

Food, Hunger, Water, Agriculture Policy
Food Systems Action Team
June 11, 20  3:30 – 5:00 pm
Meeting Notes

Facilitator: Lilly Irvin-Vitela, New Mexico First

Notes: Sharon Berman, New Mexico First

In Attendance:

- Zak Barela, NMDA
- Sarah Cobb, Village of Los Ranchos
- Brian Colon, NM State Auditor
- Bryan Crawford-Garrett, Thornburg Foundation
- Tyler Eshleman, New Mexico Coalition to Enhance Working Lands (NMCEWL)
- Dan Gerry, Agri-Futures, Los Ranchos
- Bruce Hinrichs, NMSU Cooperative Extension Service
- Jonas Moya, NM First
- Raphael Nevins, Healthy Futures
- Pam Roy, NM Food and Ag Policy Council
- Brent Van Dyke, NM Association of Conservation Districts
- Mike Venticinque, NMFMA
- Wendy Wintermute, New Mexico First

Unexpectedly good or unexpectedly bad way system has behaved during COVID related to food.

- Raphael gave a shout out to the Navajo Nation and those helping out with food and water. 300 food boxes are being delivered per week to hogans or homes. Proof of delivery happens by taking a photograph of the delivery. People are working tirelessly help families under great stress
- Brent commented that COVID-19 shed light on lack of meat & protein processing in NM. He said that there is lamb and cattle production yet we have stores run out of proteins, which is due to lack of inspection in NM. Attending to internal protein processing will help fix the missing link.
- Sarah said COVID-19 has jump-started ideas and innovations working with food banks.
- Jonas said he predicted we would get stronger working together in food systems. The Ag Resiliency project has been going on for over 5 years. He saw promise in adding value to products in NM, keeping things in-state, and making sure producers have feasible systems.
- Dan said COVID-19 has revealed the willingness of community to step up and volunteer. He added that this is a mind-shift and people realize we're all in this together and want to volunteer.
- Mike gave a quick update. He said that no one is being left behind with their products. He gave a shoutout to Thomas Swenson at NM Harvest, with whom they have a partnership. NMFMA finished their online training on food safety for farmers. There are now 70 farmers selling product to schools. He said they have spent the \$50,000 allotted to the pilot program for seniors in a tri-county area. Regarding seeds, Mike added that farmers were grateful for the seeds. He shared anecdote about woman who had cherries available.
- Tyler said he was amazed and encouraged by the ability of our state to rally, partner, collaborate, and pull funding and educational resources together. He noted that hasn't always been done here. Tyler added that he was very grateful for everyone and their work, and being a part of promoting those kinds of efforts.
- Zak commented that NMDA funding and programs are here to assist farmers and ranchers in need.



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People. Ideas. Progress.

Please contact Sharon Berman at sharon@nmfirst.org if we missed or misunderstood anything in these notes.

- Pam spoke about the Senior Meal programs, and thanked Mike at NMFMA and the Agri-cultura network. She added that the next stage will be planning to expand and onboard other counties. If anyone is interested, let Pam know at pam@farmtotablenm.org.

