



Southwest Marketing Network

Expanding Markets for Southwest Small-Scale, Alternative, and Minority Producers

Promoting Local Agricultural Marketing in the Southwest

February 2009

Durango Conference to Explore Good Food Networks in the Southwest: SWMN Conference coming to Durango in April '09

Our very first SWMN Annual Conference was at the Doubletree Hotel along the Animas River in Durango in 2003, and we are coming full circle on April 6-8, 2009.

If you have any interest in alternative marketing and rebuilding community-based food systems, keep those dates free and stay tuned for the conference brochure to be posted on the website in February and mailed to past attendees and those who request a hardcopy. Contact Le Adams at 505-473-1004x10 or at ladams@cybermesa.com to have a brochure mailed.

We plan extended sessions to provide more depth on topics of most interest to you:

- **Selling to schools, restaurants, stores, and other institutions**—getting started, profitability, scaling up, setting prices, ensuring quality and safety, and more.
- **Organizational development**—how to start, build, fund, and maintain your community organization for greatest impact and sustainability.
- **Business management**—business planning, marketing, recordkeeping, sustainable growth, energy management, and more.
- **Alternative livestock marketing**—working alone or with producer or consumer groups to raise and market livestock products with attributes increasingly valued by consumers, including local, humanely raised, organic, grass-fed, predator-friendly, eco-friendly, etc.

A major theme this year is the Good Food Network (*see article on page 2*). The need to get “good food”—healthy, green, fair, and affordable—to more and more people depends on local as well as more regional distribution. Through panels and plenary discussions,

we will be exploring what a “Good Food Network” should look like in the Southwest. Do plan to join us in Durango. We look forward to seeing you.

Jim Dyer, Southwest Marketing Network



photo by Jim Dyer

Welcome to Mesa Verde Country

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What is a Good Food Network?

In November, Southwest Marketing Network representatives presented to over 100 food system stakeholders at the first convening of the National Good Food Network. The Network was established in 2007 by the Wallace Center as a way to help build a new “good food” system—one that makes fresh, healthy, green, fair, affordable food an everyday reality in every community.

The Southwest Marketing Network was invited to speak at the convening as a result of its role as one of eight organizations selected to be Regional Lead Teams for the Good Food Network. As a Regional Lead Team, the SWMN is responsible for helping to bring together farmers, ranchers, food processors, distributors, retailers, community organizations, policymakers, consumers, and others to develop regional “good food” systems.

At the conference, Jim Dyer, Director of the SWMN, and Pam Roy, Co-Director of Farm to Table and a member of the SWMN Steering Committee, presented on the work that the SWMN has already done in this regard. Examples of successful “good food” system building in the Southwest include:

- **Helping connect farmers and school food buyers to ensure that schoolchildren get fresh, local foods in school lunches.**
- **Developing community gardens at local food banks.**
- **Establishing farmers’ markets in rural and Tribal communities.**
- **Connecting producers to local distributors, such as La Montanita Coop.**

Representatives of the other Regional Lead Teams also presented on their exciting projects. One of the speakers was Anthony Flaccavento who provided the keynote address at last year’s SWMN Conference. His organization, Appalachian Sustainable Development (ASD) has created one of the best examples of a “good food” supply chain. Since 1996, ASD has been working with former small-scale tobacco farmers in the Southeast to transition to growing organic vegetables.

In 2007, 28 growers participated in a collaborative decision-making process to determine what and how much each producer should plant to meet demand. At harvest time, these producers took their produce to a communal packing plant where \$470,000 worth of produce and free-range eggs were graded, packaged and distributed to grocery stores under the “Appalachian Harvest” label.

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To maximize both the return to producers and the social benefit of this value chain, “seconds” (produce not quite perfect enough to sell to stores) were sold at a low-cost to food banks, providing 120,000 pounds of produce to needy families. They also sold low-cost produce to a buying club that serves more than 2,500 low-income individuals and families.

This innovative way of getting fresh, local, sustainable food into the consumers’ bellies and healthy profits into the local producers’ hands is an excellent example not just of the “good food” system, but of “value chain” methodology at work.

