Tompkins County
Community Food System Plan
UPDATE
February 2022

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We need a stronger food system now

Greenhouse gas and climate change:
food travels 1500 miles to our tables

Food spending in Tompkins County:
$349,583,000 ($8,556 average / household)

Food insecurity among County residents:
11.9% of adults, 13.6% of children

Diet impacts health and contributes to chronic diseases
24% obesity rate in Tompkins County
Vision: a food system that is **sustainable**, **equitable**, **healthy** and **affordable** for all members of our community

**Process to date**

- Identified key challenges, vulnerabilities, and assets in the local food system.
- Captured the stories, struggles, concerns, and the hopes of everyone who eats.
- Will Articulate shared recommendations for future actions and policies based on input.
- After plan developed, implement changes that move us towards our shared long-term vision.
Community Collaborators and Contributors

- Cayuga Health Partners
- Childhood Nutrition Collaborative
- Cornell Cooperative Extension TC
- Cornell University
- Farmers and business owners
- Food Justice Project
- Food pantry staff and volunteers
- Food pantry clients
- Food Bank of the Southern Tier
- Food Task Force
- Friendship Donation Network
- Groundswell Center for Local Food and Farming
- Ithaca Area Economic Development
- Ithaca Green New Deal
- Ithaca College
- Finger Lakes Land Access, Reparations and Reconciliation Working Group
- Mothers Out Front
- The Learning Farm
- TC Council of Governments
- TC Legislature
- TC Health Department
- TC Planning and Sustainability
- TC Recycling and Materials Management
- Traditional Center for Indigenous Knowledge and Healing
- Unbroken Promises Initiative
- WRFI Ithaca Community Radio
- Youth Farm Project
Community Engagement and Input

**Volunteers**
- 46 volunteers with Food System Planning Team
- 30+ working group members reviewing reports

**Public Meetings**
- 100+ attendees 2020 kickoff
- 80+ attendees 2021 report out

**Surveys**
- 592 responses to Food Access Questionnaire
- 541 responses to Community Food Needs Survey

**Interviews and Input**
- 60+ in-depth interviews with stakeholders
- Dozens of conversations with community members
- 15 in-person conversations with food pantry clients
- Ongoing focus groups and stakeholder feedback
Food System Baseline Assessment Executive Summaries

Baseline Sections
- Production
- Infrastructure
- Food Environment
- Food Access and Security
- Consumption
- Waste

Data Sources:
- Primary interviews and surveys
- USDA ERS Food Environment Atlas
- USDA Ag Census
- US Census
- Feeding America
- JobsEQ (Ithaca Area Development)
- Various local studies

Read Executive Summaries at:
www.tompkinsfoodfuture.org/reports
TOMPKINS COUNTY AGRICULTURE AT-A-GLANCE

Farmers work in relationship with the land and environment to provide the foundation of food for our community.

523 Farms in Tompkins County (Declining)
75% Small farms (<180 acres)
1/3 Farmland rented
8.6% of farms are certified organic
$65M Market value of products sold
70% Sell <$40,000 annually

94% Farmland for growing animal feed
55% Farms reporting net losses
19% Farms selling direct-to-consumer
<0.9% Farms run by farmers of color
56.8 Average age of farmers
Production Opportunities

Financial incentives and transition support for retiring and beginning farmers

Education, training, and mentorship program expansion to prepare and support beginning farmers

Financial investment in small farmers who wish to expand would increase capacity in our local food system

Climate impact education would help farmers prepare, plan, and maintain resiliency

Climate mitigation funds would help farmers invest in infrastructure

Payments for ecosystem services would increase the carbon carrying / water retention capacity of cultivated areas

Collective infrastructure such as a grower’s cooperative would help farmers position themselves for growth

Food systems education expansion for children and area residents

Read the full Production Baseline Assessment report: www.tompkinsfoodfuture.org/reports
TOMPKINS COUNTY FOOD ACCESS AT-A-GLANCE

Food security means always having physical & economic access to sufficient, safe & nutritious food that meets their needs for an active and healthy life.

