

# Food System Policy Snapshot

Health, Access, Environment and Economy  
SLO County Food System Coalition  
May 2021

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# Acknowledgements

## Project Managers

**Ellen Burke**  
 SLO County Food System Coalition Steering Committee  
 Landscape Architecture Department, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo

**Marilyn Tseng**  
 Department of Kinesiology and Public Health, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo

**Christine Nelson**  
 SLO County Food System Coalition Steering Committee  
 Department of Kinesiology and Public Health, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo

Data Analysis: Kylie Hensley, SLO County Food System Coalition Steering Committee  
 Transcription and Analysis: Julia Armanino, Bridget Mancillas, Ian Moore, Sinead Swayne  
 Graphic Design: Vanessa Nunez

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# Introduction

This booklet documents the findings from Four Roundtables for the Future, a discussion of policy held on February 9, 2021 by the SLO County Food System Coalition. Attended by 25 coalition members representing diverse sectors of the food system (below) the roundtables asked coalition members to consider policy in four areas: Economy, Health, Equity and Access, and Environment. Participants described existing issues in the local food system, existing policies that influence work on those issues, and the need for new policies or modifications to existing policies. Following the meeting, two analyses were carried out on the data. The first was undertaken by researchers and students at Cal Poly as part of the Strategic Initiative Research Fund project 'Eating in the Anthropocene: Towards a Blueprint for a Holistic Food Policy.' The second was undertaken by members of the Food System Coalition steering committee to identify patterns and priorities in the policy discussion, and that analysis is documented here. The intent of the document is to inform future work on food systems policy at the local and state level.



key:

### education professionals

- Nutrition Education (5)
- Garden Education (2)
- Sustainability Education (2)
- Health Education (1)
- Farm Education (1)

### public employees

- Public Health (3)
- Health Policy (1)
- Government (1)
- City Planning (1)
- Waste Management (1)

### public-service workers

- Non-profit Organization (3)
- Farm Bureau (1)
- other**
- Food Systems Consultant (1)
- Farmer (1)
- Industrial Engineering (1)

**total: 25 members**

# Existing Policies Snapshot

Participants were asked what policies currently exist that affect their work, or work within the topic sphere. The answers are listed here, along with a brief summary of the policy scope. This is not a comprehensive list of all food systems policies, but rather a snapshot of policies that are relevant to food systems work in the county.

## national

- Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) - FDA**  
 The FSMA focuses on creating a safe U.S. food supply chain by aiming to prevent food contamination.
- Immigration Policies (eg. Public Charge Rule)**  
 These policies affect food systems hiring practices, on-farm labor, and access to social services by food systems workers
- Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)**  
 Through the WIC, federal grants are given to states to support nutrition access for women, infants, and children.
- Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers Protection Act (MSPA)**  
 The MSPA protects migrant and seasonal workers by implementing beneficial employment standards.
- National School Lunch Program (NSLP)**  
 The NSLP influences school lunch menus and purchasing practices for public and private schools.
- Nutrition Standards for School Meals**  
 These standards ensure school meals meet the American Dietary Guidelines and are nutritionally balanced.
- Farm Bill**  
 The bill protects and supports farmers, ranchers, and forest managers through programs and insurances.

## state

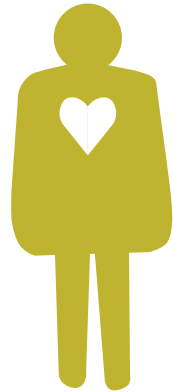
- Food Safety Regulations - Dept. of Health**  
 These regulations protect and promote public health by ensuring the safety and quality of the food supply.
- California Certified Organic Farmers (CCOF)**  
 The CCOF advances organic agriculture through organic certification, education, support, and promotion.
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and CalFresh**  
 This program issues monthly electronic benefits that can be used to purchase food at most markets.
- California Division of Occupational Safety and Health Farmworkers Rights**  
 These rights (concerning safety and health) are mandatory for all employers to provide.
- State Meal Program (school lunches)**  
 A program that provides money to school districts that financially aid children in need with school meals.
- California Thursdays (school lunches)**  
 A collaborative effort to serve healthy, freshly prepared from state-grown food, and reimbursable school meals.
- Cottage Food Bill AB626**  
 This act makes it legal to create a micro-enterprise restaurant operation from people's homes.
- California Homemade Food Act AB 1616**  
 This act requires cottage food to follow requirements related to labeling, sales, etc.
- State Pesticide Laws**  
 By regulating pest management, these laws aim to protect human health and the environment.
- Good Samaritan Law**  
 This law gives immunity from civil damages to a person who, in good faith, renders emergency care.
- Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA)**  
 The SGMA requires sustainability plans from local agencies for prioritized groundwater basins.
- Regional Water Quality Control Board**  
 The board aims to preserve, enhance, and restore the quality of the state's water resources and ensure its proper allocation and efficient use.
- Williamson Act**  
 This act enables the restriction of specific parcels of land to agricultural or related open space use through contracts with private landowners.

