

SPOKANE REGIONAL FOOD ACTION PLAN 2022



Farmland Preservation



Increase Local Food Processing



Healthy Food for All



Reduce Food Waste

Table of Contents

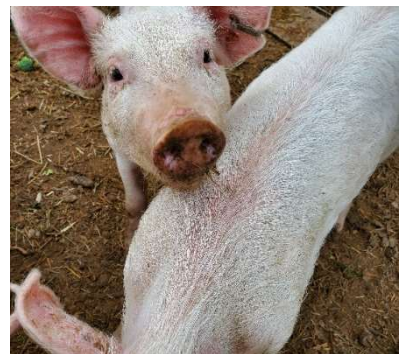
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
FARMLAND PRESERVATION	4
INCREASE LOCAL FOOD PROCESSING	9
HEALTHY FOOD FOR ALL	13
REDUCE FOOD WASTE	17
APPENDIX	21
How This Plan Was Developed	21
Research Agenda.....	22
Goals Summary	23
Spokane Food Policy Council	27
Acknowledgments.....	28

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Food, the most basic of human needs, is easily taken for granted in a society of abundance. The COVID-19 pandemic revealed the fragility of our current food system. The goal of the Spokane Food Policy Council's Regional Food Action Plan is to create a framework for regional food system stakeholders and partners to use when building a more resilient food system in the Spokane area. The plan promotes a healthy and equitable food system that is advantageous to the local economy and protective of the environment.

The Regional Food Action Plan was developed by conducting a food policy audit, an online food system community survey, and two virtual community forums in 2020. Approximately 350 food system stakeholders including producers, processors, distributors, consumers, and waste managers informed the plan by completing the survey or attending a community forum. The feedback was analyzed by the Spokane Food Policy Council, who identified four priorities for our regional food system: Farmland Preservation, Increasing Local Food Processing, Healthy Food for All, and Reducing Food Waste.



The Spokane Food Policy Council's Regional Food Action Plan will enhance community health through the following actions:

- Preserving farmland and recruiting new farmers increasing local food production and adding to our local economy.
- Advocating for policies that enable residents and businesses to make and process their food locally.
- Providing broader access to high-quality food and disseminating better food and nutrition education to empower people to make healthier choices for themselves and their families.
- Reducing food waste through gleaning, redistribution and composting to support food security and the environment.

FARMLAND PRESERVATION

Preserve farmland directly through public policy and indirectly by helping regional farms be more economically viable

Develop a promotion package for the local food and farm economy

Helping local food systems businesses to be more financially viable will help keep farmland in production. Research and interviews completed as part of this Food Plan project suggests that consumers are more likely to buy locally produced food when they have convenient access to information about availability of products. Many of our regional food producers struggle to find markets for their products. The Spokane Food Policy Council (SFPC) recommends developing a media campaign, utilizing multiple channels (print, radio, internet, television, social networking, bus placards and other promotional materials) to promote purchase of local foods and healthy eating. This campaign might also include a publicly available database designed to connect buyers with regional producers.

Complete a socioeconomic study of positive impact of the local food production sector

One way of accurately estimating potential economic growth is through a socioeconomic impact study. The SFPC recommends a partnership of food system stakeholders be assembled to coordinate development of a socioeconomic analysis of the regional food system around Spokane's foodshed. It should be the goal of this stakeholder group to develop plans for such a socioeconomic study, including developing specifications, identifying prospective contractors, and finding funding to execute the study.

This type of study aims to quantify the impact of a particular change, such as a new revenue stream, investment, event, or policy, on the economy in terms of dollars. Socioeconomic analysis estimates economic, social, environmental, and financial costs and benefits for all stakeholders affected by a change. By translating both costs and benefits into monetary units, socioeconomic evaluation allows derivation of combined net value. Combined socioeconomic value can be positive even when net financial value is negative. Socioeconomic analysis accounts for externalities that traditional economic analyses often omit.

While some pre-existing data is available for analyses, obtaining original primary data is the key to producing a final report that is relevant to existing conditions and most useful to stakeholders and decision makers. The process of designing a socioeconomic impact study would:

- Define the scope or boundaries of the study
- Classify which economic variables to consider and map their interdependencies
- Identify key values and key indicators for economic analysis
- Identify potential data sources and negotiate data access
- Develop methodologies for gathering primary data through interviews and surveys
- Gather supporting data
- Determine what information and evidence must be included in the analysis
- Develop a picture of the current regional food economy and make targeted projections of the Spokane foodshed's economic future under various change scenarios
- Explain the sources of data and be transparent about how calculations were reached
- Present clear results useful for decision making that demonstrate stakeholder costs and benefits

A well-executed socioeconomic analysis would be an important starting point toward finding funding for a whole array of work related to strengthening local food systems and developing rural and urban agricultural economies. Reliable economic figures demonstrating contributions of local agriculture and food systems would serve to inform local and state officials and expand networks of allies and partners to include economic developers and members of the business community.

Develop processes and structures for improving food systems stakeholder input on regional policy

The Comprehensive Plans and Zoning Ordinances of Spokane County as well as the cities within the county are continually and regularly reviewed, amended, and updated. SFPC favors policy in these plans that preserves farms and promotes growth in the local farm business sector. Recent land-use decisions by both city and county planners have brought into focus how difficult it is to preserve farmland when zoning code is interpreted as favoring development at the expense of farmland preservation. Regional and local planning processes should be made more accessible for the average person to engage in to advance the needs of the community.

Convene a working group to create framework for updating local Comprehensive Plans to strengthen farmland preservation policies and revitalize the local food system

The SFPC recommends a working group be convened, consisting of community food system stakeholders. This group would create a structure for organized policy development, public outreach, engagement, and advocacy around amending the Comprehensive Plans and Zoning Ordinances pertaining to food systems in the county and every applicable city within the county. As part of this process, sub-working groups would be established, including one for the for the county and one for each applicable city. These groups would continue to identify working group members, community stakeholders and decision makers relevant to their jurisdictions. Sub-working groups would propose policies and campaigns organized in support of adoption of those proposals in each jurisdiction.



