

# FOOD FOR ALL

Improving Access to Healthy and Local Food

GREATER KANSAS CITY



## 1 IN 7 OF OUR RESIDENTS DON'T HAVE ENOUGH TO EAT

Kansas and Missouri are above average, but in this case, it's nothing to be proud of. We rank 8th (Missouri) and 15th (Kansas) among the 50 states in food insecurity. In the heart of one of the richest agricultural regions in the country, **more than 15% of our residents don't have enough to eat.**

### FOOD INSECURITY

While everyone knows what hunger is, food insecurity is a less well-known concept.

Food insecurity is the way that the USDA measures levels of access to food. Food insecure households are those that were not able to afford a nutritionally adequate diet at all times in the past 12 months. For individuals and families, food insecurity may mean reducing food portions or skipping meals altogether, and it means the uncertainty of not knowing where their next meal will come from.

Children in our region are at especially high risk of food insecurity. **In Kansas,**

**More than 15% of our residents are food insecure**

**20% of children under age 5 live in food insecure households.** The rate is even higher in **Missouri, which has the 5th highest rate of child food insecurity in the United**

**States.** Overall, families with children (especially single-parent families) are at highest risk for food insecurity.

**Food insecurity is detrimental to our health, economy, and community.** In food insecure households, children do worse in school and adults miss more days of

work. Because they often only have access to low-nutrient, high-fat foods, food insecure people have a harder time managing chronic illnesses and are more likely to suffer from diet-related health problems like diabetes and obesity.

## The Greater Kansas City Food Policy Coalition

The Greater Kansas City Food Policy Coalition (GKCFPC) advocates for a strong local food system that provides healthy, sustainable, and accessible foods for everyone living in Greater Kansas City.

We are an alliance of individuals, government representatives, businesses, and organizations representing all critical components of our local food system, including healthcare, agriculture, education, social services, food distribution, government, private business, nonprofit agencies, and others.

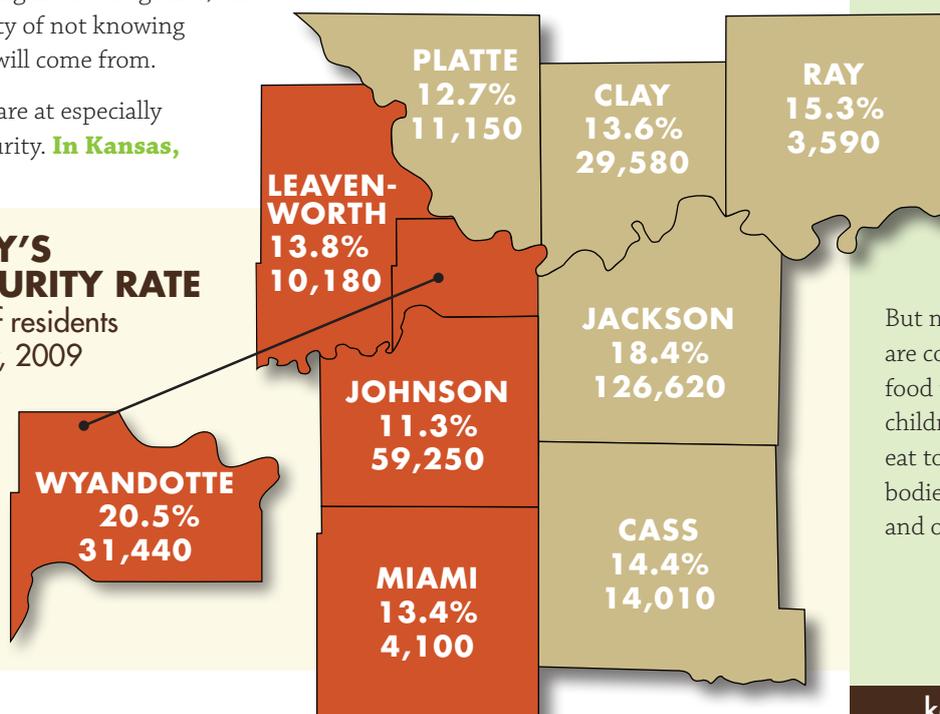
But most importantly, we are consumers. We want the food that our families, our children, and our neighbors eat to be the best for our bodies, our environment, and our local community.

### KANSAS CITY'S FOOD INSECURITY RATE

and the number of residents affected by county, 2009

Kansas ■  
Missouri ■

Source: Feeding America and Harvesters-The Community Food Network



## THE FOOD ENVIRONMENT

The food environment plays a significant role in who does and does not eat healthy, fresh, and local food. **Neighborhoods that lack grocery stores**, supercenters, and fresh food markets **are called food deserts** because staple grocery items are not affordable or easily accessible.

People in **inner city food deserts** without adequate transportation may have to purchase food in nearby convenience stores that carry highly processed, high-fat foods, or get fast food. And when they are able to get to a grocery store, they can typically only purchase what they can carry.

With more small-town grocery stores closing every year, families in **rural food deserts** often have to drive many miles to get to a full-service grocery store. This can be a significant burden for families with time pressures, and as gas prices continue to rise.

The good news is that there are **workable solutions** to food insecurity and the Greater Kansas City Food Policy Coalition is committed to implementing them. The GKCFPC seeks to **increase the availability and affordability of healthy, safe, and local food to everyone in the region.**

## IDEAS FOR CHANGE

There are many opportunities to improve access to healthy, affordable food in our community:

- Implement the recommendations about food deserts that were recently identified in the GKCFPC's food system assessment.
- Support new and existing farmer's markets, community gardens, or mobile fruit and vegetable trucks by:
  - Supporting the increased use of SNAP benefits at farmer's markets.
  - Offering SNAP participants dollar-for-dollar matches toward the purchase of fresh fruits and vegetables at farmer's markets or mobile market trucks.
  - Adopting zoning ordinances that are supportive of urban agriculture production and on-site produce sales.
- Improve transportation options to healthy food sources for underserved areas and people by:
  - Adding or improving public transportation routes between food deserts and grocery stores and farmer's markets.
  - Providing transportation subsidies to low-income individuals or subsidizing supermarket shuttle services.
- Attract new food stores or improve healthy food options in existing stores by:
  - Offering incentives to supermarkets to locate new stores in food deserts identified in the community food assessment.
  - Providing incentives and technical assistance to help existing small grocers or convenience stores in low-income neighborhoods expand their fresh, local food options.



Contributor: Jennifer Jensen, Rural Policy Research Institute

## WHAT IS A FOOD DESERT?

*A food desert is a place – often within lower-income neighborhoods or in rural communities – with limited access to affordable and nutritious food.*

### PRESENTED BY

GREATER KANSAS CITY  
**FOOD POLICY COALITION**

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*The views and opinions expressed in this publication are those of the GKCFPC and do not necessarily reflect the position of our funders.*

### FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information about the food system, public policies, and local food resources, visit [kcfoodpolicy.org](http://kcfoodpolicy.org) or contact Beth Low, GKCFPC Director, at [bethlow@kcfoodpolicy.org](mailto:bethlow@kcfoodpolicy.org) or 816.585.4738.

[kcfoodpolicy.org](http://kcfoodpolicy.org)