

PLANNING FOR A COMMUNITY FOOD SYSTEM

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What is a food system?

When we buy or eat food, we only see a very small part of what it takes to produce and move that food to the point of sale or consumption. Behind a bag of potatoes, a pack of chicken, or a head of broccoli, is a network of activities that take place from the farm to the plate and beyond.

The food system encompasses all the processes needed to provide a range of food options throughout the year including:

- Production (growing, harvesting, land access/use)
- Processing (packaging, value-added processing)
- Distribution (logistics, transportation, storage)
- Consumption (marketing, retail/wholesale/institutional)
- Disposal (waste, regeneration, environmental)

These functions work interrelatedly in a sea of market drivers, economic conditions, regulations, infrastructure, policies, regulations, financing, and more.

Local and regional food systems often interconnect with national and global supply chains.

What is local?



- The single statutory definition for "locally or regionally produced agricultural food product" in the United States applies to products transported less than 400 miles or within the state in which they are produced.
- In Canada, fresh fruits and vegetables cannot be labeled as "local" unless produced within about 31 miles (50 kilometers) of where they are sold.
- Most state definitions view "local" to mean grown within state borders; however, in some cases "local" may be defined as food grown within a certain geographic region that might cross state lines. Definitions based on geographic distance vary depending on the state or region and on whether the food is fresh or processed, among other factors
- What is local for the Southern Tier? For Western New York?

What is a food system?

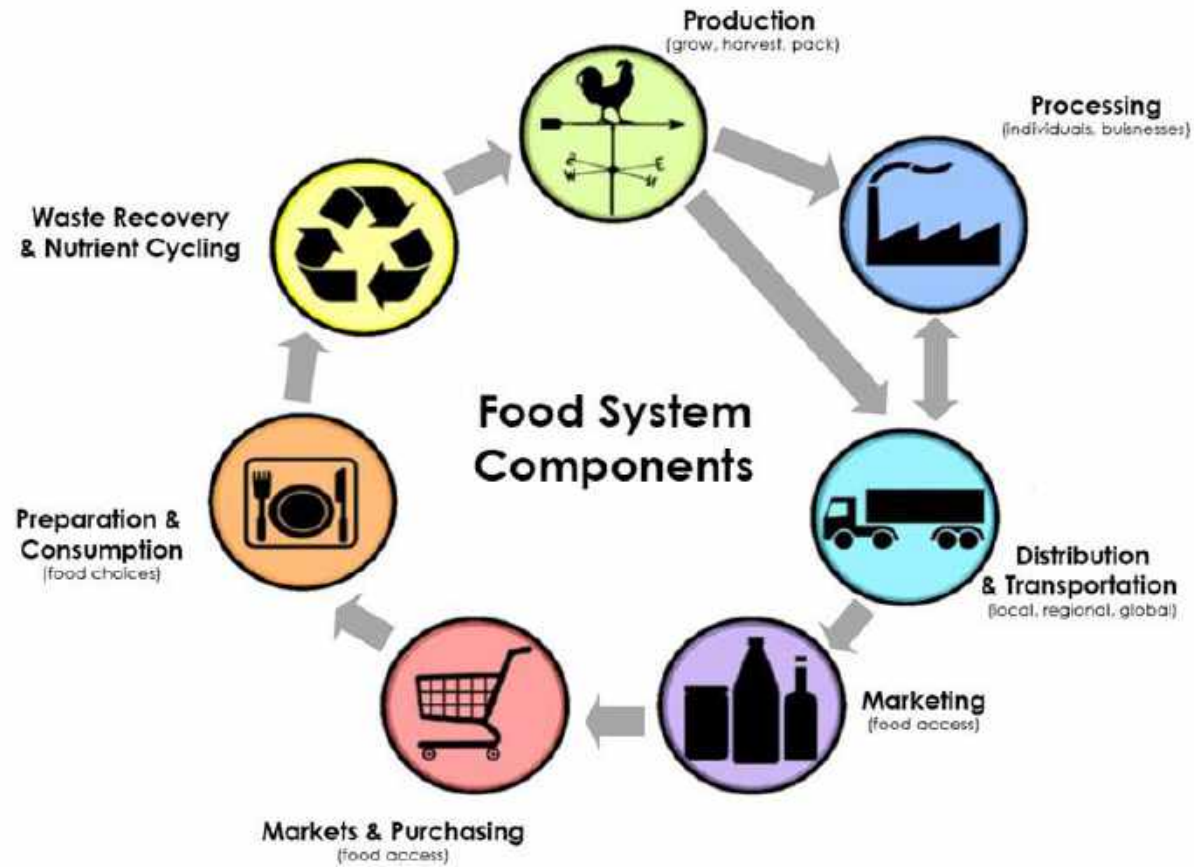
Systems approach to planning

- *Integrates all elements and relationships that exist or could be possible*
- *Jurisdiction is defined by geography or network connections*
- *Reciprocal benefits across relationships; not hierarchical*
- *Emphasis on sustaining positive impacts and beneficiaries*
- *Ingress at any point for stakeholders*
- *Holistic integration among economic – social – environmental*
- *Asset-based approach to development – leverage what currently exists*

