

Ag of the Middle meeting minutes

Tuesday, October 9, 2012

Attendance List (20):

Larry Lev, Oregon State

Lauren Gwin, Oregon State

Christy Anderson Brekken, Oregon State (not on participant list at time of 2012 meeting)

Joe Colletti, Iowa State

J Arbuckle, Iowa State

Fred Kirschenmann, Iowa State

Clare Hinrichs, Penn State

Keiko Tanaka, U. of Kentucky

Alicia Fisher, U. of Kentucky (not on participant list at time of 2012 meeting)

David Conner, U. of Vermont

Clare Hinrichs, Penn State

Rob King, U. of Minnesota

Jan Joannides, U. of Minnesota (not on the participant list at the time of the 2012 meeting)

Kate Clancy, U. of Minnesota

Larry Burmeister, Ohio University

Hikaru Peterson, Kansas State

Shermain Hardesty, UC Davis

Gail Feenstra, UC Davis (not on the participant list at the time of the 2012 meeting)

Marcy Ostrom, Washington State

Steve Stevenson, U. of Wisconsin

Since the official beginning of the project was October 1 2012 (the Monday before the beginning of the meeting) project reporting for this meeting will consist only of the Minutes.

Round-the-room three things related to our project subject matter

Lauren:

- Teaching, Intro to Food Systems, Food IQ
- ERS report, Processing Meat and Poultry for Local Markets – Clare, Rob, Larry L are advisors
- Starting Center for Small Farms & Community Food Systems at OSU
- Advising a PhD student working on food hubs, with a community that wants one but needs to know why; would be a rural-to-rural food hub
- Co-author on a book just out this month: California Cuisine and Just Food, Fairfax et al.

Christy

- Graduate program, planning PhD
- Just finished revisions on journal article about Oregon Farm Direct law
- Teach ag law

Rob

- Ag of Middle AFRI project: working on case study for Coop Partners Warehouse, almost done
- Objective of using case studies in teaching, developing materials to do that.
- AFRI book on Local Food has been approved by UNE press
- Project funded by Healthy Foods, Healthy Lives: state-level indicators, fact sheet for each state, 3 years, map for each indicator, all downloadable

Hikaru

- AFRI-funded, rural communities, collaboratively with rural grocery initiative at K-State. Viable business strategies for grocery stores located in small towns. Focusing on 3 main types of strategies: partnership with local institutional buyers, statewide survey of rural grocery shoppers, looking at size/structure of informal collections of grocery stores looking to enhance purchasing power

Steve

- Values-based supply chains (VBSC) – updates, more depth. Getting those online & published.
- Article on mid-scale food value chains in JAFSCD. Whole issue overview
- With Kate & Fred, doing overview on Ag of the Middle for Springer online encyclopedia

Alicia

- For Master's at UKY, evaluated KY Proud Program through producers and regulators' eyes.
- Now taking results and thinking about them through Ag of Middle lens
- Starting to look at standards & regulation, looking at Food Alliance

Larry B.

- Examining if/how social justice objectives are incorporated into VBSC; esp. interested in agricultural, processing labor. Also access. Need to develop solid conceptual framework.
- Teaching course: Food, Agriculture, and Society
- Member of Athens, OH, Food Policy Council, nascent stage, scoping how to promote local & regional food systems, thinking about relevant policy initiatives at the local level
- Jill Clark, Ohio State, trying to organize consortium of food policy councils; are 12 so far.

Discussion:

LL: our VBSC case studies have trouble with labor justice b/c they're trying to sell product at a premium.

CH: food hubs have been able to think about this differently, b/c they aren't in conventional business framework.

FK: minimum wage is still compressed, so how can people afford this kind of food?

Alicia: Food: An Atlas, guerrilla cartography project coming out of Berkeley. She's working on "what came first, the council or the hub?"

