



East Bay Urban Farmers Field School. *Photo by Leonor Hurtado*

2019 Annual Report: Your Impact

Food First members, friends and colleagues:

Thanks to you, frontline communities of farmers, workers, and organizers always have a trusted place for free, open-access resources that shed light on the root causes of hunger.

Because we rely on supporters like you, and not corporate underwriters or big philanthropy, we continue to produce, publish, and share the type of research and analysis that dismantles myths and informs social movements fighting every day to create a food system rooted in dignity, joy, and justice.

For 45 years, Food First has been pushing back against these myths funded by corporate media, right-wing think tanks, and politicians. But together we're amplifying movement voices, creating new narratives, and developing effective strategy for social change.

Food is the basis for social life. And we won't stop until it is no longer treated as a commodity for profit or as a weapon. We will need a deeply informed, strategic, and broad social movement to build power to change not only our food system, but everything. We cannot do it without you.

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INSTITUTE FOR FOOD AND
DEVELOPMENT POLICY

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Food First is a “peoples’ think tank” and
education-for-action center. Our work
highlights the root causes and solutions to
hunger and poverty, with a commitment to
fighting racism and establishing food as a
fundamental human right.

Food First Welcomes New Executive Director; Re-Commits to Solidarity with Grassroots Movements

Following former Executive Director, Eric Holt-Giménez, who retired in June of 2019 after 13 years of thought-provoking service, Food First welcomed its new Executive Director, Dr. M. Jahi Chappell in August of 2019. Jahi has continued Food First’s mission to end the root causes of hunger through research, education, and action in support of grassroots movements and frontline communities. As a political agroecologist, an activist, and a scholar of food justice and food sovereignty, Jahi has been driven by a commitment to solidarity with grassroots groups and frontline communities.

“I’m thankful for the opportunity to make a difference—standing alongside farmers, farmworkers, and others directly fighting the injustices that cause hunger,” Jahi expressed. “I am thankful and overjoyed to be at Food First, where working together—with researchers who care AND communities at the frontline of the struggle—we can create the changes we need for a sustainable world, free from hunger.”

Labor, Immigrant, and Indigenous Movements Tackle Structural Violence in Our Immigration System

Long-time labor activist, photographer, and journalist David Bacon authored a stunning 3-piece series featuring the life of the farmworker organizer and immigrant activist, Rufino Dominguez. Rufino reshaped how we understand migration and the struggle for justice for indigenous migrants in Mexico and the United States. In [*The People Went Walking: How Rufino Dominguez Revolutionized the Way We Think About Migration*](#), David Bacon shares the story of Rufino through the context of Mexican political and economic history while also weaving together the voices of the many people who knew Rufino not only as an organizer and thinker, but also as a person. This rich and powerful Issue Brief provides many lessons and tools for

our movements to understand and fight back against our unjust immigration system. A key theme throughout the series highlights the need to connect the labor struggle with the fight for immigrant and indigenous rights both in the US and Mexico. The piece reinforces the need to connect the right to migrate with *the right to stay home* and end the root causes of migration such as dispossession, exploitation, and violence rooted in capitalism. Analysis like this can be used by indigenous and immigrant communities and their allies to resist structural violence and transform our food and immigration system.

An Alliance of Food, Farm, and Climate Justice Movements Can Take On Climate Change and False Solutions

In January 2019, thanks to your support, Food First was able to publish our latest book, [*Can We Feed the World Without Destroying It?*](#). Food First Fellow Raj Patel called it “an important and accessible guide for critical thinking to tackle the root causes of hunger.”

While big agribusiness demands that we double industrial food production, Food First fights back by showing that we *already* have more than enough food to feed 10 billion people. Instead, we provide evidence conveying how our food system produces hunger and environmental destruction by *overproducing food*. We argue that it is capitalism which produces the poverty, dispossession, and exploitation preventing society from ending hunger.



As author Eric Holt-Giménez makes clear, it will have to be the political and social movements consisting of farmers, workers, and frontline communities who can act as a catalyst to not only transform how we produce and consume food, but society itself.

In March 2019, we shed light on the coalitions forming to take on climate change in [Food, Climate, and the Green New Deal: A Social Contract for Justice?](#)

Food First centered and amplified the voices of food, farm, immigrant, and climate justice movements demanding that the Green New Deal address the structural obstacles forcing farmers to emit greenhouse gases just to survive. We bring out the voices of food and farm movement leaders who show that parity (fair prices for farmers' products) along with land and farm justice must be an integral part of a successful Green New Deal. We need a grand coalition that links multiple movements together in order to adequately tackle climate change and the Green New Deal may be the very platform that allows our movements to build power to roll back global warming and produce economic equality.

Thanks to you, we were able to reflect the work being done by grassroots movements fighting for a Just Transition—the fair shift from an extractive economy to a regenerative one that is ecologically sustainable and equitable for all. In [Agriculture: The Next Battleground for Climate Justice](#), we magnified calls to avoid the allure of the false solutions peddled by agribusiness and neoliberal anti-hunger institutions. While they argue that technical fixes such as climate-smart agriculture, land sparing, and “sustainable” intensification can limit industrial agriculture’s impact on our warming planet, these “solutions” only stabilize the corporate food regime. Profits are protected, while the environment continues to decline. Instead, land reform, agroecology, and other measures pushed by frontline communities are the real solutions to both feed and cool the planet in a just way. Shining a light on these false solutions is integral to keeping movements on the right track.

