

BEYOND THE FARM BILL

Conference Report

March 24–25, 2014
www.btfb.org

Beyond the Farm Bill meeting – March 24-25, 2014

Brief Report, participant contacts, video presentation links, and request for further thoughts

September 5, 2014

Introduction

In March, nearly 50 organizations were represented in an important discussion about the need to expand the food and agriculture movement's collaborative capacity to fight for key policy changes in a manner that supersedes the entrenched power and politics of the U.S. Farm Bill.

The gathering included many great contributions from speakers and panels, side discussions, and break-out groups. There are links to the talks and side panels at the end of this document. We haven't made these talks public, as they took place within the context of the meeting. We are only making them available as a resource to the participants – please let us know if you have further thoughts on this.

Speakers and participants reiterated the need to find better ways to work together, to work in solidarity, and to zero in on core issues that impact and connect us all. But the meeting did not conclude with clear collective next steps. Following the March meeting, IATP engaged in a number of one-on-one discussions with participants to get additional thoughts on key takeaways and possible paths forward. This additional input was very valuable – and combined with the discussions at the meeting itself, we have pulled together some of the topline themes and possible next steps all of us to consider.

Please take a look at our summary of the topline themes coming out of the conference and some possible next steps. Once you have read this through, please respond to the survey questions at this end of this summary to provide feedback, comments, critiques and suggestions. We will share the results of the feedback with all the participants. IATP is committed to continue to work with all the groups attending, and beyond, to build greater solidarity and connections going forward.

Topline themes from the Beyond the Farm Bill meeting

1 – Line in the sand priorities. One of the more exciting outcomes was how quickly participants jumped to the critical importance of addressing the larger, more systemic issues behind the unsustainable and inequitable food system. Several big challenges permeated nearly every discussion: 1) racial inequity throughout the food and farm system; 2) the necessity to oppose excess corporate and financial power as it effects farmers, workers and consumers; and 3) the need to build countervailing power together.

Within this framework, participants and presenters identified a number of more specific “line in the sand,” systemic issues that have ramifications for all the work we are doing toward achieving transformative change in our agriculture and food systems. These include:

- *Protecting voting rights and promoting democratic participation* - Many of the communities most vulnerable and affected by the current unsustainable, inequitable, and unhealthy agriculture and food system are now being actively disempowered by state and federal voting laws undermining local control. This is particularly true for communities of color, and seen in many different manifestations, direct and indirect.
- *Economic justice for farmers* – Farmers have no power within the agricultural marketplace. They face increasing corporate control in nearly every sector. Access to land, markets, financing and other risk mitigation tools are issues that affect all farmers. Farmers of color, indigenous farmers, women farmers, and other historically marginalized groups have faced a history of particular disadvantage that continues, and is insufficiently addressed, in the present day. And more broadly, the inability to ensure fair prices and fair contracts within an environment of extreme volatility continues to reflect a failure of U.S. policy.
- *Blocking and disabling unfair and harmful international trade agreements* - Corporate power extends to international trade agreements, two of which – the Transpacific Partnership (TPP) and the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) – are currently being negotiated with high levels of corporate participation, minimal democratic oversight and active attempts to limit congressional debate through fast-track approval. Civil society and citizens are largely unaware of—and unwelcome in—the processes going on behind-the-scenes with regards to these agreements and their potential effects on communities. Racial inequity and immigration reform comes into play here too, as access to these processes are doubly blocked when placed alongside current barriers to and erosion of basic democratic rights like voting.
- *Promoting resilience and slowing climate change* - Industrial agricultural and food system practices significantly contribute to climate change while at the same time reducing the ability of rural communities and ecosystems to be resilient and adaptable to climate variability and severe weather events. Climate policy in many variations is moving forward at the state, national and international level. There is a need to actively advocate for agroecological practices as part of a climate solution that increases adaptation and resiliency, addresses the loss in soil fertility and sequesters carbon.
- *Bridging rural and urban communities* - Rural and urban communities are increasingly disassociated, despite their fundamental link through agriculture and food systems. This is a political wedge routinely used in Farm Bill debates to prevent solidarity, and an issue that requires long-term, collaborative efforts to address. Supporting farm to institution initiatives is a key area for transforming burgeoning interest in local/regional food production into critical rural/urban bridges. Setting new procurement rules for the food system we want (just, sustainable, healthy) is an issue that can be worked on at all levels – local, national and international – and has the potential to build links between rural and urban communities.

