



Remarks Presented by Mary Berry
The Louisville Harmony and Health Initiative Convening of Global Leaders
In Honor of His Royal Highness Prince Charles of Wales
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The Berry Center is putting my father's writing to work by advocating for farmers, land-conserving communities and healthy economies. Food is a cultural product and we must work on a culture that supports good farming, one that allows farmers to afford to farm well. We must institutionalize agrarianism. That involves some practical, slow, tedious work. It also involves the most necessary life affirming work I can think of except for the work of good farming itself.

The Berry Center is working to create an economic sector in which small and medium size farms can compete, make a decent living, and build thriving rural communities. We have many projects and partners including The Berry Farming Program at St. Catharine College where we address the desperate need for more farmers. Two of our projects seem to me to fit the purposes of this meeting very well.

The first is The Producer's Program Workgroup. When my grandfather John Berry, Sr. left home for college and law school he did it partly because he couldn't afford to farm. His father's farm had not recovered from the depression in the 1890's and was heavily indebted. He came home from college, set up a law practice, and farmed until his death in 1990. He and others created the Burley Tobacco Program that worked to bring parity to farmers for close to 70 years. The program ended 11 years ago but stands as the only farm program that actually served the people it was supposed to serve. My idea for The Berry Center originated in my perception from meetings and encounters over several years that in the agencies and commissions of official agriculture that The Burley Tobacco Producer's Program has been forgotten. I heard nobody speaking of it or thinking of it as a still-viable kind of program for protecting the livelihoods of small farmers. (It is the program as a model we are for, not tobacco.)

To study the producer's program, as it was called and was, and to see how it can be applied to other farm products, The Berry Center has formed The Producer's Program Workgroup. It investigates the opportunities for stable and lucrative markets that could allow farmers to live well without subsidies. The Producer's Program Workgroup has identified several possible starting places including grain for the expanding spirits and craft-brewing sector, and grass finished protein. These are culturally correct for our farmers and we hope can serve as a way in for conventional farmers to local production for local markets.

The second is The Berry Center's partnership with Metro Louisville Government and the Kentucky Agriculture Development Board to support the work of Louisville Farm to

Table, a six-year-old program that develops markets for food products grown by Kentucky farmers, farmers who are looking for ways to keep farming post tobacco.

The program is designed to increase the Kentucky farmers' portion of the local food economy by matching farmers and buyers, improving buyers' capacity to purchase Kentucky raised foods, and helps develop a more robust infrastructure for the local food economy; the program has resulted in facilitating more than \$3.2 million dollars to farmers. Maybe more importantly Louisville's Farm to Table has built relationships with farmers who don't trust the local food market and whose experience has been of gambling year after year as price-takers on the agribusiness "free market." They are not going to enter a Louisville-region food economy if it offers only another opportunity to gamble.

My gratitude to the Mayor of Louisville Greg Fischer is deep and abiding. His understanding that the health of the city of Louisville is dependent on the health of the rural communities that surround it is hopeful and hope giving.

We know that our farmland will not be well cared for until its caretakers can afford to care well for it. That is the economic sense and sanity that must support our endeavor for ecological sense and sanity. This is our most necessary work.