



# SPECIAL REPORT: Food Security

## Hunger in the Hudson Valley

Our beautiful Hudson Valley is marketed as a land of plenty for people with the means and transportation to enjoy its apple orchards, green fields, farmer's markets, artisanal foods, gourmet supermarkets and agricultural entertainment.

With such bounty in our midst, and a variety of media bursting with recipes, cooking shows and other "foodie" content, the concept of food insecurity in



Poughkeepsie Farm Project

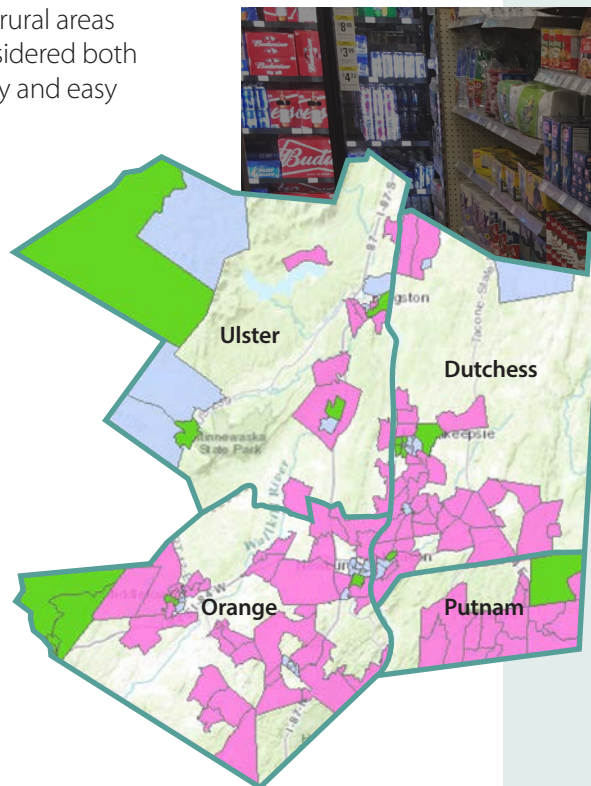
our region can be hard to comprehend. One in 10 people across Dutchess, Orange, Putnam and Ulster counties receives Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits (formerly known as "food stamps"). Many more are not eligible for SNAP but still considered "food insecure", meaning they do not have easy and regular access to quality food and may frequently go hungry.

Where hunger is about food quantity and sufficient caloric intake, food security is about adequate access to food.

People who live in "food deserts" – impoverished urban and rural areas considered both

low-income and low access – lack money and easy transportation to a supermarket. Their food choices are often limited to packaged convenience foods available at walkable mini-marts, bodegas and fast food restaurants. Fresh fruits and vegetables are scarce.

Feeding America and a national USDA survey found that one in seven (14%) of all US households were food insecure in 2014. The need for food assistance can be caused by unemployment/underemployment, low and stagnant wages and the rising cost of living. Food insecurity increased for households headed by single parents, single women and Black and Hispanic adults, and for people living in rural areas and large cities.



### What is hunger?

Chronic **hunger** is defined as not being able to eat enough calories and nutrients to satisfy the body's need for energy. Not surprisingly, poverty and hunger are closely linked.

### What is food insecurity?

The USDA considers people **food insecure** when, during a year, they are uncertain of having, or unable to acquire, enough food to meet the needs of all their family members because they had insufficient money or other resources for food.

### What is a food desert?

According to the USDA, a **food desert** is a low-income census tract where many residents have low access to a supermarket or large grocery store. **Low-income** means the poverty rate is at least 20%, or the median family income for the tract does not exceed 80% of the statewide median family income. **Low access** means it is more than 1 mile to a supermarket or large grocery store in an urban area, or more than 10 miles in a rural area.



### Low-Income, Low Access by Census Tract

Dutchess, Orange, Putnam, Ulster Counties

- Low-Income
- Low Access  
1 mile urban/10 miles rural
- Low-Income/Low Access combined

Date: 5/19/2016  
Source: USDA Economic Research Service, ESRI.  
For more information: <http://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-access-research-atlas/documentation.aspx>



# Barriers to Food Security

In Dutchess, Orange, Putnam and Ulster counties, more than 95,000 people receive benefits through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Many more are considered food insecure.

