



Central Maine Meet the Buyers
Wednesday, November 4, 2015, 2:30-5PM
Franco Center, 46 Cedar St, Lewiston
Agenda

2:30-2:40 Register & Settle In

2:40-2:50 Welcome from The Good Food Council of Lewiston-Auburn:
Review of Agenda, Today's Goals, Highlights of GFCLA initial research and pre-survey

● **Today's Goals:**

- Create connections.
- Build an understanding of F2I opportunities and challenges so we can all think more creatively about solutions.
- Inform about resources and exciting opportunities in F2I.

2:50-3:00 Buyer & Producer Perspectives: Julie Carlson, Lewiston Public Schools
Karen Bolduc, Food Joy & S. Auburn Organic Farm

3:00-4:10 Making Connections - Hearing from everyone in the room.

4:10-4:20 Get food!

4:20-4:40 Resources & exciting opportunities in F2I:

- Ken Morse, FINE, MNCFC/Maine Food Atlas
- Seal Rossignol, Oxford Micro Distribution Project
- Linda Titus, Ag Matters
- Ashley Bahlkow, Fresh Start Farms/Cultivating Community

4:40-5:00 Networking

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Presenting Sponsor



Friends of Good Food

Bates | College

Oxford Micro-Distribution Project



**Maine Network of Community
Food Councils / Maine Food Atlas**

Central Maine Meet the Buyers Event Notes
Presented by the Good Food Council of Lewiston-Auburn
Wednesday, November 4, 2015, 2:30-5PM
The Franco Center, Heritage Hall, 46 Cedar Street, Lewiston

Facilitator: Kirsten Walter

Notetaker: Julia Harper

Timekeeper: Melissa Emerson

Welcome

Kirsten Walter, Member of the Good Food Council of Lewiston-Auburn (GFCLA)

Goals for Today:

- Creating connections
- Building an understanding of Farm to Institution (F2I) opportunities and challenges so we can all think more creatively about solutions together.
- Inform about local happenings and exciting opportunities around the state in Farm to Institution.

GFCLA Mission: Through education, advocacy, and community-based decision-making we work to shape a food system where our entire community of Lewiston-Auburn has access to *good food*.

- Council serves as a connector and convener to fill food system gaps.
- Saw there was a need for a Farm to Institution strategy for Central Maine; In Fall of 2014, did local F2I Research with Bates College students.
- Pre-Survey Highlights – Had response rate of 9; Will send out again post-event.

Thanks to Sponsors: Presenting: Grow L+A; Friends of Good Food: Bates College, Oxford Micro Distribution Project; Androscoggin Valley Council of Governments; Maine Network of Community Food Councils and The Maine Food Atlas.

Buyer & Producer Perspectives:

Julie Carlson, Lewiston Public Schools

Karen Bolduc, Food Joy & S. Auburn Organic Farm

Karen Bolduc – South Auburn Organic Farm; Anecdotal story to tipfy the challenge: Small Farm, 2 acres. Read Eliot Coleman, 4 season harvest book - movable high tunnel for season extension. Wanted to do this. Wrote a grant for the high tunnel. Got it. Built it. Grew lots of arugula. Ended up in the compost pile because there was no buyer: quantity too small for some, timing not right for others. Would be interested to work with buyer in advance to plant extra of what is needed. Donating to food bank takes a lot of effort, time and \$, too. Glad we are all here to think of solutions.

Julie Carlson – Nutrition Operations Specialist, Lewiston Public Schools; Feed 3,525 students breakfast and lunch. Are looking for best price, but always looking for new ways to work with

local. (Currently looking for local potatoes). Opportunity exists with educating the students with demos: different veggies and fruits than just tomatoes, cucumbers, etc. GAP certification is needed to track source of food, if there is a safety issue.

Group Sharing - Hearing from Everyone In the Room

Producers, Buyers and Others asked to share (quickly)

