



Foundation Strategies for Investing in Food Security

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Executive Summary

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines food insecurity as a lack of access to enough nutritionally adequate foods for an active, healthy life. Food insecurity is a problem of *resources*, *access*, and *nutrition*. Although the co-existence of obesity and hunger seems paradoxical, struggling families – particularly in poor, rural, and urban neighborhoods – cannot afford or do not have access to nutritious foods that support healthy living.

This white paper was created to map the spectrum of activities that, taken together, endeavor to create well nourished, food secure communities. It will discuss the continuum of both publicly and privately funded activities that address food security in the U.S., to provide foundation staff and trustees with a framework for considering food security investments. For each general strategy or activity area, a brief overview will be provided, as well as some examples of investments that foundations and others make to support the work. The paper will serve as a guide to the growing interconnections between different activities, suggesting new pathways for broader foundation investment.

Activities, organized along a continuum from short-, to mid-, to long-term strategies include:

- ***Emergency Food Distribution:*** Emergency, charitable food distribution programs provide hunger relief to food insecure individuals who are in need of short-term, immediate assistance. Emergency food relief efforts were first organized during the Great Depression. They have since evolved into a robust, well-orchestrated support infrastructure for many hungry and food insecure individuals, with demand increasing every year. They rely heavily on private support.
- ***Improving Access to and Quality of Publicly Funded Programs:*** The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), through the Food Nutrition Service (FNS), administers fifteen domestic food and nutrition assistance programs. These programs, all primarily funded by the federal government with federal and state governments sharing administrative costs, are critical to helping food insecure individuals gain access to a nutritionally adequate diet on a sustained basis. Some (e.g., Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program SNAP) provide cash-like benefits for food purchases, others (e.g., School Lunch and Breakfast, Summer Food, and the Child and Adult Care Food Program) provide free or reduced-price prepared meals or snacks through institutions like schools, child care, afterschool and summer programs, and senior programs. Still others provide free surplus U.S. farm commodities for redistribution. Private investment can be directed to increase access to these programs and improve their quality.
- ***Urban Agriculture:*** Urban agriculture activities, including commercial farms, community gardens, and individual gardens, have grown in popularity in recent years. Urban farms and gardens can be found in vacant inner-city lots, in backyards, on rooftops, in school yards, or in other alternative spaces as new technologies advance.

Urban agriculture has the potential to help offset the dependency of many food insecure individuals on the industrialized food system, while making available fresh fruit and vegetables and meat products to people living in traditionally non-agricultural areas where fresh produce is not readily accessible. These activities have relied heavily on private support, though opportunities for public-private funding partnerships are increasing.

- ***Access to Nutritious, Affordable Food in the Commercial Sector:*** Lack of access to nutritious, affordable foods in the commercial sector contributes to higher rates of obesity, diabetes, and other diet-related disease in urban and rural communities. Nationwide, USDA estimates that 23.5 million people, including 6.5 million children, live in low-income areas that are more than a mile from a supermarket. Foundation investments in this area typically involve partnership with local economic development efforts and the business community.
 - ***Advocacy and Local Food Policy Councils:*** The way food is grown, distributed, and eaten profoundly affects the health, environment, and economy of a community and the food security of its members. To that end, community leaders across the country have created state or local food policy councils (FPCs) to improve public policy across the food security spectrum and tailor programs to the needs of the community. Today, there are nearly 50 councils nationwide. While FPC's are not a new concept, their structures, practices, and policies are still evolving. They and other local food advocacy efforts typically seek support from local governments and private philanthropy.
 - ***Regional and National Food Systems Reform:*** The industrialized food system, although efficient and vast, is thought by many to be unsustainable. It contributes to economic, health, and environmental deficiencies and disparities in the U.S. and abroad. Additionally, its size and complexity leave it vulnerable to system-wide breakdowns. National and global food policy reform is growing momentum due in part to grassroots movements, progressive governments, and the food security crisis. The public health, economic, and environmental costs of the industrialized food system – exacerbated by recent health crises, fuel shortages, and increases in food insecurity – have brought more widespread attention to national and global food policy. Most policy development work requires private support.
- The relationships among food system activities and strategies to establish long-term food security are complex. In order for funders to effectively support these various areas of work and create an integrated hunger and nutrition safety net, it is important to know how they complement and supplement each other.

Introduction

Increasingly, foundation boards and staffs are taking a broader view of investment opportunities that address hunger, nutrition, and food systems. With recent debate around health care reform, funders that traditionally focus on hunger are growing more concerned about whether the food people are given, or obtain through government supports, is nutritionally sound. Likewise, funders that focus on a host of other issues, ranging from sustainable agriculture to sustainable metropolitan communities, and environmental protection to environmental justice, are supporting projects and policy reforms that promote the return to a more localized food system. And funders of all persuasions are searching for ways to help address both the persistent hunger and food insecurity that predated the recession and the sharp increases in hunger and food insecurity brought about by the recent economic crisis, increases that are affecting mostly those communities whose donors and governments also find themselves with fewer, more thinly stretched resources to deal with the problem.

This white paper was created to map the spectrum of activities that, taken together, endeavor to create well nourished, food secure communities. Until recently, many of these activities have taken place in relative isolation of one another; and funders have tended to line up their support more narrowly behind the activity that seemed to most directly address their missions. This is no longer. Within the broad field of food security, programmatic and policy goals of disparate nonprofit organizations and public subsidy programs are converging with increasing frequency. Organizations that have been associated with one activity are venturing into others with the hope of bringing about more comprehensive and lasting change. As this work becomes more integrated, funders are challenged to navigate beyond their traditional priorities and determine where else, along a continuum of effort, they may wish to extend their investments.

This paper will first define food insecurity and present a context for hunger and food insecurity in the U.S. Next, it will discuss the range of activities that comprise the food security field, organized along a continuum from short-, to mid-, to long-term strategies. For each general strategy, or activity area, a brief overview will be provided, as well as some examples of investments that foundations and others make to support the work. Finally, the paper will attempt to illustrate some of the growing interconnections between different activities, suggesting new pathways for broader foundation investment.

According to the Food Research and Action Center (FRAC), the full-time minimum wage currently equals roughly 72 percent of the poverty level for a family of three and 59 percent for a family of four.

Food Insecurity and Hunger

At the outset, it must be stated that poverty and economic insecurity are the primary determinants of food insecurity. Government supplements like Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), unemployment insurance, and food benefits do not provide families enough support to counter unemployment and low minimum wage standards.¹ The most effective way to eliminate childhood hunger and reduce hunger among adults is through a broad expansion of economic opportunity.² This paper focuses on food insecurity with the understanding that it is a symptom of a greater set of economic, social and land-use ailments.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines food insecurity as a lack of access to enough nutritionally adequate foods for an active, healthy life. Food insecurity is a problem of *resources*, *access*, and *nutrition*. Although the co-existence of obesity and hunger seems paradoxical, struggling families – particularly in poor, rural and urban neighborhoods – cannot afford or do not have access to nutritious foods that support healthy living.

To document the pervasiveness of the food insecurity problem, here are some statistics.

Poverty and Food Security

- In 2008, 39.8 million people (13.2%) and 8.1 million U.S. families (10.3%) lived in poverty³ including 14 million (approximately 19% of) children.⁴
- In 2008, 49.1 million (16.4%) Americans lived in food insecure households compared to 36.2 million (12.2%) in 2007.⁵
- According to the USDA, an estimated 16.7 million children, more than one out of six, lived in food insecure households in 2008.⁶
- Across the metropolitan area classifications, the prevalence of food insecurity was highest for households located in principal cities of metropolitan areas.⁷
- 14.2% of rural households are food insecure, an estimated 2.8 million households.⁸
- Rates of food insecurity are substantially higher for:⁹
 - Households with incomes below the official poverty line (42.2%)
 - Households with children, headed by single women (37.2%) or single men (27.6%)
 - Black households (25.7%)
 - Hispanic households (26.9%).
- The number of people living in poverty in the Detroit tri-county area has grown by 21% in the last five years.¹⁰ According to 2007 census data, 33.8% individuals and 28.2% families in Detroit live below the national poverty level.¹¹
- The number of children ages 0-17 living in poverty in Wayne County has risen to 30.3%, while the number of children living in poverty in the City of Detroit is now a startling 45%.¹²
- There are now 533,354 people (13%) in the Detroit tri-county area living below the poverty level.¹³

Malnutrition and Its Implications

- Proper nutrition affects physical, behavioral and mental health, child development, school readiness, and achievement.¹⁴
- African American and Mexican American children are nearly twice as likely as white children to be obese.¹⁵
- Obesity rates have nearly doubled among adults and more than tripled among children in the past 30 years. In 1991, no state had an adult obesity rate above 20%. Today, 49 states and the District of Columbia have exceeded that rate – significantly, in most cases. And in 30 states, 30% or more children are overweight or obese.¹⁶

- Michigan has the 10th highest adult obesity rate and the 41st highest childhood obesity rate among the 50 states and Washington, D.C.¹⁷ The Michigan Department of Community Health recently reported that 70% of Detroit's population is obese or overweight.¹⁸

Access to Healthy Food Alternatives

- A 2009 study found that 23.5 million low-income people have no supermarket or large grocery store within a mile of their homes.¹⁹
- In California, lower-income communities have 20% fewer healthy food sources than higher-income ones.²⁰
- In Albany, New York, 80% of nonwhite residents live in neighborhoods where low-fat milk and high-fiber bread are unavailable.²¹
- Research has found that a net \$377 million in Detroit consumer spending is leaving city limits annually for purchases in suburban grocery markets.²²
- Over half a million Detroit residents live in areas that lack access to healthy food purchasing.²³

