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Good afternoon. I am Parker Deputy administrator for cooperative programs at USDA rural development I'm sure many of you know October's co-op month. As part of our celebration, we have been holding a series of events and webinars that showcase the many important ways that cooperatives can empower our daily lives. As many of you may not be aware October is also Transition -- Farm to School month . Partnering with our food service colleagues. More more today we are seeing the conversion of local and food co-ops and we think about them as a producer co-op selling to the local food marketplace, or consumer co-ops that so food from local producers. One area that often goes unnoticed is that cooperatives with the Farm to School program today you will hear firsthand from the leaders providing multiple perspectives on the topic. Enjoy and have a -- happy co-op. I will turn it over to Chad Parker .

[indiscernible] thank you Chad. Appreciate the welcoming remarks and on behalf of micelles in the cooperative team, happy cooperative month and form the school month. Hopefully you have enjoyed some of the other webinars in the events happening with gross -- across rural development and the food service. We are just a little more than halfway through. A lot of more great stuff to come soap state posted. -- So save posted to

With that I would like to go ahead and talk about a couple of quick logistics things for this particular webinar we will be opening the lines for questions, we will be using the chat box. Anytime you have a question if it's a technical question, the content question, something you would like to know more clarification on our go deeper on, by all means use the tax -- checkmarks. -- Chat box. I will be keeping tabs of the type of questions there and if you have a burning question that needs clarification before the next presenter that's fine and we will as the presenter to answer that question.. If it's a good question that several people could answer, we will hold it until the end I'm hoping we can get through most of the questions you will have that we can only answer them if you put them in the chat box. One of the questions we often get early is can we have access to the slide deck. A lot of good information there. A lot to digest. So I just sent to you all, hopefully you will see this, saying welcome and if you would like the slide desk card email me at James Dot Barnum at WDC dot that give at James Dot Barnum@WDC.thatgiveUSDA.gov. We will be happy to simulate PDF version

What we will do with this webinar is Chad mentioned, there is a amazing convergence between local food and the cooperative movement. We're also seeing that, no supplies within the farm to school community as well. I will give beauty brief overview. Then we will have entrÃ©e and Northrup -- Andrea Northrup give dig deep. We will really dig down and get to hear the producers/food hub perspectives as well as buyer perspectives. Then I will wrap up with resources to share with you all.

The first prisoners will be myself and Andrea Northrup. After my spiel I will give a little more introduction of Andrea's background.

Chad is the head of the rural developments cooperative programs. This is a place stacked with professionals who conduct research and training, technical assistance for cooperatives across the country. We manage grant programs as well as provide resources. Please use us as a resource, a lot of good information on the website. I will go back to that at the end of the webinar.

Within the cooperative programs, we built a portfolio of how the food systems work. Another opportunity to dig deeper in what rural development is doing on the food systems work. This is also a place where we will host a lot of webinars. This webinar will be recorded and will be accessible to the public a few days after this is. -- Ends.

All of this also, kind of a wider level, is connected to a departmental initiative this has been around since 2009 and it's a one-stop shop for all resources and information. We have updated the website and updated the mapping tool that allows us to chart, allowing you to locate and identify local food projects across the country. Those have been in since 2009 so thousands of projects. Allowing you to dig deeper in your own community, and a lot of it is related to the cooperative work as well .

So why is USDA involved? We see as it a strategy to met many goals. One of the goals were talking about today is to increase access to the Farm to School programs. We know there's a convergence between food systems and co-ops. The convergence has happened over many years. We probably have one of the most early stages, one of the champions of local food, was consumer co-ops, that were looking for different types of products. Looking for local products, healthier products, and not finding them. So either starting their own food cooperative, or grocery co-op, to start shelving and putting local food onto their shelves and stores.

And we saw it within the producers. The producer co-ops that have formed to are taking advantage of the local food demand that is happening across the country we know this convergence is happening and as you can expect it is happening within the Farm to School movement as well . It's not just about co-ops and local food, part of the convergence and part of why there's a lot of excitement with both co-ops and local food systems, is the shared set of values. We do have a group of folks here, and sure some of your co-op experts and on the other hand some of you might be coming from the Farm to School perspective, not really sure what our cooperatives anyway. I have laid out here a classical definition. Bottom line, it is businesses and organizations jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprises that have a set of values associated with them, such as self-help, democracy, equity, solidarity. Trying to develop a system of practices where honesty, openness and social responsibility are integrated and in grade within the members and the overall mission of the cooperative. When you think of those values, they don't differ all that much. In fact there's a lot of convergence parallel to that and the value that are espoused within the local food systems. In this case talking about a community-based food system. Anything system, if you look into the inner ring that is always going to be the production, processing, distribution, retailing of the products and the eating of those products that will happen within any food system. In a community-based food system is filled with a set of values that mean a lot to the people eating and

preparing and living within these particular communities. It could be they are supporting the local producers because of economic development, it could be because of environmental stewardship, and you can see all of the other values here you can clearly see there is a lot of the same values that are embedded within the cooperative movement I think that is one of the key pieces that has brought these two movements together.

