

Community Food Systems Tactic Checklist

Food systems are complex, dynamic and involve numerous interactive sectors across the food supply as well as interactions across and within community assets. In 2023, we revised this framework based on literature review from indigenous food systems, partner communities and Universities, Local Food Leader and Community Food System certified partners, and the *2023 Resilient Community Food Systems: Intersectional analysis across impacts, values, and organizational capacity* dissertation from Dr. Long. This led to the newly adopted framework of five food system sectors (interior ring in Figure 1) ranging from cultivation and harvesting to conservation and stewardship. Because of the nested aspect of our food systems, despite what scale we may be working in, we recognize that food systems work within larger complex community systems.

Table 1: Food System Sector Definitions






				
Cultivation and Harvesting:	Processing and Transformation:	Aggregation and Distribution:	Purchasing and Nourishment:	Conservation and Stewardship:
Practice of science, art, or occupation that involves cultivating land, raising livestock, hunting, foraging, fishing, and other maritime practices.	Change of raw ingredients through physical alteration or marketing practices into a new product.	Movement of products, including the gathering and delivery, to markets and buyers.	Use of foods including individual purchase, culinary activities, and programming for personal and community sustenance.	Care of natural resources to ensure continuation of energy, food, and water.



Figure 1: Food Systems Framework (Iowa State University Extension, 2023)

To identify these and have conversations around intersectionality, the outer ring in Figure 1 represents community asset areas. Community assets touch each of our individual lives as well as communities. Overall, these complex systems influence the potential benefits and challenges for food access, sovereignty, business viability and general food supply and consumption.

Table 2: Community Asset Definitions

						
Built Infrastructure:	Culture and Wellness:	Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion:	Economy and Finance:	Governance and Policy:	Knowledge and Wisdom:	Natural Environment:
Developed buildings, roadways, and systems.	Individual and population health through traditional and western practices.	Same status and equal access to goods, services, and power,	Community and individual wealth, finances, and resources.	Democratic practices and principles or actions adopted by groups, communities, and government.	Experiences, formal education, and historical knowledge.	Interactions of climate, living species, weather, and our natural resources.

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While this tool does not evaluate the impact of each tactic, we have created a partner document, [data resources for food system assessment tool](#), that offers information on quantitative and qualitative analysis. The data resources tool also incorporates options of evaluating both food system sectors and community assets. Additionally, the goal of this resource is to continue to highlight the breadth and diversity between the strategies and tactics of food systems. As research and community engagement continues, the list of tactics grows and depicts the numerous possibilities for food systems development that responds to place-based community values and needs. As this resource is used in community, if there are tactics that appear to be missing, reach out to our food systems team. We respect your suggestions and additions and are interested in working with you to create new tactic descriptions. Additionally, this tactic list is published into a community food systems booklet every two years to show the growth of work across local and regional food systems. This work grows through collaboration, and we are looking forward to partnership.

Within each food system sector, we recognize “tactics” or individual businesses, projects, and programs. This resource is meant to offer both a common language dictionary of tactics across the food system, as well as a simplified tool for assessment for individuals and communities to identify existing tactics across the community. It is laid out by sectors and then individual tactics that are within that sector are indicated. For example, community gardens are noted within the Cultivation and Harvesting sector with a primary “X” and additional sectors community gardens may include are marked with a “X”. This resource is also developed to be a tool for identifying which tactics exist within your community food system. There are checkboxes within the left-hand column for tracking the tactics and a notes section that can be used to describe aspects such as the number of tactic in your community; perhaps the challenges or opportunities that exist; and a general space for brainstorming ideas. This tool is meant to be a starting point to consider tactics or strategies that can be implemented to reach place-based goals of community food systems development. Please note that this tool does not incorporate the various asset areas into the matrix. Based on the food systems team’s research, there is agreement that all community assets are involved in each sector and tactic. Therefore, this tool is not used to describe the different asset area influences and impact. However, the Community Food Systems Booklet, which will be republished in 2024 and can be found as individual tactic publication, does identify and research community assets implications on food systems tactics. This resource can be found at www.agmrc.org.

