

**Indiana Grown Commission Meeting
September 17, 2014**

Attendees:

Ted McKinney
Sara Yelich
Jeanette Merritt
Cheryl Carter Jones
Sofia Kotsiri
Margaret Davidson
Pete Eschelman
Chris Baggot
Bob White
Mark Straw
Deb Trocha

Welcome from Ted

Introductions of guests

Cautionary note from Ted to remember that emails can be public record and to remember they can be requested and made public.

Indiana Artisan and Dig In panel: Brian Blackford, Tony Hahn, and Rob Gaston

- Dig In is a program that grew out of ISDA. They identified the growing demand for local foods and had connections with the restaurant community, but noticed folks were not talking to each other.
- It started as a one-day program, but has developed from there. Focus on Education, Awareness, facilitating connections to increase economic development
- 5 years in existence, annual 1 day event "Taste of Indiana." This year has 42 chefs, 17 breweries, approx 12 wineries
- Has a "foodie" brand at the moment. They have the strong connections to chefs, but want to start to bridge further connections with farmers. They also want to help teach chefs the language of agriculture/farmers.
- Indiana Artisan started about 6-7 years ago, launched in 2008, "gold-standard" of the products
- IN Artisan was very comprehensive, which is good, but it meant a lot of interests. OCRA was the primary fund source.
- Have done the promotion of artisans, food pavilion at the State Fair, "trails" around the state.
- Being part of state government brings recognition, a move away takes some of that awareness
- IN Artisan has transitioned to non-profit, they were hampered by multiple programs and the weight of marketing multiple brands. They learned it takes money to make a dent in the marketplace.

- Difficulty in incorporating all areas of the state? They never felt pressure to include all areas, but hope to get to that goal.
- They use a jury-panel process to determine membership eligibility to keep the quality high for IN Artisans. At the start, they only accepted about 20% of applicants. (Health issues, labeling issues, quality concerns – but that feedback was all provided to the applicants and some improved their product and were able to join after those changes.)
- IN Grown and IN Artisan currently work together at the fair, ultimately they want to implement the bold visions – all 92 counties, more presence in the state, more market availability (economic assistance)
- IN Artisan is concerned with spreading resources too thin, and being competition with IN Grown rather than synergistic
- Brand and Mission are key to keeping the vision and moving forward.
- Dig In sees the same connections with IN Grown and IN Artisan – a resource to help decide who gets into the Dig In program/festival.
- **TO DO** – add inspection/regulatory discussion to future discussions/agenda. (bottlenecks in current production), staffing at regulatory agencies
- IN Artisan would love to have comprehensive research on their demographics/consumers. Dig In has done some research, tends to be a lot of Hamilton Co, some Hendricks/Boone, they do try to keep it affordable b/c they are aware some consumers may not be able to afford higher prices.
- Do not negate the lower-cost entities. Wal-Mart has had some interest in the past. Restrictions have included a lack of supply. IN Grown could encourage additional supply. Need to discuss logistics.

Ken Meter presentation

- 2011 study, glad to see additional communications btw entities
- At the time, \$17 Billion, \$15 Billion from outside IN. Now, \$16 Billion is from out of state. \$18 Billion current total food purchase. This does not count tourists who purchase in Indiana. Essentially, 90% to 95% of food is purchased from out of state. It is similar to every state in the country.
- Once product gets into the supply stream, it is difficult to track where it goes.
- \$11 Billion of product produced in IN – most of it non-human consumption.
- Need to connect purchasing power to the product.
- Labeling and branding is critical to the creation of IN Grown, integrity and transparency is crucial
- SC has no money appropriated for policing, it can get difficult to police, very easy to get produce from other states but from local distributors.
- **TO DO** – bring in logistics and distributor connections to present. Kroger logistics/piazza produce (Marcus Agresta)
- What is a reasonable expectation for our goal as IN Grown? \$5 a day/per consumer goal is attainable. Bridge “build your health and build your local economy.”

- How can IN Grown be impactful? Integrity of label, identify farmer/processor, publicity umbrella and generate excitement, consumer belief that they are providing to the state. Need to have more than just the label though, needs to be impactful throughout. Needs to be some strategic planning involved.
- People are hungry for a connection to their food/producers.