When I think of cooperative businesses, I'm also talking and thinking about the supply chains by which they are moving that product from farm to put. That's where we look at these ideas of food value chains. I think it's embedded at the core of what cooperative businesses to cover yes there is structuring to create financial success. First and foremost they are businesses . there's also a social benefit. They want to see a clue to their community, the members of the cooperative, that goes beyond the financial bottom line. I think that's what we are also seeing with food hubs and other local food enterprises, it is a shared set of mission and operational values. It's a little hard to see on your screen, that the idea of shared mission values would be something the entire supply chain is supporting, Farm viability, farm preservation. In our case healthy food access, making sure kids have healthy, state the affordable nutritious food. For their schools. At the same time operational values about transparency and open communication. These things are all emblematic that we are seeing within the local food and co-ops and more specifically with farm to school .

That was my broad framing of a lot of this. I'm not sure how helpful it was. But I think more important and more fun in terms of digging deeper into the farm to school stuff is having Andrea talk about her, which is a relatively new office. A little background on Andrea before she gets going. As you can see she is the Farm to School regional lead in the mountain plains region pitches relatively new to the position. Her old buddy, my old buddy, left a sadly. Were happy to have Andrea step up and be the new regional lead to the Midwest. She's now in the Denver Colorado office having moved from Minnesota, the land of co-ops. Where she was the farm to school coordinator for Minneapolis Public schools. Prior to that she was in my backyard in DC. Lots of experience, welcome Andrea.

Thank you very much. Thank you for the warm introduction. I'm really excited to be on the call today. I know my former position in Minneapolis Public schools, we really counted on co-ops to really actualize our Farm to School program. Whether working with the food co-ops, working with cooperative farmers. You name it. Happy to begin.

Jim covered this really well, this is a definition we use about what is a community food system. I loved his concentric circles there to show that it's really a food system where all aspects of that food system are aligned to really improve the health of the community. And that is health in a broadly defined term. Environmental health help with the food system, the health of the community it serves.

And similar to the values of the cooperative movement, food security, sustainability, proximity, how local things are and self-reliance, or four of the . core values in the community food system.

So how this relates to the USDA Farm to School program are the office of community systems created and 20 and 2010 hungry foods act. For three main reasons. HHFKA 2010. To distribute grant funding, to provide an improved access. And for research and data .

The way community food systems really apply to schools is through increasing access to local food, and the food education. So encouraging students and children to learn more about where the food comes from. As a way to then encourage them to that local food when it shows up on their lunch room try.

This type of work can happen in schools. It can happen and tribal schools or tribal communities. It can happen in summer meal programs. Where breakfast and lunch and dinner, snacks are served at summer meal sites .

It can take place in preschool settings. To the child and adult care feeding program. And all sorts of educational components apply. The stereo typical, or the one that we most think about, is school gardens as way to educate kids about where their food comes from.

We can also think about farm visits, bringing the farm or farmers to the school. Having used go out to the school farm on field trips .

And some of that more traditional nutrition information can be a component of farm to school.

While school lunch and local food and school lunch is one area where farm to school, that's what we typically think about it is so much more.

Were really seeing a lot of benefits associated with farm to school. These are some facts that came out in some recent studies, about students being more willing and open to try new foods once they are exposed to a farm to school program. There actually eating more fruits and vegetables. And that improved awareness and knowledge about food and where it comes from can really inform healthy eating choices.

And so we have in the school marketplace, we have a lot of money that is being spent on food this is a really great opportunity for it to really invigorate the local food economy. Were those schools are situated.

A little bit about the office of community food systems. We had some national office staff that oversee some of the functions of the office. And then we are set up with regional leads. I am in the mountain plains regional office. That then I have six other counterparts who are really the eyes and ears on the ground in the various regions of the country. You will see a little italics that reflect the specialty areas of those particular regional office staff.

So will talk a little bit about the Farm to School grant program . We have funded about 300 projects across the country since 2012 or fiscal year 2013. And actually our request for applications was announced last month. It is due in December. If you're looking for an infusion of funds to take your farm to school program to the next level, you should check out the farm to school grants .

We also provide technical assistance. And that is in the form of a lot of different fact sheets clarifying some of the rules about buying locally and incorporating school garden progress produce and meals. Procuring local foods for child nutrition programs booklets. A document that has everything you need to know about buying local in the school programs.

We also have a toolkit that matches workshops, YouTube videos, toolkits. That walks through the farm to school process to help you get started.

In terms of research, our main effort is the USDA Farm to School census . Our 2015 Farm to School census data was recently released it is all in a really great visually appealing website that you can check out you can actually drill down to the school district level and see what schools in your community are buying in terms of local food and food education activities they have going on. That is a great resource if you have not seen it.

