



**2025** LOCAL  
FOOD  
Initiative



**King County**



## Contents

<b>Letters</b>	<b>3</b>
Letter from the King County Executive	3
Letter from the King Conservation District Executive Director	4
Letter from LFI Leadership	5
<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>9</b>
Land acknowledgement	11
<b>Why does King County need a plan?</b>	<b>12</b>
What is the food system?	13
How was this plan created?	14
Top 10 priority actions	17
How to read this plan	18
<b>LFI goals and actions</b>	<b>19</b>
Food Access	19
Local Economy	23
Food Production	28
Environmental Sustainability	33
<b>What's next?</b>	<b>38</b>
Monitoring progress	39
<b>Endnotes</b>	<b>41</b>
Glossary	42



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## Letter from the King County Executive

The health of our communities starts with access to healthy food. It nourishes our children, sustains our workforce, and brings families together.

Yet even in a large county with both fertile farmland and dynamic cities, too many of our neighbors do not have access to nutritious, homegrown food.

That's why King County launched the Local Food Initiative in 2015, recognizing that a strong local food system contributes to many of our priorities: advancing equity and racial justice, promoting climate resiliency, improving public health, and supporting a thriving economy.

We made progress during the first decade, thanks to partnerships with farmers, food businesses, community organizations, colleges, and local governments. We've strengthened the local food economy, protected farmland, and expanded access to healthy, affordable food for residents throughout the county. These are the results of collaboration, creativity, and the shared belief that everyone in King County should benefit from a resilient, sustainable food system.

Now is our opportunity to build on that foundation. The updated Local Food Initiative renews our vision and charts a 10-year roadmap to address today's challenges and prepare for the future.

Rising food insecurity, increasing cost of farmland, impacts of climate change, and persistent inequities in access to healthy food demand bold, coordinated action. This plan is a living document that will guide policies, investments, and partnerships to build a food system that is economically vibrant, environmentally responsible, and rooted in equity and justice.

This is a shared vision that reflects the voices of our communities. I'm grateful to all the residents, farmers, food workers, public agencies, businesses, and community organizations that contributed their time and expertise to shape it. Special appreciation goes to the King County Food System Advisory Council, the King Conservation District, and our county departments and partners for their leadership.

Moving forward, we invite all residents, community leaders, businesses, and organizations to join us in bringing this plan to life. Together we can ensure that King County's food system truly serves us all — today and for generations to come.



Shannon Braddock, King County Executive





## Letter from the King Conservation District Executive Director

Over the past 10 years, King County's Local Food Initiative, King Conservation District's Regional Food System Program, and our community have worked together to strengthen food access, support local farmers, and steward our working lands for future generations. Building on 10 years of experience and broad stakeholder engagement, the updated Local Food Initiative will help our partnership more effectively address pressing issues such as climate resilience, food access, and the economic viability of our local farms.

As the needs of our communities have grown more complex, so too has our approach to foster a robust regional food system. The updated Local Food Initiative creates space for deeper and more impactful collaboration, aligning climate action, equitable access, and strategies that benefit every community in King County. To that end, King Conservation District is excited to welcome the climate special projects coordinator to our team, a role designed to advance climate-smart agriculture through research, technical assistance, and the development of innovative partnerships.

A heartfelt acknowledgement to the Food Systems Advisory Council and every organization alongside us—thank you for challenging assumptions, surfacing new solutions, and keeping momentum during this time when it matters the most.

Together, with our partners, producers, and communities, we are poised to build a more resilient and vibrant local food system for all.



Rosa Méndez-Perez,  
Executive Director, King Conservation District





## Letter from LFI Leadership

We are honored to share with you the updated King County Local Food Initiative. When the first LFI was launched in 2015, it set a bold vision for growing our local food and farm economy and expanding access to healthy, affordable food for all residents.

Much has changed in our region and in the broader food system since then. New challenges have emerged, new leaders and communities have stepped forward, and we have gained valuable lessons—both from our successes and from the work that has not gone as planned. This update reflects those changes, integrates the voices of new communities and partners, and re-focuses our efforts on the most pressing challenges and opportunities ahead.

From the outset, we set three priorities for this update:

- We wanted to center the voices of communities and groups that have historically been left out of food system planning, ensuring that the plan reflects a truly regional vision;
- We aimed to embed climate change and climate resilience at the heart of the plan, recognizing that a healthy food system and a healthy environment are inseparable;
- Finally, we sought to improve alignment with other regional strategies—including the City of Seattle's Food Action Plan and King County's Strategic Climate Action Plan—so that our collective work reinforces and amplifies one another.

This strategy represents a recommitment to our shared work. It sets a roadmap for policies, investments, and partnerships to help build a more equitable, resilient, and thriving food system for everyone who calls King County home.

We are deeply grateful to the many people and organizations who made this update possible. To our Food System Advisory Council members, thank you for your leadership and counsel. To our community partners, farmers, food workers, businesses, and institutions, thank you for the countless hours of input, feedback, and collaboration that shaped this plan. We sincerely hope it reflects your vision and aspirations for our region's food system.

With deep appreciation,



**Michael Lufkin**  
Local Food Economy Manager,  
King County



**Mary Embleton**  
Regional Food System Grant Program Manager,  
King Conservation District

## Executive Summary

The King County Local Food Initiative (LFI) was first created in 2015 to strengthen the local food system by growing the local food and farm economy and expanding access to healthy, affordable food for all residents. The 2025 update renews this vision with a 10-year roadmap that addresses today's challenges and prepares for the future. It reaffirms our shared commitment to a food system that is both economically and environmentally sustainable, rooted in equity and justice, and responsive to the voices and needs of communities across King County—from rural to urban. Together, these efforts aim to build a local food system that truly serves us all.

While King County's food system is vibrant—rooted in diverse farms, innovative food businesses, active community networks, and strong policy leadership—it also faces serious and urgent challenges, including rising food insecurity, high farmland costs, underinvestment in food infrastructure, and increasing threats from climate change. The food system is also shaped by policies and funding decisions at both the state and federal levels. Recent federal changes in policy and investment are influencing local programs, creating new challenges and pressures to sustain resources and ensure long-term support. A shared, coordinated plan is essential to guide action, shape policy, and align resources to meet these challenges.

The updated LFI was shaped through an 18-month process (2024–25) and led by King County and the King Conservation District (KCD), with support from New Venture Advisors. A key part of this process was the Food System Advisory Council (FSAC)—a group of more than twenty leaders from farms, businesses, community organizations, and government.

*Continued on next page*



*Frisky Girl Farm located in North Bend*



Community voices guided the plan at every step. More than 1,600 residents completed surveys, and additional input came from listening sessions, focus groups, and interviews. These perspectives were combined with valuable learning from programs and projects and findings from other county and regional plans to ensure alignment in policy efforts and investments.

Through engagement, the community emphasized the need to protect farmland, support farmers and food businesses, expand equitable access to healthy food, invest in infrastructure, and ensure that climate and equity guide decision-making. These issues are complex and costly, and they demand a coordinated approach. The updated LFI provides the direction needed to guide investments, shape policy, and align the work of governments, funders, and community partners.

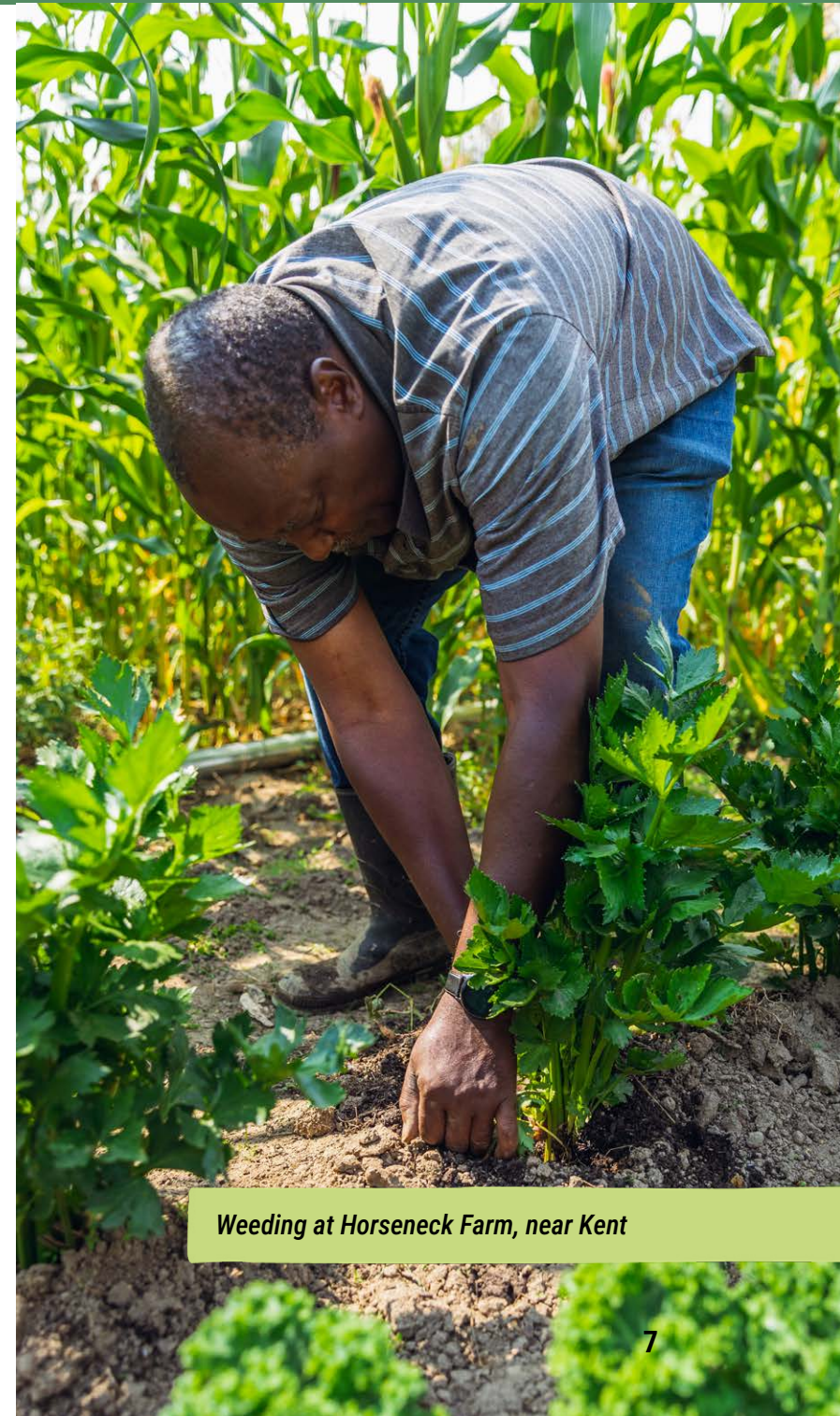
The updated LFI envisions a **just, sustainable, and resilient food system** where all residents can access affordable, healthy, and culturally relevant food; farmers and food workers can thrive; and natural resources are protected for future generations.

