



# Building a Thriving Regional Agricultural Economy in the Rural South and Central Appalachia

Convening Report

December 2013



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## The Convening in a Nutshell: Executive Summary

This report provides a summary of the main themes discussed and outcomes of the “Building a Thriving Regional Agricultural Economy in Central Appalachia and the Rural South” convening held in Charlotte, North Carolina on August, 14, 2013. The event was a collaborative effort of representatives of leading regional and local rural development organizations, businesses, US government agencies and the donor community, and academia, intended to unlock potential synergies and opportunities for cross-sectoral collaboration in order to accelerate the development of a local and regional agricultural economy in these regions. The central premise of the convening was that building trust and mutual understanding amongst divergent stakeholder groups who face similar challenges can often catalyze new thinking, generate new ideas, and lay a foundation for future action. Specifically, the convening established that effective and meaningful partnerships between large buyers and small holder farmers in rural Appalachia and the Deep South could yield more systemic results were these partnerships structured holistically, regionally, and beyond the transactional (buyer-seller). In this vein, this convening focused on addressing one central question: what would it take to create and strengthen a regional, inclusive and sustainable food system?

While there are numerous dimensions to addressing this challenge, this convening focused on three main aspects: farmer readiness (to engage effectively with the formal marketplace), logistics (the efficient and effective sourcing and distribution of product), and finance (accessing the right forms of capital to grow a sustainable rural enterprise). As such, the main take-aways from this convening were as follows:

**Investment isn’t the problem, “investability” is:** Despite the ongoing perception that there is insufficient capital to support rural development in these regions, there is an obvious disconnect between the risk profile investors are willing to consider, and the business profile and commercial viability of many potential investments;

**Betting on “local” may not be enough:** While there is general agreement that “local” is here to stay, the lack of “local” standards, consumer confusion and evolving preferences, may cause “local” market volatility that may impact on the viability and competitiveness of local farmers who depend on a growing “local” marketplace;

**The role of technical assistance is not only unseen, it remains largely unpaid:** Significant amounts of voluntary and charitable resources are expended to improve the market readiness of small farmers in the region in a combination of formal and informal interventions. Due to the lack of market readiness standards and varying requirements of larger retailers, these efforts may not always be as effective as intended and are often under-resourced.

**The role of the private sector in the region is asymmetrical:** Large retailers and related actors from the value chain are aware of the challenges and opportunities in building a regional agricultural economy in the Deep South and Rural Appalachia, but their efforts are uncoordinated, lack a systemic focus, generally do not take full advantage of locally available resources (especially technical resources), and as such, are not sufficiently integrated to make the kind of difference the region needs.

**Managing and spreading risk:** Farmers are vulnerable to crop failure, can be over-dependent on individual retailers, are often required to comply to multiple and sometimes evolving standards (especially from large retailers), and must increasingly bear all the costs of compliance. Crop, market

and channel diversification remain challenges in competitive and sustainable farm management across the region. Strategic and nimble intermediation pose challenges for small farmers who often need to rely on others for effective and efficient sales channel management.

**Logistics and related transaction costs can be insurmountable:** While the emphasis regarding logistics has often been about transportation (primarily trucks), there are other important aspects regarding logistics that are critical to the value chain — namely, how to minimize the cost and time of post-harvest management and product transportation in the face of different locations, geographies, production rates, inventory levels, maintenance times and weather and the tools and processes required to make that effort efficient.

**Rapid adaptation for the existing barriers to entry for the new is accelerating the decline of local productivity:** The older generation of farmers may be unwilling and/or unable to adapt to new standards, models and mechanisms that could enhance their competitiveness and profitability. Conversely, the very same standards and front-loaded investments required to enter the agribusiness industry may be perceived by the younger generation of farmers as daunting and commercially unviable.

## Recommendations

While the discussion at the convening centered around the challenges and potential opportunities of accelerating the development of a local and regional food system, there was less certainty as to what next steps would be required to leverage the good will and cross-sectoral interest generated through the convening. Based on the discussion, and on additional engagement with participating and other stakeholders, the Red Mantra Group would recommend as follows:

**Localize/Regionalize efficient procurement and logistics systems:** Explore opportunities for public-private partnerships that incentivize the integration of procurement and logistics approaches to lower the transaction costs to individual companies and farmers and increase the benefits collectively. While competition currently focuses on both the quality and the price of the produce, it need not compete on time to market given that in aggregate, the collective costs of dispersed procurement systems far outweigh the benefits of harmonizing and integrating procurement systems.

**Improve farmer business/investment readiness and investor awareness:** Given the growing interest of impact and other investors in domestic agribusiness opportunities and the pent-up demand for commercially viable agribusinesses, farmer support organizations including intermediaries, land grant universities and local government small business development initiatives should redouble efforts to develop and implement farmer business readiness initiatives. Conversely, impact investors should develop “farmer-friendly” financial instruments that consider the specific challenges farmers face during the course of their business development.

**Increase and target “blended” capital for value chain development and farmer competitiveness:** Design financial instruments (i.e. risk sharing facilities, credit guarantees, etc) that can manage the inherent risks in agribusiness development (i.e. crop failure due to climatological phenomena) while providing patient capital and social investments to improve value chain infrastructure and tools and training to strengthen farmer capacity and competitiveness.

**Raise consumer awareness about the benefits of local/regional food production:** Consumer education can improve not only the quantity but the quality of demand — specifically, advocate for

more local and regional choices on retailer shelves, better understand the challenges farmer's face and support their efforts through a combination of direct sourcing (through CSAs), advocating for different quality standards (less on appearance, shape and size and more on nutritional value), and a better appreciation of food miles and seasonality.

**Provide fiscal and non-fiscal policy incentives to foster agricultural innovation and entrepreneurship:** Because the private sector and civil society cannot shoulder the entire burden of building a thriving agricultural economy in these regions, national, state and local government agencies should be encouraged to harmonize and integrate policy incentives that can catalyze and complement private efforts to strengthen the local food system. In particular, offering fiscal incentives to encourage new farmers to enter the market, large retailers to source locally from qualified farmers, and access to start-up capital and business loans at discounted rates to help farmers manage inherent risks.

**Maintain and deepen regional cross-sectoral dialogues to develop and harmonize priorities:** Given the information asymmetry that exists between stakeholders on these matters, continuing these kinds of convenings and deepening their attention to specific topics (like finance, logistics, crop insurance, or farmer readiness) would enhance cross-sectoral understanding and promote collective agendas for concerted action. The process that allows for companies and investors to think alongside front-line stakeholders, academia and government agencies may allow for new, collective and integrated solutions to emerge that would otherwise remain within the purview of a few isolated actors with insufficient resources to address the systemic issues at hand.

## The Premise for the Convening

Effective and meaningful partnerships between large buyers and small holder farmers in rural Appalachia and the Southern Black Belt should represent a win-win transaction – one that contributes to a company's bottom line, enhances farmer productivity and competitiveness, and catalyzes local economic development. Unfortunately, while suppliers and retailers have made some important strides to enable a local food system to emerge, too often there is a mismatch between the buyer's expectations and the farmer's capacity to deliver, particularly among small and low-income farmers. In turn, this mismatch is often exacerbated by inadequate infrastructure, barriers to finance, and logistics challenges. It is clear that market access and the emergence of the local food economy favour larger farmers who can meet the level and quality of supply and who are in logistically convenient locations to minimize food miles. The result is that many small-scale farmers are increasingly excluded and little incentives exist for new farmers to enter the marketplace, constraining the overall potential of rebuilding our agricultural heritage in our local economies. As such, what are the challenges and opportunities to strengthening a local and sustainable food system in these regions? What are the options for these farmers in today's marketplace? How can a highly dynamic and competitive industry integrate the offerings of the small-scale farmer in a sustainable way? How can small-scale farmers gain access into this system in an economically meaningful way? And what resources are available to enable them to compete in today's economy?

This dialogue, convened as part of the Ford Foundation's Wealth Creation and Rural Livelihoods Initiative, is the culmination of a months-long effort of interviewing some of the key corporate actors and related stakeholders in the agriculture value chain critical to gaining insights into the industry and answering these questions. These perspectives collectively pointed to a number of fundamental issues: a) farmer readiness for engaging the corporate sector effectively; b) the resources it

takes for them to become ready; and, c) the systemic challenges (including logistics, infrastructure, and local available capacity) that need to be addressed to assure the sustainability of any effort.

### The Convening Objectives

The overall goal of the convening was to foster greater collaboration and partnerships among key agriculture industry stakeholders in the Central Appalachia and Deep South through greater mutual understanding of how the industry can be more inclusive and contribute more meaningfully to building a thriving local agricultural economy. The workshop's more specific objectives were as follows:

- 1) Develop a common understanding and shared perspective among key value chain stakeholders of the local food system context in Appalachia and the Southern Black Belt and identify challenges to be addressed as well as potential opportunities to explore;
- 2) Collectively identify no more than three, shared priorities that can strengthen cross-sectoral collaboration and leverage collective resources critical to increasing local supply chain quality and consistency while improving farmer access and readiness;
- 3) Develop a concrete and actionable agenda that if and when implemented could enhance additional opportunities necessary for supporting an effective and sustainable local food system;
- 4) Identify and align potential resources that could be leveraged to support the actionable agenda.

### The Plenary Panel Discussion: Setting the Scene

In order to provide context to the event, a cross sectoral panel was organized that included Ron McCormick, Senior Director, Sustainable Agriculture, Walmart, Kathlyn Terry, Executive Director, Appalachian Sustainable Development, Dionys Forster, Sourcing Specialist, Nestle Global, Robin Robbins, General Manager, Appalachian Harvest, Chris Harris, Director of Category Management, CH Robinson, and Sandi Kronick, CEO, Eastern Carolina Organics. The panel discussion was facilitated by W. Robert de Jongh and Maya Gorrez from the Red Mantra Group.

