



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO

AGENDA ITEM

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

NORA VARGAS
First District

JOEL ANDERSON
Second District

TERRA LAWSON-REMER
Third District

VACANT
Fourth District

JIM DESMOND
Fifth District

DATE: December 5, 2023

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TO: Board of Supervisors

SUBJECT

ADOPT THE SUSTAINABLE, EQUITABLE, AND LOCAL FOOD SOURCING POLICY AND DIRECT IMPLEMENTATION OF YEAR-TWO OF THE SUSTAINABLE, EQUITABLE, AND LOCAL FOOD SOURCING PROGRAM (DISTRICTS: ALL)

OVERVIEW

On June 8, 2021 (3), the San Diego County Board of Supervisors (Board), took critical action in advancing support for San Diego County residents by approving the framework for the use of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding. Under the ARPA Food Assistance component, \$1 million was allocated to initiate a County of San Diego (County) values-based food procurement program. Then on January 25, 2022 (5), the Board directed staff to commence implementation of the Sustainable, Equitable, and Local Food Sourcing Program and to develop an internal County policy. Subsequently, on June 14, 2022 (3), the Board received the Sustainable, Equitable, and Local Food Sourcing Program and Policy Framework and directed staff to return to the Board within 18 months for consideration and adoption of the policy. Today's actions request the Board adopt the Sustainable, Equitable, and Local Food Sourcing Policy; direct staff to implement year-two of the program and return to the Board with update on progress and impacts by Spring of 2025; and authorize applications for additional funding opportunity announcements to support the Sustainable, Equitable, and Local Food Sourcing Program.

This item supports the County's vision of a just, sustainable, and resilient future for all, specifically those communities and populations in San Diego County that have been historically left behind, as well as our ongoing commitment to the regional *Live Well San Diego* vision of healthy, safe, and thriving communities. This will be accomplished by supporting San Diego County's most vulnerable communities, addressing issues of food insecurity, improving nutrition, and supporting local agricultural businesses in San Diego County.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

1. Adopt Board Policy B-75, Sustainable, Equitable, and Local Food Sourcing Policy with a sunset review date of December 31, 2030.
2. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to implement year-two of the Sustainable, Equitable, and Local Food Sourcing Program and return to the Board with progress and impacts by Spring of 2025.

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3. Authorize the Agency Director, Health and Human Services Agency, or designee, to apply for additional funding opportunity announcements, if available, to support the Sustainable, Equitable, and Local Food Sourcing Program.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

According to the San Diego Hunger Coalition, as of March 2023, nearly one in four San Diegans experience food insecurity. In addition, according to a landscape assessment of County of San Diego (County) food service programs and operations, in 2022 the County served approximately eight million meals to vulnerable populations including youth and adults residing in public hospitals and detention facilities, older adults, foster youth, and individuals living with HIV/AIDS. As such, the County has the opportunity to direct public funds through implementing a values-based food sourcing program and policy that can positively impact populations served in addition to supporting a more robust sustainable, equitable, and local food system.

The development of the Sustainable, Equitable, and Local Food Sourcing Program was guided by San Diego County Food Vision 2030 (Food Vision 2030). Food Vision 2030 was developed by the San Diego Food System Alliance, which is comprised of diverse San Diego County food system stakeholders and is a 10-year strategic plan that guides collective action toward a healthy, sustainable, and just food system for the San Diego region. Food Vision 2030 builds on and complements the efforts initiated by the County’s 2019 State of the Food System Report which works toward a robust and resilient local food system that builds healthy communities, supports the economy, and enhances the environment. The overall goal for Food Vision 2030 is to inform planning, policy, program, and investment opportunities to improve the food system in San Diego County. The Sustainable, Equitable, and Local Food Sourcing Program and Policy align with the priorities of Food Vision 2030.

Notably, the Sustainable, Equitable, and Local Food Sourcing Program includes a value category focused specifically on equity: Equity-Informed Sourcing. The Program measures purchases within this value category and supports food service programs and operations in identifying food and beverage purchasing opportunities in this value category. Program staff collect data in the form of usage reports and conduct assessments to determine the County’s progress in the Equity-Informed Sourcing value category. By centering equity in the County’s food procurement, the County has the potential to focus public funds to positively impact the food system for local food producers, workers, and businesses owned and/or operated by underserved communities. In addition, implementing a comprehensive, values-based food procurement program ensures that institutional food purchasing advances an equitable, healthy, fair, local, humane, and sustainable food system. Sustainability and equity-focused institutional food purchasing can be an immediate and long-term strategy to reduce health disparities through improving quality of food served to vulnerable and under-resourced communities.

SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT STATEMENT

Today’s actions support the County of San Diego (County) Sustainability Goal #2, to provide just and equitable access to County services, policy decision-making, and resource allocation in support of sustainable communities; Sustainability Goal # 3, to transition to a green, carbon-free economy, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, support green job creation and workforce development, and prepare for impacts of climate change. In addition, today’s actions support the County Sustainability Goal # 4, to protect the health and well-being of everyone in the region, with a focus on collaborating with community partners and advocating for environmental justice for communities that have been

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disproportionately impacted; and Sustainability Goal #7, to reduce pollution and waste and demonstrate reduction in consumption of resources. This will be accomplished through adopting the Sustainable, Equitable, and Local Food Sourcing Policy, which standardizes a food sourcing program that measures and encourages food and beverage purchasing in alignment with value categories as directed by the San Diego County Board of Supervisors. These include Local Sourcing, Equity-Informed Sourcing, Elevated Labor Standards, Organic or Regenerative Certification, Low-Carbon Intensity, and Nutritional Co-Benefit. The Sustainable, Equitable, and Local Food Sourcing Program and Policy help direct public funds contributing to sustainability through increasing purchasing of organic, regeneratively grown and low-carbon intense food and beverages. The Program measures purchases within these value categories and supports food service programs and operations by identifying food and beverage procurement opportunities within the value categories, collectively contributing to County sustainability goals, as well as Departmental Sustainability Plans, the Regional Decarbonization Framework, and the Climate Action Plan.

FISCAL IMPACT

Funds for this request are included in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2023-25 Operational Plan in Health and Human Services Agency. If approved, this request will result in costs and revenue of \$353,472 in FY 2023-24 and \$204,660 in FY 2024-25 to implement year-two of the Sustainable, Equitable, and Local Food Sourcing Program. These costs were previously approved by the San Diego County Board of Supervisors (Board) on January 25, 2022 (5), as part of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Framework, to provide technical assistance to support the Food System Sustainability and Equity Procurement Guidelines through April 30, 2025. The technical assistance provider supports data analysis, action plan implementation, and monitoring of progress. The funding source is ARPA. There is no change in net General Fund costs and no additional staff years.

There is no immediate fiscal impact specific to today’s actions to adopt the policy and implement year-two of the program outside of costs tied to the technical assistance provider noted above. Adoption of the policy is not anticipated to result in new costs for departments in the near term. The action plans focus on cost neutral strategies with support from the contracted technical assistance provider. The technical assistance provider will continue to support with program implementation in year-two including with action plan implementation, technical analysis, and monitoring. However, fiscal impacts could be associated with identified goals respective to each food service operation, such as diverting or increasing purchases in specific value categories. Those goals are to be determined by leadership for each food service operation based on respective operational and budget constraints. Any such recommendations requiring additional funding would return to the Board for consideration and approval as necessary. Institutions across the country that have implemented a values-based procurement program similar to this County program have primarily relied on cost-neutral strategies to improve performance.

BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT

If approved, today’s actions have the potential to positively impact the regional food system by increasing market opportunities for businesses in the food chain including producers, manufactures, and distributors who align operations with the Board-directed values categories.

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ADVISORY BOARD STATEMENT

At their meeting on November 7, 2023, the Health Services Advisory Board recommended approval of these recommendations.

BACKGROUND

The County of San Diego (County) serves approximately eight million meals at a cost of approximately \$27 million each year to vulnerable populations including youth and adults residing in public hospitals and detention facilities, older adults, foster youth, and individuals living with HIV/AIDS. There are multiple food service programs and operations within the County that utilize public funds, categorized into two types: self-operated, such as those within the Sheriff's Department and Edgemoor Hospital; and contracted, such as those within the Probation Department, Aging & Independence Services (AIS) Older Californians Nutrition Program, the County Psychiatric Hospital, A.B. and Jessie Polinsky Children's Center, San Pasqual Academy, and the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Food Services Program.

On June 8, 2021 (3), the San Diego County Board of Supervisors (Board), took critical action in advancing support for San Diego County residents by approving the framework for the use of American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding. Under the ARPA Food Assistance component, \$1 million was allocated to initiate a County values-based food procurement program. Then on January 25, 2022 (5), the Board directed staff to commence implementation of the Sustainable, Equitable, and Local Food Sourcing Program and to develop an internal County policy to include the following value categories:

- Local Sourcing;
- Equity-Informed Sourcing;
- Elevated Labor Standards;
- Organic or Regenerative Certification;
- Low-Carbon Intensity; and
- Nutritional Co-Benefit.

Subsequently on June 14, 2022 (3), the Board received the Sustainable, Equitable, and Local Food Sourcing Program and Policy Framework and directed staff to return within 18 months for consideration and adoption of the policy.

