215

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growers, people, food, connections, restaurants, sell, flint, composting, connected, buy, talked, local, question, impacted, mm, holly, system, education, barriers, distributor

**SPEAKERS**

Participant 215, Interviewer, Interviewer 2

**Interviewer 2** 00:02

Great. So there we go, the recording of the interview is now being recorded. And your participation, again is voluntary. You can choose not to answer any questions or even to withdraw from the research at any time. We'll keep the record confidential within our team. And we won't share your name or any other identifiable information in our research findings. However, we invite you to be mindful of who might be around you or nearby that will hear your comments so you can protect your confidentiality

**Participant 215** 00:37

as well. My cat won't snitch.

**Interviewer 2** 00:40

Oh, there we go. All right, good. We will. If you have any questions or additional comments, Holly after this, you have Chris's email as your point person contact. So feel free to reach out to her. Do you have any questions before we get started?

**Participant 215** 01:03

No, I hope I hope I can provide enough information. That's my only concern is that I have enough information to to show Oh,

**Interviewer 2** 01:11

well, I'll tell you what, based upon the conversations we've had, and the beautiful pictures of people's brains that come out of this, we're sure you'll be fine. Alright, so I'm gonna start out by asking you what I think is gonna be a pretty easy question. Okay. So the first question is, how would you describe your role, or your experience with the local food system?

**Participant 215** 01:34

I primarily work with growers. Okay. And that's my whole the whole time I've been at this in this position, I'm working with the local growers. So encouraging them, I would like to see more diversity among our growers. Mm hmm. And I provide support to the growers as well and trying to help them when whenever whenever I can share information that will help them so you know, there's it's not my focus, but definitely a an education component. And I'm always connecting them to other growers or taking them to other growers, you know, so I'm providing providing an educational component to it, too.

**Interviewer 2** 02:27

Okay, that's awesome. Great. Well, as we get into this, what we want to do is we're going to show you, if you would subsystem definitions, we'll start there because we're focusing on five sectors of the localized aspect of the food system. The first growers imagine that production, people who are growing crops and raising livestock, and any scale Holly, whether it's right out your back door, in your yard, all the way up to the large farmers, yep. Then we've grouped together the folks who do processing and packaging, so the folks who are taking that food, washing it, processing it, we include the value added processors in here. So here's a lovely tomato, I add some spices and some stuff. And next thing, you know, I've got amazing salsa or some other beautiful thing. So we've got the processors, then the wholesalers, the folks who are taking the produce and things that are grown, and then they are are selling and they're reselling that that that product. Then our retailers where we go to buy food. So our stores, our grocery stores, our farmers markets, our convenience stores, the farm stands, blue boxes, restaurants, the caterers, anywhere where food is sold to customers are in that sector. And then last but not least in waste. We eat, what we don't eat, everything's not edible, and we don't eat everything. So what happens to that food, the food that's collected and perhaps composted, or even food that might be rescued, and donated, so in that category as well. Do you have any questions about these? Um, the definitions of these sectors or any comments?

**Participant 215** 04:19

No, but I'm glad to see waste on there. Great. Okay. Often it's it's not it's often it's not thought about, but I know Amy Freeman was involved in this. So you definitely would have waste.

**Interviewer 2** 04:32

Absolutely. Yes. Absolutely. Absolutely. Yeah. And I do work a lot of work in waste, too. As a side note, so yes, absolutely. It's here. Um, when you look at those sectors, you said a moment ago that you primarily work with, with growers, so production is clearly one of your

**Participant 215** 04:51

Yeah. Yep, that's right, even though we do all of those other things, too. Would you

**Interviewer 2** 04:58

say that um, You have you said you have the most expertise with growers? Is there any other category you feel or sector you feel you have expertise in? In particular, I

**Participant 215** 05:08

do work with the selling selling to restaurants. Ah, okay. Yes. So we we haven't we haven't been able to. We haven't been very successful we also sell too. Although now I do you know how Flint fresh is set up? So do you know that Flint fresh was set up to purchase from a distributors? Uh huh. As well as local growers? So we do have we do have a, it's like a food pantry. But Hurley food pharmacy we sell to them. And But primarily, most everything they buy is from the is from the distributor.

**Interviewer 2** 05:51

Okay. All right.

**Participant 215** 05:55

So I only supposed to, we don't care what who it's from right. And this when we're talking, okay.

**Interviewer 2** 06:01

Oh, no, not at all. And you can share that with us. We wanted to make sure we had a good sense of which sectors you felt you had the most experience. So you're saying production and I'm the wholesale because you're distributing to

**Participant 215** 06:13

right. And I can tell you that the it's the restaurants that are buying local stuff, but the the food pharmacy, and then another person that has a business making making meals, that's primarily our distributors as well.

**Interviewer 2** 06:37

Okay, wonderful. Thanks for that, Holly. Um, now, even though you have been through using mental modeling before, it's been a little while. Yeah, Chris has got to refresh your memory.

