



Real Food Challenge Final Report - Fall 2022

Andrew Bryant, Bryant Cooney, Tavon Cates, Zach Kingery

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Executive Summary

Since 2007, the Real Food Challenge has aimed to create a more healthy, fair, and green food system through the participation of universities, students, and intern researchers. The mission of the Real Food Calculator (RFC) interns is to track, audit, report, and offer options to increase the amount of real food served throughout Carolina Dining Services. The Real Food team believes in sustainable consumership in that food sources should be local/community based, fair, ecologically sound, and/or humane.

Fall 2022 interns audited purchases from February 2022 under Real Food Calculator's 2.1 standards and found that the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill has purchased a total of 13.75% real food. We have researched vendors and farms to be able to confirm they meet the requirements outlined by Real Food. Here, we will discuss the methodologies, results, sources of error, challenges, and recommendations discovered through the course of the semester.

Real Food Challenge (RFC) Overview

The Real Food Challenge began in 2007 after student activists and national food movement leaders worked together to form an organization targeting food distribution in higher education institutions. The movement combined many goals of sustainability in food production, from locally sourced food to worker's rights and fair trade into one organization. In 2011, RFC launched the Get Real! Campaign, which encouraged Universities to sign a Real Food Campus Commitment. The commitment pledged that the school's food purchasing would equal at least 20% of all food served through Carolina Dining Services. UNC Chancellor Carol Folt signed the pledge in 2016, committing the school to RFC through 2020, and Carolina Dining Services (CDS) met and exceeded those goals. However, CDS remains committed to providing food that passes the high thresholds presented by RFC, and thus submits its expenditures to RFC every semester for review.

Purpose

The Real Food Challenge interns share many of the same values the initiative set out to achieve in the beginning; that is consuming foods which sufficiently nourishes producers, consumers, communities, as well as Earth. The concept of sustainability is a relatively new field that has taken the campus of UNC-CH by storm. The Real Food Challenge interns values and beliefs align with these ideas even within the business sector. Creating a greener environment while still being able to access some of our favorite foods

should be of high priority. The Real Food Challenge interns serve as a bridge between the National Real Food Challenge organization and Carolina Dining Services. The main purpose the interns serve is to complete audits of Carolina Dining Services to ensure that the percentage of food purchases meets RFC's requirement of 20% real food.

Carolina Dining Services are also committed to creating a greener environment through the Real Food Challenge. CDS is dedicated to serving 20% real food in the dining hall. CDS believes "Carolina only accepts the best, so we only serve the best." CDS strives to provide innovative, well-balanced, and sustainably focused meals to the diverse Tar-Heel community. CDS has also won numerous awards for their strides such as the Gold Award Educational Outreach & Sustainability (2020). CDS has managed to purchase over 20% real food from 2016-2020 and continues striving to meet this goal.

Calculator Methodology

Our research this semester spanned from the last week of January through February 2022. For this time period CDS provided us with redacted invoices of every purchase made for Lenoir and Chase Dining Halls. Each item from the redacted invoices was then loaded into a spreadsheet with the given categories: product description, category, product code, label/brand, vendor, fair/fair description, ecological/ecological description, humane/humane description, disqualifiers/disqualifier description as well as cost. Once all items were uploaded into the spreadsheet we went to work researching each item in such a way that we could determine if they qualified as real food (using Real Food Calculator 2.1 standards).