### Key Takeaways from the Panel Discussion

**“Local” is here to Stay but with Careful Conditions** – There was agreement among the panel that the trend for retailers to source from local farms (regardless of how “local” is defined) will continue but is highly conditional. Ultimately, market demand is highly dynamic and while the novelty of local produce may eventually wane, critical factors such as quality and price always determine consumer choices. For retailers, local produce must be accessible, of quality standards and priced competitively. As with any business model, if localization is to succeed, it must be profitable for growers and viable for retailers.

**Intermediaries Are Necessary but Who Pays for the Service?** – Advances in technology and globalization are drastically changing the competitive landscape of food farming. Intermediary organizations that lend technical, business and sometimes financial support to small-scale farms in the US help farmers transcend the steep learning curve they face in gaining or maintaining their competitiveness in the marketplace. For large retailers, intermediaries are key to helping small farmers understand what it means and what it takes to supply large chain stores. However, inter-

mediary services are not captured in the current small-farm business model. Their critical services are treated as externalities that are paid for mostly through grants and other forms of aid-based or philanthropic funding. An important consideration for the long-term success of small farms is finding a sustainable mechanism through which critical intermediary services are compensated.

**Logistics are not just about Trucks** – The logistical operations of retailers were developed specific to the scale of their needs into which small farm producers do not necessarily fit. Moreover, beyond actual transport of goods, logistics also include the actual hauling of products on and off trucks that require consideration. There is no single solution for small farmers and getting their produce to commercial markets will require the coordination and cooperation of various players including aggregators, food hubs, logistics companies, retailers and farmers themselves to understand how to take advantage of existing infrastructure within specific geographies and achieve economies of scale for both farmers and retailers.

**Farmer Capacity is a Persistent Issue** – The challenge of optimizing production using new and different growing techniques is often a challenge for America's aging farmer population. Many are resistant to change while others are intimidated by technology that could radically increase their productivity. Moreover, small farms often do not have the appropriate capacity and business acumen to formalize and run their operations as a business entity. A systematic and sustained mechanism of building farmer capacity is needed to foment and maintain small farm production. In addition, continued knowledge transfer is an effective way of helping farmers understand the realities of working with large retailers. Intermediaries perform a key function in this knowledge transfer process.

**Diversification is Key to Sustainability** – It is rare that a retailer will buy 100% of a farmer's produce. Many successful farms that supply large retailers also supply farmers' markets, local stores and restaurants. However, negotiating through these varied markets takes skills, time and resources that farmers often do not have. This is another key role that intermediaries assume.

### Challenges, Opportunities and the Way Forward: Reaching Mutual Understanding

Convening participants were asked to discuss and summarize the principal challenges and opportunities that impact on the development of sustainable and inclusive agricultural value chains in the target region. The main issues that arose were classified with the following categories:

#### Farmer Readiness

The main challenges identified by the group around the theme of farmer readiness are the following:

- 1) **Farmer Education and Preparation** – in terms of market knowledge, certifications and standards, product knowledge, understanding of larger-scale production as well as the adequacy of current capacity delivery mechanisms such as universities, extension offices, knowledge banks etc.
- 2) **Models and Market Articulation** – specifically the fierce independence of small farmers and their natural resistance to cooperatives or other models of formalized organization that would be more beneficial to them in the market.

- 3) **Access to Shared Infrastructure** – how to increase market transparency and enable farmers to take advantage of existing infrastructure and opportunities to get their products to market.
- 4) **Efficiency and Technical Assistance** – as an underlying condition, refers to reaching economies of scale that make small farming profitable and sustainable. Specific issues mentioned here include a lack of appropriate performance metrics and self-assessment analyses for evaluation and decision-making.
- 5) **Safety** – meeting industry standards is becoming a market entry barrier as standards become more prescriptive and rigorous yet applied inconsistently in the marketplace.
- 6) **Building the Farming Profession and Culture** – domestic food production is in danger of becoming an extinct practice with the aging farmer population and no organized strategy for recruitment. There is no formalized process through which transfer of valuable farming experience and knowledge from one generation to another can occur.

Using these categories as a guide for discussion, the Farmer Readiness working group captured the following ideas as initial thinking towards more long-term solutions to the aforementioned challenges.

**Farmer Capacity Solutions:** To address the main issues of farmer readiness, the solutions discussion focused on more effective mechanisms for building capacities. As a starting point, it was suggested that there be a strategic planning process that helps growers understand and identify the best markets into which they can tap along with a realistic assessment of their willingness to make a commitment and “do what it takes” to be a successful part of that market. Gaps in technical knowledge can be filled using a more hands-on approach such as peer-to-peer exchanges among farmers that foster cross-fertilization of ideas and provides long-term mentorship among growers. In addition, a more holistic way of addressing capacity gaps could be accomplished through a more structured collaborative effort among technical assistance providers (i.e. intermediaries, academia, government extension etc.) and the dissemination of open sourced toolkits and other training materials. It was also suggested that transparency can be created through simple means such as mapping out where small farms are in the region and what they grow. Establishing themselves geographically can help place them into the wider landscape context of the market and how they can fit in. In addition, such a map can also be used to holistically identify needs and gaps that can then be filled systematically using structured learning processes that can be coordinated across the region.

**Market-based Solutions:** Ideas around solutions in the marketplace were centered around a more transparent and equitable relationship between growers and sellers beginning with strategic identification of needs among small farmers and the gaps they need to fill to successfully participate in the retail market space. Some meaningful ways to work together include the use of long-term contracts (in lieu of one-off annual agreements) that can buffer against common production issues and collectively addressing the challenges related to industry level safety standards and sharing the “burden” of meeting them. Other areas of collaboration include holistic buying agreements that commit majority if not all of production to a diversified portfolio of retailers as well as creating linkages with secondary markets (i.e. processing industry).

**Consumer-based Solutions:** Beyond growers and retailers, another segment of the value chain to be engaged more proactively is the consumer base to create a multi-dimensional market. Consumers need to be made more aware of the food systems they are a part of beyond what it local to educate their choices. Similarly, consumer education on how food is produced

and how regulations such as GAP certification impacts them and farmers is an important step in gaining critical support for growers.

**Future of Food Production:** With increased globalization, local farmers are facing competition with farmers abroad who have distinct advantages that include year-round growing seasons, cheap labor, openness to changing crops and growing techniques as well as an openness to formalized organization. The culture of farming in the US needs to be revitalized through structured networking and exchanges but also through strategic outreach and recruitment of new farmers. Some avenues to explore include state-level young farmers associations, the National Young Farmers Coalition ([www.youngfarmers.org](http://www.youngfarmers.org)) and the National Young Farmer Educational Association ([www.nyfea.org](http://www.nyfea.org)).

## Logistics

The overall theme encapsulating the issue of logistics was efficiency and how to improve it all along the supply chain. The main challenge for farm-to-market logistics is best summarized in the following question paraphrased from one posed by members of the working group: How do we increase efficiency by shortening supply chains in order to increase value distribution across the entire value chain? Within this context, the following main challenges were discussed.

- 1) **Connecting Supply to Demand** – Many smallholder farms are located remotely, a significant distance from major existing trucking routes or retailer drop-off centers presenting an additional cost to farmers that often goes unaccounted for. Rural distances are prohibitive not only for entry into the large-scale retail market but also into local markets. Maintaining price levels for farmers and sharing efficiencies within the value chain then become a challenge;
- 2) **The Need for Intermediaries** – For a value chain to be functional requires more than just buyers and sellers. Relationships among various actors are often cultivated by facilitators and intermediaries. Often these groups are a repository of information, including what is being farmed at what price and in which area, but there is no infrastructure for them or other players in the value chain to maximize the use of this information;
- 3) **Capital for Logistical Infrastructure** – A large aspect of logistics involves physical infrastructure (transportation, cooling, storage, processing etc.) that requires upfront expenditure. Included here are low-cost technologies that could catalyze better coordination among stakeholders to increase overall efficiency. Capital for infrastructural costs is difficult to avail of and farmers are often unprepared to assume the full responsibilities of maintaining this infrastructure over the long-term.

The Logistics working group discussed these major challenges within the broader context of localization, what it implies for small-scale farmers and what potential solutions might look like. The following were presented as some preliminary ideas.

**Importance of Food Hubs** – Food hubs are quickly filling in the farm-to-market gap by consolidating produce and products from small farmers and alleviating the farmer cost for transportation. Strategically placed hubs can provide significant infrastructure for an increasing number of farmers who no longer need to make costly investments in transportation individually;



**Building Regional Infrastructure** - A regional strategy for building and connecting the food systems across sub-regions is needed. This includes a coordinated regional investment strategy based on targeted needs. Intermediaries would play a key role in facilitating a regional vision and establishing vital connections and interactions among key players in the regional value chain. The corporate sector must be engaged as a partner willing to proactively participate in building infrastructure and not just as a buyer that receives the end product. Moreover, stakeholders can also work together to increase overall efficiency by reducing systemic complexities in such areas as insurance, certifications, safety standards etc;

**Consumer Education** – There is currently strong support for local products but to make it more than a fleeting trend, more needs to be done to increase consumer understanding of the cost difference in buying local. The corporate sector, intermediaries, funders, investors, and growers need to get on the same page about shared value and translate this into an articulated value for consumers.

### Access to Finance

The finance discussion focused on a number of core challenges: the relevance of financial instruments to farmer needs, how to manage risks including the use and adaptation of crop insurance products, the availability and use of patient capital, and the “investability” or business readiness of small farmers. What is the right mix of financing schemes and risk mitigation strategies that can grow and develop investor confidence to catalyze new investments in this region’s agricultural potential?

