

Atkinson Center for a Sustainable Future Topical Lunch Summary Report

Title: Building Collaboration for a Vibrant and Inclusive Regional Food Systems (RFS) Initiative at Cornell

Hosts: Kathi Colen Peck (ksc32), Anu Rangarajan (ar47), Robin Blakely-Armitage (rmb18)

Date: Thursday, May 19, 2016; 12:00 to 1:00pm

Summary: The goals of this topical lunch were to 1) bring together a diverse group of faculty and staff from varied disciplines to discuss the potential opportunities in a Cornell regional food systems initiative, and 2) identify common interest and unexplored disciplinary collaboration to inform its successful development.

A few days prior to the luncheon, we asked participants to provide a one-sentence statement that was emblematic of their connection to the study of food, food culture, and/or food systems at Cornell. From this, we lifted keywords of work/issue categories to see where connections could be made among these participants and their departments & schools, and with other faculty, staff and CCE educators who did the same at parallel events in 2015; we created a simple network map to illustrate where our work intersects by areas of self-identified interest (via Kumu.io).

On May 19, upon entering the Rice Hall seminar room for lunch and conversation, we asked participants to add their name to RFS work/issue categories posted on a long sheet of craft paper, e.g., Entrepreneurship, Commodities, Food Security, etc., and/or to add categories not represented, to correlate the data populated in our network map and to further identify the representation of our work. As participants settled in their seats, the topical lunch began with each participant sharing their name and the department or school with which they are affiliated, then co-host Anu Rangarajan presented a brief overview on the interest and support for exploring an initiative on food, systems, and society, and why we invited this particular group of faculty and staff. We reflected on the exercise of posting our names to work/issue categories and how these categories do and do not intersect, and continued on with discussion by addressing three key questions:

- 1) How does your work connect to others active in food studies/systems;
- 2) What could we do together that leverages our interests and overcomes perceived boundaries; and,
- 3) How can we build a shared vision and a culture of collaboration in this food space?

The topical lunch participants consisted of faculty and staff from the Law School, Food Science, Nutritional Sciences, Engineering, Center for Regional Economic Advancement, Horticulture, Development Sociology, Natural Resources, and the Small Farms Program.

Discussion was frank and lively, and several participants recommended we involve

specific colleagues so the gathering was networking time well spent. We also spent considerable time discussing existing infrastructure that could facilitate our exploration and that which may need to be formulated. As the lunch came to a close, participants expressed interest in continuing the conversation and suggested we organize an informal rotating brown bag lunch every three weeks or so.

As a follow up, participants were contacted by email and asked to consider hosting a lunch, and to contribute suggestions for next steps. The hosts, Kathi Colen Peck, Anu Rangarajan, and Robin Blakely-Armitage, are deeply grateful to the Atkinson Center for a Sustainable Future for the opportunity to assemble this engaging group to discuss the potential collaborative opportunities in a Cornell regional food systems initiative.

Attendees:

Robin Blakely-Armitage, Development Sociology; CaRDI

Kathi Colen Peck, Small Farms Program

Adriana Condarco-Quesada, Center for Regional Economic Advancement

Mary Jo Dudley, Development Sociology; Farmworker Program

Joey Diana Gates, Alumni Affairs & Development

Sergio Gramitto Ricci, Law School

Karim-Aly Kassam, Environmental & Indigenous Studies, Natural Resources

Graham Kerslick, Atkinson Center for a Sustainable Future

Dennis Miller, Food Chemistry & Nutrition, Food Science

Marvin Pritts, Horticulture

Anu Rangarajan, Horticulture; Small Farms Program

Gerald Torres, Law School

Jennifer Wilkens, Nutritional Sciences (+ Syracuse Univ. Public Health, Food Studies, Nutrition)

Max Zhang, Mechanical & Aerospace Engineering