational Programs in native language emersion – Kitchen Garden

12. Celebratory education around regional agriculture

13. Invite the public to the farm – open house

a. Model organic Farm for Education and outreach purposes

* Access
  1. Feed the food insecure in America and the world
  2. Feeding Programs

1. SNAP – underdeveloped markets.
2. WIC is $6 billion underutilized

**Group #2 - Getting Product to Market**

**Obstacles/Challenges**

* Aggregation
  1. Aggregation and distribution – outside area, to schools, other farmers markets
* Distribution
  + 1. Access and knowledge of distribution systems.
    2. Large retail outlets unresponsive to local/regional food (Holly - does this mean that we need to seek alternatives?)
    3. Middlemen
    4. Wholesale fruit distribution (via broker)
    5. Competing against the locally grown movement for regional and multi- regional shippers.
    6. Logistics with fresh product and volume
    7. Excess Product – How is it handled? Generally, the local market cannot absorb all that one grower has at any particular time, so the questions become:
       1. Market to move - Create local community brick & mortar/mobile mkts
       2. Distribution – how does one deal with the cooling, cold storage and transportation?
       3. Accounts Receivable – when dealing with local stores of national chains not uncommon for them to pay 75 days which is a long time in any operation
* Collaborations
  1. Because most farmers are independent – how do we tap in to a larger network – support system?
  2. Lack of time – Farming, marketing, Book Keeping, etc., etc., working off the farm
* Regulations
  + 1. Costs of regulation and customer requests
    2. One stop shopping with knowledgeable person to interface with
    3. Cost of paperwork to become certified organic
    4. Regulation at all levels that make us uncompetitive both globally and as small producers.
    5. Government regulations, taxation, programs that interfere with supply and demand at federal, state and county levels.
    6. Food Safety Regulations and operation size.
    7. Food Safety Rules – cost associated with them
    8. Need to understand food safety issues better
    9. Accreditation – 3rd Party Audits

**Activities**

* + Aggregation
    1. Year round sales – seasonality
    2. Fruit CSA – a seasonal collaboration with T & D Willey Farms - local distributing
    3. Selling fruit to T & D Willey CSA
  + Distribution
    1. Fruit CSA – a seasonal collaboration with T & D Willey Farms - local distributing
    2. Food 4 Thought – buying small fruit for schools – we would throw away
    3. Farmer’s Markets
    4. CSA’s, Farmers Markets, Roadside Co-ops, Direct web sales
    5. CSA in the Foothills –

6. Marketing local produce to our local market – Mar-Vals

7. Each retail chain/store have their own in store farmers market section.

* Collaboration

1. Collaborations that exist today related to product, time, resources exchange

* Regulations

1. Ag Vision – they are addressing regulation
2. California Roundtable for Ag and the Environment – they are addressing regulation

**Solutions/Opportunities**

* Aggregation
  1. Form Partnerships consisting of regional partners to allow for year round supply
  2. Collaborative effort to establish and outlet in a high traffic area so there are multiple products for multiple patrons.
  3. For CSA’s, buy products we don’t grow from other local farmers so customers can have the greatest diversity so they won’t drop their membership – Co-op?
  4. Network producers funneling into alternate distribution
  5. Combining pick up and deliver of goods many farmers need
  6. Have a marketing organization that would keep a list of what is available through organic and local farmers so buyers can deal with one source rather than calling every individual – information systems.
  7. Retail Markets – Collaborative Effort. With Save Mart, Vons, etc. – In Store Farmers Markets
  8. Growing farm markets with other products
  9. Small scale Farm/Food service Distribution – consolidation point, volume, marketing, maintain identity, aggregation.
  10. Set up local express delivery where we charge $2 for delivery and the pool of extra produce is kept in one facility and can be sold for home deliver with student labor
  11. Aggregate product for CSA, Farmer’s Market (one farmer sells while other is home farming)
* Distribution
  + 1. CSA’s – modify to fit other systems – schools, businesses, etc.
    2. Finding secondary markets for the “rest of the crop” – use all of the crop to the market place
    3. Year round, inside and out, farmer’s market with deli and restaurant with art.
    4. Eliminate touch points in food delivery system – i.e., eliminate the middleman
* Collaborations
  1. Collaborative effort to establish an outlet in a high traffic area so there are multiple products for multiple patrons.
  2. Network producers funneling into alternate distribution
  3. Continue collaborative PR, training efforts – get involved on panels et al.
* Regulation
  1. None

**Group #3 – Operational**

**Obstacles/Challenges**

* Financing Operations

1. Sustainable Financing for Production/Harvest
2. Accounts Receivable
3. Cash Flows
4. Overhead high on smaller loans (lender)
5. Hooking up market with production – can this pay?
6. Business models that show cash flow, etc. to qualify for financing (from a lender)

* Structure/Management
  + 1. Lack of capital and time
    2. Breakeven/market when education is the main component (Mint at Fresno State)
    3. It is getting harder lately to make money as large vertically integrated organizations come in to the market.
       1. My grandmother always said our farm (130 acs) was not big enough or small enough to succeed – Ag of the Middle problem
       2. Lack of time – Farming, marketing, Book Keeping, etc., etc., working off the farm
* Regulations

**Activities**

* Financing Operations
  1. None
* Structure/Management
  1. None
* Regulations

**Solutions/Opportunities**

* Financing Operations
  1. None
* Structure/Management
  1. Vertical integration to streamline costs and limit dependency on third party vendors
  2. Vertical integration
  3. More help (labor)
* Regulations

**Other Notes –** You may want to use some of these in other sections

**Obstacles/Challenges**

1. Assessing Demand – not wasting what is grown – Planting enough for the consumers but not too much
2. Competing within an international marketplace (they can do it cheaper than we can)
3. Cheap labor abroad
4. Orchestrating or influencing change from the top down (Oakland received $4 million grant from State to develop 1.4 acres to grow food for Oakland residents) (Holly – more appropriate allocation of resources. More realistic investments and better outcomes – better information with which to make decisions.)
5. Healthy small farms and healthy small retail
6. Prices too low, labor too high (stickers: requirement to sticker product adds cost especially for smaller grower.)
7. Volume discounts change markets

**Activities**

1. Marketumbrella.org – ranks farmer’s markets
2. Food System Alliance being established in Fresno
3. Foodshed or Urban-Rural Roundtable. San Francisco did a Foodshed project, and L.A. is in the process of doing one.

**Solutions/Opportunities**

1. Farm Bill regional hearings – be engaged
2. Explore other region’s activities
3. Local “foodies” chef’s network
4. Model more intensive farm systems producing more with same use of resources.
5. Celebration for small family farm events
6. Circulate more wealth in local region
7. Increase year round farm employment
8. A small farming marketing organization could help place products for farmers and certify for sustainability. CAFF might be a good umbrella organization.
9. Create food memory
10. Understanding the past and present and making investments in future opportunities. – Value Chain.
11. Have a team of Cal Poly Students do research and proposals.