Going Local North Dakota

Local News

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INSIDE:

Work begins to clarify food safety regulations

North Dakota Agriculture Department staff met with Kenan Bullinger, director of the Division of Food and Lodging for the North Dakota Department of Health, on Wednesday to discuss the particulars of the health code as it pertained to the farmers markets, small businesses, and other food related issues.

Bullinger explained that while local health codes can be more stringent, they cannot be less than the North Dakota Requirements for Food and Beverage Establishments. This document commonly referred to as the red book, is available online at: **www.ndhealth.gov/FoodLodging/PDF/**North%20Dakota%20Food%20Code%202003.pdf.

While there are more questions than answers at the moment, the meeting touched on "approved sources," commercial kitchens, institutions and health codes.

When it comes to the language of the law, an "approved source" does not have to be from a licensed and inspected grower. Instead, the Department of Health has encouraged restaurants to use fruits and vegetables from local growers.

This came about after the recent outbreaks of salmonella in produce from licensed and inspected growers and processors. The Department of Health allows locally grown produce to be considered an approved source.

As far as the many questions about commercial kitchens and small processors, Bullinger said it is the person and/or business regularly engaged in a for-profit venture that carries the license. The facility must be approved for use by the business. Absolutely NO home kitchens are allowed in the processing or production of food for sale.

Instead he advises people to do one of these four things:

1. Create a room in home that is specifically and exclusively used for that business meeting all the requirements of an inspected facility.
2. Use a church kitchen. Most are fully equipped kitchens. The business owner must work out details like rent and time slots with the church. The Health Department will inspect the facility upon request, and may want to actually witness the process before giving the go-ahead.
3. Use a licensed facility such as a local restaurant, etc., after hours with details worked out between owners.
4. Build a separate building for the business with its own commercial kitchen.

Bullinger will be presenting more information about safety and food issues at the North Dakota Farmers Market and Growers Association Meeting on January 13 at the Bismarck Civic Center. More information about that meeting and the classes offered will be in the next issue of Local News.

The Department of Agriculture and Department of Health will begin cooperatively working on a simplified document for food rules and regulations that pertains directly to farmers markets, and/or other local foods ventures. Questions may be directed to either state office.

The tools and power point presentations from the four regional local foods meetings held in October can now be found at:

www.agdepartment.com

What if you weren't born in a barn?

Or even in the general vicinity of one?

By SUE B. BALCOM

"As the setting sun lights my younger sister's face, we entertain ourselves in the cab of an old Chevy truck.

Across the field looking west, in the direction of the light, we can pick out the silhouettes of our parents wading through the stubble of a corn field.

It is the color of the sun.

In tandem with the other shadowed farmers in the field, they build tepee-shaped shocks of cut corn, until all the golden color is swept away by dusk.

The stars appear as we follow the head lights of the faded blue truck along a dusty road - home"

Promoting local foods includes changing the way people think through reframing, education and cooperation

While none of us were literally born in a barn, if the above paragraph brings back memories of your childhood, you probably were raised close enough to one to relate to the image. But what if you weren't?

That was one of the subjects discussed at a local foods summit in Breezy Point, Minn., attended by Chuck Fleming and Sue Balcom last week. The two-day event was hosted by the University of Minnesota Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships.

The first session offered an opportunity for questions – which brought to the surface many of the same issues the North Dakota Department of Agriculture addressed in its planning work for the four regional local foods meetings held in October. Questions about local foods systems from the 50-or-so people attending the conference appeared to be the same, no matter what part of the country they came from.

That session affirmed that the local foods efforts in North Dakota were on the right track. However, another exercise brought to light the need to "reframe" how we communicate to the people who lack the memories and experiences of growing up on a farm, or with a parent who gardened.

Local foods is a grass roots movement. But how do we inspire people who have no roots in the agrarian life?

Nicole De Beaufort, Fourth Sector Consulting, Inc. presented her ideas on "reframing" the approach to local foods in your community.

To accomplish that, rather than target an individual's longing for fresh, local, healthy, delicious, cost effective and convenient produce, a community must work on building a value chain associated with growing and consuming local foods.

De Beaufort said, by first understanding how people think about an issue, like local food, proponents of the movement can begin to change the public's conversations about it.

