IV. LOCAL FOOD POLICY ORGANIZATIONS [F-6, F-7, F-8, & F-9]

In this section you will find a historical timeline of work that has been done on local food systems planning over the past several decades written by Kate Clancy. Also, there are some summaries as well as the complete reports prepared by Ken Dahlberg on the local food policy councils in Knoxville, TN, St. Paul, MN, Onondaga County, NY, and Philadelphia, PA

A. "A Timeline of Local Food Systems Planning." Kate Clancy, 1996. [F-6]

B. Local Food Policy Councils:

1. Knoxville. [F-6]


3. Onondaga County, NY. [F-8]


5. Toronto, Canada. [F-9]
   Rod MacRae, "So Why is the City of Toronto Concerned about Food and Agricultural Policy? A Short History of the Toronto Food Policy Council." *Culture and Agriculture*, Winter 1994, pp. 15-18.
Report and Recommendations

on

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania Food System

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REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON THE

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INTRODUCTION

This report on the Philadelphia food system and the Food and Agriculture Task Force (FATF) is the fourth of six on cities and counties around the country. The reports are part of a larger research project which was entitled, "Local Food Systems: Policies and Values Influencing their Potential." The other study sites are: Charleston, SC; Kansas City, MO; Knoxville, TN; Onondaga County, NY; and St. Paul, MN. All except Onondaga County participated in a 1984-85 project conducted by the U.S. Conference of Mayors to establish local food policy councils.

My interest in municipal food systems follows -on from earlier work on sustainable agriculture - where the idea of localizing food systems is stressed. Curiously, the role of cities and towns in increasing the amount of locally grown food for local consumption has been neglected. This project thus explored the potential of cities and counties to be more self-reliant and more efficient in operating their local food systems.

Much greater development of this potential is not only desirable, but may be required in the shorter term if federal and state funds for food-related programs remain stagnant or decline or, alternatively, the federal government consolidates and devolves food assistance and welfare programs to the states and localities. Developing and strengthening local food systems in conjunction with innovative neighborhood development projects offers cities new ways to deal with problems of urban decay, declining tax bases, and environmental degradation, while at the same time helping to meet the need for open and green spaces.

Development of this potential will definitely be required in the longer-term as fossil fuel prices increase and multiply prices throughout our energy-inefficient food system. This will be a major factor forcing the localization of food systems. In the meantime, the challenge will be to try to maintain current support systems as much as possible, while building the foundations of greater self-reliance - all at a time when most people do not see any immediate or pressing need to do so.

Few citizens or officials are aware of how dependent for food their city is upon distant national and international systems (public and private) and how vulnerable those systems are. Neither are they aware of the extent and complexity of their local food systems, much less their potential and the need to develop that potential. This is reflected in the fact that no U.S. city has a department of food. Equally, few people are aware that the value of the produce from all U.S. gardens (urban and rural) is roughly equivalent to that of the corn crop (approx. $18 billion/year!).

I have sought to understand how local food systems and cycles operate at the household, neighborhood, and municipal levels. At each level I have also sought to understand the issues associated with each portion of the food system: from production issues (farmland preservation, farmers markets, household & community gardens), to processing issues (local vs. external), to distribution issues (transportation, warehousing) to access issues (inner city grocery stores, school
breakfasts & lunches, food stamps, the WIC program, etc.), to use issues (health and nutrition, food safety and handling, restaurants, street vendors), to food re-cycling (gleaning, food banks, food pantries and soup kitchens) to waste stream issues (composting, garbage fed to pigs, etc.). Besides the social and environmental issues associated with the above, there are also a number of ethical and value issues involved which I have also sought to understand and describe.

My visit to Philadelphia (August 1991) and subsequent work have been greatly facilitated by the extensive and generous help of Libby J. Goldstein and Patrick Temple-West.3

THE REGIONAL AND LOCAL SETTING

Philadelphia is located about half way between New York City and Washington D.C. in the Delaware Valley. Across the river to the East is Camden, NJ. Philadelphia has the largest population of the cities studied - 1,585,577 in 1990. The larger metro region had a population of 4,856,877 in 1990. In terms of minorities, the city had 40% blacks, 3% Asians, and 6% Hispanics, while the larger metro area had 18.5% blacks, 2% Asians, and 3.5% Hispanics. 20.6% of the persons in the city were below the poverty line, while 11.4% in the larger metro area were.

In 1952, the city gained home rule status from the state and has since been governed by a strong-mayor system. 1952 also represented a shift in control of city government from the Republican party to the Democratic party. As with most cities, there is considerable fragmentation among city departments and other agencies dealing with food-related issues. The ongoing city fiscal crisis has made new or innovative efforts difficult. Federal and state cut-backs forced increased local taxes which have resulted in 85% of the richest families leaving the city, leaving 80% of the region's poorest inside.4

Descriptions of the regional setting included comments on the importance of the Delaware Basin and how jurisdictional fragmentation divides the natural "foodshed" of Philadelphia between various counties and two states. Politically, the rest of the state and especially the state government were seen as much less progressive politically than Philadelphia. Culturally, some saw Philadelphia as more "insular" than Pittsburgh Pennsylvania's other major city.

In terms of land use, there were high levels of support expressed for preserving open space in the city, but much less concern about preserving farmland on the urban fringe. In part, this may relate to the fact that the closest farmland is in New Jersey. One person interviewed commented on how there was much less of a "hands-on approach" to problems than in the Midwest. Also, that in the health field, as well as more generally, there was much less interest in dealing with rehabilitation (which implies accepting the ideas of failure and maintenance) than in curative/technological approaches.

The role of Philadelphia in the country's early political history is well known. Less well known is that "Philadelphia exerted a profound influence on the nation's eating habits, especially in the 19th century when eminent local chefs published a host of culinary works."5 Interestingly, Afro-Americans played a major role in transferring French culinary traditions to Philadelphia from the West Indies. Also, they, along with other immigrants, were predominant in street vending of food.6 Philadelphia was also a center of early food reforms. Religious groups such as the Bible Christian Church helped start a longstanding local tradition of vegetarianism, while the Rosicrucians rejected red meat. Philadelphia also had a strong temperance movement.7

The contemporary role of food and agriculture in the greater Philadelphia economy is also not well known. Standard encyclopedias indicate that about 85% of the city's workers are employed in the
service industries (trade, finance, and health care), something that reflects the general decline of manufacturing since the 1950s. The major remaining manufacturing fields mentioned are clothing, chemicals, pesticides, metal products, and processed foods - especially bakery goods and beverages. Food and agriculture are thus presented as a minor part of the economy.

