



Environmental Science Graduate Program Student Seminar Series

Are we Planning for Sustainable Food Systems? An Evaluation of U.S. Food System Plans

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Abstract

Current modes of food production and consumption are unsustainable. Despite calls for food policy to address the triple challenges of society, economy, and the environment (SEE), food system agendas struggle to integrate strategies across these three dimensions. Literature shows that food system policies are often issue-based and pursue low-hanging fruit initiatives that garner broad support but do not address structural issues of unsustainability. It follows then that the Food System Plan (FSP), a comprehensive food policy document which guides the actions of public and private sector actors in the food system towards some common goals - do not evenly or adequately pursue all three requisite components for a sustainable food system. To date, no research has attempted to evaluate whether FSPs are planning for a sustainable food system. This work aims to fill these gaps by developing a Sustainable Food Systems Framework to evaluate the balance across and completeness of SEE strategies in the population of fifteen U.S. municipal food system plans. Beyond this research, this framework can be used to guide the development of more holistic policy approaches as more municipalities embark on developing FSPs of their own.