



Palmer

Town Hall Meeting Report



Wednesday, February 18, 2015

5:30 PM – 7:30 PM

UAF Matanuska Experiment Farm

Background

In 2015, the Alaska Food Policy Council (AFPC) hosted three (3) community food system meetings for the general public, which expanded on the four (4) meetings that were held in 2014. The goals of the meetings include:

1. Increase awareness about Alaska food issues among the general population
2. Increase involvement in local food issues by community members
3. Gain a perspective of local food issues to inform the AFPC and policy makers
4. Recruit new members for the AFPC.

The AFPC is nearing the conclusion of its first strategic plan. Information about the Alaska food system received through the 2014 and 2015 Town Hall meetings will assist the AFPC to evaluate the impact of their current priorities, and will frame key issues for use in developing the next 5-year strategic planning cycle.

This report summarizes information gathered through the Palmer Town Hall meeting. All of the materials used for promotion and unedited comments gathered are included in the appendix.

Overview

PLANNING

A Town Hall Meeting Committee comprised of AFPC governing board members and local community members met twice via teleconference. The group provided input on all aspects of the meeting from logistics and promotion to implementation and the agenda, including an appropriate public engagement framework. Additionally, the committee provided valuable and relevant contacts in Palmer to ensure there was a broad representation of attendees at the meeting.

Amy Pettit represented the AFPC Governing Board at the meeting.

A final teleconference was held about 10 days prior to the meeting to finalize details. This teleconference included the meeting facilitators, AFPC Governing Board representative attending the meeting, and most importantly, critical partners on-the-ground in Palmer who agreed to assist the team with final logistics and promotion.

PROMOTION

A flyer was created for the event and was distributed and shared via social media outlets including the AFPC Facebook page. The flyer was also shared via the AFPC's action alert email list serve. The flyer was emailed to local partners in Palmer who posted it on community bulletin boards and local businesses.

The event was added to the Frontiersman, Alaska Public Media, and Alaska Dispatch News calendars of events, as well as the "What's Up" and AFPC email list serves.

A public service announcement was submitted to the local radio and a press release was distributed.

Press coverage of the event included KSKA/Alaska Public Media and Anchorage Press.

ATTENDANCE

38 people were in the room; 31 signed in. Attendees were generally made aware of the event through the extensive promotion including Facebook, the AFPC email listserv, the flyer, community calendars, radio PSA, the press release, and word of mouth generated by governing board members and their communication networks, particularly Alaska Grown.

Meeting Logistics

LOCATION

The meeting was held at the UAF Matanuska Experiment Farm. The staff of the Experiment Farm generously donated the space and their time to help promote the event and provide food. The venue was very fitting for the topic, the number of people in attendance, and it provided the basic services required (kitchen, power, screen for PowerPoint presentation).

DATE AND TIME

The date and time of the Palmer meeting was coordinated strategically with local recommendations. Palmer is a large community with many competing events and activities, however it did not appear that there were any large competing events that evening.

FOOD

A local Palmer farmer generously donated locally grown carrots, Alaska Chips donated three boxes of single-serving bags of chips, and the staff of the Experiment Farm donated a number of baked goods using local ingredients.

Meeting Agenda

Based on feedback from Governing Board members about the 2014 town hall agendas, the town hall meeting committee suggested a slight modification of the meeting agenda and information collection methods in order to increase the call to action aspect of the meetings. The Palmer Town Hall began with an overview presentation on the AFPC, followed by gathering of individual input then small group discussions on solutions. Public input was gathered using open-ended questions as opposed to framing the issues and driving the discussion toward preset topics.

