



## REGIONAL FOOD AGGREGATION & DISTRIBUTION SUMMIT:

### ADVANCING INSTITUTIONAL SOURCING OF REGIONALLY GROWN FOODS

#### SPEAKER BIOS

- **Alice Chalmers, Senior Advisor, Chesapeake Agriculture Innovation Center:** After a career in corporate finance and operations, Alice Chalmers started working on farmland preservation and local food systems in 2007. She was the Executive Director of Future Harvest and Education Chair of the Maryland Agricultural Resource Council. She founded Local Food Connection, a regional food hub based in Cincinnati, with a focus on Farm to Institution procurement in the region, later merging with a large food distributor that leveraged Local Food Connection and Alice Chalmers' experience to offer local food in its other markets in the Mid-west and the Rockies. She now runs Sunbird Farm Services as a consultant on several projects, including the Chesapeake Value Chain Coordination Project with the Chesapeake Ag Innovation Center, which focuses on supporting farm to institution sales for Maryland and Delaware farmers.
- **Amy Zerante, Farm to School Program Manager, 4P Foods:** Amy Zerante manages all K-12 school accounts at 4P Foods, a mission-driven food hub sourcing from small family farms in the mid-Atlantic region. Previously, Amy served as Director of Procurement and Sustainability at DC Central Kitchen for 14 years, focusing on local food sourcing for the Farm to School program. She holds a Bachelor's degree in History from Wake Forest University and a Graduate Certificate in Sustainable Food and Agriculture Systems from Tufts Friedman School of Nutrition. Amy is passionate about improving the food system and ensuring access to healthy, local food for all.
- **Andrea S. Early, MS, RDN, Director of Food and Nutrition, Prince William County Public Schools:** Andrea S. Early, MS, RDN, became the Director of Food and Nutrition at Prince William County Public Schools in April 2024. Andrea previously served as the Director of School Nutrition with Harrisonburg City Public Schools for 21 years. During her tenure in Harrisonburg, she implemented robust farm-to-school programming, alternative breakfast service models, and a mobile meals route. She is passionate about improving access to healthy school meals to ensure students are well-nourished and ready to learn. Andrea is a past president of the School Nutrition Association of Virginia and currently serves as the Public Policy and Legislative Chair.
- **Dalila Boclin, Director, Food Systems Investment, Locus:** Dalila Boclin is the Director of Food Systems Investment at Locus, where she co-leads the organization's efforts to design and deliver innovative capital programs that advance regional food system capacity and resilience. Dalila has worked in Mid-Atlantic food systems development for over a decade—launching and scaling the Pop-Up Food Hub in 2015 Community Foodworks/Freshfarm; leading Hungry

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*Harvest's Food as Medicine and Social Impact initiatives; and most recently, serving an independent advisor to several businesses and nonprofits. Dalila is serving her second term on the DC Food Policy Council, where she co-leads the Sustainable Supply Chain working group and has been deeply engaged in efforts to improve food procurement in the District.*

- **Jason Tepper, Executive Chef, Alexandria City Public Schools:** Jason Tepper joined school food in 2020 and has worked to improve meals, tackle nutrition insecurity, and connect students with healthy, planet-forward food. Jason highlights global flavors, sustainable, plant-based menus, and scratch cooking that supports local farmers and equitable student access. Jason is a proud member of: Plant Powered School Meals Coalition; CIA Healthy Kids Collaborative; Chef Ann Foundation's Healthy School Food Pathways fellowship and advisory board; Virginia Department of Education Farm to School (Region 4 Co-Lead and Recipe Development Team). Jason aims to partner with local farmers to promote scratch cooking, farm to school, local procurement, Virginia catfish, peanuts, legumes, sea kelp and more. Outside of work, Jason enjoys cooking for his family and tending his garden of spicy peppers and herbs.
- **Karen Fedor, Administrator, Farm and Foods Program, Maryland Department of Agriculture:** Karen Fedor serves as the Administrator of the Farm and Food Programs at the Maryland Department of Agriculture. In this role, she oversees a diverse portfolio of critical food system infrastructure initiatives, including the recently acquired Maryland Market Money program, the Farmers Market Nutrition Program, and the Certified Local Farm and Fish Program—Maryland's 20% local institutional food sourcing initiative. Additionally, Karen manages a grant portfolio exceeding \$5 million, encompassing the Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program (RFSI) and the Maryland Food and Agricultural Resiliency Mechanism Grant Program (MFARM). She holds a B.S. in Natural Resources Policy from The Ohio State University and a Graduate Certificate in Nonprofit Management from the University of Maryland Global Campus.
- **Nezahualcoyotl Xiuhtecutli, Senior Grassroots Advocacy Coordinator, National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC):** Nezahualcoyotl Xiuhtecutli is Senior Grassroots Advocacy Coordinator at NSAC where he works on the Local and Regional Food Systems and the Climate campaigns. He has 20 years of experience working in rural communities and farmworkers in Mexico and Central America and in the US South. He holds a Ph.D. in anthropology from Tulane University and his training in the discipline sparked his interest in a time-depth perspective of the diversity of agricultural practices and their social implications including social organization around land tenure and labor relations across cultural and geographic realms. Raised in an immigrant and working class family, he has been in community and solidarity with working people throughout his life.
- **Sara Pollock Hoverter, Director of the Center for Community Health Innovation (CCHI), O'Neill Institute, Georgetown Law:** Sara Pollock Hoverter is a Director of the Center for Community Health Innovation (CCHI) at the O'Neill Institute at Georgetown Law, where she works with frontline communities and grassroots organizations to address social

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*determinants of health in cities and neighborhoods. CCHI focuses its work on food systems, environment, worker rights, and other systemic factors that cause disproportionate health outcomes for long-underserved racial and socioeconomic groups in the U.S. Within her work in food systems, Sara has worked with institutions on values-based procurement and holds a leadership position in the Just Purchasing Consortium, a worker-driven initiative to harness fair purchasing power in support of dignity and decent conditions for food workers. Sara is also a member of the MWCOG FARM Committee.*

- ***Stephanie Lansing, Professor, University of Maryland & Co-Chair, Maryland Food System Resilience Council:*** Dr. Stephanie Lansing is a Professor in the Department of Environmental Science & Technology at the University of Maryland. She serves as the co-Chair of the Maryland Food System Resiliency Council. She leads the Bioenergy and Biotechnology Laboratory, managing over \$20 million in federally funded grants researching food system resiliency, anaerobic digestion, nutrient management, and strengthening the circular bioeconomy. She has 20 years of experience in on-farm bioenergy research, extension education, and sustainability analyses of food systems and waste recycling.
- ***Thelonius Cook, Owner-Operator, Mighty Thundercloud Edible Forest & Board President, Mid-Atlantic Black Farmers Caucus:*** Thelonius Cook is the owner-operator of Mighty Thundercloud Edible Forest, a regenerative farm, and the Board President of the Mid-Atlantic Black Farmers Caucus. He works at the intersection of farming, cooperative development, and regional food aggregation to expand equitable access to institutional markets for small and underserved producers. Through his leadership, he supports farmer mentorship and training, aggregation infrastructure, and values-based procurement strategies that connect regional growers with schools, institutions, and community buyers. His work emphasizes land stewardship, cooperative ownership, and resilient regional food systems.

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