

JOBS FOR A
HEALTHIER
DIET and a
STRONGER
ECONOMY



New York City
Food Policy Center
AT HUNTER COLLEGE

JOBS FOR A HEALTHIER DIET AND A STRONGER ECONOMY:

Opportunities for Creating New Good Food Jobs in New York City

**A Report by the NYC Food Policy Center at Hunter College
and the City University of New York School of Public Health**

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The New York City Food Policy Center at Hunter College develops intersectoral, innovative and effective solutions to preventing diet-related diseases and promoting food security in New York and other cities. The Center works with policy makers, community organizations, advocates and the public to create healthier, more sustainable food environments and to use food to promote community and economic development. Through interdisciplinary research, policy analysis, evaluation and education, we leverage the expertise and passion of the students, faculty and staff of Hunter College and CUNY. The Center aims to make New York a model for smart, fair food policy.

GOOD FOOD JOBS

Executive Summary



Across the city, state and nation, our food system is coming under new scrutiny for its impact on our health, economy and the environment. At the same time, our local and national economies face unacceptably high rates of persistent unemployment. Can developing new approaches to creating entry-level food jobs that promote health and economic development help to solve these problems? Can the food sector become a setting for innovative intersectoral solutions to several of New York City's most serious problems including high unemployment rates, rising rates of diet-related diseases, enduring inequalities in health and high levels of food insecurity among the poor?

In this report, the New York City Food Policy Center at Hunter College explores the potential for creating “Good Food Jobs” –jobs that pay a living wage, offer safe working conditions, promote sustainable economic development, and make healthier food more accessible to all New Yorkers. The report investigates potential synergies between the need for more good food and more good jobs. It seeks to provide elected officials, city agencies, food businesses and employers, health professionals and workforce development programs with the evidence they need to forge effective policies and programs that will create new Good Food Jobs.

The report calls for the next Mayoral Administration to create partnerships with employers, labor unions, educational institutions and others to produce 10,000 new Good Food Jobs in New York City by 2020. Achieving this goal will require creating new positions as well as upgrading existing food and health jobs by improving skills, pay and benefits and enhancing the nutritional quality of the food produced.

Background and Opportunities

With more than 326,000 workers and a growth rate of 33% in the last decade, the city's food production and distribution sector provides many entry-level opportunities for low- and moderate-skilled workers, making it an important target for new job creation. The food sector also offers career paths that allow those with limited education, recent immigrants, and entrepreneurs with high ambitions but little capital an opportunity to build a career. To date, however, many of the jobs in this sector are low-paying, lack benefits and expose workers to unsafe conditions. Many of these jobs also involve the production of the food most associated with diet-related disease. Any plan to create Good Food Jobs will need to overcome these daunting realities.

By better aligning its economic, workforce development, food production and distribution, and health policies to create Good Food Jobs, New York City's government, businesses and people have the opportunity to set a new model for smart intersectoral economic development for cities across the nation.

The city's food workforce is employed in restaurants (69% of jobs), food retail (20%), grocery wholesale (6%) and food manufacturing (4%). Creating Good Food Jobs in these businesses will require identifying the specific challenges each segment of the food system faces and strategically knitting together the substantial but often fragmented public and private resources now invested in economic development, job training, workforce development and healthy food programs.

To help readers understand the opportunities and obstacles to creating Good Food Jobs, this report profiles recent examples of good food job creation at three levels. First, we describe 11 New York programs, listed below, that are working to create or improve food jobs. Second, we portray five individuals, four in New York City and one in Philadelphia, who have created good food jobs for themselves, demonstrating the importance of innovative entrepreneurs who can forge new paths. Finally we look at other jurisdictions, cities like Toronto, Portland (Oregon) and Oakland, and states like California and Pennsylvania that have developed comprehensive approaches to using food as a tool for promoting health and economic and agricultural development.

Selected New York City Programs Working for Good Food Jobs

Added Value operates Red Hook Community Farm, a working farm where produce is grown, a farmers market and a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program and manages The Farm at Governor's Island. It also sponsors a local restaurant supply partnership and runs programs for New York City schools.

BK Flea and Smorgasburg are public markets that feature more than 100 local vendors who sell packaged and prepared foods. The Flea also operates a food and beverage concession in Central Park.

East NY Farms promotes local sustainable agriculture and community-led economic development. It operates a farmers market, youth internships, and a CSA program.

