

**IN THIS ISSUE**  
**DUNCAN HILCHEY**

**Food and community wellness**



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In this open call issue, we offer a salmagundi of papers focusing on how communities are linking local food production to improved health and wellness. Depicting this theme, the cover of our fall 2021 issue features the **Farmacy Project**, a community health program that buys produces from local farms and makes it available for free to individuals referred by local healthcare professionals. In the cover photo, Karla Berger with the Brandon (Vermont) Community Health Center helps distribute Farmacy Project shares to clinic patients. Grassroots innovations such as these—linking local small farmers to residents in need of fresh food to improve their health—are part of a critical, although limited, civil society response to an American food system. The food choices of U.S. citizens remain largely controlled by powerful private interests in the industrial agriculture and allied food processing and distribution industries. Without countervailing public food system planning, policy, and governance (including a rational, nonpolitical farm bill), the American food system will continue to reflect neither the long-term interests of *real* family farmers nor the public at large.

Starting out this issue is **John Ikerd's** Economic Pamphleteer column, entitled *The EAT-Lancet Commission Report: A solution or perpetuation of the problem?* In it, Ikerd challenges the report's co-authors, an elite panel of 38 experts from around the world who argue “sustainable intensification” (i.e., growing more via an increase of technological inputs) is the solution to an unhealthy, inequitable, and environmentally destructive global food system. Triggering Ikerd's ire, in particular, is the panel's questioning of the practical value of agroecology while also ignoring the likelihood that powerful businesses that occupy a hegemonic position above producers and consumers would continue to do so under a global policy of sustainable intensification.

Following Ikerd, we have three insightful commentaries that put a light on both the promise and the limitations of a civil society approach to the wicked problems in the food system. First up is *Empowerment, love, and connection: Lessons learned from the Farmacy Project, a food-is-medicine program in Rutland, Vermont* by **Emma Hileman**. Flipping that script just a bit, **Lanika Sanders** encourages us to be careful in making charity the centerpiece of our response to hunger in *Avoiding the humanitarian trap: The 'Nobelization' of food aid*. And finally,

in *Impact of COVID-19 on Pennsylvania farm revenue: Looking back at the 2020 season*, **Miriam Seidel, Christopher D. Murakami, J. Franklin Egan, Jasmine D. Pope, and Chia-Lin Tsai** give us a snapshot of how a sample of farmers fared during the first year of the pandemic, with farmers in the study surprisingly reporting no significant benefit from the modest federal relief programs.

We next offer 12 papers covering a plethora of food system-based community development topics, touching on our theme of food and community wellness.

**Jairus Rossi** and **Timothy Woods** highlight our issue theme in *Incentivizing wellness through community supported agriculture: Reflections on shareholder impacts of an employer-based CSA voucher program*, in which the authors find that CSA participation did impact behaviors, including reporting less diet-related medical claims.

Next, we jump “the pond” to London, England, with *Procurement and delivery of food at holiday provision clubs* by **Emily Mann, Clara Widdison, Zeibeda Sattar, and Margaret Anne Defeyer**. The authors present the results of a survey of holiday club leaders and find that extending the provision of free meals to children during the holidays when school is out is an important piece of the food safety net in the city, even while they have significant logistical and financial challenges.

In *Cultivating Powerful Participation: Reflections from a food justice and facilitation learning experience*, **Jamie Bain, Noelle Harden, Shirley Nordrum, and Ren Olive** present a reflective essay on their experience effectively building the facilitation skills of community food justice leaders.

**Erika Berglund, Neva Hassanein, Paul Lachapelle, and Caroline Stephens** then offer *Advancing food democracy: The potential and limits of food policy positions in local government* in which they interview 11 of 19 known paid local government food policy professionals in the U.S. They find these professionals bullish about the future of food systems work, though somewhat challenged and in need of an expanded communications network such as the Center for Livable Future’s Food Policy Network.

