



CONNECTING AGRICULTURE AND HEALTH

PATH TO THE PLATE PROGRAM OVERVIEW

MISSION

To help Texans better their lives through education on the important connection between agriculture and health.

VISION

We are working to ensure the world has safe food, improved health, thriving agriculture and complete understanding.

OBJECTIVES

- ☆ Establish and build trust between Texans and producers of food and agricultural goods.
- ☆ Help youth and adults better understand how food and fiber production relates to nutrition, health and wellness.
- ☆ Partner with food and agricultural organizations to extend appropriate messaging to consumers at every stage of the production chain.
- ☆ Work with agricultural producers and food processors to understand best practices for sustaining family farms and ranches and corollary agricultural and food businesses for the benefit of future generations.
- ☆ Inform the public about innovations in food and fiber production that allow for land, water, and human resources to be utilized in an effective, efficient, and socially responsible manner for a growing population.
- ☆ Help those working in agricultural and food processing industries to better understand the needs of consumers in producing healthy, safe, and affordable food products.



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PROGRAM OVERVIEW, CONTINUED

RATIONALE

The population is estimated to reach 54 million in Texas and 9.7 billion globally by 2050 (Texas State Data Center 2014, UN 2015). To meet this increasing consumer demand, the supply of food, fiber, and other agricultural products produced and processed in Texas must grow as producers employ best practices to sustain water, land, animal, and human resources and minimize food waste.

According to a Center for Food Integrity survey (CFI, 2017), only 42% of consumers believe that the U.S. food system is on the right track. A lack of consumer trust can be attributed in part to a lack of understanding about food and agricultural production systems in general. This knowledge gap impacts consumers' food choices and is counterproductive to the goal for all Texans to make informed food purchase decisions based on truthful, relevant and accurate information. Further, a lack of knowledge regarding food, agriculture and their relationship to health leads to increased risk for chronic disease in adults and children, resulting in a loss of productivity and higher health care costs (CDC, 2010).

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations has estimated (2011) that one-third of the food produced in the world is never consumed; this waste occurs during the planting, harvesting, storage, transportation, and distribution stages, and is also due to processing errors, food discoloration and spoilage prior to users' purchase and consumption. Communicating with retailers, food service personnel and consumers about best practices to ensure healthy and safe food products are consumed will potentially reduce food waste.

Agricultural and food producers must understand their stewardship role to meet the wants and needs of consumers. By producing food, fiber and other agricultural goods in a way that utilizes our land, water, and human resources sustainably, we can leave a healthy legacy for future generations.

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension can foster trust in consumers through education on agriculture, food and health while advancing the stewardship position of agriculturists and food processors. The scientists/specialists who study, investigate and identify best practices, along with Family and Community Health, Agriculture and Natural Resource, Horticulture, and 4-H Youth Development Agents who share the findings, make the agency uniquely positioned to implement **Path to the Plate**.



POTENTIAL PROGRAM OUTCOMES

- ☆ *Texans will better understand agricultural production systems, including why farmers, ranchers, and food companies operate as they do and how values are shared between these entities and consumers.*
- ☆ *Youth will understand the connections between themselves and agriculture, fiber, food, nutrition, health and well-being.*
- ☆ *Consumers and agriculture and food producers will better understand best practices to reduce food waste.*
- ☆ *Agriculturalists and food companies will better understand their stewardship role in utilizing resources for production.*
- ☆ *Texans will recognize the contributions of Texas agriculture and food companies to consumer nutrition and health, as well as to the Texas economy.*
- ☆ *Texas will have a thriving, more sustainable agricultural and food production system to benefit both consumers and future generations of family farms, ranches, agriculture and food businesses.*
- ☆ *Agriculture and food producers will be better positioned to support our growing population, resulting in growth of the Texas economy and enhanced quality of life for Texans and people around the world.*