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February 26, 2014

The New York State Council on Food Policy
NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets
10B Airline Drive
Albany, NY 12235

Dear Members of The New York State Council on Food Policy:

My name is Barbara Baron and I am the Vice President of Nutrition Affairs with American Dairy Association and Dairy Council, Inc., which is funded by dairy farmers in New York, Northern New Jersey, and Northeastern Pennsylvania.

As a Registered Dietitian with more than 20 years of professional experience (as well as mom of two young men 18 and 20 years of age who still drink their milk), I commend the Council for the development of the Standard Criteria Guidelines which are consistent with the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. As you well know, the Dietary Guidelines for Americans recommend three daily servings of nutrient-rich, low-fat or fat-free milk, cheese or yogurt for adults and children 9 years of age or older, 2.5 daily servings for children ages 4-8, and 2 servings for ages 2-3.

The Guidelines also recommend increased intake of the Food Groups to Encourage (FGTE) – low-fat or fat-free milk or milk products, fruits, vegetables and whole grains. Consuming foods from these groups helps individuals meet their needs for shortfall nutrients, but most Americans, including children, do not consume the recommended amounts of the FGTE. Without developing these habits early in life, children may be setting themselves up for a lifetime of health consequences. Specifically, the 2010 *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* linked dairy to bone health (especially in children and adolescents) as well as a reduced risk of cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, and lower blood pressure in adults. Considering this, consumers should enjoy the delicious taste of dairy and feel good about the health benefits.

I also applaud the Council's focus on supporting local farmers when possible. With about 5,300 dairy farmers, New York State remains the third largest dairy producer in the country (behind California and Wisconsin). Our farmers play a vital role in providing their communities with wholesome, nutritious foods including dairy. Dairy is locally produced 365 days a year. From the dairy to you, milk goes through strict quality controls to ensure freshness, purity and great taste.

Simple and natural, milk contains essential nutrients including calcium, potassium, protein and phosphorous, plus, it's fortified with vitamins A and D. This helps nourish the body, not just your bones. However, on average, Americans consume about two servings of dairy daily.

American Dairy Association and Dairy Council works closely with schools to maximize participation in school breakfast, particularly through a Breakfast in the Classroom (BIC) program. More schools, realizing the connection between nutrition and learning, are offering students the option to have their breakfast right at their classroom desks. It's boosting academic performance. These morning meals include milk, yogurt and cheese.

Scientific-based research reported by *Food Research and Action Center (FRAC)*, in the Breakfast for Health Brief (Fall 2011), shows eating breakfast has a positive impact on children's mental health, including reductions in behavioral problems, anxiety, and depression. School breakfast has been linked with fewer visits to school nurses, particularly in the morning, and healthier students are better learners.

In further efforts to strengthen the connection between local food products and consumers, American Dairy Association and Dairy Council arranged dairy farmer visits to schools and educate children on where their food comes from, and dairy farm tours for registered dietitians and top bloggers. The tours give registered dietitians, considered a highly trusted source for nutritional information, the confidence to recommend dairy to their clients. After a tour, Food and Mommy bloggers tend to share with their 5 million monthly blog visitors, the dairy farmer's commitment to providing a nutrient-rich, wholesome product.

At about 25-cents per glass of milk, few foods deliver dairy's powerhouse of nutrients in such an affordable, appealing and readily available way.

Sincerely,

Barbara Baron

Barbara Baron, MS, RD, CDN
Vice President, Nutrition Affairs

Food Policy Council

PRESENTATION FOR NYSSFPA AT NYS AGRICULTURE AND MARKETS HEARING, FEBRUARY 26, 2014 AT THE NYS FAIRGROUNDS

My name is Alison Clarke and I'm speaking on behalf of the NY Small Scale Food Processors' Assn. (NYSSFPA), a 501 © 6 not for profit trade association for small processors across NYS. As far as we know we are the only such trade association in the US, however there is an excellent model in NW Canada with which we are in contact.

My remarks will basically introduce you to our organization and a few of our concerns. A group of sustainable food system advocates searching for the best effort to stop the shrinking number of farmers in NYS, came together in the late nineties and determined that "value added" was the best answer to work on. Two rural sociologists at Cornell U. wrote a grant to USDA NE SARE (Sustainable Agriculture, Research and Education) for a survey they would conduct and a conference we would organize. The phones rang off the wall, a couple hundred processors, "wannabees" and interested agency personnel came to the conference, and following workshops, on the steps to become processors and marketers, all voted that some organization should be formed. In 2000 the NYSSFPA was incorporated and we held our first Annual Meeting.

Operating mostly as a volunteer organization over the years more of our membership has been small processors in communities across the state who are not farmers but prioritize the use of local farm ingredients as our mission statement endorses. We consider small to be less than 20 employees, frequently one or two, and often not making more than \$20,000.

