

LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS RESPONSE TO COVID

Building Better Beyond Webinar Series

Marketing Innovations When Communities Eat at Home

Webinar Highlights

Overview

The impact of this pivot away from wholesale and institutional supply chains sent shock-waves across local and regional food systems, and required rapid reconfiguration of operations and supply chain logistics as institutions and restaurants that sourced food locally closed, producers along supply chains shifted from wholesale to direct to consumer. Leaders from the worlds of farm to school, food hubs, and niche meat shared their experience and perspectives from both an on-the-ground and 30,000 foot view.

Speakers

Rebecca Thistlethwaite

Rebecca is the Director of the Niche Meat Processor Assistance Network (NMPAN), an Extension community-of-practice housed at Oregon State University. She has a master's degree in International Agricultural Development from the University of California-Davis and was formerly co-owner of TLC Ranch, a mid-scale organic pastured poultry and livestock enterprise in California.

Lacy Stephens

Lacy Stephens is a Senior Program Manager with the National Farm to School Network where she works to expand the farm to school and farm to early care and education movement through information sharing, network building, and advocacy at the national, state, and local levels. Based in Kansas City, Lacy is a registered dietitian with a background in food systems and is currently a Bloomberg American Health Initiative Fellow at Johns Hopkins University.

Ellie Bomstein

Ellie is a Project Manager on the Food Systems Leadership team at the Wallace Center. She's been with Wallace for 4 years. Previously, Ellie worked in state and local policy advocacy and in local food distribution. She has a Masters in Regional Planning from Cornell University and a BA from the University of Michigan. She lives in her hometown of DC.

Shared Resources from webinar (links):

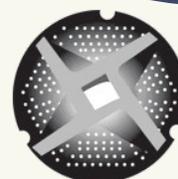
Meat Processing- Mobile Units

Lessons Learned from Public Investment in local and regional meat processing

PA Department of Ag Workforce Development



NATIONAL
FARM to SCHOOL
NETWORK



NICHE MEAT PROCESSOR
ASSISTANCE NETWORK

Immediate Impacts

Changes in labor and facility requirements, processing and packaging specifications, and distribution logistics. Innovations include shifting to online grocery stores, hiring extra staff and extending processing facility hours, and supporting emergency food efforts.

Infrastructure Investment Uncertainty

In both the food hub and meat processing sectors there is uncertainty about investing in long term infrastructure upscaling and the sustainability of maintaining an increased staff as the world adjusts and panic buying subsides.

Local Food Systems to the Rescue!

The pandemic elevated gaps and vulnerabilities of our food system. Panelists believe that state and local governments are realizing the value of local food in economic development and community food security. There are more grants and funding available for the development of the local food sector and partnerships have emerged and strengthened between governments and local food actors as officials recognize the infrastructure that already exists.

Collaborative Networks are Key

The collaborative nature of local food supply chains was essential to successful adaptations across sectors. Conversations happening not just along the supply chain but also throughout communities facilitated the creation of new connections and leveraged these relationships in novel ways.

Equity and Food Justice Front and Center

The new conversations happening during the pandemic and the involvement of local food in emergency food exist alongside increased awareness of the racial injustices in the country. In many places local food work to increase food access has focused specifically on building connections with BIPOC producers and consumers and increasing their access to participation in local food systems.

Next Steps

This moment, where local food has been highlighted in the media, has been an effective tool for hunger relief, and forging new and innovative collaborations, needs to be leveraged to build a better beyond. -Investing in relationships and collaborations -Exploring policy changes that address the barriers to local food that were exposed because of the pandemic -Using the funding that is out there to invest in training programs and infrastructure development, especially in areas that serve low income or BIPOC communities.

Project Team



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