



# PENNSYLVANIA FOOD POLICY COUNCIL

20

23

Annual Report

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Introduction

Food is a basic human right. And while Pennsylvania is home to food surplus and agricultural abundance, over 1.2 million Pennsylvanians—including one in eight Pennsylvania kids—experience food insecurity.

To address the complexities of Pennsylvania’s food systems challenges, the Pennsylvania Food Policy Council was established by [Executive Order 2022-05](#) to:

- Evaluate issues facing Pennsylvania’s food system including, but not limited to, developing and implementing strategies to improve food security and nutrition, and reduce food waste;
- Facilitate coordination of interagency efforts designated to reduce hunger and improve nutrition for Pennsylvania residents over their entire lifespan;
- Facilitate the organization of private and public sector efforts to improve the Commonwealth’s response to challenges in the food system and support food sovereignty.

In sum, the Council seeks to evaluate, coordinate, communicate, and catalyze policy action that advances healthy, equitable, sustainable, and fair food systems for all Pennsylvanians.

## Findings

While not a comprehensive needs assessment of the Pennsylvania food system, this first Annual Report shares key findings and maps of historic food insecurity and food costs, rising participation in anti-hunger programs, and the prevalence of food surplus, loss, and waste across the Commonwealth. The Report also makes special note of how food insecurity impacts Pennsylvania children.

## Accomplishments, Activities, & State Agency-Led Initiatives

The primary accomplishment of 2023 was the creation of the Pennsylvania Food Policy Council itself, the hiring and onboarding of the Director, the nomination and seating of a 16-member Advisory Committee, and the successful convening of quarterly meetings.

Second, the Council’s Director completed significant ongoing outreach efforts to connect with engaged networks, experts, and community leaders across the food system. Other accomplishments include joining existing, mission-aligned interagency efforts, identifying funding opportunities, initiating work groups on senior nutrition and food waste work groups, developing strategies to expand the use of PA agricultural products, and beginning preparations for a statewide Food Action Plan project.

This Report also gathers highlights from all eight Council-affiliated state agencies that are working to administer federal programs, build partnerships, and fill in gaps across the food system. While these state-led initiatives may not be directly attributed to the Council itself, many initiatives build on the work of the Wolf administration's Food Security Partnership which was established as an interagency collaboration on food security and nutrition in September 2015 and issued its final report in December 2022. These initiatives include:

- Assessing, planning, and investing in infrastructure to divert surplus food to feed people or generate new resources
- Increasing enrollment in SNAP—the nation's first line of defense against food insecurity
- Getting food to new mothers, families, and infants via WIC mobile units
- Expanding food access for older Pennsylvanians (farmers market vouchers, congregate meals, Grab and Go or in-home or home-delivered meals or food boxes)
- Supporting food purchase, transportation, distribution site improvements, equipment, and infrastructure investments in the emergency food system
- Getting nutritious food and universal free breakfast to Pennsylvania children in K-12 schools or college students
- Improving our food environment, expanding healthy food access –hospitals and partnerships that implement Food Is Medicine (FIM) strategies.

## **Recommendations**

While complex, food systems challenges are solvable problems. To address identified concerns, the Council submits seven broad state-level recommendations, including:

- Improve Outreach & Enrollment of Eligible Pennsylvanians in Anti-Hunger Programs
- Expand Healthy Food Access and Affordability
- Increase Procurement of Pennsylvania Food & Agricultural Products
- Reduce Wasted Surplus Food through Recovery, Redistribution, and New Resource Generation
- Increase Local Food Production and Processing by Advancing Strategies for Inclusive, Equitable Food Systems Development
- Grow A Fair and Prosperous Pennsylvania Food Economy That Benefits Pennsylvania's Essential Workers
- Support Food Sovereignty & Dignity of Pennsylvanians

The above recommendations can be implemented through bold action of the Governor in collaboration with the Council and its seated state agencies and partners.

The Council also submits four recommendations for federal advocacy on behalf of Pennsylvanians on the Federal Farm Bill, WIC, immigration reform and the root causes of hunger and poverty.

# LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

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Governor Shapiro:

On behalf of Pennsylvania’s inaugural Food Policy Council, I thank you and your Administration for your leadership and support of this important policy initiative.

As the inaugural Director and Chair of the Pennsylvania Food Policy Council, I respectfully submit this Annual Report on behalf of the appointed Council members and its 16-member Advisory Committee wherein we introduce the Food Policy Council and its work by sharing our initial findings, accomplishments, activities, and recommendations.

In 2023, Pennsylvanians faced a significant rise in food insecurity and food prices, resulting in tough choices for Pennsylvania families. 2023 also saw a record number of residents participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), as well as depending on our charitable food system.

Food is a basic human right. As such, we have a duty to fulfill this right by not only expanding access to nourishment but also supporting the dignity of all Pennsylvanians by making sure they control where our next meal will come from. We support a human-centered approach to identifying and prioritizing interventions that create the most benefit for communities and populations with the highest burden of poor health, chronic poverty, and lack of investment. We seek to leverage the opportunities that grew out of the crisis of the pandemic and integrate insights from the field of food justice. Together, we can continue to partner with Pennsylvanians who are innovating community-led solutions and multi-stakeholder partnerships.

We are encouraged by the inclusion of agriculture as one of the five pillars of Pennsylvania’s Economic Development Strategy. Food uniquely has the power to—at the same time—nourish bodies, strengthen community connections, and provide sustainable income for people working throughout the food chain.

As Pennsylvania invests in our Commonwealth’s critical food and farm infrastructure, the Council will seek to leverage the people power, natural resources, and assets needed to advance food systems based on the values of equity, fairness, justice, and

# LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

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sustainability. Now is the time to go beyond charity towards justice by exploring new research perspectives and taking equity-centered action.

In 2024, the Council will continue to meet regularly and develop recommendations around all four goals laid out in the Executive Order. We look forward to the submission of our next report in January 2025. Based on the work we have done to date, I have full confidence that the forthcoming recommendations will bring accelerated progress toward a healthy, equitable, sustainable, just, and fair food system for all Pennsylvanians.

Forward together,



**DAWN PLUMMER**

Director and Chair



# WHAT IS A FOOD POLICY COUNCIL?

The Pennsylvania Food Policy Council (PA FPC) grows from the commonwealth's ongoing commitment to strengthening our food system and healthy food access for all Pennsylvanians. It also responds to calls from food systems leaders across the state to deepen collaboration and impact on critical food systems challenges impacting PA residents, communities, and businesses.

The Governor-appointed PA Food Policy Council brings together a statewide team that consists of a 9-person Council representing 8 state agencies as well as a 16-seat Advisory Committee. Together this body represents the talent and diversity of our state's food system. In February 2023, Governor Shapiro appointed Dawn Plummer to serve as the Council's first Director.



Figure 1. Organizational Structure of the PA Food Policy Council as established in EO 2022-05.

The Council coordinates interagency and stakeholder group leaders to communicate and take action to create and support healthy, equitable, sustainable, and fair food systems for all Pennsylvanians. Together, these efforts aim to support food sovereignty, which is defined as the right of Pennsylvania residents to healthy, culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agricultural system.

The PA Food Policy Council meets at least quarterly. Meetings are open to the public and meeting details are posted on the homepage at [agriculture.pa.gov](http://agriculture.pa.gov).

**Pennsylvania joins the ranks of dozens of nations and US states that convene food policy councils.**

**PA is also home to local and regional food policy councils including:**

- Adams County Food Policy Council
- Bucks County Foodshed Alliance
- Cumberland County Food System Alliance
- Erie Food Policy Advisory Council
- Healthy Franklin County
- Lackawanna County Food Policy Council
- Lehigh Valley Food Policy Council
- Philadelphia Food Policy Advisory Council
- Pittsburgh Food Policy Council
- Wayne Communities Food Alliance
- York County Food Alliance
- among others.

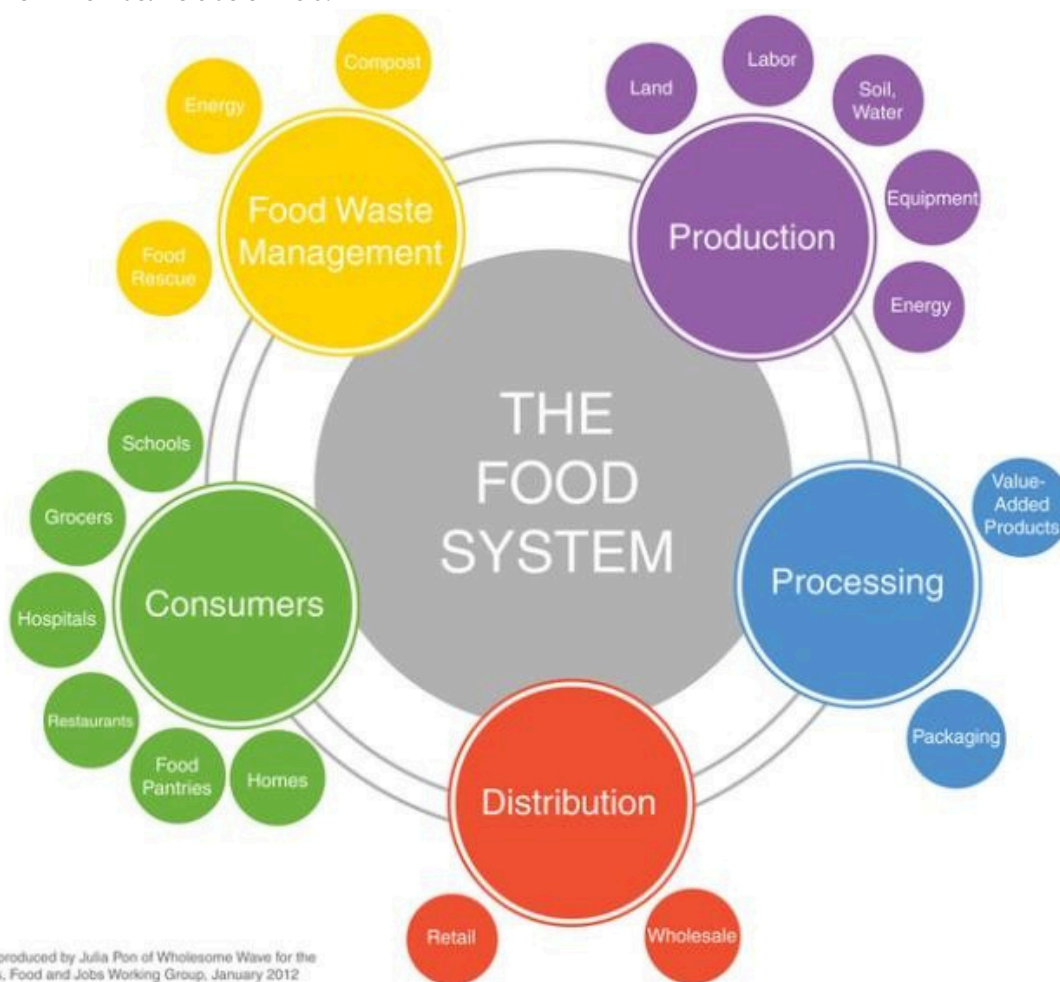


# What is a food system?

A food system includes all the aspects of feeding and nourishing people: growing, harvesting, packaging, processing, transporting, marketing, consuming, recycling, and disposal of food.

It encompasses all the interactions between people and the natural world – land, water, the climate, etc. – and the natural world’s effects on human health and nutrition.

It also includes the inputs, institutions, infrastructure, and services that support the functioning of all these aspects, as well as the role of diets and cultural practices in shaping outcomes. Food systems produce social, economic, nutrition, health, community development, cultural, and environmental outcomes.



**Figure 2.** Simplified diagram of a food system.

# PA FOOD POLICY COUNCIL MEMBERS

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## **PA Department of Agriculture (PDA)**

Dawn Plummer, Council Director (Chair)  
Russell C. Redding, Secretary  
Cheryl L. Cook, Deputy Secretary  
Caryn Long Earl, Director, Bureau of Food Assistance



## **PA Department of Aging**

Jason Kavulich, Secretary  
Emily Holladay, Deputy Policy Director



## **PA Department of Community & Economic Development (DCED)**

Rick Siger, Secretary  
Kelsey DeMerlis, Director, Center for Community Services



## **PA Department of Education (PDE)**

Dr. Khalid N. Mumin, Secretary  
Vonda Ramp, Director of Child Nutrition Programs  
Camille Traczek, Policy Aide



## **PA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)**

Jessica Shirley, Interim Acting Secretary  
Lawrence Holley, Acting Interim Director of Waste Management



## **PA Department of Health (DOH)**

Debra Bogen, MD, Acting Secretary  
Tiffany Bransteitter, Section Chief, Obesity Prevention & Wellness  
Maria Dispenziere, Policy Director



## **PA Department of Human Services (DHS)**

Valerie A. Arkoosh, MD, MPH, Secretary  
Catherine Stetler, Special Assistant to the Secretary



## **PA Department of Labor & Industry (L&I)**

Nancy A. Walker, Secretary  
Gail Varney, Executive Secretary

# ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The Pennsylvania Food Policy Council (PA FPC) grows from the commonwealth's ongoing commitment to strengthening our food system and healthy food access for all Pennsylvanians. It also responds to calls from food systems leaders across the state to deepen collaboration and impact on critical food systems challenges impacting PA residents, communities, and businesses.

