

A Challenge to the Health of Our Young People:  
**A Primer on Federal, State  
and Local Policies that  
Impact School Food**



Presented by the New Haven Food Policy Council

*The Greater New Haven Childhood Obesity Summit*

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## INTRODUCTION TO THE POLICY PRIMER

The New Haven Food Policy Council was created by City Ordinance in June of 2005 and consists of members who are New Haven residents appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by the Board of Aldermen. The Council was formed in the interest of developing a coordinated, collaborative approach to address the complex issue of community food security, and convenes a group of informed, engaged community stakeholders representing the breadth of resources serving our local food system. The goal of the Council is to create better food for a better city. This includes increasing access to affordable, healthy food; strengthening the local economy by supporting local, small-scale food producers and regional farms; and promoting sound land-use and tax policies that support a regional, sustainable food system.

Soon after it began officially meeting, the Council identified school food and proper childhood nutrition as its current focus. The Community and Economic

Development Clinic of Yale Law School engaged CitySeed as a non-profit client in order to work with the New Haven Food Policy Council to craft this policy primer. (CitySeed administers the New Haven Food Policy Council, providing staff and support.) The Council is currently working directly with a number of community organizations including the Wellness Committee, Common Ground High School, CitySeed, Yale University Dining Services and the Sustainable Food Project, the Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity, school food service workers, parents and other community members to explore strategies for supporting healthier school food and better childhood nutrition.

It is our hope the information in this policy primer will enrich the community dialogue already taking place about school food in New Haven and help build consensus around the importance of fresh, healthy school meals.

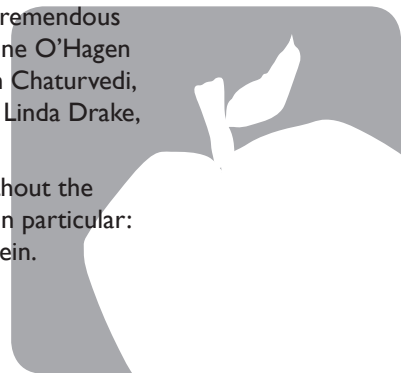
## Acknowledgements

The New Haven Food Policy Council would like to thank the Leadership Greater New Haven Obesity Team for inviting us to be a part of its summit and offering the opportunity to make this presentation.

The Council extends its gratitude to the New Haven Board of Aldermen, the City of New Haven and the Community Foundation for Greater New Haven. Ultimately, it is because of their support that the New Haven Food Policy Council was created and has been able to develop the capacity to deliver this school food policy primer.

This paper would not have been possible without the work of the Community and Economic Development Clinic of Yale Law School. A tremendous thank you to Robin Golden for her supervision and insight, Anne O'Hagen for taking the lead role in drafting this paper, and B.J. Ard, Shaan Chaturvedi, and Camille Pannu for their contributions. Thanks, too, goes to Linda Drake, Becky Elias, Benjamin Gardner, Jiff Martin and Erica Mintzer.

And lastly, this policy primer would not have been possible without the passion and dedication of the following four council members in particular: Tagan Engel, Roberta Friedman, Jennifer McTiernan and Pete Stein.



# **A Challenge to the Health of our Young People**

## **A Primer on Federal, State and Local Policies that Impact School Food**

This paper explores federal, state, and local policies that affect the ability of public school districts - like New Haven's - to serve fresh, healthy school meals. Ultimately, our goal is to increase student consumption of fresh cooked foods and fresh fruits and vegetables while decreasing consumption of processed foods. The intent of this policy primer is to create an awareness of the complexities of the school food system and to highlight opportunities for improvement. Changing the quality of school food requires action at the federal, state and local levels. At this stage of assessment, our recommendations for action are designed to be a jumping off point and include the following:

1. At the federal level, increase federal reimbursements for school lunches and directly tie that increase to greater use of fruits and vegetables
2. At the federal level, clarify the nutrition standards for school meals so only healthy, predominately fresh foods meet the criteria
3. At the state level, encourage Connecticut schools to participate in the Department of Defense Fresh Fruit & Vegetable Program and Connecticut's Farm-to-School Program
4. At the local level, establish and implement a plan to successfully transition to a self-operating school food service program that optimizes existing resources, infrastructure and expertise to economically serve fresh, healthy food

It is our hope the information in this policy primer will enrich the community dialogue already taking place about school food in New Haven and help build consensus around the importance of fresh, healthy school meals. Through this, we will identify more specific recommendations as a part of building a platform for policy change at the federal, state and local levels. Together with the community's resources and expertise, such policy changes would support fresh, healthy school food that promotes the health, well-being and academic achievement of our schoolchildren.



## **P**ublic schools feed millions

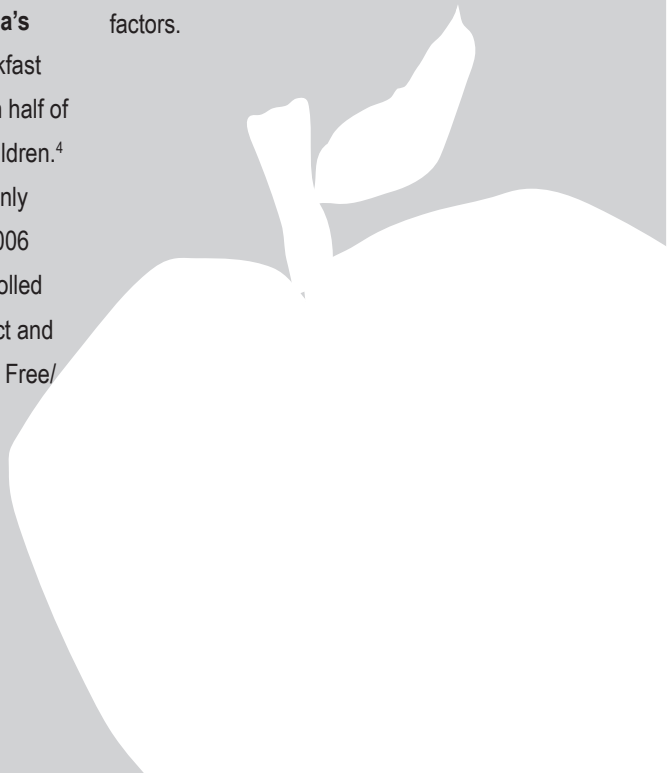
**of children a day.** Every school day, the National School Lunch Program provides low-cost or free lunches to over thirty million children across the country.<sup>1</sup> The related school breakfast program provides free or reduced cost breakfasts for nearly eight million children.<sup>2</sup> During the 2005-2006 school year, New Haven Public Schools fed 4,460,463 meals to students.<sup>3</sup>

