



Food Policy Council Talking Points

What is a Food Policy Council?

“Food Policy Councils (FPCs) are comprised of stakeholders from various segments of a local food system. The primary goal of many Food Policy Councils is to examine the operation of a local food system and provide ideas and recommendations for improvement through public policy.”

- Cleveland Cuyahoga County Food Policy Coalition

Why form a Food Policy Council?

- **A local food policy council provides a forum that brings all sectors (governmental and non-governmental) involved with local food together at one table.**

These sectors include production, processing, access, distribution, retail, institutional, and waste utilization. The council works to create policy supporting a socially just and economically viable local food system.

- **Local food policy councils have the ability to address gaps between government policy and local needs. Such as:**
 - **Loss of local & small food production and processing**
 - **Inadequate Access and Affordability** to healthy food,
 - **Public Health Concerns**, such as obesity, malnutrition and diabetes, and
 - **Adverse Health Effects** from certain animal and crop production methods.
 - **Lack of knowledge, skills and nutrition**

The Farm Bill has been the primary vehicle informing agricultural and food legislation. However, federal agricultural policies, as well as some state and local policies, have contributed to dramatic changes to supplies across the United States. Food policy councils can help to shift the overall direction of farm policy toward a healthier and more sustainable local food and farming system.

Why should the Mahoning Valley consider a Food Policy Council?

The formation of a local food policy council announces that the Mahoning Valley places a high priority on our food-related issues: (see elevator speech at the end of this document)

- Many of the Valley's residents do not have access to healthy and affordable food.
- Many of our local residents (over 90% of the residents in Youngstown) live in food deserts where there is no place to buy groceries within a mile of their homes.
- The lack of access to healthy foods contributes to high rates of obesity (ex. 23.3% in Mahoning County) and chronic diseases such as diabetes. Among the metropolitan counties in Ohio, Mahoning County has the highest overweight prevalence (41%).
- Our tri-county area has continuously lost its most productive farmland due to increasing cost and regulatory barriers. Between the years of 2002 to 2007 Mahoning County lost 12,461 acres, Columbiana County lost 5,128, and Trumbull County lost 826 acres.
- Consumers spend 45 billion dollars in agricultural food products in Ohio, 3% of this represents food grown in Ohio. That creates a large market space of local production. Imagine if we increased the amount of food grown and processed and purchased in Ohio by 7% to equal 10%? We would generate 4.5 billion extra dollars for the State of Ohio.

Our residents, local producers, potential entrepreneurs, and local and state legislators will know that the Mahoning Valley places a high priority on the health of individuals and believes that both our overall physical and economic health can be aided by supporting opportunities provided by a local food system.

Expectations of the Mahoning Valley Food Policy Council

The Mahoning Valley Food Policy Council will . . .

- **Represent All Parties in the Food System**, from eaters to producers and everything in between,
- **Commit to Continuous Learning**, engaging themselves and other individuals for the betterment of our food system, and
- **Research, Analyze and Advise** on the ways, means and policies that:
 - Create and improve access to local food,
 - Remove barriers to the growth of community-based food systems and markets,

- Strengthen the capacity for local residents to access local markets and food production/processing opportunities,
- Support land being preserved or allocated to agricultural purposes, and
- Support local food in our schools.

The Mahoning Valley Food Policy Council “Elevator Speech”

- “The Mahoning Valley Food Policy Council provides a forum that brings all sectors involved with local food, governmental and non-governmental, together at one table. The formation of the council announces that the Mahoning Valley places a high priority on the health of individuals and believes that both our overall physical and economic health can be aided by supporting opportunities provided by a local food system. To support these opportunities, the council will work to shift the overall direction of agricultural policies toward a healthier and more sustainable local food system.”