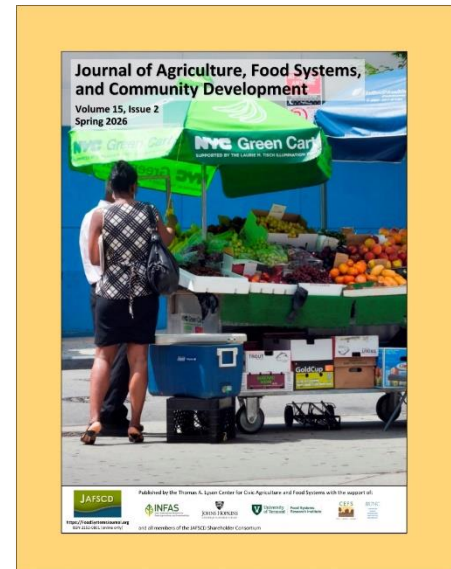


**IN THIS ISSUE**  
**DUNCAN HILCHEY**

**Righting systemic food and farming inequalities**



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The spring 2026 issue of the *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development* brings together a set of contributions that, while they are open-call and not in response to a specific call for papers, collectively examine how food systems are governed, how access and equity are structured, how agroecological transitions unfold, and how knowledge systems and cultural values shape transformation. Across its entire content, the issue reflects a strong throughline of systems thinking, place-based analysis, and an expanding recognition of the wide range of ways of knowing and acting within food systems.

Conveying the issue’s theme of righting food system inequalities, our cover photo is of a NYC Green Cart on a street in Jamaica, Queens, New York. Green Carts sell fresh fruits and vegetables to promote healthy eating in neighborhoods that have a lack of access to fresh fruit and vegetables. This convenient produce vending strategy was launched in 2008 through a public-private partnership and has stood the test of time as a good practice in urban food security. In their paper *Sustaining mobile produce vending in NYC: Evaluating the future of Green Carts*, **Katherine Tomaino Fraser, Rositsa T. Ilieva, Jacquelyn Sullivan, Julia Greene, Mukta Mohnani, Craig Willingham, and Nevin Cohen** provide an analysis of the successes and challenges of the NYC Green Carts program.

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**AI Use Declaration**

ChatGPT was used to thematically analyze the content of this issue and generate a draft narrative. However, the author edited and restructured the content in accordance with current JAFSCD policy.

**On Our Cover**

On our cover: A NYC Green Cart on a street in Jamaica, Queens, New York, on August 28, 2012. Green Carts sell fresh fruits and vegetables to promote healthy eating in neighborhoods that have a lack of access to fresh fruit and vegetables. See the article in this issue, *Sustaining mobile produce vending in NYC: Evaluating the future of Green Carts*, for an analysis of the successes and challenges of the NYC Green Carts program. Photo credit: © Littleny, ID 26656408 | Dreamstime.com

We are excited to open this issue with the inaugural value chain coordination column written by members of the JAFSCD Value Chain Coordination Editorial Circle. In *Turning supply chains into value chains*, Associate Editor **Anaya Hall** and colleagues introduce value chain coordination (VCC) as the relational “soft infrastructure”—networks, partnerships, and information flows—that enables values-based, place-based food supply chains to equitably support small and mid-sized producers while advancing environmental, economic, and social goals. The JAFSCD VCC Editorial Circle is also launching a practitioner-focused JAFSCD VCC brief series that synthesizes research and real-world practice, beginning with strategies to leverage institutional purchasing as a key market opportunity for regional and sustainable food systems. We are grateful for Anaya’s leadership in establishing the VCC Editorial Circle and for the collaboration with USDA AMS and The Food Connection at the University of Kentucky in advancing this work.

