

History, Vision and Actions: New York State Food Policy Recommendations

December 2010



New York State Council on Food Policy

December 2010

Patrick Hooker, Commissioner, NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets, Chairperson

Darrel Aubertine, NYS Senator, 48th District

Mindy Bockstein, Chairperson and Executive Director, NYS Consumer Protection Board

Dr. Kathryn Boor, Dean, NYS College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Cornell University

Linda Bopp, Executive Director, Nutrition Consortium of NYS

Bruce Both, President, United Food and Commercial Workers Union: Local 1500

Mary Warr Cowans, Associate Director, Division of Nutrition, NYS Department of Health (*retired*)

Dr. Richard Daines, Commissioner, NYS Department of Health

Raymond Denniston, BOCES Broome-Tioga; Co-Chair NYS Farm to School Coordinating Committee

Diane Eggert, Executive Director, Farmers' Market Federation of New York

John Evers, Executive Director, Food Bank Association of NYS

Cathryn Mizbani, Senior Extension Administrator; WIC Program Coordinator, Cornell University

Cooperative Extension of Schenectady County

Dennis Mullen, President and CEO, Empire State Development Corporation

Liz Neumark, CEO, Great Performances; Sylvia Center

Greg Olsen, Acting Director, NYS Office for the Aging

Kristen Proud, Acting Commissioner, NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance

Dr. David Milton Steiner, Commissioner, NYS Education Department

Irwin Simon, Founder, Chairperson, President and CEO, Hain Celestial Group, Inc

Julie Suarez, Director of Public Policy, New York Farm Bureau

Eleanor Wilson, Senior Dietitian, Price Chopper Supermarkets, Inc

Catharine Young, NYS Senator, 57th District

Member Representatives

Ellen Anderson, Director, Center for Community Health, NYS Department of Health

Sarah Blood, Director of Senate Committee on Agriculture

Ellen Deutsch, Chief Growth Officer and Senior Vice President, Hain Celestial Group, Inc

Dr. Michael Hoffmann, Associate Dean, NYS College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Cornell University;

Director of the Agricultural Experiment Station at Cornell University

Jack Kennedy, Special Assistant, NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance

Robert McNary, Executive Director of Community and Sustainable Development, NYS Empire State
Development

Jorge Montalvo, Director, Strategic Initiatives, NYS Consumer Protection Board

Frances O'Donnell, Coordinator Child Nutrition Program Administration, NYS Education Department

Patricia Race, Department of Health, Division of Nutrition

Florence Reed, Director, Nutrition Unit, NYS Office for the Aging

Jonathan Thomson, Economic Development Specialist, NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets

Nicole Willis, Assistant Director of Public Policy, NY Farm Bureau

Coordinator

Ann McMahon, Special Assistant, NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets





New York State Council on Food Policy Report to Governor David A. Paterson

Executive Summary

December 2010

New York State has been renowned for its financial, cultural, manufacturing and political leadership. Home to more than 19.5 million people, New York State is one of the most ethnically and economically diverse states in the country. New York State also proudly supports a productive, vibrant and tenacious, agricultural industry.

However, paradoxes pervade. In 2008 our 36,000 farm families returned almost \$4.4 billion to the farm economy, yet hunger and diet-related diseases, such as obesity, persist in our society. While the local food movement has ignited around the country, many “food deserts” still exist where quality, fresh and nutritious food is simply unavailable or unaffordable for consumers.

Food policy is the place where the dynamic confluence of health, agriculture, economic, education, and environmental issues is addressed. Food policy accounts for the vast range of urban, suburban, and rural communities and cultures, and institutional and political realities. In essence, food policy strives to respond to societal dilemmas in a holistic manner by connecting the proverbial dots and pioneering new relationships.

New York State food policy possesses a rich history of leaders and doers; an unwavering vision for a healthier, more prosperous society; numerous examples of successful collaborative action; and an abundance of well-informed recommendations yet to be implemented.

The New York State Council on Food Policy (NYS CFP) was created by gubernatorial Executive Order in 2007. The mission of the NYS CFP is to develop and recommend policies that preserve and enhance agricultural production in New York; and ensure that all New Yorkers have adequate access to safe, affordable, fresh and nutritious foods, especially by children, low-income individuals, the senior population, and other at-risk or underrepresented citizens. There are twenty-two members from nearly every sector of the food system on the NYS CFP. Eighteen members are appointed by the Governor, with four appointed on the recommendation of the legislative leaders. The Commissioner of the Department of Agriculture and Markets serves as the chairperson.

