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“Building Blocks Project” Food Policy Conference Notes

### **BREAKOUT SESSIONS**

**Local 1500's Building Blocks Project Statement of Food Policy Principles were established with the intent of developing a set of principles representative of the work of organizations working on NYC food Policy.**

#### *Principles*

*Are these principles representative of your work?*

Most of the organizations at the conference felt that the policy principles were in some way representative of their work. These are a few ways that specific organizations identify with the principles.

RWDSU: Emphasis on groceries and job quality

SLOW FOOD: Their mission is good, clean, fair food

Food Systems Network NYC: Supports collaborations, making links

CLC: Supports unions and unemployed workers access to food and resources

NYC Dept. of Health and Mental Hygiene : Increase availability of healthy food: healthy

bodegas, green-cart leg., supermarkets, calories counter, Green-Cart Program, Trans-fat ban

East NY Farms! Project: Policies permitting wholesale farmers' markets

NYIRN: Stronger lines between upstate farmers and manufacturers (procurement legislation)

Slow farms: Food access in public spaces

Just Food: 3,9 (Urban Ag and CSA)

*How are these principles articulated – are they strong enough? Is each one clear?*

Generally, the principles were seen as needing to be more concise, approachable, and clearly categorized. That they should be placed into the context of existing conditions and coalitions, related to specific goals and localized. It was noted that attention should be given to distinguishing between principles, goals and actions. The document should be shorter and more memorable, focused around five basic words.

*Is there something missing?*

Elderly issues

Racial disparities in the food system

Equity and fairness across supply chain, not just in terms of food

The link between sustainability and environmental and economic growth

The need for closed-loop food systems

Cancer rates



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Lifespan issues  
Community food security  
The needs of small and mid-sized farmers  
Farm workers' rights  
Growers' unions  
Land/space availability and saving land for farmers  
The global food crisis  
"Good Environment" and "Good Community" along with Health, Food, Jobs  
Social environment as well as physical  
The need for green community space  
Aggregating and processing infrastructure  
Distribution as a major obstacle  
The need to reform Federal policies  
Emergency food  
Farm bill  
Removing subsidies for commodity farming  
CSA development  
Empowering communities  
Defending the right of New Yorkers to grow their own food/Urban farming  
Showing farm-to-neighborhood system with graphics  
Emergency Food Programs, Green-carts, Problems with Green-cart eligibility calculation  
Bodegas, Production, Infrastructure

***Policy:***

*Do you have ideas for what other policies should be developed?*

***Procurement***

- Enact a procurement requirement for all city and state institutions including schools and prisons to purchase a percentage of their food locally and from sustainable sources
- Creating space in apartment buildings for CSA's

***Financial Incentives***

- Tax junk food, especially that which is sold in school zones, to correct federal subsidies that make bad food cheap
- Offer subsidies on the production and sale of healthy food
- Provide tax incentives to farmers, support for local farms including an increase in land leases
- Provide more public support for co-ops
- Give incentives to schools to use vacant land for school gardens
- Reinvest through subsidies
- Support the Farm Bill's "innovative practices" grants
- Tax incentives for developers



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- Require junk and fast food advertisers to set aside 20 percent of their advertising budget to advertise healthy alternatives to their products or to provide nutrition education to children and families.
  - Focus on planning, rather than market-driven solutions

#### *Education*

- Begin public awareness campaigns (because many people don't know what a healthy diet is)
- Revamp Farm to School bill
- Provide alternatives to dairy to schools and WIC

#### *Urban Farming*

- Strike down the city's anti-beekeeping law
- Provide city support for urban farms
- Basic infrastructure
- Requiring landlords to allow rooftop gardens
- Implementing container garden programs
- Creating community gardens

#### *Parks Department*

- Look into Parks policies
- Create an urban farming department within the Parks Department
- Use programs to empower citizens, like Million Trees (Edible fruit on street trees?)
- Remove barriers to setting up CSA's in parks

#### *Mandates*

- Mandate food retail space in new development projects

#### *Supermarkets*

- Develop policy tools to prevent closings of existing supermarkets
- Source locally
- Provide living-wage jobs
- Provide a minimum percentage of shelf-space dedicated to healthy food
- Sell food from urban gardens
- Be open late

#### *Building on Existing Legislation*

- Add a food policy section to the next iteration of PlaNYC
- Develop a healthy food enterprise model
- Farm Bill programs need bird-dogging for delivery to local level
- Utilize service statement of City Charter to bring services/needs into dialogue

#### *Communities*

- Moving communities toward policy formation
- Developing vertical partnerships
- Shifting focus from "supply-side"/Creating demand for healthy food/addressing nutrition



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misconceptions through education

- Creating a popular movement
- Further supporting non-profit infrastructure
- Seeking community input/perspectives of people with health problems
- Linking labor and community
- Differentiating between people and the representatives of people
- Creating a dialog between communities and city council
- Collaborating with faith-based groups

### **MOVING FORWARD**

**The Building Blocks Project's Food Policy Principles were created with the intent of being representative of the work of a variety of organizations.**

***Should the principles be used as a way for the UFCW to support organizations working on these issues or should these principles become the basis for another working document that we create as a group along with a structure to work together?***

- Principles should be used for UFCW to support organizations and coalitions working on food policy.
- UFCW could add their voices to existing networks and help align them as much as possible.
- The Principles should be translated into an action plan.
- Develop a policy playbook.
- Find five points where everyone's interests overlap, or pick one key issue and discuss its finer details.
- Build around a few principles and prioritize.
- The principles should be only one of the working documents that go for group feedback to create a unified document.

*What would that structure look like? Are there existing structures that could facilitate this type of collaborative work? Is your organizations part of an existing group that is already working on collaborative policy work?*

- A communications network to keep one another informed of policies that are being worked on
- Link existing structures rather than creating a new one
- The UFCW Local 1500 should develop ways for strategic collaboration between sectors and policies that support all sectors of the supply chain.



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**The UFCW should make sure to:**

- Provide activist training, be more activist oriented
- Engage other unions: 1199, Unite Here, UFT, International Union of Food Workers, La Via Compesina
- Develop a coalition of labor, distribution, and buyers for political impact
- Build trust with other orgs to build a larger community
- Create international alliances

*Are there existing structures that could facilitate this type of collaborative work?*

- Aid, broaden existing coalitions like Food & Fitness Partnership, Food Systems Network NYC
- We should have another meeting - networking follow up is needed to sustain engagement
- Regular check-in to build movement as a whole
- Formal liaison is needed to link Food & Fitness Partnership, Building Blocks, FSNYC

Questions:

- Where is the larger space to collaborate efforts?
- How much emphasis on policy? Electoral work? “Alliance for New Economy” structure?