The picture of the importance of food, horticulture, and agriculture in Philadelphia and the Delaware Valley that emerges from a detailed analysis commissioned by the Food and Agriculture Task Force is very different. The study demonstrates that twenty to twenty-five percent of the regional workforce is employed in these three fields, generating nearly twenty-one billion dollars in direct local revenues and over five billion dollars in direct local payroll. The Delaware Valley still has more than 5,200 farms that generate almost half a billion dollars in annual sales. Philadelphia is at the center of a regional "food hub." Food and agriculture cargo amount to over twenty-five percent of non-fuel imports while food is the third largest category of venture capital expenditures in the Delaware Valley.

The economic value of emergency and supplemental feeding programs reflects the extensive hunger and poverty found in the region - estimated at nearly half a million people by the Greater Philadelphia Food Bank. Nearly $16.75 million of food was distributed to the homeless, poor, and hungry in 1987. This represented over 8,000,000 pounds of food. At the same time, close to 80,000 students participated in Philadelphia's school lunch program, while some 18,000 received school breakfasts. Some 307,000 participated in Philadelphia's food stamp program, representing a dollar value of $177,770,000 - almost a third of the state's total food stamp program!

While the poverty of inner city residents seriously reduces access to purchased food, the extensive gardening programs of Philadelphia Green have helped to provide fresh produce. There are over 500 community vegetable garden projects in Philadelphia. Other horticultural activities include the annual Flower Show of the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society, and a variety of programs carried out in the city's 10,000 acres of open space.

**BRIEF HISTORY OF THE FOOD AND AGRICULTURE TASK FORCE**

Much of the initial conceptual impetus for the creation of the Food and Agriculture Task Force (FATF) grew out of the pioneering work in the early 1980's of the Cornucopia Project of Rodale Press and the Regenerative Agriculture Association on local, regional, and state food systems - work led by Medard Gable, now of the World Game. Important applications of these approaches were made through the Urban Gardening Program developed by Country Extension and its then director, Libby J. Goldstein. A number of other important food system activities have been developed and carried out by the Nutritional Development Services of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, still headed by Patrick Temple-West. Finally, there was the development of the Greater Philadelphia Food Bank and its related programs. The presence of an already developed and vigorous emergency feeding system meant that the Task Force did not have to become heavily involved with these issues. However, some important hunger-related issues and programs - those relating to nutrition, health, and child care - have remained fragmented. In part, this may relate to the general lack of interest in policy issues on the part of most nutritionists in the region.

The Task Force itself grew out of a conference on "Food and Agriculture: A Development Path for Philadelphia" held in January, 1984. The conference was organized by the Pennsylvania State University's Urban Gardening Program, the Philadelphia Green Program of the Pennsylvania Horticulture Society, and the Graduate School of Fine Arts at the University of Pennsylvania and was financially supported by the Mellon Bank (East). After a follow-on planning session, the Task Force
was created. At that point, it consisted of a fifteen-member steering committee of "conveners," each of whom had a major role or interest in food and agriculture. They met regularly at breakfasts hosted by the Mellon Bank. In addition to the organizers of the conference, the conveners included city officials and staff, the manager of the Philadelphia Food Distribution Center, representatives of the state Dept. of Agriculture, officers and staff of non-profits like the Greater Philadelphia Food Bank, the Nutritional Development Services of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, The Neighborhood Gardens Association/A Philadelphia Land Trust, Extension agents, retail food people and academics.

Shortly after its creation and its election of Libby J. Goldstein as President, the Task Force became part of the U.S. Conference of Mayors project to develop municipal food and agriculture policies. The first major effort of the Task Force was to develop a comprehensive food policy statement. It did this by establishing four working groups - which after some slight changes in title became the working groups on food assistance and nutrition, land use and community gardens, economic development in existing systems, and economic development in emerging systems working groups. Once the working groups had completed the comprehensive food policy statement, it was submitted to Mayor W. Wilson Goode. He in turn sent it to the Philadelphia Neighborhoods Commission for their comments prior to adopting the policy in June 1985. At that point, each working group started developing specific recommendations for addressing its various goals.

The nature and legal status of FATF was firmed up at this time. The "conveners" became a Board, which peaked in membership at twenty-seven in 1990. FATF was recognized by the IRS as a tax-exempt, non-profit organization. At this point, it also merged with another non-profit organization, Food and Energy Systems, which had been set up by Patrick Temple-West and Libby J. Goldstein. As Director of County Extension, Goldstein devoted a great deal of her own and other staff time to developing and supporting the Task Force.

Early in its history, FATF decided not to seek any official status with the city, although a couple of city officials were represented on the Board. It was felt that this would give FATF much greater freedom and flexibility. As it turned out this also gave FATF some geographic flexibility as well, so that it could add members to taskforces from other counties and even from New Jersey.

At their peak, membership of the working groups included over one hundred individuals and organizations, including some from Southern New Jersey. The Task Force and its working groups were very active from 1985 until 1990, sponsoring a series of projects, reports, and conferences (see below).

As time went on, three things - all relating to staff and financial support - conspired to eventually bring the formal activities of the Task Force to a halt. When a new State Director of Extension with little interest in urban food and agriculture issues took over, Libby J. Goldstein left her position at County Extension. Second, a fire in the breakfast meeting area of the Task Force, plus a change in ownership and priorities at the Mellon Bank (East) led to a discontinuance of its modest financial support for the breakfasts, a newsletter, and general mailings. Third, while attempts to obtain city, corporate, and foundation seed money for a staff director had been successful, the individual hired mismanaged the funds as well as his administrative duties - leaving a bad taste both with local foundations and some of the Board - something making any additional fundraising very difficult. The last meetings of FATF were held in 1990.

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS

While the accomplishments discussed below may not seem overly dramatic, it must be kept in mind that the initial years of any food council are particularly difficult. The effort is a pioneering one in
several senses. Members have to explore new territory which few have thought about systematically. This means that there is a significant amount of time required for members to learn about the various sectors of the food system, how they operate, and which agencies and persons are active where. Efforts to devise a viable and locally functional structure also require a lot of pioneering effort, including trial and error.