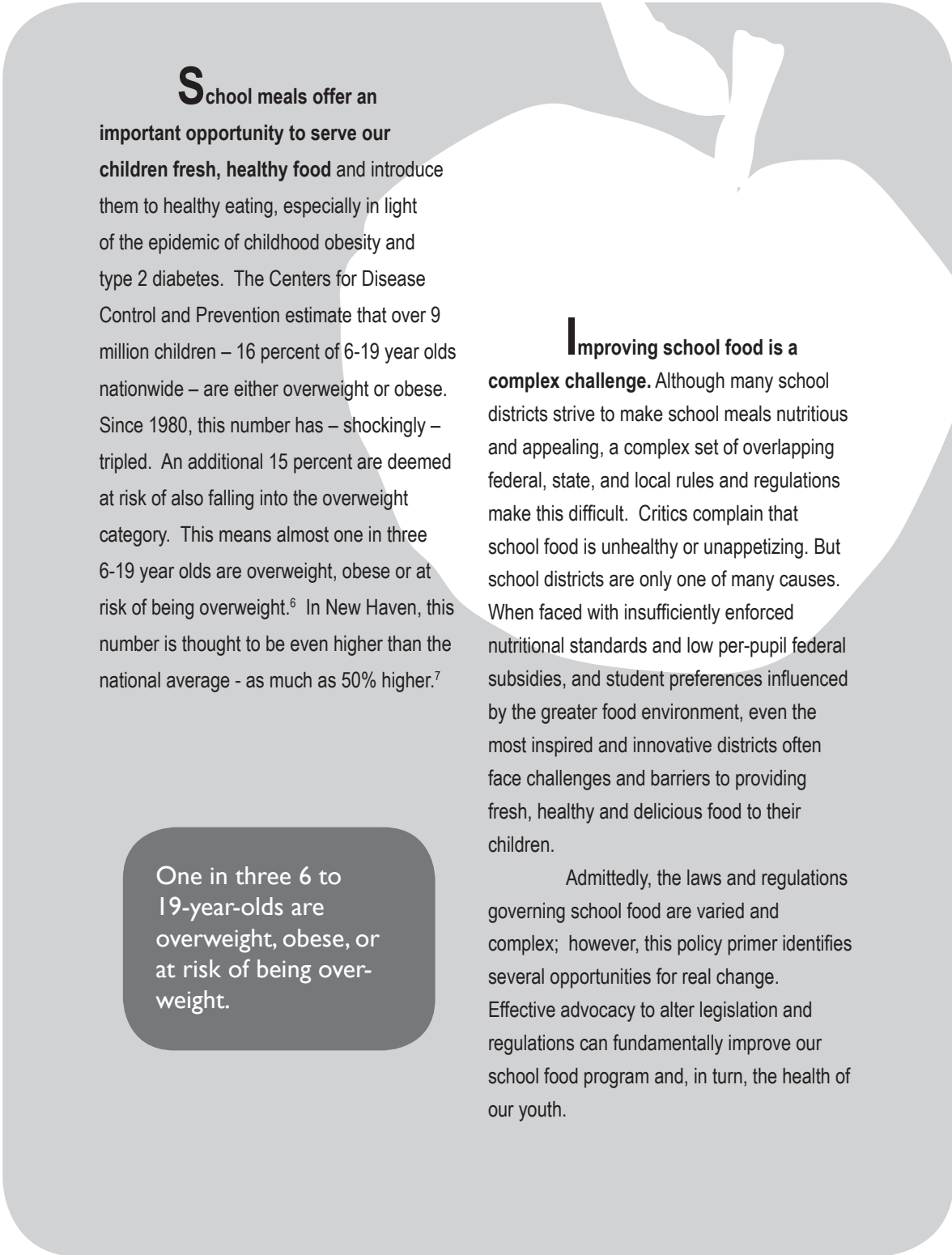
**S**chool meals provide the **major source of nutrition for America's neediest children.** Together, the breakfast and lunch programs provide more than half of the recommended daily calories for children.<sup>4</sup> For many children, these may be the only meals they can rely on. In the 2005-2006 school year, 20,273 students were enrolled in the New Haven Public School District and 61.7% of these students qualify for the Free/Reduced-Price Meals.<sup>5</sup>

In New Haven Public Schools, 61.7% of students qualify for free and reduced-price meals.

## **H**igher quality meals lead to increased academic performance.<sup>8</sup>

Recent studies have linked diet quality, not just amount of calories or having breakfast, to academic performance. Eating more fruits and vegetables and less processed food is correlated with increased academic performance independent of socio-economic factors.





**S**chool meals offer an important opportunity to serve our children fresh, healthy food and introduce them to healthy eating, especially in light of the epidemic of childhood obesity and type 2 diabetes. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate that over 9 million children – 16 percent of 6-19 year olds nationwide – are either overweight or obese. Since 1980, this number has – shockingly – tripled. An additional 15 percent are deemed at risk of also falling into the overweight category. This means almost one in three 6-19 year olds are overweight, obese or at risk of being overweight.<sup>6</sup> In New Haven, this number is thought to be even higher than the national average - as much as 50% higher.<sup>7</sup>

One in three 6 to 19-year-olds are overweight, obese, or at risk of being overweight.

**I**mproving school food is a complex challenge. Although many school districts strive to make school meals nutritious and appealing, a complex set of overlapping federal, state, and local rules and regulations make this difficult. Critics complain that school food is unhealthy or unappetizing. But school districts are only one of many causes. When faced with insufficiently enforced nutritional standards and low per-pupil federal subsidies, and student preferences influenced by the greater food environment, even the most inspired and innovative districts often face challenges and barriers to providing fresh, healthy and delicious food to their children.

Admittedly, the laws and regulations governing school food are varied and complex; however, this policy primer identifies several opportunities for real change. Effective advocacy to alter legislation and regulations can fundamentally improve our school food program and, in turn, the health of our youth.

## How the National School Lunch Program Works Nationally and in Connecticut

**After World War II, in an attempt to reduce “income-based inequalities in food access” and better nourish school children in the event of another conflict, Congress instituted the National School Lunch Program.**

To effectively advocate for changes in school food, one must understand the history and statutory context of the various school food programs. The school lunch program formally began in 1946 with the passing of the National School Lunch Act.<sup>9</sup> This act expanded and solidified the existing patchwork of programs and regulations that provided school lunches.<sup>10</sup> Until the National School Lunch Act, charities furnished many of the school lunches nationwide.<sup>11</sup> By 1937, fifteen states authorized local school boards to establish school lunch programs and sell meals at cost.<sup>12</sup> Despite this seemingly broad coverage, only four states provided limited support for impoverished students.<sup>13</sup> By providing nationwide coverage for low-income students, the National School Lunch Act sought to address “income-based inequalities in food access among children” and expanded the provision of lunches in schools.<sup>14</sup> Most importantly, the new school lunch program set clear nutritional standards and provided for meal subsidies.

From its beginnings, the National School Lunch Act worked in unison with the Agricultural Act, now called the Farm Bill, to create the commodities program,<sup>15</sup> which was expanded in subsequent years.<sup>16</sup> Through this program, schools receive free food distributed through the

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Everything from meat and cheese to beans and rice are available for schools. Additionally, schools are eligible for bonus commodities that the Secretary of Agriculture has deemed overabundant.<sup>17</sup>

Over the next twenty years from 1946 to 1966, the school lunch program was revised periodically to reflect new realities or more enlightened policies.<sup>18</sup> For example, after the National School Lunch Program established a national precedent of providing hot meals to students, Congress supplemented and expanded the program with the Child Nutrition Act of 1966.<sup>19</sup> The Child Nutrition Act, among other things, extended the Special Milk Program and began a pilot breakfast program. Although the National School Lunch Program and the Child Nutrition Act are renewed individually, they are closely related and the text of each law frequently refers to the other.

These laws outline the framework for the school breakfast and lunch programs, yet laws alone are insufficient to create programs. To implement these programs, the authorized administrator - in this case, the Secretary of Agriculture - must promulgate rules and guidelines. Under the various school food programs, the most important set of regulations is the United States Department

of Agriculture (USDA) Nutrition Standards.<sup>20</sup> These standards set the minimum nutritional requirements for reimbursement. Similarly, the rules promulgated under these programs outline the reimbursement provisions, the most relevant to New Haven schools being Provision 2, which allows school districts with a sufficient number of eligible children to provide free meals to all students.<sup>21</sup>

States, too, play an important role. Under the National School Lunch Program, all funds are disbursed directly to the states for their further apportionment.<sup>22</sup> To receive these funds, states with at least average per capita income are required to match thirty percent of the federal funds.<sup>23</sup> The Healthy Food Initiative, a Connecticut state law that authorizes the Board of Education to expend funds to meet federal matching requirements, also provides an additional \$.10 reimbursement per meal for schools that maintain high nutritional standards for competitive foods, which are foods sold outside the free lunch program.<sup>24</sup>

With an understanding of the history and administration of the school breakfast and lunch programs, we can begin to find out what factors inhibit the ability of school districts to provide fresh, healthy meals and offer substantive recommendations on how to improve the school lunch program.

