

Communities for a Better Environment

Sowing Seeds: You Are What You Grow!

East Oakland Food Fact Sheet

Our children should not be forced to eat junk food because there are no good alternatives. The food system is broken and low-income people of color are suffering disproportionately. By promoting a sustainable food system where our children and families have access to healthier food choices and that increases environmental and social justice, we can ensure healthier communities.

We need a food system that prioritizes the needs of East Oakland's most vulnerable communities.

We need to come together and make a difference. Support Communities for a Better Environment's (CBE) vision to clean up and green up our East Oakland communities. We can all play a role in building a healthier community for all of East Oakland. We want a sustainable food system that is based in locally grown food and run by our community for our community.

- Low-income communities of color suffer due to no or limited access to healthy affordable fresh foods. Lack of access contributes to higher rates of obesity, which increases risks of coronary heart disease, stroke, cancer and diabetes, all of which disproportionately impact African Americans.¹
- In a 2009 community survey 33% of East Oakland residents surveyed responded that there is not a full-service, affordable supermarket near their house.²
- There are nine supermarkets in the Oakland Hills and only four in the Flatlands.³
- In another survey, more than half of people from Oakland Flatlands responded that they shopped at corporate supermarkets, travelled an average of 20 minutes to their most common shopping location, and over half of them made those trips by car.⁴
- Most of East Oakland is considered a "food desert" by the USDA.

Industrial agriculture creates **serious environmental and public health harms**, including: threatening biodiversity, polluting soil, water and air with synthetic chemical pesticides and fertilizers; causing soil erosion and using unsustainable amounts of water.⁵

- The food system accounts for 17% of all fossil fuel use in the United States.⁶ Food may have to travel somewhere between 1,500 to 2,500 miles from farm to the dinner plate in the U.S.⁷ Diesel trucks and the freight transportation have serious health impacts in East Oakland compared to communities in the Oakland Hills.⁸
- In 2009, a survey revealed that 64% of the East Oakland residents surveyed felt there are not enough good jobs that pay enough for individuals and families in Oakland.^{9, 10}
- In 2008, Oakland residents spent an estimated \$230 million outside of Oakland on groceries.¹¹
- For every \$1 used at a local market an additional \$0.58 cents could be generated in the community economy and could alleviate even more, in relative terms, in per capita healthcare costs.¹²

The reality is that these negative impacts on low-income communities of color are the result of institutional racism, disinvestment in these communities and discriminatory public policies and planning practices.

CBE achieves environmental health and justice by building community skills and power to take action. CBE works with community leaders to "Clean Up and Green Up" their neighborhoods and to change systems and policies that put our families' health and well being at risk.

Our vision is to collectively cultivate community and sow the seeds for our children's future.

Humankind has not woven the web of life. We are but one thread within it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves. All things are bound together. All things connect.

- Chief Seattle, 1854

The only solution to pollution is a people's humane revolution.

-Speech at the "Free John Sinclair" concert in Ann Arbor, Michigan (December 1971)



Join CBE! Contact: Dionne Andrews, East Oakland Community Organizer
1906 Franklin Suite 600, Oakland, CA 94612
dionne@cbecal.org / (510) 302-0430 ext. 21 / cell: (510) 379-0001

Go to www.cbecal.org for more information and to download the factsheet.

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Food Justice is the belief that everyone has the right to affordable, safe, healthy and culturally appropriate food where they live, work, study, play and pray regardless of race, income, gender or belief. It is the belief that good healthy food is a human right.

Residents from the Flatlands of Oakland, predominantly low-income communities of color, need and want stores in their neighborhoods that are owned by and employ community residents, who give back to the community and that sell affordable, healthy, quality, local and culturally appropriate food.¹³ Siting large corporate stores in these communities does not create a sustainable economic or food system.¹⁴ Up to 5% of the City's vegetable needs or 6% of its fruit needs could be produced in parcels here in Oakland, mostly in deep East Oakland.¹⁵

The other potential benefits of expanding urban agricultural programs in Oakland include environmental services, jobs, green space, beautification, and educational opportunities: these programs can also improve public health, raise property values, and make communities safer.¹⁶

By having diverse options like community supported agriculture, community-based urban agriculture, farmers' markets, cooperatives, community retail and local processing businesses and saying "no" to junk food, we can all improve our health, save on health costs, promote a healthier environment and have a more resilient community. Growing a food justice movement and changing the food system in East Oakland is about engaging our families to learn that we have the right to healthy food and that we need to get involved to make the change happen.

Get Involved: CBE's Sowing Seeds program is developing a healthy garden and nutrition collaboration with several East Oakland groups: Acta Non Verba, Allen Temple Arms & Prophetic Justice Ministry, ACORN Woodland & EnCompass Academy, East Oakland Youth Development Center, Castlemont Green Pioneers and Tassafaronga Recreation Center.

For more information, please contact:

Dionne Andrews, East Oakland Organizer dionne@cbeal.org, office: 510-302-0430 ext 21, cell: 510-379-0001

Summer Program Activities
(June 22nd – August 5th)

Community Revival of
International Blvd. Beauty
(CRIBB) – intergenerational
clean-up projects of the East
Oakland International
Boulevard corridor.

Acta Non Verba: Youth Urban
Farm Project– educational
family grow your own food
program at Tassafaronga
Park.

Green Works Development at
Tassafaronga Park and 73rd
Ave and International Blvd.
Sponsored by the City of
Oakland.

¹ Alameda County Public Health Department. *Food Access & Liquor Stores*. 2008. Life and Death from Unnatural Causes: Health and Social Inequity in Alameda County.

² Communities for a Better Environment. 2009. Community-Based Research Summary 2007-2009.

³ HOPE Collaborative. April 2009. *A Place With No Sidewalks: An assessment of food access, the built environment and local, sustainable economic development in ecological micro-zones in the City of Oakland, California in 2008. Preliminary Findings*. Version 5.

⁴ HOPE Collaborative, 2009.

⁵ Horrigan, Leo; Robert S. Lawrence and Polly Walker. 2002. *How Sustainable agriculture can address the environmental and human health harms of industrial agriculture*. Environmental Health Perspectives. 110 (5): 445-456.

⁶ Horrigan, 2002.

⁷ Ahn, Christine. 2004. *Breaking Ground: The Community Food Security Movement*. Food First. Backgrounder. Vol. 10. No. 1. Available at <http://www.foodfirst.org/node/46>

⁸ Lee, Anna. 2008. *Cumulative Impacts in East Oakland: Findings from a Community-Based Mapping Project*. Communities for a Better Environment. Available at: <http://www.cbeal.org/campaigns/oakland.html>

⁹ Communities for a Better Environment 2009.

¹⁰ HOPE Collaborative, 2009.

¹¹ Laurison, Hannah and Nella Young. 2009. *Oakland Food Retail Impact Study*. Public Health Law & Policy, Food First Institute for Food and Development Policy. Development Report No 20.

¹² Laurison, 2009.

¹³ HOPE Collaborative, 2009.

¹⁴ Wang, Yi; Eric Holt-Giménez and Annie Shattuck. 2011. *Grabbing the Food Deserts: Large-scale land acquisitions and the expansion of retail monopolies*. Food First Backgrounder. Vol. 17. No. 1.

¹⁵ N. McClintock & J. Cooper (2009, revised 2010) *Cultivating the Commons: An Assessment of the Potential for Urban Agriculture on Oakland's Public Land*. City Slicker Farms / HOPE Collaborative / Food First, Oakland, CA. Available at: http://www.urbanfood.org/docs/Cultivating_the_Commons2010.pdf

¹⁶ McClintock, 2010.



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