Next, **John Ikerd** argues that incremental reform is insufficient to address structural failures in contemporary food systems; he calls instead for a fundamental reorientation toward ecological integrity and community resilience in his typically insightful Economic Pamphleteer column, *The need for radical changes in U.S. food policies*. **Zeynab Jouzi’s** viewpoint, *Measuring change without seeing the system: A call for epistemic humility in intervention evaluation*, complements the Economic Pamphleteer by challenging dominant evaluation paradigms and advocating for more reflexive, context-aware approaches. This emphasis on evaluation and learning is extended in the commentary *Food and nutrition security support groups: A safety net strategy for sustaining gains from a livelihood program in Uganda*, in which **Moureen Mbeiza, Caroline Nambafu, David Banige, Samuel Ikendi, Dorothy Masinde, Lee Burras, Gideon Nadiope, and Francis Owusu** examine community-based mechanisms for sustaining the impacts of development interventions over time.

We then turn to the governance issues related to agricultural production, beginning with several studies that serve to contrast rural and urban agricultural production. **Jacob Miller-Klugesherz** offers two papers on his research in Kansas: in *Challenges to production agriculture in Pottawatomie County, Kansas, USA*, he analyzes structural pressures facing regional farming systems, and in *Cover crops, chemicals, and emissions in Pottawatomie County, Kansas, USA*, he examines the environmental implications of production practices. Extending production into urban contexts, *Scaling up urban agriculture in Tempe, Arizona: A participatory planning case for early urban food policy* by **Esteve Giraud, Elora Bevacqua, Madeline Mercer, Nicholas Benard, Priya Nayak, Tawsha Trahan, and Kathleen Merrigan** demonstrates how participatory planning and stakeholder alignment can enable the expansion of urban agriculture as a meaningful component of local production systems. Governance constraints within local food systems are further explored in **Sarah Hofmeyer’s** *Permits and paperwork: Administrative burden in Kansas City’s community food system*, which reveals how regulatory complexity can constrain small-scale producers. This emphasis on place-based dynamics is echoed in *Our Food Future: A regional food circularity case study from Canada* by **Haley Everitt and Kate Parizeau**, which, alongside the place-based studies in Kansas and Tempe, shows how important regional context is in shaping food system outcomes.

We continue the food production governance theme with a focus on the Global South. *Food supply improvement for planning to meet needs in Indonesia’s New Capital City*, by **Adang Agustian, Ika Inayah, Benny Rachman, Rika Reviza Rachmawati, Chairul Muslim, Helena Juliani Purba, Alan Ray Farandy, Suharyon, Umi Karomah Yaumidin, Mewa Ariani, Sri Hastuti Suhartini, Sri Hery Susilowati, Ening Ariningsih, Irawan, Maino Dwi Hartono, and Ketut Kariyasa**, illustrates the importance of coordinated infrastructure and planning in shaping future food supply systems. And in *Beyond the shade: Family farmers’ perceptions of silvopastoral systems in the Amazon*, **Elisangela Sodr , Alexandre de Azevedo Olival, Marla Weihs, David Rojas, and Carolyn Petersen** examine how farmers engage with integrated agroforestry–livestock systems. Attention to enabling conditions in the Global South continues in *The role of civil society networks in catalyzing agroecological transitions in Uganda*, where **Charles Tumuhe, Denis Katusiime, David Ssekamate, Joshua Muloi, Keiron Audain, Hannah Kamau, and Ronald Byaruhanga** highlight the importance of networks and collective action in advancing agroecological change.

From the governance of production, the issue turns to how food circulates through markets and institutions, which can have social and environmental consequences. Looking in North America, *Using a screening*

*survey to understand the appeal of poultry meat label attributes to support small-scale producers* by **Chyi-lyi (Kathleen) Liang** and **Bryan Collins** examines how labeling influences consumer preferences and market access. And in *Virginia independent food retailer perceptions of their role in planetary health promotion*, **Maria DeNunzio, Bailey Houghtaling, Victor Olayemi, Elena Serrano, Maaz Gardezi, Vivica Kraak, Sam Hedges, and Sarah Misyak** find that profit and customer opinions matter most in the eyes of retailers. In the Global South, value chain innovation and coordination are explored in *Social innovation strategies to improve agroecological product marketing: A case study in rural Colombia*, where **Estibaliz Aguilar-Galeano, Diana Marcela Diaz-Ariza, and Claudia Paola García-Castiblanco** examine the collective marketing approaches that strengthen agroecological systems. In contrast, **Segnide Guidimadjegbe** and **Laurence Becker** suggest that the potential for GIS to protect place-based foods and strengthen community food sovereignty is threatened by the reliance on herbicides due to labor constraints risks, thus undermining both agroecological transitions and the integrity of the GI product in the paper entitled *From geographical indication protection to food sovereignty: Cassava and Gari Soboni in Savalou, Benin*.