KC: Center for Liveable Future doing this kind of work

J

Primarily survey research

- Annual survey of Iowa Farmers, Iowa Farm and Rural Life Poll. Developed with many stakeholder groups across the state, questions focused on issues of day, environmental, socioeconomic, agronomic, market opps, agritourism, land values, etc.
- w/Practical Farmers of Iowa, working on projects for them: beginning Farmers, CSA member retention survey

Keiko

- Main project is beginning farmers project w/VA Tech, U-TN. Looking at established, mid-scale farmers to see how they can scale up and become more sustainable & profitable
- 3 PhD students, incl. Alicia interested in food hub, regulations/certification, food policy councils
- Teaching on food system, rural sociology

David

- Mostly on institutional procurement – meat value chains, just getting into artisanal cheese
- Three cross-cutting questions:
 1. how do scale & quality change over time, how do businesses maintain/evolve quality (product, social aspects) as a business grows & develops;
 2. working with communications scholar, bringing new theory on how these actors communicate, coordinate, learn, work things out as they go; what are rules of game;
 3. costing, price discovery for farms growing 50-60 crops, how do they decide what's making money/not.

Kate: recommends Phil Mount at Guelph, also in communications literature

Kate

- NE Expanding Food Security in the NE through Regional Food Systems, with Clare & 20 other researchers from 13 disciplines. Many approaches: production capacity/market basket, education, supply chain studies, what's sold by markets in low income areas, etc.
- Out of this is emerging eXtension Community of Practice on Local & Regional Foods
- Nudging local food policy councils (in presentations) to be more systematic, understand feedback loops, scale, communication among levels, be more cognizant of the limits of urban agriculture and local food in terms of total food needs.
- Now a columnist for JAFSCD a few times a year. Will ask us to contribute.

Clare

- Passed out her handout, report on her work
- Main activity is the food security project. Really in the weeds with focus groups.
- Teaching: used ag of the middle concepts and case studies in a class she co-taught in Wageningen.
- Drawn into a lot of public service around food systems work, facilitating NESAWG research and assessments group, Food Systems Knowledge Ecosystems Network, to understand what metrics people are using to evaluate systems, trying to prevent wheel reinvention

Shermain

- NIFA-funded project, looking at VBSC from outside the chain: funders, regulatory, industry associations, business development consultants. Need to expand demand for values-based products, in part by increasing scale to lower prices. But funders don't see need to go beyond niche, for larger-scale production & infrastructure. Big challenge.
- Food safety for smaller producers, w/CDFA review of direct marketing regulations, state wants food safety certification for small producers, potentially self-cert, & traceability. Identity lost in multi-producer CSA programs. FSMA-related. Some farmers having liability insurance policies cancelled or premiums tripling – so they're worried also.
- Economic impact of VBSC, how do we measure? Mary Hendrickson has AFRI-funded project to do input output modeling, and we could do that in different parts of the country.

David: he has a student close to publishing an article on what does it cost farmers to meet GAPs.

Larry

- Europe great source of ideas and inspiration.
- Expected to work mostly on ag of middle but now working on an article comparing what local means in France v. the U.S. Invited by CAB Abstracts & Reviews. French have changed in last 15 years. Local products v. locality products. "Local" is just that it's grown locally, on farm. "Localized" – much preferred – is that they relate to the local culture, not just to the land.
- Looking at local sourcing foods for schools, institutions. They don't define local by distance. Can't distinguish local from regional. "Short circuit" = when there's zero or at most 1 intermediary, not by distance. Local sourcing now a big deal. National project, 80 case studies of individual supply chain organization/"platform," physical or virtual infrastructure.
- Food quality & how impacted by scale of supply chain. 2 week short course, 8 or 9 countries. Helping them to develop a research proposal.

Fred

- Local not about food miles anymore. Most people get that distance travelled is very small part of ecological footprint. But local turned people into food citizens, not passive recipients.
- New literature important for us, showing how ag of middle concept is emerging:

- Porter & Kramer, Harvard Business Review, Jan/Feb 2011, Creating Shared Value. The old way, marginalize labor & raw materials to add value up the chain, cost-reduction and -externalization, won't work anymore. Integrate social/environmental components.
- Investment community, Jeremy Grantham, April 2011 newsletter, "Time to Wake Up: the days of unlimited natural resources and cheap prices are over."
- Mark Kramer, Stanford Social Innovation Review, "Collective Impact." Small, focused research isn't giving desired impact. Faye Hanley-Brown, Channeling Change, Making Collective Impact Work. Many foundations will now require collective action.
- New article from Irish (?) colleagues: EU commission ready to recognize that industrial food system won't work in the future. New model: production side must be more agro-ecological, marketing should be more like ag of middle.
- Food Commons, Larry Yee, West coast. Food hub idea. Fresno (mayor) wants to be model city. AFF part of AoTM, organizing farmers, has been slow, difficult. Food Commons might help.
- Average age of farmers inside these AoTM businesses: 46/48 and getting younger. Important b/c it's working for farmers. Young people are staying or coming back.
- Marjorie Kelly, Owning Our Future. Cultural transformation from extractive economy (extract all we can for ourselves) to regenerative economy, people working together for quality of life.