NAME	STAKEHOLDER SEAT	TITLE & ORGANIZATION AFFILIATION
<b>Joanna “Jo” Deming</b>	Regional Food Policy Council	Executive Director, Pittsburgh FPC
<b>Erica Mines</b>	Regional Food Policy Council	Advisory Council Manager at the Office of Sustainability, Philly FPC
<b>Susan Dalandan</b>	Regional Food Policy Council	LVFPC Coordinator, Lehigh FPC
<b>Chris Keetch</b>	Food Retailer/Manufacturer	Director of Produce & Floral, The GIANT Company
<b>Denele Hughson</b>	Urban Agriculture Organization	Executive Director, Grow Pittsburgh
<b>Andy Bater</b>	Statewide Farmer Organization	District 6 Board Director, Farm Bureau; Fifth Estate Growers, LLC
<b>Ken Regal</b>	Food Security Organization	Executive Director, Just Harvest
<b>Julie Bancroft</b>	State-wide Charitable Food Organization	CEO, Feeding PA
<b>Sheila Christopher</b>	State-wide Charitable Food Organization	Executive Director, Hunger-Free PA

## ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS (CONTINUED)

NAME	STAKEHOLDER SEAT	TITLE & ORGANIZATION AFFILIATION
<b>Brett Reinford</b>	Food Waste Organization	Farm Operator, Dairy Farmer, Reinford Farms
<b>Mark Edwards</b>	Health and/or Nutrition Organization	President and CEO, The Food Trust
<b>Brian Campbell</b>	Pennsylvania Agricultural Surplus Program (PASS) Farmer	Brian Campbell Farm, PASS Farmer
<b>Megan Schaper</b>	School Nutrition Expert	Food Service Supervisor, State College Area School District
<b>Desi Burnette</b>	Immigration & Workforce Expert	Movement of Immigrant Leaders of Pennsylvania (MILPA)
<b>Dr. Patty Bennett</b>	United States Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service Representative	FNS Mid-Atlantic Regional Office, USDA FNS
<b>Martin Bucknavage</b>	Penn State Extension Representative	Senior Food Safety Extension Associate, Penn State Extension

# INITIAL FINDINGS

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Food insecurity is a problem that can be solved. This section outlines up-to-date measures of food insecurity and its contributing factors across the commonwealth.

In 2023, Pennsylvanians—like other Americans—faced a significant rise in food insecurity and food prices, resulting in tough choices for Pennsylvania families, expanded participation in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) on top of historic needs experienced in our communities, and throughout our charitable food system.

Our initial findings underscore the need to implement strategies that:

- Center dignity and reduce the overall number of Pennsylvanians whose economic circumstances qualify them for food assistance.
- Expand enrollment of eligible Pennsylvanians in benefits that support their health and well-being.
- Guarantee consistent healthy food access to Pennsylvanians, especially school-aged children and vulnerable populations.

## PENNSYLVANIANS FACE HISTORIC FOOD INSECURITY AND FOOD PRICES

In October 2023, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) reported a statistically significant jump in the number of food-insecure households nationally – from 33.8 million in 2021 to 44.1 million in 2022.[1] This dramatic jump was further exacerbated in 2023 as a result of the United States Congress' December 2022 passage of budget legislation that ended COVID-era policies that provided relief through enhanced child tax credits and increased funding for emergency SNAP allotments for food assistance and other benefits.

As a result, beginning in March 2023, SNAP recipients in Pennsylvania received **\$200 million less in food assistance benefits each month**, impacting the lives of **1.9 million Pennsylvanians** who relied on those food dollars, as well as the **food business owners** and **workers affected by that loss of sales**.

**Every household that received SNAP lost at least \$95 in benefits per month.**

[1] USDA Economic Research Service, Household Food Security in the United States in 2022, October 2023

Beyond SNAP, member food banks of Feeding Pennsylvania and Hunger-Free Pennsylvania, who collectively serve all 67 counties in the commonwealth, began collecting data on food distributed by the charitable food sector in statewide since March 2020. Recent data shows that **demand continues to rise for emergency food assistance throughout Pennsylvania.**

The data reveals that in November 2023 our charitable food system served the fourth-highest number of people ever served (since data collection began). Further, the percentage of people served in November 2023 was 20% higher than in February 2023, the last month for which the enhanced benefits were in place in PA.

Notably, from throughout the two years from December 2021 to December 2023, **four of the five highest numbers of people served occurred in the last 5 months of reporting** (See Figure 4).

Adding insult to injury, a recent Consumer Affairs report shows that **Pennsylvania has seen the largest increase in grocery prices year over year in the nation with an 8.2% increase** between November 2022 and November 2023.



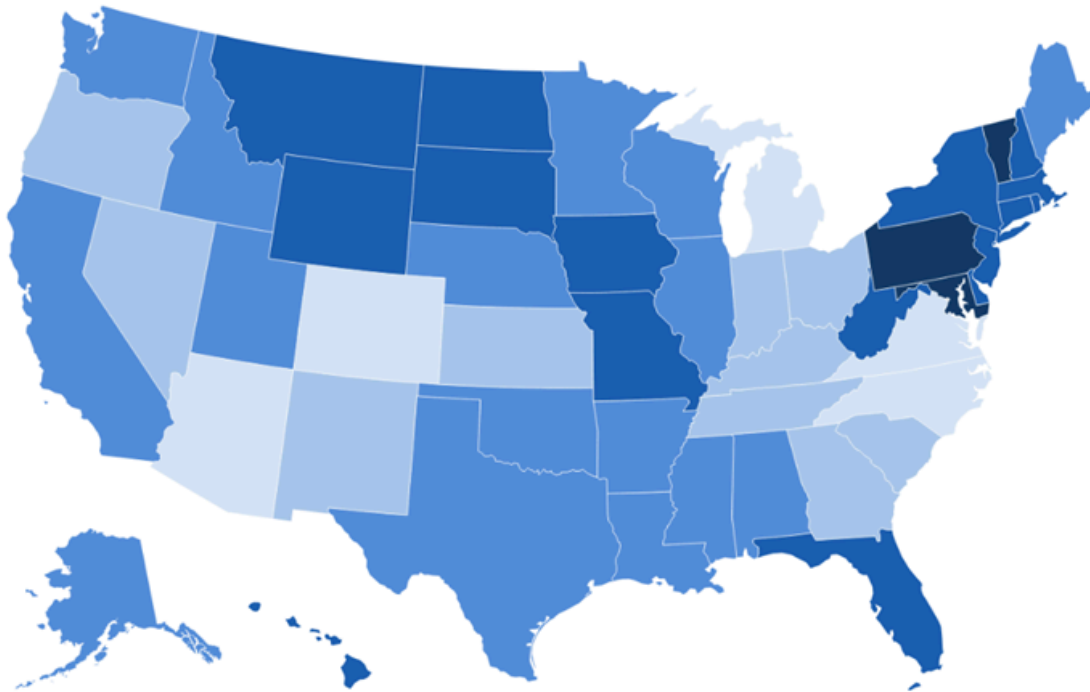
**Figure 4.** Data from the Food Bank Food Assistance Report

Other key findings show that the **City of Philadelphia saw the highest increase in grocery prices in the nation**, while nationally, rural shoppers are paying more than shoppers in urban areas [2].

[2] Consumer Affairs, The rising cost of groceries by state (2023), <https://www.consumeraffairs.com/finance/cost-of-groceries-by-state.html>

# 12-month grocery price increases by state

**< 4.0%** **4.0%–5.0%** **5.0%–6.0%** **6.0%–7.0%** **≥ 7.0%**



Map: ConsumerAffairs



**Figure 3.** Grocery price increases by state between November 2022 and November 2023

**8.2%**

Increase in PA grocery prices between November 2022 and November 2023

**20%**

Percentage increase of people served by PA's charitable food system in November 2023 from February 2023—the last month of pandemic-era benefit enhancements

# MORE PENNSYLVANIANS ENROLLED IN SNAP— NATION’S FIRST LINE OF DEFENSE AGAINST FOOD INSECURITY

According to the USDA’s latest SNAP data, the number of SNAP recipients in PA exceeded 2.0 million for November 2023, with total monthly benefits paid up 76% from pre-pandemic November 2019. This expansion in enrollment reflects both an increase in the number of recipients (+16%) and the average monthly benefit (+52%) (See Table 1).

**SNAP Benefits Received by Pennsylvania Residents**

	November Data					Total Growth
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	
<b>Monthly Benefits (\$ millions)</b>	<b>\$208</b>	<b>\$322</b>	<b>\$459</b>	<b>\$531</b>	<b>\$366</b>	<b>76%</b>
Number Persons (000s)	1,750	1,834	1,877	1,936	2,022	16%
Avg Monthly Benefit / Person	\$119	\$176	\$245	\$274	\$181	52%
Max Monthly Benefit 1 Person	\$192	\$194	\$204	\$250	\$291	52%
PA Population (000s)	12,987	12,996	13,014	12,972	12,962	0%
PA Unemployment Rate	4.4	7.9	4.8	4.4	3.4	--
Philadelphia CPI-U Groceries	241.5	246.8	256.5	299.0	303.1	25%

Note: Excludes P-EBT benefits, includes emergency allotments. Population estimates for July of relevant year. 2019 population is estimated by IFO. CPI-U data are for October.

Sources: U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and Open Data PA.

**Table 1.** SNAP Benefits Received by Pennsylvania Residents (2019-2023)

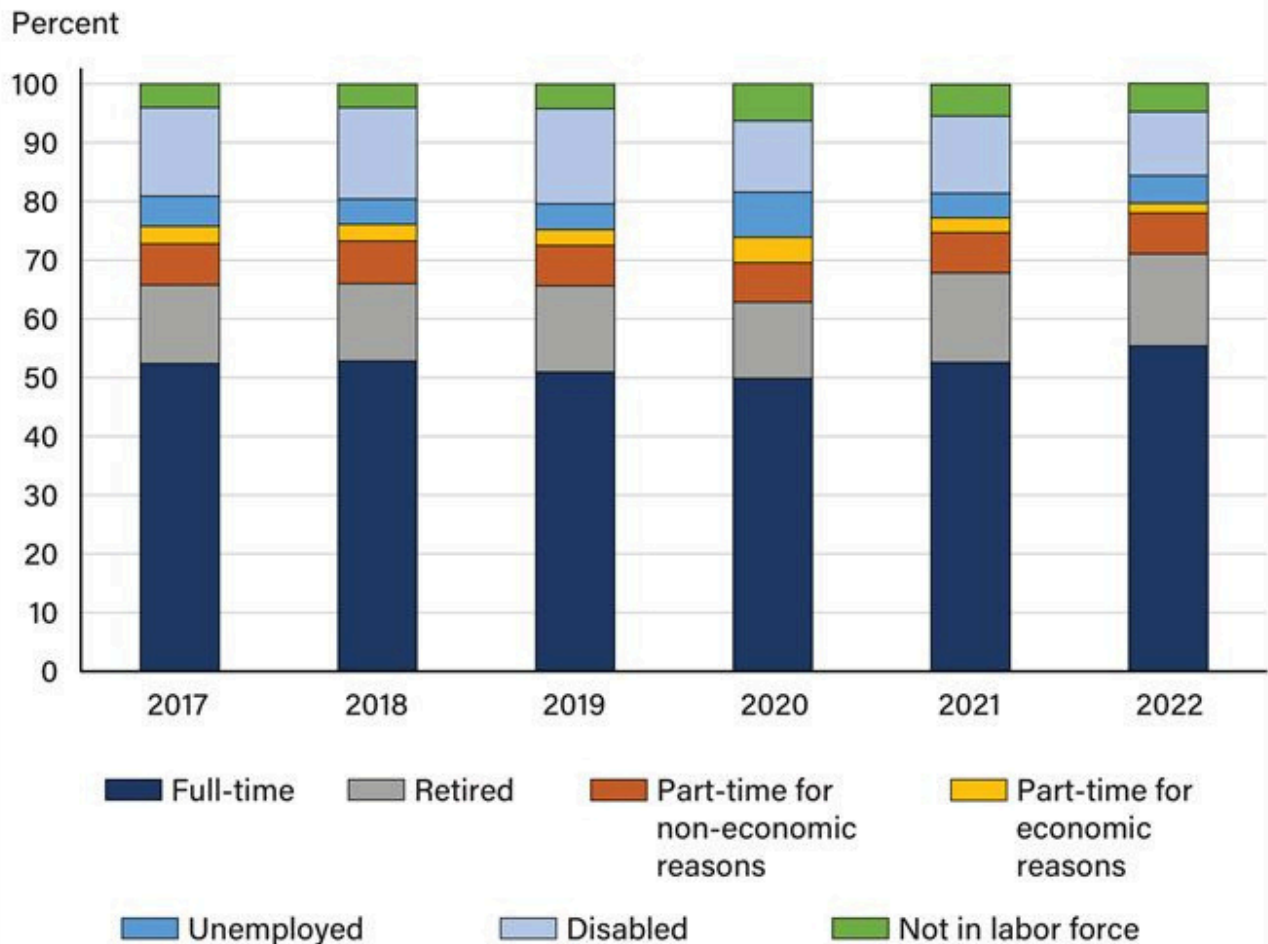
Three changes in SNAP policy contribute to these increases between November 2019 and 2023. At the federal level, the USDA updated the definition of the Thrifty Food Plan thus increasing benefits for federal fiscal year 2022. At the state level, the commonwealth increased SNAP income eligibility from 165% of the federal poverty income guidelines (FPIG) to 200% in October 2022 and expanded eligibility to certain college students in August 2023.[3]

While we are encouraged more Pennsylvanians are accessing SNAP, our goal should be to reduce the number of Pennsylvanians whose economic circumstances contribute to their qualification for this benefit. Unfortunately, we know that for those who can work, full-time employment no longer guarantees food and economic security as noted by the historically low rates of unemployment paired with the statistically significant rise in food insecurity (See Figure 4).

[3] SNAP Policy Changes Expand Program, Independent Fiscal Office, Research Brief, January 2024



## Employment status of food-insecure U.S. households, 2017-22



Note: **Food insecure** includes low and very low food security. **Full time** = adult(s) employed full time. **Retired** = adult(s) out of the labor force because of retirement; no adults employed full time. **Part-time for noneconomic reasons** = adult(s) employed part-time by choice; no adults employed full time or retired. **Part-time for economic reasons** = adult(s) employed part time because that was the only job available; no adults employed full time or retired. **Unemployed** = adult(s) unemployed looking for work; no adults employed or retired. **Disabled** = adult(s) out of the labor force because of disability; no one employed, retired, or unemployed. **Not in labor force** = no adults employed, retired, unemployed, or not working because of disability.

Source: USDA, Economic Research Service calculations using data from U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Current Population Survey Food Security Supplements.

**Figure 4.** Employment Status of Food Insecure Households, 2017-22

Federal nutrition programs are among the best tools to address disparities in hunger, poverty, and health. However, while the number of eligible Pennsylvanians increases, many are still not accessing this first line of defense against hunger. Notably, research conducted by charitable food networks reveals that participation rates of food pantry

visitors in SNAP is consistently at or below 50%. This suggests that Pennsylvanians with very low food security are still unreached by our best tool against hunger—the SNAP program.[4] Further, for those enrolled in SNAP, current benefits fall short of meeting the nutritional needs of SNAP recipients.

