



Spring 2013

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Recommended Citation

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Transforming the Farm Bill:
The Local Food Movement and Political Change

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Abstract: This study uses the political opportunity structure to measure the success of the local food movement in America. Drawing from the Political Process theory of social movements, I analyze the ability of the local food movement to leverage its transformative capacity into political gain, most notably through the Farm Bill. The current agricultural regime consists of a directed political opportunity structure and political setting, and I find that although the local food movement has made some gains in food and farm policy, the agricultural political landscape continues to be dominated by the interests of industrial agriculture.

Introduction

As one of the most cited “solutions” to the assorted problems of the conventional industrial agricultural model, the local food movement¹ represents a rapidly growing public statement against the current farm and food landscape. Such is the speed of its rise and the transformative power of its culture that local food may represent the best vehicle to renovate agricultural policy to one more cognizant of people rather than corporate profit. Yet, no discussion of local food would be complete without contextualizing it within the larger alternative food movement and more importantly, within the current industrial agriculture paradigm.

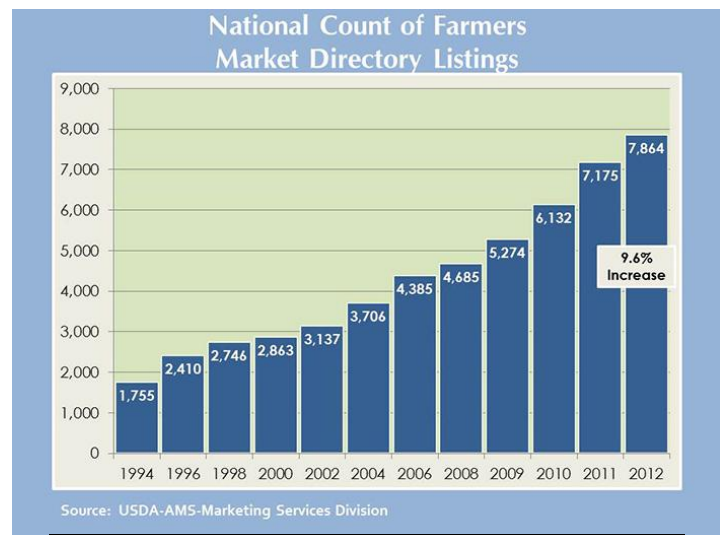


Figure 1. (Agricultural Marketing Service, 2012)

Beginning in the 1970's, the agricultural “green revolution” sought to avoid the dire consequences of global starvation in response to overpopulation, and was widely considered successful in that aim. Synthetic fertilizers, herbicides, pesticides, increased mechanization, and biotechnology allowed for vast increases in the yield of certain monoculture crops, such as corn and soybeans, creating enormous surges in the amount of food produced. However, the sustention of this industrial model relied heavily on fossil fuels and as time has passed, the multitude of externalities has become increasingly apparent. The American food system is incredibly dependent on oil for “fueling farm machinery, producing pesticides, and transporting ingredients and food” resulting in an ineffective, energy intensive system where it now takes “7.3-10 calories of energy to produce, process, and transport each calorie of food energy” (Neff et al., 2011). Such close ties between oil and food result in an unhealthy dynamic that affects three primary areas: the natural environment,

¹ There does not yet exist a universal definition of “**local food**” but it shall be defined in this paper as “**products transported less than 400 miles or within the state in which they are produced**” in accordance with the statutory definition provided by the USDA (Johnson et al., 2012, 8). The **local food movement** is defined as the “**collaborative effort to build more locally based, self-reliant food economies one in which sustainable food production, processing, distribution, and consumption is integrated to enhance the economic, environmental and social health of a particular place**” (Feenstra, 2002). Movement advocates support farmers’ markets, community supported agriculture programs (CSA’s), roadside stands, farm to school programs, and other examples of direct producer to consumer outlets and intermediated marketing channels (local farms to a local or regional distribution outlet) (Low & Vogel, 2011, 2).

human health, and income and economic welfare. As these externalities have become increasingly apparent, national discussion has turned to alternatives to industrial agriculture, and local food is one such option.

As the local food movement is relatively new, my research has revealed few academic studies examining local food as a social movement. Even fewer studies examine its political success in depth, despite published criticism from local food leaders such as Michael Pollan, pointing out the need for such analysis and for political action. The current food system, he points out, “is being challenged on a great many fronts -- indeed, seemingly everywhere but in Washington” and while Pollan recognizes the economic and cultural success of the local food movement, he states that “sooner or later, the food movement will have to engage in the hard politics of Washington” (Pollan, 2012). This is also supported by Wenonah Hauter, Director of Food & Water Watch, who states in her book *Foodopoly*, “the local food movement is uplifting and inspiring and represents positive steps in the right direction. But now it’s time for us to marshal our forces and do more than vote with our forks. Changing our food system is a political act” (2012, 7). The local food movement sought to make changes in the 2008 Farm Bill, but gained minimal success when confronted with the established political powers of industrial agriculture. However, they have since taken up the challenge of Pollan and Hauter and established a stronger presence in Washington. My research attempts to determine how successful the local food movement has been in its new political pursuits. Has it been able to leverage the transformative capacity of its exciting market growth to integrate local food initiatives into the Farm Bill? If it has, how would success be measured? I define **transformative capacity as the ability of a movement or group to transform the regulatory regime, as measured by political change.** A **regime** refers to the **system of ideas, institutions, and policies that determine how a society is governed**, and thus far, the regimes governing agricultural policy have not been conducive to participation from interest groups like local food (Harris & Milkis, 1989, 23) As of the writing of this paper, there is still no new Farm Bill, but I argue that political change may be operationalized by analysis of the Agriculture Reform, Farm, and Jobs Act of 2012 passed by the US Senate.

Given the fairly rapid rise to prominence of local food, it is important to measure its success as a social movement, both to assess the nature and extent of its transformative capacity, and to determine where improvements might be made to further achieve its aims. Academics have already recognized local food utilizing social movement theory, namely New Social Movement (NSM)

theory². However, this paper will focus on the political achievements of the movement, as according to David S. Meyer, public policy can be both “a measure of [social] movement success” and the source of “grievances for subsequent movements” (Meyer, 2002, 19). Political Process theory will thus serve as the primary framework by which the local food movement will be assessed for its political success. My research is limited to analysis of the federal omnibus legislation known as the Farm Bill. As the Farm Bill is the single-most important piece of federal legislation regarding to national agricultural and food policy, the inclusion or exclusion of local food support will serve to indicate the success of the movement’s ability to translate its rhetoric and cultural and economic capital into political gains.

Theory

The Problem of Industrial Agriculture

Our environment is negatively impacted by the increased greenhouse gas emissions resulting from the fossil fuel use, and by erosion and soil degradation from the reliance on a monoculture that drains the soil of essential nutrients (Cleveland et al., 2011; Yeager-Kozacek, 2012; Okvat & Zautra, 2011). This creates an unsustainable model that deprives our planet of its natural resources through its taxing methods of production, ultimately resulting in limited production that affects humans in certain regions more than others. However, these externalities have to date been widely accepted as a necessary cost for the benefits of mass production and cheap food.

Food insecurity,³(the “**uncertainty and/or difficulty in supplying adequate food**”) expands the negative health consequences of industrial agriculture beyond those caused by environmental damage. By focusing on monoculture and commodity⁴ crops rather than fruits and vegetables, industrial agriculture simultaneously promotes “empty calorie” food and deprives communities of access to proper nutrition (Firth et al., 2011; Walker et al., 2010; Ferris et al., 2001; Sumner et al., 2010). This lack of access to food results in starvation and malnutrition, specifically in low-income

² A brief analysis of the characteristics of New Social Movement Theory and how the local food movement compares will follow in the literature review.

³ In contrast to “**food security**”, which for the purposes of this paper shall be defined as “a condition in which all community residents can obtain a safe, culturally acceptable, nutritionally adequate diet through a economically and environmentally sustainable food system that maximizes a community’s self reliance and its view of social justice” (Thiengkamol, 2011; Hamm & Bellows, 2003).

⁴ For the purposes of this paper, **commodity crops** refers to **wheat, cotton, corn, soybeans, and sugar, crops widely grown as monocultures around the US in factory farms, often part of the industrialized processing of foods, and traded as commodities on the market.**

areas affected by the advent of food prices, that can in turn impact rates of obesity and diabetes (Cleveland et al., 2011).

The current industrial agricultural model also drains local economies of money because, instead of buying food locally, dollars are spent on importing produce and other food from around the country, resulting in the exportation of hundreds of millions of dollars (DeWeerd, “Economics”, 2009). A task force appointed by the Illinois General Assembly found that increasing the amount of money spent on food grown in Illinois to “10 percent of the statewide total by 2020 and to 20 percent by 2030” would generate “\$20 to \$30 billion in economic activity and thousands of new jobs” (Illinois Department of Agriculture, 2009), evidence of the economic “multiplier effect” that occurs when money stays within their local communities (Food & Water Watch, 2012, 13). Thus, there is much to be gained by transforming an industrial agricultural system that deprives communities of natural resources, health, and income into one that allows environmental and economic capital to stay within the local food economy.

The “alternative” food movement is a social movement that arose as part of the rising demand for “good” food and that manifested its concerns for social justice and community empowerment in farmers’ markets, community supported agriculture programs, urban farms, and community gardens across the country (Campbell, 2004; Follett, 2009). This included the call for organic food, local food, food free of animal cruelty, sustainable agriculture, and more. While all of the movements within the alternative food movement are important in solving the problems of industrial agriculture, this paper focuses specifically on the local food movement, defined as a “collaborative effort to build more locally based, self-reliant food economies - one in which sustainable food production, processing, distribution, and consumption is integrated to enhance the economic, environmental and social health of a particular place” (Feenstra, 2002). It is a piece of the larger umbrella movement⁵ of alternative food and thus is not entirely independent of its related movements. Yet, the local food movement has seen great growth in the last decade, and is a movement that will grow increasingly vital to the future of food in America. There is a clear need for local food as an alternative to industrial agriculture, and the desire for local food has grown in accordance with this need. Understanding the context in which local food operates is necessary to

⁵ Umbrella movements are the overarching movements on broad issues that are comprised of various *component movements* that address a specific issue within that umbrella movement (Cohen and Rai, 2000 10; Van Susteren, 2010, 2-3). For example, within the umbrella movement of alternative food, there exist component movements that address organic food, local food, vegetarian interests, sustainable agriculture, Slow Food, and animal rights, to name a few.

estimate its successes as a social movement and to recognize the obstacles that still remain to full integration into the politics of agriculture and food.

