



**MARYLAND**  
*Food Charter*

**CREATING A ROAD MAP FOR A  
HEALTHY AND SUSTAINABLE FOOD SYSTEM**



Institute for  
Public Health  
Innovation



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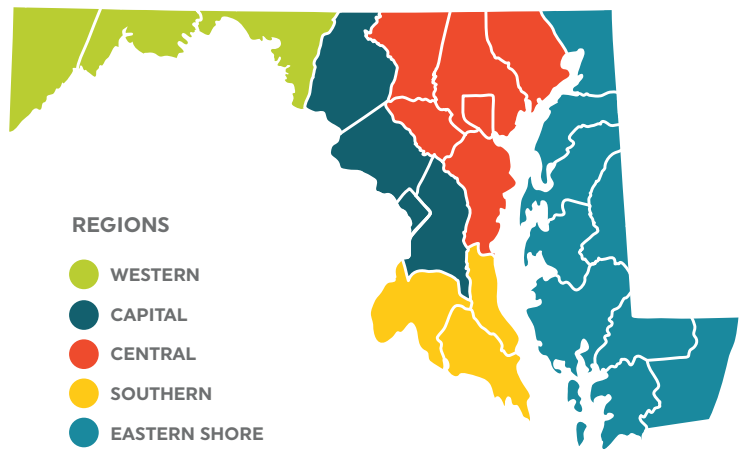
The Institute for Public Health Innovation (IPHI) would like to acknowledge the support and guidance of members of the Advisory Committee for their tireless support of our work and efforts that made this project possible. We also express our sincere appreciation to the innumerable food policy stakeholders—including public and private health entities, leaders of community-based organizations and programs, community members and state policymakers—that engaged in the process and contributed to the development of this document. This project would not have been possible without the support of the [Town Creek Foundation](#).



# I. INTRODUCTION



From the economy to health and the environment, the ways in which communities grow, process, and access food intersect multiple arenas of policy and practice. Urban and rural organizations throughout Maryland are working on food issues ranging from agriculture to access and food recovery. Although much of their work interconnects, they are often operating in isolation simply because the work is often done at the local level without a statewide lens. Accordingly, the Institute for Public Health Innovation (IPHI) and stakeholders across the state have been engaged in a multi-year process to foster collaboration and collective action for a healthy, equitable, economically viable, and environmentally sustainable food system in Maryland.



Throughout the process, IPHI discovered that while many Maryland residents and policymakers are aware of the association between poverty and hunger, many may not understand the full breadth of interconnections across the entire food system. Consequently, legislation or policy regarding one sector is often introduced without having the advantage of a system-wide perspective. Policies, however, have the potential to be more efficient and beneficial when they promote coordination between the sectors of the food system.



The three-year undertaking led to multiple strategic recommendations for five major food system sectors, and an overarching emphasis on coordination and cross-sector collaboration and approaches whenever possible. The benefits of such an approach would be tangible and widespread. The food system can and does play a powerful role in uniting people and communities by facilitating social engagement, empowering youth and seniors, and stimulating workforce and business development. Furthermore, access to healthy and nutritious food has a demonstrably significant impact on public health, and a holistic approach to food production, delivery, and recovery can improve the food system’s impact on the environment.

