



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

*Making Connections:
Developing a Food System for a Healthier
New York State*

o o o

*Recommended State Food Policies
December 2009*



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

<http://www.nyscfp.org>

New York State Council on Food Policy

December 2009

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New York State Council on Food Policy

Report to Governor David A. Paterson

December 2009

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The mission of the New York State Council on Food Policy (NYS CFP) is to recommend policies that preserve and enhance agricultural food production in New York; and ensure that all New Yorkers have adequate access to safe, affordable, fresh and nutritious foods, especially by children, low-income individuals, the senior population, and other at risk or under represented citizens. The chief role of the NYS CFP is the development of policy recommendations for the Governor's consideration in the area of food and the food system infrastructure.

To realize its mission, the NYS CFP shares networks and resources, builds and capitalizes on collaboration opportunities, researches relevant topics, communicates with stakeholders, and serves as a vehicle for the citizens of New York State to communicate food policy matters to the Governor. Essentially, the NYS CFP strives to 'connect the dots' within our food system dynamics. Specific activities of the NYS CFP are outlined in Section I of this report.

Since establishment in 2007 by gubernatorial Executive Order, the combined efforts of the 21 members of the NYS CFP, and their corresponding networks, have realized tremendous levels of inter-agency, public and private collaboration. Results include improved access to and awareness of fresh, local and healthier food choices, and increased awareness of the social, economic, and environmental benefits of agriculture in our communities.

Progress made on previous NYS CFP recommendations is outlined in Section IV of this report and highlighted throughout this document in the 'Dot Connector' series. However, there is still much to be done. The NYS CFP maintains that it is critically important to ensure that existing food production and delivery systems continue to be improved, and that fresh, nutritious and affordable food is accessible to all New Yorkers, with a special emphasis on the most vulnerable populations.

In order to effectively support the mission of the NYS CFP, and in recognition of the unprecedented economic hardship in New York, it is generally recommended that the State seek to maximize federal funding for nutrition and food programs operating in New York State. Additional food policies that can be enacted to improve the health and prosperity of its citizens are outlined in Section II of this report.

The NYS CFP 'Recommended State Food Policies' fall under four key issue areas:

1. Maximizing participation in food and nutrition assistance programs;
2. Strengthening the connection between local food products and consumers;
3. Supporting efficient and profitable agricultural food production and retail food infrastructure; and
4. Increasing consumer awareness and knowledge about healthy eating; and improving consumer access to safe and nutritious food.

The 'Recommended State Food Policies - December 2009' are not to be considered a substitute for previous recommendations, but are supplementary and often complementary. Further information on the previous activities and recommendations from the NYS CFP are available on our website: www.nyscfp.org.

Recommended State Food Policies

December 2009

Foremost, it is recommended that New York State take three significant steps:

- A. Join the Campaign to End Childhood Hunger by 2015
- B. Support a Strong Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act
- C. Codify the New York State Council on Food Policy

The “Recommended State Food Policies - December 2009” (# 1 - 12) are not arranged in order of priority. They are arranged by NYS CFP Key Issue Areas (1-4).

Key Issue Area 1: Maximizing Participation in Food and Nutrition Assistance Programs

1. Increase Public Awareness of Food and Nutrition Programs
2. Facilitate Access to Food and Nutrition Benefits by Food Insecure Individuals
3. Expand Food and Nutrition ‘Electric Benefit Transfer’ Redemption Options

Key Issue Area 2: Strengthening the Connection between Local Food Products and Consumers

4. Support Community and School-Based Food Security Initiatives
5. Define ‘Local Food’ and Set Procurement Goals of Local Food
6. Promote Healthy School Environments
7. Support Direct Marketing Initiatives and Promote Food System Networking

Key Issue Area 3: Supporting Efficient and Profitable Agricultural Food Production and Retail Food Infrastructure

8. Promote Locally Grown and Produced Food Products
9. Improve the Production, Distribution, and Marketing Aspects of the Food Industry
10. Support a Positive Business Climate for the Agricultural and Food Industries

Key Issue Area 4: Increasing Consumer Awareness and Knowledge about Healthy Eating; and Improving Consumer Access to Safe and Nutritious Food

11. Proactively Address the Issue of Obesity and Diet-Related Diseases
12. Increase Access to Safe and Nutritious Foods by Underserved Communities and Food Insecure Individuals

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I. Activities of the New York State Council on Food Policy

January - December 2009

ANNUAL MEETINGS

The New York State Council on Food Policy (NYS CFP) meets twice a year at varying locations around the State. The meetings are an opportunity for the Council members to conduct their business while gaining deeper perspective into facets of our food system and sharing this information with the public. Council members share updates on progress made toward achieving stated goals, discuss 'hot topics', and seek new opportunities for collaboration.

Guest speakers are invited to present on key issues related to the mission of the NYS CFP, and a public comment period is included. Site visits of significant venues relating to the New York State food system are arranged when feasible.

NYS CFP Key Issue Areas are:

1. Maximizing participation in food and nutrition assistance programs;
2. Strengthening the connection between local food producers and consumers;
3. Supporting efficient and profitable agricultural food production and retail food infrastructure; and
4. Increasing consumer awareness and knowledge about healthy eating; and improving consumer access to safe and nutritious foods.

Below is a summary of the 2009 annual meetings. Agendas, notes and presentations are posted on the NYS CFP website. Go to www.nyscfp.org and click on "Activities".

Summer Meeting

Friday, June 12, at the Adam Clayton Powell, Jr. State Office Building, New York City

Guest speakers and the related NYS CFP Key Issue Area (KIA 1- 4) were:

Madelyn Wils of the New York City Economic Development Corporation spoke about the economic development potential for Hunts Point Terminal Produce Market in the Bronx. Ms. Wils outlined the role of the market, existing obstacles, proposed new designs, and expected benefits of a new market. (KIA 3)

Marcel Van Ooyen, Mike Hurwitz and Tom Strumolo from the Council on the Environment of New York City and Greenmarket discussed CENYC programs that promote leadership and environmental awareness and, specifically, the Greenmarket Program, which is the largest and most successful open-air farmers' market program in the country. (KIA 2)

Jennifer Jones Austin, Co-Chair of the New York Supermarket Commission presented on the Commission's policy recommendations to spur supermarket development and the availability of nutritious, affordable food in communities throughout New York State. (KIA 3, 4)

Barry Dinerstein from New York City Department of City Planning gave a presentation about the New York City "Food Retail Expansion to Support Health" or "FRESH" program that aims to promote grocery stores in underserved areas in the city through a combination of financial and zoning incentives. (KIA 3, 4)

Ben Thomases, NYC Food Policy Coordinator from Mayor Bloomberg's Office, explained that the role of the Food Policy Taskforce is to coordinate the efforts of various agencies and projects aimed at improving access to healthy, fresh food by all. (KIA 1-4)

Sabrina Baronberg, New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene shared information about some exciting programs in New York City that provide individuals with more access to fresh foods in underserved areas. Initiatives include: Healthy Bodega, Healthy Bucks and EBT at the Farmers' Market, and the Green Cart Program. (KIA 1, 4)



NYS CFP summer meeting, NYC

Commissioner Hooker facilitated a brief period of questions and comments from the audience after each guest speaker.

To begin the NYS CFP portion of the meeting Commissioner Hooker reviewed key aspects of the NYS CFP's mission and process.

The Commissioner announced that through a major collaborative effort of the members of the NYS CFP, New York State will be the first state in the nation to accept the new WIC Vegetables and Fruits Checks at farmers' markets.

Dot Connector #1

Initiative: WIC Vegetable and Fruit Checks at farmers' markets

Contact: NYS Department of Health/Division of Nutrition

Partners: NYS Department of Health, NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets, Farmers' Market Federation

Issue: Partners saw the need and the opportunity to increase access to fresh, local nutritious food by WIC participants and at the same time support the local communities and economies.

Process: Through collaborative efforts of NYS CFP members and staff, the farm community and nutrition educators, the partner agencies drew up agreements, secured funding, held trainings to enroll farmers, and initiated a public education campaign.

Result: NYS became the first state in nation to initiate this program! In just the first few months of operation, 117 farmers were enrolled in the program and are vending at 194 markets. WIC participants now have increased options of where to use benefits to purchase nutritious, fresh, local produce.

