

# Real Food Challenge Indiana University Bloomington 2018 Report



Research and Report by: Angela Babb,  
Jennifer Navarro, and Emma Schuster

## **Executive Summary**

The Real Food Challenge (RFC) is a national student movement to develop just, healthful, and sustainable food systems. The RFC movement leverages the purchasing power of institutions that aim to shift \$ Millions in college and university food purchases to community-based, fair, ecologically sound, and humane sources. During the 2017-2018 academic school year, two Sustainability Scholars researched food purchases by Residential Programs and Services (RPS) Dining for the Indiana University Bloomington campus during the 2016-2017 fiscal year. These Scholars researched 35 vendors and distributors and over \$16.9 Million in purchases on more than 5,700 items.

The Sustainability Scholars found approximately 6.17% of food purchases to be Real, according to the RFC Guide 2.0. Real Food is that which meets the criteria in at least one of the four following categories: local and community-based, fair, ecologically sound, and humane. Out of \$15.3 million in total food expenditures, \$944K was spent on Real Food. This Real Food consists of \$621K local and community-based, \$21K fair, and \$305K ecologically sound food and beverages. Over half of food expenditures were disqualified, including \$4.6M spent on genetically modified products and \$3.4M spent on animal products from concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs). Real Food purchases increased by 67% from last year's 3.68%, while the percentage of disqualified foods increased 1.5%.

## **Introduction**

Since 2013, students at Indiana University have been researching the foods purchased for the Bloomington campus. Considering food as the primary human-environment interaction, we know that regenerative food systems are vital to sustainability and critical to surviving climate change. Real Food is defined as that which truly nourishes everyone and everything throughout food systems - the land, animals, workers, and end consumers - and which does not compromise the ability of future generations to grow and eat healthful food. Real food comes from value chains with fair wages and working conditions and ecologically sound agricultural practices with humane conditions for nonhuman producers.

Food systems are interconnected with the physical and mental health conditions of our population. Agriculture is currently the largest factor in global water pollution and the second greatest contributor to global greenhouse gases. Pesticides are linked to cancer, heart disease and obesity, among other public health issues. Concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs), which account for approximately 90-95% of animal products in the U.S., are significant contributors of methane emissions, groundwater pollution, and air pollution and lead to drastic health disparities in rural communities. CAFOs are also exacerbating the current crisis of antibiotic resistance, which leads to millions of cases of illness and tens of thousands of casualties every year.

Food is also always political, and the Real Food Challenge seeks to decentralize our food system such that we have food democracy and autonomy in our food systems. Currently a small number of oligopolies control the various sectors of our industrial food system. For instance, just four corporations control the majority of meatpacking in the U.S., such that farmers no longer own the means of production and have virtually no choice in how to raise their animals. Ten corporations control  $\frac{2}{3}$  of the global proprietary seed market. The agrifood lobbies shape our national legislation and direct 98% of federal research funds toward industrial agriculture (while only 2% of research funds are going toward organic, regenerative agriculture). Increasing consolidation in food retail, processing, and production has all but eliminated the ability of farmers, food chain workers and consumers to continue agrarian livelihoods, earn living wages, and to make real choices in the marketplace.

For these reasons and more, researchers at IU have spent the last five years assessing the foods purchased for the Bloomington campus, and strategizing procurement shifts toward more Real Food. The IU Office of Sustainability's Food Working Group has hosted bi-annual food summits to share research results and bring our vendors and distributors to the table to discuss ways to move forward. As a purveyor of more than \$15 Million in food and beverages every year, IU has the purchasing power to transform our food system to one that is fair, healthy and resilient. By joining the Real Food Challenge network, we are working to support a national transition to a sustainable food system that is truly nourishing to our students, faculty and staff, as well as our local and regional communities. This transition starts with researching what we already buy and then looking for opportunities to purchase more Real Food.

## Methods

We acquired data on annual food purchases from RPS Dining's food management software: CBORD. Katie Melsheimer sent us reports for 35 vendors and distributors selling food and beverages to RPS Dining during the 2016-2017 fiscal year (July 1 - June 30). We started with 5,770 unique items constituting over \$19M in total purchases. We split the vendors between us to research, and started categorizing each item by food group (e.g., produce, meat, dairy, grocery, etc.) Using the Real Food Guide 2.0 (see appendix), we categorized each item as Real, not Real, or Disqualified. To qualify as a Real Food, a product must meet the criteria in at least one of four categories -- local and community-based; fair; ecologically sound; humane -- and not be disqualified.