Based on public input, member expertise, data analyses, and the desire for a coordinated and comprehensive approach to the issues, four areas of concentration were developed by the NYS CFP. These “key issue areas” are:

1. Maximize participation in, and support for, food and nutrition assistance programs;
2. Strengthen the connection between local food products and consumers;
3. Support safe, efficient and profitable food production and retail food infrastructure; and
4. Foster a culture of healthy and local eating for all New York State residents.

There is tremendous momentum building in the food policy arena. Cities and towns are organizing around food policy - many seeking leadership and the federal government is actively encouraging state and local food policy council formation. A Japanese adage counsels: *“Vision without action is a daydream; action without vision is a nightmare; action with vision can change the world.”* Now is not the time for daydreams or short-sighted actions. The NYS CFP has been instrumental in coordinating actions with vision through exceptional cooperative efforts and vigorous networking.

Each December, the NYS CFP delivers a written report to the Governor. This “December 2010” report includes an historical snapshot of food policy in New York State, an account of NYS CFP activities for the year, a synopsis of the previous food policy recommendations, progress in achieving goals, notes on emerging issues, and recommended changes. NYS CFP reports are available on the website: www.nyscfp.org or by contacting ph# 518.485.7728.

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I. History of Food Policy in New York State

A rich history of food policy exists in New York State. Driven by an extraordinary combination of public servants, advocates, business people, producers, scholars and others, New York State food policy took hold in 1975. These food policy champions, as with the champions of today, were dedicated to creating a healthier, more productive, more prosperous, and hunger-free society.

Under Governor Carey (serving 1975-82) the need to protect the economic viability of the agricultural and food retail industry, while simultaneously ensuring that all citizens had adequate access to affordable and nutritious food was recorded. On October 3, 1975 an **Assembly Task Force on Food, Farm and Nutrition Policy** (Task Force) was initiated by Speaker Stanley Steingut. The Task Force, now chaired by Assemblyman Jose Rivera, continues to develop programs, legislation, and budget initiatives related to food, farm and nutrition in New York.

New York State food policy continued under Governor Mario Cuomo (serving 1983-94). In 1984 the **Council on Food and Nutrition Policy** (Council) was appointed by the Governor. The Council's mission was to propose a five-year plan to improve the nutritional status of the people of New York State based on the growing evidence that a substantial number of New Yorkers are neither adequately fed nor nourished. The subsequent plan also included recommendations to support adequate food production, job creation, and preservation of our agricultural land base. That Council became inactive sometime after the release of the Five-Year Plan in 1988, due largely in part to the loss of the chairman, Department of Health Commissioner David Axelrod.

A formal food policy forming body was not pursued by Governor George Pataki (serving 1995-2006).

Historical New York State food policy documents of note include, but are not limited to:

- Steingut Appoints Task Force: Farmers and Consumers (1975)
- Subcommittee of Food, Farm and Nutrition Policy (1980)
- New York State Food Policy: A White Paper (1981)
- A Primer of New York State Food Assistance Programs (1986)
- Five-Year Food and Nutrition Plan (1988)
- Assembly Task Force on Food, Farm and Nutrition Policy Public Hearing (2005)

The **New York State Council on Food Policy** (NYS CFP) was established by Governor Eliot Spitzer in 2007 by Executive Order No. 13, and reaffirmed in 2008 by Governor David A. Paterson's Executive Order No. 9.

Strikingly similar to previous food policy bodies, the mission of the NYS CFP is to develop and recommend policies that preserve and enhance agricultural food production in New York; and ensure that all New Yorkers have adequate access to safe, affordable, fresh and nutritious foods, especially by children, low-income individuals, the senior population, and other at-risk or underrepresented citizens. The NYS CFP consists of twenty-two members, with the Commissioner of the Department of Agriculture and Markets as the chairperson.

Based on stakeholder input, member expertise, data analyses, and the desire to ensure a coordinated and inclusive approach to issues, the NYS CFP developed four areas to focus upon. The key issue areas are:

1. Maximize participation in, and support for, food and nutrition assistance programs;
2. Strengthen the connection between local food products and consumers;
3. Support safe, efficient and profitable food production and retail food infrastructure; and
4. Foster a culture of healthy and local eating for all New York State residents.

In 2008, the NYS CFP conducted a state-wide listening tour to gain insight from diverse stakeholders about food policy issues in their community and beyond. The NYS CFP holds two public meetings each year at varying locations around the state, coordinates on-going work group collaboration projects, responds to inquiries for support or resources, prepares comments on legislation, and speaks at meetings and conferences upon request.

