

***“Growing Political Consensus through Food”
We the People = All the People***

Fact Sheet

**2020 U.S. ELECTIONS: FOOD, FARMS, DEMOCRACY PLATFORM
"Making the next U.S. Secretary of Agriculture an Election Issue
— for all candidates and all voters"**

The platform contains four sections:

- Talking about the next U.S. Secretary of Agriculture now—during election season and during the transition to January 21, 2021—might make the U.S. food & farm movement more effective (now and later)
- Food & Farm Agenda for 21st century
- Qualifications for Next U.S. Secretary of Agriculture
- Proposed Nominees for Next U.S. Secretary of Agriculture

The platform can be accessed in two ways:

- 2-page [printable PDF](#)
- [Blogpost](#) on my website

Why now?

John Ikerd, agricultural economist emeritus (Univ. of Missouri), said it best in his July 2020 article, [U.S. Farm Policy Alternatives for 2020](#):

— "Arguably, the outcomes of past general elections, since at least the 1970s, have made relatively little difference in U.S. farm policies. The farm-state Democrats and Republicans who write the farm bills have generally agreed on the broad outlines of farm policy. But this year will be different in one regard. Concerns among farmers, as well as the general public, about increased weather volatility will likely force both parties to address the issue of climate change."

— "Even with a moderate candidate, the Democratic Party will be under pressure to embrace a more progressive political agenda to ensure a strong turnout for the 2020 elections."

— "A complete transformation of farm policies will not be accomplished in the 2020 elections or the 2023 farm bill. However, for the first time in 50 years, there is an opportunity to begin creating a better future for American agriculture by reshaping U.S. farm policy."

What does the 2020 Food, Farms, Democracy platform do?

The platform highlights:

- Existence of a U.S. Secretary of Agriculture for the urban & suburban population — 70% of U.S. voters
- Gateways for urban and suburban voters to discuss food & farm policy intelligently
- Examples of qualifications to look for in a U.S. Secretary of Agriculture of the “people’s Department” (per Abraham Lincoln)
- Examples of people who would represent the entire food chain, including non-humans
- Whole food & whole farm agendas —one for 2020, one for 50 years from now, one for seven generations ahead. All are comprehensive; two have been vetted by national coalitions.

What has created this “first time in 50 years” opportunity for U.S. food & farm policy?

1. Food & Farm Movement. For 35 years, since c.1985, the food & farm movement has been growing, uniting farmers and eaters and connecting people in rural, suburban, and urban communities around local and regional food systems.

2. The COVID pandemic has demonstrated the value of existing local food infrastructure:

- farmers markets, including winter markets, food hubs
- urban farms, community gardens, home gardens, backyard chickens (and other small livestock)
- farm-to-school programs (fresh, local food in school meals; school garden or farm; food systems curriculum for K-12, and now Early Childhood)
- food co-ops, buying clubs, CSAs, farm-to-table restaurants
- alternative farmer associations, beginning farmer training programs
- food policy councils (FPCs)

3. The pandemic has also exposed the disparities in our local food infrastructure. While nationally it is robust and growing, there are too many communities, neighborhoods, groups of people, geographical pockets, etc., who are not part of a local food economy.

4. Women’s public authority. 70-80% of organizers and advocates in the food & farm movement are women

5. Justice Democrats. Since 2018 we have an alternative to “corporate” Democrats

6. Telecommunications technology. Internet, social media, mobile phones

7. Cracks in the hegemony of Big Ag farm groups, e.g., American Farm Bureau Federation

8. Young voters are looking for a politically progressive platform that they want to work for

9. Labor unions. Re-invigorated labor movement around supermajorities

10. International support. Because U.S. farm policy has had such detrimental impacts on local food systems in other countries, the rest of the world will be cheering us on.

11. Monetary policy. Monetary and banking policy—The Money Question—has finally become a 21st century issue. U.S. people are working on a variety of structural money reforms: Public banks, public sovereign money, parity agriculture, reparations, funded sovereignty for all voters, jobs guarantee, Green New Deal.

12. Compost. Our national compost pile is getting bigger and bigger, riper and riper. Since 2017, rotting U.S. institutions have been crumbling before our eyes, releasing old energies and turning into black gold, as it were. By 2021, perhaps a supermajority of us will want to start shoveling, spreading the compost everywhere, for everyone.

13. “Democracy is a lifestyle” (Andrea Chalupa, GaslitNation)—for all of us, working together.

Next Steps ?

- Share with voters, candidates (president, Congress, state), and media
- Add your own nominee for the next U.S. Secretary of Agriculture

Prepared by Debbie Hillman
Evanston, IL
www.FoodFarmsDemocracy.net

with input from colleagues on three U.S. listservs:

- COMFOOD (Tufts University) oldest & largest all-purpose food system listserv
- Food Policy Networks — FPN (Johns Hopkins University) supports food policy councils (FPCs)
- Regeneration Midwest (12-state coalition founded by Organic Consumers Assn. in 2018)