



**VDA** -Optimizing the health of Virginians through leadership and expertise in food and nutrition

## **Sustainable Food Systems**

A Sustainable Food System allows both current and future generations the potential to reach optimal health while both using and maintaining our earth's resources. It may best be achieved through Community Foodsheds. A Community Foodshed is the path products travel from where the food is produced, to where it is consumed. This includes the land it grows on, the routes it travels and any processing or markets it goes through to reach the table. A Foodshed is also committed to civic agriculture: profitable farms, animal well-being, social justice, care of the environment, and most importantly, healthy people. Registered Dietitians have many roles throughout the paths that products take within Community Foodsheds.

**A Sustainable Food System that supports such Community Foodsheds in Virginia could have a positive impact on the health of Virginians by:**

- Increasing access for Virginians of lower income levels to healthy, safe, locally grown foods through: promoting the use of EBT cards and WIC cards or vouchers in farmers' markets, farmers' gleaning programs for food banks, and community garden programs.
- Educating Virginia residents of all income levels to eat locally, purchase foods from farmers' markets, CSA's (Community-Supported Agriculture, or farm shares), food co-ops, and supermarkets that provide local foods; also to grow their own gardens and to improve culinary skills to prepare whole foods.
- Positively influencing Virginia children's lifelong eating behaviors and reduced obesity risk through farm-to-school programs, school gardens, and incorporating a food/nutrition curriculum.
- Positively influencing the eating behaviors of Virginia's college and university students through campus farm-to-table programs, student gardens, and introducing curriculum initiatives.
- Eliminating barriers to local food purchasing by institutions: hospitals, nursing homes, senior centers, either by direct purchase from farmers, through Local Food Hubs, or by working with their current distributors.
- Food safety for all Virginians by decreasing the risk of food contamination, pesticide residues, and non-therapeutic antibiotics and hormones in animal foods.
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**How can policymakers help move Virginia forward toward a Sustainable Food System?**

- Virginia policymakers can advocate for policies that promote availability and accessibility of local, nutrient-rich, sustainably-grown food for Virginians of all income levels, recognizing the connection between such a food supply and the long-term health of Virginians.
- They can also engage the **24 members/stakeholder organizations (including VDA) Virginia Food System Council**, who recommend policies that connect producers, processors, distributors, and consumers, while protecting Virginia farmland.