

Food, Hunger, Water, Agriculture Policy
Food Systems Action Team
8.20.20 ♦ 3:30 – 5:00 pm
Meeting Notes

Facilitator: Sharon Berman, New Mexico First

Notes: Xavier Vallejo, New Mexico First

In Attendance:

- Dan Gerry, Agri-futures, Los Ranchos
- Karen Plawecki, NMSU Nutrition Department
- Jason New, NMDA
- Erika Robers, NM First
- Roy Montibon, The Montibon Company
- Valerie Rangel, NM Foundation
- Jonas Moya. NM Cattle Growers

New Mexico First to send Policy Priorities document.

0. Intros & Icebreaker: Summer food you are enjoying in particular this year

People have been talking about several major efforts, programs, ideas and projects. Thought we'd get updates from the community about those and any other activities we should be aware of.

Summer Foods:

- Sweet Corn
- Watermelon
- Tacos
- Beef
- Cucumber

1. The impact of COVID on labor on harvesting, distribution

What are you seeing, what do you know?

- Need to get the NM Chile Growers Association, Executive Director on these calls. Chile growers have been experiencing field and processing labor shortages. **Joram Robbs: ebnmca@gmail.com**. Cattle producers have always had labor shortages.
- Chile processors have had some challenges on labor but have maintained operations. Don't know what extent they're having problems. From the dairy section, there have been issues regarding labor – especially related to immigration issues with Visas and unemployment benefits. There may be disincentives for workers to come back. **Karen to check with Ag side of extension.**
- 6 different students were conducted on the \$600 weekly unemployment benefits. Studies found that with job scarcity, most people on unemployment wanted the stability of a job. The net effect of the \$600 a week



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People. Ideas. Progress.

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

was a good medium for people. [For updates on Hidden Harvest, see Gleaning Section]. Received compliments from Portland, Oregon on the collective work of New Mexicans.

2. Farm to Food Box Programs

- N/A

3. What are they seeing in Farmers Market and CSAs

- Los Ranchos growers' market has had large crowd in the height of season. Two other markets in Albuquerque do CSAs but there isn't anyone on the call.
- One CSA has been thriving but its been a weird growing season. There has been some difficulty growing some crops.
- Produce farmer in Pecos and Las Vegas fell ill and lost a lot of crops. The future of this CSA is uncertain.

4. Seed distribution needs for the fall

- NM Foundation needs more information on the Seed Distribution Program for the Fall.
- Katie Laney, Assistant Director from Seed Fertilizer Division at NMDA and Mike Mento Cinco from the New Mexico Farmers' Association were lining up seeds.

We'll be scheduling meetings for next week – we'll get a doodle out for meeting times

- Valerie would like
- Jason plugged in Katie Laney – assistant director feed seed fertilizer at NMDA – Mike 25

5. Gleaning

- Hidden harvest in California paying workers \$12.50/hr. (Above minimum wage in CA). Hidden harvest paying workers for second harvest. Program provided economic benefits with worker pay and provided food for the poor in second harvest. So many systems need to communicate, but don't. Best practices often link different topics/issues.
- New Mexico First shared the gleaning survey, distributed by NMDA. 3 hrs. were dedicated to input from the community on the survey. The survey is reliant on volunteers, which can be difficult. Lots of conversations were had on the models to use for gleaning processes. **New Mexico First to attach Draft Gleaning Survey August 2020.**
- In the gleaning action team, all questions in the survey were discussed. How is this being distributed?
 - The survey is just a draft. NMDA will be distributing.
 - Call tricks as a digital medium was recommended to ensure single use links.
 - Most questions are asking farmers if interested in gleaning programs.



- Missing from survey: Size of farm (acreage and employment rate) could change contexts. Small farmers might participate if they were paid. Large farmers may need volunteers or funding to rehire seasonal workers. Large producers may have more flexibility to participate and donate second harvest.
- Opportunity for produce that is slightly damaged and doesn't have a market to receive crop insurance. For example, a slight hailstorm could damage crops and entitle a farmer to compensation. Could those compensated crops still be donated? Is that a barrier?
 - They usually have to plow it under to avoid insurance fraud. This would have to be changed at the national level in terms of policy. A clause would have to be implemented.
 - 13 states already have policies around produce gleaning.
- Some food banks (Food Depot and RRFB) have their own distribution networks. Rural communities don't usually have the resources necessary to bring in large amounts of food. This relates to issues with cold storage and distribution, even in the context of gleaning.
- An alternative idea is that those unused crops may be turned into compost. Its an alternative and farmers have decisions to make.
- Needs survey was conducted by the New Mexico Foundation.

6. Any other updates we should know about?

- NMDA Soils Grant is out. Agri-Future planning to apply. Waiting for soil sample results. Individual groups like soil & water cons district around the state forward their gest grant apps to NMDA to final review in October. To ensure local eval happens through local SWCD offices. Soil health
- United World College kept their garden open during the summer – now that school is open again they are probably going to experience food shortages in Las Vegas.
 - CSA is out of commission with huge product loss after farmer falls sick.
- Luna Community College could start taking on the role that the United World College did during the summer and teach students about the process.
- A few years ago, NM Foundation had sponsored Springer Women's Prison for a project, that could be repurposed into a gardening project. Other wardens in Guadalupe and Union County that had interest in cultivating and starting programs like that.
 - Perhaps prisons doing seedling projects
 - There was a program south of Socorro that taught farming and other things. There were legal concerns. He was hoping to get that program up and running again.
- CFAP Update: Extension/expansion into specialty crops. Sec. Witte had let them know recently. Latest stats from FSA is that 2600 applicants made the claim for the CFAP benefit. This was surprisingly low as statistically, three are 26,000 producers in NM. There is \$16M of financial assistance available to producers for declines in income or additional costs due to COVID. Expanded deadline to September 11. Additional specialty crops added. **Please get the word out!**
 - It's for January – April. Applicants need to prove economic impact during that time.



- It's comprehensive. Mainly ranching and dairy have taken
- FSA office located all over the state, they are willing and able to help applicants.
- https://www.nmda.nmsu.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Food-Assistance_covid19.pdf
- NM Foundation building up for another round of [Vecino Fund](#), New Mexico Foundation's emergency response grant. Renter evictions may be how they will focus Vecino Fund. They are taking applications for the Native American Relief Fund. Applicants must be Native American communities or directly serve Indigenous communities around the state.
 - Valerie give a lecture on her book, *Environmental Justice in NM*. The free event will take place through The Indian Pueblo Culture Center on September 15. Her book is available locally or [online](#). Valerie said she'd share the remote meeting information when it became available.
- NM Cattle Growers watching national issues re. live cattle markets. NM Cattle Growers Joint Stockman (annual meeting sponsored by Cattle Growers and Wood Growers) will be in December and may be virtual.

