



Vision for a San Mateo County Food + Farm Bill

Executive Summary



Purpose

This executive summary of the *Vision for a San Mateo County Food and Farm Bill** outlines a shared vision for supporting a strong and resilient food and farming system in San Mateo County. The report will help San Mateo Food System Alliance member organizations focus resources towards supporting a food and farming system that is economically viable, environmentally sound, and socially equitable. The vision reflects the values and priorities identified by key stakeholders and community members that participated in the four out-reach sessions to gather input.

Food Waste Recovery

The County has a goal to reduce the amount of food that goes to the landfill. The County's Office of Sustainability recently joined the SMFSA in an effort to support food waste recovery as a key component of a sustainable and equitable food system. Staff estimates that 33 million pounds of viable food is going to waste in the county.



Equity in our food system

The food system impacts our health, economy and the environment. An equitable food system makes healthy food available to all, provides good jobs, and fosters healthy neighborhoods. The Equity Analysis outlines strategies to address economic, social, and health inequities in all aspects of the food and farming system. For example, equity in access to healthy food in schools ensures that students have access to nutritious food regardless of family income or what neighborhood they live in.

The San Mateo Food System Alliance

The San Mateo County Food System Alliance (SMFSA) is a collaboration of community leaders focused on creating a better future for people, farms, communities, and the environment in San Mateo County. The SMFSA brings together stakeholders representing all aspects of the local food system, including agricultural producers, urban food growers, anti-hunger groups, food service providers, nutrition educators, and those working on policies that impact the local food system and economy.

SMSFA framework & successes

Land and rural communities

In 2015, the Peninsula Open Space Trust, a member of the SMFSA, created the "Farmland Futures" initiative that is preserving working agricultural land.

Production

SMC Resource Conservation District, a member of the SMFSA, is addressing the issue of limited water access on the coast through the 100 Ponds Project.

Processing, aggregation and distribution

SMFSA members work collaboratively on the Farm to School initiative to increase the amount of local food served in schools across the country.

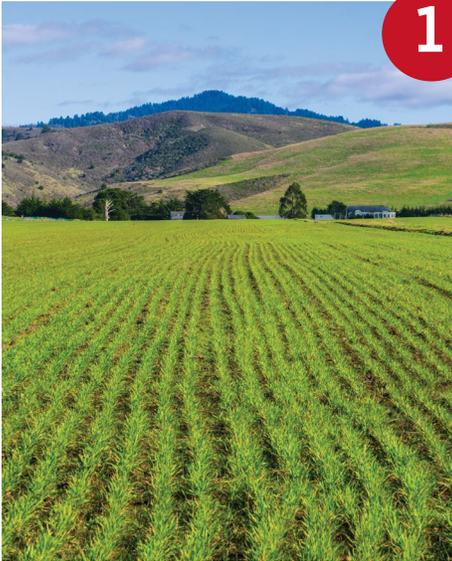
Healthy food access

In 2017, Pie Ranch, a member of the SMFSA piloted the CSA 2.0 project as a strategy to increase healthy food access for low-income families in the Pescadero region.

*Full report is available at:
http://bit.ly/SMC_FFB

Food Sector Analysis & Recommendations

The full report includes a detailed assessment of the existing conditions of the food system, utilization of food and agricultural programs in the Federal Farm Bill, and proposes performance metrics and 13 programmatic recommendations for the SMFSA. **Cross cutting recommendations** were developed with an emphasis on developing the SMFSA's institutional capacity beginning with framing an agenda, defining success, and expanding the context of the work to include regional efforts.



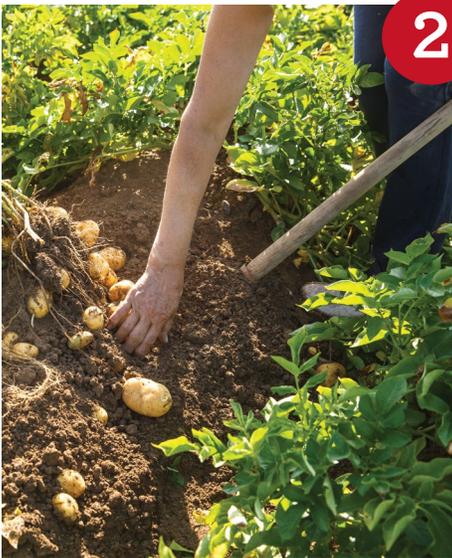
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Land & rural economies

As the unique legal issues associated with agricultural and land-based enterprises continue to increase, technical assistance for beginning farmers is essential. While many components of this topic are beyond the scope of this report, the authors found that federally funded programs for land and rural economic development are underutilized in San Mateo County. This is due in part to low staff capacity to facilitate the process of applying for federal funding programs.

Recommendations

- Increase capacity of the San Mateo County Resource Conservation District by funding the recommended agricultural resource coordinator position.
- Support agricultural producers by offering informational forums on real estate, succession, transition assistance, and vouchers for legal and accounting fees.
- Enhance Farmland Access Program on conservation lands, targeting beginning farmers.



