

Merrymeeting Food Council
Launch and Stakeholder Meeting
Draft Meeting Report

November 5, 2015
Brunswick, Maine



Good Group Decisions

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This report is organized by topic, not necessarily the order in which things were discussed.

About the Meeting

This meeting was a gathering of farmers, fisheries advocates, policymakers, nonprofits, restaurants, institutional buyers and many others working within the regional food system. The meeting was professionally facilitated by Craig Freshley and Kerri Sands of Good Group Decisions.

Objectives

- Learn about the food system in the Merrymeeting region and how having a food council could significantly improve the system.
- Make specific plans for establishing a Food Council including:
 - Identify top priorities for activities
 - Establish Work Groups
 - Decide immediate next steps
- Get to know each other, connect with helpful resources in the region, and develop enthusiasm for our future work together.

Welcome

Eileen Johnson, Environmental Studies faculty member at Bowdoin College, welcomed the group, noting that she was excited that Bowdoin was hosting the event and that Bowdoin students were involved in the research leading up to the food council launch.

Agenda and Ground Rules

Craig Freshley, facilitator, explained the meeting format (see Agenda in Appendix) and the following ground rules, things to keep in mind for an effective and efficient meeting:

- All views heard - Let Craig call on people; it's okay to disagree
- Big picture thinking - We are talking about a food council for the region, so let's be mindful of what will serve the region as a whole and over the long term
- Honor the process - We have a lot to get through today and this meeting has been carefully designed; please lean into this process even if it's a little out of your comfort zone
- Helpful and realistic volunteerism encouraged - This will work with many hands making light work, but don't sign up for things you won't be able to do
- Minimize distractions - Including cell phones and side conversations
- Neutral facilitation and report - Good Group Decisions serve this group as a whole

Craig also explained that his company, Good Group Decisions, works with all types of groups - government, nonprofits, and businesses, and that Good Group Decisions is not an expert on food systems but was here to help manage the process while the participants provided the content.

Bringing People Together Around Food

How Did We Get Here?

Lee Cataldo, Outreach and Education Coordinator for the Brunswick Topsham Land Trust (BTLT), explained the following:

- In 2012, the Kennebec Estuary Land Trust (KELT) and BTLT formed Local Farms - Local Food to enhance the local food economy, raise awareness of the benefits of local food, and increase farmland conservation in the southern Midcoast region
 - Gathered baseline data and took a snapshot of farms at that time
 - During our roundtable meetings we learned a lot
- Realized the need to have leadership and collaboration in the community
 - There were so many great ideas that needed facilitation and leadership - became too much for two land trusts to handle
- Lee attended a Maine Network of Community Food Councils meeting this summer and realized that a food council was the answer!
 - Grassroots synergistic leadership is what our system can use
- Food system definition: every single thing involved in getting food from producer to plate and returning the resources back into the system
 - Waste is a particular reminder of nonlinear system - food scraps and waste nourishing the soil
 - From retailers to farmers to college dining there is a lot that goes into getting your food to you
- The Sewall Foundation has supported our planning for the food council
 - We have been working with a team representing farmers, government, nonprofits, and others to draft a mission and vision
 - We also conducted the Food, Farms, and Fisheries Assessment (FFFA) with the help of Bowdoin students
 - This is the start of gathering lots of data about what's going on in our food system
 - See the posters on the walls today and please give us some input
 - This will help inform the direction of our food council
 - We also hired a part-time coordinator

What's On Your Plate?

For an overview of food systems basics, the group watched a University of Vermont video called "What's On Your Plate? The video can be found at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AQIG710-mdw>

Some key points made in the video:

- The food system is not just about how food is grown, processed, distributed, marketed, and disposed of; it also involves social and cultural, environmental, economic, diet and health aspects
 - SEED - social, environmental, economic, diet
- There is good and bad news about modern food systems
 - Food production has become anonymous and unhealthy
 - There has been corporate consolidation within sectors and along the entire process (seeds, farms, trucks, brands, grocery stores)
 - 50% of groceries are purchased at 4 supermarket chains
 - 1 in 3 kids is overweight or obese
 - 36,000 sq. miles of cropland is lost every year
 - Farm workers are mistreated
 - 40% of our food is lost to spoilage
 - At the same time there is more accountability and there are more local foods available
 - An alternative food system is alive and thriving
 - There are leaders like Vermont, thanks to terrain, colleges, legislative initiatives, informed consumers, and innovative farmers
- Work needs to be done from both ends of spectrum - local diversified farms and better national and international policy, with consumers in the middle driving change
- What you can do
 - Be curious about companies that produce food
 - Advocate for transparency
 - Shorten the distance that food has to travel to reach you
 - Choose fresh whole foods
 - Ask lots of questions

Marada Cook's Remarks: Bringing People Together Around Food

Marada Cook of Crown O' Maine Organic Cooperative, Northern Girl value added produce processing company, and partner with Fiddler's Green Farm, addressed the group, making the following remarks:

