

University of California Irvine  
Real Food Series 2009 Community Dinner  
Thursday, April 16, 2009  
Mesa Commons Silverado Room

Community Dinner Panel and Roundtable Discussion Notes  
Challenges, Opportunities, Visions, Ideas, and Next Steps Toward a Sustainable UC Irvine Food System  
Compiled by Laura Ashmore, Alexandre Colavin, and Alexandra Nagy  
Real Food Challenge at UC Irvine

**Major Questions of Thought**

- What are the major challenges to a sustainable food system?
  - Creating sustainable livelihoods in Orange County and Southern California
  - Creating agroecosystems and large-scale restoration projects
  - global food system - people are undernourished while others are getting too much food
  - Supply and demand - can the local area supply sustainable food to large institutions and will members within an institution
- How do we ensure food security?
- What is the cost to sustainable food?
- What changes can we make in our daily lives?
- How do we create a sustainable food system?
- Are the foods available for us going to be available for future generations?
- Are farmers taking care of livestock properly?
- How do we make suburban sprawl more food sustainable?
- How do we produce sustainable food in an affordable manner?
- How do we weigh the costs and benefits about sustainable food products?
- Is it fair to ask poorer countries to be more sustainable?
- How do we manage a large public garden in a safe way?
- Will the University of California system donate money to sustainability issues?
- Will there be academic majors in this area?
- Where do we go next? How do we move forward from our current way of eating?
- We are so dependent on convenience, how can we educate people?
- How do we create community in suburbia?
  - Other countries are being more sustainable than the US
- What should we think of genetically-modified organisms with respect to security and sustainability?
  - some of the new technologies towards drought-resistant crops will be important for future climate change
  - the issue is WHO will control the seeds
  - genetic modification is the greatest threat to food security; GMO crops can infect neighboring fields

**Major Challenges**

- Everyone dislikes something (i.e. smell, durability) about recyclable utensils -- culture shift needed
- Getting people to care/want to be sustainable
- How do we make healthy food available to all levels of income?
- How do we include all groups in this food sustainability movement?
- How do we educate about the health risks of unsustainable food?
- How do we meet supply & demand?
- HOA rules.
- Organic certification is expensive
- Candice Carr Kelman will not be at UCI.

- Transparency and accessibility of a variety of foods
- Water.
- Funding.
- Challenges for using local farms
  - space
  - interest
  - educational incentives
  - UCI Dining
  - growing what students want

### **Visions and Thoughts**

- We need a restructuring of our Farm Bill and all financially-based governance systems towards how our food is produced and distributed. It is unfair of starting college students to pay for externalities connected to food like environmental degradation, social injustice, unfair labor practices
- education is a team-effort
- we vote with our food dollars and with our interactions with each other
- everybody connects with food
- even though food is not always a topic of high politics, food production connects to a lot of current issues; recent panting of an organic garden at the White House is attracting attention to the sustainable food movement
- pair humans with trees, animals, grains, and crops is key to a sustainable food system
- We need to maximize sustainability by increasing demand
- Food gardens are easier to maintain than grass
- Planting gardens and native plants saves resources
- Farming is a local issue
- We need a less meat-based diet; there are environmental damages and inefficient use of resources
- Consider what is going into the animal because we eat them. Things going into the animal may include antibiotics, steroids, plastic, food packaging. Why do we feed animals unnatural things when we could use it feed humans?
- The UC Sustainability Policies do not contain mandates about food. Perhaps this will change. It's an unfunded mandate.
- Use waste to create energy.
- People are becoming more conscious about produce labeling. Mark source on food products.
- Community gardens as housing amenities. What are the liabilities?
- Community gardens are happening and will become commonplace -Trans-National Corporation
- Take advantage of the wealth in OC

### **In 20 years...**

- on-campus organic farm or small garden for education, nourishment, and entrepreneurial innovation
  - Too small to feed the commons?
  - Utilize as an educational tool
  - Create a foundation for research
- newly-created student-alliance and farm stand
- local and abroad food policy internships and research
- UC system devoting money towards sustainability, including food
- using water more efficiently towards food production
  - price water based upon scarcity
- using recyclable, reusable, compost-able materials
- building compost programs
- UCI members bringing their own utensils
- child education programs in the community

- using financial mechanisms like The Green Initiative Fund (TGIF)
- getting institutional and educational backing
- using local farms to help feed the campus
- Change mindset of people who don't think about the earth
- Integration of agriculture and food production
- Campus composting system (with Waste Management?)

### **What the UCI & local community members pledged @ the Community Dinner toward a sustainable food system**

- Grow our own food.
- Share grown food within the community
- Go to the farmers' market
- get a garden plot
- adopt diets that are better for the environment
- help spread the word!
- Help mobilize a student/community movement
- look into inner city gardens
- Working with elementary school kids to teach them about gardening and positive learning experiences
- Learn about food security issues
- Encourage smaller communities to take part - think outside the box and outreach to communities we may not initially think of approaching
- More education about food choices and nutrition
- Get involved in clubs and organizations around food systems.
- Create pressure through neighborhood organizations, changing HOA laws, bringing communities together, creating gardens, and creating demand.
- People pay taxes so government could support themselves. Become a part of government to help create more good. Engage in whatever channel you are passionate about to create change. Talk to city councils and environmental committees.
- Collaborate with Food Policy Councils (city, counties, regions)
- Live & eat by example and embody sustainability and healthy habits.
- Go to The Ecology Center and South Coast Farms. Educate, volunteer, and teach thyself on food-related organizations.
- Sustainable Food research
- Make sustainable food part of life (daily chores)
- Intern with organizations like Food First
- Connect academics, community-engagement, and problem-solving
- On a community level, food production can be made from vacant/unused grasses/lawns

### **Next Steps for UCI & the local community toward a sustainable food system**

- Restore diversity and the value of farmers by fiscally investing in diversified, organic, and local farmers in Orange County and Southern California
- balance the number of undernourished and nourished within the campus and local communities
- feed people while sustaining the environment
- visit local farmers' markets
- UCI has immense purchasing power. Use it towards sustainable options.
- Bring the community aspect back to food - eat as a family, shop at farmers' markets, start a food cooperative
- improve nutrition; it will reduce health care costs, bring food to the people who are in risk of going hungry and ill
- retrofit our campus and local cities
  - i.e. plant fruit trees and gardens in open spaces and lawns