

THE REAL IMPACT OF REAL FOOD:

8 WAYS INSTITUTIONAL PROCUREMENT IS BUILDING A REAL FOOD ECONOMY





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INTRODUCTION

In 2008, a group of student activists, higher education sustainability leaders, and food movement visionaries launched Real Food Challenge, a national campaign amplifying student voices and focusing our collective efforts on real change in higher education and in the food industry. Growing movements for farmworker justice, labor rights, international fair trade, student farms and gardens, and local food on campus coalesced into our definition of Real Food: food that is Local & Community Based, Ecologically Sound, Fair, and/or Humane.

In the ten years since our founding, we've won more than \$82 million in annual Real Food procurement from 82 colleges and universities across the US. As we look ahead at the future, it is worth uncovering and evaluating the impact our work has had on the communities and people along the supply chain.

The research behind this report set out to answer the following questions: What impact is Real Food purchasing having? In what ways is institutional Real Food purchasing building the robust, healthy food system we want – or not? What do purchasing relationships with colleges and universities mean to vendors on the ground?

The data for the research was drawn from two sources: the Real Food Calculator, which aggregates data on food purchasing from participating colleges and universities; and phone interviews with the Real Food vendors from whom these institutions are purchasing. (We use the term "vendors" here to capture the enormous variety of farms, boats and business involved in the farm-to-institution supply chain. "Real Food vendors" refers to any of those enterprises whose food products qualify as Real Food.)

In total, 50 vendors from across the country were interviewed to inform the findings of this report. The first phase of interview-based impact research with vendors was conducted by RFC Program Coordinator Hannah Weinronk from 2015-2016. Where stories from the initial round of interviews are included in this report, the stories have been updated through follow-up interviews over phone or email. These follow-up interviews, and all new interviews, were conducted in early 2018.

The research focused on vendors who sell to colleges and universities that have signed the Real Food Campus Commitment, which commits the signatory institution to sourcing at least 20% of their food budgets from Real Food sources by 2020. The research was not intended to have scientific validity. Rather, this research was intended to surface patterns, building up from case studies, that would give

broad stroke answers to the questions above. There are many additional questions that could be explored with a macro-economic analysis.

While we began this project as a way to inform our own internal strategic planning process, we believe it is useful to share more broadly. First, it contributes to a growing body of research on institutional procurement and community economic development; we hope it will inform further interest and scholarship. Secondly, we offer it in the spirit of our values of transparency and accountability; it is one of several publications we will offer in the next couple years that reflects on the data and lessons accumulated by thousands of student, staff, and community leaders engaged in Real Food procurement.

Finally, we offer this report in a spirit of celebration and inspiration. What we found in the course of interviews was indeed encouraging. From a ranch in Montana to an ice cream supplier in Baltimore, the stories and data in this report paint a compelling picture. Real Food purchasing does matter, and not just in a one-dimensional way. Indeed, one of our chief findings was the myriad of ways that Real Food commitments by colleges and universities impacted Real Food vendors. We are having a real impact and it is multi-layered.

In this report, you will find a sample of the stories we encountered that illustrate each of the eight different impacts that emerged, from anchoring a new business to supporting a new distribution area. The earlier sections of the report provide important context for viewing these stories. They provide a basic overview of how we define and measure Real Food, of how university food procurement works, and of how much and what kind of Real Food is being purchased.

This is important reinforcement not just for RFC supporters and stakeholders but for everyone engaged in values-driven institutional procurement efforts, from our peers at the Good Food Purchasing Program, Health Care Without Harm and the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education, to all the food producers and food workers who strive, against great odds, to align their enterprises with their social and environmental values. For many of the vendors we interviewed, Real Food procurement for institutions of higher education played a critical or meaningful role in their business and in their ability to improve well-being in their communities. Together with the data we are collecting on the scale of Real Food purchasing, the stories make a powerful case for the idea that a "Real Food economy" that is fair and sustainable for all is not only possible, it's here and it's growing. It suggests that we can build a food system that is fair and sustainable for all, and that our public-serving institutions can help to anchor that vision.

DEFINING REAL FOOD

The Real Food Standards are a set of criteria and certifications that define Real Food. The standards address four aspects of food production, qualifying a product as Real Food if they meet criteria in at least one of the following categories:

- Local & Community Based
- Fair
- Humane
- Ecologically Sound

The Real Food Standards are the most comprehensive and up-to-date guide to socially and environmentally responsible food purchasing for colleges and universities, developed in deep collaboration with advisors and stakeholders including 100+ farmers, ranchers, fishermen, industry experts, campus dining staff, and students. These standards have been rigorously researched to set a high bar and to guard against greenwashing. For instance, Local & Community Based Real Food is determined not just by distance from farm to cafeteria, but also by other factors such as ownership and size. The Real Food Guide, a two-page overview of the criteria, can be found at can be found at at bit.ly/Real_Food_Guide. The full explanation of the Real Food Standards can be found at bit.ly/RealFoodStandards.



The Real Food Calculator ("the Calculator" for short) is a web-based tool that allows student researchers to record purchasing data from their dining service operations, evaluate them based on the Real Food Standards, and track progress over time.

All of the vendors highlighted in this report meet standards in at least one of the Real Food categories.

FIGURE 1. The Real Food Wheel outlines the values behind the purchasing criteria in the Real Food Standards

THE CONTEXT FOR REAL FOOD PURCHASING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The stories of how Real Food purchasing impacts vendors is part of a larger landscape of food procurement in institutions of higher education. This section offers an overview of that landscape, outlining how college and university food procurement works, and how much and what kind of Real Food is being purchased.