The plan sets out **four interconnected goals**:

1. Ensure equitable food access and affordability
2. Build a thriving local food and farm economy
3. Protect farmland and support sustainable production
4. Advance environmental sustainability and climate resilience

These goals are backed by 83 actions including policies, programs, and investments that build on existing efforts and introduce new actions that can be carried out collaboratively across sectors and partners. To launch implementation, **10 priority actions** (page 17) have been identified as the most urgent and impactful.

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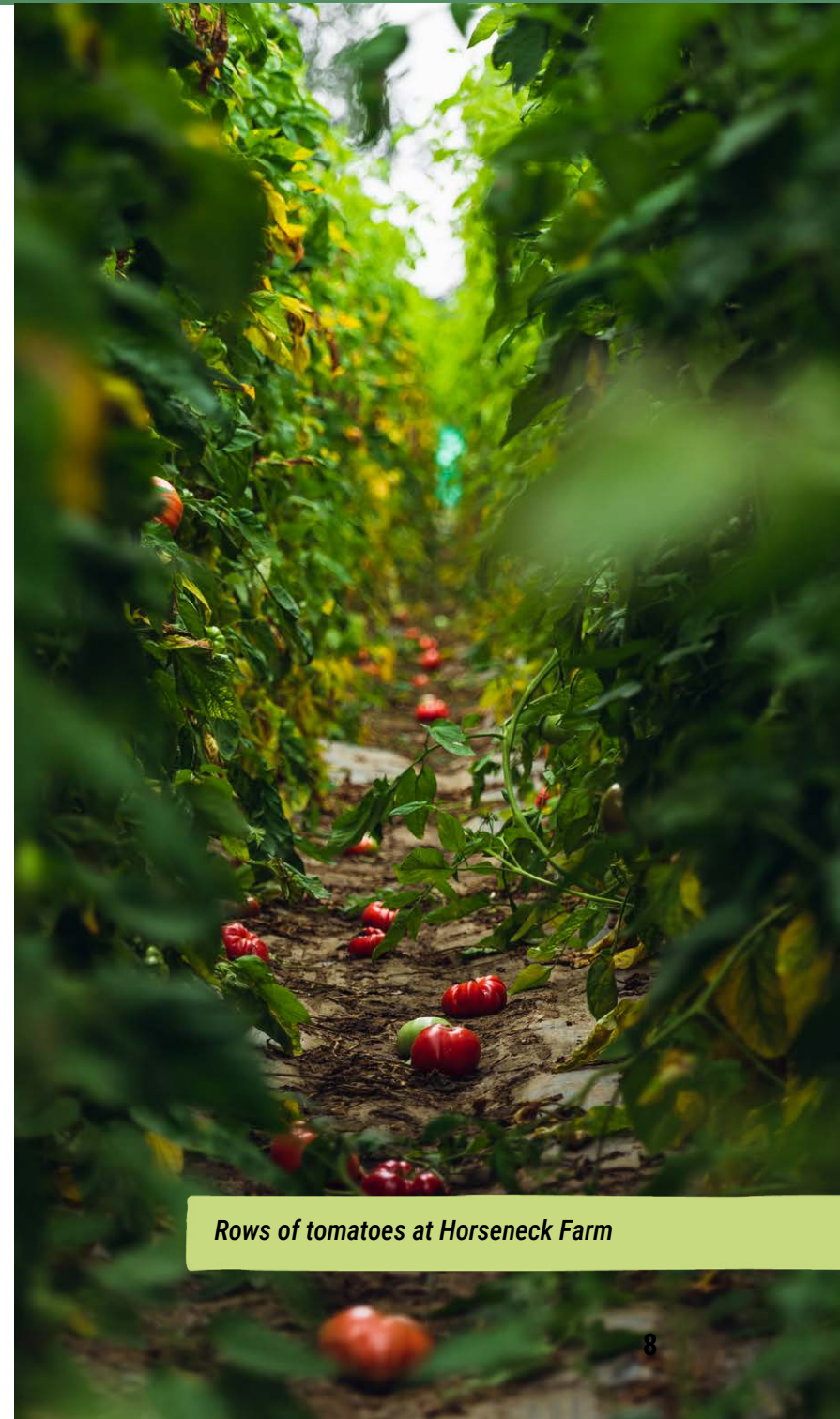
*Weeding at Horseneck Farm, near Kent*



Implementation will require partners from across the region to come together in new and innovative ways. King County and the KCD will provide stewardship and support, but this plan ultimately belongs to the community and will succeed through shared commitment and collaboration. Guided by shared principles—fair distribution of power, resilience to climate and economic challenges, and prioritizing grassroots leadership—this work will focus on building partnerships, coordinating resources, and sustaining programs. Key investments, including KCD's regional food system grants and strategic initiative grants, along with other public and private funding efforts, will help bring the plan's vision to life.

The Local Food Initiative is more than a plan—it is a shared commitment to building a stronger food future for King County. Its success depends on the combined efforts of government, nonprofits, businesses, farmers, and residents. By working together, we can ensure that everyone has access to healthy food, local farms and food businesses remain strong, and natural resources are protected for the next generation.

We invite all community members, organizations, and institutions to join in partnerships, advocate for supportive policies, and take part in programs that will bring this vision to life.



*Rows of tomatoes at Horseneck Farm*

## Acknowledgements

The success of the Local Food Initiative update reflects the time, knowledge, and deep commitment of many people and organizations across King County. Their contributions helped shape the vision, goals, and actions in this plan, and their partnership is deeply appreciated.

The King County Local Food Initiative update was co-led by King County and the King Conservation District in partnership with New Venture Advisors. A food system advisory committee, created in 2023 and made up of representatives from government, businesses, nonprofits, and food and farm organizations, played a key role in guiding the update and fostering collaboration across sectors. Over a two-year period, hundreds of King County residents and food system stakeholders contributed input that laid the foundation for the goals and actions outlined in this plan. This collaborative effort was shaped not only by vital community voices but also by the contributions of partner agencies, including the City of Seattle, King County Department of Natural Resources and Parks, Port of Seattle, Public Health - Seattle & King County, and WSU Extension.

### Food System Advisory Committee

Abby Antonelis  
*Antonelis Family Farm /  
Vashon Island Growers Association*

Ariana de Leña  
*Kamayan Farm*

Austin Becker  
*Farmstand Local Foods*

Barb Houston  
*South King County Food Coalition*

Bryant Her  
*Washington Hmong  
Farmers Cooperative*

Carrie Olson  
*Renton Farmers Market*

Dave Casey  
*SnoValley Tilth*

David Bobanick  
*Harvest Against Hunger*

Domonique Juleon  
*Business Impact Northwest*

Haylee Mensonides  
*Mount Rainier Creamery*

Heather Trim  
*Zero Waste Washington*

Indra Budiman  
*African Community and  
Housing Development*

Mariah DeLeo  
*Seattle Good Business Network*

Maura Clotilde Kizito  
*Wakulima USA*

Michael Frazier  
*Viva Farms*

Ray Williams  
*Black Farmers Collective*

Romajeane Thomas  
*Feed Seven Generations*

Rosario Lopez-Hernandez  
*Super Familia*

Ryan Lichttenegger  
*Steel Wheel Farm LLC*

Sirak Weldemicael  
*International Rescue Committee*

Wayne Johnson, deceased  
*FareStart*

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## Land Acknowledgement

**LFI Development Team**

Mike Lufkin

Yveline Saint Louis

Maren Grunnet

Andrea Rouleau



Mary Embleton

Miranda Smith



Kara Martin

Nani Conklin

Brian Estabrook

Hannah Martin

**Public Agency Partners**Annie Tran  
*Port of Seattle*Bridget Igoe  
*City of Seattle*Elizabeth Kimball and Eyob Mazengia  
*Public Health - Seattle & King County*Miranda Smith  
*KCD*Richard Martin  
*King County Department of  
Natural Resources and Parks*Rosy Smit  
*WSU Extension*

“

I was impressed with the thoughtful and committed work of the Food System Advisory Council to develop a local food initiative that included input from all parts of our community. It was especially gratifying to see that the need to continue to connect local small-scale farm operations with hunger relief organizations to build healthy food systems across our community is one of the key areas of focus and impact.