Questions of access, nutrition, and equity bring the discussion to the lived experience of all who eat. In a particularly timely study entitled *Impact of conflict on Lebanon's food industry: Challenges, needs, and emergency response*, **Aline Issa, Samar Merhi, Jessy El Hayek Fares, Elie Bou Yazbeck, and Marc Bou Zeidan** shed light on how war in the Middle East, and Lebanon in particular, is exacerbating regional food insecurity. They call for immediate and lasting intervention to arrest the growing crisis. In *A community supported agriculture produce prescription pilot program in the Northern Black Hills*, **Gemma Bastian, Sarah Lane, Haley McMahan, Olivia Husmann, and Evangeline Schumacher** demonstrate how healthcare-linked interventions can improve access to fresh foods. The NYC Green Carts study, *Sustaining mobile produce vending in NYC: Evaluating the future of Green Carts*, by **Katherine Tomaino Fraser** and colleagues, further evaluates a mobile retail intervention. In *Culturally appropriate food in local food systems and associated health impacts among immigrants living in high-income countries: A scoping review*, **Luyue Zheng, Ge Ge, Shuhan Wen, and Analena Bruce** emphasize culturally responsive approaches to food access and well-being. Policy design also plays a central role in the article *SNAP's Restaurant Meals Program: Understanding drivers and constraints on state adoption and implementation*, in which **Vicky Vong, Cerra Antonacci, Audrey Thomas, Lisa Poirier, Megan Mueller, Julia Wolfson, and Yeeli Mui** analyze uneven adoption and the administrative and political dynamics shaping implementation.

At a deeper level, questions of knowledge, culture, and power are taken up in *Bridging Western and Indigenous epistemologies in an opaque world: Food security and food sovereignty as climate adaptation*, where **Garin Bulger, Will Butler, Tisha Holmes, Karen Lowrie, and Coreine Rainford** position food sovereignty as central to climate adaptation and resilience. Similarly, **Sara María Cano-Bedoya, Jennifer Marcela López-Ríos, Leisy Cruz-Rodríguez, Juan Camilo Calderón-Farfán, and Luz Nidia Finscúe-Pete** center “good living” as a core concept of food sovereignty in their paper, *Community strategies for strengthening food autonomy and buen vivir in a Nasa Indigenous Reservation, Colombia: A community-based participatory research (CBPR) approach*. And, finally, in *Nourishing connections: An arts-informed approach to illuminating community food values* by **Rachel Zollinger** and **Gigi Owen**, uses creative methods to surface the cultural and relational dimensions of food systems. Together with the viewpoint *Measuring change without seeing the system* by **Zeynab Jouzi**, these contributions underscore the importance of how knowledge is framed, valued, and applied.

These themes are further extended through a rich collection of book reviews that examine food systems through the lenses of power, justice, labor, and transformation. **Zeynab Jouzi** reviews *Junk Food Politics: How Beverage and Fast-Food Industries Are Reshaping Emerging Economies* (by Eduardo Gómez), while **Andrea Cullers** takes up *Sweet and Deadly: How Coca-Cola Spreads Disinformation and Makes Us Sick* (by Murray Carpenter), together illuminating the outsized influence of corporate actors on diets and public health. These concerns are deepened by **Manoj Sharma's** review of *Why Agricultural Productivity Falls: The Political Economy of Agrarian Transition in Developing Countries* (by Rashed Al Mahmud Titumir) and **Carina Manitiuis's** review of *Transforming Food Systems: Narratives of Power* (by Molly Anderson), both of which interrogate how structural inequalities and dominant narratives shape agrarian change.

