

# WHOLE FOOD PURCHASES IN THE UVM FOOD SYSTEM, 2012

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## Background

In 2011, the University of Vermont signed on to the Real Food Challenge, a program that requires that 20 percent of all food sales at the university be local, ecologically and humanely produced, or fair trade by 2020. This program was conceived to compel universities to use their purchasing power to better the food systems in which they operate, and several universities and colleges across the United States have signed on to The Challenge since its inception. The program works by issuing a series of guidelines that determine which food products count as ‘Real’ food, allowing food service purchasers flexibility in determining how they meet the overall purchasing requirements subject to those guidelines.

At the University of Vermont, with less than 10 percent of its food sales currently counting as “Real” food, meeting the goals of the Real Food Challenge will require some rethinking of its purchasing strategies and perhaps even of the types of dining services it offers. Research is being done on a variety of fronts within the institution to determine how UVM can meet its Real Food goal. The Office of Sustainability and other food system actors on UVM’s campus wanted to get a better sense for what types of whole foods were purchased by Sodexo, the university’s food service operator, and proposed a project that was eventually listed as the service learning course Mapping the UVM Food System (CDAE 295). The goal of the course was to analyze data from Sodexo on its food purchases for the calendar year 2012 to estimate, on a week-by-week basis, the poundage of several whole foods ordered. One idea put forward was for the university to invest in cold storage on campus to make it easier for Sodexo to purchase locally produced storable foods when they became available at competitive prices, so most foods studied in the course are those that can be effectively stored. The purpose of this report is to present the data created during Mapping the UVM Food System, and make it accessible to a broader audience within and outside the university in hopes of promoting constructive discussion on how to improve the university’s food system.

## University of Vermont’s Food System

The various dining outlets at the University of Vermont purchase and use a lot of food. Not all of these food purchases were tabulated for this report. Based on feedback from stakeholders within Sodexo and UVM’s Office of Sustainability, detailed analysis was limited whole potatoes, processed potatoes, onions, carrots, cheese, turkey, chicken, pork, beef, fish, other seafood, eggs, and garlic. Processed potatoes includes a range of pre-cut or pre-formed potato products, including diced potatoes, French fries and hash browns, among others, but does not include instant mashed potatoes. Other foods listed include both whole and slightly processed foods, such as diced carrots, pre-cut cheese and meat, pre-boiled eggs and pre-peeled garlic. Highly processed food products that include

these foods as ingredients are not counted. Most menu items in most of the university's dining outlets are based on processed foods such as beans, bread and pasta, relegating the whole foods analyzed here to at most a small proportion of the total weight of food sold.

Table 1 shows the weights of foods purchased by Sodexo throughout calendar year 2012, illustrating that potatoes and chicken are the two most important foods purchased by the campus among those studied. Cheese, pork, beef and eggs also make up substantial weights, although individually they are of lesser importance. Again, it is important to note that this list does not include processed foods made from grains and legumes, which, by weight, certainly make up the largest share of foods purchased by the university.

Figure 1 below shows food purchases at UVM on a week-by-week basis. Food purchases at the university show the seasonal trends that would be expected, with substantial purchases during the spring and fall semesters while purchases during

**Table 1.** Purchases of select foods, measured in pounds, at the University of Vermont during the 2012 calendar year.

| Type               | Weight  |
|--------------------|---------|
| Whole potatoes     | 72,007  |
| Processed potatoes | 78,893  |
| Onions             | 25,283  |
| Carrots            | 20,429  |
| Cheese             | 87,533  |
| Turkey             | 26,436  |
| Chicken            | 144,188 |
| Pork               | 56,364  |
| Beef               | 51,712  |
| Fish               | 8,241   |
| Other seafood      | 3,173   |
| Eggs               | 58,645  |
| Garlic             | 1,622   |

