



THE ECONOMIC PAMPHLETEER
JOHN IKERD

A “Green New Deal” for farm and food policy

Published online May 14, 2019

Citation: Ikerd, J. (2019). The Economic Pamphleteer: A “Green New Deal” for farm and food policy. *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development*, 9(1), 3–5. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5304/jafscd.2019.091.008>

Copyright © 2019 by the Author. Published by the Lyson Center for Civic Agriculture and Food Systems. Open access under CC-BY license.

I made the case for a “new mandate for farm and food policy” in a 2015 *Economic Pamphleteer* column—concluding that “Food sovereignty is the logical public policy mandate to support agricultural sustainability and a sustainable future for humanity” (Ikerd, 2015, p. 13). The Green New Deal, a 2019 congressional resolution, now provides a logical framework for a policy mandate to secure food sovereignty (116th Congress, 2019).

The Green New Deal obviously will confront

vigorous opposition. Already, claims have been made that it would decimate animal agriculture in order to mitigate climate change. It has also been widely characterized as socialism and a threat to democracy. Support and opposition likely will be divided along political party lines. They shouldn’t be. The core values reflected in Green New Deal and in food sovereignty are Democratic, Republican, and America values.

The following quotes are excerpts from the 2019 Congressional Record of House Resolution

John Ikerd is professor emeritus of agricultural economics, University of Missouri, Columbia. He was raised on a small farm and received his BS, MS, and PhD degrees from the University of Missouri. He worked in the private industry prior to his 30-year academic career at North Carolina State University, Oklahoma State University, the University of Georgia, and the University of Missouri. Since retiring in 2000, he spends most of his time writing and speaking on issues of sustainability. Ikerd is author of six books and numerous professional papers, which are available at <http://johnikerd.com> and <http://faculty.missouri.edu/ikerdj/>.

*Why an **Economic Pamphleteer**? Pamphlets historically were short, thoughtfully written opinion pieces and were at the center of every revolution in western history. I spent the first half of my academic career as a free-market, bottom-line agricultural economist. During the farm financial crisis of the 1980s, I became convinced that the economics I had been taught and was teaching wasn’t working and wasn’t going to work in the future—not for farmers, rural communities, consumers, or society in general. Hopefully my “pamphlets” will help spark the needed revolution in economic thinking.*

109 (116th Congress, 2019) and the 2007 Declaration of Food Sovereignty (Nyéléni, 2007).

The Green New Deal reframes sustainability in terms the rights of all people: *“It is the duty of the Federal Government to create a Green New Deal—(A) to achieve net-zero greenhouse gas emissions, fairly for all; (B) to create millions of good, high-wage jobs and ensure prosperity and economic security for all; (C) to invest in infrastructure and industry to sustainably meet the challenges of the 21st century; (D) to secure for all people for generations to come— (i) clean air and water; (ii) climate and community resiliency; (iii) healthy food; (iv) access to nature; and (v) a sustainable environment; and (E) to promote justice and equity by stopping current, preventing future, and repairing historic oppression”* (116th Congress, 2019, pp. 5–6).

The Green New Deal addresses the responsibilities of government not as separable ecological, social, and economic policies but as a single, inseparable policy mandate to secure the basic rights of all—of both current and future generations.

Food sovereignty also defines agri-food sustainability as a basic human right: *“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. ... It defends the interests and inclusion of the next generation”* (Nyéléni, 2007, para. 3).

The Green New Deal supports sustainable family farms and local food systems: It *“will require the following goals and projects... “(G) working collaboratively with farmers and ranchers in the United States to remove pollution and greenhouse gas emissions from the agricultural sector as much as is technologically feasible, including— (i) by supporting family farming; (ii) by investing in sustainable farming and land use practices that increase soil health; and (iii) by building a more sustainable food system that ensures universal access to healthy food... (J)... restoring natural ecosystems through proven low-tech solutions that increase soil carbon storage...; (K) restoring and protecting threatened, endangered, and fragile ecosystems through locally appropriate and science-based projects that enhance biodiversity and support climate resiliency”* (116th Congress, 2019, pp. 8–10).

Animal agriculture is an essential dimension of sustainable agriculture—as I and many others consistently have explained. Animal agriculture also will play an essential role in mitigating climate

change. The Green New Deal could mean the end of concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs), but not of animal agriculture.

