



SETTING THE TABLE FOR AN ABUNDANT FUTURE

A FOOD SYSTEM PLAN FOR SAN JUAN COUNTY

2025 – 2035

Prepared by the Food System Team of San Juan County

with support from Terra Soma, LLC



LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Food System Team members are deeply grateful to live in the lands and waters of the Coast Salish Peoples. We thank and uplift these Original Stewards, who have tended these islands since Time Immemorial, and we honor inherent, aboriginal, and treaty rights that have been passed down from generation to generation. We work to deepen relations and practices with Coast Salish neighbors to uphold our responsibility to care for these lands and waters in a reciprocal and responsible way. Our hope is that the actions in this plan can be stepping stones to a shared and abundant food future.

Image: Camas field, by Jaime Beechum

Cover images: Stillwater Ranch, by Angie Shepherd; Long Live the Kings; Sweet Earth Farm, by Robert S Harrison

WITH APPRECIATION

The Food System Team wishes to express deep appreciation to all those who have made this project possible: Terra Soma, LLC for absolutely instrumental *pro bono* services; the generous funders of this significant undertaking; USDA's Regional Food System Partnerships grant program; San Juan Islands Agricultural Guild for serving as fiscal sponsor; Northwest Agriculture Business Center for technical and administrative support; and the hundreds of people who engaged with our process and care so deeply about the San Juan Islands' food system.

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Pro bono technical assistance to support community engagement, planning, and document drafting provided by **Terra Soma, LLC** – a Lummi Nation/woman owned consulting firm working at the intersection of food, health, agriculture, and related cultural traditions.



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Image: San Juan Islands Visitors Bureau

INTRODUCTION

The Food System Plan for San Juan County is a comprehensive, practical, and intentional resource designed to equitably relocalize the county's food system. The Plan was developed through a multi-phase engagement and research process. It provides community-identified goals and strategies outlining a long-term approach to ensuring a thriving, resilient food system for the county.

In 2019 the San Juan County Agricultural Resources Committee prioritized the creation of a food system plan as a way to support local food production and began to lay the groundwork for this project. Just before the COVID-19 pandemic, a grassroots, ad hoc group with leadership representing public health, sustainable agriculture, WSU Extension, and retail and wholesale food sectors formed the Food System Team of San Juan County. Funded through a generous private donation and the USDA's Regional Food System Partnerships grant program, the Food System Team conducted a food assessment, and subsequently developed this food system plan.

Active engagement from farmers, ranchers, fishers, Tribal members, grocers, restaurateurs, food artisans, eaters, and dozens of organizations throughout the assessment and plan development has shaped the goals, strategies, priorities, and approach to implementation described in this plan. These stakeholders seek greater agency in creating a place-based, ecologically resilient food system that prioritizes local and seasonal production, supports growers, and ensures equitable access to affordable, healthy, and culturally relevant food.

This Food System Plan strategically addresses issues, barriers, opportunities, and assets that are central to the vitality and resilience of the islands' food system. The Plan's concrete strategies are designed to collaboratively advance a comprehensive effort to care for and cultivate our local food system in the coming years.

It is vital to uplift the central importance of the San Juan Islands and the surrounding Salish Sea as the traditional and ancestral homelands of Coast Salish nations. Underlying shared commitments and interests in strengthening relationships between Coast Salish Peoples and islanders are core to the priorities, strategies, and approach to implementation described in this Plan.

San Juan County's local food system offers an abundance of strengths, including supportive eaters, visionary leadership, some important infrastructural assets, dedicated farmers and food makers, and more. Yet, as an archipelago faced with rapidly rising land and housing costs, the specter of major climate incidents, a remote location reliant on a challenging transportation infrastructure, and under-resourced relevant infrastructure, much must be accomplished to ensure a resilient future food system.

San Juan County is fortunate to have existing plans, such as Growing Our Future and the County’s Comprehensive Plan, that include findings and recommendations associated with agricultural, marine, and food system resources and management. Building on these plans and four years of research and engagement, the Food System Team has produced two documents, as well as forthcoming additional resources, as part of an iterative design process:

The [San Juan County Community Food Assessment](#) provides a comprehensive description of the state of the county’s food system, including barriers, issues, needs, assets, and opportunities. To contextualize the goals, objectives, and strategies laid out in the Food System Plan, readers are strongly encouraged to first read the Assessment.

This **Food System Plan for San Juan County** is a companion document to the Community Food Assessment. Based on findings from the Assessment, the Plan offers goals, objectives and strategies designed to equitably relocalize the food system.