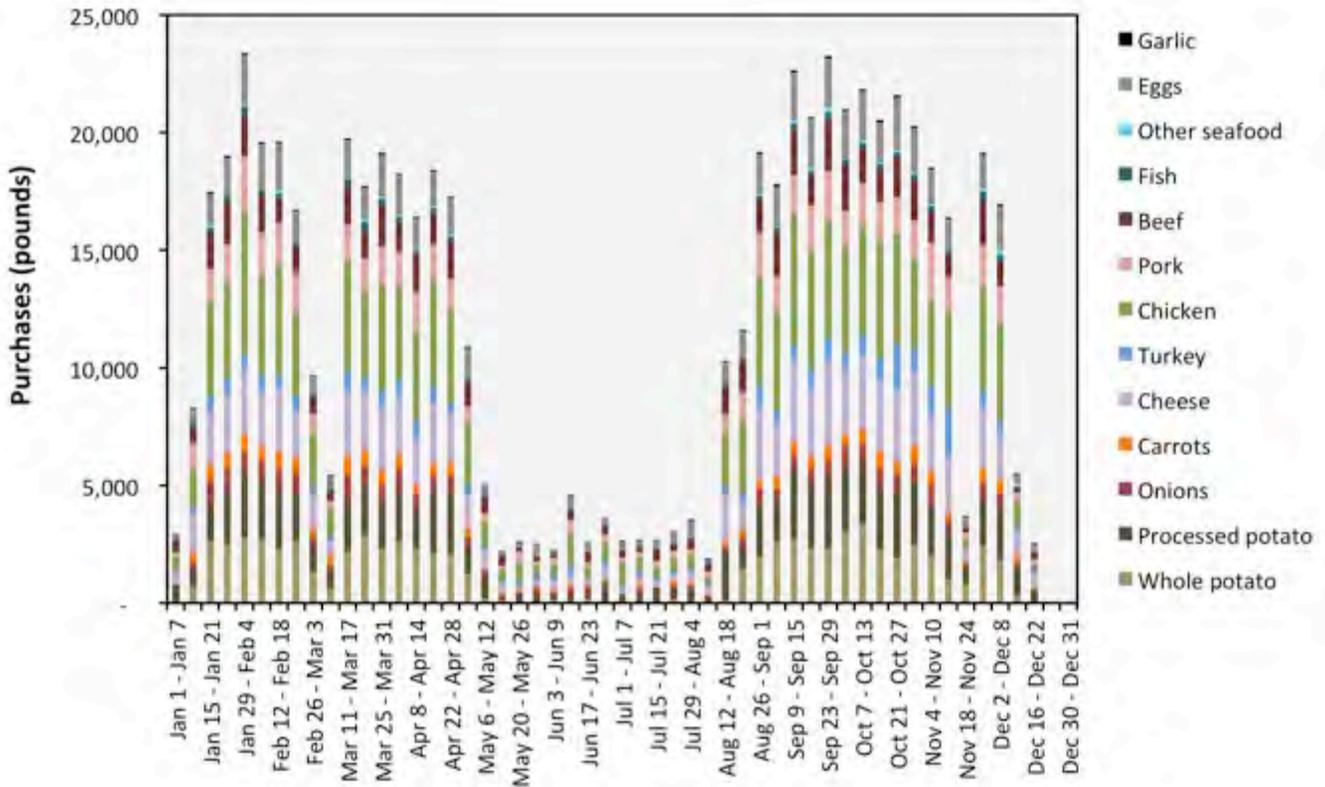


Figure 1. Proportions of various whole foods purchased by UVM over the 2012 calendar year.

the summer and leading up to spring, fall and winter recesses being much lower. This data is highly aggregated, and masks a tremendous amount of variation among the different dining outlets on UVM's campus. Looking specifically at these individual dining outlets can offer a better sense for how each specializes.

### Cook Commons

The Cook Commons dining center is located in Billings Hall on Central Campus. It is one of three residential dining venues where students can pay one price at the door and enjoy unlimited dining. There is also a Simply-to-go Residential Take Out program located inside Cook Commons. Table 2 shows that chicken was the most popular food purchased by this dining outlet, followed by processed potatoes.

**Table 2.** Purchases of select foods, measured in pounds, at Cook Commons during the 2012 calendar year.

| Type               | Weight |
|--------------------|--------|
| Whole potatoes     | 4,605  |
| Processed potatoes | 20,368 |
| Onions             | 7,528  |
| Carrots            | 5,385  |
| Cheese             | 20,202 |
| Turkey             | 7,708  |
| Chicken            | 26,106 |
| Pork               | 14,196 |
| Beef               | 15,329 |
| Fish               | 2,892  |
| Other seafood      | 976    |
| Eggs               | 17,221 |
| Garlic             | 280    |

Figure 2 on the previous page shows weekly purchases over the 2012 calendar year. The fall semester of 2012 closely reflected the data trends for the spring

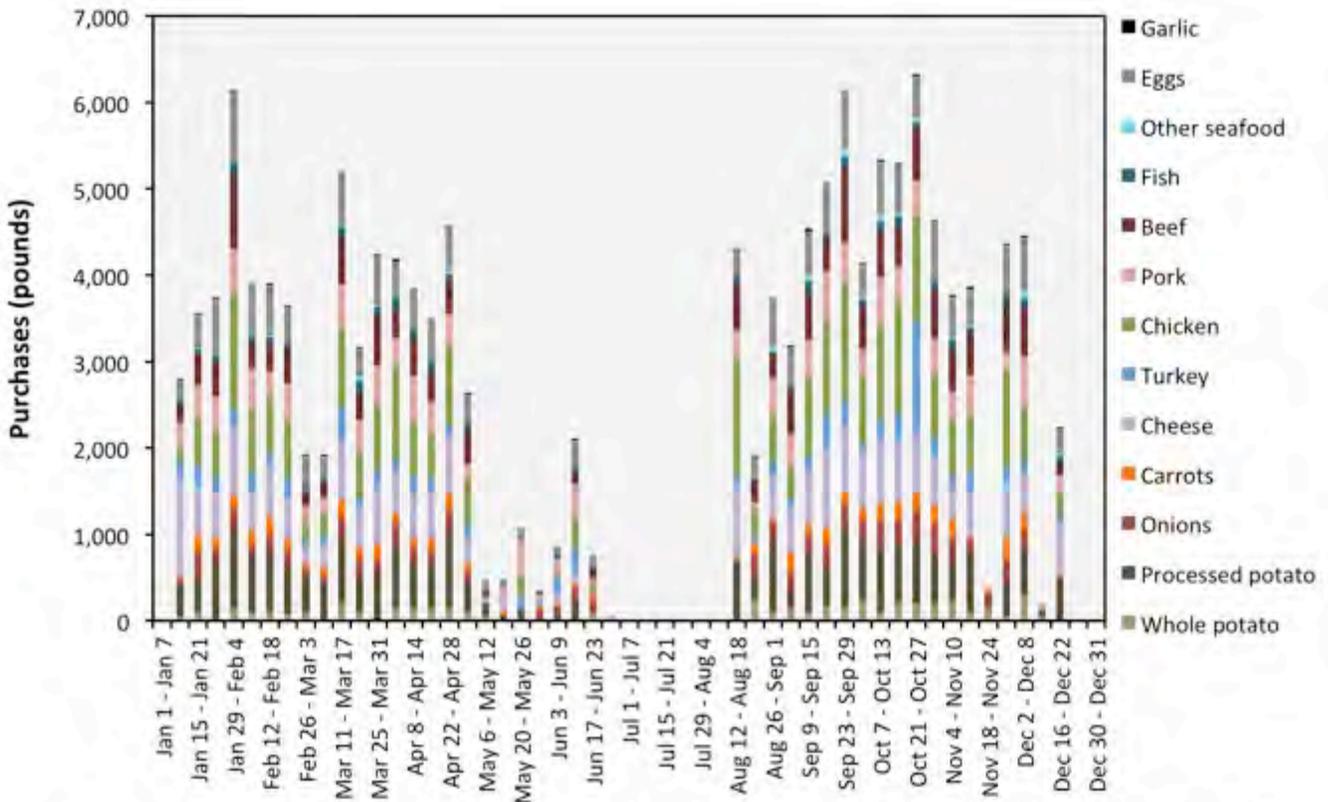


Figure 2. Proportions of various whole foods purchased by Cook Commons over the 2012 calendar year.

semester of that same year, although slightly more food was purchased in fall relative to weekly spring purchases.

