

*2010 Marin Agricultural Summit:
A Partnership in Viability for Sustainability*

*Preparation Focus Groups
Summary & Notes
June, 2010*

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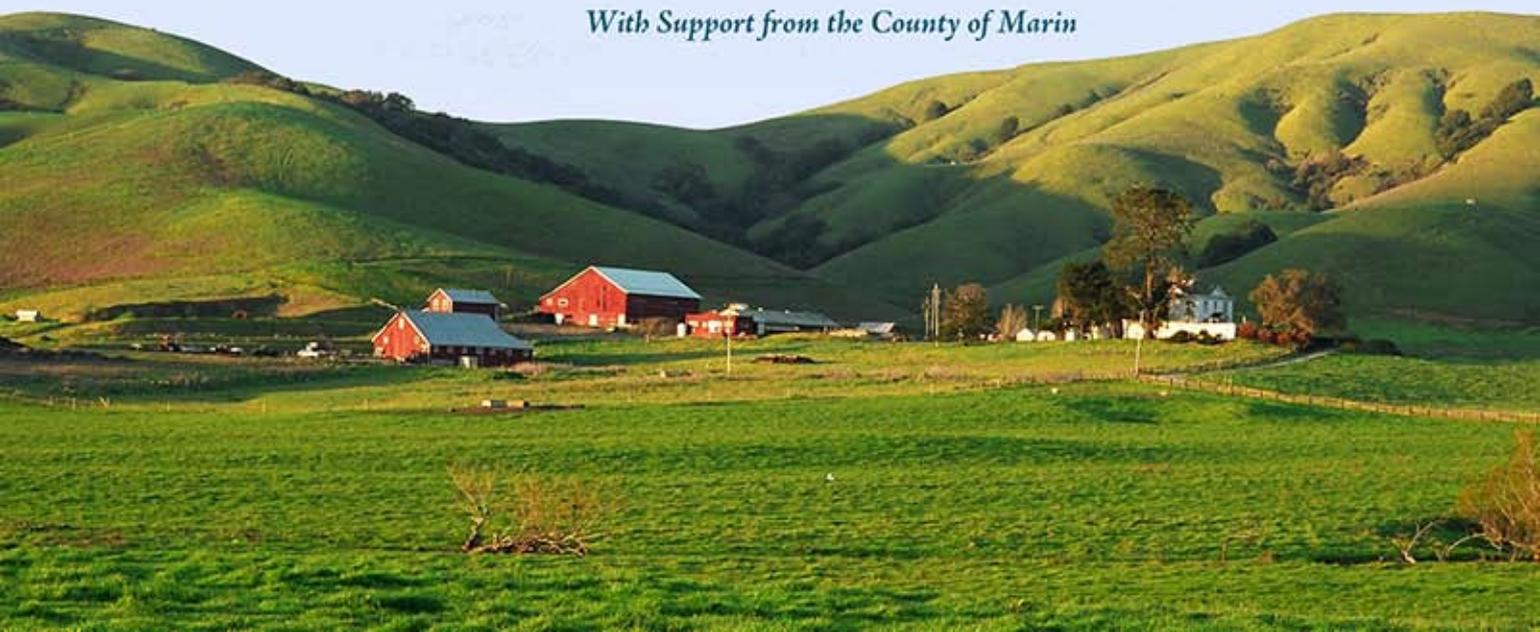
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With Support from the County of Marin



Summary

The many values and services provided by Marin agriculture, and the open lands on which it operates, are no accident. Strategic planning opportunities for the success of Marin agriculture were taken that contribute significantly to the ongoing economic viability and environmental stewardship of Marin's family farms. The 1997 Marin Agricultural Summit was one of those key planning events generating ideas and initiatives in diversification, project permitting, and soil and water conservation.

The time has arrived again for planning and developing realistic on-the-ground actions. Building on the 1997 Summit and annual Agricultural Round Tables hosted by Supervisor Steve Kinsey, the 2010 Marin Agricultural Summit will be held November 13, 2010, at Walker Creek Ranch.

With support from the County of Marin, UCCE facilitated six focus groups in March, April, and May 2010 to gather initial ideas for Marin agricultural needs and the role the Summit could have to meet those needs. The six focus groups were organized by respective commodities and agricultural support groups within the Marin agricultural community. These included:

- Row Crops on March 22;
- Grazing Livestock on April 6;
- Processors on April 20;
- Dairy on April 29;
- Organizations on May 18; and
- Retailers on May 20;

Three broad discussion topics were explored during each focus group. Focus group discussions began with the current state of Marin agriculture and the conditions, programs, and policies that have supported the viability and success of local agriculture. Participants were also encouraged to discuss what has not worked in supporting agriculture. The second focus group discussion theme centered on what agriculture needs to be successful in the next decade and beyond. Lastly, focus groups spent a smaller portion of time discussing how the Summit can benefit Marin agriculture.

These rich and interactive discussions were captured in two ways. Group points of agreement were recorded on large flip charts. Individual comments were also recorded by note takers. These two sets of notes are included in this document and organized by each respective focus group.

In general, the comments and discussions were a balance of optimism tempered by constraints. In the words of one participant, all involved with Marin agriculture should be challenged to "dream big" and aim to have local agricultural products go mainstream, including the sourcing of local schools, hospitals, and government cafeterias. There was consistent appreciation for the changes and progress made to support agricultural economic viability and a desire to take things to a higher level. Put another way, there are programs, policies, and organizations in place to support entry into more innovative product marketing and diversification, but there still remain obstacles to scaling up processing in a coordinated and cooperative business model. Unless these obstacles can be overcome, Marin agriculture will continue to experience an inability to provide a consistent and reliable product supply chain.

In almost every discussion it was useful to begin with the realization that Marin County agriculture is fundamentally commodity based dairy and grazing livestock production and that

this is a function of Marin's land and resource base. Accompanying that realization is an acceptance that, as local producers, there is little control over these commodity markets and the forces that drive them. The trick then is to "keep the grocery and tourist dollar here in Marin" as one participant said. Producers who are participating in direct marketing and value-added endeavors shared their sense that Marin agriculture has just begun to tap into consumer demand for their local products. They have loyal customers via their direct marketing. In addition, farmers markets have blossomed in number and size because of consumer demand. Most recently, some producers are capitalizing on opportunities with mainstream markets and distributors due to demand for locally recognized product.

There is a strong sense of identity in being traditional and commodity based. There is also a strong motivation to diversify and market directly through a comprehensive portfolio of market outlets. The point is not to be trapped in a perception of either traditional and commodity or value added and direct marketing. Instead, Marin agriculture will be successful through a comprehensive and integrated portfolio of markets that combines all that Marin agriculture has to offer.

Participants made the point that the future of local family farming is largely possible because the primary asset and capital requirement for farming and ranching, specifically land, is already owned and secured. This too is at risk, however, if issues around estate taxes and intergenerational transfers are not addressed. This includes family transfers of property that have MALT conservation easements. Others explained that the future of Marin agriculture relies on "pathways" to learn to farm and to lease and own land.

Regulations still represent a significant obstacle to farm operations and production of agricultural products. There was much recognition of Marin County and others' efforts to streamline regulations and support agricultural diversification. But despite these efforts, the overriding sentiment is that there are too many policies, regulations, and laws that impose unrealistic and unfeasible requirements. Furthermore, there was the consistently expressed opinion that the public does not realize the number and level of regulations with which local farms and ranches must comply, and the impact they have on farmers' and ranchers' capacity and viability. The end result is that producers are discouraged in their pursuit of projects and plans for farming and ranching in the future.

Efforts to assist ranchers and farmers with on-farm soil and water conservation and habitat restoration were referenced as highly valuable to local farms for both their compliance with environmental regulations and land stewardship ethic. What was pointed out, however, was that while considerable success has been realized in natural resource conservation and stewardship, the true value to the ecosystem and Marin in the form of services provided by Marin farms and ranches has not been documented and communicated in a manner that the general public can appreciate and potentially compensate.

In all of the groups, farmers and ranchers expressed the benefits of gathering to exchange ideas and support each other in their efforts to comply with regulations, seek out partnerships, and strengthen their Marin community and identity. These exchanges could also be places to explore opportunities to centralize and share processing infrastructure and farm equipment, and develop a combined purchasing power for products, liability insurance, and distribution. Such interaction is also important to mentoring the next generation of farmers. The idea of small recurring gatherings of producers and even the use of a grange was discussed and explored as a way to achieve this networking.

In a similar vein, participants expressed that the Summit would be an opportunity to improve coordination. Specifically, the organizations and agencies working with Marin agriculture will be able to "get on the same page" and "...be reminded of agricultural needs."

Focus group participants pointed out the important role that capital and credit play in diversifying or adding value to products. The concept of seed money and revolving funds for

sums on the order of \$25,000 to \$50,000 was discussed, as well as the need for larger sums preferably through low interest loans, redevelopment funds, or perhaps investment partnerships.

Consistently, participants shared the need to think and plan more regionally, including the Marin-Sonoma border and beyond. Comments described a complimentary relationship and “food shed” approach between the grazing livestock and dairy regions of Marin and Sonoma with other regions in Mendocino, Napa, Solano, and Sonoma Counties.

There was a call for direction and technical support in speculating on the future and making production decisions. This included information on crop selection and value-added niches to target. Related to this was a need for analysis and support in connecting opportunities of land and water resources with capable interested farmers.

In many ways the ideas and concerns expressed during these discussions were consistent with those identified in the 1997 Summit document and specifically the section containing the Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. The difference, however, is that the experiences and efforts to address each of these (in 1997 forward) has provided concrete results and context for where to focus future planning efforts and set direction for the future. The 2010 Summit will contribute to Marin agriculture’s future if it can facilitate advancement in the following areas:

- **Public Education/Messaging/Marketing:** Coordinated efforts that overcome the inefficiencies individual farms and families face in improving community relations, growing the public’s understanding of the contributions that local agriculture contributes to sustainability, and increased recognition of local agricultural products, and therein capture of increased revenue.
- **Ecosystem Services and Energy Efficiency:** Increasing the understanding of what ecosystem services and energy efficiencies are and how they are compensated so that similar programs can be developed and implemented in Marin.
- **Managing Regulations and Permitting:** Continued efforts are needed to review and provide alternatives for proposed regulations, as well as provide service assistance for compliance with approved regulations and permitting requirements.
- **All Things Labor:** Direction and initiatives that provide for a well trained, well managed, and well supported labor force.
- **Farmer networking:** Opportunities and structures through which growers and ranchers can interact, exchange ideas and realize opportunities. In addition, farmer and retailer networking to build relationships and increase understanding of the requirements and potential for partnerships.
- **Capital and investment:** Increased access to sources of capital for improvements and implementation of diversification and value-added projects.
- **Predicting the Future:** Sources of information and direction on market trends and feasible production options to target those trends and opportunities.

(Acknowledgements: Sincere appreciation is expressed to each focus group participant. Their willingness to contribute to these discussions has generated a comprehensive statement on the current status and future needs of Marin agriculture and its viability. They have served the community well in taking this important step in preparing for future success.)

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Summary..... | i |
| Table of Contents | iv |
| Row Crops..... | 5 |
| Attendees | 5 |
| Group Notes | 5 |
| What Has Worked Well? | 5 |
| Looking into the Future/Opportunities | 6 |
| Threats..... | 6 |
| How Can Summit Help You?..... | 7 |
| Individual Notes..... | 7 |
| Livestock | 17 |
| Attendees | 17 |
| Group Notes | 17 |
| What Has Worked Well? | 17 |
| Looking into the Future/Opportunities | 18 |
| What Has Helped You Decide What to Do? | 19 |
| Threats..... | 19 |
| Individual Notes..... | 19 |
| Processors..... | 30 |
| Attendees | 30 |
| Group Notes | 30 |
| What Has Worked Well? | 30 |
| Looking into the Future/Opportunities/Needs | 30 |
| What Has Not Worked Well? | 31 |
| Individual Notes..... | 32 |
| Dairy | 45 |
| Attendees | 45 |
| Group Notes | 45 |
| What Has Worked Well? | 45 |
| Looking into the Future/Opportunities | 45 |
| Threats..... | 45 |
| Ideas for Summit | 45 |
| Individual Notes..... | 45 |
| Organizations..... | 58 |
| Attendees | 58 |
| Group Notes | 58 |
| What Has Worked Well? | 58 |
| Looking into the Future/Opportunities | 58 |
| Individual Notes..... | 59 |
| Retail..... | 72 |
| Attendees | 72 |
| Group Notes | 72 |
| What Has Worked Well? | 72 |
| What Could Work/What Could be Improved? | 72 |
| Ideas for the Summit | 73 |
| Individual Notes..... | 73 |

Row Crops

Attendees

David Lewis (DL)
Steve Quirt (SQ)
Dennis Dirks (DD)
Lisa Bush (LB)
David Retsky (DR)
Peter Martinelli (PM)
Shari DeJoseph (SD)
Jenna Brager (JB)
Bonnie Nielsen (BN)
Deborah Walton (DW)
Mickey Murch (MM)

Group Notes

What Has Worked Well?

1. Grants have been helpful
 - a. EQIP, Western SARE (help from County with grant writing would be nice)
2. Local marketing, including direct sales
 - a. Farmers markets
 - b. Farm stands
 - c. MO
3. County government
 - a. County effort to highlight agriculture and to “work” laws/regulations helpful
4. Diversification
 - a. Smooths out ebb and flow of \$
5. PR
 - a. Local news coverage of farmers
6. Local role models for young and beginning farmers
7. Collaboration
 - a. Group buying and GIM workshops
8. Strong demand for local product
 - a. Increase demand
9. MO deliveries to Canal District
 - a. Funded by stimulus package
10. Farm tours
 - a. Generates income and exposure for farmers – great for kids
11. Support Organizations

- a. UCCE – Steve Q.
- b. MOCA – Huge – has made an effort to understand local agriculture
Anita Sauber
- c. California Olive Oil Association
- d. MALT – Bringing people (including kids) to farms and increasing awareness

Looking into the Future/Opportunities

1. Delivery of vegetables to:
 - a. Homes
 - b. Sites in San Francisco (such as the “rogue” farmers market)
 - c. Via a “produce truck”
2. Marin County “Farm Trails”
3. Serving the underserved
4. Preparing the next generation for farming
 - a. Passing knowledge to the next generation
 - b. Demonstration farm worker housing complex with library, computer room etc. would provide housing and information for future generation of farmers on a farm site
5. Plant diversified crops
 - a. Forage crops
 - b. Orchard crops
 - c. Grains for human consumption
 - d. Other crops of yesteryear
6. Intercropping of perennial crops
 - a. To add agricultural value and farming permanence to farms
7. Marin Identity
 - a. Including introduction of new crops
8. Better networking between farmers
 - a. Including inter-county networking
 - b. Shared equipment - mulch layer, thresher etc. (similar to how no-tell drill is used)
9. Farmlink type of landowner/farmer introduction

Threats

1. Loss of intern labor!!!
 - a. State laws need to be rewritten – can’t meet standards; Marin needs to write its own standards
 - b. Explore possibility of having a non-profit for hiring interns – would provide classes/education and be official employer
2. Growers from other areas flooding local markets
3. Need better worker housing
 - a. Septic is a big issue
4. Loss of knowledge base from experienced ranchers/farmers

- a. Need to capture institutional memory
- 5. Passing on affordable farmland to future generations

How Can Summit Help You?

1. Branding
 - a. Good concept but needs sustainable funding
 - b. (May not be necessary as local now trumps all)
2. Labor!!!
 - a. Need help “legalizing” intern labor
 - b. Umbrella organization to legalize (employ) apprentices
 - c. UCCE?
 - d. MO?
 - e. Need education about laws, regulations, etc.
3. Maintain and look into future
 - a. Passing land along
 - b. Creating perennial crops
 - c. Water
4. Continuing to promote Marin as a farming region
5. Look into specialty crops
 - a. From past etc.
6. Develop system for shared labor and equipment
 - a. Truck for manure hauling etc.
 - b. Cooperative way to dispense manure and amendments for mulch
7. Dry farming
 - a. Not just old style
8. Need balance between product and demand created by marketing
9. Advocacy organization for farmers
 - a. Possibly inter-county
 - b. Possibly grange
10. Cross borders
 - a. More inter-county collaboration
11. Mapping of good soils and water (done)
 - a. Make available information about where good soils and water are
12. Utilize MO more
 - a. Could provide truck and interns
13. Young farmers need business mentors
14. Relationship to PRNS
 - a. Bolinas area farmland within PRNS, try to regain use of it
 - b. Watch over and steward relationship w/PRNS Farmland

Individual Notes

DL: Introduce proceedings from 1997 Summit – page 3, Executive Summary. A lot came out of the last summit (Steve Q’s position, RCD work, Marin Organic [MO]). Premise of

today's meeting – shaping the next summit, November 13, 2010. This is the first of 5 focus groups (row crops, livestock, dairy, processors, organizations). We want to hear: what has worked for you, what you need to continue success, what is threatening/hurdles, and how the summit can best serve you. What does a successful summit look like? Notice the drop in fruit, nut, and veggie production in Marin, and then the subsequent rise. You are all part of that rise. Marin County embraces sustainability. Agriculture is a cornerstone of that sustainability. What has worked well for you farming here so far?

DR: Labor! Education needs to be available for growers regarding labor. I thought I was doing well, then DSLE visited, and now I have no interns, everyone is on payroll, and an \$18,000 fine. Marin Co should help facilitate this education – make sure we're covered. Maybe a mock audit of your farm. No legality for having interns.

