



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

Recommended State Food Policies in Respect to the Health and Prosperity of New York State

December 2008

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The New York State Council on Food Policy

Report to Governor David A. Paterson

December 2008

Executive Summary

The New York State Council on Food Policy (NYS CFP) was created by gubernatorial Executive Order, recognizing that New York State agriculture is a critically important industry to the State; that hunger is a serious problem facing many New Yorkers; that access to affordable, fresh and nutritious food is a serious problem, especially affecting children; and that there are significant environmental, health and economic benefits to the State and its residents from expanding agricultural production. At no time in recent history are these matters more prevalent than now.

Presented herein are the activities of the New York State Council on Food Policy for the year 2008, the initial State food policy recommendations for the year 2009 and the proposed steps needed to implement the recommendations.

The Council on Food Policy has made recommendations with corresponding action items under the previously identified four (4) key food policy issue areas in New York. The key food policy issue areas are:

- 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 food retail infrastructure and;
- 4) Increasing consumer awareness and knowledge about healthy eating; improving consumer access to safe and nutritious food.

Health concerns, such as the need to prevent and treat diet-related diseases, strongly influence all of the Council's recommendations. Consideration of ethnicity, age and geographic region are also factors influencing the Council's policy recommendations. Public testimony about the key food policy issue areas received during a listening tour ensures that the ensuing food policy recommendations are representative and practical.

An overarching recommendation involves the creation of publicly available inventories of available food, nutrition and/or agricultural services in New York State. This data will serve as a foundation upon which to build targeted food policy recommendations.

Improved collaboration among government, non-profit organizations and private industry is vital for successful implementation of the recommendations. Leadership from all levels of government supporting the recommendations is essential for building a healthier and more prosperous New York.



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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 food retail infrastructure;
 - 4) Increasing consumer awareness and knowledge about healthy eating; improving consumer access to safe and nutritious food.
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The following abridged State food policy recommendations are not in order of priority

Recommendation # 1: Public Awareness and Education

Increase public awareness of and education about assistance programs and benefits. Expand collaborative efforts with existing advocacy networks.

Recommendation # 2: Increase Collaboration

Increase collaboration and consistency among State agencies and not-for-profit organizations administering assistance programs.

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.

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.

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.

Recommendation # 6: Local Foods in Schools

Support initiatives in schools that promote healthy, local food choices that improve overall child nutrition.

Recommendation # 7: Healthy School Environment

Ensure that children are receiving nutritious, well balanced meals in schools.

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.

Recommendation # 9: Community Purchasing

Support leadership and infrastructure development of community food security programs and networks.

Recommendation # 10: Farmers' Markets

Encourage more permanent farmers' markets in more neighborhoods.

Recommendation # 11: Buy Local

Expand “buy local” partnerships within the food industry to meet demand for local preference such as the Pride of New York program and other regional efforts.

Recommendation # 12: NYS Food Industry

Address ways to improve production, distribution and marketing of, and increase demand for NYS food 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.

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.

Recommendation # 15: Food Production Capacity

Explore ways to increase utilization of existing food production capacity regionally.

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.

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.

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I. BACKGROUND

The Big Picture

Agriculture is one of New York State's leading industries. Agriculture production in New York returned almost \$4.5 billion to the farm economy in 2007 and when processed, packaged and distributed, farm products contribute more than \$25 billion to the State economy. About 25 percent of the state's land, or 7.5 million acres, is used by 35,000 farm families to produce a vast array of food, fiber and renewable energy. Yet hunger and diet-related diseases are serious problems for many New York residents. The State is being seriously challenged to meet the growing, severe need of our low-income residents. Concentrated policy efforts in the areas of agriculture and the food industry, education and health are essential to improving and protecting the health and prosperity of New York State's residents.

Today in New York:

- Food Banks and emergency feeding programs are experiencing record numbers of residents seeking assistance. Donations are declining and resources are being depleted as quickly as they arrive.
- Grocery stores and supermarkets that can provide good jobs, contribute to community development and offer access to affordable and nutritious food are closing down across the State often creating food deserts. Food desert is an area in which limited access to affordable and nutritious food, particularly such an area composed of predominately lower-income neighborhoods and communities.
- The number of farmers in New York is decreasing. Business costs and labor challenges affect the efficiency and profitability of the industry.
- Poor nutrition, overweight and obesity and diet-related health conditions are affecting children, seniors, racial and ethnic minorities, and low-income residents in the State at rates higher than the national average.
- Poor nutrition, overweight and obesity and diet-related health conditions contribute a heavy burden in health care costs to the State.

A strong focus of the Council is ensuring that nutritious food, services and education go to: New York's most vulnerable populations including pre-school and school-age children, where obesity and diet-related diseases can be prevented before occurring; to low-income residents and to racial and ethnic minorities that have disproportionately high rates of diet related disease; to the senior population that experience unique challenges to maintaining healthy diets and lifestyles; and to other underserved communities.

Supporting a strong, vibrant agriculture and food industry in New York is pivotal to meeting the demand for affordable, nutritious food. Therefore, inspiring new and future farmers, preserving existing farmland and increasing market opportunities are priorities of the Council on Food Policy.

Four Guiding Principals

New York State Council on Food Policy key issue areas are:

- 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 food retail infrastructure and;
- 4) Increasing consumer awareness and knowledge about healthy eating; and improving consumer access to safe and nutritious food.

One Overarching Recommendation

The Council will obtain a thorough picture of the New York State food landscape through developing inventories of available food, nutrition and/or agricultural services. In addition to serving as an outreach tool to engage stakeholders, these virtual data sources will serve as a foundation upon which to build targeted food policy recommendations.

Drilling Down

The Governor's Council on Food Policy has reached consensus on the following recommendations and corresponding action items for the initial State Food Policy for New York. The recommendations (1-17) are arranged by order of key issue area and are not by priority.

Once the Council on Food Policy has clearly identified the gaps and opportunities in food policy, areas where the biggest impact can be made will be pursued.

Understanding the need to establish measurable goals; the Council will provide realistic benchmarks when comprehensive baseline data is compiled to compare against. Much of this data exists independently and will be consolidated for analysis.

To avoid duplicating existing programs or studies the Council will use the multitude of resources available and collaborate with organizations already operating to address the Council's key issues. Scores of highly regarded local, regional and State efforts are currently underway working toward creating a healthier and more prosperous New York.

The Council on Food Policy recognizes the reality of current fiscal constraints in the State. The following recommendations and action items include both short and long-term goals. Many featured initiatives capitalize on innovative community efforts already underway and incur little or no cost to the State. Other recommendations and action items target federal funding opportunities.

II. ACTIVITIES OF THE NYS COUNCIL ON FOOD POLICY IN 2008

LISTENING TOUR 2008

The NYS CFP conducted a series of public listening sessions from February to May 2008. The listening sessions were held with diverse stakeholders in locations around the State to give Council members an opportunity to observe and to reach out to different segments of the population impacted by food policy. The public was asked to present testimony as it relates to one of the Council's key issue areas. General themes of testimony at each listening session site (1-7) are summarized below.