### Brennan's

Brennan's is a restaurant style dining outlet located in the Davis Center on central campus. Brennan's strives to use local and organic food as much as possible by offering students local burgers, fresh salads, milkshakes and local Vermont microbrews and wine, and is working towards providing students with "Real Food", as defined by the Real Food Challenge guidelines. Table 3 lists the quantities of food purchased by Brennan's during 2012, while Figure 3 shows food purchase trends over the calendar year. Whole potatoes were the most popular food among those tracked in this study, with chicken and pork rounding out the top three. Hand-cut French fries are offered with most meals and chicken is a predominant part of many meals and offered on salads. Although Brennan's is

**Table 3.** Purchases of select foods, measured in pounds, at Brennan's during the 2012 calendar year.

| Type               | Weight |
|--------------------|--------|
| Whole potatoes     | 60,120 |
| Processed potatoes | 388    |
| Onions             | 2,140  |
| Carrots            | 2,270  |
| Cheese             | 8,144  |
| Turkey             | 1,600  |
| Chicken            | 15,946 |
| Pork               | 12,331 |
| Beef               | 8,040  |
| Fish               | 31     |
| Other seafood      | 20     |
| Eggs               | 5,228  |
| Garlic             | 260    |

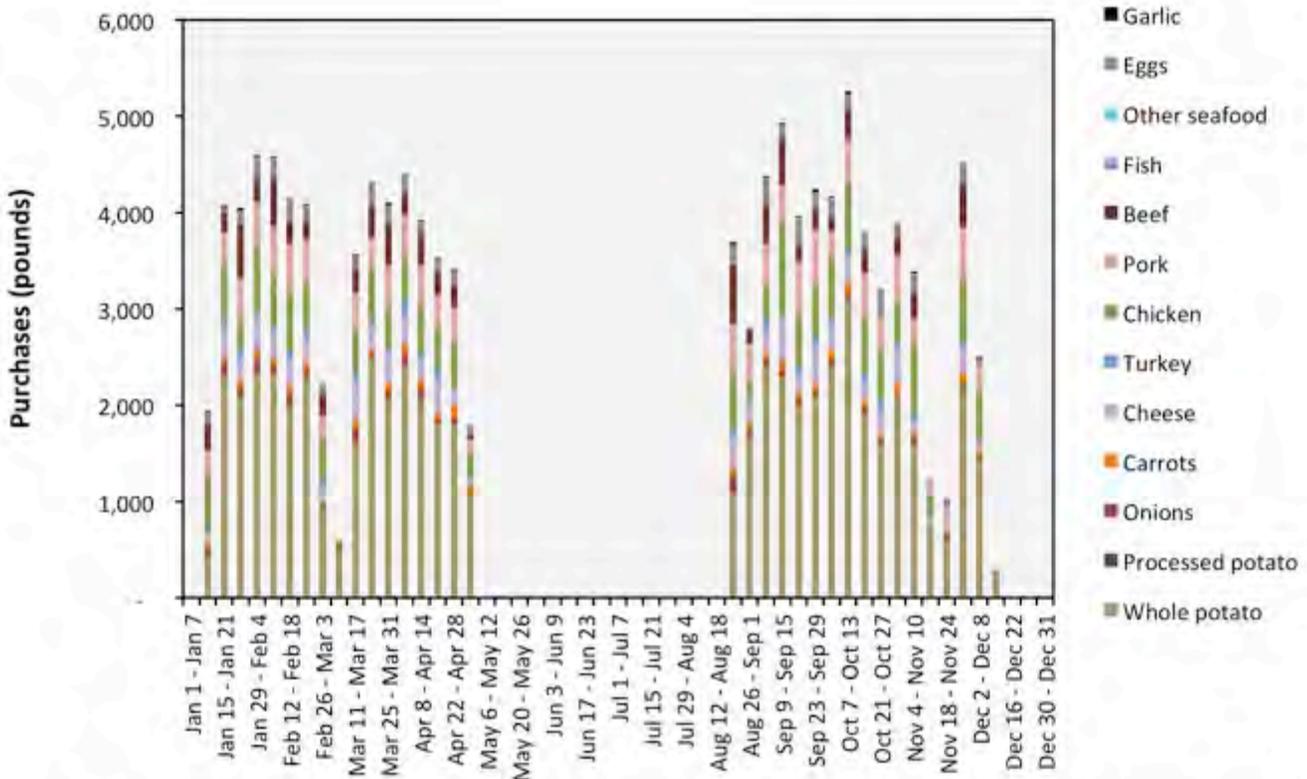


Figure 3. Proportions of various whole foods purchased by Brennan's over the 2012 calendar year.

known for selling local beef burgers, they actually purchase more pork products than beef products. This trend could be a cost-cutting measure.

### The Atrium

The Atrium is a retail food outlet in the Givens Building. This means that students can pay with meal plan points, but regular methods of payment are also accepted so it is easy for staff, faculty, and visitors to enjoy this location as well. The Atrium serves breakfast and lunch, and offerings include self-serve salad bar, hot entrées, sandwiches, desserts, and prepackaged kosher sandwiches and salads. The format currently resembles a regular lunch line, though the layout may change as The Atrium is scheduled to undergo renovation in 2014. Table 4

**Table 4.** Purchases of select foods, measured in pounds, at The Atrium during the 2012 calendar year.

| Type               | Weight |
|--------------------|--------|
| Whole potatoes     | 1,055  |
| Processed potatoes | 60     |
| Onions             | 2,002  |
| Carrots            | 2,537  |
| Cheese             | 2,744  |
| Turkey             | 514    |
| Chicken            | 15,470 |
| Pork               | 1,336  |
| Beef               | 1,060  |
| Fish               | 12     |
| Other seafood      | 20     |
| Eggs               | 2,319  |
| Garlic             | 0      |

illustrates purchases of studied foods by weight, and Figure 4 below shows weekly purchases over the calendar year. It is immediately clear that chicken is

