

Process-Driven Policy Mapping: Farm to Fork in King County

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Abstract

A vibrant local food system creates and supports a healthy food supply, including fresh produce, for people in King County. The Local Farms and Food Roundtable was convened by the City of Seattle, Public Health Seattle & King County, and Pike Place Market in November 2013, and charged with 1) exploring ways to strengthen three aspects of the local and regional food system (farmland preservation, markets, and distribution) and 2) developing short and long-term recommendations for improvement in King County. This is to be accomplished by linking steps of the food production pathway to make local food more competitive amidst a global market. The Roundtable needed a way of organizing barriers and solutions at each step along the food production pathway. The purpose of this project was to create visual concept map that depicts the flow of food through the supply chain. A systematic literature review was conducted of policies, barriers, and recommendations in King County and western Washington literature (when available), as well as relevant national literature. Information gathered from the literature review, farmer panels, and Roundtable meetings informed facilitators, barriers, and policy opportunities at each node along the pathway. The final grid will be utilized by the Markets and Distribution Subcommittee to inform the process of prioritizing interventions based on 1) feasibility of implementation in King County and 2) importance or potential impact on local farms in February and March, 2014.

Methods

- Conducted a literature search of reported barriers and facilitators for small farms at each step of the food production pathway in King County
- Developed a grid to organize facilitators, barriers, and opportunities at each step along the “food to fork” pathway
- Populated grid cells using literature search results and input from the Local Farms and Food Roundtable meetings, and Markets and Distribution Subcommittee meetings
- Adapted the graphic based on feedback from the Markets and Distribution Subcommittee

Conclusions

- The Local Farms and Food Roundtable will utilize the grid as a tool to organize ideas, and prioritize interventions
- There is a disparity between the literature and what farmers perceive to be their largest barriers and facilitators, and what interventions they want to see implemented
- It is critical to include farmers in future discussions and planning, and to be cognizant of differences between farmers of various sizes, product types, and locations



Figure 1. General pathway from farm to fork used to organize facilitators, barriers, and opportunities



Objectives

1. Analyze social, political, economic, and other barriers, facilitators, and policies affecting the “farm-to-fork” pathway in King County, and summarize this information in a literature review
2. Develop a tool to summarize and organize information and ideas from farmers, other stakeholders, and the literature in order to prioritize next-steps and interventions in King County at each step of the pathway

Results

Major Facilitators:

- Grant funding
- Local markets and interest in local foods
- Land preservation efforts
- Creativity and collaboration among farmers

Major Barriers:

- Large production costs
- Short WA growing season
- Increasing cost of farmland
- Difficult for large buyers to process raw produce
- Inadequate labor
- Differences in goals among farmers of different sizes and product types

Opportunities:

- Prevent farmland loss through economic incentives and policy
- Use tech advances and non-traditional growing techniques
- Revise the Farm Bill subsidy structure
- Develop food hubs, co-ops, or food production nodes
- Assist farmers in increasing demand for local food
- Create markets for cosmetically imperfect produce
- Subsidize equipment and staff training for preparing raw products for large buyers
- Reimburse farmers for environmental stewardship (rather than subsidizing farmers)
- Revise labor laws
- Establish procurement policies for local food in city and county agencies
- Create incentives for institutions to source locally



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