



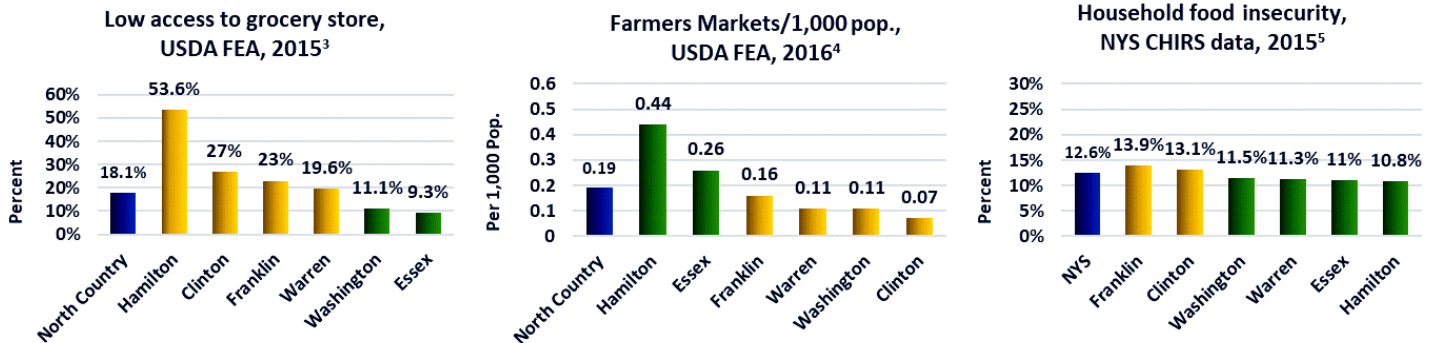
## Access to Affordable, Healthy Foods can Improve Health for Residents in the North Country

Improving access to healthy, affordable food can be a challenge for rural communities. Many rural areas in and around the North Country lack food retailers with sufficient and varied supplies of fresh, affordable foods.

Having access to healthy and affordable food choices is vital for an individual to achieve a healthy lifestyle. In rural areas, access to food is sometimes lacking due to factors like: proximity to food retail outlets (e.g., distance to a store or the number of stores in an area), individual resources (e.g., income or personal transportation), and neighborhood-level resources (e.g., average income of the neighborhood and availability of public transportation).<sup>1</sup>

Rural shoppers often rely on more expensive and less nutritious options, such as those available at convenience stores or fast food restaurants, or they face a long drive to a grocery store or farmers market that stocks fresh, affordable options such as: produce, milk, eggs, and other staples.

Some rural residents and households are food insecure, meaning they cannot always rely on having access to sufficient quantities of affordable and nutritious food. Long-term food insecurity can affect learning, development, productivity, physical and mental health, and family life.<sup>2</sup>



### North Country Region Public Health Opportunity

Rural communities in the North Country region can employ several strategies to increase access to healthy, affordable foods for their residents. These strategies include: special financing incentives for food retailers; cooperative grocery stores which are supported by members who are both customers and owners; all-season farmers markets; community supported agriculture programs (CSAs), a commitment by local residents to purchase part of local farmers' crops; farm to school initiatives which help local farmers sell fresh fruits and vegetables directly to area schools; food pantries and other forms of direct food assistance programs; and community outreach and education.<sup>6</sup>

For more information about the data and/or other information contained in this Action Brief, please email [phip@ahihealth.org](mailto:phip@ahihealth.org) with NC PHIP Action Brief #2019-09 in the subject line.

To access data or other Action Briefs, please visit the NC PHIP website, [www.HealthyADK.org](http://www.HealthyADK.org).

<sup>1</sup> Meeting People Where They Are: Contextual Factors & Healthy Eating Patterns. (2015). *Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2015-2020*. Retrieved from: [https://health.gov/dietaryguidelines/2015-2020/resources/2015-2020\\_dietary\\_guidelines.pdf](https://health.gov/dietaryguidelines/2015-2020/resources/2015-2020_dietary_guidelines.pdf).  
<sup>2,6</sup> Rural Hunger and Access to Healthy Food. (2018). *Rural Health Information Hub*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/topics/food-and-hunger>.  
<sup>3</sup> Food Environment Atlas: Low Access to Grocery Store. (2015). *United States Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-environment-atlas/go-to-the-atlas/>.  
<sup>4</sup> New York State Community Health Indicator Reports (CHIRS). (2015). *New York State Department of Health*. Retrieved from: <https://www.health.ny.gov/statistics/chac/indicators/index.htm>.  
<sup>5</sup> Food Environment Atlas: Farmer's Markets. (2016). *United States Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-environment-atlas/go-to-the-atlas/>.