Research supports a connection between access to healthy food and increased consumption of fruits and vegetables,¹ which can lower the risk of developing chronic diseases and help maintain a healthy weight.²

Access to farmers’ markets, home and community gardens, and farm-to-institution programs has been shown to increase consumption of fruits and vegetables.¹,³

Improving access to farmers’ markets for low-income individuals and families, through programs such as the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) and Senior Farmers’ Market Nutrition Programs (FMNP), has demonstrated an increase in participants’ fruit and/or vegetable intake.⁴

Traditional Alaska foods, such as fish, wild game, plants and berries, are higher in nutrients and lower in fat than comparable store-bought foods.⁵ Consuming more traditional foods is associated with better health outcomes, such as improved glucose tolerance and lipid profiles.⁶

While eating local foods has many benefits, consumption of local foods alone has not been found to reduce obesity.⁴

65% harvested wild foods by gathering, hunting or fishing at least one time.

50% purchased fresh produce from a farmers’ market, farm stand, U-pick farm or Community Supported Agriculture (CSA).

34% ate produce from their own garden.

Alaskans who have more resources are more likely than those in poverty to engage in local food activities.

Rural Alaskans are more likely than those in other areas to harvest wild foods and less likely to purchase from a farmer or consume from their own garden.
Alaska Obesity Facts: Local Foods

What Can Alaska Schools, Worksites and Communities Do?  
- Establish policies to provide more local foods at schools, worksite cafeterias, meetings and conferences.
- Support and promote farmers’ markets, farm-to-institution programs, community gardens and greenhouses.
- Encourage local food production, processing and distribution.
- Establish a local food or food policy group to work on issues to improve the local food system.
- Establish leave policies supporting traditional, customary and historic food gathering activities.

What Can Health Care Providers Do?  
- Refer low income clients to the Farmers’ Market-Quest (Food Stamp), WIC or Senior Farmers’ Market Nutrition Programs.
- Advocate for programs and policies that promote good nutrition and increase access, availability and affordability of healthy foods.

What Can Individuals Do?  
- Shop at the local farmers’ market, farm or farm stand, and purchase “Alaska Grown” at the grocery store.
- Join the Alaska Food Policy Council (see inset).
- Maintain a backyard or container garden.
- Ask your local restaurant or grocery store to purchase and promote local foods.
- Learn about the edible wild foods available in your area and give some a try!

REFERENCES
3. CDC. Recommended Community Strategies and Measurements to Prevent Obesity in the United States. MMWR 2009:58(No.RR-7).
8. Alaska Department of Fish and Game, Division of Subsistence, Subsistence in Alaska: A Year 2010 Update, January 2012.