

# The “Good Food” Checklist for Public Health Practitioners

Angie Tagtow, MS, RD, LD, Food & Society Policy Fellow, Environmental Nutrition Solutions, Elkhart, Iowa

Arnell Hinkle, MPH, RD, CHES, Food & Society Policy Fellow, California Adolescent Nutrition and Fitness (CANFit), Berkeley, California

Public health practitioners can be a guiding force in the establishment of a healthy, green, fair, affordable and accessible food system. Using this checklist, pick five “Good Food” strategies you will accomplish in the next few months as either a public health practitioner, within your organization, or as an individual, and build from there. You may find you are doing some already!

## As a public health practitioner, I will...

- Become a member of the APHA Food and Nutrition/Environmental Health Work Group
- Include sustainable food system tips in public health and nutrition education materials
- Educate public health students about:
  - The link between sustainable food systems and population health
  - The interconnectedness of food and agricultural policy with the availability of healthy food
  - Strategies to incorporate sustainable food systems into public health practice
- Work with food banks and pantries to regularly provide local, seasonal and sustainably-raised food
- Incorporate local, seasonal and sustainably-raised food into disaster and emergency preparedness plans
- Refer clients to the WIC or Senior Farmers’ Market Nutrition Programs
- Provide support and encouragement to mothers who are breastfeeding
- Encourage point-of-sale identification of local, seasonal and sustainably-raised food in markets
- Include the public health benefits of sustainable food systems on the health department’s website
- Write articles or blogs about the health benefits of sustainable food systems
- Add food systems concepts into presentations or media interviews
- Complete a community food profile as part of the next community health needs assessment and health improvement plan
- Develop sustainable food system strategies that support public health performance measures

## As a public health organization, we will...

- Implement a reduce, reuse, recycle program in the workplace

- Use recycled disposables versus styrofoam or plastic products and select packaging options that are recyclable and environmentally friendly
- Promote local, seasonal and sustainably-raised food to individuals, families, institutions and communities
- Serve local, seasonal and sustainably-raised food at meetings and conferences
- Work with food banks and pantries to regularly provide local, seasonal and sustainably-raised food
- Provide support for breastfeeding promotion initiatives
- Support schools, hospitals and long-term care facilities who choose to purchase directly from local farms and local distributors
- Promote retail innovations, including smaller-scale markets selling healthy foods
- Review food safety issues related to local foods, regional distribution and transportation systems
- Host a farmers market at the health department

## In the community, we will...

- Support and promote community gardens and greenhouses
- Implement a reduce, reuse, recycle program in the community
- Promote agritourism and ecotourism in the community
- Promote *Buy Fresh Buy Local* marketing initiatives
- Establish a food policy council in the community
- Monitor federal legislation related to the Farm Bill, Child Nutrition & WIC Reauthorization, Transportation, etc.
- Work with city councils, boards of health, boards of supervisors, state and federal policy makers on establishing vibrant, resilient and sustainable food systems by:
  - Reducing barriers to obtaining healthy, green, fair, affordable and accessible foods
  - Increasing incentives for farmers to grow fruits and vegetables
  - Implementing and enforcing Country of Origin Labeling
  - Incorporating sustainable agriculture and other public health goals in the Farm Bill and Child Nutrition & WIC Reauthorization

### For More Information

This is an excerpt from “A Vision for ‘Good Food’ for Public Health. Linking Sustainable Food Systems to Healthy People & Healthy Communities” and is available at [www.foodandsocietyfellows.org](http://www.foodandsocietyfellows.org). September 2008

## The “Good Food” Checklist for Public Health Practitioners (continued)

- Work with city councils, boards of health, boards of supervisors, state and federal policy makers on establishing vibrant, resilient and sustainable food systems by (continued):
    - Supporting federal food and nutrition programs (i.e., WIC, Food Stamps, WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program, School Breakfast and Lunch Programs, Fruit and Vegetable Snack Program) that connect participants with fresh, locally-grown food
    - Supporting food production practices that reduce the use of synthetic chemicals and non-therapeutic antibiotics, conserve resources, and decrease work-related injuries
    - Increasing research funding for reviewing the health impacts of current agriculture policy and how sustainable food systems can improve public health
    - Aligning Dietary Guidelines for Americans with foods that are healthy, green, fair, affordable and accessible
    - Establishing financial supports for retail grocery stores in low-income communities, and for new and transitioning small and mid-sized farms
    - Urging greater environmental standards and enforcement on industrial animal production and waste
    - Prohibiting outdoor production of genetically engineered crops to produce pharmaceuticals, industrial compounds and non-food ingredients
    - Expanding environmental health and public health tracking of food systems concerns
  - Educate others about the health, social and environmental benefits of eating local, seasonal and sustainably-raised food
  - Choose a diet rich in locally-grown and seasonal foods
  - Maintain a container or a backyard garden
  - Shop at the local farmers’ market, food co-op or buy directly from local farms and road stands
  - Support local food processors such as meat lockers and canning facilities
  - Start a gardening program at a school, daycare, church, hospital, long-term care facility, or community center
  - Purchase fair-trade, organic coffee, tea and chocolate
  - Compost fruit and vegetable scraps
  - Implement a reduce, reuse, recycle program at home
  - Use recycled disposables versus styrofoam or plastic products and select packaging options that are recyclable and environmentally friendly
  - Complete a Master Gardener course
  - Buy food from a community supported agriculture (CSA) farm or a farmers market
  - Become an organic farmer
  - Glean food from local farmers for food banks and pantries
  - Advocate for local, seasonal and sustainably-raised food at restaurants
  - Support businesses and restaurants that use local, seasonal and sustainably-raised food
  - Request food stores to buy from local farmers and processors
  - Submit a letter to the editor or an op-ed about the benefits of “Good Food” - food that is healthy, green, fair, affordable, and accessible
- At a personal level, I will...**
- Learn more about the public health benefits of sustainable, community-based food systems

### What is “Good Food?”

#### Healthy

- Dietary guidance is based on good food principles
- Food does not incur disease
- Health care costs attributed to diet-related diseases are minimal
- Nutritional value of food is maintained and food is free of artificial ingredients

#### Green

- Food is produced with no or low environmental impact
- Food is grown in a balanced ecosystems
- Non-renewable energy is minimal to produce and distribute food
- Wastes are recycled

#### Fair

- The food system does not exploit anyone or anything
- Farmers are economically self-sufficient
- Local food systems are economically vibrant
- Farm, restaurant and other food workers receive a livable wage

#### Accessible & Affordable

- All people have equal and regular access to fresh, safe, nutritious, seasonal and sustainably-produced food to maintain a healthy lifestyle
- Individual, household and community food security is maximized