

# COVID-19 Response & Action by NYC Community Food Projects

Report by Just Food

Maggie Israel, Qiana Mickie, Sally Quinn, & Lucille Tang



## **Table of Contents**

Table of Contents	2
Executive Summary	3
Acknowledgements	3
Defining Terms	4
Introduction	5
Methods	6
Study Design	6
Participant Recruitment	6
Data Collection and Analysis	6
Results	10
Participant Demographics	10
Table A. Food Systems Community Stakeholders Demographics	10
Table B. CSA Site Managers Demographics	10
Table C. Small and Mid-Sized Farmer Demographics	10
Section A. What Went Well and Why	11
Triumphs during the COVID-19 Response	11
CSAs	11
Small and Mid-Sized Farmers	12
Stakeholders	13
What Supported the Triumphs?	14
Community Support	14
Just Food	15
City and State Government	16
Section B. What Needs Improvement and How	17
Facing Challenges	17
CSAs	17
Small and Mid- Sized Farmers	18
Stakeholders	19
Offering Solutions	22
Communication and Outreach	22
Addressing Food System Inequities	22
Discussion	23
Recommendations	25
Limitations	27
Appendix	27
References	28

## **Executive Summary**

As we enter the winter season, the effects of the COVID-19 crisis continue to have an impact on the New York City (NYC) food system. In the Spring and Summer, large-scale food supply chains broke down and attempts were made by food providers to address the bottlenecking and gaps in food distribution. However, for many New Yorkers, food insecurity continues to rise. Currently, 1.5 million New Yorkers are experiencing food insecurity.1 To determine the pandemic's effect on NYC's regional food system, Just Food's research team conducted a series of eleven semi-structured interviews, aiming to gather stories and information on how community stakeholders, Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) site managers, and regional farmers responded and pivoted in response to the COVID-19 crisis. Trends were assessed to gain insight on triumphs, challenges, and recommendations by those interviewed; this insight was used to inform recommendations on how Just Food as well as how city and state government officials can best support the regional food system during the crisis and moving forward. Throughout the interviews, interviewees shared two primary issues with the pandemic response: majority of government resources going to emergency food models and the inaccessibility to resources to small and mid scale farmers, CSAs, and other community stakeholders. Many expressed frustration at the current city/state emergency food access models, which focused on accommodating large scale/corporate controlled farms and large corporate or non-profit structures in funding structures, in lieu of grassroots food/farm organizations. The concern is that continuing to fund this centralized food system, characterized by large-scale food corporations, will only perpetuate the mechanisms that cause persistent food insecurity in the first place.

CSAs and regional, small and mid-sized farmers faced many challenges and uncertainty at the beginning of the 2020 growing season; however, they were able to accommodate COVID-19 safety protocols without suffering significant losses and while also continuing to provide healthy, regionally grown food to communities in need. This report will demonstrate resilience of regional community food access models and grassroots stakeholders and amplify calls for sustained investment to support their long term viability, and ability to meet the needs of the diverse communities in New York City and New York State.

## **Acknowledgements**

Just Food would like to thank the partners for their invaluable contribution to this report and the entire Just Food Network for their ongoing support and tremendous food justice and equity work within our region.

Special thanks to the report authors, Maggie Israel, Qiana Mickie, Sally Quinn, and Lucille Tang for their commitment to amplifying community voices.







## **Defining Terms**

**Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)** - A group of community members who work together cooperatively to purchase shares from a regional farmer during the growing season with advance payment.

**Emergency Food** - donated, surplus, rescue, and otherwise secured food/food products distributed for free to community members by anti-hunger, food rescue, and other organizations such as food pantries, community fridges, soup kitchens and meal distribution programs.

**Pandemic Response** - The various efforts and strategies developed and deployed to specifically address gaps in the food system as a result of the pandemic.

**Regional Food System** - including food production, agriculture, and distribution at varying scales within 250 miles of New York City center.

**Hyper Local** - term used to describe food grown and consumed within walking distance in a neighborhood.

**Local** - USDA defines the term local to describe food grown, harvested, distributed and produced within 250 miles.

**Regional** - For this report, we are focusing on the term regional to encompass food grown, harvested, distributed, produced within the NY city and state proximity - including neighborhood, community gardens, urban farms, rural farms, etc.

**CARES Act** - The Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act passed by Congress on March 27th, 2020.

**PPE** - acronym for personal protective equipment (i.e. gloves, masks, sanitizer, etc.).

**PPP** - acronym for Payment Protection Program for businesses created by the CARES Act.

**BIPOC** - acronym that stands for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color.

Land Acknowledgement: We want to acknowledge this report references food, resources, and activities on the land recognized by US government entities as cities and states; however we also recognize this is the land of the Lenape people and initially known as Turtle Island. It is an acknowledgement not only of Indigenous peoples, practices, lives, and struggles on this land; but also the larger question of the validity of land tenure and stewardship within regional lands that is beyond the research, scope, and efforts within this report.





#### Introduction

In March 2020, life in NYC changed drastically and rapidly. Offices, schools, and restaurants shuttered after Governor Andrew Cuomo passed "New York State on PAUSE," which mandated that all non-essential businesses immediately come to a halt.2,3 All spring, COVID-19 continued to spread through New York and the city became the first major epicenter of the virus in the United States.4 COVID-19 highlighted and exacerbated the underlying inequities in healthcare and the food systems, and as such, communities of color soon began to experience the highest rates of infection and deaths caused by COVID-19.5

From jarring photos of large scale farmers dumping milk and letting food rot in the fields to empty grocery store shelves, school closures and children going hungry without school meals, it's clear that pandemic-related food insecurity has become a major concern in NYC.6 It's also clear that the centralized, commodity-based food sourcing system buckled under the economic stress of the crisis, and struggled to provide nutritious and culturally relevant food to those who need it in a reliable manner. Across the state, emergency food efforts have been ramped up to bring surplus food, food destined for waste, and donated food to impacted neighborhoods. Funding from the federal to city levels channeled billions of dollars into relief grants to charitable emergency food models and large scale farmers. Governor Cuomo allocated \$35 million dollars to Nourish New York to purchase surplus products from NY State farmers, who were struggling due to COVID-19, to donate to food pantries and other large non-profit food rescue organizations. 7 At the city level, the efforts around addressing food and nutrition in the crisis went under the purview of a newly formed Food Czar taskforce, and assigned former NYC Department of Sanitation Commissioner, Kathryn Garcia, to lead the efforts. According to Andrea Strong reporting from Food & Wine, the city allocated an "additional \$170 million in investment" which went to "supporting food banks, soup kitchens, DOE [Department of Education] graband-go meals, home delivery, and other contingencies" and ramped up meals delivered to senior citizens.8 Despite the extra flow of funding, many New Yorkers remain hungry and the food system remains unable to address these issues, consistently or sustainably. Even with these admirable efforts, food insecurity in the city and the nation continues to rise. It is expected that 54 million Americans and 1.5 million New Yorkers will be experiencing food insecurity in the coming months.9

Food access and nutrition are critical components of health and are undeniably integral parts in the fight against COVID-19. Hunger for many New Yorkers has become a persistent issue and there exists multiple efforts within the food security and food justice movements to combat it. However, developing more resilient, flexible, and diverse food distribution models will be essential in order to address greater issues inside the food system, from ensuring healthy food access to communities in need to ensuring longevity for small regional farmers.<sup>10</sup>

Recently, there has been a surge in COVID-19 related research and reports regarding the food system response in the midst of the crisis and the impact of government funding mainly going to resource emergency model efforts such as food rescue, food pantries, and varied mutual aid efforts. Community-driven solutions such as CSAs and community-run farmers markets as well as the perspectives of regional farmers were not present in these reports. A comprehensive investigation of the effects of grassroots efforts, community-based food system immediate response, and the pivots made by small and mid scale farmers and other stakeholders within our region has not yet happened.





