



West Virginia Agriculture Strategic Plan Community Meeting Notes October 2018



Table of Contents

About These Notes	3
Overarching Strategies	4
New Technology and Enhancing Efficiency	5
Local Demand	7
Access to Land	8
Qualified Labor	12
Farmer Education	13
Access to Markets	16
Processing Facilities	18



About These Notes

The West Virginia Agriculture Advisory Board has been tasked with creating a five-year strategic plan to grow the agriculture industry in the state. As part of developing that plan, 14 community meetings were held in each of the state's conservation districts. Overall, over 350 participated in these meetings.

The following notes represent the ideas generated through these meetings. Similar ideas that bubbled up across meetings and/or received strong support from participants (through a dot-voting exercise) have been grouped together into Strategies. More general or unrelated notes are captured under "Other Misc. Strategies" for reference. These notes are rough - we have intentionally left notes in the words of the participants and included all notes that we received. These notes are not to be interpreted as being endorsed by the West Virginia Agriculture Advisory Board.

The next step in the strategic planning process will be to bring these notes together with what has been learned through the market analysis, interviews, and survey findings to build out more specific, robust strategies. Those strategies will be reviewed by the Steering Committee and prioritized based upon what strategies the Committee can collectively impact and what strategies will have the biggest impact on growing the agriculture economy.

For more information on the process and the Steering Committee, visit www.wvagadvisory.org.



Overarching Strategies

- Strategy: WV Agriculture Clearing House - a one-stop web resource for all things WV agriculture, including:
 - News/database on new innovations, research, studies, etc.
 - For sale - equipment and land
 - Location of aggregation facilities, processing facilities and commercial kitchens
 - Clear interpretation of rules and regulations
 - Information on market opportunities, demand quantities and pricing averages
 - Quick guide info on what resources/programs are available from what agencies - where to go for help
 - Grant and funding opportunities
 - Message board or other functionality for other groups and individuals to share information
 - Ability to search by "district", "county", or "industry"
 - One calendar for all ag-related events
 - Need to consider other ways to centralize info for people who don't have access to internet

- Strategy: Increase inter-agency cooperation to reach farmers
 - Need enhanced collaboration among academic and state agencies
 - Encourage more networking and collaboration among agencies and groups involved in ag
 - Agencies need to share mailing lists and contacts freely with each other to expand the audience they reach.
 - Training Coordination - stakeholders all "preaching the same message" to have a unified effort and to help prevent duplication of services
 - More cooperation among agencies/institutions
 - Building/sharing community in the state (WVCRAFT/ WVFFC)
 - Demand all institutions and NGOs to work together and share who is working on things and what they have as intellectual property and equipment
 - Communicate better
 - Pool Resources between AG agencies to promote and publicize all available programs to producers

- Strategy: Enhance understanding of and support for farm-related legislation
 - Standardized regs and policies at federal, state and local levels or a centralized person to act as the "explainer"



- Ensure Agency staff and producers have awareness of ag policy and laws relevant to their industry
- Communication to legislators about real conditions throughout state, especially regarding access to internet
- Agriculture Becoming a Legislative Priority. Need help with...
 - Cost of equipment
 - Education
 - Infrastructure
 - Internet and cell service
- Participants need to know: what's in the current Farm Bill; how to work with Federal and State partners including the incipient WV hemp industry; how to obtain funding and other streams of support
- Lead Partners - WV Farm Bureau
- Supporting Partners - Farmers, all other AG Agencies

New Technology and Enhancing Efficiency

Discussed in Charleston, Sutton, Ghent, Moorefield, Philippi, Lewisburg, Lost Creek, Triadelphia

- Strategy: Enhance and Better Disperse Research from Higher Ed on New Techniques and Enhancing Efficiency
 - Increase the amount of research - especially from WV higher ed institutions - that is topographic/climatic region-specific
 - Producers want information relevant to the climate, soils, and geography of their specific physiographic province and county
 - Current programs tend to ignore row croppers in the Southern coalfields
 - Increase dissemination of research and information
 - More education programs at a better time of the year than when listening sessions were held
 - More use of social media, facebook, mini-classes on mobile apps, internet training resources, youtube, etc.
 - Highlight and showcase successful producers who are modeling more efficient practices
 - Classes on new technology that are specifically geared to farmers and taught at their skill level.
 - Lead partners - Farm Credit of the Virginias, WVU
 - Use online classes, self-paced courses for farmers because they are too busy to sit at night meetings.
 - Create incentives for farmers to deploy findings from the research
 - Challenge farmers to apply innovative technology with incentives
 - Encourage/offer incentives for more experimentation



