

Sustainably-Raised Meat and Poultry



HEALTH CARE PROCUREMENT GUIDE

Through innovative purchasing strategies, institutions can model healthy food choices and support more sustainable food production and distribution. By reducing the amount of meat they serve and by prioritizing sustainably-produced meat and poultry, institutional buyers can help create a food system that is healthier for the land, farm workers, rural communities, and eaters.

The hidden costs of conventional meat production are high, including antibiotic resistance,¹ air and water contamination,^{2,3} water depletion,⁴ occupational health risks,^{5,6} and greenhouse gas emissions that contribute to climate change.^{7,8} The externalized public and environmental health costs of the conventional food system are ultimately borne by the healthcare system.

American meat consumption is more than twice the global average.⁹ Hospital foodservice operations often mirror this trend. Reducing the overall amount of meat served in hospitals provides health, social, and environmental benefits that are consistent with prevention-based medicine.^{10,11}

The recommendations in this document reflect an [Environmental Nutrition](#) approach which understands that healthy food cannot be defined by nutritional quality alone, it is the end result of a food system that conserves and renews natural resources, advances social justice and animal welfare, builds community wealth, and fulfills the food and nutrition needs of all eaters now and into the future.ⁱ

ⁱ The HFHC Program model is aligned with this definition of Environmental Nutrition developed by the Hunger and Environmental Nutrition Dietetic Practice Group of the Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics. www.HENdpg.com



U.S. Department of Agriculture

Protecting Antibiotics for Human Health

Up to 80% of all antibiotics in the United States are used in animal agriculture.¹² The vast majority are given routinely in animal feed and water to promote livestock growth and to compensate for overcrowded living conditions. There is widespread consensus among independent health experts that this practice leads to antibiotic resistant bacteria that threaten human health.¹³ Hospitals can [expand antibiotic stewardship](#) to include their foodservice operations by sourcing meat and poultry raised without routine antibiotics. In 2015, Health Care Without Harm and Practice Greenhealth found that 52% of 275 hospitals surveyed were purchasing meat and poultry products raised without routine antibiotic use. These findings are a good indication of progress and adoption.

A Less Meat, Better Meat Strategy

Hospitals can take a two-tiered [Balanced Menus](#): Less Meat, Better Meat approach to meat procurement, first reducing meat and poultry purchases and then investing cost savings in sustainable meat options.¹⁴

Some recommendations include:

- **Reduce portion sizes** by moving meat away from the center of the plate.
- **Develop new recipes** that use meat as a “condiment” to larger portions of vegetables, whole grains, and legumes.
- **Increase meat-free options** by serving at least one vegetarian option at every meal or by adopting an initiative like [Meatless Monday](#).
- **Reduce reliance on higher-priced meats** and incorporate less expensive cuts including ground beef, stew meat, or chicken legs and thighs.
- **Engage staff** to use culinary skills; train staff to break down whole, unprocessed meat and to use all parts of whole animals for soup stocks and marinades.
- **Pool purchasing power** with other institutions to get better pricing.
- **Shift prices incrementally** in cafeterias by increasing the cost of unhealthy foods and lowering the cost of healthy, sustainable foods to incentivize good choices and balance the budget.
- **Use marketing and promotion strategies** to educate patients and patrons about the hospitals’ commitment to sustainable foods and to generate excitement for new menu options; use posters, menu labels, and point-of-sale [marketing materials](#) to encourage patrons to purchase healthier, sustainable foods.
- **Pass a resolution or policy** at your facility to build momentum and internal support for sustainable purchasing. Examples include the [Healthy Food in Health Care Pledge](#) and [resolutions to phase out](#) purchases of meat raised with routine antibiotics.



Top: Frank, chef at the Palomar Health Downtown Campus, holds a meal comprised of local and fresh ingredients. Bottom: Esmerada, a patient food server at Pomerado Hospital, displays a tray with organic salad and chicken raised without antibiotics. (Barbara Hamilton)

Case Study: Palomar Health

Palomar Health in San Diego began their Less Meat, Better Meat journey in 2010 by reducing meat consumption by 10% per year for three years running. They held a plant-based chef training for staff and invited colleagues from other healthcare organizations in their community to attend. Additionally, Palomar Health participates in the San Diego [Nutrition in Healthcare Leadership Team](#) which brings hospitals across the region together with vendor partners in pursuit of affordable, healthful, sustainable products.

Common Definitions

Words like *healthy*, *local*, and *sustainable* can often mean different things to different people, organizations, and companies. Third party certifications and audited label claims can be used to verify sustainable practices throughout the supply chain. Products that carry at least one of the following certifications or label claims or that meets the definition of local below are considered sustainable by the Healthy Food in Health Care program. Note that *free range*, *natural*, and *judicious use of antibiotics* are not robust or verifiable label claims.

