



Acadiana Food Alliance

Background

Beginning in February, 2014, small farmers, community leaders, local officials, non-profit organizations, restaurateurs and food industry professionals have come together to map, understand and strengthen the area food economy, through the Acadiana Food Alliance. This convergence of efforts, particularly the participation of local government and economic development agencies, represents a watershed moment for the development of a place-based food economy in the greater Acadiana area.

The Acadiana Food Alliance represents a cross-spectrum of organizations and people in Lafayette and surrounding, rural areas who see local food as a potential catalyst for economic and community development. Representatives of local governments, planning commissions, nonprofits, existing farmers, chefs, schools, beginning farmers and health services are looking for comprehensive strategies that boost our region's food production and consumption and build better communities.

Current partners in the Acadiana Food Alliance include: Earthshare Gardens, Lafayette Farmers and Artisans Market at the Horse Farm, Lafayette Economic Development Authority, Lafayette Consolidated Government, the Lafayette Convention and Visitors Council, the Downtown Development Authority, the Community Foundation of Acadiana, the Southwest Louisiana Health Education Council and many other individual farm, restaurant and educational institutions.

Currently the Acadiana Food Alliance is in the formative and planning stages. Initiated a year ago, this loose alliance took a major step forward in March, 2015 through the support of an EPA technical assistance workshop, Local Foods, Local Places. Interactive, facilitated sessions led by representatives in multiple federal agencies with Acadiana Food Alliance members brought clarity and focus to our efforts. Five primary activities were identified and mapped out for near-term action:

GOAL ONE

Formally establish the Acadiana Food Alliance and hire an executive director

GOAL TWO

Initiate a regional "Grow Acadiana" branding and marketing campaign

GOAL THREE

Create a national educational model of "Food Immersion" by engaging schools and students in the food system; similar to our locally produced "French Immersion" class to preserve Cajun French in the region

GOAL FOUR

Direct resources, support, trainings and tools towards new and established farmers

GOAL FIVE

Support the development of area food hubs for storage, distribution, and streamlining local food access

Our Needs

Our first hurdle is to establish the Alliance as an active and effective organization, which will require a funded staff position. We are seeking assistance with start-up funding for a term of 3 years; i.e., until we can generate a sustainable funding model for the organization. All of the initiatives and activities identified as important by our members will need some degree of oversight, coordination, or direct management.

As much as possible we can work through existing organizations, sharing information or forging partnerships, but the work of the Acadiana Food Alliance needs and deserves a staff person who is dedicated to the job.



Although drawing from a diverse and knowledgeable membership, the Acadiana Food Alliance will also look to outside experts for guidance and advice. We will need advisors and mentors with experience building resilient local food systems and associated economic development to give feedback, identify resources and support our efforts.

As we move forward and become established, funding will be needed to develop, launch and sustain new initiatives. Among our members, great interest was shown for developing new farmer apprenticeships, food hubs, school-based food literacy programs and a certification plus branding initiative, among many other possible large and small projects.

GOAL ONE

ESTABLISH

THE ACADIANA FOOD ALLIANCE

ACTION 1.1: INVESTIGATE FISCAL SPONSORSHIP BY ACADIANA PLANNING COMMISSION, LEDA, SWLAHEC, LCG OR OTHER POTENTIAL ORGANIZATION.

ACTION 1.2: CREATE A BOARD TO GUIDE AND ESTABLISH THE AFA.

ACTION 1.3: RESEARCH AND ESTABLISH THE FINANCIAL, ORGANIZATIONAL AND OPERATIONAL STRUCTURE OF AFA THAT WILL PROVIDE FOR LONG-TERM SUCCESS.

ACTION 1.4: HIRE A DIRECTOR TO IMPLEMENT THE AFA FOOD SYSTEM PLAN.

ACTION 1.5: ESTABLISH A YEARLY ALLIANCE SUMMIT/WORKSHOP THAT WILL PROVIDE A REPORT TO THE MEMBERSHIP AND PROVIDE INPUT FOR ADJUSTMENTS TO THE PLAN.

ACTION 1.6: SECURE APPROPRIATE LOCAL, STATE AND FEDERAL GRANTS TO ENSURE ALLIANCE FUNDING.



GOAL TWO

INITIATE

a regional "Grow Acadiana"
branding and marketing campaign

ACTION 2.1: DEVELOP A BRANDING AND MARKETING EFFORT, WITH LOGO AND TAG LINE, SOCIAL MEDIA AND OTHER OUTREACH AND PROMOTION.

ACTION 2.2: CREATE A CERTIFICATION SYSTEM TO IDENTIFY AND VALIDATE LOCAL FOOD PRODUCERS, SUPPLIERS, PURVEYORS (LOGO, STICKER, DECAL, MEDIA, PROMOTION).

ACTION 2.3: INITIATE KICK-OFF EVENTS FOR GROW ACADIANA CAMPAIGN.

