Closing the Hunger Gap with Local Food

Foreword

By Jim Hanna, Executive Director of the Cumberland County Food Security Council

Each year, through the U.S. Census Bureau, the Economic Research Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) conducts a survey to assess the extent to which U.S. households struggle to get adequate food. In September 2018, the USDA released its 23nd annual report on Household Food Security in the United States. The report estimates food security in the United States overall and in each state over the previous three years using a rolling average. For example, over the period from 2015 to 2017, an estimated 11.8 percent of American households were food insecure, that is, they lacked access to enough food for an active, healthy life for all household members. That rate had fallen from 13 percent over the period from 2014 to 2016. The prevalence of very low food security (VLFS) similarly inched downward from 5.2 percent to 4.5 percent. During the first 10 years of the USDA report, VLFS was referred to as "hunger."

In 2017, 1,195 Maine residents completed the 18-question survey, which collects yes or no responses to such statements as, "Within the past 12 months, we worried whether our food would run out before we got money to buy more," and "Within the past 12 months, the food we bought just didn't last and we didn't have money to get more." The food security status of the household is assigned based on the number of food-insecure conditions reported. The 2018 USDA report finds 14.4 percent of Maine households are food insecure, including 6.4 percent who are experiencing VLFS, significantly above the national average on both counts. In the most recent survey, only Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi and New Mexico have a higher prevalence of VLFS than Maine.

Over time, food insecurity rates reflect economic trends, including poverty and food prices. Household food security is also influenced by access to federal benefits, including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and child nutrition programs such as federally funded school meals. We find it more challenging to measure the impact on food security of resources mobilized through the charitable food system. Despite massive private investments in "emergency" food distributed by food banks, pantries and soup kitchens, that system does not have the capacity to feed everyone lacking food in a down economy or during a natural disaster. This overall system is not oriented toward a long-term goal, focusing only on addressing immediate hunger.

"Food security," as defined by USDA, means access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life. How does that definition inform our long-term strategy for establishing universal food security? Put another way, how will we eliminate hunger in our communities?

CCFSC believes an answer lies in our local food resources. Local food supports nutritious diets, stimulates regional economies, sustains healthy environments and creates strong social connections. This means that increasing local production, processing and access can alleviate hunger through a variety of strategies while building a resilient and equitable food system. This report shows how members of CCFSC and others are using local food to build food-secure communities.

The Cumberland County Food Security Council

The Cumberland County Food Security Council is made up of engaged citizens, community leaders, and representatives from local organizations who are leading the efforts to build food security in Cumberland County and across Maine. Our efforts focus on educating our community about why our neighbors are food insecure and what can be done to create greater food security in Cumberland County. We advocate for policy changes and decision-making that support systemic change and ground-level action relevant to alleviating hunger. We believe that we can accomplish more together and that collaborative advocacy and collective action can result in a hunger-free Maine.

Our Mission

The Cumberland County Food Security Council's mission is to advocate, educate and take action toward increasing food access for food-insecure people in Cumberland County. We do this by working together to initiate, strategize, and innovate solutions to our community's hunger problem.

Our Vision

Our highest aspiration is that our efforts will result in our work no longer being necessary because our community is food secure. We envision a Cumberland County free from hunger in which:

- Every home has access to adequate healthy food.
- Every person has the skills to prepare and consume food to make the most of its nutritional value.
- Each child has enough nutrition to play, learn and grow to their fullest potential.
- Each elder can access the necessary calories and nutrients to live without stress.
- Every community moves toward a sustainable food system by producing a significant amount of its own food.
- We are solving hunger together every day.

The Cumberland County Food Security Council believes

- Everyone has a right to adequate food for a healthy, active life.
- Together we are more powerful than as individuals or single organizations.
- Everyone in our community, especially those experiencing food insecurity, must be engaged if we are going to solve hunger.
- Food is a shared need and an opportunity to work together for the common good.
- A strong economy, built on a foundation that includes a healthy local food system, is one of the most important factors for food security.
- We can change habits of thought and action that perpetuate hunger and the myth that we cannot solve hunger.
- We can solve hunger.

Equity and Economic/Racial Justice

Why are people hungry? People are hungry because they are poor.

Why are people poor? Poverty exists in our nation because we, as a society, allow it. We choose to organize our economy and our communities in ways that exclude people from access to their basic needs. When political leaders elevate the ideal of personal responsibility above all else, we lose sight of our collective responsibility to take care of each other. When we blame individuals for not being able to afford food, we deny our complicity in maintaining a political and economic system that fails far too many.

Hunger is not about scarcity. We produce more than enough nutritious food to feed everyone in our country and more.[1] Hunger is not about logistics. We have the technical expertise to get adequate food to everyone. Other wealthy nations around the world have implemented a variety of strategies to enable individuals and families to meet their basic needs. These include government-funded post-secondary education, subsidized childcare, and universal health care. Others are piloting basic income, trust funds at birth, guaranteed employment, and other programs that ensure health and well-being. Our nation promised, but never honored, a commitment to reparations for people emancipated from slavery. Even though there is general agreement that people should not suffer hunger, our nation cannot agree on effective strategies to use our collective resources to lift people out of poverty.

Countries with fewer wealth disparities and the fewest people living in poverty do better on every measure; they are more democratic, more resilient and more prosperous.[2] Nations that model this success tend to be racially and ethnically homogenous. By contrast, wealthy nations with large populations experiencing abject poverty are often home to traditionally oppressed minorities. Made up stories of the moral failings of people lacking resources justify their ongoing deprivation. We dehumanize people experiencing poverty to justify their marginalization. So much human potential is wasted when we allow people to suffer deprivation. In the end, this costs us all.[3]

CCFSC recognizes the institutional patterns throughout our nation's history that have enabled poverty to persist. Much of the historical wealth accumulated in the United States is derived from land that was taken from the native inhabitants and from slave labor that was not compensated. False narratives about the humanity of people of color who were exploited justified the theft of personhood and property.

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[1] The USDA identified 41.2 million adults and children experiencing food insecurity in the US in 2016. Meanwhile, the most recent USDA data show that approximately 133 billion pounds of food are wasted annually in this country. When calculated using the USDA definition of 1.2 pounds as equivalent to one meal, this food waste is enough food to feed 36.94 billion people three meals daily, far exceeding the amount of food necessary for the number of food insecure people in the US. USDA Food Waste Challenge FAQs; USDA Key Statistics; GenerationOn Meal Math worksheet.

[2] Rowbottom, Jacob. "Political Equality, Wealth and Democracy," in *Democracy Distorted: Wealth, Influence and Democratic Politics*, 1–32. Law in Context. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010. doi:10.1017/CBO9780511844805.002.

[3] The gardens of democracy : a new American story of citizenship, the economy, and the role of government, Eric Liu and Nick Hanauer, https://searchworks.stanford.edu/view/9638703

Racism does not require people of color to be present. In Maine, one of the whitest states, the few people of color are far more vulnerable to lack of economic opportunity than their white neighbors.[4]

CCFSC is among local leaders working to solve hunger and poverty in our communities. We aspire to be among the leaders working for equity and racial justice. We welcome members with diverse perspectives, especially those with lived experience of poverty and oppression.

We ally ourselves with the Racial Equity Institute (https://www.racialequityinstitute.org), which trains and organizes advocates in the tradition of the People's Institute for Survival and Beyond. Sending council members to REI trainings supports our efforts to develop a shared and consistent antiracist analysis of hunger and poverty.

An additional resource to support our shared understanding of how to deconstruct racism is the Racial Wealth Gap Learning Simulation (http://bread.org/library/racial-wealth-gap-learning-simulation). This open source simulation was developed by Bread for the World who offers it at no cost to be used by community-based groups. It is designed to help people understand the connections among racial equity, hunger, poverty, and wealth. This interactive tool is a powerful resource for developing empathy while learning the historical context of policy decisions that have had a lasting impact on the ability of African Americans and other people of color to accumulate wealth and succeed in the U.S. economy. It is an effective first step to introduce people to structural inequality, as well as a source of information for experts who want to know the quantifiable economic impact of policies that have widened today's racial hunger, income, and wealth divides. CCFSC will work with any group that wants to bring this to your community.

Our nation's history of racism must be understood and acknowledged if we are going to transform our country into a place where everyone can fulfill their potential. There are more than enough resources to eliminate poverty and hunger. When we make it a collective priority to reorganize our economy to ensure that everyone's basic needs are met, we will have a foundation for achieving our true human potential.

[4] "Census Bureau Data: Poverty among Blacks and African Americans in Maine Is the Highest in the Nation," Maine Center for Economic Policy, September 22, 2014.

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Closing the Hunger Gap with Local Food

Hunger Amidst Plenty

Maine is known nationally and internationally for its pristine environment and the quality of food its farms and fisheries produce. The state has long been associated with popular foods, including apples, blueberries, potatoes, and seafood. The most recent federal agricultural census, published in 2014, found that Maine's agricultural products increased in market value by nearly one-quarter between 2007 and 2012 and were valued at more than $760 million.[5] Based on that same census data, Farm to Institution New England counted 8173 farms in the state in 2012, with 13 percent of farms selling directly to retail, including to institutions.[6] Lobster accounts for about three-quarters of the state's $700-million-plus commercial fisheries.[7] Mainers and visitors alike recognize the value of local abundance. In the 2017 Locavore Index, Maine retained its 2016 rank of second among states for overall commitment to local food behind Vermont. Maine ranks in the top 10 on each index measure.[8]

Despite a strong brand for food produced in Maine, substantial fishing and farming sectors, and more than a decade of growth in the state's agricultural production, many Maine households struggle to put food on their tables. Currently, Maine ranks 8th (with North Carolina) among the states in the proportion of residents who are food insecure, while neighboring states Vermont and New Hampshire rank 44th and 47th, respectively.[9] The food insecurity rate in the United States as a whole dropped following the recent recession, but that same hunger rate in Maine continued to rise (see Figure 1). The food insecurity in Maine declined last year for the first time since the late 1990s. Still, one in seven Mainers is food insecure (14.4% for 2015–17), meaning they live without reliable access to a sufficient quantity of affordable, nutritious food to lead an active, healthy life. Maine's food insecurity rate remains significantly higher than the rate for the nation as a whole, which was estimated at 11.8 percent for the same period. The "threat of hunger," an indicator of marginal food security, is also a daily reality for far too many Maine residents.

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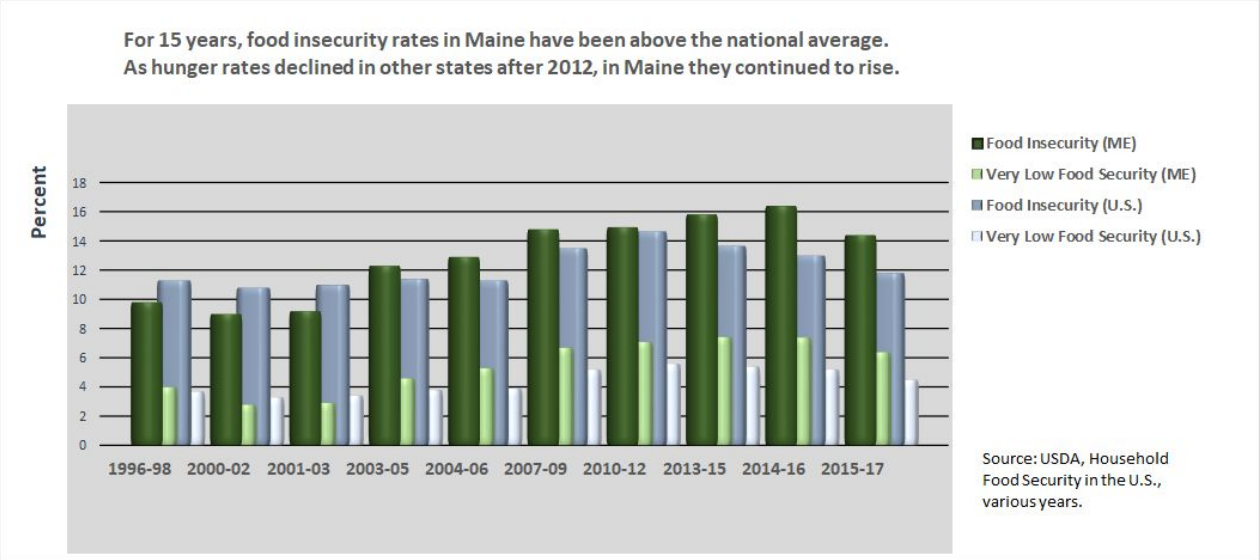
[5] "Maine's farm count defies national trend," *Portland Press Herald,* February 20, 2014; USDA/NASS 2016 State Agricultural Overview.
[6] New England Farm to Institution, Metrics Project Maine State Profile, 2016.
[7] "Maine lobster catch tipped the scale at a record 130 million pounds in 2016," *Portland Press Herald,* March 3, 2017. "Size and value of Maine lobster haul fell sharply in 2017," Portland Press Herald, March 2, 2018.
[8] 2017 Locavore Index, Strolling of the Heifers.
[9] Household Food Security in the United States in 2017, USDA, September 2018.



Today, Maine ranks 6th in the country for the proportion of households experiencing *very low food security*, meaning that at times eating patterns of one or more household members are disrupted and food intake is reduced because the household lacks sufficient income or other resources necessary to acquire food (see sidebar for USDA definitions). The most recent data places Maine (at 6.4 percent) tied with Oklahoma behind Arkansas (6.5), Mississippi and New Mexico (6.6), Alabama and Louisiana (7.1) on this measure.[10]

Food Security Definitions

- High food security: no reported indications of food-access problems or limitations.
- Marginal food security: one or two reported indications—typically of anxiety over food sufficiency or shortage of food in the house. Little or no indication of changes in diets or food intake.
- Low food security: reports of reduced quality, variety, or desirability of diet. Little or no indication of reduced food intake.
- Very low food security: Reports of multiple indications of disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake.

  Source: USDA Definitions of Food Security.

