

HEALTH-ACROSS-ALL-POLICIES

Prevention Through Agriculture Intervention



One of many New York farms. Photo taken from New York State picture gallery.

Agriculture in New York State is a very important contributor to the state's economy, with \$5 billion generated in sales and \$36 billion in overall economic impact^{1,2}.

The New York State Department of Agriculture and Market is promoting positive health outcomes in several ways. Examples include:

- Supporting the development of a mission-driven aggregation facility, or food hub, in the Bronx, which will increase availability, accessibility and affordability of New York-grown products.
- Facilitating farmer and buyer connections, such as those between farmers and schools in order to bring greater access to local foods and offer more fresh, healthy ingredients for schools to use in school meals. The Department manages a growing [Farm-to-School](#) program and an interagency procurement work group to help facilitate farmer-buyer connections.
- Using nutrition assistance programs to incent local fresh food purchases at farmers' markets. Programs administered include the Farmers Market Nutrition Program (for WIC recipients and eligible seniors), [FreshConnect](#) (Additional \$2 for every \$5 spent using SNAP) and a **FreshConnect** program for veterans.

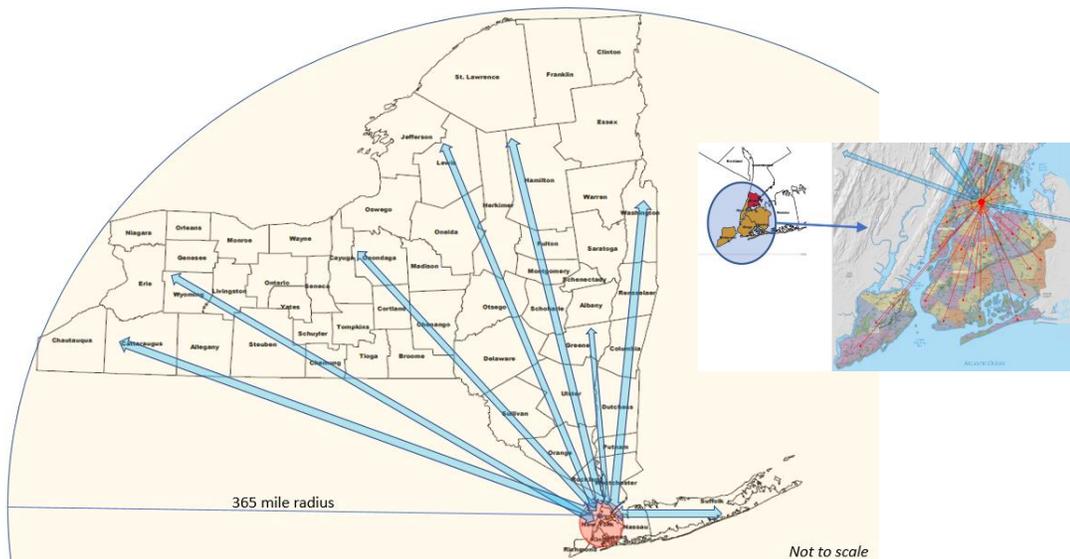
¹ https://data.ers.usda.gov/reports.aspx?ID=17843#P8a5b5741ddcd42d79fd3a11383ef3a57_2_17iT0R0x32

² <https://cardi.cals.cornell.edu/sites/cardi.cals.cornell.edu/files/shared/documents/ResearchPolicyBriefs/Policy-Brief-Aug14-draft02.pdf>

- Administering grant programs, such as the 2018 Community Growers Grant Program, to support the viability of community gardening statewide.
- Engaging leaders in public health through the [Council on Hunger and Food Policy](#) to advance the creation of an interdisciplinary approach to food systems policies and programs.

Three of these examples are highlighted in more detail below.

Building Regional Food Hubs to Make Healthier Food More Accessible and Affordable



Map of New York State with the Bronx region highlighted and showing links with some rural regions in the state.
 Photo by Dr. Christopher Davis, Public Information Group, Office of the Public Health Practice, New York State Department of health

New York State and New York City convened an intergovernmental task force in 2014 that developed an [action plan](#) to help make New York State-grown foods more accessible in New York City. The New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets was a core partner of this effort and soon after the action plan was developed, the State invested \$15 million in building the Greenmarket Regional Food Hub with GrowNYC as an anchor tenant. This hub will be built by 2020.