- Increase local producers' willingness to look outside of the area for ideas and methods to try
- Encourage regionalization of production based on local growing conditions
- Changing rules and regulatory issues to facilitate or allow for easier production and harvesting of products
- Provide targeted assistance to support implementation of best practices for increasing efficiency
 - On-farm efficiency planning services
 - Need training in organic weed and pest control
 - Producers need targeted technical assistance available on-site
 - Provide product and area-targeted on-site management training
 - Farm consultant overview of current operation - recommend changes or change of direction - what is the best use of the land
- Other related strategies
 - Provide regional labs for nutrient/soils, disease, pest testing and identification
 - Increase access to mulching, raised beds, and new techniques like movable high tunnels
 - Reduce restrictions of federally funded cost share programs
- Strategy: Increase access to supplies and equipment
 - Promote farmer cooperation for supplies
 - Make it easier for producers to rent equipment from Conservation Districts or Extension—who has what and where, and what's necessary to obtain it

Other Misc. Strategies

- State training program for more organic certifiers
- Approve medical marijuana
- Develop and/or retain large animal veterinarians
- Develop buyer's market and producers will increase accordingly
- Reduce regulations
- Decrease deer populations
- Increase transportation infrastructure
- Increase herd genetics with holistic approach to farm management
- Help developing feeding areas for cattle
- Farm Store worker schools
- Create increase grassland growth
- Open local markets, including food hubs
- Increase production on small farms with intensive focus on small vegetable farmers
- Sustainable, less restrictive funding opportunities
- Solar energy farms



- Grower coops
- Hemp regulation reduction
- Continue to emphasize that WV has the potential to grow good grass and grass fed beef
- Need to mentor
- FFA Programs

Local Demand

Discussed in Charleston, New Martinsville, Ghent, Moorefield, Lewisburg, Wayne

- Strategy: Increase local demand by encouraging healthy eating through school based programs
 - The group identified schools and other state/federally owned entities to have great market and educational opportunities
 - They mentioned the loss of a Dept of Ed program that provided students with \$ and or equipment to grow produce and sell it to their county schools.
 - Pop-up Farmers markets have been a new economic opportunity for growers and they would like to see even more (this year Tyler County k-8 all students participated and that provided over \$7,000 in produce sales for Wetzel and Tyler growers, Chevron Grant in Marshall County provided an additional \$10,000)
 - Childrens farmers markets are successful
 - Link agencies (including education and health)
 - Need more education, emphasis on where food comes from
 - Summer program for kids on farming
 - Increase cooking classes
 - Cooking and product utilization classes for school children and adults, or similar types of opportunities to reach out and educate consumers about what is available and how to use it.
 - Community cooking classes using local produce
 - Mandatory home economics class for high school students
 - Lead Partner - Dept. of Education
 - Supporting Partners - WVDA, Office of Economic Development
- Strategy: Statewide branding, promotion and education
 - Marketing campaign to promote WV heritage – eat local because “it’s who we are”
 - Promote places to sell local products
 - Get Division of Tourism involved in promoting WV Grown food as part of its larger marketing efforts
 - “Follow the farm dollar” marketing campaign
 - Communication/coordination (info hub)
 - Advertising of where and when food available



- Guides that list producers
- Education for consumers and producers through multiple forums
- More local food promotion
- Strategy: Increase access to local food for low-income and elderly residents
 - More publicity of government food programs to elderly
 - Public transportation to farmers' markets
 - Fresh food delivery system to underserved areas
 - Tax incentives to farmers for accepting vouchers or SNAP
 - Offer incentives to gas stations / convenience stores to purchase and resell healthy, local food, instead of just carrying junk food
 - [Buffalo Healthy Corner Store Initiative](#)
 - Food deserts - opportunity to replicate mobile food trucks used in urban food deserts?
 - FARMacy type programs for produce sales were mentioned as a successful model
 - Received Health Right grant
 - Garden Path one participating farm