Hunger and poverty trends for Maine's most vulnerable groups are particularly troubling. Roughly one in five Maine children is food insecure.[11] Nearly *half* of all school children in Maine (46% in 2017-18) are from families whose low income qualifies them for federally subsidized free or reduced-cost school meals.[12] One in 16 Maine children lives in deep poverty, defined as family income of less than half the federal poverty line. The rate of increase between 2011 and 2015 in deep poverty among children in Maine was twice that of other New England states and 8 times that of the nation as a whole.[13] The state

[10] Household Food Security in the United States in 2016, p. 20.
[11] Map the Meal Gap, Feeding America, 2015 data.
[12] Maine Department of Education, Nutrition Reports. Eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch (FRPL) is as follows: family income at up to 130% of the poverty line, children qualify for free meals; family income from 130 to 185% above the poverty line, children qualify for reduced-price meals.
[13] Maine Center for Economic Policy blog, May 11, 2017.

has made some recent progress in reducing child poverty. Researchers credit increases in the state's minimum wage with a drop in the child poverty rate from 17 percent in 2016 to 13 percent in 2017.[14] The percentage of children growing up in deep poverty declined only slightly, from 6.6 percent in 2016 to 5.7 percent in 2018.[15]

One in seven Maine seniors is also food insecure. Maine has the 12th highest rate of food insecurity among seniors in the nation; almost one-third now face hunger or the threat of hunger. The number of Maine seniors who are food insecure doubled between 2012 and 2017.[16]

Cumberland County

Cumberland County is home to roughly one-fifth of Maine's population, about 285,000 people, and roughly one-quarter of those residents live in the City of Portland. More than 700 small farms occupy 12 percent of the county's 825 square miles of land area, growing an array of fruits and vegetables and supplying local and external markets with beef, hogs, poultry, dairy products, and more. With more than 1200 miles of coastline, the county has long been home to a thriving seafood industry as well. The U.S. Economic Development Administration has designated the Greater Portland area a Sustainable Food Production Cluster, signifying both potential for food-sector growth and limited infrastructure for adding value to local products.[17]

Although several other Maine counties have higher rates of food insecurity, Cumberland County has the largest number of Mainers who are food insecure. Approximately 37,000 (13%) of Cumberland County residents are food insecure, including more than 10,000 children; the rate of food insecurity for children is 17 percent.[18] During the 2017–18 school year, one-third of students in Cumberland County were from families whose income qualifies them for federally subsidized free or reduced-cost school meals, and more than half of Portland's public school students (56%) were eligible for the program.[19] Four Portland schools participate in the federal Community Eligibility Provision, in which all students in the school receive free meals if the school or district serves a sufficient percentage of low-income students.[20]

Faces and Factors in Food Insecurity

Why does food security matter? When people lack the resources to secure adequate nutrition, it affects every aspect of their lives and the well-being of the community as a whole. Hunger affects children, young people, adults and seniors. When our basic needs aren't met, our full potential cannot be reached. Families living on lower incomes than their neighbors are alienated from the society around them and are unable to participate fully in the community. Economic disadvantages are magnified when

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[14] "Minimum wage increase boosted paychecks, cut child poverty in 2017," MECEP, September 24, 2018.
[15] James Myall, Maine Center for Economic Policy, email, October 11, 2018.
[16] Olivia Dooley, Good Shepherd Food Bank blog, May 22, 2017.
[17] "Cumberland County, Maine," Growing Food Connections profile, May 2016.
[18] Map the Meal Gap 2018, Feeding America; "Summer meals take the edge off persistent child hunger in Maine," Portland Press Herald, August 5, 2018.
[19] Nutrition Reports, Maine Department of Education.
[20] MAINE CEP SCHOOL YEAR 2017, Maine Department of Education. The four Portland schools are East End Community School, Howard Reiche Community School, Presumpscot School, and Riverton School.

there are other identifying factors that cause vulnerability, such as being of a minority culture, experiencing language barriers, or practicing a non-dominant religion.

Children and young people growing up in poverty face permanent disadvantages. While food insecurity is a health issue at any age, it can have particularly detrimental effects for children who need nutritious food to develop properly, resist infections, and prevent developing diet-related diseases later in life. Lack of nutrition during a child's developing years can lead to an array of challenges, including more frequent illnesses, physical disabilities, neurological disorders, and cognitive deficits. Food insecurity is among the health-related causes of chronic absenteeism in the nation's schools, with long-term negative impacts on academic achievement and years of schooling completed.[21] When students have reliable access to nutritious food, they are healthier and better able to learn. Recent studies of school lunch programs, for example, have shown clear benefits in attentiveness and test scores when students eat healthier meals.[22]

Similarly, food security is a crucial component of well-being for the elderly. Adequate nutrition is essential for maintaining physical and mental health and physical mobility. Controlling for other factors, food insecure seniors "age" more quickly, are at greater risk of chronic disease, are less able to resist infection, and may be slower to recover from illness or injury, all of which lead to greater use of health-care resources and to having higher health-care costs than their food-secure peers.[23]

Regardless of age, food insecurity creates uncertainty and stress, as people worry about where their next meal will come from or about how they can hide socially unacceptable meals. Persistent anxiety about accessing basic needs for one's self and one's family has lasting effects that health researchers are just now recognizing. Stress during childhood and adulthood can affect long-term mental health, decision-making, memory, the ability to cope with other types of stressors, neurological development, and a host of other important brain functions. Persistent hunger and poor nutrition as a result of greater access to processed foods than to fresh and nutritious foods can also lead to obesity and diet-related diseases and even shorten lifespan.[24]

In a word, food matters. It matters for individuals and families, and it matters for local, state, national and global communities that people have access to adequate, nutritious food.

Maine families lack access to healthy food not because such food is unavailable in the marketplace, but because their ability to get that food is restricted by income. Inadequate income often forces people to make difficult tradeoffs—choosing between paying for heat and buying food or between buying healthy food and buying cheaper, highly processed products. Social and economic policies that help people maintain a steady income can reduce hunger and the threat of hunger among individuals and families. Efforts to address hunger and poverty through root causes include advocating for a higher minimum wage, affordable child care, paid sick leave, and health insurance subsidies, along with maintaining critical safety net programs such as TANF, SNAP, WIC, and Medicaid.

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[21] Taking Action: Addressing the Health-Related Reasons Students Are Absent, Healthy Schools Campaign, 2015.
[22] Jane E. Brody, "Feeding Young Minds: The Importance of School Lunches," *New York Times*, June 5, 2017.
[23] Olivia Dooley, "Older Mainers, Empty Plates: Research on Senior Food Insecurity in Maine," Good Shepherd Food Bank, February 2017.
[24] Christian H. Cooper, "Why Poverty Is Like a Disease: Emerging science is putting the lie to American meritocracy," *Nautilus,* Issue 047, April 20, 2017.

Although low income is the most obvious cause of food insecurity, contributing factors can include homelessness, physical or mental disability, chronic illness, lack of transportation, and proximity to markets and other sources of healthy food. Similarly, barriers for people experiencing food insecurity to accessing hunger relief services can include language, paperwork, perceptions of stigma, and limited knowledge of existing programs. Recognizing and removing these barriers can be a first, necessary step toward ensuring access to adequate food. Understanding how food insecurity manifests in someone's life is important, and addressing hunger for individuals or groups requires identifying the specific contributing factors. Based on this understanding, communities can identify effective strategies and make the best investments to increase food security for all members.

Envisioning a Hunger-Free Cumberland County

The Cumberland County Food Security Council and its members have been working collaboratively over the last decade toward a common vision of a food-secure Cumberland County. The council brings together partner organizations and individual stakeholders, articulates a common food security vision, and facilitates greater alignment of partners' work throughout the county. While the council's focus is food security, this work fits within regional, national, and international efforts that focus on the food system as a whole. Working to improve the food system can boost economic growth, create opportunities to advance social justice, and provide an arena for addressing environmental challenges. Taking a systems approach to hunger means engaging all the stakeholders and considering all the processes involved in production and consumption. Closing the hunger gap with local food is a systems approach that aligns with other efforts to create a more robust and resilient food system in Maine. Articulated strategies include the New England Food Vision (2014) and the Maine Food Strategy Framework (2016), which call for increasing both farming and fishing to strengthen local economies and enhance regional food security for the future (see sidebars).

This approach also aligns well with Food Secure Canada, which offers a model for developing a national food policy that engages government in addressing hunger by helping to create a better food system for everyone. The model is based on a set of principles the organization calls Five Big Ideas:

- Realize the human right to food
- Champion healthy and sustainable diets
- Support sustainable food systems
- Make food a part of reconciliation
- Invite more voices to the table.

Food Secure Canada's clarion call is as relevant to the United States as it is to Canada: "Canada has everything we need to be a world food-policy leader - natural abundance, universal health care, culinary diversity, dynamic businesses, a vibrant and engaged civil society and a citizenry that loves talking about and eating good food. Let's tell the government it is time to eliminate hunger and elevate food as a critical element in our plans for a more sustainable and healthy country."[25]

Goals and Values from New England Food Vision

"A New England Food Vision describes a future in which New England produces at least half of the region's food—and no one goes hungry. It looks ahead to 2060 and sees farming and fishing as

[25] Food Secure Canada.

important regional economic forces; soils, forests, and waterways cared for sustainably; healthy diets as a norm; and access to food valued as a basic human right. " The vision articulates the changes in regional food production necessary to provide a healthy diet, called the "Omnivore's Delight," to all the region's residents. Among other benefits, the Omnivore's Delight scenario would:

- Increase the value of food production in New England by more than three times
- Grow the farming industry and local jobs
- Increase commercial fisheries and related local jobs
- Reduce the use of current food system practices that put future generations at risk
- Promote health through more nutrient rich dietary practices
- Promote greater social justice and equity
- Build greater regional food security through enhanced capacity for food production.

Source: Donahue, Brian, et al. A New England Food Vision. Durham, NH: Food Solutions New England, University of New Hampshire, 2014.

The Maine Food Strategy Framework Goals

Combining a participatory process and a concrete action plan, the Maine Food Strategy launched in 2013 and continues to build and strengthen the network of Maine food system stakeholders.

Goal 1: Global and in-state market share of foods farmed, fished, foraged and/or processed in Maine show measurable annual increases within the ecological bounds of the resource.

Goal 2: Improve the ability of businesses across the food production supply chain to manage growth and change in the marketplace.

Goal 3: Improve incomes, and access to benefits, for individuals employed in businesses along the food production supply chain.

Goal 4: Public policies are supportive of farms, fisheries and other supply chain businesses involved in food production that contribute to communities, local economies and natural resource sustainability.

Goal 5: Food insecure individuals and communities in Maine have access to resources that address their needs.

Source: The Maine Food Strategy Framework: A Tool for Advancing Maine's Food Systems, Summer 2016.

Although the U.S. does not have a national food policy such as that proposed by Food Secure Canada, the federal government does contribute to efforts to strengthen the local food system in Maine and elsewhere. One such effort is Growing Food Connections, a project funded by the USDA with a goal of improving community food security and supporting local food production. Growing Food Connections in 2015 identified Cumberland County as one of eight Communities of Opportunity and conducted an assessment of the region. The report issued in September 2017 details the region's economic challenges, hunger relief programs, and diverse food economy. The report highlights efforts by local governments, nonprofits, and the University of Maine Cooperative Extension offices to support local agriculture and strengthen connections among producers, processors, retailers and consumers. Several of the report's recommendations are consistent with activities already underway by CCFSC partners.[26]

[26] "Building on the Strengths of Land and Sea: Policy Opportunities for Strengthening the Food System in Cumberland County, Maine," Growing Food Connections, September 2017.

Among the thousands of private organizations and agencies devoted to hunger relief or other food system issues is the Closing the Hunger Gap Network, which aims to "engage food banks and their constituents in expanding their efforts beyond food handouts, toward community-based empowerment initiatives that effectively network with broader food security work."[27] The Cumberland County Food Security Council and council member Good Shepherd Food Bank both participate in this national network.

A Focus on Local Food

The U.S. has not adopted any specific universal definition of "local food." It falls to states, businesses, and other entities to define what local means to them. The USDA acknowledges the lack of a common understanding of local food, asserting that although local is defined by a limited geographic area, the boundaries of this area are not predetermined.[28] The 2008 Farm Bill, which provides the only statutory definition of local food, states that the final product must travel under 400 miles from its initial source or that it must be distributed within the state in which the product is produced.[29] Given this broad definition, it is not surprising that institutions create their own standards for what constitutes local food. In Maine, the University of Maine system food service accepts products that have traveled 175 miles or fewer as local.[30] L.D. 1584, which will require state institutions to purchase 20 percent of their food from local producers by 2025, became Maine law on July 4, 2018. Authored by Senator Eloise Vitelli, the law defines local food as anything that was produced or harvested in Maine.[31]

While "local" has been variously defined by a number of miles between production and consumption, local food in the context of this report refers to patterns of production and consumption and their impact on community well-being. A well-organized and robust food system can promote healthy diets and economic development while simultaneously reducing food insecurity, food loss, and negative environmental impacts. Closing the hunger gap with local food is a comprehensive approach to addressing food security that promotes policies, programs, and activities that 1) afford greater access to fresh, healthy food for all Mainers, in part by empowering those who would otherwise have limited access to it; 2) stimulate the local food economy; 3) protect and preserve the environment for future generations; and 4) strengthen the regional food system.

Healthy Food, Healthy Communities

The most direct path to food security is growing one's own food. The first set of programs profiled in this report are noteworthy for their success in empowering food-insecure individuals to produce food. Whether farming on several acres or gardening in an urban plot, new Mainers and others in need are increasingly engaged in growing healthy, local food for themselves, their families, and the larger community.

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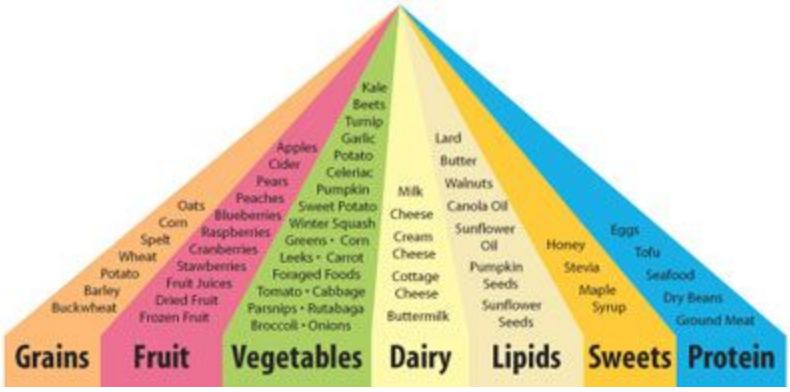
[27] Closing the Hunger Gap Network.
[28] "Local Foods - Definition," USDA.
[29] Renée Johnson, "The Role of Local and Regional Food Systems in U.S. Farm Policy," *Congressional Research Service*, February 2016.
[30] "Local Products & Sustainability," University of Maine Dining.
[31] L.D. 1584, July 2018.