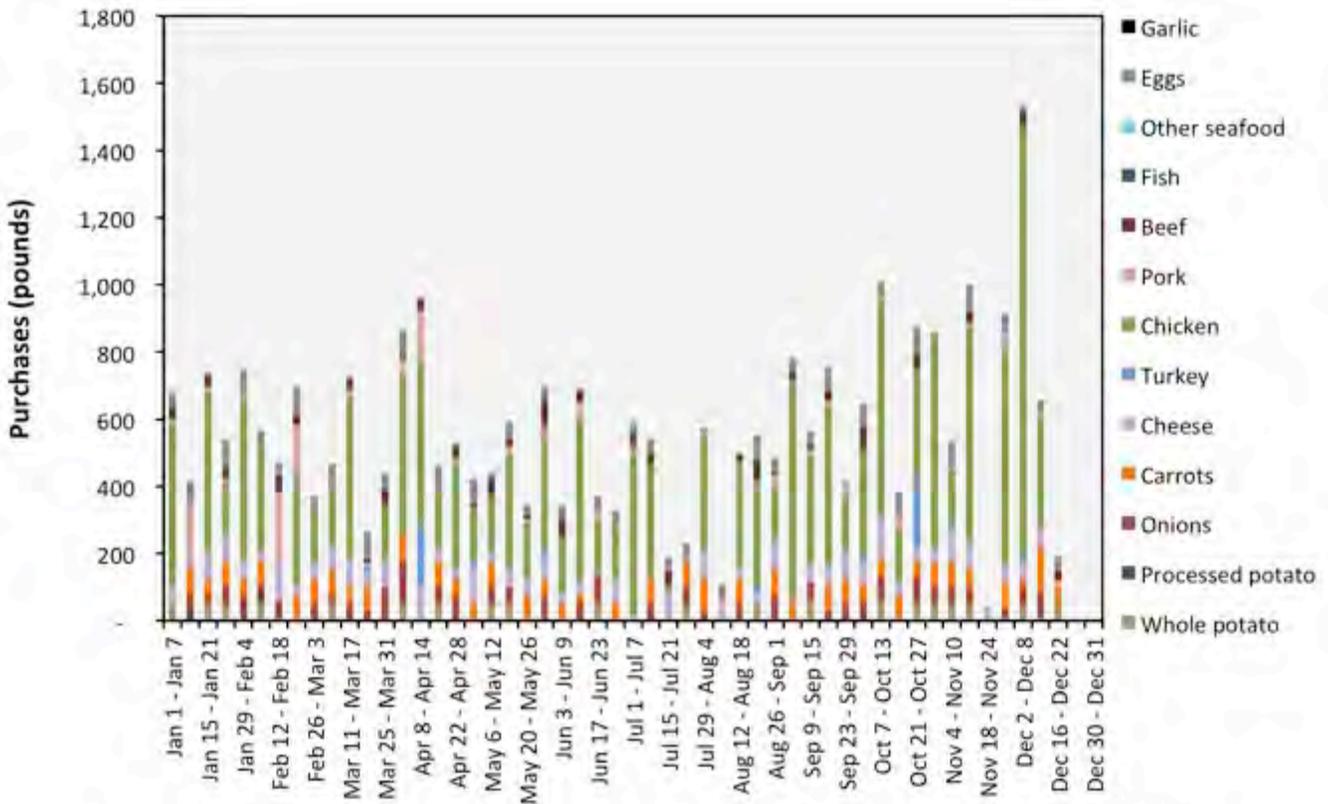


Figure 4. Proportions of various whole foods purchased by The Atrium over the 2012 calendar year.

the largest whole food consumed at this dining location, taking up just over half of the studied food purchases. Unlike other dining outlets on campus, purchases at The Atrium do not vary as much over the year.

### Harris Millis

The Harris Millis dining hall is located on UVM’s athletic campus, and offers buffet style dining at a set price. The customer base consists mostly of freshman and sophomore students from the University who live in the Harris/Millis resident halls. Menu highlights include open hearth, stone fired pizza and flatbreads, salad bar, deli sandwiches, pasta, international entrees and local ingredients. The Harris Millis dining hall strives to accommodate dietary needs as much as possible by having gluten, lactose and peanut free “zones”. Harris also has a take-out option for students on the run. Table 5 and Figure 5 summarize data from this dining hall, and processed potatoes make up

**Table 5.** Purchases of select foods, measured in pounds, at Harris Millis during the 2012 calendar year.

| Type               | Weight |
|--------------------|--------|
| Whole potatoes     | 20     |
| Processed potatoes | 27,192 |
| Onions             | 78     |
| Carrots            | 776    |
| Cheese             | 17,837 |
| Turkey             | 6,038  |
| Chicken            | 20,373 |
| Pork               | 11,368 |
| Beef               | 17,042 |
| Fish               | 1,260  |
| Other seafood      | 588    |
| Eggs               | 20,867 |
| Garlic             | 10     |