- Most food system efforts are statewide, intentionally

- I talk with people all day long and hear from a lot of constituents, and I hear a lot of rhetoric
- There needs to be a place where people come together on a regular basis to discuss issues about which we are passionate and let ideas evolve
- The local food movement has gathered momentum - it's exciting
 - It has progressed beyond getting product from A to B to thinking about critical mass to lift off an industry
 - As our stance evolves, where are those conversations happening? We need localized solutions.
- What does "local" mean?
 - Some feel it has been co-opted, like "organic" was
 - A solution that will help an Aroostook County farmer diversify and enter new markets may be a different solution for a veteran farmer from the Merrymeeting area
 - If local groups share their priorities with others across the state and listen to each other, we can shape our ideas to be more realistic and practical and not so rhetorical
 - A food council can help stitch ideas together
- Investors and legislators are starting to get more interested, as we take off
 - Let's not forget what values we began with - food councils can help with that
- Producing, distributing, and eating food is very nuanced
 - We distributors are called middle men for a reason - what we are trying to achieve is sometimes different than other parts of the system
 - Example of customers who pointed out that shrink wrap used a lot of plastic and encouraged cargo nets instead
 - We had lost sight of an element of sustainability because no one reminded me of things that are important
- People who are passionate can bring messages to people who are less passionate about food related causes
 - How to get people's attention?
 - A food council is a good way to come up with a strategy to spread further out into community
- The market we are trying to develop is only as big as the awareness we cultivate
 - If there is one thing that all Maine food businesses need, it's a bigger broader market
 - Outreach will help

Discussion

- Question: Regarding crafting the message - how do we talk to people who are not as passionate about it?
 - Response:
 - Sometimes you have to recraft the message midstream to achieve sales
 - When selling Brussels sprouts, instead of saying how they are cheap and

- we've gotta move them, instead ask "Have you ever thought about the economics of picking Brussels sprouts off the stalk? How valuable is that labor? Have you considered that you might have twice as many sales if you offered both on-stalk and off-stalk Brussels sprouts?"
 - Encourage people to think about all sides - what's good for the farmer and the retailer and the consumer
 - Think about the market that we don't know and see every day
 - Response from restaurant owner:
 - Middle men are very important to restaurant businesses
 - We need people who can source what we need on a short time frame
 - Wholesalers are an important part of food system; I salute the work Marada is doing
 - The sales pitches you are making are part of information flow that is very important - this group can help spread the message
 - Response from retailer:
 - Brussels sprouts is a great example, because aside from volume and storage issues, some people don't even know what Brussels sprouts on the stem are
 - A food council represents education and how we advance into the community - we talk to people about what vegetables are, but community education about local food economics is an important role
- Question: The traction has changed in the last 5 years. What changed? What helped us break through?
 - Response:
 - There are so many answers, but one piece is that people are motivated by fear and desire
 - We now have a national culture of fear around food. People are thinking differently, getting sick and confronting their food choices.
 - People have a desire to connect with something real and authentic. We want something tangible in front of us. The desire is pointing to knowing people in the community.
- Comment: In the recent Harvard Kennedy School report on the Maine Food Cluster Project, it struck me that the report lacked the word "farmer" - it started one level up. Let's make sure this goes all the way to the dirt - this is an important piece.
- Comment: There are different types of people in this room
 - A quick show of hands revealed that there were about 8-10 farmers in the room, 2 fisheries representatives, about 5 distributors, 2-3 processors, about 6 wholesale buyers (including restaurants and institutions), 2-3 people representing hunger and food insecurity, 2-3 educators, 2-3 people representing land conservation, 2-3 people representing government, 2-3 people representing farmer markets, 2-3 students, and 2-3 people representing investors, lenders, and financial support
- Comment: The smallest of farmers are getting farther down the ladder of recognition.

As the movement grows and gets larger, where does it leave smallest who can't afford to sell to distributors? The system is becoming more like industrial types of systems. We need to look at whole picture, at cooperation and not competition.

- Response:
 - In Maine we are very confronted with the conflict between what we value and what we can afford. We have an ethic of "buy from thy neighbor" but there is sometimes not enough to go around.
 - As we drive to scale there are farms and businesses not making any money, it's about getting overhead down
 - As small farms are pushed down, we need to think about how to integrate them - what can they sell to a wholesaler? Maybe they can specialize in a niche.
 - Actually, the biggest farms are worried about the exact same thing - they are worried about being squished out by others not even in the country! Fear of predation happens in the retail sector too. It is a continuum.
 - Maine had a glory day of small farms in 1900 and we participated in our own demise. We have a choice about repeating those cycles.
- Response from others:
 - There are opportunities for local and small farmers to explore cultural food needs - halal meat for example, or specialized tubers
- Question: As we enrich the local foodscape, what are the economics and constraints around labor?
 - Response:
 - High school should teach a few other job related skills besides typing!
 - At Crown of Maine we have different models of labor. We have specialized commercial truck drivers, salespeople, finance people, etc. It is a struggle to pay them a comparable wage.
 - The opportunities for creativity and innovation are an attraction to working with us
 - We are now an employee co-op, so there is a pathway for workers to become owners
 - At Northern Girl we have lots of line workers coming from impoverished backgrounds, and we used to have lots of trouble with attendance
 - We decided to raise the entering wage - and it worked overnight
 - We raised the caliber of people who were there and new people coming on board - when you pay people more it shows them, and you, that you value them
 - But we certainly have constraints
 - One way to have a better food system is to have everybody buying local foods, but at the \$52,000 average income level we are income-locked - there is not a lot of room for local food in the budget

Food, Farms, and Fisheries Assessment and Food System Maps

Colleen Fuller, Prevention Specialist with Access Health, explained the Food, Farms, and Fisheries Assessment (FFFA) and the Merrymeeting region food system maps created with the help of Bowdoin College students. The following remarks were captured:

