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South Carolina Institute of
Medicine & Public Health



Helping Health Happen for All: A Roadmap for Food System Policy in South Carolina

About the South Carolina Institute of Medicine and Public Health

The South Carolina Institute of Medicine and Public Health (IMPH) is an independent, nonprofit organization working to collectively inform policy to improve health and healthcare in South Carolina. IMPH provides nonpartisan, evidence-based information to guide policymakers in making impactful health policy decisions. For more information on IMPH publications, initiatives, and events, please visit imph.org.

About the SC Roadmap

The SC Roadmap is a statewide initiative that brings together partners across sectors to address nonmedical factors of health, including food access, housing, and transportation. It is a collaborative, multiorganizational initiative that aims to align efforts around shared priorities and advance coordinated, policy and systems-level solutions to improve health for all in South Carolina. For more information on the South Carolina Roadmap, please visit scroadmap.org and imph.org/sc-roadmap.

Please Share our Findings

IMPH takes a comprehensive approach to advancing health issues through data analysis, data translation, and collaborative engagement. We encourage the sharing of our data, graphics, and reports to help us improve health and healthcare in South Carolina.

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Contents

5	How to Use This Toolkit
6	Executive Summary
8	Background
13	Food Systems Policy Opportunities
14	Production
20	Processing
23	Processing, Distribution, & Healthcare Integration
26	Distribution
28	Consumption
34	Healthcare Integration
42	Acronyms
42	Glossary of Terms
44	Additional Resources
45	References





How to Use This Toolkit

This toolkit is designed to support policymakers, agency staff, and community leaders in identifying and advancing practical policy solutions that address food as a nonmedical factor of health while strengthening South Carolina’s food system. It can be used as a starting point for discussion, planning, and decision-making at the state and local levels. This toolkit aligns with the purpose of the SC Roadmap by translating its vision into actionable policy opportunities that make health possible for all people in South Carolina.

Policy Categories



PRODUCTION



PROCESSING



DISTRIBUTION



CONSUMPTION



**HEALTHCARE
INTEGRATION**

Users are encouraged to explore the policy opportunities organized across the food system (production, processing, distribution, and consumption) and identify strategies that align with their community’s priorities, capacity, and existing initiatives. In recognition of the growing momentum around Food is Medicine (FiM) initiatives in South Carolina and across the country, policy options related to healthcare integration are also included. Each policy option includes context, rationale, and examples when available to help inform adaptation and implementation. For continued learning, users can refer to the appendices for a list of acronyms, a glossary of terms, and additional resources for more information.

Geographic Categories



CITY



COUNTY



STATE

This toolkit offers options that can be tailored to different regions, sectors, and levels of government across South Carolina. Users may choose to advance individual policies or combine multiple strategies to create a more comprehensive approach.

The toolkit can also support cross-sector collaboration by providing a shared framework and common language for partners in public health, agriculture, economic development, planning, education, and healthcare. By using this resource to align efforts and build on existing efforts, collaborators can more effectively advance coordinated solutions that improve food access, strengthen local economies, and support better health outcomes across South Carolina.

Executive Summary

Food insecurity is a significant and persistent challenge in South Carolina, affecting approximately 14.4% of households and contributing to chronic diseases such as diabetes, obesity, and heart disease. Food-insecure adults in South Carolina risk higher physical and mental stress and poor management of long-term conditions, as well as increased healthcare costs. While South Carolina has a strong agricultural identity, there are opportunities to expand its economic impact, and many residents still face challenges accessing affordable, nutritious food due to gaps in the local food system. Addressing these challenges requires coordinated, system-level solutions that strengthen the entire local food system from production to consumption while aligning efforts across public health, agriculture, and healthcare sectors.

APPROXIMATELY

14.4%

of households in South Carolina are affected by food insecurity.¹

Helping Health Happen for All: A Roadmap for Food System Policy in South Carolina is designed to support policymakers, community leaders, and agency staff in advancing practical, evidence-informed policies to improve food and nutrition security statewide. Developed by the South Carolina Institute of Medicine and Public Health (IMPH) in alignment with the SC Roadmap initiative, this toolkit highlights policy opportunities that are feasible, impactful, and tailored to South Carolina's unique economic and geographic context.

This toolkit emphasizes that improving food access is not solely a matter of increasing food supply, but of strengthening all the interconnected systems that connect food to people. It outlines policy options across four key components of the food system: production, processing, distribution, and consumption, as well as those within the emerging healthcare integration space. These policy opportunities were selected based on their demonstrated success in comparable states, potential for return on investment (ROI), and ability to be implemented in the short-term, often with low or no cost.

Together, these policy options demonstrate that strengthening South Carolina's food system improves public health, supports local economies, and builds resilience against future disruptions. This toolkit also builds on existing statewide efforts, including Healthy Palmetto and the State Health Improvement Plan (SHIP), as well as prior food system initiatives and recent legislative actions. More information and links to these initiatives can be found in the **More Resources** section. By aligning with these efforts, this toolkit provides a feasible framework for advancing policy solutions that are both actionable and sustainable. Ultimately, this resource is intended to serve as a practical guide for decision-makers seeking to help health happen for all by advancing policies that create a healthy, resilient, and economically viable local food system in South Carolina.

The background of the page is a close-up photograph of several baskets filled with ripe peaches. The peaches have a mix of red, pink, and yellow hues, indicating they are ready to eat. The baskets are woven and appear to be part of a market display. The lighting is soft, highlighting the texture of the peach skin.

The policy options include:

- Establish city and county-level zoning reform that favors agricultural land preservation and food production
- Support the expansion of community gardens through zoning (city and county-level) and allocating state agency staff to provide support
- Expand investment in training and support for aspiring, new, and beginning farmers to strengthen local food security
- Invest in regional processing capacity at food hubs
- Scale up the use of existing commercial and community kitchens
- Invest in a statewide local food distribution system to support FiM programs and local agriculture
- Develop food waste recovery guidelines
- Set a minimum purchasing threshold for local procurement in schools, institutions, and local governments
- Increase funding for local food procurement in schools
- Fund free breakfast for all in public schools
- Emphasizing purchasing South Carolina products through institutional procurement processes
- Designate local-level food policy councils where they do not already exist
- Provide staff or funding support to both local food policy councils and the state council
- Strengthen opportunities for FiM interventions within Medicaid Managed Care Organizations
- Prioritize local procurement in FiM interventions
- Allocate state funding for priority populations and health conditions in FiM funding
- Leverage federal opportunities to expand FiM across South Carolina

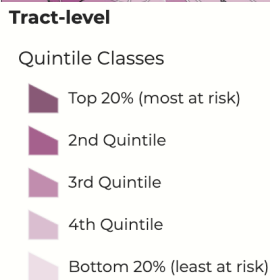
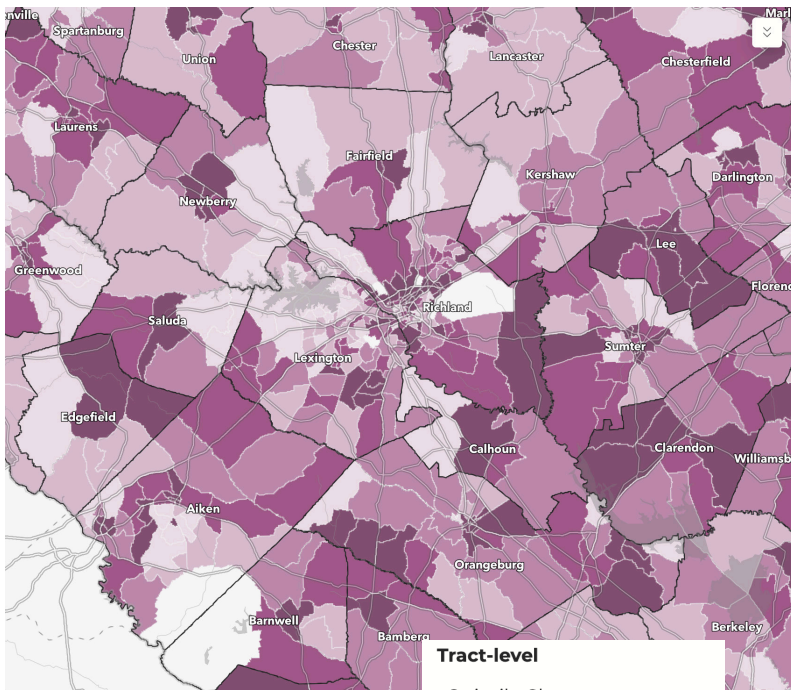
Background

The Health Impacts of Food Insecurity

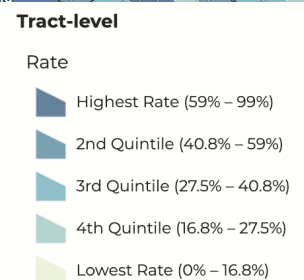
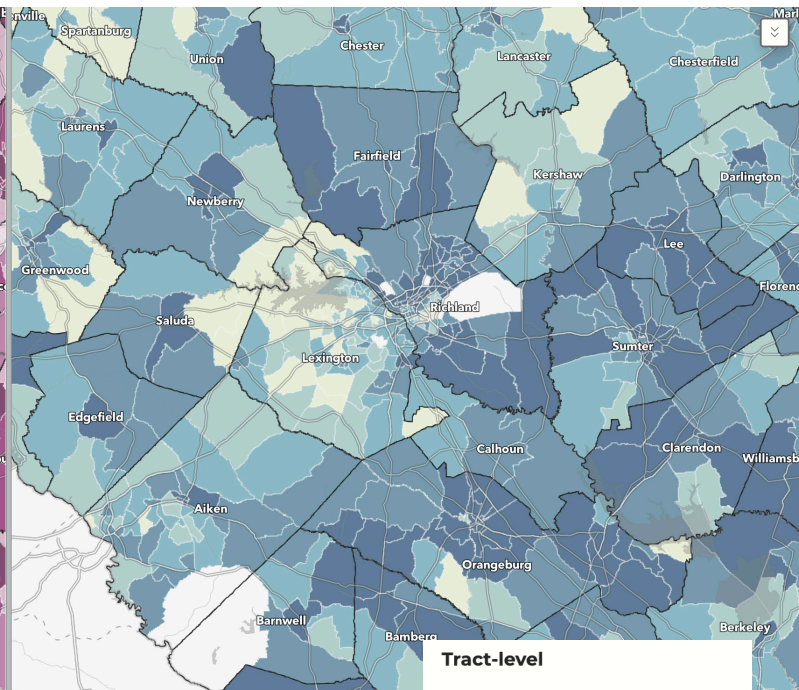
Food insecurity remains a persistent health challenge and is defined by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) as the limited or uncertain access to adequate food due to lack of resources. This issue affects a substantial share of communities across South Carolina, with an estimated 14.4% of South Carolina households reporting food insecurity between 2021 and 2023, ranking it the seventh highest in the country.¹ The risk of food insecurity varies in the state by zip code, affecting parts of both rural and urban areas as demonstrated by the South Carolina Food Insecurity Risk Map.²

MAP 1

Food Insecurity Risk Index and Domains



Demographics, Health Outcomes, and Community Resources



Source: Adapted from the South Carolina Food Insecurity Risk Map.²

Food insecurity is closely associated with elevated risks of chronic health conditions and has broader public health implications, including adverse pregnancy outcomes, increased rates of malnutrition, and overall population health differences.¹ Limited access to affordable, healthy food increases the likelihood of poor diet quality, which is marked by higher consumption of calorie-dense, nutrient-poor foods.³ Over time, these dietary patterns contribute to obesity, type 2 diabetes, hypertension, and cardiovascular disease.⁴



AT A GLANCE

Food Insecurity in South Carolina

14.4% of SC households experience food insecurity, which is the 7th highest in the nation.¹

Adults experiencing food insecurity are **two to three** more times likely to have diabetes than those who are food secure.⁶

Food insecurity increases healthcare spending by about **\$2,500** per family per year, a **20%** increase in annual costs.⁷

In 2025, the adult obesity rate in South Carolina was 34%, and the prevalence of adult diabetes was 11%, underscoring the significant burden of diet-related chronic disease across the state.⁵ National and state data support the link between food insecurity and chronic disease incidence; adults experiencing food insecurity are two to three times more likely to have diabetes than food-secure adults, even after adjusting for socioeconomic and other lifestyle factors.⁶

