CHAPTER 5: LOCAL PROCUREMENT OF FOOD
Lauren R. Sandler

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 Overview

As we prepare to meet the needs of 9-10 billion people in 2050, food sustainability in the wake of climate change is becoming an increasingly critical issue. Though many local farmers exist, especially in California, people still struggle with connecting to local farmers and sourcing food locally. Defining what is ‘local’ in terms of food procurement, can have different meanings depending on the many aspects behind who is defining it. One neutrally accepted way of determining whether something is local is by the type of place it is produced. This includes domestic gardens, neighborhood gardens, urban farms, peri-urban farms, and regional culture and excludes two of the largest food distribution systems, national agriculture and international agriculture. It is becoming increasingly important to source local as fossil fuel emissions continue to rise with the growing population. The process of growing, washing, packaging, and transporting food across the country takes about 50 calories of fossil fuel energy for every 1 calorie of food energy. This does not account for food exchanged internationally which comprised a volume of about 69 million tons in 2014. Unsustainable resource extraction in the continued effort to appease global demand has led to scarcities in many parts of the world. As food product transportation ensues to meet global demand, fossil fuel emissions will continue and rise to levels that will exacerbate the rate at which climate change evolves and effects agriculture on a national and global level.

5.1.2 Past Accomplishments

- 2002: Chapman integrates Sodexo for all food vendors on campus, including the dining commons
- 2016: Environmental Audit quantifies vegan/vegetarian satisfaction and feasibility on campus
- 2016: OC Homegrown educational farm opens near Chapman Campus
- 2017: Chapman hosts a farm-to-table event with OC Homegrown

5.2 Current Food Procurement at Chapman

5.2.1 Sodexo

Chapman University contracts with Sodexo, a food services and facilities management company, to manage the dining hall and food vendors on campus. Sodexo has a priority of sourcing local as listed in their 18 Better Tomorrow Commitments. These Commitments include relevant topics such as having a global sustainable supply chain code of conduct; sourcing local, seasonal, or sustainably grown and raised products; and sourcing sustainable fish and seafood in all the countries where Sodexo resides.

According to Chapman Sodexo, “local” cannot be defined based on the variability of seasonal foods and the demand of food products. For instance, avocados are offered year-round, reasoning that when they are not in season, they must be sourced from anywhere that has them, regardless of the
distance. The Head Chef at Chapman University, Jim Douglas, is in favor of sourcing local and even stated that, “pricing is better if you source local”. The two main reasons local sourcing does not always work is the quantity of items needed for a campus and the quality of items, meaning the health standard. The Chapman Sodexo staff stated that they are completely supportive of any change that Chapman University initiates, but cannot change until Chapman University gives them the directive.

5.2.1.1 Cost of Procurement
Specific costs of produce and other food items could not be disclosed due to contractual agreements as specified by Eric Cameron, Sodexo General Manager for Chapman. Though, one major point brought up by Sodexo staff was the price influxes that follows out of season products. Depending on the time of year and demand for certain food items, prices can vary significantly. This provides an economic incentive to Chapman University to provide less out-of-season produce and instill valuable behavioral change in Chapman students, staff, and faculty. With education about food procurement being so important, teaching people how to accept the exclusion of out-of-season products through culinary innovation and knowledge campaigns, students may adapt in a way that Chapman has not given a chance.

5.2.1.2 Chapman University Initiatives
One major initiative that Chapman University would need to initiate to raise the percentage of local food procured is establishing a standard to mainly procure items that are in season. Though this can be worked into the campus by awareness and education, the main concern with directly opposing the demand of food is the consideration of student satisfaction. The majority of students have expressed their lack of satisfaction of current on-campus food, leaving a door open for change and improvement.

5.2.1.3 FreshPoint
Due to the daily volume of food required by Chapman University, Sodexo has hired on FreshPoint to manage food procurement. FreshPoint is a food procurement company that handles the sourcing of produce for large companies. Sodexo simply sends FreshPoint a list of desired produce types and amounts and FreshPoint fills orders by aggregating the produce coming from a variety of farms. Since local farms do not always produce volumes comparable to corporate farms, sourcing locally for a large entity requires the ability to fill orders using multiple farms. Fortunately, FreshPoint prioritization of local sourcing is second only to the quality and safety of food.

Local procurement at FreshPoint means that the produce is harvested within 250 miles of their warehouse. The nearest warehouse is in Los Angeles, 30 miles away from campus. FreshPoint highlights the use of technology that can trace produce to the farm where it was grown. This technology is important to the company due to the increasing desire for consumers to understand where their food is coming from.

