

September 10, 2007

The Honorable Timothy M. Kaine
Governor of Virginia
State Capitol
Richmond, Virginia 23219

Dear Governor Kaine:

As you requested on the July 17th WVTF *Evening Edition* radio show, we are pleased to provide you the findings and recommendations of the first Virginia Food Security Summit, a partnership initiative of the University of Virginia and Virginia Tech. Held on May 11th in Charlottesville, the Summit attracted 146 people from all segments of Virginia's food system, including farmers, retailers, conservationists, planners, and government representatives. This landmark event presented the current and future strengths and challenges for Virginia's food security and solicited participant feedback in a written survey and a series of discussion groups, producing a rich trove of findings and recommendations. In the July 17th WVTF *Evening Edition* radio show with Bob Gibson, Anne Bedarf from our Food Summit team called in to familiarize you with the Summit and asked a question regarding our findings.

The central recommendation that we wish to bring to your attention is the need for a **Virginia Food Policy Council**. Gaining over 75% support on the Summit's written survey, the overwhelming consensus among Summit participants is that Virginia food policy is best undertaken by a Food Policy Council with representation from all sectors and interests. Equally strong was the participant message that the primary aim of the FPC should be to assist Virginia's smaller farms, most at risk and most vital to rebuilding community-based food systems. In brief, based on Summit participant recommendations, the Food Policy Council should:

- ✓ Develop an integrated state food security policy – linking Virginia agriculture, land conservation, economic development, schools, institutions, local governments, human health, food safety, and anti-hunger programs.
- ✓ Initiate a regulatory reform strategic plan. Participants recommend that your administration establish a Task Force consisting of diverse interests, to evaluate regulations affecting small farm operations and develop a plan for relieving the regulatory burden on small farms.
- ✓ Develop policies to remake Virginia's food infrastructure – to enable locally grown products to be processed and distributed within Virginia communities, thereby lowering the “food miles” energy cost, increasing availability of fresh food, and benefiting local farm economies and preservation of agricultural land.

Our University partnership team would like to enlist your support and ideas for appropriate “next steps.” Thirteen states currently have FPCs and their experiences can guide Virginia. We plan to seek W. K. Kellogg Foundation and other funding to begin implementing recommendations of the Summit, and to also fund a second Virginia Food Security Summit in Winter 2009. To this end, we will be contacting your Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry to

explore ways that your administration would like to be involved or even take the leadership in this pioneering effort.

Should you or your staff have any questions or wish to discuss this further, please don't hesitate to contact any member of the team. We look forward to hearing from you and working with you to further Virginia's food security.

Sincerely,

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TDC/bhj

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cc: Secretary of Natural Resources L. Preston Bryant, Jr.
cc: Secretary of Health and Human Resources Marilyn B. Tavenner
cc: Secretary of Commerce & Trade Patrick O. Gottschalk
cc: Secretary of Education Dr. Thomas R. Morris
cc: President John T. Casteen, III, University of Virginia
cc: President Dr. Charles W. Steger, Virginia Tech
cc: Dean Sharron S. Quisenberry, College of Agriculture and Life Sciences
cc: Dean Karen VanLengen, School of Architecture
cc: Brian Shephard, Policy Director, Office of the Governor