

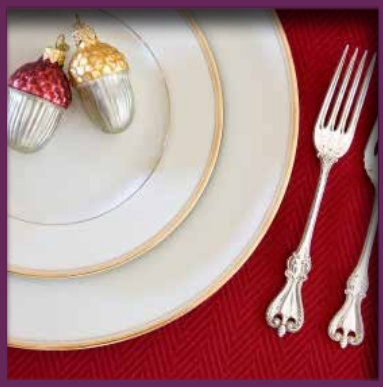


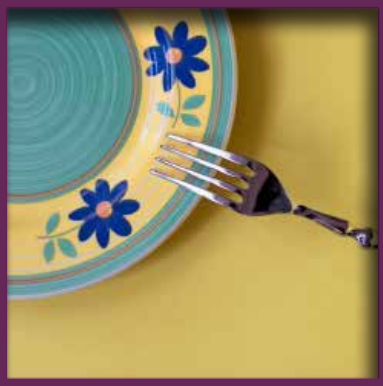


FOOD

What Might Be for Dinner?

Prepared by the Interactivity Foundation

Food: What Might be for Dinner?

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An Open Invitation to Further Discussion

Substitutions: There is no charge for substitutions. Diners are encouraged to select, exclude, mix, match, combine, divide, and/or revise ideas from any entrée or other menu item.

What's This Menu For?

The entrées in this menu—each describing different concerns and approaches to future food policy—are offered only as possible (and contrasting) entrances, or starting points, to the main course: your own exploration and discussion of the key ideas, concepts, and concerns related to food. These starting points and the other menu items are intended to stimulate, expand, and provide an opportunity to develop your own thinking and discussion. As entrées to your discussion, the ideas in this menu are only briefly sketched out. They are intentionally incomplete, partial, contingent, sometimes vague, and often conflicting. Similarly, the short- and long-term consequences of adopting one or more or parts of these policy approaches are even more uncertain, incomplete, and conflicting. This menu is intended to spur discussion. It is not an answer book or an expert policy paper that recommends a singular or specific policy or solution.

Importantly, these entrées, and this menu in general, are not meant to:

- Provide complete, expert-approved, immediately workable, detailed, or any final answers to specific or immediate food concerns or challenges. At most, they describe some broad approaches or general directions for your discussion and further development.
- Limit, restrict, or channel your thinking, exploration, or discussion.
- Endorse or recommend specific policy proposals by either the Interactivity Foundation (IF) or any of the individuals who helped prepare this Menu.

IF supports discussion of public policy concerns and the development of multiple and contrasting approaches to them. It does not recommend or advocate any of the ideas in its reports. Similarly, the ideas contained in this menu are not supported by all or even a majority of the individual cooks. At most, they felt that some of them might be worthy of (and stimulate) further discussion, especially when participants disagreed with the more specific policy ideas in a particular entrée.

About This Menu

This Menu is one of a series of discussion reports produced and published by the Interactivity Foundation for use in small-group discussions. Each report briefly describes a subject of broad public interest or concern and then describes several contrasting and "conceptual" (or general) approaches to long-term public policy.

About the Cooks

The Interactivity Foundation is a nonpartisan, nonprofit, 501(c)(3) organization that seeks to engage citizens, through a facilitated small-group discussion process, in the exploration and development of contrasting approaches, or "possibilities," for public policy concerns. Most of the ingredients for this Menu were harvested from the group discussions of two panels, each with eight members. One panel comprised people with professional and/or educational expertise in a food-related area. A second panel comprised interested "generalists."

Cooking and Preparation

The two panels met monthly and separately for about a year and then jointly in two sessions to develop these entrées and some of the other ideas for this Menu. These discussions were facilitated by an IF Fellow, the project manager and editor of this Menu. Although many of the ideas that were developed out of the panelists' discussions (in various and edited forms) are included in this Menu, the Interactivity Foundation is solely responsible for its content.

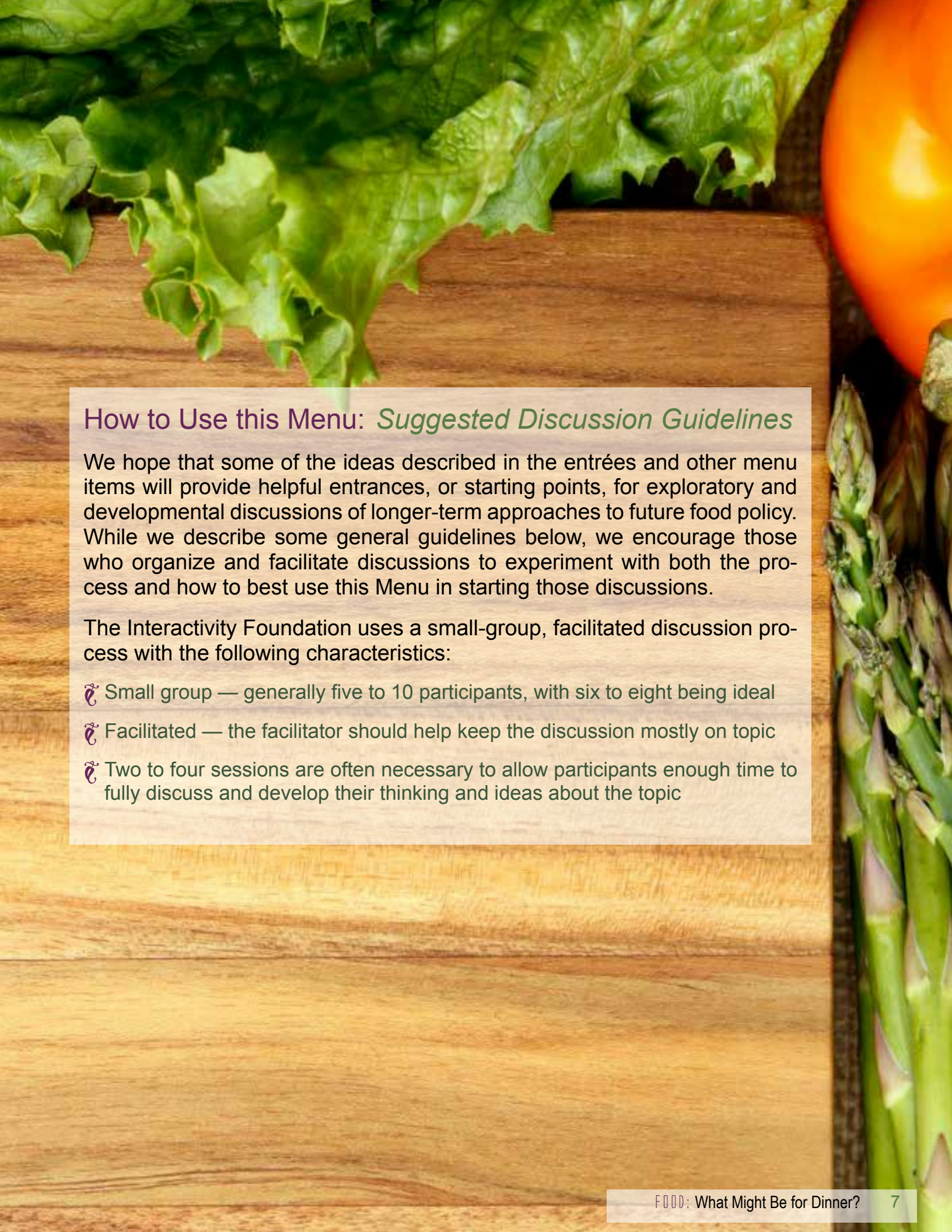
Food as a Discussion Topic: *Why Talk About Food?*

In many ways, food is an easy topic for discussion. It's a universal and daily experience: We're all familiar with food. Most of us are fortunate enough to eat something several times a day. Plus, we spend so much time talking about it already—so much so that our language is peppered with metaphors. Some of us are foodies, others junk-food junkies, but all of us eat. And many of us are only a generation or two removed from farming or processing food.

In other ways though food can be a difficult subject for a public policy discussion:

- It is a sprawling topic. Any one part (e.g., farming or cooking) could—and often does—occupy years or lifetimes of discussion and study.
- It is complex and interconnected. Every subtopic within food affects all the others, and food is interconnected with many other public policy topics: energy, the environment, the economy, labor, and public health, to name a few.
- It is sometimes too personal or political. Being the second most intimate human activity, it is connected to how we are raised, our individual health, our culture, our self-image, and personal values. Like many public policy topics, food can be ideologically divisive.
- It is a moving target. How food is produced, processed, distributed, marketed, and consumed has changed dramatically over time and continues to do so. What and how we eat now is often different from what and how we ate many years ago. And the same is true of farming and food processing—they too have changed dramatically over the years.
- We often don't know as much as we think we do. For all of our familiarity with food, we're also increasingly disconnected from it. Many of us don't know much about how and where our food is produced and processed, what's in it, or (increasingly) how to cook it.

But for all these challenges (and in some cases because of them), food still merits our serious attention and discussion. Change is constant—no less so with food—and the changes that affect food directly and daily affect us all. We all have a stake in our food future and we all have choices to make, both individually (at the market or in our kitchens) and collectively (how we choose to regulate food). And, perhaps most important, with the right meal and generous discussion partners, talking about food can be fun. We hope it will be for you.



