



COMMUNITY FOODBANK OF NEW JERSEY NUTRITION POLICY 2024

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of the Community FoodBank of New Jersey's (CFBNJ) Nutrition Policy is to provide clear guidance about the types and nutritional quality of foods that we acquire and distribute to our neighbors through our network partners. CFBNJ's Nutrition Policy ("The Policy") strengthens our commitment to support our neighbors' nutritional needs related to health concerns, cultural considerations, and food preferences.

Policy Rationale & Benefits

CFBNJ is committed to providing foods that meet the needs of our neighbors related to 1) health concerns, 2) cultural considerations, and 3) food preferences. This Policy is a commitment that these factors are prioritized when procuring food for the communities we serve.

1. At CFBNJ, we recognize the important role that nutrition plays in the prevention and management of chronic diseases such as diabetes, and heart disease.¹ The purpose of the Policy is to prioritize and promote access to nutrient-dense foods for our neighbors by providing balanced food options that support their overall health, as well as considerations of cultural food preference, dietary and allergy needs. Our goal is to ensure that all neighbors have access to a variety of fresh produce, whole grains, lean proteins, and low-fat, calcium rich dairy products, while deprioritizing foods that are high in added sugar, saturated fats, and sodium. To achieve this goal, we have established nutritional guidelines to direct sourcing and distributing high-quality, nutrient-dense foods. These guidelines were adopted from the Healthy Eating Research (HER) Nutritional Guidelines for a Charitable Food System (see appendix A) and align with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2020-2025. Furthermore, we will review and evaluate our Policy annually to ensure that it remains current and effective in meeting the health concerns of our neighbors. By prioritizing nutrition as a core component of the services our food bank provides, we believe that we can help support the health needs and quality of life for the individuals and families we serve.



2. Cultural responsiveness involves an understanding of the cultural beliefs, values, and practices of different groups and communities. By creating a nutrition policy that acknowledges the cultural needs of our neighbors, CFBNJ is best positioned to support their dietary habits. The goal of this Policy is to support neighbors' accessibility to foods that both meet evidence-based nutrition guidelines and are culturally appropriate. We recognize that within the communities we serve, Black, Hispanic/Latinx, Indigenous, and Communities of Color are disproportionately affected by food insecurity. Evidence gathered by the US Department of Health and Human Services in 2020 found that Black non-Hispanic households were over 2 times more likely to be food insecure than the national average (21.7 % versus 10.5 %, respectively). Additionally, 17.2% of Hispanic households were found to be food insecure, 6.7% above the national average.² White individuals account for 71% of New Jersey's population and have a food insecurity rate of 4%. While Black and Hispanic individuals make up 15.3% and 21.5% of New Jersey's population, their food insecurity rate is 16% and 15%, respectively.^{3,4,5,6} In order to support and acknowledge the diverse food choices and cultural heritage of our neighbors, it is important to build flexibility within the implementation of our nutrition guidelines and policies.

3. In addition to ensuring access to food that meets health considerations and is culturally appropriate, this Policy considers the food preferences of our neighbors by soliciting feedback from our network on foods being provided. CFBNJ's program layering efforts assist in this endeavor through continually touching base with our community members across multiple channels. In conjunction with this Policy, knowledge sharing across CFBNJ's programs will promote a more culturally responsive impact.

Food Inventory Sources Covered by this Policy

This Policy applies to the following foods acquired by the food bank:

1. Foods and beverages donated by food manufacturers, distributors, retailers, organizations, producers/growers and community members, including gleaned product.
2. Foods and beverages obtained from government programs.
3. Foods and beverages purchased by the food bank.

Foods to Prioritize Covered by this Policy

This Policy will prioritize increasing procurement of food items within the "Choose Often" and "Choose Sometimes" tiers of the Healthy Eating Research (HER) Guidelines for a Charitable Food System. Focusing on these tiers ensures that CFBNJ provides access to the most nutritious options like fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and lean proteins.

