

## **Task Force A Meeting Summary Wednesday, June 21, 2006**

Task Force Participants: Jim Byrum – Michigan Agri-Business Association, Keith Creagh – MI Department of Agriculture (chair), Art Loeffler – Star of the West, JoAnn Merrick – MI Department of Environmental Quality, Ron Moffett – MI Economic Development Corporation, Todd Regis – United Food and Commercial Workers 951.

Additional Participants: Susan Cocciarelli – Michigan State University, Alisande Henry – MI Department of Labor and Economic Growth.

The seventh Task Force A: Expanding Food-Related Businesses and Jobs meeting convened Wednesday, June 21, 2006 from 10:00am – 11:30am at Constitution Hall in Lansing. MDA Deputy Director Keith Creagh chaired the meeting and began the meeting with a welcome and a round of introductions.

In the April Task Force A meeting, participants began discussing Recommendation A5 relating to food processing and decided to develop the recommendation further in a sub-group that would meet before the June Task Force meeting. Task Force participants Bill Knudson, Art Loeffler, Terry Morrison and Kathy Fedder met with staff to develop a draft that was circulated to all Task Force participants. Mr. Creagh began the June meeting by presenting some background on the issue and the current Food Processors Workgroup, and moved on to reviewing the draft version of Recommendation A5.

The Task Force Participants discussed the recommendation and the implementation strategies. The participants made some changes to the recommendation itself and to the potential implementation strategies. MFPC staff will incorporate these changes and send the revised recommendation out to Task Force participants for approval. Recommendation A5 is:

### **Recommendation A5: Encourage and support new and existing food processing businesses, and investigate meat processing needs.**

- a) MDA and DEQ should assist existing and prospective food processors in navigating environmental and food safety regulations, obtaining necessary permits and achieving compliance.
- b) MDA should partner with the MSU Product Center to convene a workgroup/conference to investigate meat processing needs in the state and to discern solutions that will meet the needs of farmers and processors in a cost-effective manner.
- c) MDA and appropriate partners should analyze and develop strategies to address challenges to existing meat processors including supply and capacity concerns.

- d) The state should develop economic policies that benefit food processors such as incentives for using Michigan products and financing/capitalization for expansion.
- e) MDA, MEDC and relevant stakeholders should explore new and emerging processing opportunities in the state, such as organic processing, as public demand for “niche products” continues to grow.

At the next task force meeting, the task force will finalize this recommendation (A5), and it will go before the full council in August. Also at the next task force meeting, MFPC staff will present materials from the other task forces and an overview of the work of the Council to date. The next Task Force A meeting will be on Monday, July 17, 1:30pm – 3:00pm, at Constitution Hall in Lansing.