Paradox of Plenty:

A Community Roadmap for Overcoming Hunger in San Luis Obispo County

Food Bank Coalition of San Luis Obispo County

SLO County Food System Coalition

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Executive Summary

As we drive through our county, we see fields of luscious vegetables, farmers markets teeming with people, grocery stores full of every conceivable item and restaurants at every corner. Our local farmers produce enough to provide every county resident with 7.5 pounds of fruits and vegetables a day.

Yet we face a paradox of plenty. Some 40,000 residents of San Luis Obispo (SLO) County either go hungry on a regular basis or sometimes do not know when or where they will get their next meal. While the Central Coast of California is often viewed as an affluent and healthy place, almost half (49%) of adults are overweight or obese, and almost as many (48%) do not eat the recommended daily servings of fruits and vegetables. With the current recession, hunger has been an increasing problem. A growing number of people are finding themselves hungry for the first time in their lives. The Food Bank has seen a 40% increase in the number of people using their services in the past two years, and a 90% increase in the past five years.

In order to end hunger, efforts must extend beyond the emergency food net and address the root causes of hunger.

Faced with these conditions, The Food Bank Coalition of San Luis Obispo County (Food Bank) applied for and was awarded a USDA Hunger-Free Communities (HFC) planning grant in spring 2011. With this grant, the Food Bank and its community partners:

1) conducted three assessments to examine food resources, food insecurity and nutritional needs in San Luis Obispo County,
2) convened a broad range of local stakeholders to form a food policy council – the SLO County Food System Coalition– and
3) developed a Hunger-Free Community Plan.

This plan, Paradox of Plenty: A Community Roadmap for Overcoming Hunger in San Luis Obispo County, positions the community to comprehensively address the food security and nutritional needs of San Luis Obispo County's most vulnerable residents.

In order to end hunger, efforts must extend beyond the emergency food net and address the root causes of hunger. This plan not only addresses the quantity of accessible food, but also takes into account the nutritional quality of food most available to low-income populations. The plan recognizes that no single agency or organization alone can end hunger. It will need to be a community effort. Advocacy, education, and collaboration with other organizations all play a role within the recommendations found in this plan.

The plan is divided into five key themes: Access to Sufficient Food, Nutrition and Hunger, Local Food System, Root Causes of Hunger, and the SLO County Food System Coalition. This plan includes five overarching goals, one for each section of the plan, and a series of objectives and measurable strategies. This plan aims to be feasible and measurable; strategies are designated as initial, medium or long term, and each strategy includes a lead agency(ies) and indicators to measure the success of the strategy over time.

Access to Sufficient Food

Issues of hunger and poor nutrition have been clearly linked to limited access to fresh, affordable food. Food Bank distributions, federal nutrition assistance programs and schools all play a role in food access for low-income residents. In addition, funding for these different programs is addressed.

Nutrition & Hunger

One's food choices have a great effect on overall health. Reaching the goal of increased nutrition will require making nutritious choices more available, as well as increasing education on the benefits of healthy eating. This section examines diet and diet related disease, the availability of healthy food, institutional purchasing, nutrition education and outreach and healthy food retail.

Local Food System

Increased investments in local agriculture and fishing can help reconnect a community with healthy foods while supporting small farmers, ranchers and fishers. A sustainable food supply is needed to assure food security long term. This section examines local market opportunities, gleaning, agriculture as an economic development tool and resource conservation.

Root Causes of Hunger

There is a large correlation between those living in poverty and those who are food insecure. Thus, those struggling to sufficiently feed themselves and their families are often struggling to provide themselves with other basic resources such as housing and health care. The local job market coupled with high cost of living aggravates the hunger situation in San Luis Obispo County. This section examines income and the local economy, and the availability and costs of housing, health care and transportation. Further, the plan acknowledges that community organizations must work together and collaborate to effectively alleviate hunger.

SLO County Food System Coalition

Food policy councils have been developed in about 200 cities and regions nationwide as a catalyst for food policy advocacy. San Luis Obispo County's unique version of a food policy council, the SLO County Food System Coalition (FSC), played an active role in creating this plan. This section provides an overview of the Food System Coalition, reviews its mission and goals and identifies community partners. Additionally, it discusses the advocacy role the FSC will play and its responsibility to review the plan on an annual basis.

This plan provides a community roadmap for overcoming hunger in San Luis Obispo County. We have the resources to ensure that all of our residents have access to nutritious food and together – as individuals, community organizations, schools and local agencies -- we can make that happen.

To view the full plan, please visit the Food Bank's website, slofoodbank.org/.

GOALS & OBJECTIVES

1. ACCESS TO SUFFICIENT FOOD

Goal: All San Luis Obispo County residents have access to nutritious food.

A. Increase the availability of healthy and nutritious food from the Food Bank and other community food resources.
B. Increase awareness and utilization of food and nutrition assistance programs particularly among the most underserved populations.
C. Increase participation in pre-school, school, after school and summer feeding programs that provide nutritious food.
D. Develop sources of sustainable funding for food assistance programs.

2. NUTRITION & HUNGER

Goal: Improved nutrition of San Luis Obispo County residents who experience food insecurity.

A. Increase availability of nutritious food in local communities.
B. Encourage community institutions to prioritize healthy and local food.
C. Provide health providers with resources to both educate patients about proper nutrition and make appropriate referrals to food assistance.
D. Increase education and awareness of maintaining a healthy diet.
E. Increase access to retail outlets that provide fresh produce and nutritious food.

3. LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM

Goal: A sustainable local food system that is able to meet the food needs of SLO County residents.

A. Increase opportunities for local food processing, distribution, marketing and sales.
B. Enhance gleaning efforts in San Luis Obispo County.
C. Promote agriculture as an economic development tool.
D. Protect and enhance food production resources (e.g. land, water, air quality) and raise public awareness of threats to productivity.

4. ROOT CAUSES OF HUNGER

Goal: Collaborative community efforts to address the root causes of hunger in San Luis Obispo County.

A. Make ending hunger a community priority in San Luis Obispo County.
B. Increase use of existing programs and services that can help families meet financial, health and social needs.
C. Expand access to low-cost health care and pharmaceuticals to reduce a family's dilemma of paying for food or medicine.
D. Increase the number of "livable wage" jobs, and availability and affordability of housing and transportation by partnering with existing county efforts.

5. SLO COUNTY FOOD SYSTEM COALITION

Goal: A vibrant SLO County Food System Coalition and an effective Hunger-Free Community plan.

A. Strengthen the SLO County Food System Coalition by having an engaged and effective membership and maintaining alliances with local, state and national organizations.
B. Establish a Food System Coalition Advocacy Committee to engage in advocacy and community education around local, state and national issues.
C. Review the Hunger-Free Community plan on an annual basis.

Introduction

Hunger-Free Community Project
The Food Bank Coalition of San Luis Obispo County was the lead agency of a USDA Hunger-Free Communities planning grant awarded in spring 2011. With this grant, the Food Bank convened a group of stakeholders to form a food policy council, the SLO County Food System Coalition. The Food Bank also worked with community partners to conduct three studies: The Central Coast Ag Network (CCAN) produced a Food Resource Guide, and STRIDE, a Cal Poly research group, conducted a Food Security Assessment and Food Store Survey. Both the Food System Coalition and the studies have contributed to the third component of the grant, the creation of this strategic plan to address hunger and nutrition issues in San Luis Obispo (SLO) County.

While the Central Coast of California is often viewed as an affluent and healthy place, 40,000 residents struggled to provide food for themselves in 2011.

County Profile
San Luis Obispo County is a rural county located on the Central Coast of California, about midway between Los Angeles and San Francisco. San Luis Obispo is bordered by Monterey County to the north, Kern County to the east, Santa Barbara County to the south and the Pacific Ocean to the west. The County encompasses about 3,600 square miles of land and is home to almost 270,000 people (U.S. Census, 2010, DP-1). There are seven incorporated cities within the County and many unincorporated communities.

Approximately 83% of the population is white, and 21% are Hispanic or Latino (U.S. Census, 2010, DP-1). In 2008, 83% of the population five years and older spoke English only at home, and 14% spoke Spanish only at home (ACTION for Healthy Communities, 2010). About 78% of family households are married-couple families, and the average family size is three persons (ACTION for Healthy Communities, 2010).

Tourism and agriculture are among the largest economic sectors in San Luis Obispo County. Employment data from the first quarter of 2012 reveals the rate has dropped to 8.7% (CA Employment Development Department, 2012). The median household income is about $54,000, less than the California median household income of $58,000 (U.S. Census, 2010, S2401). The number of households living in poverty increased 20% between 2003 and 2009 (ACTION for Healthy Communities, 2010).

The Hunger Situation
While the Central Coast of California is often viewed as an affluent and healthy place, 40,000 residents struggled to provide food for themselves in 2011. Almost half (49%) of adults are overweight or obese, and almost as many (48%) do not eat the recommended daily servings of fruits and vegetables (California Health Interview Survey [CHIS], 2007). With the recent recession, hunger has been an increasing problem. While the population of California grew 10% between 2001 and 2009, the food insecure population grew 49% (Chaparro, Langellier, Birnbach, Sharp, & Harrison, 2012). A report released by UCLA in June 2012 examining food security among residents living at or below 200% of the federal poverty level indicates that 23% of adults in San Luis Obispo County were food insecure in

2009 (Chaparro et al., 2012). A growing number of people are finding themselves hungry for the first time in their lives. The number of people using Food Bank services in SLO County has increased 40% in the past two years, and 90% in the past five years.

Children are disproportionately affected. While children constitute only about 19% of the County's population, they make up about 40% of the Food Bank's clients (Food Bank, 2012). Sufficient food and adequate nutrition are important for optimal child growth and development. Seniors and Hispanics are also disproportionately affected. According to the UCLA study, 51% of Spanish-speaking, low-income adults in California experienced food insecurity (Chaparro et al., 2012).