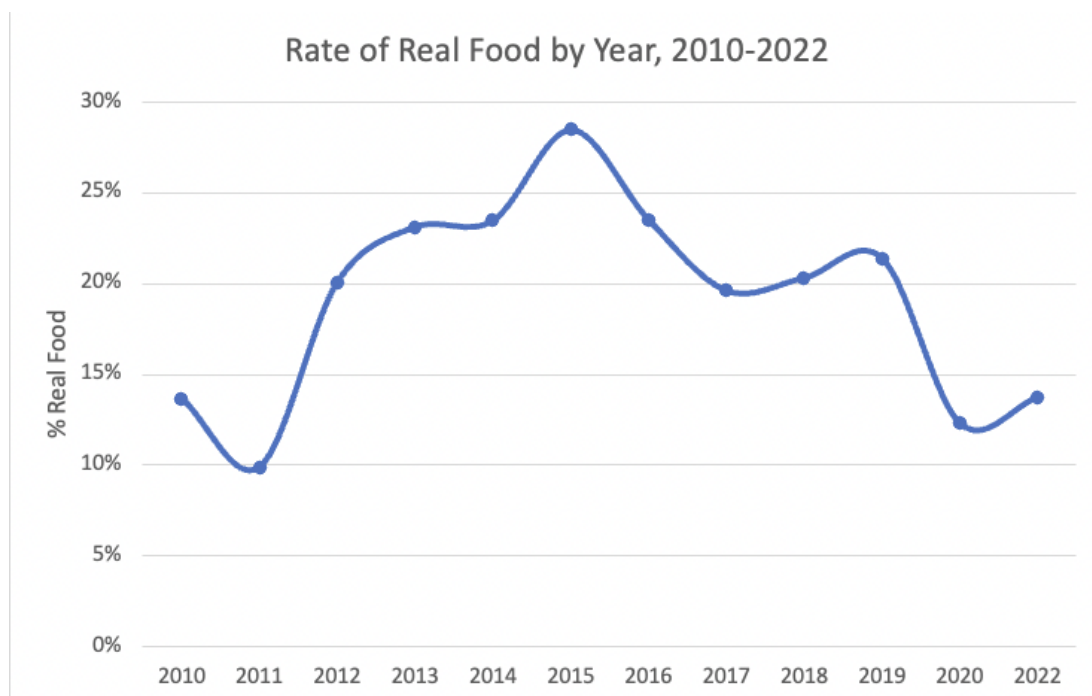
Much of our research was done online and when that fell short we reached out to vendors through phone calls and emails. First we determined if a company qualified as being local by using the address provided by the vendor and entering into Google Maps to determine distance from campus. All production, processing and distribution facilities must be located within 250 miles from campus with an extended range of 500 miles for meat, poultry and seafood. The next step in our research process was to look at ownership and size of the vendors. Products must be sourced from producers that are privately or cooperatively owned and individually owned farms must gross less than \$5 million/year and cooperatively owned companies must gross \$50 million a year or less. If products were determined to be local and met the qualifications for ownership and revenue caps we begin looking for third party certifications such as USDA organic, Certified humane/free range pasture raised, Global animal partnership or any other certification that might apply for each given food item.

Multi-ingredient items presented us with a different set of challenges as we had to reach out to vendors and determine where each ingredient came from. In order for a multi-ingredient item to qualify 50% of the product must meet the Real Food standards. This proved difficult to determine and

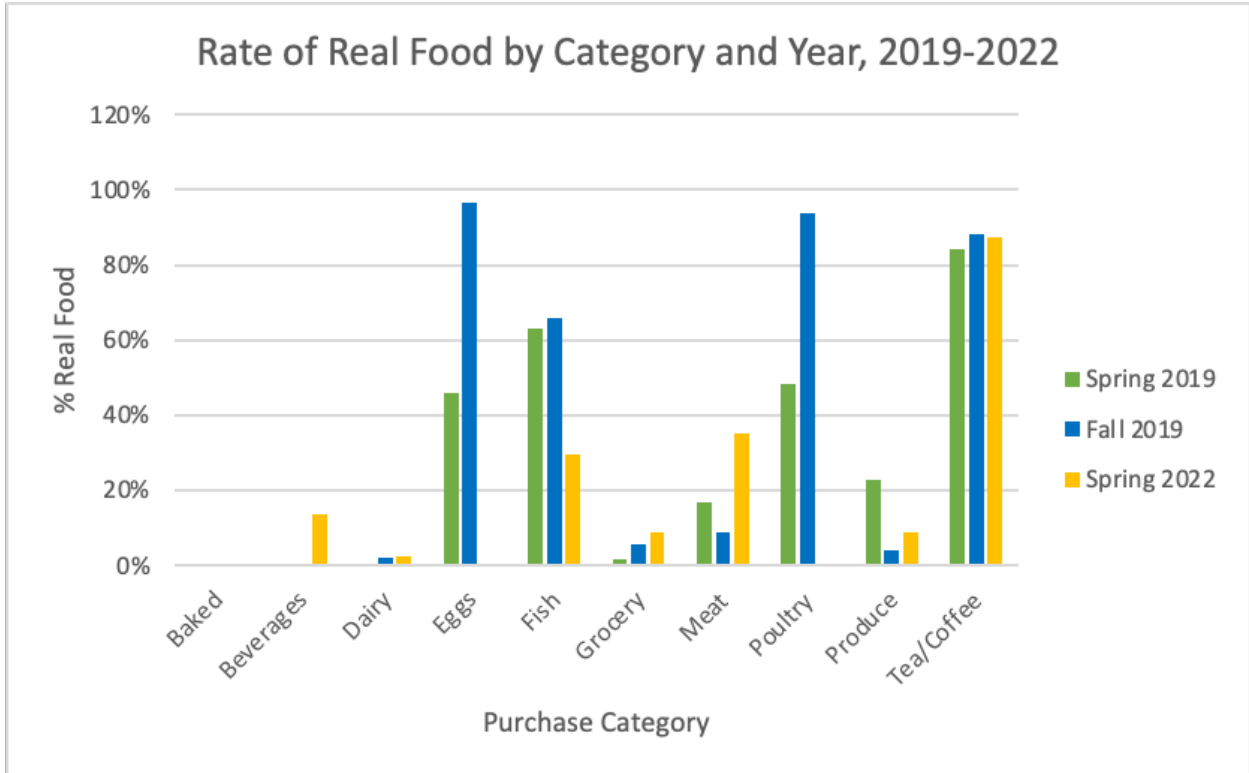
disqualified several vendors. Items such as flour are rarely sourced locally even if the vendor meets local qualifications the sourcing of ingredients often disqualified products.

