



# Eating Together: A Food Systems Approach to Increasing Healthy Food Access

Presented by

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Farm to Table

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**Hunger is a failure  
in the food system.**



A vibrant outdoor farmers market stall. In the foreground, a large wicker basket is filled with green and yellow bell peppers. Behind it, another basket contains dark purple eggplants and red chili peppers. Further back, there are large piles of leafy greens, including spinach and chard, and several purple onions. People are seen in the background, some holding produce, indicating a busy market scene. The text "In a functioning food system, a community is able to feed itself." is overlaid in white, bold font in the center of the image.

**In a functioning  
food system, a  
community is able  
to feed itself.**





**Building the  
community food system  
generates wealth  
and health.**

**TODACHEENE FARM**  
Mesa Farm Road  
Shiprock, NM

SEP 1 2007



**A functioning food  
system needs:**

**Programs**

**Partners**

**Policies**



# Consider:





A vibrant outdoor farmers market stall is shown, brimming with fresh produce. In the foreground, a large wicker basket is filled with green and yellow bell peppers. Behind it, another basket contains dark purple eggplants and a pile of bright red chili peppers. Further back, there are large bunches of leafy greens, including spinach and chard, along with purple onions. Several people are visible in the background, some holding bags and others selecting items, creating a lively market atmosphere. The scene is set outdoors with a white vehicle partially visible on the left.

**In a functioning  
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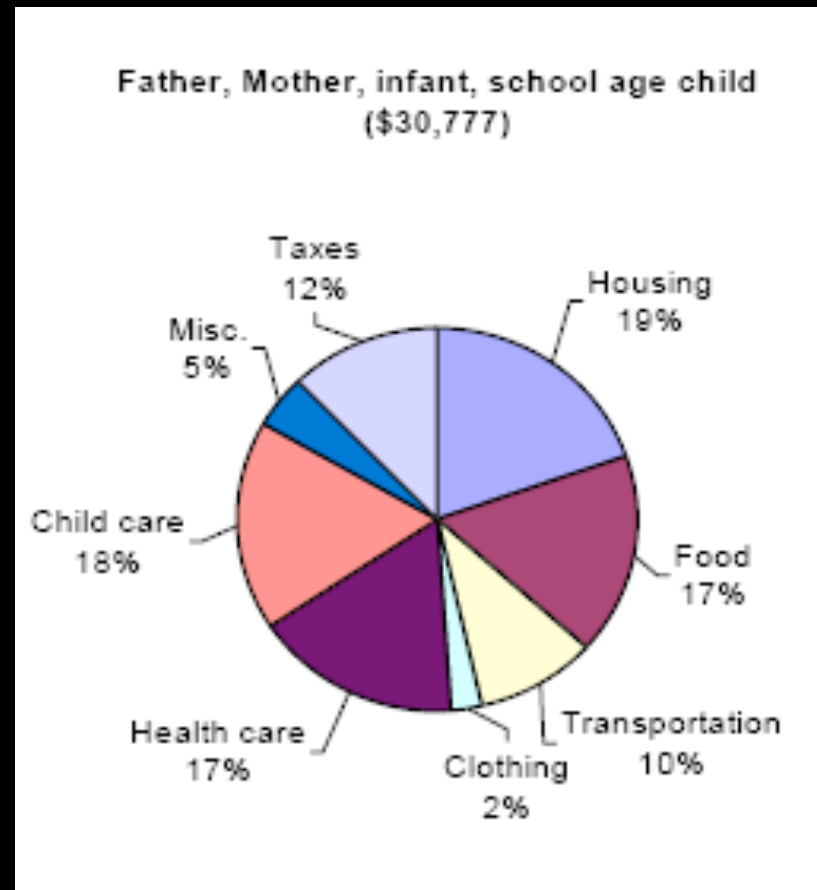






# Hunger and food insecurity are a symptom of poverty.

- 2<sup>nd</sup> highest state in food insecurity
- Currently at least 35% of families in New Mexico earn less than \$35,000<sup>2</sup>
- 41% of families served by food banks are working families<sup>3</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Based on Voices for Children, 2003; adjusted using CPI