A food system is:

- *The soil-to-soil functions and activities that connects food production, processing, distribution, acquisition, consumption, and waste disposal in food and agriculture. This includes all the resources, technologies, stakeholders, relationships, policies and laws that shape and influence how food moves through the system.*

What is a community food system?



Source: <https://www.uidaho.edu/extension/county/payette/community-food>

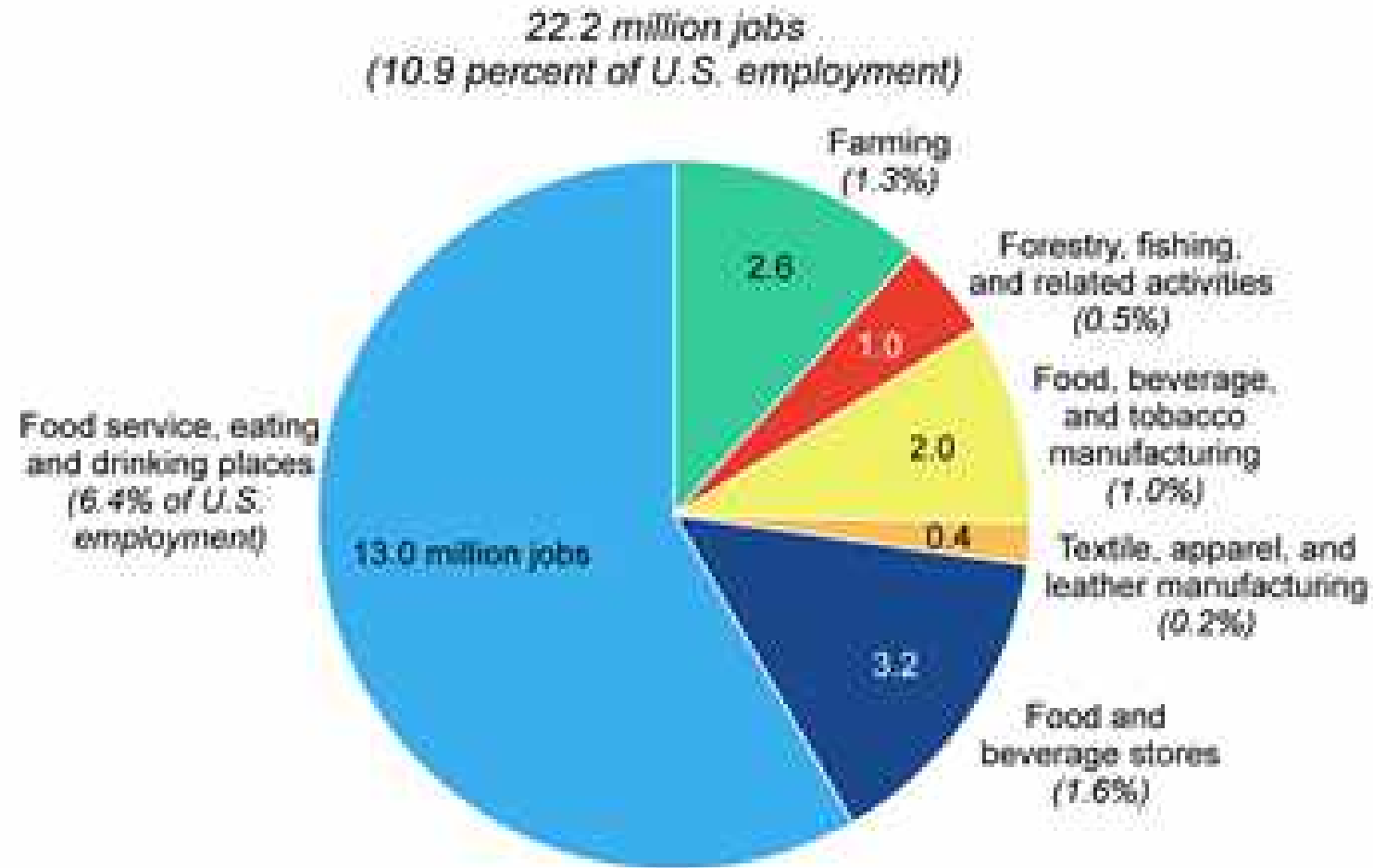
Food system planning

- At best, food system planning addresses the entire life cycle of food: from natural resource management and cultivation of crops and livestock, through processing, packaging, and distribution of food, to acquisition and consumption at homes, cafeterias, restaurants, and ending with disposal in a waste facility or reuse as compost applied to a field.
- Typically, food planning is/was narrowly focused on specific spectrums
 - *Hunger advocates focused on food security*
 - *Public health focuses on chronic health conditions (obesity, diabetes)*
 - *Farmland protection focuses on land use (development pressure)*
 - *Economists focus on job creation and wealth development*
 - *Lacking planning integration across all functions of the food system*



Employment

Employment* in agriculture, food, and related industries, 2019



*Full- and part-time jobs. Categories may not sum to total due to rounding.
Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using data from U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis, data as of September 24, 2020.

Community Health



■ County health rankings –

- <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/new-york/2020/overview>
- Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua among lowest ranked counties for health outcomes (length + quality of life) and health factors (health behaviors, clinical care, social/economic factors, physical environment)
- Allegany: 46/52; Cattaraugus: 57/59; Chautauqua: 61/54); check each county's Community Health Assessment and Community Health Improvement Plan
