NYC Food Policy

NYC FOOD AND CLIMATE STRATEGY

December 2025

Dear readers and eaters,

At this pivotal moment in our global fight against climate change, we are proud to share this NYC Food and Climate Strategy—a guide for a future in which every meal served in New York City both nourishes its inhabitants and is part of the climate solution.

This plan acknowledges the global context we're operating in. Worldwide, we face the dual challenge of feeding a growing population while addressing the fact that food and agriculture production contributes approximately 34 percent of greenhouse gas emissions. Without proper adaptation, future food supply and nutrition will be at risk. But food system transformation can address food security and nutrition as well as drive climate mitigation, adaptation and resilience.

Here in New York City, we've already proven our capacity for bold climate action—now we're applying that same determination to our food system. This Food and Climate Strategy positions New York City to learn from and contribute to global efforts, including alignment with the FAO Global Roadmap and our participation in international forums like C40 and COP.

This document contains both a comprehensive inventory of our existing work and an ambitious vision for the future, including over two dozen innovative ideas marked with lightbulb icons for New York City and for our private and public sector partners to consider for future implementation. These aren't just incremental improvements; they're invitations to think outside the box and to envision possibilities that may not seem feasible today but could become reality with the right enabling conditions. This strategy presents a vision and direction to align all stakeholders, rather than a set of commitments with funding and implementation details.

One of the most inspiring outcomes of developing this strategy has been witnessing our colleagues put on "food policy glasses"—those moments of recognition when existing work suddenly connects to our food and climate priorities. When we view resilience not just as infrastructure improvements but as preparing our entire system for slow-moving stressors, we unlock new possibilities. When we keep those glasses on, we can achieve so much more.

To inspire more of these breakthrough moments, we've developed a comprehensive toolkit that guides all readers in applying this systems thinking to their own work. We hope this unique contribution will inspire colleagues across the world to put on their food policy glasses too.

NYC Mayor's Office of Food Policy

Those moments would not have been possible without the contributions and efforts of the expertise and dedication of the City staff who participated in developing the ideas herein, as well as the Advisory Board members who guided us along the way.

This moment calls for getting motivated, not flinching or getting nervous. Let's take stock of what we're already doing and be bold about where we need to go. There's no reason we can't achieve these goals if we create the enabling factors together.

To our fellow City policy-makers: this strategy requires leadership, creativity, and commitment to seeing food policy connections in every decision you make. The opportunities are there—we need your partnership to make them reality.

Looking ahead, this strategy represents our commitment to food systems change that serves both our climate goals and our communities. Together, we can transform how New York eats while creating a model for cities worldwide, and contributing to solving the climate crisis one bite at a time.

Let's put on our food policy glasses and get started!

Best,

Kate MacKenzie

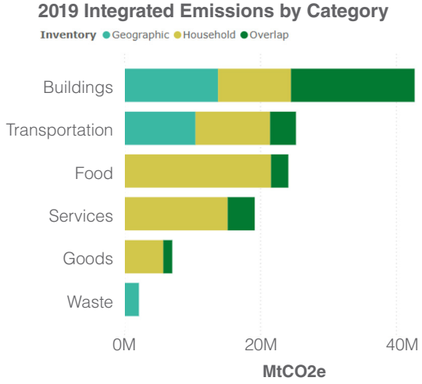
KATE MACKENZIE, MS, RD
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
NYC MAYOR'S OFFICE OF FOOD POLICY

The Food and Climate Imperative

Food and Climate in New York City

The connection between food and climate change represents one of our most urgent challenges and greatest opportunities for transformative action. Food systems generate approximately 34 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions, and yet food remains generally under-recognized as a contributor to climate change. Dense urban areas play a significant role in the global food system: most of the world's food is consumed in cities today, and 80 percent of all food is expected to be consumed in cities by 2050.

New York City has set ambitious goals to lead on climate change and food policy, from the original PlaNYC to the Green Economy Action Plan to the publication of Food Forward NYC, which establishes a framework for reaching a more equitable, sustainable, and healthy food system by 2031. Food Forward NYC emphasizes the fundamental importance of equity and choice to make it easier for all New Yorkers to access healthy, delicious, affordable and culturally appropriate food. In this **Food and Climate Strategy**, we outline our priorities to continue to make progress toward our current goals and identify new ideas and opportunities to tie our food and climate work together for even greater impact.



The scale of this challenge is matched only by the scale of our opportunity to create positive change. Approximately 19 billion pounds of food flow through the City every year, and food is our third largest source of emissions. As a City government, we serve over 200 million meals annually at our facilities and through our programs—schools, older adult centers, child care centers, after school programs, correctional facilities, public hospitals, and shelters—giving us direct leverage over food system outcomes that affect millions of New Yorkers.

The urgency of this moment cannot be overstated. Global temperatures continue to rise, with scientists projecting increasingly severe disruptions to agricultural systems and maritime resources worldwide. By addressing any vulnerabilities in our food system, we can decrease our exposure to acute shocks that could threaten food security for millions of New Yorkers. It is also important to recognize the opportunities and challenges posed by changes in federal food and agriculture policies and how New York City policy interacts with all levels of government. The strategies outlined in this plan respond to this moment with urgency to accelerate our response to the climate crisis.

Our Vision

We envision a future in which every meal served in New York City is part of the climate solution.

The food we buy heals both people and the planet, nothing edible goes to waste, and our surplus nourishes our most vulnerable neighbors.

New York City's food system operates as a regenerative force—delivering the best in quality and nutrition, eliminating waste through intelligent design, and strengthening rural-urban connection.

Our plates reflect the bounty of a thriving regional foodshed and regenerative global food system that we help sustain through our purchasing power, incentives, and partnerships.

All New Yorkers can feed their families knowing their choices are good for their health and the health of the planet.

When disruptions come—and they will—our food infrastructure bends without breaking, adapting seamlessly with distributed networks that ensure continuous access to nutrition.

Every bite we take fights the climate crisis.

Our Policy Opportunity

As policy makers and implementers at the City level, we have several tools in our toolbox that can drive substantial and immediate change throughout the entire food chain:

Purchasing Power: Each year, NYC agencies spend over $500 million buying food and meals to serve in schools, hospitals, detention facilities, older adult centers, shelters, and more, not including emergency response budgets. Our procurement volume represents one of the largest institutional food purchasing programs in the nation. Changes to procurement requirements, contract language, food specifications, public menus, and changes in what we choose to purchase and serve can all have meaningful upstream impact.

Regulatory Authority: NYC can use laws and regulations, such as our Health Code and Zoning Code, to facilitate positive change in the food retail and food waste industries. Disclosure tools like restaurant letter grades and incentive-based programs like FRESH are particularly effective mechanisms, alongside labeling, marketing, and retail operations requirements.

Physical Infrastructure: NYC can make climate-smart infrastructure and resiliency upgrades at hundreds of City-owned kitchens and cooking facilities, cold storage and warehousing centers, transportation infrastructure, and leverage City-owned spaces (parks, community gardens, schools, parking lots, underutilized buildings) for resilient food access programs. Through land ownership and lease administration, NYC is the landlord for the largest food distribution center in the nation at Hunts Point; we can partner with tenants to improve climate-friendly operations.