Since establishment, the NYS CFP has delivered an annual report to the Governor each December. The reports include the activities of the NYS CFP throughout the year, recommended state food policies and action items, recommended changes, and accounts of progress in achieving goals. Previous NYS CFP reports are:

- Connecting the Dots (2007)
- Recommended State Food Policies in Respect to the Health and Prosperity of New York State (2008)
- Making Connections: Developing a Food System for a Healthier New York State (2009)

Not to be underestimated, local and regional food policy initiatives are continuing to grow and evolve. Plans such as the New York City Speaker Christine Quinn's recently released "Food Works: A Vision to Improve NYC's Food System" contribute greatly to further the mission and vision of food policy in New York State.

See *Appendix a. Food Policy Documents* for web addresses for the documents mentioned above.



II. Activities of the NYS CFP in 2010

Throughout the year, the majority of the NYS CFP activities are coordinated through Commissioner Hooker's office at the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets. One staff member, with assistance from student interns, is dedicated to managing the business of the NYS CFP. The Department supports the NYS CFP website and a considerable communications network has been established.

ANNUAL MEETINGS

The NYS CFP meets twice a year at varying locations around the State. The meetings are designed to facilitate the flow of information between government agencies, policy makers, issue area experts, stakeholders, and the public. Topics generally address food, farm and nutrition issues and often focus specifically on systems dynamic matters such as food access, production, procurement and delivery. Meetings in 2010 were:

- Summer Meeting: June 28th at the Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. State Office Building, New York City
- Fall Meeting: October 20th at the State Capitol Building, Albany

At the meetings, Council members provide updates, discuss emerging issues and pursue collaboration opportunities as related to the NYS CFP mission and key issue areas. Detailed summaries of the 2010 Summer and Fall Meetings are included as *Appendix b. Annual Meetings*.

Guest speakers help break down complex issues and policies, and introduce innovative approaches for addressing these issues. For example, at the Summer Meeting in Harlem a "NYS Food System: Supply, Demand and Delivery" panel was assembled. The panelists communicated considerable information about the critical need to preserve farmland in New York State, school food purchasing policies and USDA food programs. Also, an impressive innovative strategy known as Community Shareholder Farm (CSF) was shared with the Council members and the approximately one hundred attendees. CSF aims to optimize access to locally-grown food by low-income, underserved community members while preserving valuable farmland.



Food System Panel, Harlem 2010

Did you know...?

- Recent survey results reveal that the top motivation for school food service directors to purchase local produce is to support their local economy and farmers
- New York State loses a farm to development every three days
- Fairly comprehensive laws exist in New York for preference of local foods in procurement by state facilities (State Finance Law §165; General Municipal Law § 103)

For more details see *Appendix b. Annual Meetings* or
http://www.nyscfp.org/docs/activities/NYSCFP_PanelMins_6_28_10.pdf

Public input is essential and has been influential in food policy development and Council actions. In addition to the 2008 NYS CFP Listening Tour, a public comment period is always included in the meetings. This opportunity has been well exercised by advocates, scholars, practitioners and community members alike.

Notably, the Council heard the public's frustration over the lack of adequate access by low-income individuals to fresh, nutritious and affordable foods. Expressly due to the cooperative efforts of NYS CFP members, multiple steps have been taken to increase these access points. Steps include:

- New York became the first state in the nation to allow Women, Infant and Children (WIC) vegetable and fruit checks to be used at farmers' markets;
- At least 40 electronic benefit transfer (EBT) terminals have been distributed for free to farmers' markets, green carts and other mobile markets that reach underserved communities;
- The Healthy Food/Healthy Community Fund, that will provide \$30 million in loans and grants for food market development and renovation around the state, requires that all recipients accept federal benefits, SNAP/food stamps* and WIC; and
- Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) has been proposed to be expanded to include roadside farm stand operators as eligible recipients of FMNP coupons in New York State (pending USDA approval).



Listening Session, Binghamton 2008

* New York State Food Stamp Program has not officially adopted the federal name, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP. SNAP and food stamps are used interchangeably in this document.



Fessenden Dairy tour, King Ferry 2009

Site visits of significant venues relating to our food system are arranged when feasible. In previous years the NYS CFP has toured a working dairy farm in King Ferry, an educational farm in Spencerport, the NYC Food Bank and Hunts Point Terminal Produce Market in the Bronx, and walked through a 'food desert' in Harlem.