How to Use this Menu: *Suggested Discussion Guidelines*

We hope that some of the ideas described in the entrées and other menu items will provide helpful entrances, or starting points, for exploratory and developmental discussions of longer-term approaches to future food policy. While we describe some general guidelines below, we encourage those who organize and facilitate discussions to experiment with both the process and how to best use this Menu in starting those discussions.

The Interactivity Foundation uses a small-group, facilitated discussion process with the following characteristics:

- Small group — generally five to 10 participants, with six to eight being ideal
- Facilitated — the facilitator should help keep the discussion mostly on topic
- Two to four sessions are often necessary to allow participants enough time to fully discuss and develop their thinking and ideas about the topic

For participants, it may be helpful to keep in mind that:

The overall goal is to foster engagement, open exploration, understanding, and have fun.

- There is no intent or effort to achieve consensus or any other group decision.
- We seek to avoid two-sided and confrontational debate in favor of a discussion that encourages and respects multiple points of view and builds upon the contributions of all participants.
- We're more interested in broader trends, bigger-picture concepts, and long-term choices and trade-offs. And we try to avoid getting hung up on any specific facts (whether those presented here or from outside reading and research).
- We try to get everyone involved and are not concerned with special expertise or fully formed thoughts. The discussion should be a safe space for trying out new recipes, foods, and ideas, whether they're fully cooked or half-baked.

Participants are encouraged to revise, combine, or develop new entrées and not to be constrained by any of the ideas as they are presented in this Menu.

Some Miscellaneous Food Facts*

Cost of Food (as percentage of U.S. household budget): In 1930: 30%; today: 10%

Farmer's Share of Retail Food Dollar in 2010: Average 20 cents. The remaining 80 cents goes to processing, wholesaling, packaging, distribution, marketing, and retailing.

King Corn: In the U.S. market (excluding exports), 55% goes to animal feed; nearly 30% goes to ethanol, 6.8% is used to make sweeteners (corn syrup, glucose, dextrose); 1.8% goes to cereals; and less than 1% is sweet corn for human consumption.

Obesity: U.S. rank worldwide: 1 Portion of U.S. adults that are overweight: ⅔; obese: ⅓

Changing Consumption & Lifestyles: U.S. per capita calorie consumption is up 24% in the last 30 years, from 3,040 calories per day to 3,760, while calories spent in an average U.S. workday have decreased by 140 (men) and 120 (for women).

Hunger

Now Serving: The world population is nearing 7 billion and is projected to increase to more than 9 billion in the next 20 years.

Servings Available: Estimated 6 billion—while there are probably enough total calories produced worldwide to feed everyone, most estimates are that 1 billion people do not have enough to eat.

In the U.S.: A record 45,753 million (about 15% of the U.S. population) now receive food stamps, and 25% of U.S. children live in households that are food "insecure," meaning they run out of food at least once a month.

Waste: One study showed that the average American wastes 1,400 kilocalories per day or, for the country as a whole, about 40% of our total food supply, up from 28% in 1974.

Energy & Food: Food system (farm through kitchen) uses about 16% of all U.S. energy, but less than 20% of that is used in farming, whereas 32% is used in home kitchens.

To deliver 1 calorie of food energy to your plate takes 7 to 10 calories of fossil fuel.

The U.S., with 5% of the world's population, uses 25% of the world's fossil fuel production.

Fossil fuels are finite resources. At some point, our agricultural and other food systems will need to transition to alternative and renewable energy sources.

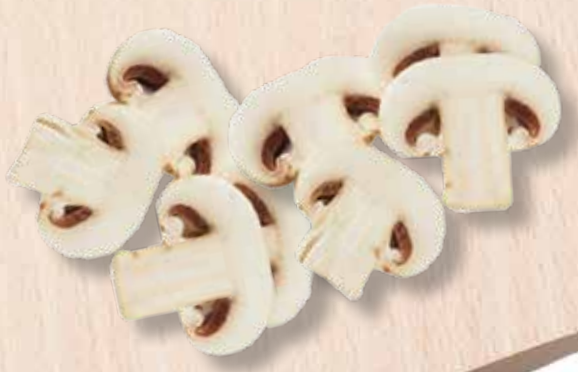
Soil Erosion: Has decreased by 40% since the 1980s, but erosion continues. Some estimate that ⅓ of top soil is already gone.

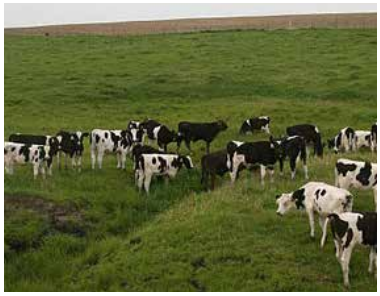
* Most admittedly, and as popularized by Mark Twain,"There are three kinds of lies: lies, damned lies, and statistics." Similarly, all the statistics or other food "facts" presented in this Menu are offered not for their specific or absolute truth, but rather only as suggestive of certain background trends and issues that might include what assumptions underlie a particular statistic and what assumptions we might be making about how to best interpret or use it.

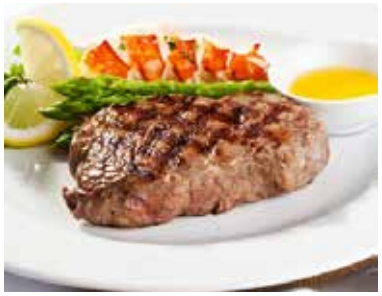
Different Tastes & Key Consumer Concerns

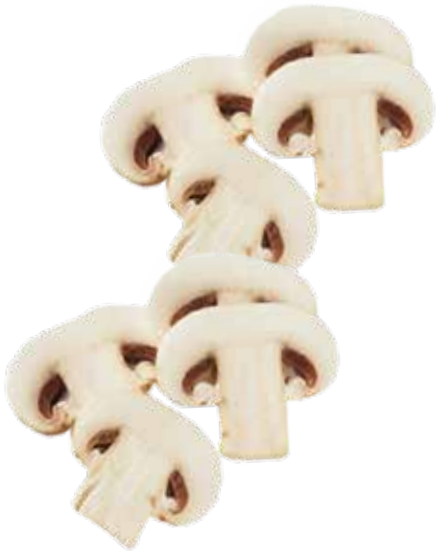
Identity and politics matter:

When discussing food, identity and politics are as important as they are in other public policy topics. Just as we all have different taste preferences, we also have different perspectives when it comes to the public choices and politics of food. What you like to eat and your feelings and preferences about some of the food policy ideas in this Menu are likely affected, in part, by who you are: your gender, race, ethnicity, cultural heritage, age, economic class and income, religion, region, education, and profession. Similarly, your tastes and food-policy preferences may well be shaped by your political and ideological inclinations: liberal, conservative, green or tea party (or green tea party), and your feelings about the proper roles or balances among markets, government, equality/inequality, freedom, regulation, and the environment. Our chosen words and rhetoric also matter. The words we use when talking about food and food politics are often affected by (and can affect) our political and ideological preferences. For example, terms like “factory farm,” “hobby farm,” “foodie,” “junk food,” “row crops,” “conventional” or “production” agriculture, “monoculture,” and “health food” are often intended to convey different imagery and agendas.









Key Consumer Concerns

As you read and discuss the ideas in this report, you might consider some key questions for each entrée and food policy:

- Choice—Do I have a choice at all or does my location, economic class, or other factors restrict what I can choose to eat? How might each entrée in this report expand or contract my choices or access to food? How?
- Cost—Will food cost more or less under this approach and by how much?
- Convenience—Will food be easier and faster to acquire, prepare, serve, and clean up under this entrée? How much time and effort am I willing or able to expend for a given food item?
- Culture/Comfort & Fashion—Is this entrée familiar? How might this approach enrich or dilute my culture and connections with others, in what ways, and which do I prefer? Is this food choice or policy a matter of fashion? Is it socially acceptable? How much should this matter?
- Health/Nutrition—Would this food or policy approach be good for my family's health?
- Political—How might this entrée or this policy approach affect other concerns: our broader society, justice, equality, the environment, our future, etc.

A. Food-Safety Scrambled Eggs

Ensure the Safety and Security of Our Food Supply

What if we focused on the importance of a safe and secure food supply to our health, our economy, and our national security? This approach would make food safety a greater national priority and call for significant updates and upgrades to the quality and scope of our existing regulatory and inspection systems. In addition to a stronger regulatory framework, the resulting changes might include decentralizing some of our larger food-processing facilities and limiting their size.

Ingredients:

Concerns Behind This Approach.

Imagine that you are a vegetable buyer for a national grocery chain. You are very much aware of the recent news stories about contaminated food (bean sprouts, ground turkey, eggs, peanuts, spinach) causing illness and even death. And you are even more aware of the significant and long-term economic harm to business that can follow from such incidents. You also know some of the statistics described in the chart at right. Not only must you decide how to ensure a safe supply for your grocery chain, but you also have been asked to advise a national commission on how to improve the safety and security of our food supply. What would you do?