Financial and Investment Tools: Municipal capital investments have the potential to shift market dynamics, and our tax policy can nudge structural and behavioral change among major food operators and transporters in the City.

Coalition Building and Advocacy: Our convening power helps bring stakeholders to the table to advance local, state and federal legislation, and center communities most affected by the climate crisis. We can lead, enable and contribute to research and analysis with nonprofit and academic partners to help build our understanding of our baseline needs, gaps in service, and NYC-specific factors to consider.

Across all these areas, we can and must incorporate clear mechanisms to operationalize equity, such as targeted investments and implementation focus on communities most affected by food inequity and neighborhoods that have experienced historic disinvestment and bear the brunt of climate burdens. Input from environmental justice experts and using existing mechanisms for community input are critical to ensure accountability.

MUNICIPAL MOMENTUM: Cities Pioneering Food System Solutions

A landscape survey of published municipal food and climate strategies reveals remarkably consistent approaches—prioritizing plant-based menu shifts, food waste reduction, and sustainable procurement practices—but significant differences in scale and approach to implementation. Many cities target 50 percent waste reduction by 2030 following the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 12.3. On the other hand, emissions reduction goals vary, including London's ambitious 67 percent reduction in consumption-based emissions. Notably, several cities promote local food sourcing for resilience and economic reasons, while acknowledging that local sourcing isn't always the greatest opportunity to reduce emissions—indicating the importance of balancing multiple policy objectives. Food is still commonly siloed from other emissions reduction strategies: most cities lack comprehensive data on their institutional food service scale, falling behind the private sector in this regard, and seldom connect food policy directly to broader climate budgeting.

How to Read and Use This Document

Goal 4 of our 10-year Food Forward NYC plan seeks to ensure that New York City's food is produced, distributed, and disposed of sustainably. This document translates that broad objective into a comprehensive **Food and Climate Strategy**, leveraging municipal tools to reduce environmental and climate impacts across our food system. We articulate a vision for a food system that both mitigates climate change and remains resilient in the face of global warming, and outline evidence-based priorities for this work to set a foundation for cohesive and coordinated efforts across the City.

This strategy uplifts existing work across City agencies—much of which has not been widely recognized as food-climate policy—while identifying opportunities for cross-agency collaboration and external partnerships. Alongside a systematic inventory of current initiatives, we have proposed new ideas to ensure our food system contributes to climate solutions. These ideas are noted with a lightbulb icon 💡 throughout the document.

Beyond taking action to operationalize the strategies below, we hope that policy makers and all readers will be able to recognize additional opportunities for impact by seeing their work through a food and climate lens. The toolkit on page 34 provides practical tools for readers across the City and around the world to identify your role in food-climate transformation and take meaningful action using existing resources and influence.

When it comes to food systems change, the potential for transformation begins with you: policy makers, implementers, innovators, private sector food leaders, and all eaters.

Food Forward NYC

Goal 1
All New Yorkers have multiple ways to access healthy, affordable, and culturally appropriate food.

Goal 2
New York City's food economy drives economic opportunity and provides good jobs.

Goal 3
The supply chains that feed New York City are modern, efficient, and resilient.

Goal 4
New York City's food is produced, distributed, and disposed of sustainably.

Goal 5
Support the systems and knowledge to implement the 10-year food policy plan.

POLICY IMPACT STORIES: Innovative Food-Climate Work Below the Radar

Hunts Point Transformation: The NYC Economic Development Corporation is leading a $630 million redevelopment of the Hunts Point Produce Market to install electric vehicle charging stations and eliminate 1,000 diesel-fueled refrigerated trailers. EDC also funded the New York State Regional Food Hub at Hunts Point, operated by GrowNYC, a first of its kind 60,000-square-foot cold-storage facility to support farmers throughout the state.

Commercial Waste Zones: The NYC Department of Sanitation is implementing the Commercial Waste Zones program, which eliminates long, inefficient truck routes that stretch all across the City and requires businesses to comply with food waste separation requirements. Businesses benefit from lower rates for recycling and food waste (on average, 32 percent less for recycling and 18 percent less for compostable waste) and can negotiate lower rates with the waste carters serving their zone.

NYC Economic Development Corporation

The Food and Climate Strategy At A Glance

GOAL 1

Mitigate the climate and environmental impacts of food consumed by New Yorkers

Strategy 1: **REDUCE GHG EMISSIONS AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS ASSOCIATED WITH THE CITY'S FOOD PROCUREMENT AND AGENCY-SERVED MEALS**

- Reduce GHG emissions from City agency food procurement 33% by 2030.
- Reduce non-GHG environmental impacts of City agency food procurement.

Strategy 2: **INCREASE CONSUMPTION OF WHOLE AND MINIMALLY PROCESSED FRUITS AND VEGETABLES AS WELL AS PLANT PROTEINS IN HOMES AND FOOD BUSINESSES**

- Encourage increased consumption of whole and minimally processed fruits, vegetables, and plant proteins.

Strategy 3: **INCREASE EFFICIENCY AND ELECTRIFICATION OF FOOD DISTRIBUTION, TRANSPORTATION, AND STORAGE INFRASTRUCTURE**

- Increase the efficiency of food distribution, transportation, and storage infrastructure.
- Continue to encourage electrification of food production and transportation.

GOAL 2

Reduce food waste and divert all food waste from landfills

Strategy 1: **REDUCE CITYWIDE AND PER CAPITA FOOD WASTE BY 50% BY 2030**

- Reduce food waste from agency-served meals while maintaining high quality and nutritional standards.
- Reduce food waste from private sector food retail, service, and wholesale operations.
- Support redistribution and consumption of surplus food across the city.
- Reduce household food waste.
- Support efforts to reduce single-use foodservice items.

Strategy 2: **DIVERT 100% OF FOOD WASTE FROM LANDFILLS**

- Successfully divert 100% of food waste generated at home and on City properties.
- Enable and incentivize increased food waste diversion from businesses.
- Expand food waste processing capacity locally and regionally.

GOAL 3

Adapt NYC's food system to be resilient to shocks and disruptions due to climate change

Strategy 1: **DIVERSIFY OUR CITY'S FOOD SOURCES AND HELP BUILD A STRONG REGIONAL AND LOCAL FOODSHED**

- Adopt a flexible and resilient sourcing strategy for City food purchasing.
- Champion regional food production and encourage regional sourcing across the public and private sectors in NYC.
- Increase the supply and consumption of foods produced in NYC.

Strategy 2: **SUPPORT ADAPTATION OF FOOD DISTRIBUTION AND TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS FOR ACUTE AND LONG-TERM DISRUPTIONS**

- Support the diversification of local food distribution infrastructure with multi-modal and resilient transportation options.
- Support the implementation of recommendations from the Special Initiative for Rebuilding and Resiliency (SIRR) Report for increasing resiliency in the food supply system.
- Improve protections for food worker health in light of potential climate-related risks.

Strategy 3: **SUPPORT RESILIENT AND SUSTAINABLE ON-FARM AND WATERSHED MANAGEMENT PRACTICES IN THE REGION**

- Support and incentivize the adoption of climate-smart and regenerative agricultural practices on regional farms including those in the NYC watershed.
- Track and champion city, state, and federal policies that support sustainable agricultural practices.

