

Regional Food Systems



The regional food systems program aims to serve Placer and Nevada Counties in three ways: increasing the availability and use of healthy, local food – especially by low-income people; strengthening connections between small- and mid-scale farmers and appropriate markets; and enhancing local food economies and the livelihoods of food system workers. These goals are based on the findings of a comprehensive needs assessment of program clientele that included interviews, participant observation, and surveys.

The program contributes to these aims through research, market connections, and publications. To expand access to fresh and local food for low-income consumers, we are preparing research on the availability of CalFresh and other nutrition assistance programs at certified farmers' markets across the Sacramento region. This study will

help UC Cooperative Extension and community partners better tailor technical assistance to markets in the future.

To build business connections for small- and medium-sized growers, we held a large grower-buyer event in March 2023 that connected farmers, food hubs, food banks, schools, and technical assistance providers. We have also referred individual clients to potential growers, buyers, or processors upon request.

To enhance local food economies in foothill communities, we are working with the Nevada County Food Policy Council to expand values-based purchasing by institutions within the county. Working with the council, we publish news articles in local media outlets to educate the public about food system challenges and solutions.



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Program Highlights 2022-23:

- Hosted a meeting of 71 growers, buyers, and food hubs to build new connections.
- Completed a needs assessment, and interviewed dozens of food aggregators, distributors, food banks, food pantries, growers, institutional purchasers, and agency representatives.
- Assisted clientele including emergency food providers and producers with research requests.
- Published research-based articles in local news outlets on meat processing and procurement.
- Served on the Nevada County Food Policy Council steering committee.



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