

Farmer Discussions

Sustainable Agriculture Research
and Education PDP Grant

Overview

- Why this piece was included in the project
- Proposed method for engagement vs. final version
 - "A farmer discussion group with 6-8 North Central state farmers to share what priorities will be most impactful for their businesses and communities over the next 5-10 years"

Methodology

- Outreach/ contact methods
- Script creation
- How calls were prioritized

Can you tell me a bit about the type of farming operation you have?

Could you give me an example of a local or state policy or regulation or state funded program in your state that you find to be a challenge as a local food farmer?

Do you know if your state has developed a state food system plan or charter?

Questions

Do you think local or state policies/regulations and state funded programs in your state are adequate in supporting local food and sustainable farmers

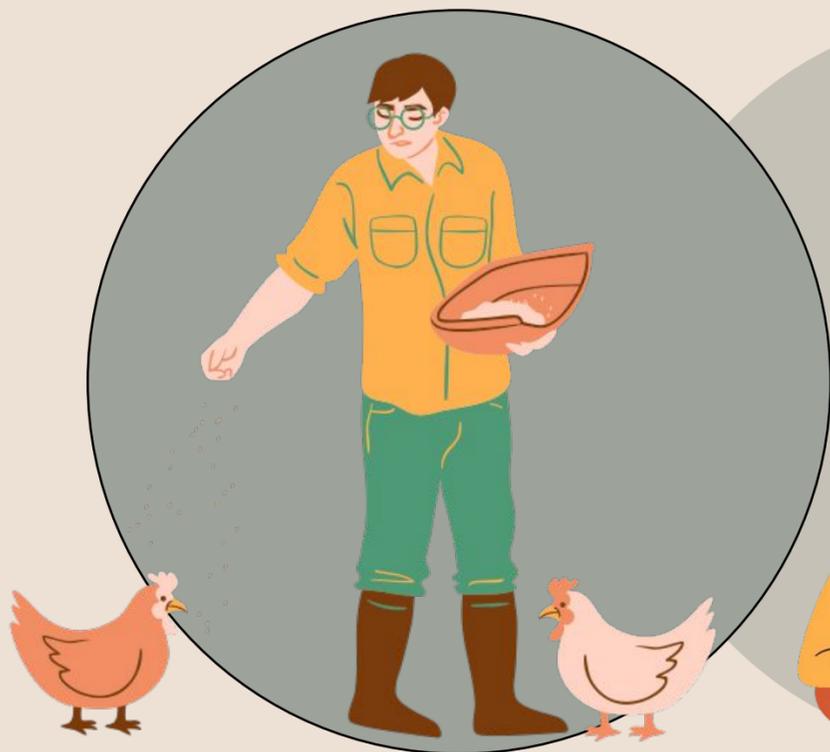
Why or why not?

Do you have any other insights as a farmer in (state) that a planning committee should consider

IF so, what type of agenda priorities need to be in that plan to benefit you and other local food farmers in your state?



What we learned...



Type of farm: 1 urban grower

and 4 self-described

'small-scale' growers

Sales channels:

- "Drive through, come on and get some produce...you can call it a farm stand - it's my growing space and it has a sign; most people know about it, been there 10 years"
- "Once in a while we'll sell to a restaurant...asparagus...broccoli/cauliflower...US Foods raises price in the winter, so we bring them cheaper cauliflower that's twice as big"
- "Most produce is marketed direct to customer...meat and eggs as well...it's improving each year and something people are

All products grown...

- | | |
|----------------------|-------------|
| Alfalfa (cover crop) | Microgreens |
| Asparagus | Oregano |
| Beets | Ornamentals |
| Basil | Peppers |
| Broccoli | Pigs |
| Cantaloupe | 'Produce' |
| Cauliflower | Radishes |
| Chickens | Rosemary |
| Cilantro | Sage |
| Collard greens | Sheep |
| Corn | Soybean |
| Cucumber | Sweet corn |
| Dried flowers | Turnips |
| Hay | Turkeys |
| Herbs | 'Veggies' |
| | Wheat |

A local /state policy or regulation or program in your state that you find to be a challenge as a local food farmer?

- Very dependent on the state: - cottage food laws
- "I'm normally the person someone calls because they are having issues"
 - Zoning and Land Bank
- Issues:
 - Licensing....education about why food safety is needed and what needs to be done
 - overwhelming requirements for commercial kitchens
 - real estate vs. farming
 - organic certification
- Strengths::
 - adjusting requirements for small producers/vendors

Do you think local or state policies/regulations and programs in your state are adequate in supporting local food and sustainable farmers - Why or why not?

- General sense that policies/regulations/programs are adequate
 - accessibility, awareness
- Programs and policies to benefit consumers: SNAP, WIC, Senior FM Nutrition Program
- Issues: rural vs. urban, state promotion campaign vs. neighbors , organic certification
- Strengths:
 - 'there are federal government programs that give us benefits when we need help'
 - societal shift
 - community work to ease process for FM and smaller growers

From your perspective, what type of agenda priorities need to be in a state food plan to benefit you and other local food farmers in your state?

- Direct connections between growers and point of sale
 - Double Up/WIC/voucher programs: learning curve, processing equipment, sites to accept
- Requiring locally-produced: points of sale, larger distributors, schools, institutions
- Consider urban (eg. zoning) vs. rural needs (eg. land protection)
- Land access, development pressure
- Meat processors
- Network development
- "Often when you say 'on the east coast, they do this' it doesn't work

What do you think is the greatest challenge for (your state) in developing and implementing a food system plan that would benefit local food farmers?

- "If you haven't done it right the first time, how can we make people feel that it's being done right this time?"
- Food tied to climate change
- Who contributes?
- Funding
- Political atmosphere
- Coordinate grower voice
- Distinguishing growers
- Corporations are in the equation...



Do you know if your state has developed a state food system plan or charter?

"Want to say yes..."

"No, not familiar with it..."

"Yes; embedded throughout a separate plan."

"I know it has been in the works but I have never once gone to one of the meetings."

"No idea."

Do you have any other insights as a farmer in (state) that a planning committee should consider?

Beyond food

Urban vs. rural input

Large- and small-scale

Incentives for local

Network development

Interested in being on a farmer panel for a virtual education session offering?



Michigan

- Process
- General takeaways
- Timeframe
- Participants



Iowa

'If you had a magic wand....'

- Grow all our food that is eaten in IA, no one hungry
- Better season extension infrastructure
- Youth; transition programs for agriculture and mentoring
- Centralized business for processing, storage and distribution; processing options for vegetables, similar to butchery taskforce
- Create service for marketing local foods instead of farmers having to do it
- Growing practices that support people, not corporations
- IA has the land to grow our food, the most farmers growing and raising our food, stays in our community



All Iowa Talks About Focus Groups

aggregated notes, brief
notes, recorded presentation

44 focus groups, 11 in-person;
276 individuals involved

8 input sessions, 3 in-person;
~200 individuals

Questions

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