These data underscore that as the public health emergency of COVID-19 waned, another public health concern continued to surge—food insecurity.

## FILLING THE GAP FOR PENNSYLVANIA’S CHILDREN

For children, federal School Nutrition Programs are vital tools for combating childhood hunger, improving children’s health, and supporting academic achievement. The United Way ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) Report from 2018 indicates that a family of four living in Pennsylvania must earn at least \$69,648 a year to be able to afford the basic necessities to live. Yet, a family of four is not eligible to receive free school meals if their annual income exceeds \$39,000 per year. In 2020, the median household income in PA was \$67,587, which falls below the income identified to afford basic housing, food, transportation, and clothing, but well above the level to qualify for free school meals. The Income Eligibility Guidelines are no longer adequate to determine a family's need for free school meals.

The percentage of total enrollment of students who are eligible for free and reduced-priced meals increased from 54% in 2019 to 63.03% in the 2023-2024 school year, according to building-level data collected by the PA Department of Education. However, this data does not tell the whole story of child food insecurity in PA, as Feeding America’s Map the Meal Gap study reveals that 23% of children not eligible for free meals due to income are still experiencing food insecurity.[5] These statistics indicate that there is child hunger in our state that needs to be addressed.

Expanding access to free school meals can ensure children have a consistent, nutritious breakfast and lunch each day.

4] See county-level reports published in 2023 and 2024 by the Central PA Food Bank for Lancaster, Lebanon, Union, Snyder, and Northumberland counties at <https://www.centralpafoodbank.org/take-action/policy-research/>

[5] See PA data in Feeding America’s Map the Meal Gap study at <https://map.feedingamerica.org/county/2021/child/pennsylvania>

# MAPPING FOOD INSECURITY & ANTI-HUNGER PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

Below are statewide maps that visualize food insecurity in PA using the most up-to-date data sources [6]. Maps and summaries assist policymakers and practitioners in focusing targeted resources and outreach to address food insecurity from a variety of different programmatic and policy perspectives.

The interactive maps, listed and linked below, have been created by the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank's Policy Research Team and are explained in turn.

1. Food Insecurity Rate and Numbers by County, ZIP Code, and Census Tract
2. SNAP Participation Priority Outreach ZIP Codes
3. WIC Participation Estimates and Priority Outreach ZIP Codes
4. Summer Food Service Program Participation Estimates

## 1. Food Insecurity Rate by County, ZIP Code, and Census Tract

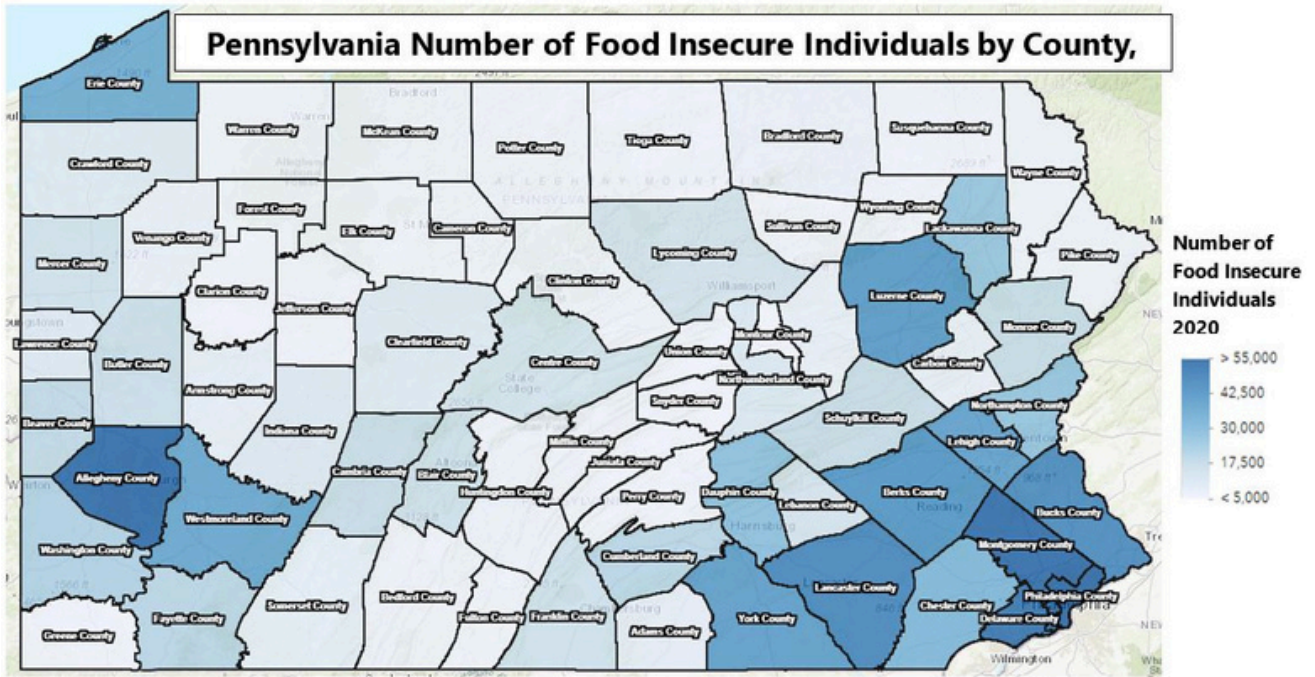


This **interactive map** shows the Food Insecurity Rate and Number of Food Insecure Individuals by several geographies including County, ZIP Code, and Census Tract levels.

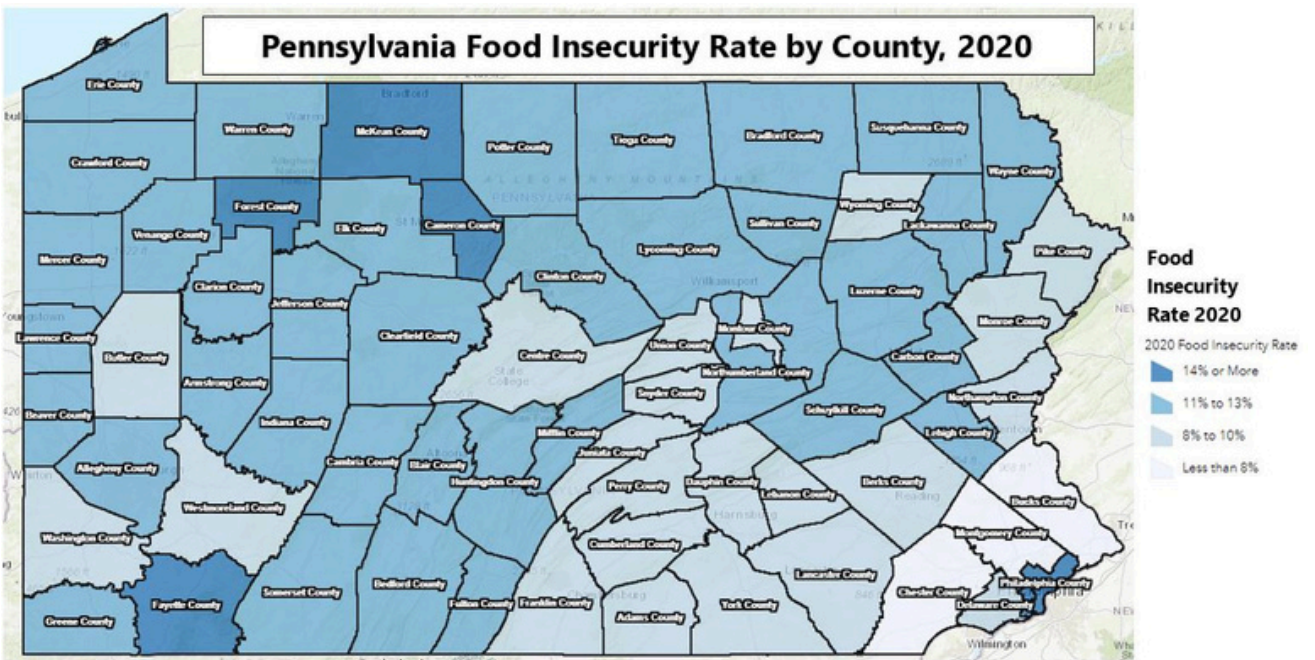
Below in Figures 5-8 are county-level maps of overall food insecurity as well as child food insecurity (by number of individuals as well as by percentage of total population).

[6] NOTES ON DATA SOURCES: The food insecurity data is from Feeding America's Map the Meal Gap. These maps utilize 2020 data, as there is a two-year lag inherent in food insecurity estimates since Feeding America bases the localized estimates on American Community Survey data. This data is typically released in the late fall/early winter of the following year, so the ACS from 2022 was released in late 2023, and then it takes time for Feeding America to develop their estimates based on the new ACS data, so they usually release new Food Insecurity data the following spring with 2022 data being released in 2024.

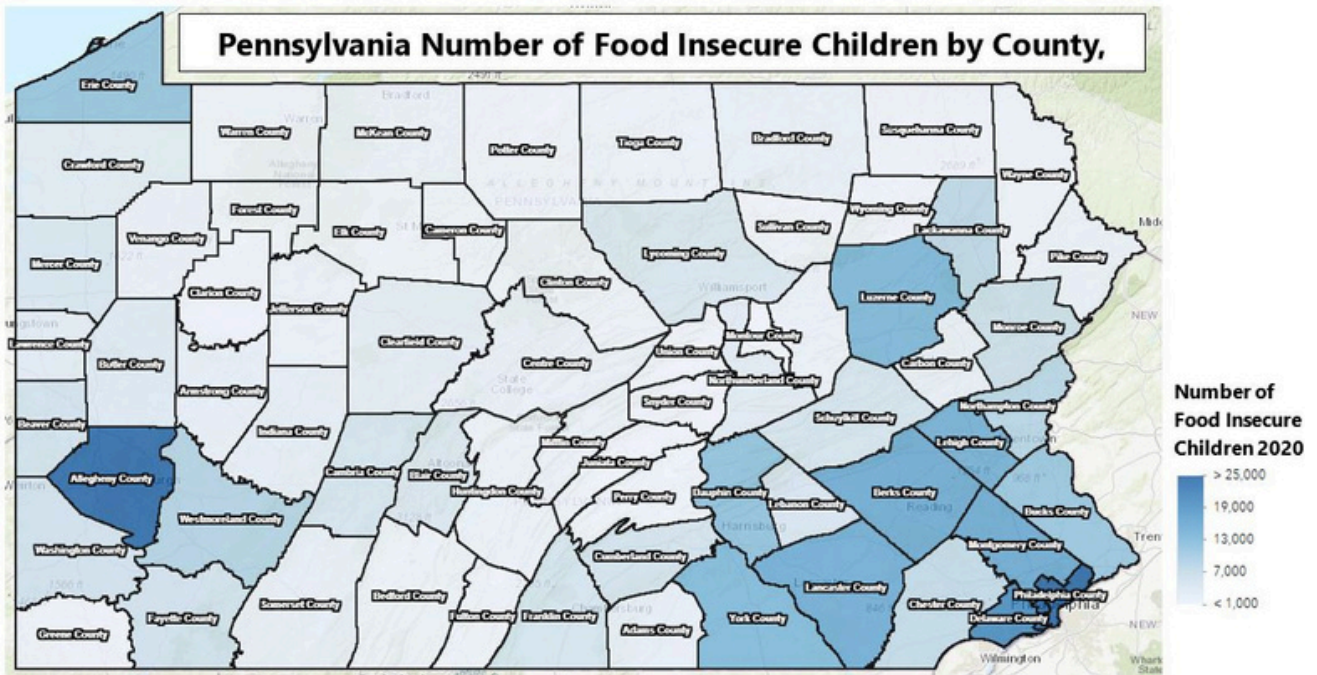
Readers should also note that these estimates are likely underestimates of the current food insecurity situation in 2024. Despite being a bit older, 2020 data is much more reflective of current levels of food insecurity, as more recent 2021 data is significantly biased downwards because of the expanded child tax credits and other federal pandemic policy responses. Localized food insecurity data for 2022 will be available in Spring 2024.



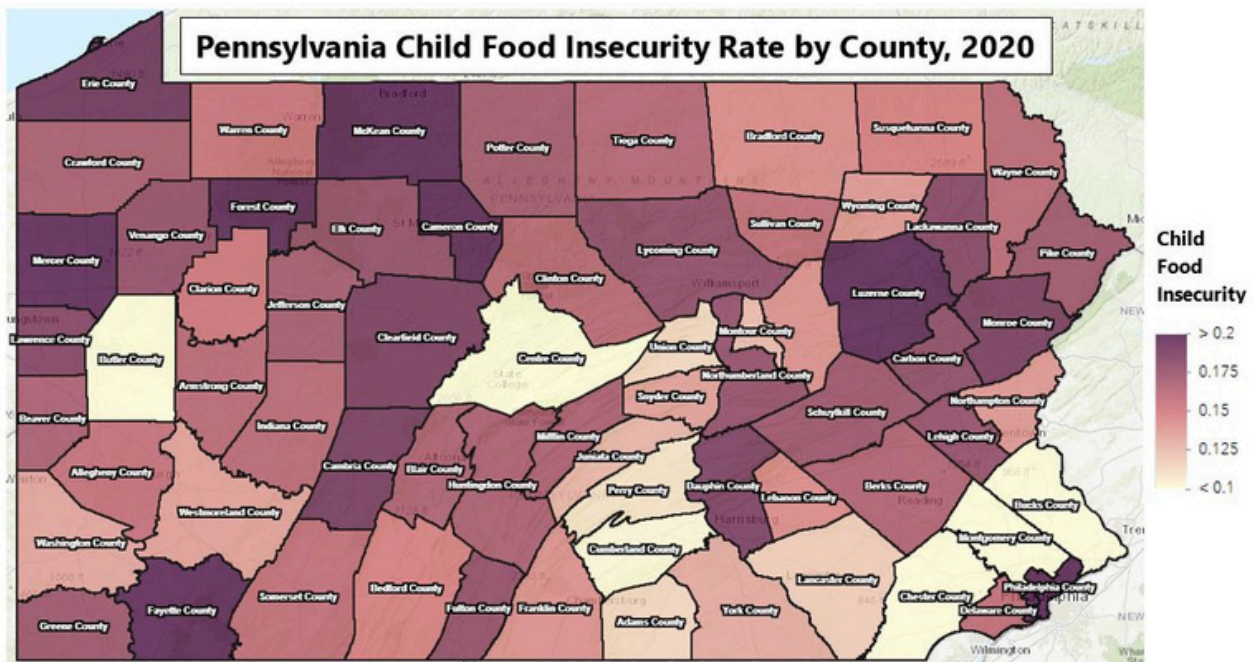
**Figure 5.** Total number of food insecure individuals by county in PA in 2020; Data is from Feeding America Map the Meal Gap 2022.