## MONEY

**MYTH: Federal “food stamp” programs like SNAP are enough.**

**REALITY:** While nearly one in 10 people in our region receives SNAP benefits, they – and many more who are not eligible for SNAP – struggle to make ends meet. Healthy food, including meat, dairy and fresh produce, is expensive. Our nonprofits report that many people they serve are making difficult choices between purchasing food to feed themselves and their children, or paying for rent, utilities, medical bills and transportation, often watering down food to make it go farther.

*We have parents who work, but they just can't make enough money to feed their kids. You can buy cheap food to fill the belly, and that's what a lot of people have to do, but what we're trying to do is offer nutritious food. So not only are they getting a full stomach, but their bodies are getting the vitamins and minerals they need.*

– Christine Hein, Executive Director, People's Place, Ulster County



## ACCESS & TRANSPORTATION

**MYTH: Even without a car, people should be able to take public transportation or a taxi to a supermarket or food pantry.**

**REALITY:** Many people without automobiles living in our region's urban and rural food deserts are limited to walkable neighborhood convenience stores where the predominant choices are sugar, fat and sodium-laden packaged foods. Regular travel to supermarkets and food pantries is challenging – taxis are expensive and bus routes and food pantry schedules can be impossible for those who live in rural areas, work multiple jobs with long hours or have young children in tow. Some buses have limits on how many bags can be brought aboard, further complicating grocery shopping. Those who are homebound or have limited mobility must rely on the kindness of friends, neighbors and nonprofits that deliver food.

*People are having a hard time feeding their families, they're skipping meals, their children are skipping meals. The food that they are able to provide for their families is not nutritionally adequate. You would think that in farmland, more food would be available, but the opposite is sometimes true. Families band together and travel to Kingston and other places with big box grocery stores. They'd rather drive an hour because they know that they can get food in bargain prices that they cannot get out here.*

– Jenny Hansell, Executive Director, North East Community Center, Dutchess County



## LIFE CHALLENGES

**MYTH: Hunger happens in third world countries, not here in America. We have safety-net programs for that.**

**REALITY:** Hunger and food insecurity are complex and often invisible problems, often tied closely to poverty. Yet other life events, such as a medical issue or loss of a spouse, job or mobility, can cause a rapid descent into food insecurity. More than 70% of nonprofits funded through the Farm Fresh Food Initiative are serving 1000 or more people annually, and over half are providing five or more food security-related services. Long term, multi-year funding is the single greatest challenge faced by our partner nonprofits, followed by demand for food exceeding supply.

*Hunger in this area is a huge problem, especially for the working poor. They don't have a safety net. A lot of people – especially single parents or those who are elderly or with medical problems – just fall through the cracks. If they're diabetic, they have to choose whether to eat the starchy food provided by the pantry, which may not be healthy for them. Most of our cancer patients are elderly, single or low-income and need better quality food to help their bodies heal.*

– Kathleen Purdy, Executive Director, Hillside Food Outreach, Putnam County



## STIGMA

**MYTH: People can just get their food at a food pantry or soup kitchen.**

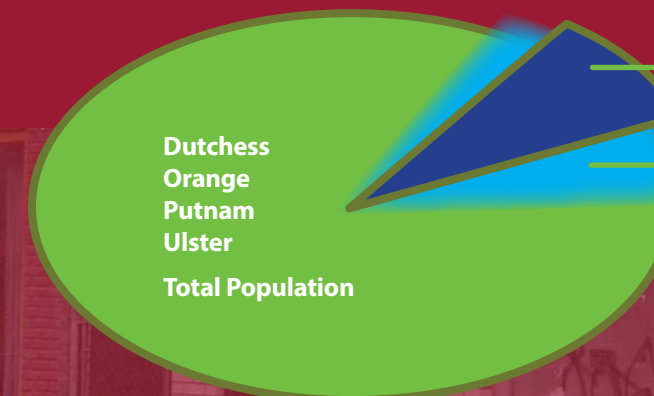
**REALITY:** While emergency food options are available, many people don't want to be seen accepting help. They might feel judged for losing their job, home, transportation or physical mobility, especially if they've been self-sufficient in the past.

