FOOD SOVEREIGNTY IN THE FARM BILL: FUNDING COMMUNITY STRATEGIES FOR HEALTHY FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

Anna Aspenson

American University
Dr. Garrett Graddy-Lovelace
University Honors
School of International Service
Spring 2015

anna.aspenson@gmail.com

This project is part of an ongoing collaboration between American University, National Family Farm Coalition, and Rural Coalition. Please feel free to contact me at any time for further comments and suggestions.

ABSTRACT

The current food system within the United States, meaning all of the structures and processes included from seed to consumption and waste, does not lend itself to sustainable and profitable small and mid-size agriculture or the availability of healthy, affordable food. While corporations continue to gain size and power, fewer farmers are able to make a living and to serve their communities fresh produce. This means more families lack access to food that meets sufficient nutritional needs. In recent decades, food insecurity and obesity have erupted as urgent public health issues. This project aims to analyze the scope and distribution of the Community Food Project (CFP) Competitive Grant Program within the context of the US Farm Bill, which determines comprehensive farm and food policies for the nation. The study utilizes participatory action research through interviews with small-scale farmers and members of the international movement for sustainable agriculture and food justice, as well as a literature review and geographic information analysis. The study demonstrates the importance of CFP in order to fund local solutions to enhance sustainable food production and infrastructure that will benefit low-income communities to meet agricultural and nutritional needs. The funding for CFP should greatly increase in order to address the most vulnerable communities, especially in rural areas and the south. Programs like CFP are crucial in order to enhance local control over resources and to establish better infrastructure for healthy, ecologically and socially responsible food.

INTRODUCTION

Farm and food policy in the United States has a tremendous impact on the health and economy of all communities around the nation. Ingrained in human wellbeing and society, food and sustenance determine many aspects of our physiological, cultural, and socio-economic interactions. Globally, farming has shaped social change and influenced the structure of society. Deeply tied to colonialism and historical displacement of indigenous cultures, agriculture today is still entrenched in international transfers of labor, value, and wealth. Agrarian reform has instituted national revolutions and global imperialism, especially around 20th century farmer-led revolutions and social agrarian reform in Latin America. In recent history, international food regimes have pushed for increased industrialization and production, due to global competition and trade liberalization. In order to maintain power in the center of global trade, the United States has enacted a number of policies and agricultural legislation that benefit large, standardized agriculture for export.

The ties between the land and nutritional needs of communities have been loosened, weakening the viability of small and mid-size farming as a livelihood. The paradigm of global trade does not lend itself to structural diversity or biodiversity. Small farming and large farming no longer represent the same type of systems, yet they operate under the same policies. The predominant system has caused severe land degradation, loss of farmland and food-related chronic disease such as obesity and malnutrition due to a lack of healthy and affordable food.

Shifts in political and regional agricultural power within the United States are often reflected in the Farm Bill. Congress decides on the overarching food policies every five to seven years, which governs funding for a range of programs such as food assistance and crop insurance. Farm Bill policies that enhance innovation and local control of food resources are crucial to develop sustainable farming practices and to distribute food for local economies. The Farm Bill also allocates funding to a small number of programs aimed to progress

sustainable agriculture, low to mid-size farmers, and low-income areas. This paper will analyze the scope and distribution of funds for the Community Food Project Competitive Grant Program (CFPCGP) within the Farm Bill and give recommendations for its expansion. Community Food Projects (CFP) are crucial to food and farm policy in the US because they provide the opportunity for the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to support long-term solutions towards food sovereignty and increase opportunities for the most vulnerable communities around the country.

COMMUNITY FOOD PROJECT COMPETITIVE GRANT PROGRAM

The most sustainable and effective way to improve food security, or the sufficient access to safe, nutritious, and affordable food, is through local solutions. This way, communities can develop strategies based on specific knowledge, assets, and needs grounded in the geographic and social determinants within that community. The Community Food Project Competitive Grant Program aims to fund nonprofit entities in order to promote comprehensive solutions in low-income areas through a one-time infusion of federal assistance (USDA NIFA). The grant program is designed to:

- "Meet the needs of low-income people by increasing their access to fresher, more nutritious food supplies.
- Increase the self-reliance of communities in providing for their own food needs.
- Promote comprehensive responses to local food, farm, and nutrition issues.
- Meet specific state, local, or neighborhood food and agricultural needs for infrastructure improvement and development.
- Plan for long-term solutions.
- Create innovative marketing activities that mutually benefit agricultural producers and low-income consumers," (USDA NIFA).

The CFP program was originally authorized through the 1996 Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform (FAIR) Act and has been reauthorized in every subsequent Farm Bill. Community Food Project grants are now administered through the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) of the USDA. This permanently authorized competitive grant program allocated $9 million per fiscal year in mandatory spending. The 2014 Farm Bill almost doubled funding from the $5 million established in the 2008 Farm Bill, which demonstrates a meaningful change in value towards food security within agricultural policy. Mandatory funding is crucial for small programs like CFP within the Farm Bill. This means that community organizations do not have to rally and advocate each fiscal year to maintain allocated funds and appropriations. CFP falls under Nutrition, Title IX, of the Farm Bill. Therefore, as long as the Nutrition title is funded, CFP will operate.

In its 18-year history, CFP awards have funded approximately $85 million in grants and 400 communities in 48 states. Only about 18 percent of submitted proposals are accepted (NSAC). The CFP Competitive Grant Program includes two types of grants: Community Food Projects (CFP), Planning Projects (PP), and Training and Technical Assistance (T&TA).

- “Examples of CFP Projects include, but are not limited to, community gardens with market stands, value chain projects, food hubs, farmers’ markets, farm-to-institutions projects, and marketing & consumer cooperatives. All projects must involve low-income participants.” (USDA NIFA, 2014)
- “Examples of PPs include, but are not limited to, community food assessments' coordination of collaboration development plan, GIS analysis, food sovereignty study, and farm-to-institution exploration. All projects must involve low-income participants.” (USDA NIFA, 2014).
- T & TA will be one, large multi-year grant award for strong comprehensive evaluation with national relevance.

The maximum grant budget is $125,000 per year or no more than $400,000 over four years. For Planning Projects, the maximum budget is $35,000 over the total project period. Each grant requires a 100 percent, dollar-for-dollar match in non-federal resources, which can come from cash or in-kind contributions. Third party contribution sources can include property rent, equipment, volunteer and paid personnel time, transportation, and other values not paid for by grant funds (Joseph & Siedenburg, 2015). This insures that funds are contributing to CFP with enough resources to implement them and the community buy-in for them to be successful.

In order to be eligible for a CFP grant, non-profit institutions, food program service providers, and tribal organizations must meet the following requirements:

1. "Have experience in the area of:
    i. Community food work, especially concerning new markets for low-income communities and agricultural producers
    ii. Job training and business development
2. Demonstrate capacity to implement a project and remain accountable
3. Demonstrate a willingness to share information
4. Collaborate with one or more organizations"

This paper will examine the scope and distribution of CFP grants and its role in building alternative structures within the current globalized and damaged food system.

RESEARCH METHODS AND POLITICAL ECOLOGY

This project is part of an ongoing collaborative process between American University, National Family Farm Coalition (NFFC), and Rural Coalition. These community partners are part of an international grassroots movement to promote social justice and dignity by defending small-scale sustainable agriculture. La Vía Campesina, or International Peasants Movement, brings together small and medium-size farmers, indigenous groups, landless

people, migrants, and agricultural workers to create a global network. Through this partnership, American University students are able to apply their studies to help fill advocacy gaps and contribute tools to advance the movement through diverse fields and academic perspectives. This paper reviews existing literature on the current context of the food system, as well as participatory action research through collaboration and interviews from small-scale farmers and representatives from the community partner organizations. It will also utilize academic resources, such as GIS mapping software to map the distribution of CFP recipients in relation to food system variables.

This analysis of the CFPCGP is designed to examine the political economy of food sovereignty and community food security projects. In other words, to examine the integration of power relations involved in Community Food Projects. The goal of the CFP grant program is to assist non-profit, community based organizations with the development of projects that would require a one-time infusion of federal funds to become self-sustaining (Tuckermanty, 2007, p. 3). Therefore, this paper will analyze the process and type of projects in context with the program's goal to empower local communities towards action and agency. Community Food Projects foster community solutions in order to restore economic prosperity and the viability of local, sustainable agriculture. This research project works to contribute to the global movement fighting for better policy and practice for farmers and consumers within our globalized food system.

CHALLENGES FACING FOOD SYSTEM REFORM

Food policy extends to a variety of sectors. Its scope is often far-reaching and difficult to measure. Yet there is no doubt that the United States is dealing with the health, environmental, and economic effects of a century of rapidly changing food and agriculture. United States food policy has been evolving for much of the 20th century to expand global markets and reach maximum commodity production. This push for liberalization of trade has

created an environment for corporations to thrive. Production control, or policies that regulate supply and price of crops (such as commodity programs, subsidies, and tax policies), has diminished. This inflates the market with cheap commodities, which drives down revenue for farmers. Commodity crops are mainly nonperishable raw materials suitable for transport, such as corn, wheat, soybeans, rice, cotton, and sorghum (Farm Bill 101, 2012). As agriculture industrialized and commodity prices dropped, agribusiness corporations and food retailers continued to consolidate. This limits the mediation between producer and retailer, as well as the political input of other actors. Producers then have decreased agency and power to demand a fair price for their products. Contracts and privatization within this highly mechanized, high-input system effectively push out the farmers that cannot keep up (Clapp & Fuchs, 2012, p. 46).

Industrial agriculture and land use

The standardized interests of agribusiness reinforce the use of monoculture production, the cultivation of one crop, typically on a large tract of land. This production technique has external consequences not factored into the price of the crops, such as the loss of fertility in farmland and chemical run-off into the water supply (Weis, 2009, p.31). These consequences can be difficult to foresee, as they occur over time and sometimes outside of farm boundaries ("Agriculture at a Crossroads, 5). Land degradation and the breakdown of agroecological practices have resulted in land abandonment, deforestation, and migration to marginal land ("Agriculture at a Crossroads, 5). In addition, the intensified production requires costly inputs, such as nitrogen fertilizer, pesticides, herbicides, and water because monoculture removes natural nutrient cycling and fertility systems, thereby heightening the crops' vulnerability to pest infestations (Weis, 2009, p.31).

Corporations and consolidated control

Consolidation and standardization are also apparent in the control over these chemical inputs, fertilizers, and seeds by transnational corporations (Weis, 2009, p.13). In 2004, the top ten transnational corporations controlled 84 percent of the global agrochemical market (such as Bayer, Syngenta Dow, Monsanto, and DuPont) and roughly half of the global seed market (led by Monsanto, DuPont/Pioneer Hi-Bred, and Syngenta) (Weis, 2009, p.72).

