

# Good Food For All Opposes Unjust Immigration Policies

The Good Food For All (GFFA) collaborative unites grassroots and national organizations around a vision for a just, equitable and sustainable food system. A key component of this vision is the fair treatment of farmworkers. The majority of agricultural workers today are foreign-born. This history has produced a food system that thrives on exploited immigrant labor and implements policies that support unjust practices.

In pursuit of its three immigration policy [goals](#) (safe and lawful admissions; defending the safety and security of our country; and protecting American workers and taxpayers), the Trump administration has created a human rights crisis that has justifiably triggered international [censure](#) and has brought the nation to the brink of a government [shutdown](#). Most recently, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) has proposed a change to public charge that would threaten access to food and healthcare programs for immigrants (refugee and asylum seekers are exempt). The public charge test -which uses the totality of circumstances to assess an individual's likely dependence on public benefits - can grant or deny residency status (a "green card") and/or entrance to immigrants based on their estimated "cost" to the government. Currently, the definition of a public charge is anyone likely to become primarily dependent on the government for subsistence, through public cash assistance for income maintenance or institutionalization, for long-term care at government expense. DHS has proposed the expansion of "public charge" to include the likelihood of using SNAP, Medicaid, and public housing at any time during residence.

This proposal is a direct attack on hardworking immigrant families and individuals in times of economic hardship. By forcing families to choose between meeting their basic needs and maintaining a path to citizenship, we risk the threat of increased food insecurity and accompanying public health issues. It also sends the message that anyone who is not wealthy is not welcome to this country. GFFA believes that this country's immigration policies should recognize and act on the following truths about the nation's food system and immigration;

- Without migrant food and farmworkers, this country's food system would come to a complete halt. This fact is recognized by farmers and [experts](#) in the food chain.
- According to the U.S. Department of Labor, more than half of the country's agricultural workforce is undocumented. Due to flawed trade agreements, like NAFTA, and centuries of political, military and economic [intervention](#), the economies of many nations around the world are dysfunctional and individuals and families therefrom are driven to seek opportunities in our unmet domestic labor supply.
- Undocumented farmworkers are acutely vulnerable to workplace abuses such as wage theft, exposure to occupational hazards and sexual exploitation, as well as to

being terrorized by threats to arbitrarily suspend employment or report workers to immigration authorities for deportation.

- Immigrant households with children are less likely to utilize housing assistance than households of US-born individuals.
- Naturalized citizens and noncitizen immigrants use programs like SNAP and Medicaid at lower rates than US-born individuals after adjusting for poverty and age.

The narratives dominating media headlines on immigration would have us believe that people cross the border to enter a competitive job market, taking jobs away from citizens and taking advantage of public resources. The reality is much more complex and is worthy of deep, intentional analysis of the underlying social and economic factors that disincentivizes domestic labor while forcing immigrants to face the worst working conditions in our food economy. There is no room to mistake what's at the core of this problem by scapegoating and criminalizing immigrants. If we want to achieve an economy and a food system that serve us all, we must take an honest look at the conditions that lead to our current reality and address the challenges at hand.

In our current food system—in which the true human cost of labor has not been accounted for—unsafe, undercompensated, and inhumane working conditions are pervasive, especially for immigrants. If our leaders were truly invested in better jobs for all people, they would recognize food and agricultural work as a source of dignified and skilled livelihood; pay fair and thriving wages to workers; ensure collective bargaining rights; provide, monitor and enforce occupational safety policies; and require standard benefits such as medical insurance and pension plans. Current labor policies and business practices do not reflect or acknowledge that the immigrant labor force is imperative to the viability of the nation's food system.

## **We deserve a food system we can all be proud of.**

The exclusion of Black, Brown, and Indigenous people from entry, economic opportunity and citizenship is deeply embedded into the history of the United States. Many European immigrants accumulated wealth through land appropriation, enslavement, devaluing labor and other violent means, yet Black and Brown immigrants and Native people are still criminalized, deported, and excluded from redress by means of their human and constitutional rights. As a nation we should recognize the humanity and the dignity of immigrant people by passing policy that values immigrant workers, whose labor is vital to the food chain. We resolutely oppose the Administration's cruel, racist and inhumane tactics in pursuit of a nonsensical "zero-tolerance" immigration policy that does not recognize the preceding empirical truths.

We call on the DHS and Trump Administration to respect the rights of immigrants and refugees, including the right of families to remain united, and to recognize the inherent value of food chain laborers with immigration and labor policies that adhere to the highest standards of humane, legal and ethical conduct. We urge the Administration to withdraw the proposed rule in its entirety. We must recognize the value of these people, beyond building the financial wealth of this nation, by providing a legal pipeline for immigration to citizenship, and that goes beyond importing them for limited times to perform menial labor under conditions unacceptable to the domestic labor force.

## Supporters

### Organizations

Appetite For Change  
Center for Community Self-Help  
City College, New York  
Community Farm Alliance  
Consultant, Food Systems Change  
DC Greens  
Dreaming Out Loud  
Farm to Table  
Food & Water Watch  
Food Chain Workers Alliance  
Food Chain Workers Alliance & Why Hunger  
Justfoodandwater.org  
Live Well  
Lutheran Services in Iowa  
Organic Planet LLC  
Scholars Strategy Network  
Seeds of Solidarity  
Slow Food  
Slow Food East Bay  
Slow Food USA  
Springfield Food Policy Council  
Sustainable Communities Network  
Teachers College Columbia University  
The Common Market  
Transformations CDC  
Tufts University

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