Third Party Certifications

- **USDA Certified Organic** (full spectrum of meat and poultry)
- **Food Alliance Certified** (beef, lamb, pork, poultry)
- **Non-GMO Project Verified** (livestock that consume non-GMO verified products)
- **American Grassfed** (beef)
- **Global Animal Partnership** (beef, pork, poultry)
- **Certified Humane Raised and Handled** (beef, lamb, pork, poultry)
- **Animal Welfare Approved** (beef, lamb, pork, poultry)
- **Salmon Safe** (beef, lamb)
- **Certified Responsible Antibiotic Use** (chicken)

USDA-Approved Label Claims

The USDA allows the following label claims. Note that no third-party audit is required to use these claims. For the assurance of third party certification, look for these claims accompanied by the [USDA Process Verified shield](#).

- **Never Ever 3** (no antibiotics, no hormones, no animal by-products) (beef, pork)
- **No Antibiotics Ever** (poultry)
- **Raised without antibiotics/No antibiotics administered** (beef, pork, poultry)
- **Raised without added hormones/No hormones added** (beef and lamb only)
- **Grassfed** (products from ruminants such as beef cattle and lamb)

Local

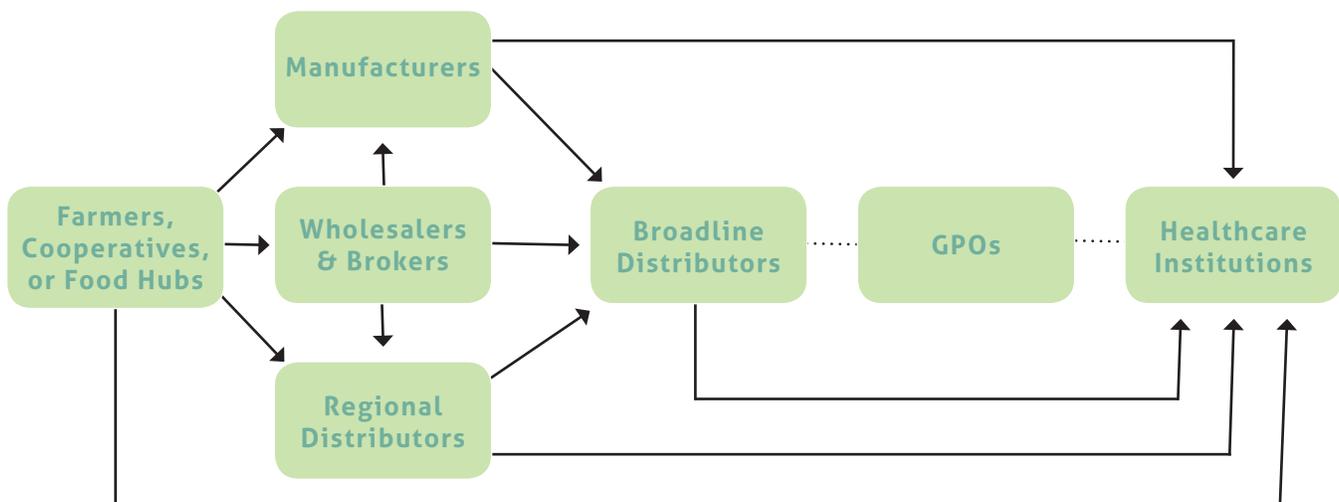
Grown or raised and processed within 250-miles of the purchasing facility. For processed foods with multiple ingredients, including breads and other bakery items, only products with the majority of ingredients (>50% by weight) grown or raised and processed within the 250-mile radius may be considered local.

TIP: Geographic distance, or the food miles a product travels from farm to plate, does not ensure that buyers are supporting locally-owned family farms. Criteria on farm scale, including acreage or gross annual sales, can help determine what counts as a family farm. The USDA concept of a farming-occupation farm where farming is the chief source of income and primary occupation is a valuable guide for buyers seeking to support independent family farmers.

Case Study: Huggins Hospital

Huggins Hospital in Wolfeboro, New Hampshire, participated in Health Care Without Harm's [2014 Food Day](#) celebration, joining over 350 hospitals nationwide in serving meat raised without routine antibiotics. Huggins sourced their entire menu from local New England farms including Miles Smith Farm, Archer Angus Farm, and Misty Knoll Farm. The hospital used posters and table tents to educate staff and guests about the issue of antibiotic resistance, which led to increased sales. After Food Day, Huggins was inspired to shift their procurement practices to support a healthier food system; they now offer meat raised without routine antibiotics in their cafeteria and in patient meals. Huggins was [featured in Food Management Magazine](#) for their relationship with Miles Smith Farm.

