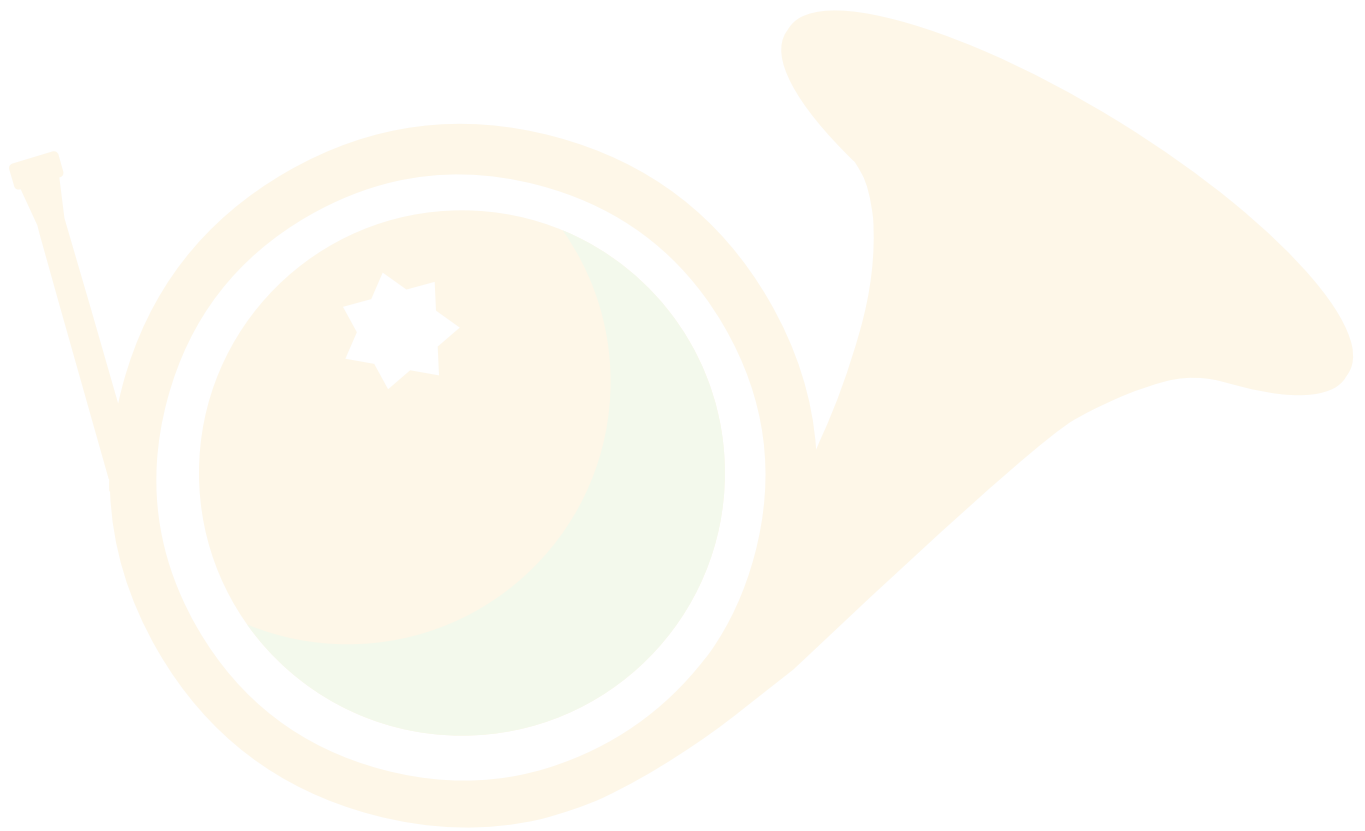


**New Orleans**  
**Food Policy**  
**Advisory Committee**



**Policy Matters:**  
**Assessing the Policy Gap and Opportunities**  
**in the New Orleans Food System**

# Welcome

Friends,

In 2014 the Tulane Prevention Research Center took preliminary steps to reinvigorate the New Orleans Food Policy Advisory Committee by inviting organizations, individuals, business and partners interested in food, social justice and equity to a community meeting. In enthusiastic support, over 40 people attended and we began collaborative work toward a more just and equitable food system. FPAC was originally convened in a post-Katrina environment and, in the 8-10 years since, the food access and policy landscape has changed. Because of this it was important to reassess the landscape as it is currently and identify the gaps and opportunities that now exist. Thanks to funding from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation and the support of FPAC members and partners, such a food policy assessment was undertaken.

Food policy is defined as “A set of collective decisions made by government at all levels, businesses, and organizations that affect how food gets from the farm to your table. A food policy can be as broad as a federal regulation on food labeling or as local and specific as a zoning law that lets city dwellers raise honeybees.”<sup>xxx</sup> It was important for our assessment to identify both governmental policy opportunities and systems policies that affect how food is grown, distributed and consumed at all levels.

Through a series of surveys and key-informant interviews, themes began to emerge relative to food policy and the systems that affect food. These themes, identified within our food policy assessment were:

1. *Access to Capital*- finding ways to fund food production, value-added food businesses, restaurants, retail outlets, and organizations is a challenge facing many trying to work in the food system.
2. *Information Gaps*- there is much confusion surrounding the current policies regarding the production, consumption, and access to fresh, healthy food.



3. *Food in All Policies*- currently food is included in many policies, but there is not a clear vision for the food system in New Orleans and Louisiana woven into all policies.

4. *Strengthening the Network*- Despite strong partnerships and collaborations, there is fragmentation and a lack of coordination among those working in the food system.

As we have identified these themes, FPAC has convened members and partners to identify how these needs could be met. Through our working groups and Steering Committee, the FPAC Strategic Plan for the Future was developed. To see our three (3) year plan and learn more about how we can work together, please visit our website, [www.nolafoodpolicy.org](http://www.nolafoodpolicy.org).