NE SARE has funded several projects along the way to foster regional organizing in the 11 tourism regions of NYS. More recently they funded our new Value Added Institute. This series of workshops was first offered in three parts of the Adirondacks in late 2011 focused mainly on reaching farmers. The evaluations were exceptional. We soon were asked to offer a series in the Mohawk Valley and recently tailored a workshop for a special day in the Catskills sponsored by Sullivan Cty CCE and others. Some of the workshop topics include, "Processing Steps from Farm to Table", "Local and Sustainable Marketing", "Freezing and Vacuum Packaging", "Small Scale Meat Processing and Marketing", and "How to Write a Business Plan: Roadmap to Success". We also offered a tour and seminar with our partner, the Food Venture Center at NYSAES. Certificates that can be used in marketing at farmers markets are given for taking four workshops..

The other focus of our work is advocacy. The needs of small scale processors are quite different than for the large processors. For example a \$400, 2 yr. licensing fee is nothing for a large firm, but to someone with a 20C kitchen on a farm growing fruit, or a small town maker of special pickles buying cukes from a local farm, it is a lot. We would advocate for a differential between large and small. We have had fruitful visits with agriculture committee members in our State legislature and it has

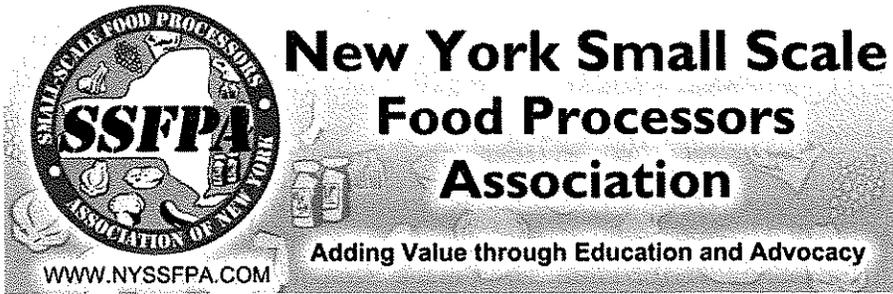
been a mutual learning experience. We anticipate a "roundtable" discussion in the coming year with many of those people and find the exchange to be valuable for both parties.

A few years ago when we realized that NYC and LI. regions had a difficult time finding liability insurance that was affordable, we worked to find a broker who both understood the food business and was able to offer a rate similar to our upstate companies. He has now become a spokesperson who understands the goals of our organization and is looking for other opportunities to help our processors including health insurance for small businesses such as ours.

Lastly, one of the areas in which our statewide networking is helpful is identifying "deserts" with no "shared use kitchens" where a few new start-up processors can utilize the same kitchen and equipment. There also may be a need for "co-packers" especially by farmers who develop a value added product but don't have the processing time. NYSSFPA keeps a listing and will be surveying the state to search out more of these facilities and/or offer help in getting one started. We intend to build a network of these facilities for shared communication and help.

For all of this, our organization now needs to finally have an office and staff person. We have done a great deal with volunteerism and small grants. All of our fine Board are very busy people and either are processing or working to foster small food businesses who in turn make our communities stronger. We ask for the continued support from NYS Agriculture and Markets, and hope this presentation has enriched your understanding of our place in building a more sustainable food system and providing more income for those who provide that food.

Alison Clarke, Secretary to the Board of the NY Small Scale Food Processors' Assn.
585-244-2711, accompost@gmail.com



NY Small Scale Food Processors' Assn.
a 501 © (6) not for profit trade association offering educational programs and advocacy
for farmers and others adding value to local foods.

Dear Friends of NYSSFPA,

We are entering our fourteenth year of supporting small businesses across the state,
building both our economy and sustainable communities. We seek your continuing
Membership and support in the coming year.

Value Added Institute

Following the successful courses offered at sites across the Adirondack Region in 2011,
the Central NY Leatherstocking and Catskill Regions in 2013, we anticipate offerings in
the New York City and northern Adirondacks in 2014.

Courses will be chosen from the following and more:

- Value Added processing: Getting Started
- From Kitchen to Market
- Small Scale Meat Processing
- How to Write a Business Plan: Roadmap for Success

Graduates of the courses receive a Certificate of Completion – a wonderful marketing
tool demonstrating training for continued product excellence. Mentoring is also available
following courses.

Monitor and Advocate – Insurance and Licensing Fees

Charging the same fee for small and large processors can be prohibitive for small
businesses. Working with regional contacts across the state, the NYSSFPA advocates for
small business-friendly policies and identifies lower costs for liability insurance from
firms that understand the needs of small scale food businesses.

Communication

Our quarterly newsletters have expanded their useful content, and we have added
frequent Member Profiles and notices of special events pertinent to our businesses. If
you have not received these emails, contact Board Member Andy Dufresne at
and4833@windstream.net to be sure he has your accurate email address. We know
some mail goes to Spam folders and occasionally we have out of date email addresses.

2014 Memberships Due in January

Please use Pay Pal at www.NYSSFPA.com to renew your membership online or copy the application in the enclosed brochure and mail with check to our Treasurer. We believe that \$30 or more is a reasonable amount to support NYSSFPA so that we can support YOU. A corporate membership of \$100 entitles you to a special advertisement in our newsletter.

