Animals in the Food System: Individual Priorities

Much of the work at this conference was accomplished in discussion groups, with comments summarized and integrated in the paper "Pasture-based Agriculture: Opportunities for Public Research Institutions". Additionally, we wanted to make sure that each individual had an opportunity to directly express his/her ideas as well. At the end of the conference we asked each person to provide written feedback indicating his/her top three priorities for a pasture-based food system within four categories: Opportunities, Issues/Barriers, Policy Needs, and Scholarship Needs. We also asked each participant to list any of the opportunities, barriers, or needs expressed at the conference which they saw as less important or did not support.

Listed below are statements that integrate individuals' feedback in an effort to reflect an overall "sense of the conference." Following the integrated statements is a table that lists the verbatim feedback received from conferees.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Bring together farmers as well as processors, marketers, consumers and other stakeholders to create new value chains for pasture-raised livestock products. These "values-based value chains" will likely need to differ from standard business models in some aspects. For example, they need to have a holistic perspective, effectively use byproducts, engage deeply with the customers they serve; be highly ethical.
- Coupled with this is a need for extensive public/consumer education about ways in which local food – especially pasture-based livestock systems – are linked with the environment, community development, local economies, and health.

SCHOLARSHIP NEEDS

- Research and education (both formal and extension) in this area needs to involve several disciplines and stakeholders (farmers, students, others) who must play a meaningful role. This is not just within animal science, but should also involve business, marketing, sustainable agriculture, law, policy, nutrition.
- Scale differences must be addressed when planning and conducting research and education. Scholars are responsible for working with both smaller and larger scale farms and food businesses.
- Additional research is needed dealing with the effects of various livestock production systems – including pasture-based – on the nutrition, safety, and quality of animal products as well as comparing production systems with regard to their overall ecological, economic and social impacts. Some of this research should focus on verifying or refuting product claims.
- Additional research exploring the economics of pasture-based livestock production and of the proposed marketing models is needed.
- Research is needed to help better utilize livestock byproducts, especially small amounts of byproducts.

- Educational efforts need to focus on farmers, their potential business partners and potential customers, and should include public policy education.

POLICY NEEDS

- Redirect funds currently going into US farm commodity support programs toward "Green Box" incentives to recognize multifunctional benefits of agriculture.
- Develop policy options that encourage family, small and mid-scale farms. One specific aspect needed is a source of start-up capital for new farmers and farmers developing alternative production and marketing systems. Examine current and proposed regulations for appropriateness for smaller farms.
- Develop land use policies that take social, environmental, economic issues into account.
- Change property taxation to eliminate penalties for pasture-based livestock systems.
- Develop regulations based on scientific assessment of broad-based risks and benefits.
- Develop higher animal welfare standards.
- Define and regulate terms such as "eco" and "natural" when used in claims and advertising.
- Provide incentives to improve eating habits of children and youth.

ISSUES/BARRIERS

- Attempts to make changes incrementally will probably not work if a major paradigm shift is needed.
- Current system (Federal regulations, standards, and subsidies; Land Grant Universities; land use and property tax policies) favor large farms, concentration, commodity production.
- Very limited communication and understanding between farmers and consumers, rural and urban people.
- Limited capital access for producers, processors of pasture-based products.
- Limited slaughter/processing/marketing infrastructure for small and mid-scale livestock producers.
- Perceptions of many policy leaders, farmers and scholars that pasture-based systems are not viable.
- Limited amount of usable information on pasture-based systems from land grant system, other agencies and organizations.

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This table lists priorities as submitted at the conference. Items listed are grouped according to first, second or third priority and a less important or do not support group.

First Priority			
Opportunities	**Issues/Barriers**	**Policy Needs**	**Scholarship Needs**
Create integrated systems with economies of scope	Perception of Grass Based System as Non Viable	The Current Government Farm Payment Program	Impact of Animal Nutrition on Human Nutritional Value of Foods
Farmer Networks, producer co-ops; Value Chain Linkages	Lack of mutual understanding between farmers, consumers, rural, urban	Redirect Federal subsidies and adjust CPR Regs Green Box	Research to verify or refute claims
New business models	LAND GRANT IS BIASED AND NEEDS TO BE FIXED	End grain subsidies	Nutrient comparisons of livestock products produced under various production systems
Value chain training and support for farmers and other stakeholders	Lack of good info from agencies	Subsidy reform; “green box”	Are these products better?
New, creative partnerships between farms, processors, marketers and consumers (new links in value chain)	Land Use	Redirect ag subsidies to “Green Box” subs; multi functional ag	Economics of pasture use
Small business development-new models	Land use/taxes	Influencing federal policy so it provides incentives for “green” practices (for farmers and non-farmers)	New business models
Integrate Crop and Family Farms or Integrate Mainstream Farms	Federal Regs: favor large farms and centralization/concentration	Review and revision of federal subsidies; eliminate all and support those that need help buying food	Curricula including real world experience, laws, regs, policies