**Until the National School Lunch Act was established in 1946, charities furnished school lunches nationwide.**

**Under Provision 2 of the National School Lunch Act, New Haven Public Schools are eligible to serve free lunch to every student.**

## Recommendation # 1: Increase Federal Reimbursement Rates and Tie Them to Increased Use of Fresh Fruits and Vegetables



The low federal reimbursement rate is the major reason that keeps many school districts from serving healthy, fresh, and unprocessed foods. This low reimbursement rate is part of the nation's overall food policy. As this paper will briefly explore, federal agricultural policy is a primary factor in the "cost-calorie paradox," where less calorically dense foods are more expensive than more calorically dense foods. At a local grocery store, for example, one dollar could purchase 520 calories in Archway Iced Oatmeal Cookies or 110 calories in McIntosh apples. Similarly, one dollar will buy 620 calories of 7UP soft drink, but only 220 calories of Tropicana orange juice. The more processed the food, the less expensive it is. This means that, generally, the less healthy the food is, the less expensive it is. Because of this paradox, schools faced with these anemic reimbursement rates have little choice but to serve highly processed, less healthy foods. This paper will now turn to a discussion of the broader context in which these federal reimbursement rates operate.

**The low reimbursement rate is the primary factor that keeps school districts from serving fresh, healthy, unprocessed food.**

**The more processed the food, the less expensive it is.**

## Costs Per Meal

For the 2007-2008 school year, the maximum federal reimbursement rate in the contiguous states was \$2.64 per meal for lunch and \$1.61 per meal for breakfast.<sup>25</sup> Ann Cooper, the head chef in the Berkeley Unified School System in California and leader in the healthy school lunch movement, estimates that schools spend \$1.68 on payroll and overhead alone for each lunch.<sup>26</sup> This leaves \$0.96 per lunch for ingredients. Many would agree that this is insufficient for a healthy, appetizing meal. Even with free or heavily subsidized commodities, school districts have limited resources with which to prepare meals.

Because schools rely on these low federal reimbursement rates, they are forced to make difficult choices. Schools can attempt to keep costs within the federal reimbursement rates. For reasons explored below, severely limiting per meal ingredient costs may lead to the serving of more processed, calorically dense foods. Alternatively, schools can choose to exceed the federal reimbursement rates and operate at a shortfall. To compensate for this shortfall, schools frequently offer competitive foods, or foods served outside the school lunch program. These competitive foods might be a la carte offerings served alongside the subsidized meal or food and drinks in vending machines. Frequently, the competitive foods are highly processed and high in calories, such as sodas, sport drinks or chips. They are often the least healthy food served in the school.<sup>27</sup> For many schools, few options seem feasible: they can serve less expensive, less desirable lunches or they can supplement their food service budgets with revenues from junk food. Because New Haven has a mandated floor for nutrition requirements, the school system does not face this problem as acutely as other school districts.

Most schools resort to serving highly processed foods to combat financial burdens. However, by optimizing existing structures in place, (such as central kitchens), more schools are striving to explore alternative, fresh food options.<sup>28</sup> Connecticut's support through the Healthy Food Initiative has further reinforced this promising development.

**One dollar can purchase 520 calories worth of oatmeal cookies, or 110 calories worth of Macintosh apples.**

## Federal Reimbursement Rates in the Broader Policy Context

**Competitive foods are snack and meal items sold in schools that are in competition with foods provided through federal programs.**

Federal reimbursement rates are particularly problematic when considered in the broader context of a federal food policy that favors processed foods. Although a detailed analysis of federal food policy, generally, and the Farm Bill, specifically, is outside the scope of this paper, a brief overview is critical for understanding the school food problem.

Federal food policy, particularly the Farm Bill, creates strong incentives to grow a limited range of crops.<sup>29</sup> Because of these incentives, there is a glut of these crops on the market, which dramatically depresses their prices. When the price of one input is markedly lower than the price of another, producers tend to shift toward the lower-priced input. In the case of food, the low price of corn, specifically, encourages farmers, food producers and manufacturers to substitute corn for other ingredients.<sup>30</sup>

As nutrition and food policy scholars, such as Dr. Marion Nestle, have noted, corn is everywhere.<sup>31</sup> Because these inputs are so inexpensive, foods containing more of these highly processed, and high calorie, ingredients tend to be less expensive than their less processed counterparts. Food manufacturers, too, use low-priced corn-based ingredients. Frequently, they substitute high fructose corn syrup for sugar and include it in the majority of processed foods.<sup>32</sup> Often manufacturers include high fructose corn syrup even when sugar would not normally be used. Similarly, cattle ranchers substitute corn for grass, despite corn's detrimental effects on cows, because it is an inexpensive way to quickly fatten the animal. This corn-fed beef contains significantly more fat than grass-fed beef, further degrading the quality of our food and contributing to the obesity epidemic. Because these inputs are so inexpensive, foods containing more of these highly

processed, and high calorie, ingredients tend to be less expensive than their less processed counterparts.<sup>33</sup>

This policy-caused price difference between corn-based crops and others is further reinforced by the strict federal agricultural regulations that discourage farmers from growing non-commodity, or specialty,<sup>34</sup> crops, such as lettuce, strawberries, or tomatoes, on land traditionally used for commodity crops (such as soybeans, corn and cotton).<sup>35</sup> This makes farmland for specialty crops – which are fresh fruits and vegetables - relatively scarce, and thus, relatively expensive. With the artificially high price of land for these crops, fresh fruits and vegetables become more expensive and out of reach for underfunded school districts.

This brief overview is designed to be a rough examination of how a few federal policies create a difference in cost that cash-strapped school districts facing low reimbursement rates cannot ignore.

Increasing reimbursement rates, especially those tied to fresh fruits and vegetables, is essential for providing healthier foods in our schools. In the current context of farm subsidies and low reimbursement rates, schools cannot easily afford fresh fruits and vegetables. In an attempt to increase fresh fruit and vegetable consumption, the USDA initiated the creation of the Department of Defense Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program,<sup>36</sup> which will be examined further in this paper. In addition to this program, by increasing reimbursement rates and linking them to whole foods and fresh fruits and vegetables,<sup>37</sup> Congress can ensure that more children receive these more nutritious foods each day.<sup>38</sup>

## Recommendation #2: Revise Federally Mandated Nutrition Standards to Promote Healthier Meals



### USDA Standards

The federal nutritional standards promulgated under the National School Lunch Act and the Child Nutrition Act are a distinct, but important, cause of the nutritional failings of America's school lunch program. Simply put, these standards are a lax implementation of a misguided paradigm. To understand the shortcomings of these standards, one must first understand their specific requirements and then explore the larger problems with nutrient based standards.