NYSSFPA Annual Meeting, Saturday, January 25, 11:45, Travers Room, Saratoga Hilton.

Held at the Northeast Organic Farmers Assn. (NOFA-NY) conference in Saratoga Springs. Hear some of the exciting work of members starting commercial kitchens and co-packing cooperatives as well as sharing marketing opportunities. Help us build our organization with your ideas. Vote for our Board of Directors. Nominations for the Board of Directors are welcomed as well.

You need not attend the NOFA Conference to participate just in our Annual Meeting. We will have a booth in the Trade Show and welcome your participation. We will have time slots for one member at a time to showcase and sell product (Contact Chelle Lindahl at sustlivingproject@gmail.com to participate).

If you attend the NOFA-NY Winter Conference – “Preserving the Past, Seeding the Future”, Saratoga Springs Hilton Hotel, January 24-26, 2014, you may be interested in the following **Value Added Workshops:**

- * Medicinal Herbs: Increasing Bio-Diversity and Creating Value Added Income
- * Advanced Cheesemaking, Friday 9am-12:15
- * Know Your Insurance, Saturday, 4:15pm-5:30
- * Production and Marketing of Raw Milk, Saturday 8-9:15am
- * Pancakes: Field to Griddle, Saturday 8-9:15am
- * Baking Bread with Local Flour, Saturday 2:15-4pm
- * Sugaring 101: A Sugaring Operation Even if you Don't have Maple Trees Sunday, 8-9:15am followed by Sugaring 102 9:45-11am

To sign up for the Conference (one day only or the whole thing!) go to www.NOFANY.org and click on Winter Conference.

Your input is always welcome in whatever form. We hope to see you at one of our events soon!

Very sincerely,

Beth Linskey and Andy Dufresne, Co-Chairs, NYSSFPA
For the Board of Directors



Cornell University
Putting Research into Practice

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program— Education; Eat Smart New York

SNAP-Ed is delivered by Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) under the program name of Eat Smart New York (ESNY). During FFY2013, ESNY was provided in 58 of the 62 counties in New York State, via 54 separate projects. Nutrition education is delivered by 300 highly qualified and trained staff.

A campus team under the leadership of Jamie Dollahite, Professor of Nutritional Sciences, provides leadership, training, curriculum development/adaptation, technical assistance, program monitoring and evaluation. Connections with faculty and academic staff provide expertise in nutrition education, program delivery, and evaluation.

For SNAP-Ed in
Onondaga County
Ph: 315-424-9485
Ext. 239

Visit our website:
www.extendonondaga.org

During FY 2013 evaluation data was collected on

◆ **42,589** participants who received at least one nutrition education contact. A total of 133,634 nutrition education contacts were completed.

An additional

◆ **176,568** participants received at least one nutrition education contact where evaluation data were not collected

8,234 participants completed a series of classes with outcome evaluation data collected. After completion,

- ◆ **98%** reported acceptable practices on at least one nutrition behavior assessed.
- ◆ **95%** (7,798 of 8,234) improved on at least one nutrition practice.
- ◆ **81%** (6,706 of 8,234) seldom consumed sugar sweetened beverages.
- ◆ **98%** reported being physically active or making positive changes in their lives to be active at least 30 minutes most days.

Eat Smart New York!



Eat Better For Less!

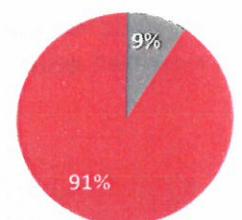
Cornell University

Jamie Dollahite, PhD
408 Savage Hall
Ithaca, New York 14853

Phone: 607-255-7715
Fax: 607-255-0027
E-mail: jsd13@cornell.edu

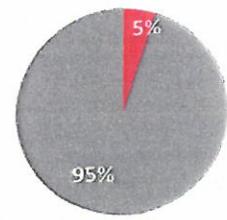
Retention studies indicate that these changes are maintained at least six-months post-education.

Food Resource Management



Acceptable Practices Improvement

Nutrition Practices



Acceptable Practices Improvement



FOOD and NUTRITION EDUCATION in COMMUNITIES

programs that turn research into action

October 1, 2011 through
September 30, 2012

Impact 2013

Cornell University Cooperative Extension

In New York State 14% of residents are living at or below the poverty level, including 878,114 children. Poverty is associated with numerous health problems, including heart disease, diabetes, cancer, poor pregnancy outcomes and obesity. Positive changes in food, nutrition and physical activity practices are integral to avoiding the negative consequences of these health conditions.

Our nutrition education programs provide a series of nutrition lessons designed to actively engage participants and proven to increase knowledge and skills. Program graduates improve their knowledge of

- Nutrition Practices/Food Selection,
- Food Safety,
- Food Resource Management, and
- Physical Activity.

Whom did we reach?

We offered lessons in a series delivered over time, allowing participants the opportunity to develop skills, increase knowledge and incorporate changes into their daily lives.

