

# Ohio Farm to School Newsletter

May/June 2018



*Pre-conference panel discussion pictured from left to right; Joe Brown, Tony Staubach, Alice Chalmers and Carol Smathers, Ohio Farm to School director.*



*Ohio Farm to School enthusiasts discussed needs related to schools purchasing local foods in Ohio and enjoyed a fantastic local meal.*

## The Ohio Farm to School Pre-Conference and Policy Forum was a Success!

The meeting engaged participants in meaningful discussion about current and emerging issues, opportunities, challenges and barriers, and policy development related to purchasing, serving and teaching local foods in schools and institutions.

The forum led in partnership with Ohio State's Initiative for Food and AgriCultural Transformation (InFACT) program was held at the Duke Energy Convention Center in Cincinnati last month preceding the National Farm to Cafeteria Conference.

School food service employees, producers, distributors, and educators, as well as Extension professionals.

The highlight of the evening was a panel discussion with representatives the "three C's of Farm to School.

Representing the Classroom: Tony Staubach, program manager of OSU Extension in Hamilton County. Representing the Cafeteria: Joe Brown, food service director at Columbus City Schools. Representing the Community: Alice Walters founder and manager of Ohio Valley Food Connection.

Also giving remarks were OSU Extension director Dr. Roger Rennekamp, Ohio Department of Agriculture state veterinarian, Dr. Tony Forshey and National Farm to School Network policy director Maximillian Merrill.

Senator Sherrod Brown and Representative Marcia Fudge provided videos about their commitment to farm to school activities.

The pre-conference dinner featured local foods. Attendees also enjoyed an Ohio producer showcase to sample locally foods that can be served in schools. (More forum info on page 2 & 3).

# Pre-Conference Forum Panel Discussion: The Three C's of Farm to School; Classroom, Cafeteria and Community

**Classroom-** Represented by Tony Staubach, Hamilton County OSU Extension.

**Success-** Tony works with teachers and educators from Cincinnati Public Schools to determine how to integrate agriculture education into what they teach. He incorporates community gardening, food testing and tasting in the classroom, with some cooking. He said, "it's really fun trying to figure out those opportunities in the classroom and particularly looking at state testing and figure out how to get those hands on experiences with agriculture in the classroom."

**Barriers-** "I love the teachers that I get to work with every day, they are wonderful people, yet many know nothing about food. There are some teachers that when I go into their classroom and ask what's your favorite food, the teachers will respond with a name of a fast food restaurant along with the kids. Therefore, it takes a lot of educating of the educators. It's hard to expect this to happen in the classrooms when the teachers themselves have never been exposed to this type of learning, they've never had to go out in a garden. I will take a lot of kids in the garden, and I work with a lot of agencies in the community to teach about gardening. The biggest barrier is there is not a lot of institutional knowledge in the system to bring forth the benefits of school gardening," he said.

**Policy Improvement-** Tony says, "there are two policies that I think would really impact the classroom. The first one is teacher education and preparation, so if we had some way of encouraging or requiring all preservice teachers to go through a nutritional education program, it would be really helpful, because they would come into their positions without a lot of knowledge, without a lot of experience in food and what food does. The other thing is policies at the local level do have a huge impact in the classroom. When I started doing my job working in Cincinnati public schools, there were just things teachers didn't know how to do or couldn't do or didn't understand how to apply. We can change our pacing guide so it lines up more with the agricultural calendar, we can give teachers training on how this standard that is tested in fifth grade science meets this need of ours to teach agriculture. It's just finding the right people in the right places to say yes, we're going to do that and yes, we will change a small rule, because it makes sense."



**Cafeteria-** Represented by Joe Brown, food service director at Columbus Public Schools. In January of 2017 his district implemented a Harvest of the Month program called Ohio Days: My Plate, My State.

**Success:** "The biggest example we have is that we offer apples in every one of our schools every day (3 million per year), we all know that Ohio produces a lot of apples. I asked around and not a single one of our apples came from the state of Ohio, every apple was shipped to us from Washington. Well, we changed that to purchasing apples from Ohio, then we began saving money. We have fresher apples and it's better for our kids," he said.

**Barriers:** "We have some challenges, we are the largest school district in the state and one of our biggest challenges is 2/3 of our schools don't have kitchens, instead we have heat and serve kitchens, so when you talk about most producers, they want to sell a product that might be field washed. We don't have that capacity, so one of our challenges is how do we get products from these growers into a form that we can use in our schools. This is a problem you have with any large institutional buyers, because they typically don't cut up all their lettuce, we need to buy precut triple washed lettuce. The number one barrier is just keeping produce in the form that we can use them, the other thing is when we're talking about as many students that we're talking about, things need to be pretty reliable. Being a government entity, there's a lot of regulations around purchasing. At the end of the day, I need to make sure we follow all of the government, district, and USDA rules. We try to give local preference, but ultimately at the end of the day this is a challenge. We want to support the person right up the road, but based on regulation requirements, we have to take that lower price. We're working through all of that, we're increasing the amount we do purchase locally every year." (cont. on page 3)



## The Three C's (continued)

(Cont. from page 2)

**Policy Improvement:** I think that the regulations that surround us when it comes to purchasing need to be changed. There's things you can do with small purchases where you can designate those dollars to go wherever you want and if you're a small school district with maybe 1,000 kids you can do a lot more with this micro purchases and be able to take care of your kids, but when you're a large school district, \$2,500 doesn't get you very far when you're trying to take care of a lot of kids, so the big job for us is really around that purchasing piece. I will go back to my apples I want to buy apples that are produced in the state of Ohio because I know that we grow them, and they have them available in the state of Ohio. But, I'm not allowed to do it very easily, there's some ways around it, ultimately I can't always give a firm geographical preference.

