

# Seeking justice in the American agrifood system: power, perspective, and practice



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# Food justice issues

- food insecurity
- working conditions
- access to resources
- exclusive decision making



# Discursive turn toward justice

- Sustainable agriculture movement
- Community food security movement
- AFIs, food policy councils, labeling criteria



# Seeking justice: perceptions

- Alternative food institution leaders
- Consumers
- University staff, students, faculty



# Perceptions: AFI leaders

- 3/4 of organizations had a position of social justice in the food system
- 3/4 of leaders said a socially just food system is economically equitable
- economy equity included fair compensation of labor, common ownership of land, meeting basic needs regardless of ability to pay



# Perceptions: consumers

What does the term, “socially just food system” mean to you?

- farmers’ market group: access to food, democratic, community, culturally inclusive
- upscale grocery store group: access to food, environment, food safety, health
- discount grocery store group: did not have answer; then discussed experiences of exploitation, pesticide exposure



# Perceptions: university

89% said it is important that their food is produced in a socially just manner; willing to pay for justice

## Important criteria for definition of social justice

<b>Highest</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Lowest</b>	<b>%</b>
Equal access to education	93	Cap on income	30
Natural resources protection	89	Land owned by society	25
Basic health care	87	Equal distribution of inherited wealth	25

# Perceptions: summary

- Interest in social justice in the food system
- Criteria include economic equity, access to opportunity, health
- Some indication of willingness to pay for justice





# Seeking justice: practice

- Alternative food institutions
- Food-system localization
- Farm-to-school programs

# Seeking justice in practice: CSAs and farmers' markets

- Farm security *and* food security?



- limited low-income participation
- managers interested in food security
- managers willing to try new strategies

# Seeking justice in practice: CSAs

Alternative *to* market or  
alternative *type* of  
market?

- decision making
- members and growers
- catalyst



# Seeking justice in practice: local food campaigns

- ethical consumption
- resistance to globalization, industrialization
- locating justice



# Seeking justice in practice: farm-to-school

- potential
- implementation
- discourse

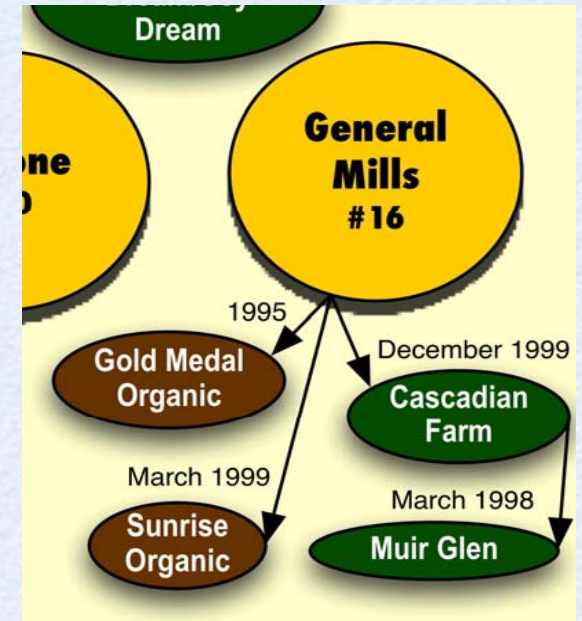


# Seeking justice in practice: summary

- Market-based solutions and entrepreneurialism
- Choice and subjects
- Community and othering

# Hiding justice: challenges

- Political power
- Material power
- Discursive power: ideology and epistemology



# Finding justice: tensions

- alternative and opposition
- structure and agency
- systemic forces and contingency



# Finding justice: the power of food

- essential
- universal—no demographic boundaries
- structures daily intimate connections
- one in five American workers works in the food system

# Finding justice: convergence

- public health and environmental justice movements
- AFI leaders
- food workers (1 in 5 American workers)
- consumers



# Finding justice: axes of action

- comprehensible, succinct definition
- unifying popular discourse
- coalition building
- reflexivity and cognitive praxis
- actions for productive justice
- activist-academic workgroups and “think tanks”



# Finding justice: definition

- ❖ A food system in which power and material resources are shared equitably so that people and communities can meet their needs, and live with security and dignity, now and into the future.

Developed by Activist Researcher Consortium, January 2004

# Finding justice: eye on the ball



<http://www.ucsc.edu/casf>  
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