DW: Tierra Vegetables in Sonoma was visited by DSLE last fall. DSLE is looking for revenue from small farmers.

DL: On April 1, a rep from the Farm Bureau will give a presentation on labor requirements at Rancho Nicasio.

DD: I cannot afford to comply with the laws. If we had to meet these standards, we'd be out of business. We need to address this at the county and/or state level – rewrite laws for internships/apprenticeships. Can we create an acting board to write our own laws and standards for apprenticeships? I've been talking to Jared Huffman's office.

LB: Is this a change in law or change in enforcement? (Answer is: change in enforcement.)

DW: Law established in the 60's to protect farm laborers. The state is enforcing it now to generate revenue. The one area where you can have interns is non-profit. Perhaps you could form a non-profit as the hiring body for interns and have them work on the farms.

DD: Could we offer classroom study for interns once per week as a group rather than on an individual farm level to meet most requirements?

DR: DSLE enforcement officer charged me for 52 violations, was not here to educate me, only to enforce. The economic situation on each farm is personal. OSHA and the labor commission would be the hardest – big fines. We can become compliant, but can everyone pay a farmers market person \$8/hour plus overtime.

SQ: Let's spend time on this on April 1, and refocus now on what has worked.

DW: Grants have worked. Equip Grant – funded cross fencing for pasture rotation. Grant from Western SARE for sheep grazing. When I began farming, I called agencies to find grants. Marin Co could have resources on grant opportunities/writing.

DD: Fish Project Grants – fine print says, if you break a law, you could be responsible for the whole of the grant money. I lost sleep on that. Local marketing has helped us. We used to wholesale in the city – that was hard. Farmers Markets and direct local sales are what are viable for us. Mickey is the best example of local marketing. MO has made the community aware of West Marin farmers and made connections.

PM: County gov't has made a great effort to promote awareness of local food. Park Service has helped as well.

DW: Diversification helps. Both animals and veggies. Hoop house so I can grow through the winter. Smooths the ebb and flow of cash.

SD: With olives as our main crop, we only harvest one time per year. Diversification helps keep our crew busy. Do local newspapers do stories on Marin farmers?

PM: Yes, local papers do stories on local farmers.

DW: I haven't instigated the press I've received. It's because I do unique things as everyone here does.

MM: Having a variety of people to look up to and different operations to visit. I borrow pieces from each role model's work. Since there is a diversity of niches, no one has to be copied fully.

DW: Sharing info and ideas is huge. I'm putting together a buying group to bring down prices. More collaboration. GIM workshops have been great.

SQ: Are you suggesting a coop?

DW: No, because we're a small group of specialized operations. Coops work better for large farms doing large amounts of one thing without enough demand. We need to grow more farmers.

DL: How many more farmers? Is the potential to grow more farmers endless? – Or back to levels of 1945?

DR: Yes, back to 1945, but not the same kinds. There's definitely a market for lots more than we are producing. Farmers Markets have increased, but they need to go to a higher level. Marin Co Farmers Market gets advertising and press has been good, stories on farmers have been increasing, but they need to step it up. Now we're competing with each other and growers from the South Bay, Watsonville, etc. There is room for more farmers and more niches. If people don't want to wait for parking at the farmers market, can we take boxes of the Marin product directly to people's houses? The problem with the CSA is no diversity – people tire of kale. CSA group: \$25 – mixed box – 100 people = \$2500.

SQ: Market diversification is key. Underground farmers market in San Francisco. Regulators are behind where consumers want to go.

DW: Also, not many of us want to go to underserved areas that can't afford farmers market food. Maybe we could bring in a veggie wagon, glean excess and sell it through the truck to underserved areas. (Canal district, Marin City) We could grow crops that appeal to that market.

MM: The stimulus package has helped. MO gets orders from food pantry, box of my produce goes straight to the canal. But will this last? With the farm stand, I can find a price that works for both the buyer and me – somewhere in between direct and wholesale.

DD: Lots of food at the end of farmers markets is unsold. Organizations collect it and distribute it to low income people (Meals of Marin). Is this even legal? We'll be outlaws again.

SD: DD, do you get a tax write off for giving unsold produce? (Yes.)

DW: CAFF is looking at the intern situation on a state level.

SQ: What has worked as far as support from organizations? What has helped in the development of your farms?

DR: Steve Quirt. MOCA helped us get certified and sell our product.

PM: MOCA helped us understand regulations. Anita.

SD: Olive Oil was a new product in the mid 1990's. MOCA, MO, and MALT – started doing workshops at McEvoy, brought people to the ranch, big role in public awareness.

DD: MALT is a great program. Brings thousands of kids in the Bay Area to farms. Helps kids understand where their food comes from. Kids pick potatoes, and ask where they can get them. We tell them you can get them at the farmers market, and then we see their parents there next week.

SD: Farm tours. People love bringing kids. Farm tours help with exposure. Retail store on site to make some money. Talk about sustainability and the bigger picture of agriculture.

DW: Farm trails in Sonoma. These things are time suckers for small farmers, but important. Sometimes provide education and exposure more than money.

SD: Farm trails in Marin? Cross borders?

DL: MALT talks about it, but there is the border issue.

DW: Meeting with Sonoma Co OSD, border is a wall but we're going to have to cross it. So Co OSD is willing.

DD: I had a kid from Evergreen College and a couple of high school kids get school credit to work on my farm. Can we fulfill education requirements for universities through internships/apprenticeships?

DW/PM: Don't think students are illegal. It's legal if through a college.

DR: It is illegal if the farm is not a non-profit.

DD: Volunteer labor is now illegal, too. We need an umbrella organization to partner colleges with farms to make us legitimate.

DL: While on break, think about how we can maintain existing niches and explore new ones. How to maintain success.

BREAK

DD: A housing complex (made with the right green technology) for the next generation to guarantee that ag has a place/bed to sleep in. Legality issues around septic is a possibility, but composting toilets are adequate. We need to accommodate labor within the county regulations. You lose info and knowledge in one generation if it's not maintained/held in a place. When I stop, what's next? It'll continue on through my apprentices and my library. A library with living quarters and kitchen off of it, like the ecology center in Sebastopol, to document what we've learned and pass to the next generation.

DR: The Dolcini Ranch has a lot of history. What happens after Doug Dolcini? Now I'm growing vegetables and doing different things. What happens after me?

PM: Local Coastal Plan Update – staff is receptive to farm stands. Shouldn't be regulations for seasonal farm stands other than parking issues. Regulations can increase gradually for more permanent farm stands. The planners get this.

DL: We're talking about institutional memory and intergenerational farming. How can we facilitate a smooth transfer? Mickey?

MM: Seeing the interconnectedness of all the ag spaces in Bolinas and other places, what happens to the land in the next 100 years? Wealth of fertility. Our farm stand was a dream, and now its reality. More dreams are: harvest forage crops, use open spaces, manage other people's land. Dream big!

DW: We need to figure out how to pass along land that has been farmed, at an affordable price. Marin Co prices out everyone. How do you pay a mortgage if you don't inherit land? Is leasing land the only other option?

DR: I found my land through placing an ad in the paper. When I placed the ad I got a lot of responses, but how can the next generation learn how to farm if it can't check out other farms. I'm done – I won't keep farming if I have to keep paying fines.

DW: Maybe there's a way to transfer land and farming rights without a huge cash transfer. Farmlink is doing some work, but is not as successful as I'd hope.

DL: What about shared buying, Deborah? How are you all networked? How would you like to be networked?

DW: We're not networked and we're too busy to network ourselves. Sharing the shipping costs in a buying coop has been successful – 16 farms have joined. Another area with potential is equipment, but people need it at the same time, and who pays if it breaks? We grew an acre of grain as summer cover crop and borrowed a seeder, thresher, and dehulling equipment. Thresher was from Tierra Vegetables, and a woman from Palo Alto brought the dehuller. The grain sold out quick.

SQ: Dried beans sell for \$4.50/lb – you can't break even on that without machines.

SD: Same goes for special row equipment. Can MO get grants to buy equipment for the farm community to share? The biggest block for specialized crops is that they are labor-heavy and need special equipment.

DW: A mulch layer would be helpful, so we could grow in the edges of the seasons.

DR: Sharing equipment is hard with people working different sizes of beds, etc. Would we standardize that?

DL: Look at the graph again. Do we have the potential to return to the production of the 1940's? Are there resource limitations to returning to that level?

DW: Why did production drop in the 1950's?

LB: Novato got paved. The whole valley used to be filled with stone fruit.

PM: We used to truck produce from Bolinas to the city.

SD: Artichokes and potatoes were big on the coast, but that died out.

LB: Huge pea farm in the 1930's. Japanese farmers were dry farming over 800 acres of peas, then they were interned. A pea cannery was in Marin.

SD: At McEvoy, along with dry farming, some perennial crops do well with little irrigation. These crops take up space and are harvested less often. What about

intercropping systems? We're looking at it with olive trees. Perennial crops – high value crops to make up for the large use of space = new opportunity.

DW: Grains – dry farm crop, perfect for intercropping with olive trees and orchards. Niches – lots of farmers feel like “this is their specialty.” A new area requires new interest and work, with uncertainty – another case for new young farmers.

DD: Dairies – making cheese, adding value.

SQ: Our organizations need upgrades to handle this stuff. MALT – what happens when everything's MALTed? Marin's new identity. We are insular. If we had a better Marin identity, we could use it to introduce new crops. And we brushed over leasing too quickly. In many areas, leasing is what you do. The summit – examine the leasing issue more. DR leases and is one of the most successful farmers.

LB: Lots of leasing is happening with livestock. What about water? Find good reservoirs and bottomland.

DW: There is a case for doing what Farmlink is supposed to be doing.

DR: Farmlink – great idea, not working. I did my time as an intern, and then to find my own farm land, I placed an ad in the paper.

LB: It is new to livestock owners to lease to veggie farmers. Almost all land in Marin Co is owned by livestock producers. (Most of Sonoma's ag land is in vineyards.)

DR: It is a real shift for livestock folks. Veggie growers create more traffic on the land – more crew, more trucks.

SQ: Farmlink idea – there is a place for this kind of work to be done, but there is the danger of bad hookups. So many people are looking for land to farm. The hookup is a responsibility. This is a full time position – knowing people, setting things up. It takes time and money.

LB: Steve, you wouldn't have to make the introduction or be in the middle.

SQ: We need a mechanism. We're small enough to link people/farmers with land.

DW: What SQ mentioned – branding: North Bay/Coast. “Sonoma Select Program” worked until inner fighting and the executive director left and there was a funding issue. Not sustainable via a grant, but the county/BOS does a tax/mechanism. But this may be unnecessary because “local” has usurped everything, including “organic.”

SQ: We should be able to connect people with land.

DL: Summit, Nov 13 – What does success look like? How can it best serve you?

SQ: Benefit your operation personally?

DD: Labor! Marketing is not a problem. To continue farming, labor is the bottom line. I'd like to see an umbrella organization (the university) cover interns, and make us not look like outlaws.

DR: Agree with DD. MO could use focus – might be perfect to organize a labor movement. Demand it there – need to legitimize what we do.

DL: Apprenticeship issues and bookkeeping issues = 2 different issues.

DW: Bookkeeping is not a problem. We can do that. Problem = gross sales, ½ goes to labor.

DR: Some farmers don't have bookkeeping services, don't know how to do payroll or have a payroll company. I don't know how to do and farmed it out to someone else who did it wrong.

PM: Summit – future of agriculture, availability of land, how to pass land along, perennial crops increase land value, creating water supplies – upgrading water facilities (gov't grants) and identifying bottomland.

LB: We do have a map.

SQ: What kind of outreach can be done to livestock ranchers regarding leasing?

DD: Past = county didn't seem to value the farmers market for what it is. Farmers market is a relationship/community. You don't sell that to the highest bidder. Money is what they make decisions on. You've got to make decisions for other reasons – sustainability. To me that is = this land is protected. Sustainability = you can't sell it.

SD: What I want in the summit – development of Marin as a strong ag region, help us promote our product. Veggie-wise, Marin Co is coming along new. Potential for further development and looking into specialty crops. Keep looking at new crops that aren't even in this county yet. With high labor crops, look into shared equipment. Dry farming should be looked at. Keep doing workshops. Marin's capacity is for small farmers. Use mulch material here – water use goes down and it can be livestock material that needs to be gotten rid of.

DW: Dry farm examples – Italy, France.

DD: There should be no waste. Manure should just be in the cycle.

SD: Manure – we need it. Ranches need to get rid of this material.

DD: County shouldn't have any waste. Shared manure resources.

SD: Manure is being delivered to McEvoy and we're not paying for the truck delivery. Shared equipment could be a truck to deliver manure and straw from livestock to farmers.

DR: Trucking wars – who gets to haul, who gets the cost, who cleans the stalls?

DL: DD said “I've got marketing taken care of.” How about everyone else?

DW: I've heard from newer/younger people starting out – trying for one channel (Sunday Marin Market). The rest of us who've been doing this longer see multiple channels. It will get harder with more competition. My philosophy – always have it sold before you put it in the ground – CSA, lambs.

DD: You have to diversify selling, like growing. I've established a customer base, but new farmers may not have.

PM: Bay Area is a huge untapped market. MO might be creating a sensation when there really isn't that much product. Balance product's market creation and promotion.

SQ: To explore at the summit – producers growing food, marketing is full and about to crack. There is a swell of food coming in – how to sell it. County regulations holding back marketing methods. Need to research cloud of regulation. Have to start doing things differently for new markets. MO: time and money to figure this out.

LB: Some of it is state regs that the county has to follow.

SQ: Have to encourage farmers. We had a marketing class at IVC. There's a lot of work to be done to develop new farmers.

DW: Looking at the list of opportunities from the last summit – it's the same now. Somebody (MO?) should go to bat for us. Clearinghouse advocacy – someone who fights for individuals, not individuals for themselves.

SQ: That's what the Farm Bureau does (for commodity farmers).

DR: There's no experience like being on the farm to grow farmers.

DW: I want the summit to help cross borders between counties, including Napa, Mendocino, and Lake. They're all part of the same foodshed. Cohesive collaboration. Maybe an overarching group of folks saying “we believe in local food...”

MM: Summit – mapping, wrapped bales. Mapping = where is there land which is fertile and available? Must make mapping available. Specialty equipment for specialty crops.

LB: There are maps. Kevin Lunny has equipment for wrapped bales.

DW: People appreciate trust. Farm stand = random \$20.

Livestock

Attendees

Jacqueline Rotlisberger (JRot)
Stephanie Larson (SL)
Ashley Grossi (AG)
Rich Grossi (RG)
Kevin Lunny (KL)
John Finger (JF)
Liz Cunninghame (LC)
Dan Bagley (DB)
Lisa Bush (LB)
David Lewis (DL)
Loren Poncia (LP)
Julie Evans Rosotti (JR)
Mark Pasternak (MP)
Myron Henrich (MH)
Jenna Brager (JB)
Bonnie Nielsen (BN)
Mike Gale (MG)
Steve Quirt (SQ)

Group Notes

What Has Worked Well?

1. Public education about agriculture
 - a. Good local collaboration
 - b. Public education/knowing where food comes from has created/increased product demand
 - c. This awareness has also increased prices to farmers
 - d. This hasn't really affected conventional/traditional markets
2. Conventional/traditional markets have been helped by
 - a. Vaccination program – driven by the “all natural” market – there's no longer a premium for this but product is easier to sell
 - b. Upswing in beef prices
 - c. Weaning can be beneficial but can also be costly
3. Luck!! Actually, not having a family tradition that we had to follow and Michael Pollan
4. Being customer driven keeps customers loyal
5. Unlimited market in Marin

Looking into the Future/Opportunities

1. Conventional/traditional producers need to learn about marketing options and new ideas
 - a. Learning other sales methods, such as video sales; need someone to come and actually teach ranchers how to do it
2. Economic analysis – are we making money?
 - a. Need to know cost of production
 - b. Need to know cost of marketing
 - c. Can then tell consumer what it costs to produce local food and can educate about the cost of carbon footprint for cheap food
3. Recognition of West Marin appellation for livestock products (like DOC in Italy)
 - a. County of Marin could be supportive
4. Ecosystem services
 - a. Need to figure out how to value and how to sell ecosystem services, habitat enhancement and creation
 - b. Need to know how to set up mitigation banks - Start at County Supervisor level
 - c. Need to have the science behind benefits of shellfish culture etc. to use also as marketing tool
5. Teaching producers about “good” rangeland management practices and increasing carrying capacity
 - a. Bring workshops here - “Ranching for Profit” and grazing workshops
6. Need local, organic harvesting/processing facility – must now ship to Merced
7. Expand opportunities for farmer’s markets – limited opportunities are discouraging for new entrants
8. Let’s take a field trip to Australia or elsewhere to see what other producers are doing
9. Seed money for
 - a. Infrastructure
 - i. On-farm
 - ii. Centralized, such as for harvesting and processing which could be mobile or a bricks and mortar poultry plant
 - b. Developing new enterprises
 - c. Innovations such as mob grazing to cover initial expenses such as labor/fencing
 - d. Marketing
 - e. Refrigerated delivery trucks
10. Product liability insurance for meat sales by the piece (increased exposure)
 - a. Farm policies don’t cover this
 - b. Need to educate farmers about it
 - c. Possibly cooperative coverage to make it affordable for multiple producers
11. County support for agriculture needs to continue and grow
 - a. Including help for Point Reyes National Seashore ranchers in dealing with the Park Service
12. Agricultural support organizations must work together and not compete with each other

- a. Farmers should be their focus
- 13. Need help capturing and storing surface water
- 14. Agricultural camps make money, provide marketing through kids
- 15. Alternative energy
- 16. Band Bs

What Has Helped You Decide What to Do?