And finally I will encourage you to sign up for the newsletter. It is called the dirt. It's a great, concise newsletter with really pretty pictures that keeps you up-to-date with all of the latest happenings in the office of community food systems. You hear about the grants, technical assistance webinars, etc., etc. I definitely recommend signing up for it if you haven't.

And I will close with a great picture from actually Southwest Colorado. Where'd I met a school district serving locally raised yak burgers for a meal they. -- Day. With that I will turn it over to the next presenter and you can contemplate how awesome this school district was for investing in their local ranching community

Thank you Andrea. That is really interesting, yak burgers. Locally raised yak.

It went over really well. I have not tried one myself but apparently they were pretty good .

Love that. Thank you Andrea. I have to say something so personal. I always have PowerPoint and the when I see Farm to School because they are such great slide decks. It's always chalked full of great information. Thanks again. We will hold questions that folks might have a go ahead and move on to our co-op presenters. We have three. Let me bring up their bios. Ginny Wingert. She joined the cooperative this April. She is involved in local systems for over six years her experiences working with organic produce companies. She's also experience the Farm to School program from a school person back to as a preschool in head start teacher. And Jenny also manages her family's organic form farm with two sisters. Jennifer, welcome. It is all yours

Thank you very much. Good afternoon I apologize ahead of time for my voice. I'm fighting a virus. Thank you for the warm welcome. Again I joined back in April. My role as a member and field coordinator is to work with all the different members of our cooperatives. I will tell you a little bit more about the fifth season and what kind of cooperative we are and how we work with the Farm to School program .

First of all what is fifth season cooperative? Fifth season started in 2010 and we were the first multi-stakeholder cooperative made up of six-member levels and it encompasses all areas of the local food infrastructure. First of all it starts with producers which include the farmers, reduce or groups, a group of farms under one particular name, such as Spring Valley produce. Our processes which is value-added products, jams and jellies, yogurt or meat producers. Also the distributor members. Broad line distribution businesses such as Reinhardt and Cisco are buyers. Schools, hospitals, universities,

restaurants and other institutions are the buyers and the six-member level is the workers. Those are members of the staff.

What do we do? We are cooperative that addresses all different aspects of the local food infrastructure and we create the connections to allow all members to succeed and grow. As you see what is our visual on the side, you can see how we are in the middle and we work our way out with all the different partners and members of the cooperative. We serve as a single part of contact between all of those different members.

We are also a cooperative that works with all of our different members to ensure that we have an existing pricing structure so that all the members can thrive and grow their businesses, and also keep the quality of their product and their identity intact as it moves through the distribution system.

We also work with providing regional food access. There are a lot of different definitions of what locally is we define local as within 150 miles. That puts us in Southwest Wisconsin, Southeast Minnesota, knows the East Iowa and Northwest Illinois. We are able to encompass a lot .

We also promote sustainability. And what makes it sustainable for us, good stewards of the land and water, bio diverse, treating animals humanely, and making sure the workers on farms are socially just, and we are also working to be economically viable for all of our members.

Our focus is to make buying local easier. My role as a member coordinator is I am that central point of contact for the smaller businesses to get into broad line distributors, such as Reinhardt and Cisco foods. What I can do is I can help them make getting their products into those distributors easier. And this also on the other side makes it easier for customers to order locally and support local small business through their distributors

And also ensures pricing through cooperative agreements, allowing purchases to be cost-effective. Assisting institutions to incorporate methods to realign their budgets to include local or organic foods. And also give institutions the tools to promote local foods and educate.

So how does this fit in with the Farm to School program ? The way that it works the best is to make the accessibility to local easier through the partner distributors. When they work with their distributors through the schools, and they are in search of a local item, they can look for fifth season items in know it's within the 150 mile radius. We also ensure the food safety and quality of products that are going through annual farm audits and visits. Which is also part of my job. And we also provide farm and producer information to make the connection between the food and who is growing it. We can give that information to the schools and they can utilize it within their institution.

On this slide, it is just an example of one of the things we do. We work with the fund the school program and the harvest of the month calendar. We developed this calendar with them. We have planning meetings and are able to go through and discuss the different items that people would be interested in having for their harvest of the month. And part of our discussion is we talk about seasonality, the capabilities of getting the products, into the schools. What kind of volume they will need and if I can

ensure that kind of supply. And also taking a look at cost and making sure that it is feasible for the schools to be able to bring in certain items. And also that it will work for the farmer as well.

Where are we headed? As with any new growing business, we have had a lot of challenges and opportunities as we are looking to gain sustainability and profitability. At the end of September we are up about 70% over last year, which makes 2016 one of our best years since we started. And some of the things we looked at during this year is taking a look at pricing. Making sure everything was working with not only the farmers, but also on the end for the customer as well. So we had some discussion about pricing with the distributors as well. We also increased our producer and processor memberships, which also included to upon its growers and greenhouse growers to extend our fresh produce availability. And we also added another meat producer, which we do have grass fed meat going into the schools currently as well. We also added a second larger broad-minded to bitter with Cisco foods. And were also offering organic. In the past we were mainly looking at conventional produce, but now we have an organic line as well. We've also increased our communication and education about what is locally available with our customers a lot of people think that it is simply produce or maybe jams are jellies, things like that did there are some any other things that are produced locally like grains, yogurt, things like that. That people are really excited to know they can get it within the 100 mile radius. Then continuing with the sales and growth each month we had principate reaching profitability by the end of 2017 .

