



New York State Council on Food Policy

MISSION

The mission of the New York State Council on Food Policy (NYS CFP) is to support and facilitate the development of food policies that will increase adequate access to affordable, nutritious, local and safe food for all New Yorkers, especially for children, seniors and other at-risk populations; and to protect and expand agricultural food production in the state. Each year, the NYS CFP holds two public meetings and delivers a report to the Governor.

The NYS CFP is a unique and unmatched resource for all the citizens of the state. Food policy is the place where the dynamic confluence of health, agriculture, economic, education, and environmental issues is addressed. Food policy accounts for the vast range of urban, suburban, and rural communities and cultures, and institutional and political realities.

The members, appointed by the Governor and leaders of the legislature, share their networks and resources, build and capitalize on collaboration opportunities, research hot topics, respond to stakeholders, and serve as a vehicle for citizens to communicate food policy matters to the Governor.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The NYS CFP has demonstrated a tremendous amount of inter-agency, public and private collaboration. Public access to government procedures has increased. Attention is consistently paid to relevant federal and state legislation. Results of the NYS CFP highlight an improvement in access to fresh, local, nutritious foods by underserved citizens and an increased awareness of the health, social, economic, and environmental benefits of preserving and enhancing agriculture in our communities.

Inter-agency, Public, Private, & Community Initiatives

The NYS CFP has inspired inter-agency, public, private, and community collaboration is evidenced by initiatives including, but not limited to:

- **Connecting with Local NYS Food Policy Councils & Organizations.** In 2013, the Council developed a survey, *"Identifying Food Policy Councils in NYS to Expand the Dialogue between Government and Local Initiatives"*. The survey is currently underway and will be administered to statewide food policy advocates and stakeholders as an avenue to connect with local NYS initiatives. This information will also be published on the NYS CFP website as an information portal to connect with and enlighten food system advocates around NYS. **(2013- present)**
- **NYS was selected to participate in USDA's National Greek Yogurt Pilot Program** within the National School Lunch Program for the 2013-14 school year. The NYS CFP and NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets (NYSDAM) collaborated to draft a proposal illustrating the need for Greek yogurt in NYS school meals. This proposal included a survey which was sent to all NYS school food service directors regarding their interest in and barriers to procuring Greek yogurt. **(2013- present)**
- **USDA Farm to School Grant.** In June 2012, Council member Raymond Dennison and Council Coordinator Sarah Johnson submitted a proposal for the first ever USDA Farm to School Federal Grant. Their proposal was approved among 67 projects nationwide for funding from among hundreds of submitted applications. The 2-year pilot is implemented in the Southern Tier of New York, targeting the Binghamton City School District using Broome-Tioga school districts' food service program ("Rock on Cafe") which manages 13 districts and works with an additional 2 districts. Binghamton Central School District also has a free and reduced rate of approximately 70%. The pilot would coordinate Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and Safe Handling Practices (SHP) workshops for produce growers and food service staff. Successful implementation of these safety and food preparation trainings, education and outreach components will allow for a Farm to School program to be sustained and, ultimately, provide district-wide awareness. Additionally, the use of fresh fruits and vegetables in school meals will serve as an avenue for chronic disease prevention. **(2012- present)**
- **Collaboration with the NYS Farm Bureau** explored the impact of impending regulations from the Federal Food Safety and Modernization Act (FSMA) on farm families and retailers in New York; discussed ways to ensure greater cooperation between farm, store, and fork and regulators. **(2012- present)**



