

The Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection (DATCP) Farm to School Council is formed by 2009 Wisconsin Act 293 with the goal of advising DATCP on future state level policy and strategy for farm to school in Wisconsin. The Council is responsible for producing an Annual Report and remaining connected with on-the-ground farm to school efforts in the state.

The council consists of 11-15 members, including farmers, experts in child health, school food service personnel, and other persons with interests in agriculture, nutrition, and education. The Council meets quarterly, twice in person and twice by conference call each year.

DATCP Farm to School Advisory Council

Date/Time: WED APRIL 28, 2021 2:30 pm - 4:30 pm

Microsoft Teams meeting

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AGENDA

Members: (strike or add as Attending)

Krista Knigge (DATCP)

Jessica Sharkus (DPI)

Charles Warzecha (DHS)

Irene Pawlisch (SNA)

Daithi Wolfe (Kids Forward), Council Chair

Amy Meinen (UW-Human Ecology)

~~Lisa Kingery (FoodRight)~~

~~Jim Degan (Janesville School District)~~

Michael Gasper (Holmen School District)

Sarah Christman (Hunger Task Force)

Cathy Statz (Wisconsin Farmers Union)

Darlene Arneson (Wisconsin Farm Bureau)

Erin Badtke (Seneca Foods)

Cynthia Holt (Holt Community Consulting)

Nancy Dorman (WASB)

April Yancer (DATCP), ST non-voting member

Vanessa Herald (CIAS), ST non-voting member

~~Kim Wahl (Rotted), ST non-voting member~~

Susan Bostian Young (DPI), ST non-voting member

Brittany Zerbe (DPI), ST non-voting member

~~Maggie Byrne (DPI), ST non-voting member~~

Guest: Renata Solan (WSGN), ST non-voting member

Guest: Hawthorn McCracken (Rooted), ST non-voting member

Guest Speaker: Grace Ahterton (DATCP)

Guest Speaker: Secretary Randy Romanski (DATCP)

Welcome- Daithi called the meeting to order

2:45 *Previous meeting minutes approval* (from 2/3/21)

Moved: Mike

Seconded: Darlene

Approval- unanimous

2:50 *Annual Report Review and approval to submit:*

Moved: Cathy

Seconded: Cynthia

Discussion: The members thought the report was well-organized and thorough. The report incorporated COVID information which is particularly relevant. The report will be helpful for legislators to provide Farm to School (F2S) education with the goal of gaining more support from legislators for initiatives the Council is tasked with. The report demonstrates the differences, geographically of how strong F2S is around the state. The equity section was approved. The graphic is powerful.

Sarah suggested a significant lift to make data available in the future.

Approval- unanimous

2:50 *Agency and Organizational updates on work pertaining to Farm to School Development*

- Wisconsin School Garden Day is May 20, 2021. Alice in Dairyland is going to visit four school gardens around the state in celebration of Wisconsin School Garden Day. One of the gardens Alice will be visiting is at Vincent, a Milwaukee Public School. The DPI has requested that State Superintendent Carolyn Stanford Taylor visit a school garden at a Milwaukee Public School. A request for her to attend has been submitted, but DPI has not received a response yet. Representatives for MPS and the Wisconsin School Garden Network (WSGN) are in communication to plan this event.
- Renata from WGSN spoke regarding the history of the organization and WI School Garden Day. WGSN was originally funded for five years but was able to secure funding for one final (sixth) year (2021). WGSN provides free garden resources and networking opportunities for educators. WGSN started the School Garden Network map that includes contact information to help programs connect with one another. In 2019, WGSN submitted the first request for a governor's proclamation for WI School Garden Day. The first year was a success and some legislators were able to visit school gardens. The second WI School Garden Day in 2020 was impacted by COVID-19 due to school closures but it was still successful. Gardens were one of the few ways that people could engage in learning at this time. This year, 2021 is another hybrid year. MPS has a strict policy for visitors but is willing to allow Alice in Dairyland and State Superintendent

Taylor to visit because MPS supports garden education. The third week in May was chosen for WI School Garden Day as gardens further up north are thawed and this is a time before school testing begins. WGSN has a toolkit on their website for ideas to engage in garden day. WGSN lists participating schools on their website as they learn about their participation. Cynthia inquired if there are talking points to invite legislators to visit gardens/learn about the event. WGSN has a template memo and 1-pager with basic talking points, including the why for WI School Garden Day and links to resources. WGSN will share this with the group. If you reach out to a legislator, keep Renata in the loop so, WGSN can do some press releases and publicity. Currently, the biggest ask from WGSN is letting people know they can participate and awareness of event. Renata will include the newsletter that can be forwarded about WI School Garden Day. Nancy will ask the WI Association of School Boards to share in their newsletter. This event is for anyone who works for children, not just schools. Nature centers and parks can also participate. WGSN is thinking about more ways to engage statewide partners next year when WGSN no longer exists (once their grant expires).