If you have the questions, feel free to contact me. At any time. Thank you for your time.

Great, thank you Jenny. I personally have a lot of questions. I will go ahead and take this opportunity to ask one or two. So low-price stakeholder cooperative. It is hard to get my head around. Are you saying like someone like Cisco, one of the largest bloodline distributes in the country Sysco , are they a cooperative member or someone you do business with the

They are at the operative member, distributor member . they have purpose -- purchase a membership with us and they are one of our four distributors actually that we work with. Reinhardt and Sysco are our larger distributors .

And likewise, buyers, the schools themselves are also members of the cooperative .

Yes. A couple of them are. There is one particular school district that we work with, the home and school district that does a lot of school gardens. Also they are doing chickens this year. So they are doing a meat situation as well. They are able to work through us to get there items into Reinhardt and be able to get it into schools that way. As well.

Fascinating. I have a lot more, but I've gotten some other folks that have started to chime in. The me talk about the two questions here, do you follow one vote for vendor -- member or relative powerful vote quick

Each member has a vote.

If there joining as a producer you have a vote, if you join as a processor you have a vote if you join as a distributor you also have a vote.

That is a vote for membership class? Or for any business that occurs?

We do have a Board of Directors. Aboard that meets once a month. If there are issues that need to be brought directly to the cooperative, those people are able to do that as well.

Great .

For those special situations

That makes sense. There was another question. A little less about cooperatives but about your business model. Can you talk more about what you mean by adjusting prices at multiple points in the system?

What we take a look at, just as an example of how with my work, what we're looking at, the fair price ensuring fair pricing for everyone, we try to make it as feasible as possible for everyone to afford the local food. What I take a look at his I take a look at the market pricing, things like that and for particular product and say this is what the fair market value is for this particular item. And we do a full percentage markup and then take a look at it going into the distributor. We give suggested prices of what would be feasible for the institution to afford. Sometimes, everyone has a different markup of what, of the type of margin they would like to see on their product. Sometimes it can be, sometimes that particular market doesn't work for the end customer. That's where I have a conversation and say okay if we can bring it to this price, your customer from the institution or school is going to be of the buy more of that. And they will be able to do more business with you if we had it at a more fair price to does that make sense?

It does, actually. At least for me. Sometimes it's a one-way conversation. [laughter]

Thank you Jennifer. I am always amazed by this particular type of cooperative model and what it says about being able to have all these different stakeholders be at the table with that ultimately means for transparency, Gail -- accountability, to munication. All of these things. All of these can be accomplished because you literally all have to get in the game, you are all members of the same business. I know we could do a lot more, but let's go ahead and move on right now. To our other two speakers. I will introduce most of them together because they were closely together through the years. The first is this the grand. -- Krista grand, Durango. Her colleague Janet Vogel is also a service director at the bank is school district -- Mancos school director. She's been with the co-op for five years.

Both Janet and Krista are going to talk about the local buying co-op that they help to establish good we will start with Krista.

Thank you for inviting us today I will be speaking about the co-op from a slightly different perspective, as an informal purchasing group formed in southwest Colorado, with seven school districts did the co-op was formed solely for the purchase of local foods. Before I get into the formation of that co-op there's a little bit of history behind our Farm to School program. We started in 2005 back in 2005 there were limited resources available to help develop Farm to School . So we developed a lot of former

connections, meetings, doing things like speed dating events where we had producers and service directors in a room together where we could learn about what farmers were growing, when things were available, when to purchase. We started incorporating some of those items into our programs through salad bars, and eventually focusing on days like the national school breakfast and lunch. Colorado proud. Trying to add local foods on those specific days. In the beginning we really started with very small purchases from farmers. And featuring those items, sometimes one salad bar at one school.

This sort of reframes that information. Starting the Farm to School program by making the former connections, then gradually increasing the purchases of local food, hitting those items on the menu more days, out to more students at more schools, trying to reach the whole population of kids eating in the program once we got to a point where we were able to buy enough food to feed all of the kids on the specific day, a local meal, we got to the point where we needed to start getting farmers to grow more food for us. The way that we did that was we took seven small districts and combined one group. The idea by the purchasing group was to show farmers with the potential was for them to grow more food. Within that small purchasing group, we ended up creating a specific Farm to School bid with safety regulations. In order to make that process successful we had meetings with farmers and servicemembers in the same room to see how that would work and how to respond to a school bid and how farmers could get their product into schools more easily. Once we got past that point we had such a tremendous amount of success with getting farmers on board coming able to make larger food purchases, that it created a need for greater infrastructure to handle the volume of the purchases from local farmers.

