

New York State Council on Food Policy

Commissioner Patrick Hooker, Chairman

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

Monday, June 28th 10:00 am – 1:00 pm @Adam Clayton Powell Jr. State Office Building, Harlem

Panel: NYS Food System ‘Supply, Demand and Delivery’

Commissioner Hooker introduced the panel members and announced that Bob Stern was not in attendance due to budget meetings. Below are just a few key points from each panel member’s presentation. The speakers, seated at the table, and their topics are as follows (right to left):

David Haight: Threat from development to New York State’s irreplaceable farm land

John Magnarelli: Farm to School initiatives as part of the USDA “Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food” strategy

Annemarie Garceau: Department of Defense food program and the NYS items purchased using these funds

Christina Grace: NYS Farm to School Program and School Food Service Director Survey results

Dennis Derryck: Innovative Community Shareholder Farm (CSF) Model for South Bronx



Robert Stern, Senior Program Manager for the NYS Assembly Program Development Group and Staff Director for the Task Force on Food, Farm and Nutrition Policy was unable to attend but provide the notes below on: [New York State Law - Procurement Preferences for New York State Food and Agricultural Products.](#)

- Generally the law regulating procurement of government goods and services requires government to buy the best product at the lowest price after solicitation of bids to provide cost effective use of taxpayer dollars and prevent any favoritism in purchasing. At the State level this is generally handled by OGS, often through centralized contracts, although agencies do have authorization to buy directly themselves.
- There are dollar thresholds for purchases that require competitive bidding, for example \$10,000 for local governments and schools. Food purchases, even multiple items, are generally considered as one purchase. For example, if all the food purchased by a school district or government in a school year is worth more than \$10,000 then any individual item is subject to the bidding threshold. This is based on Comptroller opinions, not specified in the law.
- Over the past 30 years NYS has passed and updated several laws attempting to provide authorization and encouragement for preference for NY farm products when government purchases food. It began with schools, then state agencies, but also includes the State University system and local municipal governments.
- These laws originally only authorized government to provide limited preference for purchases, but about 10 years ago both State Finance Law and General Municipal Law were amended to actually state that: when letting contracts for the purchase of food products on behalf of facilities and institutions of the state, solicitation specifications of the office of general services and any other agency, department, office, board or commission may require provisions that mandate that all or some of the required food products are grown, produced or harvested in New York State, or that any processing of such food products take place in facilities located within New York State.
- School meal purchasing local preference law has additional language and requirements, in part because school meal purchases are also subject to federal procurement regulations. This was an attempt to satisfy concerns about how State law might work or conflict with federal guidelines. Federal rules were recently changed to make it easier for schools to use a preference for purchasing local foods.

- Although NYS has fairly comprehensive laws for preference of local foods in procurement, it is not clear that they are being effectively used or implemented. It should be a goal of the NYS CFP to identify the extent to which government funds are being used to purchase local foods, how to increase the use of these laws, and what fixes are needed.

For more information contact Robert Stern at: ph # 518.455.5203/sternr@assembly.state.ny.us

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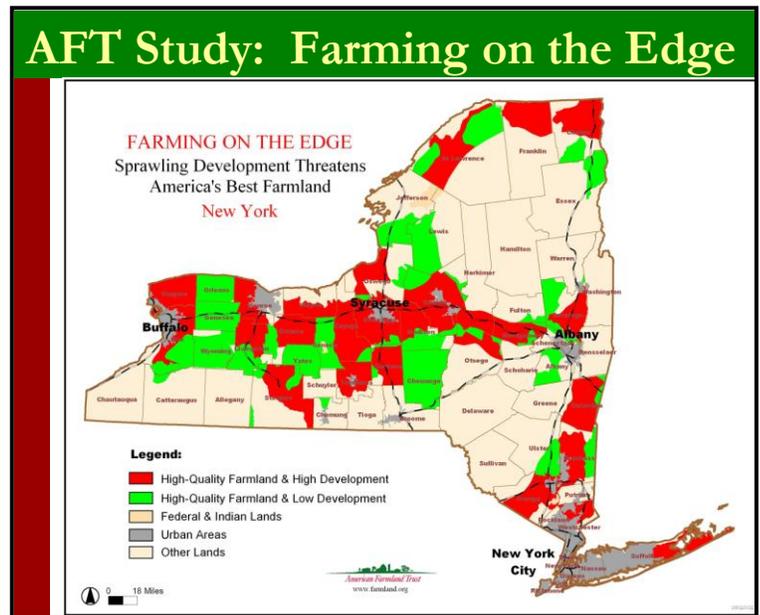
David Haight, New York Director of the American Farmland Trust, discussed the current threat from development to New York State's irreplaceable farmland. The *supply* side of the equation focuses on the basic building blocks of a food system: looking at natural resources like land and water.