- *Fair practices for farm and food chain workers* - The current agriculture and food system is highly dependent upon cheap and disposable human labor to provide cheap food, resulting in a high percentage of farm and food chain workers being exploited through dangerous work conditions and disempowering immigration and minimum wage laws. A higher minimum, and tipped-minimum, wage and reform in immigration policy are necessary to move towards justice and political and food sovereignty for workers. Immigration reform also fell within the democratic participation discussion.
- *Working in solidarity and equity* - There was strong agreement on the real need to build solidarity with and support for communities marginalized by our current agriculture and food systems, including people of color, low-income families, indigenous people, farm workers and food chain workers. There was wide recognition that greater solidarity is needed – that groups are often segmented within parts of the larger movement – and that there are very real obstacles for working together, including lack of resources for solidarity work, lack of direct lines of communication, and at times the lack of appropriate tools or efforts to seriously face the challenges around talking about inequities due to race, gender, or citizenship status.

2 – Working together. Participants were eager to share their ideas, inquire of others, recognize the need to build new trust and ways of working collectively and accountably, and to find the strengths in solidarity. In addition to affirming the importance of solidarity, there were also many discussions about the practical difficulties and the politics of collaborating. Participants shared stories of success, but also much frustration with past experiences of well-intended but ultimately ineffectual networks, including examples of collaborative projects driven by foundations, where meaningful partnerships aren't given the time or latitude to develop; issues around capacity; and the challenges mentioned with regard to social inequities. There were a number of arenas identified where participants might work better together including sharing resources like research, communications/messaging, fundraising, and other organizational assets.

3 – Network? – Based on what was heard within the meeting's discussions, it was clearly premature to jump toward inventing a new dedicated network. While the Beyond the Farm Bill framework served to help organize the meeting, there was not support for creating yet another additional network. Participants emphasized that there were many other collaborations and networks already out there and were reluctant to jump toward the idea that another was necessary. IATP learned about the ramifications of building a web structure before an *actual* structure of multiple organizations is agreed upon. For that reason, IATP is stepping back from the wider public promotion of BTFB identified network, which we'll assess again when, or if, more concrete next steps are established in collaboration with other attending or interested groups.

Possible next steps

1 – *Following up on topline themes.* Many organizational participants are already leading work in many of the topline themes identified at the meeting. One next step could be to identify

organizations among those who participated who are already working and leading in those different areas, or are part of larger existing networks, and share that with the larger group. This would allow participants to plug in as they are able.

IATP is part of many different networks and collaborations. Of the line in the sand issues identified we are part of a number of campaigns to challenge existing free trade agreements and derail those under negotiation. We will continue to work with any groups interested in engaging in that work. IATP and several of the other conference participants are building the Rural Climate Network, which is composed of agriculture and rural organizations around the country working to address climate change. Let us know if you are interested in learning more, or engaging, in either of these areas of work.

2 – Sharing of resources. There was agreement that the different strands of the movement need to find ways to better work together – and find the resources to do so. Fortunately, there are already many effective networks working on food and agriculture issues. And there have been several strong assessments and mapping projects of the food and farm movement – and the way it works.

In the next month, IATP will publish a handful of short case studies of existing networks that are working well to share how they work, and why they work well. Distilling the experience of existing and past coalitions and movements, both in the U.S. and abroad, provides valuable lessons in methodology and best practices. Ongoing efforts for strengthening capacity and collective action should build on the established work of many groups, many of whom were represented at the meeting.

