

# Sustainable FOOD

The word "FOOD" is rendered in a stylized font where each letter is a different image: 'F' is a yellow corn cob, 'O' is green leafy vegetables, 'O' is a wooden spoon in a bowl of brown soil, and 'D' is a basket of red and green apples.

## **Purchasing Guidelines**

### **Luther College**

**First Edition**

## Acknowledgements

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## Table of Contents

Introduction	3
Using the Guidelines	4
Core Food Values	5
Sustainable Guidelines	
Fruits	7
Vegetables	8
Dairy	9
Beef	10
Pork	11
Eggs	12
Poultry	13
Grains	14
Legumes	15
Seafood	16
Coffee, Tea, Chocolate	17
Sweeteners, Oils, Spices	18
Glossary	19
Resources	20

# Introduction

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## Beyond Local

As part of its longstanding commitment to sustainability, Luther College has been working for years to contribute to the local food movement. From decades old efforts to source local honey and seasonal apples to a student led initiative in the early 2000s to have “local foods nights” the goals were to educate students about food production and provide small amounts of food from local farms.

Around 2006, these early efforts began to be institutionalized in more regular purchases from a few small farms and a small, but steady supply of produce from the student-run gardens on campus. In 2008, local food efforts took a dramatic step forward when Luther Board of Regents affirmed a strategic plan with sustainability as a major focus and including a goal to “Increase purchase of local food in Dining Services to 35 percent of total food purchases.”

Since 2008, local food purchases have steadily increased surpassing the 20% mark in 2011. Along with those increases, has come a greater recognition of the complexity in defining what counts as “local food” and an increasing sense that we need more specific criteria to guide purchasing decisions.

While Luther has used distance as a primary determinant for progress on its goal, at least two problems exist for any simple attempt to track “local food.” First, it is very difficult to

determine what counts as “local” and what does not. Is it simply the distance from the farm to the college? Or the total distance the food traveled? Does it count as local if the distributor is local but not all the farms fall within the distance requirement?

Given these complexities, some scholars have determined the very notion of “food miles” is too problematic to use. At the very least we can say that there is no easy way to track “local food” with a simple criterion of distance. Second, much food that is produced within the target radius is not what students have in mind when they think of local food.

The national egg recall of 2011 for food safety concerns brought this issue home as one of the industrial facilities involved in the recall was only 40 miles from campus. While distance is one piece of “local” it is clear that distance alone is not sufficient for what we mean by “local food.”

Given these realities, Luther College has prepared a set of food purchasing guidelines in an attempt to clarify our values and provide more specific guidance in purchasing.

# Using the Guidelines

The guidelines state our food values and are meant to guide Luther food purchasing. We have developed these guidelines primarily for internal purposes to achieve sustainable food purchasing goals. Ultimately, these are guidelines and are to serve for discussion. Food is a complex matter and, after extensive research and discussion, we feel we have developed these guidelines to the best of our abilities.

Our hope is that these guidelines will serve as a helpful tool for the Norse Culinary team as they navigate the complexities of sustainable food purchasing. Additionally, these guidelines will be used for educational purposes on the Luther campus as a way of institutions looking to source more sustainable food.



# Core Food Values

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The following core food values are inherent to each product category and should serve as guiding principles for all food purchases made at Luther.

## **Food Safety**

Luther is responsible for purchasing food that complies with high safety standards in order to ensure consumer health. We recognize the seriousness of food-borne illnesses and are committed to doing everything within our power to keep campus diners from getting sick. Kitchen staff members are trained in various aspects of food safety and we require a Sodexo-approved third party certification for all entities that sell food to Luther. More information on the certification process can be acquired from the General Manager and Purchasing Specialist in dining services.

## **Affordability**

We do not expect good food to be “cheap” but Luther strives for affordability in its sustainable foods purchases. Since our primary “customers” are students paying for an educational experience, it is important to ensure that dining options are affordable for all, while also fairly compensating sustainable food providers. We recognize that paying more is a necessary part of increasing sustainable purchasing and we strive to maintain a premium of no more than 20% (for sustainable products over conventional products from the distributor). We work to model a sustainable foods program that is accessible to all, including K-12 schools, care facilities and hospitals. We continue to explore ways of achieving affordability, such as increasing volumes in order to bring prices down and using products creatively (i.e. carcass utilization).

