

# Real Food Challenge

## Spring 2015

### Indiana University - Bloomington

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## **Draft - May 11, 2015**

### **Executive Summary**

During Spring semester 2015, students of GEOG-G306: Real Food Challenge completed an assessment of food on the Indiana University-Bloomington campus using the Real Food Challenge framework. Seventeen students and one instructor researched over \$18 million in food expenditures at IU-B, spent over the 2013-2014 fiscal year. This research includes all three dining operations at IU-B: Residential Programs and Services (RPS), Athletics Dining, and Sodexo in the Indiana Memorial Union. Approximately 45,000 food products were part of this assessment.

The Real Food Challenge is a national initiative to transform the food system to one that is just, healthy, and sustainable, by leveraging institutional purchasing power and increasing educational opportunities. The Real Food Challenge class began at IU-B as a collaboration between the IU Office of Sustainability Food Working Group (FWG) and the Geography department. The FWG uses this RFC research for sustainability reporting (AASHE STARS) and for setting sustainable food purchasing goals.

At IU-B, students found 5.09% of FY13-14 food expenditures to be real, per the RFC definition of real food. This is food that meets the criteria of “real food” in at least one of the four following categories: local and community-based, fair, ecologically sound, and humane. Out of \$18.9 in total food expenditures, \$969K met the RFC criteria. This 5.09% is comprised of 4.05% local and community-based, 0.02% fair, 1.02% ecologically sound, and 0.0005% humane.

Close to half (48.7%) of food expenditures were found to be disqualified, per the RFC criteria. Over \$4 million was disqualified for containing genetically-modified ingredients. Another \$3.7 million in animal products was disqualified because it is sourced from Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs). Other common disqualifiers are high fructose corn syrup, caramel coloring, sodium nitrite/nitrate, and several food dyes, including yellow #5 and yellow #6. These are considered disqualifiers for a number of social, political, and public health reasons.

The following report provides more detail on the Real Food Challenge and the research completed during the Spring 2015 semester. A supplementary document for the dining directors lists all items found to be real. It is highly recommended that IU-B continues to increase the procurement of real food, and that potential manufacturers and distributors increase their transparency as well as their sourcing of real food products and ingredients.

## **I. Introduction:**

Our current food system is fallible and unsustainable. Within our lifetimes, we will see dramatic changes to our food supply as it is affected by environmental catastrophes such as prolonged drought and pollution from Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) which lead to high amounts of waste in small areas. CAFO waste leads to dead zones and algae bloom, both of which are devastating to the environment. There are serious issues with our current animal husbandry practices as well. Because of the small areas supporting a large number of animals, there is a higher prevalence for disease. As such, preventative antibiotics have become standard. This leads to increased antibiotic resistance not only for the animal population but for the people consuming these animals.

Beyond the environmental factors, we believe that the students at Indiana University have a right to know precisely what is in the food that is being served and where this food comes from. It is for these reasons that we strongly advocate for the increase in real foods that are offered on campus. Real food is that which is considered local, sustainable, fair, and/or humane based on an agreed set of criteria set forth by the Real Food Challenge. Fair and humane practices for the laborers who handle the majority of our food needs to be highlighted as well. These workers deserve fair pay and safe working conditions, and should be a serious consideration in the food that we buy. By increasing the amount of real food on the campus of Indiana University Bloomington, we are actively changing the food system of our university and can create a healthier, sustainable food source for the students, while also setting an example of excellence for other universities in America.

## **II. RFC History Brief & Objectives of Research**

The Real Food Challenge (RFC) is non-profit organization that began in 2007 as a self-funded program of The Food Project based in Boston, MA. The primary mission for the organization is to build a passionate and productive community of student food activists to build a sustainable food system. RFC, as a part of larger food movement, supports a national network of student food activists, focusing on the quality, taste, nutrition, and ethical sourcing of food production and consumption.

The RFC definition of sustainable food has become widely accepted through nation. The RFC thoroughly evaluates the food system and covers diverse aspects of sustainability of food. Real Food has been defined as food, which truly nourishes producers, consumers, communities and the earth. RFC is comprised of three major initiatives: a student campaign, a campus commitment, and the real food calculator. The objective is to increase the transparency of our food system, increase education regarding sustainable food systems, and set clear future procurement goals.

The RFC initiative has been started on many colleges by student activists working to increase awareness of the importance of sustainable food. Indiana University has been participating in Real Food Challenge since 2013. Indiana University-Bloomington currently has three food providers, Residential Programs and Services (RPS) Dining, Athletics Dining, and Sodexo. These three dining services at IU adopted the RFC definition of sustainable food in 2013 and students using the real food calculator released the first preliminary assessment results in 2014.

In this report, we clearly state the strategies of defining sustainable food and provide a better understanding of the origin of our food's ingredients. RFC defines "real" food as that which satisfies the criteria in at least one of the categories listed on the strategies below. A more detailed description of the criteria can be found at [realfoodchallenge.org](http://realfoodchallenge.org).

### III. Methodology

#### **Criteria**

Real Food Challenge has a clear list of criteria defining what foods can be counted as real or not. This is to eliminate discrepancies that may arise between independent institutions and to allow comparative analysis. RFC specifies four categories (**Local & community-based, fair, ecologically sound, and humane**) with clear guidelines of what must be in place for the food to be counted as real in a given category. The list of criteria is also categorized as “green” or “yellow” with green being most satisfactory and yellow being acceptable. Items that do not meet the criteria are categorized as red (not real) and may also be disqualified.

