

# 2<sup>ND</sup> FRESH FOOD RETAIL SUMMIT

The Business of Selling Healthy Foods: Perspectives from Around the Table

S U M M A R Y   R E P O R T

NOVEMBER 2014

## *The 2014 Fresh Food Summit hosted by the New York City Healthy Food Retail Networking Group*

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### **An executive summary of the 2nd FRESH Food Retail Summit held on November 14, 2014.**

New York City is home to more than 25,000 bodegas, 1,000 supermarkets, and over 140 farmer's markets. However, marked disparities in access to healthy and affordable food exist throughout the City. In the past decade, the number of organizations working to address these access issues has grown exponentially, from a handful of organizations to close to fifty city-wide. These organizations range from large city-wide operations to small grassroots community efforts, all with the same goal – to support small businesses to increase access to and affordability of healthy food.

### **THE HEALTHY FOOD RETAIL NETWORKING GROUP**

In November 2013, a small group of interested parties led by the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene and Public Health Solutions hosted the first ever NYC Fresh Food Retail Summit, with the mission of bringing together these organizations to provide support, opportunities to share and network, and to discuss issues that could more effectively be addressed via city-wide effort. Over 100 individuals representing approximately 40 organizations large and small attended, an overwhelming majority of which commented that they found the gathering useful and necessary to bolster and support their efforts. Participants voiced enthusiasm for continued opportunities to streamline activities, network, advocate for small businesses, and collaborate to ensure programs are strong, sustainable, and impactful. The Healthy Food Retail Networking Group (HFRNG) was created in response to this call-to-action and has since assembled into four subcommittees: Summit Planning, Quarterly Meeting Planning, Communications and Advocacy.

#### **HFRNG Mission**

To improve New York City's food landscape by facilitating collaboration and streamlining efforts among stakeholders to support equal access to and the economic sustainability of selling healthy and affordable food.

The HFRNG has since grown into a citywide collaboration of over 40 organizations working to coordinate efforts of healthy food retail practitioners and advocates to improve the food landscape in brick and mortar retail venues across NYC. Throughout the year, the HFRNG provides practitioners and advocates opportunities to meet, share, and learn at events such as Fresh Food Retail Summits, Quarterly Meetings and through communications to those working in the field.

### **HEALTHY FOOD RETAIL NETWORKING GROUP**



### **2014 FRESH FOOD SUMMIT SUMMARY**

The Healthy Food Retail Networking Group organized and hosted the second NYC Fresh Food Retail Summit – The Business of Selling Healthy Foods: Perspectives from Around the Table – on Friday, November 14, 2014, from 9:00 am – 4:00 pm at the NYC Food Policy Center at Hunter College.

Whereas the initial 2013 summit focused on networking and gathering, the 2014 summit focused on the business perspective of selling healthy foods and included representatives from grocery distribution, bodegas, supermarkets, and the City Council.

Key themes that surfaced during the day included:

- The intersection between public health, policy and business; and
- The utility of continuing to foster an environment of sharing and learning among healthy food retail public health advocates and business partners.

## MORNING SESSION

Janet Poppendieck, Policy Director at the NYC Food Policy Center at Hunter College, welcomed the HFRNG back to the Hunter College's Silberman Building for the second year.

*"Joining forces with businesses allows advocacy groups to learn about some of the hurdles they have. We welcome the efforts of the HFRNG and want to help you in any way that we can."*

– Janet Poppendieck, Policy Director, NYC Food Policy Center at Hunter College

**Keynote Speaker**, Maura Regan, Senior VP & General Manager of Sesame Street, touched on many topics, highlighting the "Eat Brighter" campaign's collaboration with the Produce Marketing Association (PMA) and the Partnership for Healthier America (PHA) as well as a Sesame Street marketing toolkit that provides resources for the use of Sesame Street characters on packaging and in-store signage called "Sesame Street Sharebles".



*"While the Sesame Workshop may teach us that 1+1=2, the power of partnership proves to us that 1+1=many."*

– Maura Regan, Senior VP & GM of Sesame Street

Sabrina Baronberg, Director of PHS' Food and Nutrition Programs Unit, moderated a lively Panel Discussion - *The business of selling healthy foods: perspectives from around the table*. Panelists included:

**Brian Elbel**, Behavioral Economist, NYU  
**Johnny Diaz, Jr.**, Operator, Fine Fare Supermarkets  
**Ralphie & Alex Herrera**, Owners, Herrera Deli Grocery  
**Mitch Klein**, VP of Government Relations, Krasdale  
**Robert Cornegy, Jr.**, NYC Council Member, Committee on Small Business

The panel was designed to be a conversation between business owners and advocates with the goal of learning how to support businesses in their efforts to provide healthy food to low-income communities and to brainstorm solutions to overcome existing barriers.

*"We are smaller guys and the smaller guys pay more. You have to pay an X amount of something to get the deal so we buy three boxes of something but we can only hold two."*

– Alex Herrera, Owner, Herrera Deli Grocery

An area of potential profit around healthy food retail is selling healthier grab-and-go items like pre-cut fruits and vegetables.



*"The demand is there. People are responding to the "eating healthy" message. A lot of the programs are working – walking tours, cooking demonstrations, and teaching people how to identify healthy foods. The work these community organizations do is making a difference and really helping people."*

– Johnny Diaz, Jr. - Operator, Fine Fare Supermarket

Additional topics that arose during the panel were issues of distribution, fines and fees, food equity and the future of small food businesses in NYC. Council Member Robert Cornegy, Jr. spoke about a City Council initiative, Chamber on the Go, which will provide small business owners with a range of services such as access to capital to technical assistance.

