

# **Farming Between the Trees: Farm and Farmland Preservation in Maine**

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# Comparisons

|   | Maine            | Vermont          | New Hampshire    |
|---|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Farms   | 8,136            | 6,984            | 4,166            |
| Land in farms (acres)   | 1,347,566        | 1,233,313        | 471,911          |
| Market value of agricultural products sold                                    | \$617,190,000.00 | \$673,713,000.00 | \$199,051,000.00 |
| Agricultural land developed between 1982 and 2007 (acres)                     | 75,500           | 40,800           | 38,500           |
| Market value per acre   | \$458.00         | \$546.26         | \$421.80         |
| Sources: 2007 Census of Agriculture and the 2007 National Resources Inventory |                  |                  |                  |

# The Reason

- Sustainability
  - Economic Viability
  - Equity
  - Environment
- Landscape



# Maine's Farmland Protection Program

## Maine Department of Agriculture

- **Mission:** To protect currently active and potentially productive farmland as a means to sustaining economically viable agricultural communities.
- **Program Goal:** To protect 250,000 acres of Maine's 1.6 M acres of currently active farmland by 2025.

# Maine's Farmland Protection Program

- **The Program assists:**
  - Farmland owners with enrolling in Maine's farmland property tax program.
  - Farmland owners with information on how to permanently protect their farmland.
  - Farmland owners and land trusts with technical assistance to apply to the Land for Maine's Future Program & the USDA Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program.
  - Farm owners with business planning and investment support grants through the Farms for the Future Program.
  - Towns, land trusts, legislators and community leaders with planning and policy guidance for the promotion of agricultural businesses and the protection of farmlands.

# Timeline of Farm and Farmland Preservation

- 1971 - Farm and Open Space tax law
  - In the farmland program, the property owner is required to have at least 5 contiguous acres in their tract of land. The land must be used for farming, agriculture, horticulture and can include woodland and wasteland. Additionally, the tract must contribute at least \$2,000 gross income from farming activities, each year.

## ■ 1981 - Right To Farm Act

- Provides legal protection from nuisance lawsuits and local ordinances affecting unreasonable regulation on farms and farmers. In the case of a nuisance complaint, the law enables the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Resources to intervene on a farmer's behalf and determine criteria that establish the farmer's right to farm according to site specific best management practices.

Maine Dept. of Agriculture

## ■ 1989 Maine Farmland Registration

- Also known as the “Adjacency Act,” was intended to help protect existing farms from encroaching incompatible uses via disclosure requirements that would alert residential buyers to the existence of agricultural operations.
- Rescinded in 1991

- Land for Maine's Future established in 1990
  - First easement in 1991
  - Since its creation, the Program has assisted in the acquisition of more than 510,000 acres from willing sellers, including 247,000 acres protected through conservation easements.
  - The lands protected include more than 1,000 miles of shorefront and 158 miles of rail-trails as well as valuable wildlife habitat, entire islands, and working forests and farms.

Land for Maine's Future 2010

- 1999 Maine Farmland Trust established
  - Essentially, a land trust
  - 90 land transactions totaling over 17,000 acres of farmland preserved.
  
- [MaineFarmlandTrust.org](http://MaineFarmlandTrust.org) 2010



## ■ Maine FarmLink

- FarmLink is a farm transfer program that connects farmers seeking farmland with retiring Maine farmers and other farmland owners who wish to see their land farmed.
- To date, FarmLink has made over 56 links, making it one of the most successful programs of its kind in the nation.

- 2000 Farms For The Future
  - Financial assistance offered for farms to write business plans and receiving academic training in farm operation and economics.
  - A competitive grants program that offers:
    - Phase 1 - technical assistance grants to help farmers develop written business plans that improve the farm's viability; and
    - Phase 2 - investment support grants to help farmers implement their business plans and put their "ideas for change" to work.

# Other Programs

- Agricultural Marketing Loan Fund
  - This loan program provides funds to construct or improve agricultural facilities and to provide grants for market research.
- Agricultural Development Grant Program
  - This competitive grant program is aimed at encouraging innovative efforts by farmers, aquaculturists and food processors to expand their markets, promote their products and test new innovative equipment and processes.

