

## NESAWG 2015 *It Takes a Region* Conference

### **MyPlate — Northeast: A Tool for Promoting 'Sustainable Diets'?**

This session focuses on ways that Cornell's regional [MyPlate – Northeast](#) food guide can promote 'sustainable diets', defined by FAO as "those diets with low environmental impacts which contribute to food and nutrition security and to healthy life for present and future generations." 'Sustainable diets' connect intersecting socio-cultural, environmental, public health, and economic dimensions of sustainability to food consumption. What types of guidance will best help professionals advise the public on eating a more sustainable regional diet? An important element here is food justice and food access – assuring that all Northeasterners can enjoy a regionally-focused, healthy, fair, just, and sustainable food system. We encourage attendance by food, health, and nutrition professionals. Following an introduction to MyPlate – Northeast and to Tufts' Sustainable Diets Project, session leaders will brainstorm with attendees on these issues. The discussion will generate constructive input towards a sustainable diets guidance framework, and for further development of MyPlate – Northeast.

*Presenters:*

**Jennifer Wilkins**, Syracuse University

**Kate Clancy**, Food Systems Consultant

**Hugh Joseph**, Tufts University

Original paper inspired this discussion-- by Joan Gussow (who was present at this session) and Kate Clancy 30 years ago

Jennifer:

Quality of dietary guidance. Sustainability.

Thinking about critical issues around sustainable diets.

Food justice

Food security

"MyPlate - Northeast." [http://www.agriculture.ny.gov/AP/agservices/myplate\\_ne.pdf](http://www.agriculture.ny.gov/AP/agservices/myplate_ne.pdf)

Example to inspire ideas

Image of USDA food guide.

Implementation strategy of diet guidelines.

Translate knowledge/research into recommendations.

Nutrition-foods-diets-health

WWII. Different outcomes and different goals hoped for by stated guidelines.

Now health is the goal and the expected outcome.

If we now want to also prioritize a regional food system as the source of the food that we consume, we require new guidance and a new approach. A conceptual framework that includes:

- Include economic vitality
- Include sustainable issues
- Environmental conditions

In addition to

- Diet and health relationship
- Individual level factors

In this framework, food choices shaped by these influences would have both health and sustainability outcomes.

What is role of dietary guidance?

To lead to other things than health.

How to lead to food justice, sustainability etc.??

1992 Food Guide Pyramid (image)

1998 Northeast Regional Food Guide. (image)

What about dietary guidance within the context of the region

- Northeast Regional Food Guide, completed in 1995. Reflects less meat. Prioritizes plant-based rather than animal-based sources. Photos of local products. And pics of food in many forms, not just raw. Therefore, assuming processing and food preservation.

USDA updated MyPyramid in 2011 to MyPlate. The Northeast Regional Food Guide was updated to reflect this change in 2014. Home canning food implied as well as grains produced here. Acknowledging sugars and oils ("use sparingly/choose wisely")

[http://www.agriculture.ny.gov/AP/agsservices/myplate\\_ne.pdf](http://www.agriculture.ny.gov/AP/agsservices/myplate_ne.pdf)

Critical questions arise: What is capacity of place? The growing capability? Ag diversity? How is supply and choice assessed/related? Affordability of choices? Cultural and economic appropriateness?

**Kate:**

EFSNE Project.

Enhancing Food Security in the Northeast.

Big ongoing project that melds 2 different defs/ of food security

=== food self sufficiency ratio as described by FAO

== food security of a community

\*Acknowledge differences while becoming more inclusive

Drivers and feedbacks--system analysis (get diagram from Kate)

Defining Food Justice:

**The benefits and risks of a food system are shared fairly**

1 How to modify and change for better

Food security at regional level

1 Alter flow of water trade disease migration

2 Rural urban connection. Regeneration. Better scale for that

Regional approach assumptions

1 More ecological focus. Marketing infrastructure. Distribution analysis

2 Evolutions.

Tufts sustainable diets working group

1 Complex considerations for developing a framework for organizations to develop sustainable dietary guidelines

2 ?? Scope, systems approach, audience, developers, balance of simplicity/complexity?

3 Evidence based

4 Visions/principles/priorities

5 Think about users. Outcome. Applications. Capacity.

Global Alliance for Future of Food--pdf online

**Hugh:**

FAO definition

Food consumption

Based on:

1 Preparation

2 Supply

3 Community

Food system diagram reps supply chain.

Core NE supply chain.

Access. Production distribution

Integrated into our political cultural social worlds. Co dependency on rest of world.

Systems nesting/scales up and down

Not isolated.

Food systems for whom.

- 1 Present vs future
- 2 Local vs global
- 3 Rich vs poor

How can consuming regional produced food address food security and justice

How can enhancing regional produced food in marketplace influence food justice and food security

Are there NE foods that could influence food justice/security more than others

How to improve NE plate

Food security / food Justice are priorities for today.

Regional food supply

Diets/eating choices

How does plate incorporate this guidance?

Discussion

Question: Focus on consumer model. I.e.--giving consumer choice instead of political entity/citizen activist

Panel Response: This is meant for everyone. Teachers, policy makers, eaters.

Question: What about becoming an active community member?

Panel Response: Our food / their food

Comment: Freeze fresh food to pantries--freezer meal kits. Use technology to help preserve and feed populations.

Question: Dairy is major NE sector but the smallest part of the MYPlate diagram--tension?

Panel Response: Survey to NE practitioners. They were asked whether to include or leave out dairy on the Plate image.

Comment: grass fed vs confinement model of dairy production is a good thing to keep in mind and inform this discussion.

Comment: need more modeling/researchers.

Panel Response:

A lot of modeling has been done

NE has less capacity for Ag production because of its topography...

Chris Peters is working on NE capacity. At this time we can provide 20% of the food we need.

Question: How to get it to have legitimacy?

Panel Response:

make menu with sustainability included

standards of prof practices around sustainability (natl committee produced this)

Question from Joan Gussow: How do we assess how people are eating food? Perhaps it is most important to break down the distance between people and the source of their food and break down identity of producer vs. consumer. Take control of system. Grow food. Eat that food.

Comment from Tom Kelly: Food access-new Hampshire project...

A New England Food Vision by Tom Kelly

Food Solutions New England--mix Sustainable Institute.

Direct state funds to local and regional sourcing.

Therefore, more money to local farmers.

bring justice to market. Food hubs. Targeted funds for sourcing

Liz Henderson working on food Justice purchasing guidelines

Comment: Get institutions to adopt these guidelines. Sourcing is main challenge for directors of institutions.

Panel Response: strategies include buying clubs/cooperative efforts, regionally.

Volume buys. Value added that suppliers such as hubs provide that will save

Institution time. (trim greens etc.) empower the buyer

My summary

The new version of the USDA Pyramid—the Plate is meant to illustrate more varieties of foods, in different forms—raw, processed, frozen, etc.—and through a means that conveys issues of regional sourcing, and food justice as well as health and nutrition priorities.

Controversial seemed to be how it was conveyed and that, to some it felt handed down to the consumer rather than empowering the consumer.

The other main issue of controversy was the estimate that the NE region is capable of providing just 20% of our consumption needs. This number needs to be further explained especially in the context of new guidelines and extensive guidance as to how to eat regionally.



