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The Virginia Food Security Summit

Final Report
Findings and Recommendations

Charlottesville, Virginia
May 11, 2007

Summit Report By
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Editorial Review
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To learn more, visit the Summit Website

www.virginia.edu/ien/foodsummit

The following can be found on the Summit website:

- ❖ Summit Report
- ❖ All Appendices to Summit Report
- ❖ All documents provided to Summit participants (agenda, fact sheet, participant list, speaker bio, survey, evaluation)
- ❖ All Powerpoint Presentations at Summit
- ❖ Photo gallery

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Executive Summary

The Virginia Food Security Summit was held in Charlottesville, Virginia at Alumni Hall on May 11th, 2007. The Summit attracted 146 participants from all regions of Virginia. The Summit was a partnership initiative of the University of Virginia (UVA) Department of Urban and Environmental Planning; UVA Institute for Environmental Negotiation; and Virginia Tech Department of Food Science and Technology.

The participants, including speakers, represented a wide array of interests – farming, farmers markets, food security, food retail, community gardening, non-profit environmental and planning organizations, academia, and federal, state, and regional agencies. Based on a written survey of participants, 28% noted a professional interest, 9% a personal interest, and 74% *both* professional and personal interest in community food security.

The Summit planning team sought to gather an inter-disciplinary group of participants that crossed traditional boundaries to pursue the following goals:

- To raise awareness and understanding in the Commonwealth of the need to improve Virginia's food security. The Summit used the definition of community food security developed by Michael Hamm, the Summit keynote speaker, and Anne Bellows, posted on the Community Food Security Coalition website (www.foodsecurity.org):

“Community food security is a condition in which all community residents obtain a safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes community self-reliance and social justice.”

- To help people in different professions make connections and discuss possibilities for new policies, research, pilot projects, or other actions to improve Virginia's food security; and
- To explore the need for a stakeholder “roundtable” or state-level Food Policy Council to develop an integrated food security strategy for Virginia.

The Summit hosts envisioned the event as an opportunity for individuals from diverse food system backgrounds and interests to openly discuss issues affecting the sustainability of Virginia's food system. The agenda was designed to encourage participants to think about and discuss all aspects of our food system – agriculture, economics, policy and regulations, nutrition, health, and environmental trends. Throughout the Summit, participants were offered opportunities to jointly envision ways to achieve a sustainable future for Virginia's food system.

Based on a written survey distributed at the Summit, Summit participants strongly agreed that food security is not only a matter of sustenance; food is inextricably linked to land use, human health, economies, and livelihoods. Over 50% of the survey participants noted personal interest in: ensuring the hungry are fed; public health and equity; and ensuring food is free from contamination. Over 70% of the survey participants noted personal interest in: ensuring a sustainable economy, preserving Virginia's working lands, and preserving regional character. Over 90% of survey participants agreed or strongly agreed that:

- Food security is an important issue for Virginia.
- Virginia's communities could benefit economically from cooperative efforts to improve access to and distribution of local food.
- Children in Virginia's schools could benefit from connections to local farms in curricula and cafeterias.
- Virginia's farmers could benefit from connections with local school curricula and cafeterias.

Many of the ideas proposed during the Summit reflect a trend throughout the nation to improve community food security, as defined above, using an integrated management approach and incorporating economic, environmental, and social sustainability objectives. Experience in other states suggests that an integrated approach requires the development of new mechanisms for collaboration among multiple state agencies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), whose activities impact community food security in different ways and who may not typically consult with each other in the course of their regulatory or community activities.

Specific ideas were proposed by participants during the morning table discussions, and further developed during afternoon focus group discussions. The following list of priority recommendations developed by Summit participants received their greatest support and attention. They are presented beginning with those receiving the greatest amount of attention throughout the discussion sessions and surveys, with the Summit Team providing additional interpretation on prioritization regarding usefulness, practicality, and goal-setting.

Primary Findings and Participant Recommendations

- **Food Policy:** Create and fund a Virginia Food Policy Council (FPC) in conjunction with regional/local Food Policy Councils, all consisting of a diverse group of stakeholders. Over 75% of Summit survey participants agreed or strongly agreed that Virginia needs to develop a state food security policy. The primary aim of the FPC should be to assist Virginia's smaller farms, as these are most at risk. (50% of Summit survey participants agreed or strongly agreed that a state food policy should promote the economic viability of *large* farms, several with the caveat that in this case, the large farms should be family-owned and operated.) The FPC should be grounded in grassroots representation and efforts, not top-down, and should remain connected with local and regional food policy planning efforts. 75% of survey participants indicated that a Virginia food policy is best undertaken by a food policy council with representation from all sectors and interests.
- **Regulatory Reform:** Create a Task Force consisting of diverse interests to develop a regulatory reform strategic planning initiative. The Task Force should evaluate regulations affecting small farm operations and their ability to process and distribute, identify regulations creating barriers to small farm food production, and develop a plan for streamlining or addressing these regulations as they apply to small farms. While this Task Force could be one of the first actions undertaken by a Food Policy Council, nothing prevents a Task Force from being established immediately.
- **Local Planning:** Adopt legislation that enables, or even requires, localities to conduct a Food Assessment Plan, with guidance and financial assistance from a Food Policy Council. State and local farmland preservation efforts should give high priority to protecting farmland used for food production. Over 75% of Summit survey participants agreed or strongly agreed that Virginia could save more farms and working lands through development and implementation of a food security policy.
- **Infrastructure:** Facilitate the rebuilding of infrastructure critical to processing and distribution of locally-grown products, such as regional meat processing facilities for small and organic meat producers. Over 90% of Summit survey participants agreed or strongly agreed that Virginia's communities could benefit economically from cooperative efforts to improve access to and distribution of local food.

- **Farm-to-School:** Implement and build on the past work of VDACS and recent legislation to facilitate Farm-to-School programs throughout Virginia. Farm-to-school includes not only the purchase of local food by schools, but also mentoring students on nutrition and health as well as awareness of where their food comes from. Over 75% of Summit survey participants agree or strongly agree that children in Virginia's schools need more daily access to fresh, healthy food. Over 90% agreed or strongly agreed that children in Virginia's schools could benefit from connections to local farms in curricula and cafeterias, and, conversely, that Virginia's farmers could benefit from connections with local school curricula and cafeterias.
- **Small Farm Assistance:** Increase funding and advertisement of Virginia's Agricultural Vitality and FarmLink programs.
- **Food Access:** Increase healthy food funding through WIC and food stamps, and restrict these programs to healthy food only.
- **Set Goals: Set aspirations and goals for local and state production and purchases of local food.** As an example, one discussion group proposed a goal that 15% of all food purchases be locally produced by 2010.

Next Steps

This report has been developed as a resource to further the goal of Virginia's community food security, and to serve as a guide for policy development in coming years. All Summit participants are encouraged to use this report as a starting point for more detailed planning, to implement the Summit findings and participant recommendations. To this end, Summit hosts will distribute this report to Summit participants and state agencies, and will post it on the Summit website (www.virginia.edu/ien/foodsummit), enabling its distribution to others.