The last step in our methodology was to look for any disqualifiers that may apply to vendors or products. Some items we could immediately dismiss as being ultra processed foods such as cereal and sodas. Labor and human rights violations were also looked into for each vendor though we could not prove such violations happened with any current CDS vendors. GMO's and concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) were other disqualifiers. Multiple vendors were determined to be operating with CAFOs and thus disqualifying them from counting as real food.

Results

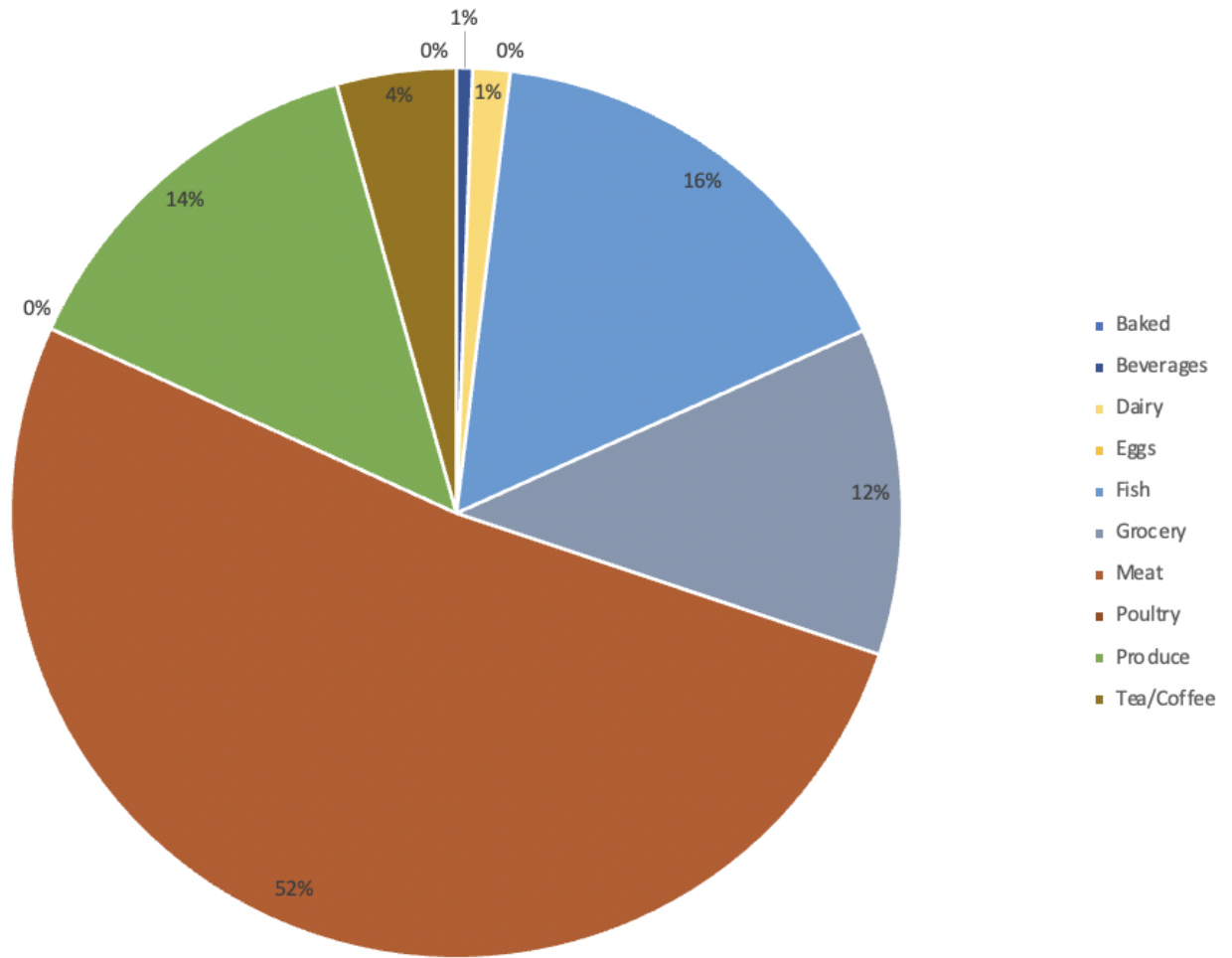


Percentage of real food by year from 2010 to 2022. Standards switched from 1.0 to 2.1 (stricter) in 2017. For years with multiple reports, results were averaged.

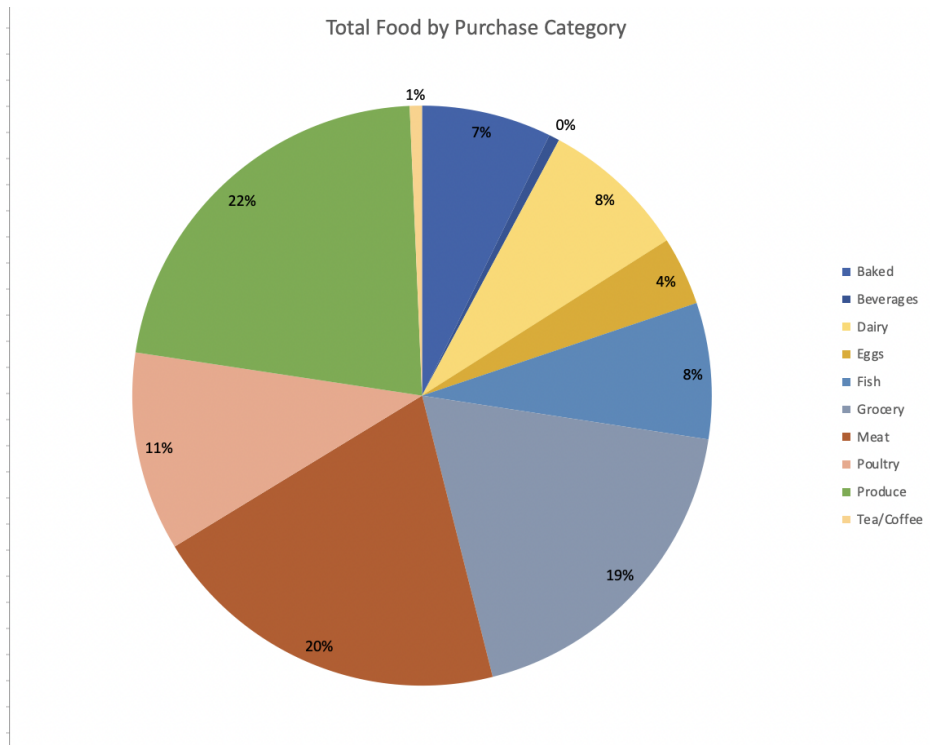


Percentage of real food by category in spring/fall 2019 and spring 2022 (no category-specific data in report for spring 2020).

Real Food by Purchase Category



Breakdown of real food purchases by category.



