



2016 FINAL REPORT

# SANTA BARBARA COUNTY FOOD ACTION PLAN

*For healthy people, a healthy economy, and a healthy environment*



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# SANTA BARBARA COUNTY FOOD ACTION PLAN

*For healthy people, a healthy economy, and a healthy environment*

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## 2016 FINAL REPORT

The Santa Barbara Food Action Plan is a strategy-based community “blueprint” for an accessible, thriving, sustainable, and healthy food system. It addresses every aspect of the food system in a way that supports healthy people, a healthy economy, and a healthy environment.

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As County Supervisors and co-chairs of the advisory board that oversaw the two-year development of the Santa Barbara County Food Action Plan, we are pleased to present you with our final report and recommendations.

As detailed in these pages, our food system is essential to the public health, economic vitality, and environmental resilience of Santa Barbara County. However, many challenges need to be addressed, including the assurance that everyone has access to sufficient nutritious food that will keep local families healthy and food secure. Fortunately, there are opportunities available to enhance our food system and make it more sustainable and accessible.

The Santa Barbara County Food Action Plan is the result of a broad and diverse community effort to examine the opportunities and challenges of the region's food system—which includes the growing, harvesting, processing, packing, transporting, selling and eating of food, as well as the disposing of food waste. Stakeholders included nonprofits, growers, educators, healthcare providers and community activists who came together to explore how this food system impacts people, the economy and the environment. We considered how to reconcile as many interests as possible and make those impacts positive.

We invite you to examine the results of 1,200 hours of volunteer time and involvement by over 200 community members. The Food Action Plan is not intended to take up valuable shelf space in your office. It is a clear invitation to a range of practical actions, where community partners can come together to make breakthrough changes in how food can shape our community's future well-being.

We believe this plan provides an exciting opportunity for the County of Santa Barbara to help move forward some of these initiatives. We heartily recommend this plan to you as a vital guide for the community as we come together to shape the region's food system and make it more resilient for generations to come.

Sincerely,



SALUD CARBAJAL  
*Co-Chair*



STEVE LAVAGNINO  
*Co-Chair*



# Executive Summary



Food, the most basic of human needs, is easily taken for granted in a society of abundance. We too easily forget that history is littered with examples of societies who were not able to adapt how they feed themselves to changing conditions—whether that be persistent drought or economic upheaval. A better future is not guaranteed, and increasingly we are unable to use the past as a reliable guide for what is to come.

The goal of the Santa Barbara County Food Action Plan is to ‘future proof’ how food travels from farm to table. Future proofing is the process of insulating ourselves, as much as possible, from the vagaries of an uncertain future—in essence, to be more resilient. In the food and farming sector, these uncertainties are huge.

When planning for our future, we must ask:

- Will the past continue to be a good indicator for how much rainfall we see each year?
- Will global markets remain stable and growing, or will our attitudes and policies about trade change?

- Will the trend towards increased income disparity overwhelm our safety net of programs and services?
- Will attitudes about immigration and diversity make finding workers for the food sector possible?

In creating this action plan, we believe we can increase prosperity and health across the community and insulate ourselves from future uncertainties by making strategic investments in the food system. This would have a positive, cyclical effect that looks something like this:

- Providing more access to good food and better information creates healthier people who make positive choices for themselves and their families.
- This in turn creates well-nourished workers who are better able to support a vibrant food system, bringing more resources to the community.
- And this in turn allows people to become better stewards of the natural resources that support our health.

To start this positive change moving, the plan asks us to commit to four big actions:

## 1 INVEST IN OUR FOOD ECONOMY

**Invest in Our Food Economy** calls us to support a new, diverse generation of food and farming entrepreneurs with training, education, preferential purchasing policies, and investments in food distribution infrastructure. These upstream investments are designed to pay increasing dividends over time as these entrepreneurs build local businesses and create jobs.

This plan, which is based on two years of community engagement with both grassroots and organizational/business leaders, is focused on opportunities. It is filled with success stories and models and programs that are ready to go to scale today. It avoids debating what or who is wrong out of a belief that change is rarely made this way.

## 2 INVEST IN OUR HEALTH & WELLNESS

**Invest in Our Health & Wellness** calls us to address the continuing diet-related challenges in our community by creating networks of neighbor-to-neighbor support, and by engaging employers, teachers, and physicians as partners to promote healthy living. The strategies focus on the information gaps that make it hard to make good health choices.

We recognize that there are a number of issues that polarize our community – from farmworker housing and wages to pesticide use—and that some agriculture representatives, food justice advocates and environmentalists may not be completely satisfied with how these topics were addressed in the plan. However, it is our hope that by raising these important issues, the plan will serve as a platform for continued engagement on areas critical to the health of the food system and our county’s resilience. This plan explicitly intends to stand outside of the traditional polarization of our community between north and south County, agriculture and environment, and red or blue politics, and is intended to be the beginning of the dialog.

## 3 INVEST IN OUR COMMUNITY

**Invest in Our Community** calls for a countywide commitment to reduce food insecurity and the socially corrosive impacts of poverty through more effective delivery of safety net services, increases in community self-sufficiency in food production, and increased availability of housing for food system workers. The strategies tackle hunger and poverty at three points: immediate need, long-term security, and lifting the most at-risk of us up into stable workforce housing.

This is an ‘all in’ plan that calls for everyone of us, every part of the food and farm sector, to get engaged and get aligned. You do not have to agree with everything to get started. Together we can invest in a better future for the community, by focusing on the health, nutrition, job and business creation, and stewardship opportunities that our food and farming sector presents.

## 4 INVEST IN OUR FOODSHED

**Invest in Our Foodshed** calls us to become stewards of our natural heritage by reducing greenhouse gas emissions generated from the food system, protecting scarce farm and ranch land, reducing food waste, and encouraging best practices for managing precious natural resources. The strategies are focused on opportunity areas where small investments can have big impacts.

Together we can future proof our food system. All we need now is the will to act.

# What Makes the Santa Barbara County Food System Unique?



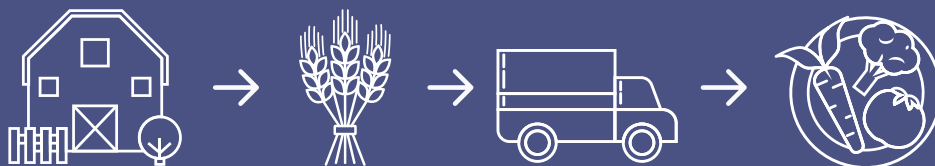
The mild, warm-summer Mediterranean climate, prevailing coastal Pacific winds, and mountainous interior abutting Santa Ynez and Cuyama Valleys make for exceptional year round

growing conditions. Encompassing 700,000 acres of row crops, orchards, vineyards, and rangeland, the agricultural sector is Santa Barbara County's primary economic driver—providing a production value of close to \$1.5 billion in 2014 through diverse goods from strawberries to broccoli, beef to wine grapes.

Moreover, agricultural production is only the beginning of Santa Barbara County's rich food system. Innovative companies create food hubs, distributing fresh products to community schools and neighborhood restaurants. Nearly 20,000 residents work in food and beverage stores or service locations alone. Local philanthropic organizations are supporting schools in establishing nutrition classes and school gardens, helping even the youngest eaters learn about their health and where their food comes from.

However, underpinning this abundance are systemic challenges within our food system. More than half of all residents countywide are overweight or obese. Farm work is the largest and fastest growing

## What is a Food System?



The food system encompasses how food moves from farms to tables. It includes farmers and the farmland on which food is grown, manufacturers and processors, distributors—from truckers to grocery stores to food banks—and all residents as consumers. It also incorporates the inputs needed and outputs generated at each step, including food waste. There are no defined geographical boundaries of our food system, but for the purposes of this plan, we localize the system to be Santa Barbara County.



occupation in the county, but the average farmworker makes less than \$19,000 a year and faces significant challenges in terms of affordable housing, healthcare, and food security for their own families. Our two major agricultural centers, Santa Maria and Lompoc, particularly suffer from some of the highest rates of poverty. These factors—along with lack of access to healthy food and lack of nutrition education—can lead to the consumption of inexpensive, heavily-processed foods containing high amounts of sugar, salt and fat.

Even the natural resources bolstering the county's food system are threatened—through drought, land development, and in some cases overuse of pesticides and synthetic fertilizers. And while some

of our residents can't predict whether they will make it through the month on their food budget, our region sends tons of useable food and food scraps to the landfill each year, generating the potent greenhouse gas, methane.

Clearly, the food system of Santa Barbara County holds both great success and significant opportunities for improvement. The rising interest and efforts to improve the food system shows the possibility for change, while the increasing threats to it show where the change is most necessary. The Santa Barbara County Food Action Plan addresses the food system's largest risks and guides us towards greater resilience, sustainability, and vitality for producers and consumers.



PHOTO CREDIT:  
DANIEL GIRARD

## What is a Food Action Plan?

A food action plan is a community-driven strategic plan that assesses how we grow, distribute, consume, and dispose of food. While each community tailors the plan to their specific needs, most share two common elements: they capture the aspirations of the community around food and farming, and they identify concrete things that can be done to improve the policies, programs, and individual actions that shape how food moves from farm to plate.

# Santa Barbara County Food Action Plan's 16 Goals

## INVEST IN OUR FOOD ECONOMY



### PRIORITY GOAL

1

Support the next generation of farmers and food system entrepreneurs by creating or expanding agriculture and vocational education at the high school and community college level.

### GOAL

2

Encourage entry into the local food economy by building access to a collaboration of educational resources and tools that can be utilized by new and emerging food system entrepreneurs.

### GOAL

3

Develop a preferential purchasing policy model for agencies and institutions.

### GOAL

4

Strengthen distribution systems for local produce through existing networks, food hubs, and alternative markets.

### GOAL

5

Form a food incubator / impact investing hub to facilitate investment in food systems development in Santa Barbara County.

