THE FOOD ACCESS SUMMIT
NW Regional Breakout Summary

FOOD ACCESS SUMMIT 2013

On August 13-15, leaders from hunger, health, education and agriculture convened for the Food Access Summit. The Summit built on the momentum from 2011 and 2012 with over 500 attendees this year, and a sharpened focus on improving healthy food access for underserved Minnesotans. Local and national speakers provided leadership development, networking opportunities, food policy tools and ideas for changing the food system.

REGIONAL BREAKOUTS

During the 2nd day of the Summit, participants gathered in their regions to have action-oriented conversations about local and regional healthy food access work. The breakouts used a process called “ORID” to make meaning of common experiences at the Summit, particularly a keynote address by Mark Winne. Using questions that were Observational, Reflective, Interpretive, and Decisional and guided by facilitators Noelle Harden (UM Extension) and Kim Turner (White Earth Health Education), small groups of participants identified and prioritized action steps to improve healthy food access in the Northwest Region. More than 30 participants attended the Northwest breakout.

BREAKOUT OBJECTIVES

- Promote connections and relationships
- Apply ideas from the Food Access Summit to our region
- Provide action-oriented, practical tools and ideas

Advisers are needed for upcoming NW Food Network gatherings to help determine topics, agenda, date, locations, and other details. Can you lend your input? Email Noelle at Harde073@umn.edu.

Questions? Noelle Harden, Extension Educator, Community Food Systems | harde073@umn.edu | 218-280-5253
DIVERSE PARTICPATION

At the regional breakout, the following groups were represented by participants. The map to the left shows where these participants are based in the region.

- NW Regional Sustainable Development Partnership
- MN Dept of Human Services
- Thief River Falls Area Food Shelf
- MN Chippewa Tribe
- Inter-County Community Council Head Start
- Rail River Folk School
- Indigenous Environmental Network
- Bagley Community Garden
- Bemidji Area Farmers’ Market
- PartnerSHIP 4 Health
- Local Public Health
- Blue Cross Blue Shield
- Tri-Vally Opportunity Council

THE MISSION OF OUR WORK TOGETHER

We used a collaborative process to come up with one sentence to summarize our morning of work. Now it rings like a mission statement for our collaboration together – the NW Regional Food Network:

We are part of a cross-council collaboration to create and become champion decision makers to implement the ideas we want, and recognize and emulate successful solutions and people in our region.
HOPES AND CHALLENGES FOR HEALTHY FOOD ACCESS

After hearing the keynote address, we shared our hopes for the regional food system. We are excited to see more youth involvement and education around nutrition, declining rates of child obesity, and overall momentum around healthy eating.

We also discussed challenges and concerns for healthy food access. We identified funding issues that limit the support available to small scale growers. Participants also pointed to a major disconnect in the Farm Bill between agriculture and food.

STRATEGIES AND NEXT STEPS FOR THE NORTHWEST

Participants in the regional breakout came up with a laundry list of strategies and next steps to improve healthy food access in the Northwest. Here are some of the highlights:

1) KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING
   - Give feedback to draft Minnesota Food Charter
   - Attend the next Northwest Regional Gathering
   - Plan a winter meeting for growers
   - Develop community maps and assessments

2) CULTIVATE LEADERSHIP IN THE REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEM
   - Find champions among peers, especially decision-makers
   - Strengthen food policy councils
   - Find creative solutions that draw on strengths of regional partners

3) WORK ACROSS BOUNDARIES
   - Bring communities and resources together across county lines
   - Collaborate across the three food policy councils in the region
   - Develop systems that are continuous, consistent and comprehensive

4) DEVELOP COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES THAT RESONATE
   - Speak the language of each audience - focus on stories
   - Focus on points of agreements, such as helping kids
   - More focus on youth projects

“Buy a truck!”

“Make experiences real for more people - walk a mile.”
THEMES OF THE DISCUSSION

Here are some of the words and concepts that reappeared throughout our conversations and on the pages of our flip charts.

- Collaboration
- Inclusivity
- Consistency
- Systems

- Communication
- Champions
- Cross-boundary
- Food Sovereignty

FOOD NETWORKS IN THE NORTHWEST

At the Food Access Summit, Mark Winne and other presenters highlighted the role that food policy councils have played to improve healthy food access across the nation. Food policy councils, more commonly known in Minnesota as food networks, are diverse groups of people working through a concerted effort to change the food system so that it better represents community values. In Northwest Minnesota, three food networks are currently active, and were all represented at the regional breakout:

- The Headwaters Food Sovereignty Council
- The Cass-Clay Food Systems Initiative
- The Fergus Falls Community Food Partnership

For more information about food policy councils, visit Mark Winne's resource page: http://www.markwinne.com/resource-materials/

WAYS TO CONTINUE THE CONVERSATION

The Northwest Regional Breakout is just one step in a series of conversations about our regional food system. There are a number of ways that you can join the conversation:

- Visit the Northwest Minnesota Food Network community at the Healthy Eating Minnesota Network (http://www.healthyeatingmn.org/group/northwest-mn-food-initiatives)
- Provide input to the Minnesota Food Charter draft
- Join one of the 3 food networks, or create a new one!

Advisers are needed for upcoming NW Food Network gatherings to help determine topics, agenda, date, locations, and other details. Can you lend your input? Email Noelle at Harde073@umn.edu.

Questions? Noelle Harden, Extension Educator, Community Food Systems | harde073@umn.edu | 218-280-5253