- Dietary draft guidelines were released on June 15, 2010 stating that we should consume more fresh fruits, more vegetables and more dairy. Where these products are produced is increasingly under threat of development.

- According to the most recent USDA Census of Agriculture: 90% of our fruits, 80% of our vegetables and 70% of our dairy products are grown in 'urban edged' counties.

- New York loses a farm every three days to development and is home to three of the Top Twenty Most Threatened Farming Regions in America. "Concrete may become the last crop that is produced on much of our land".

- Envision fragmentation of the landscape where farms become subdivisions on land that has historically produced the food we eat. Beyond loss of land, we are also inserting neighbors into the equation of the remaining farmland. These new neighbors may or may not understand what it takes to produce food: manure smells, dust, and the early/late hours of operation, etc. and this can create a lot of conflict or "death-by-a-thousand-cuts".



- Cornell researchers questioned: How many people can be fed on the number of acres being farmed in New York? They found that, on the 7 million acres - or 25% of all state land - being farmed in New York State, with everyone eating an optimum diet, we can feed 6 million people - or 30% of state population. NYS population is 19 million.
- Land is a critical limiting factor in regards to long term food security for our state. According to American Farmland Trust, 3 of the top 20 most threatened farming regions in America are located here in New York because of the threat of development to new and high quality farms.
- Around the nation, strategic plans are being developed to support the people who grow the food and protect the land resources they need to sustain food production. A Farm Security Initiative in the New England states is looking at the same issues on a regional level.
- This is also a global issue. The United Nations reported last fall it is necessary to increase global food production by 70% by 2050. Farmland security is essential to national security.
- In closing, we must ensure that we have the land, the water and the people necessary to produce our food for future security.

For more information contact David Haight at: ph # 518.581.007 /DHaight@farmland.org

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John J. Magnarelli, Regional Director Special Nutrition Programs, Northeast Region, US Department of Agriculture (USDA) spoke about the USDA strategy “Know your Farmer, Know Your Food,” and discussed the Farm to School initiatives going on across our region and the benefits to both schools and local farms.

- Nutrition programs control approximately 60-70% of the USDA budget. USDA administers the School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, WIC Program, Food Stamp Program, Child Care Summer Feeding Program and commodity programs which donate USDA food to food banks, soup kitchens, schools.
- Agricultural Secretary, Tom Vilsack, has encouraged and challenged all USDA agencies and facilities - more than 2,000 facilities and 100,000 employees - to support these programs by establishing community gardens on the premises of their work sites.
- New dietary guidelines push for increased consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables. The Fresh Fruit and Vegetables Program is one example of the USDA’s step in that direction. This program provides healthy snacks for kids during the school day. Where do you get the produce? The most efficient way is from local farmers!
- Geographic preference was prohibited ten years ago. Schools were not allowed to include local preference in their bids. Today, geographic preference laws encourage school districts to procure locally. Why? To help local farmers.
- Agricultural Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan initiated the Farm to School Program at USDA. To begin, USDA has established tactile teams that will be meeting with 12-15 local school districts that have Farm to School programs. USDA received over 600 requests for visits; more than 200 from the Northeast region alone. We discovered that there are more than 10,000 Farm to School programs around the nation!
- The goal is to identify best practices for establishing Farm to School relationships and then communicating those best practices. Farm to School isn’t just between the food service director and the local farmer down the street. The entire school district administration, the community, health inspectors, etc. need to be involved.
- One farmer donated an acre to a K-8 school and the kids grew their own pumpkins and sold them as a school fundraiser. We don’t have to have bake sales or candy sales anymore! We would like to see all these aspects integrated into the Farm to School strategy.