# A Typology of Town Ordinances

Out of 10 Maine towns with specific farming ordinances:

6 have agricultural and/or open space protection districts which include minimum lot size

1 specifies acreage for home use livestock

1 has a town version of Right to Farm

1 has an agricultural setback ordinance similar to the Farmland Registration Act of 1989

The town of York will be voting this November on a Farm Enterprise Overlay District which is “intended to maintain and promote agriculture and its related activities through granting agriculture increased flexibility, recognizing that agricultural enterprises often need to encompass hybrids of different, related uses, in order to remain economically viable.”

# New Initiatives

- Voluntary Municipal Farm Support Program
  - Enacted in 2007, rules approved in March 2010
  - create a mechanism for municipalities to voluntarily protect and support local farms, preserve farmland and reduce the potential tax burdens from new development by allowing them to enter into farm support arrangements with the owners of qualified farmland.

Maine Title 7, Chapter 2-C

# Farming for Maine

- This initiative will provide a way to publicly register and recognize local farms and farmland, to build community awareness of local agriculture and to help inform local land use plans and decisions.
- Potential to form clusters of farms for future Ag Districts
- Currently in the rule making stage

Maine Title 7, Chapter 2, ss162

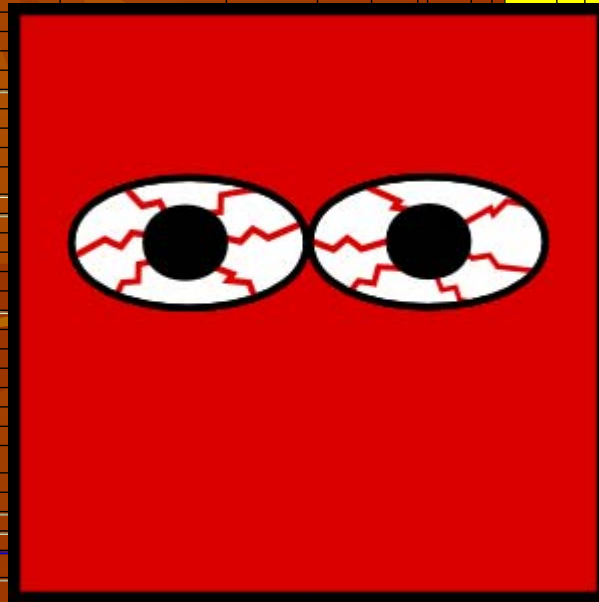
# Ag Districts Pilot Program

- **Pilot program for establishing agricultural districts and agriculture enhancement groups**
  - An agricultural districts program that allows farmers to propose that the department designate their farmland as an agricultural district where commercial agriculture is encouraged and farmland protected through collaborative efforts at the state and local level.
  - Currently in the rule making phase.

Maine Title 7, Chapter 2, ss163

# Finding Farms

The Database!



# The Database



- Consists of 3400 farms at this writing
- Contains:
  - Contact information
  - What is Produced
  - DOA programs
  - Marketing tactics

# Economic Viability



Get Real, Get Maine ([www.getrealmaine.com](http://www.getrealmaine.com)) is currently made up of approximately 1000 farms, maple syrup producers, value added processors, and livestock ranches

The goal is a local produce promotion for economic viability and farm sustainability

# Accomplishments

| Agricultural land converted to developed land (acres) | 1997-2002 | 2002-2007 |
|---|-----------|-----------|
| Maine   | 16,100    | 8,700     |
| Vermont   | 7,400     | 5,900     |
| New Hampshire   | 5,200     | N/A       |
|   |           |           |
| Source: 2007 National Resources Inventory             |           |           |

# Maine's Farmland Protection Program

- **Program Accomplishments as of July 2009:**
  - Over 18,000 acres of working farm and forest land have been protected for 7 years through the Maine Farms for the Future Program.
  - 97,000 acres of active farmland and 113,000 acres of farm woodlots are enrolled in Maine's farmland property tax program.
  - 30 farms have received public and private funds for development rights and granted permanent agricultural conservation easements on a total 8,025 acres of farmland in 10 counties.
  - More than 200 landowners have donated permanent conservation easements on nearly 25,000 acres of farmland in all of Maine's counties.

# Thank you!

Special thanks to Dr. Lapping for encouraging me to continue my work and broaden my horizons.

And also thanks to John Harker and Steph Gilbert for a phenomenal learning experience this past summer at the Maine Department of Agriculture.

