

Engaging the UC Santa Cruz Real Food Commitment

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Environmental Studies, June 2016

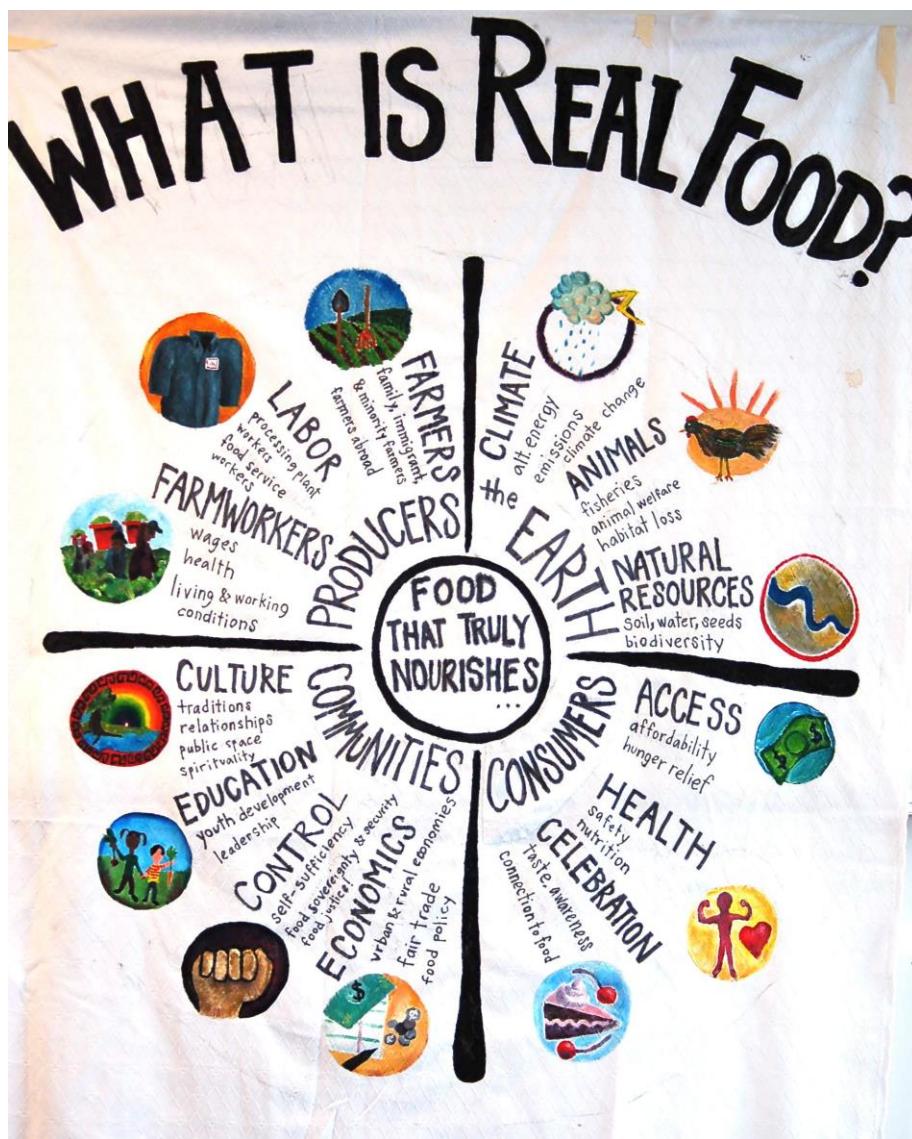
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MY 31 2014

ABSTRACT:

Agriculture and livestock production in commercial farms contribute largely to the production of greenhouse gas emissions and to the destruction of ecological life. University dining budgets are often allocated into purchasing food from a dining provider that sources food purchases from many industrial farms.: Institutions of higher education have “tremendous purchasing power to support a healthy food system that strengthens local economies, respects human rights, ensures ecological sustainability, and facilitates community involvement and education. The Real Food Procurement undertakes a quarterly analysis of UCSC Dining’s vendor purchases by researching food ingredients and product locations using online vendor catalogs and product websites. The internship process builds awareness of how food is tracked and defined, and increases consciousness of sustainable food to the greater campus community.

