A heartfelt greeting is extended to everyone. We especially send words of gratitude to our Food First donors who have sustained us through the challenges of the pandemic and more than 47 years of fighting for food justice. Our donors continue to reaffirm the importance of our shared desire to create a more fair and just food system that values and serves all of us instead of primarily catering to the needs of the wealthy and privileged.

During the past two years of the pandemic, the Food First board and staff worked remotely and suspended all in-person program activities. We concentrated our efforts on working to keep you updated on the critical issues at the nexus of the pandemic which contributed to rising levels of hunger and poverty. In doing so, we observed all of the factors that contributed to an increasing level of food insecurity. For example, the escalating food prices resulting from supply chain and production issues here in the United States, throughout the world, and particularly within the Global South. Additionally, the ongoing climate crisis and the added economic pressures from the recent war in Ukraine also impacted food prices globally.

The question of what can and should Food First do to respond was raised repeatedly. Our board concluded more advocacy and policy work directed at BIPOC community level initiatives was the way forward. We’ve also opted to continue to permanently be a remote and decentralized organization. While we’ll be working remotely from locations across the US, we’ll continue to be inspired by our historical links to Oakland and the progressive spirit of the Bay Area.

Since our inception, Food First has worked to help remove barriers that make access to nutritious and affordable food a challenge. Our mission is to end the injustices that cause hunger. We will continue to advance our mission through research, education, and action. We remain committed to this cause and hope you will all be inspired by our work and continue to support our effort to eliminate hunger and poverty. The latest Food First IRS Form 990 and 2021 Independent Auditor’s Report is located on our website at https://foodfirst.org/about-us/#annual-reports.
Welcome to this Edition of the Food First News and Views!

Introducing the New Food First Executive Director

My name is Ellen Harris and this marks my seventh month as Executive Director of the Institute for Food and Development Policy, most notably known as Food First.

I would like to extend a personal greeting and words of appreciation for your continued support of the organization. I keep saying to friends and colleagues that I've come full circle in my career. I have a doctorate in public health nutrition and my first job after graduate school was teaching community nutrition at Drexel University. A strong interest in policy led me to work with the US House of Representatives Select Committee on Hunger as a Congressional Black Caucus Fellow. That experience created the opportunity for me to work for 32+ years at USDA conducting food and nutrition assistance program evaluation research, national nutrition monitoring research, and agricultural research (animal, plant, natural resources, and human nutrition sciences). All of these experiences provided me with an appreciation for the depth and breadth of the intersection between food, nutrition, agriculture, access, justice, and sovereignty. I am grateful that they've led me to Food First!

The mission of Food First is to end the injustices that cause hunger. We are a BIPOC-led think and do organization that supports and partners with others to work for systematic change. Food First aims to inform and amplify the voices, strategies, and solutions of social movements fighting for food justice and food sovereignty.

Upcoming newsletters will inform you of our work and progress. I look forward to working with you to carry out the Food First mission. For now, I'd like to share a few key accomplishments achieved over the last few months.

Transition Planning Board Meeting

On February 16-17, 2022, the Food First board and I held a Transition Planning Meeting to strategize and define policy for the implementation of Food First’s think and do programs. We are excited about our next steps in moving forward with programming for the future. Four key activities were identified and outlined:

- conduct an environmental scan to assess the current BIPOC-led food justice/sovereignty landscape;
- identify regional partnerships to help develop/implement an effective collaboration model;
- create organizational sustainability by strengthening the business model;
- establish management and operational processes to develop and maintain administrative, fiscal and program operations.

Rise Up, Scale Up Listening Lab 4-Part Webinar Series

To address the environmental scan objective, four virtual listening sessions were created and implemented during the months of April and May. These sessions highlighted perspectives from community-based member organizations (April 22), research and academic experts (April 29), civil society and philanthropic representatives (May 12), and art & culture creative artists (May 26). Participants joined the sessions from 15 states throughout the US and Italy. We will draw from lessons learned during these sessions as we design new programming for Food First. Video recordings are available at https://foodfirst.org/programs/videos.

Food First Fellows Program

The Food First Fellows Program was reconstituted as a research, advocacy, and leadership fellowship for early career researchers, academics, and grassroots organization advocates. Its purpose is to nurture and grow the next generation of influential thought leaders capable of creating and implementing strategies in the food justice/food sovereignty space. This fellowship is part of the transition towards a BIPOC-led and focused organization. The inaugural cohort will serve a one-year fellowship from September 6, 2022, through August 31, 2023, with a possible additional year extension. They will engage in projects focused on Black farmers, participatory action research, and explore the linkages between art, culture and food justice.

Please welcome our new Food First Fellows.

- **Martinique Mims** (Cleveland, OH) – *Unconventional Spaces: Connecting Food, Art, and the Community*; creating an art series in the community and an art-inspired interactive food justice program for youth in public schools.

