



AGRICULTURE NEWS

New York State Department of Agriculture & Markets
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COUNCIL ON FOOD POLICY TO HOLD LISTENING SESSION Listening Sessions Scheduled for April 11, 2008 in Binghamton

The New York State Council on Food Policy is holding a listening session in Binghamton to gain perspective from community members on several food policy issue areas and to seek opportunities to maximize collaboration among stakeholders.

The listening session is scheduled for Friday, April 11, 2008 at the Cornell University Cooperative Extension of Broome County, 840 Upper Front Street, Binghamton in conjunction with the Regional Community Food Project. The session will be held from 2:00 pm to 4:00 pm.

The listening session is open to the public and will be an open microphone format. Anyone who wishes to participate will have five minutes to present their opinions and must also provide their comments in written format.

Comments should focus on how to strengthen the connection between local food products and consumers; supporting efficient and profitable agricultural food production and food retail infrastructure; and how to increase consumer awareness and knowledge about healthy eating and improve access to safe and nutritious foods.

Those wishing to participate are requested to RSVP by 5:00 pm April 10, 2008 to Mary Ann Stockman at 518-485-7728 or maryann.stockman@agmkt.state.ny.us.

The Council on Food Policy is hosting a series of listening sessions throughout the State. Sessions have been held in Albany, Syracuse and New York City thus far. Subsequent sessions will take place in Rochester and Long Island. Dates and locations of those listening sessions will be posted as they are scheduled at www.agmkt.state.ny.us/eventcal.html.

The New York State Council on Food Policy was created in 2007 to coordinate state agriculture policy and look at ways to increase sales of New York agricultural products to New York customers. The Council will also make recommendations on developing food policy that will ensure the safe, fresh, nutritious and affordable food for all New Yorkers, especially low income residents, senior citizens and children.

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NYS COUNCIL ON FOOD POLICY LISTENING SESSION
APRIL 11, 2008 * 2:00 P.M. – 4:00 P.M.
CORNELL COOPERATIVE EXTENSION OF BROOME COUNTY
840 UPPER FRONT ST., BINGHAMTON

Presenter	Organization
1. Kathy Gehm	The Weed Patch, Farmer
2. Martha Goodsell	Regional Community Food Project
3. Eugene Marnier	Town of Franklin Citizens' Commission on Peak Oil
4. Jennifer Vallone	NYS Dietetic Association
5. Darin Hickling	NYS Aquaculture Association
6. Alison Jack	New World Agriculture and Ecology Group at Cornell University
7. Karen Hoffman	Regional Community Food Project
8. Stuart McCarty / G.Snyder	Sunny Cove Farm
9. Jack Salo	Rural Health Network
10. Holly Gump	Cornell Cooperative Extension Schuyler County
11. Monika Roth	Cornell Cooperative Extension Schuyler County
12. Matthew Griffin	Food Bank of Southern Tier
13. Challey Comer	Watershed Agricultural Council

04/11/08

To: New York State Council on Food Policy

From: Kathy Gehm

Owner, The Weed Patch, 9501 NYS RT 79, Lisle NY 13797

Phone: 607-849-3779

Re: Farmers Market and Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Programs for Rural Areas

One of the ways we can strengthen the connection between local food producers and consumers is to expand the Farmers Market and Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Programs.

Currently, The Farmers Market Nutrition Program and the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program allocate \$20.00 annually in \$2.00 increments to income-eligible families and seniors. These programs require recipients to redeem checks at participating farmers markets. Roadside farmstands are excluded from accepting checks. Pick Your Own (PYO) operations, by definition, are also excluded.

With farmers markets being located in more urban areas, the impoverished rural population has to travel a greater distance to redeem their coupons than their urban counterparts. In many cases, the rural population may have to bypass a nearby roadside farmstand/PYO operation and travel a longer distance to redeem a \$2.00 coupon. Today the cost of transportation for rural people to the farmers market is higher than the value of the coupon.

We just have to ask ourselves the following: How are we benefiting the rural impoverished with the increasing cost of transportation if we don't open up the scope of these programs to allow roadside farmstands/PYO operations to accept market nutrition checks?

Martha Goodsell

Testimony from the Regional Community Food Project to the New York State Council on Food Policy; Binghamton, N.Y., April 11, 2008

Dear Members of the NYS Council on Food Policy:

Thank you for reaching out to New York's Southern Tier and expressing an interest in who we are and what we're doing.

In the fall of 2005 community leaders and members concerned with food security, food safety, community health, individual wellness, economic prosperity and agricultural sustainability began gathering to discuss the one element we held in common: food. The common thread securely bound the participants together and led to the formation of the Regional Community Food Project (RCFP) and monthly meetings thereafter.

The RCFP is a collaborative effort among "food" stakeholders in the Southern Tier. "Members" are a diverse group of organizational representatives and individuals including farmers, farm organizations, USDA staff, health professionals, dieticians, Cornell Cooperative Extension staff, public school administrators, food service directors, food bank managers and food pantry leaders, and others. Members are a representative of six Southern Tier Counties including Broome, Chemung, Chenango, Delaware, Otsego, Tioga and Tompkins.

Together RCFP works to create and support food secure communities and thriving, profitable farms. We work to ensure that all residents, underserved groups and food service providers have access to quality local foods. We support local farmers and the development of a strong local food system, including food processors, distributors and markets. We work to strengthen the connection between food and health by promoting the use of local food as the cornerstone of community health. And we educate residents on the many benefits of buying locally produced food and provide them information on how and where to purchase it.

The purpose of the Regional Community Food Project is to promote and help implement policies and practices leading to increased use of nutritious, locally produced foods, creating food secure communities, and improving the quality of life in South Central New York State.

The RCFP truly is greater than the sum of its parts; what we accomplish together could not be accomplished individually. The food system, as you all know, is complex and multi-disciplinary, and the problems being addressed by the RCFP are bigger than any one of us could solve ourselves. Together we are taking initial steps towards solutions by building understanding and assisting one another. The RCFP works across the disciplines. We are acutely aware that we can't solve the problems alone and rely on each other for guidance, support and expertise.

The RCFP gathers as a group to both learn and share and in this way becomes increasingly effective in strengthening farmer-consumer connections. Members have

individually lead projects which benefit the RCFP community as a whole. Stories of opportunities and challenges are brought to monthly meetings.

One such success story shared is the Chenango County Bountty. Under the direction of Opportunities for Chenango, the program builds local capacity for local foods with such innovations as: a map and stamp card campaign, an “Eat Local This Week” challenge, Bullthistle Bucks, and the newly created “Farmer’s Market at Your Door” program.

RCFP members are getting creative helping members of the community access safe and nutritious foods. The Food Bank of the Southern Tier is exploring ways that locally produced foods can have an important role in their hunger relief efforts, while The Rural Health Network is improving access to farmers market and local farm products for homebound elderly and the disabled, and the Johnson City School District fills backpacks with nutritious foods for kids to take home.

The projects are successful because a push-pull effort follows an identified need by one RCFP member. Other members who have experience working with growers, or organizing transportation, or marketing ideas assist in the effort. Together problems begin to be solved.

The RCFP recognized early on that policy acts as a barrier to the accomplishment of our goals. Utilizing productive upland pastures not suitable for other types of agriculture is a goal of our member the NYS Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative and the RCFP. But getting ruminants out on pasture is only part of a local food system; the other part involves getting those products to market, which requires local slaughtering and processing capacity. RCFP partner NY Farms! is currently working with Cornell University on a Livestock Processing Work Team to address such issues.

RCFP Partner the Center for Agricultural Development & Entrepreneurship, CADE, is working with both farmers and processors to create value added “hubs”. The Evans Farmhouse Creamery is one such example, where not only does the creamery processes local dairy products but they also distribute other agricultural products throughout the region. In this way the RCFP works to support and expand regional infrastructure.

Educating the public is critical to increasing local use of local foods. Farms enrich communities in numerous ways and that value must be compensated for. RCFP realizes that local foods may not be the least expensive and recognizes the need to defend such costs to local customers. Helping to increase consumer awareness to the benefits of eating healthy and locally is undertaken individually and collectively.

One consumer outreach effort undertaken and lead by Cornell Cooperative Extensions of Broome and Tioga, with support by Broome and Tioga Farm Bureaus, was the organization of the annual “Farm Days at the Mall”. At this event farmers are invited to have tables and displays and talk to shoppers, mall walkers and visitors about their farms and farm products. This year the request for assistance to find local farmers was greater than ever and RCFP members were happy to help.

The "Taste of Tioga" organized by Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tioga County provided another type of opportunity for people to connect with farmers through collaboration with local restaurants. Such a venue provided farmers two market potentials.

Each of the counties has coordinated and published local food guides and has worked to distribute them in numerous venues.

Health and wellness on numerous levels is an unstated RCFP goal. Individual health, community health, economic health, and environmental health are all a concern. A state of wellness is achieved when health is in balance within and among these elements.

Holism is the method employed to create wellness. Decisions are not made independently but are instead mutually dependent upon each other. The director of the Resource Conservation and Development Agency of South Central New York leads RCFP members in collective, holistic decision making.

A "Growing Health" conference organized by the Rural Health Network of South Central New York was a groundbreaking effort to bring numerous community constituents to the table in an effort to expand the concept of health and wellness, and to assist attendees in making the direct connection of wellness to the need to support local agriculture. "Growing Health" helped introduce the farm and food sectors to the health and human service sectors, and initiated important community discussions and connections that continue today.