AN AVERAGE MEAL IN TOMPKINS COUNTY IS 17% MORE EXPENSIVE THAN THE NATIONAL AVERAGE

$7.4M
EXTRA $ NEEDED FOR FOOD INSECURE FAMILIES TO MEET NEEDS

62%
SNAP ELIGIBLE RESIDENTS NOT ENROLLED

1/3
FOOD INSECURE RESIDENTS NOT ELIGIBLE FOR SNAP

11.6%
OF RESIDENTS ARE FOOD INSECURE

13.3%
OF CHILDREN ARE FOOD INSECURE

Warming, extreme weather events, and coastal flooding will all reduce the production and distribution of food. These shifts will lead to price spikes, shortfalls and exacerbated inequalities.

TRUMANSBURG GROTON ENFIELD
FOOD INSECURITY HOTSPOTS

WIC
PARTICIPATION HAS DECLINED SINCE 2011
Household Food Insecurity
Tompkins County NY

Figure 8: Household food insecurity in Tompkins County.

*From Feeding America’s Mapping the Meal Gap Study (food insecurity refers to the USDA’s measurement of lack of access, at times, to enough food for an active, healthy lifestyle for all members of a given household, and limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate foods) https://map.feedingamerica.org/

**From Feeding America’s analysis of food insecurity “Scenario C” (if unemployment increases by 7.6 percentage points and poverty increases by 4.8 percentage points, 17.1 million more people will experience food insecurity) https://hungerandhealth.feedingamerica.org/2020/03/impact-coronavirus-food-insecurity/
Opportunities

**Pay a living wage** throughout Tompkins to help more households afford food

**Make SNAP participation easier** to increase the food budgets of the 62% of eligible households not currently enrolled

**Provide free transportation for food access** to support the use of SNAP and WIC benefits

**Provide free/low-cost food delivery** for low-income households to minimize the burden transportation places on food access

**Expand community outreach** to inform residents about their options and reduce stigma associated with financial food assistance and free grocery programs

**Improve data and resource management** for food donations, food rescue, and perishable items to optimize distribution of emergency food

**Develop our food assistance workforce** to increase quality food and service in emergency food programs

Read the full Food Access and Security Baseline Assessment report: [www.tompkinsfoodfuture.org/reports](http://www.tompkinsfoodfuture.org/reports)
TOMPKINS COUNTY INFRASTRUCTURE AT-A-GLANCE

The process of how our food gets to our plates is complex, obscure and poorly understood by food consumers. It requires transportation, cold storage facilities, computer systems that track orders and inventory, and relationships and shared expectations between farmers, value added producers, distributors, retailers, and end users.

Large food businesses that operate in Tompkins will not share their data or provide transparency about their operations here.

THE COST OF DOING BUSINESS IN TOMPKINS IS HIGH, MAKING LOCAL FOOD PRODUCTS MORE EXPENSIVE THAN COMPETITORS

LOCAL DISTRIBUTORS SPECIALIZE IN BUYING FROM LOCAL FARMS AND ENGAGE IN COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

SMALL FARMS HAVE TROUBLE FINDING PROCESSORS TO FREEZE, CAN, OR FERMENT THEIR PRODUCE

ENTREPRENEURS NEED ACCESS TO COMMERCIAL KITCHENS, REFRIGERATED TRUCKS AND OTHER EXPENSIVE CAPITAL EQUIPMENT

MONTHS OR YEARS FOR AN APPOINTMENT TO PROCESS LIVESTOCK

WHERE ARE LARGE DISTRIBUTORS SOURCING FROM

HOW MANY FOOD DOLLARS LEAVE TOMPKINS
A mix of businesses and institutions create the “food environment” in any community. Grocery stores, supermarkets, convenience stores, specialty markets, institutional food service, farmers markets, restaurants public schools, and emergency food services impact the lives of residents and the broader local economy.

113 FOOD RETAIL OUTLETS
105 FULL SERVICE RESTAURANTS
74 FAST FOOD RESTAURANTS
3,279 WORKERS IN FOOD RETAIL SECTOR
$37K AVERAGE ANNUAL WAGE
5 RESTAURANTS PROVIDING LIVING WAGE

LOCAL INSTITUTIONS HAVE PURCHASING POWER, MINIMAL LOCAL FOOD PROCUREMENT

FARMERS MARKETS IN 6 COMMUNITIES, EVERY DAY OF WEEK, 143 VENDORS. THIN MARGINS FOR FARMERS, HIGH COSTS FOR CONSUMERS.