## local

- Farmers Markets governance**  
 The Farmers' Market Associations in San Luis Obispo County serve family owned and operated farms by linking their products directly with consumers.
- SNAP acceptance at Farmers Markets**  
 The SLOFMA is rolling out plans to promote and accept SNAP, or CalFresh, at their farmers markets.
- SLO City Climate Action Plan**  
 The plan addresses achieving carbon neutrality, in addition to supporting a more equitable and resilient community.
- County General Plan**  
 The plan is the guiding document to all municipal service improvements and land use proposals in the county.
- Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA)**  
 Local agencies are developing a Groundwater Sustainability Plan to better manage groundwater basins in the county, as per the requirements of the SGMA.
- Agricultural Worker Housing Ordinance**  
 The ordinance incentivizes and removes barriers to developing farmworker housing.

# Policy and Program Needs

Participants were asked to propose new policies needed or changes to existing policies that would support more effective work in the areas of health, economy, sustainability and equity in the San Luis Obispo County food system. The answers are listed here as a snapshot of policies that could be transformative to food systems work in the county.



## health

- Policies to **protect** farm worker and food chain worker health - minimum wage, benefits
- Nutrition & food preparation **education**
- **Multi-lingual** nutrition and food preparation literature
- Equal access and opportunities to **education/training for children** of food system workers
- Inclusion of **human health considerations** in County and City planning documents (e.g., CAP).



## environment

- **Sustainable farming practices** in legacy institutions like FFA and Cal Poly ag programs
- **Reducing barriers/cost** of land access for young farmers;
- **Divert food waste** to feed people
- **Education campaign** for consumers about value of local food
- **Incentives and programs** for smaller scale farmers
- **Advocacy** for sustainable farmers
- Expiration dates **policy change** and/or consumer **education campaign**



## economy

- **Education campaign** for consumers about value of local food
- Institutional local **food buying programs** (hospitals)
- **Agri-tourism program** (incentives, training, development)
- Ag value added **development program**
- Establish **farmer cooperative**
- Establish **food hub**