City of Spokane Sustainability Action Sub Committee formalize collaboration with the SFPC

The 2021 Sustainability Action Plan (SAP) is an update to the City's 2009 Sustainability Action Plan and was adopted by the Spokane City Council in 2021. The Sustainability Action Subcommittee developed this update over a period of 2 ½ years, including input from the Spokane Food Policy Council. The SAP recommends that the city and its community partners “support the Spokane Food Policy Council (SFPC) in studying, identifying, and implementing sensible and achievable codes, policies, and requirements that eliminate barriers and reduce costs for urban farms and community gardens and expand local control of food grown, processed, and sold directly to consumers.” The SFPC recommends that a representative of the Sustainability Action Subcommittee be tasked with serving as a liaison with the SFPC, attending SFPC meetings as necessary for regular communication.

Improve access to farmland

Support the establishment of a state funded farm-link program with referral and support services to facilitate the transfer of farms to farmers and take advantage of available federal programs



Farm Link and similarly named programs connect land seekers with landowners who want their land to stay in agriculture. Administered by public or private entities, they offer a range of services and resources, from online real estate postings to technical assistance, trainings, and educational resources.

The American Farmland Trust (AFT) report, *Farms Under Threat* (2020), surveyed how each state ranks as they deploy policies and programs that foster better farmland preservation. While AFT highlights some

strengths in Washington, such as a purchase of agriculture easements program, the Growth Management Act, and tax relief for agricultural lands, they also note that Washington does not have a state-funded “Farm Link” program with referral and support services that would facilitate transfer of farms to farmers and assist them in taking advantage of available federal programs.

Washington Farmland Trust’s Farm to Farmer (F2F) program is a service that provides land access to a new generation of farmers, helps farmers find the land opportunities they need to grow their businesses, and helps landowners sell or lease their land to keep it in farming. F2F programs offer technical assistance to current and aspiring farmers, farming and non-farming landowners, veterans, real estate agents, and organizations looking to expand their incubator or agricultural park programs. SFPC supports establishing state funding to expand the reach and effectiveness of the F2F program.

Increase funding for purchasing agricultural conservation easements

The SFPC recommends development of a program to advocate for increased conservation easement funding at the federal, state, and local levels.

Create a County-level farmland preservation program

Spokane is the fourth most populated county in the state. As of the 2017 USDA Census of Agriculture, Spokane County had 548,535 acres of farmland, almost half of the county’s total land area, and produced an estimated \$117 million of agricultural products yet the county government has no farmland preservation program. The SFPC favors Spokane County creating such a program. SFPC recommends Spokane County study farmland preservation programs from other counties, such as King, Skagit, and Snohomish counties, then work with regional stakeholders to develop a similar program for Spokane County.

Influence Spokane Conservation Futures to encourage more nominations of working farmland into its acquisition portfolio

Spokane County's Conservation Futures program has purchased farmland, but typically puts that farmland into recreational conservation rather than keeping it as working farmland. The enabling state legislation under which the Conservation Futures program is codified states "it is in the best interest of the state to maintain, preserve, conserve and otherwise continue in existence adequate open space lands for the production of food, fiber and forest crops." The Conservation Futures program could choose to prioritize keeping land it manages in agricultural production, as has been done in other counties that could serve as a model for Spokane, such as Skagit County. The SFPC recommends that Spokane County's Conservation Futures program place a higher priority on keeping agricultural land it manages in agricultural production.

Increase farm labor availability

Educate farmers on farm labor options and business structures

Input from producer stakeholders during the data gathering process for this plan indicates that farmers have a need for more education and outreach on options available to them with respect to business structures (e.g., partnerships, collectives, and cooperatives) and different options for compensating owners and farmworkers. The SFPC recognizes that at least some of training of this type is available from other food systems stakeholders (e.g., WA State Dept. of Agriculture, WA State University Extension, Northwest Farm Credit Service, etc.) but barriers still exist that prevent access to training. The SFPC recommends a working group be developed to identify barriers to farmers accessing business related training and gaps in available training, then find funding and develop programs fill gaps and remove barriers.



Educate farmers about the Farm Internship Pilot Program available through the Washington Department of Labor and Industries

In 2014, the Legislature authorized the Farm Internship Pilot Program in Washington State (expires 2025). This program allows interns to work on small farms in select Washington counties including Spokane County. Farm interns learn about farming practices and gain hands-on experience with farming activities. Interns participating in this program are exempt from minimum wage requirements and are not required to be paid. Instead of a wage, farm interns receive education and experience about specific farming activities and are entitled to industrial insurance protections while participating in their internship.

The Farm Internship Pilot Program was critiqued during the stakeholder input process, but further research is needed to understand problems perceived by farmers related to its structure and accessibility. The SFPC recommends convening a process that would engage stakeholders in assessing the utilization of the internship program and its successes and failures. The aim of this process would be to identify any problems with the existing program and propose solutions to improve it and make it available to all regions across the state.

Strategies	Recommendations	Potential Partners
Create visibility for local farms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiate a campaign for City- and County-funded local food production support and promotion. Put together a promotion package for the local food and farm economy. Complete an economic study of positive impact of the local food production sector. 	Washington State University (WSU) economists, Spokane Community Indicators, SpokaneTrends.org, Spokane County Information Systems Department, Spokane County Communications Office, VisitSpokane.com, GSI Inc, SRHD, Spokane Board of Health, Teri Stripes, <i>Economic Development Specialist</i> , City of Spokane, Local media outlets, Live Local INW, Spokane Independent Metro Business Alliance (SIMBA)
Create a framework for updating local Comprehensive Plans to strengthen farmland preservation policies and revitalize the local food system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Convene a working group to create framework. Identify working group stakeholders and representatives from the jurisdictions. Work in coordination with the City of Spokane Sustainability Action Sub Committee. 	Cities of Spokane County, City of Spokane Sustainability Action Subcommittee, Spokane Conservation District, Spokane Farmland Preservation Working Group, American Farmland Trust, WSU Extension
Improve access to farmland.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the establishment of a state funded farm-link program with referral and support services to facilitate the transfer of farms to farmers and take advantage of available federal programs. Increase funding for purchasing agricultural conservation easements. Create a County-level farmland preservation program. Influence Spokane Conservation Futures to encourage more nominations of working farmland into its acquisition portfolio. 	Washington Farmland Trust's Farm to Farmer program, Washington State Office of Farmland Preservation, Washington State Food Policy Forum, American Farmland Trust, State legislators, Cara McNab, USDA, WA Beginning Farmer and Rancher Coordinator, Washington Farmland Trust, Spokane County, Agrarian Trust
Increase farm labor availability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educate farmers on farm labor options and business structures. Make a permanent internship program that is accessible to farmers and meets their needs. Educate farmers about the Farm Internship Pilot Program available through the Washington Department of Labor and Industries. Assist farmers in developing their required educational curricula. 	Washington Department of Labor and Industries, Northwest Cooperative Development Center, Small Business Administration, State Legislators