To be considered **local and community-based**, the company must be a privately-traded or cooperatively-owned business that grosses less than 1% of the industry leader that is within 150 miles of the institution. This is to ensure that individuals within the company have the freedom to make decisions about the business and distribution practices of the company. Additionally, in order to be considered local, the total product must have been produced, purchased, and distributed within the 150 radius. The purpose of the radius is to ensure that resources are being redistributed into the area they are produced so that a stronger local economy can be established. This also ensures that the food travels the least amount of distance making it the freshest possible for the consumer making it higher in nutritional content. Food can qualify in the yellow zone of local and community based if 50% of the ingredients on the list fit are produced, processed, and distributed within a 250 mile radius of the institution.

Products can be considered **fair** if they have the following certifications: Ecocert Fair Trade Certified, Fair for Life Certified by IMO, Fair Trade Certified by Fair Trade Lab, Fair Trade USA, or Food Justice Certified. These certifications are to ensure that all workers involved in food preparation, distribution, and production are treated to equitable wages and working conditions. The fair component is important to real food because it creates more sustainable food system through social justice for food workers. Products can earn a yellow light if 50% of the ingredients listed are certified by one of the above ways.

Food is considered **ecologically sound** if they contain one of the following certifications or claims: Biodynamic Certified, Food Alliance Certified, USDA Organic, Protected Harvest Certification, or Rainforest Alliance Certified. Additionally, fish can be certified by the Marine Stewardship Council or if they are on the Seafood Watch Guide’s “Best Choices” Guide. Coffee can be considered ecologically sound if it is certified Bird Friendly. Ecological food leads to a more sustainable and real food system by creating a system of environmental stewardship and awareness where preserving biodiversity is a priority. This includes being aware and conscious of energy, wildlife, water, air, and soil usage and finding ways to protect the resources currently available. Ecologically sound products do not use toxic products and strive to reduce the footprint the product leaves on the earth.

Finally, animal products are considered **humane** if it has been Animal Welfare Approved, Biodynamic Certified, Certified Human, or on step 4-5+ on the Global Animal Partnership Steps. Additionally, products can be yellow light products if they are Certified Organic, Food Alliance Certified, Global Animal Partnership step 3. There are more specific classifications for cows, hogs, and egg-layers. Humane certifications ensures that animals are allowed to live in low-stress environments where they are raised without hormones, antibiotics or excessive medications. This allows the animals to have the best life possible and then can provide the highest quality nutrients to the consumers.

In addition to determining if the product is real, the RFC also includes **disqualifiers**. Disqualifiers are components of the product or the manner of production that in some way deems the product unhealthy, unethical or not safe for use. If a disqualifier is found, the product is automatically discounted as real. These disqualifiers are products with violations such as

OSHA, FSLA and NLRB, from Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs), Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs), and products that contain certain chemicals that the RFC considers too dangerous to be in food. Below is a list of the disqualifiers and the reason for disqualification:

- *OSHA, FSLA, NLRB violations*- If a producer is found to have a violation through any of these standards, the product is disqualified. This is due to safety and health issues as well as fair labor standards.
- *Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations*- CAFOs are farms that the EPA defines by the number of animals contained in a particular space and the pollutants caused by the practices used in this space. CAFOs are not only extremely dangerous for the animals confined there, but also have devastating effects on the environment and harmful human health impacts.
- *Genetically Modified Organisms*- GMOs are greatly contested around the world. In the United States nearly all corn and soy products are GMOs. They are counted as disqualifiers because of the threats to human health, the environment, and the violations of farmer and consumer rights.
- *Chemicals/coloring*- The majority of the chemicals listed are disqualified because they are a known or suspected carcinogen. These include Butylated hydroxyanisole (BHA), Acesulfame-potassium, caramel coloring, Propyl Gallate, Sodium nitrate and nitrite. The following are chemicals that may be carcinogenic, but also have other known harmful effects on health.
- *Olestra*- This chemical inhibits the absorption of some vitamins and other nutrients. This is dangerous for a multitude of reasons but specifically it causes a depletion of carotenoid, which help lower risk of cancer.
- *Partially Hydrogenated Oil (trans-fats)*- Trans-fats are widely recognized as unhealthy for cholesterol levels. High cholesterol in turn can cause heart attacks and strokes.
- *rGBH/rBST*- These hormones are injected into dairy cows to make them produce more milk. These hormones are harmful to cows, undermine efficacy of antibiotics in humans and are possible carcinogens. They also cause harm to the environment.
- *Saccharine*- This artificial sweetener was previously found to be carcinogenic, although that has now been revoked. However it has been linked to possible triggers in insulin release.
- *Dyes Red #3, Yellow #5, #6, Blue #3*- These four dyes are linked to cancer, hyperactivity in children, and can affect men's sexual health (this is mostly applicable to yellow dye).

### **Assumptions & Certifications**

Because many corporations do not make their information readily available we have to work on some assumptions. The certifications listed above were researched extensively by the Real Food Challenge to determine their legitimacy. The RFC provides a Guide that categorizes these certifications into three categories of "Realness:" Green being the best, Yellow being "real" but not great, and Red, not real. We always assume that a food is not "real" unless it has one of the certifications listed under Green or Yellow in the RFC Guide.

