

Central Coast Foodshed Guide



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This version was developed by Cauri Hammer based on information included in previous editions with input from a number of organizations in the San Luis Obispo community.

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The Center for Sustainability welcomes your input, which you can email to cfs@calpoly.edu at any time. We hope to use this edition as an opportunity to improve upon future iterations of this guide.

We would like to offer a sincere thank you to all individuals and organizations who made this document possible. Please see this list in the Foodshed Organization Directory at the end of the document.

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What is the Central Coast Foodshed Guide?

The Central Coast Foodshed Guide is a comprehensive document intended to provide background on a few of the key issues in our food system, an update on the current status of the San Luis Obispo Foodshed, and access to local food system organizations. What is a foodshed? A foodshed is a geographic area where food is grown and consumed; it also accounts for population density, land quality, and available distribution routes (Gayeton, 2014).

We begin the Central Coast Foodshed Guide with an Impetus for Foodshed Work, outlining a few of the main issues associated with our food system that provide incentive for foodshed work in addition to a few key definitions.

We then move into an overview of food systems and sustainable food systems, emphasizing a few of the ways we can progress toward a more sustainable food system that is profitable, equitable, resilient, and health-promoting.

The Status of the Central Coast Foodshed begins with a brief history of the land and an overview of the agricultural character of the area. We have incorporated summaries of the 2013 and 2014 Crop Report, the SLO County General Plan Agricultural Element, and the 2014 San Luis Obispo Food System Assessment to outline the current state of SLO Agriculture.

Finally, we have included a list of the number of organizations we are so blessed to have working in our food system in the Foodshed Organization Directory. Here, you will find their name, description, and a link to their webpage embedded in their name. We emphasize the Cal Poly projects here since the Center for Sustainability is closely involved with these entities. You will find a list of Cal Poly organizations and clubs at the end of the Foodshed Organization Directory.

Navigating the Guide

- Definitions of key bolded terms can be found in the Glossary at the end of this document.
- Each section of underlined, blue text is a hyperlink that will lead you to more information and resources.
- References of key facts are listed on the last page.

Impetus for Foodshed Work



According to the [State of Food and Agriculture 2013](#), “food systems around the world are diverse and changing rapidly, with profound implications for diets and nutritional outcomes. Since 1947, food systems have become more industrial, commercial, and global. The substitution of mechanical, chemical, and biological technologies for land and labor in agricultural production has unleashed processes of productivity growth, economic development and social

transformation that are being felt around the world. Commercialization and specialization in agriculture production, processing, and retailing have enhanced efficiency throughout the food system and increased the year-round availability and affordability of a diverse range of foods for most consumers in the world. At the same time, concerns are mounting about the sustainability of current consumption and production patterns and their implications.”

Foodshed development work stems from issues in four central realms: Food Security, Public Health, Economic Stability, and the Environment. All four realms provide incentive and issues to be addressed in local food system development. A few of the main issues are outlined in more depth throughout the next few pages.

Impetus for Foodshed Work

Food Security

- The 2010 Census data showed that 20% of all U.S. households were “food insecure.”
- While the Central Coast is often viewed as an affluent and healthy region, over 44,000 citizens battle hunger ([Paradox of Plenty](#)).
- According to Huffington Post, nearly 1 million Californians live in food deserts.
- The SLO Food Bank saw a 40% increase in the number of people using their services from 2010 to 2012.
- In 2014, the SLO Food Bank collected and distributed a record 6,000,000 lbs of food.
- Hunger is largely a factor of income.
- Programs exist to assist citizens in need of nutrition assistance: 32,750 SLO County residents are eligible for [CalFresh](#) benefits based on their income, but only about 9,500 are participating.

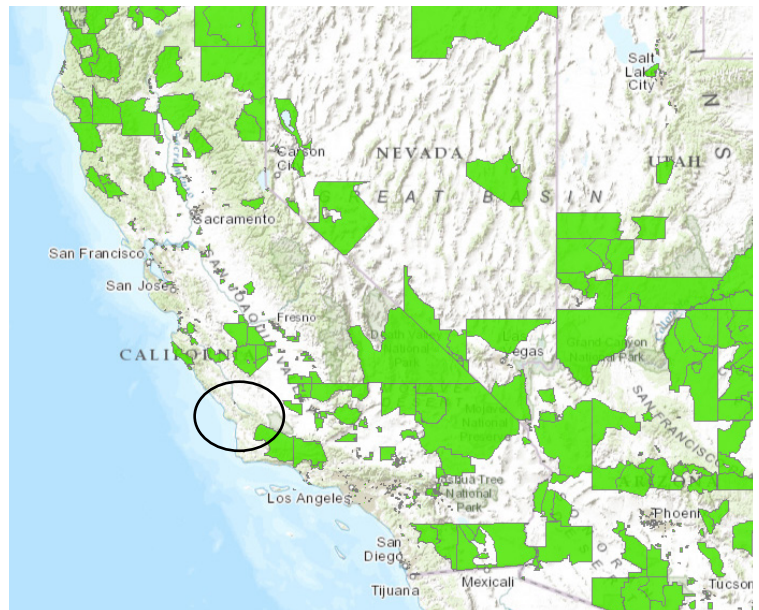


Figure 1. The green areas indicate low income areas with low access to food within 1-10 miles from residence.

Source: Economic Research Service Food Access Research Atlas

Food security: When all people at all times have access to sufficient, safe, nutritious food to maintain a healthy and active life. See the [World Health Organization's take](#) on food security.

Food desert: Urban neighborhood or rural town without ready access to fresh, healthy, and affordable food. See the [USDA](#) webpage for more details. The green areas in the map above represent food deserts in California.

The [Paradox of Plenty](#) is a community roadmap for overcoming hunger in SLO County created by the SLO Food Bank in 2012. Navigate to this document for more information on Food Security.

Impetus for Foodshed Work

Public Health

Diet-related health problems are on the rise. Lack of **access** to healthy foods is a key driver.