**David Bobanick***Harvest Against Hunger Executive Director*

“

I am excited for the final release of this report to help spur investments into solutions that we know work. I am grateful to have worked with such a diverse group of peers who all share the same values around creating a more sustainable and just local food economy in King County, and I am proud of the robust set of actionable policies we collectively built that will continue to transform our food system for future to come.

**Mariah DeLeo***Good Business Network of Washington Program Director*



## Land Acknowledgement

## Land Acknowledgement

In King County, the County interacts with many Tribal governments who have land acknowledgements for use in many contexts. You are invited to visit these Tribal governments and their land acknowledgements to learn more about those Tribal governments and the Tribes.



**Muckleshoot Indian Tribe**  
[muckleshoot.nsn.us](http://muckleshoot.nsn.us)



**Puyallup Tribe**  
[puyalluptribe-nsn.gov](http://puyalluptribe-nsn.gov)



**Snoqualmie Tribe**  
[snoqualmietribe.us](http://snoqualmietribe.us)



**Suquamish Tribe**  
[suquamish.nsn.us](http://suquamish.nsn.us)



**Tulalip Tribes**  
[tulaliptribes-nsn.gov](http://tulaliptribes-nsn.gov)



*Snoqualmie Indian Tribe salmon release celebration*



*Members of the Snoqualmie Indian Tribe release young kokanee salmon on Lake Sammamish*

## Why does King County need a plan?

King County's food system is a vital part of its economy, culture, and environment. The region benefits from a strong agricultural heritage, innovative food businesses, active food policy leadership, and a thriving network of community organizations. At the same time, it faces serious, complex challenges: rising food insecurity, the highest farmland costs in Washington, underinvestment in food infrastructure, and growing threats from climate change. While local farmers and businesses struggle to secure affordable land and facilities, access capital, and maintain viable markets, many residents lack consistent access to affordable, healthy, and culturally relevant food.

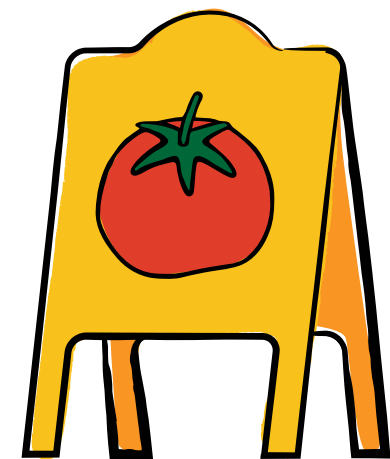
The past decade has underscored just how vulnerable the food system can be. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed weaknesses in supply chains and labor markets. Rapid economic growth in the region has added pressure on farmland and food markets. Climate change is creating new environmental stresses that require farms to adapt and transition toward climate-smart and regenerative practices, but more resources and support are needed to make this possible. At the same time, movements for racial and social justice have highlighted inequities in land ownership, food access, and decision-making, showing the urgent need to bring more diverse voices into food system planning.

These challenges are complex, interconnected, and costly. Without a shared strategy, solutions remain fragmented and opportunities are lost. A coordinated plan provides the direction needed to guide public investment, shape policy, and align the work of community partners, funders, and local governments.

Refreshing the Local Food Initiative is an opportunity to build on past successes, learn from gaps and challenges, and bring in more community voices, new research and emerging policies. The updated plan:

- centers equity and climate resilience across all food system strategies;
- elevates the voices of underrepresented communities in the planning process;
- strengthens coordination across county departments and local jurisdictions;
- aligns with the Strategic Climate Action Plan, equity and social justice goals, and other regional priorities; and
- serves as a guide for funding future investment from the KCD Regional Food System grant program.

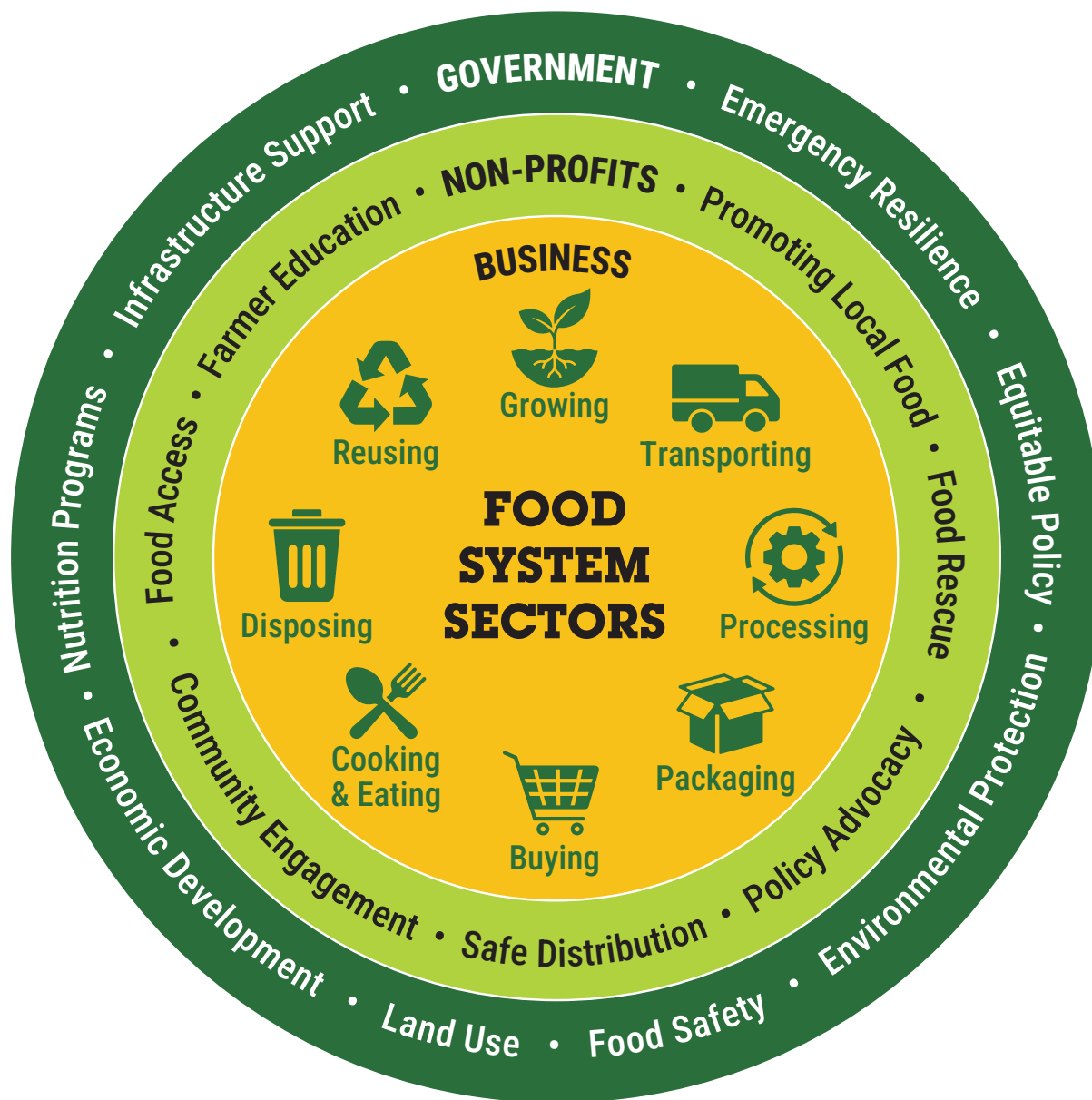
With this renewed focus, the LFI will continue to serve as a guiding framework in building a food system that is resilient, fair, and sustainable—supporting farmers, food workers, businesses, and communities across King County.



## What is the food system?

Food is more than what ends up on our plates—it comes from a system that shapes our lives and communities in many ways. The food system is the network of people, businesses, governments, organizations, policies, and resources that make food possible. It includes every step—from growing and harvesting to processing, transporting, selling, eating, and recycling or composting food. Even though much of this work happens out of sight, the food system has a big impact on our health, the environment, the economy, and the quality of life in our communities. The COVID-19 pandemic revealed how fragile global food supply chains can be, highlighting the need for stronger local systems.

A thriving food system provides affordable, nutritious food, supports farmers and workers, protects natural resources, and strengthens local economies. An unhealthy system, by contrast, damages the environment, worsens inequities, harms public health, and weakens community life. By understanding how the food system works and how it connects to larger issues like culture, leadership, and justice, communities can take action to build a food system that is fair, sustainable, and resilient for everyone.