- Thanks to our Bowdoin students Ella and Emily who compiled this information
- The assessment and maps provide a basic inventory of the resources in our food system, and also the challenges
- The students researched secondary data like the agriculture census, the American Community Survey, Google maps, and BTLT and KELT assessments. They also looked at local purchasing efforts of retailers and restaurants.
- Data is organized by town - where and who are the retailers, farmers, food pantries, banks, distributors, community gardens
- We hope it will be a launching point for our work. There are no official “results” laid out yet - as we get more and more data we will have results
- We hope to continually add to this - please review the info in your packet, or the maps on the wall, and if you see that something is missing, write a sticky note and post it
- The assessment can be viewed and downloaded online at the Merrymeeting Food Council website - see <http://www.merrymeetingfoodcouncil.org/food-scan/>
- Some of our next steps:
 - Look at relationship between transportation (public and otherwise) and access to food
 - Figure out an effective metric for determining local food consumption. If one goal is to increase local food consumption, it’s hard to know if we are achieving it if we don’t have a metric.
 - Use data to help populate the Maine Food Atlas

Bowdoin students who worked on the project added a few things they had learned so far:

- Geographic isolation is a problem (residents do not have access to stores, food pantries, or food banks)
- Town comprehensive plans do not include language about food in schools and or school gardens - there is a lot more we can do to engage towns to support food in schools.
- It was very hard to find information on fisheries
 - This speaks to the gap we are seeing in terms of ability to purchase from local fishermen

A participant added the following comment:

- Maine state law drives the development of town comprehensive plans, and the state law makes mention of agriculture. When local towns do their plans they are supposed to comply, but it’s still very important for you as local community

members to get involved in the process and help turn the conversation to agriculture and food.

The Maine Food Atlas

Ken Morse, Coordinator of the Maine Network of Community Food Councils, provided a brief overview of the Maine Food Atlas and demonstrated on screen how to access and use it. The atlas can be found at <http://www.mainefoodatlas.com>. The following remarks were captured:

- The atlas was started by the Maine Network of Community Food Councils
 - There are 11 active regional councils in the network, and other conversations starting elsewhere
 - It is a peer-to-peer learning network
 - We are trying to increase local foods and reduce reliance on outside foods, and trying to learn what our local system looks like - that is partly why the atlas was created
- It is still in beta but growing
- There are tabs for sectors - like supply chain, access, and education
- Can sort by type of product
- All categories are evolving but we are trying to not have an unreasonably long list of categories
- This is a way to explore the food system in your neighborhood - we hope you will look around your community and learn
- The easiest way to search is geographically
- Each entry for individual farms, businesses, community gardens, etc. has inner pages with contact info, categories and agricultural stats. Each entry also has opportunities to post galleries of photos - a great way to tell stories.
- It will eventually have food security stats for communities
- We are asking for feedback and hosting workshops around the state on how to input your data
- My job is to convince each one of you to add your data to site!

Discussion

- Question: This atlas is one of a dozen sites or directories that I can choose to be listed on as a farmer - there is the Eat Local Foods Coalition (ELFC) website, and MOFGA's grower directory, and MOFGA.net. I would find it very confusing as a consumer to sort through these sources. Will data from other such sources be aggregated on this site? Maybe that is something the food council can discuss?
 - Response:
 - Yes, we are working on these partnerships

- ELFC has agreed to join forces with Maine Food Atlas
- The Maine Food Atlas will work with the Maine School Garden Network to show groups that farmers are part of
- We are also working with other groups so they can pull our maps onto their websites
- This is what we call curated crowdsourcing
- It's a grassroots effort

What a Food Council Is and Could Do

Lee Cataldo's Presentation

Lee Cataldo of BTLT explained the basics of what food councils do and the range of things that our food council COULD do. See Appendix for BTLT's slides. The following remarks were captured:

- Why this work matters to Lee personally
 - Strong belief in the power of community
 - Studied traditional subsistence cultures, especially in Maine, and why they are sustainable or not over time. Sustainable cultures have deep social networks; they take advantage of each other's skills through reciprocity and communication.
- What a Community Food Council is:
 - "A forum for diverse groups and individuals to understand their food system and to coordinate action around increasing access to healthy food for everyone in their area."
 - The diversity part is key - we need buy in from everyone who eats
 - Here are some of our community organization participants
 - Mid Coast Hunger Prevention Program
 - Access Health
 - Bowdoin College
 - Bowdoinham Community Development Initiative
 - Milkweed Farm
 - Brunswick Topsham Land Trust
 - Midcoast Economic Development District
 - CEI
 - Kennebec Estuary Land Trust
 - And - you!
 - How are farms/fisheries going to last if we aren't seeing the majority of schools and the majority of shoppers at Hannaford buying local?
 - A food council is hard to define - for good reason

- What Aroostook needs may not be what Brunswick needs
 - Very place-based
 - Even within our regions, the resources of our land and our social and cultural needs are different - Dresden and Westport Island are different than Brunswick and Bath
- What a food council might do:
 - Each is adapted to land, resources, needs, culture, people
 - They launch and support programs that meet local needs
 - We are not trying to create another nonprofit that competes for resources
 - We are trying to create synergy for things happening in our community
 - They facilitate connections; reduce waste and redundancy
 - We hear from funders: “You guys are in neighboring towns asking for us for money to do the same project. Why aren’t you talking to each other?”
 - Example - maybe an identified need is a certified kitchen for a small catering company or a farmer who wants to make and sell pickles. Community food pantries might have kitchens available but are not certified because they we don’t sell food.
 - Is it okay for a nonprofit to certify a kitchen?
 - The Maine Conservation Law Foundation is helping people figure out these legal issues right now
 - A simple conversation helps us become aware of each other’s needs
- Examples from other food councils:
 - There are food councils all over world
 - They are big in Australia and the Netherlands
 - Vermont has a statewide plan called Farm-to-Plate
 - Maine is up there too - we are leaders in this
 - We still have close ties to land and farming and feeding ourselves
 - Most Mainers are related to or know someone who grew up on a farm
 - Activities
 - “Meet the buyer” events
 - Like speed dating - getting to know each other’s needs
 - Fruit and veggie prescription program (VegeRx)
 - Community cooking nights
 - Edible Main Street programs
 - Part of downtown revitalization - Main Street businesses have planters with lettuce, tomatoes, etc.
 - Healthy preschool projects - providing lesson plans and vegetables
- What should we do?
 - We envision that there would be a seated Council with workgroups, and each workgroup would have a representative who sits on the Council
 - We have prepared a draft list of workgroups, based on the Local Farms - Local Food roundtable discussions:

- Marketing and distribution
- Processing - perhaps including slaughterhouses and mobile processing
- Producer-to-institution - perhaps including courier services so farmers don't waste so much time making deliveries
- Food security - perhaps including farmers market campaigns to round up your sale and the extra dollars go towards EBT
- Policy, Finance, and Advocacy - like creating a joint resolution to increase local food consumption
- Education and wellness
- Waste management
- Farmer and Fishery Advisory Groups - forum to hear voices of farmers and fishermen

Discussion

- For the Brunswick FoodShed project, we are gaining traction but we have no data to put on paper to show how vibrant our work is. Maybe for the Marketing and Distribution group, we could look at ways to communicate existing success so we can gain support from outside the community.
- Seafood is like the “Brussels sprouts on a stalk” issue. It’s tough getting people to eat Maine seafood, other than lobster.
 - I am happy that there is a fishery advisory workgroup
 - We are looking at fisheries regionally, instead of statewide which is often the case. Seafood often involves trying to tackle big state issues.
- I am hearing about several things that have a policy role at the state level
 - There are huge food security issues
 - People living near the base do not have transportation to local farmers markets
- Transportation issues are very important
 - We tried offering a taxi service; we are not giving up, but it is not successful yet
 - What about a travelling farmers market, on a school bus
 - Instead of having people come to us, we could go to them
 - This is being done
- How about a workgroup for the customer voice - involving the customer perspective
 - There is no other industry that wouldn't take that customer perspective seriously
- What about a market development or business advisory group
 - There is no lack of ideas and answer, but where do people go to find the answers?
 - What are Brunswick people eating?
 - If I want to start a farm where should I go?
 - Who is extending financing?
- I hope there are farmer and fishery advisors as part of every workgroup
- Involve all types of people in all groups

- If there is an Executive Committee or the like on the Council, it is very important to have government people present at that level so you know what needs to be done
- Let's not be committee'd to death
- We are going to vote on workgroups to work together in today, but how the vote goes is not going to dictate final priorities. We are not making final decisions, the Council still needs to be established, but at least we will have a good set-up.

Merrymeeting Food Council Priorities

Emerging Conclusions

Based on the discussions so far, a list of potential priority areas was created and participants indicated via paper ballots which three areas would most help a) the region, and b) their work. (See Appendix for sample ballot.)

The tallied results were as follows:

<u>To Help the Region</u>		<u>To Help Our Work</u>	
Marketing & Distribution	26	Marketing & Distribution	27
Education & Wellness	22	Processing	21
Food Security	21	Education & Wellness	20
Policy, Finance, & Advocacy	21	Policy, Finance, & Advocacy	16
Processing	17	Producer to Institution	14
Producer to Institution	11	Food Security	12
Data Collection and Reporting	7	Data Collection and Reporting	10
Waste Management	6	Farm Advisory Group	8
Transportation	5	Waste Management	4
Fishery Advisory Group	2	Transportation	3
Farm Advisory Group	0	Fishery Advisory Group	2

After discussing the results of the voting, the group agreed to launch the following workgroups right away:

- Marketing and Distribution
- Education and Wellness
- Food Security
- Policy, Finance, and Advocacy
- Processing

Lee Cataldo encouraged individuals to let BTLT know which priority areas/workgroups are important to them, and BTLT can help with networking among interested people.

Some participants wrote additional comments on their paper ballots, and such comments are included in the Appendix.

Discussion

- “Marketing and distribution” means a lot of things
- Lots of overlap among the groups
 - Education, wellness, and food security for example
 - There might be overlap between transportation and marketing and distribution, and between transportation and producer-to-institution
 - Transportation also relates to education and food security
- Hope that no matter what happens, a fisheries advisory workgroup goes forward and the Council allow us to host our own group, report back to the Council, and figure out where fisheries fits in
- How does this list correlate with the recent Harvard Kennedy School report on the Maine Food Cluster Project and what it identified as priorities? The report says that the recipe for success is “engaged business leadership, an action plan for growth that builds on Maine’s assets, clear metrics for progress, greater company and system level innovation, and constructive teamwork between the private sector, trade associations, government, nonprofit groups, training and research institutions, and investors.”
- If you have more than three priorities, you don’t have any. Maybe rather than workgroups we could define three specific projects that touch on all these elements.
- We could take the policy, finance, and advocacy piece and attach it to the other workgroups - so that each group has to define what its policy, finance and advocacy pieces are.
- Combine fishery, farmer, and consumer advisory groups into a workgroup so they don’t get lost
- Projects are overlapping. We want to come up with projects that are crosscutting.
- Policy needs to be changed and we need action in all these areas.

Workgroup Session Reports

Participants broke into five workgroups and each group discussed the following:

- General purpose of the group
- Top three tasks
- Initial convener and point-of-contact
- Immediate next steps

After the workgroups met, the full group reconvened and heard a brief report from each workgroup.