Thank you to FPAC members, steering committee, partners, and collaborators for making this assessment possible. Thank you to W. K. Kellogg Foundation for supporting the FPAC food policy assessment and planning process.

We hope this report will help create a more just and equitable food system in New Orleans and help clarify and identify opportunities to increase access to healthy food and economic growth through policy.

Sincerely,



Elisa Munoz-Miller  
Co-chair, staff  
New Orleans Food Policy Advisory Committee



# FPAC Members and Supporters

## FPAC co-chairs

Pepper Bowen  
Elisa Munoz-Miller

## FPAC Voting Members

American Heart Association  
Greta Cappelman  
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Fund 17  
Rachel Schell-Lambert  
Liberty's Kitchen  
Market Umbrella  
National Food & Beverage  
Foundation/Culinaria monograph  
New Orleans Health Department  
Propeller: A Force for Social Innovation  
Recirculating Farms Coalition  
The Renaissance Project  
Schmelly's Dirt Farm  
Sodexo  
SPROUT NOLA  
Top Box Foods-New Orleans  
Tulane Prevention Research Center  
Tulane University

## Steering Committee

Dig Easy  
New Orleans Health Department  
National Food & Beverage  
Foundation/Culinaria monograph  
Propeller: A Force for Social Innovation  
Second Harvest Food Bank  
SPROUT NOLA  
Tulane Prevention Research Center

## FPAC Participating Members and Partners

Central Louisiana Food Policy Council  
Eat Local NOLA  
Fresh Central  
Lafitte Greenway  
Life City  
The Louisiana Budget Project  
Louisiana Public Health Institute  
The Media Group  
New Orleans Culinary &  
Hospitality Institute  
Tulane University School of  
Public Health  
Volunteers of America, Greater New  
Orleans, Inc  
W. K. Kellogg Foundation



## Foreword

The New Orleans Food Policy Advisory Committee (FPAC) is a broad-based coalition of individuals, organizations, and businesses working together to create systemic change in the New Orleans Food System through policy. In Spring of 2017, FPAC received funding from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to complete a food policy assessment.

Since Hurricane Katrina (2005), the New Orleans food and food related policy landscapes have shifted rapidly. To promote, encourage, and motivate healthy and culturally appropriate eating and food access in New Orleans it is necessary to work at the policy level. There is no one city agency that governs food policy; instead departments such as transportation, zoning, housing, and economic development impact access to and availability of fresh, healthy, affordable food. To develop sound food policy, we need to examine existing policies that impact food access, which city agencies are involved, and departmental interaction. This food policy assessment will help us understand the intersection of departments, policies, and regulations.<sup>i</sup> Outcomes of the assessment describe opportunities for improvements in efficiency of the local food system.<sup>ii</sup>



## Scope

In this food policy assessment the existing food system of New Orleans was reviewed to identify opportunities for improvement. The assessment is the result of a series of targeted surveys sent to participants who have been identified as stakeholders in the local food system. Participant categories were as follows:

- Organizations supporting food business development
- Organizations working in and on the food system
- Food production
- Food businesses
- Food in schools
- Food in institutions





The questions were constructed to ascertain the respondent's role in the food system, whether any existing policy challenges exist to allow full participation in the food system; and whether any steps have been taken to address those challenges.

### Respondents self-identified as follows:

- Organizations supporting food business development: business development/incubator, business growth/accelerator, technical assistance for food businesses, technical assistance for small businesses, personal finance education, networking/mentorship, financial services and products, co-working, business consulting, community workshops
- Organizations working in and around the food system: hunger/food assistance, school food, public health, research, poverty reduction, funding/grant making, government, education and/or training, gardening or farming for food production, food retail, food policy advocacy, job development, community power building/organizing, waste management, food processing, distribution, economic development
- Food businesses: value-add maker, distributor, retailer, grocery and food delivery service, meal preparation service, chef or cook, food consultant, teaching farm, commissary owner
- Food production: urban farmer, rural farmer, rancher (meat or dairy), fisher, gardener, beekeeper, composter, baker, fermenter, permaculture enthusiast, public garden
- School food: food providers, school nutrition programs
- Food in Institutions: business owners, food service providers, nutritionists

This assessment is limited to the categories and roles explicitly solicited for information and subsequent participation in the food system survey. Any aspect of the food system not expressly noted is beyond the scope of this assessment.



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## Introduction

According to the United States Census Bureau, in 2016 New Orleans' population was 391,495 <sup>iii</sup> resulting in a ranking of 49th among the 50 states in population <sup>iv</sup>. Of that population, the food insecurity rate was last calculated at 23.7% <sup>v</sup>, sixth highest in the country.

Arguments range as to the cause of such high rates of food insecurity from high unemployment and high incarceration to low wages and low education rates. The most obvious solution is that there simply isn't enough food available, fresh or otherwise. It is likely that both the cause and the remedy will be a combination of multiple factors.

The New Orleans Food Policy Advisory Committee (FPAC) is an advisory body formed to support and assist in the development of a more equitable, sustainable local food system. The 2007 FPAC recommended <sup>vi</sup> that in order to increase access to healthy food for residents the City of New Orleans should:

- 1) Adopt fresh food retailing as a priority for comprehensive neighborhood development and direct the Office of Recovery and Development Administration to provide grants and loans to food retail projects located in target areas.
- 2) Reduce regulatory barriers to businesses that sell fresh food.
- 3) Provide tax incentives to encourage the sale of fresh food.
- 4) Prioritize security for supermarkets and grocery stores.

FPAC recommendations to the City of New Orleans and the State of Louisiana, were <sup>vii</sup>:

- 5) Make economic development programs available to fresh food retailers.
- 6) Address the need for transportation to supermarkets, grocery stores, and farmers' markets.