# THE KEY DESIRED OUTCOMES OF FOOD CHARTER INITIATIVE:

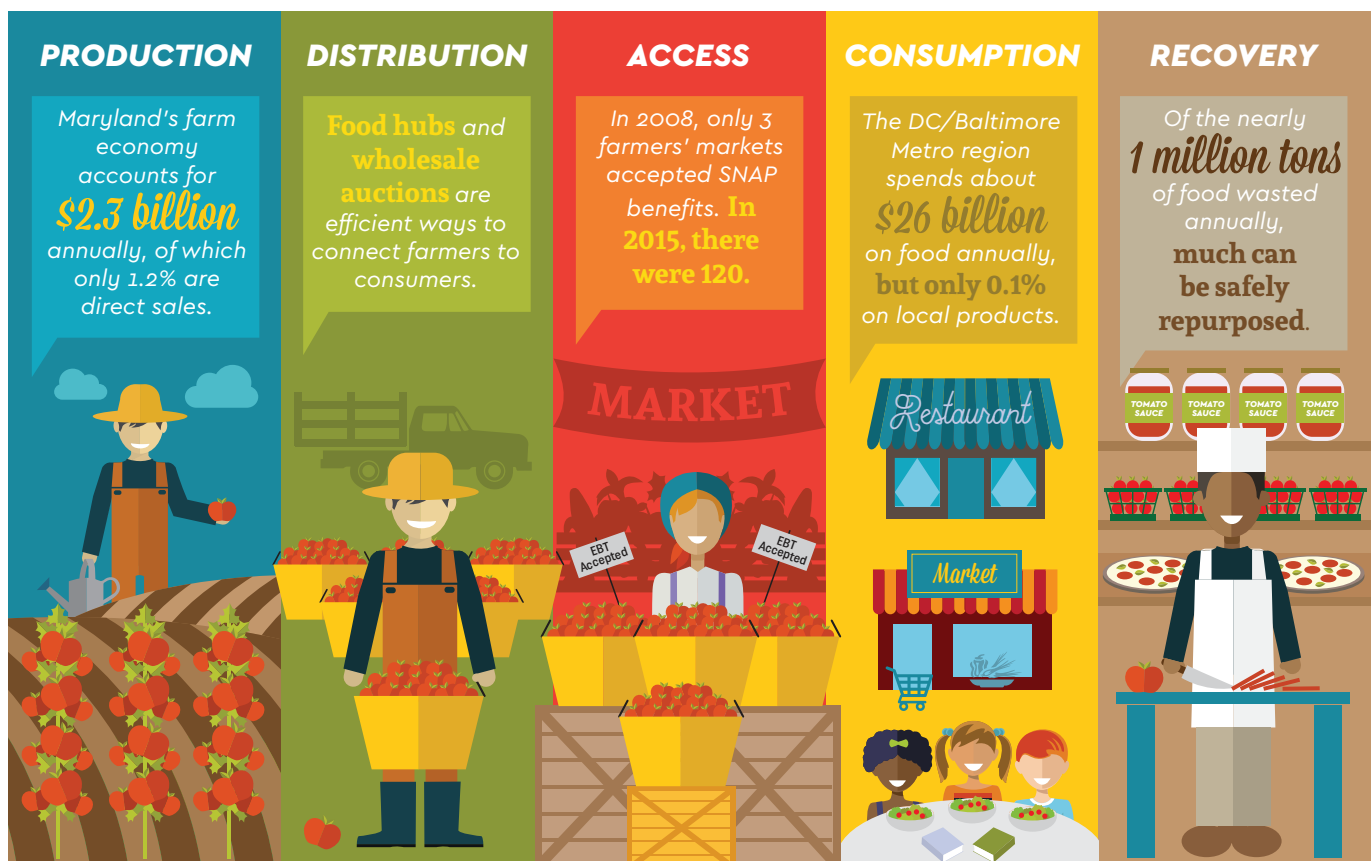
- A more coordinated and efficient state food system.
- Collaborative relationships fostered between food system sectors and stakeholders.
- Equity, inclusiveness, and resilience woven throughout the system.

While numerous local and regional organizations are working on food policy, there is currently no coordinating entity to organize, mobilize, inform, and influence how food system policy is made at the state level. Maryland would benefit tremendously by recognizing that the food system is more than the sum of its parts, and by implementing policies and practices that create cross-sector collaborations. A rational starting place would facilitate collaboration between agencies and departments, seek alignment of policies and practices that impact the entire food system, and engage broad stakeholder participation in setting metrics and goals for an efficient, inclusive, diverse and healthy food system.

This document lays out recommendations developed through a three-year process and provides a blueprint for a statewide strategic food plan that encourages coordination and collaboration among the individual sectors.

## Maryland's Food System Opportunities For Growth

Food cycles through the five sectors below, and impacts our **economy, health, and environment.**





## PURPOSE OF THE CHARTER

To reflect the values, goals, and recommendations put forth by food system stakeholders across the state, and to encourage coordination across sectors in order to foster a healthy, equitable, economically thriving, and environmentally sustainable food system.



This charter can  
be used to:



*Educate and inform policymakers  
of statewide priorities*



*Leverage and target resources*



*Garner political will to  
support food policy issues*



*Engage new and existing  
food system stakeholders*

## II. MARYLAND'S FOOD SYSTEM





## ECONOMY

The economic impact of food in Maryland is vast: retailers, farmers, fishermen, chefs, servers, truck drivers, artisans, and entrepreneurs all contribute to this growing enterprise. However, while there is significant growth in the business of food, there also remains untapped and unrealized potential for communities all throughout the state.