Updates and Collaborations

- Lilly updated the group on seed purchasing support, which was a collaboration between NM Acequia Association, NM Farmers' Marketing Association, and others. Even with a collective effort, it took longer than usual to acquire the seeds. Lilly added that there are plans to put together a purchase for a fall crop. She noted that the group has been looking at how to help people access federal grants. She wondered if others had thoughts about coordinating efforts to help folks access resources.
- Tyler said they are figuring out how to make resources more accessible through quick sheets and newsletters. They are also focusing on mental and emotional health, highlighting stories of resilience and transitioning to new markets. **He said any resources in the area of new markets would be helpful if anyone would like to share.** His email is coordinator@nmcewl.org. Through Quivira Coalition they are providing an ombudsman via an email and phone line where people can reach a person with their questions. She connects people with resources. The goal is to make things easier in our state for farmers, ranchers and producers to access resources. Tyler wrote in the chat:
 - We're here to listen and to learn how we can best support producers in our network. Reach out with questions, needs, concerns, reflections, or if you just want to chat: Call our on-call support, Shawna, at (505) 393-1254 between 9am-5pm MST MWF, or Email us at support@NMCEWL.org
 - Join us on Zoom next Friday, June 19th at 9:30MST to chat (email support@NMCEWL.org to register)
- Zak said they are developing quick sheets for federal assistance funding, which will address frequently asked questions.
- Dan said they need to speak with Terry at the Grants Collaborative about whether the grant writing mentorship idea would be worth pursuing. He said they still want to continue internships with local producers. They are applying for a USDA grant.
- Bruce said that they will be holding a [produce safety handling remote training on June 29-30](#). They are working with the Ag Econ Department to look at potential for beef processing in NM. Extension staff held a remote statewide beef seminar. He added that every county has different things going on specific to their needs. If anyone has an idea for a need, please let Bruce know by emailing him at bhinrich@ad.nmsu.edu or bhinrich@nmsu.edu.
- Pam said they started their NM Food & Policy Council website, www.nmfapc.com. Upcoming grant opportunities are shared via newsletter distributed by www.farmtotablenm.org.

Special Legislative Session

Lilly noted that the group had created a [funding priorities document](#) based on work the group had done in its first incarnation leading up to the 2020 session as well as new input by the group, whose membership grew fourfold during COVID. One of the lessons learned were building capacity to qualify applying for federal programs – for instance, the food box program. GAP certification proved a barrier to NM producers. Lilly added that because of this, thinking has emerged around creating NM-specific programs funded by federal relief dollars, using health and safety



standards that already exist through PED. She wondered how to move it from vision to action, to make it happen in NM.

- Pam said there are several bills being introduced at the federal level to create more access for farmers to mitigate certifications (such as GAP) to get dollars at the local level. She asked whether we are thinking of working with federal legislators, or current funding resources that exist, or in-state programs. Lilly answered that we want lessons learned to be made tangible and for there to be more flexibility in how states use emergency relief dollars. This would provide a path to create a NM version of the food box program with requirements more in keeping with NM contexts (e.g., school and senior feeding programs). Lilly allowed that this is in the dreaming stage and asked if anyone had ideas about how to move it forward.
- Mike said the food box bid was picked up by Segovia, which is Texas-based and has satellite offices in NM. In-state producers bid for it, but Segovia was awarded \$5.4 million for the program. He added that hubs need to be structured around GAP. “It’s more important than ever to promote food safety in agricultural practices in NM. It’s not going away.” He stated that any hub coming in needs to look at gaining GAP certification. He thought it not impossible that by January 1, 2022, existing hubs could gain GAP certification. “It’s something we can do to strengthen our systems.”
- Sarah said it is in our best interest to improve health and safety systems and standards in a way that is reasonable for our small farms. She likes state-oriented programs. She asked whether PED standards were more relevant to NM producers. Sarah added that she would support a system that would improve the standards in a way that is implementable and reasonable for small farms.
- Mike said that if we can get farmers for food safety to tier 1 or tier 2 levels, it will continue to strengthen the system. He said hubs need to be GAP certified so we’re on a level playing field with the big boys.
- Sarah asked how GAP happens. Lilly replied that there is a cohort model, and folks using that model are more successful. Mike added that GAP certification is an independent third party audit, in which people audit your farm and your program. He said there is a 90-page manual. The program requires keeping strong records for traceability. NMFMA recommends their farmers get PSA training with NMDA hopefully at FISMA level (25k), then they have 3 years to obtain certifications, which are loosened GAP certifications. Then at \$250,000 annually they are required to be GAP certified. Sarah wondered if there was a cost associated with GAP certification. Mike said he heard it was in the \$1500 range and added it was not for smaller farmers.
- Bruce said that the produce safety alliance training is the PSA training Mike referred to. Mike said he sat in on the training, found it really interesting and recommended everyone take it.
- Jonas said he thought there should be a deep conversation to make the program accessible and customized for NM.
- Dan said that community school coordinators at community schools have the job of organizing all the student supports so students can learn (this includes food, shelter and legal issues) and are the hub providing connections to the families. He added that people trust their community school coordinator, even when usually they are cautious because of immigration issues. “Even if COVID goes away there is a resource to provide assistance.” Food hubs need to be connecting with community school coordinators, said Dan. **He offered to provide connections in an email to Lilly and Pam.**