Press releases, agendas, meeting minutes, guest presentations and public comments are also posted on the "Activities" page of the NYS CFP website: www.nyscfp.org.

WORK GROUPS

Council members' interests and expertise has led to a natural distribution into work groups based on the four key issue areas. A range of Council members will intermittently come together to analyze a particular policy or undertake a project as related to the Council's mission and corresponding key issue areas. The work groups also incorporate stakeholders and experts from outside the Council, when feasible. Work groups typically communicate via conference calls or email exchanges as frequently and for as long as deemed necessary by the group.

In 2010 NYS CFP work group subject matter included: analysis of Federal food safety legislation; review of USDA Hunger-Free Communities grant; development of the "Food and Nutrition Connection Center," a web-based inventory of community resources (under construction); and preparation of recommendations for USDA geographic preference language (below). Additional topics of interest include: creating a data-driven delineation of a food desert; continuing to expand EBT at farmers' markets and other venues; creating and promoting food system jobs, and Farm to College/Farm to Institution initiatives.

More information on work group activity is available in *Appendix b. Annual Meetings*.

STUDENT INTERNS

Through the joint effort of the NYS Department of Health, Division of Nutrition and the Department of Agriculture & Markets, the NYS CFP was awarded two graduate student interns from UAlbany School of Public Health in 2010.

- Cindy Jorif-Zayes assisted the NYS CFP from January to May. Ms. Jorif-Zayes' main project was the continued development of the online inventory of available food and nutrition services: the "Food and Nutrition Connection Center" (FNCC) (under construction). Ms. Jorif-Zayes conducted an online survey about the soundness of the structure and content of the FNCC. This feedback is currently being incorporated.
- Jacqueline Follain joined the NYS CFP from May until August. As Assistant to the Council on Food Policy, Ms. Follain contributed greatly to the NYS CFP as a data analyst, policy researcher and communications agent. Notably, her research and data analyses supported the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) "Hunger-Free Communities" grant proposal submitted by NYS CFP member, Diane Eggert, Executive Director of the Farmers' Market Federation of NY. Ms. Follain also organized food policy email blasts (updates and announcements) to the stakeholders.

COMMENTS ON REGULATIONS: GEOGRAPHIC PREFERENCE OPTION

The United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Services (USDA, FNS) posted the proposed action for the Geographic Preference Option for the Procurement of Unprocessed Agricultural Products in Child Nutrition Programs in the Federal Register (Vol.75, No. 74) and accepted comments on the ruling. In the Register it is stated that: "The geographic preference option basically allows institutions operating Child Nutrition Programs to specifically define geographic areas from which they will seek to procure unprocessed local agricultural products."

The NYS CFP submitted comments that, among other things, recommended de minimis handling be defined to include cutting, combining, freezing, bagging and packaging of agricultural food products. NYS CFP believes that if implemented as recommended, the "geographic preference option" will increase local purchasing power, support economic opportunities for local farmers, and help schools and other institutions increase wholesome food choices on their menus for children.

See Appendix c. NYS CFP Comments on Geographic Preference and available here:

http://www.nyscfp.org/docs/NYS_CFP_GeoPrefComments_FINAL.pdf

NETWORK AND OUTREACH

The **NYS CFP networks** have been instrumental to achieving successful results. The members themselves are a powerful assembly of pivotal individuals engaged in (among other things) health, agriculture, food security, economic development and consumer education issues. They are from the government, private and public sectors. But more importantly, each NYS CFP member generously brings to the greater NYS CFP the breadth and depth of their individual networks and resources. These networks are called upon often to provide topic specific expertise that contributes to NYS CFP recommendations and actions.

Food policy queries frequently arrive through the NYS CFP website "Contact Us" page or over the phone. The majority of queries seek food safety or health and nutrition information, but range from those seeking advice on rooftop gardening to those needing assistance with a new business model. Due to the NYS CFP network, the queries are responded to in a coordinated and timely fashion. For example, recently a query arrived regarding suspected fraud with federal benefits (food stamps and WIC) at a food store. Through outreach to the NYS CFP network, the individual was quickly provided with one coordinated response, including procedural steps and key agency contact information for their area from the multiple agencies involved.

Public outreach is essential to increasing awareness. Throughout the year, the NYS CFP receives numerous invitations to speak at meetings and conferences, participate in webinars, submit journal articles, and give interviews. Commissioner Hooker and the NYS CFP members accommodate these requests as often as possible.