INCREASE LOCAL FOOD PROCESSING

Broaden Scope of Cottage Food Legislation

Promote entrepreneurial development of small-scale food business in Washington State by broadening existing Cottage Food legislation, modeled after more progressive laws in other states.

Cottage Food Legislation in the US

Many small-scale local food processors get their start by utilizing the cottage food law. These small businesses tend to be run by rural women looking to produce additional household income. In urban areas, cottage food entrepreneurs tend to be people with traditionally limited access to capital, including people from BIPOC communities. A Washington State Cottage Food Permit allows individuals make and sell processed foods in their primary residential kitchen. Currently, forty-nine states and Washington, D.C. allow for cottage food sales. However, the specifics of these laws vary widely from state-to-state, with differences regarding types of food that may be produced and sold, where those foods are allowed to be sold, registration, licensing, permitting, or inspection requirements, labeling requirements, and more. Some states have enacted “food sovereignty” legislation, further broadening the range of food production operations that can operate legally. In 2019, Forbes magazine reported that there hasn’t been a single food borne illness outbreak related to food sovereignty legislation in Wyoming, North Dakota, and Utah since the adoption of legislation in 2015, 2017, and 2018 respectively.



Cottage Food Law in Washington State



To receive a Cottage Food Permit, Washington resident must pay a \$230 application fee, and have a comprehensive residential kitchen inspection. Processing times take up to six months in some cases, and the \$230 application fee must be paid annually for permit renewal. The list of food products that can be sold under a WA State Cottage Food permit is limited and does not include many of the higher value boutique items food entrepreneurs typically wish to produce, such as low-sugar preserves or acidified low acid vegetables (pickles).

Washington’s Cottage Food law also limits how sales of home-produced products can occur to direct-to-consumer sales (such as farmers markets), eliminating the opportunity to sell indirectly to restaurants and through retail outlets, for example.

Recommendations for Change

The Spokane Food Policy Council (SFPC) recommends that Washington State immediately modify its existing cottage food law to:

- Broaden the list of foods that can be produced and under a Cottage Food license to include all hermetically sealed shelf stable (canned or jarred) foods made primarily from fruit and or vegetables, as well as foods which require refrigeration
- Broaden Cottage Food law to allow in-state indirect sales, including wholesale and restaurant sales
- Increase the Cottage Food license term to at least two years
- Increase sales caps under a Cottage Food license from \$25,000 to \$50,000 per year
- Adopt more progressive food legislation modeled after food sovereignty laws that exist in Wyoming, South Dakota, and Utah. These states allow consumers the freedom to choose for themselves who produces the food they eat.

Promote WSDA Custom Processing of Multi-Owner Meat Animals

Make share animal ownership and WSDA Custom processing more convenient and reform meat processing regulation at a federal level.

Meat Processing Law in the US

In the US, meat processing of hooved animals is regulated from the federal level, requiring that any beef, pork, lamb, goat, etc. sold retail, by the cut must be processed in a federally licensed (USDA) facility. States are not permitted to adopt related regulation which is less stringent than federal regulation. Federal meat processing laws are considered by many to be a primary cause of local meat processing



capacity bottlenecks. In recognition of supply chain problems caused by the COVID-19 pandemic combined with these bottlenecks, both federal and state governments are currently making unprecedented levels of funding available for building and expanding regional meat production and processing capacity.

Meat Processing Law in Washington State

Existing federal and state laws allow hooved animals to be processed in a WA State regulated (WSDA) “Custom Processing” facility if meat from that animal goes to owners of the animal. There is no limit to the number of owners any animal can have. This little-used provision of existing regulation could be leveraged to enable more convenient by-the-cut processing of meat animals in Custom processing facilities without changing any existing laws.

Recommendations for Change

Shared Meat Animal Ownership and WSDA Custom Processing

The SFPC recommends that tools and processes be investigated (from other regions), developed, and implemented to facilitate convenient group ownership and WSDA Custom processing of meat animals using existing laws. This might include the following:

- Review shared meat animal best practices used in other states, provinces, and countries
- Work with stakeholder groups to develop and promote a shared meat animal program
- Develop a public implementation document describing shared meat animal best practices and appropriate required legal documents to assist producers in adopting the model

Meat Law Reform at the Federal Level

The SFPC generally favors local and regional control over food system issues. The existing USDA blanket prohibition against selling meat retail by the cut from state-inspected processing facilities presents an unwarranted barrier to the success of local and regional livestock producers and processors.