To fill this research and information gap, Just Food hired three community-based research consultants to interview three categories of individuals in the Just Food Network: food system community stakeholders, CSA site managers, and small and mid scale regional farmers. Just Food is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization located in New York City and has been a vanguard of food justice, sustainable agriculture, and equitable policy/advocacy since 1995. This report aims to determine how these interviewees responded to the pandemic, what challenges as well as successes they experienced, and ultimately how longer term efforts toward food security and sovereignty can best be supported moving forward by New York city and state governments.

#### **Methods**

#### Study Design

This study was aimed to understand the food system's response to COVID-19, through qualitative interviews with various Community Stakeholders, Small and Mid-Sized Farmers, and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Site Managers. This study used a Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) approach by centering a community organization (Just Food), recruiting researchers with active involvement in COVID-19 relief and response, and designing interview questions to be open-ended and to leverage the work and lived experiences of the interviewees. Before report publication, a draft was sent to all interviewees to ensure their quotes and the report were in alignment.

#### Participant Recruitment

In October 2020, research assistants sent requests for interviews to Just Food's Network. Three categories of participants were recruited:

- 1. Community Stakeholders- representing community leaders who were involved in immediate, local food system response to COVID-19 within their communities (except one, who is involved on a regional level and focuses more on policy advocacy and networking and has been excluded from this analysis).
- **2.** Small and Mid-Sized Farmers- representing the first steps of regional food supply chain, sustainable agriculture production, particularly from the small and mid-sized farmer perspective.
- **3.** CSA Site Managers- representing the volunteer/members capacity of local produce distribution direct from farmers within NYC communities.

#### Data Collection and Analysis

In October 2020, researchers conducted interviews via Zoom and the phone with Community Stakeholders, Farmers, and CSA site managers. Interviewees were asked to share stories of what happened to their organization during the COVID-19 pandemic, with a specific emphasis on potential opportunities, challenges, and supports that were received and needed.













Interviews were transcribed with Otter Transcription and were uploaded into Dedoose for thematic analysis. To identify themes and trends among interviewees, researchers reviewed the interviews in several rounds and tagged for four categories (Opportunities, Challenges, Supports Received, and Supports Needed) and trends within the categories (ex. Mentions of Community Support, Labor/Staff, Infrastructure, Policy, etc.). For the "Supports Received" and "Supports Needed" categories, researchers also tagged if and/or when interviewees mentioned if they received or needed support from a specific organization (Just Food), the City government, and/or the State government. Researchers then organized the responses for this report, creating two sections:

- Section A: What Went Well and Why" highlighting triumphs during the COVID-19 Pandemic and what supported those triumphs.
- "Section B: What needs improvement and how" highlighting the challenges faced and recommendations by interviewees.

Interviews were then used to inform specific recommendations outlined on page 27. For a quick view of recommendations, please see the chart on the following pages.



		Recommendations at a Gla	nce
Action	Who Benefits?	Why?	How?
Invest	Small and Mid- Sized Farmers Farmers of Color (BIPOC)	Regional farmers showed that they were adaptable and resilient in the face of the COVID- 19 crisis, and were able to supply food to NYC communities when more centralized food supply chains were hobbled by the pandemic. Supporting regional farmers is a critical component to a resilient food system that is adaptable to shocks.  Farmers (particularly farmers of color) need to be included in city and state government regional food planning. They can grow and distribute seasonal, fresh, and culturally relevant produce in diverse neighborhoods- in particular food insecure communities.	Institutional Contracts & Regional Supply Chain Grants  • Government initiatives that support food procurement from small and mid scale and BIPOC regional farmers/ growers through CSAs, food boxes, and farmers markets. Modify contract requirements and bid processes to account for difference in scale operations and capital capacity between small- mid and large scale farmers.  - Centralized resources to better communicate opportunities and foster matchmaking opportunities among regional food providers and small and mid-scale farmers.  • Support through technical assistance, from grassroots organizations like Just Food and/or other community-based organizations that can leverage aggregation, capacity to apply, and advocacy.  • Create infrastructure grants (not loans) to support season extension development (i.e. greenhouses, processing equipment) and fair labor so small- mid farmers can continue to produce during the colder months and have income to pay fair wages from field to community.





	ı	Recommendations at a Gla	nce
Action	Who Benefits?	Why?	How?
Resource	CSAs Community- Run Farmers Markets	CSAs showed that they were a resilient model of food distribution that continued to reliably provide healthy, regional food to communities during the pandemic.  Strategies like sliding scale and subsidized shares need additional funding to increase equity in membership.  Increase redemption of safety net incentive programs like SNAP at CSAs will decrease food insecurity while increasing regional fresh food consumption.	Increase SNAP/ EBT training and resources for CSAs and farmers to become SNAP eligible  - More funding for EBT technology.  - Technical assistance for paperwork.  - More virtual trainings/ resources for farmers.  - Increase technical trainings for CSA coordinators process EBT/ SNAP onsite.  Fund technical assistance to support CSAs to apply for capacity funds to provide stipends for EBT coordinators.  Fund CSAs to incorporate more sliding scale shares and subsidized shares in their membership.  Continue Just Food trainings and technical assistance to community food providers on how to start community food providers on how to start community food projects like CSAs, food boxes, community-run farmers markets, and become SNAP eligible.  Continue Just Food Value Chain Map outreach and marketing.







		Recommendations at a Gla	nce
Action	Who Benefits?	Why?	How?
Invest	Community Stakeholders	Community-based organizations with connections between farmers and impacted communities are poised to pivot in immediate response, leverage resources, while also sustaining their active programming and staffing.	Increase grants to support community- driven food distribution and agriculture production in models such as community gardens, CSAs, and community-run farmers markets beyond the pandemic response.  Allow them to focus funding on their resilient work to support small farm and community viability, not being forced into the emergency food models in order to maintain operations.  City and state contracts and grants that allow for allocation of funding for fair wage staffing and other labor in community food models. Do not create conditions for stakeholders to increase free labor output in order to execute programming. Foster fair job security in communities through food based efforts.  Increase capacity to engage in technical assistance to ramp up operations and funding into models and better connect to city and state government.