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# Promoting Food Security in Cumberland County, Maine

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# APPROACHES



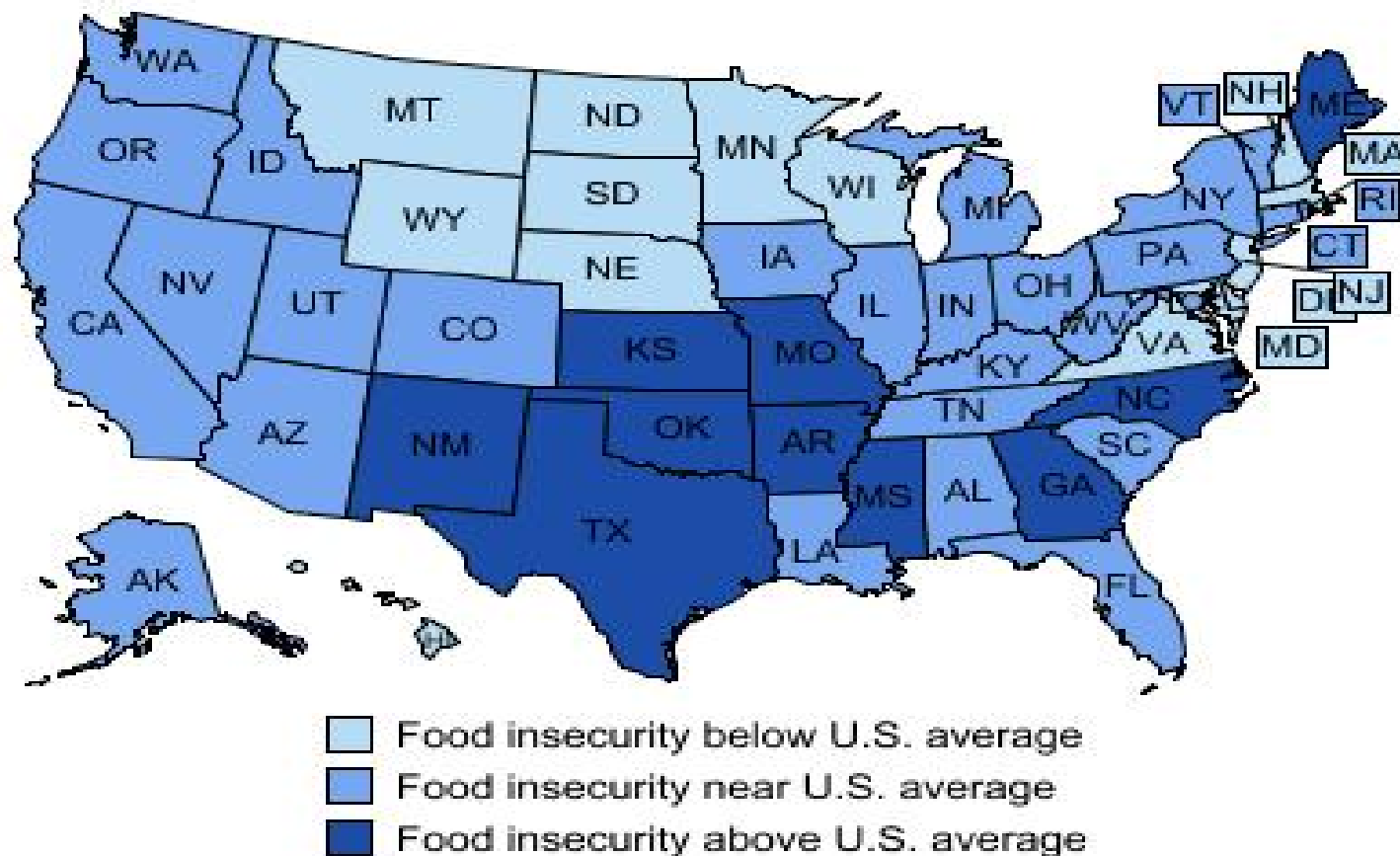
Food  
Security

Food  
Sovereignty

Food Justice



## Prevalence of food insecurity, average 2006-08



Source: Calculated by ERS based on Current Population Survey Food Security Supplemental data.



