# Food Distribution Project

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## Food Distribution Project in Brief

The goal of this project is for the students to model the information flow within a food distribution network consisting of 3 nodes: a food producer, wholesaler and retailer. The students will be divided into teams, with each team charged with understanding the information inputs and outputs for a particular node. The teams will then come together, and as a class, develop an understanding of the entire system by describing how information coming out of one node becomes the input for another (e.g. how knowledge of the price and availability of a particular food item from the producer affects inventory for the distributor and ultimately the merchandising for the retailer). The students will use the ‘information model’ they develop to design an hypothetical software system that has specific applications useful to each node while facilitating information flow through the entire system.

## What You Are Being Asked

You are being asked to help sophomore design students understand the basic transactional mechanics of a system of food distribution.

The students will interact with you to understand the information that you use, and produce, as part of a system that moves food from producers to distributors to retailers.

Your most significant contribution would a meeting of 1-1.5 hours at your business location. During this tour you would give students an overview of how your part of the system works and answer their questions about how you how you share information and decisions with your partners in the food distribution system. The students might request a follow up phone conversation to clarify some details as they proceed with their design process. You would be welcome to attend the final project presentation, though that would be entirely optional for you.

The class has 13 students, but for the purpose of this project they will be broken into three teams of ~4 students. The current plan is for all the students to visit Green Gulch Farm as the source of food production, but for only the students in a given team to visit the businesses representing the distributors and retailers in the system.

## Schedule

The project will begin Friday, 30 March. The student’s initial contact with you will need to be scheduled between that day and the following Friday 6 April. The students will be working on the project over the following 3 weeks with the final presentation scheduled for Friday 27 April.

## Background on the Class, Instructor and Program

The systems class endeavors to teach students to how to understand complicated problems by developing structural models consisting of entities, relationships, inputs, outputs, and feedback loops. This class is part of the new undergraduate program in Interaction Design at California College of the Arts.

The instructor for the class, Tim Sheiner, has been designing software for complex systems for nearly 20 years. He can be reached by at [timsheiner@gmail.com](mailto:timsheiner@gmail.com) or 415.509.1902.