#### **Results**

#### Participant Demographics

Research assistants conducted a total of eleven interviews from three categories of participants: six stakeholders, four CSA site managers, and two farmers. Five of six stakeholders represented COVID-19 response local to New York City and helped inform the COVID-19 response sections of this report.

Interviewee demographics are found in Table A, B, and C. Throughout this report, interviewees will be referred to and quoted as their categories and associated letter (Ex. Stakeholder A). Interviewees primarily served individuals in Manhattan, Brooklyn, and the Bronx in varying capacities.





Table A. Food Systems Community Stakeholders Demographics		
Interview Type	Community(s) Served	Organization Type
Stakeholder A	Hell's Kitchen	Cooperative
Stakeholder B	Central Brooklyn and Red Hook	Nonprofit Organization
Stakeholder C	Hunts Point, The Bronx	Community Garden
Stakeholder D	Central Brooklyn (But workshops all over 5 boroughs)	Community Chef
Stakeholder E	Central Brooklyn, Bed Stuy	Former Community Organizer

Table B. CSA Site Managers Demographics		
Interview Type	Communities Served	
CSA A	Manhattan, West Harlem	
CSA B	Manhattan, Carnegie Hill	
CSA C	Brooklyn, Prospect Lefferts Garden	
CSA D	Brooklyn Heights	

Table C. Small and Mid-Sized Farmer Demographics		
Interview Type	Category	Communities Served
Farmer A	Mid-size farm	Ghent, NY (Brooklyn Borough Hall, Jackson Heights, Morningside Heights, Inwood, Union Square, Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza, Upper East Side)
Farmer B	Small family farm	Goshen, NY (Corona, Queens and Sunset Park, Brooklyn)







#### Section A. What Went Well and Why

## **Triumphs during the COVID-19 Response**

#### **CSAs**

All CSA site manager interviewees were able to continue operations for their CSA with relative minor setbacks. Two out of four CSA site managers shared that they had a late start planning for the season due to uncertainty caused by the pandemic. All managed to adapt their operations to accommodate COVID-19 safety protocols. All even noted that their operations were running more smoothly and efficiently than previous seasons.

We've just really streamlined how delivery and distribution goes, and that's been really good because it's fast and efficient." - CSA A. West Harlem

CSAs B and C reported that they had to move operations to a new site and at least partly outside to accommodate social distancing, shifted operations in order to pre-bag or box shares, and financed their own PPE. They did this at little to no cost to the farmers.

- What we did have to do is completely reorganize how we did our distribution... There was a time where it was unsure whether or not it was going to happen, and we had to wait to hear from the farm as well, if they were going to be able to do it. They were planning to do it the whole time, but [the question was] how to manage it and manage things at the farm, as well." CSA D, Brooklyn Heights
- Over time, we just had weekly meetings where we would get together and talk about scenarios... if it felt comfortable for [the volunteers], because they were going to be the ones on site the most, then it was going to be safe for others. So with them, we developed a set of protocols, based on what we were seeing out in the world... we had to basically re-develop all of our processes for running a CSA, including changing locations." CSA C, Prospect Lefferts Garden

Importantly, none of the interviewed CSAs suffered notable membership loss, which would have affected their ability to remain operational. CSA A did not lose any members and had a longer waiting list at the end of the season. CSA C reported a 10% membership increase, approximately 45% of which were new members. CSA D reported minor membership loss, and CSA B reported that they had fewer members this year but still sold out of shares; they couldn't accommodate more members simply because there was not enough space on the farmer's truck.

The ability to keep membership loss low was in part due to having flexible payment plans. Flexible payment plans helped CSAs and their members be more resilient to the economic shock of the pandemic and allowed for the community to almost support itself. According to all four CSA cite managers interviewed, members who experienced financial hardship due to the pandemic could still participate because of the flexible payment options such as sliding scale or installment payment plans, or subsidized shares.

We've been able to offer subsidized shares, everything's on a sliding scale. Tier 1 is our SNAP members, tier 2 is a household income less than 35K, tier 3 is a household income between 40K and 60K, and Tier 4 is those with a household income above 60K. We usually have mostly tier 4 members, but this past season since there's been a lot of economic hardship, we've been in a really great position because we've been able to offer lower tiers to those going through tough times." - CSA A, West Harlem





#### **Small and Mid-Sized Farmers**

For farmers to maintain their connection to their NYC market base and their source of income, the COVID-19 pandemic pressured farmers to become more efficient.

Farm A notes that needing to accommodate farmers market safety protocols was an added opportunity, stating that their standards of cleanliness now have a higher baseline and were able to work out kinks in their online pre-order web infrastructure, which was "something [they] always talked about, but never executed."

[The pandemic] forced us to, kind of, flex in places that we weren't used to having to flex in... it opened up a lot of different channels of thought. It kind of broke down some like, 'we do this always because this is what we've done,' and changed it to like, 'oh, we're gonna try this because this new regulation or requirement from GrowNYC,' and it pushed us to actually improve." - Farm A

The pandemic also proved to be a valuable team building experience for Farm A.

Everybody showed up. Everybody wanted to just keep working. They felt like what they were doing was really important, and it felt essential. So that was a silver lining to it, because everybody stepped up, and I think it made the team ultimately stronger." - Farm A

In addition to maintaining their city CSAs and farmers markets, Farm A was also able to secure an emergency food distribution contract funded by the NYS State Agriculture & Markets NourishNY program and even added an additional farmers market.

For Farm B, the season was more challenging. Recruiting seasonal staff was a huge obstacle due to pandemic related travel restrictions early in the season. Two out of three of their CSA distribution sites shut down and Farm B needed to drop a farmers market because they did not have enough staff to harvest enough product for two markets on the same day. Despite these site closures, being connected to strong community networks allowed this farm to pivot to maintain their source of income. The farmers note that they primarily serve low-income immigrant communities and emphasize that these communities were hit the hardest by the pandemic.

Our customers are mainly families and people that live in Corona, Queens and Sunset Park in Brooklyn, which actually happen to be two places that COVID hit the hardest. So in the beginning of the season, everything was so uncertain... It was really scary and uncertain for our family in terms of how we were going to make a living, because farming is what [we] do. Thankfully, GrowNYC was able to put a system in place that would allow us to come to the communities and keep serving [them]." - Farm B



#### **Stakeholders**

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic, stakeholders were also able to continue their varied programming. Stakeholders representing a variety of organizations shared unique stories where they pivoted to meet community needs and support their networks.

Stakeholder E leveraged city-level emergency funding to help farmers start their growing season earlier. Stakeholder B used funding to build strong community relationships, and develop strategies for mutual aid.

What has also been interesting is that there's a ton of funding available for emergency food efforts, so it seemed kind of imperative that we enter [our Food Co-Op] into the fray, in accessing that funding, mainly because it would have leveraged our efforts to open the food co-op, and that's what we used it for. We created a mutual aid effort... and worked closely with the [community based organization] to basically get food for folks, but did it in a way that would leverage relationship building with the folks who we, in our mission statement, center – low to moderate income folks, long-term residents. And that relationship building is ongoing, and I'm happy to report that we are able to recruit some membership from that cohort, and continuously engage those people." - Stakeholder B, Central Brooklyn/Red Hook

Moreover, the stakeholders were able to navigate building these community networks virtually, and were able to pivot programming to occur online.