Breakdown of total food purchases by category.

Summary of Changes

The rate of real food purchases has increased slightly from spring 2020 to spring 2022, from 12.3% to 13.75%. However, given the lack of category-specific data in the spring 2021 report, we compared real food purchase rates from the two reports in 2019 to spring 2022. Eggs and poultry have seen the greatest losses in real food purchase rates, while meat has seen the greatest growth. Eggs sourced from Sysco are no longer American Free Range certified, leading to the greatest drop in real food. Additionally, CDS has switched poultry sourcing from Cheney to Joyce Farms. While the research team originally qualified Joyce Farms chicken as real food, further investigation prompted by the RFC team showed that only the Heritage line of Joyce chicken, not the Naked line which CDS purchases, sources from local farms with AWA certifications. Finally, purchasing from Firsthand Foods has increased our real food rate for meat dramatically; Firsthand pork products qualify as Real Food A (Local and Humane), while beef products qualify as Real Food B (Local).

Sources of Error

Lack of communication from vendors may have a significant impact on our estimated purchase rate of real food. Given the slow trickle of invoices, we contacted some vendors later than we could have, waiting for a couple weeks with no email response before attempting to reach out over the phone. Often, when we received replies from vendors (such as 4P), they assured us that they would reach out to another party within the organization for confirmation, but no further response arrived. This potential source of error could be ameliorated in the future by sending interns a list of vendors before sending the redacted invoices; this way, interns can begin researching the vendors for organization-wide qualifications (for instance, revenue cap) and begin establishing rapport with them at the beginning of the semester. Keeping one individual accountable for these communications, while others work on data entry and online research, could better divide responsibility to this end.

Challenges

As mentioned above, lack of communication with vendors, especially until later in the semester, presented a great challenge for research accuracy and efficiency. Many vendors redirected us multiple times via email or simply did not respond to our requests for more information. A specific challenge was communicating with 4P Foods; we reached out to them with no conclusive response on the local status of their products, but only a vague confirmation that they source most of their apples from Virginia, likely within the 250-mile radius to qualify as local. Additionally, communicating about Freshpoint purchases was equally challenging; after a few weeks of waiting for specifics on farms from which they source their produce, we reached out to those farms and received only one response. Thus, we only had online information to verify Real Food status for Freshpoint-sourced produce. In the future, CDS can send RFC interns the farm list for the correct weeks of purchase when they send the Freshpoint invoice, or ask interns to send Freshpoint a request for the correct farm list.

Recommendations

We have a few recommendations for the future of the RFC at UNC. First, we recommend that CDS switches its poultry supplier to one that qualifies under RFC Standards. Previously, CDS used Cheney as its poultry supplier, which qualified under RFC standards. CDS switched to Joyce Farms “Naked” brand as its poultry supplier, which does not qualify as real food under 2.1 standards. We recommend that CDS find a poultry supplier that qualifies as real food, either by switching to Joyce Farms “Heritage” brand, which does qualify as real food, return to Cheney supplied poultry, or find a new

supplier that qualifies. If just 50% of poultry used for the dining halls qualified as real food, UNC's real food percentage would increase to 19.28%, nearly meeting the 20% goal originally set out.

Our other recommendation is that UNC switches to RFC 3.0 standards as soon as they are released. RFC 3.0 standards improve on many of the key issues with 2.1 touched on by staff and interns alike, and would increase the amount of food that qualifies as real food. Under 3.0 standards, CDS could easily reach 20% real food by the end of 2023. The next section will cover the new changes presented by RFC 3.0 standards and the impacts that will have on real food calculations.

RFC 3.0 Standards

Beginning in 2023, RFC is launching their 3.0 real food standards, seeking to improve on the 2.1 standards that are currently used. The new set of standards changes a few aspects of the calculation of real food percentage. First, the 3.0 standards remove disqualifiers, which would rule a food as not "real food" even if it otherwise qualifies. The new standards also remove revenue caps on locally produced food, which restricted the growth of local providers who qualified previously. The new standards also reclassify "Fair" into "Valued Workforce," and shifts the qualification standards for this group away from fair trade practices and towards worker oriented standards. The new standards also expand the number of certifications that qualify a food in the "Animal Welfare" (renamed from "Humane") category. The certifications are now grouped by Level 1, 2, and 3, with 3 being the highest, expanding on the 2-tier system found in the 2.1 standards. Similarly to 2.1, while level 3 is the best, foods under levels 2 and 1 still qualify. 3.0 also adds a fifth category, "Community Health & Nutrition," although it does not factor into the real food calculations for institutions.

