



# Earth Sunday 2026

## Food Sustainability

*Taking Care of the World  
God Gave Us*

## Program Leaders

- Julie Lott – Environmental Stewardship Leader at FLPC
- Haley Smarr – Environmental Stewardship member

**Today's goal:** Explore sustainability, why we care about it, and how we can incorporate sustainable practices in living and eating.

Note that this topic and event was inspired by USC's Carolina Food Company's initiatives in the last few years. Pam Bowman made us aware of it, Haley and I visited them in January and saw heard about their programs:

- Local purchasing
- Green restaurant certifications
- Food waste tracking and educations
- Food recovery efforts (Feed the Flock, Garnet Bites)
- Re-usable To Go containers
- Composting



# What is Sustainability?

---

Meeting today's needs without compromising future generations' ability to meet their own.

- Three Pillars of Sustainability (3 P's):
  - Planet - Protecting the environment
  - People - Treating others fairly
  - Prosperity - Economic viability

**Here's a breakdown of the pillars:**

**Environmental (Planet):**

Protecting natural resources, biodiversity, and ecosystems, minimizing pollution, and managing waste and climate impacts.


**Social (People):**

Ensuring a good quality of life, fairness, human rights, community well-being, health, and education for all.

**Economic (Profit/Prosperity):**

Creating long-term economic viability and resilience without compromising the other two pillars, focusing on responsible business practices.

<https://www.enel.com/learning-hub/sustainable-development/three-pillars-sustainability>



***Why is sustainability  
important to us as  
followers of Christ?***

- Because God gave us the world to tend and care for
- Because we are to love our neighbors as ourselves
- Because what we do to the least of these, we do to Christ
- ....

## Food Sustainability Practices

---

1. Buy local
2. Choose healthy foods
3. Reduce food waste





# 1. Buy Local

## Benefits of Buying Local



- Fresher on our plates
  - Supports neighboring small farmers and businesses
  - Reduces our carbon footprint through less delivery miles
    - >50% of fresh fruits/vegetables consumed in US are grown in California
    - The average American food travels ~1500 miles before being consumed
- *Better yet, start a garden and grow your own produce!*

-- 6 min

How many of you have grown tomatoes or other vegetables in your own yard (or bucket)?

How many of you have visited the Kids Garden out here to see what we grow for Rehobeth Food Pantry?

<https://attra.ncat.org/publication/food-miles-background-and-marketing/>  
2022 Census of Agriculture

## Where to Buy Local Food?

### Farmers markets\*

- Soda City Market (Saturdays year round)
- Forest Acres Farmers Market (Wednesdays April – November)
- Blythewood Farmers Market (Wednesdays Apr 23 – Nov 19)
- Cayce Farmers Market (daily - store & nursery)
- Community Artisan & Farmers Market (Tuesdays – Clemson Rd)
- Meeting Street Artisan Market (Thursdays 4-8pm June-August)
- Tom's Creek Mobile Market (Mon, Wed, Thurs at 3 locations)

### Other stores for local produce:

- Four Oaks Farms (Lexington)
- Rosewood Market

\* More at: <https://colatoday.6amcity.com/city-guide/live/local-farmers-markets-in-columbia-sc>

Colatoday site has more than those listed here, but we also added some not on that site

## **Table Talk**

*(3 minutes)*

**Where have you bought  
local food  
in the last year that  
you would recommend?**

*Write your answers on the Table Talk sheet  
and be prepared to share with the room*

Gather answers from tables and write on whiteboard:

State Farmers Market

Spring Valley (Heritage) Market on Two Notch Rd

Cottle Strawberry Farm (local stand at Walmart)

Tree of Life Farmers Market – Thursday mornings

Food Lion – Decker Blvd

City Roots (by Owens Field)

