A Policy for a Sustainable Kalamazoo College Dining Services Program

Submitted to the President’s Staff on June 8, 2010
by the Farms to K Policy Subcommittee
(Rebecca Cummins-Lanter [K13], Janelle Davis [K13], Hannah Gray [K13], Jenna Hertz [K10],
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Executive Summary
Kalamazoo College has a long history of environmental stewardship and leadership in commitment to sustainable practices. For the past 5 years, Farms to K, a group of students, faculty, staff, alums, and community members has been educating the College about the importance of developing strong local food systems and has urged the College and its food service provider to purchase more sustainable local food for consumption in the cafeteria and elsewhere on campus. Farms to K has also built capacity, on campus and in the community, for institutional purchase of sustainable local food. Farms to K and supporters from across campus ask the College to adopt the following Sustainable Local Food Purchasing Policy. The Policy provides a set of purchasing priorities and guidelines, and makes four main recommendations:

1. That the College set a quantitative goal for the college’s level of sustainable local food procurement and goals for incremental increases in purchases of sustainable local food and build that goal into our contract with our food service provider.
2. That our food service provider hire a Forager (a half-time position) to facilitate local food procurement.
3. That progress on purchasing goals be reviewed every six months by a Sustainable Local Food Procurement Collaborative.
4. That our food service provider (and specifically the Forager) will track the origins of all of the food purchased for consumption on campus.

The following document provides the rationale for and details about these recommendations. We strongly urge the College to adopt this policy for implementation in the 2010-2011 academic year.

Introduction
Kalamazoo College is a place committed to social progress. This sentiment is reflected in recent and in early documents of the college. In the general remarks section of the 1851 Kalamazoo College catalogue, the following dedication can be found: “We still claim, in educational matters, to belong to the School of Progress, and have endeavored to shape our plans to meet the wants of the age...” In today’s world, where careful environmental stewardship is absolutely necessary to address climate change and to develop sustainable lifeways in acknowledgment of the fact that we live in a world with limited resources, K has once again shaped its plans and purpose to meet the challenges of the times. Responding to the global imperative to mitigate the effects of climate change,

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1 Locally grown/raised means that the food was grown within the state of Michigan or 100 miles of Kalamazoo. This does not include food that is only processed or manufactured within the state (eg Kellogg’s cereals).—The raw materials of this food must be produced within 100 miles of Kalamazoo or within the state of Michigan. For a full definition of “sustainable, local food,” please see “Top Priority” on pg 10 of this document.
and to the advocacy of students, faculty, and staff, Kalamazoo College made a strong pledge to become a leader in environmental stewardship.

In July of 2007, Kalamazoo College president, Wilson-Oyelaran signed on to the American College and University Presidents’ Climate Commitment (ACUPCC). In doing so Kalamazoo College reaffirmed its pledge to accept environmental responsibility, as stated in the college’s Honor Code. The college’s ACUPCC plan states that Kalamazoo College will achieve carbon neutrality by the year 2050. Since 2007, many people on campus have contributed to planning out how the college will reach this goal. The Climate Commitment Planning Committee (CCPC) released the college’s Sustainability Action Plan in January, 2010. One of the Plan’s major goals is to “reduce the environmental impact of college purchasing policies/decisions” and the Plan states that the college should use strategies such as “increasing the amount of local food purchased by Dining Services when justified by environmentally and economically sound principles.” It is clear that a reworking of our current food purchasing policy is needed in order to adhere to the goals of the Action Plan.

Implementing a sustainable local food purchasing policy would bring Kalamazoo closer towards its goal of being a socially just campus. Sustainability is among the highest forms of social justice in that all issues are linked to the physical health of the earth and all who inhabit it. Moreover, as climate change worsens, those who will suffer most are the most disadvantaged. Those pursuing social justice seek to ensure that all members of a society are treated fairly and without undue suffering. Refusal to address and alleviate the environmental problems that are surfacing is a blunt rejection of social justice. A social justice lens also necessitates a closer look at the conditions under which our food is produced, from treatment of workers to distribution of profits to consideration of the conditions under which animals are raised. As a socially just campus, we must consider closely where and how our food is produced.