Traditional agriculture relies on diversity and seed breeding to create long-term resilience. For example, in Central America farmers plant maize, beans, and squash in the same field because the squash reduces erosion and weed growth, the beans enrich the soil with nitrogen, and the maize provides a stalk for the beans to grow onto (Goldsmith, 104). The strongest seeds from the season can then be saved and used again. However, many farmers have abandoned the organic method in response to production pressure from transnational corporations. Seeds and soil are now treated as commodities instead of living, public goods. Farmers are becoming increasingly reliant on costly inputs and face limited choice, agency, and adaptability.

Consolidation of retail and agribusiness reduces the links between production and distribution, limiting market opportunities for smaller farmers and limiting competition. The system has fewer actors and less mediation between food producers and consumers. Antitrust laws, which regulate and restrain business mergers in order to promote competition, have been weakened and lobbying dollars are unchecked. In 2014, agribusiness spent $63,142,874 in congressional lobbying (Graddy-Lovelace, 2015). In addition, the top ten pesticide companies control almost 95 percent of the global market and the top three seed corporations control 53 percent of the world's commercial seed market (Graddy-Lovelace, 2015).

Retail is another aspect of agribusiness that affects the structure of the national food system. In 2012, the top four food retailers in the United States (Walmart, Kroger, Costco, and Target) accounted for 50 percent of all grocery sales (Hauter, 69). This type of market power allows retailers to pressure suppliers in terms of price and private standards (Clapp & Fuchs, 34). Large grocery store chains prefer business with the big brands with labels and uniform products, which limits market access for small producers. Companies like Dole and Driscoll's must pay fees, promotional allowances, and comply with complicated sales contracts in order to supply large grocery retailers (Hauter, 88). The concentrated system excludes farmers and producers without the resources to adhere to the distribution stream and low prices. Consumers are sold claims of "everyday low prices" but the savings do not trickle down. According to the Bureau of Economic Analysis, expenditures on food have risen by 12 percent over the past ten years (Hauter, 68). Likewise, a study by the USDA found that food prices were lower for farmers' income than they would be in a truly competitive market and higher for consumers (Hauter, 297).

Collective diet and public health

The expansion of commodity crops and expedited production has had a profound effect on the world's diet and public health. Cheap food products like corn, soybean, and grain are made into processed foods and feed for livestock. Nearly one in three children in the US is overweight or obese and members of low-income and minority groups are disproportionately affected by the health burden of cheap food (Krueger, Krub, & Hayes). Processed foods are deceptively cheap because they are high in calories but deficient in nutritional value.

Industrial capitalism also heavily focuses on livestock production. Global meat consumption is rapidly increasing – often referred to as the "meatification of diets" (Weis, 2009, p.62). Higher caloric intake from meat is a major contributing factor to chronic health

problems, like heart disease and obesity (Weis, 2009, p.69). Americans consume about twice the daily amount of protein recommended by the USDA and US Department of Health and Human Services Dietary Guidelines and meat consumption is at a record high (Pimentel & Pimentel, 661S). Other health concerns based on the availability of food include: added saturated fat, refined grains, ubiquitous high-fructose corn syrup, salt, and low fruit and vegetable consumption (Chapter 2). A study from the USDA Economic Research Service found that processed food accounts for 63 percent of calorie consumption in the US, animal food 25 percent, and plant food only 12 percent (Bando, 2009).

Access to healthy, affordable, safe, and culturally appropriate food that is sufficient to meet daily nutritional needs of communities remains a fundamental priority for global health and human rights. In 2013, 14.3 percent of households in the US (17.5 million households) were food insecure (Coleman-Jensen, Gregory, & Singh). This means that at some point members of the household experienced difficulty providing food for all of its members due to lack of resources and access (Coleman-Jensen, Gregory, & Singh). In the same year, 5.6 percent of US households experienced very low food insecurity, meaning their normal eating patterns were disrupted by limited food intake (Coleman-Jensen, Gregory, & Singh). Prevalence of food insecurity varies highly depending on community structures and poverty level. For example, a poll of Mississippi residents in 2013 reported that 25.1% of households did not have enough money to buy food for their family at least one time during the year (Riffkin, 2014). Mississippi has the highest poverty rate (22.8 percent), the highest food insecurity rate (20.9 percent) and the highest obesity rate (34.6 percent) (DePillis, 2013). Poverty and lack of adequate nutrition reflect the need for comprehensive food system reform.

The primary concerns of our global food economy relate to the availability of products that benefit corporate profits over the health and wellbeing of people and the planet's resources. The shift away from regional food systems limits the availability of affordable

fruits and vegetables necessary to meet the nutritional needs of communities. In addition, falsely cheap produce like bananas and strawberries have external costs, especially concerning cheap farm labor. The external costs from industrial agriculture to health and land of industrial agriculture are passed onto the taxpayers.

So, how did we get to this point? What caused this divide of time, place, and source from food products? The next section will evaluate the history of industrial, global agriculture and how it relates to future actions.

THE EVOLUTION OF AGRICULTURAL POLICY

Today, the Farm Bill is a comprehensive, omnibus legislation containing fifteen titles that determine policies and funding for food and agricultural programs, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, previously called food stamps), commodity titles, crop insurance, conservation grants, rural development, trade, agriculture research, and extension services. Congress adapts and assesses the bill about every five years. For these policies, the planning and negotiation process is not sufficiently accessible, open, or equitable; US law allows unlimited spending for private lobbying. The food industry has reported spending 1.5 billion on federal lobbying since 1997 (Watzman & Lannon, 2014). Monsanto alone spent 8.8 million for the 2008 Farm Bill ("8 Ways"). Therefore, policies that aid public health and sustainable agriculture are vulnerable to budget cuts due to pressure from agribusiness interests. Power structures play a major role in shaping Farm Bill priorities.

The Farm Bill in the Beginning

Socio-political structures have been rapidly morphing the role of farmers in agricultural policy since the beginning of the twentieth century. The Dust Bowl and the Great Depression in the 1930s brought an agricultural awakening for reform. The Agricultural

Adjustment Act (AAA) of the New Deal in 1933 and 1938, set price supports for basic commodities (like a government guarantee for farm minimum wage), set soil conservation allotments, marketing quotas, and acreage allotments (Winders, 68). These production control policies aim to prevent inflation in supply because surplus decreases prices and therefore the compensation for farmers. On the other hand, the New Deal was susceptible to business interests from the Farm Bureau and Southern democrats. Its agricultural policies also aimed to increase mechanization and use of agro-chemicals, fertilizers, and water irrigation (Weis, 2009, p.63).

A number of actors contribute to the push and pull of agricultural policy. Tony Weis (2009) describes the changes in divides between the Corn Belt region, the wheat industry and the south, which influence political coalitions. Civil rights and class structure greatly impact the power plays and the maneuvers around supply management acts outside of party politics (Weis, 2009).[1]

A major actor in the power shifts within agriculture was the Committee for Economic Development (CED). By the 1950s, the committee had created a political attack on supply management, labeled it as "socialism" and called for a removal of price supports. The committee urged that lower prices would increase sales, especially for crops dependent on export markets (Ritchie & Ristau, 1987). The CED proposed for the elimination of mid-size farms to be replaced by large corporate farms and the remainder of small farms would be reliant on government subsidies and outside employment (Ritchie & Ristau, 1987). Ezra Benson and Earl Butz, the secretaries of agriculture during this period, were steadfast for a "get big or get out" campaign. Supply management policies were viewed as a hindrance to the farmer's ability to plant as much as possible and profitably mass-produce corn and soy to be used in processed food and exports (Ritchie & Ristau, 1987).

[1] However, the historical changes and clashes of interest within agriculture are extensive and beyond the scope of this paper.

From 1950-1970, the farmer population dropped by 33 percent (Ritchie & Ristau, 1987). In 1970, congress enacted a direct income subsidy program, which provided payments to farmers when crop prices fell below the target. Taxpayers must then pay massive amounts to compensate for deficiencies. In addition, the target price is often below the cost of production. This is a lose-lose situation for everyone except the traders, corporations and banks who benefit from cheap prices and rising loans. Farmer debt, rural collapse and inequality, and the loss of capital within agriculture culminated in the farm crisis of the 1980s, when farm prices were lower than during the Great Depression (Ritchie & Ristau, 1987).

Agricultural subsidies for cheap commodities are often blamed for the damages in the national food system. However, they are simply the bandage for instability and overproduction. Lack of price floors and production controls require the government and taxpayers to support farmers, undermining their ability to make a decent profit. Global free trade creates a constant battle to cut cost and loses sight of the need for localized, non-commodity crops. The effects and systems that hinder agricultural livelihood and rural economies are still perpetuated in today's food system. The concern around global population growth and "feeding the world" should shape national policy to address the lack of effective and just distribution, instead of the lack of production. Chronic overproduction causes chronic crisis.

Global Paradigm Shift

The advancement of industrialization and agribusiness within the United States in twentieth century was not an isolated movement. Agribusiness sectors aimed to open foreign markets in order to maximize profit. As Bill Winders (2009) states in *The Politics of the Food Supply*, US agricultural policy throughout the twentieth century aimed to improve competitiveness through expanded global markets. The US needed to reserve its spot at the

"core" of the capitalist world economy. The most powerful sectors have the most influence on policies and the market structures.

The "Green Revolution", a program in the 1960s from multiple international development institutions, such as USAID, Rockefeller and Ford Foundations, exemplifies global capitalist expansion. It aimed to expand the American method of industrial agriculture through modernization support to developing countries. The US provided technical assistance, machinery, chemical fertilizers, and seeds to farmers. This development strategy dramatically increased input and fuel dependence, as well as the "bio-simplification" of global agriculture (Weis, 2009, p.108). The aid policies increased foreign dependence on cheap imports and agricultural inputs. However, the policy lacked insight about distribution and the price of technology (Weis, 2009, p.108). Large farmers were better able to afford the input package and smaller farmers struggled to compete with the lower price from higher productivity (Weis, 2009, p.108).

The dependence on input and loss of agriculture variety greatly impacts farmers. India, a primary recipient of Green Revolution aid, grew 50,000 different strains of rice before the intervention. By the end of the twentieth century, their variety dwindled to only a dozen strains represented in the world market (Weis, 2009, p.109). The policy that characterized this time urged the importance of "feeding the world", yet it pushed farmers away from traditional, diversified agriculture into the production of tradable goods (Farm Bill 101, 2012). Green revolution policy regarded farmers as recipients instead of agents of the land (Weis, 2009, p.109).

Recent Farm Bills and Neoliberalization

The regional debates of supply management and export culminated in the 1996 Farm Bill, called the Federal Agriculture Improvement and Reform (FAIR) Act, also known as the "Freedom to Farm Act", which ended price supports and production controls for agricultural

commodities, the safety nets that protected farmers from market fluctuations (Winders, 2009, p.159). Many now refer to the bill as the "Freedom to Fail Act". Within global trade negotiations, little was learned from the decades of rural farm crises; at the same time as FAIR, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) of 1994 also enhanced competition and liberalized trade.

