

**BY ROBERT FORD**  
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Diane Reeder, managing director of The Queens Galley soup kitchen, says the newly created New York State Council on Food Policy "has the potential for phenomenal impact."

"I say potentially because it will only make significant strides if the council members are not disconnected from the reality of limited food resources now available to low income consumers," she added.

Last week, Gov. Eliot Spitzer signed an executive order creating the food council, whose job it will be to coordinate state agriculture policy and make recommendations on "developing food policy that will help ensure the availability of safe, fresh, nutritious and affordable food for all New Yorkers, especially low income residents, senior citizens and children," according to a release from the Department of Agriculture & Markets.

Jessica Chittenden, ag department spokeswoman said, it's an effort to open the lines of communications between all those involved in the state food industry, to insure a safe, affordable product and to see that locally grown products get known.

"Ensuring that all New Yorkers have access to safe, fresh and nutritious food is a top priority that the Council on Food Policy will be addressing head-on," Spitzer said.

The Governor got a chance to see how some of the nutritional needs of Kingston area residents are being taken care of when he and his family helped cook and serve meals last Thanksgiving. The Queens Galley, one of the city's busier soup kitchens.

But, in addition to feeding Kingston's needy, The Queens Galley, located on Washington Avenue, also provides workshops "that teach families how to prepare economical, tasteful and healthy meals together," according to its Web site [www.queensgalley.org](http://www.queensgalley.org).

"It is disconcerting to know that many policies are made for people who struggle daily with food insecurity by those who cannot tell you the retail market price of a gallon of milk," Reeder said. "I applaud Governor Spitzer's vision of gathering representatives not just from the arenas of government and agriculture but the brilliant addition of those who grow and distribute food, from organic high end retail to emergency meal providers for the poor."

Reeder added that she hopes that recommendations coming from the council will result in improvements in the state's Food Stamp program, "more wholesome meals made with New York produce of-



**GOVERNOR ELIOT SPITZER** lends a helping hand at the Queens Galley soup kitchen in Kingston.

ferred in our schools and institutions and the education of everyone who eats as to where our food comes from and how it arrives to our table."

The council will have 21 members, with Patrick Hooker, commissioner of agriculture serving as its chair.

"In addition to coordinating food policy, the council will develop a strategic plan to ensure access to affordable, fresh, healthy, nutritious food and expand agricultural production, especially locally-grown and

organically-grown food," according to the Ag department. "The sale of organic food is an emerging market, with more than \$13 billion spent on organic food in 2005. New York has 36,000 family farms that work day in and day out to produce an abundance of fresh, healthy and wholesome food for our 19 million consumers," Hooker said.

Coordinating with farmers and farmers' markets, the council will also work to maximize the distribution of locally grown foods, Chittenden said.