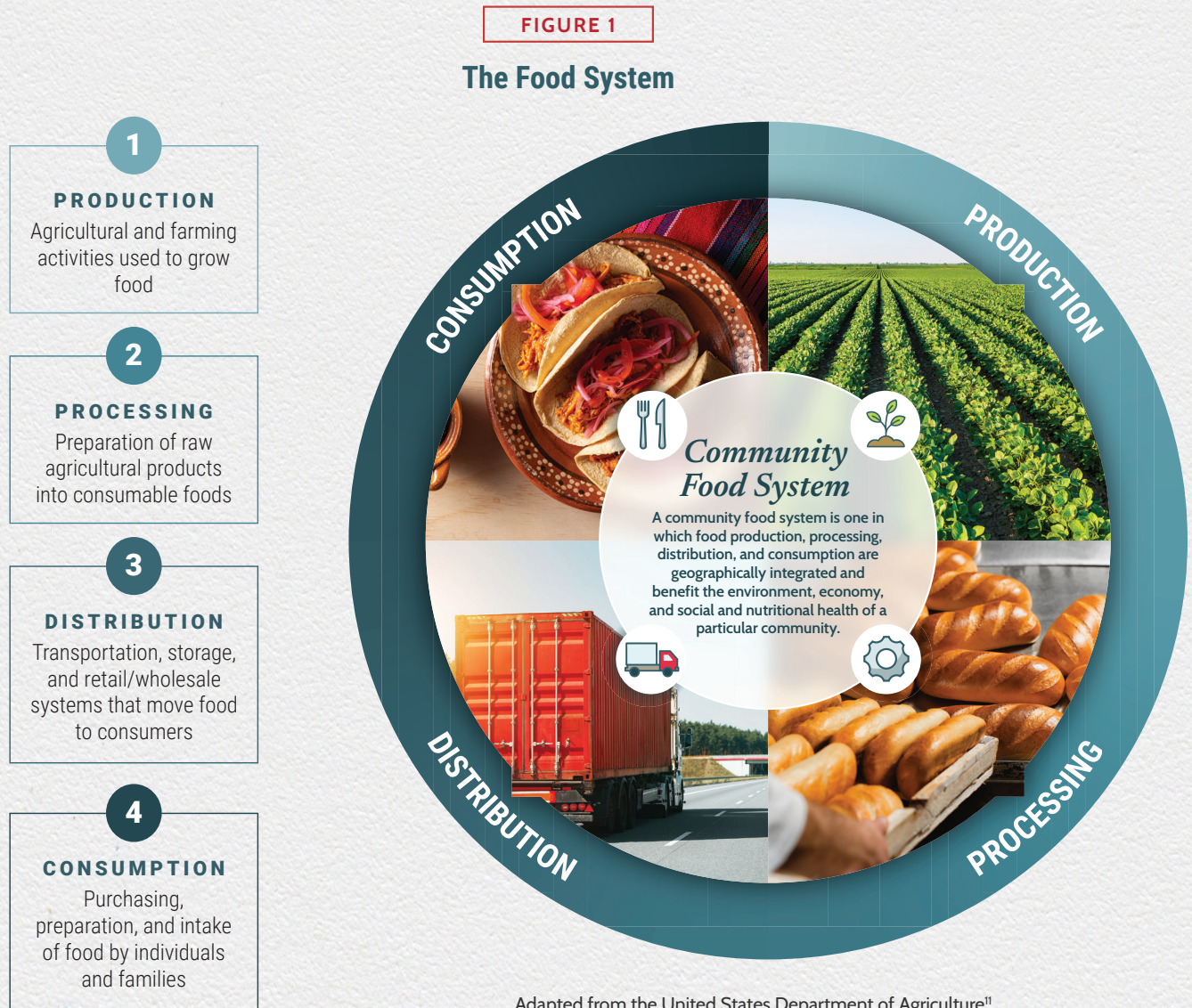
Beyond its impact on chronic disease, food insecurity drives higher healthcare utilization and costs. Individuals experiencing food insecurity are more likely to rely on emergency departments for preventable complications related to chronic illnesses and incur higher annual healthcare expenditures compared to food-secure individuals.⁷ National data show that families experiencing food insecurity spend approximately \$2,500 more per year on healthcare than food-secure families, an increase of about 20% in annual costs.⁷ These findings highlight the broader economic implications of food insecurity for families, government, and healthcare systems.

While food security focuses on ensuring individuals have enough food to meet caloric needs, nutrition security expands this concept to include reliable access to foods that promote health and prevent disease.⁸ Nutrition security acknowledges that having enough food is not sufficient if that food does not support long-term health, and emphasizes consistent access to affordable, nutrient-dense options.

Access to healthy foods also plays an important role in supporting children's learning and overall health. Proper nutrition provides essential nutrients that support brain development, memory, and concentration, all of which are critical for academic success. Children with consistent access to nutritious foods are better able to focus in the classroom, have improved attendance, and demonstrate stronger academic performance compared to children experiencing food insecurity.⁹ In addition, healthy diets in childhood contribute to better long-term health outcomes by lowering the risk of chronic conditions such as obesity, heart disease, and diabetes later in life.¹⁰

Food Systems

Both food and nutrition security are deeply influenced by the strength and structure of the food system. A food system encompasses all activities and resources involved in getting food from the field to the plate as visually represented in Figure 1. It can be further understood through four interconnected components:¹¹



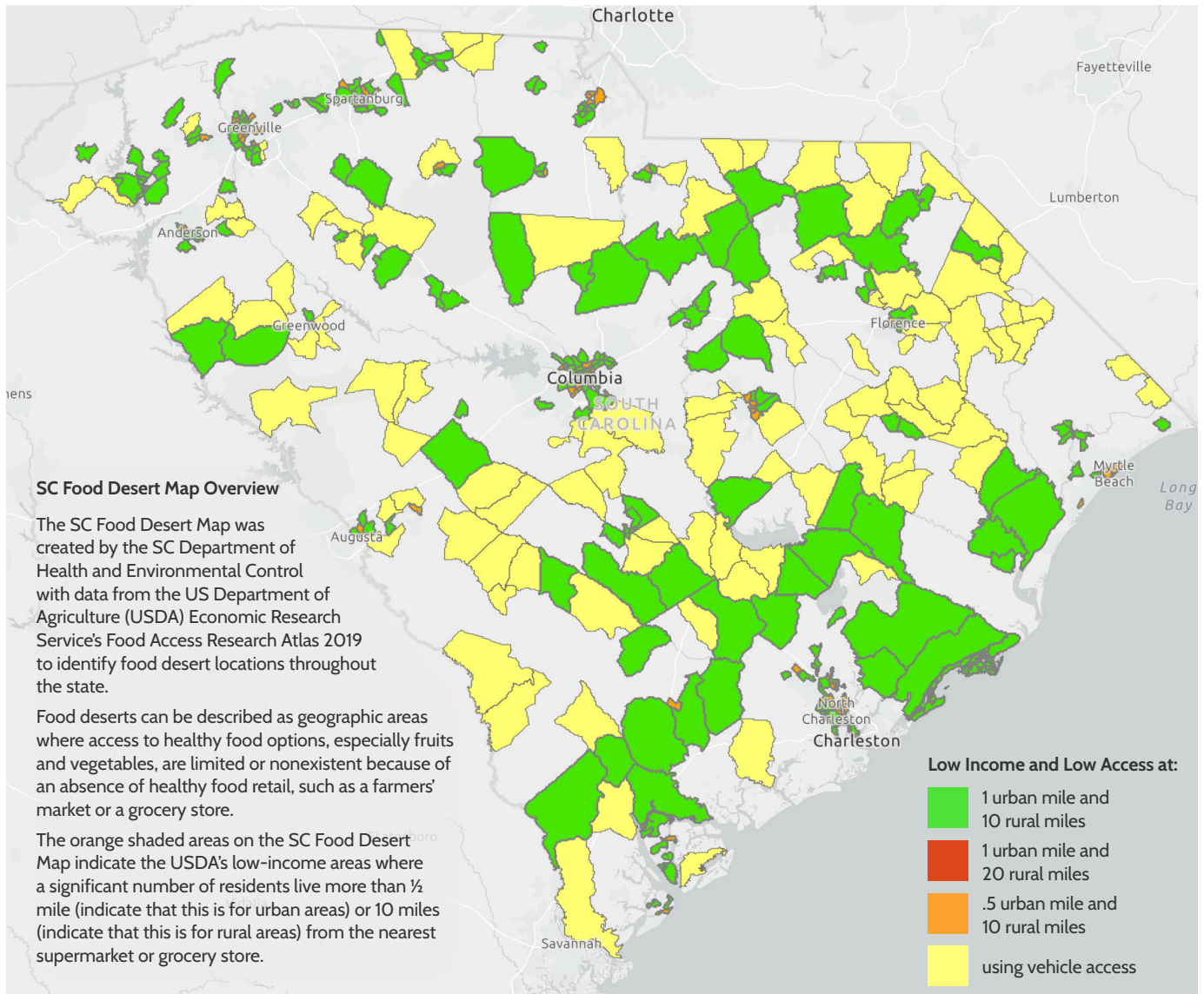
Disruptions or barriers at any stage, whether related to agricultural production, processing and distribution systems, retail availability, or a household's ability to afford food, can weaken both food and nutrition security within a community.

In South Carolina, the local food system plays a critical role not only in public health but also in economic stability. Agriculture is the state's number one industry, accounting for 259,215 jobs and contributing \$51.8 billion annually to the state's economy.¹² South Carolina is home to more than 22,600 farms and approximately 4.6 million acres of farmland.¹² The strength of the agriculture sector demonstrates the state's capacity to produce a diverse range of crops and livestock; however, much of this production is oriented toward specific markets, supply chains, and export demands rather than local food production, distribution, and consumption. As a result, a robust agricultural economy does not necessarily translate into abundant food availability for all residents, and differences in access to fresh, nutritious food can still persist across communities.¹³

Many South Carolinians live in areas where grocery stores and affordable, nutritious options are limited or absent, as nearly 80% of the state's counties contain USDA-designated 'food deserts'.¹⁴ Barriers such as transportation limitations, food distribution gaps, and a lack of food retail outlets can prevent locally grown foods from reaching people. As a result, communities may face high rates of food insecurity despite residing in an agriculturally productive state, as depicted in Map 2 of the food desert.¹⁵

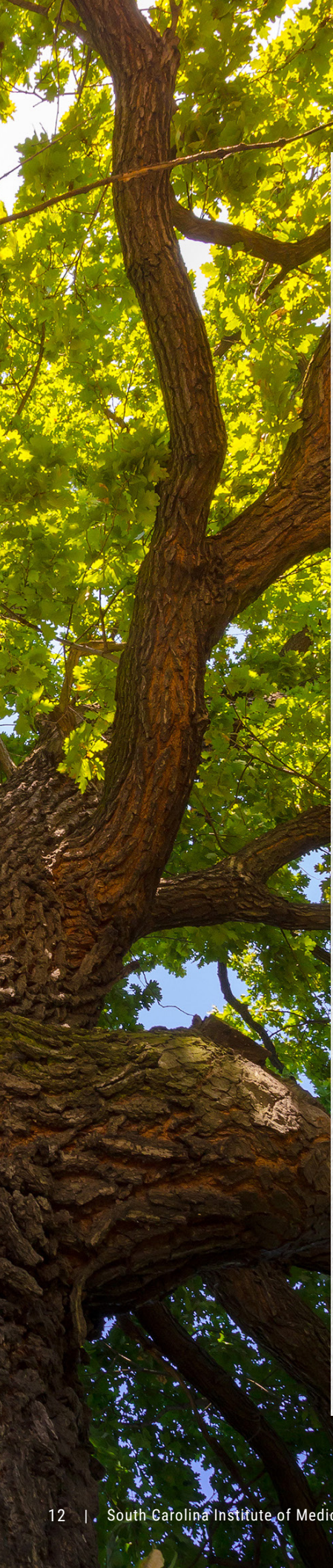
MAP 2

South Carolina Department of Public Health Food Desert Map



Source: Adapted from the South Carolina Department of Public Health¹⁵

Strengthening food systems is essential to improving both health and resilience across South Carolina. Well-coordinated food systems can help communities better withstand economic hardship, supply chain disruptions, and natural disasters. This is particularly important in rural and low-income regions, where investments in food infrastructure can both increase access to healthy foods and support local jobs and economic development.



The Intersection of the Food System and Healthcare

Healthcare providers and organizations increasingly recognize food insecurity as a critical nonmedical factor of health. Routine screening for food insecurity in clinical settings allows providers to identify patients at risk of food insecurity and connect them with community food resources as an opportunity to prevent, manage, and/or treat health conditions.¹⁶ Addressing food needs proactively can reduce avoidable hospitalizations, emergency department visits, and future medical costs.¹⁷ Integrating food access strategies into healthcare delivery represents an important opportunity to improve population health outcomes.