Gotham Greens is a rooftop greenhouse facility on an existing manufacturing building in Jamaica, Queens that will yield more than 500 tons of fresh produce each year. It will also partner on the Oakpoint Property (see below) to develop a rooftop greenhouse on top of a new food distribution center in the Bronx.

HOPE Program's GROCERY Works trains New Yorkers for careers in the food retail industry that offer opportunities for advancement.

The Hunts Point Redevelopment Project will increase storage capacity at the city's largest food hub, improve rail infrastructure and internal traffic circulation, ensure compliance with current food safety standards and regulations, and increase environmental sustainability of the facility.

Kingsborough Community College Culinary Arts Program is a comprehensive training program designed for successful entry into the creative, high-paced workplaces of the food industry.

La Marqueta/Hot Bread Kitchen Incubator is a non-profit social enterprise that supports start-up food entrepreneurs in launching scalable food businesses, with a specific focus on creating pathways to business ownership for low-income women and minorities.

NYC Green Cart Initiative is a public/private partnership that supports independent businesses to become vendors that sell fresh, unprocessed fruits and vegetables in New York City neighborhoods with the most limited access to fresh and healthy foods.

The Oakpoint Property will use New York State funding to construct a warehouse, distribution and food processing facility that features locally grown organic produce and farm products from New York State growers, a rooftop farm run by Gotham Greens, and a training facility.

The Entrepreneur's Space is a business incubator in Queens that provides affordable space and counseling to help food-related and other emerging entrepreneurs build their businesses.

These profiles of organizations and individuals demonstrate that New York City government, businesses and non-profit groups have created innovative food jobs programs that offer some combination of living wage jobs, greater availability of healthier food, and local economic development. The profiles also indicate, however, that to date most of the accomplishments have been modest and some positions do not pay a living wage. By analyzing the successes and limitations of these experiences, the report hopes to identify the ingredients for successful recipes for larger scale and more systemic approaches to creating sustainable Good Food Jobs.

Approaches to Job Creation

Currently, several different approaches to good food job creation are being implemented in dozens of programs throughout the city. Some of these efforts create new jobs; others add to the pool of Good Food Jobs by upgrading existing positions. From our review of programs in New York City and elsewhere, we describe and analyze seven approaches: creating food production and distribution hubs; subsidizing food retail outlets to expand healthier food options; training and support for small entrepreneurs such as street vendors and food truck operators; supporting urban and regional agricultural programs that bring healthy food to low-income neighborhoods; upgrading the skills and responsibilities of institutional food workers; and providing home health aides and other health care workers with new skills in food preparation for patients with diet-related conditions. The 11 organizational profiles illustrate how these approaches are being carried out. This review shows that creating Good Food Jobs requires bringing together employers—public agencies, businesses or nonprofit groups—that hire food workers; training organizations such as universities, cooking schools or other programs that provide these workers with the skills needed to prepare healthier food; and public and private funders that can provide the capital and start up support necessary to get new businesses off the ground. In addition, some of the projects described in this report also receive help from workforce development organizations or small business incubators that provide technical assistance and other kinds of support.

The report also describes the multiple funding streams that can support Good Food Jobs programs. These include public programs such as NYC's Food Retail Expansion to Support Health (FRESH) and the federal government's Healthy Food Financing Initiative, as well as public/private partnerships such as the NYC Food Manufacturers Fund sponsored by Goldman Sachs and the New York City Economic Development Corporation (EDC) and the Healthy Food Healthy Communities Fund supported by various philanthropies and New York State. By providing revenue streams for the purchase of food and health care, public benefit programs such as SNAP (formerly known as Food Stamps) and Medicaid and Medicare also have the potential to contribute to the creation of Good Food Jobs.

The 11 programs profiled in the report also highlight the many challenges that Good Food Job developers and employers face. These obstacles include the lack of a comprehensive plan for strengthening the city's food sector; the fragmented and often insufficient funding streams that support food job creation; the lack of standards in food job training programs; and the absence of mechanisms for bringing together the multiple stakeholders who could benefit from more Good Food Jobs. A comprehensive Good Food Jobs Strategy in New York City will require creating infrastructures and platforms that can bring together the employers, trainers, funders and technical assistance organizations to advance and sustain the most promising approaches to expanding Good Food Jobs.