Self - Operated vs. Outsourced Dining

The majority of colleges and universities outsource their dining to Food Service Management Companies (FSMCs). There are three companies that dominate food service in higher education: Sodexo, Aramark, and Compass Group (subsidiaries include Chartwells and Bon Appétit). These companies also operate food service in hospitals, prisons, K-12 and other institutions.

With outsourced cafeterias, the college or university has a contract with a corporation that runs the dining program, which includes purchasing food and employing dining staff. When dining is outsourced to the one of the FSMCs above, there are contracts requiring local dining managers to purchase 80-100% of their food items from a list of approved vendors. Big food and beverage manufacturers make deals with the FSMCs, paying off-invoice rebates, or "kickbacks," in exchange for being placed on the list. This practice systemically locks in these "Big Food" corporations and locks out potential Real Food vendors -- farms, boats, ranches and businesses that are local & community- based, have fair labor practices, practice environmental sustainability, and/or maintain high animal welfare standards. The way in which FSMCs operate means that decisions about food sourcing and relationships with suppliers are often made by the FSMC, far beyond the walls of the institution.

While self-operated dining programs have more flexibility than outsourced dining programs because their decisions are made in-house, they often still contract with large food companies and distributors for whole areas of their dining program. They also operate in a landscape that is marked by these business practices.

This subject deserves much more exploration. Indeed, we will soon be publishing a report about the corporate cafeteria industry. We mention it briefly here as part of our mission to provide basic literacy about the food system in general, and to clarify that the stories we collected come from both self-operated and outsourced dining operations run by all three of the largest food service management companies. Seeking examples from many kinds of operations helped to ensure our insights would be relevant to institutions with many different types of dining programs.

The Supply Chain

There is a complex supply chain to bring food from the fields and oceans to a campus cafeteria. The functions of the supply chain include Production, Aggregation, Processing, and Distribution. Each actor along the supply chain can serve one or multiple of those functions, as outlined in the diagram below:

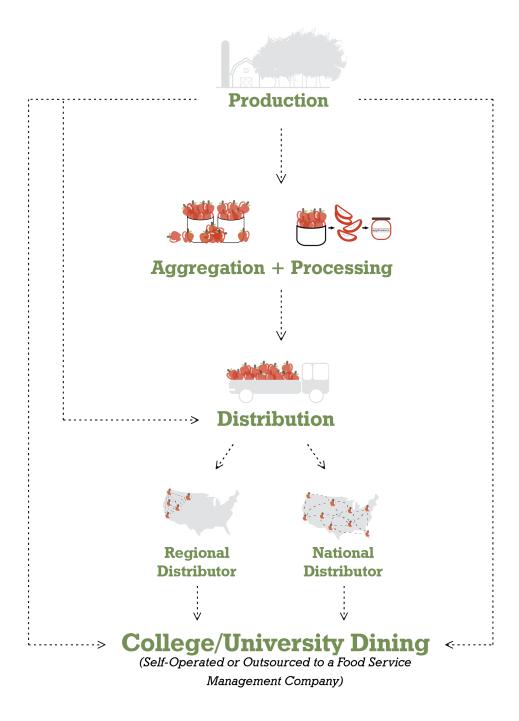


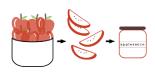
FIGURE 2. The food supply chain to a campus cafeteria



Production: All food begins as raw ingredients. Whether it's wheat or tomatoes or coffee beans or cow's milk, the raw ingredients that make up our food is produced on farms, on ranches, and on the ocean. "Producers" refers to the farmers, ranchers, fishermen, and agricultural workers that grow and harvest our food, and the businesses where that production takes place. Producers can be based locally, across the U.S., and around the world.



Aggregation: In most cases, products are combined from multiple producers before they reach their market. Aggregation can take place at the level of production (i.e. one vegetable farmer aggregating vegetables from multiple farms), by "food hub" that sources from multiple producers and then helps move the product to a market, or by regional or national distributors.



Processing: Processing is when a raw product undergoes a physical change of state. It can range from pasteurizing milk to baking bread to canning tomatoes to cutting potatoes into french fries. The act of processing often enhances a product's economic value. Processing can take place on-site (e.g. at a farm), at a facility that explicitly does secondary processing (e.g. cannery, slaughterhouse), or in the facilities of a regional or national distributor.



Distribution: Distribution is the final step of delivering the product to the customer. A distributor is a company that purchases, warehouses, and resells products to institutions, retailers, or other businesses. The most common types of distributors are:



National Distributors: These are companies that service accounts across the country. There are "broadline distributors" that handle a broad spectrum of food products (e.g. Sysco, U.S. Foods) and "specialty distributors" that focus on a niche market (e.g. frozen foods, fresh produce).

Regional Distributors: These are companies that service accounts in one or a few states in a particular region of the country.

There are potentially impacts all along the supply chain that correspond to different priorities in purchasing policy. The research behind this report focused on impacts at the levels of Production and Aggregation, since that is the focus of the Real Food Standards. We recognize that food procurement policies have other potential impacts along the supply chain (e.g. how food services workers on campus or distribution company drivers are affected), though they are not the focus of this report.