- Health is influenced by every aspect of where and how we live – access to food, shelter, education, employment, child/elder care
- Most of the chronic health indicators can be improved with dietary changes = food system planning
- Economic development and public health are sharing development of planning and improvement strategies

Agriculture and land use

- Land use planning to protect the agricultural output potential
- Keep land in agricultural production; reduced non-ag development pressures
- Assist diversification of farming products and practices = market drivers
- Northeast will be highly valuable for ability to grow food = natural resources, favorable climate for awhile,
- Cornell University's Climate Smart Farming tool: <http://climatesmartfarming.org/>
 - *Webinar: Understanding Climate Change and its Impacts on Local Agriculture*

Resilience

- Food system frailties and inequities exposed during pandemic
 - *Global supply chains broke*
 - *Processing came to a halt*
 - *Logistics of transportation interrupted*
 - *Local food systems maxed out of available food*
 - *Food was caught in supply chains, primarily institutions*
 - *Economic fluctuations = more food insecurity*
 - *But people needed to continue to eat.....*
- Pandemic = perfect storm for food system development and planning?





Video source:

Center for Environmental Farming Systems; www.localfoodeconomies.org

Tools to assess the food system

- Local or Regional Foodshed Assessment
 - *Geographic boundaries of procurement; land needed to feed a population*
- Comprehensive Food System Assessment
 - *Analysis of local/regional/state assets in land, production/processing/logistic/consumption/disposal – all functions, market drivers, workforce current status*
- Community Food Security Assessment
 - *Community engagement in assessing food access and framing action responses*
- Community Food Asset Mapping
 - *Community engagement in asset-based approach and food system vision*

Source:

“Emerging assessment tools to inform food system planning”