Food assistance programs such as CalFresh and WIC are underutilized. STRIDE's research shows that a large percentage of people that likely qualify for such programs, including individuals and families living in poverty, are not utilizing these resources. Hispanic participation in these programs is especially low. The UCLA report reveals that low-income adults enrolled in CalFresh did not experience an increase in food insecurity between 2001 and 2009, highlighting the importance of this program (food insecurity increased substantially among low-income adults not enrolled in the program) (Chaparro et al., 2012).

Economics

Hunger is largely a factor of income. A correlation exists between those living in poverty and those facing food insecurity. With an economy driven by agriculture and tourism, many of the jobs in the county pay low wages. Furthermore, San Luis Obispo County has one of the most unaffordable housing markets in the nation (National Association of Home Builders, 2011). High housing costs leave residents with fewer financial resources to provide themselves (and any dependents) with other necessities such as transportation, health care, and food. Many families are faced with choosing between buying food and paying their rent/mortgage, medical expenses, or securing other essential resources (STRIDE, 2012).

Vulnerable Populations

The objective of the STRIDE Food Security Assessment was to characterize the factors associated with food insecurity among vulnerable populations in San Luis Obispo County and to gain a better understanding of hunger in the County (STRIDE, 2012). The survey was administered to over 800 community members in 54 different locations in October and November 2011. Twenty-two agencies were consulted to approximate characteristics and numbers of the County's vulnerable populations. From these consultations, "vulnerable populations" were defined as the unemployed and underemployed, families living in poverty, senior citizens, the working poor and other similar groups (STRIDE, 2012). The survey targeted these vulnerable populations, 75% of who were found to be food insecure. Findings from this survey helped shape the recommendations contained in the Plan. The full STRIDE report, Hunger-Free Communities: Characterizing vulnerable populations in San Luis Obispo County, can be found at http://www.cosam.calpoly.edu/pdf/Hunger-Report.pdf.

This plan aims to build and strengthen partnerships across the community to most effectively eradicate hunger, and work towards building a more sustainable food system.

About the Plan

The Hunger-Free Community Plan aims to comprehensively address the food security and nutritional needs of San Luis Obispo County's most vulnerable residents. Upon completion, this plan will be adopted by the Food System Coalition, and endorsed by many community agencies and organizations. Federal, state, and local resources will be utilized to aid in hunger relief. This is a community plan, and to effectively end hunger, it will require the work and participation of the whole community including individuals, non-profits and institutions such as schools and hospitals, along with policy changes at the government level. It will take more than food assistance programs to end hunger. The root causes of hunger must be addressed. This plan aims to build and strengthen partnerships across the community to most effectively eradicate hunger, and work towards building a more sustainable food system.

In addition to the three assessments conducted as part of the grant, data were collected from the U.S. Census, County and State agencies, the 2010 ACTION for Healthy Communities report, the California Heath Interview Survey and other local, state and national organizations. The plan is organized into five sections: Access to Sufficient Food, Nutrition and Hunger, Local Food System, Root Cause of Hunger, and the SLO County Food System Coalition.

Each of the five areas has one goal, each goal has three to five objectives, and each objective is accompanied by a set of measurable strategies. The five sections of the plan all begin with a brief overview of the issue, and a summary of SLO County needs before providing the goal, objectives and strategies pertaining to that area. At the end of the plan is a spreadsheet containing all of the goals, objectives and strategies, with indicators, a lead agency and an estimated time frame for each strategy (initial, medium or long term).

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Access to Sufficient Food**
- **Nutrition & Hunger**
- **Local Food System**
- **Root Causes of Hunger**
- **SLO County Food System Coalition**

Access to Sufficient Food

"Food access is about social justice, and it's about economic vitality….Equitable food access is a corner stone for healthy communities—communities in which everyone has opportunities to participate, work, prosper, and enjoy healthy, productive lives" (Bell & Standish, 2009).

The Issue

Issues of hunger and poor nutrition have been clearly linked to limited access to fresh, affordable food (Hatfield & Gunnell, 2005). Barriers to healthy food access can be both physical and financial. Physical barriers point to poor land use and transportation decisions, and financial barriers point to economic problems. Inequitable access leads to health disparities in many communities, both urban and rural. Ironically, residents of rural communities, where agricultural production can be bountiful, are often at higher risk of hunger. Food Bank distributions, federal nutrition assistance programs and schools all play a role in food access for low-income residents. However, in order for these programs to continue, funding must be in place.

San Luis Obispo County Needs

Food Bank Coalition of San Luis Obispo County

The Food Bank Coalition of San Luis Obispo County works to alleviate hunger countywide by providing food to those in need. The Food Bank provides nutritious food directly to the public and to its many partner organizations that also distribute food. In addition, the Food Bank administers several food distribution programs. The food distributed by the Food Bank comes from a variety of sources, including businesses, individuals, farmers, supermarkets, food manufacturers, and

packing houses. Nutrition is a top priority for the Food Bank; almost half of the food distributed is fresh produce.

The level of need in San Luis Obispo County has grown tremendously in the past five years. The Food Bank served 44,000 people in 2011, a 90% increase from 2006 (Food Bank, 2012). Children are disproportionately affected; children and seniors constitute about half of the population served by the Food Bank. Further, a large percentage of Food Bank clients are Hispanic. The quantity of fresh food available for the Food Bank to distribute could be increased if incentives were provided to farmers to provide more produce. For example, farmers could sell produce unsold through conventional market outlets at a reduced rate before it spoils. Additionally, partnerships with local grocers could be expanded to obtain a greater volume of unsold food from grocery stores, and the hours distribution sites are open could be extended.

Nutrition Assistance Programs

Many residents rely on nutrition assistance programs, such as CalFresh and WIC, to help them purchase food. The Federal Food Stamp Program has been renamed SNAP, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. In California, this federal program is administered under the name of CalFresh. CalFresh helps low-income people buy food via a debit card, also known as an EBT card, that can only be used to purchase food items, or plants and seeds to grow food.

California Food Policy Advocates report that 32,750 SLO County residents are eligible for CalFresh based on their income, but that only 9,593 of these individuals are participating in the program.

The County has seen an upward trend in CalFresh cases. CalFresh data is broken down into Non-Assistance CalFresh (NACF) cases, meaning those who receive only CalFresh benefits, and Public Assistance CalFresh (PACF) cases, referring to those who receive cash assistance in addition to CalFresh. In a three-year period between the 2007-2008 Fiscal Year and the 2010-2011 Fiscal Year, NACF cases have more than doubled, and PACF cases have increased 25% (SLO County Department of Social Services, 2012).

California Food Policy Advocates report that 32,750 SLO County residents are eligible for CalFresh based on their income, but that only 9,593 of these individuals are participating in the program. This ranks SLO County 53rd out of 58 counties (with 1 having the highest participation rate of eligible individuals and 58 having the lowest).

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children, more commonly known as WIC, is designed to help pregnant women, new mothers, and young children (up to five years of age) eat well and stay healthy. Data released in 2010 indicate approximately 4,630 County residents are participating in the WIC program (California Food Policy Advocates, 2010).

The STRIDE Food Security Assessment confirms that there is high awareness of food assistance programs. When survey participants were asked if they had heard of the Food Bank, CalFresh, and WIC, "yes" responses were 89%, 84% and 79% respectively. However, program use is low. Of those who had heard of these programs, 82%, 57% and 59% of the participants were currently, or had in the past utilized the Food Bank, CalFresh and WIC, respectively. The data support a strong

need for education, outreach, and assistance with these programs. Many survey participants reported that they did not utilize food assistance programs because they believed they did not qualify, or were unsure if they qualified. The STRIDE data shows that overall, Hispanic participants were least likely to utilize any assistance programs.

Schools

One in three San Luis Obispo County school children were consistently enrolled in the Free and Reduced Price Meal Program between 2002 and 2009. However, there was a 9% increase in enrollment between the 2008-2009 and the 2009-2010 school years. Currently, about 43% (14,700) of San Luis Obispo's school children receive free or reduced priced meals (CA State Department of Education, 2012a).

About 83% of students who receive free or reduced-price meals during the school year do not participate in summer nutrition programs.

In the 2010-2011 school year, an average of 6,493 SLO County school children participated in the National School Breakfast Program each day. About 71% of breakfasts served were free, 13% were reduced price, and 16% were paid breakfasts. An average of 12,885 children participated in the National School Lunch Program each day. About 61% of lunches served were free, 14% were reduced price, and 25% were paid. In total, about 19,379 breakfasts and lunches were served a day in San Luis Obispo schools in 2010-2011, more than 78% of which (15,139) were free or reduced priced (California State Department of Education (2012c).

In the summer months when school is out of session, many children are still in need of meal assistance. In the summer of 2011, there were seven sites in the County that provided children with free nutritious breakfast, lunch, and or afternoon snacks (CA State Department of Education, 2012b). However, about 83% of students who receive free or reduced-price meals during the school year do not participate in summer nutrition programs (California Food Policy Advocates, 2010).

Funding

Operating food assistance programs requires money. Finding sustainable funding sources to keep these programs running in the County will be vital. Direct cash donations through automated systems such as online banking or grocery store checkout lines could help secure funds. In addition, the Food Bank could continue to pursue grant funding from foundations and other granting organizations.

1 **Goal: All San Luis Obispo County residents have access to nutritious food.**

A. Increase the availability of healthy and nutritious food from the Food Bank and other community food resources.
    1. Provide incentives to local farmers to provide produce to Food Bank.
    2. Expand weekend and evening hours for food distribution sites.
    3. Improve refrigeration and storage systems in food distribution sites to increase ability to distribute perishable foods.
    4. Maintain and support partnerships with local grocers to donate surplus food.

