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MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 26, 2022

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Broad Coalition Demands Real-World Solutions from White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition & Health

A nationwide, broad-based coalition of farmers, ranchers, fishers, workers, and advocates calls on the White House, as well as federal, state, and local governments, to address the realities of their constituents' experiences with hunger across all demographics and geographies.

This collaborative, which includes Rural Coalition, Alianza Nacional de Campesinas, Slow Food USA, Farm Action, National Family Farm Coalition, North American Marine Alliance, Slow Fish North America, One Fish Foundation, HEAL Food Alliance, World Farmers, Inc., and the Family Farm Defenders, solicited input from over 160 community stakeholders from some of the most vulnerable communities across the country during a listening session on June 30. Their stories, captured during 17 different presentations and video testimonies, and in 8 different breakout sessions, shaped the [comprehensive report](#) of findings that will help guide the [White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, & Health](#) on September 28.

Shared Realities

Speaking from direct experience, stakeholders from diverse backgrounds and realities noted the need for: improved access to good, affordable food; integrated health and nutrition; improved access to affordable housing and adequate community infrastructure; and better, more expanded child nutrition programs in their communities.

Farmworkers, for instance, have been hit hard, as many have had to wait in food lines to have their basic nutrition needs met, all while receiving poverty-level wages and living in substandard housing.

“Farmworkers in the Coachella Valley face several challenges, from arsenic and other toxins in their water, to limited access to fresh, healthy food and cramped, unsafe housing,” said [Alianza Nacional de Campesinas](#) Executive Director Mily Trevino-Sauceda. She continued, emphasizing that “the challenges they [farmworkers] face in the Coachella Valley are similar everywhere around the country, whether its unsafe housing or inadequate food. We need to do a better job helping essential workers meet their basic needs so they can help us meet ours.”

Listening session participants also recognized the need to integrate health and nutrition. Tribal communities in particular have suffered disproportionately because many have been blocked from accessing traditional foods, such as wild salmon, abalone, and buffalo. Many Indigenous people suffer from pre-existing conditions such as heart disease and diabetes related to poor diets and hunger.

“We’ve been here since time immemorial, but some of our food webs have been dismantled in the last 100 years,” said Aryanna Henthorne, an enrolled member of the [Sherwood Valley Band of Pomo Indians](#) in California. “We’ve been prohibited at the state level from participating in traditional food harvests and are now getting shot at by private landowners for “trespassing” while accessing food we’ve depended on for millennia. Meanwhile, we’ve been priced out of the market for things like abalone because it has become a “bougie” item for high-priced restaurants.”

A Path Forward

Listening session participants also recognized critical opportunities for positive systemic change. Many small-scale farmers, for instance, would not have made it through the worst of the pandemic if not for extensive government payments via such programs as the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA); the The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act; and the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP).

Given this reality, stakeholders saw the need to support family farms with grants, loans, and price supports to strengthen local food systems with regenerative production practices.

For these reasons, Rural Coalition and its partners encourage the administration to develop effective policy interventions that are outlined in our [Statement to the White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition and Health](#) regarding these realities and opportunities for positive systemic change.

Some of our key recommendations include: advocating for a federal minimum wage; expanding access to food assistance programs; providing universal free school lunches; expanding healthcare coverage; strengthening fair labor standards; and integration of Tribal consultation in policy and decision making.

“The reality of hunger is complex and varies from region to region, and often, from community to community,” said [Cottage House Inc](#) Executive Director and Rural Coalition Board Member

Barbara Shipman. “That’s why building the lived experiences of those who face these challenges daily into effective policy is paramount. The White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition, and Health is our opportunity to address those challenges on a systemic level so we can strengthen the autonomy and self-reliance of our most vulnerable communities.”

Additional Resources:

- Link to [Rural Coalition Statement to the White House Conference on Hunger, Nutrition and Health](#) (*Lea la declaración en español*)
- Link to [White House Conference for Hunger, Nutrition and Health Listening Session Report and Recommendations](#)

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The Rural Coalition, born of the civil rights, indigenous rights, and anti-poverty rural movements, has worked since 1978 to assure that diverse organizations from all regions, ethnic and racial groups, women and men, and youth and elders, have the opportunity to work in solidarity on the issues that affect them all. The foundation of this work is strong local, regional and national organizations that work to assure the representation and involvement of every sector of this diverse fabric of rural peoples.