Food Policy Primer

Who is this Primer for?
This is for concerned community members, leaders, and organizers; educators, students, journalists, parents, elders, workers, farmers, activists and others seeking to help their communities through systemic change.
What is a Food System?
A food system is a socio-ecological system encompassing all the drivers, activities, and resources that go into producing, distributing and consuming food and managing food waste. Food systems intersect with aspects of public health, culture, society, economics, public policy, and the environment. Food systems are often defined by their scale (local, regional, national) or key characteristics (industrial, organic, sustainable).
The term “food system” likely grew out of scholarship on the relationships between food production and consumption under capitalism and became more commonly used in the 1980s and 1990s. Thinking about food from a systems perspective helps us understand the interdependent parts and dynamics of this system – its actors, interactions, feedback mechanisms, and boundaries – and identify strategic opportunities for transformation.

In a similar vein, traditional and indigenous understandings, like the Hawaiian concept of ‘āina, offer a deeply relational view of the food system. ‘Āina, often translated as “that which feeds,” encompasses both the land (inclusive of fisheries) and the people it nourishes. This concept embodies a symbiotic relationship between humans and the environment, suggesting that caring for and respecting the land and sea leads to greater abundance and sustainability. By integrating these indigenous insights with contemporary food system perspectives, we can gain a more holistic and nuanced understanding of how to nurture and sustain our natural resources for future generations.
GLOSSARY OF FOOD SYSTEM TERMS

Affordable land access
Financial accessibility of agricultural land, ensuring that the costs associated with land acquisition, ownership, and use are reasonable and within the means of farmers, especially small-scale farmers.

Agricultural Land Preservation
Protecting agricultural land from conversion to non-agricultural uses, thereby safeguarding its availability for farming purposes.

Agricultural Viability
The ability to sustain profitable farm enterprises and retain land in agricultural production for future generations.

Biocontrol
The reduction of pest populations through the use of natural enemies such as predators, pathogens, or competitors.

Biocultural Restoration
The science and practice of restoring ecosystems and human and cultural relationships to place so that interdependent cultures and landscapes are simultaneously strengthened and revitalized.

Biosecurity
The set of measures taken to manage the risk from invasive species to the economy, environment, and health and lifestyle of the people.

Community-Based Fisheries Management (CBFM)
Community efforts to lead the management of nearshore reef fisheries, generally based on traditional customary systems. Co-management with the state typically involves management responsibilities being shared between communities and the state’s Department of Aquatic Resources (DAR), with DAR retaining final decision-making authority on any fisheries rules.

Conservation Easement
A voluntary legal agreement between a landowner and another party, often a land trust or government entity, that permanently limits uses of the land in order to protect its conservation values while allowing landowners to retain many of their rights.
GLOSSARY OF FOOD SYSTEM TERMS

Fair Labor
The fair treatment of workers involved in producing, processing, distributing, selling, and serving the food that nourishes our communities. This includes fair wages, safe working conditions, the right to collective bargaining, and freedom from discrimination.

Farm-to-School
Using food procurement, school gardens, and education practices at schools, early care, and education settings in order to simultaneously support local agriculture and child health, food literacy, education, and well-being.

_Hawai‘i Public Health Institute (HIPHI) currently coordinates the Farm to School hui in Hawai‘i. Learn more at the link provided._

Farm Viability
An individual farm’s ability to sustain long-term production and undergo succession, including successfully transferring ownership of assets, operations, and management.

Food Apartheid
A more appropriate term than “food desert” identifies poor food environments as the outcome of racist and discriminatory policies and resource disparities. Originating in the Black food justice movement, this concept underscores the systemic injustices that leave certain communities with reduced access to healthy, nourishing food. These include racist and classist public and private policies, predatory food marketing, and land and resource theft.

Food Chain Workers
Encompasses all workers involved in producing, processing, distributing, preparing, selling, and serving our food.

Food Environment
The food environment encompasses the various political, social, economic, and cultural factors that shape our food choices, including which foods are available, affordable, and desirable to us.
GLOSSARY OF FOOD SYSTEM TERMS

Food Justice
A framework and social movement that attempts to ensure the benefits and risks of how food is grown, processed, transported, distributed, and consumed are shared equally by society.

Food Literacy
The knowledge and skills needed to make informed choices about food that support one’s health, community, and the environment.

Food Loss
Occurs before food reaches retailers (e.g., unharvested crops).

Food Recovery/Rescue
The practice of collecting excess food for donation or redistribution to feed people and prevent food waste. Examples include gleaning edible food from farms, stores, and restaurants.