Image: Aurora Farm, by Robert S Harrison

A companion document to the San Juan County Community Food Assessment, the Plan offers five goals with accompanying objectives and strategies that will lead to a resilient food future:

- 1. Scale Up Local Food Production**
- 2. Steward Land and Enhance Ecosystems**
- 3. Ensure Access to Healthy Food**
- 4. Reduce and Transform Waste**
- 5. Grow Community Connections**

These goals and related strategies are responsive to numerous strategic questions posed by a variety of food system stakeholders across San Juan County, including:

- What are the relationships we need to honor in order to care for each other and the land, water, air, and all living beings?
- How will we ensure that islanders have access to healthy, culturally relevant foods?
- How do we balance the tension between the cost of local food production, and ensuring that islanders have access to affordable local food?
- How can we make sure that food system workers have affordable, adequate housing and a viable income?
- How do we best support, sustain and celebrate our existing farmers, fishermen, food artisans and enterprises, land stewards, and food cultures?
- How do we prepare for unanticipated changes ahead, along with current trends such as the large influx of second home property owners and major climate events?
- What kind of infrastructure do we need to support local food production, aggregation, storage, manufacturing, and distribution, and to reduce and repurpose food waste?
- As residents of the hereditary territory of Coast Salish Peoples, how do islanders honor, acknowledge, and uplift tribal sovereignty, values, and priorities?

These critical questions have generated the goals, objectives, and strategies contained in this Food System Plan, which are accompanied by proposed implementation strategies, key collaborations, and approaches to tracking progress and impact.

It will take numerous partners, ongoing community engagement, significant resources, political will, durable support from consumers, and a wide-ranging array of productive, trusting collaborations to advance the dozens of strategies described in this document. This path forward will provide diversified leadership, comprehensive support and coordination, policy and funding mechanisms necessary for ongoing implementation, and will be grounded in mutual respect and shared values for the work ahead.

TOP 5

WINNABLE GOALS

for the San Juan County Food System

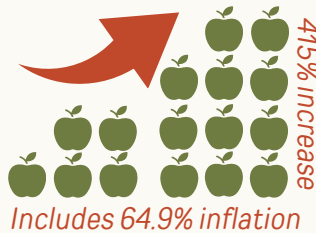
2020
Status

2035
Goal

Local
Food
Sales

\$5.1m

3.7% of food
spending

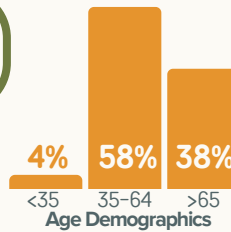


\$26m

10% of food
spending

Number of
Agricultural
Producers

576



993

+417 producers
& age demographics
trending younger

Retailers
Participating
In Local Food
Incentive
Programs

24



35

Food Waste
Composting
Facilities



Number of
Cooperative
Food & Farm
Enterprises

5

PURCHASING CO-OP FOOD CO-OP
FARM CO-OP CO-OP RESTAURANT
CO-OP EQUIPMENT CO-OP GRAIN
BAKERY CO-OP KITCHEN CO-OP
FORESTRY CO-OP SEED CO-OP
CO-OP DRY CO-OP

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WHAT IS A FOOD SYSTEM PLAN?

Feeding a population of any size is a perennial human concern. As an archipelago, San Juan County is no exception and must consider how best to meet current and future food, agriculture, and marine-related needs in the context of climate change, emergency preparedness, transportation, infrastructure, public health, economic pressures, land access, and an economically and culturally diverse population.

Before embarking on a food system plan process, many regions conduct community food assessments to understand the issues, barriers, gaps, assets, needs, and opportunities associated with their food system. These assessments subsequently inform the development of food system plans that contain key priorities, associated strategies, ways of measuring impact, identification of partners, and approaches to implementation.

These food system plans can guide future investments, partnerships, portfolios of work by tribal, private, public, and non-profit organizations, as well as individual actors in a food system. Because feeding people is a complex enterprise, food system plans are designed to be comprehensive and address the entirety of the food system. These plans typically focus priorities and strategies at specific scales that target individuals, communities, and regions.

There is a growing movement by hundreds of communities and regions across the continent to undertake this type of intentional, comprehensive approach to food systems. Increasingly, island communities are developing food system plans to claim greater agency around their food future; address the unique needs they experience because of their geography; and advance creative, much needed food- and agriculture-related initiatives. Many counties, regions, and Coast Salish communities in Washington state have also prepared food system plans to assess their current food systems and plan their food futures.

San Juan County is fortunate to have a strong foundation to build from - a vibrant food culture rooted in farming, gardening, hunting, gathering, and the harvest of food from the waters. Farming families whose knowledge of the land goes back generations, as well as first generation farmers, are raising livestock and producing vegetables, fruit, berries, and grains. Growers, makers, gatherers, and workers contribute their knowledge and labor to nourish the island community. Enthusiastic eaters support the local food system through their spending and shopping habits, culinary know-how, and understanding of the importance of a vibrant local food culture.

