

NEW JERSEY FOOD DEMOCRACY COLLABORATIVE POLICY AGENDA 2026 – 2027



In 2025, the New Jersey Legislature passed a joint resolution – [AJR229](#) – recognizing a Right to Adequate Food for all in NJ, including access to safe, nutritious, culturally appropriate food and the sustainability of local food systems. This policy agenda lays out specific actions that can help make that right a reality by strengthening food access, local markets, worker opportunity, and resilient food and farming practices across the state.

Together, these recommendations are intended to support the state in moving from recognition to realization of the Right to Adequate Food. Where applicable, actions are coded to reflect alignment with the New Jersey Office of the Food Security Advocate's priority focus areas, highlighting opportunities for coordination and shared accountability.

We see our agenda as supporting the state's move from recognizing the Right to Adequate Food to implementing it in concrete, policy-relevant ways.

The following number icons indicate how NJFDC's policy recommendations align with the five focus areas of the **NJ Food Security 3-Year Strategic Plan** from the NJ Office of the Food Security Advocate:

- 1 – Enhance Information Exchange and Access to Improve Public Awareness, Optimize Programs, and Support Data-Driven Decision-Making
- 2 – Expand Community-Based Food Infrastructure and Market Channel Creation for Enhanced Ongoing Food Access and Availability
- 3 – Build and Support Local Partnerships to Drive Community-led Food Security Approaches
- 4 – Collaborate Across Sectors and Across State Agencies to Streamline and Strengthen Federal and State Food Security-Related Program Access and Delivery
- 5 – Strengthen Food Systems Resiliency to Enhance Long-term Stability that Withstands Disruptions and Ensure Future Sustainability

HEALTHY FOOD FOR ALL

Why this matters for NJ: New Jersey residents face barriers to accessing affordable, healthy food, while NJ farmers struggle to reach local consumers. Aligning food access programs with NJ agriculture will strengthen public health, household stability, and local economies.

- **Unify SNAP, WIC, and FMNP benefits into a single payment platform** to simplify access, administrative burden and increase participation and redemption and achieve long-sought point of sale efficiencies and optimizations. **(budget / regulation) 1, 4**
- Create **one statewide NJ program for all food and nutrition incentives** and vouchers to increase fresh fruit and vegetable purchases by SNAP participants at direct-to-consumer markets, healthy corner stores, and grocery stores. **(budget / coordination) 2, 4**
- Require counties to **create an action-plan with community based groups and farmers** to develop and implement more effective enrollment, and **maximum distribution and utilization** of food and nutrition assistance benefits. **(regulation / coordination) 3, 4**
- Improve the nutritional quality and sourcing of meals served through publicly funded institutions by **prioritizing nutritious, culturally appropriate**, NJ-sourced food for seniors, youth, patients, and incarcerated individuals. **(budget / regulation) 2, 4**
- Expand access to **publicly available**, disaggregated SNAP and WIC **data** to support equitable, evidence-based food access policy, programming, and investments **(regulation / coordination) 3, 4**
- Strengthen and expand **the Jersey Fresh program** with adequate funding for **regionally-specific messaging** and outreach strategies, with input from farmers and consumers to increase consumer demand for NJ-grown and raised. **(budget) 1, 3**

2. REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEM RESILIENCE

Why this matters for NJ: Recent disruptions have shown that New Jersey's food system depends on resilient regional supply chains. Strategic public investment can strengthen local markets, keep food dollars circulating locally, and ensure farmers can reliably serve institutions and communities.

- Adopt a NJ policy for **increasing institutional purchasing of locally grown** and raised food across schools, early childhood centers, higher education, correctional facilities, food pantries, and other public institutions, aligning procurement policy with in-state economic development and public health goals. **(coordination / budget) 2, 5**
- Provide dedicated **funding and technical assistance to help schools** procure, prepare, and serve whole and minimally processed NJ-produced foods. **(budget) 2, 3, 5**
- Conduct a statewide **SWOT analysis and mapping** of food aggregation, processing, storage, and distribution to identify gaps and prioritize public investment. **(coordination / budget) 5**
- Eliminate interruptions in food security & farm viability program by establishing **permanent state programs with sustained funding allocations for Local Farm to Food Assistance** programs within the New Jersey Department of Agriculture. **(budget / regulation) 2, 3, 5**

3. FARM & FOOD SYSTEM WORKER ADVANCEMENT

Why this matters for NJ: The future of New Jersey agriculture depends on a adequately supported farmers and a food system that values fair opportunity, representation, and viable livelihoods across farming and food work.

- Advance policies and legislation that **support safe, fair working conditions for farm and food system** workers, including protections that promote workforce stability, worker health, and access to essential services. **(statute / regulation) 5**
- Implement and adapt proven state and NJ-based models and innovations that **connect environmental stewardship, climate resilience with farm viability outcomes**. **(statute / regulation)**
- Add formal advisory roles or seats on the State Board of Agriculture for small-scale, urban, beginning, first-generation, and historically underserved producers to ensure governance reflects the diversity of New Jersey agriculture. **(statute / regulation)**
- Advance implementation of recommendations from the Next Generation Farmer Report and the Organic and Regenerative Farming Board 2025 Survey to strengthen the farmer pipeline and long-term viability of NJ agriculture. **(budget / coordination) 2**

4. RESILIENT, REGENERATIVE FARMING SECTOR

Why this matters for NJ: Small farms in the urban and peri-urban environments play a growing role in food access, economic development, climate resilience, and community well-being, yet remain poorly served by existing policy frameworks. Supportive regulations are essential for their success.

- Adopt NJ-specific definitions for urban agriculture and small-acreage farming (under 5 acres) to align policy, funding, and regulation. **(regulation). 5**
- Incentivize municipalities to adopt zoning and permitted uses that support urban agriculture and reduce regulatory barriers related to land use, inspections, and remediation. **(regulation). 5**
- Establish a land access and stewardship program for small-scale agriculture, prioritizing overburdened communities to make land access possible for beginner farmers at all scales. **(regulation / budget / coordination). 5**
- Convene a select committee within the NJ Legislature to develop policy and advance solutions that address the unique challenges of small-scale farm enterprises. **(coordination). 5**