

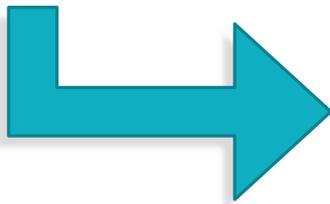
Food Justice Assessment for Food Co-ops

Food justice means building a community-owned and -controlled food system that creates health, wealth, and dignity for all. It sets forth a vision for a just food system in order to generate thriving communities and equitable economies. There are many tactics to building food justice, such as health and nutrition programs, socially responsible enterprises, people-centered policy, and much more. ***Seems like co-ops have a crucial role to play, right?***

The current Food Regime: What are we up against?

Root Causes

- The consolidation of our food system into the hands of a few, i.e. Monsanto, Tyson, Aramark, Coca-Cola.
- An economy based on systemic exploitation, i.e. racism, classism, sexism.



Manifestations

- 1 in 3 children born today will develop diabetes; 1 in 2 among kids of color.
- Research shows Black and Latino neighborhoods are often left practically devoid of fresh produce but flooded with fast food.
- The percentage of hungry people in US has gone up 57% since the late 1990s.
- 98% of black farmers have lost their land since Reconstruction.
- 7 of the 10 worst paying jobs are in the food chain.
- Poverty among farm workers is more than double that of all wage + salary employees. The average salary for a family of farm workers is between \$15,000-\$17,499.
- The EPA estimates that 10,000-20,000 farm workers are poisoned on the job due to pesticide exposure each year.

...And, Action!

Food co-ops take back ownership and power in the food system. For example, in the past few years we've seen low-income and rural communities start their own grocery cooperatives where grocery chains have refused to serve them for decades. However, we must also bear witness to other cases, where food co-ops have contributed to injustices such as gentrification and the displacement of people of color. The Food Justice Assessment and Equity Action Plan serves to support an introductory conversation and analysis towards putting equity at the core of every aspect of your cooperative in order to truly be a tool for justice. The following checklist aims to ask ***Who benefits? Who has a seat at the table? How are we creating transformative change?***

This toolkit is a draft tool and we welcome feedback. CoFED can also offer additional support and facilitation for your organization or team to create inclusive, equitable, thriving food co-ops. For further information contact workers@cofed.org.

Not all of the following points may apply to your co-op, depending on your structure, membership demographics, and geographic location. This toolkit is primarily designed for co-ops whose membership is predominately white and want to commit themselves to creating equitable outcomes.

Aspects of Your Food Co-op	Assessment Checklist
Mission & Vision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Your ends statement proposes a more just and equitable world <input type="checkbox"/> Your mission is tied to specific equitable outcomes
Customers & Service Target	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> You have a mechanism to demonstrate how you have considered feedback from your consumer base and how that feedback has been incorporated into your business practice <input type="checkbox"/> Your business prioritizes serving communities with limited access to healthy foods and enables their participation
Products & Pricing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> You engage with marginalized communities to assess what additional product offerings will be of highest value as well as culturally appropriate according to them <input type="checkbox"/> You structure your pricing and discounts so that your products are accessible to the widest array of consumers as possible <input type="checkbox"/> You accept SNAP/EBT and/or participate in the WIC program
Sourcing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Your supply chain supports small and minority farmers <input type="checkbox"/> The farms from which you obtain your products pay living wages and provide good working conditions to their workers <input type="checkbox"/> The farms from which you obtain your products consider the impact of their waste streams on the surrounding communities, with particular attention to low-income communities and communities of color
Ownership & Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Your governance structure allows for equitable participation <input type="checkbox"/> You consider alternative ways for members to participate if they face financial barriers to ownership, such as sweat equity
Wealth Building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Your business provides competitive wages, salaries, and benefits to employees from the community <input type="checkbox"/> Your business reinvests in its neighboring communities and the supply chain it is part of <input type="checkbox"/> Your business is structured in a way that allows for profit-sharing, especially with those communities from which wealth has been extracted

Work Environment & Policies¹	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Workers are trained on how decisions are made and understand how to participate in decision-making processes <input type="checkbox"/> There is a deliberate plan to recruit and develop the leadership of staff who come from underserved and underinvested backgrounds, e.g. working class <input type="checkbox"/> Values and norms are stated, and there is dialogue and evaluation around “unstated” values and norms. Leading questions, for example, could be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Are people of color welcomed in the organization only in so far as they assimilate into the existing organizational culture? o Is white culture treated as the norm? Do the art, holiday activities, and food reflect people of color cultures? o Is discussion of racism and oppression normal and encouraged or seen to distract from “the real work”? Do people in leadership positions participate in and support discussion of power and oppression issues? o Are there people of color who consistently do not participate in meetings and discussions? Is so, is there active reflection on why, and how to encourage more balanced participation?
Language & Promotion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Your menu is accessible to all language groups who might typically use your business <input type="checkbox"/> You translate your promotional materials into multiple languages <input type="checkbox"/> You have strategies in place to engage communities identified as disadvantaged within your geography <input type="checkbox"/> You have a marketing plan that makes special consideration for communities less likely to access your services
Partnerships & Community Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Your business advocates for the resourcing and participation of organizations led by low-income people and/or people of color <input type="checkbox"/> Your business seeks input and guidance from people of color organizations and community leaders of color in its strategic planning and decision making
Location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Your business is accessible by multiple forms of transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Your hours make it possible for those using public transportation to use your services <input type="checkbox"/> Your hours accommodate workers who have off-hour employment commitments

¹ This section inspired by “Dismantling Racism: A Resource Book for Social Change Groups,” Western States Center

Equity Action Plan²

We'd like to invite you to reflect on some next steps you could take in your food co-op! Using the Food Justice Assessment helps you think of how food justice can be at the core of every aspect of your business plan and/or strategic plan. While you might not be able to create completely equitable outcomes in every aspect of your co-op, when there is a choice and you can choose the more equitable path, you will create deeper impact in your community.

What is equity? Equity is the condition that would be achieved if one's identity no longer predicted, in a statistical sense, how one fares. One must work to address root causes of inequities, not just their manifestations. This includes elimination of policies, practices, attitudes and cultural messages that reinforce differential outcomes by race, class or gender, or fail to eliminate them.³

What are equitable outcomes? Equitable outcomes result from fulfilling clear goals to increase inclusivity, access, and opportunity for groups facing the greatest barriers to social and economic participation. The strength of these outcomes results from being able to meet qualitative and quantitative goals, rather than just intentions for equity.

1. Pick one aspect of your co-op. What current practices may be unintentionally reinforcing inequitable outcomes?

2. How and where could action be taken to produce more equitable outcomes?

3. What relationships, supports, incentives or accountability measures could help?

² Modified from Race Forward – Materials drawn from lecture and power point

³ Center for Assessment and Policy Development: <http://racialequityresourceguide.org/about/glossary>