

The Virginia Food Security Summit

Final Report

Findings and Recommendations

APPENDIX B

NOTES FROM MINI-VISIONING AND
SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION SESSIONS

Charlottesville, Virginia

May 11, 2007

**WHAT ARE YOUR TABLE'S TOP 2-3 IDEAS FOR WAYS TO STRENGTHEN
VIRGINIA'S FOOD SECURITY THROUGH POLICY?
(could be at local government, state, or federal level)**

1. Food Policy Council
 2. Education about value of local food – policy
 3. Clarification re: standards for soil and fertilizer for organic products
 4. Reduce restrictions on farmers for selling locally, make it required training more easily available
 5. Mobile abattoires(?) – not enough local slaughter houses – fairness and coops working together
 6. State planning re: urban sprawl – help save farmers
 7. Recognition and payments to farmers for ecosystem services – e.g., ground water recharging
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1. Tax benefits (full write-offs) for surplus farm produce/product donated to area food banks, food rescue organizations
 2. Increase the number of demonstration projects in urban and rural food deserts to demonstrate the public health benefits of access to fresh, local product, including from community gardens
 3. Changes in land use policy – land use taxation not in keeping with reality of development issues
 4. Get more input from small farmers on policy review
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1. All levels of government should behave in ways that support and enhance/grow local production for local consumption
 2. Solutions to food security should be local and diverse – governments should support local solutions
 3. Regulations should be scaled and appropriate to farm size, market, and locality, with farmers being key contributors to this process
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1. State agencies/departments/schools using local foods
 2. Reform regulations to allow SAFE, viable processing of food (particularly meat and dairy) at a local/regional level
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1. Policy to allow schools* to purchase locally grown (state) * state institutions and commercial
 2. Simplify* regulations of producers while improving public health - *standardize and publicize – multiple ways to communicate
 3. Food policy body – research other states *Foundation funds? Govt. funds? *Autonomy, universities, consumers, neutral convenor, some govt., grassroots
- *Defined outcome/time frame
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1. Get local or state support for a liaison between farmer and seller – as an incentive for retailers/institutions to buy local
 2. Use rolling labs to take to farmers to facilitate their compliance and consumers' information, increase funding for WIC Farmers' Market Program
 3. Include consumer assessment for their perceived needs to mesh with farmers' production
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1. Clarify and consistency of food prep policy of regulations governing food at farmer's markets – food safety
 2. Input from diverse population about policy
 3. Form Food Security Statewide Organization Policy
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1. Facilitation of linking growers with agencies that provide intervention for poor that lack food and having legislation that prevents litigation for any liability
 2. Pushing for more funding for small scale infrastructure such as mobile slaughterhouses
 3. Food Policy Council but not top-down but very grassroots and regionally based, i.e., local coalitions
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1. Better consumer information on meaning of “organic”
 2. Put mileage and energy use figures on all labels for food
 3. Dump bio fuels/encourage diversification less integration
 4. Make value added production requirements more accessible
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1. Push for county/country of origin
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1. Improve policies, regulations, infrastructure to support direct marketing by farmers (e.g., where to sell, how to sell)
 2. Statewide policies to encourage schools and institutions (e.g., prisons) to purchase locally produced foods. Enhance consistencies between school districts/counties.
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1. FMNP State and Federal funding
 2. Community Food Projects competitive funding program
 3. State food safety regulations too vigorous – revise – get farmers involved with VDACS in setting food safety policy – to be safe yet supportive of family farms
 4. Legislate to allow schools _____ to bid certain percentage higher for local foods.
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1. (Produce with) user friendliness improved (access to consolidated information) – guide? - consolidated web site?
 2. Liability insurance issues – personal liability, product liability
 3. Bettered / increased dissemination of consolidated regulatory info (e.g., “pathways” to production – dynamic check list (?))
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1. Strengthen procurement policies at local level – encourage local governments, institutions, etc., to buy locally/favor using dollars within 100 mile radius – locally produced
 2. Increase state investment in local community food processing infrastructure such as community kitchens, slaughterhouses, etc. We spend so much in state money investing in recruiting businesses, let's invest in food infrastructure.
 3. Carbon offsets into local food production/disincentives for buying food that travels 100 plus miles
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1. Increase support training infrastructure ; dairy regulations and poultry/beef processing regs. for local market farmers
2. Ensuring adequate inspector staffing to meet regulation requirements

