FOOD MATTERS TO THE ECONOMY

The Massachusetts food system encompasses every stage of the food production and consumption process, from growing the food to selling it to eating it. The five stages identified for the Massachusetts Food System Plan are Production, Processing, Wholesale and Retail Distribution, Access and Public Health, and Waste and Nutrient Recovery. Every stage of the system is important to the Massachusetts economy in terms of jobs and revenue.

There are approximately 420,000 jobs in food systems sectors, and food systems workers make up approximately 10% of the Massachusetts workforce. Between 2002 and 2012, food system jobs increased 13%. Food service jobs, such as those in restaurants and bars, make more than half of food system jobs, and grew 17% between 2002 and 2012. After food service jobs and jobs in food and beverage stores, food production jobs, those in farm work and operation, make up the next largest share of the food systems industry at 7%, and grew the fastest, at 21%. Jobs in food manufacturing remained relatively stable between 2000 and 2012, at 6% growth, and those in wholesale distribution grew 17%. The only food system sector to lose jobs over that time was farm work, which makes up less than 1% of total food system jobs.

Massachusetts' food system workforce is fairly reflective of the state's overall workforce by race and ethnicity. People of color make up 21% of Massachusetts' overall workforce but 27% of its food system workforce. There are, however, clear differences by industry sector.

The food system sector employing the largest number of workers of color is food services, with roughly 80,000 workers of color, 28% of workers in food services are workers of color.

The food system sector with the largest share of workers of color is the manufacturing sector, with 40% workers of color, or about 10,000 workers of color. Manufacturing jobs are good jobs that are more likely to be full time with better wages than jobs in the service sector.

Food systems jobs may provide opportunities for workers with less educational attainment than is typical in the Massachusetts workforce. Only 20% of food systems workers have college degree or greater, compared 48% of Massachusetts workers overall. The majority of food systems workers (58%) have a high school diploma or a year or two of college, and 22% of food systems workers have less than a high school diploma.