- *Institutions:*
 - *Introduce self, institution*
 - *Describe food service, approx volume of annual purchases*
 - *And, pick one:*
 - *Looking forward, what quantities are looking to purchase locally?*
 - *What is one challenge or success you've had in incorporating more local products into your food service?*
 - *What is one opportunity you see for purchasing locally-produced products?*
- *Producers*
 - *Introduce self, business (what you produce)*
 - *Describe marketing/business model*
 - *And, pick one:*
 - *What is one challenge or success you've experienced in selling?*
 - *What is one opportunity you see for your business selling products to institutions?*
- *Others:*
 - *Introduce self, business/organization*
 - *How are you involved (or do you see yourself) in farm to institution work?*
- Mia Poliquin Pross – St. Mary's Nutrition Center, member of the Good Food Council of L-A
- Scott Vlaun – Director of the Center for an Ecology-Based Economy (CEBE) in Oxford County & involved in Community Food Matters (Oxford Food Council); have done demo-size projects: community garden, community food forest, edible main street in Norway; Next: Robert's Farm, looking to do research in regenerative agriculture.
- Carl Constanzi – 5210 Let's Go! Coordinator for Western Maine Health, School Nutrition Director Group
- Melissa Emerson – PineTree Garden Seeds, Member of the Good Food Council of L-A
- Seal Rossignol – Center for an Ecology-Based Economy (CEBE) in Oxford, and Oxford Mirco Distribution Project (will share more about this later)

- Ken Morse – Coordinator of Maine Network of Community Food Councils and Maine Food Atlas, Maine Farm to School Network, Community Food Matters (Oxford), Oxford Mirco Distribution Project (will share more later)
- Denise Sears – Springworks Farm, Aquaponics Farm in Lisbon; Primary crop lettuce; Certified Organic and GAP certified. Challenge: need buyers for lettuce only, Successes: seen support from local restaurants.
- Ron Adams – Former Portland Public Schools Food Service Director; Now, COO of Maine Farm and Sea Cooperative (farmer, consumer, worker, buyer cooperative) - Submitted a bid this morning for UMaine food system contract!
- Julie Carlson – Lewiston Public Schools; currently looking for local potatoes (don't like to serve instant)!
- Paula Rouillard – Director, Auburn Schools Nutrition
- Jen & Tom Hoerth – Middle Hoerth Winter Gardens; Winter farmers, 13 acre farm with greenhouses, maple syrup on some of it, cold hardy crops; huge opportunity for selling fresh in the winter; participating in the wholesaling classes with MFT;
- Bethany Allen – Harvest Tide Organics; 70 acres avail, grow on 10; Brunswick; biggest challenge is looking to partner with institutions that are able to be open about exactly what they need and the scheduling;
- Tim Anderson – Chef at Bramhall Restaurant in Portland; Looking to bring fresh to menu, making connections;
- Justin Liudvinaitis – Chef at multiple places, Bow St. Market ; local food enthusiast;
- Kate Abbruzzese – Double Z Land and Livestock in Turner– USDA inspected; Selling wholesale grass-fed beef and lamb; Loves that with wholesale, the whole animal gets used;
- Sarah Smith – Farmer in Skowhegan: organic beef, dairy and vegetables; Also operates The Pick Up (food hub) – 50 farmers, online buying platform that is transparent with growing/raising practices (pesticide use, grass fed, etc.), purchases are bi-weekly, farmers deliver to them and The Pick Up does distribution.
- Mark Heidmann – Maple Springs Farm in Harrison; grow multiple varieties of potatoes and other veg for flavor; Contracts with 3 nearby food pantries and gives them good price on items that would be wasted – throws away less than 100 lbs of waste/yr; Challenge: restaurant failure with high turnover of chefs who could not commit; Looking for accounts that value unusual varieties of things or a small number that he can produce at higher qualities;