- New modes of transportation, leisure, employment, and work within the home cause people to lead more sedentary lifestyles and to demand more convenient foods.
- Processed foods high in sugar, fat, and salt, and low in important micronutrients are aggressively promoted in the U.S.
- More than 1/3 (about 34.9%) of the American adult population is obese.
- According to the National Cancer Institute, 1 in 3 cancer deaths are linked to diet.
- According to the USDA's Economic Research Service estimates, diet-related health conditions cost the U.S. \$80 billion annually in medical costs and productivity losses.
- An estimated 76 million people contract food-borne illnesses each year in the United States. The high incidence of food-borne diseases in children, especially infants, is a major concern.

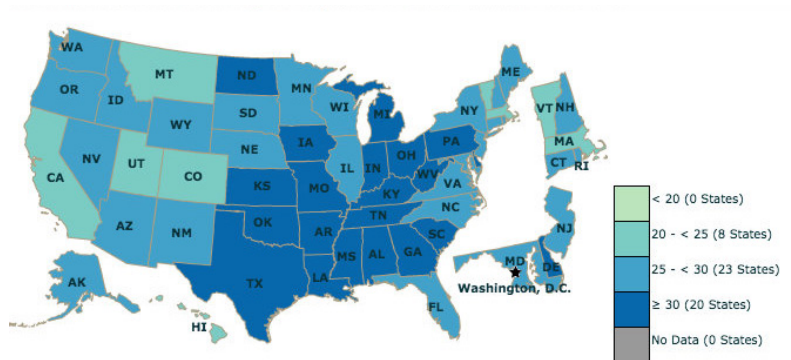


Figure 2. The percentage of obese citizens over the age of 18 in the U.S.

Source: Center for Disease Control 2013

Availability: unhealthy vs. healthy foods

Percentage of food stores carrying selected items

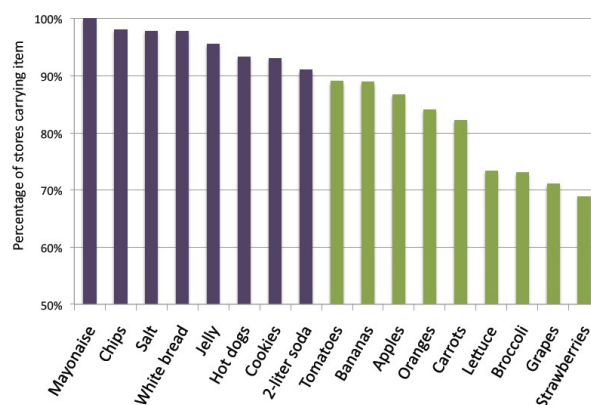


Figure 3. Processed foods high in sugar, fat, and salt are much more accessible.

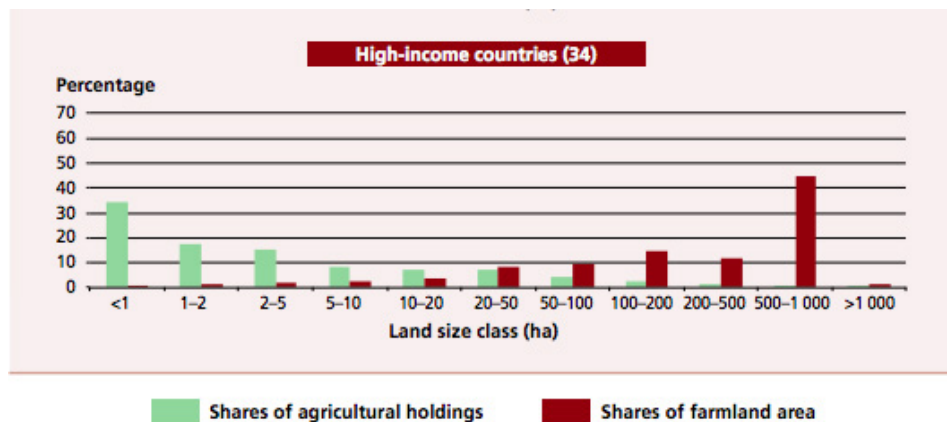
Source: Central Coast Foodshed Guide, 2nd edition

For more information on Food Choices and Health, see the [USDA Economic Research Service](#).

Impetus for Foodshed Work

Economic Stability

- ▶ The U.S. Farm Sector is shrinking: the number of farms has decreased dramatically, dropping from 6.8 million in 1935 to 1.9 million in 1997.
- ▶ The average age of farmers in San Luis Obispo County is 59 years old.



- ▶ Worldwide, only 1 percent of all farms in the world are larger than 50 hectares, but these few farms control 65% of the world's agricultural land ([FAO 2014](#)).
- ▶ The **food system** has become increasingly concentrated, benefiting only the small number of multinational corporations that control an increasing share of production, processing and distribution of food products.
- ▶ The processed foods being aggressively promoted appear more affordable than locally grown produce because of their cheaper price tag, but these items have many unseen **external costs**.
- ▶ The total number of acres of SLO County farmland enrolled in the [Williamson Act](#) also decreased from 810,000 acres in 2004 to 795,000 in 2009, which is about 57% of total land zone for agriculture in the County.

Food system: Encompasses everything from farm to fork. It includes producers, processors, distributors, retailers, and consumers of all types.

External costs: Health, social, and environmental costs constitute external costs. We pay for these through our taxes, through higher healthcare rates, and through pollution to the environment.

Impetus for Foodshed Work

Environment

- ▶ Excessive use of toxic chemicals in agricultural production can pollute air, soil, and water.
- ▶ Prevention of soil and habitat loss is needed.
- ▶ In 2008, 516 million pounds of pesticides were used on just 21 select crops (Fernandez-Cornejo, 2014).
- ▶ According to the [Environmental Protection Agency](#), the agriculture sector accounted for 9% of greenhouse gas emissions in 2013.
- ▶ 1/3 of food produced globally for human consumption is lost or wasted.
- ▶ Long-distance transportation of food, now mostly by truck, creates air pollution and may contribute to global warming. Reducing transport distances by fostering more localized production and consumption could result in reduced emissions and less pollution.

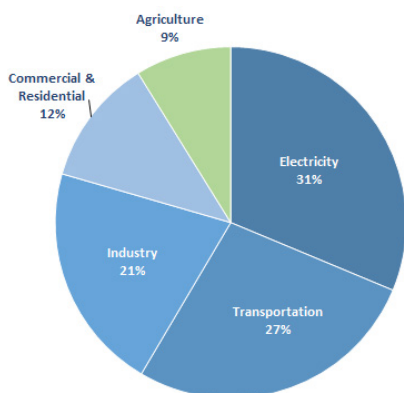


Figure 5. Economic sector contribution to greenhouse gas emissions

Source: Environmental Protection Agency



Learn about the importance of soil health through this [Food and Agriculture Organization resource](#).

