

GLOBAL
ALLIANCE
FOR THE
FUTURE
OF FOOD

A person wearing a brown corduroy jacket and blue jeans is carrying a large woven basket on their back. The basket is filled with various food items, including a large pile of white almonds, a pile of dark grey seeds or grains, and a pile of brown, sugary-coated almonds. The person is holding a green string that is attached to the basket. The background is a dark, paved surface.

PRINCIPLES AND THE FUTURE OF FOOD

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“Change confronts us on all sides, envelops us from all directions, is omnipresent. We have choices about how we face, engage, and deal with change. Principles inform and guide those choices. They do so by telling us how to act.”

— MICHAEL QUINN PATTON

At the Global Alliance for the Future of Food we believe in the urgency of transforming global food systems, and in the power of working together and with others to effect positive change. Our work is guided by a set of seven shared principles: **renewability, resilience, equity, diversity, healthfulness, inclusion, and interconnectedness**. These principles shape our vision of the future of food, express our values, and encompass the change we want to make.

Transforming our food systems is one of the most defining issues of our time. Profound changes in the way food is grown, processed, distributed, consumed, and wasted, threatens a future of food that is sustainable, equitable, and secure, particularly when coupled with climate change and shifting global economics, politics, and demographics. Transformational change at the scale and speed needed requires all actors to do their part. Business-as-usual is no longer an option: it will only continue to have more severe negative impacts environmentally (from increased GHG emissions to soil erosion and pollution), socially (from increased non-communicable diseases to eroding cultural traditions), and economically (from decline in rural economies to the volatility of the global market).

Food systems transformation requires that we take a systems-level approach, encouraging collaboration between philanthropy, researchers, grassroots movements, the private sector, farmers and food systems workers, Indigenous Peoples, governments, and policymakers. For deep and lasting material and social change — in the global south and north — diverse interests need to come together to find common ground and more effectively identify and co-create needed solutions.

Taken together, the principles provide a powerful framework to make more informed, comprehensive, and principled decisions. They enable us to see the whole system in new ways, highlight multiple entry points for change, and help us to adapt to specific contexts with sensitivity. Crucially, they ensure that we avoid siloed interventions, unintended consequences, and short-term solutions.

For current and future generations, food system transformation is a shared responsibility. We need principled thinking for principled times.

THE FUTURE OF FOOD IS:



RENEWABLE

Address the integrity of natural and social resources that are the foundation of a healthy planet and future generations in the face of changing global and local demands.

Our food systems must be renewable so that the natural and social systems that we rely on and that have regenerated over thousands of years continue to do so. This means that food is produced, processed, and consumed in adequate quality and quantity while protecting both food cultures, traditions, and practices, as well as protecting the intrinsic value and integrity of natural resources including land, soils, water, seas, biodiversity and seeds, livestock, pollination, and other natural resources through preservation, conservation, restoration, regulation, and responsible management and use.



RESILIENT

Support regenerative, durable, and economically adaptive systems in the face of a changing planet.

Our food systems must be resilient so that they can both mitigate and adapt – especially in light of extreme weather, economic shocks, and social disruption. This means that food is produced, processed, and consumed in adequate quality and quantity as part of a stable and sustainable system, not contributing to increasing climate challenges. Through intensifying soil microbial activity, restoring soil quality, increasing soil fertility, reducing dependency on fossil fuel through sustainable use of locally available resources, protecting agricultural biodiversity, and more, resilient food systems open up more climate adaptation and mitigation opportunities. Our food systems must also nurture resilient human systems and social capital, keeping alive the values, traditions, experience, and expertise needed for resilient food systems, including global communication, cooperation, and farming structures to be used by future generations.



EQUITABLE

Promote sustainable livelihoods and access to nutritious and just food systems for all.

Our food systems must be equitable so that no one is left behind and so that those upon whom our food systems depend – especially women and smallholders – have the ability to achieve a decent livelihood and food security. This means that we must work to: eliminate poverty; ensure our food systems continue to provide jobs to the 1.6 billion smallholder farmers in need of fair employment; and ensure local communities' control over the means of production, such as opportunities to land, to production subsidies, to capital, and to control over their own spiritual and material relationships to their lands and nature.



DIVERSE

Value our rich and diverse agricultural, ecological, and cultural heritage.

Our food systems must be diverse so that we protect and conserve the rich agricultural biodiversity of fishing grounds, forests, water bodies, aquatic organisms, pastoral lands, migratory routes, and plant and animal genetic resources and medicines, including crops, seeds, livestock breeds, and their wild relatives. As well, it means not just protecting and conserving agricultural biodiversity but also upholding diversity in healthy diets, markets, technology, and in local knowledge processes, traditions, and cultural heritage – all as pathways conducive to resilience and better farmer livelihoods, consumer well-being and health, and environmental protection.



HEALTHY

Advance the health and well-being of people, animals, the environment, and the societies that depend on all three.

Our food systems must deliver health for all – human health, animal health, environmental health, and community health. This means that all forms of malnutrition are eliminated through access to safe, nutritious, diverse, and affordable food now and for future generations. It means ensuring that every actor in the food system – from production to processing to consumption – is protected from food production-related occupational hazards and environmental contamination such as air and water pollution and pesticide contamination. As well, it means nurturing food's role in providing social, familial, and cultural meaning.



INCLUSIVE

Ensure meaningful and authentic engagement of diverse people and organizations in transparent deliberations, shared power, democratic decisions, and collective actions affecting food systems for the public good.

Our food systems must be inclusive of all those who produce, process, and consume food in rural and urban areas, in poor and wealthy countries. This means that global governance is built on democratic principles, shared power, and inclusive participation, that decision-making is democratic, including the participation of food producers and constituencies most affected by hunger and malnutrition, and that in deliberations concerning the future of food, diverse people and organizations are engaged in transparent and authentic ways.



INTERCONNECTED

Understand the implications of the interdependence of food, people, and the planet in a transition to more sustainable food systems.

Our food systems must be interconnected. We must understand the interdependencies within the system, recognizing the complex web of dynamics and interactions between parts of the system. It means watching for, making sense of, and interpreting the implications of things that are interconnected in the global system. We must think beyond nation-states, sector siloes, and narrowly identified issues and see the interconnections between the global and local, the macro and the micro, and the relationships between worldwide patterns and area-specific challenges.

ABOUT THE GLOBAL ALLIANCE FOR THE FUTURE OF FOOD

The Global Alliance for the Future of Food is a strategic alliance of philanthropic foundations working together and with others to transform global food systems now and for future generations. We believe in the urgency of transforming global food systems, and in the power of working together and with others to effect positive change. Food systems reform requires new and better solutions at all scales through a systems-level approach and deep collaboration among philanthropy, researchers, grassroots movements, the private sector, farmers and food systems workers, Indigenous Peoples, government, and policymakers.

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