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FOOD SUMMIT

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Session title: Localized Solutions to Global Issues: San Luis Valley

Note Taker: Jenileigh Harris

Main points of each panelist:

1. Facilitator: Jessica Wright
 - a. Foundation of farm to institution in CO has been built over the last couple of decades and are now very recently seeing that grow
 - b. Institutions are one of the only opportunities for someone to have a freshly prepared meal
 - c. Institutions = childcare centers, schools, hospitals, colleges, food banks, food pantries, senior meal programs, governmental and city facilities, correctional facilities. Cornerstones feeding our communities!
 - d. Farm to school has a lot of research around it. Studies show for every single dollar schools invest into local food, returns 0.60 to 1.16 in local food economy. 5% increase in sales & business revenue in local farmers & producers. Transportation miles are shortened (eg, keeping CO potatoes in CO).
 - e. Community engagement - connecting students to where food comes from to long-term health & nation and show that local food can be delicious. Local food doesn't have to be elitist. Education, increasing access, sharing with families.
 - f. Direct producer to consumer relationships!
 - g. School food sponsors = 207. 900,000 school lunches. 31 public colleges. Over 1300 early childcare facilities. 14 agencies over the state with multiple locations throughout - area agencies on aging (meals on wheels, etc.).
 - h. Only 7% of institutional budgets are going to local food (not including milk). Lots of opportunity!
 - i. Puzzle pieces = food service directors, kitchen leads, teachers, local experts, agricultural producers, students, large distributor/group coops, local nonprofits, community leaders
 - j. Leveraging policy: USDA & state money available for school districts to buy CO grown, raised, and processed products (including Healthy School Meals for All & Food Pantry Assistance Grant!)
 - k. Additional support needed and things to keep in mind (see powerpoint slide)
2. Speaker 1: Laura Smith
 - a. Program Director for Workforce Development [Chef Ann Foundation](#)
 - i. CO Healthy School Food Pathway - preparing individuals for job opportunities
 1. In the planning phase: Call to action - does anyone want to be a part of this? Laura wants to talk to you! Reach out.

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2. Introduce individuals on how to run a self-op scratch cook program
 3. There was a pilot program in CA and it is now funded by CA to continue and want to bring to CO (Prop FF was a huge win for doing this here!)
 4. The fellowship is a 55-week program starting in January which includes some CO school food operators
3. Speaker 2: Dana Wood
- a. Food Pantry Assistance Grant for Blueprint to End Hunger
 - i. Blueprint is a statewide initiative via Colorado Health Foundation. Utilize authentic listening to develop programs. Vision to give every Coloradan access to nutritious food when, where they want it.
 - b. FPAG - state initiative every year. Utilize partners at HungerFree, farmers, and previous grant recipients to advocate every year. This year we have \$3 M to grant. Goal of FPAG - connect recipients (food banks, pantries, etc.) to CO agricultural products. Bolsters social & economic impacts. 144 grantees across CO.
4. Speaker 3: Mary Ann Bash
- a. Public school garden leader in Parents for Parity <https://parentsforparity.com/>
 - b. Literacy teacher - using gardens & garden-focused books to improve literacy. 'if you have a garden and a library, you have everything you need' -philosopher
 - c. See powerpoint slidedeck for video
5. Speaker 4: Hanmei Hoffman
- a. Hoffman Farms - farm over 100 acres in mixed veggies & commodity corn in Greeley area
 - b. After starting backyard garden, grew 'too much' and then starting selling at farmers markets using WIC and Double Up Food Bucks programs.
 - c. Got connected to F2S by change - someone introduced them to 11 acres farmland shared with university student farm. Have started going to conferences and organizations and realized that there is a huge market demand.

Questions

Q: What makes it possible for farm to institution to exist?

- Laura: Collaboration across industries. So many roles to be played in school food (esp scratch cooking). Healthy School Food Pathway - looking for collab from labor, agriculture, comm college systems, K-12 districts (admin to school food operators to CTE programs). Learning about the strengths of these sectors and integrating them, not overhauling them.
- Dana: Massive undertaking across the state - legislators that need to be behind funding, communities, comm organizations, grantees, testimonies from folks on the ground - hearing from the community on what is being seen day to day. Testifying at the state

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capitol. Developing farmer/producer & food pantry relationships. Partners at HungerFree CO is key advocate for this organization and FPAG. Shared testimonies from [Spirit of the Sun](#) (received FPAG funding for 3-4 years and are able to source indigenous foods with these funds). Blueprint is dedicated to taking an empowerment approach - application is a community process. Peers review applications and determine where funding goes. Mindful on how we balance accountability with equity.

