



**Agriculture  
and Markets**

# **NYS Advisory Group for Improving Urban and Rural Consumer Access to Locally Produced, Healthy Foods 2022 Report**



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# 1 NEW YORK'S FOOD SYSTEM

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The United States is the third largest agricultural producer in the world and New York State (NYS) is a critical component of this system, boasting more than 33,000 farms that occupy over 7 million acres of land.<sup>1</sup> Despite New York's robust agricultural community, the crippling supply chain disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic revealed a stark disconnect between our producers and the communities they serve, emphasizing the need to strengthen our state's food system resilience. In 2021, the Department released a New York State Food Resiliency Report which provided several recommendations to improve the statewide agri-food landscape, including ways to improve coordination between stakeholders, expand innovation, and foster a more equitable food system.<sup>2</sup> The following New York State Advisory Group for Improving Urban and Rural Consumer Access to Locally Produced, Healthy Foods 2022 Report aims to expand on the gaps highlighted in the 2021 New York State Food Resiliency Report and provide actionable solutions that address procurement issues. To achieve increased food system resiliency, New York State must identify ways to support a more localized and agile network for statewide production and distribution.

The New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets has already implemented several initiatives to help reach this goal, including the Nourish New York and the 30% New York State Initiatives which aim to improve connections between agriculture producers and consumers. The Nourish New York Initiative helps emergency food providers purchase surplus products from New York farmers and dairy manufacturers and deliver them directly to families in need.<sup>3</sup> At the end of 2021, Governor Hochul permanently signed the Nourish New York Program into law and allocated an additional \$50 million in annual funding to the program. This first \$50 million will continue to be distributed through the end of Fiscal Year 2023 (March 31, 2023). On July 1, 2022, the 30% New York State Initiative, which reimburses schools who source 30% of their food from New York State producers, was transferred from the New York State Education Department to the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets. The initiative builds on existing Farm-to-School grants and programming to incentivize schools to source their food locally. Schools are just one of

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Agriculture and Markets, "2020 Annual Report." New York State of Opportunity, pp. 1-44. [agriculture.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2021/05/2020-annual-report\\_0.pdf#:~:text=the%20viability%20and%20growth%20of,helping%20to%20drive%20the%20economy](https://agriculture.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2021/05/2020-annual-report_0.pdf#:~:text=the%20viability%20and%20growth%20of,helping%20to%20drive%20the%20economy). Accessed 30 Sept. 2022.

<sup>2</sup> Department of Agriculture and Markets, Empire State Development, and Cornell College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. "New York State Food Supply Resiliency Report." New York State of Opportunity, pp. 4-42, [agriculture.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2022/01/foodsupplyreport\\_0\\_0.pdf](https://agriculture.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2022/01/foodsupplyreport_0_0.pdf). Accessed 1 Sept. 2022.

<sup>3</sup> "Supporting New York Farms and Communities." New York State, 2022, [agriculture.ny.gov/NourishNY](https://agriculture.ny.gov/NourishNY). Accessed 1 Sept. 2022

many institutional entities looking to meet required specifications for nutrition standards and dietary guidelines through procuring New York State-sourced foods. In the 2021-2022 school year alone, participating schools spent a total of \$6.4 million on New York State products and were reimbursed a total of \$2,644,534.00<sup>4</sup>.

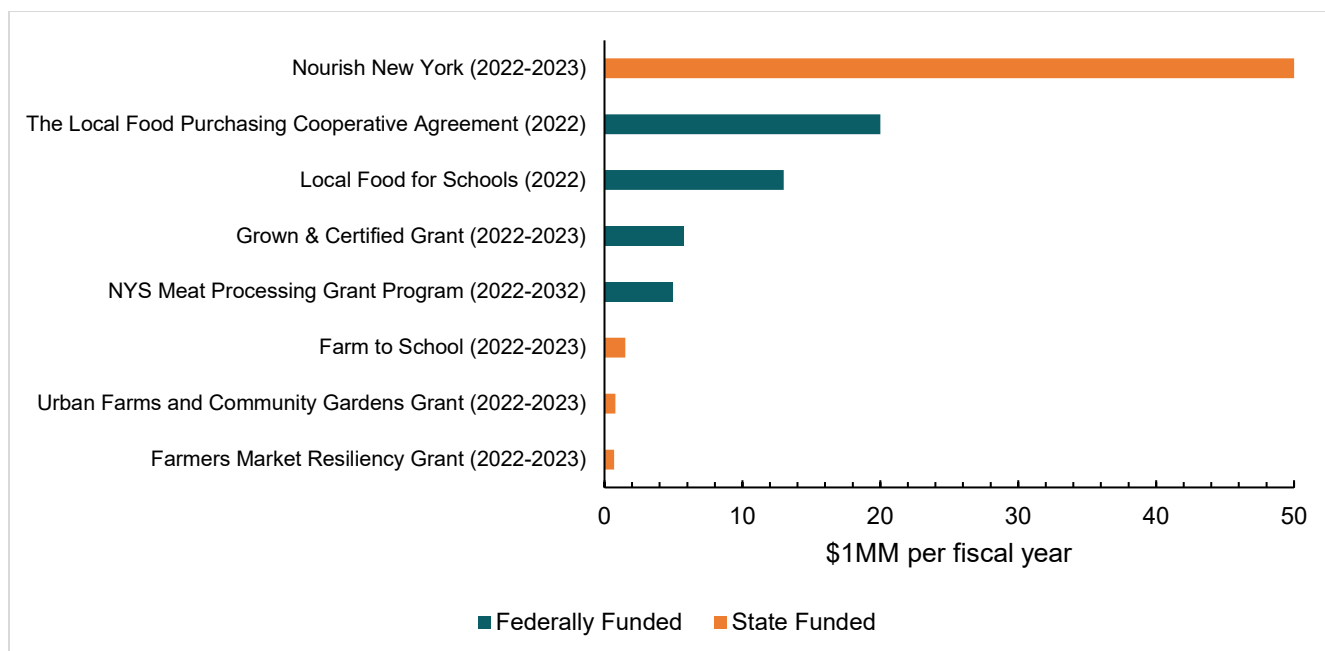
The Department has launched additional grant programs to further bolster the resiliency of the New York State agri-food value chain (figure 1). The New York State Meat Processing Grant Program received \$5 million in the 2022-23 state budget to assist in expanding meat processing infrastructure. The Urban Farms and Community Gardens Grant Program received \$800,000 in state funding to support and recognize the benefits of growing food in urban farms and community gardens. Furthermore, the Farmers Market Resiliency Grant Program helps local farmers make their food more accessible to consumers by establishing online sales, improving infrastructure, and enhancing marketing and promotion efforts.

