



The HEAL Platform for Real Food

One plan for our
economy ♦ health ♦ environment

Preamble

Food is our most intimate and powerful connection to each other, to our cultures, and to the earth, **and to transform our food system is to take one giant step towards healing our economy, our bodies, and our environment.**

Crafted by 50 organizations representing rural and urban farmers, fisherfolk, farm and food chain workers, rural and urban communities, scientists, public health advocates, environmentalists, and indigenous groups, this 10-point platform serves as a call to action and a political compass for transformation. Our understanding of the necessary changes is rooted in two conditions:

1) Concentration of market and political power in the hands of a few agri-food companies

The corporate-driven shift towards deregulation, consolidation, and union-busting, accelerated in the 1980s, forced hundreds of thousands of families off their farms. The large operations in their stead now profit enormous corporations.

These companies have become one of the most powerful lobbies in state capitals and in Washington (spending \$173.5 million in just one year to lobby Congress). As such, food and agriculture policy, whether in the Farm Bill, global trade deals, or state environmental regulations, has been shaped by what is good for their bottom line, not by what is good for people's health, rural communities' wealth or what would avert catastrophic climate change.

2) The legacy and current reality of racism

Our food and farming systems bear strong the imprint of chattel slavery and colonization. At the end of the Civil War and the beginning of emancipation, the plan to provide each freed family with 40 acres and a mule collapsed under a deficit of political courage, and the only government sponsored land redistribution was from indigenous people to White settlers under the Homestead Act.

Today, these decisions are reflected in who owns farms and who works them. The descendants of those historically denied land now face enormous wealth gaps and the highest per capita food insecurity in the nation. This model of agriculture was spread across the United States, extracting land and labor and creating crises like the Dust Bowl of the 1920s, and rampant soil depletion across the country.

This Platform is grounded in the conviction that food system transformation is inseparable from the ongoing work to dismantle racism and the mythologies that hold profit as more valuable than people or the planet.

This dream will succeed because it must: it will succeed because we have shifted decision making from corporate headquarters to the community; it will succeed because we have redefined “progress” and reinvented an economy that works for the many.

This Platform represents the bedrock of our principles and the policies we will actively pursue. It is a living document, part of an active alliance and as such will evolve as we collectively wrestle with the complexity of food and agriculture system. The Planks within this Platform are interrelated. For example, securing a living wage for farmworkers necessitates securing fair prices for farmers, and restricting the marketing of junk food too must be paired with boosting community-based food initiatives. Phasing out factory farming goes hand in hand with agroecological research and supporting independent family farmers. As we fight to break up monopolies, we lay the foundation for a fully transparent and democratic system that is accountable to people. And we understand that all of this transformation depends on people organizing together to build collective power.

**This platform is our roadmap ♦
a path to walk together into a
future that truly nourishes
our **economies**, our **health**, and
our **environment**.**



#1: Secure Dignity and Fairness for Food Chain Workers and their Families

Almost all of the food we eat passes through the hands of workers who grow, catch, harvest, process, transport, prepare, and serve it. The 21.5 million workers in the food chain constitute the largest segment of employment in the private sector.

When the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) and the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) were crafted, both purposely excluded workers in occupations dominated by former slaves, such as farmworkers and restaurant workers, among others. As a result, our current food system is devastating workers and their families, and by extension, our overall economy. More than 86 percent of workers in the food system earn low or poverty wages. Ironically, food workers face higher levels of food insecurity than the rest of the U.S. workforce. In fact, food system workers use food stamps at more than twice the rate of all other industries. There are exceptions, but many food workers experience work environments with health and safety violations, including wage theft, sexual abuse, threats of deportation, long hours with few breaks, and lack of access to health benefits.

We want and need a food system that recognizes and values the important work of food system workers, and enables ALL people to work with dignity, livable wages, and meaning. Our food system should be managed by more cooperative ownership and shaped more democratically by the decisions of the many, not the few.



1. Eliminate the tipped minimum wage and set a livable minimum wage
2. End exploitation of incarcerated people on penal farms and for food production
3. Equalize labor laws; extend all NLRA and FLSA protections to farmworkers and other exempt workers
4. Include worker and community reports of violations in environmental and labor standards enforcement
5. Increase labor protections and benefits for workers in the food and agriculture sectors
6. Mandate third party labor inspections for compliance with worker protections
7. Ratify the remaining six conventions of the United Nations International Labor Organization

8. Reform immigration laws. Create pathways to legalization for all undocumented people, including pathways to citizenship for those that want it, and end deportations until a comprehensive policy is in place
9. Establish federal programs to incentivize worker-owned food production, processing, and service-cooperatives

#2: Provide Opportunity for All Producers

The struggle to make it as a farmer today still bears the strong imprint of a system developed by colonists, in which stolen lands were redistributed and labor was stolen to work these lands. Racial, ethnic, and gender lines further determined support for our food producers, including access to land, credit, insurance, technical assistance, and citizenship.