To qualify for federal reimbursement, schools must meet the nutrition standards issued by the USDA.<sup>39</sup> Schools can choose to comply with these standards by planning meals in accordance with nutrient based standards<sup>40</sup> or traditional food-based standards.<sup>41</sup> Under the nutrient based standards, for example, school lunches must provide one third of the recommended daily calories.<sup>42</sup> Saturated fat may contribute no more than ten percent of the meal's calories.<sup>43</sup> The meal must also be "moderate in salt and sodium," though there is little guidance as to what constitutes a "moderate" amount.<sup>44</sup> The traditional food-based approach has similar nutritional requirements.<sup>45</sup>

Despite the similarities of the two approaches, their enforcement mechanisms differ. Under the nutrient based standards, meals must undergo nutrient analysis to determine the quantity of each nutrient in the meal.<sup>46</sup> To ensure standardization of nutrient

content whenever that meal is produced, the USDA requires schools to create and use standardized recipes.<sup>47</sup> Computer software, complete with nutrient analyses for standardized recipes, assist schools in menu planning.<sup>48</sup> For the traditional food-based standards, the USDA requires only that the school serve a certain number of ounces of a class of food, such as "meat or meat alternative."<sup>49</sup> New Haven, like many school districts, chooses to plan its menus based on the food-based option, which offers more latitude in meeting the guidelines.

**Agricultural subsidies favor non-food, commodity crops, making fresh fruits and vegetables - considered to be specialty crops - to become too expensive for underfunded school systems to afford.**

## Problems in the Administration of the Standards

As with many policy initiatives, the most significant problems arise in the implementation. Although there are some theoretical problems with the nutrition standards (outlined below), there are two substantial problems in the implementation of the standards. First, the traditional food-based standards allow the use of undesirable, processed foods. Second, the nutritional standards for all menu-planning options do not address America's childhood obesity epidemic.

Although the traditional food-based standards are relatively simple and seem reasonable, implementing them is problematic. Simply put, few would describe the "traditional" foods as "traditional." "Traditional" bread is not preservative-free whole grain bread, but rather highly processed, enriched white bread containing corn syrup and dough conditioners. Similarly, French fries would qualify as a traditional vegetable, while tortilla chips and cheese dip would qualify as a grain and a meat alternative. Because processed foods are sufficient to qualify for reimbursement and are substantially less expensive, schools operating under the traditional food-based menu planning option are likely to serve large quantities of processed foods. In New Haven, for example, a typical lunch may be "[a] grilled cheese sandwich [and] potato stars," "chicken nuggets [and] potato rounds," or "beef taco meat [and] nacho chips with cheese sauce" accompanied by milk and fruit juice or a fruit cup.

Given the epidemic of childhood obesity, another failing of the nutrition standards is that they are minimum requirements. Although providing enough calories was the primary goal when the school lunch program began in 1946, a different challenge has emerged: an overabundance of calories, with too many of them coming from unhealthy sources.<sup>50</sup> By setting minimums, rather than maximums, for calories, the nutrition standards are fundamentally misguided. Just as the standards require no more than thirty percent of calories to come from fat, they could also specify calorie maximums.<sup>51</sup>

**The traditional food-based standards for menu planning allow the use of processed foods and fail to address America's childhood obesity epidemic.**

## Fundamental Problems with the Nutrient Standard Paradigm

In addition to the problems of implementation and drafting mentioned above, the nutrition standards rest on a faulty paradigm. Fat and calories have become the metric by which schools measure food quality. The USDA, however, is not solely to blame for this development. This is part of a nationwide trend which writer and food activist, Michael Pollan, calls “nutritionism.”<sup>52</sup> Rather than focus on eating limited portions of nutritious, appealing, minimally processed foods, Americans have deconstructed every food into a list of nutrients. At one point, fat was a nutrient to be avoided, followed by carbohydrates. Lately, Omega-3 fatty acids are rising in popularity.

Although there is nothing inherently bad in valuing the components of an item of food, Pollan argues that this paradigm is problematic because it blurs the distinction between food and “foodlike substances.”<sup>53</sup> A whole grain bread, one made of wheat, yeast, water, and salt, mentioned earlier is a food, while a highly processed, enriched white bread complete with stabilizers and preservatives is a foodlike substance. Under the nutritionist paradigm, some might favor this foodlike substance if it is, for example, lower in carbohydrates and higher in B vitamins – despite the fact it is categorically less nutritious than whole grain bread. This cultural blind spot is important to keep in mind when analyzing current nutrition standards.

Several revisions to the USDA nutrition standards could encourage a shift in thinking about nutrition. For example, the USDA could eliminate the nutrient based menu

planning. Because so many school districts opt for traditional food-based menu planning, this revision would be largely symbolic. Nonetheless, this could signal a significant change in thinking about child nutrition. Additionally, the USDA standards could disqualify or limit certain foods, such as white breads or breaded chicken, from receiving federal reimbursement. This would likely draw significant disapproval from many interested parties, but it could encourage a move toward less processed foods.

The move from foodlike substances to food will likely be incremental, and seemingly small changes may necessitate larger structural change. Policy makers and advocates must recognize this reality and take it into consideration when planning and implementing change. Shifting to healthy, fresh, unprocessed foods may lead to different practices for purchasing frequency, food distribution, packaging and labor. For example, preservative free, whole grain bread has a shorter shelf life than processed bread and may need to be purchased, packaged, and delivered more frequently and in smaller amounts. Admittedly, these changes will take time, planning, adaptability, and cooperation of all stakeholders involved in school food.

**Recommendation # 3: Promote the Participation of Connecticut Schools in Both the Department of Defense Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program and Connecticut's Farm-to-School Program**



In concert with the USDA, the Department of Defense (DoD) runs the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program. Started in 1994 as part of an effort to expand the fruits and vegetables available for schoolchildren, the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program combines the DoD's purchasing and distribution system with the USDA's child nutrition programs.<sup>54</sup> Building on the DoD's robust system for purchasing and delivering food to military installations, such as military bases and veterans' hospitals, the USDA and DoD agreed to authorize the DoD to deliver to schools as well.<sup>55</sup> After a successful pilot program in 1995, the program was opened to all states and formalized as part of the 2002 Farm Bill.<sup>56</sup>

Individual schools may choose at the beginning of each school year to participate in the DoD program. In doing so, "a minimum of \$1,000 and a maximum of 16% of the school's Total Entitlement can be set aside to buy fresh fruits and vegetables through the DoD program."<sup>57</sup> States can limit which products the schools may purchase through the program. Schools have the right to refuse up to twenty percent of the produce given to them, due to poor quality.<sup>58</sup> The Defense Personnel Support Center has 874 currently available products including, "lettuce, . . . watermelon, . . . apples, . . . [and] celery sticks."<sup>59</sup> Either states or their schools can purchase directly from the Defense Personnel Support Center.

**The Department of Defense Fresh Fruit and Vegetable program began in 1994 to expand the fruits and vegetables available to school children.**

**Local farms can provide produce to the DoD Fresh Fruit and Vegetable program.**

Providing low-cost fruits and vegetables for schools is a critical piece of the federal child nutrition program. Given the low federal reimbursement rates, subsidization is essential for every child in the nation's poorest schools to receive an adequate amount of unprocessed fruits and vegetables. Utilizing the Department of Defense's immense purchasing power and federal subsidization, the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program is an innovative way to improve child nutrition. More schools should be encouraged to participate in the DoD Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program in order to access produce that is made available at a subsidized rate.

Local farms, in addition to schools, should be encouraged to participate in the DoD Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program. While the DoD requires a streamlined purchasing program with strict guidelines, Schools can request to source food from specific locations if the price is right.<sup>60</sup> Linda Hubeny, Program Director for the Connecticut Food Distribution Program, reports that though the DoD sources its produce mainly from large national food suppliers, local farms can source to them as well. She explains that when local farms have produce available, they can advertise their product and prices on The Marketplace website, where schools file their DoD orders.<sup>61</sup> Such opportunities are available when seasonality permits, making local food cheaper and more accessible.

