

## 4.10.20 Coordinated Response to Local Food Requests - Meeting Notes

Facilitator: Lilly Irvin-Vitela, New Mexico First

Notes: Sharon Berman, New Mexico First

In attendance:

- Anzia Bennett, Three Sisters Kitchen
  - Lucy Foma, Santa Fe County
  - Helga Garcia-Garza, Agri-cultura Network
  - Erin Ortigoza, Santa Fe County
  - Pam Roy, Farm to Table New Mexico, NM Food and Agriculture Policy Council
  - Susan Wilger, Southwest Center for Health Innovation, National Center for Frontier Communities
- 
- Lilly: I'd like to start with a giant thank you to everyone for doing the work they are doing. Last week, the urgency of needs continued to pile up. We need to figure out a way to not miss opportunities for people to connect with local food options. I have a few good news items to share, and if anyone else has good news to share, please do. Then we'll do some problem solving around connecting with local food producers, and communication.
    - Lilly: We ended up getting a donation of 1500-2000 lbs. of meat, eggs and produce for folks on the Navajo Nation and Zuni Pueblo. The downside of that is that it's California food, not NM food. The other positive thing is that Denise and Mike at the Farmers' Marketing Association are coordinating the response to the need for food. 3,000lbs of pinto beans and peanut butter from Portales being distributed to the Navajo Nation. We don't see that as redundant because the food need is significant, and they live in a food desert. Anyone else have positive stories of connection to food or local food?
  - Helga: There is a success factor from years of building a cooperative community model, but also – importantly - building the production piece. The farm to market system that has been collectively with farms and community partners has really shown its strength to keep local production flowing under the microscope of using healthy practices right now. We've been able to keep our production piece flowing the past 2 weeks. That's because of the community engagement via food access and food allies – the strength of that network has helped us deal with the shockwave and the crisis.
  - Pam: We are tag teaming with Michael Venticinque. To Helga's point, there's a pretty significant shift in the sense of market option. CSAs, the ramp -p and the work Helga's doing as a cooperative; shifting into different options like CSAs and keep options open to farmers. Because of that build-out, it sounds like its absorbing a good chunk of what's being produced. How do we see that moving forward? Does that sound right, Helga?
    - Helga: I would agree.
    - Pam: And a thank you to Lucy who's here from Santa Fe County. I know she'll share the great coordination and mapping out and creativity between the city, the county and all the partners in this region. It's really significant,
  - Lucy: I'm in charge of a program at the county called The Agri-Gate of Santa Fe County (<https://www.agrigatesfc.org/>). Connecting food something with food buyers. Started it last year. Profiles for buyers and resource providers. People could search for types of product and buyers. It was launched and we had a handful of profiles. Since the covid crisis happened, we've been more involved with the food policy council – the number of profiles and assets has rally grown. Could demonstrate the potential of local food network to meet the demand. We're happy to have this tool, grateful for the people helping build the assets database.

- Erin: I worked on an initiative through Forward Cities, a regional initiative that began a year or so ago, to build capacity in central and northern region of NM. I worked with Santa Fe County on ag land use planning, looking at what Lucy was talking about - food mapping, connection between assets in the region, how it benefits the entrepreneur in the system, what are we missing, and how to garner support. A more closed-loop system to support local food systems.
- Lilly: There was a request that I call you all back and communicate in real time. Any ideas?
  - Helga: there are different aspects to trying to meet the food chain. In working with food banks and navigating other avenues in the past 2 weeks, yes, we have local production. **Local productions and systems are being affected by the Governor's mandate.** There can only be 5 people in the facility at the same time. Since we went into the mandate, we had 1 person working production and work out the times when the farmers deliver food. **There has to be that understanding that when we say local production, our facility is being affected.** There's a stable food piece, which you most likely have to buy the majority from outside sources. There are other pieces – South Valley Development Center, Three Sisters Kitchen. All the 75 entrepreneurs working out of the SVDC are limited. They qualify as local producers. You have pretzel makers, cheese makers, etc. The mandate is affecting the local production piece. You have to understand the different levels of production. We're at the beginning of the season. Each week it gets stronger.
  - Helga: But then there's the piece regarding healthy and safe practices. I'm not here to complicate it in any way. I'm here to let folks know, as people who have to do the farm to market piece, and entrepreneurs out there, that work out of community facilities to produce local food, those are the mandates that we're working under and another level of the local food system affecting quantity and variety of production.
  - Susan: I've been on a few local meetings. What we're realizing is that some of the orders make it extremely difficult for local communities to respond to essential services. Can there be certain waivers, in the case of food production – or clarification – to the Governor's orders?
- Lilly: are there specific orders? I'm hearing from Helga that these additional requirements are impacting production. I'm also hearing her say there is attention to safety. Do you have specific suggestions about adjustment to the orders that would keep you all safe and allow you to operate more effectively?
  - Helga: We've been in conversation with SVDC and might have one solution. Since we can't stop produce from growing, we were thinking of using the facility after hours. They're currently open 8-5. We were thinking as production grows, as soon as next week for instance, we know we have to get another staff member in there plus another delivery person. We've been in discussion about how to take care of our main production when we can only be 5 people in the kitchen in order to stay within the mandate.
    - Helga: Another idea we've been working at with La Montanita Co-op, is sharing transportation. That's the way we've been able to get our deliveries to Taos, to Santa Fe, and around Bernalillo County.
  - Lilly: That's less of a policy issue and more of shared practices with other folks, is that true?
  - Helga – that takes care of our organization. But other producers need to get into those kitchens and be able to produce. We need to narrow in on this. This crisis has brought up gaps and flaws. We're connecting those dots into procurement, etc. **The policy piece here is working under the Governor's mandate during this crisis. Wanting to uplift the local economy through local production. We can't participate if we don't have the ability to get into those certified kitchens that will take care of all of those safety nets.**
  - Susan – Food production should be an essential service. If it becomes recognized as an essential service, codes that allow for more than 5 people at a time in the kitchen. Can the Governor's office

