

MINNESOTA FOOD CHARTER



A roadmap to healthy, affordable,
and safe food for all Minnesotans



Minnesota
FOOD CHARTER
For Our Healthy Future



The Minnesota Food Charter is a tool to create healthy, prosperous communities. It offers ways to ensure that nourishing food is accessible today and for future generations.

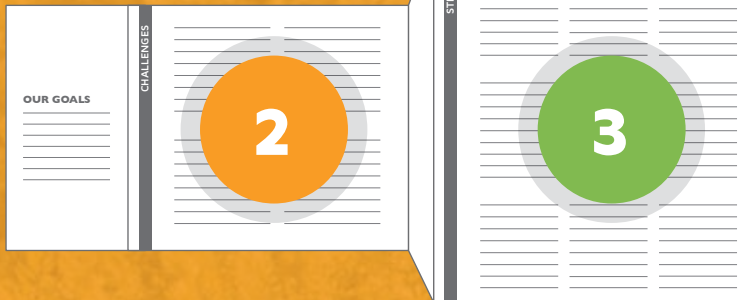


WHAT'S INSIDE

- WHAT IS HEALTHY FOOD? 2
- WHY DO WE NEED A FOOD CHARTER? 3
- WHAT IS THE MINNESOTA FOOD CHARTER? 4
- CALL TO ACTION 5
- WE CAN DO IT TOGETHER 6
- FOOD SKILLS 8
- FOOD AFFORDABILITY 10
- FOOD AVAILABILITY 12
- FOOD ACCESSIBILITY 14
- FOOD INFRASTRUCTURE 16
- ACKNOWLEDGMENTS 20



CATEGORY



READING THE MINNESOTA FOOD CHARTER EASY AS 1 2 3 !!

From farm to fork, the Food Charter offers concrete ways to build prosperous communities through changes to policies and systems at all scales.

1. Each section defines a **key part of access** to healthy food.
2. **Challenges** that affect these parts are listed on each section's left page.
3. **Strategies** that people can implement together are on each section's right page.



We identified challenges and strategies through a variety of sources, including extensive public input, expert advice, research review, and related evidence about the extent of these challenges and the effectiveness of proposed strategies. While not necessarily an exhaustive list, these strategies offer the most promising and most acceptable avenues for change, according to the thousands of Minnesotans who provided feedback to the Food Charter.

WHAT IS HEALTHY FOOD?

Minnesota Food Charter participants have different ideas about healthy food and what it means to them. It's important to have a food supply that can meet these diverse needs, definitions, and interests. Here are ways that people think about the question, "What is healthy food?"

Almost all packaged food products in the grocery store are required to follow FDA (Food and Drug Administration) nutrition labeling regulations. These regulations include a specific definition for the term "healthy." Any food labeled as "healthy" must meet criteria for fat, saturated fat, cholesterol and sodium, and contain beneficial nutrients.

AMY LOEW

Registered Dietitian and Senior Nutrition Scientist, General Mills

Healthy food works in an intricate, complex way with not only our bodies, but also with our culture, ceremony, traditions, family, and societal structures. It is a daily partner in everyday life, taking care of us as we take care of it.

SIMONE SENOGLES

Food Sovereignty, Safety and Health Coordinator, Indigenous Environmental Network

Healthy food means access for everyone to a diverse selection of nutritious foods that are sustainably grown, harvested and minimally processed close to home. Healthy food nourishes our bodies, cultures, communities, animals, soil, and environment.

MARY JO FORBORD

Farmer and Registered Dietitian

Broccoli, beans, vegetables and fruit, and not sugar. It's just the opposite of unhealthy food. It's good for you, because it makes you healthy. It makes you have a healthy body.

MARIN

Age 11

Healthy food means fresh, unprocessed, local foods that you have to wash to eat. It means foods that have less than 10 ingredients and no ingredients you can't pronounce. It means a connection to the source of your food, having access to beneficial, culturally-specific foods and having a safe place to enjoy them with your family and loved ones.

DEVON NOLEN

Food Activist; Farmers Market Manager, West Broadway Farmers Market

Some Food Charter participants look to government definitions, others look to their cultural traditions and teachings, or to favorite thinkers whose vision mirrors their values and perceptions.

WHY DO WE NEED THE MINNESOTA FOOD CHARTER?

Minnesota diets, particularly those high in calories and unhealthy foods and beverages, contribute to surging health care costs and lower work productivity. This is not sustainable. As a state, we must work together to improve our health and support a vibrant economy. By putting health at the center of policies and systems, we can achieve the changes we envision.

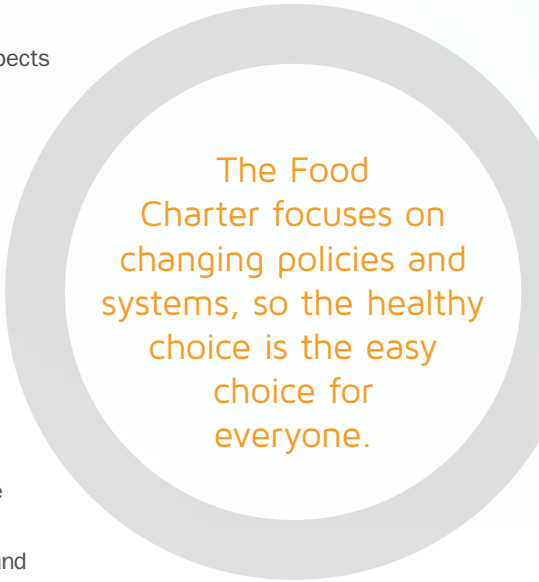
That's why we created the Minnesota Food Charter. Thousands of Minnesotans worked together to map a future that supports healthy, prosperous communities across the state. With involvement from leaders in health, agriculture, economic development, local and state government, philanthropy, and research, the Minnesota Food Charter offers steps we can take at local, state, and federal levels to increase everyone's access to affordable, healthy food. Our future prosperity depends on it.

