



A NATIONAL FOOD POLICY FOR THE USA

Towards a Just & Regenerative Food System for All

Urgent action is needed to address deep structural inequities in the U.S. food and farming system. While our food system has managed to provide cheap and abundant calories for many, it has come at significant social and environmental cost. Fundamental changes are required across the whole food system to address these challenges, but current policy and business approaches have been slow to change.

The COVID-19 pandemic and economic recession have only further exposed the need for urgent and systemic change – with impacts landing disproportionately and catastrophically on low income and BIPOC communities. Before the pandemic, 40 million Americans fought hunger, but the current crisis has thrown millions more into food insecurity, despite a multi-trillion dollar bail-out.

The current U.S. food system is governed by a patchwork of uncoordinated policy frameworks and federal departments: agriculture, health, environment, energy, social security, labor, education. Policies made at different levels of governance (e.g. municipal, state, tribal, federal) are often contradictory or disconnected from one another, leading to missed opportunities to support the innovative local and regional food system initiatives already happening on the ground.

A National Food Policy could bridge these existing policy gaps and contradictions by creating a coherent, coordinated, and integrated framework for all sectors affecting the food system. A National Food Policy would go far beyond the US Farm Bill and other food-related policies, with the aim of fostering a food system capable of ensuring a safe and sustainable future for those who work the land, the health of our land and waters, and access to healthy and nutritious foods for all Americans. By linking agriculture policies, urban and rural planning, transportation, retail, processing, worker rights and health systems, a National Food Policy would support the development of the regenerative, agroecological, sustainable, and equitable food system we need.

The central assumptions in our inability to reform the current food system, however, is that dominant “business-as-usual” interests are unassailable, and that a coalition of workers, farmers, anti-hunger advocates, animal welfarists, immigrant rights advocates, private sector partners, and elected officials have too many structurally divergent interests to come together to present a sustainable alternative to that system. But it’s not only possible: it’s already happening.



Calls for a National Food Policy have been made for decades, and have been resurgent in recent years. Rooted in existing efforts and movement building, IPES-Food's US team is developing a process through which policymakers, the private sector, researchers, tribal nations, and civil society might align their efforts to make a sustainable US food system a reality. The aim of our National Food Policy process is to break the mechanisms that perpetuate the status quo by convening a wide range of actors to identify the strategies most likely to lead to the long term policy reforms we need. Galvanizing new and existing forces into a broad and unified sustainable food movement is not only the means to build a national food policy, but also an end: the process of co-construction, of bringing together existing community engagement efforts on US food system reform, and of creating new and unlikely alliances, can be the fundamental mechanism for transforming our food system over the long term.

Through our process, we aim to collectively foster a shared understanding of the US food and agriculture policy landscape; build on organizational successes in bringing about food system change; identify opportunities to reform the 2023 Farm Bill and related policies; and collaboratively work towards a National Food Policy for an agroecological, regenerative, sustainable, and equitable food system.

GET IN TOUCH

IPES-Food's US Food Policy Process will rely on extensive collaboration with a range of actors and organizations across the US. Partnerships with a variety of actors are taking different forms and complementing the work many organizations are already doing. New partnerships and collaborations are always welcomed. All of those wishing to know more or to explore partnership opportunities are invited to contact Chantal Clement at chantal.clement@ipes-food.org.

IPES-Food's US-based working group include:

- ❖ *Molly Anderson, Middlebury College (Participant in Civil Society & Indigenous Peoples' Mechanism of CFS, Peoples' Sovereignty Network, and Vermont Farm to Plate Network)*
- ❖ *Steve Gliessman, Condor's Hope Ranch (Emeritus at University of California-Santa Cruz, Board President of Community Agroecology Network)*
- ❖ *Phil Howard, Michigan State University (Former steering committee member of Genetic Engineering Action Network, former Board member of East Lansing Food Cooperative)*
- ❖ *Raj Patel, University of Texas (UAW local 1981)*
- ❖ *Ricardo Salvador, Union of Concerned Scientists (Founding member of HEAL Alliance)*