offer technical assistance - guidance for how we can still do the prod in efficient effect manner while maintaining health and safety practices.

- Lilly – **I'll follow up with Patty Keane in the Governor's Office.** She's the point person in food issues. Jeremy with HSD, who was on our larger call has been put in charge of food response on emergency management level. **I will follow up with him as well.** Ag was determined to be an essential service, and food production is part of the ag cycle. **I will clarify with them. As soon as I know, I will let you know what I learn.**
- Helga: it's a starting point for sure.
- Lilly: They may have already looked at assets and realized, hey we need more of these certified incubation kitchens. If not, we can help get that on their radar. At least give them our list, and share with local producers and processors to look for ways to increase local food production.
- Anzia: **In ABQ, there are all of these commercial kitchens that have been city-approved that are dark right now. They are not incubator kitchens, but they are certified.** If businesses are open to opening up their kitchens, I think they might meet environmental health inspection in terms of health and legal inspection. I hope to stay involved – I have to leave right now.
- Lilly: Are there policy or systems solutions, so we can connect folks with local food sources?
  - Pam: I hear the health issue around needing more access to space to process, to get things prepared. I'm also wondering – I've heard in other conversations – I know we need to shift current production into market opportunities. My question to Helga – is that ramped up to manage the current market producers' needs? Also, I hear from people, we need to get local food produce into the emergency food systems now. It sounds like there's potentially enough happening to keep moving what's being produced now into the WHAT marketplace without trying to get it into the emergency food systems, that might be difficult for emergency providers to take it on.
  - Lilly – Thank you for pointing out that tension. By all means, we all want local agriculture to survive this. We want folks to be paid for their food as much as possible. On the other time we don't want the situation Michael as explaining yesterday, with someone driving around with food and getting turned away. What we heard from Mag at the Food Bank that they were able to get variety at their food bank. They're having trouble getting protein. That raises questions around a few things. There are tons of folks doing emergency food relief that are not connected to that statewide system: tribes, pueblos, rural. Not because they're leaving people out on purpose, but that's the limitation of an underfunded system. Local food sites, local grassroots orgs responding to local food needs of their communities. We're not suggesting that produce and local ag products are diverted. If there are opportunities where food will be wasted and it can be diverted, great. There's a two-fold thing. People could purchase food if they could find it. They have tribal or organizational dollars and are looking to purchase because local outlets are out. Jeremy was saying with Rep Stans – there may be markets for local with NM Grocers Association. Does that address yes, a tension but there may be a way to protect markets, prevent waste by sending overages to hungry folks?
  - Helga: That gives us the different paths and avenues. I'm understanding food banks need shelf-stable stuff they have already worked into their system. Then I think this other piece – we're early on into harvest. The peak of the harvest will be in September. If we could set some of these other pieces for the short term peak of the 2020 season, we have to look at what we're learning from this crisis. What we're learning is that we have to up the bar in value added production, where our local produce can be turned into that shelf-stable product. In the long vision to develop a healthy local food system. I think coming in with a NM Grocery Market Association is really important. That's a market we've never been able to penetrate on a local level. If we could do that, those local grocery stores will make it economically viable for everyone. Policy piece looking at bigger picture as policy change takes time.

Getting value-added, accepted as part of the SNAP and the Double IDONT KNOW Bucks. Those are my thoughts.

