

Food, Hunger, Water, Agriculture Policy - Food Systems Action Team Meeting
4.16.20 ♦ 3:30 – 4:30 pm
Meeting Notes

Facilitator: Lilly Irvin-Vitela, New Mexico First

Notes: Sharon Berman, New Mexico First

In Attendance:

- Mateo Carrasco, SWOP
- Sarah Cobb, Village of Los Ranchos
- Bryan Crawford-Garrett, Thornburg Foundation
- Matthew Denetclaw, Shiprock Inter-Tribal Agriculture Council
- Paula Garcia, NM Acequia Association
- Helga Garza, Agri-Cultura Network, Vice-chair of NM Food and Policy Council
- Dan Gerry, consultant on Village of Los Ranchos project
- Donna Gonzales, NM Acequia Association
- Chuck Lucas, Los Ranchos Ag Committee
- Josh Norman, MoGro
- Jonas Moya, New Mexico First
- Denise Miller, NM Farmers' Marketing Association
- Raphael Nevins, Healthy Futures
- Jason New, NM Department of Ag
- Erin Ortigoza, Santa Fe – Forward Cities, ESHIP Rio Grande
- Eugene Pickett, Valencia, National Farmers and Ranchers Trade Association, Black Farmers and Ranchers of New Mexico
- Pam Roy, Farm to Table, NM Food & Agriculture Policy Council
- Roy Montibon.
- Harold Trujillo, NM Acequia Association
- Anzia Bennett, Three Sisters Kitchen
- Mike Venticinque, NM Farmers' Marketing Association.
- Anthony Wagner, Wagner Farms. Plants in Corrales and Socorro; Farm to Table board
- Brent Van Dyke, NM Association of Conservations Districts

1. Overview and updates from action steps from last meeting.

- Lilly – we're checking in regarding sustaining local agriculture and the emergency food response. Typical food systems are not working in ways that are predictable. We've been asked to think about what we could do together to enhance the response, and how we can use local and regional systems to provide local food when the official system is lagging. It's important to keep subsistence farming going, even if those groups can't be part of emergency food response. How do we expand and protect markets?
 - We'll try to do some quick catch up in this meeting.



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- There was a process question raised by Brent in the last meeting, regarding how to continue to meet, continue with good practices and meet the Open Meetings requirements while meeting remotely. I followed up and shared that information with you.
- 1. Rafael: I don't see anybody from Tom Udall or Martin Heinrich's office or NAPI, and they have potential power to bring resources to the table.
 - a. Kyle Jim has a nonprofit in Shiprock. He has about 20 volunteers delivering food packages to families in need. Instead of getting them to sign, they take pictures and document what they're doing. **I can send people links.** Healthy Futures has given seeds and we're looking for ways to include more Native American folks and maybe get the attention of President Nez in the Navajo Nation.
 - b. In the grant Denise is applying for, there's no mention of Gallup, Farmington or Shiprock. I want to encourage her to add those communities because they're the hardest hit.
 - i. Denise: the reason Gallup isn't on that list is because COPE has separate funding for their equivalent of FreshRX. They have a federal grant for that very same thing. They've got it happening, so we don't need to duplicate those efforts there.
 - ii. Michael: I'm in conversation with people to get food over to that chapter. We are keeping them in mind. We're also working with Jason's great group out of NMDA. Shiprock and that area has not been forgotten.
 - iii. Raphael – the chapter houses are all closed.
 - iv. Michael – Ely's working on getting a distribution site.
 - c. Lilly – there are folks to follow up with, folks to invite in, and work being done so as not to duplicate.

2. Updates by Organization about Food Production Needs and Opportunities

- Lilly: What's going on in terms of concrete practical solutions to get hungry people and communities fed? And when you're thinking about concrete, actionable things, are there strategies you'd like to share?
 - a. Sarah: I always like to put in a plug for [The Storehouse](#). They are open Wednesday and Saturday, 9-12. Boxes are already pre-packaged, so people can drive up and the volunteers will place the box in people's cars. It's all free and very user-friendly and has a really good atmosphere. Pass that word around in the ABQ area!
 - i. Lilly: Statewide, most food banks and food distribution centers are doing exactly that, limited drive through setup.
 - ii. Roy: What's being done for farmers' markets and helping them get their harvest out?
 - iii. Sarah – Chuck has been really working hard on a survey that we're getting ready to distribute.
 - 1. Chuck – we've put together a survey that tries to canvas farmers in the village and the farmers and growers contributing to the food source the village gets. The survey allows growers and volunteers share information. We've recently linked in farming hygiene practices so people know what is expected of them. It will be released soon.
 - 2. Lilly: What are the questions on the survey, and how are using info to inform your work?