B. Increase awareness and utilization of food and nutrition assistance programs particularly among the most underserved populations.

1. Increase outreach and enrollment efforts for CalFresh benefits through Department of Social Services and community partners such as family resource centers.
2. Identify barriers to CalFresh enrollment at the county level and advocate with County to improve outreach and simplify the application process.
3. Increase outreach to underserved populations, e.g. Hispanics, to increase their participation in food programs.
4. Increase outreach and education on the fresh food distributions including education on how to prepare produce in a healthy way.

C. Increase participation in pre-school, school, after school and summer feeding programs that provide nutritious food.

1. Collaborate with school districts and nonprofit partners to increase the number of feeding programs available locally for school aged children during school term and during vacation periods.
2. Identify school districts with low utilization of school breakfast programs and encourage their expansion.
3. Increase participation in food programs such as Child and Adult Care Food Program in family child care homes and child care centers.

D. Develop sources of sustainable funding for food assistance programs.

1. Pursue direct cash donations via grocery store checkout lines and online banking systems.
2. Promotion of annual donations and the Feed the Hungry Endowment at the SLO County Community Foundation.
3. Collaborate with community partners to conduct more efficient fundraising drives that provide nutritious food with minimal cost.
4. Continue to seek grant funding from foundations (community, state and national), local, state and federal governments, and community service organizations to support Food Bank infrastructure and products for distribution.
5. Collaborate with coalitions such as Partnership for Excellence in Family Support to synchronize resources and leverage funding opportunities.

Nutrition & Hunger

"Without affordable fresh food options, especially fruit and vegetables, adults and children face fundamental challenges to making the healthy food choices that are essential for nutritious, balanced, diets" (Bell & Standish, 2009).

The Issue

One's food choices have a great effect on overall health. Residents with limited financial resources often have a higher intake of unhealthy food; high caloric food is often cheaper and can stretch farther than nutritious food (i.e. a families food dollar can buy more calories of unhealthy food than of nutritious food). Thus, it is not uncommon for those who face hunger to also be overweight or obese (Food Research and Action Center, 2010). One's diet can also influence their risk of other health conditions and diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, stroke, some cancers (primarily colon and breast cancer), osteoporosis, and hypertension diseases (National Cancer Institute, n.d). Unhealthy eating habits are a primary risk factor for five of the top ten causes of death in California (Public Health Law and Policy & Raimi and Associates, 2008). Residents living in neighborhoods underserved by grocery stores or dominated by convenience stores and fast food outlets may find it more difficult to obtain healthy meals, especially if they do not, or cannot drive.

A large component of a healthy diet is eating enough fruits and vegetables. A high intake of fruits and vegetables is important for optimal child growth, weight management, and chronic disease prevention. Eating five to nine servings of fruits and vegetables a day as part of a healthy, active lifestyle reduces the risk of diet related diseases (National Cancer Institute, n.d). Reaching the goal of

increased nutrition will require making nutritious choices more available, as well as increasing education on the benefits of healthy eating.

San Luis Obispo County Needs

Diet & Diet Related Disease

The California Health Interview Survey indicates that nearly half of San Luis Obispo County residents do not eat at least five servings of fruits and vegetables a day, and the 2010 ACTION study found that only one-third of San Luis Obispo County teens self reported getting the daily recommendation of five or more fruits and vegetables. In 2007, almost half (49%) of adults in San Luis Obispo were overweight or obese (CHIS, 2007). In 2008, about 40% of children 5 to 19 years old were at risk of becoming overweight or were already overweight, putting them at greater risk to becoming obese later in life (ACTION for Healthy Communities, 2010).

Participants in STRIDE's Food Security Assessment were asked to report on their consumption habits. Emphasis was placed on fruits and vegetables, and soda and snacks. On average, participants consumed fruits and vegetables (including fresh, frozen, and canned) twice a day. About 34% of participants reported eating fruits and vegetables less than once per day, and another 11% ate fruits and vegetables 1-2 times a day. Only 6% reported eating fruits and vegetables more than 5 times per day (STRIDE, 2012).

Participants reported consuming snacks and soda less frequently than fruits and vegetables. On average, participants consumed snacks and soda 1.7 times per day. While 12% reported never consuming snacks and soda, 33% reported consuming these items less than once per day, 31% consumed these items 1-2 times a day, and 24% reported consuming snacks and soda at least three times per day (STRIDE, 2012).

The Availability of Healthy Food

In general, people are not consuming enough fruits and vegetables. To increase consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables, these foods need to become more available to greater populations. Eating healthy needs to be an option for all residents. Healthy food can be obtained from a variety of sources, but some barriers do exist.

Shopping at farmers markets is a great way to get fresh flavor packed produce and support local growers. There are twenty-one farmers markets operating in the County, however, none of them are equipped with EBT machines to accept CalFresh benefits. This may prevent low-income residents from being able to take advantage of purchasing fresh food from local farmers markets.

Community gardens provide residents who may not otherwise have the space an opportunity to grow their own produce. There are sixteen community gardens in the County, but many of them have waiting lists. Community gardens are relatively inexpensive to start, and can be a great use of underutilized land, whether temporary or permanent. Food can be also be produced onsite at workplaces

through small barrel gardens, located on school grounds (school gardens), in residents' back yards and incorporated into affordable housing projects. The Housing Authority of San Luis Obispo is working on an affordable housing project, which incorporates a permaculture element into the project design. Residents will be able to grow healthy food onsite. This will be a pilot project, but if successful, should be mimicked to some extent with all affordable housing sites.

Institutional Purchasing

In addition to encouraging healthy nutrition at the individual level, healthy local food should be promoted at the institutional level. Schools, hospitals and jails all purchase great quantities of food for residents. Teachers, physicians, non-profit organizations and government officials are positioned to promote the importance of a healthy diet.

The Wellness Policies of San Luis Obispo County school districts offer an opportunity to implement programs and policies to more aggressively integrate healthy eating and nutrition education into the lives of youth.

HEAL-SLO, a coalition focused on increasing healthful eating and physical activity, is advocating for the Board of Supervisors to adopt a "buy local" policy for the County. While the County primarily only purchases food for the County jail and Juvenile Hall, this policy is evidence of the County's commitment to supporting the local economy by investing in local agriculture, and provides leadership in the buy local movement. Further, a buy local policy promotes healthy eating and can reduce carbon emissions. Each jurisdiction in the county should consider adopting a "buy local" policy to support local growers and promote fresh foods.

Every school district participating in the National School Lunch Program or other child nutrition program is required by federal law to enact a school wellness policy for all schools under its jurisdiction (Center for Disease Control, 2012). As a result of this federal policy, local schools have developed initiatives to promote healthful nutrition and physical activity. The Wellness Policies of San Luis Obispo County school districts offer an opportunity to implement programs and policies to more aggressively integrate healthy eating and nutrition education into the lives of youth.

Nutrition Education and Outreach

There are several nutrition education efforts already in place. The San Luis Obispo County Department of Social Services and the Public Health Department received a USDA SNAP-ED grant to increase nutrition education services. This grant will allow both agencies to collaboratively educate CalFresh participants to make healthier choices with their limited budget. Additionally, the University of California Cooperative Extension has a CalFresh Nutrition Education Program. The program provides evidenced-based nutrition education to CalFresh recipients and other low-income individuals and families in San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara Counties (UC Cooperative Education, 2012). The program also specializes in creating healthy cultures in low-income schools. Efforts should be made to expand or mimic these efforts to reach a greater audience.

Healthy Food Retail

There is growing awareness of the relationship between public health and the built environment. Land use, transportation and economic development decisions can be instrumental in public health outcomes. Specifically, they can

shape neighborhood food access and the retail food environment. Low-income neighborhoods often suffer from disproportionately lower access to retail outlets that sell fresh produce and higher concentrations of fast food outlets and convenience stores (Public Health Law and Policy & Raimi and Associates, 2008).

The Food Store survey conducted by STRIDE revealed that groceries tend to be more expensive on the coast and less expensive in the north part of the County, that fruits and vegetables were harder to find than snacks and soda, and that healthier varieties (e.g. whole wheat bread, lean meat) were more expensive than less healthy alternatives. However, healthy food access has not been studied at the neighborhood level in San Luis Obispo County.

Because the County is predominantly rural, there are likely to be underserved areas that lack easy access to fresh nutritious food. Residents in rural areas with limited access to transportation rely heavily on corner stores for their food shopping, which generally sell packaged foods and beverages of little nutritional value, alcohol and tobacco products, with few, if any fresh food items. Creating new farmers markets and investing in healthy corner store initiatives could both increase the availability of healthy food in these underserved areas. Healthy Corner Store projects seek to work with small local grocers to improve the availability, quality, and affordability of healthy foods. More information can be found at http://www.phlpnet.org/healthy-planning/products/healthy-corner-stores. Encouraging healthy mobile vending is another way to increase access to healthy food. Healthy Mobile Vending Ordinances legalize street vending of healthy food (e.g. uncut and unprocessed produce) and encourage it through incentives such as reduced permit fees and fewer restrictions on allowed areas to operate. More information can be found at http://www.nplanonline.org/childhood-obesity/products/healthy-mobile-vending-policies.