- Lilly: In another group, now-deceased representative Pratt had spoken about providing prescriptions for food, and the importance of that because hunger is such a negative determinant of health outcome. I wonder if HSD could add additional SNAP benefits to cover prescriptions for food.
- Helga: Yes, that's been in our campaign the last 5 years, getting local produce into Dollar General. That has been one of the leveraging points of Health Care Without Harm (an international NGO), Presbyterian and UNM leveraging FreshRx. We were at the point of supplying to Dollar General at pilot stores. That was our leverage: bringing in food as medicine as a backup to SNAP. It's in the picture, it's in the vision, it's in the works.
- Pam – the FreshRX program has guidance under USDA for states and communities that want to do it. Presbyterian has been helping numerous farmers markets and community programs to pilot FreshRX program. It's an option, like building out CSAs. It is a kind of intermediate – as it takes a few next steps and requires funding as well.
  
- Lilly: Other ways to coordinate channels of communication when the calls are coming in and people aren't getting the official quick response from government and rely on community assets? Knowing full well that NM Farmers Marketing Association is on this. If it's more nuanced than that, we'd like to know the range of options.
  - Susan: The NM Alliance of Health Councils having meeting on the 16<sup>th</sup>. Health councils are likely to know their points of contact. The communication networks I work with are different. One is through the county and the other is through a local community radio station.
- Lilly – Other ideas about giving people clear guidance about who to connect to? Not to think that a response today is a forever response.
  - Susan – another thought is I know is that New Mexico First has been a key source of info on your website. The NM Food & Ag policy Council is about to launch their website. We have the NM Farmers Marketing website. If there were 3-4 common websites that people could know, you could have a few key places to disburse the information.
  - Lilly – I love that, and am happy to link to others' pages. If you're looking to building relationships in health and community services for anybody, we're happy to pull it. Otherwise, we'd be happy to share data and resources in terms of communication also.
  - Erin – Aligning our efforts is a huge step forward. **Huge gaps. Investments. For SF County. That would – we could – trying to run – version – resource directory. Talk to production and essential resource providers.** [note: Erin had a spotty connection]
  - Lilly – Jonas at NM First is reaching out to ag producers and distributors to add to our existing resource directory. The technology is there; however, the agriculture section is not the most built-out section of the directory. We can make a concerted effort to work on it, and if folks have the capacity to help, that's great. A while back, Jonas worked on a food atlas when he worked at NMSU. He encountered a lot of people saying they didn't want to be in the atlas because they were already at capacity. In our resource directory, people can add themselves or we can add them. It's a people-powered thing and we'll do it as fast as we can. If people would like to help that would be great as it's mutually beneficial.
  - Erin: is there a directory where people can ask, "where can we get food?" The more we can focus now and get all of our voices aligned, the more it will help us navigate as the crisis continues.
  - Lilly: I have a couple of to dos. **I'll check in with Jonas to learn where we're at in building out that part of the resource directory. I'll talk with Denise in ways we can amplify and not duplicate their efforts. I'll also follow up in getting the contact info for the NM Grocer's Association to everybody on this list so we can build short and long term market opportunity.**