The Department also released the \$25.8 million New York Food for New York Families grant program, funded through the Local Food Purchasing Cooperative Agreement (LFPA) grant from the US Department of Agriculture (USDA). The program will create a more resilient statewide food system that supports local farms and provides high quality, nutritious food to communities facing food insecurity. USDA also awarded the state \$13 million for school purchases of local food for schools, administered by New York State Education Department (SED).

Lastly, the Grown & Certified Infrastructure, Technology, Research & Development Grant Program received \$5.8 million in the state budget this year as part of a \$25 million 5-year commitment from Governor Hochul. The Grown and Certified program is the first statewide, food certification marketing program. The program aims to strengthen consumer confidence in New York products and help New York farmers take advantage of the increased market demand for locally grown and produced foods.

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<sup>4</sup> “30% Initiative Payments.” New York State Education Department: SED Public Reports Portal, [eservices.nysed.gov/sedreports/list?id=2](https://eservices.nysed.gov/sedreports/list?id=2). Accessed 21 Oct. 2022.



*Figure 1: Recent government programs to support local procurement*

Many of these initiatives were designed to help increase food security for all New Yorkers. Now more than ever, New York State must continue working to bridge the gaps in our local food systems to ensure adequate access to fresh healthy foods for all New York households in urban and rural locations alike. Unfortunately, 10.5% of New York households experience food insecurity and many areas of New York State are still designated as ‘food deserts’ (figure 2).<sup>5</sup> While the USDA defines a food desert by poverty and proximity to a grocery store, it is important to note that physical ability, age, mental health, racial segregation, and access to transportation limit access to healthy fresh foods too. This map differentiates mileage for rural versus urban areas even though lack of transportation alone is most pertinent when examining one’s ability to physically access food. Areas with higher poverty rates are more likely to be food deserts regardless of rural or urban designation, which is especially true in dense urban areas (i.e., New York City).<sup>6</sup> Despite these inherent limitations in using the term ‘food desert’ as a metric for examining urban and rural food access, it is currently the most universal term utilized to discuss gaps in our agri-food value chain and therefore serves as a valuable visual for broadly examining gaps in procurement.

<sup>5</sup> “Hunger in NYS.” Hunger Solutions New York, 2022. [hungersolutionsny.org/resources-action/hunger-in-nys/](https://hungersolutionsny.org/resources-action/hunger-in-nys/). Accessed 12 Sept. 2022.

<sup>6</sup> Dutko, P., Ver Ploeg, M., Farrigan, T., “Characteristics and Influential Factors of Food Deserts.” *United States Department of Agriculture*, 2012, [www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/45014/30940\\_err140.pdf](https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/45014/30940_err140.pdf). Accessed 1 Dec. 2022.



## 1.1 GATHERING CRITICAL INPUT: NEW YORK STATE IMPROVING URBAN AND RURAL CONSUMER ACCESS TO LOCALLY PRODUCED, HEALTHY FOODS ADVISORY BOARD

The Laws of 2022 created an Advisory Group for *Improving Urban and Rural Consumer Access to Locally Produced Healthy Foods*. In July of 2022, the Improving Urban and Rural Consumer Access to Locally Produced, Healthy Foods Advisory Group, chaired by Commissioner Ball, convened its first meeting with experts and leaders in the fields of agriculture, food policy, hunger prevention, procurement, and healthcare. The advisory group convened again in September 2022 to further discuss recommendations relevant to procurement and food policy. While the statutory requirement for this group concludes upon submission of this report, Commissioner Ball plans to continue the group's work to discuss procurement issues and food system challenges within the state.

### 1.1.1 Agriculture and Markets Statute

\* § 28. Advisory group for improving urban and rural consumer access to locally produced, healthy foods. The commissioner shall convene an advisory group with representatives from agriculture, food access organizations, food retailers and economic development agencies to identify strategies and opportunities to expand access for underserved, nutritionally deficient urban and rural communities to healthy, locally produced food in New York state, including identifying new and innovative methods to increase the production, marketing and distribution of locally produced, fresh food in such communities in New York state. Not later than one year after the effective date of this section, a report shall be delivered by the commissioner to the governor and the legislature on the findings and recommendations of such advisory group.

\* NB Repealed after the report required to this section has been delivered.

### 1.1.2 Overview

The New York State Advisory Group *Improving Urban and Rural Consumer Access to Locally Produced Healthy Foods* (Procurement Advisory Group) convened stakeholders in agriculture, food access organizations, food retailers, and economic development agencies to identify strategies and opportunities to expand access for underserved, nutritionally deficient urban and rural communities to healthy, locally produced food in New York State. In addition, this group aimed to identify new and innovative methods to increase production, marketing, and distribution of locally produced, fresh food in these communities.

The Procurement Advisory Group provided critical input into the creation of the report and the recommendations it contains. The meetings provided an opportunity to reflect on the past few years, speak to current challenges in our food system, and identify next steps.