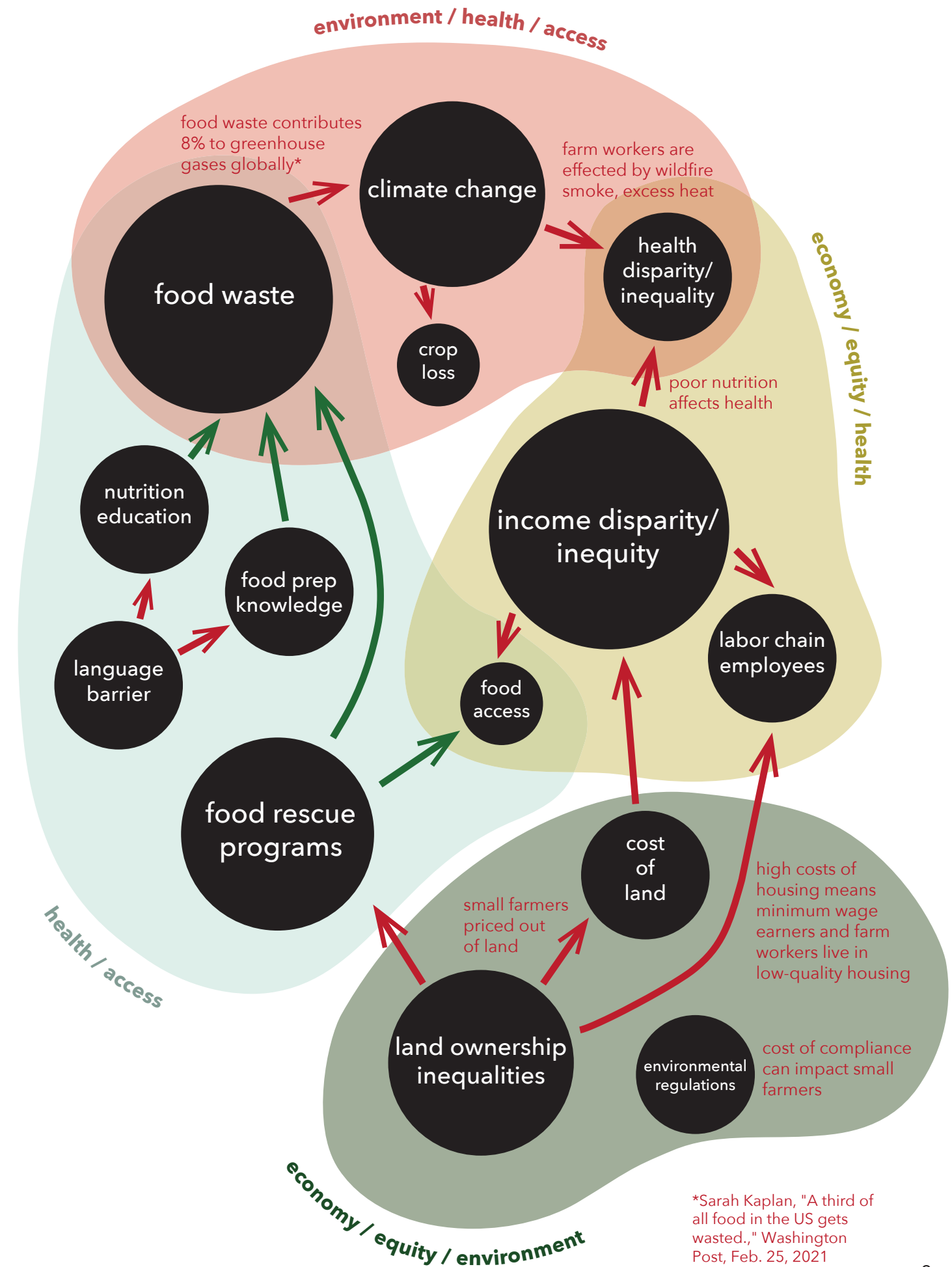


## access and equity

- **Streamline** benefit application process and organize to **minimize barriers** (e.g., events on weekends with integrated enrollment for multiple programs)
- **Food waste diversion programs**
- **Changes to food handling/safety codes** to increase viability of food waste diversion
- **Support living wage** for food system workers
- Policy that changes to benefit programs have to be **communicated more effectively**
- **Flowchart** of different benefit programs as handout for service providers

# Policy Linkages

An analysis of the roundtable policy discussions revealed ways in which issues overlap and connect, diagrammed here. Understanding these connections can help prioritize policy areas that may influence outcomes across the food system. In this analysis, land cost, livable wages for food system workers and food rescue are pivotal areas for work, along with nutrition education, climate change issues, and removing barriers for small farmers.



\*Sarah Kaplan, "A third of all food in the US gets wasted.," Washington Post, Feb. 25, 2021

## Conclusion

The Food Policy Working Group aims to develop and implement a food policy to promote a “sustainable, equitable, profitable, resilient, and health-promoting food system in the County of San Luis Obispo” from these findings, as well utilizing existing local reports from the SLO County Food System Coalition. This working group aims to:

- review existing, regional plan policies, guides, and recommended strategies related to food policy
- build partnerships with local government officials and key stakeholders within the SLO County food system
- develop a food policy for San Luis Obispo County to address the needs in the community

If you are interested to getting involved or for more information, please email: [slofoodsystem@gmail.com](mailto:slofoodsystem@gmail.com) or visit <http://www.slofoodsystem.org>