

Almost a decade ago, the Center for Environmental Farming Systems (CEFS) presented From Farm to Fork: A Guide to Building North Carolina’s Sustainable Local Food Economy. The report laid out issue areas and highlighted eleven game-changer ideas to improve local and regional food systems in NC. This summary provides an overview of what progress has been made on those game-changers since the publishing of that report in 2009.

ESTABLISH AND IMPLEMENT A STATEWIDE FOOD POLICY ADVISORY COUNCIL

Summary: The statewide advisory council was formalized by law shortly after the end of the Farm to Fork initiative. The council was sunset in 2013 but has continued to operate without a legislative mandate and coordinates partners across the state. In its tenure the council has made great strides, including influencing policy and practice changes, and inspired the creation of Community Food Strategies.

Historic Milestones:

- 2009 - NC Sustainable Local Food Advisory Council established by law
- 2013 – The council was sunset, but council members voted to continue to work together outside of legal mandate
- 2016 – Start of Community Food Strategies (came from the work of the statewide council)
- Present – The NC Local Food Council (<http://www.nclocalfoodcouncil.org/>) is still meeting regularly and supporting the coordination of communication and resources around supporting a strong local food economy.

APPOINT A STATE-LEVEL FOOD-SYSTEMS OMBUDSMAN

Summary: While a state-level food-systems ombudsman has not been established, many of the purposes of this recommendation have been accomplished through the statewide food policy council, and through other organizations.

DEDICATE PERMANENT AND SIGNIFICANT FUNDING FOR THE N.C. AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT AND FARMLAND PRESERVATION TRUST FUND

Summary: In 2010, legislation passed supporting reoccurring funding for the ADFP Trust Fund. While the original goal to secure \$30 million in funding per year for the ADFP Trust Fund has not been met, the fund has consistently awarded millions of dollars in grants every year and has expanded to preserve farmland near military bases.

Historic Milestones:

- 2010 – Legislation passed supporting reoccurring funding for the ADFP Trust Fund
- 2011 – New law expanded the ADFP Trust Fund to preserve farmland near military bases.
- Present – In 2019 the ADFP Trust Fund awarded \$12.6 million for the year.

HELP NETWORK DIRECT-MARKETING INITIATIVES STATEWIDE

Summary: The Farmers Market Association of NC facilitates statewide communication between farmers markets, largely through an active listserv that supports shared learning. Additionally, there are other means of communication such as Farm to School Coalition meetings, the Community and School Gardens websites, and other opportunities for digital marketing training at NCDA and the CFSA annual conference.

Historic Milestones:

- 2012 – Establishment of the Farmers Market Association of NC
- Present - Still has an active listserv for communications between farmers markets across the state.

ESTABLISH GOALS FOR STATE PROCUREMENT OF LOCAL FOOD - TO ENCOURAGE STATE AGENCIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS TO PURCHASE LOCAL FOODS

Summary: There is not a coordinated statewide goal, but through the 10% Campaign some state agencies and local governments have set goals around local food purchasing. Multiple counties and municipalities have either joined the 10% campaign or passed a resolution in support of it (or are working on one). In addition, several state agencies and eight Universities are also participating.

DEVELOP A MODEL FARM-TO-INSTITUTION PROGRAM THAT ADDRESSES BARRIERS TO PROCUREMENT FOR INSTITUTIONAL MARKETS

Summary: Multiple projects have been initiated to identify barriers, advocate for change and develop models for replication around institutional markets. These include the NC Growing Together initiative, Ufoods (Farm to University), Farm to School, Farm to Early Childcare and Education, and others. Additionally, many resources have been developed, and training opportunities provided to facilitate institutional market development and for farmers to meet those markets.

Historic Milestones:

- 2010 – CEFS and 4H partnered to start hosting FoodCorps service members in NC schools
- 2011 – Farm to School Coalition of NC
- 2013-2018 – CEFS’ NC Growing Together initiative helped connect local farms and fisheries to mainstream markets (including Lowes Foods)
- 2016-2018 – CEFS’ two-year project, Ufoods, worked with six universities in NC to build supply chain links from farms to universities.
- 2016-Present- Statewide Farm to Early Childcare and Education project funded.

