



Sonoma County Food System Alliance Charter

BACKGROUND

In August 2007, the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors authorized the Department of Health Services to convene a health action council (now called “Health Action”) to work on improving the health of all Sonoma County residents. As one of seven initiatives recommended by Health Action, the Health Department partnered with Ag Innovations Network, the Redwood Empire Food Bank and the Ag Commissioner’s Office to convene the *Sonoma County Food System Alliance (SCFSA)*.

The Sonoma County Food System Alliance is part of a California network of county Alliances and State Roundtables that foster consensus actions and policy recommendations from food and agriculture stakeholders. For more information, please visit the SCFSA website at:

<http://aginnovations.org/alliances/sonoma/>.

VISION

The Sonoma County Food System Alliance envisions a county in which everyone has access to affordable, nutritious food. Local farms and operations play a primary role in producing that food. Each part of the food system, from seed to table and back to soil, is environmentally regenerative, economically viable, and supports a healthy life for all members of our community.

PURPOSE

The Sonoma County Food System Alliance engages diverse stakeholders: food producers and distributors, food security organizations, public health advocates, and other community leaders. These stakeholders work collaboratively to envision, advocate for, and create a vibrant local food system in Sonoma County that increases the viability of agriculture and access to healthy food in our community

FOOD SYSTEM GOALS

1. Food Security and Access

Assure that residents are food secure and have access to sufficient affordable, healthful, fresh food.

2. Food and Agricultural Literacy

Assure that residents of all ages are food literate. They have 1) awareness of local and global implications of their food choices, and 2) skills and knowledge to acquire or grow, prepare, cook and preserve healthy food.

3. Demand for Locally Produced Food

Increase the demand for healthful, locally-produced food.

4. Local Markets and Production

Expand local markets and food production in order to provide consumers with nutritious foods produced and processed as close to home as possible, and create a resilient food system for all citizens of Sonoma County.

5. Local Distribution and Processing

Assure Sonoma County has a local distribution and processing system that effectively connects local producers, manufacturers, processors, vendors, and consumers.

6. Economic Viability

Assure that farming and food system work are economically viable and respected occupations

7. **Opportunities for Food System and Farm Workers**

Assure meaningful livelihoods and opportunities for all food system and farm workers.

8. **Environmental Impacts**

Assure that local agriculture, food production, distribution, consumption and disposal are part of a food system that regenerates nature.

CRITERIA FOR DETERMINING ACTIONS AND ADVOCACY

The following criteria will be used to help identify priority food system issues and determine SCFSA actions and advocacy:

1. **Significant impact.** The issue has potential to significantly impact the food system and the health of our people, environment, and economy.
2. **Achievable: Realistic scope and scale.** The scope and scale of the issue offer opportunities for feasible and effective local solutions. There is reasonable access to resources needed.
3. **Mobilizes community resources.** Working on this issue can leverage strategic opportunities, partnerships, and new or existing organizations to align community resources for action.
4. **Significant alignment across stakeholders.** Stakeholders can work to achieve common recommendations and approach on this issue.
5. **Community commitment to system change.** This issue generates and/or builds on a high level of community interest, receptivity, engagement, and commitment to create lasting, systemic change.
6. **Policy impact.** This issue creates opportunities for local, statewide, or national advocacy for policy and systems change to support a vibrant and resilient local food system.

DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

The Sonoma County Food System Alliance uses consensus as its decision-making process. Consensus decision making strives to reach an agreement among a majority of SCFSA members and alleviate the objections of the minority to achieve the most agreeable decision. Thus, consensus is reached when all members agree to a decision, and each group member can support the decision, whether or not he or she prefers the decision, because all voices were heard and it was reached fairly and openly.

PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

SCFSA members agree to the following principles of engagement:

- Cultivate relationships across stakeholder groups and partners
- Encourage innovative and creative thinking
- Strive for a holistic and long-term Solutions that honor the overarching purpose and goals of the Sonoma County Food System Alliance

MEETINGS

Regular meetings of the SCFSA shall be held approximately ten times a year at various locations around Sonoma County. If an extra meeting is desired, the Alliance will schedule the meeting when desired by the Alliance. Meeting notices and agendas will be distributed one week prior to the scheduled meeting date and meeting notes will be circulated to members before the next scheduled meeting.