Participants sat at tables, each containing 2-3 people. Governing Board members and facilitators were spread out evenly throughout the room and recorded the discussion at each table. During the first half of the meeting, facilitators collected the following information from all participants. Participants were given 5 minutes to answer each question. There were no limits on the amount of answers they could write. Information was gathered using post-it notes which were categorized by the participants into sectors of the food system. The following broad questions were asked:

1. What do you LIKE about the food system in Palmer? What are the positive things about food in Palmer? What do you like? What is working? Are there new and innovative things happening that you want to share?
2. What do you NOT like so much about food in Palmer? Do you face issues, challenges or barriers that you think need to be addressed?
3. If you had unlimited resources, what would be your vision for an ideal food system in Palmer?

The second half of the meeting was a longer, more in-depth discussion about specific issues. Groups gathered around food system sectors of their choosing from the “short-answer” exercise, and then those groups discussed the issue(s) of that sector in detail and brainstormed potential solutions or actions to improve the issue(s). The groups then reported back to the larger group about their issue and potential solution.

All comments from the three short exercises, the long exercise and the general table notes were collected and have been organized and documented in the appendix. The following provides a summary level recap of the input received through both exercises.

Summary of Palmer Public Input

What do Palmer residents LIKE about the food system?

CONSUMPTION

- Locally grown desire, ability to sell, and availability in restaurants
- Healthy and fresh options

DISTRIBUTION

- Increasing interest from growers, consumers, chefs, entrepreneurs, etc.
- Farmers Market, Alaska Grown section at Fred Meyer, Fish- and Farm-to-School programs

POLICIES AND REGULATIONS

- State and Federal support of agriculture

EDUCATION

- Alaska Grown logo, Grow Palmer
- Talk of the food system

PRODUCTION AND HARVEST

- Local produce availability, accessibility, diversity, quality
- Enjoyment of growing vegetables on commercial scale, opportunities for subsistence.

TRANSPORTATION

- Good relationships between farmers and consumers

FOOD SAFETY

- Freshness
- Choices in products, stores

What do Palmer residents DISLIKE about the food system?

CONSUMPTION

- More public awareness
- Want year-round local produce

DISTRIBUTION

- High mark up of local produce in the grocery store, not enough space for local produce
- Distribution to restaurants
- More access and partnership is needed

FOOD SAFETY

- Cottage industry bill not accepted by Anchorage food regulations
- Lack of concern/interest in wild food research, chemicals in store-bought foods

POLICIES AND REGULATIONS

- High prices, not enough money to promote Alaska Grown
- More pressure for grocery stores to buy and promote Alaska Grown

- Lack of city council support
- Farmland turning into housing developments
- Hunting regulations costly
- Difficult to build relationships with farmers

EDUCATION

- Lack of stable education program on agriculture

TRANSPORTATION

- Shipping is expensive
- Connect and transport produce grown in Palmer to Anchorage population center
- Lack of processing facilities or commercial kitchens to rent

PROCESSING

- No alternatives to livestock processing
- Processors not team players with local producers

PRODUCTION AND HARVEST

- Access to supplies, compost, tools, seed, irrigation, land, inexpensive inputs
- High cost to build facilities (greenhouses), start-up needs
- Not enough local grown

WASTE AND RECYCLING

- Need for storage cache
- Food waste by retailers and restaurants

Conclusion

The Palmer town hall meeting was fun, informative and met the identified goals of successfully collecting new information from the Mat-Su Valley about food system issues. The information gathered from the Palmer Town Hall meeting will be further analyzed alongside the other Town Hall meetings as they occur. This information will be critical in setting the stage for the forthcoming AFPC strategic planning process.



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Longhand Notes

Wednesday, February 18, 2015
5:30 PM – 7:30 PM
UAF Matanuska Experiment Farm

Notes from meeting to be used for formal report

► **Participant Input:** *What do Palmer Town Hall participants LIKE about the food system?*