- 1. Land prices and limitations forced diversification
 - a. More land would have allowed conventional production, but had to be creative on small farm
- 2. Enjoyment of connection with people led to direct marketing
- 3. Doing something for the family
 - a. Wanting to make a “good living” as well as a “good life”
- 4. Lots of support/help from
 - a. Agricultural Commissioner
 - b. UCCE
 - c. County Supervisors
 - d. Reduction of permit hurdles

Threats

- 1. Intergenerational transfer/inheritance issues – lots of turnover will occur within next 10 years
 - a. How to pass on already MALTed properties – conservation easement sale can’t be used as estate planning tool again
 - b. Must maintain Williamson Act in Marin County
- 2. Labor issues
 - a. Including apprentices and interns
 - b. MESA model

Individual Notes

DL: Thank you. Welcome. Intro to summit at Walker Creek Nov 13. Look at the proceedings from the '97 summit and what came out of it (Steve Q's position, Marin Organic, etc.) This is one of 5 focus groups to determine the content and format of the next summit. In June we'll have an organizing committee to shape the summit. We want to hear why you are successful now, what has worked, and what will make the summit helpful for you.

JR: Where in the document does it list the topics discussed at the last summit?

DL: Page 31: strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats, etc. On the back of the agenda is a graph of Ag Production Values for the past 5 decades.

MP: What happened in the '80's?

LC: Dairy was strong then.

SQ: That's when the regulations hit.

DL: Let's start by looking at what has worked for you.

DB: Educating the public (Michael Pollan, Food Inc., Alice Waters)

LC: UCCE has done a great job.

DB: Health issues/benefits.

JR: Educating the public on the importance of supporting local food.

MP: This creates the demand.

LC: Pointing out where food is really coming from, not the grocery store.

JF: I was there in '97. 2 things have been important in our success since '97: proximity to a market with knowledge and demand. Guys in Chesapeake Bay can't sell their oysters locally but can sell to me. We're lucky to be in the Bay Area where the demand exists, but it also costs a lot to be in business in this county. In other areas, it's about cheap food but our area will pay more. 2nd thing: selling more directly to the consumer. My 2 restaurants and direct on farm. That's what's made this business financially sustainable.

SQ: Rich and Loren, how is direct marketing (selling to commodity markets straight off the truck) affecting more conventional marketing?

RG: Not really.

LP: Direct sales have a minimal effect on conventional marketing. The educated affluent consumer here wants to put a name on their food and know where it comes from.

SQ: Stephanie, what has helped conventional marketing in the last 10 years?

SL: Value-added, vaccination programs.

MH: In '97 (pre-vaccine programs), you couldn't get your money back for vaccinating. Now you have to vaccinate because you can't sell without it.

LP: This is all driven by the all natural, no antibiotic movement – that there's a premium on all natural because feedlots can't afford it. Also, there's an upswing on the cattle cycle. Prices are higher now than in the late 90's.

SQ: Do you think natural beef is being sold like conventional?

SL: It's not all that different. It's in the labels and what the consumer wants to believe. Guys will market any way they can get more money. The corn market also influences the price of beef.

LP: I've been doing all natural beef for 15 years. There used to be a 15 cent premium. Now that more cattle are certified all natural, it's the norm, and if you don't do it you get docked 10-15 cents.

JR: Is there a price difference with the vaccination program or is it just easier to sell vaccinated animals?

RC: It's easier to sell them. You're not paid more.

MH: You're never sure if you're getting paid for vaccines, if it's worth the money. You just have to do it to broaden your sales opportunities because you'll limit your buyers if you don't do it.

LP: I agree. I still think all natural is the premium.

LC: Does everybody wean?

JR: Most people don't have the facilities.

LP: I weaned for the last 5 years, sometimes got the premium, sometimes not. Producers make more money with aggressive vaccination programs and sell them right away ("off cow").

MH: Ranchers have tried to wean and lost their shirt. It depends on the year.

SL: It depends if you've got the feed.

MH: You go into weaning if you have enough food for a time, then you're at the mercy of the market when your feed runs out and you have to sell.

SL: What about ecosystem services? Where you sell a service (cows managing rangeland, helping the environment). Rewards for grazing as a coming marketing tool. Not necessarily getting paid for it, but benefiting from it.

MP: Biggest service is turning forage into protein.

SQ: What can we do here in the next era as the ag community/helping organizations to help? It seems like conventional markets are more driven by outside forces. Is it practical to add value?

LP: Nobody would wean a calf unless there is enough money for it. If the consumer pays enough money, the market will be flooded.

SL: We're not a commercial livestock area. Think about adding value through niche marketing, about you guys getting paid for viewscape or targeted grazing or biofuels. The MALT principle – you guys getting compensated.

LP: Where would the funding come from? I like the idea but where's the money. The county is missing the boat on mitigation banks. Farmers getting paid to have their operation as it is and enhancing species habitat, paid to create endangered species habitat. Bring on the endangered species and pay me to create their habitat and help their species proliferate. There's a potential here to make more money from a mitigation bank than by raising cattle/sheep.

KL: Yes, if we do it right, we can all create great habitat.

LP: There's a program called Conservation Reserve/Security Program – pays money for this.

SQ: Mark, can you tell us about your farm camp?

MP: It's an important component you can do on ag land that will hopefully generate money. For us, the proximity to a large metropolitan area helps. It's synergistic. Bring kids out. We're paid to educate kids. Kids then encourage their friends and parents to buy Devil's Gulch product. I believe in that potential, but it hasn't been fully realized yet. We've been losing money on the camp for the last 6 years. There's always stumbling blocks in the beginning, but I'm optimistic. Startup is slow with various components for diversification (BandB's, getting paid for conservation efforts, alternative energy, etc.). They all add up to a sum which creates viability.

DL: What's helped you decide between direct marketing and traditional marketing?

MP: I don't have enough land. 75 acres isn't enough for traditional marketing. We tried other stuff in the 80's, put in our vineyard, but if we had more acres we could do more.

JR: Not having enough land. I wanted to include product on my parents' land without much space. With a small herd, the only money is in direct marketing. Land is expensive. I love direct feedback from customers and love supplying the community with local food, but if I had enough land I'd probably be farming like my parents.

KL: My kids' fault. Now their 22 years old. When they were 10, they asked why we were doing this. It's a great lifestyle but it's hard. My mom asked what can we do differently. It was an economic driver that turned into a philosophical passion. Our size herd can't break even in traditional markets – we were subsidizing with outside income. What made it possible? SL, SQ, UCCE. Mike Gale setting a standard that worked with grass fed beef. Having an ag commissioner as involved as he is in organic certification helped. Ritchie is

a better cow man than we are. Having a supportive Board of Sups – Steve Kinsey, other county staff, reduce permit hurdles.

LC: We had land without anything in place. It wasn't viable to keep the dairy. It was a gradual process. Direct marketing makes sense. Having examples helped – the Gales, LP, having lots of help and places to get resources. Lots of support from the county.

SQ: Rich and Ashley, representing the traditional guys, what are your choices for the future? Will you stay the same? What do you think of diversification?

RG: We're stuck between a rock and a hard place. It's working for now, so we'll keep on and maybe change later. We sell to a regular buyer and now have video sales – you're only as good as your representative.

AG: I hope in the future to continue with his ways and what I've learned. You only have one chance to make money in the whole year.

SQ: What will help you when you take over the ranch?

AG: I don't know.

JR: I think learning different ways to sell in traditional markets would help. Someone who can really explain video marketing and other choices that could get us more money than a dealer dealing with a buyer.

LP: There's going to be more demand. Direct marketers can't produce enough. Maybe we could work cooperatively with other ranchers to fill the need. This is already happening and it's gonna have to grow. Some people don't want to have to deal with the consumer, so the traditional marketers could work together with direct marketers. Demand is only going to grow (with Oprah, Food Inc, etc.)

MP: On the sales end, traditional guys can benefit from learning sales options. Biggest thing is lowering costs. We have to produce as cheaply and as well as possible. UCCE can offer more classes and seminars, new ideas for production will be critical for traditional guys.

JR: Local traditional farmers know how to do it, are successful, know how to budget for the year, save money, know the trends in prices.

SQ: Mike, you're one of the leaders in direct marketing. What has worked for you?

MG: Luck! Not having a family tradition that we had to follow. We realized early on that selling to a broker was not the way to make money. There's a big market for direct sales in the Bay Area. We had a pair of twins our 1st year – families bought them in quarters. The next year we sold 11, next year Michael Pollan's article came out in the NY Times and we sold 41. And it's kept on growing. Bay Area is an unlimited market. There might

be tricks to figure out ways to do it. We're still picking the low hanging fruit. Key to success is being customer driven. Keeps customers loyal.

KL: UCCE has done a good job and can do more in educating about good rangeland management. It's not what we're used to traditionally but can add to carrying capacity.

SQ: Bob McClure told me more grass with cross fencing.

RG: The biggest problem is mother nature.

LP: Until you're dissatisfied you won't change. I love being a rancher. My dad doesn't want to change anything, but I want to make a lot of money and the only way to do so is to do something different. We're just scratching the surface of good pasture management. We used to have 30-40 cows in every field and fed 6-8 loads of alfalfa. This year we only fed 1 load with the same amount of cattle. Want to learn more from SL and UCCE. It's taken a lot of time and money to get here and we can do more.

SL: It's not that anybody's wrong, it's just the way that they've done it and it works fine. But we may need change for the future. You have to work with what you've got. There's no way everyone will put up the fences that Loren has.

SQ: The economics of today are uncertain. What can we do together to advance?

- BREAK -

DL: What do we need to do for the next 10 years? Is there an integration of markets between traditional and direct? A role for the meat-buying club?

MG: How do you define success? What's a simple way to figure out profit per acre, return on equity? Can we have someone do a workshop to help figure this out? Maybe we're losing money when we think we're doing good, or maybe we're doing better than we think. Many of us don't have mortgages, which skews things. There might be a difference between traditional and niche marketing, but I'm not sure. We all want to make money because ranches are hard to maintain, but where do we start? Maybe an economic analysis of acreage, animals, expenses, opportunities, costs, etc.

LP: Depends on your lifestyle and expenses.

DB: Everyone's success is different. Mortgage is a problem. We're in the negative. That's why people have a second job.

MP: With agriculture in general, the largest amount of growth is in real estate value. This is ok if you like the lifestyle. But when your kids and grandkids don't like the lifestyle, you see a transition away from family farms. This is when you can add direct marketing to capture more money.

DB: You want to pay someone a fair wage but you don't have the money to. That's why we have a family farm – we can't afford to hire anyone. To pay 30K a year, how many eggs does it take?

JRot: More cooperation can help. Farmers combining products to sell makes direct marketing more affordable. And you can provide a variety of products at a small portion of each. Something like a meat-buying club builds direct marketing options for livestock producers. Ours sources within 25 miles of Sonoma County. All follow the same practices and principles. We sell the farmer's story. People sign up for a box of mixed meat with optional additional meat. All USDA processed. People come to various locations in Sonoma County to pick up a box, get a newsletter, and there are videos on our website of all the producers. People appreciate the option to buy local quality products and to know the story of the producers and where their food comes from. There are models in other states we're watching selling all local products. Our meat CSA is built on the veggie CSA concept. It's a little different with a one time harvest. We need to work on a year round option. This way people can specialize in their animals and work with others to provide for the demand.

SQ: This is a good example of a solution from working together. Ashley, tell us about what you're doing.

AG: FFA. With my ag advisor I'm working for a program called "Food for America" which teaches grades K – 5 about ag, about what you eat, where your food comes from. My 2nd graders have great questions and I'm learning from them, from my grandfather, and from FFA. What are we eating? How does it help us sustain life? Kids learn about animals which sustain a living.

SQ: That's great – having farmers teaching about farming. Myron, what do we need to do?

MH: I'm not actually farming right now. I don't have an answer. I'm more interested in listening to others about what's working. I'm deeply interested in ag lasting in Marin and Sonoma Counties. I see different successful operations, more than one way that people are making a living. So there are actually several answers to that question.

DL: Loren said dissatisfied. If and when you face dissatisfaction or crisis, what will you need to deal with that?

JR: As for issues in the next 10 years, inheritance of property is a big one. I see larger turnover in land ownership. In the last 10 years, MALT has helped but what if kids inherit land that is already MALTED? How will the new owners deal with land tax, etc.? How do we keep the young generation on the land? On the farm? We also need the county to protect the local Williamson Act. If it's cancelled our property tax will go way up and we may lose our ranch.

SL: Whether niche or traditional marketing, farmers don't know actual cost of production and marketing. It would be helpful to know what is a viable price to pay, what the cost of production is for traditional farmers, how many hours are spent in niche markets – so that we can tell consumers what it really costs to support local food. Need to educate people about the actual costs, using buzzwords like the carbon footprint of a hamburger and who's paying that.

DB: The same people who want local food are complaining about its cost.

LC: The price of food in the market isn't real – it's too cheap.

LP: Tell those people to get it somewhere else. Someone else will come along and pay the real price.

MG: What would help in the next 10 years is for west Marin to be known as an Appalachian of good meat and dairy. The history of west Marin is different from Sonoma County and the rest of California. We have the opportunity to market products as Appalachian, to be part of something greater than a working group. The county could be supportive of it.

DB: A benefit of coastal property is that grass is sweeter and greener for a longer period of time, which makes the flavor of meat better.

SQ: John Finger – will you talk about people working together?

JF: So much of this is similar. We started off traditional, selling through a broker to restaurant, and land costs etc. drove us to where we are today, I didn't have family land to start, and I'm faced with coastal land costs. We've managed to be successful, but it's a year to year lifestyle. There's a possibility for a cooperative site for small oyster farms on the waterfront. Working waterfronts – preserve the ability to bring oysters ashore. I'm intrigued by a mitigation bank. We're all talking about a win/win situation around habitat values, water quality issues and the environment = win/win, we help create and preserve habitat. How you quantify habitat value is a big piece. It's an education piece. Carbon sinks. How do you do that without sounding like you're hitting people over the head? How do we capitalize on that? This would improve our ability to stay in business.

KL: This is part of Ecosystem Services.

JF: I consider myself an environmentalist but we get attacked more and more by myopic environmentalists.

MG: I want to reinforce Julie's issue of intergenerational transfer, which is a huge issue.

MP: We've had workshops on this in the past, can we set it up as a living trust, as a business? We can pass down the business with no inheritance.

MG: that's only a small part of the problem. We have 3 kids who are well educated and don't see themselves as ranchers. Who is going to run the ranch after us?

JF: How big do you want your operation to get? We decided to make it a real business, we wanted to have something to go forward to the next generation, to make a real business that can go on without me, after me.

LP: I have a bucket list. Starting with what we have at our disposal. I was fortunate to inherit land in Tomales, and with it, I inherited a huge tax responsibility. Intergenerational transfer is not sustainable unless you plan for it. You have to push the envelope to make planning happen. UCCE can continue to help. One more thing – mitigation starts at the county supervisor level. Our county is so anti-development that there's no need for a mitigation bank. The county should realize that a little bit of development could help agriculture. There are great workshops out there, could the county bring the workshops here? "Ranching for Profit" is a recognized system, business planning for your farm. We could have a workshop on this. Grazing workshops, Greg Judy & Mob grazing. The biggest thing for local marketing is a local harvesting and processing facility. We don't have this in Marin County. If we want our animals harvested and we want to keep organic certification, I have to ship animals to Merced. Consider the carbon footprint. We need something here for local harvest. Expand the farmers market; I'm a little discouraged by farmers markets. It's a year-round system, which discourages new entrance to allow seasonal meat producers like me in. Local producers should take a trip to Australia/New Zealand to learn what others are doing in a similar environment. We need seed money to try new things. Successful businesses have had funding to help get started and take risks. Failure is not an option for most of us. Last thing – I'm looking into selling individual pieces of meat because there is a big demand. But I need liability insurance, and therefore must sell thousands of dollars to make it profitable enough. What about a cooperative insurance policy?

JR: Insurance is important, we need education about product liability for farmers.

KL: How do we market Ecosystem Services? How do we identify particular products and management styles? With shellfish, do people understand that it is incredibly productive? Compare livestock production of eating grass versus grain. For people who want to be aware, how do you get your arms around marketing? There is a science behind what goes on the label. We need to translate good ideas into market advantages.

DL: Ecosystem Services to capitalize on service or education to get a premium?

JF: More people are becoming aware and more people are getting skeptical about claims and standards, they need an explanation. I just got flown to Las Vegas to talk about oysters for 5 minutes.

JR: In the next 10 years, county support for agriculture needs to continue and grow. County/agencies support needs to continue helping us work with the park. Lisa's position is very important.

DB: And the Farm Bureau needs to work with us. Everyone needs to unite so we're all on the same page.

MP: On the labor issue, it's good to see UCCE and everyone standing up for David Retsky. It's up to you all to get together and talk to the bureaucrats.

JR: MALT, UCCE, etc. all must work together. Right now there's a bit of working against each other. They need to refocus to help us farmers.

DL: One more point – how can the summit benefit you? What can happen between you and organizations there to create success?

SL: Good thing to clarify at the summit – amount of land used in Marin County and how does that relate to the environment? What is the dollar value of ecosystem services. For example, Sonoma is focused on vineyards, though 10% is in grapes. This group needs to capitalize on land use.