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First Priority			
Opportunities	**Issues/Barriers**	**Policy Needs**	**Scholarship Needs**
Systems to meet consumer need (ie: ethnic)	Commodity standards one size fits all favors large	Start-up capital for small-scale/sustainable/humane/local farmers and processes	Cross discipline, learning and research
Committed consumers stick with it once they taste and know the differences in the systems	Political knowledge and skills of farmers	Start-up capital for new farmers	Encourage environment of creativity, of involving many (and non-traditional) stakeholders; extension
Engage consumers with producers	Normalization of industrial-large scale production and processing	Farmland preservation; ie: tax relief for grazers as well as crops	Endowed chair to blend small business and research together. Develop more extension outreach for small and large farms
Integrate system designed to utilize by products to produce product that fills market need	Bad slipping back to normal	Property Tax based on use	Curricular change to integrate business, marketing and sustainable agriculture; more interdisciplinary (also should include law/policy)
Refine groups	Capital access for producers and processors of pasture livestock	More research on health impacts of pasturing animals	Greater integration between disciplines and commodities
New business ethics in value chains	Current levels of individual meat consumption are unhealthy and unsustainable, so there's a problem with simply substituting alternative meat one-for-one for commodity meat in diets	Regulation based on science and risk/benefit not just assumptions	Academics are overly cautious in drawing normative conclusions from already accomplished research.

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First Priority			
Opportunities	**Issues/Barriers**	**Policy Needs**	**Scholarship Needs**
	Processing	Funding sources for applied livestock research	By products

Second Priority			
Opportunities	**Issues/Barriers**	**Policy Needs**	**Scholarship Needs**
Farmer networks	Small to Medium Sized Animal Processing Facilities	Encourage “sound” integrated land use policy	Hands-on real world research that accomplishes research goals but also benefits the small farmer
Linking small farmers with citizen (and/or consumer) interest groups around issues with environment, animal welfare, community development	Lack of small scale meat processing and barriers to distribution system to consumer	State and local policies for land use management and farmland protection. (Conduct research on how policies might be changed)	Base university research on community impact predictions
Coalitions between business schools, interested corporations (sysco), consumer groups	Infrastructure for small and mid sized producers	Favor social land use and integrated systems with property tax relief if needed	Detailed comparisons of health, economic, ecological, social effects of confinement/pasture
Consumer education, farmer education	Processing policy and availability	Drive policies to local and state level opposed to one federal standard	Research-to actively encourage researchers to think about the impact of research; who will benefit; who will it hurt; MEASURE SMALL FARMS BENEFIT IN A LOG OF IT

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Second Priority			
Opportunities	**Issues/Barriers**	**Policy Needs**	**Scholarship Needs**
Consumer education about “Local food” and its value for regional economics	Entrenched mindset	Much higher animal welfare standards	Research that addresses small-midsized farmer needs and projects that get students into the field and community to work on real problems
Education of consumers about what grass based or pasture raised means	**Attempts to swap systems rather than change paradigms**	Public morals	Research more integrated systems
Create and explore new business models for larger companies	Policies favor industrial ag	Information analysis and advocacy activism skills	Research into Alternative Systems
Develop holistic approach to p-b systems (environ, welfare, humans)	Subsidies	Food systems councils be vocal	Truly diverse systems development
Landscape values, social responsibility	Lack of unbiased scientific information		Re-inventing LGS to assess these benefits; what’s a genuine legitimate claim?
	Retail Market Entry		Handling differences
	Farmer-consumer linkages and knowledge of each other		Food safety of grassfed products
	Scale/reliability of small farms		

Third Priority			
Opportunities	**Issues/Barriers**	**Policy Needs**	**Scholarship Needs**
Consumer knowledge and linkage to producer	State and local land use issues and farm land protection	Local, state, community develop to encourage family farms	Partnership between university across disciplines

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Third Priority			
Opportunities	**Issues/Barriers**	**Policy Needs**	**Scholarship Needs**
Increase interest in small farms and the quality products they create; consumers really want the product	Access to land for pasture limited by government subsidies for crops and reluctance to use good crop land for grass	Fed and state agencies develop regs w/ small farms in mind and identify small farm specific regulators so they develop knowledge about alternative systems	Land grants need to re-evaluate and refocus their mission; food safety research if needed to support OFFAL composting regulation is a real problem and need in Michigan
Marketing based on stewardship	Consumers don't know how bad welfare-wise the dominant animal production system is; bad has become normal	Policies drive low-income	Nut ed
Public knowledge gap about the economic, health and environmental impacts of pasture raised meats	Consumer connection to food	Public policy education for all members of the alternative agriculture system	Educate on stewardship principles/sustainable ag (both ecological and economic)
Merging human, animal and environmental concerns	Seasonality alternatives	Define terms used in advertising and label claims	POLICY THINK TANK – maybe multi-university; small farmer and community focused
How to set standards	Lack of infrastructure	Define "eco", "natural" and other	Outreach in education to K-12 education, get our young people educated

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Third Priority			
Opportunities	**Issues/Barriers**	**Policy Needs**	**Scholarship Needs**
Small business, community development	LGU research does not have a strong enough priority on research that is relevant to alternative agriculture systems	Modify the food pyramid in line with science and health	Intensive weekend or "block: education programs for adults who want to improve economic and development opportunities for agriculture (professional development)
	Us vs. Them mentality	Policy to provide incentives to improved eating habits of children and youth	
	Are we moving far enough		

Less important or do not support			
Opportunities	**Issues/Barriers**	**Policy Needs**	**Scholarship Needs**
		Change carcass grade to reflect health claims	
		Enable producer to create own market	
I don't think the nutritional benefits are thing to emphasize			