

2012 Farm Bill Summit – The Road to Reform
Final Plenary Session
Thursday, January 13, 2011
Georgetown University Hotel & Conference Center, Washington, DC

Next Steps

Summit participants offered specific recommendations for individual and collective action in preparation for the farm bill reauthorization. Suggestions focused on communication, outreach, data needs, and coalition building.

- Defend the GIPSA rule now by calling the White House and Congress.
- Specialty Crops group will stay in touch about platform development via email.
- Inform cities about farm bill issues.
- Link state and municipal agendas with Farm Bill issues raised here.
- Document success stories (e.g. Stacy Miller of Farmers Market Coalition will do this for the Farmers Market Promotion Program).
- Share issues raised at this summit with allies and constituents.
- Margaret Krome of Michael Fields Agricultural Institute (MFAI) will follow up with those who volunteered to identify specific contacts that can assist with developing a research base.
- Identify the closest native nation in your area and learn about their concerns.
- Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP), Johns Hopkins University Center for a Livable Future (CLF), American Farmland Trust (AFT), and others are bringing health and agriculture communities together in April to discuss the next farm bill. If you're interested in attending this meeting let Becca Klein with CLF or Jennifer Billig with IAPT know.
- California groups will meet at Ecofarm to discuss how to coordinate better.
- Adopt a unified strategy regarding conservation.

Reflections from Coalition Representatives

Steve Etko of National Organic Coalition and Campaign for Contract Agriculture Reform, charged the group with a writing and messaging task to *hone the concept of 'new localism.'* He advocated for supporting federal programs that foster local control and ensuring that farmers have the autonomy to make decisions about their own land. He also called for networking with people in other sectors who have had similar experiences with unenforced regulations and resultant abuse.

Craig Cox of Environmental Working Group noted the usefulness of Ferd Hoefner's opening frame -- defend the base, push the envelope, unite and organize -- for Farm Bill deliberations. *Protection of the base* involves not just conservation programs but issues across the sustainable agriculture community. The budget

debate is an opportunity to *push the envelope* (e.g. by developing specific concrete proposals for identifying savings in the commodity and crop insurance programs that might help fund other programs). In the process of the budget debate, it will be important to *use rhetoric that leads to alliances and unity*, not division, or, in the President's speech, "words that heal rather than words that wound."

Lorette Picciano of Rural Coalition/Coalición Rural stressed the need for a strong business case for framing the effort as "reinvestment" in agriculture. She proposed a series of administrative and policy changes in support of small-scale producers, such as reduced paperwork, EZ forms, elimination of match requirements, the availability of crop insurance to all farmers, and recognition of regional differences/needs. She also called for greater USDA accountability and improvement of the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program.

Kathy Ozer of National Family Farm Coalition encouraged the group to proceed in a coordinated and strategic manner. She noted the unifying issue of food sovereignty and stressed the importance of connecting domestic and international efforts. Core goals for the Farm Bill, beyond allocation of funds, include implementing good rules and regulations and creating a strong base of support around the country.

John Fisk of Wallace Center at Winrock International underscored the importance of protecting the base and gathering sufficient data. He suggested that organizations focus on advocating for successful programs and that policy goals may be achieved through refinement of the existing Farm Bill. The White House focus on Food Systems and Health may present key opportunities going forward.

Patty Lovera of Food and Water Watch suggested that in order to have effective meetings with members of Congress, advocates should create opportunities for *teachable moments*. Lessons can be drawn from causes/effects of natural and agricultural disasters, contributions to economic development and infrastructure, and by translating the GIPSA rule.

Ferd Hoefner of National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition concluded that the next farm bill debate will be especially difficult and important given the budget context. He echoed the call for protecting the base, staying unified while prioritizing among programs, and capturing real success stories. He stressed the need for coordination among an increasingly large pool of Farm Bill stakeholders, and he suggested that groups cultivate Congressional champions *now* while pressing forward with building alliances and proposals.