The Scale and Scope of Real Food Purchasing

As of October 2018, 82 colleges and universities have committed to purchasing at least 20% Real Food by 2020, representing over \$82 million committed to Real Food purchasing by institutions annually across the country. Other campuses that have not yet made formal policy commitments also purchase Real Food and many of them use the Real Food Calculator as a tool for tracking food purchasing on campus and guiding procurement decisions.

Over the years, students have audited food purchasing on a diversity of campuses all across the country: small and large, public and private, urban and rural, self-operated and outsourced. The amount of Real Food that is purchased on campus as a percentage of the school's total food budget varies, but there are common trends that help us to understand the general scale of Real Food purchasing. The chart below offers a categorization for campuses based on their progress towards Real Food goals:

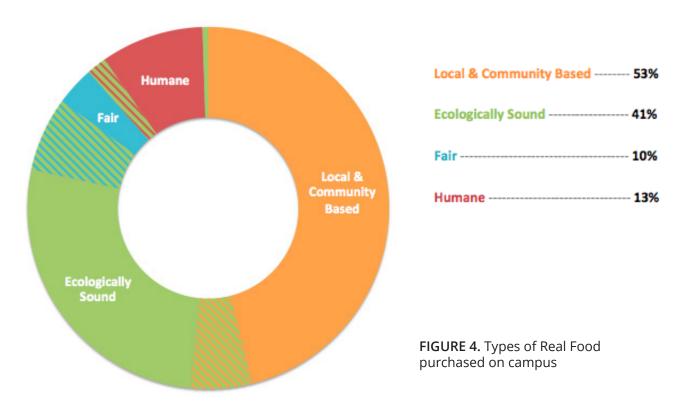
Real Food Champions! 20% + Real Food	Schools in this category have achieved 20% Real Food and have robust programs for Real Food purchasing. They serve as a model for what is possible at all of our institutions of higher education.
Active Efforts 11 - 19% Real Food	Schools in this category typically have an active program, working towards a 20% goal or a different local or sustainable food initiative. There are dedicated people and active support from the campus and dining.
First Steps 4 - 10% Real Food	Schools in this category are doing a small amount of Real Food purchasing, often buying a few key items such as fair trade coffee, humane eggs, or local produce. For some campuses, this is just a small effort to rise above the status quo, while for others, this is a testament to dedicated people trying to make change in the face of significant barriers.
Status Quo 0 - 3 % Real Food	Schools in this category have little to no Real Food. This is the baseline for most institutions of higher education that have not made explicit commitments to Real Food, local food, or sustainability. It appears to be the starting point for the majority of campuses across the country.

FIGURE 3. Schools are at Different Stages of Real Food Procurement

The interviews we conducted, and therefore the stories presented in the next section, were drawn from institutions in the top two categories (Active Efforts and Real Food Champions) because they presented the greatest opportunity to study a diversity of farms and food businesses and to understand the impacts over longer periods of time.

What types of Real Food are campuses buying?

The data that follows is based on a sample of 40 colleges and universities that audited food purchasing using the Real Food Calculator between 2016-2018. It offers a visual breakdown of the average percentage of the Real Food total that is being purchased on each campus that falls into each Real Food category. The denominator in Figure 4 is Real Food, whereas the denominator in Figure 3 is the total food budget.



As you can see above, the majority (53%) of the Real Food that is purchased qualifies as Local & Community Based, representing small- and medium-sized farms and businesses that are locally owned and operated. Nearly half (41%) of the Real Food qualifies as Ecologically Sound, carrying third-party certifications that indicate strong standards around sustainability and environmental impact. A smaller portion of the Real Food is certified as Humane or Fair. There is also overlap between the Real Food categories, with products that meet multiple criteria in the Real Food Standards. This overlap is represented by the dual-color shaded areas.

What are the top Real Food products purchased on campus?

The list below are the Real Food products that are most commonly purchased by colleges and universities in our sample. Consistent with the pie chart above, you can see that "Local" (short for "Local & Community Based) appears frequently in this list, which provides some texture for what local purchasing often includes. Similarly, you can see that "Eco" (short for "Ecologically Sound") Is among the top Real Food products in multiple product categories.

Top Real Food Products

- 1. Local Produce
- 2. Local Dairy
- 3. Local Meat
- 4. Local & Eco Produce
- 5. Eco Grocery
- 6. Fair & Eco Tea/Coffee
- 7. Local Poultry
- 8. Local Baked
- 9. Humane Eggs
- 10. Local Grocery

FIGURE 5. Top Real Food Products

Given that there are four Real Food attributes and ten food product categories recorded in the Real Food Calculator, there are many more permutations for which there is currently less Real Food in demand and/or in supply. For instance, Local Seafood has received much less attention than Local Dairy, and is a Real Food product category where there is opportunity to grow.

Our research included interviews of vendors from as many of these categories as possible. While the stories that follow are only a fraction of the total interviews (themselves only a fraction of the Real Food purchasing happening at institutions across the country), we have included anecdotes from a variety of categories in order to give some approximation of the diversity.









THE IMPACT OF REAL FOOD PURCHASING

Real Food Campus Commitment signatory institutions purchase food from a vast array of Real Food vendors, from local farms and small producers to cooperative food hubs to regional distributors. Investment from institutions like colleges and universities, and access to institutional markets, has the potential to transform individual farms and businesses as well as local and regional food systems as a whole.