2 Goal: Improved nutrition of San Luis Obispo County residents who experience food insecurity.

A. Increase availability of nutritious food in local communities.
   1. Provide greater opportunities for food insecure populations to shop at farmers markets by enabling the use of CalFresh EBT cards and WIC vouchers, and expanding markets to underserved areas through innovative models such as mobile markets, family resource center and school-based markets, and swap meets.
   2. Utilize CCAN's inventory of agriculturally viable publicly owned lands to identify locations for community gardens on existing parkland, public easements, rights-of-way and schoolyards, and support their development with municipalities, schools and community organizations.
   3. Create opportunities for onsite food production, such as gardens or green roofs in affordable housing projects, and barrel gardens at workplaces, family resource and child care centers and places of worship.
   4. Develop joint use agreements for community kitchens to allow communal food preparation and preservation.

5. Identify regulatory barriers for food producers, processors and distributors that unreasonably impede the availability of nutritious food for vulnerable populations.

B. Encourage community institutions to prioritize healthy and local food.
   1. Educate local jurisdictions and community institutions on "buy local" policies and advocate for their adoption.
   2. Advocate for school districts, child care centers and congregate living facilities to implement gardens with a nutrition education component.
   3. Provide educational materials and menu recommendations for healthy meals to be served at community feeding sites such as homeless shelters, senior centers and hospitals.
   4. Improve outreach to underserved senior populations to encourage participation in food programs.
   5. Work with child care centers and family child homes to promote wellness policies, prioritize nutrition, purchase local healthy foods, participate in food programs and create gardening programs.
   6. Work with school and community nutrition advocates to ensure that school wellness policies prioritize nutrition through classroom education, school gardens, school lunch and breakfast programs, and fundraising food policies.

C. Provide health providers with resources to both educate patients about proper nutrition and make appropriate referrals to food assistance.
   1. Develop and distribute a resource list for health providers on food sources for low-income communities.
   2. Provide continuing education workshops for physicians and health providers to educate about proper nutrition and how to discuss it with patients.
   3. Create sample grocery lists and weekly menus of nutritious meals for doctors to "prescribe" for their patients.

D. Increase education and awareness of maintaining a healthy diet.
   1. Disseminate information about healthful eating habits through food distribution sites, low-income schools, child care programs, religious organizations and other family centers.
   2. Provide classes for CalFresh recipients, Food Bank and mental health clients on healthy low budget cooking and smart shopping.

E. Increase access to retail outlets that provide fresh produce and nutritious food.
   1. Encourage supermarkets and other retail markets in underserved areas to provide fresh produce by offering development and loan incentives, linking stores to local produce vendors, and through Healthy Corner Store projects.
   2. Educate County and city governments on the benefits of a Healthy Mobile Vending Ordinance and encourage adoption of a Model Ordinance.

Local Food System

"Agriculture should support local economic development, address poverty and hunger, and support the sustainable management of natural resources" (Lawrence et al., 2010.)

The Issue

Over the past fifty years, food production has increased in scale and efficiency. The modern agricultural industry has revolutionized production and processing technologies, resulting in a more consistent and reliable supply of food, and has made massive economic contributions. However, the current industrial food system is characterized by high-energy usage and waste, consumers are more distanced than ever from their food, and farmers throughout the nation are often among the food insecure population. Today's food system is in need of more farms, farmers, and farm income (McIntyre, 2012).

Increased investments in local agriculture can help reconnect a community with healthy foods while supporting small farmers, ranchers and fishers. A sustainable food supply is needed to assure food security long term. Thus, protecting agricultural land and food production resources, making food production economically viable, and cultivating the next generation of food producers is essential. A sustainable local food system that is able to meet the needs of residents can be accomplished by increasing the availability of high-quality, affordable food within a community, offering small farmers increased market opportunities, strengthening economic and social ties between food producers and consumers, and channeling a larger share of residents' food spending back to the local economy (Central Coast Ag Network, 2011).

San Luis Obispo County Needs

Expanding Market Opportunities

San Luis Obispo County produces enough food to feed every resident of the County seven and a half pounds of fruits and vegetables a day.

San Luis Obispo County produces enough food to feed every resident of the County seven and a half pounds of fruits and vegetables a day (excluding wine grapes) (Settevendemie, 2012). However, the vast majority of this food is consumed outside the county. While it would not be advantageous to keep all of the food within the county (local farmers are supported by exporting their harvest), efforts should be made to retain a greater share of the food for local consumers. To support the viability of farming in San Luis Obispo County, market opportunities need to be increased.

Farm to School and Farm to Institution programs emphasize local purchasing and establish connections between food producers and institutions. These programs are beneficial to the food producer by providing new markets, and schools and institutions benefit from fresh local food. The Farm to School movement is gaining momentum in San Luis Obispo County schools; at least half of the schools in San Luis Obispo County's fourteen districts participate in Farm to School activities and programs that promote (Kiley, 2010). Farm to School programs provide a potentially large and reliable market for local farmers, but farmers still have concerns about whether schools will commit to buying what they grow, and whether they can grow enough food to meet the demands. Additionally, food service directors may prefer to get all of their food from one source, rather than several local farms.

A common challenge small farmers face is a lack of distribution infrastructure. Food hubs aggregate the processing and distribution of food in a community, enabling farmers to capitalize on larger volume market opportunities such as restaurants, grocery stores, schools, hospitals and universities. In 2007, Coast Grown received a USDA Rural Business Enterprise Grant to form the Coast Grown Cooperative of 18 independent farms and ranches along the Central Coast and to build the first mobile harvest unit in California (Barham, et al., 2012). Efforts should be made to support the development of this food hub.

Gleaning

Gleaning is the collection of leftover crops from farmers' fields after they have been commercially harvested or from fields where it is not economically profitable to harvest. GleanSLO, a program operated by the Food Bank, has expanded this definition to include the collection of surplus produce from backyards and gardens of community residents (GleanSLO, n.d.). In 2011, GleanSLO gleaned and donated 38,000 pounds of produce from local farms (GleanSLO, n.d.). However, there are many crops that do not get gleaned, and are left on the farm to rot. A system, such as a gleaning hotline, could streamline the process of connecting gleaners with available produce. Additionally, "Plant an Extra Row", or "Grow a Row" programs are an easy way to increase the volume of fresh local produce available to the Food Bank and other distribution sites. As their name implies, these programs encourage food producers, whether backyard gardeners or large-scale farmers, to plant an extra row of crops to be donated.

Economic Development

Agriculture is a major component of the county's economy, and should be promoted as an economic development tool. In 2011, total animal, field, fruit and nut, nursery and vegetable products produced in San Luis Obispo County were valued at $736,206,000, a record year for the county (SLO County Department of Ag, 2012). However, more than half of farm owners report a primary occupation other than farming (Crabb, 2012). This data indicates economic difficulty in farming as a single occupation. The Economic Element of the County's General Plan contains a policy (policy 2f) that reads, Take action to help agriculture remain economically viable (SLO County Economic Advisory Committee and the Department of Planning and Building, 1999). Strategies proposed in this plan also seek to improve the economic viability of farming.

Both the County and Economic Vitality Corporation (EVC) have acknowledged the importance of agriculture to economic development in their identification of economic clusters. The Economic Element of General Plan identifies an ag-based cluster (agricultural services, biotechnology, and food processing) as one of five recommended sectors suggested for business retention, expansion, and attraction efforts. EVC has also developed an economic strategy in which they have identified six business clusters that represents 90% of the regional job growth in the county since 1995 (EVC, 2011). One of these clusters is "Uniquely SLO County", which aims "to position, brand and promote San Luis Obispo County as a choice destination for regional, national, and global visitors" (EVC, 2011). Within the Uniquely SLO County cluster, three sub-groups have been established: Food, Wine, and Tourism. These formal efforts can be supported and enhanced through strategies that attract local food processers, wholesalers, and distributors (e.g. development incentives such as streamlined permits or tax breaks).

Farmers are essential to food security. Without people dedicated to food production, there is no food for our communities to eat. The average age of the principal farm operator in San Luis Obispo County is 59 years old (U.S. Census of Agriculture, 2007). In order for farming to continue at a rate that is able to sustain and feed us, a younger generation of farmers must be cultivated. Agricultural education programs, farm apprenticeships, and efforts to match young interested food producers with available land need to be cultivated. Agriculture as a profession needs to be promoted and supported among the millennial generation.

Resource Conservation

The County can strategically exercise its authority of land use and zoning decisions in unincorporated areas of the County to protect open space and agricultural land. Another policy under goal one of the Economic Element reads, Protect agricultural resources that make San Luis Obispo County an attractive place for economic development (Policy 1f). Data from the 2002 and the 2007 Census of Agriculture indicates that San Luis Obispo County saw an increase (20%) in both the number of farms and in total farm land (4%) measured in acres. About 65% of all County land is in farms, and 68% of all farmland is pastureland (Crabb, 2012). The Williamson Act of 1965 provides an incentive for landowners to keep their land in agricultural use in exchange for lower property tax breaks, and the Right to Farm Ordinance protects agricultural operation from certain nuisance lawsuits

(SLO County Economic Advisory Committee and the Department of Planning and Building, 1999). As the County's population grows, it will be increasingly paramount to protect agricultural land and preserve water and air quality.

As previously stated, the Economic Element of the County's General Plan contains a policy focused on the viability of agriculture. One program (program 2f3) under this policy supports the concept of visitor-oriented agricultural uses (agri-tourism activities such as wine tasting rooms, ranch vacations, horseback riding, bed-and breakfasts, etc). Another program (program 2f4) supports the expansion of small business uses on ag land to supplement income. Ancillary activities on ag land can be a great source of supplemental income for small farmers, especially in an area that already has a high tourist population. However, it is important that non-farm activities do not impede the agricultural production of the participating farm, or neighboring farms. For example, tourist activities can lead to increased traffic, which leads to increased air pollution and congestion.

