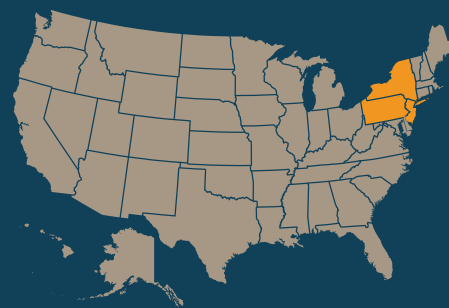# LOCAL GOVERNMENTS & LOCAL FOOD SYSTEMS

REGIONAL PROFILE SERIES

US Census Geographic Division: **Middle Atlantic**

With support from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) and Michigan State University (MSU)'s Center for Regional Food Systems conducted a 2015 survey of local government activity around food systems. The survey seeks to understand how local government policies, programs, plans, and other activities support food production, processing, distribution, access, or disposal. The survey was distributed to all counties and to all municipalities that are in ICMA's database, which generally includes those with populations of at least 2,500.
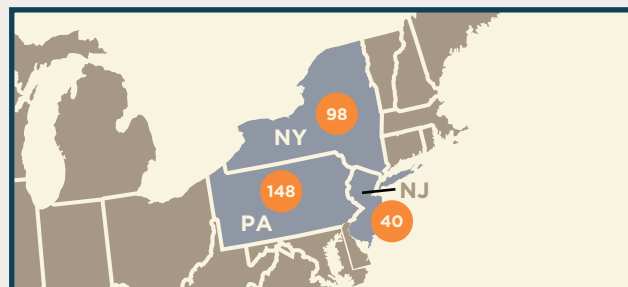
This series of briefings summarizes responses according to the nine geographic divisions as[1] defined by the US Census Bureau and provides complementary information from additional secondary data sources.

About the Region[2]

The Middle Atlantic region, comprised of New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, occupies 99,223 square miles of land on the east coast of the United States just below New England and contributes approximately $2.8 billion to the country's GDP. The region's 41.3 million residents account for 12.9% of the country's total population and are approximately 63 % Caucasian, 13% African American, 15% Hispanic, and 7% Asian. Most are high school graduates (87.4%) and a third (33%) hold a Bachelor's degree or higher.
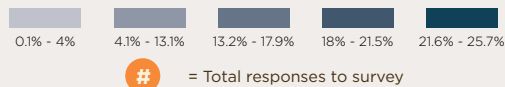
The region faces an unemployment rate of 8.3 which is the same as the national rate. The region's median household income is one of the highest in the country at $59,651 accompanied by a poverty rate of 14%. Its main industries are health care and social assistance. Only 0.8% of the civilian workforce works in the agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining industries despite 25% of the region's land is taken up by farms.

Responses to 2015 ICMA-MSU Food Systems Survey

LEGEND

Survey response rate

| 0.1% - 4% | 4.1% - 13.1% | 13.2% - 17.9% | 18% - 21.5% | 21.6% - 25.7% |

= Total responses to survey

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1 Note that while the Census defines "regions" as aggregated divisions/larger groups of states, we use the terms division and region interchangeably in this series.