The market is unable to regulate agriculture because consumption does not change based on supply. Without production control, the logical action for farmers was to produce more (Winders, 2009). After the FAIR Act, corn, wheat, and cotton production increased by an average of 20 percent (Winders, 2009, p.196). However, humans cannot consume the expansive amounts of raw materials produced. They are fed to livestock or sold at cheap prices to other countries. Some producers, especially corn, argued that "expanding markets and consumption was the key to controlling supply" and keeping prices level (Winders, 2009, p.181). This system is unstable and over-reliant on the spending power of import nations. For example, in 1997 the East Asian financial crisis caused US crop prices to drop and contributed to another farm crisis (Winders, 2009, p.198). Corn producers needed to expand markets in order to sell the surplus and they mainly looked to supply feed for foreign livestock production.

Transnational corporations (TNCs) have become the true winners of trade and production liberalization. The commodification of seeds and inputs, along with the standardization of distribution, allows for consolidation of agriculture more than in other economic sectors (Weis, 2009). Agro-TNCs have quickly gained control and limited the agency of farmers. Those attempting to modernize are vulnerable to high land cost, falling prices, crop failures, and unsustainable debt loans (Weis, 2009). Weis states, "land sales, foreclosures, and farmer suicides have became the common features of the industrializing US farm landscape" (Weis, 2009, p.82). Big landowners and corporations can more easily cope with the price squeeze (Weis, 2009). In the wake of the FAIR Act, market prices

plummeted and the number of farms of less than 2,000 acres fell by more than 90,000 over five years (Weis, 2009). Now, eight percent of farms (with sales over $250,000) account for 72 percent of all farm sales (Weis, 2009). The concentration of agricultural production makes sustainable agriculture and the livelihood of small-scale farmers progressively more challenging. Different types of agriculture require different systems and policies.

STRUCTURE & SCOPE: FOOD SECURITY AS A LOCAL ISSUE

In order to maintain agriculture as a source of local economic stimulus, policy must allow for viable livelihoods for local producers, especially in rural areas. Without local markets, small and mid-size farmers move away from their land, making room for larger institutions to buy it and take over. Consequently, the income and benefits go to the large businesses and economic impacts leave the community as agribusiness expands their top-heavy infrastructure. Without local infrastructure, both rural and urban communities suffer from decreased autonomy to determine food system processes and local production. In the context of food security and access to affordable, healthy food, standardized agribusiness systems do not focus on operating within local context, needs, or structures. Food insecurity poses a prominent problem especially in relation to local issues such as local production, poverty, and economic opportunity.

The USDA defines “food insecurity” as “a household-level economic and social condition of limited access to food,” (Gundersen & Ziliak, 2014). Nutrition assistance occupies an overwhelming majority of Farm Bill funding. From 2014 to 2018, nutrition will account for 80 percent of all Farm Bill funds. The next highest percentage of Farm Bill budget goes to crop insurance (only 8 percent) and commodities (5 percent).

Prominent nutrition programs that fall under Farm Bill policies include: the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), and the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) which provide benefits to qualified individuals for enhanced food budgets and incentivized fresh fruits and vegetables.

The system of food assistance works similarly to farm assistance, a bandage over chronic crisis. The federal government provides emergency funds in the case of disaster, either federal assistance to ameliorate the widespread lack of access to affordable food or the chronic low price and compensation to farmers for their products. Despite over $100 million in allocated funds, food insecurity remains high (Gundersen & Ziliak, 2014). Although nutrition assistance programs are crucial to meet the needs and rights to food for all individuals, despite his or her economic circumstances, they do not end the need for long-term food security efforts. Nutrition assistance is susceptible to budget cuts because of its size and scale. Even a small cut in food assistance can affect all recipient households. In 2014, the SNAP budget was cut by $5 billion, enough to take away 21 meals every month from a family of four (Gundersen & Ziliak, 2014).

Within the current state of the food system, food assistance is necessary for community resilience and wellbeing. One study found that SNAP kept 4.8 million people out of poverty in 2013. This demonstrates why multilateral solutions are so important. Ideally, American families would have sufficient access to healthy and affordable food and nutrition assistance readily available to all who need it. Nutrition assistance is expensive and unsustainable in a country with high food insecurity. SNAP benefits require other community efforts to decrease the future need for food assistance. Effective community food projects could decrease the demand for SNAP benefits.

Community Food Projects & Community Food Security: Funding sustainable progress

The Community food security (CFS) movement has risen as a medium to understand root causes and create solutions that not only align with local threats and opportunities but also improve food security long-term. CFS is defined as, "a condition in which all community residents obtain a safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through a sustainable food system that maximizes community self-reliance and builds social capital, economic equity, and environmental stewardship." (CFP indicators of Success, 2011). Determinants of food security are linked to built environment and local and national policy. For example, economic conditions, employment, affordable housing, and agricultural infrastructure all significantly impact food security but vary greatly by geographic region and socio-economic structures.

Around the beginning of CFP in 1996, there was a growing concern around the quality of food and nonprofit organizations had to rely on big banks and corporations to fund their food projects (E. Tuckermanty, personal conversation, May 1, 2015). There was also a growing international movement to strengthen grassroots efforts to improve the food supply and the state of agriculture.

The Community Food Security Coalition (CFSC) played a significant role in the advocacy for the Community Food Project Program. CFSC is a diverse network of food, agriculture, and community development organizations. In 1995, they proposed a legislation initiative for the Farm Bill called "The Community Food Security Empowerment Act" in order to promote "the expansion of proven, cost-effective, local activities in an effort to make best use of federal dollars and empower communities to build their capacity to meet a greater share of their food needs" (Gottlieb & Fisher, 1995). The duplicity of hunger and poor nutrition, along with increased demand for emergency food demonstrated a need for new solutions and resources across numerous fields. For example the policy brief states, "Such a broadened conception of sustainable agriculture provides a direct link to community food

security issues, underlining the importance of marketing, environmental protection, farmland preservation, and local economic development" (Gottlieb & Fisher, 1995, p. 1). The CFPCGP established the concept of food security, not just emergency food assistance, as a part of national food and agricultural policy.

Community food security is central to the Community Food Project goals. According to a guide from the Community Food Security Coalition and Tufts University, community food security efforts should utilize process, partnership, projects, and policy methodology. A focus on the process of community participation and coalition building works to educate and catalyze action from varied stakeholders and change policies for a stronger food system (Winne, Joseph, & Fisher, 1997).

Strong coalitions are "at the core of the community food security approach" because they can effectively carry out community projects, they add to collective experience, and they can help work towards policy change (Winne, Joseph, & Fisher, 1997, p.9). Examples of community food coalitions include: food policy councils, farmer/grower or food-buying cooperatives, farm to school initiatives, and any other processes that link actors and institutions together for a common cause.

For example, Soil Born Farm in Sacramento, CA was awarded a CFP grant in order to link the Sacramento Growers Collaborative the Healthy Food for All Coalition through their food aggregation hub (CFP Database). This helped to support limited-resource farmers and to increase access to healthy, locally produced food for low-income residents. By sourcing food from small-scale growers, Soil Born Farm strengthens the local value towards a culture of mutually beneficial food systems. Strong production resources within a community can boost effectiveness of federal food assistance and education (Chen, Clayton, & Palmer, 2015). Currently, more than 80 percent of SNAP benefits are redeemed at supermarkets or superstores (CBPP Intro to SNAP, 2). Nutrition programs could mutually benefit regional food systems if the money contributed to the local food economy.

Likewise, food and agricultural policy affects food security at a myriad of levels. Therefore, collaboration enhances the expertise and understanding at each level and helps to identify priorities and impacts of food security policy. CFS projects ideally include multisectoral collaboration and long-term projects. For example, the CFPCGP in 2010 awarded $25,000 to the Adelente Mujeres for a planning project to carry out a needs assessment of Latino farmers in Washington County, Oregon (CFP Database). They find that low-income Latino farmers have the "skills and determination to launch agricultural businesses but they face social, cultural, and technological barriers to inhibit access to growing market opportunities." Through the help of CFP funding, Adelante Mujeres was able to establish a farmers market at their La Esperanza Farm and there is now a waiting list for farmers who would like to grow on the farm, demonstrating potential to expand. The coalition also has a network through Adelante Empresas and Adeleante Agricultores, which support small businesses and farms in the community. Through these coalitions and opportunities, they picture their community with "farmland, farmers, and thriving local businesses" (CFP Database).

In order to achieve sustainable CFS, it is important to understand feedback and connectedness across levels of the food system, as well as to identify capital and input (Chen, Clayton, & Palmer, 2015). For example, there is natural capital (environmental and ecosystem resources), human capital (skills, networks, experience), and built capital (tangible spaces, farms, infrastructure) (Chen, Clayton, & Palmer, 2015). Planning projects provide insight into the existing capital and assets already existing within a community. The planning grants can also strengthen future CFP applications and create a rolling impact.

Fortunately, the CFPCGP is not the only grant program under the USDA than can work to enhance local, sustainable food systems and the livelihood of small and mid-size farmers. Some of the other grant programs that are working to fund alternative methods for sustainable and healthy farming include:

- Rural Business Enterprise Grant
- Rural Business Opportunity Grant
- Value-added Producer Grant
- Farmers Market Promotion Program
- Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education
- Organic Research and Extension Initiative
- Farm Storage Facility Loan Program
- Farm to School Grant Program ("Potential USDA programs," 2011).

The CFP grant program allows for these projects to be linked together in the community context. Its mission and goals demonstrate that the movement is multifaceted and interconnected. The relationships on the local level would help to strengthen all types of the programs mentioned above.

OTHER PARADIGMS AND FRAMEWORKS FOR CFP

Community Food Projects inherently interact with the political ecology of the food system. The nature of the program is to provide low-income areas with the proper food and agricultural needs left out by the dominant system. Therefore, CFP must constantly monitor the power structures and interactions affecting food policy. A political ecology paradigm of local food systems considers relationships between the "haves" and the "have-nots", the multiple actors and the interplay of identity and interests to address sustainable alternative development paradigms (ROCHELEAU). Dianne E. Rocheleau's analysis of "political ecology in the key to policy" could help inform principles of CFP and their ability to address community-based resource management and relationships between producers and consumers. Hallmarks of this political ecology theory include: (1) "Multiple methods, objectives, actors and audiences" and (2) "integration of social and biophysical analysis of power relations and environment."

Other frameworks within the scope of community food security can help to analyze impacts and relationships. The social-ecological lens emphasizes the interconnectedness of the individual and his or her social and environmental context, especially along multiple levels of influence (individual, interpersonal, institutional, community, and policy) (Chen, Clayton, & Palmer, 2015). The application of this framework requires a specific focus on vulnerability, interdependence, and diversity within the food system. This entails stakeholders working together to achieve common ground, diverse participation, and explicit consideration for limited resource groups over reinforcing advantages of affluent populations (Chen, Clayton, & Palmer, 2015). Another framework of food justice provides an extension to the social-ecological framework through its consideration of racial and economic inequalities and the effects on the food system. In addition, the food sovereignty movement has pervaded as a producer and people-centered framework for local and regional markets (Chen, Clayton, & Palmer, 2015).