3. Price support for local meat processing and inspection
 4. Eliminate government subsidies for commodity crops
 5. Require food farm land protection proportional to population
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1. Streamline and simplify information and regulations for food safety so producers and consumers can understand and act responsibly. Facilitate direct sales.
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1. Incentives for local sales
 2. Free market economy
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1. ID and change obstacles to “fresh food to market” (especially do not force producers to figure out what is needed)
 2. Emphasis on state institutional buying “in-state” (e.g., UVA, local schools, hospital, state colleges, corrections)
 3. Start local food policy “councils” (for information sharing, _____ to drive local government decision-making.
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1. Neighborhood supported market should be created like in Michigan (maybe replace IGA on Cherry Ave.). Health Department needs to establish guidelines/policies that local farmers follow and buyers can use when buying. Currently the HD only designates “reputable” vendors. What’s reputable?
 2. More healthy food available through WIC and food stamps (should be restricted to healthy food only – food stamps). Push to 100% participation for WIC farmer’s market program/increase funds/allow \$20 per participant without any per family limit.
 3. USDA should subsidize fruits, vegetables, and pastured meats instead of commodity corn (bio fuel, feed), soybeans, wheat, etc.
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1. Initiatives to incentivize institutions, and restaurants to source food from local sources.
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1. Legislative policies that encourage and support, rather than hinder direct access between producers and consumers, policies that allow small scale processors to be economically viable.
 2. Funding of infrastructure that supports the processing of goods to go directly from producers to consumers (produce, meats, etc.)
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1. Clarify what is meant by “food security”, is it access, safety, what? Define it.
2. Regulations and requirements be scaled for small scale/mid scale
3. What regulations/certifications even make sense/are necessary for direct sales farmers – if buyer and seller are happy who cares what the weights, etc., are.

WHAT ARE YOUR TABLE'S TOP 2-3 BROAD GOALS OR ELEMENTS OF A VISION FOR VIRGINIA FOOD SECURITY?

1. Facilitate local food use in schools and other institutions

1. Promote Animal ID – should enhance US Meat Food Safety
 2. Cool – (Council of Origin Labeling)
 3. Bio-security
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1. Education of public about food/health/community
 2. Build/provide more opportunity for producers – consumer connection
 3. Put mileage on produce in grocery store
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1. How to get farmers to come together and community able to feed itself around this issue
 2. More involvement of restaurant industry
 3. Seasonality – what does buy locally mean?
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1. Need for both incentive to support local – government based ex. tax breaks. Ukrops rep. wants to see that.
 2. Establish connection in community that educates as to safety and quality. Ex., news publication sent out to residents of Charlottesville and Albemarle
 3. Organizing farmers as co-op
 4. Bring farmers together to supply retailers.
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1. Raise citizen purchases of local production to 15% of food sales in Virginia by 2010
 2. Educate Virginia citizens on the importance of local production for local consumption
 3. Establish and promote a statewide policy and climate supporting local production for local consumption
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1. Remove state regulatory obstacles, to direct sales, farmgate sales, and value-added home production
 2. Identify ways to lower farm costs and increase farm income through for example community food centers for communal value – added production and consumer demonstrations of making food from local produce
 3. More local food business/farmer helps food insecure people (in need) by providing surpluses locally [instead of at a distant process/distributor]
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1. Convincing city of importance of farmer's market and sustainable networks
 2. Combining forces with a broad spectrum of health and food advocates
 3. Increase visibility and public awareness of local farms and food network, in order to rise higher on public's list of priorities
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1. Preserved/available land base
 2. Marketing infrastructure and processing infrastructure to enable direct sales
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1. Connection – producers and consumer – match making/information/directory
 2. Agencies/Farm Bureau – advocate for ALC, not just “big boys” – work together to support local food systems
 3. Organize grass roots advocacy and inventory of sources
 4. Production choice based on consumer need, not monoculture
 5. Start with community/collaborative producers dialogue = consumers
 6. Adaptable system – negative changes in climate and energy
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1. HEALTH – invest in local, high quality food for better health in the long term
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1. No one goes hungry
 2. State, farm bureau, VA Tech, policies move from globalization to local
 3. Buy local – shift from world market to local market (consumer)
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1. Farm profitability #1
 2. Good infrastructure
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1. More food grown in Virginia and eaten by Virginians
 2. Educating communities – how to purchase local/Virginia food and what not to purchase – ex. eliminate HFCS avoid aisle shopping
 3. Make food accessible and affordable to those in need
 4. Support local/healthy food in schools and hospitals – break the USDA cert. Barrier
 5. Support farmers in meeting local markets – not commodities
 6. Address least cost purchasing – factor in full bottom line intangibles
 7. Shift distribution/marketing money back to farmer by addressing
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1. Consumer awareness of local
 2. Awareness of identity values of VA grown
 3. Virginia farmers feeding Virginia consumers – transitioning farmers away from commodities
 4. Profit for farmers – percentage of food money to farmers
 5. Food security, access to healthy food
 6. Markets for local food
 7. Community supporting farmers
 8. Local food more affordable
 9. Scale specific
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1. Bio-fuels – “explode the myth”
 2. Accessibility of fresh and local foods
 3. Infrastructure – state policy for general public vs. corporations – preservation – processing, freezing – energy use – meat processing
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1. Increase local/regional sales greater than 10%
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1. Shift to multi-season production (for wide variety of crops)
 2. Improved processing/preservation capacity
 3. Shift from commodity to value added production
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1. Public education on food issues – seasonal eating, eating locally, economic benefits to eating locally
2. Advocate by government/NGO/non-profit financial support of infrastructure for local farming – setting up farmers’ markets, advertising, education programs, networking between farmers/retailers, processors.