Understanding Supply Chain Partners



Group Purchasing Organizations

GPOs aggregate member hospitals' purchasing power to obtain lower prices and to eliminate duplicative transaction costs. They negotiate transactions with manufacturers, wholesalers and distributors for nearly everything a hospital needs, from sonogram machines to frozen peas. In keeping with contract terms, 80 - 90% of a typical hospital foodservice budget goes through GPO channels. Hospital membership in GPOs is ubiquitous in the United States.

Foodservice Management Companies

Food service management companies provide their institutional clients with a wide array of services that can include: menu development, food procurement, negotiating prices with suppliers and manufacturers, maintaining retail space, providing capital for infrastructure improvement, managing staff, and regulatory compliance. The three largest, Compass Group, Aramark, and Sodexo, have accounts with nearly one third of all hospitals in the United States.

Broadline Distributors

Broadline distributors service a variety of accounts with a wide array of products including food and foodservice supplies. Hospital relationships with broadline distributors are typically determined by their GPO contract. The largest include US Foods, Sysco, Food Services of America, Gordon Food Service, Performance Food Group, and Reinhart Foodservice.

Regional Distributors

Regional distributors can play an important role in institutional food service, particularly for perishable goods like produce, bakery, dairy, and fresh meat. Regional distributors may have more flexibility in sourcing from small- and mid-scale regional producers and therefore may be good partners for achieving sustainability goals.

Food Hubs

Food hubs manage the aggregation, distribution, and marketing of source-identified food from local and regional producers to help them meet wholesale, retail, and institutional demand for local and sustainable food.¹⁶ Food hubs offer a high degree of assurance that their supply chains embody social and environmental values.

Case Study: Thedacare

Thedacare, an eight-hospital health system located in northeast Wisconsin, began purchasing ground beef and hamburger patties from Aspen Ridge Beef in Colorado, a supplier that is Certified Humane Raised and Handled. Additionally, the hospital is aiming to support the expansion of a local chicken producer and new regional slaughter facility by committing their purchasing volume along with other hospitals in the region.

Work With Supply Chain Partners

There are [many strategies](#) a hospital or health system can use to increase the availability of sustainably produced food via existing supply chain channels and relationships.

Determine what is available

Items are not always accurately labeled in distributor catalogs. Communicate your preferences to your representative and ask for a list of relevant products. Connect with other hospitals in your region or support organizations to learn about new options. See the HFHC [Meat & Poultry Product List](#) to find products raised without the routine use of antibiotics.

Communicate preferences and work to align definitions

Discuss your purchasing preferences and provide written definitions of what counts as local and sustainable for your institution. If you have adopted a food policy that prioritizes sustainable, local or humane production methods, make sure your purchasing partners are aware of this. It can also be helpful to let them know in advance. For instance, “within one year, it is our goal to . . . , and we hope you can help us with this.”

Encourage transparency and tracking

Ask supply chain partners to adapt their catalogs to enable easy identification and tracking of items that meet your sustainability criteria.

Know what is going out to bid

Many group purchasing organizations have public bid calendars. In these calendars you can find information on which individual food items, product categories or services (e.g., food service and distribution) will be going out to bid and roughly when. Links to the calendars can usually be found under the supplier section of a GPO website.

“ *Working with Vizient (formerly Novation) was effortless. Their access to market was effective in expanding our options for local and/or sustainable meat and is helping us reach our goals.* ”

- Monica Nakielski, Partners HealthCare

Include sustainability criteria in contracts and bidding processes

Use sustainability criteria within your contract conditions and environmental disclosure questions for Requests For Proposals/Requests For Information. See the HCWH [Food Guides](#) and Kaiser Permanente [Scorecard](#) for examples.

Serve on food advisory committees

Most GPOs have committees made up of representatives from member health systems that help make contract decisions. By serving on such a committee, you can bring information about sustainably produced food items to the discussion and ask that in addition to evaluating products based on taste, price, size, nutritional quality, etc. that the environmental health impacts and attributes of a food item be considered during the bid and contracting processes.

Refer specialty suppliers

GPOs generally send requests for proposals only to suppliers that have registered on their websites. These suppliers tend to be large companies that can provide a product of uniform size, quality, etc. to their members nationwide via existing distributor relationships. Hospitals and health systems can help their GPOs and distributors to increase their knowledge of and access to more specialty suppliers by encouraging them to register. Even just sharing information on preferred suppliers with partner representatives or directly to a food advisory committee when they are gearing up to do a request for proposals can be helpful.

Take charge of your GPO contract

When contracts are up for renewal, institutions may consider decreasing the overall spend expected through their GPO in order to allow a greater percentage of purchasing outside of the GPO relationship. Buyers can also employ contract waiver provisions to increase procurement of sustainable foods. For example, if chicken raised without routine antibiotics is not available on contract, you may be able to claim a waiver for that product.