If one were to look at defined regions, united in the effort of protecting food security locally, such as proposed "Food Sheds", ours is a model we would recommend. The RCFP is an effective vehicle moving efficiently towards defined goals.

The successes we can measure are not funded directly by any one organization, but by the contributions of each of the member organizations. There is no budget, there is no program manager, there is no working capital, but there is heart, strong will, determination, and solid convictions-- all of which have carried the RCFP to date. Like other collaborative groups working to develop a regional food system, we are looking for financial support and depend upon community and partner generosity. It is extremely difficult to find the "right" funding and would hope that the State would consider supporting our efforts.

We are excited that New York State has recently created a Food Policy Council and are here to listen to us today. We support your objectives. We hope that you contemplate our approach here in the Southern Tier as a model that could be expanded to other parts of the state. And while we are working at a regional level, and you are working at a state level, we hope that we can learn from each other, share opportunities, resource and challenges, and together benefit all members of our respective communities.

New York State Food Policy Council, April 11, 2008

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My name is Eugene Marner of Franklin, New York in Delaware County, and I am here on behalf of the Town of Franklin Citizens' Commission on Peak Oil. Thank you for the opportunity to make our concerns known to the Council.

We are a group of citizens who have been commissioned by our Town Board to explore the needs and resources of the Town of Franklin in the face of the imminent peaking and decline of global oil production and the economic dislocations that seem certain to follow. Our emphasis is upon relocalization: rebuilding the local economy and restoring community solidarity. We give the highest priority to the development of local food resources and are in the process of creating and publicizing a food security network database in our area. Last summer, we sponsored a new farmers' market in Franklin; it was very successful. This coming summer we expect more vendors and plan nearly three times as many market days.

Peak oil is not a theory but a geologic fact. It is becoming clear that global production of crude oil may already have peaked as early as May 2005, or will peak soon. The Saudis - the world's largest producers - have failed to raise production for several years (leading to suspicions that they can't do so), and we have recently learned that production in Russia, the world's number two producer, is in decline. At the same time that the market is facing supply constraints, demand is exploding in red hot emerging economies like China and India. The high prices we now pay for gasoline and diesel are directly related to growing demand encountering shrinking supply.

The agricultural systems of all industrial countries (and of many poor countries, as well) rely heavily on oil. It has been calculated that for every calorie of food we place on our tables, ten calories of fossil energy have been used to get that food there. As petroleum supplies decline and prices continue to rise, every aspect of our agricultural system will become much more costly: field work, agro-chemicals, processing, transportation. We have already seen great price inflation of foods, resulting from the diversion of food crops to the production of liquid fuels. More ominously, we have indications around the world of food shortages, so far limited to poor countries where food riots are now the stuff of daily headlines.

In our limited-petroleum low-energy future it will be essential to produce a great variety of foodstuffs close to home so that they do not need to be imported from a distance.

We call upon the New York State government to take urgent action in several areas:

1. **Encourage alternative nonpolluting sustainable methods of growing food:** organic, biodynamic, etc.
2. **Community greenhouses:** our cool northern climate obliges us to look for ways to extend our growing season. Community greenhouses, sponsored by local not-for-profits or schools, can help to bridge the seasonal gap that is now filled by energy-intensive imports from warmer climates.
3. **School programs:** our inevitable low-energy future will compel us to produce food with much lower energy inputs than we have come to think normal. The difference will need to be made up by human labor. We urge the establishment of comprehensive school agricultural programs as part of science curricula, to train students in soil science, plant biology, and organic agricultural practices. Such programs can also be integrated with community greenhouses, providing students with valuable practical experience, possibly producing fresh food for school lunch programs, and integrating the schools into sustainable community systems.
4. **Community kitchens:** certified kitchens for the preparation of processed food items would help local growers expand their markets and profitability. The items produced in such kitchens would help strengthen local distribution networks by reducing travel distance for foods, lower the carbon footprint of our communities, and offer opportunities for home gardeners to preserve and share their harvests. Existing school and church kitchens may, with not too much expense, be upgraded and inspected and turned to this purpose.
5. **Summer farm work programs:** at the February 16th Farmers' Speakout in Oneonta, of which our group was a cosponsor, many growers lamented the difficulty of recruiting farm labor. A Farm Labor Corps could supply training, provide incentives for young people, and instill a sense of pride in the work.
6. **Low-tech agricultural practices and training:** as diesel fuel prices continue to rise, animal power will again become important. Driving horses, repairing horse-drawn implements, making and mending harness are skills that will need to be learned again and taught on a growing scale.

In 2007, our group published three issues of a newsletter - the New Franklin Register - in order to bring information about Peak Oil to our neighbors and fellow citizens, and to work at the task of rebuilding our local economy and restoring community solidarity. The first 2008 issue was printed last week. I have brought copies with me and invite you to help yourselves to them.

Thank you for your time.

For further information, please visit http://tech.groups.yahoo.com/group/POA_CNY/ . The acronym stands for Peak Oil Awareness_Central New York. The Files section of the website contains many interesting and informative documents.

Our own website is under construction but should begin to have content soon at: <http://www.franklinlocal.org/flwordpress/>



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Your Link To Nutrition and Health

April 11, 2008

The New York State Dietetic Association (NYSDA), a state affiliate of the American Dietetic Association, with over 5,300 members is the largest group of nutrition professionals in New York State. The NYSDA is responding to the opportunity to submit comment on strengthening the connection between local food products and consumers. We commend the efforts of the New York State Council on Food Policy and would be happy to serve as a resource in the future endeavors of the Council. The balance of food and agriculture is an important issue to our organization and to our members.

We have given previous statements, regarding improving the balance between food and agriculture in Syracuse and New York City, however, we wanted to have the opportunity to provide our input regarding Binghamton and the Southern Tier of New York.

The Southern Tier of New York faces issues that are different than those of large cities. While Binghamton is a small city and it presents with its own unique issues.

We recognize the health and economical benefits of "buying local," however, we also recognize the challenges faced by small cities and rural areas. We encourage the Food Policy Council to consider the following issues when planning future food policy for New York:

- Transportation is often a key limiting factor in the access to fresh, healthy, local foods
 - Smaller cities face the challenge of limited transportation
 - Rural areas often lack any public transportation
- Residents of rural areas often must travel significant distances to obtain fresh, healthy foods
- Those living below the poverty level in rural areas are often sheltered
- Many residents of the Southern Tier do not fully understand the economical and health benefits of buying local products; many consumers believe that local products are more expensive and will purchase the least expensive product, regardless of freshness or quality

We ask that you also recognize the importance of education of the public in all of these initiatives and remember that members of NYSDA are happy to serve as a nutrition resource to the Food Policy Council.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Vallone, RD, CDN
Southern Tier Dietetic Association,
an affiliate of the New York State Dietetic Association

April 11, 2008

Potential for Aquaculture in New York State

On behalf of the New York State Aquaculture Association and fish growers throughout New York State, I am asking that the NYS Council on Food Policy take action on two major issues. First, change the state's regulations governing the sale of farm-raised black bass (largemouth and smallmouth bass) as a food fish and second, change the state agency responsible for regulating the Aquaculture Industry in New York State.

Currently, State law allows the sale of farm-raised black bass as a food fish, only if the sale is made directly to the consumer. It is illegal for growers to sell black bass to grocery stores, restaurants, fish markets, etc. and then have them sell the product to consumers. This practice is comparable to requiring dairy farmers to only sell milk directly to consumers rather than selling to distributors who then supply stores. When these regulations were created in the 1970's, aquaculture, as we know it, was not in existence. Officials were afraid the state's wild fisheries would be seriously jeopardized through unchecked exploitation. Since then technology has advanced to the point where most any species of fish can be raised in a controlled environment on the farm. Regulations prohibiting black bass sales need to be modified to accommodate these new advances in aquaculture production. By doing so, New York's aquaculture industry will begin to flourish and consumers will be able to purchase safe, healthy and delicious fish products, "farm-raised" right here in New York State at an affordable price.

If this law were to be changed, it would open up an incredible market for fresh fish within the state, especially in New York City's Asian-American community where live black bass are extremely popular. New York growers are prohibited from supplying this market in any form. Since the sale of black bass as food is prohibited at the retail level, a lucrative black market for this species has developed to meet the demand. We want to put an end to this illegal activity and provide a safe, healthy and legal alternative. It is estimated that the Asian-American population in NYC numbers more than a million people. If every Asian-American in New York City bought just two pounds of black bass per year, that would create a market for two million pounds of black bass annually. At a wholesale price of six dollars per pound, the market value of the product would mean approximately 12 million dollars in sales to growers and another 15 million dollars or more to wholesalers and retailers. This type of commerce would spur the economy of both upstate and downstate residents and can be done at **NO COST TO THE STATE OF NEW YORK**. No grants, no subsidies, no studies, no expensive programs; just a modification of current law allowing licensed growers to sell their product commercially will be sufficient. The figures given here are extremely conservative. Actual sales, when taking the entire state into account, are potentially into the tens of millions of dollars in sustainable commerce.