Even when fully functional, the fact that food councils deal in large part with the informal sector - which is less visible than the formal sector - means that it is often difficult to point to the type of specific achievements which public officials and/or funders like. Also, one of the key capabilities of most food councils is their ability to network and coordinate the activities of various individuals, volunteer groups, and public agencies so that much more is accomplished in terms of providing/maintaining social support systems than would otherwise be the case. In this sense, they serve as a focal point of synergy where things that otherwise would not happen do happen. This coordination and leveraging of informal and formal resources is also difficult to document and portray.

The following list identifies those projects and activities which FATF organized or in which it played a leading role.

A. The Task Force developed a basic policy statement, "Food and Agriculture - A Policy Statement," which was accepted by Mayor Goode in June of 1985. This and its other activities listed below brought food and agricultural issues into public and political consciousness, often for the first time for many people.


C. The Task Force, along with Fairmont Park and Mellon Bank (East) sponsored a colloquium on open space issues in Sept. 1988 which brought together over 100 representatives of various groups. An independent coalition concerned with these issues grew out of this colloquium.

D. The Task Force sponsored a ground-breaking study, "Agenda for Action: The Impact of Food, Horticulture, and Agriculture on the Economy of the Delaware Valley" (Nov. 1988), which was supported by the Philadelphia Commerce Dept., Mellon Bank (East), the Down Home Diner, Fidelity Bank, PNB, and Bell of Pennsylvania. The report was done by Dr. Ross Koppel. [See endnote #8.]

E. The Task Force helped create a food safety working group which then sponsored a conference, "Critical Food Safety Issues for the 90's," at Drexel University, October 1989. The working group followed this up by working with the City Council on two proposed ordinances. One was entitled "Possible Dangers of Consuming Food Treated with Pesticides or Chemicals: Warning Sips." In its original version it would have required supermarkets to post warnings and make fact sheets available. They protested that this would be too cumbersome. At that point, the ALAR scare occurred and the ordinance was changed to require a labeling of organic and non-organic foods. The other proposed ordinance, "Food Establishment Personnel--Food Safety Certification," would have required a food handler certified in safe handling practices on each shift. Local community colleges were eager to run these certification courses, but the restauranteurs wanted to run their own courses and didn't want a certified person required for each shift. The street vendors association fought the proposal vigorously. The opposition of both groups was weakened by a series of TV specials showing the risks of food contamination. Unfortunately, these two proposed ordinances
(as well as many other progressive proposals) got lost during the city's fiscal crisis and resulting political changes in both the City Council and the Mayor.

Besides the above activities where FATF had a clear leadership role, a number of things have been accomplished by the organizations represented on the Task Force, either on their own or by working with other groups. It is hard to assess the role of the Task Force in these efforts, but it is clear that it offered a forum for coordination, networking, and synergism.

Accomplishments here include many different efforts related to community gardens, community greening, and composting. Also, various leaders in the Task Force were involved in the creation of the Neighborhood Gardening Association/A Philadelphia Land Trust and the Tailgate Farmers Market Coalition. These leaders also worked with the City in initiating an "Adopt-A-Lot" program to make additional land available for community gardening. They also encouraged educational efforts on World Food Day and Earth Day as well as implementation of a "nutrition/agriculture in the classroom" program at Fox Chase Farm - a joint facility of the Philadelphia School District and Fairmont Park.

Local hunger assessments and development of a "Federal-State Food Providers Coordinating Council" were also facilitated by the food assistance and nutrition working group. The results here were less than hoped for due to territoriality of the various agencies involved.

One of the major disappointments was the failure of the efforts led by Nutritional Development Services, PACE, the Food and Commercial Workers, and supported by many FATF members to create worker-owned supermarkets in the inner-city. One store was opened with help from an inter-faith revolving loan fund, but foundered between the contrasting visions of the different participants: those promoting an anti-hunger vision, those promoting cooperatives, and those promoting community development. None were focused on the details and practicalities of running a store.

In the area of food distribution, efforts were made to have surpluses from the Food Distribution Center (FDC) - a city-developed and capitalized fruit and vegetable facility that serves the entire region and is the fourth largest in the U.S. - given to the food bank. Problems with availability of transport and timing led to the eventual dropping of this program. Even so, some twenty other non-profits come to the FDC to obtain surplus produce. Recently, city assistance was provided to the Food Distribution Center to help it upgrade its facilities by adding refrigeration - something that helped it to maintain its regional leadership and weakened the position of promoters of a rival food distribution center in New Jersey. Perhaps the largest remaining threat to the FDC is the growth of several large regional supermarket warehouses.

In another area of food distribution, efforts to promote state and local produce have been mixed. As a state, Pennsylvania has been somewhat backward in promoting local marketing of its agricultural products. The "Pride in Pennsylvania" program came late and was not vigorous. In contrast, Philadelphia not only has a nationally known Flower Show (some of the proceeds of which help fund the community garden development programs of Philadelphia Green), but a "Harvest Show" and a "Taste the Harvest" fair to promote local foods, processing, and restaurants. In addition, there have been major efforts to revitalize the Reading Terminal Market and to add hunger and development programs for areas around the market.

Summary: The Task Force and its member organizations clearly were able to highlight the importance of the food system to Philadelphia through a series of conferences, to develop a number of innovative programs, and to encourage networking and cooperation among the various players.
There are a number of sources which underlay the above accomplishments. First, there was a high degree of commitment on the part of most Task Force members and particularly by its President, Libby J. Goldstein. Most groups saw the value of getting together at the FATF meetings and learning about each other's activities. Some members were also on other boards and thus had a good general knowledge of community needs.

Second, in the early years of the Task Force, the Extension Service provided very effective and knowledgeable staff support.

Third, in the early years Mellon Bank (East) provided a neutral and congenial meeting place as well as financial support for both specific projects and general overhead operations.