DB: Grasses are a big issue. Green turns brown so fast, everywhere besides the coast.

LB: 99% of Marin ag land is in livestock production, but niche markets and small producers still get more attention.

SL: Then where is the money going?

LP: Most people in agriculture love agriculture. Most of us also have a green thumb. We could grow more crops on most of our properties if we had more water. If we could get help storing surface water that is running down into the creeks in January, then we could use it in September and October. We could use that water for a strawberry patch or whatever to increase local food production. We could participate more in the county's local food production if we had help with regulatory issues and financing rain catchment and storage.

MP: It's a cost issue for putting in infrastructure and equipment. The cost of storage and pumping is prohibitive.

KL: David, back to your question, we do have all these people in the same room, we as producers are hoping these groups will work together, hope that agencies will work together in Marin and keep focus as to why they're here. Agencies do work well together in Marin compared to other counties, so we should be thankful, but it is healthy to get people in the same room and refocus.

SQ: We especially need to get the traditional guys at the summit. It's your job to get them there. We need lots of different players at the summit.

DL: So we've got some good priorities for the summit from today. If you come up with more, please let Steve or I know. Hope we'll be able to answer Mike's question of "what is success?"

Processors

Attendees

Craig Ramini (CR)
Rick LaFranchi (RL)
David Evans (DE)
David Lewis (DL)
Lynn Giacomini (LG)
Lisa Bush (LB)
Sue Conley (SC)
Albert Straus (AS)
Tamara Hicks (TH)
Steve Quirt (SQ)
Bonnie Nielsen (BN)
Jenna Brager (JB)

Group Notes

What Has Worked Well?

1. County Ombudsperson
2. Support from other processors
3. Confidence to start business came from:
 - a. The American Cheese Society
 - b. Successes of other cheese makers
 - c. Help from the UCCE network
4. Low capital entry
 - a. Mozzarella - being able to rent established facility/infrastructure rather than paying to have new facility built
 - b. Butcher shop – access to established facility
5. Affordable housing in Point Reyes
6. Marin RCD and other conservation groups helped with conservation work
7. Low interest loan from USDA for dairy improvements
8. MALT easement provides \$ to invest in infrastructure/business
9. Support in County and community for butcher shop
10. Training for EHS staff (needs to continue)

Looking into the Future/Opportunities/Needs

1. Transitioning from Mom and Pop family operation to larger scale – requires knowledge of required inspections, HAACP, recall procedure etc.
2. Clearinghouse for information about permits, grants, information on renewable energy etc. (thermo solar, methane etc.) for processing and for running farm

- a. Shouldn't have to blaze new trail every time
3. Farmlink type connections between new producers/processors and existing farms/facilities
4. Shared facilities/infrastructure
 - a. Freight consolidation/cross docking center (County support?)
 - b. Cold storage
 - c. Distribution center on corridor
 - d. "logistics optimization"
5. County food processing program (?)
6. Skilled labor source
 - a. Cheese making courses in Spanish
 - b. Expand to other industries
 - c. Need to educate workers about pastured poultry
 - d. Need accrediting agency so workers can get certified and so they can be hired as "interns"
 - e. Cal Poly is closing dairy facility – get UC involved in dairy training
 - f. Saint Anthony's could be training center
 - g. Need pathways for intern to become producers and for producers to become landowners
7. Affordable housing
 - a. Need to be able to put up yurts with composting toilets
8. Emulate "Dairy Innovation Center" in Wisconsin and Vermont
 - a. Also for meat
9. Marin Economic Forum – Vivien Straus is on Board – talk to her
10. Bring options and programs to struggling family farms who don't know how to diversify
11. Streamline permitting
12. Grange/quarterly group meetings to discuss needs (without creating your own competition)
13. Development DOC for Marin Cheeses etc.
14. SLOW money

What Has Not Worked Well?

1. There are no incentives to stay in Marin
 - a. Petaluma offers potential financing via redevelopment money and bonds
 - b. Need to get redevelopment money managers and policy makers (Supervisors) to Agricultural Summit
2. Difficulty getting financial support for processing facilities (especially if they are not on-farm)
3. No USDA meat processing in Marin – processing is in S.F. and Sonoma County
4. Wholesaling is difficult in Marin – must rely on other counties for processing and distribution
5. There is lots of support to start processing but not to ramp up
6. Environmental Health Department (EHS)
 - a. Septic – County doesn't support alternative systems

- b. Irrational retail inspection/new inspectors who don't understand agriculture (threw out hundreds of dollars worth of cheese)
 - c. Head of EHS is supportive
7. No marketing programs – to expand markets and increase awareness of agriculture County-wide and beyond

Individual Notes

DL: Thank you all for coming. We are here today at this focus group to gather input for the Marin Ag summit. Lots of good came out of the 1997 summit (Steve's position, Marin Organic, Lisa Bush's work, Grants to RCD, etc.). In the 97 summit proceedings, on page 3 you'll find the executive summary. On page 31 you'll find strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. On page 43, you'll find the list of attendees, as you asked for Craig. Our general feeling when I came on about a year ago, between myself, Steve Quirt, and Steve Kinsey, was that it is time to plan again. This morning's structure is 3-fold. First, we'll focus on what has worked for your success. Second, we'll address what you'll need for future success. Third, we'll ask you what you would need for a successful summit. We've had 2 other focus groups. You are processors and we will have dairy, orgs, and retail. You represent bold courageous folks doing value-added. You take farm goods and produce local products for consumers. That's the hat we want you to wear today. What did it take for your success and what's it going to take for you to have continued success? Also, you'll find a copy of the 4 page proposal for the next summit as a work plan we've been sharing with partners.

SQ: We're learning from you guys. This will be replicated in the summit with a focus on solutions. What can the ag community do? The info we're trying to get is to help us better understand what to do in the summit. We do not want the summit to be idealistic or visionary, but rather the summit needs to be practical.

DL: The summit will be on Nov 13 at Walker Creek Ranch. Focus groups will be done in May and we'll start summit advisory meetings in June.

*Intros around the table.

DL: We've got a good combination here of folks who've been doing this and those just starting out. So, what's worked?

RL: First, having Lisa Bush to help work through county obstacles. It's taken us 7 months to get through the process from the time we began the project to completion. Lisa Bush has been battling roadblocks head on.

AS: What roadblocks?

RL: County departments. Not understanding things in the county permit process from the initial planning phase. Water and wastewater went fine, then came retail and food prep,

another aspect of environmental health. We weren't allowed to prep any food on site, which led to design issues that we could have been more prepared for. Now we know different hoops for next time.

AS: Was the spring up to state standards?

RL: With the design...

LB: There were communication issues between certain individuals.

TH: Can I have background info from Rick?

RL: We turned the milk barn in Nicasio into a cheese factory. More help has come from Sue Conley who has been in the business and offered a lot of support (tours, meetings).

AS: Did you have problems with public works?

RL: Not too bad. There was the stream setback issue. We should have asked for permission before continuing with the design, regarding the location of the water tank.

AS: Scale wise, do you think you've made production storage facilities as big as you'll need in 10 years?

RL: No, but you don't know what you'll need. Because of budget issues, we had to scale back on storage, but you don't really know until you're in the marketplace. We did what we needed to get started and to carry us for awhile.

DL: So if you don't know till you're in the marketplace, what gave you the confidence to speculate enough to start?

AS: Did you have a size in mind?

RL: 500 gallon vat. Someday we want to use all of our milk to make cheese.

CR: That's a lot of cheese.

RL: Clover has a lid on everyone's production. We hope to give them milk and make cheese off what we've got left. We hope making cheese will fund our dairy.

SC: I'll add something about that confidence. Rick studied cheesemaking for 3-4 years at the American Cheese Society, a network of retailers, producers, wholesalers, etc. that offers tours, courses, workshops, etc. We all depend on that.

RL: We talked to every cheesemaker and everyone was supportive. All but one were positive. Sue has done well and is expanding. Everybody is expanding – Giacomini,

Straus, Redwood Hill, etc. We are in a region that is interested and supportive of what we do.

AS: The other part is financing. Did you get all the financing you needed? That's the biggest challenge for a new business.

SC: It's impossible to get loans as a processor unless you're attached to a farm.

SQ: With these difficulties and as a generational farm, what do you see as the landscape for the dairy industry here? Rick, you have a longstanding operation. What will happen here? What's your view on the traditional commodity way vs. new industries?

RL: Trying to do conventional dairy in the north bay is like spinning wheels. Dairy prices were the same last year as they were in 1980, but the costs have gone up. We are a pasture based system. When we talked with Albert, organic made sense. We wouldn't make it as a conventional dairy.

AS: Marin lost a few dairies in the last few years.

SC: We've got sheep, goat, buffalo, and bovine.

DL: Do you guys see the Sonoma Marin County line as dashed or solid?

AS: I'm moving to Sonoma because Marin is not supportive. No redevelopment grants. No incentives to stay here. No vehicle set up for community development grants, revolving bonds, etc. That's why I'm going to Petaluma.

DL: What's the economic development like in Sonoma?

AS: There's nothing in Marin, no focus or grasp of a concept to do this.

SC: I was asked to be district representative for Sonoma County Open Space District. They have money for ag development to put toward a production site that people could rent or processing facilities.

LB: Albert, is the lack of incentive in Marin just financing?

AS: Yes.

RL: Marin County has always not considered ag. In Sonoma County, towns are surrounded by ag and it's a part of life.

DL: We can also talk about what has not worked.

AS: It sounds like environmental health and public works has been better for Rick.

SC: It's still a big issue for me.

SQ: Craig and Tamara, let's hear from the new guys what's helped you get started?

CR: I'm launching a cheesemaking business which uses water buffalo milk to make authentic mozzarella cheese. It's rare except in Italy. What has worked for me is tapping into the UCCE network via Steve and introductions through Sue. I've found a completely rented site with pasture, a working barn, and cheese processing facility. As a former Silicon Valley guy, I know it's important to keep capital costs low. I'm in Petaluma at the Pacheco Ranch on Chileno Valley Road. I'll be using Donna's facility. They still do goats and make cheese off site. What's important for the aspiring cheesemaker is overcoming the barriers to entry. You need to keep capital costs low. Prove you can make money on a small scale and go from there. My successful first steps have come from the support of people who know what's going on, connections. Education and input to figure out licensing and approval process is important, not having to start from the ground up.

LG: Farmlink in Sonoma County links entrepreneurs to farms. We need this networking in Marin on a personal scale – agritourism.

CR: A missing element was no org to help me meet Rick earlier, to join aspiring cheesemakers, to spread costs.

AS: An idea is to join or be associated but not have shared facilities.

SQ: Tamara, what has helped you?

TH: We've been trying this for 7 years. Our story is complicated, has 3 prongs. We bought our property 7 years ago in Tomales. It needed significant conservation work for the first 4 years, actually ongoing. We've had significant amount of support from NRCS, RCD, and the Bay Institute. It's taken financing on our part but it's worked well. Second aspect is our dairy, we have a herd of 200 goats. It's been a big struggle. Sue is the connection in all of this, has been there since the start. We've gotten low interest loans from USDA and support from Red Hill, which buys our milk. The 3rd aspect is making our own cheese. This is the most difficult. We have a building to do our own creamery on site, but we have little support and financing. We feel a little bit stuck in cheesemaking. We submitted design plans through the county and we got approved for a creamery and retail. Financing is the challenge. Also, just last Friday we closed on a MALT easement which will be helpful, significant help with financing half finished buildings and the creamery.

SQ: David, can you comment on meat processing. What has helped you and what topics to work on from a practical level at the summit.

DE: I started 10 years ago knowing little, thought the only market opportunity was direct to consumer, selling a whole, half, or quarter animal. I thought on farm slaughter was okay. I learned by trial and error. It's a confusing business with many different entities

having authority. Clarity is very valuable. There is a continuous learning curve, figuring out how to turn a live animal into meat at a market. Some positives have been opening my butcher shop, with the help of huge community and county support. It wouldn't have happened alone. Low capital entry is crucial. It's important to be clear on what's necessary vs. what is assumed. How to build a viable business around a retail butcher shop. Ours is the only property in town that would have allowed the use we were proposing. It already had the infrastructure required by county inspection. We need to do wholesale and we couldn't do it in this facility. Marin doesn't have a USDA meat processor, so I talked to Sonoma County and San Francisco. I live in Pt Reyes and am partial to my Pt Reyes business, but I have to be more tied to infrastructure in San Francisco, where the USDA processor is. Now we have meat being processed in San Francisco and coming back to Pt Reyes for sale. We've got a great entry level mechanism – you can get up and running, but when you have a perishable product, you have to have other outlets like a wholesale market as backup for stability.

SQ: This is a good point for the summit – that we are outsourcing services. The summit should address this.

DE: Marin had a robust ag infrastructure and it's gone. Will be a hard road to bring it back. We do still have some infrastructure but we need more for a long term sustainable food system. We are a major part of bay area food production. We have the land and the animals. It's still a problem that we're reliant on outside counties and don't have any say so.

LB: How long ago did Marin have a USDA slaughter or processing facility?

DE: There was something in San Rafael at one time that may have been for dairy. I don't think we had anything for meat. This may have preceded USDA regulations, perhaps in the 30's and 40's small independent operations could exist because there was no oversight. Regulations knock out the worst 5% and the best 10%.

DL: People are saying they benefit from a network. Am I correct that the support for local ag in this area comes from consumers and that there is less support in financing? Is there support to enter but not to ramp up?

DE: We don't survive on retail sales out the door.

SC: We couldn't scale up in Pt Reyes. We have a reliable milk supply (Straus and an increasing organic milk supply) and the market here. But we moved to Petaluma because we are limited here by the septic field. We looked to expand in Marin but the county does not consider alternative septic systems even though it'd be most economical to expand where we are. We're building new septic this year – it's a wetlands philosophy and will process 2x the waste, but the county will only permit the original amount.

DE: Regulations need to catch up with the science.

SC: Our cheese counter supports all local cheesemakers. We have a new strict inspector who trashed \$600 worth of cheese because we couldn't have room temperature cheese on the counter. We'd been asked to list which cheeses need refrigeration and which can be left at room temp. We are educating the county department on how cheese is made, what mold is, etc.

LG: You're spending time and money to educate the county.

SC: Yes, we're on the cheese trail now, which is important to the county. We've moved to Petaluma so that we're not vulnerable to Marin.

SC: We have high visibility marketing piece.

AS: Can I suggest getting an expert in this terminology?

DE: I've had the same experience as Sue in the growth of my business. I have enough livestock but the same inspector threatened to throw product in the garbage without asking about procedures. It's difficult to deal with this attitude, not stress free at all. Education is a big issue here.

LG: I'm hearing a similar story, you start small and get away with stuff and learn as you go. There comes a point where you have to grow and that opens you to county scrutiny and regulations. We wouldn't survive without 50 distributors across the US. We're small but we can't sell all of our cheese in our backyard. The north bay is lucky to have a consumer base with money that values quality food and supports us as artisans. We're facing requests (Disneyworld) and encountering a lot of regulations and paperwork and HACCPs. Maybe a workshop on how a small mom and pop can get the regulatory certification to grow.

SC: COM is starting a dairy arts program through community education. Maybe eventually it will offer college credit. CA doesn't have this and needs it.

CR: I have a question for the experienced people – are the regulatory bodies not in conversation about alternative solutions? Is anyone looking forward?

DE: Do the regulatory bodies see a conflict of interest in having conversations with us?

AS: Septic is just one thing. We have to get alternative methods approved through state and federal regulations.

LB: A few years ago UCCE put on trainings for county staff in ag awareness. I found that some individuals responded and others didn't see why ag should get special treatment. The head of consumer safety Dave Smale was very responsive and usually fixes situations. Perhaps training should continue for new employees.

AS: Can the county make initial trainings required?

LB: They could and could offer ongoing trainings as well.

RL: My impression is that county employees go by the book and compromise can only happen at the next level up.

CR: The book's outdated.

LB: Low level people don't feel they have the authority to bend the rules.

AS: They also don't know anything about ag. We need training and policies to be set regarding ag as important in Marin. Lynn, you said scale is important. I disagree – they wanted to shut me down on my first day and I was small. The county didn't recognize port-o-potties. I don't think it's an issue of scale, but how the county deals with ag in general.

LG: There are different problems at different levels. Value added programs are essential in the education of consumers. We just opened a commercial kitchen to raise awareness of what we do on a farm. It's called "The Fork at Pt Reyes." We hope to break even. It took 3 years and just opened and is entirely our investment. There are no marketing programs. What about value added programs on a marketing level? I'd like to see the county get more involved with funds to help programs and expand the market for cheese everywhere.

SC: One thing works for me – employees that can walk from affordable housing to work. In Petaluma most of our staff can walk to work from an area with housing for different income levels.

AS: Septic, housing, skilled labor are all huge issues.

All: We need more affordable housing.

DE: On a federal level, we have very limited influence. On a county level, we as a community can draw common goals. There's vision around ag in Marin. Is there a way that everyone in the county can embrace the vision? We need a support mechanism, necessary to make vision happen.

AS: Basic start would be getting local organic food in the Civic Center cafeteria.

LB: That would reinforce the vision.

LG: The farmers market is right there. It's easy enough.

AS: We need a place on 101 corridor where everyone can bring their products. We should work as a group of processors and look for a distribution center.

LG: The county does benefit when one truck comes up Hwy 1 and picks up from 19 producers. We need to consolidate.

DE: We get free delivery of vacuum sealed bags when the timing is right.

