

Farm School and Beyond...

hosted by the

South Carolina Food Policy Council



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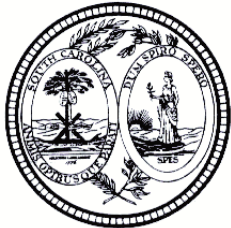
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Hugh E. Weathers, Commissioner

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Dear Reader,

The 2008 federal Farm Bill provided that schools be allowed to use local preferences in buying agricultural products, both locally grown and locally raised. This policy has really set the stage for encouraging Farm to School programs to flourish.

In addition to encouraging students to make healthier food choices by eating more fresh fruits and vegetables, Farm to School also educates students about how agriculture is connected to food and nutrition. Some advocates talk about getting certain foods out of schools, but we're working toward getting healthier foods into schools. Starting with fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables in season, we can build stronger bodies, and at the same time, build stronger local economies. When a school food service operation buys local produce directly from a grower through a local distributor, the entire community wins. This same message is true for employers, hospitals and other institutions that serve food.

This report is generated from the words and discussion from participants in the 2011 Farm to School... and Beyond workshop, which sought to expand and increase the amount of local produce being purchased and served by SC institutions. While I serve as your Commissioner of Agriculture, my staff and I will strive to provide leadership in a statewide initiative, as well as work to spread the program to other institutions, such as colleges and hospitals. I am proud and encouraged by the number and diversity of people and organizations who attended the workshop. It is imperative for a wide sector of the population to recognize and work together to provide fresh, local food to schoolchildren, as well as to support our state's farmers and growers.

By working together with the SC Food Policy Council, the SC Department of Education, the SC Department of Health and Environmental Control and Clemson University, I believe that we can implement and grow this program to its full potential.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Hugh E. Weathers".

Hugh E. Weathers

Foreword

In 2006, a multi-stakeholder group recognized the impact of health, environmental, educational and economic factors on the state's food systems, and formed the South Carolina Food Policy Council, which is housed under the State Department of Agriculture.

The Council is one of many food policy councils across the nation, but one of only 20 state-level food policy councils. The Council provides a forum for South Carolina stakeholders in food, health and agricultural sectors to collaborate on the sustainability of agriculture and food systems in the state, and to propose solutions and initiatives to key decision-makers. As a result of these discussions and meetings, an annual report is developed and provided to the state's Commissioner of Agriculture and other interested policy makers. In the 2008 report, strategies for improving accessibility and availability of fruits, vegetables and other healthy foods as a part of a farm to institution initiative were specifically recommended.

In late 2009, the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control and the South Carolina Department of Agriculture initiated a contract for more interagency collaboration on issues common to both agencies. This collaborative effort helped the Food Policy Council fund and host the state's first sustainable local food systems workshop, which was held on January 29, 2010.

The second interagency collaboration has been focused on "Farm to School... and Beyond," which looks at ways to make sourcing more local, fresh produce into school food-service and other institutional food-service programs here in South Carolina a sustainable and common practice. The results of this workshop (held on April 28, 2011) and the feedback from the participants have been captured in this report. Recommendations for supporting a statewide Farm to School program and moving beyond schools to other institutions as a way to support sustainable local food systems are presented in this report.

Acknowledgments

The success of this workshop, and the information generated to create the report, would not have happened without the support and involvement of the South Carolina Food Policy Council planning committee, whose members include: Elizabeth Beak, Todd Bedenbaugh, Ben Boyles, Katherine Cason, Beth Crocker, Dr. Kevin Elliott, Darcy Freedman, Teresa Hill, Dave Lamie, Larry McKenzie, Ana Parra, Debbie Petitepain, Allison Schaum, Diana Vossbrink, and Dr. Geoff Zehnder.

Special thanks to the Phillips Market Center staff at the South Carolina State Farmers Market, as well as Spotted Salamander Catering for their assistance and planning in providing the group with wonderful meals prepared with local foods.

Additional thanks go out to Marie Lybrand, Kay Rike, Carrie Bethea, and Meredith Ritchie for their time and support of this project.

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Workshop Overview

On April 28, 2011, the Food Policy Council of South Carolina held a Farm to School... and Beyond workshop at the Phillips Market Center, located at the State Farmers Market complex. The morning session and part of the afternoon session included presentations by leaders in the fields of agriculture and education on subjects such as South Carolina's new statewide Farm to School pilot program, examples of current farm to institution programs and their challenges, how to begin a farm to institution program, and barriers facing producers, farmers and distributors.

Following the presentations, the group broke into three concurrent focus groups, where they talked in depth about specific aspects of Farm to School programs. Led by Dr. Geoff Zehnder of Clemson University, one group discussed food safety and production issues for small farmers; another group, led by Dr. Kevin Elliott of the University of South Carolina, discussed supporting Farm to School programs in the classroom, and the third group, led by Dr. Holly Harring, statewide Farm to School coordinator, spoke about how to initiate a local food program at your institution. Each group was asked to identify barriers and problems related to their topic and work toward identifying solutions and recommendations.

Presentation Recaps

Note: These recaps follow the individual styles and formats of their presenters, and therefore vary in format presented below.

Statewide Farm to School Pilot program

Dr. Holly Harring

Dr. Holly Harring, statewide coordinator of South Carolina's Farm to School program, presented on the topic of the state's Farm to School pilot initiative, which is a collaborative effort between DHEC, the South Carolina Department of Education, the South Carolina Department of Agriculture and Clemson University. The two-year pilot program is funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The program will award approximately 52 sub-grants of \$3,000 each to South Carolina schools. To participate, a school must agree to: a) purchase SC grown fruits and vegetables from local sources, b) provide menus that feature at least two locally grown fruits and vegetables per month, c) integrate agriculture and nutrition education into the school curriculum, and d) establish or revitalize a school garden. To help schools through these processes, regional coordinators have been hired.

Why should we start a statewide Farm to School program in South Carolina? The three-part answer includes the facts that first, South Carolina ranks near the top nationally in several categories of fruit and vegetable production (so there is much to go around), second, a Farm to School program teaches students about the path from farm to fork by providing local produce in school meals (many young people unfortunately don't know anything about food production beyond fast food restaurants and grocery stores), and third, the program would create a new market and increase revenue for small- and medium-sized SC farmers who often struggle with demand, while also lessening the environmental impact of transporting food long distances.

These three reasons to start a Farm to School program correlate directly with the pilot program's mission: to connect schools (K-12) and local farms with the objective of serving healthy meals in school cafeterias; to improve student nutrition; to provide agriculture, health and nutrition education opportunities; and to support local and regional farmers.

Core Program Components:

1. Promote healthy eating among school children through hands-on learning activities: start a school or community garden, take students on field trips to local farms so they can also grow their own crops and follow them from seed to table.
2. Provide education to foodservice staff and teachers on Farm to School practices – ideas: take food-service workers on field trips to farms so they can meet farmers, grow their own plants, and become involved in the process.
3. Start or revitalize a school garden.
4. Increase the number of farmers who are certified to provide locally grown products into schools (this involves helping farmers navigate the GAP auditing process).



Program Sustainability:

1. Work to pass S0812 and H4200: bills that would require the Department of Agriculture to create and maintain a program to encourage schools to serve locally grown, minimally processed farm foods.
2. Increase the visibility and momentum of SC Farm to School through marketing as a strategy to strengthen local farms' economics and reduce childhood obesity.
3. Expansion beyond schools to other institutions, including after-school programs, hospitals and businesses.

Pilot Program Challenges

The GAP certification process can cost up to \$1,000 for a small farmer, and some costs can be recurring. Currently, the USDA provides \$400 to help cover the costs, available through Jack Dantzler, Director of Grading and Inspections at the SCDA, when a farm applies to be audited. Through the South Carolina Farm to School grant, Holly would eventually like to be able to supplement more of the cost of the audit for any farmer who agrees to sell to schools. The South Carolina program would target farmers who grow crops easiest to certify and sell to schools, for example, leafy greens are not easy for school cafeterias to wash, cut and handle, but strawberries and squash are easier. Some costs and benefits would have to be analyzed, though, because sweet potatoes are hard to wash and store but there are so many ways to use it, could we make the costs worth it? Everything concerning GAP (Good Agricultural Practices) auditing should be focused on which crops are best for schools.

