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CONTACT: Susan Merrick at 518-274-8685 or media@capitalroots.org
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PRESS RELEASE

Capital Region Partners Announce Launch of the Greater Capital Region Food System Assessment

*Two-Year Research Project to Identify Methods to Increase Equity and
Economic Resilience in the Greater Capital Region Food System*

TROY, N.Y. - Capital Roots, along with partners from across New York's Capital Region, announced the launch of the Greater Capital Region Food System Assessment Wednesday at their headquarters and regional Food Hub, the Urban Grow Center, in Troy. The assessment is a two-year project that will assess production, processing, distribution and consumption of local food to identify methods to increase equity and economic resilience in the Greater Capital Region food system.

"The information that will come from this two-year project has been needed in our region for more than a decade," said Capital Roots' Chief Executive Officer Amy Klein. "Our hope, along with all of those on the assessment's steering committee, is that through this work we will join communities across the country who have committed to the local food movement by providing data-driven information for those working to increase support for local producers and also consumers lacking food security."

This comprehensive food system assessment consists of two parts: a community food security assessment based on four counties of consumption (Albany, Rensselaer, Saratoga, Schenectady) and a local food economy assessment based on the 11 county regional foodshed (Albany, Columbia, Fulton, Greene, Montgomery, Rensselaer, Saratoga, Schenectady, Schoharie, Warren, Washington). The assessment will help the region understand the capacity for locally produced food to fill gaps in urban markets, including distribution infrastructure needs and local food processing opportunities.

Commissioner of New York State's Department of Agriculture and Markets Richard A. Ball, who spoke at the assessment's launch on Wednesday, said that increasing access to local food markets is an important step to protecting the well-being of all New Yorkers.

"By connecting consumers, especially those in need, to sources of fresh, local foods, we can combat hunger in our communities and boost the long-term sustainability of the State's agricultural industry, which strengthens the local economy," Ball said. "The Greater Capital Region Food System Assessment supports Governor Cuomo's efforts to address hunger needs across the State and will be a valuable tool to identifying the needs in the Capital Region."

New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance Commissioner Samuel D. Roberts, who was represented at the launch by Deputy Executive Director Barbara Guinn, said the information gathered will educate not only food producers, but the providers who connect low-income individuals and families to food programs.

“This education will better position state and local leaders to serve the thousands of Capital Region residents who rely on assistance programs to help put healthy and nutritious food on the dinner table,” Roberts said.

Funding for the Greater Capital Region Food System Assessment includes a 2016 Conservation Catalyst Grant from the New York State Conservation Partnership Program, administered by the Land Trust Alliance in coordination with the state Department of Environmental Conservation, as well as a grant from the Community Foundation for the Greater Capital Region’s Community Impact Fund.

“The Land Trust Alliance applauds Capital Roots for the creative and impactful partnership that has been developed for the Greater Capital Region Food System Assessment,” said Ethan Winter, New York Senior Program Manager for Land Trust Alliance. “With key support from the Environmental Protection Fund and the New York State Conservation Partnership Program, this collaboration promises to enhance regional food security while supporting farmers and farmland protection efforts. We believe this project can serve as a model and example for other community-focused initiatives in New York and nationally.”

A vast network of partner agencies, farms, businesses, educational institutions, and individuals representing all food system sectors have been assembled to guide the assessment process. Partners include Albany Community Action Partnership, Agricultural Stewardship Association, Capital District Regional Planning Commission, Commission on Economic Opportunity, Amy Halloran (local food author), Rocky Ferraro (regional planner), Community Foundation for the Greater Capital Region, Field Goods, The Food Pantries for the Capital District, Hawthorne Valley, Hudson Valley AgriBusiness Development Corp., Indian Ladder Farms, New York Farm Bureau, Saratoga County EOC, Schenectady County Community College, SUNY Albany Office of Sustainability, SUNY Albany School of Public Health, SUNY Cobleskill and Whitney Young Health Centers.

“Capital Roots recognizes the need and economic opportunities that exist for reconstructing our food system so that we can build equity for low income consumers to access healthy food, creating stable and viable markets for our farmers,” Klein said. “This assessment is the tool to achieve those goals.”

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Capital Roots is a 40-year-old nonprofit organization that nourishes healthy communities with more than 50 Community Gardens, the Veggie Mobile®, Healthy Stores, the Produce Project, Squash Hunger and more. Capital Roots is headquartered at the Urban Grow Center, a regional food hub focused on urban agriculture and produce distribution to four counties, enabling Capital Roots to triple our ability to deliver fresh food and services to underserved neighborhoods and low-income families. Learn more at www.capitalroots.org.
