



FOOD FORWARD NYC: 2-YEAR PROGRESS REPORT



NYC
Food Policy

July 2023



Dear fellow New Yorkers,

I am thrilled to highlight the tremendous progress that we have made since Food Forward NYC, the City's ten-year food policy plan, was completed in February 2021. With the clear support and encouragement of Mayor Eric Adams, in just two years, we've increased access to nutritious food for all New Yorkers and expanded choice. For the first time, the City has acknowledged the connection between the food system and our climate, namely through the implementation of our plant-powered initiatives. Food businesses that have struggled throughout the pandemic are reaching out and we're listening to them.

When we set forth Food Forward NYC's five goals, 14 strategies, and 71 actions, we did so in collaboration with NYC agencies, Mayoral Offices, community-based organizations, advocates, business owners, academics, philanthropic entities, and many others. The accomplishments in this report are a testament to how crucial it is to collaborate. Together we are making significant progress toward transforming our food system into one that supports our health, the health of our planet, and business innovation.

It is important we take stock of these achievements and celebrate them. With the momentum we have built, there's even more to achieve. New realities lead to new opportunities.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this effort thus far, and let's keep up the great work!

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kate Mackenzie". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline.

**KATE MACKENZIE, MS, RD
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
NYC MAYOR'S OFFICE
OF FOOD POLICY**

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All New Yorkers have multiple ways to access healthy, affordable, and culturally appropriate food

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All New Yorkers have multiple ways to access healthy, affordable, and culturally appropriate food



Food distribution center

ENSURING EQUITABLE ACCESS TO GOOD FOOD ACROSS NYC NEIGHBORHOODS

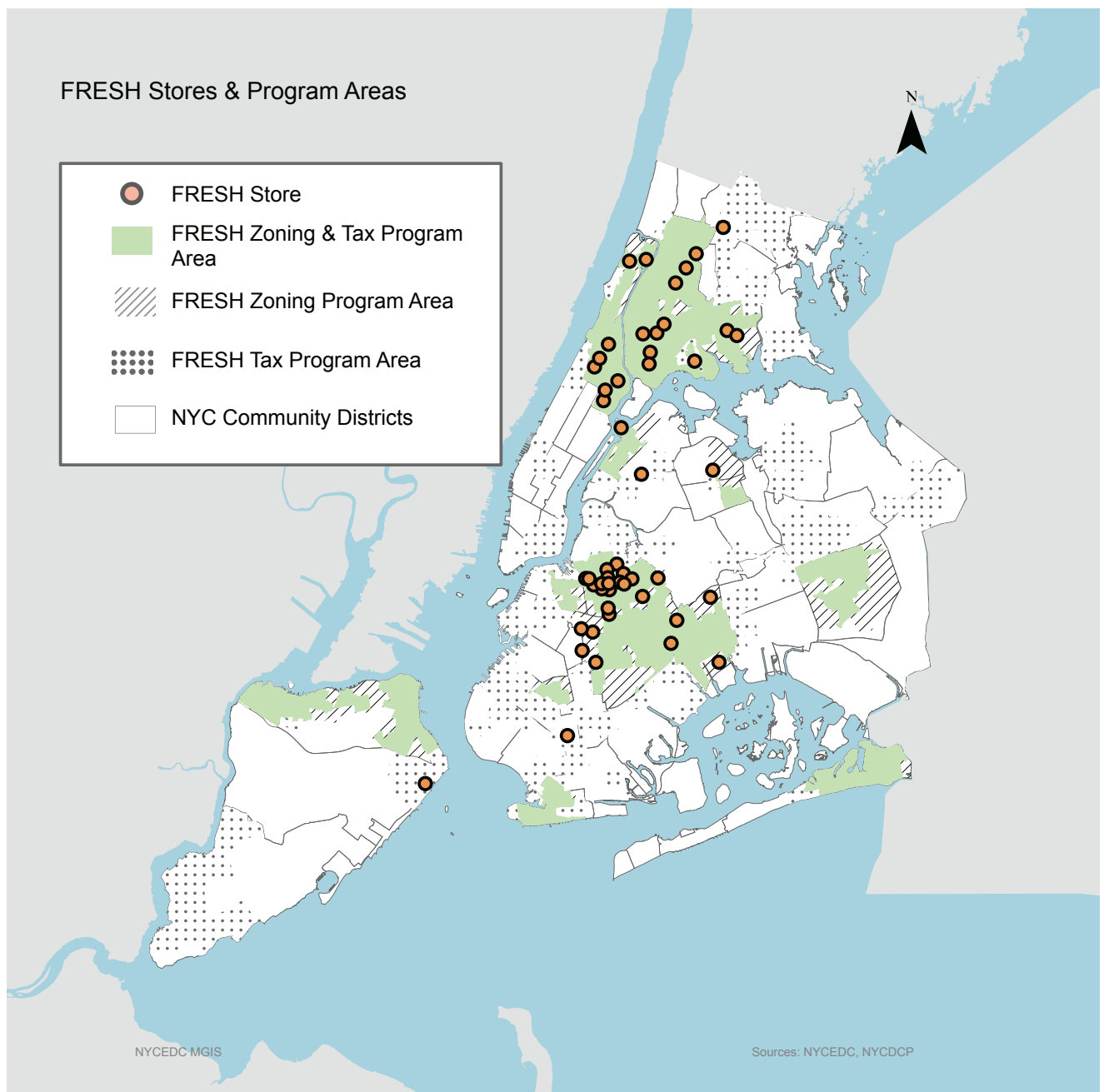
The NYC Department of Social Services (DSS) transformed its 30-year-old Emergency Food Assistance Program into Community Food Connection (CFC). CFC provides a safe, reliable supply of nutritious, healthy, and culturally appropriate food, including fresh produce for the first time ever, to over 600 community-based food programs across the five boroughs. To ensure that food is distributed equitably, the City developed metrics that track neighborhood-by-neighborhood [levels of unmet needs](#) to inform policymakers and food distributors about where and how much additional food is most needed, and how targeted deliveries could help to close the gap. In addition, CFC makes funds available to support the expansion of emergency food programs by creating additional satellite sites linked to established locations and forming new partnerships. New funding can also improve efficiency of operations and build capacity within pantries.