According to the USDA, food hubs are a *centrally located facility with a business management structure facilitating the aggregation, storage, processing, distribution, and/or marketing of locally/regionally produced food product*. Citing two major benefits of this food hub, similar to food hubs statewide, are:

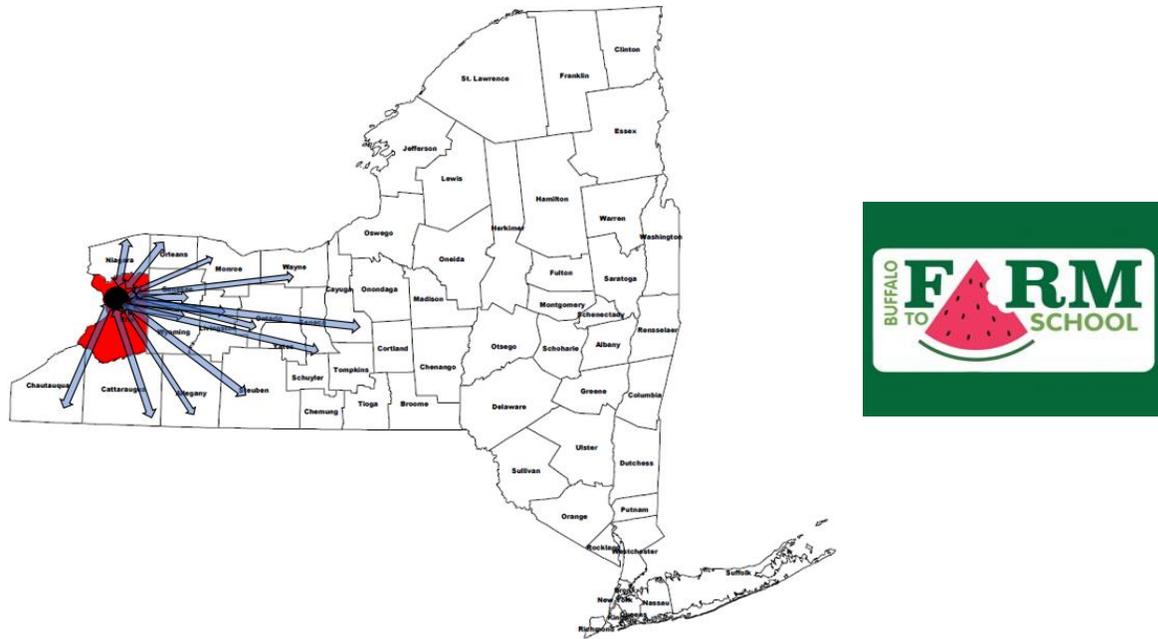
1. Building strong linkages between urban and rural communities.

- a. Sourcing product from farms Upstate assures farm viability, farmland preservation, job retention and growth and enables a reliable market for farmers, while moving product Downstate allows more locally-grown product to reach shoppers and consumers in New York City.
2. Partnering with a mission-driven organization to assure food access goals.
 - a. Nearly 1.5 million New York City residents are food insecure. Currently, GrowNYC through its smaller hub operations distributes 70% of its product to feeding programs in underserved communities. Expanding this model will allow for more food insecure individuals and the markets and organizations feeding them affordable food and larger volumes, given the efficiencies of a larger food hub model.

This project addresses the New York State Prevention Agenda Priorities:

- **Prevent Chronic Diseases -**
https://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/prevention_agenda/2013-2017/plan/chronic_diseases/focus_area_1.htm
- **Promote a Healthy and Safe Environment -**
https://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/prevention_agenda/2013-2017/plan/healthy_environment/focus_area_3.htm
- **Reducing Food Insecurity**
https://www.health.ny.gov/facilities/public_health_and_health_planning_council/meetings/2016-11-17/docs/schenectady_county_chip_presentation.pdf

Forging Connections between Farmers and Students to Make School Meals Healthier



Map of New York State with Buffalo region highlighted and showing links with some other rural regions in the state. Photo by Dr. Christopher Davis, Public Information Group, Office of the Public Health Practice, New York State Department of health

The [New York State Farm-to-School Program](#) was created to connect schools with local farms and food producers to strengthen local agriculture, improve student health, and promote regional food systems awareness.

Through technical assistance and promotional support, the Department of Agriculture and Markets helps schools, farms, distributors and other supporting organizations provide students with nutritious, delicious, seasonally varied meals from foods produced by local farms and food processors. As of summer, 2018, the Department has introduced nearly a thousand food service staff to **Farm-to-School**, issued over \$1.5 million in grants to support **Farm-to-School** programming and has increased school meal reimbursement to 25 cents per meal for schools that procure 30% or more in local ingredients. The Department has developed a [toolkit on local procurement](#) for schools to use that can be informative for other institutions and the agency is looking to do even more in years to come.