- (1) Albany, February 5: Hearing Room A of the Capitol Building in conjunction with the Farm Bureau Lobby Days. Thirteen Council members or representatives were present. The Council received public testimony from 11 individuals. Emphasis' of the session were strengthening consumer connection to local products and supporting efficient and profitable agriculture and food retail infrastructure.
- (2) Syracuse, February 14: Rooms 7 and 8 of the On Center Convention Center in conjunction with the Empire State Fruit and Vegetable Expo. Twelve Council members or representatives were present. The Council members received public testimony from 12 individuals. Increasing awareness and knowledge of healthy foods, ensuring consumer access to affordable and nutritious foods and supporting efficient and profitable agriculture and food retail infrastructure were emphasized.
- (3) Manhattan, April 3: Federal Office Building, 90 Church Street (morning and afternoon sessions held). Eleven Council members or representatives were present. The Council received public testimony from 18 individuals in the morning session (10 am- 12noon). Public testimony was heard from fifteen individuals in the afternoon session (2pm - 4pm). The emphasis' of the sessions was on maximizing participation in food assistance programs and ensuring that all New Yorkers have access to affordable and nutritious foods. Syane Roy from Senator Jose Serrano's office (28th Senate District) presented testimony on the Senator's behalf.
- (4) Binghamton, April 11: Cornell University Cooperative Extension of Broome County in conjunction with the Regional Community Food Project. Eight Council members or representatives were present. The Council heard public testimony from 13 individuals. Community-based efforts that increase consumer awareness and knowledge about healthy eating and supporting efficient and profitable agriculture and food retail infrastructure were emphasized. Assemblywoman Donna Lupardo (126th Assembly District) attended this listening session.
- (5) Rochester, May 5: Rochester Public Market. Eight Council members or representatives were present. The Council heard public testimony from 15 individuals. The emphasis' of this listening session were strengthening consumer connection to local products and supporting efficient and profitable agriculture and food retail infrastructure. Prior to the

listening session, Council members and their representatives had the opportunity to tour the agricultural education facility at Springdale Farm in Ogden.

- (6) Harlem, May 29: Adam Clayton Powell Jr. State Office Building, 163 West 125th Street co-sponsored by Senator Jose Serrano's office and WE ACT. Nine Council members or representatives were present. The Council heard public testimony from 18 individuals. Prior to the listening session some Council members participated in a one hour walking tour of the East Harlem food environment. The tour's emphasis was upon the numerous closed food markets and the otherwise scarce options for residents to purchase healthy foods in their neighborhood. The tour was conducted by community members and representatives from Senator Serrano's office and WE ACT. A light reception of local, nutritious foods was prepared for the Council members and the listening session attendees by the teenagers participating in the Children's Aid Society "Next Generation Caterers" program.
- (7) Riverhead, May 30: Riverhead Town Hall in conjunction with the Long Island Farm Bureau. Five Council members or representative were present. The Council heard public testimony from 16 individuals. Strengthening consumer connection to local products and supporting efficient and profitable agriculture and food retail infrastructure were emphasized at this session.

Overall, the Council received public testimony, either through oral presentations and/or written statements from nearly 200 anti-hunger advocates, farmers, processors, consumers, laborers, health care professionals, food service directors, legislators, extension agents, community members and others. The listening tour exercise supplied the Council members a first-hand look at how food policy issues affect the daily lives of the residents and businesses of New York. The stimulating and insightful testimony was instrumental in the development of the first set of practical food policy recommendations that represent our State's diverse needs.

The full content of the listening tour written testimony is available on-line on the Council on Food Policy's website (www.nyscfp.org). Audio tapes of listening sessions are also available.

NEW YORK STATE COUNCIL ON FOOD POLICY WEBSITE

In June 2008, the NYS Council on Food Policy website was launched with the support of the NYS Department of Agriculture & Markets. This website serves as a public resource for food security and agricultural development policy news. Records of Council activity and reports are regularly posted for public review. The website also serves as a feedback mechanism for advocates; inquires and requests for information via the website public correspondence page are addressed in a timely fashion.

The website, www.nyscfp.org, supported by the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets, went "live" in June.

SUMMER MEETING

The NYS CFP convened for their summer meeting on June 27, 2008 in the Capitol in Albany. The meeting was open to the public for observation. The meeting agenda featured four segments: Hot Topics; Listening Tour Recap; Address from Deputy Secretary Judith Enck; and Work Group Formation.

Hot Topics

Council members received updates on programmatic and service enhancements and challenges in the food, agriculture and nutrition fields. Many enhancements, such as the new provisions in the WIC package and the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, are elements of the recently passed federal 2008 Farm Bill. Other enhancements, such as the Consumer Protection Board's (CPB) Food Basket Program and *myBenefits*, the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance's (OTDA) online multi-benefit pre-screening tool, are examples of State entity initiatives aimed to enhance individual empowerment and improve New Yorkers well-being. Many of the challenges, such as the struggle to provide both adequate quality and quantity of nutritious foods to the increasing number of clients depending on emergency feeding programs or to children in school food programs, result from a combination of federal and State funding shortages.

The "Hot Topics" (Appendix A.) covered include:

- Farm Bill Specialty Crop Provisions by Commissioner Hooker, DAM
- EBT at Farmers' Markets by Diane Eggert, Farmers' Market Federation
- Food Policy Principles by Bruce Both, UFCW Local 1500
- Nutrition and WIC Package Updates by Mary Warr Cowans, DOH
- Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program by Frances O'Donnell, SED
- School Food Service and Farm-to-School Program by Ray Denniston
- Food Bank Association of NYS by John Evers
- Food Basket Program by Mindy Bockstein, CPB
- Working Families Food Stamp Initiative by Jack Kennedy, OTDA; and
- Demonstration of *myBenefits* website, www.mybenefits.ny.gov by Carolyn Karins, OTDA

Listening Tour Recap

A synopsis of the public recommendations and the recurring themes that emerged from the listening tour as they relate to the Council's four key food policy issue areas was provided and discussed.

Supporting a viable local food network, improving the overall health and nutrition of our residents, and the pressing need to increase access to affordable, nutritious food in low-income or underserved neighborhoods are subjects that were expressed in the public testimony at every listening session. This feedback underscores the soundness of the Council's established key food policy issue areas.

Recurring themes for the Council to consider when developing State food policies that emerged from the listening tour include:

- The effects of infrastructure, facility and farm limitation on New York State food production and retail sales, such as supermarket closings, institutions' limited purchasing of local products, labor shortages, and the lack of new farmers
- The role of public education and grassroots efforts in linking health, nutrition, economic, and environmental benefits such as Food Banks collaborating with local farmers, community based organizations spreading food assistance awareness, Farm-to-School and Farmers' Markets directories, and promoting regional food system networks
- Procedures and lack of technology that may impede access to nutritious food and efficient, profitable agriculture such as regulations against local procurement preference for schools and state institutions, and food assistance registration requirements (consider on-line applications and co-enrollment for services).

