

**Morning NYC Food Distribution Tour** (see [Agenda and Presenters' Biographies](#) for more information)

Commentators on the bus tour regarding the cities growing food deserts, environmental justice and potential solutions provided by Bob Lewis, NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets and James Subudhi, WEACTION.

At 10:15 a.m. the group arrived by school bus to the **Food Bank for New York City**. The group assembled in the Food Bank for NYC conference room. NYS CFP member, John Evers introduced Dr. Lucy Cabrera, Executive Director of the Food Bank for NYC. Dr. Cabrera then discussed the history of the Food Bank, which was founded in 1988, as well as the desperate need for such a program to exist.

The quote on the conference room whiteboard provided context: *"In 2008, 36% NYS individuals with a college degree had difficulty affording needed food."*

Dr. Cabrera described the mission of the Food Bank for NYC as: "Providing good food and nutritious food for balanced, nutritious meals". Dr. Cabrera outlined criteria of what types of food can be distributed to the local programs by the Food Bank. Applause acknowledged the fact that all programs are now accepting fresh produce.

Notably, the Food Bank for NYC:

- Spends up to \$ 0.5 million on New York State produce;
- Is the largest Food Bank, poundage wise, in NYS;
- Has approximately 14 trucks on the road; and
- Delivers to over 1,000 programs.

Dr. Cabrera introduced key members of her staff and then led the group on a brief tour of the facility.

Dr. Cabrera expressed that within the next five years the Food Bank of NYC would like to accomplish goals such as: participation in the nutrition education program in public schools which is funded by the USDA; expand their Earned Income Tax credit program; and begin accepting pet foods and school supplies for distribution.

The group boarded the school bus and was transported over to the NYC Terminal Produce Market at Hunts Point.

At 11:15 a.m. the group entered the **NYC Terminal Produce Market at Hunts Point**. This is the largest wholesale distribution center in the country by volume and possibly the largest in the world. At the Terminal Produce Market, Matt D'Arrigo, the Co-President of Hunts Point Terminal Produce Cooperative Association, discussed the history of Hunts Point as well as the desperate need for upgrades in order to run a more efficient market.

Mr. D'Arrigo explained that the current market location is too small for the large volumes that are coming in. Mr. D'Arrigo pointed out that almost equal amounts of produce is stored in idling tractor trailer trucks - seven days a week, 24 hours a day - as is stored in the actual facility. Mr. D'Arrigo continued by describing a proposed future build and expansion project that is recommended to take place on 40 acres behind the existing row D of the market. This would include 2 new buildings and the conversion of the old buildings. Green-building concepts are included in the discussion. The proposed plan would take approximately three years once it has begun.

**Afternoon Guest Speakers** (see [Agenda and Presenters' Biographies](#) for more information)

Commissioner Patrick Hooker, Chairman of the NYS Council on Food Policy began the afternoon by welcoming the large group of public individuals attending the afternoon meeting. He then thanked the Council members for their continued commitment to the Council mission and expressed his gratitude to them for their partnership as they strive to find workable solutions to the increasingly crucial issues of hunger, food insecurity and diet-related diseases. He said that having access to fresh, nutritious, affordable and safe food should not be considered a luxury.

Commissioner Hooker thanked NYC Economic Development and NYC Education Department for their assistance with the morning transportation and introduced the following guest speakers:

- NYC Economic Development Corp - Madelyn Wils
  - Council on the Environment of NYC and Greenmarket - Marcel Van Ooyen, Mike Hurwitz and Tom Strumolo
  - Supermarket Commission - Jennifer Jones Austin
  - Department of City Planning "Fresh Food Store Program" - Barry Dinerstein
  - NYC Food Policy Coordinator - Benjamin Thomases
  - DOHMH, Physical Activity and Mental Hygiene - Sabrina Baronberg
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**Madelyn Wils of the NYC Economic Development Corp** began the afternoon by presenting the "[Hunts Point Terminal Produce Market](#)" power point in which she outlines: what is the role of the market, what is wrong with the market, what is the proposed new design and some of the benefits of a new market.

