10.1 Encourage an Equitable and Just Food System

5 – 30 Points

Action Updates

This action was last updated in 2025. A version of this action from the prior program year is available for comparison. Edits are highlighted in yellow.

Objective

Plan for and implement projects to promote community-wide sustainable, equitable food systems.

Complementary Actions

- Develop Agriculture-Friendly Practices
- Support Equitable Food Access and Local Farmers

What to Do

The more you do, the more points you earn.

1. Form an actively engaged local or regional Food Policy Council or Food Alliance, Coalition, or Commission. One purpose of this group is to examine, connect and improve the food system, including through policy recommendations and developing new programs or initiatives. This work may be broad (food system-wide) and/or targeted (specific food issues, such as agriculture or hunger relief). The food systems team may be free-standing or part of another municipal or regional entity. You may leverage other existing committees, such as your Sustainability Team or an agricultural advisory committee, to assist with this task; you may also partner with an existing community organization. Ensure your group is reflective of diverse perspectives and experiences from your municipality. This should include age, race, gender identity, religion, family status, immigration, language, etc. The committee must be active and meet at least annually. **(5 points)**

   Submit: A list of names and titles/sectors of current members of the food systems team; the date of the most recent meeting; and at least one additional piece of documentation related to the meetings, such as a promotional flyer, an agenda, minutes, presentations, or photographs.

2. Conduct a Community Food Assessment. **(10 points)**

   All elements must be completed to receive credit.

   a. Gather data on at least 10 indicators of food access. These 10 indicators must come from the list of data indicators in Appendix A. This baseline data collection will help explain why residents are making certain food choices based on convenience, availability, and affordability.

   b. Using the baseline data to prompt discussion, host at least three dialogues on priorities and strategies for improving food access. This input should come directly from residents as well as community leaders and members of citizen boards and committees of the municipality (e.g. Health Services, Youth Services, School Board, etc).

   c. Compile information gathered on the 10 selected indicators into a Community Food Assessment Report.

   d. Following completion of the Community Food Assessment Report, distribute the assessment to relevant

municipal departments and community partners. Present the report at a public meeting of your municipal governing body, and make the report available for public viewing on the municipality's website.

Submit: The Community Food Assessment Report and a completed worksheet 1; a brief description of the three community dialogues held in the development of the Community Food Assessment Report; a screenshot of the website and hyperlink to the Report on the municipal website. If your Community Food Assessment Report was completed more than three years ago, also include a brief description of how it is still relevant and used by your municipality.

3. Using an inclusive process for resident and stakeholder participation, create an equitable Community Food Action Plan to ensure that all community members can access sustainable, nutritious food. In addition to being shaped by stakeholder participation, the Action Plan may also be informed by the findings of the Community Food Assessment Report or a farmer forum. Consider subpopulations (including variations in income, race, ethnicity, national origin, and age). **(10 points)**

   All elements must be completed and included in the Action Plan to receive credit.

   a. A list of recommended actions;

   b. The lead contact responsible for implementing the Action Plan within municipal government and any key partners/agencies;

   c. Identification of the entity responsible for implementing each action item;

   d. A timeline of deliverables with no less than 6-month intervals for a period of not less than two years;

   e. An easy method for community members to get involved, such as joining a working group; and

   f. A dedicated webpage where residents can track action plan implementation and review meeting notes.

   Submit: Your officially adopted Community Food Action Plan, documentation of the plan adoption (such as meeting minutes, an internal memo, or similar verification), and a completed worksheet 2. If your Community Food Action Plan was completed more than three years ago, also include a brief description of how it is still relevant and used by your municipality.

4. Hold a community food forum to discuss building a more equitable food system in your municipality or region. The community food forum must have taken place in the last three years **(5 points)**

   Submit: A brief overview of the community food forum (suggested 5 sentences maximum), including target populations (if any) and topics discussed; date of the forum; and at least one example of educational materials disseminated, which could include flyers, articles, letters, newsletters, presentations, or digital communications. For websites, submit both a hyperlink and a screenshot of the relevant webpage(s).

Engaging Partners

Sustainable CT encourages regional collaboration and other forms of partnership. For every action, please complete the "Partners" box in your submission, indicating the name(s) of any municipalities and/or organizations you partnered with (if any) and a brief description of your municipality's role. If you collaborate with other municipalities, each community will receive points. For additional information, please see the "Partners Guidance Document".

Potential Municipal and Community Collaborators

The local government public health department or district staff and municipal economic development representatives should be involved in the implementation of this action, in partnership with community agencies. Partners might include community food nonprofits, local businesses (including farms), emergency food providers, schools, farmers markets, early childhood collaboratives, chambers of commerce and other business alliances.

Funding

If available, below are potential funding sources specific to this Action. For a complete listing of potential funding opportunities to assist with implementing Sustainable CT Actions, please visit the Sustainable CT Grants Portal, which is searchable by Action. Please also visit the Support for Your Town page for opportunities for technical assistance and other supports.

- Urban Act Grant Program
- Sustainable CT Community Match Fund
- State Funding Readiness Project

Resources

Toolkits, Calculators, Guidance Documents

- How to Establish a Food Policy Council
- USDA Community Food Assessment Toolkit, providing a series of standardized measurement tools for assessing food security within a community
- Whole Measures for Community Food Systems: Values-Based Planning & Evaluation
- Could Your Community Survive on Local Food?
- Food Systems Dashboard

Organizations and Relevant Programs

- John's Hopkins Center for a Livable Future
- The Edible Schoolyard Project
- Food Solutions New England
- CT Food System Alliance
- UCONN: Zwick Center for Food and Resource Policy
- End Hunger CT!

Benefits

Enhancing food security improves the general health and wellness of your community and promotes equity. Addressing malnutrition also enhances a community's capacity for economic growth and community building. When food security is considered in the context of sustainable food choices, increasing access to locally grown products can also reduce adverse environmental impacts and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

CT Success Stories

- East Lyme - Oct 2022 Certification
- Ellington - May 2024 Certification
- Marlborough - May 2025 Certification