In sum, the listening tour contributed greatly to building the Council's knowledge of the diversity of efforts and existing models that have proven successful in addressing food security issues. The Council recognizes that there may not be a "one size fits all" State food policy due to geographical, environmental, social, economic, and cultural differences among various communities around the State; but that a range of viable solutions do exist.

Address from Deputy Secretary Enck

Governor Paterson's Deputy Secretary for the Environment, Judith Enck addressed the Council. Deputy Secretary Enck expressed Governor Paterson's concern over the prevalence of diet related disease in New York State. Deputy Secretary Enck said:

"Food security is a priority for the Governor and children's health, particularly related to childhood obesity and diabetes, is a priority for the First Lady."

Noting that agriculture is one of New York's largest and most vital industries, Deputy Secretary Enck stressed the need for the Council to work on food infrastructure: getting food grown in New York to New Yorkers, as a way of supporting the New York economy, ensuring New York residents have a fresh and healthy food supply, and as a way to reduce food miles whereby reducing the amount of fuel and energy we use to get food to consumers.

Deputy Secretary Enck reiterated the problem that many communities across the State are facing: lack of access to affordable, fresh and nutritious food. The linkage between a poor diet and diabetes, obesity, and other health problems was discussed. The Council was encouraged to make access to supermarkets, specifically in low-income communities, a priority of their deliberations.

Work Group Formation

To facilitate policy development, the Council members dispersed among four work groups organized around the four key food policy issue areas and based on their area of expertise (below). Commissioner Hooker serves as an ex-officio member to all work groups.

1) Maximize participation in food and nutrition assistance programs

Linda Bopp (Nutrition Consortium); John Evers (Food Bank Assoc); Jack Kennedy (Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance representative); Florence Reed (Office for the Aging representative); William Rapfogel (Metropolitan Council on Jewish Poverty)

2) Strengthen the connection between local food products and consumers; consider culture, age, and geographic region of all consumers to best serve their needs

Ray Denniston (Johnson City Schools); Diane Eggert (Farmers' Market Federation); John Evers (Food Bank Assoc); Frances O'Donnell (State Education representative); Liz Neumark (Great Performances); Mindy Bockstein (Consumer Protection Board); Jerry Cosgrove and Jim Barber (Department of Agriculture and Markets representatives)

3) Support efficient and profitable agricultural food production and food retail infrastructure

Julie Suarez (Farm Bureau); Mike Hoffmann (College of Agriculture and Life Sciences at Cornell University representative); Eleanor Wilson (Dietitian for Price Chopper Supermarkets); Bruce Both (United Food and Commercial Workers Union); Senator Catharine Young; Empire State Development; Jerry Cosgrove and Jim Barber (Department of Agriculture and Markets representatives)

4) Increase consumer awareness and knowledge about healthy eating; improve consumer access to safe and nutritious foods

Mary Warr Cowans (Division of Nutrition, Department of Health); Eleanor Wilson (Dietitian for Price Chopper Supermarkets); Cathryn Mizbani (WIC Program, Cornell University Cooperative Extension); Ellen Anderson (Department of Health representative); Ellen Deutsch (Hain-Celestial representative); Jonathan Thomson (Department of Agriculture and Markets representative)

The Department of Agriculture & Markets facilitated two work group meetings for each group. The work groups met once in July and once in August. At these meetings, the Council members examined listening tour input, graded priorities of the specific key issue areas and evaluated the implementation feasibility thereof.

Each work group delivered status reports to Commissioner Hooker in early September. The status reports served as an aid in the deliberation and assessment of the numerous recommended food policy proposals. Revised status reports containing draft State food policy recommendations for the year 2009 were then prepared by each work group.

FALL MEETING

On Wednesday, October 29, 2008 the NYS Council on Food Policy convened for their fall meeting. This meeting in Albany was open for public observation. The main objective of this gathering was to review and discuss draft food policy recommendations from the four work groups.

Commissioner Hooker presented opening remarks in which he acknowledged the challenging economic climate under which we are operating. Promoting new and enhancing existing government, non-profit and private organization collaboration on all initiatives is viewed as a vital component moving forward.

Commissioner Hansell of the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance provided an encouraging update regarding recent Food Stamp Program accomplishments in New York State, including increased enrollment and new HEAP benefits to Food Stamp recipients.

A representative from each of the four work groups presented an overview of the work group's draft food policy recommendations to the full Council. Time was allotted for open discussion and consensus was sought. Council members and advocates contributed amendments and revisions that have been incorporated when feasible, in the subsequent State food policy recommendations.

OUTREACH

Throughout the year, Commissioner Hooker and Council representatives have been partaking in numerous initiatives as they pertain to and/or overlap with key food policy issues. By participating in meetings and events, Council members are gaining varied perspectives while educating others about the Council's mission. These opportunities are maximized to assure that the initiatives of the Council are represented or promoted and collaboration opportunities are maximized.

The NYS Council on Food Policy monitors initiatives such as The Environmental Justice Interagency Task Force, The Supermarket Commission, and The Economic Security Cabinet and the Organic Advisory Task Force that are simultaneously addressing environmental, health and economic conditions of New York State and its residents.

Additionally, Commissioner Hooker and Council representatives are frequently requested to speak at conferences and meetings to promote awareness of the Council's mission. Recent events include: the Department of Health Hunger Prevention and Nutrition Assistance Program (HPNAP) "2008 Contractor Meeting"; Rural Health Network's "Growing Health Forum"; the "2008 Advanced Technology, Food and Agriculture Conference", "Cornell Agribusiness Economic Outlook Conference"; and the Tri-County School Nutrition Association annual meeting.

III. RECOMMENDED STATE FOOD POLICIES

KEY ISSUE AREA 1

Maximize Participation in Food and Nutrition Assistance Programs

Description

More New York State residents are eligible for food and nutrition assistance programs than are actually enrolled in these services. Without this assistance, many individuals suffer from hunger and/or malnutrition. Hunger's many adverse effects include a higher prevalence of chronic illness, frequent complications, and increased demands and costs for health care services. Further, hungry children experience significant and long-lasting cognitive, physical, and social delays (Food Bank Association of New York State).

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

1. Ensures that all 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 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 residents in urgent situations and;
4. Makes use of all funds obtainable from federal assistance programs.

The 2009 objective is to create a directory of the multitude of available food and nutrition services. This resource will help identify where existing programs overlap, where funding would be best allocated, and where service gaps exist. It will be a key educational tool for advocates who provide assistance and for residents attempting to navigate food and nutrition assistance programs. Some non-food and nutrition programs may correlate as they contribute to the overall financial security of individuals (such as Home Energy Assistance Program HEAP and Elderly Pharmaceutical Insurance Coverage EPIC). The emphasis of this resource is to increase consumer awareness of and access to assistance programs that will increase their purchasing power of basic necessities with the ultimate goal of eliminating food insecurity and hunger.