The silver lining is , we were leaning on the fact that we had physical space to offer to people as a resource, along with a community of people that were interested in developing ways towards a brighter, more inclusive and equitable future. Now the physical piece has been taken away, so then it's like okay so the value has changed, the value is really about the connection among the people, and how to do that virtually... it's become clear to us that what our community offers our ways to collaborate in very meaningful ways because we have such diverse backgrounds" - Stakeholder A, Hell's Kitchen, Manhattan

Importantly, community nutrition education and cooking classes were able to occur online over Zoom.

The other thing around doing these types of culinary training is that one of the things that uplifts [people] the most is being able to taste the food. The nice thing about the one that we did with [NYC Dept. Parks and Recreation] Green Thumb is that I emailed [the participants] the ingredients and they figured out how to get them or a substitute and we all cooked together, so they taste the actual recipe. That makes a difference." - Stakeholder D, Central Brooklyn

## **What Supported the Triumphs?**

#### **Community Support**

When coding for trends within the Opportunities category, "community support" appeared most frequently and at least once in ten of eleven interviewees. Community support was coded whenever interviewees mentioned how community members supported the organization, whether through monetary support or community buy-in.





For CSAs, community support ensured the functionality of sliding scale payment models, because those members with more were willing to sponsor shares for those with less.

I had this conversation with the site coordinators about subsidies about how we could restructure them. We definitely gave out more shares this year and bigger subsidies, people really responded and donated more. You could buy a share, but then you could also donate to a subsidy. So we had an uptick in donations." - CSA C, Prospect Lefferts Garden

For farmers, tapping into community support helped them keep their markets, CSAs, and distribution networks. Moreover, CSAs and farmers markets with stronger community buy-in were more resilient to the pandemic, and a more reliable source of income for farmers.

Farm B discusses a CSA that had strong community support:

We started a GoFundMe to basically crowdfund CSA shares. We opened up this Google form, it was all like word of mouth, through Facebook. Those people knew us spreading the word, friends and family. All our donors were mostly friends and family, coworkers, people that love and support our farm. So we raised money to give out free food to families weekly, throughout the entire season." - Farm B

Farm B even shares how they lost one of their CSAs because it did not have strong community buy-in.

We actually lost one of our CSAs. We used to have a CSA group in Central Park, but a lot of the families left the city. And so this year, the person that was in charge told us that they didn't have enough people to sign up. That was a CSA that we've had for over 10 years." - Farm B

According to Farm A, a smaller community-run farmers market can support local farmers and food access in more communities of need.

We're at Union Square on Wednesdays and Saturdays, which is, historically, it's been like the major hub, but with COVID, the travel through that area kind of slowed down.... The smaller markets have, through COVID, actually increased substantially. Like 82nd Street, we're there, that's become a really busy market for us" - Farm A

For Stakeholders, community response was also integral to continuing programming. In one example, the Summer Youth Employment Program was cancelled by City officials, meaning the funding stream for this program discontinued due to the COVID-19 Crisis. However, a Hunts Point community garden's food distribution program was able to rely on its immediate community to meet volunteer labor needs, with a higher degree of success.



used youth from the community instead of [a City funded] summer youth employment project. They have been with the garden for a long time and they care more and they know the community. So it's worked out a lot better, a lot smoother and we're not also dealing with personality difficulties." - Stakeholder C. Hunt's Point. The Bronx



#### **Just Food**

Four of eleven interviewees thanked Just Food and expressed that they felt supported through Just Food's strength as a bridge. Before and especially during the pandemic, Just Food provided critical technical assistance to its network of partners in order to secure funding and contract opportunities. Just Food engaged in various food/ farm advocacy efforts as well as communication efforts among grassroots and governmental organizations.

Farm A expressed how Just Food advocated on their behalf when negotiating a contract with New York State, "I was impressed with the execution, and then the follow up, and the continued follow up and the follow through...".

Just Food acted as an advocate when negotiating payment options:

We [the farmer] want to get paid on a monthly basis. We can't afford to be paid per six months or three months. We need to get paid every month. Because that's when we need to have cash flow. That's out of the normal for them [the contractor]. And for us, that was important. And JF was able to negotiate that for us," - Farm A

Additionally, CSAs appreciated how Just Food organized a virtual space and resources for those who operated at the beginning COVID-19 to share "best practices" to plan the upcoming growing season.

There's a bunch of CSAs who do winter shares. They [Just Food] were like, 'Why don't we set up... a big group zoom?' So that they could tell us about what they've learned over these past eight weeks and like, how they adjusted [to COVID in April 2020]." - CSA B, Carnegie Hill, Manhattan

CSAs also appreciated how Just Food maintains and curates their Value Chain Map<sup>1</sup>. For CSAs, this resource helps potential CSA members to find CSA locations, sites, and farmer information. Other New Yorkers utilize the map to find community-run farmers markets and regional farmer information within the Just Food Network. CSA A thanks Just Food for not only "advertising of CSAs" but also "giving people options" when finding, choosing, and signing up for CSAs.

#### **City and State Government**

Regarding governmental support, interviewees mentioned successes through two major avenues.

First, it was imperative and extremely helpful that farmers markets and CSAs, due to Just Food's advocacy, were declared as essential food businesses. This ensured that small, regional farmers could receive continued income and maintain operations at CSAs in addition to markets despite the COVID-19 pandemic. This also protected the regional food system and supply chain and ensured community members could receive regional, fresh produce in their neighborhoods.

From the city standpoint, listing farmers markets as an essential service [opened that door for us], and was really good." - Farm A

One interviewee noted how Just Food advocated to include CSAs as a necessary business.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> The Value Chain Map is an interactive tool that offers a directory of Just Food Network of CSAs, farmers, and community-run farmers markets. <a href="https://www.justfood.org/value-chain-map">https://www.justfood.org/value-chain-map</a>





One other helpful thing that I thought was really good was when [Just Food] talked to the [Deputy Agriculture Commissioner in the NY State Department of Agriculture... They got [them]... to include CSAs in necessary businesses, so that when we're working at the CSA, we're considered essential people. So like, should the worst shutdowns occur again, we have a reason to be out there." - CSA B, Carnegie Hill, Manhattan

Secondly, interviewees mentioned how they were resourced through city and state funding either by applying directly, with technical support, or as a subcontractor on institutional contracts of larger city/state-funded organizational partners.

Interviewees reported how their organization and food distribution were supported by Nourish NY, a State-level grant.

- That funding for Nourish New York... That was really good." Farm A
- [An opportunity was our] partnership with Harvest Home because they got a grant from Nourish New York. They've partnered with this garden and we get shares, so we get things like corn, potatoes, carrots, beets, apples, watermelons- things we don't usually grow, like we grow carrots, but they do that too. So things like that came into the garden as well." Stakeholder C, Hunt's Point, the Bronx

When given the opportunity, Farm B's contract with a government-funded organization provided financial stability for the farm and quality produce to low-income, immigrant families.