The following individuals were appointed to the Procurement Advisory Group for Improving Urban and Rural Consumer Access to Locally Produced, Healthy Foods:

- Commissioner Betty A. Rosa, Department of Education
- Allison Argust, Empire State Development
- JP Behrle, Office of General Services
- Malcom Lusby, Department of Corrections and Community Supervision
- Mary Ellen Mallia, State University of New York: Albany
- Robert Noble, Department of Corrections and Community Supervision
- Greg Olsen, Office of Aging
- Merrill R. Rotter, Office of Mental Health
- Gabrielle Viens, Office of General Services
- Nathan Chittenden, Dutch Hollow Farm, LLC
- Joy Crist, Crist Brothers Orchards
- Allison DeHonney, Urban Fruits and Veggies, LLC
- Mike Durant, Food Industry Alliance of NYS
- Dan Egan, Feeding New York State
- Tom Facer, Farm Fresh First, LLC
- Kate Fullam, East End Food Institute
- David Haughton, Trinity Farms
- Gary Mahany, Mahany Farms
- Jennifer Martin, NY School Nutrition Association
- Carla Nelson, Greater NY Hospital Association
- Stephen O'Brien, NYC Department of Education Office of School Food
- Julie Raway, NY School Nutrition Association
- Brian Reeves, Reeves Farm
- Mandu Sen, NYC Mayor's Office of Food Policy
- Renee St. Jacques, New York Farm Bureau
- Marcel Van Ooyen, Grow NYC

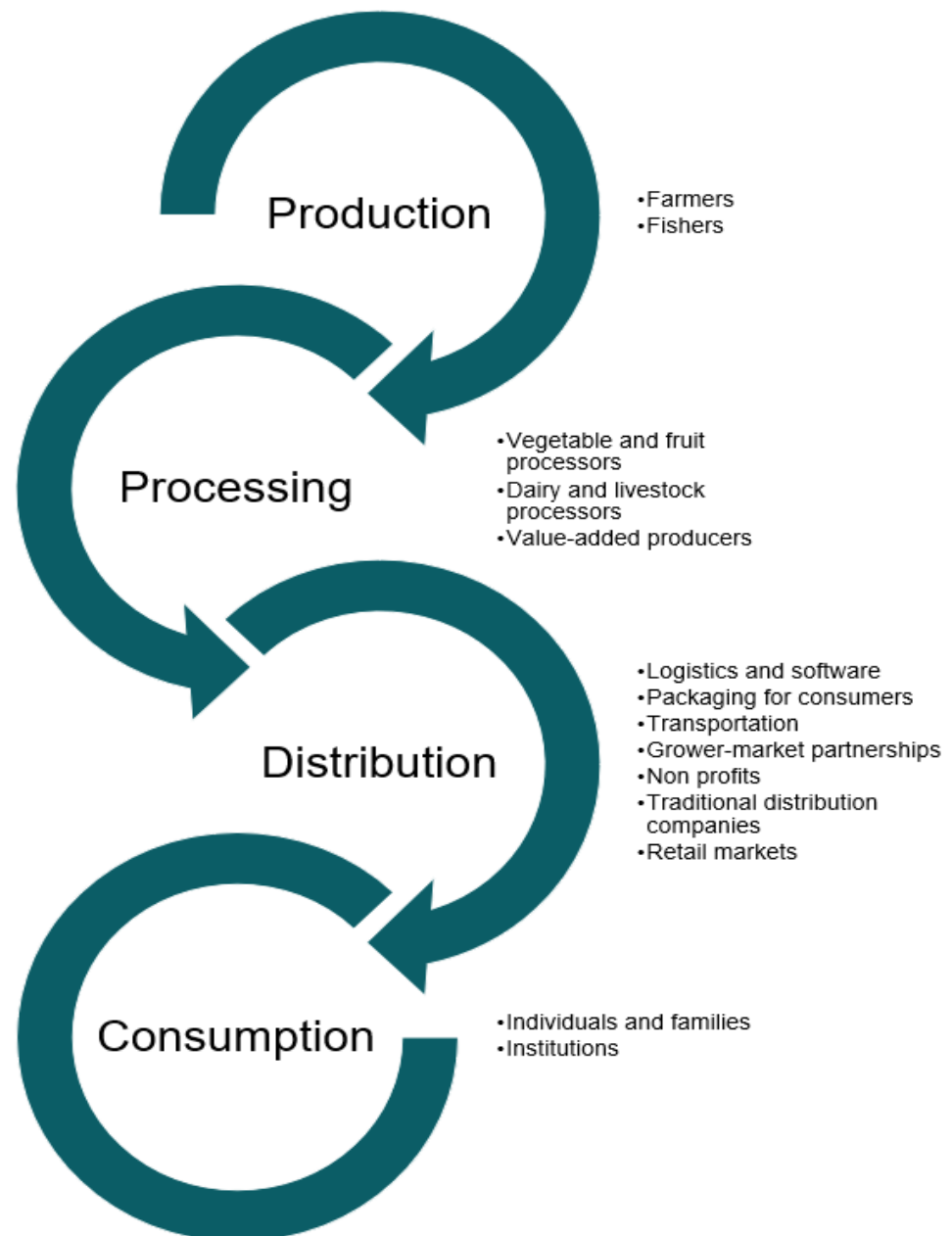
## 2 USER EXPERIENCE OF OUR CURRENT STATE AGRI-FOOD SYSTEM

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To preface the following recommendations, members of the Procurement Advisory Group evaluated the user experience of our current agri-food value chain (figure 3). The term agri-food value chain “consists of all the stakeholders who participate in the coordinated

production and value-adding activities that are needed to make food products.”<sup>7</sup> While it does not capture the full complexity of our system, the following diagram intends to break down the breadth of people involved in each step of this value chain as well as who is historically excluded as one contemplates the following gaps and recommendations for New York State.

*Figure 2: User Experience Model Based conceived by the Procurement Advisory Group*



<sup>7</sup> “Sustainable Food Value Chains Knowledge Platform.” Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, 2022. [www.fao.org/sustainable-food-value-chains/what-is-it/en/](http://www.fao.org/sustainable-food-value-chains/what-is-it/en/). Accessed 12 Sept. 2022



### 3 AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION

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New York state is the fifth largest producer of milk and second largest producer of apples in the United States, with specialty crops being the key component of New York State's agriculture. Although row crops such as corn and wheat occupy a large ratio of cultivated land, specialty crops account for more than half of the crop-based farm gate income<sup>8</sup>. This symbiosis within the agricultural landscape has fostered a diverse and productive industry.

Given the already substantial agricultural productivity in New York State, Procurement Advisory Group members identified land access as one of the greatest barriers to continued production. Because land is finite, land access poses a challenge for new and beginning farmers, and subsequently, land prices rise where there is competition for land. Coupled with local land use laws that are not always farm-friendly, new and beginner farmers often find accessing land an obstacle when trying to start a farm. This lack of support for new and beginning farmers combined with younger generations diverging from their multi-generational family farms results in a deficiency in a skilled farm labor pool.

