

Activity: Contrasting Orientations: Food Security, Food Sovereignty and Food Justice



TIME ESTIMATE
45 minutes



MATERIALS

Two pieces of chart paper (or white board) and markers, tape to secure the chart paper, writing implements for all students, sticky notes (ideally three different colours); laptop, internet access for initial research

PURPOSE

To identify and explain the drivers underlying efforts for Food Justice, Food Sovereignty, and Food Security and identify ways for participants to get involved in equity-oriented food system initiatives.

DESCRIPTION

This activity will crowdsource food system initiatives from individuals then the larger group will collectively sort these activities based on their orientation with the outcomes of food security, food justice, and food sovereignty. A shorter version of this activity (Part 1 only) can be done to help students define food justice, food sovereignty, and food security.

STEPS: PRE-ACTIVITY

- 1 Introduce the activity ahead of time (approx one to two days ahead of completing the in-class activity).
 - This activity will crowdsource food system initiatives from individuals then the larger group will collectively sort these activities based on their orientation with food security, food justice, and food sovereignty.
 - By the end of the activity, participants will have a greater understanding of the distinction between food security, food sovereignty and food justice, as well avenues for themselves to get involved in line with these values.
- 2 Instruct participants to identify three initiatives related to food systems work:
 - A non-governmental organization (NGO) - NGOs are citizen led organizations separate from government and can include: nonprofits, clubs, charities, etc.
 - A policy - this can include strategies at the local level, such as [City of Vancouver's Food Strategy](#) or local food policy councils, all the way to the national level, such as [Canada's emergent National Food Policy](#). This could also include specific policies, such as Official Community Plans, Bylaws, and Policies related to urban agriculture.
 - An action - An action participants could take, whether in relation to the policies (ie writing to an elected official about a certain policy) or NGOs (ie volunteering with an organization or donating), or unrelated, such as participating in mutual aid programs or supporting their neighbours.
- 3 Tell participants to come prepared on the day of the activity with at least one example from every category.

STEPS: ACTIVITY PART 1 (15 MINS)

This component of the activity can be done as a standalone activity (without the pre-activity or Part 2) if your participants are unfamiliar with the terms.

- 1 On the chart paper, draw three columns and write out: food security, food sovereignty, and food justice, at the top of the sheet leaving space for writing beneath each term.
- 2 Crowdsource definitions from the group: How would you define food security? Food sovereignty? Food justice? What words or images do you associate with each term?
- 3 If the group is having difficulties, offer them the following definitions verbally and jot down some of the key words on the chart paper:

Food Justice

Understandings of food justice continue to evolve and are not universally agreed upon, but often represents “a transformation of the current food system, including but not limited to eliminating disparities and inequities” that constrain food choices and access to good food for all¹ and communities exercising their right to grow, sell, and eat fresh, nutritious, affordable, culturally appropriate, and locally-grown foods. The well-being of the environment, workers, and animals must be considered simultaneously.² Food justice involves addressing the causes of inequality both within and beyond the food system – such as racism, exploitation, and oppression.³ This means actively analyzing and reflecting on the structural causes that permeate the food system and society broadly, leading to unequal access to food for different groups.⁴

- 1 Gottlieb, R., & Joshi, A. (2010). Chapter 1: Growing and Producing Food. In *Food Justice*, ix. Cambridge, Massachusetts and London, England: MIT Press.
- 2 Alkon, A. H., & Agyeman, J. (2011). *Cultivating Food Justice: Race, Class, and Sustainability*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.
- 3 Glennie, C., & Alkon, A. H. (2018). Food justice: Cultivating the field. *Environmental Research Letters*, 13(7), 73003. doi:10.1088/1748-9326/aac4b2
- 4 Allen, P., Fitzsimmons, M., Goodman, M., & Warner, K. (2003). Shifting plates in the agrifood landscape: the tectonics of alternative agrifood initiatives in California. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 19(1), 61-75. doi: 10.1016/s0743-0167(02)00047-5

Food Security

Food security is considered a basic human right by the United Nations. It is fulfilled when all people have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and preferences.¹ The concept of food security usually emphasizes physical and economic access to food; the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) emphasizes that an increase in food insecurity at the global scale can be contributed to economic slowdowns and increased conflict.² The food security paradigm often compares the total amount of production to the average needs of the population to measure food insecurity.

- 1 Patel, R. (2009). Food sovereignty, *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 36:3, 663-706, DOI: 10.1080/03066150903143079
- 2 FAO, I. (2020). *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2020: Transforming food systems for affordable healthy diets*. FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO. <https://doi.org/10.4060/ca9692en>

Food Sovereignty

“Food sovereignty is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems.”¹ The concept of food sovereignty was introduced and championed by La Via Campesina in 2007, a global peasant movement working to enact their food sovereignty by advocating for workers’ and women’s rights and fighting against land grabs and the spread of genetically modified organisms (GMOs).²

- 1 La Via Campesina. (2007). Declaration Of Nyeleni. Retrieved from <https://nyeleni.org/IMG/pdf/DeclNyeleni-en.pdf>
- 2 Food Secure Canada. (2013, August 14). What is Food Sovereignty. Food Secure Canada. <https://foodsecurecanada.org/who-we-are/what-food-sovereignty>

STEPS: ACTIVITY PART 2 (30 MINS)

- 4 Detach the chart paper, but tape the paper somewhere where the definitions would still be visible for everyone to see.
- 5 Instruct participants to write their food system's initiatives on a sticky note. Assign a colour for each (1) NGO, (2) Policy, (3) Action.
- 6 Create a three circle Venn Diagram on the fresh chart paper. Label one circle for each orientation: (1) Food Justice, (2) Food Security, (3) Food Sovereignty. If any participants have selected the same initiatives, tell them to layer their sticky notes together.
- 7 Once participants are done putting their sticky notes on the paper, have 1-2 participants volunteer to read out the sticky notes that were placed on the Venn Diagram.
- 8 Debrief the activity. Focus on one or two specific sticky notes (i.e. if one organization or action was repeatedly chosen by learners) using the following questions:
 1. Why did you choose those sticky notes? What are the drivers behind that organization?
 2. What are the organization's goals and how do they relate to the different orientations (food justice, food security, food sovereignty).
 3. Does this approach align more with a top-down approach (ie coming from government or institutions) or a bottom-up (citizen or community-driven and led)?
 4. What characteristics or indicators did you use to distinguish between each orientation?
 - Participants' answers to this question can also be used to add to their initial definitions of food sovereignty, food justice, and food security on the other chart paper.
 5. For organizations that are shared between two or more orientations, what characteristics made them closer to one orientation or the other?
 6. What is each orientation's approach to addressing the food crisis?
 7. Were there other themes or orientations that came up that are not captured in the terms food justice, food sovereignty and food security?
 - For example: social justice, poverty-reduction, food sustainability
 8. Was one of the three orientations over-represented? Was one under-represented? Why do you think that is?
 9. Do you think you will complete any of the actions that were put on the Venn Diagram, or follow up with any of the policies or NGOs?

ASSESSMENT

Write a ~3 paragraph reflection on the experience, using the "What? So What? Now What?" Model, reflective model was researched and [developed by Rolfe et al. in 2001](#) and has also been attributed to Henri Lipmanowicz and Keith McCandless, the creators of [Liberating Structures](#).

[This post](#) by Gustavo Razzetti, of the Liberationist, provides a good overview of the reflection format:

- What: Understanding the event
- So What: Make sense of the facts and their implications
- Now What: Identify course of action or new solutions based on the reflection

These reflections can be picked up at the end of the class as an 'exit ticket', where learners submit their short reflection before leaving the class or workshop.