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CAN NEW ENGLAND FEED ITSELF IN THE YEARS TO COME? NEW ENGLAND FOOD ADVOCATES RELEASE NEW RESEARCH ON THE STATE OF THE REGION'S FOOD SYSTEM:

Report Answers: What would it take for New England to produce more of the food we consume?

June 5, 2023 (BRETTON WOODS, NH) - A new report puts forth a regional goal of producing and consuming 30% of New England's food needs in the region by 2030. Commissioned by the [New England State Food System Planners Partnership](#), a collaboration between six state-level food system organizations and [Food Solutions New England](#) - it outlines the role New Englanders can play in making the region's food system stronger and more self-reliant. The report - [A Regional Approach to Food System Resilience](#) - is a product of 16 researchers exploring the opportunities and needs along the food supply chain in New England, and highlights the land, sea, and labor needs of the region, consumer purchase metrics, distribution trends, and population projections that will impact the region's ability to feed itself in the coming years.

"Together, we can improve on food system development efforts in each New England state in order to strengthen local farms and food businesses, be less dependent on a global food supply, and expand access to agricultural land so more of the food consumed here can be produced here.," said Leah Rovner, Project Director of the Partnership's New England Feeding New England project. "What this report demonstrates is that every state and every New Englander must play a role in stabilizing the food system, making it less vulnerable to outside disruption, and creating jobs and economic return in the process."

The [report](#), released publicly today to all New England Agriculture Commissioners at the annual Northeastern Association of State Departments of Agriculture regional meeting in Bretton Woods, NH, finds that each New England state can play a unique and important role in strengthening the region's food system. While consumer spending and food system employment is heavily concentrated in the southern states in the region, for example, production is concentrated in northern states, where agricultural land is more abundant. Working as a region, where each state develops a comprehensive plan in concert with its neighbors, can help. According to researcher Christian Peters, of the USDA Agricultural Research Service's Food Systems Research Unit in Burlington, Vermont, "the Production Team's regional self-reliance modeling research found that in order to reach the 30% by 2030 goal, we'd need to maximize the use of 400,000 acres of existing but underutilized cropland and pasture and bring 590,000 acres of new cropland into production in New England. This would be a big change considering that New England's area of agricultural land decreased for most of the past century."

“All New Englanders got a taste of the shortcomings of relying entirely on a global supply chain when we couldn’t get certain foods during the height of the pandemic,” said Brian Donahue, Professor Emeritus of American Environmental Studies at Brandeis University and project lead for the Dietary Eating Patterns Team of researchers. “As food suppliers and retailers scramble to meet demand through a brittle supply chain, New England has land right here within our borders that can be used to make us more resilient in the face of disruptions such as climate change. But it will take strong policy initiatives to get there.”

Additionally, the region’s food system is a major economic driver. The report indicates that for each additional job in the region’s food system, total employment in the region increases by 1.5 jobs. And for every dollar of value added in the food system, total value added in the entire region grows to \$2.01. New England’s food system employs one million people, or ten percent of all jobs, and generates \$190 billion in sales.

“Strengthening and stabilizing the New England food system will not only protect us from future disruption caused by natural disasters or global health emergencies,” noted Nic Rockler, researcher and Principal at Kavet, Rockler, & Associates. “It can continue to serve as a major economic driver for all New England states. The region’s food economy is among the largest employers and revenue generators in the region, and it has the potential to grow even more.”

The full report can be viewed at bit.ly/NewEnglandFoodReport.

New England states had a total food expenditure of over \$87.1 billion in 2019, or about \$5,868 per person in the region. In order to ensure that 30% of New England’s food needs are met with New England products, the average New Englander would have to spend about \$1,760 of that total food expenditure on regionally-produced food. By 2030, total food expenditures are projected to reach \$98.4 billion, or about \$1,890 per person to reach the 30% goal.

“The release of this report represents only the beginning of the work ahead of us in order to realize the goal of a more resilient, sustainable food system in New England,” said Holly Fowler, Co-founder and CEO of Northbound Ventures Consulting and an author on the report. “Given that New Englanders purchase the majority of their food from grocery stores and restaurants, the Partnership will be looking to engage with retailers and restaurateurs in the region to explore ways to put more regionally produced items on store shelves and menus.”

The New England State Food System Planners Partnership is a collaboration among six state-level food system organizations and Food Solutions New England who are mobilizing their networks to impact local and regional food supply chains, and strengthen and grow the New England regional food system. The Partnership disseminates information on trends, challenges and opportunities to hundreds of groups across the region that connect with our individual state initiatives. The Partnership works in collaboration with the regional Food Solutions New England network and in alignment with its [New England Food Vision](#), and also in collaboration with state governments and groups supporting local and regionally-based food supply chains.

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