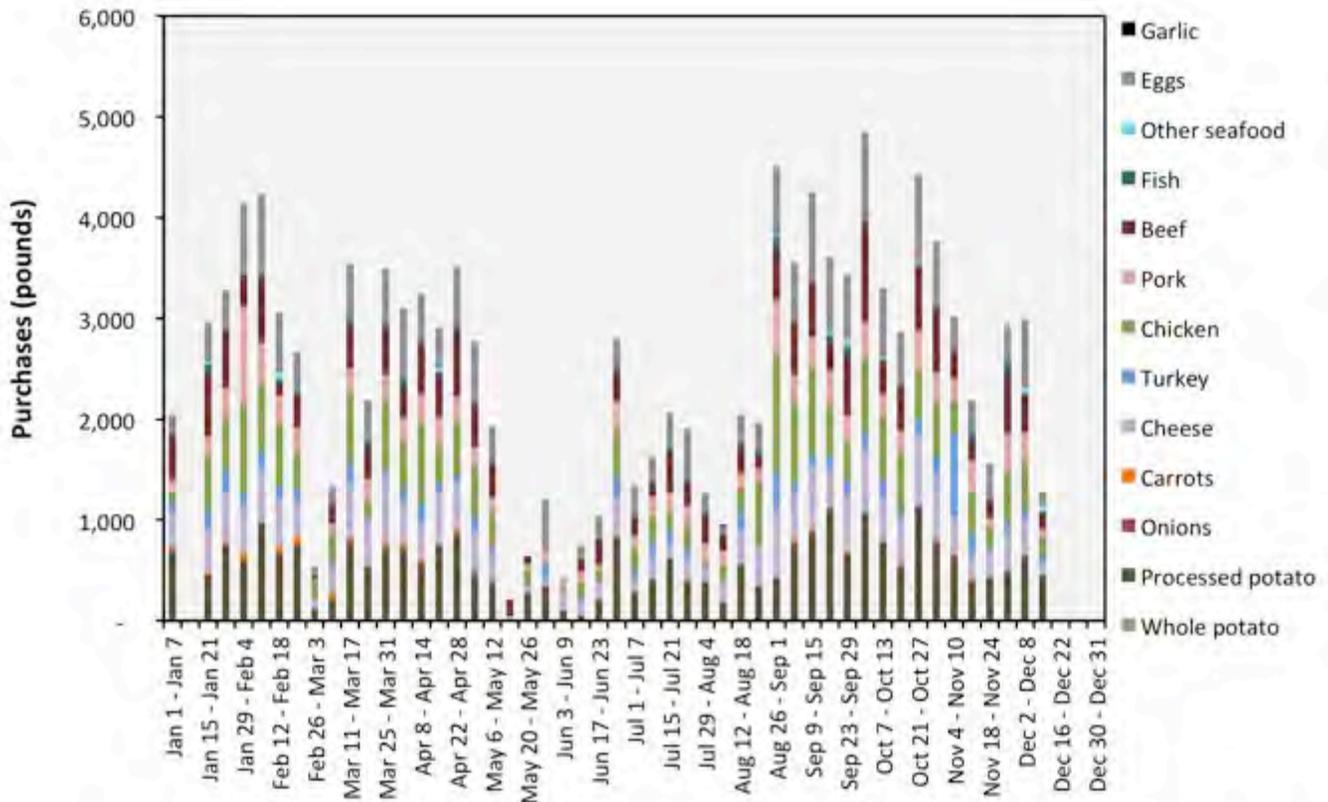


Figure 5. Proportions of various whole foods purchased by Harris Millis over the 2012 calendar year.

the largest share of tabulated food purchased at this dining location. Everyday for both lunch and dinner Harris Millis serves French fries at the grill station, as well as tater tots each morning. This dining outlet purchases some food over the summer, owing to summer programs.

### University Marché

The University Marché is located on the Athletic Campus in the Living/Learning Complex. The Marché is a retail dining location that hosts the “Euro Kitchen,” “Gifts from the Garden” vegan entrees, “Simply to Go” pre-packaged foods, an in-house bakery, Freshens smoothies, Copper Hearth pizza, and a wide range of vegan, gluten-free, vegetarian, and organic groceries, and accepts points, cash, and Cat\$cratch. Table 6 lists weights of purchased foods at this location, and Figure 6 below shows purchasing trends over time. The University Marche caters specifically to

**Table 6.** Purchases of select foods, measured in pounds, at Marché during the 2012 calendar year.

| Type               | Weight |
|--------------------|--------|
| Whole potatoes     | 1,640  |
| Processed potatoes | 24,743 |
| Onions             | 2,566  |
| Carrots            | 2,970  |
| Cheese             | 25,009 |
| Turkey             | 4,192  |
| Chicken            | 38,828 |
| Pork               | 10,979 |
| Beef               | 4,508  |
| Fish               | 2,266  |
| Other seafood      | 533    |
| Eggs               | 7,458  |
| Garlic             | 580    |