- 1) **Lack of bespoke financial instruments** — With regard to the availability of financing to support small farmer development and growth, participants identified a paradox. On the one hand, small farmers perceive there are little to no relevant financing instruments available to them; on the other, investors (especially impact investors) suggest that capital is widely available, but there are no viable/investable deals. The paradox suggests a gap — a gap in the understanding of what is investable (“business readiness”) from the perspective of the farmer, a gap in investor awareness of what are the most appropriate financial instruments for these types of farmers (i.e. blended financing, collateral-free debt products, credit guarantees, etc), and a gap on how to effectively price and manage risks with these kinds of transactions.
- 2) **Investment readiness of farmers is insufficient** — Due to a number of conditions, for example, the lack of crop insurance, a secured market, the unwillingness to leverage tangible assets, and the variability in productivity and post harvest risks, farmers are currently perceived to be ill-equipped to apply for and receive traditional investment. Moreover, insufficient effort has been placed in identifying the capacity and business model gaps that curtail investment and providing farmers with pre-investment technical assistance to get them investment ready.
- 3) **Crop insurance opportunities are either unavailable or poorly understood** — While crop insurance is a critical element for investors and wholesalers and retailers, current products are either inadequate or unaffordable. As such, many farmers may go uninsured or underinsured which has a direct impact on their ability to engage with larger retailers (who, in most cases, have this as a precondition for engagement).

- 4) **Risk sharing strategies are not prevalent** — Due to the asymmetrical relationship between small farmers and larger retailers/wholesalers, logistics providers, intermediary organizations and others, few cross-sectoral risk sharing models have been developed through which a) risks can be shared; b) better financing conditions could be leveraged; c) inputs and post-harvest facilities and logistics could be either shared or better coordinated to lower transaction costs, etc. These remain missed opportunities for enhanced farmer competitiveness and sustainability.

The potential solutions discussed by the financing working group included the following:

**Develop an investment readiness tool and roll-out** — Work with investors to develop an investment readiness toolkit and related standards that could be rolled out through new and/or existing intermediary organizations through an aggregated technical assistance facility. Being able to strengthen the business development capacity of local farmers to improve their access to finance could enhance their productivity, competitiveness and prospects for growth over the medium and long-term.

**Educate Impact and other Investors about the potential of agricultural investment opportunities in this region.** While traditional investors may have historically seen farming as a highly risky proposition, impact investors (investors who are seeking both a financial and social/environmental return for their investment) are increasingly interested in working with farmers to develop financial instruments bespoke to their needs. However, investors need to better understand what types of business and financing models would be most viable, and how to best leverage other key stakeholders as part of the transaction (i.e. purchase agreement with retailers, etc). Furthermore, impact investors may be able to learn from existing models, including Whole Foods' lending scheme for small farmers and their related eligibility criteria and performance/compliance standards. Investments should also be considered up the value chain — post harvest facilities, logistics, financing, marketing, etc.

**Risk sharing** — explore opportunities for wholesalers and retailers to share risk with investors as a way to crowd-in more farmers, increase investment, enhance productivity, and develop a stable and quality supply required to meet growing consumer demand for locally and regionally grown produce that contributes to the livelihoods of local farmers.

## Recommendations and Next Steps

### Final Reflections

In Appalachia and the Rural South, there does appear to be growing momentum in support of a local, if not a regional, agricultural system. However, if local agricultural production continues to grow without the right set of policy frameworks, incentives and private efforts to handle the needed associated development and growth of trading industries and downstream processing facilities, it is likely this will lead to lower prices at the farm and in the primary market (and not the intended multiple forms of wealth creation being sought). As such, there is a real risk that the initial expansion will not be sustainable and that farmers will lose confidence (and new farmers will be unwilling to enter the industry). The expansion and growth of this regional rural economy will therefore have to be managed to comply with the prevailing and evolving industrial opportunities, which in turn, will require competent planning by state and local governments and appropriate engage-

ment of the private sector and related regional stakeholders. It is clear from the discussion at the convening that these issues are complex, interconnected and demanding, and involve an understanding of the manner in which industries can be compelled to grow, and more importantly, grow inclusively. A lot will depend on the availability and willingness of markets, and the way in which these can be leveraged for a range of fresh and processed goods.

In rural Appalachia the Deep South in particular, the post-harvest practices that currently exist are what are determinant in the efficiency (and the benefits) of post production systems —the manner through which produce is collected, handled and transported into retail and wholesale facilities. Moreover, collection and distribution systems need to be improved in order to reduce the high levels of loss that can typify aspects of the production process. It became clear throughout the discussion that if infrastructure is poor (i.e. limited care when handling, inadequate packaging, limited roads, non-specialized transport, inconsistent compliance with market standards,, etc) — then fresh produce will deteriorate at a rate proportional to the distance, time and handling involved. This is often exacerbated by sudden changes in climate. For example, losses in order of 50% are found for soft fruits when transported on the back an open truck from farm to market during the heat of day. By contrast, losses are negligible for cut flowers shipped overnight by air from Ecuador to the Netherlands. The differences are those of supply chain sophistication — namely value and packaging, and access to dedicated transportation equipment, post harvest facilities, and dedicated management.

What is evident is that it is imprudent, if not insufficient, to catalyze the growth of production and processing independent of the service industries that provide the support, facilities and resources that are essential for commercial success. While in the grand scheme of things, production is likely the most well-understood, relatively “easy” (relative term) and lowest cost element of the value chain (and learning and growth can occur from both success and failure), they key to creating local wealth is through agro-processing. As detailed above, external investment must be encouraged to enable the development of adequate infrastructure (post-harvest facilities, cold storage where necessary, collecting points, etc). This investment is often deepened when there is clear evidence that farmers/producers are working in tandem with buyers (hence why collaboration with upstream private partners is so critical). In most cases, this leads to significant quality improvements in the crop and related yields and that can, in turn, generate more income, employment and investment opportunities for the local farmers. It is clear that neither the buyers nor the farmers/producers can grow and develop if their efforts are not well integrated and are striving to work toward the same efficiencies critical to the profitability and sustainability of the local/regional food system.

Some of these efficiencies could be created through the following recommendations:

**Localize/Regionalize efficient procurement and logistics systems:** Explore opportunities for public-private partnerships that incentivize the integration of procurement and logistics approaches to lower the transaction costs to individual companies and farmers and increase the benefits collectively. While competition currently focuses on both the quality and the price of the produce, it need not compete on time to market given that in aggregate, the collective costs of dispersed procurement systems far outweigh the benefits of harmonizing and integrating procurement systems. These efforts could be further strengthened by the development of and investment in an on-line marketplace for buyers and sellers that would enable them to a) understand market demand with timely information, pricing, and volume needed; b) understand market supply including what is available where and for how much, and c) what logistical there is available en route in order to reduce transaction costs. This is a tool that could collectively benefit all buyers and seller while si-

multaneously addressing the information asymmetry problem that exists with regard to market information.

**Improve farmer business/investment readiness and investor awareness:** Given the growing interest of impact and other investors in domestic agribusiness opportunities and the pent-up demand for commercially viable agribusinesses, farmer support organizations including intermediaries, land grant universities and local government small business development initiatives should redouble efforts to develop and implement farmer business readiness initiatives. Conversely, impact investors should develop “farmer-friendly” financial instruments that consider the specific challenges farmers face during the course of their business development.

Investment readiness and the standards for the same may be best incentivized by a federal agency like USDA or SBA through a stakeholder process that a) assesses the needs, interests and expectations of the investment community; b) analyzes the specific financing needs that farmers traditionally have and what kind of financial instruments may be best suited for them; and c) what would be the best way to develop and roll-out such a standards and capacity building initiative. Furthermore, it would be important to assess if what is most needed is a regional risk sharing/credit guarantee facility that could be leveraged by banks (indirectly) who already lend or may want to move downmarket and lend in these markets that could be used alongside other forms of risk capital to be provided to local farmers (i.e. private equity, impact investment). This might be an important consideration when trying to price and manage financial risks associated with this market segment.

**Increase and target “blended” capital for value chain development and farmer competitiveness:** Design financial instruments (i.e. risk sharing facilities, credit guarantees, etc) that can manage the inherent risks in agribusiness development (i.e. crop failure due to climatological phenomena) while providing patient capital and social investments to improve value chain infrastructure and tools and training to strengthen farmer capacity and competitiveness.

While grant money and associated technical assistance provision is being provided to farmers and farmer associations across the region, it may a) not be enough and/or b) not be sufficiently targeted to strengthen farmer business and investment readiness in such a way that it draws them closer to different forms of investment and/or sustainable and profitable commercial relationships. Some efforts may even be counterproductive in that it may mask the true costs of farming operations and sustain farms that would otherwise never be commercially viable or sustainable in the near and medium term.

**Raise consumer awareness about the benefits of local/regional food production:** Consumer education can improve not only the quantity but the quality of demand — specifically, advocate for more local and regional choices on retailer shelves, better understand the challenges farmer’s face and support their efforts through a combination of direct sourcing (through CSAs), advocating for different quality standards (less on appearance, shape and size and more on nutritional value), and a better appreciation of food miles and seasonality.

Unless consumer behavior can be changed to focus on different attributes and uses of produce, farmers may be condemned to a high volume, low margin business model through which only increasing yield and effective cost management can offer a pathway toward sustainable growth. If the idea is to create a thriving local/regional agricultural economy, this is simply not enough. A sustained effort needs to be put in place to reintroduce seasonal, farm-fresh produce to the regional

consumer in order to reposition local and regional consumers as “shareholders” in building that thriving regional agricultural economy.