In early 2023, the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) relaunched [Groceries to Go](#), a program that provides eligible NYC Health + Hospital's NYC Care members at risk of food insecurity with credits to purchase groceries through an online marketplace of local grocery stores. Households with three or more members receive additional credits. The program also offers participants a 50% discount on fresh fruit and vegetables purchased with credits. To date, DOHMH has enrolled over 2,020 participants.



Fresh produce at an emergency food distribution center

The Food Retail Expansion Program to Support Health (FRESH) provided zoning and financial incentives for the establishment and retention of 30 grocery stores, which have served 1.2 million people in underserved communities since 2009. Because of its success, in 2021 the NYC Department of City Planning (DCP) expanded [FRESH incentives](#) to more areas of the city. So far, the program has incentivized the opening of 30 FRESH stores within walking distance of 1.2 million previously underserved New Yorkers, and another 21 FRESH stores in various stages of development will offer fresh food choices to an additional 300,000 New Yorkers in underserved communities.



EXPANDING LIFESTYLE MEDICINE

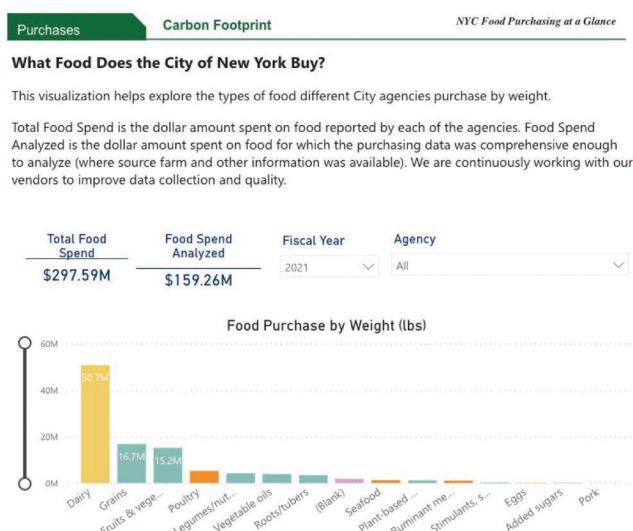
In 2022 NYC Health + Hospitals announced plans to expand their groundbreaking lifestyle medicine services at six public health care sites across the city. The interdisciplinary, evidence-based [Lifestyle Medicine program](#) supports those living with diabetes, prediabetes, obesity, high blood pressure, and heart disease in making lifestyle changes to improve their health.