Some Food Safety Facts*

Health Effects of U.S. Food-Borne Illness:

- 1 in 6 Americans gets sick each year
- 76 million bouts of illness each year
- 325,000 hospitalizations each year
- 5,000 deaths each year
- U.S. food supply still among safest in world

Changing Food Supply & Consumption

We import more food: 15% overall and 80% of our seafood

Food processors are much more concentrated:

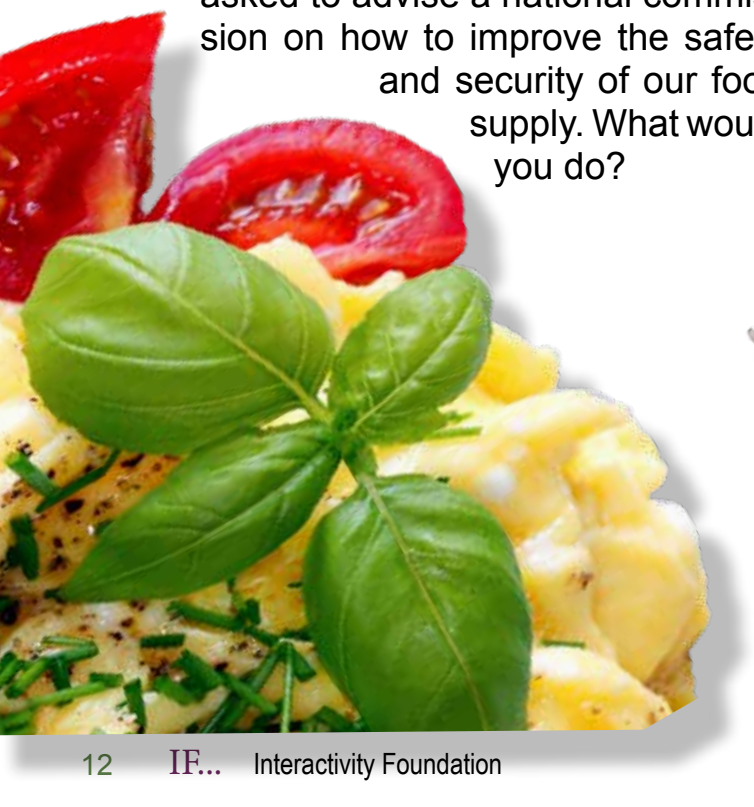
- 4 companies now process 80% of U.S. meat
- 5 companies now control 50% of grocery sales

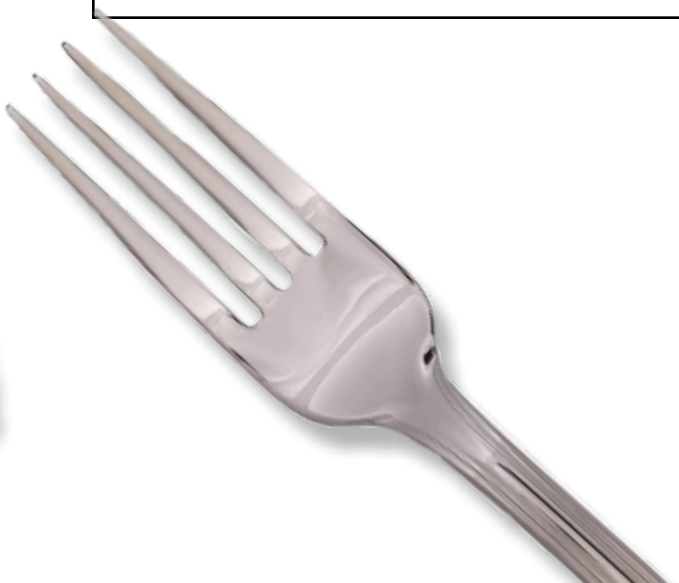
50% of all food dollars now spent in restaurants

Strains to 70-year-old Regulatory System

- Most imported food not inspected (about 1%)
- State and local government perform 90% of all inspections, testing, and incident response
- 15 different agencies at federal level

*See matching "Facts" disclaimer on the bottom of page 4.





Serving Options:

What Might be Done?

Recent federal legislation on food safety has implemented some specific reforms at the federal level: primarily strengthening the regulatory authority of the Food & Drug Administration so that it can now mandate food recalls, require processors to implement food-safety plans, implement science-based standards for production and harvesting of fruit and vegetables, perform periodic and risk-based inspections of food-processing facilities, and require importers to verify the source and safe handling of their food.

Beyond these more recent and specific federal reforms, however, this policy possibility envisions some broader, more structural, and longer-term changes to ensure the safety of our food, including:

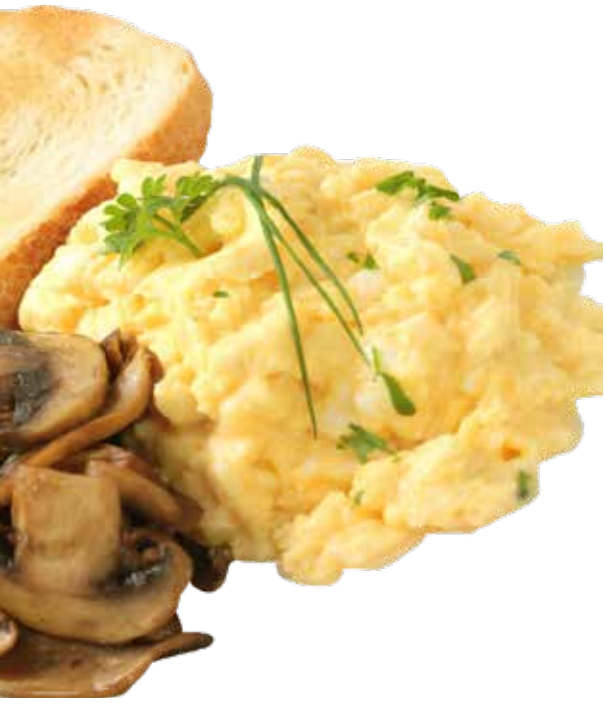
- Decentralizing some food processing so that contamination might be regionally contained and there is sufficient backup or redundancy (other food processors) in the system.
- For some commodities, limiting the overall size of production and processing facilities to minimize risks from overcrowding and improper waste management.
- Increasing implementation of industry "best practices" (for both agriculture and handling/processing) together with scalable (vary by size), risk-based regulations that accommodate smaller producers, processors, and retailers.
- Refocusing public-education efforts on food preservation, safe cooking and storage practices, and food safety in general.
- Re-diversifying both our seed stock and our animal breeds so that we'll be better able to withstand disease outbreaks, climate change, and other environmental stressors.

Your Taste Preferences

(your notes, reflections, revisions)

A. Food-Safety Scrambled Eggs

Ensure the Safety and Security of Our Food Supply



A Second Helping

additional concerns, possible discussion questions

- Is there a risk of bioterrorism in having a more centralized or concentrated food supply with only a few national processing centers?
- How might decentralizing (or, alternatively, greater centralizing of) our food processing affect not only the safety of our food but its cost, availability, and variety/selection? Why?
- Other than decentralizing larger food producers and processors, are there ways to restrain their inherent political power? Should we and why or why not?
- For additional perspectives on food safety, you might be interested in:
  - Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle,* an exposé of the meat-packing industry in Chicago during the early 1900s, which led to the passage of the Food and Drugs Act and the Meat Inspection Act of 1906.
  - "How Safe is our Global Menu?" The Christian Science Monitor Oct. 25, 2010: pages 26-31.
  - *Poisoned: The True Story of the Deadly E. Coli Outbreak That Changed the Way Americans Eat* by Jeff Benedict, Inspire Books, 2011.

Other Taste Preferences

Some may prefer other approaches to improve food safety. They may suggest that:

- We rely more on increasing and improving self-regulation—whether by cooperative and/or non-governmental groups, trade groups, or private industry.
- Decentralizing and limiting the size of food processors would require a greater number and variety of facilities. This would also increase the number and complexity of inspections and regulations and make it more difficult and costly to coordinate and enforce safety standards.
- We should continue to rely primarily on state and local governments, which already handle the vast majority of food-safety inspections and incidents at a level of governance that is closer, more experienced, and responsive.

Your Taste Preferences

(your notes, reflections, revisions)

B. Spinach Salad With Granola

Healthier food and better health for everyone

What if we lived in a world with lower rates of food and diet-related illnesses, less obesity, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and other chronic ailments? What if our food choices and diets were getting healthier? And what if our health care costs were correspondingly lower and overall productivity higher? This approach looks to improve our individual and public health by improving what and how we eat. It might combine an array of policy ideas intended to improve our dietary choices and, in some cases, to change the nutritional value of the food we eat.

Ingredients:

Concerns Behind This Approach.

While there are continuing arguments over the precise numbers, there is little disagreement that diet-related diseases and conditions, including heart disease, obesity, type 2 diabetes, and hypertension not only cost individuals their health (and lives) but have significantly contributed to our rising health care costs. The U.S. surgeon general recently called obesity (and related conditions) our "single most important health risk." There is also widespread concern that our diet (and certain food supplements) may be a contributing cause for certain cancers.