In addition to a history of environmentalism and social justice, the College also has a strong tradition of civic engagement, embodied in the work of the Mary Jane Underwood Stryker Institute for Service-Learning, which links the College and the Kalamazoo community in learning, research, and service that benefits all involved. Supporting local food systems through an institutional purchasing policy is just as important to community-building and economic development as it is to environmental sustainability, and a local food purchasing policy would reflect and support the College’s long-term commitment to being an engaged participant in its community. Purchasing locally grown food can have immediate and long-term effects on the local economy. According to a recent study in Oregon, every dollar school districts spent on local food purchases stimulated an additional eighty-seven cents in local economic activity. Additional benefits are realized through increased community self-sufficiency (food sovereignty), protection of farmlands and reduction of sprawl, and development of community food infrastructure and networks.

Kalamazoo College has much to gain from switching to a sustainable local food purchasing policy. As a community, we strive to be leaders in social justice with the

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2 See “Farm to School Investment Yields a Healthy Return into State Coffers” (Online at http://www.ecotrust.org/press/f2s_investment_20090318.html)
creation of the Arcus Center, and in sustainability with our commitment to becoming
carbon neutral by year 2050. However, it is impossible to maintain this leadership position
if we do not commit to changing our purchasing policies. Campuses across the country are
stepping up to the plate and implementing sustainable dining programs, while Kalamazoo
College remains with the same traditional food service program, which does not match the
college’s values of environmental stewardship as stated in the Honor Code. When
GreenReportCard.org evaluated Kalamazoo College for level of sustainability, the college
received a B in the category of Food and Recycling. An evaluation criterion, which pulled
down the overall score, was whether or not the school had a local food-purchasing plan. It
was clearly stated that the college does not have a local food-purchasing policy, nor does it
allot any amount of money per year for local, hormone free meat, or fair trade products.
Outside evaluations like this one are accessible across the globe and are used as tools for
high school students to make the final decision on selecting a college. And high school
students are paying close attention to sustainability issues, including food sourcing, in their
college search process. It is in Kalamazoo College’s best interest to commit to a sustainable
local food purchasing policy to remain a competitive and visionary school.

History of Environmentalism at K

Kalamazoo College has a rich history of environmental activism. Environmental
sustainability is a vital component of the college’s mission, as reflected in the President’s
climate commitment. Over the past thirty years, the college community has taken
important steps and renewed its commitment to being good stewards of the earth and the
Kalamazoo community.

Students have been at the forefront of this movement. Beginning with the formation
of EnvOrg (Environmental Organization) in 1980, and continuing with DIRT (Digging In
Renewable Turf) in 2005, and CEG (Campus Energy Group) in 2008, student organization
have had a strong influence, guiding the campus in the direction of environmental
sustainability. Students led the push for LEED certification of the Hicks Student Center and
petitioned the president to sign the ACUPCC in 2007. Recently, student organizations have
taken steps to remove trays from the cafeteria, limit bottled water use on campus, sell
environmentally friendly products in the bookstore, secure double sided printing, and urge
students to conserve energy.

Kalamazoo College boasts an award-winning recycling program that was initiated in
1992 under Robert Townsend. This department has consistently led the way in making
sustainability a reality in Kalamazoo. The department includes a REP (resource exchange
program) room and HUB (Help Understanding Bikes) program. The recycling program is
also facilitating a new and exciting partnership with Lake Village Homestead Farms to
compost cafeteria food waste.

Sustainability is built into the academic curriculum at K as well. The college offers an
Environmental Studies Concentration and many other classes incorporate sustainability
but are not part of the concentration. For example, the “How to Change the World” course
prepares students for action-campaigns focused on environmental policy. In addition to
and in partnership with these courses, the Mary Jane Underwood Stryker Institute for
Service Learning promotes sustainability through a variety of service-learning programs
such as the Woodward “Club Grub” program. The Institute emphasizes reciprocal community partnerships, and in summer 2010 is working through its internship program with four community gardening initiatives. With the Physical Education Department, the Institute started a gardening class and campus garden in spring 2010.

