

An analysis prepared as part of

THE Vivid Picture PROJECT

What Values Influence Stakeholder Perceptions of a Sustainable Food and Farming Industry for California?

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Introduction

In the spring of 2004, the Roots of Change Council and Fund contracted Ecotrust to “create a clear and vivid picture of sustainable California food systems. This detailed description will lay out how the [components of the] food systems of California should interact when operating sustainably...” Specifically, the Council charged Ecotrust with producing:

- A proposed vision for the future sustainable food system
- An outline of possible implementation strategies
- Suggested indicators of success

Our approach to the Vivid Picture Project was rooted in a survey of stakeholders in California’s food and farming system. The contributions of nearly 1,500 individuals¹ form the foundation and structure of the project’s recommendations, from its goals, visions, and recommended scenarios. Through a series of interviews with key stakeholders, the Vivid Picture Project identified core values that tap the strengths of current stakeholders and offer anchors for new entrants into the dialogue around “sustainability.” This paper suggests a set of values we believe to be at the heart of a shift toward sustainability for California’s food and farming system.

Methodology

“I’m convinced that we don’t have environmental problems in California. What we have is symptoms. We have a people problem. We don’t have people talking to each other—fathers don’t talk to sons, agencies don’t talk to each other, BLM doesn’t talk to agency people. This is the real problem.

Trade Advisor, personal interview

The Vivid Picture Project conducted a first round of interviews with, or took written statements from, 65 individuals identified as key leaders in the food system and visionaries who have shown through action or statement that ***they or their organization clearly see themselves as stakeholders in a future sustainable food system.***

We used a grounded theory orientation to the interview process, a system developed by Dr. Barney Glasser, the father of grounded theory, who stated that the goal of the process is to discover the theory implicit in the interviews (Glasser, 1967, 1992, and 1998). We employed an approach of semi-structured interviews to address our questions looking for themes to emerge from the process. By systematically comparing interviews, we were able to discern food system sectors, possible principles for a sustainable food system, existing sustainable enterprises, and ideas for new models of sustainability. We were looking for similar responses, listening for potential contradicting visions, and noting outlying ideas and solutions, perhaps mentioned only once, that may be worth exploring for future modeling as part of our backcasting process.

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Our methods are *emergent* in nature, learning from each interview how best to test and disconfirm the emerging themes. In other words, both methodology and themes developed gradually as the data and interpretations accumulated, allowing each interview to build on the previous work. This process proved a useful tool to obtain buy-in from new people into the project as a whole. It has been a potent entry point for many of the business people, influencers, and social change advocates that the project intends to galvanize.

Fifteen of the interviews were conducted with members of **the Roots of Change Council**, previously selected as participants by the Roots of Change Fund. The Council represents a broad spectrum of participation in the food system including: three university level farm educators, one vineyard manager, two food system authors, one representative from co-op extension, two nutrition educators, one person focused on rural development, one restaurateur, two farmers, and one fisherman.

Of the 65 interviews, 36 were conducted with individuals who are **executive managers or owners in food and farming businesses**. These individuals are economically vested in or currently committed to a sustainable food system. We tried to search out a geographically representative sample and a group of people that interact with both the conventional food system and some part of the already existing sustainable food structure.

These interviews were held with five manufacturer/processors, three producer/processors, three wholesalers, five retailers and four food service operators, and fifteen growers of varying sizes. All participants were interviewed for an hour and a half to seek their vision for a sustainable food system, and invited to review and draft documents the Vivid Picture team develops, and consider being interviewed a second time regarding their impressions of how to best achieve the Vivid Picture of the future.

Twenty-nine of the participants are **public interest contributors**. They were self-selected out of a group of 70 individuals invited to a Roots of Change convening in July 2005. Invitees were asked to complete a written "homework assignment" on their vision of a sustainable food system to answer key questions, including:

- *What does Sustainability in a food system mean to you?*
- *What is your vision of a sustainable food system in California in the year 2030 look like?*
- *What is your food system nightmare?*

The 15 individuals that provided a written statement were then considered to be the public interest contributors for the project. The group is diverse in its interests and commented on a variety of aspects of the system. Some individuals belong to organizations that work at the intersection of many of these issues. Their skills include two representatives from groups with an environmental mission, two public health advocates, four food security advocates, six labor activists, nine agricultural policy specialists, and two organic agriculture advocates.

We conducted the semi-structured interview method with an open framework allowing for focused, conversational, two-way communication. The hour and a half interviews, conducted by Eileen Brady, included an overview of the goals of the Vivid Picture Project, the history of the Roots of Change Council, and an introduction to Ecotrust. The

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interview questions included the personal history of the participant(s), the participant's definition of "sustainability," the participant's vision for a sustainable food system in California in the year 2030, the participant's food system nightmare, and an opportunity to include final thoughts or comments.

Analysis

We began the interviews with the understanding that we were seeking a set of values for a sustainable food system. However, we did not ask stakeholders about their values. Rather, we hoped to discover them implicit in their thinking about sustainability. Throughout these interviews, we also looked for clues as to what were key "components" of a sustainable food system. The interviews were coded separately to look for these two sets, creating parallel clusters of quotes from which the values and goals of the Vivid Picture Project were created.

The values were identified by grouping quotes according to the fundamental beliefs about the food system that they represented. The quotes identified formed 44 different groups. Some quotes were included in more than one grouping, and many of the groups were clustered together. Therefore, the quotes formed a network of ideas, with each group representing a node within that network. The clusters of nodes represent the eleven values that underlie current stakeholders' perceptions of what would make California's food and farming system truly sustainable. Rather than specific strategies for effecting change, values cut across suggested solutions and specific visions.

Summary of Findings: Values for a New Mainstream

Interviews with stakeholders revealed potential "nodes" that defined values within the framework of the Vivid Picture Project. Each node represents a diverse cross-section of interviews, and illustrates a facet of stakeholders' understandings of how their values affect the food and farming system.

The set of values that was identified as the underpinning of the Vivid Picture Project can be traced to two distinct and often divergent pictures of the American food system as a whole. Many of the change agents have values rooted in a populist-influenced vision of the American spirit that was revived during the turbulent 1960s and '70s. Many stakeholders began their careers during this period. In addition to these values, many of those working in California's food and farming system hold important core values that have their roots in the idealized, modernist vision of agriculture and society in post-World War II America.

America's Gilded Age brought the rapid pace of technological progress and an influx of capital to the nation's urban places. Cities boomed and rural places fought to retain their place at the center of American life, fueling the rise of the Populist Party. With its ethic of hard work, self-reliance, and community responsibility, the Populists sought practical solutions to what seemed to be mounting social problems that jeopardized the nation's way of life. However, hot on the heels of the Populist movement were the Progressives. Champions of America's booming industrial era, Progressive reformers assumed that "personal adjustment to the new economic system, not political action that criticized it,

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was the proper road to progress for farmers.”² This enthusiasm for technological progress grew nearly unabated throughout the next several decades, reaching its fever pitch in post-World War II America, fueled by Cold War-era investments in science and technology education.

Many leaders in the food and farming system today grew up under this period of heightened optimism. Simultaneously, contact with the pressures of the food and farming system has often revived sentiments that drove the Populists, making these leaders their heirs as well. These two value sets, those inherited from the Populists and the Progressives, can often come into conflict when associated traditional imagery or associations.

Stakeholders in the Vivid Picture Project often hold both sets of values side-by-side in their minds when discussing their work with the food and farming system. With one foot in the world of sustainability and the other in the work-a-day world of farming, food processing, or food outlets, they have not yet committed to embracing both sets. Stakeholders often expressed the difficulty of sharing values across this divide. However, in envisioning change for the future, they are able to activate both sets of values, indicating that there is strong potential for the Vivid Picture Project to build stakeholder support through an emphasis on both of these value sets.

