

Food Policy Goals Handout

The policies of local, state, and federal governments determine, to a considerable degree, how we farm and what we eat. Ideally, these policies would help to ensure that all people have access to safe, affordable, healthy food; protect our air, water, and land; support the farmers and workers who put food on our tables; and uphold rigorous standards for the welfare of animals used for food.

Supporting Farmers

Historically, the government has given economic support to farmers to:

- Insure farmers against crop loss (for example, from pests or unpredictable weather).
- Incentivize farmers to conserve soil and wetlands.
- Provide a stable price for crops, even if the market price falls.
- Set minimum prices for crops.
- Support agricultural research and development of new technologies.

Feeding the Hungry

Federal food and nutrition assistance programs like SNAP (food stamps) and Women, Infants and Children (WIC) help low-income families put food on their tables. These programs also:

- Boost the economy by allowing participants to spend more on food.
- Support local economies when SNAP benefits are accepted at farmers' markets.
- Alleviate hunger, at least in the short term, and can support/aid the most vulnerable populations.
- In addition, the U.S. government purchases surplus grain from farmers and distributes it to other countries in need. In countries that receive food aid, however, farmers may see their own prices drop with influxes of donated grain.

Keeping the Food Supply Safe

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and Department of Agriculture (USDA) work to reduce the risks of foodborne contamination. These agencies:

- Inspect processing facilities for signs of contamination.
- Require producers, processors, restaurants, and other businesses to follow food safety protocols.
- Respond to foodborne illness outbreaks.
- Review drugs and chemicals used in food animal production, including antibiotics.

Protecting the Environment

Agriculture affects air, water, land and climate. Policies can help conserve resources, reduce pollution, and promote more ecologically sound farming practices. In addition to regulating agricultural pollutants, environmental protection efforts offer incentives for farmers to:

- Reduce soil erosion and runoff
- Conserve freshwater
- Shift to renewable energy sources
- Preserve wetlands
- Protect wildlife habitats
- Minimize agricultural pollutants

Food Policy Council Roles Handout

- **School food service director:** oversees purchasing for school cafeterias, plans menus, etc.
- **Public health advocate:** provides guidance on nutrition, food security and other public health issues in the food system.
- **Hospital administrator:** manages food purchasing for hospitals, often involved in community health initiatives.
- **Anti-hunger advocate:** focuses on food access for disadvantaged populations.
- **City planner:** works on policies that affect where food can be sold and/or grown.
- **Supermarket manager:** manages food purchasing and relationships with distributors, customers and sometimes farmers.
- **Restaurant owner:** manages food purchasing and relationships with distributors, customers and sometimes farmers.
- **Community member:** represents the interests of communities, such as food access and local food production.
- **Farmer:** produces and sells food in the city or region served by the food policy council.
- **Labor representative:** represents the interests of food system workers, such as fair wages and safe working conditions.
- **Representative from an environmental nonprofit:** provides guidance on how the food system impacts air, water, soil, climate, biodiversity, and other parts of the environment.