Charlotte Regional Food Council Gathering

March 10, 2016
Strengthening partnerships to create a thriving, resilient community-based food system

In early March, more than 50 people from eleven counties gathered to discuss how to best support the local food economy and everyone having access to healthy, local foods. Cabarrus County Farm and Food Council co-hosted this regional event with Community Food Strategies (CFS) and the Local Food Council of North Carolina (LFCNC). Food councils foster cross collaboration of all stakeholders and sectors working in food and farming systems. The graph below shows the diversity of sectors present.

Diversity of Sectors Represented at the Gathering

- Farms
- Non-profits
- Business
- Community gardens
- Public health
- Local government
- Economic development
- Food security
- Schools
- Conservation
- Other

“The LFCNC is co-hosting six regional gatherings to learn about the opportunities, innovative ideas, and barriers for this work. These listening sessions are critical for state representatives to understand each community’s realities and to prioritize our own work as a state council,” says Karen Stanley of the NC Division of Public Health and a LFCNC representative.

Council Happenings

Six regional food networks gave brief presentations on their work, sharing current priorities and projects as fodder for later conversations and connections. Below is a listing of the local food councils or networks:

- Bread Riot, Rowan County
- Cabarrus County Farm and Food Council
- Catawba Farm and Food Coalition (SC)
- Charlotte-Mecklenberg Food Policy Council
- Davidson County Local Food Network
- Upper PeeDee Farm and Food Council

Regional Indicators

Smaller groups worked through a facilitated process using everyone’s experiences to better understand the region’s assets and needs for growing the local food economy. Community Food Strategies is helping Food Councils develop regional priorities so that local communities and organizations can better align programs and determine how to best contribute to common goals. The groups agreed on a shared result: a thriving, sustainable community-based food system in every county. The group developed the following top indicators to track the shift toward that result:

1. ↑ # of school, community, home gardens
2. ↑ # of farmland acres in production
3. ↑ farmers earning a livable wage
4. ↑ local foods purchased by restaurants

Each group brainstormed various partnerships, actions, and resources that would help advance this work even further. The attendees felt grateful for the opportunity for collaboration and felt that more regional gatherings would be beneficial. Review more data from this process on the next page or view the full summary of this event at www.communityfoodstrategies.com.
Selection of Results Based Accountability Data from attendees

Shared Result:
_A thriving, sustainable community-based food system in every county._

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>What’s happening</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What you would hear, feel, or see if the shared result were true:</strong></td>
<td><strong>What you could measure to track a shift towards the result:</strong></td>
<td><strong>What is already happening in our communities to reach this result:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Food &amp; agriculture curriculum and experiences for youth</td>
<td>• # of farmland acres in food production</td>
<td>• Regional community assessment</td>
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<td>• More local foods &amp; products in stores, markets, and restaurants</td>
<td>• % of healthy weight people</td>
<td>• Successful school garden implementation examples</td>
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<td>• Diverse farming operations</td>
<td>• % of food secure families</td>
<td>• Urban farm-to-table events</td>
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<td>• Farmers earning a livable wage</td>
<td>• Pounds of local food purchased</td>
<td>• SNAP/WIC vouchers promoted at farmers markets</td>
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<td>• People cooking at home</td>
<td>• # of GAP certified farmers</td>
<td>• Lomax Incubator Farm</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Active children &amp; healthy weight people</td>
<td>• # of school and home gardens</td>
<td>• Growth of farmers markets</td>
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<td>• Food &amp; farms at the forefront of planning and development</td>
<td>• $ of local food sales</td>
<td>• Comprehensive plans incorporating food and farm initiatives</td>
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<tr>
<td>• More school, community, and home gardens</td>
<td>• % of population with chronic disease</td>
<td>• Federal &amp; State conservation dollars</td>
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<td>• Better transit options or access to purchase local foods</td>
<td>• # of people attending food and agriculture workshops</td>
<td>• Local foods grocery stores</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Institutions purchasing more local foods</td>
<td>• Average distance for residents to purchase local foods</td>
<td>• Some County funding and support to expand meat processing facilities</td>
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<td>• Hearing chickens</td>
<td>• Average age of farmers</td>
<td>• Food Corps, pilot program for food, gardening and nutrition</td>
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<tr>
<td>• More $ staying in the community</td>
<td>• Average distance for farmers to processing facilities</td>
<td>• REACH, a Federal corner store initiative</td>
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**Greater Impact**
What we could do more of to have greater impact:

• Increase consumer awareness of and engagement with local food options through events and promotion
• Use statistics and data on buying local to create economic development campaign
• Foster collaboration between local food community stakeholders within county and region
• Provide more resources and funding to local foods development and staff
• Offer more educational and infrastructure opportunities for farmers to improve their businesses
• Strengthen relationship between councils and planning departments

This is a portion of the ideas generated at this initial regional gathering. Local food councils will continue collaboration at future networking events. View more at www.communityfoodstrategies.com.