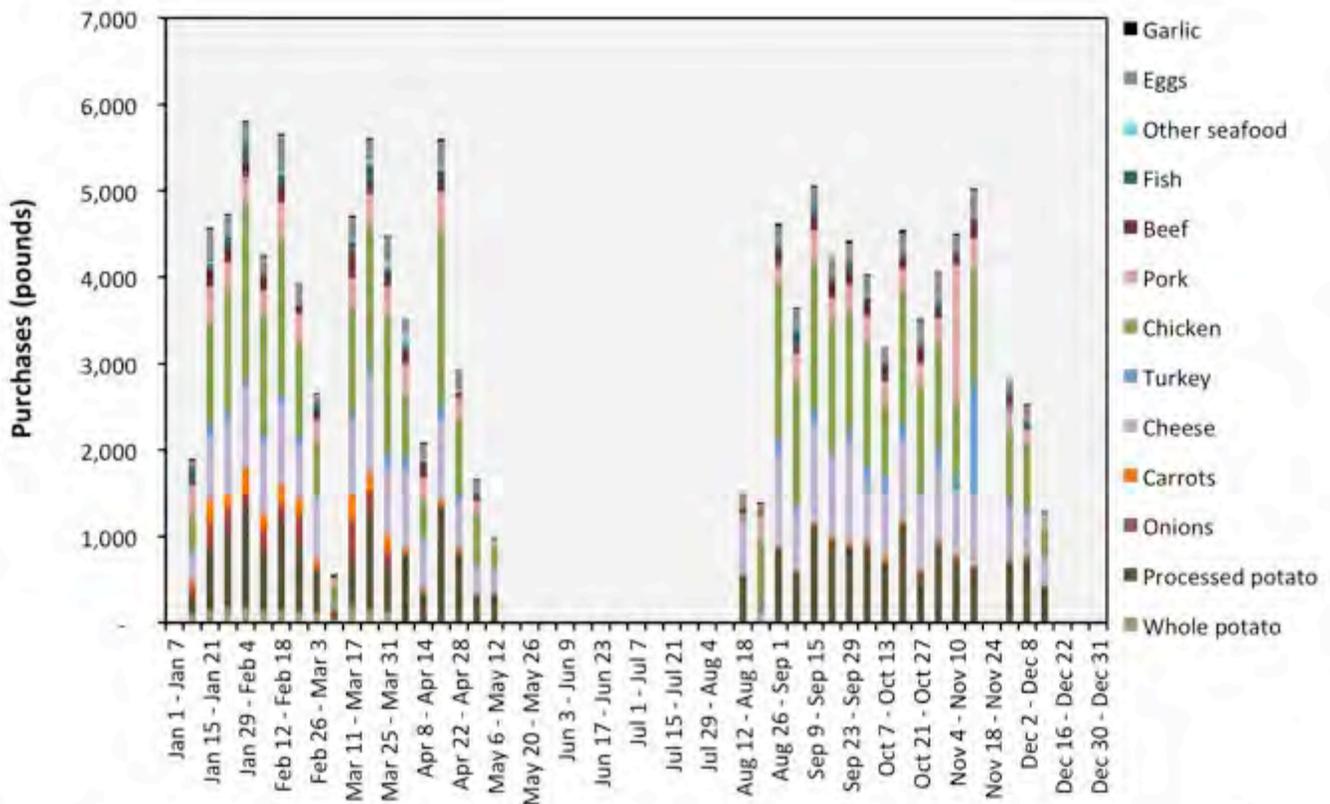


Figure 6. Proportions of various whole foods purchased by the Marché over the 2012 calendar year.

residential students.

### Marketplace

Located in the second floor of the Davis Student Center on Central Campus, the Marketplace is a retail dining establishment that offers a diverse assortment of foods ranging from pre-made sandwiches and sushi to platters of Indian food. Table 7 lists purchased quantities of some foods, while Figure 7 below shows purchasing trends over the calendar year. Chicken dominates purchases, while a range of other foods are also purchased in substantial quantities. As with other dining outlets, food purchases are much reduced outside of the spring and fall semesters.

**Table 7.** Purchases of select foods, measured in pounds, at Marketplace during the 2012 calendar year.

| Type               | Weight |
|--------------------|--------|
| Whole potatoes     | 1,720  |
| Processed potatoes | 5,373  |
| Onions             | 8,673  |
| Carrots            | 4,814  |
| Cheese             | 9,917  |
| Turkey             | 5,338  |
| Chicken            | 22,060 |
| Pork               | 4,334  |
| Beef               | 4,650  |
| Fish               | 1,396  |
| Other seafood      | 766    |
| Eggs               | 3,649  |
| Garlic             | 405    |

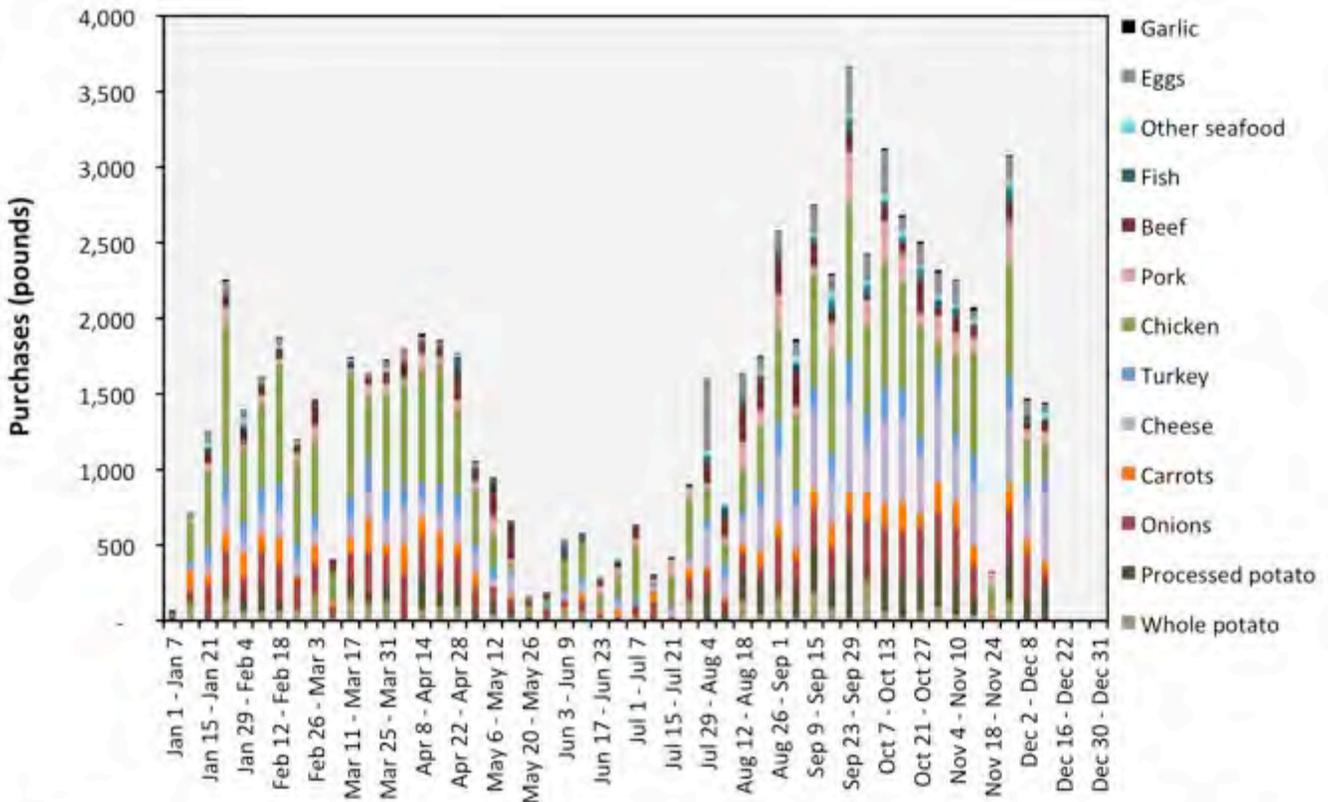


Figure 7. Proportions of various whole foods purchased by the Marketplace over the 2012 calendar year.

## Simpson Hall

Simpson Dining Hall is one of three unlimited dining options on campus where students pay one price at the door and enjoy "all you can eat" dining any time of day. Simpson offers comfort foods such as pizza and soup in addition to a vegan/vegetarian station, a salad bar, and restaurant-style lunch and dinner options. Kosher options also became available at the start of the Fall 2011 semester. "FÖD", which stands for "Food on Demand," is a computerized ordering system that provides a restaurant-style dining experience to resident meal plan holders. "My Zone" is an area designed to provide a safe environment for those with dining needs or diets, including gluten-free, lactose-free and peanut-free. Table 8 lists food purchases, while Figure 8 shows trends in purchases over the 2012 calendar year. Processed potatoes, cheese, chicken, beef and eggs are the foods purchased most heavily at this dining hall.