Purchase Directly from Farmers, Cooperatives, and Food Hubs

Purchasing directly from farmers and ranchers is an effective way to guarantee that the food you're buying meets your institutions' health, social, and environmental goals. Buying from farmer cooperatives and food hubs can also be a more direct way to connect with local and regional producers. Creating direct connections can provide an opportunity to negotiate a better price for both the institution and the producer. This cost savings can offset the time involved with ordering from a smaller supplier. Even more valuable are the relationships that can develop between the farmer, foodservice staff, other employees, and the facility's customers.

Food Safety Considerations

As institutions caring for vulnerable populations, hospitals and schools are rightly concerned about food safety. When purchasing directly from producers, it is important for institutions to know that the product they are purchasing is safe. Useful resources include the [Farm Direct Food Safety & Sustainability Guide](#) and the [Producer Questionnaire on Food Safety and Sustainability Practices](#) (these regional resources are largely applicable in other areas). Also, the county or state health department, county or state department of agriculture, or university extension offices can provide additional resources in your region.



At the George Washington University Hospital Chefs and Cooks Training, food service workers explored strategies for adding local, sustainable meat and poultry to menus such as reducing the total amount of meat and using less familiar cuts of meat in order to manage costs (Tiffany Hightower).

Case Study: Oregon Health & Science University

Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU) in Portland, Oregon, created a sustainability policy in 2010 that outlined strategies for moving towards sustainable meat and poultry purchases. Forty percent of OHSU's total beef purchases are produced without the use of antibiotics and come from Carman Ranch, a local, woman-owned ranch. About 2.5% of the hospital's poultry purchases – the equivalent of \$10,000 per year – is produced without the use of antibiotics, by nearby Draper Valley Farms. Two and a half percent of OHSU's pork purchases are produced without the routine use of antibiotics by a local farmer. OHSU is currently working with other local farmers in Oregon to increase these percentages. Additionally, OHSU has reduced the percentage of meat served in retail by decreasing portion sizes and offering more vegetarian options for patient and cafeteria meals.



Director of Sales, Ed Brylczyk displays sustainable meat options at the Dole & Bailey Meat Processing Plant in Woburn, MA as part of a food system tour for health care foodservice staff (Ed Brylczyk)

Create Alliances

Within your hospital or health system

Many successful foodservice departments have built connections within their hospital to generate support for sustainability goals, for example by joining hospital Green Teams or Wellness Initiatives, engaging material managers, and educating administrators on the connections between sustainable food service and the hospital's healing mission.

With other hospitals and health systems

Creating alliances with other hospitals provides important opportunities to shift the marketplace. While a single hospital may not be able to generate enough financial pressure to change a supply stream, the combined purchasing power of multiple hospitals aligned around the same goal can have significant impacts. In this way, hospitals can leverage the same principle underlying the formation of GPOs — pooling purchasing power — to create positive changes in the food system. A working group covered by HCWH and Practice Greenhealth, [Market Transformation Group](#) is a good example of the value of working together.

Across sectors

Across the country, there are new alliances forming among institutional buyers in the K-12 education, college and university, and healthcare sectors to combine their purchasing power and moral authority to create a healthier food system. The California EdMed Collaborative project is ramping up in CA, aligning both the procurement practices and advocacy efforts of hospitals, PreK-12 public schools and universities around the state to support the development of a healthy regional food system.

For further inspiration on these “ed-med” collaborations, look to [Farm to Institution New England](#) and the [Michigan Farm to Institution Network](#).

Resources

- [GPO Purchasing Guides](#)
- [Sustainable Food Definitions Checklist](#)
- [Understanding Labels: Meat & Poultry](#)
- [Sustainable Food Scorecard](#)
- [Meat and Poultry Product List](#)
- [Balanced Menus: Less Meat, Better Meat](#)
- [Food Service Management Companies - Farm to Institution New England reports](#)
- [Farm Direct Food Safety & Sustainability Guide](#)
- [Producer Questionnaire on Food Safety and Sustainability Practices](#)



UCSF educated customers by displaying grass-fed burger on grass. (Luis Vargas)

Case Study: University of California, San Francisco Medical Center

University of California, San Francisco Medical Center (UCSF) began reducing the amount of meat on their menus in 2010 by introducing vegetarian options and Meatless Mondays. In 2013, UCSF passed a [resolution](#) to phase out the procurement of meat raised with routine antibiotics. Since then, the hospital has shifted over 65% of their meat and poultry purchases. UCSF launched one of their new products, grass-fed ground beef patties raised without antibiotics and hormones, with an education and marketing campaign. Generating enthusiasm allowed them to pass on some of the increased cost of the product to customers. Despite the higher price, UCSF sold more of the new hamburgers and gained a higher profit margin than they had with conventional burgers.

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Health Care Without Harm seeks to transform the health sector worldwide, without compromising patient safety or care, to become ecologically sustainable and a leading advocate for environmental health and justice.

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Visit www.noharm.org for more information.

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