2 All demographic data from US Census, 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, and US Bureau of Economic Analysis
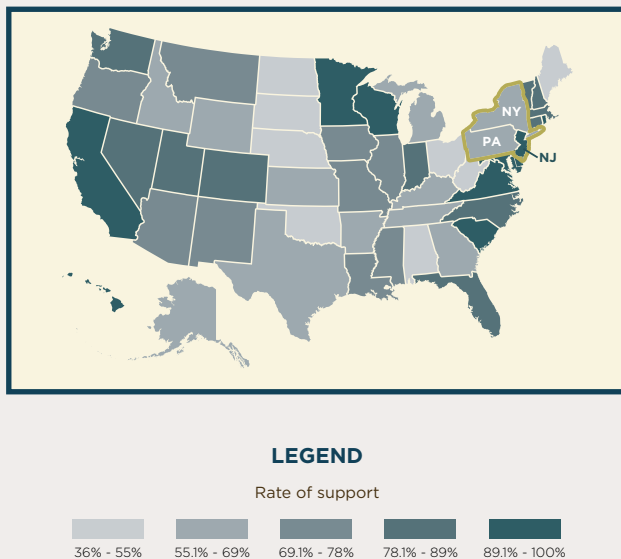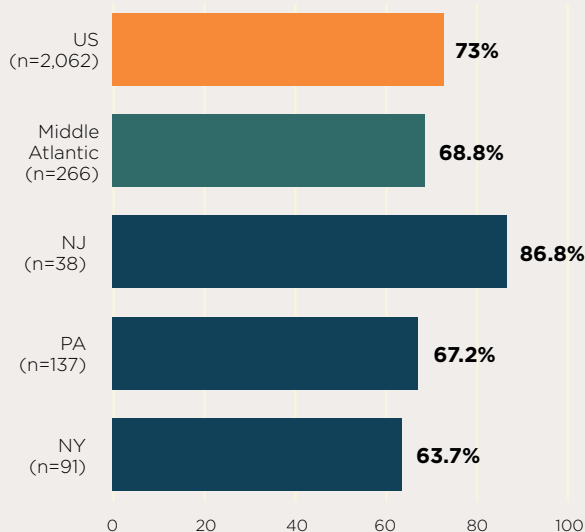
Overall Measures of Food Systems Support

While local governments may not necessarily consider food systems among their core responsibilities, there are innumerable opportunities for them to influence—intentionally or not—how food is produced, processed, distributed, accessed, and disposed in a community. Our survey included a list of 24 example activities local governments could support, such as farmers markets or other types of food retail, emergency food provision, agricultural or food-related economic development, or initiatives around health (see the subsequent "data by theme" discussion in this brief for the full set of activities). 73% of total local governments responding to this section of the survey indicated they support at least one, and an average of 3.44 of the 24 specific activities via policy, program, or matter of practice. In the Middle Atlantic region, the average number of activities supported by responding local governments in each state fell below the national average — except for New Jersey where local governments had the highest rate of support for at least one activity (86.8%) and supported an average of 4.08 activities.

Rate of Local Governments Reporting Support for any Food Activity, 2015

LEGEND

Rate of support

| 36% - 55% | 55.1% - 69% | 69.1% - 78% | 78.1% - 89% | 89.1% - 100% |

Percentage of Local Governments Supporting Any Food Systems Activity
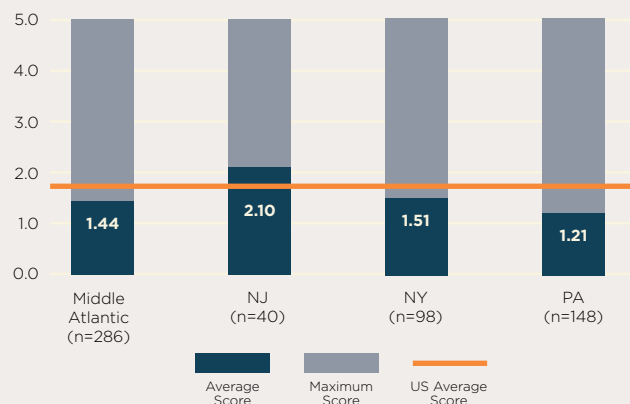

Average, Maximum Number of Food Activities Supported by Local Governments, 2015

	AVG NUMBER ACTIVITIES SUPPORTED	MAX NUMBER ACTIVITIES SUPPORTED
US (n=2,062)	3.44	24
Middle Atlantic (n=266)	**4.08**	**19**
NJ (n=38)	4.08	19
NY (n=91)	2.54	12
PA (n=137)	1.98	14

We calculated an overall measurement, the **Support Score**, on a scale of 0-5 based on the local government's responses indicating various forms of support for local food activities:

- Food systems are addressed in an official plan or strategy, such as a master plan, economic development plan, strategic plan, or other specific type (1 point)