Summit participants expressed hope that the Summit hosts – the University of Virginia and Virginia Tech – would continue their collaboration on Virginia's community food security. Some participants requested that UVA and Virginia Tech jointly spearhead the creation of a Food Policy Council, in the belief that universities could more easily ensure connection to grassroots interests. In light of this feedback from Summit participants, the Summit hosts have agreed to continue working together for the joint goal of fostering a state-level stakeholder Food Policy Council that will address the issues identified at the Summit. It is anticipated that this will be a multi-year initiative involving agencies and stakeholders from all sectors of Virginia's food system.

Additionally, given the strong interest expressed by participants in a second Food Summit, the Summit hosts will explore the possibility of holding a second Summit, most likely in the winter of 2009.

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- To help people in different professions make connections and discuss possibilities for new policies, research, pilot projects, or other actions to improve Virginia's food security; and
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Based on a written survey, Summit participants strongly agreed that food security is not only a matter of sustenance; food is inextricably linked to land use, human health, economies, and livelihoods. Over 50% of the survey participants said their personal interest in the Food Summit related to: ensuring the hungry are fed; public health and equity; and ensuring food is free from contamination. Over 70% of the survey participants said their personal interest in the Food Summit related to: ensuring a sustainable economy, preserving Virginia's working lands, and preserving regional character. Over 90% of survey participants agreed or strongly agreed that:

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- Virginia's farmers could benefit from connections with local school curricula and cafeterias.

Summit Process and Speakers¹

In preparation for the Summit, the UVA hosts developed a Fact Sheet for Summit participants, providing data on the current state of food security-related indicators in Virginia (*see Appendix D, posted on Summit website*). These indicators demonstrate that Virginia's food system is connected to multiple economic, social, and environmental factors – such as the health of Virginia's agriculture and farmland preservation, as well as food stamp and food bank participation.

The Summit began with a focus on the “Big Picture”, introducing participants to a possible vision for a secure and sustainable food system. Spencer Neale, Senior Assistant Director, Commodity/Marketing Department of the Virginia Farm Bureau Federation, provided an overview of Virginia's current agriculture system. He noted that Virginia has lost over 1 million acres of farmland since 1974 while cash receipts from farming have increased in that same period by over \$2 million. He described the changing face of Virginia agriculture: while organic crops and direct sales are increasing slowly, the staple Virginia crops of tobacco and peanuts have declined since 1974 by 80%. Small farms in Virginia still greatly outnumber large farms, with about 32,039 farms averaging \$10,000 or less in annual receipts compared with 2,212 farms in 2002 averaging \$250,000 or more. Most farm income is concentrated in ten agricultural counties, and top cash receipts in 2005 are from poultry (34.1%), meat animals (16.8%) and field crops (15%). Mr. Neale emphasized that infrastructure is a critical component of successful agriculture, and that it's important to move cautiously before promoting one kind of agricultural system over another.

“It's a challenge to build local food supplies with a booming population and dwindling farm acreage... We're losing some farmland—1 million acres since the '70s.

I'm a proponent of local food and regional food, primarily because I think it allows farmers to get closer to consumers and get more dollars in their pocket, but I'm also a proponent of American agriculture—we must be careful not to promote one system at the expense of another.” – Spencer Neale

Kenneth Meter, President of the Crossroads Resource Center, analyzed Virginia's “economic leakage” – i.e., revenues lost due to citizen purchase of non-Virginia foods and food products. He found that of the \$14.8 billion spent in Virginia on food (\$8.1 billion to eat at home, and another \$6.7 billion to eat out), with \$8.9 billion or 60% spent on food coming from outside Virginia. He noted that in 2002, 2,513 farms sold \$16.8 million worth of food directly to the consumer, representing only .7% of overall food sales, but nevertheless a 52% increase from 1997. He then looked at the overall balance of Virginia's farm cash receipts less farm expenditures, finding that Virginia farms had experienced an \$800 million loss over seven years, through 2003. His analysis shows that Virginia farmers produce \$2.8 billion of commodities per year, yet spend \$2.9 billion to raise them, losing \$110 million in production costs. As testimony to this fact, 54% of Virginia farms reported a loss in 2002. Mr. Meter added the values of net losses in the state: a loss of \$110 million raising commodities, \$8.9 billion buying food brought in from

¹ Parts of this section are excerpted from: “Virginia Food Security Summit: Exploring opportunities to build sustainable food systems in Virginia,” *The Virginia Biological Farmer*, Volume 30 Number 3 (third quarter 2007). Permission from author, Mark Schonbeck.

“Local foods may be the strongest path toward community economic development. . .if Virginia consumers bought 15% of their food directly from local farms, farms would earn \$2.2 billion of new income.”
— Ken Meter

outside the state, and \$1 billion for farm inputs purchased from outside the state, totaling a net loss of \$10 billion per year, or three times the value of all commodities raised. He suggested that, like other states that are struggling to find ways to support family farms, if Virginia were able to increase its purchase of Virginia farm products by only 15%, Virginia farms would realize an additional \$2.2 billion of new income.

After the session on Virginia’s big picture, participants were then engaged in a “mini-visioning” session, whereby each table identified its top two or three broad goals for Virginia’s food security.

Part Two of the Summit focused on different aspects of food policy. The Summit keynote was given by Dr. Michael Hamm, Director of the C.S. Mott Group for Sustainable Food Systems and Council Member of the Michigan Food Policy Council. He drew connections among farming, economics, environment and human health, noting trends such as the declining numbers of mid-size family farms in Michigan (while part-time minifarms and corporate megafarms increase), and the emergence of poor diet and lack of exercise as leading causes of death along with tobacco. He believes that while healthy eating is partly a matter of personal responsibility, public policy and food systems must encourage and empower people to make good choices. He shared that acreages in fruit and vegetable crops need to double to provide every American with the recommended amount of nutritious foods. Dr. Hamm warned that the current drive toward biofuel crops in pursuit of energy independence could leave the US more dependent on overseas sources of food.

“The mission of the Michigan Food Policy Council is to cultivate a safe, healthy, and readily available food supply for all of Michigan’s residents while building on the state’s agricultural diversity to enhance economic growth. If everybody in the country—300 million people—woke up tomorrow and said, ‘I’m going to eat the amount of fruits and vegetables the public health officials told me that I should eat,’ the reality is that we’d be about 13 million acres short of production.”
- Dr. Michael Hamm

Dr. Hamm also discussed Michigan’s statewide Food Policy Council, established to develop recommendations and strategies to secure a safe, healthy, affordable food supply for all Michigan residents, and to enhance the diversity and health of farms. The Council found that many inner city neighborhoods simply do not have grocery stores and supermarkets that provide fresh produce, and residents rely on fast food and gas station snacks for much of their diet. They recommended that the Michigan Department of Agriculture establish a farmers’ market support program, expand food stamp access at farmers’ markets, and encourage new farm enterprises in fruit and vegetable production. Finally, he suggested ways that Virginia could learn from Michigan’s experience, emphasizing that food security is improved through diversification of scale, products, backgrounds, and production strategies.