We rely on third party databases in order to confirm the food's compliance with the RFC criteria. Aside from local & community-based, each category relies primarily on stringent third-party certifications because we want to avoid green and blue washing in the food industry. We see many companies advertise their certifications as though they apply to all products rather

than a select few (green and blue washing). Therefore, we must assume that marketing is misleading, so we double-check company claims with reporting by the third-party certifier.

As disqualifiers go, we have to assume that processed corn, soy, and canola products are genetically modified unless certified organic. This is because over 90% of these crops grown in the U.S. are genetically-modified organisms (GMOs). Since GMOs are not officially labeled, we assume that any non-organic product/ingredient derived from corn, soy or canola is GMO and hence disqualified.

Many suppliers of animal products are tied to large corporations like Tyson and Cargill, which have been cited as concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs). We assume that companies affiliated with these large companies are CAFOs. If there is no human certification on an animal product, and the source is a large farm (1,000+ heads) or is unknown, we assume it is a CAFO. According to the EPA, a CAFO is defined as a large operation where animals are confined for more than 45 consecutive days and where the owners have been cited for air/soil/water pollution.

### ***Research Process***

The research process begins with acquiring the data on food expenditures. RPS and Sodexo run internal usage reports which list all items purchased and from whom. The RPS report is exhaustive, however the Sodexo report does not capture all vendor and item purchases. For the remainder of Sodexo, and for all of Athletics, the course instructor, Angela Babb, reaches out to vendors to request usage reports (also called velocity reports). These reports list all items sold/purchased by product number and description with total dollars spent over the specified time period (FY1314).

We then split up the products between us. This semester, we have seventeen students in five teams researching over 45,000 line items. We split up the products by distributor (e.g. Piazza, GFS, etc.). For direct vendors such as Prairie Farms, we are researching one company with many farms. For distributors such as Gordon Food Service (GFS), we are researching many companies connected to many brands, manufacturers, and farms.

We start by researching a company online to see if they offer any real food products. Whenever a company offers a product that can be considered fair, ecologically sound, or humane they are likely to promote it in one-way or another. When companies offer such products, they are likely to highly promote this on their packaging or anywhere they can on the website, even if it only refers to a few of their products. However we don't just take the company's word. We double-check company claims using multiple third party certification websites such as the Fairtrade Labelling Organization International (FLO)/ World Fair Trade Organization (WFTO) websites or the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) website or many others.

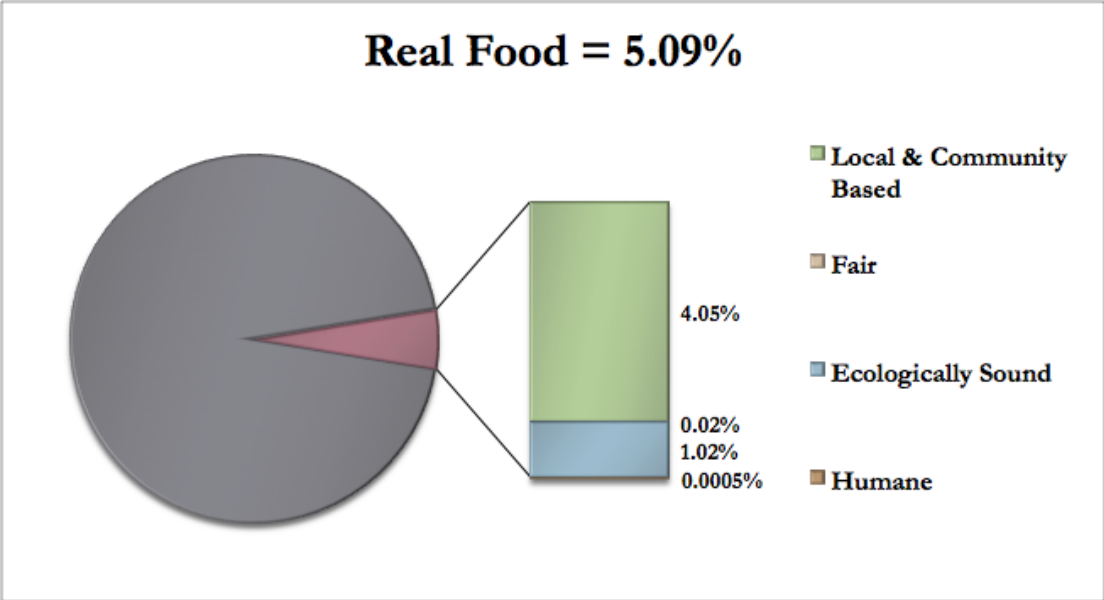
For direct vendors, we ask them to identify the farms from which they source. If they are able to give us a list of farms, we can then research the specific farms. For larger distributors, we often search as far as the brand before finding there are no real products available.

We then review the nutritional information and ingredient lists, looking for disqualifiers. We find nutritional information on the websites of large companies but the products of smaller companies require more in-depth research such as contacting the company directly via email or telephone. Once we have gone through all of the steps of the research process we are able to determine what can and cannot be considered "real".