Social Movement Theory

For the purposes of this paper, social movements will be defined as “rational attempts by excluded groups to mobilize sufficient political leverage to advance collective interests through non-institutionalized means” (McAdam, 1982; Ritzer, 2007). Although there exist many theories to explain the origin and success of social movements, I will focus on Political Process theory and New Social Movement (NSM) theory. These two theories possess two different definitions of success, and this definition in turn determines how effective the local food movement has been in utilizing their transformative capacity to accomplish certain goals. Already, academics have used NSM theory to explain local food’s appeal and success outside of the political realm, but I focus on the Political Process model to assess the current political climate for local food and to identify the achievements of local food within politics.

New Social Movement Theory

New social movement theory holds that the success of social movements is dependent on the establishment of subcultures: the creation of a shared identity that abandons the Marxist notion of class struggle for economic gain, focusing instead on quality of life, direct democracy, and self-actualization (Brannan, 2009; Buechler, 1995). In classifying social movements, NSM has four main defining characteristics in their participants, their forms or means of organization, their values, and in their goals (D’Anieri et al., 1990, 453).

One of the characteristics of new social movements is that their participant base is centered in the “New Middle Class”, often in the younger generation and groups with higher education (Pachido, 1997; D’Anieri et al., 1990, 453). In a break with the Marxist foundations of “old” movements, new social movements transitioned out of the labor class as their base group. As noted in Buechler’s article, “new social movements are not class movements in the traditional sense, but they manifest a new type of class relationship in which the making of the middle class as a group with a distinct identity and consciousness is dialectically intertwined with the mobilization of new social

movements” (1995, 455). The success of these movements depends on their ability to create a message and a movement that attracts participants from all backgrounds⁶.

The form of NSM’s is highly decentralized, nonhierarchical, and run by participatory democracy in decision making (Melucci, 1992; D’Anieri et al., 1990; Pichardo, 1997). The fundamental task of any NSM is to create a collective identity or a “we” (Starr, 2010; Melucci, 1992, 48). This identity is a “definition constructed and negotiated through an activation of the social relationships connecting the members of a movement”, and is crucial to the movement’s success (Melucci, 1992, 49). Through this shared identity, new social movements like local food do not need a centralized, rigid hierarchy. Participants are “kept connected to the movement and encourages them to stay active” in addition to drawing in “new members who bring donations or other resources to support the cause” (Brannan, 2009, 3). Social movements, according to NSM theory, can be successful if their subculture is capable of moving beyond the middle class focused base to cross class, racial, religious, etc. lines to build a broad appeal that is capable of mobilizing large numbers of people across class lines in a very short amount of time. The form of these new social movements lends itself to its goals by utilizing a very widespread, albeit loosely organized, network to transform the socio-cultural realm of a given society. As author Starr puts it, the movement’s members “share a politics, but not a party” (2010, 483), desiring the same change and believing in the same ideals, but choosing to act on those beliefs through everyday decisions, rather than the lens of traditional politics.

The values of NSM theory focus on issues of identity, such as gender, race, religion, sexual identity, and quality of life, eschewing economic concerns, and abandoning the realm of policy. New social movements seek to “regain control over their personal and collective sense of identity” (D’Anieri et al., 1990, 446) and thus it is possible for them to transform the “socio-cultural” sphere, rather than

⁶ Failure to do so often creates a sense of “elitism”, and the alternative food movement as a whole (including local food) has been criticized as such, citing both race and income as barriers to participation. In recent years, the “alternative food movement” has sought to include more minorities as a major part of its efforts. However, the alternative food movement itself is seen as “white,” as the exotic “yuppie chow” (organic or local food) it offers often does not appeal to audiences of color. Due to historical connotations of slavery and share-cropping, as well as a cultural unfamiliarity with different crops, African-Americans do not value “getting one’s hand’s dirty” in the manner often effused by whites (Guthman, 2008). Guthman also notes that the literature suggests that African Americans “especially do not participate in alternative food institutions such as farmers markets and CSA’s proportionate to the population” (2011; Hinrichs & Kremer, 2002; Payne, 2002; Perez et al., 2003). Cost is sometimes prohibitive towards low income families from purchasing local or organic food, but measures like SNAP acceptance at Farmer’s Markets and Community Supported Agriculture Programs are helping to address this.

the political realm (Pichardo, 1997). By focusing on identity and quality of life, new social movements make everyday choices a political act because identity and quality of life are everyday experiences. NSMs marked a transition from “old” movements in that it is widely considered a post-materialist reaction to Marxist views that limited the scope of social movements to economic concerns and depended largely on the labor class as the force of the movement. That movements like local food can operate through consumption choices, such as food, is in keeping with the everyday decision that influences the “politics” of identity and quality of life.

In the modern era, the goals of these new movements focus their target activities away from the institutions of the state, making the personal actions of everyday life a “political” act. New social movements have reacted to the increasing influence and control of corporations over the political process by focusing the attentions of the movement on the “industry structures”⁷ rather than the policies of the state. The local food movement’s push to vote with one’s fork by buying local and eating in-season produce is one example of this. Since its inception, local food has seen great gains in altering the economic and cultural spheres of food in the United States as evidenced by the growth of Farmer’s Markets, CSA’s, and increase in direct marketing from farmers to consumers. This economic and cultural success is a testament to their strategic focus on non-political goals and thus could be considered successful according to NSM, as evidenced by the rapid rise of such institutions considered a vital part of local food, such as Farmers’ Markets and Community Supported Agriculture Programs (CSA’s). “Nearly 7,200 farmers’ markets operated in 2011”, which was a rapid increase from “2,800 in 1998, and 1,800 in 1994” and CSA’s rose from an estimated 400 programs in 2001 to more than 1,400 programs in 2010 (Johnson et al., 2012, 11). The movement has created a subculture and has brought new ideas to the forefront of the discussion of food.

However, this theory fails to recognize the political environment in which the movement operates, often because new social movements are relatively independent of political institutions as their aims are not political in the traditional sense of affecting legislation, lobbying, and voting. The national dialogue may have shifted to include local food in the discussion but the national politics remain largely unchanged, restricting the transformative capacity of the movement. One need only look at the sales of local food in comparison to conventional agriculture to realize stark divide that still exists. As Wenonah Hauter notes from 2008, “while \$4.8 billion in sales [of local food] is

⁷ Industry structures are composed of economic, organizational, and cultural features and function to enhance or constrain social movements’ efforts to change industry behavior (Schurman, 2004, 243)

impressive, it is very small in comparison to the \$1,229 trillion in sales of conventional foods” (2012, 282). Without serious political changes, there will always be limits to the efficacy of local food. The current food landscape is slanted firmly in favor of industrial agriculture, and the policies that support this create “bottlenecks” that keep local food from transcending beyond a marginal source of food in America. New Social Movement theory focuses too narrowly on the establishment of a new identity as the marker of success for a social movement. Although the local food movement has only recently turned its aims to political change, NSM fails to account for this policy action in its measure of success and is thus an unsuitable model for my analysis.

Political Process Theory

Following and modifying the Political Process theory (PPT) formalized by Doug McAdam in the 1970’s and 80’s, I have found that the measure of social movement success needs to be corrected. Social movements are concerned with substantive changes in the direction of mainstream society at the level of policy and law, not just issues of identity, ideas, and social status. Changes in the political landscape are necessary if social movements are to be considered successful, and so I turn to PPT as the theory by which I will measure the local food movement and the mobilization of its transformative capacity.

Political Process theory was a response to analysis of the civil rights movement. It was formalized in Doug McAdam’s work, *Political Process and the Development of Black Insurgency*, and although it has continued to reform and adapt in response to criticism, PPT is noteworthy for a few defining characteristics. First, it states that social movements have a political purpose; they are not a psychological response by irrational people as suggested by the classical model. Second, the success of any movement depends on the interplay between the external political opportunity structure and the internal reaction and mobilization of the movement. This interplay consists of three crucial factors: the political opportunity structure, indigenous networks, and cognitive liberation.

Political opportunities are defined as changes in the external political sphere that indirectly shaped or affected the ability of movements to organize. However, under this broad definition, any war, demographic change, economic decline, or political realignment could be seen as a necessary influence on a social movement when no such connection may actually exist. The vagueness of “political opportunities” is one of the main critiques of the PPT, as it is so broad as to be “unfalsifiable” (Ritzer, 2007). In response, McAdam later narrowed the definition to four

dimensions: “the relative openness of the institutionalized political system; the stability of elite alignments that undergirds a polity; the presence of elite allies; the state’s capacity and propensity for repression” (Ritzer, 2007). The political opportunity structure settles the question about the character of the regime of government by looking at four elements. The first is the formal institutional structure of the state. What is the setting or culture of politics? What is the “relative openness of the institutionalized political system?” (McAdam, 1983) This element addresses the official structure of the state and the political tools available to its citizens. The nature of the electoral system, such as plurality versus proportional representation, the concentration of power amongst the branches of government, the party in power, and opportunities for citizen response all play a role in determining the setting in which social movements operate. The second element is the nature of existing political cleavages in society. What groups have been integrated into the policy structure? What groups still remain marginalized or isolated? This is important because other movements, like labor, if not integrated into the political structure can distract publicity and participants away from other social movements. The last elements of the political opportunity structure have to do with the “elites” in power. The state’s “capacity and propensity for repression” may determine the strategies and tactics used by social movements, while the presence (or absence) of elite “allies” within government may help a movement integrate their goals into mainstream politics or limit their effectiveness.