## **Transparency**

One of the benefits of local sourcing is that the eater can have access to full knowledge of the source and production methods behind food being consumed. We strive to have identifiable sourcing of all food served at Luther College. We find incredible educational opportunities in opening up the food system to consumers, especially at a time when public access to food production methods is being reduced in many places. While we value third party certifications, like USDA Organic, our main goal is to connect students and consumers to the very farms that are sourcing our food in order to increase knowledge of the food system and make sure that practices align with our core food values. In cases when local is not possible, we value third party certification on products like coffee and chocolate to ensure fair treatment of workers and environmentally sustainable practices.

## **Education**

The fundamental mission of Luther College is education and we strive to maintain that focus in everything we do on campus. We believe that food service is not purely an operational matter but rather has the potential to be an educational experience. This education includes student farm visits, bringing producers to campus and providing signage and other communications materials that tell the story of our food. These educational opportunities are all the more abundant when sourcing from farms within a day's drive from campus. We strive to get students on every farm that sells food to Luther College and to have sustainable purchasing actively connected to the educational mission of the College.

# Core Food Values, cont.

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## **Energy Use**

Luther seeks to reduce energy usage by reducing the total miles of where food comes from. We prefer to work with producers who minimize fossil fuel usage by transporting products efficiently. This also includes preference for producers who use alternative energy sources such as solar, wind, etc. We also value producers who keep track of their energy use, have a willingness to conduct Energy Audits, or purchase Energy Star.

## **Environmental Stewardship**

A commitment to environmental stewardship is a core value of Luther College and is even embedded in Luther's mission statement with a call to be "joyful stewards of the resources that surround us." We recognize that agricultural practices can be a significant source of environmental problems such as soil erosion and water pollution and we strive to support farmers who are good stewards of the land. While we value organic food, we picture something that goes "beyond organic" for a more holistic approach that strives for harmony between humans and the land community. We strive to reduce food waste. We prefer those who use minimal and recyclable packaging.

## **Workers Rights & Farmer Equity**

Luther College's understanding of sustainability is not merely environmental but also includes social justice, a value which is a central part of the current and historical identity of Luther. We strive to follow fair trade certifications, but more generally we want to be conscious of worker's conditions, ensure that farmers are fairly compensated, and that child labor is avoided.

## **Local Food**

Purchasing local food allows us to support the local economy and the viability of local food producers in the region. As the largest food purchaser in the region, we are in a position to play a significant role in the development of a regional food system. Many other things (education, transparency) are not possible if food is not sourced from within a days drive from campus. We are committed to generally reducing carbon emissions and food miles. Local food also allows us to eat seasonally by adjusting menus to make the best use of what's available locally in any given season.

## **Real Food**

We seek food with minimal additives, preservatives, dyes, sweeteners, extra salt, etc. This also includes avoiding animal products where the feed has included antibiotics, ionophores, hormones, additives, fillers, or chemicals. We prefer cooking from scratch using whole ingredients and avoiding processed foods to increase the healthfulness of what we prepare and to ensure that we can confidently serve food to those with allergies without concern that an unknown additive will cause an allergic reaction.

## **Taste & Aesthetics**

We look for a quality of food that appeals to students both in taste and aesthetics. We value food that will have a high demand and will be competitive with non-sustainable options.

# Fruits

## About

Fruits grown within the best-suited season and region require less water and pesticides. Humane worker standards are an important consideration for fruit production and can be difficult to verify. For example, conventional banana production has shown evidence of poor labor standards- including 14-hour days and unpaid overtime.



Considerations	Quality & Type	Growing & Farm Practices
<b>Best</b>	Grown in Season	Organically grown using non-genetically modified seed
<b>Good</b>	Minimally preserved or frozen	Integrated Pest Management
<b>Standard</b>	Canned or packaged in heavy syrups	Pesticide Use

## Notes

- Applicable Certifications and Labels include USDA Certified Organic, Fair trade Certified, Equal Exchange, Humane worker standards
- The "Dirty Dozen and Clean Fifteen" is a resource showing the 12 worst culprits of pesticide residue that can harm human health.

# Vegetables & Herbs

## About

Vegetables grown within the best-suited season and region require less water and pesticides. It is not well-known that many conventionally grown vegetables are coated in corn wax for aesthetic reasons. Humane worker standards are also an important consideration for vegetable production, but can be difficult to verify.



