

photo: Andrew Lightman



José Andrés

photo: Andrew Lightman



Fran Drescher and Nora Pouillon

photo: Brendan Kownacki



Mike Koch

photo: Brendan Kownacki



Ted Monk

WASHINGTON, DC

Food Tank Summit

Food Tank partnered with George Washington University to hold a one-day summit on February 2, “Let’s Build a Better Food Policy.” The speakers and panel moderators spanned all sectors of the food industry, from elected officials and policy makers to farmers, nutritionists, food journalists and chefs.

The sold-out crowd of 350 individuals was complemented by another 60,000 watching all or part online via Facebook Live or FoodTank.com.

Panel moderators included: Allison Aubrey of NPR for “A Conversation About the Future of Agriculture in the U.S.” Tim Carman of *The Washington Post* moderated “Healthy Food Systems.” April Fulton, food & health writer for NPR lead the “Creating Resiliency in Food & Agriculture” panel. Jason Huffman, agriculture & trade editor of Politico moderated “Cultivating Food Security,” and Chuck Abbott of Food & Environmental Reporting Network lead the “Next Farm Bill” panel.

GWU president Steven Knapp welcomed everyone, followed by Rep. Jimmy Panetta. [D-CA] who represents California’s Central Coast,

where agriculture fuels the economic engine of this congressional district. Danielle Nierenberg, founder and president of Food Tank introduced keynote speaker chef/activist José Andrés of ThinkFoodGroup, who has a long-standing relationship with DC and GWU.

Several of the panelists were interviewed by Food Tank for a Q&A for its website. An edited version appears below:

As founder, president, and visionary of the non-profit Cancer Schmancer Movement, Fran Drescher focuses on three prongs to fight the disease: early detection, prevention, and advocacy. A 16-year uterine cancer survivor, her mission is to shift America’s focus toward proactive health care and healthy, toxin-free living. She believes that the best cure for cancer is not getting it in the first place and wants to help those afflicted with terminal illnesses to improve their diets and well-being through sustainably sourced and produced foods.

Food Tank (FT): What originally inspired you to get involved in your work?

Fran Drescher (FD): I got famous, I got cancer, and I lived to talk about it. My life mission is to leverage my fame

to educate the public that we are what we eat. Food is medicine, and medicine is food.

FT: What do you see as the biggest opportunity to fix the food system?

FD: An exodus from industrial farms, and the return of the family farm that employs: biodynamic, regenerative, organic non-GMO sustainable practices.

FT: What’s the most pressing issue in food and agriculture that you’d like to see solved?

FD: Once the public re-learns that we are what we eat, they will understand that industrial farms is why we are such a sick nation. And then, we will end the consuming of animals and plants filled with pesticides, herbicides, hormones, antibiotics, and GMO Round-Up Ready.

Mike Koch is an agribusiness leader and award-winning food advocate and entrepreneur. Prior to becoming the Executive Director of FRESHFARM, Mike served in the Garrett County, Md. government, where he supported the development of Maryland’s first and largest Foodhub: Garrett Growers Cooperative. Since 2000, he has been the president and owner of

his hand-made cheese business, Firefly Farms, which won the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Dream Big Small Business Award.

Food Tank asked Mike about the importance of unraveling the “true cost of food,” and of supporting locally grown and sustainably produced foods.

FT: What originally inspired you to get involved in your work?

Mike Koch (MK): I own and operate a farm-centric food business: FireFly Farms, an artisan cheesemaker. We were incubated through the FRESHFARM/farmers market network, and I understand well the importance of economic and physical access to consumers that such markets provide.

FT: What makes you continue to want to be involved in this kind of work?

MK: The importance of the work and its urgency motivates me. The food system sits at the intersection of environmental, health, and social justice issues that touch every individual, family, and community.

FT: What do you see as the biggest opportunity to fix the food system?

MK: Our biggest opportunity lies in

FOOD TANK *cont. on page 22*