



farm to plate

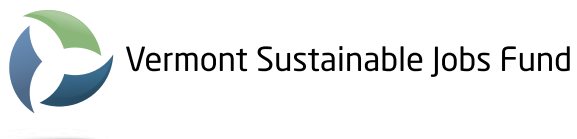
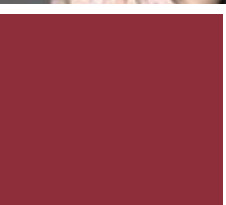
STRATEGIC PLAN

Appendix D Dissolving the Double Bind

Strategies for Expanding Food Access and
Developing Vermont's Local Food System

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The Farm to Plate (F2P) Strategic Plan is dedicated to all the hardworking farmers and food enterprises that supply nourishment for our bodies, create jobs for Vermonters, maintain our working landscape, and are the backbone of our communities.

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APPENDIX D

Dissolving the Double Bind

How can we reduce food insecurity in Vermont? How can we increase the vitality and value of Vermont's food system while ensuring that all citizens have equitable access to fresh, healthy, local food?

D1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Hunger (i.e., a painful sensation caused by a lack of food) and **food insecurity** (i.e., an inability to access enough food to meet basic needs due to financial constraints) are issues of growing concern in this country. **The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) reports that an average of 13.6% of Vermonters were food insecure from 2007 to 2009, (an increase from an average of 10.2% from 2005 to 2007). Vermont ranks 20th in the nation for the prevalence of food insecurity, third highest in New England after Maine and Rhode Island.**¹ Emergency food assistance organizations reported an increasing number of clients in 2008. As the cost of food continues to rise and the impacts of the recession linger, many Vermonters, including many farmers, are forced to make difficult choices. They may choose inexpensive, unhealthy food so that they can afford basic necessities such as heat, transportation, and medicine. Although the local food movement has provided access to an expanding market for Vermont producers, many farmers are not able to secure a reasonable standard of living for their families, and low income Vermonters are not able to incorporate fresh and affordable local foods in their diets.

Dissolving the Double Bind: Improving Access to, Availability of, and Utilization of Local Food

A *double bind* is a situation in which conflicting messages from a single source inhibit a person's ability to make an appropriate response. It could be argued that efforts to enhance food access and the economic success of Vermont's food system constitute a double bind for policy makers, businesses, philanthropists, and communities: **How do we, as a state, increase the vitality and value of Vermont's food system while ensuring that all citizens have equitable access to fresh, healthy, local food?** When problem solving around these two issues is conducted separately, the success of one effort may come at the expense of the other.

This does not have to be the case. By dissolving the myth of the double bind, applying creative problem solving, and leveraging appropriate resources, economic and social justice can be achieved for both food insecure Vermonters and Vermont farmers. Many organizations and individuals in the state are working on these issues simultaneously, often with great success. Given Vermont's highly localized food system relative to other states, we are well positioned to lead the way in developing programming at the intersection of food access and farm viability.

Access, Availability, and Utilization

To conceptualize how programs in Vermont can address the issue of food security, we have used an internationally recognized framework that divides food security efforts into three categories: access, availability, and utilization.

FOOD ACCESS is the way people obtain available food. Normally, food is accessed through a combination of home production, purchase, barter, gifts, borrowing and food aid. Food access is ensured when communities and households and all individuals within them have adequate resources, such as money, to obtain appropriate foods for a nutritious diet. Access depends on income, and on the price of food. It also depends on market, social, and institutional entitlement programs to which individuals have access.

FOOD AVAILABILITY in a country, region, or local area means that food is physically present because it has been grown, manufactured, imported, or transported there. For example, food is available because it can be found in markets; because it is produced on local farms, on local land or in home gardens; or because it arrives as aid.

FOOD UTILIZATION is the way people use the food. This depends on the quality of the food and people's preparation and storage methods, nutritional and cooking knowledge, and health status.

Three of the goals identified in the Farm to Plate (F2P) Strategic Plan relate to food security for Vermonters.

GETTING TO 2020

Goals 18, 19, and 20 address the need to increase access to fresh, local food for all Vermonters.

Goal 18: All Vermonters will have access to fresh, nutritionally balanced food that they can afford.

Goal 19: Local, fresh food will be more available to people who are food insecure.

Goal 20: All Vermonters will have a greater understanding of how to obtain, grow, store, and prepare nutritional food.



Women and children "putting food by" in a Middlebury canning kitchen operation

PHOTO CREDIT: UVM Special Collections

The objectives and strategies that flow from these goals are listed in the section *Getting to 2020* on page 38 and are drawn from the insights and experiences of many individuals and organizations as well as from reports and online resources. Over the life of the F2P Strategic Plan, efforts will be made to increase program effectiveness by measuring and communicating impacts.

D2. INTRODUCTION

Purpose of This Report

In 2009, the F2P research team began to gather information needed to write a 10-year strategic plan for the future of the food system in Vermont. The final plan could not be considered complete without addressing how issues related to food access (specifically for food-insecure citizens) and the market for locally produced food products overlap. **This report seeks to clarify the intersection between two goals: (1) equitable food access for all Vermonters, and (2) increased opportunity for Vermont farmers and food processors.** The first half of the report provides an overview of food security efforts in the state, highlighting those strategies that integrate the use of local foods and the development of relationships between the agricultural community and food insecure populations. The second half of the report outlines those objectives and strategies that will most effectively advance both goals stated here. If implemented, these efforts will improve the health and well-being of Vermonters, as well as increase economic opportunity in Vermont's food system

Overview of Food Insecurity in Vermont

The combination of the recent economic recession, unemployment, and climbing food and fuel prices has driven record numbers of Vermonters to seek assistance from both the emergency and supplemental food systems. **The USDA reports that an of average 13.6% of Vermonters were food insecure from 2007 to 2009, (an increase from an average of 10.2% from 2005 to 2007). Vermont ranks 20th in the nation for the prevalence of food insecurity, third highest in New England after Maine and Rhode Island.** This increase in food insecurity is apparent across the country. In the fall of 2009, *Feeding America*, the nation's largest food bank organization, surveyed 160 food bank network members from across the United States. They found that 100% of the participating food banks experienced an increase in demand for emergency food assistance in 2008. A similar national study conducted in 2008 reported charitable food sites experiencing a 30% increase, on average, in the number of people visiting food pantries.⁴ The USDA has designated hunger and food insecurity as focal areas for the *National Institute for Food and Agriculture*, a USDA agency that funds research, education, and extension programs at Land-Grant Universities.

Many pressures affect food access in Vermont. Limited incomes, poverty, and lack of transportation are significant contributing factors to hunger and food insecurity, though they are by no means the only causes. The concept of **food deserts** has been used around the country to describe the effects that these barriers have on food insecure individuals and families.⁵ However, it has also been argued that food deserts are an inadequate metaphor for food insecurity, and therefore, concentrating on increasing physical access to food in the absence of education or policy change will be ineffective.⁶ This argument calls for transportation issues (physical and economic barriers to food access) to be addressed in concert with education and policy-based efforts. It is apparent that addressing food access in our state is a complex and multifaceted puzzle.

Strategies for addressing food access fall into three categories: (1) **supplemental assistance programs** (often federally or state funded) to increase the consistency and nutritional quality of meals accessed by vulnerable groups; (2) using the **emergency food system** to meet the needs of citizens in crisis by providing food through food shelves and other mechanisms; and (3) **community food security projects** to focus on building communities' capacities to feed themselves through job training, food and nutrition education, and infrastructure development. This report examines the barriers and opportunities in Vermont for all three types of strategies.

Leveraging resources to effectively and efficiently reduce food insecurity while continuing to develop Vermont's food system economy is a formidable task. All organizations working on these issues must demonstrate awareness of the work of other organizations and increase coordination among related programs. The following sections provide an overview of food access and local food-related efforts and programs around Vermont. We hope that this report will enhance current efforts and engage community developers, activists, advocates, and funders in meaningful partnerships.

D3. CURRENT CONDITIONS

🍴 Federal Food Programs

This section presents an overview of the federal food assistance programs that support Vermont families and individuals. It highlights efforts that specifically address the intersection between the local food system and increasing food access.

🍴 Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), Farm to Family Program, and the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP)

The [Vermont Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children \(WIC\)](#) is a federal program run by the [Vermont Department of Health](#). It is designed to improve the health status of low income, nutritionally at-risk Vermonters. Although the program is not exclusively a food access program, ensuring adequate nutrition among its recipients is key to WIC's efforts to increase the health and well-being of vulnerable individuals and families. Specifically, the program enrolls pregnant women (up to six weeks after birth or after pregnancy ends), breastfeeding women (up to infant's first birthday), non-breastfeeding postpartum women (up to six months after the birth of an infant or after pregnancy ends), infants (up to the first birthday), and children under the age of five. This program serves 55% of all infants and 40% of children under five in the Vermont.⁷ Individuals or families are eligible if they have a household income at or below 185% of the federal poverty limit or if they are participating in assisted health programs such as Medicaid or [Dr. Dynasaur](#) (regardless of income). The 2009 income limits were \$1,670 a month for a single person, \$2,247 for a couple, or \$3,400 for a family of four.⁸ Nationally, 13.5 million people are eligible. Of these, only 67% (9.1 million) participate in the program. This percentage is similar to the participation rate in Vermont, which indicates that there is still room for greater rates of participation in the state.^{9,10}

WIC delivers food benefits through several means. First, the program provides food supplements by delivering food two times per month to participants' residences. Foods included in the deliveries include whole grain bread, peanut butter, canned beans, baby foods, cheeses, eggs, juice, cereal and milk. Some families choose brown rice, soy beverages or tofu options as substitutes for bread, milk or cheese. These

goods are purchased by delivery contractors (currently [Burlington Food Service](#)), and most approved WIC products are sourced from outside of Vermont. However, some products are sourced from Vermont producers including bread. [La Panciata Bakery](#) in Northfield has created a loaf that meets WIC nutritional criteria and provides this bread to all WIC recipients who receive food deliveries. In addition, work is underway to establish a contract with [Vermont Soy](#). [Thomas Dairy](#) in Rutland is the largest milk contractor for Vermont WIC, and all cheese is sourced from [Cabot](#).

Vermont is the last state in the nation to offer home delivery through WIC.

Currently, Vermont WIC is conducting a feasibility study that will transition the program to an electronic card benefit delivery system similar to SNAP (formerly the food stamp program and described later in this section.) Although this limits the ability of WIC to ensure that its recipients receive specific nutritionally approved food items, consumer choice is greatly enhanced. Barriers to implementing the electronic system include a constantly changing list of WIC-approved foods (changed yearly and sometimes more



Poster for the Vermont Farm to Family Program

often) and outfitting food retailers with up-to-date, real time point of sale software.¹¹ It is likely that Vermont WIC will eliminate home delivery by 2020.

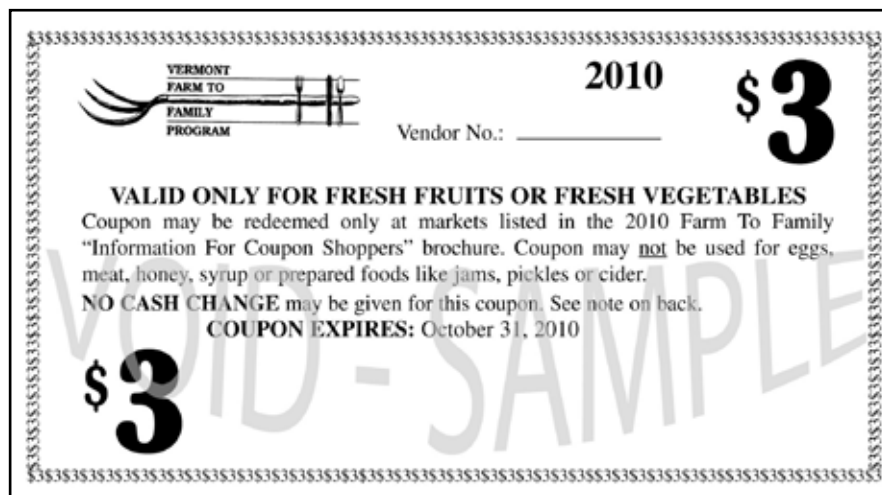
Starting in October 2009, participants in the WIC program also receive **WIC Cash Value Voucher cards that allow them to purchase fruits and vegetables.** This card looks like a credit or debit card, and can be used to purchase fresh, frozen, or canned fruits and vegetables at authorized grocery stores and co-ops.¹² Farmers' market vendors can be authorized to accept these benefits, though there are significant challenges to doing so, including a federal requirement to authorize and report sales by individual farmers (which necessitates that all farmers have access to their own wireless card readers and support software). Additionally, the allowed food list is not identical to the items allowed by other programs such as the *Farmers' Market Nutrition Program* (FMNP),¹³ making the process confusing and onerous for participants and vendors alike. Per person, the fruits and vegetable benefits are limited (\$6 for children and \$10 for women per month),¹⁴ though the yearly total spent in the state through this program dwarfs that of other federal programs (such as the FMNP). The accumulated amount has the potential to have a tremendously positive impact on the Vermont agricultural economy, if those benefits were captured by local farmers. In addition, WIC provides education for participants around nutrition, breastfeeding, and general health. In 2009, Vermont WIC provided these benefits to 25,000 individuals.

Integrating education related to the use of local foods is an area of opportunity in the WIC program.

WIC participants and other low income Vermonters qualify for farmers' market produce coupons from the *Vermont Farm to Family Program*, supported primarily with federal FMNP funds. Separate federal WIC and Senior FMNPs support benefits to WIC participants and low income seniors, respectively. *Farm to Family* is administered by the *Department for Children and Families* (DCF). *Department of Health* offices distribute the coupons earmarked for WIC participants, and *Community Action Agencies* distribute the federal senior coupons, plus a smaller set of state-funded coupons available to other low income households, such as families whose children are too old for WIC or single adults who are unemployed or have disabilities. All *Farm to Family* coupons are redeemable only for fresh fruits or vegetables sold at participating farmers' markets.

