


# Highlights from Beyond Farmers Markets: A Look at Food Hubs

## Descripción

At our spring meeting on May 10th at the Arlington Central Library, we had a lively discussion about changes in local food delivery systems. We explored food hubs and regional trends, and discussed how we get nutritious food to all.



We were fortunate to have **Ellie Bomstein, Program Associate, Wallace Center** as moderator for the panel discussion. The Wallace Center is part of Winrock International, a national nonprofit with headquarters in Little Rock with an office in Arlington. The Wallace Center “supports entrepreneurs and communities as they build a new, 21st century food system that is healthier for people, the environment, and the economy.” Specifically, the Wallace Center “leverages these strategies across all of our work, drawing on market-based approaches to bring more healthy, affordable, sustainably-produced food to all communities, by scaling up to wholesale, retail, and institutional outlets.” Learn more here: http://www.wallacecenter.org/how-we-work/.

An important part of the Wallace Center’s mission is supporting food hubs. What is a food hub? The USDA definition is “a centrally located facility with a business management structure facilitating the aggregation, storage, processing, distribution, and/or marketing of locally/regionally

produced food products." The USDA has compiled a registry of food hubs that currently numbers 220. According to Ellie, there are closer to 400 operating food hubs nationally with about 22 in the DC area.

Michigan State did a 2017 survey of food hubs with 119 hubs responding. There are fewer food hubs being added each year, but the ones that do exist are more profitable, viable and are showing more longevity than previously. 42% are nonprofit and 37% are for profit. To learn more from the 2017 survey and to find further food hub resources, check out Wallace Center's Food Hub Portal: http://ngfn.org/resources/food-hubs/food-hubs



DC region with an introduction of the panel:

**Katie Farnoly, Eastern Vegetable Buyer and Local Farm Coordinator, Coastal Sunbelt Produce**, a large for-profit distributor of both imported and local fruit and vegetable products, including home-grown hubs to help local farmers.

**Dalila Boclin, Food Access Director, Community Foodworks**. Community Foodworks is a nonprofit using the "convening power of farmers markets" to "help farmers get the most bang for their buck." Community Food Works is using 3.5 of their 14 farmers markets as pop-up food hubs where bulk, wholesale orders can be picked up, generally by small concerns that cannot use a larger distributor, such as faith-based groups and daycare centers. Community Foodworks serves as the middleman.

**Chris Guerre, Owner, Maple Avenue Market**. Chris and his wife Sarah own a farm, located in the Shenandoah, and brick and mortar market in Vienna. They grow and sell year round and have had a 10-year, small-scale partnership selling produce to Arlington County Schools.

Topics covered:

**Pricing—**

Dalila: We are grant-funded and nonprofit, so we do not raise prices.

Katy: Depends on the crop. If everyone has curly kale, it goes for market price with little markup. If a farm has a known brand, such as Little Wild Things City Farm, they can ask higher prices. Also depends on the customer—larger institutions and volumes require a smaller markup.

Chris: Pricing is tricky, especially because we buy from other farmers. We have had a CSA for 10 years that includes all products in our store and operates as a discount: $550 gets you $650 worth of products from June through October. Many farmers don't believe that CSAs should be discounted.

**Is there something about this region that allows an alternative approach to food hubs to work**?

Dalila: A dense urban area is a plus when you can make 30 stops within 50 miles. CFW places a value on serving disadvantaged customers first. CFW currently serves 45 daycare centers at about $15 a drop.

Katy: Coastal Sunbelt serves many restaurants and other institutions that are hard to convince to pay more for local. But that is a Coastal goal, to get mainstream food institutions to go local.

Chris: In this area, there is no shortage of markets for local items.

**Affluent people use farmers markets—do others?**

Katy: Coastal Sunbelt gives produce to food banks and does a lot to encourage people trying to get into farming. It also works with underserved school populations. It tried to work with Baltimore City, but the schools had no way to process the produce.

Chris: Food access has been an issue for them since 2008. They work with Carlin Springs Elementary School, which has the highest number of free and reduced lunch students; went there exclusively for one year. He also wants the food in their store to be affordable to families.

**How can we increase the biodiversity of products grown? How can we increase the interaction between customer and farmer?**

Katy: We are trying to bring farmers and restaurants together. If they meet, they develop a relationship and restaurants are willing to try new things. We have to start small. Biodiversity is one of the beauties of local food.

**What about waste? Is there a lot?**

Chris: We grow on about 2 acres. There is definitely waste. Not just what doesn't sell but what is not saleable. AFAC is great at getting leftovers from the markets.

Katy: Waste is a challenge. Bumper crops are especially hard. We need ample notice to take on more. Processing is one avenue, but the labor adds to the cost.

Delila: A lot of waste occurs on the farm itself. "Local frozen" could add capacity to food hubs.



**How can consumers support their work:**

- Buy local.
- Join a CSA.
- When you think local is too expensive, think about what went into it, the farmer’s costs.
- Ask in the mainstream for local. Push them to want to add that value.
- Be collaborative, not “all or nothing” local.
- Grow a garden.
- Work with kids.
- Start a nonprofit.

**Categoria**

1. Farmers Markets

**Etiquetas**

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2. food hubs

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