NYS CFP members provided presentations regarding their ongoing efforts to achieve the mission of the NYS CFP. In summary:

Key Issue Area 1) Maximizing participation in food assistance and nutrition programs: Council members discussed initiatives such as the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance's (OTDA) new online program: *myBenefits* (www.mybenefits.ny.gov) which is a quick and easy way for people to find answers about New York State's programs and services, to find out if they are eligible for benefits such as Food Stamps/SNAP*, and in many areas of the state to apply for the Food Stamp Program/SNAP online.

Key Issue Area 2) Strengthening the connection between local food products and consumers: Among many other actions taken to address this key issue area, the New York State Education Department facilitates the introduction to fresh, local and nutritious food by children in schools through programs such as the USDA Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program. Overall, it is getting administratively easier for schools to purchase and incorporate more farm fresh products into school meals.

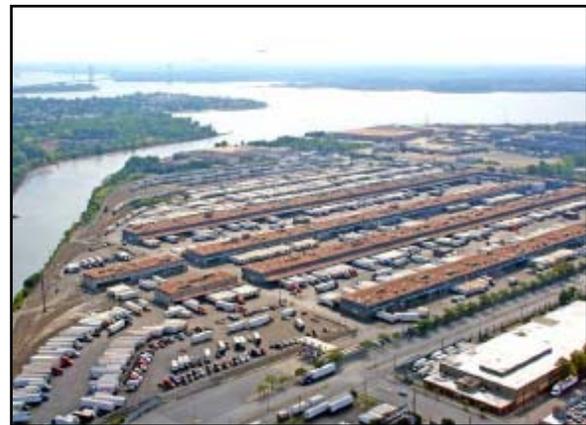
Key Issue Area 3) Supporting efficient and profitable agricultural food production and retail food infrastructure: Discussion included, but was not limited to, how re-energizing the "Pride of New York" branding program, food safety and safe food-handling practices, marketplace incentives, and the "Healthy Food, Healthy Communities Initiative" will contribute to strengthening New York State's food industry.

Key Issue Area 4) Increasing consumer awareness and knowledge about healthy eating; and improving consumer access to safe and nutritious food: Most notably, a web-based inventory of food and nutrition programs available throughout New York State is being developed. This online program shall serve as a resource center linking community members to an array of available food and nutrition services.

Site visits of the Food Bank for NYC and Hunts Point Terminal Produce Market in the Bronx occurred preceding the meeting during which:

Dr. Lucy Cabrera, CEO of the Food Bank for NYC provided the history and mission of the Food Bank and explained the growing need for such programs in our communities. Notably, the Food Bank for NYC spends up to \$500,000 on New York State produce in an attempt to provide fresh, nutritious food to the over 1,000 emergency food programs in the area.

Matthew D'Arrigo, Co-President of Hunts Point Terminal Produce Cooperative Association discussed the urgent need for upgrading the market structures and redesigning traffic flow in order to run a more efficient and environmentally sound market. Hunts Point Terminal Market is the largest wholesale distribution center in the country handling over 3.3 billion pounds of produce annually, equating to \$2.2 billion in sales.



Hunts Point Terminal Produce Market, Bronx

* *Food Stamp Program and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) are used interchangeably in this document. New York State has not officially adopted the federal name, SNAP, for its Food Stamp Program.*

Dot Connector #2

Initiative: Hunts Point Terminal Produce Market Rebuild

Contact: NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets

Partners: NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets, NYS Empire State Development, NYC Economic Development Corporation, Hunts Point Cooperative Distributors, producers, and buyers

Issue: The Hunts Point Terminal Produce Market was built in the 1960's and is woefully outdated and deficient from food safety, efficiency and environmental perspectives. It is a unique confluence of food policy, economic development and environmental justice issues. The cost to rebuild the market is estimated between \$300 and \$500 million and will require a funding partnership between the private sector, New York City, New York State and the federal government to be successful.

Process: NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets is working with partners and other state Departments of Agriculture to reach consensus on a design and build support at all levels of government for the project.

Result: Several meetings have been facilitated between growers; and NYC EDC has provided background information, including a tour for the NYS CFP to demonstrate the critical importance of this infrastructure for New York's food policy efforts. Stay tuned!

production, crop, environmental, and business management skills. (KIA 3)

Anu Rangarajan, Director of Cornell's Small Farms Program, Department of Horticulture discussed the many programs administered through the Small Farms Program. The mission of the Program is to foster the sustainability of diverse, thriving small farms that contribute to food security, healthy rural communities, and the environment. The vital contribution that Cornell Cooperative Extension educators make in our communities, and the Cornell organic agriculture efforts, including research and extension projects, were also discussed. (KIA 2, 3)

Olga Padilla-Zakour, Director of Food Venture Center provided an overview of the mission of the Center and examples of how the direct technical support, the education and outreach, and the research and food safety trainings provided have assisted hundreds of entrepreneurs, farmers and food companies develop commercial food products. (KIA 3)

Susan Henry, Dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALs) at Cornell University spoke of the critical relationship and commitment to New York State agriculture that CALs shares with the New York State Department of Agriculture & Markets, and now with the New York State Council on Food Policy. (KIA 1-4)

Fall Meeting

Tuesday, October 12, at Cornell University Moakley House, Ithaca

Guest speakers and the related NYS CFP Key Issue Area (KIA 1- 4) were:

Margaret Smith, Assistant Director of the Cornell Agriculture Experiment Station provided a presentation on the mission of the Cornell University College of Agriculture and Life Sciences (CALs) which includes: advancing a productive and sustainable agriculture; promoting a wise stewardship of the environment; supporting a safe, secure food supply; and fostering economic vitality. A report on opportunities and challenges for New York State due to global climate change was also presented. (KIA 3)

Tom Overton, Associate Professor of Animal Science, Cornell University explained that the dairy industry in New York produced \$2.3 billion in farm gate revenue in 2008, yet the industry faces many challenges. With strong support from CALs and programs such as Pro-Dairy, Dr. Overton described the many resources available to the dairy industry to advance their



NYS CFP fall meeting, Ithaca

A brief question and answer period was held during which guest speakers responded to inquires from the audience.

During the NYS CFP Roundtable, Council members individually shared their successes, collaborations, concerns, and new proposals for food policy in New York State. The majority of which is outlined in Section V. of this report: "Account of Progress Made in Achieving Goals".

A public comment period followed during which stakeholders presented recommendations for the NYS CFP consideration.

A site visit to Fessenden Dairy in King Ferry preceded the meeting during which:

Tim and Ronda Fessenden, operators of this sixth-generation family dairy farm described the current financial struggle they are going through to keep the business running with record low dairy prices. The Fessendens are dedicated to keeping the number of cows in balance with the land. They milk 700 cows three times a day, and produce about 5,000 gallons of milk daily. On 1,200 acres of carefully designed contours, terraces and strips they raise corn silage and alfalfa feed.

The Fessendens have also taken innovative steps to diversify their business while preserving and enriching the soil for future generations. They have implemented an award-winning waste management system that recycles animal manure solids into heat-treated bedding for cows, or is turned into certified organic compost; and have engineered a system to manage the liquid nutrients and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 31 times!



Tim Fessenden and the NYS CFP

WORKGROUP MEETINGS

The members of the NYS CFP agreed in 2008 to break out into workgroups by the Key Issue Areas (1-4). The workgroups periodically met throughout the spring of 2009 to discuss policy priorities that reflect current public and private interests; tactics used to effectuate change; underlying obstacles that need to be addressed; and collaboration potential.

While many members, or their representatives, participate in more than one workgroup, the general structure of the workgroups consists of:

1) Maximizing participation in food and nutrition assistance programs: Linda Bopp; John Evers; Jack Kennedy; Florence Reed; Jonathan Thomson

2) Strengthening the connection between local food products and consumers: Raymond Denniston; Diane Eggert; John Evers; Frances O'Donnell; Liz Neumark; Mindy Bockstein; Jerry Cosgrove

3) Supporting efficient and profitable agricultural food production and food retail infrastructure: Julie Suarez; Dr. Mike Hoffmann; Eleanor Wilson; Bruce Both; Senators Darrel Aubertine and Catharine Young; Jerry Cosgrove; Bob McNary

4) Increasing consumer awareness and knowledge about healthy eating; improving consumer access to safe and nutritious foods: Mary Warr Cowans; Eleanor Wilson; Cathryn Mizbani; Ellen Anderson; Ellen Deutsch; Jonathan Thomson

Consequently, Council members are now in a better position to use the extensive networks and resources represented as well as to be a resource for others. These interactions culminated in dynamic collaborative efforts that are outlined in Section V. "Account of Progress Made in Achieving Goals" or featured in the "Dot Connector" series of this report.