Summary

- **Marketing & Distribution**
 - Challenges
 - Need ways for farms to discuss and ensure diversity of crops available to buyers
 - Need ways for farms to discuss, by region, ways to move crops to market
 - Need educational material that shows what food actual costs
 - Steps
 - **Ask** people what they need – survey consumers and **get** what they want to them
 - Facilitator to work with farmers
- **Education & Wellness**
 - Purpose
 - Education across food system
 - Change families through our students
 - Figure out access points and barriers for families
 - Food security and health issues
 - Tasks
 - Collaborations across all groups
 - Cooking at all levels
 - Long term policy changes
- **Processing**
 - Purpose
 - Identify, facilitate, and act on needs of our region – make connections, share info
 - Identify needs and take actions – make it happen
 - Tasks
 - Identify and encourage development of processing opportunities
 - Willing investors
 - Kitchens/locations
 - Make connections to meet needs
 - Identify 1-3 specific near term projects (1-8 months)
- **Food Security**
 - Purpose
 - Increase access and proper utilization for healthy locally sourced food

- and consider impact on producers
 - Tasks
 - Create education and awareness opportunities around food security
 - Outreach to increase involvement on the Council of people dealing with hunger
 - Identify and network support and resources for existing projects
- **Policy, Finance, & Advocacy**
 - Purpose
 - Determine policy solutions from other workgroups
 - Education and advocacy go hand in hand – combine for regional and local purposes
 - Inventory of financial resources and advocacy for more resources
 - Tasks
 - Provide policy components to other workgroup plans or goals
 - Convene local, regional, and state policymakers
 - Platform for policy - council and workgroups

See Appendix for full set of notes submitted by workgroups.

Discussion

- For the Marketing and Distribution conclusion, would you amend “farmers” to say “farmers and fishermen”?
- We have three year round farmers markets - are those good locations to talk with farmers as well as to talk with consumers?
- We need to survey consumers AND producers
- The bigger picture is missing from Marketing and Distribution - where does this region fit statewide?
- There is a need for a lot more conversation about what the needs are for distribution, combined with education about the different styles for distribution and how they can be deployed within regions.
 - There are crops I wouldn't buy here or ask people to grow here - dure to climate, demand, etc.
 - Side note: I can't believe there is not a 50-acre strawberry farm in this region, if anyone is looking for an opportunity
- What is the role of institutional buyers in this scheme? How can Bowdoin or the school department or the hospitals help move the needle?
- Hospitals serving local food have referred people to local resources. There are people who then come and buy from farmers as a result of having tried local foods in the hospital.
- Need to survey what's already out there. Where are the opportunities to do this type of education?

- From the college's standpoint, we need to work better with distributors to extend planning. I heard today that a distributor plans for next year during the winter. Maybe colleges can forecast their needs and commit to a certain amount of products they buy throughout the year.
- I see a need for the Processing and the Finance groups to work together, to talk about funding capital intensive equipment
 - Washing facilities, shared pack lines, etc.

Next Steps

Lee Cataldo suggested the following next steps:

1. Digest what you learned and heard today
2. If you indicated interest in a particular workgroup but that group didn't have a breakout session today, it doesn't mean you are signing up to be the leader!
3. All workgroups: Think about the future conversations you will have. Some workgroups have already established some general timelines.
4. The first meeting of the Merrymeeting Food Council will be held in January
5. At [MerrymeetingFoodCouncil.org](http://www.merrymeetingfoodcouncil.org), there is a PDF list of who we think of as the current stakeholders. Please review it and see who's missing - maybe your food service director, or your fisherman. Help us add to the list:
<http://www.merrymeetingfoodcouncil.org/events/2015/11/5/merrymeeting-food-council-launch-stakeholder-gathering>
6. Think about what you can contribute. Perhaps you are not able to be part of a workgroup right now, but maybe there are resources or networking or ideas that you can provide.

A participant suggested that there should be a write up of this meeting up for the local newspaper.

Closing Comments

Lee Cataldo thanked the many supporters of this gathering:

- Thank you to the Elmina B. Sewall Foundation for their support in the establishment of the Merrymeeting Food Council.
- Thank you to these farms and restaurants for their donations in support of lunch:
 - El Camino, Brunswick
 - Milkweed Farm, Brunswick

- Solo Bistro, Bath
- Henry & Marty, Brunswick
- Standard Baking Co., Portland
- Thanks to Eileen and Bowdoin College for hosting us here today
- Thanks to our Bowdoin students for all their research work
- Thanks to Brett of We Compost It! for composting our lunch scraps and plates

Tom Settlemyre made the following announcement about the Innovation Challenge:

- The Innovation Challenge is happening at Bowdoin on November 21 and 22
- If you have an idea about aggregation, marketing, or processing, put a team together and come up with an enterprise idea. Prepare a pitch over the weekend, and the top winners will move forward with support and dollars.
- We have room for 10 teams, so spread the word
- On Sunday afternoon, Nov. 22, there will be public presentations by all the teams and a message from Senator King. Roughly 2:30 pm.
- Details at MaineInnovationChallenge.org

Karen Parker, Executive Director of the Mid Coast Hunger Prevention Program, offered the following closing remarks:

- I am committed to making sure that all people in our community have access to healthy local food
- As a community member, I want to make sure that the local farmers and restaurants who donate so generously are successful in our community
- I also want to engage with people in the community who want to understand and learn more about child hunger - it is a pervasive problem in our community
- Thanks for your time, passion, and commitment today - I hope it continues!