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- **Collaboration with and continued support for the Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program (HPNAP)** helped to provide funding to regional food banks to purchase food directly from NYS farmers. HPNAP support to Community Support Agriculture (CSA) and emergency food banks allows them to work together and provide wholesome fresh food into the emergency food stream. The program also provides better outreach and pre-screening information on Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) eligibility. **(2012- present)**
- **Collaboration with and continued support for the Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP)** helped to increase the number of weeks each year that FMNP checks can be used at farmers' markets. By extending the amount of time the checks can be used, consumer access to healthy, nutritious food increased and thus provided an opportunity for farmers to increase their FMNP earnings. **(2012- present)**
- **The NYS CFP Food Procurement Guidelines** apply to food purchased, provided or made available such that key nutrient levels either meet, or do not exceed, certain standards established as part of these guidelines. Procurement Guidelines use the purchasing power of governments to impact food availability, affect the overall demand for more healthful products, drive the reformulation of foods, and model healthier food environments. These guidelines were developed by a workgroup within the NYS CFP and are currently being implemented in Broome County, NY, while other organizations are mailing in letters of support. The formation of an implementation workgroup at the NYS Department of Health (DOH) is also underway. **(2011- present)**
- **The NYS Fresh Connect Program.** Members of the NYS CFP work with administering the Fresh Connect program, an initiative of Governor Cuomo that brings fresh food from New York farms to underserved communities throughout New York State. The Fresh Connect Program has expanded from 11 farmers markets in 2010 to over 100 sites in 2013. These include farmers markets, youth markets and food box programs in underserved communities across the state. Additional accomplishments include expanding the Fresh Check program as a nutritional incentive by providing a \$2 check to people who use their SNAP benefits at farmers' markets. Further, the Fresh Connect Program has promoted youth markets to teach young people about good nutrition and increase food access in underserved communities. **(2011- present)**
- **Comments to USDA contributed to school meal success.** NYS CFP comments to the USDA re: Proposed Rule to Revise the Meal Patterns and Nutrition Requirements for the National School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program (2011) supported that potatoes be served in the school lunch and breakfast programs (not fried). Fresh, unprocessed baked or boiled potatoes provide valuable nutrients for children and do not exceed the Institute of Medicine's nutrition recommendations. The NYS CFP stated that school food service personnel need flexibility to serve a variety of nutritious vegetable options especially those that are available locally, are cost effective, and that children will eat - thus limiting expenses and plate waste while supporting local agricultural economies. *The USDA now allows potatoes to be served as part of school meals.* **(2011)**
- **The USDA "Hunger-Free Communities" Grant** opportunity required applicants to partner with a Food Policy Council or initiate one if one did not already exist. Because the NYS CFP already existed, we were able to proactively provide a "Letter of Partnership" for the Farmers' Market Federation of NY grant application that proposed to increase access to local, nutritious foods at farmers' markets for low-income individuals through a coupon incentive program: NY Fresh Checks. **(2010)**
- **NYS became first in nation to allow WIC Vegetable and Fruit checks to be accepted at Farmers' Markets.** This increased access points to nutritious, local produce by at least 5 percent for WIC participants and increased direct market income to participating farmers. **(2009)**
- **The Farm Stand and Mobile Market EBT Pilot Project is now an ongoing program.** This was initiated as a direct response to testimony heard on NYS CFP Listening Tour. The project supplied EBT technology and training to 40 non-traditional vendors, such as farm-stand, mobile market and green-cart operators, so that they can process food stamp benefits for purchasing fresh, local produce. Having been successfully piloted, the Farm Stand and Mobile Market EBT pilot is now an ongoing program. The program supports farm stands, mobile markets, CSAs, and NYC Green Carts along with farmers markets on an ongoing basis. **(2009- present)**
- **Increased focus on Local Procurement and School Nutrition.** This results in more freshly prepared meals for students, using local ingredients. This has been highlighted as a key factor in higher school meal enrollment, including free and reduced meals and has three major benefits for New York State: 1) healthier children with less diet-related diseases thus lowering future medical costs that can be incurred; 2) support of



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local agricultural economies, which are known to have one of the highest economic multiplier rates of all industry, and; 3) bringing in more federal dollars to our schools through free and reduced meal enrollments. **(2008- present)**

- For additional details and examples of NYS CFP initiatives and recommendations, please see “Reports to Governor” December 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, & 2012 (<http://www.nyscfp.org/reporttogov.html>).

Increasing Public Access to Government

NYS CFP activities that increase public access to government include, but are not limited to:

- **Invitation of ad-hoc membership to Council workgroups**, including development of the new “Local Food Policy Council” workgroup intended to encompass a variety of NYS local food policy council/organization representatives as an avenue for information sharing, stakeholder connections, and more.
- **Statewide Listening Tours and Public Comment Periods** at meetings have resulted in public testimony from nearly 500 community members, health care professionals, farmers, anti-hunger advocates, consumers, laborers, food service directors and others about key food policy issue affecting them. This serves as an outlet for citizens and an opportunity to learn of community issues.
- **Response to food policy queries** through the NYS CFP website “Contact Us” page. The majority of inquires seek food safety or health information, but range from those seeking advice on rooftop gardening to those needing assistance with a new food business. Due to the network, the queries are responded to in an efficient, coordinated and timely fashion. For example, a query regarding suspected fraud using federal benefits (WIC) at a food store was responded to quickly with one coordinated response that included pertinent information from at least four different agencies.

Comments on Federal Legislation & Regulations

Comments on Federal legislation and regulations that can contribute to a healthier and more prosperous future for our children, our farmers, our environment, and our communities include:

- **July 2009** NYS CFP issued “Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act Priorities” to Governor and New York delegates.
- **June 2010** NYS CFP delivered recommendations on “Geographic Preference Option for Procurement of Unprocessed Agricultural Products in Child Nutrition Programs” to USDA, FNS.
- **April 2011** NYS CFP Focus Group, including members and stakeholders, reviewed the USDA, FNS “Proposed Rules for Nutrition Standards in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs.” The proposed rules may have unintended effects on the health of our children, subsequent effects on school’s ability to provide meals and tangential effects on local agricultural economies and food industries.

ADDITIONAL COUNCIL ACTIVITIES

Other activities include assisting with criteria development for Healthy Food/Healthy Communities Fund; food policy updates and funding opportunities emailed to approximately 400 stakeholders; presentations at conferences; coordinate public forums that inform stakeholders of important health, food security and economic development projects or emerging issues; and maintaining the NYS CFP website www.nyscfp.org as a public resource.



JUSTIFICATION

NYS CFP takes a focused, manageable, collaborative approach to reducing hunger, strengthening local agricultural economies, and addressing diet-related health issues. The operation of the NYS CFP is streamlined and fiscally prudent. The NYS CFP has been nationally recognized and member collaboration and community engagement is exceptional. The NYS CFP actively strives to communicate and implement the Governor's initiatives and in return keeps the Governor and the public abreast of key food policy issues as they emerge. The health and well-being of New York State benefit from the NYS CFP fostering these unique relationships and networks.