Prevalence of food insecurity and very low food security by State, average 2006-08

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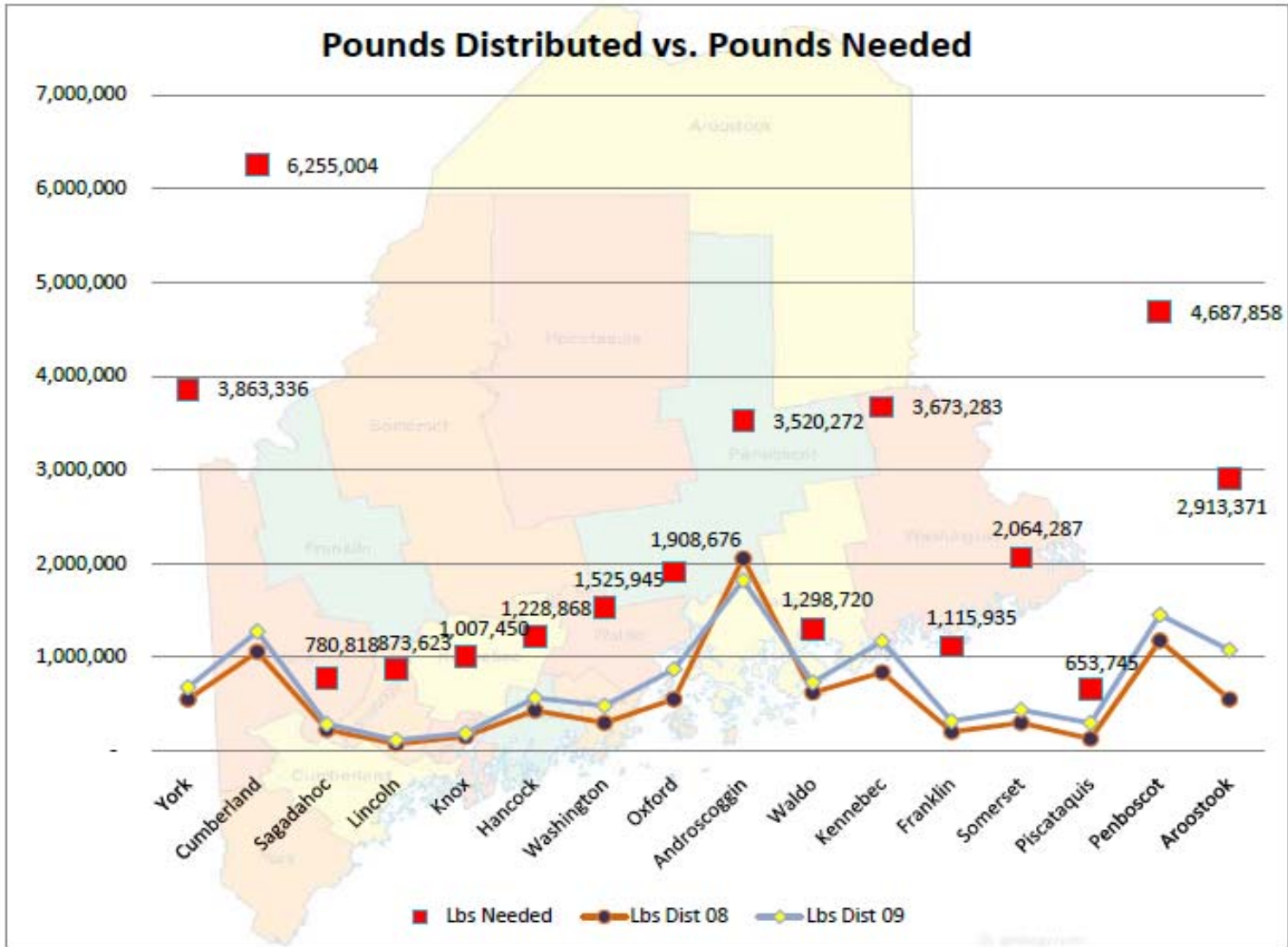
|                      | <b>Food Insecurity<br/>(Low or very low<br/>food security)</b> | <b>Rank<br/>(1-36)</b> | <b>Very Low Food<br/>Security</b> | <b>Rank<br/>(1-28)</b> |
|----------------------|--|------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------|
| <b>United States</b> | <b>12.2</b>  | <b>-</b>               | <b>4.6</b>                        | <b>-</b>               |
| <b>Maine</b>         | <b>13.7</b>  | <b>8</b>               | <b>6.4</b>                        | <b>3</b>               |
| <b>Vermont</b>       | <b>12.1</b>  | <b>16</b>              | <b>5.7</b>                        | <b>6</b>               |
| <b>Rhode Island</b>  | <b>11.7</b>  | <b>18</b>              | <b>4.2</b>                        | <b>17</b>              |
| <b>Connecticut</b>   | <b>11</b>  | <b>24</b>              | <b>4.1</b>                        | <b>18</b>              |
| <b>Massachusetts</b> | <b>8.3</b>   | <b>35</b>              | <b>3.8</b>                        | <b>21</b>              |
| <b>New Hampshire</b> | <b>8.5</b>   | <b>34</b>              | <b>3.1</b>                        | <b>25</b>              |

