Local Food Systems Graduate Course for Extension Agents: A Sustainable Agriculture Collaboration of North Carolina, Virginia, and South Carolina

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Outline

1. What we’ve done to date
2. Overall objectives
3. Outcomes / Impacts
4. Needs Assessment for Online Course
5. Next Steps for Online Course
6. Discussion
What we have done to date:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Proposal 2013</td>
<td>VA, SC, NC, Carolina Farm Stewardship Association Cooperators identified within the grant.</td>
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<td>April 2014</td>
<td>Course funded by Southern SARE PDP Grant.</td>
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<td>May 2014</td>
<td>Course format confirmed: 6, 2-day face-to-face sessions over 6 months. 5 session topics identified for 6 course sessions.</td>
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<td>Fall 2014</td>
<td>Advisory panels determine educational objectives for individual course sessions (Mtg 1), and identify learning activities and content that align with those educational objectives (Mtg 2)</td>
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<td>Winter 2014/2015</td>
<td>Course marketing and recruitment in all 3 states →16 students, all in NC</td>
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<td>February - July 2015</td>
<td>Course implemented (NC State &amp; NC A&amp;T course)</td>
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<td>In Progress</td>
<td>On-line, Non-credit course development. To date: Syllabus for Module 1.</td>
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Overall Grant Project Objective

To build the capacity of Cooperative Extension in North Carolina and neighboring states, through development & implementation of a comprehensive graduate course on local food systems.
Course Programmatic Objectives

1. Extension educators can knowledgeably explain the benefits & challenges of localized food systems to a variety of audiences, including farmers.

2. Extension educators can identify the structure & components of food systems and lead or facilitate a collaborative process of aligning these with agricultural & general community strengths for local food system expansion.
Collaborators

Co-Instructors:
Joanna Massey Lelekacs
NC Cooperative Extension
Coordinator for Local Foods
NC State University

Dara Bloom
Assistant Professor and
Local Foods Extension Specialist
NC State University

Other Collaborators:
Dede Nelson- NC State
Emma Brinkmeyer- NC State
Abbey Piner- NC State
Simone Keith- NC State
Nancy Creamer- NC State
John O’Sullivan-Emeritus, NCA&T
Noah Ranells- NC A&T
Antoine Alston- NC A&T

Eric Bendfeldt- Virginia Cooperative Extension
Kim Niewolny- Virginia Tech
Dave Lamie- Clemson
Jared Cates- CFSA
Brian Nerrie- Virginia State University
Edoe Agbodjan- South Carolina State
Duncan Hilchey- North American Food Systems Network
Brian Raison- Ohio State
Graduate Course Content

For syllabus, learning objectives, readings, session agendas, and lecture/panel discussion recording, visit:

https://go.ncsu.edu/localfoodlectures

Topics Covered

1. Introducing Local: Where we have been and where we are going
2. The Bottom Line: Economic Opportunities & Challenges of Local Food Systems
3. Value Chain: Farm to Fork
4. Food as a Common Denominator: Bringing Everyone to the Table
5. Understanding & Influencing Regulatory Policy & Frameworks / Local Leaders: Framing Local Policy.
Participants / Demographics

13 for-credit students  (*Registrations: 12 at NC State, 1 at NC A&T*)
3 non-credit, professional development students
   (*1 Program Asst, 1 FCS, 1 ANR - 1 completed the full course*)

11 NC State Extension Educators, 1 NC A&T Extension Educator

5 FCS Agents
2 Local Foods Agents (*ANR*)
1 Program Assistant (*ANR*)
1 Extension Associate (*FCS*)
1 NCA&TSU Ag/Extension Education Graduate Student
3 County Extension Directors (*background = 1 4-H, 1 CRD/ANR, 1 FCS*)
Course Outcomes
Evaluation Summary
Comparison of Students’ Confidence/ Knowledge Before (green) and After (red) Course

Mean of Confidence Rating at Post-Test

Mean of Confidence Rating at Pre-Test

- I am confident in my ability to evaluate community assets as they relate to building a local food system
- I have a good understanding of the various types of local food system initiatives that are occurring across the state and country
- I have a good understanding of the challenges associated with creating a local food system
- I have a good understanding of logic models as a tool to help plan and evaluate food system programs
- I am confident in my ability to lead or facilitate a collaborative process among community members to build a local food system
- I have a good understanding of the benefits of local food systems that have been supported by research
- I am confident in my ability to support the development of local food system initiatives that span Extension programming areas
- I am confident in my ability to create educational local food system programming
- I am confident in my ability to support the implementation of local food initiatives in my community
Intermediate Outcomes: 6 Month Evaluation
Intermediate Outcomes

“…This is a really valuable course… it's valuable for our agents to have the resources and the knowledge to be able to help foster these local food systems and really keep them alive and keep them sustained.”

“It [the course] was a hugely important thing for me in terms of professional development. I don't think I could have taken a class that would be more impactful on what my professional future's going to look like, hopefully.”
Online Course:
Overview of Local Food Systems
Needs Assessment

Level of interest in enrolling in online local food systems course
55%: I’m very interested.
39%: Maybe.
6%: Not interested.

Primary reason for potential enrollment
23%: Desire for a better understanding of local food systems
16%: More opportunities for professional development training
12%: Better utilization of my food system expertise
11%: Greater understanding by others of my food system development work
5 Self-Paced Individual Modules

*(8 hours each)*

Topics Covered

1. Introducing Local: Where we have been and where we are going
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Course Design

• Interactive
  – Online technologies
  – Student community engagement
  – Virtual field trips

• Multi-State
  – Examples of Virginia local food projects
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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Goal</th>
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<td>2/2016</td>
<td>Attend Local Food gathering in Virginia to incorporate VA Local Food Success Stories into class materials.</td>
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<td>Late Spring 2016</td>
<td>Launch online, non-credit course promotional website.</td>
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<td>Summer 2016</td>
<td>Pilot first module of online, non-credit, regional, professional development course (Evaluate and adapt)</td>
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<td>Winter 2016/2017</td>
<td>Offer additional three modules of online, non-credit, regional, professional development course.</td>
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<td>Continued engagement with <strong>North American Food Systems Network</strong> professional certification program throughout project.</td>
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How to get involved

1. Needs assessment:
   http://go.ncsu.edu/localfoodsurvey

2. Sign up on the sign in sheet to be contacted when the first course module is available.
Discussion
Thank you!

https://go.ncsu.edu/localfoodlectures

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