In addition to increasing access to locally grown produce for the recipients, the coupons are an important tool for developing a larger and more diverse group of farmers' market customers. In 2009, 19% of the coupon recipients said they had never visited a farmers' market before, and 68% said they returned to the market to shop after they ran out of coupons. Because of federal limits on FMNP benefits, recipients get \$30 in *Farm to Family* coupons per year. That amount reflects the FMNP intent not to supplement incomes but rather to provide a catalyst to motivate nutritionally at-risk people to "buy local" at farmers' markets and increase their consumption of fruits and vegetables. Seventy-nine percent of the coupon recipients surveyed by DCF in 2009 reported that the coupons prompted them to eat more fruits and vegetables than usual, and 51% bought a kind of produce they had never tried before. These are among the outcomes cited in a DCF comprehensive report on the 2009 program posted on its *Farm to Family* website, which also includes the most recent list of participating farmers' markets, a list that grows every year.¹⁵

According to the DCF report, 2009 ***Farm to Family* coupon redemptions generated \$118,992 in produce sales for 297 participating growers selling at 56 farmers' markets in Vermont.** The coupons benefited 4,916 households – 2,411 families that included 2,641 WIC participants, plus 1,518 elderly households and 987 other low income households that received state-funded coupons. Nationally, \$43



Sample Farm to Family Coupon

million in federal WIC and Senior FMNP funds were allocated to states in 2009. About 19,000 farmers and 3,700 farmers' markets participated in one or both FMNPs, and the coupon benefits went to 3 million WIC participants and seniors.¹⁶

Seniors and Vermonters with disabilities have been identified as groups that face specific challenges related to food access.¹⁷ The federal *Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program* (SFMNP) mentioned earlier is administered in Vermont by the *Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living* (DAIL), in partnership with DCF, the *Northeast Organic Farming Association* (NOFA-VT), and the *University of Vermont Extension*. The SFMNP was established as a national pilot in 2001, twelve years after the WIC FMNP began. According to the *National Association of State Departments of Agriculture* (NASDA), the SFMNP was "designed to increase the consumption of agriculture commodities by expanding or aiding the development of farmers' markets and by providing fresh, nutritious, unprepared, locally grown fruits and vegetables, and herbs to low income seniors."¹⁸ Over \$22.4 million in SFMNP funds were awarded to states in 2009, of which Vermont received \$94,659.¹⁹

SFMNP funds pay for the senior *Farm to Family* coupons distributed by *Community Action Agencies*. They also fund a component whereby NOFA-VT pairs community supported agriculture (CSA) farms with senior housing sites to allow residents of those sites to receive \$50 worth of fresh produce from the farm over a period of up to 10 weeks. According to DAIL, the 2009 SFMNP **enabled 940 low income seniors to receive \$47,000 worth of fresh produce grown by 28 CSA farmers**. The senior housing sites are chosen based on the number of eligible residents wanting to participate in this senior farm share program, access to transportation, and proximity to a CSA farm. Arrangements to ensure that seniors receive their weekly share of produce varied among sites – seniors traveled to some sites, and others delivered produce to the senior housing sites. Vermont and Maine are the only states whose SFMNP includes a CSA component. According to DAIL, senior farm share recipients in 2007 reported skipping meals or cutting portions less frequently than before entering the program, 84% reported that the food they got through the program was fresher than food purchased elsewhere, 62% reported eating a greater variety of produce, 51% reported purchasing more fruit, and 37% reported purchasing more vegetables.²⁰



3SquaresVT tokens and EBT Machine at the Brattleboro Farmers Markets

PHOTO CREDIT: NOFA-VT

The 2003 Farm Security and Rural Investment Act allocated \$15 million in SFMNP grants to 32 states, 3 Indian tribal organizations, Guam, Puerto Rico, and Washington D.C.²¹ A portion of the funding that Vermont receives on an annual basis for the support of this program is directed towards the *Senior Farm Share Program*. The program gives \$100 cash value to 250 eligible Vermonters to use at farms in their community. Vegetables ("shares") are delivered to the housing sites once a week for 20 weeks during the summer. Individuals over 60 years of age who lived in eligible housing sites may participate in the program. Housing sites are chosen based on their access to transportation, the proximity of a CSA farm, the number of eligible participants, and the coordination of the housing site itself.²²

🍴 SNAP/3SquaresVT and Harvest Health Coupons

The federal Food Stamp program was introduced in the United States in 1939 toward the end of the Great Depression. Since the beginning of the program, there has been a strong correlation between unemployment rates and participation rates in the Food Stamp Program.²³

In October 2008, the national Food Stamp Program was renamed the [Supplemental Nutrition Access Program](#) (SNAP). In Vermont, it was renamed [3Squares VT](#). The DCF administers the program, and recipients can access support and sign up for the program at one of twelve [Economic Services District Offices](#) around the state. Participants in 3SquaresVT receive monthly benefits on electronic debit (EBT) cards. These benefits can be used to buy a variety of food items including meat, dairy, cereals, vegetables, cold prepared food, seeds, and plants. The benefits cannot be used to purchase hot meals, pet food, soap, paper products, alcohol, cigarettes, and other nonfood items.²⁴ The amount of benefits that participants receive varies based on household income and number of dependents. In 2010, Vermonters who qualify had to gross less than \$20,036 (185% of federal poverty level for one person), and net less than \$10,830 (100% of the federal poverty level for one person) based on household size. Some households with members over 60 years old or people with disabilities may also qualify.²⁵ **Currently, one out of every eight Vermonters receives benefits from 3SquaresVT.**²⁶ A monthly snapshot released by the DCF in June, 2009 shows that households that receive more than \$50 per month make up 85% of Vermont participants.²⁷

3SquaresVT recipients qualify for more than just direct food assistance. Enrollment in this program can give individuals or families assistance with paying telephone bills, and can qualify their children for free or reduced-cost school meals. In 2006, the maximum amount of SNAP benefits available to a family of three was \$408 per month or \$4,896 per year.²⁸ In 2009, this amount was raised to \$526 per month or \$6,312 per year.²⁹ The benefits are completely federally sourced, but 50% of the cost of administering the program falls to the state. Nearly half of all SNAP recipients in the United States are under the age of 18. According to the [Food and Nutrition Service](#) (FNS) of the USDA, 76% of benefits go to households with children, 16% of benefits go to households with at least one disabled person, and 9% of benefits go to households with elderly people.³⁰

3SquaresVT benefits are transferred electronically to recipient debit cards on a monthly basis. Before this system was put in place, food stamp recipients were able to use their paper food stamps at farmers' markets, farm stands, and other direct marketing venues. Since the transition to this system, many farmers' markets are unable to accept 3SquaresVT benefits, primarily because they do not have access

to the necessary technology to process payments in an efficient manner. While free EBT machines that require phone line hook-ups are available, and should be utilized whenever possible, many markets are located outdoors or in buildings that require wireless connections. Local food advocates in Vermont have been working hard to increase the prevalence of wireless card readers at Vermont farmers' markets. This is not only to ensure that Vermont farmers can capture federal dollars in a direct market, but also to ensure that 3SquaresVT participant have continuous access to fresh, healthy, and local food.

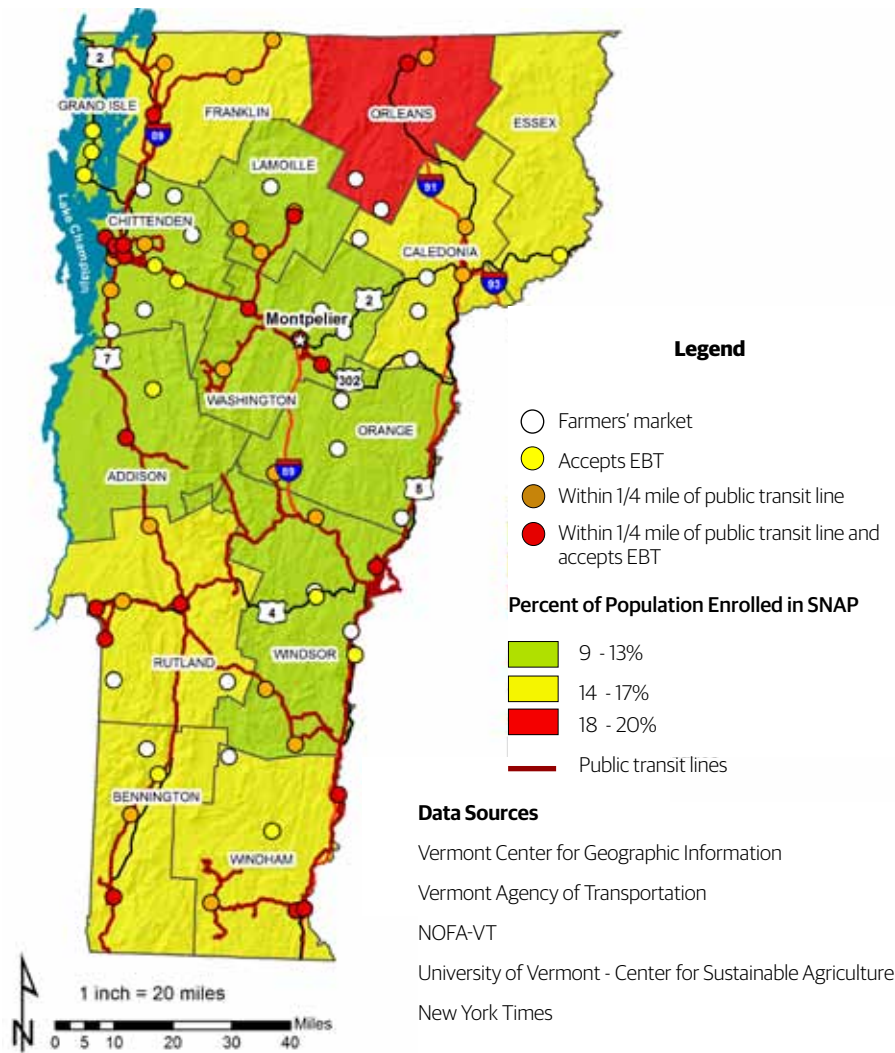
In 2007, NOFA-VT and several partners (including DCF, [Hunger Free Vermont](#), the [Vermont Agency of Agriculture Food and Markets](#) [VAAFM], and the [Agency of Natural Resources](#)) initiated a grant program to help farmers' markets set up single card readers. The goal of the [Electronic Benefits Transfer Project](#) is to help all farmers' markets in Vermont (including those in counties with farmers' markets that do not currently participate) take advantage of the opportunity to use this technology.³¹ This is done by subsidizing the cost of the card readers (which can cost around \$1,100), providing technical support for market managers, and helping with a promotion campaign for the market. Once wireless card readers are installed in markets, using them is easy. 3SquaresVT recipients (and users of traditional debit cards) can swipe their cards at the farmers' market information booth and receive wooden coins to redeem with market vendors. An additional 10 markets were brought online in the 2010 summer season. Figure D1 shows those markets in Vermont that currently accept EBT/Debit cards.

Some farmers' markets specifically targeted towards low income Vermonters have been set up as satellite sites for existing markets that already have EBT machines. In



Sample Harvest Health Coupon

Figure D1: Farmers' Markets



this way the expensive machine can be shared, as long as both markets have the same bank account. An example of this is the Market Basket Program organized by *Post Oil Solutions* in Windham County. This program reached 40 participants in 2010, and generated \$6,000 for 3 area farmers

In addition to the 3SquaresVT debit card, the *Harvest Health Coupon Project* (HHCP) was piloted in Vermont in 2008. At participating markets, 3SquaresVT recipients were able to increase their purchasing power by \$10 every week. This project was administered by NOFA-VT and funded by the *Ben and Jerry's Foundation* and the *Wholesome Wave Foundation*. Farmers' markets in Connecticut, Georgia, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Virginia, Washington D.C., and California also took part in the pilot.³² This program will likely be repeated in 2011, but long-term funding is a looming question.

Like the WIC program, a significant percentage of individuals who are eligible for SNAP benefits are not enrolled in 3SquaresVT. The good news is that more eligible Vermonters are enrolling. Between 2004 and 2006, the percentage of Vermonters who enrolled in the program increased from 70% to 80%.³³ The increasing number of people who rely on 3SquaresVT is most likely a result of the current economic instability affecting the state and the nation. It is also likely that this percentage has changed following a change in the enrollment rules in 2009. The new rule qualified an additional 30,000 Vermonters for benefits.³⁴

🍴 Child Nutrition Programs

The list of child nutrition programs in the United States includes the *National School Lunch Program*, the *School Breakfast Program*, the *Child and Adult Food Care Program*, the *After School Snack Program*, and the Summer Food Service Program. In Vermont, these programs are administered by the *Vermont Department of Education*. Some of these programs, such as the National School Lunch Program, are among the oldest federal food assistance programs in the United States. The National School Lunch and the School Breakfast Programs provide subsidies to public and nonprofit private schools and residential child care institutions. These subsidies help the school provide breakfast and lunch to qualifying students for free or at reduced-cost. Lucy Nolan, Director of *End Hunger Connecticut!*, cited 2009 research in her testimony to the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry in the U.S. Senate that showed that children gain weight during the summer when they have reduced access to school meals, and that adolescent girls who eat at least one meal a day are less likely to struggle with obesity. This demonstrates the important long-term health benefits associated with ensuring that children have regular, sufficient access to food both during the school year and the summer.³⁵

In 2008 the Vermont Legislature passed legislation that led to a dramatic increase in participation in the School Breakfast Program. Under current federal legislation, students can qualify for either free or reduced-cost school meals. The Vermont legislation requires the state to provide extra funds to the program to supplement the federal funds. **This adjustment allows all students who previously qualified only for reduced-cost school breakfast to access these meals for free.** U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders is working to expand the National School Lunch Program in a similar manner. Vermont currently has the third highest percentage of eligible students enrolled in the School Breakfast Program in the nation, and increased access to free school lunches would likely increase enrollment in this program as well. **In the 2008-2009 school year, 14,818 Vermont students qualified for the School Breakfast Program, and 24,814 qualified for the National School Lunch Program.**³⁶ As more and more Vermonters take advantage of emergency food assistance through food shelves and other programs, we can expect to see a growing population of Vermont's children in need of the National School Lunch and the School Breakfast Programs.

For those students who cannot take advantage of the National School Lunch or the School Breakfast Programs, there are additional child nutrition programs available. The [Special Milk Program](#) provides subsidies for milk and snack purchases to schools (public and qualifying private) and residential child care institutions, provided students are not also enrolled in either the National School Lunch or School Breakfast program. When the school year ends, the *Summer Food Service Program for Children (SFSP)* is available for those children under 18 who qualify for free or reduced-cost school meals. To qualify for free meals, children must come from households that, in 2010, made less than \$13,080 (for a family of one, this is at or below 130% of the federal poverty level). Children from households that made between \$13,080 and \$20,036 in 2010 (for a family of one, this is between 135 and 185% of the federal poverty level) qualify for reduced-price meals. This program has been in effect since 1968, and is administered by the *USDA's Food and Nutrition Service*.³⁷

Child care centers, outside-of-school-hours care centers, family day care homes, some adult day care centers, emergency shelters, and after-school care programs that do not qualify for the National School Lunch Program, the School Breakfast Program, or the Special Milk Program may be eligible for enrollment in the *Child and Adult Care Food*

Program (CACFP). This program provides subsidies for meals served at these settings.³⁸ Nationally, CACFP provides daily snacks and meals to 2.9 million children and 86,000 adults. A host organization that is located in an area where 50% or more of the students are eligible for free or reduced-price meals and provides enrichment opportunities to children can apply for the [At-Risk CACFP After-School Snack Program](#). This program provides an afternoon meal, which can be a snack or a supper depending on the program and the providers. Reimbursable suppers can only be provided through this program in select states, including Vermont. To receive reimbursement for meals provided, participating institutions must serve meals that meet federal nutrition guidelines to qualified recipients. These institutions must submit claims monthly, demonstrating the number of meals served to qualified children and adults. Levels of cash reimbursement depend on the type of institution, the number of meals served, and a yearly adjustment based on the consumer price index.

Care providers and institutions that participate in child nutrition programs can also choose to receive commodity food.³⁹ The vast majority of the commodity food available to care providers comes through the [USDA Commodity Supplemental Program](#), 10% of which is agricultural surplus and 90% of which is grown on contract. Although the *US Department of Defense* (DoD) administers a national [Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program](#), Vermont does not often participate. This is because the current food distributor that services the Northeastern region of the country is based in Rhode Island and delivers to Vermont only one time per month.⁴⁰ Produce distributed through the program to Vermont is often of low quality and is not fresh.



Pre-schooler enrolled in the Special Milk Program

Close examination of reimbursement strategies for child nutrition programs and state participation in commodity food programs is needed in order to increase opportunities for Vermont producers to provide food for children and families.

Several groups and individuals are working at the federal level to change policy that affects child nutrition programs. U.S. Senators Bernie Sanders and Patrick Leahy, and Congressman Peter Welch have all made efforts to address sections of childhood nutrition programs that potentially affect Vermonters. The Vermont congressional delegation has recently requested funding for several key projects that would support this goal including (1) the creation of a pilot program that would allow a greater number of summer day camps to participate in the Summer Food Service Program, (2) a pilot program that allows providers in Vermont to request cash instead of commodity food in child nutrition programs including the Summer Food Service Program, (3) a pilot program that reduces administrative costs and increases access to free school lunches by combining the categories of reduced-cost and free lunches, (4) inclusion of Vermont in the [Community Child Nutrition Snack Pilot](#) conducted previously in

California, and (5) adoption of the Pennsylvania Rural Summer Expansion Child Nutrition Pilot Program to better serve rural youth through providing meals at “open” sites in communities.⁴¹

U.S. Senator Leahy has introduced into the Senate the Farm to School Improvements Act of 2010, which in its current form requests \$50 million over five years to be spent on farm to school efforts. A version of this bill has also been presented to the House of Representatives by Senator Rush Holt (NJ).⁴² Several of these efforts present opportunities for increasing the use of local food in child nutrition programs, thereby increasing the quality of food



Student at the Ferrisburg Central School

available to Vermont children and supporting Vermont's food system economy.