## How was this plan created?

In 2024, King County and the King Conservation District began an 18-month planning process, supported by NVA, to update the LFI, which was first created in 2015. The 2025 update emphasizes three key priorities: (1) deeper and more meaningful community involvement, (2) integrating new research, lessons learned, and emerging programs, and (3) ensuring alignment with recent plans and strategies connected to the food system.

Central to the planning process, there was extensive engagement with people across King County—from farming areas to urban and suburban communities—representing all parts of the food system. This included engaging new and existing partnerships with community organizations, businesses, and community leaders working in the food system as well as gathering input from residents, or “eaters,” across the county.

Community and stakeholder engagement was carried out in several ways:

- **Food System Advisory Council (FSAC):** This group of more than twenty members guided the process from start to finish. They helped design the engagement plan, review community input, develop goals and actions, and refine the recommendations.
- **community surveys:** More than 1,600 residents completed the online survey, sharing their experiences, priorities and ideas for improving the local food system.
- **listening sessions:** Fourteen sessions—both in person and virtual—were held with different food system sectors. Participants discussed challenges, barriers, and possible solutions, as well as ways to expand on successful efforts already happening.
- **key informant interviews:** Local food system experts were consulted on the proposed actions to further refine and strengthen them.



*Native and Indigenous Foods Listening Session*



*Aggregators and distributors listening session*

FSAC members included food business owners, workers, program managers or directors at community-based organizations, food and environmental justice leaders, advocates, and government policy advisors across the food system. The LFI builds upon their decades of work, action, learning and leadership.

















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### Plan creation continued

Findings from these efforts were analyzed to identify key themes most important to the community. These themes became the foundation for the draft goals, objectives, and actions in the plan. A critical step was ensuring the plan aligned with other local engagement findings and policy efforts. This included reviewing key policies such as King County's Strategic Climate Action Plan, Seattle's Food Action Plan, and environmental justice initiatives, as well as having conversations with other jurisdictions and agencies throughout the development process (see "Table A: LFI Alignment with other regional plans"). This alignment reinforces regional priorities, reduces duplication of efforts, and strengthens coordination across partners. It also supports more efficient use of resources, improves data collection and evaluation, deepens partner engagement, and increases the overall impact of public investments.

This planning process ensured that the updated Local Food Initiative reflects community priorities, expert insights, and alignment with broader regional and policy goals. The final plan—shaped by FSAC guidance, local expertise, and public feedback—outlines four strategic goal areas with 83 actions. A public comment period and input from the FSAC then helped decide which objectives and actions should be addressed first. This process helped create a plan that reflects what the community cares about most and sets clear steps for building a stronger local food system.

Table A : LFI Alignment with other regional plans

Agency	LFI Goal			
	Food access	Economy	Production	Environmental sustainability
<a href="#">City of Seattle Food Action Plan</a>				
<a href="#">Food Insecurity in King County (2023)</a>				
<a href="#">King County 2025 Strategic Climate Action Plan</a>				
<a href="#">King County Community Health Needs Assessment 2024–2025</a>				
<a href="#">Seattle Food Action Plan Update Stakeholder Engagement Report Back</a>				
<a href="#">Snoqualmie Valley Agricultural Strategic Plan</a>				
<a href="#">Washington's Use Food Well Plan</a>				

## Guiding principles and practices

Through the community engagement process, people shared not only their ideas for specific actions but also their values and priorities for *how* this work should move forward. From these conversations, several themes emerged that cut across all of the plan's core goals. These themes highlight what matters most to the community and point to both the principles we believe in and the practices that will guide how we carry out the Local Food Initiative. These themes are not intended to be a complete list, but they highlight the main values and priorities shared most often during the engagement process, and they will be built on as the plan is carried out.

### Principles – What we believe

- Power in the food system should be shared fairly, not concentrated in the hands of a few.
- Our food system must be resilient and strong enough to handle climate change and economic challenges.
- Grassroots, community-led organizations should be prioritized for funding and resource support.

### Practices – How we work

- Bring more people and groups from across the food system together to connect and collaborate.
- Improve regional coordination of resources and actions.
- Build public awareness of the food system and support community advocacy.
- Celebrate successes in food system efforts to inspire more action.
- Help policymakers understand the food system and the challenges that farmers and food businesses face.

These principles and practices, derived directly from community engagement, provide the foundation for how the Local Food Initiative will be carried out and sustained.









## Top 10 priority actions

To launch the updated Local Food Initiative and highlight the urgency of this work, 10 priority actions were identified—shaped by community input and the Food System Advisory Council—to address urgent needs and advance shared goals across the food system.



### Food Access

-  Develop long-term, sustainable funding for farm-to-community and food access programs, helping them purchase food from local producers, including forward contracting agreements.
-  Increase voucher and incentive programs for community members to purchase local foods at farmers markets, CSAs, farm stands, local stores, mobile markets, and community organizations.
-  Develop more community-driven food retail models such as mobile markets, pantries, stores, or locker systems prioritizing free and discounted nutritious locally sourced food.

### Local Economy

-  Improve market and distribution channels by funding value chain coordinators, network facilitators, and local procurement specialists who provide technical assistance to smaller buyers, producers, and food businesses.
-  Increase the use of values-based purchasing frameworks by institutional, public, and private buyers to increase demand for locally produced foods while aligning purchasing decisions with social, environmental, and economic goals.

### Food Production

-  Make farmland more accessible to farmers by reducing fee value, including revising farmland preservation easements to require active agricultural use, offering incentives to farmers who sell their land to new and beginning farmers, and establishing buy, protect, and sell models.
-  Create and pilot cooperative, shared-land farming models that allow farmers to jointly access land, share equipment and resources, lower entry costs, and build stronger, more resilient small farm operations.

### Environmental Sustainability

-  Increase adoption of climate-smart and regenerative practices, with a focus on small and historically underserved farmers, through funding, training and coordination with partners, demonstration projects, and peer-to-peer assistance.
-  Improve the efficiency and scale of food recovery by increasing funding for logistics and operations, piloting innovative distribution models, and strengthening coordination between businesses, institutions, and food recovery organizations.
-  Accelerate the adoption of cleaner technology across the food system by investing in public-private partnerships that pilot and scale low-carbon, energy-efficient solutions through funding, incentives, technical assistance, and outreach through funding, incentives, technical assistance, and outreach.

## How to read this plan

The Local Food Initiative provides a policy roadmap that aims to build a resilient and equitable local food system. The timeline for the plan is 10 years, recognizing some actions may be able to be implemented immediately, while others will take years of additional development.

### GOALS:



**Food Access**



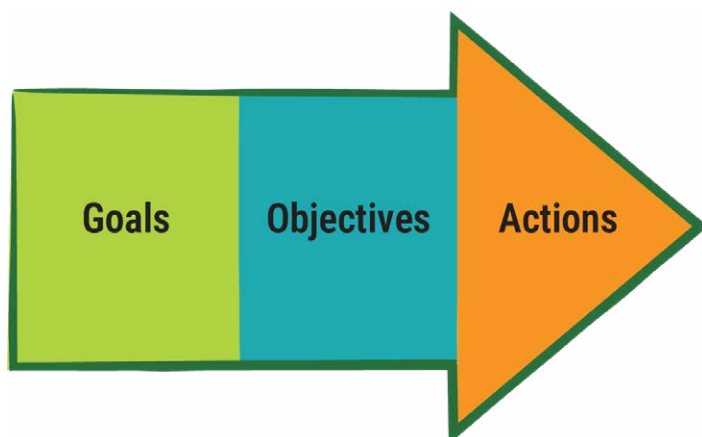
**Local Economy**



**Food Production**




**Environmental Sustainability**



The plan is organized from broad **goals** to detailed **actions**.

Each goal is broken down into specific **objectives**, and each objective is supported by concrete **actions**. These actions include policies, programs, and investments—both ongoing and new—that work together to move the plan's vision forward. The actions vary on level specificity due to the extent of community input provided. Some actions build on existing efforts and include more detail, while others reflect newer, emerging priorities that will need more assessment and development to guide next steps.

To kickstart the LFI implementation, the top **10 priority actions** are noted with a  symbol representing each goal, and compiled on page 17.



## Food Access goal:

### Ensure equitable access to affordable, healthy, culturally relevant food

Food access means that people, families, and communities can acquire, afford, and prepare the food they want to eat. Food access depends on food security, which means that everyone, at all times, can obtain enough affordable, safe, healthy food to meet their needs and preferences for an active,

healthy life.<sup>1</sup> In many cases, lack of food access is linked to a history of unfair and discriminatory treatment, resulting in low incomes, limited job opportunities, unequal education, unstable housing, limited transportation, and racial inequity. Achieving food access for all will take focused community outreach, strategic advocacy, and institutional development guided by the people most affected, creating a future where everyone can enjoy more local and nutritious food.

The 2024–2025 King County Community Health Needs Assessment found that “growing numbers of community members do not have enough resources to meet their basic needs,” including food.<sup>2</sup> The biggest barriers<sup>3</sup> are the high cost of food, the cost of transportation, limited land availability for growing food, and lack of access to supportive services and resources. From 2018 to 2022, about 9.5% of adults in King County<sup>4</sup> experienced food insecurity, meaning they did not always know where their next meal would come from. However, food insecurity is not experienced equally by all, and many social factors contribute to who is hungry and who is not. Food insecurity in King County is experienced by 30.3% of Native and Indigenous adults, 27.7% of Hispanic/Latino adults,

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**Stocking up the Tukwila Pantry**



### *Food Access goals continued*

25.6% of Black/African American adults, and 19% of Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander adults.<sup>5</sup> Feeding America estimates that to close this gap, King County would need more than \$216 million per year<sup>6</sup> to ensure everyone has enough to eat.