**Participant 215** 06:48

It needs refreshing. Thank you. Okay. All right.

**Interviewer** 06:52

So I'm going to go through a little example of the process just to refresh you. Um, but before we do that, I want to, you know, preface it by saying, even though I'm going to be the one making the connections and adding in concepts, I really want you to have like a feeling of ownership over the map. So I'm really here to try to interpret and get your understanding of the system accurate. So feel free to jump in. And correct me if there's anything that you wouldn't connect in a certain way, or a concept that you wouldn't word in a certain way, definitely feel free to sort of jump in and say, Oh, I wouldn't do it like that. Because that's really, the goal is to get to your understanding and have your map. Awesome. So then that's sort of like high level, but very practically, when we're building out connections and making a system, we have the concepts and boxes, and then connections between them. So once I've decided that there's a connection, there's sort of two things I need to choose. One is as if it's a positive or a negative connection. And that doesn't necessarily mean a good connection or a bad connection. It's more so that if one goes up, does the other one also go up? Or does it go down. So if we're looking at how much traffic is in the city, if there are more cars, there's also more traffic, and that would be a positive connection, and we'd end up with a blue arrow. A negative connection might be something like public transportation to traffic. So if there's more public transportation, or a better public transportation system, we're going to have less traffic as people are taking buses, or if it's a big city, they might have a subway or something. And we'll end up with an orange arrow. So that's positive and negative. And my last choice is how strong the connection is. So this is really measuring, you know, how influential how impactful is one thing on another, so number of car traffic might be a strong connection. If tomorrow everyone decided to not drive their cars, there would be no traffic on the road. Whereas public transportation might be more of a medium connection, that while it can be pretty influential, you know, there's always those people who really love driving in our cars, or they live or work somewhere that's not easily accessible by public transportation, or something like that. So that's a medium connection. There's also like a weak connection. So that's something that has a bit of influence, but like not a lot. That might be like the number of cyclists that we could promote, you know, like into work or something, but it's not going to be a real solution to the problem of traffic. You know, you can't really it's hard to carry your groceries on a bike or like you're not going to move a couch on a bike or something like that. So, you know, have an influence amount of influence. Any questions about this process? Nope. Awesome.

**Interviewer 2** 09:54

Awesome. Well, great. So what you're saying now Holly is the best model which has those food sectors that we talked about on there. And what we want to want to want to to share with us based upon you said your your expertise is, you know, production and wholesale. How do you see connections? How would you draw connections between the areas of your expertise as well as between these other aspects of the, of the food system. So you talked about producers a little bit. And again, what we recognize is that when people are thinking about this, sometimes it's just easier to just talk about it, your work around production, also. And a Carissa will start to draw connections as you're talking.

**Participant 215** 10:42

I'm confused.

**Interviewer 2** 10:44

So you talked a little bit about in production, you said, when you were sharing your background, you've mentioned that you work with them, producers, that you support them with information, education and connecting with others. So maybe just talk a little start from there as a way to talk about how you work with producers. And we'll start the show and draw those connections here.

**Participant 215** 11:11

I don't know. Tell me if this is what you're wanting. Are you wanting like more specific things about that?

**Interviewer 2** 11:16

Yeah, just Yeah. Talk to us about when you say that you work primarily with growers. One of the things you said was you do education. So share a bit about that. And then things that you do with producers,

**Participant 215** 11:29

I am talking to somebody actually, she was considering selling to Flint Fresh last year and then decided, no, she'd wait until this growing season, Is that the same lady, no wait, I'm getting my ladies mixed up. Nevermind. So this is somebody that contacted us; they looked on the website, and she contacted me. When we were chatting, I found out that she's going to be-she's new and thought, Oh, I'm just I won't be able to do this because I'm really small-and I said no, that's the whole idea. We take what you have and what the other person has, and we add it all up together. So no, you're too small. But she was also wanting to grow-I don't remember if she has done this yet or not or is new at it-but strawberries, and we have a grower who has two hoop houses full of berries, and just planted 3000 more plants. So I've connected those two, so she can go over and see. And we have a grower who has, it's hard to believe, he's grown forever, but he's pretty old school like he does sell at markets and takes no credit cards, doesn't have a website, nothing on social media, and he has no refrigeration. And I took him over to another growers' farm, an the empty lot, who made a cool bot, and I've actually taken two people over to that location, two different growers over there. So I connect the growers with each other to help them learn, but I also connect the growers with opportunities that I see. You know, maybe MSU, who's got an awesome class about something, so I send them those resources and email them those resources, and whether they do them or not, obviously that's their choice, but yeah.

**Interviewer 2** 13:48

Right, yeah, just connecting them. Okay. Okay, that's great. And I heard you also say, as you were describing one of those growers, that they do sell into the farmer's markets, you said markets?

**Participant 215** 14:01

Yes. He's at various markets. So our growers are growers, and this has been a change since COVID. We had growers that when COVID hit, they decided they were going to sell on farm and they've been very successful. And we've lost some of them because of that.