Food Sovereignty

The food sovereignty movement is embedded in global grassroots peasant movements that have shaped perspectives on the right to food and global relationships of farmers, ranchers, and growers. Led by coalitions such as La Vía Campesina, the National Family Farm Coalition, and the Rural Coalition, food sovereignty provides a comprehensive paradigm to think about personalized, community-based alternatives to the global industrialized food system by prioritizing small-scale farmers and local control of resources and domestic markets. These global networks envision food sovereignty as:

> "Empowered communities everywhere working together democratically to advance a food system that ensures health, justice and dignity for all. Farmers, farm workers, ranchers, and fishers will have control over their lands, water, seeds, and livelihoods [and] all people will have access to healthy, local, and delicious food," (Food Sovereignty).

When communities are well equipped to define their own food system and producers and growers are able to make a decent living, then regions will more effectively meet food and distribution needs. Food sovereignty efforts often involve a coalition of farmers and growers in order to enhance their collective voice and impact. Sovereignty incorporates the right of all people to choose where and how their food is produced. Ben Burkett, a family farmer and leader within the Mississippi Association of Cooperatives, says, "I've been able to make a good living as a farmer for 37 years, but the corporate control of inputs (seeds, fertilizer, labor) and prices has made it more and more difficult to do that," (Food Sovereignty). Lack of access to the resources necessary for agroecological practice can severely hinder the capacity for community food security.

Right to Food

Agricultural justice and the right to food are multifaceted issues that require holistic, collaborative solutions embedded in these agroecological and socio-ecological frameworks. Olivier de Schutter, the 2008-2014 United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to food, defines it as:

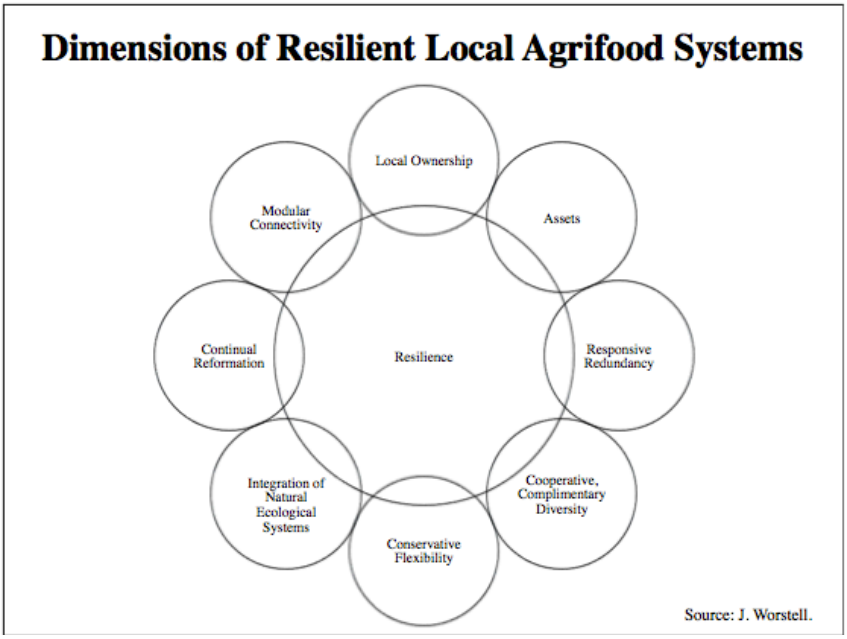
> "The right of every individual, alone or in a community with others, to have physical and economic access at all times to sufficient, adequate and culturally acceptable food that is produced and consumed sustainably, preserving access to food for future generations." (De Schutter, 2014).

De Schutter describes the diagnosis of the global food system and its shortcomings, which are broadly agreed upon. The dominant system aims to maximize efficiency, which has failed to account for distributional and environmental concerns (De Schutter, 2014). He states that food systems should meet needs for sustainable production and poverty reduction. De Schutter states, the global system needs a new paradigm "focused on well-being, resilience, and sustainability." (De Schutter, 2014, p.13). He argues that the way

forward is to decentralize food systems through locally led innovations and multi-sectoral strategies in order to rebuild diversity and eradicate hunger and malnutrition within communities (De Schutter, 2014). National and international policies must support the ability of communities to determine and reshape their food system because “food sovereignty is a condition for the full realization of the right to food.” (De Schutter, 2014, p.20).

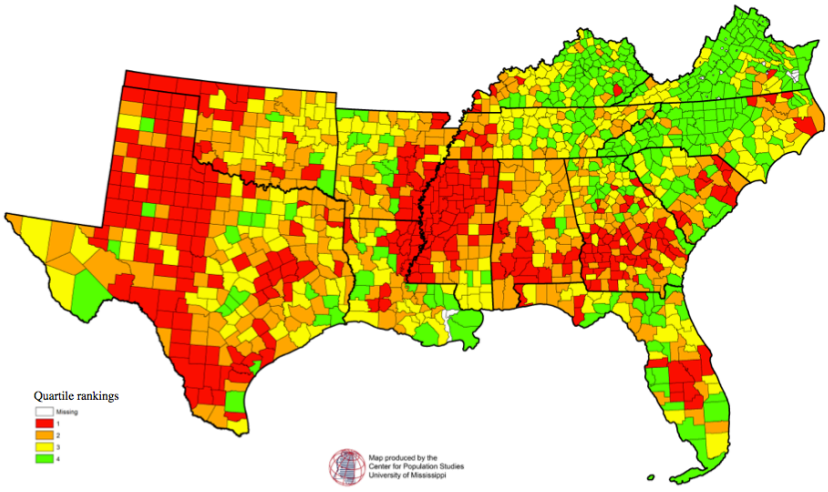
Community Food Resilience

Community food security, food justice, and food sovereignty frameworks all generally coalesce around community investment in production and access to local food resources (Chen, Clayton, & Palmer, 2015). Agrifood resiliency provides another framework to guide community food projects. John J. Green and a number of researchers from University of Mississippi Center for Population Studies have identified dimensions for agrifood resilience in the Southern United States through analysis of secondary data, an online survey of agrifood system actors, and case studies. Agrifood resilience is part of a larger research project: “Analysis to Define Progress Barriers and Opportunities for Sustainability and Social-Ecological Resilience”. The dimensions of resilient local agrifood systems include:



Some indicators used to determine resiliency are: principle operators living on farm, average age of farm operator, row crop diversity, vegetable production, low chemical input, organic practices, and internet connectivity (Green, 2014). These factors influence the stability of local production through diversity and alternative operations (See Appendix I). Using these measurements, Green et al. created a map of resilient local agrifood systems within counties in southern United States.

Total (All Indicators) Resilient Local Agrifood Systems Index



Sources: 2012 Census of Agriculture, 2013 Food Atlas, and 2014 review of state policies and regulations; extra calculations by the University of Mississippi Center for Population Studies. *Total Resilient Local Agrifood Systems Index* based on standardized score rankings on the six dimensions previously presented, with analysis of 1302 counties. Red = least resilient to green = most resilient.

CFP grants should prioritize areas with the least resilient agrifood systems (indicated in red) because those areas are the most vulnerable due to lack of local control, ecological diversity, and poverty. Mississippi, Alabama, Oklahoma, and Texas all had the lowest percentage of counties ranked in the highest category of resiliency (indicated in green). In Virginia, 80 percent of counties have high agrifood resilience, whereas Mississippi, Alabama, and Oklahoma all have less than 5 percent of counties in the green quartile (See Appendix II).

John Green and Anna Kleiner write about "escaping the bondage of the dominant agrifood system" for the *Southern Rural Sociological Association*. They describe the need for community development as a part of a social movement, which incorporates collective action and agency in a particular place that often expands across groups and places (Green & Kleiner, 2009). Various types of responses to globalization of the food system attempt to create alternative structures, processes, and institutions, of which the CFP program should take note.

Green and Kleiner focus on community based cooperative strategies, which aim to address the needs of limited resource and minority producers in the South (Green & Kleiner, 2009). Community-based cooperatives (CBC) operate based on: member ownership, democratic control, limited return on investment, and patronage refunds; their model has historically come about as a result of power inequity. Cooperatives are able to pool resources, purchase supplies, combine produce to sell to buyers, form credit unions, and influence federal farm policy (Green & Kleiner, 2009). Despite the strength of CBCs, traditionally underserved producers continue to face challenges with establishing alternative marketing and production systems, accessing insurance to manage crop risk, and realizing benefits from farm and food policy (Green & Kleiner, 2009).

Green & Kleiner conducted focus groups with members of community-based organizations to address these challenges and gain important perspective from growers. Many participants called for more interaction between individual producers and community

organizations, to establish more sustainable production techniques through funding, training, technical assistance, and to alleviate the risk of switching from conventional to sustainable production.

DISTRIBUTION OF CFP

Community Food Project grants aim to target low-income communities. This paper has demonstrated the multifaceted nature of food security beyond determinants of income. Therefore, Community Food Project grants should aim to enhance local agrifood resilience and to target areas that are environmentally and agriculturally vulnerable. Indicators of local agrifood resilience vary from income and poverty level, yet the relationship is compelling. If the CFP goal is to revitalize local and regional food systems through strategies that mutually benefit low-income populations, a comparison of the two can help identify key priority areas.

The following two maps identify points where organizations have received CFP grants between 1996 and 2014. The larger points represent one organization that has been awarded grants multiple years. The map in Figure 1 displays the data points as larger in order to emphasize geographic trends, whereas Figure 2 shows state-level trends. The most distinct concentrations are around the Northeast, California Bay Area and San Diego, Portland, and Santa Fe. There is also a visible trend that leads from New England and down the Appalachian Mountains towards Tennessee. The clearest gaps are in the Midwest and the South, especially around Texas and Oklahoma.

The CFP program prioritizes low-income communities; therefore it is important to monitor the distribution of grants in comparison to geographic distribution of income level. Although, it is difficult to determine the relationship between the locations of nonprofit organizations' offices and where the project is implemented, geographic concentration of poverty is important to note as a priority area for localized agrifood growth. The blue and

yellow poverty map represents the percentage of total population living under the poverty level in comparison to CFP grant awards.

This map demonstrates that CFP do not necessarily follow a trend of low-income communities. This could relate to a number of factors such as office location, lack of nonprofit organizations in impoverished counties, lack of resources to apply for USDA grants, and other barriers to access funds. Also, high concentrations of poverty can be concentrated near high affluence, which skews county data. However, this demonstrates that more could be done to increase capacity for rural or low-resource locations to apply for grants directly. For example, the Mississippi delta and regions around Georgia, South Carolina, and West Virginia have distinctly high concentrations of poverty and very few CFP awards.[2]

The geographic regions of low agrifood resilience are much more pronounced, represented in the resiliency map. This map depicts agricultural and local food supply vulnerability mentioned above. Therefore, CFP should aim to fund many more projects in the South, especially in the concentrated areas of red and orange. Regions around Mississippi, Louisiana, Alabama, and Georgia have high levels of poverty and very low agrifood resilience. It is crucial to support planning projects and community food projects in these areas and to monitor the impact.

[2] Further research is needed to analyze the areas served, particularly the rural and urban connections.