Food sovereignty also supports family farms and local food systems. In addition to proclaiming the right of people to *“to define their own food and agriculture systems...”* it *“prioritises local and national economies and markets and empowers peasant and family farmer-driven agriculture, artisanal -fishing, pastoralist-led grazing, and food production, distribution and consumption based on environmental, social and economic sustainability”* (Nyéléni, 2007, para. 3).

The Green New Deal supports sustainable community development: *“A Green New Deal must be developed through transparent and inclusive consultation, collaboration, and partnership with frontline and vulnerable communities, labor unions, worker cooperatives, civil society groups, academia, and businesses”* (116th Congress, 2019, p. 10) through projects that *“(A)... ensures that the public receives appropriate ownership stakes and returns on investment, adequate capital,... technical expertise, supporting policies, and other forms of assistance;... (B) ... takes into account the complete environmental and social costs and impacts of emissions through— (i) existing laws; (ii) new policies and programs; and (iii) ensuring that frontline and vulnerable communities shall not be adversely affected...”* (116th Congress, 2019, p. 11).

Food sovereignty also *“ensures that the rights to use and manage lands, territories, waters, seeds, livestock and biodiversity are in the hands of those of us who produce food”* (Nyéléni, 2007, para. 3).

Republicans historically have been advocates of the devolution of government or local control. “Republic” is defined as “a government in which supreme power resides in a body of citizens entitled to vote” (Republic, n.d.). The Green New Deal defends self-determination and local control.

The Green New Deal reclaims economic sovereignty by protecting individuals and communities from economic exploitation: by *“(K) enacting and enforcing trade rules, procurement standards, and border adjustments with strong labor and environmental protections ... (L) ensuring that public lands, waters, and oceans are protected and that eminent domain is not abused; (M) obtaining the free, prior, and informed consent of indigenous peoples for all decisions that affect indigenous peoples ... ; (N) ensuring a commercial environment where every*

businessperson is free from unfair competition and domination by domestic or international monopolies" (116th Congress, 2019, pp. 13–14).

Food sovereignty also *"offers a strategy to resist and dismantle the current corporate trade and food regime, and directions for food, farming, pastoral and fisheries systems determined by local producers and users. ... It puts the aspirations and needs of those who produce, distribute and consume food at the heart of food systems and policies rather than the demands of markets and corporations"* (Nyéléni, 2007, para. 3).

The Green New Deal and Food Sovereignty both require the U.S. Government to give the basic human rights of real people priority over the economic rights of corporations.

The Green New Deal proclaims a new economic bill of rights: by *"(O) providing all people of the United States with— (i) high-quality health care; (ii) affordable, safe, and adequate housing; (iii) economic security; and (iv) clean water, clean air, healthy and affordable food, and access to nature"* (116th Congress, 2019, p. 14).

Food sovereignty *"promotes transparent trade that guarantees just incomes to all peoples as well as the rights of consumers to control their food and nutrition"* (Nyéléni, 2007, para. 3). It *"implies new social relations free of oppression and inequality between men and women, peoples,*

racial groups, social and economic classes and generations" (Nyéléni, 2007, para. 3).

To claim that everyone has an equal right to everything of economic value could accurately be labeled as socialism. However, this is fundamentally different from the claim that everyone has an equal right to meet their *basic human needs* for clean air and water, healthy food, adequate housing, quality health care, and basic economic security.

The American Declaration of Independence proclaims, *"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."* In market economies, there no way to secure these rights without ensuring that the basic economic needs of all are met. The Declaration of Independence continues, *"That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men."* The fundamental purpose of the U.S. was, and still is, to secure the unalienable rights of the people.

The Green New Deal provides an opportunity not only to proclaim Food Sovereignty as a new mandate for farm and food policy, but also to reclaim and recommit our government to its fundamental purpose of securing the rights of the people.

References

- 116th Congress. (2019). 1st Session. H. Res. 109. Recognizing the duty of the Federal Government to create a Green New Deal. Retrieved from <https://www.congress.gov/116/bills/hres109/BILLS-116hres109ih.pdf>
- Ikerd, J. (2015). Food sovereignty: A new mandate for food and farm policy. *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development*, 5(2), 11–14. <https://doi.org/10.5304/jafscd.2015.052.004>
- Nyéléni. (2007). *Declaration of the Forum for Food Sovereignty*, Nyéléni 2007. Retrieved from <http://nyeleni.org/spip.php?article290>
- Republic. (n.d.). In Merriam-Webster Dictionary. Retrieved from <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/republic>