Diet & Nutrition Facts*		
No. of Top 10 causes of death linked to diet: heart disease (1) cancer (2) stroke (3) and diabetes (7)		**4**
Type 2 Diabetes		
Portions of U.S. adults that the CDC estimates will have diabetes in 2050 :		⅓
Recommended daily calories:		2,000
Calories produced per capita:		3,900
Calories consumed per capita:		3,760
Rank of U.S. in obesity:		**1**
Fat	**%** overweight/obese	
Adults 1960–1980	45%	**13%**
Adults in 2008	68%	**34%**
Children 1960–1980		**4%**
Children in 2008	33%	**20%**
Health Care Costs Related to Obesity		
In 2008		$147 Billion
Estimated for 2018		$344 Billion

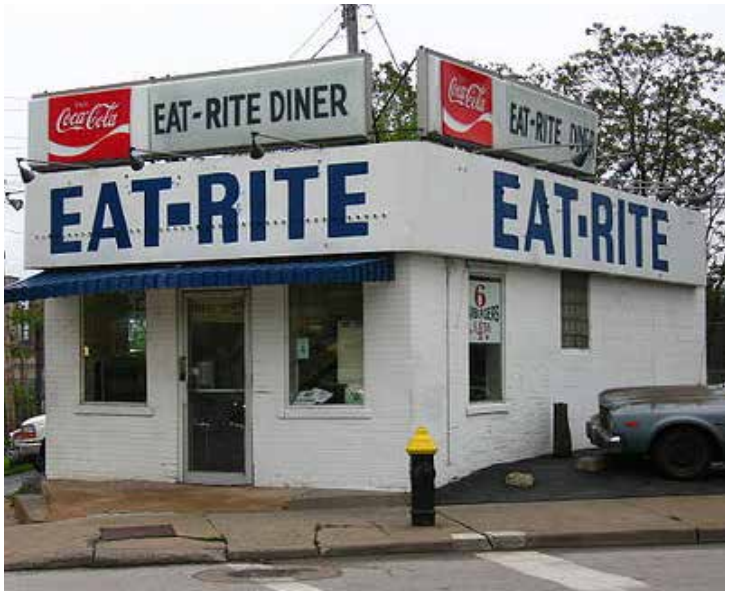
**See matching "Facts" disclaimer on bottom of page 9.*

Serving Options:

What Might be Done?

While fad diets and exercise regimens come and go, there are many who argue that public health would benefit from eating less overall (as well as getting more exercise); eating less sweetened and highly processed foods; and eating more fiber, fruits, and vegetables in their place. This is easier said than done. To help, what if we adopted a mix of some of the following policies? What if we:

- Change the price incentives by reducing subsidies for, and adding or increasing taxes on, sweetened and processed foods (e.g., a fat or carbs tax) while increasing subsidies (and/or providing credits) for fruit and vegetables?
- Ban or limit the use of certain food additives or processing methods—for example, New York City's ban on trans fats in restaurants?
- Regulate or limit food advertising, especially to children?
- Improve food labeling to, among other things, put key nutritional information on the front of packaging and on menus?
- Change food display and product placement in lunch cafeterias and stores to encourage healthier consumer choices?
- Promote (subsidize where needed) retail for fruits and vegetables? Promote farmers' markets, fresh produce, and groceries in inner-city and rural areas? Limit the number of fast-food outlets?
- Develop new and better fortified foods: e.g., "nutrient pills" or the "Healthy Hotpocket," less-salty chips, less-sugary soda?
- Promote healthier processing methods—e.g., more whole grains?

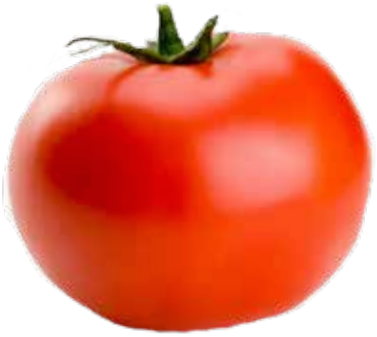


Your Taste Preferences

(your notes, reflections, revisions)

B. Spinach Salad With Granola

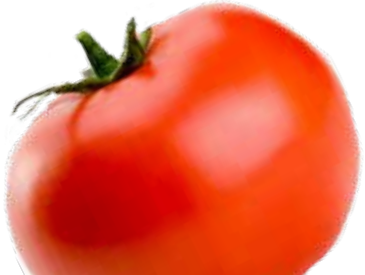
Healthier food and better health for everyone

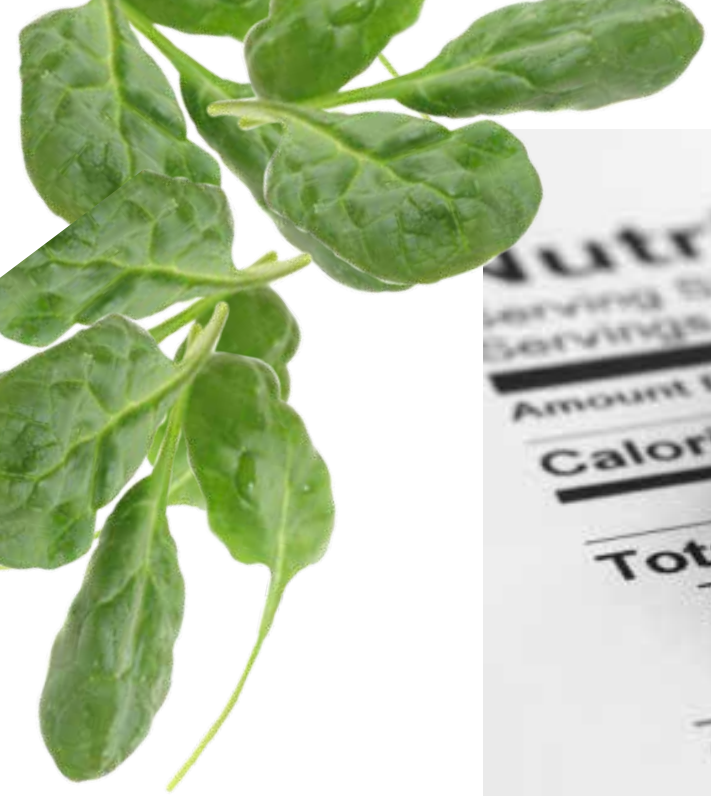


A Second Helping

additional concerns, possible discussion questions

- How might some of these measures affect—
  - The cost or availability of certain foods?
  - Their convenience? How much time and effort will it take to prepare healthier food?
  - Individual choice and cultural preferences?
- Are there some possible implementations for this approach that would rely less on government regulation and more on non-governmental actors—whether non-profit, trade or industry groups, or individuals?
- In understanding diet and health, should we adopt more of a "whole-food" approach, or is a nutrition-science approach (focusing primarily on individual vitamins and other nutrients) still helpful?
- For additional perspectives on food and health, you might be interested in:
  - *Appetite for Profit* by Michele Simon, Nation Books, 2006.
  - *In Defense of Food* by Michael Pollan, Penguin Books, 2008.
  - For a contrarian view, see *Fat Politics* by J. Eric Oliver, Oxford University Press, 2006.





Other Taste Preferences

Some may see some significant problems with this approach, including:

- This moves in the direction of a "nanny state" and whether we really need government to tell us that eating junk food and not exercising will hurt our health?
- Is this akin to swimming upstream? Can anything overcome our nature and the inherent appeal of sweet, salty, and fatty foods?
- Health outcomes are most closely correlated to economic class and educational status. Would a more direct solution be to focus on raising living standards and educational levels?

Your Taste Preferences

(your notes, reflections, revisions)

C. Subsistence Soup & Cornmeal

Help reduce hunger worldwide and at home

What if we focused more on reducing hunger and ensuring adequate nutrition for the roughly 1 billion people worldwide who do not have enough to eat? This approach recognizes that who gets to eat and who doesn't is often determined by geopolitical factors, including control and access to arable land, water, and other natural resources and the agricultural and economic policies of other countries, often far distant from the famine. To ensure a reliable supply of food for everyone, this entrée suggests a number of reforms that might help every region achieve a more reliable food supply.

Ingredients:

Concerns Behind This Approach.

Although food is relatively plentiful and cheap in the United States, the specter of hunger still stalks much of humanity—and the numbers are, again, getting worse. While doomsday predictions have repeatedly missed the mark (failing to account for rising agricultural productivity and declining birth rates), the inexorable pressures of a rising world population—estimated to increase by 33 percent to more than 9 billion within the next 20 years—and other worrisome trends have led to increased concerns about hunger throughout the world. Other worrisome trends include:

- Arable land and fresh water for growing food have peaked and, in many places, declined and may be declining further with increasing climate change.
- Increases in agricultural productivity have not kept pace with rising demand in recent years and grain stockpiles are at their lowest levels in 20 years.
- Increased meat consumption by a growing middle class worldwide will likely require more calories to feed livestock.