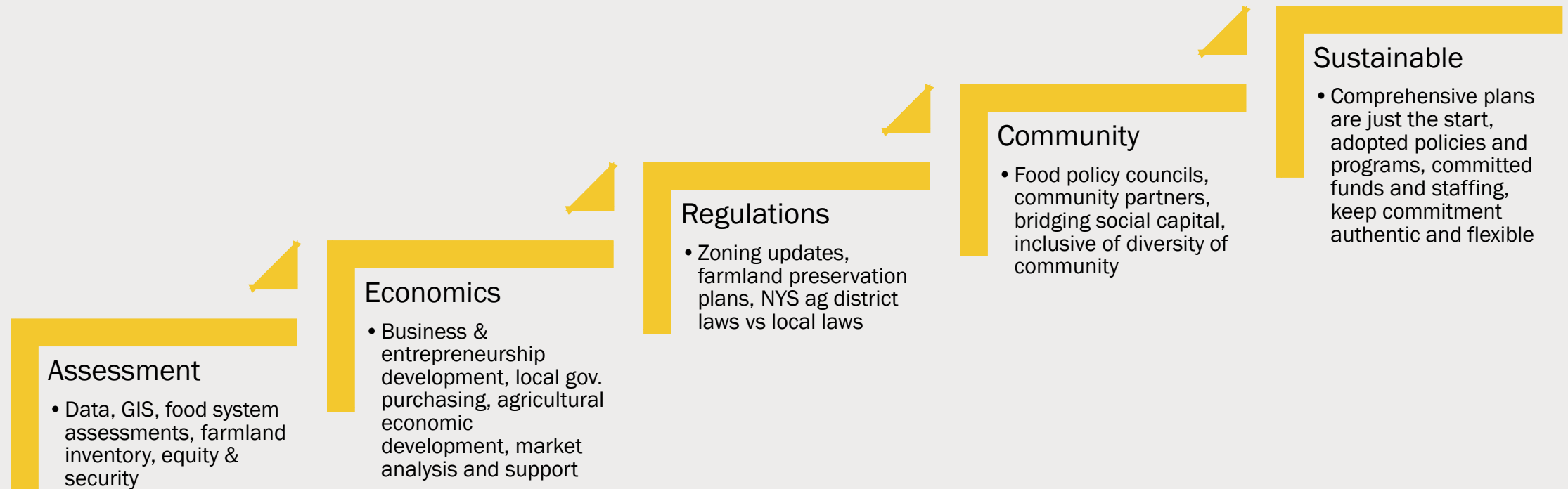
Tools to assess the food system

- Food Desert Assessment
 - *Identify areas with limited access to full-service groceries/healthy food options*
- Land Inventory Food Assessment
 - *Identify underutilized land suitable for agriculture; assess extent a community/region can feed itself*
- Local Food Economy Assessment
 - *Assess prevailing economic conditions in food and farm systems; make case for community-based food commerce, jobs, wealth creation; help engage local officials in food system planning*
- Food Industry Assessment
 - *Identify key food industries in region; cluster development; investors; economies of scale; specialized workforce opportunities*

Source:

“Emerging assessment tools to inform food system planning”

Food systems planning





Douglas County and City of Lawrence, Kansas Food System Plan

- Establishes a 10-year framework
- Trending a best practices example
- Flexible document; easily updated
- Identifies potential partners to implement strategies
- Established base plan for launch of food policy council

<https://www.douglascountyks.org/fpc/food-system-plan>

Local food economies, local governments

- Local food economies encompass everything that is associated with a local food system
 - ***Production: land use, business of farming***
 - access to land, farmer training, farm succession planning, new farmer incentives, access to technology, low- or no-cost capital, equipment
 - ***Processing: value-added food products, food manufacturing, storage***
 - infrastructure, business development support, access to transportation, market drivers, aggregation & food hubs, commercial kitchens, supply and value chains, cluster development,
 - ***Distribution: wholesale and retail supply chains, transportation channels, warehousing***
 - Trucking companies, grocery/warehouses, sales channels, technology, block chain,
 - ***Consumption: wholesale/retail/D2C/institutional sales, food security initiatives***
 - full-service groceries, restaurants, specialty markets, farmers markets, CSAs, institutions, food banks/pantries
 - ***Disposal/regeneration: reducing food waste, food in waste streams, sustainable land use and stewardship***
 - Community compost programs, anaerobic digesters, gleaning from farms/retail, no-till method, silvopasture/agroforestry, recapture the 40% of food wasted

Local food economies, local governments

- Local food economies as business retention, expansion, innovation
 - *Farms, succession planning, new/emerging farmer programs, affordable access to land*
 - *Supply chain infrastructure mapping; business development facilitation*
 - *Cluster industries; build community and business culture; processing facilities*
 - *Development and access to capital*
 - *Local foods branding and promotion; point-of-sale labeling*
 - *Community-wide health improvement program leveraging local/healthy food*
 - *Policies; food policy councils, equity, access, government/institutional local food procurement*

Resources

“A Guide for Governments on Building Local Food Economies,” published by Center for Environmental Farming Systems; www.localfoodeconomies.org

“Planning to Eat? Innovative Local Government Plans and Policies to Build Healthy Food Systems in the United States”; published by K. Neuner, S. Kelly, S.Raja; University at Buffalo

“A Planners Guide to Community and Regional Food Planning: Transforming Food Environments, Facilitating Healthy Eating,” S. Raja, B. Born, J. Russell; American Planning Association

“Emerging Assessment Tools to Inform Food System Planning,” J. Freedgood, M. Pierce-Quinonez, K. Meter; Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development

“A Call to Build Trust and Center Values in Food Systems Work,” Michigan State University Center for Regional Food Systems

“Putting Local Food Policy to Work for Our Communities,” Harvard Law School Food Law and Policy Clinic

Resources

“2020 County Health Rankings Report, New York State; University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute; www.CountyHealthRankings.org

“APA Policy Guide on Community and Regional Food Planning; www.planning.org/policy/guides/adopted/food.htm

“Regional Approaches to Local Food Economies;” www.localfoodeconomies.org

Thank you

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