



# New York State Council on Food Policy

Governor Andrew M. Cuomo

Commissioner Darrel J. Aubertine

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## SUMMER MEETING AGENDA

**Wednesday, June 29<sup>th</sup> \* 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm**  
**Blue Room - #250, State Capitol Building, Albany**

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| 1:00 | Welcome: Commissioner Aubertine   |
| 1:10 | Introductions: Council Members  |
| 1:20 | Governor's Assistant Secretary of Agriculture, Jackie Moody-Czub                              |
| 1:30 | Healthy Food/Healthy Community Fund Update: Ray Salaberrios, ESD<br>(20 min / 10 min Q&A)     |
| 2:00 | Agribusiness Development: Patrick Hooker, ESD<br>(20 min / 10 min Q&A)                        |
| 2:30 | NYS CFP Workgroup on Food Procurement Guidelines: Dr. Heather Dacus, DOH (10 min / 5 min Q&A) |
| 2:45 | Farm Bill Findings: Commissioner Aubertine, AG&MKT (15 min)                                   |
| 3:00 | Farm Bill Priorities & Open Discussion (30 min)   |
| 3:30 | Public Comment Period (30 min)  |
| 4:00 | Adjourn   |

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The mission of the New York State Council on Food Policy is to develop policies that will increase adequate access to affordable, nutritious, local and safe food for all New Yorkers, especially for children, seniors and other at-risk populations; and to protect and expand agricultural food production in the state.

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## S U M M E R M E E T I N G M I N U T E S

Wednesday, June 29, 2011 \* 1:00 pm – 4:00 pm @ State Capitol Building, Albany

**Commissioner Darrel Aubertine** opened the annual summer meeting of the New York State Council on Food Policy (NYS CFP) by welcoming the audience and the Council members. Commissioner Aubertine expressed his interest in carrying out the mission of the NYS CFP as the new Chairperson. The members and representatives of the NYS CFP then introduced themselves.

### NYS CFP members and/or representatives attending include:

- Elizabeth Berlin, NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance
- Linda Bopp, Hunger Solutions NY
- Bruce Both, United Food and Commercial Workers Union, Local 1500
- Dr. Heather Dacus, NYS Department of Health
- Raymond Denniston, BOCES Broome-Tioga; NYS Farm to School Coordinating Committee
- Ellen Deutsch, Hain Celestial Group, Inc
- Diane Eggert, Farmers Market Federation of New York
- John Evers, Food Bank Association of NYS
- Lisa Harris, Division of Consumer Protection, Dept of State
- Patrick Hooker, Empire State Development
- Liz Neumark, Great Performances; Sylvia Center
- Julie Suarez, New York Farm Bureau
- Russell Sykes, NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance
- Eleanor Wilson, Price Chopper Supermarkets, Inc
- Jorge Montalvo, Division of Consumer Protection, Department of State
- Frances O'Donnell, NYS Education Department
- Florence Reed, NYS Office for the Aging
- Nicole Willis, New York Farm Bureau

**Jackie Moody-Czub, the Governor's Assistant Secretary of Agriculture**, took this opportunity to recognize the accomplishments of the NYS CFP and share the Governor's support of their continued efforts. Ms. Moody-Czub provided a brief update about the food and agriculture agenda of the administration, specifically mentioning interest in expanding food security efforts such as farmers' markets. In closing, Ms. Moody-Czub said that she hopes to be a resource for the NYS CFP going forward.

**Ray Salaberrios, Senior Director of Economic Revitalization at Empire State Development**, provided a presentation on the **NYS Healthy Food & Healthy Community Fund (HF/HC)** (Appendix A.). The mission of the HF/HC is to address food deserts around the state by providing grants and loans for food store development or renovations in lower-income, underserved and/or distressed areas.

Mr. Salaberrios discussed that the businesses that receive HF/HC loans and grants must accept SNAP benefits and WIC (in most cases) and that "convenience stores need not apply." Eligible stores must have at least 66 percent of the shelf space devoted to retail food sales. Further it was explained that if food co-ops require membership fees they will not qualify.

Other programmatic aspects and potential impacts were discussed. Topics include: job training programs; local hiring practices; local food purchasing; on-site nutrition education; energy efficient building; and use of mobile markets to access hard to reach populations such as older adults.

