



2014 MENDOCINO COUNTY

# FOOD ACTION PLAN

## HIGHLIGHTS



## Taking Root: Vitality Through Food, Farms and Families

A PROJECT OF THE MENDOCINO COUNTY FOOD POLICY COUNCIL  
[www.mendocinofood.org](http://www.mendocinofood.org)



## WHAT IS A FOOD ACTION PLAN?

Food. How we grow it, process it, market it, protect it and deliver it: these are questions being addressed by local communities across the nation.

The Mendocino County Food Action Plan is a comprehensive, integrated series of goals and actions designed to address the complex issues that face all of us as we assume increasing responsibility for creation, protection and enhancement of our local food system. The aim of the plan is to enhance individual health, economic well-being, community resiliency, and ecological sustainability.

The goals and actions in the Food Action Plan are the compilation of information gathered from a series of community stakeholder meetings and interviews. The Mendocino County Food Policy Council (FPC) oversaw the production of this plan and received invaluable support from many governmental agencies, agricultural industry professionals, public health, social service and non-profit groups who researched, compiled and reported upon many aspects of the plan prior to its publication.

The Food Action Plan aims to educate, inspire, and empower Mendocino County to become a world leader in the sustainable food movement. We are also gifted with a rich history, favorable climate, and expert human assets to assist in this endeavor. We are fortunate to have such resources in the face of significant challenges facing agriculture in the 21st century.

## FIVE SUPPORTING PRINCIPLES

The Mendocino County Food Action Plan contains five interconnected principles to help identify our food system's unmet needs and address the steps necessary to support a vibrant, thriving, locally based food economy:

- 1 **OUR FARMERS AND FOOD PRODUCERS**
- 2 **OUR ECONOMY**
- 3 **OUR HEALTH**
- 4 **OUR LAND AND WATER**
- 5 **OUR COMMUNITY**

Each of these principles is linked to goals and actions that will move us forward. These are by no means the only goals and actions for our county, but they will act as a framework upon which we can build a stronger and more sustainable future for ourselves and our children.



## HOW DOES THE FOOD ACTION PLAN BENEFIT OUR COUNTY?

- Provides a shared vision and common goals for our community around a transformed food system
- Creates opportunity to collaborate and partner within a network of local food system stakeholders
- Inspires leaders to champion food system efforts and projects
- Increases awareness and support in our community for food system issues
- Contributes data to grant applications and helps leverage funds for project and planning efforts
- Promotes food system planning in our community and alignment with other plans
- Supports the local economy by promoting regional food system jobs, increasing local food and service demand, and keeping our money local.
- Provides opportunity for community recognition of stakeholder efforts

# What Does A Healthy Food System Look Like?

	HEALTHY FOOD SYSTEM	UNHEALTHY FOOD SYSTEM
Our Farmers & Food Producers	Small and mid-sized farmers earn a living wage, provide food and other goods to community and form a vital piece of our local economy. Farming is viewed as a respected, viable profession.	The number of new farmers continues to decline as older farmers retire. Food production is taken out of local communities and more food is imported from other countries.
Our Economy	Local farmers sell their products widely, providing revenue for living wage jobs. More eligible residents utilize CalFresh (Food Stamps, SNAP, EBT), yielding increased income for local grocers and farmers. Cultivating our natural resources helps keep revenue in our county.	Farmers are unable to market and sell their products and cannot compete with foreign or “big box” pricing. Agriculture continues to decline in Mendocino County, and money that could be utilized locally continues to leak outside our region.
Our Health	Friends and neighbors are more vital and active due to healthier diets. Fewer people are diagnosed with chronic medical conditions such as obesity, heart disease and diabetes.	Community members have limited access and face barriers to healthy food choices resulting in poor diet, increased health risks and epidemics of chronic preventable disease.
Our Land & Water	Healthy, biodiverse farmland, freshwater and marine environments produce optimum crops that are free of unnecessary pesticides. Land use and water regulations are designed to efficiently support sustainable food production.	Food producers are stymied by regulations designed for large farms that do not address the unique needs of small farmers. Single-crop farming methods result in increased dependence on chemically-based soil additives, which have unknown long-term effects upon animals, plants, microorganisms, soil and water quality.
Our Community	A local food system and access to community gardens create opportunities for everyone to grow their own food, create a culture of connectivity, educate future generations and increase the county's self reliance and resiliency.	The provision and sale of locally-grown foods is not a high priority for large-scale grocers. The community is disconnected from farmers, food producers and positive social interactions inherent in a local food system. Consumers lack education regarding how food is grown, produced and transported.

