

# An Equitable Regional Food System For Greater Washington: The Imperative and Opportunity for Change

*Washington Regional  
Food Funders 2014  
Policy Brief*

**January 2015 Update**



washington regional  
association of grantmakers  
dc md va

**Washington Regional Food Funders**

A Working Group of the  
Washington Regional Association of Grantmakers



# Contents

- 1 Foreword**
- 2-5 Executive Summary**
  - Recommendations for Action
- 6 Introduction: Food Brings Us Together and is Fundamental to Health**
- 7-13 Why Is Our Local and Regional Food System Important?**
  - Current State of Our Plate
  - Are Greater Washington’s Residents Buying Local Food?
  - Can Low-Income Residents Afford Local, Healthy Food?
- 14-18 Now Is the Time for a Regional Approach to Strengthen Our Food System**
  - Interest in the Local Food Economy and the Opportunity
  - Investments Already Being Made
- 19-20 Opportunities to Work Together**
  - About Washington Regional Food Funders
  - Washington Regional Food Funders Priorities
  - The Need for Partnerships
- 21-22 Recommendations for Action**
  - Maryland Recommendations
- 23-26 End Notes and Sources**
- 27 Contact Information**

*Cover photos: (Top) Growing greens during the winter at Even' Star Organic Farm in Southern MD  
(Middle) The Fruit and Vegetable Prescription Program (FVRx) at a DC farmers market  
(Bottom) A meeting of food policy council members and advocates from Greater Washington*



# Foreword

During the summer of 2014, Washington Regional Food Funders pulled together some of the available information on our regional food system to frame what they had learned in their time together. The purpose was to share this information with mayoral candidates in Washington, D.C., gubernatorial candidates in Maryland, and Virginia's First Lady. Several meetings were held to do just this. The overarching premise of this policy brief was that more political leadership was needed to transform our food system. This is a need that remains both at the local and regional levels.

Since this brief was drafted, there have been several positive developments in the District of Columbia and Virginia which demonstrate the type of leadership and policy change that Washington Regional Food Funders see as critical to accelerating the range of efforts to build a more equitable, regional food system. In the District of Columbia, the Council passed two important pieces of legislation, the [Food Policy Council and Director Establishment Act of 2014](#) and the [DC Urban Agriculture and Food Security Act of 2014](#). In Virginia, Governor McAuliffe's Administration announced the creation of [The Commonwealth Council on Bridging the Nutritional Divide](#) which will be chaired by the First Lady to ensure that all Virginians have access to healthy, nutritious food.

For their part, Washington Regional Food Funders welcomed more than 100 participants to a regional convening entitled [Funding Greater Washington's Food System](#). Representatives from Greater Washington nonprofits, food hubs, educational institutions, local and State government, philanthropy, and food policy coun-

cils and coalitions, spent the day learning about federal funding opportunities available to support regional food systems and networking. Also of note, Washington Regional Association of Grantmakers released its [Annual Giving Report](#) with a special section on food-related philanthropy in the District of Columbia, Northern Virginia, and the Maryland suburbs.

There have also been advances in some of the work described in this document by nonprofits, local businesses, institutions, and the many others working to transform our food system. Despite this, we believe that the information contained within the following pages is largely current. We hope that it is useful background on some of the efforts underway to regionalize our food system in Greater Washington. We look forward to continuing to work with grantees, philanthropy, decision-makers, and many others to support and catalyze positive change.

- January 2015



**Above:** Stakeholders gather at *Funding Greater Washington's Food System* on October 17, 2014 in McLean, VA. A brief report is on Washington Regional Food Funders' webpage: [www.washingtongrantmakers.org/food-systems](http://www.washingtongrantmakers.org/food-systems)

# Executive Summary

Access to reliable, nutritious food forms the basis of every healthy society. In Greater Washington, much of the food we consume is grown thousands of miles away, reducing the quality of our food supply and increasing its vulnerability to events like the on-going drought in California. Furthermore, whether grown or raised far away or closer to home, some of the ways we produce food expose our communities to too much risk. One example in the news right now is the threat of human antibiotic resistance tied to how pervasively these drugs are used on animals in large-scale operations.

When it comes to food access, too many of our residents can't afford food. Our region's food banks are seeing increasing demand, often from *employed* residents who don't earn enough to cover their basic needs. National data shows that some of the people least able to feed themselves work in the food system. These are just a few of many indicators that **our current food system is not sustainable**, that the price of food on the store shelf does not always capture all costs.

In response to problems like these, there has been notable growth in local food-related activities in the Greater Washington region. Mirroring national trends, we see evidence of this in increasing numbers of school and community gardens, farmers markets, and new options for low-income community members to access fresh, healthy food. We have also observed increases in specialty grocery stores and delivery services, food retail, and an exploding interest in food hubs, culinary incubators, and more.



*Washington Regional Food Funders (WRFF) define the **Greater Washington region** as the member jurisdictions of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOC). This region includes nearly 5 million people, 22 local governments, the states of Maryland and Virginia, and the District of Columbia. WRFF members generally fund in the MWCOC region but are committed to serving as a resource for funders throughout the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia. Image credit: MWCOC*

**Important progress in strengthening our local food system is being made but it is uneven across the region.** Healthy food should be an easy choice to make for everyone in Greater Washington. Getting it shouldn't require an extraordinary effort, or depend on where we live or how much money we have. Yet it does. Leadership and policy action is needed to change this.

# Executive Summary

## About Washington Regional Food Funders

We are a growing philanthropic community committed to catalyzing positive change through support to grantees working to build a more viable regional food system. We are a voice for the need for equity and inclusion in this work. We also serve as a resource to funders of all kinds, help build partnerships across sectors, promote collaboration among stakeholders, and advance funding support for systems improvements.

For the first time since 2008, there is new leadership in both the Maryland Governor's Office and the Mayor's Office in the District of Columbia. This coincides closely with new leadership in the Governor's Office of Virginia. Interest from all of our local jurisdictions in understanding where our food comes from has never been higher, but creating a better food system requires more work within and among our jurisdictions *and* collaboration across state lines. This is not happening in a comprehensive, consistent way across our region. **Just as the Chesapeake Bay Agreement ushered in a new generation of regional collaboration for our watershed, it is time for a regional agenda to ensure access to good food throughout Greater Washington and beyond.**

This brief describes the imperative for this agenda and the opportunity for change in our food system. It reviews some the improvements

being made in the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia, including some of the unique local efforts that merit regional exposure. Finally, this brief recommends leadership actions the new executive administrations can take to advance and scale the work that's been started, and to elevate new issues needing greater attention and investment within their jurisdictions and the region.



**Top:** [Future Harvest CASA](#) tours [Veteran Compost](#), a commercial food waste-to-compost business in Aberdeen, MD which employs veterans and their families. Photo credit: Future Harvest CASA

**Bottom:** A community gardener with his grandchild and friends at Ft. Barnard Community Garden in Arlington, VA. There is a dedicated plot with in the garden that is cooperatively gardened for [Arlington Food Assistance Center \(AFAC\)](#). Photo credit: Betina V Ferrari

# Executive Summary

## Recommendations for Action

Political leadership is needed to accelerate change. Although these recommendations were drafted with the incoming DC Mayor and MD Governor, and the current VA Governor in mind, leadership by legislators remains equally as important. Some of these recommendations may be relevant to them too.

