

HEALTHY FOOD SYSTEMS



WHAT IS A FOOD SYSTEM?

“Food system” is a term often used to describe the elements involved in feeding a population, including but not limited to: growing, harvesting, processing, packaging, transporting, marketing, eating and disposing of food. Everyone is impacted by the food system, because everyone eats. Food systems create an environment that can promote or hinder access to healthful, nutritious foods.

Although access to nutritious food is associated with decreased risk for chronic disease, many children, families and individuals lack access to healthy foods. Community-based food production can help build a healthy food system, and is an important source of local, culturally appropriate food for children and families.

A healthy food system addresses the health and well-being of community residents. It also contributes to thriving communities through sustainable economic growth and addresses environmental stewardship (e.g., by protecting resources and practicing agricultural biodiversity).

WHAT YOU CAN DO

Agriculture in urban settings, community gardens and local food purchasing practices are all efforts that promote positive change in our food system. Everyone can play a role in improving community health and decreasing hunger by expanding residents’ access to fresh, nutritious food.

The other side of this information sheet details short-, mid- and long-term policy, system and environmental improvements to make when establishing healthy food systems in your community. For more recommendations, see local and state resources below.

RESOURCES

LET’S GO LOCAL: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LINKING LOCALLY GROWN FOOD, SCHOOL GARDENS, AND JOINT-USE AGREEMENTS TO SCHOOL WELLNESS POLICIES

These recommendations help school districts integrate wellness into core activities, specifically by promoting policy language that supports local purchasing, farm-to-school activities, school gardens, and joint-use agreements.

<http://ourcommunityourkids.org/media/72906/going%20local%202011%2005%2018.pdf>

CHANGELAB SOLUTIONS

Changelab Solutions provides toolkits, fact sheets, and reports on establishing healthy food environments, such as community gardens, farmers markets, healthy mobile vending, improving corner store offerings and more.

<http://changelabsolutions.org/landing-page/creating-healthier-food-environments>

www.HealthyWorks.org

Healthy Works healthy food systems efforts support *Live Well San Diego*, the County of San Diego’s long-term initiative for healthy, safe and thriving communities. Healthy Works is making a difference in several *Live Well San Diego* areas of influence. For more information on Healthy Works, visit HealthyWorks.org.

For more information on *Live Well San Diego*, visit LiveWellSD.org.



Community



Health



Social



WHAT YOU CAN DO

Everyone has a role to play in making healthy food systems a reality in their community. Below are some short-, mid- and long-term strategies for key stakeholder groups to bring about change.

FOR SCHOOLS

SHORT-TERM

Pay attention to the types of food served at your schools, and ask where the food originates.

Ask about food service procedures at school, and encourage your school to connect with local farmers.

MID-TERM

Implement a Harvest of the Month program in the cafeteria and incorporate into classroom learning.

LONG-TERM

Adopt model food service procurement language that enables the district to buy the healthiest, locally grown food.

Organize training opportunities for food services staff to improve skills and knowledge in food preparation.

FOR BUSINESSES

SHORT-TERM

Survey other businesses about their interest in sourcing local produce, and any associated cost concerns.

MID-TERM

Create more space in store for fresh fruits and vegetables through corner store conversion and local market projects.

LONG-TERM

Adopt and implement a food systems policy to facilitate selection of healthy food and beverage options and sustainable environmental practices.

Adopt and implement policies and procedures that ensure lactation supportive environments.

FOR COMMUNITY MEMBERS

SHORT-TERM

Know who grows your food, and support your San Diego farmers.

Eat seasonally.

Buy from local growers.

MID-TERM

Grow your own food. Start small with your own home garden and watch it grow.

Connect with a local organization that provides community garden or farming space.

LONG-TERM

Communicate with and support local businesses and your local government's actions to improve the local food system.

FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AND PLANNING AGENCIES

SHORT-TERM

Lease unused land to community groups that have expressed interest in building an urban farm or community garden.

MID-TERM

Communicate any available funding that may support business infrastructure improvements so businesses may carry fresh, local food.

LONG-TERM

Establish a group of stakeholders from public health, regional land use, planning and food production to collaborate on the development or revision of policies to support healthy food systems.