



Summary of Food and Farming in “PlaNYC 2030” (April 2011 Update)

PlaNYC is touted as the comprehensive sustainability plan for the City’s future. It was first introduced by Mayor Bloomberg in 2007, and provides city officials with specific targets in the areas of land, water, transportation, energy, air and climate change. Targets implemented collectively aim to reduce the city’s greenhouse gas emissions by 30% by 2030, while improving infrastructure to meet the needs of a growing population.

In its initial version, food and agriculture were not included in PlaNYC. The Plan is spearheaded by the Mayor’s Office of Long-Term Planning and Sustainability, and involves many city agencies and government, private and non-profit actors.

In April 2011, an updated version of the Plan was unveiled, this time addressing several new issues, including food and agriculture. The updated Plan includes 202 pages and 132 initiatives in 10 areas:

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|------------------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Housing and Neighborhoods | 6. Transportation |
| 2. Parks and Public Space | 7. Energy |
| 3. Brownfields | 8. Air Quality |
| 4. Waterways | 9. Solid Waste |
| 5. Water Supply | 10. Climate Change |

The Plan also includes a section on Cross-Cutting Topics, issues that include analysis in recommendations in one or more of the 10 areas above. These topics include: Public Health, **Food**, Natural Systems, Green Building, Waterfront, Economic Opportunity, and Public Engagement.

The full Plan can be found at: <http://www.nyc.gov/html/planyc2030/html/theplan/the-plan.shtml>. The following highlights the **food and farming issues** in the updated PlaNYC.

1. Housing and Neighborhoods

- Goal: Create homes for almost a million more New Yorkers while making housing and neighborhoods more affordable and sustainable
- Initiatives: 10 total; 2 directly address Food/Farming

Initiative 7: Foster the creation of Greener, Greater Communities (p. 27)

“In addition to facilitating more housing, we must make our communities more sustainable. Sustainability means encouraging growth in areas well served by transit. It means nurturing neighborhoods that provide housing choices and employment opportunities at multiple income levels. It means building housing that conserves energy and water, constructed of materials that do not harm residents’ health. It also means cultivating neighborhoods that contain a vibrant mix of uses, including retail that offers healthy foods—a community asset missing from too many neighborhoods—and other services within walking distance of residences.

- ✓ We will support the work local neighborhood groups, community-based organizations, and individuals are already doing to make New York greener and greater. By providing technical, financial, and regulatory assistance, we can help these efforts grow, build a new model of collaborative action, and create greener, greater communities.
- ✓ We will connect communities with a number of existing City, state and federal programs in seven priority areas: energy efficiency, public space creation, tree stewardship, stormwater management, air quality improvement, and landfill diversion. We will also align our brownfield remediation efforts with local visions for employment growth and redevelopment. In each of these areas we want to provide organizations with financial and technical support to help them achieve community impact.
- ✓ To engage all New Yorkers, we will launch an online platform, “Change By Us,” to empower New Yorkers to self-organize around issues that matter to them. This site will ask “How can we green our neighborhoods?” and connect New Yorkers to other residents, groups, and resources. Like GreenNYC, “Change By Us” will give citizens the information they need to take action in their own lives.
- ✓ We will also help create greener, greater communities by integrating sustainability into neighborhood planning. We have begun and will complete a study in East New York, Brooklyn, where...we will generate recommendations for land use and zoning changes, and assess other opportunities for making the neighborhood greener. The study will also incorporate efforts to promote public health through improved access to fresh food by seeking to utilize the City’s FRESH (Food Retail Expansion to Support Health) program and build on the efforts of local groups such as East New York Farms.”

*Also see the “Greener Greater Communities” and “Roofs” case studies (pp. 27-28).

Initiative 9: Promote walkable destinations for retail and other services (pp. 28-29)

“Stores selling fresh, healthy foods do not exist in some communities. More than three million New Yorkers currently live in dense neighborhoods with limited opportunities to purchase nutritious, affordable foods. In these areas, consumption of fruits and vegetables is low, and rates of diet-related diseases are high.

Opportunities exist to use existing food distribution infrastructure, like bodegas and food carts, and the City’s regulatory powers to increase access to healthy foods. In partnership with the City Council, we are developing and implementing programs to provide low-cost temporary solutions, while encouraging the development of more permanent markets.

Through the Healthy Bodegas initiative, more than 1,000 bodegas have promoted the sale of fresh produce and low-fat dairy products, increasing sales of these products to local residents. The Green Carts program has issued almost 500 new permits to street vendors selling fresh fruit and vegetables in underserved neighborhoods, quickly and effectively expanding retail options. By augmenting the federal food stamp program (SNAP) with “Health Bucks,” we are providing SNAP recipients with \$2 in coupons for every \$5 in SNAP spent at farmers markets. More than 110,000 Health Bucks were distributed in 2009, generating an additional \$220,000 in sales of fresh, locally grown fruit and vegetables.

