

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://SonomaFoodAction.org>.

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 stakeholders. 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 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 SCFSA

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. Committee members can be non-Alliance members who are key stakeholders in the issues of that committee.

Membership

Alliance Composition

- **Alliance Members (full/active)**
 - The 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:
 - **Access/food security, ag support, community/civic, conservation, education, fisheries, food service, retail/grocery outlets, health, processing and distribution, production agriculture (including farming and ranching), urban food, food system workforce (labor)**
 - Members may represent more than one organization on the Alliance. Members may represent themselves, as individuals, or their organization, depending on their role.
- **Associates/Friends of the Alliance**
 - The SCFSA shall maintain a pool of associate members – non-participatory but interested and supportive individuals who provide needed expertise, expand the diversity of the group, and connect necessary allies and resources. These individuals will be selected by consensus of sitting membership

and will not be subject to membership requirements. This list/group is called the “Friends of the Sonoma County Food System Alliance”.

New Alliance Member Process

- **Annual Membership Review**

- The SCFSA will consider new member nominations once a year at its November meeting. Additions may be considered at other times to replace members who resign or are removed. New members must demonstrate their ability to engage in the Alliance’s activities, to commit adequate time to the Alliance, to engage in respectful dialogue, and to help move the Alliance’s initiatives forward. New members must be approved by consensus, and members will participate in an orientation to be held prior to their seating as a SCFSA member.

- **Adding new members outside of the annual process: =**

- 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.
- 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/Coordinator 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 Membership 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. The SCFSA works only because its members voluntarily commit themselves to making it work.

- **Membership responsibilities include:**

- Support the vision, purpose, and goals of the Alliance
- Attend at least 8 SCFSA meetings per year
- Inform the Facilitator/Coordinator if unable to attend regularly scheduled meetings
- Actively participate on at least one Food Action Plan Pillar Team and/or SCFSA Committee
- Engage in Alliance meetings using agreed upon principles and actively work toward SCFSA goals
- Champion the SCFSA, Food Action Plan and represent the Alliance in the broader community

Termination of Membership

A member who misses 3 meetings in a calendar year, without having informed the SCFSA Facilitator/Coordinator 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. The SCFSA membership may decide on a case-by-case basis when to remove an inactive member from the roster. 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/Coordinator.

Amendment of Charter

A consensus decision-making process at a regularly scheduled meeting of the SCFSA 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.

Commonly Held Beliefs

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

1. We believe that all people in our community should have access to enough affordable, healthy, fresh and culturally appropriate food.
2. We believe that community members benefit by understanding how their food choices impact their own health, the health of the community and world at large.
3. We believe that healthy food and agriculture sectors are central to the long-term vitality of the local economy and community.
4. We believe that farming and food system work should be economically viable and respected occupations.
5. We believe that local agriculture, food production, distribution, consumption and food waste management should work in a way that regenerates nature.

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 SCFSA meetings. Share insight, provide knowledge, and work toward Alliance goals. Participate in committees. Represent SCFSA 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

- The Facilitator partners with Coordinator to integrate long-term development of the SCFSA. During SCFSA meetings 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. The Facilitator creates effective process designs and ensures successful implementation throughout all Alliance processes. The Facilitator ensures a robust and balanced multi-stakeholder model in collaboration with the Coordinator and Alliance, and facilitates Alliance meetings, forums and Coordination Committee meetings. Supports Coordinator and Alliance in development and implementation of a strategic work plan to achieve Alliance goals

Coordinator

- Responsible for overall Alliance management; project liaison to Ag Innovations Network team. Partners with Facilitator to integrate the long-term development of the SCFSA with AIN's strategic goals. Develops, implements and oversees workplan in collaboration with Facilitator and SCFSA. Manages committees and ensures all activities are communicated throughout the SCFSA. Manages SCFSA communications (website, social media, internal communications, and leads documentation effort (best practices, lessons learned, process), and manages production of formal reports and Alliance materials. Recruits, maintains and supports the work of members to promote communication, collaboration and decision-making.



SONOMA COUNTY FOOD SYSTEM ALLIANCE
MEMBERSHIP AGREEMENT

I have read the SCFSA Charter dated **November 20, 2013**. I support the spirit and intent of the Charter, and I am committed to be an active member of the Sonoma County Food System Alliance. As an active member, I am dedicated to the vision, goals and principles of engagement outlined above and agree to participate in membership responsibilities listed below.

As general evidence of my commitment, I agree to do the following:

- Support the vision, purpose, and goals of the Alliance
- Attend at least 8 SCFSA meetings per year
- Inform the Facilitator/Coordinator if unable to attend regularly scheduled meetings
- Actively participate on at least one Food Action Plan Pillar Team and/or SCFSA Committee
- Engage in Alliance meetings using agreed upon principles and actively work toward SCFSA goals
- Champion the SCFSA, Food Action Plan and represent the Alliance in the broader community

Name: *(please print)* _____

Organization: *(if any)* _____

Mailing Address: _____

City, State Zip _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Sector Representing:

- | | | |
|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Access/Food Security | <input type="checkbox"/> Fisheries | <input type="checkbox"/> Production Agriculture (includes farming and ranching) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Ag Support | <input type="checkbox"/> Food Service | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Food/Agriculture |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Community/Civic | <input type="checkbox"/> Retail/Grocery Outlets | <input type="checkbox"/> Food System Workforce (labor) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation/Environment | <input type="checkbox"/> Health | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Processing and Distribution | |

Signature

Date

Please Return This Form To:

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