

# Increasing Access to Healthy Food: Embracing your Local Farmer!

*Improving the health of residents and the broader health of the communities in which we live...*



**Maricopa County**  
**Department of Public Health**

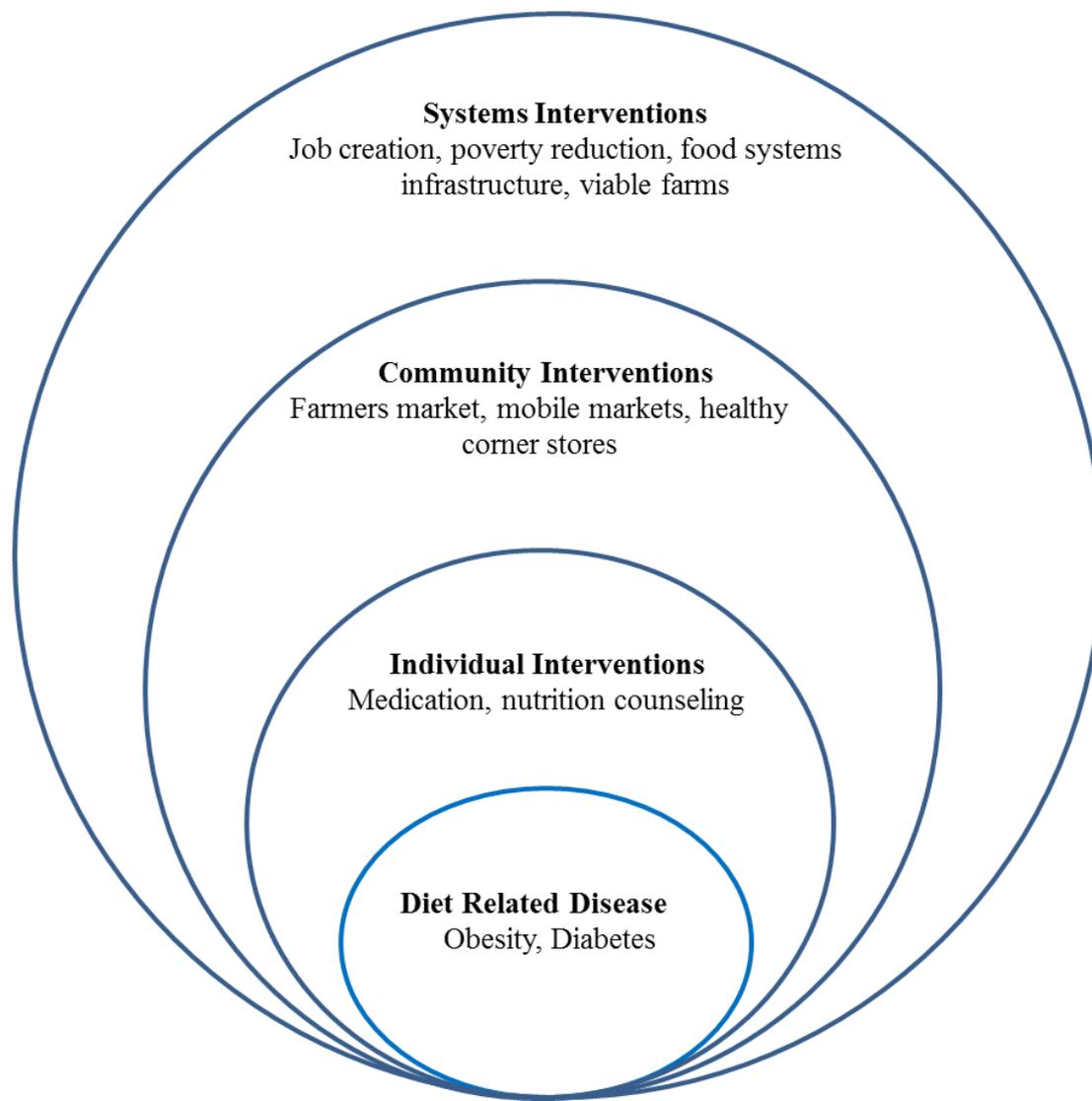
[WeArePublicHealth.org](http://WeArePublicHealth.org) [twitter.com/Maricopahealth](https://twitter.com/Maricopahealth) [facebook.com/MCDPH](https://facebook.com/MCDPH)



# Support Local Farms to Reduce Hunger and Poverty

- Helping farming families increase production in a sustainable way, and sell more crops, is the most effective way to reduce hunger and poverty over the long term.

# (With Thanks to HealthCare Without Harm)



# SNAP Ed Strategies:



- Increase access to healthy foods
- Bring affordable, healthy food to underserved communities

## ***Interventions:***

- ❖ Farmers markets
- ❖ Community and school gardens
- ❖ Healthier food retail
- ❖ Farm to school / farm to pre-school
- ❖ Mobile markets
- ❖ Nutrition education
- ❖ Connecting physical activity to community food sites / events

# Farmers as Key Stakeholders



- Relationship building
- The bulk of the work: building trust
- Constant and consistent effort



# Connecting the dots...



...between hunger, food access,  
health and equity, and  
local economic development.

