

## Preamble to INFAS Equity and Vision Statements\*

1. As participants in the Inter-institutional Network on Food, Agriculture & Sustainability (INFAS), we see that food and agriculture are part of a diverse set of interconnected systems. We recognize the value of systemic analysis to identify full impacts of policies and practices, how components of the food system function, and gaps in our understanding. We recognize that the food system has effects on, and is affected by, almost every other sphere of human activity and well-being. Therefore, we value transdisciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches to solving problems, in addition to contributions that are made within single disciplines.
2. We recognize that the global food system is profoundly inequitable along lines of gender, class, and race. In the US, racial inequity is expressed in the still-living legacies of slavery, racism, and theft of resources from indigenous peoples, all of which continue to prevent equal opportunity for many individuals and groups. Inequity is also expressed structurally in the leadership, infrastructure, and decision-making mechanisms of our food system, which continues to favor the small subset of the population (usually white, male and coming from backgrounds of relative affluence) that has held power in the US from its founding as a country.
3. We recognize multiple converging trends in US food systems that are leading us further away from sustainability, resilience and social equity and more toward irreversible thresholds at which we could enter a drastically transformed and impoverished world. We know that we live in a time of increasing uncertainty that demands new coping mechanisms. Global environmental change (e.g. climate change, nutrient cycle disruption, loss of biodiversity, and ocean acidification) constitutes a cluster of potentially severe thresholds to which food systems contribute; strikingly, the loss of human diversity, as indigenous peoples and their languages continue to be decimated, also is irreversible.
4. We value the cultural diversity of the US food system embodied in the many foodways and cultural practices of all our peoples. We understand that specific foods people eat, food production, and food consumption have spiritual, cultural, and social significance that goes far beyond food's nutritional and economic value.
5. We see that public policies and practices sometimes push food system actors away from sustainability, resilience and social equity. We understand that these policies and practices have global impacts, affecting the food system choices of people across the world as well as within our own borders and leading to limits on opportunities for all, but especially women, poor people, and people of color. We know that policies and practices can be changed with sufficient motivation, knowledge and mobilization of political power.

6. We seek to meet our responsibilities as food citizens from our positions within, or working with, institutions of higher education. We understand that the goal of “sustainability” is a call to action that requires much more of us than what is found in our formal job descriptions, and we come together to learn and act in more effective ways to promote racial equity, economic equity, and environmental restoration and health. The means by which we anticipate achieving these goals are through 1) creating a deeply engaged, interactive, and diverse INFAS network; 2) cultivating a new generation of leaders in administration, institutions, and society with education that responds to their needs and the changes that are happening in food systems; and 3) transforming food system knowledge generation, use of knowledge, policy, economic concentration, and distribution of profits to facilitate the first two goals.

*\*This preamble was developed to simultaneously acknowledge the multi-dimensionality of the food system and reinforce that INFAS values systemic analyses and transdisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and single discipline approaches to solving problems. It further articulates that there are diverse sustainability challenges including environmental (e.g., climate change, loss of biodiversity, ocean acidification); economic (e.g., low wages and limited food system access, especially for women, poor people, and people of color); and social (e.g., legacies of slavery, theft of resources, and leadership in the food system that has historically favored white affluent males) that lead us further away from food system sustainability, resilience and equity.*