

# Draft Founding Document for the US Food Sovereignty Alliance (USFSA)

October 16, 2010

## Mission Statement

The US Food Sovereignty Alliance works to end poverty, rebuild local food economies, and assert democratic control over the food system. We believe all people have the right to healthy, culturally appropriate food, produced in an ecologically sound manner. As a US-based alliance of food justice, anti-hunger, labor, environmental, faith-based, and food producer groups, we uphold the right to food as a basic human right and work to connect our local and national struggles to the international movement for food sovereignty.

## Vision Statement

We believe that food and water must be treated as basic human rights and we uphold [the internationally recognized principles of food sovereignty](#).

We honor Mother Earth, value biodiversity, and support ecological farming and fishing practices that protect the Earth, animals, and people.

We support movement away from the dominant, corporate-controlled food system, which is shaped by systems of power and oppression. Our solutions must dismantle systemic food injustice rooted in race, class, and gender oppression.

We respect people and other forms of life over profits. We honor everyone's work in the food system, including unpaid, underpaid, and devalued labor. We work to honor our human commonalities and restore traditional ways of growing, preparing, sharing, and eating food as a community.

## Operating Principles

- We embrace international solidarity as central to our organizing and view our struggles in the US as part of a broader global food sovereignty movement.
- We believe in transparency and decentralized leadership and power.
- We are committed to a membership and leadership that reflects the entire population of the US and the full spectrum of people impacted by the food system, particularly low-income communities and communities of color in both rural and urban areas.

- We recognize and prioritize the leadership of women, Indigenous Peoples, people of color, migrant workers, and other food providers and workers marginalized by the global food system.
- We listen to and honor all voices, languages, and forms of knowledge.
- We work to strengthen the links between urban and rural struggles for food justice.
- We seek to create a space of mutual education and knowledge exchange.
- We trace and hold accountable our funding sources and ask that they also honor our vision and these principles.
- We strive to create an inclusive and efficient decision-making process.
- We all commit to contribute the resources needed to ensure a strong alliance.

### **Movement-Building Goals**

1. Build and coalesce a domestic food sovereignty movement that identifies itself as part of the broader global movement for food sovereignty and is recognized as such by international counterparts.
2. Build strategic partnerships with existing food justice and food worker initiatives in the US around the theme of ending poverty through rebuilding local food economies. Ensure that the Alliance is informed by these initiatives, honors them, and actively supports them.
3. Build strategic partnerships with international allies. Facilitate the active participation of US-based groups in global food sovereignty campaigns and initiatives (e.g., representation in the International Planning Committee for Food Sovereignty and involvement in global days of action called by La Via Campesina and other international allies).
4. Lead a broad-based educational campaign on food sovereignty in the US, helping communities to understand how their local struggles are connected to broader struggles and imbalances of power.
5. Raise awareness of how US foreign aid, trade, climate, and development policies are undermining food sovereignty of communities across the globe and build political capacity to challenge these policies and offer alternatives.
6. Identify common struggles that intersect global and domestic arenas – e.g., land grabbing, water rights, and corporate control of the food system. Build mechanisms for

communities to effectively support each other's struggles, both within the US and across borders and continents.

7. Through grassroots organizing and alliance-building, work to build political power to bring about structural change in the US and internationally. Use the [Call to Action to End the Food Crisis](#) as a tool for organizing.
8. Build strategic alliances with related movements – e.g., climate justice, economic justice, community control of land, water, and others.
9. Work collectively to raise and share resources that support the leadership and full participation of grassroots members of the Alliance.
10. Actively support the leadership of the next generation.

### **Membership Criteria, Expectations, and Benefits**

We welcome grassroots, community-based, faith-based and non-profit organizations with leadership of women, youth, people of color, workers, farmers, indigenous peoples, immigrants, queer folks, people with dis/alter-abilities, trans people, and gender-nonconforming people.

Membership shall be made up of groups who endorse the Mission, Vision and Operating Principles and organizations which strive to involve the above constituencies in all aspects of community and organizational work: planning, decision-making, implementation and evaluation.

Organizations may choose to join as either general or core members, based on their capacity to fulfill responsibilities below.

