

White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition and Health

Talking Points and Policy Recommendations



Intro to White House Listening Sessions

The White House is convening a national **Conference on Hunger, Nutrition and Health**, only the second of its kind in US history. This conference is an historic opportunity for the voices of many to be heard in addressing the continuing inequities in our food chain and securing an equitable and healthful food future for all.

The White House is hosting open, regional listening sessions, June 2 through June 13. **To participate, [register here](#).**

The above organizations have assembled key talking points and additional resources organized by the topic areas created by the White House. There are many points and there may not be time for everyone to say everything, but we hope this helps the White House hear the same things many times. For context, start with the Big Picture below, and then refer to the list of points to find the ones that you feel are the most important for you to make.

There will be other opportunities to have your voice heard. We will keep you posted as this historic event unfolds.

Big picture:

The 1969 White House Conference on Food, Nutrition and Health, informed by '60s social disruption, led to important federal food and nutrition programming. As the 2022 White House Conference is organized, we must remember that continued hunger and increasing health disparities are consequences of a food and farm system that has dispossessed BIPOC producers, facilitated production practices that degrade our shared natural resources, underpaid farm and food chain workers, and encouraged consolidation from farms through the supply chain to food retail.

A successful 2022 White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition and Health must be informed by the following values and contextual understanding:

- We must **dismantle persistent racial inequity** in the food chain — from land theft to wage disparity, to inequitable access to nutritious food and farm programs, to disproportionate diet-related disease and inadequate healthcare access.
- We must understand the **intersectionality of climate change and food systems**, including the impacts of climate change on food security.
- **COVID-19** has created devastating disruption of our food chain.
- We are experiencing the decrease of critically necessary human, land, water, habitat, and biodiverse agricultural resources.
- Ever-increasing **corporate consolidation** of our food production and distribution capacities has led to ever-increasing vulnerabilities and inequities.
- The wisdom and experience of community-based practitioners should lead proposed solutions to cultivate local food systems.
- The voices of food and nutrition-insecure eaters; family-scale, beginning, and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers; urban farmers; community-based and Tribal fishers; and farm and food chain workers must be centered in all policy decisions and conversations.

Talking Points for Listening Session Topics

Improve food access and affordability

- **End food apartheid** by supporting working people and their families and addressing poverty and exploitative wages ([learn more here](#))
 - **Make the federal minimum wage a living wage**
 - Extend overtime pay to hired farm workers, who were excluded in the federal Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, and provide a subsidy to family-scale farmers and ranchers for additional overtime labor costs through enhanced tax credits.
- **Strengthen SNAP** (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) **and WIC** (Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children) eligibility and benefits ([learn more here](#))
 - Extend WIC eligibility periods, enhance shopping options, and expand product purchase options
 - Change SNAP to the Low-Cost Food Plan
 - Expand SNAP eligibility to include excluded groups; undocumented workers and their families, DREAMERS, those with drug felony convictions, and students in higher education
- **Create resilient regional farm and food economies** that increase community access to affordable healthy food options, and invest in small-scale, community-based producers and locally-owned businesses, especially in food desert areas impacted by food apartheid ([learn more here](#))
- **Implement universally free and nutrient-dense school meals**, including an increase in fresh and minimally processed, plant-based menus and an increase in childrens' time to eat nutritious school meals, reducing plate waste
- **Align USDA's school meal and emergency food procurement to support local and regional food chains** to keep dollars circulating in local economies and build reliable markets for small and mid-sized producers, processors and distributors of all kinds that allow them to survive, invest, expand, and serve other anchor institutions in the community.