3. Chuck: The questions are as detailed as a pick list, e.g., do you need pickers, food processing, hauling, equipment shares, equipment loans, assistance at farmers' market, assistance in CSA distributions, etc. Volunteers are asked different questions, such as are you interested in making donation toward an equipment fund, etc. Once we get that information, we're acting as an ag committee associated with the village, as independently as we can without any ownership. We're trying to match farmers' needs with volunteer pool. [Link to draft survey](#)
 4. Sarah: in the village there are many home and land owners who have underutilized resources. We had a thought to match them up, to make those connections.
 5. Denise: About the farmer survey, are you working with Anne Simon?
 6. Sarah: She's aware of the work we're doing.
 7. Denise: That's terrific.
 8. Chuck: The query is to assist them in organization and trafficking at the market.
- b. Roy: I'm working in Las Vegas and San Miguel County, on the following tasks:
- i. Trying to ID shut-ins so we can get everything they need. That was the impetus for the database project I'm working on.
 - ii. We're gathering all the community services in town and trying to coordinate various info: what they all have to offer, if they need volunteers, where they get food from, and if they need supplies.
 - iii. Also we're trying to make sure people are not duplicating who needs help and who doesn't on dozens of privately held lists. The very elderly and vulnerable are scared to have strangers come onto their porch.
 - iv. There are other types of permissions we're trying to build into the system. I'm working with Dr. Peter Skelton from the Healthcare Group out here on a community-wide effort called "[100% Community](#)". It's been expanded to food security and other areas since COVID-19 and is doing exactly what Sarah and Chuck are doing. [Link to 100% Community's Food Team web page](#)
 - v. We're also looking at cross-county cooperation. We're all concerned about the Navajo Nation.
- c. Lilly: You're describing doing matchmaking, both in terms of farmers/market and people in need to community. I'm wondering if there's some additional work to connect the dots. **Maybe there's an offline call folks can have to connect those dots.** I appreciate hearing what's going on.
- Lilly: We had an ad hoc call last week. In that call, we had a conversation about policy and the barriers to getting this all to happen systematically. Helga and Anzia talked about needing access to commercial kitchens during the current policy orders. There were also questions about the ways in which we support the ag industry. Is anyone finding creative ways to support the ag business here in New Mexico?
 - a. Matthew: Our position and everything we're doing is based around helping producers to make sure ag production stays in place. Policies put in place by the Navajo Nation president, such as curfews. We're in a major curfew from 8 pm to 5 am, and the whole weekend (same hours). Limits valuable producers who don't have the blessing to live on the land they produce from. That effort, we've been able to work with the department of homeland security to acquire an affidavit for producers to fill



out one as a critical infrastructure, employee or agent. For people coming across checkpoints and are pulled over by police. It's risky calf delivery season. Navajo tribal government was not pleased by that, overreaching disrespecting their sovereign status. We replied it was something to suffice. Farming or grazing permit on hand when you're doing business outside of curfew hours. That's still an issue. The people whose names are on the permits are elderly and aren't of an age to be working the property. The biggest thing we're beating is access to credit. Being able to finance their operations, continue food production. That's our biggest things and our position on this effort. We were able to pick up on the news that the state of WY was able to sell ranchers 5% shares in their cattle, sell that directly to consumers without having to acquire USDA. Rebecca Dow and SOMEONE Diamond are currently trying to find a solution for Governor to make an emergency declaration. Farmers/ranchers can sell smaller shares to be immediately processed, passed to consumers at processing facilities.