For San Juan County, an equitably relocalized food system will be capable of feeding all those who live, work, and visit the islands and those for whom the islands are traditional hereditary territory. The future agricultural system must be ecologically resilient, attuned to the rhythms and needs of the many creatures who are a part of this beautiful place, and capable of thriving despite major social and environmental challenges.

Farmers and ranchers need to be supported with the resources necessary to raise food that sustains us and our local economy. Daily basic needs must remain affordable and accessible to all and meet everyone's cultural and nutritional needs. It will be essential to uplift and care for the vibrant food cultures and heritages of the San Juan Islands. The many strategies contained in the San Juan County Food System Plan are designed to fulfill these aims.



Image: Orcas Community Participatory Agriculture @ Kaj Dawg Farm, by Justin Blevins

KEY FINDINGS IN THE SJC COMMUNITY FOOD ASSESSMENT

Findings contained in the Community Food Assessment highlighted strengths and key developments throughout the island's food system including a vibrant island food culture, a small and strong agricultural community, collaboration among supporting organizations, farmland preservation programs, and an ethos of stewardship. The document also pinpointed numerous aspects of the islands' food system and related factors that require sustained, strategic attention to maintain abundant assets and address deep challenges. These include:

- San Juan County is highly reliant on food imported to the islands, with local food sales accounting for less than 4% of total food spending.
- Climate change and ecologically harmful practices affect the resilience and vitality of groundwater, marine environments, soil health, and food production capacity.
- Water access, storage, quantity and quality affect farmers and residents alike as long-term concerns.
- An untenable cost of living and an affordable housing crisis affect all aspects of the food system, from rising rates of food insecurity, to businesses being chronically understaffed or forced to close, to local food being out of reach financially for working islanders.
- Producers face onerous costs for infrastructure and machinery, fertility inputs, amendments, and shipping to the islands.
- Farmland and housing access, succession planning and farmland preservation are issues deeply affected by development and rising land costs, particularly for new and retiring farmers.
- There is inadequate infrastructure to (1) handle food waste at scale and to (2) meet the increasing demand for on- and off-farm processing, storage, aggregation, and distribution of locally raised and made items.
- The regulatory environment is burdensome, complex, and unclear for many food and farm entrepreneurs.
- Greater public investment in and sustained attention to technical assistance, capital support and investments, and regulatory refinements and policymaking in support of the local food system are needed.
- Decision makers face gaps in knowledge around the current and potential role of non-market food production in the islands.
- As an island community, an unreliable and under-resourced ferry system negatively affects all aspects of the County's food system.
- Longstanding impacts of federal Indian policy, colonization, and land theft, combined with long-term disengagement by islanders, have undermined Tribal sovereignty; impeded Tribal access to traditional lands, shorelines, and waterways; and inhibited constructive relationships between Native and non-Native peoples that center Tribal concerns, needs, and ways of knowing.

GOALS OF THE FOOD SYSTEM PLAN

The above issues informed the development of the five goals outlined in this Food System Plan. These goals span infrastructure development, community food security and well-being, and environmental sustainability, and are designed to comprehensively and holistically ensure that San Juan County's future food system is resilient, equitable, and economically vital.

In the sections that follow, goals are accompanied by related objectives and strategies. Strategies are listed in a ranked order from the Town Hall prioritization processes.

* Strategies that include an asterisk were added in the final review phase.

1

Scale Up Local Food Production

2

Steward Land and Enhance Ecosystems

3

Ensure Access to Healthy Food

4

Reduce and Transform Waste

5

Grow Community Connections

Goal 1 | SCALE UP LOCAL FOOD PRODUCTION

Stakeholders have emphasized the importance of ensuring San Juan County has a robust local food supply that can drive the economy; provide a thriving, healthy food culture for residents and visitors alike; and further engage islanders in their local food system. Targeted, strategic investments in San Juan County's local food infrastructure and workforce will lay a much-needed foundation to expand the availability of local food. Similarly, focused efforts on educating and engaging workers and residents alike about their local food system can drive demand for and commitment to the community's food system.

Objective	Strategy
1.1 Increase Commercial Production and Sales of Local Food	1.1.1 Support producers to optimize farmland for food production through best management practices, ongoing research, and innovation
	1.1.2 Evaluate which foods are best suited for increased local production
	1.1.3 Preserve and restore wild seafood and sea vegetable harvest in alignment with Coast Salish Tribal initiatives
	1.1.4 Increase food production during shoulder and winter seasons
	1.1.5 Support value added production and cottage food businesses

