Memorandum

November 22, 2011
To: Food Purchasing and Waste Task Force
From: Peter Kraus
Re: “Other Dairy” Food Purchasing Guidelines

Overview

The goal of this project was to survey various groups and random individual students for feedback about desired purchasing criteria for various food categories. Then, the information from collected in these surveys would be used to make some general purchasing guidelines to be used in future purchasing decisions. The first and only category that was surveyed for was “other dairy”, which includes yogurt, hard cheeses, cottage cheese, cream cheese, butter, and ice cream. Surveys centers were set up at the yogurt bar in the Caf for one day during lunch and dinner, and surveys were also completed by Food Council and the majority of the Luther Cross-country team.

Background

The reasoning behind this initiative to create purchasing guidelines is so that Luther Dining Services has a long-term reference for what is good for the health and sustainability of Luther’s food system and reflects student expectations. This also benefits Luther Dining Services in providing actual guidelines for new employees involved in our food purchasing so that our food can our food buying remains reliable through the turnover of employees involved in food purchasing. Also, by having its own purchasing guidelines Luther can act as a model for other schools in developing healthy and sustainable food systems.

Proposal

A total of 81 surveys were collected which was did not reach the goal of 100, but more student groups can still be reached. A good goal for the future is to make an electronic version of the survey so that it takes less time to collect data and more students could be included. For example, student groups that were hoped to be surveyed like ECO, SEEDs and other sports teams did not get surveyed.

The results of the survey, shown in Table 1 below, show that on average growing practices and animal treatment were the most important to students, followed by the type of feed that is fed, then distance from Luther and energy usage. The two least important priorities were distance to supply chain
and the size of farm. Animal treatment had the highest number of students naming it their highest priority with 37% of the student responses followed by growing practices which had 31%. Size of farm had the most number of students ranking it as their lowest priority with 42% of student responses followed by distance to supply change with 22%.

Using the results from this survey and a similar format to other universities, a rough outline of the purchasing guideline for “Other Dairy” would look something like this.

**Ultimate priority:** Sound growing practices, including land stewardship and fair labor practices, best possible welfare and treatment for the animals, looking at how much time animals get outside and on pasture doing what is natural for the species

**Next priority:** Local or as close to Luther as possible

**Next priority:** Minimizes energy usage and waste

**Next priority:** Local or organic feed

**Rationale**

In recent survey done by Luther Food Council and Sustainability, it was found that 83% of students would be in support of paying significantly more money for higher quality local food. This is solid support for Luther sustainability and Dining Services to proceed on developing sustainable food purchasing guidelines.

In review of the data collected from the survey it is clear on which basic criteria are important to Luther students, although a larger sample would help make the result more accurate. Some of the issues that Luther will face in developing an effective food purchasing guidelines will have to do with defining how to measure certain criteria and prioritizing more specific criteria. Measuring the sustainability of a farm’s growing practices and animal welfare are fairly subjective and complex, and probably the best way for Luther to deal with this is up-scaling and increasing the focus of its student farm audit program. A good resource for this program is Yale’s food purchasing guidelines, (example of dairy page below) which provides a good layout for what students should be looking for in a farm audit. Many of the criteria on Yale’s sustainable food purchasing guidelines are more specific than were able to be addressed in the “Other dairy” purchasing priorities survey, but can be identified with a well-organized farm audit.

In conclusion I think that food purchasing guidelines surveys of students and student organizations will yield good results for what basic criteria are important for students, but I also think that for developing sustainable food purchasing guidelines for Dining Services there is need for more specific
guidelines that the general surveys lack, which is where student farm audits are really important and necessary for implementing food purchasing guidelines with the best knowledge available.

**Table 1. Students ranked different criteria from 1 to 7 and this table shows the average score from 81 responses to the “Other Dairy” purchasing priorities survey.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purchasing Criteria</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Distance from Luther</td>
<td>4.0125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distance to supply chain</td>
<td>5.1375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growing practices</td>
<td>2.5375</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Animal treatment</td>
<td>2.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Energy usage</td>
<td>4.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size of farm</td>
<td>5.4875</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feed type</td>
<td>3.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Resources:**

Purchasing Guidelines for Emory Dining
Yale Sustainable Food Purchasing Guide. http://www.yale.edu/sustainablefood/food_purchasing.html