

New York State Council on Food Policy

2013 ANNUAL REPORT

Current Initiatives, Accomplishments and Collaborative Efforts



THE NEW YORK STATE COUNCIL ON FOOD POLICY

2013 Membership

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Commissioner of the New York State Department of Agriculture & Markets

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New York State Council on Food Policy

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2013, Council members carried out the mission and addressed the key issue areas of the New York State Council on Food Policy (NYS CFP) in many ways. Comments on legislation and budgets, programmatic changes at state agencies, metrics, etc, illustrate the Council's action in 1) Maximizing participation in food and nutrition assistance programs; 2) Strengthening the connection between local food and consumers; 3) Supporting efficient and profitable agricultural food production and food retail infrastructure and; 4) Increasing consumer awareness and knowledge about healthy eating while improving consumer access to safe and nutritious food.

Connecting with Local NYS Food Policy Councils & Organizations. In 2013, the Council developed the survey, *"Identifying Food Policy Councils in NYS to Expand the Dialogue between Government and Local Initiatives"*. The survey was administered to statewide food policy advocates and stakeholders as an avenue to connect with local NYS initiatives. This information will help guide the Council in the development of recommendations, as well as collaborative efforts with statewide and local initiatives.

Statewide Food Procurement Activities Influenced by the NYSCFP Guidelines. Procurement guidelines use the purchasing power of government to impact food availability, affect the overall demand for more healthful products, drive the reformulation of foods, and model healthier food environments. Developed by a workgroup within the NYS CFP, these guidelines are currently being implemented in Broome County, NY, while other organizations are mailing in letters of support to the NYS CFP chairman. Many organizations and initiatives have been influenced by NYSCFP guidelines and its workgroups members.

Update on the Farm to School Grant Inter-agency Pilot to Support Agriculture and Healthy School Food. The NYS CFP has received funding for the first ever USDA Farm to School Federal Grant and the 2-year pilot is implemented in the Southern Tier of New York, targeting the Binghamton City School District. The grant is using Broome-Tioga school district's food service program ("Rock on Cafe") which manages 13 districts and works with an additional 2 districts. The pilot is currently coordinating Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and Safe Handling Practices (SHP) workshops for produce growers and food service staff. Further, Farm-to-You Fest! celebrations have been coordinated through the grant, as well as area producer informational sessions.

Farm to School. The 2012 Farm to School Survey was the last survey conducted before the USDA National Farm to School Census, gauging barriers, opportunities and interests before this endeavor was nationally taken on. NYS survey highlights include the above in addition to purchasing behaviors by schools, farm to school activities, menu development, and more. A pilot project is also in place and significant progress is made using local food in schools.

Development of the NYS FMNP Universal Application. As an avenue to minimize barriers to participation, NYS CFP members NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets and NYS Department of Health took the lead and collaborated to create a streamlined application process for farmers interested in participating in the Farmers' Market Nutrition (FMNP) Program and WIC Vegetables and Fruits (WIC-VF) check program.

Meetings. The Council holds two meetings per year at different locations around New York State in order to identify food systems initiatives, policies and current collaborative efforts. In 2013, the Council met at Cornell University in Ithaca and Hunter College in New York City.

COUNCIL ACTIVITIES OF 2013

Programmatic Updates; Metrics; Initiatives; Recommendations on Legislation; & More

To achieve mutual goals, the NYSCFP facilitates efforts by Council member organizations via constant communication on current initiatives, participation in working meetings, workgroups, and annual meetings. These efforts provide for inter-agency collaboration and direction for initiatives that take place within individual member organizations, including programmatic changes, recommendations on budget and legislation all leading to a manifestation of the NYSCFP mission. Council members work and communicate with one another to deliver the charge of the NYSCFP in both their individual agencies and as a collective endeavor.

Key Issue Area: *Strengthening the connection between local food and consumers*

NYS Farmers' Market Wireless EBT Program- Continued Operation and Growth

The NYS Farmers' Market Wireless EBT Program is a means to allow farmers to accept food stamp benefits at farmers' markets using a wireless terminal and wooden tokens as EBT scrip. Market managers, or representatives of the market, establish a USDA FNS (Food and Nutrition Service) account and then act as the agent for all participating farmers and vendors within the market. A SNAP recipient stops at the manager's booth, swipes their benefits card and receives the wooden tokens to use as payment with farmers and vendors for any food stamp eligible product. Farmers and vendors, in turn, accept the tokens, as cash, and later redeem them with the market manager. It is a simple process and one that creates a secondary economy within the market, as well as a special touch that adds to the festive atmosphere of the market. The program, a joint venture of the Farmers Market Federation of NY, the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets, and the NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, was started in 2001 as a response to the conversion of food stamps to an electronic delivery system.

The NYS Farmers Market Wireless EBT program offers numerous benefits to farmers, consumers and farmers markets. The program:

- Creates equal access to fresh, healthy local foods to all members of a market's community;
- Makes it financially feasible for farmers markets to operate in low income neighborhoods;
- Brings a new customer base to farmers, increasing their revenues;
- Adds social and economic diversity to the market, helping to build "community"; and
- Creates opportunities for markets to partner with community organizations and local agencies.



The program operates on a central terminal system that provides one terminal per farmers market and uses tokens for EBT scrip. The program could be excessively expensive for a market to operate without assistance. The NYS Farmers Market Wireless EBT Program provides the assistance necessary to encourage even the

most financially challenged market to participate. The program outfits participants with a wireless terminal capable of accepting EBT benefits, as well as debit and credit at the participant's discretion and expense. In addition, the program participant receives an initial allotment of \$1, market specific and serialized wooden tokens. This provides the basics for operating an EBT program in the market.

In addition to the equipment, the participants are also provided a media kit to help them with promotions and outreach to the food stamp consumer. The media kit includes posters, print ads, consumer brochures, and guidelines for effective outreach efforts. Signage is also provided to help consumers to find the terminal where they can exchange food stamp benefits for EBT tokens and the market tables allowing food stamp consumers to easily recognize which farmers and vendors will accept EBT tokens.

In 2012 – 2013, Food Stamp Usage and Program Participation Grew at Farmers' Markets

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Farmers Markets	86	135	202	247	292
Mobile Markets	3	3	8	8	9
Farmers	28	26	24	21	18
Farm Stands			10	14	10
CSAs					10
NYC Green Carts			17	33	53
Total FS Sales	\$278,689	\$883,686	\$1,597,021	\$2,560,148	\$2,643,130

The 2012 season saw additional growth in farmer market program participation. 45 new farmers markets were established and the program expanded into CSA programs. The CSA programs understood and accepted that SNAP payments would be made as the consumer picked up food, rather than following the traditional CSA model of payment up front for a full season of food.

Growth also was seen with the amount of SNAP benefits used at farmers markets. For example, in 2011, only 2 program participants exceeded \$75,000 in SNAP benefits used. In 2012, 4 farmers markets, 1 mobile market and 2 NYC Green Carts exceeded \$75,000.

Markets Exceeding \$75,000 in SNAP usage in 2012

	2011	2012	% Increase
Club Commercial Mobile	\$73,563	\$82,783	12%
CNY Regional Market	\$69,317	\$110,631	59%
Greenmarket	\$498,943	\$831,000	66%
Harvest Home	\$74,351	\$95,724	28%
Rochester Public Market	\$354,601	\$481,824	35%

Another sign of growth is the expansion of the NYC Green Cart program. Originally this was a pilot added to the NYS Farmers Market Wireless EBT Program. The goal was to have Green Carts throughout underserved areas of New York City. These carts would sell fresh fruits and vegetables, with SNAP as a benefit to both the consumer and the cart operator. By 2011, 33 NYC Green Carts were participating in the program.

Key Issue Area: Maximizing participation in food and nutrition assistance programs

SNAP Awareness Campaign was Implemented and Approximately 500,000 Individuals Received Nutrition Education.