To be considered local and community-based, product must meet the following criteria:

- The producer must be a privately or cooperatively owned enterprise
- Seafood must come from owner-operated boats
- Individual farms must be small - medium scale (gross less than \$5 Million/year)
- Meat, poultry, dairy, and egg producers must gross less than \$50 Million/year

To be considered fair food, product must have one of the following certifications:

- Ecocert Fair Trade Certified
- Fairtrade America
- Fair Trade Certified by Fair Trade USA
- Fairtrade International Certified by Fair Labeling Organization
- Fair for Life Certified by Institute for Market Ecology
- FairWild
- Hand in Hand

To be considered ecologically sound, a product must have one of the following certifications:

- USDA Organic
- FairWild
- Food Alliance Certified
- Rainforest Alliance Certified
- Biodynamic Certified by Demeter
- Salmon Safe
- ANSI/LEO-4000 the American National Standard for Sustainable Agriculture by Leonardo Academy

To be considered humane, the product must have one of the following certifications:

- Animal Welfare Approved/ Certified AWA by A Greener World
- Biodynamic Certified by Demeter
- Certified Humane by Humane Farm Animal Care
- Global Animal Partnership
- Pennsylvania Certified Organic
- 100% Grassfed by USDA

- American Humane Certified (Free Range)

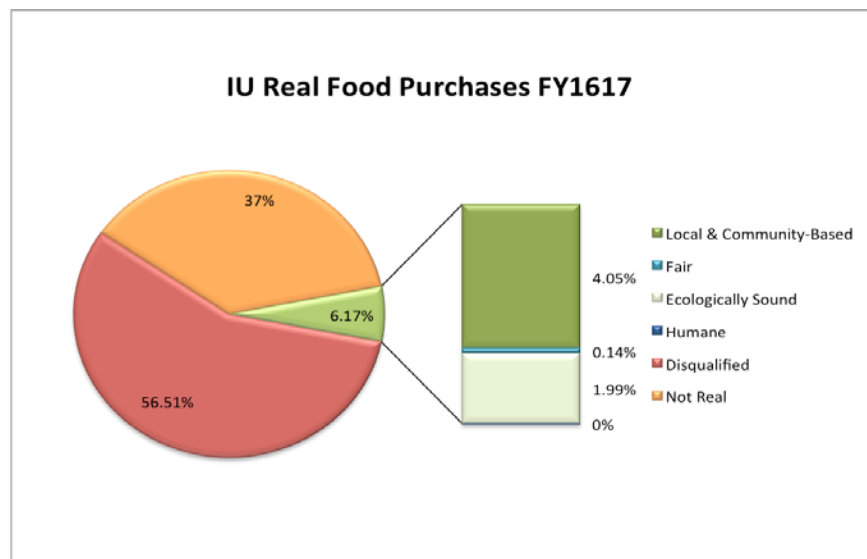
Products are Disqualified if they have one of the following characteristics:

- Egregious Human Rights Violations
- Labor Violation
- Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations
- Genetically Modified Organisms
- Ultra Processed Foods

Assumptions are necessary in the process of researching products because there is little transparency in the food system. We rely on third party certifications in order to count foods as fair, ecologically sound, or humane. Many corporations use false marketing to make products appear to be ecologically sound (this is called “greenwashing”) or to make their supply chain appear to be socially just (“bluewashing”) when there is actually much abuse and exploitation. We trust the national RFC research team to evaluate certifications and verify their alignment with the principles of sustainable and equitable food systems. Not all sustainability certifications uphold these principles and are thus excluded from the Real Food Guide 2.0.

Regarding disqualifiers, we assume processed corn, soy and canola products are genetically modified unless they are certified organic. This is because 90% of each of these crops grown in the U.S. is GMO. We assume “sugar” is also genetically modified unless certified organic or specified to be cane sugar. The majority of sugar beets is genetically modified, and most often “sugar” is beet sugar or a mix of beet and cane sugar. We also assume that meat is coming from a Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO) when we cannot trace it back to the source. An estimated 90-95% of animal products in the U.S. is produced in a CAFO. Corporations like Tyson and Cargill are large CAFO networks, so we assume any animal products tied to these companies are CAFO and thus Disqualified.