The value in value chains

What, you may ask, is a value chain and why should you care? Well, value chain methodology provides some guidance on the “how” of building a good food system. Basically, a value chain is a string of companies or collaborating players who work together to satisfy market demands for specific products or services.

You may already be familiar with the term supply chain, which refers to all the entities involved in getting food to the consumer—such as input suppliers, producers, processors, distributors, and retailers. While a value chain also involves these diverse entities, there are two key differences between a value chain and a supply chain. The two key differences with a food value-chain are that the model is both customer-centric and requires collaboration among businesses involved. First, a value chain is customer-centric. This means that to be successful, the value chain (and all of the entities that comprise it) must produce a final product that meets the buying preferences and habits of the consumer. This includes price, quality, quantity and availability. Thus, developing a value chain starts with an understanding of the final consumer and works its way backwards, building a set of interactions among businesses that can meet customer needs.

While this might seem familiar to producers who have often been in the position of price takers, when combined with the second element, the picture changes dramatically. Given that getting the right product to the final consumer is the goal of each participant in the value chain, all participants have a high stake in the ability of each link to do their part. The recognition of this interdependence requires participants in the value chain to become partners who have a strategic interest in the performance and well being of other partners. As a result, business interactions and relationships must be based on trust and mutual benefit.

This can be contrasted with a traditional supply chain in which business relationships are often seen in win-lose terms with each party trying to buy low and sell high. In a value chain, however, price is accorded based on a fair valuation of cost, which includes adequate profit margins and return on investment that are distributed equitably across the value chain. While this may seem impractical given the long history of low prices paid to producers, in fact value chain methodology actually increases cost-efficiency because it ensures that no participant is receiving more profit than the value they add to the product and that all participants are able to sustain themselves long-term. In traditional supply chains, we often see exactly the opposite: price is based on control rather than value and businesses without control are often forced to operate at a loss.

One other key characteristic of food value chains, especially those that are seeking to meet regional markets, is the need for collaboration not only between businesses at different levels of the chain, but also among businesses at the same level, for example producers. Collaboration among producers or processors or retailers, allows small and medium enterprises to have more impact on the value chain by, for example, reducing costs through bulk purchasing and economies of scale, joint advocacy, innovation, and implementing joint marketing strategies.

While this may sound complex, many of you might already be involved in value chains without even knowing it. Farm to Cafeteria programs are an excellent example of value chain development. In these programs you often see small and medium-sized farmers involved in formal or informal groups that combine their produce to meet the requirements of a particular school district. They may develop their own collaborative distribution system or they might work with a local distributor. In some cases the distributor may be the school district or the commodities truck. The food service buyers, as

conscious value chain participants eager to provide fresh, local food to their customers, develop strong relationships with the producers to develop agreements that work for both parties.

Another example could be a beef “core producer.” In this case, a rancher who develops a relationship with a grocery store that needs more beef than she is able to supply with her own herd may work with other ranchers to expand capacity. Because she has both a strategic interest in ensuring sufficient supply to meet her agreements with buyers and has a deep understanding of the price other ranchers will need to continue to provide this supply, she will pay her supplying ranchers enough to ensure that they can continue to produce long-term. On the other hand, the supplying ranchers understand that the core producer is providing a marketing service that is valuable to them and that entails real costs and are thus willing to accept a lower price than she receives from the grocer. By working together, the producers are able to sell to a market they would otherwise not have access to and achieve the economies of scale necessary to meet the final consumer’s price point.

Even farmers’ market vendors can benefit from value chain methodology. While producers in this example fulfill most of the roles along the chain, how they interact with each other will affect their success. For example, producers at a given market can commit to selling at prices that provide adequate profit margins but still fall within customers’ budgets. This prevents a “race to the bottom” in prices that hurts producers and, in the long-term, consumers because production is not sustainable at these prices. Further, producers can work together to ensure a diversity of products, understanding that the greater selection of products a market has to offer, the more customers they are likely to attract.

The value in value chains, then, is that through transparency, trust, and collaboration, everyone involved, from feed to food, benefits.