Appendix A: Agenda

Merrymeeting Food Council Launch & Stakeholder Meeting

Agenda

Thursday, November 5, 2015

Bowdoin College Cram Alumni House, 83 Federal Street

Objectives

- Learn about the food system in the Merrymeeting region and how having a Food Council could significantly improve the system.
- Make specific plans for establishing a Food Council including:
 - Identify top priorities for activities
 - Establish Work Groups
 - Decide immediate next steps
- Get to know each other, connect with helpful resources in the region, and develop enthusiasm for our future work together.

About the Meeting

This meeting is a gathering of farmers, fishermen, policy makers, non-profits, restaurants, institutional buyers and many others working within the regional food system. We are hoping that by the end of the meeting people will sign up to serve on Work Groups and take other next steps. So come ready to learn and ready to get involved!

So that the meeting is inclusive, productive, and efficient it will be professionally facilitated by Craig Freshley and Kerri Sands of Good Group Decisions. In addition to planning and facilitating the meeting, Craig and Kerri will prepare a complete report of the meeting.

Agenda

7:45

Arrival

- Arrive early for refreshments, networking, and to review the Food, Farms, and Fisheries Assessment (FFFA) and the Merrymeeting region food system maps created by Bowdoin College students.

8:00

Welcome and Opening Remarks

- Chris Cabot will welcome the group and offer brief remarks.
- Craig Freshley, facilitator, will explain the meeting format and a few simple ground rules.

- 8:10 **How Did We Get Here?**
- Chris Cabot will tell the story of how we have arrived at this place; on the brink of establishing a Merrymeeting Food Council. He will also explain some hopes for what happens next.
- 8:25 **What's It Like Out There?**
- Food System Basics
 - To provide an overview of how food systems work in general we will watch a video and briefly discuss it.
 - Bringing People Together Around Food
 - Introduced by Lucretia Woodruff, our guest speaker Marada Cook will discuss how food councils are a place for diverse people to come together to improve their lives and the community. She will explain how MFC could be a place to build bridges, learn about diverse needs, come to shared values and decisions, and move forward together. We will have time for some questions and discussion.
 - Food, Farms, and Fisheries Assessment (FFFA)
 - Colleen Fuller will explain the what and why of the FFFA, and how this research will continue. There will be a chance for quick questions and discussion.
 - The Maine Food Atlas
 - Ken Morse will provide a brief overview of the Maine Food Atlas
- 9:35 **What is a Food Council?**
- Lee Cataldo will explain the basics of what Food Councils do and the range of things that our Food Council COULD do. She will provide and briefly explain a “menu” of activities that the Merrymeeting Food Council could do.
- 9:50 **What Should be *Our* Food Council Priorities – Initial Ideas**
- Craig will provide “ballots” and brief instructions for each person to indicate:
 - How a food council will help the region
 - How a food council will help support my work
 - We will vote right in the room before taking a break
- 10:00 **Break**
- A good time to network, check out the maps and online food atlas, and review the FFFA data on the walls.
- 10:20 **Merrymeeting Food Council Priorities – Group Consensus**
- Craig will present the results of the voting and as a full group we will decide on what Work Groups to launch right away. And we will launch

them!

- Craig will provide instructions for where in the building each group will meet and the steps that each Work Group will take.

10:40 **Work Group Sessions – Let’s Get Started**

- Each Work Group will discuss and make decisions about the following:
 - General purpose of the group
 - Top three tasks
 - Convener and Point-of-Contact
 - Immediate Next Steps (perhaps including date of a next meeting)

11:25 **Work Group Reports**

- Gathered back as a full group, we will hear a very brief report from each Work Group on their purpose and top three tasks

11:45 **Next Steps**

- Lee Cataldo will provide a brief explanation of next steps, including how we anticipate that the actual Council will be formed.

11:55 **Closing Remarks**

- Karen Parker will offer some final thoughts and encouragement.

12:00 **Adjourn for Lunch**

Thank you to the **Elmina B. Sewall Foundation** for their support in the establishment of the of the Merrymeeting Food Council

And the following for their donations in support of lunch:

- El Camino, Brunswick
- Milkweed Farm, Brunswick
 - Solo Bistro, Bath
- Henry & Marty, Brunswick
- Standard Baking Co., Portland
- We Compost It!, Portland

Appendix B: Brunswick Topsham Land Trust Slides

Merrymeeting Food Council

Merrymeeting Food Council envisions a community that supports local production & provides healthy and nutritious food to everyone.

We are a collaborative network of farmers, non-profits, businesses, government, and individuals working together to advance a thriving, resilient food system. Our goal is for a large portion of the area's food supply to be raised, caught, processed and consumed locally. This local food system – or everything involved in the production and consumption of food for our community – will protect and enhance natural resources, and create robust, meaningful economic and civic opportunities for the residents and visitors of the greater Merrymeeting Bay area.

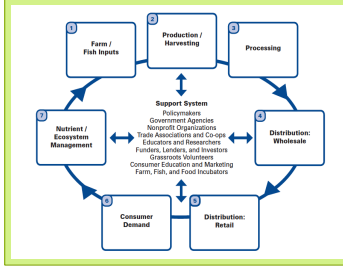
How did we get here?

- Local Farms – Local Food collaboration
- Previous round table meetings
- Recognition of need for more collaboration & comprehensive planning
- MNCFC workshop





What is a Food System?



