

(DRAFT) NC Sustainable Local Foods Advisory Council Summary of Actions and Accomplishments by Committee

Economic Development and Infrastructure Support

Expanding opportunities for small and mid-scale producers to become GAP certified (which was identified as a major constraint in developing new local market opportunities).

- The Economic Development subcommittee addressed constraints to GAP certification for small and mid-scale farmers. They worked in concert through Council members and others to:
 - Procure and implement grant-funded research on small farms to determine constraints to certification.
 - Pilot and implement Group Gap for small and mid-scale farmers
 - Procure and implement grant-funded training and financial support to aid in achieving GAP certification.

Support for Local Fishers:

- Members of the subcommittee on Economic Development and Infrastructure of the Council assisted North Carolina Sea Grant and Saltwater Connections (a regional economic development initiative) in organizing a Local Catch Summit on communication strategies for community-based, local-seafood educational organizations.

Local Food Infrastructure Development:

- A Subcommittee on Local Food Infrastructure Development aimed to assess and document existing local foods infrastructure (distribution, processing, warehousing, etc.) and identify needs. Ultimately, grants were received by Council member organizations from USDA and Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation that included funds for the infrastructure assessment. The infrastructure map developed can be found here: <https://www.cefs.ncsu.edu/statewide-infrastructure-map.html>

Addressing the regulatory framework that unnecessarily constrains small and mid-scale producers selling into local markets:

- Ten listening sessions were conducted by the Subcommittee on Economic Development & Infrastructure with 31 partners across North Carolina that drew 391 participants. The purpose of the meetings was to hear from farmers and entrepreneurs

active in the North Carolina local foods community, support institutions and other interested parties about 1) Regulations or policies that are barriers to continuing growth of the state's local foods economy; 2) Economic development opportunities ripe for investigation and/or investment; and/or 3) Forms of support and/or coordination that would benefit the state's farmers or entrepreneurs seeking to thrive in local foods. A report was made available to the public and the report presented to the full council.

- Council members actively lobbied for House Bill 168; Session Law 2011-363 to prohibit municipal annexation of property used for “bona fide farm purposes” without consent of the owner, and that property used for such purposes in a municipality's extraterritorial jurisdiction is exempt from such jurisdiction, including its zoning requirements and ordinances.
- Conducted an in-depth study of North Carolina Egg Law (106-245.13), including comparison of North Carolina law to laws of surrounding and comparable states regarding egg grading/candling. Did not attempt to change the law.
- Studied the U.S. Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) definition of cut leafy greens. Subcommittee members drafted a subsequent letter to the FDA to help bring clarity to North Carolina farmers regarding new regulatory rules on harvesting.
- A Present Use Value (PUV) working group was established to conduct research and generate dialog with stakeholders represented on the N.C. Use Value Advisory Board to determine if specific revisions to the PUV statute was warranted. A farmer survey was conducted statewide to inform the process.
- The regulatory working group corresponded and met with a number of persons involved with small on-farm processing units and discovered difficulties in securing necessary permits and also a great deal of variability in implementation of compliance requirements from county to county. These members joined others in working with the General Assembly to pass H 162, (S.L. 2011-41), legislation that exempts limited quantities of waste water generated by on-farm processing from wastewater permitting requirements, and allows the legal disposal of that water through land application.
- After discussion at the LFCNC, A White paper titled “Requirements for the Producer/Grower 20,000 Poultry Exemption” was issued in August 2010 by NCDA&CS Meat & Poultry Inspection Division that clarified to producers that 20,000 poultry could be slaughtered on-farm vs the previously understood and enforced number of 1000. This created the opportunity of economic viability for this enterprise for many farmers, where previously it was not.

Farm to School and Food Safety in School Settings

- Members of the Local Food Council of NC successfully worked with the Legislative Task Force on Childhood Obesity and the North Carolina General Assembly to pass legislation (H1832/S1284) establishing a position within the North Carolina Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services dedicated to administration and operation of the Farm to School Program.

