



**Statement from Karen A. Spiller, Food Solutions New England
ICCPR Food Rights Working Group
October 16, 2023
Geneva, Switzerland
Briefing with Human Rights Committee for Review of the U.S.A.**

Good morning! I am Karen Spiller with Food Solutions New England, lifting up the non-negotiable need for racial equity and food justice in the food system, one that feeds and serves us all.

I speak in service of and in community with stewards of the land and sea, urban and rural, with black, brown, and indigenous growers, farmers, producers and entrepreneurs; with justice-minded policy makers; power building agencies and groups; across identity, culture, ethnicity, and geography.

Last week, Senator Craig Hickman of Maine, who is co-author and original sponsor of the first state Right to Food constitutional amendment in the United States, spoke about **how food is life**.

However, the food system in the United States poses a risk to life. Our food system is dominated by toxic chemical fertilizers used to grow crops and maintain fields, leading to significant environmental pollution and harm to the food that people eat and those living on that land.

Black, brown, and Indigenous communities are more likely to be located near large polluting industries. Harmful effects increase with years of exposure and have long-term intergenerational consequences.

We urge the Committee to recommend to the United States to:

1. Strengthen local and regional food systems as a pathway to restore food autonomy to communities, and to reduce the environmental harms caused by large-scale farming.
2. Hold large-scale agricultural companies and extractive industries liable for their impacts on life-sustaining resources such as clean water and food.

Violations of the Right to Food are also linked with violations of the Right to Non-Discrimination. Our food labor systems depend on the essential work of Black, brown, and Indigenous communities, yet these groups also suffer the highest rates of food insecurity in the United States. They are also often excluded from worker protections, including the right to form trade unions. Immigrant agricultural workers face egregious labor law violations due to their immigration status and lack of protection. Black farmers have been historically excluded from land purchasing by federal programs and policies; the absence of legal protections; and limited access to capital through discriminatory lending practices.

We urge the Committee to recommend to the United States to:

1. Examine current lending practices to integrate sustainability and racial equity considerations for small food producers.
2. Raise the federal minimum wage to a true living wage, recognizing that poverty is the root cause of hunger.
3. Make reparations to communities whose labor has been systematically exploited and have been dispossessed of their land since the founding of the United States.