**Community:** Represented by Alice Chalmers founder of a Ohio Valley Food Connection a food hub near Cincinnati.

**Success** - I think one of the accomplishments is the fact that we can get food products year round, there's greens, root vegetables, and meat. The education process brings me a lot of satisfaction when working with the farms to actually bring it together. Often times, one supplier will not be sufficient to supply a school district. I will need to get kale from three or four farmers. That's the value our food hub provides is to make that coordination happen. That is our day to day job and the education of it and the customization of the front end and on the back end, providing the supply and logistics to get it there.

**Barriers** –The challenge that we have is also on the supply end and communication is absolutely key. So, going into detail, that takes time on both sides then giving samples or pictures so people can see what they look like and then on the supply side the first thing you have to do. Strawberries are going to be at least two weeks late this year. Well that's agriculture and that's the way it is. Being able to tell our buyers you are not going to get that so we are actually implementing right now kind of a ABC system. Two weeks ahead of time we'll tell you an ETA then one week ahead of time so that you can have a plan B and then two days ahead of time we can confirm. We actually did that for the



national conference procurement (to feed more than 900 registered) we worked that out beforehand, we had a few changes four days before the conference to say we're not going to get exactly the poundage we said, but that gives them time to go to their mainline distributor and get what they need and if everyone is comfortable with that, if expectations are met, then it works out well but expectations need to be met.

**Policy Improvement:** In Kentucky they have the Kentucky Proud program it is just like Ohio Proud, there is a rewards program, so as a school, you will get, I think its 10% back of all of your spending on local food from local farmers back up to a certain level. I mean talk about an incentive, basically that reduces your cost by 10%, right? In the summer program, you may have heard this on national news it is the first in the country, starting this summer any summer feeding school program that purchases from local farms gets 1/3 back. This is huge, because in the summer is when the farmers have the food, it is their greatest growing period so they're trying to encourage that synergy between farmers. We as a food hub, can't keep up with the demand for connecting the buyers and the sellers so let's look to Kentucky for some really good examples of policies that work for schools.

# Conference Report at a Glance

## Attendance

- 937 stakeholders –representing from every state in the nation as well as U.S. territories—registered for the conference, with at least 142 of them from Ohio!
- 36 ninety-minute interactive sessions were held on Thursday, April 26.

## Opening Plenary

- Featured an OH-IO welcome, and community, cafeteria, and classroom accomplishments from Ohio Farm to School.
- Roger Rennekamp shared thoughts on our college's role in food system transformation.
- The videos from Senator Sherrod Brown and Representative Marcia Fudge about their commitment to farm to school were shown once again.
- Keynote presenters, Rodney Taylor and Haile Thomas, shared perspectives as seasoned and emerging food movement activists.

## Presentations by Ohioans

- Successful Public Health-Farm to School partnerships
- Food Ethics
- 3 posters



Above- A few members of the Ohio Farm to Cafeteria Planning team: Hayley Plahuta, communications intern, Amy Fovargue Farm to School coordinator and Michaela Graham, field trip coordinator intern

Right- Ivory Harlow, OSU program specialist dressed in a strawberry costume to lead the field trip to the Science of Local Food at The Ohio Ag Research and Development Center.



## "Intensives"

- On Friday, nearly 400 people were registered for the 11 interactive field trips. Nearly 300 more people were registered for short courses in the convention center.

## Conference Meals

- OSU connected the convention center catering staff with local producers and distributors. As a result, 60-70% of the foods served at this major event held in Cincinnati, Ohio, in April were sourced locally! The convention center intends to continue to purchase foods from these local producers.

## Closing Program Youth Panel

- Abigail Fuhrmann, an Ohio 4-H alumnus and recent OSU graduate who works on her family's orchard, enthusiastically shared her experiences related to selling.

## Second Time in Ohio!

- This was the 9<sup>th</sup> Farm to Cafeteria Conference ever held. Ohio is the only state to have hosted this conference twice!





# The Great Lakes Great Apple Crunch is October 11<sup>th</sup>



Let's start planning for the loudest crunch ever! Last year Ohio had more than 100,000 participants registered. We can double that number in 2018! The crunch toolkit will soon be available at

<http://www.cias.wisc.edu/applecrunch/>

If you would like to help plan Ohio's crunch outreach and events contact Amy Fovargue at [fovargue.1@osu.edu](mailto:fovargue.1@osu.edu).

## Farm to School in the News

### National Farm to Cafeteria Conference supports eating locally-grown food

At the 9th National Farm to Cafeteria Conference, held April 25-27, 2018 in Cincinnati, OH, close to 70% of all food served to the 1,000 attendees was locally sourced from Ohio and Kentucky farmers, growers, ranchers, producers and food companies. Alice Chalmers, of Local Food Connections in Ohio, talked with WKRC in Cincinnati about some of the benefits of buying locally. (**WKRC**)

<http://local12.com/health/health-updates/national-farm-to-cafeteria-conference-supports-eating-locally-grown-food>

### Ohio hosts National Farm to Cafeteria event

Prior to the kickoff of the 9th National Farm to Cafeteria Conference, Ohio Farm to School's Leadership Team hosted an Ohio Farm to Cafeteria Pre-Conference, which provide attendees with a panel and forum to discuss and learn about challenges, successes and significant issues regarding providing fresh food from farms to schools in Ohio. Education and resources were two common topics discussed throughout the panel. (**Rural Life Today**)

<http://www.rurallifetoday.com/rural-life-southwest/4941/ohio-hosts-national-farm-to-cafeteria-event>



**THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY**

COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL,  
AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

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