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# An Investigation of Food System Localization Efforts in New York Municipalities: Projects, Practices and Policies, Survey Report

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**An Investigation of Food System Localization Efforts in New York Municipalities:  
Projects, Practices and Policies**

**Survey Report**

**Prepared for the NYS Health Foundation**

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**May, 2023**

# **An Investigation of Food System Localization Efforts in New York Municipalities: Projects, Practices and Policies**

## **Executive Summary and Key Findings**

This document is a component of a research project funded by the New York State Health Foundation from January 2022 to May 2023. The overall project goal was to better understand how we design and sustain resilient local food systems in New York from the perspective of elected officials. The project used three different data collection methods, interviews, a survey and spatial analysis. This document reports on the Survey component of the project.

These are the main highlights from the survey.

- Survey was distributed between December 2022 and January 2023 to 1,297 town supervisors and village mayors in New York State, resulting in 185 usable responses distributed across 9 economic regions in the State.
- Respondents to the survey included a majority of town supervisors and village mayors (164/185), 33% of them were female, their average age was 62.9 years and more than half had more than 5 years of experience; 40% of them report working 20 work hours or less per week.
- Convenience stores and food pantries are the most common food retail establishments across the communities in the sample, with only slightly more than 50% reporting an easy or somewhat easy access to a conventional grocery store. Other alternative retail models such as community supported agriculture or farmers' markets are less common.
- Vegetables, dairy and meat are the most common food products in the local communities represented by survey respondents. Beyond backyard gardening, small/medium farms and breweries and vineyards are the most common food production establishments in the communities. Community gardens, large farms and farm-to-table restaurants are less common.

- Access to capital and to processing facilities were the most important challenges to entrepreneurial activity reported by survey respondents; regulatory red tape was perceived as the third most important challenge.
- Moreover, local governments have limited capability to offer support to overcome those challenges with little or no budget to support food projects, and with limited capacity to offer technical assistance.
- In general, greater availability of food production businesses is positively related to food access according to survey respondents. Governments that have better capabilities to support their communities also seem to have better access to food establishments.
- Both access to food retail and production businesses are positively correlated with local government collaboration with the community, other governments and private and nonprofit organizations.

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# **An Investigation of Food System Localization Efforts in New York Municipalities: Projects, Practices and Policies**

## **Introduction**

The food system of the United States is broadly characterized as an agro-industrial oligopoly. While the US agricultural system effectively provides massive quantities of food for domestic and export markets, it has also endured waves of small producer bankruptcies and the collapse of rural communities. Federal guidance, primarily through the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), has periodically attempted to revive local markets, based on their ability to provision local communities with fresh, affordable, and culturally appropriate foodstuffs, but their efforts, chiefly focused on producers, have often failed to scale or sustain. In this project, we investigated the degree to which New York State municipalities have addressed local food system challenges, what guidance has been provided to transition communities toward a more localized food systems, and identified potentially impactful and robust policy leverage points.

The overall project goal is to better understand how we design and sustain resilient and vibrant local food systems in New York. We have identified the degree to which towns, cities and counties have begun to address localization of food systems. We were specifically interested in how they define their local food system, what prompted interest in better understanding their own local food system, and the activities and projects they have developed as a result of their interest in local food systems.

The project used three different data collection methods, interviews, a survey and spatial analysis. Each of these methods lead to a separate report that then we utilized to synthesize main recommendations in an Executive Summary of all the project.

This document constitutes the Survey Report and is organized in five more sections after this brief introduction. The next and second section of the document includes a description of the survey respondents and examines their distribution across New York State. The third section of the document includes a descriptive report of the survey main questions regarding the current status of the local food system (distribution and production), challenges that local leaders face as

well as main collaboration practices in which the respondents are involved. The fourth section includes main responses related to government capabilities to support local food systems. Section five includes the exploration of some key correlations between collaboration practices and the status of food systems. We conclude the document with a summary and main conclusions.

### Who are Survey Respondents?

We distributed the survey instrument<sup>1</sup> to 1,297 town supervisors and village mayors in New York State (NYS) using electronic mail and the Qualtrics survey platform during December 2022 and January 2023. We received 253 responses (19%), and, after removing partial responses, 185 of them were compiled for this report (14.2%).<sup>2</sup> Figure 1 includes the percentages of responses from nine economic regions in the State. The only missing region is New York City, which was not included in the original dataset of 1,297 potential respondents. Response rates ranged from 3% from the Long Island REDC and 15% from the Southern Tier.

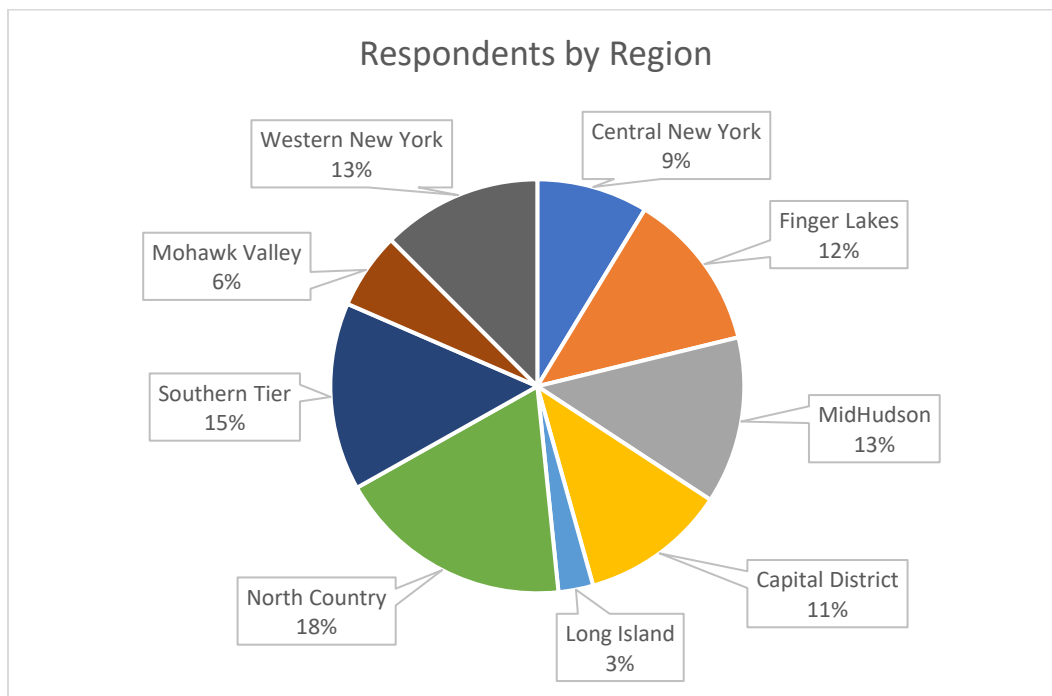


Figure 1. Respondents by Region

<sup>1</sup> The survey instrument with all questions is in Appendix A of this report.

<sup>2</sup> A methodological note describing survey procedures and protocols is included in Appendix B.

As we show in Figure 2, most respondents of the survey were the town supervisor or the village mayor. Other positions occupied by respondents of the survey included the town or village clerk, a council member or other member of the local government.