Considerations	Quality & Type	Growing & Farm Practices
<b>Best</b>	Grown in Season	Organically grown using non-genetically modified seed
<b>Good</b>	Minimally preserved or frozen	Integrated Pest Management
<b>Standard</b>	Canned or packaged with sodium-heavy preservatives	Pesticide Use

## Notes

- Products include fresh vegetables and herbs, and frozen vegetables
- Applicable Certifications and Labels include USDA Certified Organic, Fair trade Certified, Equal Exchange, Humane worker standards
- The “Dirty Dozen and Clean Fifteen” is a helpful resource showing the 12 worst culprits of pesticide residue that can harm human health



# Dairy

## About

Grass-fed cows produce milk with almost 4 times the amount of omega-3s, a fatty acid with proposed health benefits.

Cows are ruminant animals with a natural ability to break down a diverse range of grassy forage. The grass-fed diet reduces carbon emissions significantly.



Considerations	Animal Treatment	Feed	Inputs
<b>Best</b>	Pasture Based	Grass diet, Organically grown	No antibiotics, growth promoters, hormones, or ionophores use
<b>Good</b>	Limited or seasonal access to pasture	Grass diet with minimal grain supplement	Limited and documented antibiotic treatment
<b>Standard</b>	Confinement	High grain diet	Antibiotic Use and Growth Promoters

## Notes

- Applicable certifications and labels include USDA Certified Organic, grass-fed
- Products include milk, cream, half and half, buttermilk, cheese, butter, yogurt, ice cream, sour cream, cream cheese
- There is considerable variability in defining frequency or amount milked daily depending on variations in cattle species.
- Tail docking , or removing a cow's tail is considered an inhuman practice

# Beef

## About

Cattle are largely raised in feedlots and are fed corn, soy, animal by-products, growth promoters and antibiotics.

Cows are ruminant animals with a natural ability to break down a diverse range of grassy forage. The grass-fed diet reduces carbon emissions significantly.

The majority of farms handle only one portion of a cow's life which requires extra attention when purchasing sustainable beef products. Many cows spend some portion of their life on pasture.



Considerations	Animal Treatment	Feed	Inputs
<b>Best</b>	Pasture-Based	Raised and finished on grass	No antibiotics, growth promoters, hormones, or ionophores use
<b>Good</b>	Limited or seasonal access to pasture	Raised on grass and finished on grain and grass mix for 90-160 days before slaughter	Limited and documented antibiotic treatment
<b>Standard</b>	Confinement	Corn and Grain Diet	Antibiotic use and growth promoters

## Notes

- Applicable Certifications and Labels include Certified Humane, USDA Certified Organic
- Products include Hamburger Patties, Ground Beef, Outside Flats, Eye Rounds, Flank Steak, Beef Chucks, Rib eye, Strip loin, Top Sirloin, Hot Dogs, Roast Beef
- Tail docking , or removing a cow's tail is considered an inhuman practice

# Pork

## About

As highly intelligent and social creatures primarily raised in confinement, it is important to consider the social environments of pigs.

The majority of farms handle only one portion of a pig's life which requires extra attention when purchasing sustainable pork products.

Pigs are able to digest grass, corn, soy, and other grains.



Considerations	Animal Treatment	Feed	Inputs
<b>Best</b>	Pasture Based, Zero farrowing crates and gestation stalls	Grass and grain diet, Organically grown	No antibiotics, growth promoters, hormones, or ionophores use
<b>Good</b>	Limited Confinement, Stable social groups maintained	Diverse Grain diet, organically grown	Limited and documented antibiotic treatment
<b>Standard</b>	Confinement	High grain diet	Antibiotic use and growth Promoters

## Notes

- Applicable certifications and labels include Certified Humane, USDA Certified Organic
- Products include Bacon, Pork Loin, Ground Pork, Ham, Pork Tenderloin, Spare Ribs, Pork Butt, Bratwurst

# Eggs

## About

When it comes to egg production, industrial organic is much different than family-farm organic. There is considerable variability in how poultry can be raised—from housing types, feed to the amount of time spent outside. Even labels such as free-range and cage-free do not specify quality or amount of time spent outdoors .

