

CATEGORY: FOOD, NUTRITION & FOOD ACTION INITIATIVES

Food Action Initiatives

“Food action, a term referring to a broad range of initiatives addressing food security, focuses on using food to alleviate health deficits and hunger. Organizations supporting food security, many with a specific focus on food insecurity elements have emerged including food literacy groups like dietician-led school food programs, food upskilling festivals from ecology groups, and Washington State University Bread Lab’s whole-grain bread promotion among cooks, educators, students, and entrepreneurs (Food Tank, 2016; Island Food Network, 2019)” (Fleming, 2021).

Issues of food justice and food insecurity affect vulnerable and historically underrepresented populations disproportionately, including people affected by homelessness, those experiencing poverty, people of color, people with disabilities and elders, children, world populations, and indigenous peoples; hence food action initiatives are linked to issues of social justice ([Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion](#)). In addition, commercial food production, packaging, and distribution affects environmental resources, climate change, ([United Nations](#)) and wildlife habitats ([World Wildlife Fund](#)); hence food action initiatives are also linked to issues of environmental justice and sustainability.

Strategies for food action include traditional and alternative food networks – food alliances, community food banks, expanding number of farmers’ markets, community kitchens and freezers, mobile and pop-up food markets, community bulk buying clubs, food pharmacies, meal programs, and seed exchanges. As noted in previous categories of the horticulture for health framework, community gardens, urban farms, food forests, and small-scale food production sites including home gardens are part of food action. COVID-19 and its food scarcities impact on health generated new research (Payan et al., 2022; Cardarelli et al., 2021).

Related initiatives like the *food is medicine* movement and produce prescription programs (Fleming et al., 2022; Aiyer et al., 2019; Bhat et al., 2021; Gardfield et al., 2021), involving nutritious food/produce are expanding in tandem with the other food action projects, where community nonprofits, health providers and other agencies are trying to address food insecurity and its related health problems.

Refer to Resource Hub: Food, Nutrition & Food Action category: food and nutrition; Horticulture Practices category: consumer driven trends & plant-based businesses; Populations and Programs category: cancer and Landscapes for Health category: food gardens, urban farms, community gardens for related resources.

Key Organizations

[Farm to Cafeteria Canada](#)

[Feeding America](#) – supports a network of over 200 food banks, connecting them with food, funds, and partnership in four key areas: food programs, food rescue, disaster response and hunger research.

[Feeding Florida](#)

[Home | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations \(fao.org\)](#)

[Food Research and Action Center](#)

[Food Secure Canada](#) – an alliance of organizations & individuals seeking “to advance food security & food sovereignty through three interlocking goals: zero hunger, healthy & safe food, and sustainable food systems”

[Food Tank](#) – a global community advocating for food system change

[HEAL Food Alliance](#) – organization focused on building food systems that are sustainable, accessible, fair & health-focused

[Native American Food Sovereignty Alliance](#)

[Planting Justice](#) – aids people impacted by mass incarceration & transition from prison using horticulture, food justice, & growing skill development

[Slow Food USA](#) – “works at creating change in food systems, reconnecting Americans with people, tradition, plants, animals, fertile soils and water that produce food... that is good, clean & fair”.

[UN World Food Program](#)

[USDA: The Patrick Leahy Farm to School Program](#)

Books, journals & epublications on food action initiatives

[American Journal of Health Promotion](#)

Baszile, N., (2021). *We are each other’s harvest: Celebrating African American farmers, land, and legacy*. Amistad.

Canfield, M., (2022). *Translating food sovereignty: Cultivating justice in an age of transnational governance*. Stanford University Press.

Carver Martin, M., Albrecht, D., Monaghan, P., et al. (2022). [Southeast Gainesville community food project to improve food access and sovereignty summary report](#). Grace Grows.

CAWR. (2021). [Everyday experts: How people’s knowledge can transform the food system](#). (free download).

[Civil Eats](#)

Everhardt, S. et al., (2024). *Gardening behind bars: Clinical sociology and food justice in incarcerated settings*. Springer.

[Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development](#)

FAO. IFAD. UNICEF. WFP. WHO. (2023). [The state of food security and nutrition in the world 2023](#). Food and Agriculture Organization; Rome, Italy.

