

Food System and Public Health

(Revised 12/20/2017)

The New Hampshire Public Health Association (NHPHA) recognizes that a healthy, sustainable and equitable food system is essential to promote the public's health and protect the population from food system-related harms. The New Hampshire food system includes all of the citizens, groups, initiatives, institutions, and businesses that contribute to the food system from farm to plate. Threats to the public's health include both the direct impacts associated with the contemporary U.S. diet as well as the indirect impacts associated with the conventional, industrial food system. Today's typical U.S. diet contributes to a wide range of costly health problems, including obesity and diet-related chronic diseases; various kinds of cancer; cognitive decline and dementia; and other neurodegenerative disorders.^{1,2} The conventional food system poses further threats to health and the environment, including food borne disease, food insecurity, rising antibiotic resistance; toxic chemical exposures; increased air and water pollution; depletion of natural resources; and climate change.³ In 2015, 9.7% of households and 12.9% of children in New Hampshire were food insecure.⁴ Additionally, high rates of occupational injury, illness, and fatality are reported among food system workers.^{5,6}

A systems approach to food provides healthy food to meet current food needs; makes nutritious food available, accessible, and affordable to all; advances social justice; conserves and renews natural resources; and builds community health and vitality.

NHPHA supports food system policies, programs and practices that:

1. Account for the public health impacts across the entire lifecycle of how food is produced, processed, distributed, marketed, consumed, and disposed;
2. Ensure residents of all ages, ethnicities and income have convenient access to healthy, affordable, and culturally diverse foods;
3. Support the physical, mental, and economic health of all farmers, food chain workers, and consumers;
4. Educate consumers, the food service industry, and health care professionals about preventing food borne illness;
5. Conserve and maintain the agricultural use of prime and locally important agricultural land and soil; as well as marine resources; and
6. Enforce strong environmental regulations that protect waterways, rebuild fish stocks, and reduce carbon emissions, while providing incentives that help farmers and fishermen put these safeguards in place.

Resources

Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, American Nurses Association, American Planning Association, and American Public Health Association. 2010. Principles of a Healthy, Sustainable Food System.

<https://www.planning.org/nationalcenters/health/foodprinciples.htm>

Resources

Institute of Medicine. 2015. A Framework for Assessing Effects of Food System.

<http://www.nationalacademies.org/hmd/Reports/2015/Food-System.aspx>

American Public Health Association policy statement: Toward a Healthy, Sustainable Food System. 2007.

<https://www.apha.org/policies-and-advocacy/public-health-policy-statements/policy-data-base/2014/07/29/12/34/toward-a-healthy-sustainable-food-system>

Farm, Fish, & Food Enterprise Viability in New Hampshire: An initiative of the New Hampshire Food Alliance 2015.

<http://www.nhfoodalliance.com/sites/default/files/NHFA-Vision-web-updated%202-5-16.pdf>

American Farmland Trust, Conservation Law Foundation, Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Working Group.

2014. New England Food Policy: Building a Sustainable Food System. http://www.clf.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/1.New_England_Food_Policy_FULL.pdf

References

¹Stein J, Schettler T, Rohrer B, Valenti M. 2008. Environmental Threats to Healthy Aging: With a closer look at Alzheimer's and Parkinson's diseases. Greater Boston Physicians for Social Responsibility and Science and Environmental Health Network. Available online: www.agehealthy.org/pdf/GBPSRSEHN_HealthyAging1017.pdf

²American Institute for Cancer Research. n.d. Available online: <http://www.aicr.org/>.

³Institute of Medicine. 2015. Exploring Health and Environmental Costs of Food. Washington, DC: The National Academies Press. <http://www.nationalacademies.org/hmd/Reports/2015/Food-System.aspx>

⁴Feeding America. 2015. Retrieved from <http://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2015/child/new-hampshire>

⁵Bureau of Labor Statistics, Census of Fatal Occupational Injuries, 2008.

<https://www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/cwc/injuries-illnesses-and-fatalities-in-food-manufacturing-2008.pdf>

⁶Salas-Salavado J, Martinez-Gonzalez M, Bullo M, Ros E. 2011. The role of diet in the prevention of type 2 diabetes. Nutrition, Metabolism, Cardiovascular Disease. 21(2):B32-46.