The Necessary (r)Evolution for Sustainable Food Systems
Amplified Conference 2012 Presenters

Patt Cantrell

Patt Cantrell is a community organizer and a journalist focused on making the business case for local and regional food. As Regional Food Solutions LLC, she works with nonprofit and educational clients to communicate new food and farm business options and public policy directions. She is a member of the Michigan Food Policy Council and a 2008-2009 Food and Society Fellow with the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy. She brings to her work 12 years of on-the-ground food system project management at the Michigan Land Use Institute. There she led development of a 10-county local food marketing campaign, farm-to-school network, farm business education program, and a regional food and farming coalition. She is a 1987 Fulbright Scholar with BA degrees in economics and political science from the University of Missouri-Columbia. She received an MBA from Drury College in Springfield, Missouri, a city where she also cut her teeth as a business reporter and columnist at the daily Springfield News-Leader.

Melanie Cheng

Melanie is the founder of social enterprise FarmsReach and nonprofit Om Organics. FarmsReach started as a web-based SaaS platform to facilitate regional B-to-B food distribution, and has since evolved into farm advocacy services to help farms become more financially and environmentally sustainable: financial services, access to inputs, and technical assistance. With Om Organics, she operated the first farmers market-to-restaurant co-op in San Francisco in 2002, and developed the OmOrganics.org website – a popular resource for consumers to learn about organic agriculture and find sustainably grown foods in the SF Bay Area. Om's most recent project is Catalyst Commons, an initiative to help the food system movement minimize duplication of effort and connect those with capital with those who need it. In 2010, Melanie was curator and developer of the Food Systems track at the international Social Capital Markets conference. Previously, she was a Cisco Systems writer and editor.
Heather Darby

Heather Darby is an Agronomic and Soils Specialist for the University of Vermont Extension. She received her M.S. from the University of Wisconsin in Agronomy and her Ph.D. in Crops and Soils at Oregon State University. Being raised on a dairy farm in Northwest Vermont, has also allowed her to play an active role in all aspects of dairy farming as well as gain knowledge of the land and create an awareness of the hard work and dedication required to operate a farm. These practical experiences complemented by her education have focused her attention towards sustainable agriculture and promotion of environmental stewardship of the land. Heather is involved with implementing many research and outreach programs in the areas of fuel, forage, and grain production systems in New England. Outreach programs have focused on delivering on-farm education in the areas of soil health, nutrient management, organic grain and forage production, and oilseed production. Research has focused on traditional and niche crop variety trials, weed management strategies, and cropping systems development.

Niaz Dorry

Niaz is the coordinating director of the Northwest Atlantic Marine Alliance. She & her dog, Hailey, live in Gloucester, Massachusetts - the oldest settled fishing port in the U.S. Her dog Hailey is one of the lucky dogs who survived Hurricane Katrina and is Niaz' daily reminder of all the fishing communities that are yet to be rebuilt since the Indian Ocean tsunami and Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, and other disasters. Niaz began working with small-scale, traditional, and indigenous fishing communities in the U.S. and from around the globe as a Greenpeace oceans and fisheries campaigner. She then went on to working on advancing the rights and ecological benefits of the small-scale fishing communities as a means of protecting global marine biodiversity independently.

Time Magazine named Niaz as a Hero For The Planet for this work. Her fisheries articles appear regularly in Fishermen's Voice and SAMUDRA as well as a range of random publications. Niaz' work and approach have been noted in a number of books including Against the Tide, Deeper
Shade of Green, The Spirit's Terrain, Vanishing Species, The Great Gulf, Swimming in Circles, A Troublemaker's Teaparty and The Doryman's Reflection. She is a graduate of the Rockwood Leadership Programs Leading From Inside Out as well as Art of Leadership trainings. She serves on the executive committee of the National Family Farm Coalition and Granite State Fish as well as an advisor to the Harvard Medical School's Center for Health and Global Environment. Before joining NAMA, Niaz served as the Interim Chief Operations Office for the Healthy Building Network.

Vern Grubinger

Vern Grubinger has been working with and learning from farmers for 30 years. He is the vegetable and berry specialist and Extension Professor with the University of Vermont, and coordinator of USDA’s Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program (SARE), which awards over $3 million annually in grants to researchers, educators and farmers across the 12 Northeast states. He helps lead the eXtension Farm Energy community of practice, serves on the Town of Dummerston Farmland Protection committee, and has been on the boards of the Vermont Land Trust, Brattleboro Food Coop, Windham County Farm Bureau and Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Working Group. He writes monthly columns for Farming magazine, airs occasional commentaries on Vermont Public Radio, and consults individually with hundreds of farmers each year. His degrees in agriculture are from Cornell and UMass Amherst. He authored the books 'Sustainable Vegetable Production from Start Up to Market' and 'With an Ear to the Ground: Essays on Sustainable Agriculture'.