The lead for addressing the recommendations of this key issue area will be the Office for Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA). Contributing State agencies include but are not limited to: the Office for Aging (OFA), Department of Health (DOH), State Education Department (SED) and the Department of Agriculture and Markets (DAM). Community based organizations contributing to the execution of these initiatives include anti-hunger advocates such as the Food Bank Association of NY and the Nutrition Consortium.

Recommendations (# 1-4) and Action Items for Key Issue Area 1 (in no specific order)

Recommendation # 1: Public Awareness and Education

Increase public awareness of and education about assistance programs and benefits using traditional outreach strategies, such as media/public service announcements, and non-traditional outreach strategies, such as in job placement offices, places of worship, schools, grocery and drug stores, and farmer's markets. Expand collaborative efforts with existing advocacy networks.

Action Items

- Identify programs that already have existing federal and State funding for education and outreach. Quantify the existing funding amounts and resources. Recommend ways of utilizing funds/resources for alternative or increased outreach that are compatible with and sensitive to expressed community needs.
- Prepare a user-friendly directory of existing State, federal and non-profit food and nutrition assistance programs for future public dissemination. This directory will be adapted for both consumers and advocates (example: Mapping the World of Nutrition www.ansanutrition.org).

Nutrition assistance program examples include, but are not limited to: NOEP (Nutrition Outreach Education Program); "211" United Way phone information and referral system; emergency feeding programs; Cornell University Cooperative Extension - Food & Nutrition Education in Communities (FNEC); NYConnects; Older Americans Act (nutrition education, counseling, and information and assistance) and others from the NYS CFP 2007 report Appendix C: "State Agency Food, Access, and Nutrition Programs"

- Develop standard operating procedures and provide to the staff and volunteers in community-based organizations, at emergency feeding sites, farmers' markets, schools and other food and nutrition assistance programs. This resource will assist in training staff and volunteers and ensure they are knowledgeable of the variety of services available using the proposed directory of programs. It is recommended that programs have necessary consumer resources such as forms, website addresses, phone assistance, signs and guides in multiple languages for other programs available.
- Identify institutional resources (public and private) that would assist with the implementation of items above.

Recommendation # 2: Increase Collaboration

Increase collaboration and consistency among State agencies and not-for-profit organizations administering assistance programs by seeking ways to co-enroll participants for benefits and/or making the enrollment process more consumer-friendly.

Action Items

- Explore all opportunities to eliminate finger-imaging from the food stamps application process. This has already been successfully eliminated for working families.
- Explore all opportunities to allow phone interviews for food stamp application and shore up consistency in implementation. This is liberally done for working families, hardship cases

(such as health or transportation issues), and re-certification. County-by-county administration can lead to different interpretations.

- Explore all opportunities to simplify/streamline application forms. OTDA's *myBenefits* program should be capable of increasing data exchanges across agencies within five (5) years. This plan will be outlined.
- Create a check list for financial assistance packages such as the national model for seniors, "Benefits Checkup" (<http://www.benefitscheckup.org/>) or the Advocacy, Counseling, and Entitlement Services (ACES) Manual sponsored by Community Service Society of NY (<http://pbrcmmanual.cssny.org/index.html>) that can be adapted for all food insecure populations. Target populations in 2009 will include children, seniors, and low-income families and individuals.

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.

Action Items

- Collate data that documents food security needs of NY residents.
- Based on data and recognizing that emergency food assistance and feeding programs assist the State by meeting the *acute* food security needs of many residents; advise that a stable, consistent and guaranteed State funding source for emergency food assistance and feeding programs be in place for planning purposes.
- Explore options for increasing funding indexed to inflation, for government funded emergency food programs.
- Explore options for providing funding and other support to food banks for the purchase of more fresh, local produce for distribution to residents. For example: Facilitate connections and relations between regional food banks and producers by engaging Cornell Cooperative Extension Agricultural specialists and NY Farm Bureau field staff.

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. These efforts boost the local economy by increasing farm income while supplying access to nutritious foods to at-risk, underserved populations. As was recently noted, "Food stamp sales at NY farmers' markets have increased statewide from \$3,000 in 2002 to \$90,000 in 2007" (Diane Eggert, Executive Director of Farmers' Market Federation).

Action Items

- Support and explore options to increase food assistance programs and efforts that provide incentives for clients to purchase healthy, local foods such as the federal Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP). FMNP provides clients in the Women, Infant and Children program (WIC) and income-eligible seniors supplementary food assistance coupons that are redeemable at registered Farmers' Markets for fresh produce. New York State is the

largest recipient of federal FMNP grants, approximately 15% of the total federal allocation in recent years.

Initiatives to review, recommend support for and/or replication include but are not limited to:

- o NY "Fresh Checks" is a coupon incentive program that provides food stamp clients with a \$5.00 NY Fresh Check coupon each market day they spend a minimum of \$5.00 of their electric benefit transfer (EBT) benefits at the farmers market. This program is currently funded for one year through the Humpty Dumpty Institute (2008).
- o Promotion of universal portable electric benefit transfer (EBT) technology at farmers' markets, grocery stores, farm stands and green carts. EBT technology increases food assistance client's access to farm fresh products while reducing the stigma associated with using assistance benefits.
- o WIC "Vegetable and Fruit Voucher" is new program in the WIC package that increases purchasing power. The vouchers are designated solely for the purchase of fresh, frozen or canned fruits and vegetables by WIC participants. Training and certification of eligible vendors at farmers' market to accept the new vouchers for fresh vegetables and fruits will be initiated in 2009.

KEY ISSUE AREA 2

Strengthen the Connection between Local Food Products and Consumers

Description

A growing demand for local product is clearly underway by residents of New York State. The recommendations and action items presented here will focus on continuing to generate larger scale demand and continuing to capture the present demand for nutritious, local foods. Initially, the primary emphasis will be upon increasing access to local, nutritious food by children, seniors, and low-income or other food insecure, high risk populations. Target consumer connections to develop for year 2009 are institutions and community markets.

These "demand side" recommendations are complementary to and advance the "supply side" recommendations of the Key Issue Area 3 (Section III c). The two issues are inherently dependent upon one other, thus recommendations and action items have common characteristics.

Compilation and dissemination of information through a centralized electronic clearinghouse is one of the first steps identified to develop a sustainable system that will strengthen the local producer and consumer connection. Components of the proposed clearinghouse include, but are not limited to: current distribution models, storage and processing facilities, market locations, population studies and grower and processor profiles. The goals of this include, but are not limited to: 1) identify where opportunities and collaboration potential are present that will increase consumer access to affordable, local, nutritious foods and 2) providing a user-friendly network that can be accessed by consumers and producers in a "match making" type service.

These recommendations will be pursued by an alliance of Council members from the food production, food procurement and food distribution systems including the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, the New York State Education Department, the New York State Department for the Aging, the Food Bank Association, Farmers' Market Federation and School Food Service representatives. Additional stakeholders, such as other key State agencies, manufacturers and food retailers will be engaged at every opportunity.

Recommendations and benchmarks for improving, expanding, altering infrastructure will be made after the existing food system landscape is clearly illustrated and understood. Data establishing the real capacity of New York producers and markets and identifying both urban and rural food deserts are main components of the food system landscape.