Indigenous networks are the relationships among pre-existing groups within the excluded group that can quickly be adapted and mobilized for the organization of a new social movement⁸. Within the local food movement, those networks already established amongst community gardeners, proponents of organic food, local farmers, and health advocates were quickly integrated into and utilized by the local food movement to form a cohesive group advocating for local food in the market. These networks are quite similar to the “subcultures” proposed by NSM theory, as both are very fluid and decentralized but allow for mobilization of large, diverse groups of people.

⁸ This definition has also been reformed in the face of criticism, as many believed the “formal, pre-existing organizations” were not causal of the movement, simply implicit in the movement as part of collective action, and that the other forms of informal networking were not recognized under McAdam’s original description (Bevington & Dixon, 2005). Instead, the understanding of these indigenous networks has now been expanded to “mobilizing structures” to include the informal networks that play a role in any social movement (Ritzer, 2007).

Political Process theory also points to cognitive liberation⁹ as the process of finding meaning in the movement that transformed passive, pessimistic bystanders into dynamic and optimistic activists. Again, there exists a connection with new social movement theory as the message created is crucial to the creation of a collective identity or “we” that must span diverse backgrounds in order for the movement to be successful. Local food has often focused its attentions on the appeal of the Jeffersonian ideal of agriculture: communities supported by local farmers forming the backbone of American society. The United States may be an industrialized nation, but the symbolic appeal of the farmer still holds true; one need look no farther than the recent Super Bowl advertisement by Dodge Ram, “God Created a Farmer” as evidence of such.

Although social movements may be confronted by a strongly biased, directed political setting or even a closed political setting, their political achievements are a crucial aspect of any measure of success (Simeone, 2010). The local food movement faces a long term struggle that may last for generations against the political opportunity structure that constitutes the directed agricultural regime. The economic and cultural “success” achieved by the local food movement thus far, according to New Social Movement theory, is an important first step. However, without a measure of success that recognizes political change, it is impossible to fully evaluate the local food movement for its ability to infiltrate and transform the current directed agricultural regime it faces. I draw from the more fitting model of Political Process theory that focuses more intentionally on the political context in which social movements operate to provide the basis for a framework that can measure the effectiveness and success of the local food movement in the United States.

The Farm Bill and Regimes

It is impossible to address food policy without accounting for the Farm Bill. The Farm Bill is an omnibus legislation that is renewed every 5-7 years and is an integral part to any discussion of food and farm policy in America. “This large piece of legislation, with its multiple titles, frames and establishes the policies and government support for U.S. agriculture, nutrition programs such as food stamps, rural economic development programs, agricultural research and much more” (Hauter, 2012, 292). It essentially determines the nature of US agriculture, and by extension, the food system. Traditionally, the Farm Bill has encouraged conventional agriculture with subsidies

⁹ Critiques have since transformed this dimension, as cognitive liberation initially focused too much on the individual and failed to fully recognize the intention behind specific, purposeful messages created within the movement in order to expand and connect with their base. Political process theory has since adopted the language of “framing,” which is “conscious strategic efforts by groups of people to fashion shared understandings of the world and of themselves that legitimate and motivate collective action” (Ritzer, 2007).

and insurance policies that support monoculture factory farming. Due to its massive scope, the Farm Bill represents a chance “to create a truly vibrant system and culture of food production that compensates family farmers when markets fail them, cares for those most in need, and conserves invaluable soils, water resources, and natural habitat for future generations” (Imhoff, 2012, 28). This would be a radical shift from the bill’s traditional role, but the opportunity exists to “comprehensively address agricultural and food issues” (Johnson & Monke, 2012, 1). However, the Farm Bill must be understood in the political context in which it was created, as the legacy of the “regimes” continue to affect agricultural policy today.

History

The Farm Bill was created in 1933 to aid floundering farmers as a response to the Great Depression. President Franklin Delano Roosevelt enacted the Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA) to provide insurance to those farmers whose crops were severely impacted by the Dust Bowl and drought, and to reverse the rapidly unraveling “U.S. agrarian culture and economy” (Imhoff, 2012, 38; Dimitri et al., 2005, 9). This first version hinged upon a farm support program known as the “Ever-Normal Granary” where the government “would purchase and stockpile surplus crops and livestock during good years as a protection against dwindling supply in lean years” (Imhoff, 2012, 39). The basic principle behind AAA was to increase returns to farmers, and it relied heavily on “price supports and supply controls” to do so (Dimitri et al., 2005, 9). This was in keeping with the New Deal regime, in which government policies served a “corrective market” function to “shield the public from the vicissitudes of the marketplace” (Eisner, 1993, 5; Harris & Milkis, 1989, 28). The political institutions of the New Deal sought to “save capitalism from itself” by creating departments and writing policies capable of minimizing the negative consequences of a free market (Harris & Milkis, 1989, 64). The AAA was one such example. This earliest version of the Farm Bill also established food relief programs to “provide a baseline of hunger and nutritional assistance for an extremely needy population” (Imhoff, 2012, 40). The legacy of the AAA was the firm establishment of the two primary pillars of the Farm Bill, aid to farmers (through supply control and price support) and nutrition assistance (Imhoff, 2012, 41). The institutional repercussions of the federal government’s permanent involvement in US agriculture, the repercussions of which can still be felt in today’s agricultural political structure.

“The agricultural regulatory system established during the New Deal evolved and became relatively insulated. Organized commodity producers, the USDA, and the relevant

congressional committees monopolized policy...The close relationship between members of Congress, the USDA, and the commodity groups created a relatively stable system of self-regulation that allowed farmers to increase prices and income. Within the system of self-regulation, the majority of benefits have accrued to the larger farmers, at the expense of smaller farms and consumers (Eisner, 1993, 97).

Over the next few decades following the New Deal, farming in America underwent rapid changes, thanks to the increased industrialization of agriculture from World War II technologies and the Green Revolution of the 1970's. During this time, a new regime arose focused on improving quality of life in the face of rising post-materialism values as a reaction to what was seen as capitalist waste (Eisner, 1993, 8). The Societal Regime sought to prevent the hazards to human health and the environment that arose from "advanced" industrial production. The public had reacted negatively to the variety of health and environmental crises that arose during the 1960's and 70's, and new interest groups were intent on penetrating the executive branch and bureaucracy to "establish their own organizational presence in the policy process as a counterweight to business and entrenched bureaucrats" (Harris & Milkis, 1989, 84). The establishment of citizen lawsuits in conjunction with their attempts to hijack the "subgovernmental politics which had evolved into a set of informal relations among business interests, legislators, and bureaucrats" led to some success at implementing policy desires on a federal level (88). In reaction, the federal government hoped to limit the undue influence of business in the "administration of regulatory affairs" through the use of regulation and establishment of new agencies (Harris & Milkis, 1989, 9). "Rather than promoting stability and profitability, and thus furthering the interests of regulated industries, the new social regulations imposed significant costs that were often of uncertain magnitude, timing, and competitive effects", such as the Clean Water Act. (Eisner, 1993, 121). The new environmental legislation affected agriculture namely through new regulations on pesticides and the outlawing of DDT, a widely used but incredibly toxic pesticide. The policies regulating the agricultural paradigm went largely unchanged but the new policies did "delegate authority to and vest responsibility in social-scientific and scientific experts in the agencies," a trend that continues in today's regulatory agencies, namely the USDA (Eisner, 1993, 129). Even as the Societal Regime questioned some of the costs of capitalism, agricultural policy increasingly turned to stronger market measures to "take advantage of the rising export demands of global markets" (Dmitri et al., 2005, 9). The Food and Agricultural Act of 1965 maintained the New Deal supply control and price supports for farmers, but supply control decreased after this bill until finally disappearing in 1996, in keeping with the

regime that arose in reaction to the Societal Regime's perceived "over-regulation" (Dmitri et al., 2005, 9)

The controversial Secretary of Agriculture, Earl Butz, best known for his strong advocacy for farmers to "get big or get out", best exemplified the Efficiency Regime later popularized by Ronald Reagan (Imhoff, 2012, 44). Under this regime, the market was used as "the benchmark in assessing the need for policies and in designing new policies" and "regulatory reform and deregulation efforts [were] driven by an overwhelming concern with corporate compliance costs. With a newfound institutional reliance on cost-benefit analysis, "social benefits [were] weighed against the costs incurred by corporations, and regulators [were] urged to seek the least burdensome form of regulation" (Eisner, 1993, 172). Corporations across America took full advantage of this newfound liberty, and agribusiness was no exception. "Through the 1980's, farm bills were shaped mainly by agricultural interests, including farm bureaus, trade associations for various crops, and large agribusiness companies" (Weeks, 2012, 695). Due to the policies enacted by Butz, agriculture became dominated by corporate interests at the expense of the American farmer. "Cheap grain allowed the expansion of factory farms, and the food processors and grain traders enjoyed record profits from the cheap commodities that received a taxpayer subsidy" (Hauter, 2012, 24). The use of cost-benefit analysis as the "principal tool of public policy" shifted the burden of proof to program advocates because the "benefits" of government intervention were more difficult to calculate concretely than "costs" (Harris & Milkis, 1989, 105-106). Due to superior finances, this gave a distinct advantage to powerful and wealthy corporations and agricultural policy reflected this. The 1996 Farm Bill, meant to allow the market to stabilize the farm economy simply "left farmers vulnerable to market fluctuations caused by agribusiness buyers as well as the weather" (Food & Water Watch, 2012, 8).

Farm subsidies were decoupled from commodity prices to disastrous effect when commodity prices fell shortly after the 1996 bill, resulting in billions of dollars of emergency farm assistance from Congress and a reversion to traditional subsidies that supported industrial agriculture (Weeks, 2012, 705). This stranglehold on industry power continued through the 2008 Farm Bill, simultaneously driving overproduction (and therefore low crop prices) while infiltrating the political process to create the policies that perpetuated such cheap prices. The proliferation of industrial agriculture driven by agribusiness created terrible consequences for the environment, the economy, and human health, as previously noted. The Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas found

that “traditional [subsidy] programs do not provide the economic lift that farming regions need going forward” as in 2000-2003, “nearly two thirds of the counties that received heavy farm subsidies” had their job creation growth rate decline until falling beneath the national average (Imhoff, 2012, 49).