With the current level of technology available to New York fish growers, black bass can be efficiently raised in clean, sanitary culture facilities. The product produced would be of the highest quality and without the toxins and contaminants often found in imported fish products. With the Council's help, fish growers and the public at large would greatly benefit from a less restrictive approach to the sale of black bass as a food product in New York.

In addition to the updating of the black bass sales regulations, we are petitioning the Council to also recommend that the regulatory agency that governs the aquaculture industry in our state be changed. At present, the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) is the agency which regulates aquaculture. Although the DEC does a fine job in protecting our state's natural resources, promoting aquaculture and marketing of farm-raised fish is not part of its intended mission. Considering that aquaculture is a form of agriculture and we are, in fact, growing a crop, it seems logical that the Department of Agriculture and Markets regulate the Industry. This sentiment is shared by many fish growers and is supported by the New York State Aquaculture Association. Many officials at the DEC also support this point of view. If this were the case, growers could better address industry issues like fish health certification, the development of new markets for fish products, and keeping abreast of technological advancements in the industry. With the world's wild fisheries dwindling as the demand for fish and shellfish increases, commercial aquaculture will fill the gap. New York State has the potential to become a leader in aquaculture production in the Northeast. It would be a shame to allow this opportunity to slip away for the lack of changing several outmoded regulations and policies.

Remember, we are not asking the State for funds. No monies need to be spent. We are asking that our hands be untied from restrictive black bass regulations and the oversight policy governing our industry. If these changes are made, we will then be able to grow and market our agricultural products freely within New York State.

Does the Council have any questions?

Thank you.

Sincerely,
Darin Hickling
Hickling's Fish Farm, Inc.
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Edmeston, New York 13335
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e-mail: hickfish@gmail.com

Member:
NYS Aquaculture Association
NY Farm Bureau
Board of Directors - Otsego County Soil and Water

Hickling's Fish Farm, Inc. is located in Edmeston, Otsego County, NY. We have been in business since 1986 and we specialize in raising bass in recirculating systems. More information about us and what we are doing at the farm, visit our website at: www.hicklinsfishfarm.com

Public Testimony of
Jennifer Gardner, Allison Jack, and Meagan Schipanski
New World Agriculture and Ecology Group at Cornell University

Before the
New York State Council on Food Policy
Binghamton listening session
April 11, 2008

Thank you for this opportunity to provide input to the New York State Council on Food Policy. We are graduate students at Cornell University and members of the New World Agriculture and Ecology Group (NWAEG) at Cornell. NWAEG is a group of students, staff, and local community members working towards understanding contemporary agroecological problems in order to develop and implement alternatives. We are extremely excited about the formation of this council and feel that this new focus on integrating agriculture and food issues has come at a critical time. In particular, we believe that New York State is uniquely positioned to become a national leader in agriculture and food policy by connecting all consumers with local food products while supporting sustainable agricultural production.

New York State, along with the rest of the world, is entering a time of unprecedented global change due to diminishing supplies of fossil fuels and large scale climate perturbations. As future leaders in agriculture and food policy, we see this era as an opportunity for positive change in how we grow, distribute, and consume food. The ripple effect on the global food system caused by the use of prime agricultural land for biofuel production, global increases in grain-fed meat consumption, and increasing fossil fuel prices has one primary result of central importance to this council—increased food prices for all consumers.

However, we believe New York State can circumvent some of the negative consequences of these global shifts through four effective food policy mechanisms:

1. Prioritize food production over biofuel production on prime agricultural land.
2. Support the development of livestock production systems that are dependent on a grass-based diet rather than corn and soybeans.
3. Invest in regional food system infrastructure to support the storage, processing, and distribution of New York agricultural products to improve accessibility to local, healthy products for all consumers
4. Build educational programs that educate the next generation of consumers and leaders about the importance of local food systems for long-term regional sustainability.

Finally, we conclude with suggestions on methods to reach the goals outlined by this council that take advantage of the wealth of resources already in place in New York State to support regional food systems.

New York State is uniquely positioned to be a transformative leader in the arena of regional food systems development. We have a rich history of diverse agricultural systems due to our varied topography, fertile soils, and sufficient rainfall. New York is one of a few states maintaining

vibrant wine, fruit, vegetable, dairy, and grain production regions within close proximity to a major metropolitan city. Food policy should harness this diversity to help create healthy diets for all New Yorkers.

One key to promoting the development of sustainable regional food systems is reducing the competition between food and fuel for prime agricultural land in the state. National policy encouraging corn ethanol production is resulting in competition between land for food and land for biofuels. Numerous studies show that corn ethanol is not a solution to diminishing fossil fuel reserves as it uses as much energy to produce as it consumes.^{1,2} We implore this Council and the state to demand that food production take priority over corn ethanol production. We are aware of the potential for other biofuel sources, such as switchgrass and willow, which can be grown on more marginal land, to be used as biofuels, but suggest that the energy saved by local food systems could be more important in addressing the energy crisis. Corn ethanol production is not a good use of land in New York State. Corn ethanol is not an energy solution, and most importantly, it is not food. To increase food production, we need regionally adapted, diversified farms.

Second, pasture based livestock systems will reduce our dependence on grains from volatile global markets and allow New York State grown grains to go directly to consumers. Recent studies suggest that regional food self-sufficiency is possible within New York State. Chris Peters and other researchers at Cornell University found that regional food production has the potential to meet the dietary needs of approximately one-third of all New York State residents.³ In particular, they found that shifting from confined livestock production systems with a corn-based diet to pasture-based systems is critical for improving the capacity for food self-sufficiency in the state. In many areas of the state, the climate, topography and soils are more suitable for perennial pastures than annual corn production. Supporting the expansion of grass-based livestock production will help maintain affordable meat in the face of rapid, global increases in grain crop prices used as livestock feed, while also supporting the economic viability of small farms across the state.

Third, improving regional food system infrastructure is essential to increase access to local foods. New York State has lost nearly 50,000 farms since 1959.⁴ This loss has in large part led to the loss of a network of processors, market outlets, and local distribution channels. It is important to examine the policies that contributed to current consolidation in the food system in order to develop alternatives that re-link diverse, small scale farms with consumers. Farmers' markets have traditionally been the focus of efforts to promote local foods. New York State is home to excellent programs that use food stamp and WIC vouchers at farmers' markets to improve access to local, fresh produce for low income citizens. While farmers' markets are important venues for consumers to connect with farmers, due to our relatively short growing season these markets are just a first step toward improving regional food self-sufficiency. Many members of NWAEG have attempted to eat local foods year round and have been frustrated by the lack of New York State staple food products available in the winter and spring including: flours, whole grains, dried beans, meat and processed vegetables. There is a great need for regional food processing and storage infrastructure to help farmers extend the availability of their local products beyond the growing season. We encourage this council to facilitate the development of cooperative cold storage facilities, grain and dried beans processing and storage facilities, certified kitchens for

food processing and value-added product development, and regional slaughterhouses for meat processing. Building food system infrastructure will improve the year-round availability of local foods, improve marketing options for farmers, and could generate regional distribution centers. Regional distribution centers will be needed to increase the supply of local foods to larger institutions, such as schools and hospitals, which often require quantities that exceed the supplying capacity of individual farms. The Cornell Dining Local Foods Advisory Council, which formed in the spring of 2006 at the request of students, has helped Cornell Dining make substantial progress sourcing local ingredients for our campus food system. For example, over 30% of the fresh produce purchased annually is now from local sources. However, the lack of regional food processing and distribution centers creates a significant structural hurdle to making truly transformative changes in institutional dining. Relocalizing control of food processing and distribution could also provide needed economic stimulus for struggling areas of the state through the creation of jobs.

A fourth key area to improving the sustainability of regional food systems is through education. Re-creating regional food systems requires consumers who understand and accept the seasonal availability of certain foods, and who have basic food preparation skills. With the rise of convenience processed foods, many Americans have now lost the basic knowledge and skills their parents and grandparents had in food preservation and preparation.⁵ There is renewed interest among young adults in learning these skills. Last year a group of Cornell students and alumni created a local foods calendar called "Eat this Calendar" with recipes using seasonal New York products. "Locavore", meaning someone who eats seasonally and locally, was the Oxford word of the year in 2007.⁶ We believe now is the time to capitalize on this growing societal interest in local foods. With educational programs supported by this council, becoming a locavore could move beyond its current status as a trend, and become an essential component of the long term commitment to regional economic and environmental sustainability. Tompkins County CCE has partnered with local farmers who offer subsidized shares of fresh produce from their Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farms to low income citizens. These subsidized shares include cooking classes that teach meal planning around the seasonal availability of fresh produce. We strongly encourage the council to support these types of consumer education efforts, including many existing programs at Cornell Cooperative Extension in nutrition, food preparation and food preservation. Another innovative example is a newly formed collaboration in Madison, Wisconsin between several HMOs and CSA farms. These HMOs offer rebates to members who participate in a local CSA due to the health benefits of eating fresh, local produce. We encourage this council to promote the connections between nutrition, health and food, and to forge partnerships among medical and insurance industries and New York State farms.