David: really good literature on co-creation of value. A lot from business. Stewart Hart from Cornell.

Marcy

- Also on AFRI-funded project, case studies
- Sustainable Food Systems course
- Research on multi-farm CSAs, mega-CSAs. Full Circle Farm, 16,000 shares from CA to AK. Now "Farm to Table Delivery Service" not CSA. Farmhouse Table, more cooperative, multi-farm CSA. Rural to rural. Mega-CSA in Denmark, 50,000 shares. These are really "box schemes," no year-long commitments, week-by-week. Lot of turnover b/c of coordination. When organized by one farm, other farms supplying, may be more sustainable, but maybe quality issues with scale.
- Access to higher value markets by immigrant/refugee populations. Among flower farmers, Latino farmer cooperatives.
- WSU eliminated rural sociology but now wants to do food systems research. Asked her for internal grant proposal for \$50K to organize food systems research working group. Coordinate scattered efforts (both at WSU & across state), build better grad programs.

Jan

- Some stuff with meat, mostly with smaller producers.
- For a McKnight regional "initiative" foundation, interviewed 20 businesses, farms with opportunity to go to next scale. They'll use this for 5 year plan, collective funding proposal.
- Research for NW Area Foundation on alternative financing options for farm and food based businesses, e.g. crowd funding, Carrot project.
- Farm succession planning, education on how to plan for that.

Gail

- VBSC work with Shermain, mostly on produce industry. Mostly institutions, one retail example. Case studies, annotated bibliographies, research review highlighting opportunities & challenges.
- W/USDA Rural Development \$, looked at food hubs in CA to understand pros & cons. Had feedback from farmers saying food hubs weren't working for them. Looked at scale, ownership. Result: "Toolkit for Farmers, includes questions farmers should ask before they join a food hub. <http://www.sarep.ucdavis.edu/sfs/VBSC%20farmer%20toolkit%207.27.12.pdf>
- Specialty crop block grant to work with minority farmers interested in going past direct marketing. Not just workshops but tours, esp. to terminal markets, where they talked to distributors, processors: some business deals resulted. CDFA wants to ramp that up b/c of mandate to focus on minority, ethnic farmers.
- Farm to school
- Large bibliography of all food systems literature since 2000, with annotations/review by topic
- All of this is on SAREP website: <http://www.sarep.ucdavis.edu/sfs/VBSC>

Discussion around farm to school

GF: It is gradually working, takes a lot of outside resources and handholding to start. We've been working with mid-scale produce distributors, which fit mid-sized schools. Also worked with broadliners like Sisco, which was really hard until we worked with large districts like Oakland. Until they put a requirement in their RFPs for distributors that they carry these types of products/suppliers, and larger distributors quickly made changes, b/c otherwise, they'd lose the business. Then in Davis, we can say you're doing it for Oakland, you can do it for us.

KC: Listening to this, realizing we should be doing a better job collectively as a group putting our accomplishments down, they're all there, very spread out. Not in a set of useable documents.

Phone call with Rob Hedberg, USDA NIFA/SARE, and Ferd Hoefner and Juli Obudzinski, NSAC

Larry: Would USDA start with the funding that Ag of the Middle is interested in?

Rob: This group probably knows more of the appropriate funding avenues than I do at this point. I would like to be part of the project so that I can talk about the importance of Ag of the Middle at the agency as the contact for the multi-state project.

SARE, depending on project and regional focus, will always be good funding source. Talking to regional councils about need to pay attention to Ag of the Middle and interest is repeated at all of the regional admin councils.

AFRI RFA will be out probably within a week/imminent. Ag and Economic Community Program (right name?). Timeline will be included in the RFA. Most important will be the letter of intent deadline. Make sure it fits with the program, and more likely get an "encouraged" letter. If you get a "discouraged" letter go ahead and call the program leader to see if any specific things can be changed.

Other funding reported by the group: Specialty crop block grants, Federal state market improvement program, Small and medium sized farms (AFRI), FMPP (Farmers' market promotion program), using some within National Institute of Ag and some others from outside.

