

# MAXIMIZING LOCAL FOOD SOURCING FOR SJU DINING SERVICE

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## Introduction

Commercial food production, in compensating for its large scale assembly, is inefficient, creates many negative environment impacts, requires the use of many nonrenewable resources, and poses potential risks to consumers' health. Colleges and Universities across the United States are making efforts to transition from commercial food sourcing to more local and sustainable options in order to reduce their carbon footprint and provide healthy eating choices for students. However, commercial items are inexpensive and easy to procure compared to local alternatives, creating barriers for institutions to make this transition. The Farm-to-College program has been successfully adopted by many university and colleges to address these barriers. By implementing the Farm-to-College program, Saint John's University could increase its local food sourcing in order to provide students with a healthy and sustainable food option.

## Methods

Literature reviews was conducted to determine the environmental issues and health risks that commercial food sourcing poses as well as the benefit of transitioning to local food sourcing through Farm-to-College and Real Food Challenge programs.

To determine the feasible percentage of local food that SJU Dining Service could source and the challenges that it could faces, I looked at case studies of Minnesotan campuses that have successfully increase their local food sourcing: Saint Thomas University, University of Minnesota, Morris and Carleton College. These case studies' data were collected through published documents from the school websites, information provided by the dining service director and reports from Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education.

To find local food vendors as alternative option to commercial food vendors, I base my research of on the list of participants of Dining Service's Vendor Showcase held in the past three years. I also utilize Minnesota Grown website and UMN's Farm to school procurement guideline to find potential local food providers.

## Analysis

Benefits of local food sourcing	Challenges of local food procurement
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provide nutritious, fresh food options <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Reduce health risk</li> <li>* Promote healthy eating</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Reduce large scale production <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Reduce environmental impact (Greenhouse Gas, soil degradation)</li> <li>* Reduce the use of chemical fertilizer</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. Reduce food miles and transportation cost <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Reduce energy for long travel storage</li> <li>* Reduce the use of fossil fuel</li> </ul> </li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Local food sourcing can be expensive: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* Mass production &amp; subsidized farming help commercial food sourcing cheaper and abundance to obtain</li> </ul> </li> <li>2. Season dictates food resources, variety and amount.</li> <li>3. Requires upgrades for food storage facilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>* To be able to preserve fresh food</li> <li>* To increase capacities for storing fresh food</li> </ul> </li> <li>4. Require additional training for Staff to process fresh food.</li> </ol>

Institution	Food Service Company	%
University of MN, Morris <sup>1</sup>	Sodexo	2.5
Carleton College <sup>2</sup>	Bon Appetite	24
Saint John's University <sup>3</sup>	Independent	18.7

Table 1 Percentage food institution source from local vendors

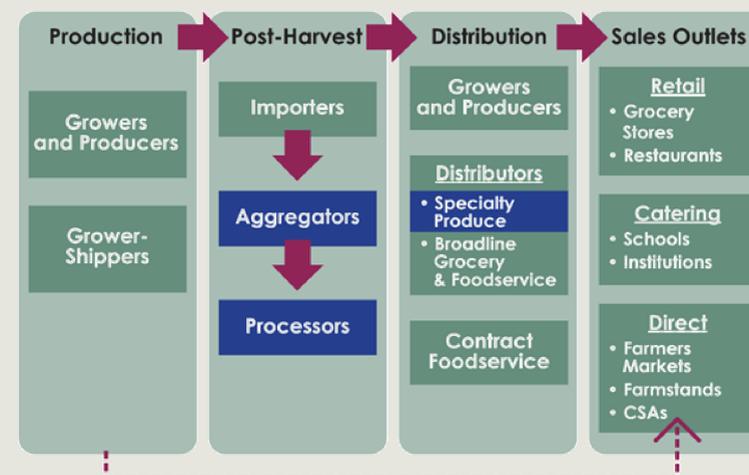


Fig. 1 U.S. Food System Value Chain<sup>4</sup>

## Conclusion

US food source are predominantly produced through conventional/ industrial practice. Industrial food sources, although are commercially affordable and abundance, has a great impact on the environment and consumers' health. These negative environmental impacts include runoff, wasteland, excessive greenhouse gas emission and exploiting nonrenewable resource. Therefore, it is a moral obligation for higher education institution to take action. By changing food source, we can reduce .

Local/sustainable food sourcing, by limiting the food miles, production scale, helps reduce environmental impact and health risk. It promote the importance of healthy eating and food production to the environment.

## References

1. University of Minnesota (2013). *2013 Systemwide Report*. Retrieved from <http://www.uservices.umn.edu/sustainableU/>
2. Larson, Martha. (2014) *Carleton College STARS Report*. Retrieved from [http://www.sierraclub.org/sites/www.sierraclub.org/files/sierra/cool\\_schools/2014/pdfs/2014-05-01-carleton-college-mn.pdf](http://www.sierraclub.org/sites/www.sierraclub.org/files/sierra/cool_schools/2014/pdfs/2014-05-01-carleton-college-mn.pdf)
3. Refectory Dining Service, Saint John's University (2015). *SJU Dining Service Account June 2015*. Retrieved from Collegeville, MN.
4. Family Farmed. *Building Successful Food Hub*. Retrieved from <http://www.familyfarmed.org>



Fig. 2 & 3 Farm to College and Real Food Challenge Logos