Purchasing and consuming food produced locally also supports nutritious diets and strengthens social connections. When Maine consumers purchase local produce, meats, dairy, and seafood, they come to know and appreciate local producers, who in turn come to know their customers. Farmers' markets, for example, "provide a meeting place and community hub for folks to gather and exchange information and support."[32] More than 100 outdoor farmers' markets operate across Maine from late spring to late fall, with many finding a winter home as well. Most accept WIC benefits, about one-third accept SNAP, and increasing numbers of markets are participating in the Maine Harvest Bucks program, which affords greater spending power to low-income residents purchasing fresh food.

The Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA) has identified 20 kinds of foods that are grown, caught or produced in Maine that can be enjoyed throughout the year. Consumers of these and other local products are choosing foods that are fresher, of higher quality, and more nutritious than similar items imported from other states or countries. Produce grown for shipping long distances, for example, is often picked before it is ripe, never reaching its nutrient peak, and may also lose substantial nutrients on its way to a far-off market.[33] Maine's farmers' market offerings have traveled on average just 22 miles from the farm.[34] Local food can be quite literally thousands of miles "fresher" and therefore more nutritious due to less nutrient loss over time than food produced thousands of miles

[32] MFFM 2017 Annual Report, Maine Federation of Farmers' Markets.
[33] Corilee Watters, "Nutrition Benefits of Eating Locally," *Hānai'Ai / The Food Provider,* August 2013.
[34] MFFM 2017 Annual Report, Maine Federation of Farmers' Markets.

away.



The Maine Food Pyramid
Source: Cheryl Wixson, "Maine Local Twenty: More Maine Food on Maine Plates, " MOFGA, 2010. Illustration by Tim Nason, Abby Sadauckas and Cheryl Wixson.

Economic Development

Consumer and institutional demand for local food enables local producers to expand their operations, create jobs, and establish linkages to other local businesses. About one-quarter of Cumberland County farms sell directly to the public.[35] The Maine Federation of Farmers Markets lists 22 farmers markets in the county.[36] Few farmers in the county or elsewhere in the state are able to make a substantial profit by farming alone, however. USDA data for 2017 estimate average annual net farm income in Maine at just over $20,000.[37] Institutional demand for locally produced food can have an

[35] "Cumberland County, Maine," Growing Food Connections profile, May 2016.
[36] Maine Federation of Farmers' Markets.
[37] USDA, 2017 State Agricultural Overview.

enormous impact on the financial stability of producers. When institutions contract in advance for products in large quantities, it reduces risk on the production side. Based on the results from a Vermont food loss study, GPCOG researcher Caroline Paras estimated that more than 2 million pounds of locally grown vegetables and berries go to waste each year within Cumberland County, including produce harvested but not sold or donated and produce that is never harvested.[38]

The efforts of a vast array of organizations, including many municipalities, to strengthen Maine's farming sector include preserving farmland, updating local ordinances, and the promotion of surplus food recovery and light processing to enable food entrepreneurs to develop value-added products for sale locally and elsewhere. In one such project, with the support of the Greater Portland Council of Governments (GPCOG), a group of food producers and consultants in 2017 competed successfully for a USDA Local Food Promotion Program (LFPP) Implementation Grant. The goal of the project is strengthening the Portland foodshed—the 10 counties within a 100 mile-radius of the city. One impetus for the project was an estimate that 25 million pounds of locally grown produce go to waste each year within the foodshed. The group plans to address the processing and distribution infrastructure gaps that lead to such vast amounts of surplus produce being wasted. The project includes the use of technology, specifically the Spoiler Alert app, to improve communication regarding excess produce, and opportunities for growers, processors, retailers, wholesalers and others to access targeted technical assistance.[39]

Environmental Impact

Direct local food sales can reduce costs and pollution associated with transporting goods, as shipping products over long distances has numerous negative environmental effects. Various types of carbon pollution are associated with "food miles," including the use of petroleum for packaging, gasoline, and refrigeration, as well as pesticide use in fields and prolonged ripening for aesthetic appeal in grocery stores. Food produced and sold locally often comes with fewer chemicals and associated risks for the consumer, compared to those produced through industrial monoculture practices, which create additional environmental impacts from pesticide application, loss of species diversity, and chemical runoff. The full impact of food production and distribution can be difficult to measure, however. Researchers are working to establish standards for assessing the sustainability of food systems that take into account much more than the distance between producer and consumer.[40]

Combating Food Waste and Local Food Loss

While some food waste is scraps or spoiled, a substantial portion of food waste is edible food. A 2011 University of Maine study found that more than one-quarter (28 percent) of household trash in Maine was food waste, and an additional 12 percent was organic matter from property upkeep.[41] An analysis conducted by the Natural Resources Council of Maine found that in Portland alone, $477,902

[38] Greater Portland Council of Governments, 2016 unpublished report.
[39] Local Food Promotion Program grant application, 2017.
[40] "Going beyond local food," Urban Food Futures blog, September 28, 2017.
[41] George K. Criner and Travis L. Blackmer, "2011 Residential Waste Characterization Study," University of Maine, School of Economics, April 2011.

was spent on removal of food and food waste in 2015.[42] Data from 2015 indicate that only about 3 percent of Maine's household food and yard waste was composted.[43] This figure is likely higher today. At least two companies provide curbside composting. Garbage to Garden reports that 1 in seven Portland households participate. The company also serves South Portland, Falmouth, Cumberland, Yarmouth, Westbrook, Cape Elizabeth, Brunswick and Bath.[44] We Compost It! reports 100 commercial customers and provides residential service in Portland, Brunswick and Kennebunk.[45]

Food left to decompose in landfills is a major source of carbon pollution. Food recovery efforts prevent food from entering the waste stream and can also help connect low-income people with food they need. In just one example, a major hunger relief agency in southern Maine, Wayside Food Programs, "diverted 980,000 pounds of edible food from the waste stream in 2017. Rescued food was distributed to 55 partner agencies throughout Cumberland County including food pantries, soup kitchens, shelters, and other social service agencies."[46]

A recent study published in the American Journal of Agricultural Economics laid out a framework for categorizing and measuring food waste based on the point in the food production cycle at which it is diverted—grower, processor, retailer, or consumer.[47] Edible food can be lost or recovered at any of these points. At the grower level, farmers and gardeners can avoid food loss by donating surplus products directly to food banks and pantries. One way to reduce the burden on farmers is community gleaning. Edible food may be left in the field because the cost to harvest it exceeds the market price or no market is available. Gleaning initiatives engage skilled volunteers in harvesting surplus produce left in the fields and delivering it to hunger relief agencies before it is plowed under. The Cumberland County Food Security Council launched a gleaning initiative in July 2017 that includes engaging residents of low-income housing complexes in collecting produce directly from the fields and bringing it back to their neighbors.

Some large food processors are committing to radically reducing waste by selling fruit and vegetable scraps to other processors, either in their current form or dehydrated for use in other types of food production.[48] Retailers can also donate foods that are near the expiration date or are otherwise no longer saleable. Locally, both Shaw's and Hannaford supermarkets operate food donation programs that provide millions of pounds of food each year to food banks, pantries, and other hunger relief efforts. Hannaford also donates money to hunger relief agencies and in 2017 gave more than $100,000 to CCFSC partners specifically to increase access to local food among low-income Mainers.[49]

Consumers, the largest producers of food waste, can reduce their contributions to food waste through judicious purchasing, careful storage, and preserving surplus. Inedible food scraps such as banana peels and ends of chopped vegetables can be used to feed livestock, to produce energy, or to create compost to return the nutrients to the soil. Efforts to expand municipal composting programs

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[42] Ryan Parker, "Waste Not, Want Not: An Analysis of Food Waste Costs for Maine Cities," Natural Resources Council of Maine, February 2, 2017.

[43] Peter McGuire, "In a first for Maine, Scarborough and South Portland will start collecting food waste," Portland Press Herald, March 27, 2017.

[44] Garbage to Garden.

[45] We Compost It!

[46] Wayside Food Programs.

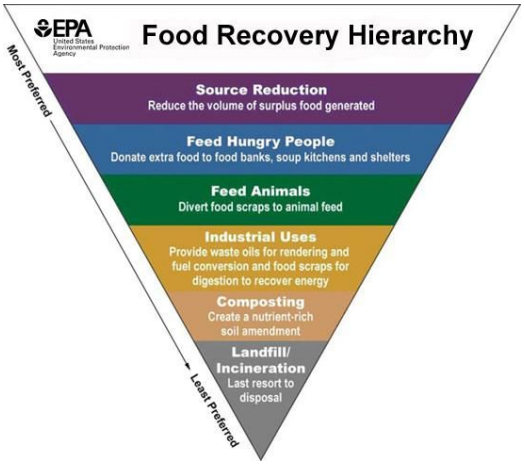
[47] Marc F. Bellemare et al., "On the Measurement of Food Waste," *American Journal of Agricultural Economics,* Volume 99, Issue 5, 1 October 2017:1148–1158.

[48] "How a Major Food Processor Eliminated Organic Waste," *Fast Company,* June 19, 2017.

[49] Good Shepherd Food Bank, press release.

indicate widespread consumer interest in diverting household food waste from landfills to more productive uses.

In 2016, Maine formally adopted the EPA's Food Recovery Hierarchy, which establishes preferences for reducing and managing potential food waste according to the level of benefits to society, the environment, and the economy. [50] The hierarchy begins with reducing the amount of surplus at the source—on the farm for example—and moves through recovering the surplus for hungry people to using food scraps for animal feed. Industrial uses, composting, and finally incineration or disposal in a landfill are the less-desirable uses.



Measuring and Reporting

How do we know if we are moving closer to eliminating food insecurity in the communities that we serve? Hunger can be difficult to measure accurately, as economic conditions and food access are constantly in flux. As a result, determining outcomes of hunger relief efforts in the community can be a significant challenge. We can and should measure our individual organization and program activities, however. We have a responsibility to those we are trying to serve to do our best, and committing to transparency can help us achieve full integrity in this work on an ongoing basis. As we work individually and collectively toward hunger-free communities, using local food as a tool, we should create a culture that values high standards in reporting on the work we are doing.

The presence of hunger in U.S. households due to insufficient resources to obtain food has been a consistent challenge to public health and community well-being. CCFSC is motivated by a value that we believe is shared: no one in our communities should go hungry. It is only relatively recently that the U.S. Department of Agriculture has begun to document the extent of food insecurity and hunger, as these conditions are experienced and reported by people and families. By the early 1990s, field experience led to consensus among nutrition experts that a sound conceptual and practical basis for measuring hunger had been developed. USDA established a standard measure of food insecurity and hunger, and in April 1995, the U.S. Census Bureau published the first Food Security Supplement to its Current Population Survey (CPS). As mentioned earlier, USDA released its most recent annual update in September 2018.

[50] Food Recovery Hierarchy, Environmental Protection Agency.

The USDA measure tells us how many people are experiencing food insecurity as a result of challenging economic conditions. CCFSC does not use this measure to determine our progress in addressing hunger, however. When the economy is in recession, hunger increases, and efforts by the charitable food system increase at the same time. When the economy is providing better wages and more employment, hunger decreases as do efforts by the charitable food system. There is no reliable way to use the Household Food Security measure to determine whether the efforts of charitable food providers are improving food security in our communities.

Another obstacle to making this measure functional at the community level is that the U.S. Census Bureau only collects enough surveys in each state to ensure the results are valid at the state level. That leaves us to figure out other ways to measure how our projects improve food security. Feeding America factors in additional data to map what they call the meal gap. The Map the Meal Gap project generates two types of community-level data:

1. County-level food insecurity and child food insecurity estimates by income categories
2. An estimate of the food budget shortfall that food insecure individuals report they experience. [51]

In partnership with Feeding America, Good Shepherd Food Bank is in the early stages of data collection efforts aimed at comparing the volume of charitable food distributed and the measured meal gap in specific geographic areas.

Why Measure

Measuring and reporting can help organizations understand and improve their programs. Having accurate program data requires adopting reliable and consistent methods for collection and analysis. Once data are collected and analyzed, agencies can use that information to construct narratives that convey why the programs exist and how the organization uses resources to change conditions. Compelling and relatable stories can garner community support as well as inspire funding.[52] Agencies can also learn better practices from each other and also share observations on what doesn't work. One purpose of this report is to encourage council members and others working on hunger relief to keep each other informed about the scope, scale, and evolution of their programs. Information sharing will enable collaboration and lead to more efficient use of resources committed to solving hunger.

What to Measure

It is a challenge to quantify whether and/or how the food that was given made a difference in the well-being of the person who received it. What do we measure to determine we have improved the quality of someone's life? Ideally, agencies conduct complex and revealing program evaluations that assess community impact and outcomes rather than outputs. Practical and financial limitations often mean that agencies instead gauge success against internal goals or indicators such as number of participants, pounds of food, and volunteer hours.

Suggested Measures. For each program category in the next section, we suggest measures that could be used in data collection and reporting. Not all the measures suggested will apply to every hunger relief program or to all the programs within each category.

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[51] Feeding America.

[52] Point K Learning, Evaluation Plan Workbook.

Projects and Programs: Four Categories, Many Models

A number of organizations and initiatives in Cumberland County are using local food to build food security in their communities. Some are connecting land and other resources to those experiencing food insecurity, so they can grow food and generate income for themselves and their families. This can involve reducing food waste and strengthening agricultural capacity. Some organizations are bringing farm-grown produce to pantries, food banks, and other food distribution centers. Others are leveraging federal and state dollars through consumer incentive programs to increase fresh fruit and vegetable purchasing by SNAP participants.

Data for this report were collected directly from food system stakeholders working to build food security in Cumberland County and across Maine. We also consulted published sources relevant to food security and the benefits of local food. The Cumberland County Food Security Council's strategic framework for this research prioritizes activities according to their effectiveness in empowering people vulnerable to food insecurity while helping to improve their short- and long-term access to nutritious food.

Four categories distinguish food security initiatives according to their emphasis on empowerment as they employ local food to fight hunger:

1. Farming and Gardening Access: Vulnerable People Producing Food
2. Farm to (Limited Resource) Consumer
3. Farm to Institution: Access for Marginalized Communities
4. Farm (and Garden) to Charitable Food System: Growing Food for Hunger Relief

Photo source: City of Portland via Seedstock.