Within the statewide pilot program, there will be three regional coordinators working with the Department of Agriculture: one each for the Upstate, Midlands and Lowcountry. These coordinators will work with small farmers to prepare them for and help them through the GAP certification process. There are also three Department of Education regional coordinators who will be working with schools, food-service directors and school garden supervisors. Additionally, there are three regional coordinators working out of Clemson University who will assist teachers in adding Farm to School coursework and activities to current curriculum.

Holly also hopes that there will soon be a standardized plan to help farmers through the GAP process. This plan would guide the farmers through the application process to receive funding to help with the cost of GAP certification.

Anderson County's Farm to School "Grow With Me" Program

Allison Schaum

Farm to School is more than teaching children about agriculture, it's also an economic development issue for the state as it can help work toward the goal of keeping more money in-state, spent with local farmers. Anderson County alone spends \$500 million on food annually, with most of the money going out of the state and country.

The mission of Anderson's "Grow With Me" program is: By incorporating educational components with the substitution of local produce on cafeteria menus we will improve the health of our children, foster better environmental stewardship, boost the local farm economy, and rebuild relationships between eaters and farmers.



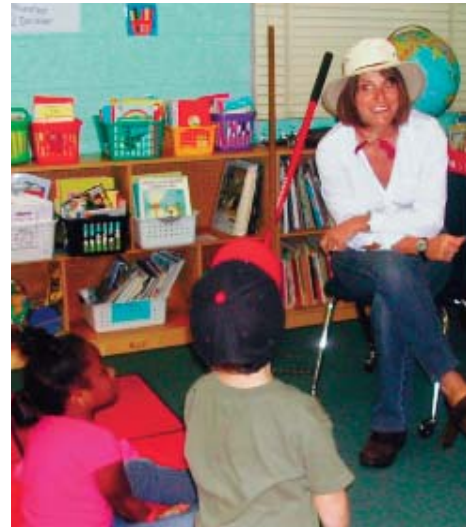
The program's vision includes four goals: a) Local Food in Schools: The main goal of the Farm to School program is to provide farmers a viable market in their community to sell produce, while supplying our schools with the freshest food possible. b) Farm Field Trips: This component of the program



strives to rebuild a connection between kids, where food comes from and who is growing food in our local communities. c) Nutrition Education: With the loss of connection to where food comes from, there has also been a disconnect with preparing food and healthy eating. The nutrition component of the Farm to School program consists of cooking demonstrations and classes to help students learn to enjoy preparing and eating healthy, fresh foods. d) School Gardens: Students will eat what they grow. The school garden component is the link between healthy eating and reconnecting students with their agricultural heritage.

The "Grow With Me" program was able to accomplish many of its goals. It provides a variety of local foods to schools within the district, including tomatoes and cucumbers in the summer, blackberries in the fall and strawberries in the spring. The program has taken children on grant-funded field trips to farms. Nutritional and agricultural education was also built into Anderson's schools' curriculums, as teachers hold taste tests of fresh local food for kids and also give cooking demonstrations.

Many schools also established gardens, including four new ones this year. One setback that Allison mentioned was that the program tried to establish a "Crop of the Month," but ultimately had to abandon the idea as there was not enough volume of local, in-season fresh food to supply the participating school districts.





Current status of “Grow With Me” program:

- a) Had to decrease strawberry purchase in 2011 due to change in child nutrition director in one district
- b) USDA grants allowed purchasing of local raspberries for 2010-11
- c) Finalized details on local frozen blackberries in lunch line for 2011-12 school year
- d) Future growth potential: The state needs more GAP certified farms to increase supply of local, fresh produce for schools in the program.

Lexington School District Month of May

*Todd Bedenbaugh, Director Office of Health & Nutrition
South Carolina Department of Education*

What are the benefits of locally grown food?

- a) **It tastes better.** Food grown in your own community was probably picked within the past day or two. It’s a crisp, sweet and loaded with flavor compared to produce flown or trucked in from California, Florida, Chile or Holland. Several studies have shown that the average distance food travels from farm to plate is 1,500 miles. In a week-long (or more) delay from harvest to dinner table, sugars turn to starches, plant cells shrink and produce loses its vitality
- b) **Local food supports local farm families.** With fewer than 1 million Americans now claiming farming as their primary occupation, farmers are a vanishing breed. And no wonder – commodity prices are at historic lows, often below the cost of production. The farmer now gets less than 10 cents of the retail food dollar. Local farmers who sell directly to consumers cut out the middleman and get full retail price for their food – which means farm families have a better chance to stay on the farm, doing the work they love.
- c) **Local produce is better for you.** Fresh produce can lose nutrients quickly. Food that is frozen or canned soon after harvest is actually more nutritious than some “fresh” produce that has been on the truck or super market shelf for a week. Locally grown food, purchased soon after harvest, retains a higher percentage of nutrients.

What are the benefits of Farm to School?

- a) **Connects kids to the source of their food:** As mentioned before, children usually aren’t aware of the intricate, multi-step process that delivers fresh food to their plates. With a Farm to School program, children can learn about and even sometimes participate in the growing, harvesting and distribution of their food.
- b) **Promotes healthy eating habits:** Childhood obesity is an epidemic not only in our state, but in our country. With a Farm to School program, children can learn that fresh fruits and vegetables taste as good as or better than junk food. It has been shown that kids are more likely to try new fruits and veggies if they have been part of the growing process.
- c) **Increases revenue for small family farms:** Schools and other institutions represent entirely new markets and revenue sources that could open up for farmers with the implementation of Farm to School programs.
- d) **Keeps local dollars in the community:** Instead of paying food distribution companies to truck in food from other states or other countries, the state and even local city and county money would stay in the state if schools bought fresh food from local farms.



- e) **Environmental benefits:** A school or other institution's carbon footprint is lowered by keeping the source of produce as close as possible.
- f) **Focus on schools:** Brings schools back to the center of the community by helping them become an economic source and market for farmers

What's in it for the farmer?

- a) **Increase in revenue:** Schools and institutions provide new markets and sources of revenues for farmers.
- b) **Increase in customers:** Teachers, food service staff, parents and children are all audiences that might not be aware of local farms in their communities. By providing fresh produce to schools, a farm is marketing their product to these new audiences who could become customers on their own. Additionally, new or revamped Farm to School programs could receive positive media coverage and PR.
- c) **Reconnecting with community:** Farmers can get to know their community by participating in a Farm to School program. Instead of customers that are halfway across the country or halfway across the world, their customers become their neighbors.
- d) **Satisfaction of knowing they are providing healthy options for community youth:** Farm to School programs help children learn about their food and can change their eating habits. Farmers and distributors of fresh produce can be directly involved in improving children's lives.

Obstacles:

- a) **Distribution:** Todd mentioned that he found only four farmers in Lexington County that could possibly be able to provide fresh produce to the district. This means that to get their produce to schools, farmers might have to travel long distances, which would add to their costs.
- b) **Farmers:** Some farmers contacted were simply not interested, or thought that the labor and distribution costs would be prohibitive.
- c) **Food safety regulations:** In order to provide fresh produce to schools, farms must be GAP (Good Agricultural Practices) certified. This can be an obstacle to small farmers, as it is a time-consuming and sometimes costly process (record-keeping, water testing, etc.). However, South Carolina's new statewide Farm to School coordinator, Holly Haring, as well as the three new agriculture regional coordinators, will be available to help SC farmers through the process.
- d) **Infrastructure needs:** Each school's cafeteria is required to run as a business, so they must be self-sufficient and they must break even in terms of their budget. There is very little extra money to go around to spend on new methods of distribution, so a Farm to School program must work within the existing systems.



