



Tri-County Health Network Food Policy Council

MISSION STATEMENT

A grassroots effort to bring diverse members of Bamberg, Calhoun and Orangeburg counties together to increase healthy food access, improve health outcomes and foster more locally grown food.

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

Interviews, listening sessions and action group conversations were used to gain community feedback. The following are highlights:



Grocery Stores

- Price comparisons from one municipality to the other indicate that grocery stores in smaller towns have higher prices. The food quality and variety were concerns in addition to cost.
- There is a lack of access to healthy food in outlying communities around municipalities in the Tri-County. Even in the largest municipality, the City of Orangeburg, most grocery stores are concentrated on North Road: Walmart Super Store, Lidl, Aldi, and Food Lion. All the stores are on a 1.8-mile stretch.

Transportation

- Lack of transportation to grocery stores. Surveys indicated that transportation was not an issue. However, listening sessions and FPC Action Group meetings tell a different story. Some residents pay as much as fifty dollars for transportation to medical care and grocery stores. Homebound residents are sometimes unable to afford or prepare healthy food. Processed foods have a negative impact on residents with debilitating diseases.

Other Impacts on Food Access

- Due to the decrease in affordable housing, higher rental prices impact the amount of money available for food and healthy food costs more. This reality impacts most priority populations. Most seniors on fixed incomes do not receive SNAP or the amount is so small it is not enough to make a difference.
- High cost of prescription drugs not being covered by insurance.
- Lack of education related to purchasing healthy food, preparation and awareness of resources that assist with food access.
- Purchasing directly from local farmers is more cost-effective for individuals and families living in outlying rural communities.
- More farmers markets, roadside stands and delivery services are needed in food deserts.

COMMUNITY ASSETS

Tri-County Health Network (TCHN)

A non-profit that serves as the community engagement arm of MUSC Orangeburg. TCHN works to improve health outcomes for all residents in the Tri-County area. TCHN is the sponsor of the Tri-County Food Policy Coalition (FPC), and is a great resource for policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) change.

Growing COB

Community garden organization serving the Tri-County area. There are currently three gardens with representation on the FPC: Denmark, Vance Senior Center and the John Ford Center in Calhoun County. All have volunteers who serve on the FPC.

FoodShare Orangeburg

Operates an affordable produce box program. Veggie Rx is offered to Family Health Center patients at all their Tri-County locations. One goal of the FPC is to help expand the FoodShare footprint in Orangeburg County.

South Carolina State University

A public university that serves as a liaison between the community and the educational, judicial, and legal systems, as well as religious organizations. The Central Orangeburg FPC has individuals who have completed the university's Community Health Worker Program.

Southeastern Housing and Community Development

Community development organization that also operates a large farm in Denmark, SC.

Family Health Center (FHC)

Provides healthcare in the Tri-County Area. There are facilities in Bamberg, Orangeburg, and Calhoun Counties. The organization operates two farmers markets. FHC also has a mobile food market. FPC Action Groups in each county will help identify delivery sites that need access to produce and other healthy food.

Bamberg County HYPE Project

Youth group comprised of youth between the ages of 12-17. HYPE focuses on healthy eating and community wellness. The team will work with Growing COB to maintain Denmark's community garden. FPC members serve with the HYPE Team.



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SUCCESS STORY: Garden at Senior Center

The Vance Senior Center has a raised bed community garden. Seniors receive food from the garden. The senior center also serves as a meeting space for the Eastern Orangeburg FPC.

Approximately
25-30
seniors

benefit from the
garden during
harvest season.

COMMUNITY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Support 3 Community Gardens



Calhoun County Community Garden – Located at the local community center. The produce grown is available to the local neighborhood.

Orangeburg County Garden – Located at the Vance Senior Center. Seniors who attend the Council on Aging activities benefit from the vegetables grown in the raised beds.

Bamberg County Community Garden – Located in Denmark across from Rose Apartments. The garden is being refurbished by the Bamberg County HYPE Team. The youth are volunteering to maintain the garden. Growing COB surveys the residents of the housing community for suggestions for planting day.



Rural Roots

Building a new relationship with a newly organized co-op, Rural Roots, who will have at least three representatives on the FPC. Rural Roots members are farmers, distributors, and value-added producers throughout the Tri-County. Most farmers are in a priority population. The average age of farmers in South Carolina is 59.

Produce Gleaning

Some local farms allow gleaning. Members of the Bamberg County FPC identify these farms to help **reduce food waste** and to help **increase access to locally grown produce**.

FoodShare

Orangeburg County is approximately 1,128 square miles. The distance from Springfield, SC to Eutawville, SC is 59.2 miles (1 hour, 8 min drive). A new strategy is to help **expand the FoodShare Orangeburg footprint**. There are FPCs in Eastern, Central and Western Orangeburg County. FPC Action Groups can recruit volunteers and distributions sites in their local communities.

83,094 Orangeburg County
population in 2022



SUCCESS STORY: Community Input

The Tri-County Health Network's directive was that the Food Policy Council should be grassroots at its core. Therefore, agencies and organizations serve as support and resources for the councils.

Surveys were the first tool used to recruit members. Participants were in priority population housing, senior centers, community events, and churches. Additionally, surveys were used to obtain data regarding food access, wellness, and chronic health conditions. Data from the surveys was used to compile the first Tri-County Food Assessment.