## INVEST IN OUR HEALTH AND WELLNESS



### PRIORITY GOAL

6

Support the development of neighborhood networks of volunteers to provide peer-to-peer education and empowerment to food insecure community members to improve their health.

### GOAL

7

Facilitate the adoption and implementation of workplace wellness policies that include support for healthy eating behaviors and access to healthy foods.

### GOAL

8

Integrate food literacy into all school campus cultures—including in-school and out-of-school programs—throughout Santa Barbara County.

### GOAL

9

Establish “Food as Medicine” programs that promote health through better nutrition.

## INVEST IN OUR COMMUNITY



### PRIORITY GOAL 10

Establish Community Food Access Centers that serve as place-based, food-centric neighborhood revitalization efforts, and which unite multiple functions (including education) in one or nearby locations.

### GOAL 11

Increase affordability and accessibility to healthy, safe, environmentally-sound, locally grown food for all residents of Santa Barbara County.

### GOAL 12

Support fair compensation for all members of the food workforce and increase the availability and accessibility to affordable housing to help sustain their vital role in the regional food system.

## INVEST IN OUR FOODSHED



### PRIORITY GOAL 13

Reduce the food system's contribution to greenhouse gas emissions, while strengthening its resilience and ability to adapt to long-term drought and future climate change scenarios.

### GOAL 14

Protect existing and potential farm and ranch land, as well as the ecosystem services they provide.

### GOAL 15

Reduce food waste across all sectors of the Santa Barbara County food system—from producer to consumer—through policy, education, and collaboration.

### GOAL 16

Promote and incentivize the use of Best Management Practices on farms, ranches, and food system businesses in Santa Barbara County.





# The Santa Barbara Food Action Plan Focuses on Four Key Areas of Investment

## 1 INVEST IN OUR FOOD ECONOMY



## 2 INVEST IN OUR HEALTH AND WELLNESS



## 3 INVEST IN OUR COMMUNITY



PHOTO COURTESY OF: FOODBANK OF SANTA BARBARA COUNTY

## 4 INVEST IN OUR FOODSHED



# 1 INVEST IN Our Food Economy



## DEFINITION

A food economy encompasses all activities within the food system that generate revenue or economic benefit to residents of the county.

- **These activities include all aspects of** agricultural production—including supporting services such as equipment and seed vendors, wholesale and retail food distribution through grocery stores, restaurants and food service, food product manufacturing, labor and business earnings, and tax revenue generated throughout the chain. It also includes food and farm tourism and all the supporting services for visitors enjoying Santa Barbara County’s food and culinary bounty.
- **Ecosystem services provided by agriculture—**such as open space, wildlife habitat, environmental quality, nutrient cycling, recreation, and tourism—also contribute economic benefits, but have yet to be calculated in monetary values.



## ASSETS

Santa Barbara County’s rich food and farming diversity—of crops and cuisines and farm and food business sizes and types—helps create economic resiliency and provides opportunities for both historic and emerging businesses to prosper in the sector.

- **The agriculture profession offers technical careers** in the areas of machining and engineering, biological and chemical science, packaging, marketing and distribution, and human resources and business services. The culinary and hospitality fields similarly offer stable and rewarding careers.
- **Existing entrepreneur hubs and business support centers—**such as Women’s Economic Ventures, Impact Hub, 805 Connect, Lompoc LAUNCHpad, and vocational programs at the community colleges—could be expanded and networked to support food and agricultural businesses.
- **High schools in Santa Ynez, Santa Maria, Lompoc and Santa Barbara** are growing their agricultural career technical education programs. Similar programs could serve as a pipeline to both agricultural and food industry careers.

*We need to put a lot more attention on the transition of generational farmers. With so many old timers retiring, we need to be preparing the next wave of new farmers, through more training and mentoring programs.*

— JASPER EILER, *Harvest Santa Barbara*



## CONCERNS

Career opportunities in food, farming, and agritourism and the range of skills needed are often not fully understood or valued. Building a strong foundation of educational resources and economic opportunity for the next generation of farmers and entrepreneurs requires substantial investment in career and technical education opportunities.

- **The average age of Santa Barbara County farmers is increasing**, with over half age 60 years or older. Succession planning will be critical to ensure that there is land to farm on and farmers to do it.
- **Supply of locally grown food cannot always meet demand** by institutional purchasers, and opportunities for the smaller producers to enter the market are limited and uncoordinated.
- **Low income populations have fewer resources** and difficulty accessing support services and training to pursue development of a small business.



## OPPORTUNITIES

Today's food businesses—from farms and ranches, to restaurants and food services—require expertise in business management, marketing, and finance, as well as engineering, science and natural resources. By promoting investment in the workers and entrepreneurs of the future, we can increase economic and social opportunities for residents, and ensure that the food economy in Santa Barbara County remains a strong prosperity driver.

- **Growing demand for agriculture career education and training programs** in high schools and colleges can help create the skilled workforce that will be necessary for the future of agriculture in the county.
- **By expanding the local distribution systems to include a broader range of growers and food product producers** through cooperative mechanisms—such as existing networks, food hubs, nonprofit centers, alternative markets, and new processing facilities—we can support small and emerging food businesses while supplying the growing demand for ‘local.’

## Introduction to a Better Food Economy

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As residents of Santa Barbara County, we are fortunate to be able to see aspects of our food economy every day as we pass by our bountiful orchards, vineyards, farms, ranches, and ocean. But the production of food is only a small part of the total food economy.

A more complete picture includes the value of food processing, warehousing, distribution, retail sales, and food preparation in grocery stores, restaurants, schools, hospitals, businesses, and homes. And even this picture needs to be expanded, to encompass all the support services and goods needed along the way—from seeds and fertilizers, to refrigeration, to information systems, to waste management and much more. A complete view should also include the growing food-oriented tourism field, which is already a major part of Santa Barbara County's allure.

### Consider in Our County:

The agriculture, tourism and wine industry employed

**36,088  
people**

in 2012, which is 15% of the total county workforce.

On-farm sector jobs are projected to grow by over

 **20%**

from 2012 to 2022—from 18,800 to 22,700 jobs.<sup>1</sup>

University of California, Santa Barbara procures

**46%** of its fresh produce

from local farms (within 250 miles). Over 25% of this is organic and/or grown without pesticides.





PHOTO CREDIT: ELLIOT LOWNDES

## Goals for Investing in Our Food Economy

In this section of the Food Action Plan we recommend investing in the training and education of a new generation of food system entrepreneurs—from farmers to chefs—who have the skills to be successful in business and effective partners with the community.

To assure their success, we make several supporting recommendations that focus on increasing the demand and availability of locally produced food products by adopting a preferential purchasing policy, investing in distribution infrastructure, and creating an innovation hub to support emerging entrepreneurs.

### PRIORITY GOAL

# 1

Support the next generation of farmers and food system entrepreneurs by creating or expanding agriculture and vocational education at the high school and community college level.

#### STRATEGY 1.1

Create engaging educational programs for students at all grade levels that focus on the critical role of agriculture in our community, and promote agriculture as a fulfilling career and desirable lifestyle.

**Sample Resource / Policy:** National Agriculture in the Classroom showcases available curriculum for teachers of K-12 students—emphasizing the basics of agriculture and gardening, the role of agriculture in individual states and the U.S., and the importance of agriculture to communities.

#### STRATEGY 1.2

Highlight the practical application of academic studies in a wide variety of agricultural business scenarios including science, technology, product marketing, and agritourism.

**Sample Resource / Policy:** Chandra Krintz, a faculty member from the Computer Science Department at UCSB, works on technological applications for local farmers. To address the problem of sustainable food security and safety, Chandra and her team developed SmartFarm, which provides producers with a decision support system.

#### STRATEGY 1.3

Build on existing programs such as “Ag in the Classroom” to create experiential opportunities on working farms and ranches.

**Sample Resource / Policy:** California Foundation for Agriculture in the Classroom promotes awareness and understanding of agriculture through formal and informal education that features nutrition, school gardens, and careers in the agricultural sector. They also provide points of contact at the local, state, and national level.



PHOTO CREDIT: GINA POTTHOFF / NOOZHAWK

## GOAL 2

Encourage entry into the local food economy by building access to a collaboration of educational resources and tools that can be utilized by new and emerging food system entrepreneurs.

### STRATEGY 2.1

Identify an existing institution that will create an educational clearinghouse to provide valuable resources to small businesses and entrepreneurs that are looking to enter or expand into the local food economy.

**Sample Resource / Policy:** [Make It Your Business \(MIYB\)](#) co-working spaces in Santa Maria provides meeting rooms and access to a commercial kitchen—as well as services for entrepreneurs, such as professional development, training, website development, and direct consultations.

### STRATEGY 2.2

Provide assistance and resources to new food enterprises and entrepreneurs, including food-focused training and consulting, micro loans, business plan development, and information on higher education programs, financial institutions, government grants, and regulatory bodies.

**Sample Resource / Policy:** [Farm Credit West](#) recognizes that preserving the future of agriculture means making sure that young farmers, ranchers and agribusiness people have a strong business management and financial knowledge base. The organization provides farmers and ranchers with educational and leadership training opportunities, financial management seminars, and a knowledge base from their banker's perspective.

## GOAL 3

### Develop a preferential purchasing policy model for agencies and institutions.

#### STRATEGY 3.1

Create a model policy for the preferential purchasing of local healthy food by public and private institutions.

**Sample Resource / Policy:** *Equitable Development Toolkit: Local Food Procurement*. Developed by PolicyLink, this toolkit goes through the step-by-step process of creating a local food procurement policy, and includes models and successful examples.

#### STRATEGY 3.2

Engage in a process of guidance, support and advocacy to help jurisdictions and institutions adopt preferential purchasing policies.

**Sample Resource / Policy:** *Tools for Advocates: Increasing Local Food Procurement by State Agencies, Colleges, and Universities*. Published by Harvard Food Law and Policy Clinic, this toolkit shepherds local advocacy groups towards effective strategies for encouraging local food procurement policies.