## Results



6.17% of food and beverages purchased by RPS Dining are Real. A majority of this is Local and Community-Based, followed by Ecologically Sound. There is less Fair food than last year and no Humane. Out of \$15.3M in total food and beverage purchases, approximately \$945K is on Real Food, with \$305K on Ecologically Sound products and \$621K spent on Local and Community-Based. More than half of the purchased foods were Disqualified. 30% of all food products purchased contained genetically modified organisms and another 22% of all purchases are from concentrated animal feeding operations.

	FY1516		FY1617	
Local and Community-Based	\$357,828.32	2.33%	\$621,100.98	4.05%
Fair	\$50,898.78	0.33%	\$21,941.90	0.14%
Ecologically Sound	\$195,590.93	1.28%	\$305,298.89	1.99%
Humane	\$0	0.00%	\$0	0%
Real Food A	\$39,568.98	0.26%	\$3,535.86	0.02%
Total \$ Real	\$564,749.05	3.68%	\$944,805.91	6.17%
Total \$ Expenditures	\$15,328,964.70		\$15,319,196.27	
% Real	3.68%		6.17%	
Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation	\$2,900,200.83	18.92%	\$3,429,027.13	22.38%
Genetically Modified Organisms	\$4,061,671.80	26.50%	\$4,684,519.03	30.58%
Guilty of Criminal Charges of Forced Labor	\$1,378.17	0.01%	\$0.00	0.00%
Labor Violations	\$184,687.16	1.20%	\$6,590.38	0.04%
Ultra-Processed Foods	\$1,286,791.51	8.39%	\$537,094.05	3.51%
Total \$ Disqualified	\$8,434,729.47	55.02%	\$8,657,230.59	56.51%
% Disqualified	55.02%		56.51%	

\* Annual comparison of Disqualified is limited because researchers choose one disqualifier when an item has many; there is no protocol for selecting which disqualifier to choose over others

Real Food products came from 19 out of 35 total vendors and distributors. Five vendors sold only Real Food to RPS: Fischer Farms, Gunthorp Farms, Heartland Family Farm, UGo Bars, LLC, and Viking Lamb. Five vendors provided 86% of all Real Foods: Fischer Farms, KeHe/Tree of Life, Prairie Farms, UGo Bars, LLC, and McConnell & Sons.

	Real Vendors	Real \$ Purchases	Total Spend (not including nonfood)	% Real/Total Spend
LCB, ES	Anabelle's Gardens	\$5,072.25	\$5,181.25	97.90%
LCB	Beasley/Troyer Foods, Inc.	\$47.20	\$419,531.83	0.01%
LCB	Bloomingfoods	\$39,651.20	\$183,439.63	21.62%
ES	Coca Cola - Building Call	\$34,485.68	\$957,520.86	3.60%
ES	Delco Pizza Supplies	\$34.04	\$2,698.19	1.26%
LCB	Fischer Farms	\$185,101.14	\$185,101.14	100.00%
ES	Fortune Fish	\$472.91	\$5,321.90	8.89%
ES	Gordon Food Service	\$10,818.28	\$5,515,443.24	0.20%
LCB	Gunthorp Farms	\$1,810.35	\$1,810.35	100.00%
LCB, ES	Heartland Family Farm	\$7,549.52	\$7,549.52	100.00%
F, ES	KeHe/ Tree of Life Inc101126-D	\$205,045.52	\$341,752.98	60.00%
ES	McConnell & Sons Inc	\$50,234.00	\$2,483,420.79	2.02%
LCB	Michael's Meats	\$9,161.55	\$12,914.92	70.94%
LCB, ES	Piazza Produce	\$17,515.71	\$404,318.24	4.33%
LCB	Prairie Farms Dairy, Inc.	\$288,380.52	\$489,995.18	58.85%
ES	Starbucks Business Alliance	\$22,083.70	\$265,292.15	8.32%
ES	Supreme Lobster	\$427.00	\$7,536.67	5.67%
LCB	UGo Bars, LLC	\$81,510.76	\$81,510.76	100.00%
LCB	Viking Lamb	\$2,347.08	\$2,347.08	100.00%