“Core Sustainability” values

The Vivid Picture Project interviews revealed there are five “core sustainability values” that are foundational to stakeholders’ visions of a sustainable food and farming system. These values are deeply-held and resonate with many of the core “dyed in the wool” stakeholders. Similarly, these values are often associated with the current natural foods and organic farming industries and progressive political movements by those outside, and may be marginalized by other groups:

- ***Interconnectedness***
Nearly without exception, stakeholders described a vision of 2030 that related shifting the food and farming system towards sustainability using partnerships and personal relationships. For stakeholders, a sustainable food system is one which both recognizes and embraces connections across the system in terms of the relationships between people and the relationships in the natural environment. Conceptually, for many stakeholders, “a chain is only as strong as its weakest link.”
- ***Diversity***
When stakeholders describe their vision for California’s food and farming system, they want more diversity to support their vision of an abundant future. More wildlife species, more varieties, more local specialty items supplied through more shops, more business. Diversity represents more choices. Additionally, diversity of ownership and products embraces California’s growing cultural and ethnic diversity. This abundant diversity is held in stark contrast to the present and nightmarish futures dominated by sameness, lack of real choices, and consolidation in the food and farming industry.

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- ***Health***
Health was an extremely robust value, defined by numerous nodes with multiple quotes. For many stakeholders, a sustainable system is synonymous with a healthy system. They often described a food and farming system in which healthy products are produced by workers under healthy conditions with adequate wages for preserving their health. Personal health was seen as tied to having healthy environments and health communities.
- ***Regeneration***
For stakeholders, sustainable systems do more than preserve themselves, they re–invest in themselves for growth and enhancement. Recycling and waste–reduction are included in this strategy, but the joy of many stakeholders’ comments lies in their sense that there is an abundance to be had through regenerative management of resources, and investment in human potential. They want things to get better. The status quo is not enough.
- ***Social Equity***
Stakeholders view a sustainable food system as one that meets the needs of all. Stakeholders believe that fair labor practices will enable common access to fresh, healthy foods, regardless of class, race, or other social differences. However, many stakeholders often described their view of equitable systems in vague terms, indicating that they have limited ideas about what equity looks like in practice and how it can be achieved.

“Bridge” values

Perhaps the most crucial finding from these interviews is that many stakeholders of a sustainable food system have retained values typically associated with current models of industrial modern society. Many stakeholders have begun to think broadly about new ways of enacting their values in the real world. Many of these value-orientations are derived from experience with the mainstream food and farming system, and lessons taken from its dramatic success. No longer seen as “necessary evils,” these values have gained traction alongside the core sustainability values:

- ***Profitability***
The new marketplace ensures profitability at all points in the value chain and respects social and environmental limits. Furthermore, stakeholders see opportunities for early adopters and innovators to gain greater profitability, providing an incentive to adopt sustainable paradigms. In the new system, companies will use profitability as an opportunity to provide good wages rather than slashing wages to achieve higher profits.
- ***Efficiency***
Efficiency is important at all levels of the system. Rising oil prices, degrading environmental quality, and the success of highly efficient “economies of scale” have all been valuable lessons for stakeholders on the importance of efficient use of resources. However, where conventional definitions of efficiency address minimizing labor and capital inputs to maximize volume of output, stakeholders’ view of efficiency often seeks to minimize natural resource use and maximize quality of output.

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- ***Innovation***

Innovation has been a lynch pin of the modern conventional food and farming system and has traditionally focused on technological solutions that replaced human labor with mechanical labor, biological cycles with technological lines, etc. Stakeholders expressed reservations about this type of innovation, preferring to focus on innovative solutions ranging from biological solutions for problems to creative thinking about educational systems. Many stakeholders believe that what they are currently doing is on the cutting edge of innovation and allows them to lead change by example. In the future, they also see innovation as the way in which new players will enter the marketplace.
- ***Safety***

Health and safety have taken on radically new components in the 21st century, as the fears of the generation have shifted. In stakeholders' view, the new food system is less vulnerable to accidental contamination and terrorist attacks, and inspires trust that the food system is free from contamination by pesticides and toxins.
- ***Ownership***

The new model of the American Dream for California is not about consumer ownership (homes, cars, material goods) but about access to the means of production. The new system allows for diverse ownership structures in which workers have access to ownership. There are myriad community benefits of ownership. Stakeholders insist that ownership of the new mainstream must be transparent and accountable.
- ***Competition***

Rather than traditional winner-take-all competition, stakeholders have developed a nuanced approach to competition that often embraces the diversity and relationships created by competition. Competition exists in natural systems without wiping out competitors, creating strong niches for individual species. Similarly, healthy competition creates a larger marketplace that is valuable for growing individual businesses. In addition to providing incentives, competition provides opportunities for collaboration that can sustain individual businesses. However, stakeholders have also witnessed the effects of consolidation and are wary that competition can create undesirable power structures and undermine equity, a core value for many. The relationship between competition and equity is one which creates an uneasy tension for some.

Findings 1: Sustainability values form the core of many stakeholders visions of a sustainable food system.

“Core sustainability values” are at the heart of most stakeholders’ visions of a sustainable food and farming system:

- Interconnectedness
- Diversity
- Regeneration
- Equity
- Health

With an emphasis on relationships and natural cycles, core sustainability values have often been marginalized as “hippie” or “new age” values. While these cultural movements have embraced these values, their lineage lies deeper in the early American Romantic tradition. Writers such as Emerson and Thoreau believed in the abundance of nature, the power of the individual, and the importance of being self-reliant, yet retained an ethic of community connectedness and responsibility. This legacy has continued throughout many farming communities even today. While current formulations may hold little traction with a broader community of leaders in today’s food and farming system, these values are defined by clusters of nodes, indicating some of the new and often surprising potential lives stakeholders have given them.

Core Sustainability Value 1: Interconnectedness

Emphasizing relationships between different elements of the food and farming system, from biological and social models, many of the key players in California’s food system today understand that there are complex networks of relationships at play in decision and change making. However, current conditions prompt stakeholders to offer caveats, as well. For many, interdependence can lead to paralysis for problem solving, if there are perceived inequalities in power.

Node: The new marketplace in particular is envisioned as rich in partnerships and personal relationships along the value-chain.

“If you call [natural foods company], you get a lady named Liz. It is a personal experience. It is not a big company with a whole bunch of people you don’t know. The customer feels “they care about me” – Trade Advisor [Trade Ally, Processing & Manufacturing]

“15 – 20 years ago, there weren’t that many outlets for organic farms, now we have helped to create the market for organics... we have helped to develop their markets. We are not the only reason they are alive, but we are a good part of why they are alive.” – Trade Advisor

Vision 2030: “Retail is simply an extension of the farm or the ranch. We at the coop are the last farm worker. We tell our staff that they work on the farm... We are not retailers as the adversary of the farmer. We instead think of ourselves as the link. Moving forward, or whatever

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*the outlets are for food in the future, we need to bring customer closer to the farm.”
– Trade Advisor*

These relationships also are seen as a way to facilitate professional labor relationships within agriculture and food systems that are based on trust and benefit all parties.

“We got one of our key people to work with the dairyman, who worked with them everyday. We have a trust now. We know each other, attend parties together, that kind of thing. Our dairy farmers are fiercely independent... We promise that if we make more money, we will share the benefits with them. They sit down with us on a monthly basis. We meet with a committee of producers to embrace a new sustainable standard each year.” – Trade Advisor

*“Sustainability we like because it says we get to strike a balance [between] how we treat our people and our responsibility to our shareholders. Sustainability requires return to shareholders.
–Trade Advisor*

For some, this includes recognizing positive professional relationships as a valuable relationship-type as well.