## GOAL 4

### Strengthen distribution systems for local produce through existing networks, food hubs, and alternative markets.

#### STRATEGY 4.1

Expand and strengthen networks of existing growers, producers, customers and distribution businesses through the creation of cooperative mechanisms to better support farmers and food system businesses.

**Sample Resource / Policy:** *Harvest Santa Barbara* works as a tie between local farmers and customers to provide the best of Santa Barbara's agricultural goods, as a means of encouraging a healthier, more sustainable food system.

#### STRATEGY 4.3

Utilize community commercial kitchens as 'micro hubs' that offer entrepreneurial and educational opportunities.

**Sample Resource / Policy:** *Commercial Kitchen Guide*, published by the Minnesota Institute of Sustainable Agriculture, gives guidance on starting a community commercial kitchen within the proper guidelines: licensed and regulated community kitchens may be used to create products for sale in wholesale or retail markets.

#### STRATEGY 4.2

Develop alternative market outlets for small- to medium-sized growers and micro-entrepreneurs.

**Sample Resource / Policy:** University of California Cooperative Extension's *UC Small Farmer Program* develops innovative marketing channels to help small-scale farmers add value to their products.

#### STRATEGY 4.4

Create a cooperative marketing / branding campaign that brings additional value and appeal of locally-produced foods.

**Sample Resource / Policy:** *Buy Fresh, Buy Local*, a program of the Community Alliance with Family Farms in Davis, California, is a marketing and educational program that works to increase consumer demand for and access to fresh, local produce. Program participants include farms, restaurants, retailers, distributors, institutions, food artisans, and other food businesses.

## Fast Track to Professions in Agriculture and Wine



Given that more than half of Santa Barbara County farmers are aged sixty or older, two programs in the heart of the region's agriculture district are offering particularly timely opportunities to educate the next generation of agricultural professionals.

Known for its highly regarded Agribusiness Viticulture and Enology program, Allan Hancock Community College in Santa Maria recently received a grant from the U.S. Department of Agriculture to develop a program that will bring that same hands-on approach and employment focus to a range of other agricultural topics.

The college's new program includes ten new courses in subjects ranging from fruit science, mechanized agriculture, and sustainable agriculture to integrated pest management and the business of ranching and farming. A full certificate program was recently approved.

The program complements the college's viticulture and enology focus, which has led to jobs in the wine industry for hundreds of graduates. With its own vineyard, a new winery, and more than fifty courses, the viticulture students learn to produce, bottle, label and sell wines under the school's proprietary "Captain's Reserve" label.

"Some of our students are just out of high school, some are in the industry and need a class or two to gain specific knowledge, some are changing careers — we even have

vineyard managers and owners taking classes," says program coordinator, Dr. Alfredo Koch. "Here, you can learn everything you need to work in the industry. If we can replicate that in the food program, it will be fantastic."

As part of its mission to help high school students transition into high-demand careers in the Santa Maria vicinity, Allan Hancock is also working closely with the Santa Maria Joint Union High School District on its Career Technical Education Center and Ag Farm, which is being created with \$2 million of funding from the California Department of Education.

The career center will present courses in subject areas that include agriculture and natural resources. The centralized Ag Farm is planned to be one of the first projects on the center's 24-acre property.

"Part of our role is to provide pathways to careers in California agriculture," says George Railey, Associate Superintendent and Vice President of Academic Affairs at Allan Hancock. "The career center will be very valuable, because it gives students the opportunity to build skills that give them a leg up in pursuing careers in agriculture."

Between Allan Hancock College and the CTE Center, a world of agricultural possibilities are opening in the heart of North County.

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**Partners:** Allan Hancock College, California Department of Education, Santa Maria Joint Union High School District, U.S. Department of Agriculture





## GOAL 5

Form a food incubator / impact investing hub to facilitate investment in food systems development in Santa Barbara County.

### STRATEGY 5.1

Build a pathway for combining different forms of capital—grants, equity, loans, credit enhancements—to invest in food-related social enterprises.

**Sample Resource / Policy:** The Cascadia Foodshed Financing Project, out of Washington, pulls together foundation and individual impact investors seeking to use market-based strategies to grow the Pacific Northwest's regional food economy. It focuses on health, social equity, family wage, job creation and preservation, rural community resilience, and the ability to influence policy.

### STRATEGY 5.2

Streamline communication and learning between investors, foundations, banks, and other lenders.


**Sample Resource / Policy:** FarmAid offers a resource appendix called **Financial Resources—Farm Aid Resource Guide**, which includes financial information on agricultural lending, contract agreements, financial planning, loan and grant programs, and more.

### STRATEGY 5.3

Facilitate the scaling of food enterprises by introducing business owners to different forms of capital appropriate to their stage of development.

**Sample Resource / Policy:** Financing and Financial Planning by The Agrarian Trust compiles information on farm financial guides, social impact investors, community based financing, helpful resources for borrowers, agricultural loans and grants, and financial and business planning.





*Santa Barbara is a fishing port, but it's amazing that many people don't know that. It doesn't feel like a traditional fishing town, but we have amazing access to local seafood throughout the year. There is an opportunity to create awareness and pride around the resources and food that is produced in Santa Barbara County and the surrounding area.*

*—LAURA JOHNSON, Salty Girl Seafood*

## SUCCESS STORY

## Can Sustainable Aquaculture Provide Abalone for All?



Between now and 2050, global population is projected to grow from 7 billion to nearly 10 billion, and world demand for protein is expected to increase by 80 percent.

Providing that much protein on land would require an area the size of South America. For a coastal region like Santa Barbara, the natural response to this global need is to explore aquaculture.

But farming edible marine species comes with social, economic, political, legal and environmental challenges. Fortunately, our region benefits from a world-class university, UC Santa Barbara, that is currently researching and developing 20 food-related projects to understand and address this and other challenges.

One of those projects is the new nonprofit Sustainable Aquaculture Research Center (SARC), housed under the UCSB's Bren School of Environmental Science & Management. Here scientists are collaborating with other scientists, economists and entrepreneurs to identify ways of making affordable, healthy, sustainably farmed seafood widely available in Santa Barbara County, with particular focus on low-income residents. The project involves determining whether it is practical to raise marine algae as food for farmed protein-rich abalone, which could then be harvested and brought to market.

"A small amount of abalone contains enough protein for a day," says Bren School professor and SARC director, Dr. Hunter Lenihan. "We're asking what it would take to get healthy aquaculture products to underserved residents of Santa Barbara County."

Partners include The Cultured Abalone Farm and Santa Barbara Mariculture, both of which can provide expertise on aquaculture, as well as Salty Girl Seafood, a start-up company that was born at the Bren School as part of its Eco-Entrepreneurship program. Co-founders Laura Johnson and Norah Eddy—who specialize in providing traceable, sustainably caught seafood to restaurants and consumers—can support the SARC project with the expertise they have developed in bringing seafood to market.

The project will include a market analysis and a marketing and distribution plan, and will be supplemented by SARC's ongoing engagement with legislators to advance permitting, regulation, and management of offshore and onshore marine aquaculture.

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**Current Partners:** The Santa Barbara Foundation, the University of California Global Food Initiative, UCSB Chancellor Henry Yang, Salty Girl Seafood and Santa Barbara Mariculture

# 2 INVEST IN Our Health and Wellness



## DEFINITION

Investing in our health and wellness means equipping all Santa Barbara County residents with access to the necessary resources—from support services to education—to be healthy and productive individuals.

- **Food literacy describes fluency in the everyday practicalities** associated with healthy eating, such as planning menus, budgeting, preparing, cooking and storing food.
- **A second level of food literacy encompasses an understanding** of how our food gets from farm to table and back to the soil—including the impact of food choices on individual health, the economy and our environment.



## ASSETS

Santa Barbara County's abundant availability of fresh fruits, vegetables and seafood gives our region an advantage when it comes to providing healthy, nutritious food, as evidenced by the vibrant farmers markets offered around the region seven days a week. Existing programs and partnerships can be tapped to ensure that all residents have access to those options.

- **A vibrant nonprofit community in our county offers important health services** that can be further networked for greater effectiveness—including School Wellness Councils, school gardens programs, the Live Well Santa Barbara Coalition, Promotoras de Salud, the Foodbank's Nutrition Advocates and Local Impact Groups, and the Healthy Stores / Healthy Valley Initiative.
- **An increasing number of motivated champions** within the healthcare networks in our region can also be tapped for partnership.



*There needs to be greater access to healthy, locally-grown food. I can say this selfishly because I have the luxury to purchase locally-produced items that might be more expensive. It matters to me enough. We need to change these trends and enable growers to provide more food locally in any setting. The economics make sense if we change the system.*

—ASHLEY COSTA, Lompoc Valley Community Healthcare Organization



## CONCERNS

While there are grocery stores and farmers markets that supply healthy foods to most communities across the county, our most vulnerable populations are often unable to access and afford them. In addition, having access to fresh produce does not mean everyone will feel confident in how to prepare it or be motivated to increase consumption.

- **Many communities in Santa Barbara County** experience high rates of obesity, heart disease, and diabetes.<sup>2</sup>
- **Latinos and underserved community members** in particular can become disconnected from health resources due to cultural and language barriers.
- **The convenience and abundance of nutrient deficient foods**, high in fat, sugar, and salt create an environment where the healthy choice is not the easiest choice.<sup>3</sup>



## OPPORTUNITIES

By leveraging resources that already exist—as well as deepening collaborations between programs and taking care not to duplicate services—we can ensure that people have the opportunity to take charge of their health by gaining access to nutritious food and education.

- **Although many decision makers understand the close relationship** between food insecurity and poor health, we must broaden that understanding across all sectors: medical, social, business, and education.
- **Instead of relying on a top-down education model**, we can develop opportunities that encourage civic engagement—where community members are not only informed and empowered to make their own choices, but can also become community leaders and role models who inspire healthy behaviors among their peers.
- **Collectively, we can work to break the cycle of diet-related diseases**, and make healthy choices easier for future generations. This has the potential to decrease healthcare costs and improve the productivity of thousands of people across the county.