Over the last 80 years, the number of farms has decreased - from 6 million to 2 million - while the size of them is growing¹: the top 10% in terms of size account for more than 70 percent of cropland in the United States². At an increasing rate our ocean commons - much like with land - is transforming into a private property asset, and the inequities we have seen on land are mimicking themselves on the water, displacing community-based fishers and undermining conservation goals.

These lines continue to shape how the US Department of Agriculture (USDA), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and other federal agencies assess whose labor and opportunities matter. Under the current system, federal agencies fail to recognize the way in which diverse producers entering the farming, fishing, and ranching industries play a key role in the future of agriculture and seafood production.

We need a system in which millions more people can thrive as farmers, fishers, and ranchers with the support of policies, not in spite of them. As a key pillar of economic development in rural communities, agriculture requires greater investment. We need farming systems that make it possible for farmers and fishers to continue to work and to pay their workers well, and that supports those who want to grow and catch healthful food in ways that are environmentally and culturally appropriate. We need to promote the success of independent farms, boats, and ranches, and create pathways for new producers. We must end discriminatory practices and focus on opening new opportunities for people of color - especially those already working the land - to access land, fishing rights, and the resources needed to grow food and catch food. Farmers, fishers, and food production are the foundation of a healthy economy.

¹ (figure 3, page 5) Economic Research Service, USDA, June 2005 the 20th Century Transformation of U.S. Agriculture and Farm Policy / EIB-3, online at https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/eib3/13566_eib3_1_.pdf

² U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service, September 03 2013, Cropland Consolidation and the Future of Family Farms, online at <https://www.ers.usda.gov/amber-waves/2013/september/cropland-consolidation-and-the-future-of-family-farms/>



1. Secure and protect land access and non-predatory credit and capital for independent producers, particularly producers of color
2. Equalize and expand access to crop insurance, technical assistance, low interest credit, and technical assistance for independent producers, particularly producers of color
3. Place moratorium on farm land foreclosures with an independent review on cause and effect, particularly for farmers of color
4. Create and implement farmer debt forgiveness programs in cases of discrimination
5. Radically increase support for beginning farmers and for the sustainability of independent farmers
6. Recognize fisheries and small fishers as part of the food system by supporting research, technical assistance and federal support parallel to that of agriculture producers
7. Secure fair markets, fair prices, and fair wages for all farmers and farmworkers to enable economically stable livelihoods (see Planks 1 and 3)
8. Support smaller and independent producers to pay a living wage to farmworkers (see Plank 4)
9. Fully fund land-grant institutions to work in the public interest and stop private interests from determining agricultural research
10. Increase public research dollars for improved, non-GMO seeds, breeds, and farming methods
11. Protect the ocean commons from privatization

#3: Ensure Fair and Competitive Markets

Over the last 30 years, the consolidation of companies in the food industry has reached historic proportions. For instance, just four companies control over 80 percent of the market for processing beef³; just two companies distribute 75 percent⁴ of the food in this country; one company sells nearly one third of the groceries⁵. The system is functionally dominated by multinational monopolies, and these agribusiness and junk food corporations use their immense political and economic power to distort the market and maintain their stranglehold on our food system. These companies abuse their unprecedented buyer power to squeeze farmers and food chain workers further up the supply chain, and wreak havoc on our health and the environment in the process.

We need democratic, transparent, community-controlled agriculture, fisheries and food systems in which all producers, especially those who have been historically marginalized, have access to fair and functional markets. These producers need to receive fair and stable prices above their costs of production that fairly compensate them for both their labor and management to ensure fair

³ Hendrickson, M. and W. Heffernan (2005). Concentration of Agricultural Markets. Columbia, MO, Department of Rural Sociology, University of Missouri

⁴ Federal Trade Commission, 2015. <https://www.ftc.gov/enforcement/cases-proceedings/141-0067/syscousf-holdingus-foods-matter>

⁵ Food and Water Watch, 2013. Grocery Goliaths: How food monopolies impact consumers, online at http://www.foodopoly.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/RPT_1312_RetailCons-FWWweb.pdf

livelihoods for farmers, fishers, and workers. We need new governing structures that impose real limits on corporate power and the political systems that shape and regulate our food and agriculture systems, including trade deals. We need to ensure the protection of natural resources, public health, and fair working conditions in order to ensure that producers, workers, and communities have real power to shape food, fisheries, and agriculture systems.