“It is all about professionalizing the farm labor. There is a lot of paternalistic approaches instead of professional workplaces. I don’t expect my executive director to treat me like one of the family. There has to be this paradigm shift from Lord and serf. That is not just mentally a shift” – Trade Advisor

Node: Sustainable food systems cultivate intergenerational knowledge.

*“We need to teach the cultural and heritage of agriculture. Once immersed then they will understand. They will have a connection. Their day to day life will change. Contact to something that is growing and living changes your life. By tasting and touching, you change.”
– Trade Advisor*

“We lost food history. We need the storytellers.” – Trade Advisor

“Sustainable ag is a good first step towards culture.” – Trade Advisor

Node: The new food system is characterized by recognition of the relationship between urban and rural places.

“[In 2030] rural communities are thriving and urban communities support the rural communities that provide their food.” – Public Interest Contributor

*“In Guatemala they say—muchas gracias at the end of a meal “everyone had a part in bringing the food to you.” You say it even in restaurants. “May it serve you well” is the response.”
– Trade Advisor*

*“City people need to see ag as part of their future. Cities would make room for ag. They have to have infill. They can’t sprawl. They have to infill...in order to have farmland.”
– Trade Advisor*

“Where’s your breadbasket? Who do you have a relationship with? Am I accountable to you? Who’s taking care of whom?” – Public Interest Contributor

“Just like you have your doctor or dentist, you should know a farmer” – Trade Advisor

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Urban and rural residents must be included in solving problems around environmental and community resources.

[T]he farmer must be included in the community thinking about land use and water access, even though the farmer is so darned busy that he can't attend Board of Supervisor meetings, etc." – Public Interest Contributor

Do we need to have all these people abandoning the countryside? We don't do cities very well here. Some of our cities are not sustainable. Since we don't have a good template for doing cities right, we need to rethink reinvigorating the countryside—to not overcrowd the cities... Absorptive capacity is beyond a reasonable limit. They can't meet demand for social services" – Public Interest Contributor

The increased vitality of small agricultural communities draws some population from megalopolises in both north and south of the state. In addition land preservation strategies surrounding suburban areas encourage the formation of "hub-and-spokes" agriculture, which in turn decreases the distance food travels as well as encourages the development of small food processing and distribution facilities." – Public Interest Contributor

Current conditions prompt stakeholders to offer caveats, as well. Interdependence can lead to paralysis for problem solving, if there are perceived inequalities in power.

Political realities are that the ag industry and commissioners are working together. The commissioners know this is an ag town and they would rather grease the skids and make it easier for growers than buck the industry." – Public Interest Contributor

Node: Interdependence reveals vulnerability, causing many advocates to preference a system that articulates individual places and their unique strengths.

Each community is food secure to the greatest extent possible within its own borders, from sustainable, non-emergency sources." – Public Interest Contributor

Continuing and high level public support and recognition about the value and importance of farmers, farms and their fundamental contribution to the public good (farmers have been marginalized!) – Public Interest Contributor

My big theory and hope is that better labor leads to better product leads to better pricing so we can afford to pay labor what it is worth." – Public Interest Contributor

Node: Biological systems provide a model of interdependence for agricultural management.

"Because [my land] is such a fragile place, I can tell if I am [managing] it right. It gives me feedback." – Trade Advisor

"Pests is a poor word. They should not be underplayed. They are your associates." – Trade Advisor

"Every time I have gone back [to Italy], the ag system has changed...farmland not integrated. Animals used to be integrated—goats, cattle other animal were operating together. Then people gave up on cows and then they couldn't be self-sufficient." – Trade Advisor

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Node: The new food system brings community into the center of working relationships.

“I don’t want to get depressed. It is the belief that we can do something. You can touch people. You have to make it fun and interesting” – Trade Advisor

“If you are on the edges, it is difficult to find a sense of belonging.” – Public Interest Contributor

“In 1997, we started this international fishermen’s group. We started that in New Delhi, India. South American and Africa are really big in that. We got Europe. I think Japan just came on. There is a lot issues. We are focusing on trade agreements that are affecting us right now. Giving voice to artisan fishermen. Showing that fishermen are very much apart of the community.” – Trade Advisor

Node: The future of California has impacts on the rest of the world—and visa-versa.

Nightmare: “WTO regulations ban preference to local foods, esp among public institutions.” – Trade Advisor

“I am interested in California because of the enormous impact agriculture in the state has on the rest of the country. Fundamentally, we have to challenge the existing power structure in agriculture. That’s the hard part.” – Public Interest Contributor

For some, this is most apparent in the relationship between California agriculture and farmworker immigration.

“It is said by farmers, ‘soil erosion is directly connected to migration’ because if the soil is poor, you can not grow anything. Our work has to do with the root causes of migration. It is really good to look beyond the border.” – Public Interest Contributor

“At the root core—the labor force is a lower class, life form—not treated as human beings. It is easy to take advantage, machisimo attitude, fear of deportation, easy to take advantage of this population. The workers, they know they are treated like this.” – Public Interest Contributor

Core Sustainability Value 2: Diversity

Diversity holds great appeal for many stakeholders. Many have encountered or are currently managing biologically diversified farms and have seen real benefits from this management. The abundance these systems produce has been embraced in their visions of the food system as a whole, from products to markets to ownership models.

Node: Having “real” consumer choices requires diversity of products from farms to retail outlets.

“We don’t have real choices now. One could argue that if you looked at Safeway today and Safeway in 1920, there is more choice, but that’s just one way of looking at one way of procuring food. My grandparents had victory gardens with “nana’s ollalieberries.” That’s real choice.” – Public Interest Contributor

“People who shop at Wal-Mart don’t have a lot of choice. It is really a low cost and poor quality operation.” – Trade Advisor

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“To allow the shift to this vision, we talk about this on a daily basis. Well, I think part of it is the diversity that you will see in products. This is not a one-size-fits all product.”
– Trade Advisor

“Dairy industry is not sustainable. Need to look at locating dairies in different places, alternative products...” – Trade Advisor

Vision 2030: “Cheeses become their own thing; because of the diversity. Like wine, people are now tuned into the varieties. You [as a wholesaler] have to have 200 choices for me. Cheese is good. Bread is good” – Trade Advisor

Node: A diversity of products supports a diversity of local and regional markets.

“I would hope you can go into a Hispanic store and get natural foods. Everyone’s local stores are going to have to be organic...You don’t want one person’s vision to dominate pricing and manufacturing. That’s not good. It needs to allow for the diversity that I think would be exciting to have. More farmers markets. Small stores Medium stores People should be able to go where they feel more comfortable. It has to be available in your local market.” – Trade Advisor

“In a vacuum, large corporate farms tend to take money out of the community and are less likely to promote diversity and habitat. Being large is not the problem, however. It is all the other things that go with it. It is lack of product diversity and growing practices that are most notable...Can we keep a community healthy, have the diversity, make sure there is some room in the marketplace for the large organic places? I think so.” – Trade Advisor

Vision 2030: “Smaller herds of cows, lots of little cheese makers, dozens of producers of beers and cheeses. Lots of opportunity for lots of people to be decision makers in smaller operations. Then there is a community of decision makers that can interact and develop refinements.” – Trade Advisor

“By having diverse people with diverse perspectives, you come up with better solutions. You have more creativity and innovation.” – Public Interest Contributor

Node: Sameness jeopardizes more vulnerable smaller players in particular, who rely on a particular “niche.”