Food Safety
The conditions and practices that preserve the quality of food across the supply chain to prevent the contamination of food by toxic chemicals and the onset and spread of foodborne illnesses.

Food Security
When all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their food preferences and dietary needs for an active and healthy life. The four essential components of food security are:

- **Availability**: Is the physical supply of food sufficient?
- **Access**: Can people actually obtain the food?
- **Utilization**: Are people able to eat and benefit nutritionally from the food they have?
- **Stability**: Are people prepared to remain food secure in the face of environmental, financial, political, or social shocks and stresses?

Food Sovereignty
The right of peoples to healthy and culturally appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods, and their right to define their own food and agriculture systems.
GLOSSARY OF FOOD SYSTEM TERMS

Food System Planning
The collaborative process of developing and implementing local and regional land-use, public health, transportation, economic, and environmental programs and policies to support local and regional agriculture and value chains, promote sustainable food production, facilitate equitable access to nutritious and culturally appropriate food across communities, support good nutrition and health, and improve management of food-related waste.

Food System Resilience
The capacity over time of a food system to provide sufficient, appropriate, and accessible food to all (i.e. food security) in the face of various biophysical, social, or economic disturbances and shocks.

Food Waste
Any portion of food not consumed by humans, post-harvest. This includes unsold retail food, kitchen trimmings, peels and rinds, plate waste (food that is served but uneaten), and spoiled food.

Sustainable Food System
A food system that delivers culturally appropriate food and nutrition for all people at all times in such a way that the social, economic, cultural, and ecological basis of food security, nutrition, and human well-being are enhanced and sustained in perpetuity.

Sustainable Development Goals
The United Nations SDGs are 17 interconnected objectives established by the United Nations in 2015, aiming to address global challenges including poverty, inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace, and justice, by 2030. The SDGs are intertwined with healthy food systems. Learn more at the link provided.

Sustainable Diet
A diet that is protective and respectful of biodiversity and ecosystems, culturally acceptable, accessible, economically fair, and affordable, nutritionally adequate, safe and healthy, while optimizing natural and human resources.
What is Public Policy?
Public policy refers to the actions and decisions taken by government bodies to address societal issues. It encompasses laws, regulations, decisions, and actions that governments undertake to solve problems affecting their citizens' lives and communities. These policies can be formulated and implemented by various levels of government, including local city councils, county boards, state legislatures, and federal agencies.

Public policies are designed to guide the actions of both government and citizens and can cover a wide range of areas such as health care, education, environmental protection, public safety, and economic development. The formulation of public policy typically involves identifying issues, setting goals, analyzing various solutions, implementing strategies, and evaluating outcomes. Policymakers, who can be elected officials, appointed bureaucrats, or public servants, play a crucial role in this process. They work to create policies that reflect the needs and values of the public while balancing practical constraints and available resources.

Why does Food System Policy Matter?
The food system in Hawai‘i impacts various facets of life, influencing health, environmental sustainability, economic stability, and social equity. Given its wide-reaching implications, food system policy in Hawai‘i emerges as a critical area for addressing community challenges. Thoughtful policy-making in this sector can directly tackle deep-seated issues of injustice and inequality. It offers a means to alleviate community hardships by ensuring equitable access to nutritious food, promoting sustainable practices, and supporting local economies. In this context, food system policy stands as a key instrument for shaping the future of Hawai‘i.

What is a healthy community Food System?
Following decades of food systems research, the UC Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program (SAREP) determined healthy community food systems are typically the result of public scholarship initiatives which work to create and maintain four major spaces within a given community: social, political, intellectual, and economic spaces (Feenstra, 2002).
POLICY AREA: LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM DEVELOPMENT

Hawai'i's local food system development is a multifaceted policy area focusing on enhancing the state's agricultural sector, promoting local food production, and ensuring the sustainability and resilience of local food systems.

2023 legislative measures included:

**Sustainable Food Systems Working Group:** Establishes a group within the Office of Planning and Sustainable Development to devise a plan for a sustainable local food economy and reports findings to the Legislature.

"Made in Hawai'i" Labeling: Clarifies the calculation of the wholesale value for products labeled "Made in Hawai'i" and promotes the brand, including operating and overhead expenses incurred in the state.

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POLICY AREA: INFRASTRUCTURE & FARMER SUPPORT

Hawai'i's legislative focus on farmer support and infrastructure aims to bolster the agricultural sector by providing financial incentives, infrastructure support, and workforce development. These measures are designed to encourage farming practices, support local food production, and facilitate the transition of farming knowledge to the next generation. 2023 legislative initiatives included:

**Tax Credits for Agricultural Shipping:** Introduces an income tax credit for farmers and agricultural entities shipping products between counties, incentivizing inter-island agricultural trade.