While hunger assistance has remained a vital component of the Farm Bill since its New Deal origins, much of the controversy centers on the system of farmer aid that was altered by Earl Butz into support for corporate interests, an enduring legacy of the Efficiency Regime. It is this “farmer safety net” that forms the foundation of the industrial agriculture paradigm, and without reform, it will continue to serve as the foundation of the agricultural and food policy landscape in America. Modern farm policy favors “large industrial-scale agriculture” and “overproduction of commodity crops” and while farm policy may still be anchored to the farmer support started in the Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1933, local food advocates believe a more balanced Farm Bill is needed (Food & Water Watch, 2012, 2; Weeks, 2012, 705). Alternative interests, like organic produce or local food, represent a challenge to the distortion by the “efficiency” establishment, and they have seen progress in the most recent forms of the bill.

Hypothesis

This paper examines Senate Bill 3240 (S. 3240), the Agriculture Reform, Food, and Jobs Act of 2012 to demonstrate the impact of local food on this landmark legislation. The Senate Bill is chosen because it passed the Senate by a vote of 64-35 in June 2012, but also because it is very similar to its partner in the House, which passed its committee but was never voted on in the House floor (Chite, “The 2012 Farm Bill, 2012; Ferguson, 2013). Any especially noteworthy differences between the two bills will be cited in my study. This leaves out other proposals for the Farm Bill, but the version passed by the Senate received wide bipartisan support and shall serve as a marker for a legitimate proposal for a new Farm Bill. Although S.3240 expired with the end of the 112th Congress, the new Farm Bill has yet to pass or even be brought before the floor at this point (March 2013), and thus the Agriculture Reform, Food, and Jobs Act of 2012 serves as the most recent and best indicator of a plausible Farm Bill proposal.

A comparison of S.3240 with the “ideal” Farm Bill created from the proposals from several advocate groups of local food provides the platform by which the presence or absence of local food’s

proposals will serve to indicate the success or failure of the local food movement to translate rhetoric into policy. This “ideal” platform may not be entirely inclusive of all demands by the local food movement due to time constraints for further research, but the main proposals are well represented by drawing heavily from the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition and the Local Farms, Food and Jobs Act (S.1773), among a variety of other local food advocates. The specific programs and policies examined will include the following: the Commodities Title, the Crop Insurance Title, Value Added Producer Grants, Specialty Crop Block Grants, the Farmers Market Promotion Program, the Business and Industry Loan Program, Section 32 and the Department of Defense Fresh Fruit and Vegetables Program, the Community Facilities Grant, and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

The 2008 Farm Bill will serve as the measure of industrial agricultural interests. Although inclusive of some measures addressing local food, the titles and programs of 2008 Farm Bill favored industrial agriculture over local food and other alternatives through its heavy support of the farmer safety net. Any significant reform of this safety net, as presented by the local food movement platform, could represent a weakening of industrial agriculture interests or the strengthening of alternative interests, like the local food movement. With this inclusion, I determine if S.3240 reflects a significant challenge to the conventional agriculture paradigm by assessing the degree to which the ideal types are reflected in the Senate’s bill.

I submit that although local food has achieved vital first steps in gaining a foothold in national policy, it has yet to radically transform agricultural policy to achieve the change envisioned by the movement, namely the establishment of local food as an integral part of the American agriculture and food system.

Hypothesis #1- The efficiency regime in agriculture has created governing structures and exists in a directed setting that are both biased in favor of industrial agriculture, so much so that the local food alternative has been blocked.

The “efficiency” regulatory regime continues to shape the existing agricultural order to produce outcomes like the Farm Bills of 2008 and, I suggest, the Farm Bill of 2012 which are biased towards industrial agriculture. My research reveals that the current U.S. political climate and culture is not conducive to the change sought by local food, as the dominant industrial agriculture paradigm is

backed by firmly entrenched powers in government and corporate lobbying. To demonstrate this, I will draw from Political Process theory to assess the current political opportunity structure and political setting, therefore defining the regime that the local food movement faces in the realm of food and farm policy. This case study differs from textbook Political Process theory as it utilizes a facet of PPT to focus on the political context in which the local food movement operates, allowing analysis of the political opportunity structure and setting as the determinant for the success of the local food movement. The tactics and messages of the movement have been important in mobilizing public opinion, but the Farm Bill remains largely unchanged due to powerful conservative forces within the agricultural political structure. Thus, this research will not examine the factors of mobilizing structures or cognitive liberation in regards to the Farm Bill. By assessing the degree to which Senate bill S.3240 matches the ideal type for local food, I discover how this challenge to industrial agriculture has been received by politicians in control of farm and food policy.

Research Design

This study uses the political opportunity structure to measure the success of the local food movement in America. The ability of local food movement to enter the national policy discussion on food and farming can be explained by defining the regime and describing the power structure within the policy realm. The political opportunity structure will be analyzed for the period leading up to the creation of the 2008 Farm Bill to the present, specifically in regards to agricultural policy. This time period will allow for analysis of the decision-making behind the 2008 Farm Bill and the powers involved in the current Farm Bill legislation. Factors to consider will include the vertical and horizontal concentrations of power within the American government, the influence of lobbying (as measured by dollars spent by conservative or transformative factions), regional alliances within Congress, and the background, interests, and tendencies of Congress members involved in the Farm Bill. A closed or directed political setting will limit the ability local food to radically affect political change, while an open setting and elite allies within Congress would allow local food initiatives to more easily enter into the political arena. The criteria used to describe the political opportunity structure and thus define the regime concerning American agricultural policy are developed primarily from the texts of McAdam and Van der Heijden and consists of four categories:

1. Formal Institutional Structure of the State
2. Stability of Elite Alignments
3. The State's Capacity and Propensity for Repression

4. Presence of Elite Allies

The dependent variable in this study is success. As there is widespread debate within the literature on social movements as to what “success” is, I utilize the “ideal type” comparison¹⁰ to determine whether or not the local food movement has been successful in achieving its stated goals in challenging industrial agriculture, and to what degree have they transformed rhetoric into political gain. All measures relate to the Farm Bill and its changes from 2008 to 2012, recognizing the introduction or expansion of new programs or policies related to local food, and acknowledging any changes that would result in limitations or decreased support for industrial agriculture. There are four categories, developed from proposals by the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, Food & Water Watch, the Local Food Farm and Jobs Act, the Seattle Food Principles, as well as additions from Food Fight: The Citizen’s Guide to the Next Food and Farm Bill and Foodopoly, written by the Director of the Food & Water Watch. While these groups do not represent the entirety of the local food movement, an analysis of every group involved in the local food movement is beyond the scope of the current research. The proposals submitted from these groups and literature will serve to represent a relevant measure of the goals of the local food movement. The four categories are as follows:

1. Farmer Safety Net Reform
2. Support for Local and Regional Infrastructure
3. Increased Access
4. Improved Marketing

By examining the various demands of the local food movement, I have formed a cohesive list of goals that, for the purposes of this paper, will serve as the “ideal” backbone of a new Farm Bill for the local food movement. This list is not all inclusive, but these categories contain the main programs and policies with the greatest potential to impact local food. The 2008 Farm Bill, as an expression of the directed agricultural regime, will serve as the baseline against which Senate Bill 3240 (with the notable differences of the House Bill included) will be compared to determine how successful the local food movement was in navigating the political opportunity for policy gains.

To provide “smoking gun” evidence, I have also investigated the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee hearings, and Congressional Records from the Senate floor to analyze the

¹⁰ (Watkins, 1952; Lopreato & Alston, 1970)

content of the discussion and how local food initiatives are perceived and discussed within the Senate. This establishes a firm link between the presence of local food interests and representatives of local food groups and the resulting policies. If it is found that local food has clearly stated their goals to the Senate during hearings or debate, the presence or absence of policies that meet those goals may serve as one indicator of local food's transformative capacity.

2008 Farm Bill

Officially entitled The Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008, the Farm Bill was enacted in June of 2008 as the successor to the 2002 Farm Bill. It contained 15 titles (see Figure 2)¹¹ addressing various issues including but not limited to commodity price and income supports, conservation, research, rural development, energy, and domestic food programs (Johnson & Monke, 2012, 1). This bill was set to expire on the 30th of September, 2012 but as a new bill could not be ratified before then; certain key aspects of the bill were extended until 2013, in the hopes of fashioning a new Farm Bill. While the addition of the "Horticulture and Organic Agriculture" to the 2008 Farm Bill represented a significant step in expanding support for organics and "specialty crops"¹², the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) expected the mandatory outlays to account for "less than one-half of 1 percent" of total mandatory farm bill spending" (Chite, 2012, 16). There are a few noteworthy programs within, such as the Specialty Crop Block Grant Program (SCBGP)¹³. However, the majority of non-nutrition assistance support went to the farmer safety net and the continuation of the dominance of industrial agriculture. As such, the 2008 Bill will serve as the baseline of the efficiency regime and a stand in for the interests of industrial agriculture.

¹¹ Figure 2 briefly highlights the titles and their respective functions but the specific provisions and programs as they relate to local food are namely those found in the nutrition, farm credit, research, rural development, and horticulture titles.

¹² Defined as "fruits and vegetables, tree nuts, dried fruits, and horticulture and nursery crops" (Johnson et al., 2012, 39)

¹³ As the principal program of Title X, the SCBGP is a system of grants provided to the state departments to aid in the production and expansion of "specialty crops". It awards a base amount to all states, and then additional funds are granted based on the state's proportion of national specialty crop production; over half of this additional funding is awarded to three states: California, Florida, and Washington (Chite, 2012, 16; Johnson et al., 2012, 39). In practice, this program supports local food via "school and community gardens, farm-to-school programs, facilities that support the processing and distribution of locally grown specialty crops, and improved access to specialty crops in underserved communities" (Johnson et al., 2012, 40). Program funding totaled \$224 million during the years 2009-2012 since the 2008 Farm Bill's passing into law.

