

February 22, 2021

Dear Dr. Fuchs, Dr. Lane, Mr. Daniels, Food Service Advisory Committee, and Dining Services ITN Committee at the University of Florida:

The current COVID-19 pandemic poses an unprecedented challenge to college campuses across the globe. To ensure they promote the health and well-being of the campus community, the University of Florida (UF) is likely reexamining many aspects of its operations in the face of this disruption. We, the undersigned organizations urge the University of Florida to assume national leadership in transforming our food system into one that is just and sustainable, and adopt the criteria outlined below in any contract with a new campus food service provider.

With the impending end of a multi-year food service contract with Aramark, one of the largest food service providers in the country, The University of Florida has an opportunity to demonstrate national leadership in promoting the well-being of the campus community and the local economy and local food system in the terms they set for their new food service contract. Indeed, as UF is one of the largest university contracts for Aramark, this is an opportunity that could have a ripple effect for food service contracts and the many dining service workers, food entrepreneurs, farmers, farmworkers, and communities across the country.

In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic has underscored the long-standing disparities in rights, resources, benefits, opportunities, and support for many who work in low paying service and food system jobs, which tend to more often and more severely affect people of color and women due to historic and current racist and sexist policies and practices, nationally and locally. This includes those working in UF's dining services and those that work in the supply chain that provides the food for staff, faculty, and students.

These disparities exacerbate additional long-standing inequities in our food system. Although we all pay the price of climate change fueled by our dominant food and agricultural system priorities, it is often these low wage workers who shoulder more of the burdens of the negative environmental impacts of those priorities. In addition, they are more likely to be food insecure than other workers in the economy (Food Chain Workers Alliance & Solidarity Research Cooperative: '[No Piece of the Pie: US Food Workers in 2016](#)').

As such, we, the undersigned organizations, urge you to adopt the requests of numerous local Gainesville organizations, community members, and UF staff, students and faculty that would lead to a meaningful equitable, sustainable and healthy food service strategy at the University of Florida. We believe that achieving these goals is critical to realizing a regional food system in the Gainesville area that promotes the well-being of your students and the surrounding community.

Specifically, we urge the University to adopt all of the Food Justice League petition items (following), with some additional *embedded criteria*, in any call for proposals and contracts with UF Dining and Food Services provider(s):

1. **Supporting Food Services Workers:** Vendor will commit that all food service workers, full-time and hourly, shall earn at least \$15 an hour¹ and the company agrees to remain neutral during any union organizing efforts.²

¹ As of March 2020 \$15.39 is considered a living wage for a family with two dependents and two working adults in Alachua County as defined by the MIT Living Wage Calculator- <http://livingwage.mit.edu>

² Commits the employer to remain absolutely neutral in the event that employees decide to unionize at the employer's non-union operations covered by the clause. Commits the employer to immediately recognize the union when

2. **Reducing Greenhouse Gas Emissions of Food:** Vendor will commit to achieve a 20% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions associated with the most climate change-intensive foods on the menu - meat, fish, seafood, dairy, and eggs -- within 2 years and ensure 50% of the entrees served in UF cafeterias are plant-based.³
3. **Supporting Local Farmers and Food Vendors:** Vendor commits to increase purchases from local (within 250 miles), small and mid-sized⁴ family and/or cooperatively-owned farms, ranchers, fisher-people, food processors, and food vendors by 25% in 5 years. Vendor will commit 1% of contract profits per year to be invested to reduce barriers to local farms, ranchers, and suppliers being able to sell to UF food services with input *from a diversity (based on race, gender, ethnicity, LGBTQ+ status) of the small and mid-sized family and/or cooperatively-owned local farms, ranchers, fisher-people, processors, and vendors⁵ and that the documentation of engagement be transparent to the public and clearly identifies how UF has engaged and incorporated solutions to barriers that are specific to each of these demographic groups.* Vendor commits to have a clear process for conflict resolution between the university and suppliers that both sides understand and agree to observe.
4. **Supporting Farmworkers and Supply Chain Workers:** Vendor commits to ensure the health, safety, fair wages, and right to organize for all supply chain workers from the farm to the plate, *including but not limited to the right to bargain collectively.*⁶ Vendor will require enforcement of labor protection and health and safety laws, as well as adherence to ILO,⁷ NIOSH,⁸ WPS,⁹ and DOL¹⁰ standards for all suppliers. Vendor will increase meaningful¹¹ domestic third-party certified fair or socially just food or meeting criteria in level 3 of Valued Workforce criteria for the Good Food Purchasing Program purchases to 8% in 5 years and will pay a price premium for these value-added certifications and prices that cover the actual costs to produce and supply the products. Vendors will commit 0.25% of contract profits per year to be invested to reduce barriers to domestic suppliers meeting these certification criteria.¹²

submitting union authorization cards signed by a majority of non-represented workers.