### AGRICULTURE

**\$2.27 billion** Total market value of agricultural products sold in 2012

Maryland's agricultural sector accounted for over **22,000 jobs** (including forestry)



### FARM TO SCHOOL

If all K-12 school districts in Maryland spent 20% of their budget on local food,

**\$21 million**

would be put back into the local economy

The 25 major universities in the state spend an average of

**\$78 million** on local food



### FOOD DEMAND



According to the 2009 American Community Survey, the Washington-Baltimore-Northern Virginia statistical area is the 4th largest combined statistical area in the United States



Total population:  
**8,924,087**



Total income:  
**\$339 billion**



Total annual food expenditures:  
**\$26 billion**




## FOOD & PUBLIC HEALTH


Access to and consumption of food has a direct relationship with the public's health. Where we eat, what we eat, how we eat, and even if we will have access to adequate food are all questions that communities grapple with on a daily basis. The prevalence of food deserts and food insecurity creates significant disparities in population health, especially with diet-related disease and illness.

### NUTRITION & HEALTH DISPARITIES

*Food plays a critical role in maintaining a healthy weight and preventing chronic disease.*


  
29.6%  
of Maryland residents are obese.

  
Nearly  
1 in 10  
residents suffer from diabetes.

 \$13.8B  
Amount Maryland could save by 2030 if BMIs were lowered by 5%.

African-Americans are 1.5 times more likely to be obese than whites.

### FOOD SECURITY

  
11.4%  
of Maryland residents are food insecure.

  
365,000 children are at risk of hunger.



11.8% of African-Americans rely on Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) compared to just 3.6% of whites.



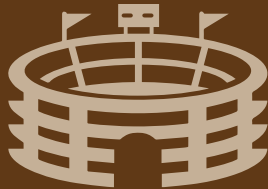
13.6% of Maryland seniors are threatened by hunger  
This is a total of 140,463 of Maryland's seniors who reported having limited access to adequate food.



## ENVIRONMENT

The food system significantly impacts both the natural and built environment. Population increases, changes in dietary preferences, and accelerating migration to cities are adding pressures to the food system. Farmland is in conflict with development. Water scarcity is an impending threat in some counties in the state. Food deserts limit access to healthy foods. There are many opportunities to reduce these stresses and strengthen the capability of the food system to successfully bring healthy and nutritious food to all. It will require collaboration, creative solutions, commitment, and policy.

### FOOD WASTE



The quantity of food wasted every day in Maryland would fill an **entire football stadium.**

*(Johnathan Bloom, "American Wasteland")*

### NATURAL ENVIRONMENT



Watershed health is either **fair or poor** in all but **two** census tracks across the entire state.