**Interviewer 2** 14:29

So they're doing farm stands on the-okay so instead of the farmers market, they're selling at farm stands on site.

**Participant 215** 14:38

On site selling, and that's impacted us because there's well, here's something I consider-I gotta take a drink, hang on a minute. Something I consider an issue: so, when we purchase, we're paying the growers wholesale prices. Okay. When the growers sell on the farm stand, they can sell retail. The bigger you are, as a grower, the more I think you can look at other options besides retail, you know, because when they're small they think, Well, why should I give Flint Fresh this, and then have this for my farm stand, because I can sell all of it on my farm stand for more money. So I've seen that as an issue lately. And some people I know that had a CSA, when COVID hit, they tripled. They tripled the membership and their CSA. And yeah, so COVID really brought an awareness about their food: food and where it comes from. And I think I think one of the issues we've got in this area, it's really hard to sell to restaurants, because they want convenience, they want cost, and they also want to be-what's the word I want for this, and maybe there isn't a word-assured that they can get x quantity, you know, every week. Consistency, that's the word I want, consistency. So restaurants have been really tough, because most of them don't care whether their foods are local or not. Like I said, they just want cost and convenience, and then if we do get to work with them, they definitely want consistency.

**Interviewer 2** 16:57

Okay, so let me let me roll that back for you a minute. So we've got costs, and I think [Interviewer]'s got, they're looking for, when you say costs, when you say cost, what do you mean?

**Participant 215** 17:07

The cost of the products, so how much...

**Interviewer 2** 17:11

When you say costs, what aspect of costs speaking to?

**Participant 215** 17:15

What I'm saying is what they're going to look at is-if they can get it from their-unless local is of any importance to them, the first thing they're going to do is look at whatever the item is and what it costs from their distributor that they're currently using, And if they don't have any interest in local, then they're not going to buy from us. It's probably cheaper through their distributor.

**Interviewer 2** 17:53

So when you when you were talking about consistency, it was consistency of quantity? You said...?

**Participant 215** 17:58

Right, like, I need x whatever each week, and wanting to be assured that they can get that.

**Interviewer 2** 18:09

Okay. Okay. And you've mentioned a couple times local, you said, if they care about local what, what determines if somebody cares about local or not, what's the connection there?

**Participant 215** 18:20

I think there's a huge lack of education about that. From even the customer that goes to the market to buy food; they don't understand-customers, individuals, they don't understand the benefit. And again, they're the same thing as the restaurants; they want cost, so they're making their decision based on more so on cost than any other factors.

**Interviewer 2** 18:57

Okay. Alright. Thanks, that that helps with that. You mentioned refrigeration in terms of-so was that-you talked about that as kind of a gap something somebody didn't have?

**Participant 215** 19:15

It was a couple of growers didn't have refrigeration, and so yes, I took them over to another growers to show them how they could do something simple with some styrofoam and an air conditioning unit and things, it's called the cool bot.

**Interviewer 2** 19:33

Okay, so is equipment or things like that one of those gaps that you help connect them?

**Participant 215** 19:41

Yes, I wouldn't say that's one of the high things, you know, but yes.

**Interviewer 2** 19:56

It does come up, okay. Alright. Just looking here at notes. You talked about...

**Participant 215** 20:02

[Interviewer], I'm glad I don't have your job doing this. Oh my gosh.

**Interviewer 2** 20:07

Listen, she is the best.

**Participant 215** 20:10

I really like it. I bet you like spreadsheets too. She does. Yeah.

**Interviewer 2** 20:22

You should see the inside that beautiful brain, talking about beautiful brains. Now, one other thing I heard you say that was a COVID result was that it increased the amount of produce that was being sold through CSAs.

**Participant 215** 20:39

Well, that was just-that's not somebody-well, it was a three family CSA, and they did sell to us, two of the families did. So that, I mean, COVID impacted greater sales for local growers, whether it was farm stand or CSA, doesn't matter.

**Interviewer 2** 21:05

Gotcha. Okay.

**Participant 215** 21:06

Most of our growers are not doing any CSAs.

**Interviewer 2** 21:10

Okay, it just increased the local food sales, is what I heard you say?

**Participant 215** 21:14

Say that again?

**Interviewer 2** 21:14

It increased local food sales, COVID did. And you also said it increased awareness of where food came from, from the people who buy food. So we want to make sure we show the COVID impacts there we go, interest in local, there it is.

**Participant 215** 21:30

Okay. I mean, it impacted us negatively, from the standpoint that there were fewer local growers-local growers were selling to us less frequently.

**Interviewer 2** 21:41

Oh, okay. Okay, so we need to connect that to you, then I less sales.

**Participant 215** 21:49

Trying to remember if that happened in-must have happened-must have first been in 2020, so for 2020 and 2021, it impacted us.

**Interviewer 2** 22:01

Okay. Okay. Alright. Great. Looking good here. Okay.