NYS CFP INTERN

Through a joint effort by the Department of Health, Division of Nutrition and the Department of Agriculture & Markets, a public health graduate student, Christine Ross, was brought on as the Assistant to the Council on Food Policy for May through August, 2009. Ms. Ross' main project was the development of an online inventory of available food and nutrition services in New York State.

PRIORITIES FOR CHILD NUTRITION AND WIC REAUTHORIZATION ACT

In July, the NYS CFP submitted to Governor Paterson 'Priorities for the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act' (Appendix a.). The NYS CFP priorities focus on strong federal legislation under four categories: School Breakfast and National School Lunch Programs; Summer Food Service Programs; Child and Adult Care Food Programs; and WIC and Farmers' Market Nutrition Programs. The NYS CFP asked that the Governor to advance their recommendations to our Congressional delegation. NYS CFP 'Priorities' can be found on our website. Go to www.nyscfp.org and click on "July 2009".

OUTREACH

There is a great deal of public interest in the NYS CFP. Council members are often asked to speak at events, provide interviews, facilitate workshops or participate in other forms of outreach. Below are examples of the outreach and facilitated public input that Council members participate in.

- The NYS CFP website (www.nyscfp.org) regularly receives and responds to food policy inquiries from the public.

- Commissioner Hooker gave an 'Agriculture and Council on Food Policy' presentation at the Cornell Agribusiness Conference in Ithaca and at the American Farmland Trust: Farm, Food and Energy Conference in Syracuse.

- Commissioner Hooker, Ray Denniston, Mary Warr Cowans, Diane Eggert, John Evers and Mike Hoffmann attended the Cornell Applied Research and Extension Program Council Conference in Ithaca and conducted roundtable discussions to receive input from the conference attendees.

- NYS CFP Coordinator Ann McMahon provided comments at the Northeast Organic Farming Association (NOFA) Conference in Rochester during the 'Food Policy Council' session.

- Ray Denniston reported to the New York Farm to School Coordinating Committee in February and again in October about specific school meal and nutrition recommendations being considered.

- Commissioner Hooker and/or Ann McMahon represented the Council during multiple phone interviews including with the Department of City and Regional Planning at the University of North Carolina and the Institute for Food and Development Policy, who request information on the mission, progress and challenges of the NYS CFP.

- John Evers, Executive Director of the Food Bank Association, gave a presentation at Cornell Cooperative Extension 'Nutritional Concerns' Conference in Albany. Mr. Evers highlighted the increased efforts of the Food Bank network with Council members and others to obtain fresh, local produce whenever possible.

- Commissioner Hooker spoke at the Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Working Group (NESAWG) Conference and discussed the role of the NYS CFP in shaping well-informed food policies.

Overall, there is an equal need to continuously spread awareness about the mission of the NYS CFP as there is for community members and stakeholders to provide feedback and input to the NYS CFP about food policy concerns.

Dot Connector #3

Initiative: Fresh - Food - Banks

Contact: Food Bank Association of NYS

Partners: Food Bank Association, Department of Agriculture & Markets, Farm Bureau and producers

Issue: Food Bank Association is committed to finding new ways to connect people in need to the freshest, most nutritious food possible through both donations and purchasing efforts.

Process: By networking with NYS CFP members and agency staff, many phone calls and farm visits were made, logistical issues resolved, and ultimately the generosity of our great farm community poured in.

Result: In both 2008 and 2009, New York State farmers donated more to food banks than any other state in the nation! In 2008 and 2009, approximately 3.97 and 3.3 million pounds (respectively) of farm product were donated to provide nutritious food to help those in need.

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II. Recommended State Food Policies

December 2009

The mission of the New York State Council on Food Policy (NYS CFP) is to recommend food policies that aim to preserve and enhance agricultural production in New York State, and ensure that all New Yorkers have adequate access to affordable, fresh and nutritious foods.

In recognition of the unprecedented economic hardship in New York State it is generally recommended that the State seek to maximize federal funding for nutrition and food programs operating in New York State. Concerted efforts to partner closely with the USDA Rural Development State Office, where many relevant federal funding opportunities originate, are intended.

Foremost, it is recommended that New York State take these significant steps:

A. Join the campaign to End Childhood Hunger by 2015

Adopt the Food Research and Action Center's (FRAC) "Essential Strategies for Achieving the President's Goal" http://www.frac.org/pdf/endingchildhunger_2015paper.pdf

B. Support a strong Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act

In addition to measures already advocated for by Governor Paterson, (May 2009) (Appendix a.) further advocate to Federal counterparts for acceptance of the priorities set forth by the NYS CFP (July 2009) (Appendix b.). NYS CFP priorities focus on federal legislation under four categories: School Breakfast and National School Lunch Programs; Summer Food Service Programs; Child and Adult Care Food Programs; and WIC and Farmers' Market Nutrition Programs.

C. Codify the New York State Council on Food Policy

Support the passage of legislation that establishes the New York State Council on Food Policy in law. Proposed legislation should mirror the existing goals and structure laid out in Executive Order No.13 "Establishing the New York State Council on Food Policy" (May 2007) with the addition of: establishing term limits for appointees; and appointing three additional members.

The following 'Recommended State Food Policies - December 2009' are not to be considered a substitute for previous recommendations, but are supplementary and often complementary. To view previous recommendations go to: www.nyscfp.org and click on 'Report to Governor'.

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Key Issue Area 1: Maximize Participation in Food and Nutrition Assistance Programs

Maximizing participation in food and nutrition assistance programs serves at least four vital functions:

1. Ensures that all New York residents have adequate access to nutritious foods regardless of income, culture, age, geographic region or other characteristics, and thus reduces hunger;
2. Provides a time-appropriate State response for New York residents experiencing food insecurity that can prevent a ripple effect leading to crisis situations;
3. Reaffirms the important role of hunger prevention programs (such as soup kitchens, food pantries, emergency shelters) serving as a safety net that provides supplemental food security needs to New York residents in urgent or recurring situations; and
4. Makes use of all funds obtainable from federal assistance programs.

Consuming nutritious food is a key link in disease prevention, including and beyond obesity and diet-related diseases. In fact, many individuals seeking food assistance that are hungry and/or food insecure may already have a compromised immune system. However, many food and nutrition assistance programs are confronted with the logistical challenge of exhausting all allocated funding and resources before meeting the increasing demand. This is exacerbated by the fact that programs are facing the reality of flat or reduced funding. Therefore, emphasis is placed on finding ways to increase access to federal programs that assist hungry or food insecure individuals.

The Food Stamp Program/SNAP alone will bring more than \$4 billion federal dollars into New York State during 2009. According to USDA, for every \$1 spent in Food Stamp/SNAP benefits, \$1.84 is generated in economic activity. This is federal money that the New York State food industry and local economies should be focused on capturing. The statewide Food Stamp Program/SNAP participation rate for fiscal year 2008 was 63 percent. If New York State enrolled every eligible person into the Food Stamp Program/SNAP an additional \$1.5 billion federal dollars would flow into the state to alleviate hunger and help our economy.

To maximize participation in food and nutrition assistance programs, it is recommended that the State:

1. Increase Public Awareness of Food and Nutrition Programs Broaden support for outreach and public awareness efforts that connect individuals or families in need to assistance programs and benefits being offered by state agencies, non-profit, and community based organizations.

- Broaden support for programs that increase public awareness about and access to assistance. Programs include: NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance's (OTDA) *myBenefits* <https://www.mybenefits.ny.gov/selfservice/>; United Way "211" Information and Referral System <http://www.211.org/>; and the Nutrition Outreach and Education Program (NOEP) <http://www.nutritionconsortium.org/FoodHelpNY.htm>.
- Explore options to advise Food Stamp/SNAP and WIC recipients of the increasing opportunities to use benefits for fresh food at farmers' markets, such as including information in the introduction literature that recipients receive when first applying for benefits or in other already scheduled mailings or notifications to recipients.
- Promote anti-hunger outreach and awareness initiatives in hospitals and health care facilities, and specifically state-operated facilities, where populations suffering from hunger or food insecurity may be predisposed to discuss such issues and accept guidance from health care personnel.