*Numbers represent percent of households*

*Ties are considered equal rank, so there are fewer than 50 places.*

**Source: ERS data from Dec 2006, Dec 2007, and Dec 2008 Current Population Food Security Supplements**

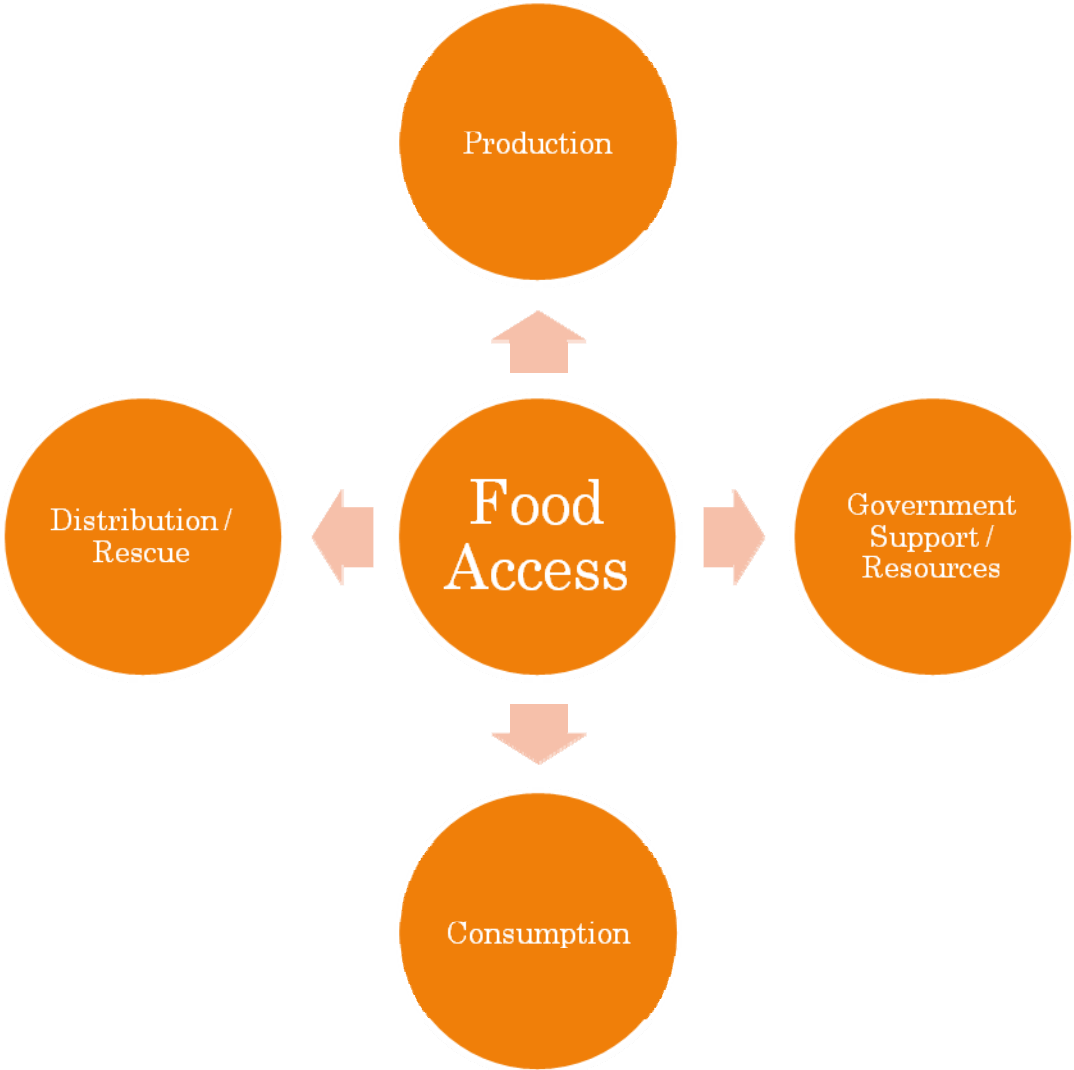




Good Shepherd Food Bank, 2009



# CPFS COALITION MEMBERSHIP



# MISSION

The mission of the Campaign to Promote Food Security in Cumberland County is to ensure that healthy, appropriate food is accessible to vulnerable populations that are experiencing food insecurity in Cumberland County in a way that reduces, and ultimately eliminates, food insecurity.



# VALUES

## We Believe That:

- Food Access is a basic human right and must not be compromised. Therefore, Food Access will not be denied due to race, religion, sexual orientation, age, income, gender or disability.
- Food Access should be geographically diverse and community-focused. The Coalition is committed to promoting local produce, involving local producers, and maximizing access to high quality and healthy foods.
- Reliance on a broad range of strategies and programs is important to achieving change and ensuring sustainability.



# SOME DEFINITIONS

- **Food insecurity:** Limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways.