Alignment and Moving Forward

This toolkit aligns with both current and historical initiatives that support healthy eating, local agriculture, and coordinated food system governance in South Carolina. At the statewide planning level, the toolkit complements priorities outlined in the State Health Improvement Plan (SHIP), a framework for cross-sector collaboration to improve population health, and Healthy Palmetto, a statewide collaborative with strategic priorities supported by champions who are aligning programs, policies, and resources to drive measurable change.^{18,19} These initiatives emphasize strategies that increase access to healthy foods, strengthen nutrition support, and address food insecurity through coordinated public health and community-based approaches. The toolkit's focus on healthy eating and nutrition strategies reinforces Healthy Palmetto's work to advance policies and programs that improve nutrition and expand food access across the state.¹⁹

The toolkit also aligns with ongoing statewide governance and coordination efforts that bring together agencies, nonprofit organizations, and agricultural stakeholders to strengthen South Carolina's food system. Earlier policy and planning efforts laid important groundwork for these collaborations. Reports such as *Making Small Farms Big Business* and *Growing Local SC* highlighted the need to strengthen local food economies, support small farmers, and improve infrastructure that connects producers to markets and consumers.^{20,21} These recommendations helped shape subsequent policy discussions and food system initiatives across the state. More recently, legislative attention to food access and coordination, such as Proviso 34.70 of the 2023-2024 Appropriations Act which established the South Carolina Food Security Council that sunset in 2024, demonstrates continued state-level commitment to addressing food insecurity and improving food system resilience.²²

Food Systems Policy Opportunities

The policy opportunities included in this toolkit were selected using a clear and practical set of criteria designed to prioritize feasibility, impact, and relevance to South Carolina:

1

Priority was given to policies based on their feasibility and applicability.

Examples were drawn from states with similar characteristics, including rurality, demographics, and policy environments that have successfully implemented policies. By focusing on approaches that have already gained traction in comparable contexts, these policy options demonstrate a higher likelihood of acceptance and successful implementation.

2

Preference was given to strategies that require little to no new funding.

Low-cost and no-cost policy options can often be implemented more quickly and may be more sustainable over time. Policies that require financial investment were included when they show strong potential for meaningful system-level impact and a return on investment (ROI).

3

For policies that require investment, evidence of ROI, measurable health improvements, and broader economic benefits were key considerations.

Depending on the policy, this includes demonstrated reductions in healthcare expenditures, improvements in food access and security, strengthened local food economies, or other documented health and economic outcomes. In cases where direct ROI data are still emerging, policies were considered when they are widely recognized as necessary system-level improvements to strengthen the food system and improve population health over time.

All policy options included here can be implemented in the short term. Together, these criteria ensure that the selected policies are practical, evidence-informed, fiscally responsible, and positioned to improve health and strengthen South Carolina's food system.



Production

As South Carolina continues to experience rapid population growth and now ranks as the fastest-growing state in the nation, pressure on land use is intensifying, with direct implications for food security.²³ As more land is converted to residential and commercial development, South Carolina risks losing critical farmland needed to produce food locally, increasing reliance on external supply chains, and reducing resilience to disruptions. Smart land use policies can help South Carolina protect important farmland and keep land available for continued agricultural use through voluntary conservation and planning tools.²⁴ Agricultural production remains an important component of South Carolina's economic and cultural identity, but it is also foundational to ensuring consistent access to affordable, nutritious food.²⁵ Policies that support farming and agricultural initiatives can help preserve working lands, sustain rural economies, and strengthen the state's ability to produce and distribute food within its own borders.²⁶ Approaches that provide property flexibility also enable landowners to adapt to changing market conditions while maintaining agricultural use. This section focuses on land use and zoning, community gardens, and the new and beginning farmer workforce as opportunities for strengthening production and advancing food security in South Carolina.

Agricultural land needs to be protected.

South Carolina is the fastest-growing state in the nation.²³

Land Use and Zoning



NO-COST POLICY OPTION: Establish city and county-level zoning reform that favors food production

Zoning reform and land use policy offer a significant opportunity to preserve agricultural roots and sustain rural economies while promoting the property flexibility necessary for modern food production. Zoning reform is not simply about regulating land; it is about protecting a community's agricultural heritage, strengthening farm viability, and ensuring that producers can adapt to changing markets. By aligning comprehensive plans and zoning codes with food system goals, local governments can treat agriculture as long-term economic infrastructure that supports jobs, entrepreneurship, and regional food security.^{25,26}

Preserving agricultural roots begins with protecting farmland from conversion to suburban sprawl and single-family housing. Counties play a primary role in this effort through agricultural zoning districts, future land use designations, and coordinated regional planning.²⁷ Farmland protection tools, such as agricultural zoning and purchase of development rights programs, and easements such as the Purchase of Agriculture Conservation Easement (PACE) programs, help maintain large, contiguous tracts of land necessary for viable farming operations and stable agribusiness supply chains.^{28,29} Additionally, the South Carolina Farm



Bureau (SCFB) has land protection programs for farmers to protect land for agriculture use.³⁰ These strategies are especially important for a fast-growing state like South Carolina, where farmland can be permanently lost without intentional protections. Safeguarding this land base also reinforces rural character and supports the broader economic contributions of agriculture to regional economies.³¹

Property flexibility within agricultural zones, such as allowing farm stands, agritourism, and limited value-added processing, can enable producers to diversify income streams while remaining rooted in agriculture. Value-added processing can:

Help producers diversify income

Enable producers to keep food fresh and local

(food is often frozen and shipped across state lines for processing)

Create rural economic centers that help build the vibrancy of rural communities



Research on local and regional food systems highlights diversification and value-added activities as important components of farm viability and rural economic development.^{32,1} These adjustments strengthen rural economies without undermining long-term land conservation goals.²⁵

Cities complement this work by expanding opportunities for food production within urban and suburban environments. Clearly defining agriculture and urban agriculture in zoning codes ensures that community gardens, small-scale farms, rooftop growing, and other innovative production models are recognized and permitted uses rather than regulatory exceptions. Zoning reform can support urban agriculture by designating food production as a “by-right use” (meaning it is automatically allowed without needing special approval) on certain types of land, so property owners can grow, sell, and distribute food without going through extra permitting processes.²⁴ Allowing agricultural activities in residential and mixed-use districts integrates food production into daily community life while supporting small-scale entrepreneurship.

Permitting on-site sales of produce further reduces transportation costs for growers, increases access to fresh food for residents, and strengthens local economic circulation.

Direct-to-consumer marketing channels, including farm stands and farmers markets, play a significant role in supporting farm income and expanding access to locally produced foods.³³ These policy opportunities promote property flexibility by allowing landowners to use their property productively without navigating unnecessary barriers.

Coordinated regional planning reinforces this approach. When cities and counties align their land use strategies, they create a cohesive system that preserves farmland while enabling food production closer to consumers. Cross-jurisdictional collaboration in food system planning simultaneously strengthens food security and economic development.³⁰

¹ Refer to the Processing section of this toolkit for more information on value-added processing and shared use kitchens as an additional policy opportunity.

At the county level, Beaufort County’s 2040 Comprehensive Plan provides a useful example of how zoning and land use policy can protect agricultural land, enable agricultural activity in appropriate areas, support local food markets and community gardens, and encourage public access to locally produced foods.³⁴ Rather than relying solely on static zoning categories, it establishes policy guidance to shape how zoning should evolve, integrating food production and consumption into broader growth and development decisions.

Zoning Reform

Zoning reform is the crucial next step in turning comprehensive plans into meaningful action for food production. Comprehensive plans identify goals such as preserving agricultural land, expanding community gardens, or supporting farmers markets for example, but zoning ordinances determine whether those activities are permitted. Without proper zoning, communities can risk undermining their own food system goals.

The *South Carolina Health + Planning Toolkit* is a useful reference for land use and zoning because it connects comprehensive planning and zoning decisions with public health goals and provides policy language that local governments can adapt in South Carolina.³⁵ Most importantly, zoning and land use reform can strengthen local food systems by balancing preservation with flexibility. By protecting farmland, clarifying agricultural definitions, permitting urban production, allowing on-site sales, and supporting diversified farm uses, communities can sustain agriculture economies while enabling innovation. Zoning is an important policy consideration at the municipal and county levels that keeps agriculture economically viable and accessible for generations to come.³⁶

Community Gardens




NO-COST POLICY OPTION: Support the expansion of community gardens through zoning (city and county-level) and allocating state agency staff to provide support (state-level)

Community gardens are a proven, community-based strategy for improving food access, fostering engagement, and promoting nutrition.³⁷ Recognized in the *What Works for Health* evidence-informed database, these gardens provide shared outdoor spaces where residents can grow fruits and vegetables.³⁷ In doing so, they expand access to fresh produce, strengthen connections among neighbors, organizations, and public agencies, and offer hands-on opportunities for people to learn how to grow their own food.

Proviso 34.70 of the 2023-2024 Appropriations Act directed the South Carolina Food Security Council to develop a report identifying and examining existing programs that aim to improve food access for South Carolinians and identify solutions to food insecurity in the state.³⁸ Building on this recommendation to support community gardening, state and local partners could explore low-cost and no-cost opportunities to support the development and sustainability of community gardens through local zoning regulations and staff support. Local communities can support community gardens by adopting an overlay zoning district that allows or protects gardens within the city’s zoning code.³⁹ Cities can prioritize and protect community gardens by designating land as protection or overlay districts, such as open space zones, which preserve undeveloped or recreational areas. While these protections can apply to private property, cities must ensure they do not constitute an unlawful “taking” without providing proper compensation.

Community gardens are often most successful when they are rooted in local leadership, volunteer engagement, and strong community partnerships, such as the Food Well Alliance mentioned in the community gardens spotlight on the next page.⁴¹ State-level support can play an important complementary role with strengthening and extending these efforts by connecting communities to existing resources and infrastructure rather than replacing locally driven work.



**SPOTLIGHT: ATLANTA, NORTH CAROLINA,
AND TENNESSEE**

Community garden zoning can be a low-cost way to expand healthy food access.

Atlanta, Georgia, offers a useful model: its urban agriculture ordinance clearly defines community and market gardens, allows them in multiple zoning districts, and sets basic rules for operation.³⁹ This reduces legal uncertainty and helps protect gardens from being treated as nuisance uses. South Carolina cities and counties could take a similar approach by adding clear zoning definitions, allowing gardens in residential and mixed-use areas, and setting simple standards for signage, composting, structures, and limited on-site sales.

The Food Well Alliance is a key partner in sustaining community gardens around the Atlanta area.⁴¹ The organization acts as a centralized resource hub that strengthens urban gardens by providing essential infrastructure, mechanical tool libraries, and “labor cohorts.” By fostering collaboration between local government and growers, they transform isolated garden plots into a cohesive, resilient citywide food network.

North Carolina and Tennessee have offered practical model examples as well. In Central Appalachia, Grow Appalachia supports families across six states with seeds, tools, and training to help them grow more of their own food.^{41,42} In Tennessee, Shelby County Community Gardens shows how local government can remove major barriers by providing land and utilities so residents can grow food for household use and supplemental income.⁴³

These models show that community gardens can strengthen food access, neighborhood vitality, and local self-reliance without requiring major public spending.

Technical assistance can be coordinated through the South Carolina Department of Public Health, Clemson University Public Service and Agriculture (PSA) and Clemson Extension, and South Carolina State University 1890 Research & Extension, which would leverage trusted, statewide systems that already operate in and alongside communities in South Carolina.³⁸

These organizations can provide technical assistance, educational programming, and operational guidance in a way that complements community-driven work, without requiring new, dedicated state funding for community garden staffing. If future funding becomes available, staff with an explicit focus on community gardens could serve as a flexible, backup resource, helping gardens navigate challenges, access grants, and build connections to long-term partners. The existing footprint of public health departments and Extension offices across all 46 counties ensures that communities have accessible, on-the-ground support when needed, reinforcing local ownership while increasing the likelihood that gardens are sustained and scaled over time.

Funding for New and Beginning Farmer Development



LOW TO MODERATE COST STATE-LEVEL POLICY OPTION: Expand investment in training and support for aspiring, new, and beginning farmers to strengthen local food security

South Carolina faces an aging farmer population, barriers for new producers (e.g., capital, land, or business skills), and high rates of food insecurity in many rural and urban counties.^{44,45} The average age of all South Carolina producers is 58.9 years old according to the 2022 Census of Agriculture.⁴⁶ New farmers are essential to keeping land in production and supplying fresh, local food, but current training and support capacity is limited.

