2014

Floyd County Community Food System Assessment

A project of Appalachian Roots, Inc. and Community Farm Alliance
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Introduction

The local sustainable agriculture movement in Floyd County started with the convening of community leaders, stakeholders, and citizens in March 2012. St. Vincent Mission planned and coordinated a 2-day visioning forum attended by more than 50 residents of Floyd County and southern Magoffin County. Participants represented growers, producers, consumers, community and organization leaders, students, teachers, and faith leaders. The forum focused on building community-wide capacity through sustainable agriculture.

Four working groups emerged from the visioning session each with identified objectives:
1. **Farmers Markets**: Establish a farmers market in either Floyd County, South Magoffin County, or both counties.
2. **Community Gardens**: Create a pilot community garden at Big Sandy Community and Technical College (BSCTC) to serve as a model for replication for additional community gardens over time.
3. **Youth Garden Project**: Create a youth garden project for adolescents and younger children on the grounds of South Floyd High School, imbedding the children’s garden project into the school’s 21st Century School program.
4. **Seed Bank**: Develop a seed bank for the region’s heirloom seeds and collect the family stories related to the seeds.

Out of the visioning session and subsequent meetings, Appalachian Roots, Inc. was born. Appalachian Roots, Inc. was formally organized as a Kentucky nonprofit organization in 2013 and has applied for 501(c)3 status with the IRS. The group was instrumental in securing grant funds for the marketing and promotion of the Floyd County Farmers Market in 2013. The growth in sales and participation by community members in the Farmers Market has been deemed a success resulting in continued interest in the market and in Appalachian Roots.

Through partnership with Community Farm Alliance (CFA) Appalachian Roots in 2012 began work needed to complete a community food system assessment in Floyd County in conjunction with multiple partners that have included Big Sandy Community & Technical College – Human Services Program, Big Sandy Area Development District, Floyd County Cooperative Extension Service, Floyd County Health Department, and St. Vincent Mission.
Appalachian Roots, Inc.

Appalachian Roots is a coalition of eastern Kentuckians promoting native and small scale agriculture as a basis for improved health, wellness, and economic development through education and outreach.

About Floyd County

Total population in 2010: 39,451*
Median Household Income (2012) - $28,014*
Poverty rate (2012) – 31%*
Unemployment Rate (2013) – 12.5%**

*Source: U.S. Census Bureau
**Source: Workforce Kentucky
***Source: Kentucky Council of Postsecondary Education
**Assessment Process**

As a result of planning meetings with community stakeholders, four committees were formed to guide the process of the community food assessment project: Producer, Consumer, Promotion, and Resources.

The Consumer Committee members, with the assistance of Big Sandy Community and Technical College (BSCTC) Human Services students, developed a consumer survey tool. The survey was conducted during the month of May 2013 at various points in Prestonsburg and throughout Floyd County. A total of 30 students were stationed at Food City, Wal-Mart, BSCTC campus, and at least three small family owned grocery stores, and surveyed exclusively Floyd County residents. County schools and churches were soon added as locations for survey collection. A total of 313 consumer surveys were completed during this process.

Institutions such as schools and educational facilities were also contacted concerning their food purchases. Institutions cited concerns including cost, quantity, quality, and payment methods (local producers do not take credit cards or are unable to wait for check payment). The largest institutional users are a part of a group-purchasing system through which vendors must bid.

Producer surveys were conducted with the assistance of the Floyd County Cooperative Extension Service during the spring of 2013 from attendees of agricultural training sessions. A total of 91 surveys were collected with questions having been developed by the Producer Committee.

UK Prevention Research Center provided technical assistance to process collected surveys into data sets.

Community Farm Alliance provided direct assistance with the local group in planning, preparing, advising, and guiding the process for the community food system assessment project.
Consumer Results Summary

Who Answered?

313 survey participants
Conducted in public areas in Floyd County, May 2013
Full survey and data located in Appendix I.

Underrepresented Populations:
- Food bank users and low income population
- Individuals lacking transportation for reliable access to fresh foods
- Populations with lower formal education levels
Floyd County residents most commonly get their food from a Floyd County grocery store, restaurants, and supercenters.

Results of a Floyd County Farmers’ Market exit survey indicate that people get their fresh produce mainly from the grocery, home gardens, and roadside stands.

Food nutrition, food safety, shelf life, and ease of preparation are important food values for consumers. The majority of consumers indicated that they try to make family recipes healthy.
The majority of residents surveyed indicated that they would like to see more locally grown foods and healthier food options. Similarly, many residents did not want to see more fast food or convenience foods.

