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Cultivating Food Sovereignty and Political Agroecology in Philadelphia and Beyond: The Power of Policy Analysis

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Since the dawn of capitalism, small-scale agriculture has been consumed by industrialization and the persistent pursuit of economic growth. Farmers' wages are dwindling, and more of them are joining the record-high pool of hungry, malnourished, food insecure, and diet-related disease afflicted people worldwide. Food and agriculture policy in the United States has merely advocated for band-aid solutions to address these disparities, if any. These policies are still structured to perpetuate the status quo of corporate farm subsidies and global trade for growing cash crops, often not even used for food, at the grave expense of our local economies, communities, farmers, and environment. Policy analysts and decisionmakers must liberate agriculture from a deregulated market if we wish to preserve these invaluable resources, and redistribute power and wealth into the hands of those who can feed the world sustainably. La Via Campesina, an international movement advocating for small sustainable farmers' rights, coined a solution called "food sovereignty," defined as the right of food producers, distributors, and consumers should have control over food and agriculture policy, rather than corporate agribusinesses. It also emphasizes the right to agroecologically produced and culturally appropriate food. The literature on the subject is beginning to uncover a deep necessity for institutionalizing food sovereignty and political agroecology. This paper aims to build upon this cause by asking: what can policy analysis do to empower the voices of smallholders and food insecure people at varying levels of government? This policy analysis focuses on answering this question in the context of the Philadelphia area's food system. The study encompasses a thorough definition of the problems that have led to the food sovereignty and political agroecology movements, a survey of the evidence and alternatives, an evaluation of the policy options, an outcome projection, and a set of policy recommendations.

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