FPAC recommendations to the State of Louisiana were<sup>viii</sup>:

- 7) Develop a financing program that will provide grants and loans to supermarkets, smaller grocery stores, and other fresh food retailers that enhance healthy food access in underserved areas.
- 8) Expand participation in federal nutrition programs that enable more residents - especially seniors and families with children - to purchase locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables at farmers' markets.
- 9) Partner with fresh food retailers to create vocational training opportunities in the fresh food retail sector.

Finally, a general recommendation made by FPAC was that<sup>ix</sup>:

- 10) The New Orleans Food Policy Advisory Committee serve as an ongoing, multi-stakeholder advisory body to the City Council ... [to] explore issues such as improving the nutritional value of food served in our schools.

A retrospective look at the “build it and they will come”<sup>x</sup> recommendations shows implementations with varying levels and degrees of success. Most notable achievements have been the Fresh Food Retailers Initiative (FFRI), Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), and the Louisiana Farm-to-School (F2S) Network.

The City of New Orleans' Fresh Food Retailers Initiative (FFRI) program has directed low-interest and/or forgivable loans to supermarkets, grocery stores, and other fresh food retailers. The City provided \$7,000,000 in Disaster Community Development Block Grant funds matched 1:1 by Hope Enterprise Corporation<sup>xi</sup>. The program has funded Circle Foods, Whole Foods in Mid-City, the Dryades Public Market, and, most recently, the Robert Fresh Market currently under construction in the Marigny, which has also been preliminarily approved for a substantial reduction on the assessed tax value.<sup>xii</sup>



The United States Department of Agriculture in Louisiana launched an initiative for “hoop houses” through the Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) benefitting New Orleans community and urban gardens or farms.<sup>xiii</sup> And Parkway Partners, coordinator of community gardens and farms in New Orleans, boasts their Urban Garden program encompasses over 43 community gardens, urban farms and orchards.<sup>xiv</sup>

The Louisiana Farm to School Network (F2S) has successfully lobbied for legislation that encourages connection between schools and local farmers and simplifies the purchasing process between schools and farmers.<sup>xv</sup> Senate Bill 420<sup>xvi</sup>, passed in 2016, aims to increase the use of locally grown produce and products in school meals.<sup>xvii</sup> Roughly 80,000<sup>xviii</sup> school-aged children in Orleans Parish are impacted.

Still, rates of food insecurity remain inordinately high. Other reasons must exist to prevent the initiatives begun ten years ago from having the intended impact. The answer may lie within the food system itself.

The New Orleans food policy assessment was conducted to clearly identify the existing local food system, its stakeholders, challenges, and opportunities for improvement. Targeted participants can be largely grouped into system cycle phases: 1) planning, 2) production and distribution, and 3) preparation and consumption.





## Objective

Unlike housing, transportation, zoning, and economic development departments and agencies that are constructed specifically to address critical initiatives in New Orleans, there is no single identifiable government department or agency established or operating to protect the public interest in food. To address issues of food access and food security, the Tulane Prevention Research Center initiated the formation of the Food Policy Advisory Committee (FPAC) at the request of the New Orleans City Council by resolution in 2007. Original members of FPAC included a wide range of professionals from varied business and academic sectors who were united by their interest in the improvement of the local food system. In a report published in 2007, the group noted “[i]n many urban and rural neighborhoods, it is very easy to buy soda or fast food, but very difficult to find fruits and vegetables.”<sup>xix</sup> Ten years later, that finding remains largely true. FPAC is currently a partner and sector chair for the City of New Orleans FitNOLA initiative which works with community partners to create a healthier city by promoting physical activity and improved nutrition

Though FPAC has been the catalyst for substantial improvements in the availability of fresh food in New Orleans<sup>xx</sup>, it is now time to reassess the current local food system. This system is the result of various interworking departments, policies, and overlapping regulations. Through support provided by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, FPAC has been able to perform an assessment of the existing food system in New Orleans. Accordingly, this information will provide a better understanding of the food system and will inform how the community can be better served, establish policies that do not currently exist, and modify those that may not be functioning optimally.

### Goal of the assessment

The goal of the Assessment was to identify the best opportunities and most serious barriers to a healthy food system that exist in the local food system policies. This assessment will inform the work done toward FPAC’s mission to shape public policy to improve equity, opportunity, and collaboration in our local food system.



The broad objective of this Assessment is to understand the intersection of departments, policies, and regulations impacting the local food system. Once identified, a cohesive plan may be crafted to improve food access and security for all members of the community. Additionally, the plan must be approached with particular care given to racial justice, which is defined<sup>xxi</sup> as the proactive reinforcement of policies, practices, attitudes and actions that produce equitable power, access, opportunities, treatment, impacts and outcomes for all.

## What's in the assessment

The assessment segments the participants of the food system into parts as follows:

### 1. Planning

Food system planning is the collaborative process of developing and implementing local and regional land-use, economic development, public health, and environmental goals, programs and policies.<sup>xxii</sup> Organizations working in a supportive role for food businesses and operating as policy advocates for a sustainable and self-supportive food system are situated at the beginning of the food system whether it be local, national, or international. Their work informs cross-disciplinary approaches and encourages synergistic food policies.<sup>xxiii</sup>

### 2. Production and distribution

A community food system “integrates food production, processing, distribution, consumption and disposal to enhance the environmental, economic, social and nutritional health of a particular place.”<sup>xxiv</sup> Organizations and businesses that either produce, add value to existing, or sell food are in the middle of the food system. Their work is the food product itself.