NYC Health + Hospitals

GOAL

1

Mitigate the climate and environmental impacts of food consumered by New Yorkers

NYC is committed to improving public health and environmental outcomes via strategic food procurement policies that reduce our carbon footprint and encourage adoption of healthy and climate-friendly food choices. We are committed to creating positive, transformational change for human and planetary health proactively through food purchasing. Sustainable food systems must take care of the land, water, and air instead of harming them, ensuring we can continue to grow healthy food for generations to come. By implementing climate-smart policies, we can simultaneously improve public health outcomes, reduce healthcare costs, and strengthen local economies. Rather than viewing sustainability as a constraint on food service operations, we see climate-smart procurement as an opportunity to improve meal quality, cultural relevance, and operational efficiency.

In 2023, New York City published its first **integrated greenhouse gas inventory**, which combined the existing geographic greenhouse gas inventory and a consumption-based inventory to identify emissions created both within and outside of city boundaries from goods and services consumed in the city. This found that food production and consumption generates 20 percent of our overall emissions—the third largest source, behind buildings (35 percent) and transportation (21 percent). Food emissions primarily come from the consumption of animal products, especially meat and dairy. In 2021, NYC became the first U.S. Coolfood Pledge signatory, and in 2023, we set an even more ambitious target in the City's updated climate strategy, **PlaNYC**, of reducing emissions from City food purchases 33 percent by 2030. City agencies are demonstrating significant progress: from the 2019 baseline, NYC has already achieved a **29 percent** reduction in total food-related emissions from City agencies. While total emissions increased slightly from FY21 to FY23 due to expanded meal service post-COVID, emissions per meal have **dropped** to 1.44 kg CO2e per 1,000 kcal in FY23 compared to 1.84 in FY22—a 22 percent reduction.

PROGRESS TO DATE:
Leading the Way with Low-Carbon Lunch

City agencies have already begun demonstrating that high-quality, climate-smart food service is achievable at scale, with innovative programs that serve as models for broader implementation.

- The **Chefs in the Schools** program has launched over 50 plant-forward recipes for students, including Chickpea Shawarma, Arugula Pesto Pasta, and Fajita Veggie Burger, while also training culinary staff at nearly 1200 schools. Between 2018 and 2022, serving fewer animal proteins reduced schools' per student emissions by 40 percent, water footprint by one-third, and land footprint by 50 percent.

- NYC Aging expanded plant-forward meals at senior centers and hosted the first citywide **"Plant-Based Cook-Off,"** where nine chefs competed with low-carbon dishes judged by celebrity chefs, demonstrating growing enthusiasm for plant-based cuisine among older adults. Aging has also provided nutrition education on plant-based eating to nearly 850 adults across 30 senior centers as of April 2025.

NYC Mayor's Office of Food Policy

- NYC Health + Hospitals (H+H) has served more than two million **plant-based meals as a default choice,** delivering a 36 percent reduction in food-related carbon emissions and an average savings of 59 cents per meal. The wide breadth of menu options in the program (from Jackfruit and Lentil Jambalaya to Sancocho) show how climate-smart procurement can enhance rather than constrain food quality and cultural relevance. The meals, prepared from scratch at H+H's Culinary Center in Brooklyn, boast a 90 percent patient satisfaction rating, and the program extends care beyond hospital stays by providing discharged patients with booklets of plant-based recipes to make at home, connecting institutional food service to broader community health and sustainability goals.

- The City has also begun to implement **best value bidding** for food items, allowing evaluation of taste, sustainability, and business model alongside price. As a result, the NYC Department of Citywide Administrative Services (DCAS) is now able to source a locally-produced, plant-based meatball and patty, delivering real results on food and climate.

Through our **Good Food Purchasing initiative** we have created systematic infrastructure for tracking and improving procurement practices across all participating agencies. The initiative requires vendors to share data, including origin detail, on the food and meals they supply to the City. This data lives in our dashboard and enables us to understand the supply chains that feed NYC and make evidence-based decisions to continuously improve our procurement practices.

POLICY INSIGHT:
Our Approach to the Complexities of Food Choice and Emissions

When it comes to food purchasing, we aim to make choices that are driven by the data — prioritizing what is best for health and climate outcomes as demonstrated across a broad set of comprehensive scientific evidence.

Plant-based diets are clearly associated with both better health outcomes and lower greenhouse gas emissions across a variety of studies. Furthermore, the data clearly show that red meat and dairy products are associated with significantly higher emissions than chicken, fish, or plant-based choices, regardless of transportation distance. [Source (landmark Poore and Nemecek study), source (NIH study), source (Harvard prospective cohort study), source, source.] Importantly, plant-based choices need not be more expensive or culturally limited, as demonstrated by our own NYC Health + Hospitals' plant-based meals program, which saves 59 cents per meal while achieving 90 percent patient satisfaction through culturally diverse dishes. This outcome is consistent with academic research that finds a plant-based diet can be more cost-effective for families.

However, striking the right balance of food and climate impact is complex, as factors like food transport and production methods can meaningfully influence the carbon emissions profile of a given food. Seasonal, regional produce often has lower emissions than energy-intensive greenhouse production or long-term cold storage, and local purchasing strengthens our regional food system resilience and economic connections. Importantly, how food is produced matters: sustainable agriculture practices, fair labor practices, organic farming, and improved animal welfare standards all contribute to more resilient food systems.

To balance these priorities, the procurement and outreach strategies proposed in this document find a foundation in prioritizing plant proteins over animal products, while also empowering policy makers to take into account the various dimensions of food production to deliver the best in nutrition, quality, value and climate impact.

Strategy 1 Reduce GHG emissions and environmental impacts associated with the City's food procurement and agency-served meals

We strive for every meal we serve to New Yorkers to deliver the best in nutrition, value, and quality, so that City meals can contribute to positive, transformational change for human and planetary health. Our primary focus to achieve this goal is to purchase, cook, and serve high-quality, culturally-relevant meals that meet NYC Food Standards.

REDUCE GHG EMISSIONS FROM CITY AGENCY FOOD PROCUREMENT BY 30% BY 2030

- Measure and track emissions from annual City food procurement to monitor progress toward reduction targets from our 2019 baseline.
- Continue and expand flagship plant-based meal initiatives at NYC Health + Hospitals and NYC Public Schools, and adapt these models for implementation at additional City agencies to increase consumption of plant proteins.
- Continue to shift away from high and ultra-processed foods and increase on-site food preparation to reduce emissions from industrial food processing and packaging.
- Engage food manufacturers to develop custom low-emissions options that meet City contract requirements via challenge-based procurements, food innovation lab and partnerships with foodtech innovation ecosystems.

REDUCE NON-GHG ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS OF CITY AGENCY FOOD PROCUREMENT

- Build the City's capacity to assess and analyze the environmental impact of food purchases, including but not limited to: water use, land use, biodiversity impacts, and air and water pollution (non-GHG metrics pillars of Good Food Purchasing initiative).
- Improve data collection and quality to increase the transparency and traceability of agency supply chains, including origin details for all food purchased by NYC.
- Encourage City agencies to procure high-intensity environmental impact foods (meat, dairy, and eggs) from suppliers using sustainable agricultural practices with enhanced environmental and animal welfare standards, and suppliers that have organic and deforestation-free designations.
- Explore adopting seasonal procurement calendars and including specific carbon footprint and emissions-based metrics in procurement criteria.