3 out of 19 in this group have used SARE recently.

Small Business Innovation Program:

- Kate: USDA has told her that SBIR has been underused by Ag of the Middle.
- Shermain: it was very competitive overall, funding maybe 4 out of 50.
- Jan: Must be a small business; under 500 employees. University can't be direct applicant but could partner with small businesses depending on topic.
- Rob: SBIR as product or process oriented but it can also support things like cooperatives, so it's a little broader overall.

Marcy: Western SARE historically has not funded many food systems projects compared to other regions, so we have been discouraged.

Rob: Admin council is receptive to what they hear—the infrastructure conference in December (in Portland) could be a watershed and SARE will be and may change their thinking, even though that is not something they have historically funded. Need time to develop the topics, relationships, and awareness around infrastructure issues so the funding from Western SARE might change.

SBDC—Small Business Development Center is not within USDA, might be in Commerce Small Business Administration.

Larry: Any funding ideas for international work?

Rob: That has to be a case-by-case basis. Right now we are in a tough funding environment. All politics are local and the funders from up on the Hill want to see the impact in their home district. Foreign Ag Service is for helping us market US products if you can make that argument.

Steve: Do all of NIFA subject areas require letters of intent?

Rob: All likely will require letter of intent. Should be ready to have it in within a month from the time that the RFA is published. It's just a placeholder, not a full proposal.

Juli (handles research work at NSAC): It's 2 years of funding because we've been delayed, but it's also a substantial amount of money at stake.

Rob: Robin Shoemaker will be someone to touch base with.

Ferd reported on the status of programs of interest in the Farm Bill, which is expired at this point. Program details:

- Rural development: Last Farm Bill, Mid-Tier Value Chain and Value Added Producer Program stayed in the Senate and House bills so far, so no changes to those set asides for now. Small and

Mid-sized Family Farm along with beginning farmer and socially disadvantaged farmer programs still there. Policy side it's in good shape, but funding it at 50 million over the life of the FB but about ½ of what we want it to be.

- Business & Industry Loan Program for loan guarantees on local and regional food programs is still there but in the House bill they made the funding floor into a funding ceiling.
- Nutrition and marketing: Working on Farm to School Procurement issues. We think we have helpful language in the House version.
- Language that would allow small/rural school districts that are modest users of USDA food distribution system to purchase their own product in whole or part from local and regional sources.
- Pilot projects to let other schools do similar things.

Julie on Research title:

Focusing on Organic Research, Specialty Crop, Beginning Farmer to get mandatory funding. AFRI doesn't have mandatory funding. Specialty Crop Research probably did best and got 10 year baseline funding.

Beginning Farmer and Rancher program got a significant hit; currently \$19 mil per year and Senate decreased slightly while House cut funding in half. Hoping in conference to get higher amount.

Put end date on SARE(?) programs so that they have to be reauthorized each Farm Bill.

Kate: From USDA's perspective are there enough proposals coming in to all of the AFRI different funding opportunities?

Ferd: That is a problem because the administrators see that some are not very competitive so they see that as lack of demand. Need to make sure that people are aware that they are available.

Marcy: Do you expect foundational programs to look about the same as last time?

Rob: Yes, fairly similar to last time.

End of call

Joe: Max \$10 million per project in challenge areas.

Q: Amounts won't be as high this time; do you think they are still looking for the big projects?

Joe: Yes, because they want to see systems approaches across disciplines with integrated approach with outreach, education, etc. But don't have the money for big caps in challenge areas.

Small Group Sessions

Four objectives:

1. Organization/ownership – control, relationships, structure
2. Social – community related goals and needs

3. Landscape/environmental
4. Policy objectives

Discussions/report back from each group

1. Organization/ownership – control, relationships, structure

Their summary

- Make a library of case studies to develop typologies of VB supply chains by various attributes, including ownership, up/down stream relationships, contractual relationships.
- Examine relationship across cases to develop hypothesis to be further studied.
- Develop indicators of success that are multi-faceted, including food systems engagement
- Measure the impacts of the typologies of VB supply chains on farmers and communities—not following the IMPLAN method but more exploratory

Their in-group discussion

DC: Wrote a competitive Hatch grant to come here on the meat value chain in VT. He and his student are about to interview 10 ranchers, 5 processors, 5 buyers. Have identified best practices of relationship buildings, and the interviews are intended to test them out. Another question is the feasibility of a seasonal pooling price mechanism, where processing at the peak would cost more, buyers pay less, and vice versa. Will this work?

