

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **New Food First Backgrounder Addresses Land Reform and Resistance in the United States**

**OAKLAND, Calif., May 1, 2014** – The disastrous effects of widespread land grabbing and land concentration sweeping the globe do not affect all farmers equally. The degree of vulnerability to these threats is highest for smallholders, women and people of color—the ones who grow, harvest, process and prepare most of the world’s food.

A new Backgrounder published by Food First/Institute for Food and Development Policy based in Oakland, CA, explores the history of displacement and land concentration in the United States and examines new trends to recover US farmland for sustainable, community-oriented food production.

Despite record agricultural profits, farming communities in the US heartland are steadily emptying out, reeling from unemployment and the environmental consequences of 70 years of industrial agriculture. Though surrounded by former peasant farmers (now turned farmworkers), many older farmers wonder who will farm the land when they are gone. But young, beginning and immigrant farmers find it too costly to access land.

The percentage of farmers under 35 years old has declined 8 percent since the last census while the number of older farmers has increased. The average age for a farmer in the US. is now 58 years old. While these statistics paint the picture of a stereotypically white, male, aging farmer, they belie a growing movement of young, predominantly female and non-white beginning farmers.

Today, family farmers are fighting to hang on to their farms and aspiring farmers are struggling to access land. Their prospects could not be worse. Unregulated market forces—in commodities and land—are both a means for dispossession and a barrier to entry. Because of the structural racism in our food system, immigrants and people of color are at a particular disadvantage.

New rural and urban initiatives for farmland access, farm protection and sustainable, equitable food systems are springing up across the US. They provide hope that another food system is possible. But do they have the potential to confront huge disparities and rising farmland concentration?

This Food First Backgrounder can be downloaded for free by visiting:  
<http://foodfirst.org/publication/this-land-is-whose-land/>

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