**Participant 215** 22:07

I'm not [inaudible] yet, good! [laughter]

**Interviewer 2** 22:09

Oh no, from get we knew that wasn't gonna happen. We already knew that. So when you think about-so as we look at producers, we got lots of connections there thus far. Are there any connections-you talked about them selling directly to the consumers-by any chance is there any connection between them and the value added processes, folks who are taking their product and making something?

**Participant 215** 22:38

Between who?

**Interviewer 2** 22:39

Between either producers and your value add or between Flint Fresh and the value added producers?

**Participant 215** 22:46

Well, Flint Fresh is doing processing, we have a beautiful kitchen. And I don't deal with any aspect of it, we're selling a lot to schools, and again, it's not necessarily local. But one of the things that we're doing is we are-likethe first thing that we're going to be getting in abundance is going to be asparagus. So we will process asparagus and put it in the freezer and the restaurants can buy it, whatever. That's probably you know, yeah, but the majority of-so if the kitchen is going to process and I'm saying this one without knowing 100%-but I'm pretty sure that primarily what the kitchen is processing for freezing. And that's local, and I know we did offer asparagus, we do apples that we freeze, and the schools are doing a lot of those types of things.

**Interviewer 2** 24:06

Yeah. So schools and restaurants?

**Participant 215** 24:11

Very minimal, very minimal for restaurants.

**Interviewer 2** 24:19

Okay, alright. Got it. Okay, so that's your value add connection there. Okay, let's see.

**Participant 215** 24:30

Currently, value added products do not go directly to a consumer. So somebody can't order-we have the produce boxes, but they don't have anything frozen in them other than the meat that we get-but yeah, that's not an item that's offered to sale to the individual. Okay, so institutions or restaurants for the frozen processed items, or probably even fresh.

**Interviewer 2** 25:03

Okay. Okay. Alright. Great. I think we've got that, because we're showing that value add to the schools, and there's a connection going over to the restaurants as well. Alright, great. It's looking good. Other ways that you see connections in the food system itself in terms of your understanding of it?

**Participant 215** 25:28

Between what and what?

**Interviewer 2** 25:36

Any additional connections you might see, you know, in the food system itself. So we've talked about your direct connections from Flint Fresh to producers, to your value added processors, we've got you connected to restaurants and the farmers connected to markets we see here. Any connections to the stores? When you talk about the retailers, are you mainly talking-are you connected to the big box, the stores or any of the local ones?

**Participant 215** 26:09

Right now, we don't have any stores that we sell to, no. We did have a pilot grant based program several-I'm not sure what year it was-2017, 2018. But yeah that never panned out into anything. I know there were some growers-I'm actually thinking of one-that was selling to-I don't know that she is anymore because she hasn't been selling to Flint Fresh for the last couple of years-but she was selling up to a store in the north end of Flint, you know, a market that has basically no food, you know, and so up in the north end of Flint into the food desert. So, some of our growers, that's not Flint Fresh, it's just some of our growers. And like I said, I don't know if that's still happening or not.

**Interviewer 2** 27:13

Okay. Alright. Great. I had a question, and there it went, huh? Oh, yes. You mentioned the boxes-the customers that you sell to Flint Fresh. Do you want to tell us a little bit about that, besides the producers. Do you want to share a little bit about who you sell to? You said you sell to...?

**Participant 215** 27:39

Okay, well we sell to Hurley food pharmacy, which is kind of like a pantry. We sell to them primarily food from our distributors. And we sell to-what's the name of his place? He makes meals and I can't think of the name... Oh, Quickies. So he uses a school, he works out of Genesee Intermediate School District and makes things and then he sells them at a health food store. So those two buy from us consistently, and then the other one that was buying from us consistently has kind of stopped because the one grower she always bought from doesn't have anything now. But we sell to two restaurants, and one is a very small restaurant and local is one of her focuses, but it's very small. And then I just I just met with another one-and that place that I mentioned is Grafted Root. Then I just met at noon with Redwood Steakhouse because they would buy-they're a big restaurant, and what he was doing is primarily buying the local stuff for catering or tastings when he has his monthly wine tasting things to introduce people to oddball produce. I just met with him because he hardly has purchased anything, and so I'm hoping that that increases so. And he's one that obviously, if we're selling to him for the his restaurant portion, we need that consistency, it's crucial in bigger quantities too. That's also an issue if we-to getting to work with more restaurants, would be need for higher quantities, which would always be accompanied by consistency.

**Interviewer 2** 30:18

Gotcha. Those two go together. Gotcha. Okay. Okay. Alright, we can see that circular, those things are deeply connected. You said that consistency, quantity and price were things that were consistent.

**Participant 215** 30:34

And the convenience.

**Interviewer 2** 30:35

Right. And the convenience. Right. Got it. Okay. Alright, great, that's looking really good.

**Participant 215** 30:42

Okay. The messier it gets, the better it is, is that? [laughter]

**Interviewer 2** 30:47

Yeah. It shows all the connections. So when you're talking, we're able to see and draw out those connections. And what's amazing, [Participant 215], is all this beautiful stuff is in all of you all's brains, but we just have to get it on paper.