See the [Pesticide Use in U.S. Agriculture](#) article on the USDA website for more information.

Learn more about the [Causes of Climate Change](#) at the EPA website.

Food Systems

The **food system** includes all activities involving the production, processing, distribution, consumption, and disposal of food. The food system operates within and is influenced by social, political, economic, and natural environments. Each step is also dependent on human resources that provide labor, research and education ([A Primer on the Community Food System](#)). Examples of each of the steps food takes along the food system are listed below.

Production

Gardeners, Farmers, Ranchers,
Fishermen

Processing

Commercial Kitchens, Aggregators,
Cooperatives



Resource Recovery

Landfill, Recycling Programs,
Compost Programs

Consumption

Individual, Commercial,
Institutional

Distribution

Farm Stands, Grocery Stores,
CSA's, Farmers' markets,
Restaurants

Sustainable Food Systems



A **sustainable food system** is a collaborative network that integrates food production, processing, distribution, consumption, and waste management in order to enhance the environmental, economic, and social health of a particular place. Agricultural products reach consumers through sustainable food supply chains.

A **food system value chain** is intended to efficiently link supply with the market while promoting certain core values that reflect a sustainable food system. Each link in a food supply chain affects the availability, affordability, diversity, and nutritional quality of foods. This includes, but is not limited to, addressing issues of food access, building capacity to meet food needs, fostering equity and fair pay for everyone involved, and working to ensure ecological sustainability.

Sustainable Diets to Support Local Foods

According to the [State of Food and Agriculture 2014](#), sustainable diets are those with low environmental impacts which contribute to food and nutrition security and to healthy life for present and future generations. Sustainable diets are protective and respectful of biodiversity and ecosystems, culturally acceptable, accessible, economically fair, and affordable; nutritionally adequate, safe, and healthy; while optimizing natural and human resources. Sustainable diets are one way to support local producers and close the loop in our food system.

[illegible]

-Paul Hawken, The Ecology of Commerce

Food hubs consider producers valued business partners and work closely with them to ensure they can meet buyer requirements by making connections along the food supply chain or providing producers with technical assistance. The number of food hubs in the U.S. has almost tripled since 2006 ([Low, et al 2015](#)).

See [The Role of Food Hubs in Local Food Marketing](#) for more information on Food Hubs in the local food market.

Local Food Systems

What is local?

Eating locally grown foods is not a new concept. "For generations, families tilled their land, planted their saved seeds, cultivated the seedlings, harvested fruits of their labor and preserved the goods to last them until the following year," says Wendy Bedwell-Wilson of Farm to Table magazine. This culture surrounding food was pushed out of practice by mass-produced convenience foods during and shortly after WWII.

[Low, et al 2015](#) found that in 2012, 7.8% of U.S. farms sold food through local marketing channels, which include both direct-to-consumer and intermediated marketing channels. This means that only about 1/10th of food in the U.S. is sold directly to consumers or to retailers close in proximity to the place it was grown.



What is considered **local** in this day and age when foods produced halfway across the world from consumers dominate? No definitive definition of this term relating to food systems exists. Ask a farmer, ask a restaurant owner, ask a food distributor...answers will most assuredly vary. Local is often defined by the number of miles over which a food item travels from producer to consumer or the energy and effort required to bring a food item from producer to consumer. This concept is known as **food miles**. Food that travels less miles tends to have a less significant impact on the environment because no preservatives or refrigeration systems are necessary to preserve their freshness and less gas is used to fuel transportation vehicles. According to the [Paradox of Plenty](#), increased investments in local agriculture and fishing can help reconnect our community with healthy foods while supporting small farmers, ranchers and fishers. A sustainable food supply is needed to assure food security in the long term.

Eating in Season

Eating in season is one way to support local producers. Certain produce items are not meant to be grown year-round or in any type of climate. A growing season is the period of time in a given year the climate is prime for growth of a certain plant or produce item.



Find out what's in season with [Central Coast Grown's Seasonal Chart!](#)

See [Five Reasons to Buy Local](#) by Central Coast Grown, a local organization that seeks to connect the community to the farm-to-table process! And for a schedule of SLO Farmers' Markets, see the [Ag Commissioner's 2014 Farmers' Market Schedule](#).

"If you decide to eat fresh food in season—and only in season—that is locally grown by farmers who take care of the earth, then you are contributing to the health and stability of local agriculture and local communities."

-Alice Waters, Chez Panisse, Berkeley, CA



Consumer Role In the Food System



Every aspect of the food system influences the availability and accessibility of diverse, nutritious foods, and thus, the ability of consumers to choose healthy diets. However, consumers ultimately determine what they eat and, therefore, what the food system produces. Above all else, **food literacy** is key to the consumer's role in a sustainable food system.

Consumers are exposed to a number of terms that could have a number of different meanings. A general understanding of terms like cage-free, free-range, pasture-raised, organic, natural, GMO, grass-fed, etc is essential to making educated decisions when pulling food off the shelves of a grocery store. It is our hope that Central Coast

Foodshed Guide will provide incentive for consumers to educate themselves about the food they are purchasing and consuming. See the State and National Resources page where you will find links to resources that define many of the terms listed above.

Jennifer Wilkins of the [Department of Horticulture](#), Division of Nutritional Sciences at Cornell University has some tips for supporting local agriculture and strengthening locally grown community food systems:

- 1) Choose a diet rich in locally grown and processed foods.
- 2) Ask food stores to buy from local growers and **processors**.
- 3) Ask where items on restaurant menus came from, and express interest in eating locally produced and processed foods.
- 4) Shop at Farmers' Markets and Food Co-ops, which are more likely to offer local, in-season, and often **organic** choices.
- 5) Buy a share in a **CSA**.
- 6) Participate in a community or school garden, or start a home vegetable garden, and share excess with neighbors, a community kitchen or local soup kitchen.
- 7) Support policies that favor local farms and other elements of community food systems.