- i. Lilly – folks filling out paperwork to do farming and ranching. Is it smooth process?
 - ii. Mathew, it's a challenge. Without succession planning, which is taboo to plan for, the elders resist. The permits have to go through probate. Tribal court are backed up with even more pressing issues. Even our own family is an example. Our grandma passed, and we're about 2.5 years waiting for the probate through the tribal court system. If we didn't have that added resource for self-certification affidavit, we wouldn't be able to check up on our farms and cattle
 1. Lilly – Jason, is there anything else you'd want to highlight what's going on with beef?
 2. Jason – working with Sec. Witte. Getting information on the capacity of what our beef packing industry is. We have a number of mom and pop shops in the state. Some of them don't process, slaughter. There is a limited capacity out there on that front. With USDA, they're not willing or able to budge on the something of inspection process. There have been discussions at upper level. Ways to circumvent the USDA certification process. I know there's a lot of interest in direct sales from the ranch. Beef prices are bad right now. There's a lot of demand for beef right now. Highlighted concerns with plants being shuttered or slowing down the capacity of their output. There was a feasibility study funded by Naked Small Nathan? They've e got some detail from which we can glean good information. Direct ranch public scales, what would that look like. Hopefully in next week I'll have more information to share.
 3. Lilly – we'll have you at the top of the agenda to share at the next meeting. There may be some opportunities to really think in ways that make our local food systems stronger out of this.
- b. Helga: On the call we had last week, it was basically flagging that there's a demand to meet needs of communities throughout the state. With years of practice working out of a USDA facility and farm to market and local distribution, working to meet demands of COVID is part of production. However, the facility we're in can only have 5 people at a time. We're used to having more people. The current policy presents a barrier when there is more need for local produce and production.
 - c. Anzia: We're trying to figure out the safest ways for processing and production, and what it means that there aren't many commercial kitchens. We're wondering if there are additional spaces where they can process. We're taking all precautions seriously. We're trying to think about safe practices.



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We're trying to figure out resources for producers. We're trying to figure out if other kitchens can be used.

- i. Harold: has this kind of issue been forwarded to Governor's office? Nurseries are having to limit themselves.
- ii. Lilly – Have others forwarded this information to the Governor's office? Last Friday we shared notes with them. I followed up today and asked if there was news. Helga, Anzia and I connected about food issues with Patty Keane in the Governor's office. Also, we spent time last week talking about what's going on with people using markets due to restaurant and school closures. I went to the NM Grocer's Association. **Michael and Denise, you had mentioned that you had connections.** There's a follow up question. What's creating barriers about working with NM Association of Growers.
- iii. Helga: We've been working with Dollar General for the past 5 years. We know it is obtainable. With some of retail stores we have to make sure production is going to stay in the state, as far as our network is concerned.
- d. Michael: right now, COVID has affected our retail sales and our ability to get NM produce into the stores. It's difficult for us at this moment to get small farmer orders into the retail stores when they're receiving mass quantities. When I am able to get produce, we teach farmers good business. Food safety is good business, and we also stress thinking about what your time is worth. We look at pricing structures, food safety issues, and retail. We're doing a lot of connecting for CSAs, getting food in different places. We strongly encourage people to use social media. Food safety and pricing are our focus. Retail we can focus on later.
- e. Pam: I want to give thanks to Zoey and Helga who are on frontlines of moving product in. In NM we're in an amazing place as a community. Farmers, with the help of organizations, agencies and retail make that happen. A lot of local product is going into CSAs. Many places are changing and ramping up. The point of that is, we're creating the next evolution of our work. We're not going to be sliding backwards. We're going to do more in the state to build out local opportunities. In Santa Fe, we have two day a week calls in the Santa Fe region.
 - i. Pam: Regarding senior services and schools – COVID allows us to shift back into normality where schools have funding and will be able to purchase into the fall. There is amazing coordination across the state.
 - ii. Pam: Regarding federal legislation, there is focus on specific language and asking for specific directives through USDA for funding that should come our way.
 - iii. Pam: On the nursery issue, we need to see that happen as well, in the right way.
 - iv. Michael: Pam, you undersold what is going on in Santa Fe. You're killing it in Santa Fe.
 - v. Michael: I was speaking with Matt Gratton at Jemez Pueblo; they're doing 75 CSAs. **Matt Gratton is looking for someone to take over and assist him so he can get his business off the ground.** He is in need of assistance for someone to help him run the CSAs.
 - vi. Sarah: Pam made reference to Thomas Swenson, who is looking into a more central distribution point. Fergus and I met with him and we're talking about a couple options. We talked about the survey that we are mainly directing toward our universe in Los Ranchos. I'm sure that it's something we could share and you could use to manage collection of your data. We could share the survey so you might be able to collect the data in your universe.