Figure 1: Community Food Project Geographic Distribution

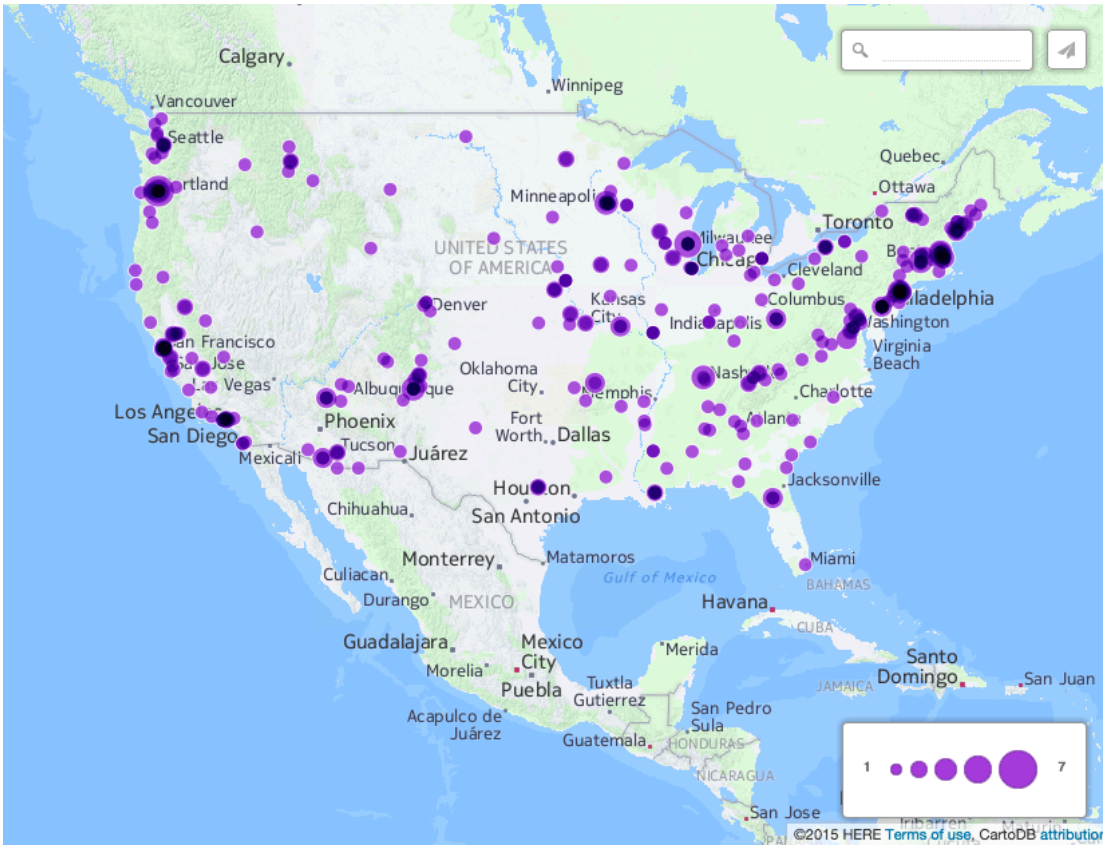
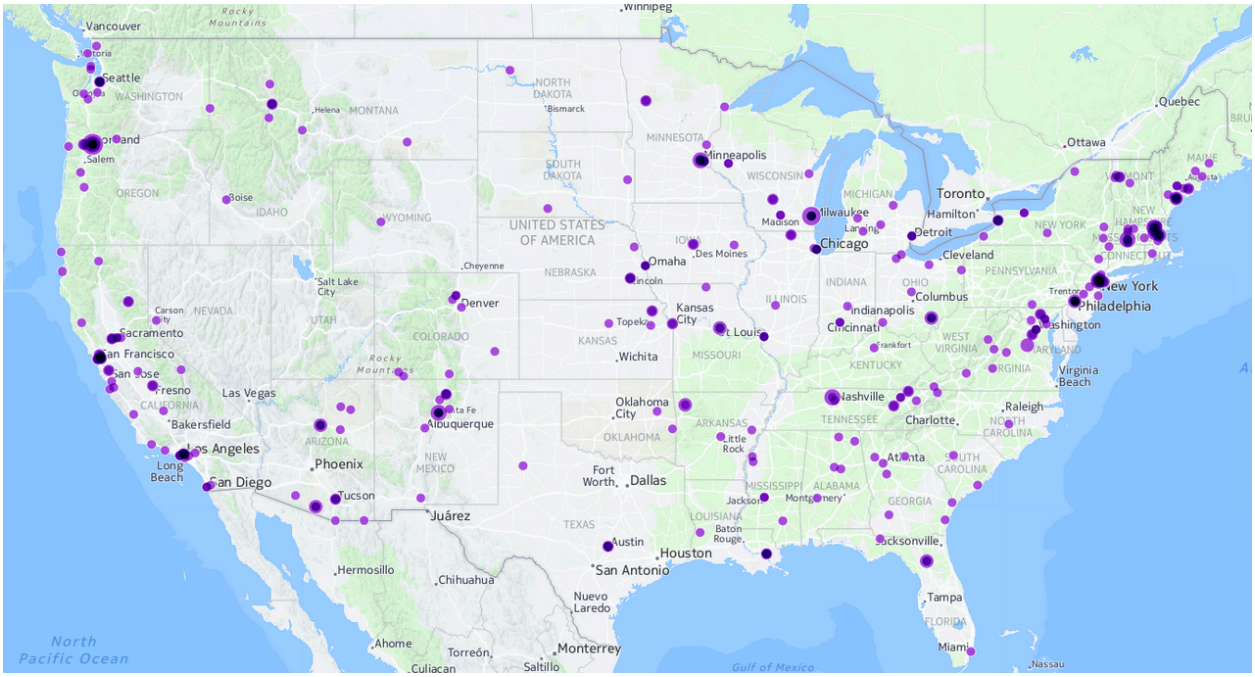
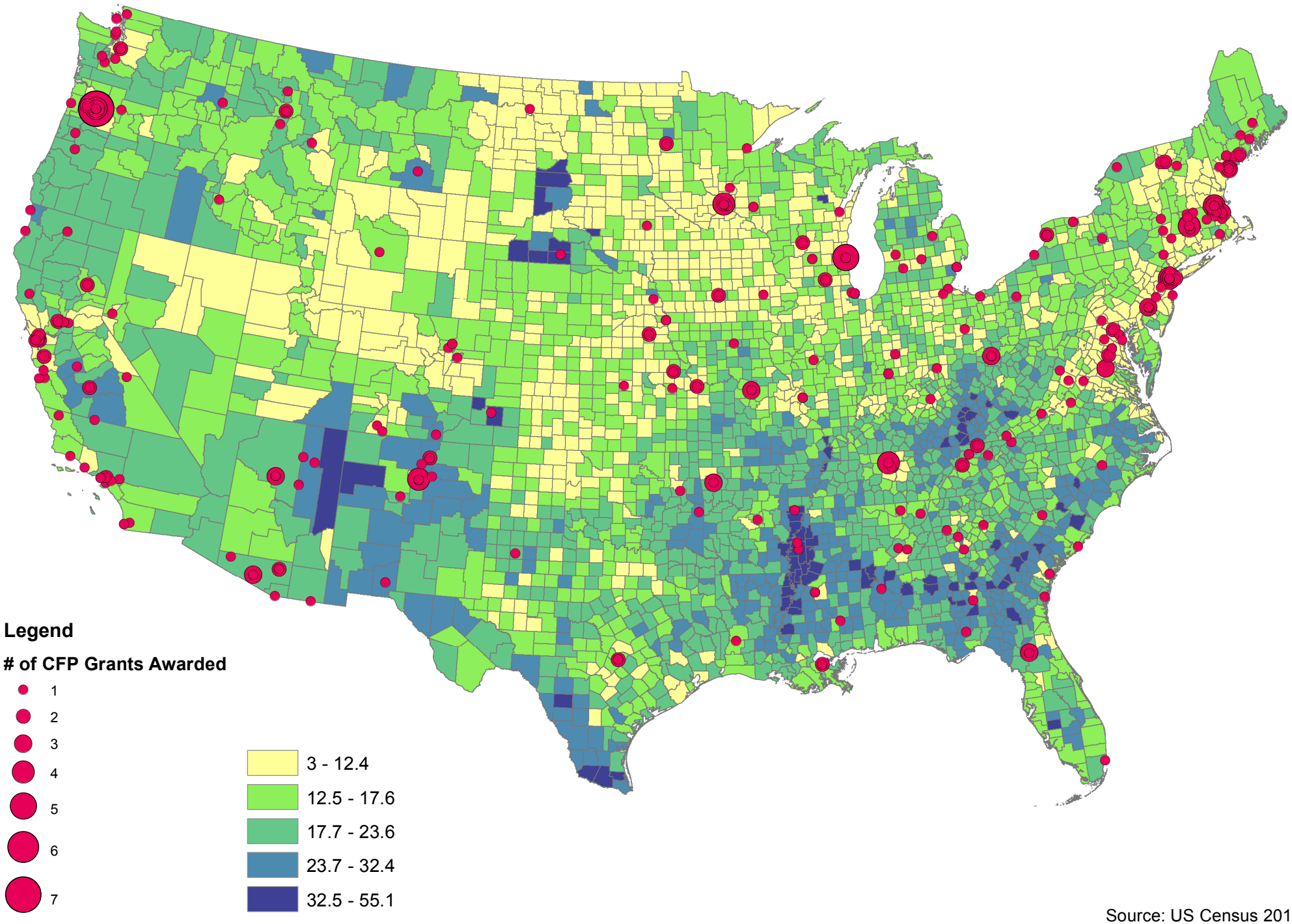


