



SETTING THE TABLE FOR AN ABUNDANT FUTURE

A FOOD SYSTEM PLAN FOR SAN JUAN COUNTY

December 2023

Prepared by the San Juan County Food System Team

with support from Terra Soma, LLC



LAND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The Food System Team recognizes and honors the Coast Salish Peoples who have inhabited these lands and waters since time immemorial. We seek to deepen our connections with present and future Coast Salish communities here, and to honor inherent, aboriginal, and treaty rights that have been passed down from generation to generation. As we do so, we commit through the work presented herein to:

- Foster relationships and respect
- Honor Indigenous identity, culture, connection to these lands and waters, and Usual and Accustomed treaty rights
- Uphold our responsibility to steward the lands and waters in a reciprocal and responsible way
- Uplift and support Indigenous stewardship practices, knowledge systems, and adaptive co-management strategies
- Build connections across cultures and find ways to facilitate dialogue, bring in voices that have been silenced, marginalized and excluded, and share learning opportunities that bring communities together

With humility, our hope is that this Food System Plan can serve as a stepping stone to deeper understanding and collaboration, as we uncover what it means to inhabit these lands and waters together.

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 San Juan County 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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Image: San Juan Islands Visitors Bureau

INTRODUCTION

In 2019 the San Juan County Agricultural Resources Committee prioritized the creation of a food system plan as a way to support agriculture and local food production and began to lay the groundwork for this project. Just before the COVID-19 pandemic, the San Juan County Food System Team formed to conduct a community food assessment and to subsequently develop an associated food system plan to outline a long-term approach to ensuring a thriving, resilient food system for the county. Funded through a generous private donation and the USDA's Regional Food System Partnerships grant program, the San Juan Islands Agricultural Guild has served as the operational backbone for this effort, with shared leadership representing public health, sustainable agriculture, Extension, retail and wholesale food sectors, and more.

Active engagement from farmers, ranchers, fishers, grocers, restaurateurs, food artisans, eaters, and dozens of organizations throughout the assessment and plan development phases has shaped the goals, strategies, priorities, and approach to implementation described in this plan. Furthermore, many complementary efforts, studies, and other resources related to San Juan County's food system have deeply informed the content of this Food System Plan. Together, these stakeholders are interested in claiming more agency around a place-based, locally and seasonally-centered food future that is ecologically resilient, supports growers, and provides equitable access to affordable, healthy, culturally relevant food.

Spanning the entirety of the food system from farms and waterways to table to waste stream, this Food System Plan strategically addresses issues, barriers, opportunities, and assets that are central to the vitality and resilience of the islands' food system, and delineates concrete strategies and pathways for implementation. This Plan is designed to enable many partners, entities, and leaders 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 islands of San Juan County 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 many strengths, including engaged eaters, committed growers, makers, and workers, as well as key infrastructural assets. This Plan seeks to maintain and build on San Juan County's vibrant agrarian culture of stewardship, nourishing people from the land and the sea, and caring for the land, water, creatures, and spirits of this place. The food system as a whole is both shaped by and actively shapes the values of the community. This Plan celebrates and recognizes the good hearts, care, and strengths of the islands while moving strategically toward the vision of an equitably relocalized food system.



San Juan County is fortunate to have many plans, such as Growing Our Future and the County’s Comprehensive Plan, that include findings and recommendations associated with agricultural, marine, and food systems resources and management. Building on these plans and four years of research and engagement, the San Juan County 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.

The **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.

Forthcoming **Action Guides** will serve as a shared roadmap of actions aimed at supporting the strategies in the Plan, many of which are already underway. Action Guides are intended to be more fluid and adaptive, and will be updated more frequently than the goals, objectives and strategies of the Plan. Concurrently, an **Evaluation Framework and Data Dashboard** will be developed to measure, track and communicate progress.

To contextualize the goals, objectives and strategies laid out in the Food System Plan, readers are strongly encouraged to first read the Community Food Assessment. If the terrain changes, needed revisions will be made and revised editions published, with past editions archived. Read more about the work ahead in *Implementation and Measurement and Evaluation*.