IATP will also organize a webinar with ARC 2020, the European coalition of organizations responsible for producing an alternative EU common agricultural policy (CAP). The webinar will explore how they put together their EU-wide network pushing CAP reform. Let us know what questions you have for them in advance, and we'll make sure they address it in their presentation.

3 – IATP's commitment. We heard many times over the need for finding ways to better work together and support each other. The food and farm movement currently has many different networks, coalitions and collaborations covering a plethora of issues – from industrial meat production, to sustainable agriculture, to food access and food rights, to food sovereignty – at local, state and national levels. While these collaborations often find ways to work together, it is not systematic, nor is there larger coordination and infrastructure sharing that might be useful.

IATP is committed to work with others who are interested in exploring ways to better collaborate going forward. IATP is committed to:

- Working directly with or in support of others on the topline themes identified at the meeting.
- Supporting and contributing to infrastructure or other needs to promote sharing of resources.

- Providing analysis and taking practical steps to move away from our industrialized agriculture model in ways that focus beyond the Farm Bill.
- Opposing the corporate-led free trade agenda
- Compiling feedback to this report and providing it to the broader community as desired.

Your thoughts

Your thinking is highly valued. Here are a few guiding questions. Please cut and paste them into an email and send to IATP President Juliette Majot via Kristen Frank at kfrank@iatp.org. Kristen will be compiling all responses – and we'll turn around a summary to you. We would greatly appreciate hearing from you by September 15th. Many, many thanks!

1 – Does this brief report capture the key topline outcomes of the meeting? Are we missing something important that should be included?

2 – Do you have any specific ideas for better sharing resources among organizations?

3- We listed three possible next steps. Do any of those seem to resonate most with you and your organization? Which would you be willing to engage on, or lead, going forward?

4 – Since the meeting, have other ideas, initiatives, or opportunities come forward that you think are worth considering as a path forward together?

Participants: BTFB National Network Meeting

March 24-25, 2014

American Sustainable Business Council	Richard Eidlin	reidlin@asbcouncil.org
Animal Agriculture Reform Collaborative	Sara Rummel	srummel.aarc@gmail.com
ARC 2020	Samuel Feret	samuel.feret@gmail.com
CATA	Jessica Culley	catanj@aol.com
Center for Food Safety	Colin O'Neil	coneil@centerforfoodsafety.org
Center for Rural Affairs	Brian Depew	briand@cfra.org
Community Food and Justice Coalition	Jessy Gill	jgill@cafoodjustice.org
CooperationWorks!	Tom Pierson	tom.pierson@gmail.com
Corporate Accountability International	TJ Faircloth	tfaircloth@stopcorporateabuse.org
Detroit Black Community Food Security Network	Kwamena Mensah	amenra628@aol.com
Farm Aid	Carolyn Mugar	carolyn@farmaid.org
Farm Commons	Rachel Armstrong	rachel@farmcommons.org
Farmers' Legal Action Group	Stephen Carpenter	scarpenter@flaginc.org
Food & Water Watch	Patty Lovera	plovera@fwwatch.org
Food Chain Workers Alliance	Jose Oliva	jose@foodchainworkers.org
The Food Dignity Project	Jemila Sequeira	es538@cornell.edu
Food First	Eric Holt-Gimenez	eholtgim@foodfirst.org
Green Lands Blue Waters	Richard Warner	rhwarner@umn.edu
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy	Pete Huff	phuff@iatp.org
	Jahi Chappell	jchappell@iatp.org
	Juliette Majot	jmajot@iatp.org
Izaak Walton League	Bill Wenzel	bwenzel@iwla.org
Land Stewardship Project	Adam Warthesen	adamw@landstewardship.org
	Mark Schultz	marks@landstewardshipproject.org
The Leopold Center	Fred Kirschenmann	leopold1@iastate.edu
Main Street Project	Niel Ritchie	nielritchie@mac.com
	Reginaldo Haslett-Marroquin	regi@mainstreetproject.org
Mississippi River Collaborative	Stacy James	sjames@prairierivers.org
Movement Strategy Center	Navina Khanna	navina@movementstrategy.org
National Family Farm Coalition	Kathy Ozer	kozer4@aol.com
National Farm to School Network	Mary Stein	mary@farmtoschool.org
National Network of Forest Practitioners	Colin Donohue	colin@nnfp.org
National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition	Jeremy Emmi	jemmi@sustainableagriculture.net
Nebraska Appleseed	Nic Swiercek	nswiercek@neappleseed.net
New America Foundation	Siddhartha Mahanta	mahanta@newamerica.net
On the Commons	Julie Ristau	jristau@onthecommons.org
Organic Consumers Association	Ronnie Cummins	ronnie@organicconsumers.org
Pesticide Action Network	Kristin Schafer	kristins@panna.org
RAFI-USA	Scott Marlow	smarlow@rafiusa.org
Real Food Challenge	Katie Blanchard	katie@realfoodchallenge.org
Roots of Change	Michael Dimock	michael@rootsofchange.org
Rural Coalition	Lorette Picciano	lpicciano@ruralco.org
Slow Food USA	Kate Krauss	kate.krauss@slowfoodusa.org
Sustainable Economies Law Center	Christina Oatfield	christina@theselc.org
Taxpayers for Common Sense	Joshua Sewell	josh@taxpayer.net
The Food Commons	Larry Yee	lkyee@ucdavis.edu
The Land Institute	Tim Crews	crews@landinstitute.org
	Josh Svaty	svaty@landinstitute.org
Union of Concerned Scientists	Jenn Yates	jyates@ucsusa.org
UFCW	Dennis Olson	dolson@ufcw.org
United State Conference of Mayors	Paul Soglin	mayor@cityofmadison.com
University of Minnesota	Valentine Cadieux	cadieux@umn.edu
VT Law School's Ctr for Ag and Food Systems	Delilah Griswold	delilahgriswold@vermontlaw.edu
Watershed Media	Dan Imhoff	danimhoff@watershedmedia.org
Western Organization of Resource Councils	Liz Moran	lmoran@worc.org