Recommendations (# 5 - 11) and Action Items for Key Issue Area 2 (in no specific order)

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 that purchase mass quantities of food on a routine basis (for example: schools, universities, nursing homes, prisons, day care centers, emergency feeding programs and government facilities).

"Common Good", a program of the national association of Meals on Wheels, is an example of an online purchasing system that allows local meal programs to buy only the quantity needed of an item while taking advantage of bulk price breaks because of the overall volume purchasing.

Action Items

- The NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets will lead in the development of an electronic database that will serve as a clearinghouse of producers, processors, associations, and consumers such as the existing web-based "Farm-Fresh Guide" that lists nearly 2000 farms offering food, products, and services directly to the public.
 - Database tools needed: sorting mechanism (by buyer/producer size and by regional level); feature for individuals to update information.
 - Use regional Cornell University Cooperative Extension agriculture and nutrition educators and others as facilitators of producer and consumer communications from State to local level whenever possible.
- The NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets in conjunction with the Food Bank Association and others will explore and analyze existing storage, distribution, associations and "Market Maker" type models for replication.
 - Consider bulk food drop-off/distribution centers such as Food Bank trucks pick up/deliver farm products (example: Foodlink, Rochester).
 - Consider association models such as: Northeast Organic Farming Association, Apple Growers Association; Vegetable Growers Association; AgriMark, Upstate Farms, and Dairy Marketing Services.
 - Explore back-loading and cold storage agreements with food retailers.
- The Council will review, analyze, comment upon legislation (proposed and existing) that relates to increasing local food products to State institutions such as, but not limited to US Senate S.3588: Healthy Food for Healthy Lives Act of 2008 introduced by Senator Clinton (commonly referred to as "Farm to Hospital").

Recommendation # 6: Local Foods in Schools

Support initiatives in schools that promote healthy, local food choices that improve overall child nutrition by changing consumption behavior of youth and that introduce youth to New York State food system dynamics.

Action Items

- Compile, review and continue to promote existing State and local programs that introduce youth to food system dynamics. Initiatives include: school gardens; Ag in the Classroom; Farm to School; and the Kindergarten Initiative.
- New York State Education Department and school food service directors, in conjunction with the Department of Agriculture will take a leadership position to employ the provision in The 2008 Farm Bill (excerpt "Title IV: Nutrition") that encourages purchasing local food products and allows school food service directors to specify geographic region for their fruits and vegetable purchases.

Farm Bill 2008 Title IV: Nutrition Locally Produced Food - Directs Secretary to encourage institutions, such as schools, that receive funds from child nutrition programs to purchase unprocessed agricultural products, both locally grown and locally raised, to maximum extent practicable and appropriate. Allows use of geographic preference in procurement in all programs funded under NSLA, Child Nutrition Act, and DoD Fresh Program. <http://www.ers.usda.gov/FarmBill/2008/Titles/TitleIVNutrition.htm#schoolmeals>

Recommendation # 7: Healthy School Environment

Ensure that children are receiving nutritious, well balanced meals in schools.

In the October 2008 bulletin from the Office of the State Comptroller titled "Preventing and Reducing Childhood Obesity in New York" (Appendix B), it is stated that:

"Over one million young people in New York are considered obese, and many more are at risk of becoming obese as a result of poor eating and exercise habits... Schools can play a key role in reversing the child obesity epidemic in New York."

Action Items

- The Council will continue to support the Healthy Schools Act (HSA) (A.8642). In the absence of strong national standards requiring schools to provide a healthy school environment, the proposed HSA strives to establish standards based on current scientific knowledge.
 - Encourage continued dialogue with school food service professionals to develop language that will support/enable schools to purchase more local, fresh products.
 - Consider adding language to HSA that supports training programs for school food service personnel such as the "Master Instructor" training. School food service personnel will need training and information on implementing the dietary changes required by HSA. These materials will need to be developed so that State Education Department can train Master Instructors who will be used to deliver the information in order to enable schools to provide a healthier school environment. The SED training network provides trainers to conduct workshops at no charge to the schools on a variety of subjects, such as sanitation and nutrition, to ensure compliance and improve the child nutrition programs.
 - Acknowledge concerns of the food industry in regard to the impact of some restrictions; engage in constructive dialogue and deliberation to resolve issues.
- The Council supports New York State adoption of scientifically based national standards for school meals when they become available. This would bring consistency throughout the country and consistency for food producers making more wholesome products available, at lower cost based on volume.
- School nutrition programs are facing increased operating and food costs. The State should strive to increase funding for school meal programs when ever possible. A suggested target is an increase of \$0.15 per meal within three years (by State fiscal year April 2012).
- Consider provisions that could be added to the Healthy Schools Act or other proposed legislation from "Local Farms-Healthy Kids Act" (SB 6483; enacted June 2008) from the

State of Washington or similar. Among other things, the "Local Farms-Healthy Kids Act" outlines policy that:

- Eliminates low-cost bidding requirements for school purchases of State grown food and allows schools to adopt price preferences for local food;
- Requires development of food procurement procedures for State entities to facilitate purchasing of State grown food;
- Enhances the Farm-to-School Program by establishing 2.5 positions in the Department of Agriculture dedicated to increasing participation;
- Establishes a farmer's market technology program that provides for wireless technology (EBT) at farmer's markets; and
- Establishes Farm-to Food Bank pilot programs.
- The Department of Agriculture and Markets will seek to increase opportunities such as producer incentives for nutritious NY added value foods ("grab and go" prepackaged foods) to be available such as carrot coins, grapes, broccoli cuts, pears and apple slices in schools.
- State Education Department will continue to pursue and expand participation in USDA federally funded programs such as the "Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program" (FF&VP) that increases access to nutritious foods for school children and encourages expanded nutrition education programs.

Recommendation # 8: Resources to Support Local Purchasing

The Department of Agriculture and Markets in conjunction with the Department of Health, State Education, the NY Farm to School Coordinating Committee, Cornell University Cooperative Extension and school food service professionals will assemble, disseminate and encourage adoption/utilization of resources that will support purchasing and serving of fresh, local products at schools.

Action Items

- Assemble, disseminate encourage adoption/utilization of resources such as:
 - "Safe Handling Procedures" for school food service directors for fresh produce. The Department of Health with the Department of Agriculture has prepared a document that has been forwarded to the National Farm to School Committee for adoption.
 - "Produce Specification Guide" with sizing standards for food service directors will be prepared by the Department of Agriculture and will be posted online.
 - "Directory" of regional producers and distributors will be developed for food service directors by the NY Farm to School Coordinating Committee.
 - "Good Agricultural Practices" (GAP) and "Good Handling Practices" (GHP) will be formatted by the Department of Agriculture and Markets for producers that supply schools.
 - "ServSafe" (or similar) protocol endorsed by DOH Sanitation Bureau that heightens awareness and policies assuring that only healthy workers handle and prepare food for consumption.