Figure 2: Community Food Project Geographic Distribution by State

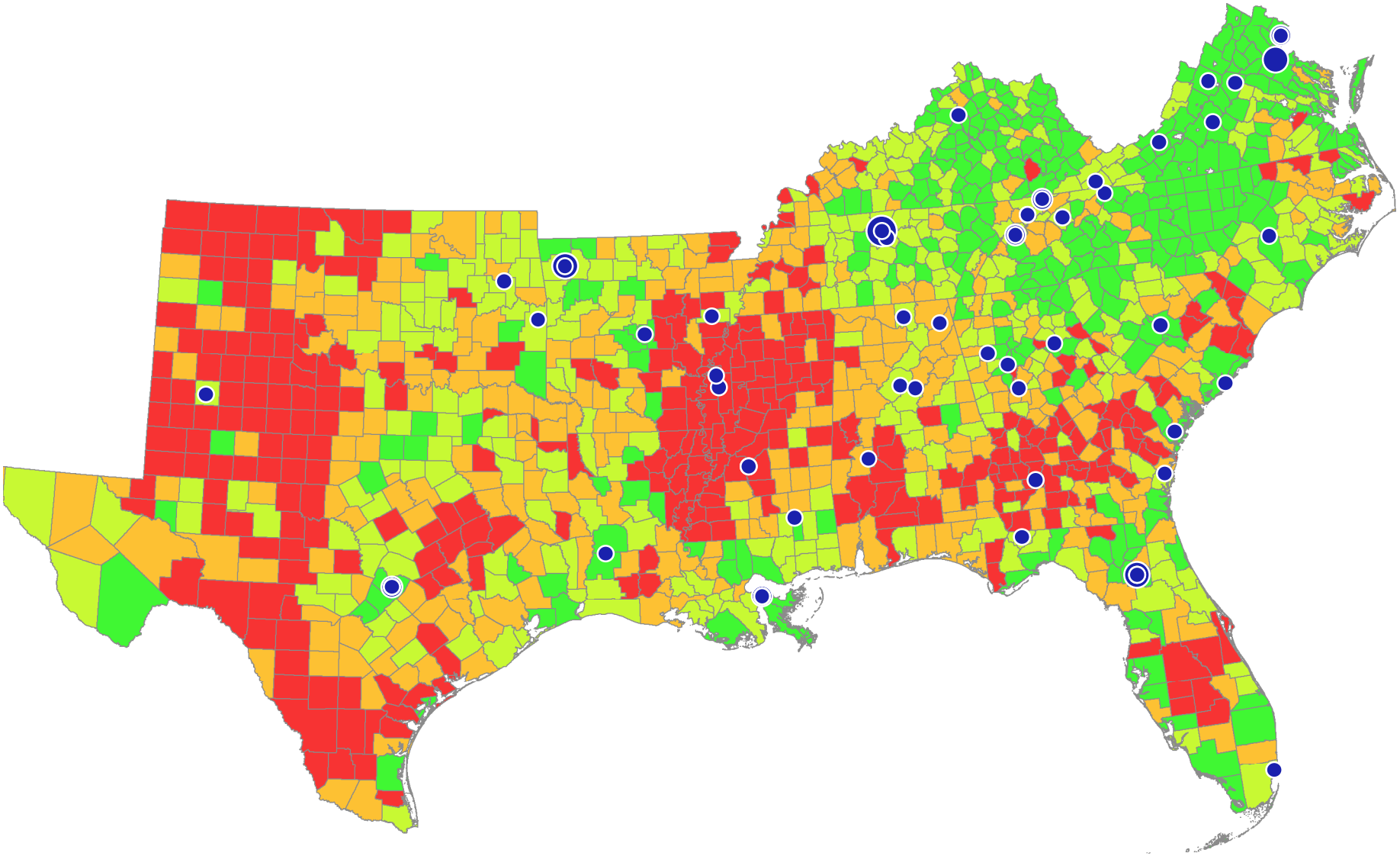


Percent of Total Population Under the Poverty Level



Source: US Census 2010

Total (All Indicators) Resilient Local Agrifood Systems Index



Legend

# of CFP Grants Awarded

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

Quartile Rankings

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

Source: University of Mississippi Center for Population Studies. 2015. County-Level Resilient Local Agrifood System Indicators for the Southern United States. Secondary Data Indicators Constructed for the Project Analysis to Define Progress Barriers and Opportunities for Sustainability and Social-Ecological Resilience, Delta Land & Community, Inc

Community Food Example: The Potential for Food Sovereignty in Mississippi

The Mississippi Association of Cooperatives (MAC) exemplifies the potential for CFP to address the viability of sustainable production and markets for limited-resource and minority farmers and provide high-quality, nutritious, affordable food to low-income residents (CFP Database). Mississippi represents both tremendous vulnerability and potential. It often tops the list of states for highest rates of poverty and obesity, yet the Mississippi delta has some of the most fertile land in the United States. This land could easily meet the nutritional needs of the whole state and beyond, yet 95 percent of the food supply is imported (Daniel Doyle, executive director of Mississippi Sustainable Agriculture Network, personal conversation, April 2, 2015). MAC takes a collaborative focus and is connected to a number of organizations. MAC is part of the Federation of Southern Cooperatives and the Land Assistance Fund; within MAC there are 13 community-based organizations: nine cooperatives, two credit unions, and two associate organizations (CFP Database). The cooperative works to increase access to nutritious, affordable food for low-income residents in Mississippi and Louisiana through increased local market opportunities for family farmers. This process helps keep minority farmers on their land and "to mentor new and beginning farmers" (Food Sovereignty).

According to Green and Kleiner, community-based cooperatives generally have a small membership base that extends to a specific local geography (Green & Kleiner, 2009). These institutions represent a broader struggle of economic empowerment and justice. From their roots in the Civil Rights Movement, community-based cooperatives represent a diverse social movement of producers, consumers, churches, rural, and urban communities (Green & Kleiner, 2009). Cooperatives are able to pull resources and products, to add to member income, reduce expenses, and get better services (Ben Burkett, personal conversation, April 2, 2015).

This connected movement can effectively meet the needs and diverse interests of southern communities, as well as establish sustainable institutions such as credit unions and health clinics (Daniel Teague, personal conversation, April 2, 2015). Daniel Teague, a family farmer and member of MAC, says, cultural capital is key; "imagination is more important than knowledge". Innovation and sustainable structures can contribute to the local economy and enhance community buy-in (Daniel Teague, personal conversation, April 2, 2015). The local food movement has been primarily centered in urban areas and many strategies do not transfer to the rural context. CFP plans must originate within the community and have a network of players that feel connected and committed to the work. During a conversation at the Symposium on Race and Sustainability at the University of Mississippi, one key message was that within the Mississippi delta, "we don't need saviors, we need team players" (1 April 2015).

Southern Rural Black Women in Agriculture is another example of potential networks in the MS delta. This cooperative aims to build a rural economy around agriculture through local ownership, job creation, farm-to-institution programs, box markets, hoop houses, and other strategies (Gloria Sturdevant, personal conversation, April 3, 2015). Gloria Sturdevant, a leader of Southern Rural Black Women in Agriculture, states that rural development should be driven by community commitment and should create a system that will work for rural family farmers to transform communities and maintain youth involvement. Organizations such as MAC and women's cooperatives can create structures of education and community knowledge to create sustainable change and vibrant rural economies.

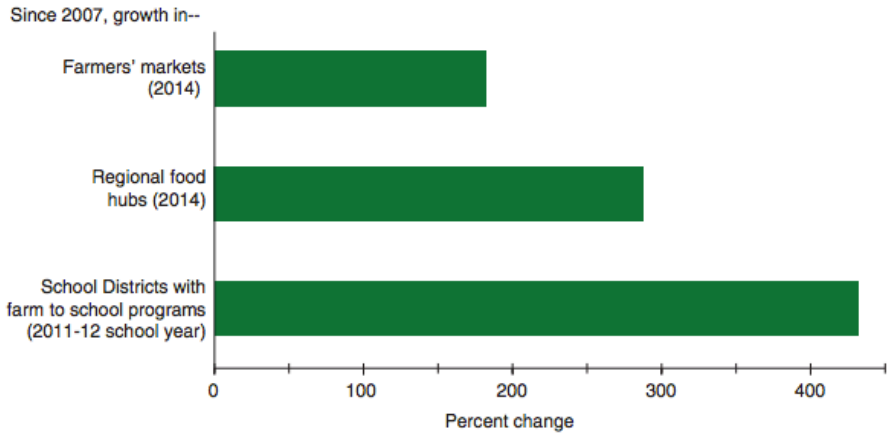
Community-based cooperatives have important functions at the local and grassroots level. Larger associations such as the Federation of Southern Cooperatives and the Rural Coalition help to further bolster the collective voice towards policy change. Members of cooperatives stated significant hindrances to their livelihood within national farm policy. "Land insecurity, lack of affordable credit, and limited markets" are barriers for farmers to

access new alternative markets for their products (Green & Kleiner, 2009, p.160). Collective action is crucial to maintaining alternative institutions. Also, organizations with higher participatory mechanisms can be more adaptive and effective than those with rigid hierarchal structures in the long run (Green & Kleiner, 2009). As Green and Kleiner argue, we need to develop more strategies than just cooperatives. This movement of food sovereignty and locally based solutions is multifaceted and dependent on action, experience, and learning.

STRENGTHS OF CFP

In the lifetime of the CFP grant program, the number of local food institutions has increased immensely due to national awareness and concern about health and environmental impacts of food. Because food is intrinsically social and CFP grants enhance local networks, the Community Food Project grant program has a great potential to create cultural capital and sustainable commitment that can revitalize low-income urban and rural areas.

Figure 1
Increase in local & regional marketing channels

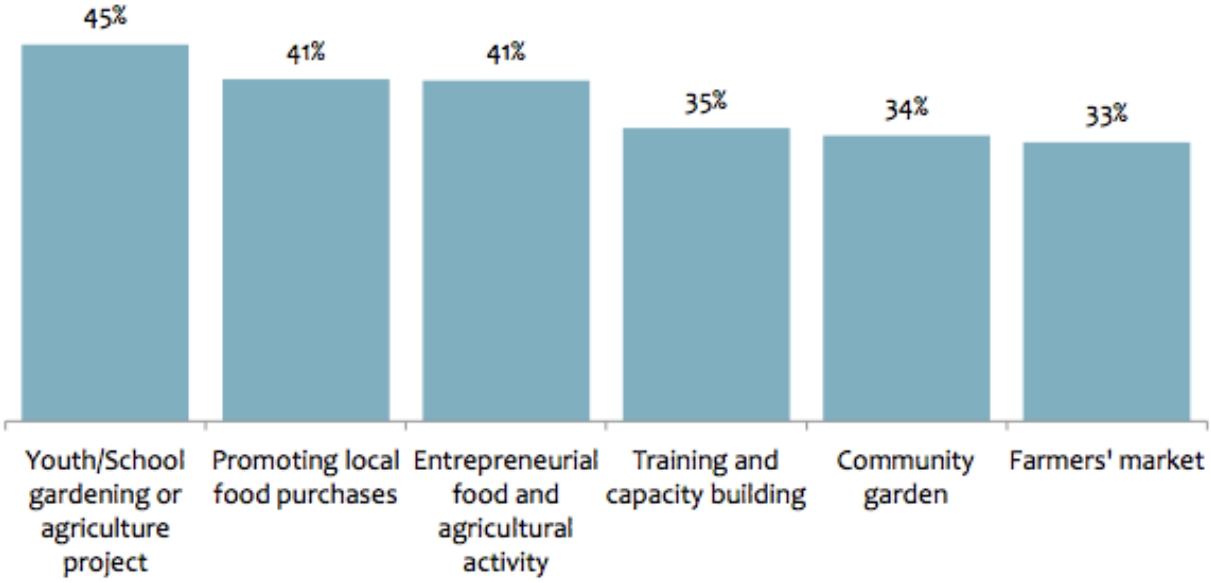


Sources: USDA, Agricultural Marketing Service, Food Nutrition Service; National Farm to School Network.

Diversity is arguably the strongest asset of the CFPCGP; the grant process is inclusive and leaves ample room for creative, new solutions. In 2011 alone, the community food projects nationwide generated 1.5 million pounds of food (produced, procured, collected), 23 food policy councils, 105 full-time jobs, and worked on a total of 250 acres of farm and

garden land (CFP indicators of Success, 2011). The most common activities were youth and school gardening, promoting local food purchases, and entrepreneurial food and agricultural activity (CFP indicators of Success, 2011).