Objective	Strategy
1.1 Increase Commercial Production and Sales of Local Food	1.1.6 Encourage establishment of perennial foods systems and pollinator friendly plants on public and private lands
	1.1.7 Assist food and farm entrepreneurs with successfully navigating regulatory requirements
	1.1.8 Increase the availability of local seafood and sea vegetables
	1.1.9* Increase the percentage of the wholesale market that is sourced from local producers
	1.1.10* Scale up and incentivize local food consumption
1.2 Increase Non-Market / Home Production and Processing of Local Food	1.2.1 Increase opportunities for nutrition education, healthy food preparation and preservation, and food growing activities
	1.2.2 Increase the number of people who grow their own food
	1.2.3* Increase access to land, tools , and other infrastructure for personal food production
	1.2.4* Increase awareness of opportunities and best practices for hunting, foraging, wildcrafting , and other harvest methods

Objective	Strategy
1.3 Support a Thriving Workforce	1.3.1 Increase the number of affordable housing units for food and farm workers in the islands
	1.3.2 Provide resources to aid food and farm businesses in providing living wages and ethical labor practices for food and farm workers
	1.3.3 Support multiple educational and vocational pathways to grow the food system workforce , including opportunities for youth
	1.3.4* Strengthen mental health support for farmers, food system entrepreneurs, and workers

1.4 Strengthen Community Food Infrastructure and Services	1.4.1 Expand on-farm infrastructure for livestock, poultry, seed, and crop production; processing; storage; distribution; and agritourism
	1.4.2 Identify and fund community storage, distribution, and value-added processing facilities needs
	1.4.3 Create adequate composting infrastructure and programming on each island to reduce food waste in the waste stream and to provide a local compost source for farmers
	1.4.4 Analyze the supply chain of the hunger relief system, institutional food services, retail grocery, and alternative market channels and align needs and assets

Objective	Strategy
1.4 Strengthen Community Food Infrastructure and Services	1.4.5 Make long-term investments in infrastructure that supports the production, harvest, processing, storage, and sales of seafood and sea vegetables
	1.4.6 Improve transportation for food and ag activities within the islands and to/from the mainland
	1.4.7 Support vocational training for mechanics in the islands to meet mechanical and fleet repair needs for agricultural, food, and farm businesses
	1.4.8 Ensure access to and allow sales from existing public docks for commercial fishing vessels
	1.4.9 Increase the availability of locally-produced seed and native and food-producing plant stock
	1.4.10* Strengthen consistent access to affordable, high quality veterinary care
1.5 Enhance Economic Viability of Local Food Enterprises	1.5.1 Increase financial infrastructure and access to capital for food and farm businesses / entrepreneurs
	1.5.2 Reduce regulatory burden and promote policy that fosters a supportive regulatory environment needed for farms and food businesses to prosper financially
	1.5.3 Expand support for food and farm businesses and entrepreneurship by way of marketing, technical assistance, and innovative revenue streams



Image: Manna Bird Farm, by Satya Curcio

Goal 2 | STEWARD LAND AND ENHANCE ECOSYSTEMS

Care for our land, water, air, and earth are critical to our survival as humans, and reflect ethical and cultural commitments to be in right relationship with all living beings and with Coast Salish Peoples who have lived in the San Juan Islands since time immemorial. By practicing loving stewardship of the land and nurturing the well-being of our environment and all living beings, the land and waterways will continue to nourish us in return. The objectives and strategies below describe specific efforts that can honor tribal sovereignty and respect the Coast Salish traditional stewards of this land; restore environmental health; reduce the ecological impact of agriculture; and increase the availability of locally grown, sourced, and prepared foods.

Objective	Strategy
2.1 Ensure Land Access	2.1.1 Identify and support pathways, ongoing resources, and education to facilitate affordable land access for local producers
	2.1.2 Open up access to public lands, waters, and shorelines for Coast Salish Tribal members to practice Indigenous foodways
	2.1.3 Increase availability of land for agricultural production
2.2 Practice Land Stewardship	2.2.1 Conserve and restore soil health , fertility, and biodiversity on agricultural lands
	2.2.2 Support expansion of Coast Salish Tribal land management of hereditary territory and public lands

Objective	Strategy
2.2 Practice Land Stewardship	2.2.3 Fund and grow Indigenous youth development around Coast Salish land management practices for public land in the Islands
	2.2.4 Increase farm enrollment in agriculturally oriented conservation programs (e.g. Voluntary Stewardship Program) and implementation of best management practices
	2.2.5* Provide financial incentives for growers to utilize regenerative agricultural practices
	2.2.6* Facilitate the transfer of generational, place-based knowledge
	2.2.7* Increase agroforestry practices that include native and cultural plantings

2.3 Conserve Farmland	2.3.1 Increase protection for agricultural land and prioritize the production of food through land use regulation and conservation easements
	2.3.2 Support farm succession that keeps land in production through planning support and education
	2.3.3* Ensure sustainable funding for farmland conservation programs