### 3. Preparation and consumption

Food systems need to be more efficient in the use of resources at every stage from primary production to transformation, distribution and consumption.<sup>xxv</sup> Organizations polled for this section are largely not businesses directly related to food; rather, they purchase and provide food for employees, students, and guests of the facility.





## Who is the intended audience

This assessment was conducted by staff and members of FPAC. It is constructed to clearly identify barriers and opportunities to a healthy food system that exist in the greater New Orleans area food system. Elected officials, policy-makers, food producers, food business and system advocates, administrators, and residents of New Orleans may find components of this assessment useful as they attempt to work within the food system or even aid in its improvement. It is suggested that readers outside of the New Orleans area, who may seek to use this assessment as a guide to address their own local food system, recognize the view through which this assessment was conducted.

## Approach

FPAC completed the food policy assessment by surveying food businesses and associated organizations utilizing two techniques:

1. Electronic survey
2. Key informant interviews

First an electronic survey of questions ranging in number from twelve (12) to fifty (50) was directed to food related businesses. The businesses were limited to organizations supporting food business development; organizations working in and on the food system; food production related organizations; other food related businesses; schools; and institutions. The questions inquired generally how the group interacts with the food system, what products and/or services they provide, who their customers are; and where challenges exist for the organization to provide and/or produce their products and/or services exist.

Secondly, direct key informant interviews were held with city's Health Department, farm to school advocates, school food providers, and school administrators. Conducting a face-to-face interview allowed for more in depth and pointed discussion on existing law and policy in categories with complex and multifaceted policies or which were underrepresented in survey responses.



# Planning

## Organizations working in and on the food system

There are several organizations in the New Orleans area working on improving the food system. These organizations focus on the areas of hunger/food assistance, school food, public health, research, poverty reduction, funding/grant-making, government, education and/or training, gardening or farming, food retail, food policy, job development, community power, waste management, food processing, distribution, and economic development.

These organizations reported successes working in the New Orleans food system. Some of the largest have been in public education and awareness, healthy food retail, and modification of restaurant practices around waste. Many of these programs are ongoing and their full impact will not be quantifiable for some time.

Some reporting organizations are not working on policy, regulatory, or advocacy related work. Those that are, however, have done work such as generate studies and data to inform policy; work to stop the dismantling of the Magnuson-Stevens Act, supported market match programs for SNAP/WIC recipients, expanded prescriptions for the fresh fruit and vegetable program; and have implemented Healthy Food Choice in Jefferson Parish<sup>xxvi</sup> and Louisiana State<sup>xxvii</sup> Buildings.

Most reporting organizations are working without a lobbyist, but others either have a lobbyist on staff, contract with one as needed, or work with lobbyists from partner organizations. Half of these organizations cited no policies/rules or regulations hindering their work. The other half noted city ordinances and federal regulations, policies, and costs as prohibitive. Resulting ways that local, state, or national policymakers could enhance the work vary based on specific organization initiatives, but include incentives for fresh food purchases and consumption and local food procurement, reduced operation costs driven by regulations, fines for actions that counteract the organization's mission (ex. fines for landfilling organics), information dissemination to the community, and clarity of language in regulations for licensure.



## Challenges

Organizations shared the challenges they face working in the local food system. Answers varied, but common themes appeared around coordination, funding, support, cost of running programs, limited capacity, and vendor accountability.

These groups of predominantly non-profit and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are frustrated equally by the lack of coordination in the local food system as they are the lack of monetary and human resources to do this work. More than one respondent noted that the competition for resources hinders collaboration; without collaboration, growth is compromised. Further, each group works independently, thereby segmenting the possible impact of the outcomes.

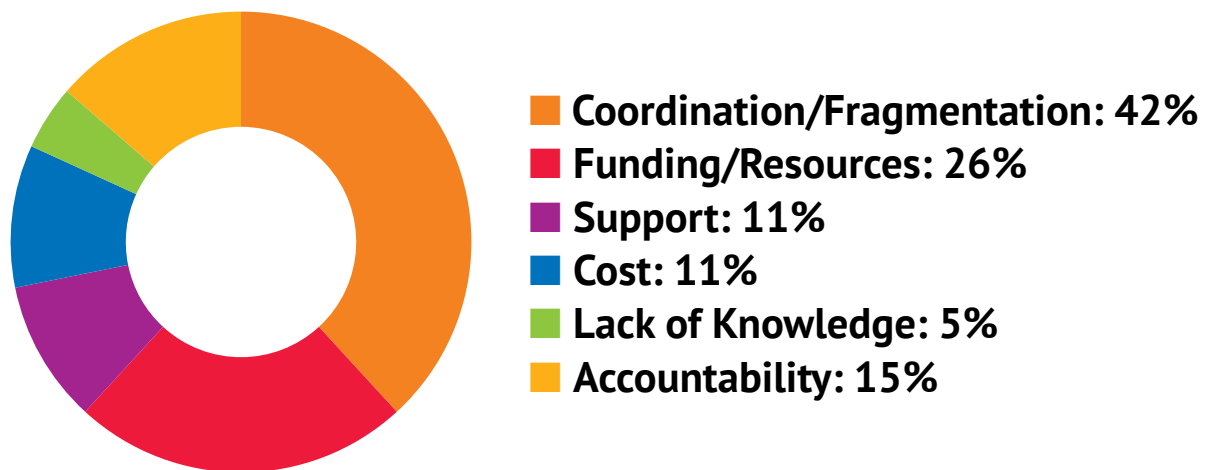


Figure 1: Challenges for Organizations working on the food system

Over half of the respondents noted policies that hinder their work. These policies range from local to federal concerns. Local and national frameworks concerning agriculture including farm needs and organic certification were listed. There is misinformation around federal requirements for labeling, certifications, donations, and tax incentives. State policies for government assisted purchasing and producer processing are impacting both farmers' ability to sell and SNAP and WIC customers' ability to purchase. And local ordinances around land and water access impact farm needs and their ability to operate.