Suggested Program Measures

Farming and Gardening Access: Vulnerable People Producing Food

- # participants

- $ sales
- lbs. grown
- lbs. donated
- produce grown for own consumption (# of bags, # of meals, etc.)
- most common crops grown
- cultivation site size
- markets reached
- volunteer hours per month
- # of volunteers from population served

Farm to (Limited Resource) Consumer

- # transactions
- # shares
- # EBT users per month
- EBT Sales
- $ incentive funding allocated to the program
- $ incentive funding distributed
- locations
- # of farmers selling produce based out of Cumberland County

Farm to Institution: Access for Marginalized Communities

For institutions:

- "local" definition
- % of total budget allocated to local food procurement
- $ amount allocated to local food procurement
- # meal participants
- pantry on site (y/n)
- # pantry visitors
- demographics of student population
- # of farm partners
- marketing strategies (y/n)

For growers and producers:

- # of direct sale institutional clients
- $ sales within Cumberland County

Farm (and Garden) to Charitable Food System: Growing Food for Hunger Relief

- # of growing partners (specify farms, gardeners, orchards, corporate, etc.)
- lbs of local food (specify grown, donated, purchased, sold, gleaned)
- # of monthly meals and participants
- $ dollar value of local produce distributed
- # of gleaning sites (include markets)
- # of distribution sites
- # of volunteer hours per month

- # of volunteers from population served

Farming and Gardening Access: Vulnerable People Producing Food

At the Cumberland County Food Security Council, we believe that the programs most transformative and effective for addressing food insecurity empower people who want to grow food with the land access, resources, and training they need. Putting the means of food production into the hands of our food-insecure neighbors enables them to grow nutritious food for themselves and their families. It also creates new opportunities for them to bring that food to markets as a source of income. The New American Sustainable Agriculture Project (NASAP), the Somali Bantu Community Association's Liberation Farms), and the NASAP graduates at New Roots Farm Cooperative work to increase food security and build economic self-sufficiency through farmer education and support.

New American Sustainable Agriculture Project

Cumberland County Food Security Council member Cultivating Community offers an array of integrated multi-ethnic and multigenerational programs to combat hunger that empower people with low-income backgrounds to grow food and to affordably access local food—all while building community.

The New American Sustainable Agriculture Project (NASAP) illustrates what is possible when those experiencing need can access the tools and resources to grow nutritious food. Conceived and developed by Jim Hanna in 2002, and led by Cultivating Community since 2009, NASAP is a farmer training and support program that has helped more than 100 refugees and immigrants (including Somali and Somali Bantu, Sudanese, and other African, Latin American, Asian and Middle Eastern participants) grow toward becoming successful Maine farm business operators and members of Maine's agricultural community.

Cultivating Community's Rowen Gorman, a community agriculture specialist, explains that low resource farmers need more than access to land and training. "People with resources, who tend to be more plugged in, are actually quite likely to learn about new land access," says Gorman. "However, many others, who could benefit from land and related opportunities even more, might never find out what's available....First, and on an ongoing basis, we need to conduct systematic, locally grounded outreach to let people who are economically and socially marginalized know when land and related opportunities become available."[53]

The primary site for NASAP is a 36-acre incubator farm that is part of a land trust–protected 400-acre family farm in Lisbon. In July 2017, Cultivating Community signed a 21-year lease to begin providing NASAP and other programs at the 62-acre Hurricane Valley Farm in West Falmouth as well. Other sites include the University of Maine Cumberland County Cooperative Extension's Tidewater Farm in Falmouth as well as a small site on Highland Avenue in South Portland. In 2018, Cultivating Community will begin exploring offering farmer training to U.S. veterans.

Most of the NASAP farmers market their produce collaboratively through the Fresh Start Farms food hub, which was formally established in 2014. In 2016, 22 farmers sold produce at six farmers markets and to 28 wholesale outlets, bringing in more than $180,000. In 2017, 26 NASAP farmer businesses sold $180,000 worth of produce through the food hub and at their own successful retail ventures. The organization also worked with dozens of New American advanced gardeners who are not yet farming commercially. In 2017, the NASAP farmers grew for one of the largest Community Supported Agriculture operations in Maine, providing farm fresh food directly to 450 customers. The farmers also

[53] Cultivating Community, "New Land for the Community Requires New Outreach to the Community," Spring 2017 newsletter.

sold to schools, food pantries, and small businesses, including restaurants. They sold to Cultivating Community's network of farm stands in six low-income communities and to the Good Food Bus and at farmers markets and other retail sites.

Cultivating Community offers integrated food production and food access programming, and more than $45,000 worth of the food grown by NASAP farmers and Cultivating Community youth went out into the community accompanied by the organization's nutrition education, vegetable and fruit tastings, cooking classes, and diverse outdoor activities focused on environmental stewardship and food production.

Four NASAP graduates, Batula Ismail, Jabril Abdi, Seynab Ali, and Mohammed Abukar, are now partners in a lease-to-own venture called New Roots Cooperative Farm, which occupies 30 acres of an old dairy farm in Lewiston. It has taken more than 10 years of work for these refugee and immigrant farmers to achieve their current success. The New Roots business owners can be contacted via www.newrootscooperativefarm.com or at info@newrootscooperativefarm.com.

From Batula (below): "I am from Somalia and came to Maine in 2005. I joined Fresh Start Farms in that same year. I am one of the three original Somali women who began farming in Lisbon. While my children are receiving an education and speak English, I believe it's important for them to help out on the farm and learn this work because farming is the future. I learned much of my agricultural skills in Somalia, but I continue to learn because farming practices here in Maine are quite different and often more challenging and more involved than in Somalia. I have dreamed about someday owning my own farm and land where my children and grandchildren can live and be safe, happy, and nourished. My favorite part of my farming business is the community. I love being part of the community, working with the public, and having a role in the local economy. "

Batula Ismail at a celebration of the new growing season in spring 2017, Photo Source: Lesley H., Cultivating Community.

Farming and Gardening Access: Vulnerable People Producing Food		
Suggested Program Measures	**2016**	**2017**

# participants	NASAP: 22	NASAP: 26 New Roots: 4
$ Sales	$180,000	$180,000 $45,000 used in other programming
Lbs. grown		
Lbs. donated		
Produce grown for own consumption (# of bags, # of meals, etc.)		
Most common crops grown		
Cultivation site size	36 acres	30 acres (Lewiston)
Markets reached	28 wholesale markets, 6 farmers markets	450 CSA customers
Volunteer hours per month		
# of volunteers from population served		

Somali Bantu Community Farmers of Lewiston, Maine

Roughly 3,000 Somali Bantus call Lewiston home. Since 2005, the Somali Bantu Community Association of Maine (SBCA) has worked to ensure their successful resettlement. SBCA's Community Farming Program (Liberation Farms) began in 2014 with 20 farmers and grew to 48 farmers the following year. The Bantus are traditionally farming people and possess generations of agricultural experience. Farming enables them to provide for themselves and their families. The primary limitation on expansion has been securing suitable farmland in the Lewiston area.[54]

In 2016, each of the 65 participating farmers had at least 900 square feet to farm vegetables, which included specialty and rare items. A Farm-to-Pantry grant managed by Preble Street's Maine Hunger Initiative enabled the Gray Food Pantry to purchase $1,250 worth of produce. By September 2017, the program included 135 farmers who received access to land, technical assistance, and targeted

[54] "New Mainers Establish Cooperative Farm in Lewiston," *The Free Press,* August 18, 2016.

trainings on three parcels of leased farmland. Liberation Farms also provides nutrition classes to educate community members on making healthy choices and how to cook with unfamiliar New England grown produce, such as broccoli.[55]

"There's no shortage of new Mainers looking for a way into farming," says Somali Bantu Community Association (SBCA) Executive Director Muhidin Libah.

Photo by Jan Wilcox, from SBCA website.

Farming and Gardening Access: Vulnerable People Producing Food		
Suggested Program Measures	**2016**	**2017**
# participants		
$ Sales		
Lbs. grown		
Lbs. donated		
Produce grown for own consumption (# of bags, # of meals, etc.)		
Most common crops grown		
Cultivation site size		

[55] Kristina Kalolo, "Case Study: Somali Bantu Community Farmers of Lewiston, Maine"; Somali Bantu Community Association, Community Farming Program.

Markets reached		
Volunteer hours per month		
# of volunteers from population served		

Community Gardening

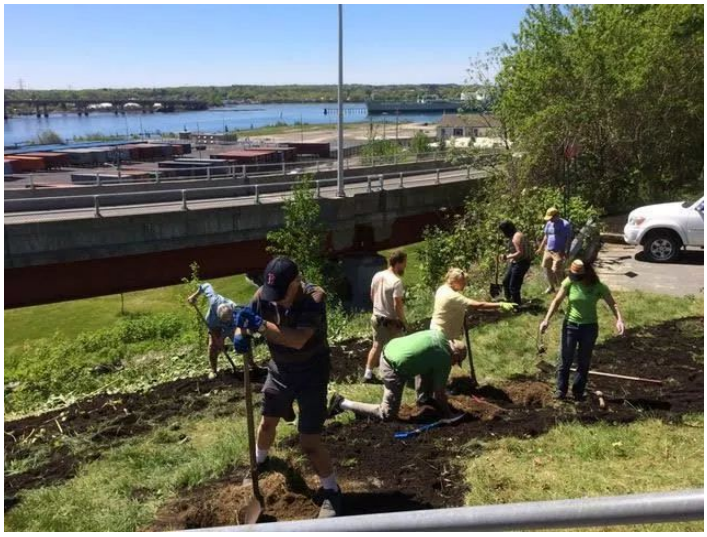
Community groups and neighborhood associations are increasingly advocating for public spaces to incorporate food-bearing plants. Portland's established Mt. Joy Orchard, Bayside Neighborhood Community Gardens, Oxford Street Gardens, Friends of Congress Square Park, Harbor View Park (West End Neighborhood Association), and a patch of public land just to the right of 7-11 on Congress Street in Portland are public spaces incorporating food-bearing trees and crops with open access to all community members and passersby. These spaces serve as engagement opportunities for people experiencing limited access to healthful and nutritious local food to connect and access not only the foodstuffs, but a deeper connection to where food comes from and its inherent seasonality.

Some challenges of urban agriculture include the reality that community gardening requires significant resources and management. In urban areas like Portland, contaminated soil is a barrier that requires cooperation between community groups and municipal agencies. Healthy soil must be brought in and gardens built carefully to ensure that the produce grown will be free of contaminants and safe to eat.

Several gardening initiatives provide plots of land free or at a discount to families and individuals identifying as low income. As with farming programs, a community garden network puts the power of growing food directly into the hands of individuals experiencing food insecurity. Growing fruits and vegetables close to home becomes a strategy for people experiencing food insecurity to participate in the process of making more nutritious food available locally while developing new social connections within the network of gardeners and growers.

The MidCoast Hunger Prevention Program's Common Good Garden in Brunswick, the Raymond Village Community Garden and Pantry, the City of South Portland Community Garden Collective, and the City of Portland Community Gardens all offer low-income residents access to garden plots. Portland's Oxford Street Garden, the Recovery Community Garden on Allen Avenue, and Bayside Neighborhood Community Garden engage and benefit low-income residents. Portland Housing Authority has gardening programs at many of the housing neighborhoods, where local Master Gardeners connect with low-income gardeners and distribute free seedlings annually for their use in the residence gardens.

Public access to locally grown food can engage curious eaters and inspire home and community gardening in the future. Growing food in public spaces can decrease intimidation and resistance around the growing practice. Exposure stimulates a sense of curiosity and possibility, where once there may have been little or no interest. One Harbor View Park work party participant reported, "Some of the homeless guys around stopped to see what was going on. They stayed a while helping out and said they would be around, maybe keep an eye on it."



Top of Park Looking down Harbor View Park –
Photo Source: Pamela Shaw for West End Neighborhood Association

Describing the new **Portland Recovery Community Garden** in the *Forecaster*, Rob Korobkin explained that the garden is not just for people in recovery, but the produce that is harvested will become a healthy alternative to food often found at sober houses.

> *"One of the dynamics I have seen is how much junk food people eat. You walk into these halfway houses and you see a counter full of chips, cakes and cookies."*[56]

One of the opportunities for community gardens is connecting people with the resources and tools to grow their own nutritious food during their recovery and re-entry into the community when economic barriers would otherwise pose a barrier.

Photo source: The Forecaster

Sally Wright, a Master Gardener who helped co-found the garden adjacent to the Oxford Street Shelter, sees the project benefiting the neighborhood and the area's neediest residents:

"When [Master Gardeners] started in Spring of 2016, we were dealing with trash mounds and 3-foot weedy grass everywhere. Now, we have flowers blooming, all beds planted, and many crops that can be picked and eaten on the spot. We have two men who are homeless who are actively helping with weeding and other chores, and strangers coming into the garden to visit and thank the gardeners. I have always thought this garden should be the prettiest one in the city, and we are on our way!"[57]

[56] Donations from Garbage to Garden, Skillins, and Greencare Landscape of Scarborough made this community garden possible. "Recovery Grows in Portland Garden," *The Forecaster,* May 9, 2017.

[57] Email from Sally Wright to Master Gardener volunteers, June 17, 2017.

Photo from Sally Wright, e-mail to Master Gardeners and Oxford Street Garden Volunteers, 8/16/17

City of Portland Community Gardens

Cultivating Community manages 11 City of Portland community gardens, many of which are surrounded by shared fruit trees and berry bushes. The number of plots has tripled since 2013; in 2017, the program welcomed 546 gardeners—46 more than the previous year. Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) have funded the building of many of the city gardens. In 2017, the garden guidelines were changed to prioritize access to garden space for low-income Portland residents to adhere to the mission of the CDBG funding.

Municipal sites include Valley Street Garden (42 plots), Clark Street Community Garden (8 plots), North Street Community Garden (52 plots), Payson Park Community Garden (33 plots), Riverton Community Garden (28 plots), Brentwood Farms Community Garden (65 individual plots and 20 communal plots), Peaks Island Community Garden (20 individual plots), Boyd Street Urban Farm (30 plots), Casco Bay Community Garden (67 individual plots and a common-share garden accommodating 25 people), and Libbytown Community Garden (42 individual plots).

The community gardens program established two new gardens in 2017, expanding the growing space and opportunities for garden-based learning. As a result, people were able to come off the waiting list for garden plots, and the time on the waiting list was also reduced. New people continue to sign up for the program, and as of March 2018, 244 people remained on the waiting list.