We feel that one essential educational component could be added to this council's stated priorities. For New York State to be a national leader in developing environmentally and economically sustainable regional food systems, part of the focus must be on the education of future farmers, agricultural professionals, policy leaders, and consumers through the state educational system. Cornell University has made important progress in developing new curricula that helps students keep up with the rapidly changing field of agricultural science. Students investigate food production systems from multidisciplinary perspectives and engage in meaningful ways with local communities. Students are an amazing resource that should be tapped to achieve the goals of this council, particularly in the area of consumer education,

through service learning projects, internships, and other partnerships between schools across the state and their local communities.

With Cornell University being one of the top-ranked land grant institutions in the country, New York State is again uniquely positioned to be a national leader in innovative agricultural education. NWAEG at Cornell hosted a sustainable agriculture education seminar series in 2005 where we invited professors from land grant universities across the country to discuss their new programs in areas such as agroecology or organic agriculture. We learned that enrollment is declining in many traditional agronomy disciplines across the country, and that developing agroecology curricula and innovative teaching methods has successfully reversed this trend in many cases. For example, the agroecology program at the Evergreen State College in Washington has 60% out of state enrollment, which brings in increased tuition revenue. The state supports this program because it recognizes that it is a major draw for students to come to the college. At Cornell, there were approximately 10 undergraduate students in crop and soil science majors in 2005, but the newly developed Agricultural Sciences major will have over 60 students enrolled next year, and there has been an increase in out of state applicants to the program. Applicant essays have revealed that a primary draw for students to this program is its interdisciplinary curriculum and emphasis on sustainability. NWAEG at Cornell, CALS, Penn State and the Rodale Institute partnered to host a national conference on sustainable agriculture education at Cornell last summer.⁷ A national Sustainable Agriculture Education Association was formed during the conference to promote and support the development and dissemination of best teaching and learning practices in sustainable agriculture education and curricula.

In summary, we are again extremely excited about the formation of this council and feel that this new state-level focus on integrating agriculture and food issues has come at a key moment. Making the transformative changes in our food system that we suggest requires the use of innovative approaches and methods. Successfully improving access to affordable, fresh, and nutritious food to residents implies the need for a grassroots, participatory approach. New York has a wealth of grassroots-based groups that have a history of engaging farmers and traditionally underserved communities, such as the Northeast Organic Farming Association of New York, New York offices of American Farmland Trust, and Just Food in New York City. We encourage this council to engage with existing resources and take responsibility to ensure that citizens most affected by policy decisions on a day-to-day basis have a proportionate share in making those decisions. These listening sessions are an excellent first step to addressing the current disconnects between health, nutrition, and food policy, but the council *must* pro-actively integrate diverse perspectives to meet the goal of improving access to healthy, local foods for all New York residents.

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Comments from Karen Hoffman, USDA-NRCS, to the New York State Council on Food Policy, Binghamton, N.Y., April 11, 2008

Dear Members of the NYS Council on Food Policy:

Thank you for being here in Binghamton today and providing us with an opportunity to share thoughts on agriculture, food, and health.

I am an active member of the Regional Community Food Project, a co-host of today's listening session. I view the RCFP as an opportunity to educate, inform, and affect positive change for agriculture in New York State with consumers, schools, health professionals, and other organizations and institutions who may in turn have an effect on future policy. I also have an interest in helping to connect local farmers with marketing their products locally to the consumer.

My purpose here today is not to ask the Council for anything in particular, but to offer assistance. I work for the USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service here in New York on the State Resource Conservation staff, and am based in the Norwich Field Office. In my position, I work with grass-based dairy and livestock farmers to provide them with technical assistance and educational information on grazing and feeding management. Many of these farmers are also either certified organic, or are transitioning to organic production. I also am the Coordinator of the New York State Grazing Lands Conservation Initiative. I work closely with a Steering Committee made up of a diverse mix of New York grass farmers and chaired by Troy Bishopp, also known as "The Grass Whisperer", who provided comments at the first meeting of this Council in Albany. The purpose of GLCI is to work with private landowners to promote the wise use and conservation of grasslands through technical assistance, education, and advocacy. Please note that GLCI is a different, state-wide initiative from the Graze New York program funded by Congressman Walsh in some Central New York counties.

There are numerous advantages to grass-based agriculture, including positive economic, environmental, community, and sustainability outcomes. New York has over 1 million acres of land classified as pasture, with an additional 3.5 million acres that could be used for pasture but is currently idle or vacant. Further, there is land used for other crop production that is likely more suited to permanent grasslands. Use of well-managed pasture reduces costs to the farmer and increases profits, holds soil and nutrients on the land, uses less fuel, fertilizer and pesticides, provides wildlife habitat, and maintains open, green spaces in small rural communities. Much of the land in this region is best suited to grasslands, as it is either highly erodible or has heavy soils not suitable to plowing or planting of annual crops or vegetables.

Food products from grass-based dairy and livestock production have been shown to have a different nutritional profile than those produced in the more

conventional, industrial model. This difference in nutritional quality has been shown to provide positive health benefits, including less total fat, more Omega-3 fatty acids, Vitamin E, conjugated linoleic acids, and increased levels of some B-vitamins. There are opportunities to provide these healthier options to New York's consumers, but the average consumer does not hear this message because meat and dairy products are viewed as too high in fat and calories and are discouraged in our diets. There are also other issues related to processing, distribution, and marketing these products that need to be changed to increase access to these foods.

There is much more that I could tell you about grass-based agriculture and the resulting high-quality, nutritious foods it provides, but I will stop here and offer my assistance to the Council. I would be willing to provide additional information on the status of grass-based farming in New York. I am also available to discuss other aspects and possibilities for the future of these farms and their potential consumers in the state if the Council so desires. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you feel I can serve as a resource to your important and timely work.

Thank you again for the opportunity to address you today and for your attention.

Submitted by,



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Presented by Stuart McCarty
for G. Snyder

APR 11 2008

To: The Council on Food Policy

I would like to thank the Dept of Ag. & Mkts. and the Council on Food Policy for this opportunity to highlight suggestions for improving our food system.

I would also like to thank Stu for reading this for me today so that I could stay home working on the farm.

My name is Gerald Snyder and together with my wife Dotty and our seven children, we operate Sunny Cove Farm in Alfred, NY. For 31 years, we have milked cows, tapped the Maple Sugar bush, picked apples, and enjoyed living on the farm where my father and mother raised me. We have always relished the produce of the garden, homemade maple syrup, wild berries, apples from the orchard, homemade strawberry jam, freezers of beef, and fresh milk from our cows. As our farm is a hill farm 2200 ft above sea level with Volusia soils and lots of wet clay, we have grazed the cows and baled hay for winter feed.

About 4 years ago, I began having customers come to the farm wanting to buy fresh milk from us. I have tested the cows and enrolled in Quality Milk Production Services as required by Ag. & Mkts. and have been selling raw milk to the public since January 2006. In March of 2008, I began testing weekly samples of raw milk from Sunny Cove Farm for pathogens at Cornell University for the safety of my customers. I have been in contact with Cornell experts, Rob Ralyea, Kathryn Boer, and David Brown, as well as NYS Ag. & Mkts. to establish the highest quality milk possible. My goal is to make high quality raw milk readily available to all the consuming public who desire it.

At this time I am asking Commissioner of Agriculture, Patrick Hooker, to support bill S.6827 introduced by Senator Cathy Young to allow for the production and sale of raw milk directly to consumers for off-site consumption at retail points of sale off the farm site where such milk was produced.

Consumer demand for raw milk is growing as evidenced by farm sales at Sunny Cove Farm with people driving from as far as 3 hours away. Many more have asked that raw milk be made available at natural food stores closer to their locations.

I have been educating consumers at our farm store for over 2 years and see a very real increase in consumer awareness and knowledge about healthy eating. I believe that making safe and nutritious food options readily available to the public and allowing them to make informed decisions about their eating styles is critically important. I also believe that making information about raw milk available as well as providing multiple outlets for its sale is one way that this can be accomplished.

I would like to add a post script to the reading of this statement by introducing myself as a local chapter leader of the Weston A Price Foundation. We receive a steady stream of requests from consumers who are looking for sources of raw milk. The current regulation that restricts the purchase of raw milk to farms holding permits and restricts the sale to an on farm transaction serves to severely limit the consumers' access to a good product and severely limits raw milk as an important revenue source for the farmer. I believe that S6827 would help both improve the current situation.

Sunny Cove Farm 607-587-4282

14664 Randolph Rd, Alfred Station NY 14803

(Stuart McCarty)

Stuart McCarty
G. Snyder

BILL TEXT:

APR 11 2008

STATE OF NEW YORK

6827

IN SENATE

January 28, 2008

Introduced by Sen. YOUNG -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Consumer Protection

AN ACT to amend the agriculture and markets law, in relation to authorizing the production for retail sale and retail sale of raw milk

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

1 Section 1. The agriculture and markets law is amended by adding a new
2 section 46-b to read as follows:

3 § 46-b. Production and retail sale of raw milk. 1. Notwithstanding
4 any provision of this chapter to the contrary, the production for retail
5 sale and the retail sale of raw, untreated milk for human consumption
6 shall be authorized in this state. The production, packaging, transpor-
7 tation and sale of such milk shall be subject to such rules and regu-
8 lations as shall be deemed necessary by the department. A copy of all
9 such rules and regulations shall be provided to the department of health
10 for comment prior to the effective date thereof.

11 2. Every person engaged in the production of raw, untreated milk for
12 human consumption shall hold a permit issued by the commissioner.