**Provide fiscal and non-fiscal policy incentives to foster agricultural innovation and entrepreneurship:** Because the private sector and civil society cannot shoulder the entire burden of building a thriving agricultural economy in these regions, national, state and local government agencies should be encouraged to harmonize and integrate policy incentives that can catalyze and complement private efforts to strengthen the local food system. In particular, offering fiscal incentives to encourage new farmers to enter the market, large retailers to source locally from qualified farmers, and access to start-up capital and business loans at discounted rates to help farmers manage inherent risks.

It is clear that well-conceived and integrated policy incentives targeting the regions in question and looking at the challenges and opportunities holistically and systemically would be beneficial. If a package of incentives could be conceived, it should seek to a) address the deficits in infrastructure and post harvesting facilities predominant in the region; b) underwrite or provide guarantees to financing facilities who would otherwise not be willing to invest in agriculture; c) provide targeted incentives for larger private sector players to engage because their engagement would contribute to local wealth creation consistent with the principles of inclusive growth (for example, encourage buyers to integrate “local” in their procurement policy and define what local means; and, d) find ways of providing or incentivizing technical assistance, agricultural extension, and lower cost/more efficient compliance methods for food safety.

**Maintain and deepen regional cross-sectoral dialogues to develop and harmonize priorities:** Given the information asymmetry that exists between stakeholders on these matters, continuing these kinds of convenings and deepening their attention to specific topics (like finance, logistics, crop insurance, or farmer readiness) would enhance cross-sectoral understanding and promote collective agendas for concerted action. The process that allows for companies and investors to think alongside front-line stakeholders, academia and government agencies may allow for new, collective and integrated solutions to emerge that would otherwise remain within the purview of a few isolated actors with insufficient resources to address the systemic issues at hand.

Agenda (9:00am – 5:00pm) - August 14, 2013

**900AM – 920AM | WELCOME and INTRODUCTIONS**

Welcome: **W. Robert de Jongh**, CEO and Chief Inclusion Architect, The Red Mantra Group

**920AM – 1120AM | AN INCLUSIVE AGRICULTURAL VALUE CHAIN at WORK:  
Experiences, Lessons and Opportunities | Moderated  
Panel Discussion**

**RON MCCORMICK**, Senior Director, Sustainable Agriculture, Walmart  
**KATHLYN TERRY**, Executive Director, Appalachian Sustainable Development  
**DIONYS FORSTER**, Sourcing Specialist, Nestle Global  
**ROBIN ROBBINS**, General Manager, Appalachian Harvest  
**CHRIS HARRIS**, Director of Category Management, CH Robinson  
**SANDI KRONICK**, CEO, Eastern Carolina Organics

Moderated by: **W. Robert de Jongh**, CEO and Chief Inclusion Architect, The Red Mantra Group and Jeff Hamaoui, Super Connector, Further by Design

**11:20AM – 11:40AM | BREAK**

**11:40AM – 1:00PM | IDENTIFYING CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES |  
Facilitated Plenary Discussion**

Inspired by the plenary panel, a discussion to determine what are the most salient challenges and subsequently based on the challenges, what would be the opportunities best explored that are critical to developing a thriving local agricultural economy in Appalachia and the Southern Black Belt. Outcomes will be clustered and three topics will be prioritized for discussion in the afternoon break-out sessions (break-out groups will be assigned and formed prior to lunch).

Moderated by: The Red Mantra and Further Teams

**1:00PM – 3:00PM | WORKING LUNCH & TEAMWORK IN BREAK-OUT GROUPS**

Three working groups will be assigned and will be asked to review and prioritize the clustered opportunities within their group in order to develop a preliminary set of goals, strategies, critical success factors, capabilities and resources required to seize the opportunities and convert them into an actionable agenda with possible next steps.

Groups will be moderated by The Red Mantra and Further Teams.

**3:00PM – 3:15PM | BREAK**

**3:15PM – 4:00PM | WORKING GROUP PLENARY PRESENTATIONS**

Three working groups will present the outcomes of their discussions and collaborative engagement.

**4:00PM – 5:00PM | WRAP-UP, NEXT STEPS AND CLOSING REMARKS**

A plenary discussion will explore key learnings and take-aways from participants, potential next steps, and closing remarks.

Closing remarks: **W. Robert de Jongh**, CEO and Chief Inclusion Architect, The Red Mantra Group

**5:00PM | END**

### About Wealthworks

WealthWorks is a 21st-century approach to local and regional economic development that belongs in every community and economic development toolkit. WealthWorks brings together and connects a community's assets to meet market demand in ways that build livelihoods that last.

WealthWorks can work for everyone: people, firms and places of all sizes, shapes and success levels. It advances a region's overall prosperity and self-reliance, strengthens existing and emerging sectors, and increases jobs and incomes for lower-income residents and firms—all at the same time.

WealthWorks identifies rich new enterprise opportunities in a region and engages a wide range of partners who turn those opportunities into results that create and capture wealth.

WealthWorks has a systematic approach that can complement or incorporate any current mainstream economic development method, while creating and capturing more value, and making it stick to the region.

In short, the WealthWorks approach seeks to produce and sustain these robust results:

- Build a more self-reliant and robust area economy.
- Bring underutilized community assets — people, place, property and know-how — into participation and production.
- Create wealth that sticks, because it is owned, controlled and reinvested locally.
- Increase upward mobility, including for low-income people, firms and places.
- Forge valued partnerships that can ably and flexibly connect again and again to fuel increasingly resilient regions.

### About the Red Mantra Group

The Red Mantra Group is a boutique strategy consulting, market research, and impact investment solutions company focused on helping our clients create value and grow in new ways that are profitable to them and that benefit society at large. We work with our clients to refine, define, develop and prioritize breakthrough solutions critical to their long-term sustainability and effectiveness across a diverse range of sectors and industries. Through our network of partners, we leverage our collective experience in strategy consulting, change management, business development, impact investing, inclusive business, and performance metrics, acquired and honed through decades of operational experience in emerging markets around the world, to partner with our clients to develop bespoke solutions to enable our clients to engage with untapped demand segments in strategic sectors that unlock long-term value and generate positive social and environmental outcomes.

As pioneers in the impact investing/inclusive business movement, our collective experience has been featured on notable media outlets such as CNN, the BBC, Euro-News and we have been privileged to advise leading organizations such as the Asian Development Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, the Department for International Development (DFID), the World Bank, Bank of America/Merrill Lynch, the Bill and Melinda Gates, Ford and Packard Foundations, Credit Suisse, the Wolfensohn Capital Group, Compagnie Benjamin de Rothschild and PriceWaterhouseCoopers, among many others. Traditionally, our clients include multi-lateral and bi-lateral development agencies, family offices, foundations, private companies and financial institutions, and non-governmental organizations.

## Appendix III: Convening Participant Contact Information and Biographies

### Convening Participants List: Contact Information and Biographies

Name	Position	Organization	E-mail address
Noah Beckwith	Chief Impact Investment Specialist	The Red Mantra Group	<a href="mailto:nbeckwith@red-mantra.com">nbeckwith@red-mantra.com</a>
Jack Beutell	Co-Founder	AgImpact Capital LLC	<a href="mailto:jack.beutell@fuqua.duke.edu">jack.beutell@fuqua.duke.edu</a>
Bruce Bolton	Retail Sales Manager	CH Robinson	<a href="mailto:Bruce.Bolton@chrobinson.com">Bruce.Bolton@chrobinson.com</a>
Dan Budi	Director of Retail Sales	Produce Source Partners	<a href="mailto:dbudi@webpsp.com">dbudi@webpsp.com</a>
Bonita A. Conwell		Mississippi Delta Southern Black Women in Agriculture	
Pam Curry	Executive Director	Center for Economic Options	<a href="mailto:PCurry@economicoptions.org">PCurry@economicoptions.org</a>
Andrew Crosson	Program Associate	Rural Support Partners	<a href="mailto:andrew@ruralsupportpartners.com">andrew@ruralsupportpartners.com</a>
Robert Daly	Produce Field Buyer	Harris Teeter	<a href="mailto:RDALY@harristeeter.com">RDALY@harristeeter.com</a>
W. Robert de Jongh	CEO and Chief Inclusion Architect	The Red Mantra Group	<a href="mailto:rdejongh@red-mantra.com">rdejongh@red-mantra.com</a>
Steve Eng	Director of Produce Operations	Harris Teeter	<a href="mailto:seng@harris-teeter.com">seng@harris-teeter.com</a>
Dionys Forester	Sourcing Specialist	Nestle	<a href="mailto:Dionys.Forester@nestle.com">Dionys.Forester@nestle.com</a>
Cheryl Galway	Marketing Director, South Region at Whole Foods Market	Whole Foods	<a href="mailto:cheryl.galway@wholefoods.com">cheryl.galway@wholefoods.com</a>
Julia Gaskin	Sustainable Agriculture Coordinator	University of Georgia	<a href="mailto:jgaskin@uga.edu">jgaskin@uga.edu</a>
Maya P. Gorrez	Managing Director, Accountability	The Red Mantra Group	<a href="mailto:mgorrez@red-mantra.com">mgorrez@red-mantra.com</a>
Ashley Graham	Consultant	Blue Moon Fund	<a href="mailto:agrahamnola@gmail.com">agrahamnola@gmail.com</a>
Jeff Hamaoui	Founder & Partner	Further by Design	<a href="mailto:jhamaoui@furtherbydesign.com">jhamaoui@furtherbydesign.com</a>
Chris Harris	Director of Category Management	CH Robinson	<a href="mailto:Chris.Harris@chrobinson.com">Chris.Harris@chrobinson.com</a>
Charlie Jackson	Executive Director	Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project (ASAP)	<a href="mailto:charlie@asapconnections.org">charlie@asapconnections.org</a>
Lea Jepson	Category Director	Walmart	<a href="mailto:lea.jepson@wal-mart.com">lea.jepson@wal-mart.com</a>
Sandi Kronick	CEO	Eco Organics	<a href="mailto:sandi@easterncarolinaorganics.com">sandi@easterncarolinaorganics.com</a>
Jennifer Lamb	Research Associate	Appalachian Sustainable Development (ASD)	<a href="mailto:jlamb@asdevelop.org">jlamb@asdevelop.org</a>
Rick Larson	North Carolina Program Director	Natural Capital Investment Fund	<a href="mailto:rlarson@conservationfund.org">rlarson@conservationfund.org</a>
Jerry Lee	Director of Produce/Agriculture	McCall Farms	<a href="mailto:jlee@mccallfarms.com">jlee@mccallfarms.com</a>
David Joshua Levy	Connector	Further by Design	<a href="mailto:dlevy@furtherbydesign.com">dlevy@furtherbydesign.com</a>
Melissa Levy	Senior Associate	Yellow Wood Associates	<a href="mailto:Melissa@yellowwood.org">Melissa@yellowwood.org</a>
Ron McCormick	Senior Director, Sustainable Agriculture	Walmart	<a href="mailto:ron.mccormick@wal-mart.com">ron.mccormick@wal-mart.com</a>