- A subcommittee delved thoroughly into the many particulars surrounding School Gardens, including meeting with other organizations addressing the same issues, and formed an interagency collaboration to create and disseminate guidelines, resources and educational materials regarding the safe production, harvest and consumption of school/preschool/childcare and community garden food and the safe use of salad bars in any of these settings. Through interagency collaboration, the Food Safety for School and Community Gardens document was developed:
<http://growingsafergardens.com/food-safety-curriculum/>.
- Recommended an appropriation of funds to increase the storage and preparation facilities in those schools in North Carolina lacking the equipment necessary to participate in the Farm to School program: Top barriers, as identified by a 2011 NCDA&CS survey of Child Nutrition Directors to purchasing fresh, local produce through the N.C. Farm to School program include: 1) Lack of walk-in refrigeration space 2) Lack of staff/facilities to prepare fresh produce 3) Nutrition program does not have warehouse space 4) Ordering method 5) Lack of preparation equipment. The LFCNC supported the House Select Committee on Childhood Obesity with their introduced HB 1099 to Support Procurement and Farm to School Funds. The bill did not pass, however, the effort resulted in The Blue Cross Blue Shield North Carolina Foundation (BCBSNCF) and Golden LEAF Foundation funding five new refrigerated tractor-trailers, increasing the distribution of local fruits and vegetables to 35 additional school systems statewide. BCBSNCF and Golden LEAF provided \$1.2 million to support expansion of the Farm to School program in N.C.

Improving Access to Fresh Fruits and Vegetables

- The Subcommittee on Health, Wellness, Hunger, and Food Access developed a plan for the Future of Electronics Benefit Transfer (EBT) and Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Programs to encourage efforts to reach more people with healthy food access and increasing revenue for more farmers. Provide support for farmers markets and farm stands to purchase wireless electronic benefit transfer (EBT) devices and promote efforts for outreach and education programs that encourage residents of lower-income neighborhoods and SNAP-ED and WIC recipients to use farmers markets and farm stands. Action Taken: A pilot program was established linking three USDA-affiliated food assistance programs for senior citizens, WIC clients and Food and Nutrition Services (FNS/food stamps) participants by encouraging and enabling them to use any of their benefits at participating farmers markets.
- The subcommittee on Health, Wellness, Hunger and Food Access through leadership of the Division of Public Health in cooperation with the Division of Social Services (DSS) and the NCDA&CS provided a webinar for farmers market managers interested in USDA funding provided to DSS (~\$110,000) for purposes of expanding Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Electronic Benefits Transfer services at Farmers Markets. The webinar was recorded and can be downloaded here:
<https://ncpanbranch.sharefile.com/d/s01a0f86d2dd4df2a>. Forty-six managers and community partners attended the webinar

Land Preservation

- Members of the Council worked in support of Session Law 2011-145 to Fund NC Agriculture Development and Farmland Preservation (ADFP) Trust Fund for Military Support. This bill provided additional financial match for the ADFP Trust Fund above the FY 2009-10 funding level to work with military bases, training zones and other areas to preserve farmland near military bases to protect the military presence in North Carolina and to protect the local food production on farmland in these designated areas.
- Members of the Council worked to support permanent funding for the North Carolina Agricultural Development and Farmland Preservation (ADFP) Trust Fund: The Council's resolution urged the General Assembly of North Carolina to appropriate \$5 million to the ADFP Trust Fund for the 2010-2011 fiscal year. Action Taken: \$ 1,700,000 in recurring funding was appropriated for the ADFP Trust Fund for the biennium.

Improve communication of the North Carolina food system

- The Council recommended that the Governor and Commissioner of Agriculture should work with the Council to improve communication across and within all sectors of the North Carolina food system by establishing an online food systems portal. NC Cooperative Extension offered to create the portal and it can be found here: <https://localfood.ces.ncsu.edu/>