Attention then shifts from macro-level dynamics to the lived realities of land, production, and rural life. **Roland Ebel** reviews *Empty Fields, Empty Promises* (by Loka Ashwood, Aimee Imlay, Lindsay Kuehn, Allen Franco, and Danielle Diamond), and **Elisabeth Ramsey** reviews *Love for the Land: Lessons from Farmers Who Persist in Place* (by Brooks Lamb), offering grounded perspectives on persistence and dispossession. These themes extend globally through **Hans Goertz's** review of *The Quinoa Bust: The Making and Unmaking of an Andean Miracle Crop* (by Emma McDonell), while **Charles Tumuhe** examines alternatives in *Sustainable Apple Breeding and Cultivation in Germany: Commons-Based Agriculture and Social-Ecological Resilience* (by Hendrik Wolter), pointing toward commons-based approaches and resilience.

The focus on agrarian systems naturally leads to the conditions of labor that sustain them. **Jessica Garneau** reviews *Precarious: The Lives of Migrant Workers* (by Marcello Di Cintio), and **Donald Cole** reviews *The Kidney and the Cane* (by Alex Nading), both foregrounding the vulnerabilities and embodied costs experienced by workers in globalized food economies.

From labor, the discussion moves into questions of governance and the role of public policy in shaping food access and equity. **Lucy Srouer's** review of *Why SNAP Works: A Political History—and Defense—of the Food Stamp Program* (by Christopher Bosso) provides a critical account of one of the United States' central food security programs, situating it within broader debates over welfare, rights, and state responsibility.

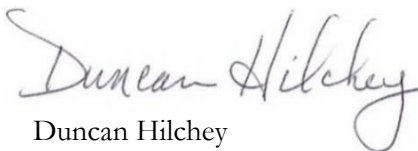
Building on these institutional perspectives, several reviews explore how change is pursued through activism, communication, and collective action. **Emily Talkow** reviews *Organizing Eating: Communicating for Equity Across U.S. Food Systems* (edited by Sarah Dempsey), and **Jason Wallace Triefenbach** reviews *Food Activism Today: Sustainability, Climate Change, and Social Justice* (by Donald Nonini and Dorothy Holland), both highlighting the strategies and narratives that underpin contemporary food movements.

Questions of place and visibility come to the fore in **Hannah Dankbar's** review of *Urban Food Mapping: Making Visible the Edible City* (edited by Katrin Bohn and Mikey Tomkins), which examines how spatial tools and mapping practices reveal—and potentially reshape—urban food environments.

Finally, the collection turns to foundational questions of knowledge and epistemology. **Jill Fabricius Keith** reviews *Indigenous Insights for Planetary Health and Sustainable Food Systems* (by Shailesh Shukla, Priscilla Settee, and Noa Kekuewa Lincoln), bringing forward Indigenous perspectives that challenge dominant paradigms and point toward more relational, place-based approaches to sustainability.

In its totality, this issue reflects a field that is increasingly attentive to the interconnections between production, markets, access, knowledge, labor, and place—highlighting the limits of siloed approaches while advancing a vision of food systems that are more sustainable, equitable, and responsive to diverse contexts and communities.

Indeed, systems thinking and borderless approaches to addressing growing challenges across communities and transnationally may seem, at first, daunting and impractical. Yet in a world that is increasingly interconnected, such approaches may be the only realistic means of promoting resilient food systems for the future.



Duncan Hilchey

Publisher and editor-in-chief

PS. You may have noticed I declared using ChatGPT (see the note at the bottom of page 1) to thematically analyze the content of this issue. This was an honest attempt to experiment with the technology. It was not the time saver I expected it to be; I ended up rewriting and restructuring the narrative quite a bit. I am uncertain whether I would use it again. In the meantime, please let me know what you think about my use of AI in this case to organize the thematic content of the issue.