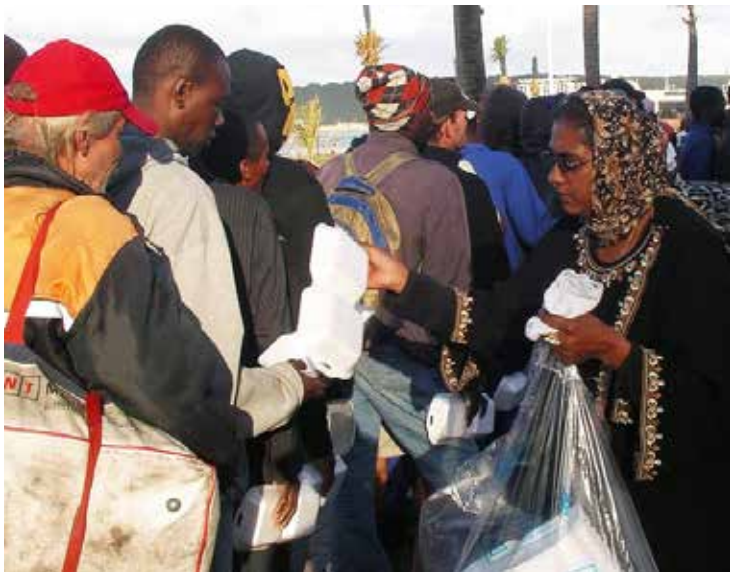
For somewhat different reasons, hunger is also a serious problem in the developed world, particularly as class disparity and income gaps have increased between the rich and poor. In 2008, for example, about 15 percent of U.S. households (17 million families and one-quarter of U.S. children) were food "insecure" at some point during the year, meaning that they ran out of food, were not sure where the next meal was coming from, skimped on groceries, or were forced to buy the cheapest food available.

Serving Options:

What Might be Done?

Some of the possible and different ways to reduce hunger both worldwide and at home might include:

- Expanding development aid and investment in agricultural infrastructure in the developing world. Helping build roads, irrigation systems, communication systems, food storage, financial and market exchanges, etc. Also increase investment in new breeds and new technology. This might include crops that have been bred or engineered to include key (often missing) micro nutrients—vitamin A-rich sweet potatoes, or rice, wheat, millet, beans, cassava packed with zinc, iron, etc. More controversially, this might also include genetically modified organisms (GMOs).
- Changing farm subsidies. Or allow developing countries to use subsidies to help farmers get seeds and fertilizer without losing foreign aid. For the United States and Europe, de-couple subsidies from production and shift subsidies to environmental practices, set asides, and farm poverty programs.
- Changing U.S. aid. Or allow some U.S. aid to be used to develop agricultural capacity in developing countries and for local purchase of food rather than relying primarily or solely on exporting U.S. crops to famine areas.
- Adopting some "food sovereignty" ideas. And treat food as a basic human right. Emphasize local and democratic control over resources and agricultural policy and practices. Grow more food by growing more democracy.
- In the United States, combining and better coordinating multiple food and poverty programs and significantly increasing their overall funding.

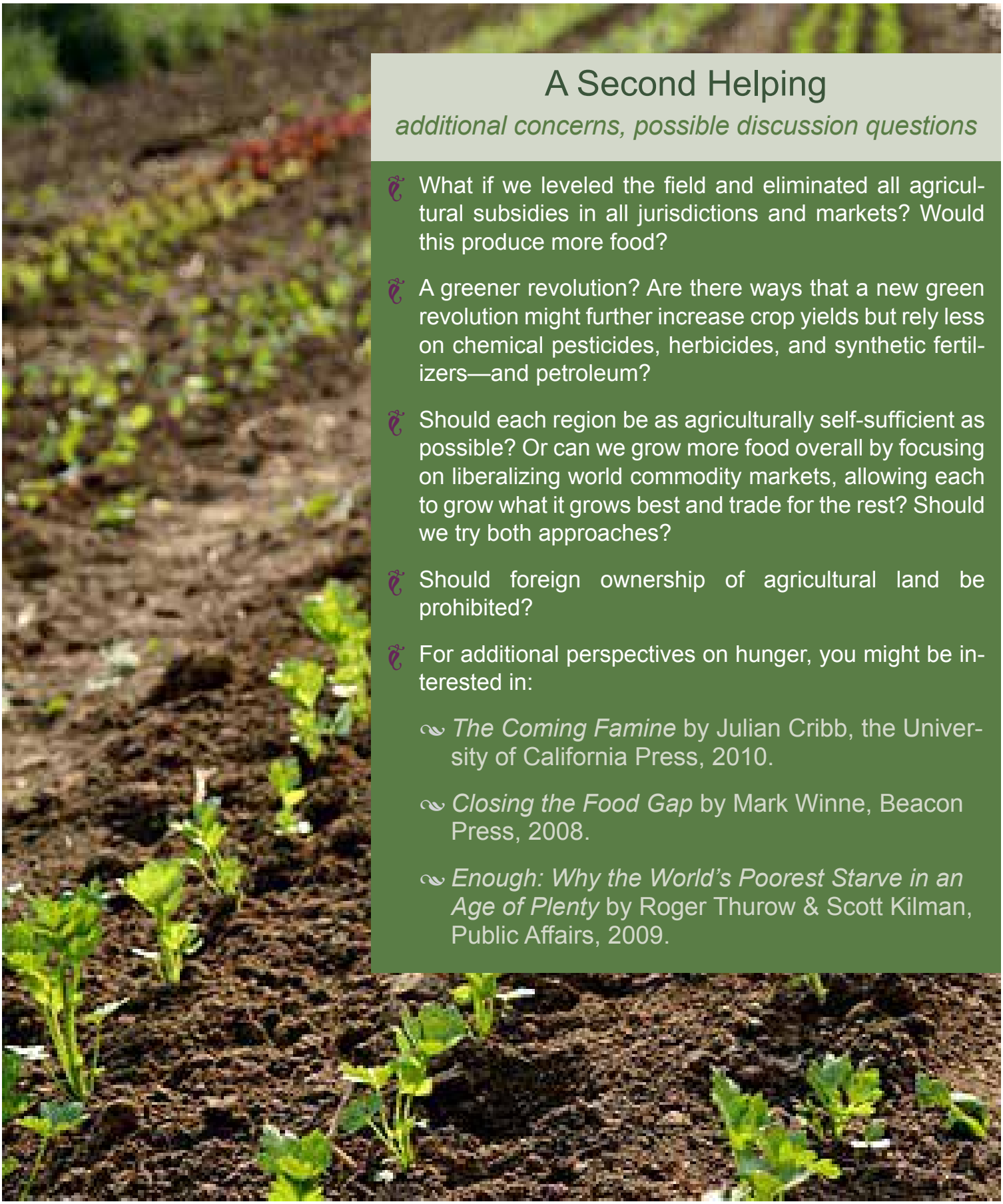


Your Taste Preferences

(your notes, reflections, revisions)

C. Subsistence Soup & Cornmeal

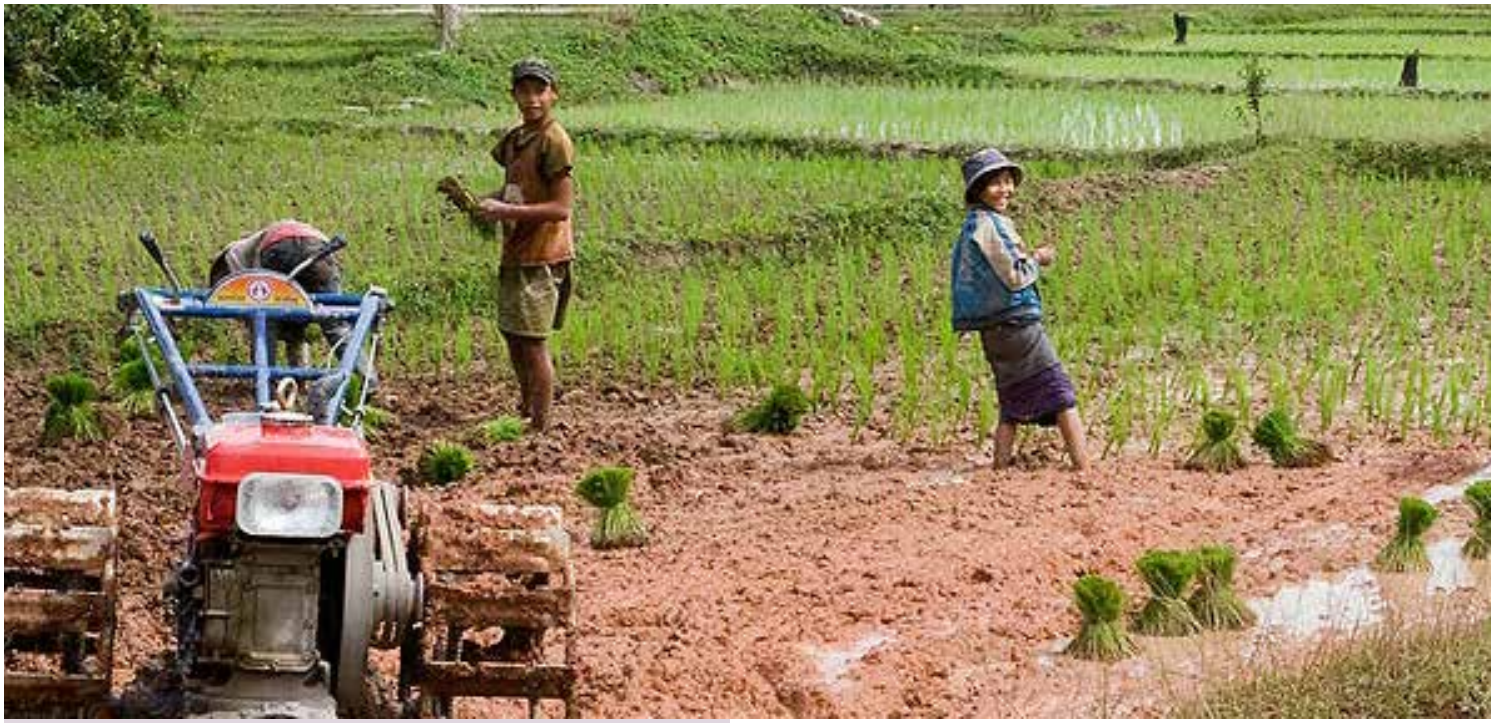
Help reduce hunger worldwide and at home