- **Support local and regional producers** ([learn more here](#))
 - Ensure beginning and socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers have **technical and financial support** to adopt and implement productive agricultural resource conservation practices.
 - Provide **grants** to historically underserved farmers and ranchers to help retain heir's property title to inherited farms and ranches
 - Shift farm support programs away from commodity crops, that end up in highly-processed, low-nutrient foods, and meat exports and towards **local production of healthy nutritious foods.**
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Integrate nutrition and health

- **Dump the junk.** End corporate marketing and subsidies of junk food to children and communities of color. ([Learn more](#))
 - **Increase food literacy**, including transparency in food labeling, country of origin, and production practices. ([Learn more](#))
 - **Increase food prescriptions, EBT usage, and double-up bucks** at farmers markets
 - **Protect farm workers and their families from the effects of toxic pesticide exposure**, including elevated risks of chronic diseases, including cancer, birth defects, and learning disabilities
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Empower all consumers to make and have access to healthy choices:

- **Increase and support nutrition education through school gardens**, especially funding full-time garden/nutrition educators in low-income community schools
- **Roll-back corporate food consolidation** so that consumers have biodiverse, healthy and culturally meaningful food choices; family-scale, beginning, and BIPOC producers have a fair chance to compete; and farm and food chain workers are treated fairly, with dignity, and have safe working conditions. ([Learn more](#))

- **Ensure real food in every hood** — promote self-determination in food production and distribution with policy change, financial and technical assistance, land, and infrastructure
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Support physical activity for all

- **Provide** health benefits to school-aged children through **hands-in-the-dirt, experiential school gardening**
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Enhance nutrition and food security research

- **End corporate proprietary influence over agricultural research and development.** Fund research for the public sector and the public good, including research on the benefits of regenerative agriculture and the use of local cultivars and farm animal breeds, improved and adapted by generations of traditional and Black and Indigenous cultivation.
- **End racial disparities in avoidable, chronic, diet-related disease** and health care inequities in Black and Indigenous communities.

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Additional resources:

- **End Food Apartheid** — HEAL Platform Plank 1: [Dignity for Food Workers & Their Families](#)
 - A person in the US can work fulltime and still be near the poverty line, especially farm and food production workers (currently 7 of the 10 worst paying jobs in the biggest economic sector - 21.5 million workers)
 - Not all have access to public transportation to local, healthy food sources and DHS (department of human services) offices.
 - Rural communities need access to working vehicles and affordable gas. Rural and urban communities are unable to access localized food systems.
 - It is reality for impoverished communities to have to choose between utilities, necessary bills, transportation to work, and food purchases. Healthy food options are marketed as and can be more expensive, and therefore become the least prioritized.
- **SNAP**
 - [The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program \(SNAP\)](#), formerly “food stamps,” helps millions of low-income individuals have food on the table. SNAP predominantly serves households with children, elderly, and disabled members.
 - After steadily declining from 2013 to 2019, the number of individuals participating in SNAP sharply increased in 2020, largely due to the pandemic, from 35.7 million in 2019 to nearly 40 million. The number continued to rise in 2021, [reaching about 41.5 million](#)
 - However, according to Feeding America, only 41 percent of the households served by their network report receiving SNAP benefits. Yet more than 88 percent are estimated to be income eligible. This suggests many of those visiting food pantries and meal programs are financially eligible but, for a variety of reasons, are not participating in SNAP,
 - SNAP budgets are based on the USDA Thrifty Food Plan (TFP), the least costly of four plans, also including the graduating Low-Cost, Moderate, and Liberal Food Plans. Recently, for the first time, the Thrifty Food Plan was re-evaluated and adjusted, increasing the plan’s purchasing power by 21%. However, this is a belated catch-up and the practical benefit of the increase is blunted by recent and projected increases in food cost.

Food prices are predicted to increase between 5.0 and 6.0 percent in 2022.

- Historically, SNAP households redeem more than 50% of their benefits within a week of receipt, over 75% by the end of the second week, and nearly 90% by the end of the third. Benefits normally run out for most households before the end of the month. About 25% of households exhaust virtually all their monthly benefits within a week of issuance.
- Studies have found that late in the monthly benefit cycle, SNAP participants not only spend less on food but also consume fewer calories, are likelier to experience food insecurity, and may be likelier to visit emergency rooms because of low blood sugar. These adverse consequences suggest that households' overall resources for food - their SNAP benefits plus their income - are not sufficient to meet their needs.