For more information on value chains and good food networks you can take a look at the Good Food Network website <http://www.wallacecenter.org/our-work/current-initiatives/national-good-food-network-1> and at www.valuechains.org. We also hope you will join us in more discussion on building value chains and the good food system at the Southwest Marketing Network Conference in April.

Ilana Blankman, Farm to Table

Water for growing food is a common good

Water for Agriculture = Food Security for New Mexico —New Mexico Acequia Association bumper sticker

One cannot overstate the importance of water to the communities of the Southwest. The region is home to ancient agricultural traditions that reflect the sacredness of water and its centrality to survival. Today, clean and secure water remains vital to the well-being of communities, both urban and rural, as well as of the ecosystems that nurture our existence.

Food traditions and the reverence of water are integral to both Native American and acequia cultures. From the acequia perspective, we view water as a “don divino” or divine gift from God that should be treated with respect and shared equitably. These principles form the basis of our customs and traditions with regard to water but also permeate the cultural values of the traditional acequia communities throughout New Mexico and Southern Colorado.

The Southwest is an area of extreme water scarcity. The land-based people of the region, including acequia communities, through many generations learned to live amid water scarcity through values that could be broadly described as follows:

- **Water is precious and should be used very conservatively.**
- **Water is essential to the survival of all living things and should be shared.**
- **Water should be clean enough to drink and to grow food that we eat.**

In acequia communities, one of the most important characteristics of our system of water governance is the repartimiento, or water sharing customs. Within these unique and localized customs, local parciantes come together to elect their Mayordomo, or caretaker of the acequia, and the Comision, the three member commission that guides the management of the acequia. The Mayordomo is entrusted with the responsibility of allocating water within his or her respected acequia according to local custom. These customs are on-the-ground articulation of the importance of food.

Depending on the acequia, a common practice is to prioritize the family gardens that are used for subsistence and to provide drinking water for livestock. Next in priority might be row crops and finally pasture. Mayordomos also have the responsibility of determining the water sharing agreements between neighboring

acequias. In times of drought, the job of the Mayordomo becomes even more challenging as he or she calls upon all the parciantes to shorten their irrigation times in order to share the shortage. These traditions have endured many centuries and continue to be a vibrant part of today’s modern acequias.

Another characteristic of the acequia system is that we view water as being attached to the land. This view was supported by the legal tradition we inherited from Spain and Mexico. However, the water doctrine adopted in the Western United States treats water rights as a commodity that is severable from the land. This has grave implications for traditional agriculture which depends on surface water from springs, streams, and rivers. If agricultural water rights are “transferred” to other uses that use groundwater, such as municipal, industrial, and other commercial uses, this could dry up agricultural communities while also irreversibly mining our aquifers.

The acequia leadership in New Mexico has argued that severing water rights from agricultural land could unravel the communal fabric that holds the acequias together. The proponents of “water markets,” in which water rights are bought and sold, argue that water should be allocated to the highest economic use. While it is important to have the flexibility to adapt to the changing needs of our communities, we cannot afford to allow markets to operate unfettered and completely dry up agricultural lands as well as our groundwater supplies that are an integral part of the springs and streams that we depend upon.

Generally, the water policy framework in the Western United States enables the water market but only under certain conditions. In New Mexico, the State Engineer must evaluate water transfers and new appropriations for water, usually groundwater, to determine whether such a use would be detrimental to the public welfare, contrary to the conservation of water, and could result in impairment of existing water rights.

The acequias and everyone who cares about our water must effectively make the argument that it is vital to the public welfare and the common good that we protect our ability to grow food. Therefore, we need to retain water rights for the purposes of growing food. Many of our communities are engaged in a monumental

effort to rebuild our local food systems. In order to do so, we will need to protect the farmland and water rights that are the foundation of our farming and ranching traditions.