In many settings, the foods and drinks that are most available and affordable are also the foods that are the least nutritious. Frequently, the foods that are best for our long-term health are costlier and harder to find. By making healthy food easier to find and more affordable, we can replace less nutritious food with more nutritious, affordable choices in the places we spend time. Evidence and thousands of Food Charter participants told us that:

- To reduce rates of obesity and related chronic diseases, we must comprehensively change our food environments. These changes will extend from farm to table, and at all the points in between.
- Unless we solve this problem, it will create long-term economic and public health burdens.

- Strengthening key aspects of Minnesota's food supply for all our residents will help support resilient, healthy communities and a vital food and farm economy.
- In Minnesota, communities with limited resources do not enjoy the same rates of good health, healthy food access, and economic prosperity as the rest of the state.

The Food Charter offers effective, publicly supported ways to improve all Minnesotans' health by changing our food environments, building on a legacy of ongoing work to ensure a safe, healthy food supply. These recommendations will also support the state's future prosperity, by reducing healthcare costs, increasing worker productivity, and supporting a robust food and farm economy.



The Food Charter focuses on changing policies and systems, so the healthy choice is the easy choice for everyone.

“For everyone to have access to healthy food, we need to focus on economic, social and environmental conditions that promote health.”

Commissioner Ed Ehlinger, MD, MSPH, Minnesota Commissioner of Health

WHAT IS THE MINNESOTA FOOD CHARTER?

Developed through a broad-based public process, the Minnesota Food Charter offers a shared roadmap for how all Minnesotans can have reliable access to healthy, affordable, safe food in the places they work, learn, live, and play. We believe this access will reduce the risk and cost of obesity and diet-related diseases, like diabetes and heart disease; conserve state resources; and boost economic prosperity.

ROBUST PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

Many residents and the organizations that represent and serve them are passionate about food access issues. The Minnesota Food Charter's public input process engaged this broad diversity of residents, including:

Educators

Elected and appointed officials

Family farmers from rural, immigrant, and urban communities

Financial institutions

Food and farm businesses

Food and farm-related organizations that serve diverse audiences

Funders

Healthcare and public health professionals

Healthy food advocates

Institutional foodservice decision-makers

Middle school and college students

People with food access issues

Recent immigrants

Researchers in agriculture, food, and health

Social justice advocates

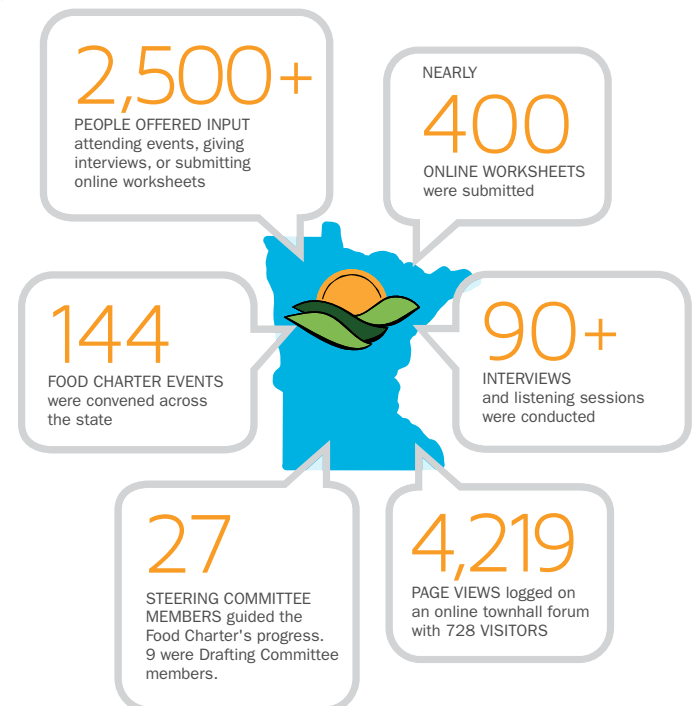
Tribal nations

Workers in food- and farm-related jobs

HOW DID WE DEVELOP THE FOOD CHARTER?

Thousands of Minnesotans in many communities and organizations helped develop the Food Charter. They attended events, contributed their ideas online, and provided leadership, identifying challenges and solutions related to healthy food access. To this input, we added expert opinions and the most current research on effective strategies for overcoming Minnesota's barriers to healthy food access.

The Food Charter is intended to guide planning, decision-making, and collaboration for agencies, organizations, policy-makers, and public and private entities across the state.





CALL TO ACTION BECOME A FOOD CHARTER CHAMPION!

The Minnesota Food Charter was created so that people can work together to increase healthy food access for all. Our health and prosperity depend on it! Here's what you can do to become a Food Charter Champion:

1. SHARE

Go to www.mnfoodcharter.com for a copy of the Food Charter and some great ways to share it with your friends and colleagues. There are easy-to-use resources that can help you host meetings, implement recommendations, and make change.

