

Minutes for the NE IA Food & Farm Coalition – April 6, 2006

The NIFFC met on April 6, 2006 at the Winneshiek County Extension office at noon with 19 people present.

At the previous meeting, four committees were created to address needs for the group: Organizational, Education, Funding and Assessment committees.

Organizational: Larry Grimstad, Rick Burras, Eric Nordschow

Assessment: Craig Chase, Solveig Hanson, Don Elsbernd, Charlie Baier

Education: Teresa Wiemerslage, Liz Rog, Al Peake, Bill Welsh

Funding: Carolyn Corbin, Lora Friest or Teresa Steffens, Brenda Ranum

Organizational items were discussed first. The following items resulted from that discussion.

Mission Statement: To support the development and marketing of locally grown agricultural products to enhance the lives of local citizens.

Purpose (Draft Form): The Northeast Iowa Food & Farm Coalition has been formed to begin implementation of the strategic plan designed to build a stronger local food and farm economy in Northeast Iowa. The Coalition's mission is to support the development and marketing of locally grown agriculture products to enhance the lives of local citizens. The Coalition has identified the following goals.

- 1) Provide an opportunity for existing and new producers to diversify;
- 2) Explore the development of regional processing and storage facilities to add value to all agricultural products in the area; and
- 3) Increase sale consumption of locally grown food on a local, regional and national level.

Name: NE IA Food & Farm Coalition

Introduction to our Strategic Plan:

"It is becoming increasingly difficult for Americans to ignore the fact that we may be entering an era that will force agriculture to change more in the coming decades than it has in the last half century," wrote Fred Kirschenmann, director of the Leopold Center in December 2005.

Instead of waiting for agriculture to change, citizens in Northeast Iowa are working to shape the future of agriculture in their region by creating and implementing a strategic plan that will develop new and nurture existing food and fiber enterprises in the three county region of Allamakee, Howard and Winneshiek counties. This goal was realized by bringing 25 stakeholders together to draft a strategic plan. Stakeholders included commodity producers, community supported agriculture growers, lenders, market gardeners/orchard growers, extension agents, retailers, independent meat processors, and fund raisers. Stakeholders developed an initial plan and held three public meetings in the three county region attended by over 80 citizens who provided input and gave overwhelming support to the plan.

The three major goals for the strategic plan include: 1) Provide an opportunity for existing and new producers to diversify; 2) Explore the development of regional processing and storage facilities to add value to all agricultural products in the area; and 3) Increase sale consumption of locally grown food on a local, regional and national level.

According to recent publication by Iowa State University, “the local food system is one of the fastest-growing, most promising markets in agriculture today. The concept behind local food is based on one central idea: when food is grown, processed, and sold locally, it is better for farmers, better for communities, better for the environment, and – in both taste and nutrition – better for you.”

The group discussed setting regular meeting dates. The first Thursday of the month was selected. The group will meet at the Winn. Co. Extension office at noon (brown bag lunch). Dates: May 4, June 1, July 6, Aug 3, Sept 7.

Larry Grimstand and Brenda Ranum were selected to be co-chairs of the group. Teresa Wiemerslage agreed to be secretary for now.

Craig reported for the Assessment committee. He reported that the Regional Food System Working Group will be meeting on April 12 and will be deciding on two communities to support in their efforts to build regional food systems. The selected communities will receive funding and support from RFSWG for several years.

Several Coalition members will be meeting with Rich Pirog from the Leopold Center sometime on April 13 between 11 am and 2 pm: Craig, Brenda, Larry, Liz, Eric N., Solveig, Lora, Carolyn. Brenda will confirm with Rich and clarify Rich’s expectations for the visit.

Members of the Education committee reported on the following items:

- Fund a staff person for outreach and networking
- Suggest joining the Buy Fresh, Buy Local campaign—this would be another marketing resource for us
- Need to teach people how to prepare food. The Decorah Farmers’ Market has a series of newspaper ads to use.
- The Woodbury County Food policy was discussed
- Need to identify ways to educate and support farmers who maybe ready to transition

Lora talked about the federal Farmers’ Market grant. Liz Rog moved that the RC&D complete the federal Farmers’ Market grant with the NE IA Food & Farm Coalition serving as advisory board for the grant. The Education committee will assist Lora. Al Peake seconded. Motion carried.

Lora mentioned that it would be useful for all coalition members to send her their affiliations so they can be included in the grant, i.e. pork producers, chamber, etc. lora.friest@ia.usda.gov It would also be helpful to have an estimate of in-kind help/services offered to the group. NEEDED BY FRIDAY, APRIL 14.

Liz announced that the Oneota Coop would be interested in hosting Ken Meter to return to the area. He would present to the Rotary during the day and to producers in the evening (~7:30 pm). The coop is looking for sponsorships for the \$550 fee. It was suggested that the Coalition be listed as the sponsor for the event and the event should be held in June while people are still talking.

The group discussed the Buy Fresh, Buy Local program. Jon Jenson will contact Mallorie Smith (BFBL coordinator) to see if she was available to come to our next meeting. A committee was formed to work on the regional BFBL producer directory which was printed two years ago: Jon, Teresa Wiemerslage and Jeremy Peake.

The next meeting will be May 4 at noon at the Extension office. Items to discuss:

- Grant report

- Mallorie Smith from Buy Fresh, Buy Local
- Report on Ken Meter presentation in June
- Discussion on how we involve local legislators to start working on policy change.