Another important factor was the generally healthy balance of Board members from the various sectors of the food system. It had representation from the following sectors: from production (few farmers or farmland preservationists, but many community gardeners), processing and distribution (mainly distributors, but few processors or grocers), food access (people concerned about farmers markets; the emergency feeding system; the location of grocery stores; school breakfasts, etc.), processing and use (restaurants; food handling; food safety), re-cycling (food pantries; composting) and disposal (landfills, etc.). Typically, there is a tendency for emergency feeding system concerns and issues to predominate in local food councils, but this was not the case with the Task Force.

As with the other sites studied, the larger political setting within which the Food and Agriculture Task Force operated was one over which it had no control. The main focus was on the city, although it did have the flexibility to include some of the issues relating to the larger "foodshed" of the city - the Delaware Basin - which encompasses several counties and two states.

The origins of the FATF reflected the personal and organizational interests of the main organizers. At that point the three main initiators were County Extension, Philadelphia Green, and the Mellon Bank (East). After the organizing conference, additional major groups were brought in, particularly representatives from the city's Dept. of Commerce (then later City Council's Technical Staff), the Nutritional Development Services of the Archdiocese, the Greater Philadelphia Food Bank, and the Food Distribution Center. The original fifteen "conveners" gradually expanded to a Board of twenty-five to twenty-seven members, very broadly representative of the entire food system.

Unlike the other sites studied, FATF had no official advisory role with the city. As noted, it did have general support from the Mayor and had city personnel represented on its Board. One city staffer interviewed felt that it was better that FATF was not an official body in that this enabled FATF to be more critical and creative.

Another notable aspect of FATF was that it clearly had the broadest representation of the various interests involved in local food systems of any of the sites studied. While the membership varied over the years, the following groups had at least one representative. City staff, county extension, public school teachers, universities, community garden groups, organic growers, food distributors, food retailers, food workers unions, the local land trust, neighborhood development groups, a senior center, restauranteurs, the Mellon bank, and a couple of food and nutrition consultants. While farmers were
represented to a degree by the representative of the organic growers, environmentalists were not formally represented, although clearly several members had environmental concerns.

While in many ways this broad representation was a strength, it also presented several challenges. One - as in all of the councils studied - was attendance. In a large city and with that many members, it was very difficult to schedule a time when most could attend a meeting. The breakfasts hosted by the Mellon Bank certainly helped greatly in this regard, but attendance fell off significantly after their meeting site was destroyed by fire. Another factor reflects the different orientation between groups noted in earlier reports between those in the private sector who are task oriented and those in the public sector who are more process oriented. One private sector person told me that when "nothing happened" after a couple of meetings, he quit attending. Over time meetings went from being monthly to bimonthly to quarterly.

Another organizational challenge involved trying to create and run a policy council in a city the size of Philadelphia. In contrast to some of the smaller sites where key players often are involved in multiple activities and know and trust each other, the operation of the council is necessarily more formal and more representational. While one can try to create a smaller and more flexible organization, it will generally have less visibility as well as less ability to carry out major projects. Alternatively, one can try to create a larger and broader-based organization, but it will likely be more cumbersome. FATF ended up doing some of each. It started out smaller and with a conscious effort to include only "movers and shakers." This did help get FATF established, but then in seeking to reach larger audiences, the Board was expanded. This meant that each member tended to serve as a representative, bringing various things to the table of the policy council and reporting back to her/his group on proposals or actions - something that made developing consensus more cumbersome.

Meetings for a large-city council operating on a representational basis need to be well organized and run smoothly. Several people commented that while the President of FATF was a great networker and strategist, she was not a detail person and that the meetings often rambled. For her part, the President felt that time was needed at meetings for discussion, both to help socialize the members and to give each group a chance to express its views.

Another major challenge associated with a large city/representational council situation is that in obtaining visibility and publicity for the larger council - FATF in this case - care is needed not to claim direct credit for activities or programs carried out by the members of the council. This evidently was a problem with FATF, where some of the groups felt that FATF was claiming credit for their projects.

One way of trying to avoid some of the representational issues at the Board level is to create working groups. This approach has been successfully used in Knoxville and was also reasonably effective in Philadelphia, although there were variations in the level of working group activity. Also, it appears that in Philadelphia fewer Board members were actively participated in working group activities.

A fundamental problem emerged, however, as FATF gained enough momentum to seek support for staff. With staff support, FATF, the umbrella group, became a potential competitor with its members for program support. Indeed, the person selected sought funding from the same sources as members without consulting them (or the Board) prior to his grant submissions.

The combination of competition between FATF and its member groups and the secrecy of the staff person hired left some members (as well as funders) resentful. Once the staff person left and the previous sources of staff support either dried up (with Mellon Bank's changing ownership and
priorities) or were lost due to staff changes (Extension), FATF was left with few resources to continue its activities.

Libby J. Goldstein explored various other "homes" or grant support for staff, but was unable to find any. Much of the networking initiated and facilitated by FATF continued after it stopped meeting (the last meeting being held in late 1990).

One of the basic issues that faced FATF throughout its existence was how to define its central organizational role. There are at least four possible roles for such a policy group - which cover a spectrum going from lesser to greater direct involvement in policy issues. First, it can serve as a forum for discussion and mutual education, and by holding conferences it can also educate the public. Second, it can serve as an umbrella body seeking to network and coordinate the activities of its members. Third, it can be an umbrella group where members work out joint policies on issues important to each. Last, it can not only develop joint policies, but develop programs or activities to seek to implement those policies.

During its history, FATF was engaged somewhat in each of these roles - yet without fully discussing which were most relevant or appropriate.

A remaining question is whether it would be useful to try either to revive FATF or to try to create a new umbrella group to carry on the various activities that FATF engaged in while it was active.

OPTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

One option is to simply continue as at present where there is a very loose and ad hoc coordination and networking among those interested in food issues. Several people expressed their feeling that they missed getting together with the kind of diverse people who were members of FATF. Also, ad hoc coordination often risks one or more groups not learning about programs that they could help with or would benefit from.

The other broad option is to seek to revive the Task Force or create a new umbrella organization. The choice of reviving the Task Force or creating a new organization is one which local leaders need to make and one which ultimately hinges upon finding an organization which has enough interest to provide the necessary staff support, plus finding the right person to serve as the new leader/coordinator. It would also require finding a desirable meeting place (or rotating places) and a meeting time when most people can attend (several people mentioned that lunch meetings were hard to get to). As indicated above, there are four broad organizational roles which might be considered for a new organization or a revived FATF.

