



Instructions for Real Food Calculator Pilot Campuses

Dear Campus Stakeholders,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the Real Food Challenge Calculator pilot campus process. We are working with colleges and universities across the country to ensure the Real Food Calculator's metrics, sourcing criteria, and the reporting process takes into account the varied higher education structures and institutions in the United States. Your input will shape the utility and access of the calculator as we finalize the tool. Please review the following set-up instructions and reporting process as we work together to create steps toward tracking the flow of **real food** on college campuses.

Through this process we hope to:

- Make the Calculator in its current form available to other pilot institutions.
- Gather feedback from pilot users.
- Assemble a task force (students, researchers, and professionals) to investigate and refine the toughest “criteria” issues.
- By next year, issue a new and improved version and make it available to campus users across the country.

Again, we are pleased and grateful that you have decided to pilot the Real Food Calculator. Your experimentation will help to create a better tool, and will ultimately help all of us understand--and celebrate--the progress we are making.

If you have any questions not answered by this document, please contact Devon Ahearn (dahearn@thefoodproject.org).

I. **Document Purpose:**

The Real Food Calculator is a critical tool in the measure and tracking of real food on college campuses. This document will detail the process for pilot campuses to assess, evaluate, and report their challenges and successes in using the Real Food Calculator to measure food within their campus food services.

II. **Real Food Challenge Calculator Overview:**

The Real Food Calculator is designed to determine how “real” an institution’s food is. Though designed for colleges and universities, this tool can be used by any institution, such as a hospital, corporation, or municipality

For the purpose of this calculator, we have divided “real food” into 4 attributes: local, fair, ecologically sound, and humane. Local and fair refer to *who* produced the food, and ecologically sound and humane refer to *how* the food was produced. The metrics are arranged in a matrix with a vertical axis modeling a stoplight value system of green (highest standards), yellow (good standards, but not the best), and red (not valued as real food) zones. **Food that meets the standards listed in the green and yellow zones is real food.** Below the stoplight system is an extended “red zone” where ingredients known to be a human health concern are identified and exclude that product from being labeled as “real food” in either the green or yellow zone. Food that does not meet the criteria listed in the green and yellow sections and/or falls into the red zone does NOT count as real food.

III. Set-up Instructions (please review carefully)

- **Step 1:** Please review the *Instructions for Real Food Calculator Pilot Campuses* (this document), the *Real Food Calculator Guide*, and any other materials sent to your pilot campus contact to prepare for participation. A conference call will be scheduled between you and your calculator point person (i.e. Regional Field Organizer and/or Devon Ahearn) to introduce the process and address any questions before you begin.
- **Step 2:** You will be asked to complete some basic information regarding your campus food system, lead contact person, and pilot site. Please complete the accompanying *Real Food Calculator Baseline Assessment* and send back to your calculator point person (i.e. Regional Field Organizer and/or Devon Ahearn)
- **Step 3:** Confirm overall reporting timeline on your campus pilot phase with your calculator point person (i.e. Regional Field Organizer and/or Devon Ahearn). Check-in calls will be established in order to address barriers and concerns that arise during the course of the process. Be prepared to step into a learning and reflective experience as you engage in trying to track and measure your food purchases.

IV. Using the Calculator Spreadsheets (also included in Real Food Calculator Guide)

In order to use the calculator, you will need to know certain information about the food your institution purchases. First, you will need to know how much money is spent in each of 10 different food categories--such as baked goods, meat, and produce--in the past fiscal year. Second, you will need to know *who* produced the food and *how* it was produced. This information can be found either by a certification that the food carries, or by asking the distributor or farmer.

The Real Food Calculator is an excel spreadsheet with 5 tabs. The first one, titled “Worksheet” is where all the data is entered. Once the dollar amounts are filled in, the spreadsheet automatically fills in the percentages and generates the tables and graphs which are located on the tabs labeled “Tables,” “Graph (1),” and “Graph (2).”

Entering Data Into the Worksheet:

In the “Total” column, enter the total dollar amount that was spent in each food category in the past fiscal year. For each Real Food Attribute column (local, fair, ecologically sound, humane), enter the total dollar amount that was spent on food that qualifies for each attribute. Food items may qualify for more than one attribute. For example, an institution might purchase \$1,000 total of produce. If \$700 of it was both local and organic, then you would enter \$700 in the local and ecologically sound columns for produce. In the conventional column, enter the dollar amount spent on food that doesn’t qualify for any Real Food Attributes, or \$300 in this example.

Is it “real food” or not?