Significantly, in October 2010 Commissioner Hooker and Dr. Daines, Commissioner of the Department of Health, spoke at the “Growing Health” conference hosted by the Rural Health Network in Binghamton. The Commissioners jointly discussed the challenges and successes of health and agriculture policy making through difficult economic times. Other events where the NYS CFP presented include: The New York State Association of County Executives in Buffalo; Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Awareness Program conference in Albany; NYS Farm to School Coordinating Committee meeting in Syracuse; Harvest Dinner at Cornell University, Ithaca; “Advancing our Regional Foodshed” at Rockland Community College, Rockland; and the Sustainable Food Work Group from Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (webinar). Also, an article highlighting the NYS CFP collaboration was published in the Centers for Disease Control, Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity online circular.

Letters of Support from the NYS CFP are often sought by organizations seeking grants as they pertain to the mission of the NYS CFP. In 2010, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced the “Hunger-Free Communities” grant opportunity. Uniquely, this grant *required* applicants to partner with a food policy council or initiate one if one did not already exist. The NYS CFP provided five Letters of Support for applicants around the state proposing local projects, such as community food security assessments by county or region. Technical assistance was also provided regarding local food policy council organization.

A **Letter of Partnership** was provided to the one applicant proposing a state-wide initiative. The Farmers’ Market Federation of NY applied for a USDA “Hunger-Free Communities” grant on October 1, 2010. The project proposes to increase access to quality, nutritious foods grown by New York farmers and offered through community farmers’ markets for low-income individuals and families through a coupon incentive program: NY Fresh Checks. The USDA grant awards announcement is expected in the near future. If awarded, the members of the NYS CFP will continue to provide network support to the Farmers’ Market Federation through the duration of the grant.



III. Recommended State Food Policies, Progress in Achieving Goals and Emerging Issues

The mission of the NYS CFP is to recommend food policies that aim to preserve and enhance agricultural production in New York State, and ensure that all New Yorkers have adequate access to affordable, fresh and nutritious foods. Based on stakeholder input, member expertise, data analyses, and the desire to ensure a coordinated and inclusive approach to issues, the NYS CFP developed four areas to focus upon. These key issue areas are:

1. Maximize participation in, and support for, food and nutrition assistance programs;
2. Strengthen the connection between local food products and consumers;
3. Support safe, efficient and profitable food production and retail food infrastructure; and
4. Foster a culture of healthy and local eating for all New York State residents.

Since 2007, the NYS CFP has researched and proposed a total of fifty-one state food policy recommendations. These recommendations have been accompanied by scores of action items, or steps to take, to implement a policy recommendation and examples for replication. The recommendations fall under the four key issue areas as such:

Key Issue Area	2007	2008	2009	Total
1. Maximize program participation	6	4	3	13
2. Strengthen local connection	5	6	4	15
3. Support food system infrastructure	7	5	3	15
4. Foster culture of healthy eating	4	2	2	8
Number of Recommendations	22	17	12	51

The more than fifty state food policy recommendations already developed reflect the ambitious, innovative and committed spirit of the NYS CFP and the public that helped inform them. These recommendations contain a mixture of big infrastructure ideas, mechanical and administrative improvements, bureaucratic measures, and societal changes. Overall, it is strongly recommended that New York State take a systems level approach to policy, development and programming. Most importantly, the recommendations sustain the vision of food policy in New York State: *Creating a healthier, more productive, more prosperous and hunger-free society.*

Progress has been made on many fronts due to laudable inter-agency, public and private collaboration efforts and political leadership. However, this vision does not have an expiration date and new issues constantly emerge.

At this time of impending administration change, the NYS CFP respectfully resists offering new recommendations, but instead provides this constructive synopsis of the existing, recurring recommendations for consideration.

See: *Appendix d. Recommendations 2007, 2008, 2009* for the condensed version of previous recommendations. All NYS CFP Recommendations are available in their entirety on our website www.nyscfp.org (click on “Report to Governor”).

KEY ISSUE AREA 1: MAXIMIZE PARTICIPATION IN, AND SUPPORT FOR, FOOD AND NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

Key issue area 1. By maximizing participation in, and support for, food and nutrition assistance programs the NYS CFP aims to ensure that all New Yorkers have adequate access to nutritious food regardless of income, culture, age, geographic region or other characteristics, thus reducing hunger and preventing diet-related diseases. This key issue area reflects both the need to ensure that all funds obtainable from federal assistance programs, such as food stamps, are accessed by eligible individuals, and the need to support programs with finite budgets and resources that are unable to meet the needs of their target populations. Programs such as Meals on Wheels, the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) and Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Programs (food banks, food pantries, shelters, etc) often fall short of meeting expressed needs from the community.

