



# Healthy and Affordable Food

## The Challenge

Many families in New York City have limited access to healthy, affordable food. Studies suggest that poor access to healthy foods is a contributing factor to the growing obesity rates and related health problems that disproportionately affect low-income children and families. Large grocery stores are non-existent or out of walking distance in many low-income communities. Many neighborhoods have few food retail outlets, forcing residents to rely on fast-food restaurants and corner stores with limited food inventory and unreasonably high prices.

Healthy eating is not solely a matter of personal responsibility or individual taste. It is also a matter of having affordable nutritious food available in all New York City communities. By promoting healthy eating and increasing the supply of affordable nutritious food, the health outcomes and quality of life of all New Yorkers can be greatly improved.

Government needs to take a more active role in developing policies that increase affordable fresh food outlets in New York City's neighborhoods while promoting good, nutritious eating. The following proposals will make a healthy diet more affordable and accessible to all New Yorkers.

## The Solution

### **Increase access to quality food in neighborhoods with limited food retail options**

- Lift the cap on street food vending cart permits, increase the number of vendors selling fresh fruits and vegetables in underserved areas, and create small business-entrepreneurship microlending opportunities
- Assist grocery stores in maintaining acceptable food safety and pricing practices and adequate sanitary conditions, and post information online on supermarket inspections

- Encourage supermarkets to provide free shuttle services to consumers residing in underserved communities
- Fund transportation and distribution of New York State-grown produce
- Promote the establishment of a wholesale farmers' market in New York City
- Enhance the capacity of small independent grocers/bodegas to carry nutritious and affordable food
- Stimulate the development of new supermarkets/grocery stores in underserved neighborhoods
- Conduct a needs assessment to develop a plan to stimulate the sale of healthy, affordable food in new and existing grocery stores
- Establish a Food Policy Council in New York State
- Improve the nutritional value of foods available in schools

**Foster the creation of year-round indoor public markets** in NYCHA complexes and other government properties, where independent vendors could rent booths to sell fresh produce and quality pre-made meals/food.

**Expand community education efforts** to help inform consumers about where to access good quality, nutritious food and provide menu-planning information and ideas.

**Improve the nutritional value of government-subsidized foods** by establishing and supporting partnerships and collaborations between the city, state and federal nutrition assistance programs.

**Promote the expansion of food co-ops, buying clubs and farmers' markets in low-income neighborhoods** by providing start-up funds and technical assistance to local not-for-profit organizations to help organize co-ops, clubs and markets.

**Improve the take-up rate of government subsidized food programs** by facilitating enrollment in the Food Stamp and Women Infants and Children (WIC) programs and increasing participation of child care, Head Start and after school programs in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).

## The Benefits

Nutritious food is the foundation for a healthy lifestyle. Ensuring that all New York City residents have access to healthy, affordable food is the first step towards better health. There are many ways to bring fresh nutritious foods into food deserts and neighborhoods with few retail options. Whether New York City invests in new markets or enhances existing ones, provides transportation or more convenient distribution centers for fresh farm goods, the right combination of opportunities should be in place for each and every neighborhood in a city otherwise abundant with food. Improving access to and increasing the availability of good food will create healthier families, more local jobs and a stronger economy.

Citizens' Committee for Children of New York, Inc.  
 105 East 22nd Street  
 New York, NY 10010  
 T: 212-673-1800 F: 212-979-5063  
[www.cccnewyork.org](http://www.cccnewyork.org)