### These actions can help strengthen the food system within DC, MD, and VA:

- Appoint agency heads and high-level staff with food systems expertise. This is a critical step in getting agencies and departments to align operations so that they support holistic solutions and a more equitable local and regional food system.
- Order an inventory of food procurement practices for the agencies, departments, and institutions overseen by the Executive.
- Request a review of food-related legislation passed in the last five years which includes information on implementation status and impact.
- Spearhead reviews of the delivery of federal nutrition programs at the local level. Maximizing participation in safety-net programs (i.e. WIC, SNAP/food stamps, school breakfast and lunch, afterschool,

**Top Left:** [DC Central Kitchen's Healthy Corner Stores Program](#) works with neighborhood convenience store owners to offer nutritious, fresh food in DC Wards 5, 7, and 8. Photo credit: DC Central Kitchen.

**Bottom:** [Arcadia's "farmers market on wheels"](#) brings healthy, fresh, affordable food to food deserts in Northern Virginia and Washington, DC.

summer, and child care meals, etc.) will lead to important improvements in low-income community members' ability to access healthy food. This effort, to find new ways to enhance service delivery, should also be informed by listening sessions with those most impacted by food insecurity, nonprofit organizations in the field, etc.

## Food Deserts & Food Swamps

While the term **food deserts** refers to communities where there is a lack of proximity to grocery stores and access to healthy food, **food swamps** refer to communities where there is an overabundance of unhealthy food outlets.



# Executive Summary

## Here are a few actions needed to promote regional collaboration across state lines:

- Areas of special state and local expertise should be elevated to the regional level for learning and analysis. (Examples of these are provided in the full brief.)
- A regional conversation on place-based disparities in healthy food access should be developed, with a regional compact to reduce food deserts and food swamps as an outcome.
- A regional effort is needed to develop “good food jobs.” Underserved urban, suburban, and rural communities should be put at the center of new policies to incentivize these jobs. Small producers and entrepreneurs, employers, non-profits, unions, educational and healthcare institutions, and others should be brought together to develop a plan for creating new positions and improving existing food-related employment in 2015.
- A meeting of Congressional delegations should be convened to share information from regional conversations so that additional, appropriate action is taken.
- The capacity of Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOCG) must be bolstered to incorporate food systems planning into existing competencies: land use planning, government procurement, and waste management.

## Good Food and Good Food Jobs

Washington Regional Food Funders use an adapted version of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation’s definition of **good food**. Good food is: affordable to and accessible by everyone, healthy and provides nourishment that enables people to thrive, fair with no one exploited involved in its creation, and environmentally sustainable. Expanding on this concept, **good food jobs** for the region should include, at a minimum, jobs that pay a living wage, provide safe working conditions, and advance the set of principles that define good food.



**Above Left:** “Thank You Farmers” chalk mural at Crossroads Farmers Market in Takoma Park, MD.

**Above Right:** Senior shoppers at Crossroads Farmers Market. Photo credits: [Crossroads Community Food Network](#).

# Introduction

---

## Food Brings Us Together and is Fundamental to Health

Food brings us together whether it's around the dinner table, at the farmers market, or to prepare a meal for community members struggling to make ends meet. Talk with anyone interested in food - a child in their school garden, a farmer or chef, a food bank volunteer - they will tell you a story that illuminates the power of food to connect us with one another. And indeed, food should bring us together for it is the foundation of health, wellness, and our society itself.

In recent years, there has been notable growth in local food-related activities in the Greater Washington region. Mirroring national trends, we see evidence of this in an increasing number of school and community gardens, farmers markets, and new options for low-income community members to access fresh, healthy food. We have also observed increases in specialty grocery stores and delivery services, food retail, and an exploding interest in food hubs, culinary incubators, aquaponics projects, and much more.<sup>1</sup>

Despite important progress in strengthening our local and regional food system, it is uneven across and within Greater Washington jurisdictions. Furthermore, food insecurity and hunger persist in one of the wealthiest regions of the country. Healthy food should be an easy choice for everyone to make in Greater Washington. Getting it shouldn't require an extraordinary effort, or depend on where we live

or how much money we have. Yet it does.

With few exceptions, there is little *regional* examination of how the way we produce, process, distribute, market, and dispose of our food impacts Greater Washington's economy, environment, and health. There are also key questions about equity which need to be included in conversations about investing in food to grow our economy. On the other hand, we know that the District of Columbia, Maryland, Virginia, and the communities within them, are focused more than ever on some of these issues. To maximize opportunities to build our regional food system and address several key challenges effectively, regional action is essential. New measures are also needed within your individual jurisdictions to strengthen linkages between urban, suburban, and rural economies, to improve health outcomes, and to promote production practices that will sustain agriculture in the Chesapeake Bay for future generations.

### What is a Food Hub?

The U.S. Department of Agriculture defines a regional food hub as a **“business or organization that actively manages the aggregation, distribution, and marketing of source-identified food products primarily from local and regional producers to strengthen their ability to satisfy wholesale, retail, and institutional demand.”**



# Why Is Our Regional Food System Important?

---

Our current, conventional food system is dominated by food produced thousands of miles away, and some of our agricultural practices in the region are unsustainable in their own right. As a system, there are risks and vulnerabilities in the supply chain. On the demand or consumer side, much of the food being consumed is not supporting wellness for many of Greater Washington's residents. The overabundance and consumption of relatively cheap, highly processed foods is bad for our health and regional economy, especially when healthcare costs are considered.

Challenges and opportunities in our current food system have prompted states like Virginia to develop a comprehensive [Farm to Table Plan](#). The rationale for the Plan included:

- job loss and dwindling revenues
- loss of farmland and working landscapes
- increased suburban and urban growth and development
- increased obesity and chronic diet-related diseases
- rising costs of energy
- increased natural resource degradation
- loss and consolidation of small and medium-sized farms<sup>2</sup>

A September 2012 [study prepared by the Maryland Department of Planning](#) cited similar reasons, along with a concern about heavy dependence on food grown in states like California, then and still in the midst of a multi-year drought.

Indeed, investing in our regional food system provides opportunities to:

- support a range of small producers and businesses
- address persistent disparities in access to healthy food through a variety of approaches, including by involving those most impacted by food insecurity - low-income and socially disadvantaged populations - in building and maintaining our regional food economy
- encourage sustainable practices and stewardship of our natural resources increasingly under stress from a changing climate

Efforts across the region to increase direct sales of local food to consumers - as envisioned by planning efforts like the *Virginia Farm to Table Plan* and an array of consumer education programs - are paying off. But a lot more work remains to be done so that not just healthy food, but good food, is the norm rather than the exception in our region.

In Greater Washington, and across the country, we are challenged by the fact that food is not affordable to all people. This results in too many residents experiencing food insecurity and sometimes, hunger. While it may seem like a paradox, America also enjoys some of the cheapest food in the world. As a few data points on our current food system show, food and agriculture have a huge impact on our economy, community, and natural resources. It is not always positive, there are costs not included in the price we pay sometimes.

# Current State of Our Plate

Food System Impacts to **Economy, Environment, Eaters, and Equity** in

## Economy

The annual sales of goods and services from food production, processing, distribution, retail, and service industries in the U.S. was \$1.8 trillion, more than 13% of GDP in 2007.

The annual economic impact of agriculture in VA is \$52 billion and nearly 311,000 jobs. Every job in agriculture and forestry supports another 1.6 jobs elsewhere in the state

DC's sales tax revenue in 2007 from the restaurant industry was \$144 million.

About 36,000 workers or 7.8% of DC's workforce, was employed in the restaurant industry in 2009. 13.7% of these workers were estimated to have earned a livable wage

The number of farmers markets in VA increased by 125% between 2005 and 2011 from 88 to 198 markets. In 2014, the USDA reported 250 in the state.