Training programs such as Clemson Cooperative Extension's South Carolina New and Beginning Farmer Program (SCNBFP) represent proven, high-impact investments in the state's agricultural economy and food system. Since its inception, the program has graduated more than 750+ new farmers and engaged thousands of additional participants, demonstrating both strong outcomes and a clear, ongoing demand for training and technical assistance.⁴⁷ With graduation rates exceeding 90% and documented improvements in business and production skills, ranging from start-up logistics, risk management, and financial management to business planning, marketing, wholesale scaling, soil health, and Integrated Pest Management, this program accelerates the ability of new farmers to launch and sustain viable operations.⁴⁸

Currently, the SCNBFP is supported primarily through time-limited grant funding sources that prevent long-term planning, limit program continuity, and constrain the ability to meet growing statewide demand.⁴⁹ Permanent financing could support the expansion of new and beginning farmer training efforts by establishing stable funding streams, scaling program capacity, and strengthening connections between training, land access, capital, and markets. Continued investment in new farmer training programs such as the SCNBFP could scale models that deliver clear returns, strengthening South Carolina's agricultural workforce, expanding access to locally grown food, and supporting long-term economic resilience.

Sustainable investment could also support complementary strategies such as mini-grants, cost-share opportunities, or scholarship programs administered through appropriate entities to reduce barriers for new farmers and help participants implement their business plans. These tools can accelerate the transition from training to action by providing critical early-stage capital for equipment, infrastructure, and market development, while also expanding access to education and technical assistance for underserved and resource-limited producers.

South Carolina could further integrate new and beginning farmers into broader food system initiatives by strengthening pathways to markets, including participation in local procurement programs (such as Certified SC initiatives, food hubs, farm-to-school, and produce box programs), and by improving coordination with land access and financing partners.

*South Carolina has an
aging farmer workforce.*

AVERAGE AGE OF ALL
SOUTH CAROLINA
PRODUCERS IS

58.9

according to the 2022 Census of Agriculture.





PROCESSING



Processing

Strengthening in-state processing is a powerful way to keep more food dollars in South Carolina, create jobs, and expand markets for local farms and food businesses. Although agribusiness is the state’s number one industry, only about 32% of agribusiness goods purchased by South Carolina residents are produced within the state, while roughly 68% are imported from outside suppliers.⁵⁰ Expanding processing capacity, especially through regional food hubs and shared kitchens, can help close this gap by turning locally grown products into ready-to-serve items for schools, retailers, and institutional buyers, while building a skilled food-sector workforce.⁵¹

The Middle Mile Opportunity



MODERATE COST STATE-LEVEL POLICY OPTION: Invest in regional processing capacity at food hubs

Providing targeted funding support to regional food hubs and similar aggregators who collect products from farms and combine them into larger, market-ready quantities would increase processing capacity (e.g., washing, cutting, freezing, light value-added processing, and packaging) in the state. The South Carolina Food Hub Network is a statewide system that connects food hubs and aggregators to coordinate purchasing from local farms and sales to wholesale, retail, and institutional markets, helping move locally grown food from producers to end users. Because this network is already in place, it provides an example of a ready foundation for expanding processing capacity without needing to build a new system.⁵² Strategic investment in this network can deepen its role as the ‘middle mile’ that turns food grown in South Carolina into products ready for schools and other institutions.⁵³ For the purposes of this toolkit, institution refers to a large, established organization with a cafeteria and/or food procurement, which includes childcare centers, city or state agencies, hospitals, or an institute of higher education.

South Carolina produces more than it processes.

Only 32% of agribusiness goods purchased by SC residents are produced in-state, while 68% are imported.⁵⁰ Expanding processing keeps more food dollars circulating locally, strengthens markets for farmers, and creates jobs.

South Carolina has dedicated programs encouraging schools to purchase locally (see Certified SC Cafeteria in the Consumption section), but many farms lack access to facilities that can minimally process produce (like peeled, sliced, frozen, or ready-to-heat items) to meet institutional specifications.⁵⁴ Without processing capacity, schools and other institutions cannot easily buy a diverse range of local products, even when they want to.

Strategic investment in regional food hubs can help bridge this gap by allowing them to take in raw products from local farms, perform basic processing, and sell ready-to-use items to schools,

hospitals, early education centers, and other large buyers that have limited time or staff capacity for food preparation or access to kitchens. This creates reliable markets for local farms and food producers and supports regional economic development.⁵⁵ The South Carolina Food Hub Network could coordinate these upgrades, including sharing equipment, standard operating procedures, and food-safety protocols among member hubs, so capacity gains in one region benefit the whole system.

Data from states like Arkansas shows that local procurement can strengthen regional economies by creating dependable markets for growers and processors.⁵⁶ Purchasing food grown or processed within the state supports economic development, provides fresher and healthier options for consumers, and can increase participation in institutional meal programs while raising awareness of local food systems.⁵⁷ In Arkansas, coordinated investments in local food infrastructure and procurement programs have helped schools and institutions more consistently source in-state products, while giving farmers clearer, more stable demand and better price certainty. This model demonstrates how aligning food hubs, processing capacity, and institutional buyers can scale local sourcing efforts statewide, improve supply chain efficiency, and keep more food dollars circulating within the regional economy.

Example implementation tools:

Competitive grants or low-interest loans for hubs and cooperatives (prioritizing members of the South Carolina Food Hub Network) to add wash/pack lines, flash freezers, cutting equipment, and food-safety upgrades.

Prioritizing projects that:

- Source primarily from South Carolina farms.
- Sell to schools and other institutions participating in local procurement initiatives.
- Create or retain food-sector jobs, including entry-level positions and apprenticeships, with the South Carolina Food Hub Network helping to coordinate training and workforce pipelines across regions.

Local Procurement Needs Local Processing

South Carolina encourages schools to buy local, but many farms lack access and resources to facilities that can:

- **Peel or slice produce**
- **Freeze or flash-freeze items**
- **Package bulk products for institutional kitchens**

Without processing capacity, local purchasing goals are harder to achieve.





NO-COST LOCAL-LEVEL POLICY OPTION: Scale up the use of existing commercial and community kitchens

A no-cost local policy option is to scale up the use of existing commercial and community kitchens, building on South Carolina's cottage food laws and underused institutional facilities. South Carolina's cottage food framework (Title 46, Chapter 57 in the South Carolina Code of Laws) already allows residents to prepare and sell certain non-potentially hazardous foods (such as baked goods and jams) directly to consumers without a commercial kitchen or food-service permit, creating an avenue for home-based food entrepreneurs who may later move into shared kitchens.⁵⁸ State agencies and partners can strengthen this pathway by providing clear, accessible guidance on cottage food rules through state websites, Cooperative Extension, and small business centers. They can also encourage local economic development offices to treat cottage food businesses as legitimate microenterprises with access to training, business planning assistance, and connections to shared commercial kitchens when they are ready to scale.

Finally, promoting shared use of underutilized commercial-grade kitchens in schools, churches, community centers, nonprofits, and higher-education institutions is another evidence-based opportunity.⁶⁰ FoodShare South Carolina's teaching kitchen offers a concrete example of how a well-equipped kitchen can support hands-on nutrition education, cooking skills, and small-scale processing of local produce for community programs, while modeling food-safety and workforce skills.⁶¹ Through cooking classes, produce-box demonstrations, and training opportunities for community members and partner organizations, the teaching kitchen helps participants build practical skills to prepare healthy meals, reduce food waste, and increase confidence in using fresh, locally grown ingredients. Community college teaching kitchens can play a similar dual role by hosting culinary and food-processing training programs while, during off-hours, serve as shared-use spaces for small food businesses working with local farm products. Greenville Technical College, for example, has a Sustainable Agriculture Certificate Program that prepares students for careers in agribusiness and is already set up with resources for potential off-hours programs.⁶² State agencies and community partners can identify and map such kitchens; develop model shared-use agreements and risk-management templates to make it easier for schools and colleges to rent or lend space; and encourage pilot programs where these kitchens host small processors of local products (such as sauces, salsas, frozen vegetables, and baked items), as well as youth and adult workforce-training programs in food processing and safety.



Local zoning can be a tool for small-scale processing.

South Carolina can encourage or model ordinances that distinguish between large-scale and small-scale food processing, permitting small-scale operations in mixed-use, commercial, and appropriate institutional or light-industrial areas instead of limiting them to heavy industrial zones.⁵⁹ A model zoning template could define "small-scale food processing" (for example, by setting limits on square footage, traffic, and noise), allow it by right or with simplified permits in suitable districts, and maintain reasonable safeguards for neighbors while reducing red tape for small processors and cooperatives.



PROCESSING



DISTRIBUTION



HEALTHCARE
INTEGRATION

Processing, Distribution, & Healthcare Integration (Combined)



MODERATE COST STATE-LEVEL POLICY OPTION: Invest in a statewide local food distribution system to support Food is Medicine (FiM) programs programs and local agriculture

South Carolina has a strong foundation for building a coordinated, state-supported distribution system that connects local farmers to FiM programs, community organizations, and households facing food insecurity. The state can draw from a range of successful VeggieRx and Grocery Rx programs already operating across South Carolina and the broader Southeast, which demonstrate multiple pathways for integrating healthcare, food access, and local agriculture.

Across the state, prescription and medically tailored grocery initiatives are expanding through a variety of partners. FoodShare South Carolina's VeggieRx sites operate in Bamberg, Greenville, Laurens, Lee, Oconee, Orangeburg, Richland, and York counties, alongside additional programs such as Clemson's food prescription sites and Lowcountry Street Grocery's Grocery Rx sites in Charleston.^{63,64} While VeggieRx programs are an important component of this landscape, they represent only one part of a broader distribution system. For example, in 2024 FoodShare South Carolina distributed approximately 96,000 produce boxes statewide, of which about 4,000 were VeggieRx boxes.⁶⁴ The majority of FoodShare's distribution already reflects the type of large-scale, community-based produce access model FiM seeks to expand, demonstrating an existing, operational network capable of reaching families in need.

SOUTHEASTERN EXAMPLE:

FarmsSHARE

North Carolina's FarmsSHARE helped food hubs buy from local farmers and distribute produce boxes to households in need, while also supporting farm income and local supply chains.^{65,66} That model was initially supported by Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement Program (LFPA) funding, along with state and philanthropic dollars, which helped build the infrastructure and relationships needed for the program to operate.^{67,68,69} Although LFPA funding is no longer available, the model and impact from FarmsSHARE is an example of how local distribution can be prioritized to make meaningful impact.

This broader distribution infrastructure is critical to the success of FiM programs. VeggieRx and similar initiatives are able to function effectively because they are built on top of established aggregation, packing, and delivery systems. In this way, South Carolina already has a working model of how a unified distribution network can serve both clinical and community-based food access goals.

Organizations like FoodShare South Carolina are actively prioritizing South Carolina-grown products and have made meaningful progress in incorporating local sourcing into their model. Currently, about 17 percent of items in FoodShare boxes are sourced from within the state, reflecting both existing partnerships and the realities of available supply.⁷⁰ This presents a clear opportunity that with stronger infrastructure to aggregate, store, and distribute locally grown food, an even greater share of these purchases could be directed to South Carolina farmers across all distribution channels, not just FiM programs.



FIGURE 2

South Carolina Food Hub Network



According to the South Carolina Department of Agriculture (SCDA), the South Carolina Food Hub Network aggregated, marketed, and distributed South Carolina-grown food and moved more than \$1.3 million dollars in in-state product in 2020 through emergency food boxes and related programs.⁷¹ This existing infrastructure demonstrates the state’s capacity to move local product at scale, but it requires sustained investment to expand beyond short-term or emergency funding cycles.

To build a more robust system, South Carolina could invest in programming for local food access and distribution. This would focus on strengthening core supply chain functions of the food system, including aggregation, light processing, storage, packing, and transportation, while also supporting coordination among farmers, food hubs, healthcare providers, and community-based organizations. Rather than creating a new program from scratch, the state could invest in scaling and connecting existing efforts at existing sites from organizations such as FoodShare and Lowcountry Street Grocery as well as with hubs participating in the South Carolina Food Hub Network. Figure 2 shows a map of emerging and existing food hubs across the state.

In this model, food hubs and designated sites would serve as central coordinators, handling sourcing, aggregation, and distribution, while healthcare providers and community organizations serve as access points for patients and households. This approach aligns with South Carolina's growing FiM ecosystem and ensures that increased demand from these programs translates into meaningful market opportunities for local farmers. Moreover, these investments would strengthen supply chains serving a wide range of markets, including schools, early care settings, and restaurants, further expanding opportunities for South Carolina producers.

Funding could be used to:

- ▶ **Increase procurement of South Carolina-grown food from small and mid-sized farmers at fair and predictable prices**
- ▶ **Support food hubs and partner organizations (including but not limited to, FoodShare and Lowcountry Street Grocery) with staffing, infrastructure, and logistics needed to aggregate and distribute food efficiently**
- ▶ **Expand partnerships with VeggieRx, Grocery Rx, and other FiM programs as consistent distribution channels**
- ▶ **Leverage matching contributions from healthcare systems, insurers, and philanthropic partners to extend the reach of state dollars**

By investing in distribution infrastructure and coordination, South Carolina can strengthen its local food economy while improving access to healthy food. Expanding the capacity to source and deliver South Carolina-grown products would not only increase the percentage of local food in VeggieRx and Grocery Rx programs but also enhance the broader produce distribution systems that already serve tens of thousands of households. The goal is not to replicate a single model, but to build a flexible, statewide system that builds on existing networks, reaches more families, and creates more stable market opportunities for local farmers.