Image: Horse Drawn Farm, by Horn

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Food System Plan for San Juan County is a comprehensive, practical, and intentional resource designed to equitably relocalize the county's food system. Guided by the San Juan County Food System Team – a grassroots, ad hoc body of local food system leaders – the Plan was developed through a multi-phase engagement and research process and provides community-identified goals to address critical needs and opportunities associated with San Juan County's food system.

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 Waste**
5. **Build Regional 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 and partnerships we need to establish, sustain, invest in, and honor in order to care for the land, water, soil, air, all living beings, and each other?
- 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.

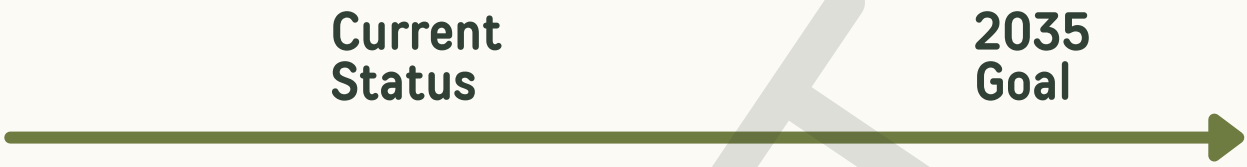
It will take numerous partners, ongoing community engagement, significant resources, political will, durable support from consumers, and a wide-ranging array of productive, trusting collaborations to advance the dozens of strategies described in this document. This path forward will provide diversified 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.



Image: Aurora Farm, by Robert S Harrison

TOP 5

WINNABLE GOALS
for the San Juan County Food System



Local Food Sales

Current Status: \$5.1m
3.7% of food spending

2035 Goal: \$11.2m
5% of food spending

120% increase

Number of Agricultural Producers

Current Status: 576

2035 Goal: 677
+101 producers & age demographics trending younger

Age Demographics: 4% (<35), 58% (35-64), 38% (>65)

Retailers Participating In Local Food Incentive Programs

Current Status: 24

2035 Goal: 35

\$54k incentives distributed
x1.43 economic multiplier

total economic impact \$77k+

Commercial Food Waste Composting Facilities

Current Status: 0

2035 Goal: 3

Number of Cooperative Food & Farm Enterprises

Current Status: 5

2035 Goal: 15

PURCHASING CO-OP, FOOD CO-OP, FARM CO-OP, CO-OP RESTAURANT, CO-OP EQUIPMENT CO-OP, GRAIN CO-OP, BAKERY CO-OP, KITCHEN CO-OP, SEED CO-OP, DIRT CO-OP, FISHERY CO-OP

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 relocated 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:

- Climate change and ecologically harmful practices affect the resilience and vitality of groundwater, marine environments, and soil health across San Juan County, as well as many other facets of life on the islands.
- Water access, storage, 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.
- 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.
- 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.
- There is inadequate infrastructure to (1) handle food waste at scale in an environmentally responsible manner in the islands and to (2) meet the increasing demand for on- and off-farm harvest, slaughter, post-harvest and value-added 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.
- There needs to be greater public investment in and sustained attention to technical assistance, capital support and investments, infrastructure development, and regulatory refinements and policymaking in support of San Juan County's food system.
- 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 from tribal communities, 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. Approaches to ongoing implementation, clear timelines, key collaborations, policy and funding mechanisms and the development of an evaluation framework will immediately follow the release of this Plan in 2024.

In the sections that follow, goals are accompanied by related objectives and strategies; granular-level action steps are forthcoming (see Implementation below). Strategies are currently 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 Waste

5

Build Regional 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
	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 food 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

1.2 Support a Thriving Workforce	1.2.1 Increase the number of affordable housing units for food and farm workers in the islands
	1.2.2 Provide resources to aid food and farm businesses in providing living wages and ethical labor practices for food and farm workers
	1.2.3 Support multiple educational and vocational pathways to grow the food system workforce, including opportunities for youth
	1.2.4* Strengthen mental health support for farmers, food system entrepreneurs and workers

Objective	Strategy
1.3 Strengthen Community Food Infrastructure and Services	1.3.1 Expand on-farm infrastructure for livestock, poultry, seed, and crop production; processing; storage; distribution; and agritourism
	1.3.2 Identify and fund community storage, distribution, and value-added processing facilities needs
	1.3.3 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
	1.3.4 Analyze the supply chain of the hunger relief system, institutional food services, retail grocery, and alternative market channels and align needs and assets
	1.3.5 Make long-term investments in infrastructure that supports the production, harvest, processing, storage and sales of seafood and sea vegetables
	1.3.6 Improve transportation for food and ag activities within the islands and to/from the mainland
	1.3.7 Support vocational training for mechanics on the islands to meet mechanical and fleet repair needs for agricultural, food, and farm businesses