RK: There have been many case study efforts—let's make a consistent list of case studies. This would allow for some of the questions we have about VB supply chains to be compared within a product type (e.g., meat—how long do we observe cooperative relationship, who is the leader/owner of the supply chain, up/down stream, the number of contracts, etc.).

Rob has perceived barriers of growth of VB supply chains at \$200,000-\$250,000; they limp along but stuck. Another barrier seemingly at \$1 million. Some have blasted through.

GF: Ownership and scale. For her cases of produce in CA, \$250,000 is small. We can't apply the same principles across scale.

“Sweet spots” for businesses in terms of scale have been identified. Where are the bumps for VB supply chains? They have challenges transitioning to the next sweet spot.

Can this be an AFRI project? Developing typology of firms can be the phase I of the project. In phase II, we can ask what we can say about the impacts of these typologies of supply chains on farms. In phase III, this is challenging, but it'll be great if we can better articulate the community impacts of typologies of supply chains.

Ideas for measuring community impacts:

Can this be exploratory? Can it be more qualitative? JJ: Evergreen Coop in Cleveland. Anchor institutions developed worker-owned coops (laundry and greenhouse) to have impact on community. Can we tease out impacts from obvious cases? DC: Todd Schmidt developed a farmer survey to develop a community impact measure (how much money is circulated back to the community) comparable to IMPLAN multipliers. The survey included items that they can easily pull out of tax records, e.g., how much do you spend on labor and inputs, fixed, and how much is spent locally. RK: Dick Levins did a similar study a few years back.

It is challenging to calculate IMPLAN multipliers correctly. Some people misuse the concept, because the results look a lot more appealing if overestimate. Netting out things is important but makes the results less appealing. The MN project on farm-to-school is a good example. IMPLAN gives a number, doesn't tell a story. Rob doesn't think that the input goes into doing an IMPLAN project is worth the cost.

Shermain: Food coops appear to be underutilized enterprise for supplying VB supply chain products. Willingness-to-pay studies can be helpful to measure potential demand for VB supply chain products.

GF: As a nutritionist, it would be very neat if we can look at health impacts of VB supply chains (not nutrient studies). LL: People who live in places with more farmers markets are healthier. How do we get the causality right?

DC: Let's define indicators of food systems engagement. Food citizenship. GF: There are indices out there. We should be tying these concepts to food access—are there differences in income levels of people?

LL: People in UK were interested in knowing who started the market and owns it. AMS hasn't collected this info on FMs. What is the relationship between ownership and performance?

In practical terms, inside AgEcon Search, we can have our group repository.

We'll have a matrix of cases with columns of attributes that define typology. The columns are unknown at this point, including regionally, product, type. It will allow for cross case comparisons and generate hypotheses. We can look at survivors. Is there an overarching performance variable that predicts success? We are still unclear on community impacts.

Food hubs (aggregation, marketing—distinct from direct marketing; a middle piece of the chain; claim to benefit the up and down stream participants) vs. VB supply chains. We'll include food hub cases.

2. Social – not available at this time

3. Landscape/environmental

Summary (from J):

- Assumption that important objective of value chains approach is to internalize externalities and farmers and other supply chain partners capture economic benefit from that.
- Not much research on how this is done.

- Research question: what is the understanding of and importance placed on environmental values/ecosystem services by actors in values change and how are environmental values captured?
- How to we measure and understand “values” when internalized and marketed/subsidized (by government)? Can reward/incentivize internalizing externalities.
- Go back to original case studies because not a lot of environmental discussion in those.
- Going to all actors in VBSC, finding all of the levers that could be pulled all along supply chain.

Larry—In the case studies, ranchers in CNB were interested in the environmental benefits of their practices, but consumers were more interested in animal welfare so they shifted their marketing.

4. Policy group: Kate, Alicia, Christy, Lauren

Summary

Ag of the Middle needs its own policy agenda, along with a policy research agenda. So we can develop background/briefing papers to feed to people like Ferd.

Remind people of the research agenda Kate did, that includes policy questions.

