

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



## Paradox of Plenty:

### A Community Roadmap for Overcoming Hunger in San Luis Obispo County

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Food Bank Coalition of San Luis Obispo County  
SLO County Food System Coalition



September, 2012

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **Access to Sufficient Food**

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

### **Nutrition & Hunger**

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

### **Local Food System**

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

### **Root Causes of Hunger**

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

### **SLO County Food System Coalition**

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

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

To view the full plan, please visit the Food Bank's website, [slofoodbank.org/](http://slofoodbank.org/).

## GOALS & OBJECTIVES

### 1. ACCESS TO SUFFICIENT FOOD

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

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

### 2. NUTRITION & HUNGER

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

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

### 3. LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM

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

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

### 4. ROOT CAUSES OF HUNGER

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

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

### 5. SLO COUNTY FOOD SYSTEM COALITION

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

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

This plan is a project of the Food Bank Coalition of San Luis Obispo County, with support from the SLO County Food System Coalition. A USDA Hunger-Free Communities Grant, awarded to the Food Bank Coalition of San Luis Obispo County, provided funding for this project.

Please turn the page and sign our Declaration of Support

# Declaration of Support

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

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

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

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

Name: _____	Representation (are you signing on...)
Organization: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> As an individual <input type="checkbox"/> For your organization
Title/Position: _____	Phone: _____
Address: _____	Email: _____
City/ State/ Zip: _____	
I/ This organization will commit to the following action(s) to help achieve the goals of the Hunger-Free Community plan (optional):	
_____	
_____	
_____	

**Thank you for your support!**

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

Or emailed to Carl Hansen: [chansen@slofoodbank.org](mailto:chansen@slofoodbank.org)

