

# Healthy Food, Healthy Economies



The Food and Agriculture Policy Collaborative is a partnership of national and local organizations working to promote the vision of healthy food and healthy economies through the advancement of four policy priorities:

1. Defending and improving SNAP benefits and eligibility;
2. Increasing consumer access to fresh, healthy food and creating jobs and vibrant communities through the Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI);
3. Improving access to healthy fresh food and supporting local farmers and economies through healthy food incentives; and
4. Strengthening local and regional farm and food systems infrastructure.

Creating Farm Bill policy to address these areas of focus would effect positive change and advance our health and our economy.

The Farm Bill establishes the food and agricultural policy for the nation: policy decisions made today will have an enormous impact on our future. The process of developing a new Farm Bill occurs twice a decade, and citizen engagement in that process presents a unique opportunity to advance a vibrant, healthy, and economically sustainable food system that supports both consumers and producers.

As a nation, we must design a system that ensures farmers can produce and market in an economically, socially, and environmentally sustainable manner; consumers have the resources they need to lead healthy and productive lives; and all communities have ready access to affordable, nutritious food. This will require bold initiatives across the entire farm and food system — from production to distribution to retail.

The Food and Agriculture Policy Collaborative has identified four priorities for Farm Bill policies that would make such initiatives a reality. We invite you to learn more about policy priorities in the areas of protecting and strengthening the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance (SNAP) program, the Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI), creating and expanding healthy food incentive programs, and building sustainable local and regional food systems.

**Of those surveyed in a poll conducted by Lauer Johnson Research April 18-22, 2012:**

**75%**

support a national program to double the value of SNAP benefits when used at farmers' markets.

**70%**

reported shopping at a farmers' market or farm stand in the last 12 months.

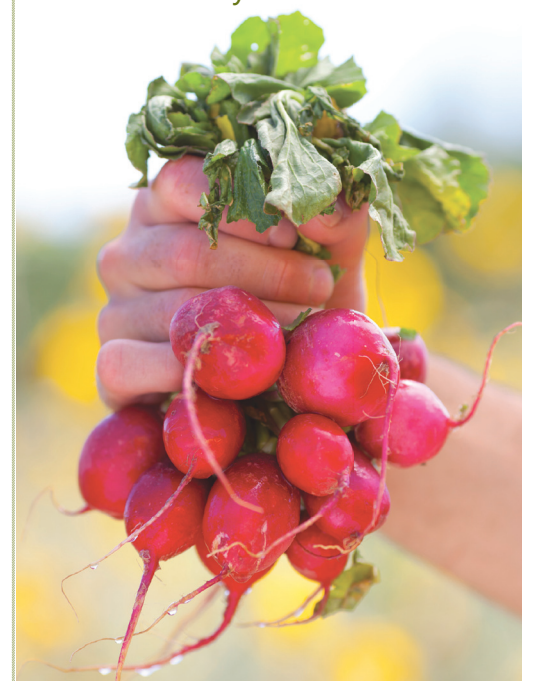
**68%**

said it's very important that all Americans have equal access to fresh fruits and vegetables.

**64%**

feel it's very important that the fresh produce they buy is grown in their region.

You can view the poll and results online at: [www.foodandcommunity.org/conference](http://www.foodandcommunity.org/conference)

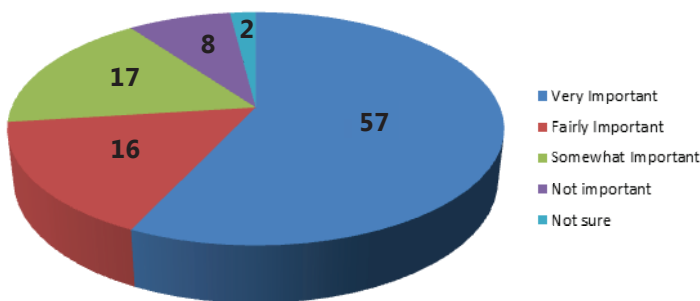


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## 1. Protect and Strengthen SNAP

Currently, more than 46 million Americans rely on SNAP to help purchase the food they need to feed themselves and their families. Food hardship — significant numbers of families without resources to purchase an adequate diet — is found in every Congressional District. SNAP is an essential protection for struggling people, especially low-income working families with children, unemployed and underemployed people, elderly persons, and persons with disabilities.

