The Sustainable Food Movement: The Locavore, Slow Food, and Food First Solutions to the Global Food Crisis

Marco Tavanti, Liz Schuering

DePaul University, Chicago, IL, United States

In a recent report the World Bank observes that while the global economy is showing tentative signs of recovery, the food crisis is not over in poor countries. Although prices have declined from their peaks in 2008, higher food grain prices and devastating climate change effects have been a deadly combination for poor people in low-income countries in rural and urban areas. Beside the humanitarian commitment of the G20 and worldwide efforts in raising productivity and incomes of the world’s poor farmers, the situation demands a review of global food policies in favor of more sustainable food policies and practices. The rapidly growing sustainable food movement, through various multi-stakeholder initiatives and organizations offer viable solutions to the internationally dependent, often unfair and un-sustainable global food market system. The paper analyzes the advocacy, partnerships and alternatives of the sustainable food movement as exemplified by the Locavore Movement, Food First Institute, Slow Food Movement and Foundation for Biodiversity.

The locavore movement and local food movements are part of a larger sustainability movement which focus on building locally based sustainable food production, processing, distribution, and consumption as an integral part of local economies. They encourage consumers to buy from farmers’ markets or even to produce their own food, with some arguing that fresh, local products are more nutritious and taste better. As locally grown food has a significantly smaller carbon footprint, the promotion of these alternative food economies has been recognized as a viable and sustainable alternative to the current global food market economy. Although generally supporting of fair trade, the locavore movement goes beyond economic justice values and proposes a locally-based global economy.

The Institute for Food and Development Policy - Food First shapes how people think by analyzing the root causes of global hunger, poverty, and ecological degradation and developing solutions in partnership with movements working for social change. Food First has been on the forefront of denouncing how the financial crisis and the food crisis are two sides of the same coin. They have been a strong advocate for American and international food policies that would recognize and prioritize agroecology and the sustainable food system. Along with other important organizations in the local, organic and slow food movement Food First sees food sovereignty as a fundamental human right.

Slow Food is a rapidly growing movement with over 100,000 members in 132 countries. It was founded in 1989 to “counteract fast food and fast life, the disappearance of local food traditions and people’s declining interest in the food they eat, where it comes from, how it tastes and how our food choices affect the rest of the world.” Slow Food International, specifically through the work of its Foundation for Biodiversity, has been at the forefront of creating partnerships around the world with projects to defend local food traditions, protect local biodiversity and promote small-scale quality products, with an increasing focus on investments in countries of the Global South.

In the face of the current global food crisis, the sustainable food movement represents a viable and necessary alternative to revise our assumptions, policies and practices as producers, distributors and consumers of a global food chain to which our economies, health and quality of life depend on. The countless organizations, initiatives and movements in relation to sustainable food compel us to recognize the importance and urgency of alternative practices that would promote the moral, economic, social and environmental values behind food.

References


