

Just Food: Building a Just and Sustainable Food System for NYC



Who We Are

Just Food is a non-profit organization that addresses regional farm and food issues by working to build a more just and sustainable food system in New York City. This means, for example, that family farmers make a fair profit for their efforts, and all people have access to affordable, healthy food. It also means that farming techniques focus on the ecological methods that protect nature's resources, as well as the urban and rural people who live off these resources.

What We Do

In the city, Just Food tackles deficiencies in food access and security by increasing the production, marketing and distribution of fresh food from community gardens and urban agriculture sites, on the one hand, and promoting Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) initiatives (food-buying clubs), on the other. Our aim is to turn “food deserts” (i.e., neighborhoods underserved by supermarkets and other food retailers) into “islands of sustainability.” In the countryside, we are addressing the rapid decline of family farms and the loss of agricultural land by linking small and medium-scale producers to new markets in New York City.

In both town and country, Just Food fosters new marketing and food-growing opportunities that address the needs of small and medium family farms, urban gardeners, and NYC neighborhoods. Through training, leadership development and organizing efforts, we build diverse partnerships to advance *dialogue* and *action* on farming, hunger and nutrition.

Our Programs

◆ Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) in NYC

CSA stands for *community supported agriculture* and can be understood as a food buying club that links regional farms and individual NYC neighborhoods in a direct market relationship. By purchasing a share (at a cost of ~\$15/week) in a farmer's harvest, a NYC family involved in a CSA group receives fresh produce at reasonable prices throughout the growing season (June-November). The participating farmers use certified organic or a range of organic and sustainable production methods. The city members perform many of the duties needed to market CSA in NYC. Since 1996, Just Food has helped to start over 30 CSA programs in NYC. This number continues to grow as we work with new groups and new farmers to start additional sites every year. If you want to know your very own farmer – call us; we'll help you bring CSA to your NYC neighborhood.

◆ **The City Farms**

While our CSA program focuses on rural farming, The City Farms program works on urban agriculture to help feed our neighborhoods. We develop and coordinate an extension service to assist people in growing, marketing and distributing more garden-grown food. The United States Victory Gardens program of the 1940's provided 40 percent of our nation's food during times of food shortages; we have the capability to achieve similar successes to combat hunger and malnutrition right here in NYC today. About 30 urban farms and community gardens are members of The City Farms, and our extension service grows and strengthens every year. To date, we've helped to start four urban farm stands – independent farmers' markets run by the community, for communities that need them most – with more on the way.

◆ **Institutional Purchasing**

Since 2001, we've been assisting soup kitchens and other institutions to acquire locally-grown food. Our partners include United Way, City Harvest, Community Food Resource Center and several neighborhood-based organizations. This important component of our work is growing quickly as we build new partnerships between community gardeners, family farmers and local food pantries and soup kitchens.

◆ **Community Food Education**

Even with affordable CSAs and farmers' markets nearby, people don't truly have access to food unless they know how to use it. Proper storage and preparation methods are key components to true food access. Just Food provides cooking demonstrations, and trains others to provide cooking demonstrations for their own communities.

◆ **VISTA Leadership Training**

Just Food and AmeriCorps VISTA share the common goal of combating poverty by building community self-reliance. This is Just Food's second year training a group of highly talented and energetic VISTA volunteers. With this training, our VISTAs are prepared to help us strengthen our CSA in NYC and City Farms programs.

◆ **Education & Outreach**

An important part of our work is community outreach and education. One of our main aims is to encourage NYC residents to be more aware of and engaged in food, farming and nutritional issues. Our Education & Outreach Program is carried out through Just Food newsletters, workshops and conferences, as well as hands-on demonstrations and trainings in local community centers, schools and farmers' markets.

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