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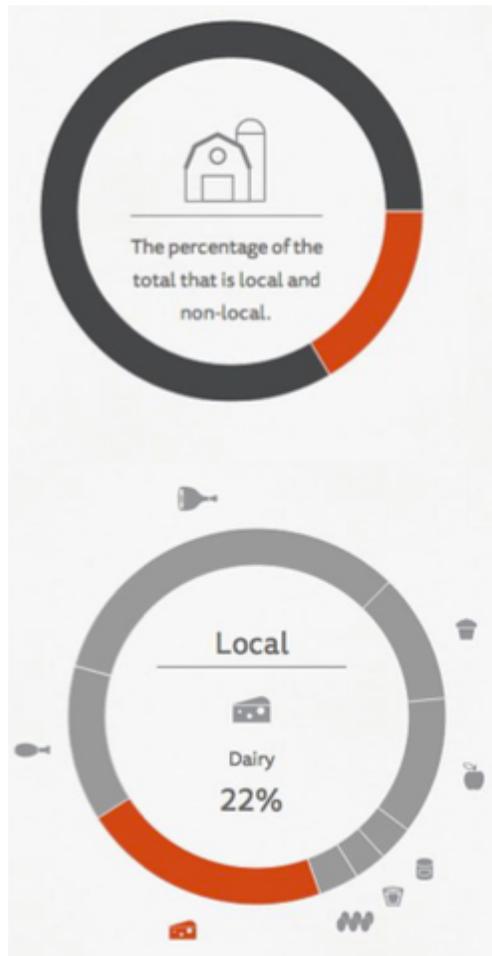
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Over 100 universities adopt student-designed tool to measure sustainable food

California State University Campuses among those leading rigorous investigations into origins of campus food

March 18, 2014 - Monterey, California – On March 26th, the California State University Board of Trustees will gather to discuss a proposed CSU-system-wide sustainability policy guaranteeing 20% 'real food' purchasing. Students from 10 CSU campuses have endorsed the policy and have already gathered 1,200 petition signatures in support. They plan to travel to Long Beach, CA to give testimony at the upcoming Board of Trustees meetings.



The average student has little idea where the food in their cafeteria comes from – and little ability to find out. School dining managers looking to satisfy a growing student interest in local,

sustainable food might not know where to start: it can be overwhelming trying to navigate the sea of confusing labels, claims and certifications, identifying which will resonate with customers, not to mention make a real impact for family farmers or the environment. The [Real Food Calculator](#), a new online tool developed by a national team of student social entrepreneurs and food industry experts, is closing the gap—using the power of big data.

Four years of research and pilot testing have produced the online tool, which allows students to collect and analyze thousands of purchasing records to assess their institution's 'real food' score. The app's analysis is based on a comprehensive and rigorous set of 3rd party-verified standards for what counts as local, fair, ecologically sound and humane food. The Real Food Calculator offers a clear benchmark of how campuses are performing in supporting the community through food choices—and how to improve.

“Increasingly we're finding businesses that understand millennials' desire for transparency, authenticity and honesty in marketing—especially when it comes to food. What's missing are concrete tools and hard numbers to help institutions keep up with an evolving customer base. The Real Food Calculator fills that gap.” - Anim Steel, Executive Director of Real Food Generation

Students across the country are realizing the power of the Calculator. In its first year since launching:

- 128 universities nationwide have begun using the application—including CSU Monterey Bay, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo and UC Santa Cruz;
- Over 600 undergraduate students have participated in campus assessments;
- Student researchers have researched over 76,000 unique products, and reviewed over \$69,000,000 in campus food purchases.

Many institutions have incorporated the Real Food Calculator into university-accredited courses. Others have sponsored paid student internships to complete assessments. The result: an unprecedented depth of actionable data for food service operators, a unique educational experience for student leaders, and new potential markets for sustainable farmers and innovative food businesses. The University of Massachusetts-Amherst, the second-largest dining operation in the country, recently completed their 2013-2014 Assessment:

“This has been an incredible learning experience for students and dining, alike. Using the Calculator, I can now tell you that 81% of my school's seafood is ecologically sound. And we now know that, compared to other universities, we could source more fairly trade items, such as rice—the item we buy the most of. Such a switch could have an exciting economic impact and serve as a campus wide educational tool!”- Anna Hankins, Class of 2017, UMASS-Amherst.

The metrics data analysis provided by the Real Food Calculator's has already led many schools to make purchasing shifts. Carleton College in Northfield, MN has transitioned from conventional bananas to fair trade, organic bananas, an investment in the health and well-being

of farming communities abroad. The University of New Hampshire is piloting a purchasing relationship with a consortium of local fisherfolk to increase both local and ecologically sound seafood and boost the University's real food score.

The Real Food Calculator has been buoyed by the public endorsement of major food service companies Bon Appetit Management Co. and Sodexo USA, which together manage cafeterias at over 700 colleges and universities and hundreds of other sites, nation-wide. In the coming year, student developers of the Real Food Calculator expect to see the program expand beyond the higher education sector, to hospitals, resorts and corporate cafeterias, where demand for these services is high.



The CSU student coalition is excited to see this kind of transparency on a larger, state-wide scale. Many of them already use the Real Food Calculator to understand their campuses' current food purchasing, and potential to support more real food; The students are eager to see the Board of Trustees vote on a policy to guarantee 20% real food purchasing for the CSU system.

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