Federal food assistance programs such as SNAP and WIC support residents in meeting their food needs. As of August 2025, 125,000 households in King County (or 11% of all households) are receiving SNAP benefits.<sup>7</sup> South King County has areas nearly three times this rate with some ZIP codes having around 30% receiving SNAP benefits. Community members also seek food assistance through a range of food access programs. A 2023 study identified 50 food banks, 97 meal delivery programs, and 65 community organizations providing food sources for food insecure individuals and families.<sup>8</sup>

Food access emerged as the top priority for residents across King County. Feedback from surveys and listening sessions pointed to significant barriers that prevent people from accessing affordable, healthy, and culturally relevant food. Participants stressed the importance of making healthy food more available and affordable, strengthening food assistance programs, and increasing nutrition education in places where families regularly access food and other resources. They also called for more spaces and resources for people to grow their own food. Over half (52%) of survey respondents said food is too expensive. This is compounded by rising living costs that make healthy, local, and culturally relevant foods even harder to access. *Ensuring everyone has access to affordable, healthy food emerged as the top overall priority in community input findings.*

The food access goal focuses on ensuring equitable access to affordable, healthy, and culturally relevant food. The goal's objectives are to strengthen community-guided food access programs, expand affordable and culturally relevant food with nutrition education, improve equitable distribution, and support community-based production, including foraging, fishing, and hunting.



## Food Access actions





= Top 10 priority actions

**Goal: Ensure equitable access to affordable, healthy, culturally relevant food**

### Objective 1: Strengthened local food access programs, outreach, and advocacy, informed by the communities that they serve


- 1.1 Increase funding for food access programs and organizations, including support for operations, service coordination, resource sharing, and infrastructure.
- 1.2 Increase coordination across the system by providing food assistance application support by linking food access organizations with Public Health's Access and Outreach Team.
- 1.3 Increase use of food assistance programs, such as SNAP, WIC, by:
  - broadening education and outreach by local agencies and partners for residents; and
  - growing the number of physical and online local food retailers who accept food assistance benefits by providing technical assistance, training, and resources.
- 1.4 Raise government and elected official awareness of the scale and causes of food insecurity, including identifying local investment opportunities to improve food security.
- 1.5 Increase the access to and use of local food in schools, through technical and resource assistance (such as grants).
- 1.6 Increase the use of food-as-medicine interventions (e.g., produce prescriptions, medically tailored groceries) by developing pilot projects and providing funding to scale existing programs.
- 1.7 Increase programs to recover food, including gleaning.

### Objective 2: Strengthened access to locally grown, culturally relevant food and increased nutrition education that promotes healthy eating and self-sufficiency

- 2.1 Expand school-based nutrition and food system education for youth and their families, including school gardens, field trips, youth ag education programs like Future Farmers of America, and family programs.
- 2.2 Expand community-led nutrition, gardening, and cooking programs.
- 2.3  Develop long-term, sustainable funding for farm-to-community and food access programs, helping them purchase food from local producers, including forward contracting agreements.
- 2.4  Increase voucher and incentive programs for community members to purchase local foods at farmers markets, CSAs, farm stands, local stores, mobile markets, and community organizations.

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*Food Access actions continued***Objective 3: Increased access to and equitable distribution of affordable food**

- 3.1 Increase community-informed food distribution, including centralized and decentralized sites, grocery-style pantries, delivery services, and co-location with trusted institutions.
- 3.2 Expand public transit solutions that link residents in underserved areas to food access and other basic needs locations.
- 3.3 Enlarge the farmers markets network and support existing farmers markets, including technical and financial assistance for their operational capacity, outreach, and food assistance programs.
- 3.4  **Develop more community-driven food retail models such as mobile markets, pantries, stores, or locker systems prioritizing free and discounted nutritious, locally sourced food.**

**Objective 4: Strengthened community-based food production, including subsistence foraging, fishing, and hunting**

- 4.1 Increase integration of community gardens, food forests, and orchards into public and private land by supporting community partnerships with technical and financial assistance.
- 4.2 Promote home food production, including backyard, balcony, indoor gardening and other small-scale cultivation by providing education and resources.
- 4.3 Address regulatory barriers that restrict safe, sustainable urban food production and foraging such as urban farms, food forests, gardens, and backyard livestock.
- 4.4 Increase education about food safety, liability protections, and legal allowances related to growing, fishing, foraging, hunting, and donating or sharing food.
- 4.5 Collaborate with Native and Indigenous communities and organizations to set priorities for restoring culturally significant foods and landscapes and integrate traditional ecological knowledge into planning.
- 4.6 Support the restoration of Indigenous-led food landscapes to grow and process traditional crops.

Food access programs are delivered by a wide range of community partners, including food banks and meal programs, grassroots and mutual aid groups, schools and educational programs, businesses, cultural and Indigenous communities, and local governments.





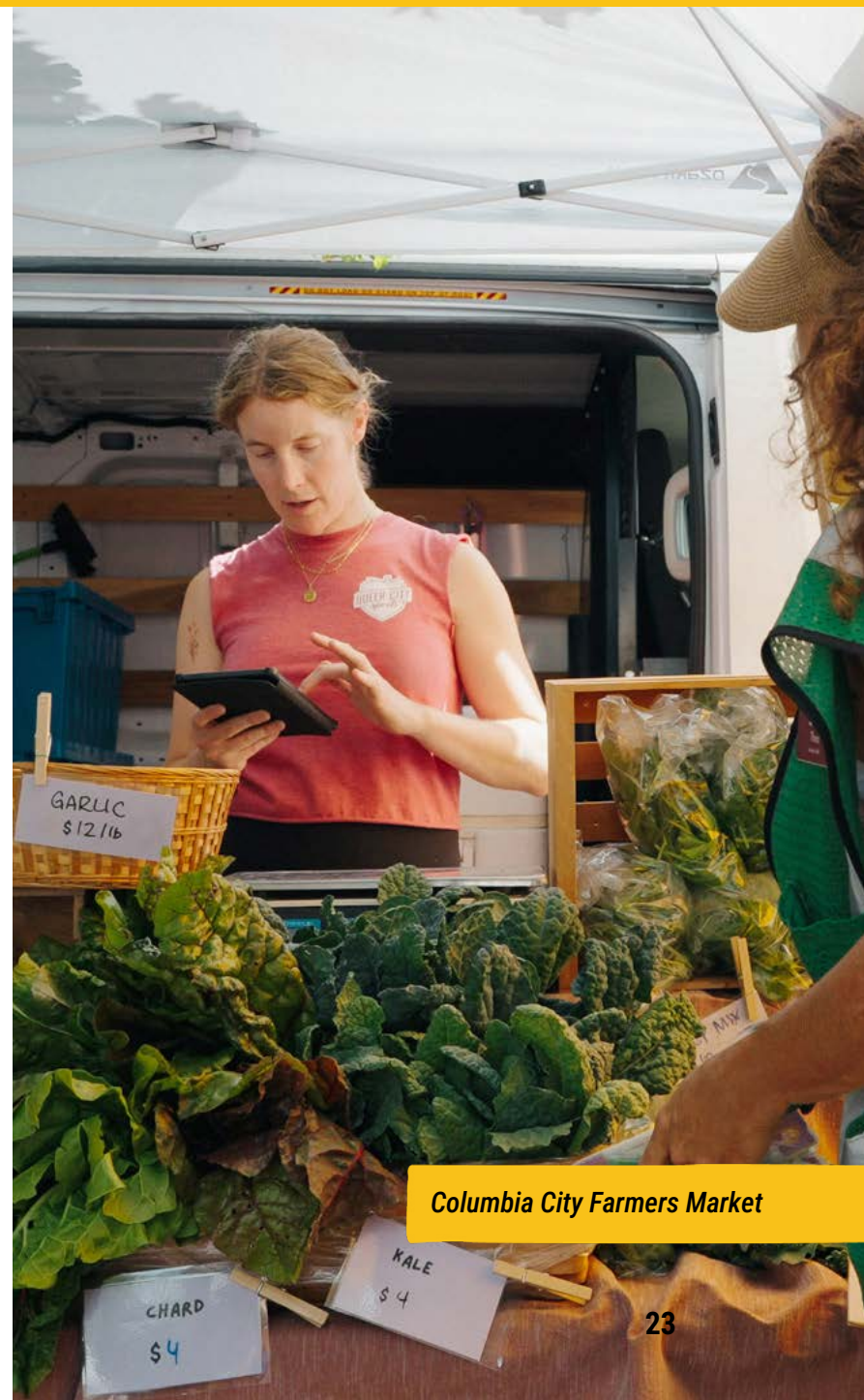
## Local Economy goal: Grow a just and thriving local food economy that uplifts locally owned food businesses and promotes dignified livelihoods for food system workers

The food system shapes both the strength of King County's economy and the fairness of opportunities within it. Every day, work is carried out by thousands of people in our community to grow, process, prepare, sell, deliver, and manage the leftovers of the food we eat. Because food touches so many parts of daily life, it creates opportunities for small, local, and minority-owned businesses to thrive and for workers to have steady, dignified work.