- Mary Ann: Students and families. Shared a story about a 4th grader on what he would do if he had a million dollars: would plant gardens everywhere so no one would be hungry. Denver Urban Gardens new partner creating a community of practice. Funding partners (Nourish CO, Blueprint) changed the garden. CO Garden Foundation was first funder of their work.
- Hanmei: Willingness of school food service workers working with us. Step outside comfort size and work with us. It's not easy for small farmers to line up distributions or work with larger distributors that schools are used to working with. Access to farmable land allowed us to grow more food and meet more demand.

Q: What would success look like for your work and what roadblocks are keeping you from meeting your goals?

- Hanmei: Challenge in CO - we're going food in a very short season. When schools started, harvest is in full swing (middle of Aug-mid Oct) and were able to do more for schools. By end of first quarter, we hit our first frost. What is available are storage crops = onions, beets, carrots, potatoes, dried beans. Makes it difficult for local food distributions. Another challenge = farm labor AND food service labor. Schools want to take more fresh veggies & fruits but it's difficult for them to take raw product and clean and process themselves, etc. Some kitchens are not built to handle high volume (eg, 3k pounds of potatoes). Another challenge: American culture! American family schedules are so busy and want convenient, fast foods.
- Mary Ann: Turnover!! Where do we want to be in 10 years? Public school systems are largest land owners in a space. Why are we not using it fruitfully? I want a paid garden teacher in every 'underresourced, underperforming' school.
- Dana: Money! We are in times of uncertainty in terms of state budget (not forecasted to be great). Anything with a fiscal note attached to it has a very low likelihood of passing (including FPAG). Pieces in this state legislation that do not work out well for recipients (only limited to 20% to spend on indirect costs - need more support for people power!). Fund farmers at a different level - what does land access look like in CO? Finite number of CO farmers (average age is 65). How do we make farming in CO more accessible? Having grantees of FPAG do forward contracting (allows farmers and banks to plan on an annual basis) = small spending window.
 - Legislation is coming about forward contracting! Reach out to Jen @ HungerFree CO. (jen@hungerfreecolorado.org).

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- Laura: Every kid is eating healthy scratch-cooked food. Nutrition in those calories, Need infrastructure in place (kitchen facilities, tools), producer capacity (labor, marketing, distribution/delivery), school food capacity (liveable wages, knowledge, skills). All this comes with advocacy and community engagement.
 - Schoolfood workforce right now = 2022: 73% of school food authorities increased staff stress & workloads, 53% reporting reduced staff morale, 50% reporting staffing shortages.

Q: Do you see attitudes, policies or other aspects of farm to institution shifting?

- Laura: Prop FF signals yes!
- Mary Ann; Concern seeing shifting of funding out of food support and into affordable housing. Have to have both!
- Dana: Opportunities from State agencies & USDA. Seeing shift in orgs receiving funding in the ways they are doing business.
- Hanmei: 8 years ago, when I just started, there's not prop FF. It's changed a lot in the past 8 years. A lot more funding for this work!

Audience questions

Q: If you want to figure out where the community stands in participating in farm to institution, where would you begin? I'm based in Delta/Montrose.

- Start meeting people. Talk to the school district. Meet producers at farmers markets. Statewide orgs working on F2I (Chef Ann, Blueprint, CO Dept of Ag). Get plugged in with Blueprint! Valley Food Partnership.

Q: Kids throwing away school food.

- Jessica: Not enough time to eat food. Legislation pursuing to make cafeteria time counted as educational classroom time. See Mary Ann's work connecting kids to garden to learn all academic subjects. It's not nutrition until it's eaten.

Q: Mobile market innovations and opportunities? How are students accessing food outside of the school day?

- One example in Silt, CO: Small farm co-op working with the community to establish a mobile farmers market. This farm became a SNAP-certified retailer and is having success.
- Community feedback from folks accessing food pantries - wanting food after 4pm, wanting to access food without traveling far. Mobile markets can meet these needs.
- GoFarm in Golden, CO - huge mobile market to check out!

Q: Big challenge around processing raw foods? Regional processing center?

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- There are some things in the works of creating those regional processing facilities. Identified by several partners, especially rural communities. Huge things in the works but a few years out!

Q: What kind of opportunities do you see advancing equity in the food system?

- Dana: Through FPAG, we prioritize BIPOC-lead organizations and BIPOC farmers. A big part of the Blueprint is advancing equity in the food system. Working with policymakers and state agencies and other partners to dismantle built in oppressive systems.
- Jessica: Part of Prop FF - in order for school foods to access the funding they have to create advisory councils that are representative of communities to identify relevant menus and recipes
- Laura: Training programs include a DEI component.

Key points of panel discussion:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Question and Answer Summary:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.