## Introduction to Better Health and Wellness

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Our richest asset as a community is the individual and collective health of the people who live here. It is clear from health and education data that there are significant opportunities to both increase the value of the contributions of all members of our community and reduce the costs to society from preventable diseases. In fact, the good news is that over the past 20 years of fighting to improve health outcomes, we have learned that the best results occur when we invest in individuals to solve their own problems.

### Consider in Our County:

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**56.5%**  
of adults in Santa  
Barbara County  
are overweight  
or obese,

and 50% of  
deaths are diet-  
related—with  
heart disease  
being the  
leading cause  
of death.

Infants and toddlers in food-insecure households are **30%** more likely to have a history of hospitalization, 90% more likely to be reported in fair or poor health, nearly twice as likely to have iron deficiency anemia, and two-thirds more likely to be at risk for developmental delays.

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**71%** of low-income K-12 students in the County are reached by the National School Lunch Program, but only half take advantage of the breakfast program—which is \$5 million in missed revenue in federal reimbursements per school year.<sup>4</sup>

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PHOTO CREDIT:  
KERRY ALLEN, SANTA BARBARA STUDIO  
FOODBANK OF SANTA BARBARA COUNTY

## Goals for Investing in Our Health and Wellness

In this section of the Food Action Plan, we encourage the community to unleash a wave of creativity and productivity by lifting the burden of poor health. Our primary recommendation focuses on funding a network of Nutrition Advocates—residents who come from the communities most at-risk for poor health and nutrition. Nutrition Advocates work on a neighbor-to-neighbor basis to share knowledge, share resources, and ultimately come together around health improvement efforts that make a difference.

Supporting recommendations include partnering with business to reduce costly health issues experienced by their employees through robust workplace wellness programs, becoming a ‘food smart’ community by improving food literacy, and partnering with the medical community to promote healthy eating as a core strategy for addressing chronic health issues.



PHOTO COURTESY OF: MESA HARMONY GARDENS



## PRIORITY GOAL

# 6

Support the development of neighborhood networks of volunteers to provide peer-to-peer education and empowerment to food insecure community members to improve their health.

### STRATEGY 6.1

Train community members in nutrition, leadership, and community organizing so they are empowered as “Nutrition Advocates”—leading volunteer projects that promote healthy change in their community through food literacy training, nutrition and cooking classes, public policy advocacy, CalFresh outreach and advocacy, gardening classes, farmer’s market tours, grocery store tours, “Food as Medicine” initiatives and fitness/walking groups.

**Sample Resource / Policy:** The **Nutrition Advocate Network** of the Foodbank of Santa Barbara County empowers Trained Nutrition Advocates as community leaders who model health and wellness, while supporting nutrition education, food literacy, and civic engagement.

### STRATEGY 6.2

Connect Nutrition Advocates with other community networks and Resources—such as conferences, school wellness councils, Promotores de Salud and advocacy campaigns—to continue to strengthen the local networks.

**Sample Resource / Policy:** Food, Nutrition, and Basic Skills Program, created by the UCSB Food Security Working Group, gives students comprehensive education in budgeting and meal planning, kitchen skills, cooking and nutrition, and insight into the food system’s impact on the environment.

### STRATEGY 6.3

Provide tools and resources to assist Nutrition Advocates in educating community members to make food choices that support healthy people and a healthy planet—including curriculum, training materials and supplies.

**Sample Resource / Policy:** Sustainable Table: Our Food Program, by GRACE Communications, offers EatWell Guides, animated movies, and downloadable handouts to learn about the problems with the current food system and consumer oriented solutions.



## SUCCESS STORY

## Good Health is Contagious



PHOTO COURTESY OF: FOODBANK  
OF SANTA BARBARA COUNTY

A year ago, says 31-year-old Sonia Sandoval, “I didn’t pay much attention to the food I ate and how it affected my health. I cared, but I didn’t know where to begin.” Since then, through the

Foodbank of Santa Barbara County’s Nutrition Advocates program, Sandoval’s sense of empowerment and well-being have expanded dramatically.

Becoming a Nutrition Advocate helped Sandoval with her own health, as she was encouraged to walk daily and cook more healthful food. In time, she began sharing her new knowledge with friends and neighbors, including José, a fast-food worker who came to a food pantry in Lompoc where Sandoval worked. Upon learning that José lacked health insurance and couldn’t meet his basic medical needs, Sandoval drove him to Social Services and helped him apply for medical benefits.

“He left so full of energy that he actually helped me in our outreach at a local college and has helped the group again since,” Sandoval recalls. “It made me realize that it’s not just infectious diseases that are contagious. Good health is contagious, too!”

The Foodbank knows that while food distribution makes a difference in the short term for those facing food insecurity, it cannot address the underlying causes of hunger, and can result in feelings of humiliation and disempowerment. The Nutrition Advocates

program goes beyond food distribution to creating a network of empowered community leaders and a new narrative driven by the idea that everyone deserves to be healthy and well fed.

Potential Nutrition Advocates are first identified at Foodbank Healthy School Pantries—school-based distributions in which families sample healthy foods and learn how to cook a specific meal, for which they receive the ingredients. Nutrition Advocates share meals and learn about food literacy in monthly hands-on cooking classes, receive training in community organizing and project management, and hold group discussions about community challenges. They are then prepared to lead in their communities—modeling health and wellness, and serving as a voice for under-represented community members.

Those skills are valuable in areas that extend far beyond nutrition but relate to all-around community health. In Santa Maria, for instance, six Nutrition Advocates decided to lobby for a crosswalk in their area. None of them had ever engaged in public speaking or advocacy before, but together they developed a powerful presentation that convinced the City Council to approve the crosswalk.

“It may appear at first that this has nothing to do with feeding hungry people,” notes Foodbank CEO Erik Talkin. “However, it represents the most truly sustainable way of making sure that people are able to feed themselves. Community members work together to build a healthier community, and that’s exciting for everyone.”



PHOTO CREDIT: DANIEL GIRARD

## GOAL 7

Facilitate the adoption and implementation of workplace wellness policies that include support for healthy eating behaviors and access to healthy foods.

### STRATEGY 7.1

Create an awareness of and action toward improving the health and well-being of employees, thereby reducing absenteeism, improving their ability to cope with stress, and increasing their morale and energy.

**Sample Resource / Policy:** The Sonoma County iWORKwell Healthy Business Recognition Program formally recognizes employers who are demonstrating a solid commitment to employee health and well being. The recognition comes with an announcement on the County's Economic Development Board home page and Facebook page, advertisement in local newspapers and journals, and decals for promotion.

### STRATEGY 7.2

Assist employers in choosing or creating a workplace wellness toolkit, such as Project ACT.

**Sample Resource / Policy:** Project ACT, of Santa Barbara County, uses the workplace as a venue for acquiring and sharing healthy lifestyle behaviors and uncovers and shares best practices in workplace wellness.

### STRATEGY 7.3

Advocate for workplace wellness policy adoption and implementation by public and private sector employers.

**Sample Resource / Policy:** Making the Case for Worksite Health, of the Center for Disease Control and National Healthy Worksite, showcases succinct and compelling reasons for employers to institute worksite wellness programs. It also highlights return on investment data.

## GOAL 8

Integrate food literacy into all school campus cultures—including in-school and out-of-school programs—throughout Santa Barbara County.

### STRATEGY 8.1

Develop the mechanisms for sustaining school gardens and Garden Educators / Coordinators.

**Sample Resource / Policy:** *School Garden Resource Center*, of FoodCorps and Whole Kids Foundation, helps educators build a new school garden or support existing ones with step-by-step guidelines and numerous links to additional information.

### STRATEGY 8.2

Build on existing efforts to sustain best practices within school food service operations, such as scratch cooking, local procurement and environmentally sustainable practices.

**Sample Resource / Policy:** *Santa Barbara Unified School District* exemplifies healthy and sustainable practices. The program stands out for serving made-from-scratch meals, bringing healthful mobile food trucks to high school campuses, and developing a “Harvest of the Month” program that promotes seasonal Santa Barbara-grown produce with lessons in the classroom and samples on the salad bar.

### STRATEGY 8.3

Increase knowledge of student eligibility and participation in federally-assisted meal programs, such as the National School Lunch Program, Breakfast in the Classroom, and the Summer Food Service Program.

**Sample Resource / Policy:** There are 40 locations throughout Santa Barbara County where any child can get a free, nutritious meal partially-supported by the federal **Summer Meal Food Service Program**. Due to a strong collaboration from a coalition of partners, in 2015 there were 33% more meals served to kids in need than in prior years.

### STRATEGY 8.4

Support schools in establishing and expanding their Wellness Committees/Councils to include a diverse representation of school community stakeholders.

**Sample Resource / Policy:** National Alliance for Nutrition and Activity suggests school districts use **Model School Wellness Policies**, which outlines standards for school health councils, nutritional quality of foods and beverages sold and served on campus, nutrition and physical activity promotion and food marketing, physical activity opportunities and physical education, and monitoring and policy reviews.

### STRATEGY 8.5

Collaborate with the school district Wellness Committees / Councils to develop healthy food guidelines for school campuses that would be communicated to students, teachers, administrators and parents.

**Sample Resource / Policy:** *School Wellness Committee Toolkit*, published by Alliance for a Healthier Generation, was created as a resource for school wellness committees to convene, plan and implement action plans.

### STRATEGY 8.6

Integrate food literacy into classroom curriculum and projects and out-of-school programs.

**Sample Resource / Policy:** The Foodbank of Santa Barbara County’s nationally-recognized and award-winning food literacy programs include the **Food Literacy in Preschool (FLIP)** program and **Kid’s Farmer’s Market**, as well as other programs including the Community Action Commission’s education in Head Start programs.

