



Slow Food USA®

The purpose of this document is to outline why Slow Food USA exists and merits engagement and support. It helps Slow Food chapters and members align around our central vision and strategy. It centralizes copy used in grants, websites, appeals, campaigns and other communications.

The Challenge

The world is in crisis. The economic push for speed, growth and profit has created mega food systems that are unsustainable, lifestyles that feel harried and unhealthy, and a planet groaning under the pressure. Instead of building relationships around food, we make transactions. Instead of making choices based on delicious flavors, we prioritize convenience. Instead of treating the Earth like our mother, we pillage resources. If we continue to chase productivity over pleasure, we risk irreversible degradation, monopolies and monocultures.

When we examine food in the United States, we see that injustices — theft of land and water, worker exploitation, lack of access to healthy foods, food apartheid neighborhoods, and diet-related health problems — are rooted in race, class and gender discriminations. Our food policies maintain a power imbalance that disproportionately affects Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC), low-income communities and women.

Short version: The world is in crisis. The economic push for speed, growth and profit has created mega food systems that are unsustainable, lifestyles that feel harried and unhealthy, and a planet groaning under the pressure. Injustices in our food system are rooted in race, class and gender discriminations.

Theory of Change

Given the enormous complexity of global food systems, there is no single solution, and so we believe that change happens when we cultivate trusting relationships, align around shared values, and work together for collective impact.

We believe that when we slow down and build relationships, when we celebrate culture and flavor, and when we nourish healthy relationships with the land and sea, then we will change the world. We reject an economy based on profit and speed, and instead embrace a gift economy and reciprocal exchange.

We facilitate network growth and collective action by hosting gatherings, running campaigns focused on specific actions, sharing the stories of the network, and providing groups with tools and administrative support.

Short version: To make change, we cultivate trusting relationships, align around shared values, and work together for collective impact.

Vision & Mission - Our solution to the challenge

We believe in uniting the joy of food with the pursuit of justice. We are committed to transforming the world to guarantee good, clean and fair food for all.

We are closely linked with the resilient ecosystems around us and respect the diversity of people, culture, places, foods and flavors. By nourishing cultural and biological diversity, educating and mobilizing citizens, and influencing policies in public and private sectors, we will create 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.

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Impact & Outcomes

Slow Food is a global network of local communities working towards good, clean and fair food for all. Our impact is in three areas: cultural and biological diversity, educating and mobilizing citizens, and influencing policies in public and private sectors. In the process, we build strong relationships between local, regional, national and international Slow Food leaders.

We nourish cultural and biological diversity:

When we nourish biodiversity, we must go beyond the biological diversity of plants and animals and think about the relationship between people and nature, as well as the traditional knowledge that has given rise to thousands of techniques for transforming raw materials into breads, cheeses, cured meats, sweets, and more. Biodiversity is preserved and enhanced within human societies and through embodied knowledge, and for this reason it is also crucial for promoting and protecting cultural diversity. Our aim is to create equity and access within Slow Food by building a network of trust. We uphold traditional ecological knowledge and work to integrate that into policies and practice.

Current projects:

- Developing the **Ark of Taste** catalog, which is in the final stages of a major data and research update. Also book publication + possible docu series.
- The **Plant a Seed** campaign, which aggregates heritage seed varieties from small seed companies to deliver to school and home gardens across the country
- **Share a Seed**
- **Slow Seed Summit**
- The virtual **Slow Fish** gathering, focused on the importance of locally sourced and sustainable seafood
- Supporting curriculum development for **school garden programs**, with a focus on fair food and the cultural connection to biodiversity
- **National Resilience Fund**
- **Slow Food Presidia**
- **Cooks' Alliance**

We educate and inspire citizens:

We understand the world best when we approach it with all of our senses. These emotional sensations change individuals and forge communities. And this approach is not just an effective technique for conveying knowledge; more importantly, it is an approach which makes learning relational, in which each of us is simultaneously student and teacher. Through this approach we urge the promotion of best practices around the world and highlight the bond between the health of the planet and our own.

Current projects:

- Slow Food USA educates eaters on why food matters by hosting **Slow Food Live**, a webinar series that brings Slow Food into homes with practical skills and engaging topics
- Strengthening the skills of our volunteer leaders and improving **network support** systems with tools and training
 - Orientation and guidebook
 - National Statute
 - Communities
 - National leader summit
 - Slow Food Youth Network
 - Developing a specific and actionable long-term strategy for **equity, inclusion and justice.**
- **Slow Books** is a national book initiative to help people understand diverse food cultures, historical foodways, food justice and the joy of eating
- **Meatless Monday**
- **Slow Food Travel**

We influence policies in public and private sectors:

We advocate for the world we want to live in through collective action. We engage both the public and private sectors to discover how, and with whom, we can achieve a better future. It is important to understand that we cannot do it alone. We forge ties with other organizations and voices in order to defend those most adversely affected by the industrial food system. We must do this work for others and with others.

Current projects:

- Slow Food USA advocates for good, clean and fair food by writing and signing onto political advocacy letters with our **food and farm policy** committee.
- Strengthening **partnerships** with allied organizations.
- Developing **business partnerships** to recognize and support companies with model business policies:
 - Food/ocracy box
 - Slow Wine
 - Ark of Taste matrix
 - Slow Fish boxes
 - Snail of Approval

Guiding Values:

1. Strong relationships built on trust and patience are the foundation of everything we do. We work at the speed of trust, and approach differences with curiosity and inclusivity.
2. Greater equality and diversity — of people, culture, perspectives, biology, and all things — is fundamentally what creates greater resilience and health.
3. Joy and pleasure are a universal right and motivates people to make lasting change. Pleasure cannot be separated from the pursuit of justice.
4. Nothing about us without us: Direct stakeholders' needs and perspectives — especially from those who steward our lands and waters—are what lead our projects. We ensure that many voices and perspectives found in the intersection of food with environment, place, gender, race, class, climate and culture are included in decision-making that impacts them most.
5. We interpret the present by understanding and acknowledging our past, while holding a clear vision for future impact. “We are the ancestors of our descendants.”

How are we different from other nonprofits?

- We are **international**. Slow Food USA is connected to a global network of local communities with the same vision of good, clean and fair food for all. Slow Food started in Italy and is now embedded in 160 countries, including many developing countries. Other countries look to Slow Food USA for inspiration and collaboration.
- We are **grassroots**. We are a global network of local communities. Our fluid structure enables local chapters and communities to form and address local issues, while also connecting nationally and globally to other local communities.
- We are an **umbrella network** that connects all the participants of the food system, from producers and farmers to laborers, chefs, educators and eaters.
- We hold **pleasure and delight** as central components of our work, always striving to enjoy taste and friendship, as we work towards justice.
- We **nourish biodiversity** by collaborating with communities to educate, mobilize and advocate.

Origin Story

Over thirty years ago, a large group of Italians led by Carlo Petrini gathered in Rome for a protest. Why? A fast food franchise was opening at the base of the iconic Spanish

Steps. Instead of throwing rocks and yelling, the activists brought in a big bowl of penne pasta and shared it with the crowd that gathered, chanting:

*We don't want fast food.
We want Slow Food!*

That gathering was the birth of the Slow Food movement. Today, we are in over 160 countries, with 115 chapters in the United States representing chefs, farmers, policy activists, producers, educators, and many others.