1. Reduce and regulate industry consolidation: implement and enforce anti-trust law, especially the Packer and Stockyards Act, and strengthen “Actively Engaged in Farming” rules
2. Reform federal farm subsidy programs, including the federal crop insurance program, so that they equally support diverse growing practices and all farmers, including farmers of color, small and midsize farmers, and independent and historically underserved farmers
3. Re-instate supply management and grain reserves and a fair pricing system
4. Secure fair pricing and contracts for livestock, produce and seafood
5. Reclaim public institutions to achieve greater transparency: keep land grants in the public interest, and ensure representation of farmers, workers, and consumers on government advisory bodies
6. Fight and reduce financial speculation in food and agriculture
7. Reform trade rules and trade institutions to rebuild and protect local food systems, and establish transparent processes for public review and input

#4: Build Resilient Regional Economies

A resilient, regional food economy is about a “management of home” that allows us, and our neighbors, to thrive even in the face of adversity. This is especially relevant as we confront the impacts of climate change. It includes regenerative, collective stewardship of land, water, and other natural resources. It’s an economy where there are vibrant opportunities for producers, distributors, and retailers to grow, catch, process, share, and sell local foods; where workers are owners, and where local, healthy food is the easy economic choice.

A resilient, regional food economy is about more than fair market-based relationships. It’s also about democratic governance: where local government and public organizations are accountable to an engaged populace. In this vision, cooperative ownership structures that generate real opportunities and wealth growth for low-income communities and communities of color are encouraged and supported. And it’s about meaningful work and relationships: where informal economies and traditional food ways can flourish; where human relationships and a sense of purpose are nurtured; and where there is understanding and reciprocity in our relationships with each other and the earth.



1. Protect land and water by expanding emerging initiatives for regional fisheries management, and improving the regulation and prevention of pollution and environmental degradation
2. Create opportunities for regional food chain initiatives by expanding financing, technical assistance, and procurement support for community owned and “socially disadvantaged” farmers, fishers, and ranchers
3. Strengthen and expand value-added production and local food system development (see Plank 7 for revisions to existing USDA programming)
4. 4. Ensure that food safety rules support small farmers, fishers and regional food systems; expand training and technical assistance; make certifications more affordable and accessible (reducing penalty fines) for small farmers
5. Ensure democratic community-based governance of regional food systems by promoting and funding worker-owned food and agriculture cooperatives
6. Move federal policy away from unjust trade deals and anti-democratic trade institutions which undermine sovereignty, including indigenous sovereignty, domestically and abroad
7. Incorporate resident voices and resident reporting of environmental justice violations in government targeting of environmental enforcement



#5: Dump the Junk: Curb Junk Food Marketing

The diet-related public health crisis we face can be counted in declining life expectancy and in dollars (for example, the U.S. spends \$200 billion annually in obesity-related healthcare costs), but it will be experienced as the physical pain of heart disease and cancer, as limbs and eyesight lost to diabetes, and as family members who are missing from holiday tables. A driving factor is the ballooning omnipresence of junk food and junk food marketing.

Multinational food and beverage companies currently spend billions every year on marketing, including at least \$2 billion in marketing directly to children. This marketing is everywhere, and disproportionately targets communities of color.

Regulations on such marketing is scant, and the food and beverage industry has long wielded its political power to fight any regulation. Simultaneously, the production of many of their ingredients, and even their marketing practices, is highly subsidized. Yet the highly-processed junk

food and sugary drinks – so heavily promoted in communities of color and to children – are driving a public health crisis through an epidemic of diet-related chronic diseases.

The predatory marketing tactics that these companies use to target children and communities of color must be stopped. We also recognize that we need to work with international partners and fight for multilateral regulatory and policy solutions so that corporations don't continue employing these practices with impunity outside our borders.



1. Restore the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC)'s jurisdiction to regulate the marketing of foods and beverages to children
2. End marketing of unhealthy food and food brands to children, including in schools
3. Treat junk food and beverage companies like tobacco companies: hold companies liable for health impacts, and include visible warning labels, restricted advertising, barriers to purchase, and taxes that are re-invested in community.
4. End subsidies for junk food marketing by closing the tax loophole that allows corporate write offs for marketing
5. Work with the World Health Organization to curtail the international expansion of the junk food industry

#6: Increase “Food Literacy” and Transparency: Increase knowledge of, connection to, and transparency around food sources

A 2007 study by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation found it is almost impossible for the typical American to eat a meal without one hidden cost or another – whether those costs be to our health, to the environment, or to farmers, fishers, and workers. We are faced not just with an absence of information, but a blizzard of confusing and misleading information. Indeed, many food companies actually benefit from this confusion; they can market new products according to the latest health fad. For example, a recent Oceana report found that around 30% of all seafood in the US is being mislabeled.

