



# **NH FOOD ALLIANCE**

## **Viability Working Group**

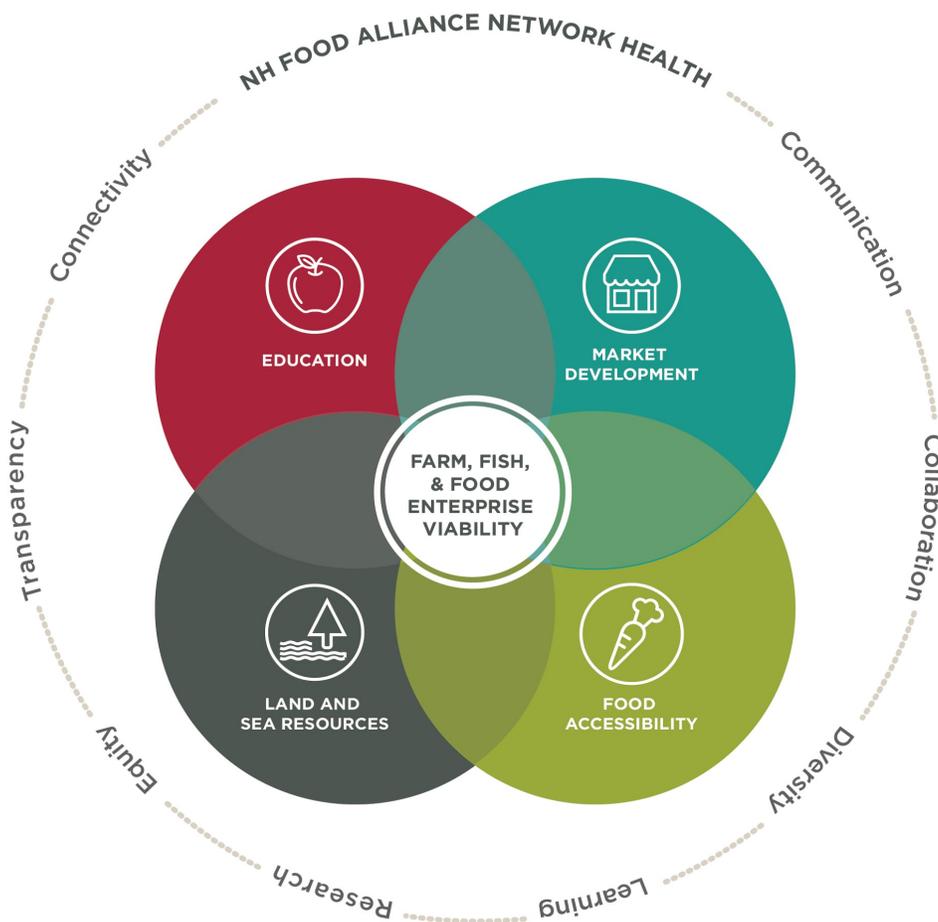
*Summary & Action Plan*

November 15, 2016

# Viability Working Group

The Farm, Fish, and Food Enterprise Viability Initiative is the first strategic effort of the NH Food Alliance, and was launched in November of 2015. The Viability Initiative (VI) is the result of over two years of building the network and listening to the concerns of hundreds of New Hampshire residents.

Data from several listening sessions and focus groups across the state was synthesized into a comprehensive report, from which a common theme emerged: *thriving local businesses are the heart of our food system and create cascading benefits for everyone involved*. The VI focuses on the challenges and opportunities of farmers, fishermen and food entrepreneurs from a food systems perspective, and how a collaborative network can support food enterprises and the whole food system to benefit all New Hampshire citizens.



After the VI report was presented, the NH Food Alliance organized a working group of subject-area specialists who represented one of the four opportunity areas (Market Development, Food Accessibility, Land and Sea Resources and Education) outlined in the VI report. This working group was charged with ensuring clarity surrounding the goals, approaches and actions needed to advance the initiative. Additionally, the group was tasked with prioritizing the approaches and actions in order to create an action plan for the network to align behind.

