

July 8, 2020

Dear Platform Drafting Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to have input into the Democratic National Committee's platform drafting process. Collectively, our organizations represent millions of eaters, farmers, workers and advocates.

From farm to fork, our food system affects everyone. From family farmers who have been devoted to feeding their communities over generations, to the farmworkers who labor day in and day out to put food on our tables, to the millions of children who rely on school meals to stay fed – we all have a stake in building a food system that reflects Democratic values for health, justice, equity and environmental sustainability.

But for too long, United States food and agriculture policy has encouraged the growth of a highly concentrated industrial food system that often works against the interests of family farmers, local communities, workers, the environment, public health, and animal welfare. Food production is dominated by chemical-intensive production of monocultures grown for animal feed, biofuels, and processed foods and by industrial-scale animal agriculture that depletes and degrades our nation's valuable soil, water, and biodiversity resources. Our industrial food system remains a leading cause of climate change. The labor of farmworkers is exploited to the point that many can't afford to eat the very food they harvest. Family farmers are having to abandon their farms because they can't compete in a highly consolidated, unfair market. Black, indigenous, Latinx, and other immigrant farmers of color, who have endured unconscionable discrimination at the hands of our government, are struggling to stay on their land. Our lax regulatory system puts the interests of corporations over people, jeopardizing workers and consumers, undermining local economies, and furthering racial injustice. And despite the wealth of our nation, millions are still going hungry and a majority are suffering from diet-related conditions such as heart disease, obesity, diabetes, and high blood pressure.

Despite these myriad ways that food and farm issues impact every one of us and are core to the most pressing social justice issues of our time, historically, these issues have largely been excluded from the DNC's platform. We hope that will change this year.

COVID-19 has put a spotlight on racialized problems in our food system, from the predominantly immigrant food chain workers who are denied basic protections by the highly consolidated and fragile meatpacking industry, to the higher COVID-related death and hospitalization rates caused by diet-related comorbidities like cardiovascular disease and diabetes, which are experienced disproportionately by Black communities facing food apartheid and targeted by junk food marketers. The federal government's response can either exacerbate these problems by directing aid to agribusiness, leaving family farmers and regional food systems in peril, prioritizing the interests of corporations over workers, and furthering concentration, or it can direct funding and reorient policy to build a more healthy, just, and resilient food system. A strong food and farm plank in the DNC's platform to accomplish this vision is more crucial now than ever.

We urge the DNC to propose a major reorientation of policy to support independent farmers and ranchers, with particular emphasis on supporting BIPOC producers; ensure access to safe, healthy, and affordable food for all families; invest in diversified, climate-friendly, humane and regenerative farming systems; commit to fair and safe working conditions for food and farm workers; and create thriving regional food economies.

Specifically, our organizations endorse the recommendations from the DNC Council on the Environment and Climate Crisis as they relate to food systems, listed below, along with a few *italicized* additions:

- Transition away from carbon-intensive, industrial animal agriculture and monoculture production, starting with a moratorium on new Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs) and large-scale food and agriculture mergers.
- Support supply and grow demand for organic, low- carbon, diversified, and humanely raised foods by leveraging federal food procurement and investing in farm-to-school programs, and by a managed shift of subsidies and programs that primarily benefit large-scale, destructive farming practices to supporting regenerative, sustainable practices.
- Direct the USDA to ensure fair prices and access to land, credits, and markets for *independent* farmers, ranchers, and fishers - *particularly Black, Indigenous, and immigrant producers of color* - , and to continue its focus on regional food systems and new and beginning producers.
- Pass a national right-to-repair law and investigate amending the Digital Millennium Copyright Act to allow farmers to repair and maintain their own equipment and technology
- Improve water quality and health outcomes through strengthening enforcement of clean air and water rules, investing to help farmers reduce pesticide and chemical fertilizer use, and banning chlorpyrifos, neonicotinoids, glyphosate, and dicamba
- Replenish and nurture healthy soils by requiring recipients of agricultural subsidies to implement comprehensive healthy soil practices.
- Support food waste reduction programs.
- Improve working conditions, pay, and protections for all food chain workers *and ensure workers' right to organize*. Strengthen OSHA standards and enforcement practices, as well as Agricultural Worker Protection Standards. *End the exploitation of incarcerated people for food production.*
- *Address injustices for farmers of color and create opportunities for the next generation of diverse farmers.¹*
- *Promote fair and competitive markets for family farmers and ranchers by strengthening anti-trust enforcement.*
- *End the privatization of meat inspection and the issuance of slaughter line-speed waivers.*

Thank you for considering our comments and for your work on this year's platform. Please do not hesitate to reach out with any questions.

Family Farm Action, Friends of the Earth Action, HEAL Food Action, Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement, Citizens Regeneration Lobby, Food & Water Action, Land Stewardship Action Fund, and People's Action

¹ <https://www.ucsusa.org/resources/leveling-fields>