

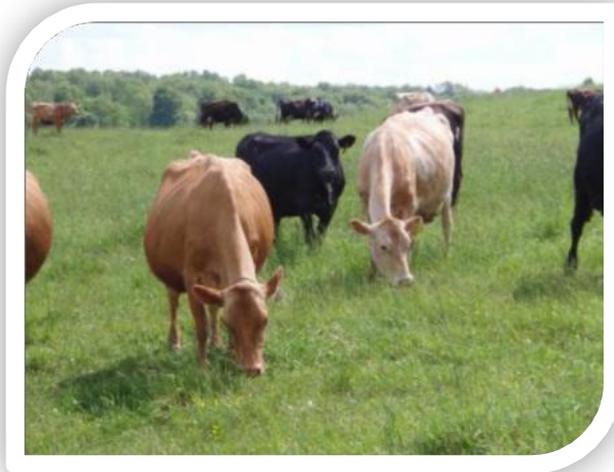


New York State Council on Food Policy

Report to Governor Andrew M. Cuomo

CULTIVATING A HEALTHY FOOD ENVIRONMENT:

The New York State Council on Food Policy 2011 Annual Report



o o o o o o o o o connecting the dots o o o o o o o o o o

<http://www.nyscfp.org>

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2011 Annual Report

New York State is 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.

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 a strong community of advocates and agencies willing to take action together.

The New York State Council on Food Policy (NYS CFP) was created by 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.

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 and the federal government is actively encouraging state and local food policy council formation. The NYS CFP has been instrumental in coordinating actions with vision through exceptional cooperative efforts and vigorous networking.

Each year, the NYS CFP delivers a written report to the Governor. This 2011 Annual report includes an account of NYS CFP activities for the year. All NYS CFP reports are available on the website: www.nyscfp.org or by contacting 518.485.7728.



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I. ANNUAL MEETINGS

Throughout the year, the majority of the NYS CFP activities are coordinated through Commissioner Aubertine's office at the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets. The Commissioner of the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets serves as chair to the Council. In addition, the Department supports the NYS CFP website and a considerable communications network has been established.

The NYS CFP meets at least 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 dynamic systems matters such as food access, production, procurement and delivery. Meetings in 2011 included:

- **Summer Meeting:** June 29th at the State Capitol Building, Albany
- **Fall Meeting:** November 9th at the Oneida County Offices of the Cornell Cooperative Extension, Oriskany

At the meetings, Council members provide updates, discuss emerging issues and pursue collaboration opportunities related to the NYS CFP mission and key issue areas. Detailed summaries of the 2011 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.

At the summer meeting in Albany, Ray Salaberrios, Senior Director of Economic Revitalization at Empire State Development, provided a presentation on the NYS Healthy Food & Healthy Community Fund (HF/HC) (*Appendix b. Annual Meetings.*). The mission of the HF/HC is to address food deserts around the state by providing grants and loans for food store development or renovations in lower-income, underserved and/or distressed areas. Mr. Salaberrios discussed that the businesses receiving HF/HC loans and grants must accept SNAP benefits and WIC (in most cases) and that "convenience stores need not apply." Eligible stores must have at least 66 percent of the shelf space devoted to retail food sales.

Public input is essential and has been influential in food policy development and Council actions. The Council held a statewide listening tour in 2008, and a public comment period is always included in the meetings. This opportunity has been well exercised by advocates, scholars, practitioners and community members alike. NYS CFP keeps a record of all public comments.

Site visits of significant venues relating to our food system are arranged when feasible. At this year's fall meeting, the NYS CFP toured the Oneida Correctional Cook-Chill facility. 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.

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.



II. THE FOOD PROCUREMENT GUIDELINES WORKGROUP

Council members' interests and expertise have led to a natural distribution into work groups based on the four key issue areas. The work groups also incorporate stakeholders and experts from outside the Council, when feasible.

In 2011, the NYS CFP developed the **Food Procurement Guidelines Workgroup**. The aim of developing food procurement standards is to improve the nutritional quality and balance of foods offered (e.g., increase consumption of fruits and vegetables, whole grains and low-fat dairy and reduce consumption of low-nutrition, high caloric foods) as well affect nutrients (reduce sodium, saturated fat and trans fats) to reduce the risk for chronic diseases, such as cardiovascular disease, cancer, obesity and diabetes. The Food Procurement Standards Workgroup will provide an avenue for the establishment of voluntary guidelines that state agencies can adopt to assure that foods provided or purchased (directly or through contracts) with government funds promote good health.

The Food Procurement Guidelines workgroup has agreed on the following statements of policy priority:

- State Agencies that procure, provide, and/or contract for foods and beverages have an obligation to provide food that is safe and nutritious.
- The most recent version of the Dietary Guidelines for America (2010), which are based on the most current evidence-based consensus of the scientific community, provide guidance for optimal nutrition for New Yorkers.
- The usual American diet is not consistent with the Dietary Guidelines for America (2010). Currently Americans consume less than recommended intakes for whole grains, vegetables, fruits, and milk/milk products, and excessive amounts of solid fats, saturated fats, added sugars, refined grains and sodium.
- State Agencies may benefit from guidelines for meals, snacks, and specific foods, in order to improve the nutrition of the foods procured, served or contracted and to improve the nutrition and health of New Yorkers.
- Guidelines should aim to improve nutritional quality and balance (increase consumption of fruits and vegetables, whole grains and low-fat dairy) and micronutrients (reduce sodium, fat) to reduce risk for chronic diseases, such as cardiovascular disease, cancer, obesity and diabetes.
- This is an opportunity to work on and understand food procurement policies and, if a food procurement guideline is adopted across agencies, there may be an opportunity to consolidate and improve costs.

