

## Food, the Environment, and Human Health: A Visual Communication Tool

This food, environment and human health visual concept map is the product of a brainstorming activity led by the Community Outreach and Ethics Core (COEC) of the University of Washington Center for Ecogenetics and Environmental Health, with the Center's 17-member Community Advisory Board (CAB). The CAB includes representatives from industry, including the Institute for Systems Biology; nonprofit organizations including the Duwamish River Cleanup Coalition, Collaborative on Health and the Environment, Washington Toxics Coalition, Northwest Association for Biomedical Research, and the Northwest Association of Science Writers; government agencies including the Washington State Department of Ecology and Seattle-King County Public Health; representatives of three Northwest tribes; public high school teachers; and University of Washington scientists, staff, and students.

CAB members, our Center Director Dr. Terry Kavanagh, and outreach staff formed small groups and brainstormed the myriad human health issues related to food, recording ideas on post-it notes and grouping organizing themes spatially on a whiteboard. Among the issues raised and discussed were food safety and contamination, agricultural practices, food transport, food policy, health effects, social justice, and research.

Following the meeting, COEC staff used the verbal and spatial concept map that was created during the meeting to develop a visual representation of the outcomes from the discussion. This visual map was returned to the CAB and additional input and refinements were solicited.

The COEC has used this visual communication tool with Center investigators to share CAB and community concerns about food and spark investigators' interest in new research topics. The map has also been distributed at community outreach and tabling events and made available for download on our website.

## Recommended uses of this tool include:

- As an outreach tool to distribute at events focused on issues related to food, diet, environmental health, or food policy;
- As a resource for secondary school teachers and students to spark discussion about how food and human health are interconnected;
- As a tool to use with scientists and academics to help put individual research projects into a larger context and facilitate effective communication with outside audiences (outreach and public engagement).



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