³ <https://www.nrdc.org/issues/climate-healthy-eating>

⁴ <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/farm-economy/farm-structure-and-organization/farm-structure/>

⁵ Common barriers include, but are not limited to: high administrative burden of paperwork, bureaucratic requirements, reporting, and insurance requirements to sell to institutions prior to any assurance of significant sales; delayed payments when limited cash flow for these types of businesses makes it a hardship to wait; history of inequities in opportunities and resources based on race, gender, and other demographic classifications; competing in price with industrial operations that externalize costs; prices that do not cover costs; demand for crops that don't grow well locally instead of developing eater interest in crops that can be grown easily by local farmers (and are less resource intensive to grow); last minute changes to orders and pricing after harvest; lack of distribution and processing systems that cater to smaller scale operations; no predictable sales that result in farmers selling at a loss or crops rotting in the fields.

⁶ <https://goodfoodpurchasing.org/program-overview/>

⁷ <https://www.ilo.org/global/lang--en/index.htm>

⁸ <https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/index.htm>

⁹ <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-worker-safety/agricultural-worker-protection-standard-wps>

¹⁰ <https://www.dol.gov/>

¹¹ "Meaningful" 3rd-party certifications are outlined and valued in the Good Food Purchasing Program standards under the Valued Workforce pillar: <https://goodfoodpurchasing.org/program-overview/>. Fair World Project also offers an evaluation of meaningful fair claims: <https://fairworldproject.org/choose-fair/certifier-analysis/reference-guide-to-fair-trade-and-worker-welfare-programs-2/>. The criteria here are not met by purchases from suppliers outside the US.

¹² The Fair World Project's Reference Guide to Fair Trade and Labor Justice Programs indicates that the 3rd party verified label standards for the Agricultural Justice Project's Food Justice Certification: <https://www.agriculturaljusticeproject.org/en/learn-more/?pane=standards> and Fair for Life: https://www.fairforlife.org/client/fairforlife/file/Fair_for_Life/Standards/Fair_for_Life_Standard_EN.PDF include

For more information about this campaign or the coalition that initiated it, please see www.FoodJusticeLeague.org

5. **Providing Transparency and Accountability:** Vendor will participate in a nationally-recognized, third-party measurement and verification process¹³ on progress toward these goals annually, and make the progress report details publicly available *and easily accessible*. Vendor will commit that any advertisement, signage and/or messaging regarding sourcing will accurately display the level of sourcing from verified sources, as compared to all sourcing (as a percentage), and any messaging pertaining to individual suppliers will be approved by the suppliers prior to use.

Your cafeteria operations have enormous potential to promote a strategy of individual, community, and planetary health and well-being in the coming years. We believe adoption of these standards offers a unique opportunity to UF to provide local and regional leadership in creating a more sustainable food system. We urge you to take the lead in all these critical areas.

Sincerely,

Agricultural Justice Project
Alachua County Labor Coalition
El Comité de Apoyo a los Trabajadores Agrícolas / The Farmworker Support Committee (CATA)
Community Spring
Cultural Arts Coalition
David Arreola - City of Gainesville Commissioner District 3
Empower Hour Radio
Fair World Project
The Family Garden
Farmworker Association of Florida
Fight Toxic Prisons
Fisher Farms
Florida Council for Incarcerated and Formerly Incarcerated Women and Girls
Food Chain Workers Alliance
Friends of the Earth
Frog Song Organics
Gail Johnson, City of Gainesville Commissioner At-Large
Gigi Simmons, City of Gainesville Commissioner D1
Grace Grows
Grow Orlando
Graduate Students United at the University of Florida
Harvey Ward Jr., City of Gainesville Commissioner District 2
HEAL Food Alliance
Ken Cornell, Alachua County Board of County Commissioners, Chair
Dr. Leannetta McNealy, Chair of the Alachua County School Board
Marihelen Wheeler, Alachua County Board of County Commissioners Vice-Chair
Mary Alford, Alachua County Board of County Commissioners District 1

standards that address pricing based on producer costs of production and have producers and/or suppliers certified in the US.

¹³ The primary third-party verifier for higher education is the Real Food Challenge - <https://www.realfoodchallenge.org>; Good Food Purchasing Program works primarily with K-12 and municipalities, but also works with other sectors, such as higher education - <https://goodfoodpurchasing.org>; Healthcare Without Harm has dining service standards for hospitals and health care - <https://noharm.org>

National Family Farm Coalition
Natural Resources Defense Council
North Central Florida Central Labor Council
Our Revolution NCFL
Pie Ranch
Reina Saco, City of Gainesville Commissioner At-Large
Rural Advancement Foundation International-USA (RAFI-USA)
Rural Women's Health Project
Siembra Farm
Soul Fire Farm
Swanton Berry Farm
Tina Certain, Vice-Chair of the Alachua County School Board
United Faculty of Florida
Young Democratic Socialist of America - University of Florida Chapter