Not all schools and eligible child care centers participate in child nutrition programs. Currently in Vermont, eleven schools do not offer a lunch or breakfast program to their students.⁴³ Likewise, not all after-school care providers take advantage of subsidized snacks and evening meals. The [Governors' Hunger Task Force](#) conducted interviews that showed that some professionals believe that all public and nonprofit private schools should be required to participate in these programs, provided they have the facilities. Vermont State Law does in fact require that all schools participate unless they are exempted by the Commissioner of Education. These exemptions must be reapplied for on a yearly basis, and the application must be reviewed by the school board prior to submission.⁴⁴ Barriers to participation include a lack of food preparation space or facilities, the belief that feeding children is solely the responsibility of the family, and perceptions that meal programs are not cost effective. Although integrating local food into child nutrition programs is an important goal, these efforts will not have maximum impact unless they are conducted in concert with efforts to increase enrollment.

🔑 Older Americans Act Nutrition Services (OAA Title IIIC)

Established in 1965, the Older Americans Act is the primary vehicle for the delivery of social and nutritional services to Americans aged 60 and older and their caregivers. The program targets this population using two programs: (1) [Congregate Nutrition Services](#) (commonly known as **Senior Meals**) and (2) [Home Delivered Nutrition Services](#) (commonly known as **Meals on Wheels**). Both of these programs provide meals and nutritional services to seniors in a variety of settings, including senior centers and restaurants, as well as in their homes. Figure D2 indicates the distribution of these meal sites. In addition to providing meals, both programs include nutrition screening, education, and counseling as appropriate. Through Title III, grants for *Congregate Nutrition Services* and *Home Delivered Nutrition Services* are allocated to individual states and territories by a formula based on their share of the population aged 60 and over. In Vermont, the DAIL distributes these funds to the five [Area Agencies on Aging](#) (AAAs), which in turn contract with various food service providers to prepare and serve or deliver meals within their regions.⁴⁵

DAIL has included the objectives of (1) expanding the use of locally sourced foods in the Older Americans Act Nutrition Programs and (2) establishing a baseline measure of the use of locally sourced foods in the nutrition programs in their State Plan on Aging for fiscal year 2011-2014. Some agencies, such as the [Champlain Valley Agency on Aging](#), already incorporate a great deal of local food into their services as a result of their partnership with the [Burlington School Food Service](#). The [Northeastern Vermont Area Agency on Aging](#) and the [Central Vermont Council on Aging](#) have been able to successfully integrate local foods into their programs by partnering with local nonprofits such as [Green Mountain Farm-to-School](#), [UVM Extension](#), and [Food Works at Two Rivers Center](#).⁴⁶ Other agencies are just beginning the work to establish new relationships with producers and caterers throughout the state.

Barriers to increasing local foods in senior nutrition programs include: difficulty accessing ordering systems or brokers to help with sourcing local food, lack of meal provider skills in preparing unprocessed or lightly processed local foods, lack of time, high cost, and lack of storage. These barriers are also common in other institutional food settings and in farm to school efforts.



Breakfast at a Senior Meal site.

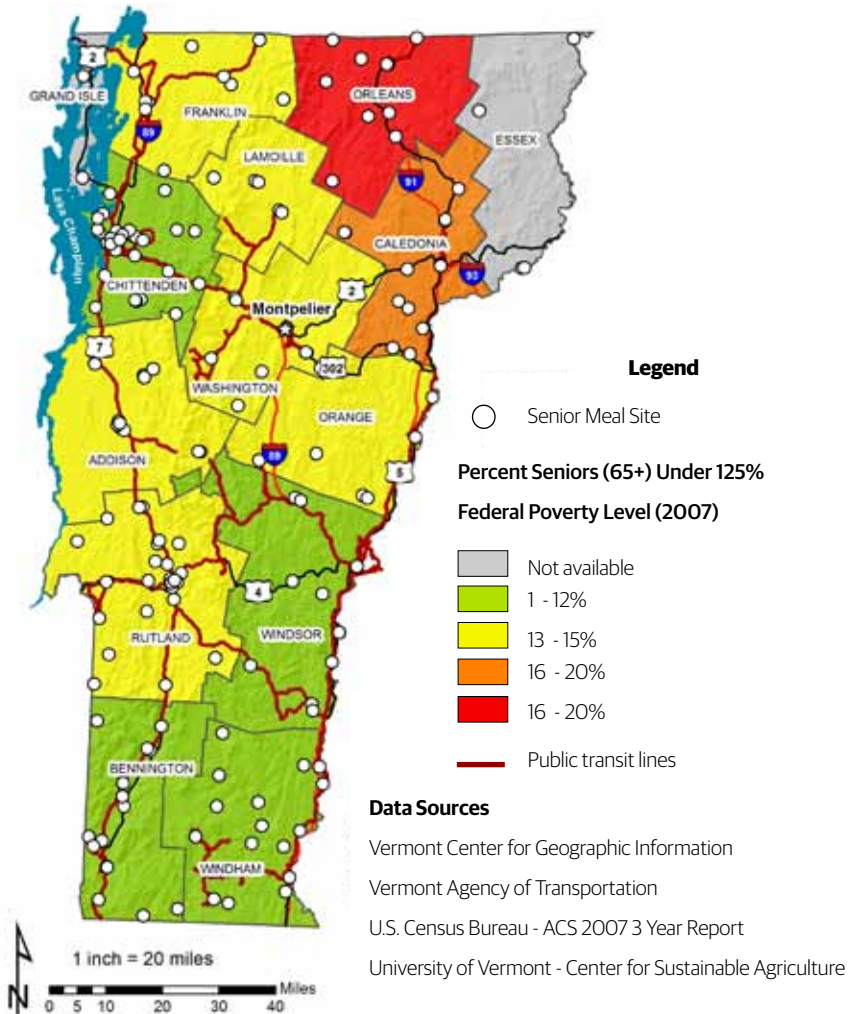
🍴 Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)

The **Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)** is a drop site delivery service administered by the [Vermont Foodbank](#) that distributes nutrition information and 31 pounds of food (such as cereal, juice, and cheese) to eligible participants. This program does not aim to provide all essential foods to participants, but rather, to specifically offer foods that are lacking in the diets of its target population. To enroll in the program, a person must either be 60 years old or older, a child under six years of age, or a woman who is pregnant or who has given birth in the last year. Individuals are not allowed to be enrolled in CSFP and WIC simultaneously. In 2009, the income requirements for seniors were \$1,174 per month or less (for one person) or \$1,579 or less (for two people in a household.) For nonseniors, income requirements were \$1,670 or less (for one person) or \$2,247 or less (for two people).⁴⁷ Individuals enrolled in SNAP, Medicaid, or the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program are immediately eligible for CSFP. Currently, approximately 3,500 people are enrolled in the Vermont CSFP, and the program is seeking new applicants.⁴⁸ Although the program was initially geared toward pregnant and postpartum women, a growing senior population and broader WIC coverage means that 90% of current CSFP recipients are seniors. The program is specifically designed to supplement SNAP benefits, helping recipients access essential nutritious foods that they could not otherwise afford. According to [Feeding America](#) (formerly America's Second Harvest), "CSFP is a safety net for specifically targeted populations who fall through the cracks in other food assistance programs."⁴⁹ The program also serves as an outlet for commodity agricultural products acquired by the U.S. government. However, services are not available nationwide. Even states that do receive funding may not be able to provide statewide delivery services. The increasing cost of food and uncertain funding have been cited as two significant threats to this program.⁵⁰

🍴 The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)

The **Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP)** is administered by the USDA's Food and Nutrition Service, and is targeted to individuals and families that meet state-designated poverty levels. Commodity foods are purchased by the USDA, which then processes and packages the food before delivering it to state agencies to deliver to families, serve as meals, or otherwise distribute. In Vermont, the [Vermont Foodbank](#)

Figure D2: Food Access — Senior Charitable Meal Sites



distributes food through TEFAP to food shelves rather than to homes. The federal program requires that food packages delivered through TEFAP be based on income eligibility.⁵¹ Meals prepared and served at food shelves and other meals sites are not based on income eligibility. By eliminating home delivery in Vermont, the *Foodbank* reduces administrative costs associated with keeping track of recipients' levels of need. In Vermont, the program is administered by the [Agency of Human Services, Child Development Division/Donated Food Section](#).

🍏 Vermont's Charitable Food System

This section presents an overview of the emergency and charitable programs in Vermont. It outlines how food is sourced and distributed through the system, and identifies opportunities for increasing the sourcing and distribution of locally produced foods.

The emergency and charitable food system is primarily composed of private nonprofit organizations. In Vermont, these organizations include the *Vermont Foodbank*, food rescue organizations such as *Willing Hands*, food pantries (also called food shelves), soup kitchens, shelters, communal meal sites, and other organizations that provide free or low-cost food to the public.

Figure D3 illustrates how food flows through this system in Vermont. It distinguishes between charitable food sites that are part of the "emergency" food system (i.e., sites that were specifically intended to provide short-term assistance to people in crises) and nonemergency programs that provide food at low or no cost as part of an on-going program. We have placed quotations around the word *emergency* because, unfortunately, many families and individuals rely on food pantries and community meal sites to meet their daily needs on an ongoing basis.

🍴 The Vermont Foodbank

Food banks are charitable organizations that collect, inventory, and store donated food. They then distribute this food to social service organizations that provide the food directly to people in need. The *Vermont Foodbank* is part of the *Feeding America* network, the nation's largest network of food banks. As part of this network, the *Vermont Foodbank* sources food from national manufacturers, the U.S. commodity program, local retailers, grocers, restaurants, bakeries, cafeterias, and farms and distributes it to their 280 partner organizations within Vermont.⁵²

In Vermont, approximately 8,200 individuals receive emergency food assistance in any given week.⁵³ Although many of these people have jobs (37% of households served by the *Vermont Foodbank* include at least one employed adult), they often live on the edge of their financial resources. Of households served by the *Vermont Foodbank*, 69% have incomes below the official federal poverty levels of \$10,830 per year or \$902.50 per month for a family of one, or \$22,050 per year or

\$1,837 per month for a family of four.⁵⁴ This means that people often have to make the terrible choice between eating and meeting other basic needs such as heating their homes or keeping a roof over their heads. Of the clients who receive food at organizations belonging to the *Vermont Foodbank* network, 42% must choose between paying for food and paying for utilities or heating fuel; 23% must choose between food and medicine or medical care; and 34% must choose between food and paying their rent or mortgage. A lack of access to personal or public transportation also contributes to families' and individuals' ability to work or access food. Of the clients served by the *Vermont Foodbank*, 35% do not have access to a working car.⁵⁵

The *Vermont Foodbank's* 280 partners include food shelves and food pantries, community meal sites, **Kid's Cafe** programs (run through *Boys and Girls Clubs* and other after-school programs), shelters, and rehabilitation centers. The *Foodbank* also distributes food for seniors and other special populations through the *Commodity Supplemental Food Program* (CSFP) to specific drop-off sites, and to communities that are limited or lacking in charitable distribution sites through their mobile program, the *Neighborhood Food Pantry Express*. Six Vermont schools also participate in the



Volunteers distribute food to needy Vermonters at food pantries across the state

Figure D3: How Food Flows through the Charitable Food System: Sources and Distributors of Free and Reduced Cost Food⁵⁶

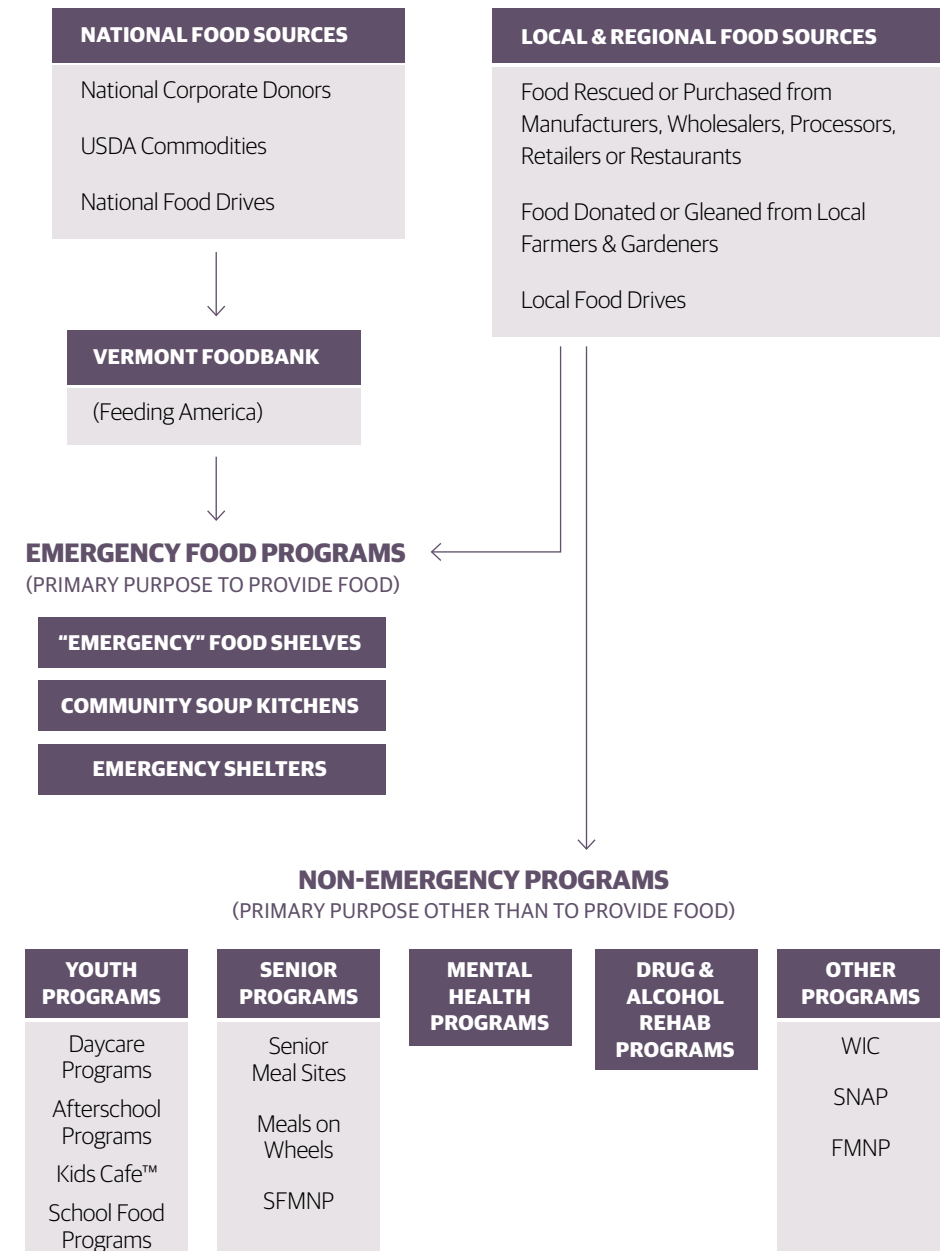


PHOTO CREDIT: Vermont Foodbank

Backpack Program, through which teachers place nonperishable food in backpacks for children to take home to ensure that they have food over the weekend. In 2009, the *Vermont Foodbank* distributed nearly 7.5 million pounds of food through these various programs to over 66,000 needy Vermonters.⁵⁷

The *Vermont Foodbank* currently has four programs that specifically focus on getting locally produced food to people in need.

— The **Gleaning Program** coordinates gleaning efforts in four regions of the state and provides guidance and support to gleaning organizations in other regions. In 2009, the *Foodbank* gleaning program distributed more than 409,000 pounds of fresh fruits and vegetables gleaned or donated from 73 farms to charitable food sites throughout the state.

— The **Foodbank Farming Network**, a program founded by *Food Works at Two Rivers Center* and the *Vermont Foodbank* (and now run entirely by the *Foodbank*) purchases food directly from farmers and then sells the produce as “shares” to its network partners. In 2009, seven farms participated in this program, producing over 40,000 pounds of 10 fall storage crops that were distributed in monthly shares over a five-month period beginning in August.

— The *Foodbank* recently purchased *Kingsbury Farm* in the Mad River Valley. When the farm initially came up for sale, members of the local community decided that they wanted to keep the land in agricultural production and put together a coalition to select farmers to operate the farm.⁵⁸ Soon this farm will be cultivating crops under a lease agreement with a for-profit farmer/business specifically for *Foodbank* partners as well as conserving open land and providing recreation space for area residents.

