

New England State Food System Planners Partnership

CALL FOR RESEARCHERS

For the New England Feeding New England Project

About the New England Feeding New England Project

Across the six-state New England region, the COVID-19 pandemic has revealed significant weaknesses in global and national food supply chains. These weaknesses have also revealed a level of unpreparedness for mass emergency feeding and a lack of agility in reorienting major supply chains (e.g., supply chains that serve institutional food programs and restaurants) to serve different outlets (e.g., grocery stores, online ordering and payment programs, curbside delivery systems). We need to strengthen our regional food system to produce more of what we eat from within the region in order to reduce the risks posed by pandemics, extreme weather events, and similar crises. Public resilience planning has thus far focused heavily on emergency preparedness related to high water management, energy, transportation, and telecommunications. Little attention has been paid to reducing risks presented by weaknesses in global food production and supply chains that increase our risk of food insecurity.

The New England State Food Systems Planners Partnership (The Partnership) is composed of the six leading NGOs responsible for supporting development and implementation of their state's food system plan, and is part of the Food Solutions New England regional network. Our mission is to expand and fortify the region's food supply and distribution systems to ensure the availability of adequate, affordable, socially, and culturally appropriate products under a variety of rapidly changing climate, environmental, and public health conditions. We are creating a roadmap to achieve our short-term goal that by 2030, 30% of the food consumed in New England is harvested, produced, raised, and caught within New England.

We are looking for farm and food systems researchers who bring a strong equity lens to their research, who reflect the geographic, age, gender, racial, and ethnic diversity that make up our region, and who are interested in being part of a team that will explore how New England can meet 30% of its food needs within the region over the next 10 years. We are looking to conduct applied research that will lead to state level investments for increased food production within the region. This work will be fast-paced - our goal is to have the majority of the research completed by July 2022. Individual researchers will be part of a multi-part research team exploring both the supply and demand of regionally produced food. The final research findings will also be informed by a regional stakeholder engagement process that will enable us to test our assumptions and data analysis along the way.

We are currently assembling a diverse team of researchers who have the following combined experience:

- An understanding of the 6-state, New England region
- Quantitative data analysis experience
- An applied approach (rather than just theoretical research or are looking for an opportunity for peer-reviewed research)

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- An understanding of and are working to address the inequities in the food system based on systemic racism and race-based oppression
- A background in participatory action, community-based participatory, community action research, or other similar approaches that engage members of the impacted communities as partners in the research
- An understanding of nutrition, health, and diet-related health outcomes
- An understanding of demand by consumer type / demographics
- An understanding of existing agriculture and food production data sources
- An understanding of commercial Fisheries, aquaculture, and other seafood viability and availability
- An understanding of demand by market channel (both direct and wholesale)
- An understanding of the emergency food and supplemental food assistance systems
- An understanding of agriculture land viability and potential land availability (including farm labor)
- An understanding of existing regional infrastructure and the regional distribution network
- Knowledge of climate adaptive food production practices
- Experience with urban and community regional planning and an understanding of how to develop equitable and inclusive communities in the planning process

Research Scope of Work

We have secured funding to compensate researchers for their participation and contribution to this project, if needed. Because each researcher's time will vary depending on their contribution to the overall project, we will develop an individual scope of work for each researcher that will include an agreement on payment, if needed.

We are looking for experienced researchers who are interested in contributing to a portion of a larger scope of work as a part of a team that is committed to increasing regional food production and consumption. Each researcher will be responsible for their agreed upon individual scope of work and will be expected to interact and collaborate as a team throughout the process, including attending regular research team check-in meetings. **The core components of the research are outlined below.**

Part A: Conduct a Market Demand Study

Complete a regional market demand study taking into account the diversity of communities represented in New England and the supply chains that serve them (via secondary research and available data) to analyze consumption and purchasing patterns and identify the potential demand for increased direct to consumer, institutional, and retail procurement of regionally produced food (i.e., by market channel).

1. **Update the dietary needs data** (i.e., recommended diets based on health and nutrition experts) based on Food Solution New England's 50x60 Food Vision (i.e., USDA MyPlate and Harvard Healthy Eating Plate). Adjust for values assumptions embedded in recommended diets to consider cultural appropriateness based on ethnic diversity of regional diets; make projections

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about consumption patterns based on dietary recommendations, and look at current data for trends. Coordinate with FSNE as they work to update the New England Food Vision.

2. **Conduct a market demand study by product category** (what are people eating via different market channels and what are these different channels (i.e., retailers, institutions) saying they would like to purchase if certain barriers were removed (i.e., product availability, distribution network, cost, etc.) in each state using existing data sources. The study may include:
 - An assessment of USDA food availability data
 - A review of Food Flows data for points of connection with food availability data
 - An assessment of current production and market channel data to provide additional intel into consumer trends and product demand
 - The development of market channel targets (e.g., institutions, grocery, direct, restaurants)
 - An assessment of emergency food system needs (i.e., lessons learned from regional research on COVID impact on food access and food security)
 - Coordination with the Project Advisory Team to identify other data sets that should be considered

Part B: Develop food production milestones by state and food category

Identify and quantify targets necessary to produce and distribute 30% of the food needed by New Englanders, representing the diversity of ethnic, racial, and cultural preferences, in New England, by 2030. Determine the methodology for establishing culturally, socially, and environmentally appropriate milestones in all 6 states by product category to get to 30% consumption of regionally produced food by 2030, and develop the production milestones that reflect this methodology, along with the dietary projections and consumer trends identified in Part A.

Our expectations for this research include the following:

- Researchers will use quantitative data
- Research is not peer-reviewed, but is good enough to get “soft” production milestones
- Consideration for what each state can realistically contribute in terms of production (e.g., based on land, soil, fishery quotas, urban ag contribution, etc)
- Considerations of market demands specific to BIPOC, immigrant, elderly, and low-income communities (e.g., who may have limited or no access to full-size refrigerators or cooking appliances), and those living with chronic health conditions or disability
- Links to what demand levels will likely be in each state, community, and demographic group based on current and projected population
- Creates parameters of what needs to be analyzed and the methodology to apply
- Produces a clear definition for: produce, harvest, raise, catch, etc. for each product category
- Uses a climate resiliency lens

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- Uses an equity lens and reflects the needs and opportunities for BIPOC managed/owned land and food businesses as well as farm and food chain workers
- Considers indigenous land
- Looks at the food flows data - what is shipping outside of the region that we could develop markets for within the region as well as supply chains serving halal, Latin, Caribbean or other ethnic markets that may not be obvious to white researchers
- Uses an interactive process with both producers and key stakeholder groups

How to be Involved:

If you are interested in being part of the research team, **please email sarahaxe@vsjf.org** with a brief explanation of why this project excites you, which piece(s) of the research you think best fit(s) with your qualifications, and any additional information such as your CV or linkedin profile. We will be considering letters of interest through June 30, 2021.

Researchers will be accountable to Sarah Axe (New England Feeding New England Project Manager) and Ellen Kahler (executive director, Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund which is serving as the fiscal sponsor for this research).

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