The new standards also come with guides for institutions as to how they can meet the goals set out in 3.0 standards. The guides provide recommendations for institutions as to how they can implement more real food options in their dining services, both in general and specific to each category, so that schools that only need to improve in one area can more specifically target that area. These recommendations also integrate parts of the Local Resourcing Program by Uprooted and Rising, which seeks to use education, resources, and money to redistribute wealth into the community, particularly BIPOC producers. While these are not directly part of the real food calculator, they do provide ways for institutions to build on their real food implementation, and might be implemented in a future iteration of the real food calculator along with the Community Health & Nutrition category.

Appendix A: Real Food Guide (2.1)

The Real Food Guide			
Local & Community Based	Fair	Ecologically Sound	Humane
These foods can be traced to nearby farms, ranches, boats, and businesses that are locally owned and operated. Supporting small and mid-size food businesses challenges trends towards consolidation in the food industry and supports local economies.	Individuals involved in food production work in safe and fair conditions, receive fair compensation, are ensured the right to organize and the right to a grievance process, and have equal opportunity for employment.	Farms, ranches, boats, and other operations involved with food production practice environmental stewardship that conserves biodiversity and ecosystem resilience and preserves natural resources, including energy, wildlife, water, air, and soil. Production practices minimize toxic substances, greenhouse gas emissions, natural resource depletion, and environmental degradation.	Animals have their mental, physical, and behavioral needs met in a low-stress environment and throughout their life are only administered drugs for treatment of diagnosed illness or disease.
GREEN LIGHT: Products meeting these criteria or certifications qualify as Real Food and best represent the standard			
<p>Single-ingredient products: A product must meet ALL the following criteria:</p> <p>A. Ownership: Producer must be a privately or cooperatively owned enterprise. <i>Wild-caught seafood must come from owner-operated boats.</i></p> <p>B. Size:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Produce: Individual farms must gross \$5 million/year or less Baked goods, beverages, dairy, eggs, grocery, meat, poultry, seafood: Company or cooperative must gross \$50 million/year or less <p>C. Distance: All production, processing, and distribution facilities must be within a 250 mile radius of the institution. <i>This radius is extended to 500 miles for Meat, Poultry, and Seafood.</i></p> <p>Single-ingredient products (aggregated): 100% of the products must meet the criteria for Ownership, Size, and Distance</p> <p>Multi-ingredient product: The company and at least 95% of the ingredients by volume must meet the criteria for Ownership, Size, and Distance</p>	<p>A single-ingredient product must be certified by ONE of the following approved certifications or criteria:</p> <p>International products:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ecocert Fair Trade Certified Fair for Life Certified by Institute for Marketecology (IMO) Fairtrade America (Fairtrade International FLO) FairWild Hand in Hand Small Producer Symbol <p>Domestic products:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equitable Food Initiative (EFI) Food Justice Certified by Agricultural Justice Project Farms unionized through FLOC (AFL-CIO), FUJ, PCUN, UFW <p>Worker-driven Social Responsibility programs*:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fair Food Program by the Coalition of Immokalee Workers Milk with Dignity by Migrant Justice 	<p>A product must be certified by ONE of the following approved certifications:</p> <p>Single-ingredient products:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Biodynamic Certified by Demeter FairWild Food Alliance Certified (produce and grocery only) Rainforest Alliance Certified Regenerative Organic Certified Salmon Safe USDA Organic and approved certifiers <p>Coffee only:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bird Friendly by Smithsonian <p>Produce only: Produce grown in a farm or garden at the institution, in which the researcher can confirm the use of organic practices</p>	<p>A product must be certified by ONE of the following approved certifications**:</p> <p>All products:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Animal Welfare Approved/Certified (AWA) by A Greener World AWA Grassfed by A Greener World Biodynamic Certified by Demeter Global Animal Partnership Steps 4-5+
YELLOW LIGHT: Products meeting these criteria or certifications qualify as Real Food but do not represent the <i>fullest</i> expression of the standard			
