

NEW BRUNSWICK COMMUNITY FOOD ALLIANCE

Making the food system work for everyone

INTRODUCTION

The New Brunswick Community Food Alliance (NBCFA) brings together people from the community with concerns about the quality, availability, and accessibility of healthy food choices in New Brunswick, N.J. to share ideas and take action.

The NBCFA functions as a food policy council to build a food secure community and is supported by the active participation of all sectors of the local food system.

BACKGROUND

Food Systems:

A local food system is a network of activities about producing and consuming food to maintain a healthy life.¹ In addition to the consumers, a wide variety of entities such as farms, food distributors, food stores, institutions where food is prepared or consumed, local governments, and emergency food service providers are all parts of the food system.

A food system typically has five sectors:

1. *Production* includes growing edible plants and raising livestock.
2. *Processing* is where raw food materials are turned into finished food products like bread, frozen peas, and salsa.
3. *Distribution* includes the ways food is transported, stored, and marketed from farm to consumer.
4. *Access and consumption* include purchasing or obtaining food from sources like food stores or food pantries, and cooking, preparing, and consuming food.
5. *Waste Management* involves collection, sorting, and processing of discarded food, including composting and landfilling.

Food Policy Councils:

A food policy council is an organization that looks into the local food system and suggests ways to improve that system. Food policy councils encourage interactions between the sectors of the food system and develop methods for greater collaboration on projects and programs related to food issues. Food policy councils aim to make food systems more sustainable and equitable and provide a forum for all stakeholders to determine how to make this system work for everyone. Stakeholders may include grocery store owners, other food retailers, emergency food providers, educators, farmers, nutrition and public health experts, transportation agencies, food waste managers, local government, community-based organizations, other private or public organizations, and residents of the community.

Community Food Security:

Community food security can be defined as a condition in which all members of a community have access to adequate amounts of nutritious, safe, and culturally appropriate food at all times from sources and practices that are environmentally sound and socially just.² Community food security focuses on building strong links between the food system and the community, food system capacity and ownership for residents, and practices across all sectors of the food system that help sustain a healthy life and natural resources.

RECOMMENDATION – A Food Policy Council for New Brunswick

The New Brunswick Community Food Alliance

The NBCFA is being established as a local food policy council to look into the local food system and find ways to make the system more equitable and sustainable in order to build community food security.

The NBCFA will provide its recommendations to the City of New Brunswick and other community stakeholders for action steps to take place. In addition to the active participation and collaboration of many representatives from the local food system, NBCFA's partnership with the City government has the advantage of leveraging resources, gaining an effective way of communication with the local policy makers, and demonstrating the commitment of the City to address the critical issues about the food system.

VISION

The vision of the NBCFA is for New Brunswick to become a hunger-free community that:

- supports easy access to healthy and affordable foods, knowledge and skills about healthy food choices, and understanding of the food system;
 - supports sustainable agriculture practices that contribute to its economic vitality;
- and
- treats its residents, workers, and visitors with respect, justice, and dignity throughout the food system.

MISSION

The NBCFA is committed to the development and maintenance of a sustainable local food system in the city of New Brunswick so that all of its residents have access to adequate amounts of nutritious, safe, affordable, and culturally appropriate food at all times in socially acceptable ways and enjoy the health and economic benefits of a strong local food system.

GOALS

The New Brunswick Community Food Alliance will:

- Explore methods and provide recommendations to ensure that healthy, safe, affordable and culturally appropriate food is readily available to every New Brunswick resident;
- Increase residents' knowledge on how making healthy food choices can positively influence public health, social responsibility, and environmental sustainability;
- Place food security and food systems on the city administration's agenda to influence the local, regional and national dialog on food policy;

- Promote community economic development for the creation of living wage jobs and local engagement and ownership in many sectors of the food system;
- Promote local, sustainable agriculture and help New Brunswick transition to a local food system that supports energy-efficient and environmentally sustainable practices in all sectors.