Example The nationally recognized initiative "Hunger in the Community: Ways Hospitals Can Help" has begun in Massachusetts. Under this initiative, hospital employees who process health insurance claims for patients are also helping patients apply for the Food Stamp Program/SNAP, and find local food banks. Hospitals are encouraged to start their own food banks, launch community gardens, and provide vouchers to patients who do not have enough to eat.

2. Facilitate Access to Food and Nutrition Benefits by Food Insecure Individuals Encourage the continued development and expansion of Food Stamp Program/SNAP modernization efforts and policy modifications that can expand access and increase participation, including greater use of technology, identification of barriers to enrollment and the implementation of relevant federal waivers.

3. Expand Food and Nutrition ‘Electric Benefit Transfer’ Redemption Option Urge the federal government to implement universal electronic benefit transfer (EBT) technology at fresh food markets (e.g. farmers’ markets) and outlets either legislatively or administratively.

Dot Connector # 4

Initiative: EBT Pilot Project

Contact: NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets

Partners: NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, Department of Agriculture & Markets, Farmers’ Market Federation, and farmers

Issue: Many Food Stamp/SNAP recipients live in chronically underserved rural and urban communities and neighborhoods, and either do not have adequate access to fresh, nutritious fruits and vegetables or have limited options where they can use their benefits.

Process: Through inter-agency agreements, funding was secured to run this pilot project and through negotiations with the Farmers’ Market Federation and community contacts, a series of trainings were held for farmers and vendors in pilot areas this fall. The project allocates 40 wireless EBT (electric benefit transfer) terminals to three different non-traditional produce retailers: farm stands, mobile vegetable vending vehicles and green carts (mobile sidewalk street carts).

Result: A number of terminals have been distributed to farm stands, Green Carts, and mobile markets through this pilot. In January 2010, an EBT Summit will be held at the Vegetable Growers Conference in Syracuse to recruit additional farm stands and other eligible venues for the program.

The Summit will be a combined effort of the Farmers’ Market Federation, Office of Temporary Disability Assistance, USDA/FNS, and the Nutrition Consortium of New York.



Key Issue Area 2: Strengthen the Connection between Local Food Products and Consumers

The emphasis of this key issue area is increasing access to local, nutritious foods by children, seniors, and low-income or other food insecure, high risk populations while at the same time improving community identification with New York State agricultural products.

Recommendations focus on: a) continuing to generate larger scale demand for nutritious, local foods; b) continuing to capture the present demand for nutritious, local foods; and c) identifying and pursuing opportunities for public/private collaboration that will increase consumer access to local, nutritious foods.

To strengthen the connection between local food products and consumers, it is recommended that the State:

4. Support Community and School-Based Food Security Initiatives Support initiatives that empower individuals to meet food supply needs and nutritional goals, while developing fundamental agriculture skills. Continue and increase support for community gardening; include training grants for growing, management and marketing techniques, and soil testing. School gardens can also be a key entry point for children to learn the benefits of growing and eating fresh foods. Farm to School initiatives should continue to be strongly supported.

5. Define 'Local Food' and Set Procurement Goals of Local Food It is recommended that the State facilitate the increase of local food procurement at state agencies and state-owned and supported institutions, facilities, and other state-supported meal programs by promoting procurement goals of local food at such agencies, institutions, facilities and programs.

- Accept the definition of 'local food' to mean food products that are grown and/or processed by New York citizens or businesses located within the borders of New York State. 'Regional food' refers to any food product that is raised, produced, and distributed in the locality or region in which the final product is marketed, so that the total distance that the product is transported is less than 400 miles from the origin of the product.
 - Recognize that minimizing the time and the distance that both the fresh food travels and the consumers travel can help reduce environmental pollution and increase nutritional benefits.

See 2008 Farm Bill (Section 6015, p.735) for further information on defining local and regional food http://www.usda.gov/documents/Bill_6124.pdf

- Set a goal that by 2020, 20 percent of all food and food products purchased by state agencies and state-owned facilities shall be local food products when feasible. This includes facilities for persons with mental health and developmental disabilities, correctional facilities, and public universities.
- Support and encourage the goal that by 2020, 10 percent of food and food products purchased by entities funded in part or in whole by state dollars and which spend more than \$25,000 per year on food or food products for its students, residents, or clients shall be local food when feasible. This includes, but is not limited to: public schools, child care facilities, after-school programs, nursing homes and hospitals.
- Establish that when a state contract for purchase of food or food products is to be awarded to the lowest responsible bidder, an otherwise qualified bidder who will fulfill the contract through the use of locally produced agricultural products may be given preference over other bidders. This is provided that the cost included in the bid of locally produced agricultural products is not more than 10 percent greater than the cost included in a bid that is not for locally produced agricultural products.
- When resources are available, support the development of 1) a system for state agencies and state-owned facilities that purchase food and food products to identify the percentage of locally produced agricultural products purchased throughout the fiscal year; and 2) track and report locally produced agricultural products purchased on an annual basis.
- Encourage state 'Requests for Applications' (RFAs) to include bonus points to applicants that include 'buying local' initiatives.

6. Promote Healthy School Environments Support initiatives that promote healthy lifestyles and food system awareness, and ensure that children receive nutritious well-balanced meals while at school. In addition to from providing nutritious meals for our children, school meal programs are increasingly being asked to meet the daily food security needs of low-income children, while proactively combating the current childhood obesity epidemic.

- Explore the ability to increase state contribution to school meals reimbursements by 15 cents per meal within three years. Protect the existing state contribution to Child Nutrition Programs from any further cuts.
- Promote the implementation of the Institute of Medicine (IOM) nutritional standards for school meals within current regulations as is feasible. Recognize that comprehensive implementation of the nutritional standards in schools will need to be phased in over time.

See the IOM “School Meals: Building Blocks for Healthy Children” (National Academies Press, October 2009) report here: <http://www.iom.edu/en/Reports/2009/School-Meals-Building-Blocks-for-Healthy-Children.aspx>

In the absence of national standards promoting a healthy school environment, Governor Paterson’s Healthy Schools Act, that strives to establish nutritional and dietary standards based on current scientific knowledge, continues to be supported.

- Support the collaborative efforts of the New York State Farm to School Program and the National Farm to School Program to modify the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) Fresh program. The existing DoD Fresh program offers schools and school food authorities the option to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables using USDA commodity entitlement dollars or other funds that support school meal programs. It is proposed that a revised focus of this program be on purchasing local products. (See Appendix b. for details)
- Take a proactive role to establish ‘Breakfast in the Classroom’ programs. Students who eat breakfast achieve higher test scores, have better school attendance, and have fewer classroom behavior issues. Support and encourage school to establish alternative methods of serving breakfast such as offering “Grab and Go” breakfast products, extending the time for offering breakfast and universal breakfast.

7. Support Direct Marketing Initiatives and Food System Networking Farmers’ markets, farm stands, mobile markets and other non-traditional fresh food markets provide communities with increased opportunities to connect with local food producers and fresh, nutritious products that may not be otherwise available. Additionally, direct marketing provides many local food producers with a vital source of income.

- Conduct research about strategies that connect consumers with farmers who direct market their products (i.e. farmers’ markets) that will work in rural, suburban and urban communities and with a broad base of consumers within each community. Such strategies may include various means of transportation, outreach and incentive programs.
- Continue training for both farmers and markets in production strategies and business planning that will extend the season, making New York State grown products available to consumers on a year-round basis.
- Promote food system networking. Encourage and support agency, independent and/or community-based networking (online or other) that aim to connect local food producers to consumers and markets, that facilitate wholesale and/or aggregate purchasing.

Example The NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets is currently developing a ‘New York Food and Farm Online Directory’ that will serve as an online networking tool. The directory will allow everyone from consumers to commercial buyers to easily search for, and identify sources of, New York food and agricultural products. It will also enable specialty crop farmers and other specialty crop businesses to quickly and easily establish on-line listings to make contacts and timely information updates. Other online tools exist such as: New York Market Maker <http://nymarketmaker.cornell.edu/>; and New York Food Trader <http://www.nyfoodtrader.org/>



Key Issue Area 3: Supporting Efficient and Profitable Agricultural Food Production and Retail Food Infrastructure

This is a 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 communities and neighborhoods. By supporting our agricultural and retail food industries through the current economic crisis, the State will be investing in our future health and economic security.

