

Marin Food Policy Council
Meeting Notes
September 20, 2016
[HHS campus](#)

Next Marin Food Policy Council meeting: October 18, 2016, 3:00 – 5:00 p.m. [HHS campus](#)

Attendees:

Steering Committee – Alexandra Danino (SF-Marín Food Bank); Becky Gershon (SF-Marín Food Bank); Bonnie Nielsen (UCCE Marin); Julia Van Soelen Kim (UCCE Marin); Lori Davis (Sanzuma); Reba Meigs (HHS); Steve Schwartz (Interfaith Sustainable Food Collaborative)

Committee Members – Bonny White (Pt Reyes Library); Casey Poldino (Zero Waste Marin); Elaini Negussie (HHS); Gueidi Beltran (WIC); June Farmer (Marín City CX3); Madeline Hope (West Marin Waste Education); Shannon Lovelace-White (AIM); Susan Martinelli (Marín Community Clinic); Teresa Fogolini (NBCC Garden of Eatin'); Veda Florez (Latino Marin)

Guests – Aliya Matos (PaperSeed Foundation); Paulette Swallow (UCCE Marin Sustainable Ag Coordinator); Jim Dolcini (Dolcini Brothers); Karen Taylor (Bivalve Dairy)

Welcome and Council Representative Announcements – Lori Davis and Alexandra Danino

- Reba Meigs: HHS brown bag series with Janet Berreman, Berkeley Public Health Officer, sharing about the process and results of the SSB tax passing in Berkeley – 9/21 from 3:00 – 4:40pm
- Lori Davis: what does the Council think about small group break-outs? Sounds good when the topic is appropriate.

Production Panel with Local Ranchers – Paulette Swallow, UCCE Sustainable Ag Coordinator
Focus on opportunities and barriers to increasing Farm to Institution efforts with local ranchers

Jim Dolcini, 4th Generation Marin Cattle Rancher, Dolcini Brothers

- Jim is a fourth generation ag kid born on a dairy. He runs beef cattle with his brother in Sonoma and Marin: 380 cows, which requires 20 bulls, some replacement heifers = 450 animals a year. Try to hit some of the grass feed niche market.
- Timeline: September cows start calving, for a few months. December castrate and vaccinate calves with vaccines that feedlots want. June or July sell calves, about 90% of calves go east (last year as far away as Iowa, who can pay more, since that's where the corn feed is). Don't even wean the calves before selling them.

- Why sell to feedlots? 7 loads of calves weighing 750 pounds... it takes a feedlot to buy them. They are too young to butcher yet, will put some out on grass to feed, which you will then have to hold onto for another year. There is no difference in the way the animals are raised between grassfed and others besides length of time feeding on that grass – otherwise they are treated the same.
- They sell their calves by the pound. Go to feedlots where they are fed 120 days, the feedlots sell the animals to packers, which then sell carcasses, and then lots of that meat comes back to this area. Could take calves to an auction, there are a few dealers that ask about their calves since they have good genetics. Jim's niece sells some grassfed beef locally, but it is not at all their main market. The grassfed cattle have to be slaughtered at Marin Sun Farms, and it is very expensive. They ship 7 loads of calves – Jim doesn't know how he could possibly try to market them here locally. Butcher cows (the older ones) are sold for a lower price, sent to a dealer to Fresno area or up north – these wind up in McDonalds and hamburger chains.
- 4-5 acres of land is needed per animal unit, plus feeding hay during the winter – they eat half a ton an animal.
- Jim wonders: why would people pay more for a grassfed animal? That's what he ate as a kid til they could afford grain fed animals! In spring grassfed animals are great – because they are eating the seeds off the tops of the grass.
- As a consumer, lots of choices (organic, grassfed, natural, antibiotic-free, etc) – what should consumers really look for? His program is considered all-natural – only antibiotics if the individual is sick, and that individual then won't be shipped as such.
- They have trouble selling calves here because of the cool weather – the stress of transit to a hot environment often makes the calves sick “coasters” = coast calves. But with a good vaccination program, calves don't get sick as much.
- Ground beef: at what point are fillers added in? Dolcini Brothers doesn't grind or add fillers. If they have an older animal with a bad hip, they can't send her to Fresno. Starting to look at donating those kinds of cows to food banks for ground beef. Still good clean meat without antibiotics or hormones, just not prime. When ground, can't tell the difference.

Karen Taylor, 3rd Generation Dairy Rancher, Bivalve Dairy

- Born and raised on the ranch she runs now – sixth generation CA dairy farmer, fourth generation West Marin. Women know dairy farming because they know how to nourish mothers, whatever species. She first worked in fashion, then school teacher, now dairy farmer. Wanted to raise kids on a farm, couldn't find affordable property in West Marin, so they took over the ranch from her mom when her mother was finished. Milk cows 365 days a year – requires a lot of management!