PROBLEM DEFINITION, CONTEXT & BACKGROUND:

Institutions of higher education have “tremendous purchasing power to support a healthy food system that strengthens local economies, respects human rights, ensures ecological sustainability, and facilitates community involvement and education” (“Real Food Challenge”). University dining budgets are often allocated into purchasing food from a dining provider that sources large amount of inexpensive food from industrial farms. Agriculture and livestock production in these industrial farms contribute largely to the production of greenhouse gas emissions and to the destruction of ecological life. In the 2013 UCSC Campus Food & Garden Guide the publication cites the International Society for Ecology & Culture’s (ISEC) facts and figures. The ISEC notes that the global food system, “accounts for almost a fifth of the nation’s energy consumption” contributing the most greenhouse gases (Galarneau T., Brown, M., eds., 2013 p. 29). The U.S per capita energy use of food processing and food distribution exceeds the combined activities of the continents of Asia and Africa. Industrial farming use high amounts of electricity during packaging and processing, and burn tons of fossil fuels transporting food across the country and overseas. The production of inexpensive, mass produced food has costly measures for the physical, chemical environmental and climate change.

Industrial farms also have ecological impacts to the natural environment. Monoculture, the practice of growing a single crop in an area of land, removes native plants and insects from an ecosystem. Over 75% of agricultural biodiversity has already been lost due to the practice of monoculture, industrial farming (*ibid*). The removal of native organisms throws off the local ecological balance making the crops susceptible to disease outbreaks. Homogenous crops also require a lot of fertilizer and pesticide use. The excess use of fertilizers and pesticides contaminate water sinks and affect the health of communities residing near farming land.

UC Santa Cruz is” committed to improving our nation’s food system to promote health, social, economic and ecological resiliency” (“UC Santa Cruz Real Food”). UC Santa Cruz signed a 40% Real Food commitment spring 2012 after meeting the UC office of the President’s 20% Real Food by 2020 goal. UC Santa Cruz’s defines real food as food purchases that meet the following 4 requirements: local, humane, ecologically sound, and fair. Today the Real Food Calculator project is being implemented to work towards meeting “36% Real Food by 2016, across UCSC dining services” (Aldao et al., 2013). The Real Food commitment at UCSC, not

only working towards sourcing more sustainable food, the Real Food initiative also includes expanding food system education through internship opportunities, educational outreach, and events as a “leading model for colleges and universities around the country” (“UC Santa Cruz Real Food”). By expanding education opportunities, more students find venues for pursuing sustainable food initiatives.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION:

The Real Food Procurement undertakes a quarterly analysis of UCSC Dining’s vendor purchases by researching food ingredients and production location using vendor catalogs. Monthly purchases are listed on excel sheets and sustainability rankings and disqualified food are recorded into the software database Food pro. The internship also entails of meeting with students, campus stakeholders, and dining service administrators in making decisions for the removal or introduction of food sources, moving towards the university’s objective of 40% Real Food by 2020. The internship process builds awareness of how food is tracked and defined by the market and how oversight is undertaken at a public university where students have an active role.

Goal statement: Assessing Dining purchases using Real Food metrics to analyze UC Santa Cruz Dining inventory in order to remove or introduce new products that will support the university’s target of 40% Real Food.