Environmental sustainability is a vital link between current students and alumni. The Center for Career Development and Sustainability Guild have been active in connecting students, staff, and alumni through externships, community building internships, forums, blogs, and events. Recent examples of student/alum synergies related to food issues include the Homecoming visit of lawyer, rancher, and fair food advocate Nicolette Hahn Niman (K89), the recent community garden consultation provided by Dr. Kenneth Mulder (K92) who is Farm Manager at Green Mountain College in Vermont, and the ongoing support of Farms to K provided by generous gifts from alums Larry Bell and Frank Schellenberg.

One element of the College’s history of environmentalism that is particularly significant in the development of a local food purchasing policy is our history of advocacy for and education about the importance of creating strong local food systems. In 2005, students, staff, and faculty formed the group Farms to K to advocate for local food on campus. The organization grew out of a service-learning project undertaken by the "Commitments" first-year seminar taught by Dr. Amelia Katanski. As an organization, Farms to K has been hard at work for five years raising awareness of the local food movement on campus, facilitating relationships between the people who grow and produce our food and the people who eat it, and building the infrastructure and partnerships necessary to achieve local purchasing goals for the college cafeteria. By bringing speakers to campus, hosting local food cook-offs and Local Chef Showdowns, facilitating trips to local farms and farmers’ markets, networking with alumni who work in the field, and participating in local food advocacy groups like Fair Food Matters, Farms to K has provided opportunities for all stakeholders to share information and ideas about local food advocacy. Dr. Binney Girdler’s Environmental Studies Senior Seminar has also provided an important curricular context for this work, particularly in the focus of the 2007 class project “Keep Your Eye on the Potato,” which evaluated the environmental impact of current college potato purchases and demonstrated how we could reduce our carbon footprint by purchasing local potatoes. Based on these findings, the class recommended that our food service provider hire a Forager to assist with the local food procurement process.

Through this work over the past five years, Farms to K and its campus and community partners have increased the capacity for local food production and purchasing in Southwest Michigan, becoming very knowledgeable about issues of procurement, distribution, and availability of local foods. This work has led to the recognition that we have reached the right time for the college to move forward with a local purchasing policy, and Farms to K is informed about and understands the community resources the College will need, as well as the challenges we will face as we work toward implementing a local purchasing policy.
Despite its successes, Farms to K has still not been able to make significant headway on increasing the amount of local food purchasing by the College's food service provider, Sodexo. While Sodexo now includes Sheldon Farms, a distributor that can occasionally provide locally-grown food, among its regular distributors, there is still no system in place to track where our food is coming from, and there is interest but there has not yet been a decisive shift in Sodexo's food procurement practices. While Sodexo has been willing to work with clients who request local food for catering events, etc., and will purchase directly from local farmers for these events, they have not changed their purchasing strategy for the cafeteria as a whole. Without a strong statement on the part of the College, it is unlikely that local food purchasing (and the tracking necessary to be sure this is happening) will become more central to our food service.

Sustainability is an integral component of every step of the K plan. Over the last thirty years we have made great strides towards environmentally friendly and sustainable campus practices. The area where our progress is lacking is in commitment to local food. Now is the time to take bold and innovative steps towards incorporating sustainable local food into our dining hall.

The Context for a Sustainable Local Food Purchasing Policy

Our recommendations for a sustainable Kalamazoo College Dining Services do not emerge from a vacuum. The national Farms to Cafeteria movement has gained significant momentum in both the public schools and at the college and university level over the past 5-10 years. Hundreds of colleges and universities across the country, including many of K’s peer institutions, have active farms to cafeteria programs, and the Community Food Security Coalition hosts an annual Farms to Cafeteria Conference (this year held in Detroit) that draws ever-increasing crowds of participants. Our policy proposal for K draws on the knowledge, experience, and best practices of these networks of Farms to College/Cafeteria programs.

Our recommendations also arise out of a thriving Southwest Michigan local food movement. Community-based organizations like Fair Food Matters, programs like Eat Local, Kalamazoo! (with which the College has been actively involved for several years), and resources like the Eat Local Southwest Michigan Listserv and Database connect our efforts with the work of many others in our surrounding community. Our connections with organizations like Farmworkers’ Legal Services inform our understanding that a sustainable local food purchasing policy must include consideration of workers’ conditions. The local food system infrastructure in Southwest Michigan has developed quickly and robustly, creating capacity in our community for farm to institution purchasing. Our colleagues at Bronson Hospital, for example, have increased local food purchasing from 0% to 12% in just two years, and estimate that local food purchases account for 25% of this year's purchases. Other Kalamazoo-area businesses and institutions have developed their own local food purchasing strategies and are successfully sourcing large amounts of food locally.