**Figure 6.** Percentage rate of total population that is food insecure by county in PA in 2020; Data is from Feeding America Map the Meal Gap 2022.



**Figure 7.** Total number of food insecure children by county in PA in 2020; Data is from Feeding America Map the Meal Gap 2022.



**Figure 8.** Percentage rate of total child population that is food insecure by county in PA in 2020; Data is from Feeding America Map the Meal Gap 2022.

## 2. SNAP Participation Priority Outreach ZIP Codes Summary



This **interactive SNAP Outreach Priority map** shows ZIP Codes across the state of Pennsylvania where geographic-based SNAP outreach activities would have the most impact, using a combination of family-level SNAP participation gaps and utilization rates as well as individual-level SNAP participation gaps and utilization rates[7].

The methodology was developed by the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank Policy Research Team. Family SNAP participation data is from the 2017-2021 American Community Survey (ACS), family and individual eligibility data are from the ratio of income to poverty level tables in the 2017-2021 ACS, and individual SNAP participation data is from the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services for October 2023.

These priority ZIP Codes contain just 18% of the population of Pennsylvania but 48% of the SNAP participation gap. There are **39 Highest Priority ZIP Codes located in both rural and urban counties**, including **Allegheny, Beaver, Butler, Berks, Crawford, Centre, Mifflin, Juniata, Adams, Franklin, Dauphin, Lancaster, Chester, Montgomery, Monroe, Bucks, Delaware, Philadelphia, Luzerne, Lackawanna, Wayne, and Pike Counties.**

## 3. Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Participation Priority Outreach ZIP Codes Dashboard Summary



This **interactive WIC Outreach Priority map** shows ZIP Codes across the state of Pennsylvania where geographic-based WIC outreach activities would have the most impact using a combination of child WIC participation and utilization gaps.[8]

These priority ZIP Codes contain just 32% of the population of children under the age of 6 in Pennsylvania but 54% of the WIC participation gap. There are **40 Highest Priority ZIP Codes located in both rural and urban counties**, including **Allegheny, Washington, Lawrence, Jefferson, Erie, Franklin, Lancaster, York, Dauphin, Berks, Lehigh, Northampton, Delaware, and Philadelphia Counties.**

The methodology was created by the Central Pennsylvania Food Bank Policy Research Team. WIC eligibility data for children under 6 is from the age by ratio of income to

[7] The priority areas are classified as follows: 1) Highest Priority ZIP Codes have a family SNAP participation gap over 100, individual participation gap over 500, and utilization rates under 75%; 2) Medium-High Priority ZIP Codes have a family SNAP participation gap over 50, individual participation gap over 250, and utilization rates under 50%; and 3) Medium-Low Priority ZIP Codes have a family SNAP participation gap over 50, individual participation gap over 250, and utilization rates under 75%.

[8] The priority areas are classified as follows: 1) Highest Priority ZIP Codes have a child WIC participation gap over 500 children and a utilization rate under 50%; 2) Medium-High Priority ZIP Codes have a child WIC participation gap over 500 children and a utilization rate under 75%; and 3) Medium-Low Priority ZIP Codes have a child WIC participation gap over 250 children and a utilization rate under 50%.

poverty level table in the 2017–2021 ACS and individual child participation data is from the Pennsylvania Department of Health for November 2023.

## 4. Summer Food Service Program Participation Estimate Map

The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) and Seamless Summer Option (SSO) are federally funded child congregate meal programs intended to alleviate child food insecurity in the summer, when schools are not open and school breakfasts and lunches are not available, by providing free meals to any child who visits or is registered at a program site.

This **interactive map** layers eligible census tracts with actual site locations from summer 2023 to increase understanding of where SFSP sites are currently located and highlight eligible areas where there are no sites.

- Only about one in seven children who receive a free or reduced-price lunch during the school year participates in SFSP. Barriers to children accessing the meals provided by this program may include a lack of nearby sites, lack of eligible areas near them, or lack of transportation to a site.
- Information about school district rural categorization is also included in this map to help identify areas where a new non-congregate site rule that would allow families in rural areas to pick up multiple days' worth of meals might be applicable.

Program sites can become eligible to participate in the program through several means:

- The most common is by the site being located in a census tract in which at least 50% of children live in households at or below 185% of the federal poverty level, which is the threshold at which kids become eligible for free and reduced-price lunch.
- Other means of determining site eligibility include but are not limited to, a site being close to an individual school building that would qualify for the program or site sponsors collecting individual eligibility data from participating children.

Data sources for this map include the United States Department of Agriculture Summer Meals Site Finder, FY23 CACFP and SFSP Area Eligibility maps created by No Kid Hungry, and the Center for Rural Pennsylvania.

**Please note that as PA implements the Summer EBT program, new data and analysis will be developed to identify gaps.**

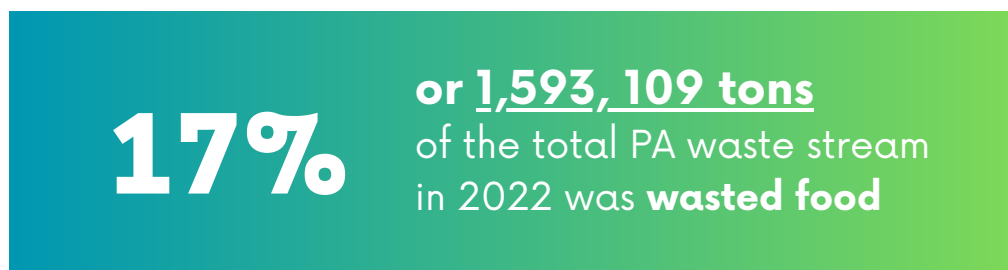
# SURPLUS FOOD & FOOD WASTE IN PA

Amidst rising food insecurity in Pennsylvania—and across the nation—we are seeing significant food loss and waste across the supply chain. This wastes not just food, but also all the valuable resources required to produce, process, distribute, and prepare that food including land, water, energy, labor, fertilizers, and other inputs.

Wasted food remains the largest component found in US—and PA [9]—landfills, where it breaks down and generates an abundance of methane, a powerful greenhouse gas that drives global warming.

To further understand these challenges, the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) partnered with MSW Consultants to conduct the state’s first food waste assessment. The **Waste Characterization Study**, published in 2022, revealed that food waste is 17% (1,593,109 tons) of the waste in the PA waste stream on an annual basis and was determined to be the largest single component of waste in the PA waste stream. The study also found that edible food comprises over 72% of the total food waste.

PA has long been known as a “landfill state” as it serves as a comparatively inexpensive dumping ground for neighboring states, which threatens the long-term preservation of landfills in the state. [10] Pennsylvania has also been home to technological advancement and innovation in the areas of food rescue and recovery, as well as the creation of new resources from waste such as compost and bioenergy production. These suggest significant potential to divert both edible and non-edible food waste from disposal in the PA waste stream (see Recommendations Section).



[9] PA Waste Characterization Study Final Report, PA Department of Environmental Protection, September 2022

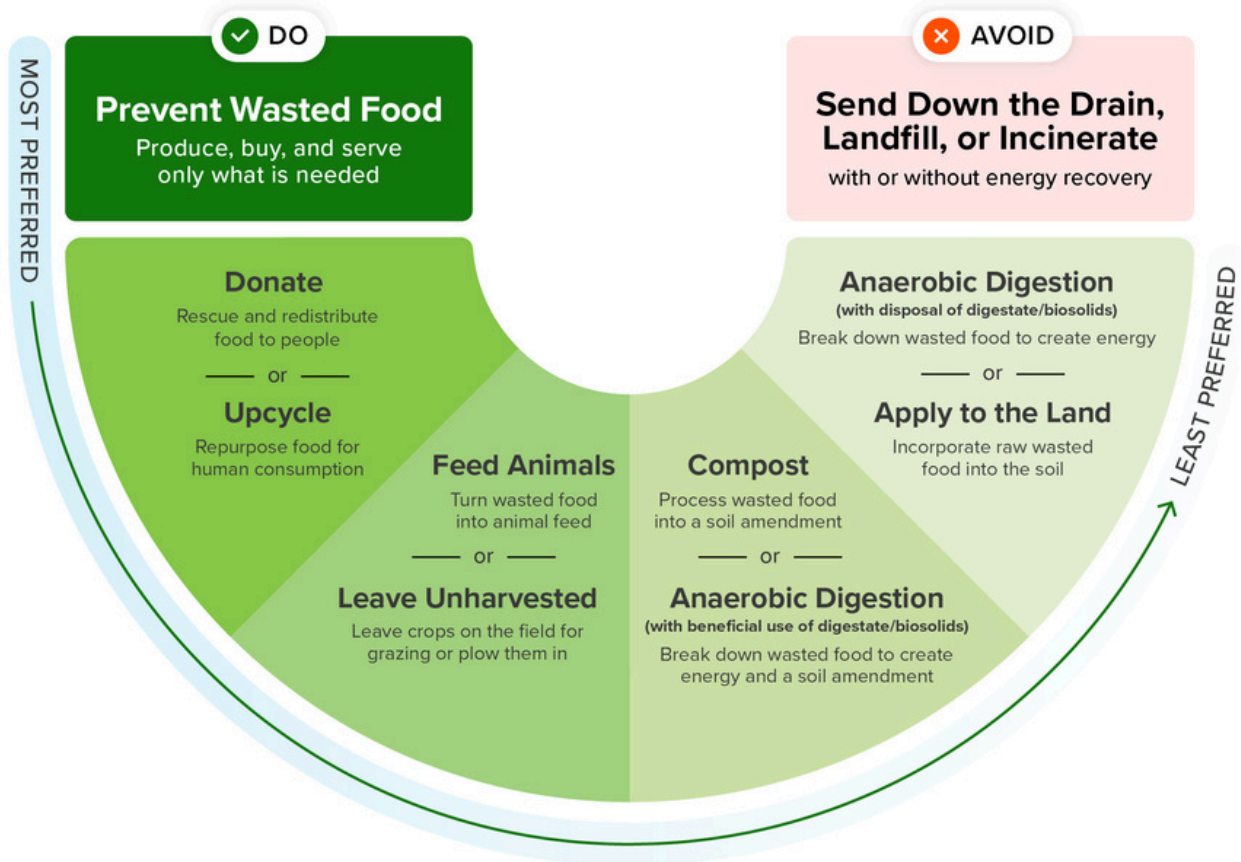
[10] Waste reportedly imported from 23 states into PA; Casey Introduces Legislation to Restrict Flow of Trash Into PA From Other States | Senator Bob Casey (senate.gov)





# Wasted Food Scale

How to reduce the environmental impacts of wasted food



**Figure 9.** United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) “Wasted Food Scale” based on the findings of its October 2023 report “From Field to Bin: The Environmental Impacts of U.S. Food Waste Management Pathways.”

**72%** of all wasted food in PA was edible.

# FIRST-YEAR ACTIVITIES & ACCOMPLISHMENTS: 2023

## SUCCESSFUL LAUNCH OF PA'S FIRST STATE FOOD POLICY COUNCIL

Per Executive Order 2022-05 establishing Pennsylvania's first-ever Food Policy Council (PA FPC), the eight state agency Council and their designees were seated on the Council. In February 2023, Governor Shapiro appointed Dawn Plummer to serve as the Council's inaugural director and chair, joining the PA Department of Agriculture's Executive Team. Upon completion of the Governor's nomination process, the Council seated a 16-person, multi-stakeholder Advisory Committee that represents the talent and diversity of our state's food system. The Council convened at four well-attended, hybrid two-hour meetings held in May, August, September, and November 2023.



### Senior Nutrition Work Group

In fall 2023, the Council developed a Senior Nutrition Workgroup tasked with:

- Analyzing senior nutrition programs,
- Increasing communication, coordination and joint planning between agency programs and external partners
- Developing recommendations on reaching older Pennsylvanians at highest risk of hunger
- Improving access to food delivery services with attention to equity
- Expanding use of PA agricultural products and reducing food waste.

2024: monthly meeting led by co-chairs:

- Julie Seby, Older Americans Act Services Division Chief, PA Department of Aging
- Sheila Christopher, Executive Director, Hunger-Free PA.

### Food Surplus & Waste Work Group

In December 2023, the Council convened 40 experts from state agencies, farms, charitable food and food rescue organizations, the private sector, and researchers to identify policy priorities for PA to address food waste.

2024: Food Surplus & Waste Work Group tasked with developing a comprehensive set of policy recommendations for legislative action.

Monthly meetings led by co-chairs:

- Lawrence Holley, Acting Interim Director of Waste Management. PA Department of Environmental Protection (DEP)
- Brett Reinford, farm operator, Reinford Farms and



## JOINED RELEVANT INTERAGENCY EFFORTS

The Food Policy Council and its Director were introduced to state agencies and collaborated on key initiatives such as the:

- Department of Health-led Pennsylvania Health Interagency Equity Task Force (PIHET) and Regional Health Equity Action Team.
- Department of Human Service (DHS)-led Mass Care, Emergency Planning and Response which is charged with coordinating the commonwealth's response to disaster-caused human services needs, including the convening of a statewide Feeding Task Force. There will be a National Mass Care exercise held on May 20-23, 2024.
- Collaboration with the Lieutenant Governor's Office, PA Department of Agriculture, and the Department of Community Economic Development (DCED) on issues of low retail food access and food apartheid in PA. We connected local officials and stakeholders responding to grocery store closures in 2 PA communities to state agencies, grant programs and resources to identify opportunities for investment.
- Emergency Food Assistance Advisory Committee (EFAAC), which is a provision of the State Food Purchase Program (SFPP) Act. Council Director represents the Governor's Office on this committee which is tasked with providing information, advice and guidance to the Department of Agriculture on the operation of the SFPP and other food assistance programs administered by the Bureau of Food Distribution.
- Governor's Office-led task force that led communications and outreach efforts to inform Pennsylvanians about the end of pandemic-era benefit rules regarding Medicaid continuous eligibility and SNAP emergency allotments.
- Participated in the PA State Farm-to-School Team with ongoing learning and coordination with Departments of Education and Agriculture and regular meetings with Mid-Atlantic Regional Office of the USDA Food & Nutrition Service (FNS) and regional state partners.