Strategy 2 Increase consumption of whole and minimally processed fruits and vegetables as well as plant proteins in homes and businesses

The City is committed to making it easier for New Yorkers to access healthy, affordable food. As consumer demand for plant-based products continues to grow, especially among younger generations, we can play a supporting role to champion the benefits of a plant-forward diet and increase access to plant-forward choices.

ENCOURAGE INCREASED CONSUMPTION OF WHOLE AND MINIMALLY PROCESSED FRUITS AND VEGETABLES AS WELL AS PLANT PROTEINS

- Continue and expand programs that support New Yorkers in purchasing and consuming fruits, vegetables, and plant proteins such as Health Bucks and Groceries to Go.
- Continue and expand public information campaigns like "Eat A Whole Lot More Plants" to highlight the benefits of eating a diet rich in plants.
- Support and expand food education efforts for families with young children, prioritizing successful implementation of the Food Education Roadmap, and empower all students to expect coordination among food, wellness, and sustainability efforts as shared in the NYC Public Schools School Wellness Policy.
- Support and champion changes to the federal Dietary Guidelines for Americans to prioritize plant protein sources and limit the consumption of red or processed meats.
- Explore new models to uplift and promote the voluntary adoption of NYC Food Standards and convene the food service industry around best practices in delivering optimal health and climate outcomes for New Yorkers.
- Continue and expand free participation in food-producing GreenThumb community gardens and education for all New Yorkers on community growing.

NYC Department of Parks and Recreation

Strategy 3 Increase efficiency and electrification of food distribution, transportaiton, and storage infrastructure

From refrigerated trucks and massive cold storage facilities for produce to gas-powered cooking equipment in homes and restaurants—our food infrastructure relies heavily on fossil fuels at every step. Transforming this infrastructure is both a climate imperative and an opportunity to improve air quality and public health for residents.

INCREASE THE EFFICIENCY OF FOOD DISTRIBUTION, TRANSPORTATION, AND STORAGE INFRASTRUCTURE

- Invest in energy-efficient kitchen equipment and cold storage systems across City facilities to reduce operational emissions from food service.
- Expand protected bike lane networks and micro-mobility infrastructure (cargo bike corrals, e-bike parking/rest areas, and e-bike battery charging) in commercial corridors to enable safe, low-emission last-mile food delivery via cargo bikes and e-bikes, including the Microhub Zones pilot and Smart Curbs program.

Support efforts to decarbonize cold storage and improve energy efficiency for private food retail, such as smart grid integration to optimize energy use during off-peak hours and innovation in alternative refrigeration technologies.

CONTINUE TO ENCOURAGE ELECTRIFICATION OF FOOD PRODUCTION AND TRANSPORTATION

- Support efforts to expand electric charging infrastructure for freight and passenger vehicles.
- Support New Yorkers in switching from gas cooking to clean induction cooking at home and in restaurants, with programs like the NYCHA Induction Stove Challenge and via Local Law 97 implementation, and other innovative strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from buildings.
- Promote uptake of utility electrification incentives by wholesalers, grocery stores, and food businesses.

Incentivize food delivery companies and individual operators to transition to zero-emission vehicles through tax credits, expedited permitting, or preferential curb access for electric and cargo bike deliveries.

NYC Department of Transportation

GOAL

2

Reduce food waste and divert all food waste from landfills

Reducing and recycling food waste represents one of our most significant opportunities of potential for climate action and resource recovery. When we send edible food to landfills, we waste all the resources that went into producing it—water, energy, labor, fertile soil, and transportation infrastructure—and exacerbate the twin issues of food access and affordability. An estimated **58 percent** of fugitive methane emissions from municipal solid waste landfills come from food waste, making diversion particularly impactful for climate goals. Reducing waste associated with food packaging is also key. The challenge extends far beyond waste management; it touches on food security, environmental justice, and our City's commitment to becoming carbon neutral by 2050.

Food waste (discarded edible food and food scraps) accounts for 21 percent of New York City's total residential waste stream. Every ton of food waste diverted from landfills can be used to create valuable resources like soil-enriching compost and renewable energy in the form of biogas. Following best practices for waste recovery programs, our primary goal is *reduction*, followed by *rescue*, and finally *recycling*.

By tackling food waste and taking bold action to achieve our City's waste reduction goals, we are working to address not just food and climate impacts, but fundamental questions about how our City manages resources, supports community health, and builds resilience against climate change. Almost every City agency can play a role in supporting this effort.

NYC Department of Education


NYC Department of Sanitation

PROGRESS TO DATE: Tackling Food Waste in the Big Apple

Reduction and Rescue

NYC agencies are implementing creative food waste reduction and rescue programs across the City. In 2024, the Department of Education launched Share Tables and food donation guidelines, to enable a new food donation program with designated tables or carts in school cafeterias where students can place unopened, unconsumed items for other students to get an extra serving or for donation to local food pantries. Students are inspiring change and leading the charge: Plastic Free Lunch Days featuring finger-food friendly menus, started by 5th grade students at PS 15 in Red Hook, Brooklyn, have been rolled out across the system every 3 weeks in all elementary school kitchens. High school students at Stuyvesant High School took the initiative to connect with local food pantries to start a food donation partnership to achieve two main goals: minimize food waste and help to address hunger in the community. Across the private sector, food waste prevention efforts are primarily voluntary. New York City has a robust emergency food network to capture and redistribute food before it becomes waste. City Harvest, Sharing Excess, the NYC Food Bank, and other non-profit organizations work to redistribute edible surplus across the City, including from the wholesale market at Hunts Point. The NYC Department of Sanitation also supports food waste reduction with the donateNYC Food Portal, connecting businesses with surplus food to organizations that can use or redistribute it.

Recycling

New York City achieved a historic milestone in October 2024 by implementing the nation's largest residential curbside collection program for food waste. The program successfully diverted nearly 130,000 tons of organic waste from landfills in fiscal year 2024 alone, equivalent in carbon emissions reduction to removing 12,400 cars from roads annually, and also serves approximately 1,400 NYC public, private and charter schools. The City's Commercial Waste Zone program is creating new avenues to drive business compliance with food waste separation requirements and opportunities for data transparency.

City agencies have made meaningful progress in establishing infrastructure and programs to tackle food waste across multiple sectors. Our strategies below focus on maximizing the impact of these investments by staying the course on implementation, increasing program participation rates and targeting interventions on the highest-impact food waste.

Reduce citywide and per capita food waste by 50% by 2030

Strategy 1

Our path to reduce both total citywide food waste and per capita food waste starts with prevention strategies that stop food waste before it happens. To achieve this ambitious goal, infrastructure and logistics solutions and private sector collaboration will be essential.

REDUCE FOOD WASTE FROM AGENCY-SERVED MEALS WHILE MAINTAINING HIGH QUALITY AND NUTRITIONAL STANDARDS

- Analyze and prioritize the top food waste reduction opportunities across every City agency that serves meals, taking into account different strategies for meals cooked on site compared to meals delivered by a third party provider, and different solutions for upstream (ordering, preparing, and delivering) and downstream (serving, disposal).
- Expand culinary training and reward systems for City agency and contracted foodservice staff to improve meal quality and reduce waste.
- Expand client satisfaction surveys to identify opportunities to improve meal service and increase the proportion of food that is consumed, such as serving more culturally relevant dishes.
- Explore creative solutions for food waste reduction, such as bulk milk service in suitable settings to eliminate single-serve cartons, cut costs, and deliver fresher-tasting milk.
- Explore emerging technologies to measure and reduce waste, such as AI-enabled waste tracking technology as well as predictive and pre-ordering systems.