<sup>2</sup> American Community Survey, 2008

<sup>3</sup> America's Second Harvest, Hunger in America, 2006

# **Of low-wage working families...**

- 41% have to choose between paying for food or paying for utilities**
- 30% have to choose between paying for food or paying the rent or mortgage**
- 28% have to choose between paying for food or paying for healthcare<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Based on NM Association of Food Banks survey, 2006





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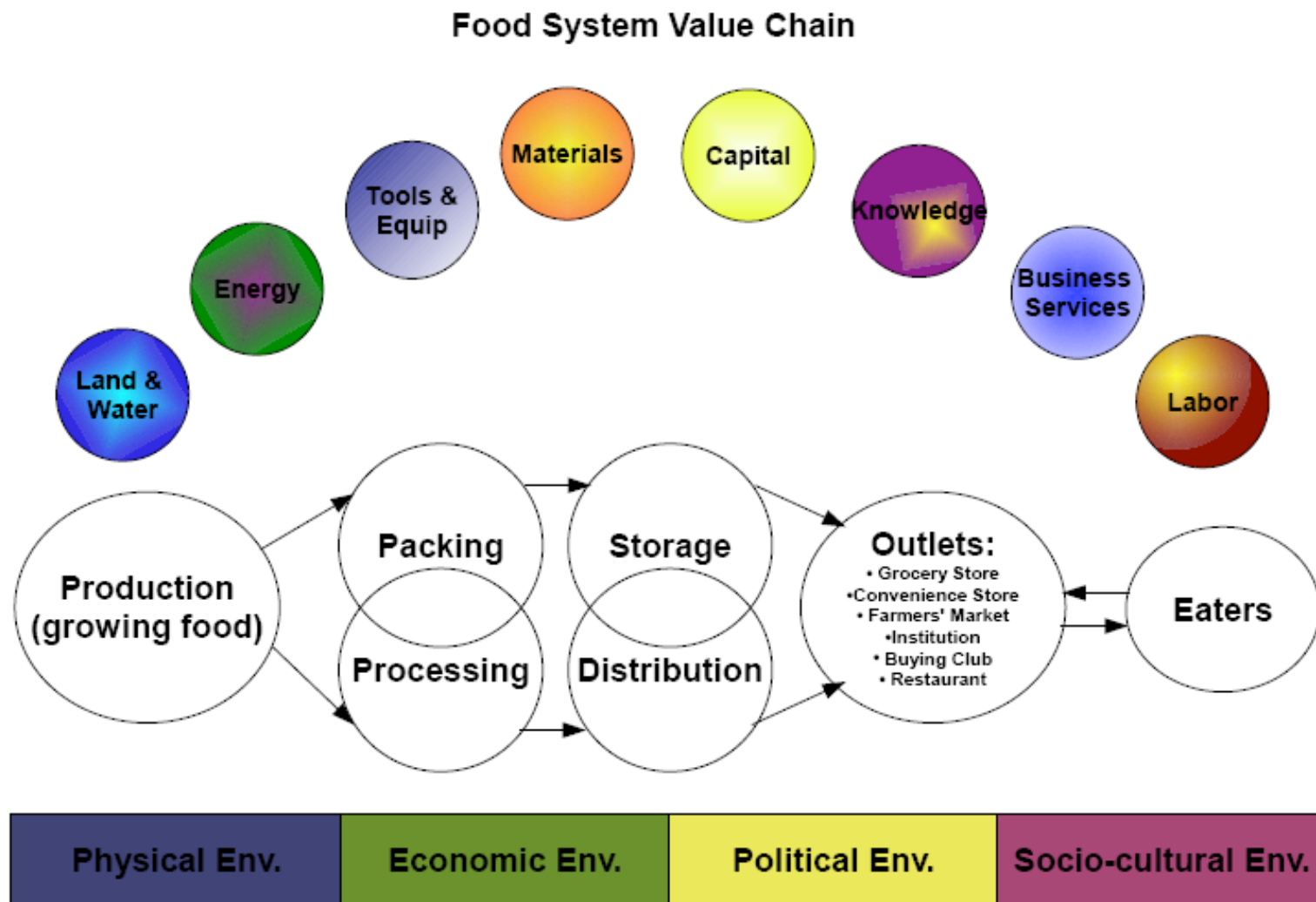