Other Misc. Strategies

- Education to increase awareness with the Department of Ag and Legislature as lead partners and non-profits as support partners.
- Regional farmers market coordinators
- Local produce stores
- Government incentives and tax breaks for local farmers in order to help them to lower their prices and make products more affordable for local consumers
- Government subsidies (not grants) for specialty crops
- Incentives for utilization and production (6 dot)
- Student participation in school cafeteria
- Mandatory business / entrepreneurship class for high school students
- Adopt model legislation from successful states
- Try to access available grants to start a "farm to table" to cover costs for any startups and help the community by buying local and selling globally but starting local.
- Farm to Table events

Access to Land

Discussed in Charleston, New Martinsville, Martinsburg, Core, Point Pleasant

- Strategy: Increase access to capital (Will add additional notes on this from survey findings)
 - Need a focus in the state on VC funds



- Need to visit banking policies for rural WV
 - Enhanced understanding of agriculture in the banking industry
 - Look into current banking/credit regulations that might be a hindrance to purchasing land – discussion that FSA does have a good loan program available to farmers.
 - Lenders – educating lenders about the unique needs of agribusinesses
 - Access to capital with the community as the lead partner and as shareholders.
 - More loan programs through USDA FSA
 - Affordable, Simple and Accessible Loans Training
 - Government programs or other cheap and accessible loan alternative for capital to purchase farm land.
 - Lead Partners - WVUES, County Assessors, Legislators, Farm Bureau, WVDA, Conservation Agency, NRCS.
-
- Strategy: Connect Potential Farmers with Underutilized Land and Startup Education
 - Enlist the help of the WV Board of Realtors to get the word to new landowners about opportunities to rent their properties to local farmers.
 - Create educational materials to provide new landowners (purchasing over 10 acres?) about land suitability/restrictions, government agencies available to assist them, and a listing of farmers in the area looking to lease land.
 - Educate these landowners on high cost of infrastructure, etc. that may help defray rental costs for farmers.
 - Educate the real estate industry about the unique needs of farmers and land utilized for agriculturally based activities, importance of an “agricultural classification” when marketing available land.
 - Develop a matching program to pair up farmers who have idle land with those interested in farming but don’t have land or skills.
 - Link easement properties to potential renters if the landowners were not actively farming it themselves to keep it in agricultural production.
 - WV Land Link, Education and Communication:
 - Implementing a program to connect landowners and interested producers
 - Education of landowners and potential tenants on land rental cost and income.
 - Send information to landowners to promote Farm Link program (possibly include in land tax forms).
 - Lead Partners – WVUES, WVFFC, WVDA, Farm Bureau, Conservation Agency, NRCS.



- Strategy: Increase tax on absentee out-of-state landowners / provide incentive for using non-productive land
 - Could offset with a break/incentive if they lease to productive farm operations/
Provide Tax Incentives for Non-Producing Landowners:
 - To allow interested parties to farm their land;
 - To allow current producers to expand;
 - Following the 'Nebraska Model'
 - Evaluate efficacy of current state and local rules regarding "tax breaks" for farmers. Current farm discount is applied at county - some are more liberal - would need to ensure people weren't getting discounts for not actually using it as farmland. If had to be a viable farm to get the tax relief, perhaps more landowners would consider leasing out their properties for production agriculture.
 - Revise/Fix WV Voluntary Farmland Protection Act - Follow the 'Ohio Model' (Lead Partners - WVUES, County Assessors, Legislators, Farm Bureau, WVDA, Conservation Agency, NRCS)
 - Education on farming for tax assessors
 - Don't want to increase taxes on WV land-owners who aren't using farmland, so instead perhaps create a match program/leasing program
 - Lead Partners - WVUES, County Assessors, Legislators, WVDA.
 - WV Surface Owners Rights org, Farm Bureau, WVFFC are orgs that advocate
 - Supporting Strategy: Policy Changes to Ensure FRPP Properties remain in active agriculture
 - Discussion about ensuring that landowners that receive funding to restrict development on their farmland to keep the farm in active agriculture. All participants from the region agreed that often the farms were "let go" after the money was received. Some participants wanted to add language to the conservation deed that the property must remain in active agriculture and provide an enforcement mechanism. Other participants felt this would be too much government overreach onto private property rights.
- Strategy: Expand and promote programs that help farmers restore farmland
 - Many government programs offer assistance to improve existing farms in order to protect natural resources. However, the cost of getting a property back into production agricultural is often the limiting factor for landowners and potential renters.
 - Existing programs are good - just need more funding and more promotion of them
 - Could there be government subsidies/ cost-sharing/ and/or financing options that will support boundary/perimeter fencing for livestock grazing, assistance for building structures for livestock housing, land clearing to create new cropland or pastures, improving soils, etc. Could use more funding for Ag Enhancement