As a member of the NYS CFP, the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) worked to address food insecurity and to assist low-income New Yorkers to put healthy food on the table. Working with community outreach partners and the members of the Food Policy Council has been a critical factor in OTDA's success. In 2011, OTDA expanded SNAP outreach partnership across New York State to increase its effectiveness at educating low-income households about the availability of SNAP and the easy and confidential ways that low-income New Yorkers can apply for them. OTDA worked creatively with community partners to improve the reach to underserved populations such as seniors and minority communities.

In 2012-2013, a SNAP Awareness campaign was implemented to support the Governor's efforts to reduce hunger in New York by:

- Increasing SNAP participation of the underserved making sure those who are eligible, especially older adults and children in need receive assistance;
- Bringing the message of healthy eating and nutritional assistance directly to low-income communities across the state;
- Promoting the use of myBenefits.ny.gov, New York's online SNAP applications and screening tool, as an easier way to apply for SNAP and a number of economic supports;
- Collaborating with the Business (Food Industry Alliance and Member Retailers) and Community Partners (Cornell Cooperative Extensions and Hunger Solutions NY) on innovative outreach activities that included in-store outreach and nutrition education demonstrations; and
- Developing radio and public service announcements targeting underserved families, individuals, and older adults, encouraging them to check their eligibility and apply for nutrition assistance.

To improve the likelihood that SNAP participants and eligibles will make healthy food choices within a limited budget and choose physically active lifestyles consistent with the current USDA Dietary Guidelines for Americans, OTDA works with a network of statewide community based organizations to deliver the Eat Smart New York program to SNAP eligibles in low-income communities. This program offers free, high-quality nutrition education at accessible community locations throughout the state, including schools, low-income day care centers, YMCAs, libraries, community based health centers, job training sites, low-income supported housing, senior centers, emergency feeding sites, grocery stores and farmers' markets.

This year, approximately 500,000 adults and youth received Eat Smart New York nutrition education.

During 2012-2013, in partnership with this network of community based organizations, OTDA also began to develop and implement public health policy approaches in an effort to address food insecurity and access to healthy food, improve nutrition and physical activity behaviors, and reduce obesity among SNAP eligible populations across the state. These efforts included expanding incentives for health bucks at farmers markets, working to establish community gardens, facilitating the establishment of farmers' markets at day care centers, and implementing evidence based social marketing campaigns focused on healthy beverage consumption.



Key Issue Area: Supporting efficient and profitable agricultural food production and food retail infrastructure

Council member collaboration with the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets, Empire State Development and the Regional Economic Development Councils supported the development of new NYS food hubs to aggregate local food for markets.

In 2012-13 Governor Andrew M. Cuomo announced that \$3.6 million in state funding awarded through the Consolidated Funding Application (CFA) process for the creation of food distribution hubs across the state. Four new facilities were funded in Central New York, the Finger Lakes, Hudson Valley, and the North Country, in addition to an earlier food hub project on Long Island, creating more than 150 jobs in these regions and increasing access to healthy, local products for New York consumers.

Finger Lakes Food Hub

The Finger Lakes Food Hub will be a 25,200 square foot facility in the Village of Groton. By contracting with multiple small and mid-sized farmers, the Finger Lakes Food Hub will source a wide variety of local field grown food products including root crops, herbs, and other fresh produce. The business will add value to these local products through packaging, branding, and processing such as quick-freezing before selling through established sales channels. It will collaborate with local farmers and producers to provide services and expanded markets for their products. This expansion will enhance distribution to markets such as Wegmans, Tops, Price Chopper, SYSCO, Regional Access, and Cortland Produce. The project anticipates 15 new jobs in the packing center and 65 seasonal jobs on local farms. It will put over 300 additional acres of farmland into agricultural production and generate over \$2.3 million in annual sales by year three.

Hudson Valley Food Hub

The Hudson Valley Food Hub, located in Kingston, will expand the infrastructure of two successful food processing and distribution firms that serve New York State farms: Farm to Table Co-Packers and Hudson Valley Harvest. With additional processing equipment, cold/freezer storage, trucks and distribution depots, these two businesses will have expanded capacity to meet the growing demand for local food from customers in New York City and throughout the Northeast. This project will result in 15 new jobs, as well as 12 construction jobs in Kingston and six jobs located outside of Kingston. The Hudson Valley Food Hub works with over 60 NYS Farms from 19 counties, farming over 7,500 acres. Products coming through the food hub include vegetables, berries, fruits, beef, pork, chicken, lamb, goat, honey, maple syrup, grains, beans, cider and eggs.



North Country Food Hub

CFA funding went toward the North Country Food Hub, United Helpers Management Company to establish a regional food hub and network in Canton.

Agriculture Enterprise Park Capital, Long Island

The Agriculture Enterprise Park Capital operates a processing plant in Riverhead, Suffolk County. The new facility is a public/private arrangement with multiple partners who received a \$500,000 grant from the Long Island Regional Economic Development Council in 2012. The building has been purchased and is in the process of an extensive renovation. The infrastructure is being put in place to begin processing crops and

allow farmers to reach markets outside of Suffolk County with the distribution of a wide range of Long Island products.

Growing Upstate Food Hub, Central New York

Comprised of six farmer owned agribusinesses, the facility is a centrally-located on space with Thruway access located in Canastota, Madison County. It facilitates the aggregation, storage, and distribution of value-added agricultural products. In total, including both existing farms and projected additional farms, about 196 Central New York farms provides farm products to be processed at the hub. Products include hops, broccoli, beef, milk, pork and beans.

The FreshConnect Program: Innovative Projects that Connect Underserved Communities with New York Farm Products

Almost 1.5 million New Yorkers live in areas with limited supermarket access. Expanding access to fresh food in underserved communities has been shown to both improve nutrition and lower costs related to obesity and diet-related disease, while also fostering community and economic development. Governor Cuomo launched the Fresh Connect program in 2011 to create new farmers' markets and support existing markets that provided fresh produce to high-need areas.

In 2011, the program provided viable market locations for over 100 farmers, helped create local jobs for youth in urban areas, and helped increase the sale of locally grown food. In 2012, an expanded FreshConnect program awarded grants through a competitive process to support work at over 50 project sites to better connect New Yorkers with local farm products.

In 2012, with advice of the NYS CFP, the FreshConnect Program was used to support not only farmers' markets, but other creative solutions to improve access to fresh, locally produced food by low-income or underserved communities. As a result, an expanded FreshConnect program awarded grants through a competitive process that supported work at over 50 project sites to better connect New Yorkers with local farm products.

In 2013, FreshConnect included innovative projects, including:

- New initiatives at traditional farmers' markets;

FreshConnect Farmers' Market Grant Program: Supported multiple grant projects to improve access of underserved communities to New York farm products at farmers' markets. Under this component, new and existing farmers' markets, municipalities and not-for-profits could apply for up to \$10,000.

- Youth markets; and

FreshConnect Youth Market Program: Funding supported multiple youth-staffed market programs, one of the most effective models for reaching nutritionally underserved neighborhoods. Youth markets also help train youth to operate all aspects of a farmers' market in the neighborhood using food purchased from local farmers. Youth will be active participants in all aspects of planning and running the market.

- Delivery of farm products to low-income housing facilities.

FreshConnect Food Box Program: This program supported 2 pilot projects to enable underserved, low-income communities to purchase fresh, locally-sourced fruits and vegetables in pre-packed boxes. Food Box customers had the flexibility to pay for their boxes weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly depending on the pick-up



schedule of each project. Food Box customers could use Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits to pay for their boxes.

FreshConnect Checks: FreshConnect Checks provide \$2 rebate checks for every \$5 in SNAP benefits spent at participating markets. In addition to SNAP, FreshConnect-funded projects are encouraged to accept other nutrition incentives, such as Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Fruit & Vegetable Checks, Farmers' Market Nutrition Program checks, and Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition checks, to ensure that all citizens have access to fresh fruits and vegetables, regardless of income.