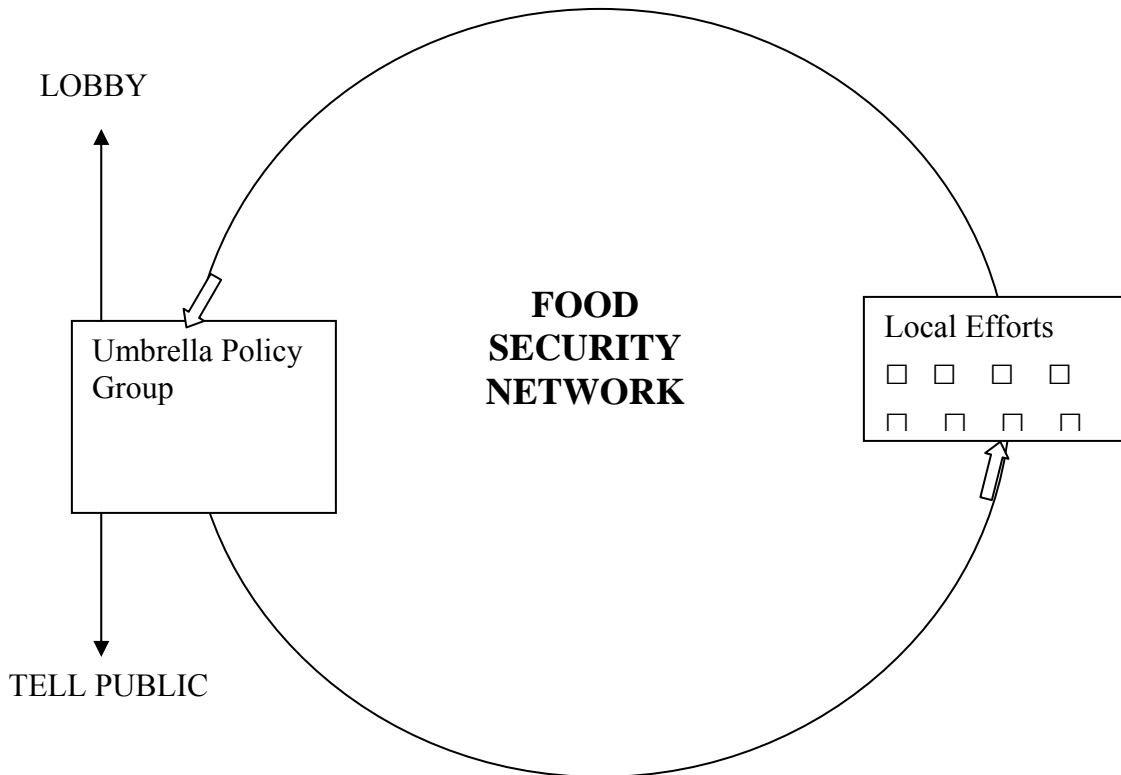
AFTERNOON DISCUSSION SESSIONS

Topics you would like to discuss (in P.M. Small groups)

- Extending FMNP throughout Virginia and other state/Federal Farmer's Market Support programs
- Small farm & processor regulations that should support and help, not hinder & prevent
- Consumer responsibility and self-control—i.e. government does not take care of them from cradle to grave
- How can locally-produced food be made affordable to low-income people
- High-tech Tools! Web-based market development/e-commerce
- Form a Virginia Food Security Network
- Establish a State CSA-small farmer start-up fund
- Role of permaculture
- Regional issues roundtables: E.g. Greater Richmond Discussion group-what affects us in particular?
- People of color losing farmland

Food Security Network Framework (Flip Chart #1)