REDUCE FOOD WASTE FROM PRIVATE SECTOR FOOD RETAIL, SERVICE, AND WHOLESALE OPERATIONS

- Support creative partnerships and initiatives such as the 2016 Mayor's Zero Waste Challenge, U.S. Food Waste Pact and NRDC Food Matters to implement waste reduction strategies and provide training for foodservice staff focused on reducing plate waste and proper source-separation.
- Establish zero waste targets for all public food infrastructure projects, including the redevelopment of the Hunts Point product market.
- Improve education for businesses on food donation opportunities and liability coverage through the Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act.
- Consider enhanced incentives for businesses that donate surplus food to cover logistics costs of donation (transportation, packaging, staff time).

SUPPORT REDISTRIBUTION AND CONSUMPTION OF SURPLUS FOOD ACROSS THE CITY

- Identify and support potential updates to the donateNYC Food Portal, donateNYC partnership, and other NYC Department of Sanitation food waste diversion programs.
- Support the City's robust network of food rescue organizations with needed resources to redistribute food efficiently.
- Support the discounted sale of imperfect produce at farmers markets and food retailers with educational materials, "bonus GreenBucks" or enhanced matching ratios, and vendor engagement.
- Conduct a citywide waste flow analysis that differentiates between edible and nonedible foods to help inform targeted interventions and identify sectors with high rates of edible surplus food.

REDUCE HOUSEHOLD FOOD WASTE

- Conduct public education campaigns focused on meal planning, food storage techniques, and creative use of ingredients that might otherwise be discarded, including input from community organizations to ensure strategies are culturally appropriate for New York City's diverse cooking traditions.
- Advocate for national, research-informed standards for expiration dates on food products, including the Food Date Labeling Act at the state and federal levels.
- Advocate for national changes to standard portion packaging for the most-commonly spoiled products so families don't have to buy more than they can use.
- Promote retailer adoption of point-of-purchase interventions, such as zero-waste bulk sections, "days until spoilage" signs on produce, shelf systems that automatically rotate older items to the front, and educational reminders at the register.

SUPPORT EFFORTS TO REDUCE SINGLE-USE FOODSERVICE ITEM AND PACKAGING

- Identify opportunities to eliminate plastic single-use items and packaging in City-provided meals.
- Continue to expand plastic free lunch days featuring finger food-friendly menus at all elementary schools.
- Support legislation to continue to eliminate single-use items and for Extended Producer Responsibility for food packaging manufacturers.
- Support private sector efforts to pilot a standardized, reusable takeout container for food delivery.

NYC Mayor's Office of Food Policy

Divert 100% of food waste from landfills Strategy 2

The City has committed to divert 100 percent of organics suitable for composting, including all food waste, from landfills. With the nation's largest residential curbside organics collection program in place, the next phase of focus is on education and increasing the quality and quantity of food waste diverted citywide. Instead of seeing food waste as a disposal challenge, our vision is to treat it as a valuable input for renewable energy generation and soil health improvement.

SUCCESSFULLY DIVERT 100% OF FOOD WASTE GENERATED AT HOME AND ON CITY PROPERTIES

- Increase participation in residential curbside composting across all five boroughs, while maintaining low contamination rates, leveraging educational efforts, clear enforcement mechanisms and technical assistance to help property owners and business operators implement effective separation systems.
- Maximize food waste separation and convenient collection programs for all City-owned properties.
- Build public awareness and support for food waste recycling with communications campaigns, events, and free distribution of compost to NYC Parks, residents, community gardens, and urban growers across the City.
- Support and expand adoption of best practices for zero waste design in new construction and rehab projects, including adequate waste sorting, storage space, and containerization.

ENABLE AND INCENTIVIZE INCREASED FOOD WASTE DIVERSION FROM BUSINESSES

- Continue implementation of the NYC Commercial Waste Zone program and ensure that all businesses comply with food waste separation requirements.
- Ensure redevelopment of the Hunts Point Produce Market improves food waste recovery and diversion, including potential on-site processing.
- Encourage the private sector to voluntarily adopt best practices in sustainable event planning, using resources like the Good Clean Fun initiative.
- Explore incentive-based initiatives such as rebates or tax abatements for food retailers that meet specific food waste diversion targets and demonstrate year-over-year reduction achievements.

EXPAND FOOD WASTE PROCESSING CAPACITY LOCALLY AND REGIONALLY

- Measure, track, and report emissions reductions from food waste diverted from landfills via composting and anaerobic digestion to demonstrate the value of carbon sequestration in soil and renewable energy potential of food waste streams.
- Continue to expand processing capacity at our Staten Island Compost Facility and monitor the status and development of regional processing infrastructure.
- Support codigestion and beneficial use of biosolids and biogas, including the Newtown Creek biogas-to-grid project and across Department of Environmental Protection's portfolio.
- Continue to support community composting including support for groups that divert food waste and build local capacity.
- Continue and expand support of composting efforts in community gardens and free training opportunities for GreenThumb gardeners.

NYC Department of Environmental Protection

GOAL

3

Adapt NYC's food system to be resilient to shocks and disruptions due to climate change

Here in New York City, we take immense pride in the culinary diversity of our restaurants and food stores, where you can find a meal or ingredients that taste like home no matter where you are from. Our global food sourcing makes our food system extraordinarily efficient, but it also exposes us to risks across the globe. Natural disasters, disease outbreaks, political crises, and labor shortages far from home have ripple effects that can reach our kitchen tables.

When it comes to building resiliency within this global network, it is important to distinguish between preparing for acute shocks and slower-moving changes that pose equally serious long-term threats but don't always capture headlines. Rising temperatures, shifting precipitation patterns, sea level rise, soil degradation, and biodiversity loss all threaten food production. Increases in the cost of fuel and electricity impact production, transportation, and ultimately, our grocery store bills. These chronic stresses compound over time, making food systems even more vulnerable to acute shocks and making it more challenging for individuals to access food during emergencies.

Building food system resilience requires broadening our focus beyond acute weather disasters alone to comprehensive adaptation for both sudden shocks and chronic stresses. Our strategies below suggest ways to infuse redundancy, diversity, and flexibility into every aspect of how food reaches New Yorkers, while maintaining the institutional capacity to coordinate rapid emergency responses when needed.

PROGRESS TO DATE: SIRR Recommendations and Resilient Infrastructure

The City has made remarkable progress over the last decade in implementing the 2013 Special Initiative for Rebuilding and Resiliency (SIRR) Report recommendations focused on infrastructure and the built environment. The FRESH program has provided direct support for 45 new or renovated food retail spaces in underserved neighborhoods. At the Hunts Point Produce Market, a $630 million redevelopment project is underway to modernize the infrastructure and install EV freight-charging stations. The cold storage upgrades are expected to eliminate 1,000 diesel-fueled refrigerated trailers that currently idle on the property. The New York State Regional Food Hub operated by GrowNYC, a new 60,000 sq ft cold storage facility completed in 2025, is operational and will help small to mid-size farms in our region thrive by connecting them to 370 food distribution partners in the City.