Recommendation # 9: Community Purchasing

Support leadership and infrastructure development of community food security programs and networks. Community food security programs keep local dollars in the economy, promote healthy lifestyles and address the issue of food deserts by providing a means for obtaining fresh fruit and vegetables. Notable activities include, but are not limited to: community gardening, urban gardening, and community supported agriculture (CSA).

Action Items

- Compile and categorize models of community food security initiatives and networks
- Create State and regional directory thereof for public distribution (online)
- Promote regional and/or statewide replication of successful models
- Encourage the adaptation or expansion of these programs to consumer organizations such as nutrition programs, restaurants and schools (restaurant supported agriculture and school supported agriculture).

Program example: In July 2008, the Department of Agriculture and Markets announced the Community Gardens Capacity-Building Grants Program. Grants will fund efforts to develop garden membership, leadership and programs in urban low-income communities.

Recommendation # 10: Farmers' Markets

Encourage more permanent farmers' markets in more neighborhoods through access to funding sources, training in market and facilities management, coordinated efforts to increase producer participation in year round markets and partnerships that increase consumer access to the markets.

Training in market and facilities management needs to be a collaborative effort between public and private entities.

To accommodate a year round farmers market, New York producers need to have product available on a year round basis.

Transportation to farmers' markets for underserved populations is typically organized through individual entities such as Housing Authority or Senior Center administration. Increasing coordination between transportation authorities, market managers and/or underserved populations is a priority.

Action Items

- Access to farmers' markets may be increased by adding a bus stop on an existing line near a market; and/or encouraging new markets to locate near existing intermodal mass transportation hubs in food deserts. Evaluation of the mass transportation plan surrounding farmers' markets will be undertaken.
- The Farmers Market Federation provides training for market managers in a wide variety of subjects to improve a market's management capacity. The Small Business Administration

can be helpful in the business and financial planning for year round markets. Facilities management training and mentoring programs are often available through non profit organizations. Increased collaboration opportunities will be spearheaded by the Farmers Market Federation in conjunction with State and non-profit entities.

- Cornell University Cooperative Extension and the Department of Agriculture and Markets can advise/help farmers interested in making changes in their production planning and systems to enable them to produce some products year round.

Included under key issue area 3 is a recommendation to support infrastructure to allow farm products to be preserved for year round sales. Infrastructure to be considered include, but are not limited to: processing and packaging facilities, community and incubator kitchens and mobile livestock slaughterhouses.

- Identify ways to increase use of electronic benefit transfer (EBT) cards and WIC checks in farmers' markets.
- Engage a demographer, or use existing resources such as the State Demographer at Economic Development Corporation, to access information and techniques useful to market siting decisions such as census (income, age...) and mapping (GIS) data.
- Consider supporting the expansion of viable non-permanent market options that penetrate into underserved areas such as the "Veggie Mobile".

KEY ISSUE AREA 3

Support Efficient and Profitable Agricultural Food Production and Food Retail Infrastructure

Description

Agriculture is one of New York State's leading industries with over 35,000 farms farming about 25 percent of the state's land producing a vast array of products; yet hunger and diet-related diseases are serious problems for many New York residents. In 2008, it was reported that New York City's supermarket shortage affects 3 million New Yorkers who do not have access to affordable, nutritious food and quality supermarket jobs. Urban and rural, the State is being challenged to meet the growing need of our food insecure residents while at the same time consumer demand is increasing for locally grown food products.

This key issue area has 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 neighborhoods.

Priority is given to recommendations that acknowledge New York producers' size, crop diversity and regional capacity. Initial attention is devoted to identifying the needs and capacity of NY producers. Assessing grant funding options and accessing those funds for infrastructure plays a central role in follow up action items. Supporting the creation of quality jobs in urban and rural environments is also a key factor to consider.

The New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets in conjunction with the Farm Bureau, Empire State Development, food manufacturers, retailers and others will lead the efforts under this key issue area. Engagement of agricultural schools and organizations, including, but not limited to: Cornell, Alfred, Morrisville and Canton is also highly sought.

Recommendations (# 11 -15) and Action Items for Key Issue Area 3 (in no specific order)

Recommendation # 11: Buy Local

Expand "buy local" partnerships within the food industry to meet demand for local preference such as the Pride of New York program and other regional efforts.

Action Items

- Expand producer affiliation with the Pride of NY program through expanding membership; track participation through measurement of farmer participants
- Create a synergy between the Pride of NY and the buy local movement through Department of Agriculture and Markets marketing plans, private industry initiatives, and greater ties to the I Love NY program.

- The Department of Agriculture and Markets will provide increased training and education for supermarket personnel to better promote and communicate the goals of the Pride of New York program
- The Department of Agriculture and Markets marketing division will explore options to include and increase wholesale distributors associations with the Pride of New York program. A model to examine includes the existing collaboration of the Associated Food and Petroleum Dealers (AFPD) and the Michigan Department of Agriculture's "Buy Local, Eat Fresh" program that connects Michigan farmers and food producers with wholesales, distributors and supermarkets in urban underserved areas.

Recommendation # 12: NYS Food Industry

Address ways to improve production, distribution and marketing of, and increase demand for NYS food products.

Action Items

- Support sustainable production strategies and research that help farmers remain competitive and viable such as organic, integrated pest management (IPM), and nutrient management programs.
- Work with buyers and producers to identify opportunities to grow and market a greater diversity of crops that take advantage of a growing and diverse consumer population.
- Increase demand for local food by encouraging Buy Local policies at State-run institutions such as schools, hospitals, senior centers and prisons.
- Provide farmer, food processor, and farm and food workers educational opportunities, technical assistance and financial assistance to enable them to perform "best practices" as they pertain to food safety measures as is now being required by some distributors and retailers; include education regarding worker safety measures.
- Work with identified federal funding sources to encourage the adoption of Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certification among the farm community (Eurogap, etc.)
- Clearly identify industry needs. Perform inventory and analysis of facilities that include, but are not limited to: cold storage facilities; grower cooperatives; processing facilities; distribution centers; food-related micro-enterprises and/or incubator kitchens.
 - Support retail initiatives such as Healthy Bodegas, Green Carts, and infrastructure initiatives such as the revitalization of Hunt's Point Terminal Market, NYC Wholesale Farmers' Market for the restaurant/small scale retailers trade, and regional markets
 - Research innovative/alternative food distribution models such as trains, barges and the Food Bank distribution/storage infrastructure to gauge appropriateness for farm operations (small, medium and large scale)
 - Consider initiatives such as: Vermont Agency of Agriculture's mobile quick-freezing unit that allows farmers to freeze up to 600 pounds of berries and produce a minute, thus extending the marketing period and reducing waste
 - Support continued development of initiatives that package produce ("grab and go" fruits and vegetables) for children's consumption in school and daycare such as apple slices, carrot coins and grapes

- Utilize GIS mapping technology and census data to enable farmers to more effectively target markets and develop more efficient distribution models. Example includes Cornell Universities "Food Security Mapper" GIS software.
- Identify existing grant programs such as: USDA Specialty Crop Block Grant Funds; Farm Viability Institute Grants; NYS ESDC Agriculture Development Funds and NYSERDA which are most important for addressing needs identified above. For example NYSERDA can assist in the prescribing and funding of energy efficient standards for both facilities and distribution systems.