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3 Patty Cantrell, “Kalamazoo: Hospital Digs Into Local Food.” 11/19/09: [http://www.mlui.org/farms/fullarticle.asp?f1eid=17368](http://www.mlui.org/farms/fullarticle.asp?f1eid=17368). Mike Rowe and Grant Fletcher from Bronson has met with representatives of our food service provider to share strategies for procuring local foods and would be willing to do so again.
Research Farms to K has conducted on the local food purchasing practices of several peer institutions indicates that our recommendations are reasonable and workable. DePauw University, which uses Sodexo as its food service provider, purchases 25% of its food locally. Oberlin currently purchases 35% local annually and its policy calls for a 5% increase in local food purchases each year. The survey of our peer institutions indicates that most have a stated local food purchasing policy that sets priorities for the college and its food service provider. Please see the Appendix to this document for a summary of the survey results. It is worth noting that DePauw, Oberlin, and most of the other institutions included in our survey are located in climates very similar to ours. Year-round local food sourcing is possible, even in Michigan.4

In fact, purchasing sustainable local foods through development of Farm to College programs is a practice that food service providers are engaging in across the country. Providers like Bon Appétit and Parkhurst have built their business models around local food purchasing. They commit to tracking food source information, building relationships with and purchasing directly from local growers, and developing local food system infrastructure. There is ample precedent for partnerships between colleges and food service providers that will achieve the goals we have outlined in our recommendations and purchasing priorities below.

Concerns about cost should not stand in the way of adopting these recommendations and priorities. There is a perception that purchasing more local food could result in increased food costs for our food service provider, and increased food costs might be passed on to the College and to students. But national research shows that there is “no clear indication that food costs for farm to school meals are higher,” while food providers see increased participation rates (from 3-16%) due to farm to school programming, which may offset any additional costs.5 And as sustainability leaders, Kalamazoo College and our food service provider should adopt a Triple Bottom Line approach to determining “cost.” The TBL model, which can act as a gauge for social responsibility and accountability, considers the social, economic, and environmental costs and benefits of policies or budgetary decisions. In keeping with its commitment to sustainability, the College must consider more than a single bottom line (i.e. immediate outlay of money) when making decisions involving food purchasing. Instead, the College must remain mindful of its values and consider the overall impact on sustainability of fiscal decisions.

Recommendations for a transition to a Sustainable Kalamazoo College Dining Services Program:

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4 Farms to K’s “Nourish What You Love” Dinner on February 14, 2010, for example, consisted of 85% locally grown food. Participants noted that they greatly enjoyed Chef Paul’s use of seasonally available ingredients.
5 Joshi, Anupama and Andrea Azuma, Bearing Fruit: Farm to School Program Evaluation Resources and Recommendations. (National Farm to School Network and the Center for Food and Justice at Occidental College) p. 8.
Recommendation #1

We recommend that Kalamazoo College set a quantitative goal for the college’s level of sustainable local food procurement. This goal should be a percentage of overall food costs going towards locally grown/raised sustainable food, set within the context of the college and region. ⁶ We recommend that the initial goal should be set at 10% local purchasing for Dining Services (achieved in the 2010-11 academic year) and that within 4 years after achieving this initial goal at least 25% of our food purchases should be locally-grown (from the Top or Second Priority categories on the attached list of priorities). We also recommend that the College set a goal for a percentage increase (5%) in local food purchasing every four years thereafter, so that we can ensure that when a student graduates from K, the College is procuring more sustainable local foods than it was when s/he entered the College. We suggest that the College and our food service provider hire an expert consultant, such as John Turrene at Sustainable Food Systems (http://www.sustainablefoods.com) to help develop a plan for meeting these goals. We further recommend that our food service provider be contractually required to meet these procurement goals, as accountability is essential to the success of this policy.