HEALTHY FOOD SYSTEM

## OUR FARMERS & FOOD PRODUCERS

### GOAL 1: SUPPORT OUR FARMERS AND LOCAL FOOD PRODUCERS

- 1.1 Facilitate and support a regional farmer/producer network promoting farming as a respected vocation. Connect novice and seasoned farmers.
- 1.2 Create a community based agriculture information clearinghouse for farms, labor, land, markets, investment opportunities, grants, and other funding opportunities.
- 1.3 Provide staff support to assist farmers and producers with financial and office activities.
- 1.4 Provide business development and marketing training for local food producers.
- 1.5 Facilitate agritourism opportunities.
- 1.6 Promote and support the development of niche crops and products.
- 1.7 Develop training and resources for producers to expand year round food production.

### GOAL 2: CREATE OPPORTUNITIES AND ENSURE JUSTICE FOR LOCAL AGRICULTURAL AND FOOD INDUSTRY WORKERS

- 2.1 Establish institutional support for farm and food system workers.
- 2.2 Support quality housing opportunities for farm and food system workers through “host housing” and portable housing units.
- 2.3 Urge policy makers to establish equitable farm worker policies and regulations.
- 2.4 Create job-training programs for food production and food processing positions.
- 2.5 Advocate for livable wages for agricultural workers and food producers.
- 2.6 Establish uniform farm intern recruitment policies and provide interns with appropriate benefits (i.e. worker’s compensation, liability, etc.)
- 2.7 Modify land use plans to allow for the creation of additional housing for farm workers in proximity to farming activities.

### GOAL 3: ATTRACT, TRAIN, AND EMPOWER NEW LOCAL FOOD PRODUCERS

- 3.1 Research best practices of farm incubator programs.
- 3.2 Facilitate land leases by farmer-owner/consultants to farm apprentices.
- 3.3 Encourage Youth Food/Farming Entrepreneurship.
- 3.4 Expand agricultural and related vocational programs in local educational institutions.
- 3.5 Support WWOOFers, AmeriCorps members, recent graduates, farm internship programs and ROP students to diversify and increase the local farm labor pool.

### GOAL 6: INCREASE CONSUMPTION OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL FOOD. IMPROVE FINANCIAL VIABILITY OF LOCAL FOOD PRODUCERS

- 6.1 Support the development and marketing of Mendocino-branded foods and related value added products.
- 6.2 Collaborate with Chambers of Commerce and other organizations to produce a “Buy 10% Local” and “I Buy Local Food” advertising and promotional campaigns.
- 6.3 Improve public awareness of the value of local food and the true costs of food production.
- 6.4 Ensure regulatory support for food production and distribution.
- 6.5 Develop market support for local farmers and producers.
- 6.6 Create and utilize a web based virtual food marketplace that includes real time product availability.
- 6.7 Establish a centralized system that identifies retail outlets for local products.
- 6.8 Provide support and education to boost attendance and sales at farmers’ markets, CSAs, and local food outlets.
- 6.9 Increase sales of local seasonal food at local businesses (restaurants, grocers, retailers).

## OUR ECONOMY

### GOAL 4: ENCOURAGE INSTITUTIONS TO SUPPORT OUR REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEM

- 4.1 Develop programs that facilitate and support local food purchasing and utilization.
- 4.2 Advocate for increased federal and state meal reimbursement rates.
- 4.3 Reinstigate fully functional institutional kitchens.
- 4.4 Educate and empower institutional decision-makers.
- 4.5 Revise institutional purchasing policies to incorporate geographical preference, prioritizing the purchase of regional foods.
- 4.6 Encourage institutional development of composting and zero waste programs.