NYC Emergency Management has robust procedures in place for severe climate disaster response that include emergency feeding, commodity distribution and coordination among emergency providers that serve vulnerable populations. As a result, this report does not include strategies to address acute climate disaster scenarios, and rather focuses on a proactive and preventative approach to build food system resilience.

POLICY INSIGHT: Food System Resiliency Learnings from Hurricane Sandy & COVID-19

Hurricane Sandy raised the alarm on critical infrastructure weaknesses at the waterfront Hunts Point Food Distribution Center and exposed significant food access risks. Particularly in low-income communities, flooded grocery stores suffered major inventory losses, and many food pantries and soup kitchens were inundated and unable to serve clients. During COVID-19, supply chain bottlenecks, labor shortages, and shifting consumer behavior created shortages and price volatility. Panic buying stripped shelves bare, revealing how consumer behavior changes can overwhelm distribution systems designed for steady demand.

Reliance on Truck Distribution: During Sandy, bridge and tunnel closures, vehicle occupancy restrictions and fuel shortages disrupted truck-based freight. Fuel supply was again problematic during COVID-19: truck drivers faced severe delays at rest areas due to distancing requirements, triggering overtime limits. Our system remains reliant on truck-based distribution. Approximately 95 percent of food travels into the City by truck via limited access points—nearly 30 percent of George Washington Bridge truck traffic is believed to be carrying food.

Adaptive Capacity: COVID-19 also demonstrated extraordinary adaptive capacity. The City mobilized an unprecedented emergency feeding program, distributing over 200 million meals through delivery, grab-and-go, and pantries. Community organizations rapidly scaled emergency food distribution and restaurants pivoted to delivery models overnight. Nourish NY was established to connect NYS farmers with food service organizations and nutrition insecure individuals. Private sector innovations emerged, from contactless delivery to direct farmer-to-consumer networks that bypassed traditional wholesale channels.

Diversify our city's food sources and help build a strong regional and local foodshed

Strategy 1

By diversifying our sourcing, we can ensure food still has multiple pathways to reach New Yorkers when individual supply chains face climate-related disruptions. As outlined in the City's SIRR report recommendations, building redundancy is a strategic investment to prepare for shocks and stressors.

ADOPT A FLEXIBLE AND RESILIENT SOURCING STRATEGY FOR CITY FOOD PURCHASING

- Continue to maximize use of flexible contracting mechanisms and streamlined processes to quickly onboard new suppliers during disruptions.
- Expand inter-agency collaboration between the Department of Citywide Administrative Services, Mayor's Office of Food Policy, Mayor's Office of Contract Services and food service agencies to creatively deploy procurement and contract management solutions to ensure the City receives a steady and reliable delivery of high-quality food products.

💡 Implement best practices for supply chain diversity, such as seasonal purchasing calendars, geographic preferences, market analysis, intentional engagement with various business types, among others.

💡 Work with all City agencies that serve meals and critical City food supply partners to develop proactive "food resiliency" plans for climate shocks and stressors.

CHAMPION REGIONAL FOOD PRODUCTION AND ENCOURAGE REGIONAL SOURCING ACROSS THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS IN NYC

- Continue to support operations at the new New York State Regional Food Hub to efficiently connect small and mid-sized farms with markets in NYC and build upon relationships with NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets to identify additional opportunities.

💡 Leverage the research of the City Food Policy Project to pilot innovative solutions.

💡 Support value-added processing partnerships for regional producers to create shelf-stable and institution-ready products from local ingredients.

💡 Encourage large private institutions to aggregate purchasing power for regional sourcing to make local procurement more cost-effective.

💡 With partnership from NYS, launch communication campaigns to highlight local and regional producers that City agencies are buying from, to incentivize New Yorkers to buy local.

INCREASE THE SUPPLY AND CONSUMPTION OF FOODS PRODUCED IN NYC

- Maximize support for existing and potential urban agriculture spaces, such as underutilized municipal land, especially in low-income neighborhoods.
- Support youth development and education opportunities, including curricular and extracurricular opportunities for NYC Public Schools students to engage with student-driven policies, grow and harvest food in and around schools and community gardens.
- Support urban farms and community gardens across the City to continue educating and connecting New Yorkers of all ages on food production.

Strategy 2 Support adaptation of food distribution and transportation system for acute and long-term disruptions

As we execute major infrastructure resiliency projects across the City, investing in redundant systems, real-time capabilities, and community-level preparedness will help support long-term adaptation. In particular, we need to proactively address our continued reliance on truck-based food distribution.

SUPPORT THE DIVERSIFICATION OF LOCAL FOOD DISTRIBUTION INFRASTRUCTURE WITH MULTI-MODAL AND RESILIENT TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS

- Survey locations and capacity of existing cold storage facilities and develop recommendations for additional cold storage needs.
- Develop infrastructure to support expanding use of blue highways (use of waterways for marine transportation) for food movement, including identifying underutilized port space and cold storage solutions.
- Install EV charging stations and shore power connections at loading docks in Hunts Point to incentivize fleet transition to electric vehicles.
- Support the use of ferries and cargo bikes to deliver fresh food to local markets via new microfreight landings across the city.

💡 Identify and develop plans for use of redundant food transportation routes using waterways, rail, and roads as needed along major transportation corridors.

SUPPORT THE IMPLEMENTATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE SPECIAL INITIATIVE FOR REBUILDING AND RESILIENCY (SIRR) REPORT FOR INCREASING RESILIENCY IN THE FOOD SUPPLY SYSTEM

- Complete Hunts Point Produce Market redevelopment, harden buildings in the food distribution center that are at-risk from flooding, and implement Hunts Point Energy Resiliency Project for continuous and back-up power at the facility through a combination of energy generation and storage solutions.
- Evaluate the FRESH program and consider expansion in geographies and business models to increase the number of food access points in underserved neighborhoods.
- Increase access to electric generators for food retailers, assess back-up power needs for critical food infrastructure, and develop sourcing strategies to quickly support access to backup power systems as needed.
- Support cold storage needs of emergency food providers.
- Implement preparedness measures for continued availability of emergency food benefits for vulnerable consumers, such as piloting food vouchers for online orders from supermarkets and back-up solutions for SNAP usage in the event of power outages.

IMPROVE PROTECTIONS FOR FOOD WORKER HEALTH IN LIGHT OF POTENTIAL CLIMATE-RELATED RISKS

- Expand access to cooling infrastructure such as shaded rest areas (including shade structures as part of street furniture), water fountains, and air-conditioned break spaces in high-density delivery zones.

💡 Explore health standards for all food service workers, including mandatory cooling breaks during emergency heat conditions, temperature limits for kitchen work, and ventilation requirements for cooking areas.

💡 Explore health standards for delivery workers, such as requirements for rest, hydration, shade, cooling, clean air, and personal protective equipment, especially during extreme heat, cold, or air quality emergencies. Explore requirements for hazard pay and preventive measures such as training, medical monitoring, as well as protocols for suspending deliveries or extending delivery windows during dangerous conditions.

💡 Support legislation requiring delivery companies to provide job-protected leave and workers' compensation benefits or a functional equivalent so workers can recover from heat illness without economic penalty.

