

2021 Food Summit (virtual)
October 13, 2021 6:30 pm -8:00 pm

Guest Presenters:

- Senator Mark Montigny, 2nd District, Bristol, and Plymouth Counties
- Liz Wiley, Executive Director, Marion Institute

Panelists:

- Kristin Sukys, Policy Analyst in the Health Law and Policy Clinic, Harvard University
- Mike Goodman, Acting Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, UMass Dartmouth
- Winton Pitcoff, Director, MA Food System Collaborative
- Wendy Garf-Lipp, Executive Director, United Neighbors of Fall River
- Ivan Brito, Chief Operating Officer and Director of the Food Pantry, M.O.L.I.F.E., Inc.

Moderators:

- Jacob Miller, 2L UMass Dartmouth, Law
- Narcisse Kunda, Senior, UMass Dartmouth, Charlton College of Business

Sponsored by the Leduc Center for Civic Engagement UMass Dartmouth, the Office of Senator Mark Montigny, and The Marion Institute.

- There were 107 people in attendance.
- People in the Food Summit stated in the chat box they were from the following cities: In Massachusetts: Fairhaven, Marion, Fall River, South Hamilton, New Bedford, Wareham, Dartmouth, Mattapoisett, Gloucester, Acushnet, Brockton, Taunton, Somerville, Bourne, Westport, Ipswich, Falmouth, Plymouth, UMass Dartmouth campus, Rochester. In Rhode Island: Providence, Tiverton, Pawtucket. In Vermont: Montpelier.

Opening remarks from Senator Mark Montigny

- Mark.Montigny@masenate.gov
- I see first-hand failures of government and institutions, and the loss of faith in institutions. The systems that serve us, regardless of political party at national and state level. We have an enormous amount of money right now in the state and federal governments. If people are still hungry, we need to discontinue failure.
- When you hear you cannot find quality help in the economy, if workers are not showing up it is because they are not being paid a fair wage. Food insecurity is directly related to earning enough in wages to pay for food.
- If you are working in advocacy, do not let politicians say we cannot do that because we do not have money. We have the money-- it is a matter of priorities. Use social media and advocacy to demand food security. It is an issue of morality.
- No people in schools should shame families and children if they cannot pay for the school meals. This is indicative of larger institutional and national culture.

Liz Wiley, from the Marion Institute presenting the Southcoast Food Policy Council and takeaways from the 2021 Food System Assessment:

- lwiley@marioninstitute.org
- Marion Institute's mission is to connect, convene, and advocate for local food producers, consumers, and community members who seek policy and systems that strengthen our regional food system, improve community health, and eliminate food insecurity.

- We work with our project partners and sponsors of Coastal Foodshed, Southeastern Massachusetts Agricultural Partnership (SEMAP), Island Foundation, and Bay Coast Bank to commission this assessment from Northbound Ventures Consulting, Holly Fowler.
<http://www.northboundventures.com/team>
- The Southcoast Food Policy Council came into the Marion Institute in early 2020 and it had been focused on the immediate emergency food relief. We now are in the process of setting up the infrastructure of the SFPC. We have our Community Advisory Board/Steering Committee that you can see here: <https://www.marioninstitute.org/southcoast-food-policy-council>. We met for the first time September 30. We are grateful for these partners.
- The Food System Assessment is important for the Community Advisory Board (CAB) because the CAB will use the Food Assessment to identify priorities to create a plan of action for the SFPC.
- The report is comprehensive and hope all stakeholders read it. You will find the assessment has a lot of information assembled, but does not make recommendations for the community. It is meant to be a conversation starter for determining shared priorities with the community of stakeholders.
- The full report is 140 page and we did develop a Digest that we will share in a few weeks when it is ready.
- Here is the link to the full Southcoast Food System Assessment
https://www.marioninstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/MI_FoodAssesmentGuide-2.pdf
- We started with the objectives (see slide page 5)
 - to update the landscape of 2014 food system assessment using broader primary research and food economic perspectives, and share progress and challenges since 2014
 - Identify intervention points where policy can support equitable and sustainable food system for all.
 - Help raise awareness of Southeastern MA for contributing to the MA Local Food Action Plan and the New England Food System planning work.
- The work of the SFPC will also support the broader goals of the MA Local Food Action Plan, which is to 1.) increase production and sales of MA grown food, 2.) create economic opportunity in food and farming, improve wages and skills of food system workers 3.) protect the land and water needed to produce food, and ensure food safety 4.) reduce hunger and food insecurity
- The role of the Food Policy Council: (slide 6) The benefit of the FPC is we work in the outside circles of the Local, state and federal policy and its impact on the public health, environment, society and economy, while partners continue the important work in the inner blue layers of production of food, distribution of food, recovery and so on. The benefits of the Food Policy Council is that it looks at long term systematic changes that need to be made, using systems thinking approach.
- Slide 7- Regional Demographics- illustrate Bristol county- specifically New Bedford and Fall River has the lowest medium income; the New Bedford are contributes billions of dollars to the MA economy, oysters and cranberries and the Port of New Bedford ,but lowest demographic wealth income. So how do we keep of the wealth here for people living here?
- Slide 9- Key takeaways from Food Production and Harvest from Chapter 1 in the assessment
 - Farming is hard and remains hard
 - The number of farms decreased by 8.1%, and number of farms decreased by 8% from 2007-2021 USDA stats

