

Pollution Prevention (P2) with Sustainable and Local Foods

Importance of Sustainable Foods Systems

A sustainable food system, as defined by the American Public Health Association, is one that “provides healthy food to meet current food needs while maintaining healthy ecosystems that can also provide food for generations to come with minimal negative impact to the environment.”¹ This type of food system is one that will create a stronger link between producers, farmers and consumers. Embracing local foods can have many positive effects on the environment, local economy and your hotel’s connection with the community.

Advantages to Buying Local

When food is produced and bought locally, hotels can form direct links to producers. Guests will know where their food comes from and how it is grown/processed. By supporting each other, you will be able to develop community driven distribution for local food. Integrating these local products into your hotel can be done through offering them in your lobby, hosting market days, or prioritizing local producers for your food services. Applying this practice would help to:

- **Support the Local Economy** - buying local helps to support the local economy²
- **Establish and Showcase Community Relationships** - become part of the community by embracing local foods
- **Reduce Operational Costs** - coordinate bulk and seasonal buying with local producers for lower costs³

Benefits of Local Produce

Hotels with restaurants can assist local farmers by creating dishes inspired by local produce. Seasonal crops produce fresh and flavorful variety throughout the year, that can be used to highlight the different seasons. They also come with the environmental and health benefits of:

- **No Preservatives** - preservatives won’t be needed with local distribution and timely use
- **Packaging Reduction** - picking up crops directly from the farm negates the need for transportation and commercial packaging
- **Less Handling** - there is less chance of contamination with shorter travel distances
- **Reduced Food Miles** - shorter food miles can help to reduce energy usage from processing and distribution, which makes up 80% of the U.S. food system’s energy usage.⁴



Hotel Gardens and Composting

As sustainability continues to surge forward in different sectors of the lodging industry, many hotels are seeking different ways to grow and harvest food on their property. Hotel vegetable and herb gardens reduce food miles to zero, helping save money and allowing chefs to highlight various seasonal foods. Gardens will also allow for composting organic material, such as fruit and vegetable peelings, coffee grounds, tea leaves, and other food scraps.⁵ If you have more compost material than is necessary for your needs, you can collect and ship this material to a composting facility offsite.⁶ Other environmental benefits of composting, as listed by the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), include⁵:

- Significantly reducing methane emissions by diverting food waste to landfills
- Reducing or eliminating the need for chemical fertilizers
- Providing carbon sequestration
- Promoting a higher yield of agricultural crops

Local Foods

Designing a menu around the locally grown produce and available meats helps to alleviate the emissions from transporting food. It can also help to facilitate interest from customers by supplying fresh and more sustainable menu items. The National Restaurant Association found that 66 percent of adults prefer to eat at restaurants with locally sourced food.⁷

Diverting Food from the Landfill

If produce fails to look the part for the grocery store, it is deemed not fit for the market; however, this product is still 100% edible. “Ugly” produce is being thrown away, contributing to the food waste issue. Programs/Tools

developed by the EPA, ADEQ and United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) are being employed to resolve this problem, such as:

- Food Recovery Challenge⁸
- Food Waste Measurement Tool⁹
- Food Donation Resources¹⁰
- Composting⁶

Fish in the Desert?

Sustainable fishing in Arizona provided farmers a chance to innovate with limited water supply. A farm located 100 miles southwest of Phoenix growing fish in oversized ponds integrated these ponds into their farm's water system. This allows for the nutrient rich water from the fish ponds to be used in watering crops and other vegetation.¹¹ The seamless integration of fish into the farm's water system can offer a profitable way to farm fish in Arizona. However, the current majority of commercial fisheries are located in the Northern part of Arizona and only making up a small niche market.

References

1. [American Public Health Association. *Toward a Healthy Sustainable Food System.*](#)
2. [EPA. *Local Foods, Local Places Toolkit.*](#)
3. [Green Hotelier. *Sourcing Sustainable Food in Hotels.*](#)
4. [Earth Policy Institute. *Oil and Food: A Rising Security Challenge.*](#)
5. [EPA. *Reducing the Impact of Wasted Food by Feeding the Soil and Composting.*](#)
6. [ADEQ. *Composting.*](#)
7. [National Restaurant Association. *Local and sustainable foods draw customers.*](#)
8. [EPA. *Food Recovery Challenge \(FRC\).*](#)
9. [United States Department of Agriculture. *Measurement Tools.*](#)
10. [EPA. *Donating Food.*](#)
11. [KJZZ. *Fish in the Desert? Arizona Farmer Nets Sustainable, Commercial Farming Technique.*](#)