A. The first would be to serve as a forum for discussion and mutual education, including the sponsoring of public conferences. The purpose of such a forum would be to provide for networking, coordination of efforts, and discussion of shared or emerging issues and problems. Meetings sponsored by specific organizations could be held either bi-monthly or quarterly. The topics and sponsoring organizations could be determined several meetings in advance. The organization running a particular meeting might well choose the topic and chair the discussion. This would give the sponsoring organization a stake and responsibility for the success of the meeting and discussions.

This option could be done with minimal support personnel, but would require someone to keep the records, mailing lists, etc. and to be a central communications point. There might be a minimal
membership fee to help cover the basic costs (phone, stationary, etc.), while the mailing, publicity, and meeting expenses for particular meetings could be assumed by the sponsoring organization.

The forum structure would also be compatible with organizing half-day or longer workshops, conferences, etc. when the Task Force felt it important to discuss an issue more at length or to bring in additional people.

B. The second would be to serve as a center for networking and coordination of the activities of members groups. There are several directions this could go, but each would imply more staff and financial resources being available - both for background research and for meeting with the relevant people on a given issue. It would also suggest that the new organization would have to spend time - at least in the early stages - better defining its own identity and priorities, the degree (if any) to which it speaks for member organizations, etc.

In each of cities studied, the problem of finding funding for staff was extremely difficult. If one seeks staff time by being housed in a particular organization, then questions of bias and partiality come up.

To seek separate funding through grants is also very difficult - although the Onondaga Food Policy Council (Syracuse, NY) was able to get a two year "seed money" grant from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation. Sadly, it was unable to raise sufficient funds after that period to keep the half-time staff person and recently decided to disband.

One obvious way to address this problem would be to have staff support and leadership provided by one of the major local service providers (Nutritional Development Services, Philadelphia Green, the Reading Terminal Market Trust, and the Greater Philadelphia Food Bank). Another would be to rotate leadership by having each of these providers agree to offer staff (one-third to one-half time) for a period of one year each. This would reduce any perceptions of the organization's agenda being dominated by any one group, but would mean that it probably wouldn't address the issues of economic development and education as much as previously. This sort of arrangement would also be provide a base from which to seek outside funding.

Any of these approaches also assume strong leadership, especially during the first year or so. This would involve a new leader and/or a small executive committee being willing to spend time and effort to help hammer out the new structures and priorities.

C. The third possible role would be for the new/revived organization to serve as a focal point for working out joint policies among member organizations. This would probably require a set of by-laws that would spell out the procedures which would be used to take policy positions and would have to be worked out according to which issues were considered "fair game" and which were considered "off limits" by the member organizations.

D. The fourth possible role would be to work as an action-oriented organization. Not only would the decision-making rules need to be clearly spelled out, but the issue of the umbrella organization potentially competing with member organizations would have to be resolved. This role would appear to be an unlikely beginning one; rather if it happened at all, it would most likely emerge out of the third option. It is generally easier for individual organizations to develop their own programs or to feed their action ideas directly into lobbying and/or political efforts than to work out common positions in an umbrella organization. Even so, it might be useful to discuss this option at any organizing meeting, both to get a clear sense of how much the various potential members are
action-oriented and whether there are overarching issues that only a broader and more comprehensive organization would be in a position to address.

Whatever option might be chosen, the importance of maintaining a rich diversity of members should be kept in mind.

PROGRAM AND POLICY NEEDS AND OPTIONS

A number of important program and policy needs and possibilities were identified while examining the work of the FATF. These remain even though the FATF is no longer operational. The types of needs and issues a new organization or a revived FATF might address include the following.

A. Leadership education. This not only helps to educate key leaders on the importance of their local food system and the need for increasing local self-reliance, but also provides important visibility. To promote this, the Onondaga County Food System Council in New York conducted tours to farms, community gardens, food distribution and processing plants, the food bank, etc.

B. Linking food systems approaches to long-term (or better, sustainable) economic development. One of the most promising areas here involves projects that connect food and jobs. There is significant room to update and expand Ross Koppel's report. In addition to further exploring the original thrust of the report, there could be a useful discussion of the need for (and the nature of) sustainable development. Sustainability as a concept has received a lot of discussion, both in agriculture and in Third World development circles. It is time to try to bring it into the debates about the future of urban America. Associated with this is a fundamental shift in evaluative criteria - from those of economic growth and productivity to those of healthy systems. The expanded report might also review the work that the World Health Organization has done on "Healthy Cities and Communities."

Along these lines, the new organization might consider ways to work more closely with the various planners in the City. They might seek to explore the planning requirements for designing a more sustainable, self-reliant food system and what it might look like.

C. Food safety issues. Current efforts on food safety can be added to by seeking to revive the proposed ordinance on food handler certification and helping to develop general training guidelines, plus perhaps exploring ways to involve community colleges in the process. Food safety and nutritional issues relating to food served in various institutions (schools, hospitals, universities, homes for the elderly, etc.) could also be explored.

D. Emergency feeding system issues. Given the debates in the new Congress regarding welfare reform and the devolution of welfare and food assistance programs to the states and localities, there is a greater than ever need for creative local thinking. This means a careful examination of existing programs both to see how they might be improved as well as how various programs might be integrated. In terms of the WIC program, there is a need to improve it both in terms of coverage and access. Unfortunately, WIC services in Philadelphia are now being pulled out of community centers, something that will make access much more difficult. Since there is little state or federal review of such actions, a new policy council/group might play a useful role here. Other emergency feeding system issues relate to school meals (making breakfasts generally available in public schools and exploring the reinstatement of lunches in public high schools), to a greater respect for ethnic food preferences in different community centers, and to an exploration of the Food Bank getting involved in local and national gleaning programs.
Extension of current emergency food programs is needed, both in time and space. Meals on Wheels programs and other elderly feeding programs need to be available on weekends, especially long weekends. Supplemental feeding programs need to be expanded to include daycare centers and to serve more during the summer months. Inner city access to supermarkets through better bus routes, etc. also needs to be improved.

E. Expansion of community gardens and composting. While there have been a number of very successful community garden programs, work is still needed to encourage more of them in public housing projects. Greater composting in community gardens should also be encouraged. Greater emphasis and publicity might be given those gardens encourage community gardens to seek to put their land in the Neighborhood Gardens Association/a Philadelphia Land Trust.