In sum, Mr. Salaberrios said that he is looking forward to collaborating with the NYS CFP on all aspects of the HF/HC Fund going forward. For more information: [www.liifund.org/nyhealthyfood](http://www.liifund.org/nyhealthyfood). Contact Ray Salaberrios: ph 212.803.3219 / [rsalaberrios@empire.state.ny.us](mailto:rsalaberrios@empire.state.ny.us).



#### Projected Impacts:

- Create or preserve 3,075 direct jobs
- Create 382 construction jobs as a result of project activity
- Create or preserve 740,000 square feet of food market space
- Provide \$30 million in capital for healthy food retail projects

**Patrick Hooker, Senior Manager of Agribusiness Development at Empire State Development** spoke next about his new role and Governor Cuomo's "Farm NY" agenda, the high interest in agricultural market development, and on the importance of bringing more agencies together to achieve similar goals. Mr. Hooker shared his vision of capturing the synergy between agencies and industries to address challenges in our state. He listed some objectives of his current and future projects that include: increasing access to fresh food to underserved communities; ensuring farmer viability; exploring new market models; and new farmer recruitment. He stressed that agribusiness development is ultimately about "being a good community member."

**Ann McMahon, Coordinator for the NYS CFP at the Department of Agriculture & Markets** provided a brief introduction of an upcoming pilot project: **The Agriculture Promotion, Outreach and Demonstration vehicle, or Ag POD**. Through a multi-agency collaboration effort, a mobile kitchen formerly used by DOH for nutrition education, was transferred to the Department of Agriculture & Markets. The Ag POD will be used for promotion of locally produced, nutritious foods; outreach regarding food assistance programs; and cooking and agricultural demonstrations at community farmers markets and other sites.

**Commissioner Aubertine** took this opportunity to emphasize the Governor's awareness of the great potential for agribusiness development in the state. Commissioner Aubertine cited the Governor's Farm NY Agenda and specifically mentioned that issues such as distribution chains that may have received less attention in the past are now being keyed in on.

A discussion ensued regarding **food safety programs and local farm products**. It was noted that there are infrastructure and policy hurdles that need to be addressed to assist small to mid-sized farmers sell more product directly into grocery stores and institutions, such as schools. Ray Denniston mentioned "Bridge to GAP" program concept. The main objective of this program would be to assist small and mid-sized farmers adapt to and/or acquire equivalent food and farm safety validation as the Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) standards provide. It was noted that this is important because USDA recently passed new regulations that now allow schools to use "geographic preference" in their bids; however, if farms don't have some type of food safety validation they may face a major impediment for direct sales of farm-fresh products for school meals. Fran O'Donnell affirmed this concern.

Additionally, Julie Suarez brought up the issue that farmers would benefit from consistent food safety regulations among grocery stores produce purchasers. She also noted that there are many GAP success stories in New York State to learn from. Other suggestions included: seeking Specialty Crop Block Grant funding for piloting the Bridge to GAP concept; help agencies to be more agile in response to farm and food retail concerns; and expanding the presence of community farmers' markets around the state.

**Dr. Heather Dacus, Director of the Bureau of Chronic Disease Control at Department of Health** spoke about the NYS CFP workgroup on **Food Procurement Guidelines**. Dr. Dacus explained that the Department of Health received a CDC grant to enhance work on policies improving health. An aspect of this is to develop food procurement guidelines that state-funded agencies and organizations can voluntarily adopt. The overarching premise for the guidelines is that "state agencies that procure, provide and/or contract for foods and beverages should provide food that is safe and nutritious." It was also noted that there may be an opportunity to consolidate food purchasing and reduce costs (Appendix B.).



Dr. Dacus mentioned that the details of the guidelines (specific nutrition recommendations) have not been decided upon yet. She continued to explain that, through the help of the workgroup, a survey is being developed to get a better understanding of how state and local agencies are currently procuring or contracting for food and beverages and to what degree they already follow the 2010 Dietary Guidelines for America.

Follow-up discussions included: use of the word "guidelines" favored over "standards" (positive messaging verse implied mandate); considering the cost impact this may have on local governments and anti-hunger programs; being aware of population specific nutritional needs; how this may pressure/influence the food retail industry to develop healthier products; dove-tailing this with sodium reduction initiative and promoting USDA My Plate.

