Organizing to affect your Food System: FOOD POLICY AND ACTION GROUPS

Part 3 in the Sustainable Food Systems series

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RECORDING NOTICE: This webinar is recorded and will be made available to the general public on the HC Link website.
Organizing to Affect your Food System!

Food Policy and Action Groups

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About the Sustainable Food Systems Webinar Series

- Partnership between HC Link and the project Healthy Food for All: Healthy and Sustainable Food Systems for Ontario
- Webinar Series
  - Introduction to Sustainable Food Systems
  - Sustainable Food Systems in a Healthy Communities Framework
  - Organizing to Affect your Food System – Food Action and Policy Groups
- Sharing the expertise and experiences of communities currently building their local sustainable food systems
Overview of Food Policy/Action Groups
- Who are the participants
- What are the common goals
- Networks
- Examples

Introduction to Food Policy and Action Groups
Food Democracy

- Giving citizens the opportunity to engage in setting priorities/actions in their food system.
- Working together to ensure there’s enough affordable, accessible and nutritious food for everyone.
- Ensuring social and economic justice for the people who raise, process, distribute and sell our food.
- Considering environmental impacts to ensure resources for future generations.
Why these groups start:

- Organically
  - In response to food systems issues
  - To increase local food production/sales/consumption and rural economic development
  - Collaborative actions continue to grow
  - Expansion of a community organization’s mandate

- Formally
  - By invitation of Government or “lead” organization
Food Policy and Action Groups

Focus on:
- Food related health issues
- Sustainable food production, processing distribution and waste
- Economic development related to food
- Identify Food System barriers and develop solutions

Food policy and strategy – engaging decision makers
- Advocating for food system infrastructure – social, physical and environmental
Policy vs. Action

- **Policy**
  - Related to goals and objectives
  - Structural changes to rules and institutions that shape our food systems.
  - Touches broader issues with longer timelines
  - “Arms Length”

- **Action**
  - Programs & policy
  - Action oriented – projects
  - Can require policy change to implement
  - Can be created as result of policy change that requires or provides program conditions or prerequisites
“Buy Local Regional Groups”

- To increase the sale and consumption of local food products
- To educate consumers on the benefits of buying local food products
- To foster rural economic development
- To produce a map identifying local farmers, small scale food processors, restaurants and retailers that will sell local food.
- Increase production and marketing skills for primary producers
- Increase community food security

- Primary Focus is to promote the food products that are grown and raised in their defined community.
- Participate in Food Policy/Action Groups or Expand mandates to become them.

AN EXAMPLE IS

Foodlink
Waterloo Region
Policy Areas include:

- Procurement
- Land Use
- Zoning
- Marketing venues
- Festivals and events
- Soil and water conservation

- Urban agriculture
- Building codes
- Labour and wages
- Food safety and Health
- Composting and waste reduction
- School nutrition
- Community gardens
Successful Food Policy and Action Groups

- Facilitate:
  - Communication
  - Grassroots civic action
  - Food systems identity
  - Trust and credibility
  - Networking

- Meet objectives to:
  - Connect all stakeholders and encourage collaboration
  - Gather and share information
  - Analyze, influence and create policy
  - Support and or create food systems change

Organizing to Affect Your Food System!
At the Table

- Anti–hunger advocates
- Community organizations
- Economic Development
- Restaurants and Retailers
- Business leaders
- Academics

- **Local and regional government – staff and officials
- Environmentalists and Conservation Authorities
- Food producers, processors and distributors

ORGANIZING TO AFFECT YOUR FOOD SYSTEM!
Farm Participation

- General Farm Organizations:
  - Christian Farmers Federation of Ontario
  - National Farmers Union
  - Ontario Federation of Agriculture

- Commodity Organizations
  - Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers Associations
  - Ontario Cattlemen
  - Etc.

- Other
  - Farm Start
  - Ecological Farmers of Ontario
  - Etc.
Champions in Municipal Governments

- Staff – health units, planning, economic development, and conservation
- Municipal and upper tier leaders
- Results in more effective, better resourced projects.
Evaluation and Celebration

- Create baselines
- Operations management and tracking
- Increasing community awareness and support
- Policy creation
- Program outcomes assessment
- Accountability to community, funding agencies and partners
Best Practices

- Local Engagement and Grassroots leadership – stakeholder ownership
- Shared values and power - governance
- Respect for the process
- Facilitative and supportive administrative lead
- Networking with other food policy/action groups
- Defined purpose, vision and mission distinguished from member/stakeholder groups
Networking – Provincial/National

FoodNet Ontario will help communities across Ontario develop sustainable local food systems by facilitating communication and cooperation, and encouraging a wide range of participants in the food system to work together to develop effective programs, policies, tools and resources.

Sustain Ontario is a province-wide, cross-sectoral alliance that promotes healthy food and farming. Sustain takes a collaborative approach to research, policy development, and action by addressing intersecting issues related to healthy food and local sustainable agriculture. Sustain Ontario is working toward a food system that is healthy, ecological, equitable, and financially viable.

Food Secure Canada is a pan-Canadian alliance of organizations and individuals working together to advance food security and food sovereignty. Food Secure Canada is committed to: Zero Hunger. A Sustainable Food System and Healthy and Safe Food.
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Networking – Food Systems Components

http://www.farmersmarketsontario.com/index.cfm

http://sustainontario.com/initiatives/ontario-edible-education-network

http://www.oafb.ca/
Community Partner: Waterloo Regional Food Systems Round Table

- Network and educate
- Coordinate and analyze
- Evaluate
- Identify policy changes
- Enrich and offer encouragement to each other
Community Partner: Huron Food Action Network

Established 2013

- Improve the policy context to enable and empower decision-making for a healthy local food system
- Encourage sustainable production of local food, serving as good stewards of land and water
- Expand existing and develop new distribution channels and opportunities for improved accessibility
- Improve local food processing and employment capacity of Huron County
- Improve local food skills and education

Action Groups

- Food Policy Council
- Distribution Action Group (Food Hub)
- Food Literacy and Education
- Community Gardens

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Thank You!

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