# Causes of Hunger



- Unexpected events
- Making the tradeoff between food and other expenses
- Physical access and distribution

# Physical Access to Healthy Food



- “Low-income communities are most likely to have access to and support retail operations that sell low-cost goods. When it comes to food, low-cost items tend to be high in fat, and salt and low in nutritional content.”

*Vikki Valentine, NPR interview*

# Status of Farmers in AZ



As we are encouraging folks to access healthy food...

- Average age of Arizona farmers is 61 (2014)
- Most farms in Maricopa County are less than 10 acres
- < 8% of all Maricopa County farms are larger than 500 acres.
- 16% (278 farms) accounted for 98.5 % of all agricultural sales. (2014)

\* Loss of farmland: Maricopa County Farm Statistics

Item	Unit	1997 Census	2002 Census	2007 Census	Percent Change 1997-2007
Number of Farms	No.	2,444	2,110	1,793	- 27 %
Total Land in Farms	Acres	742,287	627,254	485,469	- 35 %
Total Cropland	Acres	356,639	288,387	267,295	- 25%

**SOURCE: USDA-NASS – Census of Agriculture**



# AZ Farms by the Numbers



- The number of farmers grew by 28% in AZ between 2007 and 2012
- Average age of the principal operator on farms in Arizona is 61
- They have been in the farming business an average of 27 years
- More likely to be female and Native American
- 56% of farms in Arizona who are Native American
- The number of Hispanics as principal operators of farms in Arizona is 4%.
  
- Apache County has the largest number of farms in the state (5,591)
- Followed by Navajo Co. (3,846)
- Maricopa (2,479)
- Coconino (2,239).
- More than 90% of the farms in Coconino and Navajo counties are less than 50 acres.
- The counties with the highest percentage of farms or ranches over 1,000 acres are Cochise and La Paz.

*Valorie Rice, EBRC Senior Business Information Specialist, U of A / Arizona Economy*

# Average Net Cash Income – AZ Farms



- \$30,012 annually (2012)
- Down from \$37,344 in 2007





## 2016 POVERTY GUIDELINES FOR THE 48 CONTIGUOUS STATES AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Persons in family/household

Poverty guideline

For families/households with more than 8 persons, add \$4,160 for each additional person.

1	\$11,880
2	16,020
3	20,160
4	24,300
5	28,440
6	32,580
7	36,730
8	40,890

# Farmers



- How to find them
- What they want
- How to approach them



# How to Find Farmers



Legwork, homework, teamwork:

- Find someone in your community who has a relationship with growers – going in cold can be cold!



# Establishing Links

## Some potential partners:

- Public and private organizations - nonprofit, for-profit and government –
- ❖ AZ Dept. of Health Services – Farmers Market Nutrition Program / School Garden Sanitarian
- ❖ AZ Dept. of Agriculture
- ❖ AZ Dept. of Education – Farm to School / School Garden Specialist - [Ashley.Schimke@azed.gov](mailto:Ashley.Schimke@azed.gov)
- Farm tours / U pick operations
- Fruit and Vegetable Growers Associations
- Cooperative Extension
- AZ Farm Bureau
- AZ Dairy Council
- Farmers Markets / Market Managers -
- GoodFoodFinders - <http://goodfoodfinderaz.com/>
- Edible Phoenix - <http://ediblephoenix.ediblefeast.com/>
- Edible Baja - <http://ediblebajaarizona.com/>
- Farm to School State Lead, National Farm to School Network
- School Food Procurement staff who are buying local
- [www.localharvest.org](http://www.localharvest.org)

# How to Approach Farmers



Know your needs:

- Who is your target audience
- What do you want to purchase
- What can you pay
- Why you will purchase local over going to a store
- Sourcing policies / food safety

*“Once harvested, tomatoes can’t be glued back on the plant.”* John Scott, One Windmill Farm, Queen Creek, AZ



# Next Steps in the Relationship!

- Start a dialogue. Identify your organization and talk about your sourcing policies and capacity to buy their products.
- Don't limit yourself. Let the farmer know the potential program / customers / type of purchasing you have in mind.
- Advertise – as a unique selling point of your initiative.
- Visit the farms you buy from – The experience will likely spark a deeper interest in the food they eat.
- Tell your story - leverage your farm partnerships to encourage others.

# What Farmers Want



- Help selling / moving their products
- To innovate and learn
- To be profitable



“When farmers grow more food and earn more income, they are better able feed to their families, send their children to school, provide for their family’s health, and invest in their farms. This makes their communities economically stronger and more stable.”