Objective	Strategy
1.3 Strengthen Community Food Infrastructure and Services	1.3.8 Ensure access to and allow sales from existing public docks for commercial fishing vessels
	1.3.9 Increase the availability of locally-produced and adapted seed and food-producing plant stock
	1.3.10* Strengthen consistent access to affordable, high quality veterinary care
1.4 Enhance Economic Viability of Local Food Enterprises	1.4.1 Increase financial infrastructure and access to capital for food and farm businesses and entrepreneurs
	1.4.2 Reduce regulatory burden and promote policy that fosters a supportive regulatory environment needed for farms and food businesses to prosper financially
	1.4.3 Expand support for food and farm businesses and entrepreneurship by way of funding, permitting, marketing, and technical assistance
1.5 Foster Collaboration, Capacity, and Community	1.5.1 Provide coordination support funding for implementation of the San Juan County Food System Plan
	1.5.2 Deepen islanders' food system literacy

Objective	Strategy
1.5 Foster Collaboration, Capacity, and Community	1.5.3 Increase and diversify community participation in food system decision making through provision of appropriate support
	1.5.4 Explore and evaluate relevant conceptual frameworks for food system management
	1.5.5 Provide education and support on the Cooperative model for food and farm related enterprises
	1.5.6 Bolster availability of translation and interpretation to increase access for people with limited English proficiency
	1.5.7 Celebrate culture and diversity through community food events
	1.5.8 Provide clear regulatory information and enhance residents' and producers' policy knowledge
	1.5.9* Strengthen mutual support among farmers
	1.5.10* Create and support systems for community collaboration and engagement with local food production



Image: Mama 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 and ongoing resources 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
2.3 Conserve Farmland	2.3.1 Increase protection for agricultural land and prioritize the production of food through land use regulation, conservation easements, and sustainably funding farmland conservation programs
	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 in San Juan County through best management practices and education
	2.4.3 Collect additional data on agricultural water use
	2.4.4 Provide education on and funding for water catchment systems and ponds
	2.4.5 Maintain appropriate drainage systems to maintain 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



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

Objective	Strategy
3.5 Increase Non-Market / Home Production and Processing of Food	3.5.1 Increase opportunities for nutrition education, healthy food preparation and preservation, and food growing activities
	3.5.2 Increase the number of people who grow their own food
	3.5.3* Increase access to land, tools, and other infrastructure for personal food production
	3.5.4* Increase awareness of opportunities and best practices for hunting, foraging, wildcrafting, and other harvest methods



Image: Lopez Harvest Farm, by Summer Moon

Goal 4 | REDUCE WASTE

San Juan County, like many US communities, discards a lot of food. From food scraps leftover from food preparation at restaurants, retailers, or school food services, to excess still-edible food that ends up in the waste stream, much can be done to divert wasted food. Still-edible food can be rescued and redistributed. Food scraps and inedible food can be fed to livestock or composted and turned into a beneficial resource to support agricultural production across the county. The strategies below encompass ways to educate and engage residential and commercial consumers in better managing food and agricultural waste.

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 Promote local use of compostable products and reusable food containers, including food service products
	4.3.3 Support food and farm enterprises to facilitate transition to more ecologically sustainable packaging
	4.3.4 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
	4.3.5* Reduce agricultural plastic use and create recycling opportunities



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

Goal 5 | BUILD REGIONAL 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 Land Back and Food Sovereignty 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 and waterways 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 Regional Food System Planning	5.3.1 Center food system development as a key economic development and emergency preparedness priority for units of government in San Juan County, through aligned planning and investment
	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 and food system organizations to coordinate actions on a regional scale
	5.3.4 Increase engagement, support, leadership, accountability, and partnership from county government on food system issues