Program and other cost-sharing programs that help farmers restore unproductive land.

- Equipment rental is a particular challenge. Equipment is so specialized and expensive - it's hard to share - would either need to subsidize a contractor to buy it (but how to ensure that they use it to support small farms?) or, more likely do cost-sharing with farmers to hire contractors with specialized equipment
- Some participants expressed frustration at being unable to borrow nearby agency equipment because they lived just outside district borders. One grower had to reach out to Extension staff from North Carolina for the equipment and expertise he needed for his land preparation.
- Center for Rural Affairs as a model
- Education and promotion of programs
 - Few FSA offices - hard for new farmers to know about their programs
 - Need all agencies to coordinate on promoting programs
 - More hands-on education for farmers on how to restore farmland
 - What is the advertising budget for agencies?
 - Encourage/educate landowners & farmers about lower input methods, such as seasonal water systems that have above ground waterlines that can be removed before winter weather; cheaper temporary fencing for grazing systems, etc.
- Lead Partners: WVU Extension, Conservation Districts, NRCS, FSA
- Strategy: Reclaim land impacted by Oil and Gas
 - TA for farmers to negotiate better land reclamation in contracts
 - Support to monitor restoration
 - Bordas and Bordas law firm does lease management and has a group that helps monitor
 - Higher standards on O&G companies restoring pipeline and staging areas
 - Wetland mitigation program → replicate for farmland that is destroyed
 - Create O&G offset fund to help replace farmland - new tax on O&G

Other Misc. Strategies

- Encourage zoning laws that support ag enterprises and preserve farmland
- Education - Succession Planning
- Misc. Tax Strategies
 - Tax incentives
 - Tax breaks to older farmers selling to beginners
 - Tax incentives for Ag production
 - Land tax incentive for Ag leases



- Tax incentives – inheritance tax, tax deductions, land preservation incentive, production incentives, lease incentives to WV farmers
- Timberland Management – recognize managed timberland incentive programs
- Incentivize existing farmers to sell or turn over the farm earlier
- Farm land management organization
- LLC's
- Sustainability
 - Supply & Demand
 - Economic Stability/Family Support
 - Diversification
- Access to Resources
 - Education – stakeholders & public, resources for farmers/producers to have access for information

Qualified Labor

Discussed in New Martinsville, Core

- Strategy: FarmCorp like AmeriCorps
 - Lead Partners: Food Farm Coalition, WVDA, "Someone willing to take on"
 - Support Partners: WVDA, WV legislature, Universities/Colleges, training Extension Service
- Strategy: Temp Service for Ag
 - A temporary service for agricultural labor
 - Temporary service take on a liability of worker
 - Related: Shared labor pool experiment (Sprouting Farms)
 - Lead Partners: Private, Holly
 - Support Partners: Government, WV Health/Safety, Workplace Safety
- Strategy: Prison to Farm Program
 - St. Marys corrections, full ag teacher, vegetable production
 - Connect trained labor from prison system to farms
 - Lead Partners: WVDA
 - Support Partners: Dept of Corrections, BOE
- Strategy: Communication through a hub of employment opportunities.
 - Data tracking for where labor needs are and existing pools of labor.
 - Educators develop a network with farmers concerning potential employees
 - Government sponsored labor cleaning house for migrant and other seasonal labor
 - Qualified workforce that could work directly with farmers and contribute to decreasing the number of residents leaving the state. Universities, correctional



facilities and WVDHHR were identified as lead partners with faith-based and other non-profits serving as support partners.

