



August 27, 2013

Mayor Kevin Johnson
915 I Street, 5th Floor
Mail Code 09100
Sacramento, California 95814

Steve Hammond
Sacramento Convention & Visitors Bureau
1608 I Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Farm-to-Fork & Food Equity

Dear Honorable Mayor Johnson & Mr. Hammond:

I am writing on behalf of [Ubuntu Green](#)—a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization committed to promoting healthy, sustainable, and equitable communities through advocacy, education, community development and empowerment—to express our opinions and concerns relating to the City of Sacramento and the Convention and Visitors Bureaus efforts to brand Sacramento the “Farm-to-Fork” Capital of America. While we are very excited about Farm-to-Fork’s promotion of locally grown food, we are concerned that this initiative is missing an amazing opportunity to help address food access and insecurity in our community.

Through our [Home & Community Garden Program](#), Ubuntu Green has provided over 120 edible gardens to low-income families living in food deserts, and built maintains a community garden located in Oak Park. Further, we assisted with the advocacy effort that led to the passage Sacramento’s Community Garden Ordinance, which allows vacant land to be used for gardens with the consent of the owner. We also continue to advocate for urban agriculture policies that make it easier for residents to grow and sale food. Ubuntu Green is a founding and steering committee member of the Sacramento Regional Food Systems Collaborative, served on the Sacramento Unified School Districts Superintendents Healthy Foods Task Force, and remains an ardent defender of environmental and food justice.

We praise Farm-to-Fork’s work to bring together the City of Sacramento, the Sacramento Convention & Visitors Bureau, local restaurant owners, local farms and community members for the upcoming Sacramento Farm-to-Fork Restaurant Week and Festival to celebrate local food. This initiative has been a great opportunity to showcase Sacramento’s local agriculture as it relates to creating a sustainable and healthy community, and we are excited to participate however we can.

However, we are troubled by the lack of discussion pertaining to food equity issues. We are also greatly concerned with the lack of attention given to addressing hunger insecurity in the region and creating healthy foods access for all people. We believe that this lack of attentions is a missed opportunity to foster creative and collaborative solutions to problems that face a growing number of Sacramento residents.

According to “Hunger Hits Home 2012: Understanding and Combating Hunger in Sacramento County,” over 80,000 people living in Sacramento (17.7% of the population) are food insecure. In Sacramento County, that number was over 218,000. Of these, 64% spent bought most of their food from a supermarket, 24% from a discount store, and only 1% from a farmers’ market. For this group, clearly, Farm-to-Fork is not a reality, but hunger is. Of the respondents to this survey, 17% live two-or-more miles from a grocery store, in what may be considered healthy food deserts. This includes neighborhoods like Oak Park, Del Paso Heights, and much of South and North Sacramento.



We urge the Farm-to-Fork movement to work with us and other food justice advocates to publicize and remedy this problem by supporting making Farm-to-Fork a reality in low-income communities and communities of color, with limited food access.

Farm-to-Fork should not just be an endeavor that focuses on our restaurants and cuisine, but should also work to address the growing issue of food insecurity in our community by promoting urban agriculture, food access, food literacy, and the economic conditions that create food deserts. We would like to see Farm-to-Fork highlight the lack of access to healthy, locally grown food that many Sacramento residents face, and to dedicate the same amount of energy currently spent supporting local restaurants that serve locally grown food to promoting solutions that will provide food to those most in need.

Farm-to-Fork's work can help address food access through any of the following actions:

- holding **events in food deserts to promote** home gardens, local urban agriculture, and the need for more healthy food outlets;
- expanding the number of **farmers markets** in food deserts and assisting with their promotion;
- using some of the proceeds from **Farm-to-Fork events to sponsor** farmers markets, farm stands and community or home gardens for neighborhoods whose residents might otherwise struggle with healthy food access; and,
- supporting organizations that encourage local convenient stores to carry more healthy food by providing grants and retrofits; and much more.

Expanding access to healthy food by supporting the production of healthy foods inside of these communities by the members of these communities is the best way to support local, sustainable food production, and the self-sufficiency of residents.

We would appreciate an opportunity to partner with you to make Farm-to-Fork a catalyst for change in all of our communities through providing fresh, locally grown foods to the residents that need them the most. Please feel free to contact me at (916) 669-0671 or via email at charles@ubuntugreen.org, if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Charles L. Mason, Jr.", written over a light blue horizontal line.

Charles L. Mason, Jr.
President & CEO
Ubuntu Green

cc: Alchemist CDC; Office of Congresswoman Doris Matsui; Councilman Allen Warren; Councilman Jay Schenirer; Patrick Mulvaney; Sacramento Region Food Systems Collaborative; Sacramento Food Bank and Family Services.