

Southcoast Food Policy Council Quarterly Meeting NOTES
April 18, 2023 at 12 noon

Agenda:

- Introductions for CAB and Subcommittee members and new staff
- Land Acknowledgement
- Changes to the structure of the SFPC
- Food Equity Advisors
- Goals and activities of four SFPC Subcommittees
- Issue Briefing-Farm Bill
- What YOU can do
- Questions

Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that this land is the traditional unceded territory of the Wapanaak (Wampanoag) and Massa-adchu-es-et (Massachusetts). Pre-English invasion, this place, its gifts of fertile soil, waters, wildlife and beauty, had already sustained Indigenous tribes for 12,000 years. We honor and respect the precious food sources discovered, harvested and cultivated by Native peoples and remain grateful to them for their connectedness to this land and their food traditions. We further acknowledge the lands the Cape Verdeans, African Americans and Latinx farmed in this area that have been lost to them through structural racism. We make these acknowledgements with intention, and accept the responsibility of all we continue to learn. We will honor the resources which sustain us today through their protection. May food be just one of the many connections we use in our work to repair relationships with Indigenous and People of color and of all Nations living here today.

Changes to the Structure of the SFPC

- We hired a new staff member. Rita Higgins has been hired as the Director of Food Access and Innovation to help steer our Capacity Building and Food Access working groups.
- We Invited all working group members to join the CAB so they could understand the bigger picture.

Food Equity Advisors (FEA)

- We have three Food Equity Advisors from New Bedford, Fairhaven and Fall River.
- We completed the 3rd Focus Group with Mujeres Victoriosas in New Bedford. One leader from Mujeres Victoriosas is now working with us as an FEA.
- The other two joined the Food Access and Education and Communication Working Groups.
- One of the members wrote an advocacy letter in March to support HIP funding, and FEA another wrote an advocacy letter to support reinstating SNAP and Cash Assistance to lawfully present immigrants.

Goals and Activities of the Four Working Groups

Education and Communication Subcommittee

The SFPC Education and Communication Working Group will focus on long-term goals to expand food system education through educational campaigns and food forums over the next few years. Short-term goals include:

- Develop an educational campaign on the merits of building and supporting a local food ecosystem that will include education on the true cost of food, the importance of buying local, healthy eating, supporting farmers and the local economy, and climate justice.
- Create a summer Eat Local Challenge Month as part of an education campaign.
- Expand education around September's Hunger Awareness Month with more opportunities to volunteer, donate, and take action.
- Organize the annual October Food Summit to further educate the public on the priorities and issues impacting our food system.
 - ✓ We were awarded an MDAR Food Policy Council grant program to initiate the "Know Your Local Food System" education campaign. We are in the editing process of the education.
 - ✓ We are working with UMass Dartmouth nursing students to assemble Food System Education videos to augment what we will place on the website. The website is translatable from going to the Marion Institute home page.
- The SFPC has created a "Know Your Local Food System" survey for the Food System Education Campaign. We will be conducting a pre and post-community stakeholders survey to better understand the shared baseline knowledge of our local food system. This survey <https://forms.gle/UZbjyxMDYcLdJc3t8> includes simple checkboxes and multiple-choice questions. It is a total of 12 questions and should take no more than 5 minutes to complete. We believe that understanding the multi-faceted food system will lead to a healthier population that is more engaged in food sovereignty. This survey <https://forms.gle/UZbjyxMDYcLdJc3t8> will inform our "Know Your Food System" Campaign. Thank you!

Food Access Subcommittee

The overarching goal is for environmental justice and low-income communities to access local, healthy, nutritious food that is culturally relevant. The Food Access Working Group's long-term goals over the next few years are to create a farm-to-food relief program and to implement a regional gleaning program to increase the amount of local food in the emergency food relief system and reduce waste.

Short-term goals include:

- Identify best practices and develop a gleaning program in Southeastern MA, including Plymouth, Bristol, and Norfolk Counties.
- Recruit and train volunteers for the gleaning program.
- Develop a streamlined method of communication among farmers, volunteers, and food pantries to support these initiatives.

STATUS

- We hired Rita Higgins to lead this effort.
- We are applying for a big grant to help establish a gleaning program.

Capacity Building Subcommittee

The Southcoast Food Policy Council Capacity Building Working Group is focused on building the physical infrastructure and networking capacity to create a vibrant, regional Food System in Southeastern MA.

Short-term goals include:

- Identify and convene stakeholders to identify and cultivate food-related assets and value-chain intermediaries.

- Identify and support pilot projects that establish the infrastructure for a food-focused ecosystem.
- Convene and work with commercial enterprises to help divert organic waste to food relief programs and/or composting.

STATUS

- We continue to work with key stakeholders on the development of a Food Innovation District in the region.

Policy Subcommittee

The Southcoast will have a group of citizens and lawmakers who understand the food system barriers and act on those potential solutions by fostering good policies. The SFPC Policy Working Group, long terms plans, include having a group of lawmakers and community members engaged in supporting food system policies resulting in a thriving and equitable food system.