A panel followed in which four speakers discussed different aspects of policies that impact Virginia’s food security. Donna Seward, Director of WIC (Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children) and Community Nutrition Services, Virginia Department of Health, discussed the Federal Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program, noting that food stamps are both under-utilized and under-funded. For those who are food insecure — i.e., who do not know where their next meal may come from — strategies to increase use of food stamps for healthy foods and farmers markets would need to be accompanied by additional funding. Stephanie Larsen of the Community Food Security Coalition (CFSC) discussed key proposals for the new federal Farm Bill (2008), highlighting proposals that will increase access to healthy food, reduce urban and rural “food deserts,”

address the problem of an aging farm population, and improve farm-consumer connections. In particular, several farmers' market programs, the Community Food Project Grants program, and farm-to-institution programs could strengthen vital urban-rural links. One priority of the CFSC is to clarify federal legislation so that public school systems are free to seek out local fresh food for their school lunch programs. Ms. Larsen noted that Virginia's Representative Bob Goodlatte (R-6th) is a Ranking Member of the House Agriculture Committee and that Virginians have a real opportunity to influence in the direction of the Farm Bill.

Next, Charles Green described the Specialty Agriculture Initiative, by the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS), which assists farmers in diversifying and adding value to their products. The final speaker was Katherine Smith, a small farmer and president of the Virginia Association for Biological Farming. She spoke of her personal challenges and experiences in navigating Virginia's regulatory system. She identified numerous instances in which specific regulations, designed to address problems associated with large-scale production, were burdensome if not entirely inappropriate for the small farmer.

"The Virginia Department of Agriculture & Consumer Services (VDACS) enthusiastically supports local agricultural products through programs as Virginia Grown and Virginia's Finest, which help consumers identify when they are purchasing a local product. VDACS also supports the development and enhancement of specialty agriculture businesses that provide opportunities for high value and value added enterprises in rural Virginia. Supporting locally grown foods helps maintain the economic viability of our family farms and ensures that valuable farmland remains in agricultural production." - Charles Green

During the final pre-lunch session, participants at each table collected ideas through a second "mini-visioning" session for strengthening Virginia's food security through policy. Participants then enjoyed a lunch featuring locally-grown and organic foods served with corn and potato-based plateware and utensils, with all food-related waste being taken to a local farm for composting.

Part Three was designed to provide examples of initiatives, lessons, models and inspiration. Three sets of panels covered public health issues, strategies to increase farm viability, and community-based strategies for sustainable food systems. In the first panel on public health issues and innovations, Marty White representing the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank echoed the concerns regarding utilization of the WIC and food stamp programs. He described the process by

which the Food Bank obtains food, and described their partnership with Virginia Department of Social Services where effort is made to connect those coming to food pantries and soup kitchens with those not receiving food stamps. Kathy Hosig of Virginia Action for Healthy Kids spoke on access to healthful food issues, including links to obesity, disease, and exercise. She described innovative programs currently underway in Virginia to address the problems, including the "Backpack Program" where healthful food is sent home with children as well as School Wellness Policies. Renee Boyer, the final speaker of this panel, concentrated on Innovations in Microbial Food Safety. She detailed on-farm best management practices that contribute to food safety, and described the Farm Market Certification Program.

In the second panel on farm viability, Andy Hankins, an Extension Specialist in Alternative Agriculture at Virginia State University, discussed his efforts through extension to assist small farmers with developing specialty food crops, noting the crops that have been more successful than others. Examples include American Ginseng and Goldenseal roots, which are woodland specialty crops that can add value to adjacent farmlands.

David Tatman, a small livestock and egg farmer, questioned how local can a “local” food system truly be, given the globalization of all resources related to farming, from fencing to feed. In light of this, he proposed the need for increasing density of local small farm produce and meat production, to achieve economies of scale and to improve local food security.

The third panel highlighted successful and innovative strategies for community-based sustainable food systems. The Executive Director of Lynchburg Grows, Michael VanNess, described how through direct sale, community-supported agriculture, education, and providing for low-income residents, Lynchburg is growing its food system economy. Barbara Schwenk, of the Accomack-Northampton Planning District Commission, spoke about the formation of the first regional food policy council in Virginia, located on the Eastern Shore in Accomack and Northampton counties, entitled “Shore Good Foods.” She shared the success of a survey to gauge community interest in buying local food and the consequent adoption by local governments of local food policy resolutions, which are critical for the success of a regional food system. She also shared the council’s challenges, including the need for dedicated personnel and time to develop a comprehensive food plan.

Anthony Flaccavento, Executive Director of Appalachian Sustainable Development (ASD), presented on ASD’s development and work, which is widely acclaimed as an exemplar of a successful regional food program. He noted that the approaching “peak oil” will stimulate the development of local food systems, and force us all to ask: What is already here? What does Nature allow us to do here? What does Nature help us do here? He then described Appalachian Harvest (AH), the local organic growers’ cooperative that ASD helped launch over the past ten years by helping tobacco growers transition to organic vegetables. AH now sells to 600 supermarkets in several regional chains (Food City, Ingles, Ukrops, Earth Faire, Lancaster), and will begin offering free range eggs this year in addition to a wide range of organic produce, and expects to gross \$700,000 in 2007. Among the co-op growers, one now sells organic inputs to the other farmers, three are making compost, and a dozen are producing certified organic vegetable starts in former tobacco greenhouses. In addition, he described how the tools of intensive training programs, networking, and market development, have enabled ASD and AH to be successful in selling organic food as well as sustainable wood products.

“Behind the farmer, any farmer, is a substantial network of supporters: feed and seed companies, implement dealers, specialist suppliers, fertilizer and field amendment distributors (lime, chicken litter, “bio-solids”, etc.), processors, canners, etc. It’s a symbiotic relationship: Without enough farmers, these supporters can’t exist. Without the supporters, farmers have a tough time of it. Therefore, **demographic density of farming is a critical factor for local food production, and thus food security.** If we are to be serious about building a secure local food supply base, it needs to be done on a sufficiently large scale to allow the full network of farmers and supporters to operate profitably. But to get that density of farmers and supporting businesses may require some serious thinking about issues not normally associated with food security, like zoning laws, for example.

Processing is the weak link in premium quality local consumer scale meat production in the Commonwealth. If a farmer grows more than 1000 meat chickens a year, they cannot legally process for sale to the public without official inspection. Even for a small market farmer, that’s only one or two month’s worth of production. And we certainly cannot wholesale our birds to local retailers unless they are processed in a State or USDA inspected plant - and as far as we now know, there are only two suitable plants in the entire Commonwealth that can handle small batch premium poultry processing - this, despite the fact that Virginia is a major producer of commercial poultry! **If we are serious about food security in Virginia, we need to bring back a lot more small, local, but officially inspected, meat processors.** That means jobs, folks.”- David Tatman

Presentations and speaker biographies are available at <http://www.virginia.edu/ien/foodsummit>. Updates for future events will be available here as well.

