

# Food Access & Distribution Solutions: 5 Strategies for Southern California

## Farm to Institution Distribution Mission:

The Center for Food & Justice (CFJ) works to promote a sustainable and socially just food system by improving access to fresh and healthy foods in all communities, particularly those where access is most limited. By building farmers' capacity to increase their economic viability through the development of effective market strategies and practical tools of delivery, CFJ aims for social equity through food distribution.

Increasingly, the conventional food system is failing both consumers and food producers. In our efforts to develop a food-secure Los Angeles and support healthy farm economies across Southern California, CFJ has critically examined the systems by which food is produced and distributed. CFJ is designing new systems of food delivery to increase access to local foods in low-income communities and support local farm communities.

The mission of the CFJ's Southern California local food distribution work is to develop a greater variety of consistent,

verifiable and robust models of procuring and distributing locally grown foods to schools, institutions, and communities in need. CFJ believes that to increase the adoption and sustainability of farm to institution and other local food access programs there must be increased access to local foods through mainstream marketing channels. Therefore, CFJ's distribution priority for Southern California is to utilize groundbreaking strategies to develop the distribution capacity of farmers, private industry and other community-based organizations to strengthen our regional food system.

Through five models of distribution, CFJ bridges the urban and rural divide to create stronger programs that equally serve all communities. This document provides a brief introduction to the five models of distribution CFJ will help develop and implement throughout the next two years. The models and outlines of CFJ's implementation strategy and broader objectives for each are provided below.

## Local School Food

**Strategy:** The Local School Food (LSF) line is a concept for a new food product line to be carried by produce firms designed exclusively to market local foods to institutions and school food service directors.

**Operations:** The LSF line will feature local food items that have been selected to specifically address the critical institutional barriers of inadequate kitchen and processing facilities, food costs and labor. The LSF line will streamline food choices available to institutions and focus on select seasonal products that can meet institutions' requirements for quality, quantity, and price. CFJ has partnered with private industry to develop and deliver this product line in order to capitalize on tested business practices and use developed infrastructure at a minimal cost to consumers and farmers.

### Objectives:

- Develop a line of local food products to be sourced and distributed by multiple produce firms.
- Develop a LSF line that meets institutional food service needs, overcoming barriers to implementation of local food purchasing programs.
- Develop a brand and marketing campaign for the LSF
- Connect the LSF line directly to the California and National Farm to School campaigns.
- Provide supplemental nutrition and agricultural education materials and farm to school programming support to participating school clients.
- Act as a liaison between farms, produce firms and schools.
- Build institutional awareness about local food purchasing programs.
- Assist institutions in the development of local food programs.

## Women, Infants, & Children

**Strategy:** The Women, Infants, & Children (WIC) Local Food line describes a concept for a new food product line to be carried by produce firms designed exclusively to market local foods to WIC only stores in LA.

**Operations:** The WIC Local Food line will feature local food items that have been selected to specifically address the issues of perishability, high food costs and limited food preparation facilities.

The WIC line will streamline food choices and provide nutritious choices to supplement recipients overall shopping experience. The WIC Local Food line will focus on select seasonal products that can meet retail storeowners' requirements for quality, quantity, and price as well as provide recipients with variety and nutritiously dense foods. CFJ will continue to partner with private industry to develop and deliver this product line in order to capitalize on tested business practices and use developed infrastructure at a minimal cost to consumers and farmers. CFJ is also considering a WIC only CSA.

### Objectives:

- Develop a line of local food products to be sourced and distributed by multiple produce firms.
- Develop a WIC line that meets retail storeowners' food needs.
- Provide retail stores with a variety of foods that are nutritious and tasty.
- Act as a liaison between farms, produce firms, WIC only stores and the CA Department of Public Health.
- Build awareness about local food purchasing programs at WIC only stores.
- Cross promote the WIC Local Food line and other local food programming in the communities around retail sites.

## Farmers' Market as Hub Model

**Strategy:** The Farmers' Market as Hub Model is an emerging model of local food distribution, which draws on the management structures of farmers' markets.

This model will engage farmers' market associations (FMAs) and farmers' market managers to perform key organizing functions to distribute locally grown foods to institutions through farmers' markets.

**Operations:** The FMH model will utilize a single farmers' market as the central hub for collecting and distributing food sold by the FMA or market manager on behalf of its member farmers. Wholesale orders to be delivered to institutions will be collected, packed and shipped from the hub market in order to fill large orders. The hub can or may be an actual physical structure near the market or a space that is set-up at the market and used only when the market is open.

### Objectives:

- Build FMH model from existing management and association structure.
- Assist FMA and market managers in developing wholesale and specialty food programs.
- Convene a diverse mix of farmers through program activities.
- Connect multiple markets to the hub market.
- Develop the markets distribution infrastructure and processing capacity through resource sharing.
- Provide technical assistance and outreach to farmers in order to meet packing and grading standards.
- Provide incentives for produce firms to shop at farmers' markets.
- Build institutional awareness about local food purchasing programs.
- Assist institutions in the development of local food programs.

## The Farmers Collaborative

**Strategy:** The Farmers Collaborative model utilizes the combined growing, processing and established farm infrastructure to assist a diverse and wide ranging group of farmers in developing their capacity to meet the needs of larger food purchasing institutions.

**Operations:** CFJ and Tierra Miguel Farm will work to educate, coordinate and assist farmers working collectively to market their crops either through a formalized legal cooperative, a more informal collective of farmers addressing best management strategies, or by partnering with a third-party organization that markets, distributes, or sells food on behalf of the farm group. Farmers will utilize collaborative business models to address critical problems faced by farmers such as distribution, processing, marketing, and business development.

### Objectives:

- Build capacity of farmers to meet institutions local food needs.
- Provide technical assistance and outreach in the areas of business planning, cropping systems management, value added processing and marketing.
- Convene diverse mix of horticultural crop producers.
- Support the development of an agricultural marketing collaborative or cooperative.
- Assist in the development of a localized model of food distribution.
- Enhance farmers' capacity to develop value added food products.
- Build institutional awareness about local food purchasing programs.
- Assist institutions in the development of local food programs.

## The Farmer Direct Model

**Strategy:** The Farmer Direct Model provides schools with alternative farm to school programming. Once relationships are established, CFJ will work with schools participating in the CSA in the Classroom program to scale up their programs and utilize our emerging distribution models to purchase foods for their cafeterias.

**Operations:** The farmer direct model will work with a local CSA farm to create a CSA in the classroom program that incorporates nutrition and agricultural messaging provided both by the farm and the Network for a Healthy California. Basket assembly, delivery, and in-class nutrition education will be provided by farm staff. A supplemental on-farm agricultural education program will support in-classroom activities.

### Objectives:

- Implement an increased number of holistic farm to school programs beginning with CSA in the classroom activities.
- Provide hands on nutrition education.
- Expand innovative farm to school programs beyond cafeteria and school programs such as CSA subscriptions for parents, staff and families close to participating schools.
- Create experiential on-farm experiences for participating students and teachers.
- Utilize emerging distribution models (outlined above) to provide local foods for newly established salad bar programs.
- Increase community awareness of food production and food delivery systems.
- Build institutional awareness about local food purchasing programs.
- Assist institutions in the development of local food programs.

To participate in the development of these projects or for more information please contact Vanessa Zajfen at [vzajfen@oxy.edu](mailto:vzajfen@oxy.edu), 323 341 5092.  
[www.foodandjustice.org](http://www.foodandjustice.org)  
[www.cafarmtoschool.org](http://www.cafarmtoschool.org)