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Production

Despite declines in both production acreage and the value of crops in San Mateo County, there are many areas along the production chain that could be addressed to enhance the market values of agricultural programs, including soil management, water conservation, labor, and pest management. As the number of farms and ranches has declined, so have the number of business services oriented towards serving the agricultural industry.

Recommendations

- Increase availability of farmworker housing.
- Increase technical assistance to facilitate access to agricultural conservation programs.
- Enhance business planning assistance.
- Implement matched savings program for beginning farmers.

Food insecurity in San Mateo County

In **2016** there were **68,490** food insecure adults and **21,370** food insecure children.

The CalFresh program reached **55%** of the County's eligible recipients.

The Bay Area's **high cost of living** means that many food insecure residents are not eligible to receive benefits.

Food Sector Analysis & Recommendations *(continued)*



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Processing, aggregation & distribution

A 2014 report for the SMFSA analyzed the needs for developing a stronger local food system in San Mateo County. The report highlighted the obstacles that small farmers face entering large markets, including distance from markets, transportation costs, and lack of necessary certification. Utilization of federal and state programs associated with the Agricultural Marketing Services programs in San Mateo County could help to address these obstacles.

Recommendations

- Increase the number of produce aggregation facilities on the San Mateo County Coast.
- Increase the number of commercial kitchens on the San Mateo County Coast.
- Increase the use of best practices at farmers markets by providing recipes, seasonal activities, and promoting healthy food access to all.



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Markets & healthy food access

Food insecurity is present despite the county's over-all wealth and availability of federal programs such as CalFresh. Most recent data shows that there are approximately 69,500 food insecure people in San Mateo County. There are areas in the county where individuals are physically distant from grocery stores or other sources of food, or only have immediate access to stores that sell very little fresh food. Others live in remote and rugged areas and may lack access to functional kitchens. Small stores, mobile produce markets, and farmers markets may increase fresh produce access.

Recommendations

- Increase the number of farmers markets accepting CalFresh and Market Match benefits.
- Conduct survey of discretionary income, available time, and kitchen access to determine the threshold for diet choice among residents.
- Increase utilization of Healthy Food Financing Initiative funds to support innovative new food access projects.
- Develop a fruit and vegetable prescription program.

Cross-cutting recommendations

The report also identifies the following three system-wide recommendations:

- 1 Establish coordinator positions** to secure funding from existing public and private sources to develop programs that will make meaningful progress towards achieving the outcomes described in the *Vision for San a Mateo County Food and Farm Bill*.
- 2 Develop a strategic plan** for the SMFSA to guide implementation of the recommendations outlined in the full report in partnership with the Get Healthy San Mateo County collaborative.
- 3 Strengthen regional food system partnerships** with neighboring counties and the greater Bay Area to enhance opportunities for collaboration.

Our Framework for Implementation

The **Collective Impact Model** is well suited for the diverse, complex, and interrelated problems associated with encouraging an equitable food and farming system, and the diverse actors working in the various parts of the food and farming system.

The Collective Impact Model's five elements

- 1 All participants have a **common agenda** for change.
- 2 Data is collected and results are **measured** consistently across all participants.
- 3 A plan of action outlines and coordinates **mutually reinforcing activities** for each participant.
- 4 **Communication** is open and continuous.
- 5 A **backbone organization** serves the initiative and coordinates participation.



Next steps:

Hiring a network manager for the SMFSA

As a first step towards implementation of the recommendations outlined in this report, San Mateo County Health and the San Mateo County Office of Sustainability partnered in 2018 to fund the network manager position. Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF) was identified as the backbone organization to hire the network manager for San Mateo Food System Alliance. Implementing the Collective Impact Model framework, the SMFSA will continue to support the county in creating a sustainable, equitable, local food system.

Get Healthy San Mateo County

Places where we live, work, play and go to school profoundly shape our health. San Mateo County Health's Health Policy and Planning Program facilitates the Get Healthy San Mateo County (GHSMC) collaborative that consists of community-based organizations, county agencies, cities, schools, and hospitals. GHSMC uses policy changes to prevent diseases and ensure everyone has equitable opportunities to live a long and healthy life. Making it easier for people to access healthy food and beverages includes having affordable, fresh, local, and culturally appropriate foods at grocery stores and farmers markets close to home. Complete neighborhoods have space and resources to grow food in schools and neighborhoods, garden-based education, and access to clean drinking water.

For more information, please visit:

www.GetHealthySMC.org

Follow us on social media:

www.facebook.com/GetHealthySMC

www.twitter.com/GetHealthySMC

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Acknowledgments:

A special thanks to everyone who made this project possible, most notably, staff from Sustainable Agricultural Education (SAGE), staff from Ag Innovations, members of the SMFSA and community partners who participated in the stakeholder engagement process.