Rather than focusing on one person's quest for quality food, questions like "what kind of future do we envision for our grandchildren?" or "how can we create a food system that creates the legacy we want?" could begin to build a strong base for supporting our small family farms by changing the way a collective conscious thinks about where food comes from.

"Framing disrupts a dominant way of thinking about something and encourages a new perspective," De Beaufort said.

Nancy Matheson, a program specialist with the National Center for Appropriate Technology in Butte, Mont., agreed.

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"Outreach and education balanced between telling and asking, not trying to be the experts, getting feedback from the ground troops," she said. "And, challenging rear view mirror thinking."

Matheson represented "Grow Montana" (www.growmontana.ncat.org/); a group working to transform the market and economy in her state to rebuild a sustainable Montana-based food system. She emphasized the need to build a strong platform of data to bring credibility to the local foods efforts.

"Grain growers say wheat and barley are the only things that grow in Montana. Not true," Matheson said.

At one time Montana produced 70 percent of its own food, through the 1940s, when it began to gradually drop off into the late 70s.

The food processing industry was Montana's number one employer until the early 1950s, providing 45 percent of the state's food. "Today, it's somewhere around seven percent," she said.

"Montana's loss of food processing capability, meat processing, cheese making, and vegetable preservation coupled with the marked decrease in fruit and vegetable production is a major factor in the decline in use of local foods," said Matheson as she quoted Dr. Marcia Herrin.

If each household in Montana spent just $10 a week on Montana-produced food, we would redirect $186 million dollars each year to the state's food producers.

GROW MONTANA WEB SITE

To lay the groundwork for local foods in Montana, "Grow Montana" members did three things:

- Compiled existing data.
- Conducted local foods system case studies.
- Studied public institution food markets and the capacity to serve those markets.

Matheson said, "All three of these activities laid the groundwork for all our communication and work."

From there, "Grow Montana" began building its partnerships, identified policy barriers and opportunities. Three policy areas were agreed upon. They were:

- Rebuild supply (infrastructure, production, processing and distribution.)
- Institutional market development.
- Food access and food security.

A governor's summit of people using the same language with the same vision for a food system was held in March of 2007. After that, four citizen action groups with four issues, developed long term policy from what was learned by collecting historical and current data.

Montana also created a statewide food system council to keep local foods visible and carry on a long term policy agenda.

Using memorandums of understanding, Matheson said the governor dedicated resources from five state agencies to address the priorities of the citizen food council. Information about continuing local foods work in Montana can be found on the "Grow Montana" web site.

Pendulum due to swing back

(Local foods summit continued)

Speaking to the issue of regional competitiveness in a global economy, Steve Bosserman, founder and president of Bosserman and Associates, Inc., told the Minnesota partners the current global system cannot remain sustainable without becoming more regional.

"Localization has a real relevance in what it provides for us – impetus for organizing activities to build economies, establishing stable and sustainable urban, periurban and rural areas that assure regional competitiveness with a global economy." he said.

Even though the global pendulum has swung as far to one side as it can, he said, and the time for it to swing back has come, it took a long time to swing that direction and it will take a long time to swing back.However there are opportunities presented every day for filling the gap between local and global.

Periurban

Adjective: immediately adjoining an urban area; between the suburbs and the countryside

Usage notes: Used especially in English-speaking Africa and in India and Australia etc.

When approaching a local foods system, Bosserman suggested these guidelines for defining local:

- Global – more than a 100 miles.
- Regional – 10 to 100 miles.
- Local – less than 10 miles (a neighborhood level – people I know, where I live.)

The power of business to deliver affects the variety, quality and price of food, but it is the power of the individual to act responsibly toward self, community and consequences. A common theme driving the local foods movement.

"We have a responsibility to anticipate the consequences of our actions," Bosserman said.

Some of those responsibilities center around climate change and fuel. According to Hubbert's Peak, projections suggest that half of the total quantity of fossil fuel originally available in the world is already consumed. And, rogue governments currently in control of fossil fuel reserves use the revenues to fund nefarious acts, he said.

A shift in the American thinking collectively brought about a critical mass of people buying into climate change or pollution, and changed this country's whole attitude about fossil fuel.

Fossil fuel and the effect of transportation and distribution on the cost of food and the health of the environment is one of the concerns about not taking advantage of more local foods.