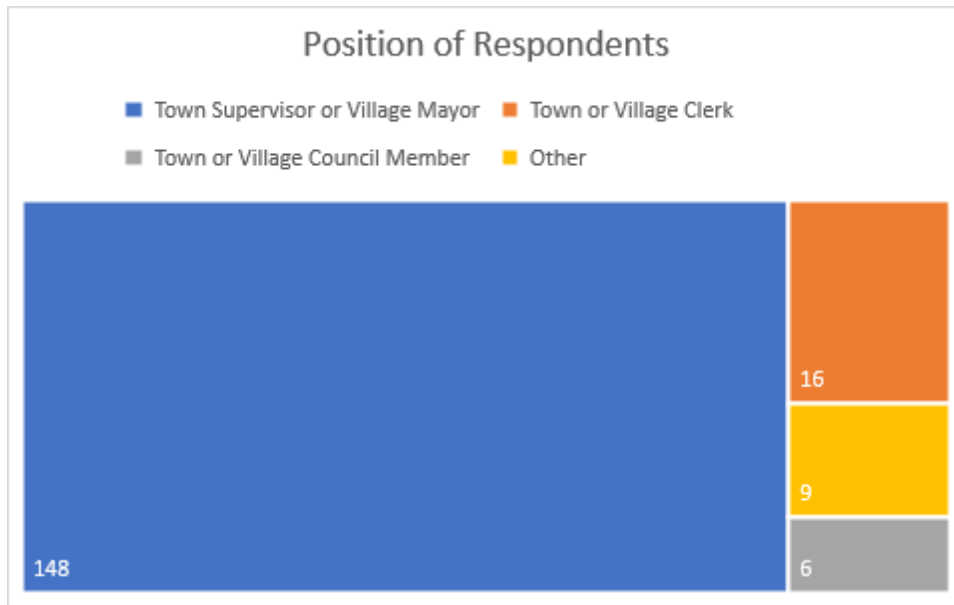


Figure 2. Respondents Positions in their Towns and Villages

The average age of the respondents is 62.9 years. The full distribution of age is included in Table 1. It is important to note that the distribution is skewed towards the older age groups; 65 % of the respondents identified themselves as male, 33% as female and 2 % preferred not to respond.

Table 1. Respondents by age group

Age group	Count	Percent
20-29	0	0%
30-39	5	3%
40-49	13	7%
50-59	44	24%
60-69	66	36%
70-79	46	25%
>80	5	3%
Prefer not to say	2	1%
<b>Total</b>	<b>181</b>	<b>100%</b>



Figure 3 indicates the tenure of survey respondents. About a quarter of survey respondents have more than 10 years in their current position in the town or village, with the largest number of them having between 5 and 10 years in their current position. Eighty four respondents (46%) had less than 5 years of experience in their position.

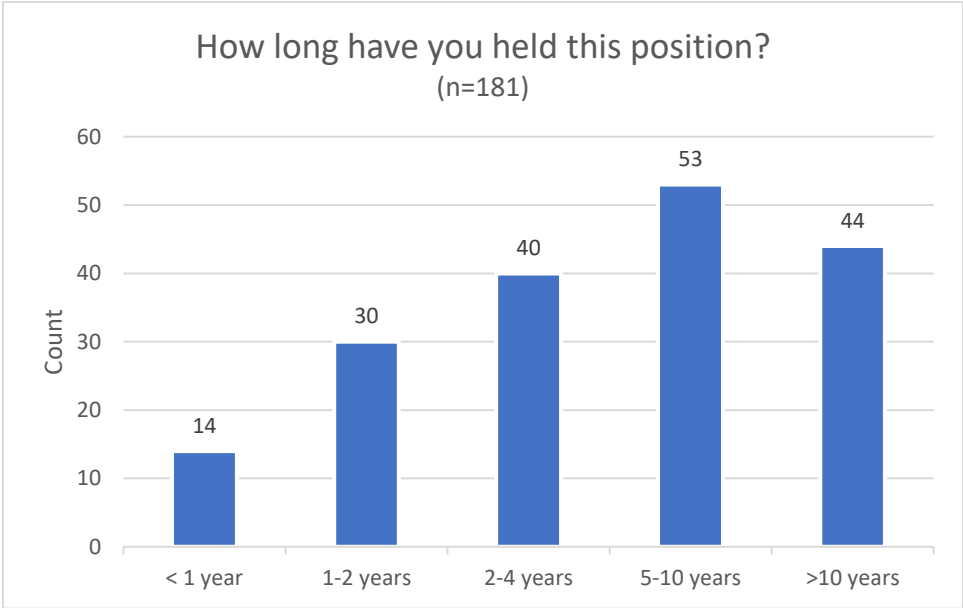


Figure 3. Respondents by tenure

In terms of the time commitment to their current position, not all survey respondents have a full-time position, and almost 40% of them have a position of 20 hours or less (see Figure 4). It is interesting to note that a number of these positions involve voluntary, unpaid work.

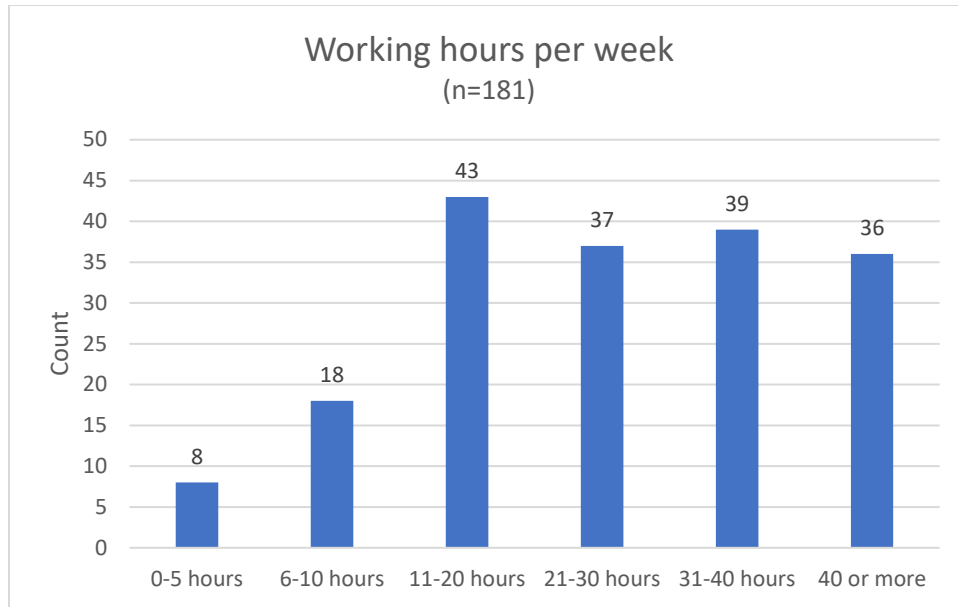


Figure 4. Respondents by time dedication to their position per week

In terms of education, the majority of respondents have a college degree or graduate studies (see Table 2).

Table 2. Respondents by Education level

Highest Degree	Count	Percent
High School	14	8%
Vocational degree	11	6%
Some college	38	21%
College	73	40%
Graduate	43	24%
Prefer not to say	2	1%
Total	181	100%

Finally, survey respondents are mostly moderate in their political views with a tendency to view themselves more conservatively, as it is shown in Figure 5.

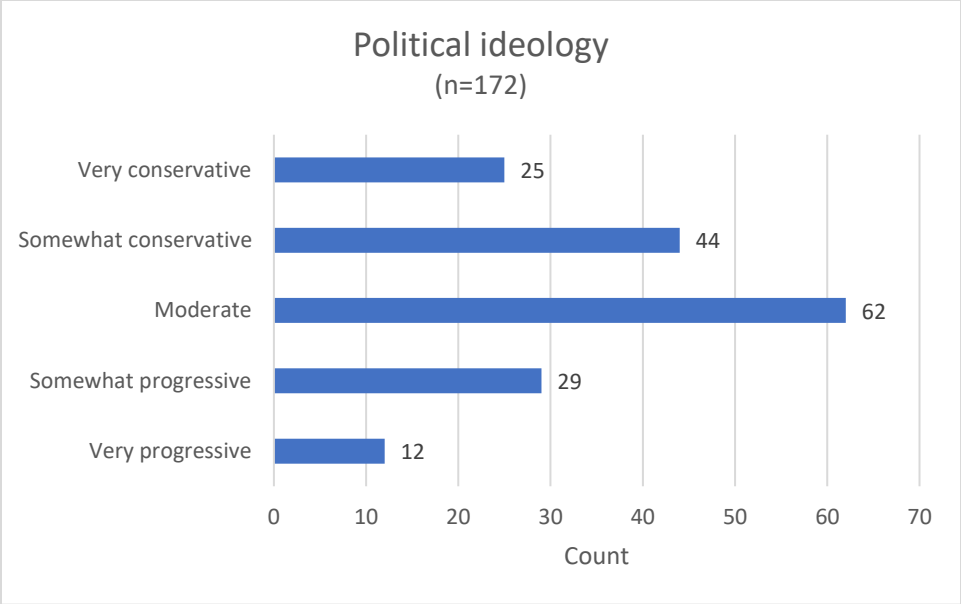


Figure 5. Respondents by political ideology

**Current Projects and Practices**

In this section of the document we present descriptive results of responses to questions related to current local food systems practices, specifically in terms of access to food establishments, food production related businesses. We also examined main challenges and partnerships at the local level. Food security in the communities of the respondents is perceived to be below the national average. According to the US Department of Agriculture, 89.8% of the US population was food secure in 2021,<sup>3</sup> and survey respondents report a median of 80% food security in their communities. Variation in these responses was large: the top 25% of respondents reporting more than 90% of their population should be characterized as food secure, and the middle 50% of respondents reporting values between 61.7% and 90%.