- Pam: Is there a way for Lucy and Erin to see the NM First resource directory and link to it?
- Lilly: Yes. You go to [Sharenm.org](http://Sharenm.org), at the top of the landing page there is a link to the [resource directory](#). You can enter county, zip code and other variables. There's also a page that's in a baby state that is a food and hunger initiative page that folks can also connect to. If you have ideas about additional information that should be added, we're wide open to suggestions.
- Erin: Is this a recurring call or is it the first time?
  - Lilly – we had a somewhat broader conversation last week and we said we'd meet every two weeks. Erin, please email me and I'll send you the meeting schedule.
- Pam – I would love more clarification as we move forward. I went to the SHARE New Mexico website.
  - [Note: everyone went to the [SHARE New Mexico Resource Directory](#) in real time and followed along]
  - Lilly – you don't have to fill in all three of those blanks. Keep in mind, we don't go out mining for data. It's a community resource directory built by community for community. If there's something awesome missing – the only industry that got told no thank you were personal injury attorneys. It's not a perfect resource directory, and we're happy to add to it, and do a little programming to have food and ag as a tag, we can do that.
  - Pam – It's great to practice during the call - navigating these systems and thinking about how they further link to more specific things. Regarding the NM Grocers Association, there has been a fair amount of work with chain stores. The New Mexico Farmers' Marketing Association is doing as well with Double Up Food Bucks. In working with them, their requirements to date – farmers have to hit a certain set of requirements that most times keep the majority of small-scale or direct market farmers to try to move into that option.
- Pam: I wonder if the Grocers Association is willing to be at the table to have conversations about policy changes within their own rules.
  - Lilly – I've got the phone number and they're actually a neighbor of mine, as they're in Los Lunas. I'll give them a call, explore about them being a part of the solution. **If they're open, I can invite them to the next call.**
  - Pam –When Whole Foods was bought up by Amazon, they had a ramp-up in their requirements and it automatically kicked out a fair amount of people.
  - Lilly – I'll include the NM Grocers Association contact info in a future email. If I get blown off, I'll copy the Governor's office and Jeremy from HSD. The recommendation came from the Governor's administration to include the Grocers Association. If that's not successful, perhaps we can all say we'd like to connect and problem-solve together.
- Susan: Many of rural communities they have a high population of elders and get pantry distribution once a month. Protein has come up as a need – in any form. I'm curious if that had come up.
  - Lilly: It has come up. And it's problematic – food banks are having a hard time accessing protein. The governor's office has been aware of this challenge and Jeremy too. They're trying to purchase food at the EOC level as well. That issue you're describing is well understood and they're trying to work out a solution. It's on everybody's radar. There aren't easy solutions. One of the solutions at the food bank level is to do bulk institutional together to increase their purchasing power. They had done that and thought it was being filled but thought it was canceled. They were dropped by someone who had confirmed their order. We don't have the same purchasing power as other states. That affects our ability to access food. There is no solution as yet, but people are aware.
  - Susan: PPE for pantry volunteers is nonexistent in many areas. Local people are trying to mobilize as best they can. If there are any local resources.
  - Lilly: there are a couple of things with PPE. They are still struggling to get that to hospital - and they're aware that food distribution has a need. Patty Keane from the Governor's office shared that if your emergency food distributors are running into challenges, to alert your local emergency response managers. That's the channel that folks are supposed to go to. For volunteer shortages too, because

nationally people are going to the National Guard. I've looked for a list of emergency response managers, but didn't find one.

- Susan – The Homeland Security State Office might know the emergency resource managers.
- Lilly - I've gone to their website. I can put it on my to do list. If anyone else could do it faster that would be super welcome.
- Susan – I'll reach out to a couple of people who served the role as emergency response manager. I can send out an email about finding out if there is a centralize resource of emergency resource managers.

- Sharon: Our next meeting is Thursday, April 16 at 3pm.
- Lilly – please email me at [lilly@nmfirst.org](mailto:lilly@nmfirst.org) and I'll add you to the invite.
- Lilly – Thank you all!

## 4.15.20 Updates from Denise Miller, New Mexico Farmers' Marketing Association

### - Regarding policy on

**allowing more than 5 people at the commercial kitchens** like SVEDC and the ones Anzia mentioned. I'd be happy to also mention this to Mariana at the Governor's office who I've been working closely with. It seems like it might not be bad for them to hear it from multiple source. Let's raise the flags on this on this issue. Would that be useful? Don't want to duplicate efforts but a short email would be easy and Helga was mentioning the same thing to me the other day in a different (but related) conversation.'

- **Produce at the food banks:** I also talked to Sherry Hooper the other day. Like Mag, she too said they have plenty of produce. She probably wouldn't turn down a donation, but it is indeed the shelf stable protein items that are most needed. Said the pantries outside of the Food Bank system would be good places for surplus donations to go.

- **Two other policy areas not mentioned here:** nurseries have been shut down, and ranchers want meat to be able to be sold without going through a USDA packing facility. NMDA is hearing a LOT of noise from industry on these two topics, and they are trying to get movement at the Governor's office. But any support we can lend on these issues would be useful.

- **Produce prescriptions for low-income individuals and families:** As mentioned by Lilly and Helga. The FreshRx program that we have been running with Presbyterian and El Centro Family Health in Northern NM since 2014 connects health clinics with low-income individuals and fresh, local produce at farmers' markets, farm stands, or CSAs has been funded by a variety of sources since it's inception. It won't be funded by HSD, but I am just in the process of writing a federal grant to expand the program across the state. It would be a 3-year \$500,000 grant, and the clinic partners are tentatively in Española, Taos, Las Vegas, Pecos, Santa Fe, Albuquerque, Clovis, Tucumcari, Silver City, and Las Cruces. Hope that provides some information. It's an exciting project and the clinics are great partners.

- **NM Grocers Association:** Mike is very close to the new president of the Association, Breck Steward. He was going to be talking to him any day about some things related to local food at the independents. We've also been trying to get some of the independents to offer Double Up Food Bucks, but there have been issues with their POS systems. But the group might want to have Mike talk to Breck about getting these stores to increase their purchase of local. **What kind of policy changes are you wanting to see by the independents? Regarding food safety? This wasn't clear.**