



FARM TO TABLE NM FOOD & AGRICULTURE POLICY COUNCIL

Farm to Table engages a comprehensive approach to ensuring that public policies which impact the New Mexico food and farming system are developed and implemented in ways that promote the health and wealth of our communities. This includes several different strategies for civic engagement: development of policy councils, administrative and legislative advocacy, rural leadership development & youth engagement.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT—OUR IMPACT

Policy Councils & Legislative Advocacy

One method for civic engagement that has proved effective in both New Mexico and across the country are the establishment of food policy councils. Because none of our federal, state, or local governments have “departments of food”, food system issues are the purview of various agencies. Food policy councils are often convened in part to facilitate collaboration and coordination among the different governmental entities whose policies and health/economic development programs impact the food and agriculture system and between agency representatives and other food system stakeholders such as community organizations, agricultural producers and other food entrepreneurs.

In 2002, Farm to Table collaborated with the New Mexico Departments of Agriculture, Nutrition Bureau, and Human Services, the New Mexico Farmers’ Marketing Association, the Community Food Security Coalition and NMSU Coop Extension other groups to form the **New Mexico Food and Agriculture Policy Council** which has since worked on researching policy issues and educating state and federal policy-makers about key priorities. The results of this collaboration have been significant. **Please see the following page for a timeline of NM Policy Council accomplishments.**

In addition to its advocacy at the state and federal levels, Farm to Table provides training and technical assistance in the development of community-based (city/county) food policy councils in New Mexico. These Food Policy Councils along with the Rio Arriba Food Policy Council have emerged to address local food system issues. For example, the Santa Fe and Grant County Food Policy Councils gained support of their counties to amend food procurement codes to create preferences for locally produced foods. They have also worked on a community food assessments to identify assets and needs with respect to food security and local food production. Farm to Table is also working with Taos, Bernalillo and Tohachi.

Administrative Advocacy & Partnership

While legislative advocacy creates the framework for a policy environment that promotes local agriculture and access to healthy food, administrative advocacy is essential to ensure that these laws are implemented and have the intended effect. Farm to Table has worked closely with organizations and agency representatives at both the state and federal level to maximize the impact of supportive laws and to help develop policies and rules that can be enacted at the administrative level.

For example, in 2006 the NM Policy Council worked to pass legislation to create administrative rules that would eliminate junk food sales at NM elementary schools and significantly restrict them in middle and high schools. The Policy Council worked with the Department of Education, the Department of Health (NMDOH), Action for Healthy Kids, the NM Pediatric Association, and the NM School Nutrition Association to create these changes and then worked at the federal level in 2010 for passage of similar rules. Further, we helped NMDOH to obtain \$600,000 in federal funds for WIC and Senior Farmers’ Market Nutrition Programs, providing tens of thousands of seniors and low-income families with access to fresh, local produce and putting all that money into farmers’ pockets. We also collaborated with the NM Farmers’ Marketing Association and the NM Environment Department to change administrative rules, allowing residents to produce low-risk foods in their home kitchens for sales at farmers’ markets.

We have also engaged with state and federal agencies in collaborative problem-solving. For example, we are working with Rural Development to get more of its funding to New Mexico for work on rural food system infrastructure and supporting rural food enterprises. This ongoing initiative will likely include legislative advocacy for changes to USDA funding programs that would make them more adaptable to the unique circumstances of New Mexico and other Southwest states. In addition, we are working with the Interagency on Obesity Prevention and to assess how well schools are implementing healthy eating programs and coordinating these with their Wellness Plans.