**IV. Results & Analysis**

**Overall**

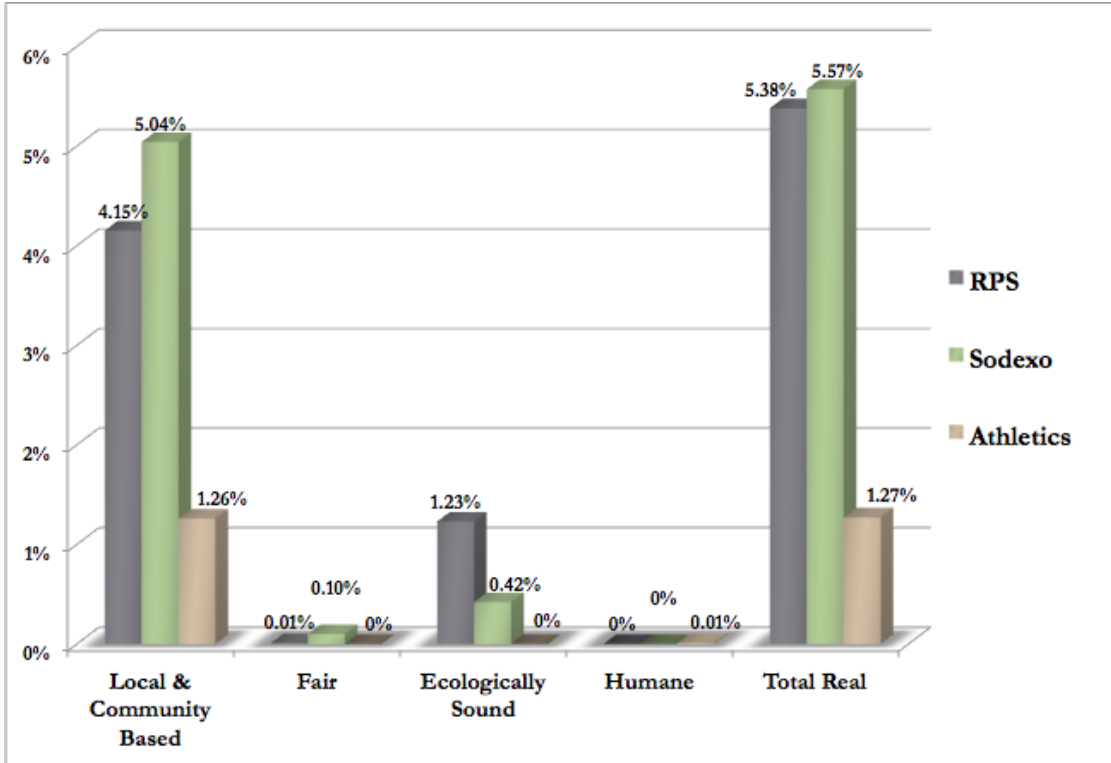
For fiscal year 2013-2014, we found 5.09% of food expenditures to be on real food. This includes 4.05% local and community-based, 0.02% fair, 1.02% ecologically sound, and 0.0005% humane.



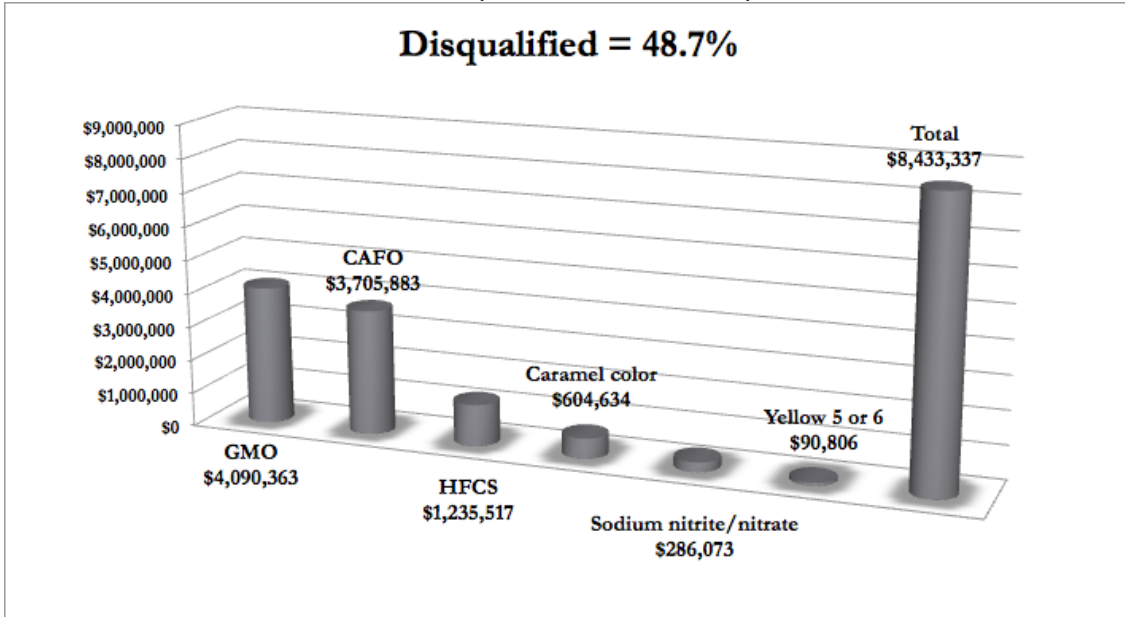
Total Real Food Expenditures	\$966,133
• Local & Community-Based	\$768,633
• Fair	\$3,662
• Ecologically Sound	\$193,747
• Humane	\$92
Total Food Expenditures (all operations)	\$18,978,672