January and February:

1.) The SFPC emailed one set of letters to Sens. Marc Pacheco, Mark Montigny, Michael Rodrigues and Reps. Antonio Cabral, Carole Fiola, Susan Gifford, Patricia Haddad, Christopher Hendricks, Christopher Markey, Paul Schmid, Alan Silvia, and Bill Straus asking for co-sponsorship:

- HD. 2737/SD. 63 (An Act relative to an Agricultural Healthy Incentives Program) **5 signed on**
- HD. 498/ SD. 611 (An Act Promoting Equity in Agriculture) **1 signed on**
- HD. 350/SD. 605(An Act Establishing Farm to School Grants To Promote Healthy Eating and Strengthen the Agricultural Economy) **5 signed on**
- HD. 2580/SD. 1348(An Act to Promote Food Literacy) **2 signed on**
- HD. 766/SD. 1013 (An Act Relative to Universal School Meals) **5 signed on**
- HD.1171/SD. 311(An Act protecting Our Soil and Farms from PFAS Contamination) **3 signed on**
- HD. 400(An Act Supporting the Commonwealth's Food System) **none signed on**
- HD. 223/SD. 263 (An Act Encouraging the Donation of Food to Persons in Need) **3 signed on**

2.)SFPC also sent an action alert to our email distribution list asking people to contact their legislators on the above items.

3.) Wrote one Letter to House Ways and Means asking for specific support of Governor Maura Healey's FY23 Supplemental Budget

- 130 Million for 3 months of extra state-funded SNAP,
- \$2 Million to replace SNAP benefits stolen through skimming,
- \$65 million to ensure universal school meals for the remainder of the school year

Outcome: Passed the House and Senate Ways and Means, and Governor signed into law.

4.) **Wrote a letter asking to the House Ways and Means** to ensure food system funding:

- Healthy Incentives Program \$24 Million (level funding from FY23)
- Food Literacy \$1,250,000 (new program)
- Food Security Infrastructure Grant Program \$25 Million (as proposed in H.1)
- Department of Agricultural Resources \$11,068,149 (as proposed in H.1)
- Department of Environmental Protection \$51,969,763 (as proposed in H.1)

Still Relevant through April 24!

Upcoming Policy: We will advocate in May for the Senate Ways and Means in the Food system, with an Action Alert, and another Action Alert on the Farm Bill.

Farm Bill Issue Briefing:

- The Farm Bill is comprehensive legislation that authorizes policies regarding food and agricultural programs. Reauthorized every 5 years and the 2018 "Agricultural Improvement Act," which was \$428 Billion, expires on September 30, 2023
- Important: Includes programs to support: small, beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers; programs to increase production and distribution of healthy local food; provides incentives for sustainable farming practices; funds nutritional programs, such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which is 80% of the FY18' budget.
- There are 12 Titles or sections. We are advocating in most Titles.
- House Agricultural Subcommittee on Nutrition (Rep. Jim McGovern MA-02), and the Senate Agricultural Subcommittee on Nutrition, Specialty Crops, and Agricultural Research

Working with the Northeast Organic Farmers Association, SEMAP (Southeastern Massachusetts Agricultural Partnership), FRAC (Food Research and Action Center), and MLRI (Mass Law Reform Institute), the *SFPC has a comprehensive message:*

We want a Farm Bill that:

- Promotes food sovereignty and provides nutritional security for all.
- Invests in and protects organic agroecological practices as a core solution to Climate Change.
- Ensures just livelihoods for farmers and workers throughout the food system.
- Increases fairness and resilience of local and regional food supply chains.
- Supports small to medium-sized farms to mitigate the supply chain vulnerabilities caused by agricultural consolidation.
- Centers racial justice across all programs and repairs past and ongoing racial harm.

Advocating for 12 Bills, 5 of the bills are in Nutrition.

Title 1: Commodities: Milk from Family Dairies Act

Title 2: Conservation Agriculture Resilience Act

Title 4: Nutrition: Closing the Meal Gap Act, The Improving Access to Nutrition Act, The Enhanced Access to SNAP Act, The SNAP Plus Act, The Lift the Bar Act.

Title 5: Credit: Justice for Black Farmers Act

Title 6: Rural Development: Strengthening Local Processing Act

Title 12: Miscellaneous: Farm Systems Reform Act

- USDA Program: Local Agriculture Market Program (LAMP)
- Agricultural Policy that lies outside the Farm Bill: Food and Agribusiness Merger Moratorium and Antitrust Review Act

Resources:

- 1.) Northeast Organic Farmers Association: <https://www.nofamass.org/policy/> Find the Farm Bill
- 2.) Food Research and Action Center: <https://frac.org/research/resource-library/2023-farm-bill-priorities>
- 3.) Join the SNAP Coalition: <https://mlri.org/advocacy-issue/hunger-food-insecurity> for Nutrition Advocacy on the Farm Bill

Want to know more about the Farm Bill? Contact sfpc@marioninstitute.org and if there are more than 5 people, we'll set up a zoom training.

5.) WHAT YOU CAN DO:

Be Engaged!

- Take action when we send legislative alerts to take action
- Participate in our events – Eat Local Month Challenge, Food Summit, Candidate Forum
- Donate and support our work
- Contact sfpc@marioninstitute.org