



June 1, 2022

NYSERDA
17 Columbia Circle
Albany, NY 12203-6399

Re: Draft Scoping Plan Comments

Dear NYS Climate Action Council:

The Food Policy Council of Buffalo and Erie County (FPC) has reviewed the above-referenced document. We recognize the hard work involved in drafting the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA) and believe this is a great opportunity for New York State (NYS) to begin directly addressing our local food system here in Erie County.

We offer the following comments:

Chapter 15 - Agriculture and Forestry

- This chapter is comprehensive but is primarily focused on forestry. In order to impart the importance of farming and the food system, and its \$5.75 billion economic impact in NYS, we suggest creating a new chapter dedicated solely to agriculture.
- The FPC's 2020 *Local Food Action Plan* (the Plan) "advocate[s] for policies and programs that ensure a healthy and sustainable relationship between food production, consumption, and disposal" and "support[s] policies permitting the use of vacant land for urban agriculture and the free use of publicly-owned land." The CLCPA should contain language supporting land access for urban farmers and community gardeners, who often face barriers securing long-term access to growing areas.
- We commend the action item of developing methods for carbon farming and regenerative agriculture. The CLCPA should consider implementing policies to mandate the use of native plants at NYS institutions and require their use in projects that have received NYS funding. By doing so, this will create ecosystems for the important pollinators that keep our food system functioning.
- The *Plan* recommends that institutions be "introduc[ed] and better connect[ed]...with local food purchasing policies and opportunities." To the extent practicable, the CLCPA should champion local procurement and complement proposed [Senate Bill S7534](#), which would amend food procurement laws to allow for more latitude in government food purchasing.
- The *Plan* "encourages [the] sustainable siting of large-scale renewable energy projects so that prime farmlands are not negatively impacted." Discouragingly, 73% of solar installations in NYS to date have occurred on farm or forested land. Of these, 58% are located on good quality soil (Katkar, Venkatesh V., et al, "Strategic Land Use Analysis for Solar Energy Development in New York State". Renewable Energy, 2021). It is paramount that the CLCPA recognize the unsustainability of continued development on farmland and incorporate the American Farmland Trust's [Smart Solar Siting](#) principles into its strategies.

Chapter 16 - Organic Waste Reduction and Recycling

- The *Plan* supports the expansion of "food waste recovery infrastructure" and "supports municipal and county-wide efforts and policies to implement composting facilities." While the CLCPA, and the NYS Food Donation and Food Scraps Recycling Law, are important first steps, the latter can be expanded and improved on.

Our mission is to advocate for an equitable and sustainable food system for the people of Buffalo and Erie County.



Infrastructural support is needed to connect institutions with edible food recovery programs and local emergency food providers. The NYSDEC should work with local municipalities to implement residential organics collection.

- The CLCPA offers an opportunity to highlight issues of food access and food apartheid. Though not directly connected to greenhouse gas emissions, access to healthy, local, affordable, sustainably grown food can have a broader impact on changing current extractive and unsustainable agricultural practices. Corner stores and other food retail institutions should be incentivized to procure food that was produced in ways that do not harm the environment in areas of food apartheid. Where possible, the CLCPA should build on the existing work done to bring healthy options to corner stores (i.e., the [Healthy Corner Store Initiative](#)).

Members of the Council would be happy to coordinate with your efforts. We welcome you to review any parts of our *Local Food Action Plan* or our work to implement it. An electronic version of the Plan can be found at erie.gov/foodactionplan.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Antonina Simeti". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "A" and "S".

Antonina Simeti
Chair, Food Policy Council of Buffalo & Erie County

AS: seg, djn

cc: Sarah Gatti, Erie County Department of Environment and Planning