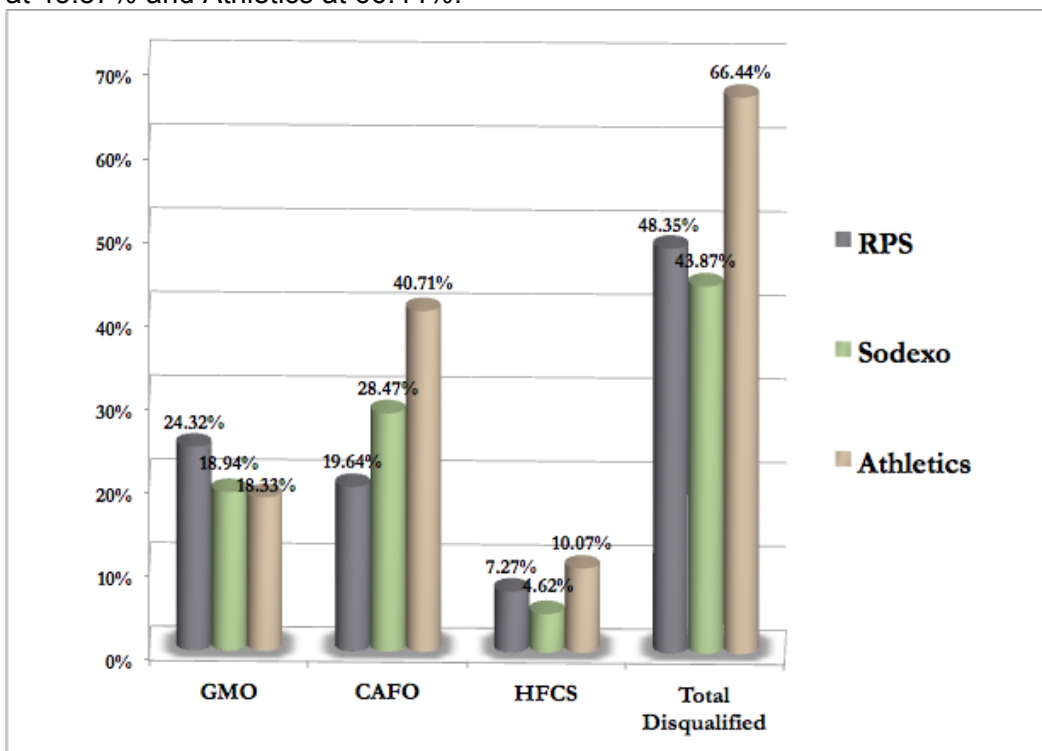
This 5.09% is a weighted average of all three operations, with RPS at 5.38%, Sodexo at 5.57%, and Athletics at 1.27%



We found a total of 48.7% of food expenditures to be disqualified, or \$8,433,337.



This 48.7% is a weighted average of the three operations, with RPS at 48.35%, Sodexo at 43.87% and Athletics at 66.44%.



### ***Change from last year***

These results differ substantially from the preliminary results for FY1213. One major change has been the amount of data. For RPS, we captured another \$2 million in food expenditures with a total \$14.9 million for FY1314. For Sodexo we captured twice as much in food expenditures as we did last year, with a total \$1.7 million for FY1314. This is approximately  $\frac{2}{3}$  of Sodexo's annual expenditures, estimated to total \$2.6 million. For Athletics, we captured \$748K in food expenditures out of an estimated total of \$1.4 million. We also received more information from our vendors this year, and were able to do more thorough research on products.

We also had many more researchers this year. The RFC calculator was run by three students and one professor the first time around. This semester we had seventeen students and one instructor. This allowed us to do much more thorough and rigorous research.

The estimated percentages of real food for FY1213 were substantially lower with RPS at 3.84%, Sodexo at 1.9% and Athletics at 2.0%. We believe our results are not easily comparable to that of last year for the reasons stated above. With more data, more students, and more vendor assistance, we believe our results for FY1314 are the most reliable and accurate estimates of real food yet. We also believe that our numbers will continue to become more accurate and truly reflect our dining operations.

### ***Suppliers (results and recommendations)***

#### **Albert Uster**

Albert Ulster provides 48 items to the IU dining services, none of which are real. All of their items are dessert related; chocolate, jellies, and marshmallows. There are a multitude of

sources that can provide alternative ingredients for the IU dining services which meet the requirements for the RFC *and* still get the ingredients they need. One of these sources is the Mama Ganache company, whose chocolates are 100% organic and Free Trade certified that would meet 2 out of 4 RFC requirements.

### **Alpha Baking**

Alpha Baking contributes a rather small percentage to the total food purchases made by IU. Out of the \$100,000 contract, there are no food products that can be counted as real using the RFC criteria. The products are not counted as real, and additionally are disqualified. Although Alpha Baking is centered in Indianapolis, the products cannot be counted as local because the ingredients are not sourced within the 250 mile required radius. The products are disqualified due to either or both high fructose corn syrup and GMO products, such as soybean oil, that are used in all of their products. Because Alpha Baking has no real products to offer, there are two recommendations that we can give. The first is for the company to make changes to the ingredient list. This would be difficult because the contract with IU is small, so there may not be enough incentive to change. In addition, Alpha Baking would have to put pressure on the suppliers from which they source their ingredients. These suppliers are huge companies such as Conagra who are not likely to change their practices. The second recommendation is to source at least 50% of the ingredients locally, meaning within a 250-mile radius of the IU Bloomington campus.