## SUCCESS STORY

# Empowerment, Baked In: Bringing Fresh Food and New Pride to County Schools



PHOTO COURTESY OF:  
ORFALEA FOUNDATION

For years, food-service workers in Santa Barbara County public schools did not cook. Their work consisted largely of heating and serving pre-packaged meals of processed foods that were high in sugar, sodium and fat — key cul-

prits in the epidemic of childhood obesity and early-onset diabetes. But that has changed in some schools, thanks to the Orfalea Foundation's paradigm-shifting School Food Initiative.

Operating from 2007-2015 until the foundation sunsetted, the program was designed to promote food literacy while helping schools provide fresh, nutritious, made-from-scratch meals for students. School kitchens were redesigned and re-equipped so that employees could actually cook in them. School gardens—36 of them—were put in around the county. Wellness committees were formed to lead a shift in the culture of school health. A middle-school food-literacy curriculum was developed. And perhaps most importantly, the program invested in empowering and transforming food-service employees.

It wasn't easy. "There was no road map, so we had to figure out a lot on the fly," says Kathleen de Chadenèdes, a former chef who served as program director. "It took a lot of cheerleading. Some people who started out standing with their arms folded turned out to be our biggest, most adventurous partners who achieved the most."

A team of roving professional chef instructors conducted a series of weeklong "boot camps" to provide 350 food-service workers with the skills and knowledge they needed to prepare fresh, nutritious meals from scratch while also addressing compliance and budgeting needs. The new cooks received chef's whites and were given sets of knives and taught to use them. Soon, a group of employees who previously had little connection to the students were fully engaged in the work of nourishing their growing bodies and minds.

Independent reviewers found that because of the program, today more than 50,000 students enjoy more fruits and vegetables and eat fewer processed foods—and the food-service staffs who cook for them have a new sense of pride and satisfaction.

"We treated them as culinary professionals and worked to increase their confidence," says de Chadenèdes. "We helped them to see that what they do is part of greater food system. We gave them a new story about the work they do, replacing the story of powerlessness so they can now see themselves as heroes making kids healthy and contributing to the environment. Empowerment was baked into the model."

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**Partners:** Santa Barbara County School Wellness Council, Santa Barbara County Food Service Directors, The STRIDE Center at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, Center for Ecoliteracy, WorldLink, David B. Gold Foundation, California Department of Public Health Network for a Healthy California



*Unfortunately, it's too easy to fill a prescription to alleviate symptoms instead of getting at the root causes of disease. We need to ensure that physicians and hospitals are working with us to develop a standard prescription for healthy whole foods, and that we are getting dietitians on board. Ideally, this would become part of the fabric of our healthcare system.*

– NIKI SANDOVAL, Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Indians

## GOAL

## 9

Establish “Food as Medicine” programs that promote health through better nutrition.

## STRATEGY 9.1

Increase the availability of diabetes and other health-based intervention classes for low-income community members.

**Sample Resource / Policy:** *Take Care of Your Health! An Extension Program to Prevent Diabetes*, University of California Cooperative Extension, developed diabetes prevention programs that motivate people to be proactive about their health by improving cooking practices and eating patterns, and being more physically active. Participants reported significant changes in food-related barriers and behaviors.

## STRATEGY 9.2

Identify care providers and doctors who are willing to: screen for food insecurity; employ innovative strategies such as a “Veggie Prescription” or a referral to a cooking class; make referrals to CalFresh; and champion this message with other doctors and care providers.

**Sample Resource / Policy:** *The Fruit and Vegetable Prescription (FVRx®) Program* helps healthcare providers give families innovative prescriptions that can be spent on fruits and vegetables at grocery stores, farmers markets, and other healthy food retailers. New York City Health and Hospitals Cooperative initiated the program in two NYC hospitals and saw very successful results.

## STRATEGY 9.3

Consolidate information for each area of the county about classes, resources or events, which a doctor/care provider can give to their patient as part of their prescription.

**Sample Resource / Policy:** *Healthy Living Resources* of Santa Clara, CA offers information for residents on local resources, health services, and toolkits for healthier living.

# 3 INVEST IN Our Community



## DEFINITION

Often the word ‘hunger’ is used instead of the more accurate term, food insecurity, which is an issue of malnutrition caused by easy access to unhealthy food and limited access to healthy food. Building on food security is the concept of food justice, which aims to ensure that the benefits and risks of producing, distributing, and consuming food are shared fairly by everyone involved.

- **Food security** refers to the economic and social condition of reliable access to an adequate amount of food for an active, healthy life for all household members. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, a household is food insecure if, at least once in the previous year, they experienced limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate foods.<sup>5</sup>
- **Food justice is rooted in three critical components** including: access to healthy, locally grown, fresh and culturally appropriate food; fair compensation for all food system workers; and buy-in from the community (often nurtured through cooperatives, faith-based initiatives and community organizations).



## ASSETS

Santa Barbara County has virtually everything it needs to create healthy, food secure communities. There is fresh produce growing in abundance, a caring population interested in food and good nutrition, and an incredible array of nonprofits committed to aligning these efforts to make good nutritional health a reality for all.

- **The Foodbank of Santa Barbara County distributed 9.3 million pounds of food** in 2014, with over 50% being fresh produce. This is provided free of charge to a network of over 300 countywide nonprofits and programs.
- **This large nonprofit network represents a major community asset**, providing grocery distributions, congregate feeding sites and long-term assistance to those in residential care. Increasingly, agencies are focusing on education and efforts to provide grouped holistic services that provide help in moving people out of need.

*The Food Action Plan means that our community will be doing even more to turn Santa Barbara County into a No Kid Hungry County. Hunger is a tough problem, but if we all do our part, it is one we can solve. We are all in this together.*

—JEFF BRIDGES, Actor



## CONCERNS

It can seem incredible that with so much wealth in the County, there are so many families living at the poverty level or just above it, and yet:

- **More than 1 in 5 children, 1 in 5 adults, and 1 in 14 seniors in Santa Barbara County live in poverty.** The cities of Santa Barbara, Santa Maria, Lompoc, and Isla Vista all include “High Poverty Areas” where children have a poverty rate of about 38% [close to twice the County rate] and adults have a poverty rate of 31%.
- **The Foodbank of Santa Barbara County last year served 140,575 unduplicated community members,** about one third of all residents in Santa Barbara County. Of these, 35% were children aged 0-17.
- **Santa Barbara County is ranked 54 of 58 counties in CalFresh participation,** with only 42% of those eligible receiving benefits.



## OPPORTUNITIES

By viewing charitable food distribution as just the first step on the road to helping clients lead healthier lives, agencies can work together on strategies to create long-term food security.

- **Network nonprofit agencies already provide a strong network of support** for food insecure, low-income individuals and households. More sustainable food security can come from the creation of neighborhood-based, healthy community pantries, that will provide fresh produce, healthy foods and nutrition education to local families.
- **If CalFresh reached all potentially eligible individuals,** it would not only build food security, but would also result in \$97.5 million of additional benefit to the county<sup>6</sup>—bringing in state and federal money that is missed out every year.

## Introduction to a Better Community

Community is the centerpiece of a food system. A good food system nurtures us as individuals and supports the creation of strong communities that enable us to become our best selves. For this to happen, all members of our community need the security of knowing that healthy food is reliably available and that each and every one of us has the access, education and empowerment to take our place at the bountiful table Santa Barbara County can create.

For many in our County, that security is far from assured. Consider:

1 in 4

146,000 of our 436,000 residents, or over 1 in 4 people, in the county are served by the Foodbank and its 300 plus partner agencies and programs.

↓ 60%

Over half the food distributed by the FBSBC is fresh produce, but as a result of the drought, the county now receives around 60% less free produce from elsewhere in California and the cost of purchased produce has risen by as much as 23%.<sup>7</sup>

The largest occupation in Santa Barbara County is farmworker and crop, nursery and greenhouse laborers and it is also one of the lowest paying jobs

with a mean hourly wage of **\$9.08**<sup>8</sup>





PHOTO COURTESY OF:  
FOODBANK OF  
SANTA BARBARA COUNTY

## Goals for Investing in Our Community

No society nor food system can call itself truly successful if so many of us are left out of its healthful benefits. The cost of hunger and food insecurity is not just moral, but real and measurable, as it impacts our health care costs, the educational attainment of children, the distribution of our limited charitable resources and the ability for people to be healthy and productive members of our society.<sup>9</sup>

We recommend investing in the long-term future of

our communities through the creation of Community Food Access Centers that would bring under a single roof the services, education and empowerment that move us toward becoming a hunger-free community. This builds on a growing awareness that one of the main barriers to addressing hunger is that too few of our qualifying neighbors are actually accessing the services we already have. This is a local issue with a local solution.



PHOTO COURTESY OF:  
FOODBANK OF  
SANTA BARBARA COUNTY



PRIORITY  
GOAL  
**10**

Establish Community Food Access Centers that serve as place-based, food-centric neighborhood revitalization efforts, and which unite multiple functions (including education) in one or nearby locations.

#### STRATEGY 10.1

Designate public space(s) for individuals to come together to re-invigorate their community by improving food literacy and food security through food distribution, nutrition education, health screenings and CalFresh outreach, value-added commercial kitchens, community planning meetings, individual grower markets and community gardens.

**Sample Resource / Policy:** Community Food Centers are spaces throughout Canada where people come together to grow, cook, share and advocate for good food. CFCs provide people with emergency access to high-quality food, and offer educational workshops and programming in three core areas: food access programs, food skills programs, and education and engagement programs. CFC programs are offered in integrated spaces, which include gardens, a Public Health-approved kitchen, and dining space.

#### STRATEGY 10.2

Build the structure for the administration and oversight necessary to support the network of designated Community Food Access Centers and define a process for evaluating the impact on healthy behaviors of individuals and neighborhoods.