Increases in Food Insecurity

Persistently high unemployment and underemployment rates are likely to keep the number of people facing food insecurity high over the next few years. Research on previous economic recessions indicates that people who fall into poverty in a time of recession do not recover quickly financially, and this deep recession threatens to have negative effects for even longer.²⁴

Since the beginning of the recent economic decline, the number of people enrolled in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as Food Stamps), the primary federal nutrition program, has increased 22% in just one year and now covers more than 40 million individuals. The USDA estimates that only 66% of those eligible participate in the program.²⁵

In an Agriculture Appropriations subcommittee hearing in March 2010, Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro expressed the concern that declining state budgets will slash the social safety net for families as local and state governments plug budget gaps. States are struggling to keep their budgets in balance. The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities estimates that in 2010, 48 states are experiencing budget shortfalls totaling \$196 billion.²⁶ SNAP benefits are 100% federally-funded, but administrative costs are shared with states, so state budget struggles are manifesting themselves in reduced access to the program at the application stage. Diminishing state funds are prompting states to cut programs and services across departments, including some state supplementary student meal programs. (The large majority of the funds are, however, federal.) For example, New Jersey recently cut \$5.6 million – more than half of the programs' total state funding – from its school breakfast and lunch programs. Under the proposed cuts, the state subsidies for breakfast in public schools would be eliminated, and funding for lunches during the regular academic year and summer school would be reduced to the federal government minimum.²⁷

Access to adequate food to stave off hunger is one key goal. Access to fresh and healthy foods is quickly becoming a companion public policy imperative in urban, rural, and some older suburban low-income areas across the country. Food deserts – areas where there is little or no access to healthy and affordable food – have increased economic and health disparities in low-income communities, making food security an issue of social justice. Recent spikes in unemployment rates, home foreclosures, and other hardships as a result of the recent economic downturn – coupled with existing poverty and economic insecurity rates – have exacerbated the concentration of food insecure individuals, families, and children.

As mentioned above, this paper will discuss the continuum of both publicly and privately funded activities that address food security in the U.S. to provide foundation staff and trustees with a framework for considering food security investments.

I: Emergency Food Distribution

Overview

Emergency, charitable food distribution programs provide hunger relief to food insecure individuals who are in need of short-term, immediate assistance. Emergency food relief efforts were first organized during the Great Depression. They have since evolved into a robust, well-orchestrated support infrastructure for many hungry and food insecure individuals, with demand increasing every year.

The USDA has reported that 49.1 million Americans lived in food insecure households in 2008.²⁸ Feeding America, the nation's largest nonprofit network of more than 200 food banks and food rescue organizations, estimates that they alone serve 37 million low-income people – one in eight Americans – annually through food pantries, emergency kitchens, and other charitable food distribution programs.²⁹ Other charitable food distribution programs include disaster relief food efforts, backpack programs for children who need assistance on weekends and school vacations, and programs that provide free meals and snacks to food insecure, low-income children at a variety of community locations, e.g., churches, schools, Boys & Girls clubs.

Infrastructure

The emergency food system, much like the commercial sector, relies on a distribution chain of suppliers (donors), wholesale warehouses (food banks), and frontline agencies (food pantries, emergency kitchens, shelters, and other program sites).³⁰



Donors: Donations to the emergency food system come from a variety of sources.

According to the USDA, most resources are local. Donors include the USDA via its surplus commodity donation program, USDA's Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), local and national farmers, food industry manufacturers and associations, wholesalers, restaurants, grocery and commercial stores, and individuals via local can drives or other voluntary collections.

Food items donated typically include non-perishable goods, like pasta and cereal, canned food, fresh or frozen meat and produce, and sometimes even household items like paper towels and cleaning supplies. Food that is donated from industrialized systems for the most part is overstock or slightly damaged, but still safe. For example, retailers may donate food with a labeling error or food that may be too close to its sale date. Increasingly, efficiencies within the industrialized food system that decrease wasteful surpluses in turn decrease the amount of food available for donation. As a result, local and national food banks are forced to purchase supplemental food to meet demand. For example, Gleaners Food Bank of Southeast Michigan now purchases 32% of its food inventory because manufacturers and retailers have become so efficient in reducing waste. Grocers and retailers are Gleaners' largest food donors, and they only represent 23% of the bank's total food inventory.³¹



Food Banks and Rescue Organizations: Nonprofit food banks are the most important source of food for food pantries, emergency kitchens, and other charitable meal programs.

They collect, house, repack, and distribute millions of pounds of food to local and regional food agency partners. Most food banks have developed efficient and reliable methods for handling large volumes of various foods. They rely on an infrastructure of staff and volunteers to organize, sort, and ship food via delivery systems that often include complex tracking systems and large, heavy-duty trucking fleets.

Donations from food banks account for 76% of the food received by pantries, 50% of the food received by kitchens and 41% of the food received by shelters.³² Feeding America, the nation's leading hunger-relief charity, provides 2.5 billion pounds of food and grocery products annually to local food banks that support 61,000 local agencies and 70,000 programs.³³



Food Agencies: Food agencies are nonprofit organizations that include emergency kitchens, food pantries, and shelters. These agencies are often affiliated with faith-based organizations and rely heavily on volunteers. Methods of food distribution vary by agency. For example, some pantries are “client choice,” in which clients visit the pantry and can select donated food based on their own individual needs, preferences, and circumstances. Other pantries provide pre-packaged grocery bags or boxes that include traditional cooking and need-based items. (Client choice pantries are generally regarded as preferable in that they support individual choice.)

While food pantries distribute unprepared food for offsite use, emergency kitchens (often called soup kitchens) and shelters provide prepared food to eat on-site. Both food pantries and emergency kitchen hours of operation vary by agency. Some food pantries restrict client visits to once per month and do not operate every day. Similarly, emergency kitchens typically do not offer all three meals, every day of the week. Size, supply, and volunteer infrastructure dictate how often agencies service their hungry community members.

Foundation Investments

A breadth of partners support the infrastructure of the emergency food system through monetary and in-kind donations. Feeding America supplies food, technical assistance, and other resources and services to agencies across the country. They receive support from large, national corporations, corporate giving programs, and foundations. It is common for corporate partners to be affiliated with the commercial food sector.

Local food banks and rescue operations receive food from Feeding America, U.S. commodity and TEFAP programs, local food businesses, and individuals. However, with the increasing efficiencies in the industrialized food system, donations of food are shrinking, forcing food banks to purchase food. Local food banks and rescue operations may also operate as hubs for public education and awareness campaigns; they often provide the public face of hunger in communities. As both the food wholesalers and, at times, community advocates, food banks and rescue operations often receive support from local and regional funders interested in human services and the social safety net.

Food pantries, emergency kitchens, and shelters tend to be supported by smaller funding partners and, generally, to a lesser degree than the larger food banks or rescue operations. Support – in the form of time, donations, and money – mostly comes from individuals, volunteers, and religious entities.

Opportunities for foundation investments include:

- Support food banks, rescue operations, and larger frontline agencies for general operating support to maintain or increase the supply of free food or the quality of such food.

- Support agencies that advance policy agendas around food security issues and educate the public on food insecurity. (Assumes that these functions reside within larger agencies that primarily address emergency food issues.)
- Engage in alternative investments, like program and/or mission-related investments (PRI/MRI). In 2009, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation announced a PRI initiative to support food security projects as part of its work toward supporting children, families, and communities. PRIs provide loans to support training, technical assistance, or general operating for nonprofit organizations to implement food security projects that generate revenue streams that can be applied toward loan repayment.³⁴

II: Improving Access to and Quality of Publicly Funded Programs

Overview

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), through the Food Nutrition Service (FNS), administers fifteen domestic food and nutrition assistance programs.³⁵ These programs, all primarily funded by the federal government with federal and state governments sharing administrative costs, are critical to helping food insecure individuals gain access to a nutritionally adequate diet on a sustained basis. Some (especially SNAP) provide cash-like benefits for food purchases, others (e.g. School Lunch and Breakfast, Summer Food, and the Child and Adult Care Food Program) provide free or reduced-price prepared meals or snacks through institutions like schools, child care, afterschool and summer programs, and senior programs. Still others provide free surplus U.S. farm commodities for redistribution.

Given the shrinking of other low-income supports like cash welfare, the nutrition programs have taken on a bigger role in supporting struggling families. The SNAP program, for example, lifts about as many children above the federal poverty line as does any other federal support, and lifts two to four times as many children out of extreme poverty (i.e. half the poverty line) as do programs like the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), Supplemental Security Income (SSI), and Social Security. Individuals qualify for programs based on available household income, assets, and certain basic expenses. More than 1 in 4 Americans use nutrition assistance programs over the course of a year.³⁶

Sixty-seven percent of the USDA's \$133 billion budget, roughly \$89 billion, has been allocated to nutrition assistance programs in 2010. This represents more than a threefold increase in funding since the beginning of the decade.

Benefits – in the form of cash-equivalent benefits or prepared meals – are paid for by the federal government, routed through the states, and distributed by an array of state departments, county health departments, local school districts, hospitals, non-profits, and community centers, depending on the program.³⁷ Foundation investments seek to both improve the access to and quality of publicly funded programs.

