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Offering Healthy Foods in Food Trucks

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### **Abstract**

Reiter Affiliated Companies Sembrando Salud Program aims to improve health outcomes in the farmworker population by creating healthy ranch communities. Semerando Salud wants to empower their employees to make educated choices that lead to improving health towards a healthier and more productive agricultural community. The prevalence of overweight and obesity is 78% among Latinos are higher than non-Latinos whites. Contributing factors leading to the health problem is a deficiency of physical activity, unhealthy diet, and unable to have access to healthy. Lacking from these contributing factors can cause consequences in the future, just as diabetes and the cost of treatment. The goal is the implementation of more healthy food options on the menu of loncheras (food trucks). The purpose of this project is to have more farmworks to eat a healthy diet and reduce obesity rates. These findings came to the result that it's not going to be easy to process having more healthy food options in food trucks. To conclude, the expected outcomes were not met, but this project will continue in the next season, beginning in early March.

***Keywords: obesity, farmworker, healthy meals, lunch trucks, Latinos***

### **Agency and Communities Served**

Sembrando Salud is one of the many departments under Reiter Affiliated Companies (RAC). RAC is one of the largest multi-berry producer and a leading supplier of strawberries, raspberries, blueberries, blackberries, and organic berries in all North America. RAC's mission has a family, "The relentless pursuit to delight our consumers and enrich our employees and communities (Reiter Affiliated Companies, 2017)." Their values of honesty, fairness, and respect are farmed by corridors of every RAC office. These values are embedded in every aspect of the company, making a clear path of integrity to flow throughout the organization (Reiter Affiliated Companies, 2017).

RAC's Sembarando Salud works to improve the health outcomes of the farmworker population by creating healthy ranch communities through empowering field employees. Their families are also part of the change by making educated choices that improve health and happiness through educating and engaging employers to be a catalyst towards a healthier and more productive agricultural community (Reiter Affiliated Companies, 2017). RAC believes Sembrando Salud can be an essential tool to create a healthy and happy workforce that will result in greater individual success, the success of the farming operations and the success of the company (Reiter Affiliated Companies, 2017).

Sembrando Salud focuses on Cinco Pasos (five steps)

1. Be Active (muevete)
2. Drink water (toma agua)
3. Eat vegetables and fruits (come frutas y verduras)
4. Measure (medite)

### 5. Share (comparte)

With these Five steps, Sembrando Salud hopes to inspire a healthy lifestyle at home and at work. Their objective is to create a happy workforce that will gain individual success. SS offers a sustainable program that will be embraced by the diverse agriculture employer community throughout California with a common vision and goal to improve the health of those who harvest their crops and therefore to create the value of the RAC business (Reiter Affiliated Companies, 2017). The population served at SS is mainly from Mexico who works seasonal or stays the whole year. A total of more than 2,500 farmworkers are in the program according to Maricela Gutierrez of Sembrando Salud Health Promoter for Reiter Affiliated Companies (RAC).

### **Problem Description**

Harvesters are picking fruits and veggies every day and are facing the highest rates than the general population yet the prevalence of overweight and obesity is 78% among Latinos in the United States (Marc Schenker, UC Davis, 2014). The prevalence of Latinos is twice higher than non-Latino Whites (Marc Schenker, UC Davis, 2014). So why can't they be eating berries like one cup of strawberries per day, that can help improve heart health, lower the risk of developing some types of cancer, lower blood pressure and maintain a lowered risk for certain diseases just diabetes (Strawberry Nutrition Facts Driscoll's Inc., 2018).

The population of Santa Cruz County is 275, 897, of that Latinos, makeup 34.1% of the population accrued (Census Bureau, 2017). In a recent data of the California Health Interview Survey (CHIS) who focuses on the local information on adult weight, found that Santa Cruz County adults with higher rates of obesity than California adults statewide – 27.1% for the county, compared to 24.8% statewide (HEALTH, Santa Cruz County, 2015). By ethnicity there

was a substantial disparity: only 20.7% of White adults were obese, compared to 34.4% of Latinos. A similar disparity was found statewide (21.9% of White adults obese, compared to 32.6% of Latinos)(HEALTH, Santa Cruz County, 2015).

Children at 15 and younger are ranked the highest among all obese; this comes from the myth, “ the thicker a child is healthier” (Quiroga, 2005). Many are struggling as adults because of the myth told as a child. Obesity results from an imbalance of excessive calorie consumption and inadequate physical activity. Some nutrients like high fat and high-calorie foods can forum the placement of fast-food restaurants.

The article “*Let them Eat Fat,*” states, “ certain fast-food joints strategically place restaurants in certain areas and certain communities. Those communities are generally in low income, low wage areas. Because of low prices and affordable menus, people with low incomes can enjoy their food. These are generally built-in Hispanic and African American communities, and this is suspected to be a reason that African Americans and Hispanics rank one and two in the highest rates of obesity and related diseases,” (Critser, 2005).

