

Farm Bill Summit

January 2011

Breakout Session Reports



National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition



Research, Extension & Education



Key Policy Targets Discussed

- Extension – refocus emphasis
 - Enterprise facilitation, local food systems
 - Beginning farmers, diversified, small-mid, organic
- Funding – increase share for sustainable ag
 - Agriculture and Food Research Initiative (AFRI)
 - Sustainability goals and criteria throughout USDA research
- Public cultivars and livestock breeds
 - Clearly defined program area



Lessons Learned from Conversation

- Messaging for law makers
 - Job creation, economic development
 - Research, education, extension that private industry is not providing
 - Cost efficiency
- Common Ground
 - Build coalitions, stakeholder networks
 - Redivide the funding pie
- Additional Allies
 - Environmental groups
 - Public health
 - Food security / food justice



Next Steps

- Develop written proposals
 - AFRI
 - Extension
 - Seeds and Breeds (done)
- Reach out to new partners, build broader coalition
- Learn how to apply/implement sustainability criteria more effectively



Local & Regional Food Systems



Key Policy Targets Discussed

- ❑ Create linkages with existing economic development programs (e.g. RBOG)
- ❑ Develop urban-rural linkages
- ❑ Develop physical and financial infrastructure
- ❑ Data needs
- ❑ Increase flexibility within programs (per geographic and production specifics)
- ❑ Food justice (producer/consumer side)



Lessons Learned from Conversation

- Common ground
 - Need definition of “Regional” and “Local”
- New ideas
 - Link VAPG and B&I
 - Loan program for farmers/processors producing for the local market
- Additional allies needed
 - Economic development associations, local governments, regional associations



Next Steps

- ❑ Assess negative impact of current programs
- ❑ Further identify opportunities in existing programs
- ❑ Document effectiveness of current programs
- ❑ Expand coalition to include economic development groups, business community, food chain workers, farm workers
- ❑ Identify additional data needs and gaps

Credit-Commodity- Crop Insurance-Disaster Payments

A merry romp through three titles and a couple of hundred billion dollars in two hours.



Key Policy Targets Discussed

- **Credit**
 - Addressing rules/legislation that is prohibiting more forceful support for refinancing, addressing the financial difficulties of the Great Recession
 - Addressing barriers that prevent entrepreneurial, beginning, disadvantaged, and specialty market farmers from better access to credit
- **Crop Insurance**
 - Increasing cross compliance for conservation, floodplains, GMOs, etc.(which can limit participation and thus decrease costs)
 - Moving toward more revenue-based, not crop type or kind
 - Increasing access for entrepreneurial, diversified, beginning, disadvantaged, and organic farmers
- **Commodities**
 - Limiting direct payments by linking payment limits to higher prices (saves money!)
 - Closing loopholes like “actively engaged in farming” definitions
 - Tightening links to conservation compliance (again, saving money)
 - Protecting those receiving minimum payments from cuts
 - Dairy program reforms



Lessons Learned from Conversation

□ Common ground

- Frame: “Reinvesting in agriculture” – investment in farm entrepreneurship, like small business, drives job growth and economic development.
- Cuts to programs should be targeted at the top rather than at the bottom.

□ New ideas

- Prepare now for budget reconciliation (a few months away).

□ Areas of difference

- Targeted vs total cuts on direct payments. Whole farm vs individual crop crop insurance approach.

□ Threats

- Difficult budget trade-offs. Commodity program protection and opposition to targeting.



Next Steps

- **Organize** specific policy wants in terms of: save money; cost money (protection); revenue neutral.
- **Organize** specifics: \$ saved, jobs created, environmental benefits (preferably quantified) and farm examples.
- **Monitor** credit demand and supply.
- **Prepare** for budget reconciliation.
- **Coordinate** across issue areas – similar programs rising in different areas, different approaches.