Summit Background

Consensus building work relating to food security and food systems planning is relatively new in Virginia, and has been undertaken primarily at the local level. Examples are the first regional Food Policy Council “Shore Good Foods,” established on the Eastern Shore in 2005, and Appalachian Sustainable Development (ASD), which is increasing regional food security in Southwest Virginia through market development and on-farm assistance.

Two other collaborative initiatives are also worth mentioning, as they reflect a collective desire to improve specific components of Virginia’s food system. The first initiative was the Governor’s Agriculture Net Receipts Work Group, which presented its report in 2003 to Governor Mark Warner and Secretary of Commerce and Trade Michael Schewel. The report, entitled “*Doubling Net Receipts in Virginia Agriculture: A Plan for the Years 2002-2012*,” details specific strategies to double net receipts in Virginia agriculture in the next ten years. (The report can be found at vdacs.state.va.us/pdffiles/govreport.pdf). Strategies include research and development; marketing/economic development; regulatory and tax reforms, incentives and credits; and farm business and farmland preservation. Though the work group emphasized that, while many of its recommendations are not new, they “are vital to rebuilding and restoring the infrastructure of Virginia agriculture.” The report highlights the threats of continued loss of farm and forest land, currently 40,000 acres lost per year. One important outcome of this report was the creation of the Secretariat for Agriculture and Forestry, which plays a prominent role in Virginia’s food security.

The second initiative is the Waste Solutions Forum of 2005, a collaborative consensus-building effort that brought together diverse interests and stakeholders to develop a strategic plan for improving management of excess manure in the Shenandoah Valley. Its report highlights many of the same issues that are connected to Virginia’s community food security:

“Farmers and agri-business are seeking economically viable solutions that will allow them to stay in business and resist pressures to sell farmland for development. . . Environmental groups are seeking ways to ensure clean waterways and drinking water maintained by the stewardship of a viable agricultural community. . . Local governments are seeking to protect rural agricultural heritage.”

Significantly, the Waste Solutions Forum steering committee succeeded in obtaining grant support to implement its strategic plan, beginning with pilot projects such as on-farm conversion of manure to energy.

Initiatives like these are what inspired the Summit hosts to test the need for a collaborative effort relating to community food security. It is hoped that the overwhelming mandate from Summit participants will provide impetus to both state agencies and non-governmental organizations to focus on ways to improve Virginia’s community food security through inclusive and collaborative initiatives.

Summit Findings and Recommendations

The following findings and recommendations are drawn from a combination of the morning table discussions and the afternoon focus group discussions. Topics for afternoon discussions were chosen by participants during the morning and resulted in the following eight discussion groups. The first seven were facilitated by Summit staff and the eighth was self-facilitated:

- 1) Small Farm Regulations
- 2) Food Safety
- 3) Food Security Network
- 4) Keeping Farmers (especially Farmers of Color) and Encouraging New Farmers
- 5) High-Tech and Creative Tools for Connecting Producers-Consumers
- 6) Low-Income Access and Hunger
- 7) Urban Agriculture and Permaculture
- 8) Richmond Focus

The following findings and recommendations are a direct outcome of priorities identified by Summit attendees. In the following sections, the order of the findings and recommendations reflects the Summit Hosts' collective review and judgment of multiple factors – e.g., how often a topic was raised, the topic's importance for improving Virginia's food security, the practicality and/or possibility for change, and the number of people participating in the discussion group.

A. OVERARCHING THEMES

These overarching themes and specific recommendations emerged from several sources: 1) a written survey distributed at the Summit to all participants; 2) written surveys completed by tables during the two mini-visioning sessions, prior to lunch; and 3) general discussion after each panel and mini-visioning session. The specific ideas and recommendations listed below are taken almost entirely from these written documents.

A.1. Create a Food Policy Council (FPC)

One of the goals of the Summit was “to explore the need for a stakeholder ‘roundtable’ or state-level Food Policy Council (FPC) to develop an integrated food security strategy for Virginia.” To this end, participants were given a written survey on Virginia food security to complete during the Summit. (*The survey is posted on the Summit website.*) Of those responding, over 75% agreed or strongly agreed that Virginia needs to develop a state food security policy. Further, over 75% also agreed or strongly agreed that Virginia food policy is best undertaken by a Food Policy Council with representation from all sectors and interests.

In addition to the survey, participants discussed this topic during two mini-visionings in the morning. During these discussions, participants repeatedly noted that a Food Policy Council should be pursued in conjunction with regionally and locally based food policy councils – a “bottom-up” model. The primary aim of the FPC should be to assist Virginia's smaller farms, as these are most at risk. (Only 50% of Summit survey respondents agreed or

strongly agreed that a state food policy should promote the economic viability of *large* farms, several with the caveat that, at a minimum, the large farms should be family-owned and operated.)

In this two-tier framework proposed by participants, smaller, locally based FPCs would assess local needs and challenges, to inform and suggest action to a state level FPC. In particular, “grassroots” or local FPCs were suggested for the Central Virginia/Greater Charlottesville and Richmond areas. Opinion was split as to whether a regional or state level FPC should come first, but all agreed that they should work closely together. It is important to note that the first regional Food Policy Council in Virginia was founded in Accomack County in 2005, and one of the Summit speakers from the Accomack-Northampton Planning District Commission represented this Council.

Participants expressed that both local and state FPCs will be most effective if they are grassroots-driven, collaborative, consensus-based, and inclusive of diverse stakeholder interests – particularly non-governmental independent family farmers at all scales and types, local people who know the land and the needs, and consumers. Additional membership would include state and local department heads, and even registered dietitians (tapping into the expertise of the Virginia Dietetic Association). Because of the breadth of backgrounds required for a successful FPC, professional facilitation and a neutral convener were suggested as a way to ensure that conflicts are resolved and that all stakeholders, particularly farmers, remain engaged.

Though public meetings were mentioned as being important, many comments surfaced *against* a council model that would use public hearings or listening sessions to develop policy. This approach was criticized as too “top down” and potentially absorbing money needed by farmers and consumers. Again, participants emphasized that a Food Policy Council should be grounded in farmers’ realities.

A stable funding mechanism and dedicated staff were suggested as ways to ensure effectiveness of a Council.

Participants noted that Virginia can benefit from the experience of other FPCs, avoiding their mistakes and customizing the FPC for the needs and conditions in Virginia. Over the past two decades, FPCs have been established in 14 states and in a handful of North American cities. The purposes of a Food Policy Council are typically to:

- 1) Develop, coordinate, and implement a food system policy;
- 2) Link economic development, anti-hunger and food security efforts, preservation, and enhancement of agriculture, and environmental concerns;
- 3) Ensure universal access to healthy and affordable food; and
- 4) Support development and expansion of local food systems.

The Summit keynote speaker, Michael Hamm, provided extensive information and suggestions for setting up a Virginia Food Policy Council. One participant identified the Center for Rural Virginia as a potential resource for a state FPC, though urban agriculture was felt to be an equally important issue.