**Participant 215** 31:02

Well, that value-I'm sorry, go ahead.

**Interviewer 2** 31:05

No, no, you go ahead.

**Participant 215** 31:06

The value added that would go to schools, primarily.

**Interviewer 2** 31:13

Uh huh.

**Participant 215** 31:16

And restaurants, we do, for Pace, it's a senior citizen place. It's not an in house facility, but we provide fully prepared meals for them.

**Interviewer 2** 31:38

Oh, okay. Okay, from Flint Fresh?

**Participant 215** 31:43

I don't know how we're doing it right now. I'm kind of out of the loop, because I'm the only one that works from home because I don't supervise anybody, I don't pack orders,vI don't deliver him. So I'm the only one that can work from home. But we used to drop off the Pace meals at the facility and they'd pick them up. And then at some point we were also delivering and I don't know if we're doing-I don't know what's happening right now. I don't know how the Pace people are getting their meals. So kids are getting value added-kids are getting-they're not getting meals, they're getting frozen-I know we do apples all the time and freeze them. I don't know if we freeze them now or do we just or I don't know. Okay. Yeah, I don't know, but the meals for the seniors are fully prepared for them, so all they have to do is heat it or whatever.

**Interviewer 2** 32:46

Okay. And that's called pace.

**Participant 215** 32:50

Yeah, PACE meals.

**Interviewer 2** 32:51

Okay, great.

**Participant 215** 32:59

So, and then we're also freezing produce from local growers, and the people that purchase the frozen stuff would be restaurants or the schools again.

**Interviewer 2** 33:18

Okay so it's freezing local produce. Okay.

**Participant 215** 33:22

Yes. I'm pretty sure that-I think the only stuff that we're processing is the local stuff.

**Interviewer 2** 33:30

Okay. I want to make sure we say local. Awesome. Got it. Okay. Got it.

**Participant 215** 33:44

Do you need where that's going to?

**Interviewer 2** 33:48

Yeah, and it's going to you said, the schools and restaurants. Yeah. Gotcha. Okay. And restaurants.

**Participant 215** 34:03

What's the difference? Oh, wait a minute. Okay

**Interviewer 2** 34:11

You had a question, [Participant 215]?

**Participant 215** 34:13

Well, I was just, what's the difference between freezing local produce and availability of local produce? Or just-I don't?

**Interviewer** 34:24

Yeah, so the thing I was hearing you implicitly say that, like part of what happens is you freeze local produce, and that's to increase like the availability of it, that they can use it whenever they want or the dead of winter or something, as a way to sort of like preserve it, I guess.

**Interviewer 2** 34:49

It's a good question. Good question. Lots of good connections here. Okay. Well, let's see. If you see anything else at this moment you want to add to it.

**Participant 215** 35:03

Let's see, I don't. Let's see. And then...

**Interviewer** 35:07

We can talk about waste?

**Interviewer 2** 35:08

So you could talk about waste. Oh, go ahead, yeah [laughter], yeah, you want to say anything about waste?

**Participant 215** 35:14

We are composting our organic waste. We're not composting it on our site. It's being picked up by... got to think of your name. I can't think of their name...

**Interviewer 2** 35:36

Is it with with Country Oaks, or something else? Okay. I only said that because you mentioned [Name]. Yeah, and I know [Name].

**Participant 215** 35:47

[Name] and I have been friends since our kids were little because we were both in the same food co op, and that's that's how I met her.

**Interviewer 2** 35:57

Wow. Talk about deep roots.

**Participant 215** 36:00

In the 90s I think. Yeah.

**Interviewer 2** 36:03

That's deep roots. Okay, so you're sending them your food scraps. Okay. Do you know anything else about-are any of your producers composting by any chance? Any connection?

**Participant 215** 36:16

Oh, yeah. Yes. Thank you. Okay. And one of the restaurants is too. The restaurant-[Name] set them up, so they're not composting, yeah.

**Interviewer 2** 36:31

But they're sending it out.

**Participant 215** 36:33

Yeah, so the one restaurant is, the small restaurant is composting.

**Interviewer 2** 36:39

Okay. Do you have any sense around barriers? I mean, you've mentioned a few barriers as other areas, any known barriers, or?

**Participant 215** 36:47

Around composting?

**Interviewer 2** 36:49

Anybody barriers to doing it or any gaps you know?

**Participant 215** 36:54

I would venture to say that most of the growers-I would guess most of the growers are composting. That other restaurant that we work with, I wouldn't be shocked if they're composting. And I think hang on here. I think composting is kind of the same as local food, not seeing the importance of it, lack of education, and I think the bigger they are, it might be more difficult for them to compost or they think it's more difficult. I think if the bigger restaurants would be set up and you know, I know what they're gonna say. I'm not gonna pay to have this thrown-I'll throw it out-you know, I'm gonna pay to have it composted, what? You know, because they have to pay to have Country Oaks to pick it up. So that's definitely a barrier. Definitely a barrier. I can put it my dumpster and yes, you are paying for that dumpster, but the dumpster is already there for whatever, so, everything, but yes.