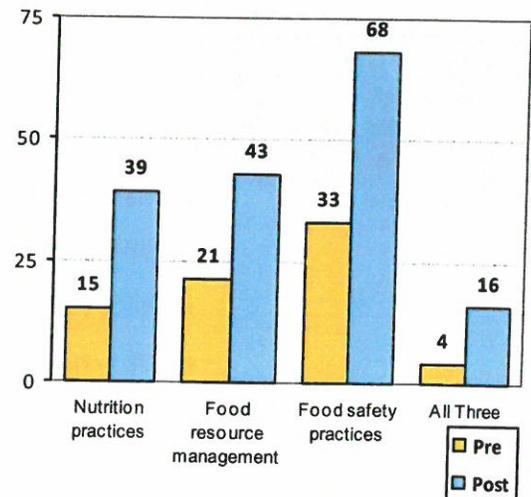
- 18,983 adults were reached, including 748 pregnant women.
- 13,058 (69%) completed the education series.
- 44,461 family members benefited including 24,786 children and youth.
- 14,152 youth received education.

Why are our programs effective?

- They motivate people to adopt healthy eating and lifestyle behaviors.
- They enhance practices related to thrifty shopping and preparation of nutritious foods.
- They ensure skills are gained by participants actively engaging in food preparation and other applied activities.

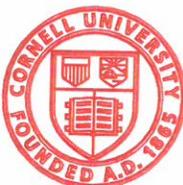
What did participants learn?

Percent reporting acceptable practices



Retention studies document that these desirable practices continue at least one year after graduation.

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Cornell University
Cooperative Extension



Cooperative Extension in New York State offers equal program and employment opportunities.



Cornell University Cooperative Extension Onondaga County

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2.25.14

Food Policy Council Listening Sessions

Maximizing Participation in Food & Nutrition Assistance Programs- SNAP-Ed (Eat Smart NY)

Presenter: Kathy Dischner, MSED, Rd- Nutrition Issue Leader,
Cornell Cooperative Extension of Onondaga County

Thank you for this opportunity to share how the Cornell Cooperative Extension system works to support the availability of safe, nutritious and affordable food for all Yorkers. My comments will address both local initiatives in Onondaga County as well as our statewide Impact to help residents make *healthier food the easier choices* through our SNAP-Ed program called "Eat Smart NY."

Who we are: CCE is an education and outreach program of the land grant system through Cornell University in NY State. Cornell Cooperative Extension helps residents put knowledge to work in pursuit of economic vitality, ecological sustainability and social well-being. We bring local experience and research based solutions together, helping New York State families and communities thrive in our rapidly changing world. CCE Onondaga just celebrated our 100 anniversary during 2013.

CCE's research and extension efforts are directed by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture directs the research and extension efforts. The areas of focus for 2012 – 2016 are:

- Global Food Security & Hunger
- Climate Change
- Sustainable Energy
- Nutrition & Childhood Obesity
- Food Safety
- Youth, Family & Community

In Onondaga County our key areas of focus are: Agriculture and Land Management, Protecting Natural Resources, Nutrition and Food Security, Youth Development, and Energy and Sustainability. Our SNAP-Ed programs draw from each of these areas

How is SNAP-Ed delivered by CCE? We provided direct education in 58 of the 62 counties in NYS through 300 qualified and well-trained community educators. Our partnerships with our local DSS, Food banks, Grocery Stores, WIC programs, Head Start, school, community, civic and faith-based organizations strengthen our program reach as well as help us all stretch our limited fiscal and community resources. Yes, we try to do "more with less" as well!

We engaged NY residents in learning through a variety of education interventions: (Please refer to the 2-sided handout that I have provided a summary of our 2013 efforts.)

Over 176,000 residents were engaged in education through Farmer's Markets, Health fairs and other educational support venues; over 42,000 SNAP-eligible adults were reached through structured lessons with evaluation data collected; over 8,000 adults residents in Upstate NY completed a series of 6-8 lessons delivered over time with 80% completion (Onondaga) and 69% completion across NYS. Over 14,000 youth received nutrition education classes through school, community and camp programs.

Sustainable. Educational. Local.

SNAP-Ed Program Accomplishments and Impact- NYS data.

During 2013, our Nutrition education programs helped residents to:

Improve nutrition knowledge and food selection practices; 98% reported improvement in one or more behaviors

Practice safe food handling and storage of food; 68% practiced safe food handling post program

Stretch food resources through better management practices; 43% were able to successfully manage food budgets

Lead more physically active lifestyles: 98% reported increased PA and were active at least 30 minutes most days

Manage weight and reduce consumption of empty calories: 81% seldom consumed sugar-sweetened beverages

In addition, retention studies conducted by Cornell University indicate that positive changes were maintained for at least 6 months post program completion.

What are some additional benefits that our residents receive from CCE led SNAP-ED programs?

As I shared earlier, Cornell Cooperative Extension's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program is in a unique position to provide enhanced benefits to our residents in low-income communities through our integration with our agriculture, natural resource and 4H youth development program research and education in each county.