2. ACT

Join with others to implement Food Charter strategies. You and your friends or colleagues can work on Food Charter strategies that matter most to you. Share your plans with others across the state, by clicking "Act" at www.mnfoodcharter.com. You can learn what others are working on too!

3. LEARN

Stay informed about the Food Charter. "Like" the Minnesota Food Charter Facebook page, follow the Food Charter on Twitter, and sign up for the Food Charter e-newsletter at www.mnfoodcharter.com.

Many Minnesotans want to leave a legacy of health and prosperity for future generations. The Minnesota Food Charter makes health a priority across all policies and systems—from farm to fork. Together, we can ensure all Minnesotans are healthy and prosperous, now and tomorrow.

WHAT WE'VE GOT

MINNESOTA HAS A LOT GOING FOR IT!

FOOD & FARM ECONOMIC POWERHOUSE

**Minnesota is 8th best
state for business**

5th largest agricultural economy in US

Farmers' markets contribute
up to \$64 million in net
economic impact

PROVEN TRACK RECORD

**Minnesota is known nationally
for effective solutions and
partnerships to support healthy,
prosperous communities.**

Nearly 2/3 of Minnesota school districts have
a Farm to School program, up from 6% in 2006.
That's a tenfold increase!

Over \$15 million/year to local communities
to increase access to healthy foods and
physical activity, and reduce use of and
exposure to commercial tobacco.

See citations on back cover.

WHY WE'RE CONCERNED

The cost of obesity and related chronic diseases is worrisome.



HUNGER

3.5M VISITS TO FOOD SHELVES

More than twice the number of Minnesotans visited food shelves in 2013 than 13 years ago.



20% OF FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN in Minnesota face hunger or food insecurity.

ECONOMIC IMPACT

\$2.8B OBESITY-RELATED HEALTHCARE COSTS PER YEAR

\$17B LOST PRODUCTIVITY

Lost productivity and absenteeism due to unhealthy workers/year.

HEALTH

60% OF DEATHS IN MINNESOTA ARE DIET-RELATED

The majority of deaths are from diet-related illness, like stroke, cancer, diabetes, and heart disease.



2:3 MINNESOTANS ARE OVERWEIGHT OR OBESE

Many low-income Minnesotans are obese with other diet-related problems, including 1 out of 3 young children.

HEALTHY FOOD ACCESS



MINNESOTA HAS FEWER SUPERMARKETS per capita than most states, ranking in the bottom third of states nationwide.

NEARLY 900K MN RESIDENTS including over 200,000 children, live in lower-income communities with insufficient grocery store access.

WHAT WE NEED

Solutions that promote health and prosperity for all.

\$11B

IN SAVINGS

By increasing access to healthy food and economic opportunity for all, we can save up to \$1.1 billion in diet-related healthcare costs.

\$2.9B

ECONOMIC GAINS EARNED PER YEAR

Investing in healthy food infrastructure and agriculture could yield \$2.9 billion per year for a state like Minnesota.



“The groups that experience the greatest disparities in health outcomes also have experienced the greatest inequities in the social and economic conditions that are such strong predictors of health.”

FOOD SKILLS

FOUNDATION OF HEALTHY EATING

WHAT ARE FOOD SKILLS?

- Growing food
- Planning, selecting, and budgeting for healthy food
- Preparing safe, healthy food from scratch
- Trying new foods
- Understanding the food system, including agriculture and cultural dimensions of food

GOALS

CHILDREN, YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS

Children, youth, and young adults will understand the basics of food production, food preparation, and healthy food choices.

ADULTS

Adults will have the food skills they need to select and prepare healthy, culturally appropriate, affordable foods for themselves and their families.

FOOD SERVICE PROFESSIONALS

Foodservice professionals will have the knowledge and skills they need to plan, prepare, and serve healthy, culturally appropriate meals within an institutional budget.

CHALLENGES

CHILDREN, YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS

Many young Minnesotans lack healthy food skills, no longer learning them at home, school, or programs outside school.

People establish lifelong food preferences at an early age, when they are most reluctant to try healthy and unfamiliar foods.

Minnesota lacks definitive data on the extent of the food skills gap among young people.

There is inadequate alignment between federal education policy and accountability measures, state level educational support, and local educational priorities for K-12 food skills education.

There are limited state and local education policies, resources, and practices supporting food skills development for K-12 students in Minnesota, such as guidelines, benchmarks, graduation/course requirements, curriculum, staff positions, professional development and training, facilities, and equipment.

Despite broad support for food skills education, many school districts lack facilities, staff, curriculum, funding, equipment, or political will to implement it.

ADULTS

Many adult Minnesotans lack basic food skills and don't understand the food supply or agriculture.

Many people are too busy to learn food skills, buy, or prepare healthy food.

Many adults prefer the taste of unhealthy foods and are unwilling to try new things.

Gardeners don't always have access to the land, equipment, or supplies they need to grow food.

Some consumers are unaware of inexpensive, healthy food options that fit within their budget.

FOODSERVICE PROFESSIONALS

Some foodservice professionals need greater knowledge and skills to plan and prepare healthy meals served by organizations where they work.

Some institutions lack kitchen equipment, facilities, or resources they need to train foodservice staff to plan and prepare healthy foods, including cooking meals from scratch.

Healthy choices happen by equipping people with healthy food skills.

