



# Hungry for Change Discussion Tool

Northwest Earth Institute, a non-profit that facilitates education and connection around topics in human and environmental health, is proud to offer this educational discussion resource for Food Day.



This sampler offers excerpts from *Hungry for Change: Food, Ethics, and Sustainability*, a 4-6 session discussion workbook used by small groups to engage in a process of exploring our food system through shared discovery and personal reflection.

Food Day seeks to bring together people in every city and state in the country to learn, debate, and mobilize to improve our food system. On October 24, use this discussion guide to connect and talk with your coworkers, classmates, friends, and family about what “Eating Real” really means.

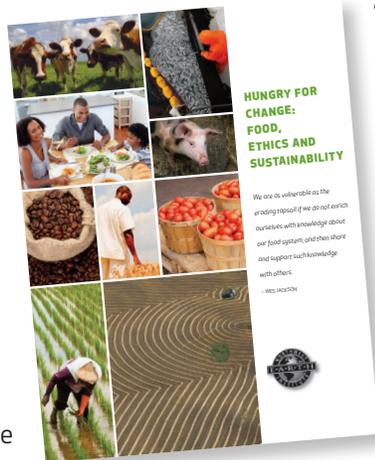
## “Three Pillars of a Food Revolution” by Anna Lappé

A few years ago, I stumbled on a United Nations study that transformed how I think about the climate crisis. In the report, researchers pegged greenhouse gases from the livestock sector at 18 percent of total global emissions. Combine this with other aspects of our food chain — from agricultural chemical production to agribusiness driven deforestation to food waste rotting in landfills — and the food and agriculture sector is responsible for nearly one third of the planet’s manmade emissions. Move

over Hummer; it’s time to say hello to the hamburger.

It doesn’t take high-level math to realize if we’re serious about averting the climate crisis, we need to add the food chain to our conversation. (Of course, we should be talking about agriculture’s impact on the environment for a host of other reasons, too.) Agriculture is the world’s single largest user of land and water, using up 70 percent of the world’s freshwater resources every year. Agriculture is also responsible for widespread air and

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### AREAS FOR APPLICATION

**Workplace** — Brown bag lunch discussion, team building, worksite wellness, office sustainability

**Higher Education** — Course activity, faculty and staff development, student group icebreaker, eco and green teams

**Community** — Home, neighborhood, parent group, community association

### ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Purchase the complete *Hungry for Change* discussion book from NWEI’s online store: [www.nwei.org](http://www.nwei.org)

Join the national Food Day movement and learn more at [www.foodday.org](http://www.foodday.org)

Participate in NWEI’s Annual EcoChallenge: [www.ecochallenge.org](http://www.ecochallenge.org)

### HOW TO USE THIS TOOL ON FOOD DAY

1. Gather together a group of your coworkers, classmates, friends, or family — over a healthy potluck lunch, classroom activity, or as the discussion opener for a movie screening.
2. Print off copies of the discussion guide for all members of your group.
3. In small groups, read the first excerpt and spend approximately 10 minutes with the discussion questions. Have group members share their opinions, experiences, and suggestions.
4. Form new groups if numbers allow for the remaining excerpts and questions.
5. During discussion, keep in mind that consensus isn’t the goal. Agreement isn’t necessary for effective dialogue.



water pollution and agricultural chemical runoff that causes aquatic dead zones around the world. At last count, there are more than 400, including one in the Gulf of Mexico that swells every year to a size three times larger than the BP oil spill. So what can we do? Thankfully, we're learning every day about the power of sustainable food systems to help reduce emissions from the food chain and mitigate the climate crisis.

Now, the "food system" may sound (and feel) like an abstract concept that has nothing to do with the sandwich sitting on your desk for lunch, but it's all related. And that sandwich you're about to eat connects you to the livelihoods and fates of farmers and food workers around the world. It also connects you to the climate.

*Read the full piece in Hungry for Change. Excerpt from an article that Anna Lappé adapted from a speech she gave for National Cooperative Growers Association.*

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How should we balance environmental protection with the need to produce enough food for growing populations? Is one more important than the other?
2. Lappé argues that our food choices connect us to the environment and to food and farm workers. Do you think these considerations should affect consumer choices? If so, how?