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Representatives from **The Council on the Environment of NYC: Marcel Van Ooyen, Michael Hurwitz, and Tom Strumolo** discussed CENYC programs that promote leadership and environmental awareness. Programs include: Youthmarkets, which are markets run by local groups of teens in their own communities, providing jobs for local youth while providing fresh and local produce to neighborhoods that otherwise may not have access; the New Farmer Development Project (NFDP) which identifies, educates, and supports immigrants with agricultural experience by helping them become local farmers and establish small farms in the region; and Greenmarkets, which are open air markets providing fresh and local products to many New Yorkers every day. The CENYC Greenmarket Program is the largest and most successful open-air farmers' markets program in the country. There are approximately 50 markets supporting local farmers throughout NYC. For more information visit <http://www.cenyc.org/greenmarket>

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**Co-Chairperson of the New York Supermarket Commission, Jennifer Jones Austin** of The United Way of NYC, presented on the Supermarket Commissions "Special Report" that was released earlier this year. The Commission is a coalition convened by The Food Trust that includes representatives from the City, the State, labor groups, public health advocates, supermarkets and financial institutions. It was established in 2008 because of concerns that New Yorkers were losing access to fresh, affordable foods. Despite a growth in population in New York City, the number of supermarkets has declined by one third in the past six years. Diabetes rates have doubled in the last 10 years. Research shows that the presence of supermarkets in communities helps people maintain a healthy weight, and eat more fruits and vegetables.

Within the "Special Report" are nine policy recommendations to spur supermarket development and boost the availability of nutritious, affordable food in communities throughout New York City and state. The Supermarket Commission's report is available at <http://www.thefoodtrust.org/pdf/0509nycommission.pdf>

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**Barry Dinerstein of the NYC Department of City Planning** gave a power point presentation on the NYC "Food Retail Expansion to Support Health" or "[FRESH Program](#)" that aims to promote grocery stores in underserved areas in NYC. Mr. Dinerstein explained that FRESH combines a package of financial and zoning incentives in specific FRESH food store areas. You can find out more information about the program by going to [www.nyc.gov/planning](http://www.nyc.gov/planning) and clicking on the word FRESH.

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**Ben Thomases, NYC Food Policy Coordinator, and Sabrina Baronberg, of NYC DOHMH** followed up by discussing other steps that the City is exploring to address the critical issues of food insecurity and growing obesity trends including calorie labeling, low fat / fat free milk promotions, and reducing stigma surrounding free and reduced school meals options.

**Mr. Thomases** explained the important role that the Food Policy Taskforce serves to coordinate the efforts of the various agencies and projects aimed at improving access to healthy, fresh food for all New Yorkers, but especially for school children, lower income individuals and families and those in underserved areas.

Ms. Baronberg gave a brief power point presentation about a few exciting programs underway in NYC to help provide individuals with access to more fresh foods in underserved areas: [Healthy Bodega initiative, Healthy Bucks and EBT at the Farmers Market, and the Green Cart Program.](#)

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## Hot Topics

### NYS Council on Food Policy Work Groups

Commissioner Patrick Hooker, Chairman of the NYS Council on Food Policy began the discussion by presenting a power point presentation that reviewed some key points of the mission and organization of the [NYS Council on Food Policy.](#)

The Commissioner also revealed the anticipated press release from Governor Paterson announcing that, through a major collaborative effort of the members of the NYS Council on Food Policy (Farmers Market Federation, DOH and DAM), New York State will be the first state in the nation to accept the new WIC Vegetables and Fruits Checks to be at Farmers' Markets this Summer. [WIC Press Release](#)

Commissioner Hooker then introduced Jack Kennedy, representing the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, as the key spokesperson for the **NYS CFP Work Group 1: Maximizing participation in food and nutrition assistance programs.**

