National Good Food Network in Support of Market-Based Solutions

Successes, Challenges and Capacity Needs

Abbreviated Survey Results
2008
Abstract

In August 2007 an online survey was sent to participants of the WK Kellogg Foundation’s Food and Society (FAS) initiative and their colleagues. Recipients were asked to self-select based on their interest in Market-Based Solutions (MBS), which we define as engaging market (consumer) demand to drive change. Specifically we are focused on increasing the flow of "good food" (healthy, fair, affordable, and green) through scaled retail groceries, food service, and wholesale. Of the 654 people receiving the survey, 28% or 183 responded.

The survey collected demographics information such as role in the food system and geographic scale, scope, status, and description of MBS work. Respondents also described the successes and challenges they face in this work and how a national network might accelerate and broaden their MBS efforts.

Several themes emerged from the responses such as:

- **Cooperative Economies of Scale Needed**: “good food” supply aggregators/distributors are eager to find one another to increase efficiency and ability to match demand and supply.
- **Information Needed**: because of the inherently local nature of the food movement, innovations and solutions are occurring in pockets of the country. If we can facilitate a national flow of information we can more rapidly spread change nationwide.
- **Local Infrastructure Needed**: there is a distinct lack of the dedicated processing, packaging and distribution capacity/infrastructure needed to build local food systems.
- **Start-up Funding Needed**: innovative solutions are emerging but entrepreneurs need funds to prove concepts, develop business models, and build to scale.

The Survey Results package contains statistical data on FAS’ (and beyond) Market-Based Solutions efforts to date as well as an enormous volume of personal accounts, thoughts, and stories. The package can be viewed on the Wallace Center’s website at [www.wallacecenter.org](http://www.wallacecenter.org).
Market-Based Solutions Definition

We define Market-Based Solutions (MBS) as engaging market (consumer) demand to drive change. Specifically we are focused on increasing the flow of "good food" (healthy, fair, affordable, and green) through scaled retail groceries, food service, and wholesale. This may include other channels that have the opportunity to scale.
Survey Methodology

• Survey distributed August 2007
• Sent to 565 people
• FAS audience asked to self-select based on interest in MBS work
• Also sent to those recommended by FAS members = 89 people
• Total 183 respondents = 28% response rate
Part One: 
Quantitatively Assessed Questions
What Role in the Food System?

- Convener, Facilitator, Membership Organization: 81 / 44%
- Technical Assistance Provider: 62 / 34%
- Thinktank, Author, University, Educator: 64 / 35%
- Social Entrepreneur: 47 / 26%
- Grower, Farmer, Fisher: 41 / 22%
- Marketing and/or Media: 38 / 21%
- Funder: 27 / 15%
- Processor, Packager, and/or Distributor: 22 / 12%
- Evaluator: 19 / 10%
- Other: 17 / 9%
- Government / Policy-Maker / Policy Advocate: 14 / 8%
- Food Service: 12 / 7%
- Grocery or Wholesale: 8 / 5%
- IT/Technology Creator or Provider: 6 / 3%
- Third-party Certifier: 6 / 3%

Individual respondents may have more than one role; Other = student, Board Member, community organizer, other
What Organizational Structure?

- Non-profit: 129 / 70%
- Other (University, tribe, cooperative, independent consultant): 20 / 11%
- For-profit: 18 / 10%
- Hybrid (divisions or subsidiaries with varying/blended structures): 13 / 7%
- Government: 12 / 7%

*Individual organizations may have more than one structure; Other = university, tribe, cooperative, independent consultant*
Where Is MBS Work Focused?

Individual organizations may have more than one geographic focus.
What Geographic Scale Goals?

Individual organizations may have more than one geographic scale goal.
How Far Along in MBS Work?

- Thinking and planning stage: 65 / 36%
- Planning complete, just beginning to implement: 30 / 16%
- Well into implementation, already noting successes and challenges: 79 / 43%
- Completed: 6 / 3%

Individual organizations may be in different stages for different initiatives
How Can Network Best Serve You?

- Provide Case Studies, Best Practices, Tools, Data and other Information: 121 / 66%
- Link you to Funders: 115 / 63%
- Link you to Others doing similar work: 114 / 62%
- Link you to Technical Assistance / Consultants with key expertise: 76 / 42%
- Provide opportunities to form or join Working Groups, Coalitions, Business / Solutions-oriented Teams: 71 / 39%
- Link you to Distributors, Food Service and/or Grocery businesses: 56 / 31%
- Help you find Processing / Packaging capacity: 51 / 28%
- Link you to potential Grantees: 33 / 18%
- Link you to Producers (e.g., Farmers, Fishers): 29 / 16%
- Link you to Opportunities to make for-profit investments: 23 / 13%

Individual respondents may have selected more than one response.
Information Clearinghouse Priorities

- Getting Funded: 101 / 55%
- Policy Solutions: 97 / 53%
- Social Enterprise / Entrepreneurship: 90 / 49%
- Commercial Supply Chain Logistics for "good food": 82 / 45%
- Increasing commercial Supply Chain Sustainability: 76 / 42%
- Indicators, Evaluation, Metrics: 73 / 40%
- Selling to Groceries, Food Service, and Wholesale: 64 / 35%
- Consumer Marketing: 63 / 34%
- Business-to-Business Marketing: 55 / 30%
- Buying from "Good Food" Producers: 55 / 30%
- Strategically Positioning your Enterprise in the Marketplace: 45 / 25%
- Business Skills: 38 / 21%