PRODUCTION & HARVEST

- Summertime: produce availability
- Availability of locally grown produce & its accessibility through farmers markets, grocery stores, and local food in schools
- Fresh vegetables readily available in the summer
- There is a fairly new Monday market at the Palmer Depot and the Bushes and Bunches stand is open Fri & Sat. 12-6pm
- I love how the foods we grow or harvest are super-foods/super healers/full of antioxidants etc.
- Opportunity to create local food system that's already established somewhere else, diversity of food availability, i.e. crops, berries, fish, hunting (variety!)
- I like growing vegetables on a commercial scale
- Quality of products, real enthusiasm for buying local food
- Lots of food grown in the Mat Valley
- Palmer has many visible production farms
- The Grown Palmer project- local, public food for all!
- Small community feel = easy to contact and find your producer, the growing interest in local foods
- Several farmers markets w/in 40 miles – on different days of the week, can get local milk and meat

DISTRIBUTION

- So much increasing interest in local food from consumers, chefs, entrepreneurs, etc., starting up a new produce delivery between Palmer & Anch
- Love the local food growers that are passionate to produce providing for the greater community, new innovations to extend season, explore options of preserving & use
- The Mat Su has a vast number of charitable food “distributors” committed to making sure families have food
- Farmers market, buy local movement
- Small local production is growing and consumers want more
- AK Grown section at Fred Meyer, fish/farm to school programs

CONSUMPTION

- Willingness of selected people to spend money for good food
- More taste tests in schools so they can appreciate their local food system
- Access to Alaska Grown
- Healthier, better for the economy
- Whatever you grow you have an opportunity to sell
- Community desire for local food. Alaska Grown
- The commitment from restaurants & other commercial entities to buy AK grown
- Healthier options & fresher
- Local growers are able to sell quality products locally

POLICIES AND REGULATIONS

- The Food Policy Council
- Most our school programs operate in the red. They are using public funds. Shouldn't they adhere to state preference program?
- Incredible state and federal support of agriculture
- More focus on locally produced (grown) food

EDUCATION

- Making people aware we have food grown here!
- People are starting to talk about the food system
- The ubiquity of the AK Grown logo/label
- Grow Palmer
- Ideas: Educating students on agriculture isn't effective unless they can access it, Use garden food in cafeterias
- Opportunities for subsistence

TRANSPORTATION

- Relationships between farmers and consumers

FOOD SAFETY

- Freshness & available in stores
- Access to locally grown food, more choices in organic products, farmers market/natural pantry

 **Participant Input:** *What do Palmer Town Hall participants DISLIKE about the food system?*

PRODUCTION AND HARVEST

- Access to agriculture supplies, compost, tools, seed, irrigation, etc.
- Lack or available land, access to inexpensive inputs
- The cost to build facilities is high, but the local gov't want to put a huge tax and charge on the structure =greenhouses
- Not enough local grown
- Each potential producer needs extensive expertise & funding, small scale & start-up funding resources are limited
- Lack of ease of funding , local meats prices seems high when compared to outside products
- Lack of abundant local food (year round)
- Larger varieties year round
- Lack of appreciation that farmland is how you grow food
- It might be an old story but I was sorry when Mat Valley Creamery closed. .Haverwiester does a good job but I can't afford their milk.

PROCESSING

- Missed opportunity to process food grown in the Mat valley
- Does not seem to be alternatives for livestock processing (i.e. bottleneck @ ?)
- Processors are not team players w/ local producers (produce)

DISTRIBUTION

- The mark up of the products in the produce dept.
- Grocery stores don't give enough space
- I hate the bottleneck problem with control of foods – food service directions-exclusive contracts-preferred vendors
- Distribution to restaurants
- More accessibility to locally grown foods is needed
- Partnerships: crops/collaborators, empty back-hauls-ANC bread trucks, supply chain & distribution centers to benefit sm. producer, capacity support

CONSUMPTION

- Public awareness, access year round
- Such an uphill battle to get folks off fast food & convenience to choose greener & more nutrient-dense “healthier food”
- Marketing help of AK Grown products especially chips

WASTE AND RECYCLING

- Storage cache. Waste of food into garbage vs composting
- Food waste by retailers & restaurants

