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The defined jurisdiction for OC-PICH consists of the cities with the highest health disparities rates in OC. It includes the cities of Anaheim, Garden Grove, and Santa Ana with a total population of 831,676. The residents within these cities suffer from higher rates of leading chronic disease indicators, including heart disease, obesity, diabetes, asthma, and cancer. Free and reduced price meals within the school districts show food insecurity in the defined jurisdiction to be the highest in the county, ranging from 66.5% to 91.6% indicating the need for targeted approaches for priority populations. One of the main projects targeted to meet this objective is to increase the number of K-12 schools in Orange County with improved local food procurement policies and practices.

Background

Orange County, California (OC) is often seen by both residents and nonresidents as a very affluent county, but there are 12 cities within the county that have been identified as red-tagged communities by the OC Business Council that face high chronic disease rates, unemployment, low education attainment rates, and poverty (Orange County Community Investment Division, 2013). In a study conducted by the County of Orange in April of 2014, diabetes was found to be the 8th leading cause of death overall, 5th among Latinos, and 6th among Asians and Pacific Islanders. This shows the imminent need for more widespread chronic disease prevention efforts.

OC-PICH

In September 2014, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention presented \$49.3 million to 39 awardees around the United States with a Partnerships to Improve Community Health (PICH) Grant. Awardees proposed specific activities to address the leading risk factors for major causes of death and disability in the United States. Community Action Partnership of Orange County (CAPOC) was the sole awardee in Orange County, CA. CAPOC received \$4.1 million of PICH grant funds to be used over 3 years regarding policy and system changes in healthy beverage and food consumption, increased physical activity, and media communications strategy.

OCFAC

Since October of 2014, the Orange County Food Access Coalition (OCFAC) has been working with OC-PICH to increase access and consumption of healthy foods and beverages in three cities within Orange County: Anaheim, Garden Grove, and Santa Ana. One of the main projects targeted to meet this objective is to increase the number of K-12 schools in Orange County with improved local food procurement policies and practices. As a result, OCFAC will focus on expanding the farm-to-school programs in the cities of Anaheim, Garden Grove, and Santa Ana for the duration of OC PICH (2015 – 2017).

Project Goals

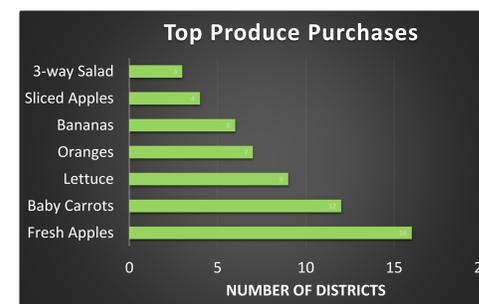
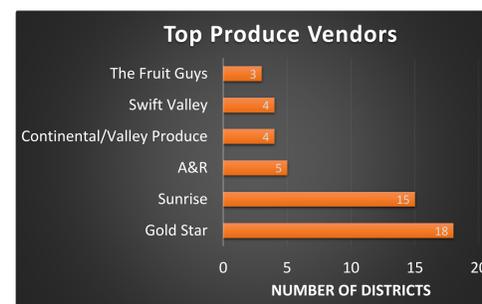
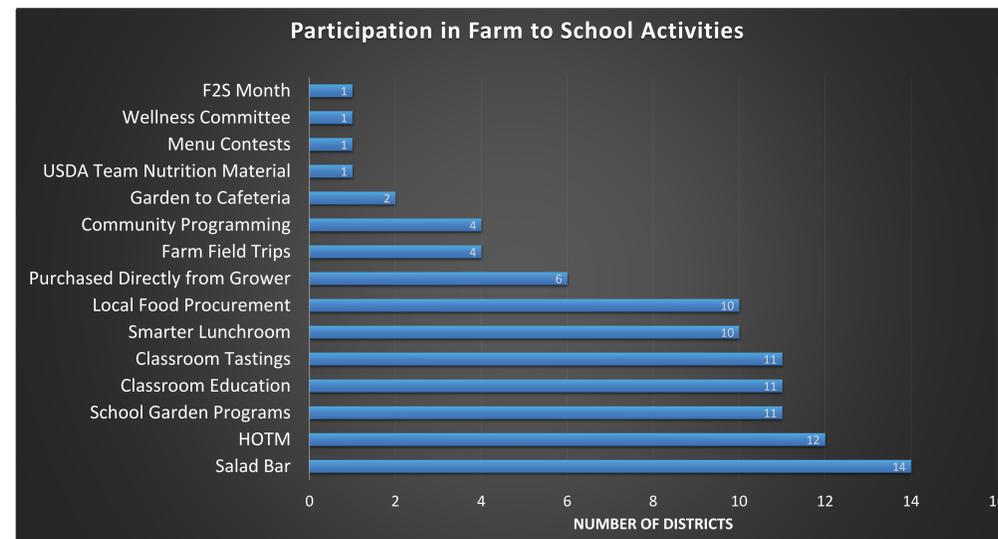
In 2013, OCFAC developed its Farm to School Task Force with three specific objectives in mind: 1) Increase the consumption of fruits and vegetable amongst K-12 students; 2) Better connect students with the source of their food through food literacy programs; and 3) Increase procurement of local food, which in turn, would support local farmers.

