

# Appendix I

## Working with your Institution

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Your decision to read this guide shows that you've already taken the first step by deciding to make a difference at your Jewish institution. This section will guide you through the conversations you will need to have and the steps you will need to take to make changes. Keep in mind that every Jewish institution is unique, with their own set of values and priorities. The more you are able to show that you understand your institution's values, and that the changes you are proposing will benefit your community, the more successful you will be.



*The material in this section is adapted from Oxfam's "Farm to School Toolkit" and The Sustainable Food Policy Project's "A Guide to Developing Sustainable Food Purchasing Policy."*

## Set the stage for success

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Be realistic. Start with something small. Once you have accomplished something small, you will be more confident to go onto bigger things. Make sure you go into this with a positive attitude. Expect to have bumps along the way and unless you believe that you can make a difference, you never will.

## Form a “Green Team”

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Don't go at it alone. Find other people in your institution who are passionate about environmental issues and changing your Jewish institution's food environment. You can assess volunteer interest by sending a survey around through your institution's listserv, newsletter, or other form of communication. Hold an information meeting allowing people to meet each other and hear what changes they want to make.

## Hazon Food Audit

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You have your idea, and you have a Green Team of people who support you, but where do you go from here? How do you go about figuring out exactly where your institution needs to change, and how to do that? Take the Hazon Food Audit (attached at the back of this Guide, and also available at [www.hazon.org/foodguide](http://www.hazon.org/foodguide)). The Food Audit sections match up with chapters in this Food Guide. Once you have your institution's score, you can go back and look at which areas are in good shape, which areas are on the road to success, and which areas really just need a new beginning.

## Research

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As you begin to consider where to start, it's important to have a full understanding of how your institution purchases food and where it is sourced. This will allow you to shape your goals and next steps, as well as make you more educated on these issues for when you

present the new idea to the person(s) in charge. This research process is also a relationship building process. The very people who you might need to convince to go “green” are usually the same people who have the information you're looking for

Some important questions to ask: (depending on the institution, you might need to pose these questions to the Rabbi, an office manager or a kitchen staff person)

- Who manages the food purchasing?
- Where does the food at your Jewish institution come from now? It is from a kosher caterer? A larger food vendor? A local, kosher restaurant?
- What are your kitchen's resources/ restrictions? What is the *kashrut* policy and how will this affect what you will be able to purchase?
- What is your budget? How much money is your institution currently spending on food? How much money is your institution spending on plates, cups, utensils?

## Get organized

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Organize a meeting of your Green Team. Set goals using the information you have gathered. Think big, but act small. Take into consideration your Jewish institution's limitations and also its potential.

## Develop a plan and a timeline.

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Break down your plan into small steps to help make it more manageable. Compile a list of resources and allies. If you have a larger institution, form committees to take on different tasks.

## Take Action

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Now you're ready to talk to the person in charge. Having the conversation is usually the most difficult part in this process.

**Set up a meeting** with your Rabbi, Executive Director, Kitchen manager, or person/people in charge of the food purchasing.

**Consider the issues from your institution's point of view.** Place yourself in the shoes of the person you are meeting with and consider: What are their priorities? What are the limitations? What educational opportunities can your Jewish institution take advantage of from this, and how can you frame sustainable food choices in the context of your institutions Jewish values?

**Share your vision.** Consider writing a statement that inspires your institution's leadership to work with you on this project. Rather than a basic statement about sustainability in general, focus on your institution's concerns. Make it clear that adopting sustainable food practices at your institution will add value to the community, and will not compromise traditional values. Here's an example:

*"This could be a great way to get young adults, who tend to be passionate about environmental issues, involved in the synagogue. Changing our food will not compromise our traditional values of kashrut, but is a way for our synagogue to be a voice in addressing contemporary issues. It is also a fresh, innovative way to re-engage current members."*

**Know your facts, and share examples.** Use the information and links in this guide to bring data to back up your points. You'll want to show that you have done your research and that you have looked up this topic from different angles. Whip out the facts you learned—prices, methods of distribution, opportunities. Use the examples of "what other synagogues have done" in this guide to show that the kinds of changes you're talking about are not only possible, they've been undertaken in other communities with great success.

## Anticipate Challenges

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You might be faced with criticism and skepticism. Don't get defensive or discouraged. It's important to show that you understand the institution's values and position. Do your homework and practice responses in a calm, collected way. You don't want to add stress to their jobs, rather, you want to offer an opportunity that that will benefit both your institution and the community. Here are some examples for how to address these concerns if your focus is on sourcing local foods:

**Problem: Prices** "It sounds like this is going to be way more expensive, we need to keep our food costs down." Response: Buying local does not always mean higher prices. Remind the person you are meeting with that the higher price will reflect the higher quality and nutritional value of the food. If it is really out of the institution's budget, figure out where you can make the most important adjustments—say by offering organic grape juice for kiddush.

**Problem: Distribution** "This seems way too complicated. Right now we have one kosher caterer that can supply us with everything we need." Response: Describe how important this is to you and your green team. Explain that there are people willing to make this happen—including working with the existing food providers to help them add sustainable foods to their repertoires.

**Problem: Legal issues** "How can small farmers monitor their production and processing in terms of food safety issues?" Response: Most farmers have liability insurance. Come prepared with a few farms you have looked into and their information.

**Problem: Labor/ staff time** "We don't have enough staff to deal with the added labor of buying local. There's not enough time to chop, clean, etc." Response: Some farmers offer value-added products: locally-produced jams, jellies or pickles will require little additional preparation than the products you're used to. You can also consider organizing the green team to help out with the food preparation.