These programs not only reduce hunger, they boost health, early childhood development, the quality of child care settings, and student achievement. For example:

- For low-income schoolchildren, the school lunch and breakfast programs reduce hunger and obesity, provide a substantial share of the key nutrients children need each day, reduce school nurse visits, and improve attendance, student behavior, educational achievement, and test scores.
- The afterschool and summer nutrition programs draw hungry children into school-based and community-based programs that keep them safe and engaged in out-of-school time, reduce obesity, and provide basic nutrients at key times when children cannot get them from school meals.
- The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) pays for food for low-income children in Head Start, child care centers, family child care and domestic violence and homeless shelters. It improves preschoolers' nutrition, reduces obesity, and strengthens the quality of care.
- Participation of women, infants, and young children in the Women, Infant and Children (WIC) program boosts rates of prenatal care, reduces low birth weight and infant mortality, reduces childhood anemia and obesity, and saves money in health systems.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

SNAP, formerly known as food stamps, was revived in 1961 after a four-year trial in 1939 when conditions of unmarketable food surpluses and widespread unemployment were prevalent. It was extended nationwide in 1974. SNAP provides monthly cash-equivalent benefits for eligible, low-income households to purchase approved food items at authorized food stores.

SNAP is the only federal benefit program that is generally available nationwide to all who need it and meet eligibility standards, regardless of age or family composition.³⁸ SNAP benefits are issued monthly and can only be used for food. Participants use an electronic benefit transfer (EBT) system, much like a debit or gift card, to redeem the food benefits.³⁹

In an average month of fiscal year 2008, SNAP provided benefits to 28.4 million people, of whom 49% were children.⁴⁰ Just two years later, caseloads have hit record numbers in all parts of the country. In April 2010, SNAP participation rose to 40.4 million people, an increase of more than 12 million people compared to two years earlier.⁴¹ Approximately one in eight Americans receives food assistance through SNAP, representing more than 16 million households.

Problems cited with the SNAP program include, but are not limited to:

- The USDA estimates that only 66% of those eligible participate in the SNAP program.⁴²
- The benefit allotment is generally considered not enough to purchase even a minimally adequate diet for a full month. Most households run out of benefits in the third or early in the fourth week of the month, especially in areas with high food costs.⁴³
- The SNAP benefit level assumes that food insecure individuals have access to inexpensive transportation to grocery stores, knowledge about nutrition, time for food preparation, and a facility to prepare meals.

In addition to the benefit amount issues, access is a problem. State or county policies (e.g., strict asset tests, understaffed welfare offices, complicated verification rules, frequent recertification requirements, fingerprinting requirements, etc.) can drive down participation among eligible, needy people.

Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)

WIC is a preventative nutrition program that provides at-risk, low-income pregnant women, new mothers, infants, and children under age five with nutritious foods, education, and access to health care.⁴⁴ Generally, households with incomes at 185% of poverty or below are eligible for WIC. In some states the cut-off is higher. In addition, eligible participants must be pregnant, postpartum, or breast-feeding, and certified by a health professional to be at nutritional risk. The program provides grants to states to support distribution of benefits, mostly through local health clinics. The prescribed WIC food package has been overhauled to be healthier. In 2010, an average of just over 9.5 million women, infants, and children received WIC benefits per month.⁴⁵ Each month, one in two pregnant women and one in two infants in the U.S. receive WIC benefits.⁴⁶

National School Lunch Program

In 1946 Congress established the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) as a matter of national security after increased incidents of youth being rejected for the World War II draft. Today, NSLP provides per meal cash reimbursements to over 100,000 participating public and private schools. If households participate in the SNAP program or receive Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) assistance, children automatically qualify for free school meals.⁴⁷ However, schools and state SNAP agencies sometimes do not do this cross-certification effectively. Otherwise, parents must document household incomes – below 130% for free lunch and between 130% and 185% of the poverty level for reduced price lunch.

In 2008, NSLP provided lunches to an average of 31 million children each school day, half of which were served free and an additional 10% were provided at reduced price.⁴⁸ The remaining 40% were purchased by students at a subsidized cost.⁴⁹ In many states, more than half of public school students get free or reduced price meals.

The NSLP is administered at the state level, most often by state departments of education. Currently, the NSLP costs the federal government \$10 billion in cash reimbursements and roughly \$1 billion in commodities per year.⁵⁰ The federal government reimburses public and private schools participating in both NSLP and the School Breakfast program per meal with cash.

School Breakfast Program

Conclusive research has repeatedly demonstrated that students who eat a healthy breakfast experience better nutrition, better health, and better learning outcomes.⁵¹ Many children, not just low-income students, do not eat breakfast at home because of tight family budgets, parents' work or commuting schedules, or students' inability to eat first thing in the morning.

Students who eat breakfast increase math and reading scores. Children who eat closer to class and test taking time at school perform better on standardized tests than those that skip breakfast, or even those that eat breakfast at home.

Congress established the School Breakfast Program (SBP) as a pilot program in 1966, and then as a permanent entitlement program in 1975.⁵² During the 2008-09 school year, 10.8 million children in more than 86,000 schools participated in the SBP. Of these children, 81% received free or reduced price breakfasts.⁵³ In 2008 the SBP cost the federal government \$2.4 billion, up from \$1.9 billion in 2005.

Advocates around the country have worked hard to increase breakfast participation, adding nearly 50,000 schools to the program since 1988 and tripling the number of children eating school breakfast every day.

Afterschool Snack and Supper Program and Summer Food Service Program

The Afterschool Snack and Supper Program offers cash reimbursement to help schools and other program providers serve snacks to children after their regular school day ends. Thirteen states, including Michigan, pay for suppers when programs run late in the afternoon or early evening. Schools, public agencies (e.g., park and recreation departments), and non-profits can be providers. Depending on the provider and the meal service, funding comes through the Child and Adult Care Food Program or the National School Lunch Program. The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) reimburses participating organizations that sponsor summer programs to serve nutritious meals to low-income children during the summer.⁵⁴ Again, schools, public agencies and non-profits can be sponsors. In some instances, large food banks and food agencies have expanded their services to include SFSP.

Some problems cited with the nutritional assistance programs include:

- Lack of SNAP outreach and other barriers to enrollment (e.g., archaic asset tests, processing delays, and unnecessary verification hurdles).
- Administrative barriers and inadequate payments associated with programs functioning at high levels of both participation and nutritional quality.
- Meal programs do not provide enough fruits and vegetables because ordering, purchasing, storage, and transportation methods cannot support fragile perishables.
- Facilities and storage spaces in some schools cannot support these programs.
- In the 1980s Congress eliminated the food service equipment assistance program as part of the NSLP, which had helped low-income schools purchase and replace school kitchen equipment. Such funding has not been restored.⁵⁵
- Agency and school staff responsible for food preparation and service lack knowledge about nutritional values and food preparation skills.

- In a survey of income-eligible households that had not applied for NSLP or SBP programs, parents cited wanting to avoid the hassle of the application process, believing that the meal was not worthwhile, and thinking that they were not eligible to participate as the most common reasons for not enrolling in the meal benefit programs.⁵⁶
- Homelessness presents a unique set of barriers to access. Lack of transportation, documentation, and a mailing address to receive updates all create barriers for this population.

Foundation Investments

Foundations typically fund intermediaries, schools, after-school providers, and advocates to support outreach and education efforts, remove barriers to access, build capacity, improve food quality or local sourcing, and support policy change. Foundation support for this work often comes from funders interested in children, seniors, education, and health and human services. The work may also be supported to boost the local economy (particularly through increased SNAP utilization).

Additionally, foundations will invest in supplemental demonstration projects or advocacy work to address the inefficiencies or lack of nutrition provided by the government-funded benefit programs. For example, in Michigan, the Fair Food Network will launch pilots of the Double Up Food Bucks (Double SNAP) program during the 2010 farmers' market season. Double Up Food Bucks doubles the purchasing power, using private investments, of SNAP benefits for clients to purchase locally-grown, fresh produce at local markets. Demonstration projects, like Michigan's Double Up Food Bucks, have successfully been launched in other cities and regions with private support.

Foundations also invest in SNAP outreach, policy advocacy to lower access barriers, and the adoption of best practices to reach the dual goals of reducing food insecurity and boosting local economic development. Every \$5 of federal food stamp income generates \$9 of local economic activity, and many economists in the 2009 economic recovery legislation debate pointed to SNAP as, dollar-for-dollar, the single best form of economic stimulus.

Cash-like and Prepared Meal Benefit Program Examples

	Cash Benefit Assistance	Prepared Meals
Relieve and Prevent Hunger (Government-funded Programs)	<i>Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)</i> <i>Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC)*</i>	<i>National School Lunch Program (NSLP)</i> <i>School Breakfast Program (SBP)</i> <i>Afterschool Snack and Supper Program and Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)</i> <i>Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)</i>
Improve Access (Privately-funded Programs)	<i>Enrollment programs, e.g., supporting outreach and counselors to assist in benefits application</i>	<i>Build capacity, increase enrollment, improve policy, or find more places to offer NSLP, SBP, or SFSP programs</i>
Provide Nutrition and Improve Quality (Privately-funded Programs)	<i>Demonstration Projects, e.g., Double SNAP at farmers' markets</i>	<i>Demonstration Projects and Advocacy Campaigns, e.g., Improve School Foods Campaign</i>

* In December 2007, the USDA issued rules for new and healthier WIC food packages. The new packages improve the health and nutritional quality of the foods in the program by offering fruits, vegetables, and whole grain bread.

Investment opportunities include:

Public Outreach and Education

- Support communication strategies to encourage program participation and reduce program stigma by promoting nutrition, food security, and wellness, not welfare.⁵⁷
- Bundle SNAP outreach efforts with other food security programs.
- Support networks of community agencies performing outreach efforts, which are eligible for federal match dollars.⁵⁸

Access Improvements

- Support initiatives to make benefit application processes more convenient, efficient, and simple for applicants, e.g., counselor assisted prescreening sites or online benefit access and other technology advancements.

Nutrition Improvements

- Support demonstration projects such as initiatives that double the SNAP purchasing power when used to purchase fresh fruit and vegetables from farmers' markets (e.g., Double Up Food Bucks in Michigan).
- Invest in programs that improve the quality of food in schools and in afterschool, summer, and child care programs.