### BUILT ENVIRONMENT



**27%** of Maryland residents live in a food desert.

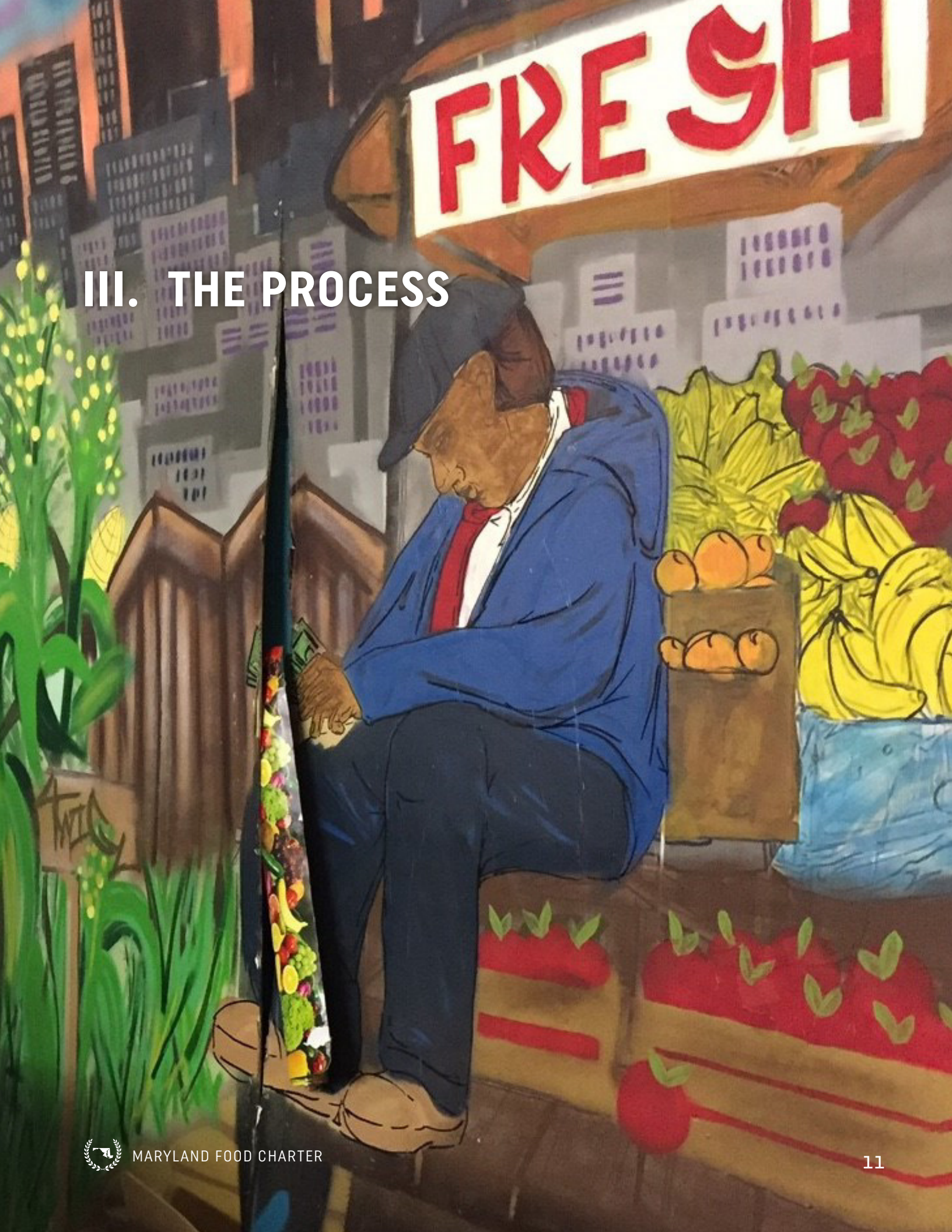


**75%** of Marylanders living in food deserts are low-income.



FRESH

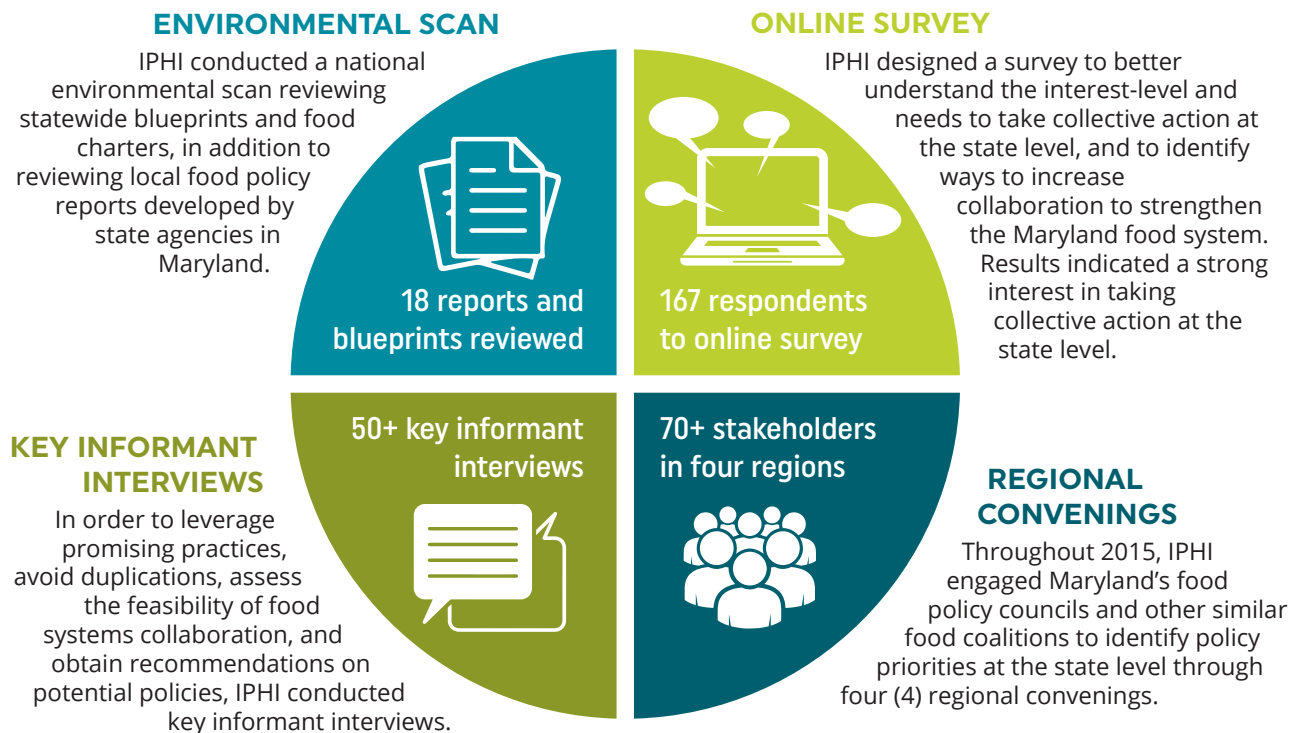
### III. THE PROCESS



## PHASE 1

At the start of this initiative, IPHI formed an Advisory Committee composed of representatives from multiple food system sectors and interests to provide input and guidance, leverage partners, avoid duplication, and facilitate collaboration among food system sectors. The Committee met regularly over three years to guide the initiative, and was pivotal in connecting community stakeholders and state policy makers. For more information on the Committee, [click here](#).

In 2015, IPHI engaged Maryland's local food policy councils and other multi-sector food coalitions across the state's five main regions (see page 4) to identify goals and policy priorities at the state level. IPHI hosted a state-wide Maryland Food Summit, and published the results in the "[Creating Maryland's Food Charter – A Summary of Public Input](#)."



## DRAFTING A VISION STATEMENT

IPHI used the [Whole Measures for Community Food Systems](#) tool to generate dialogue and build a shared values-based vision for Maryland's food system. Using the Whole Measures for Community Food Systems tool, stakeholders looked beyond their individual objectives and thought in terms of the broadest possible picture for a healthy food system, considering the following core values:



These shared values informed the vision of the charter and laid a foundation for its goals and recommendations. The vision statement was initially drafted and voted on during the Maryland Food Summit in the Fall of 2015. Over the course of the initiative, the language of the vision statement has evolved with continued input from the advisory committee and other key stakeholders, while still maintaining the core values above.





VISION STATEMENT

**“A coordinated Maryland Food System that is equitable, inclusive and resilient and improves the economy, the environment and public health.”**



## PHASE 2

In the second phase, IPHI developed a comprehensive set of talking points, targeted questions, and infographics to illustrate the five food system sectors identified in the charter summary of public input and a roster of stakeholders engaged throughout the project period. Meetings were held with elected officials and staff from 22 districts to brief them on the Maryland Food Charter initiative and gather feedback. Legislators reinforced the need for more education, coalition building, coordination, and examples of promising practices and strategies.