- Average age of farmers continues to rise and a concern, so succession planning is key when it comes to halting development of agricultural land
 - 40% of farmers are women and 98% are white and farming needs to more racially diverse
 - Cranberry is the biggest crop but the competition from other states has created a low demand so we need to diversify
 - Climate change endangers all production of crops
 - Farms struggle to be profitable and farm wages low
 - Land access is a huge barrier- very expensive; and we need to be able to produce more food locally
 - 3 counties (Bristol, Plymouth, and Norfolk) of fishing industry biggest catches in 18 coastal towns in Southcoast are American lobster, blue finned tuna, sea scallops, quahog, oysters, and crab.
- Slide 10- Key takeaways from Food Processing and Distribution from Chapter 2 in the assessment
 - Need adequate capacity, and the region did since 2014, with Meatworks that processes cattle, hog, sheep, goats; and maintained capacity with Dartmouth Grange Kitchen and Hope in Main in Bourne, RI, act as food incubators
 - Coastal Foodshed filled gaps in food access, host mobile farm stands, virtual market, and New Bedford Farmers Market and use SNAP and HIP.
- Slide 11- Key Takeaways from Food Access and Consumption from Chapter 3 in the assessment
 - Consumers primarily use grocery stores to buy food, to box stores, convenience stores, farmers markets, food pantries.
 - Summer 2020 during COVID, food providers (churches, non-profits) served 27,000 clients a week with food, with only 2 or 3 staff.
 - Did surveys to get information for the assessment. Translation services provided by Immigrant Service Center, United Way of Greater Fall River, United Way of Greater New Bedford, United Neighbors of Fall River. A heavy reliance on food pantries often because do not have direct access to grocery stores. Hardest food to get was meats, dairy, fruits and vegetables.
- Slide 12- SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) GAP
 - SNAP Participation increased but still SNAP Gap of 45% - 45% of people that are eligible for SNAP are not using SNAP. HIP participation even lower.
 - In 2014, 1 in 8 children are food insecure in Bristol County. In 2020 survey, it showed 1 in 13 children food insecure in Bristol County.
- Slide 13- Food Accessibility with Food Finder
 - <https://foodfinder.marioninstitute.org/>
 - The Marion Institute's Southcoast Food Policy Council's Food Finder is a web-based app to use from phone or computer to find any kind of food, food pantries, soup kitchens, farmers markets, farms, farm stands, mobile farm markets, specialty stores and it shows who takes SNAP, HIP, WIC, senior farmers market coupons.
 - Food Finder is the result of collaboration with UMass Dartmouth Professor Tim Shea, Deirdre Healy at the Leduc Center for Civic Engagement, Paul Constantine and Vorn Mom from Moonberry Tech.