# A (Local) Food System Map

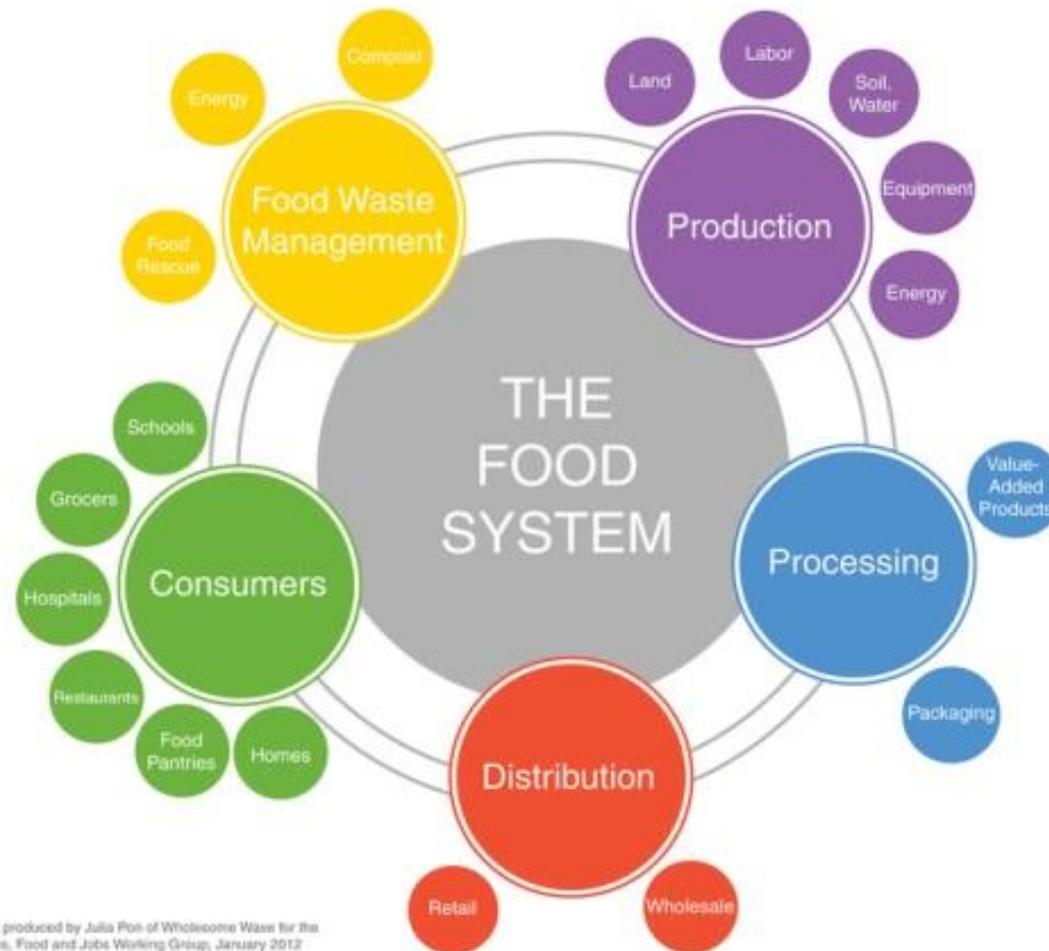


Diagram produced by Julia Poon of Wholesome Wave for the CT Farms, Food and Jobs Working Group, January 2012.

# Gleaning Programs



- Arizona Statewide Gleaning Project: Sylvia McKeever, Gleaning Logistics Manager, [smckeeper@azfoodbanks.org](mailto:smckeeper@azfoodbanks.org) - 1-866-356-3693
- The 1996 "Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act" (Public Law 104-210)  
<http://www.feedingamerica.org/ways-to-give/give-food/become-a-product-partner/protecting-our-food-partners.html>
- AZ Tax subtraction - ARS 43-1025 Agricultural crops contributed to charitable organizations  
<http://www.azleg.gov/FormatDocument.asp?inDoc=/ars/43/01025.htm&Title=43&DocType=ARS>

# Farm to School



Farm to school implementation differs by location but always includes one or more of the following:

- **Procurement:** Local foods are purchased, promoted and served in the cafeteria or as a snack or taste-test;
- **Education:** Students participate in education activities related to agriculture, food, health or nutrition; and
- **School gardens:** Students engage in hands-on learning through gardening.

*National Farm to School Network*

[www.farmentoschool.org](http://www.farmentoschool.org)



# Healthier Food Retail



- Improving the retail food environment to make healthier foods more accessible among underserved populations.



# Additional Resources



- SNAP Toolkit  
<http://www.eatwellbewell.org/collaborators/resources/food-systems#resources>
- Farmers Market Toolkit
- Harvest Calendar  
<http://www.eatwellbewell.org/uploads/media/documents/harvest-calendar-final.pdf>
- Cindy Gentry, Food Systems Coordinator,  
MCDPH – [cindygentry@mail.Maricopa.gov](mailto:cindygentry@mail.Maricopa.gov);  
602-506-8323