- Non-profit community should work with DHHR to incorporate ag sites as TANF-certified work sites to satisfy new welfare work requirements. Partners – Wayne Farm Bureau, Wayne Farmers’ Cooperative, Refresh Appalachia, Wayne EDA, Williamson Health and Wellness

Other Misc. Strategies

- State needs rehab facilities for drug rehab
- Education on labor requirements
- Increase farm income to enable to pay wages
- Prunytown certified logger program
- Mt. Olive meat cut lab
- Every county has vocation schools
- Specialized technical schools
- Education updates on hiring employees
- Cap salaries for employees in certain services
- Figure out how we entice folks to work on farms over other jobs with similar pay and skill set.

Farmer Education

Discussed in: Sutton, Ghent, Philippi, Wayne

- K - Middle School
 - Strategy: Introducing Ag-education earlier in school
 - Lead Partners - State and Local Board of Education
 - Support Partners - WVU & WVSU Extension, 4-H, and local community
- High School
 - On-farm exposure
 - Invite a class to your farm with parents
 - Develop programs that target youth education at very early ages. Provide more hands on experiences for youth on farms
 - Curriculum
 - Increase [ProStart](#) programming (neighboring Lincoln County’s just went under). ProStart introduces students to a wide variety of careers within the restaurant, foodservice and hospitality industry. Students study and practice professional food preparation, international cuisines, food safety and sanitation, customer service relations, cost control, and marketing. ProStart is a two-year course of study developed by the



National Restaurant Association Education Foundation (NRAEF) and administered by the NRAEF and WV HEAT in West Virginia.

- Mandatory ag ed class in all high schools
- Agriculture in the classroom
- Work experience
 - Hire young workers for after school work
 - Farming Internships at High School. With focus on earning money and how farms make money.
 - Offer stipend to young students for work with mentor farmer
- Mentorship
 - Establish a youth / farmer mentor program to transfer high tech and ideas on efficiency between generations.
 - Mentor Pool per district
 - Mentorship between existing producers and vo-ag students
- Career Guidance
 - Education of Youth.
 - The idea here is to educate children on the benefits and opportunities available to them in agriculture to ensure the next generation of farmers.
 - Lead Partners: WVDA & WV Dept. of Education
 - Support Partners: FFA, Conservation Districts, School Boards, Teachers Union
 - Talking with Farmers and people involved in AG, Field Day, What other are doing with same interests as you.
 - Very early education to youth on how new technology and science are used in modern agriculture. Emphasis the many diverse careers in agriculture.
 - Speaker/teacher/presenter bureau as a resource for classroom ag education – could also serve adult learners.
- Leveraging 4-H and FFA
 - There is need to attract and maintain young farmers. To accomplish this, we need to help Cameron High School employ FFA advisor to promote meats lab program and support the youth in that program. They also need a local slaughter facility to support the meat lab. Recommend working with Cameron FFA and WVU meats lab staff to develop and enhance this program to train youth in the processing.
 - On related issue, we need to maintain or recruit young farmers. We need to keep the FFA and 4-H participants in the area and help them acquire a farm to operate.
- Post-Secondary



- College loan forgiveness program for ag students
- WV agricultural scholarships at college level
- College credit for summer experience working on a farm
- More Opportunities for farmers and those interested in Ag to stay in WV for higher education and training opportunities and to farm
 - Lead Partners - Everyone! All state & federal agencies working collaboratively to create more ag-related opportunities
 - Support Partners- NGOs, EDAs, Universities, Community Colleges and Technical Education Schools
- New Farmers - Mentorship and startup training
 - Mentorship program that connects retiring farmers w/ new beginning farmers
 - Mentoring programs
 - Investment and grants to young people and veterans entering farming
 - Grant opportunities for agricultural training, including training related to financial issues, i.e., grants, loans, business plans, leases, etc.
 - Tool-kits & better transparency regarding regulations and occupation specific information in taxes, farmland protection, liability insurance and business basics
 - Lead Partners - USDA, WVDA, State Tax Department, Secretary of State's Office
 - Support Partners - Food and Farm Coalition, Small Business Administration, Farm Bureau, Small Business Development Center

