



Purchase of Local and Sustainable Food by 2025

The Ohio State University Panel on Food Sustainability

September 2016

Introduction

The Ohio State University has a tremendous opportunity to become a leader in addressing one of the most important challenges of our time: feeding a growing population in a manner that ensures human health; the economic viability of food producers, processors and distributors; and unwavering stewardship of the earth's limited natural resources.

In November 2015, The Ohio State University established strategic sustainability goals to move the university towards becoming a global model of sustainable operations and practices. One of the goals within the Resource Stewardship focus is to “increase production and purchase of locally and sustainably sourced food to 40% by 2025.”

Dedicated to providing a fully-immersive learning experience and with over 35,000 opportunities a day to reach their constituents each year, the various campuses of Ohio State are in an ideal position to discover and implement innovative business models that will better serve all members of the community for decades to come. Beginning with this charge to source 40% of our food from local and sustainable sources within 10 years, we aim to catalyze positive change that will reach far beyond the campus landscapes and dining halls to benefit the citizens of Ohio and across the country.

The “40% goal” is timely in that it represents a confluence of interest among passionate and active students, creative and progressive staff, internationally recognized faculty scholarship, Discovery Themes strategic direction, committed university partners, and an administration supportive in improving the Ohio State food system. The panel charged with developing the action plan has worked hard at a challenging time of year to draft the following plan of action for achieving a very challenging goal. We expect that the plan will be continuously evaluated, revised, and improved based on our experience and research as work proceeds, but all are committed to accomplishing the end goal within the targeted time frame, and continuing to improve the Ohio State food system well beyond this initial goal. Following are accounts of the progress to date and the current plans for moving forward.



Completed actions:

The panel members named in the original charge (*Appendix A*) met May 16, 2016, followed by meetings of the full panel on June 6, July 8, August 10, and September 6, with reports shared online between meetings.

- **May 16:** Initial discussion of panel charge, representation needed on the panel, initial recommendations for additional panel members (faculty, staff and students along with one initial external member), process for additional recommendations and invitations decided. All people invited to join the panel accepted the invitation. *Appendix B* contains a complete list of panel members.
- **June 6:** First full panel meeting, including introductions, understanding the variation in perspectives on the meaning of local and sustainable purchasing, coming to a consensus on committee co-chairs (Zia Ahmed, Brian Snyder, Casey Hoy, Mara Momenee), and assigning initial tasks.
- **July 8:** Presentations on existing initiatives – Dining Services, Wexner Medical Center, Real Food Challenge; initial framing of the action plan to be delivered in September; initial discussion of definitions for local and sustainable.
- **August 10:** Discussion of individual panel member definitions and emerging panel consensus on definitions of local and sustainable (definitions follow); strategy for preparing the action plan including scope, outline, and process.
- **September 6:** Met with the Provost and Vice President for Student Life to review outline of final report and solicit their comments and additional suggestions for inclusion. Developed a group strategy for completing the action plan on time and a plan for regular monthly meetings in the immediate future.



Agenda of Action

Panel Timeline



Action Item 1 11/01/2016 Communications	Action Item 2 12/15/2016 Perspective Review	Action Item 3 5/15/2017 Workgroup Report	Action Item 4 5/15/2017 Governance	Action Item 5 05/15/2017 Transparency Report	Action Item 6 12/15/2017 Web-based Reporting	Action Item 7 NEED DATE Academic Involvement	Action Item 8 05/01/2018 External Engagement
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Guiding Principles

As a constructive place to begin, the University Panel on Food Sustainability, charged with achieving the 40% goal, has chosen to pursue three more immediate and crucial objectives along the road to ultimate success.

- 1) First, we plan to achieve **100% transparency** with regard to the sources and production means for all food currently sourced for campus dining venues within two years (i.e. by October 1, 2018). For all fresh food, including produce, meat, eggs, and dairy products, we will know the farms producing our food and basic information about the production method used on those farms. For processed food products, we will know the location of the processing facilities involved and the geographical range, if not the exact locations, of the producers they rely upon for raw materials. This objective will involve fostering relationships with farms and other food system actors that encourage open communication of practices and shared goals to create a healthier, more resilient food system. We will ask the University to adopt such transparency as an official policy, and insist that all vendors supplying our dining halls and other campus dining facilities comply with this policy, given reasonable notice.
- 2) Second, we will insist on establishing clear and consistent metrics by which we determine the localness and sustainability of food sources in a way that assures **continuous improvement** throughout and after the course of this project. We realize we have a flawed system, but by acknowledging this we are pledging to take tangible steps now and in the future to achieve a system that provides for the good of all stakeholders. A key element of our commitment to continuous improvement will be to document customer/patient satisfaction with changes to our campus food



systems. The goal of 40% local and sustainable food is no small endeavor, but a world-class institution such as Ohio State has a responsibility to use its resources and human power to continually strive for a more equitable food system for all.

