

Future Food Security Forum

Main Points & Strategies

1. Gardens & Community Food Production

Key Issues Identified

- Water access and long-term storage
- Volunteer motivation and coordination
- Need for more school and community gardens
- Soil health and compost systems
- Lack of coordination between existing gardens

Strategies

- Create a **Countywide Garden Network** to connect community gardens, school gardens, and backyard growers.
- Develop **volunteer coordination hubs** through local nonprofits, schools, and service clubs.
- Provide **gardening education programs**:
 - Composting
 - Soil testing
 - Seasonal crop planning
- Expand **school garden programs** with curriculum tied to nutrition and agriculture.
- Establish **seed libraries and seed exchanges** through libraries or community centers.
- Support organizations like **gleaners** to harvest excess produce from gardens and farms.

2. Farmers & Agricultural Viability

Key Issues Identified

- Limited land access for farmers
- Water access challenges
- Need for farmworker housing
- Economic sustainability for farmers
- Supply and demand imbalance
- Need for new farmers entering agriculture

Strategies

- Create a **Farmland Access Program**

- Match beginning farmers with available land
 - Work with land trusts and tribes
- Support **farmworker and agricultural housing solutions**.
- Establish **local purchasing commitments** from schools, hospitals, and institutions.
- Create **farmer training and mentorship programs**.
- Provide **seed funding and micro-grants** for small farms.
- Promote **local food purchasing campaigns** to strengthen markets.

3. Nutrition & Medicinal Food Systems

Key Issues Identified

- Nutritional value of food needs improvement
- Lack of community education around healthy cooking
- Disconnect between producers and consumers
- Limited knowledge of medicinal plants and herbs
- Need for localized food knowledge

Strategies

- Develop **community cooking and nutrition classes**.
- Promote **healthy recipe sharing and demonstrations**.
- Support **community kitchens and public cooking events**.
- Create **guides to local farmers and producers**.
- Encourage **CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) models**.
- Integrate **herbal and medicinal plant education** into local programs.
- Encourage **preservation skills training**:
 - Canning
 - Drying
 - Fermentation

4. Emergency Food Preparedness

Key Issues Identified

- Food system vulnerability during disasters
- Communication breakdown during emergencies
- Need for potable water access
- Limited emergency food storage
- Lack of coordination across agencies

Strategies

- Establish **community emergency food reserves**.
- Map **existing food storage facilities**.
- Develop **emergency communication networks**:
 - HAM radio
 - local information hubs
- Ensure **potable water access points** are identified.
- Train communities in **disaster preparedness and resilience**.
- Encourage **household preparedness education**.
- Create **local response teams** tied to neighborhoods.

5. Food Distribution Systems

Key Issues Identified

- Limited storage capacity
- Distribution gaps across rural areas
- Coordination challenges between organizations
- Transportation barriers
- Volunteer shortages

Strategies

- Create a **regional food distribution network**.
- Expand **food storage infrastructure** (cold storage, freezers).
- Develop **mobile food distribution systems**.
- Coordinate volunteers through **Family Resource Centers and nonprofits**.
- Improve **transportation systems for food delivery**.
- Strengthen **partnerships between food banks and farmers**.

6. Local Food System Development

Key Issues Identified

- Need for stronger local food economy
- Lack of infrastructure to process and preserve food
- Funding limitations
- Need for stronger community collaboration

Strategies

- Establish a **Local Food Coalition**.
- Expand **farm-to-school** and **farm-to-institution** programs.
- Support **local restaurants** using local food.
- Create **food preservation and processing hubs**.
- Increase **local purchasing incentives**.
- Build stronger **relationships** with **tribal food initiatives**.

7. Innovation & Idea Hub

Community Ideas Identified

- Mobile farmers markets
- Sustainable village concepts
- Vertical farming
- Community composting centers
- Neighborhood food sharing
- Resource sharing apps
- Information hubs

Strategies

- Pilot a **Mobile Farmers Market** serving rural areas.
- Develop a **community composting program**.
- Create **information hubs** for food resources.
- Support **community-scale food innovation projects**.
- Explore **technology tools** for food sharing and coordination.
- Encourage **community-led food system experiments**.

Cross-Cutting Priorities

1. Coordination

Create a **Food Security Council or Coalition** that includes:

- Farmers
- Tribes
- Food banks
- Local government

- Schools
- Community organizations

2. Education

Focus on:

- Gardening
- Nutrition
- Food preservation
- Emergency preparedness
- Local food economy

3. Infrastructure

Invest in:

- Storage
- Distribution
- Water systems
- Food processing facilities

4. Community Engagement

- Volunteer networks
- Youth programs
- Public workshops
- Local events

Potential Forum Outcomes

The forum could aim to produce:

- 1. Mendocino County Food Security Action Plan**
- 2. Creation of a Local Food Coalition**
- 3. Community Garden Network**
- 4. Emergency Food Preparedness Plan**
- 5. Pilot projects**
 - Mobile market
 - Compost hub
 - Local food directory