Decker Fruit Stand

Wingards Nursery / Fruit stand – Lexington



**Door Prize!**



## 2. Choose Healthy Foods

## **Choose Foods that are Healthier for the EARTH**



- **Efficiency:**
  - Meat is the least fuel-efficient food we have. Lots of energy required to grow, harvest, ship animal feed, house, transport and slaughter animals, process, package and refrigerate
  - Studies show that the fossil energy input of edible animal protein is more than 11 times greater than that for grain protein production such as corn, grain, and nuts.
- **Resource usage:**
  - Land: Beef uses 20x the land and emits 20x greenhouse gasses as beans per gram of protein.
  - Water: Beef production uses >6x amount of water as soybeans or wheat per pound

Foodfacts.org

Heller, Martin C.,I and Gregory A. Keoleian. *Life Cycle-Based Sustainability Indicators for Assessment of the U.S. Food System*. Ann Arbor, MI: Center for Sustainable Systems, University of Michigan, 2000. 42.

Heeter, Chad, "The Oil in Your Oatmeal: A Lot of Fossil Fuel Goes into Producing, Packaging and Shipping Our Breakfast," *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 26, 2006.

## Choose Foods that are Healthier for PEOPLE

Avoid ultra-processed foods

- Contain added ingredients like artificial colors/flavors, preservatives
- Usually have a lot of added sodium and/or sweeteners
- Multiple studies show increased risk of dementia, cancer & cardiovascular disease
- Note: Some vegan products are ultra-processed!

Reduce red meat in your diet

- Higher cholesterol (increases risk of heart attack and stroke)
- Processed meats (hot dogs, salami) *significantly* increase risk of type 2 diabetes and obesity, Alzheimer's and colorectal cancer



Examples of processed foods:

- Frozen meals, soft drinks, hot dogs, deli meat, fast food, packaged cookies/cakes, salty snacks, jarred sauces, even plant based milk
- Note that plant based foods can also be ultra processed (veggie burgers, fake chicken patties, other packaged vegan food)

Multiple studies show link between processed food and cancer:

- [https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamaneurology/fullarticle/2799140#google\\_vignette](https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamaneurology/fullarticle/2799140#google_vignette)
- <https://www.bmj.com/content/378/bmj-2021-068921>
- <https://www.bmj.com/content/378/bmj-2022-070688>

Red meat connection to diabetes and obesity:

- <https://www.prevention.com/food-nutrition/healthy-eating/a20436097/10-reasons-to-stop-eating-red->

[meat/?utm\\_source=google&utm\\_medium=cpc&utm\\_campaign=mgu\\_ga\\_pre\\_md\\_dsa\\_prog\\_org\\_us\\_19931675023&gad\\_source=1&gad\\_campaignid=19931675023&gbraid=0AAAAADA2LLqEHMAZaHSw98Zj8jNb5f6t&gclid=CjwKCAjw1N7NBhAoEiwAcPchp6lBSue1d2SE5mZlxxrxmER7wzavQKO8oteV4nMK947Jk-P68RmLvxoCPNYQAvD\\_BwE](https://www.prevention.com/food-nutrition/healthy-eating/a20436097/10-reasons-to-stop-eating-red-meat/?utm_source=google&utm_medium=cpc&utm_campaign=mgu_ga_pre_md_dsa_prog_org_us_19931675023&gad_source=1&gad_campaignid=19931675023&gbraid=0AAAAADA2LLqEHMAZaHSw98Zj8jNb5f6t&gclid=CjwKCAjw1N7NBhAoEiwAcPchp6lBSue1d2SE5mZlxxrxmER7wzavQKO8oteV4nMK947Jk-P68RmLvxoCPNYQAvD_BwE)

## Advantages of Plant-Forward Diet

- Vegetarians typically have a lower BMI, lower glucose levels, blood pressure, cholesterol, triglycerides
- Reducing health risks can mean fewer doctor visits, prescription needs, and associated costs
- Vegan diet reduces grocery bill by 16%, a savings of more than \$500 a year compared to a diet that includes meat, dairy, and other animal products



“Vegetarian and vegan diets: benefits and drawbacks”  
<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC10516628/>

## Yummy Vegetarian Recipes

- Favorites shared by FLPC Members
- See posters on the wall
- Take a photo or use QR Code to access online
  - 15 total recipes in a PDF document

***Challenge: Try at least one of these recipes!***



To help us all look at some meatless meal ideas, we talked to several of FLPC's vegetarians who were kind enough to share some of their family favorite recipes.