Though in some ways each relationship between a vendor and a college or university is unique, we have identified a number of impact areas that appear consistently across the research:

- 1. ANCHORING A NEW BUSINESS
- 2. SUPPORTING VENDORS TO SCALE UP
- 3. EVENING OUT CYCLICAL DEMAND
- 4. OPENING OR SUPPORTING A NEW DISTRIBUTION AREA
- **5.** EXPANDING CUSTOMER BASE
- 6. IMPROVING PRODUCTION PRACTICES
- 7. BUILDING SKILLS & SHARING KNOWLEDGE
- 8. AMPLIFYING BENEFITS ACROSS THE SUPPLY CHAIN

The stories that follow include examples of each impact area, offering celebration, insights, and inspiration for all of us working to build a food system that is truly just and sustainable for all.

1. Anchoring A New Business

New farms, new small businesses, new cooperative food hubs: all kinds of vendors have been anchored by initial investment from a college or university. Institutions can wield their financial resources to capitalize new vendors and provide a consistent, stabilizing source of revenue as they get established in the market.

LINC Foods

Spokane, Washington. *Gonzaga University*. *Aggregator of Local Produce, Dairy, Eggs, Grocery and Meat*

LINC Foods was just an idea in 2014 when co-founders Beth and Joel began talking with Gonzaga University in Spokane, Washington about their new commitment to 20% Real Food by 2020. Both had long histories of agriculture in the region, and they saw an opportunity to connect local farmers with Gonzaga and other local markets. With the support of the university, LINC Foods has become a well-established food hub working with 50 farmers to deliver fruits, vegetables, grains, legumes, meats, cheeses, and eggs to Gonzaga as well as other university dining services, school systems, restaurants, and direct-to-consumers.

"I don't think our business would exist. I just don't see how we could have developed it without that partnership... Having that strong signal helped us know that we could put our energy there and something would come of it."

- Beth Robinette, Co-Founder



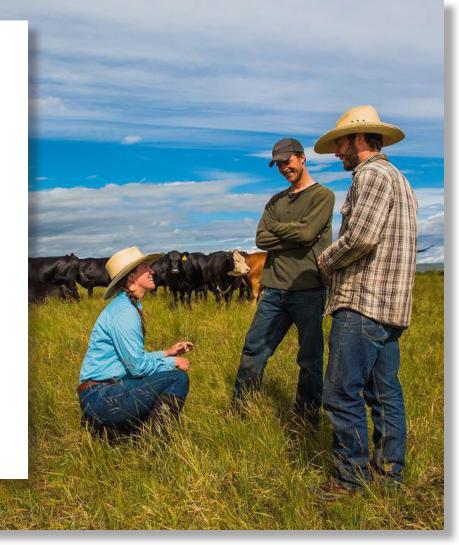
Yellowstone Grassfed Beef

Bozeman, Montana. *University of Montana. Local Meat*

Yellowstone Grassfed Beef is committed to ranching that supports the soil health, rangeland ecosystems, and ranching traditions of Montana. When they first started up their business, the University of Montana was their first large purchaser of ground beef and represented nearly half of their sales. Having the university as a stable purchaser that used large volumes and used cuts of meat that were different than other customers allowed them to establish and grow their business.

"Especially in the first couple years, they were a significant purchaser of ground beef... at thetime, they were our first large ground beef customer, which allowed us to get to significant volume fairly quickly with our other cuts because we could sell the ground. Currently... it's not like we couldn't sell that product elsewhere, where five years ago that might not have been possible."

- Terry Hollingsworth, Operations Manager at Yellowstone Grassfed Beef



2. Supporting Vendors to Scale Up

Purchasing from colleges and universities can represent a significant percentage of a vendor's overall revenue, and schools are often among a vendor's most reliable customers. This volume and consistency allows vendors to increase capacity -- hiring more staff, investing in equipment, revamping their production process, or supporting other programs.

Garuka Bars

Burlington, Vermont. *University of Vermont Local Grocery*

Today, when you walk through stores around Burlington, VT, as well as colleges and universities across the region, you will find Garuka Bars: a local granola bar made with organic ingredients. When dining staff at the University of Vermont first connected with Garuka Bars at an RFC event on campus, they were operating out of a small kitchen cooperative. The first order UVM placed was for 600 bars -- as much as they had been making in a week. With a secure demand for significant volume from the university, they were suddenly able to scale up, ordering more ingredients and setting aside more production time. UVM supported them to work with a regional distributor that sold to the university, and after the first year, Garuka Bars began to sell to the distributors' other customers as well. Garuka Bars is now an established business selling to colleges across the region, other institutions, and online sales -- especially for alumni of UVM.

"UVM was super supportive. We did something like 2000 bars in the first month... Which was awesome, and instantly I was able to start ordering ingredients and materials at a better price because I was filling a larger volume... people at UVM started having it, ordering online, then different stores around Burlington wanted to carry it, it just snowballed from there."