This is an urgent problem because it can lead to other chronic diseases, just as diabetes and consequences as the cost of treatment.

### **Contributing Factors**

High obesity rates among the Latino population are contributed by several factors. The first contributing factor is the deficiency of physical activity. In Sembrando Salud (SS) many harvests do not have the time to exercise after an 8-12 hour workday as Vivana Bermudez states,

a former strawberry picker. Many also say that they get all the exercise they need at work because they are out in the sun, walking back and forth dropping off the cases of boxes completed of berries stated from Vivian Bermudez. The amount of moderate physical activity required for those who are beginners in 30 minutes everyday states Mayo Clinic. Many farmworkers have a family to support so they consider the physical activity a waste of time(Stuifbergen PhD, 2010). Changing their beliefs might even help lower the risk of obesity or diabetes among the population.

A second contributing factor is an unhealthy diet. Farmworkers sometimes don't work many hours depending on the harvest and how it did in the season. So many buy fast food because its cheaper and can save money. Buying healthy food is expensive to purchase most of the time. Due to the cost of healthy foods, Latinos tend to consume less than four servings of fruits and vegetables(Quiroga, 2005). Two-thirds of Latinos say fruits and vegetables are challenging to get at work and 40% state fruits and vegetables are too expensive(Quiroga, 2005). So most don't have the best diet.

A third contributing factor is an access to food. In 2010, there was a 53% among farmworkers in Salinas Valley who were low on food security (Hungry in America Local Report, 2010). Which means sometimes they didn't have food or had to buy chunk food. In *Food Security Among Hispanic Adults in the United States, 2011-2014* article stated, "The share of Hispanic households that are food insecure—unable to consistently put adequate food on the table—is about twice that of non-Hispanic White households." These contributing factors can lead to serious consequences in the future just as developing diabetes.

### **Consequences**

According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), US adults have a 40% chance of developing type 2 diabetes, but if your Hispanic/Latino adults, the chances are more than 50% and most likely develop diabetes at a younger age. There are three stages of diabetes: (a) Prediabetes, many people don't know if they are at this state which is when people's blood sugar is high; (b) Type 1, when your pancreas is making very little or no insulin at all; (c) type 2, is when your body doesn't process glucose (blood sugar). CDC goes to say, Latinos have a 50% chance of dying due to diabetes when comparing Latinos to non-Hispanics Whites. The Hispanic Community Health Study found that Latinos had 16.9% for both men and women, in which non-Hispanic whites were 10.2% diagnosed and undiagnosed. When looking individual in groups, the prevalence was higher of 18.3% of those who were Mexican descent to a low of 10.2% of South America descent (Virginia, 2014).

The cost of medical treatments is the second consequence of obesity. A study from Harvard's School of Public Health (pg.20.), "obesity may account for as much as \$190 billion annually or 21% of all U.S. medical expenses." For each person individually, the cost of medical care for obese patients is estimated to be somewhere between 36% to 150% higher than for non-obese patients (Public Health, 2019). Most farm workers don't work when the season is over so they aren't making money, which means they might not even be able to afford medical treatment.

### **Problem Model**

<b>Contributing Factors</b>	<b>Problem</b>	<b>Consequences</b>
Deficiency of physical activity	The prevalence of overweight and obesity is 78% among	Diabetes



	Latinos in the United States, which is twice higher than non-Latinos Whites.	
Unhealthy diet		Cost
Access to Healthy Foods		

### Capstone Project Description and Justification

#### Project Purpose

This project will address two of the contributing factors above. One, deficiency of physical activity. Second, the unhealthy diet; what small changes can be made to have a healthy lifestyle. The purpose of this project is to reduce obesity rates in Santa Cruz County among the farmworker community.

RAC Sembrando Salud will partner with a food truck (lunchars) that already goes to some ranches, like Sunset Berry Farms to do a pilot of serving a healthy food option on their meal or snack that to support RAC's food policy. For example, those who serve RAC's employees will be asked to comply with the food and beverage policy by offering two or more healthy entrees, snacks, and beverages (Reiter Affiliated Companies, 2012). Having this in place will also provide an option for those in the fields who can't eat certain foods because of their health conditions they have like diabetes.