**Water Rights for Kalo Cultivation:** Exempts the use of water for commercial kalo (taro) cultivation from certain regulatory processes, recognizing the cultural significance of this crop.

**Tax Credits for Agricultural Shipping:** Introduces an income tax credit for farmers and agricultural entities shipping products between counties, incentivizing inter-island agricultural trade.
POLICY AREA: CLIMATE RESILIENCY & DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

This policy area addresses strategies and initiatives to enhance resilience against climate change impacts and to prepare for natural disasters. It involves developing and implementing measures to adapt to changing climate conditions, such as rising sea levels, increased frequency of extreme weather events, and shifts in ecological patterns.

**Community Resilience Funds:** Financial resources allocated for building resilient infrastructure and supporting local communities in adapting to climate change.

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POLICY AREA: FOOD WASTE

In Hawai‘i, addressing food waste and food storage is a critical environmental and resource management issue. Legislative efforts are focused on reducing organic waste, enhancing recycling, and promoting efficient composting practices. These initiatives are vital for diverting waste from landfills, thus contributing to environmental sustainability and the optimal use of natural resources.

**Composting Regulation Exemption:** By exempting artisan-scale composting operations from certain health regulations, this policy encourages local composting efforts.

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POLICY AREA: ECOSYSTEM, SOIL, & PUBLIC HEALTH

Hawai‘i’s legislative approach to environmental, soil, and public health in the agricultural sector encompasses a range of measures aimed at sustainable practices, pesticide regulation, and animal welfare. These initiatives reflect a commitment to ecological health and safety, soil conservation, and responsible farming practices. Proposed legislation in 2023 included:

**Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations:** Phases out large concentrated animal feeding operations by 2028, aiming to reduce environmental and health impacts associated with these practices.
POLICY AREA: AQUACULTURE, FISHPONDS, & FISHERIES

This policy area covers the management and regulation of aquaculture, traditional fishponds, fisheries, and the stewardship of nearshore marine areas. It focuses on sustainable cultivation practices in aquaculture, preserving cultural and ecological aspects of traditional fishponds, and ensuring responsible fisheries management, particularly in nearshore waters.

Measures introduced in 2023 included:

**Fishpond Restoration Projects:** Efforts to restore and preserve ancient fishponds, combining traditional knowledge with modern conservation.

**Ocean Stewardship User Fee:** A proposed fee system aimed at generating revenue from commercial activities in marine areas, which would be reinvested into conservation and management efforts for sustainable ocean resource use.

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POLICY AREA: LAND ACCESS

The policy area of land access in Hawai‘i encompasses several legislative measures aimed at preserving agricultural lands, managing state parks, and ensuring sustainable land use. These policies reflect a commitment to protect Hawai‘i’s unique agricultural heritage and ensure responsible land management.

2023 proposed legislative initiatives included:

**Protection of Wetland Taro-Growing Lands:** This bill prevents the Board of Land and Natural Resources from disturbing or developing specific wetland areas used for taro cultivation, recognizing the cultural and ecological importance of these lands.

**Taro Lands Classification and Preservation:** Establishes a taro lands classification for public lands and permits structures for lo‘i (taro fields) in agricultural districts. It emphasizes the growth and perpetuation of traditional Hawaiian crops as a state planning goal.
POLICY AREA: FOOD ACCESS & NUTRITION

Hawai‘i’s legislative measures in the area of food access and nutrition aim to enhance the availability and affordability of healthy food options, particularly for low-income and vulnerable populations. These initiatives are designed to improve overall nutrition, support local agriculture, and address food insecurity across the state. Key legislative actions include:

**Hawai‘i Healthy Food Incentive Program:** Allocates funds for the administration of this program, which provides matching funds to Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) beneficiaries, thereby encouraging the purchase of healthy, locally sourced food.

**Double Up Bucks Program:** Secures state funding to double SNAP purchasing power for locally sourced produce and proteins, with an amendment to increase funding to $3 million.

**Hawai‘i Farm to Food Bank Program:** Establishes a program and special fund to alleviate food shortages by connecting local farms with food banks, thereby enhancing food distribution to those in need.

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POLICY AREA: FARM TO SCHOOL

Hawai‘i’s Farm to School policy area focuses on integrating locally sourced agricultural products into school cafeterias, promoting nutrition education, and establishing school gardens. The goal is to create a sustainable, healthy food system that connects schools with local farms, fostering better nutrition among students and supporting the local agricultural economy.

