

Towards a People's Food Policy...

In October 2015 grassroots food and farming organisations in the UK began a process to create a People's Food Policy for the UK. Stewarded by the Land Workers' Alliance, the aim of the project is to engage in a process from the ground up to articulate a vision of a fairer food system for all, and how it can be realised.

The process is intended to be carried out in a participatory, inclusive and grassroots way in order to provide a platform to a) vision what kind of a dignified and just citizens' food system we need across the UK b) to articulate concrete policy recommendations that would be included in a National Food and Farming Policy c) for this paper to be used as a toolkit to support, organise and mobilise around moving towards a better food system in the UK.

What is a food system?

A food system is the path that food travels from field to fork. It is made up of all the components of how food is grown, reared, harvested, processed, packaged, distributed, transported, accessed, consumed and disposed.

What is a food policy?

A food policy is any decision, program or project that is supported by government at local and national levels which effects how the food system works.

1. Why a People's Food Policy?

Currently there is no National Food and Farming Policy across the UK that connects the dots between food, farming, health, labour rights, trade, the environment and community well-being. This omission is having serious long term impacts on our food and farming system, people's livelihoods, the fabric and cohesion of both rural and urban communities, and the environment.

However, in the wake of Brexit, calls for a National Food and Farming Policy are being heard from across the political spectrum. It is entirely unclear what the implications of the UK's departure from the European Union will be on our food system and many - or indeed all - of our economic and agricultural policies will need to be reformed and renegotiated towards national policies. That is a huge task and it is important that politicians do not only hear the voices of the corporate food industry. We must ensure that a plurality of voices are represented at the negotiating table.

We urgently need to map out a Food and Farming Policy that prioritizes and ensures everyone in the UK has the right and access to adequate and nutritious food, empowers communities, supports producers and protects the environment. We need the development of policy that works towards the creation of a food system that is socially just, ecologically sustainable and economically viable.

2. The people's contribution

We recognize that all across the UK in the past two decades there has been a phenomenal groundswell in the number of grassroots organisations, unions, activists, individuals, councils and communities (both rural and urban) working towards creating a more sustainable and just food, farming and health system. This work has intensified in response to the impact of the most recent Conservative Government's austerity and social cutback measures, which have brought about the growing inequality of wealth and health across the UK and a resultant increase in people identifying as food, housing, labour and wage insecure.

The People's Food Policy visions and policy proposals are intended to build upon all the work that is currently being done across this network, and make a contribution towards the case for what we believe must be included in a national food and farming policy. We will create the People's Food Policy by seeking participation and collaboration with people across the UK who are organising and working around realising our right to food using frameworks of food justice and food sovereignty.

3. Our timeline

Since October 2015, and over the coming months between now and the end of September 2016, we have been and will continue to engage with people, grassroots organisations, community groups and unions across the country to discuss what sort of food, farming and health policies we need in the UK that will enable major changes in the policies and budgets that dictate our current food system.

By January 2017 we aim to have a working paper of the People's Food Policy that puts forward an inter-connected and coherent set of policy recommendations for creating a People's Food Policy, and how we can start to realise a sustainable, democratic and dignified food and farming system for all in the UK.

From January 2017 onwards we will then share this paper for wider consultation and input with those who participated in the initial consultation phase and those who would like to participate to offer input in this second round of consultation and developing the next stages of the project.

4. Your participation

We have put together a set of questions we are asking you to answer. You can answer them as an individual, a group or as a representative of an organisation/union. The ideas, contributions and testimonies we receive will be a core foundation for writing the document and building future alliances.

Please fill out the questionnaire here:

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/towardsapeoplesfoodpolicy>

Your participation and contribution to this process is essential if we are to put together a document that reflects and includes the multitude of voices, most pressing issues and lived experiences of people in the food system across the UK. If we are to map out how we can create policies for a national food system that favours a human rights based approach rather than one dictated by market logic and austerity we need to work together.

In these hugely unpredictable times, now more than ever, it is crucial that our voices are heard strongly and in harmony if we are to see the development of national food and farming policies that are of benefit to us all. Together we have the power to influence and shape the future of our food system.

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