

COMMUNITY-SCALE IN FOOD SYSTEMS

CSI's role in food systems work:

- Helping develop a racial equity policy framework to create equitable "farm to fork" food policy.
- Identifying policies that support small and medium farmers of color, minimum wage reform for food systems workers and regional food hub strategies.
- Connecting local communities of color with national food advocates to develop a better race analysis and strategy for an equitable food system.

Community-scale in the food system is about:

- Meaningful local scale ownership in the production, distribution and retail sales of healthy foods;
- Urban-rural food hubs where farmers who grow fruits and vegetables have the ability to reach local markets, particularly communities lacking sufficient access to quality and affordable healthy foods;
- Strengthening the ability of food systems workers, disproportionately low wage people of color, to be able to afford healthy food;
- Projects such as urban gardens and farms; food policy councils that drive a region's food policy; fresh, local food purchasing by schools; local food cooperatives that include an ownership stake in communities of color; locally owned food processing plants.

Challenges to community-scale in the food system:

- *The Farm Bill*: The Farm bill subsidizes large-scale farmers who grow wheat, corn and soy, but not small and medium-scale farmers who grow fruits and vegetables. This puts small farmers at a disadvantage and contributes to making unhealthy products cheaper than healthy ones..
- *Agribusiness*: Family farmers do not have many local/regional market options for sales of their produce, and market forces push them into contracts to grow subsidized crops for big agribusinesses. Once executed, these contracts are difficult and costly to break.
- *Retail Giants*: Big chains like Wal-Mart displace small, local businesses, including groceries, and the jobs they provide tend to be low-wage, like food retail and food preparers, and are most often occupied by people of color.
- *Access to Financing*: Community-scale operators struggle to find investment to help them scale up, particularly in communities of color, which have historically faced redlining and disinvestment.

Communities of color are leading efforts for community-scale change:

- The *Detroit Black Food Security Network* created a seven acre farm providing fresh foods to their neighborhood and a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) project, and is currently planning for two community-owned cooperatives: a processing center and a distribution center.
- The *Detroit Food Policy Council* is driving the public conversation around using vacant property for food production, supporting healthy school foods, and improving access to healthy foods for low-income communities of color.
- The *Common Market* in Philadelphia, PA, is developing a local food distribution hub that connects rural farmers from South Jersey and Southeast Pennsylvania to urban markets, including hospitals, schools, churches and a low-income food cooperative/CSA.

Policies and strategies to support community-scale food systems

To achieve broader change, we need to:

- Build meaningful multiracial alliances that link policy advocates, innovators, and community leaders across the food chain to demand fair and inclusive policies.
- Push for policies that support living-wage jobs that are critical to build a local economy and healthy community.
- Advance agriculture policy that does not prioritize large commodity producers over family farmers who provide healthy foods in our community.