Our biggest positive was Mixteca. Through this [government funded] program... they buy like over 1,000 pounds of food per week to feed low-income immigrant populations. They purchase from us every week, which has been super helpful. We are more than grateful that we were able to work with them, otherwise, I'm not sure if we could have stayed afloat on the farm." - Farm B

#### **Section B. What Needs Improvement and How**

## **Facing Challenges**

#### **CSAs**

CSAs experienced two main challenges which predated, but continued during the COVID-19 pandemic.

First, CSAs continue to struggle to reach more diverse networks. All CSAs noted that their memberships are predominantly white and higher income, and that they have trouble recruiting low-income people and BIPOC people to their program. They have also been criticized for not offering much choice, especially choices that are relevant to certain ethnic and cultural groups.

[My mother] doesn't like CSA's lack of choice - mostly CSAs just do the usual food. There are other foods that people like that are not involved in CSA, such as callaloo or collards, you're not going to see that most of the time there. So, those things have to be put into the perspective as well" - Stakeholder C, Hunt's Point, the Bronx

Secondly, CSAs face challenges when attempting to accept Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP or formally "Food Stamps"). EBT technology imposes a variety of technical issues that CSAs are not equipped to handle. Four out of four CSA operators indicated





that logistics and accessing technology was the main barrier for accepting SNAP payments. Only one of four CSA interviewees noted that they accept SNAP, and even they acknowledged the logistical challenges of supporting the program.

- I don't know if we're organized enough to do EBT. I've heard there's a lot of paper work involved every week, and that's really tough. I wish we could do EBT; I think that would be awesome." CSA B, Carnegie Hill, Manhattan
- We can't do SNAP because it's a giant nightmare to do it, and we're not really an organization, like we don't have corporation status." CSA C, Prospect Lefferts Garden
- I don't know income level details, but Brooklyn Heights is in general a higher income level area. That doesn't mean everyone in our CSA is [high-income] but that's one of the reasons that we don't offer EBT because, and this may be covered later, but just because we don't necessarily have a need for it. It's a lot more maintenance for an all volunteer situation. That's why we offer other ways of ensuring that different income levels [can participate]." CSA D, Brooklyn Heights
- We don't offer EBT just because of the logistics." CSA D, Brooklyn Heights
- There are SNAP card readers. We considered getting one of those, but it's a big thing to take on. It needs its own phone number, and well, whose name would we put it under? The core group membership changes yearly. And that person would be responsible for paying for the phone line. Additionally, the SNAP reader itself is really expensive." CSAA, West Harlem, Manhattan (accepts EBT, still acknowledges logistical challenges)

#### **Small and Mid-Sized Farmers**

Both farmers repeatedly mentioned how difficult it was to access information and resources that could help farmers through the crisis. Opportunities were primarily tailored towards larger operations, and not smaller farmers.

- Even if the city or anybody had a huge amount of help that was available, nothing was advertised to you. You don't have time to search for it all. So really, accessibility is the problem here." Farm B
- The information about... working with the food banks and everything like that, although I think there's a lot of effort, somehow didn't feel completely readily available... I know that there's resources out there, but maybe that information is more geared towards larger operations, and not smaller farm producers."- Farm A

Even if the farmers were aware of the contract or potential funding opportunities, farmers often have limited capacity to navigate the confusing application process.

We weren't able to apply for the PPP [Payment Protection Program]. One, because the application was really confusing. Two, because we were so busy on the farm, we just didn't have the time to sit down and really try to understand it... The application was just really confusing, and so it just seemed easier not to do. I know that sounds horrible. So we didn't do that, but we kind of wished we did." - Farm B





I mean, we're fortunate to have a long standing team to help with that stuff, but if you were a smaller farm, and you had to do all this paperwork, but you also had to be on, you know, in the field harvesting, it would be something I'd probably be so daunting, that would never happen." - Farm A

For Farm B, a significant challenge is job security during the winter. The farmer stated that because they do not have the infrastructure for growing year-round (i.e. greenhouses), the family finds various jobs as a nanny, delivery driver, or line cook; they note that finding a winter job will be even more difficult this year.

We don't live on the farm. We live in Brooklyn, so once we close up the farm, my mom has to look for a job. She usually picks a nanny job... And she's gotten lucky the last couple years, but you know, this year, with parents being home, there's not much of a need for childcare because parents are already home as it is.... Unfortunately, we don't have a greenhouse or somewhere where we can keep growing stuff." - Farm B

#### **Stakeholders**

Many stakeholders expressed frustration at emergency food relief programming. Throughout the interviews, interviewees highlighted how food insecurity increased as a result of COVID-19 and all five stakeholders frequently described challenges presented by New York City's and State's emergency food plan. According to interviewees, there were three major areas of concern for the emergency food that were distributed to their communities.

Firstly, four of five interviewees mentioned that emergency food is highly processed, rather than including fresh, nourishing food. According to interviewees, providing unhealthy food was counterintuitive because the system was using the same model to provide food that was known to cause chronic diseases and increase COVID-19 susceptibility.

- [Food from the Emergency Food provider] wasn't nutritious food. It was processed food." Stakeholder C, Hunt's Point, the Bronx
- So here you have all this processed food, this high in additives, sugars, salts, healthy fats. So now the community that's most vulnerable to chronic diseases like diabetes, high blood pressure, obesity, [is] more vulnerable to COVID... So are you really helping the situation, because now you're creating people that [are more susceptible to getting] COVID?" Stakeholder D, Central Brooklyn
- Emergency food was never really concerned about nutrition and valuing nutrition at a time when we're in a pandemic, when nutrition is paramount... Give them corn. Let's give them processed food. And so it was always about calorie density, over nutrition density, and it continues to this day... there are the good pantries that have fruits and vegetables, right. But again, it's the same model. It's you know, your choice doesn't matter. It's basically about filling you up with food and sending you on your way." Stakeholder B, Central Brooklyn/Red Hook

Secondly, four of five interviewees mentioned that emergency food was wasted. Two interviewees highlighted how emergency food was wasted because they were not culturally relevant. Two interviewees shared that food was squandered because the emergency food model was created to dispose of poor quality, unwanted, or surplus food.





- What partners have talked to me about specifically and the biggest issues were around the fact that like people weren't eating [the emergency food provided], and were throwing it out so there was a huge portion of food waste coming out of these initiatives, because the food wasn't culturally relevant to the neighborhood." Stakeholder A, Hell's Kitchen, Manhattan
- So for example, the Halal meal for Muslim people, they called it a hummus sandwich. But basically, it was just some hummus in a cup and some crackers, apple juice. And the breakfast was some kind of really sugary cereal with some milk. And it was a cereal that we kind of joked about ... and doesn't sell because nobody's heard of this cereal... it's the overstock then on sale... It's surpluses. That's emergency feeding. And so like I said, on a logistics and mass volume point of view, I get it, but I just feel [like] it falls to deaf ears, because if the people aren't going to eat it, it gets wasted, it's shot in the trash. So have they really served their purpose, and are the people being uplifted?" Stakeholder D, Central Brooklyn
- It says, you know, this is what your communities deserve. If you all deserve to be beholden to these organizations and these corporations who are either giving you excess goods that they don't want, or they're purchasing stuff from people who don't want that stuff. And, you know, the food waste to food need model, which is ridiculous is what we're going to prioritize and continuously fund."