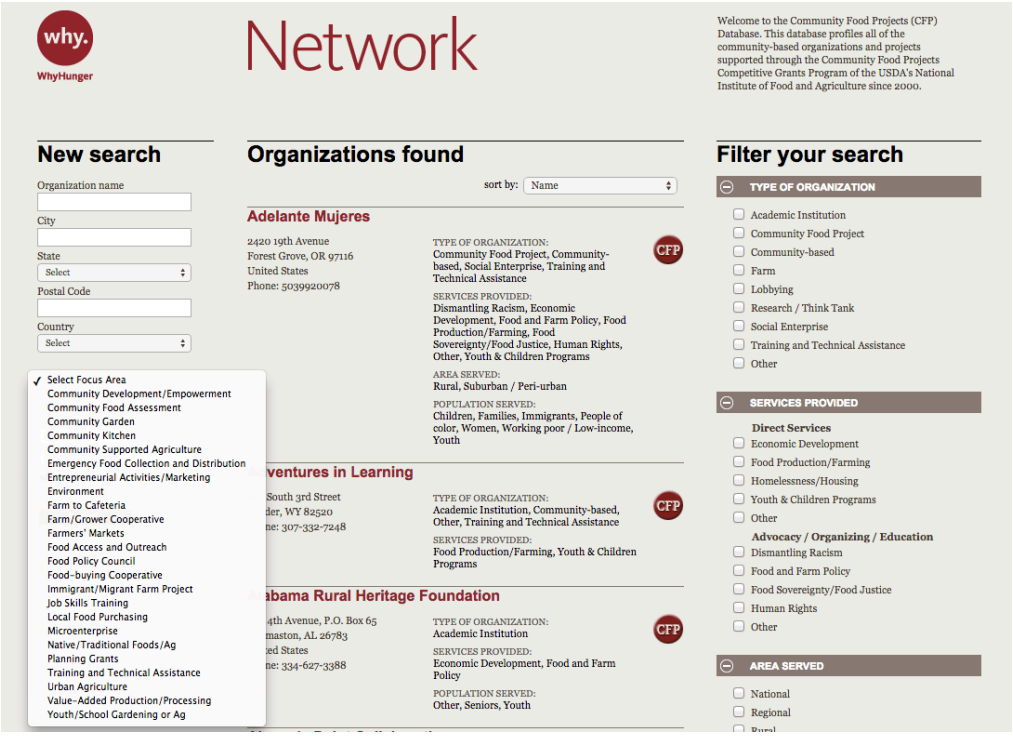
Figure 14: Common Grantee Activities, FY2005-FY2011



Currently, the CFPCGP somewhat effectively communicates the diversity of the recipient base, however the nature of annual grants means that operations are constantly changing. WhyHunger operates the CFP database at the moment. This non-profit is an extension of the Food Security Learning Center (FSLC), which is run by World Hunger Year. Their work with FSLC works to create a hub of information exchange within the CFS movement in order to document effective models and practice. Within the database, the projects are split into 24 categories, with many projects covering multiple areas. It even provides a filter based on organization type, services provided (including food sovereignty, food justice, and human rights), and area and population served.

This tool is incredibly useful for applicants to search for projects in their area or for to find similar work. The ability to search by city, state, and organization name contributes to coalition building and minimizes application and project repetition. The database was critical

for this project. WhyHunger staff members were available to send spreadsheets and answer questions.



RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Expand the size and scope of CFPCGP

In 2014, only 12% of applicants were funded (NESFP 2015). Clearly there is a growing demand for funding local and regional food system planning and action. The coalitions within the food system are unprecedented and hold enormous potential. In 2002 and 2007, CFSC released policy initiatives for the subsequent Farm Bills. In the 2002, *Healthy Farms, Food, and Communities Act*, the CFSC called for an increase funding and an additional $2.5 million for a new mini-grants component for "single-focus" community-based projects. Since then, NIFA has started the Planning Project mini-grant program, which allows for easier access to funds by grantees by building strong grant applications (Gottlieb & Fisher, 2002).

In 2007, the CFSC released the Healthy Food & Healthy Communities Initiative to establish policy proposals for the 2007 Farm Bill in order to strengthen local food systems (Tuckermanty, 2007). Some include:

- Expand funding to $15 million annually for Community Food Project Competitive Grants
- Add $7 million for technical assistance
- Add $3 million to create linkages between emergency food providers and other local food system sectors
- Provide access to healthy, locally produced food in under served urban and rural markets, including institutions
- Support the use of the EBT system at farmers' markets
- Work with partners to expand and improve existing programs (Tuckermanty, 2007).

Based on findings from this research, future CFP should continue to expand funding. CFP should also add funding for:

- Market access and local control of resources for small and mid-size rural producers by allowing funding for community-based farmer cooperatives and food hubs.[3]
- Research native seed varieties and strengthen the local, affordable, and organic seed supply for farmers and growers. Support farmers, growers, and communities that are working to conserve native resources and biodiversity.[4]
- Add technical assistance and education to support farmers with organic production, crop diversity, and local food infrastructure; monitor organizational models involved with this process, such as cooperative extensions and local USDA involvement.

[3] Sara Servin, another American University student within this coalition, has written on the potential for profitable enterprises that create infrastructure for small and mid-scale farmers, such as cooperatives and food hubs.

[4] See American University research about farmer Michael Kotutwa Johnson and his work conserving Hopi native seed varieties: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wJ-tLq7yhk4

2. Address geographic gaps

The CFP selection process should prioritize geographic gaps based on the distribution of past recipients, as well as socioeconomic and agrifood indicators. Subsequent years should aim to select projects within rural areas, especially in the South and the Midwest. The review board must also carefully consider factors that influence agrifood resiliency and community food security. Projects that work to rebuild rural economies would make a significant impact and empower historically underserved areas by funding projects particular to the community, its assets, and the members' preferences and goals.

3. Maintain a diverse review board

The review board to select CFP grantees must also be diverse and represent a number of perspectives. For example, the CFPCGP falls under the Nutrition title of the Farm Bill and many of the program directors have a background in nutrition and diet. Therefore, it is imperative that the review board represents farmers, producers, and community organizers. NIFA consciously picks peer reviewers that have community food knowledge and experience, actors that engage with organizations and understand the networks. However it is imperative that the perspectives from the board must cover diverse fields and socioeconomic experiences.[5]

4. Reauthorize funding for Food Security Learning Center (FSLC)

The 2014 Farm Bill cut funding for FSLC, which means the CFP database will no longer operate. The USDA Current Research Information System (CRIS) database contains all grants, it does not specifically focus on CFP and is not as extensive as the WhyHunger research. Unlike WhyHunger, the CRIS database is incredibly difficult to navigate and does

[5] Communication with NIFA about the current selection process was difficult. Further research could analyze the balance of perspective on the CFP review board.

not allow searches based on type of organization, services provided, area, and population served. It also does not have the same visual appeal or specific tie-in with community food work. FSLC funding should be reauthorized and enhance the capacity of the database to include more information. Reporting on the outcomes and impact of specific projects would be valuable information and experience sharing for grantees, applicants, and community food workers. WhyHunger also has a webpage for digital storytelling about community food. This adds a face to the community food project dialogue and visually represents the alternative movements happening around the nation. The webpage even includes a map that shows the locations of some of the stories. Assets such as these add to the network of organizers and should continue to be supported.

5. Maintain outside reporting and incorporate into the CFP database

Indicators of Success (IOS) for CFP grants were developed through a collaborative effort of more than 70 grantee organizations, including the Community Food Security Coalition and National Research Center Inc. Each grant recipient is expected to fill out a web-based Common Output Tracking Form (COTF) and a Participant Impact Survey (PIS), which help to capture the common outputs and outcomes of community projects (CFP indicators of Success, 2011). Whole measures were developed in order to analyze the impact on whole community development. “These fields include: Healthy People, Strong Communities, Thriving Local Economies, Vibrant Farms and Gardens, Sustainable Ecosystems, and Justice and Fairness” (CFP indicators of Success, 2011). Reporting and evaluation on CFP grants is essential in order to demonstrate the importance and impact of the work.

For many years, CFSC created a number of reports to express the impact and importance of CFP. Between 1997 and 2008, CFSC received $1,455,596 in CFP funds to build capacity for the implementation CFP, such as assistance to applicants, compiling shared experiences, analyzing effective CFP, and creating evaluation reports (CFP Database).

The Community Food Security Coalition, a key player in the start, implementation, and reporting on the CFPCGP, folded in 2012. The FSLC could be key to fill the gap left from the role of CFSC. Evaluation from outside parties allows for more open, constructive criticism and political change. New Entry Sustainable Farming Project may also create an "Indicators of Success Final Report" like the ones from CFSC. NESFP also has a page on their website that compiles resources for CFP applicants and current grantees. In order for this to be most effective, NIFA must add the links to these documents and web pages on the main CFP website and on the Request for Applicants (RFA) publication.

Similarly, further evaluation reports should add more indicators based on farmer livelihood, scale of farming (gardens, small, and mid-size), and economic impact. It would help to evaluate the rural and urban connections within CFP and their social and economic impact.

6. Maintain a scope of resiliency, empowerment, diversity, and education

The dialogue around the goals of CFP is crucial in order to set a standard of food sovereignty and resiliency work that enhance sustainable food systems long-term. The 2015 CFPCGP Request for Applications (RFA) somewhat strayed from this perspective. It states that the CFPCGP aligns, in part, with the Research, Education, and Economics Action Plan and specifically addresses Goal 4: Nutrition and Childhood Obesity, "by strengthening established strategic partnerships and strengthening implementation practices to encourage healthy eating and physical activity at the individual and community levels, focusing on high-risk groups" (Joseph & Siedenburg, 2015). This steps away from the community-based transformation, food sovereignty framework and focuses on individually based behavior change (Joseph & Siedenburg, 2015).

The Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive Grant Program (FINI) already works to increase fruit and vegetable consumption using federal food assistance benefits. For

example, a nonprofit organization could receive a grant to subsidize SNAP benefits at the farmers market. This program is effective because it helps increase access to healthy food while providing income for local farmers. However, the CFPGP should stick to its core principles and select projects that would enhance local empowerment, opportunity, and capacity to make sustainable change and alternative food system structures. A balanced selection of projects and priority areas is key.

For instance, Rural and urban solutions are different and should be equitably funded. In 2011, the CFP recipients worked with 1,102 farmers and 8,476 gardeners. The report mentions 2,200 garden plots involved but not the number of farms (CFP indicators of Success, 2011). The "extent participation has helped me to make a living in agriculture" is mixed; 24 percent said "a great deal" and 20 percent said "not at all" (CPS Indicators, 2011). This demonstrates a divide between urban gardens and rural agricultural livelihood. Ideally, CFP would fund projects so that farmers can make a living in agriculture with minimal barriers and optimal support.