ROI Justification

There is a strong return on investment for this policy approach because each public dollar invested is associated with in-state economic activity.

Funds spent on food procurement circulate directly through local agricultural economies, supporting farm income, food hub operations, transportation, and employment. The Certified South Carolina Grown campaign has demonstrated success generating economic activity. A 2020 economic impact study showed that for every \$1 in new demand generated from additional local spending activity among products within the Certified SC Grown commodity categories, a total of \$1.70 is generated in new economic activity for the state's economy.⁷¹ This local multiplier effect means that state investments often generate additional economic activity beyond the initial investment.

The program improves nutrition access for households experiencing food insecurity, which can contribute to long-term reductions in healthcare costs associated with diet-related conditions (see background section for more statistics).



DISTRIBUTION

Distribution

Feed People before Landfills



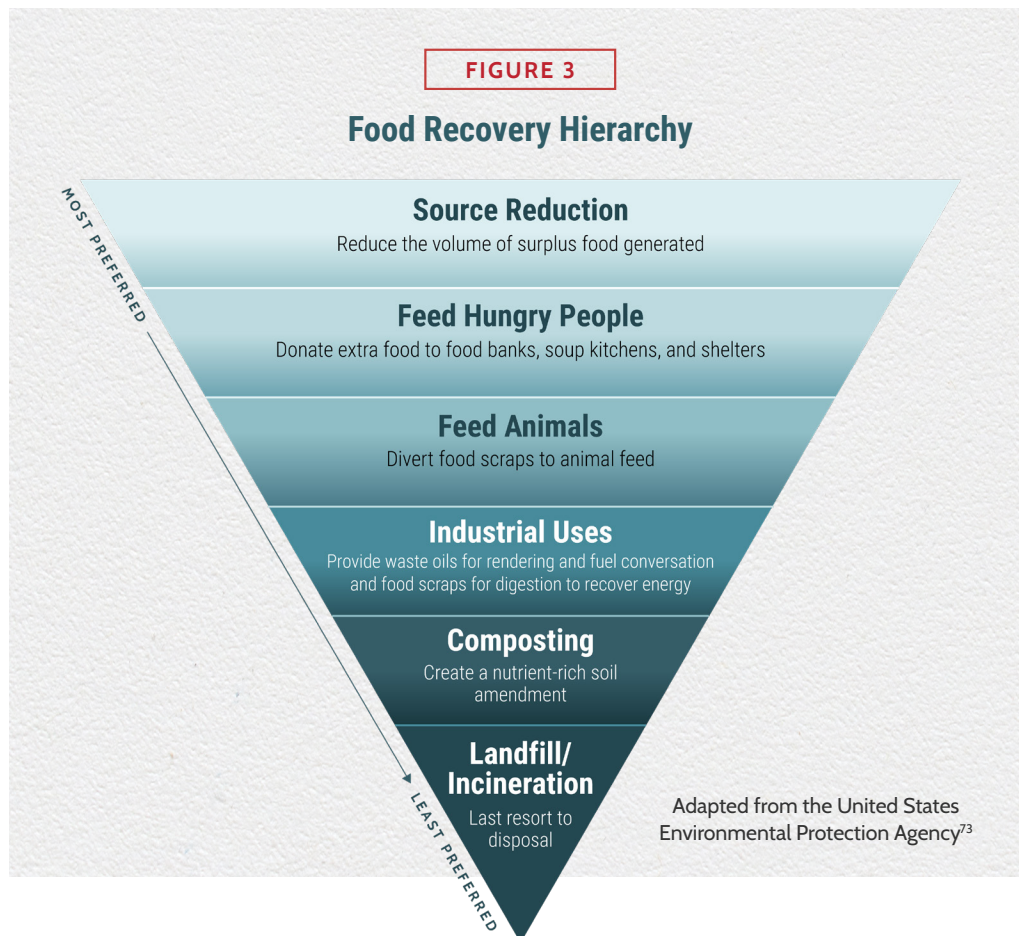
NO-COST STATE-LEVEL POLICY OPTION: Develop food waste recovery guidelines

South Carolina can reduce food waste, cut disposal costs, and strengthen food access by adopting a clear, statewide food recovery preference order and making it clear that people and businesses who donate food in good faith are protected from legal liability. The state can codify a food recovery hierarchy and donor protections. Clarifying a hierarchy and liability standards can be done through statute and administrative guidance, not new programs or appropriations.⁷² This builds on the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency’s (EPA) Food Recovery guidelines and aligns with South Carolina’s Don’t Waste Food SC campaign, which promotes reduction, reuse, and recycling over disposal.^{73,74}

Key components of the statute would establish that food players should, when possible:



This structure mirrors the EPA’s recommended sequence for managing wasted food, placing food waste prevention at the source and feeding people first, and reinforces South Carolina’s existing focus on prevention, donation, and recovery rather than disposal (see Figure 3). Prioritizing prevention, donation, and recovery reduces landfill tipping fees and transportation costs for municipalities and businesses, while better utilizing food that has already been paid for and produced.



Guidance should emphasize that donors, distributors, and recovery organizations acting in good faith are not liable for donated food except in cases of gross negligence or intentional misconduct, harmonizing with federal protections under the Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act, which sets a “gross negligence or intentional misconduct” floor for civil and criminal liability related to donated food.⁷⁵ In addition, South Carolina law already provides similar liability protection for food donors through South Carolina’s food donation liability exemption law, which exempts good-faith charitable donors and recipient nonprofits from civil and criminal liability for donated distressed food unless injury results from gross negligence, recklessness, or intentional misconduct.⁷⁶

Food donations can come from a variety of sites, and community gardens are one example. In Greenville, North Carolina, the Pitt County Community Garden has dedicated plots for donating to food banks. In addition to their educational programs and outreach, they have 18 extra plots used for local produce donations and last year, donated 288 pounds of produce.⁷⁷ Clear, state-level language reduces perceived legal risk for grocers, restaurants, schools, and institutions that want to donate surplus food, helping move more edible food to families instead of landfills while staying consistent with state and federal protections.

In schools, share tables help reduce food waste and hunger related to food insecurity by allowing students to safely take additional servings of untouched, pre packaged food items, keeping edible food out of landfills and redirecting it toward people who need it.

For more information and detailed guidance on reducing food waste in schools, readers may refer to the South Carolina Department of Environmental Services’ publication Reducing Food Waste: A Guide for SC Schools.⁷⁸

In local communities and neighborhoods, Charleston Parks Conservancy’s Grow it Forward initiative channels fresh produce grown in its community gardens and food forests to local organizations that support neighbors facing food insecurity.⁷⁹ Volunteers help plant, tend, and harvest vegetables and fruits in the gardens, and that produce is donated regularly to local food pantries, neighborhood resource centers, and other community partners addressing hunger and food access. For example, seasonal harvests have been distributed in produce bags to organizations such as The Pink House Neighborhood Resource Center and Laundry Matters, with each bag containing a variety of fresh, garden-grown produce. Over time, volunteers and partner organizations have helped donate tens of thousands of pounds of fresh produce to Charleston area food security programs, turning garden harvests into meals for neighbors in need.



Federal law under the Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act protects food donors from civil and criminal liability when acting in good faith, except in cases of gross negligence or intentional misconduct.⁷⁵

South Carolina law provides similar protections.

Clarifying this in statute:

- **Reduces perceived legal risk**
- **Encourages grocers, restaurants, schools, and hospitals to donate**
- **Moves more edible food to families instead of landfills**



Consumption

Leveraging Institutional Purchasing to Support Farmers and Strengthen the State Economy



NO-COST CITY, COUNTY, AND STATE-LEVEL POLICY OPTIONS: Set a minimum purchasing threshold for local procurement in schools, institutions, and local governments

Food procurement policies can serve as practical tools to support South Carolina’s agricultural sector while strengthening the broader state economy and improving nutrition. For this toolkit, local food refers to purchasing products that are grown, raised, and/or processed in South Carolina. When institutions prioritize South Carolina-grown products, a larger share of each food dollar stays within South Carolina instead of leaving the state through external supply chains. This retained spending directly supports farmers and food producers, and it also circulates through related businesses such as processors, distributors, equipment suppliers, and local retailers. As a result, every dollar spent on local food generates approximately \$1.32 to \$1.90 in total economic activity, as those dollars are re-spent within the local economy, creating income, jobs, and additional business revenue.⁸⁰

School Food Policy

School nutrition programs represent a significant opportunity to align purchasing practices with statewide economic and food system goals. The SCDA launched a new program, Certified SC Cafeteria, in November 2025 with support from the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE), which encourages public schools to incorporate more South Carolina-grown foods into meals. Participating schools and school districts are reimbursed for buying South Carolina-grown vegetables, fruits, grains, and honey, with additional incentives for those that source the highest percentage of local food. SCDA receives an annual investment of \$1 million from the South Carolina General Assembly to invest in children’s nutrition and farmers.⁸¹ This new program expands market opportunities for local producers and increases students’ exposure to fresh food and provides a baseline for incorporating more South Carolina-grown foods in schools.

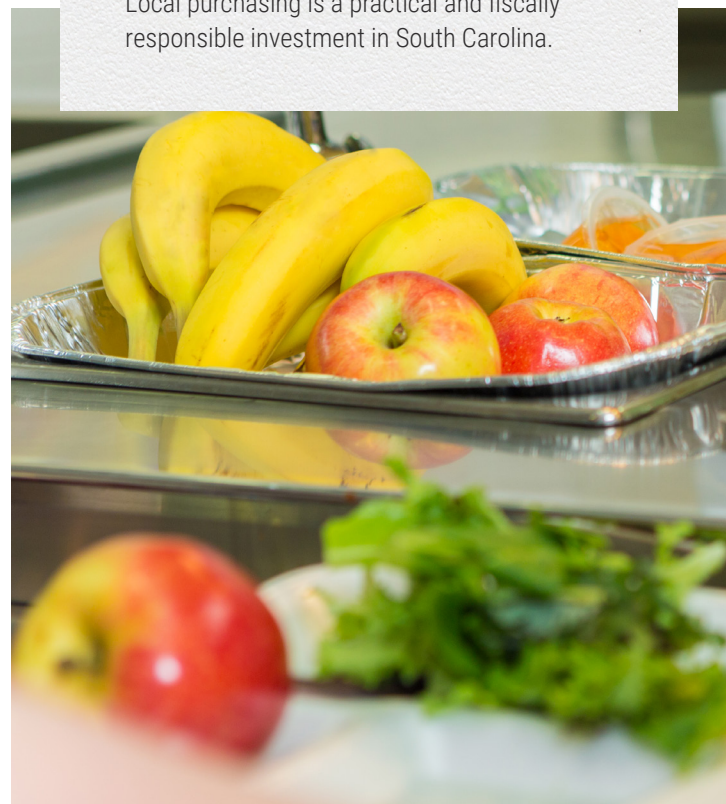
The Local Multiplier Effect

When schools and public institutions purchase food grown in South Carolina, more food dollars stay in-state.

Research shows that every \$1 spent on local food generates approximately \$1.32–\$1.90 in total economic activity, supporting:⁸⁰

- ▶ **Farmers**
- ▶ **Processors**
- ▶ **Distributors**
- ▶ **Equipment suppliers**
- ▶ **Local retailers**

Local purchasing is a practical and fiscally responsible investment in South Carolina.





NO-COST LOCAL AND STATE-LEVEL POLICY OPTION: Emphasizing purchasing South Carolina products through institutional procurement processes

Policymakers can explore procurement structures that provide clear guidelines for local purchasing in school districts. In addition to schools participating in the Certified SC Cafeteria program, another strategy is to establish a minimum purchasing threshold, or “procurement floor,” for in-state products.⁸² The Arkansas Grown School Meal Program offers an example of this approach. The program requires schools to spend at least 20% of their purchase of food budgets on products sourced from state producers. These include produce, dairy, proteins, and value-added goods, such as pre-chopped vegetables, frozen fruits, or other minimally processed items packaged for institutional use.⁸³

Administrative requirements can influence a district’s ability to purchase locally. Expanding technical assistance or considering statewide adoption of the South Carolina 2021 Model Procurement Code, a standardized set of purchasing rules that guides how public agencies buy goods and services may help streamline purchasing and broaden participation among local vendors.⁸⁴ There would be fewer steps required in completing paperwork for purchases, including writing justification statements and making the case for choosing the vendor.