During the week of May 17 through 21, 2010, seventy schools in Lexington County participated in a Farm to School pilot program, as a joint effort of the Department of Education and the South Carolina Department of Agriculture. Participating farms included Walter P. Rawl & Sons in Pelion, Clayton Rawl Farms in Gilbert, Watsonia in Ridge Spring and Coosaw Farms in Fairfax. Senn Brothers, a local produce distributor, delivered the fresh food (26,000 pounds!) directly from the farms to the schools. Highlights of the week-long cafeteria menu included: collard greens, seasonal plums, fresh pico de gallo, strawberries, blueberries, summer squash, zucchini, kale and peaches.

Todd also provided some quick math that helps explain how careful school cafeterias must be in terms of budgeting. According to Todd, a school generally has about \$1.60 to spend on one meal per child per day. Forty percent of that goes directly to labor, leaving 96 cents. When you add up the cost of the entrée and milk, there is usually only about 21 cents left to spend on fruits, vegetables and bread. This presents a challenge for the schools, as the price that schools can pay for produce may not match up with what farmers are asking.



Lowcountry Collaborative
York Glover
Clemson Extension Beaufort

York Glover was inspired by the Illinois Task Force on bringing local foods to institutions to bring the same thing to the Lowcountry of South Carolina

(http://www.agr.state.il.us/marketing/Mkt_ILOFFTaskForce.html).



An example of Farm to School in action: Lexington County Farm to School Week, May 2010 (Source: <http://www.midlandsbiz.com/articles/5397/>)



He was aware of infrastructure and distribution problems that arise when farm to institution programs are initiated. His goal: Solve the problem while also bringing new markets to small farmers, as right now they are mostly limited to farmers markets, CSAs and U-Pick as ways to sell their product.

The Lowcountry Collaborative Task Force, including Beaufort, Jasper and Colleton counties, was created to support small farmers, with a grant from the Strom Thurmond Institute of Government and Public Affairs at Clemson University, which paid for the study and legal costs of incorporation. Their main focus was to figure out how to get local, farm fresh food to schools, with a focus on fresh vegetables. Farmers started growing crops together and negotiated prices while also donating some of the food they grew to local food banks.



GAP Compliance and Audit Verification Program

Jack Dantzler, Director of Grading and Inspections, SC Department of Agriculture

In 1998, the FDA and USDA issued “The Guide to Minimize Microbial Food Safety Hazards for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables,” partly because wholesalers wanted assurance that the produce they sold was safe. Shippers and growers then approached the USDA to develop a voluntary audit system, which resulted in the Good Agriculture Practices/Good Handling Practices (GAP/GHP) audit system. The auditing program has continued to grow ever since then, and in fiscal year 2010, 2,137 audits were performed in 45 states, as well as in Canada and Mexico.



The GAP certification and food safety process deals mainly with the production and distribution aspects of a farm to institution program. As stated previously, these can be the most difficult and complicated obstacles for small farmers to overcome when they want to contribute to a farm to institution program.



The USDA GAP/GHP program standardizes rules, restrictions and regulations for farms that wish to provide fresh food to schools and other institutions. There is an extreme focus on food safety and tracking of product from farm through all the steps it takes to be delivered to a child’s school lunch plate. USDA GAP certification is not mandatory, but producers who wish to sell to the federal government must meet GAP standards, which have also been adopted by others in the industry.



The Agricultural Marketing Service division of the USDA provides a list of audited and certified farms for those who wish to find a farm that could provide fresh and local food to their institution: <http://www.ams.usda.gov/> click on “Grading, Certification and Verification.”

There are six components to the auditing program, plus a general Q&A section that must be passed first in order to move on to one or all of the six components. A farmer or producer must score a minimum of 80 to pass.



The six components are:

1. Farm Review: water, manure, animals/wildlife, land use
2. Field Harvesting and Field Packing: sanitation and transportation
3. House Packing: water use, packing line operation, general sanitation
4. Storage and Transportation: containers and pallets, pest control, temperature control, transportation/loading
5. Wholesale Distribution/Terminal Warehouse
6. Preventive Food Security Procedures: based on the FDA's "Food Producers, Processors and Transporters: Food Security Preventive Measures Guidance for Industry," audit-based and included as part of GAP/GHP audit.



Additionally, traceback questions were incorporated into each component starting in November 2009. A facility should be able to track produce containers from the farm to the packer, distributor and retailer. Containers should indicate date of harvest, farm identification and who handled the produce. Being able to trace each piece of produce through each step is one of the most important parts of GAP certification, because everyone must be prepared in the event of food-borne illness or recall.

As part of the GAP certification process, every farm is required to have or make a Quality Manual, which should include:

- A brief history of the operation
- List of employees and duties
- Map of location of operation
- GPS coordinates (if available)
- GAP/GHP training certificates (if available)
- Product floor plan (for packing house)
- Farm maps (where products are located)
- Required procedures and samples of charts

Additional requirements include signs in English and Spanish, good hygiene practices, water test reports, pest control, temperature logs and cleaning logs. There is also a section of general questions, which is a mandatory component of all audits. These cover employee and visitor hygiene practices, training of employees, sanitation of the farm/facility and traceability of what is produced.

A farm will automatically fail the GAP audit process if

- There is an immediate food safety risk
- There is a presence of rodents, pets, etc.
- There are employee practices that might jeopardize the safety of produce
- Falsification of records
- No Quality Manual (Question G-1)
- No one designated to oversee an established food safety program (Question G-2)

To request an audit, first call the SCDA for a Request Form, and then you must consent to an unannounced visit by the auditors as well as send in a copy of your Quality Manual prior to the on-site visit.



Other program requirements:

There is one announced yearly audit as close to the beginning of your season as practical, and there is also at least one unannounced verification visit performed sometime during the remainder of the 12 month cycle. The fee for an audit is \$92/hour, as well as a \$50 administrative fee (each time an audit is performed). Billing starts when the inspector leaves the office, and it ends when the inspector returns to the office. Grants are available for first-time producers, and travel time can be shared between multiple producers in the same area.

General Questions

Implementation of a Food Safety Program

Questions	Points	YES	NO	N/A	Doc
P-1 A documented food safety program that incorporates GAP and/or GHP has been implemented.					D
P-2 The operation has designated someone to implement and oversee an established food safety program. Name _____					D

Traceability

Questions	Points	YES	NO	N/A	Doc
T-1 A documented traceability program has been established.	15				D
T-2 The operation has performed a "mock recall" that was proven to be effective.	10				R

Worker Health & Hygiene

Questions	Points	YES	NO	N/A	Doc
G-3 Potable water is available to all workers.	10				R
G-4 All employees and all visitors to the location are required to follow proper sanitation and hygiene practices.	10				P
G-5 Training on proper sanitation and hygiene practices is provided to all staff.	15				D
G-6 Employees and visitors are following good hygiene/sanitation practices.	15				
G-7 Employees are washing their hands before beginning or returning to work.	15				
G-8 Readily understandable signs are posted to instruct employees to wash their hands before beginning or returning to work.	10				
G-9 All toilet/restroom/field sanitation facilities are clean. They are properly supplied with single use towels, toilet paper, and hand soap or antibacterial soap and potable water for hand washing.	15				

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November 6, 2009
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Detailed GAP/GHP audit info can be found on the USDA website at www.ams.usda.gov/gapghp and at the SCDA website at <http://www.agriculture.sc.gov>.

The screenshot shows the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service website. The header includes the USDA logo and the text "United States Department of Agriculture Agricultural Marketing Service". Below the header is a navigation bar with links: Home, About AMS, Newsroom, Opportunities, Online Forms, Help, and Contact Us. The main content area is titled "Grading, Certification and Verification" and features a section for the "Fresh Produce Audit Verification Program". This section explains that the program is a voluntary, audit-based program that verifies adherence to the recommendations made in the Food and Drug Administration's Guide to Minimize Microbial Food Safety Hazards for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables. It also mentions that the program is broken down into three major sections: Good Agricultural Practices, Good Handling Practices, and Food Defense protocols. On the left side of the page, there is a "Search AMS" box and a "Browse by Subject" list. On the right side, there is a "I Want To" section with links to "Address List of Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Inspection Offices" and a "Resources" section with links to "USDA Audit Checklist (PDF)", "USDA Audit Score Sheet (PDF)", "USDA Audit Checklist & Score Sheet (Excel)", "Tomato Audit Protocol for the Fresh Tomato Supply Chain", and "Harmonized GAP Standards".