There are four specific tactics that work across the food system. These are the individuals and groups dedicated to the comprehensive and intersectional work necessary to foster a community food system. These are highlighted below, prior to getting into the tactic spread sheet.

	Tactic	Description	Notes:
<input type="checkbox"/>	Local Food Coordinators / Value Chain Coordinators	Individuals who support and connect food systems stakeholders and develop leadership within the community to orchestrate food system evolution.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Food System Coalitions	Collective group of individuals and organizations seeking a common goal. Typically, with reoccurring meetings, common agenda (vision, mission, and values), and shared measurement for what success looks like for the future.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Food Policy Councils	Dedicated group brought together for policy change. Many times, developed through legislative policy for a municipality, county or borough, state, or federal region.	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Wellness Policies	Organization or schools with policy related to student and staff wellness, prevention and combatting childhood obesity, and encouraging school nutrition guidelines are meeting minimum federal school meal standards	

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 Primary Sector Cultivation and Harvesting								
Tactic	Description	Cultivation and Harvesting	Transformation and Processing	Aggregation and Distribution	Purchasing and Nourishment	Conservation and Stewardship	Notes:	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Residential Gardens	Private residence integrating food plants and potentially animals along with landscape. Typically, on a smaller site that allows for property to have both productive and aesthetic elements leading to increased health benefits, stress reduction, and personal financial stability.	X			X	X	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Homesteading	Typically, a larger scale than a residential garden, homesteading involves land that is used for various practices that encourage self-sufficiency, such as raising livestock, growing fruits and vegetables, collecting rainwater, composting, and crafting	X	X		X	X	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Seed Saving	Practice of storing seed from crops used to further invest in production for the future and keep specific breeds of plants for future planting. It is time intensive and requires specific knowledge in plant breeding and seed storage to be conducted well.	X	X			X	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Wild Foraging	Practice of self-sufficiency and gathering from natural environments that may include both personal or group activities that involve gathering of plants, herbs, nuts, fishing and hunting.	X			X	X	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Faith Gardens	Faith-based organizations offering land for gardening to connect with the broader community or congregation. Many offer produce to their volunteers or congregation members in need, and several also donate produce to food pantries in the community.	X			X	X	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Corporate Gardens	Business or corporation-based gardens used to promote and establish healthy habits for employees and administration within a company and promote sustainable wellness for the community.	X			X	X	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Community Gardens	City or community-based land used for gardens. Many include engagement across both public and private entities and can range in management style from rentable plots to free access. These spaces offer opportunities for families to grow their own food leading to financial stability and healthy, fresh food options.	X			X	X	

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	Tactic	Description	Cultivation and Harvesting	Transformation and Processing	Aggregation and Distribution	Purchasing and Nourishment	Conservation and Stewardship	Notes:
<input type="checkbox"/>	Farm to School and Early Care: School Gardens	Public or private schools providing garden space for unique learning opportunities for both students and teachers. Gardening can connect multiple disciplines: Math, Science, English, and Nutrition and may be used to teach individual skills on sustenance and sustainability, as well as care and respect the earth.	X			X	X	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public Edible Landscapes	Community based landscaping that offers gleaned opportunities of the produced product. Typically designed with various forms of food (fruit trees, berries, herbs, and vegetables) with ornamentals to build up the environment, increase diversity, and improve food security through a connection to nature.	X			X	X	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Food Forests and Community Orchards	Similar to public edible landscapes, this is a practice for public use of land to incorporate various forms of fruit trees and shrubs. Due to the larger nature of the products grown, many times food forests can be found in a specific park or dedicated location, rather than permeated throughout a municipality.	X			X	X	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Incubator and Beginning Farm Programs	Community organization or private business that assists beginning farmer entrepreneurs in efforts to establish their own successful businesses. The farms typically train on successful business tactics and provide resources and services that are expensive or difficult for start-up entrepreneurs to access.	X				X	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Controlled Environment Agriculture	Indoor growing practices that allow for producers to control all aspects of production from watering, temperature, and air movement. Each business may also have different scales ranging from private residence hydroponic systems to large multi-acre sites.	X				X	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Commodity or Commercial Agriculture	Large scale agriculture operations using modern technology for inputs and maximizing cultivation of crops and livestock. The model seeks to reduce production costs and maximize profit within the marketplace, with a focus on efficiency, market-driven decision-making, and productivity.	X				X	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Diversified Agriculture	Diversified agriculture focuses on incorporating numerous aspects into the farm from crops, livestock, and regenerative practices. Due to the complexity of the products grown and raised, this type of production practice is typically at a smaller scale and focuses on direct to consumer or intermediate market sales.	X				X	