CR: The director of sustainability of Wal-Mart realized that it's increasingly a distribution issue. Can we call in someone to conceptually architect how to put this together?

AS: I agree about incentives. County could help and really support this.

LG: This would create new jobs.

AS: Benefit needs to be quantified for the county to justify it.

SQ: If you review the last summit, this is hardly anything new. What can we do as a community? How about a group at the summit of processors and county staff? What about a workshop on infrastructure consolidation? How can we use the summit to look at solutions?

SC: Get the redevelopment people to the summit, people who manage funds.

AS: Get policymakers and supervisors to the summit, not just staff who follow policy.

SC: I was nervous at the last summit, telling ranchers to make cheese.

LG: We let Albert try the methane digester first.

CR: Experimentation should be supported by regulatory bodies.

AS: There should be a program set up so you know what you need regarding funding, regulations, etc. for on or off farm food processing. There should be a system in place, somewhere you go with an idea and get a checklist and potential funding sources, instead of going to multiple places with many surprises. As an individual it's hard to get a grasp on what and how to apply. Everyone is blazing their own trail and shouldn't have to each time.

LG: Renewable energy is a key component, both in being environmental stewards and in financial survival. There's grant money there.

SQ: We discussed ecosystem services in the livestock group. Stacy is figuring out how the county can reward for this.

AS: Not just on the farm but for food processors too. There's a variety of alternative energy sources – wind, solar, methane. Different things we can do as processors, separate from the farm.

SQ: Should we explore benefits for good services we offer (ecosystem services) at the summit?

RL: Yes, that is valuable.

AS: We can integrate all and get a system where people know what they're getting into. Marin has its own energy authority but they don't know what they are doing yet. They wanted me to sell them energy but didn't know what price they would pay. I signed a contract with PG&E because the county was too slow. It would help if the county had a clear path for a system. In Sonoma they have ways to connect energy independence with paying property taxes.

LG: We did an energy audit to see what was best for our property. We used an independent source. Could the county connect us with these services?

SC: Vermont and Wisconsin Senators got big grants for dairy innovation. Wisconsin hired consultants, walked dairymen through all steps.

LG: They provided marketing research too.

LB: Do we want a dairy innovation center here?

SC: There were 15 new cheesemakers in Wisconsin as a result.

DE: It could be expanded to meat products as well.

LG: What role does the Marin Economic Forum play?

DL: Steve and I visited with Robert Eyler; he's on board with the summit. Marin had the Marin Economic Commission which became the Marin Economic Forum. Goal is to be self supporting through grants. Outcome remains to be seen.

SQ: I put little hope for ag there. It's a broad spectrum economic service and our problems are so specific. Any of today's issues could take a full time position.

DL: Marin Economic Forum could help us with some specifics, like distribution consolidation issue. Let's get back to the skilled labor force issue. Where and how do we get it?

SC: COM and the CA Artisan Cheese Guild are starting with one day cheesemaking courses.

LG: We're doing our second cheesemaking course in Spanish. 25 people in the 1st one. Hispanic cheesemakers are the future and are invaluable.

SC: The next step is 2 classes in September and 4 classes in January. Ramp up community education, work toward credit, now you get a certificate at the end.

DE: We have to educate our own production force. Courses aren't out there.

SC: We should own IVC; it already has an organic farming program.

DE: This would allow me to hire an intern under an accredited program. Lots of people want to learn and I want to bring people in. We should set up a structured program with internships and job opportunities through an accredited org. Now this doesn't exist. We might get UC support, Cal Poly is looking at closing their dairy. How do we look 10 years out? In service training and housing – what else is needed?

AS: Chico has an organic dairy program. We could envision St Anthony's as an organic dairy and processing facility.

LG: McClelland's are renting the facility. It's run down, needs work.

AS: There could be more educational component, students going through.

DE: We need an accredited entity, and then people come to you.

SC: It should be in Marin.

AS: How do we improve employee housing? There are huge hurdles with environmental health – septic and parking. It all costs money.

LG: There are grants out there, just didn't fit for us. The housing was lottery based, rather than for our own employees.

LB: What about bunk housing?

TH: That works for short term, not long term. 5 months only. You invest in training and need housing which makes people stick around.

DE: Do we have approval for apprenticeship housing? Or specific criteria for ranch worker housing? Why aren't yurts and composting toilets approved? They're beautiful and cost effective. It's come up for years with the county. We need composting toilet criteria. The science and technology exist for healthy composting toilet systems. We need a pilot project – let someone be the experimental location for monitoring and developing criteria.

LC: We need a pathway for a person to develop their own farm and pathways for land leasing and owning.

DE: All this is on the table. We partnered with the LaFranchi's on a poultry pilot project. We have lots of resources in Marin and room to diversify.

LG: Family farms are struggling from lack of diversification.

DL: Looking to the future. Do farms team together on processing plants? Or each have their own? How can we help?

DE: We have a stream to get product to market. Now looking at production and supply. We want to operate at capacity. Scale is the issue. We've got lots of animals.

SQ: Last year, Marin shipped 16,800 meat calves out of the county.

DL: We have to stay diversified in outlets, right?

DE: The industrial food system is an outlet market. We don't have the system to deal with everything, such as old dairy cows. We're still heavily reliant on the outside.

SQ: What do the new guys need to benefit from the summit?

TH: A better system for permitting, alternative energy. It's so time consuming to get the right information. The process needs to be streamlined. On a simplified level, what we did today is helpful. Everyone's busy, but to meet regularly at a community gathering place/grange would be good.

CR: We should find a place to join everyone together. We need a venue to meet a few times a year. Informal gatherings get lots done. Right now we must keep reaching out.

SQ: One thing from previous meetings is grange idea. Veggie growers agreed monthly meetings would be good.

AS: I've been open for decades. One thing – you're setting up your own competition, and need agreements to not compete.

CR: You grow the pie.

RL: My point is to see the north bay become to cheese what Napa is to wine. They're different types of ag. We need to promote our area.

SC: The danger is for Seagram's to come in, buy Sterling, and put in a gondola.

AS: The vision is for a diverse product line. It's about a sustainable system and organic is part of it.

DE: Grange is a good idea.

SC: Is it different from the veggie grange?

SQ: Competition comes up, but it's rare that underhandedness arises.

LG: Like a coffee club, you find common denominator when you're not doing the same thing. Also, politically, things go from county to state level. Ex) raw vs. pasteurized. Sue and I have brainstormed on originality, on creating our own DOC, having a standard of excellence.

SC: In terms of developing the same cheese made by different producers, but called by the same name. Same profile as with beef.

DE: Create a private label.

LG: It would sum up a business template for new people.

AS: As far as the forum, I'd be willing to host in Petaluma.

SQ: 3 things – we already have orgs that are supposed to be connecting us (Farm Bureau). 2nd – the area label can work. Let's really think about what works for us. Time to do these things – you have really matured.

DE: We can find resources to host around. In the long term, I want to buy the Red Barn, repaint it red, and use it to gather.

LG: Another piece is slow money. Woody Tesh. VC Company is promoting slow business, ag business, local and sustainable.

CR: Do they do all organic?

All: No.

SC: I went to the investors' circle for money. Great experience though no one wanted to fund me, but they taught us how to present and do a business plan.

LG: There's a lot of conscious business looming but we're still 5-10 years away.

DL: If you think of other things that anyone can do, looking at other models, we can bring these to the summit and plan the future intentionally.

DE: I want to emphasize that lots of ag is happening in the federal park and we need to encompass everybody. The biggest controversy is with oysters. There's a lot of diversification in the park. We got longer leases with potential for even longer ones. We need lobbying efforts and county support to be sure it all fits together.

LB: Zoning is relevant.

SC: What about allowing for succession outside of family?

DE: Only within park families. Some perspectives want to tighten those rules. I'm taking over the lease from my uncle and some think it should only be passed on from parent to child.

SQ: Everyone is aware and in support of that.

Dairy

Attendees

David Lewis (DL)
Steve Quirt (SQ)
George McClelland (GM)
Jolynn McClelland (JM)
Dominic Grossi (DG)
John Taylor (JT)
Mike Griffin (MG)
Bonnie Nielsen (BN)

Group Notes

What Has Worked Well?

1. Permit facilitation and help with getting projects in place.
2. Being able to market directly and do value added.
3. Families are committed to the way of life and already have land and infrastructure secured.
4. Public education and support.

Looking into the Future/Opportunities

1. Priority to put the next generation in place.
2. Making local products part of the mainstream. Consumers can't find local products or have confidence they are purchasing local products even if they want to.
3. Need a cooperative and shared processing facility that serves the dairy producers.
4. Permanent site for year round farmer's market.
5. Making connections with distributors.
6. Public education and support.

Threats

1. Land prices prevent entry into dairying.
2. Death taxes pose serious risk to intergenerational transfers.
3. Need to reinstate Williamson Act.

Ideas for Summit

1. Ideas and options for capital.
2. Marketing help and public education.

Individual Notes

DL: Introduce proceedings from 1997 Summit – pg. 3 = Executive Summary, pg. 31 = strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, & threats, pg. 43 = attendees. Premise of today's meeting – spend time discussing what has worked for you, has helped in your success,

and what hasn't; what you will need for another 10 years of viability. We are shaping the next summit, November 13, 2010, and want to know how the summit can best benefit you, how it can be successful. What is your impression of the graph on the back of the agenda?

DG: Our county has no correlation to this graph, to how production is related to milk price. In fact, this graph shows an inverse relationship to what exists in Marin.

JT: In the 1970's and 80's dairy moved out of the area, we saw smaller dairies getting larger...

DG: And the steady increase in milk production from 1980 to 1999 happened because cows were becoming more efficient. You saw increased production with the same numbers of cows, which meant that production increased regardless of milk price.

DL: Let me steer things back to the summit, and add that Steve Kinsey is on board with the 2010 summit, and we have 8-10 partnering organizations as well. A lot came out of the last summit (Steve Q's position, Lisa Bush's position, Marin Organic, MOCA).

JT: I see in the '97 summit's weaknesses regulations are identified; regulations that favor large farms over small farms.

DG: Which regs? Most regulations favor small farms over large ones.

SQ: A challenge here is that you are mainly in traditional production, and all but Dominic are organic. What can we/the county do to help with both prongs – traditional and specialty/direct marketing? We need to look at everything, at all three areas – the industrial model, added value, and niche markets. The livestock group talked about advantages for traditional guys as well. We hope for the summit to be a working summit.

DL: Let me fill you in on the focus groups so far. We've had one with vegetable growers, ranchers of beef and sheep, processors, and then you, and will have one with retailers such as markets, caterers, and restaurants, and one with organizations.

GM: How about tourism?

SQ, DL: Yes, let us know of any ideas you have.

DL: So, let's bring it back to what has worked for you, and what hasn't?

JT: We can't stop regulations. Regulations can be successful when we can attain practical goals. Democracy is about compromise. The issue is not to put the sole burden on any one rancher or individual, but need to work together.

DG: And it depends on the regulator/agency. They take our input, and some use it, some don't. TMDL is horribly written, with levels so low they don't allow any wildlife! Technically we're all illegal.

JT: Plus there's no science behind it to prove whether it's coming from cows, humans, or wildlife. Any regulations need science to back them up.

SQ: The science actually refutes the 125 figure.

DG: The state and regional water quality boards do what they want.

DL: You mentioned compromise working, John. What's an example?

JT: The grazing waiver is a good compromise. Initially people were afraid, but it's a way to move forward, something practical and workable. Why don't we approach TMDL in the same way?

DG: We tried, submitted letters, and they didn't listen.

JM: Robert and I started organic as a good avenue, but there have been bumps in the road.

DG: One thing that has helped is a generational past, with established ranches. You can't jump into the business as a new guy, it's not sustainable without the access to land, barns built, cows there. Yet the infrastructure in place is both a benefit and a problem, as regulations increase. Older dairies were built differently; ours doesn't have a flush system, so I can't use rubber mats for my cows who need it now that they have to be kept in the barn more. The infrastructure doesn't fit the new regulations, and yet I can't afford to start over, it would cost a million dollars.

GM: If you started over, you'd have to do it in Texas, Missouri, or New Zealand.

DG: Another issue is feed costs. It costs more money to truck feed here than if you're in Nebraska where the corn is being grown. They produce milk cheaper there and get paid more there. The CDFA is the largest cheesemaking allowance. We produce the highest quality milk here and are paid the least, because the state regulates production but not the selling price. The entire cut to the price of milk comes out of the dairyman's pocket. These unfair regulations hit the dairymen and not the processors.

JT: Something like a variable make allowance would be a good solution.

SQ: So, what has worked for you guys?

GM: Over the last 40 years there have been ups and downs. I'm second generation; my parents started in 1938, I picked up 128 cows from them in the 70's and was milking 1,050 cows by 2005 because you can spread fixed costs thinner by getting larger. But

over the last 4-5 years, you lose more money by milking more cows because you can't compete with the Bakersfield dairymen milking 5,000 cows. In 2002 we started looking at going organic, and in 2003 we did. But processors like cheap milk, and encouraged others to go organic, so now the price is cut by 25% because there's so much organic milk. I'll be happy to break even this year. In 2009 we took it a step further, looked at manufacturing our own product and selling directly to the consumer. In 1999 we grew and sold pumpkins that the public came onto the ranch to pick and buy and we got the whole \$5 – the best of both worlds. Agritourism is big, we want to produce our own products and get away from our dependence on processors. We've got plans to build a processing plant, make our own butter. History repeats itself. Petaluma used to be the egg basket of the world, look at it now. The dairy industry is looking the same way. We need to keep thinking outside of the box. I commend Albert Strauss. People thought he was crazy in the beginning, but look at him now. We could sell our three ranches for quite a bit of money, move to AZ, ID, NM, and build a big ranch. But we want to stay here, here in this beautiful county, here in the high rent district. Marin is probably the most expensive place to milk cows!

JT: We should look at the history of agriculture here. There's a reason people farmed here – the water, nice pasture, good growing seasons. Then feed prices got cheaper, and people began relying less on their land. Now things are turning back old school, and they need to, if we're going to be here another generation. We need specialized products in niche markets. We just can't compete with large-scale operations outside of the county. We need vehicles to build processing plants. But what's the county going to say? "No."

GM: If the government wants open space, we need to educate consumers that if they buy local, the money stays in the county and benefits the county. We need to work on politicians, and to educate the public about why they should buy North Bay products. The winery people have figured it out. People go to wineries and experience the romance, the whole story of the land. We should open dairies, give tours every month, let people fall in love with Clo the cow, and then buy Clover milk, butter, cheese. People have to connect with the animals here. Horizon and Organic Valley have nice labels, but they're not local.

SQ: Regional is adding value to the product. What if there was funding from the county to sponsor a public relations program? Let's identify the issues.

DG: We need to direct market – how to keep more of the money. We need the capital to build plants. And we need one facility with a marketing agency in common, where we can all go to, to compete, like the old co-ops.

GM: Wine makers didn't do it all at once, they built their own.

DG: Wineries are different. The largest retail facility you can build in Marin is 500 square feet! The county doesn't get it, doesn't want us.

JM: Public relations needs to educate consumers so they tell officials that they want local products.

DG: The market isn't big enough for all of us to do specialty cheeses.

SQ: I disagree. You can't predict public trends like that.

JT: Look at Europe. They've got thousands of types of cheeses, but they've been doing it for centuries. It takes a long time to develop a product you can market. We need to be known as a region for high quality products. The regulations need to be lifted, we need to know that the county wants us here.

DG: We should have a facility somewhere to share, a nice place to sell from. We should build a relationship with the wine industry. There are 850 wineries in Sonoma County. We should have wine *and* cheese tastings. But within the LCP they even argue about what you can sell – we couldn't sell wine if it wasn't made in Marin!

GM: We should start with local politicians. Money talks, especially in today's economy. There should be incentives to encourage products being produced and sold in the North Bay.

DG: We need to get money from below the bridge up here. We need the ability to sell not only to Marin, and we need the ability to build facilities.

JM: I like the cooperative plant idea. We only have 200 cows. All of the paperwork and regulations can be overwhelming. Working as a group could take the pressure off so we can focus on making our product and niche marketing. We don't want to have to depend on processors forever.

GM: With making and selling butter – at \$8/pound you're still losing money! Eventually you'll make money, but it takes volume and time. 3-5 years to break even when you start a business. We're all second, third, fourth generation dairy here! Businesses started at the turn of the century, and yet I know third generation dairymen who have eaten up all their equity in the last 18 months!

DG: The next 3-4 months it's going to get worse, it's going to be hard to find feed.

GM: Free trade doesn't work. Feed mills are behind the banks. We're still down, & are going to go further into debt.

DL: So what do we do? I'm hearing talk about agritourism. Needing to be able to build facilities on your land.

DG: Offering tours to kids is great, but agritourism is separate, like the wine industry, where you enjoy the whole experience.

GM: We've got 60 people signed up for our next tour, on May 15, at \$10/person. It lasts 1-1½ hours, and at the end of the tour, everyone gets to try milking a cow. We educate the public about cows. It takes 5 people a half day to clean the dairy up. But the majority of people who come don't know what happens on a dairy, and they want to learn. Eventually we want to sell butter and cheese there.

DL: Does the tour revenue help, or is it something else?

GM: We're selling a product – people like the experience, and when they go to the grocery store they buy McClelland's butter. You have to sell the image to sell the product.