The federal PRIME Act (S. 2001, H.R. 3835) offers a potential solution by proposing to amend the Federal Meat Inspection Act to exempt from USDA inspection the slaughter of animals and the preparation of carcasses conducted at custom, state-licensed slaughter facilities for sale within each state. The SFPC recommends engaging livestock producer and processor stakeholder groups in an exploration of the PRIME Act as well as a review of other current laws and regulations. This would allow stakeholders to:

- Engage in constructive networking
- Identify policy priorities
- Propose regulatory modifications
- Explore other options for improving regional access to meat processing facilities
- Building regional meat processing capacity



Strategies	Recommendations	Potential Partners
Increase availability and convenience of local meat and meat processing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support state funding of agricultural programs designed to build small and mid-scale and regional meat producer capacity. • Take steps to facilitate shared meat animal ownership so that consumers can more conveniently purchase meat processed by state licensed Custom meat processors. • Form a stakeholder group of meat producers and processors to explore options for improving regional access to meat processing facilities and/or building up regional meat processing capacity 	Beefing Up the Palouse, WSU WA Meat Up Production Program, WSDA Regional Markets Program, WSDA Food Safety Program, Local 'custom' meat processors, The Farm Bureau, Past members of the C P o W Livestock Processors, Cooperative Association formerly of Odessa, WA, Weston A. Price Foundation, Farm to Consumer Legal Defense Fund, Heritage Foundation
Improve value of a Cottage Food legislation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expand list of foods permitted by existing Cottage Food Law to include refrigerated items, acidified low acid products. • Remove recipe restrictions for jams, jellies, and preserves. • Raise the income cap under Cottage Food law to \$25,000 per year. • Extend the term of a Cottage Food license to two years. • Expand allowable sales venues to include wholesale and internet sales. • Enact Food Sovereignty legislation modeled after laws in more progressive states. 	SRHD, WSDA Regional Markets Program, WSDA Food Safety Program, Institute for Justice, Cottage Food Licensees

HEALTHY FOOD FOR ALL

Create opportunities for people to grow and share their own food.

Promote existing and emerging educational programs for home and community gardening, cooking, and food preservation.

In Spokane County, the Washington State University (WSU) Extension programs SNAP-Ed, Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP), and Master Gardeners provide food education. In addition to WSU Extension, Second Harvest's teaching kitchen, Catholic Charities' Food For All, the Women and Children's Free Restaurant, and local food pantries also lead nutrition education, cooking classes, and promotion of healthy food resources in the community. Connecting these education providers and promoting their programs will ensure they are reaching vulnerable persons in our region through food education.

Increase land availability for community gardens.



Community gardens may improve food security by increasing access to and consumption of fruits and vegetables and reducing barriers to healthy food such as transportation and cost. Participating in a community garden promotes neighborhood engagement and development of a healthy local food environment.

There are several examples of successful food policies that our region could draw from. In Seattle, Washington the city allocated funding for their "P-Patch community garden program." This established a role for the Director of Neighborhoods to waive or reduce fees for community garden plots for low-income

individuals. The P-Patch community garden program also increases land available for gardens by allowing the Director to manage the leases of property for gardens (Code 3.35.060-0.80, Healthy Food Policy Project).

Support sustainable food systems and urban agriculture education.

Vets on the Farm and Vinegar Flats Farm provide urban agriculture education in Spokane County. These programs create opportunities from early childhood to Veterans transitioning back to civilian life. Participants gain skills in agriculture, farming, and land conservation. In collaboration with other organizations, these programs cultivate future farmers and sustain our food systems.

Support and grow equitable food access.

Identify and reduce barriers to access food.

Second Harvest, the hub for regional charitable food distribution since 1971, supplies a network of more than 100 food banks, meals sites, and other programs responding to food insecurity in Spokane County. Northwest Harvest and Feed Spokane also provide essential foods to local pantries and meal sites. Ensuring food assistance availability in all neighborhoods and outlying rural communities has been a priority. There are challenges, however, throughout the primarily volunteer-driven network with limited hours for food pantry service and client intake requirements that lead to barriers for people needing help with food access.

Catholic Charities Food For All, Farm to Food Pantry initiative is an example of increasing access to food while supporting local growers. In partnership with WSDA and Harvest Against Hunger, Food For All purchases produce from local farmers and distributes to pantries throughout Spokane County.

Extraordinary food insecurity during the COVID-19 pandemic shined a much brighter light on food access barriers for vulnerable populations. Second Harvest ramped up Mobile Market free food distributions to fill service gaps and worked with partner food banks to limit client intake to simply counting people served. Second Harvest, Northwest Harvest, and Feed Spokane, in collaboration with the Spokane Food Security Coalition, are actively assessing partner food bank capacity and exploring opportunities for expanded hours in their pantry network.



Expand CSA offerings to SNAP eligible populations.

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) increases consumer access to fresh produce. A 2016 study by Cornell University evaluated 300 low-income household's participation in a cost-offset CSA (CO-CSA). Families reported increased food security and higher fruit and vegetable intake after participation in CO-CSA.

Farmers offering CSA to SNAP recipients face barriers such as needing a point-of-sale (POS) device to process the EBT transaction and ensuring their CSA includes all SNAP eligible foods. Reducing these barriers and offering financial and educational support to farmers will get fresh produce to low-income populations in our region.

Promote expansion of food distribution routes to low resource areas.



Through the Mobile Market program, Second Harvest works closely with community centers, churches, schools, health clinics, senior centers, youth programs and other organizations to increase healthy food access points, providing free food distributions to people in need where they are located. Since the program's launch in 2006, Second Harvest has come to better understand the value of the "pop-up pantry" model in which the Mobile Market is rooted.

Opportunities to tailor distributions to low resource areas and homebound populations are being explored by local organizations such as pilot food delivery projects led by the Spokane Food Fighters, Special Mobility Services, Growing Neighbors, and online retailers such as Walmart and Safeway. This adaptability will help ensure that families receive nutritious, practical food supplies.

Assess service capacity needs of food pantries and identify opportunities for shared resources.

Spokane residents and community organizations would benefit from greater access to community kitchens and cold storage. Sharing resources for refrigeration and freight access allows pantries to store and distribute perishable foods to underserved communities including fresh dairy, proteins, fruits, and vegetables.

Local organizations identified a need for shared kitchen space to prepare ready-to-eat foods. An evaluation of the region's available commercial/kitchen space may identify opportunities for food preparation. For example, the city of New York is seeking to establish a partnership between city and county stakeholders and local school districts. Schools may open their kitchens to community organizations when school is not in session, such as holidays and summers to increase kitchen access and support local small-business producers.