Figure 2. (Johnson & Monke, 2012, 5)

The 2008 Farm Bill (P.L. 110-246): Functions and Major Issues, by Title	
•	Title I, Commodity Programs: Provided income or other types of support (“safety net”) to farmers that grow the major commodity crops—wheat, corn, soybeans, cotton, and rice. Included programs to help farmers manage production risks, including volatile weather, natural disasters, as well as market fluctuations. Support to farmers was largely through direct payments, counter-cyclical payments, and marketing loans. Other support mechanisms included government purchases for dairy, and marketing quotas and import barriers for sugar.
•	Title II, Conservation: Encouraged environmental stewardship of farmlands and improved management practices through a range of land retirement and/or working lands programs, among other programs geared to farmland conservation, preservation, and resource protection. Working lands programs include: Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). Land retirement programs included: Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) and the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP), among others.
•	Title III, Trade: Provided support for U.S. agricultural export programs and international food assistance programs. Major programs included: Market Access Program (MAP) and the primary U.S. food aid program, the P.L. 480 program, and other programs. Additionally, addressed program changes related to World Trade Organization (WTO) obligations.
•	Title IV, Nutrition: Provided nutrition assistance for households and individuals through programs such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as food stamps) and The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), among other types of supplemental nutrition assistance. Additionally, provided support for a program making fresh fruits and vegetables available in schools, and other types of support for child nutrition programs.
•	Title V, Credit: Provided support for federal direct and guaranteed loans to farmers and ranchers, and loan eligibility rules and policies.
•	Title VI, Rural Development: Supported business and community programs for planning, feasibility assessments, and coordination activities with other local, state, and federal programs. Programs include rural development loan and grant programs and authorized several new provisions, rural infrastructure, economic development, and broadband and telecommunications development, among other programs.
•	Title VII, Research, Extension, and Related Matters: Supported agricultural research and extension programs that help farmers and ranchers become more efficient, innovative, and productive. Other types of research programs included biosecurity and response, biotechnology, and organic production.
•	Title VIII, Forestry: Supported forestry management programs run by the U.S. Forest Service.
•	Title IX, Energy: Supported the development of farm and community renewable energy systems through various programs, grants, and procurement assistance initiatives. Provisions covered the production, marketing, and processing of biofuel feedstocks; expanded research, education, and demonstration programs for advanced biofuels; USDA coordination of federal biobased energy efforts; grants for procurement of biobased products to support development of biorefineries; assistance for eligible farmers, ranchers, and rural small businesses in purchasing renewable energy systems; and user education programs, among other programs.
•	Title X, Horticulture: Supported the production of specialty crops—fruits, vegetables, tree nuts, and floriculture and ornamental products—through a range of initiatives, including market promotion; plant pest and disease prevention; and public research; among other initiatives. Additionally, provided assistance to certified organic agricultural production.
•	Title XI, Livestock: Addressed a range of programs affecting livestock or poultry producers.
•	Title XII, Crop Insurance and Disaster Assistance: Provided for federal crop insurance and disaster assistance, including policies for crop insurance coverage and risk management.
•	Title XII, Miscellaneous: Other types of programs and assistance not covered in other bill titles, including provisions to assist limited-resource and socially disadvantaged farmers, and agricultural security, among others.

Other programs related to local food include Value Added Producer Grants (VAPG)¹⁴, the Farmer's Market Promotion Program¹⁵, the Farmer's Market Nutrition Program¹⁶, the Business and Industry Loan Program¹⁷, Farm to School Programs¹⁸, and the Community Facilities Loan and Grant Program¹⁹.

¹⁴ The Value-Added Producer Grants provides funding to "further refine, enhance or otherwise add value to their products" (Johnson et al., 2012, 41). A simple example of this would be a cattle rancher turning their beef into jerky and using the grant to develop the necessary facilities to process the beef. It is an opportunity for local and regional food producers to "add value" to their products in an effort to gain a stronger foothold in the local market, especially as priority is given for proposals from small and medium-sized farms (41).

¹⁵ The Farmer's Market Promotion Program began in 1976 as part of the Farmer-to-Consumer Direct Marketing Act of 1976, and has since been amended in the Farm Bills of 2002 and 2008. This program is perhaps the one most directly linked with local food, as it provides grants specifically targeted towards establishing, improving, and promoting farmers' markets and other direct marketing activities (CSA's, direct sales to schools, etc.) (Kratochwill, 2011). Grant awards are limited to \$100,000 but matching funds are not required and the amount has steadily increased from \$3 million awarded in 2008, to \$10 million in 2010 and 2011 (Johnson et al., 2012, 40).

¹⁶ There are three programs within the Farm Market Nutrition Program, all related to improving purchasing power at farmer's markets. The first is the Women, Infants, and Children Farmers Market Nutrition Program (WIC-FMNP). WIC-FMNP started in 1992 to increase access to fresh locally grown produce for low-income WIC recipients, namely through farmers' markets. In 2010, coupon redemption created a \$15.7 million profit for farmers while covering an estimated 2.15 million recipients. Funding has been sporadic throughout the program's history, as it depends on individual state allocations. In the 2011 fiscal year, \$20 million was allocated whereas only \$16.5 million was allocated in the 2012 fiscal year (Johnson et al., 2012, 49). The Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program operates in a similar manner, providing grants to states to create redeemable coupons for low-income seniors to use at CSA's, roadside stands, and farmer's markets to increase access to fresh local food. The last program is focused on increased acceptance of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) at farmers' markets. These direct marketing outlets have increasingly become SNAP-licensed retailers, permitting SNAP participants to utilize their electronic benefit transfer card (EBT) at authorized retailers within the farmers' market to buy local food. Although the Farm Bill does not require SNAP benefits to be redeemed to purchase local food, SNAP bonus incentive programs allows for participants to redeem their EBT for more than the dollar value at participating retailers, although this additional money must be provided by other sources. One example of such a program can be found at the Certified Farmers' Market in San Diego, California. "In partnership with the Wholesome Wave Foundation (a private foundation that offers programs to match dollar values of SNAP benefits at farmers markets), the market offered an additional \$5 in "fresh fund dollars" to SNAP customers who spent more than \$10 of their SNAP benefits at the market. This incentive program proved so successful that SNAP redemptions nearly tripled" (Wasserman et al., 2010, 9). There are similar programs that exist around the country and farmers' markets and farm stands are increasingly their enrollment to accept EBT cards. Yet, participation is limited by the need for outside funding and additional incentives to purchase local food using SNAP benefits. Despite recent gains, SNAP benefits redeemed at farmers' markets and farm stands in the fiscal year of 2009 totaled \$4.33 million representing *"less than one-hundredth of 1 percent"* of the total amount of SNAP benefits redeemed by program participants, around \$50 billion (emphasis original) (Wasserman et al., 2010, 3).

¹⁷ The Business and Industry Guaranteed Loan Program helps a rural business owner gain better interest rates and terms of loans by having the USDA co-sign the loan. The loans can be used in a variety of ways to either save, protect, or expand the business but the 2008 Farm Bill was unique in specifying that at least 5% of the program funding from 2008-2012 had to be used to "support local and regional food production" (Johnson et al., 2012, 45; Chite, 2012, 43).

¹⁸ Farm to School programs include Section 32 funding and the Department of Defense Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program. Section 32 dates back to the New Deal, and refers to a permanent appropriation of funds to the USDA that can be used for a variety of purposes. In recent years, the majority of these funds have been used by the USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) to purchase "non-price supported commodities",

There are numerous provisions within the 2008 Farm Bill that help support the expansion of local food efforts across the United States. However, most come in the form of grants, which have to be applied for every year, and are entirely reliant on the appropriations process that occurs *every year*, determining which programs within the Farm Bill will receive full funding as allocated in the respective relevant Farm Bill²⁰. More importantly, the most noticeable absence of local food provisions comes from the “farmer safety net”²¹. Consisting of **farm commodity price and income support programs, federal crop insurance, and disaster assistance programs**, there was little change to the farmer safety net to give advocates of local food or alternative food in general any hope over extensive reform (Weber, 2008, 1428). Income and price supports for commodity crops that accounted for roughly 22% of the 2008 Farm Bill spending (Imhoff, 2012, 24). In fact, if nutrition assistance (SNAP) is eliminated from consideration, crop insurance and commodities provisions accounted for \$43.9 billion and \$89.9 billion, respectively, thus covering over 75% of the remaining appropriated funds allocated from 2002-2012 (26). That leaves less than 7% of total Farm Bill spending to cover all allocations for conservation, energy, exports, rural development, and local food. The local food movement opposes such a distinct advantage given to industrial agriculture. The total cost of this safety net in 2011 was \$13.5 billion, 90 percent of which was covered by five crops: corn, wheat, soybeans, cotton, and rice. Under these programs, conventional agriculture continues to grow at the expense of the environment, small farmers, human health, and local economies (Chite, 2012; Johnson & Monke, 2012, 6). The lack of provisions to support alternative food sources, including local food, creates an uneven playing field that unless radically changed, will continue to perpetuate an increasingly unsustainable system. This is not to say that the safety net should be eliminated. Rather it is to recognize that reform is needed to “restore

meaning fruits and vegetables, for schools (Becker, 1). The 2008 Farm Bill mandated that a portion of these funds be spent on specialty crops, an amount that increased to \$206 million for 2012 (NSAC, 74). In addition, the largest portion of funds is transferred to the USDA’s Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) to supplement child nutrition programs through the National School Lunch Act (Becker, 2). The Department of Defense (DoD) also provides fresh produce to schools through its Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program, selling produce from its regional distribution centers to public schools who purchase it through federal funding.

¹⁹ Community Facilities loans and grants are specifically for rural development, falling under Title VI (Rural Development) of the 2008 Farm Bill, along with the Business and Industry Guaranteed Loan Program and the Rural Cooperative Development Grants. These project grants have traditionally been used to expand electricity, sanitation, and waste management efforts in rural areas but have recently expanded to recognize farmers’ markets, school and community kitchens, community gardens, and refrigerated trucks as qualified proposals (Johnson et al., 2012, 46).