Projects that enhance food sovereignty, local control of resources, and a culture of regional food systems, rural revitalization, and urban equality would more specifically fit with the goals of Community Food Projects. Each community is different; therefore diversity of grant recipients is key. Especially involving the connections and divides between rural and urban agricultural infrastructure.

The language in the Request for Applicants and homepage for CFP is central to determining the scope and perspective of CFP. Therefore, it is recommended that NIFA emphasize the ties between agriculture, nutrition, environment, and health within local food system organizing. When reading the publications from the CFPGP, food sovereignty is only mentioned one time. The materials released by NIFA should further describe the importance of projects that strengthen local control of resources and the viability of small *and* mid-size farming.

CONCLUSION

The Community Food Project Competitive Grant Program is a small program within the immense policy platform of the Farm Bill. However, its modest funding has tremendous potential to build an alternative food system that works towards the interests of people and the environment, and to decentralize the system of corporate power. This program, nestled within the extensive funding for food assistance, exemplifies the diversity that is necessary for sustainable food and agricultural structures. Farm and food policy cannot generalize either the nutritional needs of communities or the types of support and local buy-in necessary. Farmers, urban gardeners, community workers, environmentalists, and health experts all have separate but key roles to play within a healthy food system. By enhancing local organizing through strong networks, CFP can bridge the gaps between sectors and rural and urban communities. In order to make sustainable progress, communities must be able to determine their food system and enhance their autonomy through local production and control of resources. Food sovereignty within the Farm Bill can work to enhance structures that contribute to the worldwide effort for equitable access and diverse production of healthy food. Through united efforts, communities and nations can establish food systems that benefit farmers and provide healthy, fresh produce to all people, regardless of place or income.

APPENDIX I

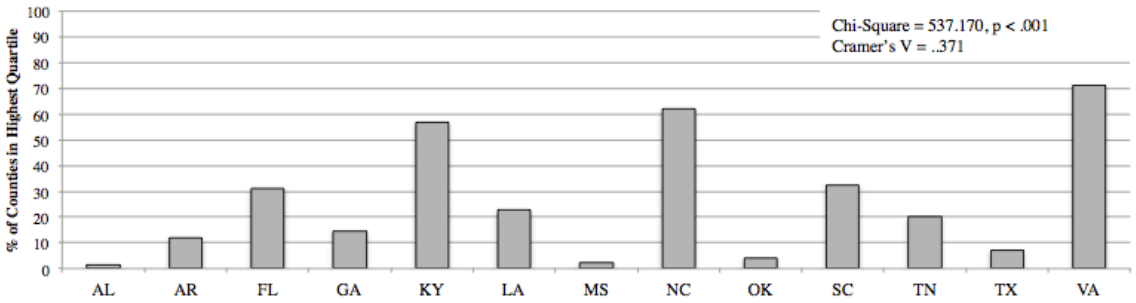
Measures

Dimension	Indicators
Local Ownership/ Control	Principal operator lives on farm % principal operators living on farm Farmer alternatives (alpha = .739) % operations with on-farm packing % operations with direct marketing to retail % operations with community supported agriculture Community alternatives Cumulative score on having meat processing facilities, farmers markets, and farm to school programs
Assets	Financial value of machinery Relative % change in the value of farm machinery between 2007 and 2012
Responsive Redundancy	Average age of farm operator Each county as a % of the highest average age in the region (68.7) Reverse coded for lower average ages to have higher scores on final indicator Stability-Change % change in number of farm operations between 2007 and 2012

Dimension	Indicators
Cooperative, Complimentary Diversity	Row crop diversity Average % of operations producing across seven different row crop options *(Note: Does not indicate these crops were grown on the same farms.)* Vegetable production % operations with vegetables harvested Livestock production % operations with livestock sales
Integration of Natural Ecological Systems	Low chemical input (alpha = .759) % agricultural land not treated with herbicides % agricultural land not treated with insecticides *(Note: Acres of "crop land" in the denominator. Numerator for insecticides excludes treatment for nematodes.)* Organic practices % operations certified organic Management intensive/rotational grazing % operations practicing management intensive/rotational grazing
Modular Connectivity	Internet connectivity % operations with Internet access

APPENDIX II

Total Resilient Agrifood Systems Index by State
% of Counties in State Ranked in Highest Category



Correlations Between Sociodemographic Characteristics and Total Resilient Agrifood Systems Index

Sociodemographic Characteristics	Correlation with Total Resilience Index	
	Pearson's r	Spearman's rho
Population (2010)	.140	.342
Total Migration (2000-2010)	.308	.375
% Families in Poverty (2007-12)	-.332	-.305

Sources: 2012 Census of Agriculture, 2013 Food Atlas, 2014 review of state policies and regulations, 2010 Decennial Census, American Community Survey 2012 Five-Year Estimates, Winkler et al. Net Migration Patterns for US Counties. Analyses of 1302 counties.

WORKS CITED

8 Ways Monsanto Fails at Sustainable Agriculture. *Union of Concerned Scientists*. Retrieved from: http://www.ucsusa.org/food_and_agriculture/our-failing-food-system/genetic-engineering/eight-ways-monsanto-fails.html#.VUjia9pViko

"Agriculture at a Crossroads: IAASTD Synthesis Report." (2009). *International Assessment of Agricultural Knowledge, Science, and Technology for Development*. Web.

Bando, M. (2009). U.S. Food Consumption As a % of Calories. *New York Coalition for Healthy School Food*. Retrieved from: http://www.nyu.edu/sustainability/pdf/NYCHSF_FoodGraph2.pdf

Chapter 2: Profiling Food Consumption in America. *USDA Agricultural Factbook*. Retrieved from: http://www.usda.gov/factbook/chapter2.pdf

Chen, W., Clayton, M.L., Palmer, A. (2015). Community Food Security in the United States: A Survey of the Scientific Literature Volume II. *The Johns Hopkins Center for a Livable Future*. Web.

Clapp J. & Fuchs D. (Eds.). (2009). Corporate Power in Global Agrifood Governance. Boston.

Coleman-Jensen, A., Gregory, C., & Singh, Anita. (2014). Household Food Security in the United States in 2013. *USDA ERS*. Retrieved from: http://www.ers.usda.gov/media/1565410/err173_summary.pdf

Community Food Project Database. *Food Security Learning Center*. WhyHunger.

Community Food Projects Indicators of Success: Fiscal Year 2011 Final Report. (2011). Retrieved from: http://nesfp.org/sites/default/files/uploads/cfp_ios_fy11_results.pdf

Community Food Projects Competitive Grant Program: 2015 Request for Applicants. (2015). *USDA NIFA*. Retreived from: http://nifa.usda.gov/sites/default/files/rfa/15_Community%20Foods%20final%20to%20post.pdf

Community Food Projects Competitive Grant Program (CFPCGP). *USDA NIFA*. Retrieved from: http://nifa.usda.gov/program/community-food-projects-competitive-grant-program-cfpcgp

DePillis, L. (2013). Mississippians are the fattest people in the nation, and also have the hardest time getting fed. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from:

http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/wonkblog/wp/2013/09/06/mississippians-are-the-fattest-people-in-the-nation-and-also-have-the-hardest-time-getting-fed/

De Schutter, Olivier. (2014). Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to food, Olivier De Schutter. *United Nations General Assembly*. Web.

Farm Bill 101. (2012). Food & Water Watch. Retrieved from: http://www.foodandwaterwatch.org/reports/farm-bill-101/

Food Sovereignty. National Family Farm Coalition and Grassroots International Retrieved from: http://www.nffc.net/Farmers%20Worldwide/Food%20Sovereignty%20One-Pager.pdf

Goldsmith, E., N. Hildyard, P. McCully, & P. Bunyard. (1990). *Imperiled Planet: Restoring Our Endangered Ecosystems*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Gottlieb, R. & Fisher, A. (1995). The Community Food Security Empowerment Act. *Community Food Security Coalition*. Print.

Gottlieb, R. & Fisher, A. (2002). The Healthy Farms, Food, and Communities Act. *Community Food Security Coalition*. Print.

Graddy-Lovelace, G. (2015). *Political Economy and Global Agribusiness* [Powerpoint slides].

Green, J. J. (2014). Resilient Local Agrifood Systems in the Southern United States. *University of Mississippi Center for Population Studies*.

Green, J.J. & Kleiner, A. (2009). Escaping the bondage of the dominant agrifood system: Community-based cooperative strategies. *Southern Rural Sociological Association,* 24(2), 149-168.

Gundersen, C. & Ziliak. J.P. (2014). Childhood Food Insecurity in the U.S.: Trends, Causes, and Policy Options. *The Future of Children*. Web.

Hauter, W. (2012). Foodopoly: The Battle Over the Future of Food and Farming in America. New York, NY: The New Press.

Joseph, H. & Siedenburg, K. (2015). The 2015 Community Food Projects Grant Writing Guide. *New Entry Sustainable Farming Project*. Retrieved from: http://nesfp.org/sites/default/files/uploads/community_food_projects_2015_grant_writing_guide.pdf

Krueger, J.E., Krub, K.R., & Hayes, L.A. (2010). Planting the Seeds for Public Health: How the Farm Bill Can Help Farmers to Produce and Distribute Healthy Food. *Farmers' Legal Action Group Inc*. Retrieved from: http://www.flaginc.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/PlantingTheSeeds.pdf

Pimentel, D. & Pimentel M. (2003). Sustainability of meat-based and plant-based diets and the environment. *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*, 73(3): 660S-663S. Retrieved from: http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/12936963?dopt=Abstract

Riffkin, R. (2014). Mississippians' Struggles to Afford Food Continued in 2013. *Gallup*. Retrieved from: http://www.gallup.com/poll/167774/mississippians-struggles-afford-food-continue-2013.aspx#1

Ritchie, M. & Ristau, K. (1987). Crisis By Design: A Brief Review of U.S. Farm Policy. League of Rural Voters Education Project. Retrieved from: http://www.iatp.org/files/258_2_48644.pdf

Tuckermanty, E. (2007). Healthy Food Healthy Communities: A Decade of Community Food Projects in Action. *Community Food Security Coalition*. Print.

University of Mississippi Center for Population Studies. (2015). County-Level Resilient Local Agrifood System Indicators for the Southern United States. Secondary Data Indicators Constructed for the Project *Analysis to Define Progress Barriers and Opportunities for Sustainability and Social-Ecological Resilience*, Delta Land & Community, Inc.

Watzman, N. & Lannon, B. (2014). Five charts on food industry influence. *Sunlight Foundation*. Retrieved from: http://sunlightfoundation.com/blog/2014/06/16/five-charts-on-agribusiness-influence/

Weis, T. (2007). *The Global Food Economy: The Battle for the Future of Farming*. Halifax, Canada: Fernwood Publishing.

Winders, B. (2009). The Politics of the Food Supply: U.S. Agricultural Policy in the World Economy. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Winne, M., Joseph, H., & Fisher, A. (1997). Community Food Security: A Guide to Concept, Design, and Implementation. *Community Food Security Coalition*. Web.