Another method to increase fruit and vegetable availability in schools is to utilize Farm-to-School programs, which create nutritional, educational, and communal benefits for students.<sup>62</sup> Farm-to-School, which has over 1,900 participating programs in the U.S. and approximately 70 programs in Connecticut, aims to serve fresh, healthy meals in schools by connecting schools to local farms, while also improving student nutrition, promoting nutrition and health education, and supporting local farms.<sup>63</sup>

By sourcing locally, students receive food that is fresher and more nutritious than food that has traveled a far distance. “When things are grown far away, they’re typically harvested early and they’re not allowed to fully ripen,” which prevents produce from reaching its potential vitamin and mineral content, explains Cynthia Sass, from the American Dietetics Association.<sup>64</sup> Along with being harvested early to make up for travel time, studies show that by eight days

after harvest, produce such as spinach greens, lose nearly one half of their nutrients.<sup>65</sup> Sourcing food locally minimizes travel time and maximizes the nutritional value of foods.

In addition to greater nutritional value of foods, Farm-to-School programs create opportunities for developing meaningful community relationships, fostering experiential learning, and implementing nutrition-based curriculum. Farms are able to increase their markets by sourcing to schools, improving business viability and strengthening the local economy. These relationships may also encourage schools to make farm visits, where students and teachers make a direct connection where food comes from, how it is grown, and who grows it. Greater understanding and familiarity with about and access to fresh, food, as studies have shown, can lead to healthy food choices, a more balanced diet, and enhanced academic performance.<sup>65</sup> Notifying schools and local farmers of Farm-to-School Program and the Department of Defense Fruit and Vegetable Program opportunities are crucial. This is an excellent opportunity for schools, farmers, and the community to work together to bring more healthy, fresh produce into the schools, with the potential for some of it to be sourced from local farms.<sup>66</sup>

**In 2007, conventionally grown Washington State apples were offered for sale at the Hartford Regional Market in Connecticut for approximately \$30 per case, while ecologically grown Connecticut apples were available for only \$19 per case.**

**Recommendation #4:** Establish and implement a plan at the local level to successfully transition to a self-operating school food service program that optimizes existing resources, infrastructure and expertise to economically serve fresh, healthy food.



Finally, school districts can evaluate and modify their own school food policies and procedures to promote fresh, healthy food. When school districts issue Requests for Proposals (RFPs), price is frequently determinative. As previously noted, costs are the limiting factor for most school food service programs, so it is reasonable that districts are primarily concerned with the costs listed on the bids. Low costs, however, are frequently correlated with less healthy, more highly processed foods. To encourage healthier, less processed food in our schools, school districts must examine more qualitative factors in assessing RFPs. Before beginning that inquiry, one must first examine the institutions in place at the district level and how these affect the quality of food.

There are two primary methods for operating a school food service program. In some school districts, food service management companies are hired as contractors to operate the school food service program for a fee. Alternatively, school districts can run a self-operating food service program. Self-operating school districts purchase, prepare, and serve food on their own.

Encouraging more fresh fruits and vegetables and less processed foods requires different strategies depending on whether the district is self-operating or uses a food service management company. If a district uses a food service management company, the district would have to include any special bid requirements or specifications for fresh

foods, unprocessed foods or local foods in the RFP that determines the selection of the food service management company. Percentage of fruits and vegetables served, for example, could be written in to the RFP as an important qualitative measure. Minimizing the amount of processed foods could be a requirement. Contractors with seemingly endless offerings of breaded chicken products and enriched white bread would receive lower scores than those with grilled chicken breasts and whole grain bread. Appeal of the food is also critical, so that children will eat it. RFPs could also encourage local sourcing of fruits and vegetables from regional farms. Assessing contractors on qualitative, rather than simply quantitative, measures could initially be more challenging, but the gains from providing more fresh, unprocessed foods would be substantial. Prioritizing fresh, unprocessed foods would come at a financial cost that could be borne by an increase in the federal reimbursement rate.

**School districts can place a greater priority on freshness and food quality.**

## **Self-operating school districts enjoy a number of benefits, including:**

**More flexibility in terms of:** menu planning; changing menus in response to supply limitations or opportunities; offering meals that reflect the cultural diversity of the student body; purchasing, especially in regards to creating relationships with local farms, distributors and suppliers; and the ability to be responsive to the needs and concerns of students, parents and school food service workers.

**Significant room for innovation,** including creating curricular tie-ins such as school gardens and cooking activities.

**The potential to partner with community organizations and groups,** vocational schools, and local farms to promote fresh, healthy school food.

**The ability to establish a regional purchasing group to secure lower pricing for school food;** schools can collaborate with other non-profit food service programs in their area (such as hospitals, universities and other school districts) to create a regional purchasing group.

## Next Steps for New Haven

**The decision in April 2008** – made only a few weeks ago – by the New Haven Board of Education to return to a self-operating school food service program demonstrates vision and leadership! The opportunity we are presented with right now, to reimagine the New Haven School Food Service Program, is exciting in its potential and massive in its scale. Almost all of the school districts in the country that have succeeded in serving fresh cooked, unprocessed, delicious food have done so by becoming self-operated programs. The transition from a food service management company to a self-operated program takes clear planning, coalition building and vision to be successful. Given how timely this paper is, we have therefore developed a set of very specific local-level recommendations we hope will be helpful as New Haven makes this transition.

- 1** Work together with the Wellness Committee, the New Haven Food Policy Council, the School Food Service Workers, Parents, the New Haven Obesity Coalition and other stakeholders to create a vision for a successful and sustainable food service system. In New Haven we have the added advantage of having the opportunity to learn from Yale Dining Services and the Sustainable Food Project's experience cooking sustainable food and transitioning to a self-operation.
- 2** Create a Task Force of key leadership that has the ability to call on food service industry professionals nationwide to learn both "best practices" from successful self-operating programs and strategies for avoiding mistakes. This Task Force could also help conduct an assessment of existing resources and how best to utilize them in the creation of a fresh-food based, self-operated food service program
- 3** Craft a job description that will attract a highly skilled, cutting edge Executive Director who is knowledgeable about sustainable, fresh cooked foods in school food service programs, good labor relations, and school food administration. There is a burgeoning movement in sustainable fresh school food sweeping the country, and with the right language and dissemination of the job posting, we could attract great leadership to New Haven.
- 4** Examine the possibility of hiring a Temporary Director to run the summer food service program while we utilize all our resources to craft a comprehensive plan for the fall and do a national search for the Executive Director. This year will be a year of transition: financial and culinary change and success will not be instantaneous. Most of the food ordering for next year has already been done. We will need to use up the processed foods that have already been ordered, be creative about how to incorporate new items into the menus, and work with our new leadership to develop many new purchasing and labor systems.
- 5** Optimize the usage of the Central Kitchen to create fresh cooked delicious food for our students, and to fully utilize the culinary talents of our cooks. While at first glance a central kitchen can seem industrial and antithetical to the idea of fresh cooked food, many of the good programs in the country including those in northern California have central kitchens. They can be an opportunity to concentrate our culinary talent, cook food from scratch, and process more of our commodity foods in-house.

## **Conclusion**

Improving school food involves policies at the federal, state and local levels which all impact the ability of a school district like New Haven to serve fresh, healthy school food. Through advocacy and involvement, we can change school food in New Haven, Connecticut, and across the nation. Policy changes, such as increasing the reimbursement rate, utilizing both the DoD Program and Connecticut's Farm-to-School Program, and executing a successful transition to self-operation can greatly improve school food and child nutrition. Already, the community conversation about school food has uncovered the possibilities and encouraged collaboration. The New Haven Board of Education has already demonstrated leadership on this issue by becoming self-operating. Together, we can show the city, state, and country the possibilities of better food for our children!