Committees are formed based on the goals and objectives of the SCFSA. Committees work to develop specific objectives, actions and decisions in the SCFSA's identified priority areas (such as policy, farm-to-institution, etc.). Each committee has a chair responsible for scheduling meetings and ensuring that notes are kept from each meeting. Committee members are jointly responsible for carrying out agreed upon actions as well as gathering feedback from full Alliance and broader community and networks.

MEMBERSHIP

Membership Composition

Sonoma County Food System Alliance membership shall consist of primary stakeholder groups that have an active interest in and commitment to SCFSA vision, purpose and goals. Ideally, membership should consist of representation from the primary food system stakeholder groups, including: agriculture, food processing and distribution, food retail, labor, health, environmental, education, and consumer. Members may represent more than one organization on the Alliance. Members may represent themselves, as individuals, or their organization, depending on their role. The SCFSA will periodically assess whether membership reflects the desired diversity of food system stakeholders. New members will be identified and nominated as needed to achieve desired representation (see below).

New Members

Potential new SCFSA members are nominated by a current SCFSA member in good standing. The nominating SCFSA member will review the Charter with the potential member and may invite him/her to attend the next SCFSA meeting as a guest. The nominating member will notify the SCFSA facilitator prior to the next meeting so it can be added to the agenda. If the nomination is approved by member consensus, the nominated SCFSA member will provide the nominee with the member agreement form and an invitation to attend the next meeting as a new SCFSA member.

Member Responsibilities

The effective functioning of the SCFSA is absolutely dependent on the commitment and regular participation of its members. Membership responsibilities include:

1. Support the vision, purpose, and goals of the SFSCA
2. Attend all regularly scheduled meetings
3. Inform the SFSCA facilitator if unable to attend regularly scheduled meeting
4. Actively engage in SCFSA meetings and/or subcommittees using agreed upon principles of engagement and work toward SCFSA goals
5. Bring relevant information on food system issues to the SCFSA and information from SCFCA back to my community and/or organization

TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP

A member who misses 3 meetings in a calendar year, without having informed the SCGSA facilitator prior to their absence, and without having taken the time to inform themselves of the groups actions and activities shall be considered to have resigned. A member who is deemed by the core group to have failed to live up to the purpose and principles of the SCFSA Charter may be terminated by group consensus, less the affected member. Membership may be voluntarily terminated by submission of a letter of resignation to the SCFSA by submission to the SCFSA facilitator.

AMENDMENT OF CHARTER

A consensus decision-making process at a regularly scheduled meeting of the SCGSA may amend this Charter provided the proposed amendments have been distributed to the full membership at least 10 working days prior to the meeting at which they will be considered for action.

Appendix A: Sonoma County Food System Alliance

Commonly Held Beliefs

Food System Alliance members will identify commonly held beliefs on an ongoing basis and populate this section as determined.

Time-Sensitive Decision Making Process

While most SCFSA decisions will occur during meetings, some time-sensitive items may arise and require decisions between meetings. This process will require the following actions:

1. Email to entire group outlining background and requested decision
2. State the following in the email subject line: FSA: [insert topic] Please Respond by [insert date]
3. Provide timeline for responses in the body of the email
4. Decision made by passive consent. For this purpose, passive consent is assumed if SCFSA members don't respond with objections to the proposed decision or action item. In other words, a non-response indicates approval.

Roles

SCFSA Member

Attend SCGSA meetings. Share insight, provide knowledge, and work toward Alliance goals. Participate in committees. Represent SCGSA to the broader community, food system stakeholders and local policy and decision-makers. Provide innovative thinking, leadership and proactive engagement in furthering the Alliance vision and goals.

Facilitator

Designs, with the Process Committee, the SCFSA overall process and meeting agenda. During full SCGSA meeting the facilitator guides the dialogue and decision-making process while ensuring that good recording of meeting results are taken. The facilitator also brings content knowledge on food and agriculture systems to the group, including sharing traditional views, potential allies, best practices and trends from around the state. Serves as an advisor to the SCFSA and sub-committees on process and content areas, where needed, and is responsible with other Staff and the Process Committee for communication between meetings.

Staff

Assist in developing meeting agendas, setting and announcing meetings, record meeting notes, work on grant writing and fundraising where appropriate, recruit and maintain SCFSA members, support the work of members, promote collaboration, conflict resolution and decision making.