2011- 2013	
# of Total Checks	52,800
# Total Sites	140
# Farmers Impacted	389

Microgrants for Capital Improvement Projects: Microgrants of up to \$2,500 each were made available for capital improvement projects at farmers' markets that improve access to farm products by underserved communities.

Key Issue Area: *Increasing consumer awareness and knowledge about healthy eating; and improving consumer access to safe and nutritious food.*

Collaborative efforts by the NYS CFP with the NYS Department of Health have yielded a number of activities, partnerships and ongoing initiatives at the state, community, early childhood and school levels.

STATE LEVEL

Designing a Strong and Healthy New York (DASH-NY) – This statewide coalition with partners from transportation, agriculture, economic development, planning, education, academia, and health care develops policy, systems and strategies to reduce the burden of obesity and chronic disease in disparate communities. The program, through a contract with Karp Resources, provided technical assistance to five DOH chronic disease prevention contractors to work with food systems to increase availability of healthful foods. DASH-NY produces a quarterly newsletter and has a website to notify stakeholders about training opportunities, conducts policy assessments on obesity prevention topics and provides obesity prevention work in multiple sectors.

COMMUNITY SECTOR

Creating Healthy Places to Live, Work and Play (CHPLWP) – This comprehensive initiative prevents obesity and type 2 diabetes by implementing sustainable policy, systems and environmental changes in 22 NYS communities. From October 1, 2011 to March 31, 2013, 22 contractors implemented 161 sub-strategies to establish or expand environmental and system changes that increase the availability of places to be physically active with a maximum potential reach of 750,000 residents. 474 sub-strategies were implemented to establish or expand environmental and systems changes that will increase access to healthy foods, with a maximum potential reach of 336,251 residents. During the same period, in addition to funding provided by DOH, seven CHPLWP contractors, along with local partners secured funds for 19 projects with a total value of \$111,255 in-kind contributions and \$1,093,735 in grants.

Healthy Eating and Active Living by Design (HEALD) – Twelve HEALD contractors implemented changes in schools and communities to reduce risks for heart disease and obesity by increasing access to healthful foods and opportunities for physical activity. HEALD reached approximately 187 sites with a potential reach of 380,000 individuals. To improve access to healthy foods, 22 community gardens are being started/expanded; 31 restaurants are offering smaller portion sizes; 11 new grocery stores are being established in high need areas; and 9 convenience stores are offering low-fat milk and more low-calorie beverages. Data from the community gardens show that participating gardeners increased their fruit and vegetable intake by one cup per day on average, and increased their physical activity by almost 30 minutes per week.

Community Transformation Grant – Small Communities – This two-year project (9/30/12 – 9/29/14), funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), is to prevent and reduce obesity, encourage physical-activity and healthy eating, and reduce exposure to tobacco in eight small high need communities in Broome, Cattaraugus and Chautauqua counties.

- *In Broome County*, the Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) adopted a healthy beverage policy intended for all vending machines, programs, and meetings held by CCE. The policy states that 70% of all beverages offered must be free of added sugar.
- *In Cattaraugus County*, the Gowanda Central School District has terminated its contract with Coca-Cola and the district's food service director is taking over all of the vending machines.
- *In Chautauqua County*, a campaign aimed at educating teens and adults about the damaging health effects of consuming unhealthy beverages has started to run on cable television and local radio stations. The Jamestown City School District passed a policy that prohibits tobacco use at off-campus school-sponsored events.

The general public and CTG partner organizations and agencies are exposed to messages about active living, healthy eating and tobacco-free living via newspaper articles, newsletters, social media sites, websites, and presentations to decision makers. Examples include:

Just Say Yes to Fruits and Vegetables Project (JSY) – This program is designed to prevent obesity and reduce long-term chronic disease risks by promoting increased fruit and vegetable consumption. Using nutrition education workshops and food demonstrations, JSY helps to ensure low-income families in New York eat nutritious foods, make the most of their food budgets and prepare foods safely. Workshops provide practical nutrition information using USDA approved lesson plans, recipes and cooking demonstrations focusing on fruits and vegetables and low-fat ingredients. Last year, JSY provided 28,549 SNAP-Ed participants nutrition education activities in two settings:

- Just Say Yes to Fruits and Vegetables in Food Banks, is a collaboration between the Department and NYS Regional Food Banks. A network of nutritionists delivers comprehensive nutrition education statewide through emergency food programs in eight NYS Food Bank Regions.

- The Stellar Farmers' Market Program (SFM), a Department and the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene collaboration, provides free Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed) nutrition workshops and cooking demonstrations at 19 farmers' markets located in NYC's lowest-income neighborhoods. This intervention provides a \$2 Health Bucks coupon redeemable for fresh fruits and vegetables at the farmers' market. Stellar Farmers' Markets distributed 15,321 "Health Bucks" during the growing season. Through collaboration with Foodlink, Inc., New York City's SFM project is being replicated in an urban farmers' market with high SNAP-EBT usage in Rochester, NY.

Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) – The WIC Program, funded by USDA, provides supplemental food, participant-centered nutrition education and counseling, breastfeeding support, and linkages with health and social services for eligible low-income women and children to improve pregnancy outcomes, promote optimal growth and development for infants and children, and influence lifetime nutrition and health behaviors.

- *Implementation of New WIC Food Package* - Data collected before and after the 2009 implementation of a new WIC food package, which provides foods such as fruits and vegetables, whole grain cereals and breads, and low-fat dairy foods was evaluated. Comparing WIC data from July-December 2008 and July-December 2011, increases were observed in many healthy behaviors, including: breastfeeding initiation; delaying introduction of solid foods to infants; daily fruit, vegetable and whole grain consumption; and switching from whole milk to low or non-fat milk. Between 2008 and 2011, the proportion of 1-year-old children with >95th percentile weight-for-recumbent length decreased from 15.1 to 14.2% and the proportion of children 2-4 years with body mass index (BMI) > 95th percentile (obese) decreased from 14.6 to 14.2%.
- *WIC Healthy Lifestyles Initiative* - WIC local agencies assess, develop, implement and evaluate strategies to encourage more than 500,000 participants and their families to adopt a healthier lifestyle through physical activity and improved nutrition, including breastfeeding.

Reduce Sugary Drink Consumption: A Multi-component Approach – The New York State Association of County Health Officials (NYSACHO) received Communities Putting Prevention to Work (CPPW) funds to pilot test intervention strategies to reduce sugary drink consumption in seven counties (Clinton, Orange, Rockland, Schuyler, Steuben, Wayne and Yates) to develop a consumer Web site about reducing sugary drinks. Using state funds, nine Healthy Eating and Active Living by Design (HEALD) contractors increased awareness about the health consequences of sugary drinks and helped community-based organizations and worksites establish policies to reduce sugary drink consumption. The CPPW projects worked in 56 municipal buildings and 18 worksites, reaching at least 10,000 people. The reach exceeds 70,000 people when seasonal venues, such as community sports complexes, are added. The HEALD contractors established over 100 policies or practices to limit sugary drink availability and reached over 10,600 people with presentations about the health consequences of sugary drink overconsumption.

iChoose600® Media Campaign – Through a CDC CPPW grant, the iChoose600® campaign was developed to increase consumer awareness about calories in chain restaurant foods and to provide consumers with guidance on selecting restaurant meals within daily calorie recommendations. The campaign was implemented in the four counties outside New York City that enforce calorie posting in chain restaurants: Albany, Schenectady, Suffolk and Ulster counties. The iChoose600® campaign had over 9,200 Facebook fans, over 66 million digital ad impressions, and reached over 500,000® people through local earned media. The evaluation of iChoose600® suggests that the campaign successfully reached members of the priority audience of women, ages 25-44, with young children, with an emphasis on low-income and minority women, and that customers who recalled the media ads were more likely to notice and use posted calorie labels. iChoose activities have continued beyond the CDC funding. iChoose600® Facebook page has over 14,000 fans and posts continue 5 days per week. A mobile application is being explored to provide calorie counts at fast food restaurants.