- The local government participates in some form in a food council, commission or coalition (1 point)

- Local government staff provides at least informal, ad hoc support to local food efforts in the community or region (1 point)

- The local government provides policy or programmatic support to any of the 24 specific food systems activities included in our survey (up to 2 points, scaled to the total number of activities supported)
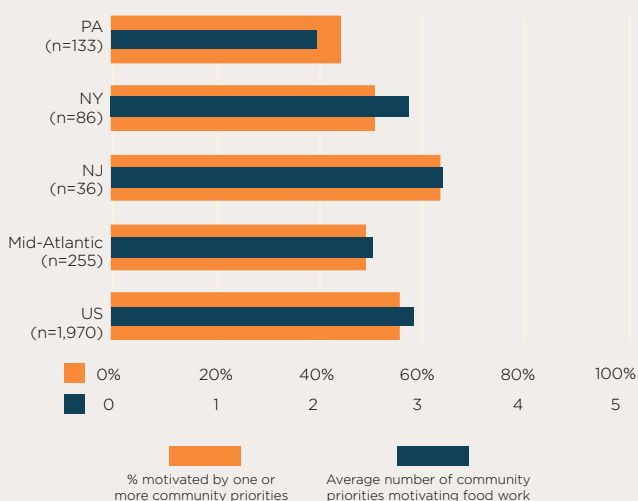
Average, Maximum Support Scores

The average Support Score for the region and most of its states is below the national average of 1.69, except for New Jersey's score of 2.1 which exceeds the national average. The light green bars in the chart indicate the maximum score observed in each state and the region.

Local Government Motivations, Departments Responsible for Food Activity

Nationally, 56% of local governments associated their food-related plans, policies, and/or programs with at least one, and an average of 2.9 community priorities such as public health, community development, and economic development. This suggests that a majority of responding local governments see food as a topic that cuts across multiple community interests. Though rates of support and average number of priorities for the Middle Atlantic region overall were lower than the national levels, New Jersey scored higher than the national average (and the other two Middle Atlantic states) in both categories. 55% of local governments nationwide and 39% in the Middle Atlantic region also indicated at least one municipal department had responsibility for food related programs or policies.

Extent of Motivation to Address Food

The thick bars in this chart represent the rate of local governments in each state that indicated a motivation to address food issues. The thin bars indicate the average number of community priorities that local governments in each state linked to food systems.

	US	MA
% local gov'ts where at least one dep't responsible for food programs or policies	55%	39%

IN PRACTICE

Jersey City, New Jersey (2015 population: 259,651), achieved the maximum support score of 5. In 2014, its Department of Health and Human Services launched the *Partnership for a Healthier Jersey City* initiative, which aims to foster collaborations across local government and with external partners and institutions to promote overall health and wellness. The city reported addressing food through multiple plans and strategies and support for a wide range of policies and programs to increase healthy food access. It has also collaborated with other New Jersey communities through a healthy corner store initiative.

DATA BY THEME

The following section contains primary and secondary data related to three thematic areas: community health and security, production and infrastructure, and economic development.

Within each theme, we developed an index reflecting the extent of local government support reported for related specific activities included in our survey. The specific activities included are listed under each theme; note that several appear in multiple themes (farmers markets, the most common activity supported overall, are included in all three). Average and maximum scores are provided for each index.