   Stakeholder B, Central Brooklyn/Red Hook

Lastly, two of five interviewees mentioned that emergency food was inaccessible to seniors, low-income families, and people with disabilities.

- Right now in Red Hook, we work very closely with the senior center... The administration took mad long to respond to the senior need because a lot of seniors get food through the senior centers. So since the senior centers closed down, there wasn't a plan right away to make sure that these folks had food. And because they were such a high-risk population, you didn't want them to leave their homes. But that's typically how they would get their food... so it's a very difficult thing when you say like, 'Okay, um, you can't come here, but we don't have a plan for you to get food.'" Stakeholder B, Central Brooklyn/Red Hook
- We were more or less trying to assist them and direct them about things and the stories that I've heard about, especially around seniors and people who have disabilities, physical disabilities, to not be able to physically go anywhere, or do anything, and that have the type of access, again, technology to order things or have things delivered, or even have the economy because when you deliver stuff, you got to pay a delivery charge out of social kindness, you want to give them dollars [for a] tip. So now you're talking about probably adding another \$10 to \$15 onto your bill, which is a lot of money for some people. Yeah, that's a whole couple of more meals for them, especially for seniors who are on very fixed income. So those are things that I felt like the city wasn't prepared to really do." -Stakeholder D, Central Brooklyn





Expanding on accessibility, Stakeholder D explained that another barrier to access for many seniors and/or low-income people was access to technology, which impacted their ability to order food to their homes or participate in socially distant nutrition workshops.

It had its challenges being that it was virtual, and people had to kind of figure out their technology...

There's another organization that I do some work with around childcare providers, and we were supposed to do the nutrition piece. Because of the fact that some, many of the people in that industry are older women, women of color, who don't necessarily embrace the technology as well. And so it just for the one class that I tried to work with them, it just wasn't viable. Because it wasn't fair to them, because I just didn't... It's not in their wheelhouse. They don't come from that generation." - Stakeholder D, Central Brooklyn

## **Offering Solutions**

#### **Communication and Outreach**

When coding for trends within the Support Needed category, "Communication and Outreach" appeared most frequently and at least once in seven of eleven interviewees. In this category, "Communication and Outreach" was coded whenever interviewees mentioned needing assistance with communicating between organizations and/or communicating with the community that the organization serves. More specifically, interviewees requested better communication channels between the top level and the community base. They also requested more streamlined ways of communicating important information, resources, or food distribution contracts.

Some interviewees also expressed how smaller grassroots organizations, that don't "fit" the funder's or contractor's preference, needed technical support for follow up and negotiate contract specifications.

- I mean, if you fit within what [the city] had decided was the thing that they were looking for, then I think the process would have been a little easier but we didn't fit. So they were just like 'yes that's great' and then nothing because there wasn't anyone who was willing to follow up with that conversation" Stakeholder A, Hell's Kitchen, Manhattan
- So the city, you know, helping with... doing the grants. But not having maybe different tiers of grants, where they have big people, the people that have all the industrial ways to disseminate food, but also looking at grassroot organizations, and how they're more plugged into the community." Stakeholder D, Central Brooklyn
- Although [the State-level funding representative] was speaking like she understood, and she had the same intentions but I don't think she totally got it... She was saying that [she has] to get the most amount of food [she] possibly can for these contracts, and that was going to put her in line with someone like Chobani, versus saying you could be the yogurt provider for this location and this could be the commitment for this size farm. That would be... a nice shift. And I think that's effectively what we did with this... I think, if more farms had access to that. I mean, I know I've got neighboring dairy farmers would be so happy to be able to have a deal like that. Farm A

Additionally, Farm A suggested creating "a centralized resource" for food distribution contracts and grants.





#### **Addressing Food System Inequities**

When directly asked to provide feedback on how Just Food and the city and/or state governments can best support interviewees, they repeatedly highlighted the current inequities in the food system and provided various solutions.

According to interviewees, there are smaller organizations that are better connected to community needs and who have the capacity and network to provide quality food to community members. However, large farms, non-profits, and organizations are first to receive governmental support.

I would say that funders shouldn't go to big non profits. Some of them don't do food insecurity work. They have to go to other places that do that to serve those communities, that actually have the contacts and do the work. You can't continue to do the same thing. It hasn't worked." - Stakeholder C, Hunt's Point, the Bronx

Out of the five stakeholders, three highlighted how the state and city government can invest in a more sustainable and resilient food system and stakeholders shared how this can be achieved through representation and reinvestment.

In order to better connect grassroots organizations to government funding and resources, Stakeholder D suggested creating a network and supporting organizations, such as Just Food, to continue connecting and functioning as a bridge.

That's why organizations like Just Food and other small organizations, those community based organizations keep the community together, and the government needs to support them in ways that they need to be supported so that they can disseminate and do this work." - Stakeholder D, Central Brooklyn

To address inequities, Stakeholder C suggested targeted outreach specifically to small and mid-sized farmers and black farmers by establishing an Office of Urban Agriculture within city government run by actual farmers instead of urban planners.

- Their attitude was let's go big ag, and so there has to be a pushback that local farmers were actually the ones you wanted to work with. That was a lot better. Yeah, local farmers are a lot better to work with. You wanted to support them. At the same time, it would have been better if there also were smaller scale farmers, more black farmers involved. Actually not getting the usual suspects to bring more diversity, because everyone keeps talking about diversity and equity, but you don't see it." Stakeholder C, Hunt's Point, the Bronx
- I also think they should be an urban agricultural office as well an urban agricultural office that has actors from the food system (growers: small and medium scale, packaging and distribution), health, urban planning, transportation. Possibly a Community Farmer Program that growers can apply for that would allow them to grow and sell, supplementing their income and growing culturally relevant crops for their communities. We need to be active instead of reactive. One that's more of an office, that's not done by an urban planner, but actually people who work in food, who understand it and understand what needs to be done. Because right now, it went from a website to an office but nothing's been really done." Stakeholder C, Hunt's Point, the Bronx





Stakeholder B suggested to fund sustainable, community organizations rather than unsustainable "free food efforts."