**Table 8.** Purchases of select foods, measured in pounds, at Simpson Hall during the 2012 calendar year.

| Type               | Weight |
|--------------------|--------|
| Whole potatoes     | 6,300  |
| Processed potatoes | 33,365 |
| Onions             | 13,225 |
| Carrots            | 8,226  |
| Cheese             | 22,516 |
| Turkey             | 6,314  |
| Chicken            | 32,394 |
| Pork               | 13,756 |
| Beef               | 20,181 |
| Fish               | 1,995  |
| Other seafood      | 900    |
| Eggs               | 21,857 |
| Garlic             | 587    |

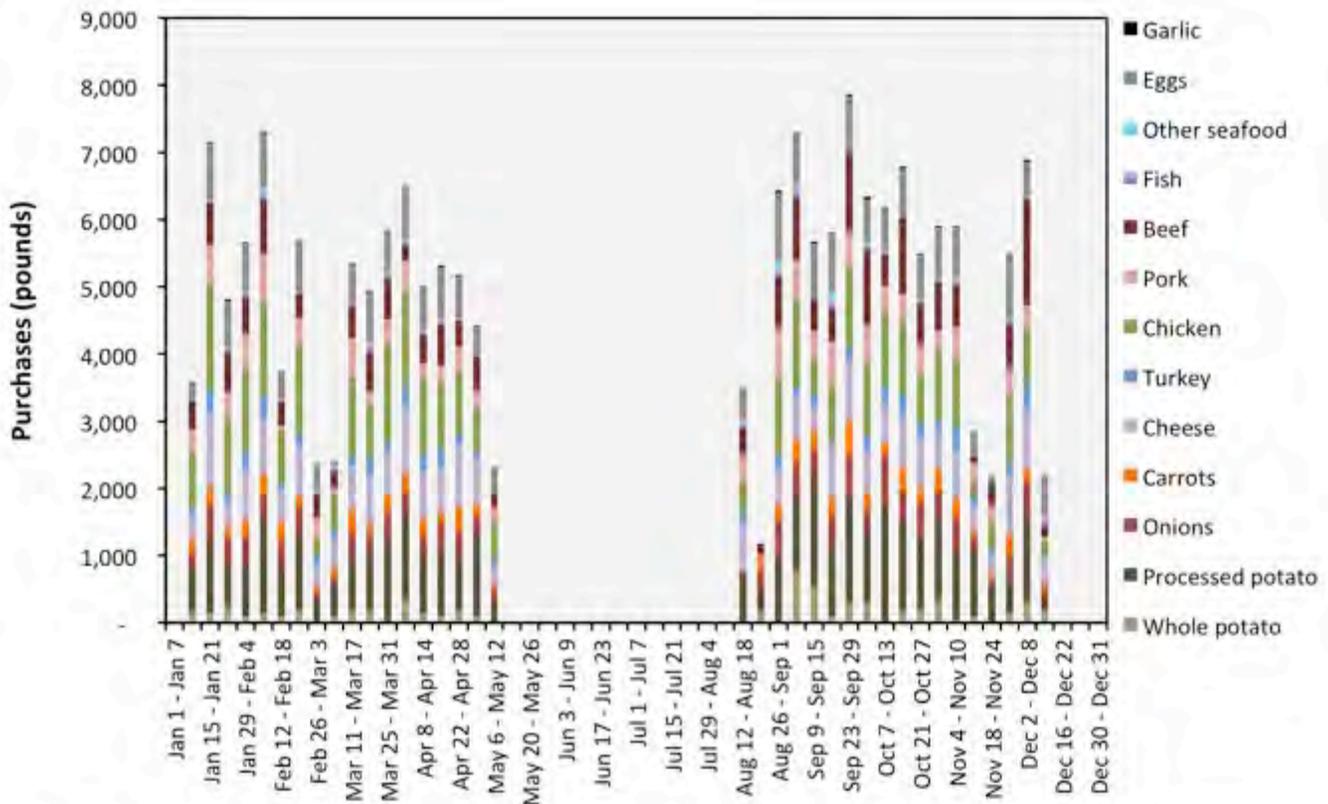


Figure 8. Proportions of various whole foods purchased by Simpson Hall over the 2012 calendar year.

## Waterman Dining Facilities

The Waterman Building is centrally located on campus and houses two different dining facilities, one is called Waterman Café and the other is called Waterman Manor. The Waterman Café is a small, fast-paced facility in the basement of the building that sells mostly pre-packaged food, such as sandwiches, snacks, and salads. It's also a popular spot for students and faculty to grab coffee on the go. Waterman Manor is only open for lunch Monday through Friday and is the campus's only sit-down restaurant style facility. Waterman Manor is used frequently by professors to host meetings, interviews, and business lunches, and accepts points, CatScratch, cash, and credit cards. Table 9 lists food purchases and Waterman Café and Waterman Manor, while Figure 9 below

shows trends in purchasing over time. The data for the Waterman dining facilities showed that chicken was annually the most used whole food. Both Waterman

**Table 9.** Purchases of select foods, measured in pounds, in the Waterman building during the 2012 calendar year.

| Type               | Weight |
|--------------------|--------|
| Whole potatoes     | 1,402  |
| Processed potatoes | 769    |
| Onions             | 2,296  |
| Carrots            | 1,677  |
| Cheese             | 3,679  |
| Turkey             | 1,046  |
| Chicken            | 5,405  |
| Pork               | 1,822  |
| Beef               | 1,083  |
| Fish               | 384    |
| Other seafood      | 271    |
| Eggs               | 1,904  |
| Garlic             | 87     |