The percent increase in total direct farm sales from producers to consumers 2007 to 2012 in MD and VA was 32% and 44% respectively.

The average age of farmers nationwide, in MD, and VA in 2012 was 58.3, 59, and 59.5 years old respectively.

VA's 2012 average obesity rate of 27.4% is estimated to carry an additional medical cost of \$11.4 billion each year.

\$8.4 million was the amount spent on local food by reporting school districts in the Greater Washington region in the 2011 to 2012 school year. (About 10% of total food expenditures reported.)

*Sources provided on pages 25 and 26.*

# Current State of Our Plate

## Environment

An estimated 19-29% of total global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions from human sources are produced by the global food system.

Energy use in the US food system increased from 14.4% to an estimated 15.7%, as a percentage of total U.S. energy consumption, between 2002 and 2007.

The MWCOG region reported 13% less - or 73,000 fewer acres - of its land in farms between 2002 and 2012.

Only 29% of the Chesapeake Bay and its tidal rivers met overall conditions for healthy waters in 2012.

Excess manure from animal agriculture remains a significant source of pollution to the Chesapeake Bay, contributing an estimated 17% of the nitrogen and 26% of the phosphorus that enters the Bay.

Blue crabs and American shad are increasing in the Chesapeake Bay but are not at target levels. Wild oysters, American river herring, American eels, and Atlantic sturgeon remain at near record-low levels.

In 2012, more than 36 million tons of food waste was generated in the U.S., with only 5% diverted for composting. Food makes up the largest amount of material in the municipal solid waste stream.

MD currently recycles 13.1% of its food scraps. Composting, rather than sending scraps to landfills, can reduce the release of harmful methane gases, a potent contributor to global warming.

# Current State of Our Plate

## Eaters

Per capita, Americans spent \$2,273 on groceries or food-at-home in 2012.

Marylanders and Virginians are estimated to have spent \$4.76 and \$5.09 per capita on food directly sold by farmers. This is less than 0.2% of per capita spending on food-at-home.

49 million Americans (15.9% of all Americans) were food insecure or unsure of where their next meal would come from in 2012. 15.9 million of them were children.

14.5%, 13.1%, and 12.1% were the estimated rates of food insecurity for DC, MD, and VA residents respectively. (Rates for childhood food insecurity are higher.) In the MWCOG region, rates of food insecurity are highest in low income communities of color.

20% of the households served by Feeding America's member food banks, pantries, etc., include a member who has served in the military.

There are currently 35 farmers markets in DC, 150 in MD, and 250 VA. 22 DC, 31 MD, and 64 VA markets are authorized to accept SNAP (food stamp) benefits. Most of these DC and MD markets also accept WIC and some take Senior nutrition benefits too.

21 DC farmers markets also offered bonus incentives/dollars to increase the purchasing power of low-income shoppers in 2013.

The U.S. doesn't produce enough of the variety of foods needed to supply all Americans with the foods that make up a healthy diet. Quantities of some recommended vegetables and legumes remain at less than half of what is recommended for the U.S. food supply.

# Current State of Our Plate

## Equity

Food system workers use SNAP (food stamps) at more than one and one half times the rate of all U.S. workers relying on this safety-net program to put food on the table.

15.9 million American children are food insecure. Feeding America finds that 1 in 6 white children, 1 in 4 Latino children, and 1 in 3 African American children live in food insecure households.

Nationally, African Americans and Latinos suffer from higher rates of obesity and food insecurity than white and Asian Americans. As food-system workers, African Americans, Latinos, and Asian Americans are more likely to make less than the minimum wage than white Americans.

In DC, workers of color are overrepresented in lower-paying positions and segments of the restaurant industry.

There are higher incidences of nutrition-related chronic disease and conditions like high blood pressure and obesity in DC, Prince's George's County, MD, and Prince William County, VA than much of the rest of the Greater Washington region.

DC, Prince George's, and Frederick Counties, MD have rates of death from heart disease that exceed the United States rate of 172 deaths per 100,000. In DC, there were 255.7 deaths/100,000 between 2001 and 2003.

# Why Is Our Regional Food System Important?

## Are Greater Washington's residents buying local food?

**They are** and the outlets where residents can buy this food are also increasing. Although the \$4.76 and \$5.09 spent per capita in 2012 on farm products sold directly to consumers within Maryland and Virginia is small, numbers are up from \$3.78 and \$3.74, respectively, since 2007.<sup>3</sup> Conceptually, proxies of local food purchases like these are useful to understanding the potential economic impact of buying more local food.

According to the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Affairs, "research by Virginia Cooperative Extension has shown that if each household in Virginia spent just \$10 a week on locally grown agricultural products, consumers would invest an additional \$1.65 billion back into the local economy each year."<sup>4</sup> This is a key driver behind the [Virginia Food System Council's Buy Local Challenge](#) to encourage all Virginians to spend more money on local food. A similar understanding drives the [Maryland Buy Local Challenge](#), which estimates that "if every household purchased just \$12 worth of farm products for eight weeks (basically the summer season), over \$200 million would be put back into the pockets of our farmers."<sup>5</sup>

Regional estimates of consumption of local food vary between less than one and no more than seven percent depending upon the study area and methodology. One study from MWCOC found it to be less than one percent using 2007 data.<sup>6</sup> As the regional food systems field of practice continues to grow, we believe the methodology for estimating local food consumption and economic impact will become more robust.

## Estimated MD and VA per capita spending on local farm products

	2007	2012
MD	\$3.78	\$4.76
VA	\$3.74	\$5.09

*Derived from U.S. Census of Agriculture data on direct-farm-sales and population estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau using the methodology described [here](#) by Greg Bowen of the Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission.*

A priority for our region should be the collection and maintenance of data on the regional food system. This data needs to be publically available and incorporated into planning efforts.<sup>7</sup> Although there is a good deal of data available on food and agriculture at the federal, and to some extent, state and local levels, little exists in the way of a clear regional picture on the impact of local food production and consumption on disparities in healthy food access, jobs, public health, or the capacity of the region's land and water resources to support long-term food security.<sup>8</sup> The affordability of good food, demographic representation and opportunity in the local food system, and information on farmland access and affordability, are further research questions that require regional inquiry. In addition, although locally grown and produced food shortens the miles between farm, ranch, fishery and plate, there are opportunities to investigate and further disseminate practices which can yield the healthiest soils, waterways, and plants and animals for our region's consumers and producers.<sup>9</sup> Outstanding needs for some data aside, we do know enough to continue to act and to come together around a regional agenda.

## Can Low-Income Residents Afford Local, Healthy Food?

This is a complex, critical question, and it has not been answered from a regional perspective. Here is what we do know:

Most Americans, regardless of income, do not eat enough fruits and vegetables, and the price of fresh produce has increased at a greater rate than processed foods in the last 60 years.<sup>10</sup> Despite the fact that we have access to some of the cheapest food in the world, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), we know that the **cost of food generally** is of great concern to too many.<sup>11</sup> Additionally, in a nationwide study on food insecurity, Feeding America found that the average cost of a meal is higher in DC and Northern Virginia than many other parts of the country.<sup>12</sup> Add high housing and other costs to this, and the ability to afford high quality food, whether regional or otherwise, is compromised.