Poultry traditionally eat a grain and insect diet. Eggs from pasture-raised chickens have less cholesterol and saturated fat, more vitamins A, E, and B12, and omega-3s. Most often, even organic ally raised chickens eat primarily corn.



Considerations	Animal Treatment	Size & Type of Farm	Feed	Inputs
<b>Best</b>	Pasture Based / Free Range	Small Farm	Diverse Grain and Insect Diet (Organically Grown)	No antibiotics, growth promoters, hormones, or ionophores use
<b>Good</b>	Cage Free	Medium to Large	Diverse Grain and Insect Diet	Limited and documented antibiotic treatment
<b>Standard</b>	Caged	Large CAFO	Primarily Corn Diet	Antibiotic Use and Growth Promoters

## Notes

- Products include shelled eggs and liquid egg product
- Applicable Certifications and Labels include Cage free, Free range, USDA Certified Organic,
- Nearly all poultry feed is corn-based, therefore “inputs” is a more important consideration

# Poultry



## About

Conventional poultry breeds are hybrids designed to gain weight rapidly. Rapid weight gain often cannot be supported by bird's skeletal structure. There is considerable variability in how poultry can be raised—from housing types, feed to the amount of time spent outside. Even labels such as free-range and cage-free do not specify quality or amount of time spent outdoors.

Poultry traditionally eat a grain and insect diet. Eggs from pasture-raised chickens have less cholesterol and saturated fat, more vitamins A, E, and B12, and omega-3s. Most often, even organic ally raised chickens eat primarily corn.

Considerations	Animal Treatment	Size & Type of Farm	Feed	Inputs
<b>Best</b>	Pasture Based / Free Range	Small Farm	Diverse Grain and Insect Diet (Organically Grown)	No antibiotics, growth promoters, hormones, or ionophores use
<b>Good</b>	Fixed Housing with some access to pasture	Medium to Large Farm	Diverse Grain and Insect Diet	Limited and documented antibiotic treatment
<b>Standard</b>	Indoors	Large CAFO	Primarily Corn Diet	Antibiotic Use and Growth Promoters

## Notes

- Applicable Certifications and Labels: Cage free, Free range, USDA Certified Organic,
- Products include turkey and chicken breasts, thighs, wings, legs, ground, breasts (boneless)
- Nearly all poultry feed is corn-based, therefore “inputs” is a more important consideration

# Grains

## About

Eating a variety of whole grains has many health benefits such as improving cardiovascular health. Processing and refining grains into flour decreases natural nutrients so the combining flour with whole grains increases nutritional value. Increased genetic modification of wheat has contributed to higher gluten intolerance and sensitivity.

Grains predominately used in the U.S. are corn and soy, especially in name-brand whole grain cereals. The assumed benefits of fortifying, or adding vitamins, are in unknown.



Considerations	Quality & Type	Growing & Farm Practices
<b>Best</b>	Variety of whole grains & unbleached flours	Organically grown using non-genetically modified seed
<b>Good</b>	Unbleached flours	Minimal pesticide use
<b>Standard</b>	Bleached flour, primarily soy/corn, & fortified with vitamins	Genetically modified and Pesticide Use

## Notes

- Applicable certifications and labels include USDA Certified Organic, Fair Trade, Certified GMO Free
- Products include Whole Wheat Flour, Hi Gluten Bleached Flour, Cake Flour and Unbleached, and Oats, Corn meal, Wheat, Breads, Rice, Quinoa, Barley, Faro, Bugler, Cereal
- Valuing real, healthy food requires made-from-scratch products and requires purchasing a variety of flours



# Legumes

## About

Legumes are essential to the human diet and also develop soil fertility. A diversity of legumes in combination with grain provides a good source of complimentary protein necessary for a balanced diet. About 85% of U.S. soybeans are grown with a genetically modified variety.



Considerations	Quality & Type	Growing & Farm Practices
<b>Best</b>	Minimally processed, in "raw" form	Organically grown using non-genetically modified seed
<b>Good</b>	Processed, naturally low-sodium	Integrated Pest Management using non-genetically modified seed
<b>Standard</b>	Processed with preservatives and additives	Pesticide Use

## Notes

- Products include Lentils, Black, Kidney, Cannellini, Refried, Garbanzo Beans, Black-Eyed Peas, Lima Beans, Peanuts, Edamame, Tofu, Soy Milk, Split Peas
- Applicable certifications and labels include USDA Certified Organic, Fair Trade, Certified GMO Free

# Seafood

## About

Sodexo is committed to purchasing 100% sustainable seafood by 2015 certified by the Marine Stewardship Council or Best Aquaculture Practices. Currently, 85% of marine fisheries are overfished and demand for seafood is increasing.