Good Agricultural Practices: Food Safety on the Farm

Dr. Geoff Zehnder, Coordinator, IPM & Sustainable Agriculture Programs, Clemson University

The American Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA), which was signed into law in January 2011, expands food safety enforcement by the FDA, including certain farms and processing facilities to develop and implement GAPs and to keep very good records. The records are very important, because when someone has been sickened or infected by something they ate, regulators must be able to trace every step of the production and distribution process to find the problem when they issue a recall. There is an exemption to this act for “qualified facilities,” which is a facility with less than \$500,000 in annual sales, and with most of their products sold directly to consumers in the same state within a 400 mile radius.

Funding for the FSMA has not yet been appropriated, and implementation and enforcement by the FDA is probably years away. Therefore, produce buyers that currently rely on GAP certification will continue to do so. This can restrict the farm to institution market access for smaller producers who are not GAP certified.



The image shows a USDA GAP & GHP Audit Program form. It includes fields for Farm Name, Contact Person, Audit State, Main Address, City, State, Zip, Telephone No., Fax, E-mail, and a list of auditors. There are also checkboxes for whether the auditor is participating in GAP & GHP training and whether the farm is a qualified facility. The form is titled "USDA Good Agricultural Practices & Good Handling Practices Audit Verification Checklist".

What are some reasons why a farm should consider implementing GAPs?

- First, the adoption of GAPs will increase market opportunities for farmers, as they will be certified to sell to government institutions and schools.
- Second, GAP procedures and records will reduce the liability of a farm, since they will be able to trace every step of their production and distribution in case of an outbreak or recall. This could also reduce insurance premiums.
- Finally, most GAP standards are just common sense: They involve establishing food safety policies and procedures as well as looking at a farm's operation, identifying high-risk procedures and modifying infrastructure.



The Clemson Organic Farm underwent GAP certification, and following are some examples of the kinds of issues and modifications they had to identify and implement:

- a) Use a separate cooler for eggs and produce
 - b) Restrict bird access to market area
 - c) Establish a produce washing facility with proper drainage
- Total cost: approximately \$3000

Question and answer session at end of presentation:

1. How many farms in South Carolina are GAP certified?

As of January 2011, there were 11 GAP certified farms in South Carolina, per Jack Dantzler of the SCDA.

2. Can an entire small farm be certified instead of being certified crop by crop?

Jack Dantzler: No, each crop must be certified on its own because of the wide variety of individual issues presented by each different kind of crop.

A Distributor's Perspective
Don Wellborn of Carolina Produce



Food distributors can help facilitate Farm to School programs in South Carolina by serving as the middleman between farmers and school, and by linking schools to local produce while helping mitigate risk.

Pricing can be an issue, because farmers are able to get wholesale price when they sell to a distributor, but they get retail price if they sell directly to a school. There is a need for farmers to work together and pool their resources so that they can get volume pricing; this also helps maximize the quantities that they can sell. Distribution can also be split among the farms to lessen the cost.

Don believes that we need to think of “local” as SC grown, rather than region-specific, which can be very difficult to implement since sometimes only one kind of fruit or vegetable suitable to school lunches can be grown in a specific area of the state (this initiative is embodied in the Department of Agriculture’s “Certified SC Grown” campaign. While it would be ideal for schools to use produce that was grown right around the corner from them, sometimes logistically it is better to use a crop that is from elsewhere in the state.



Specific problems and barriers from a distributor's perspective:

1. *Recalls/traceability:* This is not a barrier so much as it is just a very important aspect of Farm to School. If a child gets sick, or something is found in the food (Don used the real-life examples of staples found in an orange and fishing line found in food), everyone involved must have accurate and detailed records so the problem area can be identified and fixed. The distributor is usually the first to hear about any problems. If information on just one step of the process is missing, the entire crop or kind of food would be affected. This is where GAP certification plays an important role.
2. *Allergies/storing:* Schoolchildren can have a wide variety of food allergies and issues. When a distributor is storing different kinds of crops together or even close by, this has to be thought of. Peanuts, strawberries and other allergy-common crops should be stored in separate containers and should never come in contact with another kind of crop, for fear of cross-contamination.
3. *School budgets:* Schools have very little extra funds to spend on buying local, fresh produce. Don pointed out that currently, strawberries from California are half the price of local SC strawberries. Schools must have an incentive and see the value in local food, similarly, farmers must see the advantages of working together and bringing the price down.
4. *Drivers:* School district rules and regulations are very strict in terms of who is allowed to come on campus and make deliveries. Drivers from local distributors need to be very clearly uniformed and easily identifiable if they are going to make deliveries to schools or other institutions. Some schools and districts also require any driver that comes on campus to have a background check.

Question posed: If a school can't use a product grown within the state, can we pack and distribute it locally?
Every part of the process should be looked at to determine what can be done in-state.

Where do you start if you are an institution and want to start sourcing locally grown food?

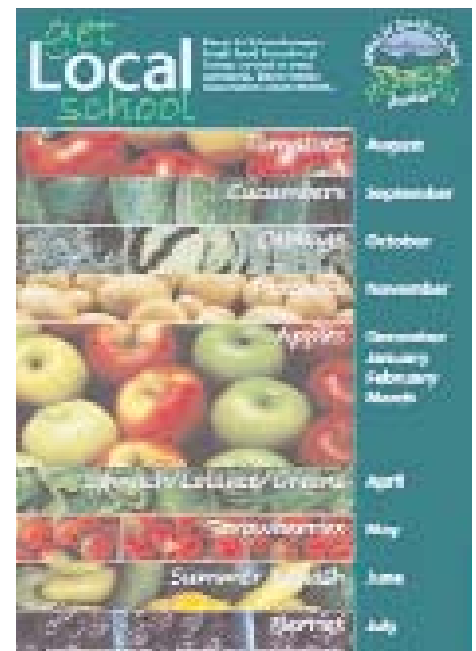
Emily Jackson, Program Director, Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project

Southeast Regional Lead for the National Farm to School Network



Emily's first piece of advice on how to start a Farm to School program at your institution was to **start small**. Many schools have had success with the "plant a row" idea, in which a farmer donates just one extra row of crops to a school, or when a school plants just one row of food.

Emily also shared a chart of the Harvest of the Month, which shows which crops are most fruitful in each month of the school year (for the southeast region of the United States):



Emily's next piece of advice is to **work within existing systems**. Schools already have many food deliveries being made every day, so why not see if they can help in terms of distribution and getting food from a farm to your school?



Next, **build capacity**. Start working with parents to see if they can help with a school garden, then collaborate with food-service workers in the cafeteria to get them on board, and then reach out to farmers. It is also important, as many presenters mentioned at the conference, to invite food-service workers as well as parents to join the class on field trips to farms. The more people who feel connected to the farm and the crops, the better.

The next step: **engage the community**. Invite farmers into school to meet the kids, teachers and administrators, and let them interact. One idea that is always popular is a taste-test of one specific kind of food. A corn taste-test was mentioned: The teacher let students taste corn on the cob, popcorn and canned corn, and the students voted on which they liked best.



Another strategy is to **highlight positive food environments**. Emily's group publishes a newsletter called "Local Food Guide for Kids," which is a colorful and engaging look at farms, farmers markets, school gardens and more. It is an easy and creative way to create interest in fresh, local produce.

Next, **focus on the educational experiences**. Go on tours of farms and farmers markets, give food-service workers "market bucks" that they can use at the farmers market to buy fresh produce and then let them be creative with how they prepare it, or bring a local chef into the classroom to teach kids and workers how to cook with fresh produce.