POLICIES AND REGULATIONS

- Cost of good to produce, resulting in higher prices than imported foods
- Roadblocks to building healthy communities around local food economies, ie. City councils resistance to supporting, financing, participating.
- Valuable farmland being turned into housing developments
- Not enough money to promote AK Grown. Put pressure on grocery stores to buy and promote AK grown foods.
- Reduce token efforts & spending on Ag promotion, AK food policy pens/bags are an effort, contractors at AK Fair running AK Grown Day. Get real AK farmers, one year the contractors had WA state potatoes!
- Find producers – barriers to entry/access to resources (i.e. land, fish, etc.). Supply chains favor larger, industrial scale production.
- Difficult to meet/build relationships w/ farmers, hunting regulations hunting a costly experience (cost benefit to hunt vs. purchase)

EDUCATION


- Lack of stable education program about agriculture
- Hunger/food scarcity, most individuals consumer processed foods, health issues, obesity, poor diets, lack of education on food

TRANSPORTATION

- Shipping is so expensive
- Need to connect/transport food grown in Palmer to population center in Anchorage
- Too much reliance on: imported food, confined to large store options during “off season”
- Don't always have fresh vegetables in winter
- Availability, not always available
- No food processing facilities or commercial kitchens to rent. Not enough local food, AG/farmland disappearing.

FOOD SAFETY

- Anchorage food regulations not accepting states cottage industry bill super detrimental for small producers
- Lack of concern/interest in wild food research (need education) & contain chemical w/in store bought foods

 **Participant Input:** *Vision. If you had unlimited resources, what would be your vision of the ideal food system in your community?*

PRODUCTION AND HARVEST

- The financial & willingness to preserve all of our fertile soils of significance
- To have large discussion w/ all sectors – distribution, producers, value-added, manufacturers, processors, markets/buyers
- Food cache for emergencies, thriving food production economy, communities working together to grow/share food
- Many new young farmers being able to go beyond direct marketing
- Able to scale up if they want
- Communities built around food production, jobs given to residents to produce/distribute/process food (milling, etc.)
- Reasonably priced AK grown food available at many, many locations
- Local foods in institutions to help grown all food sectors
- Root cellar installation funding
- Enough farmers to grow 95% of our food and plenty of processing facilities to handle it all
- A greenhouse in most back yards and most of produce at our grocery stores being AK grown
- More farms, more greenhouses, fresh local food available to all affordably
- Small communities growing for each other to trade with each other, An appreciation of the farmer as an artisan and craftsman, not just who has lower prices

DISTRIBUTION

- Involve Native corps. In distribution
- 10,000,000 food to school program not 3,000,000
- Food security. If disaster –enough to supply state
- Everyone can easily access and afford fresh, local, healthy food
- Food co-op grocery stores, all food local in school and restaurants
- Using ferry system to move food from South Central to Southeast & empty trucks from interior out, etc....
- Land, wild foods affordable, accessible to low income families. Supply chains supporting small-scale, family-owned farming/fishing businesses

CONSUMPTION

- More help in marketing of AK Grown
- No one goes hungry and enjoys fresh Alaska grown food
- Enough education that all the public is aware of the benefits of only purchasing local food whenever available

WASTE AND RECYCLING

- Schools recycle plastic from meal program & compost for school gardens
- All lawns turned into productive food, permaculture

POLICIES AND REGULATION

- Incubators funded for micro-producers from major state lending sources (instead of mega million projects)
- Alaska grocery stores only carrying AKG potatoes
- Funding Source: 500% tax on marijuana grown out of state (grows well here, give locals a cash crop opportunity that helps fund food production & incubator programs & micro start up loans)
- Real kitchens & food/crop storage options in AK funded schools (buy in bulk in August/Sept)
- Tax benefits to in-state value added produce/food
- Locally grown food readily available to all Alaskans
- Root cellar in every community, local food in every store, localized, regional food processing & meat processing facilities
- Land is open and cheap to develop and work
- Cultivate farm culture, preserve farm land-hard to compete with housing
- 20% state income tax credit for Alaska Grown, allotting fee credit
- Local foods are 1st choice for industrial buyers (hospitals, schools, prisons, etc)
- Get local produce into stores without large corporations taking all the profit, incentivize somehow...
- Each family is allocated 5 acres of free land that is productive, each is sovereign, each has a choice of how they use the land, no mega corporations can trump ownership, no force fitting into uneven mkt system, trade self-sufficiency