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	Tactic	Description	Cultivation and Harvesting	Transformation and Processing	Aggregation and Distribution	Purchasing and Nourishment	Conservation and Stewardship	Notes:
<input type="checkbox"/>	Niche Agriculture	This production practice can occur in many scales and products. The goal is to produce or raise specialty products with unique characteristics for specialization in a market. The niche practices offer a great importance because they promote diversity and encourage unique business models.	X				X	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Fisheries	Personal, corporate, or industrial business that includes harvesting of fish and other aquatic species for human consumption or for fish products. These can include both indoor through aquaculture systems and natural maritime fishery practices	X				X	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Agrihoods	Neighborhood development centered on agriculture which provides direct connections between community members and food production. Many agrihoods also take into consideration conservation programs, gardens, business and retail and social spaces.	X			X	X	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Agritourism	Tourism that is centered on engagement experiences around agricultural amenities within communities and regions. Typically includes events, tours, meals or shopping and offers additional revenue streams to farmers and food businesses as well as ways to educate public on local and regional foods.	X			X	X	



Primary Sector Transformation and Processing

<input type="checkbox"/>	Processing Facilities	Food business that processes raw food products (such as produce, dairy, or meat) through physically or chemically altering products into value-added products.	X	X				
	Slaughter Facilities	Also known as an abattoir, is a specific business for slaughtering livestock to then turn into meat for feeding people.	X	X				
<input type="checkbox"/>	Mobile Processing Units	A mobile unit that is equipped with various slaughtering or processing equipment depending on need. Many include animal or specialty crop processing equipment to allow for smaller scale farms to process directly.		X	X			
<input type="checkbox"/>	Shared-Use and Teaching Kitchens	A shared or rented certified kitchen that offers entrepreneurs a food-safe location for creating, processing, and developing products or meals. Many times, they are accompanied by educational activities and teaching kitchen activities.		X	X	X		

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	Tactic	Description	Cultivation and Harvesting	Transformation and Processing	Aggregation and Distribution	Purchasing and Nourishment	Conservation and Stewardship	Notes:
<input type="checkbox"/>	Food Enterprise Centers	Non-profit or privately managed organization that supports businesses through entrepreneurial investments in food processing, to develop a self-financed, sustainable, and profitable business model. May involve mixed-use space for multiple entrepreneurs to co-locate and have retail space.		X	X	X		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Food Innovation Center	Similar to an Enterprise Center but focused on additional research and product development for larger scale production and processing. Often intertwined with a university and research facility to support in product creation, packaging expertise, and food safety.		X	X	X		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Breweries, Wineries, and Distilleries	Licensed business where raw products are used to create beer, wine, or spirits, for consumption. Business styles may vary depending on goals for large scale growth or local development		X	X			



Primary Sector Aggregation and Distribution

<input type="checkbox"/>	Community Supported Agriculture	Diversified agriculture businesses that have primary sales through membership and direct distribution of products. This allows the business to have shared risk with consumers.	X		X	X		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Food Boxes	Aggregated products from multiple farmers (meat, vegetables, fruit, etc.) which are distributed to individual residences or community locations. This allows customers to have access to multiple types of products rather than sourced from one type of farm.			X	X		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Food Hubs	Food business or organization that aggregates, distributes, and markets local and regional products to consumers. Typically, food hubs offer the next scale of distribution when compared to CSA and Food Box programs and sell to restaurants, grocers, and other wholesale retail locations.		X	X	X		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Farmers Markets	Innovative community spaces operating as a market for farm and food vendors, where individuals socialize and purchase products. Markets range in management styles and many also offer various food assistance programs to support food access for customers.	X	X	X	X		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Auctions	Organization that allows consumers and businesses to purchase from local or regional producers. Typically purchases are at a larger quantity of products and sold at a wholesale price.	X		X			