In the not-to-distant past, things were different, people grew what they ate. This history is important to food systems. People may have a tendancy to idealize and romanticize these memories, but victory gardens, corner grocery stores, gas stations and lodges – each of those are making a comeback.

"As we see the pendulum shift, some vestiges of those are already appearing on the radar," Bosserman said.

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Networking and participation key to building local foods systems

(Local foods summit continued)

To promote local economies, we need to see how to connect those memories with today's technology to produce wherever we live, he said.

Defining the characteristics of a global food system, Bosserman said, it's distance optimization. "How much payload can I put into container that is going to move it from point A to point B. How can I take advantage of economies of scale?

But, the characteristics of a local food system put the consumer closer to the source. There is an overlapping of packaging, retail, processing and preparation in that 100 miles. Goods are making a return loop.

So how do we conquer the last mile of local foods systems — connecting the producer with the consumer?

Consumer education about these concepts:

- √ Fresh/ripe/ready to eat
- √ Tasty/looks appealing
- √ Healthy/nutritious
- √ Organic/chemical free
- √ Short travel distance/reduced carbon footprint
- √ Traceability/food safety
- √ Efficient conversion
- √ Effective in local market
- √ Easy to find and buy
- √ Convenient to use
- √ Comparable value
- √ Available information
- √ Local brand/place value
- √ Zero low emissions
- √ "Prosumer" orientation
- √ Community currencies

"A local food system nothing more than a factory," Bosserman said. "If we just look at it as a set of operations that need to be coordinated as part of production control" it can be done.

Inventory "just in time" is a critical component of local foods.

Asset utilization could mean collaboration. If processing equipment does not differentiate a product, don't buy it, share it.

Bosserman's suggestions for beginning a local foods system between communities included:

- Mobile processing units like slaughterhouses, quick freeze units and mobile kitchens.
- Social networking.
- Organizing strategies like engaging, assessing and sustaining.
- Providing collaborative tools.
- Encouraging node network behavior.
- Convene stakeholder meetings.
- Inventory resources
- Map value chains for localized agriculture, renewable energy and distrubted manufacturing.
- Populate your portfolio with projects and businesses already underway.
- Develop a strategic plan and an operating plan.

There are many ways to participate in local foods through networking on the Internet (see article below about "Going Local North Dakota" .ning site.)

Ohio local food systems collaboratives can be found on this web site: http://socialsynergyweb.org/oardc/

So participate – lurk, join, post, invite, or convene – in the growing network of local foods supporters.

Learn more about the University of Minnesota partnership at: http://www.regionalpartnerships.umn.edu/statewide

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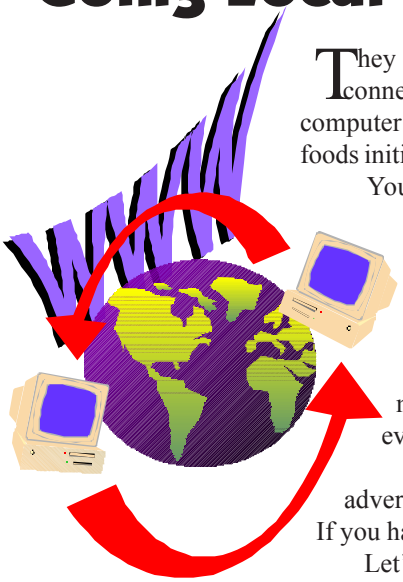
Going Local North Dakota network now online



They say it can't be done, but here is an attempt to stay connected locally with technology through a .ning network. That's correct, you will need to use your computer and keyboarding skills at least once a week to let us know how you are doing with your local foods initiative.

You can find the "Going Local North Dakota" network at

http://goinglocalnd.ning.com/

It was built by Sue B. Balcom at the ND Dept of Agriculture and could be used to keep in touch, cheer each other on, share ideas, photos and meetings with each other.

However, this is the challenge.

Every person that provided an email address while registering for one of the four regional meetings, or has indicated interest in local foods will be invited to join. It would be awesome if everyone set up a profile and became a member of this network.

There's no obligation and your name and email address will not be sent out to other sites or advertisers. You will need to complete a form and set up a user name and password to access the site. If you have questions about how this works, call Sue at 328-4763 or email suebalcom@nd.gov.