**Individuals wishing to be involved  
in making healthier food a reality in the New Haven Public  
Schools can take the following steps to help make change:**

- Enjoy fresh, healthy food together with your family! Eat meals together.
- Contact your school principal, PTA president and school board members to let them know that healthier school food is important to you. Emphasize the importance of increasing fresh foods and decreasing processed foods.
- If your school has a School-Based Wellness Committee, become an active member of it.
- Join the Working Group for School Food to raise your voice for healthier school food policies. For more information or to join, please email [nhfpc@cityseed.org](mailto:nhfpc@cityseed.org), call 203-773-3736 or visit the Council's website at: [www.NewHavenFoodPolicyCouncil.com](http://www.NewHavenFoodPolicyCouncil.com).
- Learn about where your food comes from by visiting local farms and farmers' markets. Find pick-your-owns, farm stands and farmers' markets at [www.BuyCTGrown.com](http://www.BuyCTGrown.com) and [www.CitySeed.org](http://www.CitySeed.org) or by calling 203-773-3736.
- Join a community garden or plant a backyard garden to grow your own food and introduce your family to fresh produce and seasonality. For more information about joining or starting a community garden, contact the New Haven Land Trust at [gardens@newhavenlandtrust.org](mailto:gardens@newhavenlandtrust.org) or 203-562-6655. Contact the Urban Resources Initiative at [www.yale.edu/uri](http://www.yale.edu/uri) to learn about the Community Greenspace Program. Community groups receive technical advice and assistance, including soil testing, material supplies (including plant materials and garden supplies) and training by URI staff to revitalize neighborhood green spaces.



## Recommended Reading & Resources

Legislation and models for nutritious, locally-grown school food programs exist throughout the country. Below are selected resources, reports, and guides to farm-to-school policies.

### Farm-To-School Programs

Connecticut (Department of Agriculture): <http://www.ct.gov/doag/cwp/view.asp?a=2225&q=299424>.

Hartford: <http://users.rcn.com/foodserv/saersyn.html>

The School Nutrition Association of Connecticut (SNACT). <http://www.ctsfsa.org/>

Massachusetts (Department of Agricultural Resources): [http://www.mass.gov/agr/markets/Farm\\_to\\_school/](http://www.mass.gov/agr/markets/Farm_to_school/)

Rhode Island (Farm Fresh Rhode Island): <http://www.farmfreshri.org/learn/docs/urbanag-school.pdf>

Vermont (Vermont Food Education Every Day): <http://www.vtfeed.org/>

California (Community Alliance with Family Farmers): <http://www.caff.org/programs/farm2school.shtml>

### National and International

Center for Food & Justice: <http://www.farmentoschool.org/>

Food and Nutrition Service. United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). 2008. Farm to School Cafeteria Initiatives. [http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Governance/Policy-Memos/2008/SP\\_14-2008-OS.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Governance/Policy-Memos/2008/SP_14-2008-OS.pdf)

“Largest School Districts Discuss School Food,” Sustainable Food Library:

<http://www.sustainablefoodlab.org/article/view/17941/1/2373>

“School Meals: The Rome Model” from the Sustainable Food Library:

<http://www.sustainablefoodlab.org/article/view/14192/1/2373>

### Farm-To-School and Child Nutrition Legislation

Connecticut Public Act No. 06-135 §21. <http://www.cga.ct.gov/2006/ACT/PA/2006PA-00135-R00HB-05847-PA.htm>.

Connecticut. Public Act No. 06-63. <http://www.cga.ct.gov/2006/ACT/PA/2006PA-00063-R00SB-00373-PA.htm>

Massachusetts General Law Part I, Title II, Chapter 7 §23B. <http://www.mass.gov/legis/laws/mgl/7-23b.htm>.

State of Washington. Local Farms – Healthy Kids and Communities Act.

<http://apps.leg.wa.gov/documents/billdocs/2007-08/Pdf/Bills/Session%20Law%202008/6483-S2.SL.pdf>.

United States 108th Congress. The Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2009.

[http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=108\\_cong\\_public\\_laws&docid=f:publ265.108](http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=108_cong_public_laws&docid=f:publ265.108)

### Reports

Connecticut Food Policy Council. 2004. “What’s Cooking in Connecticut Schools?: Ideas for Healthy Kids and Healthy Schools.” <http://www.foodpc.state.ct.us/images/Report.pdf>.

The Hartford Food System – Economic Feasibility, Survey Report, and Final Report on Farm-To-School Program (Debbie Humphries and Elizabeth Fleming, 2005):

[http://www.ct.gov/doag/lib/doag/farm\\_to\\_school\\_images/F2S\\_BACKGROUND\\_RPT.pdf](http://www.ct.gov/doag/lib/doag/farm_to_school_images/F2S_BACKGROUND_RPT.pdf)

[http://www.ct.gov/doag/lib/doag/farm\\_to\\_school\\_images/F2S\\_SURVEY\\_RPT.pdf](http://www.ct.gov/doag/lib/doag/farm_to_school_images/F2S_SURVEY_RPT.pdf)

[http://www.ct.gov/doag/lib/doag/farm\\_to\\_school\\_images/F2S\\_FINAL\\_RPT\\_-\\_dec\\_2005.pdf](http://www.ct.gov/doag/lib/doag/farm_to_school_images/F2S_FINAL_RPT_-_dec_2005.pdf)

Winne, Mark. March 13, 2005. “Connecticut Farmers and Students: A Healthy Combination.” The Hartford Courant.

<http://www.foodandsocietyfellows.org/publications.cfm?refID=79547>

## End Notes

<sup>1</sup> Food and Nutrition Service, United States Department of Agriculture, National School Lunch Program Fact Sheet, 1, <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/lunch/AboutLunch/NSLPFactSheet.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> Food and Nutrition Service, United States Department of Agriculture, The School Breakfast Program, 2, <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/breakfast/AboutBFast/SBPFactSheet.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> New Haven Public Schools, 2005-2006 School Year, Food Service Division, ARAMARK, 4/10/07

<sup>4</sup> Stavroula Osganian, et al., Changes in the Nutrient Content of School Lunches: Results from the CATCH Eat Smart Food Service Intervention, *PREVENTATIVE MEDICINE* 24 (4): 400 (July 1996). [a health intervention that used the national school lunch/b'fast programs as "defaults" or "controls" and showed that even with a healthy diet intervention, students are eating more than ½ of their recommended calories (by age) at school.]

<sup>5</sup> Strategic School Profile 2005-2006, New Haven Public School District. Connecticut State Department of Education, CT General Statutes 100-220(c) p1. <http://www.csde.state.ct.us/public/der/ssp/dist0506/dist060.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.childrenshospitals.net/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Homepage&TEMPLATE=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm&CONTENTID=34357>

<sup>7</sup> <http://nursing.yale.edu/Community/task-obesity.html>

<sup>8</sup> Michelle D. Florence, Mark Asbridge, & Paul J. Veugeliers, Diet Quality and Academic Performance, 78 J. SCHOOL HEALTH 209 (2008).

<sup>9</sup> National School Lunch Act of 1946, Pub. L. No. 396, 60 Stat. 231 (current version at 42 U.S.C. §§ 1751 to 1769i (2008)).

<sup>10</sup> See that report generally.

<sup>11</sup> Food and Nutrition Service, United States Department of Agriculture, National School Lunch Program: Background and Development, [http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Lunch/AboutLunch/ProgramHistory\\_2.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Lunch/AboutLunch/ProgramHistory_2.htm)

<sup>12</sup> The Bureau of Agricultural Economics, USDA, The School Lunch Program and Agricultural Surplus Disposal, Miscellaneous Publications No. 467, October 1941.