JT: We've had 30-35 tours this year. There are 1st graders there today with parents from Marin. Most think their water comes from the tap and their food comes from the grocery store. When they leave the ranch, they have a picture of Clo the cow and it makes a difference. Proposition 2 wiped out the industry.

DG: Tours aren't the right fit for everybody. Lots of dairymen are old, giving tours would mean a whole other job. And it's a different situation with land ownership. I won't build a plant on land that isn't mine. With a central processing plant, I can move product. You have to hire new people for tours, the facilities need to be spotless, it's a whole new situation.

JM: The previous generation's attitudes can make or break you. It may be that the way they did it in the 50's is the way they're still going to do it. That's not a county issue, that's between families.

DL: Back to Dominic and Steve's discussion, do you think there is the capacity in the market or not? My question is, what would you want to learn about marketing?

DG: How much of your milk is sold here, Mike?

MG: We have 18 shippers on the conventional side (which is half of the business), and 80% of the milk goes into our products, and on the organic side 30% of the milk goes into our products. We bottle about 65%, and have milk for others. About 25% is sold here.

DG: I don't think the market is realistic at all here. Maybe if you sold some cheese, some milk.

GM: Look at the Petaluma Creamery from 1913, which turned into the California Creamery. We need to look at what happened in history.

MG: I know a guy in Philadelphia who made butter. City folk came and bought their butter every three months from him. There are small-scale possibilities like that with direct sales.

GM: I might go down to 300 cows and grow my own feed instead of buy from elsewhere. I've thought about different things, like seasonal calving.

SQ: I know a veggie farmer in San Luis Obispo who's making more money now on 50 acres of organic row crops than he was on 300 acres because of a shift in marketing – adding value. You can add a direct marketing enterprise to make more money. That extra 10% income from somewhere helps. Doug Dolcini's beef gets an extra \$20,000 a year in rent money from David Retsky. Think outside of the box.

JT: Diversification is great, but we need support from regulators and politicians. With cow numbers shrinking we need to diversify, but we need to be able to develop to do so.

JM: The success of the Midwest comes from growing a lot of things.

DG: You can make so much money from corn that it doesn't matter if you make money on milk.

GM: We live in a beautiful place, we need to figure out how to make a living off of it.

DL: So, what will make a difference in the next 10 years? What do you need?

GM: The economics will drive us. You need motivation in the morning, a future to look forward to. What can we do to keep this sustainable? My motivation is my grandson. My goal is to make things so he can milk cows in the future. It's about public education and politicians. And we need to keep the grocery and tourism dollar in the county.

JM: Programs are getting cut everywhere in today's economy. The theme is survival, being able to adapt. The option to sell out is gone, so how do we make it work?

DL: Is the sell out option gone for family reasons or economic reasons?

JM: We talk about what else we would want to do. After being your own boss, do you want to work for someone else? The lifestyle is the greatest gift we can give to our son. Selling out is the last option, that I would never want to have to take.

SQ: Jolynn, can you pick one thing from this discussion that we can do?

JM: Educate people why they should buy local. It's a long process to get supervisors on your side, so we should make the public demand local from them. Agriculture has dropped the ball on educating the consumer. It's easier to stick to yourself and your ranch because of liability issues, but the public needs to learn. They also need to be able to find a place to buy local, once they realize why they should. I go to a small grocery store, that's family-run and supports things I believe in. But they're still selling products from other countries! I can try to cook and buy more seasonally, but there needs to be a place to find it.

DL: So we need to educate and create the interest to buy local, *and* there needs to be the outlets to buy it, perhaps on farm, grocery stores, farmer's markets...

DG: We need to claim local.

GM: The CEO of Whole Foods was claiming he supports the local community, that he stocks foods from within a 50-mile radius. Then I was in a Whole Foods and saw Australian cheddar on sale!

SQ: Expose on Whole Foods "California Stir-fry Mix"

JM: Trying to get butter in local groceries is hard. They're not interested in more local butters if they carry a couple, if you don't have a distributor they don't want to talk to you.

GM: I met a guy wanting to build a farmer's market mall at the Sonoma County fairgrounds, costing \$8 million. But is that the right place to build to bring in the consumer? The further south you go, the more you sell (Marin Civic Center, San Francisco); things don't sell in Sonoma County.

DG: Seasonal farmer's markets hurt. We need permanent farmer's markets as educational facilities, open throughout the week and all year.

GM: A strawberry grower only has product for 3 months out of the year. With butter and cheese you have product year-round.

SQ: And what's your definition of local? The San Rafael farmer's market defines local as within a radius of 1,000 miles!

GM: And whether you're certified or not is important. It can turn into a wholesale operation if you're not certified. It should be certified North Bay grown, from within a radius of 50 miles.

DL: So regulations are hindrances. You need capital to upgrade infrastructure from past generations. Where are there opportunities?

DG: Do you even want to borrow more capital if you're already in debt? There are lines of credit you can find, but do you want to? I can't borrow \$1 million. Businesses don't have much equity anymore.

GM: The cost of land is so expensive because it's the Bay Area; you can't pay for land from agriculture anymore.

DG: Ranches sell for \$7,000/acre in Marin.

MG: Who's the person who buys a ranch because the rancher can't make a living farming? With a central cheese plant, Dominic can sell cheese out of a trailer in the beginning before spending money on a permanent structure.

DG: It should continue as ag. land, no golf courses.

GM: In a retail store next to the creamery, you can't sell McClelland t-shirts unless you grow the cotton! Wineries do it. You shouldn't go overboard, but a little store within the atmosphere of the ranch would make you more viable; it's about tourism and education.

JM: Miscommunication with supervisors – we're just trying to stay in business not get crazy with development.

GM: Wineries are getting in trouble with weddings, needing to quit serving at 5pm instead of 7pm.

SQ: There's an apple farm north of here, 100 acres with a store, tours, cooking classes, etc. And a berry farm south of here with pies, u-pick, etc. Minimum development. Let decision-makers know you'll be reasonable, it's not about golf courses. Development isn't all the same, it can be for the good of everyone. We need some sort of lobbying organization.

JM: A coalition of farmers, consumers, and citizens, different people in addition to the Farm Bureau.

GM: Building a processing plant would cost a lot of money – for restrooms, a turning lane, fire protection alone, before even getting started!

DG: Do we lobby the public or supervisors? How do you get to the public?

SQ: Back East there's a \$1 million/year grant from a donor for an ag. advocacy PR agency; it has a huge effect marketing agricultural products for public material.

JM: MALT comes to mind, contributing all over Marin.

GM: If people knew the ag. story there might be grants. We need to go to the consumer, who elects the politicians.

JM: The global economic crisis has made people fed up with money going to the Middle East for oil, and also with money leaving the country for food. People are also learning that they're made vulnerable if they rely on getting their food from somewhere else. There is also the nutrition and obesity problem – people should be eating more fresh, seasonal, real food.

SQ: There's a gap in the public heart information from you and what the public understands. Maybe we need another product like "Hidden Bounty."

JM: Or our own “Food, Inc.” Tours can change a person’s mind.

DG: People watch “Food, Inc.” and assume we all do that, it made dairymen look bad.

JM: Horror stories sell. We do nothing to put our own positive image out there.

DG: The Farm Bureau tried to get information out there in newspapers etc., we were told it “isn’t sexy.”

GM: The California Milk Advisory Product is dropping the “Happy Cow” image – I’ll pick it up! Happy cows are in the North Bay, not Bakersfield. Big dairies know they’ll be the last ones standing. I met a guy at the seminar in San Diego on session planning (great conference). He has 8 sons, all in dairy, in Arizona where land is cheap. It’s different from Marin, geographically – you can’t get as big here.

DL: So as far as the distributors’ role and succession planning – what can we do?

DG: Cowgirl Creamery is distributing for LaFranchi. I don’t know much about distributors.

GM: Distributors want a piece of the pie, it takes your profits down.

MG: The size of what you want to try to move is important. Space.

DG: There are steps to take before distributors – create a product, find a market.

GM: And there’s the risk side. Fiscalini Cheese had written off four different accounts, then went out of business.

MG: A year-round farmer’s market with storage would help, then you would only need to get your product that far.

DG: Your own retail facility is a good idea.

GM: When we sold our \$5 pumpkins, we got the whole \$5, instead of selling them to someone who marks them up 100%. Could a group of dairymen start another processing facility like the Petaluma Creamery? Clover is unique in that they let us make butter, and take the rest of our milk.

MG: Tracking over time is helpful. What’s the risk of the cheese/product getting bumped by other products?

DL: What can or do you need to learn regarding market capacity and turnover?

MG: Do independent stores have a different strategy from chain stores?

SQ: When they began with grass-fed meat, stores wouldn't take it unless they could get it year-round. Now stores carry it because of public demand. Markets change with public demand.

JM: Our area's upper hand is that the mindset is there, we just need to tap into it and educate. People are aware of health and sustainability issues.

DL: We have farmer's markets, people doing on-farm sales.

GM: But we lost 100 dairies last year, 2 in Marin.

MG: Organic held steady when the market dropped.

JM: Even large dairies in California can't compete with Texas. Where's the end?

GM: The golden state of California milk age is gone.

MG: A gallon of milk should cost \$6 (this was said 10 years ago!). We're slammed by overproduction.

JM: Efficiency spoiled the public; people will spend more money on bottled water or soda than milk.

DL: I'm hearing a strong commitment to continue the lifestyle, that you guys survive because of creativity and adaptability, and that we need to tap into the local market more and not worry about what's happening elsewhere.

DG: We need to tap into the local dollar for *us*, not for retailers, we need to get part of the retail dollar.

GM: Politicians should give groceries incentives to sell local products (like a tax break) to encourage keeping the dollar in the county.

JM: Then they would push local, make local stuff stand out.

GM: It's hard for the consumer when Horizon and Organic Valley are right next to Strauss and Clover.

DG: Safeway milk (not organic) is local and people don't know it.

JM: Safeway used to have a list of dairies, not anymore.

GM: The Farmer's market mall would be selling 100% Sonoma County products.

JM: People are smarter about food, but you also have to make it easier on them. We need to advertise local, make it pop out.

GM: Think about your carbon footprint – you can support the environment by buying local.

SQ, MG: Tomales Bay cheese may have started here, but they're in Los Gatos now and kept the name/label!

DL: So, how can the summit help you?

DG: A lot can happen in 7 months!

MG: The summit can address all of these ideas, getting local products into markets more.

SQ: There are 26 dairies in Marin, plus 2 goat dairies.

DL: What are the steps to look at a co-op facility?

DG: It's sometimes hard to get dairymen to agree. At the summit we could start by getting financial and political support, and then talk to dairymen after to gauge interest.

DL: Processing opportunities and capabilities? There are examples of local processing, but is there potential for bigger?

DG: Marin dairies might wait and see, hoping that milk prices will just go back up.

DG: I'm fully supporting the Thompson Amendment.

JM: Issues of passing on to kids, grandkids.

GM: You have to be happy with what you're doing. It's not good for the cows if you just follow tradition and don't really care about it.

DG: You love it and yet you don't want to do it if you lose money.

JM: We weren't encouraged to get into the business growing up – I had to pursue it, and they still wanted me to get a degree as a backup plan!

DL: So the summit can explore the North Bay concept, connecting the farm community.

DG: Sonoma County did \$700 million in farm sales, Marin only \$53 million.

SQ: The focus groups have been Marin centric, except for dairy.

DG: We should get the Sonoma County farmer's market mall guy to do it in Marin.

SQ: The 2nd most successful market on the West Coast is San Rafael (1st is Santa Monica, 3rd is Seattle).

GM: We can do more advertising, can get into markets more.

** OFFICIAL END, CONTINUED TALKING **

JM: Organic isn't enough anymore. Grass fed? Seasonal?

SQ: Is it possible to survive off of seasonal?

GM: Clovis wouldn't be happy. We may go there with our own processing; fill our quota minimum and make butter and cheese and store and sell that for the rest of the year. It's more profitable if you grow all of your feed yourself.

SQ: How much pasture and silage do you grow yourself?

GM: 40% fed on grass, and we also did hay. Robert makes silage out of bull thistle. We've got 1,850 acres of food production.

JM: The tendency is to follow seasonal rhythms., but Clover wants a steady flow of milk. Health problems go down when you grow your own feed and don't push the cows as much.

MG: What about a community slaughter plant?

Organizations

Attendees

Lisa Bush (LB)
Stacey Carlsen (SC)
David Lewis (DL)
Dominic Grossi (DG)
Bob Berner (BB)
Nancy Scolari (NS)
Leah Smith (LS)
Brigitte Moran (BM)
Steve Quirt (SQ)
Helge Hellberg (HH)
Jenna Brager (JB)

Group Notes

What Has Worked Well?

12. The marketplace (which we can't necessarily control)
13. Value added dairy products for some dairy producers
 - a. Has allowed them to capture better price
14. Joe Pozzi style meat marketing
 - a. Look at model for Whole Foods cooperative in Oregon where members meat is slaughtered
15. Funding and support for stewardship and regulatory issues
16. Committed agricultural families
 - a. Oral histories could provide connection for the public

Looking into the Future/Opportunities

1. Opting out of milk pricing structure
 - a. How do you get out of commodity and into local, Bay Area sales?
 - b. Cooperative local processing plant – producer owned, similar to Clover
2. Permanent farmers market facility
3. Regionalize support for infrastructure
4. Tax incentives for retailers to buy local
5. Clean and adequate water supply from agricultural lands provides ecosystem service that community need and wants
 - a. Market this to public
 - b. Refund Williamson subvention money for good stewardship

6. Look at Countywide Plan and remind County of agricultural support policies
7. Reduce friction between environmentalists and agriculturalists
 - a. Hold ag/environmental roundtables to talk about issues and concerns
8. Eliminate estate tax or raise exclusion limit
 - a. Send collective message to senate and congress
9. Agricultural matchmaking
 - a. Connect ranchers who have suitable land and adequate water for farming with landless farmers
 - b. Provide information to landowners about how leasing land for farming could benefit them - \$ etc.
10. Support strong farmers markets
 - a. Teach farmers how to grow their businesses (Agricultural Institute of Marin)
 - b. Let ranchers and farmers know what products are needed/characterize demand and let producers know (ask chefs and consumers)
 - c. Have a summit for consumers – chefs etc.
11. Teach farmers how to tell their stories
12. Show summit participants what new things are working
 - a. Retsky/Dolcini partnership
 - b. Barboni beef
 - c. Lafranchi cheese
 - d. Red Hill
 - e. Also need commodity/traditional success stories
13. Land assessment – characterize all agricultural land in Marin and look at what it could support – what is the potential for agriculture in marin?
 - a. Slope, water, soil, vegetation
 - b. If not suitable for farming, could have agricultural tourism, renewable energy etc.

Individual Notes

DL: Welcome. Thank you for being here. This is our 5th focus group – Organizations. The 6th will be retailers – a combination of caterers, grocery stores (Whole Foods, Oliver's), etc. This is an informal conversation about what has worked in the past. We'll also spend time on viability for the future and what is going to make for a successful summit. If you look at page 31 of the summit proceedings, you'll find a SWAT analysis and you can find past participants. This summit wasn't the only planning session for Marin ag. Now we have a chance and need to do the summit again. Steve Kinsey is supporting us again. Looking at the graphs, some things we have here are veggie crops and fruits, overall county herd size, and milk production and price. This shows the history of the economics, shifts in production, and success in the past. We'll be talking about specifics and learn what didn't work. We chose you all to be here because you have good vision and you're willing to think outside your organization's mission.

SQ: We want to take the nuts and bolts from you guys to plan the summit and look at achievable goals.

DL: Page 3 is the executive summary. Page 31 is the SWAT analysis. There are new things now that were not mentioned then. The framework for today is – we'll spend a little time on past success, what's needed in the future, and what's going to make a successful summit. November 13 is the summit at Walker Creek Ranch. Okay, who wants to kick us off with what has worked?

LB: Land conservation with ag easements.

DG: How does that help producers? Because they can take the money and do something with it?

SC: We have community support for some types of ag, but major commodities – we don't have a handle on how to control that. We have ideas on how to explore. At the risk of suggesting a different market for milk, I don't know how to do that.

DG: A different market than the CDFA price?

SC: We could opt out but that would take a monumental effort. I have to put that on the table. That's our limit to success – we can't control the market.

DG: We can opt out, but we'd have to spend a lot of money. It's a \$10 million investment for the county. We could build our own processing facility, get onto the retail side, and sell out the area. If we had a name like Clover with those facilities, it would benefit individual producers like me. If you do that, it would take 25 guys like me all sharing one facility.

BB: Stacey, do we know what portion of our milk goes to value-added, Clover, etc.?

DG: You can't put Clover as value-added.

BB: How much Marin milk is now going to Clover?

SC: 7 producers.

DG: They get paid a little bit better.

SC: Same with livestock. We've had some value components, but something's missing. The meat market component with retailers drives the livestock industry.

DG: I know a guy who sells to Whole Foods. They buy everything from a coop and don't want to buy from individuals. It's tough to get into. If you have a truckload of animals to go to a coop, then you can do it.

SC: I think we could tap into the corporate offices of Safeway, Albertsons, etc. This could be an added benefit to them, too.

SQ: Look at these graphics: 55% of our ag economic product is dairy, 21% is livestock. This is a huge aspect of ag.

SC: We've been trimming around the edges and it's valuable.

SQ: Looking at how to make this productive for the summit, we do have possibilities to control this in our own county.

LS: We are looking to keep more locally produced food here.

