

Sharing lessons for the next decade

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In a recent report published February 2018, the City University of New York Urban Food Policy Institute takes stock of what has changed in food policy in New York City (NYC) since 2008 and identifies a number of challenges that any city will face in developing a food metrics process. This is a must-read report for anyone concerned with implementing and monitoring city-level food system change.

Key findings suggest that, although accomplishments to date do show that city and state governments can take action on food policy and implement policies that could lead to improvements in health, if NYC is to achieve meaningful improvements in food-related outcomes in the next decade, it will need to consider more than simply maintaining current efforts.

Questions that shape the report

Lessons for the Next Decade seeks to answer several questions:

- What are the strengths and weaknesses of the cumulative food policy recommendations that NYC and State officials have made over the last decade?
- To what extent have the policies monitored through the NYC Food Metrics report since 2012 been implemented? What are the strengths and weaknesses of this monitoring system?
- What is the evidence on the implementation and impact of a broad array of public food policies that have been approved by NYC or New York State in the last decade?
- How have key nutrition and health indicators for the NYC population changed over the last decade? What do these changes tell us about the success and limitations of current food policies?

How has NYC made use of food indicators?

Across a range of different agencies in and around NYC there is a broad attempt to create policy that relates to the following food-related goals, and under which the NYC Mayor's Office of Food Policy monitors 37 indicators:

- Improve nutritional well-being – reduce diet-related diseases (21 Mayor's Office indicators)
- Promote food security (4 Mayor's Office indicators)
- Create food systems that support economic and community development (3 Mayor's Office indicators)
- Ensure sustainable food systems – waste, carbon, protecting farmland (8 Mayor's Office indicators)
- Support food workers (1 Mayor's Office indicator)

- Strengthen food governance and food democracy (0 Mayor's Office indicators)

How has the use of indicators helped and what are the limitations?

- The six annual Food Metrics Reports from 2012-2017 show measurable progress on about 50% of the 37 indicators and provide valuable data for understanding the implementation of city food initiatives.
- 50% of the indicators relate to policy goals that promote health and reduce diet-related diseases. The other policy goals have far fewer indicators.
- Most of the current indicators focus on outputs, making it difficult to determine whether food-related policies are having any impact or not.

What reflections does NYC have to share on the use of indicators and the reporting process?

- Indicators need to be presented in a way that shows progress or set-backs.
- Indicators need to be disaggregated by geographical area, to help identify local problems and enable local solutions.
- Indicators need to be made more publicly available to enable further analysis and data visualisation.
- Heavy reliance on quantitative data limits policy makers and advocates in understanding why changes have or have not occurred.
- Because collecting the data requires such a big effort, more resources are needed and many more city organisations need to be involved in contributing data to strengthen the Food Metrics Reports.

Ultimately, the authors of the *Lessons for the Next Decade* report recommend 1) a NYC Food Plan that charts five- to ten-year food policy goals for the city, state, and region; and 2) a process to identify key outcomes and metrics for key food policy goals that can be used to monitor the food plan.

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Resources

A copy of the report is available at:

www.cunyurbanfoodpolicy.org/news/2018/2/16/food-policy-in-new-york-city-since-2008-lessons-for-the-next-decade

To see the 37 NYC food indicators and sub-indicators, see appendix p. 3-7.