Let's keep the momentum going...

Local food for thought

Fast food: A matter of convenience

By ABBY GOLD
NDSU Extension Service
Food and Nutrition Extension

In their book,"Chew on This," Eric Schlosser and Charles Wilson remind us that consumers diligently research the perfect-fitting jeans or the most efficient vacuum cleaners, but, the food we put in our bodies, which becomes an everlasting part of us, is barely thought about or researched.

Unconscious eating is what makes us "spend more money on fast food than on college education, personal computers, computer software, or new cars," according to Schlosser and Wilson. Fast food is a complete invention of the modern world. It frees us from the fork and knife. We can eat while driving or working. But, did you ever try to make a chicken nugget in your kitchen? Good luck!

Good tasting food provides us with satiation as an evolutionary phenomenon. Good taste also indicates the food is safe to eat. Early humans learned what was good for them (in other words, what was safe to eat) through taste tests.

For most of human history, taste occurred naturally. Taste depended on what was found in the wild, or what was concocted when humans learned to make fire. As humans became technologically savvy, food science drove away the reliance on nature. Nature is much too unpredictable.

Fast-Paced Convenience

When we purchase food at the grocery store, we generally migrate to the familiar. And, familiarity is based first on taste, and then on convenience. In a pursuit of filling our bellies in order to quickly move on to the next thing, convenience in packaged foods frees us from long hours in the kitchen.

In rural Africa, a woman's day probably starts off at the marketplace to buy what is in season and fresh that day. Food is purchased from known vendors. Only enough perishable food is purchased to consume for the day. Food preparation is then an all day affair. Food is also prepared for storage through drying, pickling, or fermenting.

In America, food is purchased on a weekly or monthly basis from large box stores (sometimes called superstores). Some superstores stock 200,000 items. Many of those items are packaged for long transport and storage. Foods are manufactured for convenient, fast preparation. Americans are in a rush. We must produce and not waste time preparing and eating food. The rural African lifestyle lies in stark contrast to the urban, suburban, and even rural American lifestyle.

Balance: Modernism and Traditionalism

Suggesting that women spend all day in the kitchen preparing food for their families would cycle us backward. However, a balance in families can be achieved so everyone (not just women) contributes to food procurement and preparation. When families spend more time preparing food together, they start asking questions about the foods' nature.

Essential questions about the nature of food that go beyond, "What does it taste like?" "How long does it take to cook?" and "Is it low fat or low calorie?" include "Where is the food grown?" "Who grew the food?" "How far did the food come from to get to my plate?" When we ask these essential questions, then the search for food that satisfies certain ideals about nature, taste, and health can begin.

Imagine sitting down for dinner and saying to your children, "The steak we are eating was raised by Jen's parents, the mixed salad greens were grown by our neighbor, and, oh yah, the potatoes came from the back yard."

"Cool Mom, I think I'll have some more."

Shopping for Christmas?

Visit the Pride of Dakota Holiday Showcases to find unique holiday gift ideas made in North Dakota! The showcases feature gift items, clothing, accessories, food and condiments, decorative items and more.

Minot - November 15-16

Fargo - November 21-23 - open Friday for a "Sneak Peak" from 8 p.m. - 11 p.m.

Bismarck - December 6-7

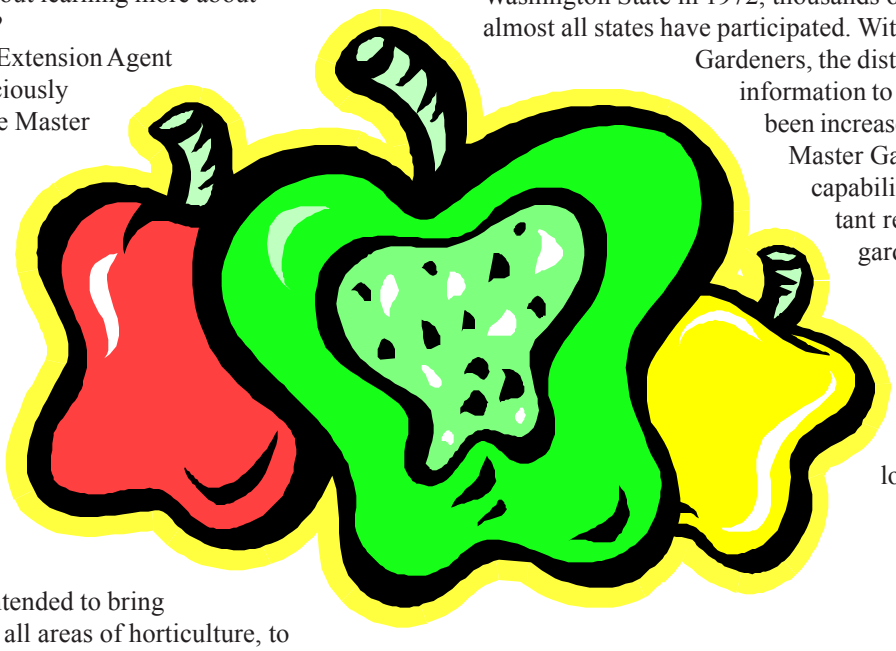
Hours are Saturdays 10-5; Sunday 11-5
Admission $2 - kids under 12 are free
Free reusable bag with paid admission!

