1/21/2011

Recommendations

For Local Food Advisory Council

Notated recommendations for the Local Food Advisory Council, based upon person to person meetings with community members, farmers and ranchers, business, hospitality, educational, medical sector, for profit's and non-profit's in Napa County and surrounding counties.

Area of Farming:

• Work with local small farmers to provide produce for weekly food boxes, events, local markets, and/or restaurants.
• Supplement existing zoning laws and other agricultural land preservation efforts in order to link local farmers with market opportunities.
• Address critical barriers related to farming start-up costs, access to affordable land, and access to affordable irrigation water.
• Aid local growers by providing brokerage or other collective marketing in order to connect local producers with local restaurants and markets.
• Expand countywide incentives for production and use of organic farm products.
• Provide local growers with special exemptions on groundwater use restrictions and/or subsidies to offset pumping costs.
• Provide technical assistance to improve irrigation efficiency and create cost-effective farm water purification to encourage the establishment of new farms.
• Take advantage of federal funding available to increase incentives for farmland conservations.
• Adopt accountability measures to increase development efficiency and minimize the loss of high-quality farmland.
• Devote more resources to research and education through the colleges. For local growers to promote healthier, tastier, and fresher locally grown food that conserves energy and other resources.

Area of Production:

• Create an inventory of land potentially suitable for agricultural production.
• Work with school districts, county cooperative extension programs, and other local organizations to support resources for school farming.
• Use available open space to grow foods for use in partnering programs and services (i.e., food bank, meals- on-wheels, etc.)
• Expand and improve current garden activities in the community, including raising chickens, harvesting honey from beehives, supporting seed saving, growing of fruit crops.
• Conduct a comprehensive review of current policy and zoning obstacles that hinder food production to increase availability of land and opportunities.
• Encourage edible landscaping, community gardens, and mixed-use development projects.
• Develop agriculture zoning designations along with related policies for zoning map.
• Where schools have shared space with city parks, increase support for the development of shared school/community gardens.

Area of Distribution:

• Use information technologies to provide details about the entire history of their food, not just its origin and nutrition content.
• Expand infrastructure for transporting and storing in-season food.
• Invest in schools long-term capacity to participate in farm-to-school and other programs that improve school food, such as increasing consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables and other healthy, local foods.
• Support wholesale produce companies to procure goods from regional and organic farms.
• Restore local packing and wholesaling facilities to support or expand local agricultural production.
• Increase the capacity to prepare for long-term needs of farm-to-school programs and other food improvements at schools.
• Collaborate with local food distribution to aid in delivery of healthy foods to various communities.
• Adopt a local food ordinance that requires city governments to purchase, by or through its food service contractor, locally produced and organic food when a public agency serves food in the usual course of business.
• Partner with distributors such as food banks and farmers' markets to aid in the distribution of healthy foods.
• Take advantage of economies of scale that exist by partnering with other firms in the area to buy and support transportation of locally grown food for corporate cafeterias and sponsoring CSAs for their employees.

Area of Consumption:

• Remove barriers to participation in federal food programs, and fully utilize federal food assistance programs.
• Increase funding for food assistance programs that specifically target elderly populations.
• Offer incentives to schools and community programs that host summer lunch sites and participate in the Summer Foods Service Program.
• Encourage the use of WIC and EBT at farmers' markets.
• Partner with school districts to develop outreach programs to increase and stabilize participation rates for the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs, and Child and Adult Care Food Program.
• Develop an outreach program to increase WIC and EBT usage at farmers' markets.
• Increase access to fresh and local foods for residents who participate in federal and emergency food programs.

Area of Health / Nutrition:

• Increase funding for incentives and disincentives to encourage healthy choices, such as a tax or regulatory fee on candy and soda and a ban on television junk food ads.
• Set realistic targets to lower the number of overweight and obese children, and increase programs and campaigns that focus on childhood and adult obesity/diabetics.
• Expand consumer education about the value and availability of local foods, for example by including local food information in a food guide to help consumers follow "sustainable diets."
• Support and encourage more nutrition education in youth, adult, and senior programs.
• Promote increased purchasing power through job creation to ensure that residents can afford healthy food.
• Sponsor community events and public health campaigns that promote healthy foods and agriculture.
• Integrate and coordinate efforts in the greater school community to ensure healthy school food and foster healthy and active school environments.
• Link effective community resources to high-risk populations.
• Engage with school districts in the ongoing development of a wellness policy.
• Work with small food stores and residents to conduct nutrition education classes and activities, including shopping and food budgeting guidance.
• Work with childcare centers and foster care homes to ensure that children receive nutritious meals.
• Ensure access to healthy food through activities such as providing customers with nutritional information at fast food restaurants.

Area of Policy and Program Development:

• Sponsor and engage food policy councils and community-based organizations to engage community residents, develop and implement healthy community events, and sponsor public relations and educational campaigns related to food systems.
• Expand youth involvement in policy-focused process in order to successfully promote healthy environments in challenged neighborhoods.
• Increase community-based participation by involving families and community advocates in the creation of food policy, education/outreach/and program planning.
• Ensure that the material and services presented are fulfilling the needs of the community, and connecting with those whom they are intending to serve.
• Ensure public participation and genuine decision-making power at the community-level.
• Communities should employ their own values and vision in food system work; this will sustain motivation during difficult times.
• Include healthy & seasonal recipes, and important nutrition information that may not be well known in the community in newsletters.
• Create a work exchange program so residents can trade food related goods and services.
• Increase the availability of community/teaching kitchens for classes and events.
• Create opportunities for residents to share ideas about food systems.

Bianco Ag Services
Marie Bianco
biancoagservices@yahoo.com
Napa, California
Cell(707)338-7907