According to comprehensive research conducted by American Farmland Trust, 253,507 acres of New York's agricultural land was lost or fragmented between 2001 and 2016, placing New York State in the top 20 most threatened states for farmland conversion. While current farmland protection programs have slowed the rate of land conversion, this continues to be a pertinent threat to New York's agricultural industries.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, the quality of land resources significantly effects the volume and quality of production. This reemphasizes the importance of having land with nutrient dense and clean soil, optimum drainage, and sufficient clean water.

Growers often may look to trade up what they are growing for a greater return on investment (ROI). There is not always a need to grow more, but instead adapt what is grown, and many of the producers in New York State are already cultivating their most productive crops. Along with protecting land rights and resources, the issues of labor, distribution and processing become more pressing when optimizing the state-wide agri-food value chain.

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<sup>8</sup> DiNapoli, Thomas P., "A profile of Agriculture in New York State." Office of the New York State Comptroller, 2019, [www.osc.state.ny.us/files/reports/special-topics/pdf/agriculture-report-2019.pdf](http://www.osc.state.ny.us/files/reports/special-topics/pdf/agriculture-report-2019.pdf). Accessed 11 Nov. 2022.

<sup>9</sup> Goodman, Erica. "Farms Under Threat: New York leads the nation in helping a new generation of farmers, yet its best farmland is at stake." American Farmland Trust, 20 May 2022, [farmland.org/fut-new-york-pr/](http://farmland.org/fut-new-york-pr/). Accessed 1 Sept. 2022.

## 4 PROCESSING

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Research conducted by the New York State Department of Labor identified over 2,000 food manufacturing firms across New York State.<sup>10</sup> Historically, there have been efforts to consolidate manufacturing facilities to reduce redundancy and increase efficiency, but this comes at the cost of resiliency and agility. This is particularly problematic in the case of emergencies, where if one processing facility is compromised, the whole system is detrimentally impacted. This was demonstrated during the COVID-19 pandemic where employees in manufacturing plants were sick with COVID-19 and unable to work. This resulted in the closure of over 13 meat processing plants in the span of two months nationwide, leading to a 25% reduction in pork slaughter capacity and a 10% reduction in beef slaughter capacity.<sup>11</sup> This ripple effect impacted consumers across the country who were unable to purchase meat products due to empty store shelves. Similarly, in 2022, one of the largest baby formula manufacturing plants was shut down due to contamination concerns, leaving store shelves across the country in dangerously low supply.<sup>12</sup> Similar trends occurred in New York State during COVID-19 and other emergencies. Implementing more regional processing facilities would increase resiliency because if one operation fails there would be others to compensate; increasing the number of regional processing facilities in New York State also significantly shortens the supply chain across the state. Long Island has experimented with value-added processing as a critical component of farms' business plans as well as Food Hubs, which are both successful, innovative models (figure 3).

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<sup>10</sup> Rivera, Peter M. and Cuomo, Andrew M.. "New York State's Food Manufacturing Industry: A Statewide and Regional Analysis." New York State Department of Labor Division of Research and Statistics Bureau of Labor Market Information, June 2014, [dol.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2021/03/new-york-states-food-manufacturing-industry-a-statewide-and-regional-analysis.pdf](https://dol.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2021/03/new-york-states-food-manufacturing-industry-a-statewide-and-regional-analysis.pdf). Accessed 1 Sept. 2022.

<sup>11</sup> Gallagher, Dianne and Kirkland, Pamela. "Meat processing plants across the US are closing due to the pandemic. Will consumers feel the impact?" *CNN Business*, 27 Apr. 2020, [www.cnn.com/2020/04/26/business/meat-processing-plants-coronavirus](https://www.cnn.com/2020/04/26/business/meat-processing-plants-coronavirus). Accessed 3 Oct. 2022.

<sup>12</sup> Creswell, Julie and Corkery, Michael. "Store Shelves Are No Longer Bare, but Baby Formula Remains in Short Supply." *The New York Times*, 12, Sept. 2022, [www.nytimes.com/2022/09/12/business/baby-formula-shortages.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2022/09/12/business/baby-formula-shortages.html). Accessed 3 Oct. 2022.

