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Introduction

The Real Food Challenge encourages colleges and universities to shift 20% of their campus food purchases to local, environmentally friendly, socially just and humanely raised food within a decade. Most college students nationwide say they are willing to pay more for local, humane and ecologically sound produced food (Building Local Food Programs). Given the example of a \$3.50 salad, the majority (at least 58%) are willing to pay \$0.25 more- which is a 7% increase - for all the following sustainability criteria: organic, local, small farm, living wage, and sustainably raised (NRI). Sixty-nine percent said they'd pay the premium for local produce. This information, and the evident sentiments from students at Western Washington University, suggests that the demand for sustainable food on campuses will continue to increase in the coming years. Our intention within this report and throughout our presentation is to portray statistical data to Western Washington University students, faculty and members of dining services regarding where dining services currently stands regarding their sustainable, "Real" food purchases. In addition, we hope to provide alternative sustainable options from which Dining Services can purchase food in the future.

Methodology

There is an abundance of resources regarding sustainable foods. Most of these resources can be found online, but most of the knowledge we have of “real food” comes from books, newspapers, magazines, pamphlets, and just by word of mouth (especially from farmers or community members who work with sustainable food on a daily basis). However, our most prominent resource for judging the sustainability of the foods purchased by dining services came from the guidelines offered by the Real Food Challenge Organization. The Real Food Challenge explains "real" food in the following manner:

“Real food is food that is ethically produced, with fair treatment of workers, equitable relationships with farmers (locally and abroad), and humanely treated animals. It is food that is environmentally sustainable, grown without chemical pesticides, large-scale mono-cropping, or huge carbon footprints. Real food is food that is healthy, tastes good, builds community, and has the potential to inspire broad-scale social change” (What is Real Food?, 2008).

Research

For much of our online research, we used the Real Food Challenge website. The website contains an abundant supply of resources to learn about what sustainable, “real” food really is. It also provides information on how to use the “Real Food Calculator”, which is a piece of technology designed to assess the sustainability of the different foods listed on schools' invoices. The website also includes tools and resources to help link universities together in an effort to promote sustainable food purchasing nationwide. The Real Food

Challenge website was helpful for all of our acquiring an initial understanding about the calculator and the student movement; but to be able to correctly sort and identify the food, we had to research a number of food corporations as well as the third party certification groups. Some of the corporations we researched included Cargill, Sysco, and Farmland Foods. The third party certification groups that we researched in more detail included The Rainforest Alliance, USDA Organic certification, Food Alliance certification, and The Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch.

Much of our personal information and inspiration regarding sustainable food comes from the works of Michael Pollan, who also serves as an advisor for the Real Food Challenge national student committee. His books- "The Omnivore's Dilemma," "Food Rules," and "In Defense of Food"- discuss the American industrial food system in depth and have influenced our thinking about what "real" food actually is. Information from the local food co-op in Bellingham has also given us insight into what sustainable food looks like and how it is produced.

Analysis

We are currently limited to using third party certification groups to verify the sustainability of food purchased, due to a lack of transparency from companies. The main third party certifications we are using are Food Alliance, USDA Organic, and Fair Trade. These are the most established and verifiable certifications. The foods and beverages purchased by Western that are certified by USDA Organic, Food Alliance and Fair Trade, and are labeled as such in the invoices, are all counted as either "Real Food" A or B. The other third party group we are using is Seafood Watch, which is an ocean

conservation program. They recommend ocean friendly seafood; seafood that is abundant, well managed and caught or farmed in an environmentally friendly ways. Although we commend this effort by Dining Services to promote sustainable seafood, we also wish to stress that Seafood Watch is a *program* rather than a *certification* and that the sustainability of the actual seafood purchased is not verifiable through the invoices. Alternatively, if the company(ies) from which Western Dining Services purchased seafood could be traced and prove to have a third party certification, the seafood could then be defined as “Real.”

Food Alliance "certifies farms, ranches and food handlers for sustainable agriculture and facility management practices". The standards for Food Alliance certified farms and ranches are providing fair and safe working conditions, ensuring health and humane treatment of animals, non use of hormones or non-therapeutic antibiotics, and no genetically modified crops or livestock. Food Alliance also requires farms and ranches to reduce pesticide use and toxicity, protect soil and water quality, protect and enhance wildlife habitat, and continuously improve management practices (Food Alliance).

USDA Organic is a US Government certification party that prohibits use of synthetic pesticides and chemical fertilizers while growing the food. It also prohibits the use of genetically modified foods, ionizing radiation and sewage sludge in organic production handling. To be certified by USDA Organic or Food Alliance, farms and foods must go through actual third party certification processes and we are able to verify this by the labeling in the invoices.

Program Development

To determine the amount of “real” versus conventional food in campus dining halls, we used the Real Food Calculator. The calculator is formatted on an excel spreadsheet, which contains different categories into which each food item falls. The food is separated into categories of real food ”A”, real food ”B”, and conventional food. To be considered real food, the item must meet certain criteria as determined by one or more third party certifications. Examples of third party certification groups include The Rain Forest Alliance and The Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch Program. These third party certification groups determine whether or not a food is ecologically sound, humanely produced, fairly traded, or local. If the food does not meet any of the third party certification standards, then it is conventional and therefore not real food. Food is considered real food “B” when it meets one of these criteria, and is real food “A” when it meets two or more.