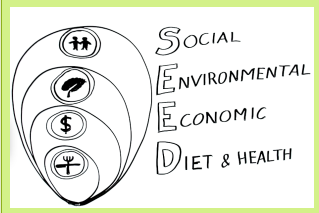

The Merrymeeting Food Council Planning Process

The MFC Planning Process

- Convene diverse team – December 2014
 - Kennebec Estuary Land Trust
 - Brunswick-Topsham Land Trust
 - Access Health (HWP at Midcoast Hospital)
 - Milkweed Farm
 - Mid Coast Hunger Prevention Program
 - Bowdoinham Community Development Initiative
 - Coastal Enterprises Inc.
 - Midcoast Economic Development District
 - Community members with roles in farms, business, Slow Money Maine, and others
- Networking around resources, needs, opportunities
- Development of DRAFT Mission, Vision, Work Groups, Council Structure
- Food, Farms, and Fisheries Assessment
- Development of website
- Funding for part-time Coordinator
- Invite more community involvement (that's you!)



What's happening in the Food System?

What COULD Merrymeeting Food Council Do?

What is a 'Food Council'?

A Community Food Council (CFC) is a forum for diverse groups and individuals to understand their food system and to coordinate action around increasing access to healthy food for everyone in their area.

- ### What types of things do Councils do?
- Place-based work
 - Educate and gather data about the community
 - Act as a forum for public discussion
 - Foster coordination
 - Evaluate and influence policy
 - Serve as a clearinghouse for research and resources
 - Take a comprehensive approach
 - Pursue long-term strategies
 - Offer tangible solutions
 - Advocate on behalf of the larger community
 - Launch and support programs that meet local needs

- ### The Key is Networking
- Share resources
 - Reduce redundancy
 - Facilitate change
 - Establish resiliency
 - Not another non-profit
-

What have other Councils done?

- Meet the Buyer Events
- Fruit and Veggie Prescription Program (VegeRX)
- Community Cooking Nights
- Edible Maine Street
- Heathy Preschool Project

There are around 200 food councils working nation-wide. Six Councils are active in Maine, with nearly a dozen others being initiated.

What SHOULD Merrymeeting Food Council Do?

Possible Work Groups

- Marketing and Distribution
- Processing
- Producer to Institution
- Food Security
- Waste Management
- Education & Wellness
- Policy, Finance, and Advocacy
- Farmer Advisory Group
- Fishery Advisory Group
- Others??

What Now?

What Now?

- Tell us how MFC can serve you
- Give input on priority needs, resources
- Get involved



MERRYMEETING FOOD COUNCIL
20% LOCAL BY 2020
Take the pledge at
www.MerryMeetingFoodCouncil.org

Appendix C: Sample Ballot

During the meeting, participants wrote in “Data Collection and Reporting” and “Transportation” in slots # 10 and #11 on their paper ballots.

Merrymeeting Food Council Priorities What Do YOU Think?

November 5, 2015

For each question please consider the top, most important ways that a Food Council will help, and check (☑) three (3) areas from the list on the left.

	A. Top ways that a Food Council will help the <u>region</u> (Check top three ways) ↓	B. Top ways that a Food Council will support <u>my work</u> (Check top three ways) ↓
1. Marketing & Distribution	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Processing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Producer to Institution	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Food Security	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. Waste Management	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Education & Wellness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Policy, Finance, & Advocacy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. Farm Advisory Group	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Fishery Advisory Group	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Appendix D: Additional Written Comments

Some participants provided additional written comments on their paper ballots, as follows:

- Aggregation [written next to Marketing and Distribution]
- The eater/customer voice is not an end product of farmer/fisher/producer need or community challenges. Don't overlook the perspective of the audience of eaters and residents.
- Other ways to reach people - not schools, markets, or impoverished, ex. in the office/workplace [written next to Marketing and Distribution]
- Talk to Jordan Farm - Penny Jordan, mobile market [written next to Transportation]
- Connecting Schools - outreach to K-12 and colleges, higher ed; Promoting Access (availability, transportation, cost) [written in as suggested new priorities]
- Public Participation [written in as a suggested new priority]
- Bus [written next to Marketing and Distribution]
- All types of people need to be included in each focus as opposed to siloing certain groups
- Community outreach [written next to Education and Wellness]
- Education and ~~Wellness~~ → Customer Relations; [Wellness written in as a suggested new priority]
- For me, as a start up, the Marketing and Distribution and Farm Advisory could be a single group...or at least Farm Advisory could roll in Marketing and Distribution.
- I think #10 and #11 are part of the Policy group
- Producer-to-Institution fits under #1
- Processing: One of the issues for scaling up or making a living is a lack of processing facilities
- Food Security: this is fundamental to a just and sustainable food system
- Education and Wellness: Cultivating a strong consumer base supporting producers and processors etc. will be essential to growing the movement and continuing to adapt and innovate
- Policy, Finance and Advocacy: This should include processing, food security, waste management, transportation, etc. so it's essential as well

Appendix E: All Workgroup Notes

The following notes were submitted by workgroups at the end of the meeting.

Education and Wellness

- General purpose of this workgroup:
 - How do we educate across the food system: garden, students, cooking, purchasing
 - Changing families through students
 - Figure out access points for families and identify the barriers and address food insecurity and health issues
 - Cooking classes in schools
 - College students and culinary students (HS tech) mentoring
- This workgroup's top three tasks:
 - Collaboration across groups represented
 - Example: cooking at all levels of education and being able to use this and address all pieces and people involved
 - Long term policy changes at schools
- Initial convener:
 - Piper Dumont, 712-8657, pdumont@wolfesneckfarm.org
- Immediate next steps:
 - Produce a packet we can share with members of different school boards
 - Creating a list of what schools are already doing - research and compile the landscape
 - Everyone listing venues/partners who do this work - key contact advocate