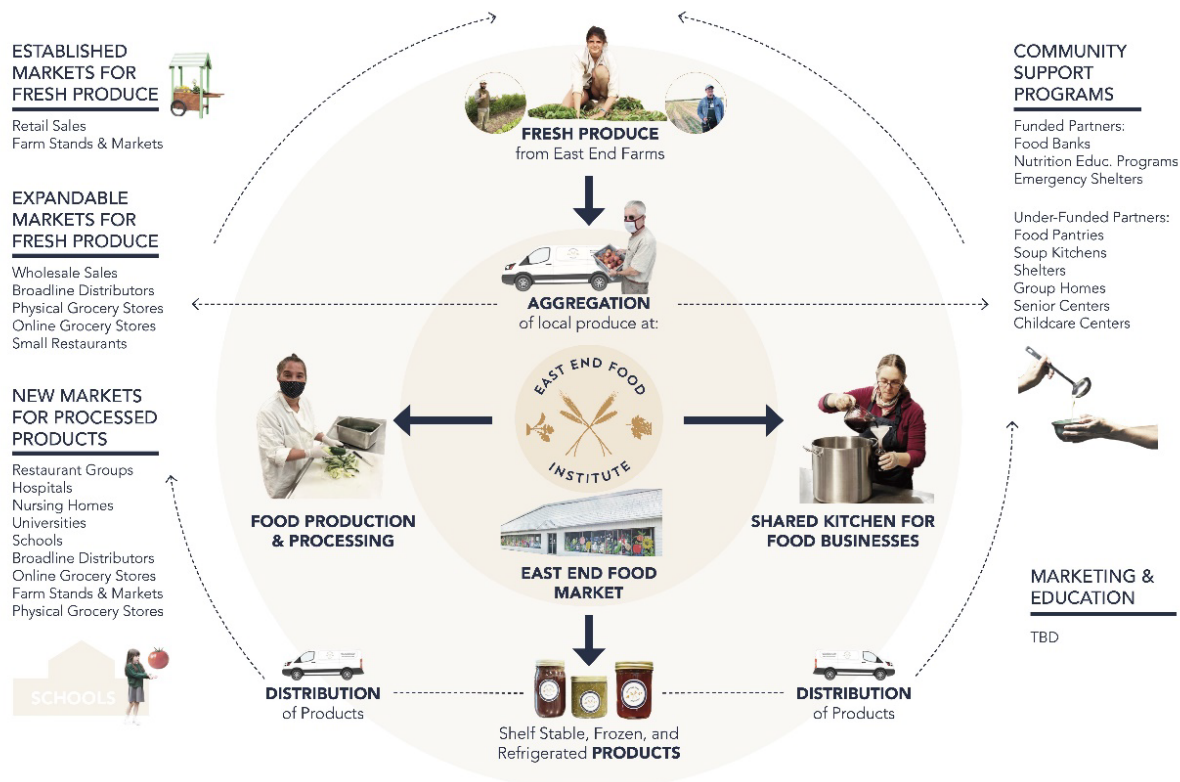


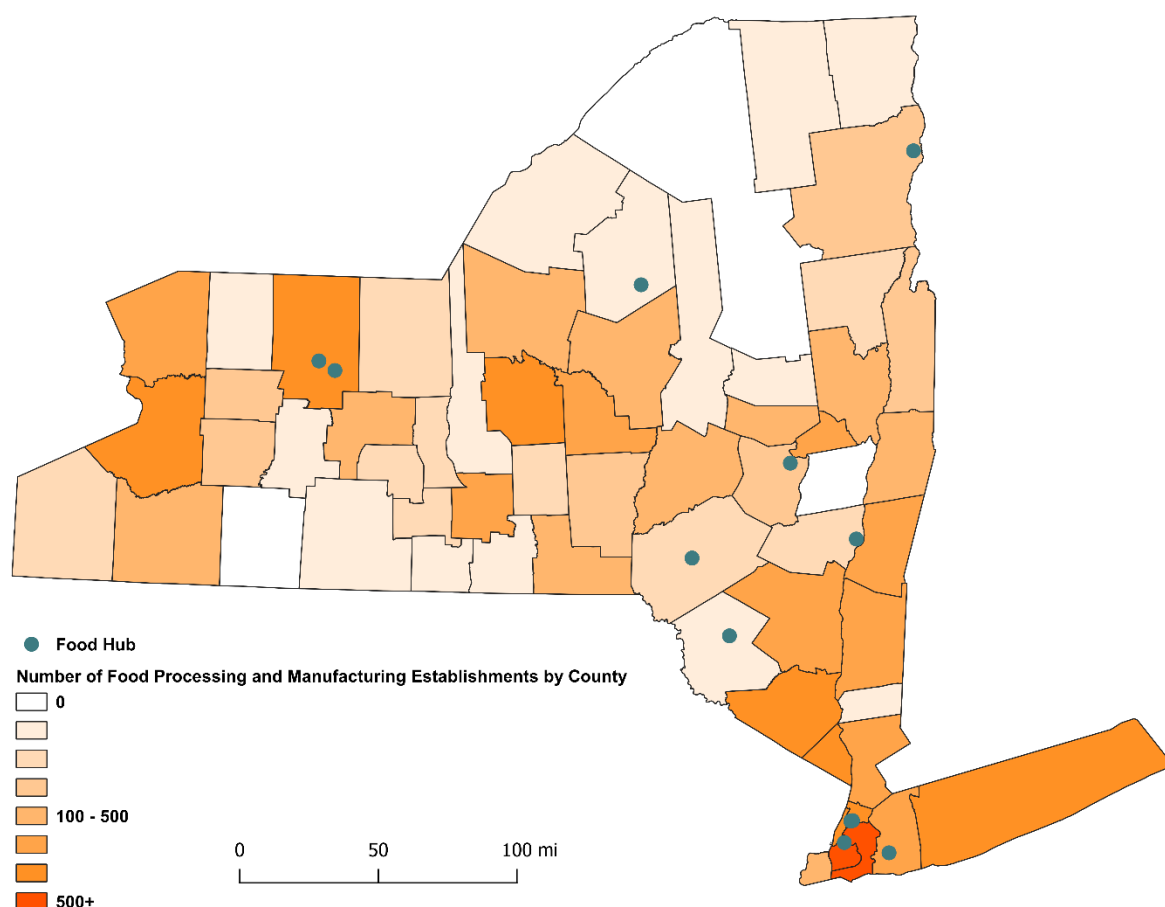
Figure 3: East End Food Institute's model<sup>13</sup>

Implementing regional food hubs would also enable in-state processing of local products for institutions and increase access to farm-to-freezer models. Non-profit partnerships such as those seen in figure 3 are essential to filling the gaps in this system where for-profit businesses may be unmotivated to participate. This model also ensures multiple viable entities for bid competition which could be for fresh produce, canned foods, or value-added products. Similarly, implementing hyperlocal food access points supports aggregators and distributors for small markets with cold storage, transportation, loading docks, and other infrastructure, where it is currently lacking. Implementing in-state regional food hubs that minimally process local products would increase the availability of institutional and other consumer ready foods. Food hubs are places where food is gathered to ensure that quantity of food required can be provided to meet the needs of the consumer. Therefore, they expand resiliency and year-round availability of fresh, healthy, and local foods. Food hubs also mitigate challenges posed by a lack of cold storage because streamlining the supply chain significantly reduces the amount of time

<sup>13</sup> "East End Food Institute"; Garnett DePasquale Projects; 19 July, 2022.

food needs to be preserved for, especially when traveling ‘last mile’ where resources (e.g., trucks, cold storage, etc.) may already be limited. Please note that the food hub data used for the map below is extracted from the USDA’s Food Hub Directory which includes “businesses or organizations that actively manage the aggregation, distribution, and marketing of source-identified food products to multiple buyers from multiple producers, primarily local and regional producers, to strengthen the ability of these producers to satisfy local and regional wholesale, retail, and institutional demand.”<sup>14</sup>

*Figure 4. Map of current food processing facilities and food hubs in New York State (appendix 1).<sup>15, 16</sup>*



<sup>14</sup> “Local Food Directories: Food Hub Directory.” United State Department of Agriculture, 2022, [www.ams.usda.gov/local-food-directories/foodhubs](http://www.ams.usda.gov/local-food-directories/foodhubs) Accessed 3 Oct. 2022.

