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CDAE 195: Barriers to Local Food  
Local Grain Feasibility Study

directly. Communications with King Arthur Flour were done via email, while Green Mountain Flour and Gleason's Grains were contacted by phone.

Each company was examined based on their environmental, social, and community development practices in addition to their capacity to meet the demands of the University of Vermont. These factors fed into their overall feasibility which was ranked on a scale from 1-5, with 1 meaning the company was fully feasible with no changes needed and 5 meaning the company is not feasible partner and is not worth pursuing.

## **RESULTS**

*King Arthur Flour*

of this, King Arthur would not meet the local standards of the real food challenge. However, King Arthur does offer a line of organic flour, that would count under the organic category.

### **Price Competitiveness**

King Arthur, because of their sizable operation, would be able to offer their product at a competitive price, but would still be significantly more than the current supplier, particularly for the Organic line.

### **Sustainability (community, planet, people and health)**

King Arthur Flour was the first B-Corp in Vermont, and set many social standards for their company. According to their website, King Arthur has taken steps to reduce their impact on the environment by recycling, composting, and reducing carbon emissions. The company provides employees a stake in their Employee Stock Ownership Plan, where they benefit, or lose, based on the company's success or failure. King Arthur also plays a key role in the community by contributing to causes through donations and volunteering. There were not many specifics available on the website, so we have rated King Arthurs sustainability at a 2, meaning they are a sustainable company but could do a little better in communicating their practices to consumers.

### **Overall Impressions**

Although King Arthur Flour does not meet RFC requirements for local, it would still be a great company for UVM to partner with due to its local roots and sustainable practices.

### **Feasibility Rating and Explanation**

Since King Arthur is a local company and sell UVM's preferred type of flour, we have rated them as a 1 for feasibility. Though the grain is not grown locally, they are able to deliver the white flour requested by Sodexo in the quantity needed. If Sodexo purchased their Organic line of flour, they would also be able to boost their Real Food percentage.

### *Green Mountain Flour*

#### **Volume**

Green Mountain Flour would be able to meet UVM's flour demand. However, they do not produce the type of flour used by Sodexo and they only sell stone-milled flour, mostly whole wheat.

#### **Distribution Size**

Green Mountain is able to sell in bulk.

#### **Distributors**

Green Mountain flour uses UVM certified distributors, such as Black River Produce.

#### **Real Food Challenge Guidelines**

Even though Green Mountain Flour is located in Vermont, not all of the grain processed by them is grown in Vermont due to a lack of availability. However, they are committed to buying as locally as possible, which typically means buying from producers in New York and Maine. This means that a portion of their product usually is sourced from within 250 road miles, but not all of it. Because of this, they would not reliably be able to count as "local" under the Real Food Challenge guidelines. They also give

preference to organic growers, but because this is not consistent and they do not have a certification, they would not qualify for the organic category either.

### **Price Competitiveness**

Since Green Mountain is a small producer that sources directly from farmers, it would be hard for them to stay price competitive for Sodexo. Daniella Malin cited 10 to 13 cents per pound as a standard bulk price for conventional flour, possibly reaching as high as 30. However, their company typically aims for about 60 cents per pound and is not currently able deviate much from that.

### **Sustainability (community, planet, people and health)**

Green Mountain Flour does not have any sustainability guidelines in place, but overall they are a sustainable business. Their website states -"We believe that organic growing practices promote biodiversity, a healthy ecosystem, and a high organic carbon levels in the soil – important for both mitigation and adaptation to climate change." We have rated them as a 3, meaning they do use sustainable practices but do not set

We have rated Green Mountain Flour's feasibility as a 2. Since they are able to meet the demand and sell in bulk, there is a serious opportunity for partnership with UVM. However, dining services would have to adapt to using stone-milled flour rather than the white flour they currently use.

### *Gleason's Grains*

#### **Volume**

Due to crop failures, the volume is a bit inconsistent. However, on an average year, Ben Gleason produces enough flour to cover the needs of UVM. However, he does not make white all-purpose flour.

#### **Distribution Size**

Gleason's is able to distribute in bulk.

#### **Distributors**

Gleason's has used Black River produce in the past, though Mr. Gleason finds this distributor to be a hassle. He says he never knows what time they are coming and this has been disruptive to his work in the past. Using this distributor is also a barrier to remaining price competitive.

#### **Real Food Challenge Guidelines**

Because Gleason's is both local and organic, they would qualify as Real Food A.

#### **Price competitiveness**

At approximately 35 dollars a bag, Gleason's Grains are at least three times more expensive than the conventional flour already being purchased by the university.

#### **Sustainability (Community, planet, people and health)**

Gleason's Grains is entirely run by Ben Gleason, so issues like employee benefits do not apply. He responsibly manages his fields with crop rotation and certified organic practices. He also handles waste by selling the excess bran to a dairy farm for feed. Mr. Gleason also feels that providing a high quality, healthful product is a positive service for the community. He also makes a point to provide farm tours so that the community can learn from his work and become intimately familiar with the product. Gleason's has extremely good practices, so we have rated them a 1 for sustainability.

### **Overall Impressions**

Gleason's Grains is a great company with very sustainable practices. The company seems to be operating at a steady size, with no real desire to expand given their current resources. Crop failures are the biggest challenge for this company.

### **Feasibility Rating and Explanation**

Gleason's Grain has been given the feasibility rating of 5 as they would not be able to, and is not interested in, partnering with UVM dining services. Ben Gleason made it clear that if UVM really wanted to make the switch to local flour, they would have to give up their dependence on white flour. Gleason's is not able to meet the demand of UVM's flour needs since Mr. Gleason already has steady markets for his whole wheat flour and his operation is not likely to expand much in the future.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

One of the greatest barriers for UVM in purchasing local grain is the type of local flour available. Like Ben Gleason told us, it would be nearly impossible for UVM to find a local grain grower that could offer the amount of white flour they have asked for.

Price is also a big barrier for purchasing local grain. Since Gleason's Grains and Green Mountain Flour are both very small companies, it would be hard to offer them a price that falls into UVM's budget and still allows the companies to make a profit.

The Real Food Challenge definition of "local" is another limiting factor. Since farmers are struggling to grow grain Vermont, it is not likely that UVM will be able to source all their flour locally anytime soon unless dining services is willing to pay a bit more for it and work with whole wheat flours. Overall, it may be more beneficial to focus on organics when it comes to grain.

### **SUGGESTIONS FOR THE FUTURE**

If Sodexo was able to transition to different types of flour, there would be much more opportunity to support local producers, such as Green Mountain. Green Mountain flour is the most willing to expand and partner with Sodexo, which could be really good for their business. However, they only offer whole wheat flour so Sodexo would need to make room for that product in their recipes. If Sodexo is unwilling to make this type of change, King Arthur Organic line allows the type of flour that Sodexo requested, which would count as a Real Food B product that also supports the local economy.

### **SOURCES**

Ben Gleason, <http://www.gleasongrains.com/>

Daniella Malin, [www.greenmountainflour.com](http://www.greenmountainflour.com)

Shawna Goldfarb, [www.kingarthurflour.com](http://www.kingarthurflour.com)

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