Emphasis is placed on the importance of good jobs for urban and rural community members and residents. Unemployment and underemployment leading to poverty are among the root causes of hunger, food insecurity and poor health. Creation and retention of good jobs contributes to building stronger, healthier communities.

The NYS CFP encourages the state to seek federal funding to supplement existing state funds or incentive programs, thus maximizing dollars entering the state for food system development. Concerted efforts to partner more closely with the USDA Rural Development State Office, where many relevant federal funding opportunities originate, are underway.

To support efficient and profitable agricultural food production and retail food infrastructure, it is recommended that the State:

8. Promote Locally Grown and Produced Food Products Strive for consistent consumer messages that convey the increased nutritional, economic, ecological, social and food safety benefits of purchasing local products.

- Support initiatives that elevate the presence of the Pride of New York program. Pride of New York is a labeling campaign that identifies New York State grown and produced food products. Initiatives include those that expand producer and farmer affiliation; and that expand industry partnerships with the Pride of New York program.
- Evaluate the marketing potential of using 'food miles' or 'foodprint' information in retail outlets to inform consumers about the distance foods have travelled and the economic and environmental importance of reducing food miles by purchasing local products.
- Designate a 'Buy Local' week during peak harvest in New York State. Designate one week when individuals, families, restaurants, institutions and markets are encouraged to celebrate and promote the benefits of fresh, nutritious agricultural food products, agricultural land as a natural resource, and local farmers.

Dot Connector # 5

Initiative: Buy Local Week, Madison County

Contact: Madison County Agriculture Economic Development (AED)

Partners: Madison County AED, Price Chopper, Department of Agriculture & Markets, Cornell Cooperative Extension, farmers, restaurants and many more!

Issue: This event was developed to highlight the benefits of 'buying local' to Madison County's economy, environment, and agricultural community.

Process: Madison County AED organized three major events during Buy Local Week: Local Foods Showcase, Fresh! Gala, and Open Farm Day. Price Chopper was instrumental in promoting and facilitating the Buy Local Week. Tickets to the gala were available, and farm 'passports' were distributed at the Price Chopper stores. Media coverage and invited dignitaries added to the success.

Result: Restaurants showcased local products on menus. More than 1,000 visitors were recorded stopping at the 24 farms and 3 farmers' markets in a 6-hour time span. Farms reported sales of over \$500 on the Open Farm Day. This event forged strong relationships between the community, the producers, local restaurants, and grocery stores.

See more here: <http://madisoncountvagriculture.com/buylocalweek>

9. Improve the Production, Distribution, and Marketing Aspects of the Food Industry

- Support sustainable production strategies and research that help farmers remain competitive and viable such as organic, integrated pest management (IPM), season extension technologies, and nutrient management programs.
- Consider implications of a warming climate and how New York agriculture can best adapt to these changes, including evaluation of new crop varieties, assessment of impacts of severe weather events, and adequate preparation for the arrival of new pests.
- Recognize the value of and support the re-development of, the vital Hunts Point Terminal Produce Market as the major source of fresh produce for the New York City metropolitan region.
- Continue to support the development of the Wholesale Farmers' Market at Hunts Point in partnership with growers, the Department of Agriculture & Markets, New York City and the Council on the Environment of New York City.

Dot Connector # 6

Initiative: New York City Wholesale Farmers' Market

Contact: NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets

Partners: NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets, Council on the Environment of New York City (CENYC), farmers

Issue: The NYC Wholesale Farmers' Market was recently relocated to the New Fulton Fish Market at Hunts Point in the Bronx, which resulted in fewer vendors and products at a time when the demand for locally grown fresh produce is actually growing exponentially in the City.

Process: The Department of Agriculture & Markets completed a study to examine the need for and potential of establishing a wholesale farmers' market in New York City in December 2007. The study determined that there was a strong interest in such a market from both buyers and sellers of local products. In 2009, the Department issued a request for proposals to provide professional management services for the Wholesale Farmers' Market at the New Fulton Fish Market.

Result: In September 2009, the Department of Agriculture & Markets awarded a \$296,000 grant to CENYC to manage, promote and expand the city's only wholesale farmers' market operating at the New Fulton Fish Market at Hunts Point. Commissioner Hooker said in his announcement: *"We have identified one of the leading farmers' market administrators in the country to manage this market and make it into a premier destination for retailers, restaurants and other small-scale wholesale buyers in the City."*

- Support initiatives that add both economic and nutritional value to New York State agricultural products through the development of new products (such as sauces, jams, juices, etc.). This includes processing and packaging initiatives that help make fresh foods more accessible and convenient. Recognize that minimally processed products often preserve optimal nutritional benefit.

Example Champlain Valley Specialties of NY, Inc has successfully developed a convenient, healthy snack food that is available year-round and made from local products...and kids love it! 'Grab Apples', the single serving size packages of fresh apple slices, meet the nutritional needs for schools. NYC School Food now purchases truckloads of apple slices from the company. Champlain Valley Specialties has been recognized for having superior quality and freshness, more flexibility with deliveries, and competitive pricing. The company, located on the western shore of Lake Champlain, Essex County, employs approximately 50 people, and is positioned for growth.

- Recognize that the Food Venture Center at Cornell is positioned to assist with this effort; as well as community kitchens located around the state.
- Encourage New York food processors and facilities, and specifically those that receive state economic development assistance, to incorporate New York grown or produced food products.
- Encourage food processors to use the FDA healthy food labeling guidelines (April 2008).

Food Labeling Guide, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Food and Drug Administration Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition Office of Nutrition, Labeling and Dietary Supplements <http://www.fda.gov/Food/GuidanceComplianceRegulatoryInformation/GuidanceDocuments/FoodLabelingNutrition/FoodLabelingGuide/default.htm>

10. Support a Positive Business Climate for the Agricultural and Food Industries Approximately 1,000 out of the 36,000 New York State farms currently produce more than 80 percent of the food grown in New York. The State should act as a catalyst to the development and sustainability of the broad spectrum of the food and agriculture industry, including our large producers.

- Support agricultural economic development by finalizing the regulations and guidelines for the Upstate Agricultural Economic Development Fund and authorizing funding of up to \$30 million in state fiscal year 2010-2011.
- Provide increased incentives for businesses including start-up financing; assistance for infrastructure; and assistance with administrative burdens that may impede growth such as labor, water, sewer, energy, zoning, taxes and other regulatory issues.
- Broaden eligibility of state economic development programs and tax incentives to ensure that farms and added value processing businesses can qualify.
- Ensure that state incentives for business development are linked to appropriate social, economic and environmental goals.

Example Guidelines being developed for the Healthy Food/Healthy Community Initiative (revolving loan and grant fund for food market development) should stipulate, beyond existing criteria, that all entities receiving state funds:

- a) be required to accept benefits from state and federal aid programs (e.g. food stamp, WIC);
- b) reserve at least 75 percent of the food market floor space for food items;
- c) pay wages and contributions for benefits that are no lower than those prevailing in the supermarket industry in the region; and
- d) participate in a “First Source” or similar hiring system that link employers with community residents and low-income New Yorkers seeking employment and career opportunities.

- Form a sub-committee or focus group to explore in greater detail the role the creation of quality/good jobs would have throughout New York State’s food system and the economy. A ‘Food System and Jobs’ sub-committee or focus group should include a diverse range of stakeholders including employers and employees that represent all levels of the food system including production, distribution, marketing and retail.
- Strongly urge the Federal government to re-structure the current dairy pricing system with a long-term plan that will stabilize and support pricing in a manner that reflects the true significance of the Northeast dairy industry to our community, our food security and our economy.
- Strongly urge the Federal government to pass Comprehensive Immigration Reform. Sole reliance on guest worker programs, such as H-2A, with complex applications and administration, are not a long-term solution to meet pressing agricultural and industry labor needs required to stay viable and competitive.