Individual respondents may have selected more than one response.
Technical Assistance Priorities

- Commercial Supply Chain Logistics for "good food" 49 / 27%
- Selling to Groceries, Food Service, and Wholesale 40 / 22%
- Business-to-Business Marketing 38 / 21%
- Increasing commercial Supply Chain Sustainability 37 / 20%
- Business Skills 36 / 20%
- Getting Funded 36 / 20%
- Indicators, Evaluation, Metrics 35 / 19%
- Social Enterprise / Entrepreneurship 35 / 19%
- Policy Solutions 25 / 14%
- Consumer Marketing 24 / 13%
- Buying from "Good Food" Producers 23 / 13%
- Strategically Positioning your Enterprise in the Marketplace 21 / 11%

*Individual respondents may have selected more than one response*
I Can Contribute (Info or TA)

- Social Enterprise / Entrepreneurship: 42 / 23%
- Supply Chain Logistics for moving "good food" through scaled Grocery, Food Service, Wholesale: 36 / 20%
- Policy Solutions: 35 / 19%
- Increasing Sustainability of the Grocery, Food Service, and/or Wholesale Supply Chain: 33 / 18%
- Business Skills: 32 / 17%
- Consumer Marketing: 31 / 17%
- Business-to-Business Marketing: 31 / 17%
- Selling to Groceries, Food Service, and Wholesale: 30 / 16%
- Strategic Positioning of your Enterprise in the Marketplace: 29 / 16%
- Buying from "Good Food" Producers: 27 / 15%
- Indicators, Evaluation, Metrics: 23 / 13%
- Getting Funded: 16 / 9%

Individual respondents may have selected more than one response
Definitions: Generally Two Models for Delivery of TA

- "Coaching" [actively guiding] advises the organization through an effort and boosts internal abilities. The Coach does not do the organization's work for it nor tell it the answer; rather, he or she provides tools, information, guidance, and feedback to move the organization successfully through an initiative and build its abilities to do this work itself in the future. Much of the Coach's work is in building trust, adapting communication styles to the organization, listening well, providing structure for the initiative at hand, putting together tools, lesson plans and teaching materials, and offering guidance and feedback.

- "Outsourcing" [providing answers and solutions] is useful when an organization lacks the resources to do the work itself and/or has no desire to build the internal capabilities. Examples may include one-time efforts (e.g., research, strategic positioning, planning) and ongoing efforts (e.g., advertising or PR). Typically the organization is only somewhat involved in the effort and relies on the provider for answers and deliverables.
Individual respondents may have selected more than one response.
Importance of Local TA Provider

- Important: 20 (11%)
- Preferred but not Necessary: 58 (32%)
- Not Important: 33 (18%)
- Uncertain: 12 (7%)

Individual respondents may have selected more than one response.
Part Two: *Open-Ended Discussion Questions*
Respondents’ Social Enterprises

- Local stores promoting sustainable products
- Sustainable producers
- Third party certifier
- Aggregators, distributors, logistics managers
- Linking and social networking organizations:
  - Linking producers with commercial channels / buyers
  - Linking volunteers and youth with farms and stores
  - Linking consumers with producers
  - Linking travelers with destinations and enterprises
  - Linking enterprises with information
- Incubators and new enterprise developers
Views on MBS Successes

• Demand higher than ever
• More producers entering marketplace; coordinated assistance efforts are working
• Significant increase in flow of “good food”
• High level engagement from commercial businesses in select regions
• Enormous media attention
• MBS solutions attractive to policy-makers
• New models for local grocery stores
• More youth getting involved and driving demand trends
Views on MBS Challenges

- Sourcing/producing/selling sustainably often costs more
- Producers earn more via Farmers Market than MBS channels
- Distribution controlled by few large corporations; need local infrastructure
- Need processing and storage capacity, especially local
- Start-up and growth funding hard to find
- Unsupportive federal, state, local policies
- Producers need new skills and reassurances; need equipment to extend growing seasons
- Insufficient and uncoordinated supply; need more producers
- Insufficient consumer knowledge and demand
- Need mediation & links between producers and commercial buyers
- Threat of “greenwashing” interfering with progress
- Fragmented non-profit efforts toward shared goals; are we thinking strategically?
Needs for Respondents’ MBS Work (I)

• Definitions: What is sustainable? What is good to support?

• Research
  – Market analysis: how are consumers defining/thinking about sustainable food?
  – Costs and benefits of local sourcing, across the value chain
  – Relevance and issues of economic scale to local sourcing
  – Impact of policy & food safety regulations; how can “good food” = food safety?
  – Impact of rising fuel costs on prices, consumer demand, business planning
  – What is our theory of change? Our attitude toward the big commercial buyers?
Needs for Respondents’ MBS Work (II)

• Tools
  – How to form strategic alliances, e.g., as a co-op and/or with corporations
  – Liability insurance and legal requirements to sell to MBS channels
  – Effective software for producers and co-ops to manage processes and CRM
  – Food safety principles and training

• Marketing and Media
  – To large-scale commercial buyers/channels like Kroger, Safeway
  – To consumers

• Attitude: “git ‘er done”!
Views on Value of a Network

• Cooperative economies of scale: many people working on similar issues across the country; would like to reach out to one another, coordinate efforts, strengthen each another, collaborate, buy and sell from each other

• Bring commercial buyers into the group to increase solutions

• Create new policy advocacy group for MBS

• Venue for information sharing; learning about innovations and what’s working

• General strategic coordination, including national assistance to achieve local solutions