



Triangle Regional Food Council Report



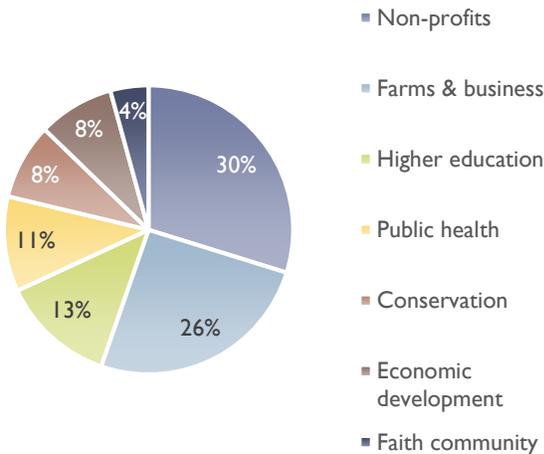
May 10, 2016

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

Nearly 50 people attended a Triangle Regional Food Network Gathering to build relationships across various counties and sectors in efforts to create a thriving food system benefiting farmers, consumers, the economy, and the land. The University of North Carolina's (UNC) School of Government, serving as a community resource for citizens and public officials, co-hosted this event with Community Food Strategies (CFS) and the Local Food Council of North Carolina (LFCNC).



Sectors Represented at the Event



Barry Jacobs, Orange County Commissioner, welcomed attendees and noted that “Local food councils can be a key grassroots resource to bring folks together, raise awareness, and combine disparate efforts to the greatest possible effect. The Orange County Food Council adds a welcome element to our county’s broad range of efforts to protect, promote and honor our local agricultural heritage.”

Building Capacity

Members of the following food councils or networks in the Triangle area attended to share their experiences and learn from other initiatives:

- Capitol Area Food Network
- Chatham Community Food Council
- Durham Farm & Food Network
- Johnston County Food & Farm Council
- Orange County Food Council

Newly released Local Food and Farm Profiles, showing trends in agriculture census data by county, were provided to attendees as tools for communicating the economic impact of local farms and food. Participants also learned tips for creating compelling stories that illustrate their work when talking to funders or partners.

Developing Regional Priorities

Community Food Strategies facilitated a process to develop regional priorities so that communities and organizations can better align programs and contribute to common goals. Small groups worked together to better understand the region’s assets and needs for improving community health and the local food economy. The groups each used a similar shared result or goal: *a thriving, sustainable community-based food system across all NC counties*. They developed indicators to track the shift toward that result and ranked the following as priorities:

- Distance to healthy food outlets
- Average income of local farmers
- % of food budget spent on local products
- Water quality indicators
- Happiness index

The groups brainstormed various partnerships, actions, and resources that would continue advancing this work. This networking event was one of six regional gatherings across the state to further connections, ideas, and synergies that will improve the local food economy. Review full summary at communityfoodstrategies.org.

Selection of Participant Data from Regional Visioning Exercise

Shared Result:

A thriving, sustainable community-based food system across all NC counties.

Experience

What you would hear, feel, or see if the shared result were true:

- Healthy, local produce in school meals
- Diversity and inclusion in the food system
- Healthy food in institutions (eg. Mental health facilities)
- Healthy, active, moving, playful people
- Pride in NC food
- Zero food waste
- Database for local food information
- Comfort in the kitchen
- Clean water at Jordan Lake
- Farmers making a decent living
- Walkable healthy food outlets
- Vacant lots filled with gardens
- More local goat milk
- Politicians engaged in food systems issues
- Agriculture valued as a vibrant part of the economy
- STEM to address climate change
- Better health, less disease

Indicators

What you could measure to track a shift towards the result:

- # of mentions of local food in local media
- # of people growing their own food
- # of hospital admissions for chronic disease
- % of local leadership that matches local diversity
- % of population on free and reduced lunch
- \$ spent on local animal products
- % of schools with access to local purchasing opportunities
- % of population engaging in outdoor recreation
- Lbs of composted food waste
- Average age of farmers
- # of food miles traveled
- Water quality indicators
- Acres of water conservation practices implemented
- # of hours of food production & nutrition curriculum in schools

What's happening

What is already happening in our communities to reach this result:

- Eastern Carolina Organics
- Farmer FoodShare
- NC Farm to School
- Durham Hub Farm
- Food policy councils
- Orange County financial support for ag enterprises
- Durham school system committed to local purchasing
- Incubator farms
- 10% campaign
- State funding food safety audits
- Regional food council gathering
- Sustainability entrepreneurship, such as compost & transportation
- Raleigh food corridor
- Blue Cross Blue Shield funding
- Engaged Cooperative Extension
- Restaurants supporting and showcasing local farms
- Double Up Bucks

Greater Impact

What we could do more of to have greater impact:

- Partnering with living wage projects to increase employment and wages
- Facilitate more community conversations and events around local, sustainable food
- Seek out diverse community stories and listen to local wisdom around food
- Communicate with & educate local officials about favorable food & farm zoning and planning
- Support small farmers with market opportunities, like workplace CSAs
- Collaborate with existing programs and help align efforts in improving access to healthy, local food
- Explore opportunities to provide food production and nutrition education and to engage youth

This is a portion of the ideas generated at this regional gathering. Local food councils plan to continue collaboration at future networking opportunities. View more at www.communityfoodstrategies.org.