By increasing the small purchasing threshold from \$2,500 to \$10,000, the code reduces administrative burden and makes it easier for schools to work directly with nearby producers when appropriate.

Beyond school settings, institutional or municipal procurement guidelines that encourage a minimum percentage of South Carolina-grown foods may further strengthen local markets. Coordinating how different institutions buy food can make demand more consistent and predictable for farmers. According to Arkansas’s Local Food, Farms, and Jobs Act Annual Report 2025, the Arkansas Local Food Act requires each institution that receives at least \$25,000 in state funding per year and is a food service program to submit a policy statement signed by the director/food service authority expressing a commitment to comply with the Local Food Act in the following fiscal year.⁸⁵ The institutions included state-funded entities that buy and sell food.



Beyond Schools

Local procurement policies can extend to:

- **Childcare centers**
- **Government agencies**
- **Public universities**

The Arkansas Local Food, Farms, and Jobs Act requires institutions to submit annual commitments to local purchasing.⁸⁵

Aligning institutional demand strengthens statewide markets.

Communities may also consider developing policies informed by models such as the Good Food Purchasing Program, which provides a values-based framework for sourcing food that supports local economies, environmental stewardship, and workforce considerations. A list of the different cities that have adopted policies and started campaigns is available online (refer to the **More Resources** section for the website). Adaptable models can allow jurisdictions to tailor procurement standards to local priorities while maintaining flexibility. One core value of the model is strengthening resilience in the local economy and prioritizing purchases from local and regional producers and processors, especially small and mid-sized, to keep food dollars circulating in the local economy. Their *Action Planning Toolkit* online has more information on the program overview, sample action plans, case studies, and a range of resources such as how to solicit tools for local procurement.⁸⁶

Together, these strategies highlight how procurement policies can align institutional purchasing with agricultural sustainability and economic development goals while maintaining local decision-making authority.



MODERATE-COST STATE-LEVEL POLICY OPTION: Increase funding for local food procurement in schools

Program applications for participating schools in the first cohort of the Certified SC Cafeteria Program closed in November 2025 and the first cohort of participating schools began receiving reimbursements for purchase in 2026.⁸¹ A moderate-cost policy option, supported by the School Nutrition Association of South Carolina, is to expand funding for the Certified SC Cafeteria program by building on the South Carolina General Assembly's recurring \$1 million investment to strengthen partnerships between South Carolina farmers and schools.⁸⁷ Increased and sustained state funding would help offset the money lost from federal cuts, ensuring schools can continue purchasing local foods while providing farmers with stable markets and revenue. This investment supports both student nutrition and South Carolina's farmers, while positioning the program for long-term growth and stability.⁸⁸





MODERATE-COST STATE-LEVEL POLICY OPTION: Fund free breakfast for all in public schools

In addition to procurement policies, funding school meals at the state level is another option to increase purchases from local farmers while also addressing food insecurity. For example, in South Carolina Governor Henry McMaster’s 2026 State of the State Address, he called on lawmakers to allocate funding for universal free breakfast for all public school students in kindergarten through twelfth grade across South Carolina.⁸⁹ Providing free school breakfast is a cost-effective way to support student performance and strengthen the future workforce. Well-nourished students are more focused, miss fewer days, and are better prepared to learn, which helps ensure that taxpayer investments in K-12 education deliver stronger returns.⁹⁰ By using existing federal nutrition dollars and reducing administrative burden around meal fees and collections, breakfast for all can streamline school operations and support children’s health.⁹¹

While primarily a nutrition initiative, expanded meal participation could increase overall food purchasing volume, potentially creating additional opportunities for local sourcing and further stimulating the South Carolina economy. The Arkansas Act 123 of 2025 requires that all Arkansas public school students receive one free breakfast daily regardless of income, effective for the 2025-2026 school year.⁹² This initiative aims to increase access to nutritious morning meals for all students. If South Carolina funds free breakfast for all students, it will strengthen efforts to create seamless meal access and ensure children have consistent nutrition throughout the school year and summer months.

Leveraging Institutional Purchasing to Support Farming and Strengthen the State Economy



NO-COST POLICY OPTION: Designate local-level food policy councils where they do not already exist

LOW-COST POLICY OPTION: Staff or provide minimal funding support to both local food policy councils and the state council

Governance structures can help align food system efforts across sectors, reduce duplication, and support more efficient use of public and private resources. One approach is supporting a statewide food policy council (FPC) that serves as a coordinating body for stakeholders including agriculture, public health, education, economic development, and community organizations. Research has demonstrated that there is a positive association between FPCs and healthy food access policies.⁹³ FPCs serve to bring interest holders together and foster collaboration and serve as a forum for information sharing, partnership development, and planning. Municipalities with an FPC are significantly more likely to have policies supporting healthy food access. Among municipalities with an FPC, 92.3% reported having at least one policy to improve healthy food access, compared with 80.6% of municipalities without an FPC.⁹⁴ This association highlights the potential value of sustained governance structures in advancing local policy change.

Currently, the South Carolina Food Systems Network (SCFSN, formerly the South Carolina Food Policy Council), serves as this entity. In addition to a statewide council, there are eleven local and regional food policy councils within South Carolina. See Table 1 for a listing of local and regional food policy councils.

TABLE 1

South Carolina Local and Regional Food Policy Councils

Council
Catawba Food and Farm Coalition
Columbia Food Policy Committee
Greenville County Food Security Coalition
Greenwood County Food Policy Council
Marion County Food Policy Council
Midlands Food Alliance
Oconee Food Council
Spartanburg Food System Coalition
Tri County Food Policy Council
West Columbia-Cayce Food Policy Coalition
York County Food Policy Council

Source: South Carolina Food Systems Network 2026 ⁹⁵

Creating a statewide council might not cost anything if it is established through policy. Even when funding is needed, it is usually low compared to running full programs, since councils mainly bring people together, identify ways to work better together, and help guide decisions. By strengthening communication across agencies and organizations, a coordinated structure can help ensure that existing investments are leveraged effectively.

The SCFSN has a proven track record of advancing a stronger food system through impactful research, planning, and collaboration. Its leadership in developing resources such as the *Grow Local SC Case Study* (2024), the *SC Grower Resource Guide* (2021), and the *SC Local Food System Roadmap* (2021) demonstrates its ability to translate community needs into actionable strategies that support farmers, improve food access, and strengthen local economies.^{96,97,98} Earlier initiatives like the *Community Food Gathering Toolkit* (2021) and the *SC Food Access Task Force Recommendations* (2016) further highlight SCFSN's long-standing commitment to addressing food insecurity and expanding opportunities for small and local producers.^{99,100}

Since it originated in 2005 as a volunteer-led effort to establish a statewide food policy council, SCFSN has grown into a vital, independent nonprofit that convenes stakeholders across sectors of the food system. By facilitating ongoing collaboration, sharing critical information, and guiding policy and program development, SCFSN plays an

essential role in building a more resilient food system for South Carolina. While SCFSN already leverages grant and partner funding to carry out this work, dedicated state funding would significantly strengthen its capacity, expand its reach, and ensure long-term, sustainable impact across the state.

With the conclusion of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed) funding that previously supported local and regional FPCs through direct funding and technical assistance, there is a need for a coordinated replacement strategy.¹⁰¹ Without the funding and technical assistance, communities may lose capacity for convening partners, advancing policy solutions, and sustaining progress on healthy food access initiatives.

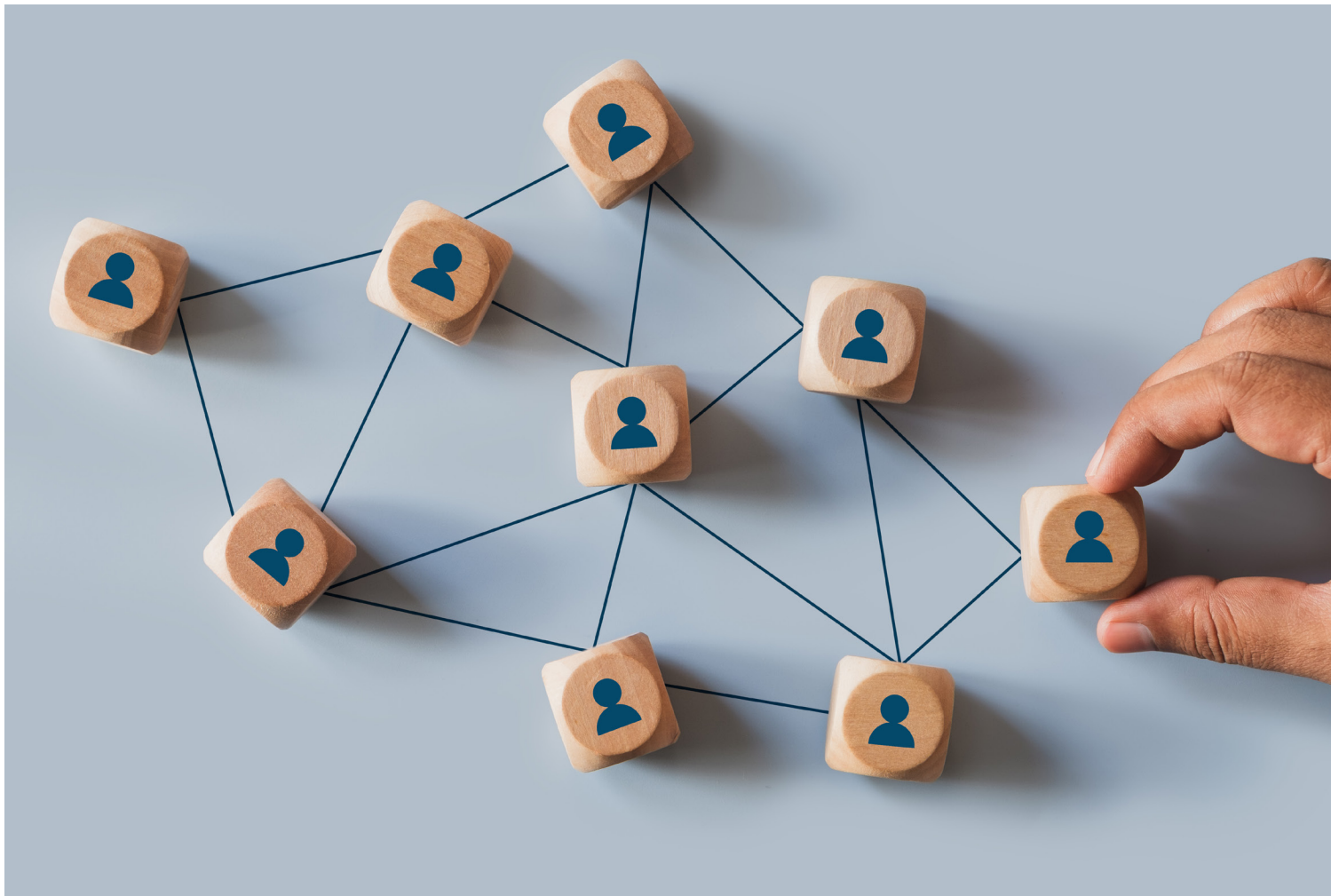
Communities may consider local approaches such as municipal or regional food policy councils. Locally based councils can respond to community-specific priorities while complementing broader state goals, creating multiple entry points for engagement and innovation. A coordinated state and local model, supported by stable funding, can help strengthen the overall food system and maintain momentum in improving access to healthy foods.

Why Governance Matters

Food Policy Councils:

- **Align agriculture, health, education, and economic development sectors**
- **Reduce duplication of effort**
- **Increase policy coordination**
- **Improve healthy food access outcomes**

Municipalities with a food policy council are significantly more likely to have healthy food access policies in place.