- Households classified **very low food secure** have had one or more members experience reductions in food intake or disruptions in eating patterns due to a lack of adequate resources for food. Food insecure households, while faced with food access problems, typically do not experience incidents of reduced food intake.
- **Food Access** is defined as a state or condition wherein members of vulnerable populations that are experiencing food insecurity in Cumberland County have adequate resources to obtain healthy and appropriate foods for a nutritious diet.
- By **Vulnerable Populations**, the Coalition signifies the elderly, children, immigrants and refugees, disabled persons, those who are underemployed or out of work, single-parent households, among others.



# METHODOLOGY AND SCOPE

Secondary Data Review

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graph TD; A[Secondary Data Review] --> B[Expert Presentations]; B --> C[Small Group Discussions / Member Survey]; C --> D[Three Public Forums];
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Expert Presentations

- Federal/State/Local Programs
- Emergency Food Distribution
- Local and Innovative Programs

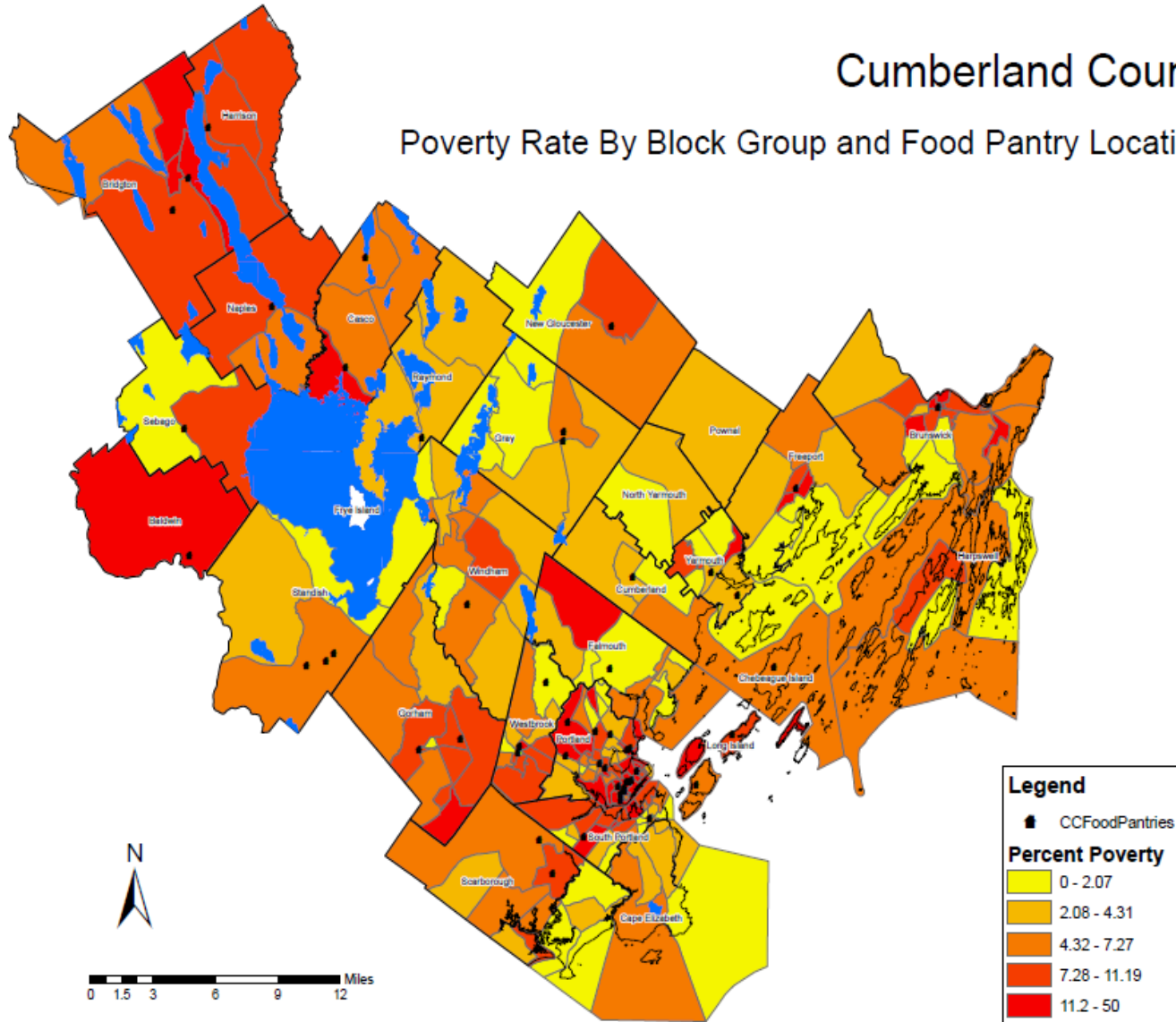
Small Group Discussions /  
Member Survey