For more information contact John J. Magnarelli at: ph # 617.565.6426/John.magnarelli@fns.usda.gov

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Annemarie Garceau, Assistant Director, NYS Office of General Services (OGS) Food Distribution & Warehousing spoke about Department of Defense (DoD) money allocated to NYS by the USDA; how OGS distributes these funds; and New York State items purchased using these funds.

- New York State Office of General Services (OGS) is responsible for receiving, warehousing, and distributing USDA commodity food to the School Lunch Program, Child and Adult Care Feeding Program, Summer Feeding Programs, and food banks. Various food products are available to meal programs through commodity entitlement dollars.
- In school year 2009/10, the School Lunch Program accounted for nearly \$65 million of the USDA entitlement dollars received by OGS. OGS supplies approximately 20% of the food that a school needs through USDA programs; the remaining 80% of food must be purchased from a distributor and/or local farmer.
- USDA is designed best to purchase and distribute frozen, dried and canned food items. Department of Defense (DoD), the largest procurer of food in the world, partnered with USDA approximately 10 years ago to begin distributing fresh fruits and vegetables to schools as part of this program (using a portion of the commodity entitlement dollars).
- How do these funds and products get distributed? Every two years OGS surveys schools to determine how much of their portion of the USDA entitlement dollars they want to devote to fresh fruits and vegetables through the DoD program. School districts can opt out (by region). Currently, 5 of the 10 regional warehouses participate in the DoD program, along with NYC and receive a portion of their fruit and vegetable entitlement fresh instead of canned or frozen.

- Approximately \$4 million of the \$65 million was used for the DoD fresh produce purchasing program. Of that \$4 million - \$2.7 million was spent on New York State produce, or 69% of the budget. The majority was spent on New York apples and apple slices. Other popular products from New York include pears, grape tomatoes and potatoes.
- One difficulty in distributing products is that food goes through a warehouse where it may sit for a few days while the schools make arrangements to pick up the products, after which the quality of the fresh products may not be optimal.
- Overall, OGS tries to focus on items that (1) are New York grown; and (2) items that can be semi-shelf stable.

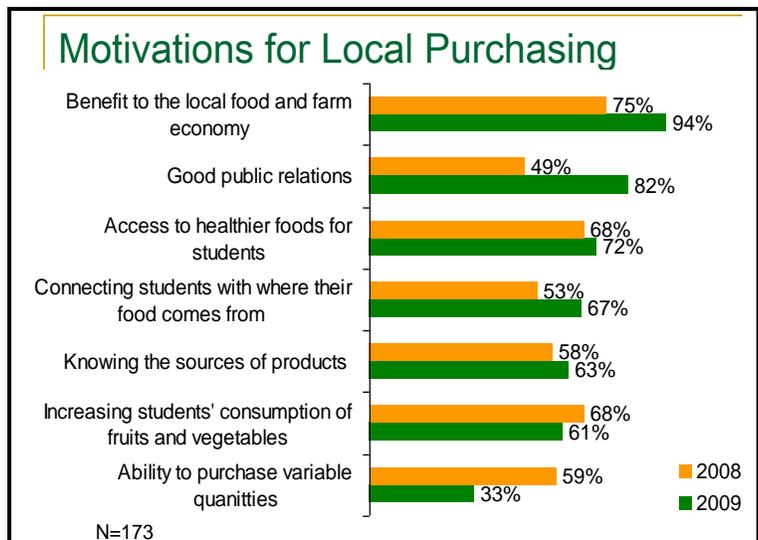
For more information contact Annemarie Garceau at: ph # 518.474.5122/Annemarie.Garceau@ogs.state.ny.us

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Christina Grace, Urban Agriculture Manager, NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets discussed New York Farm to School efforts and the 2009 New York State School Food Service Director Survey results.

- The New York State Department of Agriculture & Markets Farm to School Program provides technical assistance, materials, and support for school districts interested in initiating a Farm to School program. Without education about what is getting onto the tray in the cafeteria, the kids won't eat the food.
- One way we support Farm to School initiatives is by the School Food Service Director (SFSD) Survey. The survey has been conducted in 2009 and in 2010 in partnership with Cornell Cooperative Extension and the Office of General Services. We also conducted the first statewide School Garden Survey (not included in today's discussion).
- The average cost to produce lunch, including staff and food is \$2.19. Of that, approximately half is spent on actual food. Purchasing fresh produce is a big challenge when SFSD have only one dollar to spend per meal. In the Federal Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act, we requested a \$0.70 increase to support the National School Lunch Program, but right now they are only proposing a \$0.06 increase.