This research project's goal is to address the high rates of obesity among the community and will help inform of other chronic diseases that might be affecting the community. The general goal of this project is to help one another in the community. First, food trucks would be

#### Project Implementation

The problem will the importance of having a healthy lifestyle. One of the roles so far in this project will be creating a survey to know why these food truck companies don't have a

healthy food option on their menu and if they will consider having one option on their menu if they had the opportunity to do so. A rough draft would need to get approved by mentors Ana and Martha before heading to the fields to interview food truck owners. Each question will be asked and explained to them if they don't understand it. After gathering responses it would be summarized in the next group meeting and discuss the next steps to this project. For instance, results on the farmworker's opinion on healthy food options will be summarized. Analyzing both surveys will be important to determine if a healthy food option will be an entree, a snack or a beverage. The next step will be to verify if the Second Harvest Food Bank will agree on provide ingredients for free. Once the collaboration is set the food option will be picked, and serve at Sunset Berry Farms in Watsonville.

To successfully implement this capstone project, collaboration within the agency and with community partners will be necessary. Joceline Paddllia, a CHHS intern for Sembrando Salud, will participate in this capstone project as she will be assisting in creating a survey for the farmworkers that will collect feedback about what the farmworkers would like to see more of in food trucks and she will be going to the farms to survey the farmworkers. Martha Ortega (mentor/health promoter) will be in charge of contacting the crew leaders and ranch managers, by arranging an agreed-upon date and time to meet with the farmworkers. The date and time will also include time spent on conducting the health survey. Ana Martinez (mentor, Wellbeing Manager) will be in charge of acquiring the needed resources just as getting in contact with the Fresalud clinic to get statistics, as well as being our supporter. Because the ranches participating are owned by Reiter, she will also be in charge of contacting Reiter personally about the project, in doing so she will break down the scope of the project to them. Dr. Laui and Dr. Sally from

Memorial Hospital of Salinas Valley are the heads of the overall project. As heads of the overall project, they will be submitting their own reports to the hospital. Also, they will contact Second Harvest about collaborating with the group, by providing fresh produce. A detailed implementation plan and timeline can be seen in Appendix A.

### **Project Purpose**

This project will address two of the contributing factors above. One, deficiency of physical activity Second, the unhealthy diet; what small changes can be made to have a healthy lifestyle. The purpose of this project is to reduce obesity rates in Santa Cruz County among the farmworker community.

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This research project's goal is to address the high rates of obesity among the community and will help inform of other chronic diseases that might be affecting the community. The general goal of this project is to help one another in the community. First, food trucks would be able to offer food for those who have diabetes as one example because of the limit of food options. Second, the harvesters will be healthy, happy and be able to work. Third, RAC

Semberando Salud will have employees that are healthy and regular check-ups at FreSalud for regular check-up routines.

### **Project Justification**

In 2011, Monterey County Health Department put into effect a collaboration work with Reiter Affiliated Companies berry framers; to implement a restaurant program with lonchares (lunch trucks) to serve about 1,300 farmworkers. This was done to increase and promote the availability of healthy food options and access to energy-dense foods and sugary beverages. Sometimes when doing a change of diet doesn't mean one should become a vegetarian or change everything into a veggie menu. Clara Richardson, the coordinator of Chronic Disease Prevention Center states, "It can start by adding fresh produce, giving cheese and sour cream only on request, grilling instead of frying fish for tacos, and avoiding dipping corn tortillas in oil." The goal was to increase the number of healthy menu items and assist vendors with the procurement of fresh fruits and veggies and healthier snacks and beverages (Richardson, 2011). The fields are isolated, so healthy food options were limited. In order to make an impact on the farm worker's health, working with vendors will be the start. This project is connected to healthy food trucks by finding new strategies that maybe were not used in the past project that can work to make the change for this project.

### **Expected Outcomes**

At the end of this project, the expected outcome is to decrease obesity rates in Santa Cruz County among Latinos. This will happen by having a healthy eating lifestyle when the food truck provides healthy food or snack. The farmworkers will become aware of the serious chronic diseases affecting their community and be cautious of food portions they intake. When these

expected comes to take place Sembrando Salud and Reiter will be able to increase healthy foods at the workplace in all branches as stated in their mission. Another thing, Sembrando, and Reiter want them to know at the end of this project that they are part of the Reiter Family and want to make sure their employees are healthy and their families.

### **Assessment Plan**

In order to meet the expected outcomes identified for this project, a post-survey will be done. This survey will identify if the farmworkers have been purchasing the healthy option provided from the lunch truck. It will also indicate if Sunset Berry farm workers are aware of health issues among the community and foods causing those diseases.

### **Project Results**

#### **Project Activities**

The program activities that were conducting were creating two surveys that will determine what would farm workers would like to see on the food truck menus. Second, the survey was to determine to see if they would part of this project to create a healthy lifestyle environment at the workplace and adding or offering less sour cream on their food as one example.

Meetings were arranged to discuss roles in the project, and to get permission from the ranger managers to enter the ranches to conduct our ranches. Through the process of collecting the surveys, a decision was made to change the idea of making a veggie burrito to having a soup of beans instead and having more cups of fruits and vegetables. This came to decide because of our knowledge and background of our own.