MEMBERSHIP

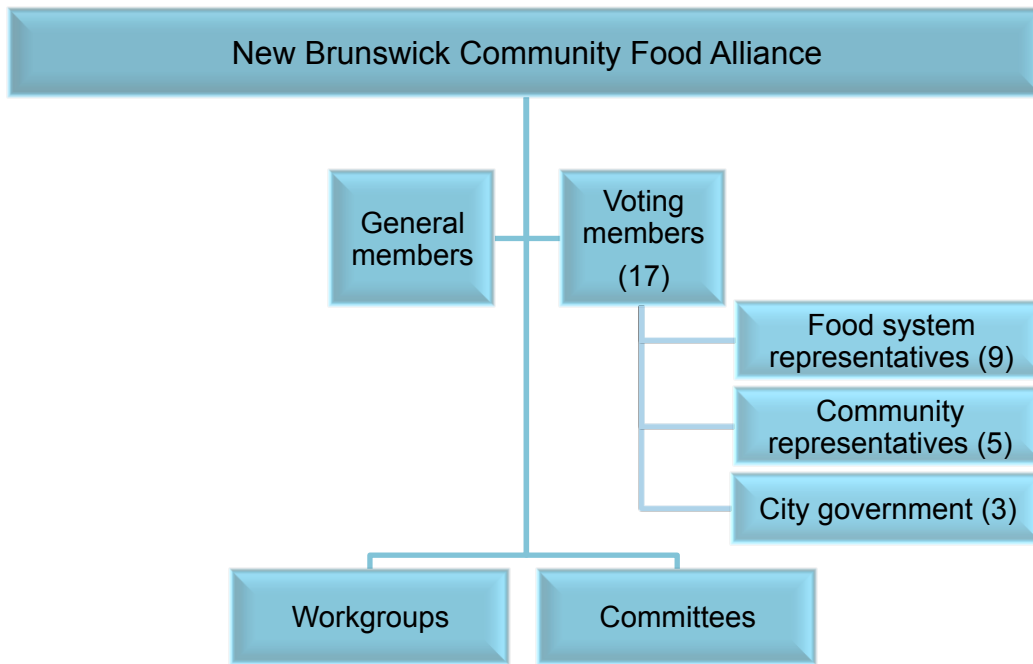
The NBCFA is a community-based advisory body. The NBCFA brings local residents, professionals, and government representatives together to address issues that have an impact on the city of New Brunswick's food system. The NBCFA includes two types of memberships: general and voting.

General membership is open to all individuals and organizations committed to building a stronger local food system in New Brunswick.

Voting membership consists of a group of seventeen (17) members, to include nine (9) representatives from various working communities of the food system (listed below), five (5) community representatives, and three (3) representatives from the city government: one representative each from the Mayor's Office, the City Council, and the Environmental Commission.

Working communities of the food system represented on the NBCFA include but are not limited to:

1. Food business community (retail food stores, distributors, restaurants, food industry workers)
2. Other local businesses (hotels, industry, etc.)
3. Schools (pre K through 12)
4. University (research and grant support, Cooperative Extension, urban planning, etc.)
5. Community-based organizations
6. Sustainable agriculture (farmers markets, urban agriculture)
7. Nutrition and health (SNAP-Ed, NJ Partnership for Healthier Kids-NB, Healthier NB, health care providers, etc.)
8. Emergency food providers



MEMBERSHIP REQUIREMENTS

1. Commitment to transforming the New Brunswick food system into an equitable and sustainable system.
2. Commitment to working in the public interest. NBCFA members will bring an expertise that benefits the New Brunswick food system.
3. Commitment to reaching out to a variety of people and entities within the relevant working community to understand their needs and what they have to offer.
4. Respect for the complexity and sensitivity of the NBCFA's work with diverse partners.
5. Appreciation of the need for skills in diversity management, problem solving, decision-making, and implementation.
6. Residence or employment in New Brunswick, or in the case of regional or rural organizations, a vested interest in an equitable, socially just New Brunswick food system.

MEMBERSHIP TERMS

The general membership is valid as long as the member is willing to participate.