A strong and fair local food economy supports family farms, neighborhood restaurants, farmers markets, and other food operations of all sizes. It can also build stronger links in the food supply chain, from farms to grocery stores to kitchen tables, while providing steady jobs and fair wages for workers. Making this vision a reality will require greater investment, more resources, and stronger infrastructure. Building a just food economy will circulate dollars locally, expand equitable access to nutritious food, protect farmland and green spaces, and promote healthier lives for everyone in King County.

The food industry is a significant part of King County's economy and workforce. According to the 2022 USDA Census of Agriculture, 290 King County farms sold food directly to consumers and those food items were worth a combined \$4.5 million.<sup>9</sup> In 2023, more than 107,000 jobs were in restaurants, cafes,

*Continued on next page*



Columbia City Farmers Market

### *Local Economy goals continued*

catering, and other food services.<sup>10</sup> In addition there are over 3,000 people working as farmers or farm operators, with more than 1,000 of them being new or beginning farmers.<sup>11</sup> The county has nearly 12,500 permitted food businesses, ranging from restaurants and coffee shops to school kitchens and institutional food providers.<sup>12</sup>

Strengthening the local food economy ranked as the second-highest priority among survey respondents. Farmers, food processors, distributors, retailers, and food service providers shared the challenges they face in keeping their businesses strong and growing. Common barriers included high costs for infrastructure, complicated permitting, limited access to markets, lack of capital, challenges in sourcing and promoting local foods, staying competitive on price, and labor shortages. Thirty-nine percent of retail and 27% of food service businesses surveyed reported difficulty accessing capital to expand. Nearly half (46%) of retail and over a quarter (27%) of food service businesses said they do not have enough reliable workers.

The economy goal focuses on growing a just and thriving local food economy that uplifts local food businesses and ensures fair, dignified livelihoods for workers. The goal's objectives are to increase affordable retail and food system infrastructure, improve small businesses access to capital and business services, increase value chain coordination and market development, and strengthen the food chain workforce through safe working conditions, fair compensation, and essential benefits.



The local food initiative marks a bold shift toward equity-driven food systems, placing community demographics and small-scale economies at the heart of agricultural resilience and regional prosperity.


**Sirak M. Weldemicael**

*International Rescue Committee*

*New Roots Program Manager*



## Local Economy actions

 = Top 10 priority actions

**Goal: Grow a just and thriving local food economy that uplifts locally owned food businesses and promotes dignified livelihoods for food system workers**

### Objective 1: Increased amount of affordable retail and restaurant space and infrastructure for storage, processing, distribution, co-packing, and production

- 1.1 Maximize use of existing and underutilized infrastructure by:
  - increasing partnerships to facilitate use of unused and currently unpermitted facilities and transportation;
  - facilitating shared and off-hours use of facilities;
  - increasing use of flexible shared spaces by providing assistance and funding to owners and operators; and
  - upgrading existing infrastructure, such as large community kitchens, to meet commercial kitchen regulations and user needs.
- 1.2 Increase new capacity, focusing on cold storage, post-harvest handling centers, meat processing, and commercial kitchens by developing strategically located infrastructure that food businesses can lease at affordable rates.
- 1.3 Expand directories and maps of commercial kitchens, co-packers, and processing facilities—and increase use of existing directories and maps—through collaboration with resources like Eat Local First, Public Health - Seattle & King County, and Washington State Department of Agriculture.
- 1.4 Increase the use of rent and lease models for small businesses by offering resources on sliding scales, shared and off-hours use, revenue-based adjustments, and negotiating with landlords.
- 1.5 Create model policies to increase the affordability of commercial property, such as vacancy taxes and rent control, to inform local and state-level decision makers.

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*Des Moines Waterfront Farmers Market*



*Local Economy actions continued***Objective 2: Strengthened small food and farm business access to capital and support services and reduced administrative and regulatory barriers**

- 2.1 Reduce the burden for navigating regulations and licensure by identifying streamlined permitting pathways and creating dedicated county and municipal positions that provide in-language materials and technical support.
- 2.2 Increase inter-agency coordination of county and municipal policies and regulations and innovative permitting models that support food and farm businesses.
- 2.3 Help businesses with planning, accessing capital, financing mechanisms, pricing, marketing, record keeping, and taxes by expanding free and low-cost resources, funding, and technical assistance for small businesses.
- 2.4 Implement King County's 2023 Strategic Food Systems Financing Plan, including establishing self-sustaining revolving loan funds for capital for small food, underserved, minority, or underbanked businesses.
- 2.5 Strengthen business food system networks that promote collaboration and equity, focusing on shared infrastructure and relationships and piloting models like cooperatives and community-owned enterprises.

**Objective 3: Strengthened local food economies through increasing value chain coordination, marketing, and new markets**

- 3.1  Improve market and distribution channels by funding value chain coordinators, network facilitators, and local procurement specialists who provide technical assistance to smaller buyers, producers, and food businesses.
- 3.2 Connect producers, buyers, and consumers by:
  - convening local food trade events to facilitate system-wide or sector-specific connections, including education, networking, buyer-producer matchmaking, and tastings; and
  - expanding online communication platforms that serve a connection function.
- 3.4  Increase the use of values-based purchasing frameworks by institutional, public, and private buyers to increase demand for locally produced foods while aligning purchasing decisions with social, environmental, and economic goals.
- 3.5 Create marketing campaigns to build demand for local food, including media activities and events that highlight its value.

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*Local Economy actions continued***Objective 4: Strengthened food chain workforce, including safe working environments, equitable compensation, and essential benefits and supports**

- 4.1 Increase workforce development, apprenticeship, job forums/fairs, and career programs across the food chain, including addressing current gaps and keeping programs affordable for both workers and businesses.
- 4.2 Build the local green workforce through training and internships that engage youth in hands-on sustainability projects across the food system.
- 4.3 Expand training and support for food business employers on equitable recruitment, hiring, and retention practices, including fair pay and benefits, employee empowerment and representation, job security, safe and healthy working conditions, diversity, equity, inclusion, accessibility, and fostering a positive organizational culture.
- 4.4 Advocate for local, state, and federal policies that enhance childcare, healthcare, transportation, protections, and benefits for essential food system workers.
- 4.4 Create equitable compensation and taxation policy models that support workers and small businesses.

*Sol to Seed Farm, Carnation*





## Food Production goal:

**Protect and expand access to farmland for food production while supporting producers in building profitable, sustainable, and resilient businesses**

Access to farmland is essential for local food production now and in the future. Without secure and affordable land, farmers and food producers cannot grow the crops or raise the animals that feed our communities. Protecting existing farmland from development and making more land available will keep food production possible in King County for generations to come. Farmers and producers also need support to build strong and sustainable businesses that provide a stable living, care for the land, and adapt to changing economic and environmental conditions. Together, farmland access and producer support are the foundation of a strong and resilient local food economy.

King County has more than 1,600 farms, with nearly half (49%) smaller than nine acres and another 41% between 10 and 49 acres.<sup>13</sup> Land in the county's agricultural production districts is highly valued, with farms greater than 10 acres selling for an estimated average of about \$44,000 per acre over the past decade.<sup>14</sup> Most farms (59%) grow crops, while the rest (41%) raise livestock, poultry, and other animal products.<sup>15</sup> According to the 2022 Census of Agriculture, farms in the county produced about \$103 million in products sold, almost 25% less than in 2017.<sup>16</sup> The census also reported declines in government payments and the market value of products sold, resulting in an overall drop of \$6.7 million in net cash farm income.<sup>17</sup>

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*Elk Run Farm, Maple Valley*



### *Food Production goals continued*

Agricultural production was a top priority for survey respondents and a key concern raised in every listening session. Producers described the difficulties they face in finding buyers, securing affordable farmland to purchase or rent, housing and transportation access for farmworkers, accessing capital, and staying competitive in the marketplace. Farmland access was the most pressing issue, with 70% of surveyed producers saying land in King County is not affordable or accessible. Reliable labor was another critical challenge, with 41% reporting it as a barrier to their operations.

The production goal focuses on protecting and expanding access to farmland while supporting producers in building sustainable and resilient businesses. The goal's objectives are to increase access to affordable farmland, reduce costs and barriers for farm operations, expand access to equipment and infrastructure, improve availability and relevance of technical assistance and business support, and strengthen the agricultural workforce.



*Snoqualmie River Farm*



## Food Production actions



= Top 10 priority actions

**Goal: Protect and expand access to farmland for local food production and support producers in building profitable, sustainable, and resilient businesses**

### Objective 1: Increased amount of affordable agricultural land, incentivized production on agricultural land, and protected agricultural land from other use

- 1.1 Accelerate farmland preservation under the King County Farmland Preservation Program.
- 1.2 Purchase more land for agricultural purposes through the King County Conservation Futures grant program funds, including supporting recipient organizations in finding, acquiring, and operationalizing agricultural land.
- 1.3  **Make farmland more accessible to farmers by reducing fee value, including revising farmland preservation easements to require active agricultural use, offering incentives to farmers who sell their land to new and beginning farmers, and establishing buy, protect, and sell models.**
- 1.4 Increase the amount of land in agricultural production through technical assistance by:
  - providing matchmaking and trust-building support between producers and landowners;
  - educating and incentivizing landowners to lease land for food production;
  - supporting succession planning for farmland and farm businesses; and
  - developing and sharing a five-to-10-year vision, including acreage and lease terms for county-owned farmland.
- 1.5 Expand the King County Farmland Lease Program so it can offer larger parcels and longer-term leases to farmers who are ready to scale beyond entry-level programs.
- 1.6  **Create and pilot cooperative, shared-land farming models that allow farmers to jointly access land, share equipment and resources, lower entry costs, and build stronger, more resilient small farm operations.**
- 1.7 Improve interagency coordination on farmland preservation by connecting to partners, state agencies, and other resources to ensure alignment and transparency.