- Brittany (DPI): The DPI is busy planning for school year 2021-22 as all schools will be eligible to provide free meals to all students under USDA's Seamless Summer Option (SSO). The DPI AmeriCorps Farm to School members created a WI Local Foods Database. This database helps to connect schools with farmers for local food procurement. Farmers who are willing to sell to schools can join the public database and Food Service Directors who want to purchase local food items can join a public list. Farmers can also indicate if they are willing to go into schools to provide agricultural education. The WI Local Food Database can be found here: <https://sites.google.com/dpi.wi.gov/wilfd/home>.
- Mike (Holmen School District): No updates. It has been a rough year- staffing is an issue.
- Sarah (Hunger Task Force): Hunger Task Force is offering weekly webinars in English and Spanish to help with P-EBT questions. This was a big agency push. HTF has been educating rural students which has been a challenge but is successful. Sarah is happy that MPS schools are back in-person learning. HTF will have summer programming on the farms (farm tours, students in the hatchery). Sarah mentioned the "Badger Box" that connects WI products with WI eaters.
- Darlene (Ag in the Classroom): The national conference is in Iowa at the end of June. The conference will feature a variety of workshops related to F2S and school gardens which are open to teachers, volunteers. Agriculture, food, and natural resources are a focus. Summer training will be virtual this year. In early summer they will be picking a book of the year for the essay conference (some books are F2S-related).
- Irene (MMSD): Staffing is short right now. SNA is participating in a joint effort with Feeding America, Feeding American Eastern WI, and the DPI School Nutrition Team to honor school nutrition professionals on social media.
- Cathy (Wisconsin Farmers Union): Attempting in-person summer camps (in a risk management way) taking up to 10 kids each for each section.
- Cynthia (Holt Community Consulting): Working on local volunteer efforts such as with "no mow me" which encourages community members to let their lawns grow for pollinators.

- Erin (Seneca Foods): Planting beans, beets, and corn. USDA bids came in, saw a larger demand for larger food service sizes and not just retail.
- Nancy (WASB): no updates.
- Krista (DATCP): The office building is open on a limited basis. Employees are still working on a telecommuting basis. Anticipate being back in the office fulltime after July 4th.
- Amy (UW-Human Ecology): Working with Dadith for funding for Farm to ECE. Trying to do a better job connecting funders around the state with F2S and F2ECE efforts.
- April (DATCP): Colleague, Andrew has been reaching out to DHS and other partners to streamline the process for directing FoodShare to CSAs and farmers market and how farmers can accept direct payment from FoodShare. April met with Mike and Irene to move forward on processing grants including dairy and protein products useful for Food Service Directors and minimally processed fruits and vegetables. Alex from Midwest Foods attended the meeting. Midwest Foods is working with the Kenosha community. Midwest Foods will pilot minimally processed fruits and vegetables based on Food Service Director feedback. The product line will not be exclusively local now, but the goal is to become more local overtime. Received lots of great feedback from the original meeting; two more meetings to come.
- Vanessa (CIAS): It is Apple Crunch time again and crunch registration opens in May. CIAS is targeting orchards to help them understand that this is an event to help grow their markets. CIAS officially launched the regional grains grant which includes a comprehensive literature review on what it means to get more local grains into institutional areas (like schools). Eventually, the project will yield a suite of resources for schools on how to use more local grains and recipes.
- Hawthorn (Rooted): Was introduced to the group. No updates from Rooted.

3:30 Nominations

The Council has four open seats. The Council is focused on nominations for better inclusion to increase diversity both ethnic and geographical. The Council reached out to Vang (a Mung producer) and Jesse (Oneida Food System Development). Amy has been in communication with Bridget Wilder, a Registered Dietitian interfacing with Farm to ECE and providing culinary and cooking demonstrations in northern Milwaukee. Bridget is recognized in a group with black dietitians and has a passion for nutrition and kids. The nomination committee has a list of individuals who have already been nominated as well. The nomination committee will take the finalized list of nominees to OS. These new seats will start in July. Krista commented that the Secretary's office is looking to sequence all councils and boards at one time per year, at their May meeting. The May meeting will include the official introduction of the new fall members and the four currently open seats. The Council would like to know whose seats are currently open; April will send a list of board seats and terms. Cynthia noted that past board members would like to be kept in the loop after their term is up. Ideas include being copied on emails with agendas and annual reports, asked to take action on key issues, and could help identify future candidates for the Council. The Council is to work on a plan to connect future nominees and past members to the leadership team and to formalize an alumni board.

3:45- Secretary Randy Romanski shares and takes questions on the proposed budget.

