

Formation of a Statewide Sustainable Local Food Policy Council

Through legislation, we seek to establish a North Carolina Sustainable Local Foods Policy Council. The council will address four local food policy related areas including: a) Health and Wellness; b) Hunger and Food Access; c) Economic Development; d) Working Lands and Working Waters

There are critical and timely reasons for the state of North Carolina to build its local food economy. Key among them during this downturn in the economy are creating jobs, stimulating statewide economic development, and ultimately stopping the leakage of money to outside the state, keeping it circulating in our local communities. Other important benefits of a sustainable local food economy in North Carolina include preservation of open space, decreased use of fossil fuel and associated carbon emissions, preservation and protection of the natural environment, increased consumer access to fresh and nutritious foods, and greater food security for all North Carolinians.

New US Agriculture Secretary, Tom Vilsack was quoted on February 5th, 2009 in the Washington Post saying he favors “establishing state food policy councils, nonpartisan advisory boards that would represent a diverse array of food interests”. He created a state council in 2000 in Iowa, and indicated it was instrumental in implementing improvements in nutritional benefits for seniors, expanding farmers' markets and increasing the number of people receiving food stamps”, among other things.

The scope of the North Carolina Sustainable Local Food Policy Council will be fourfold: a) establishment of baselines and measures of success in developing sustainable local food systems in North Carolina; b) promote local and regional efforts through providing an information and engagement hub around barriers and opportunities c) identify and develop solutions to regulatory and policy barriers; d) strengthen local infrastructure and entrepreneurial efforts.

Committees will be assigned as needed to specific tasks to carry out the work of the council. The council will prepare and submit an annual report to the General Assembly and provide recommendations to the Governor.

The council will be established legislatively and include broad representation of the North Carolina Food System and be regionally representative and racially diverse. Up to 25 individuals will be appointed to the council for a term of 3 years and have representatives from:

Local Food Producers; NC Department of Agriculture; NC Health and Human Services; Center for Environmental Farming Systems; Center for Health Promotion and Disease; Prevention; DEHNR-DWQ; Department of Insurance; NC Food Banks; Food business (retail, food service, direct); 4 NGOs; NC Farm Bureau; Department of Public Instruction; County Commissioners Association; County Managers Association; Economic Development/Business entrepreneurship; Department of Commerce; Farm Credit; Cooperative Extension Service (NC A&T and NCSU)