²⁰ For example, in 2009, there would have been an appropriations decision that would decide how much funding a program would receive, based on the amounts allocated in the 2008 Farm Bill. This process would be repeated in 2010, 2011, etc. Thus, simply getting an issue onto the Farm Bill does not guarantee successive funding for the next 5-7 years.

²¹ As found in Title I and Title XII of the 2008 Farm Bill (Chite, 2012, 8).

supply management policies and price safety nets that make agribusiness, not taxpayers, pay farmers fairly for the food they grow” (Food & Water Watch, 2012, 12).

The 2008 Farm Bill marked an improvement in the visibility and presence of local food in national agriculture and food policy. However, as the traditional commodity and insurance structures were left relatively unchanged, local food stayed a marginal issue that presented no considerable challenge to industrial agriculture. Due to this inertia, the local food movement has since mobilized its forces in an attempt to gain a stronger foothold in the Farm Bill and nearly succeeded in the fall of 2012 with the Senate and House bills inspired by the Local Farms, Food and Jobs Act. Thus, the Farm Bill represents an enormous political opportunity for discussion to change about food and farming in America, and the gains or losses of the local food movement in the new Farm Bill will serve as one, (albeit very important and enlightening) indication of the success of the movement at integrating itself into the American political institution.

Ideal Farm Bill- Local Food

Based off proposals from the NSAC, Food & Water Watch, the Local Food Farm and Jobs Act, the Seattle Food Principles, and with additions from Food Fight: The Citizens Guide to the Next Food and Farm Bill, by Daniel Imhoff, and Foodopoly, by Director of the Food & Water Watch, Wenonah Huater, I developed the “ideal” Farm Bill from the perspective of the local food movement. Any of these proposals found in S.3240 would serve as correlation in support of the local food movement’s ability to take advantage of the political opportunity structure and gain political change. The following chart on the next page shows the proposals of the local food movement as they relate to four categories of reform:

1. Farmer Safety Net Reform
2. Support for Local and Regional Infrastructure
3. Increased Access
4. Marketing and Value of Local Foods

Model: Ideal Local Food Movement Farm Bill	
<i>Category</i>	<i>Goal</i>
Farmer Safety Net Reform	Eliminate Direct Payments
	Restore Strategic Grain Reserves
	Minimum Price Floors
	Redefine Active Management to Require Ongoing and Direct Involvement in Farm Activities ¹
	Limits on Crop Insurance (50 percent reduction on production exceeding \$1 million, 100 percent reduction on production exceeding \$2.5 million)
	Expand Crop Insurance to "Whole Farms"
Support for Local and Regional Infrastructure	Community Facilities Grant Wording to Recognize "Local and Regional Food System Facilities"
	Change Definition of "Rural" to Recognize Contributions of Urban Facilities to Rural Development
	Expand B&I Loan Program Funding and Allocation for Local and Regional Food Enterprises
Increased Access	Expand Funding of EBT
	Expand Outreach to Increase Participation in EBT and SNAP
	Include CSA's in Farmer's Market Nutrition Program
	Increase Section 32 Funding for Specialty Crops
	Add "Development of Local Agriculture Markets" to Section 32 Priorities
	Allow DoD Discretionary Spending on Local Food
	Increase FMPP Scope to Recognize CSA's; Increase Mandatory Funding to \$30 Million
Marketing and Value of Local Foods	Increase SCBG Funding to \$90 Million; Add Focus on Development of Local Food
	Increase VAPG Mandatory Funding to \$30 Million Annually; Expand Eligibility to "Food Hubs"
Developed from: National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, Food & Water Watch, the Local Food Farm and Jobs Act, the Seattle Food Principles, as well as additions from Food Fight: The Citizen's Guide to the Next Food and Farm Bill and Foodopoly , written by the Director of the Food & Water Watch.	

¹ Establishing payment limits by clearly defining "active management" would close one of the most abused loopholes in the Farm Bill resulting in "significant cost savings" (NSAC, 10, 25). Under the 2008 Farm Bill provisions, subsidies could be exploited and collected by farm "managers" who were never present or active in the process of farming.

Results

Given the "ideal" Farm Bill for local food, the bipartisan supported Agriculture Reform, Food and Jobs Act of 2012 is a reflection of how effective the local food movement was in challenging conventional agriculture to have their interests and goals translated into policy. There still exists an "efficiency" regime that continues to shape the agricultural order to produce outcomes like the Farm Bills of 2008 and 2012, which are biased towards industrial agriculture; Hypothesis #1 argues the efficiency regime has created a political structure and a directed political setting that are both biased in favor of industrial agriculture, so much so that the local food movement has been blocked from radically transforming agricultural policy to one more conducive to their aims.

Foremost among the reforms of the 2012 bill is the elimination of direct and countercyclical payments. This represented the first significant reform to commodity payments in a decade and it cuts \$4.5 billion from Farm Bill spending over the next 10 years. This removal of subsidy payments was one of the key demands of local food groups. A serious reduction to the farmer safety net, it was offset by a strengthening of the crop insurance program. The new Agriculture Risk Coverage program updates and modernizes commodity assistance by providing effective coverage for the risks that farmers face (U.S. Senate, 2012, 3). Amendments to the bill added conservation requirements and payment limits to the bill, in keeping with the platform of local food. Crop insurance was also expanded to provide “whole farm insurance” for the first time, although the program is in its beginning stages and not nearly as well funded as conventional commodity crops. The definition of “active engagement” was also redefined to clarify that in order to receive a payment, the person must be “actively engaged in farming” by providing “active personal management” (U.S. Senate, 2012, 7). Assisted by budget pressures to reduce spending, the proposals of local food in regards to the farmer safety net were largely met. However, an amendment proposed by Senator Gillibrand (D-NY) to remove the cuts from the SNAP program and instead cut funding from crop insurance was rejected by a vote of 33-66 in an indication of continued strong support for the farmer safety net (Postal, 2012).

Correlational: Ideal and Directed Outcomes- Farmer Safety Net Reform ²²	
<i>Local Food Movement Ideal</i>	<i>S.3240 Outcome</i>
Eliminate Direct Payments	√
Restore Strategic Grain Reserves	X
Minimum Price Floors	√
Redefine Active Management	√
Limits on Crop Insurance (50 percent reduction on production exceeding \$1 million, 100 percent reduction on production exceeding \$2.5 million)	-- Imposes limits on premium payments those with a gross income over \$750,000 pending a USDA study
Expand Crop Insurance to “Whole Farms”	√

One of the consistent and most pressing issues for local food was federal investment into infrastructure for the development of local and regional food systems. Along with the Farmer’s Market Promotion Program, infrastructure investment was one of the most discussed topics at the March 7th Senate hearing on local food initiatives. However, the Agriculture Reform, Food and Jobs

²² For the Correlational Tables, √ indicates success, -- indicates partial success, and X indicates failure to have the ideal addressed.

Act fails to provide for significant expansion of the local food market as it does not expand the Community Facilities Grant Program, maintains a definition of “rural” that does not recognize the contribution of urban areas to rural economies, and does not expand the Business & Industry Loan Program to allow for significant investment in local and regional food systems. The Community Facilities Program was reauthorized under the Senate bill but did not prioritize local and regional food system facilities or receive additional funding. Despite pleas from Secretary Vilsack to allow the USDA the flexibility to recognize the benefits to rural communities of infrastructure within urban areas, S.3240 does not recognize that potential for mutual benefit of *urban* “food hubs” that serve surrounding rural areas. The definition of “rural” decided upon by the Senate Agriculture Committee “grants eligibility to cities and towns of less than 50,000 in population and not contiguous or adjacent to urbanized areas” (U.S. Senate, 2012, 15). Lastly, S. 3240 reauthorizes funding for the Business and Industry Loans and the stipulation that at least 5 percent be reserved for projects that include the “processing, distribution, storage, and marketing of locally produced agriculture food products” (U.S. Senate, 2012, 32). This simply maintains the provision found in the 2008 bill, it does not expand funding or the mandate for local food projects. As one of the main and clearly expressed goals of the local food movement, the lack of any significant provision²³ for local food infrastructure continues a limitation on market growth for this industry²⁴. Therefore, hypothesis #1 is upheld as the local food movement’s desire for significant investment in local and regional food system infrastructure was clearly expressed to the Senate but did not gain a stronger foothold in the Farm Bill.

Correlational: Ideal and Directed Outcomes- Local and Regional Infrastructure	
<i>Local Food Movement Ideal</i>	<i>S.3240 Outcome</i>
Community Facilities Grant Wording to Recognize “Local and Regional Food System Facilities”	X
Change Definition of “Rural” to Recognize Contributions of Urban Facilities to Rural Development	X
Expand B&I Loan Program Funding and Allocation for Local and Regional Food Enterprises	-- Maintains 2008 Funding

²³ Besides providing competitive grants to improve market opportunities for direct producer-to-consumer outlets, the Farmers Market Promotion Program expanded to “provide assistance in developing local food system infrastructure,” like food hubs. This provision is the sole measure specifically addressing local and regional food system infrastructure and while noteworthy, it adds another outlet to an already competitive program and the increased funding does not constitute the transformative infrastructure investment in “food hubs” that the local food movement sought. It is an important first step but far from ideal.

²⁴ The USDA identified “one of the main constraints to the entry and expansion of local foods is the lack of distribution systems for moving local foods into mainstream markets” (Matson et al., 2013, 7).

