



A Review of the 2008 Farm Bill and A Look Ahead to 2012

Thursday, March 3, 2011

10 AM to 12 PM

Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission

Co-convened with The Food Trust

Meeting Proceedings

Welcome and Introductions

Alison Hastings, Senior Environmental Planner at DVRPC, welcomed speakers and participants. She gave an update on DVRPC's food systems planning work, including the recently released *Eating Here: Greater Philadelphia's Food System Plan*, and discussed next steps.

“What Happened in 2008”

Thomas Forster, Policy Advisor for School Food FOCUS and Faculty at the New School in the Department of Food Studies, discussed the titles of the Farm Bill, referencing 2008 allocations in which nutrition accounts for the largest portion of funding. He highlighted how traditional advocacy approaches to the titles as separate components or “fiefdoms” have started to break down with the entrance of new issue groups with concerns that span across farm bill titles (e.g. public health, good food communities, etc.) Tom described some of the new policies adopted or substantially expanded in the 2008 Farm Bill, including innovation and block grants, critical research, and funding for small, but catalytic programs which can push some of the issues that these new entrants care about forward. He also discussed new momentum for scaling up innovative programs, engaging in cross-sector coalitions and partnerships, and new attention being paid to food issues by the Obama administration. He reminded stakeholders that the farm bill is subject to a long legislative process and that the farm bill, though essential, is not the only piece of legislation affecting issues that they care about. Tom indicated that they should also be aware of and follow appropriations (“budget”) bills and other authorizing bills (e.g. Childhood Nutrition). Three Congressional caucuses have been essential to past Farm Bill reforms according to Tom and will be essential in the future: the Congressional Black Caucus, the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, and the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus. Lastly, Tom suggested that the opportunity exists for common messages across many stakeholder groups, and that greater coordination will lead to greater success.



Looking Forward to 2012

Kurt Imhof, Field Representative for Senator Robert P. Casey, Jr., gave a preview of the upcoming Farm Bill cycle. He provided a brief overview of the legislative process the bill will go through and described some comments that have already been made key members of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry. These include calls from Chairwoman Debbie Stabenow to focus on “principles, not programs” in starting to talk about the Farm Bill. He highlighted and discussed some the of the Senator’s key priorities including supporting specialty crop growers, bolstering nutrition programs, encouraging conservation, helping farmers manage risk, and achieving fairness for Pennsylvania’s dairy farmers.

“What it all Means for Greater Philadelphia’s Food System”

John Weidman, Deputy Executive Director at The Food Trust, encouraged all stakeholders to become involved in the Farm Bill process, indicating that an advocate need not have a comprehensive understanding of the entire bill but can start with the one or two issues that he or she really cares about. The next steps are communicating these positions to elected representatives and joining a coalition to advocate with a collective voice. John highlighted and described some issue areas that are of particular importance to Greater Philadelphia including hunger, local food systems, incentives for healthy eating, farm-to-school, regional food hubs, healthy food access, and sustainable agriculture.

One-Minute Reports

Stakeholder Committee members gave one minute reports on current activities and upcoming events.

Travel arrangements for visiting speakers were made possible with the generous support of the Geraldine. R. Dodge Foundation.