



Abandoned Dairy Farm Barn. [Photo by Ryan Schmitz \(CC BY 2.0\)](#)

## Food First Gathers with Wisconsin Farmers Union

Wisconsin is ground zero in the struggle for the existence of the family dairy farm in the United States. Over the last 50 years, the US has lost over 600,000 dairy farms due to oversupply, low prices and industrial concentration. The family dairy farm is fast being replaced by automated mega-farms in which thousands of confined animals live short, overworked lives in an intensive production model that contributes massively to greenhouse gasses.

So, it was a wonderful surprise to us this January, when we attended the Wisconsin Farmers Union (WFU) annual convention in Appleton, WI and found a diverse gathering of over 500 farmers and their families not just facing the hard realities of US agriculture, but celebrating life, farming, and the joy of being together. We shared meals, sang songs, honored elders and heard from the youth. For nearly 90 years, this member driven organization has worked for farm justice by [“enhancing the quality of life for family farmers, rural communities, and all people through educational opportunities, cooperative endeavors, and civic engagement.”](#) There were dozens of workshops and many conversations on everything from climate change and farm resiliency, to social diversity, and rural mental health. We learned that fair prices, supply management, an end to CAFOs and major social investments in the countryside are all solid planks in the WFU platform for rural transformation.

Food First’s Eric Holt-Giménez’s keynote at the convention, in which he highlighted the importance of getting the principle of parity into the Green New Deal—and of building alliances outside farm country—was enthusiastically received. The Green New Deal [is now being discussed by the WFU](#) as part of their legislative efforts. We came away convinced that the food and climate justice movements have a tremendous farm justice ally with the Wisconsin Farmers Union.

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INSTITUTE FOR FOOD AND  
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Food First is a “peoples’ think tank” and education-for-action center. Our work highlights the root causes and solutions to hunger and poverty, with a commitment to fighting racism and establishing food as a fundamental human right.

## Food First Joins Community Organizers at Climate Justice Alliance Convening

The United Nation’s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change recently released their alarming report with life-altering ramifications for all: change now or face existential threat. Rapid, far-reaching, and unprecedented changes in every sector in society will be required to avoid this threat by reducing global net human-caused carbon dioxide emissions by 45% by 2030 and net zero by 2050.

Changing everything to avoid this existential threat starts with ending the injustices that drive climate change.

That’s why, from March 21-24, 2019, Food First’s Alyshia Silva joined community organizers from frontline racial, social, environmental, and climate justice movements who gathered together to strategize and build towards a climate just future.

How climate change affects our communities and ecologies – especially longtime stewards of the land such as communities of color and the working class – is at the heart of what brought organizers together for the Climate Justice Alliance convening. The Climate Justice Alliance, established in 2013, has emerged as an alliance of movements tackling climate change

through the lens of race, class, gender, and anti-imperialism. The alliance is made up of Indigenous peoples, African American, Latinx, Asian Pacific Islander, and poor white communities with a shared history of racial and economic oppression and social justice organizing.

A key task for the Climate Justice Alliance, and other movements fighting climate change, continues to be linking food sovereignty and agroecology with climate justice. On-the-ground organizers recognize and teach that agriculture is not only a survival tool and a means to mitigate climate change, but also a means to transforming the political and economic system that has created inequity to begin with.

Food First was honored and excited to take part in this important convening of grassroots organizers. We look forward to supporting these communities on the path to a just political and economic system.

### Building a Roadmap for Fighting Climate Change at *In These Times* Climate Series

We all know that our climate is in crisis and there is no shortage of analysis explaining why. But it is much harder to form solutions or to articulate what



Much of CJA centered indigenous activists of New Mexico . Photo by Alyshia Silva.

alternatives to our current system actually look like.

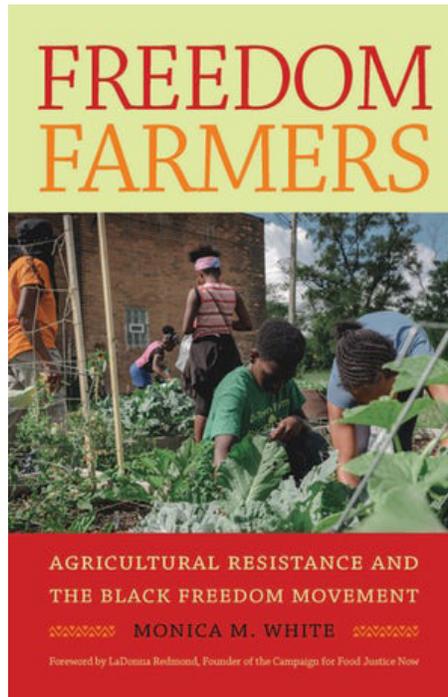
A recent *In These Times* climate series titled, “[How to Build the Zero-Carbon Economy](#),” aimed to imagine solutions and alternatives to our climate crisis by bringing together writers and activists to cover topics from renewable energy, to agriculture, to labor, and even geopolitics. Food First was honored to have its Executive Director, Eric Holt-Giménez published alongside other climate justice activists and writers such as Winona LaDuke, Kali Akuno, Kate Aronoff, and others in this series.