F. Farmers markets. As the suburbs expand, it becomes more difficult to organize city farmers markets or green markets. Besides emphasizing local and fresh produce, perhaps one or more permanent locations on the edge of the center city should be explored either with the City administration or with the Reading Terminal Trust.

G. Organic wastes. Much greater effort is needed to deal with the organic waste stream. While Extension did good work on household composting for some time, its composting agent was recently let go. As noted, more can be done in community gardens. Larger volume wastes from processors and distributors need attention. The state of Minnesota offers technical assistance to large-scale generators to dispose of these through land spreading or feeding to pigs. Heavy metals and pesticide residues in compost materials is also something that needs better monitoring. This is more important than ever because in 1991, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that states and localities are not pre-empted by FIFRA from passing their own, more stringent pesticide rules.

H. General education. There is a great potential in expanding the use of Grow Lab programs. Extension lends out a limited number of Grow Lab boxes to local schools. The innovative local nutrition curriculum developed by Sandy Sherman should be more widely used. School curricula should also be broadened to include other aspects of the food system. There are a number of useful simulation games which can help students understand hunger and poverty issues at all levels ranging from the "World Game" to the new "Food Game" developed by the University of Minnesota. It was also suggested that a grant be sought to commission a "Philadelphia Food System Game" which Medard Gabel of the World Game Institute might help design.

In terms of educational outreach, the super cupboard programs supported by the Food Bank offer a valuable model for expansion elsewhere. Another possibility along this line might be to organize "food shopping fairs or clinics" at local schools. These would be designed to help low income and food stamp users to get the most (in quantity and nutritional quality) from their resources. Fun and games could be included as well as other types of useful information. Finally, programs on World Food Day and Earth day could be expanded.

I. Farmland preservation. This has been largely neglected, although the Brandywine Conservancy does some work on this. Besides drawing on the expertise of American Farmland Trust, some of the surveys and techniques developed earlier by Rodale's Cornucopia Project, such as their Ag-Market Search and Farmer Search, might be revived and applied in the Delaware River Basin.

J. Organizational possibilities. If a new organization is created, it may want to consider some of the techniques which have been used elsewhere. The City of Knoxville has found that an annual retreat
is very useful in evaluating past efforts and sorting out future possibilities and priorities. This could be incorporated into efforts at revitalization. Another valuable practice found in both Knoxville and St. Paul is the use of an outside consultant who is able to provide new ideas and to offer constructive criticisms and evaluations. While a staff person may well be able to offer new ideas (if funding for such a person can be found), it is unlikely that he/she will be able to offer independent criticisms and evaluations of the organization and its work, both because of closeness to the board and to the projects.

**SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS**

The Food and Agriculture Task Force accomplished many things during its existence. It drafted a comprehensive food policy for the city, organized a number of conferences, and generally served as a central networking and coordinating point for a wide variety of groups and organizations. It is the only food policy council which from the beginning remained outside of city government - seeking thereby to retain greater flexibility. As all the other food policy councils, FATF had difficulty in obtaining staff support, although in its early days, it was able to draw upon significant support from Extension. The Board of FATF was the most diverse in membership of any of the sites studied, which while positive overall did create some problems in terms of consensus building. The size of the city requires an organizational approach using formal representation of the member groups more than was the case elsewhere. There were also the larger challenges of trying to deal with food system problems in what is one of the most depressed urban areas in country.

The Food and Agriculture Task Force not only raised the general level of awareness of food issues, but left a legacy of networking and working together that offers hope that a new organization might be created to take up the many remaining and difficult issues that Philadelphia faces. It is hoped that this report not only highlights the many things that are possible when some financial and staff support are available, but some of the strategies that might help in addressing the many food system needs that are so visible in Philadelphia.
1. This report is based upon work originally supported by the Ethics and Values Studies Program of the National Science Foundation under Grant No. DIR-9022243. The grant was completed May 31, 1994. The government has certain rights in this material. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this report are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation.


3. Their thoughtful comments and suggestions have greatly improved earlier drafts of this report and have helped me to avoid errors and misinterpretations. Any that remain are my responsibility. Also, I would like to thank all those that I interviewed and/or talked to on the phone. They gave me a much better sense of the dynamics and issues facing the Food and Agriculture Task Force than would otherwise have been the case.


6. Ibid.

7. Ibid., p. 269.


9. Ibid.

10. Ibid., p. 54.

11. The low numbers for school lunches is a result of the public schools deciding some years ago to drop them in the high schools due to problems of maintaining order.

12. Ibid., p. 58.

13. The historical details in this section, unless otherwise noted, are based on: Libby J. Goldstein, "The Food and Agriculture Task Force: A History," Photocopy, October 17, 1990.


15. A food safety working group later emerged out of a conference sponsored by FATF.

16. Food and Energy Systems was set up to expand the programs which Extension's Urban Gardening Program could carry out by getting around some of the rigidities of State Extension rules. Such programs included fish farms, neighborhood food systems, and market gardens. It also provided an "insurance policy" against fiscal cutbacks in the Urban Gardening Program.
17. In Kansas City, the food council there came to feel that being an official city advisory group was very constraining in terms of geographic coverage. Part of the reason they became a non-profit group was to be able to cover the entire metro region.

18. Some discussion has been occurring in the framework of the President's Commission on Sustainable Development - which was formed in response to the U.N. Conference on Environment and Development in Rio. A sustainable city taskforce has been formed, but initially did not include any discussion of food issues!

So Why Is the City of Toronto Concerned About Food and Agriculture Policy? A Short History of the Toronto Food Policy Council

by Rod MacRae
Coordinator, Toronto Food Policy Council

It's my favorite question, and I hear it most every week. The short answer is: We all eat and Toronto has 650,000 mouths to feed. The long answer is that the food and agriculture system in Canada (and most everywhere else) is not designed to provide opportunities for optimal nourishment and, consequently, is contributing to a host of health problems for Toronto residents.

Jurisdictionally, the Canadian food system is the responsibility of the federal and provincial governments. Nevertheless, it is the municipality (i.e., the most local level government in the Canadian system), which because of its public health mandate and proximity to the citizenry, has to deal first with food-based problems.