The Buffalo City School District is one leader in implementing a **Farm-to-School** program and a recipient of the state's **Farm-to-School** Grant Program. With high poverty rates, Buffalo City School District meets the conditions necessary to feed all students for free. Knowing that nutritious food may be in deficit at home, Buffalo City School District has made it a priority to

source more locally-grown, fresh ingredients, promote these new, healthy items in cafeterias and classrooms and is piloting scratch cooking district-wide.

Several interventions used through **Farm-to-School** include:

- Sourcing fresh ingredients from farms and food hubs
- Nutrition education and recipes for parents
- Kid-tested tastings
- Farm visits- pipelines for new farmers
- Tie in with wellness and recreational activities
- School gardening: STEM and experiential learning

The impacts of **Farm-to-School** programs include:

- Increased awareness and exposure to healthy foods. Children bring nutrition education materials home to their families, which can positively influence decision making at home and at the grocery store.
- Investment in local farms- Creating new market outlets for farmers helps to ensure farmers stay in business.
- Pipeline for future farmers- In New York State, the average age of a farmer is 57 years old. It's important to forge the connections between what we eat, where our food comes from and how it's grown to help fill the shoes of our retiring farmers to feed the future.

This project addresses the New York State Prevention Agenda Priorities:

- **Prevent Chronic Diseases -**
https://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/prevention_agenda/2013-2017/plan/chronic_diseases/focus_area_1.htm
- **Promote Healthy Women, Infants and Children -**
https://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/prevention_agenda/2013-2017/plan/wic/

For more information about the **Farm-to-School** program supported by the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, click the following link:

https://www.osc.state.ny.us/reports/other/farm_to_school_2016.pdf

Facilitating SNAP & FreshConnect Success at Farmers' Markets



Rochester on the New York State map showing links to other regions in the state, and Rochester Public Market. Photos by: Dr. Christopher Davis, Public Information Group, Office of the Public Health Practice, New York State Department of health; Vice Press - <https://www.democratandchronicle.com/story/rochester-magazine/2017/08/31/rochesters-best-public-market-eats/576672001/>

The [FreshConnect Program](#) builds on the [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program](#) (SNAP) incentive to shop at farmers' markets. The State's FreshConnect program rewards markets like the Rochester Public Market and farm stands. Checks can be accepted whether the market has EBT redemption or not and for every \$5 spent, shoppers can use \$2 extra dollars to purchase healthy food through SNAP. A special FreshConnect Program provides \$20 checks through the Division of Veterans Affairs to support veterans purchasing local product at a farmers' market.

The [Farmers Market Nutrition Program](#), a federally and state funded program administered by the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, offers nutrition help for eligible seniors and WIC recipients at farmers' markets and farm stands. It helps them to get locally-grown, healthy items at farmers' markets and supports the farmers' business.

It is important that WIC recipients, eligible seniors and SNAP recipients are aware of these nutrition assistance programs. With some neighborhoods lacking grocery stores, farmers' markets are a viable option and assuring that they continue to operate can be contingent on demand.

This project addresses the New York State Prevention Agenda Priorities for:

- **Promote a Healthy and Safe Environment -**
https://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/prevention_agenda/2013-2017/plan/healthy_environment/focus_area_3.htm
- **Promote Healthy Women, Infants and Children -**
https://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/prevention_agenda/2013-2017/plan/wic/

For more information about the **FreshConnect Checks** program and the **Farmers' Market Nutrition Program** supported by the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, click the following link:

FreshConnect Checks- <https://www.agriculture.ny.gov/AP/agsservices/freshConnectPrm.html>

Farmers' Market Nutrition Program- <https://www.agriculture.ny.gov/AP/agsservices/fmnp-forms-documents.html>

New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets Planning at a County Level

The goals of the Department of Health and the Department of Agriculture and Markets include:

- Prioritize food systems as a necessary part of planning on a local level to effect better health outcomes. This can be accomplished through institutional procurement, supporting community growing practices and engagement, and directing the community to healthy retail options that accept nutrition assistance.
- Identify local partners such as Cornell Cooperative Extension, the New York Farm Bureau network and other agricultural organizations who can help plan for food and agriculture interventions on a local level.