3 Goal: A sustainable local food system that is able to meet the food needs of SLO County residents.

A. Increase opportunities for local food processing, distribution, marketing and sales.
    1. Collaborate with schools and institutions to implement Farm to School and Farm to Institution programs (including fisheries) to increase the purchase of locally grown ingredients.
    2. Partner with local agricultural organizations to support the development of a regional food hub network to increase the efficiency of food distribution and increase markets for small and mid size producers.
    3. Develop programs for farmers to "adopt" a local community institution (e.g. schools or family resource and child care centers) to distribute extra farm products and provide an educational opportunity for the farmers about local food production.
    4. Investigate opportunities for nonprofit work therapy programs (e.g. Growing Grounds) to provide food to Food Bank.

B. Enhance gleaning efforts in San Luis Obispo County.
    1. Establish a hotline or website to easily link produce available for gleaning with gleaners.
    2. Work with growers to develop a "Plant an Extra Row" program.
    3. Encourage individuals to donate surplus food from backyard gardens, possibly through established drop off sites at local nurseries.

C. Promote agriculture as an economic development tool.
    1. Partner with community agricultural/aquaculture and economic development partners to brand and market quality local food production.
    2. Support ACTION for Healthy Communities in the creation of a folio regarding the economic impact of local agriculture and fisheries.
    3. Attract and retain local food processing/ wholesaling/ distribution companies through economic development incentives (e.g. streamlined permits or tax breaks).

4. Cultivate the next generation of food producers through school programs, youth job training and community efforts that promote farming, ranching and fishing as a profession.

D. Protect and enhance food production resources (e.g. land, water, air quality) and raise public awareness of threats to productivity.
   1. Preserve agricultural land through public education and advocacy on issues such as "right to farm," Williamson Act, promoting conservation easements and land use planning.
   2. Preserve fisheries through public education and advocacy.

Root Causes of Hunger

"The root cause of hunger is a lack of adequate purchasing power in millions of households. When individuals and families do not have the resources to buy enough food, the result is hunger" (Ayres, et al., 2008).

The Issue

Emergency food sources and federal food programs alone will not end hunger. The root causes of hunger and food insecurity must be addressed. Though it is not the sole factor, a lack of financial resources is a major underlying reason explaining why people struggle with food security (Ayres et al., 2008). As such, there is a large correlation between those living in poverty, and those who are food insecure. Those struggling to sufficiently feed themselves and their families are often struggling to provide themselves with other basic resources such as housing and health care. Residents with limited financial resources must weigh the critical trade offs of how they spend their money. The more money an individual chooses to spend on one essential resource, the less money he or she has to pay for others.

In addition to individual resources, community resources must also be inventoried and utilized. Collaboration between non-profits, government agencies and institutions will be required to effectively alleviate hunger and related social issues. Ending hunger must be a priority communitywide.

San Luis Obispo County Needs

The local job market coupled with high cost of living aggravates the hunger situation in San Luis Obispo County. In order to alleviate hunger, wages and the costs of other essential needs must also be evaluated. This is an arduous task and will require collaboration with many other community agencies and

organizations that are working to address these related issues. Additionally, outreach to these organizations and to the public at large, aimed at illustrating the interconnectedness of jobs, housing, health care, and hunger will be critical.

Income & Economy

Located in a rural and coastal area, San Luis Obispo County's economy is driven by agriculture and tourism, which yields a high number of low-paying jobs. In fact, 28% of all jobs in the County earn less than $1,250 per month, a greater percentage than in California as a whole (U.S. Census OnTheMap, 2010). An income of $1,250 a month equates to $15,000 a year, which is just above the federal poverty line. In the STRIDE Food Security Assessment, income was the most notable factor influencing food security. Approximately 60% of the surveyed population was living at or below poverty level, and of those in poverty, 84% were found to be food insecure (STRIDE, 2012). Countywide, the poverty rate is 14% (U.S. Census, 2010, DP03).

The Self-Sufficiency Standard for California is an alternative way to measure a family's ability to meet basic needs. This standard provides a more complete picture than the federal poverty level by taking into account family composition and the geographic cost of living (including housing, food, child care, medical, transportation and other necessary costs). The Self Sufficiency Standard recognizes that the age of children affects their costs. Since the cost of living in San Luis Obispo County is high, there is a large discrepancy between the federal poverty line and the Self-Sufficiency Standard; for one adult and two children, the poverty line is at $18,530, the Self-Sufficiency Standard in San Luis Obispo County is $57,256. An adult may be earning an income well above the poverty line, but still struggling to make ends meet. In this scenario, the adult would need to be working a full time job earning over $27 an hour to sufficiently provide basic needs for his or her family. This is more than the equivalent of three minimum wage jobs.

The Census reports that 36% of renters in the County have severe housing cost burden. This is a higher percentage than Los Angeles, San Jose, San Francisco and New York City.

Housing

The high cost of housing in San Luis Obispo County is a major contributor to the large discrepancy between the poverty line and the Self-Sufficiency Standard. According to the National Association of Home Builders (2012), the San Luis Obispo and Paso Robles metropolitan area has the 9th least affordable housing market in the nation. The Census reports that 36% of renters in the County have severe housing cost burden (U.S. Census, 2010). This is a higher percentage than Los Angeles, San Jose, San Francisco and New York City.

According to a 2010 survey, almost one quarter of SLO County residents are paying more than half of their income on housing (ACTION for Healthy Communities, 2010). The U.S Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has set a standard for housing affordability –no more than 30% of one's income should be spent on housing. As HUD explains, "Families who pay more than 30 percent of their income for housing are considered cost burdened and may have difficulty affording necessities such as food, clothing, transportation and medical care" (HUD, 2012).

The average residential rental rate in the County increased 39% between 2002 and 2010. A two-bedroom rental averaged $1,230 per month in 2010 (ACTION for Healthy Communities, 2010). This exceeds the Fair Market Rent rate (which is the rate the Housing Authority will pay for rentals) of $1,160. STRIDE's Food Security Assessment found that 52% of the survey population "sometimes" or "often" had to choose between buying food and paying rent or mortgage. This problem affected 62% of Hispanic households, compared to 40% of White households.

Health Care

When asked how often STRIDE survey participants faced having to choose between buying food and paying for medical expenses, responses were similar; over half of survey respondents had to choose between buying food and paying medical expenses. According to a 2010 survey, 16% of County residents are uninsured, up from 11% in 2006 (ACTION for Healthy Communities, 2010). Only 47% of Spanish-speaking parents are insured. Of those without insurance, 74% say it is too expensive and they cannot afford it.

Transportation

Transportation can be another significant cost, whether it is on car payments, auto insurance and gas, or regular public transportation. The Self Sufficiency Standard estimate of average monthly transportation costs for one adult in San Luis Obispo County is $258. This exceeds the monthly food costs of $236, and is the third greatest expense behind housing and taxes (Insight, 2011).

Community Organizations and Leadership

While the Food System Coalition will play an instrumental role in alleviating hunger in the County, other organizations will be needed as well. As a community plan, it will need widespread support and endorsement. Outreach to other agencies and community organizations involved in nutrition, health, housing, social services, agriculture, and government will be a part of plan implementation.

4 Goal: Collaborative community efforts to address the root causes of hunger in San Luis Obispo County.

A. Make ending hunger a community priority in San Luis Obispo County.
   1. Reach out to community agencies, coalitions and groups, and local government to review this plan, identify their role, adopt action steps and endorse an anti-hunger campaign.
   2. Educate the community about the state of hunger and malnutrition in SLO County through a multi-agency PR Campaign to explain interconnectedness of poverty, hunger and jobs.
   3. Collaborate with other organizations combating poverty, homelessness, hunger and lack of health care to advocate for economic and social justice.

B. Increase use of existing programs and services that can help families meet financial, health and social needs.
   1. Partner with California Polytechnic State University (Cal Poly) to implement a program for students to intern at health, social services

and food programs to connect low-income persons with community services (e.g. Health Leads, www.healthleadsusa.org).
2. Work with agencies such as Family Resource Centers, Head Start and Food Bank to conduct Earned Income Tax Credit outreach.

C. Expand access to low-cost health care and pharmaceuticals to reduce a family's dilemma of paying for food or medicine.
1. Increase publicity about and help connect people to health coverage programs (e.g. Medi-Cal, CMSP, Healthy Families), and medical care (e.g. Community Health Centers, Noor Clinic, CAPSLO Health and Prevention, Planned Parenthood).
2. Educate food insecure persons about programs for filling pharmacy needs such as Pharmaceutical Alliance and Community Health Centers pharmacy.

D. Increase the number of "livable wage" jobs and availability and affordability of housing and transportation by partnering with existing county efforts.
1. Support and collaborate with Homeless Services Oversight Council, Housing Trust Fund, housing authorities, Peoples' Self Help Housing and the new SLO County Department of Social Services (DSS) homeless services coordinator.
2. Work with Economic Vitality Corporation, Workforce Investment Board, chambers of commerce, large employers, and municipal planning agencies to increase the number of well-paying jobs in the County.
3. Support and advocate for improved public transit and reduced transit fares for CalFresh and WIC recipients to increase access to food, health care and social services.

SLO County Food System Coalition

"Imagine: Diverse leaders in our County working together, learning from one another, studying our uniqueness and creating a county that makes the most of its abundant resources in a responsible way to provide access to healthy food locally, especially for those who may not have access now" (Hansen, 2012).

The Issue

A food policy council (FPC), as the term implies, is a policy advocacy mechanism meant to promote the objectives of community food security (Winne, Joseph, & Fisher, 1997). Food policy councils and commissions have been developed in several cities as a catalyst for food policy advocacy. Typically made up of stakeholders from a variety of fields, FPCs are often formed through city or county resolution, and hence are located within the pubic sector. FPCs usually have a volunteer "board", few have full time staff persons, and they may be located within a city department (e.g. Public Health), established as an independent commission, or organized as a hybrid private/public organization (established by an ordinance of city council, but function as a non-profit) (Winne, Joseph, & Fisher, 1997).