Image: Salmon Pit Cook, by Tallulah

IMPLEMENTATION

The scope and scale of the goals, objectives, and strategies contained in this Plan are considerable, complex, ambitious, and much needed. While much of the work is already underway, fully deploying a plan of this magnitude will necessitate ongoing coordination among many organizations and actors; leadership for various efforts distributed across many people and partners; and thoughtful communications and support. It will also take time and considerable resources. The Food System Team proposes the following approach to guide, sustain, connect, and communicate about the various activities associated with ongoing implementation:

Coordination:

In 2024, the Food System Team can serve as a convener to bring together Coast Salish tribal people and entities, partner organizations, decision makers, and citizens interested in collaborating to actualize the Food System Plan. In partnership with the Agricultural Resources Committee, this approach to coordination is already at work in the annual Agricultural Organizations Retreat and can be expanded to the food system more broadly. This method is both coordinated and decentralized to ensure implementation is nimble and actionable, leverages the enormous body of work already underway, and illuminates potential synergies within the food system.

Action Guides:

The above actors will create Action Guides for each goal that will serve as a shared roadmap of actions aimed at supporting the strategies in the Plan, many of which are already underway. Action Guides are intended to be fluid and adaptive, and will be updated more frequently than the goals, objectives and strategies of the Plan. This work will also consider: timelines; asset mapping; who is best poised to take the lead on each element of the Plan; alignment with state, regional, and local plans and policies; best practices, principles, commitments and values around land co-management that follow traditional practices; as well as phases and funding. (Concurrently, an Evaluation Framework and Data Dashboard will be developed to measure, track and communicate progress; see *Measurement and Evaluation* below for more details.)

Phases and Funding:

While an overarching aim of the Plan is to facilitate coordination and synergy, the food system is extremely complex and some aspects of the Plan will take more work, time and funding than others. Action Guide work will also include a prioritization process to create phased pathways for the ongoing implementation of each goal, as well as cost estimates and funding sources necessary to sustain the work.

MEASUREMENT AND EVALUATION

Regularly assessing progress and impact will play a critical role in evaluating the effectiveness of collective efforts over time. In 2024, an Evaluation Framework for the Food System Plan will be finalized that will involve 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. An online Data Dashboard will be developed to share food system data and celebrate progress toward goals in a way that is transparent and accessible for the food system community.

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 and -equipped 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.



Image: Aurora Farm, by Robert S Harrison

CONCLUSION

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.

The Food System Plan for San Juan County is an important document, released at a critical juncture, that provides a comprehensive, community driven vision and agenda of the future food system. The Plan contains clear, concrete strategies across numerous priorities designed to ensure that the land, waterways, people, and many other living species are cared for in a good way long into the future.

The overarching aim of the plan is to shape a food system that is ecologically resilient and economically sustainable, one that is nourishing and affordable for people working and living in the county, and one that fosters relationships and connections among people and with the food system. This effort 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.

Community efforts advancing the strategies contained in this plan will act in service to a vibrant food culture and food system while fostering ongoing learning and a sense of accomplishment. Deepening collaboration with the many partners and players engaged in San Juan County's food system is a key mutual next step, and the Food System Team looks forward to the work ahead.

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 and Island 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 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 San Juan County Food System Plan, with multiple review rounds including Food System Team members and 14 peer reviewers.

APPENDIX II: POTENTIAL IMPLEMENTATION PARTNERS

Food System Team will pursue collaborations with the many partners, organizations, and initiatives needed to execute the Food System Plan goals, objectives and strategies, including:

- Coast Salish Nations and relevant Tribal partners
- Community / Family Resource Centers
- Community Foundations
- Economic Development Council of San Juan County
- FARM Fund
- Food Bank Coalition of SJC
- Friends of the San Juans
- Gleaning programs
- Grocery retailers
- 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
- SJC Agricultural Resources Committee
- SJC Climate and Sustainability Advisory Committee
- SJC Conservation Land Bank
- SJC Department of Community Development
- SJC Department of Emergency Management
- SJC Department of Environmental Stewardship
- SJC Department of Health & Community Services
- San Juan Island Grange
- San Juan Islands Agricultural Guild
- San Juan Islands Agricultural Summit
- 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 4-H program
- Washington State University Master Gardeners
- 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. Possible progress indicators and metrics for each goal are listed below, most of which already have baseline data from existing sources.

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 food 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 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: BUILD REGIONAL 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



Image: Barn Owl Bread, by Sage Dilts