Values-based food sourcing prioritizes principles in addition to cost when deciding which food items to purchase. Large enterprises, such as the County, have the opportunity to support farmers and producers who operate with values outlined in the proposed policy. Implementing a comprehensive, values-based food program ensures that institutional food practices, including food and beverage purchasing, advances an equitable, healthy, fair, local, humane, and sustainable food system. Government agencies across the nation that have implemented values-based food and beverage procurement programs have realized positive outcomes such as increased purchases from their local farmers and demand for products that improve food systems.

Development of the Sustainable, Equitable, and Local Food Sourcing Program and Policy Framework

Two components were identified, based on Board direction, as necessary for program implementation and to achieve the overall goal of using public funds to invest in sustainable, equitable, and local food systems. The first component was the development of a program to assess current practices and develop a comprehensive set of tools, technical support, and action plans to support the various County food service programs and operations in becoming more sustainable, equitable, and focused on local food

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sourcing. The second component was the development of a Countywide policy, in collaboration with partners across the County enterprise, to guide food sourcing and purchasing to align with Board-directed value categories that would effectively standardize the program.

The Sustainable, Equitable, and Local Food Sourcing Policy Framework (Framework) was collaboratively created by staff to guide the development of both components. The Framework was informed by best practices centered on evidence-based policy-making that supports an effective and data-driven approach. To ensure the ability to operationalize the program, the Food Services Leadership Committee (FSLC), comprised of a representative of each County food service program and operation, was convened to guide the co-creation of the Framework, program, and policy. Key components of the Framework, as approved by the Board on June 14, 2022 (3) include:

- Data Requirements: Collect, maintain, and submit food and beverage procurement data;
- Food Service Contracts: Include food and beverage procurement data collection requests in contracts and amendments;
- Action Planning: Develop, implement, and maintain action plans that increase purchasing in the value categories;
- Collaboration: Collaborate through FSLC and other values-based food procurement forums;
- Implementation and Monitoring: Include implementation and monitoring of increased purchasing in the value areas and associated benchmarks; and
- Communication: continuously communicate about the values, best practices, lessons learned, and successes.

In addition to highlighting alignment with Board-specific value categories and other County initiatives, the Framework outlines impacted County departments that have food service programs and operations. During the first year of implementation, which began in May 2022, the key components of the Framework were operationalized into the Sustainable, Equitable, and Local Food Sourcing Program.

Year-One of Program Implementation: Baseline Assessments and Action Plan Development

Through a competitive solicitation process, the County selected a contractor with established national best practices, capabilities, and experience working with large jurisdictions implementing values-based food and beverage procurement programs in May 2022. The technical assistance provider supported the implementation process based on the key components of the Framework. Value categories were operationalized through assigning standardized metrics to accurately measure current purchasing practices.

In-depth individual food service program and operation technical assistance sessions were conducted to thoroughly document each program's unique procurement landscape, authority, regulations, budget, workflow, client needs, contracts, and vendors. An important outcome of this process was the data collection and analysis of all food and beverage items purchased for baseline assessments. The technical assistance provider utilized extensive databases to analyze and catalog County food purchases, allowing for transparency and measurement of the value categories. Baseline assessments were conducted for nine self-operated and contracted food service operations using Fiscal Year 2022 food and beverage purchasing data. These included the Sheriff's Department, Edgemoor Hospital, Probation Department, the County Psychiatric Hospital, A.B. and Jessie Polinsky Childrens Center, the Ryan White HIV/AIDS Food Services Program, and AIS Older Californians Nutrition Program. The AIS Older Californians Nutrition Program currently contracts with 13 providers ranging in size.

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Based on guidance from the AIS program leads and information from the Procurement Landscape Analysis, the Older Californians Nutrition Program providers with the three highest number of meals served were chosen for the baseline assessment. In addition, San Pasqual Academy had not yet operationalized its food services at the time of the baseline assessment, however, will be participating in the program moving forward. The tables that follow provide results of the baseline assessments, specifically the percentage range of County food service operations budget dedicated to qualifying purchases in each value category, the range of carbon emissions related to producing animal products on a per-meal basis, and the range of percent of total qualifying items for the nutritional co-benefit category.

County of San Diego Baseline Assessments for Food Purchases in Fiscal Year 2021-22

Value Category	Range of Percent of Total Food Spend Meeting Value Category Qualifications
Local Sourcing	0% to 17.5%
Equity-Informed Sourcing	0% to 3%
Elevated Labor Standards	24.3% to 33.1%
Organic and Regenerative Certification	0% to 7.4%

Value Category	Range of Carbon Emissions Related to Producing Animal Products on Per-Meal Basis
Low-Carbon Intensity	0.94 lbs CO2 per meal to 5.66 lbs CO2 per meal

Value Category	Range of Percent of Total Qualifying Items out of Total Applicable Items
Nutritional Co-Benefit*	29% to 67%

*Nutritional Co-Benefit measured through a Nutrition Checklist by counting the total qualifying items out of total applicable items.