[Food Security The Science, Sociology and Economics of Food Production and Access to Food journal](#)

[Health Promotion International journal](#)

[Journal of Community Health](#)

[Journal of Food Security](#)

[Journal of Hunger and Environmental Nutrition](#)

Little, A. (2019). *The fate of food: What we’ll eat in a bigger, hotter, smarter world*. Harmony.

[Nutrition and Health Journal](#)

Nonini, D., & Holland, D., (2024) *Food activism today: Sustainability, climate change, and social justice (Social transformations in American anthropology, 6)*. NYU Press.

White, S., Brimm, L., Carver, M. et al., (2022). [G.R.A.C.E. community engagement toolkit growing resilience and cultivating equity](#). Grace Grows.

Research & articles on food action initiatives

Recently published selected research & articles:

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- Currey, C.J., VanDerZanden, AM., & Mitchell, J.J. (2018). Increasing student awareness and understanding of food security by integrating a service-learning project into an undergraduate hydroponic food production course. *HortTechnology*, 28(4).
- Darmody, M. (2022). Widening capabilities through a food and sustainability education initiative. *Educational Action Research*, 30(4), 585-603.
- Diekmann, L.O., Gray, L.D., & Thai, C.L. (2020). More than food: The social benefits of localized urban food systems. *Front. Sustain. Food Systems.*, 4, 169.
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Examples of food action initiatives

Acadia University Community Farm in Wolfville, NS offers university students access to nature, plants, food and well-being.

<https://farm.acadiau.ca/home.html>

Acta Non Verba Youth Urban Farm Project (ANV) Oakland CA is a safe outdoor space for children, youth and families focused on nutrition, food production and healthy living, founded & led mainly by women of color.

<https://anvfarm.org/mission/>

Afri-Can Food Basket organization works towards food justice, food access and enhancing nutrition, health & employment of Toronto's African, Caribbean & Black community donating food baskets to food insecure, creating 100 community & backyard gardens with youth horticulture programs.

<https://africanfoodbasket.ca/>

Beacon Food Forest in Seattle Washington is open to the public to forage on the 7 acre plot adjacent to a local park.

<https://beaconfoodforest.org/>

DC Greens is a multiracial organization that advances health equity in Washington DC by building a just and resilient food system. Their work includes community engagement, a produce Rx program, policy advocacy, and a community farm.

<https://www.dcgreens.org>

Feed the Future programs from Food Bank Santa Barbara (CA) has a host of programs for children: Kids Farmers Market, Healthy School Pantry, Food Literacy in Preschool (FLIP), Picnic in the Park (PIP), & Teens Love Cooking. Other programs available to other groups & individuals.

<https://foodbanksbc.org/programs/feed-the-future/>

Fleet Farming, a social enterprise & nonprofit in central Florida offers a model where lawns become edible gardens and micro-farms.

<https://fleetfarming.org>

Food Tank hosts, presents, and participates in a wide range of nationwide events including conferences and summits with a focus on food insecurity and food systems. An event calendar is on their website.

<https://foodtank.com/events-2/>

Grace Grows in Gainesville FL provides community development, therapeutic horticulture, education in partnership with the Univ of Florida Doctor of Plant Medicine Program, these people-plant programs empowering individuals to grow nutritious food, learn vocational horticulture skills while addressing homelessness & food insecurity.

<https://www.gracegrowsgnv.com/>

Greener Partners strengthens community health through equitable fresh food access, abundant gardens and farms. Deaver Wellness Farm is an education and production farm on the hospital campus of Lankenau Medical Center. The Farm Explorer is a mobile farm educational experience.

<https://greenerpartners.org/>

Green Haven Project in Overtown, FL is a non-profit organization that creates community gardens in food deserts and provides locally grown food free to community members. They also provide educational workshops on horticulture and nutrition for youth.

<https://www.greenhavenproject.org/>

GrowNYC promotes food access, agriculture, green space, education; their website offers resources scalable for other communities.