A.2. Create a Food Policy

Strong support exists for a state food policy to increase Virginia’s food security. Some rudimentary elements of a state policy already exist through mechanisms such as the Cooperative Extension Service, which aims to support farmers in production, marketing and distribution. However, to address the current complex challenges of food security, participants suggested a host of goals for a Virginia Food Policy. The following is a compilation of

participant ideas for food policy goals, drawn from the written participant survey and written notes from table mini-discussions.

1) Policy and Planning Elements

- Develop and implement a “Sustainable Virginia Food Security Plan.” As part of this plan, provide funding to localities to launch Food Policy Councils with the initial goal of developing Community Food Systems Plans.
- Integrate land use policy and planning with food system considerations. Local planning should consider ways of supporting or providing additional tax incentives for farms producing foods for local consumption.

2) Regulatory Reform

- Revise the state food safety regulations to support small/medium family farms and protect public health in a way that is simpler and less burdensome than the current system.
- Promote policies that make local production and distribution easier.
- Establish goals and policies to eliminate food insecurity and hunger and increase access to healthy, local food by low-income and elderly consumers (transportation, access, elimination of urban and rural “food deserts”).
- Work for increases in funding for small farmers, conservation, nutrition and anti-hunger in the Farm Bill,

3) Economic Development

- Assist with restoring infrastructure for local and regional foods. Examples are: meat/dairy processing; canning capability; additional direct farm outlets such as farmers markets and co-ops.
- Work to maximize small farm viability through means such as networking, market development, and incentives.

4) Education and Connection

- Encourage and support (“cultivate”) farming as a career, especially in younger generations and people of color.
- Encourage, incentivize and ensure accuracy in labeling (country and food miles, organic, foods produced with chemicals and biosolids).
- Provide for continuing education and outreach where diverse organizations and people come together, learn from one another, and connect (e.g. future Summits).
- Provide education with the goal of changing consumer behavior through enhanced awareness.
- Ensure farmers have access to and are trained on technological resources.

5) Public Health

- Promote healthy children through farm-to-school programs that include fresh fruits and vegetables.
- Integrate into food policies the public health concerns, such as obesity, heart disease, diabetes.
- Emphasize sustainable and organic agriculture, including research and development on permaculture systems.

6) Environmental Considerations

- Promote environmental resilience (diversity) and prepare for future challenges from: fuel cost increases (peak oil/oil depletion); weather conditions associated with climate change; and migration of populations due to sea level rise.
- Promote clean energy in food production and consumption.
- Promote humane treatment of animals.
- Create alternative food supply chain and distribution systems that minimize food miles.

Equally important to ideas of what a food policy might address are participant concerns and caveats about what a food policy should not do or become. The following list is a compilation of participant concerns and reservations about a state food policy.

A Food Policy should *not*:

Goals and Focus

- Try to do too much too fast.
- Lose focus on land development pressure, land preservation, and preventing sprawl.
- Emphasize “economic growth” as the bottom line goal (which will lead to concentration on exports rather than sustainability).
- Leave out any type of agriculture in Virginia, no matter what type or the size.
- Receive only sporadic or inadequate funding.

Leadership and Membership

- Be a “top down” planning / design process.
- Under-represent farmers and consumers and over-represent state agencies.
- Leave out any stakeholders (e.g. large and small farms, conventional and alternative production systems, and culturally diverse groups, rich and poor).
- Be dominated by agribusiness/large farms, governmental agencies creating a cumbersome bureaucracy, and academic representatives.
- Polarize the agricultural community into an “us vs. them” mentality (such as organic vs. conventional vs. sustainable).
- Ignore considerations of farmers, such as time to be involved and limited access to technology.

Regulation

- Add bureaucratic layers/impediments or additional regulation for Virginia farmers.
- Allow safety issues to translate into more regulation rather than more connection and communication.
- Let the word “security” lead to approaches that emphasize “protection” of export crops.
- Ignore the variability in Virginia’s counties.

A.3. Focus on Farmland Preservation and Farming Viability

Participants throughout the day expressed deep concern at the rapid rate of farmland loss as a result of development pressure, high land prices/taxes, and decreased farming viability. Participants urged that these losses be seen as a wake-up call to the need for viable community food systems and investment in the rural economy. Most every Summit participant alluded to making food production a viable, sustainable business endeavor as the main way to ensure that farmland remains in farming.

Participants believe that family owned and operated farms, including large family farms, are an important focus, but that industrial models/corporate-owned farms should not be seen as the answer for community food security. A few participants suggested some sort of “Consumer Assessment” be performed to mesh consumer desires with production.

A.4. Create and Restore Infrastructure

The loss of food systems infrastructure was a concern echoed throughout the Summit. Infrastructure needs encompass not only production and processing, but also distribution. Summit attendees encouraged that investment in infrastructure be viewed as an alternative to traditional business recruitment, with equivalent financial investment. They also voiced the idea that the issue of seasonality could be addressed through the creation of infrastructure that enables food preservation and long-term storage. Many participants recommended that mechanisms for bringing together willing farmers and landowners are an important infrastructure component to food systems development.

During the mini-visioning discussions and in the written survey, participants identified specific infrastructure needs as follows:

- Facilitate mechanisms for small-scale meat/dairy processing at the local/regional level.
- Fund and support small-scale mobile or locally-oriented abattoirs.
- Improve local food processing and canning capability.
- Develop additional outlets for local purchasing and direct sale mechanisms (e.g., farmer’s markets, or a co-op broker like Appalachian Sustainable Development).
- Obtain local and/or state support for a liaison between farmers and sellers; this liaison would facilitate direct sales, marketing, and getting farmers to markets, and provide an incentive for retail institutions to buy local.
- Create a local USDA (possibly organic) certified meat-processing plant in Charlottesville.

Many Summit participants also recommended the development of food labels clearly showing country of origin (Country of Origin Labeling, or “COOL”), mileage and energy use figures. A few participants encouraged expanded use of the Virginia-grown label as well.

A.5. Implement Farm-to-School and Farm-to-Institution Programs

Throughout the entire day during table discussions as well as in the written Summit surveys, participants overwhelmingly advocated development of Farm-to-School programs. Participants described two-fold benefits: an increased market for farmers, and health benefits for children. In addition to schools, several participants urged

that other state agencies and institutions, such as hospitals and jails, also develop local purchase and community garden programs.

An afternoon discussion group on Permaculture focused much of its attention on the farm-to-school connection. (See next section for further information on this discussion group.) This discussion group stressed that school gardens offer additional opportunities to teach children, and to encourage them to take plants home. At other times during the Summit, participants also recommended cooking demonstrations as a way to complete the loop on the education of growing food.

