

Food Working Group Speaker Series Session #3

April 2nd, 2014 @3:00pm

Speaker: Kelly Brownell, Dean of the Sanford School of Public Policy

Topic: “The need for Coherent Food Policy”

If there is ever an example of students teaching teachers, Kelly had that experience at Yale. By teaching a Psychology of Food class there, he was pushed out of his typical work and into more interconnected food issues. This showed him also how disconnected they often were from policy.

Kelly has identified five important world food issues [see slides].

Hunger is a huge problem in the US.

One of the main reasons for Hunger are due to the number of conflicts in the world and their production of refugees. This causes hunger/malnutrition. Weather is a heavy influence on this.

Food allergies are also becoming more of an issue- what in our food system is causing this? GMOs? Something is a problem here.

Obesity: Since 1985, the % of obese adults has skyrocketed. What has caused this? Our self-control and responsible behavior is either stable over time, or increasing even. Something else in our environment is causing these issues.

Numbers are rising greatly in developing countries because the food norms are changing quickly. Even in the US the food norms are changing rapidly. In Kelly’s youth, no one ate in their car. Now as an auto manufacturer, you need to have large cup-holder sizes or you will lose market-share.

Norm for what you eat for breakfast has changed- people thought that fast food companies were nuts for offering a breakfast option at first, and that Americans would not buy it. But now they are!

Used to eat three meals a day, plus maybe a snack. Now, Taco Bell has introduced its 4th Meal –meal between dinner and breakfast. Sending the message that it is ok to eat midnight (and eat fast food!). If you think about portion sizes: Coke used to come in a 6 ounce bottle and now it is 20 ounces.

We are finding that hunger and over-nutrition are very linked- often are present in the same household as an issue for families. Food stunting is also now related to obesity. Once food becomes available later in life where it was not in youth, those stunted growth individuals will become

Hunger and obesity now affect about \$1billion worldwide. Over-nutrition now more of a significant issue than hunger in China.

People are becoming more interested now in “the story of food”- where it comes from, etc. Environmental issues becoming more on people’s radar.

Water scarcity: concern worldwide for the ability for the world to continue keeping people hydrated. Currently 92% of the world’s Ag gets used for Ag. Kelly has never seen a number lower than 2/3rds. We need to reduce the amount of water used for Ag.

What we choose to grow on farms affects water requirements. Meat production water use is very high, much higher than just eating corn. Amounts of meat consumption very high, and with an emerging middle class, meat consumption has been rising rapidly across the world.

Biodiversity: increasing homogeneity in global food supply – creates interdependence amongst countries.

Diseases are able to take out crops more easily with shrinking biodiversity.

The Case of Orange Juice

-orange juice came about because orange growers in FL were producing more oranges than they need. No one had thought of juice before that. After it became popular, there are now only 4 varieties in FL, where they used to be dozens. Only four because they have certain properties like thin skin, few seeds, high sugar, etc. But with only a few varieties, the risk is not distributed well towards weed/pest/weather issues.

For CAFOs (Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations), of particular concern is methane and nitrous oxide as these are a stronger greenhouse gas by several magnitudes than carbon dioxide- they have a longer half-life. Transportation industry creates less of a GHG impact than animal agriculture does.

Climate Change: the wheat industry is predicted to shift north. Perhaps things will move north, but what will those areas do where they are no longer able to grow their primary crop?

IPCC report from the UN for 2014 was just released. They focused on the effect of climate change on food issues.

Food Safety and Security: salmonella, listeria concerns, several other diseases weren't really around when Kelly was young- especially not for plant crops. These outbreaks are perhaps occurring because many of our plant crops are grown near animal crops, and things may carry.

Who is Watching the Store?

We are trying to make the right food choices for our environment/health, but it's difficult to make a good choice. Can buy an organic product from a big box store that was grown in China.

We are making small advances, but there is a tidal wave of opposition.

Who is paying attention to these issues? NGOs, world agencies, but no one is really looking at it all in combination.

Example: CDC- hunger food insecurity and obesity, but nothing else

Examples of conflicts: vitality of the food industry often goes into direct conflict with public health. Coke and others- their job is to sell the most food possible. Direct conflict with obesity.

Green Revolution was started by the Rockefeller foundation as a way to help feed the world. Norman Borlaug won an award for this. Led to GMOs, petroleum-based fertilizer. Greatly hailed as a success for its increases in yields. But created a large amount of environmental issues.

SNAP benefits and soda: debate about whether people should be able to use their SNAP benefits to buy soda. Gov. spends \$4 billion a year on soda. But the hunger community feels strongly that that benefit should be protected- they are already a stigmatized community, why stigmatize them more? But this puts the hunger community against the obesity community.

