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Food Policy in Alaska

Alaska's Food System

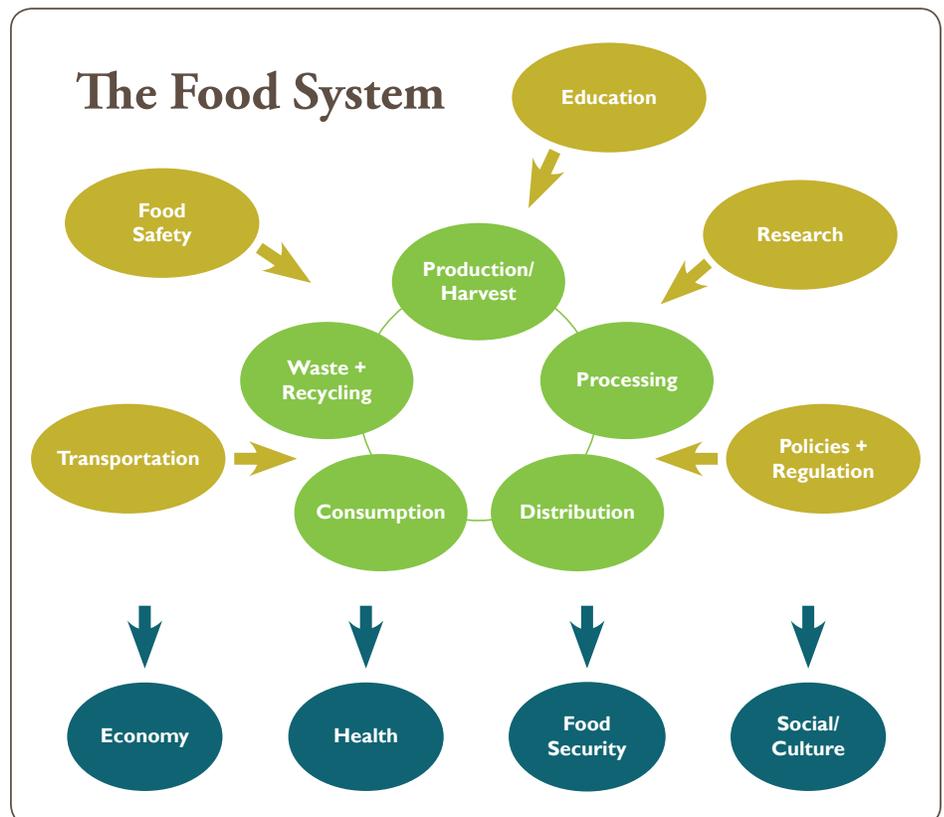


Photo: Laura Minski, Anchorage, AK.



Food is an integral part of any society and is closely related to public health, economic and social well-being, local self-reliance, and sustainability. A food system includes a set of activities related to food production, processing, distribution, consumption, and waste management, as well as the associated policies, regulatory institutions, and activities.

Alaska's food system has a significant impact on our economy, health and security. A USDA report shows that in 2007 Alaskans spent \$1.5 billion on retail food expenditures; however, it is estimated that less than five percent of the food consumed by Alaskans is produced in-state. The State of Alaska Department of Health and Social Services reports that 66 percent of Alaska's adult population is either overweight or obese and four of the top 10 leading causes of death in Alaska, cancer, heart disease, stroke, and diabetes, are diet-related. Many Alaskans do not have enough food to eat. In 2009, the USDA reported that 13 percent of Alaskans were uncertain of having, or unable to acquire enough food for all household members because they had insufficient money or other resources for food. These facts alone point to the urgency and need to improve Alaska's food system for today and future generations of Alaska residents.



The Alaska Food Policy Council (AFPC or Council)

Food policy councils (FPCs) are a way to bring together the broader spectrum of stakeholders within the local food system, and to coordinate and empower their individual efforts to improve the system. The role of an FPC is often to examine how the state and/or local food system functions, then to provide ideas and recommendations for improving access to healthy, affordable, culturally appropriate foods for all of the state's citizens. A FPC accomplishes this by advocating for policy changes at the local, state and federal level, and by educating the public about food systems.

The Alaska Food Policy Council (AFPC) is an independent organization with members representing different aspects of the food system. Proposed in early 2010, the Council is open to anyone interested in improving Alaska's food systems. Initial meetings included approximately 80 individuals interested in forming a food policy council; they represented federal and state agencies, tribal entities, university programs, farmers, fisheries, and food systems businesses. Today, over 100 agencies and individuals participate in the AFPC. Participation ranges from e-newsletter recipients to active roles on issue-specific committees. A governing board of 11 representatives has been established and will work to identify key issues, set broad strategic direction and priorities for the Council, oversee strategic plan implementation, and perform other Council management duties. AFPC's intent is to provide recommendations and information to agencies, businesses, organizations, and individual consumers, with well-developed comprehensive policies that improve Alaska's food systems.