Robert S. Lawrence

Robert S. Lawrence, MD is the Center for a Livable Future Professor in the Department of Environmental Health Sciences at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health with joint appointments as Professor of Health Policy, International Health, and Medicine. He is the founding Director of the Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future, which supports research and develops policies related to the public health impacts of industrial food animal production, improving food security, and adopting healthier diets. Dr. Lawrence graduated from Harvard College and Harvard Medical School and trained in internal medicine at the MGH. He has been a
faculty member of the School of Medicine at the University of North Carolina and Harvard. From 1980 to 1991 he served as chief of medicine at the Cambridge Hospital. From 1991 to 1995 he directed the Health Sciences Division at the Rockefeller Foundation. He is the founding director of Physicians for Human Rights (PHR), serves on the Board of Directors of the Albert Schweitzer Fellowship, and is a member of the Global Health Advisory Committee of the Open Society Institute.

James B. Macon

James has spent his career as an operator, investor and advisor taking a hand-on approach to corporate and financial design, market analysis, partnership development, capital formation, team building and exit strategy and execution. Prior to co-Founding Closed Loop Capital, James founded Barbour Alliance, L3C, a start-up and venture capital advisory services firm and new economy innovations incubator.

Prior to Barbour Alliance, James served as Venture Director at Criterion Ventures where he designed and launched new social enterprises in healthcare finance, sustainable fisheries, urban education and renewable energy. James served as Executive Vice President at e2e Materials, an Ithaca, NY-based greentech start-up founded on Cornell University bio-composite research and technology. At e2e Materials, he was responsible for corporate financing initiatives, strategic planning and client acquisition. James was an Advisory Board Member for e2e Materials’ subsidiary Comet Action Sports, a skateboard manufacturer and founding B-Corporation. In 2007 James was an Associate with CEI Community Ventures in Portland, ME where he focused on new financing rounds for portfolio companies and the creation of a new fund targeting consumer product, software and renewable energy ventures in underserved regions in New England. James spent five years at eSecLending, a global financial technology start-up in Burlington, VT where he focused on global client acquisition and corporate strategy with particular emphasis on the sale of the business (sold 2006).

As an undergraduate, James received a BA from Hamilton College with additional study at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland. He earned an MBA at the S.C. Johnson Graduate School of Management at Cornell University where he focused on venture creation and financing, and led the Ithaca-based venture capital fund BR Ventures. As an alumnus dedicated to venture creation and development, James was recognized as a Jonas Weil Entrepreneur Fellow. James lives in beautiful Shelburne, Vermont with his wife and two children.
Corie Pierce

Corie began farming as a teenager in New Hampshire on Barker’s Farm in Stratham, NH. It was supposed to be just a summer job, but she fell in love with the work growing food, being outdoors, running a family business, interacting with the community, the teamwork to run a successful farm, etc. She knew it would become part of her livelihood eventually! She also loved teaching and working with kids and people. So, the vision of a community farm that also engaged people by sharing with them where food comes from and connecting people back to the food they are eating and how it is produced became a goal for her. In 2005, Corie and Adam met in California at the UC Santa Cruz Farm and Garden Apprenticeship. It was there where the two began discussing ideas of this “community farm” and combining their passions and vision for a farm. After a wonderful stint in Michigan co-managing the Michigan State University Student Organic Farm and developing and teaching in their Apprenticeship, Corie moved back home to New England with her partner, Chris Dorman, and their son Henry, to collaborate with Adam to begin their farm.

Corie and Adam found out about the Leduc Farm preservation led by the Vermont Land Trust and submitted their proposal to buy the farm. In August of 2009, they were selected to buy the farm and in September 2009 they purchased the farm and launched their dream. Corie continues to teach for another year and a half at Sterling College while working on the farm on weekends. As of January 2011, Corie joined Adam full time on the farm helping to grow the vegetable production on the farm and to expand the dairy operation. Together, Corie and Adam are building all production areas of the farm the bakery, the meat, the dairy, and the veggies and are excited to grow their dream of creating their family farm and community farm!

