

Mission Mountain Market Association Meeting  
Minutes

Time: 10:00-11:30 AM

January 7, 2010

Location: 407 Main St, Ronan, MT, Conference Room

Facilitator: Karl Sutton

I. Welcome and Introductions (5 minutes)

a. Attendees

- i. David Lukens, The Healthy Pantry – business develops recipe kits; a “nutritional version of Hamburger Helper
- ii. Heidi Johnson, Orchard Flathead Lake, LLC – organic value added cherry products and fresh cherries
- iii. Ole Norgaard, organic Indian corn value added project
- iv. T.S. Laurens, Redneck Meats – smoked pork products
- v. Bipin Patel, Tipu’s Tiger Chai --
- vi. Lisa Rousseau Silva, dried cherries
- vii. Matthew Silent Thunder, Silent Thunder Jerky
- viii. Joe and Wendy Arnold, artisan cheese producers
- ix. Joel Carlson, Thunderhead Gardens
- x. Hugh Spencer, Commercial poultry producer
- xi. Roland Godan, Mission Mountain Food Enterprise Center

II. Mission Mountain Market Association Background (Jan Tusick, 5 minutes)

III. Reasons for organizing the meeting –

a. Program perspective (10 minutes)

- i. Food and Ag and Cooperative Development (Jan and Karl, 5 minutes)
  1. The Mission Mountain Food and Ag Center and Cooperative Development Center have resources to support food entrepreneurs.
  2. Would like to see the association more formalized so that entrepreneurs have greater resources available to them to market and distribute food statewide and regionally.
- ii. Department of Ag (Angelyn De Young, MT Dept. of Ag marketing officer, 5 minutes)
  1. Dept of Ag offers services to food entrepreneurs

- a. Marketing, financing and trade shows
    - b. Can test market trade shows for entrepreneurs
  2. Would like to see a formalized market association that would cooperate in marketing, packaging, distribution
  3. Dept of Ag is pushing local movement of Mt made goods
- b. Food entrepreneur and value added business perspective (30 minutes)
  - i. Guiding question: What challenges do you face in your small business?
    1. David Lucas
      - a. Affordable MT grown ingredients
      - b. Assistance in identifying local support programs in his region
      - c. Distances to facility / kitchen
    2. Heidi Johnson
      - a. Distribution to wider market – currently self-distributes by car and would like to look at existing distribution options
      - b. Distances to processing facility
    3. Ole Norgaard
      - a. Production – cleaning of grains -- and packaging issues as well as access to organically certified processing facilities near Lewistown
      - b. Finding biodegradable packaging
      - c. Ingredients – correct quantity for size of production
    4. T.S. Laurens
      - a. How can we joint market?

- b. Lack of viable local pork production in Western MT – used to work with local producers until market collapsed
- 5. Bipin Patel
  - a. Marketing and Distribution to larger markets (i.e. Northwest urban centers) – has had limited success
- 6. Lise Rousseau Silva
  - a. Label approval, affordable packaging,
  - b. Materials cost and shipping costs (USPS and UPS) and delays
- 7. Matthew Silent Thunder
  - a. USDA label approval – slow process
  - b. Reliable distribution – in particular NW and Western States
- 8. Joe and Wendy Arnold
  - a. Developing a perishable product, artisan cheese have labeling concerns and packaging concerns – need technical assistance
- 9. Joel Carlson
  - a. Distribution – currently 14 stores in Western MT but would like to reach further in MT and western states
    - i. Access to larger chain stores
  - b. Marketing assistance in Western and NW states
- 10. Hugh Spencer
  - a. Processing needs for spent fowl and breaker eggs
    - i. Mobile Poultry Processing Unit may address one area of concern

- ii. Distribution to larger chain stores – Albertsons and Roseurs

- iii. Distribution infrastructure – actual trucks to move eggs

- b. MMFEC

- i. Distribution infrastructure or lack there of

- ii. Cost of goods and access to labor

- c. Janet Stokes (Wrote a letter)

- i. Increasing costs of state business license, local business license, UPC, insurance and supplies

- ii. Distribution

- iii. Time

- iv. Money – not enough to grow

IV. Prioritizing the challenges -- Themes (10 minutes)

- a. Distribution (7 comments)

- b. Marketing (4 comments)

- c. Infrastructure – proximity (3 comments)

- d. Local source of ingredients (2 comments)

- e. Clearinghouse of programs (i.e. technical assistance programs) (2 comments)

- f. Label Approval Process

- g. Packaging and ingredients costs

- h. Liability insurance

V. How can “we” work together to address the challenges (25 minutes)

- a. Cooperative / association collaborative perspective

- i. Marketing

1. Eco label / branding label – Association could development 1 brand that each producer markets under – each producer though would also keep their own brand
    - a. Themed packaging (Wild West, untamed, community spirit)
  2. Marketing based upon relationships / personal connections– emphasize a cooperative spirit
    - a. Are you more interested in branding or manufacturing? Is it more profitable under one name or individual products?
  3. Pool products and hire a marketer
- ii. Distribution
1. Coalition – companies pool products and distribute together (shared pallets, shared trucks – volume for better pricing)
  2. Bring individuals with distribution knowledge to the table
  3. Tie into existing infrastructure
- b. Program perspective
- i. Resources available to address challenges
    1. Marketing
      - a. Cooperative marketing through website
        - i. Dept of Ag – Made in MT website linking to individual producer website
        - ii. Dept of Commerce – Abundant MT project support with the Alternative Energy Resource Organization (AERO)

- iii. MMFEC – Website has a Market Association page under developed and MMFEC would like input as to how to **use the page**
- b. **Look up** -- Market study already conducted by MT dept of ag for San Francisco Bay area
- c. **Continue researching** Red Tomato distribution model in the northeast – Is it possible to develop similar model in MT?
- d. **Research:** Boulder, Co has a natural foods annual festival featuring regional Colorado products
  - i. Could develop a MT or NW marketing festival or event similar to the SW Marketing Network annual event
- e. Growth through AG Grant Funding opportunities

VI. Next Steps (5 minutes)

- a. Develop List Serve of producers
- b. Research Red Tomato distribution model, Boulder and SW Marketing Networks
- c. Organize a next meeting in February / early March to continue working on formalizing a marketing association or cooperative
- d. Look up San Francisco market study conducted by Dept. of Ag