The Toronto Food Policy Council (TFPC) was created in the fall of 1990 by the Toronto City Council. Community groups and supportive civil servants convinced the City Council that the organization of the existing food and agriculture system was associated with health risks for Toronto residents. These health problems had emerged in the 1980s and were associated with three general phenomena: increased levels of hunger and poverty; concerns about declining food quality in a centralized and oligopolistic food economy; and environmental degradation.

Canada's traditional view of these problems centered on four premises: 1) that the food system provides, almost defacto, nourishing food and that all food system actors are interested primarily in nourishing the population; 2) that food is cheap for consumers; 3) that hunger is a problem largely of insufficient income, and that the structure of the food system is not itself part of the problem; and 4) that the food system is capable of addressing any problems of environmental degradation without significantly redesigning its structure or activities.

Proponents for the creation of the Food Policy Council felt strongly that these were false premises, and that existing institutional activities at the federal, provincial and municipal levels either ignored or were inadequate to address underlying realities. Proponents wanted the municipality to take a fundamentally different approach so that long-lasting solutions could be found.

Why and How

Early in TFPC's development a decision was made (after much difficult discussion) to assume the form of a roundtable - a structure deliberately comprised of people with differing political views from a variety of food system sectors. The group assigned to create the TFPC was itself very diverse, reflecting the values and opinions of many sectors (diversity of experience). Collectively, it also contained an awareness of ecological and community health promotion principles (experience of diversity). The TFPC would ultimately have representatives from: the farm/rural sector, anti-poverty activists, community organizations, food systems analysis, the conventional business sector, the organic business sector, education, labor, multicultural organizations, the Toronto Board of Health, and politicians sitting on Toronto City Council.

A roundtable was seen as desirable for several reasons. An essential task of the implementation group was to integrate the different perceptions of the food and agriculture system and its problems, and produce a comprehensive mandate.

The group recognized that, in contrast to the traditional view, food, agriculture, and health are all intimately connected. This understanding is reflected in TFPC's mission statement, its goals and objectives (see Table 1). The group also felt that it was essential for a food policy council to confront its diversity, especially where it contributed to historically separate intellectual and institutional domains. A structure and process had to be in place to allow linkages both between isolated issues and the people working on those issues.

The multisectoral representation inherent in the roundtable has permitted sectors that typically do not communicate on any formal basis to work together to develop innovative projects. For example, farmers and anti-poverty activists, two groups whose paths rarely cross, provided the initial design for a non-profit food distribution project. It is a project that takes into account the needs of both Ontario farmers and their lack of local markets and the urban poor and their lack of access to distribution systems that were truly affordable. The details of the Field to Table project took many months of difficult discussion to hammer out, and ultimately produced a study to examine how high quality foods could be sold at below wholesale prices to low-income people in Toronto.

Through the roundtable structure, TFPC has obtained essential insights into the agendas of various sectors
which permit potential problems to be anticipated as proposals are developed. The TFPC discussions allow different sectoral representatives to hear and understand each other's views. At the same time, decisions are not made to reflect a "lowest-common-denominator" position. This has provided us with some credibility in places where none would normally be forthcoming. Likewise, it has linked us to resources we would not have hoped to leverage given our modest budget of $200,000.

Since most of TFPC's members volunteer their time to TFPC activities or are volunteered by their employers, this small public investment yields large returns in "free" expertise. Even complete failure would not cost the municipality greatly, so structure and financing contribute to risk reduction.

**Political and Community Linkages**

It was decided that the TFPC should be administered as a subcommittee of the city's Board of Health, a standing committee of City Council. This relationship provides immediate access to both the political machinery and preventive health care knowledge and apparatus of the city. TFPC's three staff, persons are attached to the Department of Public Health, and their salaries and other TFPC expenses are paid by City Council. This arrangement provides a stable funding base and facilitates the development of a lateral network of bureaucratic allies and access to the bureaucracy's information gathering systems. It also gives TFPC staff credibility within the civil service which, in turn, enhances the TFPC's ability to gather information and effect change within the municipal government.

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**Table 1. The Mission of the Toronto Food Policy Council**

The Toronto Food Policy Council will work to develop a just and environmentally sustainable food system for all Torontonians.

**Guiding Principles**

The Toronto Food Policy Council will recognize the cultural and economic diversity of the city; enable communities to be actively involved in developing policies; and facilitate collaboration among all sectors of the food system.

**Operational Goals:**

I. *To end hunger and the need for a food distribution system based on charity*

The Toronto Food Policy Council will:

1. recognize the causal relationships between poverty, hunger and ill-health, and advocate for improved wages, income support programs and affordable housing;

2. work with the Boards of Education and all levels of government to establish sound nutrition programs in all Toronto area schools. This would include measures addressing both immediate and long-term food and nutrition needs of children in Toronto; and

3. in conjunction with concerned community groups, the corporate sector and municipal agencies, work to improve physical access to affordable and nutritious food.

II. *To promote food production and distribution systems which are equitable, nutritionally excellent, and environmentally sound*

The Toronto Food Policy Council will:

1. heighten public awareness of the nature of the current food system including: ecological sustainability, economic interdependency, and health implications;

2. advocate for improved food labelling and advertising to assist the consumer in making food choices; and

3. work with all concerned sectors of the food system to promote healthy food production by encouraging local production of the most nutritional food possible and the elimination of excessive food packaging.
The sectoral structure of the TFPC has also helped create linkages with community groups. The TFPC plays a bridging role between community agencies and the political and bureaucratic machinery of the city. This role is primarily catalytic and facilitative. Members and staff help community groups organize and coalise, and provide strategic advice on how to solicit support from the municipal government.

Once coalitions are secure, the TFPC slowly decreases the support it provides, and transfers ownership of the project to a non-profit community organization. TFPC then focuses on a new community grouping or issue. The close relationship with community agencies gives the TFPC a much better sense of what is happening "on the ground" than is true for most government bureaucracies.

**What and When**

The TFPC has consciously engaged in multiple projects, believing that solutions will emerge from a diverse number of activities in contrast to pursuing a single large initiative. Because the TFPC operates in an arena where many players (e.g., politicians, civil servants, community people) can decline to participate or can halt a project, this strategy further reduces risk by moving many initiatives forward simultaneously and by using a diversity of players.