**I don't want a hand-out.  
I want an opportunity.**

**--Anonymous**



# What is a Food System?





# How do we build the community food system?

- Closing the Food Gap
- Healthy Kids, Healthy Economy
- Farmers Market Nutrition Programs
- Public Benefits Utilization



# Closing the Food Gap

- **Goal:** Use community assets to make healthy, affordable, culturally significant foods in rural and under-served areas.
- **Mechanisms:**
  - Provide infrastructure and technical assistance to small-scale store owners
  - Improve distribution system, La Montanita Coop
  - Build connections between producers and consumers
  - Develop alternative food outlets (e.g. buying clubs, school-based stores, CSAs)
- **Outcomes:** Physical and social infrastructure for local, healthy food networks. Community economic development.



# Healthy Kids, Healthy Economy

- **Goal:** Provide school children with healthy local foods and create new market for farmers.
- **Mechanism:** Provide \$4 million in state funding to purchase fresh fruits/vegetables, grown when available.



- **Outcomes:**

- For many children, school meals are their most nutritious (and in some cases only) meals of the day. This program ensures that children are getting the healthiest foods possible.
- Additional funding makes school sales profitable for local farmers, increasing community wealth.



# Farmers Market Nutrition Programs

- **Goal:** Make farm-fresh food accessible to limited income people.
- **Mechanism:** Use state and federal funding to provide market vouchers for WIC clients and seniors. Allow EBT purchases at markets.
- **Outcomes:**
  - Increase food budget for WIC clients and seniors.
  - Encourage EBT users to get nutritious foods.
  - Increase sales for local farmers, generating community wealth.



# Public Benefits Utilization

- **Goal:** Expand food budgets for low-income people.
- **Mechanism:** Work with income support programs to:
  - Simplify enrollment and accounting.
  - Increase outreach
  - Increase minimum allocations.
  - Connect food programs to nutrition education.
- **Outcomes:**
  - Increase percentage of eligible recipients receiving public benefits.
  - Bring more federal dollars into the community.
  - Encourage public benefits users to support their local economy through purchases of local foods and at local businesses.







**If consumers bought 15% of  
their food directly from  
local farmers, farm income  
would increase over 60%**

**For every dollar that  
goes to farmers,  
\$1.80 is re-spent in  
the community.**

**So, 15% in purchases from  
farmers would generate  
\$704 million per year in  
community wealth.<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> All figures based on analysis by economist Ken Meter.


# Our food system can generate community wealth if we...

- Connect anti-hunger and anti-poverty efforts
  - Ex: the Oregon Food Bank has 5 FTEs dedicated to public policy work around increasing minimum wage, health care, and job training. *Oregon went from 1<sup>st</sup> most food insecure state to 23<sup>rd</sup> after 3 years.*
- Recognize the vast, largely untapped value of our food system to create good-paying jobs
- Add value to NM farm products through direct-marketing and local processing
- Expand the potential of local farms and ranches to feed New Mexicans
- Rebuild our rural retails and wholesale food sector
- Protect prime farmland and water resources; rebuild agricultural infrastructure
- Use mid-sized farms and cooperatives to achieve economies of scale, not industrial farms






# **Policies and programs that support community-based initiatives...**

- 1. Create deeper, more equitable relationships among participants in the food system.**
  - 2. Maximize circulation of resources within the community.**
  - 3. Eventually make themselves unnecessary.**
- 

## For more information:

- Pam Roy
- Farm to Table and the NM Food & Ag Policy Council
- [www.farmtotablenm.org](http://www.farmtotablenm.org)
- 505-473-1004 x11



The background is a solid teal color. There are two white circles: one on the left side, partially cut off by the edge, and one on the right side, also partially cut off by the edge.

**We can grow the local food economy to a scale that meets the region's needs for justly and sustainably produced food through locally directed spending, the building of relationships, and strategic public and cooperative ventures. These investments will make a difference to the economic success of our region's food producers, manufacturers, distributors, restaurants and grocers; to preserving farmland; and to providing access to healthy, affordable food in all of our communities. They are investments in a sustainable and prosperous future.**

**--Ken Meter**