

small farms and food systems

Developing Civic Capacity for a Sustainable Food System: Creating a Local Food Policy Council

Program Goals:

To develop integrated policy and action for a food system that supports health for people, communities, economies, and the environment.

Overview The Small Farms and Food Systems Program at WSU King County Extension (WSU KCE) is taking steps to realize a healthier, more sustainable and equitable food system for King County by working to establish a local food policy council. With a systems-based approach we foster stronger and mutually beneficial connections among all stakeholders along the food system from growing, harvesting, processing, packaging, transporting, and marketing, to consuming and disposing of food.

Situation: Local governments generally lack a comprehensive local planning process to ensure a resilient, sustainable and equitable food system. At the same time, government programs that address hunger, nutrition, agriculture, food sector labor conditions, and infrastructure are spread across many agencies and jurisdictions. A food policy council (FPC) is a coordinating entity that offers a means for greater governmental involvement in food system problems while also giving residents access and the ability to influence government policies that affect food systems. A **Seattle/King County Food Policy Council** will provide a role for city and county governments in partnership with private sector organizations, to collaborate in decreasing food insecurity, improving health, and increasing the sustainability of our local food system.

2009 PROGRAM ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In 2009, the Acting Food Policy Council (AFPC) made important progress toward its goals: 1) to develop integrated policy and action for a food system that supports health for people, communities, economies, and the environment; and 2) to secure official recognition from Seattle and King County governments.

- The AFPC created a [strategic framework](#) to guide regional food policy work. The framework outlines five focus areas including infrastructure, public health, local economic development, equitable food access and council development. The process raised funds from stakeholders to cover the cost of engaging strategic planning consultants, and engaged stakeholders beyond current AFPC members to include broader voices.
- In 2009, the AFPC shifted its focus toward developing a **regional food policy council**. In collaboration with stakeholders from three neighboring counties (Kitsap, Pierce, and Snohomish) and Seattle City Councilmember Richard Conlin, the AFPC prepared and presented a proposal to the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) Growth Management and Executive Boards to establish a regional Puget Sound Food Policy Council that would be housed within the PSRC. Negotiations to establish a regional council continue despite the challenges associated with budget reductions at the PSRC.
- City of Seattle Councilmember Richard Conlin secured **operating funds** for the AFPC to continue through June 2009, as it transitions to a regional food policy council
- The Seattle Department of Neighborhoods invited the AFPC to participate in the development of the **Local Food Action Plan** for Seattle.



The Acting Food Policy Council published a strategic framework to guide regional food policy work

Capital Press
June 18, 2009

Seattle makes progress on local food initiative

More farmers' markets, lower fees help area growers

King County farmers say they are pleased to see Seattle's local-food initiative making headway, including more farmers' markets and lower fees.

In a 7-2 vote last spring, the Seattle City Council passed the Local Food Action Initiative, which was crafted to help develop stronger ties between agriculture and regional consumers and institutions.

Proposed by Council President Richard Conlin, the initiative's goals include strengthening local farmers' markets, securing their locations, expanding resources for food banks, developing solutions to reduce the cost of food for urban consumers and planning for a secure food supply during emergencies and disasters. One year later, the initiative has borne fruit, and work is continuing on implementing the goals that received funding. [Read more](#)

•AFPC members participated in a number of food policy efforts including: hosting its own monthly meetings to share information and developments with stakeholders, participating in meetings convened by Councilmember Conlin to promote urban agriculture, and preparing a USDA Community Food Project grant for several food system improvement projects for the City of Seattle.

•In partnership with Sustainable Seattle, the AFPC submitted a **social networking grant to the Seattle Foundation** to create a new version of Seattle Food Network, online forum and clearinghouse.

•AFPC members contributed to the King County Food and Fitness Initiative (KCFFI) planning process in a number of ways: helped focus communities identify strategies for food system change at a community retreat; assisted the KCFFI Policy Committee with analysis and prioritization of policy options; and served on the KCFFI Healthy Retail Design Team.

IMPACTS

Greater interest and awareness of food system issues and policy opportunities:

- Increased number of guests at AFPC meetings.
- Increased awareness of AFPC efforts.
- Number of FPC's in development in the state -- two in 2004 to twelve in 2009.
- Level of press coverage of food issues – Seattle Times, Capital Press, KUOW

Several local and statewide policies developed to address food system issues:

- Local Food Action Plan – City of Seattle.
- City of Seattle support to establish secure locations for farmers' markets around Seattle.
- City of Seattle developing a new farmers' market at City Hall.
- City of Seattle lowered permitting fees for farmers markets from \$8,312 a year to \$251 a year.

Contact:

Sylvia Kantor

WSU King County Extension

200 Mill Ave. South, Suite 100

Renton WA 98057-2175

Voice: 26-205-3131

Fax: 206-296-0952

sylvia.kantor@king.county.gov

www.king.wsu.edu