Capacity Building of Meal Providers

- Provide incentives for schools, public agencies, non-profits, and child care providers to participate in NSLP, SBP, afterschool nutrition, Child Care Food, or SFSP. Support operational capacity or facility expansion for school nutrition programs.⁵⁹
- Invest in technologies to supply, transport, and store perishable, nutritious fruits and vegetables supplied by commodity programs.
- Subsidize low-income schools that want to offer lunch or breakfast in the classroom to all children for free.
- Support purchases of food from local growers and other urban agriculture ventures to supplement nutrition programs, particularly farm-to-school programs.

Advocacy Grants

- Support efforts to overhaul meal standards to include more fruits and vegetables, and provide healthier options.
- Fund policy work with local, state, and national agencies to remove regulatory barriers to participation.

III: Urban Agriculture

Overview

Urban agriculture is the growing, processing, and distribution of food and other products through intensive plant cultivation and farming of animals in and around cities.⁶⁰ Urban agriculture includes commercial farms, community gardens, and individual gardens, often referred to as backyard gardens.⁶¹

Urban farms and gardens are plotted in green belts around cities or at the city's edge, in vacant inner-city lots, in backyards, on rooftops and patios, or in other alternative spaces, as new technologies in agriculture advance.⁶²

Farms and gardens provide many direct and indirect benefits. These include:

- Food costs reduction
- Access to better quality and more variety of foods
- Recreation, exercise, therapy, and education opportunities
- Spaces for social gatherings, creating a sense of community
- Reuse of vacant parcels of land or abandoned buildings⁶³
- Reuse of food and water waste streams
- Preservation of green spaces and neighborhood beautification
- New business and employment opportunities
- Reduced dependency on global food system
- Youth leadership programs

Dozens of model projects are demonstrating successfully that urban agriculture is both necessary and viable.

Hydroponics technology, the method of growing plants using mineral nutrient solutions in water without soil, is being used to plot gardens in vacant or abandoned buildings.

Hoop houses, greenhouse-like structures with plastic roofs that let sunlight in for heat, create prolonged or extended growing seasons in a variety of climates.

Urban Agriculture and Food Security

Approximately 80% of the U.S. population lives in urban areas.⁶⁴ According to Urban Agriculture Magazine, by 2015 about 26 cities in the world are expected to have a population of 10 million or more. To feed a city of this size, at least 6000 tons of food must be imported each day.⁶⁵ With the industrialization of the food system, products typically travel between 1,500 and 2,500 miles from farm to plate, using one gallon of fossil fuel per hundred pounds if shipped by tractor-trailer.⁶⁶ As a result, most fruit and vegetable varieties sold in supermarkets are chosen for their ability to withstand industrial harvesting equipment and extended travel, not for their taste or nutritional quality.⁶⁷ Population increases and growing transportation costs intensify low-income, urban residents' vulnerability to insecure food conditions.

Urban agriculture can help to offset the dependency of many food insecure individuals on the industrialized food system, while making available fresh fruit and vegetables and meat products to people living in cities.

Participation

Urban agriculture activities have grown in popularity in recent years. Health and nutrition advocates are frequently the first to initiate urban agriculture programs as one means toward achieving food security among community members.⁶⁸ They often form partnerships with community gardeners, university professionals, emergency food providers, and faith communities in citywide coalitions and food policy councils to maintain and expand urban food security. Environmental agencies are also proponents and organizers of urban agriculture.

In Detroit, over 200 community and family gardens are supported through The Greening of Detroit's Garden Resource Program Collaborative. These gardens produce 100 tons of food each year that are sold under the Grown in Detroit brand at a sponsored booth at Detroit's Eastern Market and mini-farmers' markets throughout the city.⁶⁹

There are many barriers to urban agriculture include:⁷⁰

- *Regulatory barriers:* Local regulations often do not allow agriculture.⁷¹
- *Start-up costs:* High costs for land or equipment can be an obstacle to people with limited income.
- *Access to markets:* Growers often find it difficult to market their locally grown food to grocers, restaurants, or institutions due to wholesale distributors' monopolies.
- *Knowledge and skills:* Populations engaged in urban agriculture may lack knowledge and skills in production, processing, and marketing.
- *Seasonal limits:* Often climates do not support food production year round.
- *Toxic brownfield soil:* Safety of urban-grown food is a concern for city farmers. If soil is toxic, replacement dirt can be expensive.
- *Land tenure:* Many urban agriculturalists do not own the land they use.

Foundation Investments

Funders interested in alleviating hunger, promoting healthy communities, protecting the environment, promoting sustainable land use policies, and creating economic development opportunities support urban agriculture. Additionally, foundations that invest in children support urban agricultural activities for their educational benefits and youth leadership opportunities. For example, Growing Power, an urban farm in Milwaukee, empowers kids to grow healthy food in a sustainable way in an area of the city that is a food desert.

Similar to emergency food distribution efforts, funding for urban agriculture is typically routed through intermediary nonprofits that support community farms and individual gardens. The barriers to urban agriculture, however, provide more focused opportunities for foundation investment.

These include support for activities that:

- Provide start-up funds, tools, or other planting and resources needed for urban farms and gardens.⁷²
- Support "buy-local" campaigns.
- Fund workforce training and educational programs offered through nonprofit intermediaries around agricultural and food-related industries.

A low-profit limited liability company (L3C) is a legal form of business entity that provides a structure to facilitate investments in socially beneficial ventures that have a charitable purpose, with profit making as a secondary goal. The business model was created to simplify the IRS approval process for foundations to make program related investments in these charitable ventures.

- Use new technology, like hoop houses or hydroponic production. Often these opportunities allow funders to use alternative investments like a low-profit limited liability company (L3C) or other program related investment strategies.⁷³
- Advocate for conservation land easements to delineate areas that can be used for urban agriculture, or create land trusts to secure land for urban agriculture.
- Advocate to remove other barriers, such as zoning and lack of municipal water access.

IV: Access to Nutritious, Affordable Food in the Commercial Sector

Overview

Lack of access to nutritious, affordable foods in the commercial sector contributes to higher rates of obesity, diabetes, and other diet-related disease in urban and rural communities. In addition, these neighborhoods are denied the jobs and economic vitality that full-service supermarkets and other grocery stores bring, while money to buy groceries “leaks out” of the community and goes to other areas.

Nationwide, USDA estimates that 23.5 million people, including 6.5 million children, live in low-income areas that are more than a mile from a supermarket. Of the 23.5 million, 11.5 million are low-income individuals in households with incomes at or below 200% of the poverty line.⁷⁴

Corner stores, convenience stores, drug stores, and gas stations serve as food source alternatives in communities that lack supermarkets. These stores often only offer packaged food and very little, if any, healthy snacks. Recently published studies show that the average child purchases more than 350 calories on each visit to the corner store, and 29% stop at corner stores twice a day, five days a week.⁷⁵

Advocates and policymakers have primarily focused on two types of initiatives to address the need for access to healthy alternatives in the commercial sector: healthy corner store campaigns and grocery store financing. Additionally, farmers’ markets play an important supplemental role to the local economy of urban markets.

Healthy Corner Store Campaigns

In urban districts across the country, education campaigns serve to better inform kids’ corner store purchases and advocate to store owners for more healthy alternatives, while also providing new supply networks to corner stores. Most of these programs are new and typically leverage partnerships in the public, private, and nonprofit sectors and use creative tools to reach kids, e.g., social media, youth leadership, and school engagement.

Detroit FRESH connects corner stores with produce distributors who deliver fresh food and equips the stores with basic supplies and produce handling information. Program staff reach out to residents and neighborhood organizations and host events on nutrition education, cooking demonstration, and health screening.

In Pennsylvania, the Healthy Corner Store Initiative depends on youth leadership to educate their peers on healthy choices. The initiative uses social marketing tools and markets its own brand of Snack-Fresh water and produce to the corner stores. Healthy Corner Store is a partnership among store owners, community partners, youth leadership, and local farmers. The program is run as part of a local nonprofit, the Food Trust.

DC's Healthy Corner Store Program, funded by the DC Department of Health, and operated by D.C. Hunger Solutions, an arm of the Food Research and Action Center, surveyed corner store food options and developed healthy corner store standards to conduct nutrition education at the stores for youth and community members and engage local farmers to supply healthy foods. Additionally the program provides training at schools and summer programs, supplies promotional material to community members, and connects kids to their local corner stores.

Grocery Store Financing

Analyses in Detroit, New York City, New Orleans, and Philadelphia have found:

- Market studies relying on census data undercount city residents and their purchasing power. For example, Detroit's annual retail purchasing power, recently recalculated with different modeling tools, was underreported by as much as \$2 billion.⁷⁶
- Increased business costs discourage national retailers from entering the markets, e.g., the loss of merchandise due to theft, the need for increased security measures, and the loss of shopping carts either by theft or customers using them to transport groceries.
- Challenges like navigating brownfield sites or zoning hurdles can discourage new market development in urban districts.
- National retailers have trouble securing a trained, local workforce.

Advocates and policymakers have created cross-sector finance partnerships to encourage supermarket development. In the last half decade, grant and loan programs, modeled after the 2004 Pennsylvania Fresh Food Financing Initiative (PA FFFI), have been established in roughly a half dozen cities and states to encourage supermarket development in underserved neighborhoods.⁷⁷

The PA FFFI was established with a \$30 million investment from the state, which in turn leveraged \$165 million in private investment. Since its inception, PA FFFI has funded 83 supermarket projects in 34 Pennsylvania counties, providing more than 400,000 residents with increased access to healthy food and creating or preserving almost 5,000 jobs. Additionally, there are substantial local economic revitalization impacts, including \$540,000 in local tax revenue from a single store in Philadelphia.⁷⁸ The program has been so successful that the Obama administration has worked with the Food Trust to expand the program nationally with a \$400 million investment in the FY2011 budget to create and expand supermarkets, farmers' markets, and other food stores.