EDUCATION

- Permaculture education in grade school, teacher's connection to natural resources, applied knowledge to produce using community green houses.
- Going into homes and personally working w/ people on "thoughtful" food choices....how their food impacts themselves and others, environment, etc., and people then desiring a more "sovereign" system.
- Education of high school age students to enter the food industry to meet the state needs for production & workforce & demand
- Every community has multiple farmers that provide food for that community, micro communities, (inside schools and institutions)
- AK cooking show, AK grown dishes
- Promote AK potatoes, get the % of AK spuds eaten and grown here to 80%, more funding and promotion for AK Grown
- Convenient, easy access
- FAA high schools
- Marketing education before and after school, populations: youth & adults, subsistence
- Ag in classroom
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program: SNAP
- EFNEP – Fm Food Program
- ID who is invested: to establish curriculum
- Master Gardner Program – volunteers
- USDA, Fish & Game

TRANSPORTATION

- Involve railroads in distribution when Mat Su commuter train and PT Mac rail get going. Put produce on trains. Have markets transfer sites along the way....PLUS farmland....PLUS ARRC produce to Denali

FOOD SAFETY

- Affordable food free of pesticides & chemical for all Alaskans
- Have access to fresh local foods all year long
- Alaska Grown have a food safety component with program

RESEARCH

- Feasibility (i.e. cost) of central kitchens being used to process food



The Alaska Food Policy Council
Invites you to attend the

PALMER TOWN HALL MEETING

WHEN: Wednesday, February 18, 2015 – 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.
WHERE: UAF Matanuska Experiment Farm, 1509 S Georgeson Road, Palmer, Alaska
FOOD: Light refreshments and beverages will be provided.

Why is food important to you?

The Alaska Food Policy Council (AFPC) invites you to attend a community town hall meeting to gather your ideas and opinions about local food. The AFPC is interested in hearing input from local community members on local food system issues.

The purpose of these meetings is to increase awareness of Alaska food issues, promote involvement in local food issues by community members, and gain a perspective of local food issues to inform AFPC and policy makers.



photos courtesy of Amy Pettit

What is the AFPC?

The Alaska Food Policy Council works to strengthen Alaska's food systems to spur local economic development, increase food security, and improve nutrition and health. The Council serves as a resource for information on local and state food systems, and works to identify and propose policy and environmental changes that can improve the production, processing, distribution, health, security and safety of our food.

For more information, visit akfoodpolicycouncil.wordpress.com or call **907.575.8583**



PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

February 13, 2015

Media Contact: Chelsea Ward-Waller, 907.575.8583

The Alaska Food Policy Council to Host Three Statewide Town Hall Meetings: Information gathered from Alaskans will guide statewide food policy.

Anchorage, February 13, 2015 - Alaska Food Policy Council (AFPC) is hosting statewide town hall meetings to gather information and ideas from Alaskans about food in their communities.

The purpose of the meetings is to increase statewide awareness about Alaska food issues, promote involvement in the local food system by community members, and gain a perspective of local food issues. The information gathered will be used by the AFPC to inform institutions, organizations and policy makers to improve and strengthen the Alaska Food System.

The first four meetings were held in Nome, Juneau, Fairbanks, and Bethel in spring 2014. Reports from these meetings can be found on the Alaska Food Policy Council website. The next meetings to be held are as follows:

- Palmer: Wednesday, February 18, from 5:30-7:30 PM at UAF Matanuska Experiment Farm (1509 S Georgeson Rd).
- Homer: Tuesday, March 17, from 5:30-7:30 PM at Homer High School Commons (600 East Fairview Ave, located off of East Pioneer Avenue in downtown Homer).
- Anchorage: Tuesday, March 24, from 5:30-7:30 PM at the Downtown Soup Kitchen (240 East 3rd Avenue).

