

"Creating a healthy, sustainable food system locally is what Blue Zones Project and our partners are striving for."

– Jessica Crane



The Blue Zones food policy is aimed at addressing sustainable solutions regarding the sufficient supply of food. GETTY IMAGES

The health of our food system



Jessica Crane

Guest columnist

One area of focus for Blue Zones Project-Southwest Florida is food policy. Similar to the Blue Zones Project itself, food policy is all about a systems approach. It's aimed at addressing sustainable solutions regarding the sufficient supply of food.

A food systems approach analyzes the relationships between the different parts of the food system and the outcomes of activities within the system in socio-economic and environmental/climate terms. The food system includes all food related activities involving the production, processing, transport, and consumption of food. Programs and policy efforts that impact some, or all of these elements, can contribute to a better-or worse-food system.

Blue Zones Project works with partners such as the University of Florida, Florida Gulf Coast University, Florida Department of Health-Collier County, and hunger relief organizations to encourage a healthy food system in Southwest Florida. Blue Zones Project has two food policy committees, one in Collier County, and one in South Lee County. The ultimate goal of those committees is to create outlets

for affordable, healthy, nutritious foods for all.

Some of our areas of focus are on increasing access to farmers markets, encouraging markets to accept Supplemental Nutrition Assistant Program (SNAP) cards such as EBT, establishing community gardens, healthy vending, and preserving agricultural lands.

The most recent effort of the food policy committee is to create a Food Policy Council for our region. A Food Policy Council is a diverse group of stakeholders from different areas of the food system that come together in an open forum to address common concerns. In 2016, Florida created a statewide Food Policy Council with the mission "to address gaps and affect policy within the food system through integrity and collaboration for the benefit of all Floridians and the environment." Besides the Florida Food Policy Council, there are seven municipalities across the state that are working to address food systems locally.

Our hope is to have a regional Food Policy Council in Southwest Florida launching this fall. Creating a healthy, sustainable food system locally is what Blue Zones Project and our partners are striving for and a Council is a great way to start.

If you or anyone you know is interested in being part of a Food Policy Council, please reach out to Jessica Crane. Jessica.ayers.crane@sharecare.com