Food Security

- General purpose of this workgroup:
 - To increase access to and proper utilization of healthy food sourced locally, considering economic impact on local producers
 - Being voice for people who can't participate
 - Food - basic need, tip of iceberg, interconnected, hidden in communities
 - Town of Brunswick not having priority for health food, value of food
- This workgroup's top three tasks:
 - Create education and awareness opportunities about food insecurity
 - Educate what is food insecurity
 - Get participation by hungry
 - Learn to engage - outreach
 - Through outreach, increase involvement on Food Council from people dealing with hunger

- Identify, network, and support from resources for existing and merging projects
- Initial convener:
 - Colleen Fuller, 373-6925, cfuller@midcoasthealth.com
- Immediate next steps:
 - Meet within next two weeks
 - Get someone dealing with hunger to attend
 - Invite other people to workgroup

Policy, Finance, and Advocacy

- General purpose of this workgroup:
 - Policy solutions to other workgroups
 - Education and advocacy combined for regional and local purpose
 - Inventory of financial resources and advocacy/education for more or different resources
- This workgroup's top three tasks:
 - Providing policy components to other workgroups' plans
 - Convene policymakers, local and regional, to caucus
 - Develop a platform for policy council/workgroup
 - Advocacy planning for Council's agenda
- Initial convener:
 - Carol Eyerman, 725-1724, ceyerman@topshammaine.com
- Immediate next steps:
 - Wait for goals to be laid out by the other workgroups

Processing

- General purpose of this workgroup:
 - Identify/establish what the major bottleneck are in the region - including markets and industries of greatest impact
 - Educate and inform relevant persons about laws and regulations - awareness
 - Facilitate and act on the processing needs of region - by sharing info, making connection, and facilitating actions
- This workgroup's top three tasks:
 - Connect and encourage people with opportunities. What's needed and who could do it?
 - Identify and encourage development of process opportunities - vacant kitchens, willing investors
- Initial convener:
 - Nate Wildes, 207-776-4268, natewildes@gmail.com
- Immediate next steps:

- Identify 1-3 specific projects to get done - then do them!

Marketing and Distribution

- General purpose of this workgroup:
 - Marketing aggregation
 - Creating new venues
 - Access to markets
 - Farm to institution
 - Data collection
 - How do we sell the food
- This workgroup's top three tasks:
 - Variety of crops across producers - farmers talk - work together
 - Combine small farm distribution/delivery - revamp
 - Group dedicated to creating education material about what food should cost (ex: distribution models)
- Initial convener:
 - Jamie Pacheco, 207-242-2762, jameson.pachecho@gmail.com
- Immediate next steps:
 - Group dedicated to asking what people need - consumer, retailer, distributor
 - Gather info - lead to education
 - Problem identification - lead to ways to address
 - Group dedicated to getting farms to gather - facilitating crop diversity and localized pickup consolidation

Appendix F: Participants by Workgroup

Food Security

Michelle Rines, KELT/Woolwich Bath Community
Colleen Fuller, Access Health
Karen Parker, MCHPP
Merry Fossel, The Morris Farm
Sue Elsaesser, MCHPP
Jeanne Johnson, Juniper Edge Farm
Greta Huff, The Morris Farm
Mary Turner, MCHPP
Vicki Skydell, Slow Money Maine/KELT
Piper Dumont, Wolfe's Neck Farm

Processing

Jim Amaral, Borealis Breads
Jan Goranson, Goranson Farm
Vicki Skydell, Slow Money Maine/KELT
Kris Ganong, BTLT/Five Pine Farm
John Shattuck, Town of Topsham
Nate Wildes
Jonathen Merry, Dragonfly Cove Farm/Thyme for Goat
Jenn Legnini, Turtle Rock Farm
David Asmunssen, Blue Bell Farm
John Scweiser, Rosemont Market
Mary Turner, MCHPP
Green Bee Craft Beverages

Education and Wellness

Kristin Hanczor, Bowdoin College
Abby Sadauckas, Apple Creek Farm
Katy Maxim, MSAD 75
Emily Stewart, Bowdoin College
Piper Dumont, Wolfe's Neck Farm
Jessica Damon, Damon's Organics & MSAD75 parent
Lee Cataldo, BTLT
Carrie Kinne, KELT
Colleen Fuller, Access Health

Michelle Rines, KELT/Woolwich Bath Community

Policy, Finance, and Advocacy

Denis Tepler, Maine House of Rep.
David Vail, CEI & Bowdoin College
Carol Eyerman, Town of Topsham Planner
Ashley Sears, DACF
Angela Twitchell, BTLT
Will Neilson, Solo Bistro
Piper Dumont, Wolfe's Neck Farm
Colleen Fuller, Access Health
Carrie Kinne, KELT
Mary Turner, MCHPP
Steven Levy, Steven C. Levy Consulting, LLC

Marketing and Distribution

Brett Richardson, We Compost It!
Joe Grady, Two Coves Farm
Ken Morse, MNCFC
John Naylor, Rosemont Market
Bill Seretta, Sustainability Lab/Maine Farm & Fish & Food Innovation Challenge
Carrie Kinne, KELT
Abby Sadauckas, Apple Creek Farm
Wiebke Theodore, Bath Freight Shed Alliance
Maina Handmaker, Brunswick Food Shed
Kate Holcomb, Tao Yuan Restaurant
Tom Settlemyre, Crystal Spring Farm/BTLT
David Whittlesey, BCDI
Marada Cook, Crown of Maine
Matthew Caiazzo, Bowdoin College
John Schrieber, Rosemont Market
Jamie Pacheco
Jacqui Koopman, BTLT

Waste Management

Piper Dumont, Wolfe's Neck Farm

Farm Advisory

Jeanne Johnson, Juniper Edge Farm

Data Collection and Reporting

Piper Dumont, Wolfe's Neck Farm
Colleen Fuller, Access Health