It's also important to **connect to local food movements**, such as First Lady Michelle Obama's "Let's Move" and "Chefs Move to Schools" campaigns. Books such as "Food, Inc.," "In Defense of Food" and "Eat Where You Live" have also been huge hits in the mainstream culture. There are so many other local, regional and national farm-fresh food campaigns, why not try to partner with one to help your institution?





Another piece of advice: **Connect the cafeteria to the community and the classroom.** Put up signs and posters highlighting the farms where the food is coming from, and publicize your menus. Additionally, point out on the menus which parts of the meals feature fresh, local food. Make posters that feature the food service workers visiting farms and cooking with fresh produce. When kids see and know where their fruits and vegetables are coming from and remember meeting the farmer and touching the dirt, they are more likely to try and experiment with new foods.

Emily also mentioned how helpful it can be to **connect to other institutions**, such as Farm to Hospital, where locally grown food is served in hospitals. Hospitals also participate in CSA drops, visit farmers markets, and hold cooking classes. Farm to Head Start is another way to connect to children, since starting young means you have a greater chance of establishing healthy behaviors and attitudes.

Finally, a successful Farm to School program needs to **gather data**. This could mean gathering comments from parents who have seen improvements in their children.



Some examples from the Farm to School Pilot Program in Madison County, NC:

- *My son was so excited about cooking and eating new things in class. Since then he tries more types of food.*
- *My non-vegetable eating child came home saying he loved kale!*
- *He tried new things that without having tasted them at school he probably wouldn't have had the opportunity*
- *My daughter enjoyed these projects and bragged about eating fresh veggies at the farm. She tried more raw veggies at home after the farm trip.*
- *I think it's great for children to learn where food comes from, especially since this county once produced a large number of crops and families grew their own food.*
- *Keep serving local grown products for lunches.*

Addressing Barriers to Local Food producers

Dr. Kathryn Boys

Kathryn presented her work on two different research projects: “Bridging Specialty Crops Producers and Institutional Food Consumers” (October 2009 to present), and “Linking Specialty Crops Producers and Institutional Food Services: Food Safety Concerns and Considerations” (August 2010 to present).

The first project (“Bridging...”) is supported through a USDA Specialty Crop Research Initiative Planning Grant and a Clemson Service Alliance Citizens and Scholars Mini-Grant.

Kathryn presented the “win-win” opportunity for both the farmers and institutions involved in farm-to-institution programs. For producers, there is a new market opportunity and a guaranteed outlet for products. Institutions get to offer fresher (higher quality) foods, increase the availability of produce to vulnerable populations (children, elderly), and, especially at schools, this kind of farm-to-institution program can be complementary to other initiatives that counter childhood obesity. A farm-to-institution program also supports development of rural economies and promotes community connections. Kathryn especially highlighted that “Due to age, economic and/or health status, it is often the clients of institutions who can least afford specialty crops but whom would most benefit from an increase in their consumption.” In this grant, specialty crops included fruits, vegetables, horticulture and nursery crops.

Next, Kathryn spoke about why farm-to-institution is a critical need in the Southeast. The region is among the worst in the country in terms of obesity rates: According to Calorielab, South Carolina has the 9th highest obesity rate in the country, North Carolina ranks 10th and Georgia ranks 17th. In South Carolina, 65% of adults are overweight or obese, and more than one-third of high-school students are overweight or obese. These states also rank low for per-capita income: According to the Census Bureau, South Carolina has the 45th lowest per-capita income, North Carolina is 35th and Georgia is 38th. In South Carolina, 58% of children depend on reduced or free lunches. South Carolina also surpassed \$1 billion in obesity-related medical spending in 2003.

Kathryn’s presentation featured a chart that helps explain the farm-to-institution “marketing problem,” or why it’s hard to connect farms and institutions. Their needs and abilities vary widely.

Kathryn’s first study had two clear objectives: 1. Improve understanding of the current barriers that limit the ability of southeastern specialty crops producers to serve as suppliers to institutional food services, and 2. To develop a sufficient understanding of the research and extension needs surrounding the farm-to-institution marketing channel to submit successful future grant proposals. This project looked at small- to medium-sized (less than \$500,000/year in agricultural sales) producers of specialty crops: fruits, vegetables, horticulture and nursery crops. It also included schools, hospitals, correctional facilities, military bases and long-term care facilities in South Carolina, North Carolina and Georgia as available institutions. Phase I of the project, in fall 2009, involved stakeholder focus groups. Phase II, in spring 2010, involved a two-day conference of 97 attendees where there were panel discussions, keynote speakers, breakaway discussions and large group discussions. The next step was a proposal and paper(s).

Producer	Institutional Food Services
<ul style="list-style-type: none">· Small quantities· Heterogeneous Products· Strong Resistance to Cooperatives· Reluctant to enter channel - lower unit prices	<ul style="list-style-type: none">· Large quantities· Homogeneous Product· Limited Labor, Equipment (Schools)· Need ease of ordering, delivery, some value added processing, invoicing complexities· Verification of regulatory compliance· Seasonality (Schools)· Lack market-based incentives to incorporate these foods into their menu planning

Kathryn's second project, entitled "Linking Specialty Crops Producers and Institutional Food Services: Food Safety Concerns and Considerations," was supported through the Southern region Sustainable Agriculture Research and Extension (SARE). Her team met with small and medium specialty crops producers as well as institutional food buyers in Asheville, NC; Clemson, SC; Columbia, SC; Charleston, SC; and Athens, GA.

Her findings included:

- Producers cited significant concerns about their capacity to adhere to proposed food safety regulations and potential traceability requirements.
- GAPs certification was frequently cited as a limiting challenge to accessing institutional food markets
- As a group, producers are generally quite independent; minimal interest in working cooperatively with other producers
- Strong desire for more resources from university extension services and NGOs



General barriers on the producer side:

- Perceived high costs of complying with regulations, traceability
- Lack of time and expertise needed to address food safety within current production systems
- Ambiguity of regulations; require additional education

Findings from the buyers:

- Desire to procure from local producers, but cited several factors which limited their ability to do so
- Strongly committed to food safety, but all are not convinced that the additional regulations will meaningfully improve food safety outcomes
- While not yet required, understood and explored potential challenges to introducing traceability into institutional food services
- It would be a challenge to introduce traceability into institutional food service operations, but it would be possible
- Additional financial and technical resources would be required
- Additional coordination and information sharing between food service providers and institutional food services would also be needed

General barriers on the buying side:

- Current supplier contracts limit ability to purchase food from local producers
- Additional management time, labor and technical resources needed to introduce traceability and maintain required records.

Focus Group Discussions

I. Food Safety and Production Issues for Small Farmers: Developing Farm Food Safety Plans and the GAP Certification Process, led by Dr. Geoff Zehnder

One of the main challenges relating to farmers participating in Farm to School programs is that farmers view the GAP auditing process as costly and time-consuming. Generally speaking, the SCDA supports an increase in farmer participation in GAP certification as a way to maximize access to a variety of markets. A primary goal of the Farm to School Pilot Program is to have as many South Carolina farms or crops become GAP certified as possible so that the produce can be sold directly to local schools' food service buyers. This is important to the sustainability of a successful Farm to School program because schools are required to use food from an "approved" source, which includes GAP certified farms and produce.

Issues identified by the group in its initial discussion focused on specific recommendations for the three new SCDA regional coordinators within the pilot program, realizing that they will be faced with addressing the concerns of both small farmers and interested schools:

- What should they do that goes beyond introductory meetings and training?
- What are the first steps of the GAP certification process and how will coordinators get farmers on board?
- There is obviously a demand for local, farm fresh food at institutions, so how do we increase supply?
- How can we convince farmers to see this demand as an economic opportunity and realize that GAP certification will likely lead to an increase in their profitability?
- Could GAP certification decrease a farm's liability in terms of safety on the farm and food safety?

One suggestion was that there should be materials (brochures, hand-outs) created that would show how GAP certification leads to new markets in a simple, easy to understand way.