- Slide 14- Key Takeaways from Food Loss and Waste Reduction, Recovery and Recycling from Chapter 4 in the assessment
 - Policy success in MA Organics Waste Ban in 2014, saving 1.5 million tons of food
 - Food rescued or donated has increased 30% since 2014 and food waste collected has doubled in same time.
 - 2022, expect expansion so institutions and commercial waste, if have 1 ton of food waste, must be composted and given to farms or groups that use the compost.
 - Gleaning still in baby stage, with 30% of food remaining in the fields, so need to develop gleaning program in the area
 - Consumer education of food labeling will help lessen food waste
- Slide 15- Key Takeaways from Local Food Economy in chapter 5 of food assessment
 - Over 350,000 jobs and 3 billion to economy
 - Total number food manufacturing business is 388, most need find ways to keep products here
 - We have high number of jobs in the food business and restaurants and working in food industry (fishing too) but consistently low wages and not enough money so they do not need to rely on SNAP, food pantries etc.
- Slide 16- Key takeaways from the Food System Regulations and Policy in chapter 6 of the assessment
 - This would be the work of the Southcoast Food Policy Council and partners like SEMAP who has been working in policy for years.
 - Policy Issues to highlight include: access to land and land tenure, preservation of prime agricultural land and halt development buying the land, tax laws for small agricultural parcels, developing more right to farm and agricultural commissions in this area, climate change mitigation policies, soil health research and regeneration of the soil, increasing the minimum wages, developing consumer and institutional local food purchasing incentives, expand food loss reduction and recovery of food.
 - Ensure we have land and skilled labor to grow food
 - Ensure equal access to food for all and cultural inclusivity in the food grown
 - Ensure economic goal aligned and action coordinated so no one left behind
 - Mitigate climate change impacts on health and the environment
- We want your feedback. Email sfpc@marioninstitute.org
- Here is the link to the full Southcoast Food System Assessment
https://www.marioninstitute.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/MI_FoodAssesmentGuide-2.pdf

Panel

- 1.) Mike Goodman, Acting Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs, UMass Dartmouth
 - mgoodman@umassd.edu
 - How to make food access and food security work considering the trade-offs with economic priorities?
 - In speaking of food security and food access to eat nutritious food, it is about the economy. It is a false choice to say food security and food access is pitted against

economic priorities. On one hand there is pressure on land to grow food when alternative uses of land such as housing development. Land owners need to see agriculture a viable economic opportunity which often has to do with zoning, and other regulation. A policy action could be creating the agricultural jobs with incentives. Maybe even looking at a way to reduce the cost of access to nutritious food.

- The function of the market economy is to allocate resources, money, goods, and services. When the economy does not do that, the economic model has failed in its role. The economy is just a series of institutions so no need to bow to the economy.
- During the pandemic what I saw happened, is that we took for granted the food provided in the public school system. We had no plan b. When schools were closed there was no immediate plan on how to pay and provide access for school children to eat breakfast, lunch and dinner. The problem in this case, is the wages for families were not enough and access to food was a problem.
- If families not pursuing school food programs, need another option for families.
- Need to look at where market is failing and step in to provide solutions.

2.) Kristin Sukys, Policy Analyst in the Health Law and Policy Clinic, Harvard Law School

- ksukys@law.harvard.edu
- Trends in Food Policy Councils (FPC):
 - We are seeing FPC's work more on economic incentives in policy, and what can boost the economic drivers to enact good food policies. Who has money and what are social policies we can help.
 - We are seeing FPC look at the downstream and upstream impacts to ensure there is no harm in the policies.
 - We are seeing more food assessment research which is critical because legislators are savvy to numbers and statistics so we need to data to illustrate our policy proposals.
 - The Assessment can even be seen just looking at data points. This was appalling: 39% respondents surveys often or sometimes worry that food will run out before there is money to buy more. 30% often or sometimes ran out of food before there was money to buy more. 23% households in the survey relied on food pantries within the last 12 month. You can take to legislators on the reality on what is happening.
 - What expenses competed with food, rent, utility, internet, etc.? This assessment shows that food is never just about food-there are intersections to consider.
- How to know which decisions are good policy decisions a FPC makes?
 - Is the FPC decision feasible? Does it make the impact you need? Where is the energy of the individual members? What is realistic? Are you looking for the piecemeal win? Do you have a plan on how to get there? Who are their FPC relationships and what do they look like? The assessment is a catalyst for the FPC.

3.) Winton Pitcoff, Director, MA Food System Collaborative

- winton@mafoodsystem.org
- How far have MA Food Plan FPCs come? What have you learned from the Collaborative listening sessions in 2020?
 - No much had changed but the Core problem is the disinvestment in the food system and relegating the trust of the running the food system to businesses.