TIMELINE OF ACCOMPLISHMENTS

NEW MEXICO FOOD AND AGRICULTURE POLICY COUNCIL

2002	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block; margin-right: 20px;"> NM Food and Agriculture Policy Council founded </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> NM Farm to School program created by memorial </div>	<h3><u>Ongoing Advocacy</u></h3> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Advising policymakers and local and state organizations on improving New Mexico's procurement code to support local food purchases. ◆ Working with national groups to include federal funding for the Farm to School Grant Program and an increase in school meal reimbursement. ◆ Providing advice on the development of a federal Healthy Food Finance Initiative. ◆ In support of the NM Food Gap Task Force recommendations, coordinating a policy campaign targeted at amending the state's Local Economic Development Act to include rural grocery stores and food outlets and entities appropriate for funding assistance to increase economic activity and access to affordable healthy foods. ◆ Work with national and regional groups to focus on and advocate for federal programs that could expand access to affordable food in rural, Tribal, and underserved communities. ◆ Ongoing advocacy on a federal Farm Bill that supports local producers and consumers.
2006	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> NM becomes one of the first states to take action in support of children's health through minimizing junk food in schools </div>	
2007	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> \$85,000 in recurring state funding secured for the purchase of NM-grown fresh fruits and vegetables for school meals for 12 schools serving 6,000 students in the Albuquerque </div>	
2008	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> \$150,000 in recurring state funding obtained to promote the development of farmers' markets. </div>	
	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> NMFAPC's lead role in regional advocacy for increased federal funding and inclusion of SW states in the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program results in approximately \$300,000 in annual federal funding and \$200,000 annual supplemental state funding. </div>	
	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> \$162,000 in recurring state funds secured to supplement federal funding for the WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program. </div>	
	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> State funding secured to establish and support two tribal extension agents, serving the Navajo Nation. </div>	
2009-	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> Federal Farm Bill advocacy helps to create the Healthy Urban (and rural) Food Development program, "geographic preference to allow school food service to make special bids for local foods and significantly increase funding for the Fresh Fruit/Vegetable Snack Program which brought \$5.5 million over 5 years to NM schools. Advocated for \$40 million Farm to School Program and improved federal school meal nutrition standards in the Child Nutrition Reauthorization of 2010 and provided testimony to federal agencies on the President's Healthy Food Financing Initiative. </div>	
	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> Governor-appointed NM Food Gap Task Force presents its findings to the Governor to improve healthy food access and promote food-based economic development. </div>	
2010	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> Helped to form the Santa Fe City and County Food Policy Council and Grant County Food Policy Council. Continue to advocate for increase in state funds for fresh fruits & vegetables for schools and amendment to NM Local Economic Development Act to include rural food retail. </div>	
2011-2012	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px;"> Developed and advocated for "Local Food Procurement" state legislation passed by NM Legislature & vetoed by the Governor. Continue to work on at local & state levels. Advocated for the "In-State Business Preference Act" to support local food, agriculture and many other NM businesses that passed the NM Special 2011 Session. 2012: NM School Food Delivery Funds, \$600,000 recurring. </div>	

Our Impact—

Rural Leadership Development

Given that rural communities encounter opportunities and challenges with respect to the food system that are different than urban communities, a comprehensive approach to civic engagement must focus on empowering rural leaders to bring their perspectives to food system discussions. Engaging rural communities is often more complicated than soliciting involvement from their urban counterparts for several reasons. First, New Mexico is a geographically large state, and many of our rural communities are located three or more hours drive away from the state capital, making it challenging for rural community members to participate in the state legislative process. The large distances also make it difficult for government representatives to reach out to remote areas, particularly at a time when state budget cuts have limited travel allocations for agency representatives. Second, many of New Mexico's rural communities still lack easy access to the internet, which has become the primary method of communication for many organizations and government entities. Third, few rural communities have sufficient resources to support paid staff for community organizations, signifying that those involved in civic engagement activities are doing so in free time that is pulled in many directions.

Our work in this arena is closely tied in with our work in community-directed development. We have provided advocacy trainings to many of the communities we have worked with, have invited their participation in the statewide NM Policy Council, and have included policy council development in our technical assistance package to several communities. Identifying and addressing policy issues that impact food system development.



As more and more families, businesses, non-profit organizations and governmental agencies are recognizing the important link between food and health and between local agriculture and rural economic development, the need for this kind of coordination and the opportunity for successful advocacy is growing. New and expanded funding for policy councils at the state and local levels would

ensure that these issues are being addressed in a systemic manner and that those who are most impacted by food, nutrition and agriculture policy have an understanding of the issues at hand and are empowered to present their perspectives to policy-makers and agency representatives.

Our goal over the next three years is to help other communities and groups develop food policy councils and to provide capacity building, advocacy training, coordination and shared learning experiences between NM's local and state food policy councils. Specific commitments have already been made to emerging groups in Bernalillo, Dona Ana, Grant, Santa Fe, Rio Arriba, Taos and McKinley counties with the goal to invite other interested communities to the table. In addition, we will continue to build out our state food and agriculture policy efforts by advocating for policies and programs that will support the permanent access to affordable, nutritious and culturally appropriate foods as well as seek policies that support economic programs and initiatives that increase the health and wealth of New Mexicans. To accomplish this work we will continue to expand our reach to work with a broader range of groups, agencies and local food policy councils.

Our goal in the next three years is to participate fully in the increased coordination of organizations and agencies focused on children's health and their communities and press for full coordination of programs and funding to improve children's health, their environment, and their communities ability to provide accessible healthy affordable foods.

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