According to an interview with Ted Protano, the District Sales Manager for the FreshPoint in Los Angeles, FreshPoint fully believes in local procurement of food and provides educational drivers to make the purchase of local food simple for consumers. When it comes to sourcing for places such as Chapman, once locally sourced options are exhausted, FreshPoint must seek other farms that are not local to fulfill orders. In some cases, such as bananas, local sourcing will never be an option, since there are simply no local farms that grow certain produce. FreshPoint states that it is the demand of the customer that drives procurement elsewhere. If Chapman wanted to source more local food, it would be up to Chapman to determine what lengths FreshPoint has to go to for order fulfillment. If Chapman needs 50 bunches of bananas, FreshPoint will use as many farms, and whichever farms they can, to collect and send Chapman the amount they need.
In terms of quantifying the percentage of locally sourced produce, Ted said it is possible, but it would take collaboration with Chapman University. Thus, if Chapman University wants to advertise how much food is locally sourced, the information is available.

5.2.1.4 Cost of Procurement

One of FreshPoint’s biggest incentives to source local are the costs related to transportation. Compared to other FreshPoint warehouses in states such as New York, the cost of procuring food is much more expensive overall. Ted Protano attributes higher costs with the distance that food must travel to get to the warehouse. In fact, added costs are typically the result of transportation alone.

The comparison of locally sourced food compared to food from common grocery store chains could not be quantified. There are a lot of factors that go into costs of foods that leave the overall determination of a less expensive route unclear.

5.2.2 Chapman Opinion

The 2018 Environmental Audit Survey sought to answer certain questions about local food procurement with the opinions of 659 students, faculty, and staff.

5.2.2.1 Additional Costs

When asked, “How much more would you be willing to pay for local/organic food?” data revealed a staggering 85% of people who would be willing to pay more for local/organic food (Figure 5.1). This suggests that, given potential cost increases due to local food price variances, the majority of people find

**Figure 5.1.** How much more would you be willing to pay for local/organic food?
that locally sourced food is worth additional cost.

5.2.2.2 Reasoning for acquiring off-campus food

![Diagram showing reasoning percentages for off-campus food]

Figure 5.2. Main reason for eating off-campus

In order to estimate whether changes in the food sourced to campus may have an impact on satisfaction, this survey question sought to understand students’ opinions towards on campus food and why they might seek food elsewhere (Figure 5.2). The answer was in a text format, to allow students to answer with their own thoughts and words. The Variety category includes answers pertaining to boredom with on-campus choices, not enough options, lack of cafeteria creativity and variance, and a lack of options for vegans, vegetarians, gluten free, and other allergen exclusive diets. The Dissatisfaction category includes answers pertaining to poor on-campus ingredients, lack of fresh food, lack of healthy food, and complete dissatisfaction with the food on-campus. The Convenience category includes answers such as a lack of food at home, not enough time to cook, preference to avoid cooking, and convenience of restaurants on the way home. The Money category includes answers pertaining to unreasonable on-campus prices, trying to save money, no panther bucks, and preference to cook at home. The Social category includes answers pertaining to a change of pace, meetings, social events, and simply going out with friends. The Commute category includes answers pertaining to the lack of a meal plan and no need for on-campus food due to living at home. The Other category includes answers pertaining to the cafeteria/on-campus restaurant hours, yumminess of off-campus food, long school lines, support for local food and business, and forgetting a lunch.
5.2.2.3 Percent in Support

![Figure 5.3. Support of Local Food](image)

From a scale of 1-5, 63% of those surveyed ranked the importance of local food procurement with the highest level of support. Only a combined 5% ranked local food in the negative direction from a neutral view. Although food procurement is significantly important to students, staff, and faculty, there are not many Chapman events that are centered on local food procurement (Figure 5.3). A simple idea that can help bridge this gap is more advertising on campus for events at OC Homegrown. There are numerous events that bring people closer to the food they eat including farm-to-table events, seasonal cooking demonstrations with local professional chefs, and education on how to find the right farmer, gardening workshops, and so much more.

Often times, the procurement of local food is the most challenging aspect for consumers who support local food. There are many farms to choose from, prices that may divert from standard in-store prices, and seasonality of produce and meat.