— **Pick for Your Neighbor** is a collaborative program between the *Vermont Foodbank* and the VAAFM that encourages U-pick customers at participating orchards to pick and purchase extra apples to be integrated into the *Vermont Foodbank* inventory and distribution network.

Because the *Foodbank* is the primary supplier of food to Vermont’s charitable food system, where the *Foodbank* chooses to source its food has a significant impact on the access and availability of local foods for food-insecure families and individuals

in Vermont. By establishing the preceding programs, the *Foodbank* has made a commitment to increase the amount of locally produced foods it provides to its network partners.

— Emergency and Public Charitable Food Distribution Sites: Food Shelves, Soup Kitchens and Community Meal Sites

For the purposes of this report, charitable food distribution sites have been divided into two categories. The first category, **food shelves** (also called **food pantries**), provide groceries for people to take and consume at home. The second category, **soup kitchens** and other types of **community meal sites**, provide prepared meals for people to eat in group settings on site. These charitable food distribution sites are usually community-based programs funded through a variety of mechanisms, often run by volunteers through faith-based organizations. Because community meal sites can also provide a place for people to be in the company of others, some people may use these sites to socialize or for reasons other than food insecurity. However, such community meal sites still play an important role in providing food to many people in need. This is especially true for seniors. In 2008, over 20% of the meals served at community meal sites (as defined here) in Vermont went to people aged 65 or older.⁵⁹

Vermont has at least 135 food shelves and 35 community food sites, or 170 charitable distribution sites that are free, locally organized, and open to the public.⁶⁰ The majority of these (at least 100) are operated by faith-



Volunteers harvest greens at Vermont Foodbank Farm

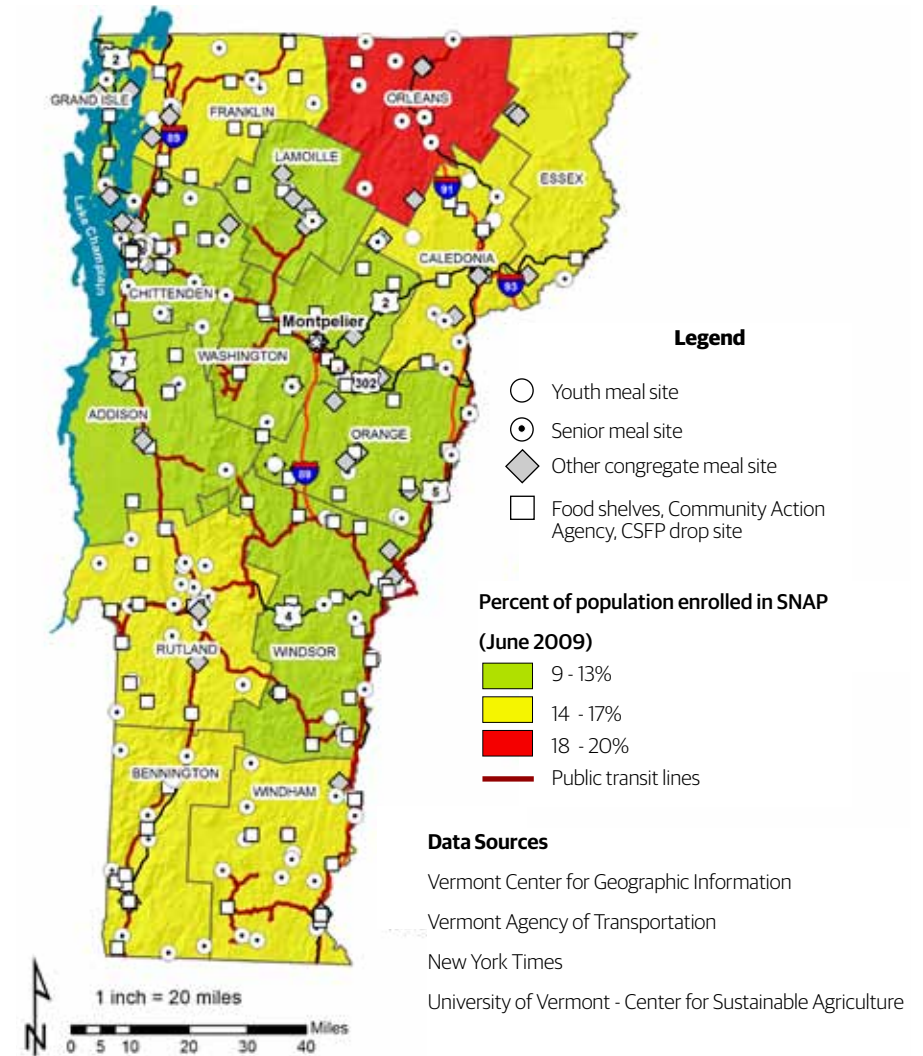
Table D1: Sources of Food Distributed by Charitable Food Sites in 2009⁶²

Sources of Food	Foodshelves	Community Meal Sites
Average percentage of food from Foodbank	70.4%	36.8%
Median percentage of food from Foodbank	80.0%	30.0%
Percentage of programs receiving food from:		
Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP)	34.7%	27.3%
The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP/EFAP)	56.8%	25.0%
Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR)	0.9%	3.2%
Church or religious organizations	80.0%	57.1%
Local merchant of farmer donations	73.8%	74.3%
Local food drives	75.5%	25.7%
Food purchased by agency	68.6%	77.1%
Other	18.2%	31.4%
Sample Size	131	40

based organizations. Other hosts include 19 local agencies, 7 town clerks, and 20 family centers or similar organizations.⁶¹ Although these organizations vary widely in terms of their missions, structure and capacity, all charitable food sites rely heavily on volunteers and donations of goods and in-kind services from the surrounding community. The diversity among the charitable sites and their reliance on volunteer staff is reflected in their eligibility requirements and their schedules. Some sites have a policy of serving anyone who walks through their doors, whereas other sites serve only people who live within their community. Some sites are open three days per week; others are open only once a month.

Figure D4 shows the location of community meals sites, food shelves, and CSFP drop sites for each county in relation to the percentage of the population enrolled in the SNAP program. Food pantries and community meal sites provide food and/or a place to eat for a significant portion of Vermont's population. **In 2008,**

Figure D4: Food Access - Charitable Food Sites



approximately 31,000 people or 5% of Vermont's population visited a food shelf or community meal site in a typical month.⁶³ That same year, the total value of food provided through food pantries and community meal sites in Vermont amounted to approximately \$11 million dollars (based on \$9,500,000 for the total value provided through food shelves and \$1,700,400 through community meal sites).⁶⁴

The majority of the charitable food sites in Vermont belong to the *Vermont Foodbank* network and source the bulk of the food they serve from the *Foodbank* (70.4% of the food provided by pantries, and 36.8% of the food served by community kitchens comes from the *Vermont Foodbank*).⁶⁵ However, in addition to procuring food from the *Foodbank*, charitable food sites in Vermont also use a number of other sources, including purchasing food directly. Of *Vermont Foodbank* partners that participated in a recent survey conducted by *Feeding America*, a significant percentage (over 68% of the food pantries surveyed, and over 77% of the community meal sites) make direct purchases of food in addition to receiving food from the Foodbank, the CSFP, TEFAP/EFAP), and donors.⁶⁶

Much of the food that these organizations purchase tends to be healthy produce, dairy products, and meats — items that are also produced by Vermont farmers and could be sourced in Vermont. In a 2010 survey of *Vermont Foodbank* partners, 77.1% of the community meal sites purchased fresh fruits and vegetables; 47.3% of the pantries and 80.0% of the meal sites purchased beef, pork, poultry, fish, beans, eggs and nuts; and 6.7% of the pantries and 88.6% of the meal sites purchased milk, yogurt, and cheese.⁶⁷

Many charitable sites wish to receive more of these products. Specifically, 45.4% of the pantries and 44.7% of the meal sites in the *Feeding America* survey reported needing more fresh fruits and vegetables; 63.8% of the pantries and 38.1% of the meal sites needed more milk, yogurt, and cheese.⁶⁸ Both are categories of food that are produced in abundance by Vermont farmers. These data were corroborated in a recent survey conducted by the *Vermont Foodbank's* Agricultural Resources department to assess interest in locally sourced foods. Responding partners of the *Vermont Foodbank* indicated an urgent need for all nutrient-dense foods, with 65% of the respondents stating that their greatest need is for protein (i.e. meat, dairy products, eggs). The greatest demand in general is for meat. The majority (84%) of the responding food sites were interested in increasing the amount of meat they receive from the *Foodbank*. Sites were asked to rank their interest in various types of meat: beef, chicken, pork, wild game and lamb or goat. Of these types of meat, sites showed the greatest interest in obtaining more chicken and beef and were willing to pay more for beef than for chicken. Over 50% of the sites responding to the survey stated that they would be willing to pay \$0.50 per pound for beef, while only 29% indicated that they would be willing to pay \$0.50 for chicken. A larger number of sites (35%) were willing to pay \$0.10 per pound for chicken.⁶⁹

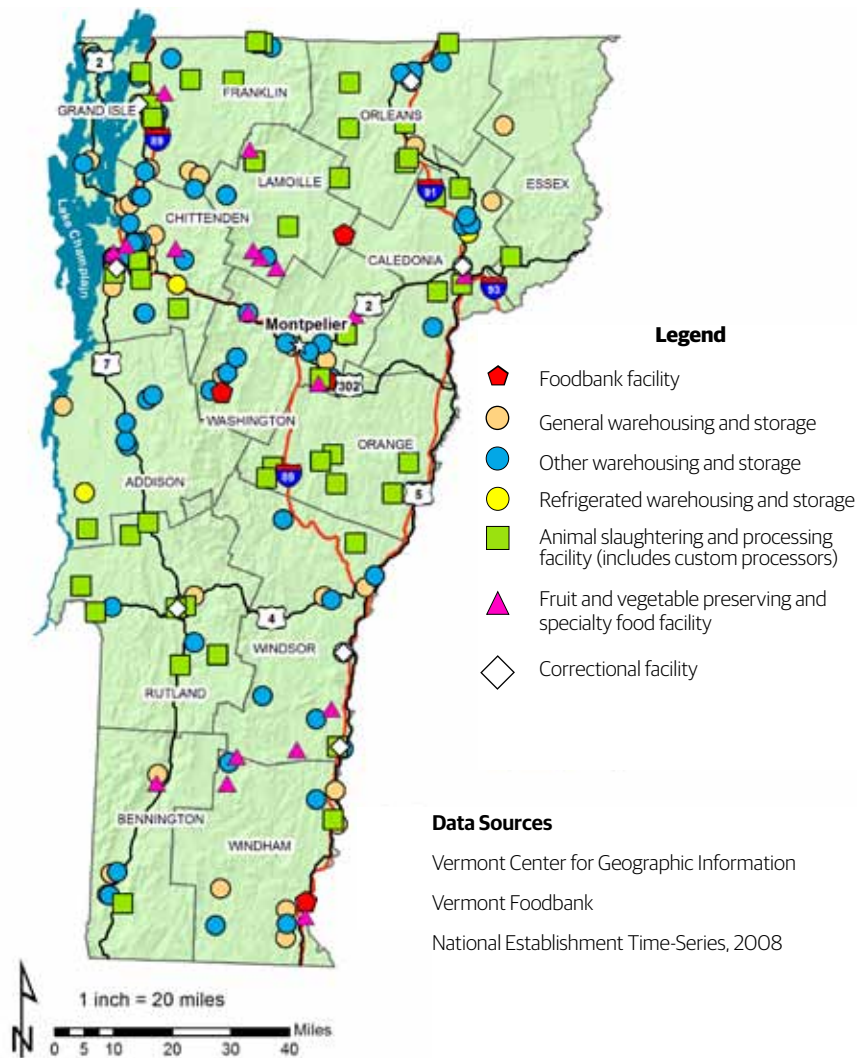
The fact that charitable food sites purchase some of the food they provide, along with their desire for more fruits and vegetables, meats, and dairy products presents an opportunity for introducing more locally produced nutrient-dense food into the charitable food system. These purchases would probably have to be subsidized in some manner to be affordable for most charitable sites. As such, these sales cannot be relied on by any individual farm for the bulk of their profit, but they can provide a reliable market, especially for beginning farmers, as has been demonstrated by the *Farm to Table Program* and by *Post Oil Solution's* low income farmer's market CSA at an affordable housing site.

However, to increase distribution of fresh produce and meat at charitable food sites in Vermont, more on-site storage capacity is needed because most charitable food sites lack sufficient cold storage space. Many food shelves and community meal sites are open only once a week or less, yet very few have the capacity to store fresh food. This lack of cold storage capacity can prevent those who manage these sites from accepting fresh perishable foods from gleaning programs and other donations. Half the respondents to the *Vermont Foodbank* survey do not have access to a refrigerator or freezer, and 69% of the respondents identified cold storage as the greatest barrier to providing more fresh meat and produce to their clients.⁷⁰



Volunteers pack boxes for delivery

Figure D5: Potential Storage and Processing Facilities



Even relatively small investments in storage and processing infrastructure can make a significant difference in an organization’s ability to provide local food. As an example, in 2009, the *Fairfield Community Center and Food Shelf* was able to purchase a new freezer and stove for its kitchen using a mini-grant from the *Vermont Foodbank*. The Center’s Director, Nancy Shaw stated:

Because of this (grant), last summer we were able to process excess vegetables grown in the Center’s Community Garden. Farmers and growers also donated produce that we put by for the winter. We were able to offer chard, squash, berries, broccoli and beans to Food Shelf clients and serve them at our senior community lunches almost up until Christmas time. There’s huge potential here [...] Right now the Center is in the process of a metamorphosis, and local, organic food and the promotion of healthy lifestyles seem to be a central theme in the future of our organization.⁷¹

The *Vermont Foodbank* and the *Vermont Farm to School Network* are interested in exploring whether some of the existing food storage and processing infrastructure in the state could be shared. Figure D5 illustrates the locations of existing storage and processing facilities or potential storage and processing locations, such as correctional facilities. An inventory and assessment still needs to be conducted to determine which of these sites would be appropriate partners for charitable food providers or farm to school programs.

🍴 Food Rescue and Gleaning Programs

Food rescue is the act of retrieving safe, edible food that would otherwise go to waste.⁷² It may include food that has passed its “sell by” date, food that has been over-ordered by restaurants, or produce with cosmetic imperfections. Businesses that donate food to food rescue programs may receive tax credits for their donations, and they are protected from liability lawsuits as a result of the Good Samaritan Food Donation Act.⁷³ In 2009, the *Vermont Foodbank* rescued 600 tons of close-to-code, perishable, and shelf-stable food from Vermont restaurants, stores, bakeries, cafeterias, food manufacturers, and distributors.⁷⁴

Willing Hands is a nonprofit charitable organization that rescues and distributes food throughout the Upper Valley Region of Vermont and New Hampshire. It was founded

in 2005 by Peter Phippen, an employee of the [Hanover Food Co-op](#) who was dismayed by the amount of perfectly good produce that was being thrown away. *Willing Hands* collects food from over 30 donors and distributes it to over 50 charitable and social service organizations in the Upper Valley entirely free of charge. It also provide free cooking classes to recipients and education on how to prepare fresh produce. The *Willing Hands* farming project consists of an organic garden and team of gleaners. Ninety-five percent of the food that *Willing Hands* distributes is unprocessed fruits and vegetables.⁷⁵

In 2009, *Willing Hands* delivered approximately 182 tons of fruit, vegetables, bread, milk, and frozen ground meat to its network of charitable food sites. Of this, 85.3% (including 2.1 tons of frozen, ground meat) was rescued from grocers and wholesalers; 11.5% came directly from local farms (including 5.4 tons of produce gleaned or harvested by *Willing Hands* volunteers and 1 ton of milk donated by a New Hampshire dairy); and 3.2% (or 6.2 tons) was bread from local bakers. They also picked up and distributed 454 trays of prepared food donated by chefs to a local retirement community in New Hampshire.⁷⁶

It is important to note that both the *Vermont Foodbank* and *Willing Hands* rely on rescued foods from local grocers, wholesalers, processors, and restaurants, for the majority of the food that they distribute to people in need in the state. Although not all of these foods may have been raised by Vermont farmers, they are coming from Vermont businesses, and they represent a year-round supply of good, nutritious food that would otherwise go to waste.