Objective	Strategy
2.4 Protect Water	2.4.1 Increase drought resilience through utilization of practices that enhance soil organic matter and moisture-holding capacity
	2.4.2 Conserve water and improve water quality for current and future agricultural use through best management practices and education
	2.4.3 Collect additional data on agricultural water use in the islands
	2.4.4 Provide education on and funding for water catchment systems and ponds
	2.4.5 Maintain appropriate drainage systems to support agricultural production, while reducing potential for water quality contamination from sediment, nutrient and pathogen runoff
	2.4.6 Promote and encourage farmers to acquire agricultural water rights
	2.4.7 Support Coast Salish Tribal initiatives , priorities, and practices for water protection

Objective	Strategy
2.5 Decarbonize Food Production and Distribution	2.5.1* Encourage electrification and energy efficiency of agricultural equipment, on-farm activities, processing, and distribution infrastructure
	2.5.2* Encourage on-site renewable energy production
	2.5.3* Create a regulatory framework for agrivoltaic projects that protects soil and maintains agricultural production
	2.5.4* Support and encourage manure management practices such as composting that reduce methane and nitrous oxide emissions



Image: Orcas Farm, by Satya Curcio

Goal 3 | ENSURE ACCESS TO HEALTHY FOOD

Planning for emergencies, supporting residents' food self-sufficiency, and improving access to affordable food in the places people spend time are all ways to support the health and well-being of the many people who live and work in, and visit, San Juan County. These strategies represent a holistic approach to making access to healthy, culturally relevant, affordable food an option for everyone in the islands.

Objective	Strategy
3.1 Support Farm-to- Community Food Efforts	3.1.1 Expand local food in nutrition support programs
	3.1.2 Sustain innovative farm-to-food bank funding efforts to increase access to locally grown foods
	3.1.3 Expand infrastructure at schools with gardening programs to grow, store, prepare, and serve food grown onsite
	3.1.4 Create or maintain programs to distribute surplus food from farms and gardens to hunger relief agencies

Objective	Strategy
3.2 Improve Access for Low-income Residents to Purchase Local Food	3.2.1 Increase capacity and funding for local food incentive programs and direct purchasing from local farms
	3.2.2 Ensure that low-income residents can fully utilize food benefits at eligible Farmers Markets and retail locations
	3.2.3 Increase engagement of community leaders in outreach and implementation of food access initiatives
	3.2.4 Increase participation in local, state, and federal food benefit programs
3.3 Broaden Access to Culturally Appropriate Foods	3.3.1 Expand leadership, access, and support for Tribal members to practice Indigenous foodways in and around the islands
	3.3.2 Expand availability of culturally relevant, locally grown, and locally prepared foods
3.4 Strengthen Emergency Preparedness	3.4.1 Undertake a Food Security Assessment as part of county-scale disaster preparedness measures
	3.4.2 Collaborate with Department of Emergency Management to create and promote a Food Security Preparedness Plan



Image: Lopez Harvest Farm, by Summer Moon

Goal 4 | REDUCE AND TRANSFORM WASTE

The food system generates substantial waste. Plastic is used from production to consumption, and mechanisms to reduce or recycle plastic are currently limited. Leftover food scraps from restaurants, retailers, or school food services, along with excess still-edible food, often go to waste. However, there are numerous opportunities for diversion. Still-edible food can be redistributed, while scraps and inedible portions can be repurposed as livestock feed or composted. These strategies aim to engage and educate farmers, residents, and commercial consumers in more effective food and agricultural waste management.

Objective	Strategy
4.1 Prevent Wasted Food	4.1.1 Provide ongoing incentives, education, programs, and resources to commercial and residential consumers for donating and composting wasted food and implementing best practices for managing wasted food
	4.1.2 Implement best practices in wasted food reduction and related student education in schools

4.2 Turn Waste Organics into Fertility	4.2.1 Develop and maintain food and yard waste composting facilities on each island with related collections and distribution infrastructure
	4.2.2 Promote use of soil amendments derived from recycled, local organic materials
	4.2.3 Advance the development of biochar processing

Objective	Strategy
4.3 Reduce Sources of Potential Waste	4.3.1 Establish policy and cultural norms around the reduction of single use plastics, products with toxic ingredients, and products with excessive packaging
	4.3.2 Support food and farm enterprises to facilitate transition to more ecologically sustainable packaging
	4.3.3 Support policy that establishes " next highest use " as the first and best alternative to discarding any item to reduce the volume of waste transported off the islands
	4.3.4* Reduce agricultural plastic use and create recycling opportunities



Image: Midnight's Farm, by Faith Van De Putte

Goal 5 | GROW COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

A resilient, vital local food system depends upon an ecosystem of mutually beneficial relationships. Tending to these important relationships in a good way must be grounded in values of reciprocity, neighborliness, humility, respect, care for all living beings, and shared strategic aims. The below strategies reflect a commitment to actively honoring Coast Salish tribal priorities, protocol, and practices; fostering partnerships to advance justice and equity in both the local and regional food system; and enacting pathways for ongoing collaboration to care for our shared food future.