17:40 min



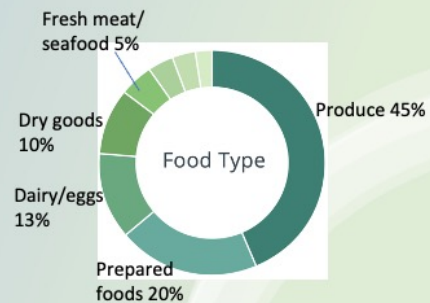
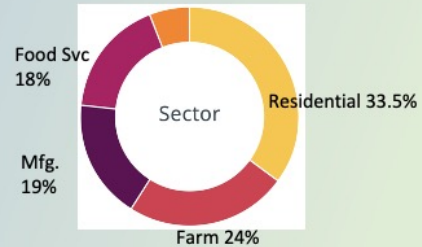
## 3. Reduce Food Waste

## So Much Food Waste!

- 29% of the US food supply is surplus (the portion that goes uneaten)
  - 240 million tons of surplus food generated in 2024
  - Worth \$380 billion
  - 412 pounds per person
- 24% of US landfill material is food (26% in SC)

From: ReFED.org

### Sources of Surplus Food:



See ReFED report – fascinating: <https://refed.org/uploads/2026-food-waste-report-design-final-1.pdf?ver1>

-

<https://des.sc.gov/sites/des/files/Documents/BLWM/Recycling/MSW%20STUDY%20FINAL.pdf>

Good news: In 2016, USDA and EPA created “US Food Loss and Waste 2030 Champions” to encourage businesses to reduce food loss and waste in their operations in the US by 50% by 2030.

>45 food businesses (grocery stores, restaurants, food processors, manufacturers etc) have joined. Main changes are tracking waste, donating to non-profits, composting, and diverting for energy production.

See: <https://www.usda.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2030-Champions-Milestones-Report.pdf>

### Good news: 2024 saw a 2.2% reduction in food waste from 2023

The reduction is due in part to higher food prices – spurring businesses and households to be more careful.

Also – industry initiatives focused on waste reduction (the US Food Pact – an

industry collaboration led by ReFED and WWF with 81% of food service companies signing on)

## Tips to Reduce Food Waste

- Plan your shopping list with a meal prep plan (I know, I know – it takes planning!)
- Try not to buy more fresh food than you need
  - Packaged produce is big source of wasted food
  - Why buy a bag of peppers if you only need 1 or 2?
- If you make too much, freeze part of it right away (before it goes bad in the fridge!)
  - Or share with a neighbor...
- Be aware of food date labels
  - USE By (safety) vs. BEST if Used By (for quality)
  - If it looks good/smells good/tastes good – it's probably OK to eat!
- To reduce your waste going to landfills, try composting!

See [www.wasteloop.org](http://www.wasteloop.org) for lots of great info and ideas under "Resources/Food Waste Prevention"



Who here has a compost pile or bin at their house?

## **Table Talk**

*(3 minutes)*

**How does your family  
try to reduce  
food waste?  
(Or – How did your  
grandmother reduce waste?)**

*Write your answers on the Table Talk sheet  
and be prepared to share with the room*

- 27:41 min

Ideas:

- Leftover night once/week
- Make soup or salads or stir fries with leftovers
- Do an informal coop with a friend/neighbor to buy fresh veggies in bulk and split to save money
- Join an actual food coop

Others:

Eat and freeze leftovers

Use all parts of the fruits/vegetables

Banana peels and coffee grounds – use as fertilizer on plants

Broken egg shells – use to repel slugs in garden

“Big Little Meals” at Fresh Market

Purchase smaller amounts

Make soup from leftovers

Compost what's left



**Door Prize!**

## Food Composting at FLPC

- Restarting after pandemic paused church meals
- Kitchen compost bucket located by courtyard door
- Kitchen crews will be updated on the process
- Compost bin is located in Kids Garden next to left fence