<sup>13</sup> Id. Indiana, Missouri, Vermont, and Wisconsin established limited programs to feed poor students. In both Indiana and Missouri, school boards in cities over a certain population, which Indianapolis and St. Louis, respectively, were the only qualifying cities in each of those states, provided lunch to poor students. Vermont had provisions allowing for free lunch for all impoverished

children. In Wisconsin, school boards could provide meals below cost.

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.grist.org/comments/food/2007/09/27/index.html>

<sup>15</sup> National School Lunch Act of 1946, Public Law 396, 79th Congress, June 4, 1946, 60 Stat. 231. (current version at 42 U.S.C. §§ 1751 to 1769i (2008)). Also note that the term "commodity" can be a bit confusing in the school food context. For the purpose of this paper, there are two types of commodities: the foods in the Commodity Program and those receiving subsidies in the Farm Bill (as will be explored later.) The former is a much more expansive definition, whereas the latter includes only five crops: corn, soy, wheat, rice, and cotton.

<sup>16</sup> Agricultural Act of 1949, Pub. L. 439, § 416, 81st Congress, Oct. 31, 1949, 63 Stat. 1058. (current version in scattered sections of 2 U.S.C., 7 U.S.C., 16 U.S.C. & 21 U.S.C. (2008)).

<sup>17</sup> Food and Nutrition Service, United States Department of Agriculture, Schools/CN Commodity Programs, [http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/programs/schcnp/schcnp\\_faqs.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/programs/schcnp/schcnp_faqs.htm)

<sup>18</sup> For example, amendments to the National School Lunch Act in 1952 modified the program for implementation in states and territories outside the lower forty-eight states. Public Law 518 July 12, 1952, 66 Stat. 591. (current version at 42 U.S.C. §§ 1751 to 1769i (2008)).

<sup>19</sup> Child Nutrition Act of 1966, Pub. L., 89-642, 89th Congress, Oct. 11, 1966, 80 Stat. 885-890.

<sup>20</sup> 7 C.F.R. § 210.10.

<sup>21</sup> 7 C.F.R. § 245.9.

<sup>22</sup> 42 U.S.C. § 1753 (2000).

<sup>23</sup> 42 U.S.C. § 1756 (2000). See also C.G.S.A. § 10-215b (2002) (authorizing the Connecticut State Board of Education to expend funds to meet federal matching requirements.)

<sup>24</sup> C.G.S.A. §§ 10-215b, 10-215f (2002).

<sup>25</sup> Federal Register/Vol. 72, No. 131/Tuesday, July 10, 2007/Notices 37510

<sup>26</sup> Tom Philpott, Cookin' It Old School, *GRIST*, Sept. 27, 2007, <http://www.grist.org/comments/food/2007/09/27/>

<sup>27</sup> As mentioned earlier, Connecticut attempts to solve this dilemma by offering an additional \$.10 per meal for schools that do not serve unhealthy competitive foods. Although this is valiant effort, an additional \$.10 is likely insufficient to attain the goals outlined in this paper.

<sup>28</sup> Ann Cooper, Lunch Lessons: Changing the Way We Feed Our Children, 2008 <http://www.lunchlessons.org/>

html\_v2/lunch\_lessons.html

<sup>29</sup> The Farm Bill currently encourages the production of corn, wheat, soybeans, rice, and cotton. Farm Security and Rural Investment Act (Farm Bill) of 2002, Pub. L. No. 107-71, 116 Stat. 134 (codified as amended in scattered sections of 2 U.S.C., 7 U.S.C., 16 U.S.C. & 21 U.S.C.).

<sup>30</sup> Current corn prices are near record highs, but corn has historically been a very inexpensive input. See Ephraim Leibtag, Corn Prices Near Record High, But What About Food Costs?, AMBER WAVES, February 2008, at 11 available at [www.ers.usda.gov/AmberWaves/February08/PDF/CornPrices.pdf](http://www.ers.usda.gov/AmberWaves/February08/PDF/CornPrices.pdf). Over time, industries have adapted to the low price of corn relative to other inputs and created production systems accordingly. Because these systems have been in place for so long, they threaten to persist even in spite of the increasing price of corn.

<sup>31</sup> Marion Nestle, *What to Eat*, North Point Press: New York (2007).

<sup>32</sup> Another Michael Pollan Article

<sup>33</sup> Because cows are ruminants, they require a specific pH in their stomachs. Corn, however, increases the acidity in their stomachs putting them at increased risk of infection. To decrease the chance of infection, many cattle ranchers give each animal prophylactic antibiotics, leading to increased human exposure to unnecessary antibiotics.

<sup>34</sup> Specialty crops are defined as fruits and vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, and nursery crops (including floriculture) by the United States Department of Agriculture. [http://www.usda.gov/documents/SPECIALTY\\_CROPS.pdf](http://www.usda.gov/documents/SPECIALTY_CROPS.pdf)

<sup>35</sup> Jack Hedin, Op-Ed., My Forbidden Fruits (and Vegetables), N.Y. TIMES, Mar. 1, 2008, at A17.

<sup>36</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Services, Department of Defense Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program <http://www.fns.usda.gov/FDD/programs/dod/default.htm>

<sup>37</sup> There are many methods by which federal or state-purchasing incentives could increase the amounts of fresh fruits and vegetables in our school food programs. Analysis of how this program would be most effective is beyond the scope of this paper.

<sup>38</sup> Increasing the nationwide consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables would greatly increase the demand for these products. Although an increase in demand alone would increase prices, these higher prices may induce more farmers to grow non-commodity crops. It is unclear which effect would dominate; further analysis beyond the scope of the paper is required. Even if prices of fresh fruits and vegetables rose in the face of surging demand, the long term effect on fresh fruit and vegetable prices

may be positive or neutral if this creates an organized lobbying effort by schools to eliminate federal subsidies that artificially alter the market for crops.

<sup>39</sup> Nutrition Standards and Menu Planning for School Lunches, 7 C.F.R. § 210.10.

<sup>40</sup> Id. § 210.10(c).

<sup>41</sup> Id. § 210.10(k).

<sup>42</sup> Id. § 210.10(b)(2).

<sup>43</sup> Id. § 210.10(b)(3)(iii).

<sup>44</sup> Id. § 210.10(b)(3)(vi).

<sup>45</sup> Id. § 210.10(d)(1).

<sup>46</sup> Id. § 210.10(h)(3).

<sup>47</sup> Id. § 210.10(h)(8).

<sup>48</sup> Id. § 210.10(h)(4).

<sup>49</sup> Id. at § 210.10(k)(1)(i).

<sup>50</sup> See presentation to the National Nutrition Summit on May 30, 2000 by Dan Glickman, US Secretary of Agriculture: <http://archives.foodsafety.ksu.edu/fsnet/2000/6-2000/fs-06-01-00-02.txt>.

<sup>51</sup> E.g., 7 C.F.R. § 210.10(b)(3)(ii).

<sup>52</sup> MICHAEL POLLAN, IN DEFENSE OF FOOD 27 (2007).

Michael Pollan is the Knight Professor of Journalism at UC Berkeley. Some of his other books include *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals* (2006) and *Food Fight: The Citizen's Guide to a Food and Farm Bill* (2007).

<sup>53</sup> Id. at 147.

<sup>54</sup> U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE., FOOD AND NUTRITION SERV., DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE FRESH FRUIT AND VEGETABLE PROGRAM, [http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/programs/dod/DoD\\_FreshFruitandVegetableProgram.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/programs/dod/DoD_FreshFruitandVegetableProgram.pdf)

<sup>55</sup> See if I can track down the agreement between the Food and Nutrition Service and the Defense Personnel Support Center.