The following value statements are part of what drives the work of the New Mexico Acequia Association and may have broader resonance with all land-based people and supporters of strengthening local food systems:

- **Protecting water rights for growing food is an essential part of our food security and our cultural identity.**
- **Generational memory about customs for sharing scarce water has an intrinsic value to humanity.**
- **Local water governance and ways of expressing collective decisions about water are essential to protecting our precious waters.**

Paula Garcia, New Mexico Acequia Association

This is reprinted from the NMAA blog at www.lasacequias.org with permission. For information about permission to use in whole or in part for educational purposes, contact the NMAA at 505-995-9644. A good source of information about global water issues is the new website www.waterconsciousness.com, which also contains a chapter about acequias and their relevance to the global movement to protect water from commodification.

Healthy Community Food Systems group forms

Seeing a need for more systems-based strategic planning, a new nonprofit group has formed in Southwest Colorado. Three SWMN collaborators have formed Healthy Community Food Systems (HCFS) with the aim of being a key partner for the SWMN in the Colorado area. Jenny Wrenn provides much-needed technical assistance to groups in project development and grant writing for the SWMN; Julie Hudak has been compiling the amazing resources for the SWMN website; and Jim Dyer is SWMN project director.

This small and nimble nonprofit is designed to be able to respond quickly to communities as they rebuild their food systems by helping them develop strategic plans that provide a context for, and integrate, the wide variety of local food projects springing up recently—from farm to school to beginning farmer programs, from farmer-chef events to low-income cooking classes. With proper planning these individual projects can more effectively and efficiently achieve overall goals and greater sustainability.

Stay tuned at www.healthycommunityfoodsystems.org for new developments.

Jim Dyer, Southwest Marketing Network

New resources on the SWMN website

The SWMN website has several new resource sections. Please visit the website and let us know what you think. We are always open to feedback!

Food System topics

The new Food Systems resource pages have been designed especially for those working on community food systems. The resource pages include; Community Food Systems, Farm to School, Community Food Security, and Community Gardens. Please visit our **Marketing Topics** section for resources from a producer viewpoint.

Four Corners Alternative Marketing News

This is a compilation of newsletters, list serves, and archived news stories that we have found especially pertinent to alternative marketing in the Four Corners States. Let us know if we have left out a marketing-related news source that you value.

Stay tuned for the following resources coming in early 2009: **Grant Writing and Policy Resources.**

Check it out at www.swmarketingnetwork.org

Julie Hudak, Southwest Marketing Network



photo by Jim Goodwin

David Fresquez leads a Farm Tour at the 2008 SWMN Conference in Santa Fe.

Farm to School News: Durango, CO students enjoy local organic beef

Students in the Durango School District are exposed to local food every month through a strong Farm to School program and a relationship with Fox Fire Farms that grew from it. This relationship has removed the question of how healthy is the meat in my taco? Since April of 2008, the 10 schools in the Durango School District 9-R have been serving locally raised organic ground beef in the school lunches. Students now enjoy the benefits of grass fed beef from Fox Fire Farms in their tacos, spaghetti sauce, nachos, chili, gorditas, and BBQ beef sandwiches. The Durango School District 9-R has about 5,000 students enrolled, covering grades K-12.

In March of 2008 Krista Garand, Student Nutrition Director for Durango Public Schools, attended the First Annual Durango Farmer Chef Connection event with the hope of meeting producers who could sell her local food for the school lunches. The Farmer-Chef Connection event was sponsored by Healthy Lifestyles La Plata, the La Plata County Extension Office and Durango Slow Food. The simple goal of the event was to help foster relationships between food buyers and food producers.

Garand's relationship with Fox Fire Farms was established during the "speed dating" portion of the Farmer-Chef Connection. Each of the food buyers had five minutes to meet with each of the farmers and ranchers at the event. When Krista sat down at the Fox Fire Farms table, she told Brent Perry she was unsure that they could do business together, as Fox Fire is most well known in the Durango area for their lamb. Brent told Krista about a special they were running on organic ground beef and that maybe they could try to get it into the schools.