Objective	Strategy
5.1 Elevate and Support Tribal Sovereignty	5.1.1 Facilitate and foster relationships in good standing between Coast Salish and island partners to advance joint efforts
	5.1.2 Support the Food Sovereignty and Land Justice movements
	5.1.3 Support Tribal leadership , initiatives, and approaches to managing island lands and waters
	5.1.4 Expand on the San Juan Islands Agricultural Summit's Traditional Foodways conversations
	5.1.5 Work with Coast Salish Nations to enhance land, water, and foodways access for Tribal people

Objective	Strategy
5.2 Build a Just and Equitable Regional Food and Farm Economy	5.2.1 Promote strategic collaboration to streamline supply chain logistics, reduce costs, and grow the local food supply
	5.2.2 Foster the development and inter-cooperation of cooperative food and farm enterprises
	5.2.3 Address issues impacting food system workers and organizations and partner with neighboring counties to increase capacity
	5.2.4* Support and uplift BIPOC- and women-owned food and farm businesses

5.3 Advance Food System Planning and Implementation	5.3.1 Increase engagement, support, leadership, accountability, and partnership from San Juan County government on food system issues
	5.3.2 Support the continuation of the San Juan Islands Agricultural Summit and Agricultural Organizations Retreat
	5.3.3 Partner with neighboring county agencies, educational institutions, and food system organizations to coordinate research and actions on a regional scale
	5.3.4 Provide coordination support funding for implementation of the San Juan County Food System Plan

Objective	Strategy
5.4 Foster Collaboration, Capacity, and Community	5.4.1 Deepen islanders' food system literacy and commitment to buying local food
	5.4.2 Increase and diversify community participation in food system decision making through provision of appropriate support
	5.4.3 Explore and evaluate relevant conceptual frameworks for food system management
	5.4.4 Provide education and support on the Cooperative model for food and farm related enterprises
	5.4.5 Bolster availability of translation and interpretation services to increase accessibility
	5.4.6 Celebrate culture and diversity through community food events
	5.4.7 Provide clear regulatory information and enhance residents' and producers' policy knowledge
	5.4.8* Strengthen mutual support among farmers
	5.4.9* Create and support systems for community collaboration and engagement with local food production



Image: Salmon Pit Cook, by Tallulah

IMPLEMENTATION: A NETWORK APPROACH

Farmers, fishers, Coast Salish tribal members, community leaders, and agencies actively participated in drafting the Community Food Assessment and the Food System Plan. This high degree of sustained collaboration reflects the deeply democratic nature of San Juan County's food system. People care, show up, participate, contribute, lead, and connect with each other.

This existing social network and history of collaboration will be foundational for the implementation of the Food System Plan. Many players and entities across and beyond the County will be involved in determining and deploying specific actions to advance associated strategies contained in the Plan. Continued information sharing, relationship building, and collaboration are crucial to success. Shared investment in these efforts will yield an effective, resilient, and dense ecosystem of relationships among all nodes and components of the network.

The Food System Team will continue to engage with the growing network, supporting Plan implementation alongside partner organizations and individuals. In 2025, the Food System Team Coordinator will focus on providing technical support to work groups, organizing gatherings, advancing Plan strategies, and strengthening relations with Coast Salish tribal communities.

MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION

Regularly assessing progress and impact will play a critical role in evaluating the effectiveness of collective efforts over time. Following publication of the Food System Plan, resources will be sought to finalize an evaluation framework that will include methods, tools, and baseline data identified as part of the Community Food Assessment.

For each goal in the Plan, several Progress Indicators have already been identified (see Appendix III), with a focus on indicators for which baseline data is already known and for which data can be gathered reliably over time to measure changes. In some instances, new data may also be needed to fill gaps where no baseline data exists to measure desired changes.

This structured, strategic approach to measurement and evaluation will surface important insights to help guide ongoing planning refinement and prioritization of strategies and actions. This effort will involve working with key partners who are well-suited to develop an overarching evaluation framework, including key indicators for measurement; measurement methods and associated instruments; approach to analysis; and identification of necessary resources to meet ongoing evaluation needs.

CONCLUSION

The primary purpose of the Food System Plan is to provide a comprehensive and integrated approach to equitably relocalizing San Juan County's food system – a food system that is ecologically resilient, affordable and economically sustainable, and relational among people, land, and waters. The Plan is also intended to serve as a pathway to deepening trust, reciprocity, and collaboration, as islanders work to become good neighbors to Coast Salish Peoples – the hereditary stewards and inhabitants of these traditional territories.