### **Beasley**

We did not find any real foods for Beasley. We primarily purchase produce from Beasley, although we do source a few animal products through them. These animal products are disqualified because the dairy source was unidentified and assumed to be a CAFO. We know that some of the produce is locally grown, but this is not indicated on the usage report. We would suggest Beasley prioritize any animal purchases from companies that are not CAFO, and provide source information on these products. We strongly suggest labelling locally-sourced foods on usage reports, which likely requires attributing unique SKU numbers to specific farms. We suggest an increase in overall transparency to make this information easily accessible on invoices, reports, and their website.

### **Coca-Cola**

Being one of the largest beverage suppliers in the world, Coca Cola has an extreme influence over the market and has the power to impact the beverage industry significantly by leading by example. Coke has solid transparency in regard to their nutritional information of their products but they could be more transparent by identifying which of their ingredients are genetically modified. We recommend that Coca-Cola label GMOs on their products. We also recommend that Coca-Cola offer more organic options that do not contain high fructose corn syrup.

### **Dawn**

Dawn is a baked goods company that provides 564 products to IU dining services. Only 12 of those items were considered real: semi-sweet chocolate chips, which were ordered 12 times. These chocolate chips were fair trade certified.

It is difficult for bakery products to be considered real food, as their core ingredients are most often sourced from genetically modified organisms (GMO), thus they are automatically disqualified. We recommend that Dawn offer more organic options.

### **Delco Foods**

Delco Foods is known for being one of the most efficient and dependable food services in the industry. Delco foods believes in strict cooperation with the FDA regulations and prides themselves by making that known to the public on the website. Their company feels that additional labels such as “farm-raised”, “free-range”, and “grass fed” only adds confusion to the customer, and that there needs to be more trust in standard information that is already provided. A strategy for Delco in the near future would be to provide more product information on their website, as it is relatively barren and gives almost no nutritional information or ingredients on their products. We recommend that Delco Foods adds information such as ingredients, nutritional facts, and manufacturer/brand information to their website.

### **Donahue**

Donahue contributes a very small percentage to the total food purchased by IU with Waffle Mix being the only item purchased. The products are not considered to be real and additionally are categorized as disqualified because of genetically modified organisms. We recommend that Donahue offer an organic version of waffle mix.

### **F. McConnell & Sons**

F. McConnell & Sons is a family-owned company located in Indiana. They “strive to continually grow [their] business and have embraced improvements including e-commerce..” We believe one area that could use development in order to aid this movement in the company is to improve the website. There is no transparency at all. The website could be upgraded with more information in a more user-friendly style that allows a customer to access the information. Few of the products offered are local or fairly traded. Seems like these areas could be improved for a family-owned company located right here in our backyard. An increase in the number of organic products used would also be beneficial for the well-being of their customers. Focusing less on genetically modified foods is also a step in the right direction. Very little is known about the day-to-day strategies of McConnell, since they are a family owned company but the non-transparency says something in itself. To celebrate being a family owned company for 100 years, McConnell & Sons has decided to do 100 good deeds whether it is at their church, school, or favorite charity. I believe their good deeds should be focused on improving the quality of products they offer to customers. They strive to be the best they can be, which means making a few alterations in their choices of products should be in their best interest.

### **Fair Market**

Fair Market, Inc. is an established leader in the wholesale discount food market, providing a unique service. This company is primarily involved in distributing, repacking products in large quantities at the best price. The purchase made by Fair Market is rather small. The university purchases chicken breasts, beef, and chicken patties from

Fair Market. These products are not considered to be real and are also disqualified for GMOs and for being from CAFOs. We recommend that Fair Market source organic meats from non-CAFOs and make this information clear and accessible.

### **Gordon Food Service**

Gordon Food Service (GFS), is one of the largest distributors utilized by Indiana University (IU). Over 21,000 food items from various manufacturers are sourced through GFS, encompassing the majority of food items consumed by IU. Of these items, only 176 were considered real. However, we must remember that GFS is primarily a *distributor*, not a producer. Much of the burden to achieve a higher RFC rating by the IU dining facilities falls on what products IU orders.

Many of the GFS products are produced by GFS themselves, and the ingredients are not listed on their website. They provided an account access password to see the ingredients, but this was inconvenient as the password could only be used by the instructor. We recommend that GFS provide full transparency for their products on their website, and that this information is publicly available rather than password protected. We also recommend that they source more options from manufacturers that meet the RFC criteria.

### **Hubbard & Cravens**

We source tea, coffee, and hot chocolate from Hubbard and Cravens. A few of these items were found to be organic, namely the hot chocolate, the Sobro coffee blend, and the peppermint tea. According to Hubbard and Cravens, “Ensuring that the growers we work with are successful and prosperous is of utmost importance to us, so we guarantee a price, set far above international fairtrade standards, is paid directly to them.” This method of direct sourcing has the potential to benefit coffee farmers more than fair trade certifications. We highly recommend that Hubbard & Cravens increase their transparency such that we can verify their coffees to be fairly sourced and considered real under the fair category.