Gleaning is a subcategory of food rescue. It refers specifically to the act of gathering produce that is left over from farmers' fields after the commercial harvest. For the purposes of this report, gleaning is defined broadly to encompass all food that is harvested, rescued, or donated directly from Vermont farms, orchards, farmers' markets, home gardens, and **Grow an Extra Row**, or similar programs for provision to the charitable food system. Although numerous farmers and backyard and community gardeners donate extra produce to the *Foodbank* and charitable food sites on an informal basis, five organizations and one individual (the *Vermont Foodbank*, *Willing Hands*, the [Intervale Center](#), [Post Oil Solutions](#), [Rutland Area Farm and Food Link](#) (RAFFL), and Corinne Almquist) currently run coordinated gleaning programs



Young children help glean carrots at Clear Brook Farm

in Vermont. Combined, these six programs gleaned and donated over 307 tons of fresh produce to 247 food pantries, communal meal sites, senior centers, after-school programs, group homes, and shelters in 2009.^{77,78}

The Lamoille Valley, Central Vermont/Washington County, the Greater Brattleboro area, Chittenden County, the Upper Valley, and Rutland and Addison Counties all have coordinated gleaning programs.⁷⁹ There are currently no coordinated programs in Bennington, Essex, Franklin and Grand Isle County or parts of Orange County. This is due to a lack of funding for coordinators and not to a lack of interest on the part of either farmers or charitable distribution sites, or to a lack of need on the part of residents. Because gleaning efforts involve extensive and challenging scheduling, logistical management, and organizing of volunteers to ensure that good-quality produce makes it to its destination while it is fresh, gleaning programs are best managed by paid staff.⁸⁰

The *Vermont Foodbank* is currently developing a set of suggested standard practices for the gleaning/donation, collection, and distribution of surplus agricultural products from farmers' markets and community gardens that could easily be adopted by home gardeners. In the future, the *Vermont Foodbank* will be looking to farmers' market managers, citizens, charitable food sites, and regional food centers to help educate communities about the potential of these community-based efforts.⁸¹ To expand gleaning in Vermont, directors of current gleaning efforts strongly believe that regional coordinator positions need to be funded throughout the state.

Community Food Security Projects

This section presents an overview of the food security projects that strengthen a community's capacity to meet their own food needs. It highlights efforts that work to build the capacity of Vermont communities to grow, access, and utilize food for themselves.

Although there will always be a need for the social safety net provided by the charitable food system, the long-term goal of a truly secure food system in Vermont is to maximize the ability of all of our residents to purchase or cultivate food for themselves whenever possible. Community food security is defined as "a condition in which all community residents obtain a safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes community self-reliance and social justice."⁸² To address hunger and malnutrition, the community food security framework uses a whole systems approach and emphasizes building a community's resources to meet its own food needs.⁸³

In contrast to the charitable systems' necessary approach of providing free and low-cost food to people in need, community food security programs seek to build capacity and infrastructure to enable individuals and communities to grow, access, and prepare fresh, nutritious foods for themselves in a long-term sustainable manner. Using local resources, leadership, and volunteers, community food security stresses collaboration and partnership across often disconnected sectors. For example, public health employees, grassroots organizations, farmers' market organizations and youth programs can work together on common projects related to increasing food access

Farm to School Programs

Farm to school programs strengthen communities' capacity to feed themselves by (1) building direct relationships between schools and farms and (2) educating children about where food comes from, how to prepare fresh whole foods, and how to have a healthy diet. Since children from food-insecure families often get assistance for school meals, integrating local food into these meals is an excellent opportunity to increase local food consumption among food-insecure children in Vermont while providing an additional commercial market for farmers.

In 2006, Vermont's legislature passed the Rozo McLaughlin Farm-to-School Act (Act 145). This program provides grants and technical assistance for schools to purchase food from neighboring farms and incorporate education about agriculture and nutrition into their curricula. Since the passing of Act 145, the VAAFM's Farm to School grant program has provided \$380,000 to schools and school districts to plan or implement Farm-to-School programs⁸⁴ and \$60,000 to *Vermont Food Education Every Day* (VT-FEED) and other organizations to provide technical assistance to schools. To date, 44 schools and school districts have received funding through this program. Currently, at least 16 of the 44 schools receiving Farm to School grants have 50% or more of their students receiving free or reduced-price school meals.⁸⁵ There is also a limited amount of funding available for equipment through the *Vermont Department of Education*.

There are currently farm to school programs of different stripes in every county, many of them operating without the benefit of Act 145 grants.⁸⁶ *Green Mountain Farm-to-School* coordinates efforts at 21 schools in the Northeast Kingdom, *Upper Valley Farm to School* works with 9 schools in the Upper Valley Region of Vermont and New Hampshire, and Vermont-FEED has been able to bring Farm to School initiatives to more than 75 schools throughout the state. There are also a few independent Farm to School projects that are not affiliated with any of the preceding programs. All in all, over 100 Farm to School projects are either in planning or implementation stages in Vermont's schools. The VAAFM estimates that each school with a Farm to School program spends, on average, \$3,000 on food at area farms.⁸⁷

As with the charitable food system, limited food storage and processing capacity present challenges for schools that want to integrate local food into

their menus. Contemporary school kitchens are not designed to cook large amounts of whole foods; rather they have been designed to warm and serve processed and prepared foods. To date, every Farm to School grant recipient has needed to invest in new equipment to process and store local products. When these investments have been possible, they have resulted in improved diet-related behavior among students. For example, *Woodstock Union High and Middle Schools* reported an increase in lunch participation from 50% to 65% of students.⁸⁸ Adding salad bars, in particular, has been an effective vehicle to get students to eat more fresh fruits and vegetables, and it is relatively easy to integrate local food into salads.

Vermont-FEED conducted a successful pilot study to create opportunities for Vermont growers and processors by lightly processing and freezing Vermont vegetables and fruits for use later in the school year.⁸⁹ By transitioning away from products that Vermont producers cannot produce to those they can, such as lightly processed vegetables or ground beef, school food services can effectively increase the market potential for Vermont farmers.⁹⁰

Although there is enormous potential to increase food access and the use of local products in Vermont schools, and simultaneously grow the market for local food producers, processors and distributors, the cost of programs like those mentioned is a significant barrier. Funding is needed to complete assessments of school infrastructure, provide school kitchens with appropriate equipment to process perishable food, deliver information about resources to food service directors, conduct trainings for food service directors and staff, and reward schools for making efforts toward local food purchases. This funding is extremely difficult to secure using current revenue streams. Supplemental funding would help schools make the first steps toward securing food access for all students and increasing the use of local foods, but long-term funding is dependent on changing administrative expectations of school food service.

🔑 Community Gardens

Community gardens promote community well-being by providing land, tools, and educational opportunities for people to grow food for themselves and others. Vermont has over 180 community gardens. This number includes school and teaching gardens,



Garden at the Underhill School

PHOTO CREDIT: Friends of Burlington Gardens

neighborhood gardens, and allotment gardens. Many of these gardens serve low to moderate income households.⁹¹ In Burlington alone, over 2,000 people participate in community gardens or benefit from other types of group gardens. Chittenden County has the highest number of allotment-style community gardens with more than 25 for the county. In addition to providing Vermonters with fresh food, community gardens provide a number of other social benefits, including exercise, education, and a sense of connection to nature and other people. When asked about the benefits of community gardening, respondents to a survey ranked improved diet and nutrition as the most important benefit, followed by learning and education, connection to nature, recreation and community, and saving money on food costs.⁹²

In a survey conducted of members of the *Vermont Community Garden Network* for the F2P Strategic Plan, 43% of respondents felt that most of the gardeners at their site do not grow enough produce to meet their household needs. However, one third of respondents (36.8%) grow just enough to meet their households needs, and nearly

20% felt that most of the gardeners at their site grow more than enough to meet household needs. A significant amount of respondents (62%) share surplus produce with friends, family, and neighbors, while 24.5% stated that most gardeners at their site bring surplus produce to a local food shelf, and 4.7% said that gardeners grew extra produce for a Grow an Extra Row project. Approximately one quarter, or 24.1% of respondents gave away or donated between 10 and 30 pounds of produce in 2009.

The *Friends of Burlington Gardens/Vermont Community Garden Network* has received federal funds to enhance farm to school programs by supporting community gardens established on land at or adjacent to 40 of Vermont's 393 public schools. The 40 school-community gardens will receive mini-grants and technical assistance from *Friends of Burlington Gardens* to develop their garden sites. *UVM Extension Master Gardeners* will provide on-site support. The gardens will enhance the school and summer programs of collaborating nonprofits, including Vermont-FEED, *Green Mountain Farm-to-School*, *Upper Valley Farm to School*, and *Hunger Free Vermont*.⁹³

Figure D6: Community Garden Food Usage, 2009

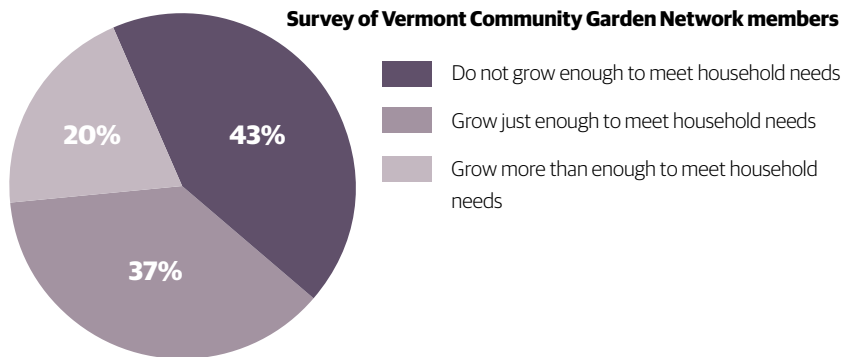


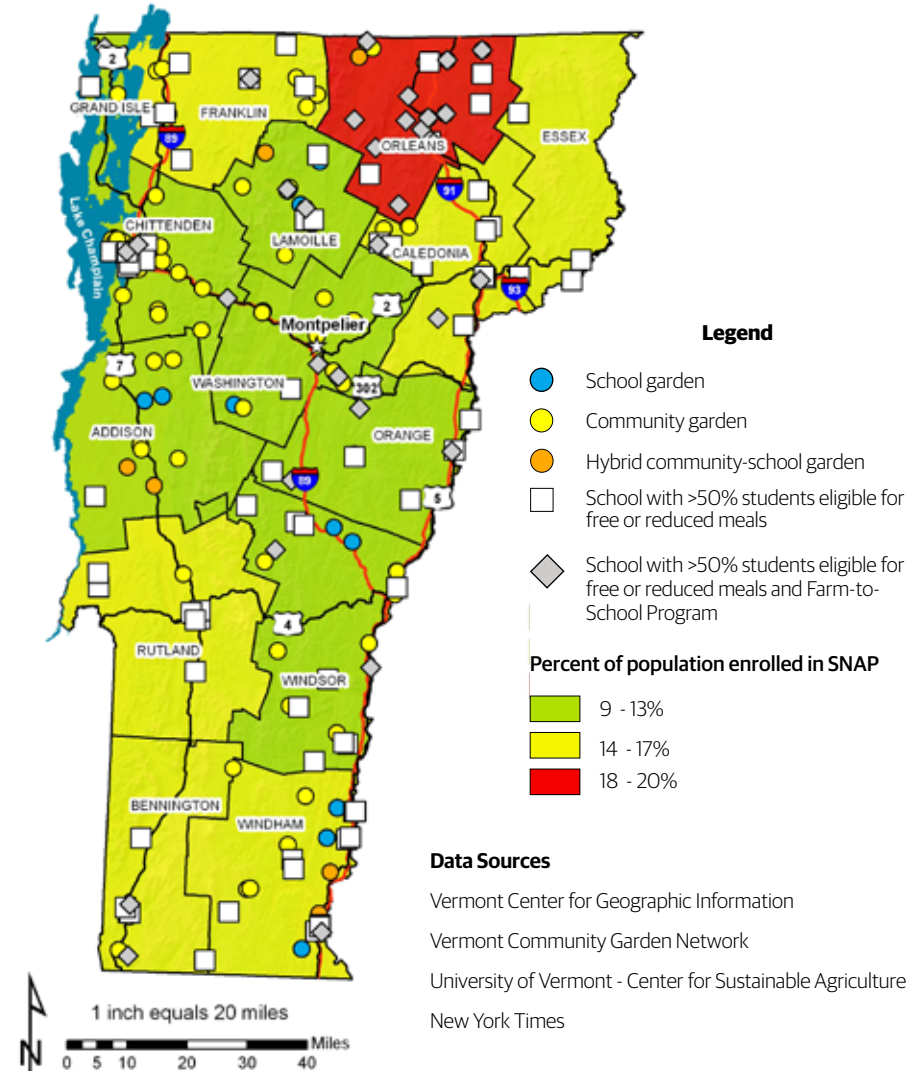
Figure D7 illustrates the location of school and community gardens as well as schools with farm to school programs in relation to the percent of the population enrolled in SNAP by county. It also identifies individual schools where greater than 50% of the students are eligible for free and reduced-price meals, and which of these schools have a farm to school program in place.

Community gardens and related programs are increasing in number throughout Vermont, there are challenges to ensuring the continued success of these gardens. Although funding is available to start new community garden projects, obtaining funding to maintain or improve established programs is often difficult.⁹⁴ Continued funding and technical assistance are needed to help established community and school gardens reach even more households in limited income communities. Specifically, funding is needed to (1) compensate for sliding scale/reduced to free fees to encourage more participation of low income households; (2) install infrastructure improvements including greenhouses, raised beds, and water hook-ups; (3) improve publicity and outreach especially to novice gardeners and non-English speakers; and (4) establish gardens within walking distance of low income neighborhoods.



Hinesburg Community Garden

Figure D7: Community and School Gardens, Farm-to-School Programs, and Schools with >50% Students eligible for Free or Reduced Meals



Regional Food Centers

Vermont currently has eight regional food centers: (1) the *Intervale Center* (Chittenden County and surrounding areas); (2) *Vital Communities Valley Food and Farm* (the Upper Valley of Vermont and New Hampshire); (3) *Rutland Area Farm and Food Link* (RAFFL – Rutland County and surrounding areas); (4) *Local Agricultural Community Exchange* (LACE – Central Vermont); (5) *Post Oil Solutions* and *Great Falls Food Hub* (Windham and Windsor Counties in Vermont and Sullivan and Cheshire Counties in New Hampshire); (6) *Food Works at Two Rivers Center* (Central Vermont); (7) The *Center for an Agricultural Economy* (Greater Hardwick Area); and (8) the *Addison County Relocalization Network* (ACORN).

In a collaboratively written document, these entities defined themselves as follows:

Organizations that work within regions of the state with communities and seek to increase physical and organizational infrastructure to support Vermont farms, local agriculture economies, and the health and vitality of Vermont communities. They work to expand local food access, shorten supply chains, promote fair prices to farmers, increase efficiency, and support the success of farmers and food related business.⁹⁵

As such, the regional food centers can potentially play an important role in improving the access, availability, and use of fresh and local foods for all Vermonters by addressing food systems development. Some of the regional food centers' programming currently addresses food storage, processing, and distribution infrastructure within their individual regions. A number of the regional food centers explicitly include food security as a critical part of their mission and run innovative projects to improve food security in their areas. Some of the specific ways the regional food centers are working to strengthen community food security are listed in Table D2. Some of the strategies that hold particular potential for improving community food security that some regional food centers are pursuing include (1) providing infrastructure for limited-income or beginning food entrepreneurs; and (2) creating economies of scale by aggregating product for distribution by charitable food sites.

Vermont's local food landscape is constantly changing as many communities embrace the mission of strengthening their local food systems. As such, this table includes the

oldest and most well-established programs, but does not include new programs or organizations that are expanding their missions to serve as Regional Food Centers. For example, *Green Mountain Farm to School* is now aggregating and distributing product to other food service providers in addition to schools, and Johnson/Lamoille County, the Greater Falls (Bellows Falls) area, and South Royalton are all exploring creating regional food “hubs.”