A Second Helping

additional concerns, possible discussion questions

- What if we leveled the field and eliminated all agricultural subsidies in all jurisdictions and markets? Would this produce more food?
- A greener revolution? Are there ways that a new green revolution might further increase crop yields but rely less on chemical pesticides, herbicides, and synthetic fertilizers—and petroleum?
- Should each region be as agriculturally self-sufficient as possible? Or can we grow more food overall by focusing on liberalizing world commodity markets, allowing each to grow what it grows best and trade for the rest? Should we try both approaches?
- Should foreign ownership of agricultural land be prohibited?
- For additional perspectives on hunger, you might be interested in:
  - *The Coming Famine* by Julian Cribb, the University of California Press, 2010.
  - *Closing the Food Gap* by Mark Winne, Beacon Press, 2008.
  - *Enough: Why the World's Poorest Starve in an Age of Plenty* by Roger Thurow & Scott Kilman, Public Affairs, 2009.



Other Taste Preferences

Some of these flavors or ideas are controversial. Some may worry that:

- Using GMOs will be harmful to local agriculture and the environment.
- Shifting or eliminating subsidies for farmers in the U.S. and Europe could be financially and politically difficult.
- Concepts of "food sovereignty" may emphasize the small, the organic, and the local at the expense of other proven ways to increase production, such as newer, higher-tech farming methods; larger, more capital-intensive farming; and liberalized trade policies.
- In the United States, an increased focus on—and taxpayer funding for—the needs of the poor and hungry may be politically unpalatable, particularly among taxpayers and voters.

Your Taste Preferences

(your notes, reflections, revisions)

D. Well-Earth Sandwich & Locally Sourced Salad

Alternative, more environmentally sustainable approaches to agriculture

What if we worked to ensure that our agricultural methods are environmentally sustainable over the long term and that, over time, we reformed our current land-based agriculture toward a kind of "permaculture" based on ecological principles and sustainable practices that mimic and work with natural patterns and processes and in a greater mix of both rural and urban settings? This approach might include more widespread use of some innovative concepts for urban farming, vertical farming, and aquaponics, among others.

Ingredients:

Concerns Behind This Approach.

This policy possibility derives primarily from a set of interconnected concerns that our agriculture and food systems (and our ecology overall) must be sustainable over the long term. Many environmentalists, for example, are concerned that some modern farming practices are degrading our environment—eroding, exhausting, and polluting the very soil and water on which we depend for food. They and other critics of our current agricultural practices are also concerned that our food systems are far too dependent on a limited and declining supply of fossil fuels—for fertilizer; insecticides; herbicides; and for planting, harvesting, transporting, processing, packaging, distribution, and consumption. As available oil supplies dwindle (we've already used half of the world's known reserves), significant change will be required for all parts of our food systems and for the rest of our society as well. To feed future generations, our agriculture will need good soil, clean and reliable fresh water, renewable energy, temperate climates, and sufficient labor and expertise.

To help ensure we have some of these inputs, this approach focuses on farming practices that might help better protect our environment and reduce our dependence on non-renewable energy sources.

Serving Options:

What Might be Done?

In response to these and other concerns, a number of visionaries are experimenting with a wide variety of alternative and more sustainable practices and cultures for food. This policy possibility might combine a number of these approaches, including:

- Urban farming: using vacant urban land for gardens, orchards, even fields; fruit and nut trees throughout the cityscape; intense fruit and vegetable gardening on both public and private lots; greenhouses, hoop houses, urban foraging, etc.
- Vertical farming: designing new buildings to grow food and using older abandoned buildings as well.
- Aquaponics: raising fish in tanks and filtering the water through vegetable beds where the fish waste becomes fertilizer for the plants.

- Redesigning our urban and rural landscapes to incorporate smaller-scale and local agriculture by region (each village can grow much of its food from the surrounding countryside and cityscape).
- Rediversifying our agriculture from reliance on so-called monocultures of corn, wheat, and soy and grain-fed livestock toward a variety of regionally appropriate grains and grasses (oats, barley, rye, millet, buckwheat, corn, wheat) and grazing and pasture-fed varieties of livestock.
- Shift from annual hybrids to perennial grains when further developed and where possible, which will require fewer inputs and less tillage, while helping to secure the top soil with deeper, denser roots.
- Shift to no-till/lower-till practices and cover crops. Planting cover crops and leaving last year's root stock in place (not plowing it in) have already, together with other soil conservation practices (e.g., contour farming), reduced the rate of soil loss in the United States by 40 percent.
- Change agricultural subsidies from rewarding volume (in some cases) to rewarding more sustainable farming practices that preserve the soil, conserve water and energy, and protect the groundwater.

Your Taste Preferences

(your notes, reflections, revisions)

D. Well-Earth Sandwich & Locally Sourced Salad

Alternative, more environmentally sustainable approaches to agriculture

A Second Helping

additional concerns, possible discussion questions

- How might implementing some of these ideas on a greater scale affect the availability, cost, or convenience of our food? And how might we "scale up" some of these approaches?
- How might non-governmental efforts and organizations play a role?
- Might some of these alternative agricultural approaches coexist with or even complement some more conventional farming methods?
- What about local food efforts or the locavore movement? How much energy might be saved if we reduced the distance and time from field to plate? Would this work for all foods?
- For additional perspectives on some more sustainable agricultural efforts, see:
  - On "permaculture" generally, see the Wikipedia entry at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Permaculture
  - Growing Power, Inc. at http://www.growingpower.org/, a national nonprofit that helps develop sustainable community food systems.
  - *Urban Agriculture: Growing Healthy, Sustainable Places,* by Kimberly Hodgson, Marcia Caton Campbell & Martin Bailkey; published by the American Planning Association, 2011

Other Taste Preferences

Some may see this approach as impractical for several reasons:

- Even as local, organic, sustainable, artisanal, heirloom, free-range, pasture-fed foods have grown in popularity, the overall markets for these "alternative" products remain fairly limited to niche demographics and regions. The vast majority of our food is produced and processed by larger operations.
- This approach would require a complete shift in our economy and our culture. Cities would have to be physically and functionally restructured, and many more people would have to re-engage in growing and processing food for, likely, very low wages. And many simply won't want to give up their junk food.
- How would cities in arid or desert regions supply their own food?

Your Taste Preferences

(your notes, reflections, revisions)

E. Farmers' Choice Commodity Casserole

Support independent farmers and farms of all types and sizes

What if we envision a future where families and independent farmers—of all types and sizes—will still be able to own, live on, and farm their land independently? A future where they can earn a reasonable living, have sufficient freedom to operate, and remain good stewards of the land. This approach would rely primarily on marketplace incentives and reducing farmers' regulatory burden. It might also rely on stronger regulation of larger and consolidated processors and wholesalers to help ensure farmers' ability to compete fairly in the marketplace, and it might work to protect farmlands from commercial development.

Ingredients:

Concerns Behind This Approach.

We need our independent farmers. They not only feed the rest of us (and many others around the world), they do so cheaply (Americans spend about 10 percent of household income on food; down from 30 percent in 1930). And most alternatives, especially collective ownership (whether public or private), have not been successful or popular. But farming has always been and remains a precarious business: subject to the vagaries of weather, seed and soil conditions, shifting markets and financing, technological change, competition, etc. It's also hard and dangerous work. Today's farmers face new challenges as well: from foreign competition (food imports have doubled in the last decade), a growing labyrinth of regulations, and thinner profit margins and a smaller share of every food dollar (averages 20 cents). Other challenges include:

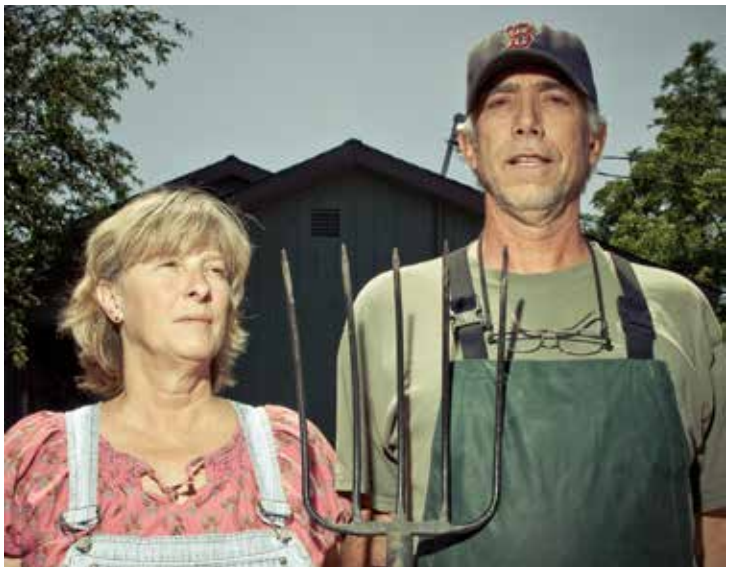
- Recent and significant market consolidation (and power) among feed/seed suppliers, processors, and wholesalers/retailers, which makes it more difficult for farmers to bargain for their share of food dollars or even control over their own production. A few (three to five) processors, for example, control most farm production of poultry, eggs, vegetables, and pork. Just two companies now control 60 percent of the corn and soybean seed market, and just four companies control 80 percent of beef processing.
- Fewer and fewer are choosing to enter or stay in farming: The percentage of our population that earns its living from farming has steadily declined and is now less than 1 percent. And the average age of farmers in many sectors is nearing 60.
- In some regions, we're steadily losing our farmlands to development pressure from a rising population and smaller household size. In some areas, rural land is more and more fragmented, and land-use conflicts are increasing.