In winter of 2019, you also helped us continue to illuminate the clear links between



Indigenous vendors at the market of Tlaxcala. Photo from Palacio de Gobierno (GNU Free Documentation License)

agriculture, climate change, and mass species extinctions. In [Biodiversity and Agriculture: Nature’s Matrix and the Future of Conservation](#), Food First Fellows Ivette Perfecto and John Vandermeer, along with former Board Member Angus Wright, explained how agriculture is not only part of the problem, but also the solution. They broke down the mistaken approaches taken by some scientists and conservationists who insist on extreme intensification of food production on land outside protected areas in the name of “saving” biodiversity. However, creating sacrifice zones in some areas while protecting others, also known as “land-sparing,” will do little to stave off mass extinctions of insects, birds, and more. Instead, these authors propose not only sustaining and expanding conservation areas, but also utilizing an approach which prioritizes landscapes of agroecological agriculture that can support, interact with, and enhance species diversity rather than destroy it.

Pairing Movement Organizing with Social Programs Reduces Hunger

In September 2019, your generosity and commitment allowed us to continue down the road towards ending hunger. In [Continuing on the Road to Ending Hunger](#), M. Jahi Chappell advanced the work of



Dairy mural painted during New Deal era at Coit Tower. Photo courtesy of Zemlinki! (CC BY 2.0)

previous Food First leaders by examining how decades of movement organizing paired with local government programming led to dramatic reduction in hunger in Belo Horizonte, Brazil. Jahi takes these analyses and lessons and puts them in the context of the United States, where people and movements are also engaging in the arduous work to build the capacity within our communities and institutions to create long-term social change and end hunger.

Building Multi-Racial and Working Class Movements for Food & Farming

Your support allowed for Food First to join with communities at the forefront of social movements struggling against corporate power and institutional oppression. In March of 2019, Food First linked with community organizers from racial, social, and climate justice movements in order to imagine and strategize a transition to a climate just future at the Climate Justice Alliance assembly in New Mexico.

In January 2019, Food First connected with dairy farmers at the Wisconsin Farmers Union’s annual convention. While there, farmers shared with us their stories and knowledge of their fight for farm justice by advocating for fair prices, supply management, an end to confined animal feeding operations (CAFOs), and major political reforms that would reinvest in and reinvigorate livelihoods in rural communities. Food First’s now former Executive Director, Eric Holt-Giménez gave a keynote emphasizing parity, the Green New Deal, and the need to build alliances outside of farm country.

This past fall, Food First was on the ground in Wisconsin again at Farm



Image by Leonor Hurtado

Aid 2019. We joined with a multi-racial cohort of farmers, advocates, and activists from all over the country to share experiences, build solidarity among different struggles, and strategize for a food system rooted in food and farm justice. Their stories, experiences, and organizing efforts provide key lessons for how rural and urban communities can work to produce an alternative food system.

Training the Next Generation of Leaders

For the fourth year in a row, Food First hosted a cohort of youth from across the

globe on a multi-country program to understand the complexities and challenges of our global food system and how to address them. Food First hosted them in California for two weeks before they departed the country to continue their studies in Ecuador, Malawi, and Italy.

We are incredibly grateful to the following organizations and people we were able to collaborate with to ground the students in justice-centered food systems: Movement Generation, Sogorea Te Land Trust, UC Berkeley Gill Tract Community Farm, R & R Fresh Farms, Agriculture and Land-Based Training Association, San Jerardo Cooperative, Puente de la Costa Sur, Phat Beets, AORTA (Anti-Oppression Resource Training Alliance), and Miguel Altieri.

Providing Free Political Education Webinars

In September 2019, Food First's Alyshia Silva led a political education webinar with Community 2 Community and Farmworker Association of Florida on the successes and lessons from

the farmworker organizing efforts in Washington State. In response to the injustices of the H-2A temporary visa program, farmworker organizers joined with Community 2 Community (C2C) and Familias Unidas por la Justicia to push for SB 5438, a bill put forward by the Washington Employment Security Department. As large-scale farms continue to contract with temporary farmworkers due to a "labor shortage" caused by deplorable, unsafe conditions and the deportation machine accelerated under Trump, temporary workers are increasing. Many of these workers lack basic labor protections and are tied to their employer in order to stay in the United States, making them extremely vulnerable to labor violations and unable to organize for better conditions. However, organizers won a major democratic victory to enshrine protections for H-2A workers that brings us closer to labor and food justice in the food system. Opportunities for political education that amplify the lessons and successes of organizers on the ground is essential for strengthening the strategies of the food and farm movement.

A Note to Our Donors

We're excited to share our expenditures and revenue with you in our next News and Views. We are proud to conduct annual audits to ensure the fiscal integrity of our organization, and having recently changed to a new auditor, we are working diligently to give you our most up-to-date figures soon!

A Message from New Executive Director, M. Jahi Chappell



It's my first year as Executive Director of Food First and I feel so grateful and humbled to have met so many of our members like you who share how they use Food First's resources in classrooms, union meetings, coalition spaces, conferences, and much more.

Thanks to members like you, frontline communities of farmers, workers, and organizers always have a trusted place

for free, open-access resources that shed light on the root causes of hunger.

That's why I hope you consider giving again during our annual spring campaign, which begins in March and ends May 15th. Food First receives over 60% of its funding from members and this campaign ensures Food First has funding for the rest of the fiscal year.

Can Food First count on your support again? By generously giving again this year you will ensure Food First's 45-year tradition of revealing the corporate-funded myths that concentrate power in our food system, and beyond. You can donate to this campaign at www.foodfirst.org/spring2020.