Advance equity in the food system.

The fundamental human right to adequate food for all requires the pursuit of expanding food security programming with equity in mind and creating low-barrier pathways for food access. The ZoNE, the backbone of a collective action partnership of Northeast Spokane residents, schools, and community organizations, has built new partnerships to reach neighbors with culturally aware food assistance supported by community health workers and other volunteers.

Work is ongoing to identify and cultivate partnerships with organizations that can help break down barriers to reach diverse populations. The Washington State University Food Systems Program recently published a report that identified the needs and barriers of underserved, food-insecure Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) and other socially disadvantaged communities. This work was funded by the WSDA and demonstrates a regional commitment to an inclusive, culturally relevant, and equity-based food system. The SFPC will support BIPOC-led teams, farmers, producers, distributors, and advocates by acknowledging the gaps in our current system and inviting participation from BIPOC communities and people with lived experience being food insecure and utilizing food aid regionally.

Support programs and policies that help children, adults and seniors get healthy food.

Increase enrollment of eligible people into SNAP, WIC, school meals and other government nutrition programs.

SNAP, WIC, and other government assistance programs provide essential food resources for people with low incomes. The population eligible for programs such as SNAP and WIC continue to grow as more residents experience food insecurity due to the impacts of COVID-19. The Washington State Food Security Survey was administered in 2020 and found that 30% of respondents experienced food insecurity. To reach the expanding eligible population, barriers to applying for public assistance must be addressed. Overcoming these barriers may include increased communication from local agencies to the public, continued expansion of hours and accessibility of WIC offices, and efforts to reduce the stigma associated with utilizing SNAP and WIC dollars.



The Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT) program was created in 2020 in response to families need for nutritional resources as schools closed due to COVID-19. P-EBT provided households with the value of free school meal rates on an EBT card for the days schools were closed (\$5.70/day). Among households receiving P-EBT, it is estimated that 2.7-3.9 million children were lifted out of hunger (The Hamilton Project – Brookings). Washington Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) administered P-EBT in partnership with schools and other community stakeholders. The success of P-EBT demonstrates that similar models for food assistance and vouchers can reduce food insecurity and benefit the broader economy (Food Research & Action Center)

Advocate for public and private food assistance programs.

SNAP and WIC are proven to reduce hunger, promote financial stability and self-sufficiency (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities). These programs also bring millions of dollars into the community for food purchasing. The Spokane Food Policy Council and community partners will advocate for sustaining and expanding SNAP and WIC benefits to increase food security and health for our region's population.

The Washington State Department of Health in partnership with Farmers Markets and Food Retailers across the state, offer *SNAP Market Match* and *SNAP Produce Match* programs. Match programs increase SNAP recipients' food benefits for purchasing fruits and vegetables. In Spokane County, a \$10 EBT purchase of fresh or frozen fruits and vegetables results in a \$5 off produce coupon at participating Safeways. At participating Farmers Markets, purchases made with EBT/SNAP dollars are matched dollar for dollar when purchasing fruits and vegetables. Continuing to fund these programs helps stretch families' food budget to buy more fruits and vegetables and support our local farmers.

Strategies	Recommendations	Potential Partners
Create opportunities for people to grow and share their own food.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote existing educational programs for gardening, cooking, and food preservation. Increase land availability for community gardens. Support sustainable food systems and urban agriculture education. 	WSU Extension, Catholic Charities Food for All, Spokane Edible Tree Project, Growing Neighbors, Community Centers, Spokane County, City of Spokane, City of Spokane Valley, City of Millwood, City of Cheney, City of Airway Heights, City of Medical Lake, City of Deer Park, City of Newport, City of Liberty Lake, Neighboring Communities, Spokane Community Gardens, Inland Northwest Community Gardens, Inland Northwest Permaculture Guild, Spokane Permaculture, NAACP, Local Farmers, Mutual Aid Groups (Mutual Aid PNW, Spokane County Mutual Aid, BIPOC Mutual Aid Spokane), Little Food Pantries, Housing Organizations and Shelters
Support and grow equitable food access.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and reduce barriers to access food aid. Promote expansion of food distribution routes to low resource areas. Assess service capacity needs of food pantries and identify opportunities for shared resources (e.g., cold storage, shared kitchen space). Research equity issues in the food system (e.g., availability of culturally relevant food). 	Second Harvest, Northwest Harvest, Catholic Charities Food for All, WSU Extension, Spokane Regional Health District, Spokane County Food Security Coalition, Inland Northwest Farmers Market Association, WA DSHS Market Match Program, WA Farm to School Network, 211, People for People, Eastern Washington, Feed Spokane, Food Not Bombs, Homeless Coalition, Local Food Pantries and Food Assistance Programs, Local Businesses Retailers, Native Health, Community Registered Dietitians, Community Health Workers
Connect local food system stakeholders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create local food directory. Create resources section for SFPC website. Networking/social opportunities to bring food system stakeholders together. 	Spokane Regional Health District Second Harvest and Food Bank Network, WSU, Spokane County, City of Spokane, City of Spokane Valley, City of Millwood, City of Cheney, City of Airway Heights, City of Medical Lake, City of Deer Park, City of Newport, City of Liberty Lake, Spokane Independent Metro Business Alliance (SIMBA), Spokane Cohousing, Spokane Conservation District, Tilth Alliance, MealConnect, Food Security Coalition
Support programs and policies that help children, adults and seniors get healthy food.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase enrollment of eligible people into SNAP, WIC, school meals and other government nutrition programs. Advocate for public and private food assistance programs. 	WSDA / USDA, ALTCEW, City of Spokane, City of Spokane Valley, City of Millwood, City of Cheney, City of Airway Heights, City of Medical Lake, City of Deer Park, City of Newport, City of Liberty Lake, Spokane County, State of Washington, Catholic Charities Food for All, DSHS Basic Food Subcontractors, Public Schools, Spokane Regional Health District, People For People

REDUCE FOOD WASTE

There are many reasons for the increase in waste output: changing patterns of consumption; the variety, quality, and durability of consumer products; increased packaging; and Americans' attitudes and habits about thrift and conservation.