### Appendix III: Convening Participant Contact Information and Biographies

Name	Position	Organization	E-mail address
Matt McKenna	Investment and Foundation Advisor to the Secretary of Agriculture	United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)	<a href="mailto:matt.McKenna@osec.usda.gov">matt.McKenna@osec.usda.gov</a>
Wes Miller	Managing Partner	Broader Horizons Management Consulting	<a href="mailto:wescmiller@bellsouth.net">wescmiller@bellsouth.net</a>
Jill Moorhead	Marketing Director	Eat Well Distribution & Wholesale Marketing Director, Jeni's Splendid Ice Creams	<a href="mailto:jill@eatwelldistribution.com">jill@eatwelldistribution.com</a>
David Nicola	Co-Founder	AgImpact Capital LLC and Venture Farming	<a href="mailto:david.j.nicola@gmail.com">david.j.nicola@gmail.com</a>
Pete Pearson	Principal	Solstice Enterprises	<a href="mailto:petepearson@solsticeinc.com">petepearson@solsticeinc.com</a>
Robin Robbins	General Manager	Appalachian Harvest	<a href="mailto:ahmrkt@yahoo.com">ahmrkt@yahoo.com</a>
Leslie Schaller	Program Director	Appalachian Center for Economic Networks (ACEnet)	<a href="mailto:leslies@acenetworks.org">leslies@acenetworks.org</a>
Henry Swink	Co-President	McCall Farms	<a href="mailto:hswink@mccallfarms.com">hswink@mccallfarms.com</a>
Kathlyn Terry	Executive Director	Appalachian Sustainable Development (ASD)	<a href="mailto:kterry@asdevelop.org">kterry@asdevelop.org</a>
Thomas M. Watson	Principal	Rural Support Partners	<a href="mailto:thomas@ruralsupportpartners.com">thomas@ruralsupportpartners.com</a>
Andrew Williams	President	Williams Enterprises	<a href="mailto:andrewwilliams66@yahoo.com">andrewwilliams66@yahoo.com</a>
Jill G. Young	Technical Assistance Coordinator	Value Chain Cluster Initiative	<a href="mailto:jillgraceyoun@yahoo.com">jillgraceyoun@yahoo.com</a>

## **Building a Thriving Local Agricultural Economy**

in Central Appalachia and the Deep South

**August 14th, 2013 Convening List of Confirmed Participants**

### **NOAH BECKWITH - Chief Impact Investment Specialist, The Red Mantra Group**



Noah is an impact investment specialist focused on the design and structuring of debt and equity vehicles investing in social and environmental sectors. His current mandates include the design of several BOP (base of the pyramid) – orientated private equity funds for the Asian Development Bank and the establishment of a new investment company for ResponsAbility, one of the world's leading microfinance investors. In addition, Noah heads the Banks and Angel Investors Programme at BiD Network, a Dutch organization which channels capital to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) across the emerging markets. Prior to working independently, Noah was responsible for fund raising, business principles and development impact assessment at Aureos Capital, a global leader in SME investing. Whilst at Aureos, he created one of the first development impact assessment systems, the Aureos Sustainability Index. Previously, he spent two years with the Commonwealth Development Corporation, and four years with the Economist Group as a Senior Economist for the Africa and Pacific regions of the Economist Intelligence Unit, contributing regularly to the Economist newspaper on African and Asian affairs. Noah graduated from Oxford University with an MA in Spanish and English, and from the London School of Economics with a Diploma in International Relations, and an MS in Development Economics. He speaks English and Spanish, as well as fluent French, Portuguese and Italian. Noah currently works on a variety of impact investment and inclusive business projects for a range of clients, including the Asian Development Bank, Banque Benjamin de Rothschild, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and the UK's Department for International Development.

### **JACK BEUTTELL, Co-Founder AgImpact Capital LLC and Venture Farming**



Jack Beuttell is a 2014 candidate for MBA and Master of Environmental Management at Duke University, where he founded DukeENVENT, a pan-university initiative promoting environmental entrepreneurship. Jack is a 2013 MBA Fellow for Investors' Circle and recipient of the 2013 Bull City Forward Fellowship for Social Entrepreneurship, sponsored by Burt's Bees. Jack received Fuqua's 2012 CASE Seed Prize for Social Entrepreneurs. He served as an Associate for Fuqua's CASE i3 Initiative on Impact Investing in 2012. Prior to Duke, Jack spent seven years in marketing, finance, and sustainability for an international real estate investment firm. He was raised in Florida where his family was in the citrus business for 30 years. Jack has uncles in the Christmas tree and ranching businesses in North Carolina and Montana, respectively. He has interned with Ranchlands Group (Colorado Springs, CO), International Farming Corporation (Kinston, NC), and The Conservation Trust for North Carolina (Raleigh, NC). Jack is a co-founder of AgImpact Capital LLC & VentureFarming.

### **BRUCE BOLTON - Retail Sales Manager, CH Robinson**



Bruce is currently the Retail Sales Manager at CH Robinson and has more than 40 years experience in the retail, wholesale food industry. Started in the wholesale grocery business in 1971 in Monroe, LA with a regional wholesale grocery distributor, Malone and Hyde who was bought out in 1988 by a national wholesale grocer, Fleming Companies. Over the course of a 29 year career with this company, Bruce spent time in warehousing, outbound shipping, logistics and then moving into procurement of fresh produce, and then to operations manager for fresh produce. He moved to Miami in 1991 to manage their produce operations that included domestic and export of fresh produce. In 1995, Bruce moved to OKC as director of Produce Marketing, introducing the first national private label program for independents. He worked with independent retailers for 29 years selling them on the value of their programs. In late 2000, he moved to Morven Partner's (Nut Company) as a national accounts manager for just over a year and then moved to Dole Fresh Salads as a national accounts manager. In 2003, Bruce went to work for C.H. Robinson as Retail Sales manager and has managed many different categories within Robinson and in 2013 took over the sourcing managers role for our CPDS in Eden Prairie, MN.

## Appendix III: About the Convening Participants



### **DAN BUDI, Director of Retail Sales, Produce Source Partners, Inc.**

Dan Budi is the Director of Retail Sales at Produce Source Partners Inc. (PSP) located in Ashland, Virginia. One of his major responsibilities is developing and expanding produce grown in Virginia to the retail market trade throughout the state. His retail customers include Martin's, Walmart, Harris Teeter and Fresh Market to name a few. Prior to joining Produce Source Partners, Dan was Vice President of Davis Distributors in Northern Virginia, specializing in distribution of fresh mushrooms and specialty produce to the retail markets. Dan then started his own wholesale food company, Old Colony Distributors, in Richmond Virginia. Old Colony was a specialty produce distributor with a strong emphasis in sales and distribution of Virginia Finest products. Dan has considerable experience in the produce area and a love for produce grown in Virginia. He is a supporter of the local farmers and works diligently to promote their products to Virginian's.



### **BONITA A. CONWELL, Mississippi Delta Southern Black Women in Agriculture**

Ms. Conwell is President of the First Black Women's and all Women Cooperative in the State of Mississippi and has been a successful business owner for 35 years. She is the former Alderman of the Town of Mound Bayou, has been a former educator, and is the Secretary of the Board of Directors of St. Gabriel's Mercy Center. She has extensive experience in agricultural development in the Deep South and is a proud mother of one daughter.



### **PAM CURRY, Executive Director, Center for Economic Options**

Pam Curry has been the Executive Director of the Center for Economic Options (CEO) since 1988. Under her leadership, CEO has become a catalyst organization that connects people with the resources and expertise they need to take advantage of economic opportunities and to accelerate innovation and entrepreneurship. The social purpose enterprises she has developed through CEO have trained and supported the development of hundreds of rural small business owners. Her focus on people, profits and the planet guides the organization's work and builds on her former career in social services and academic background in business and economics. She is at the forefront of many regional development initiatives including the Central Appalachian Network (CAN), West Virginia's A Vision Shared initiative, West Virginia's Farm to School movement, and CEO's Green Business, Green Jobs Accelerator website and web-based Shades of Green Business Certification and Business Directory initiative. A native West Virginian, she lives with her husband on a 100-acre homestead and is a founding member of the Appalachian-Celtic band, Mountain Thyme.