- Linda Titus – AgMatters LLC - writes speciality crop grants to help farmers to get GAP certified; Has 2016 grant for group GAP certification. Will speak more later on in the program.
- Martha Putnam – Farm Fresh Connection – 15 year old distribution company. Skilled in being a buyer of local food. Looking for Turkeys right now!
- Bonnie Lounsbury – River Rise Farm in Turner, also member of the Good Food Council of L-A; This yr gave up CSA and grew late summer and early winter crops (skip summer and winter). Looking for market for wild edibles. Grow on 3 acres, and could scale up if incentive was there. Hoping to find crops buyers want that work well on their land.
- Kim Finnerty – Took over Whiting Farm in Auburn, now owned by John F. Murphy Homes. Teaching background. Not a farmer. 12 greenhouses, 3 running now, + Farm stand. MCF grant to help with educational aspect, looking to make it a teaching farm.
- Christine Schwartz - Bates Dining – Self-operated. 5K meals a day. 1 million meals a year. Buy from 28-32 local farms. Challenge: volume/timing.
- Cheryl Lacey – Bates Dining. 1800 students on meal plan. Students looking to expand what they grow on campus. All you can eat facility = tons of food. Always looking for more local products. Do have large quantity and timing needs.
- Ken Smith – Asst Director of Culinary Operations Bates Dining
- Genna Cherichello – Portland Food Co-op Meat and Dairy Buyer; Also Garden and Greenhouse Management for Falmouth Schools (new position); Food Co-op has many requests for: Local Organic Pasteurized Milk; Duck Eggs; Quail Eggs, Sheep's Milk Cheese; Dry Grains...;
- Kate DelVecchio – Tender Soles Farm – Mixed Veg, Pork, Eggs, ...; Just started doing Wholesale this year; Challenge: Same as Harvest Tide, with quantities and timing from buyers; Not GAP certified;
- Fr. Paul Dumais – member of Healthy Androscoggin board and St. Mary's Hospital Chaplain; Churches have commercial grade kitchens that are under-utilized;
- Vicky Rioux – Sales at Town & Country Foods – Local distributors looking for more product;
- Ashley Bahlkow – Marketing for Fresh Start Farms CSA (new American retail/farming training program), in Cultivating Community's food hub; past 2 years have been working to scale up to wholesale, selling to summer camps, speciality markets, schools, etc. Successes: Working with school food services doing winter planning;
- Keena Tracy – Little Ridge Farm in Lisbon; organic CSA share is 99% of business; Sometimes there is a crazy abundance of one crop that is not consistent; looking for extremely flexible wholesale person that wants random crops at random times (laughter);

- Justin Nadeau – Working with Cultivating Community this year in UVM Food Hub Management Program; interested in groups like FINE and Maine Farm and Sea Coop advisory boards;
- Jonah Fertig – Board member of Maine Farm and Sea Coop – just this morning put in bid for UMaine food system contract; if they get the bid will need more farmers/food; if they don't, will still want to work with institutions to work on procurement; Also works for Cooperative Development Institute working with new American farmers in L-A area.
- Justin Gray – Pineland Farms in New Gloucester; Strawberries and vegetables for the wholesale market;
- Sue Martineau - Sues's Blues in Lewiston; highbush blueberries; no chemicals; 7 years running; Challenge: finding institutions that can deal with variations in crop;
- Gail Kezar – Regional Rep in Sn. Angus King's Office – Always trying to stay informed and accessible; Always willing to listen; Lots of grants available through USDA; Can connect folks to grants or provide a letter of support from their office; FYI - A Dresden goat farmer, Marge Kilkelly, runs Ag Policy for Sen King's office - very approachable.
- Leslie Runser – Native Maine; commodity conventional produce distributor; buy \$5M of local products, growing all the time; Challenge: hard to tell/keep the story of the local product from field to customer, so that they are willing to pay a little more for that product.
- Walter Goss - Goss Berry Farm in Mechanic Falls; raspberries and blueberries – Biggest challenge: labor, finding pickers, also season extension.
- Cann - Wei Li Restaurant in Auburn; does not use any MSG in cooking; trying to expand healthy menu with organic vegetables;
- Alicia Stow – Director of Rails Restaurant in Lewiston; make menu from scratch; Challenge: fresh, local produce at the moment they need it;
- Gisele Guerrette– board of Directors for Grow L+A; held a public forum for food hub feasibility study study for Bates Mill 5 where 100 folks attended and shared desire for more local foods; excited to support this event.
- Kevin Michaud – Chef at Franco Center, also board of Directors for Grow L+A – had fun making locally sourced foods today; try hard to source local produce and meats whenever they can.
- David Moyer – Director of Seniors Plus and Meals on Wheels, also Member of the Good Food Council; provide nutritious food for seniors.
- Bob Thompson – ED of Androscoggin Valley of Council of Governments (AVCOG) - supporting local Agriculture is a focus; offer free small business counseling programs.

Open Questions

- *For Buyers: How important is GAP certification for growers?*

Leslie Runser - Native Maine does not require GAP, but does seem like it is coming down the road as requirement. Anything eaten raw will require more strict certifications. Schools don't precisely require GAP but do have strict rules for traceability (which GAP provides) so many directors choose GAP certified sources.

- *Will cost of GAP certification start to come down for producers as there is more demand?*

Linda Titus – no, because costs for audits are federally set.

- *For distributors, are you looking for more farmers, is that why you are here?*

Leslie Runser - Native Maine - Yes, looking to meet them. Also looking to meet the farmer customers we've been buying from for years.

- *Have the distributors worked together for collaboration or is it just cut-throat competition? With food miles seems like it would make sense...*

Leslie, Native Maine – sometimes they distribute and buy from one another. All doing somewhat different things. Native Maine is in all of NE. Crown of Maine and Farm Fresh Connection are just in Maine.