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*Food Production actions continued***Objective 2: Strengthened farm viability through increased access to capital, reduced operating costs, and reduced administrative and regulatory barriers**

- 2.1 Expand strategies that help producers reduce operating costs by providing training, connecting them to essential resources, and offering technical assistance.
- 2.2 Create a central database of funding opportunities for agricultural operations from local, state, federal, and national sources.
- 2.3 Expand programs that connect beginning, transitioning, and expanding farmers to innovative low-cost, easily accessible financing.
- 2.4 Expand buyback programs and forward contracting to reduce financial risk for producers.
- 2.5 Help producers navigate county regulations and permitting more easily and with less cost by:
  - creating agricultural permit specialist positions to provide technical assistance; and
  - piloting streamlined permitting for common on-farm activities.
- 2.6 Increase the long-term viability and sustainability of dairies through capital, marketing, technical assistance, infrastructure funding, market access, diversification, and consumer education.

**Objective 3: Increased access to production equipment and infrastructure**

- 3.1 Increase infrastructure development, including season extension equipment, on-farm storage, and wash/pack facilities, by providing grants and cost-share support for farmers and farm businesses.
- 3.2 Increase equipment sharing programs and tool libraries, addressing logistics, costs, and liability challenges.

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*Food Production actions continued***Objective 4: Increased use of existing technical assistance, business support, and education resources**

- 4.1 Increase use of technical assistance offerings by improving outreach and creating central hubs to connect producers to available support, including financial and strategic management (bookkeeping, contracts, taxes, insurance, business planning), production planning and scaling, market analysis, and developing new farm income opportunities.
- 4.2 Improve existing technical assistance for farmers through in-language, virtual, and hands-on options that meet the needs of producers.

**Objective 5: Strengthened agricultural and food production workforce**

- 5.1 Create experiential learning programs, pipeline programs, and career-building opportunities.
- 5.2 Implement the 2025 King County Agricultural Sector Study to improve farmer and farmworker housing access through partnerships, policies, and creative land use.
- 5.3 Expand transportation options for farmers and workers through transit routes, shuttles, rideshares, and employer partnerships.

*Full Circle field prep*



## **Environmental Sustainability**

**goal:** Protect and restore ecosystems and natural resources, and strengthen climate resilience to support a healthy, sustainable food system for future generations

A healthy environment is the foundation for all food production and life itself. To ensure that future generations have enough to eat, we must protect and restore our ecosystem, use natural resources responsibly, and strengthen our resilience to climate change. Today, we have the opportunity to continue protecting and restoring the natural resources that sustain us—soil, water, air, and biodiversity—by building on existing efforts to reduce food waste, prevent pollution, and support regenerative farming practices.

Looking ahead, we can strengthen and scale these efforts to build a truly sustainable food system by expanding regenerative and climate-smart production, cutting greenhouse gas emissions and fossil fuel use, and safeguarding biodiversity. Many of these practices have long been used by Native and Indigenous communities, who have cared for ecosystems for generations. Honoring, uplifting, and learning from their legacy of stewardship is critical to building a food system that is both sustainable and just.

According to the 2022 USDA Census of Agriculture, 48 King County farms<sup>18</sup> are USDA certified organic production farms, up from 27 farms in 2017.

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*Greenhouse microgreens*



### *Environmental Sustainability goals continued*

USDA certified organic production farms use farming practices that improve water quality, conserve energy, increase biodiversity, and contribute to soil health.<sup>19</sup> At the same time, many other farms in the region use sustainable or regenerative practices without pursuing certification. It is important to recognize and support these growers as well, and to help all farmers continue adopting sustainable and regenerative approaches.

Food waste remains a pressing challenge. The 2022 King County Waste Characterization and Customer Survey Report showed that edible food waste is the most prevalent disposed material in King County, accounting for 8.3%, or 71,403 tons of the total annual waste stream, and non-edible fruits and vegetables accounted for an additional 4%, or 34,899 tons, of the total annual waste stream.<sup>20</sup>

Environmental sustainability emerged as a key priority for building a resilient food system. Community and stakeholder input emphasized the importance of expanding resources for climate-resilient production and distribution practices, preventing and reducing food waste.


From a wide range of food system goals, survey responses showed strong support for environmental sustainability: 16% prioritized conservation practices to protect soil and water, 11% prioritized reducing greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to climate change, and 8% prioritized reducing food waste and related solid waste.

The environmental sustainability goal focuses on protecting and restoring ecosystems and natural resources while strengthening climate resilience to ensure a healthy and sustainable food system for future generations. The goal's objectives are to increase use of regenerative, sustainable, and climate-smart food production practices; strengthen regional efforts to protect ecosystems and increase biodiversity; advance circular practices and reduce waste across the food system; and reduce greenhouse gas emissions and fossil fuel use across the system.

Regenerative and climate-smart farming works with natural systems to keep agriculture strong, protect the environment, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by storing more carbon in soil and plants. King County has recognized the importance of these practices by supporting the shift to regenerative farming on county-owned land and naming it as a key strategy in the recently adopted Strategic Climate Action Plan.




## Environmental Sustainability actions

 = Top 10 priority actions

**Goal: Protect and restore ecosystems and natural resources, and strengthen climate resilience to support a healthy, sustainable food system for future generations**

### Objective 1: Increased use of regenerative, sustainable, and climate-smart food production practices


- 1.1 Coordinate research and provide technical assistance and education on climate smart and regenerative practices for farmers, agencies, and policymakers by creating climate-smart agricultural specialist positions at partner organizations.
- 1.2 Help farmers and landowners reduce their environmental impact by providing technical assistance, financial support, and incentives to:
  - develop farm conservation plans and resource management strategies that include best management practices and technologies for sustainable production, such as climate adaptation, soil health, water efficiency, and biodiversity;
  - adopt practices that reduce chemical inputs—such as pesticides, herbicides, and plastic mulch; and
  - improve irrigation efficiency and use efficient water technologies like water recycling, rainwater collection, water storage, and lagoon conversion.
- 1.3 Increase farmer awareness about safe and effective growing and soil management practices in areas affected by soil contaminants—such as lead and arsenic—to protect crop quality, human health, and long-term soil productivity through technical assistance, including the creation of a guidance document.
-  1.4 Increase adoption of climate-smart and regenerative practices, with a focus on small and historically underserved farmers, through funding, training, and coordination with partners, demonstration projects, and peer-to-peer assistance.
- 1.5 Create a climate-resilience resource hub for producers with guidance, funding, case studies, and research.
- 1.6 Conduct and update assessments on climate risks to different crops and livestock, and support applied research on climate-adapted varieties to guide future investments.

### Objective 2: Strengthened regional-scale food system practices that protect ecosystems and increase biodiversity

- 1.2 Increase the number of farmers that adopt biodiversity-enhancing practices such as native hedgerows, flowering field borders, and riparian buffers by expanding technical assistance and financial incentives, including payment for ecosystem services programs.
- 2.2 Increase water access for agricultural production—including temporary water rights transfers, water leasing arrangements, and multi-objective projects that provide irrigation while minimizing impacts to farmland—by building regional partnerships with state agencies, utilities, conservation districts, and others.
- 2.3 Expand recycled water use in areas such as Sammamish and Green River Agricultural Production Districts.

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*Environmental Sustainability actions continued***Objective 3: Strengthened circular practices and waste reduction across the food system**


- 3.1 Reduce food loss and waste on-farm and throughout the production system through education, technical assistance, infrastructure support, and incentives, including programs like the Washington Commodity Donation Program.
- 3.2 Prevent wasted food in commercial and institutional settings (including farmers markets) through education and technical assistance, including the use of discounting, dynamic pricing, and market incentives for unsold produce.
- 3.3 Coordinate with the Washington Department of Ecology to reduce food waste through:
- education and technical support for businesses, institutions, and residents, including tracking and assessing sources of food waste;
  - technical and financial support for schools, including share tables, donation protocols, menu planning input, and ensuring adequate time to eat;
  - consumer education on low-waste cooking, meal planning, food storage, and food safety;
  - contribution to and promotion of Ecology's Food Rescue Map to connect food donors, relief groups, and distributors; and
  - support for the development of standardized processes, infrastructure, and best practices for food handling and distribution, providing training and tools to boost safe, efficient food donations.
- 3.4  **Improve the efficiency and scale of food recovery by increasing funding for logistics and operations, piloting innovative distribution models, and strengthening coordination between businesses, institutions, and food recovery organizations.**
- 3.5 Expand the production of value-added products made from B-grade/seconds and recovered foods, including the establishment of a pilot project fund or incubator program that supports costs of necessary ingredients, labor, and kitchen access.
- 3.6 Increase diversion of food waste from landfills and compliance with new statewide food waste laws by:
- creating a multilingual, culturally relevant countywide public education campaign, including grants for in-language, hands-on outreach; and
  - supporting cities in their transition to municipal composting by providing organic diversion starter kits and transition technical support.
- 3.7 Create compost use and application education and pilot projects, including training and materials for farmers, landscapers, and gardeners.
- 3.8 Reduce contamination in compost feedstock by:
- providing technical assistance to producers, processors, waste management service providers, and municipalities to reduce contamination in their food waste stream; and
  - creating improved public education and outreach on sorting organics and enforcement of contamination standards.