Improvements are believed possible. Options include incentivizing diversified and small-scale agriculture, possibly through tax credits, as well as tax incentives for food donations. Transparency is suggested for policy creation; greater accountability is needed for vendors; increased promotion of and access to opportunities for social and environmental impact; and dissemination of information throughout the community would improve the food system.

### Respondent recommendations

- State funding for grown items through a Grow program similar to that existing in Massachusetts (<http://www.mass.gov/agr/massgrown/>)
- Passage of the Urban Agriculture bill presented by Sen. Stabenow from Michigan
- Smart Snacks Initiative – School Nutrition
- Entrepreneurial support in city or state level funding
- Citizen focused and not corporate friendly food policy
- Support existing initiatives begun by partner organizations
- Collectivized approach to address food system challenges by increasing cohesion and reducing redundancy in State agencies



## Organizations supporting food business development

Organizations that work in support of food business development were surveyed. The list of services provided by these organizations includes business development and growth, technical assistance, personal finance education, networking/mentorship, co-working space, and business consulting. All reporting organizations that support food business development are nonprofits that work directly in policy, regulations or engage in round-tables and other convenings to lend perspective to policy issues. These organizations provide business mentorship, networking opportunities, technical assistance, coaching, and workshops specific to food businesses. The client base for these organizations is minority-owned, women-owned, established, or aspiring small businesses as well as social entrepreneurs.

### Challenges

These organizations were unanimous in their identification of the One Stop Shop as the policy or regulatory barrier for their clients. Explanations included difficulty in navigating the site and difficulty finding sought information. Additionally, there is confusion around city licensing processes and requirements.

For value-add food producers, renting commercial kitchens, paying for nutritional labeling and necessary insurances present financial barriers to entry. Most entrepreneurs are unaware of the resources for food businesses including grants and low- to no interest loans. Consequently, some have fallen prey to predatory lenders.



## Respondent recommendations

- Lending that works in conjunction with markets.
- Micro-lending/small business lending.
- Increased funding for fresh/healthy food retail programming.
- Monetary incentives for stores to carry more fresh healthy foods.
- Increased funding for impact lending and mission-based lenders.
- Policy to minimize availability of predatory loans.





# Production and distribution

## Food Production

Because food production is such a broad topic, a variety of types and methods of food producers were surveyed for this assessment. Participating food producers were predominantly urban and rural farmers, but also included ranchers, fishermen, gardeners, beekeepers, and composters.

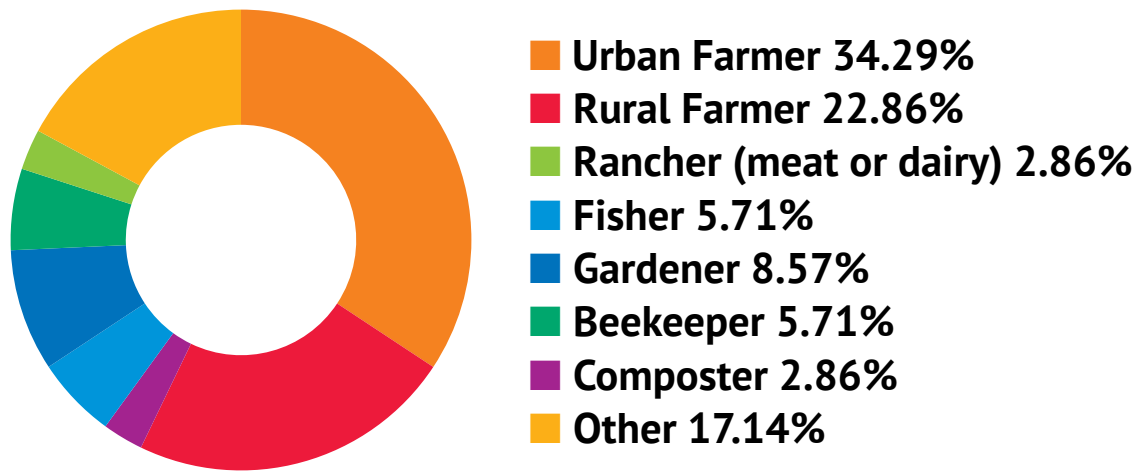


Figure 2: Categories of food producers

Those who self-identified as “other” are those who identified multiple roles such as urban farmers and rural farmers or beekeepers and nursery stock growers; bakers; permaculture enthusiasts; public gardeners; and fermenting value-adders. Respondents raise bees, chickens, cows, duck, farmed fish and crawfish, goats, lamb, pigs and rabbits. And over half (54.4%) of respondents were also value-adders.

Farmers expressed concern that the amount of land available for use is insufficient to make a profit. Nearly half (42.86%) own the land, the rest lease by some form of agreement. Most (57.14%) reported experiencing obstacles in acquiring land including exorbitant rates in urban areas, lack of capital, and an imbalance of cost to quality.

The minority (11.54%) were certified organic; those who were not cite reasons for not seeking certification, even if it impacts sales, to cost of certification and lack of return on that investment, and inability to control surrounding areas that may cross pollinate. Most (53.85%) were not Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) or Good Handling Practices (GHP) certified; were aware of resources available or have participated in training; but felt it has had no impact on sales.

Just over half (52.17%) of the food producers had heard about the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA). Nearly half (43.48%) were aware of exemptions to FSMA requirements. And over half (52.17%) were aware of training or resources to become FSMA compliant. Several respondents commented that constraints of federal regulations including the FSMA Produce Safety Rule, and rules around organic fertilizer, and urban composting add complications to their operations.

Resulting opportunities to assist food producers in meeting these challenges are focused on providing guidance around federal requirements including labeling and cooling temperatures, zoning limitations, permits for harvest, prep, and sale, and cost/profit margins.



