

COMING TO TERMS WITH OUR FOOD SYSTEM MINISTRIES

Food security means having reliable access to sufficient, nutritious food for a healthy life. Some definitions include language such as culturally appropriate [food]. People may experience temporary **food insecurity**, such as when there is no food in the cupboard and money has run out at the end of the month, or chronic food insecurity caused by chronic poverty, environmental degradation, and war. **Food access** may be limited by affordability or geography and transportation. If there is no reliable source of nutritious food in an urban neighborhood or rural area, it is said to be a **food desert**.

Food sovereignty refers to the ability of a country, region or community to meet its own food needs. The term seems to have originated to describe the transition from providing food aid to helping people in the developing or conflict torn parts of the world rebuild sustainable local food systems. It is increasingly applied to communities in the United States.

A **food system** comprises all the activities in providing food, from soil back to compost, including growing, harvesting, processing, distributing, selling, buying, preparing and eating. It cannot, though, be depicted as a simple supply chain, since there are many feedback loops and complex relationships. For example, waste occurs along the chain at many points, and workers at each of the steps are also consumers.

Food justice is often used to refer to the human right to food security, but may also be used to describe the pursuit of justice in any aspect of the food system, such as farm or food system worker justice.

Ecojustice or **environmental justice** is an ethical principle recognizing that environmental devastation and economic and social injustice go hand in hand. Environmental and human rights are seen as a continuum, not competing values. The food system is one place where this principle is evident and applicable.

In agriculture, **sustainability** or the triple bottom line, means that farmers making a living, increasing social equity for farm workers and community stakeholders, and promoting ecological wellbeing are all core values. (Others, following the lead of Pope Francis, may call this “integral ecology.”) For some, **resilience** is a higher value, especially as we face accelerating climate change. Resilience is the capacity to prepare for, work with, and recover from crises or disasters with minimal harm to the farmer, others involved in the work or benefitting from it, and the environment.

Many terms used in describing agriculture can be confusing. When food is **certified organic**, it means it was produced following certain guidelines. Because certification involves time and money, some small scale farmers grow crops using **sustainable** methods, but do not pursue the organic label. Organic food is not necessarily grown sustainably, since large organic farms often import inputs, export waste, and use pesticides approved for organic growing. Large scale agriculture not certified organic may be referred to as **conventional** or sometimes industrial. A **CAFO** is a confined animal feeding operation, common in the production of meat, milk, poultry

and eggs. **Pesticide** usually refers to a means of reducing or eliminating representatives of the animal or fungal kingdoms detrimental to crops, though it may be used generically to refer to chemical substances applied to kill most anything detrimental to crops. **Herbicide** refer to a chemical used to control pests from the plant kingdom, also known as weeds.

Carbon emissions is sometimes used as a catch all term for all **greenhouse gases**. **CO₂e**, carbon dioxide equivalents, is a more precise term. **Methane** (CH₄) is a powerful contributor from the food system due to food waste in landfills, enteric fermentation (belching) in cattle, and livestock manure. Carbon farming is the practice of sequestering carbon, thus having a negative impact on atmospheric carbon, through rangeland management, no till farming, and related practices. In agriculture **nitrogen** gases have an even greater impact on climate change than any carbon gases. N₂O, nitrous oxide, has 298 times the impact of CO₂; certain cultivation practices as well as organic and synthetic fertilizers contribute to its presence in the atmosphere. Nitrogen run off from fertilized crop land and lawns contributes to dead zones in waterways and oceans.

And now for some alphabet soup. **CSA** stands for community supported agriculture, where consumers contribute up front to the costs of farming and then take a share of the produce as it is harvested. There are also speciality CSAs, for example, for fruit, and **CSFs**, or community supported fisheries in coastal communities. **SNAP** is the supplemental nutrition assistance program, which used to be called food stamps, but it is now distributed not as stamps, but with **EBTs**, electronic benefit transfer cards. It may be called something else where you live; it is CalFresh in California. **WIC** stands for Women, Infants and Children, and is used by low income parents for foods specifically designated as nutritionally important for children under 5 years old and their mothers.

And for the style manual: **Healthful** means beneficial to or promoting health. **Healthy** means enjoying or evincing health. *My healthy tomato plants are going to give me lots of healthful salads.*

There used to be a glossary of climate change terms on the EPA website, but it was removed by the current administration. UC Davis to the rescue.

<https://climatechange.ucdavis.edu/science/climate-change-definitions/>

An excellent glossary on Local and Regional Food Systems is here:

<http://guides.library.cornell.edu/c.php?g=31298&p=199469>

More help with how to talk about food justice.

<https://tilth.org/stories/food-justice-definitions/>

An extended definition of food sovereignty plus many interesting links.

<http://usfoodsovereigntyalliance.org/what-is-food-sovereignty/>

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