Farmers' Markets

Farmers' markets, usually held in public spaces, accommodate farmers and artisans selling local, fresh produce, eggs, poultry and meat, often grown naturally or organically.⁷⁹ Although farmers' markets generally only operate during the growing season of spring through fall, and are often only open one or two days per week, they are important to the local economy of urban markets. They also provide urban dwellers access to local, fresh produce, encourage small farm production, and are a boon for local economic development.

In Detroit, each week as many as 40,000 people visit the city's Eastern Market, the largest farmers' market in the country. Each Saturday the market features more than 250 independent vendors and merchants.⁸⁰

In some communities, farmers' markets that were historically operated by the municipality are incorporating as non-profit operators. This can allow for better operating efficiency and alternative mechanisms to finance needed improvements.

In 2008 in Michigan alone, 18 farmers markets accepted SNAP benefits for a redemption of more than \$87,000.

USDA and nonprofit partners have worked hard to make SNAP EBT cards usable at farmers' markets and increase their value (e.g., demonstration projects that double the purchasing power of SNAP benefits at the markets).⁸¹

Foundation Investments

Foundations that support health and human services have been most engaged in incentivizing and supplementing the commercial sector to provide communities with healthy alternatives. However, there is also interest from economic development-focused investors because these initiatives foster economic activity, employment, and capital growth.

Foundation grants usually go to large non-profit and quasi-public intermediaries who support corner and grocery store initiatives with capital, technical assistance, and various forms of workforce training and supplier development. Opportunities include:

Capital Investments

- Provide low interest loans or establish a revolving loan fund for retail grocers, typically through intermediaries.
- Establish low-profit limited liability companies (L3C), with other nonprofit or for-profit investors, to finance grocery store development.
- Provide capital to farmers' markets where ownership and infrastructure are controlled by a non-profit entity.

Capacity Building

- Partner with national foundations, e.g., the Food Trust recently received a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to expand the PA FFFI model to an additional eight states in the coming years.
- Fund intermediaries that help retailers select sites and navigate local development processes.
- Fund workforce development programs that support the retail grocery industry.
- Link corner stores and gas stations with local farmers and other suppliers of fresh produce to improve the nutritional quality of their supplies.
- Support development of distributors and processors of locally grown food.

Public Outreach and Education

- Fund corner store healthy eating education campaigns.
- Support education programs to encourage community residents to shop at new or expanded grocery stores and purchase healthy foods.

V: Advocacy and Local Food Policy Councils

Overview

The way food is grown, distributed, and eaten profoundly affects the health, environment, and economy of a community and the food security of its members. To that end, community leaders across the country have created state or local food policy councils (FPCs) intended to improve public policy across the food security spectrum and tailor programs to the needs of the community. Today, there are nearly 50 councils nationwide. While FPCs are not a new concept, their structures, practices, and policies are still evolving.⁸²

Food policy councils monitor local food systems that often go unexamined at the federal level. On both the national and local levels, food policy jurisdiction is spread across numerous governmental departments and functions, e.g., city and state transportation departments, local school districts, economic development offices, and health departments. They are often not coordinated around a shared understanding of a local food system or shared food policy agenda.

According to the report *Food Policy Councils: Lessons Learned* published in 2009 by Food First, food policy councils began as a way to address the food system as a whole, working across sectors, engaging with government policy and programs, grassroots/non-profit projects, local businesses, and food workers. Instead of many advocates working on the isolated symptoms of a failing food system, FPCs attempt to establish platforms for local, coordinated action among food security activities.⁸³

Infrastructure

A food policy council (FPC) brings together representatives from various segments of a state or local food system to examine the operation of that food system and develop recommendations for how it can be improved. Typically sanctioned by a state or local government, FPCs educate officials and the public, improve coordination between existing programs and governmental agencies, start new programs, and set long-term policy goals relating to the sustainability and security of the local system.

FPCs are typically represented by constituents from different parts of the food system, e.g., farmers, consumers, anti-hunger advocates and food bank managers, members of the faith community, food processors, food wholesalers and distributors, food retailers and grocers, chefs and restaurant owners, officials from farm organizations, community gardeners, and academics involved in food policy and law. In addition, the state or local government officials involved with the council typically include representatives from a breadth of departments including agriculture, economic development, education, health, human services, and transportation.

A council can be administered either as an official part of state or local government, or by a non-profit or educational institution as an advisory body. In Connecticut, the non-profit Hartford Food System helps administer the council in cooperation with the state department of agriculture. In Iowa, the Agricultural Law Center at Drake University administers the council in cooperation with the office of the governor. In North Carolina and Utah, the councils function as bodies of the state departments of agriculture.⁸⁴

Activities that food policy councils might engage in include, but are not limited to:

- Conducting a local or state-wide food assessment that maps assets, needs, and environmental conditions.
- Recommending policies that strengthen local food systems.
- Reducing barriers for participation and promoting publicly funded programs and other anti-hunger initiatives.
- Creating a food security report card to provide an annual assessment of the local or regional food system.⁸⁵
- Encouraging public officials, schools, and intermediaries to take advantage of federal benefit programs.⁸⁶
- Convening a forum for different stakeholders to come together to address food policy issues.

Successes and Barriers

In 1994, Kenneth Dahlberg of Western Michigan University conducted a study of five city and one county food policy councils. Amid the small sample size, he found that successful FPCs tend to have strong supportive mayors, good links with staff in local governments, and competent organizers.⁸⁷ Additionally, he found that policy councils that focus on comprehensive food system reform, as opposed to focusing only on hunger relief issues, are more successful in the long run.

If a food policy council (FPC) is a part of any governmental office, state or local, then the degree of support it receives can change significantly as administrations change. On the other hand, if an FPC is distant from the government, then it is much freer to pursue its own agenda and priorities, but may not receive as much public support.

Challenges include adequate funding, lack of staff support, decreases in government support and complex political climates, and balancing the interests of diverse memberships and constituencies. Additionally, the federal government controls a significant part of the national food system, like large-scale commodity production or federal policies around food labeling that may limit local councils' effectiveness. Finally, local food policy councils are often fledgling organizations. Their organization, influence, and continuity – or lack thereof – present efficacy barriers.

Foundation Investments

Funding for most food policy councils comes from private sources, foundation or government grants, or state appropriations. However, most food policy councils lack adequate funding and capacity to work effectively across local food systems.

Few foundations support the work of food policy councils, most likely because they are government-sanctioned and have not been well evaluated. Recent support has come from larger, national foundations like the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, which has supported the creation and capacity-building of several food policy councils across the country.

Investment opportunities include:

- Working with public and private partners to establish food policy councils, especially in food desert areas.
- Supporting further research and evaluation, like Dahlberg's, around the successes and failures of local and state food policy councils.
- Supporting staff of food policy councils since often volunteers drive FPC agendas.
- Funding technical assistance for developing or strengthening food-policy structures, e.g., policy councils, task forces, or networks.

VI: Regional and National Food Systems Reform

Overview

The industrialized food system, although efficient and vast, is thought by many to be unsustainable. It contributes to economic, health, and environmental deficiencies and disparities in the U.S. and abroad. Additionally, its size and complexity leave it vulnerable to system-wide breakdowns.⁸⁸ National and global food policy reform is growing momentum due in part to grassroots movements, progressive governments, and the food security crisis. The public health, economic, and environmental costs of the industrialized food system – exacerbated by recent health crises, fuel shortages, and increases in food insecurity – have brought more widespread attention to national and global food policy.⁸⁹

Advocacy and Policy

Grassroots advocates and reformists have linked industrial agriculture to:

- Air pollution, surface and groundwater contamination, soil erosion, and the loss of bio-diversity.⁹⁰
- Less control by contract farmers over farm inputs onto the farm, and the quality and type of produce sold from the farm.⁹¹
- Rural community destabilization as the economic benefits of agriculture more often leave, rather than remain within, the community.⁹²
- A food system that is skewed toward corn, wheat, and soy commodities and as a result has flooded the food market with cheap and unhealthy calories.⁹³
- A food system that uses more fossil fuel than any other sector of the economy.⁹⁴
- An increase in the amount of greenhouse gases emitted by the food system from chemical fertilizers (made from natural gas), pesticides (made from petroleum), farm machinery, modern food processing and packaging and transportation that now takes 10 calories of fossil-fuel energy to produce a single calorie of modern supermarket food.⁹⁵
- A health crisis where four of the top 10 killers in America today are chronic diseases linked to diet: heart disease, stroke, Type 2 diabetes, and cancer.⁹⁶

Reform recommendations made by national advocates include, but are not limited to:⁹⁷

- Supporting local, decentralized, and sustainable food systems.
- Encouraging commodity farmers to grow a broader range of food through subsidy reform.
- Transitioning large, fertilizer-dependent farms to organic systems that use diverse crops – including animals – to support natural and healthy land.
- Initiating municipal food composting.
- Ensuring food safety measures with more strict regulations on, or complete termination of, confined animal feeding operations.
- Creating and supporting a culture of healthy food and healthy communities.