To promote faster growth, farmed fish are genetically altered and often introduce disease to native/ wild populations.

The seafood industry is complicated because of the variations in practice and in species. Farm-raised fish who eat smaller fish are usually fed fish pellets which gives the fish a gray coloration that is then treated with a synthetic pigment to retain normal coloring. Some species are fed animal by-product. Organic labeling is also problematic because it does not include wild caught or carnivorous fish.



## Recommendation

Given the complexity of the seafood industry and the variety of seafood, prioritize U.S. seafood, MSC and MBA

## Notes

-Applicable certifications and labels include Marine Stewardship Council (MSC), Best Aquaculture Practices, Salmon Safe, Monterey Bay Aquarium (MBA) Seafood Watch, FishWise, FishChoice, EcoFish

-Products include Fresh, Frozen, and Sushi



# Coffee, Tea, Chocolate

## About

Coffee, Tea, and Chocolate are typically not produced and processed within one country and are grown in more tropical climates. Producers comply with their country's laws, which do not always comply with U.S. standards. For example, most countries that produce coffee do not have the same pesticide regulations as the U.S. The majority of chocolate is produced in Africa where there are poor labor standards, including child labor.

Third party certifications prevent help solve this problem. Fair trade certification is hard for larger farms to comply with. Even though they are not always certified organic, about 80% of fair trade farmers do not use synthetic or chemical fertilizers.

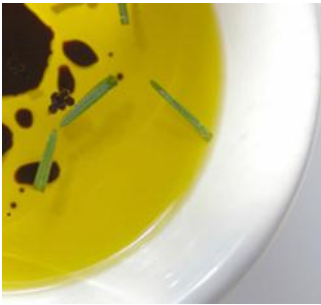


Considerations	Growing & Farm Practices	Size & Type of Business
<b>Best</b>	Third-Party Certified Fair Trade	Minimally processed through small-scale regional business
<b>Good</b>	Shade Grown and/or Organically Grown	Processed through small to medium scale business
<b>Standard</b>	Follows laws enforced within country produced	Heavily processed at large factory

## Notes

- Products include Coffee, Espresso, Tea, Chocolate: Bars, chips, baking chocolate, baking cocoa, syrup
- Applicable Certifications and Labels include Fair trade, Rainforest Alliance, Shade-Grown, Bird-Friendly
- Fair Trade is considered a best practice over organic because fair trade encompasses environmental stewardship, worker equity, and community development projects

# Sweeteners, Oils, Spices



## Oils

Predominantly used cooking oils go through what is known as a “high heat” method of process that uses chemical solvents, bleaching or preservative. The high heat method usually depletes nutritional value.

Organic oils do not allow the use of any of the previous stated chemical methods. The cold press method process the seeds with steel rollers and does not require other inputs.



## Sweeteners

Modern sweeteners such as high fructose corn syrup or beet sugar are heavily processed and central to processed food known as “empty calories”.

While most sugar is not produced in the United States, alternatives such as honey and maple syrup are available regionally.



## Spices

Spices are grown and processed in countries with different agriculture standards. To ensure fair wages and environmental stewardship, the Rainforest Alliance has identified more sustainable sources of pepper, ginger, turmeric, chilies, vanilla, and clove.

Processing and drying spices can involve harsh solvents and heavy metals.

## Recommendations

Regionally processed oils with preference to organic and the cold press method

Regionally produced sweeteners. When not applicable, minimally processed and organic

Preference to local herbs, and Rainforest Alliance certification

# Glossary

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**Bisphenol A (BPA)** a chemical produced in large quantities for use in the production of polycarbonate plastics and epoxy resins. Many countries have banned its use for its carcinogenic effects. It is found in aluminum, plastic, and even receipts. The primary source of exposure to BPA for most people is through the diet.

**Cage-free** indicates that the poultry were able to freely roam a building, room, or enclosed area with unlimited access to food and fresh water during their production cycle.

**Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation (CAFO)** is a USDA classification that identifies a size of an operation that has a significant contribution of pollutants. A large CAFO contains at least 1000 cattle, 2500 hogs, or 125,000 chickens.

**Farrowing crate** is a metal enclosure that allows female breeding pigs to lie down in order to milk their piglets. \*See gestation stall

**Free-range** indicates that the poultry were provided shelter in a building, room, or area with unlimited access to food, fresh water, and continuous access to the outdoors during their production cycle. The outdoor area may or may not be fenced and/or covered with netting. The USDA does regulate the labeling.

**Genetically modified food** is food that has been genetically modified to improve certain traits such as the resistance to herbicides. It poses risks to the environment and human health. They are currently not labeled. The majority of both corn and soybeans in U.S. agriculture are genetically modified. By definition, organic foods do not contain genetically altered characteristics.

**Gestation stall** is a metal enclosure used for female breeding pigs that significantly limits their ability to move. Responding to consumer concerns, it is being phased out in many factory farms as an inhumane practice.

**Grass-Fed** refers to a cattle diet that is primarily grass. As ruminant animals, cattle cannot digest grain without health consequences. The grass-fed diet has a significantly small carbon footprint. Cattle can be grass-fed and finished on grain within organic standards to achieve desired taste profiles. Therefore, it is usually necessary to distinguish grass or grain finished.

**High Fructose Corn Syrup (HFCS)** is a processed sweetener typically found in packaged foods that has higher levels of fructose than corn syrup. As a heavily contested product, the health community has not found consensus in research to link HFCS to higher levels of obesity nor are claims that HFCS is “natural” certified by any standard.

**Integrated pest management (IPM)** is a growing practice that considers many pest control methods through an evaluation process. IPM typically uses less pesticide, as broadcast spraying is a last resort measure. However, IPM is not certified like organic.

**Ionophores** have been used in industry to mimic antibiotics use with an “antibiotic free” label. The USDA has classified them similarly to antibiotics and does not allow such labeling for their use.

**Organic** is usually used to mean food grown without most artificial fertilizers or pesticides and in a way that emphasizes crop rotation, making the most of natural fertilizers and ensuring good soil quality. Animals are managed in ways that minimize the need for antibiotics.

**Pastured-Based** refers to sustainable livestock farming where livestock roam land, primarily eat grasses and are allowed to carry out their natural behaviors. It extends beyond U.S. organic standards that require minimum “access to pasture” days.

**Shade-Grown, Bird Friendly Coffee** is grown under a canopy of trees and maintains habitat that promotes biodiversity. It usually follows organic practices as it is maintained by natural processes such as allowing birds to act as natural pest control.

# Resources

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## Certifications

**Equal Exchange**, a fairly traded cooperative that supplies organic coffees, teas, chocolates, bananas, olive oil, and almonds

**Fair Trade** certifies fruits, vegetables, coffee, tea, cocoa, sugar, grains, herbs, spices, wine & spirits, flowers, fresh & processed foods for global agricultural and processing operations

**Humane Farm Animal Care** (HFAC) implements a certified humane label to ensure humane treatment of animals from birth to slaughter. It works closely with the American Meat Institute standards for slaughtering guidelines.

**Marine Stewardship Council** (MSC) is a non-profit organization that sets standards for sustainable fish.

**Monterey Bay Aquarium** (MBA) Seafood Watch

**Rainforest Alliance** certifies coffee, tea, cocoa, tropical fruits, flowers in tropical agricultural operations

**USDA Certified Organic** is a certification for agricultural and food production in the United States

## Other Resources

- “A Guide to Developing a Sustainable Food Purchasing Policy” A Report by the Food Alliance
- American Grassfed Association
- “Environmental Working Group’s Shoppers Guide: Pesticides in Produce”
- The Food Alliance
- Non-GMO Project
- “Scrambled Eggs: Separating Factory Farm Egg Production from Authentic Organic Agriculture” A Report by the Cornucopia Institute
- USDA Agricultural Marketing Services
- Sustainable Trade Initiative
- “Yale Sustainable Food Purchasing Guide” First Edition

For information about Luther College Sustainable Food Initiatives please visit our website: [www.luther.edu/sustainability/food](http://www.luther.edu/sustainability/food)

View information on our food provider’s values at [www.bettertomorrow.sodexousa.com](http://www.bettertomorrow.sodexousa.com)