The Alaska Food Policy Council is an independent, statewide organization with a vision for a food secure, healthy Alaska. The AFPC works to strengthen Alaska's food systems to spur local economic development, increase food security and improve nutrition and health. The AFPC serves as a resource for information on local and state-side food systems and works to identify and propose policy and other changes that can improve the production, processing, distribution, health, security and safety of food in Alaska.

For more information about the Alaska Food Policy Council, please visit <http://akfoodpolycouncil.wordpress.com/> or LIKE the Alaska Food Policy Council on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/akfoodpolicy>.

###



Palmer Town Hall Meeting
February 18, 2015
UAF Matanuska Experiment Farm
5:30-7:30pm

Agenda

- 5:30 pm The Alaska Food Policy Council welcomes you! Come on in, find a seat, grab some food, we're so happy to have you!
- 5:40 pm Who is the Alaska Food Policy Council? What are we here to accomplish tonight?
Presentation by Alaska Food Policy Council Governing Board Member Amy Pettit
- 6:00 pm Group Exercise #1
- 1: What are the positive things about food in your community? What do you like? What is working? Are there new and innovative things happening that you want to share?
 - 2: What do you NOT like so much about food in your community? Do you face issues, challenges or barriers that you think need to be addressed?
 - 3: If you had unlimited resources, what would be your vision of the ideal food system in your community?
- 6:15 pm Group Exercise #2
- In depth discussion about the issues identified in Exercise #1. Talk about the issues in detail and brainstorm potential solutions or actions to improve the issue. If describing a positive issue, explain why it is working.
- 7:00 pm Groups Report Back
- 7:15 pm Alaska Food Policy Council Governing Board Member(s) continue presenting, including call to action based on Ken Meter recommendations. Open the room to questions/comments/discussion.
- Closing: What happens next? Did we miss anything important that you want to tell us?

TOWN HALL MEETING



Alaska Food Policy Council
Palmer, Alaska
February 18, 2015



Did you know?
Alaskans spend \$2.5 billion dollars
on food each year at grocery stores
and restaurants.



Alaska Food Policy Council

Did you know?

It's estimated that 95% of Alaska's food is imported.
That makes Alaska vulnerable in times of disasters.

Alaska Food Policy Council



Did you know?

Alaska's food system creates a lot of jobs.
About 115,000 jobs are food-related.
That's 1 in 7 jobs in Alaska.

Alaska Food Policy Council



Did you know?

For each dollar invested in local Alaska food, \$3-6 circulates in local economies of our own food supply.

Alaska Food Policy Council



Did you know?

Rates of chronic disease related to lifestyle choices are escalating in Alaska.

That means high healthcare costs borne by the state.

Alaska Food Policy Council



Did you know?

\$459 million annual medical care costs are attributable to obesity in Alaska.

The State of Alaska pays one quarter of those costs.



Alaska Food Policy Council

Did you know?

Chronic diseases—such as cancer, heart disease, and diabetes— are related to unhealthy eating and physical inactivity.

These are among the most prevalent, costly, and preventable of all health problems.



Alaska Food Policy Council

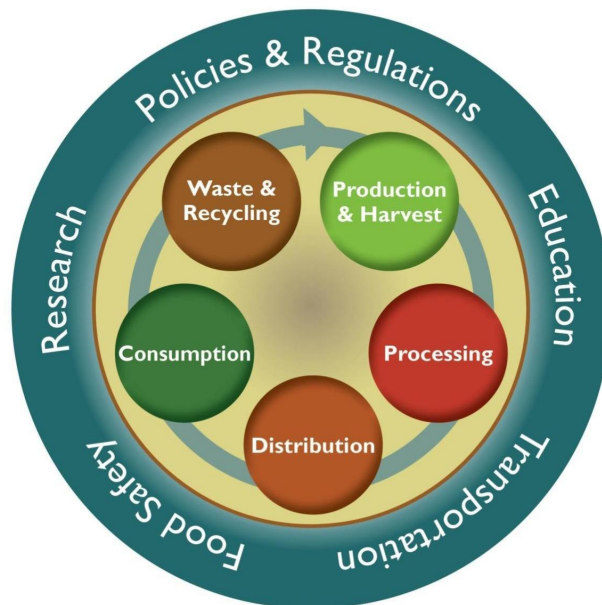
Did you know?

