What’s Cooking in Your Food System?

A GUIDE TO COMMUNITY FOOD ASSESSMENT

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Farm stand organized by NorthEast Neighborhood Alliance at the Rochester Public Market in 1999. Photo credit: Kali Meeks.

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Preface

Background

This Guide is aimed at informing and supporting the development of Community Food Assessments as a tool for increasing community food security and creating positive change. In 1993, Community Food Security Coalition co-founders Andy Fisher and Bob Gottlieb were involved in a year-long study of the Los Angeles food system, entitled Seeds of Change: Strategies for Food Security for the Inner City. This study sparked interest among advocates in other communities in completing similar studies, and numerous requests to the Coalition for information and support. Thus, in 1999, the Coalition started offering workshops on how to do Community Food Assessments, and decided to develop a guidebook on the subject. This publication is our first attempt to systematically summarize information on how to do a Community Food Assessment. Reflecting the state of current knowledge of this emerging field, it is necessarily imperfect and incomplete.

We encourage readers to supplement this Guide with other material, including the Community Food Security Assessment Toolkit, the resources listed in Appendix 6, and the reports from assessments highlighted in the cases in Chapter 3.

Intended audience

We envision the audience of this guidebook to be individuals and representatives of diverse organizations who are working on food issues in their communities, and who are interested in gathering information to highlight what is happening in their food system, and to encourage positive change. We expect that most readers are active in their communities, experienced with basic organizing approaches, and interested in working collaboratively with community residents and representatives of diverse agencies and organizations.

Authors and editors

This Guide was assembled through the work of several authors who joined the process and worked on it at different times since 1999. Andy Fisher conceived of and raised the funds for the project, and contributed to the writing. Hugh Joseph, initially charged with the project, fleshed out the idea, created the basic framework, and was responsible for much of the initial writing. Kami Pothukuchi, joining in 2002, worked with existing material, filled significant gaps, and developed much of the final content, collaborating with Kai Siedenburg on editorial decisions. Hannah Burton was responsible for obtaining and compiling the material on the case studies and related tables, and provided additional editorial assistance.

It is important to note that Kai Siedenburg and Kami Pothukuchi, the Guide's editors, accept full and final responsibility for the Guide's contents. In this Guide, the authorial "we" refers to these editors. Any questions on the contents of the Guide may be directed to us at the Community Food Security Coalition.

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