- 3) As a third principle to guide our work, we pledge to assure that the methodology we use will reflect the **diversity of perspectives** within this dynamic and ever-changing community, especially those marginalized by the current food system. We will accomplish this by developing a governance structure that provides both consistency of crucial definitions and ongoing review of progress, while incorporating newer knowledge and novel circumstances throughout the process. We can never settle on a single, static way of looking at the challenges we face, but with ongoing discussion, evaluation, and measurement strategies, we believe this panel will be well-equipped to craft a truly inclusive approach to meeting this sustainability goal for all.

Action Item One: Communications plan

In collaboration with university communicators, this panel will develop a comprehensive communications plan by November 1, 2016 to keep the campus community informed regarding ongoing panel progress toward the food related sustainability goal. This plan will utilize a variety of communication channels to reach our diverse stakeholders, which includes Ohio State students, faculty and staff; food producers, processors and distributors; government agencies; and the general public. The panel is deeply committed to receiving and integrating feedback from stakeholders, and as such will implement multiple modes of engagement (social media, web site, direct messaging, town halls, surveys, *et cetera*) to capture and address questions and suggestions of all those affected by this action agenda.

Action Item Two: Perspectives

The panel will review various perspectives within the university community and existing industry frameworks for local and sustainable food sourcing by December 15, 2016. In addition, the panel will invite individuals and groups, such as the Real Food Challenge, Joann Lo of the City of Los Angeles Food Policy Council, and a group from Harvard, to share their insights and perspectives. Furthermore, our panel also will continue outreach and promote conversations with additional campus organizations, faculty, staff, and students interested in food systems and sustainability to gain additional insights prior to the deadline.

Action Item Three: Workgroups

Based on community perspectives, the panel will establish an initial set of targeted workgroups made up of faculty, staff, students and external stakeholders by January 1, 2017 to further engage the University community and propose actions for specific goal areas. Additional workgroups may be established as needed. The panel plans to establish these collaborative workgroups to focus on specific tasks – for example, research sourcing data



and metrics, explore curriculum integration, establish governance systems, and create a producer and distributor outreach strategy. The panel will disseminate workgroup reports for the university stakeholders and solicit feedback by May 15, 2017.

Action Item Four: Governance

The panel will initiate an inclusive system of governance that engages students, staff, faculty, and stakeholders, ensuring a rigorous and transparent approach, as called for in the Panel charge, that provides for continuous improvement and evaluation of the initiative. Based on feedback and overall direction of the initiative, the panel will evaluate the integration and involvement of university administration, students, faculty, staff, and appropriate external partners in roles and decision-making related to their expertise and/or scope of responsibilities. The panel will also explore mechanisms for evaluating and adopting consumer preferences and/or demands as they change over time. This action item will be completed by May 15, 2017.

Action Item Five: Transparency Reports

Student Life Dining Services, Medical Center Nutrition Services, and Athletics and Business Advancement will provide a transparency report for fresh produce, meat, eggs and dairy products by May 15, 2017. The report will include items purchased and supplier, origin, and usage information to the extent that this information is available. Where information is unavailable, the reasons for the missing information will be shared. The report will be used to identify opportunities to improve local purchases and/or sustainability practices. Fresh produce, meat, eggs and dairy categories represent significant costs in university purchases as well as having strong potential to impact the local and sustainable supply chain network. These data will inform current practices. The panel will select the next wave of categories and completion deadlines by August 15, 2017.

Action Item Six: Measurement and Reporting

Targeted metrics to measure “local” and “sustainable” progress will be selected or developed and implemented based upon information gathered through May 2017. These metrics will be reevaluated frequently and adjusted accordingly over time. By December 15, 2017, the workgroup will create a web-based reporting system for local and sustainable metrics that is accessible to the entire campus community. The reporting systems can be used to document progress and to communicate continuous improvement.

Action Item Seven: Academic Involvement

Directly aligning with our goals of both educational impact and transparent reporting of purchasing data and analysis, the panel will work collaboratively with colleges and departments to design academic course content that contributes to reporting data, metrics, and analysis of local and sustainable food purchasing. The panel will leverage current



courses to provide targeted content and expand service-learning opportunities by the end of Spring Semester 2017 including: (1) ENR/AED ECON/FABE 4567: Assessing Sustainability: Project Experience, a capstone course for the Environment, Economy, Development, and Sustainability (EEDS) major in which students analyze sustainability of targeted projects (including preliminary purchasing analysis completed last spring); (2) ENR 5600: Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems, in which students gain a greater understanding of the multi-faceted issues in the food system; (3) PUB AFRS/CRP/AEDE 5900: Food System Planning and the Economy, which takes an economic and policy approach to understanding the food system; (4) SWK5026: Community Food Strategies, in which students contribute to local food security issues; (5) HTHRHSC 2300: Service-Learning in Vulnerable Communities, where students are exposed to community-based learning and research; and (6) RS 5530: Sociology of Agriculture and Food Systems, in which students are already contributing to our goals.