Equipping the NYC healthcare workforce with access to new tools to combat chronic disease and health disparities citywide is also integral to this transformation. Through the City's partnership with the American College of Lifestyle Medicine, which includes a [\\$44 million investment](#), training in nutrition and lifestyle medicine is available for 200,000 of our doctors, nurses, nurse practitioners, dietitians, and other health care professionals.

TRANSFORMING THE FOOD WE BUY AND SERVE AS A CITY

Institutional food purchasing is an enormous lever for change and a critical tool for equity. The City's [Good Food Purchasing Program](#) gives us the understanding of where our food comes from and how it impacts us. All vendors must now comply with reporting requirements, bolstered by the signing of [Executive Order 8](#), about the origins of the food and meals the City purchases. With this data, the Mayor's Office of Food Policy (MOFP) determined legally sound metrics to enable City agencies to track [progress](#). This unprecedented insight into public procurement helps New Yorkers understand more about their food while driving positive change across the local, regional and, even, global food system. The program has been recognized by the international community; in 2022, the City received a [Milan Urban Food Policy Pact award](#).

The H+H Lifestyle Medicine Program focuses on six aspects of lifestyle change: a healthy plant-based eating pattern; physical activity; stress reduction; sleep health; social connection; and avoidance of unhealthy substances, like tobacco or alcohol. Patients are guided by interdisciplinary teams that assess their needs (including screening for food insecurity) and offer a tailored plan to improve their health through individual medical visits and access to group sessions on nutrition, meal planning, cooking, exercise, mindfulness, and sleep health.



In June 2023 NYC unveiled “[Prioritizing Food Education in Our Public Schools: A Path to Developing a Healthy Next Generation](#)”—a comprehensive roadmap to improving food education in New York City’s public school system. This plan—the first of its kind—will ensure students across the city learn healthy eating habits, and how each component of our food system interacts with the climate, economy, and local community.



Veggies at the launch of DOE’s Food Education Roadmap

Executive Order 8 also reaffirmed the [New York City Food Standards](#), which help combat structural inequities that make healthy eating challenging for those with limited resources. These evidence-based food and nutrient criteria ensure every New Yorker accessing meals or snacks from City agencies and their contractors will be served nutritious foods. The Standards for Meals and Snacks Purchased and Served were updated in April 2022 to include new limits on added sugars and beef and new requirements that phase out processed meat and introduce plant-based protein minimums. The standards apply to the 192 million meals and snacks served each year at schools and after-school programs, older adult centers, childcare centers, correctional facilities, public hospitals, and in the shelter system. NYC’s Beverage Vending Standards and Food Vending Standards were also updated in 2022 and 2023, respectively, thereby improving the food environment across hundreds of vending machines on City property.

Another step the City is taking to combat structural inequities, through the signing of [Executive Order 9](#) of 2022, is to ensure that only healthy foods are promoted in advertising or promotional materials produced, published, or otherwise disseminated by City agencies and in City franchises or concessions. This is an effort to contrast the density of advertisements for consumable products, in particular unhealthy foods and beverages, in neighborhoods with higher proportions of Black and Latino New Yorkers.

INVESTING IN KITCHEN EQUIPMENT AND DINING ENVIRONMENTS TO ENSURE THAT NEW YORKERS OF ALL AGES ENJOY HEALTHIER FOOD

City agencies are playing a significant role in expanding access to better food for every New Yorker, including students and seniors. One example is the [Cafeteria Enhancement Experience \(CEE\)](#), which aims to make school cafeterias welcoming spaces where students can enjoy nutritious meals. The CEE has already transformed 87 cafeterias with new comfortable tables and chairs. Serving areas have been redesigned to display food in a way that makes it more attractive for students while minimizing their waiting time. Another agency leading in this space is the NYC Department for the Aging (NYC Aging). By using funds realized by agency savings, four program centers will build out commissary kitchens. This will not only allow providers to cook healthier and more culturally appropriate meals but also enable them to cook for other programs in their network. In the long term, this will also give NYC Aging more control over food quality and help them be better prepared for future emergencies.