Food activists have long argued that more fruits and vegetables from local producers should be included in the school lunch programs to help improve childhood nutrition. Reformists now argue that locally grown food requirements will help foster economic benefits for small farmers and help sustain rural America as a whole.⁹⁸

Barriers to Advocacy Efforts

Activity along the food security spectrum is fairly self-contained. According to researchers at the Drake Agricultural Law Center: “The reality of current farm policy may be that many of the issues associated with a ‘food systems’ analytical approach, such as hunger, food security, and direct farm marketing, are seen by the conventional agricultural and food system as marginal or not central to the success of the food system.”⁹⁹ Furthermore, promoting localized systems has the potential to pit more traditional commodity farmers and newer, niche farmers against one another.¹⁰⁰

Foundation Investments

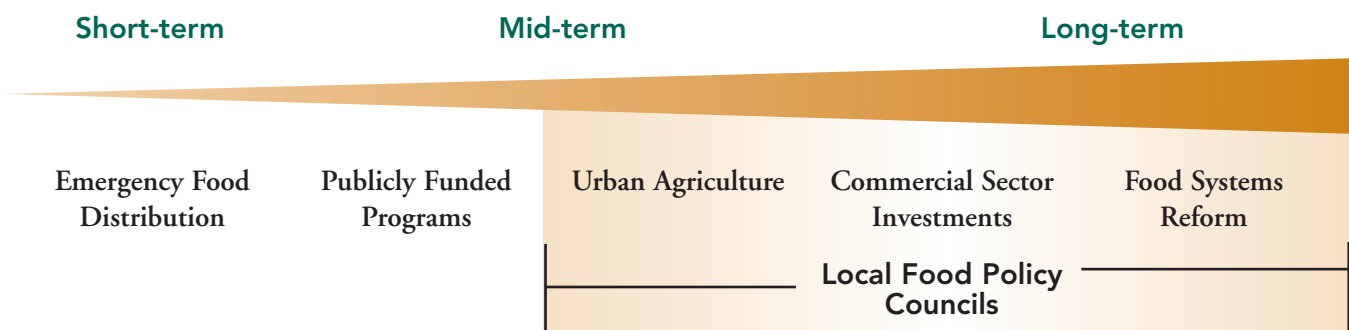
National foundations that invest in agricultural and environmental advocacy campaigns have funded national, systematic food reform efforts. Grants typically go toward national nonprofits that focus exclusively on advocacy, or include policy campaigns as part of their services, like the Food Democracy Now campaign.

There is opportunity to engage more funders across the food security spectrum with food systems reform. Increasingly, funders interested in economic development, health, and even education may consider funding nonprofit advocacy groups that engage in lobbying and public policy advocacy on the state and federal levels. Community food system assessments can provide useful baseline data, but often require special funding to be completed. Foundations may also consider investments to connect partners along the food system spectrum to encourage a more coordinated approach to food system reform. Locally, consortia of government and non-profit stakeholders can be provided with modest support to undertake local reform projects. Local food policy councils can also be organized into their own consortia to work on reform.

VII: Activity Across the Food Security Spectrum

The relationships among food system activities and strategies to establish long-term food security are complex. To encourage these various programs to function together effectively as a hunger and nutrition safety net, it is important to know how they complement and supplement each other.

Strategies to Establish Food Security



Emergency Food Distribution

Although emergency food distribution is a short-term, immediate assistance strategy, it has ties to other activities along the food security spectrum. For example, food banks receive excess food from the publicly funded programs that have evolved out of surplus commodity donation efforts, like the USDA's Temporary Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP).¹⁰¹

Some food banks participate in food stamp outreach programs. On the local level, food banks and rescue operations engage in awareness campaigns to fight hunger and host can drives and other community engagement programs. Nationally, Feeding America is engaged in several education and PSA campaigns to inform the public of food insecurity implications and promote healthy eating.

Although emergency food distribution is intended to supply immediate and necessary calories to hungry individuals, there are opportunities to partner with other activities in the food security spectrum that focus on nutritional quality. Additionally, emergency food distribution organizations may align with broad public policy and public awareness campaigns that focus on food system reform. However, there is something of a paradox built into the food security spectrum, in that successful food system reform efforts would have the secondary effect of greatly reducing the surplus food that currently supplies the emergency food distribution system. Consequently, some emergency food organizations keep some distance from food system reform efforts.

Urban Agriculture

Urban farms and gardens are mid-term strategies along the food security spectrum. They provide a supplemental stream of food to individuals and other programs along the spectrum. For example, farm to school movements connect local farms with local schools. As an additional benefit, local connections provide valuable opportunities to educate children about food sources and preparation, and the local farming industry.

Urban agriculture can also provide food to emergency food programs. In Boston, Drumlin Farm's Food Project brings together city and suburban youth to grow food for Boston area soup kitchens, homeless shelters, and farmers' markets that serve low-income neighborhoods.¹⁰²

Local agriculture can also connect to food assistance programs, like SNAP. There is a movement among advocates to make sure all farmers' markets accept EBT. And in some markets, creative incentives – like the Double Up Food Bucks initiative – double the buying power of food stamps if they are used to purchase local, fresh food.

Finally, in terms of system reform, urban agriculture is a critical component to nutritional and energy efficiency policy changes. The energy used to transport food is decreased when urban agriculture can provide residents with nutritious, locally grown food.

Publicly Funded Programs

Publicly funded nutrition assistance programs serve as a mid-term safety net for millions of families experiencing food insecurity. The benefits of the programs currently dwarf other components. The \$90 billion per year in federal nutrition assistance provides 20 to 30 times as much help as the roughly \$3-4 billion in food provided through food banks.¹⁰³

The underutilization of the public programs (e.g. SNAP reaches only two out of three eligible people; school breakfast reached fewer than half of the low-income children who receive school lunch; summer food and child care food participation rates are even lower) means that there is huge remaining potential in the system that can be leveraged by support for outreach, policy, adoption of best practices, and public education efforts.

Access to Nutritious, Affordable Food in the Commercial Sector

Increasing availability of healthy food in the commercial sector is a mid-term strategy with long-term implications. It creates healthy alternatives that have immediate effects on healthy choices for food insecure individuals, while forwarding long-term food system reform by improving local market infrastructure.

Corner store campaigns and grocer financing supplement private sector markets, and creating demand for healthy food alternatives is critical to retail success. If markets are profitable when providing healthy food, they will continue to supply those alternatives. As a result, insuring access to nutritious food in the commercial sector depends on campaigns that educate food insecure individuals about the benefits of eating fresh and healthy foods. This type of local advocacy engages a breadth of partners in the community, e.g., schools, food councils, and private retailers.

Task forces established in states to provide grocer financing initiatives are making recommendations to local and state governments to support the healthy alternatives movement. For example, at the recommendation of the New York Healthy Foods/Healthy Communities Initiative, a revolving loan fund in New York, Mayor Bloomberg created the Food Retail Expansion to Support Health initiative. In Louisiana, New Orleans created the Fresh Food Retail Incentive Program and in conjunction the state legislature passed the Healthy Food Retail Act.

As community partners continue to work for the availability of nutritious, healthy food in the commercial sector, we may see policy changes in other, complementary movements. Healthy food advocates are also pushing for:

- Sustainable transportation modes such as mass transit, car-sharing and bike-sharing programs that will connect residents and patrons to sustainable food retail establishments.
- Planning and zoning practices that promote and encourage the design and development of high-performing sustainable grocery stores.
- Tax incentives to businesses that supply healthy and fresh food.

Local Food Policy Councils

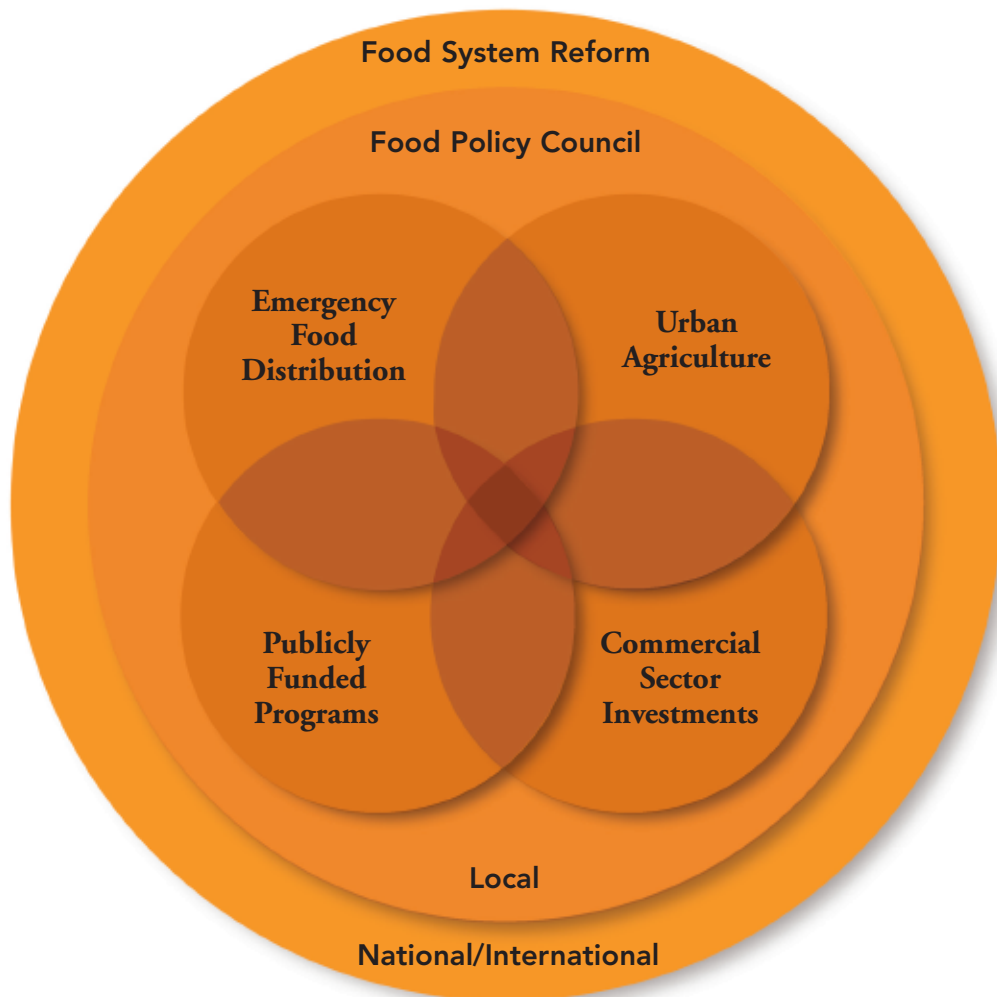
Food policy councils have the potential to serve as umbrellas of advocacy and coordination among all local food security activity, particularly among urban agriculture, commercial sector, and food systems reform investments. Most food policy councils have yet to tackle hunger and emergency food distribution. As a comprehensive strategy, the purpose of the councils is to address food insecurity and related policies between the sectors, in a way that national or federal partners cannot.

