



FIRST NATIONS
DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

First Nations Development Institute

REFERENCE GUIDE

for Community Food Assessments

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

Thank you for your efforts in promoting equitable access to food and the accompanying economic benefits in your community! This guide is not meant to be all-inclusive. Rather, it is a survey of topics you will come across when assessing your food system, however you choose to define it.

Current models of food systems are far more comprehensive than they were even a few years ago. While access to food and proximity to grocery stores have long been measures of the quality and effectiveness of a food system, new measures like health and other market-based measures are becoming increasingly popular.

This guide is meant to be a jumpstart to a broad-based understanding of a system; and a systemic understanding must be underpinned by an understanding of your market, the accessibility of product, demand, target market demographics, your food system's place in your locality, and the funding sources available to shore up the weaknesses you may identify.

Each of these references approaches a systemic look from a different perspective. It is our hope that by reading this variety of publications, your horizons will be similarly broadened and the work we are all excited about can proceed with a common focus, knowledge and language.

Enjoy!

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Marketing Service

The Economics of Local Food Systems: A Toolkit to Guide Community Discussions, Assessments and Choices

www.crcworks.org/amstoolkit.pdf

This toolkit was compiled specifically for communities interested in undertaking community food assessments. It contains detailed case studies from several communities that discuss methodology, data sources, how to use data, how to engage community, as well as several different ways to model data to determine the economic impact of key drivers in the system. It's a must-read for those starting food-system assessments.

U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey (BRFSS)

www.cdc.gov/brfss/index.html

The Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey is a measure of health-seeking behaviors. Health-seeking behaviors in nearly all modern paradigms are assessed in terms of two primary life activities: diet and exercise. In a food assessment paradigm, the extent to which individuals perform health-seeking behaviors, in the context of diet, can be used as proxy to estimate market demand for "healthy foods." "Healthy foods," in turn, are generally considered fresh produce that is local to the area.

U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS)

Census of Agriculture 2012

www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2012

For those conducting food assessments, the Agricultural Census is necessary as a primary source for locating mainstream farming, distribution and geographical information. A searchable database with tabular functions, data can be extracted by crop, by region, by state, and by other searchable parameters.

U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census

2007 U.S. Economic Census

www.census.gov/econ

While the Agricultural Census gives an assessment team a sense of the agricultural activity in its region of study as well as the amount of activity relative to other regions, the Economic Census can give a perspective on the agricultural, food processing and distribution industries in comparison to each other and relative to other businesses. This can reveal relative contributions of all industries to the economics of a region, and establish the importance of agriculture and food in a larger context.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2001), Public Health Service, Office of the Surgeon General

The Surgeon General's Calls to Action

www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/calls

A market-related and grant-funding resource, the Surgeon General's Calls to Action encompass priorities of the Department of Health and Human Services. Funding is a critical component to improving areas of the system that are acting as barriers to social and economic health, and a sound understanding of the priorities of the government are a critical means to leveraging the necessary capital.

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Current Programs and Services

www.fns.usda.gov/programs-and-services

A resource page, this contains links to all large commodity buying programs in the USDA that feed the public. For example, many low-income children receive their primary meal in school, making the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) one of the most important programs to this class of citizens in the United States. Programs like NSLP and their officers' buying habits drive farmer choices on what crops to grow in many regions of the United States.

Feeding America (2014)

Map the Meal Gap/Food Insecurity in the United States
www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/hunger-studies/map-the-meal-gap.aspx

A measure of food insecurity, this interactive map uses nationwide data to create a comprehensive picture of food insecurity and food access in the U.S. Data can be used to create demand curves in specific counties, or to assess the relative health of the food system with regard to access and availability in a region of choice.

The Hamilton Project

Share of Children Living in Food-Insecure Households, by State

www.hamiltonproject.org/charts/share_of_children_living_in_food_insecure_households_by_state

The Hamilton Project self-describes as “The Hamilton Project offers a strategic vision and produces innovative policy proposals on how to create a growing economy that benefits more Americans.” A different measure of food access applicable to children, this map is longitudinal, giving an easy-to-read chronology of food access issues over a decade.

Food Research & Action Center (FRAC)

SNAP Monthly Data - 2017

www.frac.org/research/resource-library/snap-monthly-data-2017

Probably the most well-known food-assistance program in America, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), formerly Food Stamps, is one of the largest anti-poverty programs in the nation, with yearly budgets topping \$72 billion. An understanding of the expenditures of SNAP recipients is crucial to maximizing any efforts to improve a local or regional food system.

Food Research & Action Center (FRAC)

Profile of Hunger, Poverty and Federal Nutrition Programs

www.frac.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/us.pdf

This document can act as a primary source document or as a quick reference to utilization rates for USDA feeding programs. It also provides a profile of the typical American recipient of food and nutrition assistance. This can inform market data as well as act as a target demographic in and of itself.