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1. Lilly: If you could send a pdf or word version, we could send that out.
2. Sarah, we're looking to get it finalized and approved. We'll get it to the group through Lilly as soon as we can. [Link to draft survey](#)
3. Chuck: I emailed you a preview link of that survey. If any other agency/organization in the state has a survey monkey account, we'd be willing to work with them. With the Navajo Nation, we'd be willing to help tailor to them. [Link to draft survey](#)
4. Chuck: Michael was just talking about some of the efforts in food distribution. I have often wondered whether it would make sense if we had a commodity box or basket. In the sense of a local market, it would be a tent at the farmers market. At the end of the day, I could sell it at a commodity rate. There would be brown boxes with "NMFMA" and "NMDA" on the box. It would be a box that, if I subscribed, I pick up at the end of the market, or it gets donated to a family. Basically, it would either be non prime produce, or I just want to get rid of it instead of taking it back to the farm. I realize a lot of things would have to be worked out. I could almost see three main hubs throughout the state of NM that were backed by NMDA and NMFMA, where we could traffic produce from the north part of the state to the south, maybe have standard boxes that aren't typically grown in our regions. This is a 3-5 year plan. The more immediate one is something that happens at your local market where you can sell your product at a market rate.
 - a. Lilly: Ben Rasmussen is doing something similar. I will do a follow up introduction for you all.
 - b. Jason: One thing that came to mind when listening to Chuck was there's a gleaning study that is starting to develop. It's about gleaning unharvested produce, but it seems like it would be great to address in a workgroup session.
 - i. Lilly: I will follow up with Sherry from the Food Depot.
 - c. Denise: There is value to thinking about it – a new take on old idea. Currently, at the SF Farmers' Market and the Albuquerque Downtown Growers Market, farmers already donate leftover produce to local Food Bank. Thinking about it with a new twist - a subscription, combining it with the gleaning project - there's always room for a new idea.
 - i. Lilly – I'll copy you in too, Denise.

- **Summarize Next Steps**

1. Lilly: We are having lots of conversations as a whole group, and conversations in between. We'll get folks the notes. Pam has been watching federal policy and keeping us all in the loop. [If there are things that require urgent action, feel free to reply to the whole group.](#) If you have bandwidth, great, or if you want to take it to a smaller conversation, great too.
2. Lilly: What would you like to talk about next time?
 - a. Harold: Winter food: to try to get ready for that. Things like beans and potatoes. Plant it now in case it gets bad this winter. Strategic, thinking a little bit longer term.
 - b. Lilly – we'll make sure to add this to the agenda.



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3. Lilly: Do we need an hour and a half versus an hour to meet? I see thumbs up for taking extra time. We'll try it.
4. Lilly: Regarding Matthew's comment about credit, **folks can be thinking about what access to credit looks like in this time.** There are opportunities coming for small business loans and grant opportunities. There will be options from the traditional bank/credit union way, but also in access to philanthropy.
 - a. If there's something we missed or got wrong in the notes, let us know.
 - b. Michael: Regarding planting, I've been hearing all over the state that with COVID, the backyard farmers have bought up all the seeds. Farmers are having difficulty finding seeds and when they do find it, it's double or triple the price. It's a major issue.
 - i. Lilly – I wonder if folks from acequia association could comment?
 - ii. Paula – I'll keep it quick. We ran into that issue. To support subsistence farmers or commercial growers in starting a garden where they don't have it, we have a program called Semillas Pa' La Gente, which is an exchange of native heirloom seed, or buying bulk seed and supplying it to people. National seed suppliers are backed up. We have about a dozen growers that are donating to the effort and are willing to make bulk seed available. It's for smaller growers at this point. Some have stopped selling to small buyers and are selling to commercial buyers. It's putting a crunch on farmers trying to buy seed in bulk. We need them to be able to get seed when they need it. It's definitely an issue we need to pay attention to.
 1. Lilly we can bring it up to Jeremy Toulouse at EOS. Jason, who should we speak to in NMDA?
 2. Brad Lewis at NMDA. I'll send you his email.
 - iii. Denise – **maybe there could be a seed-buying co-op for small to midsize growers so they can make larger orders.**
 - iv. Harold – I recently had an experience where I had to buy 1,000 sacks of seed potatoes. I couldn't buy just two sacks, I had to buy 1,000.
 - v. Lilly – **we'll put it on our agenda for next time.**
 - c. Next meeting we'll see if a slightly longer meeting works, We'll try 3:30 – 5:00 pm next time.

[Meeting Recording](#)



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