## Challenges

Food producers surveyed reported a wide range of challenges. Time and human resources were mentioned. Themes repeated around money, marketing, and business management. Marketing is reportedly difficult and expensive. The associated costs of doing business make the profit-margins slim and do not encourage business growth.

Unwieldy local, state, national, and global policies are ongoing challenges. Regulations requiring rental of commercial commissary kitchens in order to produce value added products is difficult and expensive. Unclear zoning regulations or specifically prohibitive beekeeping zoning regulations within urban parishes encourage predominantly rural parish operation and impede urban pollination. Certified organic farmers must meet strict regulations to maintain certification. Multiple respondents report the record-keeping and monitoring necessary under the Produce Safety Rule as a tremendous burden. Small farmers admit they want to use best practices and be as safe as possible, but the additional monitoring requirements are prohibitive. The rules for getting dairy to market present a large barrier in regulatory complexity and lack of clarity. Regulations, permits, and governmental requirements for harvesting, preparation, and sales make commercial fishing difficult while cheap foreign seafood products seem to dominate the local markets making competition prohibitive.

Land and water access, security, and contamination create ongoing challenges. The high cost to purchase land is a barrier for many and the complexities to install an agricultural water meter on a temporary site are too expensive in both time and money.



## Respondent recommendations

- Assistance with land-use acquisition such as a government program to connect farmers/growers with unused/blighted properties or a land trust.
- Incentives to grow on temporarily available land such as free water hookups, grants, or financial assistance in erecting fencing or other small structures.
- Fresh food markets in every neighborhood.
- Free business training in languages spoken in New Orleans area.
- Increased taxes on imported food products.
- Assistance for new producers to navigate complexities of creating a healthy food business.
- State and local representatives visit farms and promote local agriculture.
- Additional state resources and larger knowledge base for beekeepers and honey producers.
- Change in processing, raising, growing, and sale regulations and/or policies.
- Restrict sales from foreign states during high seasons in order to promote locally grown, raised, and caught products.



## Food business

Surveyed respondents represent a variety of food businesses, but are predominantly (78.57%) value-add makers who use commercial commissary, restaurant, and home kitchens to make their products to sell at farmers' markets, small groceries, food co-operatives, restaurants, institutions, and corner stores. Most of the value adders sell in the greater New Orleans area all the way to Baton Rouge, but some respondents sell as far as Shelby Parish in Louisiana and Tennessee.

This group of value adders got its start-up funding in a variety of ways ranging from pitch contests to personal investments.

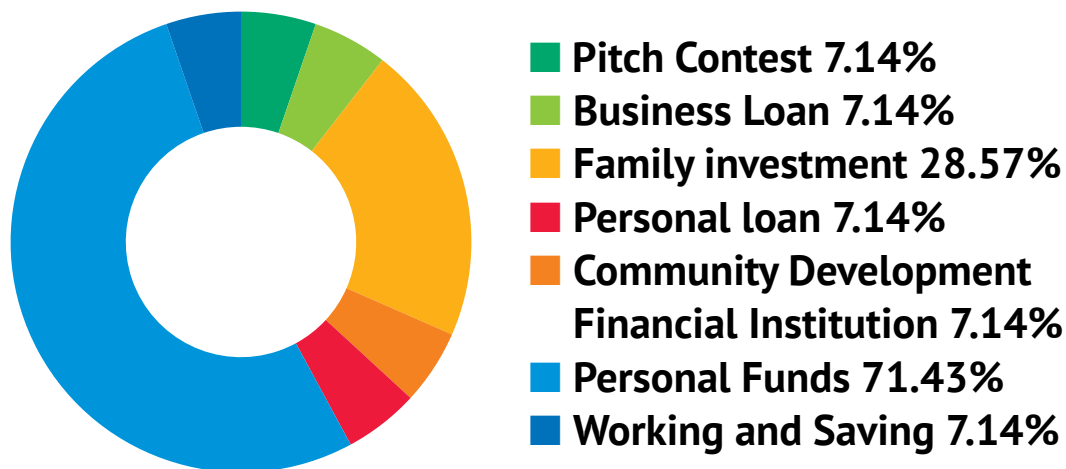


Figure 3: Start-up funding for food businesses

Included in food businesses surveyed were distributors, retailers, food consultants, teaching farms, commissary owners, and grocery stores. This group reported the most difficulty with tax forms, health inspections, permitting, and business/occupational licensure. Some 78.57% of the respondents, including all of the value-add makers, went through the licensing/permitting process on their own.

Food businesses want to see policies that give choice, control, and transparency to make healthful and beneficial choices. To grow, the businesses cited need for additional funding, knowledge of available loans/grants, insurance requirements are hard, and more reasonable vendor rules and city enforcement around food business operation.

## Challenges

A full half of the respondents surveyed reported no policy, rule, or regulatory barrier to starting or growing their business. Of the half experiencing such challenges, each detailed response was unique. Challenges exist around local retail grocery store “red tape”; state and federal regulations on child nutrition funds; and licensure. The only repeated theme was angst around commercial kitchen operation, availability, and cost.

Locating and renting a commissary kitchen for production is reportedly as challenging as owning and running one. Survey responses included uncertainty regarding the supremacy of commercial kitchen rules or cottage food laws; moreover, Department of Health and Human Services (DHH) inspects each individually licensed food producer using a commissary kitchen as opposed to the kitchen itself. Only caterers and retailers are permitted to rent commissary kitchens while wholesale producers are relegated to specifically approved kitchens for wholesalers.

A lack of innovative lending and funding support for food businesses continues to be a barrier for starting and growing businesses. Those with personal funds to start business are much more able to begin, grow, and sustain a business.