Recurring recommendations in this area include, but are not limited to:

1. Increase public awareness of, and education about, food and nutrition assistance programs
2. Increase the number of markets/outlets that are capable of receiving public benefits
3. Explore options to ease enrollment in programs, including participant co-enrollment in multiple programs

Progress highlights in this area include, but are not limited to:

- New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) introduced many user-friendly tools to modernize the benefit enrollment process, including the “myBenefits” online prescreening tool. As of July 2010, OTDA was providing benefits to more than 2.86 million New Yorkers; this represents more than \$430 million/month in federal funds entering into the New York State economy. USDA reports that in 2009, New York State food stamp participation rate reached 70 percent of eligible individuals, compared to the national average of 62.9 percent.
- New York State became the first state in the nation to allow the WIC vegetable and fruit checks to be used at farmers’ markets. This creates a win-win situation as it increases access points for benefit recipients to purchase fresh, nutritious foods and directs money back into local agricultural economies.

- New York State is in the second year of an EBT pilot project. EBT terminals have been distributed to non-traditional farm product vendors such as mobile markets, green carts and roadside farm stands.
- Food retail stores are increasingly becoming a public relations hub for healthy, local food and agriculture awareness across income brackets and cultural communities.
- The Governor's Healthy Food/Healthy Community Fund, which is offering \$30 million in grants and loans for the development or refurbishment for food stores in underserved, low or moderate income communities, is now accepting applications. All applicants who receive funding from the state through this Fund need to show the intent to, and subsequently do accept public benefits including SNAP/Food Stamps and WIC. For more information see: www.liifund.org/healthyfood.

Emerging issues in this area include, but are not limited to:

- New York State is proposing to extend the Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) to be available for roadside farm stands. Currently, the program coupons are only acceptable by authorized farmers vending at farmers' markets. This will increase the access points for local, nutritious foods and benefit local economies.
- Food and nutrition programs are under ever-increasing pressure to ensure that all individuals have access to enough, nutritious food. While more than 70 percent of the eligible population is already participating in the Food Stamp program, it is the last 30 percent that are the most difficult to reach. Continued focus on outreach and education is essential.
- Many food and nutrition programs are already operating at maximum capacity, yet because of finite budgets, cannot meet the expressed demand from the community. Emphasis needs to be placed on finding ways to prevent further cuts to existing funding and increase access to new funding.
- The federal Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act (CNR) is proposing to increase funding for school meals, but cut funding for SNAP/Food Stamp benefits. This is inconsistent and unsatisfactory as hunger and food insecurity affect the entire family environment. Priorities proposed by the NYS CFP in June 2009 for the CNR can be found here: http://www.nyscfp.org/docs/NYS_CFP_CNR_priorities_updated_8-25-09.pdf

KEY ISSUE AREA 2: STRENGTHEN THE CONNECTION BETWEEN LOCAL FOOD PRODUCTS AND CONSUMERS

Key issue area 2. Proposals to strengthen the connection between local food products and consumers focus on increasing local food purchasing by institutions, such as state-funded schools, universities and hospitals and supporting new and growing direct marketing outlets, such as farmers' markets and community supported agriculture (CSA). Both measures are important for meeting food security and nutrition needs, sustaining local economies, and preserving farmland. Adapting and/or improving the associated infrastructure and administrative systems are top priorities.

Recurring recommendations in this area include, but are not limited to:

4. Support initiatives in schools that promote healthy, local food choices, improve child nutrition, and increase awareness of local food system dynamics.
5. Continue to develop and pursue local food procurement goals at state agencies, state-owned and supported institutions and facilities, and other state-supported meal programs.
6. Focus on new models of food delivery and community and individual behavior modifications that favor local, nutritious food products, including for food and nutrition and hunger prevention programs.

Progress highlights in this area include, but are not limited to:

- In November 2010, Governor Paterson issued Executive Order No. 39: Establishing State Policies for the Promotion of Sustainable Local Farms and the Protection of Agriculture Lands. See *Appendix e. Executive Order No. 39* or http://www.ny.gov/governor/executive_orders/exeorders/EO39.html for details.
- Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Awareness Programs (HPNAP) require contractors to spend a percentage on their funding on fresh produce and low-fat dairy. Contractors regularly spend at least 23 percent of that funding on locally grown and produced products.

