

# Slow Food Systems and Food Insecurity in Copenhagen, Denmark and Western NC

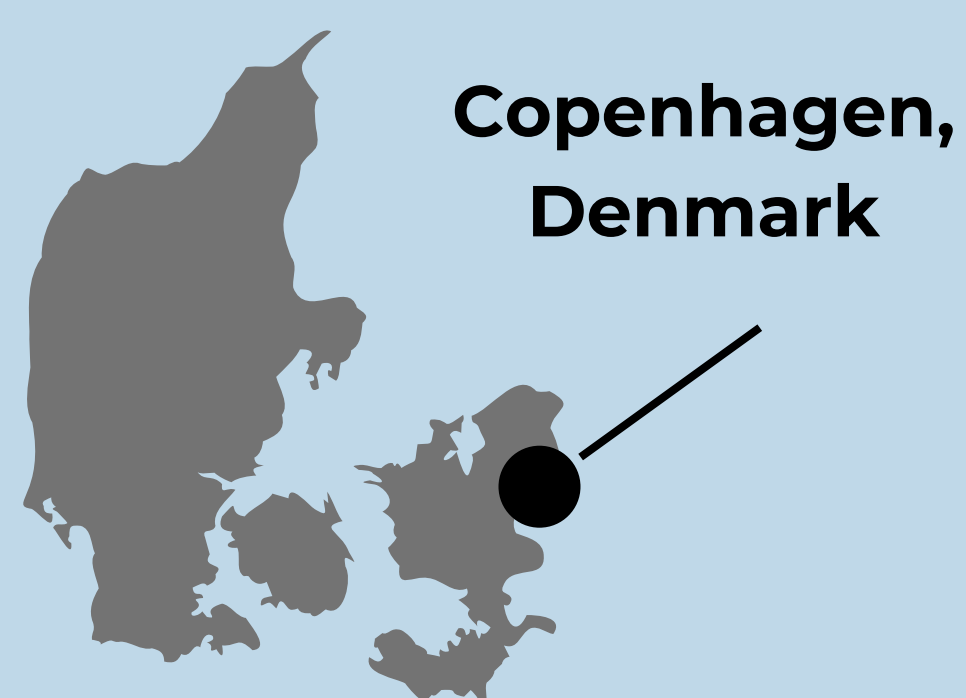


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The US wastes 125-160 million pounds of food a year, according to the Conservation Law Foundation. Yet, over 34 million households are considered food insecure, which is over 10% of households in the country (NIHCM). In North Carolina, the numbers grow, especially for children. Wasting food increases methane emissions and depletes natural resources. Unsettled by these seemingly contradictory issues, I set off to explore the ways these two issues are being combatted simultaneously across the globe.

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I traveled to Copenhagen, Denmark to explore urban farming and food production in a country considered one of the most sustainable in the world. Upon returning home, I set out to explore how the community around me in Western North Carolina produces food for those who are food insecure in the area while avoiding excess food waste.



While in Copenhagen I visited many urban farms around the city and met with farmers, learning about their current projects and philosophies on sustainability. Denmark was an early adopter of organic farming standards and there are more than 1,500 organic farms in the country. I was surprised by how many urban farms there were spread out across the city showing a real commitment to growing local food even with limited space.



Throughout my work in WNC, I noticed a theme of encouraging dignity throughout the process of ensuring food access to all. Through my work with Dig In! Yancey County I witnessed their emphasis on dignity in their weekly Harvest Share. Their approach sets up the weekly harvest share like a farmers' market. Community members



get out of their cars and pick fresh produce items for themselves from a series of tables with all items displayed nicely. This differs from the traditional food donation model which creates pre-packaged food bags where items are prechosen for the recipients. This model encourages a fun, experience like you would have at your local town farmers market, the only different is that it is all free! It also facilitates connection between those distributing the food and community members.



While meeting and learning from many farmers and community members in WNC, I learned about the large group of people who do not qualify for SNAP but still face food insecurity. The organizations I worked with - Dig in! Yancey County and Food Connection distributed food to everyone in the community no matter your background. This is intended to reduce the number of people who fall in the gap between food security and qualifying for assistance. Through my experiences I have come to learn that this approach is not only beneficial but necessary in food justice work as it allows food access for all.

This experience has completely changed how I think about food systems and what it means to produce sustainable food. I've learned that sometimes the mainstream narratives, such as the glorification of organic food, are not the full story. I have seen



the beauty of community organizing and how critical it is to ensure everyone's access to food. I have seen how farming can bring together a community both in Denmark and in North Carolina. Finally, I have seen the interdisciplinary nature of food studies - how we cannot talk about food or food insecurity without discussing farm subsidies, economic policies, and geographies that affect the food to which people have access. I am grateful for what this experience has taught me about food production, sustainability, and community.