## IDENTIFIED FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES TO ADDRESS FOOD SYSTEMS CHALLENGES

As part of the Department of Agriculture's Policy Team, the Food Policy Council Director participated in the development of and shared updates with Council members on:

- PA Agriculture-led USDA awarded Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Grant program which will invest \$26 million in PA food and farm businesses and other eligible entities to create more diverse local and regional market options and economic opportunities for communities, allowing them to retain more of the value chain dollar;
- Two USDA Regional Food Business Centers (Appalachia and Northeast) that incorporate PA and will distribute over \$30 million regionally;
- Two projects led by PA-based partners who applied for USDA-funded Healthy Food Financing Initiative (HFFI) Partnership Program grants;
- PDA administered PA Farm Bill Urban Ag Infrastructure grant program review committee as well as the grant announcement event held at Farmer Girl Eb's Out of the End, Inc in Pittsburgh, PA;
- PA Department of Community and Economic Development's Neighborhood Assistance Program's Charitable Food grant program review committee; DCED invested \$36 million with \$6.2 million in tax credits and nearly \$11m in program funding and food contributions dedicated to the charitable food system.



## DEVELOPED STRATEGIES TO EXPAND THE USE OF PA AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS

The Director built partnerships and laid the foundation for increasing local, values-based procurement of PA food and agricultural products by:

- Serving on the Expert Panel convened by Penn State's Project PA and the PA Department of Education to synthesize interview data and policy development research. [PA Local Food Purchasing Incentive Investigation](#) released in September 2023.

- Collaborating with members of the Advisory Committee and the PA Farm to School Network, a statewide network of non-profits, state agencies, food policy councils, educators, and school-based leaders coordinated by The Food Trust. In 2023, this network collaborated with state partners in PDA, PDE, and Penn State's Project PA on a PA Harvest of the Month program with PA food service departments, culinary training, professional development for school food purchasers and farmers, as well as supporting the PA Farm to School Grant Program of the PA Farm Bill.



## CONDUCTED BROAD STAKEHOLDER OUTREACH

The Director focused her first months on broad outreach with a wide range of PA stakeholders, including:

- Dozens of one-on-one meetings and outreach to stakeholder networks resulted in robust public participation in all four Council meetings (with 75 to 160 members of the public in attendance at each meeting).
- Presented keynote speeches, presentations, network participation and partnership development with PA-based local and regional food policy councils, networks and associations of charitable food and food rescue organizations, school food and child nutrition professionals, private sector firms, farm-to-school advocates, immigrant farmworkers, and urban agriculturalists.
- Actively participated in ongoing coalitions including PA Hunger Action Coalition, PA Farm to School Network, and PA Child Nutrition Task Force.



## ESTABLISHED COMMUNICATIONS TOOLS

- Launched the **PA Food Policy Council website**.
- Gathered hundreds of contacts for an outreach list that received regular information.
- Garnered media coverage from 10 statewide news sources including [The Pennsylvania Capitol Star](#), [The Latrobe Bulletin](#), [MyChesCo](#), among others.





## INITIATED PREPARATIONS FOR PA'S FIRST FOOD ACTION PLAN

As required by Executive Order 2022-05, the Council Director took initial steps towards “developing a Food Action Plan for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.” In 2023, the PA FPC Director met with national experts and conducted initial research on the cost, methodologies, and outputs of state-level food action planning. In 2024, the Council seeks to identify the necessary funding, leadership, and capacity required to complete an impactful plan. The Council will draft and initiate the Plan’s scope of work.



### PA Farm-to-School Team Attends Regional Training

From June 13–15th, the Council’s Director joined a team of PA state agency colleagues from Agriculture and Education at a **USDA Mid-Atlantic Regional Office Farm to Child Nutrition training** in Bridgeville, New Jersey. There she made presentations on Pittsburgh Public School District’s Good Food Purchasing Program and PA’s Farm to School initiatives.

### 6th Annual PA Urban Ag Week

In July, the Director supported a successful **Sixth Annual Pennsylvania Urban Ag Week celebration** and Secretary Redding’s tour of urban farms and community food spaces across the state, including an inaugural “Urban Ag Luncheon: Seeds in the City” hosted by Rep. Emily Kinkead in Pittsburgh, PA.

### Council Co-hosts Listening Session on Senior Nutrition

On September 7th, the Council co-hosted with the PA Department of Aging a well-attended virtual event titled “**The Future of Senior Nutrition & Food Security: A Virtual Listening Session for PA’s Master Plan for Older Adults**” contributing important nutrition and hunger-related feedback.

# STATE AGENCY-LED FOOD SYSTEMS INITIATIVES: 2023

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**As a Food Policy Council, we seek to monitor, support coordination, and increase communication around state level food systems initiatives. While these initiatives were not led by the Food Policy Council, we regularly share progress reports at Council meetings and via our Council network.**

Below are highlights of initiatives pursued and achieved by PA state agencies:



- On May 25, 2023, Governor Shapiro signed Executive Order (EO) 2023-09, which called for the development of **Aging Our Way, PA**, a 10-year strategic plan designed to help transform the infrastructure and coordination of services for Pennsylvania’s older adults. The Pennsylvania Department of Aging, through the network of Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs), conducted over 200 Listening Sessions that provided the opportunity for older adults to share their concerns and experiences. At least one Listening Session was held in every county, and several were held virtually, including a session facilitated by the PA Food Policy Council. Among the various barriers to aging well, stakeholders identified challenges with accessing and affording healthy, nutritious foods. To address this, Aging Our Way, PA includes priorities, strategies, and tactics that promote and improve the health, well-being, and quality of life of older Pennsylvanians and prepare the commonwealth to support a healthier, longer-living older adult population.
- The Department’s PACE Program, in collaboration with the PA Department of Agriculture, helped expand enrollment in the **Senior Food Box Program (SFBP)**, which improves the health of low-income seniors by supplementing their diets with nutritious USDA foods. In August 2021, the PACE Cardholder Call Center began outreach efforts to eligible PACE enrollees and thereafter, a second call center was added at the PACE Application Center (Benefits Data Trust). In 2023, 5,428 SFBP applications were received at both call centers adding to the total of more than 30,000 applications received since

2021, of which 93% were approved to receive the food box. PACE transfers the applications to Hunger Free PA where they are distributed to one of the network's 17 food banks. In some areas of the state, food boxes are home-delivered through an agreement with DoorDash.

- The PA Department of Aging provides nutrition services through the Older Americans Act (OAA) to older adults through a network of 52 Area Agencies on Aging (AAAs). Nutrition services are designed to reduce hunger and food insecurity, reduce malnutrition, promote socialization, and promote health and well-being by assisting individuals in gaining access to nutrition, disease prevention, and health promotion services that help combat adverse health conditions brought about by poor nutritional health and sedentary behavior. Nutrition services include direct meal service that is offered at no charge to eligible individuals. Direct meal service includes **Congregate Meals** offered at Senior Community Centers (SCCs) and Older Adult Daily Living Centers, **Grab-and-Go Meals**, and **In-Home Meals** (also called Home Delivered Meals) provided through the OPTIONS program. In FY 2022-2023, the Department provided a total of 9,058,655 meals (2,417,475 Congregate Meals Served and 6,641,180 In-Home Meals Served) to individuals through nutrition services.

In addition to direct meal service, nutrition services provided to older adults include annual **nutrition screening**, **nutrition counseling** by a registered dietitian for those older adults assessed as being nutritionally at-risk, **monitoring and evaluation** of meals served and locations where food is handled, and **nutrition education**. **Nutrition education** is provided to AAAs and SCCs by a registered dietitian, at a minimum of four (4) times annually, to share at their discretion with the older adults they serve. The topics vary and have included Food Safety, MyPlate for Older Adults, Eat Right and Reduce Food Waste, Smart Tips for Getting Nutrients that May Be Lacking, among several more. The Department is committed to providing nutrition education in multiple languages, including Spanish, Chinese, and Vietnamese. The materials are also available on the Department's website.

- Through a collaboration with the Department of Agriculture, the AAA network and their affiliated SCCs distribute **Senior Farmers Market Vouchers** to eligible older adults.



- PA's 2023-24 budget included a \$2 million increase to the **State Food Purchase Program (SFPP)** to provide state funds for emergency food assistance for low-income Pennsylvanians. The increase to the \$26.28 million line item will connect surplus food donated by farmers through the **Pennsylvania Agricultural Surplus System (PASS)** to food banks and food pantries statewide. It will connect additional low-income seniors with home delivery of **Senior Food Boxes** filled with nutritious dietary staples.

Via a partnership between the PA Department of Agriculture and Feeding Pennsylvania, September 2023 was the first \$1 million month of purchase for the Pennsylvania Agricultural Surplus Program (PASS) and the Local Food Purchase Assistance Program (LFPA) since the programs' inceptions in 2015 and 2022, respectively. All thirteen food banks affiliated with the two programs participated in purchasing local foods during this month. The Pennsylvania products purchased during this month were from various agricultural sectors, including fruits, vegetables, potatoes, dairy products, meats, and eggs.

PASS and LFPA continue to support both the agricultural industry and the charitable food network statewide by reducing waste of surplus product, supporting local farms, and providing Pennsylvanians experiencing food insecurity with fresh and nutritious local foods.

- PA Department of Agriculture partnered with Hunger-Free Pennsylvania to administer the federal senior food assistance program called the Commodity Supplemental Food Program and known in PA as the **PA Senior Food Box Program (SFBP)**. The appropriated \$1,000,000 will go to expanding home delivery programs to seniors in rural areas of the Commonwealth who struggle with mobility and transportation. The SFBP is active in all 67 counties.
- The USDA and Food & Nutrition Service (FNS) awarded PA funds via **The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) Reach & Resiliency Grant Program** to invest a total of \$4.1 million into projects that expand the reach of federally funded emergency food into remote, rural, or low-income areas that are underserved by the TEFAP program. This program will invest in the PA emergency food system through food distribution site renovations, expansion of cold storage infrastructure, and investments in warehouse, transportation, and other critical equipment to expand the reach of emergency food resources.

- PA was awarded \$6.8 million for the **USDA Local Food for Schools (LFS) Program**. These funds will be sub-awarded to participating schools in Pennsylvania that operate the National School Lunch Program to be used for the purchase of unprocessed or minimally processed local and regional foods, thereby increasing sales opportunities for the local food system, and ensuring that Pennsylvania schools are afforded additional resources to feed PA children during these challenging times.
- PA's 2023-24 budget included an investment of \$2 million to fund the **Fresh Food Financing Initiative (FFFI)** by improving fresh food access to be administered by Agriculture in 2024.
- PA's 2023-24 budget invested \$13.8 million in the **fifth year of the PA Farm Bill**, making critical investments in building the workforce, processing infrastructure, urban agriculture, and marketing opportunities that the industry needs.
- PA's 2023-24 budget invested \$1 million to create a new **Organic Center of Excellence** to empower and support organic farmers and businesses and create new markets for them.



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- DCED's **Neighborhood Assistance Program-Charitable Food Program** funding decreased by \$1.5 million invested this year. At the same time, many Community Development Block Grant-receiving Community Action Agencies administer food access programs and have been seeking additional funding to provide more support to low-income individuals to purchase food and other basic necessities. With the decrease in SNAP benefits the Community Action Agencies have faced funding shortages and need additional funding to fill the gap to support individuals and families.
  - DCED manages the **Community Services Block Grant (CSBG) program**, a federally funded block grant that provides funds to 43 eligible nonprofit community-based organization or governmental entities across the Commonwealth that work to ameliorate the causes and conditions of poverty in disadvantaged and low-income communities across Pennsylvania. Some of the services provided include case management, nutrition programs, food access programs, health care, day care, etc. Many of these agencies are the lead administrator in their county for SNAP, WIC, Head Start and food distribution programs.



- Governor Shapiro retained **free “Universal Breakfast” for all PA children in K-12 schools** and the **elimination of cost to those children who qualify for reduced lunch**.
- PDE’s **Hunger-Free Campus Initiative** aims to build a coalition of colleges and universities focused on addressing hunger and the basic needs of students. Pennsylvania universities and colleges may apply for the PA Hunger-Free Campus Designation to signal their commitment to addressing food insecurity amongst students and gain access to a growing network of student hunger advocates. In 2023, PDE awarded \$1 million in Hunger-Free Campus grant funding to 30 colleges and universities to increase student access to healthy food, increase awareness of available supports, and partner with community organizations to improve services.



- DEP Division of Waste Minimization and Planning developed the **Food Recovery Infrastructure Grant (FRIG)**, which aims to reduce, to the greatest extent practicable, the amount of fresh and processed foodstuffs currently entering PA’s waste stream by providing grants to non-profit organizations operating in Pennsylvania who recover fresh, wholesome foods from food retailers/wholesalers and provide those recovered fresh, wholesome foods to Pennsylvanians who need it. The FRIG covers 100% of eligible grant costs (up to the maximum award) for equipment to store, transport, or prepare the recovered fresh, wholesome foods. In September 2023, approximately \$4.2 million was awarded to 114 non-profit organizations from across the Commonwealth in the second solicitation of the FRIG. The second solicitation of the FRIG gave special consideration to applicants located in or serving citizens from Environmental Justice (EJ) Areas. Of the 114 non-profit organizations awarded a FRIG in its second solicitation, 102 of these non-profit organizations were identified to impact an EJ Area(s).
- The Pennsylvania Climate Change Act of 2008 (Act 70) requires the DEP Energy Programs Office to compile an annual **greenhouse gas (GHG) inventory**, develop a voluntary GHG registry, and develop a **Climate Action Plan (CAP)**, and impacts

assessment and update them every three years. Previous versions of the CAP identified the reduction of food waste as well as increased production and use of biogas/renewable gas from the diversion and processing of food waste as strategies that will assist Pennsylvania in meeting GHG reduction targets. Since the last update to the CAP was performed in 2021, the department completed a **Food Waste to Renewable Energy Assessment**, and the data collection and analysis related to that assessment will be incorporated into the 2024 CAP update currently underway to provide more detailed strategies and related GHG reduction opportunities around the topic of food system management.