Video Presentations from Beyond the Farm Bill, March 24-25, 2014

Keynotes

<http://youtu.be/9KcGD16qe1E> - Moving "Beyond" - Linking Big Ideas to Action - Josh Svaty, the Land Institute

<http://youtu.be/VEDLHs8YcpY> - Moving "Beyond" - Linking Big Ideas to Action - Fred Kirschenmann, Leopold Center

<http://youtu.be/C01kbcdb5Jo> - Starting Small - Grassroots Action to Policy Creation - Paul Soglin, U.S. Conference of Mayors Task Force on Food Policy

<http://youtu.be/-vGKyoi1UKw> - Starting Small - Grassroots Action to Policy Creation - Kwamena Mensah, Detroit Black Community Food Security Network

<http://youtu.be/zNdjmtc8x1l> - Building the Policy Blueprint - Lessons from ARC2020 - Samuel Feret, ARC2020

Panels

<http://youtu.be/EgWF8KhsQ7o> - Fair Prices for Farmers - Protect Natural Resources - Scott Marlow, Rural Advancement Foundation International (RAFI); Liz Moran, Western Organization of Resource Councils (WORC); Brian Depew, Center for Rural Affairs.

<http://youtu.be/dlIJFDi6KLI> - Fair Pay and Worker Dignity - Safe Food for All - Jose Oliva, Food Chain Workers Alliance; Colin O'Neil, Center for Food Safety; Kristin Schafer, Pesticide Action Network

<http://youtu.be/qV1axBkhuSo> - Healthy Food Access - Local Ownership and Control - Jemila Sequeira, Food Dignity Project; Patty Lovera, Food and Water Watch; Larry Yee, The Food Commons

<http://youtu.be/BQTVqj6Bloc> - Food and Farm Policy for Everyone - Eric Holt-Gimenez, Food First; Lorette Picciano, Rural Coalition; Navina Khanna, Movement Strategy Center