So in southwest Colorado, the seven districts, this just gives basic information about the enrollment sizes. Durango is the largest at 4670 students last year were slightly over 5000 this year. And Janet to my colleague from bankers will speak showing that district is as small as 496 students. With 496 students it is harder to have by in power. So we have much greater buying power if we show the farmers what we could actually purchase.

So here is just the sort list of farmers were currently working with. We have been working with up to 19 farmers at a given time and in a school year. Our products range from pinto beans to cornmeal, to carrots tomatoes, cucumbers cut potatoes. And fruits also, apples, pears, peaches. So we have farmers this year we are working with.

A little bit about the farm to school bid. When purchasing local food we just -- defined local as within 250 miles. So Durango is located only 45 miles from the New Mexico border. If we were to say we only wanted to purchase within Colorado we would be limiting ourselves to a 45 mile radius. So we went as far as 250 miles. And we also specify delivery criteria for the participating schools, the products, the usage, allowance for variations on pack size, different varieties the farmer might grow. Within the bid, we are an informal group, so we use the bid process to show our purchasing power as a collective. But then each producer bids actually to the individual school district they want to provide the food to the so we created this form that gives the farmer the ability to tell us what product they can deliver on the variety of the product, case I is Predicted delivery of the amount taken delivery and the pricing structure. The pricing structure drives the purchase. Each farmer relies on the individual school district,

and then they go through the response sheets together. We also created some on form food safety. In southwest Colorado we work with mostly small farmers. So a lot of the larger regulation around food safety doesn't apply to the small farmers. We have created our own farm to school food safety checklist that required, that each farmer we work with has a food safety plan. This was developed in conjunction with farmers. And based on gap protocol, each heading comes directly from those Protocols working with small farmers to identify what was reasonable for a small farmer to respond to as a safety plan. Every farmer response to the bid with the food safety plan and checklist

And then the checklist is what the food service directors use when they go out to a farm for a visit. If we want to check up on the practices, we look at what they said they do on their safety list, then we compare that to what we see peers

--. In the end, this year we had, I wrote up two different grants. The USDA implementation grant and another one, the Colorado health, because we have had such success with our cooperative and have increased the amount of food we are purchasing to a level where we were unable to receive that anymore. So we actually built an aggregation center within our high school that is just for local foods. And so it has given us the capability to make larger purchases from our producers, and also provide infrastructure for some of the smaller school districts, and really greater food safety management.

So this photo QuÃ©bec in 2005, when we used to get deliveries from farmers a lot of times it was in the back of the vehicle. Delivered in random crates and baskets and things. We were just excited to get the food and be putting local form food out there on the salad bars. And then this photo shows now with the aggregation center, we can see consistent pack sizes, the differences of the delivery. Reliable containers, proper storage, compliance with food safety. In the aggregation center serves seven districts on the bid. We bring food in and we can distribute to other districts that don't have the infrastructure .

I will handed over to Janet.

Hi and thank you. I am from the make this district. -- Manke's district. About 30 miles west of Chris's -- Krista. She mentioned we work closely together. Having the aggregation center really has opened up capabilities for us as well. You can see on the screen. We are a pretty high community. Which means there's not a lot of access to fresh fit in the tuples to the community members. -- Fruits and vegetables to the community members. So bringing it through Farm to School is a great resource for this community as they may only get these particular items from the school district. When we first started, with Krista about five years ago, again as a small district we had our own challenges. Very small infrastructure. We had minimal equipment in the kitchen. Every small kitchen. Very little storage space. So when we for Midshipman -- started the Farm to School program, as you saw in the back of the car , the slide previous where farmers would bring small portions of food to us, that is kind of how we had to function. I did not have places to store the food. We were only able to take on very small portions at a time. And we still are as you will see in a couple of slides. But as a small district, we did not have a lot of buying power. Farmers would come to the back door. I was able to only take on maybe 20 pounds, 30 pounds, of what they had available. That would limit me to only being able to serve that food maybe one day a week. I also wrote for a grant, to the Colorado health foundation. And equipment grant. We

were able to bring in, we pretty much we outfitted the entire kitchen with new equipment, bringing us up to speed. So we can actually do more scratch cooking. We can put up the food safety. -- Safely . we can bring in more of the food, the local foods and are able to use not only in the salad bars, but the dish menu options.

So when we talk about the co-op, we are able to streamline the process by using, utilizing the hub, the aggregation hub. I will switch to the next slide, I apologize. So this is a focus of what our kitchen looks like. As you can see it is pretty minimal. In the corner behind the ladies is our refrigeration and freezer. On the left, there we go. On the left you see the color and on the right you see a clear. Those are the only two refrigeration sources. Behind that is the door to the walk-in freezer which is not much bigger.