Residents indicated interest in all the programs listed in the survey. A program focused on increased access to local foods garnered the most interest, followed closely by a program to help the local Farmers’ Market.

Community Comments:

“Outside of the local growing season the only consistently reliable source of fresh produce in the county is [area grocery chain], but it is all at premium prices… The Pikeville location has twice the variety, a far superior meat section, a more reliable fish section and a much larger produce section.”

“I hope to purchase foods from local farmers market this summer. I love fresh foods!”

“We need more fresh grown foods and better way to show others how eating right can change not only our lives but our future of our children also. Eating better saves lives.”

“We have a lot of restaurants only a few of them are truly healthy. I would like to see more healthy varieties along with a better variety of [ethnic options].”
Many residents indicated that they had “sometimes” or “often” experience some form of food insecurity in the last twelve months.

Participants reported concerns about the price of food, how far food travels, and food safety as the top concerns about food in the community.

About one third of survey participants reported receiving some form of food assistance in the past twelve months.

Community Comments:

“We are poor people around here. We do get food stamps but they just don’t go far enough. We always check for the sales and get the cheapest prices but still by the time the bills are paid we have no money left to spend on food and $152.00 in food stamps doesn’t buy very much and that is buying the cheapest stuff we can find.”

“If I had transportation I would do the food pantry.”

“The food prices in our area are way too high and the variety of choices are very limited and the freshness is not always good."
Producer Results Summary

Who Answered?

- 91 survey participants
- Conducted at agricultural training sessions
- Full survey and data located in Appendix II.

Producing food in Floyd County?

- Yes 81%
- No 19%
The majority of people participating in production in Floyd County is fruit and vegetable production. Very few reported raising livestock for any purpose. Chickens are the most common livestock animal, with flock sizes ranging from 5 birds to 50 birds.

The majority of both fruit and vegetable plot sizes are well under half an acre. The average size of an herb plot is less than 100 square feet.
Ten individuals responded to this question and indicated that the majority of their sales were from home or “other.” Only 30% of sales were reported to be from farmers’ markets.

The majority of producer respondents reported not having enough time as a main reason they do not sell their products commercially.

### Farmers’ Market Exit Survey:

**Top 5 market purchases:**
- Bread
- Squash (all types)
- Tomatoes
- Eggs
- Beans

**Distance traveled:**
- <1 mile – 3
- 1-5 miles – 10
- 6-10 miles – 4
- 11-15 miles – 6

**Prices:**
- Comparable – 17
- High but reasonable – 4
- Too expensive – 0
- Less than grocery store – 5

**Found the market via:**
- Facebook – 9
- Signs – 5
- Friends – 4

**At the market, I want...**
- Fruit, cheese, value-added products (jams, breads, soaps, etc)

**Where do you sell?**

- From home – 60%
- Other – 40%
- Farmers Market – 10%
- Roadside – 10%

Ten individuals responded to this question and indicated that the majority of their sales were from home or “other.” Only 30% of sales were reported to be from farmers’ markets.

### Community Comments:

“I would love to see a larger farmers market. They must advertise more - locations, availability, & produce. If I were better informed I would shop there more.”

“Farmers’ markets are not available in most communities. The only one I know of takes place in Prestonsburg but it does not operate 7 days per week or on extended hours making it difficult for working people to utilize. These should be open in at least 3-4 areas in the county as to be more accessible. Better advertisement would be help as well.”
Community Comments

► Farmers’ Markets: Publicize, increase markets, and decrease prices

Publicize

“Make it more advertised. Most people don’t even know about the farmers’ market.”

Increase markets

“I would like to see a big farmer’s market that sells local foods, nearby. I would be willing to pay more to help support local groups and know where my food is coming from.”

“Not a lot of different places to shop. I would like to see an increase in farmers markets.”

Decrease prices

“I know it’s hard work, but the farmers’ market is too expensive.”

“Fresh vegetables and fruits at grocery and farmers market are too expensive. I would purchase more if the prices were lower.”

► Financial issues: Help everyone get healthy foods

“The food assistance programs are nice but there are still people who make above the limit that need assistance. It’s a shame the assistance programs can’t assist everyone when needed.”

“Food availability isn’t the problem, it is having enough money or food stamps to purchase the food.”

“What I think is very important and even holding back is people with government assistance with foods cannot purchase foods at farmers markets and such. They need to make it possible for EVERYONE to get healthier foods.”

