

**Food and Nutrition Security** is a priority focus of Center for Wellness and Nutrition's (CWN) **Health Equity & Racial Justice Platform**. We believe ALL people have a right to be food secure with access to quality nutrition and physical activity opportunities. We examine access to healthy, nutritious, culturally appropriate foods and beverages, including food storage and preparation; to identify and reduce systemic issues driving inequities.

This **Food and Nutrition Security Priority Brief** is intended to show our commitment to a more just food system that provides the nutrition needed for optimal health for all regardless of one's race, gender, abilities, or socioeconomic status. CWN's intentional drive to improve food and nutrition security is centered on dismantling discriminatory and racially unjust systems by partnering with communities, decision-makers, and a wide range of stakeholders at the local, state, and national levels to support food justice for all.

Food Justice is Racial Justice. Our nation's food system is built on exploitation. The production of food in the United States includes a history of oppression and racism that continues to influence all elements of food access and distribution today. Over 42 million individuals in the United States do not have sufficient access to resources to lead a healthy lifestyle. As of May 2021, 19.8% of Californians are experiencing food insecurity, meaning nearly 7 million people do not have sufficient access to food. Households with children experience an even higher rate, with 25% reporting they are food insecure. Research shows food insecurity disproportionately impacts communities of color, low-income neighborhoods and increases health inequities like higher rates of diabetes, obesity, and other preventable diseases. Rates of food insecurity are worse when examining data by race, according to a 2021 United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) study, on average, more than one in five Black non-Hispanic and Latinx households with children reported sometimes or often not having enough to eat, and an astonishing 30.5% of Black households with children reported food insecurity. ([USDA ERS Charts of Note](#)).

Achieving health equity necessitates we acknowledge and address the history of racial discrimination and power imbalances in our food system and how policies, practices, and structural barriers affect individual and community health. To address this injustice, both food and nutrition security issues must be addressed together and center communities most impacted by injustices.

#### KEY TERMS:

**Food Apartheid** looks at the whole food system and considers income, race, and geography. It includes the social and racial inequalities that are at play in our food system. It recognizes that the systems in place are what make it difficult for people living in low-income areas and communities of color to access fresh and healthy food. ([NRDC](#))

**Food and Nutrition Security** is when all individuals, regardless of social and economic factors, have reliable access to enough affordable and nutritious food to lead a healthy lifestyle and prevent or treat diet-related illnesses and/or chronic diseases.

**Food Sovereignty** is the right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their food and agriculture systems. It puts the aspirations and needs of those who produce, distribute, and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations. Declaration of Nyéléni, the first global forum on food sovereignty, Mali, 2007 ([US Food Sovereignty Alliance](#))

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**Actions to Improve Food Security that Support Health Equity or Racial Justice:**  Indicates actions that CWN is currently taking.

**Educate and advocate for equitable policies to increase access and raise awareness:**

-  Acknowledge the history of race and food systems. Educate others about inequities and ways to co-create more equitable and just food systems.
- Sustain and expand critical safety net programs that provide food for all and extend innovative solutions established during the pandemic. ([Applying a Racial Equity Lens to End Hunger](#))
-  Adapt materials culturally, in preferred languages, and remove other burdensome application procedures, barriers, and requirements that prevent eligible families from accessing services.
-  Expand food assistance (USDA's 15 nutrition programs) to be more inclusive regardless of an individual's socioeconomic, criminal justice, and/or immigration status.
-  Increase monthly allotments permanently and expand healthy incentive programs.

**Increase choice of fresh, affordable, and nutritious foods:**

-  Support local retailers and food merchants working with community-based organizations and partners to provide culturally relevant foods and ingredients.
- Invest in expanding home and community gardens to promote food sovereignty.
- Support universal school meals for all that account for student preferences and locally sourced products ([Farm to Fork Initiatives](#)).
-  Increase welcoming Farmers Markets environments and expand acceptance of food assistance programs providing incentives for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program fruit and vegetable purchases.

**Invest in community resilience and local sustainable food systems that:**

-  Prioritize resources and investments in communities historically left out.
-  Collaborate to form diverse multi-sectoral partnerships to address systemic barriers and expand successful programs, practices, and policies. ([Let's Feed LA Food Voucher Program](#))
-  Fund community-based organizations connected to underserved communities for the procurement and delivery of healthy traditional foods and education specifically to vulnerable populations including Tribal partners.
- Connect Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and other local farmers from historically marginalized communities to community-based organizations, schools, and retailers that reach underserved individuals and families.
-  Co-create community programs with community-based organizations and residents through an authentic and intentional community engagement process.

As a part of our Health Equity & Racial Justice Platform, CWN is committed to continuing the actions and activities indicated above that are currently a part of our work, looking for new opportunities to continue exploring ways to address root causes, and increasing strategic collaboration and partnerships to improve Food and Nutrition Security for all.

This Health Equity and Racial Justice Priority Brief is created and shared to support ongoing discussions regarding key inequities underlining food and nutrition insecurity and provide examples of equitable strategies to assist communities, decision-makers, and a wide range of stakeholders working on food equity and justice issues. CWN envisions continued dialogue utilizing racial and health equity framework and resources. We believe together we can create a more equitable, healthy, and thriving world.

**Reports & Resources:**

- [Examining the Impact of Structural Racism on Food Insecurity](#)
- [Racial Equity Tools: Food Justice](#)
- [The Praxis Project: Food Systems](#)
- [Improving Food and Nutrition Security During COVID-19, the Economic Recovery, and Beyond](#)
- [Food insecurity in Sacramento is higher than the U.S. average. Here's possible solutions](#)
- [Slow Food USA](#)