

Conversations Conferences



on Nebraska
Environment
and Sustainability

Food: Questions to Explore

Questions to Trigger Exploration and Learning

- How much of the food that is consumed in Nebraska is produced in Nebraska? Can local food systems provide all the foods we need?
- How do our conventional food systems affect the sustainability of land, water, energy, food and materials?
- How might the production, processing, and delivery of food best meet economic, nutritional, and proximity location needs of people in Nebraska?
- What do we Nebraskans need to know more about in order to be smart consumers of food?

Questions to Trigger Ideas for Change, New Action

- What actions can I take today that reflect what I know about sustainable food consumption practices?
- What are practices I can initiate where I work, and in my community, that could lead to more sustainable food consumption practices? What recommendations for action can we formulate today, to be shared with whom, when, and how best that could influence:
 - Food consumption practices among everyday citizens of Nebraska?
 - City, state and federal policies that impact food production, delivery, and consumption practices?

Background Reference Questions

- What educational opportunities can we encourage/initiate that would serve to inform everyday citizens, including children and youth, as well as professional service providers about Nebraska's food systems and sustainable food consumption practices?
- What kinds of regional planning processes—and state and local policies—would take into account sustainable food production, processing and delivery in Nebraska?
- Who gets to define sustainability? What is sustainable for one farm may not be seen as sustainable for another. Is there a need for multiple types of food systems for Nebraska, for the United States, and for the world?
- How does the quality of land, water affect the nutritional quality of food grown in NE and elsewhere?
- How might we best teach ourselves – and our children – the nutritional, safety, and seasonal attributes of locally produced and marketed food?
- What kind of food system is best for Nebraska?
- Food produced in alternative production systems is sometimes more expensive. How does that impact the low income family?
- What does a “sustainable” food production system look like? How prevalent are sustainable food production practices in Nebraska?
- How does food security enter into the discussion for any type of food system?
- How can local farmers – and local food consumers (markets) – become viable economic forces for the local economy?

continued

- What will it take for the price of food reflect the full costs of water, energy, land, labor, and actual production, transportation, and marketing costs? Will consumers be willing and able to pay those full costs?
- What are the impacts on sustainability practices when the U.S. government subsidizes agricultural production prices? What percentage of agricultural production is currently subsidized? What are the ramifications to our food supply if price supports are removed?
- Why are organic food prices almost twice non-organic prices?
- As GMO experiments progress into the future, will consumers be assured of full disclosure and choices among “real” organic and non-organic options for purchases of food?
- Are current federal labeling policies sufficient for protection of consumers? Do we yet know enough about where our food comes from, who produced it, under what social and economic contexts, what the net energy costs are, and/or what non-sustainable practices may have led to its availability?