What was very striking to me and to a lot of folks involved in the effort of fundraising for the food Coop is just how much funding was available for free food efforts, and not more sustainable models... so it's just a very frustrating process when you're trying to do this work of long term solution building when everyone is using your terminology and your focuses and saying that they're doing the same thing. They're not... I feel like [community] organizations, more than other organizations, kind of deserved that funding, because they are able to leverage it towards their long term sustainability of food access programming." -Stakeholder B, Central Brooklyn/Red Hook

#### **Discussion**

- 1. Small and Mid-sized regional food supply chains are resilient during the COVID-19 crisis. Throughout the interviews, it was clear that CSAs, Farmers, and Stakeholders pivoted well to adapt to COVID-19 challenges. CSAs successfully adapted their operations to meet COVID-19 safety protocols, provided food to their usual distribution sites, and maintained membership with the help of flexible payment plans and subsidized shares. Reciprocity, commitment to supporting regional agriculture, and solidarity-based relationships between farmers, grassroots organizations, and community stakeholders support their ability to support each other and strategize collaboratively. Unlike the bottlenecking and food shortages in longer food supply chains, the small and mid scale regional supply chain proved resilient and many continued operations with minimal interruptions. Farmers maintained their connection to their NYC markets and CSA sites and continued their multifaceted programming and were nimble to meet diverse needs in the crisis. For example, Farm A secured an additional institutional procurement contract.
- 2. Resourced technical assistance is a critical bridge for regional stakeholders to government based initiatives. Critical to the successes was the support from the community, Just Food, and State and City governments. Just Food supported interviewee's efforts through technical assistance and functioning as a bridge among grassroots and governmental organizations. NYC and NYS government supported by declaring CSAs and Farmers Markets as essential services, which ensured continued operations and income during the COVID-19 crisis, and through various immediate initiative funding. Another suggestion in support from city government, was Stakeholder C's suggestion in the creation of an Office of Urban Agriculture with representatives "that's not done by an urban planner", but actually people who work in food.
- 3. Emergency funding and resources were leveraged by regional farmers and stakeholders in their multi-faceted approach to an immediate response to the crisis. Stakeholders, who represented a variety of local NYC community-based food projects and programming, were nimble in their varied COVID-19 response, such as becoming emergency food box sites as well as trying to maintain their core community efforts. However, they expressed frustration in the majority of COVID-19 related funding and contracts focused primarily to resource the emergency food system. Also important to note, many of these community stakeholders had to provide unresourced labor and leverage their existing infrastructure in order to execute immediate response efforts to distribute emergency food boxes throughout the city since many emergency contracts did not provide funding for staffing costs. Stakeholder C further highlighted in their interview that many of the people involved in the emergency food effort were women of color. This continues the paradigm of unpaid work, stress, health issues in impacted communities. This is not sustainable in long term solutions throughout our food system to not resource fair wages, stipends, and exacerbate health inequities.





- **4. However, emergency food response is not a long term solution.** The interviews also highlighted how existing challenges in the food system prior to COVID-19 were exacerbated by the pandemic. According to stakeholders and in line with other reports, food insecurity increased as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.9,11,12 Stakeholders shared that to address food insecurity, governmental organizations mainly relied on "big ag" and large nonprofits, and emergency food organizations by providing significant funding for sourcing and distribution.13 However, emergency food was wasted because the options provided were not culturally relevant, oftentimes highly processed and poor quality, and was surplus food dumped into communities in need. During the COVID-19 crisis response, millions of dollars were pumped into an emergency food model that had been failing to meet food insecurity needs for decades.
- We should not be under the impression that those who are on the receiving end are unaware of the fact that this is unwanted food and they are the recipients. What are you saying about them and to them? You are replicating the system of food apartheid. You are doing what you are allegedly against."- Stakeholder C, Hunt's Point, the Bronx
- 5. Investment in a solidarity, regionally based food system is needed. The major problem that was highlighted is that the current food system, characterized by centralized, large-scale production, industrialization, and commodification, is inflexible, uninclusive, and unsustainable. Emergency responses such as channeling large amounts of surplus food into food pantries and food boxes, reliance on donated food from farmers, and contracts tailor designed for mainly large scale farmers and distributors -will inevitably continue to not fully dismantle the root causes of food insecurity and the specific needs of communities. This calls for a reimagining, creation, and monetary support for an alternative food system, grounded in sustainability, equity and diversity, and accessibility. From these interviews, stakeholders expressed the need for State and City governments to divest from the emergency food systems and and charitable, donation reliant models in order to invest more equitably in building the capacities of small and mid-sized farms and grassroots, community-based organizations to provide food to communities in a way that mutually ensures their own viability. These smaller organizations are better connected, responsive, and representative of their communities and their communities' needs. Providing more technical assistance and resources to this scale of farmers and food access models in our region would enable them to better pivot during crisis and in the future.

Addressing food system inequities, especially during the COVID-19 Pandemic, is challenging but the immediate need is clear. The status-quo of top-down government emergency food systems is a band-aid for the chronic issue of food insecurity. In the face of this crisis, these communities rallied to support the regional food system and in turn, Farmers and CSAs pivoted to nourish their communities. Their small-scale and community-connectedness allows for crucial flexibility that larger programming can't offer.







What was very striking to me and to a lot of folks involved in the effort of fundraising for the food Co-Op is just how much funding was available for free food efforts, and not more sustainable models [...] so it's just a very frustrating process when you're trying to do this work of long term solution building when everyone is using your terminology and your focuses and saying that they're doing the same thing. They're not.[...] I feel like [community] organizations, more than other organizations, kind of deserved that funding, because they are able to leverage it towards their long term sustainability of food access programming." - Stakeholder B, Central Brooklyn/Red Hook

#### Recommendations

#### I. Increase Investment in Regional Small and Mid-Scale Agriculture and Fair Food System

The city and state continued allocation of resources inequitably to small and mid-scale farmers -in particular farmers of color- will continue to impede their ability to ramp up and secure larger procurement contracts and other sourcing opportunities. Regional farmers and CSAs need funding and targeted technical assistance to better serve the NYC community, particularly during times of crisis.

Moreover, the transition to an alternative community-centered food system, requires a strong network of regional farmers that has the capacity to meet demand. Factoring the need for regional food year- round, equitable strategic investments in infrastructure is necessary for extended agricultural production - such as greenhouses and space for value added processing. In addition, investments in job security and fair wages for farm workers, farmers, and community members are critical.

It changes the question we had in our model - the size of what we're doing, is it actually financially viable? And we kind of proved that this year. Yes, it is, as long as there's enough support [for] small to medium sized sized food producers. That has changed this year. We've got a lot of support, there's a lot of new customers, a lot of engaged individuals that are grateful and happy that we were providing good food, and I hope that continues to stay that way. It's really just a matter of education and knowing that the deeply centralized food system is precarious. I think we saw that coming up with all that crazy news with the pork production that was happening in the central [United States]. Hopefully, you know, people stay interested in eating local food from smaller farms." - Farm A

#### II. Invest in Community-Led, Capacity-Building Organizations

Interviewees highlighted the immense amount of support received by Just Food. Therefore, most if not all ask in the "Support Access" section for the work of Just Food to be given government and/or private funding. These resources should be allocated to enable grassroots organizations such as Just Food to better disseminate technical assistance, provide resource connections, and advocate for farmers and community members alike. Just Food's targeted capacity and proven experience for crucial flexibility that larger organizations cannot offer.

In addition, technical assistance provided by capacity driven organizations with regional relationships and expertise can also support diverse farmers and community stakeholders to apply for a range of city and state resources and contracts. This targeted technical capacity in the region can also inform city and state government officials on how to better design future food procurement contracts and policies targeted for farmers of color, small-mid scale farmers, and community food projects.