- Senior ‘Meals on Wheels’ programs have increased purchasing from roadside farm stands; and New York State food bank spending is increasingly targeting local, fresh products and creating strong relationships with the agriculture community.
- School meal programs are creating healthier school environments and participating in the USDA “Healthier US Schools Challenge” (HUSSC) that promotes increasing whole grains and vegetables in school meals. In January 2010, five schools in New York State were recognized by HUSSC. Binghamton School District won Gold Medal!
- Collaboration continues on clarification for geographic preference language for procurement of local food products for child nutrition programs with the USDA, Food and Nutrition Service.
- Collaboration continues with the National Farm to School Program and USDA to revise the Department of Defense (DoD) Fresh Program. The DoD Fresh Program provides fresh fruits and vegetables to schools using USDA commodity entitlement dollars. It is proposed that the program focus on purchasing local products.
- Cornell Center for Behavioral Economics in Child Nutrition Programs (BEN) has just received a \$1 million grant from the USDA to research and help disseminate information on how school cafeterias can creatively nudge students to eat healthier.
- NYS Farm to School Program celebrated “Farm to You Fest/New York Harvest for New York Kids Week” in October. More than 70 schools around the state held special events to celebrate local food and agriculture.

Emerging issues in this area include, but are not limited to:

- The federal Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act (CNR) is proposing to increase funding for school meals, but cut funding for SNAP/Food Stamp benefits. This is inconsistent and unsatisfactory as hunger and food insecurity affect the entire family environment. Priorities proposed by the NYS CFP in June 2009 for the CNR can be found here: http://www.nyscfp.org/docs/NYS_CFP_CNR_priorities_updated_8-25-09.pdf.
- National Dietary Guidelines are expected to be released from USDA. These guidelines can influence product development. Schools and institutions with purchasing power can also pressure healthy product development.
- Increased attention to the interrelationship between safe, local food and the health of consumers is evident. Increasing education and training for the New York State farm community to assist in marketing products as local, healthy, and safe will be beneficial. Safe food is defined as unadulterated food as defined in Ag Law Article 17 § 200; and food safety refers to the prevention of illness, disability, and death due to food-borne diseases. Preventive measures are essential. Good Agriculture Practices (GAP) certification of farmers is one way to help strengthen the connection between producers and food retailers. Producer GAP certification or similar food safety documentation can bolster confidence of retail produce purchasers for sale to consumers. However, GAP certification is not always financially feasible for small and medium sized producers.

KEY ISSUE AREA 3: SUPPORT SAFE, EFFICIENT AND PROFITABLE FOOD PRODUCTION AND RETAIL FOOD INFRASTRUCTURE

Key issue area 3. It is essential to support safe, efficient and profitable food production and retail food infrastructure at every level into the future. New and existing agriculture and food retail industries are the pathway to good job creation leading to healthy communities and healthy economies.

Recurring recommendations in this area include, but are not limited to:

6. Infrastructure issues, such as transportation/delivery and market place development/revitalization, need to be addressed for both urban and rural landscapes, including wholesale distribution centers.
7. Assist with small scale business development, such as processors and community kitchens. Provide technical assistance, business planning advice and incentives; including for new farmer development.
8. Keep a positive business climate in New York State for agriculture and food retail development by addressing challenges such as: tax and regulatory issues, licensing fees, land and energy input costs, and labor needs.

Progress highlights in this area include, but are not limited to:

- New York State has an increasing number of new farmers and non-traditional niche farmers interested in growing specialty crops. In September, \$1.1 million in Specialty Crop Block Grants (USDA) were awarded for 17 projects that will enhance the competitiveness and ensure long-term viability of specialty crops grown in New York State, which include fruits, vegetables, maple, honey and horticultural products.

- The Governor’s Healthy Food/Healthy Community Fund, which is offering \$30 million in grants and loans for the development or refurbishment for food stores in underserved, low or moderate income communities, is now accepting applications. Program criteria includes devoted shelf space for fresh food and increased consideration is given to applicants that commit to paying comparable industry wages and participate in targeted hiring programs. See www.liifund.org/healthyfood for more information.

Emerging issues in this area include, but are not limited to:

- Federal Farm Bill 2012 needs to proportionately emphasize the farm industry and farmers with nutritional programming. Specifically, New York State has a unique agricultural industry that historically has not benefited proportionately from Farm Bill allocations.
- Federal Dairy policy needs to be modified in the upcoming Farm Bill or sooner to avoid the disastrous price swings of recent years. Both farmers and consumers are not served well with the current policy and a modified risk management program is urgently needed.
- Food safety should be a non-negotiable issue for New York State. Appropriate levels of staff and programming for food safety and inspection services need to be maintained at the responsible state agencies.
- Agriculture and the food industry need continued technical and financial support to pro-actively address sustainability issues and climate change.
- Food is not recession proof. There is a downward price pressure on food. New York State farmers are currently very concerned with the cost of doing business verses the returns.