SLO Agricultural History

San Luis Obispo "agriculture" had been established long before the arrival of the missionaries in 1772. The Chumash Indians inhabited this plentiful area and relied on hunting, gathering, and fishing to harvest a wide variety of plants and animals. These people flourished with little dependence on domesticated plants or animals and used intensive exploitation of marine, estuarine, and terrestrial resources and actively burned the landscape to maintain the productivity, diversity, and accessibility of terrestrial plants and animals (Dartt-Newton, D. , & Erlandson, J. 2006).



When the Spanish arrived in 1772 and established the San Luis Obispo mission, wheat, corn, beans, and fruit were more or less already established, but the Spanish introduced livestock to the region. The effects of Spanish livestock grazing on the acorn, seeds, and other plant foods diminished one of the foundations of Chumash subsistence, and as a result, livestock and domesticated plants became the dominant industry.

Later, the rise of gold mining in the state helped to promote dairying in the coastal portions of the county, and for a time, the county was the largest producer of butter west of the Mississippi.



SLO Agricultural Character



Today, San Luis Obispo County is the envy of many, located midway between the San Francisco and Los Angeles metropolitan regions. Due to its varied topography and diverse micro-climates and soils, the county has been a major agricultural producer of various agricultural products for over a century. In 2008, the county was the 16th largest agricultural producer in the state.

SLO County has long supported agriculture as its most important industry. County land use policies and programs, including exceptionally high participation in the state's preferential property tax program ([the Williamson Act](#)), adoption of a county-wide [Right to Farm Ordinance](#), agricultural land preservation programs, and the Strategic Growth Initiative have provided support for wise land use planning. This type of policy support has protected the county agricultural resources

(both productive soils and underlying groundwater) and has largely avoided the extensive interface between agricultural and non-agricultural uses, which has commonly fragmented production in agricultural areas throughout the state and nation.

According to the [SLO County Agricultural Commissioner](#), for nearly a decade, the county agricultural sector has produced a wholesale value in excess of \$500 million annually, with over 25 different crops exceeding \$1 million in value. At various points in the county's history, significant quantities of milk and dairy products, poultry and eggs, beef, wheat, nuts, sugar beets, and dry beans have been produced in the county. A wide variety of vegetable crops are harvested from about 7,000 acres. In addition, nearly 50,000 acres of orchards and vineyards are planted in citrus, avocado, apple, stone fruit, olives, and berries.

Crop Reports

Crops reports represent gross values of agricultural products produced in the county. The Department of Agriculture/Weights and Measures releases a crop report yearly with this information, which allows us to make year-to-year comparisons of crop yields in the county.

Other statistics can be found at the [Agricultural Commissioner's website](#).

Top Value Crops for 2013

- 1) Wine Grapes
- 2) Strawberries
- 3) Cattle and Calves

Despite persistent drought and variable weather conditions, the value of agricultural commodities produced in SLO County during 2013 reached a record high, increasing by 11% from 2012.

Conversely, field crops were negatively impacted by drought conditions with a 34% decline in value. Drought conditions also put pressure on the cattle industry to reduce herd sizes, as natural forage was low and supplemental feed costs high. Reduced herd sizes caused more animals to be sent to market, raising values for the year to over \$96 million. It will take a few years for ranchers to build herd sizes back to normal levels.

Top Value Crops for 2014

- 1) Strawberries
- 2) Wine Grapes
- 3) Cattle and Calves

Fairly mild winter temperatures in 2014 had a favorable effect on several vegetable crops, however, crop damage due to increased soil salinity from the third consecutive year of drought was widely reported. One of the more drastic effects of the drought conditions of 2014 was that avocado growers were forced to prune and cut down orchards to reduce leaf canopy to save the trees in response to reduced or no irrigation.

Drought conditions in 2014 resulted in 6,000 fewer acres of field crops planted (23% less acreage compared to 2013). With 2015 predicted to be another dry year, the difficulties in producing agricultural products will increase. However, with over one hundred different crops produced in the county, this diversity provides for stability when growing conditions become demanding.

Click here for more information on the [California Drought](#).

SLO County General Plan Agricultural Element

The Agricultural Element of SLO's General plan, revised in 2010, outlines four main agricultural goals: (1) Support county agricultural production, (2) Conserve agricultural resources, (3) Protect agricultural lands, and (4) Encourage public education and participation.

Impetus for protecting our Agricultural Lands

- The State has found that it is of major importance for the future wellbeing of the people of California.
- There is a finite amount of land with the necessary characteristics that will enable the production of food and fiber, the basic necessities of life.
- Once land is converted to non-agricultural uses, it is very difficult to restore it to agricultural use.
- Agricultural land provides rural character.
- Secondary benefit of retaining other open space resources such as riparian lands, important habitat, and scenic quality.
- Contribution to long-term protection of ecosystems and natural communities.
- Strong commitment to agriculture will reduce pressure to convert productive lands to urban uses.

What issues do we face?

- Agricultural industry is constantly changing.
- Population growth can create pressure for speculative investment in agricultural land for conversion to non-agricultural uses.
- A number of parcels in the Agriculture Land Use category are too small to support most production agriculture uses.
- Estate planning issues and necessity of paying estate taxes act as pressure forcing the sale or parceling of farms.
- Conflict exists between agricultural practices and urban neighbors.
- Water is becoming an increasingly scarce resource.
- While more than half of the agricultural acreage in the county is under [Williamson Act](#) conservation contracts, the terms of some of those contracts may not adequately protect agricultural land.



SLO County Food System Assessment



The goal of conducting a **food system assessment** is to collect data about food production, marketing, distribution, and consumption in order to understand trends in the food system. The SLO Food System Assessment conducted by the Agricultural Sustainability Institute of UC Davis was intended to help us identify how our community is affected by the structure of our food system, including job creation, water, and air quality, diet-related issues, and wellbeing of workers. Understanding these trends and relationships between different sectors can help community leaders and policy makers to work towards solutions (Central Coast Grown, 2013).

This particular assessment examines the strength of SLO's food system and identifies

opportunities and provides recommendations in each goal area selected by the SLO County Food System Coalition: profitability, resiliency, equitability, and health-promoting goals.

Kim Pasciuto, in the first edition of the Central Coast Foodshed Guide (2009), notes "a study of our local foodshed would tell us what we grow and whether we have the capability to feed ourselves and provide food for more distant markets. It would illustrate our distribution system and capability to create value-added products, and pinpoint gaps in the system where we can generate and leverage new sustainable economic opportunity while ensuring food security for all."