Table 3 and Figure 6 introduce descriptive statistics and the distribution of responses of those questions related to access to food establishments within respondent communities. Although both visuals tell similar stories about the responses, we include both given that different readers may

<sup>3</sup> See <https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/ag-and-food-statistics-charting-the-essentials/food-security-and-nutrition-assistance/#:~:text=The%20prevalence%20of%20food%20insecurity,had%20very%20low%20food%20security>.

prefer one over the other. Both pictures suggest that convenience stores and food pantries are the most accessible food establishments in the communities of survey respondents. On the other hand, community supported agriculture, online deliveries and farmer’s markets are the least accessible food establishments in these communities. Conventional grocery stores are situated at the middle of the distribution with roadside farm stands.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics for responses to access to food establishments

Question	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum	Count
Conventional grocery store	3.43	1.31	1	5	180
Convenience store	4.04	1.06	1	5	180
Farmer's market	3.16	1.22	1	5	178
Community supported agriculture farms	2.67	1.28	1	5	176
Roadside farm stands	3.38	1.24	1	5	178
Online local delivery	3.03	1.39	1	5	178
Food pantries	3.69	1.02	1	5	180

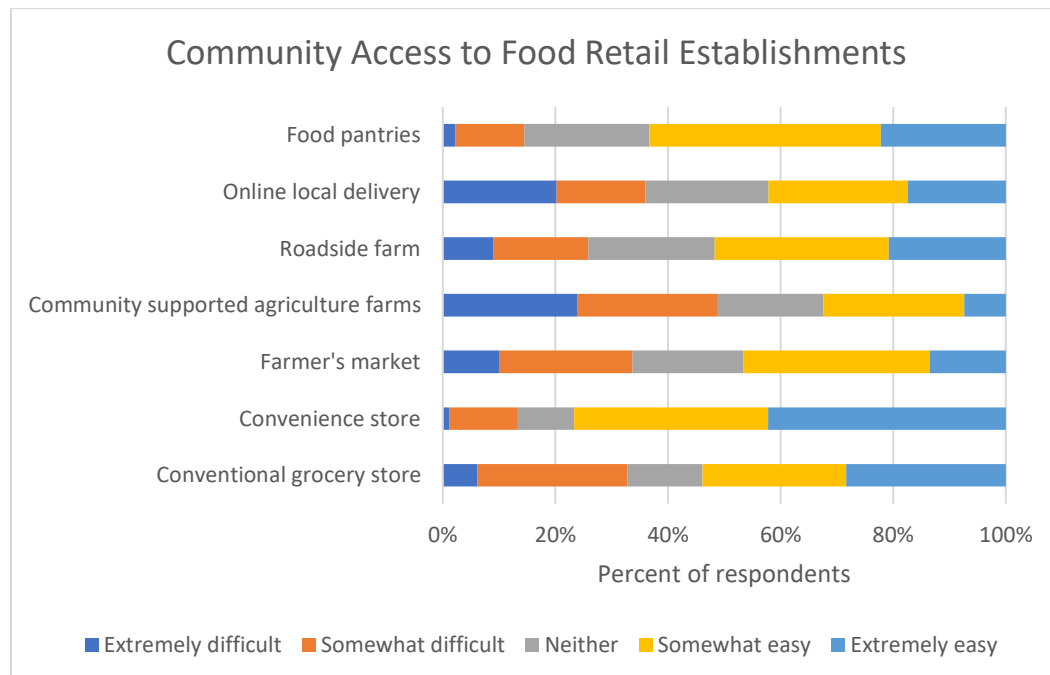


Figure 6. Distribution of responses of access to food establishments

Table 4 and Figure 7 present the perceptions of survey respondents about the access to food for those members of the community that participate in the SNAP program. Respondents report that perceived access to stores that accept this form of payment is limited, particularly when overlaid with access to transportation to get to stores that participate in the program; more than half of the communities report that getting transportation to these establishments is difficult.

Table 4 Descriptive statistics for responses to support for SNAP users

Question	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum	Count
Stores that accept SNAP	3.50	1.22	1	5	177
Transportation to SNAP accepting stores	2.53	1.14	1	5	177
Social service organizations	3.07	1.14	1	5	178

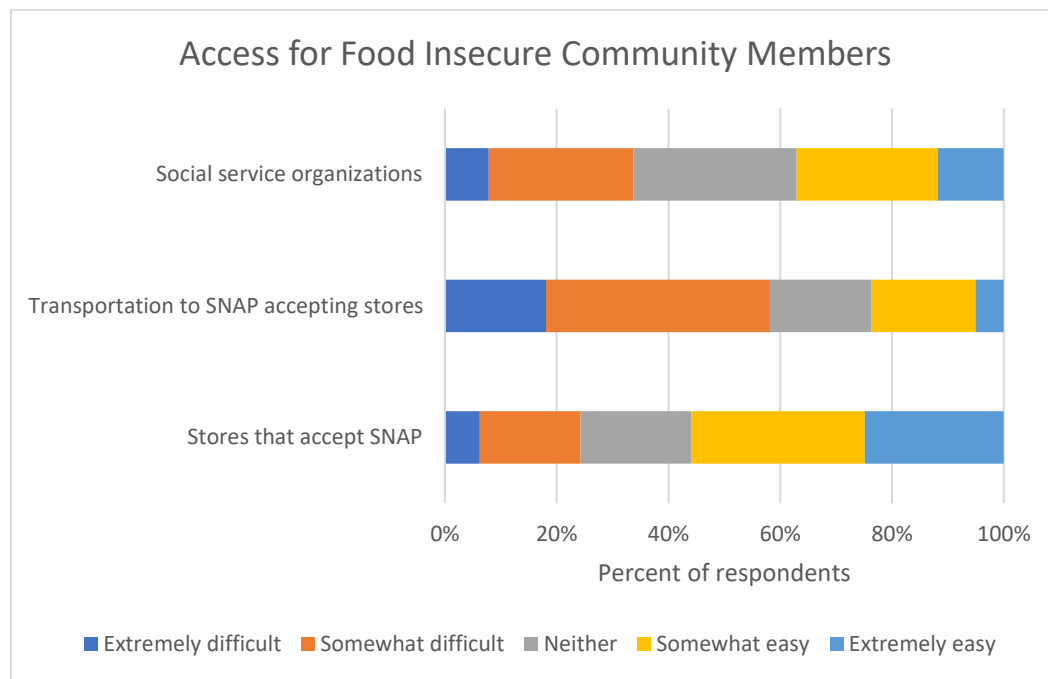


Figure 7 Distribution of responses of access to food for food insecure community members

In terms of food production practices, the survey suggests that backyard gardening is a widely-adopted practice in the communities included in the survey (see Table 5 and Figure 8). Small and medium farms represent the second largest food production business as perceived by survey participants, with about half of the participants reporting them to be somewhat easy or extremely easy to access in their communities. Interestingly, breweries are reported to be the third most

commonly available food production establishment. Community gardens, community supported agriculture and farm-to-table restaurants are the three least available food production establishments in the communities included in the survey.