Three Public Forums

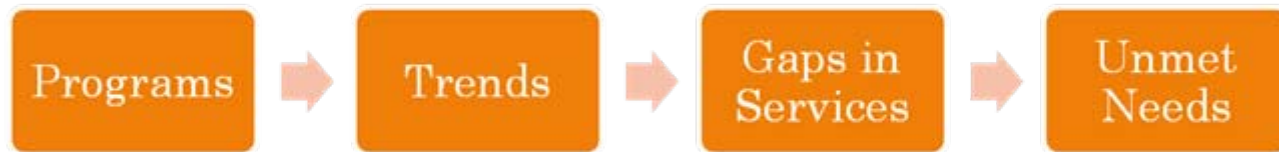
# Secondary Data

## Cumberland County

### Poverty Rate By Block Group and Food Pantry Locations



# EXPERT PRESENTATIONS



Presentations:

Federal, State, and Local Food Support Programs

Emergency Food Distribution Network

Local Farmers and Innovative Programs



# PUBLIC INPUT

Coalition  
meetings and  
small group  
discussions

Survey of  
members

Public forums



# DRAFT COMMUNITY STRATEGIC GOALS

- 1. Increase overall capacity for Cumberland County to respond to food access issues over the next three years.**
- 2. Raise the visibility of the ongoing problems around hunger and lack of food access among vulnerable populations in Cumberland County.**
- 3. Address the systemic issues that limit food access to vulnerable populations**
- 4. Influence public policies at the community, regional, state, and national levels that affect food access for vulnerable populations.**
- 5. Maximize the efficiency, effectiveness, transparency, and availability of the Emergency Food Distribution System.**
- 6. Enable expansion of innovative, community-based initiatives that increase food access for vulnerable populations in a sustainable way.**




# DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS OF SPECIAL INTEREST TO PLANNERS

- Establish the Cumberland County Food Access Council for the purpose of overseeing the implementation of the Coalition's goals and recommendations.
- Create in Cumberland County more transportation options, including public transit education and access facilitation, for vulnerable populations that need to access food.
- Use (a) mapping and connectivity software to determine location of vulnerable populations and services in order to plan best future delivery and use of food access services in Cumberland County and (b) business-modeled survey research to maximize delivery of food access services.
- Encourage municipalities in Cumberland County to authorize the use of vacant lots and other properties for community gardens.
- Advocate for and influence federal, state, and local policies, programs, tax and other laws, and land use regulations which encourage (a) local food production, infrastructure and resources, (b) creation, preservation and utilization of local farmlands, agriculture, neighborhood and community gardens, and (c) the promotion of local and vulnerable population food access, and self-sufficiency.