13 3. All raw, untreated milk for human consumption produced for retail
14 sale shall be transported and sold in a bottle or single service
15 container mechanically filled and capped.

16 4. Every container of raw, untreated milk for human consumption sold
17 at retail shall be labeled with a warning that such milk is not pasteu-
18 rized and such additional warnings and specifications as the department
19 may require.

20 5. Raw, untreated milk for human consumption shall be sold at retail
21 only for consumption off the premises of the person or business engaging
22 in such retail sale. No such milk shall be authorized to be sold in a
23 vending machine. Every person and business engaged in the retail sale of
24 raw, untreated milk for human consumption shall conspicuously post at
25 the point of sale a sign which reads as follows: "NOTICE: Raw Milk sold
26 here. Raw Milk does not provide the protection of pasteurization."

27 § 2. This act shall take effect on the one hundred eightieth day after
28 it shall have become a law. Provided that any rules and regulations
29 necessary to implement the provisions of this act on its effective date
30 are immediately authorized and directed to be completed on or before
31 such date.

EXPLANATION--Matter in *italics* (underscored) is new; matter in brackets
[-] is old law to be omitted.

LBD14544-01-7



of South Central New York, Inc.

Testimony from the Rural Health Network of South Central New York to the New York State Council on Food Policy, Binghamton, N.Y., April 11, 2008

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Executive Director:

John (Jack) C. Salo

Dear Members of the NYS Council on Food Policy:

Thank you for reaching out across New York State to listen to those of us involved in developing a more regional, healthy and sovereign food system.

The Rural Health Network's food system work is conducted collaboratively with the diverse membership of the Regional Community Food Project. As you know, the Regional Community Food Project (RCFP) is co-hosting today's listening session. We work closely with our RCFP partners and believe the re-emergence of regional food systems requires the resources and perspectives of many diverse stakeholders.

As a New York State funded Rural Health Network, there are several specific health oriented recommendations we would like make:

1. The Council should advocate for the creation of New York State policies that provide incentives for state regulated or licensed facilities with food services to increase their purchase and use of foods grown in New York State. The Food Policy Council can make a strong case that this is good for the state's economy, the state's environment and the state's health.

This could be implemented in phases: First, encourage state owned facilities with food services such as state universities, prisons, nursing homes, etc. to set a good example. The next phase might be non-state operated health facilities such as hospitals and nursing homes, with encouragement for these facilities to market the use of food grown in New York State with a message about nutrition.

Initial incentives could include Pride of New York designation, and a statewide annual awards dinner (with local foods) honoring the institution that has had the greatest percent realignment in its food budget towards the purchase of local foods, and an award to annually honor the institution with the most creative programming that reinforces the connections between food service, nutrition, health and local sustainable agriculture.

2. The focus on the relationship between food and health is generally limited to individual health. The Council on Food Policy could be instrumental in expanding the definition of health as it relates to food

and sustainable food production in New York State. As we well know, individual health is dependent on *many* factors including nutrition, environmental health and the economic health of the community in which the individual resides. The Council's support of a more regional and sustainable New York State agriculture will realize multiple health, economic and community benefits that need to be acknowledged. Helping policy makers and the general public to understand these relationships and their interdependency could be a valuable service provided by the Council on Food Policy.

3. The Council should have a role in supporting the education of dietitians, health educators and health policy makers on the benefits of foods produced sustainably and locally. Research shows that there are significant, qualitative nutritional differences in some foods that are produced using sustainable farming practices, including organic vegetables and grass fed meat and dairy products. Dietitians and health educators could be a powerful force in supporting the development of a more regional food system, but most know little about how the nutritional quality of food is related to specific agricultural practices and systems, or how sustainable agricultural practices can enhance environmental and community health.

In the fall of 2006, the Rural Health Network, hosted *Growing Health, a forum on Local Food and the Opportunity to Nourish Self, Families and Communities*. This event, with an attendance of 200 well fed participants from throughout the Southern Tier, was our initial effort to begin a dialog between local farmers and food producers *and* the health and human service sectors. We will be hosting the second Growing Health Forum in Binghamton this fall.

The Council could have a valuable role in supporting and facilitating these essential, cross sector learning opportunities.

4. The Council on Food Policy should become a voice and advocate for providing sufficient funding to school breakfast and lunch programs. Farm to School is an important idea, but it will not become a meaningful movement until school districts and food service directors have funding sufficient to purchase more than a token amount of nutritious, locally produced food. The Council should advocate for inclusion of Farm to School and similar initiatives as eligible activities, in existing New York State grant programs offered through Health, Education, Children and Family Services and other Departments.

The Council can also advocate for private philanthropic and business community support for Farm to School and other initiatives to develop a sustainable agriculture and food system in New York State.

On behalf of the Rural Health Network of South Central New York, I thank you for the opportunity to share these recommendations and ideas with you today.

Submitted by,

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Prepared for the April 11, 2008 Listening Session of the NYS Council on Food Policy,
held at Cornell University Cooperative Extension of Broome County

Introduction:

Hello. My name is Holly Gump, and I am the Finger Lakes Region Nutrition Coordinator for *Food and Nutrition Education in Communities* (FNEC) programs, of Cornell University Cooperative Extension. FNEC programs include the New York State *Food Stamp Nutrition Education* program called *Eat Smart New York* (ESNY), the *Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program* (EFNEP), and the *Farmers Market Nutrition Program* (FMNP). It should be mentioned that ESNY is a collaborative effort between the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) and Cornell University, among others. EFNEP is a federal program funded by USDA and administered by Cornell University in New York. Finally, the FMNP is a collaborative effort between: Office for the Aging (OFA), the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), Cornell University Cooperative Extension (CUCE) and Cornell University, and the Department of Agriculture & Markets.

The vision of Cornell University Cooperative Extension programming is:

“Well nourished and active people in health-promoting communities”

The CUCE mission is to:

“Promote healthy eating and active lifestyles, wise use of personal and environmental resources, access to nutritious and safe food, and communities that support healthy choices.”¹

At the February Listening Session, Kathy Dischner, Nutrition, Health and Safety Team Coordinator from CUCE-Onondaga County, gave you an overview of two of the FNEC programs: *Eat Smart New York*, and FMNP. I will give you a brief overview of the EFNEP program, and then highlight some local Cooperative Extension nutrition programming that address the following key issue areas for today’s session:

- 1) Strengthen the connection between local food products and consumers;
- 2) Support efficient and profitable agricultural and food retail infrastructure; and
- 3) Increase consumer awareness and knowledge about healthy eating and improve access to safe and nutritious foods

Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program – Next year will be the 40th anniversary of the start of EFNEP, a federally funded nutrition education program sponsored in NYS by Cornell University Cooperative Extension (CUCE) and Cornell University. EFNEP is designed to help low-income participants acquire the skills they need to enhance the health and well being of themselves and their families. EFNEP is delivered in a series of 6-12 classes, and may be

¹ Division of Nutritional Sciences Strategic Plan '05 – '10 http://www.f nec.cornell.edu/Strategic_Plan_00_05.cfm

tailored for a group or for one-on-one instruction. EFNEP serves 35 counties, both rural and urban, in New York State.

Improved health and well being is achieved by encouraging participants to improve basic nutrition knowledge and dietary intake, increase physical activity, develop skills for shopping and preparing nutritious foods on a limited income, and improve food safety practices thus avoiding food borne illness.

In 2007, 6,477 people representing 20,198 family members enrolled in EFNEP. Of those, 5,028 (78%) graduated. Graduates showed the following behavior changes: 85% showed improved nutrition practices (reading food labels, using lower fat dairy products); 72% improved their food safety practices (thawing meat safely); 80% learned new food management skills (use grocery lists, compare unit prices, and plan meals); and 44% reported being more physically active.

Local Examples of FNEC Programs in the Finger Lakes Nutrition Region:

Farmers Market Food Demonstrations

CUCE nutrition educators conduct food demonstrations at many farmers markets, and provide the public with recipes and new ideas for how to prepare fresh fruits and vegetables produced locally.

In Cayuga County, the CUCE nutrition educator has a booth at the Cayuga County Farmers Market. Each week, the nutrition educator will ask the farmers there, what produce will be available in abundance for the following weekend. The CUCE nutrition team will identify a recipe that uses that produce, and the nutrition manager writes a column for the local newspaper that includes that recipe and nutrition information about the highlighted produce. At the farmers market the following weekend, the nutrition educator will prepare that same recipe using donations from market farmers, and have samples for the public to try. As a result of this newspaper column and food samples, farmers report sales for the featured produce have increased dramatically.

In Steuben County, CUCE-nutrition educators have a “featured farmer” each week, where they conduct food demonstrations at their booth highlighting that farm’s produce. The market shoppers appreciate the opportunity to learn more about individual farms.

Use of Local Foods for Cooking Demonstrations

In Cornell University Cooperative Extension classes, an effort is made to prepare foods that are in season and local wherever possible.

In Steuben, CUCE-nutrition educators hold food preservation demonstrations at food pantries and other public forums. Participants sign up to attend a 6-session series on how to preserve fresh, locally grown produce.