The USDA now measures lack of access to reliable, nutritious food – food insecurity – rather than the physical sensation of hunger. Food insecurity can cause hunger but it can also result in not enough of the right, healthy foods. Eventually, this can cause conditions like obesity. In either case, serious but avoidable health and developmental problems can result. Fifty years ago, those who were hungry were unemployed. Today, many more working people do not know where their next meal will come from. Nationwide, the number of food insecure people is in the millions. **Why can't so many people cover basic needs such as food? A key reason is that wages have not kept up with inflation.**<sup>13</sup>

Since 2006, the Capital Area Food Bank and its partners have seen a 25 percent increase in the number of residents they serve. Job loss, underemployment, high housing costs, and a lack of health care contribute to an inability to cover basic needs.<sup>14</sup> Also driving this increase are reductions in federal safety net programs and support to low income consumers. Charles Meng, Executive

Director of the Arlington Food Assistance Center, recently reported that his organization has seen a 40 percent increase in the number of community members it serves *just since 2013* when SNAP (food stamp) benefits decreased and unemployment benefits expired.<sup>15</sup> This is a crisis that can't be addressed through needed changes to food policy alone.

Organizations like the [Food Research and Action Center](#) do the important work of tracking the ability of our nation's citizens to afford food and advocating for the range of federal safety net programs which support food security. Supporting federal safety-net programs and maximizing participation in nutrition programs locally remains key to improving in low-income community members' ability to access healthy food. But we also need regional data comparing the prices of healthy, nutritious food in grocery stores to healthy, local food sold at farmers markets, and other retail outlets. If other studies on this issue are an indicator, we might expect comparability in price for some items like seasonal fruits and vegetables with higher prices on other items such as potentially, animal protein. The superior freshness, reduced nutrient loss, and potential for improved taste and flavor of sustainably produced local food should be something to which consumers of all income levels have access to.<sup>16</sup>

With exponential growth in farmers markets in the region, there has also been growth in programs to increase the purchasing power of low-income residents at some markets. Called Double Value Coupons, Bonus Bucks, and more, these local programs provide additional money to supplement benefits like SNAP and WIC to incentivize purchases of local, healthy food. Many gaps still exist in where the incentives are offered across the region. Programs like [Arcadia's Mobile Market](#) are addressing place-based disparities by taking locally produced, healthy food to communities in DC where there is no farmers market, healthy corner store, and certainly no grocery store.

# Now is the Time for a Regional Approach to Strengthen Our Food System

## Interest in the Local Food Economy and the Opportunity

In our time living and working in the Greater Washington region, there has never been so much public interest, entrepreneurialism, and nonprofit programming related to our local food system as exists now.

Why is interest so high? As one University of Virginia professor notes, “virtually every aspect of community life - economic activity, public health, and environmental health - can be impacted and advanced by the local food movement.”<sup>17</sup> Put in other words, ensuring that no one is hungry, creating jobs in rural and urban communities, knowing where our food comes from and feeling confident in its health, safety, and our own ability to obtain it for our families - we believe these are priorities and concerns shared by many of our region’s residents.



**Top:** A busy Sunday at the new [Mosaic Central Farm Market](#) in Vienna, VA.

The box below contains just a few examples of stories in the regional media which document the enormous popular interest in local food and healthy eating.

### Food News from Greater Washington

*June 17<sup>th</sup>: The Washington Post reports on Capital Area Food Bank’s efforts to help partners and clients [learn about growing and preparing food](#).*

*June 30<sup>th</sup>: Governor McAuliffe announces [a public-private investment](#) with Relay Foods to expand its operations in VA and DC and add 25 new jobs at its Charlottesville headquarters.*

*July 4<sup>th</sup>: The Baltimore Sun shares a photo essay on some of the [innovative urban farmers](#) in the city and the customers they serve.*

*The Washington Post reports on a [new app from Food Cowboy](#) to help non-profits like Montgomery County, MD’s Nourish Now! avoid food waste and serve food insecure community members.*

*July 14<sup>th</sup>: WJLA/ABC 7 highlights the [work of DC Green Scheme](#) to help low-income housing residents in Wards 7 and 8 tackle food deserts in part by growing their own food.*



# Now is the Time for a Regional Approach

## Investments Already Being Made

We probably don't need to tell you that investments in our local and regional food system continue to be made. Perhaps you supported legislation or budget allocations for food system efforts in another elected position or capacity. Public and private investments are on-going, but they are fragmented and greater investment and coordination is needed. Here are a few interesting examples from around the region. Many of these rely on cross-sector partnerships for success, and could be models for regional approaches to building a more equitable regional food system. Note that this is not a comprehensive census of any kind.

### *Business and Social Enterprise Examples*

There has been **growth in food hubs** to bring healthy, fresh, locally grown food from small and medium-sized farmers to consumers and institutions such as hospitals. At our October 2013 [Food Hubs 101](#) convening, Wallace Center at Winrock International and the USDA shared that there were 21 active and 14 hubs emerging in DC, VA, and MD. Virginia had the greatest number of active and emerging food hubs.<sup>18</sup>

In the last eight years, **unique residential and commercial food waste collection services reducing food waste and for creating compost** have been launched. Examples include new businesses like [Veteran Compost](#) and [Compost Cab](#).<sup>19</sup>

**Culinary incubators, culinary training programs, and shared-use commercial kitchens** continue to attract the interest of entrepreneurs, community members, local government, and investors. Here are a few examples of new and expanding enterprises which have been announced just in DC:

- Opened less than two years ago, [DC's culinary incubator, Union Kitchen, will add a second location](#) to accommodate demand. The District government announced plans in February to pursue a partnership with Union Kitchen to support workforce development and training for food entrepreneurs.
- In May, plans were announced [to open Mess Hall in Brookland](#), a 10,000-square-foot warehouse slated which will include several commercial kitchen spaces, event space, storage and office space for rent.
- [EatsPlace](#) describes itself as a food and restaurant incubator opening this year. The facility will include a community commercial kitchen, marketplace, and dining space for pop-up restaurants and guest chef residencies.

### *Community and Nonprofit Examples*

A number of **new nonprofits have formed which are focused on advancing urban agriculture**. Today we have several urban farms in the Greater Washington region like [Common Good City Farm](#) in the District and [ECO City Farms](#) in Prince George's County, MD. There are numerous examples further afield in locations like Baltimore, Lynchburg, and Richmond, as well as a growing number of for-profit urban farmers. Countless school and community gardens and farms, supported by a range of nonprofits, local government agencies, and schools, have also sprung up.

# Now is the Time for a Regional Approach

There [are now an estimated 93 school gardens in DC's 200 public and charter schools](#).

Changes are underway at some of our region's emergency food service providers. **Several area food banks and emergency food service providers are increasing the amount of fresh, healthy food they're offering** to partners and clients. Two examples include Capital Area Food Bank's (CAFB) new Fruit and Vegetable Fund which will allow CAFB to contract with farmers to grow produce for partner agencies, as well as [Bread for the City's new orchard](#), which produces fruit for their clients.

**Food policy councils and coalitions** continue to grow. We can name nine just working within the Greater Washington region alone.<sup>20</sup> Notably, DC's City Council is considering legislation to establish a DC Food Policy Director and Food Policy Council, similar to what already exists in Baltimore.

## *Local Government and Institutional Examples*

There are many positive examples of programs and policies at the city, county, and state levels within Greater Washington, which are strengthening the local food system. It is hard to select just a handful to highlight, so we summarize a few diverse examples, several of which could potentially be adapted to other parts of the region.

A regional agenda to connect efforts like these would provide a needed framework for sharing successes and lessons learned. Identifying regional issues for research can help to build linkages between the food, health, and the agriculturally-related research that is on-going at many of our region's institutions of higher education.