CHILDREN, YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS

Establish a food skills baseline for children, youth, and young adults in Minnesota to determine the extent of the food skills gap.

Use food skills baseline assessments to inform district-wide wellness policies and design of food skills programs and curriculum in school districts.

Establish dedicated state staff positions for family and consumer sciences education and health education.

Provide training, continuing education credits, and incentives to early childcare providers who incorporate food skills education into their programs.

Train teachers, coaches, and other educational staff to guide children of all ages to make healthy food choices, using evidence-based methods.

Offer adequate support for curriculum development and use, teacher training, and school resources, toward the goal of basic food skills for every Minnesota middle-school student.

Require and train teachers to incorporate food skills education into existing curricula, particularly in math, science, and social studies.

Require and financially support K-12 guidelines development for food skills education in Minnesota schools.

Support school gardens, curriculum development, and teacher training to teach all Minnesota second graders the principles of plant biology and basic gardening skills.

Increase number and capacity of farm-to-school programs.

Institute and sustain college-level curricular requirements and extra-curricular options, including farm-to-cafeteria efforts, to strengthen students' food skills.

Ensure support and training needed for tribal communities to host culture camps focusing on traditional foods and related teachings.

ADULTS

Increase adults' opportunities to learn food skills at schools, worksites, community education classes, hunger relief programs, and food stores.

Provide patients with appropriate information about food skills education and referrals to relevant community resources, when they visit their healthcare provider.

Offer knowledge and resources needed by food harvesters to harvest wild rice; catch, gather, and preserve fish, plant foods, and berries; and tap, process, and store maple syrup and sugar.

Establish accessible, adequate gardening plots, equipment-lending libraries, garden education options, and seed and seedling giveaways.

Offer employees paid time and free courses to strengthen food skills, and offer flexible work schedules to accommodate time needed to plan and prepare healthy meals, as part of employee wellness programs.

Ensure adequate state and federal funding for healthy food skills-related education for SNAP/EBT and WIC participants.

FOODSERVICE PROFESSIONALS

Create ideal professional standards for nutrition and food skills core competencies for foodservice professionals.

Teach knowledge and skills needed by foodservice professionals to continue to serve healthy meals.

Improve foodservice professionals' wages.

Increase funding available for schools to obtain necessary facilities upgrades, kitchen equipment or other food-preparation and teaching resources.

FOOD AFFORDABILITY

ENOUGH MONEY FOR ENOUGH HEALTHY FOOD

WHAT IS FOOD AFFORDABILITY?

People can buy most or all of the healthy foods they want with the money they have available.



GOAL

Healthy food for all people regardless of income.

CHALLENGES

BUYING FOOD

Many jobs in Minnesota do not pay enough for everyone to afford healthy food.

Some healthy foods can cost significantly more than unhealthy alternatives.

Many people and institutions would like to purchase substantial quantities of foods grown nearby or using sustainable production methods, but these foods can be too costly.

SELLING FOOD

Food stores, such as small-town grocery stores, corner and convenience stores in low-income communities, as well as other types of vendors may offer limited amounts of healthy foods or offer healthy foods at high prices.

Small, locally owned grocery stores can have difficulty beating the prices of healthy food options that large, national competitors can offer.

Some stores and farmers markets don't accept WIC or SNAP/EBT, making it difficult for limited-resource shoppers to afford healthy foods.

Not enough farmers' markets offer a financial incentive promotional program for SNAP/EBT users, which can help make healthy foods more affordable for low-income customers.

BUYING FOOD

Create incentives for Minnesota businesses to pay all employees living wages.

Offer incentive programs for consumers, such as 'market bucks' and 'veggie prescription' programs for healthy food purchases at stores and farmers markets.

Establish healthy food programs and policies that give institutional food buyers greater purchasing power, so they have more resources to buy healthier food for meals, concessions, vending machines, and fundraisers.

SELLING FOOD

Streamline regulations so more farmers who sell food at farmers markets or elsewhere can accept WIC and SNAP/EBT.

Develop a 'healthy food financing' initiative that provides funding, incentives, low-cost financing, and tax breaks for healthy food-related enterprises (such as new food stores offering affordable, healthy options in communities that need them, or regionally-focused food distribution companies).

Develop institutional policies and practices to increase the price of unhealthy food and decrease the price of healthy foods.

Create incentives for institutional foodservices, stores, and farmers' markets to purchase or sell affordable foods grown locally, sustainably, or organically.

Create incentives for Minnesota farmers to grow affordable, healthy food for nearby institutions.

If healthy food is widely available, the healthy choice is the easy choice, for all of us.

Matching 'food bucks' programs can greatly increase healthy food consumption for low-income people and increase farmer profits.

Fair Food Foundation, 2014

FOOD AVAILABILITY

ENOUGH HEALTHY FOOD FOR ALL

WHAT IS FOOD AVAILABILITY?

There are an adequate number of convenient food sources, offering a sufficient number and variety of healthy options in a community.

GOAL

A diverse variety of healthy foods are more available, and unhealthy foods are less available in places where we work, live, learn, and play.



CHALLENGES

PLACES AND OPTIONS

Many communities want a more diversified and culturally appropriate food supply, with foods grown and supplied by local, regional, national, and international sources.

People with cultural, diet-related or religious food preferences often find it difficult to get the healthy foods they want at stores, restaurants, farmers markets, institutional foodservices and hunger relief programs in their communities.

