

California Nonprofit Revolutionizing Public School Lunches Named Finalist for World's Largest Environmental Award

One of four finalists worldwide, Conscious Kitchen is recognized for transforming how California public schools source and serve food.

SAUSALITO, CA, UNITED STATES, April 29, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Conscious Kitchen](#), the nonprofit advancing fresh, organic, locally sourced meals and revolutionizing public school food, has been named a shortlist finalist for the 2026 [Food Planet Prize](#).



When purchasing shifts toward local, organic food the impact goes beyond the cafeteria. It supports student health, strengthens farmer livelihoods, and invests in food systems and climate resilience."

*Judi Shils, Executive Director
of Conscious Kitchen*

Recognized as the world's largest environmental award, the Prize is funded and administered by the [Curt Bergfors Foundation](#) and awards cash prizes annually to organizations working to transform global food systems. This year, each shortlisted finalist receives \$150,000 in recognition of their work, with one organization selected for the \$1.5 million grand prize.

The recognition marks a major milestone for Conscious Kitchen, which has transformed school meals for more than 1.5 million students since its founding in 2013, with a goal of reaching all of California's 6 million public school students while building a replicable model nationwide. Through partnerships with school districts across the state, Conscious Kitchen makes fresh, local, organic school meals a reality by connecting schools with farmers, building supply chain infrastructure, and making scratch-cooked, organic meals possible in cafeterias, all within existing budgets.

This work stands in contrast to the food served in many U.S. public schools, which is often ultra-processed and prepackaged. Yet the scale of public school food systems represents an enormous opportunity for change. In California alone, schools serve more than 5 million breakfasts and lunches every school day and manage a roughly \$4.8 billion food budget.

When that purchasing power shifts toward local, organic food, the impact goes far beyond the cafeteria--supporting student health, strengthening farmer livelihoods, investing in regional

food systems, and advancing climate resilience.

“We’re honored to be shortlisted for the Food Planet Prize alongside organizations driving meaningful change in food systems around the world,” said Judi Shils, Founder and Executive Director of Conscious Kitchen. “For more than a decade, we’ve worked alongside students, farmers, and school food leaders to demonstrate that organic, scratch-cooked school meals can be implemented at scale. This recognition affirms that the model works, and fuels our commitment to expanding what’s possible for schools and communities.”

Launched in 2020, the Food Planet Prize recognizes organizations from around the world advancing a rapid transition to a more sustainable global food system. The Curt Bergfors Foundation believes that the way the world produces and consumes food is one of the greatest threats to our planet, and that bold, systemic change is urgently needed. The Prize is designed as a catalyst, providing organizations with the funding to accelerate that change at scale. Each year, the Prize receives more than 1,000 applications from around the world.

“We come across hundreds of inspiring initiatives that are each improving the food system in their own way. Our 2026 shortlist represents some of the most promising approaches, and we are excited to see the impact they will have in the future,” said Emily Norford, Nominations Manager at the Food Planet Prize.

Leaders from Conscious Kitchen will travel to Sweden in early June to present to the Food Planet Prize jury, which will select this year's winner from the four shortlisted organizations.

“Food system change is a global effort,” said Shils. “We’re honored to represent California's organic farm-to-school work and to connect with fellow changemakers working to reshape food systems around the world.”

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About Conscious Kitchen

Conscious Kitchen is transforming public school food systems by advancing fresh, local, organic,



and values-aligned food in schools. Through partnerships with districts, farmers, distributors, and community leaders, Conscious Kitchen helps build the infrastructure needed to make organic farm-to-school work at scale. Visit consciouskitchen.org to learn more, or follow @consciouskitchen on Instagram.

About the Food Planet Prize

The Curt Bergfors Food Planet Prize was established in Sweden in 2019, in acknowledgement of the perils that our current food systems pose to the health of people and the planet. The Prize supports initiatives that significantly reduce the environmental impact of the way we eat. Unlike many awards, the Food Planet Prize recognizes initiatives for their potential future impact on the environment rather than past achievements. The Food Planet Prize's international jury consists of 9 leading specialists in complex Food Planet challenges. The jury is co-chaired by Lindiwe Majele Sibanda and Magnus Nilsson.

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