Our Agriculture program supports farm business practices and encourages new markets for *producers*. *We help producers enroll in Farmer's Market programs to accept EBT and FMNP* benefits to increase profitability while these services provide more choices for residents receiving SNAP and WIC benefits to purchase, fresh, local, low cost food. Our SNAP-Ed nutrition educators provide point-of-purchase education about how to prepare, store and preserve local produce with tasty recipes that are easy to prepare. Our educators also provide in-store supermarket tours to assist residents in receipt of WIC and SNAP to stretch their benefits and make healthy choices based on their family needs and food preferences.

Our Natural Resources Programs offer trained volunteer Master Gardeners who assist our school and community partners in low-income areas to plant community and school gardens to harvest and utilize fresh produce to both support school curriculum and provide produce for after-school nutrition education programs facilitated by SNAP nutrition educators. Our SCSD school food service has even piloted a Farmer's Market program in select elementary schools after receiving training from SNAP-Ed and our Cornell "Smarter Luncheon" program initiative. This year the Syracuse City School District will engage with CCE to raise awareness of the importance of agriculture in our daily lives during "Ag Literacy week" (March 17-21, 2013). Several schools will offer classrooms and teacher support to read "*Who Grew My Soup*" to second graders.

Our youth nutrition education program series are based on 4H principles that not only teach youth about how healthy eating, but how to make healthy decisions. We use teaching methods that support skill building, teach mastery through cooking experiences and teamwork through small group work. Our youth program "graduates" help to teach healthy eating and food preparation skills to younger youth and help positively influence food purchases at home.

SNAP-Ed provides the lifestyle, food purchasing, and behavioral guidance to help at-risk families improve health outcomes on limited budgets, through improved lifestyle behaviors.

Thank you for this opportunity to share the benefits of CCE's food assistance programs, specifically SNAP-Ed to support healthy New York Residents.

NYSFCP 2-26-14 Listening Session Comments

–Jeff Piestrak, Newfield, NY, jmp36@cornell.edu

Good Morning Council Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. Some of you may remember my presentation to the Council last July¹. At that time I shared a few details about my own food systems work², at Cornell's Mann Library supporting information access and knowledge exchange between our on and off-campus communities, and with a variety of community, state and regional groups, supporting civic engagement, collective impact and healthy value chains. I'm happy to say those efforts have progressed considerably.

We now have some very good opportunities for related infrastructure and capacity building in our state, enabling us to make significant progress in the Council's key issue areas. We can do this by more effectively linking and leveraging three of our state's greatest assets –our people, institutions, and farmland.

To capitalize on these opportunities, I believe **there needs to be a more robust and coordinated effort by the state, through its various agencies and policies, which invests in community and regional capacity** rather than isolated projects whose outcomes are narrowly focused and sometimes competing. We need to invest in multifunctional systems and solutions, not band-aids that treat the symptoms. This will in part **require “upgrading our information infrastructure³”, empowering communities and leaders with networked information resources, decision-making tools and collaborative platforms**. With proper support, communities would then be better able to effectively identify and leverage local, state and federal assets, while sustainably building and retaining multiple forms of health and wealth⁴.

I'm particularly interested in seeing more active support for Community Food Policy Councils and Farm to Institution efforts, linking anchor institutions⁵ (including our eds and meds) to community driven food systems and regional economic development. I want to thank the New York State Legislature for approving, and Governor Cuomo for signing the Food Metrics Bill into law. This will greatly help in these efforts. I encourage the state to look toward Farm to Institution NYS⁶ for support and guidance in implementing this law. FINYS is laying excellent groundwork for what could be a national model.

An abundance of existing resources⁷ and expertise could potentially support these efforts. This includes government data available via New York's Open Data Portal⁸, and new Ag Census data currently rolling out. The NEFKE project I described last July is building a regional

knowledge hub that will help a variety of researchers, food and ag enterprises and community based organizations more easily share data and insights about their own work, and connect with others in our region with similar interests, or complimentary resources and needs. Tools for generating informative profiles and maps from that data will also be coming online.

Knowledge and expertise associated with our states higher education institutions could also better help these efforts. Mann Library itself is actively involved with managing a variety of data and information repositories⁹ which could be much more effectively used to support community food systems projects. This includes GIS and USDA data, and expertise discovery systems indexing Cornell faculty and staff, as well as Cooperative Extension agents and programs across the state.

Way back in 2009 the Task Force on Diversifying the New York State Economy through Industry-Higher Education Partnerships¹⁰ (led by Cornell President Skorton) called for development of “innovation ecosystems”, linking our states “substantial university-based innovation assets to drive sustainable economic growth”. Creating and maintaining mechanisms for information sharing and networking among ecosystem participants was listed as a priority. New York’s agriculture and food sector, including markets for local foods, was identified as an area of strength and opportunity. Projects like Knowledge NY¹¹ are already working on building similar connections between New York’s high tech businesses and academic sectors –why aren’t we doing more for food and ag, strengthening Extension?

Unfortunately I’ve found again and again that many barriers to using currently disparate and sometimes overly technical resources remain for those actively engaged in ag and food systems work at the community level. With better support and coordination across the state, I believe these challenges could be addressed. Successful methods and models could be shared, adapted and scaled more readily, better connected to each other and the work of researchers and educators. Investors and funders (including NYS itself) would also be better able to make more informed, strategic, coordinated, long term investments in our states local and regional food systems.

