Theory of Change
How We Understand Change

Introduction

We exist in some of the most exciting yet challenging times to be alive. As the problems we face grow clearer and more extreme, the solutions we pose must grow more specific and complex. We have been buckling under an obsession with speed, efficiency and scale at the expense of our own well-being and the integrity of our planet. The ongoing pandemic and recent climate disasters have been poignant reminders of how fragile many of our systems truly are, bringing us to an incredible inflection point.

For over a year, Slow Food USA has been engaging our network leaders, national office staff and board leadership in a Theory of Change process. Here we articulate the social challenge our movement is working to address and how our network can make a difference through food.

This Theory of Change aligns with the Slow Food International Call to Action and serves as the North Star for charting our efforts within the Slow Food USA network. We hope this
Foodways refers to the deep cultural knowledge and social practices of food — from the way it’s sourced to how it reaches our stomachs.

As a result, our food policies maintain inequitable systems and power imbalances that disproportionately affect Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), communities with low-income, women and LGBTQ2S+ communities.

We strive to center reciprocity, kinship and the interconnectedness of all beings. We look to the movements for Indigenous sovereignty and Black liberation in particular—to their traditional knowledge and strong leadership as guiding lights along the path to healing and reconciliation.

Driving Social Transformation

Together, we are challenging the tyranny of the Big and Fast with the beauty of the Small and Slow. We believe that grassroots networks are uniquely equipped to change the world. We understand that networks thrive when people are connected to each other, aligned around a collective vision, and mobilized to effect change at different levels. The Slow Food network is a beautiful and multilayered body that is activated at individual, community and institutional levels:

- **Individual:** We savor incredible flavors, helping producers and chefs, farmers and families celebrate their own identities and roles in the larger food ecosystem, and invite people to embrace Slow lifestyles and mindfulness. We believe a fundamental shift in our lifestyles will result in healthier bodies and environments.

- **Community:** We mobilize local communities to make sure everyone has...
access to delicious and nourishing food. Together, we break down systems of oppression and discrimination and propose life-affirming alternatives.

- **Institutions:** We advocate for systemic change in food policies and institutional practices at the local, regional and federal levels. We center the lived experience and perspectives of those closest to the issues.

Ultimately, we imagine a society in which access to healthy food is the norm, where biocultural diversity is thriving, and food sovereignty is realized in communities across the United States.

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**The Delicious Future**

**Purpose**

Slow Food is a global network of local communities acting together to ensure good, clean and fair food for all.

**GOOD — joyful + meaningful**

We stand for delicious, healthy, and culturally-appropriate food as a right for everyone. A diversity of people, cultures, places, foods, and tastes is key for resilient societies and ecosystems.

**CLEAN — resourceful + regenerative**

We support local and resilient food systems which regenerate the Earth’s precious resources rather than deplete them, and which safeguard all ecosystems and living species.

**FAIR — equitable + accessible**

We help build economies based on solidarity, cooperation, inclusion and equity; that benefit and empower all food workers and consumers; and where everyone is a valued decision-maker.

**FOR ALL — without exception**

We understand the driving force of this movement is to make meaningful and joyful food readily accessible to every single person on Earth.

**Vision**

We envision a world where all people can eat food that is good for them, good for the people who grow it, and good for the planet.
Movement Mission + Pillars

The Global Mission
Slow Food cultivates a worldwide network of local communities and activists who nourish biological and cultural diversity; educate, inspire and mobilize the world around us; and advance systemic change through policy advocacy.

Slow Food USA Mission
Slow Food USA unites the joy of food with the pursuit of justice. We cultivate nationwide programs and a network of local chapters, host educational events and advocacy campaigns, and build solidarity through partnerships.

Movement Pillars

We **defend biological and cultural diversity** by nurturing connections with each other and the land and waters that feed us. We raise awareness of the importance of biodiversity in food security, nutrition and well-being.

We **educate, inspire and mobilize the world around us** to create a network of leaders who change minds and hearts through food. We honor and celebrate the depth and diversity of our foodways.

We **advance systemic change through policy advocacy** and by building strategic partnerships with other networks, coalitions and organizations. We work to transfer power to communities of concern.
Roles + Strategies in a Social Change Ecosystem

Slow Food USA is a vibrant and diverse network of chefs, farmers, ranchers, fish-harvesters, educators, eaters, activists, organizers, food producers and entrepreneurs.

**We are weavers.**
We connect the many hands that touch our food, and reject the industrialized segmentation of our food web. We weave together a grassroots network of communities, connect leaders and resources to strengthen local food ecosystems, and support food justice initiatives across the country.

**We are builders.**
We foster solidarity and cultivate relationships that help communities realize their food sovereignty goals. We act collectively to build campaigns, partnerships and programs that work to provide equitable access to good food.

**We are storytellers.**
We tell stories of food, people and places that inspire curiosity, compassion and collective action. Food is a powerful vessel that brings together art, history, economics, the environment, health and politics.

**We are disruptors.**
We inspire bold action to break down social and political barriers to good food access. We spark dialogues around food as politics, food as climate action, food as pleasure, and food as a catalyst for change.
The World We Want to See

Short-Term Shifts
If we slow down and look closely, we can see that the future we desire is already beginning to take shape:

- Kitchens and dining room tables are spaces of engagement, enrichment, and empowerment
- Farms, gardens, and fisheries facilitate multigenerational learning
- Reflection, personal change and collective action reshape our relationships with each other and with food
- Gatherings and events bring people of all ages, races, abilities, genders, sexual orientations, ethnicities, socioeconomic and educational backgrounds together
- Awareness campaigns bring food to the forefront of important social and environmental issues

As these shifts deepen and spread, a revolution for joy + justice radiates across the network.

Long-Term Changes
Over time, a new paradigm of life-affirming and regenerative communities, networks and institutions will emerge:

- Biodiversity is reimagined and celebrated as key ingredients in food security, nutrition and well-being
- Power is shared with and transferred to diverse communities of eaters, growers and harvesters
- All people feel a strong sense of belonging within Slow Food and are celebrated for their similarities and their differences
- New economic models based in worker ownership will feed entire communities
- Endangered foods reemerge as nutritious, dietary staples and powerful cultural assets
- Connections between all living beings are rekindled

We believe that this will fulfill our vision of a world where all people can eat food that is good for them, good for the people who grow it, and good for the planet.
As we work in community, we agree to be led by the following values:

- We are deeply rooted in community representation and participation, working from the principle “Nothing about us without us.”
- We cultivate people-power through education and experimentation, understanding that movements thrive on flexibility and agility.
- We embrace an ethos of mindfulness and interconnectedness, rejecting extraction and unnecessary urgency.
- We nurture trusting relationships with respect, gratitude, reciprocity and transparency.
- We understand that antiracism and decolonization are crucial tools for centering equity and justice in our relationships, our work and our lives. We hold space for each other while working to challenge oppressive systems.