*I lost my job, was struggling financially, went to apply for food stamps and made \$20 more than what was allowed, and so I was denied... There's an inaccurate impression of people receiving benefits – no jobs, don't want to do anything, lazy... I'm going to tell you that's not true. The working poor are out there.*

– Paula Wisneski, Ulster County resident



## Who Is Food Insecure?



Nearly one in 10 Hudson Valley residents receives SNAP benefits

Roughly one-third of school-age children are eligible for free or reduced lunches, suggesting there are additional families who are food insecure but ineligible for SNAP benefits

2015 population data:  
<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/>

2015 SNAP data:  
<https://otda.ny.gov/resources/caseload/2016/2016-03-stats.pdf>

2014-15 free and reduced lunch data:  
<https://data.nysed.gov/lists.php?type=county>

Mid-Hudson Community Profiles:  
<http://www.mhvcommunityprofiles.org/>

County	Total Population	% Persons Receiving SNAP Benefits	% Students Free/Reduced Lunch Eligible
Dutchess	295,754	8%	34%
Orange	377,647	13%	41%
Putnam	99,042	3%	16%
Ulster	180,143	12%	43%



# Farm Fresh Food for All

The Local Economies Project of The New World Foundation has provided generous funding to the Community Foundations of the Hudson Valley to establish the Hudson Valley Farm Fresh Food Initiative in partnership with the Food Bank of the Hudson Valley and other nonprofits.

Here's how we're addressing the complex and often invisible challenges of food insecurity:

## Outcomes

*Since inception in 2014*

- More than 1 million pounds of produce distributed by the Food Bank of the Hudson Valley and nonprofit partners
- Tens of thousands of people served
- \$560,000 in grants to nonprofit partners
- \$285,000 in support to Food Bank of the Hudson Valley
- Hundreds of volunteers generously supporting these efforts
- Dozens of partnerships linking nonprofits, schools, pantries and farmers



## ACCESS TO FRESH FOOD

There is no substitute for simply providing farm fresh food to people in need to combat the barriers of **money, access and transportation**. Our nonprofit grantees demonstrate their creativity, resourcefulness, tenacity and dedication daily in achieving this goal. All continue to work long hours on shoestring budgets to feed tens of thousands of people in our region through the following mix of services:

- Free and low cost produce at farmers markets
- Network of nonprofits for gleaning, processing and distribution
- Refrigeration hubs to provide local produce at food pantries
- Mobile farmers markets in urban food deserts
- Emergency food pantries and soup kitchens
- Home delivery of vegetables, dairy and dry goods to seniors and the chronically ill
- Food backpacks for students during the school year
- Summer feeding programs so students don't go hungry
- Increased farmer capacity to donate food
- Reduced-cost CSA shares for low-income residents
- Sustainable food product development



## WRAPAROUND SERVICES

People who are hungry or food insecure are likely to have additional needs. Our nonprofit grantees provide many services and programs that help to overcome **medical and life challenges**, as well as the perceived **stigma** of seeking assistance. Low cost or free food can be a gateway to receiving other services, and vice versa. Some of these programs include:

- Health screening
- Health care services
- Summer camp, pre-school and afterschool programs
- Parenting workshops
- Summer youth employment programs
- Financial counseling and budgeting assistance
- Medical and social transportation for homebound
- Job training
- Case management
- Domestic violence services
- Homelessness prevention services
- Low cost clothing and homegoods
- Rehabilitation services

The nonprofits funded through the Farm Fresh Food Initiative are collaborating externally to deliver services, and have developed partnerships with:

- Health care providers
- Farms
- Schools
- Social service agencies
- Businesses
- Community groups
- Government agencies
- Religious organizations



Family of Woodstock/Everette Hodge Center





Applehoni, a new honey alternative made from local apples, was conceived as a fundraiser for the Food Bank of the Hudson Valley. All profits will support programs that provide farm fresh food to underserved communities from Newburgh to Albany.

