Building Extension and Agriculture Networks for Farm-to-School Program Success

Presented by Fred Berman
WSDA Small Farm Program Coordinator
Farm to School

- Getting locally grown foods into school lunches and snack programs
- Education about food, nutrition, and agriculture
- Experiential learning through school gardens and hands-on food skills projects
- Visits to farms and/or farmers markets
- Farmers and chefs in the classroom
Farm to School Goals

- Provide fresh, seasonal produce to students
- Reconnect young people to the sources of their food
- Encourage healthy, informed eating habits that last a lifetime
- Create markets and improve viability for small and mid-size farms (sustainable, organic, diversified, etc.)
- Support farms who practice responsible land and water stewardship
The Local Farms-Healthy Kids Act: state policy changes relating to schools

- Farm to School Program (WSDA)
- WA Grown Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Grants (OSPI)
- Eliminates low-cost bidding requirements in school food purchases
- Encourages School Gardens to grow food for educational purposes and offer the food for consumption in school snack and meal programs.
WSDA Farm-to-School Program

- Assist producers, distributors and brokers to market WA-grown food to schools
- Assist schools in connecting with local producers for purchasing and education
- Identify and share education resources on the nutritional, environmental, and economic benefits of locally grown foods
- Support efforts such as school gardens and farm visits

Photo by: Sam Tonn at Van Asselt Elementary
295 School Districts, 39 Counties
WSDA Teamwork

WA State Dept. of Agriculture Director’s Office

Economic Development & Domestic Marketing Program (1 FTE)

Small Farm & Direct Marketing Program (2 FTE)

Farm to School Program (1.5 FTE)

Other WSDA Partners:

Food Safety Program

Fruit and Vegetable Inspection Program
Local Food Systems are Built on Local Knowledge

■ Who is likely to be interested? (schools and farms)
■ Who can supply the food required? – quantities, packing and distribution, processing, etc
■ What resources and potential partners exist in the community? - project support, funding, education
■ Other site-specific questions
Existing Partnerships

- Washington State University
  - Small Farms Team
    - includes WSU Extension and other agency and non-governmental agriculture support organization representatives from around WA)
  - Small Farms Advisory Board
- Food and farming organizations around the state
Supporting Local Farm-to-School Connections

A workshop for extension agents and other ag professionals

December 11, 2008
D.F. Allmendinger Center
WSU Puyallup Research and Extension Center

Brought to you by WSU King County Extension and the Washington State Department of Agriculture Farm-to-School and Small Farm & Direct Marketing Programs.

This workshop was supported by the WSU Center for Sustaining Agriculture and Natural Resources (CSANR) and the USDA Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program (SARE).
Supporting Local Farm-to-School Connections  
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Session</th>
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<tr>
<td>8:30</td>
<td>Registration and Coffee</td>
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<tr>
<td>9:00</td>
<td>Farm-to-School, The Local Farms-Healthy Kids Act and the Immediate Opportunity – Tricia Sexton Kovacs, WSDA Farm-to-School</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:00</td>
<td>How to make connections for buying WA produce – Patrice Barrentine, WSDA Small Farm &amp; Direct Marketing</td>
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<td>10:45</td>
<td>15 minute break</td>
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<td>11:00</td>
<td>DISCUSSION: Known barriers and potential solutions</td>
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<td>12:00</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
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<td>1:00</td>
<td>Food Safety: Good Ag Practices – Karen Killinger Mann, WSU</td>
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<td>1:45</td>
<td>Food Safety: USDA GAP/GHP Audit Program for Fruits and Vegetables – Chuck Dragoo, WSDA</td>
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<td>2:15-2:45</td>
<td>Liability Insurance – Lesa Boxx, Country Financial</td>
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<td>3:00</td>
<td>Education Resources – Tricia Sexton Kovacs, WSDA Farm-to-School</td>
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<td>3:30</td>
<td>DISCUSSION: Next Steps - Farm contact lists, distribution solutions, processing assistance/projects</td>
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What did we learn?

- Great demand for the workshop around the state
- Diversity of Interests
- Farm-to-school will be built from different starting points in each community, depending on who’s interested.
The current landscape

Challenges:
- State budget cuts
- Extension partners facing smaller staff, reduced funding

Opportunities:
- The interest is out there
- Funding is coming from some new sources as interest grows – federal grants, health foundations, etc.
- Other key partners outside farm world – OSPI, public health, parents, teachers, etc.
Farm-to-School on a Shoestring

- Continue to build networks and knowledge around the state
- Work in existing professional groups and conferences
- Start in the areas with a critical mass of interested parties
- Be flexible and look for opportunity wherever it may be
WA Grown Fruit and Vegetable Program

- Increase children’s consumption of WA grown, packed and processed fresh, dried and frozen fruits and vegetables
- Expand variety of WA grown fruits and vegetables children experience throughout the school year
- Make a difference in children’s diets to positively impact present and future health
- Expand the market for locally grown produce
Local Purchasing: Serving lunches and snacks from Washington farms

Olympia School District
- Currently buys from more than 8 local farms.
- Cut spending on desserts and ready-made pizzas
- Greening the district – metal forks and reusable trays
- Money saved can be spent on locally grown foods.

30% of produce budget used to buy fruits and vegetables direct from local farms.
Questions? Follow-up?

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