SLO County Food System Assessment Findings

Recommendations for creating a **profitable** food system that focuses on overall agricultural production, local food production and sales, and distribution infrastructure for local production and distribution:

- Support programs, such as [Sustainability in Practice Certified](#) that encourage sustainable production/certification programs for local agriculture industries.
- **Farm to School**: find ways to incorporate more SLO County produced agricultural products into school lunches.
- Promote local, direct marketing: Farmers' Markets, **CSAs**, U-picks, and roadside stands.
- Identify regional food processing and distribution capacity.
- Find small producers' impact on local employment or direct sales.
- Encourage local **agri-tourism**.

Recommendations for a **health-promoting** food system that promotes community health, serves fresh and local food in schools, and allows residents to make healthy food choices:

- Encourage physical activity in addition to healthful eating in school aged children.
- Take advantage of the growing interest in Farm to School programs and school gardening.
- Encourage fruit and vegetable consumption through nutrition education and salad bars in all schools.

Recommendations for an **equitable** food system that provides food security and access for residents, provides opportunities for new food producers, and provides fair wages for food system workers:

- Support government food programs ([CalFresh](#), [WIC](#), school meals, [Meals on Wheels](#), etc).
- Support/create mobile markets, community gardens, food banks or community farms.
- Review findings of "[The Hands that Feed Us: Challenges and Opportunities for Workers Along the Food Chain](#)" and select one or two goals for change.
- Review findings of "[Hunger-Free Communities: Characterizing vulnerable populations in SLO County](#)" and collect of the same key indicators within the next five years to monitor progress on community food security.

Recommendations for a **resilient** system in which current food production supports needs of future generations, farmland is preserved, soil and water are conserved, and strong relationships exist among producers, consumers, and communities:

- Increase diversity in crop production.
- Support efficient application and use of agricultural chemicals and management practices that reduce offsite movement into surface and groundwater.
- Promote animal agriculture management systems that reduce the potential for off-site movement of pollutant into surface water.

The full document can be accessed on [Central Coast' Grown's website](#).

Foodshed Organization Directory

Numerous private, governmental, and non-governmental organizations are based in the county and have an interest in issues involving the intersection between food, the environment, and economic, ecological, and social sustainability. Below is a list of the wonderful organizations involved the Central Coast Foodshed. Click each name for access to their webpages! You will find these organizations categorized and described in subsequent pages.

[California Conservation Corps Los Padres Center](#)
[California Regional Environmental Education Community](#)
[Casa Festiva](#)
[Central Coast Agritourism Council](#)
[Central Coast Foodie](#)
[Central Coast Grown](#)
[Central Coast Vineyard Team](#)
[Centrally Grown](#)
[Coastal San Luis Resource Conservation District](#)
[Department of Public Health](#)
[Edible SLO](#)
[Environmental Center of San Luis Obispo County \(ECOSLO\)](#)
[Food Bank Coalition of San Luis Obispo County](#)
[Glean SLO](#)
[Guadalupe-Coyote Resource Conservation District](#)
[HealSLO](#)
[HopeDance](#)
[Land Conservancy of San Luis Obispo](#)
[One Cool Earth](#)
[Rancho El Chorro Outdoor School](#)
[San Luis Obispo County Agricultural Commissioner](#)
[San Luis Obispo County Office of Education](#)
[Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club](#)
[SLO Botanical Garden](#)
[SLO County Farm Bureau](#)
[SLO County Food System Coalition](#)
[SLO Farmers' Market Association](#)
[SLO Grange](#)
[SLO Grown Kids](#)
[SLO Permaculture Guild](#)
[Slow Money SLO](#)
[Solstice Green Directory](#)
[Transitions Mental Health Association and Growing Grounds Farm](#)
[United Cerebral Palsy, The Jewish Community Center, and the Ranch](#)
[University of California Cooperative Extension](#)
[Upper Salinas-Las Tablas Resource Conservation District](#)

Local Foodshed Organizations

Agriculture

[Central Coast Vineyard Team](#) (CCVT)

This organization identifies and promotes the most environmentally-safe and economically sustainable viticulture methods, while maintaining or improving quality and flavor of wine grapes. The Team is a model for wine grape growers and promotes the public trust of stewardship for natural resources.

[SLO County Farm Bureau](#)

The SLO County Farm Bureau's mission is to lead San Luis Obispo County in the protection, promotion, and advocacy of agriculture for the benefit of its members and community. The Farm Bureau strives to protect and improve the ability of farmers and ranchers engaged in production agriculture to provide a reliable supply of food and fiber through responsible stewardship of California's resources. Farm Bureau programs include Young Farmers and Ranchers, Ag in the Classroom and Small Farm Resource programs, and policy committee.

[San Luis Obispo County Agricultural Commissioner](#)

The San Luis Obispo County Agricultural Commissioner serves as the primary local enforcement agent for State agricultural laws and regulations, and is appointed by the SLO County Board of Supervisors. Agricultural Commissioners have a unique and important role in the promotion of agriculture, farm worker health and safety, the protection of environmental resources and the assurance of a fair marketplace.

[SLO Grange](#)

The Grange provides opportunities for individuals and families to develop their highest potential to build stronger communities and relationships through education and fellowship. The Grange facility is used for community functions, including farm cooperative groups, farmers' market vendors, community dancing, public dinners, movies, and breakfasts, as well as a fine place for public comradeship and local member fellowship.

Local Foodshed Organizations

Community

[Central Coast Grown](#)

This organization champions a sustainable local and regional food system to ensure a nourishing, diverse, and abundant supply of food that is resilient, safe, and secure. In addition to working on the development of the SLO City Farm, Central Coast Grown has participated in a number of local projects in the progress towards a sustainable food system. These include the SLO Food System Assessment, Public Land Survey, and Farm to Institution efforts.

[Centrally Grown](#)

Centrally Grown is a neighborhood of sustainably-conscious spaces built on the philosophy that healthy people build healthy communities. It is this simple but profound belief that reconnects the values of the past with the lifestyles of the present. Throughout the Centrally Grown experience, they invite their neighbors to learn alongside us as they continually explore global resources, the environment, the food system, and our daily practices. Centrally Grown has a market, restaurant, and event venue in Cambria.

