

FOOD PROCUREMENT POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

“The Good Food Purchasing Program is essential to the health of communities. It ensures that workers throughout the food supply chain have their rights protected, are treated with respect, and are paid living wages. It is not sustainable for our institutions to choose vendors based on lowest bids—this undermines our economy and our communities. The GFPP is the best program I’ve seen in a long time that is good for customers, families, workers, and vendors. In Southern California, Gold Star Foods is growing as a company, schools throughout the region receive quality, sustainable food, and Gold Star employees have financial security while their children benefit from good, nutritious food at school”

—Randy Cammack, Teamsters Joint Council 42 President

THE PROBLEM

The food system is the largest employment sector in the United States, with more than one out of every seven workers (21.5 million) working along the food chain.¹

Most food-chain workers are in non-managerial, low-wage positions, and frontline food-chain workers are predominantly people of color, immigrants, and women.² Food-chain workers are also at high risk for experiencing food insecurity, wage theft, lack of access to health care, harassment, intimidation, and workplace injury and illness.³ In fact, at \$10 per hour, food-chain workers make the lowest hourly median wage of all workers in the United States and are more than twice as likely to be on food stamps than any other U.S. worker.⁴

THE SOLUTION

Values-based procurement is one tool that local officials can use to support food-chain workers and encourage positive changes in the overall food system. Policies like the Good Food Purchasing Program (GFPP) require transparency in food procurement, and help track and monitor problematic suppliers to improve institutional food-supply chains by moving them toward sustainable, fair, humane, healthy, and local procurement practices. Passage of GFPP has been critical for ensuring fair wages and working conditions for food-chain workers

and protecting workers’ rights in participating supply chains, as well as increasing levels of nutritious food, strengthening local economies, reducing environmental impacts of food production, and supporting the humane treatment of animals. As more institutions participate in such programs, the collective impact offers building blocks for the larger, transformative change much needed within our food system and economy.

The GFPP was developed in 2012 by the Los Angeles Food Policy Council with support from a host of stakeholders, including the Food Chain Workers Alliance. The program was created for local institutions and governments across the country with the goal of bringing more good food into underserved communities and a focus on five values: (1) local economies; (2) environmental sustainability; (3) valued workforce; (4) humane treatment of animals; and (5) health and nutrition. Similar to LEED certification (an internationally recognized green-building rating system), each value category has a tier of standards, and both suppliers and food items are evaluated and assigned a tier based on performance. Each supplier and food item is assigned a certain number of points and the participating institution (e.g., a city or school district) is then awarded one to five stars based on the assessment of its suppliers and the food it is buying.⁵ The tiered, points-based scoring system allows

institutions to choose which level of commitment best suits their goals at a given time and offers incentives to continually increase the amount of good food that it purchases. Importantly, each value category has a baseline standard that must be met, so institutions are not able to limit themselves to changes that are easy or skip any value category.

To date, the Program has been adopted by eight institutions in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Oakland, and Chicago, including two of the largest school districts and the second largest county in the country, where the policy applies to the use of over \$525 million public dollars every year. Critical to GFPP's success is the building of local coalitions that provide space for those most impacted—including frontline food workers and communities of color—to play a key role in the leadership of this work: local community and worker groups work closely with institutions during adoption and implementation.

CITY AND COUNTY MODELS

LOS ANGELES: The GFPP was initially passed in 2012 by the City of Los Angeles and Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD). Since then, the program has fostered change in institutional supply chains by increasing demand for fair, sustainable, local, healthy, and humane food—causing ripple effects for local food-chain workers. The GFPP has led to the creation of 220 new well-paying jobs in Los Angeles County and has been leveraged by the Los Angeles GFPP Coalition to block low-road employers from gaining lucrative institutional food contracts. Furthermore, labor partners have leveraged GFPP requirements to protect workers from union-busting tactics. The GFPP's standards require employers participating in the program to respect workers' rights to organize and collectively bargain without fear of retaliation. For example, Teamsters Local 63 and Joint Council 42 used GFPP to stop a local distributor in the LAUSD supply chain from intimidating its workers who were seeking union representation. This action led to over 150 of the distributor's drivers voting in favor of union representation by the Teamsters. Once the drivers joined the union, the Teamsters developed a positive relationship with the distribution company, who then agreed to be neutral as its warehouse workers decided whether they wanted union representation as well. The workers decided to join the union, and in January 2018, warehouse workers won a union contract—with a total of nearly 400 employees who now have higher wages, better health benefits, and stronger workplace protections. These victories are a testament to strong workplace organizing and a model for others on using GFPP as a tool for securing increased protections and higher wages for food-chain workers.

CHICAGO: In 2018, Cook County, IL, the nation's second-largest

county, became the first in the country to adopt the GFPP. The passage came on the heels of a string of GFPP adoptions in 2017 by the Chicago Public Schools, the Chicago Parks Department, and the City of Chicago—directing close to \$325 million annually toward purchasing good food. These successes were made possible by a grassroots Chicago coalition that ensured GFPP was adapted to meet local needs and priorities. Thanks to their leadership and that of county champions, the Cook County resolution not only requires county purchasing to follow GFPP standards, it also prioritizes incentives in their food-procurement contracts for residents, communities, and enterprises who can gain the most and who have not had access to such resources in the past. This includes incentives for:

- businesses located in and hiring from low-to-moderate income communities, and persons with prior arrests and/or prison records; and,
- farms growing organically and using bio-intensive methods.

Additional coalitions are working to expand GFPP in the San Francisco Bay Area, Buffalo, Cincinnati, Denver, New York City, Northwest Arkansas, Los Angeles, Washington, D.C., and the Twin Cities.

LANDSCAPE AND RESOURCES

The **Food Chain Workers Alliance** is a coalition of worker-based organizations whose members plant, harvest, process, pack, transport, prepare, serve, and sell food, organizing to improve wages and working conditions for all workers along the food chain. See www.goodfoodcities.org for more information.

The **Center for Good Food Purchasing (CGFP)**, is a non-profit organization that provides technical assistance and implementation support for institutions that adopt the GFPP. CGFP staff assess how supplier practices stack up against GFPP standards through a rigorous verification process that includes an in-depth analysis of each supplier's production practices.

The **International Brotherhood of Teamsters** and **United Food & Commercial Workers Union** represent people who work in different aspects of the food chain. As representatives of workers who are intimately familiar with food production, processing, and service, these unions are great resources and partners to engage in pursuing good-food purchasing policies.

Co-authored by the Food Chain Workers Alliance.