Conservation, Energy, & Climate



Key Policy Targets Discussed

- **Conservation Stewardship Program**
 - Challenges: Funding at risk, build more political support
 - Strategies: Outreach to farmers, increased enrollment, transparency
- **Climate**
 - Challenges: Political landscape is bleak, although possible support from Stabenow
 - Strategy: Create an EQIP carve-out program for climate?
 - Strategy: More focus on adaptation and on multi-benefit approaches
- **Sodsaver**
 - Challenges: Resistance to making program mandatory
 - Strategy: Engaging tribes and minority farmers
- **Conservation Compliance**
 - Challenges: Losing ground – need to pressure USDA and strengthen program within FB
 - Strategy: Couple crop insurance and compliance



Key Policy Targets Discussed

- **Rural Energy for America Program (REAP)**
 - Challenge: who gets the \$?
 - Strategy: creating matching waivers, improving access for socially disadvantaged farmers
- **Biomass Crop Assistance Program (BCAP)**
 - Challenges: no baseline, poor implementation
 - Strategies: first find money, then ensure adequate implementation and with required conservation plans
- **Conservation Reserve Program**
 - Challenge: represents \$2 billion of baseline: it's a big target
- **EQIP Organic Initiative**
 - Challenge: ensuring full use of funding



Lessons Learned from Conversation

- Common ground
 - Need to defend the conservation programs we all care about
 - Crop insurance is hot – link it to compliance and conservation practices
- New ideas
 - Linking climate and Farm Bill
- Areas of difference
 - How do we define climate adaptation?
 - Do we push for climate-specific Farm Bill actions?

Sustainable Livestock



Key Policy Targets Discussed

□ **Increasing Access to Slaughter/Processing Facilities**

- A significant obstacle
- Suggested Approach: Add language to a number of farm bill programs
- Next Steps: Proposed two day meeting with processors & producers

□ **Encouraging Rotational Grazing**

- Use farm bill to encourage producers to transition to grazing
- Suggested Approach: Regional program for groups of transitioners
- Next Steps: Interested organizations to continue discussing



Key Policy Topics Discussed

- **Providing Nutrition/Commodity/Purchasing Preference For Local And Regionally Produced Foods**
 - Next steps: Research & identify lead organizations

- **Restoring EQIP's Integrity**
 - Public funds to large CAFOs in name of conservation
 - Lack of transparency – Who is getting the funding?
 - Next steps: Develop legislative proposal, find champion



Key Policy Topics Discussed

□ **Addressing Check Off Program Inequity**

- Already an exemption for organic producers
- Suggested Approach: Either exempt or allow \$ to go to organizations that better represent sustainable producers
- Next steps: Identify leader & write proposed FB language

□ **Agricultural Census**

- Suggested Approach: Collect data on production systems beyond organic
- Example: Grassfed livestock production operations
- Next steps: Identify leader & write proposed FB language



Key Policy Topics Discussed

- Involving Food Purchasers in Farm Bill
 - Next steps: Non-profit(s) meet with institutional food purchasers such as Chipotle, Whole Foods, etc. about farm bill opportunities

- Facilitating Farm Bill Programs
 - Next steps: Advocate for more targeted USDA applications that are easier to complete and for technical assistance for small producers in filling out USDA applications.

RURAL DEVELOPMENT



Key Policy Targets Discussed

- Promote Food & Ag Enterprises as Rural Development
- Raise Profile & Stature of Rural Development
- Secure \$1 Billion in Mandatory Funding



Lessons Learned from Conversation

- We can (and must) build/organize a diverse constituency to support rural development
- We should address the training & capacity of state & local USDA staff



Next Steps

- Develop Specific Policy Tweaks to Promote Food & Ag Enterprises
- Develop Compelling Message for Rural
- Develop 12 Month Admin Campaign on \$1 Billion

AGRICULTURE OF THE MIDDLE

*Too big to sell direct, too small to compete
with commodities, just right to grow the
healthy food movement*



AOTM is a Frame Around Policies that Support:

- **Differentiated Markets** that return value to the farm.
- **Wholesale** rather than Direct Markets.
- **Value** rather than supply chains.
- **Aggregation** over individual farms.