### **ANDREW CROSSON, Rural Support Partners**

Andrew, a native of rural Western North Carolina, is in his second year with Rural Support Partners. He is the coordinator for the Central Appalachian Network (CAN) and is involved with several other Wealth Creation-related projects and networks. He completed his undergraduate degree at UNC-Chapel Hill, and received a Master's in Sociology from the University of Granada, Spain, with a focus on rural development and agriculture.

### **ROBERT DALY, Produce Field Buyer, Harris Teeter**

Robert is a local Produce Field buyer for Harris Teeter. He has been in the Produce industry for over 30 years and with Harris Teeter for 22 years. He started with Harris Teeter as a Produce Clerk and worked his way up to Produce Manager, Co-Manager, Store Manager, Produce Merchandiser and now his present position Local Produce Field Buyer.

## Appendix III: About the Convening Participants



### **W. ROBERT DE JONGH - CEO and Chief Inclusion Architect, The Red Mantra Group, Inc.**

W. Robert de Jongh is a senior strategy, business development and change management executive focused on accelerating the growth, competitiveness and impact of public and private sector clients in emerging markets. For 20+ years, he has developed and executed strategies that have generated over \$1 billion for sustainable and inclusive business development efforts in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Robert held senior executive positions in for-profit and non-profit organizations during which time he led numerous change management/business turn-around and corporate strategy initiatives that were catalytic in creating long-term company value and growth. As an entrepreneur, Robert has also founded 3 business ventures including a private-equity-financed technology solutions start-up in 2000 that was subsequently acquired in 2008 and is a pioneer and one of the key drivers of the "inclusive business" movement worldwide. His latest venture, Red Mantra, is a boutique strategy consulting, market research, and technology solutions company focused on inclusive growth, sustainability and accountability in emerging markets worldwide. Robert is a graduate of the American University in International Studies and Development Economics in Washington, D.C. and he completed EU policy studies at the Université Libre de Bruxelles, in Brussels, Belgium. He speaks six languages, has lived and worked in over 30 countries in the Americas, Europe, Africa and Asia, and is a frequent panelist/invited strategist at international conferences worldwide.

### **STEVE ENG, Director of Produce Operations, Harris Teeter**



### **DIONYS FORSTER - Sourcing Specialist, Nestlé Global**

Dionys Forster is a Sourcing Specialist in Nestlé's Corporate Agriculture Division in Vevey, Switzerland and is focused on developing raw material suppliers in sustainable agriculture worldwide. Dionys has been exposed to farming for most of his life -- be it from visiting his grandfather's vineyard as a child to building and developing his own farm in the Swiss countryside. Trained as agronomist, Dionys first worked in development cooperation with a focus on agricultural development in Central Asia and then moved to agricultural and environmental research in West Africa, South Asia and South-East Asia for FIBL (Swiss Research Institute for Organic Agriculture). Thereafter, he became engaged in research and development of organic production systems and worked on a variety of crops such as cotton, corn, wheat, soybean and vegetables supporting the development of local and export-oriented value chains mainly in South Asia and Africa. Dionys received his undergraduate and graduate degrees in International Agriculture at the School of Agriculture, Forest and Food Sciences part of Bern University of Applied Sciences, Switzerland and his PhD from Rostock University (focused on intensive peri-urban food production systems in Vietnam). [??]

### **CHERYL GALWAY, Marketing Director, South Region, Whole Foods Market**



### **JULIA GASKIN, Sustainable Agriculture Coordinator, University of Georgia (UGA)**

Ms. Gaskin is the Sustainable Agriculture Coordinator for the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences at the UGA. She works with stakeholders and faculty to identify critical needs for sustainable agriculture in the state and to develop programming to serve those needs. Over the past several years, she has solicited stakeholder input through stakeholder meetings, surveys, and focus groups. The sustainable agriculture program is responding to these needs by developing training and research as well as increasing outreach through a new website ([www.SustainAgGA.org](http://www.SustainAgGA.org)), newsletter and a new Facebook page. Recent workshops include local foods, farm to school, grass-fed ruminants, organic grain and oilseed production, organic cool season vegetable production, soil fertility, and conservation tillage systems. One significant effort is the development of the Sustainable and Organic Production Team in partnership with Fort Valley State University and Georgia Organics that provides technical assistance to organic and other small to mid-scale growers. Another recent effort is extension trainings for small and medium-size farms on food safety. This multi-state project created a simple checklist and fact-sheets for farmer's market managers and farmers in both English and Spanish to help smaller producers begin to address food safety issues. Ms. Gaskin recently led the effort to form the Georgia Sustainable Agriculture Consortium. This group includes the UGA, Fort Valley State University, the

## Appendix III: About the Convening Participants

Georgia Department of Agriculture, Georgia Farm Bureau, Georgia Fruit & Vegetable Growers Association, and Georgia Organics. This consortium is working together to leverage resources to develop food hubs in the state and provide research-based information on sustainability as well as best practices for vegetable production and multi-species grazing systems. As part of this effort she recently conducted a baseline food hub survey for Georgia and a farmer's needs assessment.



### **MAYA P. GORREZ, Managing Director, Accountability, The Red Mantra Group**

Maya is a senior strategy, monitoring and evaluation, and market research specialist focused on developing sustainability and conservation interventions in Asia and the Pacific, Central America, and the United States. For more than 20 years, she has led sustainable resource management and community development efforts in Southeast Asia and Central America, focusing on the development of alternative livelihoods, sustainable natural resource management strategies, local community integration processes and accountability mechanisms. Maya's work has transcended boundaries that traditionally divided the conservation, community development and poverty-reduction arenas. Apart from having co-authored the only comprehensive integrated biological, social and economic monitoring guide for the Meso-American reef region, Maya has applied an ecosystems approach to mapping out the complex network of human trafficking in the country of Cyprus as part of an effort to develop new mitigation strategies. Her clients have included the World Bank, the Packard and Summit Foundations, GOPA Consulting Group, World Wide Fund for Nature, The Nature Conservancy, the US State Department, and SNV among others. Maya is a graduate of the University of the Philippines at Los Baños and has a Masters of Science degree in Environmental Sciences and Policy from Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore. Over the past few years, Maya has led multiple research, market scoping and evaluation assignments focused on value chain analysis, livelihoods development, and capacity development. She has been an advisor on and contributor to inclusive business development, primarily on defining impact indicators, establishing the correlation between value chain development and inclusive business, and on impact investment feasibility studies.



### **ASHLEY GRAHAM, Blue Mood Fund**

Ashley Graham is consulting with the blue moon fund to identify gaps and opportunities in the Louisiana food system and to support entrepreneurial organizations that address critical needs and grow the local food economy. From 1992-2011, Ashley served in a variety of senior positions at Share Our Strength, where she worked with the organization's network of chefs and restaurateurs, grassroots leaders, and corporate and community partners to harness their strengths to support anti-hunger initiatives. Ashley led the organization's response to Hurricane Katrina, supporting the region's food system recovery and opening a Louisiana office based in New Orleans. Before she sat down at the table to focus on food issues, she graduated from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and enjoyed a brief career working on political campaigns.



### **JEFF HAMAOU - Founder, Partner, Super Connector, Further by Design, Inc.**

Jeff Hamaoui is an expert in collaborative innovation and is fascinated with open innovation, systems collaborations and the intersection between the two. Jeff has spent 20 years building partnerships around the world working with many fortune 500 companies, governments, investors and NGO's trying to understand the strategies, technologies, financial tools and narratives to effectively get groups of people to design together, invest together and work together. It's been an interesting ride so far. Jeff is also Co-Founder of LAUNCH, a global sustainability innovations program supported by NASA, USAID, Department of State and NIKE and sits on a number of boards focusing on access to technology (the very awesome Techsoup Global), education and youth development. Jeff is currently designing and delivering the systems innovation and design course at the Wharton School of Business in Philadelphia. He also loves to surf.

## Appendix III: About the Convening Participants



### **CHRIS HARRIS - Director of Category Management, CH Robinson**

Chris Harris is the Director of Category Management at CH Robinson where he represents their strategic approach to their categories and the supply of those categories. That includes, but is not limited to how they engage with growers to grow for CH Robinson locally, domestically and internationally. Chris has worked in produce since college, for a growers and processors in the UK including the processor Ready Pac and the well-known UK-based retailer Tesco (fresh and easy). He was worked at CH Robinson for the past three years and has worked in all aspects of the supply chain from seed through consumer in two continents. Chris received his Bsc Hons in Maths and the University of Sussex in the UK and his MBA from Pepperdine University in California.



### **CHARLIE JACKSON, Executive Director, Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project (ASAP)**

Charlie Jackson is the Executive Director and one of the founding farmers of Appalachian Sustainable Agriculture Project (ASAP). He has extensive experience in developing and implementing local food campaigns and creating local food systems that are socially just, health promoting, sustainable, and that build local economies. He is an author of the groundbreaking local food and farm assessment *Growing Local: Expanding the Western North Carolina Food and Farming Economy* (2007). He has been responsible for the successful development and implementation of programs in farm to school, farm to hospital, farm to chef, direct sales, regional branding, farm tourism, and more. He is the founder of numerous farmers markets and farmer associations, a community organizer, and a researcher on local food system development. He initiated and currently serves on the North Carolina Local Food Policy Council and serves on the Buncombe County Public Health Advisory Council and the WNC AgriVentures Innovation Council.



