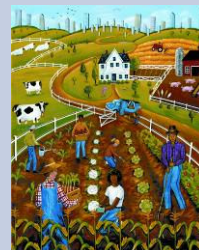


# FARM TO HOSPITAL

SUPPORTING LOCAL AGRICULTURE AND IMPROVING HEALTH CARE



Center for  
Food & Justice  
Urban & Environmental  
Policy Institute  
OCCIDENTAL COLLEGE



**Community Food  
Security Coalition**

## WHAT IS FARM TO HOSPITAL? WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?

The time is ripe for the development of farm to hospital programs. Given the increasing popularity of buying food products directly from local farmers, as well as the heightened concern about human health and quality of food in hospitals, there has never been a better time to buy locally.

The nation's hospitals have a mission to promote both the health of their patients and the communities in which they are located. To meet this goal, they employ skilled staff and utilize the world's most advanced medical technologies. But step away from operating rooms and labs into hospital cafeterias and kitchens, and the health mission often seems overlooked. Even as the nation faces an epidemic of obesity and diet-related illnesses such as diabetes and heart disease, many hospitals, searching for ways to cut costs, are offering fast food meals and junk food-filled vending machines. Linking local farms and hospitals can improve the freshness, quality, and nutritional value of hospital food while opening new markets for small and medium sized farmers.

Hospitals do not need to look far to improve their food environments. Partnering with local farms can help align food services with the institution's overall health mission. Coordinating an institution's health mission with food procurement can be done in a number of ways. Examples of farm to hospital program elements are: purchasing locally grown products like fruits, vegetables, meat, and dairy for use in patient and cafeteria meals, hosting a farmers' market or CSA (community supported agriculture) programs on hospital grounds, or creating hospital gardens as places of calm and healing.

Sustainably and locally grown foods can provide many health benefits for hospital patients, staff, visitors, and the environment. By supporting a localized food system hospitals can help reduce the ecological impact of the agricultural sector by decreasing the number of miles that food travels from farm to plate, thereby reducing carbon dioxide emissions, air pollutants, and use of fossil fuels. By choosing sustainably produced foods, hospitals can also lower patient and staff exposure to pesticides, herbicides, hormones and non-therapeutic antibiotics in meat, while offering patients fresh, flavorful, and naturally delicious foods. As small sustainable growers continue to be challenged by the conventional food system, connections between hospitals and local farms can provide a boost to local farm economies.

With so much recent focus on the links between food, nutrition, safety, and health, a farm to hospital program can provide an opportunity for health care to demonstrate its commitment to health promotion and disease prevention. Developing a seasonal menu that includes items from local sources is an investment in the health and well being of a community and its citizens. Hospitals, with their health promotion and prevention objectives and strong community ties, represent a tremendous opportunity to expand farm to institution connections.



# STEPS HOSPITALS CAN TAKE TO IMPROVE THEIR FOOD

1. **Start a conversation about healthy food with nutritionists, food purchasers, physicians, and hospital administrators:** Building a team of dedicated people will result in a more successful and sustainable program.
2. **Develop a food purchasing policy that addresses health and environmental concerns:** Include a preference to purchase meats produced without antibiotics and non-RBGH (Recombinant Bovine Growth Hormone) milk from local family farmers.
3. **Work through your existing supplier and distributor to purchase local farm products:** Express a preference for these foods with your vendors.
4. **Contract with a group purchasing organization, distributor, or food service provider that supports healthy food:** Work with businesses that can best help you serve patients and staff with local, nutritious foods.
5. **Buy directly from local producers:** Research what is available locally, cultivate relationships with local growers, and start small by buying only a few products.
6. **Become a fast-food free zone:** Although fast food establishments may provide revenue for your facility and 'comfort food' for patients and staff, their presence contradicts the hospital's obligation to promote healthy food choices as part of a healthy lifestyle.
7. **Limit use of vending machines and replace unhealthy snacks with healthy choices:** Vending machines are another source of fast, cheap and convenient, but often unhealthy food. Make sure to include whole fruit, low fat and low sugar snacks, and water or juice beverages in your vending machines.
8. **Host a farmers' market or CSA on hospital grounds:** Farmers' Markets and CSA (community supported agriculture) programs support efforts to incorporate healthy foods into diets by increasing availability of fresh, locally grown foods.
9. **Model local, nutritious, sustainable food at conferences, meetings and workshops:** When planning a health care professional event, work with conference centers or hotels who are willing to incorporate local foods into conference meals and promote these efforts to event attendees.
10. **Create hospital gardens to grow fresh produce and flowers:** Gardens can provide both healthy foods and thriving green spaces.

# HOW GROWERS CAN APPROACH INSTITUTIONS

Below are some issues farmers need to address if they want to explore selling to institutions:

## 1. Product Consistency and Communication

Have a clear idea of what you are capable of providing for your clients. Larger institutions are typically used to relying on large, dependable food service providers and may have limited resources and staff available to place and receive orders. Be clear about the products and quantities you estimate will be available and when; and if possible, provide hospital food service staff with a seasonality chart so they can better plan their menus. To increase variety and fill production gaps, consider working with other growers. If product volumes will be short, abundant, or cosmetically damaged, let clients know as far in advance as possible. Making the effort to personalize your service will demonstrate your concern and care for client service and also give food service staff time to adjust menus as needed.