Healthcare Integration

Food is Medicine (FiM)

Food procurement policies can serve as practical tools to support South Carolina's agricultural sector while FiM approaches address nutrition and food insecurity at the intersection of food systems and healthcare. These programs are designed to help prevent, manage, or treat health conditions by ensuring consistent access to foods aligned with patients' medical and dietary needs. Evidence suggests that FiM programs can reduce emergency department visits, decrease hospitalizations, support treatment adherence, and contribute to lower overall healthcare costs.¹⁰² By aligning healthcare delivery with nutrition security and food system strategies, South Carolina can improve health outcomes statewide. A growing body of research demonstrates that nutrition-focused programs can improve diet quality, reduce food insecurity, and positively affect health indicators associated with chronic disease, providing a strong rationale for expanding FiM strategies. Research on FiM interventions also shows promise for improving diet quality and both nutrition and food security among participating patients, which are key drivers of diet-related disease.^{103,104} Evidence from nutrition programs such as the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), considered one of the first FiM interventions, further supports nutrition's role in maternal and child health: prenatal participation in WIC has been associated with lower risks of preterm delivery, low birth weight, and infant mortality, and improved diet quality for mothers and children.¹⁰⁵ Food is Medicine South Carolina (FiMSC) is a statewide coalition coordinating alignment among stakeholders, guiding strategic implementation and research priorities, and ensuring that policy and program development are focused on scale and sustainability.¹⁰⁶

Defining Food is Medicine

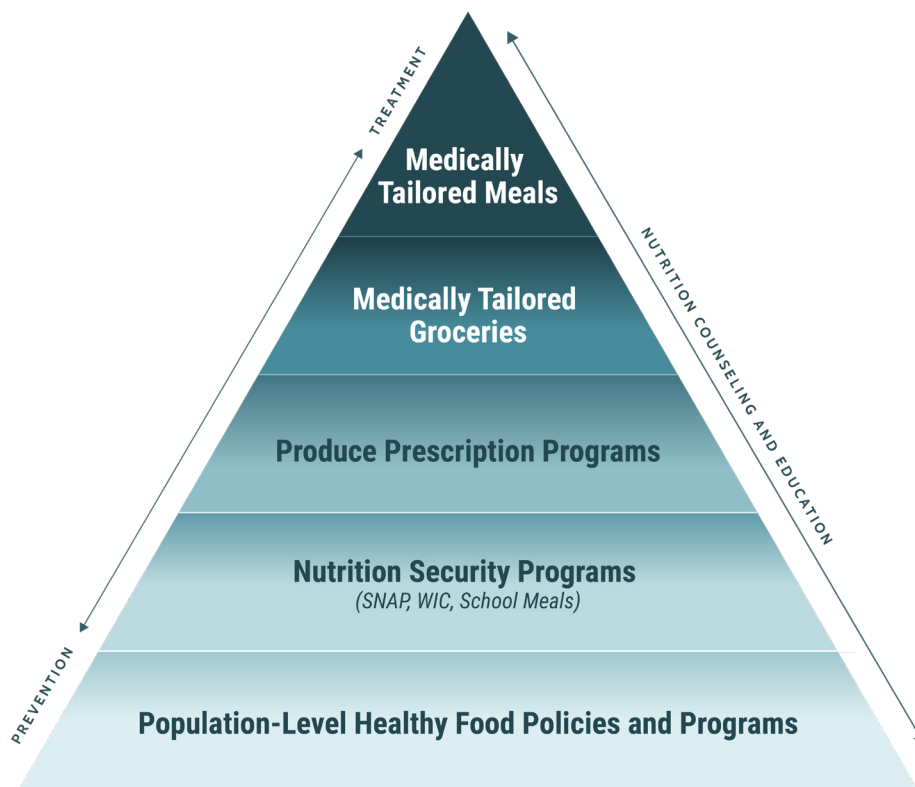
FiM interventions are a range of services and programs that prioritize food and nutrition in preventing, managing, and treating certain health conditions and promoting well-being.¹⁰⁷ These interventions include:

- 1) the provision of foods that support health, and*
- 2) a direct connection to healthcare providers and services, ensuring that food and nutrition interventions are linked to patient care.¹⁰⁸*

Figure 4 depicts the FiM pyramid from Tufts University's Food is Medicine Institute and shows a tiered approach to improving health through food.¹⁰⁹ The base layer shows population-level food policies and nutrition programs that make healthy food more accessible while the next layers show medically tailored groceries and produce prescriptions for people with diet-related conditions, and at the very top are the most intensive interventions: medically tailored meals for people with serious illnesses. Refer to Table 2 on page 36 to learn more about these interventions. The takeaway is that different people need different layers of support, depending on health needs and food access. The pyramid emphasizes that FiM approaches are grounded in a strong foundation of broader policies like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), school meals, and community-based healthy food access strategies that can improve nutrition security.¹⁰⁹

FIGURE 4

Food is Medicine Pyramid



Adapted from Tufts University Food is Medicine Institute¹⁰⁹

FiM interventions are most effective when they are intentionally integrated across sectors, not only within the healthcare system, but in partnership with community organizations, food providers, state agencies, and local governments. This requires coordinated collaboration among healthcare providers and community-based partners to align screening, referrals, food distribution, and nutrition support services so individuals and families can access seamless, community-wide support. By emphasizing food and nutrition within the healthcare delivery system, these strategies tackle diet-related risks, improve health outcomes and quality of care, enable potential cost savings, and reflect a broader shift toward partnerships that support whole-person care and population health improvements. Emphasizing food and nutrition within the healthcare delivery system improves quality of care by addressing diet-related risk factors, enhancing clinical outcomes, and supporting more effective treatment.¹¹⁰ These strategies also promote whole-person care and enable cost savings, reflecting a broader shift toward integrated, population-focused health systems. Examples of FiM interventions are demonstrated in Table 2 and include medically tailored meals, medically tailored groceries, produce prescriptions, culinary medicine programs, and nutrition competencies in medical education.

TABLE 2

Food is Medicine Interventions

Intervention	Description
Medically tailored meals	Medically tailored meals are prepared and created by registered dietitians to meet the specific nutritional needs of individuals with complex or chronic conditions, multiple comorbidities, and other limitations on activities of daily living that make shopping for and preparing meals difficult. Medically tailored meals can also be provided as short-term support during a change in a person's healthcare or health needs, especially after surgery or hospitalization, or as part of high-risk pregnancy or postpartum care. ¹¹¹
Medically tailored groceries	Medically tailored groceries provide curated packages of unprepared foods (groceries), including produce, whole grains, legumes, and lean protein, can be used to prepare meals that align with an individual's condition-specific dietary needs, and often contain recipes. ¹¹¹
Produce prescription programs	Produce prescription programs enable healthcare providers to prescribe fruits and vegetables through either direct provision of produce packages or vouchers in partnership with a food organization or retailer. ¹¹² These programs incorporate nutrition and culinary education to enhance long-term nutrition security and increase individuals' ability to use produce to prepare healthy meals. As mentioned earlier, providing opportunities for nutrition education is a vital part of ensuring the sustainable impact of any FiM intervention.
Culinary medicine approaches	Culinary medicine approaches emphasize the importance of nutrition and culinary education by combining "the art of food and cooking with the science of medicine." ¹¹³ These programs offer nutrition education alongside practical culinary skill-building, helping individuals gain the confidence and skills needed to navigate nutrition recommendations and manage condition-specific needs over the long term and in their own kitchens.
Nutrition competencies in medical education	Nutrition competencies in medical education are the skills and knowledge physicians need to assess diet-related risk, counsel patients on healthy eating, and connect nutrition to prevention and treatment of chronic disease. This aligns with a set of proposed Association of American Medical Colleges' U.S. competencies that emphasize foundational nutrition knowledge, communication, public health, and referral skills, and that were developed to guide medical student and trainee education. ¹¹⁴ The University of South Carolina (USC)'s School of Medicine Greenville has already built nutrition and lifestyle medicine into its curriculum and publicly supported the Association of American Medical Colleges' call to strengthen nutrition training in medical education, while the USC School of Medicine Columbia is also part of the broader push to expand nutrition education across medical schools in South Carolina. ¹¹⁵ This effort is consistent with current national recommendations related to nutrition training in medical schools and with bipartisan House Resolution 1118, which called for meaningful nutrition education throughout medical training. ^{116,117}

FiM interventions use nutritious foods to support better health and manage health conditions. Although FiM interventions require upfront investment, evidence suggests these approaches can be fiscally responsible over time by reducing emergency department visits, hospitalizations, and overall healthcare utilization. There are also opportunities to leverage other investments and infrastructure in broader food system efforts, like a FarmsSHARE-style investment to align and maximize resources.



Food is Medicine programs

can **improve health**,
reduce hospital visits,
and **lower costs** by
helping people
*manage chronic
conditions through
better nutrition.*

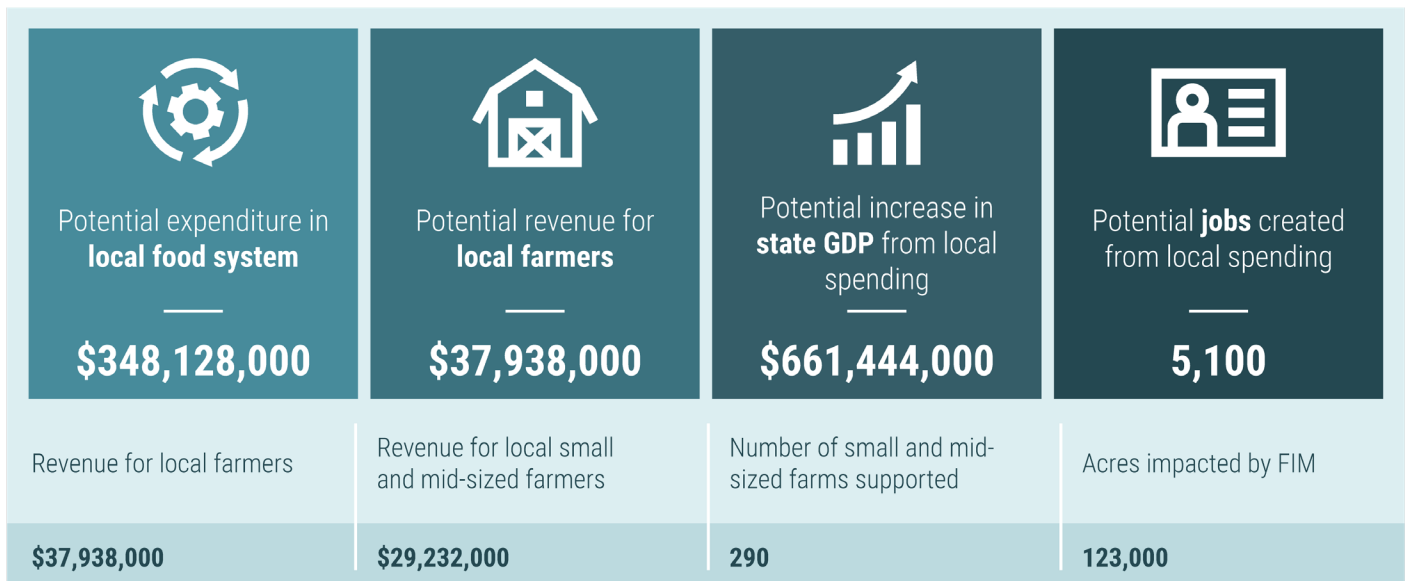
In South Carolina, modeling from the Tufts Food is Medicine Institute indicates that expanding produce prescriptions nationally for adults with type 2 diabetes could yield more than \$15 million in savings over ten years, while medically tailored meals for adults with one or more diet-sensitive conditions could result in approximately \$2,500 in annual healthcare savings per participant.¹¹⁸ Funding for these initiatives varies by state but is typically drawn from a mix of Medicaid financing, state appropriations, health system investment, private payers, and philanthropic support.

Beyond savings, FiM programs improve diet quality, clinical outcomes, and overall quality of life. They also help strengthen food and nutrition security – especially for groups that often face higher health risks, including older adults, people with disabilities, pregnant and postpartum women, children, and individuals with behavioral health conditions.^{119,120,121} By connecting nutrition with healthcare, South Carolina has an opportunity to strengthen its communities, improve health outcomes, and use resources more effectively. At the state, county, and city levels, these investments can be reinforced through Medicaid coverage for food-based interventions and procurement and partnership strategies that integrate nutrition into primary care delivery and community health systems. Engagement through the FiMSC Committee offers a practical starting point for exploring and coordinating these policy options.

In addition to health outcomes, FiM strategies generate broader economic and community benefits. By connecting healthcare with local food production and distribution systems, these approaches can strengthen markets for South Carolina farmers, support food hubs and related infrastructure, and keep food dollars circulating within South Carolina’s agriculture economy. Recent estimates from the Rockefeller Foundation indicate that scaling FiM interventions statewide and prioritizing local food procurement opportunities in South Carolina could generate over \$348 million in annual local food system expenditures in South Carolina, with almost \$38 million being potential revenue for local farmers.¹²²

FIGURE 5

Impact of Locally Sourced Food is Medicine on South Carolina’s Farmers



Adapted from the Rockefeller Farm to Food is Medicine Report, SC Profile¹²²

Policy Opportunities



NO-COST STATE-LEVEL POLICY OPTION: Strengthen opportunities within Medicaid Managed Care Organizations (MCOs)

A recent national poll shows that 79% of people believe that FiM interventions should be paid for by public and private insurance.¹²³ FiM interventions can be implemented by MCOs managing the health services of Medicaid patients. South Carolina can support the integration of FiM services by enhancing and building upon value-added programs such as medically tailored meals, produce prescription initiatives, nutrition education and counseling, medically supported home-delivered meals, and food insecurity screening and referral programs. The state can also expand the patient populations served by these services. Additionally, leveraging quality improvement efforts to prioritize food and nutrition can help improve member outcomes. For diabetes prevention, South Carolina can support integration of FiM by enhancing and building upon value-added services such as Diabetes Self-Management and Education Programs, youth obesity prevention programs, the National Diabetes Prevention Program, or other diabetes support programs. Providing clear definitions, guidance, and technical assistance can help align FiM interventions with quality improvement goals, member satisfaction, cost savings, and population health priorities.