The organization is trying a new “common-share” approach, which emphasizes collaboration and cooperative gardening and is especially helpful for new gardeners. Programming at the garden sites to support gardeners in gaining new skills in garden stewardship and production extends throughout the growing season. In 2017, Cultivating Community provided 45 workshops (with 434 participants), 50 volunteer events (with 552 volunteers), and 22 community-building events (with 589 participants). As part of Cultivating Community’s commitment to supporting youth in becoming more community-minded

and engaged, the organization trains the youth crew to be an outreach and community-organizing force in support of its urban agriculture work. Following training in canvassing and public speaking, teens knock on hundreds of low-income households' doors to inform them about how they can sign up for a community garden plot. Most importantly, due to extensive outreach and relationship-building by young people in Cultivating Community's 2017 Youth Leadership Intensive, the number of low-income gardeners increased from 10 in 2013 to more than 100 in 2017. These gardeners were eligible for a scholarship that enabled them to pay $15 for a plot instead of the standard $60 for a full and $40 for a half plot.[58]

Private efforts to provide urban gardens are also underway. Avesta Housing's affordable multifamily complex at 409 Cumberland Avenue in downtown Portland includes a rooftop garden and greenhouse for its mixed-income residents. Cultivating Community manages the rooftop garden for residents. The Oxford Street Community Garden, cared for by University of Maine Master Gardeners and managed by Cultivating Community, serves area residents as well as people experiencing homelessness. In addition to Cultivating Community's Citizen Gardener Workshop Series, the University of Maine Cooperative Extension and other nonprofits and local nurseries offer a wide variety of low-cost or free gardening-related workshops and classes.

" The community garden is one of the best activities I've been involved in since living in Portland. I can't express enough how great the community element is. Not only am I learning to garden, but the dynamic of this particular group is a key element in why this is such a great experience. The common share gardeners are hard-working, generous and fun, and this group exemplifies what community living means. I can't wait for the next season to start!" - Common Share Garden Participant

Farming and Gardening Access: Vulnerable People Producing Food		
Suggested Program Measures	**2016**	**2017**

[58] Cultivating Community website; Laura Mailander, Cultivating Community.

# participants		
$ Sales		
Lbs. grown		
Lbs. donated		
Produce grown for own consumption (# of bags, # of meals, etc.)		
Most common crops grown		
Cultivation site size		
Markets reached		
Volunteer hours per month		
# of volunteers from population served		

Cultivating Community's Youth and Elder Share Programs

In 2017, Cultivating Community's food-based youth programs included five youth leadership development programs—summer Youth Growers, fall Culinary Crew, winter and spring Youth Leadership Intensive, spring and summer GROW Internships, and summer Alumni Mentors. The majority of participating high school teens (ages 14-19) come from low-income families. Fifty-five young people participated in the programs in 2017. In three urban gardens, the high schoolers grow produce that they then cook or deliver to low-income seniors.

The food-based youth programs enable teens to find their voice as they develop leadership and community organizing skills, learn about the food system, grow food for their own families, and distribute produce and meals to low-income seniors living in Kennedy Park, North School, and Franklin Towers. In 2017, with a significant increase in the number of ElderShare senior participants, more elderly people received shares of healthy fruits and vegetables and healthy meals than ever before--73, up from 53 the previous year and 43 in 2015. The produce provided through the ElderShare program is grown on the 1/8th of an acre Boyd Street Urban Farm and on Fresh Start Farms, a piece of land in Lisbon cultivated by another of Cultivating Community's programs. ElderShare provided approximately $5,000 worth of vegetables to low-income seniors in 2017, in addition to the $1,500 worth of produce that went home to the teens' families. For the first time, the youth operated a free farm stand in Kennedy Park and invited

community members to pick produce free of charge at their Boyd Street Urban Farm and Oxford Street Gardens, helping to meet the needs of low-income people for healthy produce.[59]

Youth Culinary Crew sessions run for 10 weeks in the fall; on Tuesdays the students cook a meal at the Wayside Food Programs kitchen. On Thursdays, youth deliver meals to seniors enrolled in the Summer Elder Share program. The winter/spring program, called Youth Leadership Intensive, consists of similar community engagement, cooking/nutrition and leadership elements. On Tuesdays in the spring, students cook a meal for residents at Logan Place (a Housing First program run by Preble Street Resource Center), improving food security and providing social support to people who are transitioning from homelessness. On Thursdays, the youth perform outreach for the community gardens program at Cultivating Community. If students have perfect attendance for the entire session, they receive a $400 stipend. Youth can also advance into leadership positions through the GROW internship (spring and summer) and Alumni Mentors (summer).

During the 2017 sessions, teens went on 16 field trips to farms, gardens, and other Maine-based youth programs; they attended and/or participated in eight food-system conferences or summits throughout New England; they participated in or taught 20 workshops on food systems, food justice, and healthy eating; and they collaborated with St. Mary's Nutrition Center, Chewonki, Maine Environmental Education Association, Logan Place, and Wayside Food Programs.

Cultivating Community collected qualitative data for the 2017 youth programs by administering surveys at the beginning and end of all teen sessions, conducting oral feedback sessions, implementing vegetable preference surveys in classrooms, collecting survey feedback from teachers and parents, and compiling anecdotal feedback from volunteers and seniors who received our produce/meals. The youth programming continues to reveal several skills-based outcomes for teen participants, including a growth in personal confidence and self-identity, facilitation and leadership skills; an increased desire to seek opportunities to advance into more responsible, independent leadership positions; a greater desire to share work and ideas at local, regional, and national gatherings; and a stronger personal connection to gardening and cooking.

> *"As a Youth Grower I grew into this outspoken leader that I never thought I could be. At fourteen, public speaking absolutely frightened me. I'd prefer jumping out of a window. Fortunately, Cultivating Community values and promotes equity and has always instilled hope in all the youth. With the help of the staff members and lots of practice, I can truly say my love, learning, and strength as a public speaker arose." Maryan Isack, Cultivating Community Youth Gardener*

> *"It is important to help senior citizens in the community due to the lack of mobility or inability to cook food that sometimes affects them due to advanced age or health conditions. Through the ElderShare program youth reduce the number of senior citizens suffering from food insecurity. Thus, Cultivating Community supports youth in engaging in the process of delivering and developing solutions." Maryan Isack, Cultivating Community Youth Gardener*

[59] Lesley Heiser, Cultivating Community.

Cultivating Community youth attend the Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Working Group (NESAWG) Conference in fall 2017.

Farming and Gardening Access: Vulnerable People Producing Food			
Suggested Program Measures	**2015**	**2016**	**2017**
# youth participants	56	50	55
# seniors reached	43	53	73
Lbs. grown			
Lbs. donated			
Produce grown for own consumption (# of bags, # of meals, etc.)			
Most common crops grown			
Cultivation site size	1/8th of an acre is the Boyd St garden sice,	1/8th of an acre is the Boyd St garden sice,	1/8th of an acre is the Boyd St garden sice,
$ Sales	$400 stipends to youth	$400 stipends to youth	$400 stipends to youth
Youth Workshops			20
Field Trips and Farm VIsits			16
Volunteer hours per month			

# of volunteers from population served			

Farm to (Limited Resource) Consumer

CCFSC and its partners use a number of strategies to make local food more affordable and accessible for low-income consumers. One strategy is to encourage farm stands and farmers' markets to accept SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) benefits. One in seven Maine residents benefits from SNAP, which is the nation's major anti-hunger program.[60] Across the state and in Cumberland County, farmers markets and some retailers have taken steps to facilitate shopping for local produce with SNAP EBT cards. Once farmers and markets are set up to accept SNAP, they can tap into programs that offer financial incentives for SNAP users to purchase local produce directly from them.

Maine Harvest Bucks provides extra funds to SNAP users to shop at farmers markets, and starting in 2018, a companion program called Farm Fresh Rewards offers vouchers to SNAP users for purchasing local produce at participating retailers. Through these programs, farmers receive full price for their products while low-income consumers receive nutritious local food at a discount.

Other initiatives in this category include Maine Senior FarmShare, a federal program that connects older low-income consumers directly to farmers, and the Good Food Bus, a mobile market that brings fresh local food to low-income communities.

Farm to (Limited Resource) Consumer		
Suggested Program Measures		
# transactions		
# shares		
# EBT users per month		
EBT Sales		
$ incentive funding allocated to		

[60] USDA, *Characteristics of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Households: Fiscal Year 2016.*

the program		
$ incentive funding distributed		
locations		
# of farmers selling produce based out of Cumberland County		

Maine Harvest Bucks

Maine Harvest Bucks is managed by the Maine Local Foods Access Network (MLFAN), a collaboration of Maine nonprofits that works to improve access to local food statewide. To launch Maine Harvest Bucks, MLFAN partnered with national nonprofit Wholesome Wave to secure a Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive grant (FINI), a USDA initiative that was part of the 2014 Farm Bill. Maine Harvest Bucks enables SNAP users to buy fresh produce from farmers' markets, farm stands and other retailers, mobile markets, and CSAs, helping to increase their consumption of fruits and vegetables, while expanding markets and increasing sales for local farmers. Among the organizations involved in this effort in Cumberland County are Cultivating Community, Maine Farmland Trust, Maine Federation of Farmers' Markets, and St. Mary's Nutrition Center.

While the details can vary, Maine Harvest Bucks participants typically receive a $5 or $10 voucher to spend on local fruits and veggies for every $10 in SNAP benefits they spend on eligible items. Participants may also receive a $5 voucher when they sign up for the program and every time they refer another person who signs up for the program. Maine Harvest Bucks are now accepted at most Cumberland County farmers markets, three retailers in the county and 15 more retailers across the state. In 2016, $36,742 in EBT funds and $21,376 in nutrition incentives came into the Portland Farmers' Market through this program, benefitting local farmers and consumers who otherwise could not afford the produce.[61] One retail market, the Portland Food Co-op, had about 75 participants in 2016, who received a total of $6,000 in vouchers for local fruits and vegetables.[62] The Co-op had about 135 participants in 2017, who received more than $24,500 in vouchers. According to the Maine Federation of Farmers Markets, in the three years of federal grant funding for Maine Harvest Bucks, low-income shoppers received more than $200,000 in bonus produce statewide.[63]

[61] Clara Moore, Portland Farmers Market Association, Maine Harvest Bucks Manager.
[62] Mary Alice Scott, Community Engagement Coordinator, Maine Harvest Bucks Manager, Portland Food Co-op.
[63] Maine Federation of Farmers' Markets.

Left: Kateri Cox , Maine Harvest Bucks and SNAP participant, Portland Maine Farmers Market, Monument Square, August 2017; Right: Photo source [Bangor Farmers Market.]

"[MHB] is great because I can feed myself well and nutritionally...it's good for my health. I cook a lot. All my neighbors are getting in on it!" - Kateri Cox. She says her blood sugar is going down and she's now eating a lot more beans and less meat, and her doctor likes that.

Somali Bantu Community Farming Program (Liberation Farms)

Liberation Farms benefited from nutrition incentives as both farmers and consumers. A 2017 sub-recipient of Cultivating Community's Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) program award, Liberation Farms received $1,000 in incentives to effectively double the value of SNAP benefits when used to purchase produce. This grant had a significant impact on the purchasing made within the Bantu community, as SNAP benefits and Harvest Bucks could be used to buy familiar foods from their fellow community members. Liberation Farms also became certified to accept WIC vouchers, adding another path to increased access for low-income consumers.

Senior Farm Share Program

Maine's Senior Farm Share Program is run by the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation & Forestry (DACF) with funding from the USDA Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program. The program provides $50 worth of coupons to income-eligible senior citizens to be spent on fresh, unprocessed Maine-grown vegetables, fruits, and herbs during the growing and harvest season. According to a report prepared for Good Shepherd Food Bank, "Farmers are not required to keep or report a waitlist for the program; however, the number of seniors that qualify for a Farm Share outnumbers the amount of shares available for distribution. Additionally, according to the Maine Department of Agriculture, the program has not had leftover shares since 2010. The Department also reports that many farmers provide more produce to seniors than what the program pays for. In 2015, 17,075 seniors received FarmShare

benefits from 106 Maine farmers."[64] In 2016, 16,558 shares were administered statewide, and 96 farms participated.[65] Preliminary figures from the state for 2017 show a decline in the number of shares to 16,469 with a total value of $823,450, with 80 farms participating, including six in Cumberland County.[66]

Photo source: Maine Senior Guide.

Good Food Bus

This mobile food market, which launched in 2015, is a partnership among lead partner St. Mary's Nutrition Center, Cultivating Community, Harvard Pilgrim Health Care Foundation, and other supporters. The Good Food Bus sells healthy local food items with an emphasis on seasonal fresh vegetables and fruit. Other items include bread and eggs; favorite foods from outside Maine such as citrus, bananas, and avocados provided through Maine distributors; and Anchor Meal bags with all the ingredients needed to prepare featured delicious and healthy dishes. The most popular items sold in 2017 were Anchor Meals, cucumbers, tomatoes, apples, strawberries, blueberries, peaches, corn, potatoes, and summer and winter squash.

The Good Food Bus staff worked to create and build community relationships. At several stops, staff have participated in local special events, including a neighborhood street party, a bean-bag-toss tournament, and a movie evening. In addition, the Good Food Bus paired up with two other programs—The Opportunity Alliance, Southern Maine's Community Action Programs (CAP) Agency, as well as Cultivating Community's own CSA—to offer taste tests for shoppers and passersby. The sample foods highlighted multiple vegetables for sale that day at the Good Food Bus.

The Good Food Bus purchased $22,000 worth of food from local farmers in 2017 and made 13 stops each week in Bath, Lewiston-Auburn, Gorham, and Westbrook. Some 42% of the more than 2,700 total transactions occurred in communities at risk for food insecurity. The 2017 season saw a 42% increase in sales over 2016, with one-third of purchases by individuals considered low income.

"Seeing all the different veggies makes me want to try new ones!" --2016 Good Food Bus Customer

[64] Olivia Dooley, "Older Mainers, Empty Plates: Research on Senior Food Insecurity in Maine," Good Shepherd Food Bank, February 2017, p. 21.
[65] E-mail correspondence with Senior FarmShare Program Manager, October 2016.
[66] Email correspondence with Jessica Nixon, Director, Agricultural Resource Development Division, Maine Dept. of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry.