## 2. Delivery

Delivery details are a vital part of establishing a new purchasing arrangement with a hospital. Few hospitals have the capacity to pick up product from a farm or farmers' market, and most hospitals are wary of receiving deliveries from multiple trucks. Delivery systems that coordinate product pick up and delivery from several farms to a local hospital can be helpful in reducing the administrative work for the hospital. Find out what channels the hospital currently uses to purchase their food products (such as a distributor) and explore the possibility of working through these channels. Contact local agriculture organizations to determine if there is a local farmer cooperative or other farmer infrastructure for marketing your products to local institutions.

## 3. Pricing

When determining product prices, try to maintain consistent prices throughout the season, barring any natural disasters or large market fluctuations. Do your best to project a price which reflects costs of production and profitability but allow space for discounts due to volumes or other such negotiations. When invoicing institutions, make invoices clear, concise, and readable, and try to maintain the same billing layout throughout your wholesale relationship. Most institutions are generally reliable, though payment can be slow in coming. Keep in mind that institutions typically pay below retail prices and may take up to 1-3 months to pay for goods received. Many institutions will require growers to hold at least \$1 million of general liability insurance. Working through an existing distributor, farmer cooperative, or other marketing network may allow you to circumvent this issue.

## 4. Regulations and Food Safety

Hospitals are beholden to certain regulations regarding food preparation, handling, and processing due to the nature of their work. Growers should be mindful of HACCP (Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points, to learn more visit: <http://www.cfsan.fda.gov/~lrd/haccp.html>), JCAHO (Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations), and other healthcare related food regulations. In order to address some food safety concerns, growers might consider documenting their farm's policies and practices concerning:

- Field Harvesting
- Washing/Packing Line
- Loading, Storage, and Transportation
- Water Usage
- Worker Health & Hygiene

# FARM TO HOSPITAL CASE STUDIES

## FLETCHER ALLEN HEALTH CARE BURLINGTON, VERMONT

**PURPOSE:** To increase staff and patient access to healthy food, and support the local economy.

**SUMMARY:** For 10-15 years, Fletcher Allen Health Care has been composting their food waste and selling the compost back to the community through Intervale Compost Products. More recently they began buying locally grown (usually organic) food, hormone-free milk, and fair-trade coffee. FAHC's patient menu also utilizes fresh, local foods and brings local chefs in to the cafeteria to promote recipes. FAHC also purchases and composts biodegradable cups and purchases recycled napkins and coffee trays.

**PURCHASING:** FAHC buys most of its local products through small vendors, local distributors, or directly from farmers. A small amount of local foods are purchased through their contracted supplier, U.S. Foodservice.

### **COSTS & BENEFITS:**

- FAHC pays a premium for some of its organic produce but gets good pricing on the milk since they are a large purchaser.
- Composting food waste costs no more than other disposal methods and diverts waste from landfills.
- Their overall program helps develop a sustainable local community.

## CANCER TREATMENT CENTERS OF AMERICA ZION, ILLINOIS & TULSA, OKLAHOMA

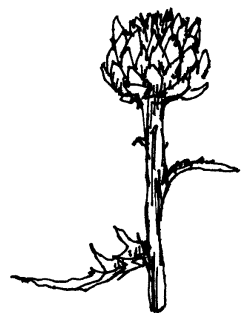
**PURPOSE:** Promote optimal nutrition for cancer patients and reduce their exposure to toxins and pesticides.

**SUMMARY:** CTCA prioritizes the use of certified organic food and drinks and serves fresh, high quality products to patients. Organic foods include fruits and vegetables, soymilk, dairy products, dry goods, and meat. CTCA follows USDA's suggestions for reducing chemical exposure from food when organic products cannot be purchased. Nutritionists also counsel patients on ways to eat organic at home.

**PURCHASING:** CTCA initially found it difficult to find organic produce wholesale suppliers in the Midwest but began working with Roots and Fruits Cooperative, a USDA-certified organic handler. They now use locally grown organic products whenever available.

### **COSTS & BENEFITS:**

- Raw food costs per patient are higher than that of the average medical facility.
- Organic and fresh foods provide optimal nutrition and reduced exposure to pesticides for patients, visitors, and staff.
- The food is of the highest quality, and is better tasting.
- The program provides support for local organic producers.



# FARM TO HOSPITAL, A GROWING MOVEMENT!

Across the country, hospitals are teaming up with local growers and producers to make changes in the food service industry and local food economy. The time is right for farms and hospitals to connect to provide patients and staff with the most healthy and fresh foods available.

Many resources are available to hospitals and growers interested in the healthy hospital food movement. For more information contact:

Center for Food & Justice  
<http://www.foodandjustice.org>  
(323) 341-5099  
[beery@oxy.edu](mailto:beery@oxy.edu)

Health Care Without Harm  
<http://www.noharm.org>

The resources referenced in this brochure, and many others, can be downloaded at Health Care Without Harm's website.

Sample Institutional Policies can be found on the Food Alliance website:  
<http://www.foodalliance.org/sustainablefoodpolicy/policies.htm>

To find a CSA or other local food resources in your area visit, [www.localharvest.org](http://www.localharvest.org)



Developed by the Center for Food & Justice, a division of the Urban & Environmental Policy Institute at Occidental College. To learn more: [www.uepi.oxy.edu](http://www.uepi.oxy.edu)  
(323) 341-5099 | [cfj@oxy.edu](mailto:cfj@oxy.edu)

In partnership with the Community Food Security Coalition.  
To learn more visit: [www.foodsecurity.org](http://www.foodsecurity.org)

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