HH: This meat issue of having a processing facility here will be resolved in 2 years. It will regulate itself. The big frontier is dairy. The Bay Area consumes 1 million gallons of dairy per day. We have 10% of what's needed in the Bay Area. This is a tricky undertaking but the demand is there.

DL: There is enough demand for milk produced here to make a connection.

DG: "Here" means Marin and Sonoma.

HH: It's a multi-prong approach – cheese, fluid milk, etc. The market is getting ready.

BB: How do you get out of the milk commodity market?

HH: We need more varieties of cows. We've got to change how we use grassland. Different cows produce different cheeses.

SC: This is sad, but, the crop stats for last year – dairy produced a \$12 payout and this is a problem. There is a \$5 swing and it's disheartening. This year for the first time dairy is below 50% of our ag production.

LB: How is the organic milk price holding up?

HH: The problem is that the step between fluid milk in organic vs. not organic is not enough. It's in value-added.

LS: This goes back to infrastructure – something is missing.

SQ: We got a lot of this covered in the dairy workshop; lots of challenges were identified regarding on farm processing, marketing, public education, etc. These huge challenges can branch downward to more challenges. Let's keep moving – we know dairy is significantly challenged. We have ideas – Dominic, to develop an on farm system of marketing processed food is really tough.

LB: I don't see regulatory issues as insurmountable, but the finances are. It's not permitting, but infrastructure.

SC: The missing piece is looking at regional support for this and not be reliant on people without means or power. We need to talk to the federal people about support, need an umbrella approach, not just going to our building department. We need regulatory support.

DG: There is an ordinance today on ag accessory structures. I've been talking to Kinsey for 8 years.

SC: A new wave of policies needs to be recognized.

SQ: We talked about this in the dairy group – to build the wave, we need public education to put pressure on politicians. In press interviews, people are clueless about how difficult it is for build a value-added industry.

HH: The total support of organic research in the last Farm Bill was less than \$5 billion over 5 years. The current plan is for that much every year. We can do so much and federal money is more available.

DL: The things with the greatest influence we don't have control over. What has worked? Stuff that stays local – we need to grow that.

HH: When you can pull part of your operation into the local market, then we have more control.

DG: We need political pressure. We should meet with retailers and talk about tax breaks for them?

BB: Local county tax?

DG: The county could kick back.

SC: Do it when a product is sold.

SQ: You, the consumer, go into a store; there is no differentiation for local. The product is disguised, and many consumers are not educated.

BB: Cowgirl Creamery has their cheese separate.

DG: And consumers know Clover. Safeway has local milk, but they don't label it.

BM: We are looking to have 6-10 cheese makers sell from one truck. We have 8-10 between Marin and Sonoma. This also helps them to develop with a presence in the marketplace.

HH: Dairy is tricky. This is about not competing, but supporting each other.

BM: We are working with a man travelling through France, learning to make cheeses, learning to do the value-added part. France has 850 cheeses.

DL: When have we worked well as Marin-Sonoma?

DG: We haven't tried.

LB: Producers work better together than governments do.

DG: To save us money, Clover is prime for the taking. They lost a lot of money on the organic side. Only 16% of milk goes in a bottle. Take it as a collective coop – 30 years ago Benedetti decided to stick with cheese and not market fluid milk.

SQ: What about a collective processing place?

SC: If you could keep half of what you lose, you'd have half that money. The big opportunity is in the milk because you have the volume. You could raise your income by 5 even 10%.

BB: Dominic, if Clover is on thin ice, is a takeover more likely to happen through industry consortium?

DG: Yes.

SC: This is the most realistic way.

DG: First, they need to sell.

SC: Five years ago, when the dairy swing was in the dump, take a look at the central valley – 60 mom and pop dairies went out. They got the benefit of efficiency in production, but ran out the families.

BB: Stacey produces great crop reports. It would be interesting to associate that with land use in acres. People relate to land use. Sometimes it's easier for people outside to understand in acres.

LB: More land is in beef.

DG: The land is often mixed use.

SC: We hide some acres in the crop report and could do a better job with a chart dedicated to this discussion.

LB: 99% of ag land in the county is for livestock grazing.

BB: The attention to ag is a function of non-commodity.

LS: We need public education – to talk to people about what’s grown in Marin.

DL: I don’t want to stray too far from markets, but what are some other things that have benefitted ag?

LS: Stewardship projects – restoration, riparian areas, addressing regulatory issues.

DL: We heard a supervisor candidate say “land has been saved, new environmentalism is sustainability.”

BB: There is no assurance land will be in ag production.

DG: You can’t force that.

BB: We need to find ways to make loss of ag less likely.

SQ: With TMDLs and David’s work, we watched it go toward acceptance that waivers, etc., could be a good thing. There has been progress with agencies helping.

BB: It is clear that ag organizations and agencies have been reasonably successful. Steve and Lisa have strengthened UCCE’s activities, but this may not be enough.

SQ: What are steps beyond? Ecosystem services? Is this another level of benefit?

BB: MALT and Marin Organic are trying to sell services that are not already commodified. There is a published paper explaining the benefits to property, landowner, and the public. How do we convert public benefits to a dollar value? What is the open space value?

LB: Quantifying is hard – it’s a moving target.

BB: We raise money to save ag land. This is not an ongoing benefit to the producer.

HH: 1/5 of Marin Organic’s budget comes from environmental services. Ex) Hewlett Packard. The environmental service area is huge.

DL: What is the difference between environmental and ecosystem services?

HH: There is interest in that and the chance to communicate about that is amazing.

NS: There is benefit in the area of water. Ag producers need water. The public has a need for clean water and so streams and the public benefit. It is difficult to give both ag producers and fish what they need.

BB: This is a broad idea – this county gets money back on the Williamson Act and doesn't need that money. It's worthwhile to look at a program to refund to operators with conditions. This is a way for the county to financially support ag. It would help a bit to not have to pay Williamson Act taxes.

DG: Water quality polled with highest importance in this county.

BB: This is a way to justify more financial support from the county.

DL: Nancy, can you expand on how to benefit everyone.

NS: This is the challenge, it's not new. It gets more and more difficult. It used to be easy to put in a pond, now there is 10 years worth of regulations.

DG: How do you set a precedent?

LS: How about the countywide plan? Can we use these programs and call upon the county to further our work?

SQ: I loved Jolynn's appraisal letting the county know we want them to follow the countywide plan. What if we had a broader education effort about the difficulty for the public to recognize the lack of water and the demand for local healthy food?

BM: For us, it's hard enough to get someone to eat oranges instead of cheetos.

HH: What's the messaging? How can we make it to the public's benefit?

DG: It's better to focus on broader public education.

HH: Residents don't really care about ag production, only how it applies to them.

BB: I think there is a good amount of interest and curiosity. We need to create a venue – perhaps a bigger ag summit over the hill?

SQ: There is a group in Connecticut doing a television campaign regarding life on the farm. They had lots of money to work with.

NS: Here I am doing environmental projects with producers. It takes 7 permits to restore a stream. It's been over 10 years on this water project. Everyone wants to know why it's so hard.

DG: There are multiple agencies.

LB: Nancy mentioned the environmental community and the increasing friction between environmental and ag interests. It's difficult for the county to be flexible. Hard core environmentalists spend a lot of time lobbying the supervisors and they get heard. This is hard on ag. What's the solution for a more common understanding?

DL: It started with ecosystem services – might be a revenue source. Public education – not aware of this service happening or the opportunity to support. Messaging could garner support for local ag.

HH: The greatest challenge to ag is the environmental movement. 100 years ago, 120 Native Americans were supposed to move and they were shot. We can become board members of the environmental groups in Marin.

BB: I was on the board of the MCC for a long time and it helped. We could have regular round tables. A lot of it is ignorance.

SC: Many groups have hired executive directors who need to cater to membership. Membership drives the thought.

BB: Most of these are board driven organizations. EAC has wanted to have an ag person on their board.

DG: I'm pulled between 5 boards right now. As a dairyman, if you want to be involved, there are too many ag organizations. 15-16 meetings a month is too much, and there isn't enough people.

BB: Start with convening a round table.

DL: Something that has contributed to success is that these are committed families. Selling out is not an option. What other things can we educate on?

NS: We just did great oral histories. Take pieces of personal information and connect the public. A bound book with photos, great farms, stories. Connect the public with a face.

DG: Could do it at a booth at the farmer's market. Get a couple thousand people over the hill. Most of these people are living on old ranches.

NS: We could put excerpts on the web, have voice/interview recordings of 10 different farms.

SQ: Modern media today, film is really important.

BM: TV show which is a pilot – what happens on a farm and how food gets to market.

BB: The information age is about internet and video.

BM: It is an idea – out there regarding ag in California.

DL: What are other things – looking ahead 10 years?

DG: Eliminate the death tax – may be bigger than Marin County. At the local level, can we reassess property taxes?

BB: Exclusion needs to be raised. State taxes will become a greater problem. We need to send a collective message to senators and Congress. We could make an argument regarding the impact of the Estate Tax.

DG: Supervisor support to outreach to senators – keep ag land in production to pass it on.

SQ: More to small producers. If we expand row crops and specialty farms. Can we expand on what David Retsky and Doug Dolcini are doing? We can increase that model. The Young Farmers Mixer had 400 people there. At the Summit, we should tackle how to expand this and diversify.

LB: Ag matchmaking. We have data on land, water. We could do a survey on ag land owners.

BB: It must provide information to land owners and prospective tenant regarding the money arrangement. There is an investment required – it doesn't work short-term. It should outline the model. If Lisa outlined sample lease agreement?

LB: It's a fact sheet about what a lease should include. This could easily be done.

SQ: It's about relationship. David and Doug are a special example. Must be handled very carefully. A screening process.

BB: More than a business relationship.

SQ: Russell doesn't want anybody around – it's his house.

LS: Over 25 years, we've seen more and more diversification. After 3 years, we've had only one producer. We need to continue to support strong farmer's markets so farmers can sell their products locally.

SQ: Could markets absorb more veggie farmers?

BM: Yes, our local growers can supply the demand. We need to diversify and get more farmers. We're setting up programs to help markets grow.

DG: If you're short of supply, send out letters to guys like me with ranches who might grow something but aren't now. I might try something if I knew what was needed that's not in the marketplace now.

SQ: That's such a good idea. How do we get them to the table?

DG: Send a letter to all the ranchers in Marin.

HH: Great. Easy. We're always shy of product.

DL: What is the demand? How do we help producers tap into that information?

SQ: Address this at the summit. At these focus groups we see that we've got you guys. There is movement in this area. Families have the resources.

LS: Possibility of bringing people (chefs, etc.) to part of the summit to start the matchmaking?

BM: Another summit for the consumer – have them start talking about it to the east.

DL: What about stewardship? Do we need to handle more issues? A County-wide plan will be done. LCP will be done.

SQ: Connect with green entrepreneurs (slow venture capital). Like Dominic's thing – cheese and wine place.

BM: Venture capitalists would compromise a lot of our principles.

DL: The Williamson Act funds could be a revolving fund for seed money.

SQ: Stacy – are credits for sustainability on farms out of reach?

SC: NO, that fits into eco-component. What are indicators on farms that should be credited? In the Commissioner's office, we look at a list of regulations we have. We should have a moratorium on regs. All we've been doing for 20 years is looking at environmental protection. There are ordinances for all kinds of things. Permits we issue that are beneficial. Add up the documentable things that farmers do – we don't quantify that very well. Air, water, biodiversity, habitat restoration – we don't quantify these things. Let these things become indicators – go down a checklist and create incentives to recognize environmental protection.

DL: Helge – how do we start a strategy for giving messaging tools to families?

HH: We got a grant to teach that, to give them the understanding of how sacred their work is, including social media,

DL: The summit is a start, set key topics.

LS: Planned format for the summit?

DL: Don't have it yet, we're not getting ahead of ourselves. It will be based on the needs identified in these focus groups. A few content-focused sessions. Steve's idea – summit guides.

SQ: Hard to do in a short period of time. It would be nice to have some points we really wanted to solve, rather than big headlines. We should take what's on the table before us and make a plan.

BB: I'd like to know what everyone thinks is working in ag. David and Doug – if this partnership is working, maybe they should present at the summit. What resonates with people is specific stories.

HH: All we want to do is soil-based. Is there funding for MCP? Look at row crop potential, quantify ponds. Instead of following market trends, look at where we would arrive as a survey of land. Where would be max out? Soil, slope, water, vegetables vs. livestock, seasonality, climate zones. Find out suitable areas and develop something else – tourism?

BM: Different stories, successes, choices. Marin – Nicasio, Red Hill, David Little. Don't be afraid to reach beyond Marin for advice.

DL: Want to share comfort level with livestock as conventional or traditional. How do we bridge this with the innovated?

BB: One does not exclude the other.

LB: Frame it as what new things are being done by traditional ranchers.

NS: Part is getting demand information because hesitation is possible failure. Upfront information = comfort in innovation.

HH: What might not be economical for 1 might be economical for many. The energy/power side is very important.

BB: Do people in ag know what is going on?

DG: Not really. How many people are showing up? The vast majority is still commodity ag.

SC: What is the land base and who should be affected by summits? We need to attract them to these events. Strategize regarding markets – how could you create your cooperative system.

HH: Must be really careful saying – you just said fluid milk fell below 50%. We've got to pick them up now, push the envelope on diversification.

SC: We're not really good at recognizing values of having farming in West Marin.

HH: We still are losing 1 dairy per year.

SC: We don't highlight the value of ag activities.

BB: Some of us are trying. The dairy and beef industry – we're not going to change it from the outside. We want to help, but it's up to dairymen to figure out what you want to do. We could take time at the summit to talk about this.

SC: Allow next steps to come in private, outside public forum. Encourage talking about it.

BM: Regarding the story – we've done well promoting organic row crops. But the story is dairy and beef.

SC: Surprising we don't do more with major commodities.

LB: Different stories can be told for different types of ag. Open space is mostly beef.

BM: What we show consumers if veggies and cheese, so people think all those acres are veggies and cheese.

HH: Dairy has benefits of local and the consumer doesn't know.

DL: Beef is showing some local labels. We could use the summit to be productive on dairy.

LS: Trend toward meat-buying co-ops. Can we expand this?

DL: Thank you for coming. Regarding the summit, it would be great if we could come to you for help. What else can benefit the summit?

DG: Get 300 people there?

SQ: How many people could we get there?

BB: Get producers there.

SQ: We need a discussion to get traditional guys there.

SC: Critical = is what is on the agenda sufficient to attract them? They need to think they'll miss out if they don't go.

LB: Steve – remember the conference for youngsters, was it well attended?

SQ: Yes, Julie headed it and that made a huge difference. There isn't much you can do with traditionals and commodity regarding what's new.

LB: What about appealing to family?

SQ: I like the co-op idea. I still think it's diversification. One of the most hard-core guys was actually interested. These guys are thinking now.

DL: This is good additional information, and will be helpful with the agenda. We'll model a message about Marin ag at the summit. Challenge us – how do we organizations continue to work well together? For example, with the labor requirements. New things will come up, and we'll each take a turn at leading.

LS: This is a real challenge. Some organizations work better together than others.

SQ: I miss doing that. We used to get together 2 times a year and just talk. It's important to get together.

BM: Issues are building. We should look strong together, present a front that we're on the same page to the rest of the community.

Retail

Attendees

Ed Ghilardi (EG)
Chris Giacomini (CG)
Anna Smith Clark (AC)
David Lewis (DL)
Steve Quirt (SQ)
Bonnie Nielsen (BN)

Group Notes

What Has Worked Well?

1. Strong leadership – Steve Kinsey, Sue Conley
2. Russell's strawberries
 - a. Demand for local produce has increased
 - b. Supply stream has increased

What Could Work/What Could be Improved?

1. Need more canned products like Point Reyes Preserves, Kambucha etc.
2. Volume of local produce can't keep up with demand
 - a. Some local producers can only deliver 2-3 times/week
3. Have local produce from specific producers featured for a week or so
4. Consumer education regarding seasonal availability
5. Marin branding labeling
6. Endowment for small farm outreach and advocacy
7. Restaurants can deal with seasonality better than grocery stores can – restaurants are always looking for local products
8. Educate consumers make connections between local farmers and consumers
9. Define local
 - a. For restaurants it's Bay Area
 - b. It's personal relationships
 - c. In grocery stores it's California
 - d. It's relative and depends on choices at a given retail outlet
10. Local needs a logo
 - a. It could go on grocery bags to help make the farmer/consumer connection

Ideas for the Summit

1. Build relationships between retailers and farmers/ranchers
2. Local branding
 - a. Develop a logo
 - b. How do we build local branding?
 - c. Marin versus Sonoma/Marin
 - d. Find out how much Marin product is sold outside of Marin
 - e. Ask Farm Bureaus
 - f. What would tourists versus local consumers respond to?
3. Michelle Obama as the keynote speaker
4. How to bring Sonoma County into the summit
 - a. Have Steve Kinsey invite Efren Carrillo and others

Individual Notes

DL: Thank you all for coming. We are calling you the retail focus group, and it is the last of 6. These focus groups are helping us get ready for the summit, which is a follow-up to the 1997 summit. The '97 summit led to many successful changes and new programs. If you take a look through the proceedings, you'll notice that some things are the same, some are new, and we've done a lot. There are still threats and risks we need to address. These focus groups are intended to help identify what agriculture needs to continue its viability in Marin. We'd like you to share what has worked well and what you will continue to need. We're interested in the current state of affairs and what has led to your success. We also want to hear what hasn't worked. Over the next 10 years, what will you need? How can the summit benefit you, what will make it a success? [Introduction] The focus groups so far have been for row crops, livestock, dairy, processors, and organizations; this focus group is addressing the other side of production – the outlets. Let's start with what is working for you.

