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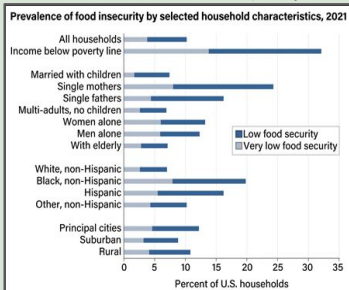
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Food Injustice in the United States: What Can We Learn and How Can We Act

Katie McGushin

Why Should Americans Care?

Food insecurity is a deeply interconnected, systemic issue related to the monoculture food industry and an unjust governance system that disproportionality affects people of color. Through education and practice, Americans can overcome food insecurity and break down walls to create a healthy culture of full stomachs and equality.



Note: Food-insecure households include those with low food security and very low food security.
Source: USDA, Economic Research Service using data from U.S. Department of Commerce, The Census, 2021 Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement.

usda.gov/data-products/chart-gallery

Food insecurity is defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) as, "access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life." Despite the United States being a top global exporter of many modern staple crops, including corn, 33.8 million Americans live in food-insecure households according to the 2021 Census.

What Can Be Learned From The Past?

Historically, the USDA has discriminated against Black farmers, removed Native Americans from their land, and incorporated the land of American people into national parks. In all cases, the USDA has restricted or removed the right for people to create a self-reliant food source and to prosper economically from their land. Actions like these from the U.S. government directly lead to groups of marginalized people being unable to provide for themselves financially and greatly reducing their access to food. It's a systemic, racial, and class-motivated issue.



scholastic.com/honoring-our-past

What Should Americans Be Asking?

- Currently, Americans that live in low-income localities have limited access to food, particularly fresh produce, and often turn to cheap, processed foods. Can this diet lead to a "healthy life" as the USDA's definition entails?
- Despite a need for change, people living in low-income areas don't typically have the time or resources to advocate for change. How can all Americans act to rework this system?

Solutions: Utopian and Realistic

In a perfect world, the U.S. government would adjust the subsidization of industrial farms and refocus that economic asset on promoting sustainable agriculture through local land use and increasing the population's awareness about agroecology. Unfortunately, this would lead to a deficit in exported produce which would be a demotivating factor from the perspective of an economically fueled food industry and government.

Fortunately, some farms and projects in America focus on curating food justice, such as Soul Fire Farm in New York. Their overarching goal is to create fair food production and exchange systems while removing racism from the system via education and practice. They are led by people of color and use native practices to provide food, jobs, and education; effectively transforming communities to become self-reliant and connected to the land.

Visit the Soul Fire Farm website to learn about their numerous integrated goals and practices:

soulfirerfarm.org

Action

The best and most accessible way to end food injustice at an individual level is to find ways to fund, support, and connect with these projects. Spreading awareness and becoming an educated, aware consumer when possible is the best way to promote food justice and redirect demand from industrialized farming in America to local farms and projects.

Citations:

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