Food waste is a major health, environmental, and economic problem. Approximately, 40% of food in the United States goes uneaten, ending up in landfills or incinerators where it contributes to greenhouse gases and negative impacts to the environment and people's health.

A sustainable food system is regenerative rather than extractive in nature. It allows natural ecosystems and human cultures and communities to thrive. It helps us achieve carbon neutrality while acknowledging and addressing environmental injustices.

The Spokane Food Policy Council defined its Regional Food Action Plan Priorities as the following:



Reform the residential and business composting program.

Advocate for year-round green bin collection service.

In Spokane County, the green bin collection only occurs for 9 months, March-November. Increasing to 12 months would allow residents to compost year around. Also, these services are not available throughout all of Spokane County so in rural areas people do not have access to green bins.

Advocate for free/low-cost green bin service to every single-family residence.

In Spokane, there is a cost associated with the green bin service at \$122.58 per year, which may not be affordable for all families. By reducing the costs and/or making this service free, more families will have access to composting.

Examine ways to incentivize green bin service for commercial accounts like businesses and multi-family complexes.

In Spokane, green bins are not available to multi-family complexes or at businesses.

Identify opportunities for shared drop off locations for organic materials.

The current system for collecting compost and other food scraps is not accessible to all individuals living in Spokane County. Waste reduction advocates can meet with members of the Spokane Food Policy Council, Spokane Food Security Coalition or the Spokane County Regional Solid Waste System (SCRSWS) to identify and develop connections between those without access to on-site compost and those that have the capacity to take the compost.

Use education to reduce edible food waste while increasing the repurposing or composting inedible food and other organics.

Advocate for programs to educate individuals, businesses, and institutions on how to reduce food waste and/or compost to limit the amount of edible food put into the waste management system.

The City of Spokane has a new online waste reduction class for children created by Kristine Major, the Solid Waste Education Coordinator.

Develop outreach and a social marketing campaign regarding food waste.



Public awareness campaigns can help raise community awareness on the why and how to minimize food waste. Love Food Stop Waste, which was launched by Seattle Public Utilities, could be adapted for Spokane County. Currently, the city of Spokane's food waste campaign aims to bring light to the issue of food waste and empower individuals to take action by suggesting simple ways to reduce food waste on a personal level.

Increase the number of strategically placed recyclable/compostable bins in Spokane and include signage about what's recyclable/compostable to the top of pick-up bins. During large community events, such as Bloomsday or Hoopfest, coordination with youth organizations to have volunteers educate the public on how to sort their trash. Work with school districts, hospitals, grocery stores, and restaurants to implement waste reduction programs and to partner with a company like Sunshine Disposal to convert food waste into compost.

Recognize and certify green business practices.

Work with city and county officials to promote local legislation to incentivize schools, hospitals, and restaurants to purchase either fully reusable or compostable packaging. Identify certification programs for businesses that have green practices. Consider programs like TRUE to be recognized for zero waste certification. In Spokane, the Envirocertified program certifies businesses that put practices and policies in place to properly manage hazardous wastes and conserve resources.

Incentivize food businesses and farmers to donate surplus food.

Educate producers on current regulations regarding food donations.

Information can be found at the Washington Department of Health Charity Food Donations webpage.

Educate producers about where they can donate their surplus.

Spokane Edible Tree Project, a program that works with landowners and residents with fruit trees to help harvest unpicked fruit and distribute it to programs that serve families in need.



Advocate with businesses on how they can avoid disposal costs.

The Spokane County Regional Solid Waste System (SCRSWS) provides waste consultations to businesses, schools, and hospitals

Increase funding for programs like farm to food pantry.

This is an innovative way to bring nutritious food to people struggling to put food on the table while also promoting the economic growth and viability of Washington farmers. The Farm to Food Pantry initiative, a partnership with Harvest Against Hunger, helps bridge the gap between hunger relief organizations and farmers through relationship building.

Integrate food waste pickup so it's part of the back-haul of food delivery systems.

The City of Spokane has a new initiative from Growing Neighbors that uses manual and electric bicycles to deliver fresh, local food to people in need while collecting compostable food waste.

Identify funding for equipment to maintain a cold chain when donating food.

Most food rescue organizations do not have the funds to purchase refrigerated trucks. Working with larger food banks in the area to secure grants for purchasing refrigerated trucks could double daily food deliveries.



Strategies	Recommendations	Potential Partners
Reform the residential and business composting program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate for year-round green bin collection service • Advocate for free/low-cost green bin service to every single-family residence • Examine ways to incentivize green bin service for commercial accounts like businesses and multi-family complexes • Identify opportunities for shared drop off locations for organic materials 	Spokane Solid Waste Department, City of Spokane, Sunshine Disposal, Waste Management, Spokane's Sustainable Action Subcommittee on Waste Reduction, Department of Ecology, US Compost Council
Use education to reduce edible food waste while increasing the repurposing or composting of inedible food and other organics.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate for programs to educate individuals, businesses, and institutions on how to reduce food waste and/or compost to limit the amount of edible food put into the waste management system. • Outreach and social marketing campaign regarding food waste • Increase the number of strategically placed recyclable/compostable bins in Spokane and include signage about what's recyclable/compostable to the top of pick-up bins • Recognize and certify green business practices. 	Spokane Solid Waste Dept, Nutrition Education Programs, Department of Ecology, Spokane Regional Health District, Food for All programs
Incentivize food businesses and farmers to donate unsold but still good food.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Educate producers on current regulations regarding food donations. • Educate producers about where they can donate their surplus. • Advocate with businesses on how they can avoid disposal costs. • Increase funding for programs like farm to food pantry. • Integrate food waste pickup so it's part of the back-haul of food delivery systems. • Identify funding for equipment to maintain a cold chain when donating food. 	City of Spokane, WSDA, Spokane Edible Tree Project, Feed Spokane, Food pantries, Harvest Against Hunger, Department of Ecology

APPENDIX

How This Plan Was Developed

In 2016, The Spokane Food Policy Council published the Spokane Regional Food System Inventory. This report, written by members of the Spokane Food Policy Council (SFPC), is a broad assessment of the Spokane regional food system in 2016--the first of its kind for Spokane. It evaluates our local food systems to improve access and quality of food for their residents and to determine their ability to provide food during economic, environmental, and climatic challenges.