Martha, Farm Fresh Connection - Native Maine are great distributors, but not great buyers. FFC are great buyers, but not efficient distributors. If we can recognize and capitalize on our strengths, we there is room additional collaboration.

Sarah Smith, The Pick-Up: There has been interest expressed in distributors-only group meeting.

FYI

- Idea: Spot Market / Food Alert App, that allows folks to go online and see what is available in real time.
- The Good Food Bus – “Sell out the bus” event (for winter) on Friday 11/6 at the Nutrition Center in Lewiston. Reaching out to advertise through Great Falls buying Club. One-time event.
- Kirsten Walter, GFCLA – Please send us your ideas to us so we can send them out post-event.

Food/Networking Break

Local Happenings and Exciting Opportunities: Panel Presentation

State-wide

Ken Morse – Personally works on many different food system projects. Some state-wide F2I initiatives:

- Coordinator of Maine Network of Community Food Councils (MNCFC) – Food System partners are invited to attend [MNCFC Summit on 11/20](#);
- Farm to Institution spreading rapidly in Maine. F2School growing over last 10 years. Regional steering cmte from the NE started FINE (Farm to Institution New England) that has been knitting together F2S with College and Health Care Farm to Institution projects
- Maine now has these F2I Work Groups: Maine Healthy Food For Health Care WG, and Farm to College organizing especially with Student/teachers/staff/community at UMaine campuses working to on new UMaine Food System contract, getting admin to agree to buy 20% local foods by 2020 - Maine Farm and Sea Co-op formed to apply for that contract;
- This year a new multi-sector group called Maine Farm to Institution Group just started to meet and will have Summit in Spring 2016, alternating with regional Farm to Institution New England (FINE) meetings;
- Another new initiative is the Maine Scaling Up workgroup (collaboration between MFT, FINE, MOFGA, Cooperative Extension, Environment Maine, and Conservation Law Foundation) is helping to train farmers to scale up to wholesale/institutions, and other practical and policy support to increase the sale of Maine foods to Institutions and other wholesale markets

Local Projects:

Seal Rossignol – Oxford Micro Distribution Project – kicked-off as a result of similar Meet the Buyers meetings in Oxford; researched small distribution models nationally, looking for sustainable models; looked at top 20 crops local folks were growing and producer needs; held meeting last Fall to bring interested folks together; Challenges: timing for all involved; sends out weekly e-bast to buyers with products from 12 producers; will host another meeting to bring together key buyers and find out what models might work better – online ordering?;

GAP Certification:

Linda Titus – AgMatters LLC - Have several Maine Specialty Crop Grants and a Marketing Grant from the MDACF to help farmers —at no charge-- with food safety, to prepare for audits, to anticipate FSMA and its impact on operation, and also can assist food distribution groups (like food hubs) with food safety concerns.

- GAP (good agricultural practice) is a Certification through USDA – GAP is all about prevention of food contamination - so fruits and vegetables are produced, packaged, handled, and stored in the safest manner possible to minimize risks of microbial food safety hazards. Ag Matters can help because they know what auditors are looking for, and have grant funding to help farmers get certified. Audit with Ag Matters takes about 3 hours.

From Producer Perspective:

Ashley Bahlkow - Marketing Manager, Fresh Start Farms (FSF), part of Cultivating Community's food hub – micro aggregation/distribution group primarily for new American farmers coming out

of FSF program; Successes in meeting some buyers' needs; 15 growers in the program this yr, all on 1 acre or less and supplying food to the food hub; types of buyers have increased, shifted and changed – restaurants, to public and private schools, etc.; Challenge: finding crops that work the best with their land and the buyer's needs; Opportunity: exists for folks in the room to dispel common myth of “local buying won't work” because a buyer or producer tried it once and it failed. Multiple attempts sometimes needed to find the successful grower/buyer arrangement.

Maine Food Atlas Tour www.mainefoodatlas.com

Ken Morse walked through live tour of the Maine Food Atlas - a project of the Maine Network of the Community Food Councils. It's an interactive GIS food system map of Maine and a way for people to explore the food system around them: farms, retail outlets, distributors, education, etc. You can easily add/build your own page with information and photos - and you are encouraged to do so! MNCFC is working to help farmers, in particular, build their pages. Also making many improvements all the time, including making it mobile-friendly soon. Please give any feedback via the website!

Networking Break

Adjourn - 5PM