<p>Multi-ingredient products: Company must meet ALL the following criteria:</p> <p>A. Ownership: Company must be a privately or cooperatively owned enterprise</p> <p>B. Size: Company or cooperative must gross \$50 million/year or less</p> <p>C. Distance: All processing and distribution facilities must be within a 250 mile radius of the institution.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">-AND-</p> <p>At least half (50%) of the ingredients by volume must come from farms meeting ALL the following criteria:</p> <p>A. Ownership: Company must be a privately or cooperatively owned enterprise</p> <p>B. Size:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Produce: Individual farms must gross \$5 million/year or less Baked goods, beverages, dairy, eggs, grocery, meat, poultry, seafood: Company or cooperative must gross \$50 million/year or less <p>C. Distance: All production facilities must be within a 250 mile radius of the institution</p> <p>Single-ingredient products (aggregated): At least three-quarters (75%) of the product (by volume) must meet the criteria for Ownership, Size, and Distance</p>	<p>A product must meet ONE of the following criteria:</p> <p>All products:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fair Trade USA <p>Multi-ingredient products:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least one of the primary ingredients (20% by volume) meets the Green Light criteria 	<p>A product must meet ONE of the following criteria:</p> <p>Single-ingredient products: Be certified by one of the following approved certifications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ANSI/LEO-4000 (gold- or platinum-certified) by Leonardo Academy Bee Better Certified Certified Sustainably Grown Fair Trade USA LEAF Marque (Linking Environment and Farming) USDA Transitional Organic <p>Multi-ingredient products:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least half (50% by volume) of the ingredients meet the Green Light criteria <p>Seafood (wild-caught only):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) Blue Eco Label paired with the MSC Chain of Custody Certification Monterey Bay Aquarium Seafood Watch Guide "Best Choices" and "Good Alternatives" 	<p>A product must be certified by ONE of the following approved certifications:</p> <p>Broiler chickens:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Certified Humane Free Range/Pasture Raised Global Animal Partnership Step 3 <p>Laying hens:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> American Humane Certified Free Range / Pasture Raised Certified Humane Free Range / Pasture Raised Global Animal Partnership Step 3 <p>Swine:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Global Animal Partnership Step 3
DISQUALIFICATIONS: Products containing disqualifying characteristics cannot count as Real Food in any category			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Egregious human rights violations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forced labor (including Prison labor): Producers have been found guilty of criminal charges of forced labor within the previous 10 years OR products that have been produced in prisons or using prison labor (through state or county correctional industries or through leases to, or partnership with, private agricultural or food processing companies). Labor violations: Producer has been found guilty of or has been cited for three or more cases relating to serious, repeat, or willful Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), or Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) violations within the last three years. Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs): Producer is a Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Except for dairy that has been aggregated from multiple farms if the average farm size is less than 200 cows</i> Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs): Products made with genetically engineered ingredients (including corn, soy, rapeseed, beet sugar, papayas and summer squash) and their derivatives <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Unless these ingredients are used in trace amounts or the product carries a certification that precludes the presence of GMOs (Non-GMO Project Verified or any of the certifications that qualify as Ecologically Sound)</i> Ultra-processed foods: Products made with the following ingredients: Aspartame; Butylated hydroxyanisole (BHA), Butylated hydroxytoluene (BHT); Caramel coloring; Partially hydrogenated oil (trans-fats); Potassium bromate; Propyl gallate; rBGH/rBST; Saccharine; Sodium nitrate added; Sodium nitrite added; Dyes: Red #3, Red #40, Yellow #5, Yellow #6. <p>*Worker-Driven Social Responsibility Programs are exempt from Disqualifiers and can count as Real Food even if they have a disqualifying characteristic. **Animal products that meet the certifications in the "Green Light" Humane category are exempt from the CAFO disqualifier. All other animal products should be researched for the CAFO disqualifier.</p>			

Appendix B: Summary of 2.0 Changes

What's changed from Real Food Standards 2.1 to 3.0?

Real Food Standards 3.0 is the newest institutional food purchasing standards from Real Food Challenge. It is based on the Anchors in Action Framework for institutional food purchasing that Real Food Challenge created with the Center for Good Food Purchasing and Health Care Without Harm. This Standards update includes significant structural changes as well as changes to the content that allows students and community organizers to research more holistically the food purchasing of institutions. Please read below for an overview of these changes.