Many people buy a significant amount of their food from corner and convenience stores. In general, these stores offer too many unhealthy options and not enough healthy options.

Some farmers markets sell a limited variety of products and may have limited hours that don't match the schedules of working people.

There are not enough healthy, affordable options and too many inexpensive, unhealthy foods made by food companies.

Hunger relief programs, such as food shelves, tribal commodity programs, and onsite dining programs offer too many unhealthy foods and not enough healthy foods.

Some institutions that serve communities - including hospitals, worksites, and public facilities-offer too many unhealthy options and not enough healthy foods in their cafeterias, concession stands, and vending machines.

Nursing mothers can find it difficult to breastfeed their babies or pump breastmilk in many settings.

Some employers and employees who are breastfeeding may not be aware of state and federal statutes around break time and appropriate space for nursing and expressing breast milk in a workplace.

CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENT

Minnesota's short growing season and long winters can limit the availability of healthy food options, especially fresh fruits and vegetables.

Tick-borne diseases can inhibit many people's ability to fish, trap, hunt, or gather wild foods.

All food is cultural. Strengthening the positive cultural aspects of our food offers protective factors for our health.

PLACES AND OPTIONS

Provide support (such as tax breaks or incentives) to stores, restaurants, and other places that serve and sell food to limit the number of unhealthy options and improve the availability of affordable, healthy foods, including foods familiar to people of many ethnicities.

Develop policies and incentives that encourage food retailers (such as corner and convenience stores), restaurants, concessions, and vending machines, to offer a greater number of healthy options and reduce the number of less healthy options.

Establish policies and incentives that limit the availability of unhealthy foods and increase the availability of healthy foods served in schools, childcare centers, group homes, and hospitals.

Serve a larger and wider variety of healthy items, and substantially reduce or eliminate unhealthy options at institutions.

Create healthy food guidelines and establish contracts based on these guidelines that determine what types of food vendors and foodservices provide at institutions, organizations, and events that serve the public.

Manufacture a wider variety of healthy products sold by food industry, including those that use crops raised on nearby family farms.

Enact staple foods ordinances at state, county, or municipal levels to ensure corner stores and other small markets stock a greater variety and amount of healthy foods.

Offer native communities more nutritious, culturally familiar foods as part of USDA commodity program.

Increase the amount of healthy foods, decrease the amount of unhealthy foods, and provide a greater variety of healthy foods that are culturally familiar to customers distributed by food banks and food shelves.

Increase resources available to hunger relief programs for obtaining and storing healthy foods, including food grown by nearby farmers and foods familiar to customers' cultures.

Permit hunger relief programs to choose to accept or redistribute food supplied by food banks, in order to meet healthy food guidelines established by food shelves.

Educate employers and mothers about state and federal statutes that support break time for nursing and expressing breast milk in the workplace.

Launch and sustain employer-supported, high quality lactation support programs for employees.

Provide nursing mothers with clean, accessible, safe, comfortable, private spaces to breastfeed their children or pump breast milk.

Sell foods raised and harvested by tribal members (including traditional foods) and foods grown at nearby family farms at farmers' markets located in or near tribal communities.

Offer affordably priced native products, such as wild rice, bison, and other traditional foods, at tribally owned facilities that sell and serve food, including casinos, meals programs, and stores.

Strengthen community food assets, including community gardens, seed banks, community kitchens, and community-supported agriculture farms.

Provide a wider variety of food sources in communities with few options for healthy food, such as farmers' markets, mobile markets, or community-supported agriculture delivery sites.

Change zoning policies to encourage more small-scale food production in communities.

Distribute unused crops grown by Minnesota farmers for processing into other products or sell surplus produce to buyers through programs that target both institutions and individuals.

CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENT

Increase support for research to understand the source, transmission, prevention, and treatment of tickborne diseases, and their effect on people who hunt, fish, forage, garden, and gather wild food.

Increase capacity of farmers to use season extension, season moderation, and food crop preservation technologies (such as high tunnels or community root cellars) to grow, preserve, and store healthy food, including financial and informational resources.

FOOD ACCESSIBILITY

HEALTHY FOOD IS EASY TO GET

WHAT IS FOOD ACCESSIBILITY?

Sources for healthy food are easy to get to at a manageable distance from home or work, using affordable and convenient personal or public transportation.



GOALS

- Stores selling healthy food are located near all communities
- Cities and towns provide provide adequate, safe options to bike or walk to places where they can buy or grow healthy food
- Communities offer widely available, and more affordable public, private, and non-profit transportation and delivery options to make it easier to get healthy food

CHALLENGES

Many people lack access to reliable, affordable transportation, which makes it difficult to get to stores and other places that offer healthy food options.

Many communities lack safe routes for people who walk, use a wheelchair or scooter, or ride their bike to food sources.

Safety issues—such as being a pedestrian after dark or working alone in a community garden - can limit access to healthy food.

Many people rely on public transportation to get to their preferred food sources (such as stores, food shelves, or farmers markets). Sometimes the public

transit routes are lengthy, do not offer stops near these food sources, or offer infrequent or inconvenient scheduling.

Many rural communities and some city neighborhoods don't have nearby food sources or stores offering healthy, affordable groceries.

Some people have mobility issues that keep them from shopping in person.

Long winters mean cold temperatures and icy streets and sidewalks. Walking, biking and taking the bus can be dangerous.

Everyone needs affordable, easy ways to get to places that offer healthy options.