San Luis Obispo County Needs

The Hunger-Free Communities grant stipulated that the awarded agency must work with their local food policy council to create the strategic plan, and if there is no local food policy council, they must create one. San Luis Obispo County did not have a food policy council at the time the grant was awarded. Thus, the Food Bank and the Grant Steering Committee began convening a group of interested stakeholders to start forming a food policy council. This unique version of a food policy council, known as the SLO County Food System Coalition has been meeting monthly since June 2011.

About the Food System Coalition

The Food System Coalition is a collaborative network, which brings many individuals and organizations together. Projects conducted from any of the partner organizations are supported by the Coalition, and additionally, projects will form out of the Coalition. It has been stressed that the Coalition should support, but not duplicate existing efforts to improve the local food system.

Mission and Goals

The mission of the SLO County Food System Coalition is, "To promote a sustainable food system that is equitable, profitable, resilient, and health promoting in the county of San Luis Obispo" (SLO County Food System Coalition, 2012). Goals include:

- Create a forum that brings people together from all sectors of the food system to generate new relationships and cross learning.
- Promote policies and programs that increase food security and social and economic opportunity for food producers, distributors and consumers in San Luis Obispo County.
- Support education and programs that encourage San Luis Obispo residents to make choices for a healthy life.
- Serve as a resource to the community to assist in solution-oriented local food system development programs and projects.

The mission of the SLO County Food System Coalition is, "To promote a sustainable food system that is equitable, profitable, resilient, and health promoting in the county of San Luis Obispo"

Community Partners

The Food System Coalition will provide a forum for people to bring new ideas, and for collaborative efforts to conjoin. Members of the Coalition come with a broad range of interests and expertise. The Food System Coalition aims to have representatives from all segments of the local food system. Government, businesses, education, faith and non-profit sectors may be represented.

Advocacy

The Coalition seeks to educate community leaders as well as the general public on food system issues, offer public policy ideas, improve coordination between existing programs and efforts, and start new programs that aim to improve the food system. In addition to building partnerships within the County, it will be important serve an active role with the formation of the California Food Policy Council, and engage with state and federal movements. Advocacy work will be critical in achieving the Coalition's goals, including hunger relief. Establishing an advocacy committee within the Coalition will create a group of individuals focused on advocating at the local, state, and federal levels.

Review of Plan

To help ensure success of the plan, the Food System Coalition will need to monitor the progress of plan implementation. Indicators have been established for each strategy, which can be found beginning on page 33. These indicators will help monitor implementation and determine the success of the plan. Annual measurement will be conducted, and compared to baseline measurements to track progress. Annual review of the plan may lead to slight alterations of the plan

or indicators. These findings will be published in an annual report and shared with the community.

5 **Goal: A vibrant SLO County Food System Coalition and an effective Hunger-Free Community plan.**

A. Strengthen the SLO County Food System Coalition by having an engaged and effective membership and maintaining alliances with local, state and national organizations.
   1. Ensure the agricultural sectors are adequately represented within the Food System Coalition (FSC), and that the Coalition is working towards agricultural issues.
   2. Align with statewide and national organizations that advocate for FSC goals of sustainable local food systems.
   3. Conduct local Food Shed Assessment.
   4. Pursue funding to ensure sufficient administrative support for the FSC to continue its operations.

B. Establish a Food System Coalition Advocacy Committee to engage in advocacy and community education around local, state and national issues.
   1. Research and recommend positions to the FSC on state and national issues such as Farm Bill, child nutrition and SNAP.
   2. Research and recommend positions to FSC on local issues such as agricultural preservation, regulations to increase the availability of nutritious food, economic development and public program participation.
   3. Host FSC forums on public policy issues that impact access to nutritious food in San Luis Obispo County.

C. Review the Hunger-Free Community plan on an annual basis.
   1. Establish indicators with community organizations for tracking progress on plan implementation.
   2. Review strategies for possible modification.
   3. Provide an annual report to the community on progress in eliminating hunger in San Luis Obispo County.

Indicators for Success

Goal 1: All San Luis Obispo County residents have access to nutritious food.

STRATEGIES	INDICATORS	TIMEFRAME	LEAD AGENCY
A. Increase the availability of healthy and nutritious food from the Food Bank and other community food resources.			
1. Provide incentives to local farmers to provide produce to Food Bank.	▪ Pounds of food received from local farmers	Medium	Food Bank
2. Expand weekend and evening hours for food distribution sites.	▪ Number of food distribution sites with extended hours	Medium	Food Bank
3. Improve refrigeration and storage systems in food distribution sites to increase ability to distribute perishable foods.	▪ Total pounds of perishable food distributed	Medium	Food Bank
4. Maintain and support partnerships with local grocers to donate surplus food.	▪ Pounds of food donated from retail outlets ▪ Number of retail outlets donating annually	Initial	Food Bank
B. Increase awareness and utilization of food and nutrition assistance programs particularly among the most underserved populations.			
1. Increase outreach and enrollment efforts for CalFresh benefits through Department of Social Services and community partners such as family resource centers.	▪ CalFresh participation rate as measured by Participation Access Index	Initial	Food Bank, DSS
2. Identify barriers to CalFresh enrollment at the county level and advocate with County to improve outreach and simplify the application process.	▪ CalFresh participation rate as measured by Participation Access Index	Initial	Food Bank, FSC, DSS
3. Increase outreach to underserved populations, e.g. Hispanics, to increase their participation in food programs.	▪ Hispanic participation rate in CalFresh and WIC programs	Initial	DSS, Food Bank, PEFS
4. Increase outreach and education on the fresh food distributions including education on how to prepare produce in a healthy way.	▪ Creation and distribution of education materials. ▪ Adult obesity rate	Initial	Food Bank
C. Increase participation in pre-school, school, after school and summer feeding programs that provide nutritious food.			
1. Collaborate with school districts and nonprofit partners to increase the number of feeding programs available locally for school aged children during school term and during vacation periods.	• Total number and type of feeding programs available to San Luis Obispo County children • Participation rate of school districts in school breakfast and lunch programs	Medium	FSC

STRATEGIES	INDICATORS	TIMEFRAME	LEAD AGENCY
2. Identify school districts with low utilization of school breakfast programs and encourage their expansion.	▪ Rate of school breakfast utilization among each school district	Initial	FSC
3. Increase participation in food programs such as Child and Adult Care Food Program in family child care homes and child care centers.	• Number of child care providers enrolled in food programs • Number of adult day care homes enrolled in federal feeding programs	Initial	CAPSLO
D. Develop sources of sustainable funding for food assistance programs.			
1. Pursue direct cash donations via grocery store checkout lines and online banking systems.	▪ Number of direct donation mechanisms established ▪ Total dollars donated via direct donation	Medium	Food Bank
2. Promotion of annual donations and the Feed the Hungry Endowment at the SLO County Community Foundation.	▪ Total dollars donated to Feed the Hungry Endowment	Initial	Food Bank, FSC
3. Collaborate with community partners to conduct more efficient fundraising drives that provide nutritious food with minimal cost.	▪ Evaluation of pounds of food received from food drive and cost of collection	Initial	Food Bank
4. Continue to seek grant funding from foundations (community, state and national), local, state and federal governments, and community service organizations to support Food Bank infrastructure and products for distribution.	▪ Dollars in grant awards ▪ Number and types of funders	Initial	Food Bank, FSC
5. Collaborate with coalitions such as Partnership for Excellence in Family Support to synchronize resources and leverage funding opportunities.	▪ Number of funding efforts conducted in collaboration with other Coalitions or groups	Medium	FSC, PEFS

Goal 2: Improved nutrition of San Luis Obispo County residents who experience food insecurity.

STRATEGIES	INDICATORS	TIMEFRAME	LEAD AGENCY
A. Increase availability of nutritious food in local communities.			
1. Provide greater opportunities for food insecure populations to shop at farmers markets by enabling the use of CalFresh EBT cards and WIC vouchers, and expanding markets to underserved areas through innovative models such as mobile markets, family resource center and school-based markets, and swap meets.	▪ Number of farmers markets accepting CalFresh and WIC benefits ▪ Dollar amount of purchases made with CalFresh and WIC benefits at farmers markets ▪ Number of new farmers markets or produce vending operations	Medium	DSS, FSC
2. Utilize CCAN's inventory of agriculturally viable publicly owned lands to identify locations for community gardens on existing parkland, public easements, rights-of-way and schoolyards, and support their development with municipalities, schools and community organizations.	▪ Identification of potential sites for community gardens ▪ Number of community gardens in the county	Long	CCAN, One Cool Earth
3. Create opportunities for onsite food production, such as gardens or green roofs in affordable housing projects, and barrel gardens at workplaces, family resource and child care centers and places of worship.	▪ Number of affordable housing projects with onsite food production ▪ Number of barrel garden sites	Long	One Cool Earth
4. Develop joint use agreements for community kitchens to allow communal food preparation and preservation.	▪ Number of joint use agreements for kitchens ▪ Number of kitchens available for schools, feeding programs, etc.	Medium	TBD
5. Identify regulatory barriers for food producers, processors and distributors that unreasonably impede the availability of nutritious food for vulnerable populations.	▪ Number of regulatory barriers identified and addressed by FSC advocacy	Medium	FSC
B. Encourage community institutions to prioritize healthy and local food.			
1. Educate local jurisdictions and community institutions on "buy local" policies and advocate for their adoption.	▪ Number of jurisdictions with a buy local policy	Initial	HEAL-SLO
2. Advocate for school districts, child care centers	▪ Number of gardens that also serve as an	Medium	One Cool Earth