Throughout the process, IPHI discovered that while many people are aware of the connections between poverty and hunger, many did not understand the connections between the different food sectors and infrastructure of the entire food system. Consequently, legislation or policy regarding one sector is often introduced without having the advantage of a systemwide perspective.

Policies have the potential to be more efficient and beneficial when they promote coordination between the sectors of the food system, especially when public resources or funds are involved.







## BALTIMORE FOOD SYSTEMS TOUR

The Mayor of Baltimore, Baltimore's Office of Sustainability and IPHI hosted a tour for state legislators showcasing Baltimore City's Food Systems. Baltimore is known worldwide for both its food challenges and its innovative solutions. The tour provided a firsthand experience of the importance of food policy and state and city investments to the health and well-being of Maryland communities. The tour showcased initiatives that could be replicated elsewhere in the state. It included an urban farm that employs returning citizens, a virtual supermarket utilizing innovative technology that allows senior citizens to order groceries online using federal food benefits, and a culinary social enterprise dedicated to creating good jobs and growing small food businesses. Examples of these projects are highlighted throughout this document.

Baltimore Food Systems Tour

44  
food system  
stakeholders  
in attendance

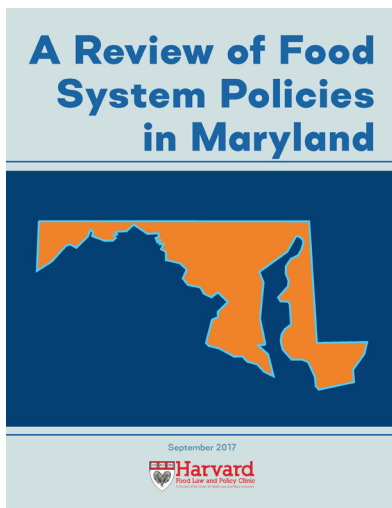


## ALIGNMENT OF EFFORTS



### [Milan Urban Food Policy Pact](#)

In 2015, 144 cities around the world signed the international Milan Urban Food Policy Pact (MUFPP). The premise of the pact is to “work to develop sustainable food systems that are inclusive, resilient, safe and diverse.” Baltimore was one of the first US cities to sign in 2015 and won the 2016 MUFPP Award for its intergovernmental Baltimore Food Policy Initiative. Baltimore has worked to get more cities across the US to adopt the pact, and utilizing this framework for the Maryland Food Charter is an innovative way to link the issues, challenges and successes of Maryland’s food system to broader national and international efforts.