STRATEGIES

Include healthy food access as an important component of local governments' overall infrastructure and transportation planning.

Install and maintain sidewalks, metered crosswalks, and bike paths on routes that provide access to stores, hunger relief programs, farmers markets, community gardens, and other food sources.

Put bus routes near community food sources and coordinate bus schedules with those sources' open hours.

Ensure food stores and farmers markets are located in places easily reached by bus, bike, or foot.

Create volunteer carpool networks for people who need rides to healthy food sources near where they live.

Deliver healthy food grown at nearby farms to neighborhood drop-off sites.

Establish affordable food-delivery services that bring food from local stores and farmers' markets to seniors, individuals with mobility issues, and people without transportation.

Ensure ongoing, adequate support for existing food-delivery options, such as Meals on Wheels and free or reduced cost delivery services.

Transportation is a critical link to ensuring opportunity for all—connecting us to jobs, schools, housing, health care, and grocery stores.

PolicyLink, 2013

State agencies offer many resources—information, grants, and partnerships—to help increase healthy food access for Minnesotans.

FOOD INFRASTRUCTURE

GROWING, PROCESSING, AND DISTRIBUTING SAFE, HEALTHY FOOD

WHAT IS FOOD INFRASTRUCTURE?

Food infrastructure is the underlying physical, policy, and organizational structures needed for our food supply's operation, services, and facilities.

Food infrastructure includes:

- How, where, and what food is grown and by whom
- How food is processed, packaged, and distributed
- How food is marketed to and obtained by consumers
- How we dispose of food waste



GOAL

Create a vital, lasting food infrastructure that improves the health of Minnesota's consumers, while growing the food and farm economy.

CHALLENGES

AGRICULTURE AND FOOD RESEARCH, TECHNOLOGIES, AND PRACTICES

Minnesota's higher education system needs more public investment in and a wider array of influences on its food and agriculture-related education, outreach, and research.

Minnesota's growing season may be too brief and variable to produce enough fresh fruits and vegetables for local consumers.

Our bee population is at great risk, and we depend on bees to pollinate our crops.

Many consumers express concern about the extent of food waste, as well as the use of chemicals, technologies, and antibiotics in food production.

Farming practices and technologies should protect our animals, soil, air, and water.

Tribal communities lack influence over agricultural production practices and technologies that non-native farmers use within or adjacent to reservation borders.

PHYSICAL AND FINANCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Many farmers lack adequate physical and financial infrastructure on their farm and in their region for harvesting, processing, storing, and distributing nutritious food to nearby markets.

Farmers face significant financial risks. They have limited access to capital and financing; high labor, land, and

equipment costs; and low rates of return for small and medium-sized family farms.

Tribal nations have historically had limited access to financing and USDA development funding for food and farming infrastructure.

LOCAL MARKETS

Local wholesale and certain retail markets offer farmers low and decreasing prices.

Some farmers face insufficient access to certain markets.

FARMLAND ACCESS AND PRESERVATION

In many places, there is not enough available, affordable farmland for farmers who want to produce nutritious food products for nearby markets.

A significant amount of Minnesota's farmland may be permanently lost to development.

Farmers growing food for Minnesota markets face numerous challenges related to zoning and environmental regulations.

AGRICULTURE AND FOOD RESEARCH, TECHNOLOGIES, AND PRACTICES

Increase public funding for agricultural research and development at higher education institutions and Extension (including breeding plants for key food and feed crops for Minnesota markets, developing new cropping systems and related technologies, improving sustainable agricultural practices, and understanding the effect of existing practices on human, animal, and environmental health).

Ensure adequate resources for public/private partnerships that support pollinator health.

Increase investment in systems for season extension, season moderation, food preservation systems and technologies, including financing and grants for growers.

Encourage farmers to use farming practices and technologies that protect the health of people, animals, soil, air, and water.

Create policies, technologies, and incentives that reduce food waste or transform it into compost or energy.

Provide resources, support, and incentives for farmers who want to use food production methods, such as sustainable and organic practices, to increase their customer base.

PHYSICAL AND FINANCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Establish viable, robust mechanisms for healthy food and farm-related enterprise development, such as angel investor tax credits, start-up funding aggregated from public and private sources, as well as public investment in research and development and technical assistance for business planning.

Promote the development of cooperatively owned businesses related to healthy food and farms.

Establish enterprises that can provide healthy food to nearby communities and institutions.

Create tribally controlled, small incubator farms with shared equipment and water access.

Secure resources for tribal nations to purchase equipment and develop businesses that support harvesting wild rice; catching, gathering, and preserving fish, plant foods, and berries; and tapping, processing, and storing maple syrup.

LOCAL MARKETS

Establish annual voluntary food pricing agreements that Minnesota farmers develop together, and participating wholesalers and vendors agree to honor.

Create technical assistance and training opportunities for farmers to sell new products and access new markets.

FARMLAND ACCESS AND PRESERVATION

Establish an easy-to-use farm ownership transition program to transfer farm ownership from one family to another.

Implement farmland-access recommendations developed by organizations that serve farmers. For example, prioritize family farms in local comprehensive plans, building codes,

land use and restrictions, taxing structures, and other local policy initiatives.

THE FOOD SYSTEM



FOOD INFRASTRUCTURE CONTINUED...

CHALLENGES

FARMER TRAINING AND RESOURCES

Many farmers who grow healthy food for nearby communities can't reliably afford health insurance, liability insurance, and specialty crop insurance.