The local food movement also had a number of initiatives proposed to increase access to direct marketing outlets for farmers and consumers. The expansion of electronic benefits transfer cards to more “untraditional” vendors would allow for more SNAP participants to engage in farmers markets and CSA’s and the Senate bill does remove any language to distinguish acceptable vendors for EBT technology. Funding is also maintained for the Farmer’s Market Nutrition Program, which provides low-income seniors with coupons to be exchanged for fruits and vegetables at farmers’ markets, roadside stands, and newly eligible community supported agriculture programs (U.S. Senate, 2012, 30). Increasing support for Farm to School programs was another main focus of local food, but funding was merely maintained at 2008 levels for the Fresh Fruit and Vegetables Program and the Department of Defense Fresh Program. Neither of these added any stipulation or wording to emphasize purchase of local foods or remove barriers to doing so. The key program for increasing access was the Farmers Market Promotion Program. Under the new bill, mandatory funding is doubled for the expanded Farmers Market and Local Food Promotion Program to \$20 million a year. While not the \$30 million hoped for by local food advocates, the increased funding in the face of budget pressures constitutes a successful translation of movement goals into political reality and thus challenges hypothesis #1.

Correlational: Ideal and Directed Outcomes- Increased Access	
<i>Local Food Movement Ideal</i>	<i>S.3240 Outcome</i>
Expand Funding of EBT	X
Expand Outreach to Increase Participation in EBT and SNAP	√
Include CSA’s in Farmer’s Market Nutrition Program	√
Increase Section 32 Funding for Specialty Crops	-- Funding is maintained at 2008 levels
Add “Development of Local Agriculture Markets” to Section 32 Priorities	X
Allow DoD Discretionary Spending on Local Food	X
Increase FMPP Scope to Recognize CSA’s; Increase Mandatory Funding to \$30 Million	√; -- CSA’s Recognized; Funding increased to \$20 million

In regards to improving the marketing and value of local foods, S. 3240 contained changes to two key programs: the Specialty Crop Block Grants (SCBG) and Value-Added Producer Grants (VAPG). Under the new bill, SCBG funding was increased from \$55 million a year under the 2008 bill to \$70 million a year. The change is short of the goal of \$90 million a year and does not include language

emphasizing preference for development of local and regional foods. Nevertheless, it marks a partial success for local food as this allocation of funding will allow for expanded research and promotion of fruits and vegetables, and thus more opportunities for the local food movement to access federal support. The Value-Added Producer Grant was allocated \$12.5 million in annual mandatory funding, starting in 2014 with up to an additional \$40 million available per annual appropriations (Chite, “The 2012 Farm Bill”, 2012, 81). This marked a notable growth in funds from the 2008 Bill but fell far short of the \$30 million in mandatory funding hoped for by local food advocates and did not include any priority for local food projects or expand eligibility requirements to include the establishment of “food hubs”. In support of my hypothesis, the Value-Added Producer Grants was not made a champion program of local and regional food system projects as local food advocates had hoped.

Correlational: Ideal and Directed Outcomes- Marketing and Value of Local Foods	
<i>Local Food Movement Ideal</i>	<i>S.3240 Outcome</i>
Increase SCBG Funding to \$90 Million; Add Focus on Development of Local Food	--/X Funding increased from \$55million to \$70million; Focus on local food missing
Increase VAPG Mandatory Funding to \$30 Million Annually; Expand Eligibility to “Food Hubs”	--/X Funding increased to \$12.5 million annually; no eligibility added

The Regime and Political Opportunity

As previously mentioned, “regime” refers to the system of ideas, institutions, and policies that determine how a society is governed (Harris & Milkis, 1989, 23). The New Deal, Societal, and Efficiency regimes were all unique in the characteristics of their governance but it is important to recognize that no regime is completely independent of the others; they “cannot shed entirely the institutional and policy relationships of previous regimes, even if the ideas of the new regime directly challenge those older relationships” (Eisner, 1993,; Harris & Milkis, 1989, 48). When considering the new Farm Bill, it will be important to keep in mind the respective legacies of the previous regimes and the continuity between them, as they continue to affect the development of farm policy today. The efficiency regime is the most recent and most apparent in agricultural policy, as human health and environmental concerns continue to be “considered less important than corporate profitability and economic competitiveness (Eisner, 1993, 172). This is the regime that the local food movement faces. Whether or not the new Farm Bill marks the beginning of a new

regime remains to be seen. The presence of local food initiatives expanded in the 2008 Farm Bill but “various institutional actors will have developed vested interests in the status quo” of industrial agriculture and they will seek to maintain their dominance (Harris & Milkis, 1989, 48). “This resistance pits the old ideas that support the status quo against the new ideas, and this dialectical clash of ideas can result in either the defeat of the new ideas or the emergence of a synthesis of the new and old. Only with a new synthesis is a change in the regime possible” (Harris & Milkis, 1989, 48). Drawing from the political opportunity structure and political setting that together determine the likelihood of local food “intrusion” into agricultural policy, I break the current agricultural regime into four main elements:

1. Formal Institutional Structure of the State
2. Stability of Elite Alignments
3. The State’s Capacity and Propensity for Repression
4. Presence of Elite Allies

This analysis provides explanation as to how the local food movement was capable of achieving what it did in the Agriculture Reform, Farm and Jobs Act of 2012.

The first part of any regime is the formal institutional structure of the state. “Institutions provide the context for the formulation and implementation of policy. They are central to politics and the policy process because they define the tasks of organization members, determine the way in which and the extent to which specialized knowledge will be brought to bear on policy problems, and shape the relationships among agencies, private associations, and organized constituencies” (Eisner, 1993, 10). The United States government is a federalized system, sharing power between the centralized federal government and the states; this fragmentation of power was a concentrated effort by the framers of the Constitution to prevent authoritarian rule (Eisner, 1993, 12). In the modern era, power favors the federal government, based in the “Supremacy Clause” in Article VI of the Constitution²⁵, and developed from the expanding role of government in public affairs started during the New Deal. States can still establish their own laws regarding production or purchasing of local food²⁶ and, a legacy from the deregulation and decentralization of the Efficiency Regime, are often independent in determining how to spend federal grant money from the USDA, as seen in the Specialty Crop Block Grant program. However, due to the scope and enormous federal funding

²⁵ The Supremacy Clause established state governments as subjects to federal law over state laws

²⁶ Such as Vermont’s Farm to Plate Initiative (2009) that calls for local food production to double from 5 percent to 10 percent by 2020 (Etnier, 2011)

behind the Farm Bill, the national agriculture and food system will always be dictated by this omnibus legislation.

The Farm Bill is a law that is renewed every 5-7 years by Congress. Although primarily under the jurisdiction of the US Department of Agriculture for implementation, and therefore subject to influence from the executive branch (by appointments), Congress is the central authority for this legislation. President George W. Bush used a rare Farm Bill veto in 2008 due to a desire to limit government subsidies but was overwhelmingly overridden by Congress (Herszenhorn & Stout, 2011). The Supreme Court was involved in striking down the New Deal Agricultural Adjustment Act that created the Farm Bill, but the Farm Bill continued as one of the most important pieces of legislation written by Congress (SNAP to Health!, 2013). “The president and the courts are quite important in shaping regulatory authority, but Congress bears the primary responsibility. It passes regulatory legislation, oversees agencies’ activities, and tries to shape implementation actions. Reflecting its composition, the frequency of elections, and the existing system of campaign finance, Congress is exceptionally sensitive to interest group’s demands and local constituencies’ concerns” (Eisner, 1993, 13). As Congress is responsible for the authorization of the Farm Bill (to determine baseline funding for programs) and the subsequent annual appropriations of those funds (to determine what actually receives funding), it is understandably the logical primary target of the newfound political arm of the local food movement.

Within Congress, there exist multiple political parties, but the US political system is widely recognized as a two party system, with power shared between the Democratic Party (liberal) and the Republican Party (conservative). Congressional elections are largely determined by plurality votes, rather than proportional representation, and thus minority parties are a fringe presence within the US government. As a representative democracy, Congressmen and women are expected to represent the interests of their constituents with their votes on all legislation during their terms. The negotiations for the newest Farm Bill have occurred under a Democratic President, Barack Obama, a Democratic-controlled Senate, led by Majority Leader Harry Reid, and a Republican-controlled House of Representatives, led by Speaker John Boehner. Republicans gained control of the House in the 2010 midterm elections, and since then the US political system, especially within Congress, has been characterized by highly partisan politics. Outright obstruction, refusal to negotiate, and filibusters are not uncommon in the floors of Congress, but they have reached new highs during Obama’s tenure. Party politics are often the first consideration for any legislation but

agricultural policy is divided more along regional than partisan lines (Lesniewski & Ferguson). In the Senate, where every state has equal representation, senators from “farm states” will often align across party lines with one another to leverage their coalitional power against more populous, urban states. Divisions between Midwestern farm interests, Southern farm interests, and states primarily concerned with the welfare of urban residents are common.

The second consideration to make when analyzing a regime is the stability of elite alignments, relating directly to the prominence of regional divisions within agricultural policymaking. Elite alignments refers to the relationship between political elites that determines what issues receive priority within policy discussion, but also the existing conflicts that may prevent new topics from entering the debate (Van der Heijden, 1997). With the Farm Bill, regional loyalties are the first to consider when discussing elite alignments. “Particularly as expressed in the composition of Congress, the federal system gives local concerns and regional disputes national significance... regional voting blocs in Congress may pass regulatory legislation to impede economic changes that could affect economic patterns of economic development” (Eisner, 1993, 14).

This has already been seen in the differing versions between the Senate and the House; the former favored Midwestern interests while the latter promoted Southeastern interests. “The Senate bill offered a revenue loss protection plan that several studies said would be more advantageous to Midwest corn and soybean growers. The House approach made a price loss protection plan the centerpiece and kept target prices as the trigger for payments to participating farmers. The combination appealed to rice, peanut, and wheat farmers, who thought it would provide a stronger financial safety net than the Senate approach” (Ferguson, 2013). Within the Senate, they were able to pass S.3240 with bipartisan support from Chairman Stabenow (D-MI) and Ranking Member Roberts (R-KS) leading the effort to avoid partisan politics.