*"The conversation to support small businesses begins with education and information. "Chamber on the Go" brings all of the services that the city has to offer directly to the doorstep of small business owners."*

– Robert Cornegy, Jr. - NYC Council Member, Committee on Small Business

Brian Elbel, Associate Professor of Population Health and Health Policy at the NYU School of Medicine, described how research underscores the importance of food-access, but that there is no silver bullet approach to shift the distribution of healthy food purchasing.

*"Retail-based approaches are important, but they are one piece of the puzzle. We need to think about how to wrap these initiatives around big picture policy changes to make them have an even greater impact."*

– Brian Elbel, Behavioral Economist, NYU

### Afternoon Session

The goal of the afternoon sessions was to facilitate a more intimate conversation between summit participants and panelists around their areas of expertise, to follow-up on themes brought up during the morning discussion and to open the floor to questions.

#### UP CLOSE AND PERSONAL

After a lunch of tamales prepared by Heleadora Vivar, a local East Harlem street vendor supported by the Street Vendor Project, participants broke up into different rooms for “Up Close and Personal” conversations with panelists of their choosing from the morning discussion.

A panel on “Community Organizing around Food Retail” was also available in response to interest from 2013 summit attendees with panelists Mark Winston and Harvir Kaur from the Brooklyn Movement Center and with Afia Bediako as the moderator.



■ During the Store Owner’s “Up Close and Personal” conversation, participants discussed the challenges of daily operations and efforts to modernize and meet customer demands while meeting expenses.

#### SPEED NETWORKING

Attendees were given time to strengthen their professional networks in a fun and structured way at speed networking sessions. Participants were randomized to ensure cross organizational integration and encouraged to distribute their business cards and make connections for future collaborations.

#### CLOSING

Barbara Turk, Director of Food Policy, Office the of Deputy Mayor for Health and Human Services of New York City, gave closing remarks encouraging the HFRNG to continue advancing the City’s efforts to increase food security through healthy food retail initiatives. She recommended that the HFRNG strengthen its advocacy role to elevate the voice of New Yorkers in the policy-making process.

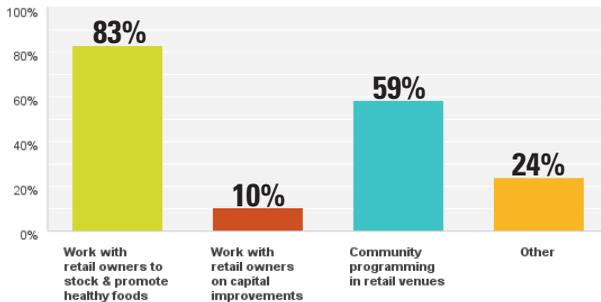


■ During the speed networking session, attendees had three minutes to introduce themselves, their work and exchange business cards.

## DIRECTORY

In an effort to create a healthy food retail city-wide directory, Summit invitees were asked to complete a survey detailing their work to support healthy food retail initiatives. Of the 40 organizations that completed the survey, a majority work with corner stores / bodegas (91%), supermarkets (62%) and wholesalers (30%) to implement initiatives that range from stocking / promoting healthy food supply to community programming (eg. nutrition education), and capital improvements (e.g. physical renovations). This directory of groups working on retail initiatives will help HFRNG members and partners to improve inter-organizational referrals and communication by detailing who partners are and their work.

Which of the following best describes the focus of your initiative around healthy food?



## MAP

Information from the survey was also used to develop a map to visually depict where healthy food retail initiatives are happening across New York City (excerpt to the right). These maps provide an opportunity for healthy food retail advocates and funders to see where the work is happening and leverage opportunities to collaborate, streamline efforts and address service gaps as a network.

## WHAT'S NEXT?

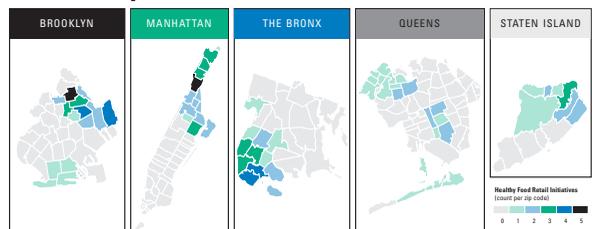
**1. Improved Communication Platforms:** The HFRNG Communications Committee plans to distribute a quarterly newsletter to share food retail program updates, information, news, events, and resources among HFRNG members and beyond. News can be submitted by any member of the group.

The Communications Committee is working to identify funding for a website for organizations to share information about their programs, locate and collaborate with similar practitioners across the city, and access tools and resources related to the work. The group envisions a web portal arranged by borough and then by neighborhood, with access to community needs/food assessments, mapping, programmatic information, and evaluation tools that can be easily shared across neighborhoods

**2. Advocacy Committee:** In response to HFRNG member interest, an Advocacy Committee has formed focused on policy and advocacy. Primary objectives will be to educate members regarding food policy issues and to shape policy recommendations from citywide practitioners.

**3. Quarterly Meetings:** Quarterly meetings will continue to be held to provide practitioners with opportunities to share and network.

## Healthy Food Retail Initiatives Across NYC - 2014



\* This map is based on responses to the 2014 FRESH Food Retail Survey

■ Contents of the directory and map are based only on responses to the pre-summit survey of NYC brick and mortar food access programs. The data is accurate as of November 2014. Copies of the directory and map are available upon request.

## Thank You

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If you are interested in joining the HFRNG or in supporting this work, please contact [healthyfoodretail.nyc@gmail.com](mailto:healthyfoodretail.nyc@gmail.com).



### *What is the New York City Healthy Food Retail Networking Group?*

The Healthy Food Retail Networking Group, formed in 2013, is a citywide collaboration of over 40 organizations working to coordinate efforts of healthy food retail practitioners and advocates to increase access to healthy foods at brick and mortar food retail venues in New York City.



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