



Policy Memo Re: Institutional Purchasing

Date: December 6, 2018

To: Sustainable Solano

From: Christina Oatfield, Grassroots Finance Attorney

Re: Institutional Purchasing Policy to Promote Local Food Systems in Solano County

Dear Sustainable Solano,

This memorandum describes policy ideas that Sustainable Solano and its local partners could advance to further your goals of promoting access to, consumption of, and awareness of local food in Solano County, California. As with any policy idea, ample discussions with affected stakeholders greatly helps refine the policy proposal and build political support, so we highly encourage you to consider working on these ideas with other local organizations, farmers, city planners, and community groups.

Good Food Purchasing

What is Good Food Purchasing?

Many food movement advocates around the US have succeeded in lobbying institutions to adopt procurement policies, or food purchasing policies, which require the institution to purchase foods that meet certain criteria that promote good nutrition, local agriculture and local businesses, environmental sustainability, animal welfare, and workers' rights. While individual consumers can have a positive impact on the food system by choosing to purchase certain products based on how they were produced, large institutions that purchase ingredients in large volumes can have much greater and more immediate impacts on the food system.

Solano County food and agricultural organizations and business owners could consider asking major institutions such as school districts, hospitals, city and county governments, and other institutions that regularly purchase food and agricultural products in large quantities to adopt a policy that prioritizes purchasing products from Solano County farms, among other criteria. Food procurement policies could require purchasing from farms within a certain number of miles from the institution (common procurement policies that favor local produce define local as grown within 150 or 250 miles) or from within a certain county. Additional policies could favor purchasing from farms with certain certifications, such as organic or animal welfare approved.

Resources

The Center for Good Food Purchasing promotes an adaptable food purchasing policy framework for large institutions, such as schools and hospitals, seeking to purchase food that provides measurable benefits in five categories which include: Local Economies, Environmental Sustainability, Valued Workforce, Animal



Welfare, and Nutrition. Institutions around the US have adopted some version of the Center's food procurement policy. The Center provides metrics, standards, and technical assistance for institutions to adopt a policy and track its progress on implementation. See their online resources at this link:
<https://goodfoodpurchasing.org/>

Success Stories

According to the Center for Good Food Purchasing, since adopting a Good Food Purchasing policy, LA Unified School District has shifted \$12 million in spending toward local farms.

Friends of the Earth produced a report detailing how the Oakland Unified School District was able to substantially reduce environmental impacts and increase nutritional quality of its school meals while saving costs by lowering quantities of meat served, but purchasing higher quality meat. See the report titled Shrinking the Carbon and Water Footprint of School Food available at this link:

<https://foe.org/resources/shrinking-carbon-water-footprint-school-food/>