SCHOOL SECTOR

Healthy Schools New York – This program provides technical assistance and resources to 180 school districts to establish healthful eating environments and daily physical activity opportunities, including physical education (PE), for students of all abilities. Eighteen regional contractors work with school district personnel to assess school wellness policies and develop or strengthen key policy elements, regulations, and practices. HSNY has worked in 57 of New York's 62 counties providing technical assistance to more than 1400 school personnel in over 630 school buildings from 119 school districts. HSNY is working with 49 of 164 high need school districts. Using the *Wellness School Assessment Tool* developed by the Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity at Yale University, 100 baseline assessments and 17 post assessments of federally mandated local school wellness policies have been completed. In New York City, HSNY is supporting the implementation of the NYC Department of Education's Wellness Policies in 49 high-need school buildings. Nutrition and physical activity policies implemented with support from HSNY affect 342,000 students, 12% of all students in the state.

Centers for Best Practices – Obesity Prevention for School-age Children – From 2007-2012, the DOH funded a Center for Best Practices to Prevent and Reduce Childhood Overweight and Obesity among school-age children (New York-Presbyterian Hospital). The primary activities of the center included:

- increasing provider and public awareness about the public health risks of childhood obesity;
- increasing early recognition of childhood overweight and obesity by promoting the appropriate use of screening; and,
- conducting activities, in a designated geographic area, to prevent and reduce childhood overweight and obesity.

The Center for Best Practices for school-aged children created an effective universal childhood obesity prevention social marketing campaign through business and community organizations reaching 1.1 million individuals in NYC. Please see appendix F for educational materials.

EARLY CHILDHOOD SECTOR

Child and Adult Care Food Program – The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) provides reimbursement to child care and day care programs that serve nutritious meals and snacks to children and adults in care. The program reaches more than 330,000 New Yorkers cared for in one of CACFP's 4,700 participating licensed day care centers and 9,200 licensed or registered day care homes. CACFP funds nine Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies and the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to implement Eat Well Play Hard in Child Care Settings (EWPH-CCS), a nutrition education and obesity prevention intervention in CACFP-participating child care centers serving low-income children and their families; 241 child care centers were reached during FFY 2012.

An independent evaluation of EWPH-CCS in 2012 found that children in child care centers with the EWPH-CCS program had an increase in their daily at-home consumption of vegetables, at-home use of 1% or fat-free milk, and reported rates of child-initiated vegetable snacking compared to children in centers that did not have the program.

CACFP received a USDA Child Care Wellness Grant in 2010 to develop and test an adaptation for day care homes. The goals of EWPH-DCH are to help day care home providers make changes in their environments to improve the nutrition and physical activity practices in their day care homes, and communicate positive messages about eating healthy food and being physically active to children and their families. Preliminary evaluation data indicates that participating day care homes are making changes to nutrition and physical activity practices including serving meals family style, introducing a variety of new fruits and vegetables to the menu, encouraging children to drink more water, adding more movement activities and limiting television use. To date, 126 day care home providers have completed the intensive 12 week implementation

period of EWPH-DCH, reaching approximately 1,335 children in their care. By September 30, 2013, an anticipated 160 providers will have completed the program with an estimated reach of 1,700 children.

Nutrition and Physical Activity Self- Assessment for Child Care (NAP SACC) – NAP SACC is an evidence-based intervention that supports child care facilities in improving nutrition and physical activity environments, policies and practices, for the prevention of obesity in early childhood. The intervention was implemented to introduce obesity prevention best practices into the state child care system. NAP SACC is implemented in consultation with child care directors through a process of self-assessment, improvement planning, staff training and technical assistance provided by local health professionals, and re-assessment. One statewide contractor and nine regional contractors administered the NAP SACC intervention which to date has reached 2,900 child care providers and 13,500 preschool age children. Follow-up interviews with providers, who completed the intervention, revealed improvements in nutrition and physical activity practices. Sustained improvements at 2 to 3 years post-intervention were associated with having written policies for nutrition and physical activity.

Collaborative efforts with the New York State Education Department have yielded a strong focus on school food, nutrition and feeding programs.

The Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act (HHFKA) of 2010 authorizes funding and sets policy for the New York State Education Department (SED) National School Lunch Program (NSLP), the School Breakfast Program (SBP), and the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). HHFKA authorizes the U. S. Department of Agriculture to update national nutrition standards for all foods sold on the school campus throughout the school day, including food sold in vending machines, a la carte lines, school stores, and fundraisers.

Performance Based School Meal Reimbursement

All school districts participating in the NSLP are required to submit menus and supporting documentation to SED's Child Nutrition office to be certified as meeting the new meal pattern requirements and nutritional standards. Certified districts/RCCIs receive an additional \$.06 of federal reimbursement for each lunch meal served.

State Education Department strategies to certify 100 percent of participating districts and RCCIs:

- Conducted 25 statewide trainings.
- Leveraging special payroll positions to provide 1-1 technical assistance to facilitate districts and RCCIs to become certified.
- Contacting non-certified schools to determine status of compiling/submitting certification documentation.

State Education Department Nutrition Standards for all Foods Sold In Schools

The HHFKA Sections 208 of the HHFKA amend the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 (42 U.S.C.) 1779) and required the Secretary of Agriculture to promulgate regulations to establish science based nutrition standards for all foods sold (a) outside the school meals programs; (b) on the school campus; and (c) at any time during the school day.

In 2013, State Education Department activities included:

- Drafting regulations to address infrequent school-sponsored fundraisers.
- Providing technical assistance to schools in preparation for implementation.
- Presenting at NYS School Nutrition Association/School Business Officials meetings.
- Submitting additional comments to USDA pertaining to the interim final rule.

Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program

The Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP) Grant provides funding for schools to purchase, prepare and serve fresh fruits and vegetables for students to consume during the school day at no charge. Students receive these additional fresh fruits and vegetables in the classroom or other school settings. Teachers and school food service personnel engage students in activities to increase their knowledge and understanding of the seasonal variety of fresh produce and emphasize the benefits of consuming fresh fruits and vegetables daily. For 2013-2014 SY, grants were awarded to 241 elementary schools in 32 high need districts. The \$6,700,000 federal grant funding is expected to provide fresh fruits and vegetables to more than 111,300 NYS school children during the 2013-2014 school year.

Nutrition for Life II

SED and Department of Health (DoH) mobilized staff to review the original work of Nutrition for Life and consider how this iconic initiative could be updated to promote and align with current health and education priorities, including the new Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act standards.

SED and DoH concurred that the content and formats of selected components of the original Nutrition for Life (NFL) document is an excellent foundation to develop relevant materials that support the HHFKA standards and other State nutrition initiatives. SED and DoH propose to engage Cornell University's Division of Nutritional Science to develop materials aimed at increasing student knowledge and understanding of nutrition for grades Pre K-5. The proposal seeks to explore innovative educational delivery methods to effectively engage students, teachers, and school food service personnel using web-based learning modules. SED will need to create and/or amend the following regulations for 2013-2014:

- 8 NYCRR 114.1 School Breakfast Program- This regulation will need to be updated to reflect the new meal pattern requirements imposed by the Healthy Hunger- Free Kids Act ("HHFKA") of 2010 (Pub. Law 111-296).

- SED will need to create regulations and/or legislation to implement the federal requirements for Competitive Foods which sets minimum standards required for competitive foods sold in schools (HHFKA and 7 CFR Part 210 and 220). Specifically State agencies are tasked with setting the allowed frequency for fundraiser exemptions under the new rules.