### **LEA JEPSON - Category Director, Walmart**



### **SANDI KRONICK, CEO, ECO ORGANICS**

Sandi got her start in the sustainable food scene in college as the Local Food Coordinator for a 700-member dining co-op in Oberlin, Ohio. After learning how to communicate efficiently with the area's Amish farmers (who don't drive or use phones, fax or email), she figured she could set up a vibrant local food system anywhere. After consulting with Cleveland restaurants to help them set up local buying programs, Sandi moved to NC and hooked up with the [Carolina Farm Stewardship Association](#), launching ECO in 2004. She oversees all business management activities, ensuring that the company is growing in-line with our goals of making a positive impact in both the consumer and grower communities. In 2010 Sandi was awarded the 40 Under 40 Business Leadership Award for the Triangle area in NC and traveled to Chile on behalf of the Chilean Trade Commission to give lectures on the US organic marketplace. Sandi serves as the agribusiness representative on the Administrative Council for [Southern SARE](#), the sustainable ag arm of the USDA. Sandi's a proud 'opportunivore,' (she experiments in the kitchen with whatever is available).

## Appendix III: About the Convening Participants



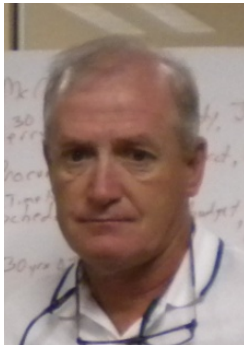
### **JENNIFER LAMB - Research Fellow, Appalachian Sustainable Development**

Jennifer Lamb is a Fellow at Appalachian Sustainable Development (ASD), a non-profit in Abingdon, VA. She conducts outreach for crop insurance education for diversified producers and is currently working on a project to build a regional geographic information system (GIS) to help connect remote farmers to direct and regional markets. Prior to joining ASD, she worked in Kenya, Uganda, Lesotho and South Africa as a Research Associate for the Sustainable Agriculture & Natural Resource Management Collaborative Research Support Program and as a Soya Beans Project Coordinator for Community Action for Rural Development, a nonprofit in Kenya. A graduate of Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University, she received a B.S. in Agricultural & Applied Economics and a B.A. in Political Science in 2010 and a M.S. in Agricultural & Applied Economics in 2011. Jeni has published multiple articles on sustainable development. She was selected as a Harry S. Truman Scholar in 2009 and to the USA Today All Academic First Team in 2010. In fall 2013, she is beginning law school and plans to specialize in environmental and agricultural law and plans to work in agricultural policy.



### **RICK LARSON - North Carolina Program Director, Natural Capital Investment Fund**

Rick joined The Conservation Fund in 2007 to assist with TCF's natural resource-based business lending programs. As ShadeFund Director, he heads up ShadeFund's lending activities nationwide, working with potential borrowers and preparing recommendations for the ShadeFund Loan Committee. He is also NC Program Director for the Natural Capital Investment Fund ([www.ncifund.org](http://www.ncifund.org)), The Conservation Fund's business lending arm that provides patient capital to triple-bottom-line natural resource-based businesses in six Southeastern states. His prior experience includes: Managing Director of SJF Ventures, a \$45 M mission-driven venture capital fund based in Durham, NC; National Director, REAL Enterprises, a nationwide entrepreneurship education program for rural youth and adults; and shop floor supervisor and financial controller for the Cummins Engine Co. He is an Adjunct Professor at Columbia Business School and UNC Chapel Hill's Kenan-Flagler Business School, where he teaches courses on Impact Investing and Financing Social Ventures. He serves on the Board of Fair Trade USA, which certifies Fair Trade products in the US. Rick lives in Durham, NC with his wife Gair and is the proud father of two sons, Justin (a St. Olaf College sophomore) and David (a 7th grader). He earned an MBA from the Yale School of Management and a BA in History and French from Amherst College.



### **JERRY LEE, Director of Produce/Agriculture, McCall Farms**

Jerry is currently Director of Agriculture and Raw Produce Procurement at McCall Farms, Inc. Over the course of a 33 year career with McCall Farms, Jerry has directed warehousing, shipping and logistics, and finally moving to his current position. He serves as a board trustee for Florence County School District #5, President of Johnsonville's Prosser Field Youth Organization, member of USSA Sports Association Hall of Fame and was 2011 State Volunteer of the Year for South Carolinas Parks and Recreation Association. [\[7\]](#)



### **DAVID JOSHUA LEVY - Connector, Further by Design, Inc.**

David is multi-industry, high impact pioneer. Working at PAX Scientific as VP of Strategy and Development from September 2010 – May 2012 David brought investors, customers, and partners to PAX Scientific from a wide array of industries and economic centers including Beijing, Silicon Valley, and Nashville. Prior to joining PAX Scientific, while earning his MBA, David worked as an Associate in Private Wealth Management at Goldman Sachs. From 2003 - 2008, David served as Founder and President of Threshold Music, a company that produced original music for national and international television advertising campaigns. David currently sits on the board of Los Angeles based Isidore Electronics Recycling. He holds a BA in History and a BA in Music from Northwestern University and an MBA from Vanderbilt University.

## Appendix III: About the Convening Participants



### **MELISSA LEVY - Senior Associate, Yellow Wood Associates, Inc.**

As part of Yellow Wood's work as the managing grantee of the Ford Foundation's Wealth Creation in Rural Communities initiative, Melissa Levy coaches grantees on wealth creation and measurement.

Melissa has worked with a wide variety of organizations in the area of measurement, using Yellow Wood's You Get What You Measure ® process. Melissa is the co-author with Doug Hoffer of a paper on community wealth indicators, Measuring Community Wealth. Melissa received her Master's in Natural Resource Planning from the University of Vermont. Melissa lives in Hinesburg, Vermont where she serves on the Hinesburg Conservation Commission and the Hinesburg Economic Development Commission. She also serves as a board member and Secretary of the Vermont Environmental Consortium.

### **RON McCormick, Senior Director, Sustainable Agriculture, Walmart**



Ronald (Ron) G. McCormick, Senior Director of Sustainable Agriculture has been with Walmart since 1995 when he joined the company as a produce buyer. He spent 10 years as VP/ Divisional Merchandise Manager for Produce & Floral, and has been leading work on local produce sourcing and sustainable agriculture in recent years. He started his 40 year grocery career as a bagger at a former Michigan grocery chain, bought produce at Meijer, and prior to joining Walmart spent 8 years in store operations at Food Lion. McCormick earned a B.A. in Business Administration at the University of Michigan - Flint, and attended Aquinas College in Grand Rapids. He currently serves as captain of Walmart's Global Food & Agriculture Sustainable Value Network. McCormick has served on the National Mango Board, the boards of the Produce for Better Health Foundation and the United Fresh Produce Association, as well as chairing committees for the Produce Marketing Association. McCormick and his wife, Angie, have been married for over 35 years. They have two daughters Haley Lane, who lives in NW Arkansas with her husband and two children; and Mallory McCormick Lowe and her husband. His son-in-law, Brandon Lane, and daughter, Mallory, are also part of the Walmart family.

### **MATT McKENNA - Investment & Foundation Advisor to the Secretary of Agriculture (USDA)**



Matt McKenna is serving as the Investment and Foundation Advisor to the Secretary of Agriculture. In 2012, USDA invested more than \$30 Billion in projects in rural America. These programs included investments in electric utilities, broadband, telecommunications, housing, and improved water and wastewater service. Mr. McKenna's role will be to leverage these federal resources with public and private partners to foster job creation, business development and economic growth in rural America. External stakeholders will include both strategic and financial investors. Prior to joining USDA, Matt served as the President and Chief Executive Officer of Keep America Beautiful, Inc., the nation's leading nonprofit that brings volunteers together to build and sustain vibrant communities. Matt led the transformation of this well-respected nonprofit with bold initiatives into waste reduction, recycling, beautification and communality greening including breakthrough work in social community impact—all while expanding support and increasing recognition for this respected 60 year old organization. Keep America Beautiful was a strong network of 1,200 affiliates and partners singularly focused on improving public places through programs that delivered sustainable impact. Through programs and public-private partnerships, they improved the economic, social, and environmental health of these communities. The organization was a valued member of the Clinton Global Initiative. Through just two of their programs, the non profit recruited more than 7 million volunteers and sponsored events in more than 20,000 communities across the country. Prior to joining Keep America Beautiful, Matt served as the Senior Vice President, Finance at PepsiCo, Inc., the global food and beverage corporation. Previously, he held positions of Senior Vice President, Treasurer and Senior Vice President, Taxes. A graduate of Georgetown Law School, Matt is the chairman of the Board of the Ignatian Volunteer Corps. He has served on the board of trustees of several other for profit and not for profit organizations including Hamilton College, where he graduated in 1972 and was a member of Phi Beta Kappa. Matt has also served on the boards of Manhattanville College, Mount Saint Mary's University and the Manhattan Theatre Club. He remains an adjunct professor at Fordham University, where he has taught since 1984. He is actively involved in the community of Bronxville, NY, where he and his wife Nancy raised their four children.



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### **WES MILLER, Managing Partner, Broader Horizons Management Consulting**

Miller serves as managing partner for Broader Horizons Management Consulting which specializes in agriculture, energy, environment and business development services and has 15 years of economic and community development experience in commercial, energy/environmental, financial, housing and industrial programs. He served as Director of the Leadership, Agriculture and Economic Development System Program (LEADS) at Tougaloo College, a community based partner in the USDA StrikeForce Initiative. This program significantly impacts economic and community development initiatives in rural communities with consistently high rates of poverty. Prior to coming to Tougaloo College, Miller acted as chief operating officer for EGB Tech, a building prefabrication company which uses eco-friendly panelized materials. As the management consultant in charge of directing the NeighborWorks America, Rebuilding Communities Office for Mississippi and Alabama, Miller was responsible for developing strategic plans and providing technical assistance for fundraising, construction management, capacity building, economic development and green technology usage in areas affected by Hurricane Katrina. Prior to joining NeighborWorks America, he acted as deputy director and evaluator for Project Recovery. His daily responsibilities included organizing a workforce of 450 people who collected data door-to-door on hurricane victims in 49 counties. His responsibilities included evaluating and interpreting data related to human development, property loss, and infrastructure development in addition to filing reports and making presentations on the impact of Hurricane Katrina. As a marketing specialist with Alcorn State University he assisted small farmers in developing plans, packaging, branding, organization management structure for cooperative development and in locating new markets for products.