## **District of Columbia**

- The landmark [2010 Healthy Schools Act is a multi-faceted bill](#) aimed at improving the health and wellness of DC students. The Act also strengthens the regional food system through additional money paid to schools participating in the federal school lunch program. Additional reimbursement is provided from a city fund for every school breakfast and school lunch provided. There is even extra reimbursement for the purchase of local food.
- The city has led the region in providing public dollars to supplement private funds raised by nonprofit organizations to incentivize the purchase of fresh fruits and vegetables at DC farmers markets and mobile markets. This year's [Produce Plus Program made an additional \\$130,000 available to low income residents](#) to purchase more local fruits and vegetables.
- Last year, the *Real Food Real Jobs Campaign* [helped food service workers secure improved working conditions and other benefits](#) at Howard, American, and Gallaudet universities.



**Above:** [City Blossoms'](#) Marion Street Intergenerational Garden in Washington, DC, is a community space for residents of all ages to learn about gardening and healthy living.

# Now is the Time for a Regional Approach

## Maryland

- At the state level, the MD General Assembly [approved bond funds to provide financial assistance to vendors to make more Maryland-grown produce available in communities identified as food deserts](#) in the State. In the 2014 session, the Assembly considered [SB 0670 Income Tax Credit - Qualified Farms – Gleaning](#) to connect investment in the rural economy to improving food security. Recommended by the Task Force to Study the Implementation of a Hub and Spoke Program in the Southern Maryland Region, the Bill proposed a pilot program to provide a tax credit to farmers who donate fresh, healthy food to reduce hunger.
- Locally, there are many milestones to highlight. The Baltimore Food Policy Initiative continues [to work to improve the city's food environment](#) in partnership with other city agencies, community organizations, philanthropy, and other stakeholders like [Center for a Livable Future](#) at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health. It is a powerful example developing a plan with many stakeholders, then leveraging public and private partnerships to fund implementation.<sup>21</sup>



**Above:** Participants examine a Virginia Extension demonstration project at [Lynchburg Grows](#) during the Urban Agriculture Summit.

- In 2013, the County Council in Montgomery County, MD [created and funded a unique Food Recovery Task Force](#). Part of the Montgomery County Food Council, the group is setting up a countywide system to recover food to address food security and environmental concerns.

## Virginia

- In 2012, the Virginia General Assembly tasked a multidisciplinary team headed by Virginia Tech and Virginia State University to conduct a study of food deserts in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The [report](#), released earlier this year, found that food deserts are prevalent in at least 17 percent of the Commonwealth.
- This year, a range of partners and sponsors, including the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Affairs, Virginia Cooperative Extension, and USDA, hosted the Commonwealth's first [Urban Agriculture Summit](#).
- Formed in 2010, the 25-plus member [Beginning Farmer and Rancher Coalition Training Program](#) draws on the expertise of Virginia Cooperative Extension, Virginia Tech, and Virginia State University, beginning and established farmers, non-profits, and State and federal partners to more effectively address the needs of future farmers. A recent presentation reports that the Coalition held seven regional whole farm planning programs and trained an impressive 528 beginning farmers and ranchers between 2011 to

# Now is the Time for a Regional Approach

Continuing to invest in our local food system offers a compelling alternative to our current system. For some issues, such as where to fill in gaps with new infrastructure for local food processing, aggregation, and distribution, a regional context must be considered. As discussed, policy changes are being made in different localities to improve school meals, to increase access to healthy food, to promote urban agriculture, to prevent and recover food waste, and more. There are untapped opportunities to learn from one another to strengthen linkages between urban and rural economies, to improve health outcomes, and to promote production practices that will sustain agriculture and thriving fisheries in the Chesapeake Bay into the future. There are also cases in which working together can allow small and medium-sized producers to access more markets throughout the region. This could benefit producers and consumers.

Interest in local food is higher than ever. The energy that comes with this, coupled with three new administrations in the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia, presents a unique window for innovation, collaboration, and addressing urgent human needs. For funders, there has never been a more opportune moment to elevate the work of our community of grantees, to give voice to what we have learned about persistent disparities, and to promote the development and implementation of a regional agenda for action. Just as the Chesapeake Bay Agreement ushered in a new generation of regional collaboration for our watershed, it is time for a regional agenda to ensure access to good food throughout Greater Washington and beyond.



**Above:** Businesses, food policy advocates, local, state and federal agencies, institutions and funders from Greater Washington at [Washington Regional Food Funders' Food Hubs 101](#) in October 2013 in Chevy Chase, MD.

# Opportunities to Work Together

---

Working together across state lines is needed to maximize existing investments, elevate best practices, and address issues which require regional solutions. From businesses committed to supporting local farmers, to community organizations working to ensure that vulnerable children, families, and seniors have access to the highest quality food, to institutions leading by example through internal policy change; we all have a role to play in strengthening our regional food system so that good food is available to all. Philanthropy has played an important role in supporting efforts to improve our regional food system in Greater Washington and will continue to do so.

## *About Washington Regional Food Funders*

In 2011, a number of funders, all members of the Washington Regional Association of Grantmakers (WRAG), came together to better understand how philanthropic investments focused on access to healthy, affordable food were being made in the Greater Washington region. Our group quickly grew to nearly a dozen local and regional funders.

A scan of our investments in the regional food system revealed an imbalance in funding across different elements of the system from land to fork, and in where these investments were being made in the region. We found fewer investments to support the supply side of the food chain, especially food production targeted to low-income communities. We also found that the bulk of our investments were focused on marketing, consumer education and access in the District of Columbia, and less so in the Maryland and Virginia suburbs. As our region grapples with the suburbanization of poverty, it is critical

to build a broader network which can help to address these gaps.

Our assessment of opportunities for building a more equitable food system also revealed the need for a stronger equity frame. In a series of stakeholder interviews, we learned that few of the staff and leadership “working on the front lines” to tackle food insecurity were members of marginalized communities in the region. Organizations interviewed also spoke of community members who desired to be more involved in the business of the regional food system, but didn’t have experience getting startup loans, writing grant proposals, or networking with institutional funders.

In 2013, we continued our work by holding several major convenings for stakeholders within the regional food system, including funders. These included two first-ever regional convenings: a gathering of area food policy councils and a learning event on the function and role of food hubs in building a more equitable food system.<sup>22</sup> This October, we will hold a convening with USDA on federal funding opportunities to strengthen our regional food system.

## *Washington Regional Food Funder Priorities*

We envision the development of a cohesive framework for action to ensure access to good food throughout the Greater Washington region within the next five years.<sup>23</sup> In pursuit of this, we are focused on raising the visibility of local and regional food system issues through a variety of activities. This includes continuing to advance learning for funders, grantees, and policymakers, providing unique opportunities for network building and collaboration, and

# Opportunities to Work Together

identifying strategic intervention points to support and accelerate change. We will also continue to share the need for the use of an “equity lens” in building the regional food system. Informing our priorities are these general positions:

- Reducing barriers to good food and strengthening the local and regional food system can provide positive social, economic, and environmental impacts throughout the food chain - from farm to fork - and should be elevated as a regional priority;
- Keeping considerations of equity at the forefront of this work is necessary so that low-income and socially disadvantaged populations can meaningfully participate in building and maintaining this system; and
- Addressing upstream issues and supporting other non-food policies are also needed to improve access to good food. These include policies to address poverty, workforce development, affordable quality housing, etc., so that low-income residents are empowered to procure good food rather than caught in a series of trade-offs on how to allocate limited resources to support basic needs for food, shelter, health, and education.

## *The Importance of Partnerships*

Building partnerships between all sectors is essential to making measurable improvements to our food system in an equitable way. Marshalling the necessary resources to fund the range of needed improvements within our regional food system also requires working together.