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	Tactic	Description	Cultivation and Harvesting	Transformation and Processing	Aggregation and Distribution	Purchasing and Nourishment	Conservation and Stewardship	Notes:
<input type="checkbox"/>	Cooperatives	Co-ownership of a business where each individual shares responsibility for decisions. Cooperatives can exist across the food system sectors, but commonly are seen within grocers and distribution models for products. Many cooperatives are developed due to a particular value or need in a community.	X	X	X		X	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Food Banks	Non-profit organizations that aggregate, store, and distribute dry, cool, and frozen goods to a variety of customers. The primary goal being food security for a particular region. Food banks are the primary purchaser or gleaner of product and then store and distribute to partner agencies such as food pantries, soup kitchens, and shelters.			X	X	X	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Institutional Procurement	Schools and large-scale institutions procuring local and regional foods that are typically then used in dining centers or educational programs to teach staff, clients, patients, and students about their agriculture, food, health and nutrition.	X	X	X	X		



Primary Sector Purchasing and Nourishment

<input type="checkbox"/>	Meal Programs	Non-profit organizations that serve individuals who need support in accessing food and prepared meals. Meal programs often include a client-choice pantry and targeted referrals to community services, helping to eliminate poverty among clients.			X	X	X	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Food Pantries	A charitable distribution agency that provides individuals with food and grocery products for home preparation and consumption.			X	X		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Small Market Retail	Often referred to as corner stores or bodegas, they are typically independently owned and operated and support access to food as a small retailer/ grocer.		X	X	X		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Grocery Stores	A food service retail store that provides various range of fresh, processed, and sometimes prepared foods for individual consumers. While many are bricks-and-mortar, there are examples of online grocery options with pick-up or delivery options.		X	X	X		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public Markets	A collection of businesses in one space that offer prepared, raw, processed, and specialty foods and products. Typically managed through rental rates and lease agreements for businesses. These markets support		X	X	X		

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	entrepreneurs in understanding demand provides customers with local products.						
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<input type="checkbox"/>	Restaurants	Food business that procures and creates meals for patrons. Restaurants provide a unique option for diverse cuisine and cultural connection through food preparation and dining experience.	X	X		X	X
<input type="checkbox"/>	Food Trucks	Food business, like a restaurant on wheels, with relatively low start-up costs. Typically equipped with a full kitchen, however, may depend on a certified kitchen to first develop products for sale.		X	X	X	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Nutrition Assistance Programs	Government programs established to combat hunger through aiding under-resourced households with mechanisms to purchase food. Many programs also provide education on food budgeting and meal preparation.			X	X	



Primary Sector Conservation and Stewardship

<input type="checkbox"/>	Composting and Composting Programs	Process of regenerating organic matter like food scraps, landscape materials, manure, and other products into a value-added product that can be used to fertilize the soil.	X				X
<input type="checkbox"/>	Water Conservation	Individuals, farms, organizations, and municipality activities that use water more efficiently and effectively to reduce unnecessary water usage.	X				X
<input type="checkbox"/>	Renewable Energy	Practices that utilize natural resources for energy sources, including solar, wind, biomass, geothermal, etc. to substitute fossil fuels.	X				X
<input type="checkbox"/>	Land Trusts and Conservation Programs	Policies and programs that protect land for particular uses of environmentally sustainable practices and care for the land. In some cases, this can include land set aside for particular types of farming.	X				X
<input type="checkbox"/>	Reef and Coastal Management	Government and organizational preservation and maintenance of oceanic ecosystems' health; including coral reefs, native species, resources, shorelines, tourism, cultural values, marine life, etc.	X				X
<input type="checkbox"/>	Food Donation and Gleaning	Organizations or individuals working to gather and donate food products prior to spoilage date at farms, retailers, and dining locations.	X			X	X
<input type="checkbox"/>	Waste Prevention	Individuals, farms, organizations, and municipalities dedicated to preventing waste through recycling, prevention of waste, and audits for understanding waste.					X