Lilly noted that we learned in a call today that the state had just published a P-EBT hotline - (505) 660-4822. Lilly asked that folks share the hotline on their networks and through social media.



Local food systems updates

- Bryan talked about PED's new program and an up and coming senior center model. He wondered if there were ways to guide things to continue to help local producers as well as lower-income folks who could use local food., He suggested holding brainstorming sessions with NMDA and other stakeholders, in which they take note of what's going on in other states.
- Pam said that because the NSIP program focused on buying products within U.S., Aging and Long Term Services was onboarding additional communities using existing funds on NM-grown/raised products. She added they had surveyed counties with whom they're working (Sandoval, San Juan and Socorro), and discovered there is a need to meet people where they're at. Pam said they doubled the number of meal deliveries to home-bound folks. She wondered how to modify programs that currently exist in order to meet everybody's needs, so people can trust meeting in communities/neighborhoods. The goal is to make it permanent.
 - Dan said he thought Roy Montibon in San Miguel Co., as he would be interested to join the discussion as they have a lot of homebound people too.
- Lilly said we need to understand where there are gaps. She referred to the survey conducted by NM Applesed that revealed that one of the big barriers to summer food programs is transportation. Summer food programs anticipated a million dollar shortfall.
- Lilly wondered about Bryan's point of holding brainstorming sessions. She asked if anyone on the call would be interested in doing a brainstorming session. **Zak said he would mention it to Jason and let Lilly know.** Bryan wrote on the chat that he would be interested in such a conversation. Pam requested that this work be tied in with the gleaning study that they were doing with NMDA.
- Pam described the gleaning task force, supported by a [memorial](#), which was charged with figuring out how to work with farmers to glean produce that might be imperfect or otherwise unharvested. They are working on putting the team together. Pam said that about 15 states have gleaning programs in place, either privately or via nonprofits. There are comprehensive studies and federal framework. Pam added that the task force will be working on the report in the next few week and will get the report to the legislature by Nov. 1.
 - Sarah asked if there were guidelines in place. Pam said there were. **She said she would send the reports she shared with NMDA that demonstrate standards.** NM Policymakers have asked about liability for farmers. Sarah asked if there were food & safety guidelines and potential guidelines for farmers wishing to donate to a pantry or food bank. Pam replied that she didn't think there were formative guidelines.
 - Mike noted that in 2019 there were 14 vendors, and now there are 70. Regarding gleaning, he emphasized that there needs to be a consideration of farmer liability because "you-pick it" has a different set of liabilities. He added that there needs to be consideration of product that should not be part of the program. He asked if people helping with gleaning process were to be vetted and if there were safety considerations. Lilly noted that 15 states have figured out these issues.
 - Pam noted that it will be important to focus on compensating the farmers. She said the task force would be looking at checks and balances, which would help create a standard. She added that farmers have donated to food assistance programs for years. The study would help create a set of clarifications and approaches for the initiative. Pam emphasized the importance of paying farmers for what they grow, and ranchers for what they raise. She said she was on a call last week in which Sec. Witte had told Sen. Udall that COVID-19 is helping us understand how important it is to have a strong local food system.

Lilly noted that the group will meet in a fortnight.