Providing Infrastructure

LACE is a nonprofit organization located in downtown Barre. The LACE building contains a grocery market, a café, and an incubator **community kitchen** to help area food entrepreneurs start their new businesses. It also provides a processing facility to local farms interested in adding value to their products. The community kitchen was made possible by a partnership between LACE and the [Central Vermont Community Action Council's \(CVCAC\) Microbusiness Program](#). CVCAC's staff assists entrepreneurs who wish to use LACE's kitchen with business planning, classes in finance and marketing, and individual coaching. LACE offers access to local ingredients, networking with the community, and a market to test sales of products. The kitchen also provides an educational space for community classes on cooking, diet and nutrition.⁹⁶ As of early 2010, seven food entrepreneurs were using the LACE kitchen to prepare the foods for their businesses. Similarly, the *Intervale* is collaborating with the [Association of Africans Living in Vermont](#) to provide land and training to refugee and immigrant farmers hoping to get started in agriculture in Vermont.

Table D2: Regional Food Center Community Food Security Strategies

STRATEGY	ORGANIZATION
Collaborating with the Vermont Foodbank and/or Willing Hands in developing gleaning programs for their region	Intervale
	RAFFL
	ACORN
	Post Oil Solutions
Revitalizing or building production, storage and/or processing infrastructure – especially for limited-income beginning food entrepreneurs	Intervale
	Food Works at Two Rivers Center
	Center for an Agricultural Economy
	Post Oil Solutions
	LACE
Coordinating purchasing agreements between local farmers and the charitable food system	RAFFL
	Food Works at Two Rivers Center
	Center for an Agricultural Economy
Working with regional planning commissions and conservation districts to preserve and utilize prime agricultural lands	RAFFL
Acting as a resource for area food councils	Food Works at Two Rivers Center
	Vital Communities
	RAFFL
Working with economic development agencies and community action councils on the development of incubator farms and kitchens to provide jobs for community entrepreneurs	Intervale
	LACE
	RAFFL
	Center for an Agricultural Economy
Bringing cooking, nutrition, and gardening classes to affordable housing sites	Post Oil Solutions
	Food Works at Two Rivers Center
	Vital Communities
Leveraging funding to build connections among local communities, farmers, and charitable food sites	Center for an Agricultural Economy

Aggregating Product

RAFFL developed a **Grow the Longest Row** effort as an alternative to gleaning and as a means of incorporating excess food from local farms and gardens into the charitable food system. Rather than sending volunteers to farms to glean, gardeners and farmers bring produce they wish to donate to the Rutland farmers' market where it is picked up at the end of the market. From there it is brought to *Thomas Dairy* for cold storage and stored in tubs donated by local hardware stores. On Mondays, the produce is picked up and delivered to area food pantries and social service agencies. In the first year of the program (2009), RAFFL distributed over 10,000 pounds of food, consisting of 45 different varieties of fruits and vegetables, over 100 dozen eggs, plus meat and cider, from 26 farms and gardens to over 17 agencies. This program also demonstrates the creative use of existing storage space at *Thomas Dairy* to meet a community need.⁹⁷

Farm to Table, a program developed by *Food Works at Two Rivers Center* provides a model for introducing locally grown produce into the charitable food system in a way that benefits both farmers and charitable sites. Now in its sixth full year, Farm to Table acts as a nonprofit wholesaler of local foods (primarily produce) within Central Vermont, serving schools, senior centers, hospitals, community mental health programs, and emergency food pantries. Most of these meal sites serve nutritionally at-risk populations, and receive subsidies from the Farm to Table program. This enables them to purchase healthy, local foods at affordable prices, while ensuring that the farmers receive fair market wholesale rates for their high-quality organic products. The program is primarily funded by private grants. However, it has recently begun reaching out to non-low income populations (such as businesses, institutions of higher learning, and households who have formed buying clubs) who pay a mark-up above the farmers' wholesale price, which enables the program to generate some of its own revenue to continue offering subsidies to the high-need meal sites. In 2009, Farm to Table purchased \$83,241 from 22 local growers and two producers of locally-grown food, and distributed it to approximately 60 sites. Sales rose dramatically in 2010, due at least in part to the opening of the root cellar and distribution center at the *Two Rivers Center*. Food education is also an important part of the program; *Food Works* staff works directly with the food service personnel, providing them with the workshops, resources and encouragement they need to use fresh produce and to cook with the seasons.⁹⁸

D4. ANALYSIS

Access, Availability, and Utilization

To conceptualize how programs in Vermont can address the issue of food security, we have used an internationally recognized framework that divides food security efforts into three categories: access, availability, and utilization.

Food access is the way people obtain available food. Normally, food is accessed through a combination of home production, stocks, purchase, barter, gifts, borrowing, and food aid. Food access is ensured when communities and households and all individuals within them have adequate resources, such as money, to obtain appropriate foods for a nutritious diet. Access depends on income, and on the price of food. It also depends on market, social and institutional entitlement/rights to which individuals have access.

Food availability in a country, region, or local area means that food is physically present because it has been grown, manufactured, imported, or transported there. For example, food is available because it can be found in markets; because it is produced on local farms, on local land, or in home gardens; or because it arrives as aid.

Food utilization is the way people use the food and is dependent on the quality of the food, its preparation and storage method, nutritional and cooking knowledge, as well as on the health status of the individual consuming the food.

The objectives and strategies listed in the section *Getting to 2020* are drawn from the insights and experiences of many individuals and organizations as well as from reports and online resources. We have highlighted those strategies that we believe create the greatest opportunity for increasing food access and integration of local food into Vermont's emergency and supplemental food systems. Strategies vary in both cost and duration of implementation. We have attempted to present a range of options. Some can be achieved in a short time period, while some will take many years to put in place. Some come with a high price tag while some are relatively inexpensive. Some are policy changes that will require collaboration with the state, while some can be implemented at the grassroots level.

Access: All Vermonters will have access to fresh, nutritionally balanced food that they can afford.

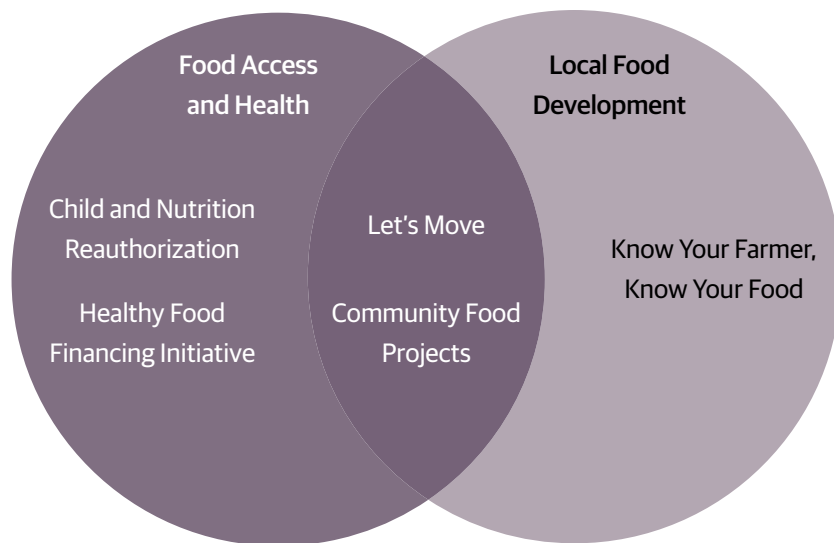
🍷 Opportunities at the Federal Level

On a national level, there is increasing federal support for increasing access to healthy food in U.S. schools. Specifically, First Lady Michelle Obama's *Let's Move* campaign⁹⁹ promises to increase education around food choices for families, increase support for school meal programs, increase physical education and activity, and address food deserts in the United States. In keeping with this initiative, the Obama administration is seeking strong reauthorization of the **Child and Nutrition Act** and has released \$400 million as part of its **Healthy Food Financing Initiative**, the goal of which is to eliminate food deserts by bringing retailers that stock healthy food to underserved regions in the country. This initiative is a collaborative effort on the part of the Departments of Treasury, Agriculture, and Health and Human Services.¹⁰⁰ These efforts will be moved forward by offering tax credits to stores that open in distressed and economically disadvantaged areas, and through additional support to community development financial institutions. The USDA will make additional loans and grants

available for projects that increase access to healthy food for low income Americans. Community development organizations will also have access to increased funding to support retailers, farmers' markets, and other markets that increase the accessibility of fresh, healthy food.¹⁰¹

There is also increasing support for local food systems coming from the USDA, as seen in public statements issued by USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack and Deputy Secretary Kathleen Merrigan. The *Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food*¹⁰² initiative's goal is to create new economic opportunities for American farmers. Part of this initiative is increased funding for Community Food Projects, which seek to meet the needs of low income Americans in underserved areas. According to the USDA, "The primary goals of the Community Food Projects program are to (1) meet the food needs of low-income individuals; (2) increase the food self-reliance of low-income communities; (3) promote comprehensive responses to local food, farm and nutrition issues; and (4) meet specific state, local or neighborhood food and agricultural needs, including needs relating to infrastructure improvement and development, planning for long-term solutions and the creation of innovative marketing activities that mutually benefit agricultural producers and low-income consumers."¹⁰³

Figure D8: Good Things in Progress on the Federal Level



🍷 Opportunities in the Charitable Food System

A number of food advocacy organizations in Vermont are pioneering new models for providing fresh, locally grown food to the charitable food system. In addition, other states have modeled innovative new tax structures and programs that enhance agricultural viability and food access efforts. This section highlights a few of the most notable efforts.

🍴 Gleaning Coordinators

In 2009 the gleaning program at the Vermont Foodbank received 408,806 pounds of donated produce with a market value of \$483,379. They achieved this using only four gleaning coordinators in four regions of the state.¹⁰⁴ If the state had more gleaning coordinators and a system for collecting donations, these organizations and others like them would be able to rescue a much greater quantity of food that might otherwise go to waste. **The need exists for 8 to 10 regional coordinators throughout the state**



Child lends a helping hand to glean cabbages at Clear Brook Farm

contributing an average of 20 hours per week year-round. Regional coordinators could be affiliated with the *Vermont Foodbank*, *Willing Hands*, regional food centers, Community action agencies, and/or other organizations within a region, such as some of the NOFA-VT farm to community mentors. Food could be stored at regional food center facilities once established, at a willing farm, or within an already existing storage facility (e.g., *Vermont Foodbank* distribution centers).¹⁰⁵ Food collected through these programs can be distributed through established networks or utilized by community groups. For example, *Post Oil Solutions* in Windham County has collaborated with the *Foodbank* in the past to use gleaned produce for onsite cooking demonstrations, in community meals, and canning demonstrations. Funding for coordinators should include monies for programmatic and operational needs (i.e., storage for field supplies, field vehicles, and administrative supports such as phones and laptops, as well as salaries). Gleaning coordinators should be established first in regions where there is great need but little activity, such as the Northeast Kingdom, the Lake Champlain Islands, and Bennington County, with one new coordinator added to the state every year.

— Proposed Donated Crops Tax Credit for Vermont Farmers

Currently, farmers who donate produce to the charitable food system are told that they can write off the donation on their taxes, but in most cases they are not able to do so. This is because taxpayers can deduct an expense only once, and since most farmers write off seeds as a business expense they cannot also deduct the cost of a mature plant as a charitable donation.¹⁰⁶

A number of states, including Oregon, Arizona, Colorado and California, have tax policies that allow farms to deduct charitable donations of agricultural products. The *Vermont Foodbank* has proposed a tax credit for farmers based on these programs. If Vermont passed a state refundable tax credit to Vermont farmers who donate agricultural products to 501(c)(3) nonprofits that have an ongoing purpose to distribute food to Vermonters in need at no cost, it would encourage more farmers to donate food that might otherwise go to waste to the charitable food system. The tax credit would apply to all farm products including produce, dairy products, and meat.

Instituting a state refundable tax credit for a percentage of the value of all donated food would reimburse farmers for making donations to gleaning programs and encourage more farmers to participate in gleaning programs.

The tax credit would allow Vermont farmers to apply for a credit equaling 25% of the market value of the donated goods at the time of donation. Donations would be receipted by the receiving organization, and the market value would be determined by the donor. As an example of the impact of such a tax credit, a 25% credit would have cost the state approximately \$121,000 in 2010 based on the \$483,379 value of the produce gleaned by the *Vermont Foodbank*. The dollars would go directly to the farmers. The *Vermont Foodbank* presented a proposal for such a tax credit for farmers during the 2010 legislative session, based on a similar statute passed in Oregon in 2001.

— Proposed Foodbank Program for Donated Dairy Beef

The current Federal USDA School Lunch policy states that schools can only use meat from USDA inspected slaughterhouses, yet in many ways, state inspection is the equivalent of USDA inspections. A pilot program should also explore the potential of using state inspected slaughterhouses to provide meat to schools.

Currently, dairy beef cows are shipped to packing companies out of state, where the beef is then distributed to restaurants and chain supermarkets. A 2006 study conducted by the VAAFM estimated that between 19,000 and 30,000 dairy cows are culled in the state every year. According to a recent study commissioned by the *Vermont Foodbank*, the 82,000 Vermonters served by the *Vermont Foodbank* could consume up to 2,624,000 pounds of ground beef per year. Meat from the dairy beef cows could translate into 15,000,000 pounds of beef.¹⁰⁷

The *Vermont Foodbank* is currently exploring options that would facilitate the donation of dairy beef cows to the charitable food system. A number of other states including Idaho and Montana have similar programs whereby farmers can donate cattle to the charitable food system. The *Foodbank*, an intermediary organization, or the VAAFM could coordinate the processing and distribution of the beef. The seasonality of meat production places the greatest pressure on slaughterhouses from August to December. However, dairy cows are culled every day, year round. If the *Foodbank* or another organization ran its program from January to July, in addition to providing locally raised protein to people in need, it could help keep Vermont slaughterhouses operating at full capacity year-round.¹⁰⁸

However, as discussed earlier, many receiving organizations lack the storage and processing capacity to handle much perishable or temperature-sensitive food. This issue will need to be addressed before launching a large-scale rescue and distribution program for locally raised meat.

🔑 Community Kitchen Job Training Program

The *Vermont Foodbank* partners with the *Chittenden Emergency Food Shelf* and the *Champlain Valley Office of Economic Opportunity* to run the community kitchen program. The community kitchen program helps unemployed and underemployed men and women build the skills and prepare for a career in the food service industry while also turning donated, rescued, and gleaned food into meals for food-insecure Vermonters. Students in the program intern at *Sodexo Corporation* sites in Burlington, including at *UVM Sodexo Campus Services*. In 2008, the Community Kitchen program processed and distributed 288,805 pounds of food sourced from the *Intervale* as well as supermarkets and other food rescue sources. Other food banks around the country

have instituted similar job training programs to help food bank clients develop skills and become fully employed.¹⁰⁹

🍏 Opportunities in Community Food Security

Vermont has a number of projects that work to build the capacity of Vermont communities to grow, access, and use food for themselves. One of the most successful district-led farm to school efforts in Vermont is the *Burlington School Food Project* (BSFP), a collaboration of many partners including *Shelburne Farms* (Sustainable Schools Project), *Burlington School Food Service*, *Friends of Burlington Gardens* (Healthy City Youth Initiative), Vermont-FEED, and *City Market/Onion River Co-op*. The group has made significant progress in shifting the food culture in Chittenden County by addressing access, availability, and utilization of local food in several key ways (1) The Burlington School district provides a livable wage (\$15.23 in 2010) for food service employees; (2) school employees work with local producers to provide food or develop new products that are affordable for local schools and manageable for food service employees; and (3) the program works to increase food access while simultaneously reducing the stigma experienced by students who receive assistance for school food.

In addition to its work addressing cultural changes around food and food service in schools, BSFP has dramatically increased access to local food and fresh fruits and vegetables (from any source) for students in the *Burlington*.