A staff member from Opportunity Alliance's Community Partnership for Protecting Children welcomes a customer to the Westbrook Good Food Bus stop outside St. Anthony's Church in 2017. Photo source:

From Farms and Gardens to Low-Income Consumers: Growing Food for Hunger Relief

Across Maine, volunteer farmers and gardeners produce food specifically for donating to those in need. Programs include Harvest for Hunger (statewide) and Veggies For All (Waldo County). These types of gardening and farming cultivation programs are often federally funded or funded by private grants and run largely on volunteer labor.

Tim Libby, Veggies for All, Photo source: MOFGA.

Portland Public Schools and Maine's School Garden Network

More than 30 schools in Cumberland County including nine schools in Portland have gardens that operate as outdoor classroom spaces while connecting students to the production of healthy food. For many students, this exposure to growing fresh produce improves their daily diets and inspires healthier food choices. In Portland, school gardens have varying histories and purposes. In a school garden initially funded with a 2011 grant from Whole Foods Market, Longfellow Elementary School grows carrots and potatoes for use in the annual statewide Maine Harvest Lunch event. Longfellow's garden produces

about 300 pounds of both crops, which provides a single meal for about 2,000 students, according to Ron Adams, former Food Service Director at Portland Public Schools.

Lincoln Middle School grows greens in a greenhouse for the daily cafeteria salad bar. Teachers use the greenhouse for lessons in science, social studies, art and other subjects.

In 2011, Reiche Community School received a grant from Lowe's to build its school garden. Each year since, the Green Team is able to grow enough garden produce for an after school festival in the fall that features a traditional potato and leek soup and a cider press demonstration that uses apples from the school grounds to make cider and applesauce.

Among the local projects of the School Ground Greening Coalition is a native habitat learning garden at Ocean Avenue School. Classroom teachers manage sections of the garden, leading their students through planting, caring for, and harvesting vegetables.

Portland Arts and Technology High school (PATHS) has a horticultural program in which students grow seedlings to be distributed to various Portland school gardens.

East End and Riverton Elementary also have school gardens. The Rise and Shine before-school student club at East End Elementary School harvested about 15 pounds of produce in the fall of 2017 to give to the Locker Project for its on-site pantry. The previous spring, the Rise and Shine club helped prepare the Locker Project's garden plot for planting. FoodCorps Service Members at Riverton help students harvest lettuce and kale for the cafeteria salad bar.

In fall 2017, Food Service Director Jane McLucas combined harvests from four school gardens with other locally sourced products to feature a districtwide local potato leek hash for all Portland students to enjoy on Maine Harvest Lunch Day, celebrated annually in October by schools statewide. This synchronized effort was inspired by the Reiche School's traditional annual potato leek soup harvest celebration.

Supervised by Cultivating Community staff, FoodCorp Maine members nutritional education and local food engagement programming, facilitating taste tests during the school day to help familiarize students with vegetables they would not ordinarily eat. In fall 2016, FoodCorps taste test programming expanded to four Portland elementary schools (East End, Riverton, Hall, and Lyseth Elementary schools). In 2017, taste tests theoretically reached 1,768 students twice with samples of Maine-sourced apples and butternut squash. In total, Portland-based FoodCorps members delivered 100 hours of hands-on garden based education at 3 Portland schools, exposing many Portland youth to the values of healthy eating and organic food production.

Cultivating Community's elementary school education program delivered 400 in-depth garden lessons at four Portland elementary schools, two of which were Title I schools. More than 1700 elementary school students participated in one-time garden or taste-test lessons, and 160 middle school students—all from a Title I school—took a field trip to an urban garden.

Cumberland County School Gardens

Brunswick – Harriet Beecher Stowe School
Brunswick Junior High School
Chebeague Island School
Falmouth Elementary School

Falmouth High School
Falmouth Middle School
Falmouth REAL School
Freeport Mast Landing School
Freeport Morse Street School
Gorham – 4 Seasons Preschool & Child Care
Gorham Country Fun Child Care
Gorham Middle School
Gray – New Gloucester Middle School
Portland Arts and Technology School
Portland – East End Community School
Portland – Hall School
Portland – Longfellow Elementary School
Portland - Lyman Middle School
Portland - Ocean Avenue Elementary School
Portland - Reiche Elementary School
Portland – Riverton Elementary School
Portland – Waynflete School
Scarborough – Blue Point School
Scarborough High School
Scarborough – Wentworth Intermediate School
South Portland Dora Small Elementary School
South Portland High School
South Portland Memorial Middle School
Standish – Edna Libby School
Standish – George E. Jack Elementary School
Windham – Manchester School
Windham Primary School
South Portland Skillin Elementary School
Steep Falls Elementary School
Yarmouth Schools
Yarmouth – Tender Years Learning Center
Source: Maine School Garden Network

Howard C. Reiche Community School Garden
Photo source: http://neatoday.org/2015/12/02/teacher-led-school-educators-decide-best-students/

Friends of Forest City Trees

Waite Maclin, Friends of Forest City Trees
https://www.pressherald.com/2016/04/10/the-elder-waite-maclin-portlands-elementary-school-students-have-him-to-thank-for-fruit-trees-and-lessons-on-how-to-care-for-them/

University of Southern Maine's Community Garden

https://usm.maine.edu/sustainability/usm-community-garden-soil-building-workshop
Garden to Food Recovery Networks and Campus Pantries/Partnership with Dining Services
https://extension.umaine.edu/hunger-dialogue/about/Maine Hunger Dialogue

Farm to Institution: Access for Marginalized Communities

The Cumberland County Food Security Council recognizes the buying power and impact institutional food service providers can have on the local food system. "Collectively, Maine's food-serving institutions serve thousands of Mainers daily, impacting individuals' health and food choices, while spending millions of food dollars annually--money that could support more Maine food growers, harvesters, and producers," says Renee Page, Co-Coordinator of the Maine Farm to Institution Network (MEFTI) . The volume of food that Maine's food-serving institutions purchase creates significant opportunities for local producer sales. Institutions such as schools and hospitals are important venues for people, especially those with limited access to healthy food, to gain access to fresh and nutritious local foods. Farm to Institution New England reports that Maine schools, colleges, and hospitals spend more than $9 million each year on local food and serve more than 8 million meals.[67]

[67] Farm to Institution New England.

Several recent studies, including one from the Maine Farm & Sea Cooperative (profiled below), have quantified Maine's institutional food purchases as well as the opportunities and challenges for local growers and producers to gain a larger share of institutional sales.[68]

Making food purchasing decisions that benefit local producers can be a challenge for institutions, for financial reasons and because the organizational culture may not value local food. The Maine Farm to Institution Network works to get Maine institutions, from K–12 schools and hospitals to prisons and senior centers, to buy more foods produced in Maine--both to grow the local economy and to increase access to healthy local food. MEFTI's objectives include promoting sustainable agricultural practices as well as ensuring fair wages and labor standards for those working in the food system.[69] According to MEFTI, Maine K–12 schools, on average, spend 16 percent of their food budgets on local food, which totaled $3,782,660 in 2016. The figures for higher education institutions were 23 percent and $5,050,600 and for health care just 5 percent and $508,200.[70]

Farm to Institution: Access for Marginalized Communities

For institutions:

- "local" definition
- % of total budget allocated to local food procurement
- $ amount allocated to local food procurement
- # meal participants
- pantry on site (y/n)
- # pantry visitors
- demographics of student population
- # of farm partners
- marketing strategies (y/n)

For growers and producers:

- # of direct sale institutional clients
- $ sales within Cumberland County

Portland Public Schools

The Portland Public Schools' Central Kitchen, currently managed by Food Service Director Jane McLucas, serves meals to more than 6800 students at 17 elementary, middle and high schools. During the 2017–18 school year, more than half of Portland students (56%) qualified for free or reduced-price meals.[71] That's more than 3500 Portland youth experiencing food insecurity and the threat of hunger every day.

Local food purchasing by school districts brings healthy and nutritional food access to all students. Procurement of fresh food from local sources has been a priority for past Portland school boards, administrations and food service leadership. The Portland School Board has allocated as much as $600,000 in recent budgets toward subsidizing purchase of locally grown and processed foods. Portland

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[68] Maine Food to Portland Tables, Maine Farm & Sea Cooperative, 2017; Local Foods to Institutions: Cumberland, County, Maine, Greater Portland Council of Governments, September 2015; Betsy Biemann, Growing Maine's Food Industry, Growing Maine, Maine Food Cluster Project, Harvard Kennedy School, October 2015.

[69] Maine Farm to Institution Network.

[70] New England Farm to Institution, Metrics Project Maine State Profile, 2016.

[71] Nutrition Reports, Maine Department of Education.

Public Schools peaked at about 35% local of the food procured during the 2014-15 school year under former Food Service Director Ron Adams.[72] During the 2017-18 school year, PPS Food Services used 21% of its budget to purchase locally from Bracketts, Oakhurst, Amato's, Fairwinds Farm, Crown of Maine, and Liberation Farms.

> "On average, only about 63% of students who qualify for free and reduced lunch actually go through the lunch line and eat. This creates an added layer of pressure and reliance on the charitable food system for these students and their families. Student consumer engagement (exposing kids to local foods by way of taste tests and eating alongside kids in the lunchroom) along with education are the keys to meal participation." --Portland Public Schools Food Service Director 2008-15 (check), Ron Adams]

> "When he started his job seven years ago, the school district was importing apple wedges from Washington state. Now, Adams buys whole Maine apples, and the $40,000 spent on Washington apples annually now goes to Maine farmers. To reach the 50 percent goal without spending more taxpayer dollars, more kids need to buy school lunch, Adams said, explaining that since labor and other costs are fixed, the more meals the district serves, the less each costs. He's trying to figure out a way to make school lunch "cool" to encourage more takers – perhaps playing up the local foods angle?" Source: https://www.pressherald.com/2015/04/26/portland-embraces-mayors-initiative-for-a-healthy-and-sustainable-food-system/]

"Local Food Fridays" from 2014-15 Photo source: https://www.portlandschools.org/cms/One.aspx?portalId=1094237&pageId=7047871

Maine Farm & Sea Cooperative

CCFSC member organization Maine Farm & Sea Cooperative (MFSC) is the nation's first legally designated cooperative food service provider. The MFSC provides local food service for Maine events (MFSC recently sourced and served 75 percent Maine products for BikeMaine 2017), along with consultation services for food service operations interested in increasing local food purchasing. MFSC

[72] Growing Food Connections.

values social, economic, environmental, and healthy dietary outcomes; cooperative membership includes producers, institutions and staff employed by the cooperative.

MFSC has been a leader in setting goals for local sourcing by Maine institutions, in part by including a 20 percent local sourcing target in its bid for the 2016 UMaine food service contract, which set the bar for Sodexo (see below) and other food service providers. MFSC currently conducts research in food processing optimization and advocates for local food procurement in K-12 schools, universities, and hospitals. MFSC advises on local food sourcing, financing, processing equipment needs, and consumer engagement strategies for successful farm to institution implementation.

MFSC's statement of values is as follows:

- We use local foods whenever financially and logistically possible to benefit the customer with healthy, locally caught, grown or processed foods. We believe in fair cost for the providers and fair price for farmers and consumers.
- We benefit the Maine agriculture and seafood economy by purchasing at a volume and price that works for both sides of the transaction.
- We work to build a resilient food economy less dependent on global supply chains and more dependent on our communities through the cooperative structure.[73]

Photos source: https://newfoodeconomy.org/farm-to-campus/

Somali Bantu Community Farming Program (Liberation Farms)

Liberation Farms is currently providing produce for Bates College (Androscoggin County), Portland Public Schools, and Saint Joseph's College. These new partnerships mean that over 12,000 students and faculty will be encountering more locally grown food and food that supports new American families each time they enter the dining hall. Farmers benefit from relationships with larger institutions, which can often make use of seconds that cannot be sold to other markets. School districts and colleges can turn hundreds of pounds of "ugly" vegetables into nutritious meals for students.

According to Kristina Kalolo, Markets Manager for the Somali Bantu Community Association, Bates and Saint Joseph's College are interested in furthering their relationships with the Liberation Farms by hosting cultural events, cooking demonstrations, and collaborating on student projects. Christine Schwartz, Assistant Vice President for Dining at Bates College, said, "We purchased some new and exciting produce, which enhanced our summer offerings, and in general the product quality was

[73] Maine Farm & Sea Cooperative.

excellent. We look forward to continuing this relationship and building on the foundation we forged this summer."

Measures: Percentage of food/budget, dollar value, intentional implementation/engagement practices in place, relationships with nearby farms (define local)

Photo source: Sun Journal.

St. Joseph's College

Among the Maine colleges with a demonstrated commitment to local food is council member St. Joseph's College, which in 2015 purchased 30 percent of its food from within a 300-mile radius of its Standish campus.[74] A new Institute for Local Food Systems Innovation (ILFSI) is currently in development at the college and includes Hydroponic High Tunnels, a Large Scale Food Processing Facility, and a Center for Agritourism.[75]

Farm to Institution: Access for Marginalized Communities

For institutions:

- "local" definition
- % of total budget allocated to local food procurement
- $ amount allocated to local food procurement
- # meal participants
- pantry on site (y/n)
- # pantry visitors
- demographics of student population
- # of farm partners
- marketing strategies (y/n)

For growers and producers:

- # of direct sale institutional clients
- $ sales within Cumberland County

Maine Course by Sodexo

In 2016, the University of Maine system signed a food services contract with provider Sodexo for all UMaine campuses with the exception of Orono. The RFP, which was issued in 2015, included a requirement that 20 percent of purchases of dairy, eggs, produce, meats, fish and seafood be from

[74] Growing Food Connections

[75] "Saint Joseph's College launches Institute for Local Food Systems Innovation," *Mainebiz,* September 25, 2017.

producers with 175 miles of each campus served by 2020. In Cumberland County, the five-year contract covers the Portland and Gorham campuses of the University of Southern Maine (USM).[76]

Sodexo's Maine Course program is also in place at three other Cumberland County schools: University of New England, Southern Maine Community College, and Maine College of Art. Maeve McInnis, Sodexo's Maine Course program director, counted four Cumberland County farms among program vendors as well as a varying number of other area food businesses. In the 2016–17 school year, 12 percent of purchasing by Sodexo's Maine Course went toward Maine products; across all 15 Sodexo accounts in Maine, $997,516 was spent on local food. [77]

In September 2017, USM president Glenn Cummings reported in his weekly missive to students that "almost three full years before their required deadline, Sodexo has achieved just shy of 20% of their food purchases as local produced. Consistent with our mission as a community-engaged university," Cummings continued, "buying local food allows us to strengthen the economic vitality of the Maine agricultural sector - and it's better for our health."[78] In January 2018, UMaine officials announced the system had surpassed the 20 percent goal and was at 23 percent local food. The *Portland Press Herald* reported, "As of November 2017, it had spent $770,000 on local food, and for this year it expects to buy $1.5 million worth of Maine food from 134 different producers."[79]

MaineHealth

MaineHealth committed to serving healthier food in 2012, including offering more fruits and vegetables to patients and in cafeterias and also sourcing more products locally. The system successfully completed a three-year commitment to Partnership for a Healthier America's (PHA) Hospital Healthier Food Initiative in 2016. The 2017 annual report cited three key outcomes of efforts to serve more fresh food and source locally: 64 percent of hospitals exceeded, met, or were within 1 percent of meeting their healthy produce procurement goal; 55 percent of hospitals spent 15 percent or more of total food purchases on healthy produce; and the MaineHealth System as a whole purchased 71,546 lbs of local food (from the six New England states) from 10 vendors and 17 farms.[80]

Farm (and Garden) to Charitable Food System: Growing Food for Hunger Relief

Over the last 40 years, as hunger rates have risen in the U.S., and food pantries and food banks have transformed from emergency to regular sources of food for many people, they have often by necessity stocked their shelves with surplus and donated foods of varying quality and nutritional value. Fresh, local food has typically been more difficult to procure and to store. Increasing the proportion of local food in hunger relief programs can feed hungry people in Cumberland County while also creating a more robust and resilient food system in the county and in Maine.