### **McFarling**

McFarling contributes a significant amount to the total food purchases made by IU. These products are mostly poultry, meat, and fish/seafoods. All of the products are not counted as real. They are also disqualified because they are from CAFOs. Since products from McFarling contribute greatly to the total purchases by IU, immediate actions are needed to improve the quality of these foods. Such actions could involve negotiation with McFarling about the serious problems related to CAFOs. We recommend that McFarling source more humane-certified options and provide information about the source of these animal products.

### **Peet's Coffee**

Peet's Coffee sells 68 items to IU, and 7 of them are considered real. The Gaia Organic blend coffee, the Pacific Soy Blend, the Chai Tea liquid concentrate, and the Awake tea all met the RFC criteria. We suggest that Peet's continues to increase options that meet the RFC criteria.

## **Performance Food Group**

Performance Food Group prides its business success on balancing environmental, economic and social objectives. They provide the best service and value to their customers by working hard to achieve the highest operational efficiency, minimizing the impact on the environment, and creating benefits to their associates, customers, suppliers, and communities. The Performance food group is also a large supporter of animal welfare. In order to keep up their science-based strategies that enhance the humane treatment of food animals, the Performance Food Group is dedicated to constantly reviewing and updating these practices to ensure they follow the industry's best practices. One strategy the Performance Food Group may want to consider is to look for local producers that are growing and farming organic plants and animals. This will ensure no GMOs are going into the process of production and all customers will be eating overall more healthful food.

## **Piazza Produce**

Piazza Produce was one of the largest contributors of real food in the local category. The following local foods are currently being purchased from Piazza:

- Cottage Cheese
- Milk
- Sour Cream
- Yogurt
- Various desserts
- Squash
- Zucchini
- Seedless watermelon

Piazza marks foods produced within 250 miles of Indianapolis as "Local." Because of this information, the university can evaluate their purchases to align with the local availability when seasonally appropriate. We are able to assume that these foods marked as local are in fact local, however there may be other items not marked that are potentially local. More importantly, we cannot currently track products back to the farm to confirm their location of origin. If Piazza created a tag or separate SKU for each farm, it would assist in identifying a greater amount of local foods, and would provide marketing opportunities for both Piazza and IU dining operations.

## **Prairie Farms**

All of Prairie Farms' products were considered real. They fulfill the requirements to be considered local, which is within 250 miles of the campus. Prairie Farms participants do not have large herds, with each farm having 100 head of cattle or less. These reasons make the company an ideal partner to continue to work with on campus. We would suggest that Prairie Farms provide information about their farms on their website.

## **Royal Cup**

None of the Royal Cup products were considered real, however there were no disqualifications for them either. We would encourage Royal Cup to look to Fair Trade certifications.

### **Scholar's Inn Bakehouse**

Scholar's Inn Bakehouse is a bakery located in Bloomington, Indiana. However, the ingredients are not sourced locally, so Scholar's Inn Bakehouse is not classified as local. We highly recommend that Scholar's Inn Bakehouse source more local ingredients. At least 50% local ingredients, and we can count them as real under the local and community-based criteria.

### **Southern Food Systems**

We currently source Charlie Biggs batter and sauces through Southern Food Systems. These products are disqualified for containing genetically modified ingredients. We recommend that Southern Food Systems switch to organic vegetable oils so that these products are not disqualified.

### **Starbucks**

While none of the Starbucks are considered real by the RFC guidelines, it is still one of the more ethically minded coffee companies. Currently Starbucks relies on a third party verification system called C.A.F.E Practices, however at this time there is not enough transparency for us to consider it real. We recommend that Starbucks representatives highlight their third-party certified blends: Cafe Estima and Serena.

### **Sysco**

We currently source a range of items from Sysco, including tea, coffee, soup, spices, canned vegetables and baked goods. None of these items were found to be real in any category. We highly recommend that Sysco increase transparency of their products on their website and increase options that meet the real food criteria.

### **Tree of Life**

Tree of Life supplies us with a range of items, including chocolate, non-dairy milk, granola bars, snacks, frozen entrees, and yogurt. We found many of these items to be real under the ecologically sound and fair categories, including Clif bars, Luna bars, Amy's entrees, among other various organic options. We encourage Tree of Life to continue offering these options, and recommend that IU continue purchasing these options.

### **UGo Bars**

UGo Bars make up only two items ordered for the IU dining facilities, but absolutely encapsulate the very spirit and message of the RFC. They are a small, local, business that is organic. We highly encourage the IU dining directors to continue to buy UGo Bars as the purchases go directly back to the Bloomington community and they meet the RFC requirements. We also encourage the UGo Bar company to source more of their ingredients locally.

## **V. Recommendations & Strategies**

### ***Dining Services (RPS, Sodexo, and Athletics)***

We strongly urge the university to keep purchasing a larger amount of real food moving forward, with particular focus on local foods. We feel that this is the most feasible step to take

towards increasing real foods because of the area in which we live. Our state offers a bounty of real food items and we should capitalize on that opportunity. In addition, we believe that it is important that more products be purchased from non-CAFO organizations and that these items are highlighted in the dining areas.