Farm-to-School Background

Schools in Virginia have enacted Wellness Policies that have led to the removal of vending machines with unhealthy snacks and sodas, and not allowing fast-food chains in Virginia's schools. These are important steps toward health food in schools. A new webpage describes Virginia's current initiatives:

<http://www.vdacs.virginia.gov/marketing/farm.shtml>

In addition, legislation passed in the 2007 General Assembly includes two bills with the requirements to develop plans for Farm-to-School programs. These are summarized below and can be found at <http://leg1.state.va.us/>.

Farm-to-School Task Force. This Bill requires: “the Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry and the Secretary of Education to establish a farm-to-school task force to develop a plan for implementing a Farm-to-School Program in Virginia. The Task Force appointed by the Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry and the Secretary of Education shall complete its meetings by November 30, 2007, and the Secretary of Agriculture and Forestry and the Secretary of Education shall submit jointly to the Governor and the General Assembly an executive summary and a report of the Task Force findings and recommendations for publication as a House or Senate document. The executive summary and report shall be submitted as provided in the procedures of the Division of Legislative Automated Systems for the processing of legislative documents and reports no later than the first day of the 2008 Regular Session of the General Assembly and shall be posted on the General Assembly's website.”

Farm-to-School Website. This Bill states: “The Commissioner shall establish and maintain a farm-to-school website. The purpose of the website shall be to facilitate and promote the purchase of Virginia farm products by schools, universities, and other educational institutions under the jurisdiction of the State Department of Education. The website shall present such current information as the availability of Virginia farm products, including but not limited to the types and amount of products, and the names of and contact information for farmers, farm organizations, and businesses marketing such products.”

A.6. Integrate Local and Regional Planning

As most “on-the-ground” planning in Virginia takes place at the county and city levels, and given that local governments are very interested in building economies, local governments are a key player in developing a food-secure Virginia that attains sustainable local food systems.

Several participants recommended that each locality conduct a Food Assessment Plan, with guidance and financial assistance from a Food Policy Council. These participants further visualized a state requirement to protect farmland used for food production proportional to population. In this scenario, localities would be required to provide some form of protection for food-producing farmland proportional to county population; thus, much like wetland banking, a

locality with greater population would need to either preserve food farmland within its jurisdiction or purchase “food farmland preservation credits” from a more rural county. If done on a regional basis, these plans could be designed much like the State-required Local Water Supply Plans.

A.7. Provide Education and Demonstration Projects

Participants overwhelmingly identified education as an important need, and while there was not a specific “Education” discussion group, recommendations emerged from all discussion sessions and survey responses.

Examples of educational needs include helping producers navigate complex regulations, general education to the government and general public on the importance of food security and development of sustainable food systems. Increased visibility and public awareness of local farms and farm outlets are needed in order to increase public interest in purchasing Virginia products.

Several participants stressed that it is important to increase the number of demonstration projects in urban and rural food deserts to demonstrate the public health benefits of access to fresh, local produce, including community gardens.

Participants recommended that the following types of training be offered in an easily accessible format:

- Senior mentoring of school children.
- Directories of farms engaged in on-farm sales.
- Locating farms and other vacant lands that could expand types and scale of operations.
- Marketing techniques.
- Transitioning to Organic.

B. SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION PROPOSALS

Topics for afternoon small group discussions were proposed by Summit participants, and participants were allowed to select which groups they wished to attend. The following proposals emerged from these small group discussions.

B.1. Regulatory Reform for Small Farms & Food Safety

Two afternoon discussion groups focused on regulatory reform strategies and goals for small farms, building on ideas generated during the earlier mini-visioning discussions, one focusing on regulatory reform overall and one focusing more specifically on food safety. Throughout the day, participants repeatedly expressed concern about the current Federal, state, and local regulatory framework on small farmers. Participants overwhelmingly affirmed that the current state of Virginia’s regulations place an unfair burden on smaller producers and have contributed to the decline in small farm viability.

Reduce Regulatory Complexity

Participants identified regulatory complexity as a persisting issue that continues to challenge and burden small farmers. Many different agencies regulate and educate producers, processors, and distributors – creating a morass of complexity, confusion, and frustration that adds to the small farmers’ perceived and real burden. An abbreviated inventory of these regulatory and educational agencies regulators includes:

- Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS): weights and measures; on-farm inspection.
- Virginia Department of Health (VDH): kitchens, retail, restaurants, biosolids.
- Virginia Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ): biosolids (beginning 2008), water quality, water withdrawals.
- Virginia Department of Conservation (DCR): cost-share programs for soil erosion conservation, water quality protection, farm preservation.
- Secretariat of Agriculture and Forestry (SAF): farmers markets, specialty markets.
- Virginia General Assembly (GA): enabling legislation for local regulation.
- Local governments: land use, farmer markets, some input on biosolids.
- Virginia Tech Cooperative Extension Service (VTCE): education, training, marketing, promotion, research.
- Virginia State University: education, training, research.
- US Army Corps of Engineers (USACOE): wetlands.
- US Department of Agriculture (USDA): Farm Bill, federal regulations, policy.

Participants stressed that regulations affect all farmers, but are principally connected to and necessitated by concentrated production practices. While food safety is an important concern, participants expressed the view that requirements for concentrated production place unfair burdens on small farms. Participants envisioned a new regulatory system that would support and enhance farming at smaller scales, while also protecting food safety. They suggested the need for a two-tiered regulatory system whereby smaller farms are subject to different requirements than larger farms, providing for both food safety and a supportive structure for small farm profitability and local consumption. Participants recommended that regulations be scaled and appropriate to farm size, market, and locality, with farmers being key contributors to this process.

Based on these persisting problems described by participants, this discussion group developed three principal ideas for assisting small food producers: 1) streamline regulations for small farmers; 2) provide regulatory assistance and guidance to small farmers; and 3) improve food safety education for small farmers.

1) Streamlining regulations: The discussion group recommended that an interagency Task Force be established to conduct a full review of regulations impacting small food producers. This Task Force would examine whether current regulations are appropriate and effective, in light of the need to preserve family farms and foster a diverse array of profitable operations. This Task Force should solicit substantial public input from the regulated community (e.g. small farmers, distributors) and consumers through a roundtable-type effort. While this Task Force could be one of the first actions of a Food Policy Council, nothing prevents a Task Force from being established immediately.

Some participants suggested that a way to achieve Task Force goals would be to “start over” and develop a more equitable regulatory framework “from scratch.” Participants believe this process should aim to eliminate much of the bureaucracy and delineate benchmark goals.

Some participants suggested that the state consider specific changes:

- Create land use tax incentives for farms with smaller acreage than currently allowed, because significant food production can take place on small land parcels.
- Explore ways to make it easier to meet small meat producers' need for regional meat processing plants (e.g., should have fewer hoops to jump through than large processors).
- Explore ways to meet consumer demand for raw products (e.g., milk, cheese, cider) while also minimizing consumer safety risks.

2) Regulatory Assistance and Guidance: The discussion group recommended that a guide be developed for small farmers. This guide would use the “For Dummies” approach, including step-by-step guides and plans to enable small producers to meet requirements. The guide should specifically outline “pathways to production,” making it easy for small producers to navigate the system.

