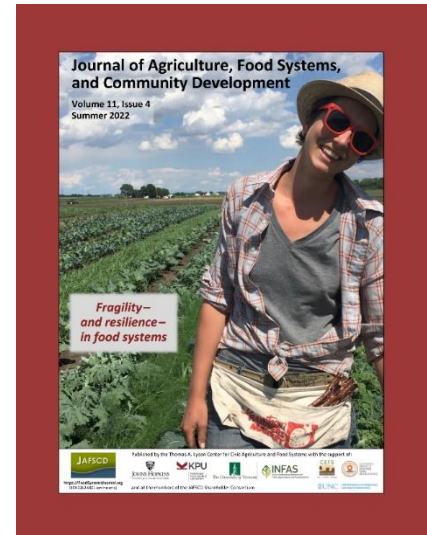


**IN THIS ISSUE**  
**DUNCAN HILCHEY**

## Fragility—and resilience—in food systems



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This summer issue (volume 11, issue 4) includes papers on a wide range of food systems topics, many of which relate to both the fragility and the resilience of food systems. Gracing our cover is Julia Slocum, who was the owner and operator of Lacewing Acres, a small certified-organic vegetable farm in Ames, Iowa, from 2012 to 2019. (She is now a first-year doctoral student in counseling psychology at Iowa State University.) In this issue, you will read about her decision to close her farming operation in *Ending Lacewing Acres: Toward amplifying microperspectives on farm closure* (co-authored by Abby Dubisar at Iowa State University).

Julia's experience highlights the challenge of being a beginning farmer in the U.S. Small-scale, community-based farming is certainly one of the most difficult occupations to take up. For at least two-thirds of each year, it is an all-consuming endeavor. In daylight hours, small local growers manage dozens of crops (each of which has its own requirements to flourish); they may have to manage co-workers, customers, perhaps CSA members, a retail operation, wholesale accounts, and so on. In their evenings, they track production and sales, fill out surveys and tax forms, and nurse aches and injuries received during the day. Imagine going to bed exhausted and then having nightmares about crop failures or injuries or even lawsuits. Somehow, they must find time to recover and carve out personal and family time.

The farmer toils physically all day for much of the year in all kinds of weather, manages multiple health and financial risks—and each day the struggles are renewed. Many farmers still would not trade the experi-

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*On our cover:* Julia Slocum was the owner and operator of Lacewing Acres, a small certified organic vegetable farm in Ames, Iowa, from 2012 to 2019. Read about the decision to close her farm operation in [Ending Lacewing Acres: Toward amplifying microperspectives on farm closure](#), by Abby M. Dubisar and Julia A. Slocum, in this issue.

*Photo by Andrea Rissing*

ence for the world. And yet Julia did trade it in, and for good reason: the effort was not worth the cost to her quality of life. And so, she set about ending Lacewing Acres—doing it her way and with an extraordinary dignity that was appreciated by all her shareholders and business partners.

We begin the issue with **John Ikerd's** THE ECONOMIC PAMPHLETEER column, entitled *Can we afford good food?* His answer is a nuanced “yes,” but it will require eaters to dramatically change their lifestyles and make more informed food choices. This column triggers an obvious next question: what percentage of Global North citizens are prepared to do this?

Next are two informative commentaries: *In search of the New Farmers of America: Remembering America's forgotten Black youth farm movement*, by **Bobby J. Smith II**, and *Effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the food system in Abeshge District, Central Ethiopia*, by **Tsegamariam Dula**.

We begin our open call papers with a minitheme focused on food system fragility and resilience. As advertised, we lead off with *Ending Lacewing Acres: Toward amplifying microperspectives on farm closure*, in which friends **Abby M. Dubisar** and **Julia A. Slocum** present the candid story of the closure of a community-oriented farm.

In *A qualitative investigation of resilience among small farms in western Washington State: Experiences during the first growing season of COVID-19*, authors **Dani Ladyka**, **Yona Sipos**, **Marie L. Spiker**, and **Sarah M. Collier** take an in-depth look at the lived experience of community-oriented small farms during the pandemic and spotlight the “buffer and adaptive strategies” that allowed them to absorb financial and operational shocks.

Next, in *Challenges for the agritourism sector in the United States: Regional comparisons of access*, **Weiwei Wang**, **Chadley Richard Hollas**, **Lisa Chase**, **David Conner**, and **Jane Kolodinsky** use Penchansky and Thomas's five dimensions of access framework to find that, while agritourism operators across regions experience different sets of issues, liability is a significant and common concern.

Continuing our minitheme, in *Farmer attitudes and perceptions toward gleaning programs and the donation of excess produce to food rescue organizations*, **Susan P. Harvey**, **Rebecca Mount**, **Heather Valentine**, and **Cheryl A. Gibson** compare groups of farmers who participate in gleaning and those who do not and highlight the barriers to adoption of this critical component of local food systems.

After these farm-focused papers, we turn to resilience in the context of nonfarm domains of food systems.

In *Community food systems resilience: Values, benefits, and indicators*, **Catherine G. Campbell**, **Alicia Papanek**, **Alia DeLong**, **John Diaz**, **Cody Gusto**, and **Debra Tropp** present the results of their research underlying the development of the Community Agriculture & Resilience Audit Tool (CARAT).

**Jane Karetny**, **Casey Hoy**, **Kareem M. Usher**, **Jill K. Clark**, and **Maria Manta Conroy** then present a sustainable food system policy index to evaluate, compare, and contrast municipal food system plans in their article, *Planning toward sustainable food systems: An exploratory assessment of local U.S. food system plans*.