# TAKEAWAY?

- It may be called food security, but it is a distinctly planning-related issue: land use, location of infrastructure (such as processing facilities and cold storage), transportation, economic development, etc.
  - Time, money, and scope remain root challenges.
  - There is a lack of consensus on appropriate metrics, and infrequent reporting on those metrics.
  - Very little correlation to political will.
  - Engages the planning profession within a wider narrative of public health, sustainability, social justice, etc., to which planning theory often aspires.
  - Public engagement remains a challenge, but can yield rich results.
  - BUT: no practicing planners were involved. Why?
- 

# Thank you!

Contact me at

[danielwallace75@gmail.com](mailto:danielwallace75@gmail.com)

Draft report available at:  
[Muskie.usm.maine.edu/cpfs](http://Muskie.usm.maine.edu/cpfs)

Special thanks to Julia Reddy



# What Does Local Really Mean in Northern New England?

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Mark B. Lapping, Ph.D.  
Executive Director,  
Muskie School of Public Service, USM

# Why the Current Emphasis on Local Food?

- A. Food Safety and Growing Concern with Health and Nutrition
- B. Local Economic Development, Import Replacement, Tourism Development, and Rural Community Survival
- C. Building Social Capital, Food as a Social Process
- D. Growing Preference for Organic/Fresh/Artisanal Foods
- E. All There is on the Shelves is all there is!

# What is “local”?

- There is no generally accepted definition of “local.”
- “The proposition that geographical scale is socially constructed (is) an established truism.”
- The local in agro-food studies is currently taken for granted as a “purified” category and treated as a “context” or locale that is conducive to the emergence of new economic forms incorporating “alternative” social norms.

- The dangers of an uncritical celebration of “local” place-projects is the spectacle of “geographical fetishism.”
- There is an uncritical assumption that the local-scale is inherently desirable and superior...This avoids issues such as:
  - Who will benefit from food localization?
  - What is the agenda?
  - What outcomes are most likely to result from a given scalar strategy?
  - At what scale is the community defined?

- Import replacement as a rationale to concentrate food systems more locally is suspect in some ways.
- Increasing local food production carries both advantages and social complications such as
  - Displaced labor outcomes
  - Unequal participation in the benefits,
  - And more or less environmentally sound production practices

- A food system cannot operate as an independent variable in a local vacuum, but is integrated within global systems.
- The effort to concentrate food systems locally should be seen in terms of promoting local autonomy and sustainable development.

- The underlying complexity of the notion of “local” feeds into a sometimes reactionary, defensive, and exclusionary impulse on the part of beleaguered agricultural producers and wary consumers.

The following letter is in response to:

*The Food Movement, Rising* from the June 10, 2010  
issue

To: The Editors

From: Kevin Morgan

Professor School of City and Regional Planning

Cardiff University

Wales, United Kingdom

Michael Pollan inadvertently reveals the dangers of the local food movement when he extols its multiple benefits [“The Food Movement, Rising,” *NYR*, June 10]. In an otherwise excellent article, he claims that “the local food movement wants to decentralize the global economy, if not secede from it altogether.” As it stands, this argument carries two political dangers.

First, it comes perilously close to equating local food systems with sustainable food systems, when the former is merely one ingredient of the latter. The notion of sustainability should not be confused with a narrow green agenda because it embodies social and economic values as well as environmental values. The implication for food policy is clear: a sustainable food movement should embrace fairly traded global produce as well as local produce.

Second, the localism of the food movement can easily degenerate into parochialism unless it is leavened with a cosmopolitan disposition. Sadly, such parochialism is especially evident in Italy, the great bastion of the local food movement, where the right-wing Northern League uses local food specialties to prosecute its campaign against ethnic minorities. “We want polenta, not couscous” says the League—a slogan that betrays its ignorance of the cosmopolitan origins of so much “local food” in Italy.

Localism is not necessarily and always a conservative force—nor is it always a progressive response.

Given our history in Northern New England, a regional approach to food system localization may be more appropriate. Likewise, a focus on nutritional and dietary heterogeneity is also necessary.

# Thank you

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