- Would Clemson and/or the SCDA provide these materials?
- How would this information be disseminated to farmers once created?
- Would farmers be invited to workshops?

One issue pointed out is that farmers are looking at price per unit and not always factoring in the related time costs, such as delivering this product to multiple customers and destinations. For example, farmers should consider the work, prep and marketing that is involved when selling at a farmers market versus selling to a single school. Even though the unit price when selling to a school may be lower, there is no marketing involved as the school or institution is a guaranteed market with a contract. It can also be less time consuming to sell to a school because a farmer doesn't have to sit for four hours at the market selling their product, and there is also no set-up or tear-down of the booth.

Related question: How much does institutional marketing cost versus marketing at farmers markets and roadside stands? Providing farms with this type of information could be helpful as they compare the "cost" of doing business in various markets with different customers.



There is also a community outreach component/benefit for farmers who sell as part of Farm to School. They can share information about their involvement, and use it as a marketing tool for potential customers who may see this as a positive and choose to patronize the farm for other things, such as family meals. Bringing students into the agricultural process helps everyone, from the children to the school to the parents, and it would certainly help farmers as well by potentially increasing their customer base to receive patronage from these families. The first step toward this for a farmer is GAP certification, which could be marketed as just “the right thing to do,” or “Just do it.”

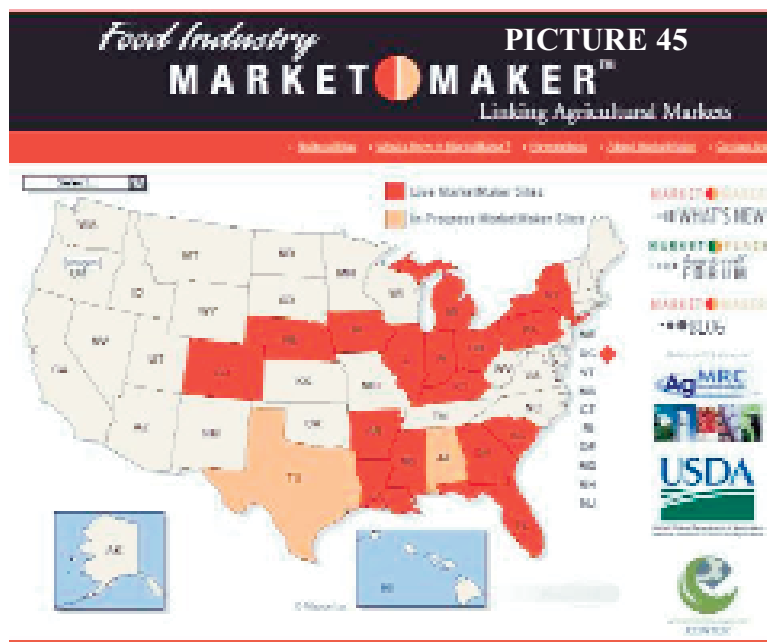
Question: *Is auditing/record-keeping and new technology to manage trace-back a problem/barrier only for older farmers? How does the new generation of farmers feel about GAP certification?*

A suggestion: There needs to be a credible Farm to School ambassador/spokesperson whom farmers can relate to and believe. Ideally this would be a farmer who has gone through the GAP certification process and who can testify to the increased market opportunities and profitability resulting from GAP certification. Success stories need to be shared. It was mentioned that this is one way that the organic food movement gained popularity among farmers. The Newman’s Own Organics company played a huge part in the organic movement, and, per their website (www.newmansownorganics.com/organic.html): *The Organic Farm Plan is central to demonstrating progressive improvement of practices and measuring evolution of the management system as a whole towards greater sustainability. In this context, record-keeping is a key management tool for identifying problems and successful adaptations.*



Question: *Is it really a feasible endeavor for a small operation to become GAP certified? Is there a “cut-off” for the profitability and feasibility of certain size farms becoming GAP certified?* This is an area where Clemson or another research institution might be able to provide information.

Question: *Can a farm focus on a specific crop and would it be easier/less costly to get GAP certified for a specific crop, such as broccoli or strawberries?* This could make it easier to talk to farmers about profit and simplify by focusing on certifying one crop at a time. It doesn’t matter what size the farm is, just focus on getting them GAP certified for a crop that has a known, steady market: schools. This could help farms realize that GAP certification is feasible and would help them consistently market their crops.



There is a continuous need to connect farmers to schools, institutions and distributors. What do they need? When do they need it? What will they buy? How much will they pay? What tools are available? South Carolina Market-Maker (<http://scmarketmaker.com>) could be a good resource for farmers: MarketMaker was originally developed as an online marketing resource to give Illinois farmers greater access to regional markets by linking them with processors, retailers, consumers and other food supply chain participants.

Since its inception, it has expanded tremendously and is currently one of the most extensive collections of searchable food industry related data in the country, containing nearly 500,000 profiles of farmers and other food related enterprises in Arkansas, Colorado, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Mississippi, Nebraska, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and South Carolina.

GAP certification, auditing and distribution also sets up farmers to form co-ops: This would help with price negotiation at all points of the process. Unfortunately, many farmers often resist the idea of forming a co-op for a variety of reasons. There is a need for more education to change this attitude.

A suggestion: Farmers should work together through a central packing shed (or food hub) and have the produce ready to go in a form that the customer (the school or institution) is demanding/needing. The packing facility would need to be Hazard Analysis & Critical Control Points (HACCP) certified and GAP certified, but the farmers would only need to be GAP certified.

In addition, efforts are needed to address the misconceptions and misinformation out there about the costs and what it takes to become GAP certified. There are so many rumors and so much false information that scare off farmers, but they really don't know the facts. GAP is feasible and doable, but when there are rumors and misinformation floating around, it is hard to even get farmers to the table, so to speak.

This is where the regional coordinators can be very useful: They need to teach farmers about the actual requirements and costs of a GAP audit and offer support in obtaining initial certification, as well as maintaining annual re-certification. There is also funding available through the SCDA to help farms get started. In addition, the pilot program is trying to figure out other ways to supplement Farm to School costs for farms that specifically agree to sell to schools.

Will the regional coordinators be able to work with farmers one-on-one, or will they only be able to host workshops? The answer is probably a little of both. The overarching goal is to increase the number of GAP certified farms, and if individual visits to farms are needed, then that is what they should do.

An idea: Can we move away from the word "audit," which many people associate with an IRS tax audit? Can we call it something else? What about just "certification"? Other suggestions? "Compliance"?

Overall suggestions from the group:

- Create and distribute educational pieces directly to farmers, including a quality, informational GAP certification manual
- Build alliances between farmers, schools, other institutions and coordinators
- Create an active website that would capture testimonies of successful GAP certified farms, to be used as a recruitment tool for new GAP certified farms
- Market the demand that schools and other institutions provide: a list of crops and when they could be bought/sold, as well as prices and quantities

II. Supporting Farm to School in the Classroom: School Gardens and Other Educational Resources; Parents, Wellness Communities and Other Supporting Roles, led by Dr. Kevin Elliot

Questions and problems concerning school gardens and Farm to School in the classroom:

1. There is a burden placed on teachers who have to stick to a very strict curriculum: Most of the time, there is no room to add in additional course-work that would correspond with gardens or nutrition since the children must learn key/tested subjects.

Proposed Solution: Make or find a template of standards that would include aspects of garden education that fits in already with the science and math curriculum. One teacher who has been successful with a garden and in teaching about gardens suggested that she sort of made it up as she went along. She found ways every day to introduce gardening into the school-work, and then revised it every year so that it became more integrated.



She also suggested that having a principal who supports Farm to School in the classroom and school gardens was very helpful. The DIG teen program in the Raleigh/Durham area was mentioned as a great example to follow (<http://www.seedsonc.org/dig.htm>), as well as the curriculum and business plan created by Michigan State University (<http://www.mifarmtoschool.msu.edu/>).

2. Finding funding/resources for extracurricular activities and field trips, especially funding for transportation and other logistics for field trips.