Three counties in the Finger Lakes Nutrition Region, Cayuga, Onondaga and Tompkins, piloted a new cooking/nutrition program called: *Cooking Together for Family Meals* in 2007. In this

pilot program, parents cooked with their children, ages 8-15, using recipes designed to increase vegetable consumption using local produce where ever possible. Twelve families with 39 total family members participated in the first year. As a result of participating in this program, both adults and youth developed increased cooking skills, more familiarity preparing vegetables in new recipes, and modifying recipes to increase vegetable content, and developed an understanding of the importance of family meals. Parents recognized that their kids were more competent in the kitchen, and more families helped to plan family meals together. This pilot program is being expanded to an additional 2 counties (Schuyler and Steuben counties) in 2008.

Subsidized Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)

CUCE-Tompkins County has run a series of classes for two years now, where community members provide funds for a subsidized CSA share, so that low income families can join. Subsidized CSA participants learn basic nutrition and prepare meals using produce received in their CSA share. Monika Roth will discuss this program in detail.

Combined Nutrition/Gardening Classes

Some CUCE-program educators teach nutrition and gardening together to help kids to learn to eat healthy and also understand where food comes from.

In Wayne County, a community nutrition educator and a 4H educator worked together on a nutrition/gardening class for youth ages 4-13 years. The youth planted and cared for a garden, and learned how to prepare vegetables from the garden, and tasted many new and different foods, while at the same time learning the basics of nutrition.

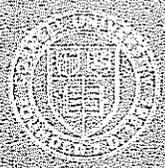
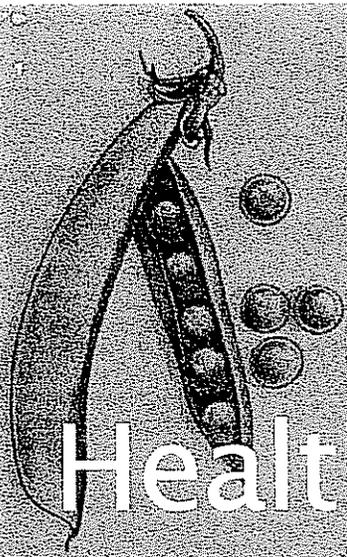
For a number of years, the CUCE-Yates County nutrition educator has collaborated with CUCE-Master Gardeners to do a garden/nutrition series for pre-school children at Keuka Lake School. The nutrition educator uses produce from the garden in classes for parents and students along with the "Color Me Healthy" nutrition curriculum for children. Through this program, students learn the basics of nutrition and gardening. Kids learn that food comes from plants and they learn about vegetables they may have never seen before.

As you can see by these examples, Cornell University Cooperative Extension county nutrition staff are very active and creative in promoting local agriculture and local foods in collaboration with other Extension programs and with other community agencies. I thank you for taking the time to learn about what we do, and I look forward to working with you to build a better New York that promotes local agriculture, healthy communities and healthy and active lifestyles for all New Yorkers.

Our region is developing a newsletter that highlights the programs described here in more detail. As soon as it is published, I will send a copy to the New York State Council on Food Policy.

For more information, please contact:

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Wiley
Cornell University
Cooperative Extension

Healthy Food For All





Program Summary

The "Healthy Food For All" subsidized Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program was developed by Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County (CCETC) in order to provide low-income households access to fresh, nutritious, high quality, organic produce at a price they can afford for a minimum of 12 weeks throughout the summer. Program participants are also encouraged to enroll in the free cooking and nutrition classes taught by Cooperative Extension Nutrition Educators in order to learn easy and delicious ways to prepare the produce they receive.

In addition, local farmers, who are often WIC and food stamp eligible themselves, gain additional members and income by participating in this program. As a result, local sustainable, organic farmers are able to provide food for a segment of the population they ordinarily wouldn't be able to serve. The strength of our local food system is enhanced by keeping food dollars circulating within our community, and residents who are often unable to purchase adequate amounts of fresh vegetables and fruits for themselves and their families are able to learn about and experience eating a variety of fresh produce.

Objectives/Performance Targets

In 2007 we had several goals:

- To double program participant enrollment from 2006 to 2007 (18 to 36) - achieved
- To diversify our participant pool to ensure we are engaging audiences that are not familiar with the CSA model and who may not have had any exposure to local foods - achieved
- To involve at least one additional CSA Farm in the program in order to create more pick up options and choice for program participants as well as to involve more local farmers - achieved
- To make the program more financially accessible to low-income audiences by accepting food stamps as payment - achieved
- To raise additional funds to allow program participants the option of receiving produce for an additional 5 weeks outside of the established 12 week program delivery timeframe - achieved
- To provide access to and a positive experience with fresh nutritious produce to a diversity of low-income households so that these audiences are equipped to make healthy dietary choices for themselves and their families - achieved

Methods/ Outcomes & Impacts

People served

Based upon a successful pilot year in 2006 we were able to secure additional funds that allowed us to double the households served by the "Healthy Food For All" program from 18 to 36 serving a total of 107 individuals including 56 children in 2007.

Program Diversity

In 2007 we made a concerted effort to increase our participant diversity. In order to reach diverse audiences, we connected with several community-based organizations and programs that work with underserved populations. In partnership with these organizations we conducted outreach at the following locations: the Greater Ithaca Activities Center, The Beverly J. Martin after school program, Urban 4-H at West Village and Parkside Gardens Housing Projects, and the First Baptized Church Food Pantry. CCETC nutrition educators conducted additional outreach at WIC clinics.

CCETC supplied all organizations with flyers containing program and contact information for display and to distribute to clientele. For direct outreach, CCETC developed a poster featuring photos of produce that would be offered through the program, the farms from which the food comes, and of pictures of past participants in the cooking class. While conducting direct outreach CCETC also provided food samples featuring produce that would be available through the subsidized share and the corresponding recipes

used in the cooking class, information about the CSA's from which people could choose, and a harvest calendar so participants would know when to expect certain produce items in their CSA share box.

As a result of our outreach efforts, 15 of 36 households represented people of color, recent immigrants and differently-abled populations. Diversifying overall CSA membership also helped create a bridge between people from disparate socio-economic backgrounds. In our final evaluation survey one program participant said, "Before this [program] I thought people who got food from CSA's would have more disposable income than me and I'd feel uncomfortable, but I didn't." Another participant had similar feelings, "It [the program] was more than I ever expected. I was amazed by the respectful way family and myself were treated by the CCETC staff and the farmers really blew me away. They were nothing but sincere and wonderful. And I never expected to have salad every week."

In addition, through the outreach process, we were able to establish relationships with community-based organizations and programs. Establishing these relationships strengthens our capacity to work together to address food security and extends services that benefit low-income audiences throughout the community.

CSA Farms Involved

In 2006, CCETC worked with the Full Plate Farm Collective, a group of three organic farms, to provide CSA shares for the program. In 2007, the Full Plate Farm Collective continued their participation and Early Morning Organic Farm also became involved by providing CSA membership shares for the program. CCETC met with the Full Plate Collective Farmers and the Farmer from Early Morning Organic Farm in February of 2007 to create an equitable means of share allocation between farms.

As a group we decided that the number of subsidized shares for each farm would be based on the farm's total CSA membership the previous growing season. This ensures the farms have the capacity to produce for additional subsidized shares and creates an equitable share distribution system. The Full Plate Collective had a total of 250 members in 2006 and the Early Morning Organic Farm had 50 members. For the 2007 season, The Full Plate Farm Collective received 30 subsidized shares and the Early Morning Organic Farm received 6 subsidized shares due to their participation in this program.

Small small-scale farmers are often WIC and food stamp eligible themselves, so we were happy to be able to provide these farms with additional shares and therefore, additional income, through this program. The farmers also feel good about being able to provide food for those who normally would not be able to afford the full share price. In addition, CSA memberships were diversified to include a broader socio-economic representation of the community's population.

By working with an additional CSA farm in 2007, program participants were able to have more choices for how and when they picked up their produce.

The Full Plate Farm Collective offers 4 pick up options – two on farm and two pre-boxed:

- Wednesday on farm pick-up at Stick and Stone Farm located a few miles past the Cayuga Medical Center from 2-7pm
- Saturday on farm pick-up at Three Swallows Farm located on Nelson Rd. a few miles past Ithaca College from 10am-3pm.

On farm pick-ups allow members to choose from a variety of produce that is displayed at the farm. This allows CSA members greater choice in selecting produce that they prefer, for example, more beets than lettuce.

- Thursday Pre-Boxed Shares delivered to either Ludgate Farm Store on Hanshaw Rd. or Cooperative Extension on Willow Ave from 2-6:30pm.

Pre boxed shares are packed by the CSA manager with a variety of the produce harvested that week. The pre-boxed delivery option does not offer the same opportunity to select more or less of certain produce items as with farm pick-up.

All members of the Full Plate Collective pick the most convenient pick-up option for themselves and pick-up their produce from that location for the entire season. All Full Plate Collective members are provided with anytime access to the U-pick fields at the farms. This allows members to pick flowers, herbs, and stock up on other items like tomatoes, okra, beans etc. This is a wonderful option that allows people to freeze, dry, and can additional produce for the winter as well as experience harvesting food for themselves.

Early Morning Organic Farm offers three flexible Ithaca Farmers Market pick-up options:

- Tuesdays from 9am-2pm at the Ithaca Farmers Market at Dewitt Park
- Saturdays from 9am-3pm at the Ithaca Farmers Market at Steamboat Landing
- Sundays from 10am-3pm at the Ithaca Farmers Market at Steamboat Landing

Early Morning CSA members choose from the variety of produce available at the Early Morning Farm farmers' market stand. They may also pick up on any or all pick up days from week to week. There is no U-pick option with Early Morning Farm because their farm is located in Genoa, NY.

