

AB 1009 (Bloom) Farm to School Food Hubs Fact Sheet

BACKGROUND

Food hub support has been an initiative of the USDA since 2009. Recognizing the popularization of the term to embrace many functions, the USDA more specifically defines it in this way: “A regional food hub is 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.”

There are an estimated 250 food hubs throughout the United States, concentrated mostly along the eastern seaboard (primarily in New York and the District of Columbia); California currently has around 15, which operate at different scales, and are more concentrated in Northern California.

Food hubs offer a regionalized approach to food distribution that has proven to be a successful model for promoting direct farm and ranch sales to local communities. In two national U.S. studies examining the relationship between food environment and county-level health outcomes, researchers found that the level of direct farm sales was associated with lower levels of mortality, obesity, and diabetes.

PROBLEM

The COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically revealed shortcomings in the U.S. food system, stripping the façade of a seemingly robust supply chain and revealing a system ill-equipped to handle disruption to the complex network of supply and demand. This pandemic has resulted in the unpredictability and loss of markets, which has had a disproportionate impact on California’s small-scale farmers; particularly historically underserved farmers of color.

Food system reform increasingly calls for more regionalized food systems, which in turn provide greater resilience in times of natural or public health disaster. During the pandemic, those areas that had community facing food hubs were able to pivot quickly toward redirecting their supply chains to areas of need, such as

The Common Market, a non-profit that provided support for local farmers and emergency food relief in Philadelphia, New York, Georgia, and Texas.

California is the number one agricultural producer in the country, in terms of dollar volume, with a farm economy valued at \$50 billion 2018. Our agricultural economy is comprised of approximately 81,700 farms, employing 800,000 people in all stages of the farming and ranching economy, and produces over 400 crops.

While California leads the nation in agricultural production, we lag behind in the development of regionalized food systems, which require capital investment in aggregation, and distribution infrastructure, such as food hubs, needed to increase purchasing of local, climate friendly, and equitably produced food. This is a particularly important intermediary supply chain support for schools and other large-scale institutions.

SUMMARY

Public funding for food hubs is necessary in order to build back a better food system economy, support local farming economies, accelerate climate adaptation and resilience, and re-employ food system workers. School districts and other public institutions have been endeavoring to leverage their significant food purchasing budgets toward these positive public values; this would provide the critical missing piece to support them in those efforts, in addition to creating jobs, and spurring local economic development.

AB 1009 establishes the Farm to School Food Hub Program within the Office of Farm to Fork in the Department of Food and Agriculture and proposes funding for a regional pilot program to establish three farm to school food hubs in northern, central, and southern California.

AB 1009 serves as an opportunity to support disadvantaged communities as they recover from the drastic economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The farm to school food hubs created under AB 1009 will prioritize aggregation and distribution from small to mid-scale farms and ranches that are cooperatively owned, or

owned by socially disadvantaged, beginning, limited resource, veteran, minority, or disabled farmers and ranchers to school districts and other public institutions.

AB 1009 will increase purchasing of local, climate-friendly, and equitably produced food; build a better food system economy; support the local farming economy; accelerate climate adaptation and resilience; and employ food system workers. Additionally, these food hubs will serve as a model for the rest of the state to encourage investment in value aligned aggregation and distribution infrastructure.

SUPPORT

- 50 Acterra Action for a Healthy Planet
- Acta Non Verba: Youth Urban Farm Project
- Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments
- Asian Business Institute and Resource Center (ABIRC)
- California Association of Wheat Growers
- Californians for Pesticide Reform
- Cattani Farms
- Center for Ecoliteracy
- Center for Food Safety
- Center for Land-Based Learning
- Center for Urban Education about Sustainable Agriculture (CUESA)
- Ceres Community Project
- Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF)
- Cultiva la Salud
- Dean’s Greens
- Duende Consulting, LLC
- Everyone’s Harvest
- Farm to Fight Hunger
- Farm2People
- Friends of Public Banking Santa Rosa
- Friends of the Earth U.S.
- Good Eggs
- Greenbelt Alliance
- Grow Abundant Gardens
- Humboldt County Visitors Bureau
- I Love to Glean – South County Food Hub
- Institute for the Study of Societal Issues, UC Berkeley
- Los Angeles County Office of Education
- Los Angeles Food Policy Council
- Los Angeles Regional Food Bank
- Multinational Exchange for Sustainable Agriculture
- Napa Farmers Market
- Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC)
- North American Climate, Conservation and Environment (NACCE)
- North Coast Growers Association
- Peaceful Valley Farmers Market
- Pesticide Action Network
- Pie Ranch
- Resource Conservation District San Diego
- Riverside Food Cooperative, Inc.
- Riverside Unified School District – Riverside Food Hub
- Roots of Change
- San Luis Coastal Unified School District
- School Garden Network
- Sebastopol Farmers Market
- Sierra Harvest
- Sierra Orchards
- Slow Food California
- Slow Food Sonoma County North
- Slow Food South Bay
- Slow Money SLO
- So Cal Farm Network
- Solutions For Urban Agriculture
- Sonoma Wine Shop & La Bodega
- Sustainable Agriculture Education
- Sustainable Conservation
- Sustainable Economic Enterprises of Los Angeles (SEE-LA)
- Tahoe Food Hub
- The Bullock Garden Project, Inc.
- Tomkat Ranch
- Urban Tilth
- West Contra Costa Unified School District
- 63 Farmers

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