

About Community-based Food Systems

A community food system is one in which "food production, processing, distribution and consumption are integrated to enhance the environmental, economic, social and nutritional health of a particular place."¹ We have identified five values-based aspects of community food systems to organize our work.



A community food system preserves or increases many types of assets³. For example:



Built Capital

- Protect agriculture in rural areas; promote community gardens and urban farms.
- Ensure processing /storage facilities for food producers of all sizes to expand.

Financial Capital

- Increase access for farmers to friendly credit.
- Increase institutional spending with local producers.

Human Capital

- Increase consumption of fruit and vegetables.
- Increase skills and education among new and existing farmers and farm workers.
- Increase consumers using food safety practices.

Social Capital

- Expand programs that match interested farmers with interested landowners.
- Reconnect local food producers with consumers, businesses, and institutions.

Political Capital

- Include food systems in comprehensive, environmental, transportation, and economic plans.
- Increase protection for farmers and farm worker rights.

Cultural Capital

- Increase sharing of stories of community food and farm legacy.
- Increase respect of the historical context of agriculture and food in North Carolina.

Natural Capital

- Increase retention of farmland and availability of natural inputs.
- Reduce use of fossil fuels in food production, packaging, and delivery.

¹ Discovering the Food System: A Primer on Community Food Systems, Cornell University. <http://www.discoverfoodsys.cornell.edu> accessed on 10/10/2013

² Adapted from Seattle Neighborhoods Whole Measures Framework <http://www.seattle.gov/neighborhoods/ppatch/documents/WholeMeasuresCFS.pdf>

³ Adapted from Community Capitals Framework <http://www.soc.iastate.edu/staff/cflora/nccrd/capitals.html> accessed on 10/10/2013

About Food Councils

"Many communities are figuring out innovative ways to support their local food system by creating Food Councils. The councils examine how the local food system operates, and provide policy recommendations to improve that system. Food Councils involve a variety of stakeholders from different segments of the local food system. In some cases, the councils are created through a governmental action, such as an executive order or local resolution. In other situations, grassroots efforts drive and maintain the Food Council structure."⁴

Benefits of a Food Council

Food Councils provide for engagement and broad representation across the community, enabling collaborative governance and generating synergies across food efforts. FC's identify and strengthen the connections between food, health, natural resource protection, economic development and the agricultural/food production community. They can provide for a cross-cutting approach to solving broad, food-related issues.

Issues addressed and positive results may be seen in the following areas:

- **Health**, especially diet-related preventable disease, which is so expensive and prevalent
- **Economic Development**, by identifying opportunities in food-related businesses and through the recirculation of local dollars in the community
- **Preserve working lands and waterfronts** and discourage sprawl through land use regulations

Intangible benefits:

- **Engage residents** and build community
- **Attract tourists** who find locally-based food systems appealing
- **Institutionalize collaboration** across a broad base of stakeholders

What Do Food Councils Do?

Every food council organizes in its own unique way, but food councils that are effective do three things:

1. **Facilitate Connections** by engaging many people in the conversation
2. **Focus Attention** by making sense of complex issues
3. **Drive Action** by providing impetus and support for food-related change

In short, Food Councils are the **keeper of the issues around food in a local community**, and the **conveners of those who can do something to improve the system**. Food councils engage many voices, such as:



⁴ <http://publichealthlawcenter.org/topics/healthy-eating/food-policy-council>