- The way it pays out is farmers are finding it hard to break even financially as they make \$.96 for every \$1.00 spent. That means farmers are losing money in MA. Food is not too expensive. Farmers are finding it harder to grow food and people cannot afford to buy food.
- The disinvestment in UMass Extension for farmers to get good research and farmer education, the lack of affordable lands and the ability to get affordable loans, lack of access to room where decisions are made, lack of state agency coordination.
- With the establishment of the Food System Caucus in the MA legislature, coordination is better and talking about similar issues.
- Equity was key takeaway. The lack of access to land, jobs, education, and power and there needs to be targeted action to undo the inequities.
- How can local people and Food Policy Councils pull the levers of power? What are some impacts FPCs have made in communities?
 - FPC allow the building of local power. Right now the power is in the hands of industrialized farming and the federal level. Local FPC's best use of their power is understanding their local assets and resources, and ensure fair treatment of people.
 - FPC's is more of an art than a science. Every FPC is different- some working on just urban agriculture, but you cannot small community garden your way out of hunger. Stuff needs to be figured out to scale.
 - Some FPCs are more comfortable in advocacy and use those tools. FPC's best work is when they connect the parts of the food system that have not been connected in a long time, through breaking the silos and pulling the broadest groups of stakeholders together to tackle issues.

4.) Wendy Garf-Lipp, Executive Director, United Neighbors of Fall River <https://unfr.org>

- wendy@unfr.org
- Our organization did not start in food, but our mission is to respond to emerging issues.
- At schools, children are not getting full nutritious meals, those are supplemental meals, not a full healthy lunch meal, and it is not dinner, and no food on the weekends.
- During the pandemic, we were able to connect with other groups in Fall River to feed people 7 days a week, 65,000 meals distributed. Money raised ran out and those people hungry.
- We cannot have a food system where we all access our food from one place, in this case the Greater Boston Food Bank, because if there is a problem with the refrigerated trucks, with people being too sick to drive, or crops dying, we will not have the food.
- We should not strengthen the current system as it is broken. We need to create a new food system, with everything local, and a system that takes away the stigma that we need to line up to get food at a food pantry.
- I also see that people have no idea what to do with fresh produce. They might not have a stove or full size refrigerators. If it is not used right away, and food goes bad. We never told people they could buy frozen vegetables and so people do not buy frozen produce. Message needs to be different.
- Feed the folks, this will save the world. If do not have to worry about food, you can do other things.

5.) Ivan Brito, Chief Operating Office and Coordinator of the Food Pantry, M.O.L.I.F.E., Inc.

- <https://www.molifeinc.com/>
- ibrito@molifeinc.com
- Started the food pantry at our organization based on need during the pandemic for seniors, BIPOC communities, and regardless of the weather they were open.
- We need to start with education, to learn how to grow your own food. We should grow local food for local people.
- We need to increase wages because we cannot afford quality and nutritious food.
- Policy change is the way forward, and we need a food revolution to be more control of our food. There seems to be a war on farming, a war on growing your own food, and a denial of our right to grow and eat the food we want- we need to work towards food sovereignty, especially in our urban areas.
- I agree with Wendy, our food pantry is just one truck away from no food because there are so few local resources available to us.

Question and Answer with audience:

- How do fundraising efforts for donated goods help or hinder efforts?
 - When people donate food, it is usually food that the donor does not need and nor do people coming into a food pantry. We ask for money so we can buy food people will actually eat.
- Public School question- Adele Sands, Superintendent of Bristol Country Agricultural High School
 - Public schools are required to provide free breakfast and lunch.
 - From Agricultural school prospective, we are dairy farm and have pork, cow, chickens and we feed kids using meat we raise.
 - We have 1,000 pounds beef and chicken and giving it out to food pantries because cannot give it to other schools because other schools cannot handle raw meats.
 - We have kids raise cows and the milk we get from cows is whole milk but we cannot give whole milk to students.
 - Public schools are not getting food because the supply chain is broken. We had driven over to the food distribution point and drive the truck back to the school cause not enough drivers in order to have enough food.
 - We need BIPOC children invested in agricultural science and natural resource management, even on this call there are a lot of white people, and we need BIPOC children to learn about agriculture now so the future will be secure.
- It struck me that we are one of the largest catch port in the US, and remembering growing up in WI – we got local milk into local schools. Is there a way to get local fish into local schools?
 - Significant portion of catch is exported. Underutilized species are sold because not marketed effectively in the region; it is noted as garbage fish in this region but that fish is eaten around the world, so more intentional use of local species is needed- to get that food into schools and local supermarkets, but the public needs to know what to do with the fish. There are opportunities to support local fishing industry by domestically marketing the local species.