Farm-to-pantry partnerships make more Maine-grown food available to pantry users and community meal sites. Connecting pantries and other food providers with local producers brings all the societal benefits of a consumer focus on local food while expanding access to the nutritional benefits of

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[76] Sodexo Maine Course.
[77] Maeve McInnis, Sodexo Maine Course Coordinator, presentation at MEFTI Summit 2018.
[78] USM president Glenn Cummings, email, September 18, 2017.
[79] "Our View: UMaine System gets local food onto more plates," *Portland Press Herald*, February 5, 2018.
[80] MaineHealth Annual Report 2017.

local food to the whole community. Programs that connect farms with the emergency food system ensure that more nutrient dense, minimally processed foods are made available to those whose access is restricted due to income. Partnerships between farms and food pantries strengthen both by establishing a reliable source for the pantry and customer for the farm. Pantries receive produce for free via gleaning partnerships and at reduced costs via purchasing contracts, and farmers avoid waste and sell food they otherwise would not. Focusing on local food also boosts awareness of local agriculture and support for farmland preservation.

Cumberland County programs that partner farms with pantries are helping to bring fresh, Maine-grown produce to some of the most vulnerable members of our community while also creating new markets for local farms. From 2010 until 2016, with the help of a grant from TD Charitable Foundation, Preble Street Maine Hunger Initiative (MHI) partnered with food pantries and farms to bring nutritious locally grown food to Mainers in need. In the final year of the program, MHI purchased $30,000 in produce from seven farmers, distributing the food to 24 food pantries in Cumberland County, reaching more than 5,000 families. In 2017, Good Shepherd Food Bank largely took over the partnerships as part of Mainers Feeding Mainers (see profile below).

Additionally, organizations such as Wayside Food Programs, the Locker Project, and Good Shepherd Food Bank connect donated, gleaned, or grant-funded purchased produce with pantries throughout Cumberland County, at schools, universities, and community meal sites.

Farm (and Garden) to Charitable Food System: Growing Food for Hunger Relief

- # of growing partners (specify farms, gardeners, orchards, corporate, etc.)
- lbs of local food (specify grown, donated, purchased, sold, gleaned)
- # of monthly meals and participants
- $ dollar value of local produce distributed
- # of gleaning sites (include markets)
- # of distribution sites
- # of volunteer hours per month
- # of volunteers from population served

Mainers Feeding Mainers

In 2010, Good Shepherd Food Bank (GFSB) launched Mainers Feeding Mainers (MFM) with the goal of forming partnerships between "people who work the land and the sea" and Mainers experiencing food insecurity.[81] GSFB uses the food bank's buying power to create a new market for small and midsize farmers, thereby responding to the needs of these local businesses as well as those of Good Shepherd partner pantries. As part of the agreement, crops are picked up or delivered to Good Shepherd or directly to a GSFB partner in the region, which in turn distribute the healthy produce to those they serve.

Since its inception, MFM has partnered with more than 60 farms across the state and distributed more than 9 million pounds of fresh, Maine-grown food to those in need. One farmer was able to afford to enroll his son in college because he finally had a reliable income. Good Shepherd also reports that once community members are exposed to a new fruit or vegetable, they start to shop for it on their own and often patronize the same farmers at farmers' markets and farm stands.[82]

[81] Good Shepherd Food Bank.
[82] Reinvestment Fund, "Feeding the Line, or Ending the Line? Innovations among Food Banks in the US," 2016.

MFM is often a partnering farm's largest customer, which can have a considerable economic impact. In 2016, Mainers Feeding Mainers in Cumberland County connected five farm partners with 14 pantries, purchasing $35,000 worth of locally grown produce and delivering 71,000 lbs of food to Cumberland County pantries.[83] The figures for 2017 (see below) show substantial increases in the amount of food purchased as well as in participating farms and pantries.[84]

"The Mainers Feeding Mainers program helps bring delicious varieties straight to the consumer who may never look at vegetable as an accessible commodity. I believe this partnership strengthens Maine and brings neighbors together." -- Pantry Participant at Crossroads Community Food Pantry

Farm (and Garden) to Charitable Food System: Growing Food for Hunger Relief						
Program Measures	pantry participants/ recipients	Lbs of local food	farm participants	# of gleaning initiatives	volunteers (separate out food-insecure individuals)	dollar value
2017	18 Cumberland County pantries	117,592 lbs of local food	8 partners in Cumberland County 64 MFM partners statewide	?	?	$119,987 local food purchase
2016	14 Cumberland County pantries	71,000 lbs of local food	5 partners in Cumberland County 25 MFM partners statewide	?	?	$35,000 local food purchase

Harvest for Hunger

Established in 2014, Maine Harvest for Hunger is an outreach program of the University of Maine Cooperative Extension that provides fresh fruits and vegetables to food-insecure individuals and families across Maine. Since its inception, volunteers have grown and distributed more than 300,000 pounds of produce from Harvest for Hunger cultivation sites to hungry Mainers.[85]

In Cumberland County, volunteers transport some produce from cultivation sites directly to pantries. Wayside Food Programs also collaborates with Harvest for Hunger to organize gleaning parties

[83] "Can the burgeoning local food movement save Mainers from hunger?" *Bangor Daily News,* November 23, 2016; Nancy Perry, Mainers Feeding Mainers, conversation? date?
[84] Good Shepherd Food Bank.
[85] UMaine Cooperative Extension.

at various locations. Wayside uses the gleaned produce either directly for its community meals or distributes it to pantries within the county.

In 2016, Cumberland County participants in Harvest for Hunger included 364 volunteers, four businesses, and 10 farms/orchards. Volunteer growers reported donating 41,772 lbs of food. Among the donors to Harvest for Hunger are UMaine Gardens at Tidewater Farm, South Portland Community Garden Collective, IDEXX, Jordan's Farm, Maxwell's Farm, Two Farmers Farm, Westbrook Community Garden, Richville Library, and Canal School Garden.[86] Along with Wayside Food Programs, 14 food pantries in Cumberland County were recipients of the produce.

The total number of pounds donated in 2017 to the Harvest for Hunger program in Cumberland County was 47,990, and staff reported 376 volunteers, 4 businesses, 13 farms/orchards, and 14 food pantries participating.

Photo source:
https://extension.umaine.edu/gardening/2016/03/01/maine-home-garden-news-march-2016/

Photo Source:
https://extension.umaine.edu/cumberland/programs/horticulture/maine-harvest-for-hunger/

"Yesterday, over 80% of the produce used in our meal was donated through the harvest for hunger program." — Don Morrison, Operations Manager of Wayside Food Programs.

Hunters for Hunger

The Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry in collaboration with other state agencies accepts meat from participating hunters for distribution to food pantries and shelters statewide. The program began in 1996 and in 2014 expanded to include seafood and freshwater fish

[86] Harvest for Hunger website.

donations. The program serves as a source of much-needed lean protein for the emergency food system.[87]]

Photo source: http://www.sunjournal.com/game-plan-maine-hunters-donating-meat-hungry/

Farm (and Garden) to Charitable Food System: Growing Food for Hunger Relief				
Program Measures	pantry participants/ recipients	Lbs of local food	farm participants	volunteers (separate out food-insecure individuals)
er 2017	14 Cumberland County pantries	47,990	13 farms and orchards	376
2016	14 Cumberland County pantries	41,772 pounds	10 farms and orchards	364

Gleaning Programs

Volunteer-powered gleaning groups and activities have grown rapidly across the state in recent years. In October 2016, volunteers for Feeding the 5000 Portland, Maine, gleaned more than 4,000 pounds of food around Cumberland County in less than a week, surprising even themselves and raising awareness in the larger community about the sheer volume of food grown in the area that is never eaten. The first annual Maine Gleaning Week, held in October 2017, was organized by the Maine Gleaning Network (MGN), which has 10 gleaning group members. Hundreds of volunteers across the state gleaned more than 18,000 pounds of produce over nine days.[88]

Merrymeeting Gleaners, based in the Sagadahoc County city of Bath, began as a pilot project in 2016 and in that year gleaned 14,000 pounds. At mid-November 2017, the group surpassed the 20,000 pounds mark and was distributing food to 21 different agencies, including some in Cumberland County. Gleaners visit farms in Bowdoinham, Dresden and Brunswick and the Bath Farmers Market weekly and travel to other area farms on an ad hoc basis.[89]

[87] Hunters for the Hungry website; http://www.maine.gov/dacf/ard/tefap/hunters_for_hungry.shtml

[88] "First Annual Maine Gleaning Week," Maine Gleaning Network, February 2018.

[89] Merrymeeting Food Council; "Food pantries benefit from local gleaning," *Times Record,* July 26, 2016.

Working in collaboration with UMaine Cooperative Extension Cumberland County and Healthy Acadia, MGN member Cumberland County Gleaning Initiative gleaned more than 8,000 pounds from 11 locations in 2017, its first year in operation. The initiative strives to increase the amount of produce rerouted from farm fields in Cumberland County to local organizations serving populations experiencing food insecurity and limited resources. Among the recipients of gleaned produce was the South Portland Housing Authority, where some residents were also gleaners, helping themselves and their neighbors. The Gleaning Initiative enabled CCFSC to host its first free community "Gleanhole Suppah" in Portland in March 2018. Surplus root crops were gleaned from the cellars of three local farms; several other partners donated additional local ingredients, and volunteers prepared a nutritious seasonal meal. With newly increased capacity to recruit and manage volunteers, the Cumberland County Gleaning Initiative expects to see significant increases in the amount of produce rescued throughout the county in the years ahead.[90]

Cumberland County Gleaning #s:

- Gleaning took place on 6 Cumberland County Farms, 1 Audubon Center, 3 Private Homes, and 1 Community Garden
- 37 volunteers filled out the gleaning form during the gleaning season, currently 43
- 22 volunteers that actually gleaned
- 118 hours total volunteer service
- 6 volunteers registered from SPHA, 4 of them regularly glean with us. We have 3 from the Root Cellar. I am not sure how many of the independent volunteers are low-income.
- Recipient locations: Wayside, SPHA-Ridgeland, SPHA-Broadway, Scarborough Food Pantry, South Portland Food Cupboard, Jewish Family Services, The Root Cellar,
- Kennedy Park Study Center
- lbs. gleaned 8,012
- $13619.55 value of produce
- Distribution sites: Jewish Family Services, Scarborough Food Pantry, South Portland Food Cupboard, and Wayside 1x per week July-October
- Opportunity Alliance, Cooking Matters, Sagamore Village, Preble Street Soup Kitchen, Amistad (West End)

Farm (and Garden) to Charitable Food System: Growing Food for Hunger Relief								
Program Measures	# of growing partners (specify farms,	lbs of local food (specify grown, donated, purchase	# of monthly meals and participants	$ dollar value of local produce distributed	# of gleaning sites (include markets)	# of distribution sites	# of volunteer hours per month	# of volunteers from population served

[90] Cumberland County Food Security Council.

	gardeners, orchards, corporate, etc.)	d, sold, gleaned)						
Cumberland County Gleaning Initiative								
Merrymeeting Gleaners								


Photos source: http://www.ccfoodsecurity.org/gleaning.html

Somali Bantu Community Farming Program (Liberation Farms)

While subsistence growing remains an essential part of how this program empowers Bantu farmers, a growing number—approximately 40 farmers in 2018—have begun to sell produce, including to pantries. This transition from subsistence to marketing began in 2016 with a Farm-to-Pantry grant through Preble Street's Maine Hunger Initiative, which enabled Gray Food Pantry to purchase $1,250 worth of fresh produce from the CFP. For the 2017 and 2018 growing seasons, Liberation Farms received $2,500 Farm-to-Pantry grants through Good Shepherd Food Bank's Mainers Feeding Mainers to provide fresh produce for Gray Food Pantry, Crossroads Community Church of Gray Food Pantry, and First Congregational Church of New Gloucester Food Pantry. In addition, Liberation Farms also sold wholesale produce to North Pownal United Methodist Church's food pantry. These food pantry partnerships mean that the community farmers are fairly compensated as they feed the wider community.

Donna Rand, a lead organizer at Gray Food Pantry, said, “We are grateful that the farmers are willing to deliver to us instead of us having to pick it up. It is difficult to find a volunteer who can do this on a regular basis. Also, our clients love to get fresh produce that was picked the day it is delivered."

