

Food Hub Conversation – August 23, 2014

Stories:

Paku Hang – Hmong American Farmers' Association, member-based non-profit in Minneapolis.

- Goal is to build community wealth through agriculture. Non-profit offers service to Hmong farmers to help them break through glass ceiling. One obstacle: access to land (that they know they can have for more than one season).
- They aggregate farmers' produce and sell it. Sell to Minneapolis public schools, restaurants, hospitals, and run a 200-member CSA.
- They offer trainings/workshops for farmers
- Run a research program so we have numbers to benchmark farmers' progress

Vicente – Blue Corn Cooperative

- Has been in Minnesota for a few months, interested in urban agriculture.
- He is working on a small orchard with other immigrants (3-year old project). Met two Chileans and started a cooperative, stemming from a project that Debra Ramos was working on dealing with growing blue corn.

Paris Dunning – Urban Oasis, East St. Paul

- Started with idea to build food center on the eastside of St. Paul, proximal to St. Paul farmers' market
- Dealing with access to processing and marketing local food
- Hopefully working with cooperatives down the road
- Currently working on creating a catering company and processing company

Joanna Baken – Organic Food Buying Club and Rosendale (?) Food Coop

- Currently 60 members
- Mostly local but also organic non local things
- Order wholesale from frontier coop
- Sell it whole sale + 10% to customers
- Members need to volunteer, help sort the food
- \$3,000-\$5,000/week in food going to families
- Challenge: How to we involve people that work fulltime during the day since we require volunteer time?
- Rosendale Food Coop – people need to be able to volunteer and get a discount

Candice –

- Feeding people on the north side, teaching people how to work and grow for themselves
- Growing entrepreneurs while servicing the community

Adam – U of St. Thomas and Community Table

- Food distributor – Bright Side Cooperative

Neal Richie – Main Street Project

- Developing a free range poultry system

- Moving people into leadership positions to better their own lives
- Equity, wealth-retention in communities are driving principles

Karen Clark – Women’s Environmental Institute

- Environmental justice should include food – particularly medicine
- Looking at toxic exposure, especially in regard to farmers
- Urban land is contaminated so you have to grow new soil, we need to scale up our compost production so everyone can grow
- Started the Community Food Justice Council across neighborhoods and cultures
- Helping small farmers transition to organic

Collie –

- Partner with Women’s Environmental Institute, working with Main Street Project and Bright Side
- Working on bringing these groups together to build a cooperative
- Help fund small/starting farmers, can repay with vegetables

Questions/discussion

- Soil testing resources?
 - U of M has resources – how to collect and send it to them
 - Also build your soil! Check out how Growing Power does it with vermiculture.
- Is anyone mapping all this stuff going on? How can someone go to one place and find all of this? (Karlle Cole)
 - I (Karlle) would be interested in doing this. I live in south Minneapolis.
 - It would also be great to take all the community food assessments and look at patterns. A lot of research has been done, and we need to start doing!
- How do we get land access when there isn’t a lot of land. Something we’re doing is a Yard Sharing Network (Molly Costello from Chicago). We have a toolkit if you’re interested.
- I live in West Virginia (Joe Gorman). We have a lot of vacant land so there are \$1 100-year leases. We also have places that are owned by out-of-state companies that lease land to coal companies. Could people farm this land?
- Zoe (Appetite for Change, Fresh Corners): Working to support small-scale farmers of color. Trainings, investing in their farms, policy research, community campaigns and outreach work. Working on how do we create demand for local, fresh food in low-income neighborhoods. We want to sell to our own communities, not just high-end markets.
- Jim Connors: There has been a push to get local food in schools, why don’t public facilities (places that have tax money coming in) have leverage to get local food coming in?
 - We need scale and leverage

- One challenge is that people have the mindset that food is cheap. We need to give preferences to local vendors. It is the aggregation and also price (Paku)
- Recently started working at the Weight House. We're working on a food justice unit. If you see places youth from Weight House could be plugged into the work you all are doing, let me know.
- Minnesota Food Council at the state level – if you're interested talk to Karlie Cole.
- Bishar Issak: Working on youth gardening, what they grow, they eat.