Project Objectives:

- I. Engage student peers in defining real food and empower students to track food with the real food metrics by conducting a coding party every quarter.
 - A. Prepare resources to implement coding exercises for different student groups & events
 - B. Host one coding gathering, one each quarter.
 - C. Advise and support an additional intern to facilitate Real Food Tracking and Research
- II. Research ingredients and food manufacturing locations of dining purchases by using online vendor catalogs.
 - A. Coding vendor product identifications (VONS) using Food Pro, dining software that helps keep track of Real Food categories.
 - B. Research additional information of grocery items using shopwell.com
- III. Convene a meeting with UCSC Dining and FSWG stakeholders and share fall and summer purchase analysis
 - A. Plan a meeting for mid to late January 2014, with Dining stakeholders to reflect and discuss the real food procurement of summer and fall purchases of 2013
 - B. After the meeting, prepare a list of 10 contacts and products to research in order introduce to Dining.
- IV. Support the Food Systems Working Group on advancing real food awareness for students and the campus community

A. Attend quarterly FSWG events for familiarity with Real Food and Food system issues

Impacts/needs statement:

UC Santa Cruz is located in the central coast of California, less than 300 miles from the fisheries of Monterey Bay and the central valley, the breadbasket of the world. A lot of the food grown and produced in California is exported throughout the nation and the world. Many of these growers and fishers have to sell their food elsewhere because there is not enough local purchasing. Having university dining services purchase local food “fosters university-community relations supporting the livelihoods of family farmers, and food chain workers” (“UC Santa Cruz Real Food”). Purchasing dining products from local community members is more sustainable as the ecological impact is at a smaller scale. Food products grown and manufactured locally, create less ecological changes to the soil and output less greenhouse gases thus reducing “the ecological impact of our consumption behavior”.

UC Santa Cruz’s Real Food Commitment states that the university is dedicated to “providing students with experiential learning opportunities within our campus and the regional food system”. Engaging students in dining sustainability incorporates the youth principle of the Real Food Challenge. Students are encouraged to participate in dining procurements because students have the “collective ability to demand and achieve widespread structural and social change” (“Real Food Challenge”). Coding parties engage students of the UCSC campus community which clarify dining’s sustainability goals. Coding parties are a 2-3 hour get together where students research ingredients and locations of vendor products. They are beneficial to speed up the coding process. Standing with the Real Food commitment UCSC, hopes to “increase undergraduate student’s hands-on involvement at the farm and campus garden sites”, providing students with the education and skills development for students interested in changing food production practices in the U.S” (Campus Sustainability Plan. Aldao et al).

PROJECT TIMELINE:

The timeline of the food procurement expands throughout the school year beginning on October 3rd, 2013. My project objectives are divided throughout each quarter. Fall quarter consists of coding new summer purchases and any items that may have been miscoded during the summer coding procurement. The timeline of fall quarter coding begins October 3rd and ends December 5th 2013. I will also hold a trial coding party with the CLEI 155 class on November 20th, 2013. Beginning January 10th, the first week of winter quarter, will consist of running the final report of food purchases and developing an agenda for a meeting with dining administrators. The first weeks of winter quarter will consist of developing and agenda with FSWG for our stakeholder meeting January 23rd, 2014. After analyzing patterns and assessing the sustainability of our purchases at the stakeholder meeting, I will research contacts and alternative products to increase our real food sourcing by March 13th 2013. Spring quarter, starting April 2nd 2013 will consist of coding our food purchases for the school year; finalize the purchasing of new products and developing and implementing Real Food outreach materials.

PROJECT STAKEHOLDERS, STUDENTS, & MENTOR ROLES:

- UCSC Campus Community-students joining coding parties
- Food Systems Working Group(FSWG): Natalie Tran, Crystal Owings (FSWG co-chairs), Becky Reese (intern) Tim Galarneau
- Dining Administrators: Clint Jeffries, Josto Puddu, Dwight Collins (Executive Chef), Bill Prime (Interim Acting Director), Candy Berlin (marketing & education in dining)

After analyzing the coded purchases of summer and fall 2013, I will present the results to my advisor Tim Galarneau and the Food Systems Working Group (FSWG) in order to keep the organization updated on the Real Food procurement. As an organization we will analyze the purchases and design an agenda for our stakeholder meeting on January 23rd 2014. I will be co facilitating the meeting along the Food Systems Working Group (FSWG) co-chairs, and alongside my internship advisor. Dining administrators will assess any patterns of disqualified food and suggest pilot projects to increase our real food percentage. They will also assess what pilot projects will stay within budget and changes that will not upset students eating in the dining hall.