- PA DEP received \$511,502 from the EPA for the **Solid Waste Infrastructure for Recycling (SWIFR) grant**. PA's SWIFR grant will enhance the circular economy of food waste and food reduction measures by bridging the gap between entities that have excess food, entities that could use that safe, wholesome excess food to feed people or animals, and entities that could compost or digest unusable excess food. The amount of food diverted from disposal will be able to be tracked, which will help quantify waste reduction measures of the food recovery efforts. A Best Management Practices document for Pennsylvania's food recovery industry in which GHG reduction estimates will also be developed because of this grant.



- The **Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC)** is administered by the Department of Health. WIC is focused on impacting lifelong health and eating habits through nutrition assessment and education, specifically prescribed food supplements, counter nutritional risk factors and referral to appropriate health services. WIC program partners include 22 local agencies that perform nutritional assessment, education and counseling. There are more than 1,200 retailers statewide where WIC participants can utilize their benefits for prescribed food items.
  - **Mobile Health Units** are an innovative model of service delivery that can help alleviate health disparities in vulnerable populations. By opening opportunities directly into communities and leveraging existing community assets, Mobile Health Units can offer tailored, high-impact and accessible services that respond dynamically to the community's evolving needs. The Pennsylvania (PA) WIC Program will increase participation, program access and equity through the purchase and implementation of WIC Mobile Units. These mobile units will assist with providing services in underserved areas as well as increase WIC Program awareness. The WIC Mobile Units will be customized to operate as a fully

functional WIC satellite clinic and outreach unit serving underserved areas throughout PA. PA WIC is looking to expand upon brick-and-mortar facilities and engage more people near where they live, work and play. Mobile units will also optimize customer service by targeting rural and urban areas, while addressing transportation barriers and on-going pandemic issues. There are many reasons to pursue mobile units; however, the core goal is to reach underserved populations to ultimately increase participation.

- This is an ongoing federally funded project with financial support that ends September 30, 2024. To date, 3 WIC Mobile Units have been deployed and are serving the community, 3 are currently being outfitted, 2 are pending approval at USDA MARO, and 2 Local Agency proposals are nearing completion and will be submitted to PA WIC for review soon. Additionally, PA WIC is working with Harvard University and Family Health Council of Central PA on a program evaluation to measure program impact and identify best practices relating to PA WIC Mobile Units. PA WIC is a national leader with their work on mobile units. The best is yet to come.
- **PA Healthy Pantry Initiative (HPI)** is a project of Feeding Pennsylvania in partnership with the PA Department of Health aimed at increasing healthy options available to communities at food banks and pantries.
- **Good Food, Healthy Hospitals (GFHH)** is a collaboration between the PA Department of Health, the Hospital and Health system Association of Pennsylvania (HAP), and the Philadelphia Department of Health. The goal of GFHH is to help transform the food environments in Pennsylvania’s hospitals by working to promote healthy food and beverage options to their employees, patients, and visitors. Participating hospitals can target five food environments (patient meals, cafeteria service, catering, vending, and food purchasing) in offering more fresh and nutritionally dense food and beverage options, providing nutrition information, improving community access to nutritious options, and offering fewer unhealthy and processed options. In 2024 GFHH support will be expanded to address nutrition security in the communities they serve. As of July 2023, 51 hospitals in 26 counties have taken the pledge, impacting more than 42,000 hospital staff, 5.3 million patient meals per year, 6.8 million cafeteria meals per year and 263 healthier vending machines.



- Throughout 2023, DHS authored an 1115 demonstration waiver application titled **Bridges to Success: Keystones of Health for Pennsylvania (Keystones of Health)** to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). These allow

states to introduce and evaluate innovative programs and services in state Medicaid programs. The goal of Keystones of Health is to improve health and quality of life for PA's beneficiaries by helping with health-related social needs, which can improve a person's quality of life and offset the need for more costly, acute care. It will also improve access to care through improved supports for reentry from correctional facilities and close coverage gaps for children under 6 years of age. **PA's application includes the provision of food and nutritional services such as meals or grocery delivery for diet-related chronic disease management, healthy pregnancies, as well as connection of patients to existing programs such as SNAP and WIC.**

- In July 2023, DHS announced efforts to help Pennsylvanians **recover stolen SNAP benefits** that were electronically stolen via skimming, card cloning, phishing scams or scamming on or after October 1, 2022. Through federal funds provided by the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2023, victims of electronic theft are now able to have those benefits replaced. Data from October 31, 2023, shows that 1,630 claims totaling \$815,506 had been approved for reimbursement to PA SNAP recipients for the period of July 12 to October 15, 2023. DHS continues to review claims.
- **Expansion of SNAP Eligibility for College Students Enrolled in Certain Employment and Training Programs:** In August 2023, DHS announced that new flexibility in SNAP would allow certain college students who meet eligibility requirements to receive SNAP benefits but who traditionally do not qualify because of their status as a student. To qualify for this new flexibility, students must be enrolled in a qualifying employment and training program. Generally, college students enrolled at least half-time are ineligible for SNAP unless they qualify for existing exemptions from a work requirement. Existing exemptions are based on factors such as college enrollment status, income, caregiver status, age, disability, and more. Under this new flexibility, a student enrolled in certain programs meets the new exemption if that program: 1) Primarily serves students from households with low incomes; 2) is operated by a state or local government, or an instrumentality thereof; and 3) provides the equivalent of at least one allowable activity under SNAP Employment and Training criteria.



- The Department of Labor & Industry continues to provide **training and support workforce development**, particularly among youth, to private sector partners and employers in the fields of food and agriculture.

# RECOMMENDATIONS & ACTION STEPS

## STATE RECOMMENDATIONS

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The Council asks the Governor to work with the PA Food Policy Council to advance a healthy, equitable, sustainable, and fair food system for all Pennsylvanians. Considering our findings, we submit the following recommendations for action:



### **Improve outreach & enrollment of eligible Pennsylvanians in anti-hunger programs**

- Increase enrollment of eligible Pennsylvanians to SNAP—the nation’s first line of defense against hunger. The Council, state agencies and community-based partners should work together to identify current barriers to SNAP accessibility across the commonwealth and implement strategies that make comprehensive improvements designed to increase the reach to and enrollment of eligible Pennsylvanians. Research from charitable food partners suggests that of all current food pantry visitors, only 50% or fewer of those eligible are enrolled in SNAP. Improvements may include adjusting staff levels, training, and customer service standards at County Assistance Offices. Special focus should be placed on signing up eligible seniors to SNAP.
- Make critical improvements to PA WIC program including:
  - Integrating WIC into the portfolio of services available to low-income families and promote connections among key programs, including health care, early childhood education, SNAP, and Medicaid.
  - Improving outreach, improved customer service, staffing and additional state funding to supplement inadequate federal funding needed to administer the program.
  - Accelerating the conversion to online benefits from the current off-line system.



## Expand healthy food access and affordability

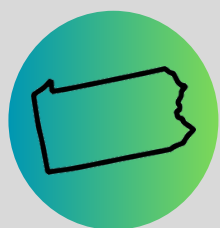
- Expand Governor Shapiro’s Universal Breakfast for all PA students to include free lunch to support the health and learning of PA kids while addressing school meal debt. The cost to continue Universal Free Breakfast, eliminate reduced lunch charges to students, and provide lunch at no charge to all students is estimated to be \$365 million in the 2024-25 school year.
- Support the Council in studying both the impact of the loss of the pandemic-era federal investment on SNAP recipients, local agriculture, and food retailers, as well as how a state-supported increase in the SNAP minimum allotment would impact food access, as well as the PA food economy.
- Improve access to nutritious food by continuing to support and expand critical PA programs such as the PA Agricultural Surplus System (PASS) program, the Fresh Food Financing Initiative (FFFI) and State Food Purchase Program (SFPP).
- Maintain \$1 million funding for the home delivery of the Senior Food Box Program in the FY24-25 Governor’s budget; continue to innovate alongside private and nonprofit sector partners to get nutritious food into the hands of older Pennsylvanians via the Senior Food Box Program (SFBP).
- Invest in the continued modernization of farmers markets by providing funding to farmers markets to grow their capacity to process electronic transactions and accept SNAP.
- Invest \$2 million annually in the Food Bucks program, which allows SNAP recipients to stretch their benefits and receive nutrition incentives when they purchase fruits and vegetables.
  - Funded predominantly through USDA, the Food Bucks program allows PA SNAP recipients to stretch their benefits and receive nutrition incentives when they purchase fruits and vegetables. The program increases the number of fresh fruits and vegetables consumed by SNAP recipients and increases revenue for PA farmers and fresh food retailers. The Food Bucks Rx program enables healthcare providers to distribute produce coupons to patients experiencing or at risk of diet-related illness. With an investment by the commonwealth, PA could draw down reeptionadditional federal



dollars from the USDA Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP)—this would better meet the demand by PA families and boost revenue for many farmers and small businesses.

- Increase redemption rates for the Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) and Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) checks and maximize benefits of the program.
  - Identify priority areas across the commonwealth where there is a need to increase PA farmers and vendors participating in the program, identify barriers to participation and develop targeted outreach strategies and solutions that help expand producers' participation in the program.
  - Evaluate redemption rates and identify priority areas for targeted outreach and innovative strategies such as mobile markets that can reach eligible women, children, and seniors.
- Expand technical and financial assistance to support the expansion of food recovery and distribution programs that enhance the PA food system:
  - The Food Recovery Infrastructure Grant (FRIG) provides grant funding using a funding source that has been depleted and cannot continue to support the growing needs of this vital grant program. The maximum amount able to be requested and awarded to FRIG grantees was reduced from \$200,000 per applicant in the first solicitation of this grant (awarded in 2020) to \$50,000 per applicant in the second solicitation of this grant (awarded in 2023) – a decrease of \$150,000 per applicant. However, costs and needs for grant-eligible equipment have not decreased and the demand for food provided by and number of clients relying on these non-profit organizations continues to grow.
  - To ensure that the Food Recovery Infrastructure Grant is available to non-profit organizations in the future, DEP is working to identify an additional or new funding source to support and expand this vital grant initiative that will help feed Pennsylvanians and reduce the amount of waste disposed or processed in the Commonwealth.
- Expand healthy food access for Pennsylvania's children by administering the 2024 Summer EBT program through the collaboration of DHS and PDE with USDA.

- With a successful 1115 Medicaid Waiver, Departments of Human Services, Agriculture, and Health should collaborate closely with the Council on the development of the implementation plan for the food and nutrition services it will provide. PA should take a leadership role in the promotion of food as medicine and healthy food access throughout the commonwealth--convening key stakeholders, new partners, and impacted communities.
- Develop a sustainable, long-term strategy to identify, monitor, and invest in “food deserts,” communities impacted by food apartheid.
  - Allocate \$2.5 million in annual funding to Pennsylvania’s Healthy Food Financing Incentive (HFFI) program to target support for grocery retail in communities that lack access.
  - Investment strategies should promote inclusive economic development that supports the growth of food sovereignty innovations and community-led interventions that arose out of the COVID-19 pandemic realities.
- Given the link between hunger and poverty, the Council is a valuable partner for policy development that integrates whole person, whole community approaches to policies and programs such as childcare, healthcare, transportation, and housing. The Council supports intersectional approaches to poverty reduction with a keen interest in addressing its root causes and strengthening social determinants of health.



## **Increase procurement of PA food and agricultural products**

- Establish and fund a state Local Food Purchasing Incentive (LFPI) program in PA to provide School Food Authorities with additional funds to partially or completely offset the cost of purchasing local foods.
  - Serving more local food in Child Nutrition Programs in K-12 schools would provide kids and families with access to high-quality, nutritious foods while also strengthening local economies.
  - Based on program design and costs in other states, the LFPI would be best administered through the Pennsylvania Department of Education, and funding should be available to adequately administer the program and impact Child Nutrition Program operators’ purchasing behavior.



## **Reduce wasted food through recovery, redistribution and new resource generation**

- Pass a comprehensive food waste policy in 2024 that:
  - reduces food loss and redirects edible food to feed Pennsylvanians;
  - decreases greenhouse gas emissions and generates new resources by redirecting inedible food waste to compost and bioenergy production
- The Council will launch a Food Waste Work Group in 2024 to develop a comprehensive set of policy recommendations for legislative action that addresses the entire food waste cycle, including source reduction, donation of edible food, and recycling (the diversion of food waste to animals, renewable gas generation, and composting). While DEP will implement recommendations from the PA Food Waste to Energy Assessment (related to improving internal permitting procedures and providing technical and financial support to facilities processing food waste), the Council can elevate the discussion and involve key stakeholders from the food production, processing, and distribution communities to address issues such as source reduction and donation of edible food, as well study opportunities and best practices to ensure excess food generation is properly managed and recycled. This Work Group could examine policies, incentives, and other tools that would encourage that food waste is properly managed across multiple disciplines and stakeholders. Acting in 2024 will allow the commonwealth to better leverage funding opportunities provided by the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) and the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) for both short-term planning, as well as long-term implementation activities, such as the building out of additional infrastructure to process food waste.



## **Increase local food production and processing by advancing strategies for inclusive, equitable food systems development**

- Build out Pennsylvania’s Economic Development Strategy to include local and regional food systems development and wealth generation opportunities and align federal and state food systems investments with this strategy to support inclusive economic growth in PA.
- Develop strategies to address barriers to land ownership and capital access and support the growth of cooperatives across the commonwealth that engage marginalized populations, immigrants, youth, and the next generation.
- Increase assistance for farmers who have permanent or temporary disabilities, including provision of grant programs to fund outside labor sources as needed to keep experienced farmers on the job while also providing mentorship opportunities for new farmers.
- Develop strategies to support the growth of PA’s strong animal agricultural economy, with a focus on small direct-to-consumer production through the expansion of meat processing facilities, aquaculture, and farm-raised fish industries.
- Analyze and evaluate impacts of government programs on the growing Pennsylvania Amish agricultural communities versus non-Amish “English” farmers.