With this challenge alleviated, such as in the case where Chapman University would provide local food, 90% of surveyors said they would prefer to eat local if it were provided to them (Figure 5.4). The desire to eat local along with the support for local food should be a wake-up call to the university that local food procurement needs to be a priority. Simple things can be organized to illuminate local food sourcing such as a farmer’s market-to-table event hosted by Chapman once a semester. This would include pairing one of Chapman’s Sodexo chefs with a local chef to shop at the farmer’s market together, plan a menu containing these local foods, and do a cooking demo. This can be further advertised by making it into a short film using collaboration from Dodge College students and posted on Chapman’s sustainability webpage. Furthermore, University of Washington highlights the importance of local food sourcing by celebrating “Farm Fresh Fridays,” an event that takes place every week at an on-campus Café that features specially made foods from local farms. If Chapman were to copy this model, it would help build student relationships with local sourcing.

![Figure 5.4. Would you eat local if provided?](image)
and understanding where their food comes from by advertising local food, local farmer support, and showing students what can be made with local, seasonal food.

5.3 Procurement Standards

The 2016 Environmental Audit reported that Sodexo claims that beef cannot be sourced locally and is currently sourced from the cities of Dorris and Covel, located 696 and 582 miles away, respectively (Newport Meat Company, 2016). Sodexo marries ethical and sustainable which according to this audit, do not go hand in hand in terms of closer meat production. Although not all food that is local is the best option due to ethical/sustainable standards, a high percentage of local food is innately organic, sustainable, and a product of overall sound production.

5.3.1 Aspirational Food Procurement

Sourcing local should not only be a goal for environmental reasons, but also aspirational goals. Chapman University holds itself to very high standards, including those of sustainability. Similar campuses around the U.S. who hold standards that encompass sustainability, systematically incorporate principles for local food procurement. Claremont McKenna’s first choice in food purchasing is to buy, “seasonal ingredients from small, owner-operated farms and ranches within a 150-mile radius of campus.” Seattle University states that of all food purchased on campus, 20% of it must be local and seafood must adhere to the sustainability guidelines proposed by the Monterey Bay Aquarium’s Seafood Watch. At University of California at Davis, Sodexo has gone as far as supporting the creation of a campus owned and sourced farm that resides adjacent to the campus. As schools around the country continue to encourage the progress of their institution as a whole by making changes such as sourcing food locally. Chapman should consider the value in incorporating similar changes in University standards.

5.3.2 OC Homegrown

Chapman’s neighbor, OC Homegrown, is a non-profit farm that does so much for the community in terms of local food education, sharing various tricks of the trade, and supporting local farmers. In an interview with Megan Penn, the Executive Director of the farm, information was gathered about why sourcing local is important, where people falter in the effort to source local, and how making the connection with how something is produced is key.

Price fluctuations when purchasing local may be a concern when people are trying to support local farmers. The prices from local farmers take into account the need for less vehicles and lower shipment costs, less man power, and smaller quantities; all variables that can alter the cost of products. Other things to consider are the additional costs that are eradicated when sourcing local, for instance, every step between the farmer and the consumer which adds costs. When you source local, you are avoiding numerous steps between when your product is harvested to when you actually get to eat it. Local farmers are selling you a product that reflects their work to supply you with that product while other corporate farms are supplying a product to a vendor, which then determins a set price based on demand.

5.3.2.1 Where does my food come from?

According to Mrs. Penn, understanding where your food comes from is one of the most important reasons to source local. With a convoluted modern food market, it is becoming increasingly important to understand your right to know where your food was grown, raised, and processed. In places such as Northern California, this “right-to-know” is already executed in many markets. This importance lies in
the fact that when you are more connected to your food, you are more connected to your community and your awareness of the food ultimately determines your health. When asked how Chapman students could benefit from local food sourcing on campus, these two major points were reiterated. Although some people may oppose the lack of non-seasonal food items, educating students and allowing them to understand why these foods are not offered will alleviate opposition. Support for local products has already been quantified, leaving Chapman with the decision of whether or not to support the people who comprise their community.

5.3.2.2 Sourcing Local at Chapman

In 2017 Chapman University partnered with OC Homegrown to host a farm-to-table catering event. Chef Jim Douglas, Chef Bryan Liem, and Chef Steven Anderson from Sodexo came to OC Homegrown and created and cooked a menu based solely on the crops available. The feedback was substantial in terms of how delicious this food was. There are many reasons that local food is better, and the taste is one that people cannot refute! Whether Chapman University decides to source local because students are not satisfied with current food, importance of supporting local economy, and/or environmental stewardship, there is significant value in sourcing local.