The TFPC has also focused on short, medium, and long-term initiatives. For example, we are working with other city departments to fashion the city government into a promoter of healthy and local food choices. This has required discussions with private sector food service companies who have historically supplied city cafeterias, parks concessions, and street food vendors. As discussed above, we helped to establish a non-profit food distribution company that buys fresh fruits and vegetables at below wholesale prices and sells to organized low-income people in public spaces: schools, housing complexes, and neighborhood buying groups.

We're trying to demonstrate, in a concrete way, that community food security can be enhanced by shifting food distribution, at least in part, from private sector control to those places that communities view as public or 11 commons." In the short-term, this seems moderately acceptable to the private sector, as we locate in places poorly served by quality food retail outlets. In the medium term, however, such efforts have the potential to subvert the dominant system because clients are withdrawn from it. This, we believe, is justifiable given the fact that the dominant system is not really interested in servicing low-income people, and rarely designs distribution systems that ensure their access to affordable, nourishing food.

Our long-term projects include: redesigning an industrial food district slated for conversion to high-volume retail outlets and condominiums; developing an advocacy campaign to change the role of the health care system in addressing poverty and hunger; and changing the consumer food information system from one that currently sows confusion to one that promotes public policy efforts that support healthy food choices and agricultural sustainability. We're also challenging the free trade agreements and GATT, and providing an alternative perspective on trade and food security that has received little attention in the Western world.

These projects represent significant challenges to the status quo, and are being opposed, or at least ignored, try businesses and regulatory people. Our closeness to the city's Board of Health, and its concerns, however, affords us some protection and influence. Just how these projects will evolve is unclear. The very fact that we have initiated them is impressive and a significant poke in the ribs to the agricultural establishment.

**New Challenges**

The TFPC has been in operation for over three years. A major difficulty now is bringing closure to some of our projects and finding ways to pass them on to others who can take over leadership. We are unable to take on new challenges until this happens. But we are seeing increased enthusiasm for local food initiatives, much of it not linked directly to us, but somehow encouraged by our presence. For example, the eastern part of Toronto is about to launch a Green Communities Initiative that will develop programming for consumers and local businesses interested in supporting the transition to sustainability (e.g., buy local programs, community food projects, gardening, organic food purchasing). Also, many community agencies have a newfound interest in community kitchens and associated projects such as baby-food preparation circles. This affirms for us that food is a powerful force for community mobilization and that the expertise to run programs has been lying dormant, awaiting the enabling conditions.

Evaluating what strategies work best is also challenging, especially given our need to target our limited resources for maximum effect. Because much of our work is indirect, facilitative, and collaborative, it's difficult to isolate the impacts of our specific efforts. We do know, however, from focus group work, that many of the 10,000 customers of Field to Table are now eating a more nourishing diet. Qualitative research inquiries into Toronto school food programs indicate better attendance, less tardiness, and better socialization in many classrooms. We know from informal communications that our political advocacy efforts have favorably affected provincial and federal government decisions. We continue to seek partnerships with researchers in the hope that better evaluative tools can be developed.

Our roundtable structure also raises interesting questions at this juncture in our development. The very features that proved important for successful startup may become challenges for TFPC’s ongoing operation and project implementation. As projects become more detailed and complex, it is difficult for volunteers who only spend a few hours per week on TFPC work to find satisfying ways of participation in discussions and actions. At the same time, those around the table who represent the dominant system are finding
increasingly that their interests are challenged by our activities. Yet, they are unable to articulate a valid reason for stopping the projects. The dilemma is understandable given the fact that TFPC’s mission is ultimately at odds with the interests of most agribusiness firms and the values of the dominant institutions (e.g. departments of agriculture, research institutes) that support them. Clearly, the issues TFPC is addressing will not be resolved quickly. Nevertheless, a food policy council does provide a workable institutional mechanism for food system reform. As long as we all need to eat, there’s work to be done.

Toronto Food Policy Council Discussion Paper Series

Reducing Urban Hunger in Ontario: Policy Responses to Support the Transition from Food Charity to Local Food Security

In the past 10 years, our perceptions of food banks have changed dramatically. First seen by policy makers and the general public as an emergency, short-term, and caring response to what was supposed to be a time-limited hunger problem, they are now viewed, at least implicitly and often reluctantly, as one of the cornerstones of society's anti-hunger and anti-poverty strategy. Although there is much talk about eliminating the need for them, concrete strategies to effect such an outcome remain elusive.

This discussion paper presents an evolutionary series of policy initiatives designed to reduce the need for food banks. These initiatives recognize both the government's fiscal dilemmas and the responsibility of many sectors of society for both the current problem and the potential solutions. 35 pages.

Health, Wealth and the Environment: The Impacts of the CUSTA, GATT and NAFTA on Canadian Food Security

Little attention has been given to the effect of trade arrangements (CUSTA, NAFTA, GATT) on Canadian food security issues, particularly for large urban areas such as Metro Toronto. Food security exists when all citizens have access to an appropriate, affordable, and nourishing diet.

The pillars that underlie food security are equitable wealth generation, environmentally sustainable food production and community health promotion. Each of these pillars is rooted in specific principles and conditions. These principles and conditions are being undermined by the trade arrangements. In concrete terms, this means that we are likely to see increasing levels of hunger and food insecurity, increasing degradation of the natural resources on which food production is based, and decreased individual and community health.

It will require significant efforts on the part of advocates for change and their institutional allies to create a food system and trading regime that promote food security. It is the TFPC's view that current trade agreements so compromise food security that they must be abrogated and eliminated. Then new systems must be put in place that respect the foundation principles of food security: equitable wealth generation, environmental sustainability and the health of communities. 27 pages.

If the Health Care System Believed You Are What You Eat. Strategies to Integrate Our Food and Health Systems

Our health care system does not recognize the extent to which hunger and poor food choices create problems and increase acute health care expenditures. We propose strategies to integrate our food and health systems so that health care costs are reduced in the long-term and population health improves. Available Early 1995.

Setting a New Direction: Changing the Agricultural Policy Making Process

Many current problems in agriculture are a result of a flawed public policy system. This paper provides some examples of those flaws and proposes changes to the agricultural policy making system. Available Early 1995.