A nightmare: “The Purdues and Tysons are producing everything. No room for the small guys. Might not happen, but if you compound that with the Wal-Mart that are controlling the standards, you’ve got consolidation.” – Trade Advisor

“It bothers me that half the story is owned by Hain and 90% of the distribution is owned by UNFI. We are better off with more diversity” – Trade Advisor

A nightmare: “A hijacking of our food system by a small but powerful number of agribusinesses, either motivated by greed or a fear that our resources are so limited that science and technology are our only hope for feeding an ever-growing population.”
– Public Interest Contributor

Node: In the new system, stakeholders see broad benefits to the end of monocultures of crops and ownership.

“A sustainable system would make the best use of the labor in your communities. All year round work. You wouldn’t have monoculture. If you think about the indicators that would bring you to a more sustainability, they might be: diversity of tasks, extensive use of labor vs.

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mechanisms, year round work. Designing production system for maximum number of workers to create a sustainable community.” – Public Interest Contributor.

“Diversity is really important. Just the word diversity means a lot of things—a group of people, a customer base, plants in your field If you have all your eggs in one basket, you are in trouble if your basket drops.”-Trade Advisor

Vision 2030: “Monoculture has been limited to 25 acres.” – Public Interest Contributor

Vision 2030: “Thanks to mandatory water conservation (and the revisiting of water “ownership rights”) regulatory initiatives, large land holdings are broken up and a new generation of ethnically diverse growers lease and/or own productive agricultural lands throughout the state. .” – Public Interest Contributor

Node: The biodiversity of natural systems should be used as a model for human managed systems.

Vision 2030: “Farms are “complete” and incorporate vegetal, animal and human elements.” – Public Interest Contributor

“Farming is not a natural thing. Not a sustainable thing, by nature, the very nature of it. We try to mimic nature and take nature’s lead. That is why we are so diverse and messy. A large farmer tends to do large blocks of things. We have this diversity, not only at nutritional levels, but at taste levels.” – Trade Advisor

“The most sustainable thing we have is our hunting program. If you think about it ag has never been sustainable...” – Trade Advisor

“Organic is not the answer if you don’t have biodiversity, by the way.” – Trade Advisor

“16 producers agreed to work with California Cooperative Extension to fill out farm plans... We had 16 dairies that had different climates, different herds, different business models...The only thing they had in common was the dirt.” – Trade Advisor

Core Sustainability Value 3 : Health

Health is a more recent addition to the roster of core sustainability values, stemming largely from a growing cultural interest in preventative health. Concerns over public health among many stakeholders link individual health issues with broader social concerns and environmental problems. The current food system is seen as being deeply implicated in a range of epidemic-scale health issues such as obesity, asthma, and diabetes. Additionally, conventional farming conditions are seen to have direct impacts on the health of workers. Across the board stakeholders envisioned a food and farming system that links these problems,

Node: The ‘products produced in a sustainable food system promote and expand individual health

“Vision 2030: Children in California’s school system, now the nation’s best, will all have access to healthy, nutritious food.” – Public Interest Contributor

“If the price is in line, people will gravitate towards health. Every year there is/will be a new health issue.” – Trade Advisor

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“The long term result is that one out of 6 children have asthma in the central valley. Our marine stocks are the way they are, air quality is the worst it has ever been, because of this export market. I don’t think we can export without sacrificing the residents of California.”

– Trade Advisor

Node: A system that not only produces healthy products but protects the health of those responsible for producing them.

“We have to look at this systematically; it is not a simple one-sentence vision. It’s a system that is healthy and beneficial for all people, leaves as small an ecological footprint as possible.”

– Public Interest Contributor

Q. *“What does sustainability in a food system mean to you?”*

A. *“Farmers, farm workers, and food industry workers make a living wage and work in healthy conditions. –Public Interest Contributor*

“Organic has more short tools and hand weeding—I don’t think anyone has challenged the organic community on labor issues. – Public Interest Contributor

“With the new equipment—health problems may have increased. New technologies are a problem. Workers are dripping in water at packing houses. – Public Interest Contributor³

“What is sustainable? What is more sustainable? Techno-fixes or broken bodies?”

– Public Interest Contributor.

Node: Health extends beyond personal health, into environmental and community health. Farming practices have an effect on all three.

“Health focuses on human well-being, sustainable agriculture focuses on the broader environment. Thus the strategies that are delineated need to be selected carefully, some sustainable agriculture efforts may appear irrelevant to health, some even divergent with health interests, while other carefully crafted efforts could create precisely the resonance that would lead to rapid adoption and success. –Public Interest Contributor

“This renaissance of local, seasonal, organic food raised in a socially just manner will have revitalized rural economies throughout the state and strengthened local self-reliance. We will have a population that knows where their food comes from and is “food literate” evidence by improvements in public health and consumption patterns that are growing the sustainable system while starving the now largely diminished and obsolete industrial system. Rates of obesity and diabetes will be under control.” – Public Interest Contributor

“All parts of the food system are justified by placing healthy relationships, particularly personal health and the health of the environment, first; acknowledging that the value of personal health and the health of the environment always outweigh any other factor or budgetary restrictions.”

– Public Interest Contributor

“Some of these [mega]dairies are being mandated to put in methane digesters. There is an argument to be made environmentally for the large guys. The jury is still out on the social issues on the mega farms. I am not sure what it does to the surrounding area.”

–Trade Advisor

Core Sustainability Value 4: Regeneration

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For stakeholders, sustainable systems do more than preserve themselves, they re-invest in themselves for growth and enhancement. Recycling and waste-reduction are included in this strategy, but the joy of many stakeholders' comments lies in their sense that there is an abundance to be had through regenerative management of resources and waste.

Node: The new food system creates long term potential for social growth and satisfaction.

"Sustainability in a food system literally means that farming remain as a viable way of life. That our knowledge base of sustainable farming practices is passed on to future generations."
– Public Interest Contributor

"This is the definition of sustainability: can it continue? Whether you are making a real estate decision or any other decision, you have to ask, will this site carry you long enough to make your capital return? It means, is it going to continue?" – Trade Advisor

"At some deep level, sustainability is a confidence that everything is 'going to be OK' and not 'fall apart'. It is a promise we make with the children of the future. ... It is not a great word, because it doesn't, in its actual definition, mean regeneration or enhancement, but I think these are the concepts we attach to them." – Eileen Brady

"Working towards a system that can sustain itself. Not here for short term gain. The opposite of the mining metaphor. You have a system that can be there for centuries and centuries."
– Trade Advisor

Node: A sustainable system participates in ecological cycles that repeat and change over time.

Vision 2030: "Food is produced with least toxic methods with attention to long term renewable of soil and other natural resources."

"Organisms need to be produced on the farm and returned to the farm. Put back what you take out. You have to internalize the processes, soil management internalized, might even mean trees back in the system." – Trade Advisor

"Sustainability also means lots of great care taking of the soil and an on-going process of innovation to create productive (not drudgery) and self-regenerating natural systems."
– Public Interest Contributor

"In my vision of a sustainable food system... The agricultural system maintains soil fertility on lands where agriculture is practiced." – Public Interest Contributor

Node: The new food system creates an ethic where waste products are reduced or reused.

"You'd know the sustainable system if the food processing sector committed to life-cycle analyses for continually reducing the number of waste products." – Public Interest Contributor

"Ideally human activity in the agro-ecoscape has low/no negative impacts. Loops are closed. Cradle-to-grave technologies are used. Recycling is the norm." – Public Interest Contributor

"Composting is part of sustainability. Keeping water to a minimum and reusing it. Lots of reuse needs to be in a sustainable system. Reuse of packaging also—reusable glass bottles. Reusing chemicals for cleaning and equipment is part of what we do. When we use one way packaging, we try to make it recyclable." – Trade Advisor

Core Sustainability Value 3: Social Equity

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Social equity has been a mainstay of the progressive movements that have historically supported the food and farming system. However, stakeholders were often unable to articulate precise visions of how equity can be achieved. They are more often able to envision the effects of labor equity and broader food access on communities as a whole.