<https://www.grownyc.org/>

Grow2Heal Hospital Garden in southwest Florida uses an affiliated vegetable farm for food production and nutrition education through Baptist Health's Homestead Hospital.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dRNFQHIBYGo>

Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP), funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), is a federal program designed to address financial barriers to fruit and vegetable (FV) purchases among consumers with a low income using financial incentives.

<https://www.nutritionincentivehub.org/>

The Sky Farm at Eskenazi Hospital in Indianapolis, IN is used for patient education and to supply the cafeterias with fresh produce, an example of horticulture-health connections with a food action focus.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4vj6legh9-g>

Infinite Zion Farms Urban Farmers Alliance is located in a food desert in Apopka FL. & has grown from a market to a movement, creating a food alliance, group purchasing power and more.

<https://www.infinitezionfarms.org/>

Kingsbridge Heights Community Center's gardening, nutrition & horticultural therapy programs in the Bronx, NY includes a wide array of plant-based activities in this community setting.

<https://www.khcc-nyc.org/program/gardening-nutrition-and-horticultural-therapy-programs>

Kentucky's Food Action Network works to create accessible and resilient food systems. This includes policy, agriculture & food systems, child feeding programs & institutional procurement program.

<https://kyfoodactionnetwork.org>

Lewis Ginter Botanical Garden- Kroger Community Kitchen Garden grows & donates more than 50,000 pounds of vegetables to Feed More's Meals on Wheels and Kids' Café programs for Central VA children & homebound seniors. Education, workforce development and sense of community are integrated into activities.

<https://www.lewisginter.org/visit/gardens/garden-descriptions/community-kitchen-garden/>

Nature Rx is a nature prescription program through Cornell Health, in Ithaca, NY. Built on the model first developed by Park Rx American, at Nature Rx, Cornell Health clinicians and mental health providers prescribe nature to students.

<https://health.cornell.edu/resources/health-topics/nature-rx>

Nourish Nova Scotia organization administered by registered nutritionists, has resources on food literacy programming, school gardens, recipes, guides/templates for letters/fundraising/volunteer recruitment.

<https://www.nourishns.ca/shep>

Nutrition Garden Rx non-profit works with groups to optimize urban gardens and food forests for climate & health benefits. Models have included garden & programming to support people at risk for and/or who live with diabetes in Portland, OR. Webinar on Nutrition Garden Rx (2024) is the second link.

<https://www.nutritiongardenrx.org/> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xBNp3Lr1e0M>

Plant Chicago is an organization that works towards making cities healthier and more efficient by developing and sharing innovative sustainable food production, energy conservation, and material reuse through several different types of programs like local produce food box & farmers markets.
<https://www.plantchicago.org/>

Sanctuary Farms in urban Philadelphia uses abandoned & neglected areas making them spaces that promote safety, hospitality, nutrition & growth while improving inequities from systemic racial oppression & economic injustice.
<https://www.sanctuaryfarmphila.org/>

Saskatoon Food Bank & Learning Center (Canada) uses an urban farm called *The Garden Patch* to strengthen community & food security using a social return on investment model to validate its success with food production, food donations, & client educational classes.
<https://saskatoonfoodbank.org/garden-patch>

Seattle WA's Food Action Plan has updated its strategic priorities addressing community food insecurity, land use, food waste, & community grant programs.
<https://www.seattle.gov/environment/sustainable-communities/food-access/food-action-plan>

University of Vermont Medical Center launched a *Gardening for Health* program in 2020 to provide education related to introductory gardening, nutrition, and health. Over 8 weeks, participants engage in workshops at home and at UVM Medical Center.
<https://vermontbiz.com/news/2020/july/28/gardening-health-program-launch-university-vermont-medical-center>

Urban Agriculture Resilience Program collaboration between American Public Gardens & local public gardens integrate urban food growing at their sites, in conjunction with local community groups.
<https://www.usbg.gov/urbanagriculture>

Western Maryland Health System has 20 sites for community gardens affiliated with its hospitals, and a *Therapeutic Garden Group* work to create and maintain the gardens as places of respite for staff and healing for patients. The *Garden Group* has an associated Facebook page (second link).
<https://health.maryland.gov/wmhc/Pages/Auxiliary-and-Volunteer-Services.aspx>
<https://facebook.com/flowergrams>