## Respondent recommendations

- Provide assistance in marketing, meeting insurance premiums, reaching a larger customer base, securing more employees, and general availability of funding sources.
- Compel enforcement of food truck restrictions.
- Increase information on labels that provides the consumer with complete knowledge of the contents and how it will affect them biologically
- Relax the market rules around inclement weather closures at the Farmers’ Markets.





## Preparation and consumption

### Food in schools

Targeted respondents were either a local school or the vendor under contract to produce and distribute the food to charter and private schools in the Greater New Orleans area. Information was gathered through a combination of completed surveys and key informant interviews. It is important to note that all respondents schools have 50%+1 free or reduced lunch and offer breakfast, snacks, and after-school programming food.

In large part, the schools rely upon major commercial food distributors with a few medium sized produce suppliers interspersed. School food providers would like to offer more local and culturally appropriate options, but are stymied by budgets, time, policy/regulations, waste, and storage limitations. One commenter noted, “Ideally [SB420] would simplify the purchasing process between schools and farmers and promote the purchase of produce suitable for use in school meal programs, support equipment grants for districts that need it, and provide farm to school resources.”

At least one respondent conveyed a policy advocate would make an impact. But all agreed there is currently a weak Farm to School Network<sup>xxviii</sup> and admit to having little knowledge of farmers possessing the local, state, and federally mandated certifications to work directly with schools. Resulting opportunities are the education needed around direct farm-to-school (bill) purchase options; the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP); and food service management companies (FSMC). There is opportunity to increase the amount of fresh, healthy, and local food provided in schools with greater collaboration between FSMCs and schools, and more coordinated communication and external support.

### Challenges

Surveyed school administrators and their FSMCs are unsure about food safety requirements for fresh and local food procurement because they change often. Additionally, there is uncertainty as to whether the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) will impact their ability to provide fresh food. The information gap promotes fear concerning what is legal.



Schools are limited by funding and cannot pay more for healthier food. Requests for proposal (RFPs) for food service providers and procurement are not created by the school and are in place for five (5) years. Resulting contracts are binding and allow for no deviation in what is provided by the third-party food suppliers.

The amount and detail of record-keeping that is necessary for FSMCs is daunting. The records are time-sensitive, require weekly logging, and must include daily production, food handling, provider training, and food waste disposal processes in case of audit.

Schools and farmers struggle to contract with each other in order to provide fresh local options under the Farm to School Bill. Certified distributors do not carry much local food. This is the suspected result of the required food safety certifications to do business that small local farms may not possess.

Although schools report interest in providing more fresh and local options, food is not the primary focus for schools. Existing programming and daily operations do not allow sufficient time needed to discern how to interrupt the current supply chain in order to get local fresh food into schools. Without a coordinated group or resource to advise schools on what is permissible, they tend to continue with the status quo.



## Respondent recommendations

- Policy advocate is needed.
- Clarity and additional information to better understand the Farm to School Bill as its impact on programming is unknown.
- Resources that provide information on navigating existing policies around connecting with local food producers
- Revision of state level school RFP criteria to include local procurement and food quality



## Food in institutions

Institutional participants were limited to insurance providers, a hospital/health system, morning newspaper/print media, machine manufacturer, and a fitness studio. The objective was to ascertain how large institutions provide food for their staff, clients, and visitors and whether they directly purchase from local producers, farmers, or other agricultural sources thereby contributing to the local food system. The answer is that though these institutions are local in geography and service people who eat, they are largely removed from directly providing food.

Food for these institutions is almost equally reported as being made onsite by hired staff or a third-party contractor, prepared off-site by a third-party contractor; or no food provided at all on a regular basis. However, the institutions recognize their staff must eat so they permit food trucks on-site, but do not partner with them. Additionally, an exception to this is providing food for special occasions. Otherwise, these institutions rely upon vending machines, coffee carts, cafeteria and patient food services. Some of these institutions expect neighboring restaurants to provide food. This expectation may impact the culture promoted of either eating on campus, bringing food from home, or patronizing nearby vendors. Others have internal policies, state health regulations, DHH and Joint Commission requirements to meet which may inform considerations of providing food.

Institutions contracting with third-parties to provide food report there are several factors impacting the institutions' food purchasing priorities. These include price, quality, condition, convenience, availability, local product, and client preference. Respondents reveal purchasing policies and standards for those with central offices located elsewhere are equally created by the home and local offices. This may explain why the only recommendation for assisting the institution in providing more local and/or fresh options was incentives.



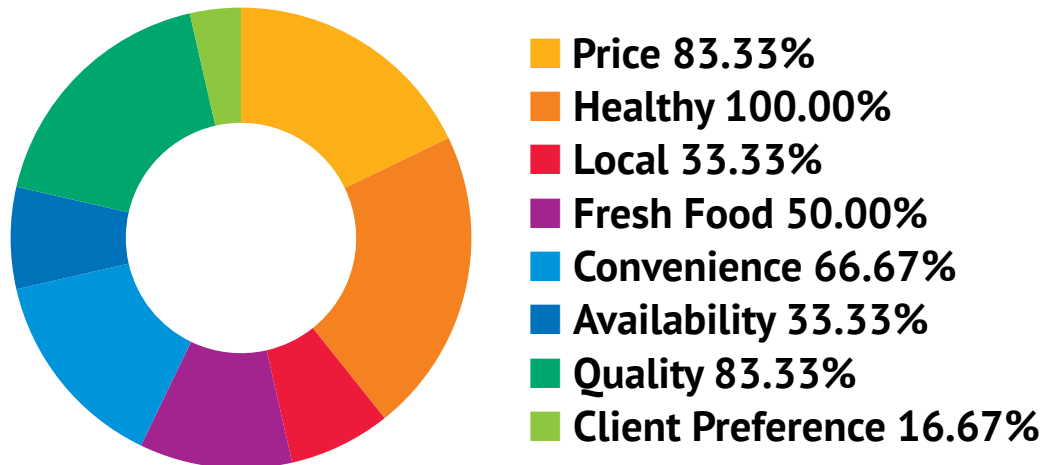


Figure 4: Institutional food purchasing priorities

Finally, nearly half of these institutions were interested in increasing local food options, while most remained unsure. Conversely, nearly half were unsure about increasing the amount of fresh food options, while most were interested. Institutions surveyed reported they either throw away, donate, or don't deal with food waste or surplus product and are simultaneously satisfied with existing food waste or surplus handling.

