Creating a Local Food Procurement Community of Practice: The Alberta Flavour Learning Lab

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Alberta’s agri-food system
Alberta’s ‘turn to local’

• 2016, total market value for farmers’ markets, farm retail, and local food restaurants was $1.624 billion, quadruple that in 2004

• Scaling up the local food sector: building physical and social infrastructure

• Harnessing the power of institutional procurement: benefits and challenges

• Forming a procurement Community of Practice – AB Flavour Learning Lab
2014 - 2015

- Northlands Ag Society convened the group (summer of 2014)
- Securing funding: McConnell Foundation; ALMA; FLEdGE and Mitacs
- Purpose and definition of local
  "Creating a positive community impact by getting more local food on more local plates"

Criteria for local/Alberta food (2 out of 3):
- ingredients
- processing
- business ownership
2014 - 2015

- Inventorying local food products available through distributors or being sourced directly (1700 products; 20 direct trade relationships)

- Learning resources: guest speakers, reports, online sources, local food tours
More food (and drink) tours
2016 - 2017

Priorities 2017 →

- Story Telling

- Measurement & Evaluation

- Coordinating Demand

2017

Alberta Flavour
Telling our stories

- Marketing toolkit
- Website: albertaflavour.com
- Social media @albertaflavour
- Video

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X8Odc-GDIEk
Measurement and Evaluation
2015 and 2016 data

- 2015 baseline study of 6 different institutions purchasing
  - Total food spending: $11.52 million
  - 23.9% ($2.76 million) on local food
- Highest categories: 57.8% dairy; 44.6% protein; 24.9% frozen
- Lowest: 0.1% beverage; 7.9% fish & seafood; 9.5% fresh produce
- Wide range of individualized % local results (29.9% - 7%)
- Set targets to increase percentage of local food purchases

- 2016 data analysis revealed a slight drop in total % of local food, but again, a wide range of individualized results (30.5% - 12%)
Coordinating demand

- Barriers to scaling up local purchasing: issues of quantity, range of products, access/distribution

- In order to support production planning and supply chain development - coordinate institutional demand

- Proposed 2 – 3 yr pilot project will focus on coordinated purchasing of a few commodities to start with, secure funding to hire a purchasing coordinator and evaluate the results

- This work will draw on other examples of successful group institutional purchasing (St. Joseph’s Health System Group Purchasing Organization) and other initiatives (Nourish Health Care)
Challenges and Strategies

• Building relationships of trust
  – Art of Hosting; Confidentiality Agreement

• Terms of Reference and Participation Pledge

• Growing the Learning Lab

• Moving beyond economics to include other dimensions of sustainability
Successes

How do you feel about today? Outlook for 2017?

- CONCRETE ACTION PLAN
- Positive
- Let's Go!
- 2017 is going to be a major advancement
- COHESIVE Clicking fitting together
- CLARITY
- "How to use the group to address + dismantle known barriers"
- "Nice to have common goals!"
- Hard work of collaboration is DONE
AB Flavour Learning Lab Members

- Northlands Agriculture Society
- Alberta Dept of Ag & Forestry
- AB Innotech
- AB Health Services – U of AB Hospital
- Covenant Health
- NorQuest College
- University of Alberta
- Northern Alberta Institute of Technology

- MacEwan University
- City of Edmonton
- Shaw Conference Centre
- Organic Box
- Erdmann’s Farm
- Aramark
- Sysco
- Gordon Food Services
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