Eric expressed Food First’s message that our food system chronically overproduces food, degrading the environment while the poor get left behind and farmers around the world go hungry as they can no longer afford to produce food. While corporate agriculture can no longer ignore the climate crisis, their false solutions only double down on industrial agriculture, disguising its business-as-usual approach with terms like “climate-smart agriculture,” and other technical fixes. Here at Food First, we continue to show that these false solutions only serve to keep intact the existing industrial food system built upon overproduction, fossil fuels, Confined Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs), and other injustices. This may protect their profit margins, but it doesn’t feed the world or mitigate our climate crisis. Instead of technical fixes, we need systemic solutions that transform everything. The good news is that there is indeed an alternative path forward - A Green New Deal that supports agroecology as one of the solutions to our food system’s biggest problems.

Read the full article at: <http://inthesetimes.com/features/green-new-deal-zero-carbon-economy-plan.html>

## Connecting Black Liberation with Agricultural Resistance

Dr. Monica M. White, a professor at the University of Wisconsin and Food First Fellow, has published an essential new book called *Freedom Farmers: Agricultural Resistance and the Black Freedom Movement*.



Monica dives deeply into the rich and vibrant history of Southern Black farmers’ important role in the struggle for freedom. Her contribution to the academic literature on agriculture and the fight against racism reframes the narrative of agriculture’s role in Black history. Monica shows how agriculture and land acted as sites of resistance to white supremacy and were key spaces for Black farmers to struggle for freedom and dignity.

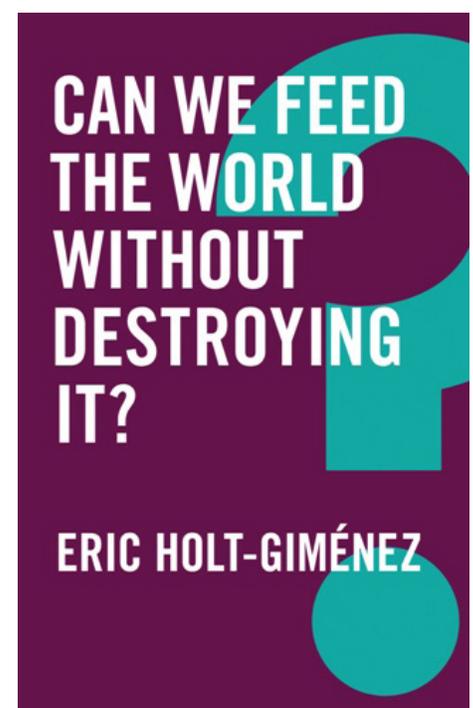
*Freedom Farmers* navigates the ways in which prominent figures such as Booker T. Washington, George Washington Carver, and W.E.B. Du Bois played in laying the intellectual foundation for collective power and community resilience in the early Black freedom movement. Monica details with multiple case studies how Black farmers used cooperatives to collectively resist systemic racism and mass dispossession. These cooperatives also provided paths for Black farmers facing terror and dispossession under Jim Crow to remain on their land and build healthy communities. Monica’s book helps us understand the historical roots and context for today’s food justice and food sovereignty movements in Black communities throughout the US.

[Buy the book today.](#)

## Continuing Food First’s Legacy with *Can We Feed the World Without Destroying It?*

Food First’s latest book continues our organization’s legacy of challenging the myths and conventional wisdom surrounding the root causes of hunger. In our latest book, *Can We Feed the World Without Destroying It?*, we examine how industrial agriculture and anti-hunger groups’ calls to double food production by 2050 are rooted in myths about what causes hunger. Instead of blaming scarcity or overpopulation, we continue to make the case, first started over 40 years ago, that we have more than enough food to feed everyone. It is the injustices of our food system that produce hunger, not scarcity and overpopulation. Injustices such as poverty, dispossession, and exploitation—driven by our political and economic system—are hunger’s root causes.