Corn to ethanol issue- was originally hailed as a good idea (corn to ethanol), but the environmental implications for its production and use as a fuel source are hotly debated now.

Development and nutrition- lot of work by economists that growth is the answer. But Speth (Yale professor and economics scholar) argues that capitalism and the all-out focus on growth states that that goal is short-term focuses. We are hurting ourselves in the long-term. Wealth beyond a certain level does not bring additional levels of happiness.

As growth and income go up, you don't necessarily save children from malnutrition.

A World Food Institute would serve as a solution. Get an institute together that deals with the four fundamental issues. Expertise in those areas, overseen by a variety of stakeholders.

[Break for Reception]

[Discussion]

Question: Class at Duke. Psychology. Teach students they had a voice. Published op-eds in papers around the world and locally.

Q: fast food companies say that they are responding to consumer demand- that people would eat salad. But people don't overconsume that food. industry will continue to do as they are until they are threatened by poor public opinion, legislation and regulation. Food marketing to kids and taxes on their products they will fight. Things they will work on are environmental sustainability- farm to school as a non-threat.

Q (Kristen Cooksey -2nd year PhD Sanford): how can we allow nutrition-washing? Companies have a lot of latitude. Can get public mad and they have to respond to protect their reputation. Big three: legislation, litigation, regulation.

Attorney Generals have a particular authority. Do you want to go legislation, litigation, or regulation?

Certified Organic was a real win.

Michelle Nowlin, but there is no validation process after certification for the quality of the product.

Abuse of food labeling.

Can't trust the companies to do right by their own. First thing they do is agree to self-regulate to get ahead of the game.

Kelly served on a Board of a company. Showed him a new cereal with better nutrition considerations. It was Honey Bunches of Oats. Didn't look like there weren't a lot of oats. Kelly asked what the most

common grains were- they were rice and wheat. Why call it oats? That's what consumers think is healthy.

Tobacco companies knew they would stall out in the US. Did their best to put out mis-information until they moved to making profits in the developing world.

Q (Nic School MEM 2nd year): What are the policy options for reducing meat consumption?

Kelly: Taxes are not as far-fetched as you think. They are in 4-5 countries and are still being debated in the US. They say- it's a slippery slope, what else will you tax next? Kelly says we have checks in balances in the area of public health. Of course it's a slippery slope- that's a good thing! If we could embrace the cost of paying for the environmental and health costs that would be the equivalent of a tax.

Michelle – Law School- Environmental Law Clinic- works on CAFOs. Meat issue: animals needs to be consumed as a part of a pasture rotation system. With CAFOs, you have 40 acres, you could only stalk 240 density on those acres. But you can incredibly up that with a CAFO. Made possible by reliance on anti-biotics.

FDA has a critical role to play in disapproval of the anti-biotics.

Kelly: anti-biotics very important and scary- we are subsidizing the real costs of that

Nicholas School 1st year- they are replacing some anti-biotics with zinc. But this makes that land unfarmable. How do you solve a system when you solve one problem or create another

Different approaches to food the worldover- very suspicious of GMOs in Europe but not here in the US. Countries need to fight to keep their native food traditions and supplies.

Packaged-processed foods in some places of the globe are perceived as safer from a food safety standpoint.

PORCH- neighborhood coordinators pick up food donations off people's porches. Deliver to a central location at a food bank. But the Foods they accept are non-perishable. But Esther as a dietician disagrees. We don't have good nourishment for those who are lower-income. Care about hunger, but also good quality food that is actually nourishing their body.

Kelly: Solving hunger but then you get obesity. How to solve this problem?

Opportunity to distribute food from people's backyards (their trees). Got fruits and veggies to the soup kitchens because of that. Regulation- food banks can't take fresh food.

Secondhand Foods- org picks up food from restaurants for the needy to use. How are they able to get around regulations. Farmer Foodshare will buy fresh produce from the farmer's market for the underserved.

Kelly: what about going to the PORCH director and figuring out what the barriers are for fresh food

Esther: "A place at the table" – documentary film discussion afterwards. Showed how polarized people in that group were on the two sides of the dilemma (hunger and nutrition).

Fuqua MEM/MBA: How can we monetize this?

Kelly: Change would be a lot faster if it lined up with business interests. Food industry says, if we can change demand, we'll change what we sell. But the reply is, that they are actually creating demand. They market the most unhealthy cereals to kids. Kids don't overeat bran. They overeat sugared corn flakes.

Can education work? Who can pay enough to make it work?

Then how do you change demand? Come back to government intervention often.

How do parents compete with all the bad things going on out there- the companies have the brightest minds and all the money.

Cooksey: But also an issue of disparities of access to healthy foods