

# Sonoma County Healthy & Sustainable Food Action Plan Highlights

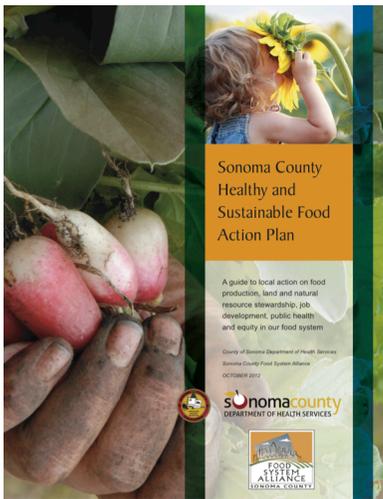
Sonoma County Food System Alliance • [SonomaFoodAction.org](http://SonomaFoodAction.org)



## What is the Sonoma County Food System Alliance?

The Sonoma County Food System Alliance (FSA) is a county-based coalition of diverse stakeholders working collaboratively to envision, advocate for and create a vibrant local food system. We envision a system in which local growers and processors are economically viable, the physical environment is maintained, and consumers have access to healthy, affordable food. Convened through a partnership between Ag Innovations Network and the County of Sonoma in 2009, the FSA is a powerful forum to confront and resolve local food system issues by identifying and implementing key strategies that lead to effective action.

## What is the Food Action Plan?



Building upon existing work of the FSA, the Food Action Plan (FAP) provides a shared community vision and goals for our local food system. Strategies in the FAP incorporate the findings from the Community Food Assessment and Sonoma County Food Forum Report. The FAP invites local governments businesses, community organizations and individuals into dialogue and action to improve our food system.

- **As a road map**, the Plan serves as a framework to guide collaboration and integrate the efforts of diverse food system stakeholders.
- **As a guide**, it serves to catalyze policy change, encourage investment and raise awareness and support from our community and policymakers.

**How the Food Action Plan is organized:** The FAP groups opportunities and concerns into **4 action areas (Pillars)**. Within each area, key goals are articulated and details of policies and recommendations are enumerated into sub-goals. In total, the FAP incorporates 11 overarching food system goals and 42 sub-goals across the 4 Pillars.

**Support the Food Action Plan and take action!** The time has come to join together in supporting a healthy, equitable, thriving local food system. The FSA encourages stakeholders of all backgrounds to complete the **Declaration of Support** and join with others playing an active role in improving our food system.

Please visit [SonomaFoodAction.org](http://SonomaFoodAction.org) to learn more and support the Plan!

## Pillar 1: Agriculture & Natural Resources

In order to have local food, we need local land on which to produce it, and that land needs to be thoughtfully managed to ensure those lands are maintained for future generations. Sonoma County has the potential to produce large amounts of diverse types of food. However, over the past hundred years, the variety of crops produced locally has decreased to mostly those products that can be distributed and marketed outside of the county. Creating more agricultural diversity and crops for local use is central to a thriving local food system. It is crucial to ensure that agricultural lands are permanently protected so there will always be land available for food production.

### Goal 1. Protect and enhance agricultural land base, farms and ranches

- 1.1 Protect permanent farm and ranch land
- 1.2 Promote the use of public land for food production
- 1.3 Promote educational opportunities on farms and ranches
- 1.4 Support public and private incentives for food producing land
- 1.5 Ensure regulatory support for food production and processing



## Goal 2. Encourage sound resource management

- 2.1 Support agricultural practices that preserve and increase topsoil/soil fertility and enhance riparian corridors
  - 2.2 Work towards Sonoma County sustainable water use and encourage conservation practices to save water and conserve energy
  - 2.3 Create resources out of food scraps and agricultural by-products
  - 2.4 Educate and promote environmentally friendly third-party certification for local food producers
  - 2.5 Prioritize the regeneration of local fish and fisheries
  - 2.6 Support and encourage heirloom livestock, crop and species diversity
  - 2.7 Enhance agricultural potential to mitigate and adapt to climate change
  - 2.8 Promote wildlife-friendly agricultural practices
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## Pillar 2: Economic Vitality

The Economic Vitality action area focuses on the promotion of local food products and producers, increasing the capacity of the local supply chain (including processing, distribution and storage) and encouraging institutions like schools and hospitals to purchase local food. Economic Vitality refers to all parts of the food system being able to remain healthy and in business over the long-term. This includes farmers, ranchers and fishers who produce the raw food products as well as the various processors, distributors, retailers and other businesses that have a role in delivering food to the consumer. In this time of national and international economic recession, supporting local farmers and local food businesses is increasingly recognized as a powerful opportunity to jump-start the local economy.