💡 Encourage City agencies to procure from suppliers demonstrating fair labor practices, such as Fair Food Program certification, Equitable Food Initiative certification, or equivalent third-party verification.

💡 Explore NYS living wage standards for agricultural workers to address labor shortages, as well as requirements that agencies procure produce from farms that protect the health and wellbeing of farmworkers through independent third-party compliance audits, internal and third-party complaint mechanisms, and farmworker education.

NYC Economic Development Corporation

Strategy 3 Support resilient and sustainable on-farm and watershed management practices in the region

Climate change affects growing conditions, water availability, and crop yields in areas that supply our City with food. By supporting farmers in adopting climate-smart practices, we have the potential to strengthen our food supply and contribute to climate solutions. This strategy recognizes that urban food security and rural agricultural sustainability and viability are interconnected challenges requiring coordinated investment and policy support.

SUPPORT AND INCENTIVIZE THE ADOPTION OF CLIMATE-SMART AND REGENERATIVE AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES ON REGIONAL FARMS INCLUDING THOSE IN THE NYC WATERSHED

- Support research partnerships to understand and measure the climate impact of on-farm practices (measurable carbon mitigation and sequestration potential and quantified effects on soil health, biodiversity, and water and land use).
- Complete the New York City Urban Water Management Project to provide dependable and accessible water supply to urban food producing community gardens under NYC Parks' jurisdiction, including measures for increasing agricultural water supply efficiency, protecting water quality, and securing dependable water quantity for community gardens.
- Explore the market for expansion of production of fruits and vegetables in the NYC watershed to support economic vitality of watershed farms.
- Support funding opportunities for sustainable watershed management practices, including agricultural land preservation, land conservation mechanisms, farming practices that protect water quality and food production capacity, and diverse and native crop production suitable to the region.
- Study the food production capacity of farms in the NYC watershed, and the potential for existing or future markets in NYC and the region for those products.
- In partnership with New York State, explore possible sources of funding, such as restaurant bill contributions, and improve access to technical assistance to support regional farmers in adopting approved sustainable management practices, such as cover cropping, diversified rotations, and water management systems.

TRACK AND CHAMPION CITY, STATE, AND FEDERAL POLICIES THAT SUPPORT SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURAL PRACTICES

- Support state-level policies that provide tax incentives, grants, and technical assistance for sustainable agriculture practices, farmland preservation, agricultural climate adaptation in the NYC region, and prevention / clean-up of soil contamination with harmful chemicals such as PFAS.
- Identify and advocate for federal policies promoting sustainable land management, renewable energy use by food producers, emissions monitoring on farms and stable agricultural workforce availability.
- Develop partnerships with surrounding states and counties to coordinate regional food system planning, agricultural land preservation, and climate adaptation strategies.

NYC Department of Environmental Protection

Taking Action: The Food and Climate Impact Toolkit

The strategies outlined in this document represent opportunities for coordinated action across all sectors of New York City's food system. This section provides practical tools for any reader—whether you work in government, lead a food business, conduct research, or advocate for change—to identify your role in food-climate transformation and take meaningful action using existing resources and influence.

For food policy makers and implementers, we have a dedicated worksheet in the Appendix focused on public sector implementation.

Self-Assessment: How Does Your Work Connect to Food Systems?

Food systems intersect with nearly every sector of the economy and every aspect of urban life, and touch every aspect of municipal operations, often in ways that aren't immediately obvious. Use these questions to identify connection points between your work and food-climate opportunities:

For public sector employees:

- Does your agency serve meals to staff, clients, or the public?
- Do you purchase food for any programs?
- Do you manage facilities where food is sold, served, or stored?
- Do you regulate businesses that handle food?
- Do you control physical spaces that could support expansion for food access or urban agriculture?
- Do you oversee transportation infrastructure (used or under-utilized for food distribution or food waste processing)?
- Do you control buildings where food businesses operate?
- Do you manage waste collection or processing that includes food waste?
- Does your agency manage energy systems that serve food facilities?
- Do you issue permits or licenses to food businesses?
- Do you inspect facilities that handle food?
- Do you control tax incentives or economic development programs that could influence food businesses?
- Does your agency influence land use decisions that affect food access?
- Do you oversee development projects that could include food retail?
- Do you manage public space that could support expansion for food access or urban agriculture?

For all readers:

- Does your organization purchase food for employees, clients, events, or operations?
- Do you influence food choices through policy, business decisions, or research?
- Do you manage contracts with vendors that provide food services?
- Do you serve populations affected by food insecurity or diet-related health issues?
- Do you control resources that could support food access or sustainable food systems?

Farmers, Business, and Advocacy:

- Do you operate food-related businesses (restaurants, retail, distribution, processing, agriculture)?
- Do you provide services to the food industry (logistics, technology, finance, marketing)?
- Do you manage real estate where food businesses operate?
- Do you steward publicly accessible land dedicated to community growing and distribution (community gardens, urban farms?
- Do you invest in or insure food-related companies?

Healthcare and Social Services:

- Do you provide healthcare services that intersect with nutrition and food access?
- Do you work with vulnerable populations experiencing food insecurity?
- Do you manage facilities that serve meals to clients or patients?
- Do you advocate for policies that affect community health and food access?

Community Services and Advocacy:

- Does your organization provide services in neighborhoods with limited food access?
- Do you work with vulnerable populations that experience food insecurity?
- Do you manage community spaces where food programming could occur?
- Do you provide emergency services that intersect with food security?
- Do you advocate for policy changes at local, state, or federal levels?

Education and Research:

- Do you conduct research relevant to food systems, sustainability, or public health?
- Do you educate students about food, nutrition, environment, or policy?
- Do you manage institutional food service at schools or universities?
- Do you engage with community organizations on food-related issues?

Impact Mapping: What Tools and Influence Do You Have?

Once you've identified food system connections, inventory the specific tools and influence you control that can advance food-climate goals:

Economic Influence:

- What purchasing decisions do you control that affect food systems?
- Can you influence vendor selection, contract terms, or investment decisions?
- Do you have spending power that could support sustainable food businesses?
- Can you create market incentives for climate-smart food practices?
- What discretionary spending, grants, or tax incentives does your agency manage that could be aligned with food-climate goals?
- Can you structure economic development programs to prioritize sustainable food businesses?

Operational Authority:
- What policies, procedures, or standards does your organization control that intersect with food systems?
- Can you modify how food is sourced, served, or disposed of in your operations?
- Do you set sustainability standards or environmental commitments that could include food-related goals?

Physical Resources:
- What spaces, facilities, or infrastructure do you control that could support sustainable food systems?
- Can you provide venues for food access programming, urban agriculture, or food waste reduction?
- Do you manage buildings or equipment that could be optimized for energy efficiency or waste reduction?

Knowledge and Expertise:
- What specialized knowledge, research capabilities, or technical expertise can you contribute to food-climate solutions?
- Can you generate data, conduct analysis, or provide evidence that supports policy development?
- Do you have unique insights that could inform food system transformation?

Networks and Relationships:
- What stakeholder relationships do you maintain that include food system actors?
- Can you convene partners, facilitate collaboration, or broker connections between organizations?
- Do you have communication platforms that could amplify food-climate initiatives?
- Do you participate in regional partnerships that could incorporate food system planning?