AT LEAST 17 FOOD PANTRIES COUNTY-WIDE, PRESENT IN EVERY MUNICIPALITY. 25 FOOD BANK OF THE SOUTHERN TIER PARTNERS.
Tompkins County Food Consumption At-a-Glance

Dietary patterns, food culture, and availability affect what we eat and that impacts our community health, economy, and the environment.

- 24% of adults are obese
- 12% of children are obese
- 87% say "good food" means nutritious and enjoyable to eat*
- 24% say they eat 2 or fewer daily servings of fruit or veg* each day
- 53% say healthy, affordable food is a key issue*

Increasing access to healthy food was the highest priority identified by Tompkins community members.

- $8,556 annual food costs per household
- $4,972 spent on food eaten at home
- $3,593 spent on food eaten out

*Based on Tompkins Community Survey responses
Tompkins County Food Waste At-A-Glance

Wasting food is a misuse of valuable resources. Food is the single largest component of solid waste in landfill and incinerators - and a major source of the greenhouse gas methane.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barriers</th>
<th>Opportunities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient funding for residential collection</td>
<td>Provide residential food scrap collection</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fear of liability re: donations</td>
<td>NYS Food Donation and Food Scraps Recycling Law which bans food waste from large generators</td>
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<td>Misconceptions + education</td>
<td>Offer food waste reduction tools (schools, restaurants, stores)</td>
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<td>Lack of small - medium collectors + community composting sites</td>
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An estimated 35% of all food produced is never eaten.

3,384,900 pounds of food waste composted by Cayuga Compost

120,372 pounds of residential food scraps collected

14 food scrap drop sites in Tompkins

1,400 lbs of food saved per day by FDN
Moving Forward Together

**VISION:** A food system that is **sustainable, equitable, healthy and affordable** for all members of our community

**3 DIRECTIONS for our local food system:**

1. Build Resilience
2. Cultivate Equity, Sovereignty, and Economic Opportunity
3. Promote Human and Ecosystem Health

Read the Food System Plan Draft Directions and Goals: [www.tompkinsfoodfuture.org/reports](http://www.tompkinsfoodfuture.org/reports)
Moving Towards Implementation

Collaborate with community and stakeholders to develop food system plan recommendations, finalize Food System Plan Spring 2022

Provide support and coordination for collaboration among local governments, organizations, institutions, businesses and community groups to implement recommendations and achieve shared food systems goals.

Develop and gather signatures on a Tompkins Food Future Charter based on the Food System Plan. Encourage stakeholders to become champions, get involved in the food system, provide endorsements, and provide funding as sponsors.
Thank you to our funders and supporters

Food Policy Council of Tompkins County
Working to create a just, healthy and inclusive food system in Tompkins County, NY

Cornell Cooperative Extension
Tompkins County

Community Foundation
of Tompkins County
Celebrating 20 Years

Recycling and Materials Management
of Tompkins County
Join TC Food Policy Council

**Meetings:** 9am 3rd Friday of the month

**Contact:** Don Barber, Chair, Tompkins County Food Policy Council 
[Email](mailto:sunnybrk@gmail.com)

Learn and Contribute

**Reports:** [www.tompkinsfoodfuture.org/reports](http://www.tompkinsfoodfuture.org/reports)

**Comment:** [www.tompkinsfoodfuture.org/get-involved](http://www.tompkinsfoodfuture.org/get-involved)
or
[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Edwfuw3vd2yklZqFySYaXQtdEGa8k4I5CoirDH2eXM8/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1Edwfuw3vd2yklZqFySYaXQtdEGa8k4I5CoirDH2eXM8/edit?usp=sharing)

Volunteer with TFF

**Visit:** [www.tompkinsfoodfuture.org/get-involved](http://www.tompkinsfoodfuture.org/get-involved)

**Email:** Katie Hallas [kh788@cornell.edu](mailto:kh788@cornell.edu)