Calling all interested gardeners

It's barely winter in North Dakota, but some of us yearn for spring - the season of gardens.

Rather than wait for spring to begin planning for the next growing season how about learning more about horticulture this winter?

Burleigh County Extension Agent ElRoy Haadem has graciously volunteered to begin the Master Gardener's course in December if there are seven, or more, people interested in the program via teleconferencing.



Normally the class won't begin again until September, so this is an opportunity to do the class independently – with a completion deadline early next year.

The program is intended to bring gardeners up-to-date in all areas of horticulture, to reinforce previous knowledge, and to help them learn how to share this information with others.

Who Can Become a Master Gardener: Experienced gardeners from all walks of life can become involved in this program. Candidates for the program will be selected on their horticultural experience, availability and willingness to help others. This program is open to all people without regard to race, creed, color, sex, age, national origin or handicap.

The Training: The training program will consist of 48 hours of instruction. A wide selection of horticultural topics will be covered. The instruction will be given by extension specialists from NDSU and experienced Master Gardeners. Besides classroom and field training, a complete horticultural reference handbook will be provided for each participant.

Program Costs: The registration fee helps cover the cost of publications and handouts. As Master Gardeners continue in the program, they receive newsletters, updated references, and additional training.

Volunteer Responsibility: The Master Gardener Program is a volunteer program. To officially become a Certified Master Gardener, 48 hours of volunteer work is required during the year. Master Gardeners are also required to submit a yearly report. They are recertified on a yearly basis.

How and Where Volunteers Work With People: Volunteer time used to help others could be spent in many diverse activities such as: assisting in the Extension Office; answering gardening questions on the phone or in person; working with 4-H and other youth groups; presenting gardening information to groups; becoming involved in community service activities; setting up and staffing horticultural displays and working with community groups. All activities are coordinated through the local extension staff. In this way the county extension staff and Master Gardeners are able to make more effective use of their volunteer commitment and help serve other people.

Benefits of the Program: Since the program started in Washington State in 1972, thousands of Master Gardeners in almost all states have participated. With the help of Master Gardeners, the distribution of horticultural information to the gardening public has been increased significantly. The Master Gardener Program has the capability of becoming an important resource to the home gardener.

Please contact Sue B. Balcom, suebalcom@nd.gov.com or 328-4763, as soon as possible if you are interested in this great local foods resource.

Time to begin planning for school gardens

School gardens grow science achievement scores

2006-01-03 - NSTA Reports-Debra Shapiro

Science educators have long recognized the value of school gardens in motivating students to study science. Recent studies show that school gardening programs also boost students' scores on science achievement tests.

Cynthia Klemmer, director of education and development at the National Gardening Association; T.M. Waliczek, an associate professor at Texas State University; and J.M. Zajicek, professor of horticultural sciences at Texas A&M University, studied 647 third, fourth, and fifth graders from Temple, Texas. As part of their science curriculum, students in the experimental group participated in school gardening activities and received traditional, classroom-based science instruction, while teachers of students in the control group taught science using traditional methods only.

The American Society for Horticultural Science's publication HortTechnology contained an article that summarized the results of Klemmer's study. The study found that students in the experimental group scored significantly higher on the science achievement test compared to the students in the control group. The article pointed out that "no statistical significance was found

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between girls and boys in the experimental group, indicating that gardening was equally effective at teaching science for both genders."