### [A Review of Food System Policies in Maryland](#)

During the development of the Maryland Food Charter, the Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future commissioned the Food Law and Policy Clinic of Harvard Law School to conduct a policy scan of Maryland’s food systems. The preliminary findings of that scan were discussed at a meeting of stakeholders in Annapolis in the Spring of 2017. Aligned with the Maryland Food Charter, the document delivers an assessment of Maryland’s current policies and provides examples and suggestions of related policies throughout the US that Maryland could emulate.



# IV. RECOMMENDATIONS



The following recommendations were developed based on public input from all regions of Maryland, the “Milan Urban Food Policy Act,” and the Harvard Food Policy and Law Clinic “Review of Food System Policies in Maryland.” They are categorized to align with five food system sectors: 1) production and processing, 2) distribution, 3) access, 4) consumption, and 5) recovery, with two cross-sectoral areas: an enabling environment, and social and economic equity. These recommendations, if used as guidelines for policy makers and organizations working throughout the food system, can help build a robust, equitable, and economically viable food system.

\* Adapted from the “Milan Urban Food Policy Act.”

\*\* Adapted from the “A Review of Food System Policies in Maryland.”

## CROSS-SECTORAL RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. FOSTER EFFECTIVE COORDINATION AND COLLABORATION

- Facilitate collaboration across agencies and departments and seek alignment of policies and programs that impact the food system across multiple sectors and administrative levels\*
- Enhance stakeholder participation through political dialogue to build consensus, cohesion, and shared visions\*
  - Facilitate state-wide and regional networking opportunities to include all food system stakeholders, including farm, labor, environmental, planning, business, public health, and other sectors, both private and governmental
- Appoint a food policy advisor and develop a multi-stakeholder Maryland platform or food council\*
- Develop or revise food policies and plans, and ensure allocation of appropriate resources within state and local administration\*
  - Balance urban and rural interests
  - Review, harmonize and strengthen regulations
- Develop or improve information systems for policy development and accountability\*
  - Develop a digital platform to share templates, policy language, and other resources across Maryland
  - Enhance the availability, quality, quantity, management and exchange of data
  - Include data from civil society and other partners
- Support food and health mapping initiatives
- Develop a Food System Reliance Plan to mitigate protracted crises and chronic food insecurity throughout the state

## CASE STUDY

[Baltimore Food Policy Initiative \(BFPI\)](#): The City of Baltimore has proactively undertaken an intergovernmental approach to collaboration on food issues. The Initiative includes a full-time Food Policy Director with two full-time staff housed in the Planning Department as well as dedicated staff in the Health Department and Economic Development Corporation. These departments focus on food access, resilience, equity and entrepreneurship with an advisory committee of more than 60 stakeholders. Among the innovative solutions BFPI has developed are 1) a land leasing initiative that allows low-cost, mid-term leases of city-owned property for urban farms, 2) an urban agriculture tax credit (90% credit on real property tax), 3) a food procurement policy to promote health and economic development, 4) protocol for a Food Resilience Plan, and 5) a Grocery Store Incentive Area that provides a personal property tax credit to grocery stores that locate in food deserts, or for renovations to existing grocery stores that are effectively "preventing" food deserts.



## CROSS-SECTORAL RECOMMENDATIONS (continued)

### 2. SOCIAL & ECONOMIC POLICY

- Promote viable employment for all\*
  - Ensure fair economic relations, fair wages and improved labor conditions within the food and agriculture sector for all
- Encourage and support economic activities for marginalized populations at different levels of the food chain
  - Facilitate access to safe and healthy foods
- Promote networks and support grassroots activities that create social inclusion and provide food to marginalized individuals through community gardens, community food kitchens, etc.\*



## FOOD SYSTEM RECOMMENDATIONS



### 1. PRODUCING AND PROCESSING FOOD

*Goal: Support food producers and processors in both physical infrastructure and streamlined regulations.*