<sup>56</sup> Farm Security and Rural Investment Act (Farm Bill) of 2002, Pub. L. No. 107-71, 116 Stat. 134 (codified as amended in scattered sections of 2 U.S.C., 7 U.S.C., 16 U.S.C. & 21 U.S.C.).

<sup>57</sup> U.S. DEP'T OF AGRIC., supra note 46. Department of Defense (DoD) Fresh Fruit and Vegetable program F-1 <http://www.kyagr.com/consumer/food/lunch/documents/SECTIONFDOD.pdf>

<sup>58</sup> 42 U.S.C. § 1755(a) (2008).

<sup>59</sup> [http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/programs/dod/DoD\\_FreshFruitandVegetableProgram.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/fdd/programs/dod/DoD_FreshFruitandVegetableProgram.pdf)

<sup>60</sup> Linda Hubeny, Connecticut Food Distribution Program, Department of Administrative Services Program Director for Department of Defense Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program and USDA Commodities for schools.

<sup>61</sup> The Marketplace [http://www.das.state.ct.us/FedFood/Default\\_070131.asp](http://www.das.state.ct.us/FedFood/Default_070131.asp)

<sup>62</sup> To ensure that Connecticut's students eat the freshest local produce, while still benefiting from the DoD's

purchasing power, state and federal lawmakers could develop a pilot program based on revised guidelines that emphasize sourcing from local or regional farms. There are several possible indicia of success. Most importantly, the DoD could evaluate the success of the program at schools by examining the cost, freshness, and consumption of produce provided through the more local program. Tracking produce refusal rates and surveying head chefs could provide the needed feedback. Additionally, the DoD could examine the change in food prices. For many cash-constrained districts, even a small fall in the price of already subsidized food could be determinative of overall school food quality. As fuel costs reach record levels, the savings from local produce could be significant.

<sup>63</sup> P.L. 89-642, 89<sup>th</sup> Congress, Oct. 11, 1966, 80 Stat. 885-890

<sup>64</sup> Public Health Advocacy Institute, Mapping School Food: A Policy Guide 28 (2007)

<sup>65</sup> U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Services, Department of Defense Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program <http://www.fns.usda.gov/FDD/programs/dod/default.htm>

<sup>66</sup> Farm Security and Rural Investment Act (Farm Bill) of 2002, Pub. L. No. 107-71, Public Law 396, 79<sup>th</sup> Congress, June 4, 1946, 60 Stat. 231.

<sup>67</sup> Public Health Advocacy Institute, Mapping School Food: A Policy Guide 28 (2007). National School Lunch Act of 1946, Pub. L. No. 396, 60 Stat. 231 (current version at 42 U.S.C. §§ 1751 to 1769i (2008)).

<sup>68</sup> Public Health Advocacy Institute, Mapping School Food: A Policy Guide 28 (2007)

<sup>69</sup> United States Department of Agriculture, Technical Assistance for Specialty Crops Program, [http://www.usda.gov/documents/SPECIALTY\\_CROPS.pdf](http://www.usda.gov/documents/SPECIALTY_CROPS.pdf)

<sup>70</sup> Linda Hubeny, Connecticut Food Distribution Program, Department of Administrative Services Program Director for Department of Defense Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program and USDA Commodities for schools.

<sup>71</sup> The Marketplace [http://www.das.state.ct.us/FedFood/Default\\_070131.asp](http://www.das.state.ct.us/FedFood/Default_070131.asp)

<sup>72</sup> What is Farm-to-School? Farmtoschool.org, <http://www.farmtoschool.org/aboutus.php>

<sup>73</sup> Farm-to-School Connecticut Profile Statistics, Farmtoschool.org <http://www.farmtoschool.org/state-home.php?id=28>

<sup>74</sup> Jeff Nield, The Tyee, *Local Means Nutritious, Even in Winter*. January 4, 2007. <http://100milediet.org/local-means-nutritious-even-in-winter#more-171>

Cynthia Sass, Spokesperson for the American Dietetics Association "When things are grown far away, they're typically harvested early and they're not allowed to fully ripen. Nowadays, we know a lot more about these naturally occurring substances in produce — it's not just vitamins and minerals, but all these phytochemicals and really powerful disease-fighting substances — and we do know that when a food never really reaches its peak ripeness, the levels of these substances never get as high."

<sup>75</sup> Storage Time and Temperature Effects Nutrients in Spinach, Journal of Food Science, vol 69, no. 9. March 18, 2005

<sup>76</sup> Michelle D. Florence, Mark Asbridge, & Paul J. Veugelers, Diet Quality and Academic Performance, 78 J. SCHOOL HEALTH 209 (2008).

## **CRITICAL SCHOOL FOOD DATES**

- 1946-** Creation of National School Lunch Program (NSLP)
- 1962-** Amendment to NSLP to adjust funding based on participation rate and state need
- 1966-** Child Nutrition Act signed into law
- 1966-** Creation of School Breakfast Program
- 1973-** Imitation cheese now called cheese: FDA repeals the imitation rule requiring that food-like substances be labeled as imitation
- 1975-** School Breakfast Program receives permanent authorization
- 1980-** USDA and HHS release Nutrition and our Health: Dietary Guidelines for Americans
- 1981-** President Ronald Reagan and the USDA propose that ketchup be considered a vegetable
- 1994-** Food nutrition labels made mandatory on all food products
- 1995-** Creation of the Department of Defense Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program
- 1999-** Creation of the New Haven Nutrition Committee
- 2004-** Obesity rate among 6 to 11-year-olds increases from 6.5% to 18.8% since 1980
- 2004-** Junk food banned in New Haven Public Schools
- 2005-** Creation of the New Haven Food Policy Council
- 2006-** Connecticut bans soda in schools under The Healthy Food Initiative
- 2008-** New 5-year Farm Bill likely to be signed into law
- 2009-** Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act up for review
- 2012-** New 5-year Farm Bill legislation

## **The New Haven Food Policy Council and Community Food Security**

The New Haven Food Policy Council was assembled to improve the level of community food security and the quality of the local food system in our city.

A food policy council works to strengthen the local food system by connecting its various sectors. The local food system is the network of entities that encompasses everything about the production and consumption of food, including farms, distributors, retail stores, and emergency service providers. Since access to and distribution of food is an important part of the food system, the public sector, including such transportation systems and schools, also play an important role. A food policy council encourages networking between these sectors and develops methods for greater collaboration on projects and programs related to food issues.

Food policy councils are made up of a diverse group of people representing different sectors of the community food system. Membership often includes grocers, restaurant owners, chefs, anti-hunger advocates, farmers, wholesalers and distributors, food processors, government employees, environmentalists, school system representatives, non-profit employees, community and religious leaders, scholars and concerned citizens. Since its creation, the New Haven Food Policy Council represents a coordinated locus of activity connecting these efforts and encouraging collaborative, far-reaching problem solving.

Phaedra Ebron  
Connecticut Food Bank

Tagan Engel  
Chef & Community Member-at-Large

Roberta Friedman  
Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity

Jennifer McTiernan H., Chair  
CitySeed

Frank Mitchell  
New Haven Ecology Project

Diana Richter  
Greater New Haven Emergency Food Council & Downtown Evening Soup Kitchen

Peter Stein  
Regional Growth Partnership

Erin Sturgis-Pascale  
New Haven Board of Aldermen

Linda Townsend-Maier  
Greater Dwight Development Corporation



[www.newhavenfoodpolicycouncil.com](http://www.newhavenfoodpolicycouncil.com)