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Participants Sought for UNH Panel on the Future of Food in New England

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DURHAM, N.H. -- Are we eating the future? Fifteen people will explore this question as part of a "Citizen Panel on the Future of Food in New England" organized by the University of New Hampshire for June 19 to 21, 2003.

"Where and how food is produced affects our lives in many different ways -- from the choice of what food items are available to us, to our health, to the quality of the environment, to whether we have farmers and open space in our communities," says Tom Kelly, director of the UNH Office of Sustainability Programs. The panel is an opportunity for New England citizens to examine the region's food system, discuss alternative futures and arrive at an informed opinion for public consideration."

The panel will consider such issues as agricultural practices, business consolidation, foreign imports, family farming, nutrition, farm and food policy, food security, sprawl and more.

For example, "Why is it that New England's dairy farmers are paid around a dollar for a gallon of milk that costs them about \$1.50 to produce?" asks Bruce Clement, UNH Cooperative Extension program leader for agricultural resources. He further adds that consumers pay almost \$3 per gallon in the grocery store. "Where is the consumer's food dollar going?" he asks. "What are the implications of a collapse of the regional dairy industry?"

Panelists chosen will participate in two planning retreats, April 11-12, 2003, and May 2-3, 2003. They will provide testimony at the public conference June

1921.

At the conclusion of the conference, the panel will deliver a set of findings and recommendations for use by other citizens, local, state and federal policy makers, educators, and the food industry.

To be considered as a panelist, send a one-page letter introducing yourself and explaining why you would like to be a member of the panel. Send your letter by March 12, 2003 to: Citizen Panel, UNH Office of Sustainability Programs, 107 Nesmith Hall, 131 Main Street, Durham, NH 03824-3597. Panelist expenses for travel, meals, lodging and program materials are covered by the program.

The Citizen Panel on the Future of Food in New England is a joint program of the University of New Hampshire's Office of Sustainability Programs and Cooperative Extension with support from The Nathan Cummings Foundation. It is modeled on a method developed in Denmark to engage ordinary people in a process of study and deliberation about difficult and controversial social issues. The panel offers an important way to help citizens, industry and government make better decisions about these issues.

For more information, please contact the UNH Office of Sustainability Programs at 603-862-4088 or by e-mail el.farrell@unh.edu.

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