**Sample Resource / Policy:** Every Community a Place for Food: The Role of the Community Food Centre in Building a Local, Sustainable, and Just Food System, published by the Metcalf Foundation, provides a wealth of resources on building and supporting a community food centre.

# GOAL 11

Increase affordability and accessibility to healthy, safe, environmentally-sound, locally grown food for all residents of Santa Barbara County.

## STRATEGY 11.1

Establish and increase healthy access points that can be reached by walking, biking, or transit by all residents—such as community and school gardens, grocery stores, corner stores, restaurants, farm stands, and food banks / pantries—in areas that exhibit need.

**Sample Resource / Policy:** *Growing Urban Agriculture* from PolicyLink, highlights policies for establishing greater access to healthy foods, including establishing farm stands and smaller, more spatially diverse food pantries.

## STRATEGY 11.2

Develop a marketing campaign to promote designated healthy access points.

**Sample Resource / Policy:** *Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food Compass Map* is an interactive guide to learning about thousands of projects around the country. One of the map filters correlates to “healthy access” and showcases diverse projects, as well as funding received for them.

## STRATEGY 11.3

Incentivize markets, convenience stores, restaurants, and other food vendors to provide quality, affordable healthy products.

**Sample Resource / Policy:** *Incentive for Change: Rewarding Healthy Improvements to Small Food Stores* examines financial and non-financial incentives available through the public and private sector to lay the foundation for expanding healthy food offerings in food stores.

## STRATEGY 11.4

Develop consumer education materials that address how food choices can help or hinder environmental concerns such as water pollution, climate change, and soil loss.

**Sample Resource / Policy:** *Sustainable Food Center* in Austin, Texas, offers Central Texas residents the knowledge and resources necessary to grow their own food to alleviate hunger and bolster the health of their families, their communities, and the environment.

## STRATEGY 11.5

Advocate for revision of local laws that curtail growing food in residential areas or vacant lots, and provide educational workshops in small-scale growing for individuals and families.

**Sample Resource / Policy:** *Growing Smart” Legislative Guidebook* produced by the American Planning Association, gives states and local governments practical tools to help combat urban sprawl, protect farmland, and encourage redevelopment.

## STRATEGY 11.6

Create decentralized, neighborhood-based, and low-cost venues and markets to increase access to healthy, local produce and other food items.

**Sample Resource / Policy:** *A “How-to” Guide for Hosting Mini Farmers’ Markets in Minneapolis* guides interested organizations through the process of establishing successful mini markets to serve members of their communities.

**STRATEGY 11.7** Develop and implement a Market Match / Double Value Coupon Program at local Farmer’s Markets.

**Sample Resource / Policy:** *Market Match* is California’s healthy food incentive program, which matches customers’ federal nutrition assistance benefits at farmer’s markets. Led by the Ecology Center, it is offered at more than 230 farm-direct sites across the state in collaboration with 30 regional community-based organizations and farmer’s market operators.

## HEAL: A Prescription for Healthy City Living

If an office vending machine stocks only unhealthy, processed foods, then 100% of those using the machine will eat an unhealthy snack. If pedestrians and cyclists don't feel safe on city streets, fewer people will walk or ride. If a housing development lacks parks and play equipment, residents will be less inclined to exercise outdoors, and children will be less active. We know where those scenarios lead, because we see it in the current epidemic of obesity—along with a rise in chronic diseases, reduced quality of life and a price tag of \$41 billion annually in health-care costs and lost wages in California alone.

The Healthy Eating Active Living Cities campaign (HEAL), a partnership of the League of California Cities and the California Center for Public Health Advocacy, is intended to reverse the trend and cut those costs. HEAL supports municipalities and counties with training and technical assistance to help city officials adopt policies that improve their communities' physical activity and retail food environments.

While 180 cities in California have adopted HEAL city plans, in 2016, Santa Barbara County became only the second county in the state to adopt a HEAL resolution—agreeing to take actions such as promoting healthy lifestyles in schools and the workplace, and embedding the vision into its master plan. Live Well Santa Barbara County, a county-wide coalition, supported the passing of the resolution. The primary

collaborative focus of Live Well Santa Barbara County is providing health education and advocating for health in all policies and programs.

After the City of Lompoc became the first HEAL city in Santa Barbara County in 2012, the City Council established rules for healthy food in vending machines and at any city functions. The master plan also contains language to guide developers, including requirements for the projects to enhance walkability and provide bike lanes as part of what is referred to as “complete streets.” HEAL establishes a vision in which human and environmental health are at the forefront of city and county actions.

Once cities adopt the HEAL campaign, they can customize it in ways that work for them. In Lompoc, the Healthy Lompoc Coalition is dedicated to implementation of the campaign goals. The group established a “Walking Wednesdays” project in which parents walk to school with their children, as well as a “Creative Crossings” program in which local artists submit ideas and then receive an honorarium to transform crosswalks into works of art. So far, six crosswalks have been painted with shapes from nature, such as shells and footprints.

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**Partners:** Lompoc City Council, Live Well Santa Barbara County, Healthy Lompoc



*The City of Lompoc became the first HEAL city in Santa Barbara County to establish rules for healthy food in vending machines and at any city functions.*

## SUCCESS STORY

# Changing What it Means to Be a Grocery Store



The Isla Vista Food Cooperative has been at the forefront of “fresh, organic, local” since long before those words became a movement. Opened not long after the 1970 riots that led to the burning of the Bank of America, “the Co-op,”

as locals know it, has been a force for social good for some 45 years.

This is a grocery store with a vision and an evolving mission that goes far beyond its formal one of providing Isla Vista’s 23,000 residents with “reasonably priced foods, products and services that promote a healthier lifestyle and environment.”

Community lies at the core of the store’s foundational concept. The Co-op sells local, in-season organic vegetables not only because they are nutritionally sound and delicious, but also because doing so links it to the larger goal of supporting local farmers and local economic autonomy while breaking a link in the corporate food chain.

Recently, big changes have come under the leadership of General Manager Melissa Cohen. Leading the store since 2010, she has worked to transform it from a business that “kept going but didn’t thrive, and sold

food that many local residents couldn’t afford,” into one that thrives while demonstrating how much more a grocery store can be. “We have redirected to focus on access and justice around food,” Cohen says.

In each of the past five years, the Co-op has allocated one percent of its total operating budget to its sponsorships, donations, and community education and outreach. It partners with the UCSB Associate Students campus food-distribution system, and Cohen is a member of a UCSB group working with Chancellor Henry Yang as part of the UC Global Food Initiative introduced by UC President Janet Napolitano in 2014.

The store has adopted a pricing system based on “variable margins,” which means there is almost always a very affordable option. The co-op offers coupons and specials, as well as an educational guide explaining how to shop most effectively to save. It is a partner in the THRIVE Isla Vista Healthy School Pantry and is also involved in the weekly Isla Vista Tenants Union food distribution, at Pardall Center, providing recipes, food and education, and promoting the fact that they accept CalFresh.

One result has been a significant increase in CalFresh Co-op shoppers and greater diversity at the store. UCSB student donors have also been a big resource at the Tenants Union pantry. Says Cohen: “Their involvement has caused a culture shift for students, who now know that some of their friends are hungry.”

## GOAL 12

Support fair compensation for all members of the food workforce and increase the availability and accessibility to affordable housing to help sustain their vital role in the regional food system.

### STRATEGY 12.1

Strategy 12.1: Provide clean, comfortable, safe and affordable housing accommodations for farmworkers in proximity to work areas.

**Sample Resource / Policy:** **Cabrillo Economic Development Corporation** provides comprehensive housing services and community economic development activities through a community-building approach that facilitates self-sufficiency for individuals and families who are most lacking in opportunity in Ventura and Santa Barbara Counties.

### STRATEGY 12.2

Advocate for government subsidies, program-related investments from foundations, and Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) to support the construction and maintenance of guest and domestic farmworker housing.

**Sample Resource / Policy:** **Farmworker Housing Resources**, prepared by the California Department of Housing and Community Development, lists reports and books, government publications, and journal articles related to establishing affordable housing for farmworkers.

### STRATEGY 12.3

Share and encourage best practices currently being implemented here and in other communities regarding living wage, farmworker housing, and safe and healthy working conditions.

**Sample Resource / Policy:** **The Equitable Food Initiative** is a new model to promote partnership among buyers, vendors and farm workers. The voluntary certification program establishes a supply of safer and healthier food to consumers, while being fair to workers and profitable to farmers, retailers, and food service providers.

### STRATEGY 12.4

Develop outreach mechanisms to increase participation in existing affordable housing, financial and educational programs for members of the food workforce.

**Sample Resource / Policy:** **Understanding and Incentivizing Workforce Housing: A Professional Project for the City of San Luis Obispo** analyzes outreach and research to develop incentives and recommendations to overcome barriers of workforce housing and begin increasing the supply of quality workforce housing.

### STRATEGY 12.5

Provide education and resources for small food and agriculture-related businesses and entrepreneurs to build profitable and sustainable business models, while supporting fair compensation for their employees.

**Sample Resource / Policy:** **APA Policy Guide on Community and Regional Food Planning** covers salient facts and trends about how the food system impacts localities and regions and provides some examples of progress being made by planners.

# 4 INVEST IN Our Foodshed



## DEFINITION

A foodshed is the geographic region that produces the food for a particular population. It describes the area spanning from where food is produced to where it is consumed—including the land it grows on, the route it travels, the markets it passes through, and the tables it ends up on. A foodshed also includes the natural resources needed for its long-term sustainability, such as water, soil and climate.

- **About 40% of Santa Barbara County** is comprised of agricultural lands, with nearly 1,600 farms and ranches totaling 700,000 acres.<sup>10</sup>
- **99% of what is grown in our county is exported,** and 98% of what we eat is imported. In 2014, this translated to 13,000 exported shipments of produce and cut flowers—nearly all going to Canada and Japan.<sup>11</sup>



## ASSETS

The Santa Barbara County foodshed boasts abundant sunshine, year-round growing cycles in varied microclimates, and coastal valleys with rich soil. Our region also has a history of environmental stewardship and a deep cultural connection to agriculture, with some of the oldest remaining ranching and farming families in California going back eight generations or more.