### Is the food stamp program important for the country?



Food Research and Action Center/Hart Research Associates, August 2012

SNAP:

- Supports Food Security. SNAP benefits, particularly as boosted by The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), lift household food security.
- Reduces Poverty. Census data show SNAP lifted 3.9 million Americans – 1.7 million of them children – out of poverty in 2011.
- Responds to Hard Times. Participation grows during national and local recessions and natural disasters and declines when the economy is doing better.
- Stimulates the Economy. SNAP creates jobs, including in agriculture. Each \$1 billion in SNAP creates an estimated 9,800 full and part-time jobs.
- Improves nutrition and child health. Young children in families receiving SNAP are less likely to be food insecure; be underweight; or be at risk of developmental delays, reducing long-term social costs.

The average SNAP allotment is a mere \$1.50 per person per meal. Protecting and strengthening SNAP are essential for achieving a healthy outcome for America.

For more information on SNAP: [www.frac.org](http://www.frac.org)



## 2. Expand the Healthy Food Financing Initiative

More than 23 million Americans cannot purchase fresh healthy food anywhere nearby and must choose between fast food restaurants and convenience stores selling junk food. The results are grim. These areas – mostly low-income rural and urban communities – suffer from higher rates of obesity and diet-related diseases. These communities also experience high unemployment rates and disinvestment. To improve access, jobs, and health benefits, the Healthy Food Financing Initiative:

- Supports local efforts underway across the country to improve access to nutritious foods at affordable prices and create economic opportunity.
- Sparks new efforts with flexible, one-time grants and loans to a variety of fresh food retailers – from grocery stores to food hubs – located in low-income, underserved communities.
- Models the successful Pennsylvania program in which state funds leveraged private capital to finance 88 businesses, created or saved 5,000 jobs, and improved access for more than 400,000 people across the state. A \$30 million investment from the state resulted in over \$190 million in new and expanded healthy food retail outlets.
- Creates public/private partnerships that will bring viable, effective, and economically sustainable businesses providing access to healthy food and improving the health of children and families, while creating jobs, and stimulating local economic development.

For more information on HFFI: [www.policylink.org](http://www.policylink.org)

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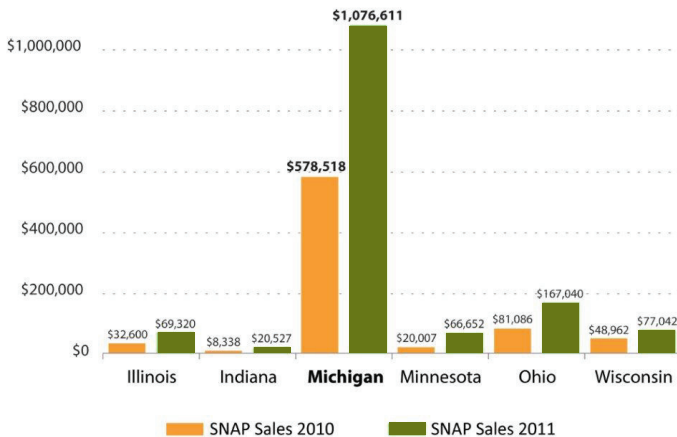
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### 3. Create and Expand Healthy Food Incentives

Healthy food incentive programs provide families participating in the federal SNAP nutrition program with supplemental benefits to purchase locally grown fruits and vegetables at farmers' markets. These programs serve the dual purpose of increasing SNAP families' access to affordable, nutritious fresh food while simultaneously increasing markets for small and mid-sized farmers. Healthy food incentive programs:

#### Michigan - the Sales Leader

Michigan continues to lead the Midwest in SNAP sales at farmers' markets



- Report that participants buy and eat more fresh fruits and vegetables and a greater variety of produce, which is crucially important for good health.
- Demonstrate additional farmers' market sales: At more than 400 farmers' markets across the country where incentives are offered, SNAP sales have more than doubled.
- Create extra income: In Michigan, farmers received \$1.3 million in extra income in 2011 from combined SNAP and Double Up Food Bucks incentive program sales. One third of those farmers expanded acreage and hired more staff.
- Increase local revenues: According to the United States Department of Agriculture, farmers' net revenue increases seven times per unit by selling locally and directly rather than in conventional markets. That revenue stays in communities and recirculates throughout the local economy.

For more information on healthy food incentives:  
[www.fairfoodnetwork.org/what-we-do/projects/double-food-bucks](http://www.fairfoodnetwork.org/what-we-do/projects/double-food-bucks)



### 4. Build a Sustainable Local and Regional Food System

There is skyrocketing consumer demand for local food that agricultural producers and entrepreneurs are striving to meet. Despite these opportunities, significant infrastructure, marketing, and information barriers are limiting growth. Policy reform to expand farming and marketing opportunities for new and existing family farmers to produce good food, sustain the environment, and contribute to vibrant communities:

- Creates jobs and spurs economic growth by making local and regional agriculture a major new driver in the farm and rural economy.
- Expands access to good food for all, including low-income families, by taking important steps from the supply and distribution side of the equation to build a food system that is healthy, green, fair, and affordable.
- Invests in the future of American agriculture by creating new farming opportunities for young people, improving the long-term economic viability of sustainable and organic farming, and strengthening rural and urban communities through food- and agriculture-based development.
- Assures that socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers have opportunities to successfully acquire, own, operate, and retain farms and ranches and equitably participate in all federal programs.