So being able to check on a lot of these foods take on a lot of these foods that the local farmers are bringing us is pretty difficult to store. And so by using the co-op and utilizing the aggregation center, I am able to serve these local foods on a more regular basis. And it also extends our season. Some of the items I would no longer be able to hold can be held in Krista's storage refrigerator. For example apples, the tuples, all of those -- vegetables, all of those items that hold for a period of time, I can go on a weekly basis and pick those items up and have them available throughout the week, rather than having to only be able to put those items on my salad bar, or my menu items, main menu items once or twice a week. Now I am able to do it on a more wide basis, everyday.

It also helps us with the food safety. The service directors and small districts, and large districts, prior to is having the food co-op, a lot of times we would be driving to forms on our own taking our own food --. So by doing this, -- taking this a much easier way on a more regular basis.

So that kind of concludes what we do here and in conclusion it is great to be able to do this, it gives us bigger buying, purchasing power but also the bottom line, it really is about the kids. Our goal is to serve nutritious food for our kids. In the co-op allows us to do that.

I will hand this back over to Krista to let her close. Thank you for having us. If you have any questions let us know.

Thank you for having us.

Good post Krista. [laughter]

I also have a lot of questions that is one advantage of being in moderator. I will start because it's really interesting, two things happening that really coalesce. One is being able to bring all the different districts together in order to form the bargaining position in purchasing power. But also realizing you needed some other physical assets to make this work, being the aggregation facility. Effectively you are running a food hub because you're managing orders, doing the aggregation, and I am assuming at that point, you have to do forward distribution to each of the school districts, or they need to pick a product. We didn't get into that. But ultimately manages all of this? It ends up being you Krista? In Durango? You have a staff? The person power?

It is a lot of coordination, a lot of work. Farm to School is a lot of work in general . Remembering that we started this process in 2005, when there was no support, Barry limited resources. A lot of the Farm to School programs put together through conferences with farmers, really just gathering information of what works and what doesn't work, how we can do it. With the aggregation center, it was a lot of work to get it put in and it takes a lot of coordination and I do all of that.

We need to clone you. [laughter]

Prior to the season, it's crazy. Right now it is slowing down and we are moving into more storage crops, onions, carrots, potatoes. Things we can bring in in larger quantities. September, halfway through October, the photo of the controller. Then it gets divided up and sent out in the next week it looks the same. We are serving an abundance of local food. One thing we are doing with the aggregation center currently, is the way that the bid process is divided out to the farmers, they actually respond individually to each food service director. So we currently have a model where each food service director is responsible for their own purchases. Now those items may be delivered to the aggregation center, but they are invoiced separately. We are in essence a holding facility. I work with each individual food service director to pick up their product. We have protocols on link of time we can hold food and all kinds of things. So with those minimizing the work, I am dividing things in receiving larger orders. But we are separating that to the sense that farmers are invoicing directly to each district.

Okay. That, I can see how that can help alleviate some of the burden. If they're doing their own purchasing. Now here is a question, it may lead to a follow-up question are your school districts saw operated? Self operated or do you work with a food service company?

They are also for operated. And the follow-up.

I assumed you were self operating, giving your flexibility to do this I'm sure you have heard from other school districts, that are working through food services companies can't do you know of anybody who's been able to replicate your model outside of the self operated? Or does it become too restrictive, you can have the right partnership .

The model in the sense of the co-op or the aggregation --

The buying co-op .

I think there is some other groups in the state of Colorado doing similar. I know incredibly -- Greenlee has the school districts that work together. There are other districts in the state. We have shared the bread information, the food safety information in the state. There are some other people following that model.

Now that actually gets to another question. One of the participants asked if you would be willing to share your food safety checklist with them .

Absolutely .

You are comfortable if I sent people your email.

Yes I have shared that with a lot of people. It is limited, pertaining to a smaller farms. If you are a large school district working with a large farm, the guidance now comes under different roles. If you're working with small farms it's an excellent way to get the conversation started on to safety. A lot of the small farms don't have the kind of food safety things in place that schools require. The farm to school checklist is an excellent way to get the conversation started .

Okay. Awesome. So there will be more time for more questions. People who are still with us, we have 60 still. Utilize the chat box. I will shift for a couple of minutes and talk about some other resources at USDA. Probably many of you know the USDA can really offer support all along the supply chain, from production to the consumption of products. The next slide that I have presented many times, is expected and intended to overwhelm in some ways. On this info graphic of sorts, you can see where it's basically a chart, and when we talked about assistance with a local food systems space. We have close to 30 USDA programs across seven different agencies that offer assistance. Because I'm a supply chain junkie, I like to set things up by different activities that happen within the supply chain. If you are a producer dealing with production, we highlighted that we think are some of the key programs you should be looking at it similarly if you are processing or aggregating, those programs. I heard Janet and Krista talked about how they utilized, I'm not sure if you applied or already got a grant to do farm to school that helps with the aggregation facility. We can get clarification on that. Interesting for folks to look into. There's a lot of programs at Rural Development . Ones like the Rural Development development grant . A lot of producer grants, producer co-ops utilizing the program. The community facilities, a wonderful one for Farm to School for a lot of folks would have loans and grants . Like Janet said, I think it was Krista, were able to apply for a grant in order to get new equipment think it was Janet. You went through a foundation in Colorado. You can also apply for grants for community facilities, to prepare food or ultimately store food had to benefit the community. There's a lot of USDA resources there. There certainly is in time to go through them all. I hope that you take a gander at this particular slide. If you go to know your farm and know your food, this particular graphic is on the front page where it talks about resources. All of these have hyperlinks. You can go directly to the programs to find out more information. And I would be happy to answer a few more questions at the end of this webinar if you have them.