Food System Reform

Food system reform efforts work mostly on the national and global level, and have generally been focused on advocating against large, governmentally-subsidized agribusiness and in support of sustainable agriculture and environmental issues. Recently, more effort has been directed toward improving nutrition and health in low-income communities. For example, national campaigns have focused on maximizing quality and not quantity for food assistance programs like SNAP, WIC, and school breakfast and lunch programs. There are many opportunities for reform advocates to work in closer coordination with other efforts along the entire spectrum, specifically to include issues of hunger and basic food security.

As mentioned earlier, a consequence of successful food reform efforts could be to reduce or even eliminate most of the surplus food that is currently available for donation to the emergency food distribution supply.

Interconnections Among and Between Food Security Strategies



Conclusion

A number of factors, including increased disparities exacerbated by economic decline, national healthcare reform, and highly-visible national advocacy campaigns, have highlighted the dangers of hunger, food insecurity, and poor nutrition in low-income communities. Achieving food security requires a full spectrum of activities and programs that tackle different objectives, work along a variety of time horizons, and appeal to different philanthropic priorities of foundations and other investors.

However, as this work becomes more integrated, there is opportunity for funders to stretch their traditional priorities and determine where else, along a continuum of effort, they may wish to extend their investments. This white paper was created to illustrate some of the growing interconnections between different activities, suggesting new pathways for broader foundation investment of activities that, taken together, endeavor to create well nourished, food secure communities.

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- ³⁴ Program related investments have low interest rates (1%-4%) with negotiable repayment periods. PRIs are one of the non-gift vehicles that WKKF is using to diversify its reach and impacts on child wellness. *Good For All*. N.p., 15 May 2010. Web. 20 May 2010. <http://freshtaste.typepad.com/my_weblog/2009/11/wk-kellogg-foundation-announces-pri-investments.html>.
- ³⁵ The 15 food and nutrition programs administered by USDA's Food and Nutrition Service include: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Special Milk Program (SMP), Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP), Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP), Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP), The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR), Food Assistance for Disaster Relief (FADR), Nutrition Assistance Block Grants, including Nutrition Assistance for Puerto Rico, Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP).
- ³⁶ Julie Paradis, FNS administrator, testimony before Congress on March 18, 2010. Accessed here: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cga/speeches/CT031810-b.html>
- ³⁷ Services provided by food assistance programs include: commodities supplied as prepared meals, as food packages that may be used for home consumption, or as disaster relief assistance; food assistance through Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards; nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free meals and snacks; vouchers; fresh, locally grown produce; nutrition education and promotion materials; and food safety and security technical assistance and informational materials. *Food and Nutrition National Service Home*. N.p., 15 May 2010. Web. 5 May 2010. <<http://www.fns.usda.gov/fns/>>.
- ³⁸ *Food Research and Action Center*. N.p., 2007. Web. 6 May 2010. <<http://www.frac.org/>>.
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- ⁴⁰ Wolkwitz, Kari. USDA, Office of Analysis, Nutrition and Evaluation. *Characteristics of Food Stamp Households: Fiscal Year 2008*, September 2009.

- ⁴¹ *Food Research and Action Center*. N.p., 2007. Web. 6 May 2010. <<http://www.frac.org/>>.
- ⁴² It is important to note that other research suggests that SNAP usage is often understated in self-reported surveys, thus, the actual age of clients who are receiving SNAP benefits may be higher. See, for example, Bollinger, C. and M. David. "Estimation With Response Error and Nonresponsive: Food Stamp Participation in the SIPP." *Journal of Business and Economic Statistics* 19(2), 129–142, 2001 and Gundersen, C. and B. Kreider. "Food Stamps and Food Insecurity: What can be Learned in the Presence of Nonclassical Measurement Error." *Journal of Human Resources* 43 (2), 352–382, 2008.
- ⁴³ *Food Research and Action Center*. N.p., 2007. Web. 6 May 2010. <<http://www.frac.org/>>.
- ⁴⁴ The program has been proven to increase the number of women receiving prenatal care, reduce the incidence of low birth weight and fetal mortality, enhance the nutritional quality of the participants' diets, and reduce anemia. *Food Research and Action Center*. N.p., 2007. Web. 6 May 2010. <<http://www.frac.org/>>.
- ⁴⁵ Ibid.
- ⁴⁶ Ibid.
- ⁴⁷ TANF is a federal assistance program that provides cash assistance to American families with dependent children through the United States Department of Health and Human Services.
- ⁴⁸ Nord, M., Andrews, M., Carlson, S. USDA: *Household Food Security in the United States, 2008*.
- ⁴⁹ All schools and all children are eligible to participate in the NSLP, however household income determines if students receive free or reduced price lunches. Children above the poverty levels purchase NSLP lunches. Participating schools are also eligible, based on the number of lunches served, to receive commodity supplemental assistance. The contribution of commodities to the NSLP, although small in comparison to the cash reimbursements, is important. The monetary value of the commodities made available make up roughly 12% of the total federal funding for NSLP, and consist of over 200 products. *Food Research and Action Center*. N.p., 2007. Web. 6 May 2010. <<http://www.frac.org/>>.
- ⁵⁰ Ibid.
- ⁵¹ Studies have shown that students who eat breakfast increase math and reading scores and improve in cognitive tests; children who eat closer to class and test-taking time at school perform better on standardized tests than those that skip breakfast, or even those that eat breakfast at home; and children consume more fruits and a wider variety of foods and drink more milk when they eat a school breakfast.
- ⁵² *Food Research and Action Center*. N.p., 2007. Web. 10 May 2010. <<http://www.frac.org/>>.
- ⁵³ Ibid.
- ⁵⁴ Unlike the Afterschool Snack Program, the SFSP does not require sponsoring organizations to provide supplemental enrichment or educational activities. However, cash reimbursements are not as high as the afterschool snack incentives. *Food Research and Action Center*. N.p., 2007. Web. 6 May 2010. <<http://www.frac.org/>>.
- ⁵⁵ Parker, Lynn. *Commodity Foods and the Nutritional Quality of the National School Lunch Program: Historical Role, Current Operations, and Future Potential*. N.p.: n.p., 2008. N. pag. Web. 3 May 2010. <<http://www.frac.org/>>.
- ⁵⁶ *Evaluation of the National School Lunch Program Application/Verification Pilot Projects*, Nutrition Assistance Program Report Series, The Office of Analysis, Nutrition and Evaluation. Accessed from: www.fns.usda.gov/ora/menu/published/CNP/FILES/NSLPPilotVolV.pdf
- ⁵⁷ Many folks do not know they are even eligible to apply for nutritional assistance. For example, in 2009, approximately 41% of client households seeking emergency food assistance from the Feeding America network reported that had never applied for SNAP, 41% believed they were ineligible for the program, mostly because they thought their income or assets were too high (31%). However, an analysis of reported income showed that more than half of these households (58%) would have been eligible for SNAP benefits, suggesting that there are a large number of individuals who could benefit from additional education and outreach on eligibility. Rhoda Cohen, J. Mabli, F. Potter, Z. Zhao. *Hunger in America 2010*. Feeding America.