Other Misc. Strategies

- Transportation - too far to make it worth it for farm labor - not worth it for what farm can pay
- Virtual reality games can introduce youth to ag in lieu of an actual farm visit
- Placement SAE's , be more accessible with students
- producers work with local schools
- starts in the schools
- After specific new farmer/producer programming at various events/programs
- Coordinated efforts among local agencies, identify news gaps
- State Agriculture website under WVDA
- More Personal contact farmer agencies, visiting and talking with rural people on the opportunities that exist
- Internet may be iffy: but utilize webinars, Skype meeting
- Make publications accessible in both print and online
- Find out how we can help them what information is needed.
- Ag In the Classroom
- Mentoring



- Statewide clearing house for opportunities
- Agency coordination
- Policy increase funding
- New Programs
 - Training for farmers regarding processing
 - SARE grant programs
 - Education for buyers
 - Cost share/lease programs for land
 - Contact list for needs
 - Local meet ups
 - Shared agency calendar
 - New marketing platform
 - Advertising educational opportunities better
- Scaling existing programs
 - GAP certifications opportunities
 - Collaborations with FFA and 4-H kids
- Policy Changes
 - Better communication with regulatory agencies on what is required
- Mandatory or optional (or a combination of both) classes for K-12 to teach and expose them while young
- Promoting and supporting local farmers markets as hubs for information and training; Increased grant opportunities with simplified or streamlined grant application processes
- Training/on-going support/feedback loop
 - Production/ field tech support people
 - Build/ continue existing food safety
 - Help with efficiency training for distribution and production
- Increased Funding to Agriculture programs like extension, WVCA, Ag EP
- Education and Training -
 - Need a systems/holistic approach.
 - Hands-on focus on adoption/implementation
 - Mentoring programs

Access to Markets

Discussed in Charleston, Sutton, Wayne, Lost Creek, Point Pleasant

- Strategy: Create and support existing Grower Support Services
 - Create/build off existing roadmap/ Ecosystem Map that explains all programs/services to help growers access markets
 - Several groups are currently working on this but not aligned



- Currently many programs (state and fed) are geared towards larger producers - evaluate as part of mapping
 - Create a “concierge” (person or program) to connect growers with those programs/services / Connect Farmers to Distributors (Database)
 - The local producers said they are unsure of who to contact to distribute their products, or who distributes what products. A database updated by the department on an annual basis would help them make those connections.
 - Lead Partners: WVDA, USDA
 - Support Partners: County Commissions, Extension
 - Create a center/website to disseminate market research on what types of products are in demand in different markets and offer business planning services to help farmers plan for meeting that demand
 - Specialized for local production for local markets vs. commercial production for commercial markets
 - Determine a few key opportunities and pilot this Grower Support Services for two years focus on those products/markets - right now efforts are spread too thin
 - Use AgStatistics to find out what is being produced and what is needed
 - Niche Markets, Ready to eat foods/identify demand, price points
 - How can small farms compete without an economy of scale? Develop opportunity product for size of farm and local product demand or other markets that pay cost of production
 - Identify agricultural brokers to aggregate products from small farmers to fill buyer orders
 - Coordinate shared delivery/sales among existing grower groups and aggregators
 - Easy to access/more comprehensive buyer/grower list
 - WVU looking at Distribution Centers
- Strategy: Expand business planning and marketing services/training for farmers
 - Partnerships or collaboration between people knowledgeable about agricultural production and people knowledgeable about business and marketing
 - Marketing Training for farmers for online sales, marketing skills, etc.
 - Access to the internet is crucial part of this
 - Additional promotion and marketing services (incl. graphic design) to promote WV producers in those in-demand markets
 - Grower coops can support this
 - Cooperative protein branding
 - Lead Partners: WVDA and Cooperative Extension



- Strategy: Encourage and support development of co-ops (Markets + Processing)
 - To form regional co-ops with other local producers to pool resources to invest in things they needed together (such as processing facilities, etc...)
 - Producers coops need formed to aggregate product/ facilitate storage and transportation. Producer coops if no market build their own.
 - Not only building local markets for products, but providing local employment opportunities
 - Centered in community engagement with producers
 - Pool resources from farm-to-farm, business-to-business
 - Co-op product processing to reduce operating costs and aid in group certification (e.g., Group GAP)
 - Incentives for growers to form co-ops
 - Lead Partners: Extension, WVDA, WV Legislature, the producers themselves
 - Support Partners: County Commissions, WV Farm Bureau, WV Food & Farm Coalition, community members

