

## *Support of the Development and Growth of Local Food Systems in North Dakota*

### Executive Statement:

The North Dakota Public Health Association supports the development of connected and planned local food systems that assure that North Dakota nourishes its residents with healthful foods.

The NDPHA recommends that state agencies utilize information technology and mapping to visualize food retail sources and identify gaps in retail food availability to facilitate planning on a local, regional, and statewide basis.

The NDPHA recommends coordination and collaboration among state agencies, tribal governments, and local public health to bring focus and resources to healthful food supplies for all North Dakota residents.

### Background:

People who have access to and can afford healthful foods are healthier. However, there exist barriers to, and disparities in, the accessibility and availability of foods that support healthy eating patterns. Agriculture and food production are important to food producers and to North Dakota's economy, and can play a larger role in helping improve North Dakotans' health.

Many of us experienced for the first time during the COVID-19 pandemic going to a grocery store and not finding food items we were seeking. Food orders continue to be delayed, backordered, and/or out of stock for schools, long term care facilities, grocery stores, and most all places that prepare and serve and sell food. Local food systems partners served as innovative, flexible, and resilient responders to food needs during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Building up local food systems and resources can

- help meet food and nutrition needs of state residents
- support agricultural producers
- benefit the North Dakota economy.

### Quick facts:

If each household in North Dakota spent just \$10 a week on North Dakota-produced food, we could redirect \$ 167 million each year to the state's food producers and keep that money circulating in the local economy.

From 2013-2019, North Dakota lost >20% of its small, rural grocery stores.

Half of North Dakota school districts lost their primary food distributor and food deliveries in November, 2021.

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## Recommendations:

The North Dakota Public Health Association (NDPHA):

- Requests that the great State of North Dakota, with its information technology resources, map all food retailers, including supermarkets, grocery stores, farmers markets, and convenience stores and make the map readily available online and updated annually.
- Requests the coordination and collaboration of the state departments of Health and Human Services, Agriculture, Public Instruction, and Commerce, along with tribal governments, nonprofit and membership associations and organizations, including the North Dakota Public Health Association, to bring focus and resources to healthful food supplies and food systems for our residents.
- Supports the development of connected and planned local food systems that assure that North Dakota nourishes its residents in addition to growing food and commodities that are exported across the United States and the world.

## Key Points:

- Agriculture and food production are important to producers and North Dakota's state and local economies. And yet, North Dakota has zero food hubs (a food hub is a regional center with personnel who aggregate food from multiple sources and help to get food to where it can be prepared and/or sold.)
- Locating places where food is stored, sold, prepared, and served, and how it is transported are crucial for disaster/emergency preparedness, economic development, identification of gaps, and policy decision-making.
- Regional collaboration can be a solution for rural communities. A shared services cooperative in Northeast North Dakota, with a mission to improve access to healthy foods and locally retailed and produced products, is showing some success in meeting the food needs of area residents.

