

# Food Policy for Food Justice: Food Justice & Farmers' Market

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According to the US Department of Agriculture, the number of farmers' markets in the US increased from 1,700 in 1994 to more than 8,200 in 2014. This increase demonstrates the growing public interest in eating more fresh produce and supporting local growers. Farmers' markets also provide people an opportunity to have regular interaction with local farmers, develop relationships and have a greater appreciation for what it takes to grow food, especially outside of current agribusiness models.



However, having more farmers' markets doesn't necessarily result in a more just food system. In some ways, they can perpetuate the current food system's inequalities. For example, a farmers' market that is part of a larger urban development plan often benefits those with economic and racial privilege.

These markets charge more for produce and other food items use public dollars without public input and often contribute to urban gentrification.

When looking at farmers' markets through a food justice lens, the market should not contribute to further inequity or sustain the current food system, which creates and perpetuates food insecurity. A farmers' market that practices food justice would deliberately make it a priority to serve the nutritional needs of those most negatively impacted by the current food system. It would target communities of color, working class communities and communities experiencing poverty.

These communities consist of people receiving government food assistance like SNAP, WIC and the Double Up Food Bucks programs. The food justice movement and public health sectors have been pushing for more food assistance for purchasing fresh produce and even vegetable plants for those who want to



While such programs are subsidized by public money, the dollars spent on government food assistance programs pales in comparison to the public dollars supporting large corporate agribusiness. While neither subsidy is sustainable, Our Kitchen Table supports subsidizing communities experiencing poverty until our food system is truly democratic.

In addition to supporting people experiencing food insecurity, farmers' markets that practice food justice should also make it a priority to have local growers and vendors who practice ecologically sound growing practices and fair labor practices. A farmers' market practicing food justice should be transparent about these dynamics and exhibit signage that makes the practice of food justice highly visible.

Last, farmers' markets should not end up being niche markets, but rather venues for both transforming the current food system and creating new food system models. In addition to providing more fresh food purchasing options, a farmers' market that practices food justice should also educate the community about the food system and share resources and skills that empower people to collectively become more food independent, for example, cooking resources, food preservation workshops, seed exchanges, information of food policy challenges and even the development of food cooperatives. In other words, a farmers' market that practices food justice should not only be a means to resist the current agribusiness food model, but also provide a venue for people to create truly democratic food systems that ultimately lead to food sovereignty.



For more information about Our Kitchen Table and its farmers' market, the Southeast Area Farmers Market, contact [OKTable1@gmail.com](mailto:OKTable1@gmail.com) or call 616-206-3641. You can also get updates about the Southeast Area Farmers Market at [www.facebook.com/seafmfarmermarket](http://www.facebook.com/seafmfarmermarket).

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**O**ur Kitchen Table believes that these injustices need to be fought and the fight needs to be led by women of color. While providing temporary relief, food handouts and food assistance, are not the answer. We need a food system where women of color and communities of color play an intricate role in determining the kind of food they eat, how it is produced and who benefits from that food production.

Organizations like Via Campesina, Navdanya and the Coalition of Immokalee Workers all recognize the vital role that women play in food justice and food sovereignty movements. Our Kitchen Table is committed to playing this same role in West Michigan, empowering women of color to have a voice in determining the kind of food system they want.

We see women of color creating food justice in the following ways:

- **Having real access to healthy and nutritious food** through growing, preserving and preparing their own food. We do this by offering food growing resources and operating neighborhood-based farmers markets.
- **Changing school food policies** to guarantee that their children eat healthy, nutritious meals, made fresh daily. We do this by supporting food growing projects and local schools with students and parents.
- **Sharing knowledge and skills** on food growing, food preparation, seed saving and food preservation. The more women have these skills and share them with each other, the more influence they will have in creating a food justice movement. We do this by hosting forums, workshops and creating educational materials on food justice.
- **Challenging local restaurants** to prepare food that is local, fresh, culturally relevant and does not use exploitative labor, including those who pick the food, prepare the food and serve the food.
- **Demanding that the City of Grand Rapids allow women of color to garden on vacant, city-owned land** for food production in their neighborhoods.



*For more information on the food growing and food justice work of Our Kitchen Table, contact us at [OKTable1@gmail.com](mailto:OKTable1@gmail.com).*



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The movement for Food Justice is changing Food Apartheid. Armed with the notion that everyone has the right to eat healthy, food justice advocates engage in more locally grown food projects, sharing skills

on how to grow, prepare and preserve food, while exposing the current food system's unjust nature .

The Food Justice Movement is an international movement that is ultimately fighting for Food Sovereignty, where everyone has say in the kind of food systems they want. Food Sovereignty is Food Democracy, where healthy food is a right for everyone—not just for those who can afford it. Here is a list of Food Justice principles that Our Kitchen Table supports and promotes:

- Food Justice recognizes that the causes of food disparity are the result of multiple systems of oppression. To practice food justice we must do the work through an intersectional lens.
- Food Justice advocates must focus on working with the most marginalized and vulnerable populations: communities of color, communities in poverty, immigrants, children, our elders, women, people who identify as LGBTQ, those with disabilities and people experiencing homelessness.
- Food Justice require us to work towards the elimination of exploitation in our food system, both exploitation of humans and animal s.
- Food Justice demands that we grow food in such a way that preserves ecological biodiversity and promotes sustainability in all aspects.
- Provide resources and skill sharing so that people can be collectively more food self-sufficient.



**Eating Healthy Food is a Right!** The current global food system must be resisted and dismantled. For more information on ways to practice Food Justice in your community, contact Our Kitchen Table.



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