



# FOOD DESERTS



## LEARNING GOALS

- To understand the similarities and differences between a food desert and a food swamp, as well as their respective causes.
- To contemplate how and why food deserts affect developed and developing communities differently,
- To learn about various proposals and initiatives by governments and non-governmental organizations that address food deserts

## ASSIGNMENT

Estimated Time: ~20 min

- Watch ["Food Deserts in D.C."](#) (~3:30 min)
- Read ["Food Deserts Become Food Swamps"](#) (~3 min)
- Read ["Food Swamps Are the New Food Deserts"](#) (~3 min)
- Explore this [Food Desert Map](#) administered by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.
  - Where are the food deserts located in Hawaii?
- Explore the [Global Food Security Index](#). Scroll down to see the world map.
  - How is food security measured in this data? How is it related to food deserts?
  - How does the United States rank in comparison to other countries?
  - Click on the United States its food security profile. Compare it to other countries.

## TERMINOLOGY

- **Food Desert** - Areas in short supply of fresh produce and other high-quality foods. Food deserts most often afflict urban neighborhoods, particularly those with rampant crime and poverty. For more information, check out the Food Desert Map linked below.
- **Food Swamp** - Areas overcrowded with unhealthy eating options, including fast food chains.
- **Malnutrition** - A condition whereby the body is deprived of critical nutrients, due to a poor diet, lack of access, or both. It is important to note that malnutrition can still occur in developed countries. Indeed, a diet wholly dependent on fast food and/or convenience store items does not promote nutritional balance. In order to combat malnutrition, an abundant quantity of food will not suffice; quality is just as, if not even more, essential.
- **Processed Foods** - Foods that are transformed by preservatives, artificial sweeteners, and coloring agents. Examples include microwavable meals, which enjoy a longer shelf life.
- **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)** - The formal name for food stamps, a federal program that assists low-income citizens with food purchases. SNAP is the subject of much controversy, given its penchant for being a target of budget cuts
- **Food Security** - According to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), "Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life."



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## KAHOOT QUIZ

- Go to [Kahoot.it](https://kahoot.it) or use the Kahoot mobile app and enter the pin 08687849
- Or, use [this link](#)

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- When it comes to food security, why does the quality of food matter in addition to its quantity?
- What are food deserts, and who suffers the most from them?
- What causes a food desert? Consider economic, racial, and social disparities.
- According to the [Global Food Security Index](#), the United States is considered among one of the most food secure nations on earth. Yet, the [Food Desert Map](#) shows food deserts all across the country.
  - What accounts for this apparent discrepancy?
  - What does this say about people's access to healthy, fresh foods in the rest of the world?
  - Why do food deserts still exist in wealthy, developed countries?
- According to the [Food Desert Map](#), where are the food deserts in Hawaii?
  - Use google maps to find out how far the nearest grocery store is from you.
  - Are Hawaii's food deserts unique in any way?
- How can governments, activists, and businesses stop the spread of food deserts? What policies or initiatives might work, and why?
- Is there anything that can be done to eradicate food deserts at the school level? What can students do to make a difference?
- To what extent do you think government-sponsored welfare can make a difference? What might be the benefits, as well as the limits, of a purely welfare-driven approach? If welfare is something you are reluctant to embrace, what other solutions merit consideration?

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- [Hawaii Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice](#)  
This page features reports that detail Hawaii's food shortages as well as potential solutions.
- [Hawaii Food Bank Programs](#)  
Review the list of programs that the Hawaii Food Bank has initiated.
- [Food Security in Hawaii](#)  
Read this paper written by George Kent, a former professor at the University of Hawaii. Kent provides an in-depth exploration of Hawaii's food insecurity crisis.
- Read ["The Food Desert of the North"](#) (~10 min)  
An article about the unique struggle that Inuit people face for food security in northern Canada.



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## IDEAS FOR ACTION

### Easier

- Take a look at the Food Desert Map in the additional resources section. Where in Hawaii do they exist? And why? Report your findings to the class in a presentation. Perhaps a lesson plan about this can spark a vigorous, informative discussion among teachers and students.
- Donate to nonprofits, especially the Hawaii Food Bank.

### Medium

- Organize a food collection drive in your neighborhood and/or school. The accumulated amount can then be donated to the Hawaii Food Bank, which plays a critical role in alleviating hunger. Use the drive as an opportunity to educate your neighbors about food deserts.
- Also consider establishing a community garden, for fresh produce combats the spread of food deserts.
- Volunteer for Meals on Wheels. They deliver nourishment to some of our most marginalized communities, especially our kupuna. Nonprofits could always use an extra hand!

### Hard

- Lobby against any proposed budget cut that would gut SNAP and other food assistance programs. Protest, submit testimony, and/or vote. Research federal and state policies simultaneously. Perhaps you can compile your findings into a presentation or brief.
  - ◊ Lobby for bills that would encourage sustainability, such as green agriculture. The more Hawaii can localize its food supply, the less it will witness food swamps. This is where issues like climate justice (SDG 13) intersect with food security.
- Intern for a think tank that crafts policy innovations. One local organization is the [Hawaii Appleseed Center for Law and Economic Justice](#).

## HAWAII DOE SUBJECT STANDARDS LINKS (High School)

### Hawaii Core Standards for Social Studies (HCSSS)

- Content Standard [SS.WH.8.12.1](#)
- Content Standard [SS.US.12.8.1](#)
- Content Standard [SS.US.12.16.2](#)
- Content Standard [SS.MHH.4.9.1](#)
- Content Standard [SS.PID.4.10.2](#)
- Action Projects link to [SS.PID.5.7.1](#)

### Career and Technical Education — Hawaii Content and Performance Standards III

- Benchmark [CTE.9-12.2.5](#)

### [National Health Education Standards](#)

- NHES.1.12.3
- NHES.2.12.4

This lesson was created by Matthew Sohn.