STRATEGIES	INDICATORS	TIMEFRAME	LEAD AGENCY
and congregate living facilities to implement gardens with a nutrition education component.	nutrition education tool		
3. Provide educational materials and menu recommendations for healthy meals to be served at community feeding sites such as homeless shelters, senior centers and hospitals.	▪ Number of feeding sites utilizing healthy menu recommendations	Initial	Food Bank
4. Improve outreach to underserved senior populations to encourage participation in food programs.	▪ Number of seniors served in food programs by ethnicity and income level.	Medium	Senior Nutrition Program
5. Work with child care centers and family child homes to promote wellness policies, prioritize nutrition, purchase local healthy foods, participate in food programs and create gardening programs.	▪ Number of child care and family child homes with wellness policies ▪ Number of child care and family child homes serving locally sourced food. ▪ Number of child care and family child homes with gardening programs ▪ Number of child care and family child homes participating in federal food programs	Medium	CAPSLO
6. Work with school and community nutrition advocates to ensure that school wellness policies prioritize nutrition through classroom education, school gardens, school lunch and breakfast programs, and fundraising food policies.	▪ Number of school wellness policies adopted with a nutrition component	Medium	FSC
C. Provide health providers with resources to both educate patients about proper nutrition and make appropriate referrals to food assistance.			
1. Develop and distribute a resource list for health providers on food sources for low-income communities.	▪ Creation and distribution of resource list ▪ Number of health providers receiving and utilizing resource list	Medium	DSS/Food Bank
2. Provide continuing education workshops for physicians and health providers to educate about proper nutrition and how to discuss it with patients.	▪ Number of physicians and health providers participating in continuing education workshops	Medium	HEAL-SLO
3. Create sample grocery lists and weekly menus of nutritious meals for doctors to “prescribe” for their patients.	▪ Number of physician offices receiving menus and lists ▪ Number of physicians writing “prescriptions”	Medium	PHD
D. Increase education and awareness of maintaining a healthy diet.			

STRATEGIES	INDICATORS	TIMEFRAME	LEAD AGENCY
1. Disseminate information about healthful eating habits through food distribution sites, low-income schools, child care programs, religious organizations and other family centers.	▪ Number of food sites, low-income schools, child care programs, religious organizations and family centers disseminating materials on nutrition	Initial	Food Bank
2. Provide classes for CalFresh recipients, Food Bank and mental health clients on healthy low budget cooking and smart shopping.	▪ Number of participants in cooking classes	Initial	PHD, DSS
E. Increase access to retail outlets that provide fresh produce and nutritious food.			
1. Encourage supermarkets and other retail markets in underserved areas to provide fresh produce by offering development and loan incentives, linking stores to local produce vendors, and through Healthy Corner Store projects.	▪ Number of retail outlets offering fresh produce ▪ Number of retail outlets offering produce from SLO County farms	Medium	TBD
2. Educate County and city governments on the benefits of a Healthy Mobile Vending Ordinance and encourage adoption of a Model Ordinance.	▪ Number of jurisdictions who have adopted a Healthy Mobile Vending Ordinance	Long	TBD

Goal 3: A sustainable local food system that is able to meet the food needs of SLO County residents.

STRATEGIES	INDICATORS	TIMEFRAME	LEAD AGENCY
A. Increase opportunities for local food processing, distribution, marketing and sales.			
1. Collaborate with schools and institutions to implement Farm to School and Farm to Institution programs (including fisheries) to increase the purchase of locally grown ingredients.	▪ Number of farm to school programs ▪ Number of farm to institution programs	Medium	CCAN
2. Partner with local agricultural organizations to support the development of a regional food hub network to increase the efficiency of food distribution and increase markets for small and mid size producers.	▪ Creation of food hub network	Long	CCAN, Central Coast Ag Cooperative
3. Develop programs for farmers to "adopt" a local community institution (e.g. schools or family resource and child care centers) to distribute extra farm products and provide an educational opportunity for the farmers about local food production.	▪ Creation of an "adopt an agency" program ▪ Number of farmers and agencies participating ▪ Pounds of food donated to agencies	Medium	Farm Bureau
4. Investigate opportunities for nonprofit work therapy programs (e.g. Growing Grounds) to provide food for Food Bank.	▪ Pounds of food donated to Food Bank from work therapy programs.	Medium	TMHA
B. Enhance gleaning efforts in San Luis Obispo County.			
1. Establish a hotline or website to easily link produce available for gleaning with gleaners.	▪ Creation of a hotline or database for gleaning ▪ Number of farmers using hotline ▪ Pounds of food donated through website/hotline	Initial	GleanSLO
2. Work with growers to develop a "Plant an Extra Row" program.	▪ Number of growers participating in the Plant an Extra Row program ▪ Pounds of food donated through the Plant an Extra Row program	Initial	GleanSLO

STRATEGIES	INDICATORS	TIMEFRAME	LEAD AGENCY
3. Encourage individuals to donate surplus food from backyard gardens possibly through established drop off sites at local nurseries.	▪ Pounds of fresh food donated from individuals	Initial	GleanSLO, One Cool Earth
C. Promote agriculture as an economic development tool.			
1. Partner with community agricultural/aquaculture and economic development partners to brand and market quality local food production.	▪ Number of food producers under the Coast Grown label. ▪ Number of distributors (restaurants, supermarkets, etc) purchasing Coast Grown products.	Medium	FSC, Farm Bureau, EVC
2. Support ACTION for Healthy Communities in the creation of a folio regarding the economic impact of local agriculture and fisheries.	▪ Creation of folio	Initial	FSC
3. Attract and retain local food processing/ wholesaling/ distribution companies through economic development incentives (e.g. streamlined permits or tax breaks).	▪ Number of local food processing/wholesaling/distribution companies	Long	FSC
4. Cultivate the next generation of food producers through school programs, youth job training and community efforts that promote farming, ranching and fishing as a profession.	▪ Number of famers ▪ Decrease in the average age of farmers	Medium	[Farm Bureau]
D. Protect and enhance food production resources (e.g. land, water, air quality) and raise public awareness of threats to productivity.			
1. Preserve agricultural land through public education and advocacy on issues such as “right to farm,” Williamson Act, promoting conservation easements and land use planning.	▪ Total acreage in farmland ▪ % of total revenue generated from non-farm sales/services rendered on ag land ▪ Acreage of farmland under Williamson Act contracts	Initial	FSC
2. Preserve fisheries through public education and advocacy.	▪ Weight and value of commercial ocean landing in San Luis Obispo County	Medium	TBD

Goal 4. Collaborative community efforts to address the root causes of hunger in San Luis Obispo County.

STRATEGIES	INDICATORS	TIMEFRAME	LEAD AGENCY
A. Make ending hunger a community priority in San Luis Obispo County.			
1. Reach out to community agencies, coalitions and groups, and local government to review this plan, identify their role, adopt action steps and endorse an anti-hunger campaign.	▪ Number of agencies who sign declaration of support ▪ Number of agencies who agree to take part in plan implementation	Initial	Food Bank
2. Educate the community about the state of hunger and malnutrition in SLO County through a multi-agency PR Campaign to explain interconnectedness of poverty, hunger and jobs.	▪ Development of PR campaign ▪ Favorable trends in online/ social media tracking of campaign	Medium	FSC, Food Bank
3. Collaborate with other organizations combating poverty, homelessness, hunger and lack of health care to advocate for economic and social justice.	▪ Evidence of collaboration on economic and social justice issues	Initial	FSC
B. Increase use of existing programs and services that can help families meet financial, health and social needs.			
1. Partner with California Polytechnic State University (Cal Poly) to implement a program for students to intern at health, social services and food programs to connect low-income persons with community services (e.g. Health Leads, www.healthleadsusa.org).	▪ Number of students involved ▪ Number of agencies participating in program ▪ Number of clients referred to the service	Medium	TBD
2. Work with agencies such as Family Resource Centers, Head Start and Food Bank to conduct Earned Income Tax Credit outreach.	▪ # of clients provided EITC assistance	Initial	Food Bank, FSC
C. Expand access to low-cost health care and pharmaceuticals to reduce a family's dilemma of paying for food or medicine.			
1. Increase publicity about and help connect people to health coverage programs (e.g. Medi-Cal, CMSP, Healthy Families), and medical care (e.g. Community Health Centers, Noor Clinic, CAPSLO Health and Prevention, Planned Parenthood).	▪ Number of people using Medi-Cal, CMSP, and Healthy Families health coverage programs ▪ Number of people utilizing health services at Community Health Centers and Noor Clinic	Initial	TBD

STRATEGIES	INDICATORS	TIMEFRAME	LEAD AGENCY
2. Educate food insecure persons about programs for filling pharmacy needs such as Pharmaceutical Alliance and Community Health Centers pharmacy.	▪ Number of people utilizing Pharmaceutical Alliance and Community Health Centers pharmacy services	Initial	Food Bank
D. Increase the number of "livable wage" jobs, and availability and affordability of housing and transportation by partnering with existing county efforts.			
1. Support and collaborate with Homeless Services Oversight Council, Housing Trust Fund, housing authorities, Peoples' Self Help Housing, and the new SLO County Department of Social Services (DSS) homeless services coordinator.	▪ Number of people paying more than 30% of their income on rent	Initial	FSC
2. Work with Economic Vitality Corporation, Workforce Investment Board, chambers of commerce, large employers, and municipal planning agencies to increase the number of well-paying jobs in the County.	▪ Number of head-of-household jobs, (as defined by the City of SLO Economic Development Strategic Plan)	Long	FSC
3. Support and advocate for improved public transit and reduced transit fares for CalFresh and WIC recipients to increase access to food, health care and social services.	▪ Expansion of transit lines that connect low-income neighborhoods to goods and services	Long	FSC

Goal 5: A vibrant SLO County Food System Coalition and an effective Hunger-Free Community plan.