Table 5 Descriptive statistics for responses to access to food production businesses

Question	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum	Count
Community gardens	2.56	1.35	1	5	176
Community supported agriculture	2.58	1.24	1	5	177
Small and medium farms	3.30	1.23	1	5	181
Large farms	2.72	1.39	1	5	181
Backyard gardening	3.91	0.98	1	5	180
Breweries/vineyards	3.09	1.34	1	5	181
Farm to table restaurants	2.68	1.25	1	5	181
On-farm retail stores	2.71	1.31	1	5	180

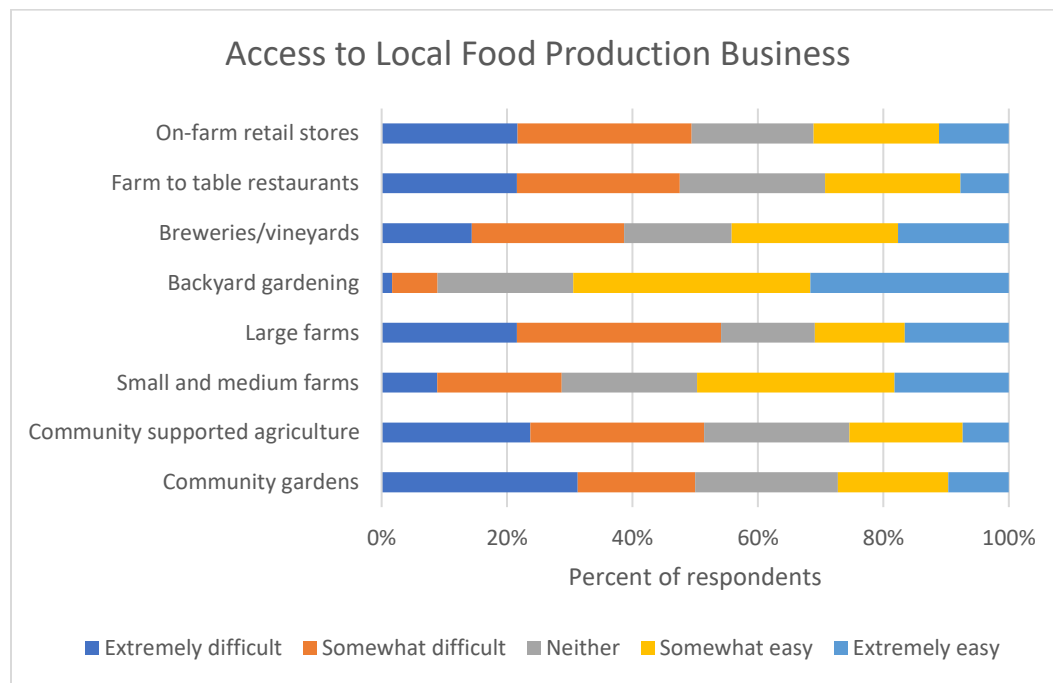


Figure 8 Distribution of responses of access to food production businesses

When asked about the top 3 farm products in their community, vegetables and dairy were the most common mention by survey respondents (see Figure 9). In fact, about three quarters (76%) of the survey respondents choose vegetables as one of the three top products, and about 62%

selected dairy. Meat and fruit were the next two more popular products with 50% and 37% of the respondents choosing them among the top 3 farm products, and grains was the last one.

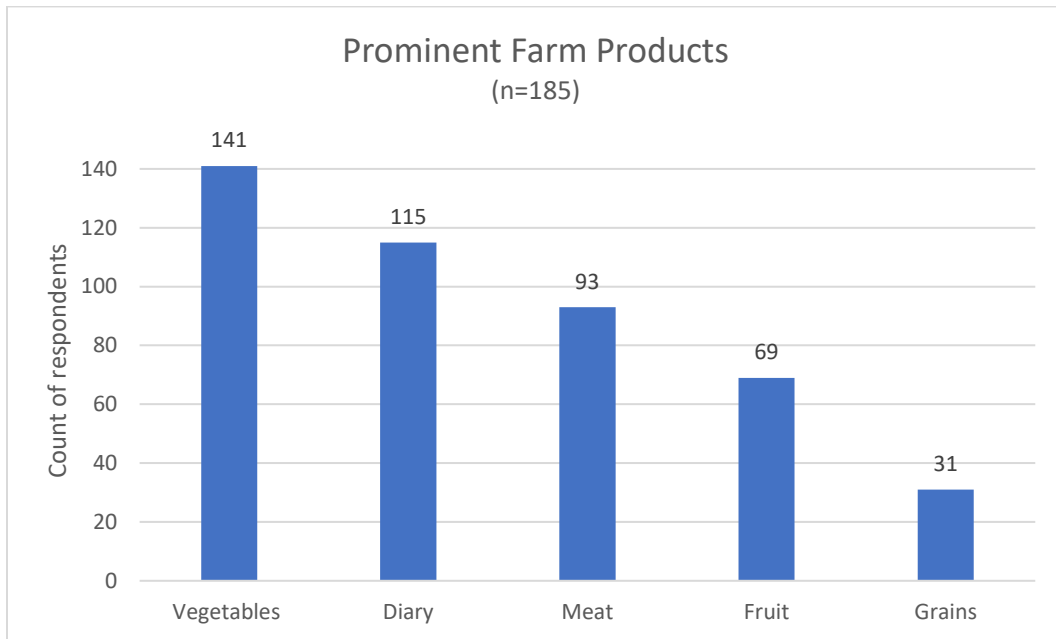


Figure 9 Prominent farm products in local communities of respondents

Table 6 and Figure 10 include once more two alternative descriptive representations of survey responses to the perception of the importance of some challenges to entrepreneurs in the municipalities that participated in the survey. In general, survey respondents identified all these elements as important challenges to entrepreneurs in their communities; more than half of the respondents perceived these challenges to be important in their communities. Among them, access to capital and access to processing facilities were perceived as the most important. Availability of spaces to start a business and access to local food products were identified as the least important in this list.

Table 6. Descriptive statistics for responses to challenges to entrepreneurs in the locality

Question	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum	Count
Access to capital	4.21	0.87	1	5	178
Access to local food	3.85	0.98	1	5	179
Regulatory red tape	3.98	0.99	1	5	179
Space for the business	3.78	1.07	1	5	179

Access to processing facilities

4.09

0.99

1

5

178

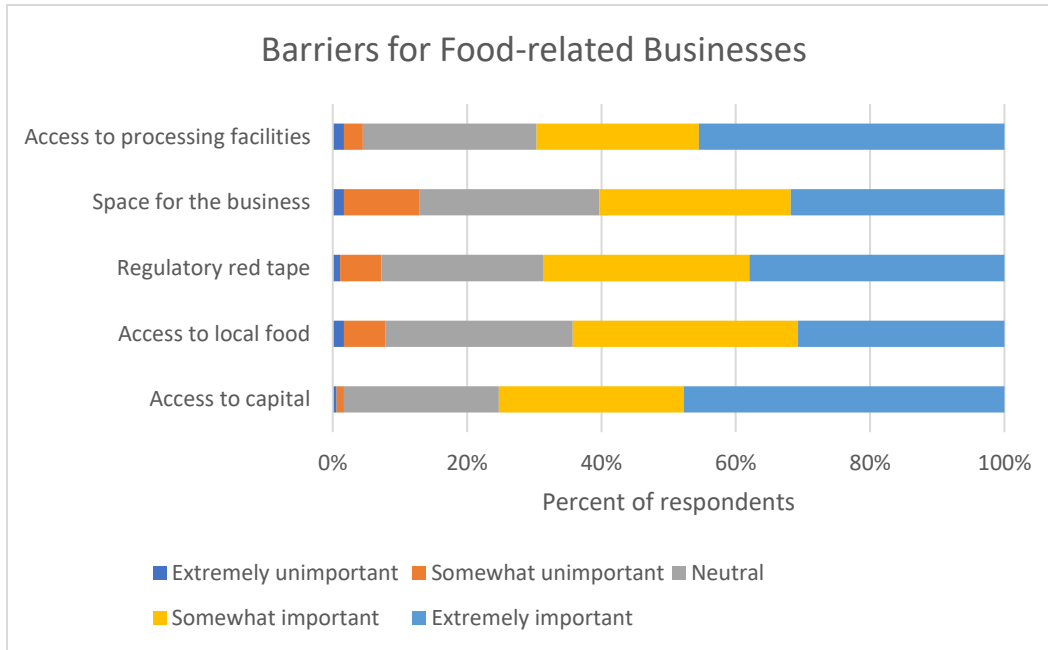


Figure 10 Distribution of responses of the importance of barriers for food-related businesses

Table 7 and Figure 11 introduce survey respondents' perceptions of different levels of land use pressure, particularly as when farming and open space preservation are priorities. As shown below, solar and wind farms and residential development represent the top two land use challenges according to survey respondents. All other land uses exercise far less pressure on land use in most communities.

