Vermont’s Farm to Plate Program
Act 54, Section 35

Representative Christopher Bray
Vermont House Agriculture Committee
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Rebuilding Our Food System
Revitalizing Our Communities

Representative Christopher Bray
Vermont House Agriculture Committee
Why rebuilding our food system and revitalizing our communities?
Is Vermont relevant to Philadelphia?
Or Nebraska?
Is Vermont relevant to Philadelphia? Or Nebraska?

Vermont land use:
- 78% forest
- 14% farms

92%
Eating is an agricultural act.

—Wendell Berry
Jobs are essential to a healthy community.
Motivation

Two stories

one urban
one rural
New Britain, Connecticut
“Hardware City of the World”
New Britain, Connecticut
“Hardware City of the World”
a beehive

Stanley Tool
Fafnir Ballbearing
Corbin Lock and Screw
Universal Appliance
Landers, Frery & Clark
Addison County, Vermont

“Land of Milk and Honey”
Two very different times and places, but both suffered.
One lost, and the other is losing, an entire way of living

10,000 people
1 in 7 residents
left New Britain in less than a decade

10,000 dairy farms in Vermont
in 1955, has dropped to 1,000 in 2009
Vermont’s Farm to Plate Program

Rebuilding Our Food System
Revitalizing Our Communities
The Legislative Landscape in January 2009

It was the worst of times,
The Legislative Landscape in January 2009

It was the worst of times,
and then it got worse.
The Legislative Landscape in January 2009

It was the worst of times, and then it got worse.

“BYOM”
The Legislative Landscape in January 2009

BUT a few bright spots:

“Buy local”
ARRA
Mind share
Collaboration: champions inside and outside the State House
You know, champions...
Collaboration: cast of champions inside and outside the State House

- Vermont Businesses for Social Responsibility
- Rural Vermont
- House Commerce & Economic Development
- House Agriculture
Collaboration: analyzing the situation and building commitment to solving challenges

• VBSR series of meetings, June 2008 & after
Collaboration: analyzing the situation and building commitment to solving challenges

- VBSR series of meetings
- Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund
- “Leaky Bucket” report,
  Vermont’s dependence on imports
  * the potential of relocalization

What was going on in Vermont’s food system?
Vermont’s Current Food System:

grow 3%
import 97%
Vermont’s Current Food System:

grow 3%
import 97%

$2.6 B
Vermont’s Potential Food System with a 10% shift:

grow 3% + 10%
import 97% - 10%

$2.6 B => $260M
$260M => $520M
Farm to Plate’s goal:

20% by 2020

grow 3% + 17%

$2.6 B => $442M

$442M => $884M
Economic Opportunity equals taking the missed out of missed opportunity
Collaboration: analyzing, crafting legislation and building commitment

- VBSR series of meetings
- “Leaky Bucket” report
- Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund
- Rural Vermont
- Rep Lorber and media roll-out
- many drafts - tenacity, endurance
- Senate Economic Development - collaboration
Finally, what did we create as a group through this process?

Farm to Plate Program
What sort of food system are we starting out with?

Swiss cheese
What are the next steps for Farm to Plate?

Over the next 14 months…

• An inventory
What did we create?
Farm to Plate

Over the next 14 months

• An inventory
• A food map
What did we create?
Farm to Plate

Over the next 14 months
• An inventory
• A food map
• A 10-year strategic plan
What did we create?
Farm to Plate

Over the next 14 months
• An inventory
• A food map
• A 10-year strategic plan
• A series of mini-grants
What did we create?
Farm to Plate

Over the next 14 months
• An inventory
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And then do it all again, for a decade
How will Vermont’s Food System change under Farm to Plate?

- more farms
- more processors, including food hubs
- more distribution of local food
- more mainstream markets
How did we fund the program?

- ARRA, State Stabilization Funds, $100K
- VT Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets, Specialty Crop Funds, $50K
- Vermont Community Foundation, $50K
- Vermont Economic Development Authority, $0

A circle of mutual encouragement & competition
Farm to Plate complements existing programs

- Rozo McLaughlin Farm to School Program
- Vermont FEED (Food Education Every Day)
- Vermont Sustainable Agriculture Council
- NOFA-VT (Northeast Organic Farming Assoc)
Farm to Plate opens the door to other opportunities

#1 to increase the health of the food Vermonters eat every day

One day the value of the health care savings related to better diets will equal or exceed the value of the farm receipts for this food.
Farm to Plate opens the door to other opportunities

#2 to increase the health of our soils

We will improve the way Vermont handles food and organic wastes in order to turn a higher percentage into composts, which are natural fertilizers and soil builders.
Farm to Plate is a tool to

Rebuild Our Food System
Revitalize Our Communities
Questions, resources, and more

Vermont Rep. Christopher Bray
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