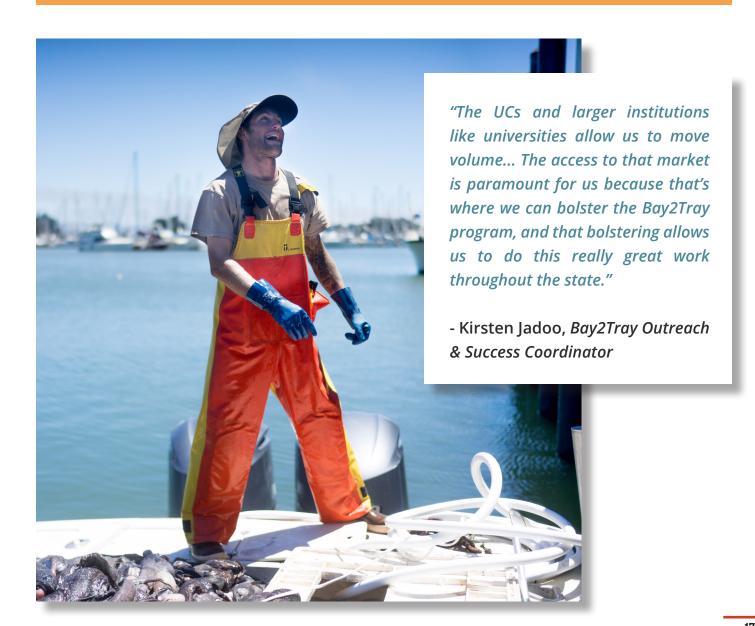
- Mike Rosenberg, Founder



Real Good Fish

Santa Cruz, California. *University of California Santa Cruz*Local Seafood

Real Good Fish brings seafood from the waters of California to local markets. At the heart of their work is a program called Bay2Tray, working with California school districts and institutions to deliver a local seafood species that was once discarded as bycatch. This creates new secure markets for local fishers and more affordable access to fresh local seafood for schools. The University of California Santa Cruz is one of the largest institutions they work with, selling seafood from a local fisherman in San Francisco. This enables them to move volume and expand all of their programs, including the important work they are doing with students all over the state.



3. Addressing Cyclical Demand

Many vendors experience high demand in the spring and summer that drops off in the fall and winter seasons. Luckily, that's when colleges and universities are buying the most food! Evening out cyclical swings in demand allows vendors to create long-term plans and keep their staff year-round, instead of laying them off or reducing hours in the off-season.

Taharka Brothers

Baltimore, Maryland. *Johns Hopkins University Local Dairy*

Taharka Brothers is a local ice cream company that emerged as a social enterprise to support young people to be leaders and changemakers Baltimore. Through flavors like "Chocolate Lives Matter" and through intentional sourcing of ingredients that use fair labor, they share the story of issues in the city and across the food supply chain. Hopkins has become the largest customer for Taharka Brothers. Since students eat ice cream year-round, sales to Hopkins has supported the company to keep up production and employ people year-round. It has allowed them to purchase new equipment and continue to expand their company and their mission in the city.



"[Sales] dropped off for us [in the winter] because a lot of our customers are ice cream shops... so when we got the Hopkins account, that really helped us because that kept the sales going during the colder months. The school year is basically during the colder months, so that really helped us keep a steady flow of income and our our employees hours stayed more steady year-round instead of dropping"

- Sean Smeeton, Co-Founder

Bausch Potatoes

Whitehall, Montana. *University of Montana*. *Local Produce*

Bausch Potatoes is a family farm in Montana that grows and sells potatoes: whole, peeled, diced, and sliced for restaurants and institutional foodservice. They sell to the University of Montana as well as other colleges in the area. While tourism and other activities are busiest in the summer, the university is busiest in the winter, so that Bausch Potatoes doesn't have a down season, enabling them to employ more people on a steady basis. The staff at the university has been good to work with, and they appreciate selling to a public state institution.



4. Opening or Supporting a New Distribution Area

Once a vendor is established, the next challenge is often figuring out how to break into new markets. Institutional purchasing can open new distribution areas by making it cost-effective to start a delivery route to a new geographic area; providing legitimacy in the eyes of other potential customers, especially customers concerned about the vendor's ability to deliver consistent volume and quality; and making networking connections with other college and university dining programs.

Equal Exchange

Multiple Locations. *University of Vermont.*Fair and Ecologically Sound Produce

In a banana industry dominated by four corporations, and which has a violent history of colonization, worker suppression, and ecological destruction, Equal Exchange bananas offer a model of what is possible. They are a US-based worker-owned cooperative that, among other products, purchases bananas from two farmer cooperatives: El Guabo (125 small-scale banana farmers in Ecuador), CEPIBO (466 farmers in Peru), and APOQ (617 farmers in Peru). The University of Vermont worked closely with Equal Exchange and a regional distributor call Black River Produce to figure out the ins and outs of sourcing ethical bananas through alternative supply chains. In the process, they have created a hub for purchasing in Burlington, VT, allowing





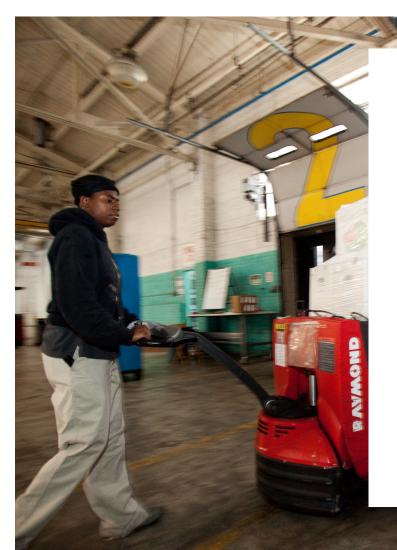
"Volume is still the game with bananas... Take a place like Burlington. We have coops and retail stores that carry our product. Without them, we probably wouldn't be able to have the UVM program. Without UVM, we probably wouldn't have as successful a retail program at other stores. Anything that's bringing more weekly volume into the program allows us to better ship, distribute, ripen, and also price..."