- ✓ We will facilitate the creation of 300 more healthy food retail options in targeted underserved neighborhoods. To encourage the growth of new grocery stores and supermarkets, we launched the FRESH program, which provides zoning and financial incentives for full-service grocery stores that locate in certain neighborhoods considered underserved by food retailers. We will identify additional amendments to zoning, including an expansion of the FRESH program, to direct grocery stores to more communities with food access needs.
- ✓ In partnership with the City Council, we are also creating food retail and production opportunities by maximizing the use of City-owned land. The City has helped establish both the Kitchen Incubator at La Marqueta in East Harlem, and the Entrepreneur's Space (E-Space) in Long Island City. These programs provide facilities, equipment, and other resources to entrepreneurs starting businesses in the ever-growing food manufacturing industry. The City currently serves 100 clients at E-Space. We will graduate 25 new businesses from that incubator and an additional 40 at La Marqueta, so that food entrepreneurs can bring healthy food and economic development to neighborhoods throughout the city."

2. Parks and Public Space

- Goal: Ensure all New Yorkers live within a ten-minute walk to a park
- Initiatives: 15 total; 1 directly addresses Food/Farming

Initiative 3: Facilitate urban agriculture and community gardening (p. 37)

"We are committed to promoting community gardens and other forms of urban agriculture. We recognize the important role they serve in building communities, supporting local cultural heritage, and bringing individuals together around the vital issue of access to healthy food.

More than 1,000 community gardens exist in the city. More than 600 are on sites maintained by the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA), and nearly 500 are registered with the City's GreenThumb program.

- ✓ To support and enhance well-established gardens throughout the city, we will increase the number of registered GreenThumb volunteers by 25%.

Approximately 80% of the city's community gardens grow food. Most food-producing gardens are located in neighborhoods with limited open space and inadequate access to fresh produce and other healthy foods.

- ✓ To increase public access to fresh foods, including produce grown in community gardens, we will partner with the non-profit organization, Just Food, to establish five additional farmers' markets at community garden sites.
- ✓ We will also explore additional ways to support farmers markets.

We are also working in partnership with GrowNYC, a non-profit, private organization, to support gardens at our schools. Already 70 school gardens have registered with Grow to Learn NYC, the Citywide School Gardens Initiative, and are actively educating students about healthy food choices and environmental stewardship.

- ✓ Through 2013, we will retain 75% of registrants annually and register 25 new gardens with a goal of reaching 150 registered school gardens throughout the city. Furthermore, 50 school gardens participate in the Garden to School Café program that helps school cafeterias serve food grown in those gardens.

We are also exploring ways to increase the number of gardens and urban farms.

- ✓ We will take a full inventory of municipal land and identify properties that could be suitable for urban agriculture.
- ✓ We will also review existing regulations and laws to identify and remove unnecessary barriers to the creation of community gardens and urban farms. For example, only green roofs that use drought-resistant plants are currently eligible for the New York State green roof tax abatement. Broadening this legislation to include agricultural plants could encourage an increase in green roofs and urban food production. NYCHA will also expand its urban agriculture program, creating at least one urban farm and 129 community gardens on its grounds.”

3. Brownfields

- Goal: Clean up all contaminated land in New York City
- Initiatives: 11 total, 1 directly addresses Food/Farming

Initiative 11: Promote green space on remediated brownfield properties (p. 57)

“In addition to “brick and mortar” development, brownfields present important opportunities to create valuable public green spaces. Our New York City Pocket Parks Program will convert small brownfields to community parkland.

- ✓ We will collaborate with community brownfield planning organizations, State DOS, and non-profit parks development organizations to identify prospective sites in neighborhoods that are underserved by open space.
- ✓ We will begin with a pilot program to create three pocket parks. Candidate sites will undergo environmental investigation and cleanup by leveraging BIG Program funding and other government grants.
- ✓ We will design protective measures such as liners for state-of-the-art community gardens on remediated brownfield properties.
- ✓ We will work with GreenThumb and the New York Restoration Project to pilot a community garden on a remediated brownfield site.”

4. Waterways

- Goal: Improve the quality of New York City's waterways to increase opportunities for recreation and restore coastal ecosystems
- Initiatives: 15 total; 0 directly address Food/Farming

5. Water Supply

- Goal: Ensure the high quality and reliability of our water supply system
- Initiatives: 13 total; 1 address Food/Farming

Initiative 1: Continue the Watershed Protection Program (p. 81)

- ✓ We will continue our partnership with the Watershed Agricultural Council to promote sustainable farming techniques that limit the amount of fertilizer and other waste products that run into our reservoirs.