Fruits and Vegetables:

- Nutrient guidelines for this food group:
 - Saturated fat ≤ 2.5 g
 - Sodium ≤ 479 mg
 - Added sugar 11 g



- Included in this category:
 - Fresh fruits and vegetables with a focus on providing a variety of colors, seasonality, and groups:
 - Fruit groups including citrus, pome fruits, stone fruits, berries, melons
 - Vegetable groups including leafy greens, cruciferous, cucurbit, nightshade, root, allium
 - Frozen fruits and vegetables with no added sugar or sodium
 - Fruits canned in water or 100% juice
 - Vegetables canned with no added salt or reduced sodium
 - 100% fruit and vegetable juices

Whole Grain and Whole Grain-Rich Foods:

- Nutrient guidelines for this food group:
 - Saturated fat \leq 2.5 g
 - Sodium \leq 479 mg
 - Added sugar \leq 11 g
- Included in this category:
 - 100% whole grains such as quinoa, brown rice, barley, stone ground grits and farina
 - Whole wheat pasta
 - Whole grain breads
 - Whole grain cereals with \leq 6 grams added sugar
 - Plain oatmeal

Protein Foods:

- Nutrient guidelines for this food group:
 - Saturated fat \leq 4.5 g
 - Sodium \leq 479 mg
 - Added sugar \leq 11 g
- Included in this category:
 - Dried beans
 - Low-sodium canned beans
 - No added sugar nut butters
 - Unsalted nuts
 - Fresh/frozen poultry, lean beef, lean pork
 - Fresh/frozen/low sodium canned fish
 - Eggs
 - Tofu

Dairy Foods:

- Nutrient guidelines for this food group:
 - Saturated fat \leq 6 g
 - Sodium \leq 479 mg
 - Added sugar \leq 11 g



- Included in this category:
 - Fat-free or low-fat unsweetened yogurt
 - Skim, 1%, 2% milk
 - Fat-free and reduced-fat cheeses
 - Light sour cream

Non-Dairy Alternatives:

- Nutrient guidelines for this food group:
 - Saturated fat \leq 2.5 g
 - Sodium \leq 479 mg
 - Added sugar \leq 11 g
- Included in this category:
 - All plant-based milks, yogurts, and cheeses

Beverages:

- Nutrient guidelines for this food group:
 - Saturated fat 0 g
 - Sodium 140 mg
 - Added sugar 11 g
- Included in this category:
 - Water, coffee, tea

Mixed Dishes:

- Nutrient guidelines for this food group:
 - Saturated fat \leq 6 g
 - Sodium \leq 599 mg
 - Added sugar \leq 11 g
- Included in this category:
 - Soups, stews, and frozen meals

Foods to Deprioritize Covered by this Policy

According to The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the top five most preferred foods by food pantry guests are poultry, meat, fish, dairy, fresh fruits and vegetables, and eggs, while candy and soda were among the least preferred.⁷ Fruit and vegetable intake has been shown to be lower in food insecure households and declines as the level of food insecurity becomes more severe. One potential reason for this correlation may be that calorie-rich foods tend to be more affordable compared to fruits, vegetables, lean meats, and high-fiber foods.⁸ According to Feeding America's Hunger in America 2014 report, 79% of food insecure households reported purchasing inexpensive, unhealthy foods as a coping strategy in order to feed their families.⁹



This Policy would like to underline that in a balanced diet, there are not inherently “bad” foods; rather overall diet patterns, moderation, variety, nutrition education, and access to quality foods are key factors in ensuring a sustainable approach to nutrition, where all foods can be enjoyed. By deprioritizing foods with lower nutritional value and that our neighbors least prefer, CFBNJ is better able to economize storage capacity allowing for a greater ability to receive and store more nutritious and neighbor preferred items. To prioritize CFBNJ resources, support food preferences, and promote the overall health of those we serve, CFBNJ will reduce the following foods and food categories by not directly purchasing or seeking donations of these items.