Table 7. Descriptive statistics for responses to pressures on land use

Question	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum	Count
Solar and wind farms	3.91	1.42	1	6	181
Commercial or industrial development	2.66	1.69	1	6	181
Transportation	2.70	1.52	1	6	179
Residential development	3.29	1.37	1	6	180
Waste management facilities	2.68	1.60	1	6	180
Recreational opportunities	2.84	1.37	1	6	180



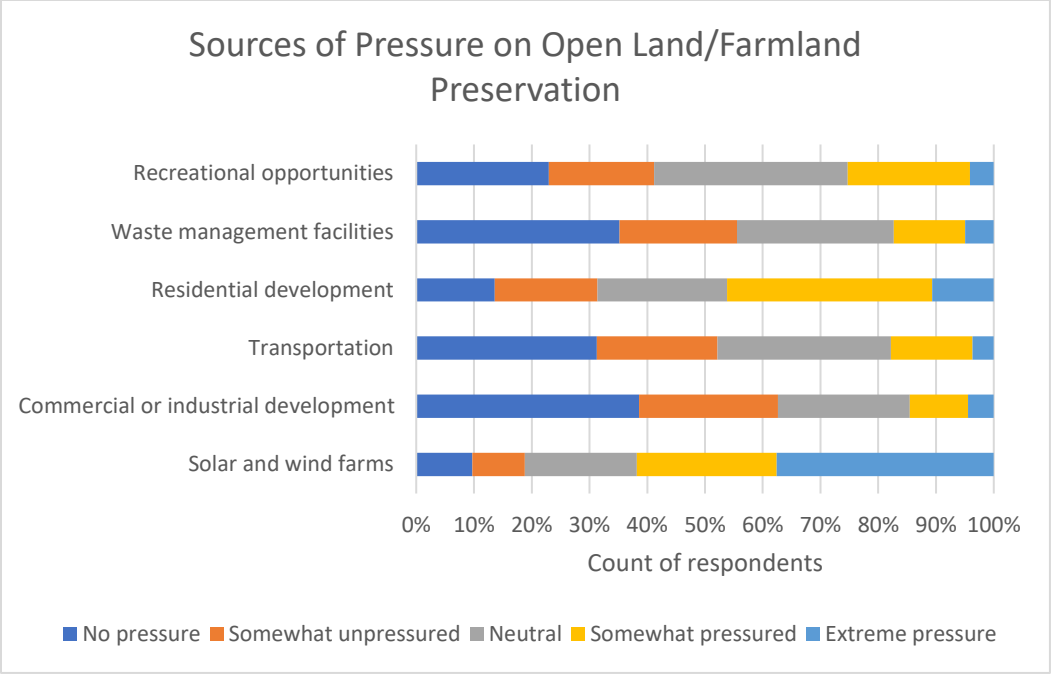


Figure 11 Distribution of responses of pressures on land use

**Government Capabilities**

In this section of the report, we examine responses from survey participants that describe government capacity in terms of funding, collaboration and methods of providing support to entrepreneurs and other local organizations. As it is shown in Table 8, three quarters of survey respondents have no funding to support local food system projects. Only 10 respondents have a budget greater than \$10,000, and 20% of them (36 responses) have a budget between \$1,000 and \$10,000 dollars.

Table 8. Distribution of responses to the availability of funds to support local food projects

Dedicate funding to local food systems	Count	%
No Funding	134	74.4%
\$1,000 or less	17	9.4%
More than \$1,000 but less than \$10,000	19	10.6
More than \$10,000 but less than \$50,000	9	5%
More than \$50,000	1	0.6%

Table 9 and Figure 12 introduce a descriptive summary of some of the capabilities of local governments to provide support to local organizations and entrepreneurs. Supporting the promotion of fairs and local festivals, as well as developing zoning policy are the areas where

survey respondents perceive their local governments to be better prepared. Nonetheless, as it is shown in Figure 12, only a bit more than half of them perceive themselves as somewhat or very prepared. Few respondents consider themselves prepared to negotiate attractive tax policies to attract investors, for example. Additionally, respondents report feeling unprepared to provide grant writing support, to overcome regulation challenges and to manage food related projects. It is important to note that 52 out of 181 respondents have never applied for State or Federal grants, suggesting that they have not had the opportunity to develop this capability.

Table 9. Descriptive statistics for responses to local government capabilities to provide support to entrepreneurs

Question	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum	Count
Overcome regulation challenges	2.61	1.15	1	5	180
Connections to technical assistance	3.04	1.20	1	5	179
Grant writing assistance	2.58	1.23	1	5	179
Managing food related community projects	2.96	1.15	1	5	180
Tax incentives to attract investors	2.34	1.12	1	5	178
Zoning to protect farmland	3.48	1.36	1	5	180
Promote festivals and food fairs	3.45	1.13	1	5	180

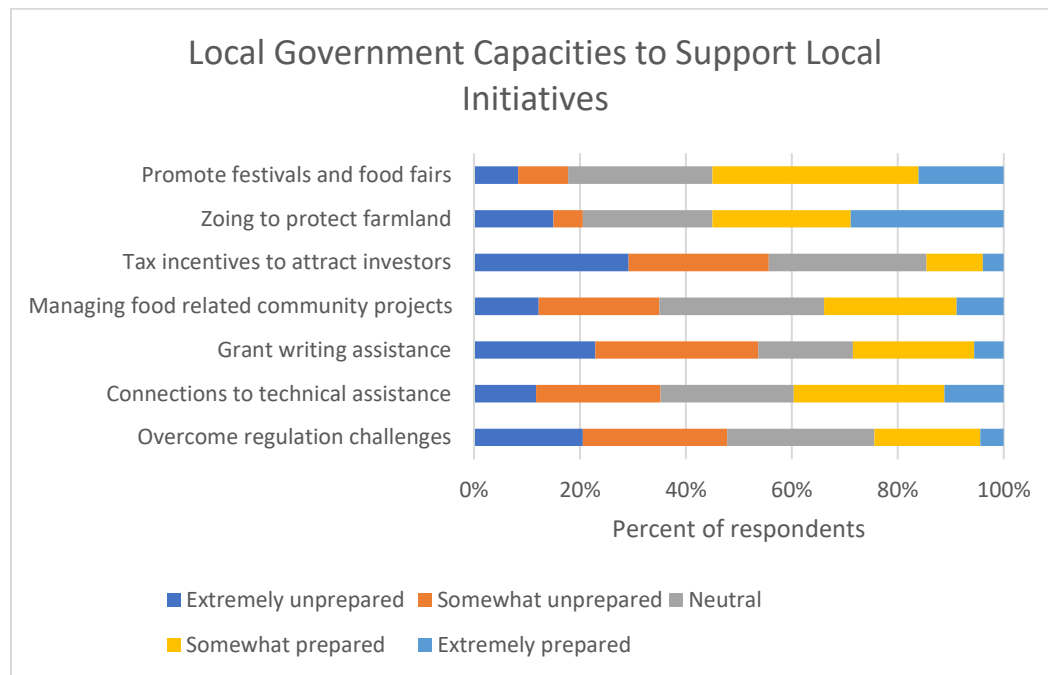


Figure 12 Distribution of responses of local government capabilities to support local initiatives

Table 10 and Figure 13 introduce two alternative views to the different communication channels used by the local communities represented in the survey. Town hall meetings and the local website are the most common communication channels, followed by the use of electronic mail, the phone and social media. Local newspapers and printed newsletters are the least used forms of communication between elected officials and their constituents in the local communities that responded to the survey.

