

Responsibility for healthy food accessibility



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The accessibility of " healthy" foods is not so much a responsibility of the government but of the community. On July 31 · 2015, the United States Department of Agriculture reported that there are over 8, 400 farmer's markets in the nation and of the 1400 that were surveyed, they all " show that farmers markets continue to grow and serve as popular community gathering places." (USDA) Proposing that as communities begin to grow, farmer markets conjointly appear because they create a stronger relationship with everyone in the community as they depend on each other to grow. As communities learn how to depend on intercommunity programs, the government should bear the responsibility of enforcing regulations that allow consumers make healthier choices and assist local social organizations. In fact there are studies that not only show promise in helping in that particular area but in understanding that there are more individuals motivated in choosing the healthier option than is expected.

The lack of accessibility of " healthy" food is dominantly seen in low income communities around the states. Gentrification and the lack of education are the main dangers that communities face. Farmer Markets have become a common way for local businesses and residents to improve their local economies without the introduction of additional corporations or franchises. In many cases, these markets not only have improved eating habits, but have helped fund educational institutions and create jobs in poverty stricken areas. A farmer's market infrastructure was created in West Oakland under the name of " Mandela MarketPlace". The case study, Transforming West Oakland: A Case Study Series on Mandela MarketPlace, explains that it <https://assignbuster.com/responsibility-for-healthy-food-accessibility/>

began as a, " resident-driven grassroots efforts to bring good food and good jobs into the community." (PolicyLink). Their team of " worker- owners" are all local residents of various cultures who represent the diversity in the community. The implantation of this marketplace shows how creating a place for the community to come together can not only improve the eating habits but the economy of the region itself as it helps include the producers into the community. The marketplace additionally helps the community create local business as they sell a variety of homemade items prepared by " budding local food entrepreneurs" (PolicyLink). The increase of locally made products improve the economy of the community by making it self-sufficient. One of the contributing factors in the growth of the MMP has been due to their youth programs that " engage and inspire young local residents to be part of the solutions that transform the health and well-being of their communities." (PolicyLink) This involvement in the education of the youth allows them to voice their opinions and increase the bonding between the diverse cultures in the communities.

Furthermore, gentrification is one of the many dangers communities are susceptible to. Gentrification, according to the CDC, is " the transformation of neighborhoods from low value to high value" (CDC) meaning that the increase of rents, mortgages, and property tax lead longtime residents to leave the area. Not only does this cause major social issues, such as loss of community history and culture, but the impact of health in the community itself. The CDC also includes that it causes " limited access to or availability of.... Healthy food choices." (CDC) Thus making gentrification a factor on how low income communities have complications in receiving the healthy

food items that would improve their overall health. To resist this transformation, communities have taken up arms (metaphorically) and united to come to an agreement with their city governance for a chance to improve their situation. Dudley Street neighborhood in Boston found how to hold back the gentrification of their homes through the use of their land. Back in the 80s, Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative was created under the leadership of the residents. The initiative established a "community land trust to take democratic ownership of the land and guide development." (Penn) Community land trusts are defined as a nonprofit corporation that develops and supervises public buildings and parks on behalf of the community. They convinced the city to adopt their plan and use the power of eminent domain on over 60 acres of blighted land from private owners. The land obtained, is now used for urban farming to support the neighboring communities. From being nearly gentrified, the Dudley Street neighborhood converted their area into a self-depending community that supplies their own food through local greenhouse and community farms, and have raised their land value by building local businesses and charter schools throughout the area. Their tactic of using land trusts have slowly been spreading to other cities that have begun accepting these trustees and the communities take advantage of large plots of land that were not in use before. Even though, many the States have not adopted this, it stands to show that communities have a larger role in their destiny of accessing both healthier foods and healthier environments.

Not only is there a little access of healthy foods in low income communities, the supermarkets and grocery stores in those areas contribute in the low

access of healthy foods. The reasons they lower the access for healthy foods is mainly because of profit reasons. Keith Seinfeld, health and science reporter from Seattle based Knkx radio station, gets a glimpse on why it is hard selling produce when the store owner of the local " Fresh Green Market" told him, "'You cannot make money on the produce. Then, I decided to add groceries," (Seinfeld) meaning packaged foods'". This suggests that the margin of profit from selling is so low in these communities that it is difficult a to sustain a business solely based buying produce from wholesalers and then selling it. In 2004, The Food Trust, a nonprofit organization based in Philadelphia that is focused on increasing access to affordable healthy foods, began the Healthy Corner Store Initiative to " motivate youth and adults to purchase healthier items through classroom education and direct marketing in the corner stores." (The Food Trust) This initiative works by creating a system where " corner stores" go through a various stage of progression, and for achieving the goals of each store, they receive incentives such as monetary prizes and capital investment. Having an initiative such as this, has resulted in " a cumulative total of over 23, 000 new healthy products were added to corner stores across all stores participating at the basic level of change" (The Food Trust). By incentivizing these small businesses through means of investment, allows them to improve their quality of goods without having to sacrifice that little amount of profit they already make in the daily.

Even with all the upcoming community projects and programs that have begun improving their neighborhoods, it is important to understand that legislation on the smallest details of food labeling can vastly improve the mentality and access of healthy foods. Many researchers have tried

implementing nutritional labeling systems that have resulted in interesting effects on how individuals reacted. One such experiment was done in a hospital cafeteria in Boston, Massachusetts. The objective for this experiment was to determine the effect of labels on costumers' awareness and choice of healthy foods. The experiment categorized cafeteria items using the colors; red (unhealthy), yellow (less healthy), or green (healthy). The negative criteria were based on their saturated fat and calorie content being within a certain perimeter depending on the group each food was placed in. Many of the patrons surveyed before and after the food labeling intervention said that they " usually' or " always" choose healthy foods. Yet the findings suggested that despite their good intentions, " many individuals are unaware of how to make healthy purchases" (Sonnenberg). It is important to include that the study believes that this lack of awareness " may be independent of an individual's motivation to make healthy food choices." (Sonnenberg). Suggesting that even with the motivation and intentions to attempt to eat healthy, the lack in nutrition causes them to choose the unhealthy choice without knowing. The study concluded with individuals seeing health/nutrition as an important factor increase after the implementation of the traffic light labels. Nevertheless, an implementation of traffic light labels on food items causes people to focus less on the nutritional value an item contains, the system will be doing all the work. It would be a step forward to improving a healthier food purchasing mentality.

As local leadership groups realize that the solution is through intercommunity programs and local business, the accessibility of healthy food will increase. This is particularly true as farmers would not have to rely

on the selling to corporations and instead focus on working with their neighbors to supply the various communities that surround them. Moreover, as more intercommunity programs that provide assistance for small business arrive, it will become more common to see corner stores and grocery stores providing healthier options. Even with the main responsibility in providing more healthier food options lies on communities, the government has to be responsible in backing these programs and projects through legislation and monetary backing. Yet, it is important to note that the government support is mainly there to help start up these projects and programs so that they grow enough to depend on the community instead of the government.

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