Some farmers need more information about existing resources to more effectively to sell their products in larger markets.

Many educational resources (such as classes and written materials) for farmers, food workers, and farm workers are only available in English.

Local, regional, state, and federal educational and legal resources for farmers and workers in food and farm-related jobs are not fully accessible, because they have limited hours of operation, staff capacity, and languages.

Many agricultural organizations, centers, clubs, groups, associations, and partnerships conduct their business only in English, making it difficult for new immigrant farmers to participate in these opportunities.

Materials about agricultural programs and regulations are only available in English, are hard to locate, and are created without adequate representation from new immigrant farmers.

LABOR AND PAY

People who work in food and farm-related jobs often lack adequate pay and benefits.

Workplace and child labor laws are not always adequately enforced in food- and farm-related employment, and workers lack adequate access to legal counseling about labor issues.

Food and farm workers, farmers, and food businesses lack clear policies around freedom of association, collective bargaining, fair contracts, living wages, and conflict resolution.

Workers in food- and farm-related jobs often lack adequate whistleblower protections.

Some farms and nearby communities lack adequate, affordable worker housing, which increases worker illnesses, the spread of communicable diseases, and food safety risks.

HEALTHY FOOD AND AGRICULTURE POLICY

State and federal agriculture and nutrition policies don't sufficiently support access to safe, affordable, healthy food.

Federal agriculture and nutrition policy should be more effective at ensuring widespread availability of affordable, healthy food.

Minnesota lacks the economic development and planning at all scales that would strengthen small and medium-sized food and agricultural businesses and infrastructure.

FOOD LABELING, REGULATIONS, AND MARKETING

Current food labels do not fully address consumer concerns.

A lot of food marketing promotes unhealthy foods, particularly to children, which negatively influences healthy food preferences and purchases.

Tribes whose food systems incorporate traditional food preparation, gathering, and farming can often find that food

safety regulations and protocols do not reflect their needs or tribal sovereignty.

Small or new healthy food businesses need a more flexible, integrated regulatory infrastructure to meet food safety and licensing requirements.

Regulations for community kitchens, farmers' markets, urban agriculture, commercial zoning, parking, subdivision,

land use, and related ordinances can inadvertently impede healthy food access.

Despite ongoing efforts, lack of resources, constraints in cross-agency communication, and inconsistencies in enforcement create barriers for healthy food businesses.

INFLUENCE AND DECISION-MAKING

Communities want greater involvement and influence over the design of their communities' food environments.

Federal agriculture and nutrition policies do not reflect the needs and interests of a broad range of consumers.

Consolidation within food and agricultural industries results in concentrated decision-making power.

FARMER TRAINING AND RESOURCES

Establish affordable statewide liability, specialty crops, and health insurance programs for small farmers.

Create and offer training (classes and written materials) in multiple languages, with a focus on basic farm ownership, food production, and farm management skills.

Ensure adequate, ongoing investment in a wide array of farmer-focused technical assistance and training.

Provide comprehensive, culturally appropriate training for small entrepreneurs who sell foods at cultural events, such as powwows, community feasts, and farm-based dinners.

LABOR AND PAY

Support research, policies, and programs that address food-infrastructure labor and pay issues, such as support for organizations that provide independent verification of labor and pay conditions in agriculture and food-related enterprises.

Share information and conduct training for food and farm-related employers on federal and state labor laws, with accompanying promotion and materials in multiple languages.

Disseminate information and conduct training for food and farm-related workers on federal and state labor laws, with accompanying promotion and materials in multiple languages.

Improve enforcement, training, and dissemination of federal and state labor laws and workplace and food safety regulations—including promotion and materials in multiple languages.

Strengthen whistleblower protections for food and farm-related workers—including legislation and worker organization.

Develop comprehensive policy and related resources to ensure adequate housing for workers employed seasonally in agriculturally-related businesses.

HEALTHY FOOD AND AGRICULTURE POLICY

Encourage the Statewide Health Improvement Program, state agricultural grant programs, and other state resources to implement Food Charter strategies.

Create state-level policies and investments that support and minimize risk for Minnesota farms

that grow healthy, costly and/or vulnerable crops, such as fruits and vegetables.

Encourage federal agriculture and nutrition policies and priorities to reflect the stated needs and solutions described in the Minnesota Food Charter.

Strengthen relationships between federal agencies and tribal communities to increase access to agency resources that support tribal communities' traditional foods practices.

FOOD LABELING, REGULATIONS, AND MARKETING

Address consumer food labeling concerns at the federal and state levels.

Reduce marketing of unhealthy food to children.

Streamline food safety and licensing protocols, and provide training for small and emerging businesses (such as growers and processors) on good

agricultural practices, food safety, licensing, inspections, and related regulations.

Give inspectors flexible tools for the type, size, and risk of food business.

Meet sovereign tribal nations' stated needs for food safety education, food protection, and foodborne illness response.

Develop interagency workgroups and trainings to ensure clear, consistent enforcement of food safety and inspection codes.

INFLUENCE AND DECISION-MAKING

Support food policy councils at local, regional, and state levels.

Invest in development and implementation of effective food

systems planning for communities and regions across Minnesota.

Establish councils of traditional foods gatherers to advise tribal communities on food-related needs and issues.

