Challenges and Opportunities in Local Food Sourcing for the UNC Dining Halls

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Why a Local Food Capstone?

- Growing interest in local food’s potential for improving economic and environmental sustainability
- CDS has strong interest in local foods but faces obstacles to local sourcing
- Student interest in promoting local foods
- Need for information from local food producers
Objectives

Main Goal: Increase CDS local purchasing

- Project tasks:
  - Better define key obstacles from the perspective of CDS and farmers
  - Enhance understanding of North Carolina farmers’ perceptions of partnership with CDS
  - Investigate possible models and offer recommendations
Methods

- Information gathering → experts and literature review
- Survey → 87
- Interviews → 9
- Analysis
- Formation of Recommendations
- Farm to Fork Forum
How Does Partnership with CDS Work?

- Aramark is the contracted food service provider for UNC
- Farms that sell to UNC must comply with Aramark specifications regarding food safety and liability
- Freshpoint and SYSCO are the main distributors that supply UNC with produce
Source:
Obstacles CDS Faces to Local Food Sourcing

- Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certification
- Proof of insurance
- Volume
- Delivery
- Price
- Seasonality
Key Findings in Farmer Perceptions: Three Areas Determined from Survey and Interviews

- Food Safety
- Uncertainty
- Cash Flow
Key Findings: Food Safety

- Substantial insurance costs and legal responsibility for farmers
- GAP is cumbersome and expensive
- Cost includes both audit fees and changes that need to be made to obtain the certification
- Certification includes HAACP & Recall plan creation
Key Findings: Uncertainty

- Uncertainty of security of market
  - Hesitation to make investments in GAP or insurance
  - Desire but not confidence in scaling up production

- Need for clear communication
  - Consistency and streamlined contact at CDS

- Strong interest in aggregate/conglomerate
  - More support and shared costs
  - Addresses volume and delivery concerns
Findings: Cash Flow and Profitability

- Cash flow delay
- Supplying large orders requires a significant upfront investment
- Many farmers depend on rapid turnaround time

Challenge with seasonality
- Farmers will need to find alternative markets during summer
Farm-to-Fork Forum

- December 4th, 2012
- Presentation of preliminary findings
- The event provided an open forum to meet and interact with local food stakeholders.
- 35-40 attendees
- We learned about the complex challenges in local partnerships.
- We discussed the first steps in tackling present challenges
# Recommendations: Short Term

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<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Short Term Recommendations</strong></th>
<th><strong>Responsible Stakeholders</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Increase outreach to local farms</td>
<td>FLO, CDS, Distributors</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strengthen partnerships with local food organizations and individuals</td>
<td>FLO, CDS</td>
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<td>Strengthen relationships with current or past local partner farms</td>
<td>CDS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Connect farmers to resources to ease GAP process</td>
<td>FLO and CDS, Distributors, Extension, Farmers</td>
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<td>Gage student interest and demand for local food</td>
<td>FLO</td>
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<td>Incorporate seasonality in menu and diversify local food offerings</td>
<td>CDS</td>
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### Recommendations: Medium-term

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<th>Medium Term Recommendations</th>
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<tr>
<td>Use 1.5.0. and Carolina Catering as small scale pilot for local growers to transition to CDS</td>
<td>FLO, CDS</td>
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<td>Cite Aramark's existing commitment to “increasing level of sustainable food offers served by at least 5% each year.”</td>
<td>Auxiliary Services</td>
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<td>Utilize existing conglomerate organizations that can provide support, shared costs, address volume and delivery challenges</td>
<td>FLO, CDS</td>
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<td>Increase formalized academic involvement</td>
<td>Environmental Studies Department, Business School, Office of Sustainability, School of Public Health</td>
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<td>Clarify market for local food at CDS</td>
<td>CDS</td>
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## Recommendations: Long-term

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<td>Look to other Aramark Higher Education institutional local purchasing models (Elon, UNCW)</td>
<td>FLO food, future academic projects, Student Food Groups Across the State</td>
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<td>Expand storage facilities (such as freezers) to increase capacity for local food storage</td>
<td>Future Capstone Projects, Office of Sustainability</td>
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<td>Modify contract with food service provider to facilitate local food purchasing</td>
<td>Auxiliary Services, Office of Sustainability</td>
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<td>Utilize non-undergraduate university affiliates for research and furthering local food goals</td>
<td>Triangle University Food Studies, Office of Sustainability</td>
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Future Goals and Discussion

- Sysco’s role: could open many other markets for local farmers besides UNC Chapel Hill
- Key role of other locally based conglomerates and distributors
- Need for data reflecting student demand
- Increased formalized student involvement
- Clarifying job descriptions at CDS regarding local purchasing