 Nicole Vitello, President of Oke USA/Equal Exchange Bananas

The Common Market

Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Johns Hopkins
University. Aggregator and Distributor of Local
Produce, Dairy, Eggs, Grocery, Meat and Poultry

The Common Market is a mission-driven distributor of regional farm products. They have worked with over 200 family farmers and producers through the Mid-Atlantic, the Southeast and Texas. When they were expanding from Philadelphia into Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University provided an anchor for them to distribute within the city, enabling them to sell to other smaller restaurants, schools and institutions. In doing so, they were able to begin or expand purchasing from farmers and producers in those areas.



"The Common Market has to be strategic when it comes to our trucking capacity and our ability to make timely deliveries... When we expanded into Baltimore, having an account like Hopkins was absolutely transformational for us. It served as an anchor institution due to its size and purchasing power, allowing us to expand our reach to smaller customers on their route, including restaurants, retailers and community organizations."

Margaret Smith, Former Outreach +
 Operations Coordinator - Mid-Atlantic,
 current Director - Texas

5. Expanding Customer Base

Selling to one college or university can open the door to other institutions, through direct connections to purchasing staff in other dining programs or through offering the credibility that other dining programs look for. Within a campus, students and staff often continue to purchase the product independently in town while they are still at school, as well as long after they leave the institution, sometimes even helping the vendor break into new markets.

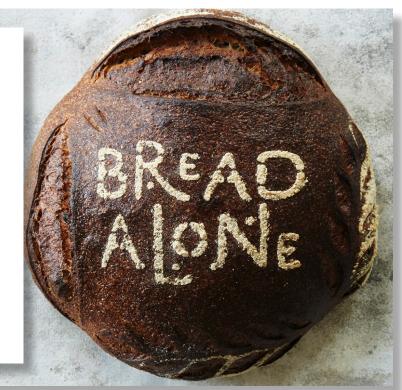
Bread Alone Bakery

Kingston, New York. Bard College. Ecologically Sound Baked Goods.

Bread Alone Bakery has been producing certified organic breads and pastries in the Hudson Valley of New York since 1983. When Bard made a commitment to Real Food, they increased their purchasing from Bread Alone Bakery and quickly became one of their largest foodservice customers. In addition to enabling them to send trucks out further into rural areas to deliver their products, their relationship with Bard College has opened the doors to connecting with other institutional foodservice accounts.

"It was the connection with [Bard sustainability staff] and Bard that then helped open some other doors into other foodservice accounts. Doing that work has actually helped us build more business with some other schools and institutional accounts in the area. So for that reason Bard has proven to be a customer that's even more important than the sales we do with them directly."

- Nels Leader, Vice President



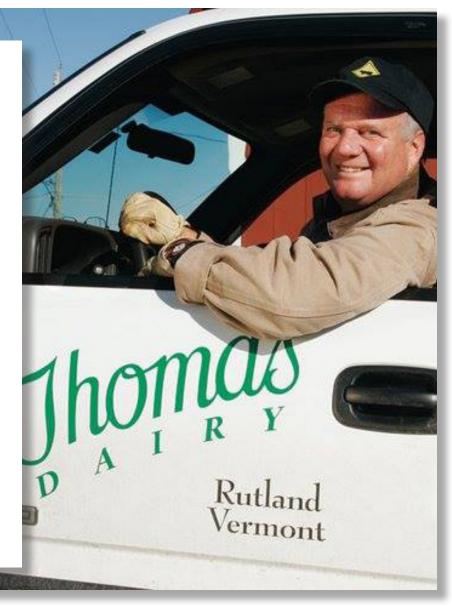
Thomas Dairy

Rutland, Vermont. *University of Vermont. Local Dairy*

Thomas Dairy is a 5th-generation dairy in Vermont. Once a dairy farm itself, Thomas Dairy now aggregates milk from 8-9 small local dairy farmers and homogenizes, processes, and distributes the milk. Because of selling to the University of Vermont, they began sending trucks farther up north, enabling them to gain new business in that area. Milk production has increased because of their new business in that area of Vermont, so they now use more milk from their farmers. They have also found that having their product on campus supports sales in the community.

"We were aware that sending a truck up north, quite a bit further than we had been delivering, would open up other avenues of business up there... We came in contact and have started a relationship with a chain in this area... As far as the word of mouth and the way that the students have received Thomas Dairy products in the UVM community, I think it has carried over into their friends, and maybe their families, and even other off-campus stores and facilities up in the Burlington area, which obviously helps spread our business up there to other outlets."

Abbey Thomas, Marketing
 Manager, fifth-generation owner



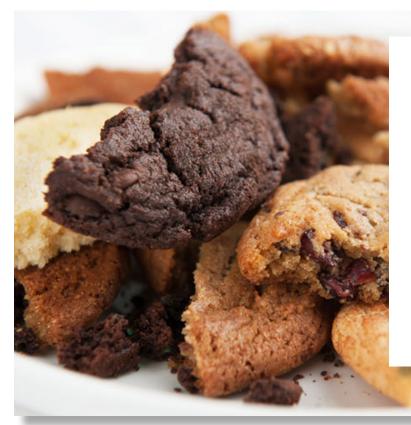
6. Enhancing Production Practices

Institutions work with vendors to change their recipes or practices so a product will qualify as Real Food, supporting farms and businesses to adopt more sustainable practices.

Pacific Cookie Company

Santa Cruz, California. *University of California*Santa Cruz. Ecologically Sound Baked Goods

Pacific Cookie Company is small family-run cookie company in California with a long-standing relationship with the University of California Santa Cruz. When the university made a commitment to Real Food, the cookie company came along with them! They have shifted to source local flour and butter and fair trade chocolate in order to meet the standards for Real Food. This has allowed them to make stronger commitments to sustainability as a company that all of their customers benefit from, as well as the people who eat on campus.