The City of Spokane formally adopted the Spokane Regional Food System Inventory in 2017 and requested the Spokane Food Policy Council develop an adoptable food action plan for Spokane that addresses the following: 1. Local food economy opportunities throughout the entire food system; 2. Ways to increase Spokane resident access to healthy food; 3. Strategies to preserve our natural landscape, reduce food waste, and prepare for the impacts of climate change. Based upon this request, the Spokane Food Policy Council took the first steps to create a Regional Food Action Plan.



This plan was developed with support of the Spokane Regional Health District. The recommendations outlined in the Spokane Regional Food Action Plan are solely those of the Spokane Food Policy Council.

The Regional Food Action Plan priorities were determined through the following process:

1. **Food Policy Audit (Spring 2020)** - The Spokane Food Policy Council worked with the Gonzaga Law Clinic to conduct a Food Policy Audit which highlights current food policies and areas where we currently do not have local food policies in place.
2. **Food System Community Survey (Summer 2020)** - An online community survey was conducted inviting all local food system stakeholders to offer insight into local food system priorities. It was widely distributed throughout the community via email, Facebook and through local partners.
3. **Community Forums (Fall 2020)** - To gain a deeper knowledge of the current food system challenges, the Spokane Food Policy Council held two focused community forums seeking community input on food system priorities and potential solutions.
4. **State and Local Government Entities and Community Partner Review (Fall/Winter 2021)** – The draft Spokane Regional Food Action Plan was circulated to various state and local government entities and community partners for review and feedback.

APPENDIX

Research Agenda

Additional research is needed in some areas to help us more fully understand where the best opportunities to improve the local food system exist and how to address challenges. The Spokane Food Policy Council will seek partnerships to explore the following high-priority research areas more in depth.

- Collaborate with local indigenous populations to understand priorities including local fish food system, fish hatcheries and dams to bring back the local salmon population.
- Measure accessibility of healthy food in neighborhoods and communities.
- Engage communities most at risk for diet-related diseases, and immigrant and refugee communities, to identify strategies to improve their access to healthy, culturally appropriate food.
- Develop site criteria and conduct a further inventory of City-owned land available for urban agriculture.
- Assess the food production potential of publicly and privately owned land.
- Assess the opportunities and challenges of businesses that grow and process local and healthy foods.
- Explore the need for local and regional food processing facilities, cold storage, and other food-related infrastructure.

APPENDIX

Goals Summary

Goals	Strategies	Recommendations	Potential Partners
Farmland Preservation	Create visibility for local farms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiate a campaign for City- and County-funded local food production support and promotion. Put together a promotion package for the local food and farm economy. Complete an economic study of positive impact of the local food production sector. 	Washington State University (WSU) economists, Spokane Community Indicators, SpokaneTrends.org, Spokane County Information Systems Department, Spokane County Communications Office, VisitSpokane.com, GSI Inc, SRHD, Spokane Board of Health, Teri Stripes, <i>Economic Development Specialist</i> , City of Spokane, Local media outlets, Live Local INW, Spokane Independent Metro Business Alliance (SIMBA)
	Create a framework for updating local Comprehensive Plans to strengthen farmland preservation policies and revitalize the local food system.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Convene a working group to create framework. Identify working group stakeholders and representatives from the jurisdictions. Work in coordination with the City of Spokane Sustainability Action Sub Committee. 	Cities of Spokane County, City of Spokane Sustainability Action Subcommittee, Spokane Conservation District, Spokane Farmland Preservation Working Group, American Farmland Trust, WSU Extension
	Improve access to farmland.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the establishment of a state funded farm-link program with referral and support services to facilitate the transfer of farms to farmers and take advantage of available federal programs. Increase funding for purchasing agricultural conservation easements. Create a County-level farmland preservation program. Influence Spokane Conservation Futures to encourage more nominations of working farmland into its acquisition portfolio. 	Washington Farmland Trust's Farm to Farmer program, Washington State Office of Farmland Preservation, Washington State Food Policy Forum, American Farmland Trust, State legislators, Cara McNab, USDA, WA Beginning Farmer and Rancher Coordinator, Washington Farmland Trust, Spokane County, Agrarian Trust

Goals	Strategies	Recommendations	Potential Partners
Farmland Preservation	Increase farm labor availability.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educate farmers on farm labor options and business structures. Make a permanent internship program that is accessible to farmers and meets their needs. Educate farmers about the Farm Internship Pilot Program available through the Washington Department of Labor and Industries. Assist farmers in developing their required educational curricula. 	Washington Department of Labor and Industries, Northwest Cooperative Development Center, Small Business Administration, State Legislators
	Increase availability and convenience of local meat and meat processing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support state funding of agricultural programs designed to build small and mid-scale and regional meat producer capacity. Take steps to facilitate shared meat animal ownership so that consumers can more conveniently purchase meat processed by state licensed Custom meat processors. Form a stakeholder group of meat producers and processors to explore options for improving regional access to meat processing facilities and/or building up regional meat processing capacity 	Beefing Up the Palouse, WSU WA Meat Up Production Program, WSDA Regional Markets Program, WSDA Food Safety Program, Local 'custom' meat processors, The Farm Bureau, Past members of the C P o W Livestock Processors, Cooperative Association formerly of Odessa, WA, Weston A. Price Foundation, Farm to Consumer Legal Defense Fund, Heritage Foundation
Increase Local Food Processing	Improve value of a Cottage Food legislation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand list of foods permitted by existing Cottage Food Law to include refrigerated items, acidified low acid products. Remove recipe restrictions for jams, jellies, and preserves. Raise the income cap under Cottage Food law to \$25,000 per year. Extend the term of a Cottage Food license to two years. Expand allowable sales venues to include wholesale and internet sales. Enact Food Sovereignty legislation modeled after laws in more progressive states. 	SRHD, WSDA Regional Markets Program, WSDA Food Safety Program, Institute for Justice, Cottage Food Licensees