One of the biggest concerns in sourcing local for Chapman is the mere size of the university. FreshPoint alleviates the challenge that comes along with sourcing locally for a large volume, but there are gaps in local sourcing when demand must be met. Chapman Sodexo and FreshPoint have the ability to raise the percentage of local sourcing by catering to the support of local food advocates as opposed to the general demand of food. The Sodexo chefs have proved their ability to produce incredible meals given only seasonal/local items, so why not extend this talent to the dining hall?

5.4 Concluding Assessments about Sourcing Food Locally

5.4.1 Where Chapman is Doing Well

Chapman has done a wonderful job in accepting FreshPoint as their produce distributor given the company’s focus on buying food locally and seasonally. At FreshPoint, buying local is always the best option and they do all that they can to encourage people and companies to choose local food first. Luckily, Sodexo’s willingness to change was apparent in the interview and their capability to produce delicious local/seasonal food has been proven. Both aspects are valuable in considering where Chapman is able to go with local food on-campus in the future.

5.4.2 Areas to Improve

Although it is not possible for an entity such as Chapman to source 100% of food locally, a lot can be done in sourcing more food from a local radius. Behavioral incentives for students to eat seasonal food is just one example of how Chapman can educate while supporting local farmers, local economy, and leading in environmental stewardship. According to Chapman’s farm-to-table event and Ted Protano, local food is much more desirable simply due to the flavor.

5.4.3 Existing Gaps in Knowledge

The biggest knowledge gap is that of quantifying the amount of locally procured food. Along with this information, Chapman Sodexo would need to define “local” for Chapman’s campus. This information is helpful to understanding how well Chapman is doing in terms of local procurement for the student body, competition amongst similar schools, and the community.
5.5 Recommendations for Local Food Procurement

5.5.1 Low Cost and/or Effort

Establishing a transparent percentage of the amount of food sourced locally is important for the student’s right-to-know and can be advertised on Chapman’s website. The percentage should aspire to reach a goal of 20% locally sourced, which is the lower end of schools that place precedence on local food procurement. This can be achieved through enhancing the transparency of the relationship between Sodexo and FreshPoint.

5.5.2 Medium Cost and/or Effort

Local food procurement percentage should be raised to 30% to compete with schools that place precedence on local food procurement. Also, Chapman University should take advantage of the educational opportunity of OC Homegrown by hosting more events collaborated with their staff. Additionally, Chapman should strongly consider the adoption of the farmer’s market-to-table idea and/or the Farm Fresh Friday idea highlighted in section 5.2.2.3.

5.5.3 High Cost and/or Effort

The first choice in purchasing decisions should be local/seasonal foods. The majority of food offered to the dining hall should be seasonal, with the exception of special events and food products that will never be local. On-campus awareness should help make this possible, given the prediction of some opposition. Lastly, Chapman University funds should consider land purchase for a large Chapman University farm, such as that of UC Davis. Its main use will be for food but it can also be valuable in term of educational purposes.

5.6 Future Areas of Research

5.6.1 The Future of Food

In the future, Chapman University should explore the model University of California at Davis has created in terms of the development of a university farm which feeds the majority of the campus. Since Chapman lies in the middle of a city, land within defined local standards could be purchased to house this farm. For instance, if Chapman decides to define local as 150 miles away, a potential farm lot could be implemented anywhere within 150 miles from campus. This farm could also be used for course education in areas such as soil, crops, community, and climate. Students will be more connected to on-campus initiatives such as composting, seasonal food consumption, and health. More information about this farm can be found on the UC Davis website as follows: http://asi.ucdavis.edu/programs/sf/eat-our-produce

5.7 Contacts

Chapman Sodexo and Catering
Eric Cameron, General Manager (eric.cameron@sodexo.com, 714-997-6902)
Dustin Fitch, Resident Dining Operations Manager (dustin.fitch@sodexo.com, 714-997-6706)
Jim Douglas, Chapman Sodexo Executive Chef (james.douglas@sodexo.com, 714-977-6784)
Olga Magana, Retail Operations Manager (olga.magana@sodexo.com, 714-628-7338)
Steven Anderson, Kitchen Manager (steven.anderson@sodexo.com, 714-977-6784)
Megan Penn, OC Homegrown Executive Director (mpennohg@gmail.com)
5.8 References


5Student Farm at University of California, Davis. *Agriculture Sustainability Institute*. Retrieved from http://asi.ucdavis.edu/programs/sf