► Education: Classes for all ages

“Should have more FFA classes to teach kids farming and carpentry skills.”

“Having a group to help with couponing would be a great way to help out.”

“I think that the classes [offered for adults] would be very helpful for children to attend.”
► Grocery stores: Lower prices, more local, more options

Lower prices

“It would really be nice to be able to afford fresh vegetables and fruit. Prices are way too high in stores.”

“Many people in our area have very low incomes. This factor makes it extremely difficult to have a balanced diet that includes fresh fruits and vegetables. All other efforts will not be effective if these items are not more affordable. You can have all the classes and programs you want but if the healthy food items are still more expensive, then the low income citizens will never be able to improve their diets.”

More options

“Fresh seafood and fruits and vegetables are often poor in quality. I would like to have fresher fish, fruit and vegetable choices at my store.”

“I would really like to have access to all organic food market. There are way too many unhealthy food sources here.”

“We need more fresh grown foods and better way to show others how eating right can change not only our lives but our future of our children also. Eating better saves lives.”

More local

“Instead of selling exotic foods from other countries that cost 3x as much as regular foods to cover cost. Stay local. Cut down on costly displays and fancy decor.”

“The farmers market is good but doesn't seem big enough. I like that [the area grocery store] sells local produce but could increase the locally grown amount.”

► Self-sufficiency: Grow our own

“I think community gardens are a great idea.”

“I think it is great to grow your own food. I try to grow fresh vegetables when I have the time.”

“My family has a garden every year for our own use. However, I think that we need to make more gardening supplies available to the less fortunate.”
Appalachian Roots Recommendations

Increase availability of local food/healthy food options for Floyd County residents.

- Increase promotion of the Floyd County Farmer’s Market in order to make known the availability of fresh, local produce to residents.
- Develop new and support existing producer education programs to increase local food production.
- Support the development of community gardens to provide healthy food options and availability to residents with limited capacity for home gardening.

Develop education programs focused on increasing awareness of local food.

- Institute a consumer education campaign highlighting the opportunities and benefits (health, economic, and social) of eating seasonally, purchasing local food, and growing gardens.
- Encourage restaurant and institutional use of local produce. Distribute information on the benefits of purchasing local produce items while connecting local producers with institutional users.
- Collaborate with community partners to develop and host healthy eating programs.
- Engage Big Sandy Community and Technical College and Floyd County Cooperative Extension Service with the community through formal academic programs and/or community education programs.
- Encourage utilization of the community kitchen and availability of additional certification classes through the Floyd County Cooperative Extension Service.

Encourage sale of local food at restaurants and retailers.

- Implement a food competition (Master Chef/Iron Chef format) focusing on seasonal produce that engages regional restaurants and 4H programs. Provide opportunities to increase interest in local food, educate consumers, and increase agricultural-related economic development
- Connect agricultural producers with businesses and institutions.
Next Steps for Appalachian Roots

- Engage partners including the Big Sandy Community & Technical College and the Floyd County Cooperative Extension Service through educational programs and services that meet the goals and objectives of Appalachian Roots, Inc. Agricultural forums, master gardening, value-added production, cooking healthy foods and producer education including farm operations/management will provide opportunities for consumers and producers to realize benefits associated with local foods/agriculture.

- Inform the general public and promote healthy and local food options in Floyd County. Engage local civic groups, health providers, and area agencies through established venues and new activities by promoting the use of local foods will expand the outreach of Appalachian Roots, Inc. and achieve the organization’s goals of improving the health status of residents while increasing agricultural activity.

- Expand Appalachian Roots, Inc. initiatives including the Floyd County Farmer’s Market, Community Gardens, and Heirloom Seed Preservation projects.

- Pursue financial support for the ongoing initiatives of Appalachian Roots, Inc. in order to provide for the long-term sustainability of the organization and its goals and objectives.

- Develop new partnerships to expand the outreach of the organization and its initiatives.

- Plan for and begin developing the infrastructure for an area food hub as part of a long-term objective to increase healthy food accessibility and enhanced agricultural economic development.
Get Involved!

- Follow Appalachian Roots on Facebook.
- “Like” the Floyd County Farmers’ Market on Facebook for updates and announcements about the Market.
- Join the Friends of the Floyd County Farmers’ Market to support the Market.
- Visit Appalachian Roots online.
- Attend an Appalachian Roots, Inc. meeting.
- Ask your favorite restaurant to use local products.
- Volunteer with a community garden.
- Grow your own garden and tell others!
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