The goal of this report is to better understand the current state of Farm to School (F2S) in Orange County and to develop the next steps for OCFAC and its OC Farm to School Task Force for increasing and improving F2S programming in the three target cities and throughout Orange County.

Materials and Methods

In December 2015, OCFAC distributed its 21-question 2014-2015 *State of Farm to School District Survey* to all Food and Nutrition Service Departments countywide. Surveys were created using Google Forms and distributed by email to the Food and Nutrition Service Directors. There are 27 school districts in Orange County and each district has its own Food and Nutrition Services Department, with the exception of Anaheim Union High School District and Anaheim City Elementary School District. OCFAC received 100% response rate and is proud to represent all districts throughout Orange County in this report.

Results and Outcomes



Conclusions

All of the school districts in Orange County are already participating in some F2S activities and are currently purchasing some amounts of local foods. This is encouraging since studies have shown F2S to be extremely beneficial to the health of children. It is very likely that participation in F2S will increase if work is done with the school districts to increase their awareness, and by creating and nurturing connections between school districts and local vendors to help alleviate and resolve concerns on both sides.

Next Steps

- (1) Increasing awareness of F2S and all of the associated activities is an essential first step to increasing F2S participation in Orange County. All school districts are already participating in F2S activities, but they are unaware that incentives exist to assist them in implementing such activities. OCFAC and the OC Farm to School task force will continue to increase awareness around F2S programs.
- (2) The most common concern that the districts have over purchasing locally is in regards to delivery. In the upcoming year, OCFAC plans to meet with the top three produce vendors (Gold Star, Sunrise, and A&R) to better understand the school food supply chain and how local purchasing connections are made and sustained, and what barriers/challenges vendors face in terms of local procurement.
- (3) The second most common concern over purchasing local is the farmers' and/or the district's ability to minimally process foods, such as sliced fruit. Steps should be taken to attempt to mitigate this issue, perhaps through a shared kitchen space. OCFAC plans to explore this option and how to open up a dialogue around shared production kitchen space, especially since 22 districts currently prepare food in a production kitchen and two of those districts also prepare food for another district.
- (4) Many schools reported lack of local vendors as a major concern over purchasing local. Continuing to assist schools in locating and making connections with local vendors would increase local purchasing.
- (5) Many districts reported lack of kitchen equipment to process fresh produce as a major concern. There are grants available to help schools obtain new kitchen equipment. The schools should be made aware of these grants and possibly aided in applying for the grants. Similarly, although 14 districts already have salad bars in some of their schools, there are several grant opportunities for funding salad bars in schools and OCFAC hopes to aid districts in applying for these opportunities as well and to expand the number of salad bars in Orange County schools.
- (6) All of the districts could benefit from a better understanding of what purchasing local means, and what the definition of local is. This might allow food service directors to set small goals for increasing local purchasing.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank **OC Food Access Coalition (OCFAC)**, who tirelessly works to develop innovative, community-based strategies to end hunger and deliver nutrition – not just calories – to the underserved in the community. Their vision is to create access to healthy, local food options for Orange County's most nutritionally vulnerable residents by working to transform the food system to one that supports all OC residents with nutritious, affordable, and sustainable food options. I would also like to thank President Janet Napolitano for creating the Global Food Initiative, and Dr. Mojgan Sami for all of your help and guidance.