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 such as: tax and regulatory issues; land and energy input costs; and labor needs.

Action Items

- Support comprehensive immigration reform that includes overhaul of the guest worker (H-2a) program and incorporates key features of the Ag Jobs Bill such as earned adjustment to legal status for experienced agricultural workers and a solution to the dairy agriculture labor issues.
- Encourage initiatives for new and beginning farmers; and the expansion/growth opportunities for established farmers seeking new added value and expanded agricultural operations.
- Maintain existing tax credit programs for farmers and seek changes to the Empire State Development Corporation programs that will ensure agriculture is fully eligible for all economic development and small business assistance using metrics that recognize the full range of benefits that agriculture provides and eliminate unnecessary paperwork.
- Identify duplicative federal, State, and local inspection processes.
- Maintain full support for agricultural districts program, which is critical for the preservation of farmland and farms in New York. Increase farmland protection funding and planning assistance, to meet demand and fully integrate farmland protection into the State's Smart Growth efforts and the NYS Open Space Conservation Plan.
- Compile information regarding agricultural programs and institutions, particularly business planning and financing entities, and ensure that such information is readily accessible on the Department of Agriculture and Markets and other websites.

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.

Action Item

- Produce or obtain a resource that provides a manageable description of the spectrum of food retail in NYS such as: supermarkets, food cooperatives, farmers' markets, community supported agriculture, Healthy Bodega, and Green Cart initiatives.
- Through consultation with industry representatives and others, provide standard definitions of the terms used to describe food retail entities and related terminology such as: grocery stores, supermarket, and food desert
- Review the recommendations of public and private initiatives such as the NYS Environmental Justice Interagency Task Force, Economic Security Cabinet, Smart Growth Cabinet, Organic Advisory Task Force and the Supermarket Commission that are working on similar issues simultaneously. The Council on Food Policy will assess the role that they will play to implement concurring recommendations and facilitate discussion with the key stakeholders.
- Consider efficacy of proposals that may alleviate the decline in neighborhood grocery stores that result in limited access to affordable, nutritious foods including, but are not limited to:
 - Incentives for small retailers (*defined here as: less than 2,000 sq ft; or less than 8 workers*) to carry local, nutritious foods and for farmers to sell to small retailers located in underserved areas;
 - Tax breaks or funding for refrigeration used for healthy foods in stores located in underserved areas; and
 - Economic development opportunities for food retailers such as a revolving loan fund for grocery store development and retention in identified food deserts.

Recommendation # 15: Food Production Capacity

Explore ways to increase utilization of existing food production capacity regionally. Infrastructure and capacity vary throughout the State due to regional differences such as population, geography, and economics.

Action Items

- Identify current food processing infrastructure both for wholesale and small scale production, and ensure that food processors are afforded assistance/access to ESDC programs.
- Collect and disseminate information on regional/community food shed network efforts (growing, processing, distributing, marketing capacity). Examples include, but are not limited to: Nelson Farms, Upstate Growers Cooperative, Rural Health Network and Chenango County Bounty. Help facilitate these efforts when possible.
- Identify and pursue collaboration opportunities with community based organization or grassroots initiatives that may secure independent funding and are already actively pursuing concurrent goals.

KEY ISSUE AREA 4

Increase consumer awareness and knowledge about healthy eating; Improve consumer access to safe and nutritious foods

Description

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 for New Yorkers and Americans affecting all ages, males and females, all racial/ethnic populations and all socioeconomic groups.

New York's future well being is inextricably tied to our health. 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. Experts agree that the most important factors that influence health are: nutrition (including eating foods of high nutritional value and in the right quantities) and physical activity. 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 achieving a healthy weight; have access to healthy affordable foods; improve lifelong healthy eating; and increase lifelong physical activity requires action to make it easier for New Yorkers to achieve these standards.

The main focus of this key issue area for the year 2009 will be to create an inventory of existing food, nutrition and obesity prevention programs and initiatives (State, federal, non-profit and private) that are working to increase nutrition awareness, improve healthy eating, reducing obesity and the promotion of healthy diets and lifestyles. Another component will be to evaluate strategies used in successful food advertising and social marketing campaigns by both public and private industry. This analysis will be used to identify opportunities for counter-advertising of unhealthy practices and marketing of positive health and nutrition messages across New York State.

The purpose of this inventory will be to identify what services and programs currently exist; where programs overlap; where gaps may exist; and what communication tools are being used successfully to promote healthy eating and healthy lifestyles. The goals of the program inventory and campaign analysis are to promote cross-agencies and organization collaboration efforts, avoid duplication, expanding on successes and to ensure that nutrition messages are being communicated by the most effective means possible. Actions will be based on data driven measurements and results to the fullest extent possible.

The Department of Health, Division of Nutrition will lead this effort with strong support from corresponding agency and industry representatives as well as community based organizations and affiliates.

Recommendations (# 16 -17) and Action Items for Key Issue Area 4 (in no specific order)

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.

Action Items

- Collect and evaluate existing programs that educate children and the public about healthy eating, accessing nutritious foods, nutrition education and healthy food preparation such as, but not limited to: Farm to School; Food Stamp Program; Eat Smart New York; Eat Better, Move More; community gardens, CSAs, co-ops, food mobiles, and school gardens.
 - Ask the question "What does your agency or organization do to meet the recommendations of this key issue area?"
- Recommend increased federal, State and private support and/or funding for programs with successful track records.
- Encourage collaboration between parallel programs.
- Consider the growing dependence on convenience foods in our society and demand on personal time; promote manufacturing and marketing of affordable, nutritious quick and easy to prepare food items.
- Encourage the adoption of evidence-based guidelines establishing nutritional and dietary standards for food and beverages sold, served and offered in schools, childcare, and after school programs.
 - Include foods that are used as substitute foods for children with allergies.

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.

Action Items

- Inventory and assess what and where consumer outreach is taking place; where gaps exist; and what is making a successful impact. Including, but not limited to: educational posters/maps in bus stops, trains, billboards; low-fat milk initiatives; demonstrations at farmers' markets; emergency food programs; grocery stores that illustrate menu-planning ideas, healthy cooking tips, and farmers' market locations; and inclusion of cultural diversity in healthy food messaging.
- Review social marketing tools such as messaging tactics and terminology used in public health and retail initiatives
 - Evaluate how health focused initiatives stack up against the commercial promotion of non-nutritious foods.
 - Recommend consistent, positive messaging tactics and terminology that reinforce healthy eating habits and consumption of nutritious foods for all ages.
- Evaluate the impact of health focused initiatives such as, but not limited to menu labeling.
- Increase access to healthy food through retail interface with consumers.

IV. ACCOUNT OF PROGRESS MADE IN ACHIEVING GOALS

The engagement and networking of the vast range of stakeholders, creating inclusive relationships, that has already taken place through the Council on Food Policy listening tour, work group discussions, annual meetings, other public events and website correspondence is a critical first step toward achieving the Council goals.