Collaborative efforts with Empire State Development resulted in the funding of the New York Healthy Food and Healthy Communities Projects

New York State announced the creation of the Healthy Food/Healthy Communities Initiative in 2009 in response to rising concern over the lack of access to affordable, nutritious, fresh food in underserved communities defined as one of the following:

- a low- or moderate-income census tract
- a census tract with below average food market density
- a food market site with a customer base of 50% or more living in a low-income census tract

The New York Healthy Food & Healthy Communities Fund is a \$30 million statewide program created to provide grants and loans for food markets in those communities. The program is two-fold – it meets the financing needs of market operators that plan to operate in these communities and do not have access to financing through the conventional credit market.

The seven projects that received HFHC funding are spread across New York towns and cities, including Mount Vernon, Highland Falls, Conklin, Buffalo, Red Creek and in the New York City boroughs of Brooklyn and Staten Island, which also received tax incentives through FRESH (Food Retail Expansion to Support Health). The fund's investments have so far supported 67,500 square feet of new, improved or preserved food retail space and created or preserved more than 200 jobs.

2013 HFHC-funded projects include:

- In Highland Falls, N.Y., a 16,000-square-foot MyTown Marketplace, which opened last fall next to a senior center, received a total HFHC financing package of approximately \$300,000. Senior residents were previously using a shuttle service to get to the nearest supermarket 11 miles outside of the town.
- A Reliable Market in Conklin, N.Y., is upgrading the existing market space, including installation of energy-efficient equipment to reduce utility costs. Concurrent with the renovation, the market is enrolling in the "Pride of New York" local agriculture promotion program to improve its offering of products from New York State growers and food manufacturers.
- In Red Creek, N.Y., an A&D Market received \$11,500 from the HFHC Fund.
- In Buffalo, the Massachusetts Avenue Project's Grown Mobile Market, which delivers organic, locally grown, affordable produce to low-income neighborhoods, received funding for a new truck.
- Moisha's Discount Supermarket, in Brooklyn, N.Y., received funding from HFHC and tax incentives through the FRESH program.

Additional Legislative Activities Related to Food Policy

During the 2013 legislative session, a number of proposals were targeted towards expanding access to farm fresh products:

In the FY 2013-14 Enacted Budget: Increased discretionary purchasing authority for state agencies for the purchase of food commodities that are grown, produced, or harvested in New York up to \$200,000 in value.

\$300,000 of funding for the Harvest New York program through Cornell Cooperative Extension: The pilot program, enacted under New York State County Law 224-b, currently has a Dairy Processing Specialist, Local Food Systems Specialist, and Dairy Modernization Specialists that offer a regional approach to agricultural economic development.

The following bills were tracked by the NYS CFP by did not pass during session:

- Senate bill 2084 (Assembly bill 1749): provides farmers with an exemption from tolls when transporting products to New York City for consumption in the city.
- Senate bill 2193 (Assembly bill 5321): establish the urban and regional farmers' markets facilities construction program and a revolving loan and loan guarantee fund for establishing, expanding and developing year-round urban or regional farmers' markets to bring farm products directly to customers.
- Senate bill 4332 (Assembly bill 7063): expand the definition of a "farm operation" to include retail farm operations, such as roadside stands and on-farm markets in an effort to encourage direct-to-consumer sales and expand access to farm fresh food.



NYSFCP FOOD PROCUREMENT

Statewide Food Procurement Activities Influenced by the Guidelines

In April 2011, the New York State (NYS) Council on Food Policy appointed a workgroup to develop recommendations on food procurement guidelines for NYS agencies (*see appendix b*). These Guidelines apply to food purchased, provided or made available such that key nutrient levels either meet, or do not exceed, certain standards established as part of these guidelines. Procurement Guidelines use the purchasing power of governments to impact food availability; affect the overall demand for more healthful products; drive the reformulation of foods; and model healthier food environments. Procurement guidelines help to ensure healthier New Yorkers -- both those residents directly receiving foods and those for whom healthier foods are more available, accessible, and possibly less costly because of increased demand from the state purchases.

The Food Procurement Guidelines Workgroup is currently working on an implementation plan including an executive budget to carry out the guidelines in state agencies.

Local Level Food Procurement Activities

Broome and Schenectady Counties are currently serving as demonstration projects working on implementing the food procurement guidelines developed by the Council on Food Policy. They have two outcomes which are as follows:

- By June 2014, at least two community based organizations will adopt policies that require the implementation of food procurement standards.
- By June 2014, at least one municipality will implement one jurisdiction-wide food procurement policy.

Broome County Demonstration Project

Since January of 2013, Broome County has been able to work with three entities, a municipality and two community-based organizations to adopt and begin to implement the food procurement guidelines. These organizations include:

- **Broome County Central Foods**
The municipality serves approximately 1.8 million meals annually at Willow Point Nursing Home, Senior Centers, to Meals on Wheels recipients, children's centers, and at the Broome County Jail. As part of the implementation process, the county hired a temporary full-time employee in March 2013 to conduct a nutritional assessment of their most current grocery bid products listing. The analysis took a total of four months and was completed in June 2013.
- **Meals on Wheels of Western Broome (MOWWB)**
A private not-for-profit organization that provides home delivered meals service, Monday through Friday, to homebound elderly and handicapped adults. MOWWB serves a total of 400 people each year. The biggest obstacle to implementation thus far has been integrating the guidelines with the special dietary requests from clients. For example, many clients, under the advice of their physician, were told that they should not eat vegetables high in Vitamin K if they take the medication Coumadin. Yet others have dietary restrictions because they are on a cardiac diet, renal diet, diabetic diet, or because they have food allergies or cannot eat foods with seeds, nut or skins. Working to overcome this barrier, meals that were formerly made to meet each individual client's dietary restrictions are being altered to achieve a better balance of nutrients to meet the client's nutritional needs, allowing



them to eat some of the food items that may have been omitted previously in their diet.

- YMCA of Broome County
The YMCA provides meals and snacks to 215 youth through their childcare programs. The YMCA has written a new food procurement policy that was electronically sent to their Board of Directors before they recessed for the summer. The policy will be voted on when the Board resumes this Fall.

Schenectady County Demonstration Project

- Schenectady ARC
Schenectady ARC (SARC) is an organization that serves approximately 1,200 individuals with developmental and intellectual disabilities. SARC has well developed nutritional guidelines. Currently, the agency operates over 20 group homes. All of the group homes purchase food at local grocery stores. The agency is looking to standardize what foods can be purchased by the staff while also taking into consideration the choices of the participants. Schenectady County plans on working with SARC to develop a purchasing system whereby the staff can only purchase approved foods that meet nutritional guidelines while also maintaining participant choice.
- Conifer Park Rehabilitation Center
Conifer Park is a substance abuse treatment facility that has one full time Registered Dietician working as the food services manager. Significant progress has been made at this facility in lowering the sodium in menu items. Over 200 meals are served daily to the participants in this facility. Development of a food procurement policy is currently in progress.
- Glendale Nursing Home
In the first year, Schenectady County focused on Glendale Home, a county-owned skilled nursing facility that has 200 beds. A nutritional analysis was completed which compared the current purchasing practices with the New York State Council on Food Policy's recommendations. Areas of improvement with regards to changes in purchasing as well as changes in food preparation were identified. Examples of processed/convenience foods that were purchased were outlined. Next steps include, presenting a draft policy to the county manager and a presentation to the Public Health Advisory Board which consists of the CEO's and Medical Directors of the Federally Qualified Healthcare Center and Ellis Family Health Center as well as County legislators, the President of Schenectady County Community College and the Executive Director of the Schenectady Free Clinic.

Community Transformation Grant – Small Communities:

Given the recent changes in school lunch program requirements through the Healthy Hunger Free Kids (HHFK) Act and the need for school districts to find affordable ways to make improvements in the nutritional content, the NYSDOH Community Transformation Grant (CTG) in Small Communities is working to establish a regional food procurement initiative in Cattaraugus and Chautauqua counties using a successful food procurement model from Broome County.