### **General Member Responsibilities:**

- Uphold and support the mission, vision, and operating principles of the Alliance
- Be involved in food sovereignty work and/or work that intersects with the food sovereignty/food justice movement (e.g. health care reform, labor rights, economic justice, immigrant rights, trade justice, climate justice, water privatization, anti-poverty, anti-oppression, etc.)
- Dedicate time, resources, and effort toward ending racism and other forms of exclusion and oppression evidenced in the food system and perpetuated in our own organizations.
- Inform other members about your work and stay informed about the work of other members
- Take action to support the work of the Alliance and its member groups (e.g., commit to solidarity actions with other member organizations, widely publicize your membership and activities in the Alliance, contribute member/staff time and funds, etc.)

**Additional Responsibilities for Core Members:**

- Dedicate time and resources toward common ground strategies and campaigns of the Alliance
- Serve on at least one work team of the Alliance – Grassroots Power and Movement Building, Corporate Control and Policy, Media/Messaging, Fundraising (forming), Building Local Food Economies (forming), etc.
- Commit to take part in racial justice/anti-racism trainings and to actively work to apply anti-racist principles to the work of the Alliance (internally and externally)
- Agree to undertake actions in solidarity with other member groups, that are not within the usual themes, agenda or actions for your organization, at least 3 times each year

**General Member Benefits:**

- Be connected to the U.S. and international food sovereignty movements
- Learn from the experience and knowledge of others in the Alliance
- Receive recognition and/or support for your food sovereignty-related work from the Alliance and other members
- For new groups trying to start up local food sovereignty efforts, you will receive referrals to resources to help you to develop your work.
- Access to information and educational opportunities on ending racism and addressing injustice in the food system
- Broaden the audience for your work

**Additional Benefits for Core Members:**

- The right to vote for Coordinating Committee members
- Opportunity to serve on the Coordinating Committee
- Participate in decision-making for committees and the overall goals and work of the Alliance
- Gain broader attention and support for your food sovereignty-related work through promotion to the public by the Alliance (via Alliance website, emails, public events)

- For core member groups aiming to strengthen local food sovereignty efforts, you will receive help and mentoring from more established Alliance members.

If you are an individual interested in getting involved, we encourage you to join an organization that is a member of the Alliance. Please contact us for a list of member organizations.

If you are an organization, network, or alliance interested in working with the US Food Sovereignty Alliance on campaigns and projects but cannot join as a member, you may apply to join as an Affiliate, allowing you to participate in a committee, but not have a vote. Affiliates are determined by the Coordinating Committee.

### **Process to Apply for Membership**

1. Organizations fill out an application for membership (see below), either for Core or General Membership, indicating that they meet the membership criteria, provide information about their organization and indicate that a decision-making body of their organization has made an affirmative decision to join USFSA.
2. The USFSA Coordinating Committee is empowered to approve applications for membership and may nominate new members.

### **Structure and Decision Making**

The US Food Sovereignty Alliance membership decides the overall political vision and strategies of the Alliance, and carries out the work of the Alliance through committees, ad hoc working groups, and a Coordinating Committee. The Coordinating Committee includes one representative from each of the committees and makes administrative and program decisions during the course of the year. Additionally, the Coordinating Committee seeks to have balanced representation that is inclusive of all regions and the experiences of those most impacted by the problems and conditions of the predominant agrifood system. All committees, including the Coordinating Committee, hold regular monthly calls and ideally a minimum of one face-to-face meeting per year. The work agenda for the Alliance is set by the membership during an annual assembly. Additional opportunities for the fullest degree of participation and improved communication will be explored.

All decisions made in the committees and by the membership are made by consensus. In the event that full consensus is unable to be reached, decision will be made by voting.

