

2018 Annual Board Chair Report

By Katie Daman

Thank you to everyone for joining us at our AGM this year! As we have a number of new members, I'd just like to take this opportunity to review the mission that Farm Fresh Food Hub's work is guided by:

FFFH works to provide access to an urban market for small producers, while simultaneously encouraging consumers to purchase food that reduces the ecological footprint of our food system.

The three components of this mission are:

- To develop an exciting space for producers and consumers to gather and connect
- To support local, small producers in their desire to access market opportunities
- To strive towards reducing the ecological footprint of Manitoba's food system

South Osborne Farmers' Market

As you all know, our mission has translated into the creation of the South Osborne Farmers' Market, which is wrapping up its third year this summer. We are also committed to two indoor markets a year, one in December and one in Spring. These are all run on a volunteer basis.

Our last two indoor markets were extremely popular, particularly the Mother's Day Market + Plant Swap which we've decided to make an annual event. This year we were even able to host a brunch at the market thanks to the help of our newest board member, Anna Sigrithur.

The outdoor farmers' market continues to grow each year, and as it does, we are able to put more money into marketing and other areas. We were excited to be able to pay a small honourarium for the first time this year to co-op members Bethany and Rueben for their volunteer work around coordination. We anticipate being able to hire someone for this position in the near future – maybe even next year!

This year the market averaged 30 vendors a week, with an average of 500 customers through the gate. September has slowed dramatically, which will be addressed in our plans for next year. Similar to last year, we are hoping to plan an "end of year party" at the last market with an open mic, a crokinole tournament and additional kids' activities.

Food Hub Plans

Our long-term goal over the last few years has been to develop a Food Hub, which would involve storage, aggregation, sales and distribution of regionally-sourced food. This idea is not new and has been the topic of many discussions throughout Manitoba's local food economy for many years. In doing so, we have become members of Direct Farm Manitoba and continue to consult them on various activities. I will speak more to this later.

Board Changes

This year, as their terms expire, three of our board members (Leanne Dunne, James Magnus-Johnston and Lindsay Waedt) have decided not to stay on the board. We are sad to see them leave but have enormous amounts of appreciation for the work and energy they put into incorporating our co-operative, creating the South Osborne Farmers' Market and contributing work and ideas to the Food

Hub's future plans. I want to express particular appreciation for the work of Leanne and James, who were both instrumental in bringing this idea to fruition long before I became involved. I know that you are all continuing to do important work outside of the Food Hub, and wish you all the best in those endeavors.

In other news – we appointed a new board member to our board this past winter! Anna Sigrithur, a self-taught chef, food activist, research and educator, has been a welcome addition. Anna's main food-related passions revolve around food history and culture, sensory perception, food preservation, microbiology, ecology and intersectional feminism/body politics.

This Past Year

This year the board has tried to focus on two things (in addition to the operation of our markets):

1. Business Planning
2. Grant Applications through the Canadian Agricultural Partnership Manitoba (CAPM)

Business planning was mildly successful but proved challenging without a concrete understanding of where a physical "Food Hub" would be housed. We have talked with various organizations about partnering with them for discounted rent, and had a few ideas floating around with Nathan from "My Farmers Market" before he went out of business. That said, organizations are hesitant to commit. Further, business planning has been constrained to the winter months as the market becomes so time consuming in summer. Anyone who would like a copy of what we've gathered together in our business planning process is welcome to request it at any time.

We applied for another grant through the CAPM Fund, a provincial/federal partnership, for \$50,000. This is the amount we have deemed would be required in order to get a distribution centre off the ground. This is our third large grant application, which we have unfortunately not heard back about yet. Many of the grant programs offered are a poor fit for us, as they exclude items like capital costs or rent.

In better news, we were able to secure a Manitoba Co-op Association grant of \$2000 this spring for signage and pamphlets. This will help us advertise the market, provide education about our organization as a co-operative as well as inform people of our future Food Hub plans.

This Next Year

Our biggest learning this year was the need for a strategic planning session with our board. While the distribution centre plans are not off the table, we have recognized a need to smart with smaller and more attainable goals. This is particularly due to lack of large-scale industry experience and capacity on our board. A strategic planning session will help us make realistic, concrete and actionable goals going forward. There are already some ideas that have been discussed that we are excited about, including a partnership to collaborate and increase capacity within existing organizations such as the Harvest Moon Local Food Initiative or the Prairie Fruit Growers Association. Additionally, there are considerations around small-scale "test/pilot" aggregation projects.

Thank you for all of your help in supporting us supporting small-scale local food entrepreneurs in Manitoba! We look forward to seeing what the future holds, and having all of you continue to be a part of that.