In Broome County, the Broome-Tioga BOCES partnered with all public school districts (n=15 school districts) to create a consolidated food procurement system. The model/system established a cooperative bidding system, standardization of menus, centralized resources for menu analysis, and enabled the bulk purchasing of fresh fruits and vegetables which has significantly reduced the cost of healthier food items. As a result of this systems change, fresh fruits and vegetable served in the school districts increased by over 14%.

Through CTG, Broome County will act as a mentor to expand this model to Cattaraugus and Chautauqua Counties. The intervention will focus on six high need school districts in these two counties. The definition of high need school districts includes: districts that exceed the statewide median for the percent of total population living in poverty (8.0%), the percent of the population over the age of 18 with less than a high school education (14.2%), the percent of students eligible for free or reduced price lunch (33%), the percent

of students that are minorities (8%), and the percent of the population aged 5-17 from families living in poverty (12.9%).

Because this work is new to Cattaraugus and Chautauquau counties, the first year of the project was spent determining the level(s) of stakeholder interest and assessing the existing infrastructure to determine how to build a collaborative food purchasing system. To date, each county has conducted readiness assessments with school district and food service leaders and obtained copies of existing bids from the BOCES that cover the districts in their area (Cattaraugus-Allegany BOCES and Erie 2 Chautauqua-Allegany BOCES respectively). Broome has provided technical assistance by analyzing the products on the bids, assessing cost efficient menu items and nutritional quality, and whether the items meet the standards in the HHFK act. Cattaraugus and Chautauqua will use this analysis when they meet with the two BOCES this fall and determine the next steps.

Hunger Prevention Nutrition Assistance Program

The New York State Department of Health's Hunger Prevention Nutrition Assistance Program (HPNAP) provides state funds, for food and operational costs, to the emergency food network, the 8 NYS Regional Food Banks, the United Way of New York City and other organizations that operate emergency food programs.



HPNAP currently has the following procurement policies regarding purchased food:

Requirements for purchased foods	Items not allowed for purchase
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contractor budgets include a separate budget line that must be spent on purchasing fresh produce and 1% or fat free fluid milk. Food bank contractors must spend a portion of HPNAP purchased food funds on New York State grown fresh produce. Fruit juice must be 100% fruit juice. Canned fruit must be packed in or juice or light syrup---we are evaluating the sugar content of canned fruit to determine if we should set a limit on it. Contractors must also have at least one whole grain cereal available at all times; whole grain is defined as a cereal with at least 3 grams of fiber per labeled serving. Canned pasta, chili and boxed macaroni and cheese is limited to products with ≤ 720 mg of Sodium per labeled serving. Canned vegetables and beans are limited to products with ≤ 140 mg of Sodium per labeled serving. With the exception of Raisin Bran, breakfast cereals are limited to those with ≤ 6 grams of sugar per labeled serving. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flavored milk cannot be purchased. Gravy, cheese sauce, pickles, dessert sauce, dessert syrups and toppings cannot be purchased. Protein shakes, vitamins, diet supplements, nutritional supplements, Ensure, Boost etc., cannot be purchased. Coffee/tea, soda/punch, alcoholic beverages, hot chocolate, powdered drink mixes, lemonade, Kool-Aid and bottled water cannot be purchased. No snack foods, except for crackers, can be purchased. Dessert food items, sweets, and candy cannot be purchased. Baby food and infant formula cannot be purchased.

THE 2012 NYS FARM-TO-SCHOOL SURVEY

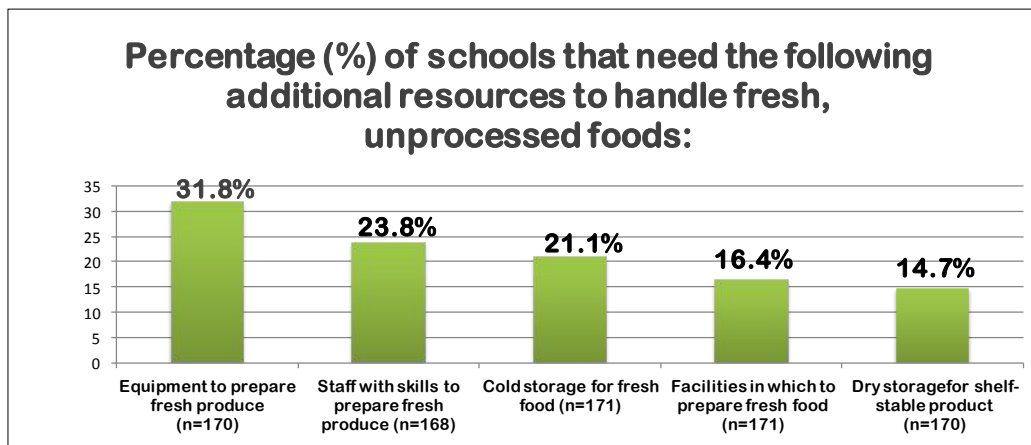
Gauging Farm-to-School Interest, Opportunities and Barriers in NYS

Finalized in 2013, the 2012 NYS Farm-to-School Survey was developed to gauge current interest in farm to school, determine food distribution systems, identify the most commonly purchased products, determine the use of Geographic Preference, existing opportunities and barriers. Survey administration was done via SurveyMonkey and emailed to over 1,000 NYS food service directors. The survey had a total of 307 participants with a 20% response rate. For **all** survey results, please visit **appendix C**. Survey highlights include, but are not limited to:

NYS COUNTIES REPRESENTED IN THE SURVEY

Albany	Dutchess	Livingston	Orange	Seneca	Wyoming
Allegany	Erie	Madison	Orleans	St. Lawrence	Yates
Bronx	Essex	Monroe	Oswego	Steuben	
Broome	Franklin	Montgomery	Putnam	Suffolk	
Cattaraugus	Fulton	Nassau	Queens	Sullivan	
Cayuga	Genesee	New York	Rensselaer	Tioga	
Chautauqua	Greene	Niagara	Rockland	Westchester	
Clinton	Herkimer	Oneida	Saratoga	Warren	
Columbia	Jefferson	Onondaga	Schenectady	Washington	
Delaware	Kings	Ontario	Schoharie	Wayne	

OPERATIONAL RESOURCES OF PARTICIPATING DISTRICTS



PRODUCE IN SCHOOLS

Annual produce budgets range in schools:

< \$1,000 - \$300,000

Of the respondents:

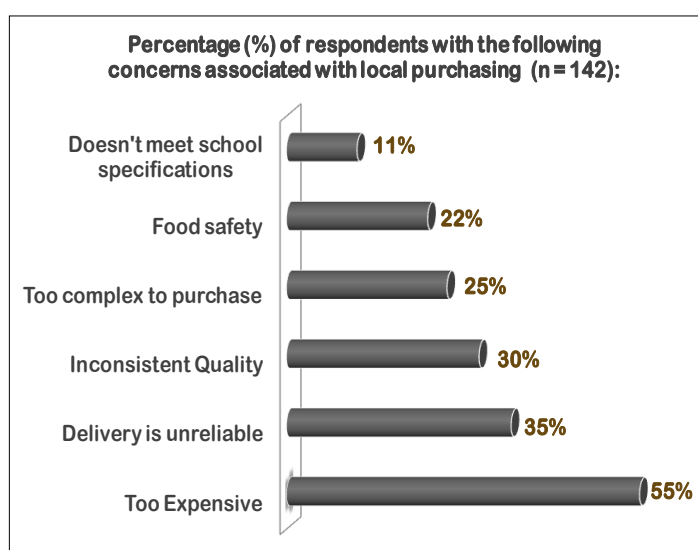
- 77% sell fresh produce a la carte (n=149)
- 56% have salad bars in schools (n=145)
- 57% receive 1 fresh produce delivery per week; 35% receive 2 deliveries; 8% receive more (n=152)

Top fresh produce items purchased by schools (excluding oranges and bananas):