Additional guides using the “for Dummies” approach are needed for a) food preparation regulations governing food at farmer’s markets; b) raising small flocks of chickens; and c) small-scale egg production in Virginia.

The group identified the Virginia Association of Biological Farming (VABF) as a key resource that should be involved in both streamlining regulations and developing written guidance.

3) Food Safety Education: A second afternoon discussion group concentrated on food safety, again concerned with the complexity and difficulty of regulatory issues for small farm operations as they relate to food safety. Many of the issues identified by this group reflect and support those identified by the regulatory reform discussion group described above.

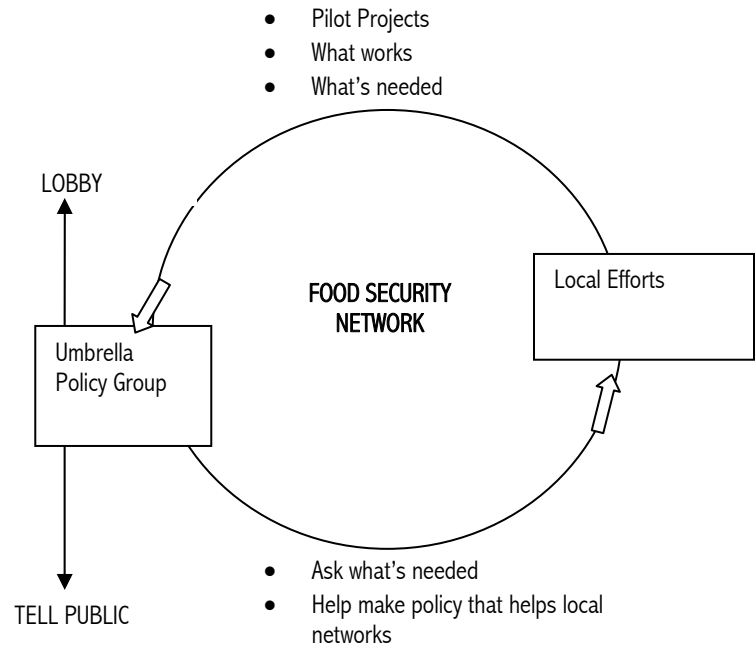
This discussion group suggested that a key way to improve food safety would be to improve food safety education. Participants developed the following specific recommendations, and stressed that these would make a significant difference:

- *Standardize food safety education:* The VDH should standardize food safety education across the state and offer classes that are easily accessible on a regular schedule. Issues and problems with the current education system could be corrected.
- *Appropriate venues:* The VDH must work with Community Colleges, Agricultural Extension Service, and other local partners to choose the most appropriate venues to offer education classes.
- *Financial support:* Courses and training on regulations must be supported financially by the state. This would help small producers who often find the cost of training a significant barrier.
- *Improve Consistency:* Remove the disconnect between state regulatory agency inspection and state research institutions. (An example of the Black Currant was given. Virginia Cooperative Extension Publication Number 438-107, posted July 2006, on the viability of growing currants and gooseberries, states: “Across Virginia, growing black currants is still against the law, and enforcement is conducted in nursery sales. Hybridized cultivars (nonpure black currant) that are resistant to WPBR are now available (and legal) and should be selected... Variable and often confusing legal issues are still an effective roadblock to development of a viable industry”).

B.2. Food Security Network

A third topic chosen by participants for an afternoon discussion group was the development of a food security network. This group proposed the framework for a food security network as outlined in the accompanying graphic developed by the group. The framework includes an umbrella policy group to serve as a partner to local efforts, lobby for improvements, and inform the public.

Given the other recommendations that emerged from the Summit, a state-wide Food Policy Council could easily serve as the “Umbrella Policy Group” that interacts with local-level efforts and organizations. In addition, many of the goals proposed for a network are aligned with the mission of a Food Policy Council. The network, however, would have more of an advocacy role and a specific mission to create local food-related groups and mini-networks, such as regional chef networks.



Graphic developed by Food Security Network Discussion Group

B.3. Keeping Farmers and Encouraging New Farmers

A fourth afternoon discussion group identified the need to grow and diversify farmers, in particular people of color. Additionally, Summit survey responses indicate a need for increased farmer recruitment and training to reach out to unconventional groups: low-income residents, young people, immigrants, and urban dwellers.

This discussion group encouraged exposing potential new farmers to successful operations. In addition, they highly recommended that schools implement agriculture training and education programs, covering all types of farming, as an important component of a Farm-to-School program.

Participants recommended that a new “Farmer/Rancher Initiative” proposed for the new Farm Bill could help with new recruitment in Virginia. (For more information, see: www.sustainableagriculturecoalition.org/).

Virginia’s Agricultural Vitality and FarmLink Programs

The afternoon discussion group that focused on farmer recruitment, as well as many Summit attendees in morning mini-visioning sessions, recommended that VDACS agricultural assistance programs be better funded and advertised. Information on these programs follows, and most of this information was obtained at http://www.savefarms.com/agvital_about.htm.

In 2000, the Virginia General Assembly approved establishment of the Virginia Agricultural Vitality Program to address the issue of farmland loss and the challenges to agricultural profitability and farm and business transfer. In 2001, the General Assembly created the Office of Farmland Preservation within the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, to oversee the Ag Vitality Program. The program currently has two initiatives:

- developing standards for local purchase of development rights programs (PDRs); and
- administering the Virginia FarmLink Program.

The Office of Farmland Preservation also is charged with:

- recommending funding sources for PDRs;
- providing assistance to farmers on farmland preservation issues; and
- educating the public on the importance of farmland preservation.

The Virginia FarmLink Program is designed to help two important segments of the Commonwealth's farm community:

- farmers and landowners who are facing retirement and want to see their businesses continue and their land stay in production; and
- beginning and aspiring farmers who are in search of business arrangements through which they can acquire land, equipment, experience and access to the knowledge of seasoned producers.

Funding and Incentives

The following ideas emerged from several afternoon discussion groups as well as participant mini-visioning sessions:

- Increased funding for Farmer's Market Nutrition Program (FMNP).
- Assist farmers, particularly new farmers, with developing business plans and economic training.
- Ensure that farmers are not discriminated against.
- Offer competitive grants for community food projects (build on current federal and private efforts).
- Enable and encourage land use taxation that reflects the reality of development issues.
- Provide farm equipment tax breaks (e.g., like Madison County).
- Promote reward systems for "local support" from retailers such as restaurants and grocers (e.g., like Ukrops).
- Recognize ecosystem services provided by farms by paying farmers for these services— e.g., ground water recharging (the Virginia Department of Forestry is currently working on such a program).
- Offer carbon offsets for local food production, to create disincentives for buying food that travels over 100 miles.
- Provide funding for transfer and purchase of development rights programs.
- Find ways that "leased" land can receive credits, loans, service.

B.4. High-Tech and Creative Tools for Connecting Producers and Consumers

A fifth afternoon discussion group concentrated on finding high-tech solutions to many of the challenges of food networking, specifically a high-tech tool to connect producers and consumers and create sales revenue. They focused on the following question: “Would producers/consumers, retailers, and the entire food supply chain use a statewide web-based tool to (socially) network and facilitate connections?”