**Interviewer 2** 38:36

They're paying for it. Okay. Mm hmm. Okay. Alright. Looking good. I think that was the only one that we didn't have a connector to, was the waste of it.

**Participant 215** 38:48

And yeah, like you're saying education about it-the perception of composting is difficult, it's because there's a lack of education about it.

**Interviewer 2** 38:59

Yeah, and you said lack of the importance as well. Okay, got that. Alright, looking good, and we can add, if there's anything else that comes up, I'm going to ask a few more questions. Sure. As we look at the food system as you understand it, what are some of the ways that racial equity or inequity are impacting participation in the food system?

**Participant 215** 39:24

I think that we've got such a rich resource of African American people. They are probably older, but you know, that could, well, we know we have in general a lack of younger people that are interested in growing food. And it would be so wonderful to take the people that have all this knowledge that are older, especially, African Americans, to work with those people and help them. Having land is an issue too; where am I going to grow this, ad how do I this? I don't know how to do this. Maybe I want to do this, but I don't know how to do this. And who can-just that connecting in the education part are so important with that. I'm happy we've got an Asian grower, and we've got an African American grower. I'm very happy about that, I would like-and we did have another one a couple of years ago with very-she probably was too small. But, yeah, go ahead. And you saw those as connected, because you talked about it from a racial equity standpoint. When you talk about the lack of the access, the knowledge, lack of knowledge, lack of access to land, and the transferring of knowledge from one generation to the next. So those were all tied to... Oh, you moved it? Oh there you go, thanks, girl.

**Interviewer 2** 40:57

I don't see it anymore. She moved it up to the upper right. I was looking forward to I was like, ready to go.

**Interviewer** 41:33

It's gonna be connected over here a lot.

**Interviewer 2** 41:35

Yeah, she's Yes. Yes. Thank you, [Interviewer]. That's what I was talking to but we didn't get there, alright, great. Great. Any other things, [Participant 215], that you think are race related or equity related, that you're seeing in the food system?

**Participant 215** 41:53

Well, yeah, purchasing the seeds, or purchasing any seeds or equipment, I think can be an issue. And, maybe they are great on the the knowledge and education part of it, but they can't get started because they don't have the money to buy those things.

**Interviewer 2** 42:16

Gotcha. Okay. The capital. Okay. Gotcha. And you see that mainly affecting their ability to get both seeds and equipment. So you're saying the impact on the ability-so you talked about land, but also, the money is tied to being able to get seeds and equipment too. Okay, okay.

**Participant 215** 42:40

So I'm sure you've heard about Edible Flint. And yeah, that's a great resource. That's a great resource, for all growers, not just-you know, we're trying to increase-well, you know what, that does help increase the growers that can grow-I think Edible Flint is providing great resources.

**Interviewer 2** 43:11

Okay, helping increase the number of growers. Alright, great.

**Participant 215** 43:16

So yeah, yeah, it's you know, education, the equipment, the tools, the seeds, the knowledge, the connection to others. Like I said, though, there are some [inaudible] connections. I must be missing something about racial equity, though. I feel like...

**Interviewer 2** 43:47

dWell, let me ask you the question another way then. Are there other barriers? You talked about access to capital, access to land, and education, those are three things, but are there barriers or other things that are tied to-arekind of racialized barriers. So we've got those there: capital, land, education that you spoke of, and if there's nothing else coming up, you know...

**Participant 215** 44:25

Maybe time?

**Interviewer 2** 44:27

Ah, okay. How so?

**Participant 215** 44:31

Well, if I have another job, you know, how do I have time to farm?

**Interviewer 2** 44:40

Okay. Mm hmm. And having another job is because of what?

**Participant 215** 44:47

Because, it's pretty darn difficult to have enough money by being a farmer. So the income provided by farming is inadequate.

**Interviewer 2** 45:04

Mm hmm. Farming income inadequate. Okay. So multiple jobs, which impacts time and availability to farm. Okay, got it. Great. That was the connections there, any other kind of barriers affecting...?

**Participant 215** 45:30

Lordy, um... Well, yeah but it goes back to this other thing, for them in terms of being a seller, for people to understand the importance of local and if it costs more, you know. So I think that the farmers at a disadvantage when he's competing-because the people-local is not a priority. Price is the priority.

**Interviewer 2** 46:10

Mm hmm. Okay got it. Okay. Great. Thank you. And I'm going to ask that question in one more way. It's slightly different, I'm gonna flip it a little bit. Are there ways that the food system contributes to racial inequity?