- **Our region enjoys a rare Mediterranean climate type**—only found on 2.25% of the earth’s land surface—with rich habitats and diversity of species, making for long growing seasons and robust production.
- **Due in part to the convergence of warm southern water and cooler northern water in Southern California,** about 550 species of fish either inhabit or traverse Santa Barbara’s offshore ocean. In 2013, Santa Barbara was the 11th-ranked port in California’s annual \$279 million commercial fishing industry, gleaning the highest earnings in the state for seven species.<sup>12</sup>



*Between 2012 and 2015, agricultural water use in Goleta increased steadily because of hot, dry weather, while residential and commercial customers cut their water use significantly. In 2016, agricultural water use finally started to decline. The long-term viability of agriculture depends on cooperation between water districts and farmers to reduce demand during droughts. We all understand that this cannot be a race to the bottom.*

— MEG WEST, Goleta Water District Board of Directors



## CONCERNS

By 2040, population growth in Santa Barbara County is expected to increase by 100,000 people<sup>13</sup> —which means more pressure on water supply, agricultural lands, open spaces, transportation corridors, and waste processing facilities. In addition, extended droughts and other environmental impacts could stress agricultural industries and fisheries so that they aren't able to provide the bounty we're accustomed to.

- **Conversion of agricultural lands to development,** soil depletion and erosion, air and water pollution, loss of pollinators, degraded marine health and an over reliance on chemical pesticides and fertilizers will limit the productivity over time of the land and sea.
- **Drought, lack of available grass for grazing,** and the high cost of supplemental feed has already forced cattle ranchers to reduce their herd size by 40 to 50%.<sup>14</sup>
- **Food remains the largest source of waste in California,** making up about 15.5% of the total refuse sent to landfills each year, losing not only the end product, but also the embedded resources that it took to grow or produce it.



## OPPORTUNITIES

In addition to food production, agricultural lands provide “ecosystem services” such as water storage, habitat for pollinators and wildlife, fire protection, and carbon storage in soil. California is taking a leadership role by incentivizing farmers to save water and repair soils, and by prohibiting the disposal of food waste in landfills.

- **Worldwide, ecosystem services** are valued at about \$33 trillion per year. A dollar value for Santa Barbara County could be calculated by using existing reports and databases such as InVEST and ARIES to inform and validate the process.
- **A preliminary analysis of the county's rangelands** indicates that treating just 114,000 acres of rangelands with a single quarter-inch application of compost would increase plant growth and sequester about 167,000 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent (MTCO<sub>2</sub>) a year for several decades. Farmers could be incentivized to provide “carbon credits” to other industries looking to offset their greenhouse gas emissions.<sup>15</sup>

## Introduction to a Better Foodshed

Most Santa Barbara County residents instinctively know that we live in an incredibly special place, bordered by mountains and the Pacific ocean, with right-sized cities and vast swaths of agricultural lands and open space that feed both our bodies and spirit. There is very little that cannot be grown here: strawberries, avocados, lettuce, wine grapes, beef, flowers, citrus, and dozens of other fruits and vegetables that grace our tables daily.

Yet we can not take for granted the many benefits our foodshed provides. Only with careful stewardship of soil, water, open space, and habitat for wild and beneficial critters of all sizes can we be assured of preserving the bounty of this region.

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**About 40%**  
of all food in the U.S. is wasted  
between the field and the fork—  
most of that at the consumer end.

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Increasing the organic  
matter of soil by just **2.5%**  
  
increases its water  
holding capacity by **12%↑**  
[or more, depending on the soil type.]<sup>16</sup>

---

By 2040, population growth in  
Santa Barbara County is expected  
to increase by  
**↑100,000**  
from 420,000 to 520,000.

---

More people means more pressure on  
water supply, agricultural lands, open  
spaces, transportation corridors, and  
waste processing facilities.

PHOTO CREDIT: ELLIOT LOWNDES

## Goals for Investing in Our Foodshed

In this section of the Food Action Plan, we recommend that the community align around a commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions generated from the food system as its top priority. This is an area ripe with opportunity for businesses and consumers to save money through reduced energy use and renewable energy, earn money by sequestering carbon through a variety of agricultural practices, and gradually build a more resilient system that can withstand the impacts of extreme weather and climate-related events.

We also recommend a more concentrated effort to protect existing and potential farm and ranch lands as well as the ecosystem services they provide, reduction of food waste across all sectors of the food system, and the promotion and incentivization of Best Management Practices on farms, ranches and food system-related businesses. Overall, these recommendations seek to minimize negative impacts to the environment and reduce unnecessary use of natural resources.



PRIORITY  
GOAL

13

Reduce the food system's contribution to greenhouse gas emissions, while strengthening its resilience and ability to adapt to long-term drought and future climate change scenarios.

### STRATEGY 13.1

Engage the farming community, policy makers, government agencies and regulators in practices such as “carbon farming,” which decrease and offset agriculture’s contribution to Santa Barbara County’s greenhouse gas emissions.

**Sample Resource / Policy:** The Marin Carbon Project establishes the basis for soil carbon sequestration for local rangelands and works with farms and ranches to establish an augmented U.S. Natural Resources Conservation Service plan to create and implement farm-scale GHG plans and Carbon Farm Plans. The focus is on increasing the capacity of the farm or ranch to capture carbon and store it beneficially as soil organic matter.

### STRATEGY 13.2

Increase adoption of energy efficiency practices and generation of on-site renewable energy in the agriculture, food processing, food transportation, and food retail sectors through education and promotion of existing incentives.

**Sample Resource / Policy:** Rural Energy for America Program (REAP): Renewable Energy Systems and Energy Efficiency Improvement Loans and Grants offers guaranteed loan financing and grant funding for agricultural producers and rural small businesses to purchase or install renewable energy systems or make energy efficient improvements.





PHOTO CREDIT: DANIEL GIRARD

## GOAL 14

Protect existing and potential farm and ranch land, as well as the ecosystem services they provide.

### STRATEGY 14.1

Enforce existing agricultural buffer and other zoning policies and provide incentives (such as tax breaks) to farmland owners for maintaining agricultural land production.

**Sample Resource / Policy:** The Agricultural Preserve Program of Santa Barbara County helps ensure long term conservation of agricultural and open space lands by enrolling land in the Williamson Act of California or Farmland Security Zone contracts. Land is enforceably restricted to agricultural, open space, or recreational uses in exchange for reduced property tax assessments.

### STRATEGY 14.2

Expand opportunities for agricultural development—including in urban centers—through mechanisms such as tax incentives and streamlined permitting processes.

**Sample Resource / Policy:** County of Santa Barbara: Agricultural Land Use Planning started the Agricultural Planning program in 2005 to assist the County with agricultural land use decisions and resource protection. The agricultural planner advises planning staff on development projects and policy matters affecting agriculture.



**GOAL**  
**15**

Reduce food waste across all sectors of the Santa Barbara County food system—from producer to consumer—through policy, education, and collaboration.

**STRATEGY 15.1**

Encourage the adoption of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Food Recovery Hierarchy as the standard protocol for managing food waste in city and county general plans, climate action plans, campus sustainability plans, and other frameworks.

**Sample Resource / Policy:** *The Food Waste Recovery Challenge*, hosted through the EPA, offers a suite of tools from free technical assistance in the form of webinars to an online database that helps implement and track food waste recovery activities. Over 100 businesses in California actively participate, including Chumash Casino Resort and the University of California, Santa Barbara.

**STRATEGY 15.2**

Compile information on existing food recovery, gleaning, and composting programs in the County, and encourage all agencies with points of contact in the food system (such as health departments, green business programs, and waste management departments) to cross-promote these efforts.

**Sample Resource / Policy:** *Food Forward*, of Santa Barbara County Resource Recovery and Waste Management Division, has developed educational materials that include a list of locations in Santa Barbara County that accept donations of prepared or unprepared food, and criteria for participating in the County's pilot commercial collection program for food scraps.

**STRATEGY 15.3**

Facilitate easier pick-up and distribution of smaller amounts of surplus food not captured by existing programs through collection hubs, multi-agency volunteer networks, and online applications.

**Sample Resource / Policy:** San Francisco and other cities utilize technology applications such as *Food Runners*, which serve as donation brokers. These applications facilitate networks of volunteers to pick up quantities of perishable or prepared food and directly deliver them to neighborhood food programs.

**STRATEGY 15.4**

Create opportunities for managers of grocery stores, restaurants, hospitals, large businesses, schools, universities and hospitality providers to learn from innovators in the industry, and to share best practices and barriers.

**Sample Resource / Policy:** *Community Environmental Council* brought together a **targeted group of stakeholders** for a roundtable discussion on food waste reduction in Santa Barbara County. Participants represented over 25 different grocery stores, restaurants, hospitality services, charitable organizations, community innovators and local government agencies.

## SUCCESS STORY

# Agricultural Buffer Policy Is Good for Farms, Good for their Neighbors



In a twist on the axiom “good fences make good neighbors,” the Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors passed an ordinance in 2013 based on the idea that good agricultural buffers can do the same. The ordinance,

which was eight years in the making, protects both the county’s valuable agricultural lands and those who live or work beside them.

Santa Barbara County ranks among the top one percent of all counties in the United States in terms of agricultural production. County crops were valued at just under \$1.2 billion in 2011, with a spillover value of \$2.4 billion. Those number represent a doubling of value in the past 15 years.

But rapid growth in the county was resulting in land-changes that threatened valuable farmland. Seeking to avoid conflicts between farms and new projects developed on lands adjacent to them, in 2005 the County began a process that would lead to passage of the Agricultural Buffer Zone ordinance.