Making a community meal in a commercial kitchen

School District. In 2003, the dollar value of fresh fruits and vegetables purchased by the Burlington School District totaled \$5,000. This increased to \$120,000 in 2009. The value of local food (primarily sourced directly from farmers) in 2009 was \$90,000. Key to the success of this effort is the work of the Vermont Food Service Directors Association, a group of 135 schools that work together to negotiate contracts and make local food more accessible for schools. A critical change made by the Burlington School District that has helped the BSFP make great strides in their food procurement strategies is the creation of a farm to school coordinator position. The coordinator is responsible for working with food service employees to create new menu options that incorporate locally available food, as well as act as a liaison between local farms and the school district.

🔑 Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets Beef to Schools Program

Both the Vermont Foodbank and the VAAFM in partnership with Vermont-FEED are exploring options for providing local ground beef to the charitable food system and Vermont schools, respectively. While the *Foodbank* is proposing a program through which farmers would receive a tax credit for donating dairy beef cows to the charitable system, the VAAFM and Vermont-FEED are proposing that schools would purchase beef from cattle farmers at a fair market price.¹¹⁰ A pilot program on ground beef would identify the logistical, infrastructure, and policy issues; determine the costs associated with operating each proposal; determine where economies of scale can be used by aggregating product; and determine the potential economic benefits for farmers, processors, and distributors selling beef through the VAAFM program.

In October 2008, the VAAFM surveyed 250 food service providers throughout the state to assess their interest in introducing locally produced ground beef into school meal programs. Of the 44 food service directors that responded to the survey, most were amenable. They indicated that they would purchase frozen patties of local beef if they were of “consistently high quality” and “competitively priced.” Sixty-four percent were willing to purchase local frozen ground beef at a cost of “10% more than what they are currently paying.” At the time, respondents paid distributors an average of \$2.41 per pound for bulk ground beef or beef patties. The following year, food service staffs in 10 schools were asked to try local ground beef from market dairy cows.



PHOTO CREDIT: Food Works at Two Rivers Center

Shared meal with participants of Good Food, Good Medicine program in Barre

Schools paid \$2.05 per pound for local ground beef and \$2.50 per pound for local beef patties. Again, the response was favorable. The author of the report concluded that if VAAFM or another organization, such as a farm to school program or a regional food center, were able to make the price of locally sourced beef competitive by creating economies of scale, a beef to schools program¹¹¹ could increase the amount of local protein in Vermont schools, as well as providing Vermont farmers with a predictable market.¹¹²

Currently, some schools around the state including the Doty School in Worcester, Sharon Elementary School and Randolph Elementary School are buying local beef directly from the processor such as Royal Butcher in Randolph, but as of yet there is no consistent affordable option through a wholesale distributor. The Doty School was able to reduce the cost of the meat by purchasing entire sides of beef with a neighboring farmer and then arranging for the processing themselves. Green Mountain Farm-to-School helps six schools and four senior meal sites purchase local beef from Brault's

Slaughterhouse through its Green Mountain Farm Direct program. *Green Mountain Farm-to-School* is working with *Brault's* to develop a supply chain, storage system, and audit trail so that sites would know exactly which farm the beef came from.¹¹³

— Food Councils and Community Food Assessments

Many communities around Vermont are in the process of creating groups to create food plans and implement policies that will address food security in a systematic manner. Examples include the Rutland Regional Planning Commission (RAFFL began as a project of the Regional Planning Commission), the Central Vermont Food Council (which is currently inventorying and mapping its agricultural assets), the Waterbury-Duxbury Food Council, the Burlington Food Council, the Upper Valley Food Council and ACORN.

Food councils bring together stakeholders from diverse sectors to examine how a food system is working and develop recommendations on how to improve it. Food councils can be particularly effective at integrating food security issues into government policies. Today there are over 50 food policy councils in the United States.¹¹⁴ Founded in 2003, the Burlington Food Council is one of the oldest in Vermont and has helped launch a number of influential community food security projects in the Burlington area, including the Burlington School Food Project, and has conducted a community food assessment.¹¹⁵

A community food assessment is a process for discovering community food needs and assets, with the goal of developing projects and policies that will improve food security for all residents. Assessments may include interviews, focus groups and surveys, and can vary in the degree to which they integrate citizens in the process. The more participatory community food assessments can be particularly powerful in bringing residents together and building social capital as neighbors learn about one-another and develop projects to address hunger in their communities.^{116, 117} Hunger Free Vermont, in partnership with Northfield Savings Bank, has been piloting the Community Hunger Assessment, Intervention, and Resources Project (CHAIR) in Washington and Chittenden Counties since July 2006. Over a three-year period, the program has succeeded in creating hunger councils in both counties that have been able to significantly increase participation in nutrition programs.¹¹⁸

In Brattleboro, the Community Food Security Project of *Post Oil Solutions* conducted a rapid community food assessment between December 2008 and April 2009, resulting in the publication of a report in June 2009. The assessment revealed that the barriers to greater food security are often related to structural problems that are not unique to the Brattleboro area, including lack of understanding of community food security, lack of jobs, lack of livable wages, lack of local food system infrastructure, lack of time, convenience as a priority, lack of nutrition education, and an overall societal mentality that values cheap food. In responding to the barriers identified, participants had many ideas about how government, business, and community or civic organizations can and should participate.¹¹⁹

Food councils and community food assessment efforts should be supported and expanded throughout Vermont to allow towns to consider how they will include community food security and issues around access, availability, and utilization of food in their town plans — including everything from the use of agricultural lands, to public transportation routes, to providing for residents in emergencies.

— Storage, Processing, Aggregation, and Transportation Infrastructure

Very few food shelves or meal sites have the capacity to store fresh food. This lack of cold storage facilities can prevent those who manage these sites from accepting fresh perishable foods through gleaning and donation. Similarly, although some schools are able to store and process fresh foods on site, many do not have sufficient equipment and other infrastructure to do so, thus hampering their ability to serve fresh, local foods. If central locations could be identified or developed where perishable foods could be kept cool for up to a week, food shelves could then use locally harvested foods on an as-needed basis. If processing centers were available, foods that are highly perishable, such as tomatoes, or slightly compromised, such as winter squashes with some soft spots, could be frozen or processed into shelf-stable products, thus decreasing the loss of fruits and vegetables, and increasing the amount of local produce available to food shelves on a year-round basis.

An inventory should be conducted to identify existing storage and processing facilities that could also be used to store and prepare food for schools and charitable food sites. It would be critical to include existing businesses and entrepreneurs in this inventory

and assessment. For example, the *Skinny Pancake* restaurant and NOFA-VT have designed a proposal for a shared commercial kitchen that would provide food for *Skinny Pancake's* for-profit ventures and also for the food service programs within the *Burlington School District*.¹²⁰ Similarly, a portion of the *Vermont Refrigerated Storage* facility in Shoreham could be used to store produce for charitable food sites in Addison County. Programs also could be developed at Vermont Correctional facilities to process locally raised foods for the charitable food system at low cost while simultaneously providing job training in the food service industry for inmates.¹²¹

Programs such as *Food Works at Two Rivers Center's* Farm-to-Table, RAFFL's *Grow an Extra Row*, and *Green Mountain Farm-to-School's* farm direct program can and are creating economies of scale by aggregating fresh and processed foods for distribution to schools, senior meals sites, hospitals, and restaurants in their regions. Currently, these programs are funded by grants, although the Farm to Table model is increasingly moving toward a mechanism whereby higher income members such as *National Life Insurance* subsidize memberships for charitable organizations and low income members. Similar subsidized aggregation models could be implemented to distribute local foods to charitable food sites throughout the state.



Vermont Foodbank Warehouse

Many of Vermont's existing public transit routes already include grocery stores and access to downtown areas where farmers' markets are located. The statewide Elderly and Disabled program also accommodates single trips for essential shopping to anyone who is 60 or older or disabled. However, in preparing for the *Vermont Agency of Transportation's* (VTrans) upcoming five year Public Transit Policy Planning process, Regional Planning Commissions, in collaboration with local transportation providers and the Public Transit Section of VTrans, could broaden access to food by paying special attention to: (1) building grocery store stops into public transit routes that currently lack them; (2) adding farmers' market stops on the days of market operations; (3) ensuring that affordable housing projects and senior centers have reliable public transportation connecting them to food shopping, food shelves, and meal sites; and (4) working with other organizations to advertising all options for reaching food through public transportation.¹²²

Integrate Local Purchasing in Food Assistance Programs

WIC

In coming years, WIC benefits will be administered exclusively through EBT cards. The first step in this direction is the newly introduced WIC fruit and vegetable vouchers. Currently, the WIC fruit and vegetable vouchers can be used only in locations that have been authorized by WIC, which currently includes grocery stores and some food co-ops.¹²³ The card is not currently used in direct market venues such as farmers' markets or CSAs, though other states have used vouchers in order to increase benefit access in direct market venues. To ensure that recipients of WIC benefits are able to access fruits and vegetables that are fresh, nutritious, locally produced, and competitively priced, farmers' markets and other direct markets should be included in planning related to the transition from WIC home delivery to WIC EBT. On a national scale, WIC fruit and vegetable benefits generate a \$500 million dollar annual market for fresh fruits and vegetables. Capturing even a fraction of that market would greatly increase the vitality of the Vermont local food economy.¹²⁴

The *Farm to Family* program is highly successful in providing opportunities for WIC participants, seniors, and other low income Vermonters who experience food insecurity to access fresh, nutritious, locally grown, and competitively priced produce



EBT and debit card access helps to make shopping at local farmers' markets convenient and easy

at farmers' markets. Even with the additional federal funds received in 2010, the \$159,000 program budget is sufficient to serve only about 10% of the Vermont households that qualify. Some, perhaps half, of the eligible Vermonters may disregard the program because they are not interested in fresh produce or lack ready access to a farmers' market offering a good selection of fresh fruits and vegetables. To increase access to *Farm to Family* benefits for the other eligible Vermonters, however, the program needs additional financial support until federal allocation procedures are revised to better serve Vermonters. Any significant program expansion would be feasible only if the state and local agencies that distribute the coupons and reimburse farmers' markets for the value of redeemed coupons have the staff and other resources required to manage the expanded operating costs and workload.

3SquaresVT/SNAP

3SquaresVT/SNAP benefits are transferred electronically to recipient Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards on a monthly basis. These debit cards can be used at any location that is authorized by the USDA — Food and Nutrition Services (FNS). Before this electronic banking system was implemented in 2002, food stamp recipients were able to use paper food stamps at farmers' markets, farm stands, and other direct market venues. Since the transition to the electronic system, local food advocates in Vermont have been working hard to increase the prevalence of wireless card readers at Vermont farmers' markets.

In 2007, NOFA-VT and several partners (including the *Department for Children and Families*, *Hunger Free Vermont*, the VAAF, and two Vermont resource conservation and development councils) initiated Vermont's first grant program to help farmers' markets set up central card readers to be shared by all vendors of the market. This was done by subsidizing the cost of the card readers (which can cost around \$1,100), providing technical support for market managers, and helping with a promotional campaign for the market. Though NOFA-VT and its partners have done (and continue to do) an excellent job of getting card readers to many farmers' markets, this access needs to be expanded to all farmers' markets, as well as to CSAs, farm stands, and other direct marketing venues in Vermont. One way that the State of Vermont could support this is by covering all EBT wireless transaction fees at farmers' markets (\$0.15 per transaction). The federal government would reimburse Vermont up to 50% of the cost.¹²⁶ The potential economic impact of capturing federal food assistance in direct markets should not be underestimated.^{127,128}

In a state characterized by its rural landscape, with limited public transportation options in many communities, it is of great importance that all eligible retailers be required to accept EBT cards. This policy change necessitates education geared towards retailers that includes staff training in 3SquaresVT requirements and basic principles of nutrition. In addition, training must include customer service specifically targeted towards decreasing perceived stigmas related to the use of SNAP benefits. To decrease cost and increase efficiency of these trainings, Vermont WIC and the *Department of Children and Families* should collaborate to offer trainings that address both WIC Fruit and Vegetable Benefit Cards and SNAP EBT cards.

Often, families who do not receive 3SquaresVT financial benefits do not realize that enrolling in the program can qualify their children for child nutrition programs. In the past, the group *End Hunger Connecticut!* provided \$750 mini-grants to Connecticut meal providers to work on increasing participation in federal entitlement programs such as SNAP and child nutrition programs. One round of mini-grants enabled schools and child care institutions to launch informational campaigns that resulted in 400 more children accessing daily meals.¹²⁹ Similar efforts should be supported in Vermont to increase enrollment in child nutrition programs. To increase support for local food purchasing, these grants should be awarded to institutions that demonstrate the greatest need and make sustained and proven efforts to source local food when possible. Administrators of the grant must develop criteria that clearly articulates what constitutes “sustained and proven effort” and provide follow-up to ensure that grant recipients use funds for their intended purpose. Additional funding is also needed to support efforts to increase awareness about food insecurity and the availability of public programs. These funds should be used for the development of outreach materials geared toward eligible individuals and families.



Farmers' markets across the state offer EBT and debit card transactions

The increasing popularity of community supported agriculture (CSA) as a method of direct marketing in the United States has led to a growing diversity of delivery methods of preordered fresh food. These ventures are based on a subscription system. These ventures echo programs geared toward food-insecure individuals and families including the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP) and WIC home delivery. However, WIC will soon be discontinuing home delivery, and CSFP reaches only a small fraction of those in need. **Providing support for 3SquaresVT recipients to join existing CSAs will expand local markets for Vermont farmers.** Creating opportunities for low income Vermonters to access fresh, local, healthy food in the same way that their financially secure neighbors and community members do will also decrease the perceived prevalence of stereotypes and social stigmas related to the use of federal food benefits. Support of the NOFA-VT Farm Share Program is one mechanism for achieving this. Additionally, technical support provided by SNAP offices, *UVM Extension*, or other nonprofit organizations could help farmers navigate the logistical hurdles of accepting CSA members enrolled in 3SquaresVT (including transportation and billing issues). To ensure that these initiatives meet the needs of the target population, it must be established that there is an unmet demand for CSAs among food-insecure Vermonters and their financial risk must be limited. (This can be done by ensuring that participants are guaranteed the value of the food they are paying for).¹³⁰

School Breakfast Program

In 2008 the Vermont Legislature passed legislation that led to a dramatic increase in participation in the School Breakfast Program. Under current federal legislation, students can qualify for either free or reduced-price school meals. Students who qualify for reduced-price meals often struggle to pay the reduced fee, making them more vulnerable to food insecurity and hunger than their fellow students. According to the *Hunger Free Vermont*, “families in this income range are most likely to have children that go without food during the school day or that accrue debts with school food service programs.”¹³¹ Vermont legislation requires the state to provide extra funds to the School Breakfast Program to supplement the federal funds. The total cost of the expansion in 2009 was \$132,477.¹³² This adjustment allows all students who previously qualified only for reduced-cost school breakfast to access these meals for free.

U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders is currently working to expand the National School Lunch Program in a similar manner. Until Senator Sanders and other congressional delegates are successful at affecting federal policy in this way, the responsibility for subsidizing the School Lunch Program falls to the state or other funders. Vermont currently has the 3rd highest percentage of eligible students enrolled in the School Breakfast Program. Increased access to free school lunches would increase enrollment in this program as well. In Vermont, however, there continues to be extensive unmet needs despite federal food assistance programs. Increased access to school meals would help to alleviate the reliance on emergency food, while demonstrating to the rest of the country the importance of providing access to school lunch for all children. This change would cost approximately \$669,455 per year, including both school lunch and breakfast.¹³³

➔ Address the Needs of Unserved and Under-Served Vermonters

Community Action Agencies

Currently, Community Action Agencies are restricted in their ability to purchase local food on contract from local growers. To increase purchasing power among Community Action Agencies and establish stronger relationships between these organizations and the farms in their communities, legislative language should be adapted that demonstrates the state's approval of local contracts. Facilitation of these contracts will require an additional staff person at each participating agency, though significant increases in food budgets are not necessarily required.¹³⁴

Immigrants

The [*New Farms for New Americans*](#) program is administered by the *Association of Africans Living in Vermont* (AALV) in Burlington. The *Intervale Center* and the *USDA Farm Service Agency* are consulting partners on the program. The program works with recent immigrants and refugees to support new agricultural businesses. This program increases participant access to healthy, fresh food (grown by the participants themselves) and also provides support for farmers to work with food purchasers in the northwestern part of the state. Currently, 50 families are involved in the *New Farms for New Americans* program.