ACTION 2.4: PARTNER WITH AND ENGAGE LOCAL AND REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITIES.



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ACTION 2.5: CREATE A REGULAR RADIO/TV/INTERNET SEGMENT HIGHLIGHTING MOVEMENT, PEOPLE AND ACTORS.

ACTION 2.6: COORDINATE WITH ACADIANA FOOD CIRCLE ON LOCAL FOODS DIRECTORY, SUPPORT AND PROMOTION.

GOAL THREE

ASSIST

SCHOOLS IN CREATING FOOD LITERACY PROGRAMS

ACTION 3.1: CREATE A “FOOD IMMERSION” (REGIONAL CULINARY ARTS) PROGRAM SIMILAR TO THE FRENCH IMMERSION PROGRAMS.

ACTION 3.2: EXPAND LSU AGCENTER FOOD LITERACY AND GARDEN PROGRAM TO MORE SCHOOLS.

ACTION 3.3: IMPLEMENT A PILOT FARM TO SCHOOL PROGRAM FOCUSING ON INCREASED PROCUREMENT OF LOCAL PRODUCE.

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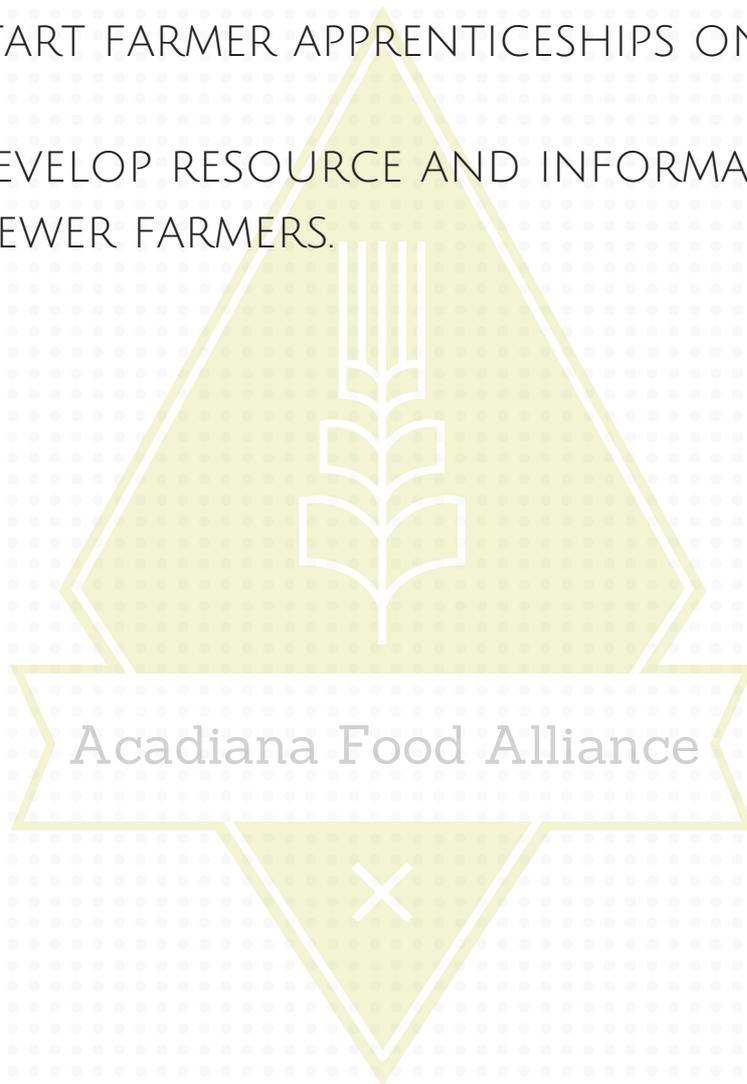
GOAL FOUR

TRAIN FARMERS

ACTION 4.1: ASSESS EXISTING FARMER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS AND INTERNSHIP OPPORTUNITIES.

ACTION 4.2: START FARMER APPRENTICESHIPS ON LOCAL FARMS.

ACTION 4.3: DEVELOP RESOURCE AND INFORMATIONAL SUPPORT SYSTEM FOR NEWER FARMERS.



GOAL FIVE

SUPPORT AREA FOOD HUBS

ACTION 5.1: CONDUCT A MARKET STUDY AND A FOOD HUB FEASIBILITY STUDY.

ACTION 5.2: DEVELOP AND ADOPT A PLAN FOR LONG-TERM FOOD HUB DEVELOPMENT IN THE ACADIANA REGION.

ACTION 5.3: SUPPORT ESTABLISHMENT OF FOOD HUBS IN ACADIANA.



Participants in the
Local Foods, Local Places
Workshop
March 5, 2015



Acadiana Food Alliance
Stakeholders
Local Foods, Local Places
Workshop
March 5, 2015