LOCAL PURCHASING BY SCHOOLS

- 69% of 147 respondents had purchased local food
- 26% of the 147 respondents had not previously purchased local products but expressed interest in doing so
- 103 respondents agreed to be listed in a directory of schools interested in buying local products
- 43% of respondents specified Geographic Preference to suppliers (n=62)
- Most local purchases were made through distributors rather than directly from farmers



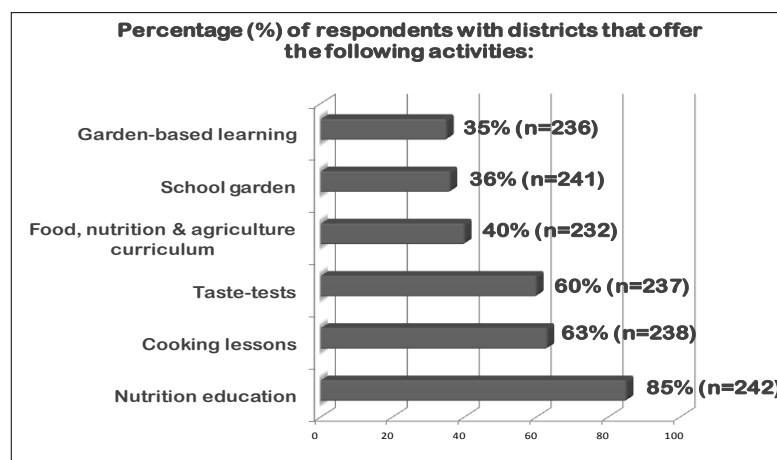
Top Locally-purchased Items by Schools

Rank	Local Item	Rank	Local Item
1	Apples	8	Onions
2	Carrots	9	Milk
3	Tomatoes	10	Pears
4	Cucumbers	11	Yogurt
5	Lettuce	12	Cabbage
6	Peppers	13	Potatoes
7	Broccoli	14	Grapes

The top resources considered very useful in facilitating the purchase of local foods (%):

1. *Financial support*
 - **88%** (n=136)
2. *Directory of local farms that serve schools*
 - **85%** (n=133)
3. *List of local products available through current distributors*
 - **81%** (n=129)
4. *Simplified state procedure for local purchasing*
 - **80%** (n=129)
5. *Direct assistance identifying local food suppliers*
 - **73%** (n=129)

FARM TO SCHOOL ACTIVITIES



THE 2012 FARM-TO-SCHOOL GRANT: AN UPDATE

Progress and Benchmarks of the Council's Inter-Agency Farm-to-School Pilot

In June 2012, Council member Raymond Dennison (BT-BOCES) and Council Coordinator Sarah Johnson (NYSDAM) submitted a proposal on behalf of the Department for the first ever USDA Farm to School Federal Grant. Of hundreds of applicants, this proposal was approved of for funding amongst 67 other projects nationwide and included direct support from entities such as the Binghamton Central School District (BCSD); Broome County Health Department (BCHD); New York State School Nutrition Association (NYSNA); Food and Health Network of South Central New York; Cornell Farm to School; Rural Health Network of South Central New York; Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE); United Health Services and American Farmland Trust (AFT).

Grant partners include NYSDAM, the Food and Health Network of South Central NY (FAHN), Broome-Tioga BOCES, CCE of Broome County and the BCHD. Starting in December 2012, the pilot project is to take place for two (2) years and is currently underway.

Continuing Progress

Three school districts in New York's Southern Tier are reaping the benefits of local farm harvests. Since the beginning of September 2013, Binghamton City, Johnson City, and Owego-Appalachian school cafeterias have been serving tomatoes from Benton Berries in Penn Yan, N.Y. and apples from Reisinger's Apple Country in Watkins Glen, N.Y. The locally grown produce successfully made its way to student plates thanks to a USDA Farm to School grant awarded to the New York State Department of Agriculture & Markets (NYSDAM). Through the pilot program "Sustaining Farm to School in New York State," Broome-Tioga BOCES food service is working to procure fresh, nutritious, local food.

The contracts with Benton Berries and Reisinger's Apple Country are the first of its kind for Broome-Tioga BOCES, having originated from the newly developed geographic preference bid. This bid incentivizes food produced within New York State—simply by virtue of it being local—making it more competitive in the bidding process and ultimately more affordable for schools.

In addition to the geographic preference bid, collaboration has been and will continue to be a key piece of the pilot program's success. The pilot program is a partnership that relies on the respective expertise of several agencies: NYDAM, Broome-Tioga BOCES, Food and Health Network of South Central New York, Broome County Cornell Cooperative Extension, and Broome County Health Department.

Procurement of apples from Reisinger's Apple Country exemplifies the collaborative nature of this farm to school program. Originally a U-Pick operation, Reisinger's Apple Country needed a robust and affordable way of transporting apples from Watkins Glen to Binghamton. Existing connections with the Food Bank of the Southern Tier (FBST) led to an agreement in which FBST back-hauls apples from the farm to Binghamton using its existing distribution routes. In exchange for the transportation, Reisinger's Apple Country is donating fresh, local apples to FBST.

The pilot is emphasizing food safety for the next phase of the grant. Both Benton Berries and Reisinger's Apple Country had or were working toward food safety certification at the start of the program. Moving forward, the pilot will specifically seek participation of New York State growers lacking food safety certification, which is required for selling to schools. The pilot is coordinating food safety training and will provide technical assistance throughout the food safety certification process in order to increase the number of producers in the region that are able to sell to schools. Food safety doesn't stop at the farm, so training for proper handling and preparatory techniques for fresh produce in school cafeterias will also be provided during the next year for food service staff.



Generating support from school faculty and staff, parents and community members, and the students themselves brings the farm to school program full circle. Events like Farm to You Fest!, which was held on October 4th, 2013 in Binghamton, help spread a consistent message in support of healthy food and local diets. With appearances from Rock on Cafe cartoon characters Rex and Roxy, tastings from the Lost Dog Cafe, apples and pears from Reisinger's Apple Country, Chobani yogurt samples, a farm stand selling VINES/Binghamton Urban Farm produce, and outreach/education from the pilot's partner agencies, families enjoyed learning more about their food system and the importance of eating locally.

By continuing to focus on food safety, producer partnerships, and nutrition promotion, the pilot intends to build a collaborative, sustainable farm to school procurement program for school districts throughout Broome and Tioga Counties, hoping it may serve as a model for other communities in the state.



THE 2013 SURVEY OF LOCAL NYS FOOD POLICY ORGANIZATIONS

Identifying Food Policy Councils in NYS to Expand the Dialogue between Government and Local Initiatives

In August 2013, the NYSCFP conducted a survey of local food policy councils and organizations in New York State that focus on anti-hunger, farm, nutrition and other food system related issues. The NYS CFP compiled this feedback to publish on the NYS CFP website, to share with stakeholders and utilize as an information portal to connect with and enlighten food system advocates around NYS. This information will help guide the Council in recommendation development, as well as collaborative efforts with state-wide and local initiatives.

The NYSCFP has also created a Local Food Policy Workgroup as part of its membership. This will include ad-hoc members of NYS food policy organizations as an avenue to close the gap between government and grassroots efforts.

Organizations that participated in the survey are categorized by NYS County below.