SQ: Something that has changed since the '97 summit is that back then there was little local produce, and now there is more. Recently there has been the alternative livestock working group. There is a disconnect between livestock and stores, and that is now changing. There is a resurgence with you guys securing local food. How can the summit help you continue getting local food?

LB: Bill, Julie, Evan are all selling their meat.

CG: It's amazing what you've done since 1997. Marin Organic, the Grower's Group... That's due to good leadership. David Lewis, Steve Kinsey, Steve Quirt, Sue Conley.

SQ: So you're saying leadership has helped to foster this? What'd your store look like in 1997?

CG: My dad was going to the valley every day to get produce to sell. 5 days a week. Earl's Produce came around when my dad couldn't do it anymore. We continue to pay local farmers Earl's Produce prices.

SQ: What percentage do you get from local growers?

CG: It's seasonal. About 70% from Earl's, and 30% from local growers?

SQ: Do you see that growing? Or has local plateaued?

CG: In some ways farmer's markets fill the local niche. But I hope it grows.

LB: Is there a difference in demand for local produce vs. Earl's?

CG: Yes. The consumer wants Sartori strawberries.

SQ: If there was more produce, could you sell more? I did a study on what's in production in Marin vs. what's certified – there's a difference (because of field rotation, etc.). We have about 200 acres in production of row crops. Divided between you guys, that's not a lot.

DL: Is there an increased demand for local? What constraints do you face to meet consumer demand?

EG: When we started with organics, it was hard to come by. An almond guy used to pick up organic orders and deliver, that's how it started. Now we get about 90% of our organics through NorCal Produce out of West Sacramento, and we just started dealing with Capay out of Davis 4 months ago. We used to get produce from Star Route Farms and strawberries from Russell, but the problem is an issue of the volume we need vs. what they can supply us with. It became better for Russell to sell at farmer's markets than to supply us.

DL: Is there enough demand for you and farmer's markets?

EG: There is both enough demand and a knowledgeable consumer. Before the consumer expected to pay more for organics. Now the supply is so great that often organics are sold at the same price as conventional.

SQ: I know a raspberry grower down south who sold organic berries as conventional because there were so many.

EG: Sometimes this happens when there is so much organics.

DL: We've tried to help farmer's markets. Is there room for local growers to access more of the grocery dollar or is it better for them to stick with farmer's markets?

EG: We want to work with independents. It's a supply issue. Their delivery systems only come a couple times a week. Or they forget. If they don't show, it's a problem.

SQ: Whole Foods has a regular produce schedule and something like a mini farmer's market where they carry local specialty items. That creates different expectations; it's ok to run out. Maybe it's even good marketing to sell something you might only be able to buy once. Is there the possibility to do something like this?

EG: Now, no. 10 years ago we carried 10% organic and 90% conventional. Now it's 50/50, but we have the same variety, so I'm pressed for space. I need to remodel to get more space. Things like packaged salads are making things squished as it is.

SQ: Maybe this could be a summit topic – integrating unconventional products into grocery stores?

EG: Yes. They might have innovative ideas. Maybe to showcase a local producer per week, highlight their products? We try to have demos and sampling of local products with producers.

DL: How does that happen?

EG: They introduce the item for the store.

DL: That's like with artisan farmstand cheeses. There's talk about there being a Marin soft cheese that everyone makes to create more volume to sell.

EG: We started carrying LaFranchi cheese with demos. It's selling very well. People just need to try it.

DL: How can independents get support? What criteria do you use to engage independents?

EG: They come to us. It's one-way.

DL: What makes them appeal to you?

EG: Proper supply stream. We get complains about things being here today, gone tomorrow.

SQ: Independent cheesemakers try to promote small lots of cheese that are seasonal, it should be a positive thing, not a negative. Can we ever accommodate seasonal in groceries, or only in farmer's markets?

EG: The customer is used to some seasonal with some specialty items. You'd need education in the store. People are still asking what you do with a turnip. Education is big. Some consistent signage or a logo to identify Marin County products. From the

retail point of view, shelf talkers do a lot. Oliver's Market is doing a great campaign to promote local products now.

SQ: This was a theme from other focus groups. A big example is with milk. Horizon and Organic Valley are always a few cents cheaper than Straus and Clover, but it comes from all over the country.

AC: It's still a problem of quantity. You need to develop a relationship with a particular quantity.

SQ: I like scarcity. Are you working with Whole Foods on small local niches?

AC: They have hired someone as a local forager.

DL: What about meat products – their history and opportunity?

EG: We don't carry any local meat. Some from local fisheries. I want to check out Bill Barboni, but he's exclusive right now with Oliver's.

DL: Again there's the issue of guaranteeing a supply stream. What does a producer need to be a viable option for you?

EG: They need to carve out a niche. Local cheeses have done that well. Kevin Lunny has done it with oysters. The same could happen for beef. We need a supply chain. The expense comes in with a delivery system or middle man/distributor.

SQ: The big guys say there's no way they'll hold their cows over. The system needs to change for you. Bill does it by holding over part of his herd. That's the issue, not the processing. There's a seasonality to it.

EG: Bill's got a section in Oliver's meat case with lots of signage.

SQ: Can you switch things, tell the customer there will only be meat for 3 months?

EG: I think the consumer would be open to that.

SQ: 16,000 calves are shipped from Marin every year. Only about 200 stay. How can we change that?

LB: Change happens funeral by funeral.

EG: It's the younger generation making the changes.

LB: Evolution. Infrastructure issue at some point. The issue is beef producers are used to producing, not acting on marketing. The younger generation is looking to capture more of the market.

DL: Mendocino is making a big effort on the processing side.

SQ: Loren Poncia is an example of change.

DL: If you were in a room with a group of conventional dairy and ranchers wanting to know the risks and opportunities of taking a chance, how would they get the information?

CG: Keep bookkeeping easy. Good relationships. Money.

EG: Bill started with 1 store. Simple. Get your feet wet, then expand.

DL: On the reverse side, what opportunities are there for restaurants and groceries, why should they look for local?

AC: Quality. The story, romance. There is demand from restaurants.

DL: Does local put people in restaurants?

AC: Yes, local is selling food in the Bay Area.

EG: It works for the restaurants to do daily menus, feature seasonality. Easier for them than groceries.

DL: Is it happening enough already?

AC: Restaurants are still sourcing, and looking for more. There are different layers of knowledge for different restaurants. The Tomales Deli might have to close after she saw Food, Inc. People want to know how to wash slugs off of organic lettuce. The bottom line is education. You think Marin knows, but we still need more education. Education at stores, charts breaking down issues for consumers.

DL: Maybe the summit should describe the need for more connections.

EG: Most consumers think that Whole Foods is all organic. That's hard on independent stores. Marketing works 2 ways.

DL: From the farmer's perspective, how do they know if organic is an opportunity. It would be good for them to hear that there's unmet need.

EG: People are always asking for more. People wait and ask for heirloom tomatoes from Peach Tree in Winters.

LB: Whole Foods doesn't offer what's *really* local. Local to them could mean Castroville. They're phony local.

CG: But Whole Foods is better than Costco?

LB: We need the true local story and connecting with real people.

AC: NorCal is working to change that in Whole Foods. I just had a meeting with the manager of San Rafael's store. They're wanting to learn.

DL: So for constraints, there's the supply chain. Local producers opting for farmer's markets. Education on seasonality.

EG: 10 years ago there were less farmer's markets. Now producers can sell all their products at farmer's markets. The Cotati farmer's market started 4 years ago, and people always come, and the producers are always changing.

SQ: Would you say farmer's markets affect your produce sales?

EG: Not sales. But consumers are in tune to prices. And I'll get consumers saying they got rainbow carrots from the farmer's market and asking me to carry them.

SQ: Central produce market in San Francisco sales are down because of farmer's markets.

EG: We used to have a truck go there, not anymore. Most of SF market's business comes from small independent stores and restaurants. North Bay Produce supplies lots of restaurants, and us, too. Stores used to be big consumers at the produce market in SF, now it's restaurants.

SQ: Cut flowers are a real specialty. We're killed by South American flowers. Is there a market for local organic flowers?

EG: People don't think of flowers as organic, they don't ask for it.

DL: One-way route of relationship. When is it a big enough opportunity to explore relationship with a grower?

EG: We don't have the extra staff to do outreach. Local producers come to us.

DL: So someone to connect producers and markets?

AC: I'm the conduit between restaurants and producers.

EG: With the Peach Tree relationship, a customer's cousin told United there was a driver delivering to San Francisco, and asked if he could come to us, too. The LaFranchi cheese connection happened because an employee knew about it. Our owner is in both stores every morning and has an open door to talk about new products.

AC: Restaurants are open to people coming to talk.

SQ: What do we know about caterers buying? Do you have caterer customers?

EG: They usually order in advance. Spirit Rock orders through others and sometimes through us. We've been their backup for years. They want organic first. Local restaurants also work with us.

DL: Earlier focus groups talked of a portfolio of market outlets for family farmers. These can look different, include traditional and niches. The summit can help people realize the opportunities out there.

SQ: Marin needs more farmers. The bigger David Retsky gets the easier it is for him to go wholesale with Greenleaf. We need bigger farms in addition to County Line and Star Route.

DL: What do we already do here? Beef, sheep, and dairy. We should explore connections with what we've got.

LB: There are water limitations, too.

SQ: Processors control dairy.

LB: The constraint with meat is that a lot of restaurants don't want frozen product. You have to drive to the valley to slaughter organic meat, so you have to freeze. We need to educate restaurants.

EG: The consumer thinks frozen isn't fresh.

LB: Infrastructure is an issue with local meat.

CG: Do you carry local eggs?

EG: There is no volume there. Some from Petaluma.

LB Petaluma is local.

SQ: Liz Cunninghame's eggs wholesale for \$4.50. What's that retail?

EH: \$6.98.

AC: But they still sell, people want them.

DL: Who could communicate the untapped demand in a dynamic way? We can come back to this.

EG: The owner of United Markets is at work from 4:30am-7pm – that’s passion.

DL: The outlet side needs to convey that they’re not saturated at all to motivate producers and farmers to continue and connect with outlets. It seems like maybe there are 2 food systems, and maybe that’s ok, to meet big demand.

CG: I think it’s good to have the 2, small local specialty and volume.

EG: It gives the producer flexibility. We don’t have people to go out. Producers should know our door is open, and should contact us.

AC: Caterers are marketing themselves as local now, more than 10 years ago. It’s what people want. The biggest difference is that customers know more now.

EG: Especially younger customers. Older customers still think organic is a fad! It’s going to grow as there are less older customers around.

AC: My dad watches every penny. What clicked for him with organic and local food was the issue of food justice. He said he was so old that it didn’t matter to him for his health, but when he thought about it from the perspective that we’re poisoning the people who can’t afford organic food, that worked for him.

DL: So what would help at the summit for farmers and ranchers to be viable? People want to know about capacity. They should know that your doors are open and that they should connect with restaurants.

AC: Rossotti has a facebook page. The local foodie movement is growing.

DL: What would help you at the summit?

EG: Building relationships, making connections. We need Marin local branding. Something like Grown in Marin. We need to push the local idea.

AC: Buying local financially supports the community. Keeps dollars in Marin.

EG: We hear that a lot from consumers. But they think that everything at a farmer’s market is local. We’ve always supported local organizations and schools. We try to make room for local. But we need a logo, something to educate the consumer about local products.

SQ: That’s both a simple solution and hard to do. The cost of upkeep is a huge job. You need a watchdog to make sure that stores put the signs up.

DL: What is local? Close enough? Geographically, seasonal?

EG: 50 mile radius? 20, 100, 250?

DL: The summit can explore regionality. The Sonoma/Marin County Line.

SQ: The concentric circle theory from San Francisco.

DL: What do restaurants consider local?

AC: Each has a different idea. Marin Organic says only Marin. Usually the Bay Area.

LB: What do customers perceive as being good about local? The farmer's name? Less driving miles? That it's their neighbor's work? That it supports the local economy?

AC: The story. People want to go back in time, know how cheese is made. They admire farmers.

SQ: The personal relationship with the grower. Face to face or an idea. Signs with farmer's names. Like what you get at a farmer's market.

EG: How people shop now at farmer's markets is different than at stores. At farmer's markets they're relaxed, but in stores they're rushed, it's a chore. We label the country of origin, if it's in the US, we label the state. People think California is local. It's rare that people ask about the county.

SQ: It's part of the choice. California comes first. But closer destination trumps. It's tiered.

LB: It's a relative choice.

EG: We just need a logo, we do our own signage. We have reminders posed to bring bags in the parking lots and on the doors. Half of our plastic bags are from petroleum, and half are recycled. The recycled aren't clear, and our older customers complain that they can't see inside them when they're in their fridge. We're phasing out paper bags.

SQ: If we do an electronic logo then there's no distribution cost. We could come up with a logo at the summit. It could be up to everyone to use on their own.

CG: Wasn't that already done with the Grower's Group? Logos made, and then never used?

AC: It would need an education campaign too.

DL: What's the motivation to do this?

EG: To build connections with product and consumers. Our owner has a strong interest in supporting local businesses. We tried working with the San Rafael and San Anselmo

Chambers of Commerce to advertise local small businesses in our newsletter, not only around food.

AC: In Australia there is a “Made in Australia” logo that fosters national pride.

DL: What would motivate use of the logo?

CG: Something local for the tourist to take away. That’s what the tourist wants.

SQ: Even though we already tried with a logo, timing is everything. Good to try again. We need to exorcise the Sonoma Select failure and move on.

EG: Good ideas often happen ahead of their time.

AC: There could be other partners to work with on this.

EG: There are more local producers now.

DL: How else could the summit help you? What else besides local branding?

SQ: Public education. Public Access TV. \$200,000 to run a local TV campaign would be a huge help.

DL: What does the logo need to mean something, give it credibility?

AC: An education campaign.

EG: Marin-specific or Sonoma too? Because a lot of agriculture is linked between the 2 counties.

AC: Marin Organic does have its logo that is established. But it’s only organic and from Marin.

EG: Also, growers need to think about how much of a product they’re selling outside of the county; would it be beneficial to have Marin/Sonoma, or just Marin?

SQ: Some in Sonoma want to join up. There’s a lot more produce in Sonoma County. There are pluses to an alliance, but is it impossible culturally?

LB: I’m inclined to buy something that’s inclusive. Lots of livestock has land in both counties.

EG: There used to be talk about having a third county – West Marin and Sonoma counties.

LB: There are different types of agriculture in both counties. Sonoma County is more flat, has more water, more opportunity for farming vs. ranching.

EG: Are you going to ask both counties' Farm Bureaus about the logo?

SQ: The biggest difference is the grapes. Heavy dollars there. Is the United Markets consumer different in San Rafael from San Anselmo?

EG: We sell more organic in San Anselmo than San Rafael. There are more old, traditional families in San Rafael, and more younger-minded, open-minded customers in San Anselmo.

LB: It's also an issue of rural vs. urban, west vs. east.

DL: So with public education, you would benefit from the public learning about seasonality and products that they're not used to seeing, right? How to cook what's in season?

SQ: The cooking part is huge. People don't know what to do with something different.

EG: Even with basic greens – they know how to cook swiss chard but not something similar. Dino kale has taken off because there was an article in the food section of the SF Chronicle several years ago!

DL: What else would you want to see at the summit?

CG: Have Michelle Obama as a keynote. You know what I can't keep on the shelf? Preserves. Canned goods. Pickles, beets, jams, syrups, preserves, fermented juices, kombucha. Local buyers love the Pt. Reyes name. We need a bigger supply of value-added.

DL: Is it beneficial for the producer to niche? Consumership is not homogenous.

SQ: Regional identity is huge in Pt. Reyes. Is the value of Marin identity specific only to Pt. Reyes? What cache does Pt. Reyes Preserves carry? Pt. Reyes Blue is more defined.

AC: Could it cross over all lines if it's Marin pride?

DL: What percentage do you sell to tourists vs. local consumers per year, Chris?

CG: Maybe 60% local and 40% tourist?

DL: Do you track demographics at United?

EG: I don't. I do know that the volume we sell grows each year. It's increased a lot in the last year, with the economy down.

CG: Us too; our sales have increased in the last year. We buy more, have more selection, and the demand was probably always there.

EG: The economy. People are eating at home more. It is also a health thing. People are eating less processed, less gluten, less dairy.

DL: Do you have any questions or suggestions about the summit? We're working with Supervisor Kinsey, and there are about 10 organizations helping; it's a group effort for and by agriculture. We want it to be practical, to come out with next steps, or a logo we all work on together. We want to have compelling speakers.

EG: Will both Farm Bureaus be there?

DL: We'll discuss that at our first organizing meeting on June 23.

EG: Especially if the logo will be Marin and Sonoma, we should have both of their input.

SQ: It is the Marin summit, though; it's kind of a dance. How far should we go/invite in Sonoma County? UCCE. Ag. Commissioner...

EG: It should be a tie between the counties, think outside the lines and build partnerships. We should have the West County Supervisor input, and Pam's... There are fisheries in Bodega, too.

DL: It's being called a reset, not a recession.

SQ: When I first started this job there were no veggie farmers. Now there are many in the same area, and more starting. This means something.

CG: People are gardening themselves.

EG: People need to rethink; the younger generations are trying new things.

DL: Some are still doing the commodity route, and others are getting into diversification. Thank you all for coming, hope you will be able to make the summit...