



CCOF

Organic Certification

Education & Outreach

Political Advocacy

Promotion

RE: Sound and Sensible Focus Groups on Economic Barriers to Organic Transition

Focus Group 1 (Monterey Bay Area):

June 22, 2015

9:00 A.M. –12:00 P.M.

Driscoll's Offices, Del Rey Conference Room

300 Westridge Drive

Watsonville, CA 95076

Focus Group 2 (Sacramento Area):

June 23, 2015

9:00 A.M. –12:00 P.M.

Glide Ranch

36355 Russell Blvd

Davis, CA 95616



AGENDA

9:00 AM: Welcome & Opening Remarks

- Cathy Calfo welcomes participants; gives overview of the Sound and Sensible contract (including the scope, purpose, and outcome of the focus groups); introduces facilitator, Mark Lipson, and focus group coordinator, Kelly Damewood.
 - *Goals: Participants understand that the focus groups are funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and documentation of the group discussions will be in the public domain; participants understand that USDA-NOP support for bringing key stakeholders together to discuss and prioritize specific economic barriers to organic transition is an important development for advancing the conversion of existing agricultural land to organic; participants understand that Mark Lipson will facilitate the discussion.*
- Kelly Damewood outlines the purpose of the day's discussion, focus, and outcomes.
 - *Goals: Participants understand that growth in demand for organic continues to outpace growth in supply; participants have helpful information, statistics, and data on this imbalance; participants understand that the focus of the discussion is two-fold. First, the group will identify and validate specific economic barriers to the conversion of existing agricultural land to organic. Second, the group will brainstorm solutions and recommendations to address economic barriers. The recommendations may include subsidy, regulatory, and private industry reforms. Participants understand that CCOF will document the discussions and use the information gathered to prioritize and implement projects which address specific barriers to transition. CCOF will also share the documentation with the USDA, and the information will be in the public domain.*

9:15 AM: Facilitator & Participant Introductions

- Mark Lipson makes his opening remarks, explains how he will facilitate, and lays ground rules.
 - *Goals: Participants learn about Mark's experience and interest in organic transition; participants understand how the discussion will proceed; participants understand basic ground rules, such as not disparaging people's ideas.*



- Participants introduce themselves.
 - *Goal: Participants have the opportunity to explain their work, as well as their interest in, and commitment to, the focus group outcomes; participants begin to understand who is in the room and how to work with one another.*

9:30 AM: Identify Challenges to Transition

- Mark Lipson sets forth challenges to transition.
 - *Goals: Jumpstart the conversation by laying out pre-identified economic challenges to transition; present the economic challenges as Problem Statements, e.g. "The lack of markets for rotational crops is a significant obstacle to transition."*
- Group participants validate identified challenges.
 - *Goals: participants identify strengths and weaknesses in the Problem Statements, e.g. what rings true for them? What would they change about the Problem Statements? What, if any, problems are missing?*
- Group participants prioritize Problem Statements
 - *Goals: Identify opportunities within group Problem Statements or note overlapping issues. Revise the list of Problem Statements accordingly. Rank the Problem Statements based upon urgency, impact, and solvability, e.g. what economic challenges must we address first? What economic challenges have the most realistic, attainable solutions?*

10:00 AM: Review Existing Efforts to Overcome Challenges to Transition

- Organizations such as the Organic Trade Association (OTA), and companies such as Wild Oats give 5-10 minute overviews of their existing efforts to support organic transition, followed by a 5 minute Q & A per presentation.
 - *Goals: Acknowledge and better understand existing efforts to support organic transition; learn from other experiences, e.g. what is working? What is not working? Correlate these presentations with the Problem Statements.*

10:45 AM: Brainstorm Solutions and Opportunities

- Mark Lipson recaps high priority challenges and existing efforts.



- *Goals: Remind the group of the high priority Problem Statements, giving Mark the opportunity to draw connections and note progress thus far.*
- Mark Lipson facilitates discussion on solutions. Kelly Damewood assists with organizing ideas.
 - *Goals: Give participants the opportunity to recommend solutions and ideas for moving forward; organize the ideas into categories such as subsidies, regulations, and private incentives for easy reference.*
- Mark Lipson facilitates discussion on recommendations.
 - *Goals: Frame ideas on solutions as recommendations; identify top priority recommendations and areas of overlap or opportunities to coordinate efforts; note which Problem Statements may lack practical solutions and recommendations.*

11:45 AM: Wrap Up & Next Steps

- Mark Lipson recaps the discussion.
 - *Goals: Mark has the opportunity to draw connections and note highlights; participants understand the progress they have made as a group. Distinguish between progress on Problem Statements vs. progress on recommendations.*
- Group validates Mark Lipson's recap.
 - *Goals: participants add ideas or thoughts to Mark's recap; participants feel confident that their discussion was well documented and well understood.*
- Kelly Damewood explains next steps.
 - *Goals: participants understand that the content of their discussion will lead to outcomes; participants are alerted to future opportunities to work with CCOF on organic transition.*
- Final acknowledgements and goodbyes.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The following questions are prompts that the facilitator may reference to ensure a complete, robust discussion of economic barriers to organic transition.