1. **Mechanically Separated Meats:**

- a. Mechanically separated meat is a paste-like and batter-like meat product produced by forcing bones, with attached edible meat, under high pressure through a sieve or similar device to separate the bone from the edible meat tissue.
- b. Feedback from our network partners indicates that this item is not favorable among our neighbors.

2. **Sugar Sweetened Beverages**

- a. Frequently drinking sugar-sweetened beverages is associated with weight gain, obesity, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, kidney diseases, non-alcoholic liver disease, tooth decay and cavities, and gout.¹⁰
- b. Sugar-sweetened beverages are any liquids that are sweetened with various forms of added sugars like brown sugar, corn sweetener, corn syrup, dextrose, fructose, glucose, high-fructose corn syrup, honey, lactose, malt syrup, maltose, molasses, raw sugar, and sucrose.
- c. Examples of sugar-sweetened beverages include, but are not limited to, regular soda (not sugar-free), fruit drinks (not 100% juice), sports drinks, energy drinks, sweetened waters, and coffee and tea beverages with added sugars.¹

3. **Desserts:**

- a. Including baked goods (cookies, cakes, brownies, muffins), ice cream, frozen novelty desserts, fruit snacks, and candy.

4. **Food items that rank as “Choose Rarely” according to HER guidelines**

- a. The Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2020-2025 recommend limiting the intake of saturated fat, sodium, and added sugar.
- b. The “Choose Rarely” tier of the HER guidelines (see appendix A) provides nutrient limits that align with these guidelines.¹¹

Items Not Covered in this Policy

1. Nutritional food products (specialized diet foods)
2. Baby food/formula
3. Condiments



Targets for Inventory

This section outlines the specific targets we aim to achieve for each category: Choose Often, Choose Sometimes, and Choose Rarely

1. Choose Often and Choose Sometimes Foods:

- a. 95% of CFBNJ's purchased food will be combined inventory of Choose Often (Green) and Choose Sometimes (Yellow) foods. This target will ensure that our neighbors have access to a wider range of nutritious options that support their health and preference needs.

2. Timeline:

- a. To ensure that our inventory aligns with organizational goals, capacity, and market trends, CFBNJ is committed to reaching our specified inventory targets by June 30th, 2026.
- b. The timeline will provide sufficient opportunity to implement the necessary changes in the inventory procurement process and work closely with our vendors and donors to align with our nutrition objectives.

3. Inventory Specific Targets:

- a. This Policy pledges to provide a variety of fresh and frozen produce, as well as culturally appropriate foods. To meet this commitment, CFBNJ will conduct internal reviews to assess and improve our offerings, considering market trends, organizational requirements and capabilities.

4. Quarterly Review:

- a. CFBNJ will review progress towards achieving our inventory target quarterly, allowing CFBNJ to identify any deviations from the goals and make necessary corrections promptly.

5. Annual Review:

- a. At the end of the fiscal year, an annual review of the Policy's target on the inventory will be conducted. This assessment will evaluate the effectiveness of our goal. Based on the results of this annual review process, targets may be adjusted, if needed, to ensure they remain realistic, driven, and continue to align with the Policy's goals.

Cultural Responsiveness: Strategies to increase availability of culturally relevant foods

CFBNJ is committed to improving the equity, diversity, and inclusion of the services and foods we provide so that they are reflective of the communities we serve. Diverse communities will have different food and nutritional security needs and different barriers to addressing those needs. Research heavily supports the idea that tailored interventions that address these culture-based differences promote healthy food behaviors better than non-tailored interventions.^{12, 13}



By acknowledging the unique dietary needs and practices of the different communities and cultural groups that we serve; this Policy can be more effective in promoting access to nutritious foods that reflect the culturally diverse needs of our neighbors.

The cultural responsiveness component of the Policy aims to guide our staff in delivering culturally relevant and appropriate foods to the communities we serve.

1. Definition:

- a. Cultural Responsiveness: Cultural responsiveness refers to the ability to understand, respect, and effectively respond to the cultural needs and preferences of individuals and communities.