The voting members are appointed for three-year terms. The initial members will be elected to staggered terms so as to maintain a balanced turnover of membership. For the voting members, missing two meetings per year without notice is deemed equivalent to a resignation. Vacancies in voting membership will be filled with an interim appointment by the NBCFA.

A Chair, Vice Chair, and a Secretary will be elected annually from among the voting members to serve a one-year term.

MEETING FREQUENCY

Formal meetings of the full NBCFA are held five times per year. Meetings take place tentatively in February, April, June, August, and October. Less formal workgroup meetings that review

issues in detail and prepare recommendations for the NBCFA are held in January, March, May, July, and September.

All meetings are open to the general membership and public. Voting members are required to attend all five meetings of the full NBCFA each year, participate on at least one workgroup, and commit to work between meetings.

DECISION-MAKING STRUCTURE

The NBCFA will work to establish an open meeting structure that will welcome community input and participation. Decisions shall be made by Robert's Rules and Consensus Decision-Making:

1. Hear all viewpoints of members and guests:
 - a. Hear and address concerns.
 - b. Hear reservations.
2. Seek consensus.
3. Decision shall be made by a simple majority of the voting members.

BYLAWS

Bylaws will be developed to define the detailed structure and governing rules of the NBCFA. These bylaws will be reviewed and revised as needed.

WORKGROUPS AND COMMITTEES

Workgroups are established to serve as the content-specific forums that conduct the work of the NBCFA and generate suggestions for action.

Workgroups include the voting and general members of the NBCFA, and other public participants. Workgroups are chaired by voting members of the NBCFA. Minutes and attendance of all meetings are documented and reported to the NBCFA voting body at each regular NBCFA meeting. Every effort is made to ensure full public participation in workgroups including translation assistance and use of bilingual materials.

Each workgroup will develop and implement measurable objectives that will contribute to the overall goals of the NBCFA. The following workgroups have been identified based on community feedback:

Healthy Food Access: Increase access to healthful, safe, affordable, and culturally appropriate food for every resident of New Brunswick. Encourage schools, public institutions, businesses, emergency food providers, and community-based organizations to participate in this effort and related nutrition education activities.

Community Engagement: Increase residents' knowledge on how making healthy food choices can have positive effects on public health, social responsibility, and environmental sustainability. Facilitate participation of the New Brunswick community in all activities of the local food system. Address racial/ethnic, economic, and social justice barriers that deter residents from benefiting from the food system.

Advocacy & Policy: Ensure that improving food security and the local food system are on the city government's agenda. Urge local government leaders to adopt policies that benefit all residents. Use the available information to develop policies that will improve community food security. Advocate for policies at the regional, state and national level that affect the local food system.

Food Economic Development: Promote community economic development for the creation of living wage jobs and local ownership in all sectors of the food system, including skilled work force, and food business and enterprise opportunities.

Agriculture: Promote local sustainable agriculture and energy-efficient practices as essential parts of the local food system. Work with schools to integrate agriculture and nutrition into the curriculum. Establish food gardens at schools, community organizations, and houses of worship.

Committees that will support the functionality and operations of the NBCFA:

Membership Committee: Review the initial prospective voting members of the NBCFA. Coordinate community and youth engagement. Recruit and maintain membership.

Operations Committee:

- Administrative function: Review agenda items, convene meetings, and maintain records of meeting attendance and proceedings.
- Communications: Create awareness and visibility of the NBCFA within the New Brunswick community and beyond. Produce an initial food system report and subsequent reports and documents as needed. Communicate activities to the members of the NBCFA.
- Evaluation: Develop metrics to measure progress and evaluate the workgroup and NBCFA processes and outcomes. Support ongoing collection of data, benchmarking, and monitoring of the NBCFA's overall impact.

Work groups and committees may be added or removed at the discretion of the NBCFA.

REFERENCES

1. Sobal J, Khan LK, Bisogni C (1998). A conceptual model of the food and nutrition system. Soc Sci Med. 47:853-863.
2. Hamm MW, Bellows AC (2003). Community food security and nutrition educators. J Nutr Educ Behav. 35: 37-43.

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