County	Organization
Broome	Food and Health Network of South Central New York
Broome	VINES
Chemung	Food and Health Network of South Central New York
Chenango	Food and Health Network of South Central New York
Cortland	Food and Health Network of South Central New York
Delaware	Food and Health Network of South Central New York
Delaware	Slope Farms LLC
Erie	American Farmland Trust

County	Organization
Erie	Massachusetts Avenue Project
Erie	Food for All
Erie	Field and Fork
Herkimer	NY Farmers and Friends
Kings	The Fort Greene / Clinton Hill Community Food Council formed by the Myrtle Avenue Revitalization Project (MARF)
Kings	Brooklyn Botanic Garden Children's Garden
New York	City Harvest
New York	New York City Food Policy Center at Hunter College
New York	FamilyCook Productions
New York	CUNY School of Public Health
New York	Karp Resources
Oneida	Food Policy Advisory Council of the Mohawk Valley Food Action Network
Ontario	Hobart and William Smith Colleges
Oswego	Mexico School District
Otsego	Food and Health Network of South Central New York
Queens	Queens Harvest Food Cooperative

County	Organization
Rensselaer	Transition Troy
Schoharie	Schoharie Valley Farm to School Project
Schoharie	Schoharie County Planning and Development
St. Lawrence	Local Living Venture
Tioga	Food and Health Network of South Central New York
Tompkins	Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County
Tompkins	Food and Health Network of South Central New York

For a full description of each organization and the full survey, please see appendix D.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE FMNP UNIVERSAL APPLICATION

A Collaborative Effort to Develop a Streamlined Application for Farmers Participating in FMNP & WIC-VF

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) mission is “to safeguard the health of low-income pregnant, breastfeeding, non-breastfeeding postpartum women, infants, and children up to age 5 who are at nutrition risk by providing nutritious foods to supplement diets, information on healthy eating, and referrals to health care”.¹ WIC food packages and nutrition education are the strategies used to accomplish this mission, by working to improve the diets and lifestyle choices of the families enrolled. Currently, participants in the WIC program receive checks or vouchers to purchase food items from authorized vendors, such as a grocery stores and supermarkets. WIC food packages are specifically designed to meet the special nutritional needs of the families enrolled.

The NYS WIC program has been able to introduce a voucher specifically for fresh, canned or frozen vegetables and fruit due to a new interim rule aligning to the program with the Institute of Medicine recommendations. Also under the interim rule WIC State agencies were given the option to authorize farmers at farmers markets. The USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) adopted the Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) definition of a farmer: “an individual authorized by the State agency to sell eligible vegetables and fruit to participants at a farmers market or roadside stand.” In June 2009, the NYS Department of Health (DOH) and the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets (the Department) implemented a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), establishing for the first time, a process for NYS farmers to become authorized WIC vendors to accept WIC checks at authorized farmers markets in exchange for fresh vegetables and fruits.

Major Participation Challenges

In 2013, more than 950 New York farmers participated in the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) and WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) and accepted checks for fresh produce sold at farmers markets. However, after four years of operating the program, conducting education and outreach campaigns, and holding online webinars only 16 percent of those farmers have elected to become authorized to accept the WIC VF checks.

Due to extensive feedback from participants in the NYS WIC program and from farmers participating in the NYS Senior and WIC FMNP, three barriers have been identified that prevent farmers from participating at the same level they participate in with the other nutrition programs operating at farmers markets in NY.³

1. United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, “About WIC, WIC’s Mission.” <http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/aboutwic/mission.htm> Accessed October 22, 2013.

2. United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, “Benefits and Services.” <http://www.fns.usda.gov/wic/benefitsandservices/revisionsfoodpkg-background.htm>. Accessed October 22, 2013.



- 1) **Paperwork.** A separate application process exists for farmers to become authorized WIC vendors. This process includes a Farmer Application, Bank Designation Form, and a nine (9) page Farmer Agreement.
- 2) **Training.** Farmers are mandated to attend an interactive training session every year, either face-to-face or during an online webinar.
- 3) **Bank Account.** Farmers are required to complete a Bank Designation Form and to register their personal or business bank account when they apply, and to notify the Department of any changes.

Working together with the NYS CFP, the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets and the NYS Department of Health proposed the following changes to the current process of authorizing farmers for FMNP and WIC VF.

1. **Paperwork.** Create a streamlined universal application for FMNP and WIC VF that incorporates the elements currently contained in each of the separate applications and the USDA required elements of the current agreement for WIC VF. This application would be completed by farmers annually and submitted along with a crop plan to the Department. An online version of the application would be developed and made available for participating farmers.
2. **Training.** Eliminate the annual training requirement that states training be interactive with Department staff annually. The training requirement would be changed to once every three years.
3. **Bank Account.** Eliminate the collection of bank account information from farmers participating in the WIC VF. The collection of this data is not required by USDA and not necessary from a banking standpoint. It creates an unnecessary burden for farmers and makes the administration of the program unduly complicated. Such data has never been collected for FMNP. Cases that require special processing can be handled on an individual basis between the Department and Key Bank, the bank of record for both programs. This is currently being done for the FMNP.
4. **Expand Program.** Increase the type of direct venues through which WIC V&F checks can be accepted by farmers from WIC customers. USDA allows WIC V&F checks to be accepted at farm stands. We are proposing to allow the acceptance of WIC V&F checks at farm stands, pick-your-own farms, mobile farmers markets, youth markets and urban farm stands. For all of these venues it would be a requirement for them to be certified for SNAP and to have the required hardware to conduct SNAP/EBT transactions. This would allow customers participating in any of the common nutrition benefit programs to shop at these venues while simultaneously benefiting New York farmers.

2013 ANNUAL MEETINGS

A Brief Overview of the Summer and Winter Meetings

The basis of many NYS CFP activities were discussed and developed at the 2013 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 2013 include:

- **Summer Meeting:** July 17th at Cornell University in Ithaca, NY
- **Winter Meeting:** Dec 11th in New York, New York

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 2013 Summer and Winter 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. Presentations from 2013 meetings consisted of:

- ***“Adopting Healthy Habits: Leveraging Cooperative Extension to promote environmental change”*** presented by **Jamie Dollahite** developed a model for Cooperative Extensions to engage in site-specific environmental change initiatives with partner agencies and larger communities that make healthy habits easier for low-income families.
- ***“Climate Change and Agriculture: No Longer Business as Usual”*** presented by **Mike Hoffmann** illustrated the challenges and opportunities of climate change and agriculture for NYS; what is needed to adapt to these changes; reducing greenhouse gas emissions; and more.
- ***Case Studies on Local Food Supply Chains*** presented by **Miguel I. Gomez** illustrated research questions such as: *What factors influence structure and size of local food supply chains? How do local food supply chains compare to mainstream supply chains for key dimensions of economic, environmental, and social performance?*

Supporting Food Systems as an Arena for Civic Engagement and Collective Impact: An Ecosystems Approach by **Jeff Piestrak** presented the importance of collective impact, knowledge ecosystems, and questions such as: *“How can we leverage existing resources/assets more effectively for the greater good? How can we empower communities and leaders with the tools and resources they need to make good decisions?”*

Throughout the year, the majority of NYS CFP activities are coordinated through the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets. The Department supports the NYS CFP website and a considerable communications network has been established.

(For a full illustration of meeting minutes and agendas, please see **appendix A**)



NYS CFP PLANS FOR 2014

Statewide Listening Tours, Continued Partnerships, Annual Meetings and On-going Participation in Food Systems and Nutrition Conferences

2014 Listening Tours

In 2014, the NYS CFP will hold a series of listening sessions across NYS. Dates are to be determined, however feedback from the local food policy council survey, as well as constant, open dialogue with the public via email and annual meetings has assisted the Council to choose geographic locations. The Council conducted its first listening tour in 2007 where initial priorities were identified. These initial priorities have been consistent with recommendation and initiative development. The Council will use the 2014 sessions as an additional opportunity to connect with the public and identify current priorities to align its mission with.

The 2014 Listening Tours will provide a statewide opportunity for the public, local organizations and grassroots initiatives to engage in open dialogue with the Council.

Annual Meetings & On-going Participation in Food Systems and Nutrition Conferences

The Council will continue to hold its statewide annual meetings and participate in a variety of conferences, such as NOFA and Harvesting Opportunities Conferences in 2014.

Focus on Marketing of New York's Agricultural Products

In 2014, the NYS CFP will more effectively use the authority vested in the Council, the Department of Agriculture and Markets and Empire State Development, to find new ways to advance the marketing of New York's agricultural products. The FPC will continue to strengthen the connection between local food and consumers.

