

Sustainable Food Systems

Generational Goal. Adequate culturally appropriate food that enhances the health of people and the ecosystem is produced, processed, distributed and consumed using just and equitable practices that protect future as well as current generations.

Objective 1. Access to healthy, culturally appropriate food as a basic human right. For future generations to be healthy, all people must have access to sufficient supplies of healthy food in close proximity to where they live, and the knowledge and other resources necessary to consume it. Promoting food security entails changes in practices and policies affecting production, processing, distribution and sale of food; changes in how we design neighborhoods, communities, and regions; and changes in how we plan for land use. Practices and policies must be responsive to changing conditions that affect access.

Priority Actions

1. Ensure that every community has easy access to nutrition education and health-promoting, affordable food, free of chemical contaminants and biological pathogens. Subsidize access to healthy food for people who cannot afford its full cost (or address this in other ways, such as by increasing the minimum wage).
2. Eliminate disparities in the quality or quantity of food accessed due to poverty, ethnicity, geographic location and similar factors that are at least partially outside individual control.
3. Prioritize access to healthy food in all decision making affecting the food system and in the design of neighborhoods, communities and regions. To the extent possible, neighborhoods should have land set aside for community-based food production, farm-markers, and year-round food retail.

Objective 2. Ecosystem restoration and preservation of farmland, rangeland and fisheries. For farming, ranching, and fishing to be sustainable, food systems must maintain or enhance ecosystem health and their natural resources instead of degrading them. A synergy must be maintained between the need to safeguard ecosystem health and ecosystem services and the need to provide abundant healthy food for people.

Priority Actions

1. Preserve agricultural and ranch land in all regions by encouraging compact land use policies and related urban growth boundaries, and by protecting public lands.
2. Develop policy incentives for ecosystem preservation and restoration, and transition to organic agricultural production, as well as zero-waste management on working agricultural land, rangeland and fisheries and in all other food system business activities. Implement disincentives (taxes, fines, etc.) for all food system practices that degrade ecosystem services in the US or other countries.
3. Encourage food purchasing practices that contribute to the enhancement of the ecosystem rather than degrading it (this could include “choice editing” by supermarkets, i.e., only offering sustainably- and humanely-produced food for sale) and ensure these products are accurately labeled so that consumers can make informed choices.
4. Restore and develop local food systems that minimize food transportation (includes infrastructure, markets, policies, etc.)
5. Ensure equitable access by farmers, ranchers, fishers and food system enterprise owners, managers and workers to the information and technology they need to make transitions to more sustainable practices and practices adapted to climate change.

6. Ensure that the nation is investing in ample research and data collection to constantly improve our understanding of ecosystem services, ecosystem preservation and restoration, and effects of food system practices on these.

Objective 3. Promote sustainable farming, fishing and ranching livelihoods and their multiple contributions to vital communities. We must inspire and enable the next generation to become farmers, ranchers and fishers by ensuring meaningful work, just compensation, safe working and living environments, and access to all needed technical assistance, training, and opportunities for personal advancement. We must also honor and preserve the traditions and cultural connections to farming, fishing and ranching and encourage decision makers to recognize the multiple social, economic and environmental benefits of food production at various geographic scales. This Objective requires particular attention to upcoming major transitions of land ownership and stewardship.

Priority Actions

1. Allow markets to reflect the full cost of food production, processing, and distribution, with social, economic and environmental costs internalized.
2. Ensure that profits from more sustainable production are distributed equitably through the supply chain, that producers and other food and farm workers don't bear disproportionate costs, and that producers and all other food system workers have living wages.
3. Encourage business relationships in the food system that are based on cooperation, mutual benefits and shared common values.
4. Protect food producing land in rural and urban communities. Promote land use policies that curb unlimited urban sprawl and build regional synergies between urban and rural areas. Recognize the multiple socioeconomic and environmental benefits of commercial and non-commercial food production in both urban and rural areas, and the economic multiplier effects.
5. Promote and support access to land, capital and markets among young people and others, including farm-workers, who want to become farmers as a career. Ensure that land transitions are made equitably with fair opportunities available to enter farming, and keep land in farmland.
6. Ensure safe and decent working and guest-housing conditions for farmers, fishers, ranchers and all food system workers.
7. Ensure that communities do not suffer any harmful health or environmental effects from food production or other food system activities.
8. Create market opportunities for smaller farms, ranches and other food businesses, including direct marketing channels such as farmers markets and community-supported agriculture (CSA).
9. Ensure that future agriculture and fishing occur at a diversity of scales that are appropriate to environmental constraints. Enable producers to maintain control over seeds, land and the terms by which their labor is used (for example, in agricultural contracts).
10. Support programs that encourage individual and communal obligations to protect cultural traditions associated with farming, fishing and ranching.

Objective 4. Democratic processes, with fair representation of stakeholders and broad community participation, for making decisions about food systems. Democracy requires that people have access to information and images about what is at stake and what is possible. Only then can they can make knowledgeable decisions. Democracy also requires structural changes that reduce disparities in income, education and opportunity across social divides (gender, race, ethnic groups, age, etc.)

Priority Actions

1. Encourage artists and a free press to explain the full cost of food production.
 2. Create processes, including at state and federal levels, whereby community members are able to participate in and have open and full access to information about food systems that is necessary to make decisions affecting them.
 3. Make more transparent lobbying by corporations and their influence on law and rule making.
 4. Set up clear processes for determining the complete range of stakeholders (including animals and future generations).
 5. Create proxies for stakeholders, including the interests of other species, who cannot bring their voices to decision making. Ensure that decisions are made with respect for the complexity of ecosystems and their emergent properties.
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