### **JILL MOORHEAD, Marketing Director, Eat Well Distribution & Wholesale Marketing Director, Jeni's Splendid Ice Creams**

Jill Moorhead was recently hired on by Jeni's Splendid Ice Creams and their sister company, Eat Well Distribution to provide marketing solutions for both companies. She provides marketing and media support for Eat Well Distribution, which showcases built-from-the-ground-up, best-in-their-category foods made from real ingredients. This boutique distributor boasts services not traditionally offered from distributors. At Jeni's Splendid Ice Creams, she uses experience her eleven-plus years as Marketing Director for a small chain of markets in Columbus, Ohio to assist more than 800 retailers across the country in educating their customers about the grass-grazed ice cream.



### **DAVID NICOLA, Co-Founder AgImpact Capital LLC and Venture Farming.**

David Nicola is a 2013 MBA who graduated with honors from Duke University's Fuqua School of Business, where he served as student co-chair for the CASE i3 Initiative on Impact Investing and received Fuqua's 2012 CASE Seed Prize for Social Entrepreneurs. Prior to Fuqua, David spent seven years in the financial industry as a portfolio manager at BlueMountain Capital Management and as an investment banking analyst at Citigroup. He is an avid conservationist with a Natural Resources degree from Cornell University and extensive volunteer experience with The Nature Conservancy, serving as Young Professionals Board Member from 2005-2011. Currently, David is working at Stone Barns Center for Food & Agriculture on a project that is jointly sponsored by Armonia LLC. He is focused on exploring new business models that support beginning farmer land access and regenerative agriculture in New York state. David also remains focused on sustainable agriculture in the North Carolina region as a co-founder of AgImpact Capital LLC & VentureFarming.



### **PETE PEARSON, Principal, Solstice Enterprises**

Pete Pearson has been a sustainability/CSR professional for over 5 years, most recently serving as the Director of Sustainability for SUPERVALU where he led the Zero Waste program and worked cross-functionally to expand sustainability initiatives in 11 grocery formats across 37 states. In addition, Pete has 10+ years of experience as an operations analyst and project manager with various companies including Hewlett-Packard and Accenture. He received a BS in Information Systems from the University of Idaho and obtained his MBA in Sustainable Business Management from Green Mountain College in Vermont. Pete helps businesses and communities develop/execute sustainability/CSR programs and has worked extensively on creating an online logistics tool which restaurants and grocery

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stores can more effectively source food from local farmers. Pete is the president of the Idaho Center for Sustainable Agriculture (ICSA) and is co-founder and principle consultant for Solstice Enterprises LLC.

### **ROBIN ROBBINS - Appalachian Harvest General Manager**



Robin is responsible for managing ASD's Appalachian Harvest food hub enterprise including its 15,000 square foot facility in Duffield, VA. She is also responsible for market development and building strong relationships with supermarket buyers and for daily sales of Appalachian Harvest produce and free-range eggs. She has developed farmer, facility, and logistics processes to streamline the organization's operations and minimize costs with a goal of making Appalachian Harvest a self-sustaining enterprise. Since joining ASD in 2006 she has increased sales from \$350K to \$1.2 million in 2012. Robin joined ASD in 2004 as a certified organic farmer and joined the Appalachian Harvest staff as Marketer in September, 2005. Prior to joining ASD, she graduated Magna Cum Laude from Virginia Intermont College in Bristol, VA. For 7 years she served as a public school teacher in the Lee County public school system, and has been a 22 year advocate for children with special needs. Robin joined the Appalachian Harvest network as an advocate for health, nutrition, education, and building local community support systems. She has many years experience organizing events and special campaigns. She has drafted the Appalachian Harvest GAP Mirror Program and merged the USDA National Organic Program rules with GAP practice language into one farmer-friendly document. She also trains farmers in USDA GAP procedures and processes, guiding them to USDA GAP Certification.

### **LESLIE SCHALLER, Program Director, Appalachian Center for Economic Networks (ACEnet)**



Ms. Schaller currently serves as the Director of Programs and provides national consulting services on behalf of the Appalachian Center for Economic Networks. ACEnet is a community-based economic development organization located in rural Appalachia Ohio founded in 1985. The mission of ACEnet is to build the capacity of Appalachian communities to network, work together, and innovate to create a dynamic, sustainable regional economy with opportunities for all. ACEnet food sector programs are nationally renowned for developing local food infrastructure, farmers market networks, access to market initiatives and regional branding programs for farm and processed products. Ms. Schaller was part of the founding staff of ACEnet's Food Ventures program and oversaw the development of the Food Ventures Center, ACEnet 12,000 square foot kitchen incubator facility. Since 1996, our shared-use kitchen incubator, the Food Ventures Center has provided a licensed commercial kitchen, thermal processing, packaging, food service and warehouse space to over 240 food processors and area farmers. ACEnet's Food Ventures program has pioneered non-traditional strategies to rebuild the infrastructure, market programs and distribution channels for family farmers and local food processors to thrive, at the same time meeting the growing demand from rural consumers for fresh, local foods.

### **Daymon Worldwide (final confirmation pending) - 2 participants**

### **HENRY SWINK, Co-President, McCall Farms**



Mr. Henry M. Swink serves as the Co-President of McCall Farms, Inc. Mr. Swink has been a Director of First Financial Holdings Inc. since 2002. He has been Director of First Federal Bank since 2010. Mr. Swink served as a Director of Peoples Federal Savings and Loan Association from 1996 to August 30, 2002. He served as Director of First Federal Bank until August 30, 2002. He is active in various civic activities having been a member of the Florence Kiwanis Club for thirty five years. He serves as Chairman of the Board for Carolina Hospital Systems. He serves as Trustee of Drs. Bruce & Lee Foundation, and Chairs the Finance Committee of this Foundation. He is an active member of the Effingham Presbyterian Church and has served on the Session for 25 years. He serves on the Board of the Legislative Audit Council and the Clemson University Board of Visitors.

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### **KATHLYN TERRY - Executive Director, Appalachian Sustainable Development (ASD)**

Kathlyn Terry was born and raised in Texas and holds a bachelor's degree in business from Texas A&M University. Kathlyn is the Executive Director at [Appalachian Sustainable Development \(ASD\)](#), a non-profit organization that supports the local, sustainable economies in southwest VA and northeast TN. She has over 20 years of experience in various leadership business roles in the for-profit sector, and now works to promote wholesale and direct market opportunities for farmers and to provide citizens in the region with opportunities to grow, purchase, eat and enjoy their food in a variety of ways. Kathlyn joined ASD in 2006 as the business operations manager, responsible for leading ASD's social enterprises towards financial independence.



### **THOMAS M. WATSON - Principal, Rural Support Partners**

Thomas M. Watson is a social entrepreneur with 20+ years of experience in nonprofit and business management, community-based economic development, and organizational capacity building. Currently, he is the Principal of Rural Support Partners – a social enterprise working across the Southeast to strengthen anchor organizations, develop collective impact networks, and help move rural sustainable economic development efforts to scale. Prior to founding Rural Support Partners, Thomas was the director of the Grassroots Support Project at the Southern Rural Development Initiative (SRDI). At SRDI, Thomas worked to strengthen grassroots economic development organizations across the Southeast through the provision of hands-on organizational and leadership development support, development of regional networks, and the implementation of grassroots trainings. Thomas came to SRDI after working as a Senior Program Consultant with the Annie E. Casey Foundation in Baltimore, MD where he managing national funding initiatives focused on grassroots leadership and social enterprise development. He also co-founded the Center for Participatory Change in Asheville, NC and served as Co-Executive Director for five years. CPC supports grassroots groups in Western North Carolina through organizing, capacity building, network building, and a small grants program. Thomas grew up in rural Appalachia and worked in factories, as a hotel manager, and a banker before receiving his Master of Social Work degree from UNC-Chapel Hill - where he completed internships with Grassroots Leadership and the Highlander Center. He received a BS in Business Management from Guilford College in Greensboro, NC.



### **ANDREW WILLIAMS, President, Williams Enterprises**

Andrew Williams is President of Williams Enterprises, LLC, a Consulting Outreach Company that assists small farmers and rural communities. He also serves as the CEO for the United Christian Community Association (TUCCA). He retired from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service in 2009. His career with USDA began in 1976, and he served in the capacity of Soil Conservationist, District Conservationist, RC&D Coordinator, and State Outreach Coordinator during that time, as well as serving two years as staff Rural Development Specialist to Congressman Earl Hillard.



### **JILL G. YOUNG, Technical Assistance Coordinator, Value Chain Cluster Initiative**

Jill Young joined the Value Chain Cluster Initiative in March of 2013 as the Technical Assistance Coordinator. She brings her experience and enthusiasm for community development, outreach and lettuce production to the project. Her past efforts with local foods and farming include Coordinator of the Greenbrier Valley Local Food Initiative, VISTA Volunteer with the GVLFI - assigned to Monroe Farm Market, AmeriCorps Intern with the Monroe County BOE as a Business and Community Liaison. Long known as a serial entrepreneur, Jill has also worked in real estate, owned an international homestay organization, sold books, and been a professional tailor. In her spare time, she grows lettuce and other greens, which she sells through Monroe Farm Market.