

TUG Networking Meeting Minutes October 20, 2015
CRC Regent Park Community Food Centre

1. Intros & TUG updates

Rhonda gave updates on the TUG website & CEED garden pilot project

2. Equity & fair pay for urban farmers - Leticia Boahen and Rosalyn Endlich, Black Creek Community Farm

Most of us are engaged in food justice work because we seek a radical change in the world and are attempting to make that change through the food system. We also know that labor within the food system has a long history of being exploitative, especially for people of color. Therefore, we contend that dismantling racism within the food system requires radical change in the valuing of food system labor. And yet, many food justice or urban agriculture projects rely, out of seeming necessity, on under-compensated labor from underpaid staff, unpaid interns and volunteers. The financial pressures are particularly great on projects that are seeking to improve access to healthy and fresh foods within low-income communities. We will facilitate conversation around the following broad questions: what is preventing us from being able to pay people well? And what can we do about it together?

See attached notes of the discussion

3. Soil for Life, South Africa - Louise Vaughan and Ryan Vermooten

Louise and Ryan work in Cape Town to train people in organic food gardening using low-cost, soil building, water-wise, environmentally friendly technologies in whatever small space is available.

See the attached Power Point for more info about Soil for Life

Louise Vaughan

- People are getting empty calories, they don't grind traditional maize meal themselves anymore, commercial product is stripped of nutrients
- Training program focuses on sending out trainers to set up home gardens in the townships, can then outreach to others in the neighbourhood and get to know neighbours, build community and safety in violent areas where NGO's don't go
- Train people to garden with what they have, what they can find
- When people see the home gardens, they want to do it themselves
- Story: When Shaun got his own garden, within 9 months he went from making nothing to earning 4,000 rand per month (significant amount)
- Fran is a great educator because she knows how the politics work in each community and who the leaders are, the entry points

Ryan Vermooten

- Developed a phone-based app for tracking data in real time
- They were using paper-based methods but it was too much work to input, paper got damaged or blew away. Risk of losing paper with sensitive information. Validation means data entered is accurate.
- Tried to make it as simple as possible, some trainers have never used a phone or computer
- Tracking progress of 800 gardeners, trainers can access info on-site
- Doing a hackathon at Ryerson to improve app

4. Regent Park tour – Emily Martyn, CRC Regent Community Food Centre

- Emily took us through the newly renovated space at 40 Oaks, with a commercial kitchen and gardens with wheelchair-accessible raised beds
- Also visited the new greenhouse and garden space in the new Regent Park
- Toronto Seed Library has set up a branch at Regent
- A local issue is the removal of gardens on the ground as Regent Park is re-developed. New rooftop gardens are planned, but there are issues with access, size of space available.

Notes from Fair Wages in Urban Ag Discussion

Barriers & Challenges

- 1. What are the systems in place that make it so difficult to pay people well?**
 - 2. What is preventing us, in our organizations, from enacting more just labour practices and what needs to change?**
- Government subsidies to corporate agriculture – meat, dairy, corn, soybeans but not small-scale fruit & veg production
 - Selling organic produce – who is pumping cash into food growing system
 - Impermanent funding sources
 - Having to act as a business to make money when expertise is in community development
 - Non-profit structure
 - Devaluing food system labour in general
 - Lack of government support and infrastructure
 - In South Africa - barriers to/discouraging up-skilling – have to pay people more
 - Ridiculous expectations on non-profits for little \$
 - Who has access to land and loans – capital
 - Training courses & apprenticeships are expensive, who can afford them?

Sharing Successes & Strategizing

1. What is working well?

- Connecting urban ag with peri-urban & rural –expand the scale
- Entrepreneurial training

2. What can we do as a movement to both enact and fight for fair labour?

- Gardens and non-profits cooperating – building connections
- Support for business training for growers
- Webinars – accessibility
- Sharing resources, tools, knowledge

3. How can we link our struggles to fight for this goal?

- Beginning conversations
- City policies that support urban ag
- Green Gardeners Community Collaborative – importance of being with a group of business-minded people to exchange ideas, learn. Example of one young man who started a bread CSA (although he inherited \$ to get him started)
- Non-profits standing their ground, uniting
- Semi-processed, value-added products – such as pickles, sauces – expand sales beyond veggies
- Making your own products, like Mennonites – self-sufficiency
- Connect and include powerful, wealthy people
- Find champions
- Choose board members strategically for who they can connect to
- Getting support from all levels of government
- Push back against individualization and retraction of government supports
- Basic Income Guarantee (also known as Guaranteed Annual Income) – if people have money, they can afford to buy food
- Sharing responsibility for fundraising, program evaluation
- Local Organic Food Co-ops Network <http://cultivatingfoodcoops.net/> is a resource