Commissioner's Statement: Dairy Pricing

"Legislative Responses to the Dairy Crisis: Reforming the Pricing Structure" August 2009 * Batavia, New York

Commission Patrick Hooker, NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets testified, in part, that:

"Dairy prices have plummeted in 2009 and dairy farmers are now coping with price levels not seen since the 1970's. Based on recent numbers provided by Farm Credit, dairy farmers are losing about \$4 per each hundredweight of milk that they produce. This means that they are losing as much as \$100 per cow per month. For a farm milking 100 cows, that is \$10,000 per month and well over \$100,000 for the year. **Total receipts for dairy farmers in New York are estimated to be down almost \$700 million, a whopping 30% decrease.**"

Commissioner Hooker continued:

"Dairy is the cornerstone of the Northeast's regional food system. New York State and the Northeast have a long history of supplying fresh and nutritious fluid milk and other dairy products to consumers in our metropolitan areas and up and down the eastern seaboard. As Congress and the Obama administration recognize the importance of sustainable local and regional food systems, they must also recognize that for the Northeast, this must include the dairy farms that **supply milk and dairy products to the over 50 million consumers within the region.**"



Key Issue Area 4: Increasing Consumer Awareness and Knowledge about Healthy Eating; Improving Consumer Access to Safe and Nutritious Food

Improving public health and the nutritional status of New Yorkers is at the heart of this key issue area. The health of New Yorkers has changed significantly in the past three decades with adult obesity rates doubling and childhood obesity rates tripling. The epidemic of overweight and obesity has become one of the most critical public health threats across age groups, gender, racial/ethnic populations and socioeconomic groups.

Helping New Yorkers to become healthier by reducing or preventing illness and chronic disease is the best way to reduce health care costs and ensure New York's future economic security with healthy and productive citizens.

According to a report from the State Comptroller:

- Obesity-related medical expenditures in New York State for children are \$302 million and \$7.6 billion for adults annually.
- Approximately \$6.2 billion of the adult obesity-related medical expenditure is publicly funded through Medicaid or Medicare.

Current nutrition and physical activity in New York State falls short of national goals. Changing this trend for the future – helping more New Yorkers achieve good health by attaining and/or maintaining a healthy weight; accessing healthy affordable foods; improving lifelong healthy eating; and increasing lifelong physical activity requires action to make it easier for New Yorkers to achieve these standards.

To increase consumer awareness and knowledge about healthy eating and improve consumer access to safe and nutritious food, it is recommended that the State:

11. Proactively Address the Issue of Obesity and Diet-related Diseases Prevent and reduce obesity and diet-related diseases by using professionally recommended, evidence-based prevention initiatives and education that focus on cultural and environmental change.

Example NYS Department of Health's initiative: "Creating Healthy Places to Live, Work and Play" <http://www.health.state.ny.us/funding/rfa/0809170456/index.htm>; and Governor Paterson's Program Bill #21: Calorie Posting Bill http://www.ny.gov/governor/press/press_0518091.html.

- Expand eligibility to USDA's SNAP - Ed Nutritional Education program to encompass all New York State children ages 2 -18 who are at risk for poor nutrition, episodic hunger, physical inactivity and becoming overweight or obese. Target and provide all at risk children in the state with consistent nutritional education, messages and promotions using existing SNAP-Ed curriculum, materials, and strategies in multiple settings. Settings include, but are not limited to: day care, schools, WIC clinics, emergency food locations, summer feeding sites, after-school programs, youth programs, and YMCA's. Nutrition education programs are currently available only to Food Stamp Program/SNAP eligible or participating families. Funding to expand SNAP-Ed is limited by the requirement to put up a 50% local share match to draw down federal SNAP-Ed dollars.
- Advocate that health care providers incorporate and/or increase obesity prevention and awareness messaging to patients and refer early for medical nutrition therapy. Work with state medical association to identify provider-friendly methods to accomplish this.
- Limit food marketing to children, and consider supporting a national ban on advertising targeting young children ages 2 - 8 on television (this is effectively done in Europe). According to a study from the Center for Science in the Public Interest, 79 percent or 8 out of 10 food ads on the most popular children's television station are for foods of poor nutritional quality.

See the CSPI November, 2009 report here: <http://cspinet.org/new/pdf/pledgereport.pdf>

- Support the coordinated nutrition education efforts being conducted by emergency food programs. Efforts are aimed at preventing or managing diet-related diseases, improving cooking skills and food safety while encouraging independence from emergency feeding programs.
- Encourage entities funded in part or in whole by state dollars, and which spend more than \$25,000 per year on food or food products for its students, residents, or clients, to begin phasing in the Institute of Medicine (IOM) nutritional standards in state fiscal year 2010-2011.

12. Increase Access to Safe and Nutritious Foods by Underserved Communities and Food Insecure Individuals Access to nutritious food may be a physical challenge for many, such as in a food desert. However, access to nutritious food is also a pronounced and profound financial challenge for more individuals than ever before. Access to nutrition education, safe food handling, and food preparation techniques are also key links in creating a healthier future.

- Support transportation efforts that facilitate bringing people to markets, such as increased busing, as well as bringing the market to people, such as mobile markets.
- Foster Food Bank partnerships with all agricultural industries and trade groups including pork, dairy, and, beef and seek opportunities in which food banks and farmers will achieve mutual benefit.

Example Representatives from the Minnesota Soybean Research & Promotion Council, Minnesota Pork Board and Minnesota Milk Producers Association announced the donation of approximately 85,000 pounds of pork and more than 36,000 pounds of cheese at a news conference with the governor. See the story here: www.MNfarmershelpingfamilies.com

- Research and support effective ‘food rescue’ practices that collect and transport excess food from donors (restaurants, cafeterias etc.) to emergency feeding sites.

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Food Bank of NYC (June 2009)

III. Recommended Changes

Below are the recommended changes to the New York State Council on Food Policy (NYS CFP). These changes will assist in carrying out the stated purpose and goals of the NYS CFP.

○ **Codify the New York State Council on Food Policy**

The NYS CFP recommends that the Governor support the passage of legislation that establishes the New York State Council on Food Policy in law. Proposed legislation should mirror the existing goals and structure laid out in Executive Order No.13 “Establishing the New York State Council on Food Policy” (May 2007) with the addition of: establishing term limits for appointees; and appointing three additional members.

The NYS CFP recommends that the Governor appoint: the Commissioner of New York State Office of General Services (ex-officio), a full-time farmer, and an environmental justice advocate to the NYS CFP. The additional members are seen as fundamental to comprehensive food policy development and successful implementation.

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

Appointee term limits are in effect a way to garner further stakeholder involvement and bring diverse expertise to the NYS CFP. This action will help the NYS CFP adapt to changes in the political, social and economic climate on a predetermined basis.

Recommended appointee terms are as follows: appointed members shall be appointed for a term of three years and may serve until their successors are chosen provided, however, that of the members first appointed, not more than six shall be appointed for a term of one year, not more than five shall be appointed for a term of two years, and not more than five shall be appointed for a term of three years.

○ **Appointment of the three additional members to the NYS CFP mentioned above stands on its own in the event that NYS CFP legislation is not passed.**

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IV. Progress Made in Achieving Goals

The most remarkable progress made by NYS CFP membership, is the ever-increasing coordination of efforts and ideas across the spectrum of food system initiatives. NYS CFP members have, in essence, exponentially increased their working networks since commencement. An account of this type of progress would be impossible to harness, yet it is indispensable, and should not be underestimated.

In December 2008, the NYS CFP provided state food policy recommendations and action items to Governor Paterson. The previous food policy recommendations are available in entirety on the NYS CFP website. Go to: www.nyscfp.org and click on 'Report to Governor'.

Below is just a snapshot of progress that the NYS CFP has made in addressing the NYS CFP "Recommended State Food Policies - December 2008" (*in italics*). More examples of progress are available on the NYS CFP website. Go to: www.nyscfp.org and click on Activities / Summer Meeting 2009 / Hot Topics (http://www.nyscfp.org/docs/hot_topic.pdf).

