

Health, Wellness, Hunger, and Food Access

Progress Report, Discussion

April 2011

Charge to Subcommittee from Legislation

- Sec. 106-832 (1): In depth assessment to inform efforts to increase the amount of sustainable local food used in School Lunch/Breakfast programs
- Sec. 106-832 (2): Making sustainable local food available under public assistance programs (EBT at farmers markets)
- Sec. 106-832 (3): Promoting urban/backyard gardens to improve health, use idle property, lower food costs
- Sec. 106-832 (general): Encouraging entrepreneurial efforts and economic development, reducing regulatory barriers



Efforts to date: Farm to School

- Getting local foods into child nutrition program through Farm to School (F2S)
 - Updates from Gary Gay and other NCDA Farm to School program staff
 - Significant interest from legislators re increasing the reach of program: schools and farmers
 - Coordinated effort with Obesity Task Force to increase staff effort for marketing/outreach to schools
 - Survey for child nutrition directors to assess barriers and facilitators of F2S participation
 - GAP certification key issue for smaller farmers
 - Likely funding from local foundations for pilot programs to test school kitchen upgrades and expand NCDA “fleet”/cold storage (Obesity TF recommendation)



Efforts to date: EBT at Farmers Markets

- Use of EBT to facilitate SNAP and WIC at farmers markets
 - Update from Leaflight – coordinated support for SNAP
 - Update from WIC re future plans – likely 2 years out
 - Much in flux with potential funding changes re nutrition benefits programs
 - Advocacy efforts in NC increased SNAP-Ed funding (Obesity TF) to support local foods use/education – future expansion uncertain



Efforts to date:

Food Safety and Regulatory Issues

- Food safety re school/community gardens and serving local foods in salad bars
 - Salad bars as an approach to encouraging consumption of local foods
 - School gardens to encourage interest in consuming fruits and vegetables
- General concern among child nutrition personnel about food safety and associated liability – lack of clear guidelines

Food Safety and Regulatory Issues

- Information sessions
 - In person meeting 1/20/11
 - Subcommittee members
 - Food safety Experts:
 - Dr. Ben Chapman: NCSU, Food Safety Specialist
 - Kristi Nixon: NC DENR Food Protection Staff
 - Child Nutrition Directors
 - Update regarding policies/practices in other states
 - Conference call 2/28/11 with Subcommittee
 - 30+ CNDs and other interested parties
 - Representatives from other states implementing programs
 - CDC representative – re salad bar promotion program
- **Bottom line:** How can we protect food safety and avoid liability problems while retaining options for promoting local food in schools and communities?

Food Safety and Regulatory Issues

- National fact finding:
 - USDA and CDC both encourage the use of school garden foods and salad bars in school cafeterias
 - Neither agency offers specific guidelines for food safety but recognize the importance
- Discussion with Regional Child Nutrition Directors
 - Recommended language for a SLFAC resolution:

“The SLFAC recommends an interagency (DPI, NCDA, DPH, NCSU, NCAT/cooperative extension, UNC-CH) collaboration to create and disseminate guidelines, resources and educational materials for school stakeholders (administration, child nutrition, parent/community groups) regarding the safe production, harvest and use of school garden food in schools.”



Grant proposal to RWJF: Removing Fruit and Vegetable Barriers through Sensible School Food Safety Policies

Goal- contribute to obesity prevention by removing barriers to fruit and vegetable consumption posed by restrictive policies regarding use of school garden food and salad bars.

- **Aim 1:** Determine reported frequency, severity and source of outbreaks associated with school gardens and salad bars
- **Aim 2:** Assess perceived food safety concerns among child nutrition staff and catalogue existing state and local policies regarding school gardens and salad bars.
- **Aim 3:** Use data from 1 and 2 to create school garden and salad bar food safety guidelines, training, and a certification process to minimize liability concerns and thus remove barriers to fruit and vegetable intake.
- **Aim 4:** Develop and implement a web-based communication, dissemination, and social marketing plan for national distribution of the training and certification process
- **Aim 5:** Work with USDA, CDC staff to complement and inform policy efforts at the federal level regarding salad bars and school garden food use.



Food Safety:

Community Gardens and Green Carts

- Apply feasible food safety guidelines to community gardens as well
- Subcommittee to consider increasing healthy food access through food/green carts
 - Many food safety issues on the table now
 - NYC model uses unprocessed foods only
 - Question of affordability while reasonable return to farmer – end of market food? Gleaning?

Discussion

- Farm to school
 - How to increase participation from farmers, including smaller farmers?
 - What could be learned from a farmer survey?
 - How would we do this?
 - How to improve distribution systems within schools districts
 - Potential inclusion of meat and seafood
 - Role of value-added processing facilities?
 - Include pre-schools? Childcare?

Discussion (cont.)

- Support for “resolution” about school food safety guidelines?
 - Could be helpful for grant proposal...

“The SLFAC recommends an interagency (DPI, NCDA, DPH, NCSU, NCAT/cooperative extension, UNC-CH) collaboration to create and disseminate guidelines, resources and educational materials for school stakeholders (administration, child nutrition, parent/community groups) regarding the safe production, harvest and use of school garden food in schools.”

Discussion (cont.)

- Whole farm GAP certification
- School/community garden food safety issues
- Additional strategies for use of EBT for local foods
 - CSAs?
 - Cooking classes?
 - Innovative legislation per Commissioner Troxler?
- Other thoughts, recommendations for the subcommittee? Health Reform? Affordable Care Act?