### GOAL 5: DEVELOP THE REGIONAL FOOD ECONOMY AND INFRASTRUCTURE

- 5.1 Create a collaborative task force to recommend policy changes and economic development priorities that support small food businesses.
- 5.2 Create community-driven, inclusionary procedures that include input from agriculture-related institutions (University of California Cooperative Extension, Farm Bureau, Granges, etc.) to develop, plan and implement local food policy.
- 5.3 Develop information and education producers about cooperative ownership models and cooperative networks. (CSA Co-Op, Co-Op Processing Facilities, etc.)
- 5.4 Assess the status and availability of existing food processing facilities and small business incubators. Support the development of new businesses as needed.
- 5.5 Promote government and private investment in the local food and agriculture sectors.
- 5.6 Increase the use of renewable energy and fuel efficient vehicles and equipment for production and distribution.
- 5.7 Coordinate county food distribution to more effectively utilize new and existing resources such as distributors, food banks (back hauling), and local retailers.
- 5.8 Establish and maintain policies and ordinances that create access and support for urban food production.
- 5.9 Support the creation of a grain storage and processing facility.
- 5.10 Support the creation of an appropriately sized and located multi-species meat processing facility.
- 5.11 Establish a vehicle for local investment in farms and food system projects.

## OUR HEALTH

### GOAL 7: INCREASE EQUITABLE ACCESS TO HEALTHY, AFFORDABLE, SAFE, CULTURALLY APPROPRIATE FOODS

- 7.1 Support food banks' ability to obtain more locally produced food.
- 7.2 Provide financial assistance so all community members can purchase more local foods from farmers' markets, Community Supported Agriculture farms, and other local outlets.
- 7.3 Develop ongoing funding stream for incentive programs, including Food Stamp Match, at local food outlets county wide.
- 7.4 Ensure a greater range of multi-cultural foods at food assistance programs.
- 7.5 Develop policies, programs and infrastructure that increase access to healthy food in food insecure communities.
- 7.6 Align local food security activities with larger efforts.
- 7.7 Survey and inventory local emergency food supplies and connect emergency services providers with local food producers.
- 7.8 Increase access to healthy food in all neighborhoods.
- 7.9 Ensure that local, affordable food is available year round for all county residents.

### GOAL 8: INCREASE AWARENESS AND UTILIZATION OF FOOD AND NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

- 8.1 Increase enrollment in food and nutrition assistance programs.
- 8.2 Institutionalize the use of Electronic Benefits Transfer Cards (EBT) by retailers, CSAs and farmers' markets.
- 8.3 Develop social marketing campaign to increase awareness of the benefits of food and nutrition assistance programs.

### GOAL 9: CREATE ENVIRONMENTS THAT SUPPORT HEALTH AND QUALITY OF LIFE

- 9.1 Incorporate data and knowledge of healthy food environments in local food system planning.
- 9.2 Increase awareness of healthy food choices and curtail advertising of unhealthy foods.
- 9.3 Establish and maintain city and county zoning policies to ban or limit fast food outlets.
- 9.4 Ensure access to healthy choices in vending machines.
- 9.5 Implement school, non-profit, private, local government and community wellness policies.

### GOAL 10: PROMOTE INDIVIDUAL AND COMMUNITY HEALTH BY ENCOURAGING HEALTHY FOOD CHOICES

- 10.1 Increase and facilitate community-wide local food, health advocacy and education efforts and events.
- 10.2 Develop/increase cooking classes, demos, and recipes to educate public about nutrition, healthy cooking and utilization of local food.
- 10.3 Incorporate nutrition education in school classrooms and cafeterias.
- 10.4 Design a Healthy Foods promotional campaign. Incorporate social marketing elements.

## OUR LAND & WATER

### GOAL 11: PROTECT AND ENHANCE OUR AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

- 11.1 Support food-producing lands and community gardens by identifying and enacting relevant city and county codes, zoning policies and land use agreements.
- 11.2 Transform and diversify untended or underutilized acreage (i.e. vineyards, orchards) into food-producing land.
- 11.3 Develop incentives for food producing lands.
- 11.4 Advocate for the continuation and refunding of the Williamson Act.
- 11.5 Facilitate the development of agricultural land trusts, conservation easements and non-profit land purchases.
- 11.6 Create polices that secure land for small to mid scale diverse agricultural production.
- 11.7 Create educational programs regarding land use policy, BLM leases, conservation easements, and development right transfer.
- 11.8 Develop indigenous foods and medicines.
- 11.9 Support laws prohibiting the cultivation of Genetically Modified Organisms.
- 11.10 Ensure continuing supplies of agricultural water.
- 11.11 Foster an equitable balance between the water needs of residential and agricultural users.
- 11.12 Support programs that encourage efficient use of irrigation water.
- 11.13 Balance the needs of frost protection water deliveries and instream flows necessary for healthy fisheries.
- 11.14 Encourage the increased use of reclaimed water.
- 11.15 Encourage land use practices that reduce erosion, storm water run off and increase groundwater recharge.