Serving Options:

What Might be Done?

To support farmers and protect our farmlands, we might try some mix of the following:

- Support growth in markets for farm goods of all types. What if we supported market growth for farms and goods of all types (processed, organic, grain-fed, pastured, etc.) and in all market segments (local/direct, regional, and export)? Perhaps we could issue new "Green Stamps" that consumers could spend only when buying directly from farmers.
- Limit market power of processors and wholesalers. What if we significantly strengthened our anti-trust laws and their enforcement against the growing power of food wholesalers and processors?
- Support networks and education for farmers. What if we supported greater education and networking for farmers to help them survive and compete with consolidated suppliers and processors?
- Regulations. What if we reduced farmers' overall regulatory burden and what if we changed our regulatory scheme from one-size-fits-all to a more scalable approach that would adjust regulations to the relative size and risks of an operation?
- Farmland protection. What if we enacted new and strengthened existing legal, tax, and other incentives and structures—including land trusts, conservancies, and other non-government efforts—to preserve farmlands from development?

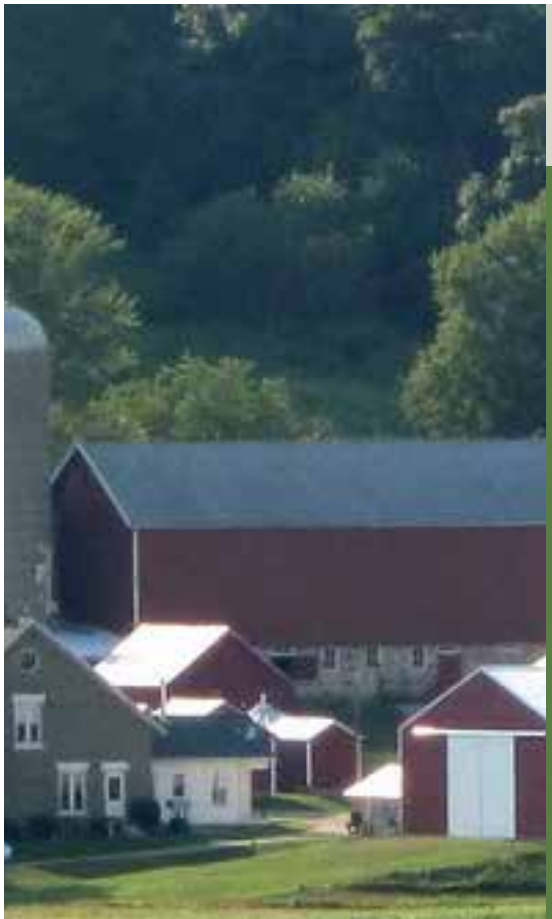


Your Taste Preferences

(your notes, reflections, revisions)

E. Farmers' Choice Commodity Casserole

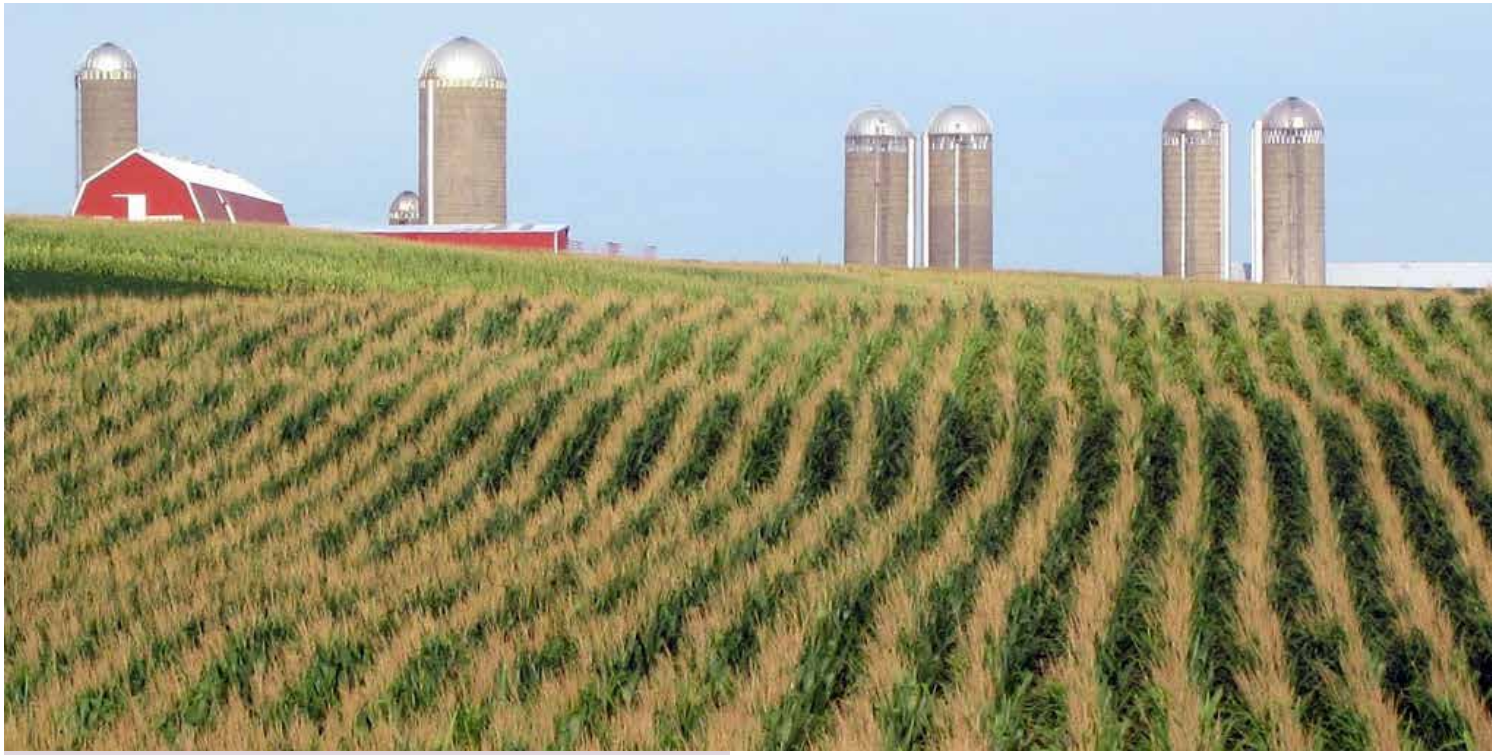
Support independent farmers and farms of all types and sizes



A Second Helping

additional concerns, possible discussion questions

- This approach seeks to help independent farmers of all types and sizes stay on the land and make a decent living. Do our feelings change as we consider the range of farm operations and entities, from the idealized "family farm" to the multi-generational or multi-family farm—which might well be incorporated and likely have employees—to the larger corporate operation with many employees? Should this matter, or why is it celebrated when other entrepreneurs (but not farmers) grow their business to corporate dominance?
  - This approach might reduce the regulatory burden on farmers and producers while simultaneously increasing the regulatory burden (for anti-trust compliance) on conglomerate wholesalers and processors. How are these two segments of the food chain different?
  - Could independent farmers organize or unionize and collectively bargain with wholesalers, processors, and food companies? Have they in the past? What makes this difficult?
  - Are there ways to simultaneously protect farmers' freedom to operate and protect the environment for the long term?



Other Taste Preferences

Some might find this entrée not entirely palatable. They might worry that:

- Medium and smaller farms and processors would still decline, as they would be unable to compete with cheaper products from larger operations, and it wouldn't constrain the growth in the size and number of larger "mega-farm" operations that some feel threaten the environment, food safety, and variety.
- Even with stricter anti-trust laws and enforcement against consolidated processors and wholesalers and distributors, this approach wouldn't do enough to protect independent farmers (and consumers) from the vast market and political power of multinational agribusiness and conglomerate food companies.

Your Taste Preferences

(your notes, reflections, revisions)

F. Community Cooked School Lunch

Reconnect with food and one another through education and community dining

What if we lived in a world where our schools and our cooking and dining practices taught us about food and helped reinforce our social fabric? This approach would focus on both food education and community kitchens and dining. The old "home economics" curriculum would be revitalized, expanded, and updated (perhaps re-branded) for students of all ages and in multiple settings so that we might be more knowledgeable consumers, cooks, and citizens. More shared cooking and dining could also help renew the social bonds of food, family, and community.

Ingredients:

Concerns Behind This Approach.