Food Research & Action Center (FRAC)

School Breakfast Scorecard: School Year 2015-2016

www.frac.org/wp-content/uploads/school-breakfast-scorecard-sy-2015-2016.pdf

Again an important driver of local institutional food procurement, this report on the School Breakfast Program underscores demand for the program in comparison the NSLP, while also demonstrating the opportunity and large amounts of money available to provide these services if community foods can break into institutional buying.

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service

Household Food Security in the United States in 2015, Economic Research Report Number 215, September 2016

www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/79761/err-215.pdf?v=42636

Another measure of food security from a different perspective. This information can be used to judge the quality and effectiveness of the food system by state, region or other locality in relationship to others.

PolicyLink/The Food Trust (2010)

The Grocery Gap: Who Has Access to Healthy Food and Why It Matters

www.thefoodtrust.org/uploads/media_items/grocerygap.original.pdf

The Grocery Gap report is an analysis of buying trends based on access and existing infrastructure. It draws data-based conclusions on how the availability of food and grocery stores can influence buying behavior.

Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF)

Making the Invisible Visible: Looking Back at Fifteen Years of Local Food Systems Distribution Solutions, October, 2014

www.caff.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/07/CAFF-Lessons-Local-Distribution-102814.pdf

This report is a collection of case studies of different local food systems implementing solutions to specific challenges in different ways. This work is essential to developing a working knowledge of distribution solution options and the pros and cons of each intervention.

U.S. Department of Agriculture, National Agricultural Statistics Service

Statistics by State

www.nass.usda.gov/Statistics_by_State/index.php

This searchable database centralizes quick facts about agriculture in each state. Publications of note, farm facts, important crops, livestock and poultry data, and other broad topics are collected on this site.

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economics, Statistics and Market Information System

World Agricultural Supply and Demand Estimates, June 9, 2017

www.usda.mannlib.cornell.edu/MannUsda/view-DocumentInfo.do?documentID=1194

This macro-level report shows yield, acres planted, and demand and supply estimates for nearly every major crop in the U.S.

U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics

2014-2024 Employment Projections by Occupation

www.data.bls.gov/projections/occupationProj

This Department of Labor report shows shortage categories for nearly all occupations in the U.S. Agricultural and food science technicians, agricultural engineers, inspectors, equipment operators, and farmers are all included in the projections.

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Marketing Service

Local Food Directory Listings

www.ams.usda.gov/services/local-regional/food-directories-listings

This searchable database gives a snapshot of local and regional food directories nationwide.

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Marketing Service

Community Supported Agriculture: New Models for Changing Markets, April 2017

www.ams.usda.gov/sites/default/files/media/CSANewModelsforChangingMarketsb.pdf

This up-to-date publication covers several approaches to direct-to-consumer marketing for farmers. Specializing in the CSA, it covers how models have evolved over the years to make sense in shifting markets.

National Resources Defense Council

National Call to Action! Ten Strategies for Achieving U.S. Food Waste Reduction Goals, September 2016

www.nrdc.org/file/10876/download?token=14j8wx-NN

Any system will generate “waste.” Reduction of byproducts or the recycling of usable material from the system will result in better cost control and better utilization of resources. The reduction of food waste is a major consideration in any food system assessment.

U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs

2013 American Indian Population and Labor Force Report

www.bia.gov/knowledge-base/american-indian-population-labor-force-reports

This report outlines the current Native American population and related labor statistics by region, tribe, state and other geographical boundaries. In addition to the population statistics, this report also introduces age demographics and families in poverty. This reports brings to light the tremendous opportunity for Native American programs.

U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics

Current Labor Statistics

www.bls.gov

This dataset contains regional and national data around the types of employment, rates of employment, importance of job categories by sector, disability, unemployment and other useful subsets that are a must for defining the labor market in any analysis.

U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics

Average Retail Food and Energy Prices

www.bls.gov/regions/mid-atlantic/data/averagere-tailfoodandenergyprices_usandmidwest_table.htm

These tables outline the average cost of food at retail as well as energy costs in specific regions. This link is for the mid-Atlantic, but Western and other American regions are also available. Pricing can be used for food business projections.

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service

Food Price Outlook

www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-price-outlook

A subset of the well-known Consumer Price Index (CPI), the Food Price Outlook analyzes forecasted inflation for only food items. This is a reasonable expectation of the inflation in price for the category.

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service

Food Access Research Atlas

www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-access-research-atlas

The Food Access Research Atlas is an interactive map that illustrates food deserts, or areas of low access to food, by income and geography. The map can also be tailored to different distances consumers would need to travel to access food.

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service

The Farm to School Census

www.farmtoschoolcensus.fns.usda.gov

The USDA Farm to School census is a snapshot of farm to school programs by school district. This document aggregates and centralizes data around institutional procurement and buying habits of individual school districts. This is a great resource to forecast institutional demand, especially in rural areas where schools are the largest institutional buyer and provider of food.