### "Food is Cheap at Market, but Costs a Lot Elsewhere" by Marion Nestle

Food prices are indeed going up, and I can hardly keep track of the possible causes: natural disasters, crop failures, commodity speculation, corn used for biofuels, lack of research in agriculture, the declining value of the U.S. dollar and just plain greed.

But we Americans still pay relatively less for food than anywhere else because so many of the costs of industrialized food production are "externalized." We pay for them, but not at the grocery store.

### HEALTH CARE COSTS

Let's count obesity as another externalized result of a cheap food system. The cheapest foods are high in calories and low in nutritional value — "junk" foods. When food is cheap, people eat more of it.

Abundant cheap food leads companies to aggressively market their products to be eaten any time, any place and in very large amounts — all of which promote biologically irresistible overeating.

Current estimates of the costs of obesity and its consequent illnesses in health care and lost productivity approach \$147 billion annually, almost the same as the cost of unsafe food.

Accurate or not, such numbers provide ample evidence for the need to bring agricultural policy in line with health policy.

To pick just one example: Dietary guidelines say to eat more fruits and vegetables, and cut down on sodas. But the indexed cost of fruits and vegetables has increased by about 40 percent since the early 1980s, whereas that of sodas has decreased by about 20 percent.

The high externalized cost of our present food system is a good reason to reconsider current policies. Now is the time to start working toward food system policies that will better promote health, safety and human welfare.

*Read the full piece in Hungry for Change. Excerpt from foodpolitics.com by Marion Nestle.*

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What role should food companies play in promoting good health? Should responsibility for obesity and other diet-related diseases be primarily with the consumer who has purchasing power, or with the larger food environment?
2. What role does price play in your own food buying decisions? What role do health considerations play? Are you willing to pay more for foods you view as healthier?
3. Do you think Americans would consume fewer "junk foods" if they were more expensive?





### “Transforming our Tastes” by Raj Patel

Reclaiming control of the food system requires both an individual and a collective effort, and requires both individual and collective rights. It demands tough democratic deliberation about where the boundaries between the two should be. It’s a discussion that ought not to be pre-empted by its definition so much as broached by it.

The span of these actions ranges from the individual to the global. Some will require international cooperation for change. Some will be up to us as individuals. Together, these actions and rights form a cycle — to change ourselves, we need to change our world. To change our world, we need to change ourselves. Both are necessary. Both are difficult.

Listing those changes is hard, because they vary according to circumstance. There are some broad outlines, though. Starting at the individual level, one of the most difficult, because fundamental, changes that many of us will face is to:

Learn more about Northwest Earth Institute’s discussion-based resources at [www.nwei.org](http://www.nwei.org).

Join the national Food Day movement at [www.foodday.org](http://www.foodday.org) to learn more about diverse food system issues, access our free education and activism materials, connect with the online community, and get ideas for how to stay involved.

*Transform our tastes.* Much of the damage done by the food system is carried out under the alibi of “consumer demand.” Food system corporations are merely providing the sugar, salt, fat, and flesh that everybody wants to eat — or so they claim. The most obvious way to choke the supply is to douse the demand. This is easier said than done, of course. It isn’t easy to override our body’s hard-wiring for processed and energy-dense foods, especially when we have come to accept them as normal.

*Read the full piece in Hungry for Change. Excerpt from Stuffed and Starved by Raj Patel courtesy of Melville House.*

#### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What tastes might you need to change to reclaim the control of the food system, as Raj Patel suggests?
2. What makes you hopeful about the future of food? Briefly describe your ideal “food future.”

#### PUTTING IT INTO PRACTICE

- **Learn to cook.** A diet of whole foods is better for you, better for the planet, and a lot tastier than processed foods. Get healthy recipe ideas at [www.foodday.org](http://www.foodday.org).
- Buy food that is **produced locally** and **without harmful chemicals**.
- **Volunteer** in your community’s food system — on **Food Day** and throughout the year! Join a work party at a local farm, help out your neighborhood food co-op, organize a Northwest Earth Institute discussion group, host a Food Day event, and check out opportunities on the Food Day events map.
- Become aware of and support improved conditions for **farm workers**. You can find books, articles, and films on this subject at [www.foodday.org/resources](http://www.foodday.org/resources).
- If your community is lacking healthy, local, sustainable, and equitable food options, brainstorm with others about how **you can make a difference**. Contact your city’s sustainability office or food policy council, write to your elected officials, and organize with others in your network.