[Food Bank Coalition of San Luis Obispo County](#)

Working hand in hand with volunteers, donors, corporate sponsors, and non-profit agency partners, its mission is to see that no one in our county goes hungry.

[GleanSLO](#)

Housed under the Food Bank Coalition of SLO County, GleanSLO unites farmers, health advocates, food providers, backyard gardeners and community volunteers to harvest and donate produce gleanings into our local food system. GleanSLO's mission is to rescue nature's bounty for the benefit of our community. Through the act of harvesting and sharing food, they connect and nourish our community to build stronger relationships and a deeper appreciation for our food. Their main goals are to maximize food recovery, increase community awareness of gleaning as a solution to hunger and food waste and grow a community network of collaboration amongst the people of SLO.

Local Foodshed Organizations

Community

[HopeDance](#)

The purpose of HopeDance is simply to report on the outrageous, pioneering, and inspiring activities of outstanding individuals and organizations who are creating a new world regardless of their spiritual tradition or political agenda. They publish material and engage in activities that are necessary in building ecologically sustainable, practical, down-to-earth solutions and a holistic, healthy, and awakened community. Inspiring genuine hope, their intention is to also help connect people to specific projects, individuals, and organizations, so that dialogue, wisdom, and vital action will be the fruitful outcome for the people, plants, animals, and land in SLO County.

[SLO Botanical Garden](#)

The mission of the San Luis Obispo Botanical Garden is to display the diverse plant life of the Mediterranean climate zones of the world and to provide opportunities for education, recreation, conservation, and research. Through its programs and facilities, the Garden fosters an appreciation and understanding of the relationship between people and nature and encourages a sense of stewardship of California's resources.

[SLO County Food System Coalition](#)

This forum represents groups from all sectors of the food system. This group works collaboratively to promote policies and programs that increase food security and social and economic opportunity for food producers, distributors, and consumers in San Luis Obispo County. It is meant to serve as a resource to the community to assist in solution-oriented local food system development programs and projects. See their website for information on their current projects and work groups which include: Living Schoolyard, a Food Hub working group, and a Community Cafe working group.

[SLO Permaculture Guild](#)

As part of a regional initiative to regenerate thriving social, environmental, and economic systems in San Luis Obispo County, SLO Permaculture is dedicated to holding space for community members to share knowledge, build support, and co-create the solutions for an abundant tomorrow. Uniting the guild are the three permaculture ethics: Care for the Earth, Care for People, and Share the Wealth.

Local Foodshed Organizations

Community

[SLO Farmers' Market Association](#)

The San Luis Obispo County Farmers' Market Association (SLOFMA) is a mutual benefit, not-for-profit corporation. As a mutual benefit organization, they serve two groups, providing several market places for family owned and operated farms and fresh quality products directly to consumers like you. Currently, SLOFMA operates five weekly markets throughout the county.

[Slow Money SLO](#)

Slow Money provides a meaningful alternative to our current financial system that has run amok—trillions of dollars a day flowing through capital markets in securities that no one fully understands, contributing to systemic problems of our time. Slow Money prides itself on investing in building an economy based on principles of soil fertility, sense of place, care of the commons, and economic, cultural, and biological diversity.

[Transitions Mental Health Association and Growing Grounds Farms](#)

Transitions Mental Health Association is the parent organization for the Growing Grounds Farm in San Luis Obispo and Santa Maria. Both farms serve as horticultural therapy sites for adults with mental health issues. The San Luis Obispo site grows California natives, Mediterranean perennials, succulents, restoration and mitigation plants, a wide variety of grasses, and a selection of perennial herbs that are often used in local restoration projects, while the Santa Maria site focuses mainly on vegetable production.

[United Cerebral Palsy, The Jewish Community Center, and the Ranch](#)

The Ranch is a joint project of United Cerebral Palsy and the Jewish Community Center. Located on 10-acres, this is a horticultural therapy day program for adults with physical and/or cognitive disabilities.

[University of California Cooperative Extension](#)

California Cooperative Extension is the local link to research, information, and expertise for farming and gardening from the University of California. Instead of teaching students in classrooms, Cooperative Extension advisors and staff work directly with people in San Luis Obispo County. Since 1922, when the San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors officially established a partnership with Cooperative Extension, they have been part of a nationwide network of educators and scientists who use education to help local people solve problems.

Local Foodshed Organizations

Culinary and Tourism

[Casa Festiva](#)

A San Luis Obispo online newsletter exploring food, beverages, restaurants, sustainable agriculture, markets, far-flung adventures, and everything in between.

[Central Coast Foodie](#)

Central Coast Foodie is a field guide to the most delicious, sustainable food and drink options in California's Central Coast. The website contains information about restaurants, farmers markets, wineries, cheese shops, microbreweries, and other specialty food and drink producers.

[EdibleSLO](#)

Each Edible magazine publication celebrates local food culture season-by-season, community-by-community. They focus on the people--farmers, fishers, chefs, vintners, and food artisans who live and work the land. They give voice to local food inspirations, trends, and challenges. They offer rare access to the most influential and interested food and drink enthusiasts, all the while creating an authentic, vivid, enticing, and enriching culinary experience.

Local Foodshed Organizations

Education

[California Regional Environmental Education Community](#) (CREEC Network)

Housed in the San Luis Obispo County Office of Education, this is an educational project whose mission is to develop a communication network that provides educators access to high quality environmental education resources to enhance the environmental literacy of California Students.

[Rancho El Chorro Outdoor School](#)

Housed in the SLO County Office of Education, Rancho El Chorro Outdoor School teaches curriculum developed within California Science Framework guidelines in a rustic, natural setting and encourages students to use all their senses while experiencing nature. Programs range from field trips to multi-day (overnight) camps for elementary school children.

[San Luis Obispo County Office of Education](#)

Environmental Education Coordinator, Teresa Lees, supports garden-based learning programs and trading throughout the county's school districts. See more information on an important milestone in the movement to green school grounds and connecting children with nature: [Living Schoolyards for California](#). Teesa Lees has been working to incorporate this into SLO County school curriculums.