THEME: Community Health & Security

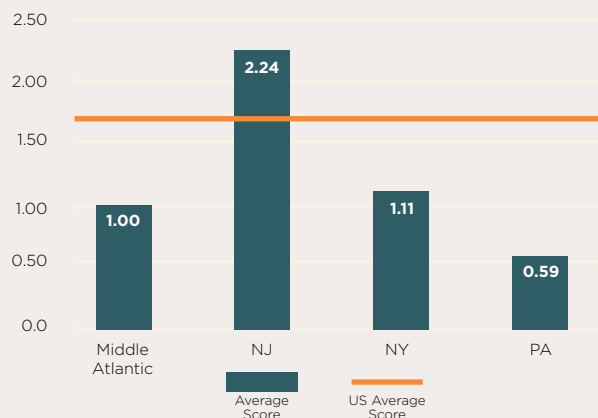| SECONDARY INDICATORS	US	MA	NJ	NY	PA
% adults who are overweight or obese, 2015[3]	64.5%	n/a	63.7%	59.5%	66.2%
% households receiving food stamps/ SNAP, 2015[4]	13.2%	13.2%	9.1%	15.4%	12.9%
% household-level food insecurity and very low food security, average 2013–15[5]	13.7%	n/a	11.1%	14.1%	12.4%
% children in households that were food insecure at some point during the year, 2014[6]	20%	18.5%	13.7%	21.6%	17.2%
Estimated Children's Participation Rate in National School Lunch Program Participation (Free/Reduced Meals) - 2015[7]	40.4%	37.0%	31.4%	42.2%	33.1%

Index

This index is based on the following activities included in the ICMA-MSU survey:

- Establishing and maintaining farmers markets
- Establishing groceries in underserved areas
- Encouraging healthy food in corner stores
- Expanding acceptance of food assistance benefits
- Expanding purchasing power of food assistance benefits
- Providing healthy food in government facilities
- Promoting healthy eating, obesity prevention
- Restrictions on unhealthy food
- Emergency food provision
- Surplus food donation
- Providing land for community gardens
- Providing water for community gardens

Scores

A maximum score of 12 is possible for this index, and the national average is 1.67. While most states and the overall region score below the national average, New Jersey's average score of 2.24 exceeds the national average.

IN PRACTICE

The Village of Fort Edward, New York (2015 population: 3,318) reported connections between food and community health and security issues. It received a grant of state Department of Health funding through the local hospital system to promote healthy places for people to live, work, and play, and took the lead on a multi-year process to rehab an old barn into a farmers market that opened for business for the 2017 season.

3 Kaiser Family Foundation State Health Facts

4 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

5 USDA Economic Research Service, using data from the December 2013, 2014, and 2015 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplements

6 Annie E. Casey National Kids Count Database

7 Calculated using USDA Food and Nutrition Service and US Census data

THEME: Production & Infrastructure

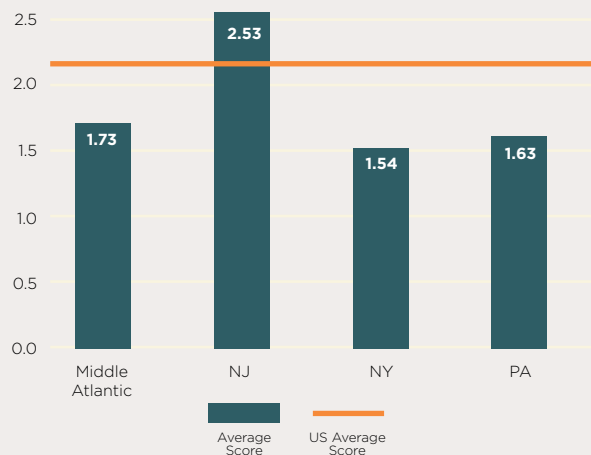| SECONDARY INDICATORS	US	MA	NJ	NY	PA
Land in square miles, 2010[8]	3,531,905	**99,223**	7,354	47,126	44,743
Number of farms, 2016[9]	2,060,000	**102,800**	9,100	35,500	58,200
% land in farms, 2012	40.3%	**25%**	15.3%	24.2%	26.6%
Civilian workforce 16 years and over by industry: Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining, 2015[10]	2.0%	**0.8%**	0.3%	0.6%	1.5%
% of principal farm operators classified as "beginning famers" (<10 years of operation), 2012[11]	22.1%	**17.7%**	19.3%	22%	21.5%
Market value of agricultural products directly sold for human consumption, 2012[12]	$1.3 billion	**n/a**	$33 million	$100 million	$86 million

Index

This index is based on the following activities included in the ICMA-MSU survey:

- Establishing and maintaining farmers markets
- Providing land for community gardens
- Providing water for community gardens
- Encouraging green roofs, edible landscaping
- Farmland preservation
- Support for value-added processing
- Promoting composting
- Keeping of residential/urban livestock
- Allowing sales at farm stands, gardens, etc.
- Creating/operating food hubs
- Encouraging food trucks, mobile vending, pop-up food businesses

Scores

A maximum score of 11 is possible for this index, and the national average is 2.18. While most states and the overall region score below the national average, New Jersey's average score of 2.53 exceeds the national average.