Node: Equity is important but will be a by-product of new systems that create an abundance of opportunities.

“One of [Buckminster Fuller’s] questions is: are you willing for your neighbor to have as much as you? When there is enough, there is not the fear that creates the disease. Much of what drives us is that there is [a sense of] “not having enough.” Then, in that case, I got to get yours.” – Trade Advisor

“I tend to look more from the standpoint of where we are today to go to a world that works for everybody.” – Trade Advisor

“We have to look at this systematically; it is not a simple one-sentence vision. It’s a system that is healthy and beneficial for all people, leaves as small an ecological footprint as possible.” – Public Interest Contributor

Node: Fair labor practices ensure equitable communities across the board.

“A system that invests in healthful consumption promotions and integrates the needs of the local hunger community as a value added to the over-all locality’s well being.” – Public Interest Contributor

“Socially progressive management thing: employ a lot of people, a lot of entry level people.” – Trade Advisor

Nightmare: “Walmart comes into many communities and leads to reduction in labor standards and pay for supermarket workers.” – Public Interest Contributor

Q. “What does sustainability in a food system mean to you?”

A. “Farmers, farm workers, and food industry workers make a living wage and work in healthy conditions. –Public Interest Contributor

Node: The future food system ensures equitable access to the means of production.

“Another thing we are finding on the farm—professional development opportunities are needed. Sending people to community college for education is good. Part of my vision is farm work is a job that people aspire to. I would love to become a farmworker—they will say. This is about job satisfaction.” – Trade Advisor

“Big companies will want to co-opt it. General Mills is doing it now. Not bad necessarily. For reasons of profit. When only the people who can afford the standards can do it, it’s exclusionary. The corporate responsibility piece is to make sure that this is something that has meaning for everybody.” – Trade Advisor

“Food production is organized cooperatively (not for profit), so all who work in food get a cut of the income for the products traded. At the very least, farm processing and food service workers have the same, hopefully good, incomes and benefits as everyone else and have work that is stable and meaningful (working many different tasks, for instance).” – Public Interest Contributor

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Node: In a sustainable food system, there is an equitable distribution of fresh, healthy food. There is no hierarchy of access to quality foods.

“What is needed to move lower income people into food quality? But if they had someone who is in the middle class and grounded in healthy living, they have mentors... If you're living in poverty, you don't have mentors. They don't have mentors.” – Trade Advisor

“In my nightmare...We have a system of have and have-nots. The haves can afford fresh, nutritious, chemical- and GE-free food, the have-nots cannot. The haves have access to land, the have-nots do not.”

*“A sustainable food system in California in the year 2030 is one that provides for everyone in the state. There is a system of checks and balances that insures that no one goes to bed hungry and that everyone has a bed. There is equitable distribution.”
– Public Interest Contributor*

“Equitable and fair distribution of available, quality foods to all populations (organic). Equitable pricing with appropriate consumer cost and appropriate profit margins for domestic farmers. Appropriate wages for workers with farming health and safety assured. (Resolution of migrant worker status.)” – Public Interest Contributor

“We want food system that are designed beginning to end production to marketing committed to supported sustainable distribution....We have to get things to market at lower prices, buy lower cost products” – Trade Advisor

“Here's a wild hair: pricing won't be an issue. As a country we will demand that every person has a right to buy food that they need. Cost is not a factor. – Trade Advisor

Findings 2: Stakeholders have tentatively embraced Bridge Values in their vision of a sustainable food system.

Many, if not all, stakeholders have inherited values from the conventional system that have often sat awkwardly atop their activities in the food and farming system. Many who have made environmental or social commitments in their business practices have felt unable to publicly own their acceptance of some traditional values. However, many stakeholders have begun to re-imagine a set of these values, incorporating them in to their vision of a sustainable future:

- Profitability
- Efficiency
- Innovation
- Safety
- Ownership
- Competition

These values are at the core of many of their own success, often in the face of stiff competition from the mainstream. However, stakeholders have redefined them, as they did with core sustainability values. These “new mainstream values” embrace conventional mainstream values without losing site of core sustainability values, creating new and, again, surprising nodes on which they are anchored.

New Mainstream Value 1: Profitability

Stakeholders value profitability. But they are struggling with ways to define this commitment as it differs from current dominant understandings of profitability. Stakeholders who have recently embraced sustainability have found profitability as an important bridge for talking with current partners about improving environmental practices. Stakeholders who have been working within the current niche systems, particularly the natural foods industry, are wary of embracing economic gain in public. Gradually, however, many say they have “stopped apologizing” for being a profitable company and instead focused on the benefits it provides throughout the value chain.

Node: The new marketplace ensures profitability at all points in the value chain.

“There has to be an understanding of the need for everyone in the food chain to make money—producers, wholesalers, retailers. And the customers have to get a good value. The impact on the distributor is that we are getting squeezed on both sides.”

– Trade Advisor

“It is OK to run an economically viable company. We have stopped apologizing for that.”

–Trade Advisor

“A system that provides a profitable return to each participant (grower, laborer, distributor and retailer) in the food chain with the understanding that this “chain” attempts to be indigenous to the local “place” it serves. A system that identifies value (saved or earned) in paths that

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reduce water use, reuse compostable waste, and embrace appropriate technology within all stages of the “food chain”.” – Public Interest Contributor

“Profitability is part of sustainability. It can’t be profit at any cost. It has to be socially just, all those kinds of things. How do we get them to think about the greater good? We have to get corporations to not have the rights of people.” –Trade Advisor

“We had a partnership with management. The company shared its financials with the workers. What would it cost to have health insurance? To pay everyone \$10/hour? At the start of the third year, the company was doing so good that everybody got a wage increase. We also formed process improvement teams.” – Trade Advisor

Node: Profitability constrained by social and environmental limits is still profitability.

“If you are a publicly traded retailer, what is wrong with making 4% versus 8%?”
– Trade Advisor

“There’s more of a pay off if you are patient—that will be the battle cry. Lowered expectations for return on investment in return for doing the right thing.” –Trade Advisor

“Economically, does it work? It has to be prosperous. Has to have a return on investment in the world’s economy. Has to interact with the rest of the world’s food system.”
– Trade Advisor

“Free range eggs: the limiting factor is you need enough money for a family to live on.”
–Trade Advisor

“This is why I stay with the company. Why I stay with the company is that the company is committed to making a difference, not just making a profit.” – Trade Advisor

“If the food system is based entirely on money it can never survive at all. We need to pay more for food. We need to value food more I don’t know how we are going to do that.”
– Public Interest Contributor

Node: Profitability is a great “carrot” for encouraging adoption of sustainable paradigms.

“We took the internationally accepted definition of [sustainability]: 3 E’s. We went to our producers with this and they laughed. These guys who have been around for a while—they could give a damn. They only care about the money, the economic viability—the first E. We had to get there by saying that doing things differently will get you more money. Then we took the next step...” – Trade Advisor

“Retailers are seeing that there is a value added here. If we market our program properly, we will grow.” – Trade Advisor

“You have to sell this change as having a real economic interest.” – Trade Advisor

“Businesses do not have to compromise their economic viability to take care of the environment and people. The people who buy goods and services will make it happen.”
– Trade Advisor

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Node: Sustainable companies use profitability as an opportunity to provide good wages rather than slashing wages to achieve higher profits.