- Pilot Projects
- What works
- What's needed



- Ask what's needed
- Help make policy that helps local networks

#2

Mission's' for Network

- Promote and advocate for farmland preservation
 - Find un-used farms and farm infrastructure e.g. Lynchburg Grows and Appalachian Sustainable Development
 - Rebuild Abattoirs and look at regulations affecting small-scale agriculture
- Regs affecting small farms in general:
- Appropriate?
 - Effective?
 - Suitable?
- Educate and dispel myths about food security
 - Help start/seed local groups
 - Inspire more young and/or urbanites, immigrants, to become farmers
 - Foster diversity e.g. ASD model

#3 Caveats to Consider

Recognize Land Use Problem

- Farmland Loss
- High cost for land / tough to invest
- Don't be too utopian > develop viable (\$) alternatives
- Need sparkplug champions to carry message and draw in partners

#4 Next Steps VA Food Security Network "Sustainable 3 Es"

Need Dfn.

- - Access:
 - Production network
 - Processing
 - Distribution
 - Marketing
 - Affordability
- Safety
- Not Going Hungry/having choice variety

Assurance of cleanliness (Chem: Bio)

Whose standards, trust relationship vs. Govt. regulations

Nat'l Security e.g. shipping oil

1-3 weeks

#5 steps con't

- 1) start several small, local groups = mini-networks
chef networks
local food in schools, diet program
e.g. Harrisonburg/Shenandoah Valley Public Schools
- 2) define mission so as not to disenfranchise other VA farmers
- 3) Website
- 4) Players: Margaret Merrill, Eric Benedict, Amber Vallotton, Lynda Fanning

High-Tech and Creative Tools for Connecting Producers-Consumers

Would producers/consumers, retailers, entire supply chain use a statewide web-based tool to (socially) network and facilitate connections?

Who should help design?

What are existing portals?

What are challenges to development?

What functions / attributes?

- Modular, regionally/locally customizable, searchable
- Increase productivity, increase revenue
- Increase local markets
- Map-based

Useful to connect with other producers, consumers

- Network to access available resources
- Network to sell products

* Include funding efforts, grantwriting

Current resources: VDACS, VABF, VCE

Jonah Fogel, VA Cooperative Extension, Richmond

Low-Income Access and Hunger

Farm-to-School

Community Gardens

- Food Project—MA
- Growing Power—Milwaukee
- Heifer International
- ATTRA

Healthy Families – Family Farms

- Seconds to Food Bank
- Funded by local groups, churches, etc.

Plant-a-Row for the Hungry

Education—proximity to hungry

Sharing our strength

Access to grocery

- Small neighborhood stores
- Farmers Coop

Master Gardener Program

- Offer to underserved communities
- Scholarships
- Mentoring in schools

Community Kitchen

- Access & education

Survey residents' interest

Small Farm Regulations

Start over with regulations

Cheese/end of curing meats

Reasonable regs

Learn-new farmer

It is not just VDACS

Livestock “victim”

- Tiered strategies
- Spending \$ in wrong way

Who:

VDACS—Weights and measures; on-farm

VDH—retail, restaurants

USDA

Legislature—Dillon's rule

Local—sludge, land use, farmer market

US Army Corps of Engineers—Wetlands

VT/extension

Vstate-training

What:

- Arcane/delays
- No simple/clear paths...- to farmer, - to regulator
- Catch 22/conflicts

- Land use tax for small acreage
- Limited staff/delays, response time
- Bureaucrats
- Loss of customers

- traditional farming “friendly”, not “industrial” approach

- tiered structure of regs.
 - Chicken model

- Raw milk issue-own fight

How:

- Task force
- *Guide to regs
- Forum/Roundtable/Regulatory negotiation

Low-hanging fruit?

We decided a “For Dummies” approach would work to assist navigating the regulatory morass.

State-published guides—aimed at new farmers/farmers considering new enterprises.
e.g. Raising small flock metal chickens in Virginia for Dummies; Small-scale egg production in Virginia for dummies, That sort of thing...

This process would force the State agencies and organizations to deconflict their own regulations!

