



## Food Security Forum 2010 Discussion Group Notes



### Farmers Issues and Land Use

Facilitator: Kristyna Solawetz

Panelist: John LaBoyteaux

Introductions and group interests: City land use, Media (North Coast Journal, Food for Thought radio), UCCE, Healthy Humboldt, Southern Humboldt and land issues, historical land use and redesignation

#### Current Issues:

-Past generations and succession: How do we avoid repeating mistakes?

-General Plan Update: Redesignate 160,000 acres of prime ag lands. 100,000 acres currently occupied by rural residential designations. 60,000 acres are believed to be vacant. Heated topic surrounding farming on rural residential—should be able to farm. When county is looking at growth in urban areas, they are talking about consolidating growth for those who need services (not intended to limit those living on rural residential, but rather serve those of lower income that need greater access to services).

1.2 million acres of timber land

We have 75,000 acres of farmable land

-Sustainable agriculture: economical, environmentally healthy, and socially beneficial. Should sustainability necessarily be profitable? Study tracked organic farms and found most need outside supplemental income.

-Land distribution and variety of production. Increase segments of agriculture that are in higher demand. 3.8% of wheat grown domestically are turned into whole wheat flour, so prioritizing uses is important in determining county efficiency, and would require a shift of practice and knowledge of those who use grains.

-Organic production and purchasing. Organic milk: Horizon was only purchasing 15% of organic milk produced.

-We are already producing enough beef and dairy... What are the issues for grains, vegetable cultivation, etc. land use loan availability and start-up costs for beginning farmers

-Land use planning: If competing interests for land and price is inflated, farmers will not be economically viable for buying. Restricted for agricultural land use only is important in securing land for farm production

Realtors have designated quantities of land to be available for housing, could we initiate something similar for farmers? An agriculture inventory of land available for purchase, lease, etc. Like a dating service—linking needs with resources

Deborah Giraud is conducting a study of landowners who own greater than 10 acres.

Survey asks what land is available, considerations for selling or leasing land, etc.

-Marijuana culture, large housing developments, riverfront recreation, and public lands acquisitions are biggest factors in conflict with agricultural land uses.

-Historical uses of land, production of successful crops no longer under cultivation, what lessons can we learn from the past?



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-Ag land preservation is driven by soils. Policies should honor soils maps. Definition of prime land in General Plan uses Williamson Act to keep bottomlands in prime designation. Coastal Act also protects prime grazing lands.

### Questions:

- How much land would we need to feed the county?
- Subsidies: How do subsidies affect Humboldt County? Beef and dairy often receive matching grants. Waste management for beef cows. However, these are not necessarily price supports.
- Certification of food safety: Senate bill 510 may require farmers to receive \$500 certifications for food safety (excluding smaller scale farms?).
- Is the dairy industry actually profitable? Is it falsely supported/promoted?
- High elevation grazing and grain production? What works, what is harmful?
- What are the efficiencies of grain cultivation? The food system is vulnerable, even globally due to economics and fuel.
- Are we looking at an old model or a post peak oil model? Post peak oil model calls for more localized system, not reliant on other countries.
- How can we better utilize land in McKinleyville? How can we produce food closer to where people live?

### Action:

1. **List of aspiring farmers** (10 years or less experience). Build a database documenting future farmers. Identify farmers, assist in networking with mentors, supplies, land, etc.
2. General Plan: **Articulate food systems advocacy from perspective of community (in addition to farmers). Articulate farmer's perspective to community.** CAFF has booth at farmers market for education to community? Article in Co-op news outlining planning meeting times? March 11 meeting may be last General Plan Update meeting to attend.
3. **Utilize social networking and digital communication** to continue pursuing goals. Use current list serves to disseminate information regarding needed action.