



FFM Production Team Meeting Monday, August 17, 2009

Present: Lori Wellmon, Loyd Lewis, Ronnie Roper, Daniel Shires, Greg Traywick, Sandy Brenneman, Lara Worden, Linda Lemons (recording).

Dr. Brenneman convened the meeting. Greg Traywick distributed copies of the draft guidelines and application form for the proposed Community Table consignment project. After team comment and review, the work was endorsed as presented.

Dr. Brenneman distributed and discussed the 2009-10 Planning & Development Strategy, stressing the market's mission and the planning and development method. He noted that in addition to planning for the remainder of the 2009 season, the team will need to address production-related issues for 2010, where we envision FFM in 3-5 years, as well as goals related to long-term producer/vendor capacity.

Loyd Lewis noted that FFM needs to attract/support/maintain late-season vendors (fall commodities).

Lori Wellmon suggested that we seek consignments of pumpkins, gourds, decorative corn, corn stalks, hay and other items in an effort to diversify the late-season product line. She also noted that a workshop on fall gardening might aid/encourage producers considering late plantings.

Lara Worden reported on two workshops she is offering as a part of her "Ten Acre Tuesdays" series. She provided details on these workshops (already publicized to vendors in the August '09 *Vendor Newsletter*):

Aug 25	Planting the Thanksgiving Feast - Preparing & Preserving the Fall Garden
Sep 8	Diversifying into Alternative Marketing Strategies – Community Supported Agriculture, Subscription Sales & Meat Buying Clubs

Greg Traywick noted that NC Cooperative Extension could provide group transportation to these sessions.

Lara also reported on the possibility of developing a tour of a grant-funded high tunnel system being used in support of Hmong vegetable growers.

Lara also talked about the remarkable growth and development of the Davidson Farmers' Market and the potential benefit of visiting/studying them.

The following high-priority next steps and assignments were identified:

1. Survey producer/vendors, verifying current production plans (per Daniel's info), asking about interest/plans in lengthening the season and adding variety of products, and identifying specific information they would like to have delivered through workshops.
2. Survey customers (Jackie Sibley at the Chamber is working with Survey Monkey, an internet-based tool) regarding their product interests. Daniel and Lara should be able to provide a list of possible items that people could check. Different varieties of the same product would be a key part of this – for example, different varieties of mushrooms, not just shitakes, different beans like limas, butter, and pole beans, yellow beans, etc.

3. Research the Davidson market (Mary Jane Leach) and visit, to learn about their method for increasing variety of products, and to see first hand what a market that provides an overall experience looks and feels like, and talk to the vendors to learn about their experience. You might coordinate this with Wade, Chad, Lowery, and Phyllis Feaster.
4. Communicate with current vendors and other farmers in area to emphasize the later season crops, consignment table, etc. (Greg and Daniel through regular channels.)
5. Plan/publicize workshops:
 - August 25 – Fall Gardens, in Gastonia (Extension van leaving from county office building, at 1:15 PM)
 - September 8 – CSA, subscription sales, meat clubs, other mechanisms to expand ways to connect with consumers (and bring more people to the FFM)
 - Planting schedule planning – Entire Team, with support from Daniel, Lara, NC A&T resources, etc., to provide producers with up-to-date info on varieties of products, planning multiple crops, season-extending methods, etc. – one or more workshops, to be scheduled later.
 - High-tunnel technique – to be scheduled later
6. Plan and conduct pre-market meeting – to be scheduled.

Greg → Actively promote Ten Acre Tuesday series and encourage vendors to participate (phone calls to active vendors).

Daniel & Lori → Inventory current crops and products, determine producers' interest and willingness to grow new varieties and extend the season, and identify specific information and resources (growing, small business operation, value-added opportunities, etc.) desired by producers.

Greg & Daniel → Implement strategies to ensure strong vendor participation and product variety for the remainder of the 2009 season.

Lara, Ronnie & Lori → Visit Davidson Farmers' Market and manager Mary Jane Leach to conduct research.

Daniel, Lori & Jackie → Survey FFM customers to determine what additional products they would like to see offered at FFM. Survey growers to see which of these products they would be interested in growing.

Lori Wellmon was appointed team leader and spokesperson.

The next Production Team meeting was set for Monday, September 21 at 3:30 PM.