TOMPKINS COUNTY FOOD SYSTEM PLAN:  
Roadmap for our Future

Presented by: Don Barber, Chair, Tompkins County Food Policy Council  
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We need a stronger food system now

Greenhouse gas and climate change:

food travels 1500 miles to our tables

Food spending in Tompkins County:

$349,583,000 ($8,556 average / household)

Food insecurity among County residents:

11.9% of adults, 13.6% of children

Diet impacts health and contributes to chronic diseases

24% obesity rate in Tompkins County
WHY A FOOD SYSTEM PLAN?

Like air and water, food is a necessity and touches everyone.

Decisions about food affect our resilience, well-being, and health.

Good plans can guide sound decision-making and improve quality of life for all residents.
FOOD SYSTEM PLANNING

PROCESS
Two-year effort funded by Legislature and Community Foundation led by Food Policy Council, CCE Tompkins

BASELINE
First comprehensive study of local food system challenges, vulnerabilities and opportunities

ENGAGEMENT
50+ businesses and organizations, 2,000 individuals participating

OUTCOME
Community Food System Plan with vision, directions, goals and recommendations for future action
Food System Baseline Assessment Executive Summaries

Baseline Sections
- Production
- Infrastructure
- Food Environment
- Food Access and Security
- Consumption
- Waste

Data Sources:
- Primary interviews and surveys
- USDA ERS Food Environment Atlas
- USDA Ag Census
- US Census
- Feeding America
- JobsEQ (Ithaca Area Development)
- Various local studies

Read Executive Summaries at:
www.tompkinsfoodfuture.org/reports
TOMPKINS COUNTY AGRICULTURE AT-A-GLANCE

Farmers work in relationship with the land and environment to provide the foundation of food for our community.

- 523 farms in Tompkins County (declining)
- 75% small farms (<180 acres)
- 1/3 farmland rented
- 8.6% of farms are certified organic
- $65M market value of products sold
- 70% sell <$40,000 annually
- 94% farmland for growing animal feed
- 55% farms reporting net losses
- 19% farms selling direct-to-consumer
- <0.9% farms run by farmers of color
- 56.8 average age of farmers
A mix of businesses and institutions create the “food environment” in any community. Grocery stores, supermarkets, convenience stores, specialty markets, institutional food service, farmers markets, restaurants, public schools, and emergency food services impact the lives of residents and the broader local economy.

- **113** Food Retail Outlets
- **105** Full Service Restaurants
- **74** Fast Food Restaurants
- **3,279** Workers in Food Retail Sector
- **$37K** Average Annual Wage
- **5** Restaurants Providing Living Wage

Local institutions have purchasing power, minimal local food procurement.

Farmers markets in 6 communities, every day of the week, 143 vendors. Thin margins for farmers, high costs for consumers.

At least 17 food pantries county-wide, present in every municipality. 25 food bank of the Southern Tier partners.
IS FOOD ACCESS A RIGHT OR A PRIVILEGE? WHICH BOXES CAN YOU CHECK?

- I have easy access to a grocery store
- My store always has fresh food
- I can afford those fresh foods
- My home has a kitchen w/ stove and fridge
- I never worry about the utilities in my kitchen
- I have silverware and dishes
- I never worry about where I’ll get my next meal
- I never have to ration my food
- I never go to bed hungry
- I can afford to eat out sometimes
- I can afford organic produce
- I can afford a special diet (paleo, keto, etc.)
- I generally eat until I am full
- I usually buy lunch at work instead of bringing it from home
- I never had to worry about lunch debt at school
- I can discard food I dislike
- When grocery shopping, I don’t have to keep a running tally of how much I’m spending
- I’ve never used food stamps/EBT
- I’ve never used a food pantry
- If I was ever unable to afford food, family or friends would help
- I was raised with basic cooking skills
- I was raised with an understanding of how to eat healthy
Tompkins County Food Access At-a-Glance

Food security means always having physical & economic access to sufficient, safe & nutritious food that meets their needs for an active and healthy life.

An average meal in Tompkins County is 17% more expensive than the national average.

$7.4M
Extra $ needed for food insecure families to meet needs.

62%
SNAP eligible residents not enrolled.

1/3
Food insecure residents not eligible for SNAP.