Regulatory Authority:
- What permits, licenses, or approvals does your agency issue that affect food businesses, organizations and community groups?
- Can you require disclosures, establish performance standards, or create incentive structures?

Take Action: How to Engage with NYC's Food and Climate Strategy

Review the specific strategies in this document and identify where you can contribute most effectively within your sector and role. Which strategies (reducing emissions and environmental impacts, reducing waste, building resiliency) align most closely with your organization's mission and existing operations? Where can you achieve immediate impact using current resources and authority? What changes can you make to your own practices that advance food-climate goals?

For Private Sector Organizations:
- *Food Businesses:* Implement food waste reduction programs, source from sustainable suppliers, and offer more plant-based options to customers. Share data and best practices that can inform municipal policy development.
- *Other Businesses:* Evaluate your employee food service, corporate catering, and business travel food choices against climate impact criteria. Use your purchasing power to support sustainable food businesses.
- *Real Estate and Development:* Include food access considerations in development projects, support food businesses that align with climate goals, and design buildings that accommodate sustainable food operations including waste reduction and energy efficiency.

For Academic and Research Institutions:
- Researchers: Contribute data, analysis, and evidence that can inform policy development and measure progress on food-climate goals. Collaborate with municipal agencies on research projects that address knowledge gaps identified in this strategy.
- Educational Institutions: Transform your own food service operations to align with the strategies in this document while using campus programs as living laboratories for food system innovation. Integrate food-climate education into curricula and community engagement programs.

For Community Organizations and Advocates:
- Direct Service Organizations: Incorporate food-climate considerations into programming, advocate for policies that serve your communities, and provide feedback on how food-climate initiatives can better address equity and access concerns.
- Advocacy Organizations: Support policy implementation through community education, hold government and business accountable for commitments, and ensure that food system transformation strengthens rather than displaces vulnerable communities.
- Innovation and Pilot Projects: Where can your agency test new approaches or demonstrate innovative solutions? What pilot projects could generate data and best practices for broader implementation? How can your agency's unique position create models for other cities?

For Healthcare and Social Service Organizations:
- Healthcare Systems: Follow NYC Health + Hospitals' model by implementing plant-based meal programs, engaging patients in nutrition education, and connecting institutional food service to community health goals.
- Social Service Organizations: Integrate food-climate considerations into programming while advocating for policies that ensure food system transformation improves rather than constrains food access for the populations you serve.

Connecting with the Mayor's Office of Food Policy

The Mayor's Office of Food Policy welcomes engagement from all sectors and encourages partnerships that advance the goals outlined in this strategy. Whether you represent a business, research institution, community organization, or other entity, MOFP can help connect you with relevant City agencies, facilitate partnerships, and provide information about opportunities to contribute to food-climate initiatives.

Contact MOFP to discuss how your organization can support or benefit from NYC's food-climate strategy. Together, we can ensure that all stakeholders contribute to transforming our food system into a climate solution that strengthens communities, supports economic opportunity, and protects planetary health.

Visit ***www.nyc.gov/food*** or email ***NYCFood@cityhall.nyc.gov***

Public Sector Food and Climate Action Planning Worksheet

Part 1: Current State Assessment

Programs and Policies Inventory

Instructions: Review your agency's current work and identify connections to food and climate systems.

Existing programs that touch on food systems:
- ☐ Procurement/purchasing policies
- ☐ Employee wellness/cafeteria programs
- ☐ Agricultural support or regulation
- ☐ Economic development initiatives
- ☐ Public health programs
- ☐ Emergency preparedness/food security
- ☐ Land use planning
- ☐ Other: _____

Existing programs that address climate issues:
- ☐ Energy efficiency initiatives
- ☐ Transportation/fleet management
- ☐ Waste reduction programs
- ☐ Green building/infrastructure
- ☐ Environmental compliance
- ☐ Sustainability planning
- ☐ Emergency/resilience planning
- ☐ Other: _____

Programs or policies that could connect both food and climate (but don't currently):
List 2-3 programs and note the potetial connection:

1. Program/Policy: _____ Connection: _____
2. Program/Policy: _____ Connection: _____
3. Program/Policy: _____ Connection: _____

Part 2: Opportunity Mapping

Quick Wins (implementable within 6 months)

Consider: What small changes could create immediate food and climate co-benefits?

Internal operations:
- ☐ Revise procurement policies to prioritize local, sustainable food
- ☐ Audit agency food services for climate-friendly options
- ☐ Include food systems in existing sustainability reporting
- ☐ Add food/climate talking points to existing presentations
- ☐ Connect with other agencies already doing food/climate work
- ☐ Other: _____

External programs:
- ☐ Add climate co-benefits messaging to food-related programs
- ☐ Include food systems considerations in climate planning
- ☐ Partner with organizations working on food/climate nexus
- ☐ Highlight food/climate connections in existing communications
- ☐ Other: _____

Your quick win priority: *What is the most feasible action you could take in the next month?*

_____

Medium-term Opportunities (6 months - 2 years)

Consider: What program expansions or new initiatives could advance both goals?

Policy development:
- ☐ Comprehensive sustainable food procurement standards
- ☐ Climate resilience planning that includes food systems
- ☐ Cross-agency coordination mechanisms
- ☐ Updated regulations that consider food/climate co-benefits
- ☐ Other: _____

Program enhancements:
- ☐ Pilot programs testing food/climate innovations
- ☐ Expanded partnerships with food and climate organizations
- ☐ Staff training on food/climate connections
- ☐ Data collection to measure co-benefits
- ☐ Other: _____

Your medium-term focus: *What opportunity would create the most impact for your agency's mission?*

_____

Part 3: Implementation Planning

Stakeholder Analysis

Internal champions:
- Decision makers who would need to approve changes: _____
- Colleagues who share interest in this work: _____
- Staff who would implement day-to-day changes: _____

External partners:
- Other agencies working on similar issues: _____
- Organizations that could provide expertise or support: _____
- Community groups or stakeholders to engage: _____

Overcoming Barriers

Additional support needed:
- ☐ Data/research on food/climate co-benefits
- ☐ Case studies from similar agencies
- ☐ Template policies or procedures
- ☐ Training or technical assistance
- ☐ Funding opportunities
- ☐ Other: _____

What challenges do you anticipate and how might you address them?

Potential Barrier	Possible Solutions
Limited budget	Start with no-cost policy changes; seek grants; demonstrate cost savings
Competing priorities	Frame as supporting existing goals; start small; show quick wins
Lack of expertise	Partner with agencies; bring in consultants; staff training
Regulatory constraints	Research policy flexibility; propose pilot programs; work with legal counsel
Resistance to change	Use compelling messaging; involve skeptics in planning; demonstrate benefits
Your top barrier: _____	**Your strategy to address it:** _____

Messaging Tools

Which food and climate connection resonates most for your work?
- ☐ Health (clean environment = healthy food = healthy people)
- ☐ Carbon emissions (food systems account for 25% of greenhouse gases)
- ☐ Responsible consumption (sustainable choices support regenerative practices)
- ☐ Food security (climate resilience protects against supply disruptions)
- ☐ Economic concerns (climate action prevents higher future food costs)

Your elevator pitch: *In 2-3 sentences, how would you explain why your agency should care about food and climate connections?*

_____

For questions or additional support, contact ***NYCFood@cityhall.nyc.gov***

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