

Topical Lunch Summary
Conventional versus Local Supply Chains for Fruits and Vegetables: A Comparative Study of Environmental, Nutritional and Economic Issues

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Attendees: Helene Schember, Anurag Agrawal, Frank DiSalvo, Louise Buck, Daniel Welch, Vithala Rao, Lori Bushway, Christian Peters, Jonathan Russell-Anelli, Phillip McMichael, Anusuya Rangarajan, Olivia Hall, Dan Brown, Laurie Drinkwater, Mike Timmons, Ariel Bleth, Joe Francis, Ardyth Gillespie, Judith Green, Miguel L. Gomez (host), Oliver Gao (host), Dennis Miller (host), Bradley Rickard (host).

The objective was to discuss our project in the broader context of sustainable supply chains. We had two main goals:

- Receive feedback from academics outside our disciplines on developing a framework to assess the sustainability of food supply chains
- Potential for expanding the scope of our initiative toward the creation of an institute for sustainable food systems research at Cornell.

We started by describing our approach, which focuses on assessing sustainability of food supply chains from three perspectives: economics, nutrition and the environment. We identified other three Cornell groups are working on related initiatives and discovered the following synergies:

- Our project offers a rigorous quantitative modeling approach to assess performance of food supply chains on key sustainability dimensions (economics, nutrition and engineering).
- Gillespie and collaborators offer methodologies to understand how families and communities make food choices, and brings to the table the Community Engaged Research methodology.
- Russell-Anelli and collaborators offer a systematic approach to understand the relation between food production systems and natural resources.
- Regenstein and Timmons offer a technical approach to a particular local food system (urban animal production) that should be evaluated from a multidisciplinary perspective.

In general our group discussion favored the idea of increasing the scope of the project. This can be done by integrating all (or some) initiatives. There were several opinions as to the strategy to move forward this initiative, from forming a study group to conducting a research project to creating an institute. Salient topics of discussion included: 1) need to develop a common language and a common framework of analysis for the assessment of food supply system sustainability; 2) must generate exploratory, applied papers for publication in the short run to test the framework (and this will put us in better position to apply for external funding); 3) need to consider the links between alternative food supply systems and food choices is critical; 4) the framework should address the role of public policy in the sustainability of food systems; and 5) it may make sense to focus on the Gómez and collaborators model first, and build from this basic model to include the other disciplines.