Because food systems, and community and regional development efforts more broadly, are so complex, with challenges and opportunities constantly changing (particularly in light of current and future climate changes), no single entity can be expected to have the resources, answers or authority needed. Effective solutions must be informed and guided in part by those closest to the unique problems and conditions of their own community. Our state must invest in learning and innovation on the ground, as well as our ivory towers. I strongly suggest those investments be directed where possible to existing efforts like the Mohawk Valley Food Action Network¹² and SCNY Food & Health Network¹³, who have demonstrated a proven commitment to informed, inclusive collaborative action in their regions.

Similarly, no single platform, database, or application will address all these needs. Much like the role highways and telecommunications networks play in supporting our economy, now more than ever we need new network investments supporting communication, coordination, and collaboration in our food system, across value chains, and between businesses, community practitioners and research and education institutions. This will in turn support our

ability devise, implement and share successful solutions within our regions and across the state. Innovative models like the Regional Food Systems Working Group in Iowa¹⁴ and Vermont Farm to Plate¹⁵ are demonstrating the power of networked platforms, communities and data to transform regional and state food systems, strengthening agriculture and communities while creating thousands of new jobs¹⁶.

I invite others to work with me on implementing these suggestions, ensuring that more of our citizens, from farmer to eater, benefit from the production, processing, distribution, preparation and consumption of healthy food grown locally and within the state. I encourage the Councils support and advocacy in these efforts. Thank you for your time.

Regards, Jeff Piestrak

References

- 1) **See NYSCFP Activities page** for minutes/presentation: <http://www.nyscfp.org/activities.html>
- 2) **My current roles** include:
 - Outreach & Engagement Specialist at Cornell's Mann Library (www.mannlib.cornell.edu/outreach), in support of research, learning and outreach, and Land Grant mission
 - Leadership team member for: Cornell Cooperative Extension statewide Ag Marketing & Community Development Program Work Team; Community, Local and Regional Food Systems eXtension Community of Practice; CCE-TC Ag Advisory Committee
 - Active participation in and support for several civil society food systems groups and initiatives, including Northeast Food Knowledge Ecosystem project. Initiated through the Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Working Group (<http://www.nefood.org/>), it seeks to support communication, coordination, collaboration and learning across a 12 state "network of networks". A major focus of our pilot project is support for Farm to Institution New England (<http://www.farmtoinstitution.org/>), one model for Farm to Institution NYS.
- 3) **Upgrading Our Information Infrastructure for Social Change** concept paper: <http://www.marketsforgood.org/markets-for-good-upgrading-the-infrastructure-for-social-change/> and Strategic Story slide presentation: <http://www.slideshare.net/marketsforgood/markets-for-good-strategic-story-march-2013-18380766>
- 4) **Creating Multiple Forms of Wealth -the Wealth Creation Approach:** <http://www.creatingruralwealth.org/wealth-creation-approach/multiple-forms-of-wealth/>
- 5) **Linking Anchor Institutions to Outcomes for Families, Children, and Communities:** <http://community-wealth.org/indicators>
- 6) **Farm to Institution NYS:** <http://newyork.farmland.org/finys/>
- 7) **Mann Library Local & Regional Food Systems Guide:** http://guides.library.cornell.edu/local_food
- 8) **New York State Open Data Portal** (<https://data.ny.gov/>) provides an extensive index of local, state and federal [datasets](#), [charts](#), [maps](#) and other resources, including those relating to [food](#), [agriculture](#), and [economic development](#).
- 9) <http://mannlib.cornell.edu/collections/digital-collections>
- 10) **Report from the Task Force on Diversifying the New York State Economy through Industry-Higher Education Partnerships:** <http://www.cornell.edu/president/docs/20091214-gov-task-force-report.pdf>
- 11) **Knowledge NY:** <http://www.knowledgeny.org/>
- 12) **Mohawk Valley Food Action Network:** <http://www.mvfoodaction.com/>
- 13) **SCNY Food & Health Network:** <http://www.foodandhealthnetwork.org/>
- 14) **Regional Food Systems Working Group:** <http://www.leopold.iastate.edu/regional-food-systems-working-group>
- 15) **Vermont Farm to Plate Network:** www.vsjf.org/project-details/20/farm-to-plate-network (an initiative of the Vt. Sustainable Jobs Fund)
- 16) **As Farm to Plate movement blooms, Vermont food and farm jobs help drive economy:** <http://www.examiner.com/article/as-farm-to-plate-movement-blooms-vermont-food-and-farm-jobs-help-drive-economy>

Testimony Presented to:
NYS Council on Food Policy
NYS Fairgrounds, Syracuse
February 26, 2014

By:
Jim Bittner

My name is Jim Bittner, along with my family and partners, we own and operate a 500 acre fruit farm in Niagara County where we raise apples, peaches, plums and cherries. I am also proud to serve as chairman of the New York Farm Viability Institute board of directors. Thank you for this opportunity to share with you the following information about the New York Farm Viability Institute today.

