

Sacramento Region

Food System Action Plan

“A Healthy and Thriving Regional Food System with Access for All”

September
2015



What is the Food System Action Plan?

The Action Plan provides a common framework along with integrated goals, strategic priorities and recommended actions to strengthen the food system for the six-county Sacramento region. Celebrated as America's Farm to Fork capital, our region is renowned for the diversity, quality and vitality of our food and agriculture. In spite of this great abundance, there are many disconnects in our food system. Very little of the food grown in the region makes its way to our plates. Many residents suffer from persistent hunger and food insecurity. Lack of access to affordable healthy food is a major contributor to poor health status, especially as related to certain chronic diseases.

OUR BOUNTY ...

- \$2.4 billion in farmgate value
- More than 150 different crops grown
- Annual food production = 3.4 million tons
- 7200 farms and ranches covering 1.3 million acres
- More than 37,000 food and ag-related jobs
- More than \$4.4 billion in economic value – a major regional economic driver

AND YET...

- Only 2% of food consumed locally is grown in the region
- 90-160% increase in amount of food served by food banks over 6 years
- 22.5 million pounds of food distributed by the region's food banks annually
- Higher levels of overweight and obesity than the state levels
- \$215 million could be added to the local economy from more participation in federal nutrition assistance programs

Our food system is big, dynamic and complex. Over the past several years, many individuals, farmers, chefs, government agencies, businesses, institutions such as schools, food banks, health systems, and other organizations, including a growing number of nonprofits, have been working to strengthen this system. Increasing market demand, innovative projects and new public policy initiatives and investments are creating economic and community development opportunities to localize the food

system. While much progress has been made, many gaps exist. We are at a turning point. With better focus, collaboration, coordination, and increased investment and organizational capability, we can take the regional food system to the next level. The Food System Action Plan provides the road map to take us there.



¹ See full report for all data sources.



The Process

After a series of learning sessions with key members and leaders of the community, the Sacramento Region Community Foundation adopted “Connecting the Regional Food Economy” as one of its four new strategic initiatives in late 2014. In early 2015, the Foundation engaged Valley Vision, a recognized leader in the regional food system, to prepare the Food System Action Plan.

Its development was a collaborative effort with many regional partners and guided by a Champions Advisory Committee of leaders from throughout the region.

Action Plan goals, strategies and action recommendations were developed as a result of much quantitative and qualitative research and analysis. More than 250 community stakeholders, including elected officials, were directly engaged through convenings, focus groups, interviews, briefings and other activities to identify regional assets and gaps. The report has three first-ever products prepared for the region:

- County and regional maps showing food deserts overlaid with major food access points including emergency food distribution sites - a visual overview of food access gaps in the region, both urban and rural.
- Inventory of the nonprofit organizations working on the region’s healthy food system activities. Nonprofit organizations are playing an increasingly vital role in the food system and the health of the sector is crucial.
- Baseline data on food distributed through the emergency food system.

The Action Plan

The purpose of the Food System Action Plan is to support a resilient, prosperous, equitable and sustainable food system. The Action Plan contains four goals, nine strategies and fourteen recommended priority action areas. It describes the organizations and partners already working in the targeted areas, innovative models, and what is needed to reach scale and impact through investments in infrastructure, programs and organizational capacity, especially of the nonprofit sector. Food System Action Plan focus areas are shown above – recommended goals, strategies and actions are summarized on pages 3 and 4.

The Action Plan calls for strategic leadership and investment in all aspects of the food system, from growing to distribution, and to many types of customers, from individual to retail and institutional purchasers. This approach will increase access to healthy locally-grown food for those most in need, as well as grow new markets for our farms, businesses, and food and ag entrepreneurs. Combined with increasing knowledge about the importance of agriculture to our region and the ways to access, prepare and eat these foods;

training the next generation of farmers and workers; and incubating new technologies that will make our food system the most sustainable in the world – together we can achieve these goals.

The Action Plan recommends investments and action in five pivotal areas. The Foundation, Valley Vision and the Champions Advisory Committee will engage partners and potential investors in moving the plan to implementation, with regional partners taking on various implementation roles. As the Action Plan is a living and fluid document, the Foundation and Valley Vision will continue to identify emerging issues and areas of opportunity; convene, connect and coordinate stakeholders, funders and others; set up a metrics system; and communicate about and advocate for our regional food system under the guidance of the Champions Advisory Committee.



Please see the website for more information on the Action Plan, updates and ways you can be engaged:
www.sacregfoodaction.org

GOAL 1:

Ensure the viability of the food and ag economy at all scales.



Strategy 1.A:

Increase access to financing and affordable land for existing and emerging farmers.

Recommendations:

- Inventory publicly and privately owned properties available to lease for urban farming by adopting and scaling up in jurisdictions throughout the region new civic technology platforms being prototyped.
- Connect and assist existing and new farmers with financing resources to acquire farmland, expand operations and facilities, and update SACOG's Rural-Urban Connections Strategy (RUCS) information on land use agricultural models that could increase financial viability.



Strategy 1.B:

Increase the pipeline of new growers and create career pathways across the entire education and training system.

Recommendations:

- Expand existing farmer training programs to develop a coordinated approach at the regional level with models for accreditation and apprenticeship certification.
- Identify key demand occupations and pathways models; add K-8 grade schools as feeders to high school career academies.

Strategy 1.C:

Support the development and deployment of new technologies that help food and agriculture adapt to changing environmental conditions, improve health, and compete globally.

Recommendation:

- Support expansion of AgTech entrepreneurship programs.

GOAL 2:

Increase the amount of locally-grown food distributed to the regional food system.

Strategy 2.A:

Establish a regional network of food hubs.

Recommendations:

- Build capacity to implement the RUCS food hub findings, and provide growers with information to shift/expand crop production for local markets.
- Develop a financing mechanism for food hub development; leverage the potential to incubate the food hub(s) in the food banks.

Strategy 2.B:

Implement an institutional food procurement strategy.

Recommendations:

- Develop a health system local food procurement pilot and a partnership between the Sacramento region and the Health Care Without Harm Ed-Med Collaborative on joint procurement strategies.
- Develop an inventory of school districts' procurement capacities and needs for locally-sourced foods.



GOAL 3:

Increase access to fresh, healthy produce, especially in underserved communities.

Strategy 3.A:

Strengthen the emergency food assistance system in order to increase the capacity to provide more food to those in need.

Recommendation:

- Work with food banks to support and increase the capacity of the emergency food system through: increasing the amount of cold storage facilities and other infrastructure needed to create more efficiency; capacity-building through needed training; and increased collaboration among partner agencies to provide more food to their communities.

Strategy 3.B:

Provide funding to CalFresh outreach programs to increase the number of participants among those eligible for federal nutrition assistance programs.

Recommendation:

- Increase funding to existing CalFresh outreach programs to support staff and needed training at these locations and to increase enrollment at other locations.

Strategy 3.C:

Develop federal nutrition assistance benefits (CalFresh/WIC) healthy food incentive match programs by creating a long-term funding source and expanding accepted locations to include grocery stores.

Recommendation:

- Develop a sustainable funding source that increases the amount of matching funds available by expanding programs with scalable models.

GOAL 4:

Increase consumption of healthy foods through access to food and nutrition education and knowledge.

Strategy 4.A:

Create opportunities for food and nutrition education and garden programs at schools, churches, and other sites.

Recommendations:

- Expand programs that address long-term change and support a variety of programs working with different age and cultural groups.
- Support a school garden coordinator position at school sites or across sites.



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