The Viability Working Group (VWG) began formally meeting in March of 2016. After becoming versed in the VI report, the VWG identified components that might be missing and drew from the opportunity areas to highlight 9 key ingredients that support enterprise viability:

#### Education

- Educated and motivated consumers
- Skilled and capable food business owners/operators

#### Market Development

- Strong local supply chain to meet demand
- Strong markets for producers/harvesters

#### Food Access

- NH residents have easy access to local food

#### Land Resources

- Conservation and stewardship of natural resources
- A resource base that is accessible to producers/harvesters

#### Fisheries

- A stable fishing industry

#### Labor

- Available, affordable and capable labor

Subsequently, the group refined, expanded, and prioritized the approaches, enlisting the help of close to 50 farmers, fisherman, food producers, and food system practitioners whose role was to provide critical feedback to the VWG at strategic moments during their process. This feedback process was established to ensure that the work of the VWG is grounded and validated by those whose enterprises are directly impacted by actions that are or that will be implemented.

As a result of 9 day-long meetings, numerous conference calls, and electronic communication, the VWG brings the resulting refined goals, approaches, and action priorities organized by Opportunity Area and Viability Ingredient. The **priority approaches and associated actions are bolded in each opportunity area section**. These priority actions illustrate initial tangible actions the network can align with and begin to move forward collectively. The VWG recognizes that all approaches are important for reaching our goals; some are already being addressed, while others can be taken up by the network or others in the future.

For more detailed information associated with each approach, including action steps, suggested indicators, timeline, and partners, please see the [VWG action plan worksheets](#).

## The Enterprise Viability Working Group

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Opportunity Area

# Education

Key Viability Ingredient

## Educated and motivated consumers

Goal

Consumers of all types understand the importance of viable local food systems to our economy, health, resource base, heritage and culture and act accordingly.

### Approach 1

**Conduct educational programming and campaigns directed at all NH residents, including eaters (consumers), legislators, and decision makers at local, state and regional levels about the potential of the NH food system, with specific calls to action to enhance farm and fishing business visibility.**

**Action 1.1 Develop and launch a statewide campaign to encourage purchasing of local food at the 5% of food expenditures per person/ week level.**

**1.1.1 Engage producers and retailers in the planning process to insure their awareness and support of the program, see value in it and help to promote it.**

**1.1.2 Design a campaign directed at eaters/consumers at the household level that explains the advantages/impacts of spending food dollars locally.**

**1.1.3 Secure marketing expertise to assist with design of the 5% campaign.**

**1.1.4 Integrate outreach and education to seafood consumers about the benefits of eating locally harvested, seasonal and more diverse species of fish as part of the 5% campaign.**

**Action 1.2 Ensure NH food systems education and training is integrated throughout the K-12, technical, community college and university levels.**

**1.2.1 Inventory resources and programs that are already being used and at what levels.**

**1.2.2 Identify gaps at each level and prioritize levels to be targeted.**

**1.2.3 Provide ongoing educational/technical assistance to all those working in the food system.**

### Approach 2

Create a Fisheries & Aquaculture Marketing Group to invigorate the NH Fresh and Local Seafood label (increase demand) and coalesce the remaining fishermen and up and coming oyster farmers to work together under that umbrella (also in Market Development).



Opportunity Area

# Education

Key Viability Ingredient

## Skilled and Capable Business Owners/Operators

Goal

Owners/operators of farm, food or fishery businesses are fully capable of developing, managing and growing their business and are considered an integral component of NH's economy.

Approach 1

Cultivate a business and economic development climate that recognizes farm, fish, and food enterprises as key components of New Hampshire's overall economic development objectives.

**Action 1.1** Convene discussions with BIA (Business and Industry Association) and the Coalition of Economic Development to encourage/assist them to develop agricultural interests at their table.