We show that it is mostly peasant farmers, many of them women, who are the ones that go hungry in a world of plenty because they can no longer afford to farm or buy the food that they produce because of industrial agriculture’s overproduction of food. Instead of pushing for doubling food production under the current industrial food system, which would accelerate the environmental destruction of the planet, we must push for systemic



changes that promote food sovereignty, democratically redistribute resources, and radically change how we produce and consume food.

Since we released the book in January, we have taken our analysis on the road to places like Wisconsin, North Carolina, Maine, Vermont, and back home in the Bay Area.

In April, we also took part in an exciting double book event that featured Food First's Eric Holt-Giménez, and Small Planet Institute's Timothy Wise, author of *Eating Tomorrow: Agribusiness, Family Farmers, and the Battle for the Future of Food*. The event was moderated by Doria Robinson, a farmer, grassroots organizer, and Director of Urban Tilth in Richmond, CA. Together, they criticized Big Ag's call to intensify agriculture as a way to fix our problems; discussed alternative solutions that could help transition our communities towards climate and food justice; and explored why the fight to change the food system cannot just be technical, but must be political and social.

These events have shown us that farmers, students, activists, and the general public are excited to discuss and learn about the root causes of hunger and how it is possible to feed the world without destroying it. Sharing these ideas and our analysis across the country are important steps towards building an equitable food system.

## Shedding Light on Tunisia's Fight for Food Sovereignty

Recently, scholar-activist Dr. Habib Ayeub contributed an in-depth op-ed about the crisis facing Tunisia's peasant farmers and the nation's food system. Tunisia is already severely dependent on food imports, with one out of every two Tunisians fed from outside the country. Much of this food dependence has occurred over the past 25 years as Tunisia shifted its agriculture to prioritize exports of fruits and vegetables to meet Europe's demand, causing poverty to grow substantially in the countryside. The current government, repeating the same policies of the past, is edging closer to agreeing to a massive free trade agreement that would dismantle all remaining barriers that protect the North African nation's agricultural system, generating more poverty for vulnerable peasant farmers.

Unfortunately, Tunisia lacks any clear way out. As Dr. Ayeub points out, Tunisia's food dependence makes any refusal to Europe and international financial institutions' demands perilous. The nation could face political, economic, and social consequences for not entering the free trade agreement, leaving them with "only their fingers to eat." Rejecting the free trade agreement without a strategy for radically reforming Tunisia's food system would be suicide.

Ayeub makes a passionate plea for Tunisians to refuse both the free trade agreement and the status-quo of dependency by piv-



A Tunisian peasant farmer. Photo by Ernest Riva

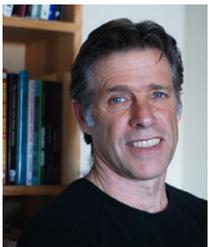
oting towards a food sovereignty model grounded in radical agricultural reforms that could both break Tunisia's dependence on Europe and also support the livelihood of peasant farmers. Ayeub looks to the Cuban and South Korean agrarian reforms and food policies as political inspiration to show what may be possible in the Tunisian context.

Food First is honored to serve as a platform so that we can hear and learn from food and land activists doing great work across the world in places like Tunisia.

Check out the article here: <https://foodfirst.org/building-food-sovereignty-in-tunisia/>

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## Food First's Transition Fund Continues



Eric Holt-Giménez, Executive Director of Food First for the past 13 years, is retiring on June 30, 2019. Before he leaves though, he's giving one last gift to Food First.

From now until his retirement date, Eric is working with Food First's biggest advocates, including you, to fundraise for our Transition Fund. Your help will ensure Food First's future for decades to come and act as one last gift to Eric for his leadership over the last decade.

## How You Can Help Food First's Transition

- **Double your gift.** Visit [www.foodfirst.org/support](http://www.foodfirst.org/support) or send us your donation in the mail.
- **Become a Monthly Sustainer.** Your gift allows Food First to plan ahead and accomplish even more. Visit [www.foodfirst.org/sustainer](http://www.foodfirst.org/sustainer).
- **Name Food First in your will or donate a part of your retirement plan.** Leave a living legacy for future generations to benefit from Food First's research and action. Visit [www.foodfirst.org/livinglegacy](http://www.foodfirst.org/livinglegacy).
- **Give stock.** It's tax-smart and keeps us running. Give at [www.foodfirst.org/stock](http://www.foodfirst.org/stock).