Below are examples of recent efforts that contribute to achieving one or more of the Council on Food Policy's key food policy goals of 1) maximizing participation in food and nutrition assistance programs; 2) strengthening the consumer connection with local products; 3) supporting efficient and profitable agriculture food production and food retail infrastructure; and 4) increasing consumer awareness and knowledge about healthy eating; and improve consumer access to safe and nutritious foods.

In many instances the efforts stem directly from new or renewed Council member and agency collaborations, and/or listening tour input from stakeholders to the Council on Food Policy.

- **WIC Vegetable and Fruit Benefits** The Department of Health, Bureau of Supplemental Food Programs, the Department of Agriculture and Markets, Economic Development Offices and the Farmers Market Federation are collaborating to allow the use of WIC Program checks for the purchase of fresh and processed vegetables and fruits from certified farmers at Community Farmers Markets beginning in 2009. These checks, valued between \$6 and \$10, will allow WIC program participants to purchase fresh, locally produced vegetables and fruits from authorized participating farmers.
- **Food Stamp Accomplishments** The Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance accomplishments in the Food and Nutrition Program initiatives over the year 2007/2008 include:
 - Elimination of Resource Test for Food Stamps
 - Telephone recertification for non-temporary assistance Food Stamps
 - Working Families Food Stamp Initiative
 - On track to achieve or exceed Food Stamp enrollment targets
 - Launch of *myBenefits*, the online, multi-benefit pre-screening tool
 - Successful pilot of facilitated online Food Stamp application in eleven districts collaborating with community-based-organizations
 - Food Stamp - HEAP benefit maximization initiative
- **Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program** The State Education Department's allocation of the over \$1.7 million in federal funds for the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FF&VP) began in the fall of 2008. FF&VP funding is going to 51 schools in 26 districts in NYS. Schools receive funds to purchase domestically grown fresh fruits and vegetables to be served to children separately from meal programs. This program will provide an additional serving of fresh fruit or fresh vegetables to over 26,700 children in New York State through the school year 2008-09. Participating schools are encouraged to expand their nutrition education programs.

- **Safe Food Handling Tips for Schools** The Department of Health in cooperation with the Department of Agriculture and Markets, the NY Farm-to-School Coordinating Committee, and the State Education Department have developed and provided Safe Handling Tips "Stay Healthy" for school food service professionals handling fresh produce (Appendix C). This document is posted on their corresponding websites. Currently this document is setting the standards for the National Farm to School Committee.
- **"You Are What You Eat! Guide to Food Terminology"** Price Chopper has distributed and will display the Consumer Protection Board's pamphlet "You Are What You Eat! Guide to Food Terminology" in 70 stores across upstate New York. Using Price Chopper's HealthyU store displays, 7,000 brochures will be available for the public in an area of the store identified as offering healthy recipes and information.
- **Politics of Food Conference** UFCW Local 1500 co-sponsored the Politics of Food Conference in NYC. The UFCW Local 1500 participates in the NYS Supermarket Commission; the Food Systems Network NYC and the Brooklyn Healthy Food Campaign.
- **Harlem Supermarket Town Hall Meeting** UFCW Local 1500's Building Blocks project partnered with the East Harlem Food and Fitness Consortium that organized the "Harlem Supermarket Town Hall Meeting." The town hall brought together hundreds of Harlem residents to discuss how they want to shape their food system.
- **Good Food, Good Jobs and Good Health Website** UFCW Local 1500 has a website devoted to the promotion of Good Food, Good Jobs and Good Health www.buildingblocksproject.org.
- **Food Safety and Inspection** The Department of Agriculture and Markets Food Safety and Inspection Division has received and is processing New York State slaughterhouse information from the Cornell Small Farms Program. It is intended that the information will be corroborated with Department records and made available online.
- **Pride of NY** The Department of Agriculture and Markets regularly works with food retailers to coordinate efforts to connect consumers with the Pride of NY branding program. Price Chopper has recently initiated conversations with the Department of Agriculture and Markets Marketing Division.

Council members and representatives are actively reaching out to many industries, community based organizations, committees and State agencies seeking further insight and collaboration opportunities to meet their corresponding goals. Establishment of these relationships and lines of communication can not be underestimated as the Council continues to seek effective ways to create a healthier and more prosperous New York.

V. ACTIONS NECESSARY TO IMPLEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

As it moves forward in 2009, the Council on Food Policy will direct its efforts on two initiatives: Key Issue Area Work Groups and a Food Policy Summit. Additionally, critical to the success of many of the Council on Food Policy recommendations and action items is the commitment from New York State agencies to assist the Council in its work to achieve the State food policy goals.

KEY ISSUE AREA WORK GROUPS

The Council will focus its implementation efforts within each work group by designating agency work group chair(s) and assigning implementation responsibilities according to the recommendations already identified within that issue area. In addition, each work group will reach out to and partner with other Council members and interested stakeholders to develop specific implementation strategies and actions that address these recommendations.

Work groups will prepare baseline data, outline longer term (2-5 years) implementation goals, and propose benchmarks for measuring progress when possible. Work groups may modify existing recommendations and action items and/or identify new recommendations and action items as necessary to achieve the goals of the Council.

Lead agencies for the work groups are:

- 1) Maximize participation in food and nutrition assistance programs – Office of Temporary Disability Assistance and Office for the Aging
- 2) Strengthen the connection between local food products and consumers – Department of Agriculture and Markets and Department of Education
- 3) Support efficient and profitable agricultural food production and food retail infrastructure – Department of Agriculture and Markets and Empire State Development
- 4) Increase consumer awareness and knowledge about healthy eating; improve consumer access to safe and nutritious foods – Department of Health

The lead agencies will serve as the chair and facilitator of the work groups and will be expected to engage other Council members, stakeholders, other task forces, sub-cabinets and commissions as well as other necessary State agencies as they move forward with implementation efforts on each of the work group's recommendations.

FOOD POLICY SUMMIT

The Council will organize and host a statewide summit on food policy issues in early 2010. The Food Policy Summit will highlight the efforts of the New York State Council on Food Policy, draw upon experience and expertise from across the region and the country and build support for future efforts to ensure the availability of an adequate supply of affordable, fresh and nutritious food and expand agricultural production to help meet those needs.

NEW YORK STATE AGENCY ENGAGEMENT

Intrinsic in the success of many of the Council on Food Policy recommendations and action items is the commitment from the other New York State agencies to join the Council work groups in the spirit of cooperation when approached.

In 2009, the Council's work will entail a great deal of fact finding. It is expected that every State agency will assist the Council work groups in a timely fashion as they prepare the groundwork for progressing. Notably, the Department of Labor, the Department of Environmental Conservation, the Division of the Budget and the Office of General Services are agencies that the Council considers to be of significant importance to successful implementation of New York State food policy recommendations.

The Council has discovered through the public listening tour and through the productive discourse between the varying representatives on the Council that the mission of a healthier and more prosperous New York surpasses each individual mission.