For a food item to qualify for a Real Food Attribute, it must meet one or more of the criteria listed in the “Green Light” OR “Yellow Light” sections in the Real Food Criteria. The criteria listed in the “Green Light” section are generally verified by a 3rd party whose standards are the best for each attribute. These criteria easily get a yes for real food. The "Green Light" section also accounts for food purchased from producers or handlers whose practices are aligned with our highest standards but are not certified. If the person (or people) piloting the calculator can verify that these standards are indeed met, then those food purchases count as real food. The criteria listed in the “Yellow Light” section are sometimes verified by a 3rd party, but the standards used are broader or less stringent than the standards used by "Green Light" criteria. Like the "Green Light" section, the "Yellow Light" section also includes criteria that are not verified by a 3rd party, but reflect good standards for real food. These criteria are open to more uncertainty and need to be verified by the person (or people) piloting the calculator. **Food that meets criteria listed in the "Yellow Light" section also counts as real food.** More investigation, however, may be needed to determine if the food item should qualify for that Real Food Attribute.

Calculations

The “Calculations” tab contains the math used to generate the tables and charts. See Appendix B in the *Real Food Calculator Guide* for a visual explanation of the calculations used.

Understanding the Results

The calculator generates several tables and graphs. In these results, Real Food is divided into Real Food A and Real Food B. Real Food A includes food items that qualify for **two or more** Real Food Attributes, while Real Food B includes food that qualifies for **just one** Real Food Attribute. This distinction is made in an effort to recognize various levels of success. While the items included in Real Food B have room for improvement, it is important to recognize that progress is being made.

V. Maintaining Communication and Support for your Pilot Process

- **Communication**—each pilot campus will have direct support for clarifications and inquiries with the calculator point person. All campuses will be invited onto a bi-weekly or monthly conference call that will be established and ongoing during the pilot period.

In addition, a monthly or quarterly *RFC Pilot Campus Update Report* will be requested from each campus and submitted electronically in order to ensure RFC staff are addressing concerns and flagging them as they arise.

- **Onsite Pilot Support**—this process is a unique opportunity to invite a student intern or student staff member to assist with data collection and coordination in tandem with a campus food service staff representative. Within the RFC we try to envision all activities as learning opportunities for campus stakeholders where we all become students in the process. Most importantly, this can serve as a good bridge of collaboration by offering students a chance to better understand the complex nature of food procurement and tracking. The RFC team would be happy to work with the student liaisons on a workplan and timeline to document their process and use it toward credit or paid internships.

Below are suggested methods for integrating a student role in the assessment process:

- Academic Credit--students should have the ability to receive credit through a sponsored internship, integration into a project, or through an existing class. Many faculty can offer independent study credit to students for a project such as this.
- Dining Services Paid Internship--many campuses have student interns working on various dining hall related projects, from marketing and education to greening of operations. Providing a paid summer, multiple quarter, or semester internship will provide dining services with a consistent and committed student to assist with documenting and tracking all the the information that must be compiled during the process.
- College & University Project Funds--campuses provide many channels of funds for student projects, whether they are research-based, involve student government, or use green funds. Schools often offer specific scholarships and awards for this type of work.

If you would like job descriptions for internships or other positions to assist with this task, please inquire with the calculator team and we would be happy to assist!

- **Time Projection for Pilot Real Food Calculator Campus Activities:**

Note: Time suggestions are approximate.

- **Step 1 (week 1):** Review *Instructions for Real Food Calculator Pilot Campuses* (this document), the *Real Food Calculator Guide*, and any other materials sent to your campus contact to prepare for participation. A call will be scheduled between your pilot campus contact and your calculator point person (i.e. Regional Field Organizer and/or Devon Ahearn) to introduce the pilot process and address any questions before you begin. (Total: 4-8 hours)
- **Step 2 (week 1-3):** Develop internship, research proposal, academic credit request, or other campus support. Identify student & staff liaisons. (Total: 8-14 hours)
- **Step 3 (week 2):** Establish timeline for national pilot conference calls & bi-weekly or monthly campus check-in call with Real Food Calculator point person. (Total: 4 hours/month)

- **Step 4 (week 3-5):** Complete the accompanying *Real Food Calculator Baseline Assessment*. (Total: 6-10 hours)
- **Step 5 (week 3-6):** Develop Real Food Calculator data collection plan based on the *Baseline Assessment*. (Total: 4-6 hours)
- **Step 6 (week 5-9):** Conduct Real Food Calculator data collection and documentation process--including check-in calls (Total: 6-10 hours per week)
- **Step 7 (week 8-10):** Wrap up pilot process including evaluation and next steps (Total: 10-16 hours)