The next set of papers in this issue focuses more on producer perspectives of food systems. In *Exploring the needs of urban producers in a rural state: A qualitative needs assessment*, **Catherine E. Sanders, Casandra K. Cox, Leslie D. Edgar, Donna L. Graham, and Amanda G. Philyaw Perez** find that, while Cooperative Extension in Arkansas is generally available to assist urban food producers, the organization is more oriented to commodity producers and presently not well equipped to advance the needs of small-scale growers who are more likely to use alternative production practices.

**Anika Rice** and **Zachary A. Goldberg** follow this with an event ethnography approach to provide an in-depth exploration into Jewish agroecological knowledge and issues conducted during a gathering of Jewish farmers and nonfarmers in *‘Harvesting a participatory movement’: Initial participatory action research with the Jewish Farmer Network*.

Continuing the farmer knowledge theme, **Eric S. Bendfeldt, Maureen McGonagle, and Kim L. Niewolny** interview a group of small farmers in Virginia to more fully appreciate the complex nature of local agricultural knowledge and experience. They conclude that more sophisticated and nuanced qualitative approaches to engaging with small farmers are required for effective extension and education in *Rethinking farmer knowledge from soil to plate through narrative inquiry: An agroecological food systems perspective*.

Using a social entrepreneurship framework, **Darin Saul, Soren Newman, and Christy Dearien** explore the effects of COVID-19 on a diverse group of food hubs in *Capital in context: Funding U.S. Inland Northwest food hub development before and during COVID-19*. In contrast to Seidel et al.’s Pennsylvania farmers (above), the authors find surprising resilience in the food hubs in their study, especially of those able to take advantage of federal COVID-19 relief programs.

Next, **Michelle Miller** sheds light on the unequal access of food systems data and information among supply chain stakeholders, especially during crises, and calls for the democratization of critical knowledge through public investment in data collection and analysis in her policy analysis, *Big data, information asymmetry, and food supply chain management for resilience*.

In our final peer-reviewed paper, *Implementing sustainable food forests: Extracting success factors through a cross-case comparison*, **Stefanie Albrecht** and **Arnim Wiek** take a deep dive into seven cases of food forests in multiple

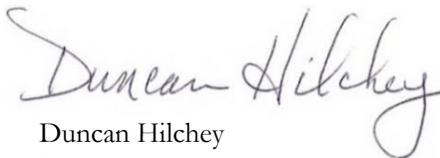
countries, and provide recommendations for their management informed by this research.

In our final paper, further complicating our understanding of the efficacy of federal support during COVID-19 is the research by **Iryna Demko, Ana Claudia Sant’Anna, and Kathleen (Chyi-Lyi) Liang**. In their paper, *An overview of the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loans and implications for agricultural enterprise recovery from COVID-19*, the authors found the benefits varied considerably due to the lack of clarity and consistency in the program’s implementation.

We finish the issue with four book reviews. **Innocent Awasom** reviews *Food Gardens for a Changing World*, by Daniela Soleri, David A. Cleveland, and Steven A. Smith; **Bruno Borsari** reviews *Breaking Boundaries: The Science of Our Planet*, by Johan Rockström and Owen Gaffney; **Krishnendu Ray** reviews the *Routledge Handbook of Food as a Commons*, edited by Jose Luis Vivero-Pol, Tomaso Ferrando, Olivier De Schutter, and Ugo Mattei; and **Molly D. Anderson** reviews the *Routledge Handbook of Sustainable and Regenerative Food Systems*, edited by Jessica Duncan, Michael Carolan, and Johannes S. C. Wiskerke.

With this issue, we start our second decade of publishing JAFSCD! The food movement is blessed with many activist scholars, professionals, and practitioners working every day to make the world a bit more equitable and resilient. JAFSCD has been fortunate—especially during these difficult times—to have many of these activists involved as authors, editors, editorial board members, and volunteers.

Despite the continuing struggle with COVID-19, for racial justice, and around climate issues and the growing imbalance between the haves and have nots, we, the JAFSCD staff and representatives of the JAFSCD Shareholder Consortium, wish our readers and their loved ones happy and healthy holidays, and a hope for a better year in 2022. 



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