## **Grow a fair and prosperous food economy that benefits PA’s essential workers**

A key measure of the resilience and fairness of a food system is the prosperity of its food and ag businesses, as well as the well-being and safety of its workforce. The quality and working conditions present across our food system jobs are critical, as are the ability of workers to earn family sustaining wages. We know that precariously employed workers in U.S. and PA food systems disproportionately include women, immigrants, Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) individuals.

- Raise the minimum wage in Pennsylvania from the federal minimum of \$7.25 an hour to support family-sustaining wage levels capable of lifting Pennsylvanians out of poverty, increasing buying power, and therefore decreasing food security.

- Incorporate food systems development strategies into the state’s economic development plan that support and incentivize the creation of good food jobs, and successful businesses and cooperatives. Support community-driven food production and retail in places neglected by private industry.



## **Support food sovereignty & dignity of Pennsylvanians**

- Develop a coordinated and strategic communications plan that shifts the narrative in Pennsylvania from issues of charity to matters of equitable development and justice by:
  - The Governor’s Office and agency communications teams collaborating with the PA Food Policy Council to develop pro-active communications plans for storytelling, empowerment and reducing stigma associated with participation in programs like SNAP, WIC, and the Child Nutrition Programs.
  - Uplifting community-led solutions by inviting partners to share their work in meetings, conferences and briefings, and media outreach.
- Empower the Council to expand inclusive participation in food governance by:
  - Ensuring that agencies engage a diverse group of stakeholders on key issues impacting food and agricultural systems, access to nutritious foods, essential workers in the food supply chain, and using the power of the Food Policy Council to convene these conversations.
  - Facilitating relationship-building activities across sectors with leaders from frontline communities.
  - Formally engaging local and regional food policy councils in the PA FPC.
- Build data democracy, transparency, and accountability to establish measurable goals by:

- Expanding key indicators established in the Wolf Administration’s Food Security Partnership initiative to assemble the food systems data landscape needed to track progress over time; incorporate new data sets as they are released (such as the 2024 Ag Census).
- Collaborating with key data partners such as Pasa Sustainable Agriculture’s Foodshed Mapping Project to align agency and Council efforts and assessments.
- Improving data transparency by sharing under-analyzed data collected by state agencies.
- Disaggregating data by critical categories (race, sex, geography, age) to assist with outreach and utilization analysis. For example, FMNP vouchers currently do not track critical information needed to make program improvements.
- Investing in systems upgrades and the necessary technology to deliver high quality programs efficiently. Modernizing the state data systems infrastructure—including department level data expertise and interagency coordination also allows for appropriate data collection and analysis needed for evaluation, accountability, and improvement planning.

# CRITICAL FEDERAL LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES FOR PA

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The Council asks the Governor to continue advocating for improved federal policies that impact Pennsylvanians and our food systems, including:



## **Support recommendations for expanded programs in the 2024 Federal Farm Bill**

including improvements and expansion of Nutrition title programs such as The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP), Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP), Supplemental Nutrition Program (SNAP) and The Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP).

- Advocate for increased invest into the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program to allow eligible older adults greater access to healthy fruits, vegetables, and herbs as well as for the inclusion of eggs and dairy, as vouchers would expand accessibility for these items. PA benefitted from the investment of additional American Rescue Plan funds for 2023 and 2024, allowing the PA Department of Ag to increase the voucher's dollar amounts from \$24 to \$50 for eligible seniors thus expanding access.



## **Advocate for full funding of the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) for FY2024**



## **Advocate for federal policies and programs that reduce poverty and other root causes of hunger**

such as the revival of the expanded and inclusive federal Child Tax Credit and Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC).

- These proved to be powerhouse policies for PA families and children by slashing hunger and increasing the purchasing power of families to buy more and better-quality foods. In PA, the monthly, fully refundable Child Tax Credit lifted 140,000 of Pennsylvania’s children from poverty, and over 2,368,000 – 90% of children in the state – benefited from the program. Under current law, millions of children are once again excluded. The EITC – which was temporarily expanded to include younger workers and seniors still in the workforce – provided an average of \$700 more to 697,000 Pennsylvania workers without children in the home<sup>[11]</sup>.



## **Advocate for immigration reform recognizing the critical role of essential workers of our food and agriculture systems**

[11] [CTC State Factsheet](#) (June 2023) ([economicsecurity.us](http://economicsecurity.us))



# 2024 PA FOOD POLICY COUNCIL

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## Quarterly Meeting Dates

Council meetings will be all virtual or hybrid with both an in-person and virtual option via Microsoft Teams for broad participation. The Council and its Advisory Committee will meet quarterly in 2024 on the following dates:

- ❄️ Friday, February 16, 2024 (all virtual)
- 🌱 Thursday, May 16, 2024 (in person in Pittsburgh, PA)
- 🌻 Friday, August 16, 2024
- 🌾 Friday, November 15, 2024

**These meetings are open to the public.** Meeting notices, including any changes to meeting location, can be located at:

<https://www.agriculture.pa.gov/Pages/Meeting-Notices.aspx>

## Contact

**Dawn Plummer**  
**Pennsylvania Food Policy Council**

717-743-3166

dawplummer@pa.gov

[https://www.agriculture.pa.gov/Food\\_Security/Pages/PA-Food-Policy-Council.aspx](https://www.agriculture.pa.gov/Food_Security/Pages/PA-Food-Policy-Council.aspx)

**We look forward to collaborating with you to build a better food system for all Pennsylvanians in 2024.**

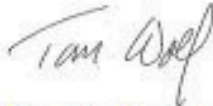


## Executive Order Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Governor's Office

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### Executive Order 2022-05 – Pennsylvania Food Policy Council

Date: December 15, 2022

By Direction of:   
Tom Wolf, Governor

- WHEREAS, the Wolf administration has prioritized improving Pennsylvania's food system and has done so through various means, including establishing the Governor's Food Security Partnership, funding the expansion of cold storage in food banks, creating the Fresh Food Financing Initiative and Pennsylvania Hunger-Free Campus Initiative, increasing access and expanded eligibility for food assistance programs, utilizing the Pennsylvania Agriculture Surplus System, and proposing and implementing the first state-level Pennsylvania Farm Bill; and
- WHEREAS, food insecurity, hunger, inadequate nutrition, and food waste remain serious problems in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, with too many of our citizens unable to access affordable, fresh, nutritious, and culturally diverse food for themselves or their families; and
- WHEREAS, proper nutrition plays a significant role in reducing infant mortality and health problems associated with aging, and in improving the ability of children to learn in school and the job readiness of workers; and
- WHEREAS, there are significant economic and workforce development benefits to the Commonwealth and its residents from expanding the use of Pennsylvania agricultural products in public and private food and nutrition delivery systems; and
- WHEREAS, the United States Department of Agriculture's Economic Research Service found that 10.2 percent of Pennsylvania households were food insecure in 2021; and
- WHEREAS, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection estimates that more than 2.7 million tons of food waste are produced in Pennsylvania annually; and
- WHEREAS, the food system must be sustainable and resilient in the face of shocks and stresses from climate change, historic inequities, international conflicts, supply chain interruptions, and other disruptions; and

WHEREAS, through resources available to the public sector in conjunction with novel efforts in the private sector, Pennsylvania seeks to ensure better access to food, improved nutrition, and reduced food waste in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Tom Wolf, Governor of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and other laws, do hereby establish the Pennsylvania Food Policy Council (hereinafter referred to as the "Council") and do hereby direct the following:

**1. Purpose of the Pennsylvania Food Policy Council.**

The Council is established to:

- a. Evaluate issues facing Pennsylvania's food system including, but not limited to, developing and implementing strategies to improve food security and nutrition, and reduce food waste.
- b. Facilitate coordination of interagency efforts designated to reduce hunger and improve nutrition for Pennsylvania residents over their entire lifespan.
- c. Facilitate the organization of private and public sector efforts to improve the Commonwealth's response to challenges in the food system and support food sovereignty.

**2. Composition of the Pennsylvania Food Policy Council.**

The Council shall consist of nine (9) members as follows:

- a. The Director of the Council;
- b. The Secretary of Aging or the Secretary's designee;
- c. The Secretary of Agriculture or the Secretary's designee;
- d. The Secretary of Community and Economic Development or the Secretary's designee;
- e. The Secretary of Education or the Secretary's designee;
- f. The Secretary of Environmental Protection or the Secretary's designee;
- g. The Secretary of Health or the Secretary's designee;
- h. The Secretary of Human Services or the Secretary's designee; and
- i. The Secretary of Labor & Industry or the Secretary's designee.

**3. Duties and Responsibilities.**

The Council shall have the following duties and responsibilities:

- a. Make recommendations to promote coordination, communication, and joint planning between agency programs and external partners in the private sector to improve Pennsylvania's food system.

- b. Develop recommendations on ways entities may work cooperatively to reach those who are at the highest risk of hunger, and to expand food and nutrition delivery systems to improve access to food and nutrition services for those in need.
- c. Identify gaps in food and nutrition delivery systems through statistical and program analyses, surveys, studies, and public hearings and make recommendations on strategies to fill those gaps.
- d. Develop recommendations to reduce food waste across Pennsylvania.
- e. Develop and implement strategies to expand the use of Pennsylvania agricultural products in public and private food and nutrition delivery systems.
- f. Identify grants and other opportunities to further address the challenges and opportunities of the Commonwealth's food system.
- g. Develop a Food Action Plan for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and update the plan on a biennial basis. The Food Action Plan must include a strategic plan for implementing policies with benchmarks and criteria for measuring progress.
- h. Submit an annual report in January 2024, and every year thereafter, with accomplishments, recommendations, and findings to the Governor. The Council may submit other reports to the Governor, as it deems necessary, on the identified areas of responsibility of the Council under this Executive Order.
- i. Convene at least quarterly and at the call of the Director of the Council. Council members may attend meetings in-person or virtually, or through a combination thereof, at the discretion of the Director. In-person or virtual participation shall be considered attendance for purposes of constituting a quorum.

**4. Director of the Pennsylvania Food Policy Council.**

The Governor shall appoint the Director of the Council, who shall serve as the Chair of the Council and will be an employee of the Department of Agriculture. The Director shall:

- a. Prepare agendas, timelines, and meeting schedules; convene meetings; and oversee the activities of the Council.
- b. Facilitate interdepartmental cooperation on food access, nutrition, and food waste.
- c. Identify shocks and stresses that jeopardize Pennsylvania's food system and opportunities to strengthen the food system.
- d. Review and evaluate the operations and policies of all state and federal food security programs administered by the Commonwealth.
- e. Assist the Council in coordinating private and public sector collaboration opportunities.

**5. Pennsylvania Food Policy Council Advisory Committee.**

The Director may establish an Advisory Committee to assist the Council, as appropriate. The Advisory Committee shall be chaired by a member of the Council. The Chair shall be appointed by the Governor and serve at the Governor's pleasure. The Advisory Committee shall consist of sixteen (16) members appointed by the Governor. Members of the Advisory Committee serve at the pleasure of the Governor. Whenever possible, members shall be selected to ensure geographic representation and to build a diverse membership that represents the Commonwealth. The Advisory Committee shall include representatives from:

- a. Three Regional Food Policy Councils;
- b. One food retailer or manufacturer;
- c. One urban agriculture organization;
- d. One statewide farmer organization;
- e. One food security organization;
- f. Two state-wide charitable food organizations;
- g. One food waste organization;
- h. One health and/or nutrition organization;
- i. One PA PASS farmer;
- j. One school nutrition expert;
- k. One expert on immigration topics;
- l. One representative of the United States Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service; and
- m. One representative from Penn State Extension.

**6. Compensation.**

Members of the Advisory Committee shall serve without compensation.

**7. Effective Date.**

This Executive Order shall take effect immediately.

**8. Termination Date.**

This Executive Order shall remain in effect until revised or rescinded by the Governor.

**9. Rescission.**

Effective immediately, *Executive Order 2015-12*, dated September 29, 2015, is hereby rescinded.

# APPENDIX 2: GLOSSARY

## FOOD AND NUTRITION SECURITY TERMS [12]

### TERM

### KEY WORDS

### DEFINITION/DESCRIPTION

Community Food Security

food access; food safety; nutrition; sustainable agriculture; local food systems; culturally acceptable food; social justice

A situation in which all community residents obtain a safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes community self-reliance and social justice.

Source: [University of Florida IFAS Extension](#); Date accessed: 01-25-2023.

First Food Desert

breastfeeding, social, and economic dynamics

Geographic areas where social and economic dynamics unequally constrain breastfeeding when compared with other locations. Places often classified where broader forces present such consistently large obstacles to breastfeeding success in predominantly black and low-income areas of the United States.

Source: [Erica Morrell, First Food Justice: Infant Feeding Disparities and the First Food System. Breastfeeding Medicine. Oct 2017.489-492](#), and [Correction to: First Food Justice: Infant Feeding Disparities and the First Food System, by Morrell E. Breastfeed Med. 2018 Mar;13\(2\):161.](#); Date accessed: 06-23-2023.

First Food Justice

racial disparities, infant feeding

To take action on first food deserts and racial disparities in infant feeding. First food justice is about creating accessible, supportive, policies and environments to enable breastfeeding people to give their infant optimal nutrition.

Source: [Andrea Freeman, "First Food" Justice: Racial Disparities in Infant Feeding as Food Oppression, 83 Fordham L. Rev. 3053 \(2015\).](#); Date accessed: 06-23-2023.

[12] Adapted from the Association of State Public Health Nutritionists (ASPHN); Accessed at <https://asphn.org/food-and-nutrition-security-primer-terms/>

## Food and Nutrition Security

physical access to food; social access to food; economic access to food; safe food; sufficient quantity; sufficient quality; health equity; social determinants of health

Food and nutrition security means having reliable access to enough high-quality food to avoid hunger and stay healthy. Improving access to nutritious food supports overall health, reduces chronic diseases, and helps people avoid unnecessary health care.

Source: [HHS, CDC](#); Date accessed: 12-27-2022.

## Food Apartheid

apartheid; control; discrimination; food desert, food swamp; hunger; justice; poverty; racism; self-determination

Describes food insecurity as a systemic issue, not a naturally occurring phenomenon.

Food apartheid more accurately describes what it means not to have food access in the US.