<sup>15</sup> “Local Food Directories.” United State Department of Agriculture, 2022, [www.usdalocalfoodportal.com/fe/fdirectory\\_foodhub/?source=fe&directory=foodhub&location=&x=&y=](http://www.usdalocalfoodportal.com/fe/fdirectory_foodhub/?source=fe&directory=foodhub&location=&x=&y=). Accessed 30 Sept. 2022.

<sup>16</sup> “Food Safety Inspections – Current Ratings.” New York State, 2022, [data.ny.gov/Economic-Development/Food-Safety-Inspections-Current-Ratings/d6dy-3h7r/data](http://data.ny.gov/Economic-Development/Food-Safety-Inspections-Current-Ratings/d6dy-3h7r/data). Accessed 05 Oct. 2022.

In figure 4, this dataset includes all facilities inspected by New York State food safety in the last 24 months and classified as a 'beverage plant', 'processing plant', 'wholesale manufacturer', 'wholesale produce packer', or 'produce grower/packer/broker, storage'.

## 5 DISTRIBUTION AND LABOR

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Transportation is a key component of any value chain in every step of the process, yet it continues to be one of the most urgent gaps in our agri-food value chain. Trucking companies have been operating at crisis level with too few drivers, highlighting the acute need for increased labor across sectors. The New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS) is piloting a program to train Commercial Driver's License (CDL) drivers, which also provides safety training and hauling licenses.<sup>17</sup> This program serves as a viable case study when examining workforce development and subsequent connections to employment opportunities. Targeting populations like veterans, immigrant populations, youth, and adults over the age of 60 by providing internships and viable career opportunities in rural areas such as farm business training and early exposure in schools on the breadth of agri-food careers and pathways could help reduce the unemployment gap.

Similar issues impact procurement across sectors such as the lack of qualified employees in production, processing, and distribution. While many farmers have been born into their profession, there are many who would have voluntarily chosen this career path. It was noted that farmers and producers could improve on promoting their careers as conscious choices.

Although technology has helped improve working conditions on farms, the agricultural industry doesn't offer the same schedule flexibility that other professions do, which may deter younger generations from choosing this career path. Additionally, equipment can require a significant financial investment, which may be cost prohibitive for many new and beginning farmers. Most importantly, any business must be economically viable and provide a respectable salary to attract employees. On Long Island, labor shortages are directly related to the cost of housing. To accommodate increased labor, it is important to consider the availability, cost, and regulation of housing on farm property.

With labor shortfalls, shortening distribution channels can reduce the number of employees needed. And, fewer hands touching the products results in increased profitability for those who remain involved. Long Island, with a focus in Suffolk County, is

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<sup>17</sup> "Governor Hochul Announces 'Jails to Jobs' — A New Initiative to Improve Re-Entry into the Workforce and Reduce Recidivism." New York State, 5 Jan. 2022, [www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-hochul-announces-jails-jobs-new-initiative-improve-re-entry-workforce-and-reduce](https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-hochul-announces-jails-jobs-new-initiative-improve-re-entry-workforce-and-reduce). Accessed 13 Sept. 2022.

expanding its mid-tier value chain via aggregation and processing from more small- to mid-sized farms, followed by sales to a predetermined wholesale market. An emerging nonprofit food hub helps aggregate diverse local product and more efficiently mitigates challenges associated with the ‘last mile’ of procurement. With enough built-in replication of processes, this model could provide a safety net when supply chains are disrupted. This aggregator model is particularly beneficial for institutions requiring a variety of foods but lacking the capacity to handle several separate orders or deliveries. Infrastructure investment is critical to establishing a sustainable model for food hubs.

## 6 PURCHASING AND MARKETS

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The food purchasing landscape in New York State is often defined by external operations because New York State growers and producers are competing with bids from other states that have lower production costs. Buyers choose the lowest price for produce to maximize their return on investment, which is why the prices New York State growers can receive are often set by growers across the United States and in some cases internationally. Furthermore, these prices are set for the period of the contract, despite produce varying in weight depending on the time of year (i.e., a potato in storage can shed weight as time lapses) or market forces of supply and demand. The prices are also set based on an estimate of how much the buyer expects to use during a given period. Producers might place these bids in August, which is replicated in October, even though growers do not yet know how much they will produce the following season (a result of factors and influences like weather, potential crop yield or failure due to blight, etc.). While this procedure is simpler for the USDA and for buyers, it can result in a net monetary loss for producers. To accommodate the New York State marketplace, farmers indicated that they grow what they know they will sell. To shift this paradigm, we must better understand barriers and evaluate growth capacity. Subsidizing food production to allow institutions to be able to afford purchasing from local growers would incentivize purchasing from New York producers. Advertising and marketing may also play a key role in shifting this paradigm. Stakeholders have successfully utilized social media as a marketing tool to push certain agricultural products, particularly when influencing students.

When examining the New York State agri-food marketplace, it is important to examine institutions as consumers. Schools are crucial to New York State’s efforts to increase procurement of New York State products and demonstrate the potential for other institutions to strengthen the resiliency of their own agri-food chains. To reach their full potential, stakeholders expressed the need for simpler and more flexible guidelines that accommodate institutional buyers’ operational challenges. In the 2022-2023 school year, the New York State Education Department was allocated \$112,835,230 for school lunches through USDA Foods entitlement for the National School Lunch Program (this includes



Direct Delivery, Processing, USDA Department of Defense (DoD), and USDA Pilot for Unprocessed Fruits and Vegetables (PILOT). Despite these programs helping increase the amount of fresh healthy foods served in schools, they often limit their capacity to buy locally grown and produced products.

## 7 REACHING UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES

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Due to systemic and structural inequities, historically nutritionally underserved populations bear most of the burden from gaps in our agri-food value chain, with procurement obstacles primarily in infrastructure, labor, and transportation. The location of processing and distribution facilities should be thoughtfully examined and located to better serve nutritionally insecure neighborhoods that struggle to access food and resources.