Randy would like to thank the Council for their willingness to serve and to provide recommendations. After disruptions in the food supply brought on by COVID-19, people want to become closer to their food supply. Smaller farmers are saying they cannot keep up with demand because people have found them. We are well-situated to tell the story about what we can do and what has happened and to focus on “know your farmer, know your food.”

Governor Evers proposed a 43 million dollar increase for agriculture. This money would be spent for grant programs and added staff support. There are 5 buckets: 1) Invest in meat and dairy processing, 2) Provide technical support for clean water and healthy soil, 3) Provide resources to navigate challenges to the profession, including mental health resources and a business consultant program to increase farmers’ financial security, 4) Bolster DATCP’s internal function by adding meat inspector positions, additional staff to work in DATCP labs, and a staff position for a Farm to Fork program to work with April, 5) Encourage market development for WI products. The budget also includes proposed funding to open international markets, to include a F2S coordinator, and \$200,000 per year for supply chain connections for the F2S program. The goal is to get more WI products to schools, businesses, colleges. The need and interest is here. The budget includes \$125,000 for a farm diversity program to help farmers find additional markets. The food security program includes 25 million dollars in federal Cares Act funding to connect WI food to help combat food insecurity. 10 million dollars has been proposed to tackle a food insecurity program at the state level.

Questions- Cynthia asked for insight on the Farm to Fork position and how this position will work with other agencies and non-profits who are doing similar work. Secretary Romanski responded that the goal is cooperation, and we need to create partnerships with those who we can work in tandem with. Cynthia asked about the business consultant and marketing opportunities- “do you see a place where the business consultant could understand our story?” Secretary Romanski responded that it makes sense to share the story. The one challenge is that there are so many things around us, it is hard to know what they all are but he foresees an opportunity to share information.

Amy thanked Secretary Romanski from the Council for this budget. Amy wanted to confirm that the Joint Finance Committee (JFC) is taking public comment on the budget through this Friday (4/30). Grace Atherton (DATCP) confirmed that public comments will be received through Friday. Grace noted that even after JFC finishes the public hearing process and moves into the executive sessions that they will still take comments from constituents. Grace encourages the Council that even after the JFC comment period has closed to reach out to their legislators. Members can find their legislators at <https://legis.wisconsin.gov>. Amy asked if there is a way to get the Annual Report to the JFC. Secretary Romanski responded that DATCP will share the document with legislators. He noted that members can always contact their legislators directly as well.

4:10: Potential DATCP F2S and Farm to Fork Grant Program development

Farm to Fork falls under April’s position. Both of the proposed grants would support F2S and Farm to Fork work. Dairy recovery is 7 million lbs.

4:12: Discussion on Free school lunch through spring 2022

Mike: The USDA waivers are extended through next school year to end in June 2022. Mike is hopeful that this will be the precursor to free meals for all students into the future. There has never been a time with this much momentum. Any school can participate in the free meal program. The pandemic brought to light the need for free meals. Schools are switching over to the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) reimbursement rate which is a higher free rate than the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) free rates. All schools now have to utilize the Seamless Summer Option (SSO) and use the NSLP meal pattern. The higher reimbursement rate will help school districts make up some of their fund deficient. The districts who are not struggling financially will have more funds to increase the quality of school meals and perhaps purchase more local products.

4:18 Public Comments

Cynthia presented an idea of developing a formal strategic plan for WI F2S. This is the ideal opportunity to come together with key partners and establish the vision for F2S ten years from now. It would be worthwhile to bring in someone from the National Farm to School Network or another state to help with the process.

April commented that the Stewardship Team has discussed this idea. Everyone thought it was a good idea but would like more details on how to make this happen. Cynthia responded that it would be a process that would take some time and would greatly impact the work the Council has been committed to for so long.

Amy noted that a Strategic Plan would allow the Council to be prepared and should include equity and inclusion. Amy thought it would be helpful to have a guiding document and it could include logic models.

Vanessa seconds this idea. CIAS may have funding to contribute to this project. Vanessa thinks this may be a project for a USDA F2S grant. A Strategic Plan would help everyone to direct their energy.

Nancy thinks strategic planning would be really good and would be important for the future.

Cynthia responded that the goal is to be more impactful with Council efforts. The Board would need to identify people who could do the work and the funding for this.

Cathy asked who are the “we” to be responsible for this. Cynthia responded that a non-profit or university could take the lead.

Vanessa asked about inflection points and how F2S is connected but different than other groups, like Farm to ECE. Is it strategic for this group to stay siloed or should Farm to ECE and F2S become more integrated?

Nancy suggested that the Annual Report get to JFC as soon as possible.

4:30 *Adjourn*- Mike motioned, Cathy seconds. Approval unanimous.

Minutes Taken By: Brittany Zerbe