The panel also plans to develop a proposal by the end of Spring Semester 2018 for either a new GEN ED course as an introduction to food systems sustainability issues or content that could fit into many existing and new GEN ED courses to achieve the same greater understanding of and preparation for research on the contributions of food purchasing at Ohio State to food system sustainability in Ohio and beyond.

Action Item Eight: External Engagement

The panel will develop a strategy for additional engagement by the Ohio State food purchasing system with qualifying Ohio farms, businesses, and communities by May 1, 2018. This outreach and engagement effort aims to create and/or sustain positive economic, social, and environmental impacts from updated food sourcing policies and procedures. The panel will engage stakeholder groups to identify qualifying food system partners while continuing to grow existing relationships.

Conclusion

The Agenda of Action detailed above will assure full implementation of a system for documenting progress toward reaching the full scope of goals represented by this project within a two-year period, corresponding to the October 1, 2018 deadline for achieving transparency of sourcing for all food received within the university's self-managed food services. We will then track and report that progress until 2025, as indicated in the original charge, and beyond. It is hoped that other objectives will emerge along the way that might affect other foods available to the campus community through existing and new partnerships.

Ultimately, it is our hope that the values and achievements represented by the success of this project will result in a fully immersive teaching and learning experience for everyone at



Ohio State, including students, faculty, staff and even visitors to the university. Our vision is that the experience of nourishing our bodies need not be separated in any way from the more traditional intent to nourish our minds, and that the food served and shared on our campus be understood to represent the same opportunity for advancement that we take for granted in the classrooms and boardrooms where important lessons and decisions take place. Food is the common thread that knits together a dynamic and ever-changing community, and we intend to take full advantage of the promise that our common food system represents.



Attachment A

THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY OFFICE OF ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

Charge to Establish a University Panel on Food Sustainability

April 2016

BACKGROUND

In November 2015, university leaders accepted a comprehensive set of sustainability goals developed by the President and Provost's Council on Sustainability. Among the goals was one that calls for the university to "increase production and purchase of locally and sustainably sourced food to 40 percent by 2025." Additionally, university leaders have supported an initiative through the Discovery Themes to transform food systems on campus, in the community, and across Ohio and beyond to achieve food security for health. Building on the goals outlined, the university needs to consider issues related to how it informs internal and external audiences about our strategic plan and our progress. To this end, the university will create a panel and charge its members with the development of this plan.

THE CHARGE

Deliver to the Ohio State community and the public a full accounting of accomplishments related to food sustainability across the institution, not only in the dining halls but in all phases of university life and in connection with Ohio communities; and to develop the strategic plan to accomplish our 2025 goal. At a minimum, these are goals the University Panel on Food Sustainability will accomplish:

- Define terms, particularly "sustainable" and "local," to achieve scientific rigor and clarity around our 2025 goal.
- Determine metrics by which waste, nutrition, diet-related health, hunger, food sources, cost and impact of Ohio State purchasing will be measured;
- Establish baselines for each of the metrics listed above.
- Develop an inclusive system of governance over the implementation of the initiative that engages students, staff, faculty and stakeholders in ensuring a rigorous and transparent approach to achieving the goal.
- Ensure an approach that engages food buyers on all Ohio State campuses and others impacted by university purchasing on Ohio farms and in Ohio businesses and communities.
- Incorporate the initiative as a larger educational component of the Ohio State experience.
- Outline how the internal Ohio State community informs and interfaces with external audiences.
- Report on progress to date as well as future plans and opportunities to engage all audiences.
- Create a timeline for action.

PANEL FORMATION / TIMELINE

Kate Bartter, chair of President and Provost's Council on Sustainability, will convene the group, which will determine the appropriate chairperson or persons and coordinate additional members for the panel. **The panel's agenda of action will be delivered to Senior Vice President Adams-Gaston and Interim Executive Vice President Provost McPheron by September 15, 2016.**

POTENTIAL PANEL MEMBERS

- Student Representatives – to be determined
- Faculty/Staff Representatives – to be determined
- Zia Ahmed, Sr. Director, Dining Services, Student Life
- Kate Bartter, Director, Office of Energy and Environment (initial convener)
- Molly Calhoun, Associate VP of Student Life (or alternative leader)
- Casey Hoy, Faculty Director, the Initiative for Food and AgriCultural Transformation (InFACT)
- Ryan Schmiesing, Senior Administrative Officer, College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences
- Brian Snyder, Executive Director, InFACT



Attachment B

FOOD SUSTAINABILITY GOAL CHARGE COMMITTEE

Member	Category	From	Email Address
Colleen Spees	Faculty	School of Health and Rehabilitation Services	spees.11@osu.edu
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