We need a food system that replaces deliberate confusion with deep knowledge, and in which clear, accessible, and accurate information gives all people the power to make effective decisions about what we eat and how our food economy should be structured. Nutrition and health care professionals play a key role in shaping the “food literacy” of our public, and schools play a special role in shaping the tastes and “food literacy” of the next generation. We envision gardens and good, healthy food in every single school building, but understand that there are other critical levers to pull as well. These range from a strong labeling system to knowing who gets how much profit in the industry to protecting the ability of people to investigate wrongdoing. We have a right

to know what's in our food! And we want more people of all ages to have direct experience with farming, fishing, ranching, and food production.



1. When developing the dietary guidelines, incorporate environmental sustainability as well as nutrition
2. Require labels that identify key qualities of retail and quick service restaurant food and beverage items on-package and at point-of-sale
3. Require visible warning labels for harmful food and beverage products
4. Bring transparency to the politics behind the food economy, including corporate donations
5. Bring transparency to industrial agriculture production, including emissions, pesticide and fertilizer use, mandatory checkoff programs, and crop insurance
6. Require transparency in the seafood supply chain, from catching to processing and transportation
7. End the undue influence that corporations have over public research
8. Meet the full demand for farm/boat to school funding and extend the program's reach to public schools, hospitals, prisons, tribal schools, and to include traditional foods and marginalized farmers, fishers, and ranchers

#7: Real Food in Every Hood: Making affordable, fair, sustainable, and culturally-appropriate food the norm in every neighborhood

Over 42 million people nationwide struggle every day to get a meal, let alone one that will truly nourish them, support the farmers, fishers, and workers who produced it, and preserve the environment (what we call “real food”).

While we can make healthy food more accessible through a variety of supports, incentives, and innovations, we ultimately need to create economic opportunities to ensure all people are able to afford real food that reflects our different cultures. This includes securing a living wage and dignified conditions for working people, and more opportunities for decentralized ownership and control of food system infrastructure. We also need to support people to produce their own food - self-driven food production is the most empowering and lasting means to achieving food security. The food system itself can be a tool for fighting inequality, creating jobs and community wealth, and bringing food within reach of everyone.



1. Make real food a clear, accountable priority, starting by creating an Interagency workgroup focused on the whole food system: USDA, Department of Education (DOE), Department of Transportation (DOT), Department of Health (DOH), Department of Labor (DOL), Food and Drug Administration (FDA)
2. Restore, increase, and protect food and nutrition programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Women, Infants and Children (WIC), with no discriminatory barriers including testing, citizenship, or work requirements, and expand healthy and sustainable options within those programs
3. Incentivize entrepreneurship in low-income communities through tax breaks and other support systems, and provide financial literacy, job training, and cooperatives to encourage wealth development
4. Make community institutions like schools, hospitals, and senior centers anchors of real food; increase funding for the Child Nutrition Reauthorization (CNR) reimbursements and for farm-to-institution programs
5. Develop infrastructure for worker and neighborhood-owned cooperative food enterprises in underserved neighborhoods through the Healthy Foods Financing Initiative (HFFI), and increase capital and credit opportunities for neighborhood residents
6. Ensure that all USDA and NOAA-funded grant programs related to local food systems and food security prioritize community ownership and community decision-making

ENVIRONMENT

#8: Phase Out Factory Farming

The intensive production of unprecedented numbers of animals in confinement (Confined Animal Feeding Operations or CAFOs, better known as factory farms) is an unmitigated disaster for rural communities, public health, regional economies, and the environment, as factory fishing and industrial aquaculture are for coastal communities, family fishers, and marine ecosystems. With negative impacts on workers, water, animals, communities, and the climate, factory farming and fishing are simply not conducive to a just and sustainable food system.

Animal agriculture and aquaculture systems should prioritize the health and safety of people, animals, communities, and ecosystems, while adding to regenerative economic activity that produces wealth for people who do the work. Our vision of sustainable livestock and seafood production centers on the development of locally appropriate ecological principles that foster stewardship of the land, rivers, and oceans. We want a future with:

- pasture-raised livestock on independent small and medium scale family farms and farmer- and worker-owned cooperatives, with soil-building fertilization systems;
- thriving wild seafood populations procured by community-based fishers using appropriate technology, whose scale of operation has the smallest ecological footprint on the ocean; and
- diversification of ownership, including farmer, fisher and worker ownership, from producer, to processor, to manufacturer.



