

Indiana Grown Commission Meeting
January 23, 2015

Attendees:

Mark Straw
Jeanette Merritt
Chelsea Marburger
Margaret Davidson
Cheryl Carter Jones
Deb Trocha
Pete Eschelman
Ted McKinney

Welcome from Ted McKinney. Comment from Cheryl that David King did a great job of doing PR at Hort Congress. Bianca Gogel and David King both spoke well at the event and offered great insights to growers. Jeanette Merritt added her thoughts as well that folks are very excited about the program.

General discussion from others in the room about the Indiana Grown program and ideas/thoughts.

Presentation from Ben Schaffer – Homegrown Heroes Program

- They began a program to try to assist their veterans in Kentucky to assist those who were in agriculture or were wanting to get into agriculture. Try to give them the option of using agriculture as an income source and career option.
- It is a national program now, but the origin was in Kentucky.
- Denotes products which are grown or raised within the state. Those who participate must first be a member of the Kentucky Proud program, then are part of the Homegrown by Heroes program.
- They must show they either currently serve with honors or were honorably discharged from any branch of service at any age. (It is not limited to post 9/11.) They must also have 50% ownership or management in the farm.
- Entered into a partnership with the Farmer-Veteran Coalition. They have exclusive partnership to take the Homegrown by Heroes across the country. They have started to take the program out to other states. Kentucky owns the trademark – with the partnership, they can work with Farmer-Veteran Coalition to take the trademark nationwide. The exclusive partnership retains the integrity of the program.
- They are turning over the trademark to the national organization to ensure the program is able to maintain continuity through different administrations.
- They work with other organizations to help teach these individuals farming practice as a new/second career. (Mr. Karis Gutter – USDA Veteran liaison) With aging farm base, this helps bring in new generation to the career of farming.
- Lots of public support for the program; folks were generally willing to pay a higher premium for Homegrown by Heroes products.

- Illinois kept the connection with their locally grown program, but Ohio has made it separate from their locally grown program. They are trying to work with each state department of Ag – create memo of agreement with each state. The agreement is with the Farmer-Veteran Coalition, so they can do all the paperwork/running of the program.
- Can be a meshing of the logos, do not have to connect. It is a national logo/brand.
- He is guessing most will go to the national logo b/c the products will likely span state borders.
- Farmer-Veteran Coalition does require food safety certifications. Kentucky encourages it, but Farmer-Veteran Coalition requires.
- **TO DO** - Find out how many vets are in ag business to connect/partner with the vet programs in Indiana.
- Mid/end of May – program to promote/convention (if nothing else, Jeanette has a veteran-owned winery who can participate)
- <http://www.kyproud.com/veterans/>
- <http://www.kyproud.com/veterans/forms/Eligibility-Requirements.pdf>
- http://www.huffingtonpost.com/linda-watson/homegrown-by-heroes-program_b_4299404.html
- <http://www.usatoday.com/story/money/business/2014/08/17/veterans-farmers/14111229/>
- They also use some grant money (from Tobacco Settlement \$s) to try to get the program recognition. (hand up for starting process)
- Rewards program budgets in Kentucky generally seem to be about ½ a million dollars.

Review Commission Talking Points

- Comments from Margaret – talking points need to be the overarching message for the department and continued by the commission members in any meeting or any time they discuss the program.
- Includes the description of the program, economic impact, reference to other state programs, and description of the Commission.
- It will change depending on additions to the program – the messaging is important.
- Sticking with the definition of \$16 Billion in food purchases in Indiana – it is a verified number.
- “, appointed by the LG,” (added to the commission definition)
- The commission has been meeting since August 2014 to establish the program with a launch expected (anticipated?) in 2015.
- Add “produced and/or processed” added to point one.
- Per David – it is an initiative. It is not a brand, and not a program. It is an overarching initiative.
- Approve talking points with these changes.

General updates

- Agreement of Grown and/or Processed in Indiana
- Back to discussion of percentage attached to definition of Indiana Grown.
- Keep going back to main 3 objectives to set the definition of what is “Indiana Grown.”

- Good idea to have “gold label” products in the business plan for products which are 100% Indiana grown.

Legislative update

- As always, don’t know what results will be because it’s legislative process. If you talk to anyone about funding for the program, DO NOT attach yourself to this commission.
- Neither ISDA nor the Commission can lobby for funding outside of the Governor’s budget recommendation.
- 3% cut to ISDA budget based on numbers from previous biennium budget.
- Need to get the business plan done so it is a tangible product to show progress and defined direction.

Business Plan Update

- Have created a business plan summary – they will do a deeper plan next week.
- Be consistent on all wording throughout all documents, use categories for where it’s made, where to buy, where it’s grown. How to include partners? Add verbage for it. Add food service/catering?
- Organizationally create categories for drop-down web purposes. Add duck.
- Give contact info first thing on the application.
- Chelsea will be giving some additional feedback and doing a review of the application. She will be taking a stab at draft changes.
- **TO DO** – Have IEDC see the business plan

Logo/Branding

- Should we include Huntington University logo options? No need to keep any connection to Indiana Grown past logo. Competition among Indiana universities to create a logo? Be able to unveil at Ag Day? Also Livestock, Forage Conference? Margaret and Chelsea can work to reach out to schools and create the competition.

Fees

- Pete – no fee
- Chelsea – hard to not charge a fee for a program that has no money
- Deb – no fee
- Margaret – no fee
- Chelsea – no fee
- Mark – no fee
- Jeanette – like having folks with a little skin in the game
- Ted – like no fee, but also can’t have no fee/then go to fee, especially if eventually want to go to self-sustainable program.
- Everybody agrees with skin in the game of some sort.

- What would the fee be used for? Used to run the program.
- Very much need to look at options for additional funding/outside funding. Workshops, food shows, training, etc.
- Measure success of the program, anecdotal info collected.

General consensus – def do Homegrown by Heroes.