2

NYC's food economy drives economic opportunity and provides good jobs

CATALYZING FOOD SCIENCE INNOVATION

In March 2023, the City announced the opening of a [\\$20 million center for sustainability-focused biotech](#), in partnership with Newlab, the Partnership Fund for New York City, and Empire State Development. The innovation space, which is expected to open in 2025, will create more than 400 high-quality jobs and support a new generation of scientists, innovators, and entrepreneurs through office space, research laboratories, and programming space, working to bring new climate and sustainability solutions to market using the power of biology. This initiative delivers on Mayor Adams' [Blueprint for Economic Recovery](#) while advancing efforts to make New York City the global center of sustainable technology and food science.

PROVIDING EXCEPTIONAL TRAINING TO THE SCHOOL FOOD WORKFORCE

[Chefs in Schools](#) is transforming the kitchen workforce in New York City public schools and making sure that students have access to healthy and delicious meals that reflect their cultures and traditions. The program was launched in September 2022 in partnership with Wellness in the Schools (WITS) to implement scratch-cooked, plant-based, and culturally relevant recipes. The first phase of the program was to create a Chefs Council, a group of renowned chefs and food experts who developed plant-based and culturally diverse recipes. These [recipes](#) were tested by real students, and their feedback taken into account in multiple iterations of the recipes.

The second phase of this program is peer-to-peer training for school food workers that includes recipe development, knife skills, and other culinary techniques, as well as training on how to share the benefits of scratch-cooking and plant-based eating with their peers and teach the students they serve.



Food workers preparing meals



M/WBE Noncompetitive Small
Purchase Method on contracts
increased up to

\$1.5 MILLION

SUPPORTING FOOD BUSINESSES AND M/WBE VENDORS

Both the COVID-19 pandemic and the asylum seeker crisis have underscored the importance of being able to quickly deploy local solutions that are responsive to the specific needs of each community. The City has relied on food trucks, restaurants, and NYCHA food entrepreneurs during these crises and is using those lessons to create processes more tailored to local needs and local capacity.

- NYC Health + Hospitals is contracting with Rethink Food to provide meals to asylum seekers produced by local restaurants, many of which are M/WBE.
- The NYC Administration for Children's Services (ACS) is working with The Migrant Kitchen to incorporate seasonality and cultural relevance into its menu offerings.
- The NYC Housing Authority (NYCHA) contracted four [Food Business Pathways \(FBP\)](#) graduates – a 10-week “accelerator” course that prepares NYCHA entrepreneurs to launch new food businesses and strengthen existing ones – to provide 7,000 meals during COVID and partnered with Governors Island in 2021 and 2022 to allow graduates to vend their products on the island. This market access opportunity continues in summer 2023. A new cohort of FBP entrepreneurs will convene in fall 2023.
- The City successfully advocated the State Legislature this past legislative session to allow the City to use the M/WBE Noncompetitive Small Purchase Method on contracts awarded up to \$1.5 million, tripling the initial threshold of \$500,000 which was raised to \$1 million during the 2022 legislative session and operationalized in January 2021.



NYCHA FBP graduate Christina Franco and her partner, selling food at Governors Island

CUTTING RED TAPE AND SUPPORTING BUSINESS OWNERS

- 1 Mayor Adams signed [Executive Order 2 of 2022 “Small Business Forward,”](#) which directed City agencies to identify the 150 provisions of law or rules that are most frequently enforced and evaluate them to reduce the burden on local businesses. This EO builds upon Local Law 80 and will provide relief to food businesses, among others, by reducing fine schedules and allowing for cure periods or warnings for first-time violations.
- 2 The NYC Department of Small Business Services (SBS) has launched the [NYC Business Express Service Team \(BEST\)](#) initiative to provide small businesses with one-on-one expert support and streamline the interactions required with City agencies. Services provided by the BEST team include compliance consultations, help with securing licenses and permits, and language support.
- 3 The City suspended the liquor license surcharge from June 2022 through May 2023, helping small businesses save an estimated \$6.5 million.
- 4 Launched in 2022, [PASSPort Public](#) is an innovative data transparency portal that gives unprecedented insight into New York City’s main procurement system and accountability through data-driven analytics.
- 5 The City’s Clear the Backlog Initiative unlocked more than \$6.2 billion to get contracted not-for-profits (many of them human service providers that also serve food) paid on time.

ADVOCATING FOR WORKERS AND UPHOLDING THEIR RIGHTS

The City is upholding food workers’ rights and working swiftly to investigate complaints, secure money owed to workers, and ensure businesses come into compliance with the law. In the past two years, the City’s enforcement efforts have [delivered up to \\$20 million for fast-food workers](#), in addition to other significant wins.