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*Environmental Sustainability actions continued***Objective 3: Strengthened circular practices and waste reduction across the food system**

- 3.9 Support King County's annual Organic Summit to improve policy alignment, education and outreach, enforcement strategies, and infrastructure investments.
- 3.10 Reduce the use of single-use plastic products and packaging on farms and in-farm product delivery through outreach, incentives, and pilot projects to transition to alternatives and more sustainable practices such the use of reusable and compostable products.

**Objective 4: Reduced greenhouse gas emissions and fossil fuel use across the food system**

- 4.1  Accelerate the adoption of cleaner technology across the food system by investing in public-private partnerships that pilot and scale low-carbon, energy-efficient solutions through funding, incentives, technical assistance, and outreach, including:
- on-farm: replacing fuel-powered equipment with solar and renewable systems;
  - aggregators, distributors, retailers, and hunger relief organizations: using efficient cold storage and renewable-powered refrigeration;
  - food storage and processing: retrofitting facilities with efficient, renewable technologies
- 4.2 Expand regional aggregation hubs and shared delivery systems with low-emission vehicles, efficient routing, and reduced redundant trips.
- 4.3 Increase consumer awareness of and access to sustainable diets that use fewer resources and produce less pollution through education, labeling, and price incentives.

*Kale at Horseneck Farm*



## What's next?

The King County Local Food Initiative is a roadmap for strengthening the local food system over the next 10 years. It will guide the work of King County, the King Conservation District, and partners across the region. To make this plan successful, many groups will need to work together—including local governments, schools, nonprofits, farmers, businesses, and community members.

King County and KCD will support implementation by focusing on:

- **Building partnerships:** bringing people and organizations together to agree on priorities, work toward shared goals, and find funding opportunities. This includes continued engagement with the Food System Advisory Council to provide guidance during implementation.
- **Being guided by shared principles and practices:** Implementation will follow clear ways of working—such as building partnerships, coordinating resources, and engaging the community—while staying rooted in core principles, including fair distribution of power, resilience to climate and economic challenges, and prioritizing support for grassroots, community-led organizations. (See page 16).
- **Coordinating actions:** organizing, assigning, and tracking tasks to make sure progress is made. King County's Department of Natural Resources and Parks and KCD will oversee implementation. As a living plan, actions will be refined and added to address rising needs and priorities.
- **Engaging the community:** sharing updates, asking for feedback, and keeping residents informed. This also means raising awareness of food system issues through outreach, storytelling, and training for both the public and decision-makers.

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*Jalapeño peppers*

### *What's next continued*

- **Sharing information and resources:** providing data, tools, and best practices to farmers, food businesses, community groups, local governments and the broader community.
- **Sustaining and strengthening programs:** supporting, piloting, and expanding food system programs and projects that align with the plan's goals. This includes grant funding through KCD's regional food system grants and strategic initiative grants and King County funding programs.
- **Advocating and organizing:** mobilizing partners and stakeholders to influence policies, build political support, and secure long-term funding at the local, state, and federal levels.
- **Celebrating successes:** recognizing and lifting up progress and achievements to inspire continued momentum and build public support.
- **Measuring progress:** tracking results to understand what is working and what needs to improve. Each goal has performance measures that will be used to evaluate progress over time and guide adjustments as needed. (See Table B, p.41).



Columbia City Farmers Market



## Monitoring progress

## Monitoring progress

Measuring progress helps show how the LFI is making a difference, where improvements are needed, and how partners can learn and adapt together.

Each goal in the plan will have indicators, or performance measures, to track progress. These measures show what is working well, what needs to improve, and help guide adjustments over time. Agencies and partners will need to work together to find data that is available, reliable, and meaningful. Ongoing collaboration across the food system will also be needed to decide on the most important measures of success. The measures will help partners show the impact of their work to community members, local leaders, and funders.

Progress will be measured in two ways: outputs, which track immediate activities and participation, and outcomes, which reflect longer-term changes such as improved food access, stronger farm incomes, or reduced greenhouse gas emissions. The LFI provides potential measures by goal area, which should be refined with partners to ensure they are reliable, reflect community priorities, and allow results to be compared across communities and over time (see Table B, p.41).

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*Des Moines Food Bank*



## Monitoring progress

Table B: LFI performance measures by goal

Goal area	Metrics
<b>Food Access</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number and % of households receiving SNAP benefits</li> <li>• % of eligible households enrolled in SNAP</li> <li>• Changes in food access (e.g., number of food retail locations, average distance to nearest store) in limited/low-access areas</li> <li>• % of students eligible for and participating in free or reduced-price meals</li> <li>• % of schools using the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP)</li> </ul>
<b>Local Economy</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual market value of agricultural products sold</li> <li>• Annual farmers market vendor sales, disaggregated by vendor type (farm, value-added, etc.)</li> <li>• % of farms selling direct-to-consumer (DTC)</li> <li>• Value of grants awarded for food access programs to purchase local produce</li> </ul>
<b>Food Production</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acres of land in active agricultural production</li> <li>• Acres enrolled in the Farmland Preservation Program (FPP)</li> <li>• Acres of previously unfarmed land brought into production (annually)</li> <li>• Total acres of land in food production</li> </ul>
<b>Environmental Sustainability</b> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of certified organic farms</li> <li>• Total organic product sales (certified and exempt)</li> <li>• Number of farms with conservation plans</li> <li>• Acres of farmland restored or improved</li> <li>• % of uneaten food sent to landfill</li> <li>• Greenhouse gas emissions (CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent) from food consumption</li> </ul>

## Endnotes

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## Glossary

### CIRCULAR ECONOMY

A circular economy is an economic system designed to keep products, materials, and resources in use for as long as possible. It reduces waste by reusing, repairing, recycling, and composting, so resources are continually cycled back into the economy rather than thrown away.

### CLIMATE CHANGE

Climate change refers to any significant change in measures of climate (such as temperature, precipitation, or wind) lasting for an extended period (decades or longer). While some shifts may be natural, human activities have been the main driver of modern climate change, including activities that change the atmosphere's composition (e.g., through burning fossil fuels) and the land surface (e.g., deforestation, reforestation, urbanization, desertification, etc.).

### CLIMATE-SMART PRACTICES

Climate-smart practices are farming and food system methods that support productivity, help communities adapt to changing weather, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Examples include using cover crops and no-till farming, conserving water, planting trees, and using renewable energy.

### CULTURALLY RELEVANT FOOD

Culturally relevant food is safe, nutritious food that reflects and respects the traditions, identities, and preferences of the people who eat it. It may include ingredients, preparation methods, and eating practices that connect to a community's culture and history.

### FARM TO INSTITUTION

Farm to institution creates connections between local farms and large organizations such as schools, hospitals, and universities. The goal is to bring fresh, local, healthy food into these settings while supporting local farmers and strengthening the local economy.

### FOOD ACCESS

Food access means having reliable, affordable, and convenient ways to get healthy, safe, and culturally appropriate foods. Barriers to food access can include cost, transportation, store location, and availability of healthy, safe, and culturally appropriate food.

### FOOD AS MEDICINE

Food as medicine is a philosophy where food and nutrition aids individuals through interventions that support health and wellness. Programs such as produce prescriptions and medically tailored meals use food to help prevent, manage, and treat diet-related diseases.

*Continued on next page*



*Glossary continued***FOOD  
JUSTICE**

Food justice ensures that the benefits and risks of growing, transporting, and eating food are shared fairly. It means everyone has the right to healthy, affordable, and culturally appropriate food, and that food is grown with care for the land, workers, and animals. Food justice is seen in communities exercising their right to grow, sell, and eat healthy food and leads to a strong local food system, self-reliant communities, and a healthy environment.

**FOOD  
SECURITY**

Food security is when all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to enough safe, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food to lead active and healthy lives.

**FOOD SYSTEM  
INFRASTRUCTURE**

Food system infrastructure includes the physical infrastructure and organizational capacities needed for food to move from farm to table. Examples include food hubs, processing facilities, cold storage, trucks, markets, and the technologies that connect producers, distributors, and consumers.

**REGENERATIVE  
AGRICULTURE**

Regenerative agriculture is a system of farming principles and practices that seeks to rehabilitate and enhance the entire ecosystem. This includes farming techniques that enhance the land, including regenerating topsoil and increasing biodiversity; that are resilient to climate change; and that provide a livelihood for the farm families and the local community.

**SUPPLEMENTAL  
NUTRITION  
ASSISTANCE  
PROGRAM (SNAP)**

The largest federal nutrition assistance program, SNAP provides benefits to eligible low-income individuals and families via an electronic benefits transfer (EBT) card. This card is used like a debit card to purchase eligible food in authorized retail food stores.



2025 LOCAL  
FOOD  
Initiative



King County

