Food Policy Councils: Improving Food Systems

Ben Rasmussen
National Center for Frontier Communities
• What is Food Policy and What are its Impacts?

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What is Food Policy?

• **Food policy** is the area of public policy concerning how food is produced, processed, distributed, and purchased. Food policies are designed to influence the operation of the food and agriculture system.

• This often includes decision-making around production and processing techniques, marketing, availability, utilization and consumption of food, in the interest of meeting or furthering social objectives.

• Food policy can be promulgated on any level, from local to global, and by a government agency, business, or organization. Food policymakers engage in activities such as regulation of food-related industries, establishing eligibility standards for food assistance programs for the poor, ensuring safety of the food supply, food labeling, and even the qualifications of a product to be considered organic.
This Includes

- Food Production
  - Safety
  - Distribution
  - Subsidies
  - Regulations (worker rights, organic and origin labeling, etc.)
  - Fishing and other wild harvest quotas

- Food Purchasing
  - Safety
  - SNAP and other Benefit Eligibility
  - Food AID/Disaster Relief
  - Import/Export
  - Procurement Policies
Who Can Determine Food Policy?

- Government Entities (Federal, State, County, City, etc.)
- Businesses (lobbying, internal Policies)
Which business sectors drive the TTIP negotiations?

Lobby groups with the most behind-closed-doors involvement in the early phases of TTIP negotiations:

- Cross Sector Lobby Groups
- Telecom & IT
- Pharma
- Finance
- Automobiles
- Engineering/Machinery
- Health
- Technology
- Chemistry
What Are Food Policy Councils?

Food Policy Councils (FPCs) provide a unique forum for diverse stakeholders to come together and address common concerns regarding food policy including food systems, food security, farm policy, food regulations, health, and nutrition.

Stakeholders include people such as farmers, city and state officials, non-profit organizations, chefs, food distributors, food justice advocates, educators, health professionals, and concerned citizens. FPCs bring together these stakeholders to share concerns and then utilize this diverse membership to act on common goals, thus influencing and shaping food policy.

FPCs exist in various other cities and states, and have had much success in improving and amending policies to be friendlier to local food systems and improve access to healthy foods.
Where are FPC’s?

There are 278 total Food Policy Councils (FPCs) in North America, with 212 in the United States, 60 in Canada, and 6 in tribal nations. 19 of these councils are still in development stages.

Jurisdiction: 31% of FPCs across North America operate at the county/district level; 22% at city/municipality level, 20% at a regional level, 13% at both city and county levels, 12% at state/provincial level, and 2% at tribal/indigenous level.

Government Relationship: 33% of FPCs across North America have government employees as members of their council, 32% receive in-kind donations/support from government entities, 22% report no connection to government, 18% were created by government legislation or agency decisions, 14% have their members appointed by a government official, and 12% receive direct funding from government and 6% report “other” relationships with government (these categories were not mutually exclusive).
Top priorities reported by FPCs include healthy food access, urban agriculture/food production, education, networking, and food purchasing/procurement.

Capacity building needs of FPCs include funding, organizational development, policy training and guidance, communication, strategic planning, administrative/staff support, membership recruitment/engagement, technology assistance, and research and evaluation.
What Have Food Policy Councils Done or Helped Do?

• Banning soda and sugary beverages in schools
• New Mexico’s New Mexico Grown Fresh Fruits and Vegetables for Schools (Senate Bill 80) allotting nearly $250k for schools to purchase locally.
• Maryland ban on sales of certain neonicotinoids (pesticides linked to killing honey-bees)
• Public Procurement policies (mandating that a certain percentage of public dollars be spent on local foods for institutions and schools)
• National Center for Frontier Communities Health Impact Assessment- recommendation will be introduced in to increase national TEFAP spending by double.
• Food Safety monitoring.
The Need for More Food Policy Councils

While there have been numerous food policy successes, there are many areas of concern that need better representation from stakeholders:

- Recent trade agreements threaten local food policies
- Many communities are particularly vulnerable to fluctuations in food distribution or crop damage
Starting a Food Policy Council