

The Future of Farmers Markets- Real Food Summit, 12/1/07

- 3 goals of workshop: 1. generate awareness 2. create collective vision for future 3. open network channels.

Panelists:

David:

- Operations manager at Union Square Greenmarket → since 1976, 4 days a week, 122 producers, links 16,000 acres of cultivated farmland within a 200 mi radius of NYC, including PA, Hudson Valley, NJ, and Vermont. One of 46 Greenmarkets, it has revitalized the public space, providing farmers and consumers with necessary interaction with each other. There is a lure of its unique environment.

June:

- Managed 9 different locations, worked as a farm inspector and liason between producers and consumers. She believes education and promotion are essential for future markets in order to help people make the right choices default choices. Having people taste fresh produce is effective in this respect. Parking for the farmers is an issue.

Ryan:

- Red Hook= low income and minorities, but improving. Home of fairway, waterfront, and no subways and 2 bus lines. 11,000 people, 8,000 of which are in public housing, with 50% below the poverty line. Food offered in the area does not create health or wellness. Cornell coop extension and NY parks made a farmers market possible. It fosters economic development and involves local teens. He says the future involves listening back to when growing food used to be a major part of life. Local markets nurture environment, souls, and local dollars. Food is grown and sold directly at market, senior center and local restaurants, which are owned by people living in Red Hook. 1,000 teens who attend after school programs are now hooked up with local food from the market. Education leads to demand for local food.

Karen:

- City farmer from the Bronx community garden coalition, which was initially established for beautification but not produces food for urbanites. The site for the market was on park land, and many people needed to be convinced to make it happen: community boards, city council members. The area has many Mexicans, and the market provides them with products that are not common in the supermarket. There is a pride involved because the dollar stays with people in the community. Her vision is to bridge the farmers market and the bodegas, possibly through edcation, and also to empower youth through education. With a grant from the department of agriculture, after school programs now get their snacks from the community garden. Working with politicians would also help. Local Food = empowerment for the community.

Bob:

- His vision is to ensure sustainable agriculture in the third world. Markets are more than what they appear. Visibility found there leads to deep changes. States should emphasize markets in centers so media trickles down to rest of system. Another part of his vision is making it easier for people to start their own (picking

locations, finding farmers, and managing the structure). Cornell helped Latin American farmers start again, and most were very excited to do so. Suggests restoring so small scale buyers can buy from middle scale growers.

Question: How to accommodate high prices for low income people?

Answer: People will pay for good quality. Trying to empower people so they don't rely on food stamps by offering job sources and training. Community gardens. Farmers need a living wage! Have people understand the complications of the industry.

Group Questions/Answers:

Q1: What is great about NYC's markets and the present market network?

A:

- Culture building;
- Youth involvement;
- Economic benefits;
- Meet the farmers;
- Buy from your community;
- Freshness, variety and quality;
- Diversity (biological and cultural);
- Lots! Well-accessible, well-places, year-round;
- Preserving open space;
- Urban-rural connection.

Q2: What needs are currently unmet by NYC Farmer's Markets?

A:

- More advertising – where/when/EBT;
- Perception – white, middle class;
- Not enough in every Borough;
- No permanence – facilities);
- Producers-consumers enough for each other;
- Need to be seen as more than just produce;
- Parking;
- NYC-grown food;
- Winter markets;
- Connection of market with people in neighborhood so the market reflects community;
- Cultural awareness.

Q3: What is your vision of NYC's market scene 10 years into the future?

A:

- Markets as social, civic, political tools;
- More affordable markets in low income area;
- Increased awareness of markets;
- Union Square-type market in every borough;
- More community markets stemming from central;

- Today's youth still involved;
- Year round;
- Youth-run vendor market;
- Nutrition education at all sites;
- Market-institution relationships;
- Interborough-wide network;
- Market-focused transport (maps?);
- Educated consumers;
- Networking/communicating between orgs;
- Technology

Q4: What role will you play in getting from the present to the envisioned future?

A:

- Grow and distribute food;
- Continue to work hard, get a raise;
- Lobby for funding;
- Educate kids and adults;
- Volunteer.