**The multiplier effect...** Research demonstrates that locally-directed spending by consumers more than doubles the number of dollars circulating among businesses in the community – creating a local economic stimulus effect. Economists call this the “multiplier effect,” because it steers more jobs and sales tax revenue into the community. For example, in contrast to importing food to Sonoma County, if \$100 million more dollars of locally-produced food was consumed in Sonoma County, it would result in an additional \$25 million in local economic activity. Several recent studies have found multiplier benefits of local businesses to be up to three times those of non-local businesses.



## Goal 3. Support local food system jobs and commerce

- 3.1 Develop, support, implement and fund “local foods” marketing efforts in order to increase demand for healthy local food
- 3.2 Identify and support funding and resources for existing and new farmers and ranchers
- 3.3 Expand the capacity of the local food supply chain to create more jobs in Sonoma County
- 3.4 Support the cultivation of culturally appropriate crops

## Goal 4. Encourage institutional purchasing that supports the local food system

- 4.1 Build in preference of purchasing Sonoma County products
  - 4.2 Support and encourage a regional food hub to serve as an aggregation and distribution center to increase the market for products and stimulate more supply
  - 4.3 Support and encourage a regional alliance of institutional food purchases to buy from local producers in order to stimulate more supply
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## Pillar 3: Healthy Eating



The Healthy Eating action area addresses health outcomes related to food consumption and access in Sonoma County. Healthy Eating is influenced by access to healthy, safe, affordable foods and beverages, and by individuals’ knowledge, attitudes and culture. Healthy Eating is an important factor of a sustainable food system. Poor diet and physical inactivity contribute to a number of health conditions: obesity, type 2 diabetes, certain cancers, cardiovascular disease, high blood pressure and stroke. In Sonoma County, obesity and weight gain are serious health concerns and are most prevalent in low-income populations.

A 2008 statewide study found that Sonoma County residents had over three times as many fast food restaurants and convenience stores nearby as grocery stores and produce vendors. A more recent in-depth study of four low-income neighborhoods in Sonoma County, with a combined population of nearly 24,000

and over 50% of the Hispanic population living in poverty, found limited access to affordable, healthy food. Instead, these

neighborhoods were dominated by convenience stores and fast food outlets offering few healthy choices. Furthermore, none of the food stores or fast food restaurants met standards for healthy food marketing. Fruit and vegetables were priced more than 10% higher than the county average and very few stores accepted WIC vouchers. Three of the four neighborhoods did not have an accessible farmers' market.

### **Goal 5. Increase equitable access to healthy, affordable, safe, culturally appropriate food and beverage choices**

- 5.1** Include increasing access to healthy food and beverage choices and decreasing availability of unhealthy food and beverage choices in local general plans
- 5.2** Incorporate Health Impact Assessments in the review process for all projects and policies
- 5.3** Support the implementation of wellness policies
- 5.4** Support the implementation of policies for publicly purchased food, food available on public premises and food obtained via public contracts to make healthy food and beverage choices standard in these settings
- 5.5** Support innovative strategies to increase the retail availability and affordability of healthy local food and beverages and decrease the prominence of unhealthy food and beverages

### **Goal 6. Connect the food insecure with food and nutrition assistance programs**

- 6.1** Promote awareness and enrollment in food assistance programs
- 6.2** Increase point-of-sale acceptance of CalFresh and WIC
- 6.3** Connect surplus food with need

### **Goal 7. Increase education about local agriculture, nutrition and the impact of food and beverage choices**

- 7.1** Promote growing food in home, neighborhood and school settings
- 7.2** Establish and expand affordable and accessible education programs for basic cooking, food preservation, nutrition skills and green practices
- 7.3** Promote farm trips and know-your-farmer programs

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## **Pillar 4: Social Equity**

This action area explores the root causes of hunger and food insecurity. The long-term health of our community will require more than just increasing access to food and nutrition assistance programs. This section looks at opportunities to address system-wide inequalities in our community that ultimately lead to hunger and food insecurity.