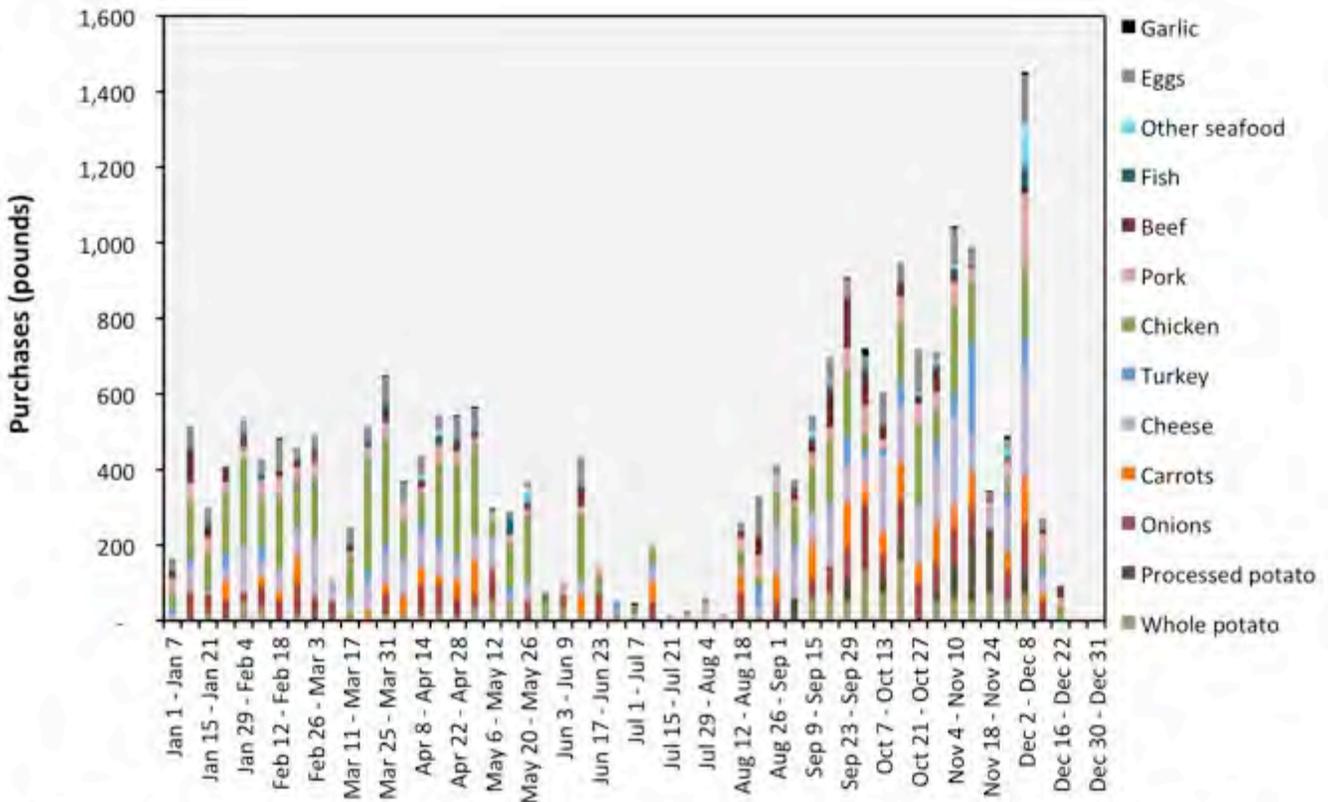


Figure 9. Proportions of various whole foods purchased by Waterman Café over the 2012 calendar year.

Café and Manor have a lot of chicken options.

## Discussion

The University of Vermont purchases a huge amount of food, and is among the larger institutional food purchasers in the state of Vermont. While this research did not tabulate total food purchases, most of this reports contributing authors would agree that the whole and minimally processed foods tabulated represent a small share of total food purchases, perhaps as little as 20 or even 10 percent. Much of the food purchased by Sodexo to be sold on the UVM campus is either processed, pre-prepared foods or are derived from grains or legumes and would thus not fall in any tabulated category. UVM's food system does not differ substantively from any other college or university's food system in this regard.

In hindsight, adjustments could have been made to this study's methods to make it more useful. Quantifying total food purchases would have put whole and minimally processed food purchases that were tabulated in a better perspective, in particular by giving a sense of how small the proportion of whole foods that could conceivably be sourced locally is. While the initial impetus of this report was the Real Food Challenge, many students, faculty and administrators are particularly interested in using institutional purchases to support local producers and local businesses, even when these producers don't meet the requirements of the Real Food Challenge. The reality that foods that could potentially be sourced locally represents a small component of the university's total food purchases might prompt a discussion on how food consumption patterns throughout the university can shift to better support Vermont producers and offer healthier food options to consumers who purchase food at the many dining options on the university campus.

In addition to tabulating total food purchases, additional classes of whole foods, such as fruit, leafy greens and other vegetables could be tabulated as well. Many of these categories were left out of the analysis because contacts within Sodexo wanted the analysis to focus on things that stored well. While this motivation is reasonable, it can lead to somewhat of a biased view of UVM's food purchases. Fruits and vegetables, with perhaps the exception of potatoes, apples and bananas, are probably very small components, by weight or by dollar cost, of the university's food consumption. Regardless, counting them would provide a better sense for the breakdown of UVM's food purchases. Additional categories of processed foods, beans and bread could allow an even more finely resolved understanding of UVM's purchasing, and these represent substantial portions of the university's total food consumption.

One goal of this report is to present information to support UVM's commitment to the Real Food Challenge. While processed foods can qualify as 'Real Food' under this program, whole foods are more likely to do so. The challenge at UVM, and any university, is to find a healthy balance between feeding students food that's healthy, food that's affordable, and food that students will eat. The Real Food Challenge attempts to focus on foods that are healthy, but

it remains to be seen how Sodexo, or any future food service operator at the University of Vermont, will balance these three sometimes-competing needs within its unique institutional context.

## **Conclusion**

The University of Vermont currently purchases and serves comparatively little whole foods. Efforts are underway to change this. This report summarizes data on whole foods purchased by the university to inform students, faculty and university officials of roughly how much of these foods are currently served at the school's dining establishments and to illustrate trends in purchasing. It is hoped that this data stimulates discussion throughout the university on what UVM's food system can become and how it can best meet its commitments relating to the Real Food Challenge.

## **Acknowledgements**

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