Draft Platform and Some New Ideas

- ❑ Organic Research and Extension Initiative (OREI)
- ❑ Specialty Crop Research Initiative (SCRI)
- ❑ Value Added Producer Grant Program (VAPG)
- ❑ Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE)
- ❑ Business and Industry set aside (B&I)
- ❑ Seeds and Breeds
- ❑ Crop Insurance
- ❑ Organic Data Initiative / Specialty Market Data Collection
- ❑ Specialty Crop Block Grants
- ❑ Community Reinvestment Act
- ❑ Tax Credits



Proposals with the Most Energy

- ❑ VAPG tweaks (tighten value chain language, equipment purchase).
- ❑ B&I – links to SARE and VAPG, priority for value chains.
- ❑ Financial Infrastructure – redirecting conventional agriculture financing sources, addressing lending risk.
- ❑ Technical Assistance for scaling up or diversifying.
- ❑ AOTM is an important frame for linkage to public health, institutional buying.



SOCIALLY DISADVANTAGED FARMERS & RANCHERS



Key Policy Targets Discussed

- Outreach and Technical Assistance (access to USDA programs)
 - Appropriateness of information and its providers (translation, who shares, where shared)
 - Building relationships, not just sharing information
 - Full funding for Tribal Extension (serves only 25 of 500 tribes now)
- Waiving Match Requirements and Advance Payments for SDA Producers and Groups that Serve Them
 - EQIP – 90% cost share in one county 4x increase in participation!
This works!
 - (e.g., Value Added Program, Community Food Project grants, Energy, etc.)



Key Policy Topics Discussed

- Diet and Health
 - Specialty Crop Block Grants program – redefining so SDA producer/groups are eligible
 - More research on links between diet (including native diets) and health
- Marketing Assistance
- Access to Credit and Crop Insurance and Disaster Monies
 - Micro credit
 - Access to both for SDF&R
 - Farm workers access to disaster funds
- Information and Data on How Programs are Used
 - Section 14006 and getting aggregated data from counties on programs & race, ethnicity



Lessons Learned from Conversation

- Common ground
 - On most issue areas
 - Principle of supporting efforts that support growing economic independence of SDF&R producers
- New ideas
 - Map of CBOs across country
 - 14006 important for data to validate our policies, gaps, issues
 - A diversity of outreach means (Office of Outreach, by program, extension, ATTRA, CBOs, other)
 - EZ process for SDF&R – simplified forms, etc.
- Areas of difference (if any) and challenges
 - Set asides for various programs – helpful carve outs or leaving money on the table?
 - How to diversify NSAC, continue to work with other coalitions and organizations working on these issues, and bring more and more voices to the table
- Additional allies needed
 - Growing Power
 - Churches
 - Those working on diabetes



Next Steps

- Creating a mechanism for on-going dialogue with other and new groups/coalitions on SDF&R issues
- Ensuring 14006 implemented to get data to define the problem
- Building SAWG capacity to develop grassroots engagement
- Proposals for “easy access” for SDF&R groups to engage with NSAC in particular

Specialty Crops & Organic



Protect the Base

- Protect & Grow Funding

- Program Improvement Focus
 - EQIP Organic Initiative
 - Specialty Crop Block Grants



Push the Envelope

- Organic
 - Liability for GMO and pesticide residue contamination
 - Competitive markets and contract fairness
 - Fair-share of funding resources at USDA
 - Promotion programs (export and public)
- Specialty Crops
 - FNS to provide equal support for farmers and farmers markets on EBT technology and outreach
 - Planting flexibility
 - SCBG: create new program priorities



Unite, Organize

- Common and Uncommon Partnerships
 - From Oklahoma to soccer moms
- Themes
 - Too early to focus on messaging, focus on public education with platform
 - Health (human and environment) message
 - Organic = growth = economic opportunity = jobs
- Documenting and communicating success
- Group staying in touch