## **Call to Action**

*The following Call to Action is adapted from the Call to Action to End the Food Crisis issued by the US Working Group on the Food Crisis in 2008 and endorsed by several thousand organizations and individuals. It is included here as a springboard for future action of the Alliance, with the understanding that it will evolve to reflect new ideas, voices, and perspectives as the Alliance develops.*

**We call on people across the United States to use our political power and actions to fight poverty by rebuilding local food economies, and specifically for food system changes that:**

1) Stabilize prices for farmers and consumers locally, nationally and globally by:

- Ending rampant financial speculation in food;
- Establishing and strengthening publicly-owned domestic, regional, and international strategic food reserves;
- Suspending international trade and investments in industrial-scale biofuels (a.k.a. agrofuels);
- Transforming corporate-oriented food aid;
- Ensuring fair prices to farmers, fishers, pastoralists and other food providers;
- Establishing equitable regional and global trade arrangements that enable countries, communities, and all farmers, fishers, pastoralists and other food providers to meet food and livelihood needs.

2) Balance power in the food system by:

- Reducing the political influence of agrifood corporations on public policy, e.g., by strengthening antitrust enforcement on those corporations and reducing their unregulated market power;
- Convening multi-stakeholder, representative food policy councils at state and local levels.

3) Make agriculture environmentally sustainable by:

- Supporting family farms' transition to agroecological practices through incentives, purchasing and procurement;
- Halting expansion of government-supported agrofuels (biofuels) and transgenic seeds

programs, mandates, and tax incentives and other subsidies

- Directing state and national farm policy, R&D, education and investment toward agroecological farming and sustainable food businesses.

4) Guarantee the right to healthy food by building local and regional food systems and fostering social, ecological and economic justice by:

- Calling on the US to join the community of nations to support the human right to food;
- Supporting domestic food production and independent, community-based food cooperatives and businesses in the United States and around the world;
- Establishing living wages, so that everyone can afford healthy food;
- Implementing full workers' rights for farm workers and other food system workers;
- Implementing agrarian reform that takes land out of the hands of large corporations and puts it in the hands of communities for local food production.
- Strengthening the social safety net for low-income people across the US;
- Creating a solidarity economy that puts people before corporate profit in the US and around the world.

***Through food sovereignty, the Earth can feed all living things.***

# Membership Application

## Application for Organizational Membership to the US Food Sovereignty Alliance

*Please read the founding document in full before submitting a membership application. Submission of the membership application signifies that your organization is in alignment with mission, vision, principles, etc. laid out in the founding document and is committed to fulfilling membership responsibilities.*

Name of Group:

\_\_\_\_\_

Address:

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Fax: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Website: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

Email and phone:

\_\_\_\_\_

Alternate Contact: \_\_\_\_\_

Email and phone:

\_\_\_\_\_

Your group's Mission:

What is your group's structure (e.g. First People's nation, congregation, chapter based, coalition, network, community-based membership organization, etc.) and who is your constituency?

Please list 3 issues that your group works on. Does your group have any existing campaigns? If so, please list.



Why is your group interested in joining the US Food Sovereignty Alliance? What do you hope to get out of membership?

What will your group bring to this Alliance and how will it contribute?

Is your group open to new members? If an individual from your area contacts us, can we refer them to your group?

Is your group interested in being a general member or a core member of the US Food Sovereignty Alliance (see membership criteria above)?

Who are your strategic partners, especially related to food sovereignty organizing?

If you're interested in core membership, please indicate which team(s) one or more representatives of your group might be interested in taking part in:

\_\_\_ Grassroots Power & Movement-Building Team: Coordinating, organizing and mobilizing actions related to food sovereignty. Identifying, recruiting and cultivating relationships with organizations for the Alliance. Collaboration with the Growing Food and Justice Initiative (GFJI) and other key partner organizations.

\_\_\_ Corporate Control and Policy Team: Researching, analyzing and developing strategies to address policy related to food sovereignty. Developing strategies and actions related to corporate power and influence over the food system.

\_\_\_ Fundraising Team: Developing and facilitating fundraising for the Alliance and core

campaign work.

\_\_\_Annual Assembly Planning Team: Planning for the first annual assembly of the US Food Sovereignty Alliance and related activities.

\_\_\_Media/Messaging Team

Developing messaging and media work for the Alliance. \*This team is not yet up and running, but hopefully will be once there's a critical mass of folks interested. If you have experience in this area, please let us know!\*

Additional thoughts on future work teams welcome.

To submit this Application, please email it to [info@usfoodsovereigntyalliance.org](mailto:info@usfoodsovereigntyalliance.org). You can download a pdf version [here](#).