

# FOOD FIX

CAMPAIGN

## Food Fix 101

### HOW POLICY CHANGE CAN FIX OUR BROKEN FOOD SYSTEM

#### Is Our Food System Broken?

Yes. Americans face a growing crisis of chronic conditions, including obesity, diabetes, and heart disease, which have reduced our quality of life and led to suffering, premature deaths, and rising health care costs. Our chronic disease crisis also exacerbated the COVID-19 pandemic's tragic impact: according to the CDC, most virus victims in the U.S. had at least one chronic condition, and many suffered from multiple chronic diseases. Poor nutrition was quickly identified as a key culprit, with the CDC citing "limited access to nutritious food" as worsening COVID-19's impact. As a result, it is imperative for the U.S. to fix the food system by making healthy foods more accessible and combating the chronic disease crisis.

#### How Can Access to Nutritious Food be Improved?

Today, more than 20 million Americans - most of whom are racial or ethnic minorities - live in communities that are food deserts (lacking fresh fruits, vegetables, and other healthy food) and food swamps (filled with fast-food chains and highly processed foods). In fact, Type 2 diabetes rates have skyrocketed among minority children, and the top five killers of Latinos and Blacks in the U.S. are diet related. Compounding this crisis is the fact that many low-income families cannot afford organic food, even if they had a place to purchase it. Solving these problems requires greater production of high-nutrient foods and increased accessibility via food support programs, school meals, and enhanced markets in at-risk communities.

#### What is Regenerative Organic Agriculture?

Regenerative Organic Agriculture (ROA) is a sustainable, climate-smart approach to producing nutritious foods, restoring farm and ranch lands, generating a cleaner environment, and improving farm and ranch economics. Using methods such as composting, cover crops, rotational cropping and grazing, and reduced tillage, ROA significantly increases the nutrient content of food while helping to regenerate ecosystems, restore biodiversity, reduce environmental emissions. ROA also makes farms and ranches more productive, protected from risk, and economically secure. Just as important, ROA methods can enable farms and ranches to produce in the greater quantities needed to make nutritious foods accessible to all.

#### What Does "Food As Medicine" Mean?

As Dr. Mark Hyman puts it, "Scientists have discovered a powerful new drug that may help cure all chronic illnesses. It is a drug you take every day and can be found at the end of your fork. It's called food." In fact, research shows the power of food in promoting health and preventing illness. A growing body of evidence also reveals the scientific utility of nutrition as a therapeutic tool that can treat, reverse, and even cure most chronic illnesses. Nutrigenomics, for example, reveals the effect of food on gene expression, causing improved health - or worsening disease. As a result, with enhanced access to nutritious foods, we can achieve great strides in public health, while also lowering healthcare costs and improving economic productivity.

## **What is Crop Insurance?**

For nearly 150 years, crop insurance has helped protect American farmers and ranchers from a wide range of threats to their crops, livestock, and operations, such as when droughts, freezes, flooding, fires, insect damage, and disease cause a loss of crops or livestock. In addition, indemnity payments support farms and ranches when yields fall below expectations or if oversupply drives down the prices they can charge. Today, U.S. farmers and ranchers spend over \$1 billion on more than 1 million private and federal crop insurance policies that protect nearly half a billion acres of farm and ranch land. Government-funded subsidies ensure these policies are affordable to farmers and ranchers at an annual cost to taxpayers of nearly \$10 billion.

## **How Can Policy Change Fix the Broken Food System?**

Fortunately, there is much that policymakers can do to fix America's broken food system, including:

- Expanding use of climate-smart, high-nutrient agricultural methods via enhanced supports to farms and ranches that transition to ROA, such as increased funding to farmers and ranchers who engage in composting, cover crop planting, rotational cropping and grazing, and reduced tillage;
- Making new crop insurance coverage options available that replace current disincentives for ROA with incentives that reward farmers and ranchers for producing foods in a manner that increases their nutrient content, is safer for the environment, and protects better farms and ranches from risk;
- Increasing consumption of nutritious foods by making it more accessible via such means as food programs, school meals, and enhanced markets in at-risk communities, while better educating consumers about the medical, behavioral, and cognitive harm caused by highly-processed foods; and,
- Acting on the recommendations of the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to identify and direct “a federal entity to lead the development and implementation of a federal strategy to coordinate diet-related efforts that aim to reduce Americans’ risk of chronic health conditions.”