Goals	Strategies	Recommendations	Potential Partners
Healthy Food for All	Create opportunities for people to grow and share their own food.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote existing educational programs for gardening, cooking, and food preservation. Increase land availability for community gardens. Support sustainable food systems and urban agriculture education. 	WSU Extension, Catholic Charities Food for All, Spokane Edible Tree Project, Growing Neighbors, Community Centers, Spokane County, City of Spokane, City of Spokane Valley, City of Millwood, City of Cheney, City of Airway Heights, City of Medical Lake, City of Deer Park, City of Newport, City of Liberty Lake, Neighboring Communities, Spokane Community Gardens, Inland Northwest Community Gardens, Inland Northwest Permaculture Guild, Spokane Permaculture, NAACP, Local Farmers, Mutual Aid Groups (Mutual Aid PNW, Spokane County Mutual Aid, BIPOC Mutual Aid Spokane), Little Food Pantries, Housing Organizations and Shelters
	Support and grow equitable food access.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and reduce barriers to access food aid. Promote expansion of food distribution routes to low resource areas. Assess service capacity needs of food pantries and identify opportunities for shared resources (e.g., cold storage, shared kitchen space). Research equity issues in the food system (e.g., availability of culturally relevant food). 	Second Harvest, Northwest Harvest, Catholic Charities Food for All, WSU Extension, Spokane Regional Health District, Spokane County Food Security Coalition, Inland Northwest Farmers Market Association, WA DSHS Market Match Program, WA Farm to School Network, 211, People for People, Eastern Washington, Feed Spokane, Food Not Bombs, Homeless Coalition, Local Food Pantries and Food Assistance Programs, Local Businesses Retailers, Native Health, Community Registered Dietitians, Community Health Workers
	Connect local food system stakeholders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create local food directory. Create resources section for SFPC website. Networking/social opportunities to bring food system stakeholders together. 	Spokane Regional Health District Second Harvest and Food Bank Network, WSU, Spokane County, City of Spokane, City of Spokane Valley, City of Millwood, City of Cheney, City of Airway Heights, City of Medical Lake, City of Deer Park, City of Newport, City of Liberty Lake, Spokane Independent Metro Business Alliance (SIMBA), Spokane Cohousing, Spokane Conservation District, Tilth Alliance, MealConnect, Food Security Coalition

Goals	Strategies	Recommendations	Potential Partners
Healthy Food for All	Support programs and policies that help children, adults and seniors get healthy food.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase enrollment of eligible people into SNAP, WIC, school meals and other government nutrition programs. • Advocate for public and private food assistance programs. 	WSDA / USDA, ALTCEW, City of Spokane, City of Spokane Valley, City of Millwood, City of Cheney, City of Airway Heights, City of Medical Lake, City of Deer Park, City of Newport, City of Liberty Lake, Spokane County, State of Washington, Catholic Charities Food for All, DSHS Basic Food Subcontractors, Public Schools, Spokane Regional Health District, People For People
Reduce Food Waste	Reform the residential and business composting program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate for year-round green bin collection service • Advocate for free/low-cost green bin service to every single-family residence • Examine ways to incentivize green bin service for commercial accounts like businesses and multi-family complexes • Identify opportunities for shared drop off locations for organic materials 	Spokane Solid Waste Department, City of Spokane, Sunshine Disposal, Waste Management, Spokane's Sustainable Action Subcommittee on Waste Reduction, Department of Ecology, US Compost Council
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APPENDIX

Spokane Food Policy Council

The Spokane Food Policy Council is comprised of food system stakeholders with diverse experience and includes representation from Spokane Regional Health District, Second Harvest, Catholic Charities, WSU Extension, SNAP-Ed, farmers, ranchers, regenerative agriculturists, academia, local business owners and food service representatives. Our mission is to advance policies and initiatives that foster a resilient food system in the Spokane area; one that is healthy and equitable for its residents, economy and environment.

Spokane Food Policy Council Members

- ▶ **Elizabeth Abbey*** – PhD, RN
- ▶ **Shawna Beese** – RN, PhD Candidate
- ▶ **Julie Bongard*** – Spokane Regional Health District
- ▶ **Ian Cunningham** – Community Stakeholder
- ▶ **Kendra Dean** – Catholic Charities Eastern Washington
- ▶ **Shaneese Dunigan** – Courage to Grow Farms
- ▶ **Gregg Deponte** – Ole Aina Farms, Northeast Washington Soil Health Stewards
- ▶ **Torie Foote*** – Footehills Farm
- ▶ **Josh Hechtman*** – Repurpose 81
- ▶ **Kathy Hedgcock** – Second Harvest
- ▶ **Nils Johnson** – Rural Resources
- ▶ **Julianne Kellogg** – Crop Scientist in Human Nutrition
- ▶ **Kitty Klitzke** – formerly Futurewise
- ▶ **Pat Munts*** – WSU Spokane County Extension
- ▶ **Andrey Muzychenko*** – Community Stakeholder
- ▶ **Chrys Ostrander** – Permaculture Designer
- ▶ **Kylie Pybus** – WSU Spokane County Extension
- ▶ **Jennifer Stutchell** – Pantry Fuel, LLC
- ▶ **Natalie Tauzin** – Spokane Regional Health District
- ▶ **Kyle Unland*** – formerly Spokane Regional Health District
- ▶ **Lori Van Anrooy** – WSU Spokane County Extension
- ▶ **Stephanie Watson** – River City Youth Ops
- ▶ **Melodi Wynne*** – Spokane Tribal Network
- ▶ **Janell Harvey** – Spokane Food Policy Council Program Director, MBA

**Past Spokane Food Policy Council Member*

APPENDIX

Acknowledgments

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