## OUR COMMUNITY

### GOAL 12: INCREASE COMMUNITY RESILIENCY THROUGH ORGANIZATION AND SELF DETERMINATION

- 12.1 Develop, promote, and celebrate local, seasonal food through community events.
- 12.2 Develop, plan, and implement local food policy through community-driven, inclusionary planning including agricultural institutions (University of California Cooperative Extension, Farm Bureau, Granges, Food Policy Council, etc.).
- 12.3 Promote programs and community organizations countywide that facilitate the development of community gardens through education and access to land and resources.
- 12.4 Promote policies and agreements that support increased access to land for the establishment of community and school gardens and farms.
- 12.5 Provide liability insurance to community gardens through the creation or identification of a suitable non-profit organization.
- 12.6 Maintain county-wide school gardens with an integrated, food-related curriculum.
- 12.7 Inventory and create community access to food production and processing equipment (i.e. tool banks, juice and oil presses, commercial kitchens).
- 12.8 Develop and promote a community-based gleaners network.

# What We Can Do: Action Items For Improving Our Local Food System

The message of the Food Action Plan is simple. It does take a village. Each one of us has a part to play in shaping our food system and it will take commitment, compromise and compassion. The next time you bite into a crisp, juicy apple, ask yourself a few questions. Who grew this apple? How far did it travel? Is it truly safe to eat or does it just look healthy? Did someone make a decent wage to grow it? If you can answer even one of these questions, you're well on the way to being an advocate for a local food system.

Please take a look at the ideas below for ways you can make a difference.

## ENLIVEN OUR LOCAL ECONOMY

- » Shop at locally owned retail grocers and restaurants serving healthy, affordable, and culturally diverse food. Ask what is local and purchase those products first. Ask your favorite stores and restaurants to take a 10% local challenge.
- » Commit to purchasing at least 15% of your food from local sources and encourage your favorite stores and restaurants to do the same.
- » Ask your workplace to provide local food at meetings and events.
- » At supermarkets, ask where produce, meat and dairy products come from. Request that local products be purchased and showcased.
- » Purchase Mendocino-branded products for gifts. Showcase our county's bounty to your family, neighbors and employees.
- » Ask neighborhood convenience stores to voluntarily remove or reduce outdoor marketing of unhealthy food like candy, chips and soda pop.

## IMPROVE THE HEALTH OF YOUR FAMILY

- » Grow your own food. Grow year-round. Eat what is in your garden.
- » Eat what is in season.
- » Attend or teach a healthy cooking or eating class.
- » Cook with kids and let them help in the kitchen. Talk with them about what is on the dinner table, where it has come from, and why it's important.
- » Find out if you or a family member qualify for CalFresh (Food Stamps, SNAP, EBT) benefits or reduced-price school lunches.
- » Pack lunches without sugary drinks and include tap water or low fat milk instead.
- » Eat a diet rich in colorful fruits and vegetables.
- » Participate in and support your workplace or school's wellness initiatives.
- » Support efforts to remove unhealthy food and beverages from vending machines within your workplace, school, or church.

## CREATE A FOOD-SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY

- » Throw a dinner party or potluck using foods grown in Mendocino County.
- » Get involved in a localization group, a Grange or other organizations supporting vibrant, local food systems.
- » Organize community forums and neighborhood action around healthy food access for all residents.
- » Start a local eating group at work or at a faith-based center to help you eat seasonally and healthfully.
- » Encourage legislators at all levels to take leadership in developing policies supporting small farmers and local food production.
- » Support expansion of community garden programs so everyone has access to garden space.
- » "Plant an extra row" and grow surplus food for community food pantries.
- » Bring the discussion of food sustainability to your family table.
- » Volunteer at your local school garden.
- » **Share this Food Action Plan with your faith community, service club, friends and colleagues.**

## PROTECT FARMLAND AND WATER

- » Talk to local farmers and policy makers about how to protect our farms and farm land.
- » Donate, loan, or lease land for the establishment of small farms or community gardens.
- » Support laws that will preserve our delicate fishing habitats while allowing our fishermen/women to maintain our long tradition of providing a high-quality catch to the community.
- » Vote for policies that support conservation of land for bio-diverse farming and ranching.