FUND A STATEWIDE COORDINATOR AND OTHER ACTIVITIES OF THE N.C. COMMUNITY GARDEN PARTNERS (NCCGP)

Summary: NCCGP is an organization governed by an all-volunteer advisory committee. In the last 10 years NCCGP has had varying levels of funding and employed both full-time and part-time coordinators to support their efforts. One of the biggest outcomes of the NCCGP in the last decade is the strong connections it has built between gardening leadership across the state through the *Grow* workshops.

Historic Milestones:

- 2010 - Founded by North Carolina community gardeners and The Cooperative Extension Program at NC A&T State University. Funding was provided by a USDA CYFAR (Children, Youth, and Families at Risk) Sustainable Community Project grant. Link to the project: <http://nccommunitygardens.blogspot.com/>
- 2015 – A&T Coordinator left her position at the university, NCCGP has some money and was in limbo for about a year.
- 2017 – Rural Advancement Foundation International (RAFI) became the fiscal sponsor.
- Present – Volunteer advisory board, volunteer coordinator and looking for funding for a PT coordinator.

EXPAND AND STRENGTHEN NC’S SNAP-ED PROGRAMMING

Summary: Steps to Health, NC’s SNAP-Ed program, launched in 2012. This program provides nutrition education to serve limited resource individuals and families across North Carolina. SNAP-Ed is funded by the USDA and funds are administered through the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services. NC’s program, Steps to Health, is delivered by county-based NC Cooperative Extension Agents. Funding has increased in the last decade, from \$1.2 million in 2010 to over \$4 million by 2015.

Historic Milestones:

- 2012 – Steps to Health established (NC’s SNAP-Ed program)
- Present – In 2018 10,629 people attended nutrition classes in 61 NC Counties and 53% now make healthier food choices.

LAUNCH AN “EAT 10% LOCAL SUSTAINABLE FOOD” CAMPAIGN

Summary: The 10% Campaign launched shortly after the end of the From Farm to Fork initiative, with funding from the Golden Leaf Foundation. In the first two years, pledges to spend 10% of an individual’s or business/institution’s food budget on locally-grown/caught foods grew quickly through community events, online promotions, and educational materials. In more recent years, programming has been developed with county-based NC Cooperative Extension Agents to cultivate relationships (such as through grower-buyer connection events), reach more diverse populations and parts of the state, and create youth leadership opportunities. Currently there are 8232 individuals, 1181 businesses who have signed up for the campaign, reporting more than \$71 million in spending.

Historic Milestones:

- 2010 – Campaign Launched. NC cooperative extension designates a local food coordinator in every county to help with the campaign.
- 2011 – Reached over 4500 consumer members
- 2013 – Local Food Ambassador Program at HBCUs started
- 2014 – Reached over 1000 business/organization/institution partners
- 2017 – Push for county-level 10% campaign (provided extension agents toolkits)

DEVELOP A MODEL FARM-TO-SCHOOL PRE-SERVICE TEACHER INSTRUCTION PROGRAM

Summary: Appalachian Sustainable Agricultural Project (ASAP’s) Growing Minds farm to school programming predates the Farm to Fork initiative, starting in 2002. Their work has expanded in the last decade. In addition to offering workshops, presentations and consulting services to teachers and school districts, they are working with universities to provide teachers with education on farm-to-school programming before they enter the classroom.

Historic Milestones:

- 2011 - ASAP’s Growing Minds @ University was established. This program connects with relevant academic programs to provide future professionals with education to incorporate local food and farm based experiences in their professional careers.

DEVELOP A TEEN-FOCUSED SOCIAL NETWORK AROUND FOOD SYSTEMS

Summary: The Food Youth Initiative, a statewide food justice network that supports the capacity building for food advocacy work, was established in 2012. This organization is still operating and growing, with five core youth groups across the state.

Historic Milestones:

- 2012 – Food Youth Initiative launched and is still running
- 2016 – FYI awarded the Opal Mann Green Engagement Award
- 2017 – FYI hosted the annual summit for Rooted in Community, a national network of youth-centered food justice organizations

For more information on the From Farm to Fork Report visit
<https://cefs.ncsu.edu/resources/from-farm-to-fork-a-guide-to-building-north-carolinas-sustainable-local-food-economy-2010/>.