Mayor Eric Adams has also shown his commitments to working people by rallying state lawmakers to double down on their support for the Child Tax Credit and a [further expansion of the Earned Income Tax Credit \(EITC\)](#) — a critical initiative that Mayor Adams advocated for and secured in the FY 2023 Executive Budget. As a result of this expansion, a single parent with one child and an income of \$14,750 will see the benefit increase from \$187 to \$933 — an almost 500% increase. A married couple with two children and an annual income of \$25,000 will see their benefit grow from \$308 to \$925 — a 300% increase. In addition, [\\$4 billion were secured over four years to expand quality childcare](#) and the City was authorized to offer financial incentives to property owners who retrofit property to establish childcare facilities and businesses that provide free or fully subsidized childcare for their employees.

Expanding opportunities for small-scale food production spaces in commercial areas

The NYC Department of City Planning (DCP), through its [City of Yes for Economic Opportunity](#) initiative, which will begin public review in late 2023, proposes to modify zoning to enable small-scale food and beverage production to occur in commercial zoning districts.



\$4 BILLION

secured over four years to expand quality childcare

3

The supply chains that feed NYC are modern, efficient, and resilient



\$130 MILLION

investment toward modernization
of the Hunts Point Produce Market

INVESTING IN FOOD STORAGE AND DISTRIBUTION SYSTEMS

The City is investing \$130 million to modernize the Hunts Point Produce Market (HPPM), ensuring that it remains competitive and its operations are environmentally sustainable. The HPPM also recently received \$110 million from the U.S. Department of Transportation's Infrastructure for Rebuilding America (INFRA) grant and \$130 million from the New York State Legislature to further modernize the facility.

As the cost of building out cold storage is high, the City is exploring the use of financial incentives from the NYC Industrial Development Agency (IDA), such as tax abatements, to facilitate the development of cold storage facilities on private sites.

To reduce the use of trucks for distribution, NYCEDC is planning to implement the infrastructure necessary to transport goods (including food) by water and has received a \$5.25 million federal grant to create a network of six marine highway landings with existing waterfront assets. NYCEDC and the NYC Department of Transportation (DOT) will also pilot a microhub program this summer. During the pilot, the City will test approximately 20 local delivery hubs for moving deliveries from trucks to sustainable forms of transportation. By providing designated curbside or off-street locations for delivery trucks to unload items, smaller, low-emission vehicles or human-powered modes, like cargo bikes and hand carts, can complete the final leg of deliveries.



Worker at Hunts Point wholesale market

CONSOLIDATING URBAN AGRICULTURE AS A KEY PILLAR OF THE NYC FOOD SYSTEM

The City has taken bold steps to expand urban food production, invest in urban agriculture on NYCHA property, and foster climate resilient infrastructure. In September 2022, Mayor Adams created the Mayor's Office of Urban Agriculture and appointed Qiana Mickie as the City's first [Urban Agriculture](#) Executive Director. Additionally, more than 380 community gardens operating on property within the NYC Department of Parks and Recreation's (NYC Parks) jurisdiction under the [Green Thumb](#) license will be supported for an additional full decade, an extended term resulting from direct community feedback.

Finally, [Farms at NYCHA](#) — an initiative grounded in food justice, resident leadership, and youth workforce development — added two new farms in the past year at Astoria Houses (Queens) and Castle Hill Houses (Bronx). There are now nine farms in operation, and NYCHA plans to add six new sites by June 2025.



Astoria Houses residents and Green City Force Corps members plant seedlings during the ribbon-cutting of the newest Farms at NYCHA site, the Astoria Houses Eco-Hub

4

NYC's food is produced, distributed, and disposed of sustainably

Plant-Powered Carbon Challenge

The NYC Plant-Powered Carbon Challenge offers leading organizations the opportunity to demonstrate leadership in sustainability by increasing the offering of plant-based foods and be recognized for their efforts. Participating organizations will have access to a diverse forum of peers and experts, as well as tools to help them realize continued reductions in food-related GHG emissions.