*“You can not deliver quality and put downward pressure on prices and wages.”
– Trade Advisor*

Vision 2030: “New myth of California: We have increased the number of farmers making a good living by half. It has revitalized our rural economies. We don’t have hunger amidst the fields of plenty.” – Public Interest Contributor

Even those who expressed skepticism about profitability *explicitly* envisioned models in which labor shares in the wealth of profits from agricultural trade.

“Food production is organized cooperatively (not for profit), so all who work in food get a cut of the income for the products traded.” – Public Interest Contributor

While mainstream understandings of profitability (and the language surrounding it) may draw skepticism from some stakeholders, many of the nodes around which stakeholders organized their understanding of profitability may hold traction for some skeptics.

New Mainstream Value 2: Efficiency

Efficiency is a classic conventional food system value. In a system dominated by processed food products, agricultural products are “inputs” to a manufacturing system, and minimizing costs from these inputs is crucial. Many stakeholders have learned from the least-cost model and are inspired by efficient production’s ability to provide low-cost products to consumers. However, many stakeholders take a longer view of input efficiency and seek to minimize costs at the ecological and social level as well.

Node: The conventional system has taught valuable lessons about efficiency that must not be lost.

“We want food system that are designed beginning to end production to marketing committed to supported sustainable distribution... We have to get things to market at lower prices, buy lower cost products” – Trade Advisor

“You have this incredible growth. A sustainable system would make the best use of the labor in your communities. All year round work.” – Public Interest Contributor.

Vision 2030: “They [consumers] are buying food at Whole Foods, who takes on the charge to provide foods that are ethically, sustainably produced. Everybody is so busy they can’t search that out. They [Whole Foods] find it for us.” – Trade Advisor

*“Wholesaling is a game of scale. Nothing is going to change there .Still going to be the number one in the industry and they will pay a higher percentage of income on food.”
– Trade Advisor*

“Factory inevitable, but not sustainable, phase of high efficiency, driven by the numbers, but the cost to society does not compute.” – Trade Advisor

“The larger companies need to use their power to change things.” – Trade Advisor

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“The amount of the land the vineyards here use is inefficient. Farmers need to use the land, really use it to feed the people: Companion planting, utilizing the land more effectively, more intense with our farming.” – Trade Advisor

“My guess is that downward spiral on the cost of food is what produces giant factory farms... The goal has to be to reduce the embedded cost in energy and processing so you can afford the goods.” – Trade Advisor

“The greatest obstacle in a sustainable market is transport. You have small farms... The food costs include transport and distribution. If you have the model that you are growing food in urban/suburban, you are going to be buying it from the green grocer, farm stand, buying it fresh to the greatest extent. Still if the closer the trip, the lower the fuel cost.” – Trade Advisor

Node: The conventional system has taught valuable lessons about efficiency that must not be lost. Food-chain efficiency drives the new diet.

“I have a bias, being a vegetarian. You go to Italy, they eat meat but also a lot of grain and vegetables. It has to increase from vegetables and decrease from protein. The reason for factory farms is the amount of resources you need to feed the animals, if you can concentrate their production. You either grow them like that or grow few of them properly. Atkins may not like that.” – Trade Advisor

“One of my primary inquiries is—why do plants grow so beautifully in nature and why do we have so many pests in our agriculture? Why are lands under our management not well kept when wild, unmanaged places are jewels?” – Trade Advisor

“Grave inefficiencies in this kind of sustainable agriculture [IPM]. In every activity there is inefficiency. You break the soil, the wind comes up. You irrigate it and maybe you lose some of the soil or you interrupt nutrient cycling. You grow the 100% human food crop and you run the tomato harvesters. You leave 5% in the field and haul it to the processor. Ever year there is some tomato truck that is spilled on the side of the road. That is more inefficiency. You then lose 3% in ketchup making and you put it in the marketplace. You get it into the kitchen. Then there are leftovers in the ketchup in the bottle. If you are lucky you lose 80% efficiency. You got movement? Then you have loss.” – Trade Advisor

New Mainstream Value 3: Innovation

Stakeholders are innovators. They have supported alternative agriculture, natural foods stores, championed public policies like CSP/CREP, have inspired school districts to cut junk food from vending machines and serve organic food in cafeterias. They purchase renewable power and use renewable energy technologies on their farms and manufacturing plants. Innovation has been a key factor in their success and they are committed to retaining this edge. In contrast to both conventional innovation, which often focuses on “faster, bigger, cheaper” technologies, and public understandings, which often see sustainability as an anti-progress, nostalgic, “back to basics” movement, stakeholders see innovation for the new mainstream as drawing on nature for models of resource efficient practices, from agriculture to energy to community systems.

Node: Technology within biological limits has the potential to make Californians lives better.

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*“Technology is used to improve/enhance the environment, not degrade it”
– Public Interest Contributor*

“There’s room for technology within biological limits. You can ameliorate those. There are limits to technology, keep creating better ways to live better.” – Public Interest Contributor

“Biological solutions are sought before technological ones.” – Public Interest Contributor

Stakeholders are wary of traditional technology paradigms but embrace the innovative opportunities they have provided.

*“Techno-fixes—are they a good thing?—it is really hard. The hand weeding issue has been really divisive. Here’s where I am at (organics vs. farm workers). I would like to see more research into techno-fixes. Some of them might be very good for everyone.”
– Trade Advisor*

“A hijacking of our food system by a small but powerful number of agribusinesses, either motivated by greed or a fear that our resources are so limited that science and technology are our only hope for feeding an ever-growing population.” – Public Interest Contributor

Node: Innovation occurs throughout the food chain—from farming to distribution to retail strategies to policy making to youth and consumer education and more.

*“Food buying is institutionalized as a family experience, but there is such a demand on people’s time. One of our business initiatives is to partner with [an online retailer]. They have a whole gift category which is organic food. This could get big. It may save people time.”
– Trade Advisor*

“The dramatic investment in appropriate technology, including hybrid-vehicles and solar energy reduces the reliance on oil within all phases of agriculture. The statewide campaign to encourage the change in consumption patterns (fresh and local) is joined by the insurance industry which reduces health premium payments for those who can prove they eat three local and fresh meals a day. Fisheries are replenished as new management strategies are integrated into local coastal food consumption strategies. State funds needed to build water filtration plants; water transfer stations and pesticide monitoring systems are instead invested in local health clinics and educational institutions—that have a new food-based curriculum included in their educational program. Of course, GMOs are banned from use in state agricultural systems.” – Public Interest Contributor

Node: Stakeholders are innovators who are leading by example.

“Some farms like Frog Hollow Farms, they are well-known farms—they are also pioneers. He has a whole strategy to avoid selling to whole foods, but we sell a lot to CDC, their wholesale buyer.” – Trade Advisor

“If society doesn’t value that and won’t pay for it, don’t bring that to the table. You really have to have a visionary model to drive the system.” – Trade Advisor

*“We brought out a group to do a real in depth group deep training session. Difference between training and education. There is a real difference. Leadership that believes. Sister companies that need to be shown. Advantages need to be shown to them.”
– Trade Advisor*

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“The conventional folks are up for it. Sensitive to what the community means and needs are... Perception of what they look like, how it will taste, what those incremental steps are. Taking people with you.” – Public Interest Contributor

*“Is Whole Foods’ model where we should go? I hope not. ...Whole Food has lots of convenience foods. There is pressure to create novel products—it is troubling.”
– Public Interest Contributor*

Node: New public policy structures will support innovation.

“That means the farmer has representation with all of the local, state, and federal organization that have grant money available for innovative problem solving grants, and that the farmer doesn’t have to learn to be a grant writer but can access this money through someone else’s help.” – Public Interest Contributor

*“What is missing is a vocational training program for farming or agriculture.”
– Public Interest Contributor*

*“I attended another conference. What we needed here was a different reward system for conservation, we realized. They thought the time had come for this kind of program.”
– Trade Advisor*

Node: Creativity offers innovators new avenues for improving the sustainability of the food system.