PUBLIC HEALTH
&
NUTRITION



Key Policy Targets Discussed

- Local/Regional Food Systems and Health (Supply)
 - Clarity on local vs. production methods and food type
 - Value-based approach to food (Health, Env Health, Economies)
 - Infrastructure across the value chains
 - Economic development/Food access/Jobs
- Food Deserts (Access)
 - Number of programs to support and build on from last bill + other leg (HFFI, Universal EBT at Farmers Mkts)
 - HUFED/Community Food Projects/Farmers Market Nutrition and Promotion Programs
 - More equal access to grants
 - Local ownership/economic dev/jobs
 - Both Rural and Urban



Key Policy Topics Discussed

- Farm-to-Institution (Demand)
 - Challenges to implementing geographic preference
 - Beyond Farm-to-School, other institutions (including seniors)
 - Local processing infrastructure needed to support
 - USDA working on this, change/remove Dept of Defense FRESH?

- Other
 - Environmental health
 - Potential for organic and sustainable ag contributions/pesticides
 - Native and culturally appropriate foods
 - Farmworker health



Lessons Learned from Conversation

- Common ground
 - Prioritize whole systems thinking
 - Need more research and research support \$
 - Economic, health-benefit
 - Research/Messaging around externalized costs of the food system
 - Choose and sustain certain past farm bill wins
- Long-term ideas
 - Quality vs. costs: can they be brought together?
 - Competition in retail outlets
 - Fed \$ support toward health prevention and food systems that support it
- Areas of difference
 - Level of understanding of where the health literature is
 - Priority areas of emphasis
- Additional allies needed
 - Other orgs undertaking health/ag campaigns
 - Funders
 - National Prevention Program (Affordable Health Care Act)
 - Business Community, local chambers of commerce
 - Health companies



Next Steps

Understanding/detailing the wide health community

- Identify/share where the data is clear/gaps for further research
- Continue to build broad alliances
- Build strong, robust messaging campaign
 - @PH—making links; @public; @ decision-makers
- Clear opportunities:
 - Antibiotics and growth hormones
 - Linking health to job message in Food Systems conversations



BEGINNING FARMERS
&
RANCHERS



Key Policy Targets Discussed

- Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program

- Beginning Farmer Credit and Savings



Lessons Learned from Conversation

- New ideas
 - Land Access
 - Aggregation / Networks
 - Health Care for Beginning Farmers
 - Beginning Farmer GI Bill
- Potential Reforms
 - Beginning Farmer and Rancher Definition (throughout USDA)
 - FSA Training/Outreach
 - BFRDP (Mentor Farms, Matching Requirements)
- Additional allies needed
 - Economic Development Councils, SBAs, Municipalities, Other Traditional Farm Orgs, Land Trusts



Next Steps

- ❑ Make the Case for Beginning Farmers and Ranchers
- ❑ Measure Success of Existing Programs (for Advocacy and Messaging)
- ❑ Develop Package of BFR Policies
- ❑ Devise a Congressional Strategy to Win



COMPETITION & MARKET CONCENTRATION



Key Policy Targets Discussed

- GIPSA Livestock Title Proposed Rules
- Second Round of Desired GIPSA Proposed Rules
 - Packer Ban
 - Captive Supply Reform
 - 25% Spot Market
- New Competition Title in Farm Bill
 - Consolidation
 - Contract Fairness
 - Increased Co-op power



Lessons Learned from Conversation

- Need to discuss framing of issues and messaging
- Possible allies include labor, financial markets, mining safety, petroleum, etc...
- Vertical Integration - Rules don't go far enough
- Buyer power- need for Blue Ribbon Commission



Next Steps

- Valentine's Day: *Love Your Farmer* collective call to the White House
- Meet locally with Congress people (esp. Appropriations Comm.): February 21 – 25
- Hearings on GIPSA Rules: Contact members of Ag committee to defend USDA staff
- Create messaging campaign