As I look over the Council on Food Policy key issue areas, it becomes clear that the priorities of this council and NYFVI overlap a great deal, including:

Strengthening the connection between local food producers and consumers

Supporting efficient and profitable agricultural food production.

How are we doing that?

One of the best ways to assure a safe, fresh, nutritious and affordable food supply for New Yorkers is to be certain New York farms are viable, profitable businesses and that farmers are armed with the research results, proven tools, and knowledge they need to reach those goals.

The New York Farm Viability Institute was founded on the premise that there is a definite need for applied agricultural research, education programs and business development assistance across all New York agriculture sectors, and that farmers need to play a pivotal role in directing those research, education and development efforts. The Institute was structured to have an all farmer board of directors representing the major components of New York agriculture. NYFVI regularly reaches out to farmers across New York State soliciting input as to the highest priority needs and opportunities that, if addressed, would have the greatest positive impact on the productivity, profitability and viability of New York farms.

Since its incorporation in 2004 the NYFVI has engaged over 400 farmers in identifying the highest priority needs for various agricultural production sectors, and engaged over 120 farmers reviewing and ranking project proposals. Over 250 projects have been funded in nearly every sector of New York agriculture, involving over 1,500 farms in 57 of the 62 New York counties. This farmer involvement included: hosting research trials or field days, developing business or succession plans, developing new value added products, utilizing profit teams, participating in peer to peer discussion groups and more. With over 150 completed projects, project leaders report that farms engaged in the projects realized over \$44 million in new revenue from product sales, \$6.7 million in savings and reduced production costs, and nearly \$14.5 million spent on new capital investments during the time frame of the projects. In addition, project final reports document the creation or retention of over 1,100 full, part time and seasonal jobs.

Healthy upstate communities and a strong, stable New York economy are closely linked to a vibrant and profitable agriculture sector. There is tremendous public benefit from having profitable, viable farm businesses. Keeping farms competitive and profitable requires a consistent, long term investment in research and education. With shrinking state and federal resources farmers are being encouraged to increasingly pick up some of the tab for research and education in their production sector, and many farmers have proven ready to meet this challenge. In New York, apples, onions, cabbage and soybean have mandatory check off programs to support applied research. At the same time dry beans, processing vegetables, grapes, berries, maple, turf grass and Christmas trees growers have voluntary programs to collect funds for research and development. Since New York communities, and the economy at all levels, benefit from profitable and viable farm businesses, it is appropriate, and indeed important, that the State of New York be a full partner providing funding for important and high priority applied research and education programs.

It is important that the people of New York State be long-term, dependable and full partners in funding applied agricultural research and education programs. As a result the New York Farm Viability Institute is proposing the creation of a new pool of funds that would be used as matching money for farmer collected funds destined to support applied research and education programs. The Institute would work closely with the mechanisms already set up within the industry to direct the funds toward the most important, grower identified projects, leverage the funds to do even more good for New York agriculture and by extension New York's economy and communities, and then manage those projects to achieve the desired results and disseminate the resulting knowledge.

I could talk about the NYFVI and its projects for hours. My enthusiasm for what we have accomplished has led to my belief that NY agriculture will remain a strong, viable economic engine for future generations. I feel very strongly that the NYFVI is the best thing that has happened for NY agriculture in the last 10 years. That is why I have volunteered so much of my time to it. I could go into a lot of detail about what the NYFVI does and how we do it, but in the interest of time, let me offer this...

If anyone would like more information on specific projects or project areas that NYFVI has been involved with, please feel free to contact me or our Managing Director Dave Grusenmeyer. Included in the packet of information I have for each member of the Council is a map showing the broad state wide coverage of projects we have funded. Also our annual report that has descriptions of some of the projects and the economic impact of our work over the last 10 years. Again, thank you for this opportunity and I would like to take the time I have left to answer any questions members of the Council may have for me.

Krys Cail's Comments to the NYS Council on Food Policy, Listening Session in Syracuse, NY

2/26/14

Thank you for the opportunity to address you today. I want to begin by expressing my gratitude for your work to date, which has resulted in some excellent clarification of issues and needs, ultimately leading to the implementation of appropriate policy measures. In particular, the recent passage into law of a bill to aid NYS in the development of metrics by which to track the governmental purchase of NYS farm and food products is a milestone we are all pleased to see met. Although only a beginning, this will provide us with a baseline and a methodology that will allow us to set goals for further accomplishments in strengthening the connection between local food products and consumers (including agency consumers), and fostering a culture of healthy and local eating. When I addressed you here years ago, I stressed the importance of the development of information infrastructure to accommodate the exchange of information about growing and developing local and regional food systems. I want to reference that past testimony of mine at this time, particularly in terms of the importance of allowing for self-organizing components of the information systems to be developed. Government, like other large bureaucratic institutions, can have a tendency to impose monolithic one-size-fits-all systems that operate with less agility and less efficiency than the more diverse and multi-option systems that are devised when bottom-up systems of self-organization are employed. The private sector, for instance, has brought us the Wholeshare computer-mediated approach to providing food access in food desert locations, and, particularly in some rural areas, good results have been documented. We should avoid any tendency to want to establish such ironclad, mono-cultural standards and metrics that innovation in the development of information infrastructure is stifled, and/or only certain companies are able to compete in the marketplace. As with agriculture, diversity and a broad range of possible tools, with the seed and the production methodology matched to the specifics of the locale, give us a better opportunity to reap a rich harvest than an industrial-scale monocrop of information infrastructure. In particular, the involvement of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation in some proposed information infrastructure proposals gives me pause, given Microsoft's monopolistic tendencies in the private market. Be sure to let a thousand flowers bloom.