Support for farmers who would like to graduate from the farm incubator program to owning their own farm businesses is also needed. These farmers require language and cultural support to take advantage of *USDA Farms Service Agency* programs. This support could come in the form of vocational English as a second language training, farm accounting classes, assistance with applying for loans, and technical support for growing and marketing.

To increase the effectiveness of this program, it is necessary to decrease the cost of accessing land in Chittenden County. Currently, the rent paid to the Winooski Valley Park District for incubator land equals \$1,400 per acre, per year. Access to additional or alternative sites would increase the number of families who could participate in the program.

Children

Currently, WIC does not cover children over the age of five years old. The CSFP is designed to meet the needs of children who are no longer eligible for WIC. However, CSFP is designed to supplement 3SquaresVT benefits, not to provide for the complete nutritional needs of these children. Often, by the time the parents are able to navigate the system and sign their child up for CSFP, the child is almost six years old. Experts suggest either extending WIC benefits to children up to six years of age, or creating a new WIC service dedicated to children age 5 to 12 that includes milk, vegetables, and protein. Local food should be emphasized in both food delivery and educational material in the expanded program.

Older Vermonters

Elders have been identified as a group in particular need of food assistance, due in part to their limited fixed incomes and often high medical expenses. According to the *Champlain Valley Agency on Aging*, 50% of seniors who are admitted for hospital treatment suffer from malnutrition significant enough to either cause illness or impede recovery.¹³⁵ The *Vermont Area Agencies on Aging* (AAAs) currently contracts with meal program providers and caterers in all regions of the state. The AAAs recognize the opportunities and challenges presented by the taste preferences of an aging population. All AAAs have collectively decided to work together to increase the use

of local foods in their community and Meals on Wheels programs. For the AAAs to achieve their goal, stronger ties among agency staff, caterers, and farmers must continue to be developed. The agencies can work together to address some of the barriers such as the increased cost of labor, storage, food costs, and transportation, to name just a few.

Reduce Participation Barriers

A barrier to enrollment in many federal food assistance programs is the time it takes to become and stay enrolled, especially in programs that require household financial reporting (as opposed to automatic eligibility based on regional income trends). Many individuals who are eligible for 3SquaresVT do not apply because they believe the benefits are insignificant compared to the time required, wages lost, and general burden of staying enrolled in the program.¹³⁵ In reality, 85% of households enrolled in 3SquaresVT receive \$50 per month or more in SNAP assistance, a significant contribution to monthly household expenses.¹³⁶ **To increase enrollment, categorical eligibility between food assistance programs should be implemented widely.** Categorical eligibility is when individuals or families in need who apply and are accepted to one program are immediately listed as eligible for other programs.

Increasing categorical eligibility between programs will increase enrollment rates, which could foster additional opportunities for local purchasing. For example, children who come from households enrolled in 3SquaresVT would automatically be eligible for free school meals. Schools would receive the maximum amount of reimbursement for meals served to these students, whereas they would receive a lower rate of reimbursement if the same students were enrolled for reduced-priced meals through the National School Lunch Program. A greater reimbursement rate gives schools a slightly more flexible budget, increasing the potential for purchasing local products. The transition to categorical eligibility would be difficult. Therefore, a 10 year graduated plan should be developed by the state agencies and organizations that administer current programs.

In 2009, 119 Vermont schools qualified for At-Risk Child and Adult Care Food Program (i.e., 50% or more of the families in the community met income requirement that made their children eligible for free school meals.) These meals are automatically reimbursed to service providers at the maximum possible rate. Although areas

designated as at-risk benefit from the added support of this program, children who struggle with food insecurity and who live in rural areas remain underserved. Because poverty is more dispersed in rural areas, service providers are required to collect household-level financial data to determine whether children qualify for one of three levels of reimbursement. The administrative time and cost are a significant barriers to these service providers. To enroll more providers to offer nutritious meals to food-insecure children, the federal qualifications for areas to receive these benefits should be adjusted. These adjustments reduce administrative cost by standardizing the reimbursement rate for meals served and eliminating the need for service providers to collect household-level data. Historically, limits for similar programs (the Summer Food Program) have been as low as 33%.¹³⁷ *Hunger Free Vermont* estimates that by lowering the at-risk designation to 40% or more of families in the community meeting the requirement for free school meals, CACFP could reach an additional 13,000 Vermont children in an additional 60 school districts. This would cost an estimated \$578,000 per year.¹³⁸ A greater number of students served would potentially create a larger market for local producers, if local food purchasing is incentivized.

Increasing enrollment rates for child nutrition programs is a perennial goal in Vermont. Integrating local food purchasing into strategies to increase enrollment can simultaneously break down social barriers between high and low income Vermonters and increase the use of local foods in schools, child care centers, and child care homes. Incentives for institutions with enrollment in free and reduced-price categories above a pre-determined level could include cash for local food purchases or subsidized CSA shares. Making local food more available to children in need will directly challenge the perception that local food is only for high income Vermonters.

Availability: Local, fresh food will be more available to people who are food-insecure.

🍏 Community Food Security

Vermont state law (VSA Title 24, §4382, Chapter 117) requires that Vermont towns revise their town plans every five years. This statute could be amended to include a requirement that municipalities consider food security in their town planning process.^{139, 140}

Town-based food security planning efforts could be modeled on the town energy committees that evolved in response to energy-related concerns such as climate change and peak oil. A network of town-based volunteer organizations receive support from the [Vermont Energy and Climate Action Network](#) (VECAN) and have made great strides in implementing energy plans for Vermont towns and municipalities and engaging citizens in the process.

Although town and regional planning efforts would be driven primarily by citizen volunteers, the Governor's *Hunger Task Force* can support a statewide town-by-town strategic plan to eliminate hunger in Vermont and identify the appropriate types of technical assistance. For example, *UVM Extension* currently provides extensive education and technical support on municipal planning to town officers and citizens. Extension personnel could train town officers in integrating food issues into town plans and provide models for doing so through the Town Officers Education Conference and other venues.¹⁴¹ Regional planning commissions also provide planning assistance to towns and appear to be poised to take a more active role in planning around food and agriculture issues in the state.

Services could include "(1) Sharing best practices for how to conducting a community food assessment and sharing models of best practices for drafting and implementing effective food plans; (2) advising on providing access to food for at-risk or marginally at-risk citizens when planning for emergencies and providing sample materials to towns for how this emergency planning can be done; (3) building and administering a pool of state, federal, and charitable funds that communities can access to support effective planning."¹⁴²

Senator Sanders has secured a \$120,000 federal grant for *Friends of Burlington Gardens* and the *Vermont Community Garden Network* to create a statewide, school-based summer gardening initiative that teaches Vermont children and youth how to grow fresh produce using land on or adjacent to school campuses, especially in low income communities.^{143, 144} The initial funding will be used to establish 40 school community gardens statewide. As the program develops, additional support will be required to provide technical assistance and mini-grants to sustain the community gardens and expand participation among food-insecure households. Long-term funding for community and school garden programs should continue to come from federal sources such as the Child Nutrition Act to provide access to fresh food and nutrition and gardening education to food-insecure families nationwide.

Utilization: All Vermonters will have a greater understanding of how to obtain, grow, store, and prepare nutritional food.

🍏 Nutritional Education and Food Literacy

Currently, there are statewide programs that educate recipients of federal food assistance about food safety, nutrition, budgeting, and other topics. The [Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program](#) (EFNEP) at *UVM Extension* has provided education in these areas for more than 40 years through classes and partnerships with community organizations. From 2009 to 2011, the *Center for Sustainable Agriculture*, EFNEP, and *Hunger Free Vermont* are partnering on a class pilot project that integrates traditional educational material (related to nutrition and food safety) with a new curriculum that focuses on local food access. If the pilot is successful, this program and others like it should be made available statewide.

The 2002 Farm Security and Rural Investment Act allocated \$15 million in Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program grants to 32 states, three Indian tribal organizations, Guam, Puerto Rico, and Washington D.C.¹⁴⁵ Of the funding that Vermont receives on an annual basis for the support of this program, a portion of it is directed towards benefits for use at farmers' markets, and a portion is directed toward the Senior Farm Share program. In 2009, the Senior Farm Share program provided a CSA share valued

at \$50 per season to 940 eligible Vermonters living in subsidized housing. In contrast, seniors were given \$30 per month to use at farmers' markets. In both cases, benefits are given and recipients are required to receive nutrition education. This component of the program, however, is not funded. To increase the use of local food and the effectiveness of the farm share program, nutrition education must be supported through additional funding for programs such as EFNEP.

In 2009, 119 of Vermont's 393 public schools were located in areas in which 50% or more of the households had net incomes that would make their children eligible for free school meals. Currently, 16 of the 44 schools receiving farm to school grants have 50% or more of their students receiving free or reduced-price school meals.¹⁴⁶ Expanding farm to school programs to all 119 schools with 50% or greater eligibility would help bring food literacy and nutrition education to more food-insecure households and introduce more low income youth to fresh, whole foods. However, many of these schools need funding to purchase processing equipment, improve cooking facilities, and increase storage capacity for fresh foods, as well as to train staff in the sourcing and preparation of local foods.

The VAAF and advocacy organizations should push for increased funding for farm to school coordinators, equipment purchases and school infrastructure improvements, and professional development of food service workers, in the next Federal Farm Bill and in the current reauthorization of the Child Nutrition Act (and through Senator Leahy's Bill S.3123, the Growing Farm to School programs Act). As demonstrated by the Burlington School Food Project, farm to school coordinators can play a key role in training food service staff and helping to source and distribute local foods throughout school districts.

Cross-Cutting: Increase program effectiveness by measuring and communicating impacts.

🍏 Impact Evaluation for Food Access Organizations

As presented in this report, many organizations address food insecurity and local food issues in Vermont. Often, these organizations are not required to conduct in-depth evaluations of their efforts, nor do they have the resources to do so. If impact studies of these programs were supported and carried out, their effectiveness and efficiency would be greatly enhanced. By creating a modest funding pool (for three organizations per year) dedicated to impact evaluation, programming throughout Vermont would improve, resulting in longer-lasting impacts and further establishing Vermont as a leader in food security and local food system development.

D5. GETTING TO 2020: Objectives and Strategies for Expanding Food Access and Developing the Vermont Local Food System

CATEGORY	OBJECTIVE	STRATEGY
<i>Research Strategies</i>		
ACCESS	Use a percentage of storage, processing, and aggregation infrastructure to distribute local foods to people with limited resources.	Inventory existing storage and processing facilities that can be used by schools and charitable food sites.
<i>Natural Resource, Physical Infrastructure, and Technology Strategies</i>		
ACCESS	Improve access to fresh, local food by addressing the transportation barriers experienced by low income Vermonters.	Integrate access to food distribution sites into Agency of Transportation planning.
<i>Sales and Distribution Strategies</i>		
ACCESS	Use a percentage of storage, processing, and aggregation infrastructure to distribute local foods to people with limited resources.	Provide funding for organizations to replicate aggregation and distribution programs that serve low-income residents.
ACCESS	Increase the ability to integrate local purchasing into current WIC benefit programs (fruits and vegetable vouchers, Farm to Family coupons, and deliverables).	Support direct market vendors to accept WIC fruit and vegetable vouchers.
ACCESS	Increase access to locally produced food through direct marketing venues for recipients of 3SquaresVT (SNAP).	Increase use of 3SquaresVT cards at direct market venues.
		Create additional opportunities for low-income Vermonters to participate in CSAs.
		Support eligible retailers to accept SNAP EBT cards.
ACCESS	Increase the quantity of fresh local produce at all food shelves and charitable meal sites throughout the state.	Establish a pilot program to supply ground beef to charitable food sites, schools, and hospitals.

CATEGORY	OBJECTIVE	STRATEGY
Technical Assistance and Business Planning Strategies		
AVAILABILITY	Help all Vermont towns identify actions they can take to address food insecurity and incorporate those actions into their town plans.	Assist towns and regional groups of towns as they conduct community food assessments and incorporate food security into town plans.
Financing Strategies		
ACCESS	Increase access to locally produced food through direct marketing venues for recipients of 3SquaresVT (SNAP).	Fund the Harvest Health program.
		Provide grants to educate eligible individuals about 3SquaresVT while incentivizing local food purchasing.
ACCESS	Increase the ability to integrate local purchasing into current WIC benefit programs (fruits and vegetable vouchers, Farm to Family coupons, and deliverables).	Increase funding for Vermont Farm to Family.
AVAILABILITY	Establish community or school gardens within walking or bicycling distance of every population center in Vermont with a population of 500 or more.	Provide funding to organizations that develop and sustain community school gardens that serve underserved youth, older adults, and their families.
UTILIZATION	Educate recipients of federal and state food assistance to make healthy and safe food choices. Increase education about food shopping skills and local purchasing.	Fund required nutrition education for seniors through the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition program.
Network Development Strategies		
ACCESS	Increase the quantity of fresh local produce at all food shelves and charitable meal sites throughout the state.	Establish and fully fund gleaning programs and coordinators in every region of the state by 2014.
ACCESS	Identify and address the needs of food insecure groups that are unserved or underserved (i.e. immigrants, elders, and the homeless).	Support Area Agencies on Aging to build relationships among their organizations, farmers, and caterers.
CROSS-CUTTING	Support organizations to measure the success of and increase the efficiency and effectiveness of programs that address food insecurity and focus on local food economic development.	Create a funding pool dedicated to supporting impact evaluation for organizations and groups that focus on increasing local food access for food insecure Vermonters. Share best practices across all food security stakeholder groups.

CATEGORY	OBJECTIVE	STRATEGY
Education Strategies		
UTILIZATION	Educate recipients of federal and state food assistance to make healthy and safe food choices. Increase education about food shopping skills and local purchasing.	Support nutrition education programming that emphasizes food access and local food for recipients of federal and state food programs.
Workforce Development Strategies		
ACCESS	Identify and address the needs of food insecure groups that are unserved or underserved (i.e. immigrants, elders, and the homeless).	Support agricultural entrepreneurship in immigrant and refugee communities.
Regulation Strategies		
ACCESS	Increase enrollment in child nutrition programs, increase funding for school meal provisions, and integrate local purchasing into schools and childcare facilities.	Eliminate the reduced-price category for school lunch.
ACCESS	Identify and address the needs of food insecure groups that are unserved or underserved (i.e. immigrants, elders, and the homeless).	<p>Create enabling legislation to allow contracts between food shelves and Community Action Agencies and farmers for the provision of local food to these agencies.</p> <p>Provide WIC coverage for children in the "gap year."</p>
ACCESS	Identify and address barriers to enrollment in federal food assistance programs. Increase enrollment rates for eligible benefit recipients.	<p>Gradually schedule and implement categorical eligibility for federal food assistance programs.</p> <p>Lower Child and Adult Care Food Program eligibility requirements for those at-risk, thereby leveraging federal funds for local purchasing.</p>
UTILIZATION	Establish a Farm to School program in every school in which more than 50% of the students receive free or reduced-price meals.	Secure federal funds to increase the number and capacity of farm to school programs to at-risk schools.

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APPENDIX D

Dissolving the Double Bind

Credits

Appendix D: Dissolving the Double Bind was prepared by Rachel Schattman, Virginia Nickerson, Linda Berlin, Ellen Kahler, Heather Pipino, and Scott Sawyer.

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The information contained in *Appendix D* maps was derived from a variety of sources. *Advanced Geospatial Systems, LLC* (AGS) compiled these maps, using data considered to be accurate; however, a degree of error is inherent in all maps. While care was taken in the creation of this product, it is provided "as is" without warranties of any kind, either expressed or implied. AGS, the *Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund* or any of the data providers cannot accept any responsibility for errors, omissions, or positional accuracy in the maps or their underlying records. These maps are for informational purposes only.



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On the Cover: Woman picking apples: Vermont Foodbank; Underhill garden: Friends of Burlington Gardens; girl with milk: Vermont Foodbank; meal preparation in community kitchen: Vermont Foodbank; Foodbank warehouse: Vermont Foodbank; canning in Middlebury: UVM Special Collections; senior meals: Vermont Foodbank; EBT machine and Brattleboro tokens: NOFA-VT; gleaned potatoes: Vermont Foodbank.