Recommendation #2

In order to review the current situation of purchasing and to help achieve these ambitious yet obtainable goals we suggest that an additional position be created, specifically for the purpose of guiding and reviewing the progress of local food procurement in the college’s dining and catering services. There is a need for a dedicated position—a “Forager”—to take on the responsibilities and tasks required to implement a new local food purchasing policy. This position would ideally be a food service-hired, half-time, paid position, and might employ a graduate of the College—someone who would be willing to commit to the position for at least a couple of years. The Forager would work with student workers (perhaps work-study) as needed to implement the policy, track food purchases, and build relationships. A Forager position would help our food service provider to communicate with farmers before the growing season starts to plan for planting specifically for the school’s use, among other tasks.

The following are responsibilities of the Forager, who would be charged with the tasks of coordinating local food procurement:

A. Investigating the current situation of dining services including, current purchasing policy by our food service provider Sodexo, how purchases are tracked within the college, what is currently locally-sourced and what is the seasonal availability of these ingredients within the college dining services. This person will work with the help of interested students to compile a list of possible local sources of food, noting location, seasonal availability, contact persons, emails, and phone numbers so that we have a working list of local vendors for dining services to reference when considering purchases. This will make it easier to figure out which farms we, as a

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⁶ As noted above, locally grown/raised means that the food was grown within the state of Michigan or 100 miles of Kalamazoo. This does not include food that is only processed or manufactured within the state (eg Kellogg’s cereals).—The raw materials of this food must be produced within 100 miles of Kalamazoo or within the state of Michigan.
college, wish to work with and help facilitate making first contact with these vendors.

B. Working as a liaison between the food service staff and the farms of Southwest Michigan to plan for the future procurement of food. It is imperative that we set up lasting, personable relationships with farms in the area, so that we can create sources for years to come. Farmers need to understand the situation of the school, and dining services needs to understand the situation of the farmers in order for purchasing to be effective and efficient. This new position would help the communications between both parties to ensure that purchasing goals are met.

C. Planning to see that goals are being met by maintaining contact to farmers, calculating and tracking the food costs of the college, and resolving any insurance issues that may come up due to sourcing from small farms. This would ensure that the college is moving forward on their commitment to sustainable local food.

D. Reviewing and refining the attached Purchasing Priorities Guidelines.

E. Attending certain meetings on campus to gain a better picture of what is the climate of the college and to gain powerful partners in implementing these changes. This person would regularly attend the meetings of Farms to K and the Dining Services Committee and report back to these groups as well as the Sustainable Local Food Procurement Collaborative and the President’s Climate Change Committee on progress made on the institutional sustainable local food purchasing goals.

F. Tracking the origins of all food purchased for the college dining services (as explained in #4 below). The Forager would need to work with both small farmers and large distributors, tracking food back to the farm of origin.

G. Developing a system for tracking labor relationships and fair treatment of workers on farms from which we purchase our food. While there are accepted organic certification processes, and Fair Trade certifications for international food purchases, there is not one accepted standard for certifying fair treatment of workers on US farms. Developing a system for tracking such labor relations would put the College and our food service provider at the leading edge of local, sustainable food advocacy, which keeps both social and environmental justice in mind.

**Recommendation #3**

Progress on the purchasing goals should be reviewed every six months. We suggest that authority be granted to a new group, the K College Sustainable Local Food Procurement Collaborative, to evaluate dining service’s actions aimed at reaching these set institutional goals. This Collaborative would be made up of at least the following: The Forager, a representative from Student Development, a representative of Farms to K, one of the College’s Sustainability Interns, a liaison from the College’s community garden, a local farmer, and a representative of Fair Food Matters. The Collaborative should include student, faculty, and staff/administrative representation, so additional members may be added to the above list to achieve this breadth of representation. We note that the goal of obtaining sustainable local food in the cafeteria is a gradual process and as such the percentage goal of how much sustainable local food should be in the cafeteria should go up periodically—ideally every four years, so a student may be assured upon entering the College that by the time of his/her graduation, the College will have improved in its purchases of local foods. Like the President’s commitment to be carbon neutral in year
2050, small changes are needed over time to offset the carbon footprint from dining services and the bar needs to be raised continually.