1. Strengthen environmental and conservation regulation
2. Dismantle the pillars propping up CAFOs, including non-therapeutic use of antibiotics, consolidation, and mandatory checkoffs
3. Align federal subsidies with conservation principles and in support of small/mid-size farms
4. Regulate and reduce line speeds to reduce worker injuries and contamination
5. Oppose trade agreements that include measures allowing transnational corporations to undermine sovereignty through investor-state trade dispute settlement mechanisms, and that drive up demand for factory-farmed and inhumane meat production (see Plank 3)

#9: Promote Sustainable Farming, Fishing, and Ranching

In today's agricultural system, grass-based livestock operations are giving way to confinements, while small and midsize diversified crop operations are losing ground to monocropped mega-farms. A similar phenomenon is happening on the oceans, with independent boats being replaced by industrial trawlers. We must stop this life destroying, dangerous trend. We need the dominant food production practices to be of net benefit to the environment – to increase topsoil and protect estuaries, store more carbon, and enhance biodiversity.

To accomplish this, the policy infrastructure that supports food production, from research to technical assistance to insurance and credit, must primarily encourage the integration of the best of cutting edge agroecological science with the best of time-honored indigenous wisdom and agricultural and fishing traditions. Supporting this shift both domestically and internationally is necessary for the world to feed itself. Policymakers must recognize the impacts of other industrial activities, like deforestation, mining, and fracking, on fish populations and ecosystem management. The protection and development of sustainable farming, ranching, and fishing systems will support ecological and public health, with safer environments for farmers and workers, and more diverse, nutrient-rich diets for everyone.

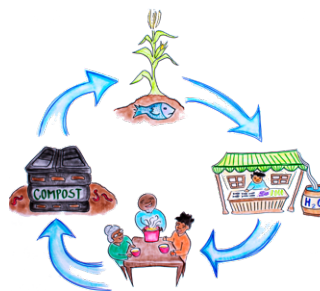


1. Restore classical and farmer participatory plant and animal breeding communities of practice with breeding objectives designed for sustainable systems
2. Strengthen and then expand USDA conservation programs
3. Strengthen the regulation and prevention of agriculture-related environmental degradation from pesticides, runoff, and carbon emissions
4. Reform the federal crop insurance program to reward stewardship practices; and make real, measurable conservation a condition of eligibility for premium subsidies
5. Increase incentives for transitioning to organic
6. Revise USDA and NOAA research priorities to align with sustainability and climate change resiliency
7. Increase overall funding for agroecological research and extension, especially through on-farm, producer-led research, and in land-grant universities
8. Revise national fish management programs such as the Catch Share program that consolidate fishery ownership and produce negative ecological impacts

#10: Close the Loop on Waste, Runoff, and Energy

The current dominant agricultural system is setup to produce waste at every stage of the food chain, from farm (e.g. excess chemical fertilizer, pesticide, and herbicide runoff) to consumer: 40% of food intended for human consumption is wasted, and our food and agriculture system accounts for one-third of greenhouse gas emissions.

This waste has ethical, environmental, and economic ramifications. We need to close the loop and ensure that the true cost of food is accounted for throughout the supply chain, discouraging overproduction and damaging environmental practices, integrating agroecological and ecologically responsible fishing practices along the way. We want a food system that ensures that the full use of food produced – including animals captured at sea – from human consumption to composting and recycling, recognizes the true value of natural resources that go into food production and maintaining these resources as a public good.



1. Create incentives and a market for farmers to employ environmentally-beneficial practices
2. Create Carbon Tax to penalize excessive carbon added to the atmosphere and tax the use of toxic pesticides and herbicides
3. Fund development of zero waste initiatives and infrastructure, with a focus on cooperative and community-owned operations
4. Loosen cosmetic standards for food and incentivize alternate markets for produce seconds
5. Establish an initiative to reduce and recapture food that is otherwise wasted by consumer, grocery, and hospitality food streams
6. Standardize and improve date labeling: implement a standardized rule of law for labeling and distinguishing between harmful and not harmful foods
7. Lower the maximum contaminant limit (MCL) standards for pesticide/fertilizer residues in water and regularly test all water sources and disclose results publicly. Impose fines on chemical manufacturers, not farmers, when there are violations