Rich Pirog

Rich Pirog joined the newly created Center for Regional Food Systems at Michigan State University as senior associate director in May 2011. His current work includes developing a statewide food hub learning and innovation network and providing oversight to new Center work groups that include Center and MSU faculty and staff. From October 1990 to May 2011 he was
associate director and program leader for marketing and food systems at the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture. At the Leopold Center Pirog directed the Value Chain Partnerships (VCP) project, an Iowa-based network of food and agriculture working groups that provides technical assistance to farmer-led food businesses in Iowa. Through VCP, Pirog lead the Regional Food Systems Working Group, which focuses on making the case for investment in local and regional food businesses and networks. There currently are 16 local food groups representing more than 80 Iowa counties that participate in the Regional Food Systems Working Group. Pirog lead the development of Iowa’s Local Food and Farm Plan in 2010-2011, which was mandated by the Iowa legislature and includes funding and policy recommendations to develop a stronger local food economy in Iowa.

Pirog's research and collaborations on local foods, food networks and communities of practice, food value chains, and ecolabels has been publicized in magazines and media outlets across the globe, used by local food practitioners, and are often cited in books and college courses. He currently is consulting and writing publications with the Ford Foundation, Wallace Center for Sustainable Agriculture, and the Kellogg Foundation.

LaDonna Redmond

LaDonna Redmond is a Senior Program Associate for the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP) and a long-time community food security activist who has successfully worked to get Chicago Public Schools to evaluate junk food, launched urban agriculture projects, started a community grocery store and worked on federal farm policy to expand access to healthy food in low-income communities. Redmond is a frequently invited speaker and occasional radio host. In 2009, Redmond was one of 25 citizen and business leaders named a Responsibility Pioneer by Time Magazine. LaDonna was also a 2003-2005 IATP Food and Society Fellow. In 2007, she was awarded a Green For All Fellowship. LaDonna attended Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio.
Stephen Ritz

Stephen Ritz is a South Bronx teacher/administrator. With the help of extended student and community family they have grown over 25,000 pounds of vegetables in the Bronx while generating extraordinary academic performance. His Bronx classroom features the first indoor edible wall in NYC DOE which routinely generates enough produce to feed 450 students healthy meals and trains the youngest nationally certified workforce in America. Stephen has consistently moved attendance from 40% to 93% daily, helped fund/create 2,200 youth jobs, captured the US EPA Award for transforming mindsets and landscapes in NYC, recently won the ABC Above and Beyond Award, helped earn his school the first ever Citywide Award of Excellence from the NYC Strategic Alliance for Health and attributes these results directly to growing vegetables in school. His speech at Columbia University, “From Crack to Cucumbers,” along with the release of a You-Tube Video (Urban Farming NYC) resulted in a national following including an invite to the White House Garden. Dedicated to harvesting hope and cultivating minds, Stephen dreams of opening a nationally replicable Career Technical Education public school in the poorest Congressional District in America rooted in urban agriculture, green and sustainable initiatives. For more information, see Stephen Ritz.

David Schwartz

David is the Campaign Director at Real Food Challenge. David graduated from Brown University in December 2009, where he spent more time organizing with the Real Food Challenge than he did in class. Coming from a Jewish household where issues of economic and racial justice were common dinner table discussions, David came to the world of food justice and sustainable agriculture in high school and hasn’t looked back. On campus he helped start a student garden, a local distribution scheme for local produce, and a campaign to redirect over $1 million of school food dollars to “real food.” Other things David feels passionately about: playing dress up, cheap Chinese food, participatory education, immigrants’ rights, and the color blue (sometimes orange).
Irit Tamir

Irit Tamir is the Senior Advocacy and Collaborations Advisor for Oxfam America's US Regional Office. She works on both campaigns and collaborations for better conditions and wages for migrant farm workers. Ms. Tamir also advises Oxfam America's Gulf Coast Program where she works with grassroots organizations in the Gulf to ensure that coastal communities are more resilient to climate hazards. She is the co-author of the recently published Oxfam America report, Weeding Out Abuses: Recommendations for a law-abiding farm labor system.

Prior to working at Oxfam, Ms. Tamir was the Director of Government Relations at the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston where she successfully lobbied for an extensive federal and state legislative agenda. She co-lead the effort to pass the Sudan Divestment Bill in Massachusetts which required the state pension funds to divest from companies doing business with the Government of Sudan in an effort to halt its human rights violations in Darfur. Ms. Tamir is an attorney with a masters in international law. A devoted human rights activist, she has spoken publicly about the issues in Darfur. Ms. Tamir has had years of experience in government relations and is a former prosecutor that supervised civil rights prosecutions and hate crimes.