Another vital objective that we want to stress in the next year is maintaining transparency between the vendors and the university. The purpose for this is two-fold; it allows the Real Food Challenge class to research the items in a more comprehensive manner and respond more effectively to changes that need to be made. Transparency also allows for students to know which foods are real and which foods are not. Therefore, increased signage in the dining halls advertising real food to students would be an engaging and important step in this process.

This can be done through signage in the cafeteria spotlighting what dishes include the local food as well as where the food came from. This level of awareness may challenge students to become more interested in their food origins and increase support for the Real Food Challenge. The university should also prioritize healthier foods at concessions through the Athletics Department to reinforce the commitment to healthier foods for everyone on campus.

Some alternative sources we found include: Alpine Valley Breads, which at a cursory glance meets 2 out of 4 RFC requirements, and has no disqualifiers. We highly encourage the IU dining directors to source more fair trade coffee from Peet's Coffee and to purchase the real options from Starbucks: Fair Trade Certified Café Estima and the Organic Serena Blend. Below is a list of local products that the university is not currently purchasing from Piazza that are available during significant amounts of the school year:

- Frozen blueberries/blueberries
- Eggs
- Eggplant: We currently purchase a non-local product from Piazza
- Cabbage: We currently purchase a non-local product from Piazza
- Cantaloupe: We currently purchase a non-local product from Piazza
- Greenbeans: We currently purchase a non-local product from Piazza
- Parsnips
- Green pepper: We currently purchase a non-local product from Piazza
- Potatoes: We currently purchase a non-local product from Piazza
- Radish
- Mung beans
- Tomatoes: We currently purchase a non-local product from Piazza
- Squash
- Various Cheeses

Ideally, all of these produce items would be purchased instead of the alternatives that are currently used. This would give the dollars that are spent on food greater purpose as they are going back to local farms and promoting the smaller farms that have been able to successfully collaborate with a distributor to broaden the reach of their products.

Because the university is a large institution, their purchases have power. The university is encouraged to seriously consider the broad, long-term benefits associated with purchasing more local foods. If they were to make additional purchases from local producers directly, farmers may have an increased market that would then allow them to farm additional products that would further increase the amount of real food purchased. We highly recommend referencing the supplemental spreadsheet that lists



all real options currently purchased, and increasing the procurement of these real options.

### ***Suppliers***

Overall, we have two recommendations for our current and prospective vendors and distributors: 1) increase transparency, and 2) increase real food options. The strategies for pursuing these two recommendations vary by location, scale, and operation. With hundreds of schools now using the RFC definition and looking to source more real food, we believe adopting this definition and the RFC principles is highly beneficial for food suppliers on the market. Regionally and nationally, colleges and universities are also demanding real food and looking for real suppliers.

To increase transparency, vendors should consider putting more information online about the farms from which they source and the ingredients within the food products. Distributors should consider providing more information about the manufacturers from which they source their products and any relevant information, including ingredients and certifications. One particularly effective strategy would be to implement a system of unique SKU numbers so that origin information is not lost during distribution. This may also be possible by using UPC rather than SKU numbers.

To increase real food options, vendors should consider sourcing more ingredients locally (within 150 or 250 miles). Distributors should consider sourcing more products locally and from small, independent or cooperatively-owned operations. Vendors and distributors should consider sourcing more products that have certifications recognized by the RFC and that do not contain any disqualifying ingredients. All suppliers should consider which strategies would both qualify them as real food and maintain economic viability. Again, strategies will vary by operation, but overall, we believe providing more real options and more transparency will be beneficial for vendors and distributors in the longer-term.

### ***Real Food Challenge Students***

Since most of the products in our spreadsheets were grouped by brands, it is easiest to stay focused on the products of the same brand name, rather than organizing your research based on the category or some other form of distinction. The reason to group and research products by brand rather than product type is because much of the information about the brand ended up applying to the majority of the products from that brand, and that way you will not have to be navigating from website to website, so more than anything, this saved us a great deal of time and effort. Following a brand-based research approach you will also come to learn that a majority of the websites do not provide much information, and you may need to seek other sites or contact their company directly for additional information in order to efficiently complete your research.

When searching for information on products, it is beneficial to know as much about the product and the company beforehand. Before searching for a product individually, it is important to learn as much about the company as possible, that way you have a general understanding of the company whenever another product from that company appears.

The nutritional information and ingredients will be where you find the disclaimers, so it is important to get familiar with the real food guide and know what is and what isn't considered a disqualifier, as this could be the final check to whether or not the product can be considered real or sustainable.

## **VI. Conclusions**

Indiana University has made improvements from the previous year, and we expect an even higher real food percentage as the G306 class continues to do more comprehensive research and the dining directors keep working towards obtaining more real food. As we increase transparency among our vendors, distributors, and our university, we will find more real food and potential outlets for procuring more real food. This will greatly improve the viability of Indiana University and the opportunities for food suppliers.

As we increase support of our local and sustainable food systems in Bloomington and throughout Indiana, we will see an increase in opportunities to source more real food. By putting more money toward local, sustainable food systems, this economic initiative will help grow our local and regional food systems, and increase our options. The current barrier of inadequate local supply will only be mitigated by more circulation of monies into the local food system. Growing the local food system also greatly increases local and regional food security.

We believe it is in everyone's interest to collaborate on this initiative, such that we can simultaneously improve the health of our students, faculty, staff, and community, increase the viability of our local economies, create new markets for our vendors and distributors, and transform the food system to one that is healthy, just, and sustainable.