

# Organization of the Program

Discovering the Food System is organized into two major Sections.

## Section 1: You and Your Food System

This section contains instructional lessons designed to help you better understand how nutrition, diet and the food system are connected. This section introduces the food system components and concepts and an overview of dietary guidelines and the food guides, and how food choices every day influence and are influenced by the food system.

Lesson 1: Food and You introduces the dietary guidelines for Americans. It shows how these guidelines support our health yet have little relationship to the food system. The USDA Food Guide Pyramid is compared with the Northeast Regional Food Guide, which is designed to promote healthful diets from foods grown and processed in the Northeast. This lesson explores the ways that dietary guidelines and food guides can impact upon the food system.

Lesson 2: Food System Basics introduces the concept of a system and then the various components of the food system.

Lesson 3: Think Globally, Eat Locally introduces a comparison between local and global food systems and the complexity involved in making such a comparison. There are no neat distinctions between the "local," or "community" and "global" when it comes to the food system. This lesson asks: what do these terms mean and how should they be used to examine the food system?

Lesson 4: Food Labels and the Food System helps you learn how to read the Nutrition Facts food labels, and to explore "food system" information that might also be included. What's on food labels and what is not can provide insights into why our food system is often mysterious and hard to know.

## Section 2: Discovering The Food System Project

This section provides a guide for conducting a Discovering the Food System project. You will be provided with tools for exploring your food system. What you choose to focus on and the methods you use are flexible and should be guided by your interests or those of the class, club, or after school program of which you are a part. It is this flexibility that assures a high level of engagement on your part. The food system discovery is accomplished through a search of existing food system facts, interviews with people who represent the food system and a public survey about some aspect of the food system that interests you the most.

The program does not end with discovery, however. It also provides tools to teach you how to share your newly obtained food system understandings with the community with an eye for creating community change. You will learn about the potential impact information can have on policies in a school, or in the broader community.

Step 1: Finding Food System Facts provides tools and guidelines to locating and understanding data that has already been collected on the food system, and is therefore available for use and interpretation. This is very much like the processes being used across the country to conduct community food assessments. Also, food systems stories are frequently in the news. You will learn about the breadth of issues that are related to the food system that you might read about in any daily newspaper.

Step 2: Learning from People in the Food System will give you a better understanding of your food system by interviewing some of the people whom you will identify as being part of the food system. This step in the food system project builds on the previous lesson by clarifying the aspects of the food system that most interest you, identifying who is directly involved in those aspects, and formulating questions about issues for those most likely to have interesting insights. This step in the Discovering The Food System Project provides an opportunity for you to gain experience with a qualitative social science methodology: the open-ended, in-person interview method. You will practice basic interviewing techniques in a role play, contact community members who are part of the food system, arrange to meet them, and finally, actually conduct in-person interviews.

Step 3: Community Survey: Getting Ready will provide you with an opportunity to work with a classic quantitative social science methodology: the survey. You will identify topics that interest you (from previous research and your interviewing experience) and design a questionnaire.

Step 4: Conducting a Community Food System Survey will take us beyond the design stage and into the actual survey experience. You will have the opportunity to choose a population sample, distribute the survey and compile the results. In doing so, you will learn how some segment of the broader community feels about food system issues.

Step 5: Sharing Food System Stories with Your Community will help you develop methods of taking your newly won food system knowledge and presenting it to your local community with the eye towards community change. You will learn how to present your food system facts, interview experiences and survey results and how to wrap up your project experience in a cohesive manner.

## Discovering the Food System - The Lessons

- Summary

The summary is a brief paragraph to help you identify what types of activities you will engage in for the particular lesson. It will be an introduction to the concepts and activities that will be covered in the lesson.

- Learning Objectives

For each lesson, we have defined what we think are the most important concepts for you to learn. The objectives are intended as guidelines for you to assess what you have learned upon completion of the lesson.

- Key Concepts

Each of the lessons introduces concepts that are relevant to understanding the food system and the relationship between consumers and the food system.

- “Getting to the Core”

Throughout this curriculum the themes being explored are applied to a consistent example – apples. In each lesson and in each part of the project description, how the topic applies to apples is described. For example, in Section 1, Activity 1, we have given you information about where apples are found on the food guide pyramids, the nutritional value of apples, and how apples fit into a nutritious diet. These “Getting to the Core” sidebars provide a quick and easy example of how the concepts being developed can be applied to real food. One of the reasons we chose apples for this purpose is that there are many varieties of apples grown and marketed in our state of New York. If you like, you can develop your own “food thread” as you go about discovering your food system. This food might be a potato, tomato, strawberry or orange, or a product native to your location. Or, if you are quite ambitious, you might choose a food product that contains more than one food from more than one food group – yogurt for example. The important thing is that the food that is chosen should have some meaning and relevance to the food system that is being discovered.

- Activities

Each lesson has several activities within it. For example, to understand what a food system is you need to be familiar with the setting of the food system, what aspects are part of the food system, and other important basic concepts. Therefore, each lesson will have many parts to help build a complete concept. The activities will be numbered to help guide you through the lesson. Also, some of the activities will have numbered steps to make the procedure clear.

- Going Further

You may be interested in learning more and have the time for further investigation of a topic. We have provided ideas for optional activities that will help reinforce what you have learned in the lesson. Some of the additional activities are also geared to help you connect with your community before the interviewing and survey lessons.

- Background

The lessons are designed to meet the needs of a formal classroom setting as well as a variety of non-formal educational settings. The background section provides a discussion of important aspects of the food system on the specific topic of the lesson. This section will help provide you with the necessary background information to navigate the lesson. If you are a teacher using this curriculum at a group or class level, it will provide you with the information you need so that you are able to better educate your students and guide discussion. Our goal is to provide enough information so that you will feel well-versed in the major issues and questions involved in discussing lesson topics. In one or more of the lessons, it may be beneficial to use the Internet as a resource for gaining information about the food system. In any of the lessons that suggest the use of the Internet we have also provided alternative non-electronic sources of the comparable information for groups using the activities which do not have Internet access.

- Lesson Resources

Some of the lessons will guide you in investigating your local food system. In a few of the lessons you will need to seek data about the food system. In each lesson we will provide any resources we recommend using to obtain data not supplied in the lesson itself. The resources might be websites, phone numbers, or names and addresses of community organizations and governmental agencies.

- Food for Thought Journal and other handouts

Each lesson will have a journal entry to bring the material covered in the lesson to the context of your day-to-day lives. In addition to the journal, there may be other handouts that you will need to copy. Once you have completed the worksheets you can collect them to make up a Discovering the Food System Portfolio.

- Student Portfolio

To assess your progress through the Discovering the Food System curriculum, we suggest collecting work produced in each of the lessons in a Discovering the Food System Portfolio. The resulting collection will help display how your understanding changed through the completion of all of

the lessons and will provide you with a reference packet as you prepare to share your work with the community in the final lesson.

- Glossary

Throughout the lessons certain words and phrases appear in bold type. These are defined in the glossary which follows Section 2.