San Juan County's local food system offers an abundance of strengths, including dedicated farmers and food makers, supportive eaters, visionary leadership, important infrastructural assets, and more. Yet, as an archipelago faced with rapidly rising land and housing costs, major climate impacts, a remote location reliant on challenging transportation infrastructure, and under-resourced relevant infrastructure, much must be accomplished to ensure a resilient food system.

The islands' thriving community network is poised to implement Food System Plan strategies, with a demonstrated track record of deep participation, shared leadership, and results. There are as many ways to be involved in this work as there are members of the local food system, and it will require broad community effort to implement the many facets of this Plan. We all have a place at the table to create our abundant food future.

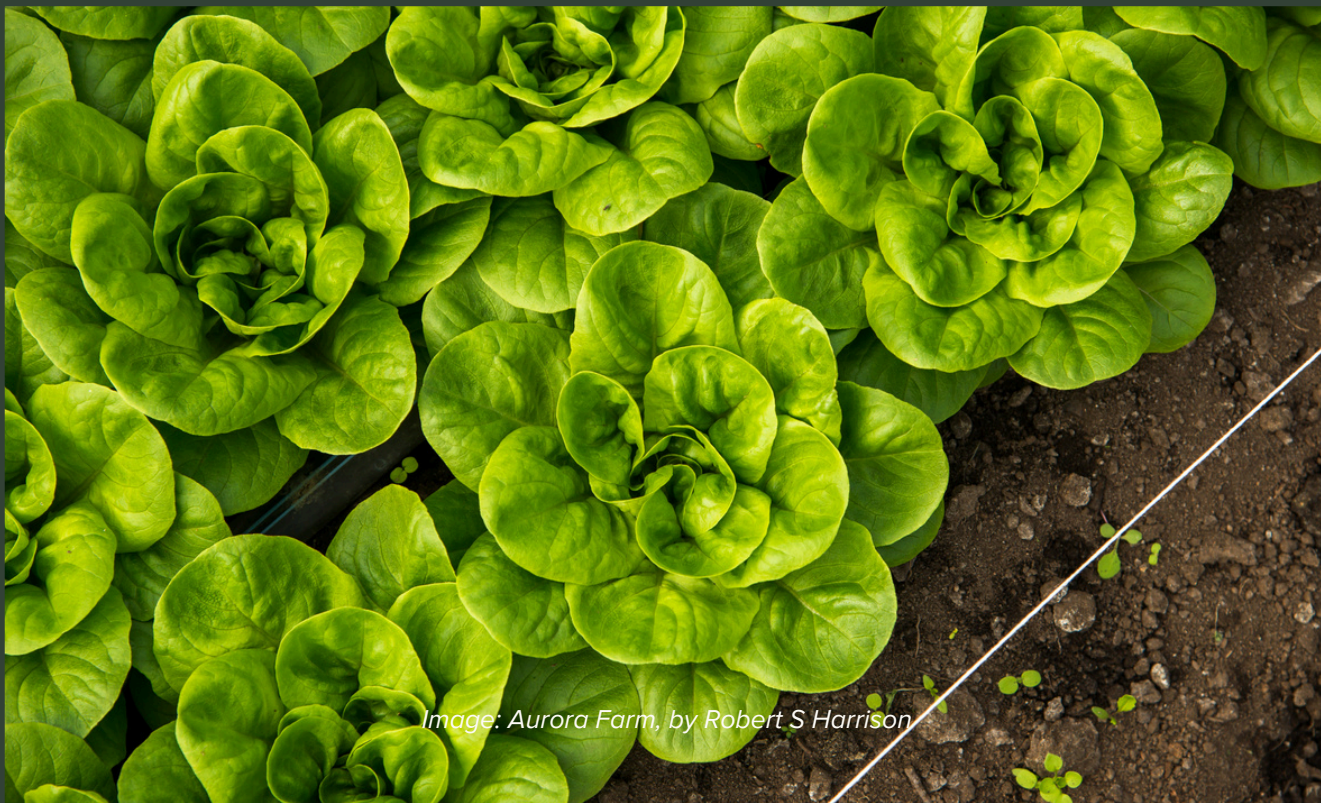


Image: Aurora Farm, by Robert S Harrison

APPENDIX I | PLAN DEVELOPMENT PROCESS DETAILS

Throughout the drafting process of the Food System Plan, the Food System Team sought extensive community engagement with grassroots and grassroots stakeholders. Engagement focused on reviewing, refining, and prioritizing a series of goals, objectives, and strategies based on findings from the Community Food Assessment. Subsequently, key partners reviewed multiple drafts of the Food System Plan.