LCB = Local and Community-Based; F = Fair; ES = Ecologically Sound

**Vendors/Distributors of Real Foods by Category:**

<p><b>Local and Community-Based</b></p> <p>Anabelle's Garden            Beasley-Troyers            Bloomingfoods            Fischer Farms            Gunthorp Farms            Heartland Family Farms            Michael's Meats            Piazza Produce            Prairie Farms            UGo Bars, LLC            Viking Lamb</p>	<p><b>Ecologically Sound</b></p> <p>Anabelle's Garden            Beasley-Troyers            Coca Cola            Delco Pizza Supplies            Fortune Fish            Gordon Food Service            Heartland Family Farms            KeHe / Tree of Life            McConnell and Sons            Piazza Produce            Starbucks            Supreme Lobster</p>
<p><b>Fair</b></p> <p>KeHe / Tree of Life</p>	<p><b>Humane</b></p> <p>n/a</p>

**Other vendors that were researched:** \*Alpha Baking Co., \*Chocolate Moose, Coffee Bean and Tea Leaf, Dawn Bakery, Donahue Distribution, Early Birds Bakery, Euro USA, \*Hubbard and Cravens, MBM, McFarling Foods, \*Scholar's Inn Bakehouse, Southern Food Systems, Sushi King, Sysco Food Services, \*The Chef's Garden, US Foods (\* = has much potential for becoming Real Food)

## **Conclusions/Recommendations**

We have greatly improved our Real Food purchasing since last year. The jump from 3.68% to 6.17% is a 67% increase in Real Foods. At this rate, we can reach 20% Real Food by end of 2020. There are several strategies for maintaining this rate of improvement and reaching 20% Real Food with very little change in food costs for students.

First is to work with existing vendors and distributors on items that are almost Real Food. For instance, Alpha Baking Co. sells many baked goods to IU that contain high fructose corn syrup - an ingredient that disqualifies a food item from being Real. We can work with Alpha Baking to eliminate this ingredient. We could also switch to sourcing only from their certified organic processing facility. Another example is Chocolate Moose, from whom we source a lot of ice cream. Their milk is Prairie Farms which is considered Real Food. However, their sugar is a mix of GMO-beet sugar and cane sugar. If we work with them to use only cane sugar, their product will not be disqualified (for containing GMOs) and will be counted as Local and Community-Based, and thus Real.

Second is to work with existing vendors to find additional Real products they can provide. We are currently working with Gordon Food Service (GFS), our primary vendor, to switch some of their sourcing to Real Foods. For example, one of the items we buy most from GFS is beef. If we can have them source more from certified humane/ non-CAFO local beef producers, we can count this as Real. We also buy a lot of chicken, pork and fish from GFS - to switch these products to Real sources would have a tremendous impact on our local food system and on our Real Food %.

Third is to diversify our sourcing. Over the last two years, Chef Tallent has done great work to add local, Real vendors to our system. We should continue sourcing from these vendors - Heartland Family Farm, Annabelle's Garden, Fischer Farms, etc. - and expand this sourcing beyond catering to the dining halls. We should also consider adding more vendors. A recent change in federal policy now allows dining to source up to \$50K of product from new (non-primary) vendors, so we should utilize this opportunity. This will likely involve altering University policies that require a vendor to serve all campuses in our system. Diversifying our sourcing may include diversifying vendors by campus, such that a vendor need not sell to both the Fort Wayne and New Albany campuses.

Purchasing more Real Food for IU will undoubtedly require operational transitions. Sourcing more Real Food requires IU Dining to work with more fresh foods and to cook more from scratch. Sourcing local food at economical prices (usually this is during the summer and fall) will require some infrastructural changes such that food can be processed and stored for use during the winter and spring. Menus will need to incorporate more local, seasonal items, and staff will need to implement more waste saving strategies, such as composting - these transitions have already been set in motion. Given strategic operational changes, we can continue to purchase more Real Food without transferring those costs to students, and in the process develop a community that is well educated on food systems and sustainable food practices.