- Promote and strengthen urban and rural food production and processing\*
  - Utilize sustainable, holistic approaches
  - Provide services such as credit, technology, food safety, market access, etc.
  - Promote production education, training, research, and technical assistance to all farmers, including transitioning, new and beginning, and urban farmers
  - Support needs for infrastructure, innovative food production and processing, zoning ordinances, equipment acquisition, and youth leadership development
- Strengthen connections between the urban and rural food production, processing and distribution\*
- Streamline local and state regulations, permits, and zoning
  - Ensure flexibility for a thriving local food economy, including value-added processing
  - Ensure regulations regarding food processing and safety are the same statewide
  - Train and assist farmers to meet state and federal regulatory requirements
- Protect and enable secure access to land for sustainable food production in urban and rural areas, including land for community gardeners and smallholder producers\*
- Apply an ecosystem approach to guide integrated land use planning and management\*
  - Collaborate with urban and rural authorities and natural resource managers
  - Incorporate inputs such as compost, grey water, and energy from waste, etc.
  - Ensure that these do not compete with human consumption
  - Include strategies for agroecology, biodiversity and farmland conservation, climate change adaptation, tourism, leisure and other ecosystem services
- Integrate food production into comprehensive plans





## 2. DISTRIBUTING FOOD

*Goal: Maryland has a thriving and sustainable infrastructure for delivering food from farm to table.*

- Assess the flow of food to ensure access to fresh, affordable foods\*
  - Ensure consistent access in low-income or underserved neighborhoods
  - Address transportation and logistics planning to reduce carbon footprint
- Strengthen technologies linking urban and rural areas
  - Include food storage, processing, transport and distribution
  - Include all businesses, including diversified small and medium scale food businesses along the value chain that may provide decent and stable employment
- Promote the development of regional aggregation and distribution centers
  - Encourage partnerships between local and state government and food and agriculture entrepreneurs to find the necessary land and financing
- Assess, review and/or strengthen food safety legislation and regulations\*
  - Ensure that food producers and suppliers throughout the food chain operate responsibly
  - Eliminate barriers to market access, including family farmers and smallholder producers
  - Integrate food safety, health and environmental dimensions
- Review public procurement and trade policy to facilitate a supply of healthy food throughout Maryland\*
  - Facilitate job access, fair production conditions and sustainable production, including the most vulnerable producers and consumers
- Provide policy and program support for public markets including farmers' markets, informal markets, retail and wholesale markets, restaurants, and other food distributors\*
  - Recognize and incorporate different approaches of private and public market systems
- Improve and expand support for infrastructure related to market systems that link urban buyers to urban and rural sellers\*
  - Build social cohesion and trust, support cultural exchange and ensure sustainable livelihoods





### 3. ACCESSING FOOD

*Goal: Maryland has policies and an economic climate that supports diverse, flexible food models to provide healthy, culturally-relevant and sustainable food in every community.*

- Incorporate healthy food access into strategic planning documents and comprehensive plans
  - Regularly assess related health impact indicators
  - Expand the definition of Maryland's Complete Streets to encompass healthy food access\*\*
- Promote public and private policies that attract healthy food retail to areas that are in need
  - Assess status of recommendations in the Maryland 2012 Fresh Foods Task Force report and Maryland Fresh Food Financing Initiative
- Increase access to healthy food retail venues
  - Include state and local transportation and transit systems
  - Include Innovative technology such as online purchasing programs
  - Include healthy food incentive programs
- Use appropriate mechanisms and social protection systems to provide vulnerable populations with access to healthy food\*
  - Include food banks, community food kitchens, emergency food pantries, etc.
  - Ensure attention to the specific beliefs, culture, traditions, dietary habits and preferences of diverse communities
  - Enable more locations to serve as summer and afterschool feeding sites
  - Require a universal/alternative breakfast program for schools with Free and Reduced Meals (FARMS) rates over 70%
- Promote food assistance and incentive programs that augment low-income households' food budgets
  - Promote participation of federal nutrition programs in all food retail outlets

## CASE STUDY

**Maryland Market Money:** Maryland Market Money (MMM): This statewide initiative, run through the non-profit Maryland Farmers Market Association, provides a dollar-for-dollar match for purchases made using federal nutrition benefits at participating markets throughout Maryland. This program is a win-win: it generates additional revenue for farmers and producers while providing critical nutrition assistance to food-insecure Marylanders. Since 2013, the MMM has generated over \$1 million for producers selling through Maryland farmers markets and benefited over 20,000 low-income households. In 2017, the Maryland General Assembly unanimously passed the Maryland Farms and Families Act (SB 278/HB 586), which created a grant program through the Maryland Department of Agriculture to support the MMM initiative. Efforts to fund the bill are ongoing.