Amber Vallotton, Extension Agent, Harrisonburg

Keeping Farmers (especially Farmers of Color) and Encouraging New Farmers

- Need “one stop shop” for information for farmers/producers (regs, grants, technical)
 - Internet possible, but connections may be slow
 - Minority/racial discrimination can hinder grower/producer success. Can affect getting loans, for example.
 - Economics are complex for new farmers
 - (new) farmers may hesitate accepting financial aid (consider as welfare)
 - Less local banks>less loans to local start-up farmers
 - “Leased” land inhibits getting credits, loans, service
 - Are there less school agriculture programs
 - Are they teaching traditional farming or alternative farming (e.g. organic, etc.)
 - Farm vitality program may be:
 - Underfunded
 - Not advertised
- New farmers need to see other successful operations
- More \$ for transfer/purchase development rights program
 - Enable direct marketing programs
 - Less regs. For direct marketing, Farmers Market
 - Farmers may have trouble sustaining a farmers mkt. presence
 - New “Farmer/Rancher Initiative” proposed for new Farm Bill
 - www.sustainableagriculturecoalition.org gives more info
 - Reduce taxes
 - e.g. Madison County farm equipment tax

Urban Agriculture and Permaculture

Key Actions

- how does permaculture fit in local food production—reducing inputs as peak oil impacts increase
- capacity building-education and demonstration
 - “edible yards”
- Prioritize vacant lands for community gardens (with permanent easements)
- Urban agriculture and education for low-income areas as educational tool to enhance nutrition
- Increase access to healthy foods
- Urban farms as catalyst for healthier food system
- Involving people with disabilities in food systems
- Increasing healthy, fresh food in schools
 - Do need to address lunchtime meals
- School gardens
 - Local food programs to teach children>take plants home
 - Cooking demos
- Greenhouses at schools
- Summer school lunch program
- Support cooperative networks for producers to address seasonality
- Make gardening part of school P.E. & health class
- Connecting independent living facilities to farming
- Senior mentoring of school children
- Farm Bill Action—increase flexibility of schools and hospitals to get healthy, fresh food
- Survey unused land and identify proximity to schools, senior living and target for food production
- Link lands, farmers, and consumers through cooperative network
- Celebrate eating at farm sites (picnics, cookoffs)
- Urban farm tool library
 - Coop Farmshed
- Workshops to build cold frame, hot box, etc.
- What practices and techniques of permaculture are applicable to urban environments
- Better understand pollution issues associated with urban farming
 - What to be concerned about and how to address it
- Think vertical, not just horizontal
- Share success models (like Chicago 1 acre garden) of productive farms, markets

Recommendations

- Engaging schools and children to retain or regain knowledge farming, cooking, nutrition
- Modify regulations to encourage local, fresh, healthy food in schools, hospitals, and senior living facilities
- Formulate local food policy council with focus on schools linked to governing body and influence local policy re: food and institutions

Resources

- Blue Ridge Permaculture Network

- Rockfish Valley Community Center Permaculture Certification
- Blue Moon Fund
- Potomac Vegetable Farms, Northern Virginia
- Food Project, Boston
- Intervale Farm, Burlington, Vermont

Food Safety

Uniformity within Department of Health across the State: How they regulate and who they work with, regular schedule of classes on web, etc.

Simple things that can be done in VA to make a difference:

- VA Dept. of Health needs to standardize food safety education across the state- offer regular classes with a regular schedule that is easily accessible.
- VA Dept. of Health must work with Community Colleges/Extension-local partners to choose most appropriate venues to offer classes.
- These courses must be supported financially by the state.
- Remove disconnect between state regulatory agency inspection and state research institution (Black Currant example).

Contributions you or a group/org. can make on this issue:

Bring attention to the complexity/difficulty of these issues for small farm operations
VABF

Map out a plan that small farmers/food providers can implement to meet requirements
Step-by-step guide

Richmond Focus

Jonah Fogel, Stacey Moulds, Liz Taylor, Adele MacLean, Benjamin Shirley, Patricia Stansburg, Molly Harris

Who we represent:

- Smart growth advocates
- Community gardens-Byrd House Tricycle Garden
- Community development & Economic WRIR
- Development-farmers
- Farmers Markets-social network

A. Informed Event-an outcome from today's meeting?

- a. "Slow Food Group"
- b. Land, food & culture event—musicians, farmers market celebration of Greater Richmond
Sauer's Spice Company, Convention Center
- c. VA Biological Farming Conference. Feb 08 in Richmond
- d. Education lecture series—Virginia Commonwealth Univ.? JCC? University of Richmond? Barbara Kingsolver, VA Cooperative Extension Service & J. Sarge.
- e. Sustainable ag program and culinary arts & restaurants

Need social networks

B. Buy local directory—web hosting, web tool to develop local regional markets

C. Food access—food bank, food stamps and WIC connections with farmers markets

D. Food co-op—facilitate urban ag project

Urban co-op. Train citizens to start it.

Science museum property—community garden.

Stay in touch.

Think systemically.

Jonah will keep us connected.