Soon after the event, Krista ran a pilot program featuring Fox Fire's certified organic ground beef in the schools. The feedback from students, their parents, and faculty was strongly positive. Garand said "It has been an ongoing challenge to teach people there is value in purchasing a school meal. Serving organic grass fed beef has made people realize that there is fiscal as well as nutritional value in purchasing a school lunch. The proof has been in the increase in meals served on the Fox Fire menu days." The overwhelmingly positive feedback helped Garand formulate an agreement with Fox Fire to buy their organic ground beef for the entire 2008-2009 school year.

In an era where farm to school relationships are receiving so much praise, the connection between Fox Fire Farms and the Durango 9-R School District is an exemplary model. The relationship between the two functions due to the commitment they both have to serving fresh, healthy and local foods to the children of Durango. Krista Garand has a unique dedication to buying food from local farmers. She currently works with 12 producers in the Durango area to serve students fresh vegetables and meat.

Garand is able to buy the ground beef from Fox Fire for only a slightly higher cost than she was paying before from Andrews Food Service. Brent Perry of Fox Fire Farms makes large, bulk deliveries of frozen ground beef to the school district's central food storage warehouse. From there, the meat is delivered to each site based on the amount of meals served. Each site kitchen prepares the meals from scratch using the best food safety practices.

Garand is able to easily serve Fox Fire's beef because it has gone through a USDA certified processing facility, thus meeting the guidelines of the National School Lunch Program.

The program has been so successful that Durango 9-R and Fox Fire Farms have renewed their agreement for the upcoming 2009-2010 school year. Student and faculty response to the ground beef continues to be incredibly positive. The model has been so successful in Durango that other school districts in southwest Colorado are exploring the possibility of serving Fox Fire Beef for the 2009-2010 school year.

The Durango 9-R Farm to School program continues to grow with the support of the Southwest Colorado Farm to School Program, which is sponsored by the Southwest Marketing Network, the Sustainability Alliance of Southwest Colorado and Healthy Lifestyle La Plata. The working group's purpose is, "to ensure that our Pre-K through College students consume the highest quality, sustainably produced, culturally appropriate foods from local farms and ranches." The dedication of Garand and the SW Colorado Farm to School Program has helped support small scale food producers while ensuring that students have access to the freshest and most nutritious food possible.

Julie Hudak, Southwest Marketing Network

Teec Nos Pos to be featured on new Jamie Oliver TV show



photos by Roy Kady



It's a wrap! Jamie Oliver of the Food Network just visited Roy Kady and the folks of Teec Nos Pos to film a segment for an upcoming TV series called, "Jamie in America." The show, premiering in September 2009, will focus on highlighting the best of American cooking. The Teec Nos Pos segment will be the premier of the series. More details to come in our next SWMN newsletter.

Calendar of Events

February 18, 2009 • Fruit Growers Workshop • Santa Fe, NM

Contact: Lē Adams at (505) 473-1004, ext. 10 or ladams@cybermesa.com

February 19-21, 2009 • Colorado Agriculture Big and Small Conference • Greeley, CO

For more information, please visit: <http://www.coloradoagriculturebigandsmall.com/>
or contact Adrian Card at acard@bouldercounty.org.

February 25-27, 2009 • 6th Annual Diversified Agriculture Conference • Delta, Utah

For more information about the conference, please visit: <http://www.diverseag.org>

February 27-28, 2009 • The New Mexico Organic Farming Conference • Las Cruces, NM

For more information, contact: Joanie Quinn at (505) 841-9067 / joan.quinn@state.nm.us
or Lē Adams at (505) 473-1004 x10 / ladams@cybermesa.com

Or log on to: www.farmtotablenm.org/fts/category/conference-workshops-trainings/

Includes: keynote, sessions, pre-conference tour of NMSU campus, and HACCP Workshop on Feb 25.

April 6-8, 2009 • Southwest Marketing Network 7th Annual Conference • Durango, CO

Contact: Lē Adams at ladams@cybermesa.com or visit: www.swmarketingnetwork.org

Go to www.swmarketingnetwork.org to find updated information on the Southwest Marketing Network and other activities in our region. For more events outside our region, visit the ATTRA calendar at www.attra.ncat.org/calendar/index.php

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photo by Jim Dyer