Find a way to infuse these questions in a systematic way into everyone’s work:

- This group: methods to use to study effects of policy (existing, proposed) on AoTM? Offer a list of easy things we can all incorporate in our research.
- Interacting with ag policy centers – Mott Center, OSU/UC Davis – see if/how this area/approaches can be on their radar screen. Specific projects and integrating these types of farms (scale, differentiation)

In-group discussion

Through policy piece for the AFRI project (interviews of all case study folks, going through entire CFR), it became clear how underused many gov’t programs are. Suggests real need for participatory research, helping farmers on how to use programs, how to apply to their farms, what is stopping them.

Also: they fret about impact of food safety policies. FSMA, GAP, leafy greens marketing agreements.

Ag of the Middle needs a policy agenda, not just research but advocacy. This is beyond policy research agenda (see Kate’s document from 1-2 yrs ago; some items are directly related to policy).

Not being a registered lobbyist but developing background papers to feed to people like Ferd.

And determine how existing policies influence the performance of values based supply chains. Those are big economic research projects. We may need to bring in others who focus on this: effects of policy on performance (economic, social, environmental, etc.). And ask policy researchers to look at alternative supply chains/VBSC in their overall policy research. Look at mid-scale farms, not just small, e.g.

Need for targeted, focused analyses: very specific administrative changes that would be incredibly helpful. SARE should be funding that...

You can couch this kind of specific policy analysis in larger research questions. Let's do some analysis, how much does it cost to function under this particular regulation, etc.

Our group needs tips on methods to use to learn about policy & effects on AoM, VBSC.

New policy centers popping up: go talk to them, ask if they will include AoTM/VBSC. OSU/UCDavis, Michigan State/Mott, Vermont. First question: are you willing to put some of your resources toward these immediately useful, qualitative, smaller questions, particularly on the impact of specific regulations, program utilization and barriers, esp. for AoTM farmers & VBSC.

Some of these analyses aren't full theses but smaller projects. Students could do them quickly. Go talk to our universities' public policy programs.

Gail: AGree, food and ag policy. Davis meeting is about regional & local food systems, policy implications, getting a really good group of folks. It's big money: Gates, Kellogg, Hewlett, Packard, McKnight, etc.

Kate: yes, but the big guys are winning all the arguments, inside of AGree on the board, about what they're going to look at. They put out an offer asking for suggestions for new research projects. Write a compelling essay, and if compelling enough, you'd get \$3000...

Gail will do some intelligence about potential openings for us in the future.

<http://www.foodandagpolicy.org/>.

Wrap-up for the day

Next year's meeting will be in MN again: October 14, 15, 16.

Wednesday Oct. 10th

Leadership: Hikaru is the new project leader.

Online place to share: Lauren will organize Google Docs site for everyone with four categories:

- Syllabi
- Meeting notes – or a link to where they are – with list of work groups?
- Articles – recommended by us
- Documents, articles, project reports – by US

Plus a "how to use this" document (what's here, how to use google docs).

Then she will invite everyone into the group and we'll see what happens, if/how we use it.

Case study meta-analysis: to explore all these other topics (landscape/environment, social, etc.) that weren't explicitly analyzed in/across cases before

- Why: There are things we can learn across these that we can't learn when they're scattered.
- Collect them all: the 4 main ones, plus all the others we've discussed
- There will be some gaps, missing info
- Can see trends in how these topics/issues develop
- Start a database – Rob led the discussion of categories
 - Title
 - Authors
 - Affiliations
 - Pub info
 - URL
 - Date of interviews/publication
 - Product category
 - Region
 - Focal firm – supplier, distributor, retailer
 - Scope – single, entire supply chain
 - Org form
 - Founding date
 - “Death” date
 - Key partners
 - Gain sharing procedure (how allocate benefits from improvements) and outcomes for farmers
 - Governance
 - Scale
 - Financing mechanisms
 - And is there anything in the case about certain themes, e.g. environment, social values
 - Typology of founding stories
 - Types of market: wholesale/retail
 - Policy
 - Grants/subsidies
 - Regulatory environment
 - Infrastructure/facilities
- This isn't fundable as an end in itself; it's a start – to create a consistent matrix. Then you have to do the research part, the data gathering to fill in gaps.
- RK: Build the matrix, do a few examples as proof of concept, w/o funding. If you can prove it will be useful for a desired analysis, then to get it funded, pitching it as: our first objective is to create a database that will be a shared resource & analyze specific questions.
- Need a planning grant – SARE? Archival? Pitch as a toolkit/reference? NW Area Foundation?
- RK: With a small group & two days & coffee, you could hammer out the framework, trial w/ a few cases, then the “so what.”