For more information on building a sustainable food system:  
[www.sustainableagriculture.net](http://www.sustainableagriculture.net)

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## About the Food and Agriculture Policy Collaborative:

**The Food and Agriculture Policy Collaborative** is funded as part of the Food and Agriculture Policy Fund established by the Convergence Partnership and other funders. The Convergence Partnership promotes equitable policies and practices that sustain healthy people and healthy places.

[www.convergencepartnership.org](http://www.convergencepartnership.org)

## National Organizations:

**Fair Food Network** works at the intersection of food systems, sustainability, and social equity to provide access to healthy, fresh and sustainably grown food, especially in underserved communities.

[www.fairfoodnetwork.org](http://www.fairfoodnetwork.org)

**Food Research and Action Center** has been the central non-profit leader in the fight to end hunger in the United States through improved and expanded public nutrition and anti-poverty programs since 1970.

[www.frac.org](http://www.frac.org)

**National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition** is an alliance of more than 90 grassroots organizations that advocates for federal policy reform to advance the sustainability of agriculture, food systems, natural resources, and rural communities.

[www.sustainableagriculture.net](http://www.sustainableagriculture.net)

**PolicyLink** is a national research and action institute advancing economic and social equity by lifting up what works.

[www.policylink.org](http://www.policylink.org)

# Stronger Together

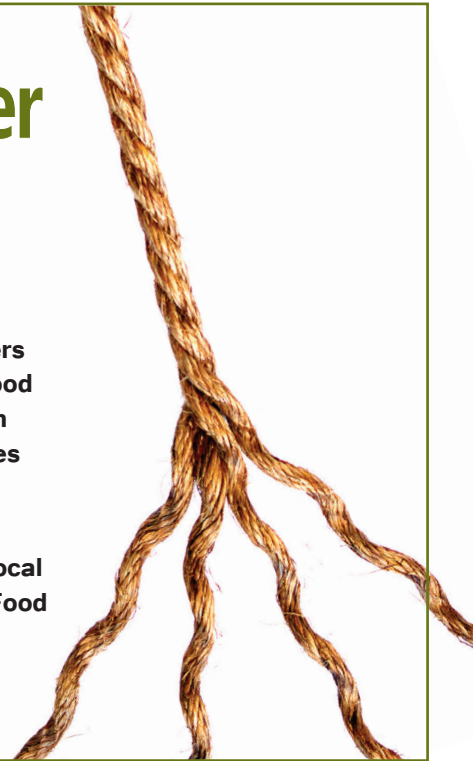
These four principles work together to create healthy communities. They are stronger when applied together rather than apart.

**1 Protect and Strengthen SNAP**

**3 Support Farmers and Healthy Food Access through SNAP Incentives**

**2 Expand the Healthy Food Financing Initiative**

**4 Build a Sustainable Local and Regional Food System**



## Local Partnerships:

**D.C. Hunger Solutions** was founded in 2002 as an initiative of FRAC to create a hunger-free community and improve the nutrition, health, economic security, and well-being of low-income District residents.

[www.dchunger.org](http://www.dchunger.org)

**Metropolitan Organizing Strategy Enabling Strength** is a faith-based and congregation-centered community organization that works on multiple social justice issues that have systematic impact on quality of life in a community.

[www.mosesmi.org](http://www.mosesmi.org)

**The Food Trust** is a nonprofit founded in 1992 to make healthy food available to all by working with neighborhoods, schools, grocers, farmers and policymakers to develop a comprehensive approach that combines nutrition education and greater availability of affordable, healthy food.

[www.thefoodtrust.org](http://www.thefoodtrust.org)

**The Reinvestment Fund** is a national leader in rebuilding America's distressed towns and cities and does this work through the innovative use of capital and information to finance projects related to housing, community facilities, food access, commercial real estate, and energy efficiency in the Mid-Atlantic.

[www.trfund.com](http://www.trfund.com)

**Southern Sustainable Agriculture Working Group** fosters the movement towards a more sustainable food and farming system by strengthening the capacity and effectiveness of local organizations in the Southern United States.

[www.ssawg.org](http://www.ssawg.org)