



## BUILDING FOOD SYSTEM ALLIANCES FOR LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM CHANGE

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### WHAT IS A FSA?

- A community effort to deal with food and farming issues
- Brings together broad mix of stakeholders
- A place for learning, finding common ground, and taking action



Photo: San Mateo Co. FSA members

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### WHO PARTICIPATES?

- *All affected interests!*
- Farm bureaus
- Commodity groups
- Growers
- Labor/farm workers
- Processors
- Retail/distribution
- Environmentalists
- Community leaders
- Health advocates
- Chefs
- Consumers

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### WHAT ARE THE GOALS?

- To create a food system that reflects the best aspirations and desires of the community
- To protect the long-term viability of American agriculture and the resources upon which it depends
- To reconnect food and farming to the community at large

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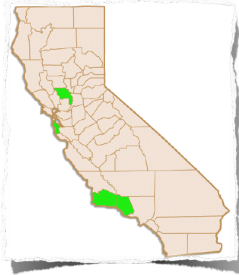
Photos: Ventura Co. farmworker housing

## RESULTS FROM THE FIELD

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## WHERE WE ARE TODAY

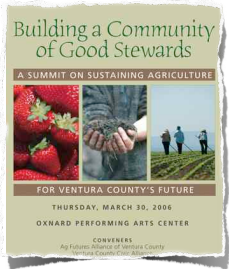
- Alliances running in 4 California counties
- Statewide counterpart
- Over 150 active participants
- Working every major issue in CA ag



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## VENTURA COUNTY

- Operating since 2000
- 5 citizen white papers
- Community farm worker housing advocacy project
- Drew 300 citizens to stewardship forum



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## SAN MATEO COUNTY

- Broadest coalition
- Farm bill reform with mayors
- School health/nutrition education
- Why ag matters in county



Photo: San Mateo Co. FSA members signing their "Constitution"

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## YOLO COUNTY

- Ag land mitigation principles
- General plan
- Right to farm law
- New processing capacity



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## CALIFORNIA ROUNDTABLE

- State-level group
- 30 members from ag, environment, and government
- Working big issues:
  - Farm bill
  - Invasive pests
  - Food safety



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## WHY AN FSA?

BUILDING A FOOD SYSTEM FOR A VIABLE FUTURE

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## A TROUBLED FOOD SYSTEM

- Unprecedented abundance and unenviable health
- Battles over growing practices
- Farm losses
- Plight of farm workers



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## THE REAL CHALLENGE

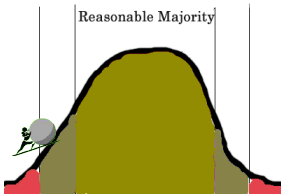
- COMPLEXITY!
- No stakeholder has full view
- Uncoordinated efforts
- Debate and policy driven by the poles



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## THE LOST MIDDLE GROUND

*The voices in the reasonable majority are downed out*



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## A NEW WAY FORWARD

- Rather than isolation and conflict:
  - Build on the common interest for a healthy future
  - Develop relationships between polarized or disconnected stakeholders
  - Seek win-win solutions and projects
  - Work on actions that bond community

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## STARTING AN FSA

A ROADMAP TO A BETTER FOOD SYSTEM

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## FOUR STEPS TO AN FSA

- Convene
- Build trust
- Work issues
- Take action



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## CONVENING

- Find 2-3 key partners
- Identify all affected interests
- Invite to learn more
- Get commitment



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## BUILD TRUST

- Focus on listening
- Values not positions
- Foster openness to new ideas
- Make sure all voices are heard



Photo: ROC Fellows participating in Statewide food system planning process

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## WORK ISSUES

- List and prioritize food system issues
- Learn
- Find consensus
- Most groups take on only 1 to 3 issues/year



Photo: Habitat loss in Salinas Valley, CA. Courtesy of Wild Farm Alliance

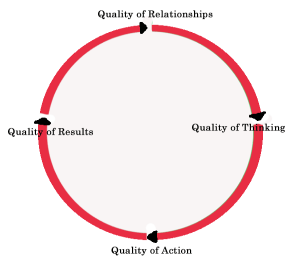
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## TAKE ACTION!

- Publish issue paper
- Distribute to community leaders
- Press release, press conference, op eds
- Advocate to city councils, Board of Supervisors, other leaders
- Further action: e.g. farm worker housing in Ventura
- Link with other groups that share similar positions

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## WHY IT WORKS



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## WHAT IT TAKES

- Right people
- Patience: 10 months to build trust
- Facilitation skills
- Modest resources if hiring facilitation



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## WHY NOW?

- Complexity of issues that face us are overwhelming our institutions
- Polarization is leading to gridlock
- We need powerful citizen “think/do tanks” capable of making real change
- FSAs offer a real alternative that work

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## FACILITATION RESOURCES

- Isaacs, W. (1999). Dialogue and the Art of Thinking Together. New York, Currency Doubleday.
- Schwarz, R. (2002). The Skilled Facilitator: Practical Wisdom for Developing Effective Groups, 2nd Edition. San Francisco, Jossey-Bass.
- Wheatley, M. (2002). Turning To One Another: Simple Conversations to Restore Hope to the Future. San Francisco, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

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## LEARN MORE

- <http://foodsystemalliance.org>
- [joseph@aginnoventions.org](mailto:joseph@aginnoventions.org)
- THANKS!



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