KEY ISSUE AREA 4: FOSTER A CULTURE OF HEALTHY AND LOCAL EATING FOR ALL NEW YORK STATE RESIDENTS

Key issue area 4. Fostering a culture of healthy and local eating for all New York State residents incorporates numerous factors such as increased consumer awareness of, education about, and access to nutritious foods. Reducing obesity and diet-related diseases is the foremost concern addressed.

Recurring recommendations in this area include, but are not limited to:

9. Proactively address the issue of obesity and diet-related diseases by using professionally recommended, evidence-based prevention initiatives and education that focus on cultural and environmental changes.
10. Increase consumer knowledge of the nutritional value of food through outreach and promotion of nutritious products through consistent, positive messages.

Progress highlights in this area include, but are not limited to:

- Grants and student interns have been a successful part of spreading food system awareness.
- Retail food stores are increasingly engaged in promoting healthy, local foods and actively seeking both fresh products and educational resources for their customers.
- The launching of the “Food and Nutrition Connection Center,” an online inventory of food and nutrition programs (under development) will be a valuable tool for individuals seeking assistance, as well as for program administrators seeking collaboration opportunities.

Emerging issues in this area include, but are not limited to:

- National Dietary Guidelines are expected to be released from USDA; policy and system changes will need to take place for effective implementation.
- The federal Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act (CNR) establishes funding for programs that foster a culture of healthy eating and lifestyle. NYS CFP Priorities for the CNR can be found here: http://www.nyscfp.org/docs/NYS_CFP_CNR_priorities_updated_8-25-09.pdf.
- Many local governments are struggling to continue fully funding their Cornell Cooperative Extension County Association Offices (CCE). CCE serves urban, suburban, town and rural areas by offering programs in five broad areas: Agriculture and Food Systems; Children, Youth, and Families; Community and Economic Vitality; Environment and Natural Resources; and Nutrition and Health. These services enable people to improve their lives and communities and are invaluable resources for New York State.



IV. Recommended Changes

In order to increase efficiencies and remain fresh the NYS CFP recommends structural changes to the organization that include appointing new members and implementing term limits. Prompting broader support and cooperation from other state agencies and political offices, as related to food policy issues, is recommended. Formally engaging the USDA State Offices, where relevant federal funding and program opportunities intersect state food policy, is strongly encouraged.

STRUCTURAL CHANGES

To achieve superior inter-agency, public and private collaboration into the future, the NYS CFP recommends appointing three new members to the NYS CFP, and implementing term limits. Additional members include: the Commissioner of New York State Office of General Services; a full-time farmer; and an environmental justice advocate. The additional members will contribute to comprehensive food policy development and successful implementation.

- The New York State Office of General Services is a pivotal state agency connected to both the administration and the execution of multiple facets of institutional purchasing including: contracting, warehousing, purchasing and delivering of food products to state agencies and state-supported entities.
- An active member of the New York State farm community on the NYS CFP will provide a pragmatic view of the day to day challenges that the farm community faces.
- An environmental justice advocate will provide a broad view of how some communities and individuals may be disproportionately affected by food policy recommendations.

Appointee term limits are recommended as a way to garner further stakeholder involvement and bring diverse expertise to the NYS CFP. This action will help the NYS CFP adapt to changes in the political, social and economic climate on a predetermined basis. Recommended appointee terms are as follows: appointed members shall be appointed for a term of three years and may serve until their successors are chosen, provided, however, that of the members first appointed, not more than six shall be appointed for a term of one year, not more than five shall be appointed for a term of two years, and not more than five shall be appointed for a term of three years.

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

State agencies, not already associated with the NYS CFP, such as the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, are responsible for a multitude of programs and regulations that may influence the effectiveness of the recommendations and action items going forth. Providing gubernatorial direction, indicating the expectation of a fully coordinated inter-agency effort will provide the additional support needed to the stated mission of the NYS CFP.

Formally engaging the USDA State Office of Rural Development is also recommended. As New York State is facing economic hardships unparalleled in recent history, it is imperative that we seek to maximize federal funding for food system and development initiatives that support agricultural production and community sustainability.