*Table 10. Descriptive statistics for responses to forms of communication with community constituents*

Question	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum	Count
Town hall meetings	4.06	0.98	1	5	181
Local website	4.08	0.93	1	5	180
Social media	3.29	1.34	1	5	181
Phone	3.44	1.02	1	5	177
Email	3.60	0.97	1	5	179
Printed newsletter	2.58	1.36	1	5	178
Local newspaper	3.24	1.03	1	5	181

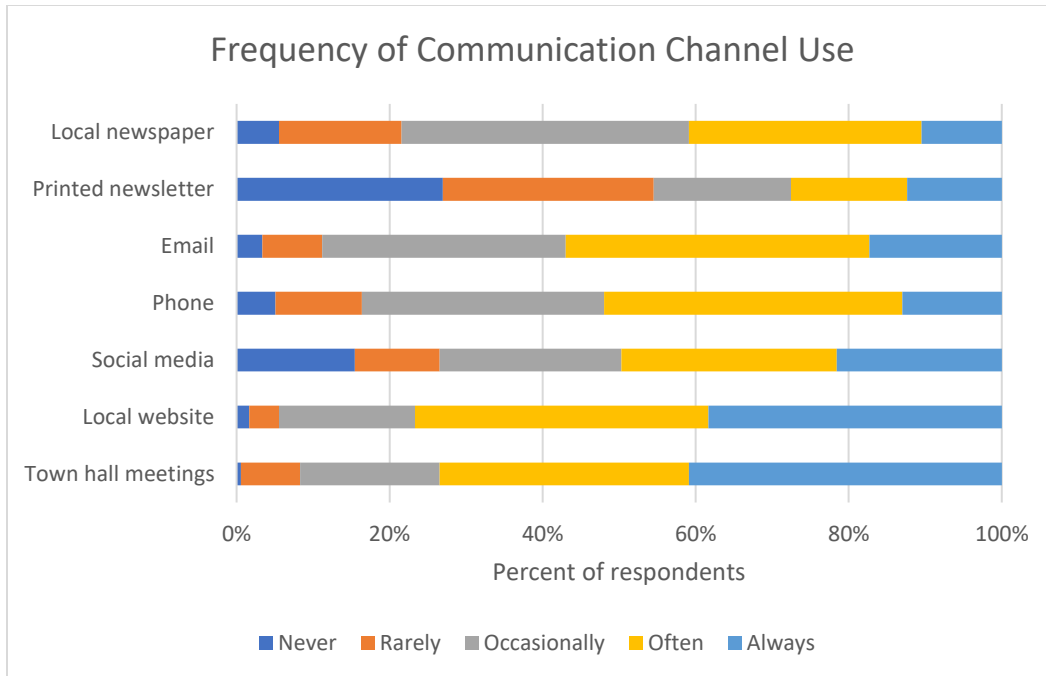


Figure 13 Distribution of responses of frequency of communication channel use

Table 11 and Figure 14 introduce responses that represent how often survey respondents collaborate with other town supervisors, and other levels of government. Although the levels of collaboration are not very high in general, collaboration more commonly takes place among peer town supervisors and county governments. Intensity of collaboration with state government is significantly lower compared to the levels of collaboration among peers and with county government.

Table 11 Descriptive statistics for responses to collaboration within government

Question	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum	Count
Other town supervisors	3.49	0.82	1	5	180
County level elected representatives	3.54	0.88	1	5	179
County level program staff	3.47	0.92	1	5	180
State level agency representatives	2.88	0.85	1	5	179
State level elected officials	2.96	0.84	1	5	179

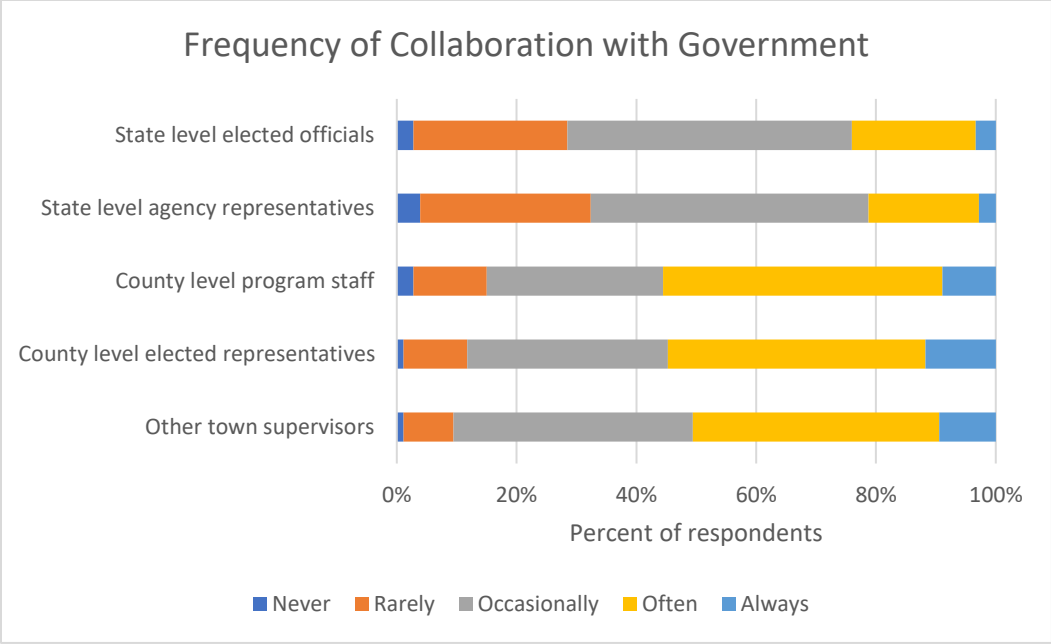


Figure 14 Distribution of responses of frequency of collaboration with Government

We were interested in discerning between collaboration between local government and other formal organizations, and the kind of collaboration and engagement that happens within a community, among constituents, committees and local business people. Survey respondents report that more intense collaboration takes place with local committees and other constituents within the community. Interactions with local entrepreneurs is significantly lower than interaction with other community members (see Table 12 and Figure 15).

Table 12. Descriptive statistics for responses to collaboration with community members

Question	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum	Count
Interested constituents	3.66	0.93	1	5	176
Volunteer committees	3.70	0.91	1	5	176
Local entrepreneurs	3.27	0.97	1	5	176

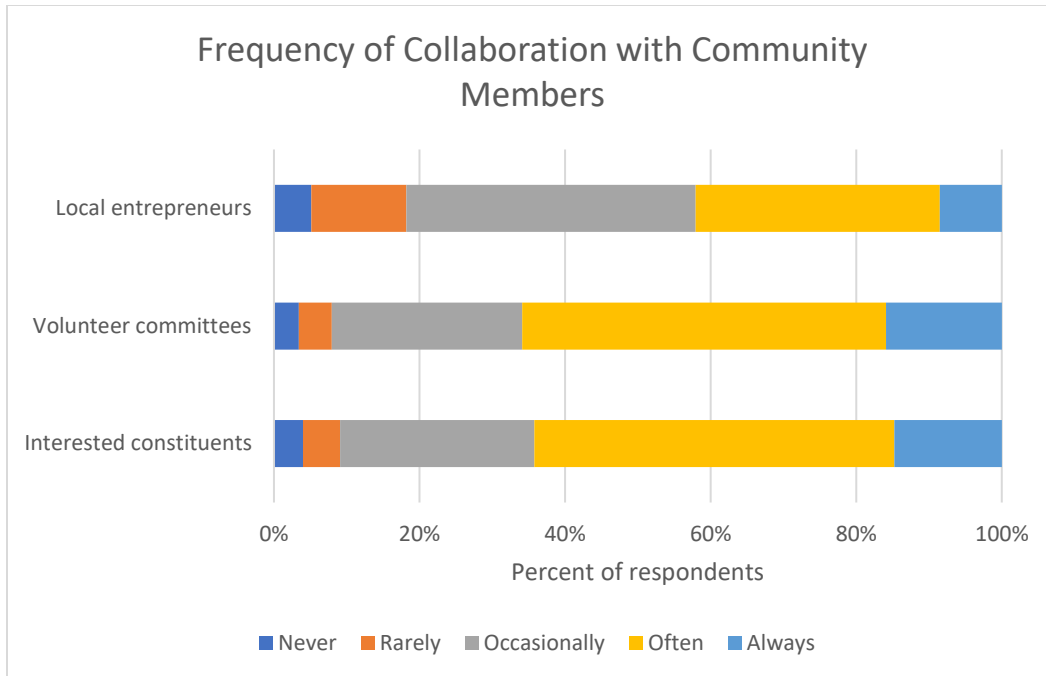


Figure 15 Distribution of responses of frequency of collaboration with Community members

Finally, and as it is shown in Table 13 and Figure 16, the lower levels of collaboration reported by survey respondents involve collaboration between local governments and other organizational entities. We find much lower levels of collaboration with universities and research centers, and with private companies. Engagement with nonprofit organizations appears to be a bit higher, and collaborations with school districts ranks highest in this group. Nonetheless, all of them are low intensity interactions.