While the organic industry has grown rapidly in California, its growth has had mixed results for some of the early adopters, much as happened with the “conventional” commodity crop systems. Innovators will continue to lead by example, improving sustainability in their wake:

*“What happened is the organic movement created a cottage industry and got real premium prices. Now as organics are more commoditized, the spread is less.”
– Trade Advisor*

“Cultural creatives. I got the biggest kick out of it. They are special. Special type of economy. The big payoff for California is that it is that much more special... Continuously to be creative. Great faith in our ability to be creative. There is something beyond organic.” – Trade Advisor

Node: The new market allows opportunities for new players to lead innovation.

“I was listening to the whole slow food movement. They were asking about innovations. Innovations coming from the housewives. Interesting. ...The American Farm turns out to be a wonderful resource. We abandoned it all to mechanization. We can turn around or run off the cliff” – Public Interest Contributor

Vision 2030: “Silicon Valley entrepreneurs have cracked the logistical challenged inherent in delivering fresh, minimally processed foods to the consumers; rural living/working is the new loft.” – Public Interest Contributor

*“How do we change the system without system collapse?... Innovation in the marketplace.”
– Public Interest Contributor*

*“The old guys were passing, new guys coming on. They wanted to embrace something new because the heavy toxics and heavy over fertilization was showing some cracks, soils were washing away. Lands were taken out of production, growing things of less value.”
– Trade Advisor*

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“What you lose in largeness... you lose special and different things you can get. You get a box of cereal rather than a unique granola. With bigness you lose creativity. Smaller players need a way to get into the industry. As long as that exists, if everyone has an opportunity to jump in, it will work. They are going to have products that are flexible, what they think they can sell.”
– Trade Advisor

“There are a lot of farmers being creative and going to Plan B. There is a really good article in the magazine called Coast and Ocean. Marin County, just North of SF, they identified farm families that have changed the way they are doing business. Farmer had 4 daughters. They went off to college. One Christmas, they came home and the daughters decided to take over the farm. There are new ways of doing business. That is what progress teaches us.”
– Trade Advisor

“Me being part of the water is a pilot. UFW—water is important for ag and for ag to be viable, but workers also have the issue of water in the community. In Salinas there are so many nitrates the price of drinking water is going up. What I have been thinking of is the proposals to build a desal plant and to build a big one. So that it can provide water for so many needs. This doesn't need to happen. We just need more creative thinking.”
– Public Interest Contributor

Node: Technological innovation provides entry points for new stakeholders in the new system.

“Students are turned on by technology—GPS, weather monitoring, managing disease cycles, soil profiles—they don't want to look like they do manual labor. Technology can be a handy tool in terms of managing ecological system.” – Public Interest Contributor

“Everything we buy has to be refrigerated. Milk is bought off the shelf there [in Europe]. There is not a lot of refrigeration. Shelf stable, less preservatives, aseptic packaging is going to help us do that. With the right packaging, we can now still be organic, less processed, still. Food that is closer to its original form will be the norm.” – Trade Advisor

“Innovation in the industry is very, very high and major breakthroughs occur regularly to meet the challenge of how best to regenerate ourselves and our environment.”
– Public Interest Contributor

“We haven't settled on what we are best at. That is to say that what we are doing best may not be the thing that we can do best. We are passionate.” – Trade Advisor

New Mainstream Value 4: Safety

As the United States has matured over the last century, the nation has tested the limits of its security in the Great Depression, two world wars, a cold war, and current fears of terrorist activity. As a result, most Americans have begun to feel increasingly vulnerable to both foreign and domestic threats. Concerns over terrorism in the wake of the September 11th terrorist attacks has infiltrated nearly all systems in the United States, including the food system. Fears over centralized production, undiversified genetic seed stock, and vulnerable transportation and energy networks have provided opportunities for many stakeholders to attract new players to a sustainable food and farming system. Some policies outlined by the USA PATRIOT Act provided limited funding to support expansion of local food systems. Several stakeholders acknowledged that fear has been a primary factor in distorting the current food system, providing a caveat that valuing “safety” may indicate a fear of vulnerability. However, it is also important to note that

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many in the sustainable food and farming system experience real fear about future needs for safety.

Node: The new food system is less vulnerable to accidental contamination and attacks.

“What we have to do is link terrorism and farming with our national security .It is a real issue that is not being addressed. I think half the value of maintaining rural communities is for national security reasons. Rice production is a national security issue. Somebody has to provide rice.” – Trade Advisor

Nightmare: “Terrorist or natural intrusions on distribution systems—FAMINE (e.g., San Diego County receives some 96% of its food from outside San Diego even though it is within the top ten of the state’s agricultural producers.)” – Public Interest Contributor

“Bio-terrorism targets our international food supply... A mutation of a GMO “experimental AIDs virus pharm plant” appears within our lettuce supply.” – Public Interest Contributor

Node: A sustainable food system ensures trust that the food system is free from contamination by pesticides and toxins.

“Food systems nightmare: We are forced to have to package everything: produce, salad bars, bulk department items, because of food terrorism. The water that is found in soda pop is found to be toxic and has already poisoned millions of people.” – Public Interest Contributor

“It is possible that the large farms that have pesticide control people on the staff and because of this may actually use less pesticides. Small farmers may have fewer choices about who they hire for advice. They may be more likely to take advice from pesticide sales people.” – Public Interest Contributor

“A hijacking of our food system by a small but powerful number of agribusinesses, either motivated by greed or a fear that our resources are so limited that science and technology are our only hope for feeding an ever-growing population.” – Public Interest Contributor

New Mainstream Value 5: Ownership

In 1907, Theodore Roosevelt named declining farm ownership as a top concern for Americans. At that time, Roosevelt felt that ownership encouraged investment in local communities and stabilized land values. Stakeholders in California’s food and farming system today acknowledge many of these same facts about ownership, and seek to return owner-operators to the landscape. Many stakeholders also expressed a belief that ownership cultivates accountability to workers and communities. Additionally, in a new system ownership would reflect the ethnic diversity of California’s population.

Node: The new system allows for multiple ownership structures.

Vision 2030: “Thanks to mandatory water conservation (and the revisiting of water “ownership rights”) regulatory initiatives, large land holdings are broken up and a new generation of ethnically diverse growers lease and/or own productive agricultural lands throughout the state.” – Public Interest Contributor

Nightmare: “A majority of our water supply is sold/leased (privatized) to two or three companies.” – Public Interest Contributor

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“It would be great if we could see a lot more small scale farms being able to produce and market their own product. Everything is trending toward one entity owning everything.”
– Trade Advisor

Node: Workers have access to ownership. The new model of the American Dream is not about consumer ownership (homes, cars, material goods) but about access to the means of production.

“One of the things I had worked on from worker ownership or cooperatives. Can you link what workers do to the outcomes. Outreach to small and med companies and what venture capital—can you link venture capital funding to employee buyout as a requirement.”
– Public Interest Contributor

“What I am most proud of is our internship program. We have 5 live-in interns... We have looked at that list recently. A large number of those interns are now farm owners.”
– Trade Advisor

“The issue that we have is that we are a country of employees and employers. We don’t own. Ownership issue is a key issue. More local ownership. Entrepreneurial ag.”
– Public Interest Contributor

“More opportunities for farmworkers to become farmers. Organic farmers are getting old. How can the very people that have been in the fields, in the organic fields, take up the charge and be the new organic farming leaders? Creating more ownership in the production system is a good vision.” – Trade Advisor

Q. *“What does sustainability in a food system mean to you?”*

A. *“Those who want to farm have access to land, capital, and markets.”*

– Public Interest Contributor

Node: There are myriad community benefits of ownership.