December 2008

Key Issue Area 1: Maximizing Participation in Food and Nutrition Assistance Programs

- New York State has taken significant steps to maximize participation in food and nutrition assistance programs, especially the Food Stamp/SNAP, the largest program by far. Between September 2008 and September 2009, enrollment in the Food Stamp Program/SNAP increased by 252,896 households and 477,307 individuals. This brings New York to record levels of participation and as of September 2009, we are helping 1,353,360 households and 2,555,081 individuals. These numbers translate to more than \$153 million in monthly benefits coming into the state's economy. As program growth has skyrocketed, it should be noted that the state has managed to maintain a high payment accuracy rate despite the pressure.
- The NYS Department of Health reports that the monthly caseload of the Women, Infant and Children (WIC) Program for the period October 2008 - September 2009 showed a traditional seasonal decline of caseload from 519,000 in October 2008 to a low of 508,000 in February 2009. From February 2009 forward, the WIC Program caseload steadily increased to a high of 523,500 in August 2009. This is an increase of 15,500 participants/month or 3%; and an annualized growth rate of 6%.

Since August 2009, WIC caseload has remained relatively constant due to a recent procurement for WIC service providers effective October 2009. This new contract period will expand the local infrastructure to permit continued increases in caseload, with the goal of serving 575,000 participants by October 2010. Further caseload expansion is expected for the duration of the 5 year contract period to a goal of 50 percent of the estimated eligible population, or approximately 700,000/month.

Recommendation # 1: Public Awareness and Education *Increase public awareness of and education about assistance programs and benefits. Expand collaborative efforts with existing advocacy networks.*

- Significant outreach continues to be conducted by a network of grassroots organizations statewide and through media efforts. Several times during 2008 a series of TV and radio ads were run upstate to educate the public about the myBenefits website. These ads complemented a national effort by USDA aimed at promoting the Food Stamp Program/SNAP in New York City. The NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) recorded a significant jump in myBenefits screenings during the time the ads ran compared with the 45 day-period immediately preceding. In some areas the number of screenings more than doubled.

- OTDA's myBenefits website <https://www.mybenefits.ny.gov/selfservice/> and the "Resources for Working Families" webpage provide easy access to a wide range of nutrition assistance programs and other economic supports. AccessNYC provides a similar tool for residents of NYC and the 211 system is being implemented in more areas of the state.

Recommendation # 2: Increase Collaboration *Increase collaboration and consistency among State agencies and not-for-profit organizations administering assistance programs.*

- Efforts continue to decrease the burden of the finger-imaging requirement from the Food Stamp Program/SNAP application process throughout New York. More applicants are offered telephone interviews in lieu of face-to-face interviews at initial application; and overall, fewer people are being subjected to finger-imaging.
- New York State runs a state-supervised, locally-administered Food Stamp Program/SNAP. OTDA is working closely with local districts to streamline systems, apply technology and improve access. Through the implementation of telephone interviews at recertification, local districts were able to develop the capacity and processes to use this approach. This approach has positioned more and more districts to expand use of phone interviews for other situations.
- Low-income households can apply for the Food Stamp Program/SNAP online with the help of a community based organization in 23 counties and can apply on their own from any computer with internet access in ten upstate counties. New counties will continue to be added and this option is scheduled to be available statewide in late 2010. The Food Stamp Program/SNAP application will be the springboard for future online program application options.
- The myBenefits website now allows anyone with access to the internet to screen for 14 programs including Food Stamp/SNAP, WIC, school meals and other economic supports such as HEAP, health insurance, temporary assistance and EPIC. New programs will continue to be added in the months to come.

Recommendation # 3: Resources at Food Banks and Emergency Feeding Programs *Ensure that food assistance and emergency feeding programs have adequate quality (nutritional value) and stable quantities of resources needed to meet demands.*

- See 'Dot Connector # 3: Fresh-Food-Bank' (p. 5)
- NYS Department of Health administers the Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program (HPNAP), which requires food banks to spend 10 percent of the HPNAP funds they receive to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables, and 2 percent of funds to purchase low-fat fluid milk, and to purchase locally, where possible. In FY 08-09, \$3.16 million was spent on purchasing fresh and where possible, local produce. This represented more than double the requirements.
- United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) and Smithfield foods launched a joint 'Feed the Hungry Program'. The program is intended to bring much needed assistance to the growing number of people facing hunger and food insecurity in communities nationwide. The UFCW and Smithfield plan to donate at least 20 million servings of food to various food banks nationwide over the next three years.

Recommendation # 4: Food Assistance at Markets and Outlets *Increase the number of markets and outlets that are capable of receiving food stamps and other food assistance currency.*

- See 'Dot Connector #4: EBT Pilot Project' (p. 8)

Key Issue Area 2: Strengthening the Connection between Local Food Products and Consumers

Recommendation # 5: Institutional Purchasing *Create networking systems for New York farmers and producers to provide fresh, nutritious food products for State institutions and other food service programs.*

- NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets is currently developing a ‘New York Food and Farm Online Directory’ that will serve as an online networking tool. The directory will allow everyone from consumers to commercial buyers to easily search for and identify sources of New York food and agricultural products. It will also enable farmers and other businesses to quickly and easily establish on-line listings to make contacts and timely information updates.

Recommendation # 6: Local Foods in Schools *Support initiatives in schools that promote healthy, local food choices that improve overall child nutrition.*

- NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets, Farm to School Program provided educational and fun promotional material to more than 60 school districts around New York State, reaching more than 70,000 children to help schools celebrate the annual ‘Farm to You Fest!’ (New York Harvest for New York Kids week). The material was developed in conjunction with the NYS Farm to School Coordinating Committee and focuses on the benefits of local agriculture and healthy eating habits. For details see: <http://www.agmkt.state.ny.us/f2s/index.html>

Recommendation # 7: Healthy School Environment *Ensure that children are receiving nutritious, well balanced meals in schools.*

- The Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP) is a USDA federally-funded program, administered in New York State by the State Education Department (SED). Through this program, SED provides all students in participating schools with a variety of fresh fruits and vegetables, free of charge during their school day. New York State received \$1,730,384 to reach 26,828 students for the 2008-2009 school year. For the 2009-2010 school year, New York State received \$2,967,352 which will reach approximately 42,390 children. Elementary or secondary schools participate in the program, the majority of which have at least 50 percent of its students eligible for free or reduced price meals. The FFVP, through promoting healthier eating, is an important component of combating childhood obesity and creating healthier individuals.
- In 2009, USDA changed regulations and now allows for minimally processed (cut, sliced, diced) fresh produce to be use in the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program at schools. The NYS Farm to School Coordinating Committee strongly supported this and provided pertinent information to state and federal entities reviewing the regulations.

Recommendation # 8: Resources to Support Local Purchasing *Assemble, disseminate and encourage adoption/utilization of resources that will support purchasing and serving of fresh, local products at schools.*

- NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets, Farm to School Program has developed a purchasing guide for school food service professionals. The purchasing guide converts typical farm-fresh purchasing units (pounds, bushels, etc.) into traditional school serving sizes as illustrated below.

Food as Purchased	Count Size	Purchase Unit	Servings per Purchase Unit	Serving Size per Meal Contribution	Purchase Units for 100 Servings
Carrots	50 lbs. per bushel	Pound	5.2	1/2 cup raw vegetable strips	19.3

Recommendation # 9: Community Purchasing Support leadership and infrastructure development of community food security programs and networks.

- NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets initiated a Community Gardens Capacity Building Grant Program in 2009. This pilot program awarded a total of \$50,000 in grants to fund membership, leadership, and organizational development in community gardens around the state.

Recommendation # 10: Farmers' Markets Encourage more permanent farmers' markets in more neighborhoods.