The plan was drafted by the public-private Ag Futures Alliance of Santa Barbara County after a process that

involved an array of diverse stakeholder groups, state-wide research, and multiple field studies. The resulting ordinance offers protection for all by requiring that a barrier ranging from 100 to 400 feet wide be part of any new project adjacent to existing farmland.

The barriers of native plants and trees protect farms from soil depletion by erosion, flooding, and siltation caused by runoff from adjacent developments, as well as crop losses from domestic pets, invasive species, and introduced pests associated with residential housing. On the other side of the barrier, schools, residential neighborhoods, and businesses located beside farms receive protection from potential dust, pesticides, odors, noise, light from night operations and other elements of normal farming processes.

In an agriculture-dependent county, the buffer policy was an optimal outcome. Supported by all parties and passed unanimously by the supervisors, it ensures that agriculture in Santa Barbara County—and its neighbors—will thrive far into the future.

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Partners: American Farmland Trust, Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors, Santa Barbara County Ag Futures Alliance, Santa Barbara County Planning Commission, Montecito Planning Commission, Santa Barbara County Farm Bureau, Santa Barbara County Agricultural Commissioner



PHOTO CREDIT: JORDAN BENSHEA

## GOAL 16

Promote and incentivize the use of Best Management Practices on farms, ranches, and food system businesses in Santa Barbara County.

### STRATEGY 16.1

Collaborate with a diverse group of stakeholders to review designated Best Management Practices throughout California and adopt those that align with the goals and strategies of the Santa Barbara County Food Action Plan.

**Sample Resource / Policy:** [Cachuma Resource](#)

**Conservation District** provides technical assistance and services related to the improvement of land capabilities, conservation of resources, conservation of water through services of the Irrigation Mobile Lab, prevention and control of soil erosion, and public education.

### STRATEGY 16.2

Streamline and improve permitting for producers using Best Management Practices.

**Sample Resource / Policy:** [Michigan Agriculture](#)

**Environmental Assurance Program**, developed by a coalition of farmers, commodity groups, state and federal agencies, and conservation and environmental groups, provides a venue for farmers to become better educated about management options in order to help protect and enhance the quality of natural resources.

### STRATEGY 16.3

Pursue innovative funding opportunities to incentivize and implement Best Management Practices.

**Sample Resource / Policy:** [NRCS Environmental Quality](#)

**Incentives Programs** provides financial and technical assistance to help plan and implement conservation practices and address natural resource concerns through cost-share contracts. The Central Coast EQIP Fund Pool prioritizes applications tackling soil erosion, reduction of soil organic matter, and soil quality degradation.


### STRATEGY 16.4

Promote and strengthen existing agricultural support services and facilities via better coordination and access to funding through a County position such as “Farmbudsman.”

**Sample Resource / Policy:** [The University of California Cooperative Extension of Sonoma County](#) has an

**Agricultural Ombudsman** to address permits and the gap that exists between farmers and ranchers who need help and the confusing processes that must be negotiated to obtain county and state permits.





*Farmers need to see a practice being used and having a benefit before wanting to adopt it themselves. They don't want to read a scientific paper; they want their neighbor to show them what they did.*

—DENISE KNAPP, *Santa Barbara Botanic Garden*



## SUCCESS STORY

## Hedgerows Hold Promise for Pollinating Sustainable Farming

This is a hard time to be a pollinator. The 90-plus local species of native bees—as well as bats, birds, imported honeybees and other indispensable natural players in our food system—face threats from pesticides, habitat loss, disease and other elements resulting largely from human activities. Denise Knapp, Ph.D., director of conservation and research at the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden, is addressing the problem with a pilot project that employs an ancient agricultural element—hedgerows—to increase pollinator habitat and farm productivity.

For centuries, hedgerows served as borders dividing fields and farms, but as farming scaled up to become more intensive, more mechanized, and based increasingly on monoculture, hedgerows disappeared. Now, says Knapp, who earned her PhD in ecology at UC Santa Barbara, “We are returning to a more common-sense approach to farming, one more in keeping with what the land can sustain.”

In spring 2016, as a result of Knapp’s work and with funding from the Santa Barbara Foundation, three South Coast farms—Hilltop Farms in Carpinteria, Fairview Gardens in Goleta, and Las Varas on the Gaviota Coast—installed trial hedgerows on their properties. Before that, Knapp had found only three other farms using hedgerows in Santa Barbara County.

The long, low, stands of native plants harbor diverse flowers that bloom at different times of the year. That’s critical for bees, Knapp explains, which need

sustenance throughout the year, not only when crops are blooming. The hedgerows also preserve soil by minimizing erosion and slowing winds, which can remove top soil.

Robert Abbott’s family has grown lemons and avocados at Hilltop Farm along Highway 150 northeast of Carpinteria for nearly a century. And even though the farm has good insect diversity, particularly in spring, he says, “I firmly believe that these strips work, especially on a more tightly controlled farm.”

Knapp is monitoring the pilot projects and hoping they will help other farmers see the value of hedgerows.

“Farmers need to see a practice being used and having a benefit before wanting to adopt it themselves. They don’t want to read a scientific paper; they want their neighbor to show them what they did,” she notes. “I’m hoping that by finding a few more progressive farmers to demonstrate this practice, it can spread to the farms that need it more desperately. I’m very appreciative to Hilltop Farm, Fairview Gardens, and Las Varas for their willingness to be leaders.”

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Current Partners: Santa Barbara Foundation, Santa Barbara Botanic Garden, Robert Abbott, Hilltop & Canyon Family Farms, Carpinteria; Paul Van Leer, Las Varas Ranch, Gaviota Coast; Fairview Gardens Educational Farm, Goleta

# Footnotes

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# Food Action Planning Process

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The Santa Barbara County Food Action Plan is a unique hybrid document: on one hand it is the product of 18 months of intensive outreach—including public meetings, interviews with diverse stakeholders, topical working groups, and ongoing review and guidance from an expert advisory board. On the other hand it is a carefully curated approach to change that reflects the diverse values of the county.

To kick off the process, our team conducted over 35 one-on-one interviews with community leaders, representing a range of perspectives. This was an opportunity to hear about critical issues affecting the food system from key stakeholders, including representatives from Community Food and Justice Coalition, Driscoll's, Ellwood Canyon Farm, Food and Farm Adventures, Givens Farm, Hansen Agricultural Research and Extension Center, Harvest Santa Barbara, Innovative Produce, Lynda.com, Rancho San Julian, SBCC Center for Sustainability, Santa Barbara County Farm Bureau, Santa Barbara Farmer's Market Association, Santa Barbara Pistachios, Santa Maria Chamber of Commerce, UCSB Bren School of Environmental Science and Management, and Women's Economic Ventures. A third-party consultant, LoaCom, facilitated these interviews to collect qualitative data that was analyzed to identify high-level themes and strategies.

Following this, we held three community listening sessions to engage a broader segment of the population. These two-hour sessions were facilitated in Santa Maria, Solvang, and Santa Barbara and were attended by over 150 residents and community leaders. Spanish translation enabled us to hear directly from

constituents such as farmers, farm workers, and Promotores de Salud. Over 500 ideas, opportunities and challenges were communicated and later analyzed utilizing a software application platform for qualitative data analysis.

In an effort to be as inclusive as possible, we then organized working groups to review and analyze the data, and to identify preliminary priorities and strategies. Each working group was comprised of 10 to 15 community members who were invited to contribute their knowledge, expertise, and personal experience. These five teams focused on Health and Nutrition; Food Access and Justice; Environment and Natural Resources; Economic Development; and Agriculture Viability. Each working group selected three to five recommendations from the data analysis and developed specific strategies based on 10 established criteria. Collectively, working group members committed over 1,200 volunteer hours to create the workable and actionable goals and strategies you see outlined in the plan.

The entire process was overseen by an Advisory Board of community leaders, and shepherded by a core executive team that included representatives from the Community Environmental Council, the Foodbank of Santa Barbara County, the Orfalea Foundation, and the Santa Barbara Foundation. The resulting Santa Barbara County Food Action Plan focused on the investments that we can make today to improve individual health, reduce poverty and food insecurity, make our farms and food businesses more profitable, and increase the health of the environment we call home.

# Working Groups

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**Maggie Hall**

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**Krista Harris**

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**Allison Hensley**

SOL Food Festival

**Katie Hershfelt**

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Fairview Gardens

**Pat Hitchcock**

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# Stakeholder Interviews

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---

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## How to Get Involved

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1

### Utilize the plan to further your work and leverage additional support.

The Food Action Plan is supported by multiple jurisdictions, government agencies and community-based organizations throughout Santa Barbara County. Aligning your current and future work with the plan will strengthen the impact of your projects and programs, and leverage a network of community leaders dedicated to achieving the designated goals and strategies.

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2

### Investigate sample resources and policies that align with the mission and values of your organization.

The Food Action Plan highlights resources and policies in support of designated strategies that are linked to local, state and national organizations. We encourage you to contact organizational leaders and engage with existing partnerships and collaboratives.

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3

### Invest in the implementation of goals and strategies.

Food Action Plan partner organizations will continue to collaborate with the support of local foundations and individual donors. If you would like to donate in support of this work, please go to [www.sbcfoodaction.org](http://www.sbcfoodaction.org) or the LEAF (Landscapes, Ecosystems, Agriculture, and Food Systems) Initiative at [www.sbfoundation.org](http://www.sbfoundation.org).

Visit [sbcfoodaction.org](http://sbcfoodaction.org) for more information about the Food Action Plan.

# SANTA BARBARA COUNTY FOOD ACTION PLAN

*For healthy people, a healthy economy, and a healthy environment*

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Visit [sbcfoodaction.org](http://sbcfoodaction.org) for more information about the Food Action Plan or to download the full report. Appendices available online.

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## PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

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## COVER PHOTO CREDITS:

Kerry Allen, Santa Barbara Studio; Jordan benShea; Elliot Lowndes; Foodbank of Santa Barbara County; Daniel Girard