Recommendations

Create 10,000 Good Food Jobs in New York City by 2020

This report recommends that the Mayor's Office, the City Council, employers and trade associations, labor unions and CUNY and other educational institutions set the goal of creating 10,000 new Good Food Jobs by 2020. This target was selected as a meaningful but realistic goal for ensuring that a significant portion of the expected job growth in the food sector creates good food jobs and to encourage policies that help to achieve that goal. To illustrate the innovative and intersectoral thinking and action that will be needed to achieve this target, we suggest six strategies, each with the potential to create at least 1,000 new Good Food Jobs—and thus to bring New York City more than half way to the proposed 2020 goal. These recommendations are intended to spur action and to encourage businesses, nonprofit organizations, elected officials and city agencies to suggest additional strategies for the creation of Good Food Jobs.

The six strategies are:

1. Increase enrollment in the New York City Department of Education's School Lunch program by 15% -- another 97,500 children-- in order to generate 883 new jobs in school food and train school cooks to lower salt, fat and sugar in school meals and to prepare more food from scratch. Increasing enrollment in school breakfast programs by 35,000 children would generate another 117 additional positions to reach the target of 1,000.
2. Create the New York City Healthy Food Truck and Street Vendors Project to assist 1,000 aspiring entrepreneurs and targeting recent immigrants, unemployed people, or small business owners to prepare and sell healthy, affordable street food in New York City neighborhoods, parks and tourist destinations.
3. Build new food processing plants in New York City that can process regionally grown food for institutions and small retail outlets thereby creating new jobs (and, with the New York State government expand the market for New York State farmers) and improving the nutritional quality of food served in city institutional food programs.
4. Create or expand social enterprise organizations that can win contracts for institutional food in private schools, universities, health care facilities and city programs by providing affordable healthy food. Each year, New York City public agencies serve 270 million meals and universities and voluntary hospitals serve tens of millions more. Creating local businesses that can sell healthy, regional, fresh and processed food to these institutions creates jobs and improves the health of vulnerable populations.
5. Provide additional training and compensation to home health aides to prepare them to become healthy food shoppers and cooks for people with diabetes and other diet-related diseases in order to prevent hospitalizations and improve disease management.
6. Enroll an additional 250,000 eligible New Yorkers in SNAP (Food Stamps) to increase demand for healthy food in small groceries, bodegas, farmers markets and Community Supported Agriculture(CSA) projects and enlist the city's advertising agencies and food organizations in a citywide pro bono social marketing campaign to increase demand for healthy food.

Build an Infrastructure to Sustain and Expand the Number of Good Food Jobs

To support these goals and to create the infrastructure that will be needed to sustain and expand Good Food Jobs, we propose the following actions:

1. The Mayor should appoint a Good Food Jobs Task Force to coordinate public, labor, commercial and non-profit efforts to create and maintain Good Food Jobs.
2. The City Council should fund a new staff person in the Mayor's Office of Food Policy to serve as the city's point person for Good Food Jobs.
3. City government, employers, labor unions such as SEIU and the United Food and Commercial Workers, workforce development programs and educational institutions should create an ongoing New York City Food Workforce Development Sector Center to provide coordinated and comprehensive support to organizations and individuals that are training and employing food workers or creating food businesses.
4. To ensure that the goals of reducing food insecurity and diet-related diseases remain at the center of New York City's food sector workforce development, it is recommended that:
 - The New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) should create a new certificate and training program in healthy food preparation to complement its existing food safety certificate. Food outlets should receive incentives to send staff for such training and technical assistance and support to help them prepare and market healthier food.
 - CUNY and other appropriate partners should develop and begin to implement a comprehensive plan to create the food, nutrition and health care workforce needed to better integrate health and nutrition into the city's food workforce. The foundation for this plan should be existing workforce development and professional preparation programs in food, nutrition and health care.
 - A consortium of local universities should create a Food Innovation Center similar to the one at Oregon State University to assist large and small New York City food producers in product and process development, packaging and engineering, shelf life studies, and consumer sensory testing in order to create healthier, more affordable yet still profitable products for the New York metropolitan region market.

These recommendations provide a starting point for making New York City a center of innovation for Good Food Jobs. New York City has long been both ground zero for the nation's most serious health and social problems and an incubator for imaginative and effective solutions to these problems. By committing to a Good Food Jobs strategy, the next Mayor of New York City can contribute to this tradition while helping to solve some of the city's and nation's most persistent employment and nutritional problems.

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