- Mr. Kennedy discussed the history and the present accomplishments of the Food Stamp program in New York. Mr. Kennedy described the new online program *myBenefits* [www.mybenefits.ny.gov](http://www.mybenefits.ny.gov) which is a quick and easy way for people in State to find answers to questions about New York State's programs and services, find out if they are eligible for benefits such as food stamps and eventually the site will allow for online applications.
- Mindy Bockstein, Chairperson of the New York State Consumer Protection Board said that the demand for food and emergency food as well as emergency feeding programs has increased by 35%. Ms. Bockstein then acknowledged the growing rate in which food banks are increasing their supply of fresh produce as well as produce from local farmers.
- Florence Reed, the Director of the Nutrition Unit at New York State Office for the Aging explained that currently in New York, they are hard pressed to amply help older adults with all of their nutritional issues. Ms. Reed pointed out that Seniors Farmers Market Nutrition Program is one of the most successful programs but due to insufficient federal funding, we are only able to serve approximately one out of every ten eligible individuals.
- Mr. Kennedy closed the work group's discussion with a few next steps that the Council on Food Policy is interested in pursuing. Notably, Council members from the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, the Department of Agriculture and the Farmers Market Federation have collaborated to develop a pilot project to expand the New York State Wireless EBT Program beyond farmers markets to farm stands, New York City Green Carts and mobile farmers markets.

The reasoning for this pilot project is that while farmers markets have become a key means of promoting increased awareness and use of fresh produce by food stamp participants using EBT debit cards, the majority of farmers markets operate only 1-2 days per week during the local growing season (June-Nov). By contrast, many farm stands in rural areas operate daily during the growing season; mobile "veggie vans" in urban areas operate on multiple days during the growing season or year round; and the newly authorized, mobile "Green Carts" in New York City operate on city sidewalks in specific low-income areas daily during fair weather. Given their geographic location and/or mobility in relation to food stamp participants lacking access to fresh food, and their more frequent and/or year round schedule of operations, all three types of retail food vendors could provide additional access to fresh, nutritious, locally grown produce for those participants who cannot take advantage of the state's otherwise extensive farmers market network.

[EBT Press Release.](#)

Commissioner Hooker introduced Frances O'Donnell, Coordinator Child Nutrition Program Administration, NYS Education Department as the key spokesperson for the **NYS CFP Work Group 2: Strengthening the connection between local food products and consumers.**

- Ms. O'Donnell discussed some opportunities and challenges with institutional purchasing. One challenge discussed was how to communicate most effectively the knowledge we have about the benefits of local produce purchasing to schools and food service professionals. This NYS CFP Work Group is interested in developing a web-based clearinghouse of food systems and networks including: supply; distribution; transportation of fresh and processed New York State products for schools and food service professionals.
- Recent changes in the Farm Bill have made local produce purchasing easier for school food service directors. Schools can now specify in their ordering for New York State products. There are also new initiatives to support introducing more local food into school meals such as school gardens. Ms. O'Donnell reports that schools are beginning to feel comfortable buying more local produce and that we are continuing to assure food safety through safe food handling education. Information about food procurement is available on the State Education Department Child Nutrition Management website <http://portal.nysed.gov/portal/page/pref/CNKC>.
- Expansion of the USDA Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program was also discussed by Ms. O'Donnell. Through this program, a single serving of a fresh fruit and vegetable is offered to school children during a break in the day, not at breakfast or lunch, every single day. This creates a healthier school environment as well as increases fruit and vegetable consumption and increases exposure and experience of fresh products to children. This program reached approximately 27,000 children last year. See the [NYS CFP Hot Topics](#) for more information.
- Finally, Ms. O'Donnell discussed that the New York State Education Department has received stimulus funding for new kitchen equipment in schools. New York State will distribute approximately \$5.9 million in grants for kitchen equipment that lends itself to improving the quality of school foodservice meals that support the dietary guidelines (e.g., purchasing an equipment alternative to a deep fat fryer); equipment that improves the safety of food served in the school nutrition programs (e.g., cold/hot holding equipment, milk coolers, dishwashing equipment, etc.); equipment that improves the overall energy efficiency of the school nutrition operations (e.g., energy efficient walk-in freezer to replace an outdated energy-demanding freezer); and/or equipment that allows SFAs to support expanded participation in a school nutrition program (e.g., equipment to better utilize cafeteria space, etc.)
- All of these programs contribute to the future health of children in New York State and thus to the mission of the NYS CFP. See the [NYS CFP Hot Topics](#) for more information.