- Strategy: Buyer Support Services
 - Central, comprehensive information on what buyers can purchase from WV producers and how to
 - Incentives/subsidies/cost-share for institutions to support local purchasing, incl. Farm to school
 - Models for local producers/buyers to set prices (e.g. Farm Roots is selling to local restaurants - they worked with them to understand their profit margins - accept different prices in different regions)
 - Better Media Presence - Local social media page (need administrator). Craigslist style website for local markets, Producer blog to inform the community.

- Strategy: Support the sale of local produce in schools
 - The group identified schools and other state/federally owned entities to have great market opportunities
 - Legislature should require schools to purchase a percentage of school food local sources, if supply is available
 - Group wanted to see WV proteins offered on school menus
 - Mentioned a need for pricing and quantity that local schools will buy
 - Grants and training for selling to schools and institutions
 - Farm to School programs that provide profitable outlets for producers (group was especially concerned with the schools pricing for beef and other proteins)
 - Lead Partner - Dept. of Education
 - Supporting Partners - WVDA, Office of Economic Development

Other Misc. Strategies



- Aggregation and distribution centers
- Co-Ops, Food hubs, aggregation/distribution
- Changing existing farmer's market model towards more of a consignment market model
- Equipment sharing products (Sprouting Farms)
- Increase Education - WVCA, USDA, FSA, NRCS, WVDA, Community efforts, 501c3s
- Tax Cuts - Additional tax cuts for markets and farmers.
- Additional Grants
- Access to Capital, Grants, Equipment, Land
- Increasing education and training for labor force; Promotion of competitions between markets
- Developing more access to local markets, i.e., at grocery stores, schools, institutions, etc.

Processing Facilities

Moorefield, Parkersburg, Triadelphia, Wayne, Sutton

- Strategy: Work with Industry and Consumers to make co-op run facilities available to "pool" money and have more opportunity to build more slaughter facilities and access to commercial kitchens
 - Work with local, state, and federal partners to find different ways to get capital investment to start a facility, as the initial cost to start a business is so expensive that no one person normally can start on their own. Combine farmers to start a co-op to make it cost sharing to allow the startup money and share profits with facility and farmers.
 - Additional co-op opportunities meat or vegetable producers and processors
 - Affordable processing facilities
 - Carcass/ cut/ profitability training for beef/ lamb/ pork producers
 - Finishing more cattle in-state
 - Lead Partners- WVDA, USDA, WVDHHR, Local County Health, Federal and State Legislators, County Commissioners, Farm Credit
 - Support Partners: County Board of Ed., Region 8 Planning Commission, RDA-Regulatory Development Authority
- Strategy: Change regulations to related to slaughtering and production to support WV products
 - Allow for agribusiness to grow while keeping food safe
 - Change regulations regarding slaughter facilities to allow for interstate commerce.
 - Streamline the documentation on process facilities to comply with regulations. The documentation is overwhelming.
 - Develop reciprocal agreements with PA and OH for interstate transfer of meat products that are state inspected.



- Solution is to pass Farm Bill allowing state inspected to cross state lines.
- Need policy change or regulation change to improve competition. West Virginia products have disadvantage to out-of-state products. Specifically need exemptions for small WV pet food producers and small slaughter facilities/operations. Producer wants the same exemption for pork and beef as rabbits and poultry enjoy. (There is exemption in state code WV Rule 61-16-9 for on farm slaughter). (These are different issues, but comment was given in the meeting)
- Strategy: Promoting and exploring value-added processing within the local areas for certain ag products
 - Funding for value-adding equipment at aggregation centers
 - Improve Cottage Industry regulations and regional commercial kitchens
 - Every school should be a certified commercial kitchen and holding facility (walk-in cooler)
 - Partners – Refresh Appalachia, Wayne EDA, Turnrow Collective

Other Misc. Strategies

- Education on programs increasing awareness
- Sustainable funding assistance