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UMaine Today



UMaine, UVM researchers find increase in homegrown food during pandemic in Maine, Vermont

November 19, 2021

New research from the University of Maine and University of Vermont discovered that residents in their respective states grew, fished, raised, foraged or hunted more of their own food during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Food insecurity spiked in the Northeast as a result of the pandemic, prompting many families to increase the amount of food they produce at home.

According to survey data collected in spring and summer 2021 as part of the UVM-led study, almost 60% of households in Maine and Vermont engaged in home food production since the pandemic began. Half of households that engaged in home food production either produced their own food for the first time or bolstered existing production.

The study also revealed that despite food insecurity in Maine and Vermont decreasing since the height of the pandemic, it remains higher than pre-pandemic levels, affecting over 27% of households in both states.

These findings were reported in the latest series of surveys being conducted by the National Food Access and COVID Research Team (NFACT) spearheaded by Meredith Niles, an associate professor in the food systems program at UVM. It serves as the first to demonstrate persistent, elevated rates of food insecurity in multiple New England states.

“Our study shows there is a thriving interest among Vermonters and Mainers in growing their own food and purchasing from local producers,” says Rachel Schattman, a UMaine assistant professor of sustainable agriculture who co-authored the policy brief detailing study findings. “We should think carefully about how supporting our local food systems can help alleviate the negative consequences of disruptive national events like the COVID-19 pandemic.”

[Learn more about the study on the UVM website.](#)

Contact: Marcus Wolf, 207.581.3721; marcus.wolf@maine.edu

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Division of Marketing and Communications
5703 Alumni Hall
Orono, ME 04469-5703

Tel: 207.581.3743
Fax: 207.581.3776

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