2. Guiding Principles- The following principles will guide the implementation of our Cultural Responsiveness Policy:

- a. Inclusivity and Equity: We are committed to eliminating barriers and promoting equitable access to nutritious and culturally appropriate foods for individuals from all cultural backgrounds. We aim to address disparities and ensure that our services are inclusive, responsive, and culturally appropriate.
- b. Language Access: We recognize the importance of language access in providing culturally competent services. We will strive to offer interpretation and translation services, as available, to ensure effective communication.
- c. Community Engagement: We will actively engage with our communities to understand their unique needs, preferences, and challenges related to nutrition. We will encourage input from our network partners and neighbors to inform the development and improvement of our services and food offerings.
- d. Policy Review: The Cultural Responsiveness component of the Policy will be reviewed annually to ensure its effectiveness and relevance. Any necessary revisions will be made to align with emerging best practices, community needs, and organizational goals.

Review Process for Nutritional Ranking of Specific Food Items

1. If there are questions or concerns regarding specific foods within the established HER nutrition rankings, please contact Erin Long, Community Nutrition Manager, at Elong@cfbnj.org to initiate a review process for the item by the Nutrition Policy Working Group.
2. The review process will involve an examination of evidence-based research, nutritional data, and input from stakeholders such as partner agencies and neighbors to determine the appropriateness of the food's nutritional ranking within the context of the Policy's goals.



Overview of Policy Implementation and Review

This Policy has been reviewed by the CFBNJ’s board of directors. The Policy will be effective as of July 1st, 2024. The policy will be reviewed annually after initial implementation by the Nutrition Policy Working Group and the board of directors.

Appendix:

Nutrition Guidelines for Ranking Charitable Food

Food Category*	Example Products	Choose Often			Choose Sometimes			Choose Rarely		
		Saturated Fat	Sodium	Added Sugar**	Saturated Fat	Sodium	Added Sugar**	Saturated Fat	Sodium	Added Sugar**
Fruits and Vegetables	Fresh, canned, frozen, and dried fruits and vegetables, frozen broccoli with cheese sauce, apple sauce, tomato sauce, 100% juice, 100% fruit popsicle	≤2 g	≤230 mg	0 g	All 100% juice and plain dried fruit			≥2.5 g***	≥480 mg	≥12 g
					≥2.5 g***	231-479 mg	1-11 g			
Grains	Bread, rice, pasta, grains with seasoning mixes	First ingredient must be whole grain AND meet following thresholds:			≥2.5 g***	231-479 mg	7-11 g	≥2.5 g***	≥480 mg	≥12 g
		≤2 g	≤230 mg	≤6 g						
Protein	Animal (beef, pork, poultry, sausage, deli meats, hot dogs, eggs) and plant proteins (nuts, seeds, veggie burgers, soy, beans, peanut butter)	≤2 g	≤230 mg	≤6 g	2.5-4.5 g	231-479 mg	7-11 g	≥5 g	≥480 mg	≥12 g
Dairy	Milk, cheese, yogurt	≤3 g	≤230 mg	0 g	3.5-6 g	231-479 mg	1-11 g	≥6.5 g	≥480 mg	≥12 g
Non-Dairy Alternatives	All plant-based milks, yogurts and cheeses	≤2 g	≤230 mg	≤6 g	≥2.5 g	231-479 mg	7-11 g	≥2.5 g	≥480 mg	≥12 g
Beverages	Water, soda, coffee, tea, sports drinks, non-100% juice products	0 g	0 mg	0 g	0 g	1-140 mg	1-11 g	≥1 g	≥141 mg	≥12 g
Mixed Dishes	Frozen meals, soups, stews, macaroni and cheese	≤3 g	≤480 mg	≤6 g	3.5-6 g	481-599 mg	7-11 g	≥6.5 g	≥600 mg	≥12 g
Processed and Packaged Snacks	Chips (including potato, corn, and other vegetable chips), crackers, granola and other bars, popcorn	None			If a grain is the first ingredient, it must be a whole grain AND meet following thresholds:			≥2.5 g	≥141mg	≥7 g
					0-2 g	0-140 mg	0-6 g			
Desserts	Ice cream, frozen yogurt, chocolate, cookies, cakes, pastries, snack cakes, baked goods, cake mixes	None			None			All desserts		
Condiments and Cooking Staples	Spices, oil, butter, plant-based spreads, flour, salad dressing, jarred sauces (except tomato sauce), seasoning, salt, sugar	Not ranked								
Miscellaneous Products	Nutritional supplements, baby food	Not ranked								