- FK: Should we adopt as part of our research to have an active AoTM farmer involved? CA project had an advisory board with practitioners.
- JJ: Rather than fill out the whole matrix, let's pick out 4 areas we want to dive into more deeply.
- LL: If this meta-analysis were available, could have individual, fundable projects that could go in different directions. Not just case studies but other outcomes.
- RK: Data from the ag census will be available in 2014 – you can get individual farm data, with a security clearance...? Take firm names in, get the data, do a data analysis, take summaries.
- LB: Maximize flexibility: the meta-analysis provides data for projects.
- KT: create a typology of organizational forms, then try to see how different forms address social issues, particularly labor related. Decisionmaking process, who participates, etc.
- CB: once the matrix is created, plugging in the data can be divided by region. Where there are holes in the data, that's a separate project.
- RK: if you have coding framework, you can do a survey
- CH: with these really refined categories, a lot of cells will be empty. Two tasks: coarse coding, then separate laundry list of desired indicators
- There may be 30-40 cases out there. Or more, depending how broadly we conceive them.
- LL: Are we too focused on the methods? Let's think about the questions. E.g., financing is a key constraint: case studies can inform that. A financing focused project to help reduce that barrier.
- HP: is there a way to develop a survey instrument to ask all the farmers who are part of these cases, how has this AoM structure helped you, what aspects motivated you, are working, etc. Not just drawing on the existing interviews but asking them all the same questions.
- GF: farmers aren't just members of the AoM supply chains but many market chains. So their outcomes may not be specific to AoM.
- CH: but that's important data, whether it's their primary market or peripheral. Important economically v. important for their values.
- LL: with foundational grants, they'll want to focus on farmer profitability. A lot of us might be interested in value claims, whether there are social/environmental benefits, mostly going to non-farmers. So USDA might not be the best source. You can put those in secondarily.
- J: if we internalize these externalities, the farmers should be able to capture that?
- CH: why do people exit these kinds of arrangements? They juggle them, but who says forget it? That could be valuable for the companies like Organic Valley.

Workgroups – these projects all start to some degree with the meta-analysis

- Larry B, Keiko, and Clare will forge ahead on their project.
- Hikaru's farmer survey: Jay, Marcy, Gail, Shermain, Kate, Jan, David, Clare
- Ownership, financial, governance: Jan, Rob, Larry, Steve
- Policy: Kate, Lauren, Christy (white paper to group about incorporating policy; approach policy centers with questions to gauge their ability/interest)

Notes on policy group idea to go to policy centers:

Rich Pirog has been involved with cumulative impact [Stanford papers] for a long time, used it in NE Iowa (regional food systems working group used CoP model). Approach him from that perspective.

What do we want from policy centers?

Example: we want FSIS to provide more safe harbors like Appendix A & B, to help with HACCP validation (provide guidance, reduce costs). So the policy center could (a) identify the precedent for doing this, why/how appendix A & B were done, as a reason for doing appendix C & D; (b) provide evidence (even anecdotal) of importance of App A & B to small plants. And we have to know what we want App C & D to be ABOUT. Laws or regs that might be there that might read on what we're asking. E.g., administrative authority. Whether other agencies do this, other sectors, etc.

Then advocates could go with this to FSIS. WILL HELP TO KNOW FROM FERD IF FSIS WAS WILLING AND IF THIS WOULD HAVE HELPED.

Whole-group brainstorm of specific questions to suggest to ag policy centers:

- Impact of FSMA on AoM ventures – legally required and retailer required
- Impact of implementing GAPs on small-scale farms
- Zoning for farmworker housing
- JOBS act, opening up crowd funding. Law was passed but regs not yet written – need info on that, what will it mean for small, mid-sized businesses, a new opp for financing? Less regulatory than needing SEC review?
- Internships on farms – legal or not. Oregon figured this out. Has to be educational. You can't just call it an internship and not pay them. Working through states individually.
- State-level tax abatement, incentive strategies (NC, WI...?)

Other resources: FLAG, Georgetown law clinic, probably other law clinics.