## SUPPORT OUR FARMS & FOOD PRODUCERS

- » Buy directly from local farmers, fishers and foragers.
- » Support your local farmers' markets and CSAs.
- » Buy wild-harvested seafood caught by local fishers.
- » Meet your local farmers, visit their farms and let them know you appreciate their hard work.
- » Support efforts for living wages for food system workers.

# The Mendocino County Food Policy Council

## Acknowledgments

### FOOD POLICY COUNCIL MEMBERS

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### FOOD ACTION PLAN COMMITTEE

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### CREATIVE TEAM

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### SPECIAL THANKS TO THE SPONSORS OF THIS PUBLICATION:



## OUR MISSION

To collaborate with institutions, businesses, and the public at large to create a sustainable local food system that reduces hunger, increases health and expands economic vitality.

## OUR PURPOSE

- Reduce hunger, particularly in communities with disproportionate burdens of poverty, obesity and chronic diseases
- Develop and promote programs that deliver healthy locally-grown foods to county residents
- Protect the land and water resources required for sustained local food production
- Increase the knowledge and skills needed to grow, preserve, and prepare healthy local foods
- Educate the public on the economic and health benefits of eating healthy local foods
- Increase collaboration among groups and individuals promoting local healthy food systems
- Stimulate the county's economy by keeping money circulating locally instead of leaving the area
- Advocate for local policies that facilitate increased local healthy food production, processing, sales and consumption

## WHY WE CREATED A FOOD ACTION PLAN

1. It's a road map that serves as a framework to guide collaboration and integrate the efforts of diverse food system stakeholders.
2. It helps us connect, network and support organizations and groups in the county that contribute to this important work.
3. It helps attract funding opportunities and assists with strategic planning efforts.

The Mendocino County Food Policy Council is a charter member of the California Food Policy Council.

[www.rootsofchange.org/content/about-cafpc](http://www.rootsofchange.org/content/about-cafpc)

## 7 WAYS YOU CAN SUPPORT THE FOOD ACTION PLAN

- 1. READ IT.** Download a printable PDF of the full plan at [www.mendocinofood.org](http://www.mendocinofood.org).
- 2. SHARE IT:** If you are excited and moved to action by the goals in the plan, share your passion with your friends, neighbors and colleagues. Offer them an opportunity to join you in your efforts.
- 3. JOIN IN.** Many groups in Mendocino County meet regularly to work towards advancing the plan's goals. The Mendocino County Food Policy Council is just one. Choose the principle(s) that appeal to you and find a group that's creating positive change in your community.
- 4. DISCOVER YOUR ROLE.** Explore ways your organization is currently advancing the goals outlined in the plan and uncover new ways to incorporate them into future planning efforts.
- 5. SIGN IT.** By adding your name to the Declaration of Support you are standing up for a food system that works for all. Our collective voice will help increase leverage for policy changes that matter.
- 6. JOIN MILLIONS.** We are not alone in our efforts; nationwide cities and counties have taken on similar paths. Sonoma County and Multnomah County are two that inspired this plan.
- 7. STAY IN TOUCH.** This is a long-term road map for change. Let us know what specific actions you and your organization take so that we can record and champion your efforts towards creating a lasting and just food system.

### DECLARATION OF SUPPORT

We, the undersigned, support the vision and principles in the Mendocino Food Action Plan, through practice, policy and planning; and in implementing actions to advance a sustainable food system that is local, healthy, equitable and prosperous for all.

Organizations and individuals signing this declaration of support will be publicly listed at [www.mendocinofood.org](http://www.mendocinofood.org).

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Title/Position: \_\_\_\_\_

City/County: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

### REPRESENTATION

I am signing on:  As an individual  For an organization

### SECTOR REPRESENTING

- |   |  |  |   |
|---|--|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Access/Food Security                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Ag Support                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Community/Civic               | <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation/Environment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Education  | <input type="checkbox"/> Fisheries                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Food Service                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Retail/Grocery Outlets   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Health   | <input type="checkbox"/> Processing and Distribution | <input type="checkbox"/> Food System Workforce (Labor) |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Production Agriculture (includes farming and ranching) | <input type="checkbox"/> Other                       |  |   |

Cut out and mail to: **Mendocino County Food Policy Council, 413 N. State Street, Ukiah, CA 95482**  
or sign online at [www.mendocinofood.org](http://www.mendocinofood.org)