



# Frequently Asked Questions about the Seattle-King County *Acting* Food Policy Council

March 2008

## ***What does the council do?***

Food policy councils (FPCs) operate in many different ways. Some propose and implement specific food related projects, like Connecticut's FPC which performed research on food access and transportation. Other FPCs focus their work solely on developing policy with their local government, and typically serve as a coordinating body between multiple food policy advocates, business interests and other grassroots groups. FPCs generally convene meetings, coordinate and instigate research and community food assessments, and serve as a clearinghouse for local food-related information. Food policy councils in both New Mexico and San Francisco have a track record of success in these areas.

## ***Who is involved?***

The AFPC is comprised of 15 individuals representing key sectors of the food system. Other community members participate in meetings and committee work, and the AFPC also welcomes volunteers to educate others about the elements of a healthy food system and connect with people willing to act as leaders for their community around food. The group strives for representation from all facets of the food system, but does not mandate dedicated seats for specific industries or organizations. If you wish to participate in our meetings or outreach activities, or present educational information please visit our website at [www.king.wsu.edu/foodandfarms/foodsystems](http://www.king.wsu.edu/foodandfarms/foodsystems).

## ***Why use the term "Acting"?***

We are called the *Acting* Food Policy Council to demonstrate that one main goal is to form an officially sanctioned food policy council recognized by local government. Using the term "*acting*" helps to demonstrate that we are setting the stage for the work of a future FPC intertwined with the role of local government in a formal relationship to enhance a local healthy food system.

## ***Why does the AFPC want to be sanctioned by government?***

The AFPC takes guidance from the 50+ food policy councils formed around the nation. While some food policy councils start as nonprofit or citizen groups, those with longevity have created close partnerships and relationships with local government.

## ***What will an FPC do in Seattle and King County that isn't already being done?***

Many groups in the Seattle and King County region do work on aspects of food policy, from farmland preservation to nutrition education, food policy and policy for environmental sustainability, land use planning and transportation. The most important function of an FPC is to serve as a bridge between local governments – city, county and state – and the diversity of food system issues for a more comprehensive and coordinated approach to food policy. One prime example is helping to improve links between public transit and access to healthy foods in grocery stores, farmers markets, and community gardens -- a topic that spans multiple jurisdictions, businesses, community groups and government and is not easily accomplished by only one agency alone.

## ***What is the Seattle King County AFPC working on currently?***

The AFPC is developing a series of education papers for government officials and the public on several important policy areas: food access, transportation, climate change and the federal Farm Bill. The AFPC is also currently working to support Seattle's Local Food Action Initiative proposed by city council president Richard Conlin.

### ***What are some AFPC successes?***

The AFPC has come a long way in the past year. With partners in the City of Seattle, King County and a number of nonprofit organizations and businesses and support from WSU King County Extension, food-related issues are capturing the attention of our elected officials and becoming more visible in the media.

- Seattle PI editorial series called living food covers different aspects of the local food system including the Farm Bill, public health, food stamps, genetically modified foods, and food safety.
- King County Climate Action Plan highlights the importance of food and agriculture in relationship to climate change.
- The AFPC partners in community-wide outreach and education efforts such as Eat Local For Thanksgiving and the King County Food and Fitness Initiative.
- Seattle Climate Action Plan calls for support for local and sustainable food.
- The AFPC has submitted recommendations to the King County Comprehensive Plan update that address the food system.

***Recent Publications*** (available at [www.king.wsu.edu/foodandfarms/AFPCPublications.html](http://www.king.wsu.edu/foodandfarms/AFPCPublications.html))

### **Greenhouse Gas Emissions and the Local Food System - Issue Paper No. 3**

Most of us know that climate change is associated with human activity, especially the production and use of energy. A significant portion of this stems from a globalized food system. To better understand the climate impact of food in Washington, researchers at the University of Washington assessed and compared greenhouse gas emissions of locally and globally sourced food items. Using the internationally accepted Life Cycle Assessment method, because of its capacity to describe climate impacts in detail, we compared four typical Washington food items sourced regionally and globally. The more locally produced products had less climate impact in every case, though the reasons vary and in this case depended largely on Washington's high agricultural productivity.

### **Thinking Ahead to a Local Thanksgiving - Issue Paper No. 2**

Can we reconnect our Thanksgiving tradition with our local agricultural tradition to create a more meaningful celebration? Should we? The global economy has changed the way many farmers grow, process, package and transport their products. One consequence of these changes has been a reduction in varieties of plants and animals and in genetic diversity. This powerful information and innovative suggestions can be put into action year round (not just at Thanksgiving)...

### **2007 Farm Bill Legislation to Support a Healthy Food System for Seattle & King County - Issue Paper No. 1**

Moving our food from seed to table involves a complex system of policies, programs and practices. This system is heavily influenced by the federal Farm Bill. This omnibus legislation affects agriculture, trade policy, access to food and nutrition, environmental stewardship, and conservation of natural resources. Although this is federal legislation, it has significant impacts on the health of our local communities.

Impacts from the Farm Bill affecting food and farming in Seattle and King County include:

- Subsidies for commodity crops.
- Scant support for small scale agriculture.
- A dominant food production and distribution system dependent on fossil fuels.
- Lack of access to healthy food in low income areas yet readily available non-nutritious food.
- Increasing rates of chronic disease

### ***What does WSU Extension have to do with the AFPC?***

WSU King County Extension supports the establishment of a local food policy council by serving as the coordinating entity under the guidance of its Small Farms and Food Systems Program.

**For more information please visit us on the web at [www.king.wsu.edu/foodandfarms/foodsystems](http://www.king.wsu.edu/foodandfarms/foodsystems), or contact Sylvia Kantor, at [sylvia.kantor@kingcounty.gov](mailto:sylvia.kantor@kingcounty.gov) or call 206-205-3131.**

Prepared on behalf of the Seattle-King County Acting Food Policy Council by Rebecca Sayre, WSU King County Extension, March 2008.