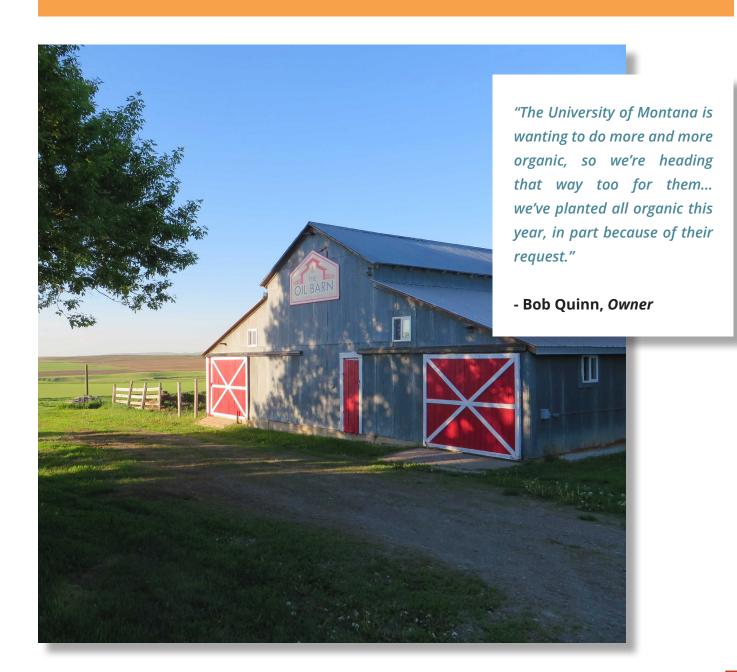
"We've been working with UC Santa Cruz for over 18 years. Because we're a local company they were on board a long time ago, but just recently they asked us, 'We really would like to qualify you for the Real Food Challenge. You fit in so many ways. Let's look at your recipes and see specifically'... We made the change to the flour which has been really successful... Now we use it across the board"

- Cara Pearson, President

The Oil Barn

Big Sandy, Montana. *University of Montana*Local and Ecologically Sound Grocery

The Oil Barn is a small, farmer-owned operation growing and producing high-oleic safflower oil. They have a "closed loop" system with the University of Montana: they deliver locally grown safflower oil, and the university returns the used oil for the farm to run in its tractors. The university is a strong and steady customer. Their interest in having oil that was both local and organic has influenced The Oil Barn in their decision to grow all organic crops this year.



7. Building Skills & Sharing Knowledge

The relationships between vendors and institutions of higher education offer unique learning opportunities to everyone involved. At its best, farmers and farmers-in-training learn about planning for different types of markets and working with big institutional buyers; vendors get important feedback on their products; dining staff learn to work with small producers; and students on campus learn about food production and are exposed to farming and working with food businesses as viable careers.

Tyler's Farm

Oberlin, Ohio. *Oberlin College*Local Produce

Tyler's Farm grows hydroponic lettuce and green. They are a new farm that started in December 2014, in part because of a letter from the dining manager at Oberlin College that enabled them to get the loans they needed. In addition to providing an initial market, working with the chefs and getting feedback from them has allowed the farm to develop their product that they can now bring to other customers.

"Because of them, I'm able to try new things, they'll tell me yes or no. It's a great working relationship. They can tell me 'nah, this doesn't work out too great' or 'that one really is nice' and it's a good relationship on both sides. Not only do I provide them with fresh and local, but they're teaching me what's good or not as well."

- Tyler Gogolek, Grower and Owner

Catamount Farm

Burlington, Vermont. *University of Vermont. Local Produce*

Catamount Farm is an educational farm at the University of Vermont. It is a 10- acre vegetable farm that runs a farmer training program and a summer program for undergraduates. Produce grown at the farm is sold to the university dining operation through their foodservice management company, Sodexo. The farm's other marketing channels include a 100-member CSA, a farmers' market in Burlington's Old North End, and an on-site farm stand. Selling to the university is educational on many fronts: it allows the student farmers to learn about selling to a particular type of market and it also creates an opportunity for the staff in the dining program to learn how to work better with small producers.

"Selling produce to UVM's dining halls helps to connect UVM students to the farm. Chefs will sometimes highlight dishes by utilizing ingredients grown solely at Catamount. This reminds students of Catamount Farm's presence on campus. Sodexo's commitment to purchasing set amounts of produce from the farm not only supports the general operations of the farm, but it also supports the practical education of students who work and learn at the farm. The needs of an institutional kitchen are different from the needs of a customer purchasing produce at a farmers' market or through the farm's CSA. Realizing and accommodating those needs helps students better understand and prepare for marketing to a wholesale account."

 Rachel Stievater (Catamount Farm Manager and Farmer Training Program Co-Director)



The Bridge

Middletown, Connecticut. Wesleyan University Local Grocery

The Bridge makes local tofu in Connecticut, using soybeans grown in New York state. They are a well-loved local business, and that translates to Wesleyan University, where students enjoy their products in the dining hall as well as on-campus retail stores. Because they are located in the same town as the university, students are able to visit the manufacturer, creating an opportunity to learn about a production process that is often hidden behind the walls of the industry.