ACCORDING TO RECENT
NATIONAL POLLING DATA,

80%

believe more FiM interventions should be offered more broadly in healthcare.¹²³



NO-COST STATE-LEVEL POLICY OPTION: Prioritize local procurement in FiM interventions

Any policy implemented to strengthen, scale, and sustain FiM programs should prioritize purchasing within the South Carolina local food system. Aligning FiM investments with local procurement strengthens the state's agricultural economy, supports farmers and food businesses, and increases access to fresh foods. Similar to institutions, a procurement floor, as described in the Consumption section, is an option to consider for MCOs and payers of FiM services. This approach reinforces the connection between food system investments and health outcomes while maximizing the economic impact of public funding. FiMSC can facilitate connections between healthcare entities and local producers, helping to build a coordinated, statewide supply chain. Aligning FiM procurement with existing Certified South Carolina initiatives can further amplify economic impact.





MODERATE-COST STATE-LEVEL POLICY OPTION: Allocate state funding for priority populations and conditions

South Carolina can allocate dedicated state funds to support and expand FiM programs targeting priority conditions and populations, including diabetes, heart disease, cancer, pregnancy, behavioral health, older adults, and children. Focused investment can build on existing programs and partnerships to increase reach, improve results, and ensure resources are directed to make a meaningful impact on high-priority groups and health issues. Recent national polling data shows that 84% of people believe that FiM interventions could improve health in the United States, and 80% believe more interventions should be offered more broadly in healthcare.¹²³



MODERATE-COST STATE-LEVEL POLICY OPTION: Leverage federal opportunities to expand FiM

South Carolina can build on existing and upcoming opportunities to fund and expand FiM programs through federal pathways. These include:

- ▶ **Medicare:** can help cover nutrition-related services for eligible patients;
- ▶ **Veterans Health Administration:** includes nutrition support as part of care for veterans;
- ▶ **Health Resources and Services Administration's Maternal Produce Prescription (MP3) program:** helps pregnant and postpartum women access healthy foods; and
- ▶ **U.S. Department of Agriculture's Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program (GusNIP) Produce Prescription Program:** supports programs that make fruits and vegetables more affordable for low-income individuals while also supporting local farmers

Programs like GusNIP have been shown to improve fruit and vegetable intake, food security, and health outcomes while also benefiting local agriculture.¹²⁴ Aligning these resources with state and local efforts can help programs grow and last over time, ensuring they reach more people through existing and new delivery systems.

Together, these strategies position South Carolina to develop a coordinated and sustainable FiM landscape that improves health outcomes, reduces healthcare costs, strengthens local food economies, and advances nutrition security statewide.

SPOTLIGHT

Oklahoma

Oklahoma's Food is Medicine Act, which was enacted in 2023 and expanded in 2025, authorizes Medicaid-contracted providers to deliver medically tailored meals and produce prescriptions as covered services.^{125,126} This bipartisan legislation integrates FiM into the state's healthcare framework by:

- ▶ **Enabling reimbursement:** Medicaid reimburses qualified entities for nutrition interventions tailored to clinical needs, such as diabetes management or postpartum recovery.
- ▶ **Partnering with local systems:** Programs connect participants to locally grown produce through partnerships with food banks, farms, and retailers, boosting the local multiplier effect.
- ▶ **Proven outcomes:** Data from Oklahoma's pilots demonstrate 1.5% reductions in HbA1c levels, an average of 10 mmHg drops in systolic blood pressure, improved mental health scores, and \$1.52 in local economic activity per FiM dollar spent with an average of \$5 million costs savings statewide.¹²⁴

The 2026 Oklahoma Food is Medicine Landscape Analysis by Hunger Free Oklahoma examined 14 FiM programs (12 analyzed), highlighting growth alongside challenges. The analysis confirms health benefits (e.g., A1C reductions and blood pressure improvements) across 14 programs but notes rural gaps and grant dependency.¹²⁷

South Carolina could create a similar model through targeted, fiscally responsible reforms that deliver health improvements and economic returns while prioritizing local agriculture and taxpayer value.

Acronyms

EPA: Environmental Protection Agency

FPC: Food Policy Council

FiM: Food is Medicine

FiMSC: Food is Medicine South Carolina

GusNIP: Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program

ILOS: In Lieu of Services

LFPA: Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement Program

MCO: Managed Care Organizations

MP3: Maternal Produce Prescription Program

PACE: Purchase of Agricultural Conservation Easement

PSA: Public Service and Agriculture

ROI: Return on Investment

SCDA: South Carolina Department of Agriculture

SCDE: South Carolina Department of Education

SCFB: South Carolina Farm Bureau

SCFSN: South Carolina Food Systems Network

SNAP: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

SNAP-Ed: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education

SCNBFP: South Carolina New and Beginning Farmer Program

SHIP: State Health Improvement Plan

USC: University of South Carolina

USDA: United States Department of Agriculture

WIC: Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children

Glossary of Terms

Aggregator

An intermediary that collects, packages, markets, and distributes products from multiple suppliers (farmers or restaurants) into a single, organized platform or supply chain. They streamline operations for small producers, providing bulk access to customers, or, in the case of food delivery, unify online orders from multiple apps into one system <https://sustainableagriculture.net/fsma/who-is-affected/food-hubs-and-certain-community-supported-agriculture-operations/>¹²⁸

Agribusiness

A business that earns revenue from agriculture <https://www.nifa.usda.gov/glossary>¹²⁹

Agritourism

A form of commercial, recreational, or educational enterprises that link agricultural production and/or processing with tourism to attract visitors onto a farm, ranch, or other agricultural business <https://www.nal.usda.gov/human-nutrition-and-food-safety/local-foods-and-communities/agritourism>¹³⁰

Community gardens

Collaborative projects on shared open spaces where participants share in the maintenance and products of the garden <https://lod.nal.usda.gov/nalt/en/page/68415>¹³¹

Direct-to-consumer marketing channels

The sale of agricultural goods and products from the farm straight to the consumer, without intervening distributors or retailers <https://sarep.ucdavis.edu/sustainable-ag/direct-marketing>¹³²

Farmland Preservation

Protection of agricultural land from development to keep it available for farming <https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/conservation-basics/natural-resource-concerns/land/cropland/farmland-protection-policy-act>¹³³

Food deserts

Urban neighborhoods and rural towns without ready access to fresh, healthy, and affordable food <https://lod.nal.usda.gov/nalt/en/page/142350>¹³⁴

Food hub

Businesses or other organizations that aggregate, distribute, and market local and regional food products, usually fresh fruits and vegetables, but also sometimes meat, dairy, grains, prepared foods, or other items <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/strategies-and-solutions/what-works-for-health/strategies/food-hubs>¹³⁵

Food insecurity

The limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods, or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/measurement> ¹³⁶

Food is medicine

Interventions that have a nexus between the healthcare system and the community by providing food that can help to manage, treat, and prevent chronic health conditions <https://odphp.health.gov/foodismedicine/understanding-food-medicine/types-interventions> ¹³⁷

Food security

Condition in which all members of a household have consistent, reliable access at all times to enough nutritionally adequate and safe food for an active, healthy life, and are able to obtain that food in socially acceptable ways without resorting to emergency measures such as scavenging, stealing, or relying on food aid <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/measurement> ¹³⁸

Food system

Complex networks that include all the inputs and outputs associated with agricultural and food production and consumption <https://www.usda.gov/about-usda/general-information/staff-offices/office-chief-economist/sustainability/definitions-sustainability-and-food-systems> ¹³⁹

Good Food Purchasing Program Model

A nationally coordinated initiative that uses institutional purchasing to promote a transparent food system, while providing a framework that unites local, multi-sector coalitions across cities to advance policies that reflect community needs and build local ownership <https://goodfoodpurchasing.org/faq-items/what-is-the-good-food-purchasing-program/> ¹⁴⁰

Healthy Palmetto

A statewide coalition of partner organizations in South Carolina that works to unify and mobilize efforts to improve healthy eating and active living, with the goal of enhancing quality of life and ensuring all residents have the opportunity to thrive <https://healthypalmetto.org/about/> ¹⁴¹

Institution

For the purposes of this toolkit, a large, established organization with a cafeteria and/or food procurement, which includes childcare centers, city or state agencies, a healthcare organization, or an institute of higher education <https://sarep.ucdavis.edu/sustainable-ag/institutional-procurement> ¹⁴²

Local food

For the purposes of this toolkit, local food is defined as products that are grown, raised, and/or processed in South Carolina <https://www.usda.gov/about-usda/news/blog/what-local-food> ¹⁴³

Medically tailored meals

Fully prepared meals designed by registered dietitian nutritionists and provided through medical referral as part of a treatment plan to meet the specific dietary needs of individuals with complex or diet-related health conditions <https://odphp.health.gov/foodismedicine/understanding-food-medicine/types-interventions> ¹⁴⁴

Middle mile

The stage where goods move between facilities, such as producers or manufacturers to warehouses or distribution centers, which links the start and end of the supply chain <https://www.foodlogistics.com/transportation/last-mile/article/22867209/onfleet-understanding-firstmile-vs-middlemile-vs-lastmile-delivery> ¹⁴⁵

Nutrition security

Consistent access to healthy, safe, affordable foods essential to optimal health and well-being <https://www.nifa.usda.gov/glossary> ¹⁴⁶

Purchase development rights programs

Land conservation programs in which a government or organization pays landowners to permanently give up the right to develop their land, ensuring it remains preserved for uses like agriculture <https://sustainablecitycode.org/brief/purchase-of-development-rights/> ¹⁴⁷

South Carolina 2021 Model Procurement Code

State-developed template policy designed to guide how public school districts in South Carolina purchase goods and services <https://procurement.sc.gov/files/2021%20Model%20School%20District%20Procurement%20Code.pdf> ¹⁴⁸

Value-added products

Changing a raw agricultural product into something new through cooking, packaging, processing, cooling, drying, extracting, or any other type of process that differentiates the product from the original raw commodity <https://attra.ncat.org/topics/value-added-agriculture/> ¹⁴⁹

Zoning reform

Changes to local land-use laws and regulations that govern how land can be used, aimed at improving community outcomes by allowing more flexible development <https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/strategies-and-solutions/what-works-for-health/strategies/zoning-regulation-and-land-use-policy-reforms> ¹⁵⁰

Additional Resources

Carolina Farm Stewardship Association

<https://carolinafarmstewards.org/>

Certified SC Cafeteria Program

<https://certifiedsc.com/programs/certified-sc-cafeteria/>

Clemson Cooperative Extension: Rural Health & Nutrition

<https://www.clemson.edu/extension/health/>

Don't Waste Food SC

<https://www.des.sc.gov/community/recycling-waste-reduction/dont-waste-food-sc>

Food is Medicine South Carolina

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

FoodShare South Carolina

<https://foodsharesc.org/>

Healthy Palmetto

<https://healthypalmetto.org/>

North Carolina's FarmsSHARE 2024 Evaluation Report

<https://heyzine.com/flip-book/farmsshare-evaluation-report>

School Nutrition Association of South Carolina

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

South Carolina Department of Agriculture

<https://agriculture.sc.gov/>

South Carolina Department of Environmental Services' Reducing Food Waste: A Guide for South Carolina Schools

<https://des.sc.gov/sites/des/files/Library/OR-1522.pdf>

South Carolina Department of Public Health

<https://dph.sc.gov/>

South Carolina Food Hub Network

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

South Carolina Food Insecurity Risk Map

<https://www.foodismedicinesc.org/map>

South Carolina Food Systems Network

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

South Carolina Health + Planning Toolkit

<https://www.dph.sc.gov/sites/scdph/files/Library/SCHealthPlanningToolkit.pdf>

South Carolina New and Beginning Farmer Program

<https://www.clemson.edu/extension/newfarmer/>

South Carolina State Health Improvement Plan

https://dph.sc.gov/sites/scdph/files/2025-10/25-117-DPH_SHIP_Report_V12.pdf

South Carolina State University 1890 Research & Extension

https://scsu.edu/psa/1890_research_and_extension.php

Tufts Food is Medicine Institute

<https://tuftsfoodismedicine.org/>

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