A similar study by Leanna L. Smith and Carl E. Motsenbocker of Louisiana State University AgCenter's Department of Horticulture also confirmed that "once-weekly use of gardening activities and hands-on classroom activities helps improve science achievement test scores."

The school gardening program examined in the Texas and Louisiana studies is the Junior Master Gardener® (JMG) program, an international 4-H youth development program of the University Cooperative Extension network (and modeled on the adult Master Gardener® program). Aimed at grades 3–8 and created by teachers and horticultural professionals, the JMG curriculum covers science, horticulture, and the environment and correlates to state teaching standards. The curriculum addresses such topics as plant growth and development; photosynthesis; soils and water; ecology and environmental horticulture, insects and diseases; landscape horticulture; and the interdependent relationships among living things. Group hands-on activities integrate math, science, language arts, and social studies.

JMG's newest curriculum, Literature in the Garden, can help educators of grades 3–5 use the garden as a means to get students interested in reading. The curriculum has 34 related activities developed around six award-winning children's gardening books: Plantzilla by Jerdine Nolen; Miss Rumphius by Barbara Cooney; Brother Eagle, Sister Sky by Susan Jeffers; The Gardener by Sarah Stewart; Tops and Bottoms by Janet Stevens; and Weslandia by Paul Fleischman.

The program also offers "independent and group learning experiences, life/skill and career exploration, and service learning opportunities for youth." Students who complete the program are recognized with certification as Junior Master Gardeners.

Students can participate in JMG through schools, homeschools, after-school programs, or youth clubs. An outdoor garden is not required; schools without space for an outdoor garden may use indoor container gardens.

At *www.jmg kids.us*, teachers can learn more about the curriculum, take a tutorial about the different components of starting and leading a JMG group, find out how to start a school garden, access grant information, and see when and where the program's optional training sessions will be held.

Teachers usually need help starting and maintaining school gardens. They can receive this assistance from volunteers such as parents, older students, senior citizens, garden club members, Master Gardeners, or interested community members. Often these individuals are able to help maintain the school garden over the summer. To locate Master Gardeners in the United States and Canada, see the interactive map at www.ahs.org/master_gardeners/index.htm.

Activities for grades K–8 in the NSTA best seller Bottle Biology: Exploring the World Through Soda Bottles and Other Recyclable Materials include designing a gardening system. Students use film canisters to grow tiny gardens, and they can perform individual experiments on germination, gravitropism, and phototropism. Visit http://store.nsta.org for more details.

The Teacher's Room at the National Gardening Association's (NGA) www.kidsgardening.com provides gardening resources such as "All About Plants" articles, activities, a school greenhouse guide, a hydroponics guide, a school garden registry, classroom stories, and teaching strategies. NGA's From Seed to Seed: Plant Science for K–8 Educators is an online professional development course for teachers seeking to incorporate botany and gardening into their science curriculum; NGA also offers other online courses for educators. The association's website informs teachers about upcoming events, grants, awards, and fundraising ideas and enables teachers to register to receive free newsletters. NGA also sells various gardening-related educational materials.

Washington State University's Growing with Plants curriculum for primary grades blends nutrition education, plant science, and ecology. Its nine lessons feature simple science experiments and hands-on activities. Teacher background material includes a guide for starting school and community gardens. Consult www.pierce.wsu.edu/nutrition/gwp for more information.

Other sources of gardening education information are The Nature Conservancy (http://nature.org), The American Horticultural Society (www.ahs.org), and the United Kingdom's Royal Horticultural Society (www.rhs.org.uk).

Calendar of upcoming events

NOVEMBER 30 School garden applications are available. Call the North Dakota Department of Agriculture at 328-4763 or 328-5759 or email: suebalcom@nd.gov.com

JANUARY 13 North Dakota Farmers Market and Growers Association annual meeting.

JANUARY 13 Local Foods summit held in conjunction with NDFMGA annual meeting at the Civic Center, Bismarck. Topics and speaker information will be included in the next issue of Local News around the first week of December.

Is your community planning a local foods meeting or event?
Send your information to suebalcom@nd.gov or go to http://goinglocalnd.ning.com/ and add your information to the calendar of events.