

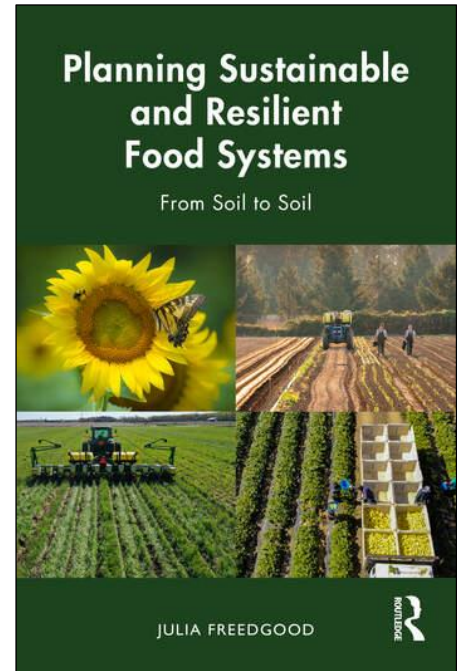
## Understanding the foodscape: Context for growing a discussion on feeding the people

*Book review by*

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Review of *Planning Sustainable and Resilient Food Systems: From Soil to Soil*, by Julia Freedgood. (2024). Published by Routledge. Available as paperback, hardcover and eBook; 290 pages. Publisher's website: <https://www.routledge.com/Planning-Sustainable-and-Resilient-Food-Systems-From-Soil-to-Soil/Freedgood/p/book/9781032276861>



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With roots in agriculture before the nation's founding, America's food system branches into parts down to the seed. The systems that make up the country's nutritional health are so intercon-

nected that a guide to understanding the national, state, and local factors is needed for planning professionals to effectively view the big picture in a holistic way. Author Julia Freedgood provides just that in her book *Planning Sustainable and Resilient Food Systems*.

\* Al Dilozeno is an American Planning Association Food Systems Division member, independent consultant, and JD candidate at Capital University Law School whose work bridges sustainability, technology, the arts, and real estate to create more resilient and connected communities. Living on a half-acre urban farm in Columbus, Ohio, she actively supports the Urban Farm Church and advocates for local food systems as essential components of land use planning and public policy. Connect with her via email, [aldilorenzoart@gmail.com](mailto:aldilorenzoart@gmail.com), or LinkedIn, <https://www.linkedin.com/in/aldilorenzo/>.

An expert in food systems planning and agriculture advocate, Freedgood is an advisor at American Farmland Trust who focuses on planning and policy to increase food security and combat climate change with a farmers first approach. In her book, she provides a rich assessment, particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, of the need to plan for a more resilient food system through land management, supply chains, policy, and community.

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Freedgood emphasizes that planners should proactively design comprehensive plans and zoning ordinances that incorporate food production and equitable access. With meaningful community buy-in, local produce farms and markets can diversify the food supply chain and enhance regional self-reliance. Good policy is the connective tissue between planning and practice—translating vision into the regulations, incentives, and partnerships needed to sustain long-term food security. Improving access to nutritious food not only strengthens community food security but also has potential to produce better health outcomes in a country experiencing high rates of diet-related disease.

As the pandemic and the more recent federal government shutdown underscored, America’s “get big or get out” agricultural model remains alarmingly fragile—particularly for low-income households, 32.1% of which experienced food insecurity in 2021. During the 2025 federal shutdown, approximately 42 million SNAP beneficiaries faced interruptions in benefits, exposing how vulnerable food access is to political and economic disruptions. The ongoing consolidation of agriculture continues to degrade soil health and reduce the nutritional value of food, reinforcing Freedgood’s call for a decentralized, resilient system rooted in local planning, sound policy, and community empowerment.

To aid in the development of more resilient food systems, Freedgood provides a comprehensive framework on the fundamental elements and importance of planning, ensuring that profession-

als, regardless of their background, can quickly grasp the essentials of food systems planning. Freedgood then equips the readers with a robust toolbox, detailing federal agencies and policies as well as state land-use decisions, sustainable agriculture programs, and community food security initiatives.

The author’s writing is dense with information, requiring multiple readings. The book has two parts. Part one contextualizes the field of planning, making the book approachable to those not experienced with the practice, while part two is focused on various components of food systems. The book touches on, but could dig deeper into, the future of food systems. How do all of these parts—national and local, physical and political—come together to create a healthier and more resilient food system? That could be the reader’s job to figure out.

I recommend that planners working on food security and resiliency have this essential field guide to food systems close by. Discussion questions are included at the end of each chapter, adding valuable opportunities for planners to contemplate food systems in their communities. *Planning Sustainable and Resilient Local Food Systems* could be useful in classroom settings as well as a toolkit for understanding the food system as it exists at large. The content is relevant for agriculture programs, extension schools, and college planning or environmental science courses. Freedgood’s book is an essential guide for those reshaping America’s food systems from seed to shining seed! 