Table 13. Descriptive statistics for responses to collaboration with organizational actors

Question	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum	Count
Universities and research centers	2.13	0.94	1	4	180
Supportive nonprofits	2.82	1.02	1	5	179
Private sector companies	2.43	0.90	1	5	178
School districts	3.04	1.03	1	5	176

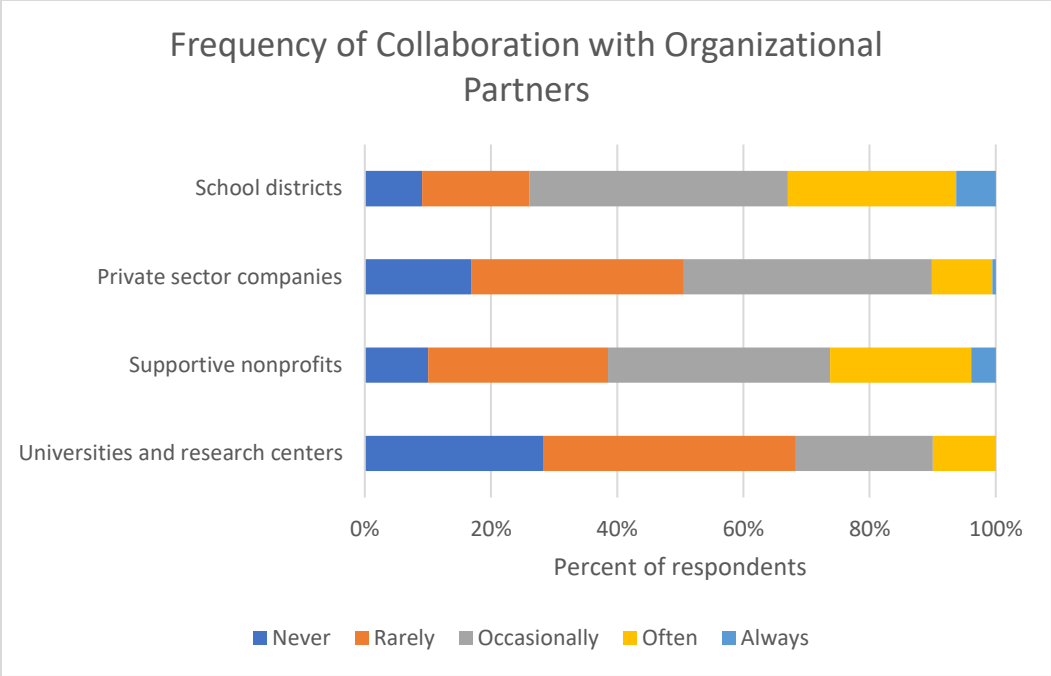


Figure 16. Distribution of responses of frequency of collaboration with organizational partners

**Key Correlations among Variables**

In this last section of the report, we introduce some further explorations to explain how the different variables introduced in the survey relate to each other. To advance this correlational view of the questions in the survey, we consolidated survey questions into scales. Table 14 includes summary statistics of these scales, grouping related variables that were introduced in the previous section of the document. For example, the scale named food access is an average of all questions related to access to food retail establishments introduced in Table 3. SNAP access is the average of all questions introduced in Table 4, and so on. In this way, the descriptive statistics presented in Table 14 constitute a high-level view of main topics included in the survey. Given that all scales were presented to survey participants in 5-degree scales, an average close to 1 relates to a general lower value on those questions for each respondent. The last column in the table –labeled Alpha—introduces a measure of how aligned those responses were for each individual respondent. The maximum value for this column is 1 and it is an indicator of how consistent this scale is. In general, values greater than 0.7 suggest that the aggregated questions are all answered in a consistent way. All scales are above or on that threshold, meaning that

averaging the questions is appropriate to represent a concept like Food Access or Food Production.

*Table 14 Summary statistics of main survey themes*

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	N	Alpha
Food Access	3.36	0.83	181	0.79
SNAP Access	3.01	1.03	177	0.79
Food Production	2.95	0.93	181	0.88
Challenges for Entrepreneurs	3.98	0.73	179	0.80
Capabilities to Support	2.93	0.86	181	0.85
Pressure on land	2.75	0.75	174	0.78
Government Collaboration	3.27	0.68	180	0.84
Organizational Collaboration	2.46	0.76	180	0.70
Community Collaboration	3.42	0.78	176	0.73

Values in Table 14 suggest that communities in this survey are just above the midpoint in the scale in terms of Food Access (access to a variety of food retail establishments), but are below that midpoint for Food Production businesses. SNAP access is expressed in a similar way. The scales also suggest that measurement of government capabilities to support local food systems are below the midpoint. In terms of collaboration, the scales suggest that local governments are better at collaborating with members of the community than they are collaborating with other government entities and that they are a bit less successful when the collaboration is established with other organizations such as universities and private companies. Challenges to entrepreneurs are in the higher end from the perspective of survey respondents.



Table 15. Bi-variate correlations among survey themes

	Food Access	SNAP Access	Food Product	Challenges Entrep	Capability Support	Pressure on Land	Gov Collab	Org Collab	Comm Collab
Food Access	1	0.53*	0.70*	-0.16*	0.34*	0.19*	0.15*	0.31*	0.13
SNAP Access		1	0.44*	-0.10	0.10	-0.01	0.02	0.21*	0.07
Food Production			1	-0.22*	0.30*	0.14	0.21*	0.31*	0.21*
Challenges Entrep				1	-0.10	-0.01	0.10	0.01	-0.02
Capability Support					1	0.15*	0.26*	0.27*	0.24*
Pressure on Land						1	0.09	0.10	0.06
Gov Collab							1	0.47*	0.51*
Org Collab								1	0.43*
Comm Collab									1

\* The correlation is statistically significant at a level of 0.05

Table 15 introduces correlations among all the scales presented in Table 14. Correlations are a measure of how different numbers vary together (or not) and vary in the same or an opposite direction. Correlation values are always in the range of -1 and 1. Positive correlations suggest that 2 variables vary together and in the same direction; both go up or down together. Negative correlations suggest that concepts vary in the opposite direction. A value of 1 would mean that the two variables change together in a perfect way such as sale taxes and the amount on the sale, you pay more taxes as you buy more using a precise formula. A correlation of zero represents that there is no relationship between the 2 variables, and a correlation of -1 would mean that variables relate perfectly in an opposite direction. In this way, values in the table suggest that respondents that perceive larger values on the perception of business challenges also perceive less access to food retailers and food production.

Values in the table suggest that respondents that collaborate with other governments are also more likely to collaborate with members of their community and other organizational actors. Moreover, local communities that are strong collaborators also are better at providing access to food and facilitating the development of a healthier local food system with increased access to food establishments and food production, better support to SNAP users and better capability development more in general.

### **Summary and Conclusions**

This document is a descriptive report of a survey responded by 185 town supervisors and city mayors in New York State. Survey respondents were distributed across all regions in the state, and have significant experience with government at a local level with 54% of them having an experience of more than 5 years.

Community elected leaders perceive their communities to be below national average in terms of percentage of the community experiencing food insecurity, reporting a median of 80% of community members being food secure. Access to food retail establishments varies across localities, with convenience stores representing the most widespread retail facility. Food production businesses are less common across localities, but backyard farming appears to be a widely adopted practice in the state. Challenges for entrepreneurs are important at the local level, and local governments have limited capacity to support them in overcoming these challenges.

Finally, towns that have better capabilities to collaborate with other governments, and community and organizational actors seem to perform better in terms of food access when compared to towns and villages that have less capacity to collaborate.

## Appendix A. Local Food Systems Survey

Welcome!

As part of an ongoing effort to better understand local food systems projects, policies and practices in New York State, I would like to invite you to take part in a survey about local food system policies and projects in your community. This survey is part of an assessment to investigate the state of local food systems in New York State. The findings will provide guidance to municipal leaders interested in further developing their local food systems. This project is being conducted by researchers from the University at Albany's Center for Policy Research, and funded by the New York Health Foundation.