Creating system-wide change includes working to ensure that all individuals have the tools and resources they need to make healthy food and lifestyle choices, as well as equal opportunities to shape food system priorities and goals. A socially equitable food system protects the rights for farmers and farm workers, and upholds the dignity and quality of life for all who work in the food system through healthy living and working conditions. According to Occupations Employment Statistics, most food system and farm workers in Sonoma County earn significantly less than the county average. These reported wages are close to the Federal Poverty Level for a family of four.



### **Goal 8. Address root causes of hunger and food insecurity**

- 8.1** Identify and support opportunities for affordable living conditions
- 8.2** Support the definition and implementation of social equity criteria to be used at all levels of public policy

### **Goal 9. Create opportunity and justice for farmers, farm workers and food system workers**

- 9.1** Support policies to address inequities in farm/food system worker employment practices
- 9.2** Promote and support businesses and products that provide opportunities for farmers and food system workers
- 9.3** Support new farmers and ranchers from underrepresented groups
- 9.4** Develop systems to gather ongoing, accurate data on farm/food system workers in Sonoma County

### **Goal 10. Ensure the inclusion of underserved and underrepresented communities**

- 10.1** Support the development and inclusion of community leaders from underrepresented communities in conversations and policy-making about Sonoma County's food system
- 10.2** Increase the participation of community members

### **Goal 11. Increase community resilience**

- 11.1** Improve our ability to feed ourselves from food grown and raised locally
- 11.2** Support an emergency food system that meets the immediate needs of all food insecure people in Sonoma County
- 11.3** Strengthen and diversify the local food system to better cope with disasters and long-term changes

# Call to Action: 7 Ways to Advance the Food Action Plan

1. **Support the Vision:** Sign the **Declaration of Support** to show your commitment to food system changes in Sonoma County (learn more and sign-on at [SonomaFoodAction.org](http://SonomaFoodAction.org)).
2. **Advance These Goals:** The FAP represents our community's food system priorities; use these shared goals and actions as a guide when making decisions about policies, changing business practices, making investments and improving our food system. Identify a specific commitment you/your organization can make to advance these goals.
3. **Work With Others:** Supporting and enhancing a viable food system for future generations requires that all of us work together. As you identify your own areas for action, look for other individuals and organizations that could be natural partners. Joining efforts and using a collective voice will increase our ability to create policy changes and attract funding.
4. **Align Funding:** Demonstrate to granting organizations that your organization's efforts align with the Food Action Plan. This allows funding agencies to understand that your specific efforts are part of a larger coordinated plan to shift the food system locally, demonstrating that their resources may be leveraged as a result.
5. **Incorporate These Goals Into Other Community Planning Efforts:** Incorporate the Food Action Plan's goals and actions into future community planning efforts, as well as into existing plans through updates or amendments to ensure the development of an intentional food system that reflects our values.
6. **Make the Food System a Priority:** Use the Plan to frame decisions about our local food system with elected officials, policy makers, political candidates and community leaders to help elevate our food system as a community and policy priority.
7. **Make Individual Choices:** As an individual consumer we have the power to shape the market which supplies our food. Use the Individual Actions in the Plan to help transform our food system through everyday choices.

The time has come to join together in supporting a local, healthy, equitable and prosperous food system for Sonoma County!

There is a role for every organization, business, government and person to play in building a food system that creates health and prosperity for both our people and our environment. Please visit us online to learn more about the FAP, the Food System Alliance, and how you can get involved!

[SonomaFoodAction.org](http://SonomaFoodAction.org)



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