### Challenges

Institutions reported no policy for or regulatory barriers to operating despite having internal policies, state health regulations, DHH and Joint Commission requirements to meet. This is likely because they do not directly provide food to the institution's staff, clients, and visitors.

### Respondent Recommendation

- Incentives to assist the institution in providing more local and/or fresh options

## Conclusion

**We, the members of the New Orleans Food Policy Advisory Committee**, believe that all of our citizens deserve equal access to fresh, nutritious food and culturally appropriate food as well as equal opportunity to grow, make, and sell food and food products. Our recommendations focus increased equity in the food system and the opportunity for all to grow, make, and eat food that is nutritious, culturally appropriate and the support needed to realize these goals.

### The New Orleans Food Policy Advisory Committee shall:

Work with the City of New Orleans to provide easy to understand resources and information to those wishing to grow, make, and/or sell food in order to reduce the confusion around policies and regulations.

Develop a local Good Food Purchasing Program providing incentives for institutional purchasing, value chain coordination, and business support for food businesses interested in selling to a large purchaser.

Identify the laws and policies that govern simple processing, packaging, and selling of produce on agricultural growing site and make recommendations to policy makers on improvements and changes.

### We recommend the City of New Orleans:

Support and incentivize development/investment in infrastructure such as commercial kitchens (prioritizing commercial kitchens with business development support and affordable rental rates) and food hubs or other forms of local food aggregation.

Support a continuation of the Fresh Food Retail Initiative (FFRI) programming as well as an explore innovative financing options for food related businesses (to include alternative distribution models such as farmers markets and mobile markets) and transparency around the usage of these funds and their impact.





Make the existing One Stop Shop system easier to access and navigate and provide clear information on the policies and regulations that govern local food businesses.

Support infrastructure for urban farms and community gardens in New Orleans with transparent processes to land acquisition and leases that allow for long-term investment in growing space.

Recognize that urban agriculture can be part of a healthy water management strategy, and support and incentivize rainwater catchment systems for urban agriculture and gardening. As well, city support for municipal water line installation on urban farms and community gardens is recommended.

Appoint a city food liaison to work interdepartmentally, ensuring food is interwoven into all policies.

### We recommend the State of Louisiana:

Support a continuation and expansion of the Healthy Food Retail Act.

Recognize the importance of agriculture for Louisiana's economy and culture and support and advocate for the 2016 Urban Agriculture Bill, which increases support for urban and rural agriculture at a state and federal level.

Work with partner organizations to provide technical assistance related to implementation of Farm to School Program Act 404.



## Definitions

**Collaboration:** focuses on bringing key stakeholders to the table and facilitating cooperation across disciplines, organizations and neighborhoods to support the food system.

**FDA Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) Produce Safety rule:** establishes, for the first time, science-based minimum standards for the safe growing, harvesting, packing, and holding of fruits and vegetables grown for human consumption. <sup>xxix</sup>

**Food access and education:** seeks system-level changes in our community and school settings to make it more convenient for residents to access healthy food and for community organizations to provide nutrition education.

**Food-related business development:** identifies strategies to increase access to capital and support development and mentorship for marginalized groups

**Food Policy:** A set of collective decisions made by government at all levels, businesses, and organizations that affect how food gets from the farm to your table. A food policy can be as broad as a federal regulation on food labelling or as local and specific as a zoning law that lets city dwellers raise honeybees. <sup>xxx</sup>

**Food Production:** Supports local farmers and producers by identifying strategies to expand growing opportunities and processing infrastructure.

**Food system:** food production, processing, distribution, consumption, and waste management. <sup>xxxi</sup>

**Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program (FFVP):** a federally assisted program providing free fresh fruits and vegetables to students in participating elementary schools during the school day. <sup>xxxiii</sup>



**Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and Good Handling Practices (GHP):** are voluntary audits that verify that fruits and vegetables are produced, packed, handled, and stored as safely as possible to minimize risks of microbial food safety hazards. GAP & GHP audits verify adherence to the recommendations made in the U.S. Food and Drug Administration’s Guide to Minimize Microbial Food Safety Hazards for Fresh Fruits and Vegetables <sup>xxxiii</sup> and industry recognized food safety practices. <sup>xxxiv</sup>

**Local:** limited to a 200-mile radius of the city New Orleans city and Orleans Parish geographical limits that include urban and peri-urban farms, food producers, and other food businesses.

**Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (Magnuson-Stevens Act):** the primary law governing marine fisheries management in U.S. federal waters and fosters long-term biological and economic sustainability of our nation’s marine fisheries out to 200 nautical miles from shore. Key objectives are to prevent overfishing, rebuild overfished stocks, increase long-term economic and social benefits, and ensure a safe and sustainable supply of seafood. <sup>xxxv</sup>

**Sustainable food system:** one that provides healthy food to meet current food needs while maintaining healthy ecosystems that can also provide food for generations to come with minimal negative impact to the environment. A sustainable food system also encourages local production and distribution infrastructures and makes nutritious food available, accessible, and affordable to all. Further, it is humane and just, protecting farmers and other workers, consumers, and communities. <sup>xxxvi</sup>



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