Key initiatives introduced in 2023 included:

**Local Procurement Policies:** Encouraging schools to purchase fruits, vegetables, and other food products from local farms, thereby boosting the local agriculture sector.

**Collaborations with Farmers:** Building partnerships to facilitate farm visits, farmer-in-the-school programs, and other opportunities.
If you’re interested in learning more about each policy area, in the civic process, and how to engage: testify, organize, advocate on food system measures, you can sign up for informative workshops or alerts & notices with Food+ Policy.

**Hawai‘i Food+ Policy** is an program with Purple Mai‘a that gives college students and young farmers gain experience in civic problem solving through the lens of food systems advocacy.

### Integrated Food Policy Framework For Hawai‘i

Transforming Hawai‘i’s Food System Together convened a team of experts to prepare the Integrated State Food Policy Framework (ISFPP) in time for the Summit! Take a sneak peek of the draft ISFPP page and the draft food system planning Element modal views for details. This “living document” is intended to be updated on an annual basis and serve as a repository for science-based analysis and policy ideas for key food system issues.

### Hawai‘i Food Policy Landscape

Recognizing the varied policy specialties of different organizations, this document aims to facilitate knowledge sharing across areas of expertise. It offers a macro-level overview and highlights nuanced policy cues and patterns. For detailed information on these areas, including a list of policy leads and subject matter experts, refer to our linked community landscape document.

*Please note that this primer and its companion resources are designed to be dynamic and responsive, evolving over time with input from the community. We encourage users to actively participate by providing feedback and contributions, which are essential in shaping the ongoing development of these materials—see back cover.*
Policy, rules, and procedures occur and change at all the levels of government.

This primer, focuses on the state level policy and lawmakers.

PUBLIC ACCESS ROOM (PAR)
Hawai‘i has one of the more superior resources. PAR will help with any questions and aims to help you better participate in the legislative process.

What “powers” the Legislature has:
The Hawai‘i State Legislature can effect change through laws that appropriate funding, set out directives, or require issues to be further studied:

- **The State Budget:** One of its main powers lies in controlling the state budget. This means the legislature decides how the state’s money is spent, which allows it to focus on areas that need the most help and support important community programs.

- **Resolutions & Studies:** Besides handling money, the legislature also conducts studies and passes resolutions. These help lawmakers understand complicated issues better or can generate localized data sets.

- **Directives:** The legislature can set clear directions and objectives. This guides how state agencies and administrative branches operate and prioritize their tasks. In summary, through budget control, research, and setting guidelines, the Hawaii State Legislature has significant influence in addressing and improving various aspects of community life.

The Legislative Process
The Legislative Process in Hawai‘i follows a two-year cycle known as a 'biennium,' where lawmakers concentrate on creating and enacting legislation and budgets. This means that a bill introduced in one year, such as 2023, stays active and can be deliberated in the following year, like 2024. This system, however, presents challenges, particularly in the second year, when new bills are introduced. This influx can stretch the resources and focus of legislators, advocates, and the public, making it difficult to give each bill the attention it deserves.
During this biennium, each session starts on the 3rd Wednesday of January until May; PAR issues a calendar with key dates of the session each year. A proposed bill must pass through various stages, including multiple readings and committee reviews in both legislative chambers – the House and the Senate. The process includes opportunities for public testimony, amendments, and debates, ensuring that each piece of legislation is thoroughly examined and refined. After passing both chambers, the bill is sent to the governor, who has the power to sign it into law, veto it, or allow it to become law without a signature.
GLOSSARY OF POLICY TERMS

Appropriation Bill
Legislation proposed to authorize the expenditure of government funds. These bills are critical for funding government operations and public projects.

Bill / Measure
"Measure" and "bill" are often used interchangeably, they both refer to proposed legislation under consideration by a legislative body, such as a state legislature or Congress.

Committee Hearing
A meeting conducted by a legislative committee to discuss, evaluate, and gather information about proposed bills or issues. These sessions often include testimonies from experts, stakeholders, and the public.

Committee Chair
The appointed leader of a legislative committee, responsible for directing the committee. Committee Chairs possess significant authority, including the power to decide which bills are considered in their respective committees, effectively controlling a bill's journey through the legislative process.

President of the Senate
The leader of the Senate, responsible for overseeing Senate proceedings, guiding legislation, and often appointing committee members and chairs. President of the Senate influences and determines the committee assignments of bills, shaping their legislative journey.