The baseline assessments revealed that some County food service operations already spend five or more percent of their total food and beverage budget on items that qualify in some of the value categories prior to any goal setting. This assessment also highlighted low carbon emissions for some food service operations and a high percent of qualifying items utilized in County food service programs and operations for the nutritional co-benefit category. Equity-Informed Sourcing and Organic and Regenerative Certification categories had the lowest percent of total food spend while Elevated Labor Standards and Local Sourcing had the highest. Results closely aligned with what the technical assistance provider had observed in other large jurisdictions across the nation. Information collected through this assessment served as a starting point for food service providers to identify goals and corresponding activities to include in their respective action plans.

Informed through technical assistance and information from baseline assessments, each food service program and operation engaged in an action planning process tailored to their unique operations. Priority areas were collaboratively identified by food service programs and operations, the technical assistance provider, and program staff. To maximize impact, Countywide actions were also identified during this process that would support each food service program and operation increase purchases in value categories.

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These actions include adding data transparency in the form of food and beverage purchasing usage report requests in contracts. Action plans are iterative and can shift with operational priorities.

The Proposed Sustainable, Equitable, and Local Food Sourcing Policy

Guided by the Framework, the first year of the program informed the development of the Sustainable, Equitable, and Local Food Sourcing Policy (Attachment A). Special attention was given to engaging all County food service programs and operations, through the FSLC in the process of data collection, analysis, and action planning. Key stakeholders including the County’s Department of Purchasing and Contracting and the Land Use and Environment Group Executive Office were also engaged in this process. Per the proposed B-75 Policy, County food service programs and operations shall participate in the program which includes:

- Action planning – develop, maintain, and progress towards annual procurement action plans collaboratively created by food service program leads and/or operators and the program team.
- Collaboration – attend periodic County of San Diego Food Services Leadership Committee meetings for Program support, peer learning opportunities, and progress reporting.
- Data Requirements – collect, maintain, and share annually and upon request procurement data related to food service operations.
- Food Service Contracts – include food and beverage procurement data collection requests in contracts and relevant amendments as feasible.

The Sustainable, Equitable, and Local Food Sourcing Policy provides the ability for food and beverage purchasing data transparency and guides goals to increase purchasing in the value categories determined by each individual operation’s annual food service action plans. The policy outlines that support will be provided by the County for action plan development and associated implementation strategies. It also highlights that food- and beverage-related contractors and vendors will not be required to provide data analysis but will be requested to share purchasing data, in the form of usage reports. Progress for County food service operations will be made available publicly as an aggregate.

Year-Two of Program Implementation: Action Plan Implementation and Monitoring Progress

The first year of program implementation focused on solidifying the various program components, onboarding the technical assistance provider, conducting baseline assessments, and developing initial action plans. Year-two of program implementation will focus on implementing action plan strategies and activities for each food service operation, with extensive technical assistance provided by the contractor. Action plans include clear and achievable activities that represent a focus on cost neutral strategies for implementing the Sustainable, Equitable, and Local Food Sourcing Program and identifying opportunities to shift food and beverage purchasing to value categories. Year-two will also include data analysis to measure internal progress towards the value categories, with the baseline assessments from Fiscal Year 2022 data serving as the benchmark. Relevant cost considerations resulting from implementation of action plan strategies will also be highlighted. Progress related to year-two of implementation will be provided to the Board in the Spring of 2025.

Today’s actions request the Board adopt the Sustainable, Equitable, and Local Food Sourcing Policy, direct staff to implement year-two of the program and return to the Board with update on progress and impacts by Spring of 2025, and authorize applications for additional funding opportunity announcements to support the Sustainable, Equitable, and Local Food Sourcing Program.

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LINKAGE TO THE COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO STRATEGIC PLAN

Today’s proposed actions support the County of San Diego’s (County) 2023-2028 Strategic Plan Initiatives of Sustainability (Environment and Resiliency), Equity (Health), Community (Engagement and Quality of Life), and Justice (Environmental), by shifting public dollars in food procurement to reflect value areas identified by the San Diego County Board of Supervisors, such as sustainability, equity, and local economy. In addition, today’s proposed actions promote access to affordable, local, and healthy foods, support the region’s environment and economy by promoting a robust, diverse, and sustainable food system, promote a food system that is resilient and safe, and improve the local food system through community engagement and input that create healthy environments and increase the well-being of San Diego County residents.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Eric C. McDonald". To the right of the signature, the word "FOR" is written in a smaller, blue, sans-serif font.

HELEN N. ROBBINS-MEYER
Interim Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENT(S)

Attachment A - County of San Diego Sustainable, Equitable, and Local Food Sourcing Policy