#### 4. CONSUMING FOOD

*Goal: Make the healthy choice the easy choice for all and celebrate delicious foods.*

- Promote healthy diets through relevant education, health promotion, and communication programs\*
  - Emphasize safe, culturally appropriate, environmentally friendly, and rights-based
  - Include effective, evidence-based public nutrition
  - Collaborate with schools, day care centers, grocery stores, and utilize social media
  - Encourage partnerships between nonprofit, for-profit, and government
- Address health diseases associated with poor diets and obesity\*
  - Give specific attention where appropriate to reducing intake of sugar, salt, trans fats, meat and dairy products and increasing consumption of fruits and vegetables and non-processed foods
- Develop guidelines for public food procurement\*
  - Promote communication and training campaigns to inform consumers, city planners, food service providers, retailers, producers, and processors
- Encourage joint action to educate and implement integrated strategies for healthy lifestyles and social inclusion\*
  - Include health and food sectors
- Encourage menu nutritional labelling (Including calories, sodium, fats, carbohydrates, etc.) in restaurants, retailers, and public institutions
- Promote a healthy school food environment
  - Include nutrition and food systems in teacher training and K-12 curriculum
  - Address healthy food, sustainability, health impacts, environmental health, and literacy
  - Assess Maryland Nutrition Standards for schools
  - Encourage fresh foods and salad bars in all public schools





## 5. RECOVERING FOOD

*Goal: Reduce food waste.*

- Convene food system actors to assess and monitor food loss and waste reduction at all stages of the state's food supply chain\*
  - Include production, processing, packaging, safe food preparation, presentation and handling, re-use and recycling
  - Ensure holistic planning and design, transparency, accountability and policy integration
- Raise awareness of food loss and waste through targeted events and campaigns\*
  - Identify focal points such as educational institutions, community markets, and economy initiatives
  - Develop a public education campaign to reduce food waste at the consumer level\*\*
- Develop and review, as appropriate, policies and regulations to prevent waste or safely recover food
  - Assess the Maryland Waste Reduction and Resource Recovery Plan
  - Develop guidelines with regard to food safety for food donations as needed\*\*
  - Encourage collaboration between the private sector, research and educational institutions, related organizations, and communities
  - Include processes, cosmetic and grading standards, expiration dates, etc.
  - Examine Maryland's renewable portfolio standards with regards to food recovery and compost
- Facilitate recovery and redistribution of safe and nutritious foods for human consumption\*
  - Include production, manufacturing, retail, catering, wholesale, and hospitality sectors
- Expand Maryland's liability protection laws for food recovery and food donations\*\*
  - Include food recovery organizations that nominally charge end recipients
- Expand new and existing local processing facilities to recover inedible food for composting
- Support a food recovery jobs program
  - Partner with existing job training programs
  - Include veterans and returning citizens
- Expand the "Maryland Farm Food Donation Tax Credit" statewide
- Encourage schools to assess food waste and develop guidelines to minimize food waste\*\*

## CASE STUDY

[Farm Food Donation Tax Incentive Bill \(SB 416 / HB 472\)](#): This bill provides a simple win-win-win solution by incentivizing farmers to "donate" their surplus fresh produce to pantries, soup kitchens, and food hubs. The tax credit is intended to offset basic farm production costs for the donated food that might have otherwise been wasted, resulting in an economic gain for farmers. It brings the health benefits of nourishing food to those who are food insecure and increased food security. Moreover, by keeping donated food within a reasonable distance, local donations decrease transportation and fuel use. Economy, health, and environment all benefit from this simple and elegant solution.



# V. LOOKING AHEAD



There is much enthusiasm for the Maryland Food Charter and interest in developing a coordinated, collaborative statewide food system. To continue this work, we recommend the following as potential next steps:

- Secure multi-year funding to support a coalition or backbone organization to coordinate with organizations and partners to facilitate convergence around common issues;
- Develop and implement an action plan with priorities, specific metrics, annual reviews and assessments;
- Encourage coordination and collaboration across sectors and government agencies and departments when public policy, resources or funds are developed and/or utilized;
- Assess and seek alignment of policies and practices that impact the food system across sectors and administrative levels;
- Continue to engage, educate, and raise awareness among state legislators to address food system issues;
- Develop a media platform to share food policy related information and resources such as model legislation and procurement language from all regions in Maryland.





**MARYLAND**  
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