Speaker of the House
The presiding officer of the House of Representatives, responsible for overseeing House proceedings, appointing committee members and chairs, and directing legislative business. The Speaker plays a key role in influencing and determining the committee assignments of bills, impacting their progression and potential passage.
Glossary of Policy Advocacy Terms

(Policy) Advocacy
Advocacy in policy refers to actively supporting and championing specific policies to shape decisions made by governments and other institutions. This involves persuading those in power to allocate resources and make choices that align with certain political, economic, or social goals.

Collective Impact
A specific framework used to organize social change efforts that include multiple stakeholders. Involves developing a common agenda, shared measurement system, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communication, and a backbone support organization in order to address a specific social problem.

Collective Action
Actions taken together by a group of people whose goal is to enhance their status and achieve a common objective, often through various forms of advocacy and mobilization.

Community Engagement
The practice of working collaboratively with community groups to address issues that impact their well-being. Often led by a community-based organization, government agency, or other project leader. Can range from asking community members for their input on an issue to ongoing consultations with communities to shifting decision-making power into communities.

Governance
The process of managing, coordinating, and administering public and/or private organizations or entities to achieve collective objectives. This often involves making policies and strategic plans. In Hawaiʻi, our coalition is discussing this process in relation to our Food Policy Council’s Charter.

Organizing
The act of bringing individuals or groups together around a common objective, coordinating actions and resources for collective impact.
Defective Dates
In Hawai‘i’s political landscape, there’s a subtle tactic that lawmakers use to slow down or block a bill without clearly saying they’re against it. They do this by changing the bill’s start date to a time far in the future—decades later. This lets them vote "yes" to pass the bill out of committee, showing some support. But by setting a distant start date, they quietly show other lawmakers and people involved that they’re not fully happy with the bill as it is.

This strategy reflects a careful navigation of Hawai‘i’s complex political landscape. Legislators use this method to balance a range of factors: public opinion, party expectations, and personal or collective viewpoints on the issue. By avoiding a direct "no" vote, they mitigate the risk of negative reactions from supporters of the bill. At the same time, delaying the bill’s enactment provides additional opportunities for modifying, refining, or even ultimately setting aside the proposed legislation. This approach highlights the nuanced nature of legislative decision-making.

“Sending” to Conference
In Hawai‘i’s legislative process, a notable tactic to influence a bill involves making substantial changes in the non-originating chamber (like the Senate or House), thereby sending the bill to a conference committee. This committee, comprised of members from both chambers, is tasked with reconciling the differences between the two versions of the bill.

However, this step can often hinder the bill's progress. The more committees a bill has passed through, the harder it becomes to convene all relevant lawmakers and reach a consensus on a unified version. Conference committees, while intended to resolve differences, can sometimes act as a bottleneck, particularly for bills with extensive amendments and multiple committee involvements. These committees have the power to significantly alter legislation, a process that can delay or even derail a bill's passage.
ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Integrated State Food Policy Framework For Hawai‘i
THFST convened a team of experts to prepare the Integrated State Food Policy Framework (ISFPF). This “living document” serves as a repository for science-based analysis and policy ideas for key food system issues. Use the QR code to learn more.

Aloha+ Challenge & Hawai‘i Green Growth: Local Food & UN SDGs
Hawai‘i’s Aloha+ Challenge local food goal was informed by stakeholder and community input to the Hawai‘i 2050 Sustainability Plan, which identified doubling local food production by 2030. The Aloha+ Challenge Dashboard measures Hawai‘i’s progress, examining data on local food production and agriculture. Use the QR code to learn more.

The 30% Project Podcast
Hosted by Paula Daniels, J.D., co-founder of the Center for Good Food Purchasing. Deep dive conversations about efforts to have a 30% “Good Food System” by 2030, centered on Hawai‘i and its Aloha+ Challenge. Explore these systemic issues and solutions and consider their relevance to all regions. Listen with the QR code provided.

HPR: This is Our Hawai‘i Podcast
Join host Russell Subiono as he digs deep into residents’ frustrations with the status quo in each episode of this limited series podcast. From Hawai‘i Public Radio, ‘O ko mākou Hawai‘i kēia: This Is Our Hawai‘i explores the history of local people dealing with outside forces — and what may be in store. Listen with the QR code provided.
This primer is currently in its beta phase.

Designed as a dynamic, evolving document, it aims to foster collaboration with communities across Hawai‘i and facilitate democratic participation in food policy changemaking. The goal is to enhance our collective understanding of different stakeholders' perspectives.

To contribute to this process, we have provided a link to a feedback form. You are encouraged to share your feedback and suggest additions to the content of the primer for future updates.

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Access the References for this Food Policy Primer by using this QR code.