Funding for Subsidized Shares

The full cost of a farm CSA share for 12 weeks was \$243 (full season shares cost \$426 for 24 weeks). Our goal was to raise funds to pay half of the cost of the share and that the program participant would pay for the balance. The cost to the participant for a 12 week subsidized share was \$121.50. This could be paid on a monthly basis using foods stamps or by cash/check paid directly to the farmer.

Funds raised to subsidize half of the cost of a 12 week share came from the following sources:

- *United Way – \$1,822.50 for 15 shares
- *Ithaca Health Alliance – \$800 for 6.6 shares
- *Greenstar Cooperative Market - \$607.50 for 5 shares
- Cargill grant - \$1,500 for 12.3 shares

Total funds: \$4,730 for 38.9 shares (supported 36 participants with the balance being used for share season extensions- see information below)

These funds were paid directly to participating farmers so that they received the full value of the share; half paid by the participant, and half paid by the share subsidy paid by the above list of funders. In addition, farmers raised funds to extend the subsidized shares beyond the 12 weeks.

**Indicates this was the second year of funding from these sources.*

Accepting Food Stamps

CCETC worked with the Ithaca Farmers Market manager and participating CSA farmers to make it possible for food stamps to be accepted as payment for the participants portion of their CSA subsidized share. The Full Plate Collective farmers and Early Morning Organic Farm are all members of the Ithaca Farmers Market. The Ithaca Farmers Market is equipped with the EBT machine that processes food stamp payments. "Healthy Food For All" participants eligible and choosing to pay with food stamps went to the Farmers Market once a month on a Saturday or Sunday and paid the Farmers Market Manager with their EBT card. The Farmers Market

Manager then reimbursed the farmers for the payment. **Sixteen of the 36 program participants used food stamps to pay for their produce. Many participants said the ability to use food stamps for payment was what enabled them to join the program.**

Raising additional funds - extending the season

Farmers and the CCETC staff set a goal of raising enough funds to allow all "Healthy Food For All" CSA members to have the option of extending their shares for the full regular CSA member season – an additional 5-6 weeks. The "Healthy Food for All" program subsidized CSA membership for 12 weeks. In 2007 farmers solicited donations from past and new CSA members on their membership sign up forms, on their websites, and at the Ithaca Farmers Market. In addition, a large music benefit was held on a farm in Newfield (see attachment) to raise funds for the share subsidy. As a result of these efforts, in addition to individual donations received through CCETC solicitations, we were able to offer the option of extending the CSA subsidy to all 36 program participants. Two-thirds of those participants eligible to extend their shares chose to do so for the remainder of the CSA season therefore, enabling them to receive a total of 18 weeks of fresh, local, organic farm produce.

Nutrition and Cooking Classes & Overall Program Impact on Participants

CCETC offered two free 6-week cooking and nutrition classes to all "Healthy Food For All" program participants. The class is offered to provide additional support in vegetable identification, preparation and preservation of produce for meals, and nutrition education. In order to accommodate a larger program in 2007, CCE offered two cooking classes. Each class met every other week.

CCETC Nutrition Program Educator (NPE), Karen Robinson led the class. Ralph Payne, a long term Culinary Expert, volunteered to assist with this year's program. We had a number of other volunteers emerge during program promotion this year. Roxanna Johnston, who has a great background in growing and preserving foods and Josh Carlsen, who is particularly interested in teaching cooking to youth and families, volunteered to help the NPE with the cooking classes. Lucy Garrison-Clauson of Stick and Stone Farm attended most classes this year adding value to the program, as she was able to talk about the varieties of produce in the CSA share telling participants how they grow and how she uses the product.

Two CCETC Student Interns coordinated and provided childcare for this program. Each week the interns involved the children in preparing a healthy snack and in drawing or reading activities involving healthy food concepts. Older children joined their parents in the cooking and nutrition class. At the end of the cooking classes, the small children joined their parents in sampling the foods that were prepared in the class.

During each class, participants washed produce and shared the responsibilities of preparing recipes for the class meal that varied from week to week depending on the produce delivered in the CSA shares. Participants learned to prepare everything from sautéed kale with apples and onions, to brown rice pilaf, to the very popular (especially with the kids) carrot beet pancakes.

Nutrition and/or food safety lessons were delivered during each class session. Lessons included: food safety in washing produce, refrigeration, and FightBac concepts; the new Food Pyramid and My Pyramid that emphasizes eating a variety of colors; exercise and water consumption; portion sizes, proportions of different food groups, protein and non-meat sources of protein, whole grains; and reading nutrition labels.

All class participants sat down to share a meal together at the end of each class. During mealtime, Lucy from Stick and Stone Farm described the contents of the week's box share. This led to recipe brainstorming and sharing in which participants would describe ways that they like to prepare the different types of produce. The NPE recorded these suggestions from each class and then provided written notes in the following class. This was very successful and many participants indicated that they tried these suggestions of their classmates. Infrequently, recipes would be suggested that contained high levels of fat or sugar or expensive ingredients and as these arose, the NPE suggested ways to modify the recipe to make it healthier.

Fourteen "Healthy Food for All" program participants were active in the cooking and nutrition class. The number of persons in participant families was 32, 14 of these being children. Seven cooking class participants were receiving food stamps and two were receiving WIC. Three cooking class participants were breastfeeding.

As a result of the classes, the percent of participants eating two or more servings of fruit per day increased from 60 to 70% between start and end of the classes. The percent of participants eating three or more servings of vegetables per day increased from 70 to 80% between start and end. Seventy percent of participants showed improvement in one or more food resource management practices (i.e. plans meals, compares prices, does not run out of food, or uses grocery lists).

Participant Feedback

CCETC sent out surveys following program completion to all "Healthy Food for All" program participants to gauge participant satisfaction. Nineteen out of 20 respondents said they would join a CSA again next year and that if their resources increased they would purchase a full price share.

Surveys responses indicated that many participants felt a real difference in their health and eating habits due to the program.

In answer to the question: "What was the best thing about joining the "Healthy Food For All" program participants responded:

"Convenience, picking out what (produce) you want, and the freshness of the food. Now, I eat what I get from the CSA. I feel good and I am losing weight. I really wanted to get healthy again. I also tried new things like rainbow chard, kale, fennel, garlic scapes, and lots of varieties of tomatoes."

"Eating healthier and having access to foods I may not have chosen."

"I really enjoyed going to the Farmers Market each week to get food. I've lost 15 lbs. since the last visit to the doctor and most of this has been due to eating healthier foods."

"My biggest excuse about being overweight before was because it is so expensive to buy healthy. Now I know there are ways to get around that and to eat healthy."

"I thought this was a wonderful program and my family ate much better this summer because of the reduced rate CSA."

"I wasn't a vegetable person before. Now I know there are lots of different things you can do to make them good. I learned how to make new things from the recipes provided by the farmers, CCE, and Google."

"I learned a lot about what is in the vegetables, what they have in them that is good for our bodies. Now the girls eat their vegetables with out a fight and their attitude about vegetables changed. Now they know what is good and what is junk".

"This was a really really positive experience for my family. I feel a lot of gratitude that I was able to have such good quality food that I normally wouldn't be able to afford and that my family was able to eat really healthy. Also, that this is available to people in the community."

Healthy Food for All participants learned a myriad of other things too:

"I was surprised by the variety of produce. Some stuff I'd never heard of. I've tried Tatsoi, fennel, Japanese eggplant, garlic scapes, arugula"

"I've tried tatsoi, spring mix, garlic scapes, more... Now, I really like the dark greens and darker salad greens."

"I realize that fresher foods taste better. I taste a big difference in the onions, tomatoes, and greens. The flavors are so much more distinct."

"My children have benefited enormously - for them to see the work that goes into the food and where it comes from, to see friends and other people being a part of this thing was amazing for them. I gained knowledge with unusual vegetables like okra and garlic scapes. Katie was really helpful sending recipes. I took advantage of those."

"[I learned about] all the different kinds of peppers – the hot ones - I have 15 different kinds of peppers strung up to dry right now."

"I was surprised to learn what could be grown here. I didn't know the variety of things that could be grown locally. I thought a lot of the stuff would have had to be grown down south. I also learned about the high quality of the food. I also tried new things rainbow chard, kale, fennel, garlic scapes, and lots of varieties of tomatoes."

"I realized that they're (the vegetables) worth the money, even at the grocery store. There's a real tendency when you don't have a lot of money to not buy healthy food."

"Going to the farm with my son and going to the field and picking crops was great. It was positive to be more connected to where our food comes from and my son got a lot out of that."

Challenges

We had lower than anticipated participation in the cooking and nutrition class for the 2007 season. In order to accommodate a larger participant pool in 2007 we scheduled two classes that met at Cooperative Extension on Thursdays at 5:30 pm and alternated weeks. We think the alternating week class schedule was difficult for people to remember and habituate into their schedules.

