

## **Promote health**

Katherine Rea, Oakland  
(San Francisco Chronicle, July 11, 2009, page A-7)

Bravo to the mayor for prioritizing access to healthy food so highly. In our state's fiscal crisis, we can't afford the cost of health care and lost productivity resulting from unhealthy food environments.

Everyone benefits when the communities in which we live, work, learn and play are abundant with fresh, affordable, nutritious foods rather than the norm of convenience and fast foods.

This kind of policy ultimately saves money and lives and can promote the health and well-being of all San Franciscans. It's common sense: Create a healthy environment, and health will follow.

## **Original article**

“Newsom's fresh idea: mandates on healthier food”

Heather Knight  
(San Francisco Chronicle, July 9, 2009, A-1)

He's already banned spending city money to buy bottled water and mandated composting citywide. Now, San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom is taking on something as basic as water and trash: food.

Newsom on Wednesday issued an executive directive he hopes will dramatically change how San Franciscans eat.

All city departments have six months to conduct an audit of unused land - including empty lots, rooftops, windowsills and median strips - that could be turned into community gardens or farms that could benefit residents, either by working at them or purchasing the fresh produce. Food vendors that contract with the city must offer healthy and sustainable food. All vending machines on city property must also offer healthy options, and farmers' markets must begin accepting food stamps, although some already do.

The mayor will send an ordinance to the Board of Supervisors within two months mandating that all food served in city jails, hospitals, homeless shelters and community centers be healthy.

And effective immediately, no more runs to the doughnut shop before meetings and conferences held by city workers. Instead, city employees must use guidelines created by the Health Department when ordering food for meetings.

Examples include cutting bagels into halves or quarters so people can take smaller portions and serving vegetables instead of potato chips.

"We have an eating and drinking problem in the United States of America," Newsom said Wednesday. "It's impacting our health, and it's impacting our economy."

The directives are the product of an "urban-rural roundtable" of food experts from around California convened by Newsom last year. The group was charged with finding ways to get more of the food grown on farms within 200 miles of San Francisco onto the plates of city residents, especially those who depend on government meals.

The idea is to decrease the need to import food, reconnect people to homegrown food rather than processed food, and to provide more options in neighborhoods like Bayview-Hunters Point that lack easy access to grocery stores.

### **Plan still lacks details**

Many of the details have yet to be worked out, including how much it will cost. Newsom bristled when asked how it would be funded because there's no money to implement the food policy in the budget agreed to by the mayor and the board's budget committee just last week.

"We have plenty of resources," he said. "This is not a budget buster."

Supervisor Ross Mirkarimi, a member of the budget committee, said he likes the idea - and in fact, supervisors have been calling for the creation of an urban farm in San Francisco for years. He said that he wanted one included in the redevelopment of the former UC Berkeley Extension site on Laguna Street, but that the idea was never embraced by the mayor's administration.

"Even if it's a good idea, the timing's a little odd," Mirkarimi said of the unfunded proposal coming just days after the budget compromise. "I like the notion if we're able to get this at a very low cost."

It's also unclear how much land could be converted into community farms. The Public Utilities Commission has thousands of acres outside San Francisco that could be used, and the Real Estate Division and the Recreation and Park Department own some unused parcels in the city.

### **Model farm in Oakland**

Newsom made the announcement Wednesday at a junkyard-turned-farm in West Oakland that could serve as a model for how land could be converted in San Francisco. A stone's throw from BART, it used to be home to old cars and one angry dog, but now is run by the nonprofit City Slicker Farms.

With a handful of staff members and scores of volunteers from the neighborhood, the nonprofit operates six small farms in West Oakland and sells the produce, along with honey and eggs, on a sliding scale to local residents at a Saturday farm stand.

The 2,000-square-foot former junkyard now produces 2,000 pounds of food every year, including lettuce, squash, tomatoes, parsley, sage, collard greens, grapes, cherries and plums.

"This speaks to people's soul," said Barbara Finnin, director of City Slicker Farms. "It's a place people can relax, be outside, and nourish themselves and their families."

Newsom toured the farm, biting off a piece of kale to taste, munching on an apricot and admiring sunflowers taller than him.

Back in San Francisco, it was apparent Newsom's idea may take some getting used to. Michael Summers, who operates a hot dog stand in Civic Center Plaza that contracts with the city, said the dogs made of tofu don't sell nearly as well as the old-fashioned meat kind. That was evidenced by the line of people ordering hot dogs just after noon - and not a tofu order among them.

### **New food rules**

San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom is calling for city-funded food to be healthy and sustainable. His administration provided the following directives for what this means:

**Safe and healthy:** Avoids excessive pesticide use and has high nutritional value.

**Culturally acceptable:** Acceptable culturally and religiously to San Francisco's diverse population. An example would be providing Chinese seniors with bok choy and other vegetables they're familiar with at local farmers' markets.

**Sustainable:** Grown in a way that maintains the health of agricultural lands and advances self-sufficiency among farmers and farmworkers. An example would be using manure as a fertilizer rather than chemicals.