The increase in farm-fresh produce has spurred food pantry volunteers to provide recipes and cooking demonstrations. During a produce delivery drop-off, Markets Manager, Kristina Kalolo saw how one of the volunteers at Gray Food Pantry had made a red-russian kale salad so that clients, few of whom had ever seen this variety of kale, could become familiar with this new vegetable.[91]

Photo source: http://www.sbcmala.org/our-history.html

Farm (and Garden) to Charitable Food System: Growing Food for Hunger Relief

- lbs of local food (grown, donated, purchased, sold, gleaned)
- # of monthly meals and participants
- $ dollar value of local produce distributed
- # of gleaning sites (include markets)
- # of farmers
- # of volunteer hours per month
- # of volunteers from population served

Farm (and Garden) to Charitable Food System: Growing Food for Hunger Relief				
Program Measures	Pantry participants/ recipients	Lbs of local food	Farm participants	# of Farmers
2017				30 farmers in 2017
2016				

Wayside Food Programs

CCFSC Member Organization Wayside Food Programs operates a number of programs, including Community Meals, which in 2016 provided 13 weekly meals at 11 locations for 31,000 total meals; the

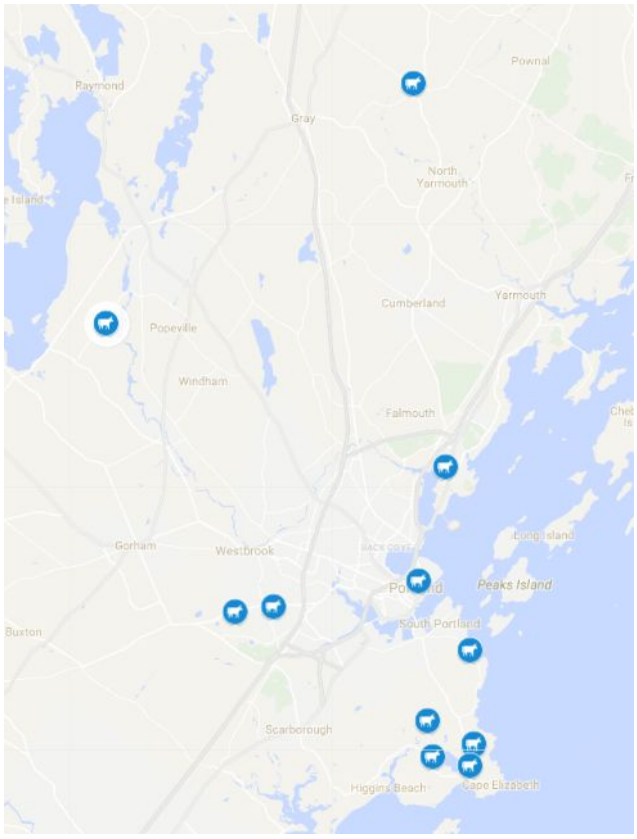
[91] Kristina Kalolo, “Case Study: Somali Bantu Community Farmers of Lewiston, Maine.”

Mobile Food Pantry, which in partnership with Portland Housing Authority delivers groceries to some 2,100 community members--enough for 110,000 meals; and Kids' Healthy Snacks, which partners with more than 15 organizations and programs to work with children and teens in afterschool and summer programs. Part of Wayside's mission is reducing food waste. In 2016, Wayside rescued and distributed 772,482 pounds of food free of charge to more than 43 partner agencies feeding households throughout Cumberland County. Of that food, local produce and meat accounted for 27,644 pounds. Nearly 40 food donors included farms, retailers, and schools, as well as home, community and corporate gardeners.[92]

Contributing Cumberland County farms and gardens:

- Alewive's Farm
- Cultivating Community Youth Gardens
- Cumberland County Cooperative Extension's Tidewater Garden
- Green Spark Farm
- Idexx Laboratories Community Garden (Harvest for Hunger)
- Jordan's Farm
- Maxwell's Farm
- Meadow Wood Farm
- Merrifield Farm
- Pineland Farm
- Smiling Hill Farm

[92] Wayside Food Programs, Annual Report 2016.



[Farm (and Garden) to Charitable Food System: Growing Food for Hunger Relief]

- # of growing partners (farms, gardeners, orchards, corporate, etc.)
- lbs of local food (grown, donated, purchased)
- # of monthly meals and participants
- $ dollar value of local produce distributed
- # of gleaning sites (include markets)
- # of volunteer hours per month
- # of volunteers from population served

Farm (and Garden) to Charitable Food System: Growing Food for Hunger Relief						
Program Measures	pantry participants / recipients	Lbs of local food	farm participants	Meals sites and meals served	Community partnerships	Volunteer Hours
2016	Mobile Food Pantry: 2,100 community	772,482 pounds of food free of charge to more than	Nearly 40 food donors included farms, retailers,	13 weekly meals at 11 locations for 31,000 total meals	Healthy snacks program: 15 organizations and	

	members--enough for 110,000 meal	43 partner agencies	and schools, as well as home, community and corporate gardeners.[93]		programs to work with children and teens in afterschool and summer programs	

Photo source: http://usmfreepress.org/2016/02/01/wayside-food-program-provides-for-those-in-need/

The Locker Project

With the USDA providing many children from low-income families with school breakfast and lunch programs, the times these children go hungry the most are in the evenings, on weekends, and during long school breaks. By providing nourishing food for students to take home, the Locker Project aims to fill these gaps and improve long-term outcomes for children from food-insecure families.

Founded in 2014, the Locker Project in 2016 and 2017 operated pantries in 23 schools throughout Greater Portland and provided 13 meals per month for programs at the Center for Grieving Children. A staff of three and more than 80 volunteers ensure that school pantries are stocked with dry staples such as rice, beans, and pasta, along with easy-to-prepare items such as macaroni and cheese and snacks. The Locker Project partners with Good Shepherd Food Bank to supply food to 11 schools in which more than half of students are eligible for free or reduced-price school meals, purchasing food at a discount from the food bank. Food drives and donations provide most of the remaining dry goods.

The Locker Project holds produce distributions each month at 13 schools and other sites that serve low-income students. Students and parents fill bags with produce that has been gleaned from nearby farms and farmers' markets along with produce, meat and bakery items that local supermarkets have donated through a partnership with Good Shepherd. Community gardeners also donate produce throughout the growing season. Through these produce distributions, children and their families enjoy locally grown fruits and vegetables and other fresh food they would otherwise be unable to afford. Between the pantries and the produce tables, the Locker Project distributed more than 100,000 pounds of nutritious food in 2017.

[93] Wayside Food Programs, Annual Report 2016.

2017 Locker Project Pantry/Service Sites:
Portland: Bayside Learning Community, Center for Grieving Children, Deering High School*, East End Community School*, Hall Elementary School*, King Middle School*, Lincoln Middle School*, Lyman-Moore Middle School*, Lyseth Elementary School, Ocean Avenue School, Presumpscot Elementary School*, Reiche Elementary School*, Riverton Elementary School*
Saco: Margaret Murphy Center for Children
South Portland: Brown Elementary School Portland, Kaler Elementary School*, Memorial Middle School, Skillin Elementary School*, South Portland High School*
Westbrook High School*
*produce distribution site

Farm (and Garden) to Charitable Food System: Growing Food for Hunger Relief					
Program Measures	# of growing partners (farm, gardener, orchard, corporate, etc.)	Lbs of local food	farm participants	Meals sites and meals served	volunteers (separate out food-insecure individuals)
Locker Project 2017					
2016					

Conclusion: Local Food and Systems Change

It is easy to underestimate the food security problem in our neighborhoods and throughout Cumberland County. One effective approach to building community food security is working to increase awareness about the magnitude of the problem, which is one goal of this report. The primary goal, however, is to map out local efforts that address the underlying systemic problems that perpetuate food insecurity in Maine and Cumberland County. There is great work being done, and there is still more to do as people continue to experience food insecurity in our communities.

In order to move toward a food system characterized by equity and economic justice, those most in need must have access to the resources necessary to solve the problem themselves. At the Council, we consider the most effective strategy to closing the hunger gap to be putting the means of food production into the hands of food-insecure people. This can happen on a scale ranging from backyard gardening to mid-size farming. Through collaborative and strategic efforts, food security organizations, local food businesses, like-minded non-profits, and interested citizens can increase and broaden their positive impact in hunger relief by empowering people as consumers and producers.

Direct farm-to-pantry, nutrition incentives, and farming and gardening programs all remove economic barriers to accessing nutrient-dense fresh foods and create pathways to the local food that is available. Nutritional programming offers opportunities for individuals and families to gain a better

understanding of how to process raw local foods into health conscious meals. As more food-insecure people gain access to local food and knowledge, our communities will be better fed, and community wellness on the whole will be enriched and supported. Renewed appreciation of local food increases its value. It becomes a tool for hunger relief and to build healthy and strong communities. It adds wealth to local economies and decreases our collective food waste in fields and in the kitchen.

One way to describe the shared goal is food democracy. If we can agree on a collective vision for a food system, we can work towards it together with our actions. As individuals, we can vote for the food system we want through what we purchase and consume. Consumers have the opportunity to shift their values and behaviors toward more local food purchasing, thereby expanding markets for local producers.

We can't forget, however, that choosing the food we want is an advantage our economy does not grant to everyone. It is a privilege to be able to purchase the best quality, most nutritious foods. Claiming consumption as a conscious choice does not tell the whole story. It ignores the power of marketing, which creates demand for calorie dense, limited-nutrient food designed to addict consumers and generate profit for corporations. It ignores the fact that a corporate processed food culture has crowded out a culture of home cooking and preparation of nutritious fresh food. When our economy is organized so that far too many of us are absorbed by surviving the present, paycheck to paycheck, rather than living in the moment in ways that nurture the future, we need to reflect and revise our shared patterns of behavior.

This report serves as both a celebration of the current work being done in Cumberland County using local food as a tool to build food security and a call to action for more aligned and intentional work toward ending hunger. We need each other if we are going change our food system. We must organize locally to protect the integrity of our food supply by building our collective capacity to meet more of our food needs. This means investing in the most important person in our sustainable food system, our local farmer. Sharing information about what's in our food and where it comes from is a good beginning. If it is an apple or a carrot, the first question has a fairly simple answer. If you bought it directly from the farmer who grew it, the answer to the second question is also known. Supporting your local grower's economic security creates jobs and, eventually, ensures the affordability of local food for all.

If we are going to achieve our potential and leave a good life for our children and their children, we are going to need to remember how to care for each other, our food and the Earth. This means working together to nourish each other and ourselves. People who look different, talk different and eat different can agree on shared values of balance and mutual caring. Remembering compassion for the shared human struggle, we can reorganize our communities toward a shared ideal of the common good. It is easier to do this when we are present to each other, chopping food or moving soil, shoulder to shoulder. When we look each other in the eye, we can consider together what cooperative activities will provide maximum benefit with minimal harm to our families and community. Hearing each other's voices is the most local form of public engagement.

This is where local food councils play an important role. A food council can bring together people who care about food and the ways it is produced and made available. People participating in a food council can agree upon a shared vision that will lead us to a more equitable food system. You can be part of this food justice movement by joining us at the Cumberland County Food Security Council or joining your local food council. CCFSC is one of 14 community food councils across Maine, which work independently on local priorities and also collaborate through the Maine Network of Community Food Councils.

The Roles of the Council and its Members

The Cumberland County Food Security Council has a responsibility and opportunity to act as a central resource hub for food security stakeholders throughout the county. The theory of change is rooted in the collective impact model, in which "large-scale social change comes from better cross-sector coordination rather than from the isolated intervention of individual organizations."[94] Rather than determining measures and collecting data on their own, member organizations commit to reporting a set of shared measures annually to the council. Improved information sharing through a central hub will foster collaboration and ongoing dialogue among council members and with their partners. The council commits to collecting and then sharing data from organizational members on an annual basis as well as maintaining historical data.

There is more opportunity than ever before to align ourselves and our approaches to delivering and measuring food security activities, so that we might gain greater insight into our collective impact and become more effective in our work. By coming together as the Cumberland County Food Security Council, we can hold each other accountable. By sharing information and effective program methods with one another, we will continue to foster growth and strength within the community of food security stakeholders.

Recommendations and Opportunities

Opportunities to build food security in Cumberland County include raising awareness about the inequities and potential for change in our current food system, work to remove barriers to food access, and efforts to create new relationships.

One example of the need for broader education is on the issue of cost. The claim is often made that fresh local food is too expensive to play a central role in reducing hunger. What this perception misses are the many costs of cheaper, highly processed foods that are not reflected in the purchase price, including negative impacts on consumer health, exploitation of low-wage labor, and environmental destruction. The mainstream food economy in the U.S. benefits from a host of mostly hidden subsidies, including those that stem from a regulatory structure that advantages large-scale operations, historical inequities in access to land and capital, and the exemption of agricultural workers from most labor laws. Food that is produced sustainably may have a slightly higher price at the market, but if all the impacts are considered, the true costs to the community are far lower.

Nutrition education in schools and other community settings, through programs such as Good Shepherd Food Bank's Cooking Matters, FoodCorps in schools and SNAP-ed, familiarize people with foods available from local farms and the many ways they can be prepared and consumed. Sustained public awareness campaigns can boost participation in nutrition incentive programs such as Maine Harvest Bucks.

Reducing barriers to food access requires first recognizing the obstacles that exist, such as language and transportation issues. For example, programs for nutrition education or food pantry outreach need funding for translating material into the variety of languages spoken in the community. When food-insecure people lack transportation to farmers markets and other sources of fresh local food,

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[94] John Kania & Mark Kramer, "Collective Impact," *Stanford Social Innovation Review,* Winter 2011.

municipalities and service providers should find ways to bring food to them. The Locker Project's school-based produce distributions and Cultivating Community's Good Food Bus offer two successful models. The City of Portland is demonstrating a model for subsidized CSA shares and workplace pickup sites. Community centers and public housing sites could adopt a similar model, seeking sponsors to provide subsidies as needed.

Municipalities can make growing food part of their land use plans, with community gardens, orchards in public parks, and programs that lease available public land for agricultural use.

Connecting low-income consumers directly to farmers offers the potential for forging the social connections and commitments that enhance the resilience of the food system. By relying more on local farmers for their food needs, community organizations can build a local social safety net that benefits everyone. By modeling this commitment to the local food system, programs that provide meals to seniors, childcare and other services set an example for the wider community to follow,

Local governments and organizations that promote economic development also have a role to play in ensuring that growth reflects the community's shared values regarding access to nutritious local food. Numerous studies have shown that growth in Maine's food economy will require targeted investments in the labor force, in processing infrastructure, and in resource development that is sustainable and protects that state's natural beauty. Long-range planning should focus on the strong linkages between small-scale producers, processors and consumers that can protect the local food system from external forces and in times of economic decline.

Ultimately our vision is of more democratic communities sharing power in the local food system. This food sovereignty means that the people who produce, distribute, and consume food control the mechanisms and policies of food production and distribution, rather than the corporations and market institutions that have come to dominate the global and local food systems. These communities will maintain the rights of people to healthy and culturally appropriate food and the right to define our food and agriculture systems.