The AFPC Strategic Plan

AFPC Vision

Healthy, secure food systems that feed all Alaskans.

AFPC Core Values

We value...

- Alaska grown, harvested, caught and made
- health
- community
- self-reliance
- interdependence
- justice
- stability and security
- sustainability
- safety
- prosperity

AFPC Mission

The AFPC improves our food systems for the benefit of all Alaskans.

This document represents the Alaska Food Policy Council's Strategic Plan. A planning team comprised of 24 members of the Alaska Food Policy Council developed the plan over the course of a two-day planning meeting in Anchorage, Alaska, on August 1st and 2nd, 2011. The strategic plan defines AFPC's vision for Alaska's food systems by defining broadly desired long-term improvements or goals in five key focus areas including: access; economic development; safety, security and protection; sustainability; and public engagement. For each focus area the plan provides a clear set of objectives for measuring progress on broad goals, a set of strategies for how to make that change happen and a set of priority strategies the AFPC will focus on for the next three years (2012-2015). The priority strategies were developed through a group ranking process using an agreed upon set of criteria. The criteria were as follows:

- Will the strategy have an impact at the local level?
- Is the strategy specific and measurable?
- Does the strategy have a clear leader?
- Does the strategy fit within our three-year timeframe?
- Is the strategy achievable and practical?
- Is the strategy a food policy strategy?
- Is the strategy clear of conflict or opposition?
- Does the strategy have a likely person, organization or group that can work on it?

The strategic plan will act as a guide for the AFPC board, staff and membership and is meant to direct, unify and strengthen membership activities. As such, the AFPC governing board, with the support of the full membership can revise and modify the plan to better meet Alaska's food systems' needs. The key components of the plan and how they are defined is outlined below.

Vision

What is the AFPCs desired future state: 10, 15, 20 years from now?

Core Values

What is important to the AFPC? How does the Council identify itself?

Mission

What does the AFPC do and who do they serve?

Goals, Objectives + Strategies

- Goals – What long-term improvements or changes does the AFPC hope to achieve?
- Objectives – What does the AFPC hope to accomplish or impact with their goals and strategies? What will be the measureable change?

What is the three-year target? NOTE: While developing this strategic plan, the AFPC recognized the challenges regarding a lack of baseline data for setting measurable objectives for the strategic plan. As such, objectives identified in this current version of the strategic plan included broader based objectives. As the data are made available, measurable targets will be incorporated into the plan.

- Strategies – How will AFPC achieve three-year objectives and make progress on their goals?

Priority Strategies, 2012-2015

Of the many strategies outlined in this plan, which strategies will AFPC focus on over the next three years? NOTE: These strategies are listed in the framed box below and were decided through a ranking and voting process during the August strategic planning meeting.

AFPC Priority Strategies 2012-2015:

Develop, strengthen and expand the school-based programs and policies that educate about and provide healthy, local foods to schools (e.g., Farm to School Program, Agriculture in the Classroom, traditional foods in schools, school gardens).

Strengthen enforcement language in the Local Agricultural and Fisheries Products Preference Statute (AS 36.15.050), also known as the “Seven Percent” statute and Procurement Preference for State Agricultural and Fisheries Products (Sec. 29.71.040).

Advocate and participate in the development of community level and comprehensive statewide emergency food preparedness plan(s).

Develop AFPC’s role as research aggregator and resource.

Identify and support existing local food system leaders, projects, events and activities that support Alaska’s food system.

Working toward our goals and three-year objectives:

Goal 1: All Alaskans have access to affordable, healthy (preferably local) foods.

Objective 1c: Increase the number of Alaska schools participating in local, healthy, and traditional food procurement.

Goal 1: All Alaskans have access to affordable, healthy (preferably local) foods.

Objective 1d: Increase the number of Alaska institutions (e.g., hospitals, government agencies) participating in local, healthy, and traditional food procurement.

Goal 3: Food is safe, protected and supplies are secure throughout Alaska.

Objective 3b: Improve the emergency food preparedness of our communities and regions.

Goal 5: Alaskans are engaged in our food system.

Objective 5a: Improve the body of research that will inform and support Alaska food policy efforts.

Goal 5: Alaskans are engaged in our food system.

Objective 5b: Increase the number of food advocates among the public that support healthy food initiatives and policy changes.

Goals, Objectives + Strategies

(**denotes 3-year priorities)

Goal 1: All Alaskans have access to affordable, healthy (preferably local) foods.

Objective 1a: Increase access, availability and affordability of local foods to end consumers.