6. Transportation

- Goal: Expand sustainable transportation choices and ensure the reliability and quality of our transportation network
- Initiatives: 14 total; 1 directly addresses Food/Farming

Initiative 11: Improve freight movement (pp. 97-98)

"A 2009 Port Authority study found that 25% of the trucks entering New York City via Port Authority crossings are carrying food, from multiple origins. Much of the food coming to the city passes through the Hunts Point Food Distribution Center (FDC) in the Bronx, the largest food distribution center in the U.S. We are currently reviewing the transportation needs of this area as part of a federal grant to study the Sheridan Expressway corridor. The study contains a range of alternatives, including the option of removing the highway and improving arterials. In evaluating all options, we will work to ensure that the FDC continues to play its vital role in the city's food distribution network. The FDC contains more than 115 businesses that generate more than \$3 billion in annual sales and support 10,000 jobs.

Before we can increase the efficiency of our food related freight movement and reduce its impacts on congestion, and improve residents' access to food, we need to better understand what New Yorkers eat, where it comes from, how it gets to the city, and where it ultimately gets delivered.

- ✓ We will partner with the City Council, which is seeking to address many of these questions through the Speaker's FoodWorks program, to launch a food distribution study at the neighborhood level, as well as study improvements in how food flows into the city from elsewhere.
- ✓ We will also assess the barriers and potential municipal interventions to facilitate, expanded the distribution and consumption of regional food products.

- ✓ We will also work to shift inbound freight from trucks to rail and increase rail capacity into the city. The Hunts Point Terminal Produce Market, located at the FDC, presents an opportunity to expand the use of freight trains to supplement trucks for incoming shipments. The produce market handles 60% of the produce consumed in the city and 22% consumed in the region. Approximately 3,800 trucks travel to and from the market each day, with many additional trucks also serving other enterprises in the vicinity, an important employment cluster. As part of a potential redesign currently under negotiation, we will work to maximize inbound rail market share.”

7. Energy

- Goal: Reduce energy consumption and make our energy systems cleaner and more reliable
- Initiatives: 17 total; 0 directly address Food/Farming

8. Air Quality

- Goal: Achieve the cleanest air quality of any big U.S. city
- Initiatives: 10 total; 0 directly address Food/Farming

9. Solid Waste

- Goal: Divert 75% of our solid waste from landfills
- Initiatives: 13 total; 4 directly addresses Food/Farming

Initiative 1: Promote waste prevention opportunities (p. 138)

“In many cases, we generate unnecessary waste without even thinking about it.*

- ✓ We will work with the city’s 24,000 restaurants and food-related businesses to identify and adopt practices that reduce waste. These could include minimizing packaging for food products and giving customers the option to opt out of receiving all the disposable materials that often accompany take-out food.”

*This section also has commitments related to water bottles, plastic disposable bags, and paper.

Initiative 3: Incentivize recycling (p. 139)

“Recycling was introduced in 1895, when household waste was separated into three categories—food, rubbish, and ash. Food waste was processed into grease for soap products and into fertilizer. Rubbish was sorted to salvage paper and other marketable materials. And ash, along with the nonsalable rubbish, was landfilled.

The City has embarked on a study of the entire commercial waste system.

- ✓ Until this study is complete, we will develop new recognition and award programs or build on existing models...to incentivize businesses and institutions to expand recycling and use recycled and recyclable materials.”

Initiative 6: Create additional opportunities to recover organic material (pp. 140-142)

“Approximately 30% of what we throw away in our homes is organic material. The majority is from food scraps, but also includes leaf and yard waste and textiles, such as used clothes.

On the commercial side, we estimate that organics represent 18% of the total waste stream, the majority of which is food waste from businesses and institutions. Paying to transport these organics to distant landfills is not only expensive due to the high water content of these materials, but it is also a key driver of our GHG emissions. We know that when food is disposed of in a landfill it quickly rots and becomes a significant source of methane.

Yet with proper separation and treatment, food waste can be converted into a valuable resource for agricultural applications and energy generation. Other organic materials, such as leaf and yard waste and textiles, can also be composted or recycled. Diverting organics from the general waste stream could save the City and its businesses millions of dollars by avoiding expensive disposal costs. It could also reduce transportation impacts such as congestion, noise, and air emissions.

Residential organics

New Yorkers have several options to compost their food waste. Many community-based organizations accept food waste for small-scale composting. GrowNYC hosts drop-off locations for organics at select Greenmarkets, and residents with yards can use small containers to compost kitchen scraps along with their yard waste. For nearly 18 years, the City has also operated the NYC Compost Project, which offers outreach and education about composting for residents, nonprofit organizations, and businesses at botanical gardens and non-profits in each borough.

- ✓ We will expand outreach and education efforts, benchmark and quantify current community-based composting efforts, and work with community and government partners to increase the number of available drop-off locations for food waste.
- ✓ In addition, we will launch a grant program for small-scale composting to encourage diversion of food waste.

