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NLC RESOLUTION #17

**SUPPORTING HEALTHY FOOD, PUBLIC HEALTH AND SUSTAINABILITY
PRACTICES IN THE 2012 FARM BILL**

WHEREAS, cities throughout the country face multiple health, social, and environmental issues connected to food, including hunger and malnutrition, as well as having to cope with health problems such as Type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and other chronic diseases for which the increasing incidence of obesity and overweight adults and children are significant risk factors; and

WHEREAS, supporting public health and protecting our environment are essential to the viability and livability of our cities and our economy; and

WHEREAS, improving nutrition and reducing hunger are not only moral concerns, but also critical for decreasing social vulnerability, increasing the capacity of children to learn, and improving economic opportunity; and

WHEREAS, agriculture represents an important part of both rural and urban economies, yet, farmland, farms, and farmers are at risk because of policy barriers and inadequate infrastructure; and

WHEREAS, access to healthy food is increased when local and regional food production, processing, distribution and retail work together to build strong markets for healthy foods, and regional food economies are an important source of employment in our communities; and

WHEREAS, maintaining and improving the security of a diverse food supply is essential to local emergency preparedness and regional self-reliance; and

WHEREAS, the current food system has led to an unsustainable reliance on chemical inputs and cheap oil for production and distribution and the paradox of simultaneous increases in both obesity and chronic hunger; and

WHEREAS, around the country local governments and community groups are developing approaches to the renewal of the Farm Bill that reflect these concerns and priorities; and

WHEREAS, local governments have an important role to play in creating a healthy food system, but federal policies and actions significantly impact the ability of cities to fully realize these goals; and

WHEREAS, the policies, programs, and funding included in the 2012 Farm Bill will affect how successful cities can be in improving our local food systems and in doing so, advance goals of environmental sustainability, economic development, public health, race and social justice, and emergency preparedness.

46 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the National League of Cities calls upon the
47 federal government to adopt a Farm Bill that is consistent with these principles in the areas of
48 healthy food, public health and sustainability:
49

- 50 (1) **Health-centered Food System:** Focus on the relationship of food and ecologically
51 sound agriculture to public health. Improving the health of the nation’s residents must be
52 a priority in developing policies, programs, and funding.
53
- 54 (2) **Sustainable Agricultural Practices:** Promote farming systems and agricultural
55 techniques that prioritize the protection of the environment so that the soil, air, and water
56 will be able to continue producing food long into the future. Integral to both domestic
57 and global agricultural policies should be agricultural techniques and farming practices
58 that enhance environmental quality, build soil and soil fertility, protect natural resources
59 and ecosystem diversity, improve food safety (to protect against foodborne illness and
60 disease), and increase the quality of life for communities, farmers and farm workers.
61 Sustainable agricultural practices should be more broadly supported and applied and
62 reliance on oil should be reduced.
63
- 64 (3) **Community and Regional Prosperity and Resilience:** Enhance food security by
65 strengthening the viability of small and mid-scale farms, and increasing appropriately
66 scaled processing facilities, distribution networks, and direct marketing. Develop
67 strategies that foster resiliency, local innovation, interdependence, and community
68 development in both rural and urban economies. New coordination across city, county,
69 state, and federal agencies, as well as between government, civil society, and businesses
70 is needed to allow communities greater flexibility to plan and take action for strong and
71 diverse food systems in every region.
72
- 73 (4) **Equitable Access to Healthy Food:** Identify opportunities and reduce barriers by
74 developing policies and programs that increase the availability of and improve the
75 proximity of healthy, affordable, and culturally-relevant food to urban, suburban, and
76 rural populations. Protect the nation’s core programs that fight food insecurity and
77 hunger while promoting vibrant, sustainable agriculture.
78
- 79 (5) **Social Justice and Equity:** Develop policies, programs, and strategies that support
80 social justice, worker’s rights, equal opportunity, and promote community self-reliance.
81 The policies reflected in the Farm Bill impact the lives and livelihoods of many people,
82 both in the United States and abroad.
83
- 84 (6) **Systems Approach to Policymaking:** Reduce compartmentalization of policies and
85 programs and approach policy decisions by assessing their impact on all aspects of the
86 food system including production, processing, distribution, marketing, consumption, and
87 waste management. Consider the interrelated effects of policies and align expected
88 outcomes to meet the goal of a comprehensive health-focused food system.