Encourage the Minnesota Department of Agriculture to develop long-term plans for Minnesota's agricultural infrastructure.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Minnesota Food Charter was made possible by the contributions, resources, and leadership of many people and the organizations that serve them. Special thanks for the involvement and expertise of the following individuals, who served on the Food Charter Steering Committee (SC), Food Charter Drafting Committee (DC), and Food Charter Launch Strategy Committee (LC):

Food Charter Planning Team Members

Lisa Gemlo and Tim Jenkins (Minnesota Department of Health)
Margaret Adamek and Katie Wahl (Terra Soma, LLC)
Jenna Carter, Christian Knights, and Alison Rotel
(Center for Prevention at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota)
Mindy Kurzer, University of Minnesota (Chair, SC)
David Benson, Farmer (SC)
Phil Brooks, H. Brooks Produce (SC)
Rachel Callanan, American Heart Association (SC)
Kathy Draeger, University of Minnesota Extension and Farmer (SC)
Joyce Ford, Farmer (SC)
Bonnie Frederickson, Farmer and Retired Public Health Nurse (SC)
Maria Regan Gonzalez, City of Bloomington Division of Public Health (SC)
Jamie Harvie, Institute for a Sustainable Future (SC)
Cheryal Hill, Region 5 Economic Development Commission (LC)
Kristine Igo, University of Minnesota (SC, DC)
Taya Kaufenberg, Wedge Natural Foods Co-op (SC)
Christian Knights, Center for Prevention at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota (LC)
Rod Larkins, AURI (LC)
Warren Larson, Sanford Health (SC)
Amy Loew, General Mills (SC, DC)
Mary Marrow, Public Health Law Center (DC)
Warren McLean, Community Reinvestment Fund (SC)
Bruce Miller, Minnesota Farmers Union (SC, LC)
Vayong Moua, Center for Prevention at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota (DC, LC)
Joanne Mulbah, Minnesota Chippewa Tribe (DC)
Susie Nanney, University of Minnesota (SC, DC)
Terry Nennich, University of Minnesota Extension and Farmer (SC)
Jan O'Donnell, Two Harbors Food Shelf (SC)
Charlie Poster, Minnesota Department of Agriculture (SC)

Simone Senogles, Headwaters Food Sovereignty Council and Indigenous Environmental Network (SC)
Scott Smith, Minnesota Department of Health (LC)
Mustafa Sundiata, University of Minnesota Extension (SC, DC)
Bob Tracy, Minnesota Council on Foundations (LC)
Kim Turner, White Earth Nation Health Education Program (SC)
Rachel Valesano, MN School Nutrition Association/Owatonna School District (SC)
Janelle Waldock, Center for Prevention at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota (SC)
David Wallinga, Healthy Food Action (SC, DC)
Craig Wethington, Minnesota Department of Education (LC)
Don Wyse, University of Minnesota (SC, LC)
Hii Xyooj, Farmers Legal Action Group (SC)

Minnesota Department of Health

TEAM LEADS: Bill Bureson, Lisa Gemlo, Tim Jenkins, Donna McDuffie.


MDH Leadership: Commissioner Ed Ehlinger; Assistant Commissioner Jeanne Ayers; Director, Office of State Health Improvement Initiatives, Julie Myhre; Chris Kimber.

THANK YOU TO Rhonda Bauer and Lucy Schweitz

Technical Assistance Provider to the Minnesota Food Charter
Terra Soma, LLC

Organizational Hosts for Food Charter Steering Committee
University of Minnesota Healthy Foods, Healthy Lives Institute

Communications and Design Support
C2 Communications, Gish & Co., Ladywithafan Design, and Kinsale Communications



For more information on research, references, and findings associated with the Minnesota Food Charter, go to www.mnfoodcharter.com or contact info@mnfoodcharter.com



Taking action together is our surest path to a healthy and prosperous future for all Minnesotans.

CITATIONS

www.hungersolutions.org/about/hunger-partners/minnesota-food-shelves/
www.health.state.mn.us/cdrr/obesity/pdfdocs/obesityplan20090112.pdf
policylinkcontent.s3.amazonaws.com/Minnesota_mappingFINAL_0.pdf
www.cdc.gov/obesity/stateprograms/fundedstates/minnesota.html
www.health.state.mn.us/divs/chs/healthequity/ahe_leg_report_020414.pdf
www.mn2020.org/assets/uploads/article/Fertile_Ground_web.pdf
www.iatp.org/documents/farm-to-school-in-minnesota
www.health.state.mn.us/healthymnpartnership/sha/docs/1204healthofminnesota.pdf
www.hungersolutions.org/hunger-data-center/state-of-hunger-in-minnesota/hungerfreemn.org/media-coverage/publications/snap-access-study-2010/
www.forbes.com/best-states-for-business/list/
fairfoodnetwork.org/sites/default/files/Michigan20PercentShift_FullReport.pdf
www.healthyamericans.org/assets/files/obesity2012/TFAHSept2012_MN_ObesityBrief02.pdf
www.nass.usda.gov/Quick_Stats/Ag_Overview/stateOverview.php?state=MINNESOTA
archive.leg.state.mn.us/docs/2008/other/080146.pdf
www.health.state.mn.us/divs/hpcd/do/HPCDtrendreport2011.pdf



mnfoodcharter.com

The Minnesota Food Charter is supported by funding from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Center for Prevention at Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota, and the Statewide Health Improvement Program at the Minnesota Department of Health, with leadership support from the Healthy Foods, Healthy Lives Institute at the University of Minnesota.