Windy City Harvest "Food as Medicine Project" in conjunction with *Chicago Horticultural Society* participated in this project, with funding from *Nat. Institute of Food & Agric.* Addressing goal #39 to "increase the purchase of fruits and vegetables by low-income consumers participating in SNAP by providing incentives at point of purchase". This included health care education, coupons at farmers' markets, produce boxes, education sessions, *Youth Farm & Corps* programs.
<https://www.chicagobotanic.org/urbanagriculture/veggieRx>

Videos, webinars & websites on food action initiatives

Alachua County Farm to School program in Florida uses its website, video & resources to promote use of locally grown produce in school settings.
<http://farm2schoolalachua.com/>

Cornell University Garden-based Learning: Voices in Food Justice series discusses food sovereignty in local communities. Various leaders present background information, video & group discussion questions.

<https://gardening.cals.cornell.edu/lessons/project-s-o-w-seeds-of-wonder-food-gardening-with-justice-in-mind/voices-in-food-justice/>

Food Action is Happening in People-Plant Programming [YouTube] presented by the Florida Horticulture for Health Network (FLHHN) highlights different food action strategies like mobile food trucks, pop up festivals, food alliances, community food banks, community kitchens and freezers, therapeutic horticulture programming & more.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ORSrtP1qBhU&t=4s>

FoodCloud video explains using food leftovers for Irish communities, scalable for other places. EY Entrepreneur of the Year 2017.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qUQTSJls8qQ&t=47s>

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations provides a video on the State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World, 2023.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_ddcjQf7OYo&t=10s

[Food Justice topic on FoodShare](#) website covers this complex topic referencing the UN Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, poverty reduction lens to pay, combating anti-black racism action plan among other topics.

Food Literacy video from Nourish Nova Scotia explains this issue.

<https://www.nourishns.ca/food-literacy>

Food Navigator website has webinars, podcasts, & a newsletter addressing current topics.

<https://www.foodnavigator.com/>

Netflix documentary *Rotten* highlights the problems with demand for food & food security throughout the world demonstrating how demand for food impacts crops grown in another country.

<https://www.netflix.com/title/80146284>

No Kid Hungry (US) organization focuses on education of kids & parents providing programs on food budgeting, No Kid Hungry campaign, support for summer meals, school breakfast & afterschool meal programs.

<https://www.nokidhungry.org/>

Sowing the Seeds of Success was designed in partnership with the American Horticultural Society and provides instructions re organizational aspects of developing a gardening program, including a new section on engaging low-literacy audiences.

<https://gardening.cals.cornell.edu/lessons/program-tools/planning-organizing/>

Therapeutic Horticulture Activities Database (THAD) activities with a nutrition & food action focus include blueberry activities, building a pallet garden, fring frang potato dish, individual plot gardening, plan/plant & eat the rainbow, pea shoots, kitchen waste: regrow avocado seeds.

<https://hort.ifas.ufl.edu/therapeutic-horticulture-activities-database/activities-a-to-z-list/>

The University of California's Global Food Initiative is addressing the issue of how to feed a growing world population sustainably and nutritiously. Website highlights include conference overviews, a mapping of environmental pressures of food production, trends, and other information.

<https://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/initiative/global-food-initiative>

Unlocking Plant Resources to Support Food Security and Promote Sustainable Agriculture video and research paper examines the global state of edible plants, particularly key neglected and underutilized species as a strategy for addressing food security.

<https://nph.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/ppp3.10145>

Qajuqturvik Community Food Centre in Nunavut northern Canada builds food sovereignty in Iqaluit using food, traditions and a daily community hot meal, as well as offering Piruqtuviniit food boxes, food education, these intended to increase healthy food access.

<https://www.qajuqturvik.ca/>

Related organizations

[Beacon Food Forest](#)

[Dreaming Out Loud Urban Horticulture](#)

[Michigan Urban Farming Initiative](#) (Detroit)

[National Institute of Food and Agriculture Hunger & Food Security Programs](#)

[The Hunger Project](#)

[Urban Harvest \(St. Louis, Missouri\)](#)

[UNICEF](#)

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