Procurement Advisory Group stakeholders suggested increasing support of local food assistance organizations through monetary aid and by increasing distribution of local food to communities in need. Monetary assistance may include food banks partnering with sub-grantees to serve hyper-local pantries or expanding on food purchasing incentive programs such as FreshConnect, which subsidizes SNAP purchases at farmers markets. Nourish New York is a successful example of indirect monetary aid. The program stimulates local procurement by connecting farms directly to food service organizations and nutrition insecure individuals through the state's food bank system. Additionally, grants from local foundations can give partners access to wholesale pricing, increasing buying power of food assistance organizations.

To increase dignity of choice for all, it is important to help for people facing food insecurity to shop from stores rather than through assistance organizations (e.g., food pantries). Despite many pantries and soup kitchens offering choice of products, the selection is limited, and there is unfortunately a negative societal stigma associated with seeking help through 'charitable' distribution activities. SNAP is considered a choice-based program as it allows the consumer to shop in traditional grocery stores, offering a more dignified alternative to charitable distribution. Additionally, school meals are vital to increasing food access across New York State. School meals are proven to provide the most nutrient-dense impact for communities in need.<sup>18</sup> Institutions including schools K-16, hospitals, churches, and correctional facilities, to name a few, have the capacity to deliver high quality and nutritious food to a large percentage of New York's population. Decentralizing institutional food would increase autonomy for buyers to properly support local farmers

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<sup>18</sup> Au LE, Gurzo K, Gosliner W, Webb KL, Crawford PB, Ritchie LD. Eating School Meals Daily Is Associated with Healthier Dietary Intakes: The Healthy Communities Study. *J Acad Nutr Diet*. 2018 Aug;118(8):1474-1481.e1. doi: 10.1016/j.jand.2018.01.010. Epub 2018 Mar 17. PMID: 29555435; PMCID: PMC6064655.

by enabling more bids for institutions to choose from. The challenges of the state procurement process through centralized contracting presents challenges for buyers and local farmers in finding each other and getting the exact products that they want.

## **8 ACTIONS WHICH ARE NECESSARY TO IMPLEMENT THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE PROCUREMENT ADVISORY GROUP**

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### **8.1 WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

To address labor shortages throughout all sectors of the agri-food value chain, the Procurement Advisory Group recommends that New York State develops and expands existing training programs for workforce development in collaboration with New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, New York State Department of Education, Empire State Development, New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision, and New York State Department of Aging. Training opportunities should focus on exposing youth, previously incarcerated individuals, immigrant populations, veterans, and seniors to the variety of professional opportunities available in agriculture through internships, apprenticeships, and other training opportunities. Farmer training may include opportunities for employees to work their way up professionally, with the potential to build equity in the business and eventually buy land or other parts of the operation to begin their own agri-business or ownership stake.

### **8.2 HOUSING**

The Procurement Advisory Group recommends that New York State support local municipalities in adapting their local zoning codes and regulations to accommodate housing for various workers, with ways to monitor and ensure safe housing conditions, and subsidize employee housing where necessary. The Procurement Advisory Group also recommends that New York State expands upon their existing initiatives such as the Farm Worker Housing Program (FWH) which operates through New York State Homes and Community Renewal (HCR).

### **8.3 LAND ACCESS**

The Procurement Advisory Group recommends that New York State expands farmland protection programs to discourage the conversion of farmland for development, in turn protecting access to high quality fertile land.

## **8.4 TRANSPORTATION**

To address the lack of transportation opportunities, the Procurement Advisory Group recommends that New York State invest in increased public transportation infrastructure to create more pathways for food to move across the state (i.e., roads, bridges, railways, ports, etc.). In addition, investing in strategically placed cold storage facilities would guarantee increased capacity to procure perishable fresh foods, preserving integrity of the products and keeping them safe. The Procurement Advisory Group also recommends that New York State reimburse tolls and licensing fees for small to mid-sized transportation companies to mitigate barriers for truck drivers and local procurement companies traveling on roadways that are cost prohibitive. Lastly, the feasibility of other means of transportation throughout the state, such as light rail or boats on major waterways, should be explored.

## **8.5 FOOD HUBS**

The Procurement Advisory Group recommends that New York State support the development of regional food hubs and hyper-local aggregation points. This would further streamline the aggregation of local products and support local processing with cold storage, transportation and loading dock infrastructure. Food hubs decrease reliance on out-of-state procurement by streamlining the aggregation and distribution of food for cost efficiencies. Both non-profit and for-profit food hubs play a key role in the agri-food chain.

## **8.6 TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE FOR FOOD PROCESSORS**

The Procurement Advisory Group recommends that New York State establish regional centers to provide support and technical expertise for small food businesses related to food safety, business management, equipment needs, and other business development supports. This will empower small businesses to scale up while encouraging local procurement and may include co-packing to assist farms in bringing their products to market. Technical assistance centers could easily be incorporated as a component of food hubs and/or training centers.

## **8.7 EQUITABLE FOOD ACCESS**

When prioritizing equitable procurement of fresh healthy foods, The Procurement Advisory Group recommends that New York State supports utilization of fresh food grown in New York State, beyond just access. This may include but should not be limited to education around nutrition and cooking beginning with youth in schools, spanning to older adult and community centers. New York State should facilitate better communication between farmers and institutions to guide growers' planting plans and incentivize a diversity of products from small-scale producers to meet larger institutional needs across the state.

## 8.8 POLICY REFORM

The Procurement Advisory Group suggests several policy recommendations to mitigate barriers for local non-profits, farms, small businesses, and institutions. First, the Procurement Advisory Group recommends options for the decentralization of grant funding to increase accessibility of funding opportunities for hyper-local non-profits. Accessible funding streams are crucial to building a sustainable and equitable value chain. Second, The Procurement Advisory Group recommends that procurement rules, terms and conditions are simplified and incentivize local food. New York should adjust the 30% New York State Initiative rules to expand eligibility to reflect challenges faced by all geographic regions of the state and encourage participation in this program. This may expand eligibility to include breakfast and snacks served in schools and measure the total amount of New York product that is purchased by the school rather than measuring the amount of New York product that is ultimately consumed by students. Last, The Procurement Advisory Group suggests that the Governor of New York encourages the USDA to move more agriculture dollars to New York State to increase autonomy and efficiency. New York State should work in synergy with USDA by allowing for preference of locally sourced products such as through the DoD Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program.