Proposed solution: Sell the kids! When a community or parents know that children need something, especially something as educational and useful as a school garden, they are usually willing to help. Promote your needs wherever you can in the media, and also promote your initiatives and the results. Positive publicity is a great tool to help with fund-raising. The school district also wants to look as good as possible, so it likes to show off good results. In terms of cost-effective transportation, in the Charleston area, one teacher uses city buses to transport kids to field trips. This was accomplished through communication with the mayor's office. Hospital shuttles are also sometimes available and willing to help with field trips.



3. GAP certification and safety in schools – necessary for small gardens if the children want to eat what they grow? Is it ok for schoolchildren to go in the cafeteria to prepare/observe? Also, school food-service workers can sometimes be resistant to new ideas or time-consuming processes.

Proposed solution: According to DHEC, kids cannot be in the kitchen when school meals are being prepared, but they can go in after-hours as long as they are supervised by a food service worker. To get food service workers more involved, take them with you to local farms to check out the produce, and even let them grow some crops so as to promote ownership of the concept. Publicize all the work that food service people do (posters in the cafeteria), and make it fun as everyone works together.

4. Produce that is easy, fast and fun to grow usually doesn't always sprout and/or fruit until the summer, when children are away from school.

Proposed solution: Fall strawberries, broccoli, lettuce and collard greens are all suitable for growing during the school year. In addition, partnering with after-school and summer-school programs can be a way for children to still participate in and benefit from the garden, even when school is officially “out” for the summer. (See appendix of produce availability chart.)

5. Finding grants and staying aware of deadlines can be overwhelming for busy teachers, and then deadlines for grants that could have been helpful are missed.

Proposed solution: A representative from DHEC, Jennifer Maddox, said that she has information on current grants available, but it is hard for her to publicize them. Contact her and she's happy to supply info. Additionally, the SC Department of Agriculture blog, scschoolgardens.blogspot.com, regularly posts about grants that are available for school gardens, and there is a school gardens e-newsletter created by the SC Department of Agriculture available at www.agriculture.sc.gov/schoolgardens. Teachers can also share grant information and work together to get all the necessary materials in order. AmeriCorps volunteers also may be willing to help on

a project-based timeline.

6. *Purchase choice: There is a desire to support local and independent business, but sometimes the cheapest tools come from big-box stores.*

Proposed solution: Use Communities in Schools (in the Charleston area) to ask for everything you need, from big gardening items to small tools. Craigslist and also parent/teacher listservs can be used to find supplies. One



teacher also posts on her personal Facebook account about tools/supplies she needs for her school garden. Donations from local feed and seed stores, landscape companies and even big box stores may also be available.

7. *Gardening technical specifics (insects, fertilizer, etc).*

Proposed solution: There is a School Garden toolkit available through the SC Department of Agriculture (<http://www.agriculture.sc.gov/schoolgardens>). Share

best practices with other teachers. Extension services, master gardeners, garden clubs and 4-H organizations have also been very helpful to some teachers. College and high school students can be great resources, since they often need volunteer hours or internships, as well as FFA students..

Someone also brought up the fact that Wal-Mart employees must perform a certain number of volunteer hours, and they sometimes have grant money to give away For more information:

<http://walmartstores.com/communitygiving/201.aspx>.

8. *Sustaining teams that will keep the garden going every year, not just in the beginning when there is high enthusiasm.*

Proposed solution: Melissa Tranchida from Charleston/Memminger Elementary: She has 1st grade “green leaders” who promote the garden as well as nutrition and recycling throughout the school. The whole “green”



movement in the school started with her small school garden, which proves that a garden can have a ripple effect throughout the school.



Other resources/ideas:

- Elizabeth Beak, formerly of Lowcountry Local First, has had good experience working directly with farmers and bringing them into the school to talk about their farms and share information with the kids.
- Cherokee County holds an Agriculture Careers Week – instead of the normal fireman/policeman/doctor/lawyer, kids learn about all the careers available within the agriculture industry.
- Dietetic interns and registered dietitians at MUSC have been very involved with helping teachers and schools learn about nutrition and plan menus. Other schools have brought in chefs, who are always willing to show kids as well as food service workers how easy it is to

prepare meals with fresh produce.

- The SC Department of Agriculture also holds the Commissioner's School for Agriculture every summer, which is a partnership with Clemson University (www.clemson.edu/cafls/sccsa). The SCCSA is an academic program that provides college-based experience for rising high-school juniors and seniors. The program covers broad topics in agriculture and natural resources. Additionally, Pelion High School runs an Advanced Agribusiness Research program (<http://www.lexington1.net/centersofstudy/default.aspx?page=PHSAgricenterBusiness.html>), which provides students an intensive study of agribusiness through experimental agri-scientific research, entrepreneurial ventures and advanced studies while they participate in leadership opportunities.

How to Initiate a Local Food Program at Your Institution, led by Dr. Holly Harring

Many people and groups are interested in supporting the purchase and consumption of more locally grown foods and products. The concept often receives support and positive feedback, but actual implementation of this practice still leaves a lot to be desired.

Challenges or barriers identified by the group related to the implementation of purchasing and serving local foods in institutional setting include:

1. *Safety*: If an institution uses a large distributor or gets food from GAP certified farms, food can be safe. But if you start small and procure produce from a small farm, there must be a way to guarantee that the food is safe to eat.
2. *Cost*: The cost of a farm to institution program is generally determined within the existing food distributor contracts. Sometimes sourcing locally may be more expensive, but many times it is not. Within many large contracts, schools and institutions may get a break in price when they buy from one distributor, but if sourcing locally is a priority, then finding competitive pricing from local growers is possible. In contrast with distribution, schools could decide they want a certain percentage of items to be sourced locally. This could include food items beyond fresh produce.
3. *Quantity*: Menus must be planned five weeks ahead at most institutions, which makes it hard when farmers aren't able to absolutely guarantee the amount of fresh food they will produce. Institutions also must usually follow strict standardized recipes, and they don't have a lot of flexibility in terms of substitution of ingredients. There are also regional climate restrictions in terms of what can be grown efficiently and profitably, and what can be delivered in a timely manner to institutions. In the future, the focus group would like to see more coordination across institutions: For example, hospitals could coordinate their menus so that each one needed the same thing at the same time. This would make it easier for farmers since the quantity is larger, however, the price could decrease.
4. *Contracts*: The binding and legal contracts that institutions must put in place to guarantee delivery and safety can sometimes be too complex, costly and demanding for small growers. The liability that a small farmer is required to bear under a standard contract with a buying institution may be unreasonable.



5. *Stigma of co-ops*: Farmers may be reluctant to work together in anything resembling a co-op for a variety of reasons. Older generations may associate co-ops with communism and/or socialism. However, farmers could receive many benefits from working together as a group, including being able to negotiate for higher prices for their products, pooling resources and sharing distribution costs. Co-ops have been successful in the Northeast region of the country as well as in Florida (Florida's Natural orange juice – for more information about the co-op, see <http://www.floridasnatural.com/co-op/meet-the-co-op>), so there is a possibility that this stigma is a regional barrier and can be overcome. Modeling farming cooperative programs after ones in other regions may provide some insight into how this arrangement can be



What is a farming co-op?

A farming co-op is a member-owned business entity where farmers/members can come together to share resources and to obtain access to new markets by working together to meet supply demands that they might not be able to meet by themselves.

For more information, visit: <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/rbs/pub/cir7/cir7rpt.htm>

effectively integrated within existing statewide farm to Institution programs.

Resources:

1. Have vendors able and available to supply local produce when possible. Use your existing relationships with vendors as well as distribution networks to see if they will cooperate in the goal of providing fresh, local produce to your institution. The focus group emphasized that when it comes to working with the food service director and distributors at your institution, the first step is to ask for what you want or need.