As a funder group, we can be a partner to local government, institutional, and community-based efforts in bringing together different types of stakeholders to identify how diverse resources can complement one another in reducing barriers to good food.<sup>24</sup> We will continue to fund catalytic work, and to build relationships with new funders and investors to join in this effort.

We seek strong relationships with elected officials and policymakers so that we can provide input to the decision-making process when appropriate. For us, it is critical that our grantee partners and community members are “at the table” when new policies are being considered. Finally, we will work with policymakers (and grantees) to promote the fullest understanding of the range of public and private funds that exist to solve food-related problems and to show how to effectively access these resources.<sup>25</sup>

An “**equity lens**” suggests a magnifying glass to identify avoidable, unnecessary or unintentional barriers, exclusions and lack of opportunities to achieving good well-being. It prompts a system which considers factors like gender, age, socioeconomic status, disability, language, culture, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religious beliefs and geography when planning, implementing and evaluating elements of the food system (not to exclude services or programs). It also encourages the system to consider the impact of discrimination, social cohesion, or isolation, levels of support, control over life choices; and includes the voices of those most affected by the barriers.

# Recommendations for Action

Political leadership is needed to accelerate change. The following is a summary of the actions we recommend the new administrations in the District of Columbia and Maryland take, and that the Virginia Governor’s office also consider. Although these recommendations were drafted with these elected officials in mind, leadership by legislators remains equally as important. We hope these recommendations will be considered by them as well. We look forward to supporting our elected officials and policy-makers in this work and hope to meet with them again to assess progress and opportunities for collaboration.

All of them will be in a position to lead improvements in our regional food system, to provide support to the many already engaged in this work, and to initiate any of the recommendations below.

## Actions needed to promote regional collaboration on food

- Areas of special state and local expertise should be elevated to the regional level for learning and analysis. (See page 2\_\_ for a few examples of these.)
- A regional conversation on place-based disparities in healthy food access should be developed, with a regional compact to reduce food deserts and food swamps as an outcome.

DC, MD, and VA all have baseline information about food deserts. There are innovative solutions being tested or proposed to address food deserts in some of our local

communities. Reach out to involve them in a broader regional conversation. Several have, or will be, convening focus groups with community members to understand how the data about their neighborhoods translates into day to day experience, what community members view as the true challenges and solutions, etc.

Ensure that local government and other stakeholders understand opportunities available for financing a range of solutions to improve access, such as the [Healthy Food Finance Initiative \(HFFI\)](#).

- A regional effort is needed to develop “good food jobs.” Underserved urban, suburban, and rural communities should be put at the center of new policies to incentivize these jobs. Small producers and entrepreneurs, employers, nonprofits, unions, educational and healthcare institutions, and others should be brought together to develop a plan for creating new positions and improving existing food-related employment by the end of your first terms.
- A meeting of Congressional delegations should be convened to share information from regional conversations so that additional, appropriate action is taken.
- The capacity of Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG) must be bolstered to incorporate food systems planning into existing competencies land use planning, government procurement, and waste management.

# Recommendations for Action

---

## Recommendations for work in MD, DC, and VA

**1. Appoint agency heads and other high-level staff with expertise in local and regional food systems.** Our region needs more leaders with this expertise, particularly in departments and agencies overseeing agriculture, small business and workforce development, planning, and public health and social service delivery. This is a critical step in getting agencies to align operations so that they support holistic solutions and a more equitable local and regional food system.

These new government leaders should look for chances to learn directly from small businesses, community organizations, colleges and universities, the growing number of food policy councils, etc., throughout their tenure, including as they are becoming acquainted with their new responsibilities. We hope that this staff will be given a mandate to work with those most impacted by food insecurity to be part of the solution to building and maintaining our regional food system.

In Washington, D.C., the new Mayor should make the appointment of the District's first Food Policy Director a priority.

**2. Spearhead reviews of the delivery of federal nutrition programs.** Maximizing participation in the federal nutrition programs (e.g. WIC, SNAP/food stamps, school breakfast and lunch, afterschool, summer, and child care meals) will lead to important improvements in low-income community members' ability to access healthy food. This effort, to find new ways to enhance

service delivery, should be informed by listening sessions with those most impacted by food insecurity, nonprofit organizations in the field, etc.

**3. The new Mayor of DC and Governor of MD should also request a review of food-related legislation passed in their jurisdictions within the last five years and direct agency staff to prepare a report on impact, implementation successes and challenges, etc.**

**4. Order an inventory of food procurement practices for state agencies, departments, and institutions overseen by the Executive.** Do these entities have any local or regional food purchasing requirements? Guidance for healthy food purchases? Are any existing policies being implemented? It is important that public agencies lead by example when using public dollars on food service expenditures.

Along these lines, finding ways that government can build on the successes that some local jurisdictions are having with farm-to-school is also key. Whatever leaders can do to promote greater participation across their jurisdictions should be explored for the multiple benefits these programs can yield for the health of our children, environment, and agricultural economy.



# End Notes

1 One good summary of the dramatic increase in local food system programs and enterprises can be found in “[Virginia—An Emerging Leader in the Nation’s Local Food Movement](#)” by Tanya Denckla Cobb. Written in 2011, there are even more farmers markets, food hubs, etc., than Professor Denckla Cobb wrote about only three years ago. This is a helpful overview for anyone interested in understanding the many stakeholders who have been focused on strengthening Virginia’s local food system over the past decade. Link: <http://www.coopercenter.org/publications/VANsltr0911>

2 Taken from page 5, *A Logic Model for the Virginia Farm to Table Plan*. Link: [Virginia Farm to Table Plan](#).

3 Using recently released 2012 U.S. Census of Agriculture for total direct-farm-sales to consumers by state and estimates of U.S. population from the U.S. Census Bureau, just \$4.76 per capita was spent by Marylanders on products sold by Maryland farmers in 2012. This is just 0.2% of the average per capita food-at-home spending on all food according to Greg Bowen at the Southern Maryland Agricultural Development Commission. Using the same methodology, we find that Virginians spent about \$5.09 on products sold by their farmers in 2012. For 2007, Marylanders and Virginians are calculated to have spent \$3.78 and \$3.74 per capita on food sold directly from Maryland and Virginia farmers.

4 From the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services website. Link: [www.vdacs.virginia.gov/news/releases-a/041614farmsmkt.shtml](http://www.vdacs.virginia.gov/news/releases-a/041614farmsmkt.shtml)

5 From the MD Buy Local Challenge website. Link: [www.buy-local-challenge.com/why.html](http://www.buy-local-challenge.com/why.html)

6 See *What Our Region Grows: A look at Agricultural Production and Demand in the Washington Area Foodshed* from The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments. It should be noted that the study used 2007 Census of Agriculture data to derive this number and that updated figures are needed. Link: <http://www.mwcog.org/uploads/committee-documents/bf1cXVpZ20121025124048.pdf>

7 The Maryland Food System Map, created and maintained by the Center for a Livable Future (CLF) at Johns Hopkins University’s Bloomberg School of Public Health, is a good example of a statewide resource that centralizes federal and state data while also supplementing this information with data collected in partnership with local partners and through CLF’s own original research. For more see: <http://mdfoodsystemmap.org/>

8 It should be noted that there is capture of *some* of this information through the work of a variety of important institutions, agencies, and experts within the region at the local and state level. There is also a new effort called the Chesapeake Foodshed Initiative which aims to bring together stakeholders from DC, MD, VA and beyond to answer these questions from a regional perspective.