## Evaluate

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Evaluation is key to see how far you have come in attaining your goals. You can decide to do this every few months or after a year. Assessing how far you have come will empower you to work towards higher goals.

## Share your Success!

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Spread the good news. Share all you have learned with members of your institution and the community by educating them about the changes you have made. Write an article for the local or institution's newspaper and hold an educational event such as a film night, panel, or potluck. In the process you can also gain more support and



momentum for effecting change. Email [foodguide@hazon.org](mailto:foodguide@hazon.org) so we can spread the word for you!

### Prices: Can we afford to do this?

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You can't afford not to! Buying sustainable products may be a little more expensive, but once you know what you are (or aren't) paying for, the benefits of sustainable foods on the health of your community and the environment outweigh the slight price increase. It may mean that you will have to adjust your institution's budget to spend more on food, but it is an important adjustment.

#### Tips for buying sustainable foods with price in mind:

- **Beware of the markup.** Many grocery stores add 150%-200% markup on organic products. A coop or farmers market will likely have lower markups, or none at all. When you buy closer to the source, less of your money goes to middlemen (the costs of running the supermarket, for example) and more goes right to the farmer.
- **Buy in Bulk.** Buying in bulk will keep costs down. Look for pantry staples often available in bulk, such as beans, legumes, rice, flour, nuts, chocolate chips, and much more. Many local co-ops have extensive organic bulk sections. At a farmers market, you may get a good price for a whole case of fruit for your Kiddush fruit tray.
- **Buy in season.** When foods are locally abundant, they may be lower in price (although premium products may always be more expensive, even when they are in season, especially if the season is short, as it is for strawberries or sour cherries). Again, when you're buying local foods, your money is going all to the local farmer, rather than the shipping and packaging companies.
- **Be selective.** You may wish to pick a few foods to focus on at first. Make the switch to fair trade coffee, or locally-produced milk, or fruit from a local farmer. Big change starts with small steps.

## Crafting Institutional Food Guidelines or Policy

You've taken the Food Audit. You've done the research. Creating a food policy or set of food guidelines for your institution is one possible next step. Your guidelines should facilitate decisions about food choices and help determine a course of action. By establishing a formal policy or guideline, everyone in the community will be able to look to it when they are making food choices for your community.

As we've stressed all along, making sustainable food choices are often nuanced, gradual and sometimes contradictory. As such, considering "guidelines" rather than "policy" may be more realistic for your community (see Andrea's comment below about including the words "to the best of our ability" in their synagogue guidelines). Even so, having a written set of values and/or guidelines can be an important milestone in your institution's food journey, and a public signifier of institution-wide support for these issues.

Below you will find two examples, one from Hazon and one from a synagogue in Toronto, of possible food guidelines for your institution.

### Hazon's Organizational Food Values

At Hazon, we often are required to prioritize one (or more) of our food values over another as we are planning our events. As we work towards a healthy and sustainable food system where we will be able to meet all our food values all the time, we want to be transparent about the food choices we are making along the way, where we are falling short in meeting all our values, and how we are working to do better next time. Hazon's food values are a work in progress as we grow and change as an institution. But the overall idea is there, and we follow it as closely as possible.

In all the food choices we make for the Hazon community, we aim to serve food that meets the following values (listed in alphabetical order):

- Cost effective – paying a little more isn't necessarily a bad thing, but we have to make sure that it fits overall into our budget;
- Delicious – food should be inspirationally delicious;
- Ethical – the circumstances of the people producing/preparing/serving the food are just as important as the food itself, as are the circumstances of any animals we might be eating;
- Healthy – Hazon believes in serving healthy, nourishing food that is pesticide free;

- Kosher – the meals we serve should be accessible to people across the Jewish spectrum;
- Low waste – we aim to serve food that does not waste our precious resources;
- Transparency/education – food can and should be used as a teaching tool and a conversation starter; being transparent about the choices we make is critical to our food work.

### The Sustainable Food Guidelines at First Narayever, Toronto, CA

First Narayever Congregation in Toronto, CA, recently passed a resolution regarding the food served at synagogue events. The resolution was the culmination of over a year of committee work, targeted outreach and education. Andrea Most, project coordinator, reflects on the process of passing this resolution:

"So how did we get here? First, we approached and got support from the President of the Board who agreed to chair the Ad Hoc committee. We then spent over a year studying our own practices, and also outside practices (such as reading *The Omnivore's Dilemma* and watching Food, Inc.). We then put together a more formal committee, and started drafting recommendations. For a committee of 10 people, we identified 9 important areas to work on. Our final presentation to the Board was received very positively, and they voted unanimously to approve it. In the process, we decided that the words 'to the extent possible' were important to get the motion passed. But we feel confident that once we begin to implement these principles (and to educate people about them), they will quickly become 'the new normal.'"

*The resolution reads:*

*Moved that the Food Committee (formerly the Kiddush Committee) oversee the delivery of all food served in the shul, encouraging the use of food that is, to the extent possible: healthy and nutritious, produced in a sustainable, environmentally sensitive manner, produced under fair labour and trade practices, produced according to a high standard of animal welfare, and produced locally, while maintaining a budget that is sustainable by the congregation and while encouraging as much community participation as possible in brining out food practices more closely in line with our Jewish values.*

*Passed by the Board of the First Narayever Congregation, May 3, 2011*

### Small steps for success

Congregation Kol Ami in Elkins Park, PA, has made it their policy to serve fairtrade coffee and tea at all congregational events.