- SFSD survey results: 211 school districts (or 28%) responded of those who participate in federal child nutrition programs. Of those who responded, 110 school districts are participating in Farm to School activities and local procurement. NYC was separated out to eliminate skewing results. Results available on NYS DAM FTS website.



- Why do school districts care about local? Survey results show that the #1 motivation SFSD purchase local produce is to support local economy and members/farmers of their community. Good public relations are also very important to schools. The USDA program "Know Your Food, Know Your Farmer" is helping.

- How do they get the local products at school? Creating good relationships with distributors and farmers is important. Some SFSD purchase produce directly from farmers, but it is not tenable for many school districts. Logistically, many farms cannot deliver and this makes it difficult for the food service director. The majority of school districts purchase their food supplies through traditional distribution channels. The Department works to identify which distributors are working with schools who participate in 'Farm to School' activities and who may be interested in extending what they are doing.

- New York City schools serve 800,000 meals per day and are second only to the Department of Defense in most procurement food dollars spent in the nation. If NYC buys local then it opens doors for other districts around the state.

- Some considerations for successful Farm to School in New York include: having trained staff on site with appropriate kitchen equipment to handle fresh when it shows up at school; producers need to be able to supply a large volume of

product for meals consistently throughout the school year – this often entails distributors having multiple suppliers and managing multiple schedules; and a streamline procurement process is needed.

- Increasing slightly processed fresh, local agricultural items such as sliced apples, cut carrots for salad bars, organic black beans, and frozen produce, will allow Farm to School to proceed and grow.

For more information contact Christina Grace at: ph # 718.722.2834/Christina.grace@agmkt.state.ny.us

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Dennis Derryck, Founder, Corbin Hill Road Farms, discussed the Community Shareholder Farm (CSF) model that provides shareholders with a means of food sovereignty and economic empowerment, while contributing to the economy of a rural upstate county. Mr. Derryck and this concept were featured in The New York Times (June 2010): **For a Healthier Bronx, a Farm of Their Own** <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/06/23/dining/23bronx.html?ref=dining>.

- Food System supply, demand and delivery... “So many things are obvious but it takes a while to figure out why is it obvious.” The Corbin Hill Road Farms Community Shareholder Farm (CSF) model is a *farm share* program that provides individuals the benefits of receiving fresh, local food without the risk of joining a community supported agriculture (CSA) program.
- A CSF can be distinguished from a CSA through many factors; mostly by the community that each serves. The risk sharing that happens in a CSA between a farmer and a consumer is not logical if we have a low-income consumer; and the down payment associated with a CSA (approximately \$400 in advance) is not possible for a low-income consumer using food stamps when benefits are only \$400 a month. Joining a CSA is a seasonal contract. A two week commitment is good for a family on food stamps. With a CSA, members don’t always know what they will receive; this also is not practical for someone in such an economic situation. Finally, a CSA is designed to provide for a family of 3-4; however, we are dealing with family sizes of 5-7 members. Soon, it becomes obvious that a CSA is not an ideal model for many individuals.
- The CSF allows flexibility: people can join, drop out, re-join, upgrade, downgrade, set-up payments through payroll deductions. This provides shareholders with both food sovereignty and economic empowerment.
- We have redefined where the supply comes from. We realized that we don’t need to build a new farm to feed the people of South Bronx. Instead, the project connects 32 established farmers in Schoharie County to residents in NYC. Risk is reduced by having multiple farmers organized.
- Third aspect: Sovereignty – much of what we do is top-down, not bottom-up. Leadership has to reflect the community it is serving. We have raised \$600,000 – 72% has come from blacks and Latinos.
- Decision making and ownership are intricate principles. Citizens must own the farm. Non-profits are looking for grants to invest in the farm and within 5 years they must sell their shares to the community members that have participated in the CSF for multiple years. Future dividends from farm investments can be used for community or member benefits. Right now, there is a need to secure grants to help support the program.
- After two weeks in operation, this is the largest program of this type in the city of New York –with 220 members. Participants are considered ‘economic citizens’.

For more information contact Dennis Derryck at: dderryck@corbinhillfarm.com

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