11.6%
Of residents are food insecure.

13.3%
Of children are food insecure.

Warming, extreme weather events, and coastal flooding will all reduce the production and distribution of food. These shifts will lead to price spikes, shortfalls and exacerbated inequalities.

Trumansburg
Groton
Enfield
Food insecurity hotspots

WIC
Participation has declined since 2011.
Household Food Insecurity
Tompkins County NY

Figure 8: Household food insecurity in Tompkins County.

*From Feeding America’s Mapping the Meal Gap Study (food insecurity refers to the USDA’s measurement of lack of access, at times, to enough food for an active, healthy lifestyle for all members of a given household, and limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate foods) [https://map.feedingamerica.org/](https://map.feedingamerica.org/)

**From Feeding America’s analysis of food insecurity “Scenario C” (if unemployment increases by 7.6 percentage points and poverty increases by 4.8 percentage points, 17.1 million more people will experience food insecurity) [https://hungerandhealth.feedingamerica.org/2020/03/impact-coronavirus-food-insecurity/](https://hungerandhealth.feedingamerica.org/2020/03/impact-coronavirus-food-insecurity/)
TOMPKINS COUNTY FOOD CONSUMPTION AT-A-GLANCE

Dietary patterns, food culture, and availability affect what we eat and that impacts our community health, economy, and the environment.

- 24% of adults are obese
- 12% of children are obese
- 87% say "good food" means nutritious and enjoyable to eat*
- 24% say they eat 2 or fewer daily servings of fruit or veg* each day
- 53% say healthy, affordable food is a key issue*

Increasing access to healthy food was the highest priority identified by Tompkins community members.

- $8,556 annual food costs per household
- $4,972 spent on food eaten at home
- $3,593 spent on food eaten out

*Based on Tompkins Community Survey responses
TOMPKINS COUNTY FOOD WASTE AT-A-GLANCE

Wasting food is a misuse of valuable resources. Food is the single largest component of solid waste in landfill and incinerators - and a major source of the greenhouse gas methane.

AN ESTIMATED 35% OF ALL FOOD PRODUCED IS NEVER Eaten.

3,384,900 POUNDS OF FOOD WASTE COMPOSTED BY CAYUGA COMPOST
120,372 POUNDS OF RESIDENTIAL FOOD SCRAPs COLLECTED
14 FOOD SCRAP DROP SITES IN TOMPKINS
1,400 LBS OF FOOD SAVED PER DAY BY FDN

BARRIERS
- Insufficient funding for residential collection
- Fear of liability re: donations
- Misconceptions + Education
- Lack of small - medium collectors + community composting sites

UNEATEN FOOD IS RESPONSIBLE FOR 4% OF US GHG EMISSIONs

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OPPORTUNITIES
- Provide residential food scrap collection
- NYS Food donation and food scraps recycling law which bans food waste from large generators
- Offer food waste reduction tools (schools, restaurants, stores)
# Challenges and Vulnerabilities in the Tompkins County Food System

## Production
- Profitability
- Land access
- Climate change
- Short growing season

## Infrastructure
- Local sourcing
- Scaling up
- Access to facilities

## Food Environment
- Reliance on multinationals
- Hiring and retention
- Volume and consistency
- Consolidation and concentration

## Food Access and Security
- Transportation
- Systemic problems
- Evolving emergency system

## Consumption
- Limited access to fresh
- Racial disparities
- Chronic diet-related illness

## Food Waste & Recovery
- Funding
- Lack of access and education
- Misconceptions re: liability

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**Learn More:** Executive Summary
CLIMATE CHANGE

- Food system accounts for ⅓ of global GHG emissions.
- Heavy use of fossil fuels in agribusiness, commodity crops produced in CNY
- Extreme weather, seasonal shifts, invasives, influx of people
- No one is left unaffected by climate change
- ↑ food prices, damage to infrastructure and ag areas, elimination of some imports
- Food system transformation is necessary AND possible, not yet doing enough
- Agroecology, agroforestry, and agricultural diversification

“Overall, the picture is stark for food systems. No one is left unaffected by climate change. The world can prevent severe impacts on people and on nature, but there is a brief and rapidly closing window to act”