- Husband is an engineer by trade so he has brought a lot of new technology to their operation.
- Went organic as a financial decision – only way to make it. Later realized other benefits. So much of what they do now and call organic is just how it was done before (old practices).
- 200 milking cows, 700 acres (also rent 150 acres from Straus family), and recently took over another 600 acres. They have a lot of water on their home ranch and have a lot of acreage, so are trying to grow their own feed (largest cost had been feeding their animals – feeding organic costs 1 and a half times as much as feeding conventional). They grow silage and hay, which is different on the coast since they don't get the same heat. Hay (dry matter) is needed for cows to grow and produce milk. Their male calves are kept and processed as beef.
- They ship their milk to Cover Stornetta in Petaluma, and Cowgirl Creamery's Red Hawk cheese is made solely from their milk. Every dairy that ships their milk has their tanks of milk sampled for fat, protein, solids, liquids, volume, etc. They get paid per pound, not gallon, but Clover - \$30 per 100 pounds of milk (twice the price of conventional, though feed costs 1 and a half times as much). Cows are milked daily and milk is picked up once a day and shipped to Petaluma. Highest quality milk goes to fluid milk, lesser quality turns into cheese or other solid products. Their dairy is consistently high so usually stays as fluid milk.
- Historically her family had shipped to a cooperative and thus had say in where their milk went. Clover is a private company so they have no say. However, Karen has known the owners of Clover for a while and they trust each other. She appreciates that Clover milk stays in the Bay Area – milk gets to consumers within a few days of milking. Clover helped them through their transition to organic.
- Organic cows produce about 70 pounds of milk a day (8 pounds/gallon).
- Cow testers test each cow's milk, which is then blended together into an average. At the Clover plant, they separate the fat out, and put it back into cartons depending on the percentage of fat desired. Whole milk is 4% fat. Sugar is added to nonfat milk.
- Somatic cell count tested (white blood cell in the cow) – low count = healthy cow. Tested at the dairy as well as at Clover. Clover gives bonuses for low somatic cell counts. Lower somatic cell counts = lower shelf life. Clover milk in a carton **not in a clear container** is fine if it's 10 days past expiration date.
- Pasteurizing milk removes a lot of the harmful bacteria in milk. It's more of a liability issue. She grew up drinking raw milk but doesn't drink it now.
- Tours of their ranch available, especially for schools (through AIM). They don't make money through tours, it's more from an educational interest.

- Methane digesters are a great technology but more is needed to make them more efficient, and to be able to reuse the gas that comes off of it rather than putting it into a generator. Millions of dollars of investment.

Questions & Answers

- Why might a local rancher choose beef vs. dairy? Jim's ranch used to be a dairy. Switched to beef for water quality issues (big issue in the 1990's – lots of dairies went out of business). Historically, ranches have been placed near water. Managing that for water quality needs is a perennial issue. Karen's ranch has been in the dairy business since the 1800s. 3 important things come out of a cow: calves, milk, and manure. They want the manure back onto their fields as fertilizer, *not* into waterways. Regulated by SF Regional Water Quality Board.
- Next month's meeting David Lewis will give a presentation on the history and context of Point Reyes Seashore and ranching.
- How is farmworker housing and overtime labor law issue? ...
- What might you as ranchers need from the MFPC?
They would love a mobile processing system. Processing facility, period. Marin Sun Farms is cost-preventative to be used by many (about \$200/animal just to be slaughtered). Also, Marin Sun Farms is at capacity and can't process more. A facility would come with a lot of regulations and etc. Is Marin too small to have a processing plant? Marin ordinance against a processing plant. There may be a possibility to amend this code. Mobile processing may be possible for poultry. Traveling to slaughter is never good for the animal or the rancher (\$). Mobile facilities are hard to meet the bottom line because of travel costs.
- Any other specific asks from the MFPC? Any policy barriers or policy opportunities? Ag worker housing has taken 5 years to happen, so many hoops to jump through and still working on it. Lots of regulations...!!!
- Can communicate further offline, email Paulette at Pjswallow@ucanr.edu.

Breastfeeding in Marin County Report – Susan Martinelli and Gueidi Beltran

****see attached presentation****

- Breast milk is a baby's first food – and not many are getting the recommended amount, which puts them at risk for health problems and food insecurity.
- Marin has a high breast milk initiation rate (90%), but there is a rapid decline – by about 3 months old only 52% of babies are exclusively breastfeeding (6 months of exclusive is recommended, and a year or 2 combined with solid food).

- What happens once you leave the baby-friendly hospital (10 step certification process to support breastfeeding)? Problems happen more for lower income mothers who need to go back to work early, may fear job insecurity if try to continue breastfeeding. Moms incur external costs to breastfeed. It takes a community to support mothers and their goals. 60% of employers do not have a breastfeeding support plan.
- First food desert: babies are very vulnerable – they can't eat what's at the food bank. About 900 babies die in the US in a year because they aren't breastfed.
- Role of MFPC: letters of support on state breastfeeding initiatives, include breastfeeding in hunger and food access in Marin documents, provide breastfeeding support in our circles of influence – return in the spring to discuss next action steps.
- Parental Leave Act
- National WIC Association has decided to not have any formula sponsors

*****Prospective Member Presentations on hold for the next meeting***

Equitable Access Report – Becky Gershon, Julia Van Soelen Kim, Lori Davis

Equity Summit

- November 9-10: small-scale community meetings on the 11/9 & all-day event on 11/10
- 5 themes: jobs, housing, transportation, food insecurity, health & hunger
- MFPC will organize a panel of presenters (Marin City, San Rafael, West Marin, and others) to speak to their respective issues on the 9th, and will give a quick broadview presentation about our overarching goal of eliminating food insecurity in Marin with some sub-topic discussions on the 10th.

SSB – are we interested as MFPC to write a letter of support for the cities of Oakland and San Francisco for their SSB tax on the ballot in November? **Vote: All in favor.**

Also, perhaps write a Marin Voice or letter to the editor about this action?

CA Food Policy Council Report – Steve Schwartz

- For 78 years farmworkers didn't get overtime pay, this past week we got it. Also \$65 million for climate-friendly agriculture programs.
- Each FPC needs to endorse the list of 10 bills as ones we want to track. Steve thinks it's a fine list – and is not going to change. **Vote: All in favor.** Steve will email the list to the full Council. We will also have the opportunity to endorse the report as well.

Meeting adjourned at 5:05 p.m.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, October 18, 2016, from 3:00 – 5:00 p.m. at the HHS campus