- ⁵⁸ The federal government offers nearly 50/50 match rate funding for SNAP administration and outreach. For FY 2009 and FY 2010, in addition to the regular nearly 50/50 match rate funding for SNAP/Food Stamps administration, the federal government provided states with extra SNAP/Food Stamps administration funds that required no state match.
Bellows, Anne, Lauren A. Ledwith, and Ellen Vollinger. "SNAP/Food Stamps Outreach and Access Toolkit." *Food Research and Action Center*. N.p., 1 May 2010. Web. 3 May 2010. <<http://www.frac.org/>>.
- ⁵⁹ In the 1980s Congress eliminated the food service equipment assistance program as part of NSLP, which had helped low-income schools purchase and replace school kitchen equipment. Funding has not been restored to support this program.
- ⁶⁰ Bailkey, M. and J. Nasr. *From brownfields to greenfields: Producing food in North American cities*. Community Food Security News. Fall 1999/Winter 2000:6.
- ⁶¹ Urban agriculture has a rich and ubiquitous history across all cultures. Ancient civilizations in Persia and Native American communities used water conservation and community waste techniques to feed urban farming. Most recently, victory gardens provided fruits and vegetables during WWI and WWII to offset food production and support the war effort.
Vijoen, Andre, et al. 2005, *Continuous Productive Urban Landscapes*. Architectural Press, Burlington MA 2005
- ⁶² For example, hydroponics technology, the method of growing plants using mineral nutrient solutions in water without soil, is being used to plot gardens in vacant or abandoned buildings. And hoop houses, a greenhouse with a plastic roof wrapping that heats the structure, create prolonged or extended growing seasons in a variety of climates. The potential for food production in cities is great, and dozens of model projects are demonstrating successfully that urban agriculture is both necessary and viable.
Brown, Katherine H., and Anne Carter. *Urban Agriculture and Community Food Security in the United States: Farming from the City Center to the Urban Fringe*. N.p.: Community Food Security Coalition', 2003.
- ⁶³ The U.S. General Accounting Office identified 130,000 to 425,000 contaminated vacant industrial sites, or brownfields that could be safely converted to agricultural purposes when properly redeveloped.
- ⁶⁴ Brown, Katherine H., and Anne Carter. *Urban Agriculture and Community Food Security in the United States: Farming from the City Center to the Urban Fringe*. N.p.: Community Food Security Coalition', 2003.
- ⁶⁵ Drescher et al. 2000. "Urban Food Security: Urban agriculture, a response to crisis?" *UA Magazine* (2000) 1.1 ><http://www.ruaf.org/index.php?q=system/files/files/Urban+food+security+-+UA+response+to+crisis.pdf>>
- ⁶⁶ Eat Locally, Ease Climate Change Globally - washingtonpost.com
- ⁶⁷ Brown, Katherine H., and Anne Carter. *Urban Agriculture and Community Food Security in the United States: Farming from the City Center to the Urban Fringe*. N.p.: Community Food Security Coalition', 2003.
- ⁶⁸ Brown, Katherine H., and Anne Carter. *Urban Agriculture and Community Food Security in the United States: Farming from the City Center to the Urban Fringe*. N.p.: Community Food Security Coalition, 2003.
- ⁶⁹ *The Greening of Detroit*. N.p., n.d. Web. 28 Sept. 2010.
<http://www.greeningofdetroit.com/5_2_urban_agriculture.php>.
- ⁷⁰ Brown, Katherine H., and Anne Carter. *Urban Agriculture and Community Food Security in the United States: Farming from the City Center to the Urban Fringe*. N.p.: Community Food Security Coalition, 2003.
- ⁷¹ Hodgson, Kimberley. *Regulation of Food Access through Comprehensive Planning and Zoning*. N.p., Apr. 2008. Contact author at khodgson@planning.org.
- ⁷² For example, Detroit's Garden Resource Program Collaborative is a tool bank intermediary and provides resources like tools, compost, mulch, tomato stakes, seeds, and education to gardeners.
- ⁷³ An L3C is a legal form of business entity that allows nonprofits to engage in for-profit ventures as long as it is for a charitable purpose. The business model was created as a way to simplify the program related investment process with the IRS.
- ⁷⁴ Nord, M., Andrews, M., Carlson, S. *USDA: Household Food Security in the United States, 2008*.

- ⁷⁵ Borradaile, Kelley E., and Sandy Sherman. "Snacking in Children: The Role of Urban Corner Stores." *Pediatrics: Official Journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics* (2009). Web. 10 Apr. 2010. <www.pediatrics.org>.
- ⁷⁶ *Detroit Fresh Food Access Initiative: Report of the Taskforce Findings*. N.p.: n.p., 2008. N. pag. Print.
- ⁷⁷ The Food Trust – a Philadelphia base nonprofit – has launched similar programs in New York, New Orleans, Illinois, New Jersey and Colorado. The grant and loan programs are financed by state and private investments and is typically administered by an intermediary organization. The Obama administration's FY2011 budget includes money to create a national grant/loan program. *The Food Trust*. N.p., 1 May 2003. Web. 3 May 2010. <<http://www.thefoodtrust.org/>>.
- ⁷⁸ Ibid.
- ⁷⁹ Robinson, J. M., and J. A. Hartenfeld. *The Farmers' Market Book: Growing Food, Cultivating Community*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2007.
- ⁸⁰ *Detroit Eastern Market*. N.p., 2008. Web. 20 May 2010. <<http://www.detroiteasternmarket.com/>>.
- ⁸¹ SNAP participation rate increased more than 17% between September 2007 and September 2008 nationally, according to USDA – a clear indicator of current economic conditions. In 2008 in Michigan alone, 18 farmers markets accepted SNAP benefits for a redemption of more than \$87,000. Montri, Dru. "New Release: Farmers Markets Can Meet the Need by Offering SNAP Benefits." *Michigan Farmers' Market Association*. N.p., 17 Feb. 2009. Web. 29 Sept. 2010. <<http://www.mifma.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/SNAP-Benefits-2-17-09.pdf>>.
- ⁸² The first local food policy council was established in 1982 in Knoxville, Tennessee. Connecticut's legislature established the first state food policy council in 1997. And, in 2002 the Farm Bill authorized the USDA to provide community food security grants to create food policy councils. Section 4125 of the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 amending 7USC §2034: In addition to then doubling annual funding to \$5M, the law encouraged "long-term planning activities, and multi-system, interagency approaches with multistakeholder collaborations that build the long-term capacity of communities to address the food and agricultural problems of communities such as food policy councils and food planning associations." *North American Food Policy Council*. N.p., 2008. Web. 10 Apr. 2010. <<http://www.foodsecurity.org/FPC/index.html>>.
- ⁸³ Activities include: production (agriculture, farmland preservation, farmers' markets, household and community gardens, and small livestock), processing, distribution (transportation, warehousing), access (grocery stores, co-ops, school breakfast and lunch programs, food stamps, WIC, etc.), food use (health, nutrition, cooking, food preservation, food safety, and food handling), food recycling (gleaning, food banks, food pantries, and soup kitchens), and waste streams (composting, garbage fed to animals, etc.).
- ⁸⁴ Hamilton, Neil D. "Putting a Face on Our Food: How State and Local Food Policies Can Promote New Agriculture." *Drake Journal of Agriculture Law* 7.2 (2002).
- ⁸⁵ Connecticut created one, See, e.g., Conn. Dept. Of Agric., *Food Security In Connecticut: The 2000 Annual Report Of The Connecticut Food Policy Council* (2001).
- ⁸⁶ If a FPC is a part of any governmental office, state or local, then the degree of support it receives can change significantly as administrations change. On the other hand, if a FPC is distant from the government, then it is much freer to pursue its own agenda and priorities, but may not receive as much public support. Dahlberg, Kenneth A. *Food Policy Councils: The Experience of Five Cities and One County*. N.p.: n.p., 1994.
- ⁸⁷ Dahlberg, Kenneth A. *Food Policy Councils: The Experience of Five Cities and One County*. N.p.: n.p., 1994
- ⁸⁸ Additional events related to the food system compromise its sustainability including increasing food prices and battles over genetically modified crops and pesticides. For the first time in history, the U.S. Supreme Court is weighing in on genetically modified organisms' role in the nation's farm fields. As reported in the New York Times, American farmers' near-ubiquitous use of genetically modified pesticides has led to the rapid growth of new superweeds that stand to threaten the entire industrialized farming system. Neuman, William, and Andrew Pollack. "Farmers Cope With Roundup-Resistant Weeds." *The New York Times* 5 May 2010. N. pag. Web. 5 May 2010. <www.nytimes.com>.

- ⁸⁹ In the past, farm states have exerted disproportionate control over food policies in the interests of large commodity and agricultural business (agribusiness). In Congress, farm-state members have traditionally sought out seats on the Agriculture Committee.⁸⁹ In the past, it's been hard to gain attention of advocates and public interest because most are removed from the issues.
Winant, Gabriel. "Will Obama Bring Change to Agriculture." *Salon.com* 8 Nov. 2008. N. pag. Web. 16 Apr. 2010. <www.salon.com>.
- ⁹⁰ Brown, Katherine H., and Anne Carter. *Urban Agriculture and Community Food Security in the United States: Farming from the City Center to the Urban Fringe*. N.p.: Community Food Security Coalition, 2003.
- ⁹¹ Ibid
- ⁹² Ibid
- ⁹³ Pollan, Michael, perf. *Food Inc.*. 2009. River Road Entertainment . DVD-ROM.
- ⁹⁴ Pollan, Michael. "Farmer In Chief." *The New York Times* 12 Oct. 2008. N. pag. Web. 16 Apr. 2010. <www.nytimes.com>.
- ⁹⁵ Ibid
- ⁹⁶ Ibid
- ⁹⁷ Advocates also encourage consumers to buy locally, choose foods that are organic and in season, read labels, and plant gardens, to name a few.
- ⁹⁸ Black, Jane. "Where Policy Grows." *The Washington Post* 25 Mar. 2009. N. pag. Web. 16 Apr. 2010. <www.washingtonpost.com>.
- ⁹⁹ Hamilton, Neil D. "Putting a Face on Our Food: How State and Local Food Policies Can Promote New Agriculture." *Drake Journal of Agriculture Law* 7.2 (2002).
- ¹⁰⁰ For example, a handful of U.S. senators have recently critiqued of USDA's *Know Your Farmer Know Your Food* campaign. Although the program was established to better connect consumers with local producers, its opponents say that it is an effort to redirect funds away from rural farms to "small, hobbyists and organic producers whose customers generally consist of affluent patrons at urban farmers' markets." *Food Democracy Now*. N.p., n.d. Web. 20 Apr. 2010. <<http://www.fooddemocracynow.org/>>.
- ¹⁰¹ In a study conducted by Feeding America affiliates, 54.4% of pantries, 33.5% of kitchens, and 31.4% of shelters receive food from TEFAP.
Feeding America. N.p., n.d. Web. 10 April 2010. <<http://feedingamerica.org/faces-of-hunger/hunger-101/child-hunger-implications.aspx>>.
- ¹⁰² Feenstra, Gail W. "Local Food Systems and Sustainable Communities." *American Journal of Alternative Agriculture* (2009). Web. 20 Apr. 2010. <greenopolis.com>
- ¹⁰³ The recent initiatives to connect SNAP to farmers' markets probably still mean that less than \$10 million in food stamps is spend in farmers' markets.