We don't just throw money out the door we also offer technical assistance guidance documents, reports and resources. You heard from Andrea, Farm to School has amazing resources to support everything from local procurement to how you manage the food safety and questions that come up either on the production side, or on the consumption side, how you would handle products and that kind of stuff. Tons of resources. And the rural development, we have quite a few as well. On the regional food enterprise hub site, we have a report series. It talks about best practices, starting a food hub, as well as maintaining a financially viable food hub . we have these resources . you can download them and on the cooperative programs page as I mentioned it's the top of the hour we also have tons of resources on a cooperative programs. Including one of the most robust libraries of co-op publications in the country. Possibly in the world. Again they are free and we have a lot of hard copies of these as well if you're

doing a training your self. Or if you would like to learn more and don't want to read online. Or if you want to save a tree you can download them electronically. I recommend checking out those resources .

And just a you know, this is to give a shout out to Wisconsin since my -- Minnesota got a shout out it was clarified that in fact Minnesota is number one, more co-ops Incorporated than anyone else. Wisconsin is number two. They do have a cooperative development Center with excellent resources. And I also wanted to highlight, the USDA supports directly cooperative development for technical assistance and training, through the cooperative development centers . these centers do a lot to help cooperative cedar start, or help them expand, do with financing issues, legal issues . you can find a full listing of the cooperative development centers, it's a ridiculously long link, so if you just do an Internet set -- search, you will get right to the PDF that list all of the cooperative development centers in our state in your state .

There's also cooperation working with the national realization of cooperative development centers. While means, check that stuff out. It doesn't end there, there's always more. A number of other organizations that were to support cooperatives across the country. Now that I've given my spiel, we are going to return to the questions.

This is almost like a plug or a soft ball. It came from one of the arty folks Road folks in Oregon. The question is how have USDA Road programs assisted? I'm interested Jennifer. It doesn't have to be USDA resources, but tell us about the fifth season. Some of the resources they have been able to tap into an order to establish and expand upon the fifth season cooperative model .

Actually that's a very good question. The USDA has been really an integral part in getting fifth season started, starting with the cooperative development. The section of it we have Margaret [indiscernible] involved with cooperative development with the start up QuÃ©bec in 2010. She also continues to be an advisor. As far as particular grants, we did receive the value-added production grant, processing grant. What that did, the fifth season developed to frozen blends. Vegetable blends to use in institutions and schools, hospitals and things like that. What the VA PG did for us was help with the processing cost of that. Also purchasing the produce and launching the product and storage. That was really a good grant for us, to be able to kickoff two different blends that we have utilized to have local produce available all year round. Not just during the high season. And we also were able to receive the local food promotion grant as well. And that also, that was focused more on the marketing aspect of our frozen blends. Living those into school districts specifically into Illinois into Chicago. That really supported us quite a bit. So the grants and the USDA have been a huge part of getting us rolling on a couple of different big projects .

That is great I had a feeling you had gotten USDA grants. Certainly there is other avenues in using member equity, to raise funds and so forth. Local food promotion has been a good grant program for a lot of food hubs. And producer and distribution. As well as the value add producer grant program .

Since we're talking food safety with Janet and Krista, the checklist and how they set up the protocols to ensure that they have healthy food coming to the system. This one is less about food safety, but about food waste. I am curious, how do you handle, this is a question that came an earlier, how do you handle

and mitigate food waste within the co-op? Said to have everyone at the table there is an opportunity, I would like to ask Krista and Janet, there is an opportunity to figure out, because it's farm to put such you have all the -- part -- the parts because of all the members there.

I will start with Jennifer, then Krista and Janet .

No problem. As for his food waste, with this season, we don't have a lot actually. A lot of the orders we do specifically with fresh produce, are custom orders. There is very little we bring into store that we don't necessarily act as a storage facility for long-term storage . we do more of a custom order cycle, with the customers are ordering twice a week or once a week, and everything comes in with the next few days and goes out the next day. There is an a lot left behind. But if the farmers, if they have additional product they need to move, we also partner with another organization that is within the building. Community hunger solutions. We are able to connect farmers with community hunger solutions, in order to have them move that food through. So it doesn't go to waste. It is actually getting to more people who can utilize it.