Discussion of food hubs

We don't agree with Barham – food hub is part of the VBSC, not the whole supply chain.

“Hub” makes them sound like the most essential part, when they might not be. Kloppenberg, Stevenson, Hendrickson, “Coming into the foodshed,” in Ag & Human Values, deals with regional sourcing issues but doesn't talk concretely about mechanisms.

What does it mean for our group? Do we have to include this language in our proposals to get funded?

Also: Clare encourages all of us to come to Ag & Human Values in East Lansing, MI, and meet/do panels.

Broke into workgroups – notes available for only one of the three groups)

Farmer survey small group: Hikaru, Jay, Shermain, Fred, Keiko, David, Clare, Marcy, Christy – (notes provided by CAB)

Do we survey a larger sample to have a comparison group, i.e., similar group of producers who do not use VBSC?

J: It's valid to just survey farms that we know are in AOTM chains. And if we cast a wider net may find more people that dip in and out.

Clare: Dimensions by which to select AOTM entities—geography, etc.?

Hikaru: As many as possible, bringing in Davis, VT food hubs, Kate's NE smaller case studies...

Clare: We need willingness to cooperate from the researchers that have studies already—getting letters of support from other researchers that have relationships and past surveys.

Frame this work as generalizing from what we learn from all of the groups generally, such as by typology of participation in AOTM. Also want different product lines.

Fred: Participation with farmers part of a grant; 1 page proposal of why collaboration is important to start the conversation with the farm groups and get their ideas about what's important to their business, then go with the survey. I can communicate the 1-pager to other farmers as a farmer. It's more invitational that way and if they have a voice as to what is beneficial to them.

Others: More case are better, but also gets complicated. Might want to start sampling large groups, like Organic Valley, and they have regional groups as well and could be very interesting. Country Natural Beef has 1700 now. Full Circle Farms has layers of core producers, then farther out ...

J: Constructing questions that apply to everybody is important because it can be complicated from a design and analysis point when going across different products.

David: Structure as 3-year plan

- Year 1 meta-analysis of case studies and credible farmer and farm organization input on questions (they like that on the grants), choosing who will be surveyed, letters of support (here's what each researcher will do and their pool of farmers), etc. 5 farmer groups with 5 surveys with major overlap between the types of questions; online survey.
- To speak to the values base supply chain have to mainly talk to farmers but also have to talk to designers/developers/managers of the chain also.
- Year 2: Develop and administer the survey
- Year 3: Analysis, outreach, developing educational outcomes. Participatory analysis afterward? Roundtables with some of the participants afterward—focus groups/vetting the results.

Educational—could have students do some of these things as a class to produce user-relevant reports that answer particular questions posed by the farmers.

If keeping the farmer participation all the way through, need to pay them such as travel money, etc. so that they can go back for outreach later too as an educational outcome.

Lessons learned: Toolkit approach like Gail already used—How is the chain working for the farmer? What works and what doesn't?

Fred: Be prepared for surprises because things will change quickly.

Nice thing about AFRI is giving us full range of funds to be flexible in the implementation.

Remember, using \$500k over 3 years. Need just a few people per AOTM group for full participation all the way through. Except for the roundtable idea, then as many as possible because talking to each other about what works and what doesn't in their VBSC.

Maybe separate out the supply chain organizers from the farmers when talking about impacts too.

How practical to do this as a national level? Regional? Can get some good participation if do it with teleconferences.

Creating the instrument in and of itself is valuable because we can apply it just to our regions with regional SARE grants, for example, then incorporating our students, etc. And AFRI would like using the national money to make a survey as a product, then leverage it against the SARE money for additional impacts.

I don't think our group is taking on the full meta-analysis, but we can write it out as a first pass at a pilot template then we will use it to inform the project to make the survey, choose our sample, etc. But we don't promise lots of outcome just from the database of case studies thus far.

We think Hikaru should be the PI as our leader—she thinks she can find the organizational support to give a start on it. She will start the action plan by thinking about letters of support, who will do what, survey design (Jay), etc.

J has expertise in his department and a survey lab. Clare also has a good survey lab; Marcy also has a great survey lab. Let's go to our survey labs and get estimates for an online survey for the budget.

First thing to establish is if it can be online or if it has to be mail. Fred says online, Shermain says not online. Marcy says needs translation.

Then we adjourned.