Commissioner Hooker introduced Deputy Commissioner Jerry Cosgrove of the NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets as the key spokesperson for **NYS CFP Work Group 3: Supporting efficient and profitable agricultural food production and food retail infrastructure.**

- Deputy Commissioner Cosgrove discussed the two-pronged goal of preserving and enhancing a vibrant farming community in New York while promoting and enabling a thriving retail food infrastructure that provides nutritious, local food products specifically, but not exclusively, in underserved and low-income neighborhoods.
- Deputy Commissioner Cosgrove discussed measures considered for meeting the work group objectives including: re-focusing and energizing buy local campaigns such as "Pride of New York"; continuing to educate the public that fresh, nutritious, and local food production must also be profitable (that farming is a business); and addressing the fundamental, yet intricate questions such as: what percentage of New York State demand are state producers meeting (Cornell study suggests approx 30%); what is the current/future potential to meet demand; what are the impacts of the cost of production on NYS producers; and what percentage of NYS product is sold fresh, frozen, processed?
- Additionally, it was stressed that food safety, including safe food handling on farms is a top priority. The Department of Agriculture & Markets has introduced a new grant available to farmers for compliance with "Good Agriculture Practices" that helps address this issue.
- Dr. Micheal Hoffmann, Assistant Dean, NYS College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALS) at Cornell University reiterated the importance of the points that Deputy Commissioner Cosgrove made. Specifically, Dr. Hoffmann stressed

the collaborative opportunities that exist between the Council on Food Policy, the Department of Agriculture & Markets and research conducted at CALS.

- Bob McNary of the Empire State Development Corp took the opportunity to speak about the relevant collaborative programs that address the NYS CFP objectives. Programs include: "Healthy Food, Healthy Communities Initiative" and the Upstate Agriculture Economic Development Fund.
- President of the United Food and Commercial Workers Union, Local 1500, Bruce Both spoke briefly about the need to attach good job and community standards criteria to zoning and incentive programs for supermarkets.
- Jorge Montalvo, Director of Strategic and Virtual Consumer Programming at the Consumer Protection Board highlighted that many collaboration opportunities have transpired through involvement with the NYS Council on Food Policy. Specifically, Mr. Montalvo mentioned the brochure "[You are What You Eat! The Consumer Protection Board's Guide to Terminology, Purchasing and Related Consumer Information](#)" that has been distributed in Price Chopper stores around the state; and the migrant labor outreach efforts underway.
- These topics relate to strengthening the food industry in New York and contribute to the overall effort of ensuring that a safe, nutritious, local food source continues to be available for all. See the [NYS CFP Hot Topics](#) for more information.

Commissioner Hooker then introduced Mary Warr Cowans, Associate Director Division of Nutrition, New York State Department of Health as the key spokesperson for **NYS CFP Work Group 4: Increasing consumer awareness and knowledge about healthy eating; improving consumer access to safe and nutritious food.**

Commissioner Hooker at this time also gave a special acknowledgement to the Department of Health and Ms. Warr Cowans for being instrumental in securing a Public Health graduate student intern to work with the NYS Council on Food Policy this summer. Christine Ross will be working at the Department of Agriculture & Markets with the Coordinator for the Council on Food Policy from June until the end of August 2009.

Ms. Warr Cowans provided a brief review of some of the Work Group's objectives and proposed action items and the steps they have taken to achieve their goals. Most notably, the group is working on developing a web based inventory of food and nutrition programs available throughout New York State. It is anticipated that this web based program inventory will serve as a resource center linking community members to an array of food and nutrition services available to them in New York.

As a key collaborator in strategizing how to implement the new program allowing WIC Vegetable and Fruit checks to be used at New York's farmers markets, Ms. Warr Cowans explained that this change will not only increase access to fresh, nutritious produce by women and children, but hopefully this can contribute to a decrease in childhood obesity rates and provide an opportunity to promote healthier lifestyles.

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Commissioner Hooker again thanked the audience, the guest presenters and the NYS Council on Food Policy members for their attention and their dedication to the mission of ensuring that all New Yorkers have affordable access to safe, nutritious foods and to the expansion of agricultural production in New York. The next meeting of the NYS Council on Food Policy is scheduled to be in October 2009.

The meeting was adjourned at 4 p.m.

*N.B. Questions from the audience were taken after the presenters throughout the meeting.*