Right. Great. Krista and Janet, this is a huge part. I'm not saying that local food is going to be the panacea, but there is a lot, in my kid schools it's shocking how much food is thrown away. They only have 10 minutes to eat and shoving everything in, and then leave half of it there. Whatever you been able to do to reduce the waste in your system?

This Janet. I will speak to my end. Being able to bring in food on a more regular basis, by use of the aggregation hub has really limited the food waste. When we would bring it in and smaller quantities, and we were limited on how we were able to put it out, then our? Would have a harder time with utilizing all of the food within a few days, so it didn't get wasted. If you're talking about plate waste, within a cafeteria, in the very beginning when we started Farm to School a lot of the kids were not introduced to fruits and vegetables until they joined us at the school. Then yes, we did see a little bit of it at first. But we also participate with a garden program at our school. So by teaching the kids from the beginning, putting seeds in the ground, growing at, bringing it in the harvesting, bringing it to the cafeteria and sing it on their plate, it brings it full circle for them. Those older kids that we started Farm to School with , we are seeing the older kids going through this now five years, are really starting to waste less and less food. They actually are very disappointed if there isn't fresh food available for them.

This is Krista. I will mention one more thing a lot of the local food purchases, is driven by the menu. And so for instance potatoes, things, driven by what we know we will use. And the other piece is that we have salad bars and all of our schools five days a week. All of that food goes out on the salad bars in Durango, the salad is the vegetable of the day. By the end of the week it's always fresh fruits and vegetables on that bar.

We do a lot of taste testing with kids. A lot of the bills are from scratch mills that also utilize the farm to school products. Lots of fresh vegetables. We do a lot of taste testing with kids, to incorporate menu items that they will like and actually use those items. We have high levels of consumption of fruit and vegetables in our district.

Great. Take you both for expanding on that. One last question I will ask, Krista and Janet, this is a question that you have been successful and have set up this co-op and really focusing on increasing the local food procurement. Can you give me one or two high-level points, like what you should know if you want, if I want to do this with 10 or 12 school districts in Virginia where I am, what do I need to know. Where can we shorten the learning curve and provide some kind of good practices. Things where you thought this would be really important and it doesn't. Take a lot of time. I would love a few high-level points from both of you about your experience and what advice he would give to others .

This is Krista. The form that I showed where we had the farmers responding with what products they were going to provide. That took a lot of tweaking. It took a lot of, the first time we put it out we didn't have a form that worked very well. It was kind of a nightmare deciphering what the farmer meant. How much part of that could deliver. The success of the program comes through education. In Durango we have put on five SW. Farm to school conferences one Puryear for the last five years. Each one of those conferences focuses on a different level of farm to school for instance when we developed the checklist, we did one conference that was just about the checklist. What does it mean to have a food safety plan in place. How you write one. What is feasible for the checklist. What does Mean. Which please of it makes sense for a small farm. We've done other ones around food safety. What school district purchasing looks like. Because you can get as many school districts together to form a co-op, but if nobody speaks the other language you will never have a successful story. It took getting all of the food service directors in the same room, all the producers in the same room, even coming up with terminology. A glossary of terms. What is procurement, what is a bid process. The farmers didn't speak our language and we definitely didn't speak theirs. It has taken quite a few years of these educational environments of getting everybody in the same room to really have the level of success we have now .

Just a tag on that, she pretty much covered everything. I would add a whole lot other than it does take a big difference when you build the relationships with the farmers. The better relationships you can build with them, the more communication happens, the more communication that happens, the more smoothly it goes. The first couple of years we did muddle through. Us as directors learned through the process as well. It has been a learning process, but really building the loyalty between the farmers and the districts. So that they feel confidence and we feel confident as well .

And one more thing, I invited a couple of finance directors from districts to speak to farmers, so they could understand how school finance functions. And why the pricing in a bid is so important. That is another piece of the success, getting farmers to understand price points that school districts can work with the

Right. Absolutely. We have one minute left. A quick question. Are the Farm to School conferences that you do open to schools outside of Colorado? This person is from Wyoming. Is it just for the school districts in Colorado?

We invite our local school districts, the local producers. Anybody can come. We had one in the beginning, to people showed up for that one. Five years ago when people were trying to get Farm to

School programs started . The summit is interested in what we are doing, they can always email and we can let them know that

It might be a way for a person in Wyoming to start setting up something similar. That is great. We are at the time. It is 3:14 PM. We need 30 seconds to wrap up. First and foremost I want to thank all of the speakers. Andrea, Jenny, Krista and Janet, for it fantastic presentation . laying out a lot of different aspects of cooperatives in the intersection between that and local food. This recording, thank you all applause. [applause]. I want to just close by saying this webinar will be recorded. We will be posting it to our site and making it available for everyone if you want to check it out again. Or to share with others within your own network. With that, thank you very much for everyone's attendance and sticking with us through an hour and 15 minutes. I hope you all have a wonderful rest of cooperative month as well as farm to school month. Thank you everyone. Have a good day.

[Event concluded]