[SLO Grown Kids](#)

This organization seeks to improve the health of the entire community in San Luis Obispo County by teaching students and families life-long, healthful eating habits through garden and farm experiences, providing local produce in school lunches, and nutrition education integrated into core academic curricula. At their school gardens at Pacheco and Monarch Grove Elementary schools, they assist teachers by offering children a hands-on experience to reconnect with their food source and the environment. They help educate children about the origins of their food, offer them the taste of fresh-picked produce, and teach them the value of preserving the local foodshed.

Local Foodshed Organizations

Environment and Natural Resources

[California Conservation Corps Los Padres Center](#)

The Los Padres Center's natural resource projects include trail rehabilitation, trail construction, fire hazard reduction, tree planting, native plant restoration, landscaping, park development, and minor construction. The CCC has local partnerships with the Department of Fish Game, the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, California State Parks, the Morro Bay National Estuary Program, Morro Estuary Greenbelt Alliance, the United States Forest Service, resource conservation districts, community services districts, and local nonprofit land conservancies. These partners, along with the state Natural Resources Agency, Coastal Conservancy, and the Nature Conservancy consistently call on the Los Padres Center to assist with the planning and execution of their resource enhancement projects.

[Central Coast Resource Conservation and Development Council, Inc.](#)

The Central Coast Resource Conservation and Development Council Inc. seeks to promote long-term sustainability of the diverse natural resources of the Central Coast. The council has two major goals: (1) enhance and sustain the good health of watersheds and (2) to improve rural economic conditions consistent with a long-term sustainable economy. To achieve these goals, the organization develops cooperative projects with community partners including Central Coast Grown, the Central Coast Vineyard Team, the University of California Cooperative Extension, and others.

[Coastal San Luis Resource Conservation District](#)

The CSLRCD offers a variety of programs to assist farmers, ranchers, landowners, and other watershed users in improving and protecting soil and water resources. The CSLRCD has a strong relationship with the Natural Resource Conservation Service, helping the local community through technical assistance, funding opportunities, and permit coordination. This partnership has facilitated implementation of hundreds of conservation projects in Coastal San Luis Obispo County.

Other RCD's in SLO County are: the [Guadalupe-Coyote Resource Conservation District](#) and the [Upper Salinas-Las Tablas Resource Conservation District](#).

[Environmental Center of San Luis Obispo County](#) (EcoSLO)

EcoSLO strives to support and create resilient, healthy natural systems and lifestyles in San Luis Obispo County. Programs related to food systems include environmental health education programs both in schools and with farm workers with the goal of reducing pesticide use.

Local Foodshed Organizations

Environment and Natural Resources

[One Cool Earth](#)

One Cool Earth is a non-profit with a mission to create a peaceful, abundant planet with a healthy environment for all through planting gardens, trees, and native plants. At Liberty High School in Paso Robles, One Cool Earth runs a program called Green Works Nursery, where at-risk youth earn science, social studies, and physical education credits while completing projects in the nursery. Schoolwork is split between conceptual development in the classroom and experiential learning in the field. Students there discover the meaning of sustainability in terms of economy, the community, and the environment.

[Land Conservancy of San Luis Obispo](#)

A non-profit group that works with landowners and government agencies to find positive, win-win solutions, The Land Conservancy has permanently protected over 11,000 acres of land in SLO County, maintaining valuable wildlife habitat that is crucial for long-term environmental sustainability. Through voluntary and collaborative measure, The Land Conservancy of San Luis Obispo County works to permanently protect and enhance lands having important scenic, agricultural, habitat, and cultural values for the benefit of people and wildlife.

[Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club](#)

The Sierra Club's Sustainable Consumption policy supports educating the public in making better food choices to reduce the harmful consequences of our diet. In San Luis Obispo County, the Sierra Club has advocated for establishment of a Food Policy Council, adoption of an Organic Conversion Policy, and Local Organic Food Purchase Ordinance based on the Woodbury County, Iowa model, a ban on growing open-pollinated genetically engineered (GE) crops, and the labeling of GE food.

[Solstice Green Directory](#)

Solstice Green Directory is a resource for finding eco-friendly businesses, improving "green" awareness and tips for healthier living.

Local Foodshed Organizations

Health

[Department of Public Health](#)

With a mission to promote, preserve, and protect the health of all San Luis Obispo County residents through disease surveillance, health education, direct services, and health policy development, the Department of Public Health has demonstrated an increasing focus on obesity and diabetes prevention through the promotion of increased consumption of locally grown fruits and vegetables. Because the lower income demographic experiences a higher incidence of these diseases, DPH is also working to improve access to healthy, fresh, locally produced food for low-income residents and participants in food assistance programs throughout the county.

[Heal-SLO](#)

The mission of Heal-SLO is to increase healthful eating and regular physical activity among children in SLO County by working at each level of the socio-ecological model, encouraging policy, behavioral, and environmental changes to promote and support a healthy lifestyle. Heal-SLO has formed a Healthy Communities Workgroup which assists in the planning of events during the month of October, which has been proclaimed Healthy Communities Month by the San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors.

California Polytechnic State University

California Polytechnic State University, the Center for Sustainability's home-base, offers a wide variety of educational opportunities relating to the existing and potential connections between agriculture, food systems, planning, sustainability, design, and health. University resources provide a range of opportunities for collaboration and a constant influx of new student energy and ideas for potential implementation.

[Academic Senate Sustainability Committee](#)

The Sustainability Committee informs and supports the activities of other committees whose scope encompasses environmental responsibility.

[Cal Poly College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Sciences](#)

Cal Poly "CAFES" is the hub for academic interest and projects based on local food production, processing, packaging, distribution and consumption. A host of enterprise projects and "learn by doing" opportunities are housed in this college. As interest in the local food movement transcends disciplines, the college is interested in supporting multi-disciplinary learning centered on this topic.

[CAFES Center for Sustainability](#)

CAFES Center for Sustainability helps the College of Agriculture, Food and Environmental Science (CAFES) achieve its sustainability goals. The Center collaborates with stakeholders from every department within the college and with many from across the University on an array of initiatives for campus and community members.

[Cal Poly Dining Services](#)

Campus Dining is the main provider of food for students on Cal Poly's campus. They have restaurants and markets that provide a wide variety of food items.

[Organic Farm](#)

The Cal Poly Organic Farm provides undergraduate students a place to experience hands-on learning in organic and sustainable farming and gardening practices.