The maintaining of NYS's rich diversity of plant and animal species and agricultural and food processing heritage is the area that I will address today. As you know, we are in an era of unprecedented change, with a very rapid escalation of unintended consequences of industrialization, including massive global-scale climate changes and very large numbers of species extinctions. In the past few years, we have had special concerns for the health and wellbeing of keystone species, such as honeybees, which are essential to much of our food

production activities. At the same time that weather pattern changes are impacting the productivity and wellbeing of some of our fruit and vine crops, and, in some cases, making more advantageous conditions for the spread of invasive pests and diseases, the die-off of bee colonies is making pollination and fruit set harder to achieve.

First, I believe that, like Europe, we should curtail the use of neonicotinoid pesticides, which have been shown to have deleterious effects on honeybee colonies. We had a thriving agriculture prior to the introduction of these substances, and we can continue to have one without their use. We cannot continue to have a thriving agriculture if our pollinators die off.

My second suggestion for forward work on the development of policy to protect the vibrancy of NYS agriculture and food systems during these times of rapid climate and biosphere change is more complex, so I ask your patience in listening closely as I explain a less well-known threat to our food systems. One of the results of changes in the nature of our agricultural processes over the past several decades has been the increasing degree to which important crop germplasm has become a proprietary commodity, held under patent by individual corporations—in most cases, large, multinational corporations. Centralization of the control of seedstock in the hands of relatively few entities has been the result of acquisition and merger activity in the sector, and has left a landscape in which diversity of seed sources and diversity of varieties offered on the market for sale has been greatly diminished over what had previously been available. Although there is some recent resurgence in the conservation of open-pollinated heirloom plant varieties, improved cultivars of important feed and food crops are still becoming more limited in number and less widely available than was previously the case.

In a time of difficulties associated with unexpected changes in weather associated with global climate change, our need for a wide diversity of improved varieties has never been greater. Standard varieties bred to maximize yields under closely-controlled conditions may perform poorly when conditions are changed, or may show vulnerabilities to pests whose ranges have expanded in response to climate changes. More alarmingly, access to the base germplasm of varieties for the purpose of breeding and developing varieties appropriate to the changing conditions—previously an important responsibility of our Land Grant university public plant breeders—has been severely curtailed by the new regimen of privatized ownership of individual varietal plant traits. This is in no way limited to GM or human-engineered plant materials. Rather, the “patent thickets” surrounding important crop germplasm make many ordinary hybrid varieties off-limits to plant breeders who are not working under contract to the particular patent-holding multinational corporation. As these patent holders sell seed to a world-wide agricultural market, concerns for the development of varieties that are adapted to the particular conditions being experienced by growers in New York State may not be research priorities.

Our Cornell-based public plant breeding history is storied and proud, and we retain the skeleton of an infrastructure for the development of improved varieties to meet the needs of our state's farmers yet today. However, the continued enclosure of the germplasm commons—the increasingly privatized ownership of the seeds from which new varieties might be developed—represents an ever-increasing hurdle for our public system to surmount in providing these traditional services to our farm and food economy in the state. This comes at a time when rapid response to changing agricultural conditions is needed. What a shame to be marooned in our plant-breeding response to climate change by cabals of bickering lawyers asserting patent infringement claims under the guidance of multi-national corporate profit-maximization planners.

Of late, an approach to solving this problem has been developed in academia, and it deserves much closer study and policy development work. Borrowing from the successful arena of open-source software, where similar problems were encountered and solved, an Open Source Seed Initiative has been developed. Most notable as a reference for this work is Professor Jack Kloppenburg. I would steer you toward his work on this topic for further study. By making use of a General Public License for Plant Germplasm (see http://www.horticulture.umn.edu/Who_sWho/Faculty/TomMichaels/GeneralPublicLicenseforGermplasm/index.htm), it is possible for plant breeders to begin to develop a parallel source of plant germplasm material that has improved characteristics from which to work in further breeding activities, but is not constrained by privatized ownership from being made use of in the public domain. Kloppenburg refers to the gradual development of a “protected commons” of plant materials and genetics that allows for the work of scientists not under the direct control of corporate masters, but with more traditional goals, such as the development of varieties answering the expressed needs of NYS farmers.

Thank you for the opportunity to address you today, and I would be happy to discuss what I have brought up here with you at greater length, should that be of use to you in future.

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