1. Value name changes:

- "Local/Community-Based" --> "Local & Community-Based Economies"
- "Fair" --> "Valued Workforce"
- "Ecologically Sound" --> "Environmentally Sustainable"
- "Humane" --> "Animal Welfare"

2. Community Health & Nutrition value addition: This is a new value in the Real Food Standards that focuses on how institutions can create a dining experience that is nutritious, high-quality, and culturally relevant to its eaters. It also includes aspects of public health, such as food security and antibiotics reduction. This value does not include strategies that would count food purchasing towards your Real Food Purchasing.

3. Dining Operation Strategies: The actions that campus dining can take towards the five value categories in Real Food Standards 3.0 is organized around strategies. These strategies include actions that relate to food purchasing that have traditionally made up past versions of the Real Food Standards. There are also strategies that assess how campus dining can advance towards a value outside of food purchasing. These strategies include practices that relate to institutional policies, engagement with suppliers, and dining operations.

- **Fundamental Strategies:** Real Food Standards 3.0 includes a new set of strategies that aren't specific to one value but represent a suite of actions that have been identified as minimum best practices in the Anchors in Action Framework development process. Please see pg. 1 for more information on the Fundamental Strategies.

4. No more disqualifiers: Real Food Standards 3.0 does not contain disqualifiers that would prevent a food product from counting as Real if they hold a qualifying attribute. The third-party certifications that have been selected in the Anchors in Action Framework have been vetted to ensure rigorous standards to protect against any disqualifiers in previous versions of the Real Food Standards while balancing feasibility for institutional purchasing.²⁹

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What's changed from Real Food Standards 2.1 to 3.0?

- **Levels to Rank 3rd Party Certs, Programs, and Product/Supplier Attributes:** A three level structure has been added to structure the list of qualifying certifications, programs, and attributes for Real Food. Institutions can understand Level 1 as "Good", Level 2 as "Better", and Level 3 as "Best". These levels also provide an on-ramp for institutions to continuously improve its food purchasing in a value by purchasing food products from higher levels over time. Level 2 and 3 have been identified in the Anchors in Action Framework as the food products that ideally should be purchased while Level 1 is seen as an attainable on-ramp for institutions that are just starting out in real food procurement. Products that hold an attribute from all levels will count towards an institution's Real Food Percentage.

- **Reorientation of "Valued Workforce" value (fka "Fair"):** In previous versions of the Real Food Standards, products with certain fair trade certifications counted towards this value. In Real Food Standards 3.0, the value has shifted to center the worker in the food supply chain instead of if fair trade premiums have been paid to the farmer for their products. The qualifying third-party certifications, programs, and supplier attributes in the Valued Workforce category ensures that workers in this supply chain are guaranteed livable wages, healthy and safe working conditions, and freedom of association and to collectively bargain. Attributes that ensure workplaces are practicing principles of worker justice, democratic decision-making, and cooperative ownership have also been included. Food products with some fair trade certifications may still count in a Local & Community Based Economies strategy but will not be included in an institution's Real Food percentage.

- **No annual revenue cap in Local & Community-Based Economies:** In Real Food Standards 3.0, there is no revenue cap for suppliers who can qualify in the Local & Community-Based Economies value. There will only be a distance and ownership criteria that they would need to meet. Instead, a local supplier's annual revenue will be used to categorize local purchasing into levels. Level 1 local suppliers can be of any size. Level 2 local suppliers would be considered mid-sized. Level 3 local suppliers would be considered small. (Please see pg. 9-11 for specific revenue ranges for each level.)

- **Expansion of qualifying high Animal Welfare products:** The Animal Welfare advisors for the Anchors in Action Framework saw the necessity of including an on-ramp for institutions to increasingly advance high animal welfare through its purchasing practices. To that end, third-party certifications that did not qualify in previous versions of the Real Food Standards have been included as Level 1 certifications in Real Food Standards 3.0. The intention is for institutions to eventually purchase animal products from Level 2 and 3 certifications and support suppliers who practice high animal welfare while using other Animal Welfare strategies to reduce the number of animals that enter the food supply chain

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