To encourage enrollment in the cooking and nutrition class for 2008 we will hold the class on once a week schedule plus add an additional class weekday and location. For example, instead of holding the nutrition classes once every other Thursday at Cooperative Extension, we will offer a class once a week on Wednesdays at Cooperative Extension and a class once a week on Mondays

at an additional neighborhood-based location. We think this will make it easier for more people to fit the class into their schedules. The classes are an important component of the program as they provide support to participants who do not know how to prepare many of the vegetables that are offered in the CSA share. Further, it fuels interest in cooking and eating with healthy fresh foods.

In order to more effectively measure dietary shifts due to program participation, we need to collect both pre- and post-surveys. We typically are able to gather pre-survey information for those participants who sign up for the CSA cooking class because we collect it at the first class. For those who did not opt to take the class, we had difficulty retrieving the necessary information. In order to improve program evaluation, we will ensure all pre-survey information is collected before program begins by including surveys in the registration packet and requiring that they be completed for program participation. In addition, our survey tool will be improved because we are collaborating with Jennifer Wilkins, Senior Extension Associate in Nutrition at Cornell, on a Federally- funded Research Grant "Eat Your Vegetables! Does seasonal Community Supported Agriculture membership increase annual produce consumption?" Within this study we will assess the short and long term impacts of CSA membership on total fruit and vegetable intake, variety and seasonality of produce consumed, and attitudes toward produce use. This survey will be designed specifically to measure the changes of dietary/attitudinal shifts of CSA participants.

Plans for 2008

Based on the success of the "Healthy Foods for All" Subsidized CSA Share Program, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County along with our farmer partners have discussed making the following program changes for 2008:

- We have hired **Liz Karabinakis** to replace Lael Gerhart who moved out of town in November. Liz will be assuming the job of CCETC Community Food Educator in mid-February. Liz will reach out to partner organizations for funding support and to recruit participants through community organizations and agencies as well as via direct outreach.
- Continue outreach to underserved audiences through community organizations that serve those audiences. Additional organizations suggested for outreach include: the Ithaca Youth Bureau, Department of Social Services food stamp division, the Advocacy Center, and Tompkins Community Action Head Start. CCETC will contact these organizations to inquire after their willingness to distribute information and/or host outreach sessions.
- Raise enough funds to expand the number of subsidized shares from 36 to 50 to serve more families
- Increase farmer participation; we have at least two additional CSA farms that have expressed interest in participating in the program in 2008
- Host weekly cooking classes with the option of two dates and two locations per week
- Produce a vegetable identification picture ID card so that program participants know what the products are in their share box.
- Include a pre-program participant survey in our CSA contracts that must be completed in order to become a registered participant

- Participate in the Cornell Grant funded project to evaluate the impact of CSA membership on eating habits of participants
- Raise sufficient funds to be able to offer extended season shares (5-6 weeks) for those who want to continue beyond the normal 12 week program
- Streamline payment procedures for program participants and for the farmers
- Farmer-led fundraising activities as a criteria for farmer participation
- Fundraising a year in advance so that we know in 2008 what numbers of shares we can fund in 2009

Report prepared by Lael Gerhart and Monika Roth
Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County

1/31/08

NYS Council on Food Policy Listening Session
 April 11, 2008
 Statement from Food Bank of the Southern Tier

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. The Food Bank of the Southern Tier is pleased with the creation of the NYS Council on Food Policy and looks forward to the council's work in enhancing the food system of NYS.

A. What is the Food Bank of the Southern Tier?

- ❖ A food warehouse that distributes food to hunger-relief agencies in six counties
- ❖ One of 8 Food Banks in NYS
- ❖ Last year, distributed over 5 million pounds of food to over 180 agencies, which serve 9,000 people weekly. 38% of those we serve are children.
- ❖ Work with America's Second Harvest in Chicago to solicit and acquire food donations from across the nation
- ❖ 20 years ago most of food we moved were government commodities and donated products; now much of the food is acquired from the primary market; Receive state funding to help cover costs

B. What are the Food Bank's goals?

1. Primary: Help our food pantries, soup kitchen, and other programs so they can meet immediate food demands of working poor and others.

2. Long -Term: Community food security (CFS) - "all community residents obtain a safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes community self-reliance and social justice."

Both goals fit with the purposes of the Council on Food Policy, especially #2.

Some Food Bank programs that help us achieve CFS:

- ❖ Food Stamp Outreach- provides education and assistance about Food Stamps through a pre-screening process
- ❖ Summer Food Service Program- helps open sites for children to receive nutritious meals when school's out
- ❖ BackPack Program- in tandem with schools, children from food insecure homes receive nutritious shelf-stable foods for the weekend.

C. Food Bank's goals intertwined with agriculture, health, and human services groups

The Food Bank participates in the Regional Community Food Project - a group of representatives from agriculture, health, and human service community - Participation in RCFP has helped FBST ask: How does our work enhance CFS? How do we work with different groups to help our clients while supporting New York growers, food businesses, and communities?

D. Food Bank recommendations: Focus topics for Council on Food Policy

In this light, we envision the support of 3 initiatives that can positively affect our farm community and our low-income neighbors. We encourage the Council to include them in its action plans.

1. **Create and promote incentives for farmers to make donations to hunger-relief programs.** Since 2003, when the American Farm Bureau's Harvest for All program started, our farmers have donated over 9 million pounds of food. Here in the Southern Tier, Frog Pond Farms in Bainbridge has donated local produce to the Colesville Food Pantry. Another food pantry in Steuben County receives donations from local farmers and in turn, a community group returns the favor by giving pantry clients coupons to use at farm stands. Such work gets nutritious food to people in need and is great PR for farmers. Are there other carrots we can offer our farmers to donate surplus foods?
2. **Encourage Food Banks to increase purchases of state products- eggs, meat, dairy, produce, and other staples.** Collectively, Food Banks in NYS use \$8.5 million of state funding to make food purchases for food pantries and soup kitchens. Much of these funds are spent on out-of-state foods. We recommend discussion at the state level, between the Department of Health and the Department of Agriculture and Markets, to provide **additional funds and incentives** earmarked for acquisition of NYS foods. We see at least two benefits:
 - ❖ Recirculation of dollars within NYS
 - ❖ A win-win program for 2 major constituents- agriculture and people in need.Many of you are familiar with The WIC-Farmers' Market Nutrition Program, a wonderful example of how a program can serve farming and nutrition interests. We envision similar success with a local purchasing initiative for Food Banks.
3. **Create a state or regional food processing facility for Food Banks and other institutions.**

The bulk of the donated foods that Food Banks have access to are perishable items –fruits, vegetables, and dairy foods. We need innovative ways to extend the life of perishable foods. Is there a place for a processing facility to handle foods, both produced in and out of state, for Food Banks and other institutions?

E. Conclusion

The Food Bank's food procurement and educational activities are significant and make a difference. But they do not occur in a vacuum and the Food Bank's accomplishments come through partnerships with schools, religious organizations, community groups, generous donors, and supportive state agencies.

Today, 2.7 million New Yorkers struggle to consistently put food on their tables. We've lost 47 million farms and 5.5 million acres of farmland in the last 50 years. We have much work to do. Together we can accomplish great things. Thank you for your time.

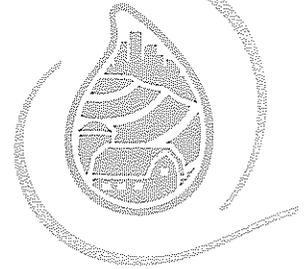
Respectfully submitted,

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Watershed Agricultural Council

Agriculture ♦ Forestry ♦ Conservation Easements ♦ Economic Initiatives

44 West Street, Suite 1, Walton, New York 13856-9751 phone: 607-865-7017 fax: 607-865-5535 www.nycwatershed.org



April 11, 2008

New York State Council of Food Policy Listening Session: Binghamton, NY

The Watershed Agricultural Council is a non-profit organization with the mission to support the economic viability of agriculture and forestry through the protection of water quality and the promotion of land conservation in the New York City watershed region.

CONTACT: Challey Comer, Farm to Market Manager

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KEY POINTS:

1. How to strengthen the connection between local food products and consumers.
 - Continue the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets (NYS DAM) Agri-tourism Grant Program.
 - Reduce barriers to small regional food distributors.
 - Provide/increase grant funding for cold storage facilities, community kitchens and growers cooperatives to help successful small and medium-sized farms grow.

2. How to support efficient and profitable agricultural food production and food retail infrastructure.
 - The creation of numerous regional animal processing facilities; especially in Sullivan County.
 - Work with small regional retail and grocery chains to increase the amount of local products available in small communities.
 - Improve outreach and support of small scale food production through the Food Venture Center and NYS DAM inspectors.
 - Perform a statewide foodshed study as done in California (www.farmland.org/programs/states/ca/Feature%20Stories/SanFranciscoFoodshedProject.asp)
 - Perform a Market Analysis Study for Value-Added Dairy Products as in Massachusetts (www.mass.gov/agr/programs/agroenviro/grantreport_pilgrim.pdf)

3. How to increase consumer awareness and knowledge about healthy eating and improve access to safe and nutritious foods.
 - Increase the connection between regional Buy Local Campaigns (*Pure Catskills, Finger Lakes Culinary Bounty, Regional Farm and Food Project, Adirondack Harvest*, etc.) with the *Pride of New York* Program.
 - Use public service advertising space on billboards and radio spots to educate consumers about eating locally in their region.