#### III. Building Towards Solidarity Within a Regional Food System

There is no monolithic solution to the problems and inequities within the food system; however, it is important to acknowledge there exists multiple approaches and models in our region. CSAs have provided small farm viability and healthy food access into NYC communities for over 20 years. At the same time, they can continue to become a more equitable model. CSAs have shown that they are a reliable food distribution model, successfully incorporate new safety protocols (i.e. pre-bagging, contactless distribution, and revamped or new sites for increased physical distancing) in the face of crisis and should be supported as part of addressing food insecurity in the city. With additional resources to support the model, CSAs would be in an even stronger position to ensure continued food access, small farm revenue, and community leadership.

Increased regional food in NYC communities can be achieved via community-driven models that source directly from small-mid scale regional farmers. These models consist of food supply chains which create increased revenue for regional farm viability, food based businesses, and healthy food access in communities in need. The collaborative and reciprocal nature inherent in these partnerships are key to their operations, and ability to adapt and make food accessible to all. Community food models that are developed "for the community, by the community" foster self-determination as well as neighborhood resiliency.

I'm really, really, really, happy that CSAs have such a strong relevance. I don't know if this is something that you've noticed or it came back up, but I realized that the demand for CSA has absolutely increased during COVID. I've seen it...I've heard it from other people who run CSAs, that the CSA model is something that they want to replicate with emergency food efforts."

- Stakeholder B, Central Brooklyn/Red Hook

#### IV. Invest in Capacity-Building of Diverse Food Providers to Tackle Persistent Food Insecurity



Interviews with CSAs indicate that CSAs are a model that are resilient in the face of shocks. Unlike the centralized food system, the decentralized food system promoted by CSAs and community-run farmers markets remained intact and were able to provide local, healthy food to communities with minimal to no interruptions in the supply chain. This was achieved through the strength of the model, which promotes diversity, flexibility, and regional produce procurement.

Divestment from unsustainable, donation based food models such as mutual aid efforts in the long term is also important. Training and technical assistance to establish new sites, teach site coordinators how to become eligible models for government incentives like SNAP or Health Bucks. These programs help make regional food affordable while also supporting farm businesses.

Therefore, investing in CSAs and other community-driven food models may be a sustainable, long-term solution to address persistent food insecurity in our region.



#### **Limitations**

Limitations of this report primarily stem from its small sample size. With only two farmers and four CSAs, it can be difficult to generalize this information to all farmers and CSAs that are regional to NYC. Interviewees served communities in Manhattan, Brooklyn, and the Bronx. Therefore, future studies need to investigate the hyperlocal supply chain of Queens and Staten Island to gain a broader understanding of NYC as a whole.

Additionally, this data was collected as a "snap-shot" in October 2020. With the COVID-19 crisis uncertainty and rapid changes in news and policy, future research will be needed to gather more insight on the ground-level perspectives from Farmers, CSAs, and Community Stakeholders.

## **Appendix**

#### I. Maps of interviewees' locations



Map 1: Location of Regional Farmers in Relation to NYC



Map 2: Locations of CSAs and Stakeholders in NYC



#### References

- 1. Hunger in NYC: Fact About Hunger. City Harvest <a href="https://www.cityharvest.org/food-insecurity/">https://www.cityharvest.org/food-insecurity/</a>
- 2. Governor Cuomo Issues Guidance on Essential Services Under The "New York State on Pause" Executive Order. New York STATE; 1930. <a href="https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-issues-guidance-essential-services-under-new-york-state-pause-executive-order#:~:text=Cuomo%20announced%20he%20is%20signing,8PM%20on%20Sunday%2C%20March%2022</a>
- 3. Governor Cuomo Signs the "New York State on PAUSE" Executive Order. New York State; 2020. Accessed November 30, 2020. https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/governor-cuomo-signs-new-york-state-pause-executive-order
- 4. Chakrabarti M, Kotsonis S. How New York City Became The Epicenter Of The Coronavirus Pandemic. WBUR. <a href="https://www.wbur.org/onpoint/2020/04/13/new-york-city-epicenter-pandemic">https://www.wbur.org/onpoint/2020/04/13/new-york-city-epicenter-pandemic</a>. Published April 13, 2020. Accessed November 30, 2020.
- 5. Cases, Data, Surveillance: Hospitalization and Death by Race/Ethnicity. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; 2020. Accessed November 29, 2020. <a href="https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/covid-data/investigations-discovery/hospitalization-death-by-race-ethnicity.html">https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/covid-data/investigations-discovery/hospitalization-death-by-race-ethnicity.html</a>
- Corkery, Yaffe-Bellany M David. Dumped Milk, Smashed Eggs, Plowed Vegetables: Food Waste of the Pandemic. New York Time. <a href="https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/11/business/coronavirus-destroying-food.html">https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/11/business/coronavirus-destroying-food.html</a>.
   Published April 11, 2020. Accessed November 30, 2020.
- 7. Nourish New York: Supporting New York Farms and Communities. New York State Accessed December 7, 2020. https://agriculture.ny.gov/NourishNY#:~:text=Nourish%20NY%20is%20rerouting%20surplus,York's%20network%20 of%20food%20banks.&text=Governor%20Cuomo's%20Nourish%20New%20York,brought%20on%20by%20 COVID%2D19
- 8. Strong A. NYC's New Food Czar on Trying to Keep People Fed in a Pandemic Hot Spot. Food Wine. Published online April 17, 2020. <a href="https://www.foodandwine.com/news/new-vork-city-food-czar-kathryn-garcia-interview-coronavirus">https://www.foodandwine.com/news/new-vork-city-food-czar-kathryn-garcia-interview-coronavirus</a>
- 9. Lee L. 54 million Americans are going hungry. Here's how you can make sure you eat. CNN. <a href="https://www.cnn.com/2020/10/24/us/how-to-get-food-assistance-hunger-pandemic-iyw-trnd/index.html">https://www.cnn.com/2020/10/24/us/how-to-get-food-assistance-hunger-pandemic-iyw-trnd/index.html</a>. Published November 12, 2020. Accessed November 29, 2020.
- 10. Hunger in NYC: Fact About Hunger. City Harvest <a href="https://www.cityharvest.org/food-insecurity/">https://www.cityharvest.org/food-insecurity/</a>
- 11. New York Food 20/20: Vision, Research, and Recommendations During COVID-19 and Beyond. The Hunter College NYC Food Policy Center, The Laurie M. Tisch Center for Food, Education & Policy, and The CUNY Urban Food Policy Institute; 2020. https://www.nycfoodpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/ny2020-finalv2.pdf
- 12. Mickie Q. Solidarity, Not Charity. Solidarity Beyond the Crisis. Published September 16, 2020. Accessed November 29, 2020. https://rosaluxnycblog.org/solidarity-not-charity/
- 13. Reiley L. Young farmers and farmers of color have been shut out of federal assistance during the pandemic. The Washington Post. <a href="https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2020/07/16/cfap-ppp-farmers-coronavirus/">https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2020/07/16/cfap-ppp-farmers-coronavirus/</a>. Published July 16, 2020.