Answering this online survey will take approximately 15 minutes and your answers will be confidential. Your participation is voluntary. However, we are convinced that your participation is very important to achieve the objectives of this work. Thank you very much in advance for your time and cooperation.

### **Q1. Please assess how easy it is for your community to access all these types of food retailers.**

	Extremely difficult (1)	Somewhat difficult (2)	Neither easy nor difficult (3)	Somewhat easy (4)	Extremely easy (5)
1. Conventional grocery store (i.e. Price Chopper or Hannaford)					
2. Convenience store (i.e. Stewart's or other local stores)					
3. Farmer's market					
4. Community supported agriculture farms (CSAs)					
5. Roadside farm stands					
6. Online local delivery services					
7. Food pantries					

**Q2. How easy is it for food insecure members of your community to access additional support?**

	Extremely difficult (1)	Somewhat difficult (2)	Neither easy nor difficult (3)	Somewhat easy (4)	Extremely easy (5)
1. Grocery stores that accept SNAP (Supplemental Assistance Nutrition Program)					
2. Transportation to SNAP-accepting grocery stores					
3. Access to social service organizations that provide assistance with food insecurity matters (such as through your county or through state agencies)					

**Q3 Food security is defined as having access to sufficient food, or food of an adequate quality, to meet one's basic needs. What fraction of your community is food secure? (For example, 80% of my community food secure.)**

**Q4. How hard is it to access the following food production or food related businesses in your community (or within a 15-minute drive from your community)?**

	Extremely difficult (1)	Somewhat difficult (2)	Neither easy nor difficult (3)	Somewhat easy (4)	Extremely easy (5)
1. Community gardens					
2. Community supported agriculture (CSAs)					
3. Small and Medium Farms					
4. Large Farms (including dairies or commodity production farms)					
5. Backyard gardening					
6. Breweries/vineyards					
7. Farm to table restaurants or cafes					
8. On-farm retail stores					

**Q5. Please choose the three most prominent primary farm products produced in your community:**

Vegetables ( )      Fruit ( )      Meat ( )      Dairy ( )      Grains and oilseeds ( )

**Q6. How important are the following challenges or barriers for food-related entrepreneurs/businesses in your community?**

	Extremely important (1)	Somewhat important (2)	Neutral (3)	Somewhat unimportant (4)	Extremely unimportant (5)
Access to capital (1)					
Access to local food products (2)					
Regulatory “red tape” to open a business, such as licensing (3)					
Space to locate the business (4)					
Access to processing facilities (5)					

**Q 7. How prepared are you/your community to offer the following potential solutions to local farm and food entrepreneurs?**

	Extremely prepared (1)	Somewhat prepared (2)	Neutral (3)	Somewhat unprepared (4)	Extremely unprepared (5)
1. Facilitate technical assistance to overcome regulation challenges					
2. Facilitate connections to those who can provide technical assistance					
3. Grant writing assistance					
4. Managing food related community projects (i.e. farmer’s markets or community gardens)					
5. Tax incentives to attract investors					
6. Zoning to protect farmland					
7. Promote festivals and food fairs					

**Q8. How prepared are you/your community to offer the following potential solutions to local farm and food entrepreneurs?**

	Extremely prepared (1)	Somewhat prepared (2)	Neutral (3)	Somewhat unprepared (4)	Extremely unprepared (5)
1. Facilitate technical assistance to overcome regulation challenges					
2. Facilitate connections to those who can provide technical assistance					
3. Grant writing assistance					
4. Managing food related community projects (i.e. farmer's markets or community gardens)					
5. Tax incentives to attract investors					
6. Zoning to protect farmland					
7. Promote festivals and food fairs					

**Q9. How much pressure on farmland/open space will your community face in the future from the following economic development activities?**

	No pressure (1)	Somewhat unpressured (2)	Neutral (3)	Somewhat pressured (4)	Extreme pressure (5)
1. Solar and wind farms					
2. Commercial or industrial development (i.e. Amazon distribution or Walmart warehouses)					
3. Transportation infrastructure					
4. Residential development on farmland					
5. Waste management facilities (i.e. landfills)					
6. Recreational opportunities (i.e. outdoor recreation such hiking or kayaking)					

**Q10. How often do you collaborate with the following stakeholders in the implementation of local projects/policies?**

	Never (1)	Rarely (2)	Occasionally (3)	Often (4)	Always (5)
1. Other nearby town supervisors					
2. County level elected representatives					
3. County level program staff					
4. State level agency representatives					
5. State level elected officials					
6. Universities and research centers					
7. Supportive nonprofits					
8. Private sector companies					

**Q11. How often do you collaborate with the following stakeholders within your community?**

	Never (1)	Rarely (2)	Occasionally (3)	Often (4)	Always (5)
1. Interested constituents					
2. Volunteer committees					
3. Local entrepreneurs					
4. School districts					

**Q12. How often do you communicate with your constituents using the following strategies?**

	Never (1)	Rarely (2)	Occasionally (3)	Often (4)	Always (5)
1. Town Hall meetings					
2. Local website					
3. Social media					
4. Phone					
5. Email					
6. Printed newsletter					
7. Local newspaper					

**Q13. Does your town dedicate funding to local food systems projects or planning?**

No, ( )      Yes; \$1000 or less ( )      Yes; >\$1000 ( )  
 Yes; >\$10,000 ( )      Yes; >\$50,000 ( )

**Q14. On a scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”, please evaluate the following statements.**

	Strongly agree (1)	Somewhat Agree (2)	Neither agree or disagree (3)	Somewhat disagree (4)	Strongly disagree (5)
1. Meaningful public service is very important to me					
2. I am often reminded by daily events of how dependent we are on one another					
3. Making a difference in society means more to me than personal achievements					
4. I am prepared to make sacrifices for the good of society					
5. I feel sympathetic to the plight of the underprivileged.					



**Q15. Have you applied for any state or federal grant programs over the last year?**

Yes ( )      No ( )

**Q16. Do you represent a town or village in New York State?**

Town ( )      Village ( )      Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Q17. Position that you hold with your town:**

Town Supervisor or Village Mayor ( )

Town or Village Clerk ( )

Town or Village Council Member ( )

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Q18. How long have you held this position?**

< 1 year ( )    1-2 years ( )    2-4 years ( )    5-10 years ( )    10 or more years ( )

**Q19. How many hours per week do you devote to your position within your town?**

0-5 hours per week ( )      6-10 hours per week ( )      11-20 hours per week ( )

21-30 hours per week ( )    31-40 hours per week ( )    41 or more hours per week ( )

**Q20. How old are you?**

20-29 years ( )      30-39 years ( )      40-49 years ( )      50-59 years ( )

60-69 years ( )      70-79 years ( )      80 + years ( )      Prefer not to say ( )

**Q21. What is your gender?**

Male ( ) Female ( ) Non-binary ( ) Transgender ( ) Prefer not to say ( )

**Q22. What is the highest degree or level of school you have completed?**

Not a high school graduate ( ) High school graduate or GED ( )

Completed vocational, technical, or trade school ( ) Some college ( )

College graduate ( ) Master's degree, MD, PhD. or post-doctoral degree ( )

Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**Q23. Today, there is an active discourse between the conservatives and the progressives.**

**Please rate your political inclination on a scale ranging from very progressive to very conservative.**

	Very progressive (1)	Somewhat progressive (2)	Moderate (3)	Somewhat conservative (4)	Very conservative (5)
Political ideology (1)					

## **Appendix B. Research Methods and Protocols**

In this section, we introduce a brief description for our data sample and survey procedures. Our data was collected from an online survey distributed among town supervisors and village mayors in the State of New York. To collect the data, we followed the following two steps.

First, we created a contact information database for town supervisors and village mayors in nine Regional Economic Development Councils (REDCs) in New York State. These REDCs include Capital Region, North County, Central New York, Western New York, Mid-Hudson, Finger Lake, Southern Tier, Long Island, and Mohawk Valley RECDs. We confirmed their names, office phone numbers, and email addresses by examining each local government's website. When we were not able to find contact information of local leaders, we used the representative email and phone number of town and village governments instead.

Second, we distributed our survey to the entire list of local leaders via email. We sent out three rounds of email invitations with a survey link to 1297 town supervisors and village mayors between December 2022 and January 2023. As a result, we received 185 usable survey response, which represents 14.26% of the total population.