**Recommendation #4**

Our food service provider (and specifically the Forager) will track the origins of all of the food purchased for college dining services. The Forager will keep track of the farms of origin for each item. This kind of tracking, though not common practice in institutional food service, is necessary for us to determine our current local purchasing practices and to improve those practices to meet our goals. It is not enough to note which distributor provides a particular food item, or to note that a distributor asserts that an item *could* have its origins within our defined local area. The College and its food service provider must push distributors like GFS to provide accurate, specific tracking information to institutions that purchase from them. And since developing relationships with farmers is among our goals, tracking food from its farm of origin is important in meeting those goals. The Forager should also track other important characteristics of our food, including whether or not the food is organic, whether meat is grass-fed and meat, dairy, and eggs are produced humanely. The tracking system should also note whether fair labor practices are in place on the farms from which the food is purchased.
Local Sustainable Food Purchasing Priorities and Guidelines

Top Priority:
Organic, grown and raised in Michigan or within 100 miles of Kalamazoo College, from non-industrial (small) farms that treat animals humanely and raise them on pasture, engage in sustainable stewardship of resources, and treat workers fairly. One ideal way to fulfill this priority would be to use food grown in our on campus gardens or greenhouses

Second Priority:
Purchases that engage in some, but perhaps not all, of the Top Priority practices and where the food originates in Michigan or within 100 miles of Kalamazoo College. (Forager will keep track of which top priority practices are met.)

Third Priority:
Organic, grown and raised regionally (within 500 miles of the College), from non-industrial (small) farms that treat animals humanely and raise them on pasture, engage in sustainable stewardship of resources, and treat workers fairly.

Fourth Priority:
Purchases that engage in some, but perhaps not all of the Third Priority practices and where the food originates within 500 miles of the College. (Forager will keep track of which top priority practices are met.)

Fifth Priority:
Organic, grown and raised within the US, from non-industrial (small) farms that treat animals humanely and raise them on pasture, engage in sustainable stewardship of resources, and treat workers fairly.

In order to meet the local sustainable food purchasing goals as articulated in Recommendation #1 above, purchases must come from the Top or Second Priority categories.
### Appendix: Compiled Survey Information on Peer Institutions  
(conducted by Hannah Gray, K13, May 2010)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local %</th>
<th>Allegheny College</th>
<th>Wayne State University</th>
<th>Oberlin College</th>
<th>DePauw University</th>
<th>Calvin College</th>
<th>Kenyon College</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No set goal / as much as possible</td>
<td>No set goal</td>
<td>35% with a annual increase of 5%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Worker Position</th>
<th>Food service provider employees with some coordination with college staff sustainability coordinator</th>
<th>Outside group Youth ReVentures involved in assessments, one staff member</th>
<th>Food service provider employees</th>
<th>General manager and student workers employed by food service provider</th>
<th>Production chef</th>
<th>Food service provider employee with student interns and volunteers</th>
</tr>
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| Definition of Local                          | 150 mile radius from campus | 150 mile radius from campus; representative of a 48 hr. time frame farm to plate | 150 mile radius from campus or state of Indiana | - | - Differentiates between locally grown vs. locally produced |

| Tracking Methods                             | Visits in the fields for building contacts. Food service provider does the tracking | Collaborative study in progress | Food service provider committed to tracking | Effort to get farmers to sell to distributors and for distributors to actively track | Summer time connections to vendors at markets, tracking done internally | Through food service provider |

| Provider                                     | Parkhurst Foodsystems       | Bon Appétit Sodexo            | Calvin College Dining Services | AVI Foodsystems |

| Other Considerations                         | Cage-free eggs, as much grass fed beef as possible, fair trade coffee, | Working to support economic activity within the city of Detroit | Sustainable farming practices, fair wages, education of farmers and students | Composing, work with local CSA, goal to change how the farmer grows/sells to provide for the region | Economic incentive to support local, students responsive to changes | Commitment to local meat, labor issues, organics, grass-based dairy, free-trade and organic coffee, campus gardening efforts |

| Price Change                                 | Minimal price change, but food service provider absorbs most of the difference | Minimal | None for the students, minimal for the school/food service provider | No | No |

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