“Can you pay for your health insurance? Can you replace your car before it is broken down? Can you get your kids through college? How do you retire without selling your assets?”
– Public Interest Contributor

“In my nightmare: farmers and farm workers have gone bankrupt and been displaced. Rural communities are in economic shamble as the agricultural base has disappeared.”
– Public Interest Contributor

“Community ownership is important to us. Our hope is to open a couple more stores. Possibly venture out to provide other services to the community.” – Trade Advisor

Node: Ownership of the new mainstream is transparent and accountable.

“There are so many players on a farm, that it is a shell game and hard to track. There is the spray company, contract labor, pesticide applicator. These guys don’t even know who the owner of the fields is... It is a five ring circus.” – Public Interest Contributor

“Keeping clear who owns what is critical on sustainability of the farm. We own 3200 acres. ...[and] contract with [other] land owners for their crops. We farm 2500 a year. We contract with 7500 acres—26 growers. That is our structure... Generally, nobody owns every piece of the operation.” – Trade Advisor

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"I was just at a round table with growers. Two growers right next door do not talk to each other. They don't do that kind of communication. So, they don't talk about when they will be spraying—on what days, etc. How do they change that practice? How do they communicate with each other? That is what we were talking about."

– Public Interest Contributor

New Mainstream Value 6: Competition

Competition is a mainstay of today's business world and most stakeholders are no exception. Whether they support hard-nosed competition or modified systems, most stakeholders view a diverse marketplace as a valuable component of a sustainable food and farming system. Competition for the new mainstream embraces traditional Populist policies through which systems are designed to stabilize competition and prevent the establishment of monopolies. Biological models provide points of reflection for some stakeholders. Others remain wary that competition can achieve the steady states found in natural systems and express concern that equity jeopardizes equity in the system.

Node: Competition exists in natural systems without wiping out competitors, creating strong niches for individual species.

"Pests is a poor word. They should not be underplayed. They are your associates. ...Bugs are gleaners, cleaners—little bugs are keeping weed sprouts. A weed has great root anchorage. It chose to be there because of environmental competitive advantage."

– Trade Advisor

"Instead of killing weeds, they are suppressed. Weeds are competitive. Where you have time you simply share the space with the weeds... In this climate, at this time, I will grow potatoes and weeds. For the winter it will be potatoes and weeds and we will get about the same yields." – Trade Advisor.

"Corporations need to fall back into provider of public good. They can leverage things in the market. They should be limited and regulated in terms of what they are allowed to do [to] reduce competition. Provide a membrane to allow these economic zones."

– Public Interest Contributor

Node: Healthy competition creates a larger marketplace that is valuable for growing individual businesses.

We lead by example and are motivated by competition... We have a belief that there is more people involved in it. You've got a little business and are 100 miles out of town. Fence it in and no one will be able to get to you. Open it up or nobody will come just for you. It is like the whole shopping mall concept." – Trade Advisor

"The thing it doesn't have is that Sacramento is not an "A" market. It is a capital... a cow town...So whole foods did not originally target this area. ... Finally whole foods caught on. We lost a couple percent there. [Now] we draw from 25 miles away. 14% of our sales are coming from where they opened. Over time it builds the market to have more natural foods stores." – Trade Advisor

"We distribute Horizon, Straus, we distribute as many good dairy products on our trucks as we can—even if they are our competitors. If we can make money distributing another product, we do it. We said, let's not be afraid of competition. If we are doing our job right with our dairy, our products will sell too." – Trade Advisor

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“The coop is a communistic system basically. There is no room for incentive, for someone to be better than another. We got the best ones of the bunch. Some of the producers wanted incentive to do a better job. We will pay more and you need to do more... They have been able to add cows to their herds. We have allowed them to remain more viable.” – Trade Advisor

“For us it is tougher and tougher to separate ourselves. It is nice to run your company [in a way] that creates a differentiation in the marketplace. A lot of these things are driven towards mainstream.” – Trade Advisor

Node: In addition to providing incentives, competition provides opportunities for collaboration that can sustain individual businesses.

“One said we need farm salmon because we can’t supply the world. [But] that’s why you rotate. You work with Alaska. You work with and coordinate marketing. Instead of being competitive, you start coordinating your marketing. If one is after vitamins, a food technician can advocate what to eat when. They should tell you how to rotate to take pressure off the stocks.” – Trade Advisor

“We need to find a way to collaborate to find something new or something different. Foundations working in silos won’t work.” – Public Interest Contributor

“Collaborative efforts to assure water, power, financial supports for farmers and consumers.” – Public Interest Contributor

“I don’t feel that big ag, those guys, are the bad guys. I feel so bad we haven’t helped them solve their problem.” – Trade Advisor

However, stakeholders have also witnessed the effects of consolidation and are wary that competition can create undesirable power structures and undermine equity, a core value for many.

Node: The relationship between competition and equity is one which creates an uneasy tension.

“My big business friends tell me, keep agitating. The big guys love new regulations—every time they put in a new rule, the big guys can meet it, the little guys can’t.” – Trade Advisor

“We are very small—no penetration in the Bay area. Dominated by Whole Foods and Wild Oats. They have a different wholesale structure.” – Trade Advisor

Recommendations: Commit to further research on core sustainability values and bridge values that will foster effective stakeholder development activities.

On the whole, more information is needed to verify the results of this study. The Kellogg Foundation reviewed initial results of this research and suggested that sustainability values be more thoroughly investigated. Further research should be conducted by a consulting firm specifically charged with this task. The firm would interview or conduct focus groups with influencers who associate themselves with sustainability, as well as with influencers who do not explicitly perceive themselves as aligned with sustainable

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food system development but whose collaboration is desired. Specifically further research would:

(1) Test the validity of these values among a broader set of stakeholders.

The stakeholders interviewed in the scope of this report were identified as having acknowledged their role in a future sustainable food and farming system. To verify the values identified in this report, further interviews will be needed, with both the current group of stakeholders and a group of leaders in the current mainstream food and farming system.

(2) Identify footholds in the Bridge value set for current advocates of alternative food and farming players.

Many stakeholders have begun to make sense of how to embrace values that historically were considered anathema to a progressive, leftist movement. As stakeholders have fought to maintain influence, whether as business people, farmers, or advocates, they have come to recognize that there are other cultural values that they hold as well. In the words of one stakeholder, “We’ve stopped apologizing” for turning attention towards issues of economic viability and the attendant values that they represent.

Values such as profitability, efficiency, and competition that are found in the current landscape can create different landscapes when executed through new strategies and paired with core sustainability values. Understanding the ways that these “new mainstream values” may have traction with players in the conventional food system will be crucial to widespread adoption of the Vivid Picture Project’s goals for a sustainable food system.

(3) Identify footholds in the Core Sustainability value set for conventional food and farming players.

While the stakeholders surveyed here have found ways to synthesize the two value sets, players in the food and farming system dominant today may be unable to internalize the Bridge values, given their current understandings of these same values. To further the spread of Bridge values, further research into dominant system players’ attitudes toward Core Sustainability values will need to be conducted. Some nodes identified may be more productive than others.

Conversely, New Mainstream values may be more comprehensible to current food and farming players as they are rooted in dominant understandings of the food and farming system. This value set may be a way to gain traction in the Core Sustainability value set. Again, further research will be needed to determine which approach may be most effective.

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Endnotes

² Mary Neth, *Preserving the Family Farm: Women, Community, and the Foundations of Agribusiness in the Midwest, 1900 – 40* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins U P, 1995), 105.

³ Here, “new” refers to recent technologies, rather than technologies envisioned as part of a sustainable food system.