Questions to Facilitate Introductions

1. Do you have experience converting non-organic agricultural land into organic production?
2. Besides land transition, what other work have you done with organic transition? For example, have you explored options for labeling products sourced from land in transition?
3. Do you operate or work with both non-organic and organic production? What are the reasons for operating both non-organic and organic?

Questions to Set the Scope and Focus

4. How are economic challenges different than other challenges to organic transition?
5. Is it imperative to discuss economic challenges? Why?
6. What can we achieve through a focused discussion on economic challenges to transition?
7. What is the benefit of bringing together different stakeholders to discuss organic transition?

Questions to Determine Existing Challenges

8. What economic challenges to organic transition exist today?
9. Based on your experience, do you foresee new or developing challenges to transition? If so, what challenges may develop in the next 5 years? 10 years? 20 years?
10. How do the economic challenges to transition relate to one another? Do some challenges overlap? What challenges should be discussed together? Separately?
11. What are the highest priority challenges, e.g. what challenges must we address first? Why? What are the lowest priority challenges?



12. What are the most complicated challenges? What factors make a challenge more or less complicated?
13. How should we categorize existing challenges? For example, we can categorize challenges under the following categories: regulatory hurdles, lack of subsidy support, lack of private industry incentives, and lack of access to resources and organic education. Do other categories exist? Which challenges fall under more than one category?

Questions to Evaluate Existing Transitional Efforts

14. What existing federal or state subsidies support organic transition?
15. What are organizations like the Organic Trade Association (OTA) doing to support organic transition? What works? What does not work?
16. What are organic certifiers doing to support organic transition? Have they made efforts in the past that have not been successful? What works? What does not?
17. What are private companies doing to support transition? What models are working and why?
18. What challenges do handlers and processors face as they try to source organic domestically?
19. What actions are handlers and processors doing to increase their ability to source organic?
20. What efforts have retailers made to support domestic organic production?
21. What resources exist for producers interested in converting land to organic production?
22. What data on organic transition exists?
23. What kinds of data do we need to better support organic transition?

Questions to Stimulate Recommendations

24. What improvements to existing subsidies could better support organic transition?
25. Do other subsidy sources exist that could support organic transition?



26. What improvements to the National Organic Program (NOP) could better support transition?
27. Besides NOP, what other federal regulations could be clarified or improved?
28. What type of state regulations could be clarified or improved? For example, could we improve the way fees are assessed for the California State Organic Program?
29. What recommendations can we make to improve existing private efforts to support organic transition?
30. What can organizations like OTA and CCOF do to support private efforts?
31. What sort of recommendations might address more than one challenge?
32. Should some challenges be addressed in tandem? Why?
33. What solutions do you recommend pursuing in the next year? The next 3 years? 5 years? Why?

Questions to Guide Next steps

34. What are your short and long term plans related to organic transition?
35. What short and long term actions do you recommend for CCOF?
36. How would you like to see the documentation of this discussion used in the future?
37. What did you like about the format of today's discussion? What could be improved?
38. Are you interested in future focus groups related to organic transition?



PARTICIPANT INVITATION LIST

Focus Group 1 (Monterey Bay Area)

Drew and Myra Goodman, Earthbound Farm
Brian McElroy, Driscoll's
Tamara Muruetagoiena, Driscoll's
Reggie Knox, California FarmLink
Peter Golbitz, Agromeris
Neal MacDougall, Agribusiness Department, Cal Poly, San Luis Obispo
Jenny Lester Moffitt, California Department of Food and Agriculture
Laura Batcha, Organic Trade Association
Steve Pederson, High Ground Organics
Bud Colligan, South Swell Ventures

Focus Group 2 (Sacramento Area)

Carol Olson, Organic Expansion
Tom Casey and Jim Keyes, Wild Oats
Dennis Hooper, Costco
Karen Klonsky, UC Davis
Rick Jensen, California Department of Food and Agriculture
Brad Samuelson, Fagundes Dairy
Rick Rominger, Rominger Brothers Farms
Paul Underhill, Terra Firma Farm
Chris Hay, Say Hay Farms