[SLOcavore](#)

Offered by Cal Poly Extended Education, SLOcavore is a series of special workshops, events and public engagements offering an insider's taste of the SLO life. Classes on a wide range of food system topics are designed to help the participant experience the special bounty of the Central Coast through its foods, wines, lifestyle and stewards of the land.

[STRIDE](#)

STRIDE is a multi-disciplinary program housed in the Kinesiology department dedicated to developing research studies and programs to improve the knowledge on the status of health.

[Sustain SLO](#)

SUSTAIN-SLO is a learning initiative at Cal Poly for freshmen that involves integrated learning through projects within the San Luis Obispo County.

Cal Poly Sustainability-Related Clubs



[Empower Poly Coalition](#)

The Empower Poly Coalition is an umbrella club that unites all clubs on campus that have a focus on creating a better sustainable future.

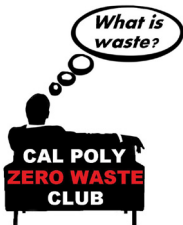
Contact: empowerpolycoalition@gmail.com



[Cal Poly Fair Trade Club](#)

The Fair Trade Club seeks to promote fair and ethical trading practices.

Contact: fairtradeclub@calpoly.edu



[Zero Waste Club](#)

The Zero waste club's goal is to promote recycling and the reduction of waste.

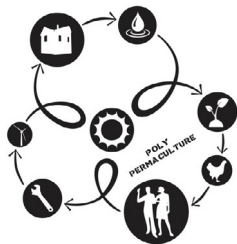
Contact: zero.waste.club@gmail.com



[The Real Food Collaborative](#)

The Real Food Collaborative is a group of students who are passionate about working with, learning about, and improving our food system, specifically at Cal Poly.

Contact: realfoodcalpoly@gmail.com



[Permaculture Club](#)

Poly Permaculture seeks to cultivate ecological consciousness and to create resilient agriculture systems.

Contact: polypermaculture@gmail.com



[Poly Ponics Club](#)

Poly Ponics promotes and educates students and community members about aquaponics and maintains Cal Poly's aquaponic garden.

Contact: polyponics@gmail.com

State and National Food System Resources

Many Food System Resources are available online, and we have included a few very useful and educational ones for your access!

The [California Rare Fruit Growers](#) seek to encourage and foster public and scientific interest, research, education in and the preservation of rare fruit plants that have edible seeds, fruits, leaves, stems or roots and are not commonly grown commercially for the benefit of the public.

The [Climate Action Network](#) is a worldwide network of over 850 non-governmental organizations in more than 90 countries working to promote government, private sector and individual action to limit human-induced climate change to ecologically sustainable levels. See the [California Climate Action Network](#) for our state information.

[Community Alliance with Family Farmers](#) (CAFF) strives to build a movement of rural and urban people to foster family-scale agriculture that cares for the land, sustains local economies and promotes social justice.

The [Ecological Farming Association](#) is a non-profit educational organization that has facilitated the inception and continued development of an ecologically sustainable and just food and farming system.

The [Farm to School Network](#) is an information, advocacy, and networking hub for communities working to bring local food sourcing and food and agriculture education into school systems and preschools. They are pleased to announce the introduction of the [Farm to School Act of 2015](#) into Congress. Navigate to their page for more information.

The [Lexicon of Sustainability](#) has created a series of Information Artworks on Food and Farming that define basic foodshed terms and concepts! Learn about biodiversity, food miles, permaculture, sustainability, and more!

The [National Initiative for Sustainable Agriculture](#) aims to improve sustainability of American Agriculture. It is a producer-led program working to develop sustainability initiatives that meet value chain expectations with regard to sustainable agricultural production.

The [National Organic Program](#) seeks to ensure the integrity of USDA **organic** products in the U.S. and throughout the world.

State and National Food System Resources

The [National Sustainable Agriculture Information Service](#) is a program developed and managed by the National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT). NCAT manages a series of projects that promote self-reliance and sustainable lifestyles through wise use of appropriate technology. One of these projects is ATTRA, the Appropriate Technology Transfer for Rural Areas. See the ATTRA webpage for more information.

The [Permaculture Research Institute of the USA](#)'s goal is to work with individuals and communities worldwide to expand the knowledge and practice of integrated, sustainable agriculture and culture using the whole-systems approach of permaculture design.

[Roots of Change](#) delivers roadmaps to victory for a healthy, equitable and resilient food system for the people, businesses and planet it nourishes. They build social, political, and economic capital to catalyze a food movement that will change the models, markets, and policies of the food system.

The UC [Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program](#) (SAREP) is a statewide program created through grass roots efforts of organizations and individuals concerned about the environmental impacts of agriculture, the health of rural communities, and the profitability of family farming operations in California.

The [USDA](#) provides leadership on food, agriculture, natural resources, rural development, nutrition, and related issues based on sound public policy, the best available science, and efficient management.

Glossary

Access: Ability to reach

Agri-tourism: "Agricultural tourism" is a commercial enterprise at a working farm, ranch or agricultural plant conducted for the enjoyment or education of visitors and that generates supplemental income for the owner.

Consumer: Individual, commercial, or institutional entity that purchases food for consumption

CSA: Community-supported agriculture

Diet-related health issues: Examples are obesity, diabetes, and cancer

Eating in season: Eating foods that are produced during their understood "growing season"

Equitable: Abundant and available to all

Farm to Institution/Farm to School: Program 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 desert: Urban neighborhood or rural town without ready access to fresh, healthy, and affordable food

Food hubs: 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 literacy: Understanding the impact of your food choices on your health, the environment and our community

Food miles: The distance food travels before reaching consumers

Food processor or distributor: Often the middle-man between producers and consumers or producers and retailers; provide food products to restaurants, schools, hospitals, etc.

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

Food retailer: Grocery stores, farm stands, farmers' markets, restaurants, and CSA's; entities that sell prepared or unprepared food products directly to consumers

Glossary

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

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

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

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

Organic: Indicates that the food or other agricultural product has been produced through approved methods that integrate cultural, biological, and mechanical practices that foster cycling of resources, promote ecological balance, and conserve diversity

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

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

Williamson Act: Enables local governments to enter into contracts with private landowners for the purpose of restricting specific parcels of land to agricultural or related open space use

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