**Participant 215** 46:41

Oh, yes. It definitely does. What? Did somebody just say something?We need to--we need to cultivate those people, and put an emphasis and including them in the food system, in whatever way, shape, or form. And I'm thinking in terms of growers here, but food costs a lot of money, and you know, people-especially low income people-they've got to get the most bang for their buck. And getting the most bang for their buck may not be providing them very healthy stuff. So it would be wonderful, we need more grocery stores for people to buy from that are near where they live, and we know that transportation can be a barrier, and if they don't have a vehicle, they have to walk to the store, and wherever they're walking to, what does that provide? What opportunities for food does that provide them? Probably more like a fancy party store, not nutritious foods, and then certainly a lack of fresh produce. And then if you don't have a vehicle, and you've got to walk, can you carry out that home and you got two kids and one in a stroller, and you know,

**Interviewer 2** 49:11

Mm hmm, can you carry the food. Okay, got it. Okay. Yeah, transportation.

**Participant 215** 49:22

Mm hmm. Yeah. So people-transportation-you don't have a vehicle, the answer isn't always use the bus, because that's not necessarily convenient either. And you know, bus fare is costly. I was disappointed to see that the Double Up Food Bucks went back to the $20 a day. For the double up, during COVID, it was unlimited.

**Interviewer 2** 50:04

Yeah, Mm hmm. Okay. Alright. So you wrote that back. Okay. So I'll let you get those connections in, and then we'll--you talked about COVID a couple of times, [Participant 215], what other impacts have you seen COVID have on the food system?

**Participant 215** 50:38

Oh, we got blasted in March of 2020, you know, we got just blasted. So people calling us wanting food and wanting because we delivered, you know. But then there's also the issue of, we didn't provide free food. That's another thing. People see our truck in the neighborhood and their neighbors getting a free box, so they call us because they think they can just sign up and get a free bucks too. When in fact, those are grant based boxes that could be provided one of two ways, either an organization has grant funds and they come to us, and have us provide food for their clients, so they give us a list of people that we should be delivering to. As opposed to us gathering people that need food, unless we have a grant, we had a really great one from DHHS, but for about almost two years, but that's been gone for a couple years, I think. So wait, what was your question?

**Interviewer 2** 52:07

Yeah, no, no, you were speaking about COVID. And basically helping us understand the impact. You got lots of calls because people want a food delivered, we've talked just briefly of the distinction between your delivering of food (where people thought it was free) but it was grant dollars from a donor who gave you money to give food to other people. So that was your COVID connections, and the DHHS grant, so you were able to give some food, okay.

**Participant 215** 52:37

COVID-I ended up-I think I said this earlier, when COVID hit, I became the Flint Fresh social worker, so I was helping people with other things as well besides food issues. That was huge, and I was also connecting them to places that they could get free food.

**Interviewer 2** 53:04

Okay.

**Participant 215** 53:05

So.

**Interviewer 2** 53:09

Great. Great. Yeah, COVID did a lot. What about the water-what about the water crisis' influence on the food system?

**Participant 215** 53:20

I think there's-initially there was some there was more concern about the growers in Flint watering produce. Okay. There was more of a concern about that initially, and that has definitely subsided. Okay, that's definitely subsided. But, you know, we had to share information about that, we had to assure people, things of that nature, and we did require water testing in 2020. We did... Before [Name],our ED came on, we did have water testing, but I think when he came on, we did not. So you know, it's not something that we get asked much anymore about. Initially, yes.

**Interviewer 2** 54:34

Okay. So concerns has subsided. Okay. Okay, great. [Participant 215], are there any other things that you think have any...?

**Participant 215** 54:42

I don't know, my brains looking at this, it's all scrambled [laughter].

**Interviewer 2** 54:46

Yeah, sometimes you have to not look after a while.

**Interviewer** 54:51

I have some tricks up my sleeve, if you want to focus in on anything we can narrow down to just things-

**Participant 215** 54:57

If you think I need to focus on something, tell me and I'll-

**Interviewer 2** 55:00

No, no, just if you do. So you've talked about a couple of influences, you've talked about COVID, you've talked about water crisis. Is there anything else that you feel has a major influence or impact on food-local food-in Flint?

**Participant 215** 55:21

Well maybe it would be nice to have everybody that's working on local food to connect with each other more or something. I don't know. So all the different facets of those working and to collaborate more. Yes. And I don't know, maybe we meet twice a year, I don't know. But to see, what is it that you're doing, and how is it improving- you know, just to see what everybody's doing. And I think, you know, maybe if we saw what everybody was doing, maybe some of us would do things differently.

**Interviewer 2** 56:14

Gotcha. I think you moved this very smoothly into the last question that we have for you, [Participant 215]. Because looking at this beautiful map, and by the way, it is beautiful, that's your beautiful brain, with all the connections that you see at least the ones that are coming to mind right now. And I'm sure we didn't get them all. But we got those. So when you think about the system, you know, as you understand it, what changes, you know, might improve it? I mean, you just gave us a classic example. What changes would you make or would you see being made that would improve the food system? So everybody connecting, collaborating?

**Participant 215** 56:55

Accessibility. Cost.