Though it was noted that consideration should be given to assisting producers who do not have regular internet access, establishing a website with access to consolidated information was this group’s main recommendation. Survey respondents further recommended an online “one-stop-shop” for information for farmers/producers, to include not only regulations but also grants and technical information.

This group recognized that resources for development of such a tool include VDACS, Virginia Association of Biological Farming (VABF), and Virginia Cooperative Extension. Prior to development of such a tool, an analysis of existing Virginia tools as well as tools used in other states was recommended.

The group identified the following functions, attributes, and goals of a connective high-tech tool:

- Modular, regionally/locally customizable;
- Searchable;
- Increase productivity;
- Increase revenue;
- Increase local markets;
- Map-based (Geographic Information Systems).

B.5. Low-Income Access and Hunger

Consideration of food access includes not only geographic availability, but also affordability. Summit participants agreed that access to healthy food is a basic human right and that hunger and food insecurity are unacceptable. An sixth afternoon discussion group concentrated on this aspect of food security.

This discussion group recommended increased healthy food funding through WIC and food stamps, and that these programs be restricted to healthy food only. Specific recommendations include a strategy to achieve 100% participation for the WIC farmer’s market program and to allow \$20 per participant without any per family limit. One of the speakers noted that increased usage of WIC benefits would exceed available funding; therefore, full participation would need to be accompanied by increased funding for the WIC program.

An additional suggestion emerging from this group and other participants was to identify “food desert” areas—where access to healthy, fresh food is limited—and to survey residents to identify ways to connect them with farmers producing healthy foods, such as encouraging new distributors to locate in food deserts. Examples of new distributors included small neighborhood stores and food co-operatives. The group emphasized that education efforts should concurrently be focused on food desert neighborhoods or areas and on people experiencing hunger.

Farm-to-School programs (see previous section), including mentoring, were mentioned numerous times by Summit participants as a way to provide better long-term food access, health, and cost savings.

One participant described “hidden hunger” as obesity, diabetes, and poor concentration at school due to poor food. The following were additional mechanisms suggested to increase food security and access:

- Encourage Plant-a-Row for the Hungry (currently exists in some areas of Virginia).
- Donation of “seconds” from farms to food banks (Appalachian Sustainable Development model) with funding by local groups such as churches.
- Encourage small, neighborhood stores promoting healthy, local food;
- Encourage the Master Gardener Program to concentrate on underserved communities, offering scholarships and mentoring in schools;
- Provide scholarships for attending food-related training;
- Develop Community Kitchens with the goals of providing access, education, and entrepreneurial successes;
- Facilitate the linkage of growers with food banks and other agencies that provide food to the hungry, and develop legislation that prevents litigation for any liability; and
- Provide tax benefits (full write-offs) for surplus farm produce/product donated to area food banks, food rescue organizations.

B.6. Urban Agriculture and Permaculture

A seventh afternoon discussion group focused on ideas for developing urban agriculture and permaculture. The definition of permaculture is the use of ecology as the basis for designing integrated systems of food production, housing, appropriate technology, and community development (*Permaculture Drylands Institute*). Three main ideas emerged that support the other Summit discussion groups and survey suggestions:

- Engage schools to teach children to gain and retain knowledge of farming, cooking, and nutrition.
- Modify regulations to encourage local, fresh, healthy food in schools, hospitals, and senior living facilities.
- Formulate a local food policy council, linked to the local governing body, with a specific focus on schools, to influence local policy regarding food and institutions.

Because permaculture encompasses a diverse array of food security-related elements, this discussion group’s recommendations reinforce those of many other participants and topics. Many of these ideas are directly connected with suggestions for land use and planning.

Urban Agriculture

- Use urban agriculture and education for low-income areas as an educational tool to enhance nutrition.
- Use urban farms as a catalyst for promoting a healthier food system.
- Support cooperative networks for producers to address seasonality of foods.
- Link lands, farmers, and consumers through a cooperative network.
- Create an urban farm tool library / a co-op for “farmsheds” (farms in close proximity).

Schools and Institutions

- Build school greenhouses.
- Make gardening part of school physical education and health classes.
- Develop a summer school lunch program.
- Get involved in the Farm Bill to increase flexibility of schools and hospitals to purchase healthy, fresh food.
- Connect independent living facilities to farming.

Land Use and Design

- Survey unused land and identify proximity to schools, senior living and target for food production.
- Prioritize vacant lands to enable use for community gardens, with permanent easements.
- Increase research on pollution issues associated with urban farming—stress what to be concerned about and how to address it.

Education and Training

- Increase capacity building through education and demonstration, such as “edible yards.”
- Hold workshops to build cold frames, hot boxes, etc.
- Involve people with disabilities in food systems.
- Celebrate eating at farm sites (picnics, cookoffs).
- Encourage vertical thinking, not just horizontal.
- Share success models (like Chicago 1-acre garden) of productive farms and markets.

Sustainable Agriculture

This afternoon discussion group noted, in addition to some survey responses, several ways in which food security relates to environmental sustainability.

- Encourage Permaculture as a solution to reducing inputs as peak oil impacts increase.
- Promote clean energy in food production and consumption.
- Recognize and fund farmers for their ecosystem services (e.g., groundwater recharging, habitat protection).
- Provide carbon offsets for local food production and create disincentives for buying food that travels 100-plus miles
- Develop diverse, adaptable systems to deal with climate change.

B.7. Richmond Focus

The eighth group of participants, all from the Richmond area, chose to focus on the Richmond area's food security in an afternoon discussion session. The group represented: 1) smart growth advocates; 2) community gardens-Tricycle Gardens; 3) community development and economic development—Cooperative Extension; 4) farmers; 5) farmers markets-Byrd House Market. This group developed ideas for events they hoped could be outcomes from the Food Summit, to foster social networks and increase regional food security. They hope the following events and projects may be hosted in Richmond as outcomes of the Food Summit:

- Create a Richmond “Slow Food Group.”
- Develop a land, food, and culture event—educational festival with local food samples, music, and educational seminars/discussion to celebrate the Greater Richmond area (utilize Sauer's Spice Company, Convention Center).
- The VA Biological Farming Conference is being held February, 2008 in Richmond: host an event in coordination with that.
- Host an Education lecture series—at Virginia Commonwealth University, University of Richmond, Jewish Community Center. Possible speakers—Barbara Kingsolver, VA Cooperative Extension Service & J. Sergeant Reynolds Community College.

Additional Richmond-area projects proposed include:

- Support a sustainable agriculture program in conjunction with culinary arts and restaurants.
- Create a “Buy Local” directory—to include web hosting, web tool to develop local regional markets.
- Increase food access—food bank, food stamps and WIC connections with farmers markets.
- Create a food co-op—facilitate an urban agriculture project.
- Create an urban co-op. Train citizens to start it.
- Create a community garden at the Science Museum property.