

# INNOVATIVE FOOD PROJECTS

In order to meet the needs of New Yorkers who lack adequate access to food, the Hunger Action Network of New York State promotes and assists in the development of many innovative programs designed to eliminate hunger and increase food justice. Below are some examples of useful community food projects. Contact Hunger Action Network and start growing toward a greater harvest for your community!

## **Seed and Seedling Distribution Program**

Help build food justice in your area by starting a Seed and Seedling Distribution Program! Community organizations distribute free vegetable seeds or seedlings to low-income New Yorkers so that they can start a backyard garden or bucket garden. Obtaining food through gardening is a viable option for many New Yorkers and one that can build skills and confidence, as well as food security. Many places are willing to donate seeds and seedlings for free, such as local nurseries and greenhouses or organizations like America the Beautiful Fund (202-638-1649, [www.freeseeds.org](http://www.freeseeds.org)). Contact Hunger Action for a free Seed & Seedling Distribution guide that explains in detail how to start the program.

## **Community Gardens**

Emergency food providers, community organizations, schools and faith communities can develop a community garden and grow fresh fruits and veggies! Produce can be harvested by local community residents and donated to food pantries and soup kitchens, where canned items are often standard fare. In addition to providing fresh produce, gardens help unify communities, are therapeutic, and help beautify neighborhoods. Hunger Action and Cornell Cooperative Extension (607-255-2237) are available to provide technical assistance with regard to starting a garden, finding funding resources, and organizing your local community to become involved in the garden.

## **Community Supported Agriculture**

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) allows New Yorkers to buy affordable, nutritious food and support local farmers at the same time. A CSA farmer sells shares of his/her crop to CSA members in the winter and spring. The produce is harvested and distributed to the CSA members about once a week at a neighborhood site throughout the summer and fall. New methods of organizing CSAs are making it easier for low-income people to participate. Some CSAs now accept Food Stamps and operate on a sliding scale! Buying affordable locally grown food not only benefits low-income New Yorkers, but it also supports small-scale farms and strengthens the local food supply. For more information on joining or starting a CSA in New York City, call Just Food at 212-645-9880. For the rest of the state, call Hunger Action.

## **Food Rescue and Gleaning Programs**

Did you know that 96 billion pounds of food goes to waste every year in the United States? By rescuing food that would otherwise have gone to waste, food recovery programs can provide nutritious meals to New Yorkers, protect the environment, and save money. Gleaning increases the amount of fresh produce available to low-income people by taking advantage of the farmers' surplus. Community members harvest the produce that would otherwise go unused from local farms willing to donate their extra fruits and veggies. Food rescue programs also gather fresh and non-perishable food from restaurants, grocery stores, bakeries, and cafeterias that has not been sold. City Harvest (917.351.8700, [www.cityharvest.org](http://www.cityharvest.org)) in New York City gathers a "second harvest" of several million pounds of food each year for distribution to low-income people! For more information, the USDA has A Citizen's Guide to Food Recovery available on the web <http://www.usda.gov/news/pubs/gleaning/content.htm> or call the USDA at 518-765-2326.





## **Food Buying Clubs**

Food buying clubs or food cooperatives provide another way to stretch food resources. These programs operate by bringing together several people in one community and cooperatively purchasing food. Because of the large volume of the purchase, the cooperative enjoys wholesale prices and the cost saving is passed along to the consumer. Typically, a “food share” purchased through a food buying club costs the members about 60% of what it would in a traditional retail market. The food is generally passed out to members monthly at a mass distribution site, such as a community center or service organization. There are usually no income or eligibility guidelines for participation. Here are some food buying clubs in New York:  
Food Sense c/o Food Bank of Central New York 315-437-1899 (sites in Central New York);  
Extra Helpings c/o the Regional Food Bank of Northeastern New York 518-786-3691 (sites in Northeastern NY).

## **Farmers' Markets and Roadside Stands**

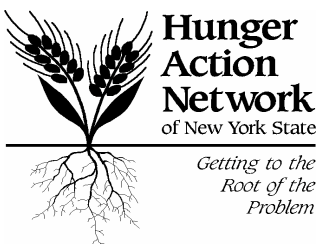
Farmers' markets provide a wonderful opportunity for people to access fresh nutritious food and support New York farmers. This ensures that low-income individuals and families have access to healthy, reasonably priced food. At the same time, this supports small local farmers and strengthens the local food supply. Many people can obtain food at farmers' markets through the New York State Farmers' Market Nutrition Program. The program provides special checks to low-income, nutritionally at-risk families enrolled in the Women, Infants, and Children Program (WIC) and Senior Meals Nutrition Program. The checks are redeemable for fresh fruits and vegetables at participating farmers' markets. To find out more about the Senior checks, contact your local County Office for the Aging or call 518-457-7076. To find out more about WIC checks, contact your local WIC office or call 1-800-552-5006. Several farmers' markets are also accepting Food Stamp benefits, with more to join the program this year. For a list of farmers' markets in your area, contact Hunger Action Network or the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets at 518-457-2087 or <http://www.agmkt.state.ny.us/AP/CommunityFarmersMarkets.asp>.

## **Grow an Extra Row!**

An excellent method for generating donations of fresh produce is to launch a “Grow an Extra Row” campaign. The Grow An Extra Row campaign encourages gardeners and citizens of New York to grow an extra row of fruits or vegetables for donation to Emergency Food Programs or other community agencies. The food donations are generated through Public Service Announcements on radio stations and in newspapers and through appeals to gardening groups. Hunger Action can assist you in launching a Grow an Extra Row Campaign in your area. For a sample Grow an Extra Row flyer and Public Service Announcement that you can distribute in your region, contact Hunger Action Network.

## **Looking to Hear A Community Success Story?**

Hunger Action Network of New York State gave out mini-grants to 14 community groups throughout the State in 2003 for projects that increased lower income peoples' access to nutritious, often locally grown food. To learn more about these projects and start building toward your own, call us or check out our website, listed below.



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