- **Strategy 1: Help develop policy and regulation to encourage farmers markets and CSA/CSFs to accept food stamps and WIC/ EBT.**
- **Strategy 2: Explore incentives to assist low-income residents to purchase healthy food.**
- **Strategy 3: Promote alternative food-buying options (such as co-ops).**

Objective 1b: Increase the number of organizations with traditional, customary, historic food-gathering leave policies.

- **Strategy 1: Educate Alaskan employers about the benefits of supporting traditional, customary and historic food gathering activities, either through a personal leave policy or designated leave time (paid or unpaid).**

Objective 1c: Increase the number of Alaska schools participating in local, healthy, and traditional food procurement.

- ****Strategy 1: Develop, strengthen and expand the school-based programs and policies that educate about and provide healthy, local foods to schools (e.g., Farm to School Program, Agriculture in the Classroom, traditional foods in schools, school gardens).**
- **Strategy 2: Promote implementation of State nutrition standards.**
- **Strategy 3: Promote a state funded reimbursement for schools taking part in the federal Free and Reduced Price School Breakfast and Lunch Program, and the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program.**

Objective 1d: Increase the number of Alaska institutions (e.g., hospitals, government agencies) participating in local, healthy, and traditional food procurement.

- ****Strategy 1: Strengthen enforcement language in the Local Agricultural and Fisheries Products Preference Statute (AS 36.15.050), also known as the “Seven Percent” statute and Procurement Preference for State Agricultural and Fisheries Products (Sec. 29.71.040).**

Objective 2a: Increase the number of Alaskans that take part in food-related educational and degree programs.

- **Strategy 1:** Promote food system- related education and training programs.
- **Strategy 2:** Promote policies that offer student loan forgiveness in food-related business.

Objective 2b: Increase support for food-related business development in Alaska.

- **Strategy 1:** Advocate for small business food-related policies and incentives.

Goal 2: Alaska's food-related industries have a strong workforce and operate in a supportive business environment.



Objective 3a: Increase the number of Alaskans that participate in food safety and protection training and education programs.

- **Strategy 1:** Facilitate connection among food safety participants to provide necessary food safety training opportunities as needed in Alaska (e.g. canning, retail food HACCP).

Objective 3b: Improve the emergency food preparedness of our communities and regions.

- ****Strategy 1:** Advocate and participate in the development of community level and comprehensive statewide emergency food preparedness plan(s).
- **Strategy 2:** Increase awareness of the need for food storage.

Goal 3: Food is safe, protected and supplies are secure throughout Alaska.

Goal 4: Alaska's food system is more sustainable.

Objective 4a: Expand and protect food production capacity.

- Strategy 1: Advocate for fiscal and planning policies that protect the viability of land and water for agricultural production, wild food and seafood harvesting.
- Strategy 2: Ensure that producers have adequate access to capital, technical assistance, or other necessary resources to support increased food production in Alaska.

Objective 4b: Improve the distribution system for getting Alaska food products from producer to end user (consumers, retailers, food service businesses, schools, etc.).

- Strategy 1: Advocate for support to Alaska producers so that they can maximize production of inputs as well as food products.
- Strategy 2: Promote online opportunities to connect consumers, producers and institutional buyers.
- Strategy 3: Encourage cooperatives among food producers so they can more easily meet the demands of larger distributors, better meet wholesale orders, and provide a professional marketing front.

Objective 4c: Expand access to home and business food processing and storage.

- Strategy 1: Connect household consumers to the resources they need to do at-home food processing and storage (e.g. information, skills, and facilities).
- Strategy 2: Promote development and use of community commercial kitchens for small business or value-added food processing.

Objective 4d: Increase Alaska food marketing.

- Strategy 1: Educate Alaskans about the benefits of purchasing Alaska food products.
- Strategy 2: Encourage commodity marketing among food producers.
- Strategy 3: Build a marketing relationship between seafood (e.g., ASMI) and agriculture (e.g., Alaska Grown).

Objective 4e: Reduce waste from food, food packaging and agriculture.

- **Strategy 1: Educate communities on waste management best practices.**
- **Strategy 2: Encourage businesses to use waste products.**
- **Strategy 3: Help channel locally produced food that is edible but nonsalable to the food assistance network.**

Objective 5a: Improve the body of research that will inform and support Alaska food policy efforts.

- ****Strategy 1: Develop AFPC role as research aggregator and resource.**

Objective 5b: Increase the number of food advocates among the public that support local food system initiatives and policy changes that are aligned with AFPC core values.

- ****Strategy 1: Identify and support existing local food system leaders, projects, events and activities.**

Objective 5c: Increase the opportunities for advocates of healthy food initiatives and educators about healthy food to be heard by policy makers and the public.

Goal 5: Alaskans are engaged in our food system.



Alaska Food Policy Council 2012 Strategic Plan

Prepared for the Alaska Food Policy Council by
Agnew::Beck Consulting