**Action 1.2** Create a Fisheries & Aquaculture Marketing Group to invigorate the NH Fresh and Local Seafood label (increase demand) and coalesce the remaining fishermen and up and coming oyster farmers to work together under that umbrella. (also in Consumer Education and Market Development)

Approach 2

The full scope of business and financial planning opportunities, topics (biz planning, budgeting, legal conservation, labor, workforce housing, licensing, food safety compliance, production inputs, regulations etc.) and providers are known, available and utilized. Timing is conducive to food producers/harvesters/entrepreneurs' attendance.

**Action 2.1** Teach food producers how to work with wholesale buyers.

Approach 3

Enhance the coordination and collaboration of existing agricultural business and financial assistance providers to provide the tools and modes of education that food system entrepreneurs need to be successful.

Approach 4

Gather information to improve our understanding of the factors that affect long-term profitability of farms and food businesses and identify gaps in support services to entrepreneurs.

Approach 5

Use the existence of the Milk Producers Emergency Relief Fund as a model of an insurance program to benefit all of agriculture and fisheries. (also in Conservation of Natural Resources)

## Approach 6

Identify areas of retraining (ecotourism, aquaculture, etc.) should wild fisheries collapse.

Opportunity Area

# Market Development

Key Viability Ingredient

**Strong local food supply chain to meet demand**

Goal

Producers and food entrepreneurs are able to meet production and distribution demands of diverse market channels.

## **Approach 1**

**Enhance the capacity of service providers to provide technical, educational, and financial assistance to new and experienced farmers and fishermen and food entrepreneurs related to production, efficiency, value-added processing, and meeting regulatory demands of wholesale markets.**

**Action 1.1** Convene a meeting(s) between service providers, public & private funders, farm, fish, food producers to inventory current technical assistance programs and funding. Develop sustainable funding sources and mechanisms to support a strong supply chain to meet demand.

**1.1.1** Identify the GAPS, in technical assistance and funding, collaborate with existing efforts (e.g. Land access project)

**1.1.2** Develop a food entrepreneurship funding mechanism to support technical assistance by integrating outcomes of the inventory and convening work (Farm/Fish Viability program).

## Approach 2

Support efforts by food system entrepreneurs to form and operate cooperatives or other innovative approaches to aggregate, store, and distribute products, to facilitate sales.

## Approach 3

Assess the regulatory demands and obstacles (municipal, state, and federal) on the local food system and take actions to lessen burdens on farmers and fishermen to achieve economic success while still ensuring a safe food supply and healthy environment.

**Action 3.1** Planning, zoning, site plan, health, commerce, food safety etc.

**Action 3.2** Support and expand policies and strategies that help fishermen diversify their catch while giving overfished stocks time to recover.

## Approach 4

Support the infrastructure that provides goods and services to farms, fishermen and food entrepreneurs.

**Action 4.1** Facilitate production of local seed, seed banks and seed libraries.

Opportunity Area

# Market Development

Key Viability Ingredient

Strong markets for producers/harvesters

Goal

Solid, diverse, reliable, and profitable market channels exist for farmers, fishermen, and food entrepreneurs.

Approach 1

Strengthen and create relationships between food producers and wholesale food buyers.

**Action 1.1** Take inventory of the institutions/communities that are currently purchasing local food and investigate what kind of language was used to develop contracts with local food producers (work with FINE and others).

Approach 2

Eliminate barriers to purchasing local food by developing contract language and internal policies for institutions and communities in order to secure access to local food statewide (also in Food Accessibility).

**Action 2.1** Inventory the institutions/communities that are currently purchasing local food and investigate what kind of language was used to develop contracts with local food producers.

**Action 2.2** Research types of liability insurance that are needed for contracting with institutions/communities and work with insurers to find creative solutions for affordable insurance for local food producers.

**Action 2.3** Work with regional partners to build capacity for institutions and communities to access local food by developing templates and providing technical assistance.