— Lead Author on IPCC Chapter 5 Report
EQUITY

• Less than 1% of local farms run by farmers of color
• 12.7% of SNAP recipients are Black, while only 4% of population is Black
• 96% higher diabetes hospitalizations among Black residents

• Historical food system oppression, present-day inequities
• Cumulative disadvantage = higher disparities among BIPOC (food insecurity, lack of access to land and resources, food as a barrier to and predictor of health)
• Fair wages, fair pricing, access to nutritious foods for all

“There are really beautiful BIPOC stories of equitable, sustainable farming that need to be shared; there are pathways that are hard won and need adequate storytelling to show people that they have—and will continue to have—a place here.”

— Land Access Advocate
COMMUNITY FOOD SECURITY

• 11.9% of adults, 13.6% of children are food insecure

• Average meal in Tompkins is 17% more expensive than national average

• 1/3 of food insecure residents are not eligible for SNAP

• Consolidated supply chains leave us vulnerable to shortages and price fluctuations

• Threats to global food system are varied and disruptions will impact local residents

• Need local ownership of food production and processing

“The reality of food is finally starting to hit us. Prices will continue to rise. This will impact everyone, not just low-income, food insecure. Local is more important than ever to weather [these] disruptions.”

— Retail Produce Buyer
FOOD SYSTEM PLAN DIRECTIONS

DIRECTION 1
Build Resilience

DIRECTION 2
Cultivate Equity and Economic Opportunity

DIRECTION 3
Promote Human and Ecosystem Health
FOOD SYSTEM PLAN GOALS

**BUILD RESILIENCE**
- **Goal 1:** Mitigate and adapt to climate risks that affect the food system
- **Goal 2:** Double local food production to sustainably meet community food needs and support the viability of local farms
- **Goal 3:** Promote coordination and collaboration among food system stakeholders to meet community needs

**CULTIVATE EQUITY AND ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY**
- **Goal 4:** Halve food insecurity rates by increasing access to affordable, nutritious, safe food
- **Goal 5:** Grow land access and food production opportunities for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), low-income, and historically excluded residents
- **Goal 6:** Create opportunities for entrepreneurship, innovation, investment and fair employment in the food economy

**PROMOTE HUMAN AND ECOSYSTEM**
- **Goal 7:** Protect natural resources by prioritizing climate smart practices
- **Goal 8:** Provide widespread opportunity for community participation in food waste reduction and recovery
- **Goal 9:** Integrate broad nutritional support for a healthier population
Tompkins County Community Food System Pledge

Because everyone deserves a resilient, equitable, and healthy food future

I support a Tompkins County Food System that:

**Builds Resilience**
1. Mitigate and adapt to climate risks that affect our food system
2. Expands capacity for local food production while improving the viability of farms
3. Enhances coordination and collaboration among food system stakeholders

**Cultivates Equity**
4. Increases community food security by creating equitable access
5. Expands opportunities for excluded residents within the food system
6. Facilitates opportunities for food system entrepreneurship and innovation

**Promotes Health**
7. Protects natural resources that sustain us by prioritizing climate smart practices
8. Reduces food waste and increases food recovery
9. Improves community health through broad, equitable nutritional support

Sign the pledge online at [www.tompkinsfoodfuture.org/pledge](http://www.tompkinsfoodfuture.org/pledge) or by scanning the QR code:
Everyone is connected to the food system. What can we do?

**FOOD CHOICES**
- Eat for your health.
- Eat for planetary health.
- Eat to Reduce Food Waste.
  - Plan meals including leftovers
  - Compost inedible scraps.
  - Donate edible items thru FDN
- Eat for our local economy
  - Restaurants & retail that buy from regional farms.
  - Farmers markets, farm stands, and local CSA share
- Build a food budget that aligns with your values
- Eat seasonally & be flexible about the varieties

**FOOD PREPARATION**
- Grow more of your own food
- Prepare your owns dishes from whole foods
- Use food prep as family & community building times
- U-pick

**SOCIAL JUSTICE**
- Support local food justice efforts by donating your land, money or time
- Engage with local and national food advocacy efforts.

See Appendix A pages 69 & 70 of Tompkins Food Future Food System Plan for further details and resources.
THANK YOU

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