Next, **Commissioner Aubertine led a discussion on the 2012 Farm Bill**. First he provided a "30,000 foot view" of the Farm Bill including the history, accomplishments, structure, as well as some perspective on what still needs to be done. He provided a summary of findings from the recent Department of Agriculture & Markets Farm Bill hearings (May-June, 2011) (Appendix C.).

Specifically, the Commissioner addressed the timing of the Farm Bill. He stressed that it is imperative to begin coalition building and development of a unified and well-informed Farm Bill platform for the Northeast states now. Commissioner Aubertine also discussed the Research Title and the effort to reach out to institutions such as SUNY to examine this title more closely.

A brief presentation that summed up national and local “Proposed Nutrition Title Priorities” was provided for discussion along with a synopsis of the Nutrition Title Comments from the Commissioner’s hearing in Syracuse (5/27/11) (Appendix D.). This material was researched and prepared by the summer Assistant to the NYS CFP, Nimmy David.

Council member discussion of Farm Bill priority issues included:

- Retaining structure and funding of the **Food Stamp Program (SNAP)** within the Farm Bill; negative impact of changing SNAP from an entitlement program to a block grant; expected debate over restricting SNAP purchases in Congress.
- Protect the image of **potatoes, peas and beans** as healthy food choices; it’s how you cook that matters.
- Need to recognize and make correlations to other Farm Bill programs that address the NYS CFP mission, such as **Conservation, Horticulture and Commodity Titles**.
- Need for capital improvements for programs that address nutrition for older adults; for example the **Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP)** is one of the highest utilized programs that meets nutrition needs and provides economic stimulus to local farmers. As longevity rates increase, people are outliving their resources and nutrition and prevention programs for older adults will not be able to satisfy future demand.
- Allow for unexpended funds from **The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)** to rollover into next fiscal year; and retaining funding levels for TEFAP in all categories.
- New York State received over \$6 million from USDA for the **Fresh Fruit & Vegetable Program (FFVP)** at schools for 2011-12. This funding only stretches to schools that have 95 percent children eligible for free or reduced meals while other states can provide funding to schools with much lower percentages. The funding allocation formula should be based on need.
- Funding for **school kitchen equipment**, with the focus on food safety and fresh food preparation, is just 25 percent of previous level. New York State received \$1.5 million this year but has requests for over \$5 million in assistance.
- Food safety and **Farm to School** programs is still an unresolved topic. Schools now have USDA geographic preference guidance and are increasingly interested in purchasing local agriculture products. Additionally, there is a movement to change the Department of Defense Fresh Produce Purchasing Program (DoD Fresh) into a voucher system in lieu of food.
- New York State was 1 of 3 states to receive a grant for **Summer Food Service Program** grants. The \$200,000 grant is for a 2 year pilot project that will focus on providing access children in rural areas of North Rose-Wolcott and the Southern Tier.

Commissioner Aubertine and others agreed that there needs to be continued, thorough analyses of these issues to develop a sound and comprehensive platform for New York State and the Northeast.

**Public comments** were then welcomed. Two members of the audience presented comments at the meeting while two others submitted comments for NYS CFP consideration. In sum, Bonnie Weber expressed concern over consumer’s reluctance to buy food from farmers located in the Hudson Valley due to the potential hazards caused by hydro-fracking. Lacey Wilson from Legislative Commission on Rural Resources asked about initiatives to build infrastructure in rural areas to enhance food processing and access to local foods. Discussion ensued regarding investment in food hubs, formation of local community food and health networks, using food banks as a resource, and how to engage more farmers to participate in initiatives such as farm to school.

In her submitted comments, Elisabeth Radow outlines potential impacts that high volume natural–methane gas extraction through hydraulic fracturing may have on the safety of New York’s water, food supply and human health. Krys Cail and Sam Bosco also submitted comments on the lack of attention to the potential impact of shale gas development on food and agricultural production. They additionally cite that New York State has reduced production of oats, wheat and hops which were once relied on as cash crops; and that the lack of available farm land for new and smaller scale farmers is limiting sustainable food production for local and regional market flow.



Commissioner Aubertine at NYS CFP

In closing, a reminder was made that the annual “**Farm to You Fest! A Celebration of Local Food and Agriculture**” will be held during the week of October 3<sup>rd</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup>.

Commissioner Aubertine thanked all the participants for their time and attention. He encouraged everyone to keep in communication with his office for follow up.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

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