#### **Project Outcome(s)**

The expected project outcome is for farmworkers to eat more healthy foods at the workplace; at a reasonable price. Having a healthy lifestyle will allow them to have more energy for the day than a monster drink that can alert their hearts and increase their sugar levels and that can wear them out quicker.

### **Findings/Results**

Due to the season-ending, results were not complete 100% clear of the changes the food truck did. The whole idea of making a veggie burrito did not work, it was going to be a big change. This project needed to start off slow so the food truck owner won't lose money and for the workers to know what are some changes are coming depending on their reaction. Again, due to the season-ending, no final, concrete results were collected.

Some small changes did occur, half of the food being sold; the tortilla was wheat grain instead of maize. The reactions of the workers were not as great as expected. They made faces when they heard the tortilla was switched to wheat grain. Jose the seller of the food didn't have good reactions himself as well due to everything happening so fast and again the season-ending. A develop and results summary of ingredients desired in a veggie burrito can be seen in Appendix B. This will show the first ideas of healthy food trucks but it will still be used for the next season that will be well planned out.

### **Conclusion & Recommendations**

My research showed that my project should be continued because it was difficult to get concrete results due to the end of the season. The beginning of the project in early March will give more time for the next intern to collect data, results, and have a set implementation.

Some recommendations will be is to have more time to work with the whole team involved in the project. Having a strong support system from ranger managers, with their helped lots of great things would have resulted better or have had more paths to take this project too.

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V. Bermudez, Personal communication, August 10, 2019

### Appendix A

#### Scope of Work

<b>Activites</b>	<b>Deliverables</b>	<b>Time/Deadlines</b>	<b>Supporting Staff</b>
Discussion of capstone Project with mentors	Capstone project approved	June 20, 19	Gabby Guzzam, Martha Ortega
Meeting with Second Mentor to discuss capstone paper	Capstone paper	July 11, 19	Ana Martinez
Doing a group meeting to meet everyone involved in the project	Knowing the roles of each person	August 8, 19	Ana Martinez, Martha Ortega, Reiter, Adrienne Saxton, Dr. Steven Laui, Dr. Sally
Preparing a survey for food trucks owners	Get survey approved and getting suggestions	August 8-14, 19	Ana Martinez, Martha Ortega, Reiter, Adrienne Saxton, Dr. Steven Laui, Dr. Sally
Meeting with Ana	Concerns about capstone project/ help/feedback	August 15-28,19	Ana Martinez, Martha Ortega,
Meet with the whole group	To see where we are with having a food truck pick and permission to enter the ranches	August 15-29, 2019	Ana Martinez, Martha Ortega, Reiter, Dr. Steven Laui, Dr. Sally Zuleima Arevalo
Conducting surveys for food trucks and for farmworkers	Getting about three food trucks opinions and if they agree with the projects	August 27, 19	Martha Ortega

Meeting (follow-up)	Discussing how far along the surveys are going. Setting a deadline for report Schuldes visit to Sunset berry farm so Dr. Laui can meet the farmworker community	August 28, 19	Martha Ortega Ana Martinez Dr. Steven Laui, Dr. Sally
Collecting responses from farmworkers	Asking the question to each person individually from each crew. 5-6 people from each to have about 30 surveys collected	August 29-September 3, 2019	Martha Ortega
Inputting results on an excel sheet	Creating an excel	September 11, 2019	Ana Martinez, Martha Ortega
Summarizing results	Inputting what food options they would like to see	September 12-13, 19	Ana Martinez, Martha Ortega
Going to Sunset Berry Farms	Discussing the project and why Dr. Laui wanted to do it. Just to get to know them	September 16-20, 19	Ana Martinez, Martha Ortega
Meeting to report results	Discussing results, decide what changes will happen.	September 25, 2019	Ana Martinez Martha Ortega Dr. Laui Dr. Sally
Meeting with Food truck owners	Discussing and show results from the responses of the farm works	September 25,19	Ana Martinez Martha Ortega Dr. Laui Dr. Sally

Food testing	Tasting food truck food to see what other suggestions can be added to the food	October 1,19	Martha Ortega
Wheat grain tortillas	The change in food in food trucks	October 31, 2019	Martha Ortega
Reactions to change from works	Get opinions on what they thought of wheat grain tortillas	TBH	Martha Ortega

## Appendix B

### Resumen de la Encuesta de Opciones de Alimentos Saludables

Como resultado, el 27% de los trabajadores agrícolas elegirán una opción de comida saludable en comparación con el 16% que preferirán algo que les llene para tener energía todo el día. Si la opción de comida o un burrito vegetariano tiene un precio bajo, es delicioso y abundante, lo más probable es que lo compren. La siguiente tabla muestra los ingredientes preferidos de Sunset Berry Farms en Watsonville, CA.