Legend: Average Score | US Average Score

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8   US Census Master Address File/Topologically Integrated Geographic Encoding and Referencing database
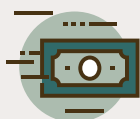9   National Agricultural Statistics Service
10 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates
11 Calculated using Census of Agriculture data, National Agricultural Statistics Service
12 Census of Agriculture, National Agricultural Statistics Service

IN PRACTICE

Union Township, Pennsylvania (2015 population: 3,119) acknowledges a desire to preserve the municipality's strong agricultural character in its comprehensive plan. Clean and Green, a preferential tax assessment program aimed to protect the state's farmland, is a relevant preservation tool administered at the county level.

THEME: Economic Development

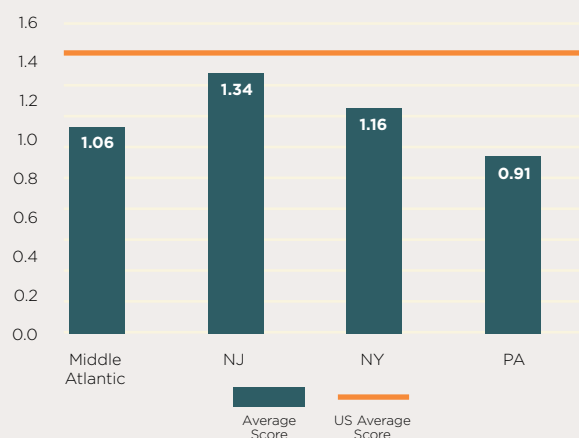| SECONDARY INDICATORS	US	MA	NJ	NY	PA
Median household income in the past 12 months (in 2015 Inflation-adjusted dollars), 2015[13]	53,889	**59,651**	72,093	59,269	53,599
People whose income in the past 12 months is below the poverty level, 2015[14]	15.5%	**14.0%**	10.8%	15.7%	13.5%
Unemployment rate, 2015[15]	8.3%	**8.3%**	8.8%	8.2%	7.9%
State minimum wage, 1/1/17[16]	$7.25	**n/a**	$8.44	$9.70	$7.25

Index

This index is based on the following activities included in the ICMA-MSU survey:

- Establishing and maintaining farmers markets
- Buying local in government facilities
- Allowing sales at farm stands, gardens, etc.
- Creating/operating food hubs
- Food-related job creation
- Promoting agri- or food tourism
- Farmland preservation
- Support for value-added processing
- Encouraging food trucks, mobile vending, pop-up food businesses
- Food-related brownfield redevelopment

Scores

A maximum score of 10 is possible for this index, and the national average is 1.42. While New Jersey again scores highest of the three Middle Atlantic states, the entire region scores below the national average for the economic development index.

	Middle Atlantic	NJ	NY	PA
Average Score	1.06	1.34	1.16	0.91

US Average Score: (orange line at ~1.42)

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13 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

14 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

15 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

16 National Conference of State Legislatures, from US Department of Labor and state web sites

IN PRACTICE

The Town of Canandaigua, New York (2015 population: 10,390) initiated an Agriculture Enhancement Program in 2014 to promote the viability of local farm and food businesses. In 2016, the town board adopted a comprehensive Agricultural Enhancement Plan, developed by consultants with extensive local input and funded by a grant from the state's Department of Agriculture and Markets. In addition to policies and programs related to agricultural land use, the plan identifies several strategies aimed at increasing awareness and profitability of the local farm economy. For more information, see: http://townofcanandaigua.org/page.asp?id=114.