- **Robbie Pollard** (Horn Lake, MS) – *The Happy Foods Project Agripreneurship Initiative*; strengthening Mississippi Delta farming enterprises of 5 BIPOC farmers with an anchor farm and partner-
Welcome our New Administrative Officer

Wesley E Myrick joined us on July 5 as the new Food First Administrative Officer. Wesley is a highly skilled strategy and nonprofit financial operations manager. Wesley recently completed an executive fellowship with FUSE Corps which enabled him to work with the City of Atlanta, Office of Housing and Community Development, where he worked to advance supportive housing policy and program development. Wesley also joins Food First with nonprofit experience including working with One 2 One Educational Support, Food Well Alliance, the Pinky Swear Foundation, and the Georgia Food Bank Association. Wesley is a welcome addition to Food First and will strategically implement our virtual office business operations.

A New Website Look

Food First has a new website look! Our web address remains www.foodfirst.org. We always want to preserve and honor our legacy, thus the previous website is clearly archived and easily accessible via the new site. Click https://archive.foodfirst.org/ to access the old site.

Creation of Virtual Office and a New Food First Mailing Address

Food First is now a virtual organization. Please update your records. Remember, we are working virtually now so, although we’d love to see you in person, this address is just for mail correspondence. If you have old donation reply envelopes, please don’t use them as each mailing will include new donation envelopes with the correct Food First address. Here is the new Food First mailing address.

INSTITUTE FOR FOOD AND DEVELOPMENT POLICY
(Food First)
PO Box 913469
Pasadena, CA 91110-3469

A Greener Fundraising Strategy

Historically Food First has published 4 newsletters annually and sent at least 2 fundraising appeals via direct mailing to our donors and supporters. For years, we have been committed to using recycled paper and environmentally friendly inks. For some time now, many donors have asked us to limit mailings for both environmental and fiscal reasons. Some Food First donors have also added stamps to our prepaid donation reply envelopes to assist in lowering our fundraising costs. While small individually, collectively your efforts make a difference.

As longtime Food First supporters, you know we have a long history of solidarity with the climate movement. We regularly speak with farmers who tell us how rising temperatures and drought, for example, are adversely impacting their ability to grow and sustain healthy crops and livestock.

The staff here at Food First have reflected on all of these realities and we are pleased to announce the steps we will take to do our part as responsible members of the global community. Today we are announcing our “Food First Goes Green” commitment. We are committed to finding ways to engage and communicate with you, our donors, and the broader public, in a more environmentally appropriate manner. We will begin by shifting our focus from relying so heavily on direct mail to increasingly sharing information via email and other electronic means. This fiscal year, we will reduce our postal mailings from 6 annually to 5. We will complement this change by adding 6 electronic e-mailings in alternating months. The goal is to increase our digital footprint while strengthening program messaging to donors and our constituent community.

Bobby Wilson, Food First Vice President, Recognized as a CNN Hero

We want to recognize and congratulate Bobby Wilson, the Food First Board
Vice President, for his recent nomination as a 2022 CNN Hero!

This recognition acknowledges individuals who are making a difference in their communities. As the co-founder of Metro Atlanta Urban Farm, a 5-acre farm located in College Park, Georgia, Bobby is committed to championing food justice and food sovereignty. Bobby serves his community by offering a variety of programs including farmer training, youth development initiatives, and urban gardening. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, using primarily crops grown on the Metro Atlanta Urban Farm site, Bobby helped feed over 25,000 local families in College Park and throughout metro Atlanta.

The July 8, 2022 profile that honored Bobby as a CNN Hero described the more than 3,000 K-12 students Bobby has hosted on farm tours and agricultural STEM field trips. Bobby works with people of all ages, whether they be community gardeners, or small farmers and is committed to providing education and support to help everyone have access to nutritious and pesticide-free produce. In the profile on Bobby, he stated, “We’re more than just a farm. We’re about justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion because at the end of the day, I want my grandchildren to have it better than what I have it today.” Not only is Bobby the Food First Board Vice President, he has also been an active farmer member of the Federation of Southern Cooperatives for over 12 years. A fellow farmer member nominated him for this recognition.


Photos courtesy of Bobby Wilson

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**HOW CAN YOU HELP FOOD FIRST’S TRANSITION?**

For over 47 years, Food First donors have played a vital role in sustaining our organization. As we recreate Food First to adapt to the new emerging challenges the most vulnerable in our society face, we ask for your encouragement, engagement, and financial support to sustain our critical work.

You can visit [https://foodfirst.org/support](https://foodfirst.org/support) to:

- Make a donation: Consider an online donation. Every gift, no matter the size, helps support our important work.
- Become a sustaining donor: Your regular gift allows Food First to plan ahead and accomplish even more!
- Donate Stock: It’s tax-smart and helps sustain Food First.
- Defined Charitable Gifts: Support Food First by making a donation from your charitable fund or family foundation.
- Designate Food First as a Will Beneficiary: Ensure Food First is able to help those in need for years to come.

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