8. Amplifying Benefits Across the Supply Chain

In many cases, the impact of institutions purchasing Real Food goes far beyond the vendor itself. When a college or university supports Real Food vendors, those vendors in turn can have their own impact across the supply chain. They can support other farmers, ranchers, fishermen, aggregators, processing plants, and distribution infrastructure, creating a ripple effect across the food system.

The Common Market

(see more under "Opening/Supporting a New Distribution Area")

"In the fall of 2016, Johns Hopkins University made the switch to sourcing local turkey. This increase in turkey sales impacts The Common Market positively, but more importantly, the farmers, processors and the people they employ. Johns Hopkins' commitment to purchasing local turkey is creating this impressive ripple effect - it's amazing to think about the power of a single institution"-- Abby Massey, Regional Manager - MD, DC, VA



Equal Exchange

(see more under "Opening/Supporting a New Distribution Area")

"\$1 per [box of bananas] is set aside and goes into a fair trade fund, so the co-op collectively decides to use that for community development, or healthcare, or retirement, or however they democratically decide to spend that. It's an important thing when you consider that one container is 1000 boxes. We're doing six containers a week, that's \$6000 per week that's going back to these co-ops in just a fair trade fund. Typically the price for conventional bananas is very low, the current box price is half that of fair trade bananas. People work on plantations, so they receive per-day or piecemeal salary or wage for that, which is also very small. The farmers that we purchase from own their own land... The more volume we can do, it not only makes for a more solid program on the retail or the wholesale end, but it definitely is also impacting producers on the ground... The fact that we can encourage people to stay on their own land, to be business people, to form a coop, to have pride and dignity in what they do, and actually become empowered to do that, that is why we do what we do. And the more volume we can move through our model to the producer that we care about."

- Nicole Vitello, president of Oke USA/Equal Exchange Bananas

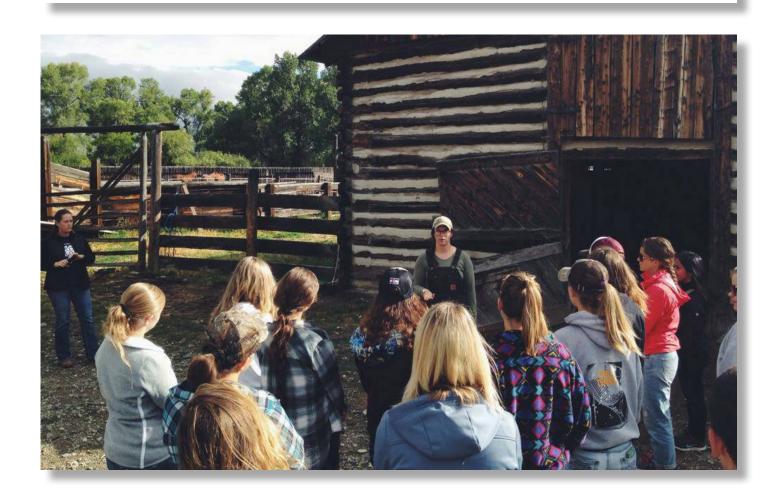


Yellowstone Grassfed Beef

(see more under "Anchoring a New Business")

"All of our beef is processed in a family-owned processing plant here in Montana. So just right there - the University of Montana is our largest single customer, and we are the largest single customer of our processing plant. So the university's account represents a significant impact on the processing plant. The number of processing plants in Montana has decreased dramatically over the past 6 years, so the University of Montana sourcing local beef certainly helps us as a business, it helps our ranches, but it also helps the processing plant, the distribution folks. It has a fairly significant impact on the economy, that's for sure."

- Terry Hollingsworth, Operations Manager at Yellowstone Grassfed Beef



CONCLUSION

These stories, alongside Real Food Calculator data, suggest that college and university purchasing of Real Food is both an immediate solution to the challenges facing Real Food farmers and producers and a long term means of building the food system we want. The alternatives to industrial farms and unhealthy food do exist: farmers, fishers, ranchers, growers, workers, and family food businesses across the country and world are producing Real Food. These vendors are ready to scale with institutional partnership – ultimately growing the 'Real Food economy.'

Shifting institutional dining purchases towards supporting a just and sustainable food system has a clear and direct positive impact on the vendors they purchase from. We should be clear: a Real Food commitment from a particular institution was not pivotal for every single vendor we interviewed. For the largest of the vendors we interviewed, no single university account was decisive; one university might represent 2% or less of overall sales, for instance. But even for these larger businesses, colleges and universities as a whole were an important segment of their market, and Real Food procurement policies have the power to grow that segment. And for all of our interviewees, institutional purchasing was viewed positively. So it matters, and not just to individual vendors; this investment can have a ripple effect across the food supply chain.

Many institutions would not have moved to make these investments without the tireless work of student leaders and allies on campus, and we are more committed than ever to mobilizing and activating young people to transform the food system as a whole. More young people are entering the political sphere than we've seen in over a generation. They are connecting food issues with what they're seeing most prominently in the world around them – for example, mass outcry around immigrants rights, racism, and climate change.

As we continue to fight to create thriving, sustainable local and regional food systems through investment in Real Food farms and businesses, we know there are larger structures of power that constrain the ultimate success of this strategy. In the course of this research, we heard about many barriers, some of them endemic. While documenting these challenges is not the focus of this report, it's important to acknowledge them to underscore the importance of the work of structural change. That's something we are dedicated to as we look ahead to the next stage of our work, and we hope to join with you on that path. Imagine a world in which the stories we have shared here are commonplace. That world is real. It's ready. And with the right policies and priorities, it is within reach.



