



NE OKC Food Security Symposium

December 11, 2019



Audience Q&A - Fill free to add as much or as little as you'd like. Please initial your responses so I can compile everything for our participants. Thanks and appreciate your extra participation.

- **What do you think the role of students (K-12 & higher ed) is in changing the food system?**
 - If we ask them, young people have many thoughts about our food system and the food we eat. When done well, I think food-related school programming is a wonderful way to get kids involved. I also think that in this current moment, many kids are not satisfied with simple answers. Some of the most thoughtful questions I've gotten have dirk from students who want to know why (global) food inequities exist and what to do about them. So I think if we give them the tools, kids can help us think about how to better design our communities to meet the needs of everyone (*Ashanté*)
 - I have seen the role of young people expand over the last 10 years and as a result I have seen young people involved in multiple ways in changing the food system, from soil to table. They are participating in master gardening and school gardens programs; they are developing gleaning programs and food pantries. They are asking for halal food to be available in school cafeterias to support Muslim students. In brief, young people are defining where they want to intervene in changing the system and this will continue to evolve. (*LaVonna*)
- **How important is bioproductivity to the development of a community? (meaning how important is it to “produce” something?)**
 - My response to this is simply my opinion and I want to be clear about that up front. That said, I believe that any community that is seen as ‘consumers only’ will consistently be left behind. A lack of community production supports an ongoing dependency on others to have needs met. More troubling is the idea that this may give others the justification they need as they fail to seek authentic community voices about what is needed or what should be done to increase access to healthy food and other resources. (*LaVonna*)
 - There are countless stories of people becoming increasingly disconnected from the food we eat - for a recent discussion of the historical foundation of this see Pure Adulteration by Benjamin R. Cohen. Whether through industrialized farming methods that cultivate food in far off places using ingredients many of us don't understand or through our own tendencies to be swayed by new fangled approaches that make food preparation and consumption easier, there seems to

be an ever widening chasm between individuals and the food we eat. Allowing communities autonomy over what is grown and control over how it is produced offers an opportunity to connect residents to food and raise awareness of the ways food influences so many aspects of life. (*Bryce*)

- **Thinking on policy, systems, and environmental change work - can you describe how critical programs are for that? What about engagement?**
 - Programs are important resources for change. Public policy produces programs-there are literally thousands of public programs that address issues as diverse as housing, food, health and income security. Programs can provide financial support to test new ideas or practices about what works to address food access. In LA, we had programmatic support that helped to develop our collaborative, to support new farmers' markets, and support a healthy eating social marketing campaign. Our partners had ideas about what they wanted to do and the programmatic support gave them the flexibility to test their ideas, and share what they learned with others, which supported their change efforts.
 - Engagement is important as well. You get peoples' attention with financial resources or the number of people you bring into the room with you. It has been my experience that the more people or organizations that are engaged in the work, the better-you are able to expand the reach of the work and are seen as more credible (*LaVonna*)
- **When it comes to retail, the big box retailers commonly look more a median household income more than need. How might we change that narrative?**
 - I wonder what it would take for this. They look at income but also other factors that we not always be privy to (such as education, marital status, etc). Some cities create incentives for big box stores by lowering tax burden if they will open in particular areas. That works sometimes but increasingly, supermarkets in particular have thin profit margins, which is a concern for them. In my view, part of what we have to consider is: are there other, more sustainable models we can turn to? I think this is a question that is about stores but more broadly is about city design/public transit, etc. aside from tax credits and incentives, I don't know that there is much that can be done to sway big stores to think about need as a motivator for opening stores. They are, after all, thinking about their own bottom line. What I do think is that, overall, there's an opportunity to study past models (i.e. a smaller stores) and consider different ways to integrate food within communities. (*Ashanté*)
- **What can we do to ensure that the interiors inside grocery stores are not placing foods in a manner that is inequitable (ex: buy a head of lettuce, get 2 free liter sodas. Or placing high fructose corn syrup juices on the baby aisle)**
 - Grocery stores often get paid to market specific spaces, such as what we see at the end of the aisles. They also respond to consumer requests and demands, such as the candy free check-out aisles. Have the task force take pictures of the layout of stores in different communities and use these as part of the conversation you want to get started around store interiors. Also, given the new

markets that are planned for Ward 7, I would get involved in whatever community advisory boards or city planning boards that are working on these issues.

(LaVonna)

- **What would be your ideal situation when it comes to # of stores, accessibility, & timeframe?**
 - For me, 'ideal' is in the hands of the community-what do they want? Ideal in LA started out as new grocery stores and expanded to a much more diverse set of food access opportunities. Regarding timeline, you need to think about what is reasonable and what are relevant milestones. More directly, how will you be able to let people know that progress is being made, even if things are moving slower (or perhaps faster) than expected? This will be critical to keeping peoples' attention and their engagement in the work. (LaVonna)
- **What is the feasibility study that says whether or not it is feasible to have a cooperative-owned healthy, whole foods grocery store in a community like Ward 7? Is it feasible???**
 - Here are a few links to resources that should be helpful starting points in answering questions of feasibility (LaVonna)
 - - <http://www.foodcoopinitiative.coop/sites/default/files/Feasibility%20FAQ%20and%20Checklists.pdf>
 - https://piet.ucdavis.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/valentialexis_200546_6212037_MonteverdeCoop_Final-.pdf
 - <http://nfca.coop/startup/>
 - <http://ngfn.org/resources/food-hubs/food-hub-knowledge/feasibility-studies>
- **How important is technology and education the next generation of farmers?**
 - There seems to be a real need to look closely at context when thinking about the future of farming. In some cases, resources such as good soil and knowledge of more traditional modes of farmer are likely to be robust, particularly in places with a history of agricultural production. However, in other locales, a food sovereign future may require training a new kind of farmer, one who wears a lab coat and germinates seeds under a microscope. (Bryce)