Applehoni is an example of how grant awards can be creatively leveraged by charitable organizations to generate self-sustaining financial support for the long term.

## EDUCATION

Hands-on education is a tool for eradicating problems caused by food insecurity, including **obesity** and other **health and environmental concerns**. Reconnecting people to farmland allows adults and children to learn to love growing, tasting and cooking farm fresh vegetables and fruits in their natural state. Our grantees are doing just that through:

- Nutrition education
- School gardens
- Hands-on education programs for children and teens
- Community gardens
- Farm-to-school programs
- Farmer apprentice training programs
- Cooking classes and demonstrations
- Kitchen entrepreneurship programs



Hudson Valley Seed

## LEVERAGING FUNDING

Nonprofits and people across our entire region are working together to solve hunger and food insecurity in the Hudson Valley. The Farm Fresh Food Initiative has adopted a multi-pronged and diversified approach to reaching food insecure children, adults and seniors where they live, in both urban and rural locations.

The first three years have provided tangible funding to nonprofits to increase availability of and access to farm fresh food for food insecure individuals and families.

Grants during the pilot period initiated by the Local Economies Project have yielded significant accomplishments in improving food security across our region. We now seek to build momentum and longevity by raising additional funds to support the work of our nonprofit partners with new multi-year grants, and to continue growing a permanent endowed fund.

### Your Support Matters

Many people in our region struggle to feed themselves and their families. You can help us grow our region's capacity to provide healthy produce to people in need.

Please join us in putting farm fresh food within the reach of all by adding your weight to that of our funding partners and nonprofit collaborators.

Your support is integral to continuing this work.

**Please use the attached envelope or donate online at [CommunityFoundationsHV.org/FarmFreshFood](http://CommunityFoundationsHV.org/FarmFreshFood). Thank you in advance for your generosity.**

## Top 3 Nonprofit Grantee Wishes

- Long term, multi-year grants to ease budgeting
- More fresh food donations – demand outstrips supply
- Improved transportation to get food to people who need it

### With more resources, nonprofit grantees surveyed would:

- Serve more people (57%)
- Expand programming (36%)
- Expand infrastructure (29%)
- Hire more staff to deliver services (21%)







# Thank you for your support!

Funding for the Community Foundations of the Hudson Valley's Farm Fresh Food Initiative generously provided by:

**Local Economies Project of The New World Foundation**  
**Anonymous donors (5)**  
**and**  
**People like you!**



Cornerstone Family Healthcare



St. Thomas Episcopal Church, Amenia

## Nonprofit Collaborators

- Angel Food East\*
- Common Ground Farm\*
- Community Action Partnership for Dutchess County
- Cornell Cooperative Extension Dutchess County
- Cornell Cooperative Extension Ulster County
- Cornerstone Family Healthcare
- Dutchess Outreach\*
- Family of Woodstock\*
- Food Bank of the Hudson Valley\*  
Glynwood
- Hillside Food Outreach\*
- Hudson Valley Community Services
- Hudson Valley Seed, Inc.\*
- Hyde Park Community Garden at St. James Episcopal Church\*
- Kids R Kids Feeding Program
- Kingston YMCA Farm Project\*
- Meals On Wheels of Greater Hyde Park, Inc.
- Meals On Wheels of Greater Poughkeepsie, Inc.
- Meals On Wheels of Greater Wappingers Falls, Inc.
- North East Community Center\*
- People's Place\*
- Phillies Bridge Farm Project, Inc.
- Poughkeepsie Farm Project\*
- Putnam County Community Action Program
- RDC Loaves and Fishes Inc.\*
- Rondout Valley Food Pantry\*
- Rondout Valley Growers Association
- Salvation Army of Greater New York
- Sparrow's Nest of the Hudson Valley
- St. Thomas Episcopal Church\*
- Ulster Corps, Inc.
- Ulster County Community Action Committee, Inc.\*

*\*Farm Fresh Food Initiative grantees*

[CommunityFoundationsHV.org/FarmFreshFood](http://CommunityFoundationsHV.org/FarmFreshFood)