Commercial food waste

The Hunts Point Food Distribution Center is situated on 329 acres of City-owned property in the Bronx and is the largest food distribution center in the U.S. It generates approximately 27,400 tons of waste per year, roughly 75% of which is organic and all of which is being hauled away in trucks for disposal. The distribution center is an ideal candidate for an on-site organics recovery operation. Such a facility could lower waste disposal costs, generate a clean source of energy, reduce truck traffic and related impacts both locally and regionally, decrease congestion, and reduce air pollution.

- ✓ We will pursue the establishment of an on-site organics recovery facility at the Hunts Point Food Distribution Center.

Yellow grease, which is essentially used cooking oil, is another organic resource in our commercial waste stream with significant value and energy potential. It can be processed locally into biodiesel, a fuel that generates comparatively lower air pollutants and GHG emissions than traditional diesel. However, when it is improperly disposed of in drains, yellow grease solidifies and can clog the sewer system. In Fiscal Year 2010, the City received more than 14,000 sewer back-up complaints.

Because of its potential as a cleaner fuel, yellow grease is now a coveted commodity. Over the last decade, yellow grease has significantly increased in value and entrepreneurial haulers and biodiesel processors now collect it for free. Today, commercial carters pick up yellow grease from more than half of the city's restaurants.

The City has helped spur this market by requiring that all heating oil used to heat our buildings include a 2% blend of biodiesel.

- ✓ We will continue to support this developing industry through outreach and education to businesses and institutions.
- ✓ We will also streamline the licensing for grease haulers and the permitting process for yellow grease transfer stations.

Every year, more than 24,000 restaurants, 5,000 grocery stores, 4,000 hospitals, 5,000 cultural and educational institutions, and numerous hotels and sports arenas, throw away approximately 600,000 tons of food. In many cases, this waste could effectively be separated at its source and diverted from landfills. While some companies and institutions have recognized the growing importance of diverting food waste and the opportunity to be recognized as a "sustainable business," participation in commercial composting efforts remains limited.

Approximately 12,000 tons of food waste per year in the city, including waste from Yankee Stadium and Citi Field, is currently sent to commercial processing facilities for composting and resource recovery. However, these sites are located far outside the city, with the closest more than 150 miles away. The lack of commercial processing facilities in close proximity to the city poses a challenge to fostering the market for commercial food waste recovery.

- ✓ We will promote commercial organics recovery as part of our proposed business recognition and award program to encourage sustainable solid waste management practices.

New technologies have the potential to reduce the impacts created by the traditional disposal of our commercial food waste. On-site dewatering units can remove the water from food waste and use odorless aerobic digestion in which bacteria eat food scraps. This process significantly reduces the weight and volume of food waste. These units can substantially reduce collection truck trips, in turn reducing air and noise pollution, GHG emissions, and congestion.

There are currently several dewatering pilot programs underway in the city, including one at a large Manhattan department store.

- ✓ We will continue to evaluate pilots of new technologies and encourage businesses and institutions to adopt them as a means to increase diversion rates.

Biosolids

New York City produces approximately 450,000 tons of biosolids from its wastewater treatment plants every year. While these biosolids are generally landfilled, they also can be harnessed as an energy source either directly or indirectly for heat, transportation fuel, or power production. Since sludge is organic material, it may also be used as fertilizer or soil conditioner for parks, farms, lawns, and golf courses, and in asphalt-paving mixes.

- ✓ We will pursue sustainable and economical opportunities to process and market sludge for beneficial reuse through pilot projects and partnerships with utilities and private investors.”

*Also see “Grease to Fuel” case study (p. 141)

Initiative 12: Revise City government procurement practices (p. 145)

“The City currently spends approximately \$2.2 billion on goods every year, ranging from paper to community monitors to public school food trays.

- ✓ In the short-term, we will establish packaging reduction guidelines for City contracts and improve agency accountability for the solid waste impacts of products we purchase.
- ✓ We will also create incentives for vendors to recover and reuse products when they are no longer in use. These actions will not only reduce our solid waste footprint but also reduce agency expenditures.”

10. Climate Change

- Goal: Reduce greenhouse gas emissions by more than 30%; Increase the resilience of our communities, natural systems, and infrastructure to climate risks
- Initiatives: 13 total; 1 indirectly addresses Food/Farming

Initiative 10: Mitigate the urban heat island effect (p. 158)

“We are taking many steps to cool New York City.

- ✓ We are increasing our vegetated surface area through planting one million more trees, constructing green infrastructure to manage stormwater, and incentivizing the installation of green roofs.”

*Note: This initiative does not mention fruit trees or edible green roofs specifically, but could be included in the initiative implementation.

To contact PlaNYC:

www.nyc.gov/html/planyc2030/html/contact/contact.shtml.

For more information on Just Food:

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