Approach 3

Create a Fisheries & Aquaculture Marketing Group to invigorate the NH Fresh and Local Seafood label/brand and coalesce the remaining fishermen and up and coming oyster farmers to work together under that umbrella. (also in Market Development)

Approach 4

Support existing efforts to brand local products (NH Made, NH Community Seafood). Use the legislative process or an executive order to create a “buy local” policy for the purchase of New Hampshire or New England grown products by State of NH state institutions and agencies.

Opportunity Area

# Food Access

Key Viability Ingredient

NH consumers have easy access to local food

Goal

Consumers of all ages, ethnicities and income levels have access to New Hampshire produced and harvested foods that are conveniently available and affordable.

## Approach 1

**Build capacity to harness individual purchasing power and leverage institutional purchasing to expand food access for all consumers.**

**Action 1.1** Develop contract language and policies to bolster institutional purchasing of local food and promote programs that expand access of local food for people with low/moderate incomes.

**1.1.1 Institutional:** Take inventory of ways that local food is currently accessed within institutions, investigate what kind of language was used to develop contracts with local food producers, and work with regional partners to build capacity for institutions and communities to access local food by developing templates and providing technical assistance.

**1.1.2 Consumer:** Increase the number of households that purchase local food by expanding opportunities for SNAP/EBT customers to access local food in a variety of ways, such as through mobile markets, farmers markets, farm stands, and increasing the amount of local food at retail outlets, such as grocery stores, convenience stores, etc.

## Approach 2

Create policies and practices that ensure commitment local food accessibility is addressed in local planning and master plans and economic development plans.

## Approach 3

Consolidate information about producers and products around the state to make it easier for consumers, institutions and retailers to readily find local food options.

**Action 3.1** Through the Granite State Market Match program increase the number of households that purchase food at farmers' markets. Capture the data from the Granite State Market Match program in dollar amounts, number of households, repeat households and repeat households and by geographic locations and by season.

**Action 3.2** Determine proximity to local food resources (by county, city, town) including Farmers markets (including mobile markets); CSA county; Farm Stand; Retail (includes grocery store and restaurants); Cooperatives, buying clubs, food hubs and related aggregating centers.

**Action 3.3** Collaborate with the Organization for Refugee and Immigrant success (ORIS), International Institute of New England, Catholic Charities and Ascentia and NH Health and Human

Services and others as appropriate to assess food access by refugees, immigrants and asylum seekers.

**Action 3.4** Collect data to assess local food by historically vulnerable populations.

**Action 3.5** Assess and identify opportunities for enhanced and efficient distribution of food by using logistical analysis of existing transportation and delivery services such as those presently in place via grocery and delivery services (e.g. Walmart, SYSCO, UPS etc.).

**Action 3.6** Track collaborative efforts among distributors, estimate mileage and distribution efficiencies, carbon foot print savings.

**Action 3.7** Collaborate with Farmers, Cooperative Extension, NH Kids Count, and others to identify opportunities to leverage efforts to promote food access.

**Action 3.8** Support neighborhood convenience and ethnic stores.

**Action 3.9** Work with home-bound and elderly service providers.

#### Approach 4

Increase and support programs that teach NH residents how to prepare local food.

**Action 4.1** Cooking classes (i.e. Cooking Matters)

**Action 4.2** Work with home-bound and elderly service providers

#### Approach 5

Enhance access to local food by developing and/or supporting policies and strengthening alliances with community partners across the state to provide livable wages that enhance access to local food that provide a livable wage for NH residents.

#### Approach 6

Promote increased access to local food via community transportation services.

#### Approach 7

Expand /support gleaning programs.

Opportunity Area

# Land Resources

Key Viability Ingredient

Conservation and protection of natural resources

Goal

Policies and programs are in place to ensure that the NH agricultural land base of prime and locally important soils is protected from conversion.