ACKNOWLEDGING THE ROLE THE FOOD SYSTEM HAS ON THE ENVIRONMENT

For the first time, the City has included food initiatives in its sustainability plan. Not only has the City [committed to reducing the carbon footprint of the food it purchases by 33%](#), but also has launched a [Plant-Powered Carbon Challenge](#) to spur the private sector to take action. This commitment crystallizes the work of agencies already serving less-carbon-intensive foods. In particular, NYC's public hospitals and schools are leading the way: By making plant-based meals its default offering and enhancing patients' experience with food, [NYC Health + Hospitals is on track to serve 850,000 plant-based meals](#) this year. This has driven a reduction in its carbon emissions by 36%. The NYC Department of Education (DOE) also introduced [Plant-Powered Fridays](#) in schools to emphasize the central role that fruits and vegetables, whole grains, legumes, nuts and seeds, plant oils, and herbs and spices must have on our plates.



Mayor Adams tastes a plant-based menu offered to patients at NYC Health + Hospitals

The Mayor's Office on Climate and Environmental Justice (MOCEJ) released the City's first [integrated GHG inventory](#), which incorporates emissions resulting from New Yorkers' consumption of goods, services, transportation, food, and housing. In this geographic inventory, food is ranked as the third major contributor to emissions, following buildings and transportation.

For more than thirty years the City has invested roughly \$400 million in supporting watershed farmers' implementing of best management practices that are good for the environment, the NYC water supply, and the farm economy. The NYC Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) is collaborating with the Watershed Agriculture Council (WAC) and Columbia University to further research best management practices that have positive climate outcomes.

REDUCING WASTE COMING FROM FOOD AND DINING

To reduce food-related waste, the City has taken several actions, including successfully rolling out the first-ever borough-wide organics collection program, expanding composting in NYC schools and older adult centers, testing initiatives to reduce food packaging in schools, and transforming organic waste into biogas.

In fall 2022, all residential sites in Queens received curbside composting collection, with no signups or opt-ins required. In the first season, the program diverted 12.7 million pounds of material from landfills, which is three times the average collected in opt-in neighborhoods—done at a fraction of the cost of previous curbside efforts. In February 2023, Mayor Adams announced that the City would roll out curbside composting citywide for the first time, beginning in Brooklyn in October 2023 and reaching every borough by October 2024. This is part of a comprehensive approach to diverting NYC's food waste from landfills for composting and creating renewable energy. In June 2023, DEP and National Grid launched the Newton Creek biogas-to-grid project, where food scraps collected across the city will be used to create biogas. This project will avoid methane emissions from landfilled organic material and reduce truck traffic to move that material to distant landfills.

As part of the City of Yes for Carbon Neutrality zoning amendment, DCP has proposed clear regulations allowing for small composting operations to be "accessory" to any use within the city, giving a green light to the broader organics and composting community to invest in neighborhood-oriented facilities.



12.7 MILLION

pounds of material diverted from landfills at a fraction of the cost of previous curbside efforts



Compost bags produced from food scraps and yard waste at the DSNY facility on Staten Island

In 2015, the Administration committed to expanding curbside composting to all NYC public schools. Nearly 70% of DOE schools are now composting, and their remaining schools will receive service starting in the 2023-24 school year. In another effort to reduce food-related waste, all elementary schools participate in monthly Plastic Free Lunch Days, featuring finger food-friendly menus.

5

Support systems and knowledge to implement the 10-year food policy plan

Transforming the food system is no small feat and something that can only be accomplished by working together. The food system is complex and fragmented, often with multiple deeply knowledgeable stakeholders wielding influence over aspects of the system. The City is actively building new partnerships and structures for knowledge exchange to ensure the initiatives within the plan are advanced and that novel and innovative ways of improving the food system can emerge.