To calculate the amount of real versus conventional food in the WWU dining halls, we analyzed invoices from Western’s Dining Services that contain all of the foods purchased. We scan through each page of each invoice to see if any of the foods are locally grown or third party certified. After determining which foods are ‘Real’ and which are conventional, we input the data into the excel spreadsheet calculator. To do this we separated out each food item and specified the amount of money that was spent buying it within the respective category outlined on the Real Food spread sheet. For example, if we found organic tomatoes from somewhere in South America, that food would meet the “ecologically sound” category (organic), so the money spent would be

put into the “ecologically sound” column of the calculator, but not into the local, and not necessarily in the humane. If the item in question can only be identified in one category, it is considered “Real Food B”. Whereas if we found beef purchased from Cargill, that amount of money spent would be placed under the “conventional” column.

We have participated in numerous meetings and phone conferences, both independently and as a group. Two of our most notable contacts in helping us decipher invoices and learn how to use the Real Food Calculator include Devin Ahearn, the National Programs Coordinator of “The Food Project.” Along with Devin, Kaitlyn Hale, the Northwest Real Food Challenge Coordinator was a beneficial source in increasing our knowledge regarding the use of the calculator and connecting us with other universities. From Western's Dining Services, Charlie Kizzrie and Brandon Artino were both useful sources in allowing us to physically attain invoices and collect information regarding Sodexo’s purchasing record for the months of October through November. We chose to analyze these specific months because they contained the most up-to-date information available. Also, we could only finish two months worth of invoices because it was such an intense amount of work to do in a relatively short amount of time. Scanning dozens of invoices for each line item takes literally hours at a time to sort through and decipher.

Case Studies

University of California at Irvine:

University of California at Irvine is the main case study that we are basing our work on.

Hai Vo and Kelsey Meagher piloted the Real Food Challenge at Irvine and researched the amount of "real food" purchased by UCI. We have been in contact with Hai Vo and have

reviewed their research proposal, findings and suggestions. Their research shows that UCI purchased 9.58% Real Food B and 0% Real Food A. Some of UCI's Real Food Challenge accomplishments are an organic salad bar in their Mesa Commons, fair trade coffee at their Starbucks and Cyber A Cafe, and organic eggs in all dining locations.

The University of California, including its 10 UC campuses and five UC medical centers and the Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, has established a comprehensive sustainable food service policy. They have agreed to purchase at least 20 percent sustainable foods by 2020, based on third party certifications that qualify different aspects of the food, including its carbon footprint and whether or not the worker was paid a fair wage or (in the case of animal products) if it was produced humanely. They also agreed to have at least one dining facility per UC location be certified as a green business, based on city or county certifications or through the Green Seal or Green Restaurant Association program. Each campus must provide students with educational materials explaining issues related to sustainable food products. Campus departments, organizations, groups and individuals must engage in activities with surrounding community in support of common sustainability goals (UC Article).

Iowa State University:

Iowa State University is another school that has taken on the Real Food Challenge. They are a public school with a food budget of \$6,000,000. They are a self-operated dining service and are part of a farm-to-college program, which includes a student run farm/garden that provides some produce for the university dining halls. In addition, University of California Davis and Santa Cruz both have farms that produce for

Community Supported Agriculture programs.

Conclusion

The results of our calculations came out to be 14 percent real food overall as our baseline percentage, comprised of 11% real food “B” and 3% real food “A”. In the real food B category, we have food products such as food alliance certified shepherds grain, organic soy milk, and any produce that was not local but still had the food alliance or USDA organic certification. The real food “A” category is solely comprised of produce from Twin sisters mushroom’s and Growing Washington. This produce meets all of the criteria for real food.

Of the total purchases, none of the baked goods or meat was real food. Only 2 percent of the beverages and grocery items were considered real food. Twenty-nine percent of the produce purchased was real food, and of that percentage, 14 percent was real food “A”. Seventy-one percent of dairy purchases were calculated to be real food “B”, because they fall into the local category. Edaleen Dairy products fall into this category, but Edaleen uses high fructose corn syrup in many of its products, and the dairy is considered to be a factory farm. Edaleen products would not be considered “ecologically sound” because they cause deterioration of soil from their confined feedlots, and their cows are not free range. Also, the cows consume non-organic corn feed, when by nature they are grass-eaters. Feeding them grain makes them sick, so antibiotics become a necessity in order to keep the cows alive. So, although the calculator includes Edaleen products in the real food “B” category, by our own standards we would

be inclined to consider Edaleen products conventional. As an alternative to Edaleen, we suggest that Western purchases milk from Twin Brooks Creamery, since Twin Brooks products meet all of the criteria for real food.

None of the meat purchased was considered “real”, to change this, we would like to see Food alliance certified pork, beef, and chicken being purchased as an alternative to buying conventional meat from Cargill.

We suggest that Western establishes a business relationship with the downtown food co-op to setup a certified Green Business on campus. This would give Western the opportunity to sell nutritious real food and organic snacks while supporting the local economy and giving students the food they want.

We want to see Western Washington University reach the goal of purchasing 20% “Real” food by 2012. We would also like to see written into the contract, at least one dining facility be certified as a green business, based on a third party certification and to provide students with educational materials explaining the importance of sustainable foods.

Future

The gauging of a food products' sustainability must start from the source. For the large majority of our invoice calculations, the sources from where the food was coming from were very vague, if not completely indistinguishable. Knowing the corporation is one thing; but knowing the origination of the ingredients themselves and how those ingredients impacted the earth and human beings during their harvesting and processing is far more important. In order to better gauge what exactly is being purchased, from where and from whom, we believe it is vital that change take place on a systematic level.

The process we are going through to calculate foods' sustainability must take place on actual invoices themselves of Sodexo's major distributors. This change would be hugely effective, not only for gauging the sustainable food being purchased at Western Washington University, but by universities nationwide.

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