



COMMONWEALTH NORTH

Charge for study of Food Security in Alaska
Approved March 27, 2019

Whereas:

- Food security is a basic necessity for all Alaskans but its definition and meaning will depend greatly on the person speaking and where they live in the State.
- The concept of food security for Alaskans includes its access, cost, nutrient value, sustainability and supply.
- The State has few agreed definitions, risk rating systems, or basic expectations for evaluating food security to develop public policies to reduce food insecurity.
- Urban and rural residents likely have very different concerns.
- At most, current food supplies at grocery stores are estimated at eight days of availability.
- An economically sustainable agricultural industry keeps more Alaskan dollars in the state economy and builds capacity.
- Additional agricultural capacity helps drive scale required to create sustainable businesses.
- New capacity can help mitigate supply chain disruptions and create an economic engine for new jobs, agricultural infrastructure, support industries, and value-added businesses.
- Alaskans import over 95% of the \$2 billion of food they purchase.
- Imported food is shipped through long, expensive and fragile supply chains.
- Alaska's supply chain is at more at risk to fuel price spikes, natural disasters, severe weather, labor unrest, terrorism from external threats.
- The State has a relatively small shipping market and freight costs are driven by the need that its north-bound freight carry empty containers for return trips.
- Rural food buyers contend with limited availability, high transportation costs and spoilage.

Therefore, Commonwealth North will engage in an action and results report intended to have a meaningful impact on the following:

1. Questions to be addressed:

- a. How does the State define food security for:
 - i. Its urban residents
 - ii. Its rural residents
- b. How does the State define food security for its communities? Such as:
 - i. Rural communities with no access point to the primary road system
 - ii. Urban communities on the road system with more than 10,000 people
 - iii. Rural road-accessible communities of less than 10,000 people
- c. What basic infrastructure and resources are required to increase agricultural capacity in the State?
- d. What is the State's role in food security, and how can the State help coordinate and stimulate sustainable demand?
- e. What barriers exist that retard agricultural development?
- f. Is there a role for the cottage producer?
- g. What specific products have the most export opportunity and reduce food insecurity?
- h. How can we drive down the cost of feed for protein producers?
- i. What strategic storage options exist to stockpile raw materials used to produce basic foods.
- j. What are the State's contingencies in the event of a natural disaster or distribution at the Port of Alaska?

2. Scope of study:

This study will:

- a) Develop key definitions around the topic of food security for Alaskans and its communities
- b) Suggest initial metrics or methods to communicate risk to food security and track incremental improvements to it
- c) Produce the top three public policy recommendations to improve it for each category of constituent
- d) Use past research and information provided by CWN; The Alaska Division of Agriculture, Homeland Security, and the Department of Natural Resources; The University of Alaska; Alaska Village Initiatives; and other sources
- e) Identify and track the federal programs Alaskans can use to reduce food security and create a long-term sustainable program through:
 - o Microgrants
 - o New staffing opportunities for agriculture jobs and grants

3. Nature of report to be issued:

This is an action and results report. The recommendations will be specific alternatives for producers, Alaskans, and food distributors to provide specific public policy actions for the Governor and legislators. The emphasis will be on recommendations that are actionable in Alaska and within the control of Alaskans.

4. Measure of success:

This study will succeed in four ways.

1. Identify actionable strategies that enable Alaskans and Alaskan businesses to better communicate and benefit from the availability of local food.
2. Develop a network of action-oriented stakeholders who will promote food security after recommendations are completed.
3. Implement risk reduction policies and procedures for food supply disruptions.
4. Enhance the state's ability to develop sustainable programs and resources for food production.