Inside Vista Hermosa tortilla factory in Brooklyn

Tracking progress per initiative

● Notable Progress ● Some Progress ● No Progress

Strategy	Action	Status
NEAR TERM: IMPLEMENTATION STARTS 2021-2022		
1A	Launch a new food program to address food security issues exacerbated by the pandemic	●
	Expand "Get the Good Stuff"	●
	Include whole families in summer meal programs permanently	●
	Pursue federal and state action to expand and improve SNAP and other food benefits	●
1B	Transform the emergency food network	●
	Enable food retailers to utilize more outdoor space	●
	Evaluate options to limit exposure to unhealthy food and food marketing	●
2A	Enforce fair scheduling laws in fast food	●
	Create financing and technical assistance plans to support worker-owned cooperatives	●
2B	Push for a NYC Small Business Recovery Tax Credit for small businesses including food businesses	●
2C	Launch a Food Community Hiring Initiative	●
3A	Continue to implement FreightNYC	●
	Continue to modernize Hunts Point	●
3B	Partner on a regional institutional food demand analysis	●
4A	Include sustainability criteria in commercial waste zone contracts	●
5A	Deepen regional engagement through a NYC-Region Food Working Group	●
	Partner with the non-governmental sector to maximize community participation in food policy decision-making	●
5B	Improve and share the City's food procurement data	●
	Conduct a regional food flow study and enhance stakeholder engagement for emergency management	●
MEDIUM TERM: IMPLEMENTATION STARTS 2023-2024		
1A	Make it possible to leverage healthcare coverage for medically tailored meals	●
	Pursue federal and state change to expand the reach of produce prescription programs	●
	Partner with health systems to increase access to healthy foods	●
1B	Explore new ways to expand farmers' markets and other programs that bring fresh fruits and vegetables to underserved communities	●
	Support breastfeeding parents in hospitals, workplaces and community settings	●
	Pursue federal support for businesses and nonprofits that provide fresh produce in underserved communities	●
	Study ways to improve access to cold storage in underserved communities	●
	Improve cafeteria culture in public schools	●
1C	Create a shared commercial kitchen for providers serving older New Yorkers	●
	Push for changes in state procurement law	●
2A	Push for state and federal change that improves the condition of workers in the food industry	●
	Support the workers that supply the City's food programs	●
	Explore ways to expand the City's existing childcare programs to include night care for children of food service workers	●
2B	Streamline regulations and enforcement processes related to food businesses	●
	Support NYCHA food entrepreneurs	●
	Advance initiatives that protect food business and customer data	●
	Push for expanded and new state and federal programs that support the needs of food businesses and cooperative efforts	●

Strategy	Action	Status
MEDIUM TERM: IMPLEMENTATION STARTS 2023-2024		
2C	Support training for food technology careers	●
	Support the creation and expansion of career pathways in the food sector	●
	Create workforce development programs for school food workers	●
3A	Strengthen the city's Industrial Business Zones	●
	Pursue development of critical food supply chain facilities	●
	Support federal funding for infrastructure	●
3B	Increase the share of regional food the City purchases	●
3C	Remove barriers to urban farming	●
	Explore new spaces for urban farming	●
	Expand Farms at NYCHA	●
4A	Explore ways to integrate sustainability and animal welfare into City food procurement	●
	Pursue federal dietary recommendations that consider environmental sustainability in the 2025-2030 Dietary Guidelines for Americans	●
4B	Explore ways to make cold storage locations more energy efficient	●
4C	Explore ways to reduce use of single-use items in food service	●
	Advocate for the inclusion of local seafood and seaweed in the New York State Grown & Certified program	●
	Create national research-informed standards for expiration dates on food products	●
	Pursue legislative action to reduce the impacts of packaging and single use items	●
5A	Launch a Public Housing Food Leadership Innovation Lab	●
5B	Develop measures that capture multiple dimensions for food insecurity	●
	Partner with the private and civic sectors on food education campaigns around sustainability and nutrition	●
LONG TERM: IMPLEMENTATION STARTS 2025 +		
1B	Explore ways to increase the amount of freshly prepared meals in public schools	●
	Explore new partnerships with schools around food access	●
1C	Explore new ways to centralize and improve City food procurement	●
	Study the viability of food hubs that expand public schools' access to cold storage, processing space, and preparation capacity	●
2A	Conduct a feasibility study on ensuring basic social safety net benefits	●
2B	Make it easier for vendors to participate in City food procurement.	●
3A	Support the development of borough and neighborhood-based food hubs, starting with the Central Brooklyn Food Hub	●
3B	Promote the creation of regional food aggregation centers	●
	Advance educational and other partnerships between City institutions and regional farms	●
3C	Pilot innovations in urban farming technologies	●
4A	Collect 90% of citywide organic waste by 2030	●
4B	Plan for a cleaner, more efficient, and more resilient food transportation network	●
	Partner with utilities to incentivize electrification and improve air quality	●
4C	Bolster community-owned waste management initiatives	●
5A	Explore the creation of a food justice fund	●



NYC
Food Policy

ERIC ADAMS
MAYOR

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