Increasing everyone's access to fresh, healthy food through programs like Farmers Markets or Community Supported Agriculture can reduce rates of chronic disease.

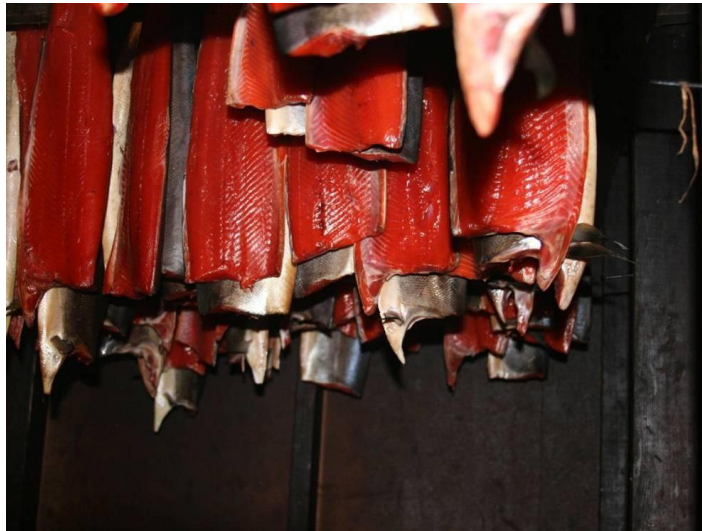


Alaska Food Policy Council

Our Food System



Alaska Food Policy Council



Salmon in Hydaburg Smokehouse

Credit: Alaska Department of Health and Social Services

Alaska Food Policy Council



Farm field in Palmer

Credit: Alaska Division of Agriculture

Alaska Food Policy Council

Sitka



Alaska Food Policy Council



Alaska Food Policy Council

What is food policy?

Food policy is any activity that addresses, shapes or regulates the food system.



Alaska Food Policy Council

Who is the Alaska Food Policy Council?

Over 200 individuals and agencies across the state – driven by the need to strengthen our food system.



Alaska Food Policy Council

Alaska Food Policy Council Vision:

A healthy, secure food system that
feeds all Alaskans.



Alaska Food Policy Council

AFPC's Core Values



Alaska Food Policy Council

AFPC Goals

Goal 1 All Alaskans have access to affordable, healthy (preferably local) foods

Goal 2 Alaska's food-related industries have a strong workforce and operate in a supportive business environment

Goal 3 Food is safe, protected and supplies are secure throughout Alaska

Goal 4 Alaska's food system is more sustainable

Goal 5 Alaskans are engaged in our food system



Alaska Food Policy Council

AFPC Legislative Priorities

1 Farmers Market Quest

2 Farm-to-School Operating Budget

3 NAFS Nutritional Alaska Food in Schools Program



Fish to School Program in Kodiak

Credit: Kodiak School District



Alaska Food Policy Council

Tonight we want to hear from YOU.

- We want to hear about the Food System in your community.
- What is working? What isn't working? What challenges do you face every day?
- Share your food system priorities the Alaska Food Policy Council so we can communicate with legislators, local and tribal government representatives.

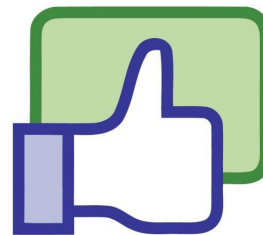


Alaska Food Policy Council

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