Details of the Food System Team's Food System Plan development process:

- Building relationships with Coast Salish food sovereignty leaders and Elders to deepen ongoing reciprocal relationships and collaborations.
- Coordinator attended monthly food system planner meetings with colleagues from Whatcom, Island, Skagit, and Okanogan Counties to build regional connections, share best practices, and investigate collaboration opportunities.
- Identified a series of draft goals, objectives, and associated strategies in response to key issues and opportunities articulated in the Community Food Assessment.
- Facilitated key informant interviews and focus groups with 28 local food system leaders across relevant sectors in the food system.
- Convened community engagement Town Hall events on Orcas, Lopez, and San Juan Islands with 150+ islanders to review, refine, and prioritize the goals, objectives, and strategies.
- Co-hosted annual Agricultural Organizations Retreat with SJC Agricultural Resources Committee to incorporate organizations' feedback on the goals, objectives, and strategies, and begin to delineate priorities and necessary action steps; 30 people in attendance represented 20 agriculture- and food-related organizations.
- Conducted multiple rounds of review and due diligence for all goals, objectives, and strategies refined through the above community engagement process, including participation from key agricultural organizations and in-depth participation by Food System Team members.
- Drafted the Food System Plan for San Juan County, with multiple review rounds including Food System Team members and 14 peer reviewers.

APPENDIX II: POTENTIAL IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS

The goals and many strategies of the Food System Plan leverage past efforts and existing programs. This list of potential implementation partners is intended to show the broad network of stakeholders who are already engaged in this work:

- Coast Salish Nations and relevant Tribal partners
- Community / Family Resource Centers
- Community Foundations
- Economic Development Council of San Juan County
- Farm and food businesses
- Food Bank Coalition of SJC
- Friends of the San Juans
- Gleaning programs
- Grocery retailers
- Home food producers
- Island Grown Farmers Cooperative
- Kwiaht
- Lopez Community Land Trust
- Lopez Food Center
- Lopez Locavores
- Madrona Institute
- Northwest Agriculture Business Center
- Natural Resources Conservation Services
- Orcas Community Participatory Agriculture
- Orcas Food Co-op
- PeaceHealth
- School Garden programs
- San Juan County
 - Agricultural Resources Committee
 - Climate and Sustainability Advisory Committee
 - Conservation Land Bank
 - Department of Community Development
 - Department of Emergency Management
 - Department of Environmental Stewardship
 - Department of Health & Community Services
- San Juan Island Grange
- San Juan Islands Agricultural Guild
- San Juan Islands Conservation District
- San Juan Islands Food Hub
- Skagit Community College
- Solid waste facilities
- Soroptomists
- Taproot Lopez Community Kitchen
- Town of Friday Harbor
- Transition Lopez
- Transition San Juan Island
- Washington State Department of Agriculture
- Washington State University SJC Extension

APPENDIX III | SAMPLE PROGRESS INDICATORS

An Evaluation Framework and Data Dashboard will be developed to measure, track and communicate progress. This sample list represents possible progress indicators and metrics for each goal, most of which already have baseline data from existing sources. The Food System Team will work with Coast Salish Tribes to determine indicators for tribal sovereignty and traditional foodways.

GOAL 1: SCALE UP LOCAL FOOD PRODUCTION

- Local food as a percentage of total food spending
- Sales of local food to direct and wholesale markets
- Agricultural sales
- Seafood sales
- Value Added products sales
- Fruit acreage and sales
- Vegetable acreage and sales
- Number and value of fisheries landings
- Food system employment
- Food processing and manufacturing employment
- Number of commercial kitchens in operation

GOAL 2: STEWARD LAND AND ENHANCE ECOSYSTEMS

- Acres in agricultural production
- Average farm revenue and net income
- Price per acre of Agricultural Resource Land
- Number of farm operators and workers
- Farmer age demographics
- Voluntary Stewardship Program metrics
- Number of producers implementing climate mitigation practices
- Investment in climate mitigation practices

GOAL 3: ENSURE ACCESS TO HEALTHY FOOD

- Number of food insecure residents
- Programs providing meal sources for food insecure residents
- Monthly SNAP household participation by SNAP eligible residents
- Households participating in income-based local, State, and Federal food incentive programs
- Adults with obesity
- Adults with obesity by race/ethnicity in San Juan County
- Death from diabetes by race/ethnicity in San Juan County

GOAL 4: REDUCE AND TRANSFORM WASTE

- Pounds of yard and food waste diverted from landfills
- Pounds of gleaned food
- Number of gleaning programs
- Volume of compost created and distributed
- Number of commercial compost facilities
- Number of on-farm compost facilities

GOAL 5: GROW COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

- Farmer race/ethnicity/gender demographics
- Food system worker median wages in San Juan County
- BIPOC staff and board member representation on agriculture and food systems-related organizations
- Number of cooperative food and farm enterprises and networks
- Number of food system initiatives that include regional collaborations
- Sales of food sourced from regional producers



Image: Lum Farm, by Robert S Harrison

NOTES





Image: Barn Owl Bread, by Sage Dilts