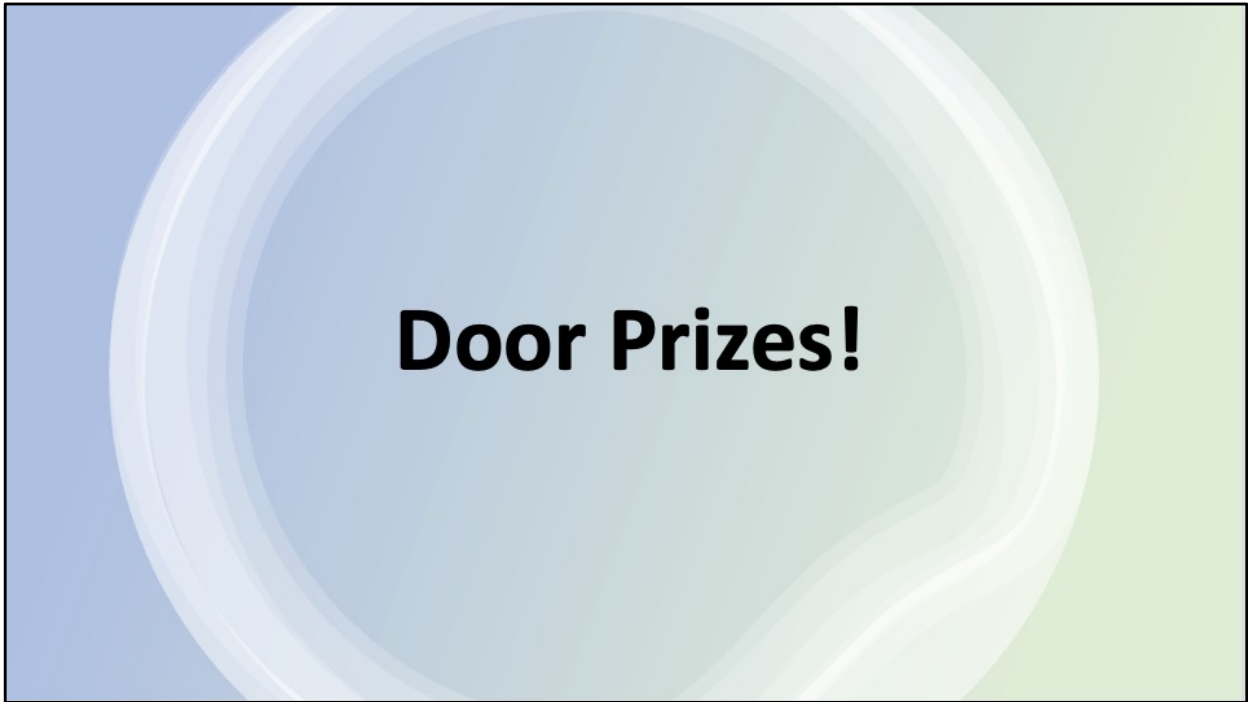


*Should we give this little fella a name?*

I'm thinking of having a contest to find a name so we can put it on the bin. Maybe we'll have FLY kids come up with names and we can offer a prize...

## Food Composting at FLPC

- This meal is our INAUGURAL COMPOSTING MEAL!
- Audience Participation – returning your plates
  - **Do compost:** fruit and breads
  - **Don't compost:** eggs, grits, butter/cheese
  - Volunteers will help you split your scraps
  - Volunteers will weigh the total scraps to get a per person waste weight and we will report it back to the group



- 33 min

Disburse all the rest of the door prizes, including the wire compost bin



Some of the things we suggested today are hard to do, depending on your situation.

Our goal was to inspire you to think about your daily choices, and consider the impact on

OTHERS, YOUR HEALTH and THE EARTH when you are making food choices.