

By electronic and overnight mail

June 9, 2015

Commissioner Richard A. Ball
New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets
10B Airline Drive
Albany, New York 12205

Barbara Turk, Director of Food Policy
Office of the Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services
City Hall
New York, NY 10007

Dear Chairpersons Ball and Turk:

We are writing to you in your capacities as co-chairs of the New York Regional Food Hub Task Force to reiterate our strong support for the creation of a long-delayed wholesale farmers' market in the Hunts Point area of the South Bronx. As you know, the Task Force is charged with presenting a report to Governor Cuomo this month that offers recommendations on how to expand regional food hubs across New York State.

Almost three years ago, many of us wrote to your state and city colleagues who at that time were seeking to finalize a large-scale modernization plan for the Hunts Point Produce Market that would have also included a new wholesale market for regional farmers. We noted in our 2012 letter that although the current Hunts Point Produce Market provides roughly 22 million people with fruit and vegetables every day, only an estimated 4% of the \$2.3 billion in annual sales comes from New York farms.

This 4% figure is staggeringly low given that, according to a 2005 study, there is as much as \$900 million in unmet demand for local food here in New York City – a number that is likely significantly higher today given the huge growth in interest for such fresh food over the past decade. Indeed, even over the past three years, we have witnessed an increased demand for local food by restaurants, schools, emergency food groups and other large regional buyers. At the same time, it is estimated that we are losing one farm every three and a half days across the state. This is why we believe building a permanent wholesale farmers' market in the Bronx is a vital piece to unlocking the full potential of our regional food economy.

As Governor Cuomo stated this past December when the Task Force was created, a regional wholesale farmers' market "will enable the upstate agricultural industry to increase access to metropolitan markets for producers, while providing an array of healthy, affordable food for communities. It will also serve as an aggregation hub and processing facility to assist upstate producers and processors in targeting institutional and private sector procurement." And in March of this year, Mayor de Blasio offered similarly strong support for a dedicated hub in Hunts Point "to better link us to food that is grown and produced in Upstate New York – strengthening our city's partnership with Upstate communities, farms, and businesses."

To be sure, this new market in Hunts Point is just one piece of larger infrastructure investments and policy changes necessary to create a robust regional food system and improve food equity for all communities. Among other reforms, additional wholesale food hubs should also be expanded or created in both the upstate and downstate regions. And any new markets should be advanced with full input from the local community and other key stakeholders. It is also important that these regional food hubs are developed in a way to help drive local economic development so that everyone in our communities can afford to buy fresh local food.

In sum, establishing a permanent regional wholesale farmers' market in Hunts Point is one of the most important actions New York officials can take to strengthen our regional food system. Accordingly, we respectfully call on the Task Force to include in its final report to the Governor a top recommendation to finally make this Bronx wholesale market a reality. We continue to stand ready to assist your offices in any way we can to help advance this crucial project.

Sincerely,

Saara Nafici
Added Value

Mary Cleaver
Cleaver Company & The Green Table

Teri Ptacek
Agricultural Stewardship Association

Shannon Mason
Cowbella Dairy

David Haight
American Farmland Trust

Robert Morgenthau
Fishkill Farms

Tamara Dawson
Bed-Stuy Campaign Against Hunger

Christina Taylor
Friends of Van Cortlandt Park

Ben Flanner & Anastasia Cole
Brooklyn Grange

Kathleen Frith
Glynwood

Ramsay Adams
Catskill Mountainkeeper

Josh Morgenthau
Good Eggs

Ken Jaffe
Center for Agricultural Development &
Entrepreneurship
Slope Farms

Liz Neumark
Great Performances

Beth Shapiro
City Meals

Diana Nelson
The Hope Center Development Corporation

Todd Erling
Hudson Valley AgriBusiness Development
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Susan Zimet
Hunger Action Network New York State

Maryann Hedaa
Hunts Point Alliance for Children

Richard Giles
Lucky Dog Farm
Lucky Dog Local Food Hub

Wanda Salaman
Mothers on the Move

Lindsey Lusher Shute
National Young Farmers Coalition

Mark Izeman & Margaret Brown
Natural Resources Defense Council

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Michael Brotchner
Sustainable South Bronx

Mark Ruffalo
Water Defense

Greg Swartz
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