## 9 APPENDIX

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### 9.1 FOOD HUBS IN NEW YORK STATE ACCORDING TO USDA (FIGURE 5)<sup>19</sup>

- Corbin Hill Food Project (Schoharie, NY)
- Foodlink Food Hub (Rochester, NY)
- Headwater Foods, Inc (Rochester, NY)
- Lucky Dog Local Food Hub (Hamden, NY)
- Schare & Associates, INC (Oceanside, NY)
- Farm Fresh, Inc. (Bronx, NY)
- Happy Valley Meat Company (Brooklyn, NY)
- Field Goods (Athens, NY)
- The Hub on the Hill (Essex, NY)
- Catskills Food Hub (Liberty, NY)
- GrowNYC's Wholesale Greenmarket (Bronx, NY)
- North Star Food Hub (Lyons Falls, NY)

Please note that Farmshed Harvest Food Hub (Syracuse, NY) was included in the original USDA dataset but has been excluded from our map as it is no longer in operation.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> "Local Food Directories." United State Department of Agriculture, 2022, [www.usdalocalfoodportal.com/fe/fdirectory\\_foodhub/?source=fe&directory=foodhub&location=&x=&y=](http://www.usdalocalfoodportal.com/fe/fdirectory_foodhub/?source=fe&directory=foodhub&location=&x=&y=). Accessed 30 Sept. 2022.

<sup>20</sup> "Farmshed, CNY's farm-to-table food hub, calls it quits after 5 years." Syracuse.com, 2018, [https://www.syracuse.com/food/2018/07/farmshed\\_cnys\\_farm-to-table\\_food\\_hub\\_calls\\_it\\_quits\\_after\\_5\\_years.html](https://www.syracuse.com/food/2018/07/farmshed_cnys_farm-to-table_food_hub_calls_it_quits_after_5_years.html). Accessed 12 Dec. 2022.

## 9.2 GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Term	Definition
Agri-food value chain	"The production of a product in a manner that enhances its value [including]... a change in the physical state or form of the product." <sup>21</sup>
Census Tract	"Small, relatively permanent statistical subdivisions of a county or statistically equivalent entity that can be updated by local participants prior to each decennial census as part of the Census Bureau's Participant Statistical Areas Program (PSAP)." <sup>22</sup>
Farm Gate Price	"Describing the price of goods if they were purchased directly from a farm, without markup added by retailers." <sup>23</sup>
Food Desert	"A food desert census tract is defined as a low-income tract where a substantial number or substantial share of residents does not have easy access to a supermarket or large grocery store." <sup>24</sup>
Food Hub	"A regional food hub is 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." <sup>25</sup>
Last Mile	"The final step in the context of supply chain: the delivery of a product or service to the destination or end user." <sup>26</sup>
Local Food	Grown in New York State. <sup>27</sup>
New York Food Product	"A food item that is grown, harvested, or produced in NYS OR is processed in or outside NYS comprising over fifty-one percent agricultural raw materials." <sup>28</sup>

<sup>21</sup> "Value Added Food." *University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources*, No Date, [ucanr.edu/sites/CESonomaAgOmbuds/Value\\_Add\\_Products/#:~:text=USDA's%20Value%2Dadded%20Ag%20Definition,such%20as%20organically%20produced%20products](http://ucanr.edu/sites/CESonomaAgOmbuds/Value_Add_Products/#:~:text=USDA's%20Value%2Dadded%20Ag%20Definition,such%20as%20organically%20produced%20products)). Accessed 12 Sept. 2022.

<sup>22</sup> "Glossary." United States Census Bureau. 11 April 2022. [www.census.gov/programs-surveys/geography/about/glossary.html#par\\_textimage\\_13](http://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/geography/about/glossary.html#par_textimage_13). Accessed 3 Oct. 2022.

<sup>23</sup> "FarmGate." Wiktionary, 29 Sept. 2019, [www.google.com/url?q=https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/farmgate&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1664547794324300&usq=AOvVaw1K-SIZOf3CLGvAuc0LPjad](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/farmgate&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1664547794324300&usq=AOvVaw1K-SIZOf3CLGvAuc0LPjad). Accessed 30 Sept. 2022.

<sup>24</sup> Wright, Ann, "Interactive Web Tool Maps Food Deserts, Provides Key Data." *U.S. Department of Agriculture*. 30 Apr. 2021. [www.usda.gov/media/blog/2011/05/03/interactive-web-tool-maps-food-deserts-provides-key-data#:~:text=In%20the%20Food%20Desert%20Locator,supermarket%20or%20large%20grocery%20store](http://www.usda.gov/media/blog/2011/05/03/interactive-web-tool-maps-food-deserts-provides-key-data#:~:text=In%20the%20Food%20Desert%20Locator,supermarket%20or%20large%20grocery%20store). Accessed 30 Sept. 2022.

<sup>25</sup> "Cooperatives and Food Hubs." US. Department of Agriculture, 2022, [www.nal.usda.gov/legacy/afsic/cooperatives-and-food-hubs](http://www.nal.usda.gov/legacy/afsic/cooperatives-and-food-hubs). Accessed 30 Sept. 2022.

<sup>26</sup> "WHAT DOES 'LAST MILE' MEAN IN SUPPLY CHAIN?" *GEP: Insight Drives Innovation*, 2022. [www.gep.com/knowledge-bank/glossary/what-is-last-mile-in-supply-chain](http://www.gep.com/knowledge-bank/glossary/what-is-last-mile-in-supply-chain). Accessed 30 Sept. 2022.

<sup>27</sup> Bilinski, Cheryl, Bull, Casandra, O'Connor, Becky, "30% NY Initiative." *Cornell Cooperative Extension*, Jan. 2022, [harvestny.cce.cornell.edu/uploads/doc\\_217.pdf](http://harvestny.cce.cornell.edu/uploads/doc_217.pdf). Accessed 30 Sept. 2022.

<sup>28</sup> Hochul, Kathy and Ball, Richard A.. "30% NYS Initiative Handbook." *New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets*, No date, [agriculture.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2022/09/30initiativehandbook.pdf](http://agriculture.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2022/09/30initiativehandbook.pdf). Accessed 3 Oct. 2022.