As our economy has developed and we have moved away from our agricultural roots, we have lost a lot of shared knowledge (old-fashioned "know-how") about how to grow, process, cook, and feed ourselves. For most of us, food now just shows up in the grocery store or restaurant. We mostly don't know—or have only the vaguest sense of how or where our food is produced or processed, how it got there, what is in it, how to cook it, or how it will affect our health. Also, many feel that our food culture is weak or just broken. Often and for perhaps understandable reasons, many of us treat cooking as an inconvenience. Similarly, we view eating and dining as nuisance "refueling." Our primary concerns are jobs and income, time and convenience, cost, schools, child care, gas prices, etc. There is little time or energy left to consider our food "inputs" or supply. In such ignorance and diminished culture, we can hardly be expected to make wise choices for either our dinner tables or for future food policy. By emphasizing education and community, this approach doesn't require radical change. It would use and build upon the many educational and other institutions—including buildings, facilities, programs, and some curriculum—that we already have.

Selected Food Facts*

What do we know about food?	
Recommended daily calories per person: 2,000	
Percent of Americans who know this	12%
Time Preparing Food Per Week	Hours
• Women in the 1920s	30
• Women in the 1950s	20
• All women in 2010	5.5
• Working women in 2010	4.4
• Men in 2010	1.75
How we eat	
• 1955 food dollars spent in restaurants	25%
• 2010 food dollars spent in restaurants	50%

** See matching "Facts" disclaimer on bottom of page 9.*

Serving Options:

What Might be Done?

There could be multiple ways to implement this approach, including:

- Restore and update the teaching of home economics and other food classes and broaden the curriculum to include ecology, biology, soil science, economics, farming, and sociology of food.
- Improve school lunches—see them as an opportunity both to serve good food and to teach students about our food.
- Implement more and expand existing farm-to-school and farm-to-market programs that bring farmers (and other food sectors) into direct contact with students and consumers.
- Where possible, support local farmers and processors by having schools and colleges buy more of their food supplies directly from them. Where possible, involve students in gardening, raising, harvesting, preserving, and cooking food.
- For adults, provide free or low-cost classes on cooking, food economics, food-safety, farming, gardening, etc.
- Establish and support community kitchens and community dining venues, where facilities and equipment and the resulting meals could be shared.
- Use social media to create neighborhood food networks and electronic bulletin boards that could facilitate shared cooking among households and provide an alternative source of home income for some. Check the website daily, select your desired entrée, and then pick it up from our neighbor on the way home.

Your Taste Preferences

(your notes, reflections, revisions)

F. Community Connections School Lunch

Reconnect with food and one another through education and community dining

A Second Helping

additional concerns, possible discussion questions

- Time is a key concern within this approach (though it applies to the others as well). Do we have time for good food and for community in a world of dual incomes, no incomes, single parents, blended families, commuting, and overscheduled kids? Can or will we slow down enough to cook and eat together? Will or can we all afford the time to do so?
- Convenience is the flip side of the time coin. We've all grown accustomed to cheap and fast food that requires little or no preparation time. Will we be able to change our habits; learn more about what we're eating; and spend more time acquiring, preparing, and eating together? How much convenience and time are we willing to give up, at what cost, and for whom?
- What happens if most of us don't know about where our food comes from, what is in it, how it affects our health, or how to prepare it?
- Do food and community complement each other? If so, how and why?

Other Taste Preferences

Some may see problems with this approach, including:

- We don't necessarily buy unhealthy food because we lack education. We buy it because it's cheap, convenient, tastes good, and often is all that is available.
- Having our children grow, pick, and chop lettuce doesn't help them get into college, get a good job, or otherwise "get ahead" in our competitive global economy. We encourage them to pursue higher education so they can learn about nuclear physics, philosophy, and computer engineering.
- Some may prefer to eat fast food alone (with their TV) rather than cook or eat or engage in conversation with their neighbors.

Your Taste Preferences

(your notes, reflections, revisions)

Diner's Choice:

Your Favorites & Other Ideas

Describe your favorite possibilities and/or policies for the future of food

Ingredients:

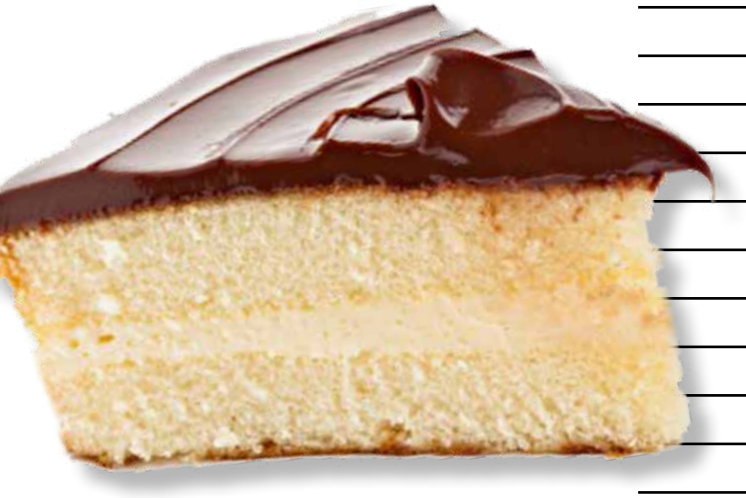
Concerns Behind This Approach.

Serving Options:

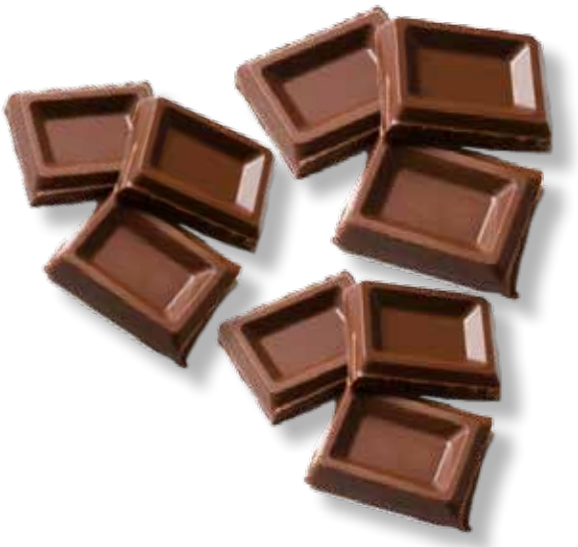
What Might be Done?

A Second Helping

additional concerns, possible discussion questions



Other Taste Preferences



An Open Invitation

Further Discussion & Interactivity

We hope that you will use this report to carry forward the discussion begun by our project panels.

We have developed a process that may be helpful for groups interested in discussing the ideas presented in our reports or in discussing matters of public interest more generally. We have also developed facilitation and discussion guidebooks to assist in the planning and conduct of those talks. These materials, as well as copies of this and other Interactivity Foundation reports, may be downloaded from our website (listed below). Upon request, you can also obtain additional printed copies of any of our publications (free of charge). See the contact information listed below.

Finally, we welcome your comments, ideas, and other feedback about this report, its possibilities and any of our other publications or discussion processes.

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Special Thanks to the contributing photographers

Pete Shively:

p. 15 Holstein Cows

p. 30 Background Farm & Beef Cows

p. 31 Field Corn and Silos

Steven Shoemaker:

p. 11 Cows in Pasture

p. 22 Green Plants

p. 26 Background Vegetables

Lindsey Day Farnsworth:

p. 27 Aquaponics

p. 25 Wheelbarrows and Hoop Bar

Sean Collins:

p. 17 Eat Rite Diner

Alastair Smith:

p. 21 Food line

Ian Broyles:

p. 29 American Gothic

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Discussion Reports

America's Democratic Promise (2011)

Democratic Nation Building (2011)

Food: What Might Be For Dinner? (2011)

The Future of Energy (2011)

The Future of K-12 Education (2011)

Future Possibilities for Civil Rights Policy (2011)

Helping Out: Humanitarian Policy for Global Security (2011)

Ayudando Política Humanitaria Para la Seguridad Global (Spanish version, 2011)

Health Care: The Case of Depression, 3rd edition (2010)

How Will We All Retire? (2010)

Privacy & Privacy Rights, 2nd edition (2010)

The Future of Regulation (2009)

Helping America Talk (2009)

Property (2009)

Rewarding Work (2007)

Science (2007)

Anticipating Human Genetic Technology (2006)

Other Publications

Julius "Jay" Stern: A Biography (2010)

Contrasting Possibilities & the Interactivity Foundation Discussion Process, 2nd edition (2009)

Facilitation Guidebook for Small Group Citizen Discussions, 2nd edition (2009)

Support Materials for the IF Discussion Process (2009)

Teaching Tips (2009)

Guidebook for Student-Centered Classroom Discussions (2008)

Public Discussion as the Exploration & Development of Contrasting Conceptual Possibilities (2006)

Facilitation Guidebook (2005)

Plenary Review: A Macro-Policy Approach to Improve Public Policy (1991)

In pursuit of its mission to encourage and enhance the discussion of—and engagement with—broad public policy ideas (or "possibilities"), the Interactivity Foundation continues to conduct new discussion projects and develop new Discussion Reports from those projects. It is also continually revising its prior reports and developing new discussion guidebooks and other materials. The above list of publications was accurate as of the print date. For an up-to-date listing, visit the IF website at www.interactivityfoundation.org.