More information on workgroup activity and membership is available in Appendix c. Workgroups.



III. COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON NUTRITION STANDARDS

The New York State Council on Food Policy submitted comments and recommendations regarding the FNS, USDA proposed rule to revise the meal patterns and nutrition requirements for the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the School Breakfast Program (SBP) listed in the Federal Register.

Example comments and recommendations from this submission include:

Comment 1: Measurement of fruit component in both SBP and NSLP is insufficient [Table, Page 2499 and Page 2500]. The proposed rules require 1 cup of fruit to be served. This measurement does not take into consideration the variation of size and difficulty of measuring fresh, whole pieces of fruit such as an apple or an orange. To most efficiently reach the required measurement, food service personnel may be more inclined to serve canned or frozen fruit and dissuaded from serving fresh fruit.

Recommendation 1: Amend the language to read as such: 1 cup of fresh, frozen or canned fruit OR any combination of products equaling 1 cup serving.

Comment 2: We agree that limiting starchy vegetable options at meals will expose children to more varieties of vegetables [Page 2500]. Concern exists around the supposition that schools are serving a preponderance of the starchy vegetables in the form of fried or par-fried potatoes that may be the impetus for this rule. On average, schools are offering fried or par-fried potatoes not more than once a week. Fresh, unprocessed baked or boiled potatoes provide valuable nutrients for children and do not exceed the Institute of Medicine's nutrition recommendations. Limiting fried and par-fried potatoes on school menus is supported.

Recommendation 2: School food service personnel need flexibility to serve a variety of nutritious vegetable options especially those that are available locally, are cost effective, and that children will eat - thus limiting expenses and plate waste while supporting local agricultural economies.

Complete illustration of comments and recommendations found in Appendix d. Nutrition Standards Comments and Recommendations.



IV. FARM TO SCHOOL IN NEW YORK STATE

Select members of NYS CFP are involved in both the National Farm to School Network and NYS Farm to School Coordinating Committee. These members participate in a multitude of Farm to School Regional Steering Committees in both New York and the New England states. Further, these members participate in and help organize New York's *Farm to You Fest! A Celebration of Local Agriculture* the first week in every October.

Farm to You Fest! 2011 successfully impacted more than 60,000 children and families from 40 counties and more than 30 school districts across New York State. Since 2009, that is more than 10 additional NYS counties now celebrating Farm to You Fest! In addition, participation levels have been expanded by including a multitude of programs and partners, such as Senior Centers, WIC, Child Day Care Programs, Cornell Cooperative Extension and Youth Gardening Programs.

For several years, *Farm to You Fest!* has had an overwhelming impact on NYS residents through school programs and community events. The Block Institute in Brooklyn has been a participant for over three years, consistently offering events such as petting zoos; apple themed activities; farmers' market showcases; harvest from school garden development and nutritional lessons. Similarly, Farm to You Fest! 2011 events also included many diverse and comprehensive methods of promoting local agriculture and healthy eating. Many schools showcased farmers' market produce stands in the cafeteria; some established school gardens; while others went on field trips to local farms for children to pick produce and then prepare lunch with the school chefs. NYS WIC programs provided parents and caregivers with instructions on how to prepare fresh apple sauce from local apples; and the NY Fresh Connect Ag POD (Agriculture Promotion, Outreach and Demonstration mobile kitchen) celebrated Farm to You Fest! in Endicott where students and community members were encouraged to "build their own tacos" using fresh, local ingredients.



2011 Farm to School Activities from ABCD at Geneva!



V. FARM BILL LISTENING SESSIONS

The Commissioner hosted a number of discussions with stakeholders to help identify and prioritize New York's areas of concern and interest with the upcoming 2012 Farm Bill. The completed sessions have proven to be productive starting points for future discussions regarding the Farm Bill. The information gathered at them will be compiled into a working document that the Commissioner will use to communicate New York's positions on federal agriculture policy.

NYS CFP members are active participants in these sessions, with the most pertinent being the **Nutrition Title Hearing**, which occurred on May 27th, 2011.

An excerpt of initial findings from stakeholders (not endorsed policies) include:

- Continue and adequately fund Food Stamp outreach and education
- Retain entitlement structure and funding levels for SNAP; Oppose block grants
 - Retain funding levels for The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) in all categories;
 - Allow unexpended TEFAP fund rollover into next fiscal year
- Relax rules relating to audience sizes in nutrition education programs
- Raise ceiling (cap) on household budget expenditure for housing in calculating eligibility
- Increase nutritional value of benefits for recipients, perhaps by setting nutritional standards for eligible foods
- Provide incentives such as tax credits for gleaning foods not suitable for retail sale for use in food banks and nutrition supplement programs
- Increase Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program from \$20m to \$40m
- Increase participation of benefit recipients in Community Supported Agriculture
- Research and invest in Food Hubs
- Reinstate Mickey Leland Memorial Hunger Relief Act
- Reduce or eliminate subsidies for unhealthy foods, such as high-fructose corn syrup
- Invest in Farmers' Market Promotion Program and Community Food Projects:
 - Increase FMPP from \$33m over the life of the farm bill to \$100m;
 - Create set-aside of 10% for construction of Farmers Market capacity building

For complete illustration of Proposed Nutrition Title Priorities, see Appendix e.