In their policy analysis entitled *National food security, immigration reform, and the importance of worker engagement in agricultural guestworker debates*, **Anna Zoodma**, **Mary Jo Dudley**, and **Laura-Anne Minkoff-Zern** find striking differences in opinions between grassroots and national labor organizations regarding the H-2A Temporary Agricultural Visa Program and reforms proposed by the Farm Workforce Modernization Act.

Next, **Kathryn A. Carroll** and **Rachel Schichtl** identify the challenges experienced by Arkansas food pantries in transitioning from a prescribed box model to a client-choice model in *Perceived barriers to client-choice conversion among Arkansas food pantries*.

In *Evaluating the successes and challenges toward achieving the Real Food Commitment at Johns Hopkins University*,

**Jeremy Berger, Raychel Santo, and Isabela Garces** present a case study of how the institution fared in fulfilling its commitment to purchase 35% “real food” by 2020.

**Kristin Osiecki, Jessie Barnett, Angie Mejia, Tessie Burley, Kara Nyhus, and Kaitlyn Pickens** then present a reflective essay about their experiences as hungry students and faculty in *Studying hard while hungry and broke: Striving for academic well-being while navigating food insecurity*.

In *Social value of a Canadian urban food bank garden*, **Wanda Martin, Anh Pham, Lindsey Wagner, and Adrian Werner** use a social return on investment evaluation to estimate the social value (in dollars) of an exemplar piece of local food system infrastructure.

**Kendra OoNorasak, Makenzie L. Barr, Michael Pennell, Jordan Hinton, Julia Garner, Cora Kerber, Celia Ritter, Liana Dixon, Cana Rohde, and Tammy J. Stephenson** then present an in-depth case study of a campus-based food recovery program (including operational and evaluation data) in *Evaluation of a sustainable student-led initiative on a college campus addressing food waste and food insecurity*.

Next is *Community relationships and sustainable university food procurement: The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the Real Food Challenge*, by **Katelyn Cline, Alexandria Huber-Disla, Amy Cooke, and Elizabeth Havice**, in which the authors explore the effects of third-party certifications on campus food purchases.


In *Growing health: Building partnerships in healthcare and local food systems for improved food access in Appalachia*, **Annie Koempel, Lilian Brislen, Krista Jacobsen, Jessica Clouser, Nikita Vundi, Jing Li, Mark A. Williams, and Mark V. Williams** explore the challenges in building a farm-to-hospital program.

In our final paper, entitled *A food-system approach to addressing food security and chronic child malnutrition in northern Vietnam*, **Cecilia Rocha, Melody Mendonça, Nguyen Do Huy, Huỳnh Nam Phương, Do Thi Bao Hoa, Fiona Yeudall, Andrea Moraes, Matthew Ryan Brown, Yvonne V. Yuan, and Thomas Tenkate** present a case study of a holistic value-chain approach to addressing food insecurity.

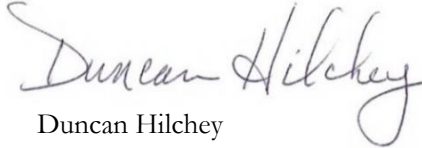
Wrapping up the issue are three book reviews. **Jules Hathaway** reviews *How the Other Half Eats: The Untold Story of Food and Inequality in America*, by Priya Fielding-Singh; **Natasha Shannon** reviews *Healing Grounds: Climate, Justice, and the Deep Roots of Regenerative Farming*, by Liz Carlisle; and **Cyndee Bence and Matthew M. Giguere** review *Food Systems Law: An Introduction for Non-Lawyers*, by Marne Coit and Theodore A. Feitshans.

In closing, I'd like to circle back to our cover story. While it is true that community-based small farms need a sufficient and reliable market, and to survive they need to scale up either on their own or through cooperation with other farmers, they must also, frankly, let go of the misguided “if I build it, they will come” attitude. Demeter’s call to till the soil is powerful, and young and beginning farmers must guard against overromanticizing their occupation. I therefore question how helpful it is that we outsiders put young groundbreakers on a pedestal and exalt them for their heroism, their hard work stewarding the land, bringing us high-quality good food, and making a contribution to our own quality of life. Indeed, they do these things, but is our praise, in effect, just contributing to the tremendous pressure small and beginning farmers are under? Perhaps we need to tone down our enthusiasm just a little and make space to hear about the challenges of this pursuit as well.

In their case study about Lacing Acres, Julia Slocum and Abby Dubisar call for more stories about farm closure, to help to eliminate the stigma around farm closure and illuminate the reality that being part of a good food system may be but a single stage in one’s life journey. Many good things can come about as a result of the operator’s challenging experience—and decision to move on. JAFSCD agrees, and we ask our shareholder community to submit case studies on farm closures and to collaborate with farmers in preparing

reflective essays about their lived experiences, including their lives after farming. Furthermore, is there a toolkit for thoughtfully and strategically shutting down a farm operation and capitalizing on the experience? If not, let's develop one and include it in every beginning farmer program being offered. After all, the success of a farm shouldn't be measured by how long it lasts but by what it contributed to its stakeholder community while it was in operation. And, as a likely extension of an operator's farm experience, their plan B may allow them to continue to enjoy satisfying work and make meaningful and lasting contributions to society. 

Peace, health, and happiness to all,



Duncan Hilchey

Publisher and editor in chief