9 In his new book, author and chef Dan Barber challenges the notion that following a farm to table diet will transform our food system. We need to introduce more variety and diversity into our diets so that they include not just more local grains and legumes but also “[classic cover crops like cowpeas and mustard, which fertilize the soil to ensure healthy harvests in the future.](#)” To transform the food system, Barber believes we also need to develop a market and taste for crops that build healthy soils, improved taste and nutrient rich foods, and economically viable farms.

10 Secondary data taken from the recently released policy brief by Anne Palmer (JHU Center for a Livable Future) and Jeffrey O’Hara (Union of Concerned Scientists) entitled *Hospitals and Healthy Food: How Health Care Institutions Can Help Promote Healthy Diets*. Link: [http://www.ucusa.org/assets/documents/food\\_and\\_agriculture/hospitals-and-healthy-food.pdf](http://www.ucusa.org/assets/documents/food_and_agriculture/hospitals-and-healthy-food.pdf)

11 The US Department of Agriculture’s Economic Research Service tracks global household expenditures for food, alcohol, and tobacco. Americans spend a smaller share of their income on food eaten at home than anyone else in the world. For more, see [the USDA’s information on expenditures on food and alcoholic beverages by selected countries](#) available at: <http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-expenditures.aspx#26636>

12 Feeding America. *Map The Meal Gap: Highlights of Findings for Overall and Child Food Insecurity*, page 23. Link: [https://feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/hunger-studies/map-the-meal-gap/~/\\_media/Files/research/map-meal-gap/2014-MMG-web-2014.ashx](https://feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/hunger-studies/map-the-meal-gap/~/_media/Files/research/map-meal-gap/2014-MMG-web-2014.ashx)

13 Tracie MacMillan, “*Shift to ‘Food Insecurity’ Creates Startling New Picture of Hunger in America: Millions of working Americans are ‘food insecure.’* *National Geographic*, July 16, 2014. Link: <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2014/07/140716-hunger-america-food-poverty-nutrition-diet/>

14 Media Advisory for Capital Area Food Bank Backgrounder for 33rd Annual Metropolitan Area Hunger Conference. Link: <http://www.capitalareafoodbank.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/2013-Metropolitan-Area-Hunger-Conference-Advisory.pdf>

15 Ethan Rothstein, “AFAC Seeing Record Demand, May Exceed Food Budget,” *ArlNow*, June 3, 2014. Link: <http://www.arlnow.com/2014/06/03/afac-seeing-record-demand-may-exceed-food-budget/>

# End Notes

16 There is a multi-year study in progress, entitled Enhancing Food Security in the Northeast through Regional Food Systems (EFSNE). Although it does not include VA unfortunately, the study seeks to determine whether greater reliance on regionally produced food could improve food access and affordability in disadvantaged communities, while also benefiting farmers, food supply chain firms and others in the food system. We are optimistic that this study will provide an important part of the answer to how to make good food affordable to all, though additional data may be needed for Greater Washington. For more see: <http://agsci.psu.edu/research/food-security>

17 “Virginia—An Emerging Leader in the Nation’s Local Food Movement,” page 2

18 According to Wallace Center at Winrock International and USDA, there are 17 active hubs and 9 emerging in VA, 3 active hubs and 4 emerging in MD, and 1 active hub and 1 emerging in DC. For more, see *Food Hubs 101: A Learning Event & Stakeholder Convening in Greater Washington*. Link: <https://www.washingtongrantmakers.org/sites/default/files/resources/food-hubs-101.pdf>

19 [The District of Columbia](#), the [cities of Alexandria, VA, Takoma Park and University Park](#), MD are amongst those considering or deploying publicly supported demonstration projects.

20 Existing or emerging councils and coalitions include: Healthy and Affordable Food For All Coalition (DC), Montgomery County Food Council, Northern Virginia Food Coalition, Partnership for a Healthier Fairfax (considering a food council or coalition), Prince George's County Food Equity Council, Southern Maryland Food Council, Virginia Food System Council, and the Chesapeake Food Leadership Council (for hospitals and other institutions). There is also a council in formation in Prince William County, VA. There are several other councils and coalitions up and running, or forming, outside of Greater Washington in MD and VA, including the Howard County Food Council supported by funds from a public and philanthropic partnership.

21 There is an opportunity to build on some of the lessons learned in Baltimore to implement a regional agenda for a more equitable regional food system. For a discussion of the formation and impact of the Baltimore Food Policy Initiative see “Collaboration Meets Opportunity: The Baltimore Food Policy Initiative” by Raychel Santo, Rachel Yong, and Anne Palmer. Published online June 17, 2014 in the Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development. Link: <http://www.agdevjournal.com/volume-4-issue-3/444-baltimore-food-policy-initiative.html?catid=164%3Aopen-call-paper>

22 Reports from our convenings, as well as our Strategic Plan, are available on our webpage at <https://www.washingtongrantmakers.org/food-systems> Also available by request is a list of emerging food hubs which has helped to facilitate subsequent meetings and follow-up for emerging food hubs in MD in particular.

23 What could a regional agenda for action look like? We refer you to WRAG’s *What Funders Need to Know on The Food System* for some information on Food Solutions New England (FSNE). Building on this model, as well as the Virginia Farm-to Table Plan, a group of community leaders and food system experts see the potential to develop a comparable vision for the Chesapeake Foodshed. (The Baltimore Food Policy Initiative also provides a model for a broader regional agenda.) Link: <https://www.washingtongrantmakers.org/resources/what-funders-need-know-introduction-food-system>

24 Using the example of food hubs, USDA agricultural economist Jim Barham noted at WRF’s fall convening on this topic that “federal and state agencies are good at funding hard infrastructure, but not the intangible work like relationship building and network creation that really drives the success of this movement. This is where foundations play a role.” Taken from page 14 of the meeting proceedings for *Food Hubs 101: A Learning Event & Stakeholder Convening in Greater Washington*. Available at: <https://www.washingtongrantmakers.org/sites/default/files/resources/food-hubs-101.pdf>

25 A 2012 national survey conducted by the Michigan State University Center for Regional Food Systems and the International City/County Management Association on local government support for food system development found that “local governments are not fully aware of the wide range of federal programs available that can support food system development.” More at: <http://foodsystems.msu.edu/uploads/file/resources/icma-survey-summary.pdf>

# Data Sources: Current State of Our Plate

## ECONOMY

**“The annual sales of goods and services from food production, processing...”** from The Food Chain Workers Alliances’, *The Hands That Feed Us: Challenges and Opportunities for Workers along the Food Chain*. June 6, 2012. Available at: <http://foodchainworkers.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Hands-That-Feed-Us-Report.pdf>

**Annual economic impact of agriculture in VA** from the Virginia Department of Agriculture’s website - *Virginia Agriculture – Facts and Figures*. Available at: <http://www.vdacs.virginia.gov/agfacts/index.shtml> Accessed: July 14, 2014.

