



Food and Nutrition

BACKGROUND: Situation/Challenges:

- Research continues to strengthen the association of the interrelatedness and integration of adequate, appropriate nutrition and the overall health status of an individual.
- Healthy eating is associated with reduced risk for many diseases, including the three leading causes of death: heart disease, cancer, and stroke. Healthy eating in childhood and adolescence is important for proper growth and development and can prevent health problems such as obesity, dental caries, and iron deficiency anemia. (Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The Surgeon General's call to action to prevent and decrease overweight and obesity. Rockville, MD.: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, Office of the Surgeon General, 2001. U. S. Department of Agriculture. Continuing survey of food intakes by individuals, 1994-96, 1998. CDC. Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance—United States, 2007. Morbidity & Mortality Weekly Report 2008;57 (SS-05):1–131. (<http://www.cdc.gov/healthyyouth/nutrition/index.htm>)
- Residents of rural America tend to be older, poorer, less educated and are further challenged by transportation, weather, and geographical conditions in securing healthy, nutritious, affordable sources of food.
- Rural Americans risk further health challenges and increasing morbidity rates as market pressures continue to squeeze small local growers, grocers and retailers from the market place, making access to needed nutritious food source(s) an even greater challenge.
- Health can be compromised by lack of access to proper, quality food and nutrition. Research indicates that many rural Americans do not consume adequate amounts of fresh fruits or vegetables, and they often lack adequate dairy and protein in their diet. (Source: LW Morton and TC Blanchard, "Starved for Access: Life in Rural America's Food Deserts", Rural Realities, Vol 1 | Issue 4, 2007 Columbia, MO <http://www.ruralsociolog>)
- Large chain superstores are not always cheaper on all food items, leaving room for an opportunity for competitive advantage for smaller local growers/producers, grocers, and markets.
- The problems of access to healthy foods are exaggerated in frontier communities which are often co-located in "food deserts", defined as areas with great distance to the closest grocery stores with "fresh" foods.

NRHA Food and Nutrition – Policy Series

This is the first, in a series of dynamic NRHA Food and Nutrition Policy Statements. This series will address food and nutrition issues in rural America for the individual, communities, and institutions, ranging from food safety, food security, obesity and physical activity, Federal Food



and Nutrition Programs, including peri-natal, pre-natal, K-12 Nutrition Programs, Meals on Wheels and other related issues impacting producing, pricing, accessing, transporting, infrastructure, and assuring quality and safety of a nutritious food source and supply for rural America.

(See Appendix: Guiding Principles The (6) principles upon which this policy series is based.)

FOCUS: Healthy Food for Healthy People in Healthy Communities

VISION: All Americans will have access in their communities to a dynamic, integrated food system that meets their nutritional needs, leads to maintaining health and well being, and enhances their overall quality of life.

MISSION: NRHA will work to educate, advocate and propose legislation for needed statutory, regulatory and educational changes in the provision of healthy, nutritious foods for all people living in the United States.

GOAL: NRHA supports a focus on locally produced, high quality foods for consumption in public/private institutions and homes. This will require a focus on: Food and Fiber, Fish and Fowl, and Indigenous Foods with a new sustainability model that enhances the health and well-being of all citizens.

Policy and Community Options

The NRHA support policies that ensure the widespread accessibility and affordability of high quality foods in rural communities and encourages affiliated state rural health associations and other rural stakeholders to promote similar initiatives.

NRHA supports policies that advocate for and recognize that:

- By encouraging local communities to focus on their local food production and distribution – just as in direct health care services provided to the community by rural hospitals, clinics, and health care practitioners which provide a stimulus to the local economy in rural areas – food-related activities can play a significant role in local economic development, as well as promoting greater security and self-reliance within the local rural community.
- Connecting local food production to local markets with fresh, high-quality foods will be needed to hold rural food dollars locally.
- Farmer’s markets and niche food markets have potential for increasing local food resources.
- Developing wholesale prices and distribution networks that are advantageous to rural markets and rural consumers, both individuals and institutions, including, schools, hospitals, prisons, etc.
- Shopping locally to keep dollars in the local community. Additionally, creating campaigns to buy locally can revitalize rural downtowns and increase the community tax base.

- Strengthening the safety net. Encourage existing and create new voluntary organizations that support healthy school lunch programs, health condition-appropriate meals-on-wheels, meal sites, food pantries, community gardens, and other safety net programs.
- Improve the transportation infrastructure and food distribution to facilitate access to food retailers by elderly, handicapped, young children, limited income residents, and busy rural residents who wish to conserve both personal and societal energies in producing, accessing, gathering and preparing nutritious, affordable, safe foods.

Appendix A – Guiding Principles (6)

NRHA supports 6 (six) principles for the building of healthy communities in rural America. Each principle will be expanded upon in later papers.

1. Link local farm production to local consumption. Investments in local processing and storage facilities will allow for large scale consumers (e.g. schools, hospitals, small colleges) in rural communities to buy locally produced goods from smaller scale operations. These new and niche markets will leverage the wealth generated from the land, create jobs and repopulate rural communities.
2. Bring broadband to rural America. Access to broadband Internet empowers farmers and ranchers to make real time marketing decisions to improve their bottom line. At the same time, broadband enables small businesses in rural communities to extend markets from local to global.
3. Take full advantage of ecosystem markets. Markets that exist for water, wetlands preservation, carbon and habitat enhancements will expand in the future representing new income and investment opportunities for rural America. USDA recently take full advantage of these opportunities.
4. Capitalize on outdoor recreation. Rural America is home to many of America's natural wonders. Hunting, fishing, hiking and other outdoor recreational activities represent real economic opportunity for a healthier America. Each year there are over 175M visitors to our national forests.
5. Promote biofuel and renewable energy production. Support a plan to build a robust biofuel industry and clean energy future for America. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) and the 2012 Farm Bill are a beginning to start providing resources to carry out these efforts. These investments will lead to higher incomes and create jobs in rural America.
6. Expand exports. Agriculture generates wealth and opportunity for the country through a robust export effort. Agricultural exports represent 9% of American exports despite the fact that agriculture represents about 1% of total gross domestic product. We enjoy a trade surplus in agriculture, and should do all we can to promote expanded exports
The NRHA supports policies that enhance community development and food systems that reflect the interdependency of our rural areas and our nation.

Policy adopted January 2011.