For example: Sodexo, the food-service provider for the campuses of MUSC and USC in Columbia, has committed to sourcing local, seasonal or sustainably grown and raised products. As they state on their website, Sodexo buys 100 percent of their fresh dairy products from local and regional farmers (<http://www.sc.edu/dining/sustainability.html>). Additionally, Sodexo purchases their produce from approved, local purveyors, like Limehouse Produce. (<http://www.muschealth.com/nutrition/Sustainability/Supporting%20Local%20Farmers>)

Solutions:

1. Institutions can be encouraged to purchase 25% of their food from South Carolina farmers, and these institutions would then receive some additional incentive, such as a tax benefit.

2. Provide financial incentives within institutions to feature local foods on the menu.
3. Work together using funding streams to pool resources across institutions.
4. Farmers can plant an extra acre to sell exclusively to institutions and, in turn, receive a tax benefit.
5. Feature local food once per week in the beginning of a farm to institution program. As the program becomes more sustainable, the frequency for featuring local products may then increase as appropriate.
6. Communication: Market your plans, ideas and goals within the institution (signs, hand-outs, emails) so workers or others who visit the cafeteria know what is available, where it comes from and how they can get involved.
7. Take advantage of healthy eating as a “hot topic,” such as Michelle Obama’s “Let’s Move” campaign.
8. For hospitals: Start a mini farmers market on the hospital’s campus so that patients and staff can have access to local food, as well as learn how to prepare fresh, healthy meals. This can also work on college campuses. MUSC in Charleston has been successful in bringing a mini farmers market to their campus: Every Friday, local farmers offer fresh produce for sale. (<http://mcintranet.musc.edu/health1st/>). There is also a Healthy Carolina farmers market on USC’s Columbia campus, where students, staff and visitors can browse produce



from local farms. (<http://www.sc.edu/healthycarolina/farmersmarket.html>).

9. Value-added packaging: Make local produce attractive. Rawl Farms in South Carolina makes veggie snack packs, such as carrots and dip, which can be delivered to schools ready-to-eat. There is no extra work or prep involved for food service workers on these kinds of snacks, and in addition, it teaches children portion control.

When developing a nutritional education component:

- Educate on how to preserve fresh food or how to have a diet that revolves around one particular readily available local food.
- Introduce new foods one or two items at a time.
- It’s important to educate food service workers as well as children, patients and other staff. Consider all possible audiences.

Addressing some of these issues and providing guidance to institutions interested in purchasing and serving local foods could go a long way toward the successful implementation of local food buying/serving policies by institutions across the state, both private and public.

General Recommendations from the Farm to School...and Beyond Workshop, held on April 28, 2011

These recommendations are based upon the presentations and focus group discussions that took place at the workshop. Representatives from across the state, including professors, farmers, distributors, educators and community organizers, came together to discuss school gardens and how to get more local and fresh fruits and vegetables into school cafeterias and other institutions as a way to support local economies and to promote healthy eating habits.

Recommendations for institutions/schools:

- Identify a distributor or GAP-certified local farm where you can buy local produce. A list of companies arranged by state or commodity can be found at <http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/gapghp>. Jack Dantzler, Director of Inspections and Grading for the SC Department of Agriculture, is also able to help identify GAP-certified farms within South Carolina.
- Work with the food-service staff to incorporate as much fresh, local produce into meals as possible. This could be as small as one snack per week, or as large as one portion of each meal served.
- Try to take a field trip to a local farm to show children where the local food is coming from. The more ownership over the project, for both children and staff, the better. Make sure to include food-service workers and parents if possible.
- Publicize and market your efforts, both in the institution and in the community. Include your cooperation with the food-service staff, through posters, hand-outs, emails, traditional media outreach and social media
- Partner with nearby or neighboring institutions to share and plan meals and menus.
- Begin or revitalize a school or community garden. Look to the SC Department of Agriculture's School Garden Toolkit for help and ideas, and research grants online. The SCDA also publishes a school garden blog, www.scschoolgardens.blogspot.com.

For farmers:

- Invest in GAP certification: Work with the SCDA to become GAP certified. Most schools cannot do business with a local farm until certain safety requirements are met and verified by GAP certification.
- Consider a co-op: Join or form one to partner with neighboring farms and/or your existing distributors to explore how the Farm-to-School process can work best for your farm. Farmers can also work together to build quantities and negotiate price, as well as share the costs of distribution.
- Become a farm ambassador: Work with schools to encourage field trips to your farm. Get to know the children you are serving through school visits. Educate them about food production. Consider being a guest speaker at the school and talking about your livelihood.
- Begin discussions with schools/institutions about what they would like to serve. Make sure to consult and plan in advance so you can "lock" in the school/institution as a market for that crop before you plant.
- Become familiar with and understand the bidding process for school produce contracts. Understand their requirements for quality, quantity and consistency of produce.
- Work with your local distributor that serves local schools and ask them to support Farm to School by highlighting and offering your produce.
- Attend food safety trainings and workshops.
- Take advantage of cost-share programs offered for GAP training and certification.

Legislative Summary of Bills Related to Farm to School – S812 and H4200

a) S-0812 – sponsored by Senator Daniel Verdin: A bill to amend chapter 3, title 46 of the 1976 code, relating to duties of the Department of Agriculture, by adding section 46-3-25 to require the Department to create and maintain a program to encourage schools to serve locally grown, minimally processed farm foods (introduced on Senate floor on 4/14/11).

b) H-4200 – sponsored by Representative Nelson Hardwick et al: to amend the code of laws of South Carolina, 1976, by adding section 46-3-25 so as to require the Department of Agriculture to create and maintain a program to encourage schools to serve locally grown, minimally processed farm foods (introduced on House floor on 5/11/11).

To check the current bill status, visit *<http://www.scstatehouse.gov>*.

Farm to School and Beyond...

Thursday, April 28, 2011

Phillips Market Center

SC State Farmers Market, West Columbia, SC

8:30 am Workshop Registration/ Networking

9:00 am Welcome

Commissioner Hugh Weathers, South Carolina Department of Agriculture
Superintendent Mick Zais, South Carolina Department of Education
Commissioner Earl Hunter, SC Dept of Health and Environmental Control
Emily Jackson – ASAP – SE Regional Farm to School Coordinator, National Farm to School Network

9:20 am “Current Examples of Farm to School in SC”

Statewide Farm to School Pilot Program –Holly Harring, DHEC
Anderson “Grow with Me” Program – Allison Schaum
Lexington School District Month of May – Todd Bedenbaugh, SC Dept. of Education
Lowcountry Collaborative – York Glover, Clemson Beaufort

10:15 am Break

10:30 am Presentations- Issues and Examples of Local Farm to Institution Programs & Challenges

Farm to School in NC – Skipper Russell & Dawn Cox, farmers

GAP & Food Safety – *what is it and why is it needed?*

- Jack Dantzler, SCDA & Geoff Zender, *Clemson– GAP compliance*
- Don Wellborn, *Carolina Produce – distributor’s perspective*

Example of a Farm to Hospital program in SC

- Jim Caccamise, *Sodexo & Palmetto Health Richland in Columbia*

12:00 pm Buffet Lunch, featuring menu items with Certified SC Grown Products

- Prepared by The Spotted Salamander, a Sustainable Caterer

1:15 pm Presentations continued

Where do you start if you are an institution and you want to start sourcing? – Emily Jackson, ASAP
Addressing Barriers to Local Food Producers - Kathryn Boys, Clemson University

2:15 pm Break

2:30 pm Concurrent Focus Groups

1. Food Safety & Production Issues for Small Farmers
 - Developing Farm Food Safety Plans and the GAP Certification Process
2. Supporting Farm to School in the Classroom
 - School gardens and Other Educational Resources
 - Parents, Wellness Committees & Other Supporting Roles
3. How to Initiate a Local Food Program at Your Institution
 - Team building, institutional challenges, contracts, risk, insurance, etc

3:30 pm Break

3:45 pm Wrap-Up – Focus Groups Report and Discussion with Audience

Facilitators: Dr. Kevin Elliott, Dr. Geoff Zehnder, Dr. Holly Harring

Farm to School Workshop 2011

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