**DC’s sales tax revenue in 2007 from restaurant and workforce data** from the Restaurant Opportunities Center of Washington, DC, Restaurant Opportunities Centers United, and the Washington, D.C. Restaurant Industry Coalition, *Behind the Kitchen Door: Inequality & Opportunity in Washington, DC’s Thriving Restaurant Industry*. February 2011. Available at: <http://rocunited.org/roc-dc-behind-the-kitchen-door/>

**Increased number of farmers markets in VA** calculated using data reported on page 5 of [“Virginia—An Emerging Leader in the Nation’s Local Food Movement”](#) and from the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s National Farmers Market Directory. Available at: <http://search.ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets/>

**Percent increase in total direct farm sales from producers to consumers** calculated from the 2012 latest US Census of Agriculture data for MD and VA. For both states see increases in “value of agricultural products sold directly to individuals for human consumption” in Table 2. *Market Value of Agricultural Products Sold Including Landlord’s Share and Direct Sales: 2012 and 2007*. Link: [http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2012/Full\\_Report/Volume\\_1,\\_Chapter\\_1\\_State\\_Level/](http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2012/Full_Report/Volume_1,_Chapter_1_State_Level/)

**Age of farmers** from US Census of Agriculture

**Obesity in VA** is secondary data taken from page 16 of the January 2014 *Food Deserts in Virginia* report. Link: <http://pubs.ext.vt.edu/VCE/VCE-294/VCE-294.html>

**School district purchases of local food** calculated from raw data available from the USDA’s Farm-to-School Census. Note that not all school districts in Greater Washington reported data for this period. Data can be downloaded from the Farm to School Census Explorer Tool available at: <http://www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/census/explore/>

## ENVIRONMENT

**Greenhouse Gas Emissions and the food system** - see Sonja J. Vermeulen, Bruce M. Campbell, and John S.I. Ingram. *“Climate Change and Food Systems,” Annual Review of Environment and Resources*. November 2012. Available at: <http://www.annualreviews.org/eprint/EBIXm7sNxrBJyuRYgki/full/10.1146/annurev-environ-020411-130608>

**Energy use** – see Patrick Canning, Ainsley Charles, Sonya Huang, and Karen R Polenske, “Energy Use in the U.S. Food System” U.S. Department of Agriculture *Economic Research Report No. (ERR-94)*, March 2010. Available at: [http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/err-economic-research-report/err94.aspx#.U\\_zO59XjXct](http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/err-economic-research-report/err94.aspx#.U_zO59XjXct)

**Declining land in farms in MWCOG region** calculated from data in the 2007 and 2012 U.S. Census of Agriculture for “land in farms” for MD and VA counties within the MWCOG of region. Includes data from 2002, 2007, and 2012 for Charles, Frederick, Montgomery, and Prince George’s counties in MD. Also includes Arlington, Fairfax, Loudon, and Prince William counties in VA.

**Percent healthy waters in the Chesapeake Bay** taken from the Chesapeake Bay Program’s *BAYBAROMETER 2012 – 2013: Health and Restoration in the Chesapeake Watershed*. Available at: [http://www.chesapeakebay.net/documents/BAROMETER\\_2013\\_-\\_3Spreads\\_Final.pdf](http://www.chesapeakebay.net/documents/BAROMETER_2013_-_3Spreads_Final.pdf)

**Contributions of excess manure from animal agriculture** taken from the USDA’s *An Economic Assessment of Policy Options To Reduce Agricultural Pollutants in the Chesapeake Bay*. Available at: <http://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/err-economic-research-report/err166.aspx>

**Chesapeake Bay fisheries and species levels** taken from the *Bay Journal* “About Fisheries” online at: <http://www.bayjournal.com/topics/fisheries>. Accessed: July 2014.

**National food waste data** from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, “Reducing Food Waste for Businesses: Food Waste Basics” available at: <http://www.epa.gov/foodrecovery/> Accessed: July 2014.

**MD food scrap recycling rate** taken from the MD Department of the Environment *Composting Work Group Final Report*, January 2013. Available at: [http://www.mde.state.md.us/programs/Land/RecyclingandOperationsprogram/Publications/Documents/composting\\_workgroup\\_final\\_report\\_1-2013000%20%281%29.pdf](http://www.mde.state.md.us/programs/Land/RecyclingandOperationsprogram/Publications/Documents/composting_workgroup_final_report_1-2013000%20%281%29.pdf) Source: USDA Economic Research Service, “Food Prices and Spending” Available at: <http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/ag-and-food-statistics-charting-the-essentials/food-prices-and-spending.aspx>

# Data Sources: Current State of Our Plate

## EATERS

**Per capita, Americans spent \$2,273 on groceries** source is USDA Economic Research Service, “Food Prices and Spending” Available at: <http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/ag-and-food-statistics-charting-the-essentials/food-prices-and-spending.aspx>

**Marylanders and Virginians spending on local food** calculated using U.S. Census of Agriculture data and American Community Survey one year population estimates.

**Nationwide estimates of food insecurity in 2012 as well as state-level data** available at Feeding America’s Map the Meal Gap at: <http://feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/hunger-studies/map-the-meal-gap.aspx>

**Data on household hunger and military families** - see Feeding America’s *Hunger in America 2014*, a report on those seeking food assistance and the partner agencies in the Feeding America network that provide food support. Available at: [http://help.feedingamerica.org/site/PageServer/?pagename=HIA\\_hunger\\_in\\_america](http://help.feedingamerica.org/site/PageServer/?pagename=HIA_hunger_in_america)

**Number of farmers market and federal nutrition benefit acceptance in 2014** calculated from USDA data on farmers markets available at: <http://search.ams.usda.gov/farmersmarkets/> Data accessed July 20, 2014.

**Bonus incentives and DC farmers markets** tabulated from the 2013 brochure created by the D.C. Farmers Market Collaborative. Figures include Arcadia Mobile Market stops. Brochure available at: [http://www.dchunger.org/pdf/farmers\\_market\\_brochure.pdf](http://www.dchunger.org/pdf/farmers_market_brochure.pdf)

**For healthfulness of the U.S. food supply**, see Susan M. Krebs-Smith, PhD, Jill Reedy, PhD, and Claire Bosire, MPH, “Healthfulness of the U.S. Food Supply: Little Improvement Despite Decades of Dietary Guidance,” *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*. May 2010. Available at: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/20153133>

## EQUITY

**Food system workers use of federal nutrition benefits** can be found in The Food Chain Workers Alliance, *The Hands That Feed Us: Challenges and Opportunities for Workers along the Food Chain*, June 6, 2012. Available at: <http://foodchainworkers.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Hands-That-Feed-Us-Report.pdf>

**Childhood food insecurity varies by race and ethnicity.** Data from Feeding America “Child Hunger Facts” Available at: <http://feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/hunger-facts/child-hunger-facts.aspx> See also “African-American Hunger” and “Hispanic/Latino Hunger.”

**Disproportionate impacts of food inequities by race** can be found on page 5, *Good Food + Good Jobs for All: Challenges and Opportunities to Advance Racial and Economic Equity in the Food System*, A 2012 study from the Applied Research Center. Available at this [link](#).

**DC workers of color in the restaurant industry** can be found in the Restaurant Opportunities Center of Washington, DC and others, *Behind the Kitchen Door: Inequality & Opportunity in Washington, DC’s Thriving Restaurant Industry*. February 2011.

**Data on nutrition-related chronic disease and geographic disparities** can be found in Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments and Washington Regional Association of Grantmakers’ Health Working Group. *Community Health Status Indicators for Metropolitan Washington: An In-Depth Look 2009*. Available at: <http://www.mwcog.org/uploads/pub-documents/zVZdWA20090623085814.pdf>

E Ibid

# Contact Information

---

We welcome your comments on this document. Please contact Lindsay Smith for additional information about this policy brief or Washington Regional Food Funders.

Lindsay Smith  
Washington Regional Food Funders  
c/o Washington Regional Association of Grantmakers  
1400 16th Street, NW, Suite 740  
Washington, DC 20036

Phone: 202-939-3440  
Fax: 202-939-3442  
E-mail: [smith@washingtongrantmakers.org](mailto:smith@washingtongrantmakers.org)  
Web: [www.washingtongrantmakers.org/food-systems](http://www.washingtongrantmakers.org/food-systems)



---

---

## Washington Regional Food Funders

A Working Group of the  
Washington Regional Association of Grantmakers