- The Farmers' Market Federation of NY is revising their publication: "A Guide to Developing a Community Farmers' Market". This guide is a tool to assist market organizers, farmers and communities to develop sustainable farmers' markets. The manual will be published on the Federation website: www.nyfarmersmarket.com.
- In November, 2009, the NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets awarded grants to farmers' markets throughout New York State to construct, reconstruct, improve, expand or rehabilitate their markets. Grants included funding to make farmers' markets more accessible and to support permanent farmers' markets. For example, the Rochester Public Market (Monroe County) was awarded a grant to improve customer access and use of the year-round, three days a week market by providing a shuttle to transport customers from off-site parking, as well as a tram/stop covered station to protect customers from the elements while waiting for the shuttle.
- The Farmers' Market Federation partners with the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene on the Health Bucks Program. The goal of the program is to reduce the obesity rates in three key areas of New York City: Bronx, Brooklyn and East Harlem, by increasing access to fresh fruits and vegetables. Through the District Public Health Offices, the program distributes \$2 Health Buck coupons to be used to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables from farmers at participating farmers' markets. Coupons are distributed through partnering organizations, Cornell University Cooperative Extension, and participating farmers' markets. The coupons are also used as Food Stamp/SNAP incentives at participating farmers' markets. In 2008, 112,919 Health Bucks were distributed. The Health Bucks were valid at over 50 farmers' markets and accepted by over 60 participating farmers. Customer response was overwhelming, as redemption rates soared to 70% overall.
- See 'Dot Connector #1: WIC Vegetable and Fruit Check Program at New York State Farmers' Market' (p. 2)

Key Issue Area 3: Supporting Efficient and Profitable Agriculture Food Production and Retail Food Infrastructure

- Empire State Development is working with NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets on the Guidelines and Application for the Upstate Agriculture Economic Development Fund. The purpose of the program is to enhance on-farm production and also food processing/market opportunities.
- NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets is administering the 'Specialty Crop Block Grant Program'. This program will provide \$900,000 through grants. The purpose is to enhance the competitiveness of specialty crops by creating partnerships; fostering innovation; increasing efficiencies and reducing costs; promoting and developing new/existing markets; reaching consumers in rural, suburban and urban communities; and ensuring the long term viability of New York's specialty crop agricultural businesses and food systems. (Specialty crops include: fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, nursery crops, floriculture, maple syrup, honey, herbs, Christmas trees, and vegetable seeds.)

Recommendation # 11: Buy Local Expand "buy local" partnerships within the food industry, such as the Pride of New York program and other regional efforts, to meet demand for local preference.

- At the New York State Fair in Syracuse, the NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets opened two restaurants that serve only New York State food products. Its mission and vision in this endeavor is to promote New York agriculture and to introduce Fairgoers to a wide variety of top quality New York made, grown, or raised food products.

- NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets successfully negotiated with HMS Host, the vendor for 12 of the New York State Thruway Authority's 27 travel plazas, to replace apples produced out of the state with fresh, locally grown New York State apples. HMS Host will now offer McIntosh, Cortland, Gala, Ginger Gold and Macoun varieties as ready-to-eat single units and in half-bushel totes year-round in the convenience stores of 12 travel plazas.
- See 'Dot Connector #5: Buy Local Week, Madison County' (p. 11)

Recommendation # 12: NYS Food Industry Address ways to improve production, distribution and marketing of, and increase demand for NYS food products.

- See 'Dot Connector #2: Hunts Point Terminal Produce Market Rebuild' (p. 3)
- See 'Dot Connector #6: New York City Wholesale Farmers' Market' (p. 12)
- NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets, Pride of NY Marketing Division, and Farm to School Program coordinated the promotion of New York grown and produced products through wholesale food distributors. Nine major wholesale food distributors, selling to more than 300 school districts, printed sales flyers promoting New York products.

Recommendation # 13: Positive Business Climate Keep a positive business climate in New York by addressing obstacles to and methods for easing food and agriculture business development in NYS.

- NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets has assisted in negotiations with the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation and the legislature on raising a statewide ban on the sale of black bass for human consumption. In cooperation with the USDA/APHIS, the Department has carried a federal program for providing free fish health testing for Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia (VHS). The Department also received \$56,777 in ARRA grants to reimburse aquaculture producers for increased feed costs from 2008.

Recommendation # 14: Marketing Obstacles Address obstacles to marketing nutritious food products in underserved areas (urban and rural) such as transportation/distribution issues, and lack of access to grocery stores and supermarkets.

- Empire State Development has been collaborating with the Governor's Office and the NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets on the development and roll-out of the Healthy Food/Healthy Communities Initiative. This initiative will feature a \$10 million revolving loan fund to develop food markets in underserved communities around the state.
- United Food and Commercial Workers Local (UFCW) 1500's Building Blocks Project has been working on the State and City level to promote good food, good jobs and good health through creating programs that will preserve and develop supermarkets that meet good job and community standards. For more information on UFCW local 1500's Building Blocks Project please visit <http://buildingblocksproject.org/home/>.

Recommendation # 15: Food Production Capacity Explore ways to increase utilization of existing food production capacity regionally.

- See 'Fall Meeting' (p.3) for examples of initiatives supported by Cornell University and the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences.
- Empire State Development works with local economic development groups, agriculture support groups and the NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets to design and implement innovative agriculture development programs for farmers and end market opportunities. See examples at: Summer Meeting / Hot Topics http://www.nyscfp.org/docs/hot_topic.pdf

Key Issue Area 4: Increasing Consumer Awareness and Knowledge about Healthy Eating; and Improving Consumer Access to Safe and Nutritious Foods

Recommendation # 16: Obesity and Diet-Related Diseases *Prevent and reduce obesity and diet-related diseases by using professionally recommended, evidence-based prevention initiatives that focus on cultural and environmental change.*

- The first major changes to the WIC food packages in nearly 35 years took place in January 2009. Through the efforts of the NYS Department of Health, New York State was the first in the nation to implement the changes. The new WIC Food Package provides participants with vegetables and fruits, whole grain breads and rice, culturally acceptable alternatives such as tofu or soy milk, incentives for fully breastfeeding moms, and jarred vegetables and fruits as a replacement for juice for infants.
- The "Creating Healthy Places to Live, Work and Play" RFA, released by the NYS DOH in November 2009, seeks to establish programs to prevent obesity and type 2 diabetes through the implementation of sustainable policy, systems and environmental changes in communities and worksite settings in New York State. The initiative targets to improve opportunities to access healthy foods and physical activity in areas in which New Yorkers live, work and play. Total funding for this initiative is \$4.3 million per year for five years, funding up to 20 public and/or not-for profit organizations to implement the program.

Recommendation #17: Consumer Outreach *Increase consumer knowledge of the nutritional value of food through consumer outreach. Increase promotion of nutritious products through consistent, unified messages.*

- Price Chopper Supermarkets, Inc and Cornell University Cooperative Extension of Upstate New York introduced the 'Family Meals Matter' initiative. As family meals are a well-known indicator of more healthful eating patterns and other positive benefits to families and children, it was targeted by CCE for multiple education efforts over the course of this year. Together, they developed a toolkit to assist families with increasing the number of family meals over a four-week time frame, with hopes that skills developed and resources offered will impact on improving the number of family meals on an ongoing basis. Tools included: an educational insert for Price Chopper's direct mail Active Families magazine, surveys, in store promotions, coupons, and raffles. The Active Families magazine was distributed via direct mail to some 65,000 families. CCE distributed an additional 8,000 to communities and populations in particular that access food assistance programs. The 17 Price Chopper stores outreach efforts garnered pledges from more than 900 families, representing 2,674 family members. The group currently eats 5,224 meals together with family each week, and the group pledged to eat 8,384 family meals per week during the challenge.



V. Actions Proposed to Achieve the Goals

WORKGROUPS The NYS CFP has formed four 'key issue area' workgroups. The workgroups will continue to have periodic interactions and meetings to discuss food policy priorities and potential actions as often as business requires or as is practical.

ANNUAL MEETINGS The annual summer and fall NYS CFP meetings will continue to be held in diversified areas around the State with an educational component and a public comment period.

OUTREACH To further encourage stakeholder participation in state food policy development and ultimate implementation, the NYS CFP proposes to host public conference calls (focusing on one key issue area) on a quarterly basis or as often as practical. The NYS CFP proposes to host webinars during which experts can share information with stakeholders about current and critical food policy topics as often as practical.

NYS CFP INTERN Again, through the joint effort by the NYS Department of Health, Division of Nutrition and the Department of Agriculture & Markets, a public health graduate student will intern for the NYS CFP. The NYS CFP intern will work at the Department of Agriculture & Markets throughout the spring semester 2010. The intern will focus on completing the online 'Food and Nutrition Resource Center' that was initiated by the NYS CFP intern in 2009.

POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT Political support of the NYS CFP mission and recommendations at the local, regional, state and national levels are necessary for continued progress. The NYS CFP will strive to work in collaboration with other food system networks and planners including town, regional and city governments and agencies, and promote parallel efforts to a State level where applicable. Concerted efforts to partner closely with the USDA Rural Development State Office, where relevant food system federal funding opportunities originate, are intended.