**Interviewer 2** 57:01

Mm hmm.

**Participant 215** 57:02

Accessibility and cost. I think those two are big.

**Interviewer 2** 57:12

Okay. Well say a little bit about accessibility. What would you say? If you were changing and improving the system, accessibility, what would you say?

**Participant 215** 57:24

Well, there needs to be more stores in neighborhoods selling the stuff we talked about, selling fresh produce. That absolutely has to happen. Absolutely. That people can afford. And if they're not accepting EBT and double up, they need to be.

**Interviewer 2** 57:52

Okay, accept EBT and double up. Okay. Okay. So those are changes. What else would you change to improve the system? So we're looking like leverage points, we're looking for ways to actually change the system, so in addition to those when you said cost, talk a little bit about cost.

**Participant 215** 58:16

Talk about cost? Well, again, are they going to buy the junk ish food because it's less money? I guess it's alright, there's two people can look at food in two ways. I got to get something in my belly, versus I have to get something inside me that's good for me. So the the point may be just to get food in their bellies, and because it's more affordable, the crappier stuff is more affordable.

**Interviewer 2** 58:57

Mm hmm.

**Participant 215** 58:58

So I don't think-I mean, education isn't going to solve that because they don't have the money. You know, so I don't know how we can get more money for food in their pockets.

**Interviewer 2** 59:22

Okay, getting more money and food... Getting more money in pockets for food. Okay, got that one. Okay. Uh huh. Part of the solution, getting more money?

**Participant 215** 59:33

Yes, I think because then we can work on the education part of it. Because if you don't have any money, it doesn't matter. You know, if you can't afford that, it doesn't matter. If you know, and some people know it's better for them, but they don't have the money to buy it so they just buy something to fill them up.

**Interviewer 2** 59:55

Gotcha. Okay, education doesn't matter. Got it up. Other things you would change that you would think would improve the system.

**Participant 215** 1:00:04

I just-I think the collaboration between groups working on the food system, and coming together and meeting and knowing what everybody's doing.

**Interviewer 2** 1:00:19

Uh huh. Okay. Okay. Okay. I'm sure there's- What'd you say, [Participant 215]?

**Participant 215** 1:00:40

I'm sure there's more, but.

**Interviewer 2** 1:00:43

You've done a beautiful job. Thank you so very, very much. I was gonna say I was gonna ask you this question. Based on that. Is there anything else? But I think you're there. Okay. Yeah, well, again, Holly, we deeply appreciate you the work you're doing. We appreciate you coming back for the second interview to give us these additional insights and perspectives. And as we shared before, your interview is confidential. We use it, you know, we'll look at the data and everything and the research team, but not share your name or affiliations in any way. If something else does come back to mind, reach out your research or your contact person reach out and share. You also one last thing we always asked if you would do the evaluation for us? Sure. I'll drop a link in the chat. But also Chris will email it to you. Okay, easier for you. If you'll take take two minutes or so to do that. That would be great. And, again, we appreciate your time and everything you're doing.

**Participant 215** 1:01:53

And I appreciate both of you. Yes,

**Interviewer 2** 1:01:57

thank you. fan.

**Participant 215** 1:01:58

I tried to come on to this meeting a month ago because you know how you have it in your head. Remember, I had to email you like why can't I get on there? And I hate it when like the days are identical in March and February and March, you know, yeah, yeah. It's not on my February calendar. What now if I turned it to March, I would have seen it. But no, it's like, oh, my gosh, I forgot to write it down.

**Interviewer 2** 1:02:22

Guess what, we are all caught in that one way or the other? It happens. Oh my god, we're happy you were looking for it. We were happy you were looking for it. So again. Thanks. And and we do appreciate it. We were pretty much going to be closing out in the next week. We've got a few more interviews, just a few more slots. And, and so again, it's been great to get the second look and get some additional insights from you. So I'm sure we'll be talking with you again along the way. We're not going anywhere yet. Okay.

**Participant 215** 1:02:57

I can't remember i i think my boss did the first one. Did he Brian Short? Yeah, yeah. Brian talked to us. Yeah. Did he do the second one? Oh, yeah. Yeah, he

**Interviewer 2** 1:03:09

did. He did. And you know what's cool, Holly, is your beautiful brains are not identical. That's why we that's why we like talking to different people. Mm hmm. Yeah. Cuz you you give us different perspectives and insights. You know, like you said, Hey, I'm over here. And I'm doing this right. So yeah, thanks a lot. Sure. All right. We'll talk to you soon. I'll tell Amy, you said hi.

**Participant 215** 1:03:36

Oh, she owes me a phone call. I'll tell her you said hi to. All right. Thanks, Holly. Thank you, ladies. And again, I apologize. I was late getting on. Oh.

**Interviewer 2** 1:03:49

We know about grace. There's always that people. All the meetings end on seconds and then we're trying to move from place to place. You were fine. Thank you so much. Thank you. Bye bye. All right. Bye bye. Bye bye.