References:

1. Why It Matters . 2023, www.cdc.gov/nutrition/about-nutrition/why-it-matters.html#:~:text=People%20with%20healthy%20eating%20patterns,these%20conditions%20and%20prevent%20complications. Accessed 9 May 2023.
2. Food Insecurity - Healthy People 2030 | health.gov. Health.gov. Published 2020. Accessed June 15, 2023. <https://health.gov/healthypeople/priority-areas/social-determinants-health/literature-summaries/food-insecurity>
3. "Black (All Ethnicities) Hunger & Poverty in New Jersey | Map the Meal Gap." Feedingamerica.org, 2023, map.feedingamerica.org/county/2021/black/new-jersey. Accessed 9 May 2023.
4. "Latino (Hispanic) Hunger & Poverty in New Jersey | Map the Meal Gap." Feedingamerica.org, 2023, map.feedingamerica.org/county/2021/hispanic/new-jersey. Accessed 9 May 2023.
5. "White, Non-Hispanic Hunger & Poverty in New Jersey | Map the Meal Gap." Feedingamerica.org, 2023, map.feedingamerica.org/county/2021/white/new-jersey. Accessed 9 May 2023.
6. "QuickFacts: New Jersey." Census Bureau QuickFacts, United States Census Bureau, 2022, www.census.gov/quickfacts/NJ. Accessed 9 May 2023.
7. Caspi, Caitlin E., et al. "Needs and Preferences among Food Pantry Clients." Preventing Chronic Disease, vol. 18, 1 Apr. 2021, www.cdc.gov/pcd/issues/2021/20_0531.htm#:~:text=In%202019%2C%20meat%20was%20reported,and%20eggs%20were%20always%20available,https://doi.org/10.5888/pcd18.200531. Accessed 9 May 2023.
8. Mello J, Gans KM, Patricia Markham Risica, Usree Kirtania, Strolla LO, Fournier L. How Is Food Insecurity Associated with Dietary Behaviors? An Analysis with Low-Income, Ethnically Diverse Participants in a Nutrition Intervention Study. 2010;110(12):1906-1911. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jada.2010.09.01>
9. "Hunger in America 2014, Executive Summary" Feedingamerica.org, 2014, <https://www.feedingamerica.org/sites/default/files/research/hunger-in-america/hia-2014-executive-summary.pdf>. Accessed 9 May 2023
10. CDC. Get the Facts: Sugar-Sweetened Beverages and Consumption . Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Published April 11, 2022. Accessed May 9, 2023. <https://www.cdc.gov/nutrition/data-statistics/sugar-sweetened-beverages-intake.html>
11. Top 10 Things You Need to Know About the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, 2020-2025 | Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Dietaryguidelines.gov. Published 2020. Accessed June 26, 2023. <https://www.dietaryguidelines.gov/2020-2025-dietary-guidelines-online-materials/top-10-things-you-need-know>
12. Hammons A, Hannon BA, Teran-Garcia M, et al. Effects of Culturally Tailored Nutrition Education on Dietary Quality of Hispanic Mothers: A Randomized Control Trial. 2019;51(10):1168-1176. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jneb.2019.06.017>
13. Varela E, McVay MA, Shelnut KP, Mobley AR. The Determinants of Food Insecurity Among Hispanic/Latinx Households With Young Children: A Narrative Review. 2023;14(1):190-210. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.advnut.2022.12.001>