STRATEGIES	INDICATORS	TIMEFRAME	LEAD AGENCY
A. Strengthen the SLO County Food System Coalition by having an engaged and effective membership and maintaining alliances with local, state and national organizations.			
1. Ensure the agricultural sectors are adequately represented within the Food System Coalition (FSC), and that the Coalition is working towards agricultural issues.	▪ Number of agricultural representatives on coalition	Initial	FSC
2. Align with statewide and national organizations that advocate for FSC goals of sustainable local food systems.	▪ Number of statewide and national organizations with which FSC has affiliated	Initial	FSC
3. Conduct local Food Shed Assessment.	▪ Completion of CCAN's assessment	Initial	CCAN
4. Pursue funding to ensure sufficient administrative support for the FSC to continue its operations.	▪ Creation of an administrative committee with defined term and responsibilities	Initial	FSC
B. Establish a Food System Coalition Advocacy Committee to engage in advocacy and community education around local, state and national issues.			
1. Research and recommend positions to the FSC on state and national issues such as Farm Bill, child nutrition and SNAP.	▪ Semi-annual update/discussion with Coalition on state and national issues	Initial	FSC
2. Research and recommend positions to FSC on local issues such as agricultural preservation, regulations to increase the availability of nutritious food, economic development and public program participation.	▪ Semi-annual update/discussion with Coalition on local issues	Initial	FSC
3. Host FSC forums on public policy issues that impact access to nutritious food in San Luis Obispo County.	▪ Number of forums hosted in five years	Medium	FSC
C. Review the Hunger-Free Community plan on an annual basis.			
1. Establish indicators with community organizations for tracking progress on plan implementation.	▪ Create indicators that will be adopted as part of the final plan, as well as a time frame and lead agency for each strategy ▪ Establish baseline indicators and measure annually.	Initial	Food Bank, FSC

STRATEGIES	INDICATORS	TIMEFRAME	LEAD AGENCY
2. Review strategies for possible modification.	▪ Annual review of plan by the Food System Coalition	Medium	Food Bank, FSC
3. Provide an annual report to the community on progress in eliminating hunger in San Luis Obispo County.	▪ Create and disseminate annual report	Medium	FSC

KEY

Timeframe

Initial: strategies that can be begun within the first 6 months after adoption of the plan and can be implemented in the first year of the plan.
Medium: strategies that can be begun within the first 12 months after adoption of the plan and may take two to three years to implement.
Long: Long term strategies that can be begun within the first two years after adoption of the plan, but will take much longer to implement.

Lead Agency Abbreviations (Note: agencies in [brackets] are proposed lead agencies):

CCAN: Central Coast Ag Network
PHD: County Public Health Department
DSS: County Department of Social Services
FSC: SLO County Food System Coalition
PEFS: Partnership for Excellence in Family Support
HEAL-SLO: Healthy Eating, Active Living San Luis Obispo
TMHA: Transitions Mental Health Association
CAP-SLO: Community Action Partnership of SLO County

Glossary

Access: Ability to reach.

CalFresh: Known nationally as SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) and formerly as the Food Stamp Program, CalFresh provides low-income households with supplemental dollars to buy food or seeds.

Child and Adult Care Food Program: A USDA program that provides meals and snacks to children at family day care homes, childcare centers, homeless shelters, and after-school programs, and to older or functionally impaired adults at adult day care centers.

Earned Income Tax Credit: A refundable federal income tax credit for low to moderate income working individuals and families.

EBT: Acronym for Electronic Benefits Transfer, An EBT is an electronic system that automates the delivery, redemption, and reconciliation of issued public assistance benefits. EBT is the method for distributing CalFresh benefits, California Food Assistance Program benefits, and cash aid benefits.

Equitable: Abundant and available to all.

Farm to Institution/ Farm to School: programs that connects K-12 schools, colleges, hospitals, corporate cafeterias and local farms with the objectives of serving healthy meals improving nutrition, providing agriculture, health and nutrition education opportunities, and supporting local and regional farmers.

Food Hub: A business or organization that actively manages the aggregation, distribution, and marketing of source-identified food products primarily from local and regional producers to strengthen their ability to satisfy wholesale, retail, and institutional demand.

Food insecurity: The USDA has two classifications of food insecurity. This plan does not distinguish between the two levels. When food insecurity is discussed, it is inclusive of both levels.

- Low food security: Reports of reduced quality, variety, or desirability of diet; little or no indication of changes in diets or food intake.
- Very low food security: Reports of multiple indications of disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake.

Food producer: Farmer, rancher or fisher that produces food commercially.

Food security: Access by all people at all times to enough nutritious food for an active, healthy life.

Food Security Assessment: Study conducted by STRIDE that consisted of over 800 face to face surveys. Assessment gathered information about food security at the household level and characteristics specific to populations that mat be at risk for food insecurity in San Luis Obispo County.

Food Store Survey: A study conducted by STRIDE that measured the availability and accessibility of food in 45 food stores throughout San Luis Obispo County.

Gleaning: The collection of leftover crops from farmers' fields after they have been commercially harvested or from fields where it is not economically profitable to harvest, or the collection of surplus produce from backyards and gardens of community residents.

Head-of-household job: Stable, requiring a certain level of education or skill, offering the opportunity for promotion, providing healthcare benefits, and offering a salary that enables the employee to support dependents while having some disposable income.

Health promoting: Supports the physical and mental health of all participants in the food system.

Healthy Corner Store projects: Partnerships between advocates and local corner store owners that seek to improve the availability, quality, and affordability of healthy foods.

Healthy Mobile Vending: The selling whole unprocessed produce from portable vehicles.

Hunger: Uneasy or painful sensation caused by a lack of food; the recurrent and involuntary lack of access to food.

Hunger-Free Community Project: A project consisting of three assessments, the formation of the SLO County Food System Coalition, and the development of a strategic plan to end hunger in San Luis Obispo County. This project was funded by the USDA Hunger-Free Communities grant program, which was created to provide public funding for comprehensive and collaborative efforts to end hunger at the community level.

Local food system: Food production, processing, distribution, consumption, and waste management as well as associated supporting and regulatory institutions and activities in San Luis Obispo County.

National School Lunch Program: A federally assisted meal program operating in public and nonprofit private schools and residential child care institutions that provides low-cost or free lunches to children each school day.

Poverty: If a family's total income is less than the family's threshold, then that family and every individual in it is considered in poverty. Poverty thresholds are the dollar amounts used to determine poverty status. The official poverty thresholds do not vary geographically, but they are updated for inflation using Consumer Price Index.

Profitable: Meaning profitable for all participants in the food system.

Resilient: Thrives in the face of challenges like unpredictable climate, increased pest resistance, declining and increasingly expensive water and energy supplies.

Self-Sufficiency Standard: Commonly An alternative to the federal poverty level to measure a family's ability to meet basic needs. This standard takes into account family composition and the geographic cost of living.

SLO County Food System Coalition: A group formed as part of the Hunger-Free Communities grant, which includes a diverse group of stakeholders involved in some component of the San Luis Obispo food system.

School Breakfast Program: A federal program that provides cash assistance to States to operate nonprofit breakfast programs in schools and residential childcare institutions.

Sustainable: Equitable, profitable, resilient, and health promoting.

STRIDE: Standing for Science through Translational Research in Diet and Exercise, this research group was founded by the Cal Poly Kinesiology department and focuses on promoting healthy weight across the lifespan. STRIDE conducted the Food Security Assessment and Food Store Survey as part of the Hunger-Free Communities Project.

Vulnerable populations: The unemployed and underemployed, families living in poverty, senior citizens, the working poor, and other similar groups that struggle with food security.

WIC: Commonly used abbreviation for the Women Infants and Children Nutrition Program, a USDA program that provides low-income pregnant women, new mothers, and children under the age of five with nutritious foods, nutrition education and referrals to health and other social services.

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Declaration of Support

Food is a basic necessity; it is what nourishes and sustains us, yet many households struggle to put food on the table. Locally, the number of people using Food Bank services has increased 90% in the past five years. About 44,000 San Luis Obispo County residents access Food Bank resources annually, about half of which are seniors and children. Ending hunger will need to be a community-wide effort. Please help in the development of a thriving, sustainable, and local food economy in San Luis Obispo County in which every resident has access to fresh, nutritious food.

We envision a future for San Luis Obispo County, which includes:

1. Access to nutritious food for all residents;
2. Improved nutrition of County residents who experience food insecurity;
3. A sustainable local food system that is able to meet the food needs of all residents;
4. Collaborative community efforts to address the root causes of hunger;
5. A vibrant SLO County Food System Coalition and effective Hunger-Free Community plan.

We support the SLO County Food System Coalition's Hunger-Free Community plan, "Paradox of Plenty: A Community Roadmap for Overcoming Hunger in San Luis Obispo County," to alleviate hunger and increase nutrition among all residents of San Luis Obispo County.

Name: _____

Organization: _____

Title/Position: _____

Address: _____

City/ State/ Zip: _____

Representation (are you signing on….)

☐ As an individual ☐ For your organization

Phone: _____

Email: _____

I/ This organization will commit to the following action(s) to help achieve the goals of the Hunger-Free Community plan (optional): _____

_____

_____

_____

Thank you for your support!

Signed Declarations of Support can be mailed to: Food Bank Coalition of San Luis Obispo County | 2212 Golden Hill Road | Paso Robles, CA 93446

Or emailed to Carl Hansen: chansen@slofoodbank.org

FEEDING HOPE FOR 20 YEARS

FOOD BANK

COALITION OF SAN LUIS OBISPO COUNTY