Heartland Growers (horticulture and floriculture)

- 2 facilities, greenhouse production. 75% of their business is in an 8 week time span in the spring. They expanded into produce to spread the business year.
- They do a lot of business with Lowes and they don't have much connection to Indiana Grown, but they have started to work with Marsh and Kroger (herbs/lettuce) and they are much more interested.
- Many different definitions of local grown. North America/Midwest/within the state/local vicinity.
- Market is doing well in Cincinnati – still considered local there.
- What could IN Grown do to help them? From Heartland - What is the goal of where it is going? What is their definition of IN Grown? Does not have to be sprouted in Indiana, 75% of the growing cycle in Indiana for floral.
- Maybe consider following the money – headquarters is in Indiana, the time the product spends outside of the state is just in subcontracting.
- Some companies have headquarters in other states, but they are processed in Indiana – can they be included?
- They have had no issues or traction issues with organic/not. Local trumps organic.

Commodities

- She provided stats on In Corn and Soy
- Programs similar to this have started and died a few times. Never any money – needs money to be successful. Put something in place to go outside the Administration/have life despite Administration changes.
- They don't necessarily have any programs that would want to use the IN Grown label, but she would hate to see an across the board exclusion.
- Due to hybridization, don't know where the markets will go. They would potentially be interested in the use of Indiana Grown for some of their export market. They have seen some interest from international markets for Indiana grown product.
- Paths don't cross btw industrial and consumer products, there would not be confusion because the two markets do not cross.
- Traceability is not occurring in the feed market. They are starting to see some action (very limited) because of the specific traits used in the corn/soy.
- **TO DO** – research Corporate Body Politic – have to send report to the Treasurer.

General discussion

An idea might be to have a site visit for each new member, but don't make it a requirement for participation in the program.

TO DO – discuss sustainable funding.

Laura Buck – liked hearing from IN Artisan and Dig In – don't reinvent the wheel

Sara Yelich – goals is to have metrics and numbers to put behind the brand, glad to know existing data.

Liked idea to have Purdue Extension police the program.

Jeanette Merritt – very interested in partnerships with these existing programs without stepping on toes. Use their strengths.

Cheryl Carter Jones – long term partnerships, why shut the door on feeding the world?

Pete Eshelman – great having disparate groups talking cooperatively. Heard privately that IN Artisan was worried IN Grown would override them, good plan to be working together and reassuring them as we did today. We would be crazy not to work with them.

Margaret Davidson – remember this is a mass audience focus. Artisan is successful because they are a segment, but we need to be mass consumer.

Chris Baggot – has expanded his viewpoint after hearing from these groups.

Bob White – Everyone sitting in the room thinking collectively, 3 years ago – no one was talking to each other. Integration.

Mark Straw – how do we maintain long-term sustainability of the brand? Must be removed from the political process/better chance of survival.

Melissa Rekeweg – liked the consideration of “follow the money” given that some products are not fully produced in Indiana. Ensuring quality – always have a few producers who are problematic and don't want it to reflect on the program.

Ted McKinney – interesting consideration with juried selection. Other IN brands are compatible, we must collaborate. Get it right, quality over speed. Take the time to do it correctly. Sustainability and funding are critical. Logistics are a big deal and should be considered. Government does have a role, it may be start and incubate/move to quasi-governmental. Structure of the entity is critical.

Audience members – food hub process already has vetting. Reminder that branding is only one part of keeping dollars local. Livestock truly wants to be included in this process and be incorporated.

If you are a part of IN Artisan, maybe you can already be “grandfathered” into IN Grown.

Ted - Let the free enterprise market take care of self-policing. Be a big tent.

Does the IN Grown label help the market accessibility? Do stores/retailers see the value?

Question – what needs to be in the report/document? What is our actual focus?

ISDA have report fleshed out by Oct. 10th.

Membership questions - % of livestock life in IN? Rootstock from IN?

- Tiered memberships are a great way to boost membership
- Entry level – small cost or free, 2nd tier featured on facebook page, higher levels can access grants, etc.
- Consider no-tiers, but each benefit costs so much. (roll of stickers – \$x, facebook post - \$x)

- Consider members in industry segments, farmers/producers/wholesalers/restaurants, Charge membership based on association level.
- Consensus on simplified structure.
- Don't undervalue the program. It might be worth more than thought at first glance. \$100 was used in the past but some producers didn't want to give that. They didn't know what the value would be. Anything over \$50 is not going to be accepted by small, farmers market folks.
- If the program is free, the perception is that it won't be worth much. Need to charge something – but need to show the value of the program.
- ISDA will define - what are the benefits of the program. What are the benefits provided by other commodity groups? Have the commodity groups/organizations do what they do and use it synergistically with IN Grown.
- Focus on logistics/distribution issues

Next meetings:

10/10 – Pete Eschelmann/Joseph Decuis

10/28 – Jeanette Merritt/Winery?

11/10 – Chelsea Marburger/City Market