Students of the UC Santa Cruz community are also stakeholders involved in Real Food procurement. I will begin a coding party trial run November 20th, 2013 with Tim Galarneau's CIEI 155 class, a course with the objective to introduce students to internship opportunities. I will teach students how to login into U.S Food vendor catalogs in order to search product location, and ingredients. Participants will also actively participate in researching the location of vendors by doing internet searches. Students will learn to define real food and understand the conflict of tracking and labeling food. I plan to hold one coding party a quarter in order to "commit to increasing awareness. . . [of] socially equitable food systems" (UC Santa Cruz Real Food).

EVALUATION:

Outcome/Output #1: Identify the percent of dining food items that are classified as Real (humane, ecologically sound, fair and local) as determined by the Real Food metrics designed by the organization, Real Food Challenge.

Outcome/Output #2: The PSI intern will classify new 2013 vendor purchases using real food metrics and record qualifications on the database Food Pro throughout the 2013-2014 school year.

Outcome/Output #3: Compare the percentage of real food sourcing from the year 2013-2014 and compare it to 2013-2014 in spring to determine the rate of growth of real food sourcing.

Outcome/Output #4: The PSI will assist the Food Systems Working Group on advancing real food awareness for students and the campus community

The primary indicator of my food procurement project will be any increase in our Real Food percentage along with the removal or purchasing of new products that qualify as real food. My PSI work plan will also be a great indicator of my progress as I record the dates projected

projects and their deliverable date. At the end of the year FSWG and dining produce an annual progress report which is made publically available through the UC Santa Cruz Sustainability Office and CASFS website. Real Food procurement updates are also made in the FSWG published Campus Farm and Garden Guides. The guides are updated every school summer for the following school year.

Project Results:

- I. Engage student peers in defining real food and empower students to track food with the real food metrics by conducting a coding party every quarter.
 - This project began with a coding party in the fall. I used the food and garden guide as a reading assignment to introduce students to the real food calculator. We spent a 4 hour evening calculating and did not finish the list. Coding parties were problematic because we had to reteach the guidelines and not enough coding got done. Coding in the fall we needed the most assistance because we had to code 4 months of summer purchasing.
 - A coding intern was beneficial in helping code fall purchasing. We would recommend having a summer intern to code purchases in the summer because that is when the most new purchasing occurs.
- II. Research ingredients and food manufacturing locations of dining purchases by using online vendor catalogs.
 - Using US food catalogs was often difficult because ingredients and product images were often not available. I found it most beneficial to type the name of the products online and conducting a google search. When I Google searched the product image, website, and manufacturing site often came up in the results.
 - Also going on the company website was the best way to ensure the certification of real food products. With practice it becomes easy to determine real food products because they stand out against conventional food.
- III. Convene a meeting with UCSC Dining and FSWG stakeholders and share fall and summer purchase analysis
 - We held 3 meetings with Dining throughout the 2013-2014 RFC project. We meet with dining to analyze fall real food purchasing and products that can be real food. For this project year we research mozzarella cheese and local cheese products.
 - At the Dining meets we also developed a project to survey how real food purchasing is playing out in the dining hall. I found that the dining hall survey was not as beneficial because real food purchasing depends more on stakeholder decisions. We already know what are our non real food purchases and we have alternatives available, we just need to do more product researching and stakeholder meetings.

IV. Support the Food Systems Working Group on advancing real food awareness for students and the campus community

-Attending Real Food rising was a way for the PSI intern to become familiar with the real food campaign. It was also an introduction to working with the food systems working group.

- Attending the Real Food Calculator training was also a great opportunity to learn how to outreach and work in a team in order to support real food purchasing.

-Contributing a written contribution on the campus farm and garden guide was a useful way of introducing students to the calculator project.

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