Source: [T. Colin Campbell Center for Nutrition Studies](#); Date accessed: 01-25-2023.

“The systematic destruction of Black self determination to control our food (including land, resource theft and discrimination), a hyper-saturation of destructive foods and predatory marketing, and a blatantly discriminatory corporate controlled food system that results in our communities suffering from some of the highest rates of heart disease and diabetes of all times.”

Source: [National Black Food & Justice Alliance](#) and [Dara Cooper](#) (co-founder of the [National Black Food and Justice Alliance](#)); Date accessed: 01-25-2023.

## Food As/Is Medicine

food access, availability; chronic disease management; health; medical nutrition therapy; nutrition security, prevention; treatment

Considered "a spectrum of programs and services that respond to the critical link between nutrition and health, integrated into healthcare delivery. Examples: programs that provide nutritionally appropriate food, for free or at a discount to individuals, to support disease management, disease prevention, or optimal health, as part of or linked to the health care system as a component of an individual's treatment plan."

Source: [Informing the White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition and Health – 2022 Task Force Report](#) and Interventions for Food is Medicine are based on findings in this research: Downer S, Berkowitz SA, Harlan TS, Olstad DL, Mozaffarian D. Food is medicine: actions to integrate food and nutrition into healthcare. *BMJ*. 2020 Jun 29;369:m2482. doi: 10.1136/bmj.m2482. PMID: 32601089; PMCID: PMC7322667; Date accessed: 01-25-2023.

Food as Medicine is a philosophy where food and nutrition aids individuals through interventions that support health and wellness. Focus areas include:

- Food as preventative medicine to encourage health and well-being;
- Food as medicine in disease management and treatment;
- Food as medicine to improve nutrition security; and
- Food as medicine to promote food safety.

Food as medicine is a reaffirmation that food and nutrition play a role in sustaining health, preventing disease, and as a therapy for those with conditions or in situations responsive to changes in their diet.

Source: [Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics](#); Date accessed: 01-25-2023.

## Food Desert

census tract; food access; availability; neighborhood; nonmetropolitan, rural, urban; retail food distribution; concentration; measurement

The application of the food desert concept in the U.S. elucidates a great divide between those with and without access to low-cost, high-quality foods.

Source: [A study by Mississippi State University & Cornell University](#); Date accessed: 01-25-2023.

Low-income census tracts with a substantial number or share of residents with low levels of access to retail outlets selling healthy and affordable foods.

Source: [USDA](#); Date accessed: 05-22-2023.

## Food Dignity

agency; choice; community-based participatory research; community organizing; food security; food justice

Being able to feed your family what you believe is healthy and right promotes dignity.

Food Dignity—aims to convey both a statement of values and a hypothesis. The ethical stance is that human and community agency in food systems is an end in itself. Our hypothesis is that expanding such agency, especially within communities dealing with food insecurity, will improve the sustainability and equity of our local food systems and economies.



## Food Equity

access to food; community-based; control; fairness; food apartheid; health equity; healthy food supply; public, private, and charitable sectors; food chain: food production, processing, distribution, retail; food recovery; recycling; waste; racial equity; food awareness, knowledge, skills, preparation

A healthy food supply, in both public and private sectors, and through the charitable system. Access to affordable, good food in all communities. Vegetables, beans, fruits, and other nutritious food must reach all communities. Awareness, knowledge, and skills that empower people everywhere to select good foods and to quickly prepare them at home.

Source: [Partnership for A Healthier America](#); Date accessed: 01-25-2023.

An equitable food system is one that creates a new paradigm in which all — including those most vulnerable and those living in low-income neighborhoods and communities of color — can fully participate, prosper, and benefit. It is a system that, from farm to table, from processing to disposal, ensures economic opportunity; high-quality jobs with living wages; safe working conditions; access to healthy, affordable, and culturally appropriate food; and environmental sustainability.

Source: [Policy Link](#); Date accessed: 01-25-2023.

## Food Insecurity

food insecurity; dietary quality and variety; quantity of food; uncertain availability (of food); limited, uncertain acquisition (of food)

Food insecurity is the limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways.

Food insecurity: Since the food security measure uses multiple items, it covers households worrying about food running out, dietary quality and variety, and quantity of food consumed. Food insecurity is measured at two levels of severity. In households with low food security, the hardships experienced are primarily reductions in dietary quality and variety. In households with very low food security,

the hardships experienced are reduced food intake and skipped meals.

Source: [USDA-ERS](#); Date accessed: 09-13-2022.

## Food Insecurity as a Social Determinant of Health

food insecurity; low food security; very low food security; nutrition security; food and nutrition security; social determinants of health

Food insecurity is defined as a household-level economic and social condition of limited or uncertain access to adequate food "that may be influenced by a number of factors, including income, employment, race/ethnicity, and disability."

Low food security: Reports of reduced quality, variety, or desirability of diet. Little or no indication of reduced food intake.

Very low food security: Reports of multiple indications of disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake.

Source: [HHS, HP2030](#) and [HHS, HP2030](#); Date accessed: 12-27-2022.

## Food Insufficiency

food insufficiency; enough to eat; severity; very low food security

Food insufficiency means that households sometimes or often did not have enough to eat.

Food insufficiency: The food insufficiency question provides relatively little detail on the food hardship experienced and indicates only whether a household had enough to eat. Food insufficiency is a more severe condition than food insecurity and measures whether a household generally has enough to eat. In this way, food insufficiency is closer in severity to very low food security than to overall food insecurity.

Source: [USDA-ERS](#); Date accessed: 09-13-2022.

## Food Justice

universal access; nutritious, affordable, culturally appropriate food; disparities in food access, land ownership, agricultural practices, distribution of technology and resources;

Those working for Food Justice work to "ensure universal access to nutritious, affordable, and culturally appropriate food for all and advocate for the well-being and safety of those involved all along the food chain." Those working for Food Justice aim to address disparities in food access by examining the structural roots of food systems. Food Justice

workers' rights; historical injustices; communities of color

addresses "questions of land ownership, agricultural practices, distribution of technology and resources, workers' rights, historical injustices faced by communities of color" and is "intertwined with environmental justice and sustainability movements."

Source: [Boston University Community Service Center](#); Date accessed: 01-25-2023.

A process whereby communities most impacted and exploited by our current corporate controlled, extractive agricultural system shift power to re-shape, re-define and provide indigenous, community-based solutions to accessing and controlling food that are humanizing, fair, healthy, accessible, racially equitable, environmentally sound, and just.

Source: [National Black Food & Justice Alliance](#) and [Dara Cooper](#) (co-founder of the [National Black Food and Justice Alliance](#)); Date accessed: 01-25-2023.

## Food Mirage

food affordability and access; income; distance, proximity

In a food mirage, grocery stores are plentiful, but prices are beyond the means of low-income households, making them functionally equivalent to food deserts in that a long journey to obtain affordable, nutritious food is required in either case.

Source: [Science Direct](#); Date accessed: 01-27-2023.

## Food Scarcity

food scarcity; food insufficiency

Percentage of adults in households where there was either sometimes or often not enough to eat in the last 7 days.

Source: [U.S. Census Bureau](#) (Reference period is 7 days); Date accessed: 09-13-2022.

## Food Security

food security; food insecurity; equity

Access to affordable, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food for all people at all times.

Source: [GusNIP Training, Technical Assistance, Evaluation, and Information Center, Gretchen Swanson Center for Nutrition](#); Date accessed: 09-13-2022.

access; availability;  
nutritionally adequate; safe

Food security for a household means access by all members at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life. Food security includes at a minimum: The ready availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods; Assured ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways (that is, without resorting to emergency food supplies, scavenging, stealing, or other coping strategies).

Source: [USDA-ERS](#); Date accessed: 09-13-2022.

## Food Sovereignty

culturally appropriate, cultural diversity, food access; food production; food distribution; food systems; people first; power; relationships; rights; self-determination

"Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems. It puts the aspirations and needs of those who produce, distribute, and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations." – Declaration of Nyéléni, the first global forum on food sovereignty, Mali, 2007.

Source: [Nyéléni International Movement For Food Sovereignty](#) and [U.S. Food Sovereignty Alliance](#); Date accessed: 01-25-2023.

There's no universal definition for food sovereignty, but it can be described as the ability of communities to determine the quantity and quality of the food that they consume by controlling how their food is produced and distributed.

Source: [U.S. Department of the Interior – Indian Affairs](#); Date accessed: 01-25-2023.

## Food Stability

food availability, access; food security; food utilization

Food stability is when a population, household, or individual has access to food at all times and does not risk losing access as a consequence of cyclical events, such as the dry season."

Source: [Open Oregon Educational Resources](#); Date accessed: 01-25-2023.

## Food Swamp

fast food; food access; food desert; fruit/vegetable availability; junk food; retail zoning; structural racism; urban

Neighborhoods that have relatively easy access to less healthy foods compared with access to healthy foods.

Source: [USDA-ERS](#); Date accessed: 01-25-2023.

Neighborhoods where fast food and junk food inundate healthy alternatives. Areas with a high-density of establishments selling high-calorie fast food and junk food, relative to healthier food options.

Source: [UJERPH](#); Date accessed: 01-25-2023.

## Foodways

culinary practice; culture; eating habits; food knowledge; generations; similarities and differences

The eating habits and culinary practices of a people, region, or historical period.

Source: [Science Direct](#); Date accessed: 01-25-2023.

Foodways as a discipline examines the role of food and food-related behavior in cultural groups, and the ways in which food knowledge is transferred within and varies between different societies.

Source: [University of Washington Library, Anthropology: Foodways web resource](#); Date accessed: 01-25-2023.

## Health Equity

health disparities; social determinants of health; economic obstacles; injustices

Is the state in which everyone has a fair and just opportunity to attain their highest level of health. Achieving this requires focused and ongoing societal efforts to address historical and contemporary injustices; overcome economic, social, and other obstacles to health and healthcare; and eliminate preventable health disparities.

Source: [HHS, CDC](#); Date accessed: 09-13-2022.

## High Food Security

no food access problems; no food access limitations

High food security (old label=Food security): no reported indications of food-access problems or limitations.

Source: [USDA-ERS](#); Date accessed: 09-13-2022.

## Hunger

individual level; physiologic condition

Hunger is an individual-level physiological condition that may result from food insecurity.

Source: [USDA-ERS](#); Date accessed: 09-13-2022.

consequence of food insecurity; involuntary lack of food

The term hunger refers to a potential consequence of food insecurity. Hunger is discomfort, illness, weakness, or pain caused by prolonged, involuntary lack of food.

Source: [HHS, HP2030](#); Date accessed: 09-13-2022.

## Limited Access to Healthy Foods

food access; food availability; built environment; references USDA definition

Percent of population that is low-income (below 200% the Federal Poverty Level) and does not live close to a grocery store (more than 10 miles for rural and 1 mile for non-rural).

Source: [HHS, HRSA](#); Date accessed: 09-13-2022.

## Low Food Security

reduced diet quality; reduced diet variety; reduced desirability of diet

Low food security (old label=Food insecurity without hunger): reports of reduced quality, variety, or desirability of diet. Little or no indication of reduced food intake.

Source: [USDA-ERS](#); Date accessed: 09-13-2022.

## Marginal Food Security

anxiety over food sufficiency or food in the house

Marginal food security (old label=Food security): one or two reported indications—typically of anxiety over food sufficiency or shortage of food in the house. Little or no indication of changes in diets or food intake.

Source: [USDA-ERS](#); Date accessed: 09-13-2022.

## Medically Tailored Meals

chronic illnesses; dietary therapy; evidence-based; food is medicine; medical nutrition therapy; nutrition assessment; treatment

Medically tailored meals (MTM) are meals approved by a RDN that reflect appropriate dietary therapy based on evidence-based practice guidelines. Diet/meals are recommended by a RDN based on a nutritional assessment and a referral by a health care provider to address a medical diagnosis, symptoms, allergies, medication management and side effects to ensure the best possible nutrition-related health outcomes.

## Nutrition Equity

food security; health equity, participatory research; racial disparities; food systems

The state of having freedom, agency, and dignity in food traditions resulting in people and communities healthy in body, mind, and spirit.

Source: [Freedman, D.A., et al. Food system dynamics structuring nutrition equity in racialized urban neighborhoods. The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition 115, 1027–1038, 2022](#); Date accessed: 01-25-2023.

## Nutrition Security

consistent and equitable access to food; consistent availability of food; affordability; equity

Consistent and equitable access to healthy, safe, and affordable foods that promote optimal health and wellbeing.

Source: [USDA-FNS](#); Date accessed: 09-13-2022.

Nutrition security means all Americans have consistent and equitable access to healthy, safe, affordable foods essential to optimal health and well-being. Our approach to tackling food and nutrition insecurity aims to: Recognize all Americans are not maintaining an active, healthy life that is consistent with Federal recommendations; and emphasize taking an equity lens to our efforts.

Source: [USDA-FNS](#); Date accessed: 09-13-2022.

## Human Right to Food

all people; food availability, accessibility, adequacy; human dignity; human rights

The right to food is recognized in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights as part of the right to an adequate standard of living.

The right to adequate food is realized when every man, woman and child, alone or in community with others, has physical and economic access at all times to adequate food or means for its procurement.

Generally understood as the right to feed oneself in dignity, the right to adequate food is a long-standing international human right to which many countries are committed.

## Very Low Food Security

disrupted eating patterns;  
very low food intake

Very low food security (old label=Food insecurity with hunger): reports of multiple indications of disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake.

Source: [USDA-ERS](#); Date accessed: 09-13-2022.

## RESOURCES

1. [White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health: Session Recordings](#), 09-28-2022
2. [White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health: National Strategy](#), 09-28-2022
3. [White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health: Website](#)
4. [Defining Food Insecurity and Measuring it During COVID-19](#), Food Research & Action Center (FRAC), Date accessed: 09-14-2022
5. [Definitions of Food Security](#), USDA Economic Research Service (ERS), Date accessed: 09-14-2022
6. [Prioritizing Nutrition Security in the US](#), Viewpoint” editorial in the Journal of the American Medical Academy (JAMA), Date accessed: 09-14-2022
7. [Research Framework that is a multi-dimensional model depicting a wide array of health determinants relevant to understanding and addressing minority health and health disparities](#), The National Institute on Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD), HHS, Date accessed: 09-14-2022