

GOOD FOOD CHECKLIST

Cultivating a Healthy, Green, Fair, and Affordable Food System



MARCH 2008

An Ecological Approach to Food & Health

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Healthy soil grows healthy food.
Healthy food nourishes healthy people.
Healthy people form healthy communities.

SUPPORTING SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEMS

Science proves that healthy soil grows healthy food. Science also proves that eating healthy food nourishes healthy people. Therefore, when the soil is unhealthy it becomes the source of disease in plants, animals and people. The long-term consequences are an accumulation of disease and a food system that does not support good health. All eaters must support a healthy, green, fair and affordable food system by cultivating a food landscape that supports the health, social and economic well-being of individuals, families, farms and communities.

Sustainable food systems, or “good food” systems, are formed when

agriculture, processing, distribution and consumption are integrated and related practices that regenerate rather than degrade our natural resources. They are socially just, accessible, affordable, develop local communities and economies and meet the food and nutrition needs of **all** eaters.

You may already be implementing sustainable food systems practices either personally or professionally. By engaging in sustainable food systems issues, you can advance a healthy, green, fair and affordable food system. This will result in better nutrition counseling and improved health for individuals, families and communities.

GOOD FOOD STRATEGIES

You can be a guiding force in the establishment of a healthy, green, fair and affordable food system. Using this checklist, pick five “good food” strategies you will accomplish in the next few months and build from there. Start at home, you may be surprised to find you are doing some already!

I will....

- Learn more about sustainable food systems
- Choose a diet rich in locally-grown and seasonal foods
- Maintain a container or a backyard garden
- Share my home-grown food and recipes with others
- Support and promote community gardens and greenhouses
- Shop at the local farmers’ market or food co-op
- Buy directly from local farms, road stands and U-pick farms
- Buy a CSA share
- Support local food processors such as meat lockers and canning facilities
- Start a gardening program at a school, daycare, church, hospital, long-term care facility, or community center
- Purchase fair-trade, organic coffee, tea and chocolate
- Compost fruit and vegetable scraps
- Select packaging options that are recyclable and environmentally friendly
- Implement a reduce, reuse, recycle program in my home, workplace or community
- Complete a Master Gardener course
- Promote agritourism and ecotourism in my community
- Grow food for a community supported agriculture (CSA) farm or a farmers market
- Become an organic farmer
- Start a local food co-op

continued...

Good Food Strategies

Cultivating a Healthy, Green, Fair and Affordable Food System

I will....

- Promote local, seasonal and sustainably-raised food to individuals, families, institutions and communities
- Promote *Buy Fresh Buy Local* marketing initiatives
- Serve local, seasonal and sustainably-raised food at meetings and conferences
- Include sustainable food system tips in nutrition education materials
- Educate patients and clients about:
 - The health, social and environmental benefits of eating local, seasonal and sustainably-raised food
 - The availability of fresh, local, seasonal and sustainably-raised foods
 - Preparing and preserving fresh, seasonal food
 - Food safety issues related to selecting and preparing fresh food
- Begin a discussion at my institution about:
 - Adopting a seasonal menu system
 - Purchasing directly from local farms and local distributors
 - Requesting local, seasonal and sustainably-raised foods from food distributors
 - Reviewing food safety issues related to regional distribution and transportation systems
 - Educating food service staff on preparing and cooking whole, local and seasonal food
 - Revising institutional procurement policies and purchasing specifications to include local, seasonal and sustainably-raised food
 - Becoming a fast food-free zone
 - Minimizing and managing waste and energy
 - Using recycled disposables versus styrofoam or plastic products
 - Establishing a composting system
 - Hosting a farmers market at our facility

- Educate students and interns about:
 - The link between sustainable food production, nutrition and health
 - The interconnectedness of food and agricultural policy with the availability of healthy food
 - Strategies to incorporate sustainable food systems into clinical, management and public health practice
- Clean food from local farmers for food banks and pantries
- Work with food banks and pantries to regularly provide local, seasonal and sustainably-raised food
- Establish a food recovery system and donate leftover food to emergency food programs
- Implement disaster and emergency preparedness plans that incorporate local, seasonal and sustainably-raised food
- Refer clients to the WIC or Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program
- Offer nutrition or cooking classes using locally-grown food at farmers' markets, food banks and schools
- Provide support and encouragement to mothers who are breastfeeding
- Express interest in eating local, seasonal and sustainably-raised food at restaurants
- Support businesses and restaurants that use local, seasonal and sustainably-raised food
- Work with restaurants and institutions to develop menus that use local, seasonal and sustainably-raised food
- Encourage point-of-sale identification of local, seasonal and sustainably-raised food in markets
- Write articles or blogs about sustainable food systems
- Submit a letter to the editor or an op-ed about the benefits of locally-grown foods
- Add sustainability principles in your next presentation or interview

The Politics of Food

It is policy that determines what food is grown, harvested, processed, imported, exported and available for purchase. Dietitians can influence "good food" policies at the local, state and federal levels that:

- Increase access to fresh, locally-grown food for all eaters
- Encourage diversity of food that is grown
- Conserve natural resources such as soil, water and energy
- Decrease synthetic chemicals and pharmaceuticals used in agriculture
- Protect valuable farmland
- Build vibrant local food system infrastructure
- Increase the number of small and mid-sized farms

- Work with policy makers on establishing vibrant local food systems
- Establish a food policy council in my community
- Run for an elected office
- Join the Hunger & Environmental Nutrition Dietetic Practice Group (www.HENdpg.org)

Resources

1. American Dietetic Association Sustainable Food System Task Force. *Healthy Land, Healthy People: Building a Better Understanding of Sustainable Food Systems for Food and Nutrition Professionals*. Chicago, IL: American Dietetic Association; 2007.
2. Harmon A, Gerald B. Position of the American Dietetic Association: Food and Nutrition Professionals Can Implement Practices to Conserve Natural Resources and Support Ecological Sustainability. *J Am Diet Assoc*. 2007;107(6):1033-1043.
3. Health Care Without Harm. *Healthy Food in Health Care: A Menu of Options*. 2006. www.noharm.org.
4. McCaffree J. Water and sustainable agriculture: What they mean to food and nutrition professionals. *J Am Diet Assoc*. 2008;108(2):215-216.



Environmental Nutrition Solutions

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Angie Tagtow, MS, RD, LD is a Food & Society Policy fellow working to educate consumers, opinion leaders and policy makers on sustainable food systems that promote good health, vibrant communities and environmental stewardship. Angie is an environmental nutrition consultant dedicated to assuring all eaters have access to "good food." Her business, Environmental Nutrition Solutions, takes an ecological approach to food and health by focusing on the public health benefits of sustainable food systems. © Environmental Nutrition Solutions, 2008.