## **Approach 1**

**Support and expand the use of conservation easements.**

**Action 1.1 Leverage federal and municipal funds and new sources of private and public monies to raise awareness and capacity in securing agricultural easements, and**

**Action 1.2 Educate farmers and land owners about the benefits of protecting their lands with conservation easements.**

Approach 2

Support existing Right To Farm Initiative.

Approach 3

Increase the number of Agricultural Commissions in New Hampshire towns and cities; commissions should include farmers and other food producers/entrepreneurs.

Approach 4

Research the impact of property taxes on agriculture land and structures.

Approach 5

Use the existence of the Milk Producers Emergency Relief Fund as a model of an insurance program to benefit all of agriculture and fisheries.

Approach 6

Support strategies coming out of SB 38 to develop a State Conservation Plan.

Approach 7

Improve coordination and connection between land trusts, producers, harvesters and conservation organizations, local, state and federal agencies as a way to develop innovative strategies for maintaining farmland, enhancing soil health.

Action 7.1 Convene a “natural resources summit” to address common issues (e.g. common templates, natural resource Vs Business tensions, OPAV etc.)

# Land Resources

## Key Viability Ingredient

A resource base that is accessible to producers/harvesters

## Goal

Policies and programs are in place to ensure that the NH food producers have access to the agricultural land base.

## Approach 1

Support and expand farm seeker and land transfer policies programs that integrate land, business, and human resources support to assist farmers in accessing secure tenure and/or acquiring farmland.

Action 1.1 Advocate for tax incentives that encourage landowners to lease/rent their land to farmers and support changes to property tax structures to make owning and investing in farmland and agricultural enterprises affordable.

Action 1.2 Succession planning for landowners and service providers.

Action 1.3 Insure that easement language does not overly restrict farm operational options.

## Approach 2

Support strategies coming out of SB 38 to develop a State Conservation Plan.

## Approach 3

Improve coordination and connection between land trusts, producers, harvesters and conservation organizations, local, state and federal agencies as a way to develop innovative strategies for maintaining farmland, enhancing soil health.

Action 3.1 Convene a natural resources summit to address common issues (i.e. common templates, natural resource Vs Business tensions, OPAV etc.)

Action 3.2 Develop and promote state policy that increases public land available to farmers.

Opportunity Area

# Fisheries

Key Viability Ingredient

The volatility of the NH fisheries industry is stabilized

Goal

NH fisheries and aquaculture industries are a vibrant component of the NH food system.

## Approach 1

**Maintain and expand policies and strategies that support NH fishing and aquaculture industries, foster innovative solutions to a catch share system and use of space to culture more fish and create new seafood products.**

**Action 1.1** Create a working group to explore options for innovative solutions to a catch share system and explore/develop candidate aquaculture species, techniques and useable spaces both on land and at sea.

**Action 1.2** Participate in and monitor federal and state policies and programs that impact NH fisheries so that NH fisheries are fairly and sustainably regulated.

## Approach 2

Support and expand policies and strategies that help fishermen diversify their catch while giving overfished stocks time to recover.

## Approach 3

Increase financial investments to maintain sustainably manage and monitor our local fishing and aquaculture industries

## Approach 4

Identify areas of retraining (ecotourism, aquaculture, etc.) should wild fisheries collapse. (Also in Education- Skilled and Capable Food Business Owners)

Opportunity Area

# Labor

Key Viability Ingredient

Available, affordable and capable labor

Goal

Labor policies and practices are in place that support fisheries and agriculture in the state.

Approach 1

Encourage labor policies that support fisheries and agriculture in the state.

Approach 2

Connect workers to fishery and agricultural employment opportunities

Approach 3

Help farmers and fishermen find affordable labor, willing and able to meet the needs of the job.

Approach 4

Help farmers/fishermen innovate and find ways to create efficiencies that reduce demands for labor.

Approach 5

Find ways to give employees a livable wage while reducing labor costs of farmers/fishermen preventing workers being paid under the table or unregistered aliens, hired illegally to avoid additional costs such as worker's compensation, insurance, etc.