The biggest challenges again came from the same regional concerns, with the opposition coming from mostly “moderates and conservatives from the South and West” wanting stronger provisions for rice and peanuts, staples of southern agriculture (Brasher & Ferguson, 2012). During the Senate vote on S. 3240, Senator Landrieu of Louisiana expressed her displeasure, stating “From sugar and rice in the south, to cotton and poultry in the north, and all areas in between, Louisiana needs a farm bill that supports all of our farmers. This one failed in one important area, which is why I cast a “no” vote...Rice took a 65% reduction [in subsidy support] when the other crops, on average, took

a 30% reduction” (Senate June 21st, 2012, S4401). Landrieu was supported by Senator Chambliss of Georgia who also voted “no” on the bill. Despite being a “significant reform,” the bill, according to Chambliss, did not recognize “certain limitations of crop insurance for certain regions of the country, namely, the Southeast, and whether the new commodity title program ARC, can work as a safety net for crops other than corn and soybeans. Leaving producers without an effective safety net provides very little protection and certainty for those outside the Midwest” (Senate June 21st, 2012, S3998).

Instability is not limited to regional tension between the Midwest and the South. There is also tension between Northeastern and urban senators wanting to maintain SNAP funding at the expense of farmer support programs (Lesniewski & Ferguson, 2012). A proposed amendment by Senator Gillibrand (D-NY) would have kept funding for SNAP by taking the \$4.5 billion in cuts from crop insurance instead (CQ Weekly, 2012). However, the amendment was rejected 33-66, representing entrenched opposition to further cuts to crop insurance from both Midwestern and Southern interests. The issue of SNAP cuts will remain a source of contention in the new Farm Bill, as one of the primary differences between S.3240 and the version passed by the House Agriculture Committee was the severity of the cuts to SNAP; the Senate cut \$4.5 billion from the program but the House version cut \$16.5 billion (Ferguson, 2013). It is important to note that negotiations for the new Farm Bill have taken place during a time of economic crisis and budget cuts. Addressing the federal deficit is among the top priorities of Congress and so “there is less money to respond to national needs and priorities in the Federal policies and programs covered in [the Farm Bill]” (Senate June 21st, 2012, S4395). The cuts to the commodity titles and SNAP were heavily influenced by these issues in conjunction with increased pressures from interest groups.

The third element of the regime is the state’s capacity and propensity for repression. Despite the multitude of democratic avenues available to the American public, the Farm Bill was, until recently, a bill largely decided behind closed doors. Corporations have had a strong influence since the days of Earl Butz and the advent of the Efficiency Regime but the 2010 Citizens United Supreme Court decision has turned the democratic process on its head. Unlimited corporate funds can now legally flow into the political campaign process, purchasing the decisions of lawmakers before their constituents can have their voice heard. During the legislative process for the 2008 Farm Bill, a staggering \$173.5 million was spent on lobbying, in comparison to \$120 million spent on lobbying

for the healthcare reform bill, one of the most controversial pieces of legislation in recent history (Food & Water Watch, "Cultivating Influence", 2012, 1).

Despite growing public demands for new priorities in food and agriculture policy, the last few Farm Bills essentially maintained the legacy of Earl Butz and the Efficiency Regime: financial support for large farms and agribusinesses (Food & Water Watch, "Cultivating Influence", 2012, 2). When considering the lobbying on commodities, farm credit, crop insurance, and equipment totaled over \$29 million (over 16 percent of all lobbying) and represented more than 140 interest groups, it is possible to see the connection, especially considering the specialty crop and organic groups only spent \$3.6 million (Food & Water Watch, "Cultivating Influence", 2012, 6). The specialty crop industry had hoped to make a significant impact on the 2008 bill by doubling campaign contributions, making political alliances, and increasing pressure on Congress but their \$8.5 billion wish list was confronted by "old-time power politics" that are "remarkably resistant to change" (Martin, 2007, 1).

Gains in programs like the Farmers Market Promotion Program in 2008 marked an improvement, but it must be said that until the Senate Bill 3240, the political setting of agricultural and food policy has been a "directed" one (Simeone, 2010, 482). The 2008 Farm Bill had the appearance of openness but outcomes were shaped by the few powerful and dominant interests capable of infiltrating the political labyrinth. One need look no further than the allocation of funding within the Farm Bill, (excluding nutrition assistance) to find where the power lies. From 2002-2012, \$89.9 billion has been allocated to commodities, \$43.9 billion towards federal crop insurance, and \$37.2 billion towards conservation; local food money doesn't even make the list (Imhoff, 2012, 27). Additionally, while the ten year baseline for mandatory Farm Bill Programs for the fiscal years of 2013-2022 allocates \$1.1 billion towards the Horticulture & Organic title, Crop Insurance and Commodities are allocated over \$150 billion (Chite, "The 2012 Farm Bill", 2012, 4). Gross spending in federal policy heavily favors industrial agriculture over local food. Yet, predictions from the Congressional Budget Office estimate that mandatory spending on the Horticulture Title would increase by \$213 million while the Commodities and Crop Insurance titles would see a reduction of over \$7 billion (U.S. Senate, 2012, 50-51). The increase in federal spending towards local and organic agriculture indicates partial movement success, but overall spending still suggests a continued dominance of industrial agricultural interests.

Another factor in the definition of a regime is the presence (or absence of) of elite allies. It is here that local food has seen its greatest gains, with the avid advocacy of the First Lady, Michelle Obama, on behalf of community gardens, the appointment of Secretary Vilsack to head the US Department of Agriculture, and the presence of an increasing number of local food advocates within Congress. As “outsiders” to the decision-making process of agricultural policy, the local food movement has made a concerted effort to identify and connect with elites who can influence or participate in food and farm policy. First Lady Obama has been the “most vocal booster” of a more nutritious and sustainable food supply, according to the New York Times, and her re-establishment of a Victory Garden at the White House drew national attention to the advocacy of local and organic food as a solution to the epidemic of obesity (Martin, 2009).

In terms of policy, Secretary Vilsack is a crucial local food ally in the USDA. “Mr. Vilsack’s brief tenure at the agriculture department has unnerved the food lobby and cheered sustainable food-activists, who are in agreement with many of its stated priorities” (Martin, 2009). At the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee Hearing on March 7, 2012, Secretary Vilsack recognized local food as an opportunity to “maintain wealth in rural communities, help create new opportunities for entrepreneurship and innovation, and be an entry point for young farmers to get into this business as a job creator” (CQ Transcriptions, 2012, 9). He also laid out several proposals in line with advocates of local food, including an expansion of the Farmer’s Market Promotion Program, a definition of rural that recognizes rural contributions from urban infrastructure, and flexibility in Farm Bill programs like Business & Industry loans to allow infrastructure investment for the development of local and regional “food hubs” (CQ Transcriptions, 2012).

Despite this strong partner, Secretary Vilsack and local food advocates “will need the approval of Congress for any major changes in farm policy, and therein lies [their] greatest challenge” (Martin, 2009). As a fairly recent appointee, Vilsack faces years of tradition and entrenched support for farmer safety nets and agribusiness. Fortunately, allies also exist within the Senate. The Local Farms, Food and Jobs Act²⁷ was brought before the Senate in November of 2011 by Sherrod Brown²⁸ (D-OH) as a marker bill, meaning it was never meant to become law but served as a policy

²⁷ Many of the provisions within the Local Farms, Food and Jobs Act reflect the platform espoused by the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, representing a close tie between this bill and local food advocates.

²⁸ The same bill was also brought before the House of Representatives by Representative Pingree from Maine. The House bill had 77 Co-Sponsors but they too were almost entirely Democrats (NSAC, “Local Farms, Food and Jobs Act”, 2012).

expression of local food advocates, as over 280 organizations sponsored the bill²⁹ (NASC, “Local Farms, Food and Jobs Act”, 2012). The bill had 14 cosponsors within the Senate, but they were all Democrats and only two came from strong “farm states”, Senator Richard Durbin from Illinois and Senator Tom Harkin from Iowa, former chairman of the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry Committee. The support of Harkin is notable as a former chair but not surprising as he welcomed local food advocates during the formation of the 2008 Farm Bill but urged them to recognize that farm policy “does not have sharp turns” (Martin, 2009). During the Senate floor vote on June 21st, both Harkin and Brown recognized and lauded the Agriculture Reform, Food and Jobs Act of 2012 for “making the farm safety net more fiscally responsible” and the provisions supporting local food, like the newly named Farmers Market and Local Food Production Program and Specialty Crop Block Grants (U.S Senate, 2012, S4398). Harkin was among five Senators of twenty-one members on the Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee³⁰ who co-sponsored the Local Farm, Food and Jobs Act.

Sponsor of the Agriculture Reform, Food and Jobs Act and Chairwoman of the Senate Agriculture Committee, Senator Stabenow paid tribute to local food during the March 7th hearing, believing it represented a “win-win” for agriculture in the local economy and although only consisting a small portion of the Farm Bill, local food programs can have a “very big impact in our communities creating jobs and improving access to locally grown foods” (CQ Transcripts, 2012, 2). During the same hearing, Senator Roberts (R-KAN), the Ranking Member of the committee also praised local food, congratulating local producers on being part of “the fastest growing sector in agriculture” but then went on to caution the hearing to avoid the belief that “locally grown and purchased food is inherently better, safer, more environmentally sustainable than food produced elsewhere in our country” (CQ Transcripts, 2012, 4). During her remarks to the full Senate on June 6th, Chairwoman Stabenow stated “the Agriculture Reform, Food and Jobs Act is about cutting subsidies and creating jobs in America” (Stabenow, 2012). Stabenow and Roberts both spoke to the need for local food during the legislative process but remain cautious advocates, more concerned with the need for a balanced, passable Farm Bill than the sole interests of local food advocates. In spite of some notable gains in ally presence, the local food movement still faces a directed political setting and opportunity structure, in regards to agricultural policy. Advocates of the Local Farm, Food and Jobs

²⁹ These groups included the Center for Rural Affairs, the Community Food Security Coalition, Fair Food Network, Farmers Market Coalition, Food and Water Watch, Food Democracy Now!, National Farmers Union, National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, Slow Food USA, and the Union of Concerned Scientists (NSAC, “Local Farms, Food and Jobs Act”, 2012)

³⁰ The Senate committee responsible for writing farm bill legislation, chaired by Senator Stabenow (D-MI).

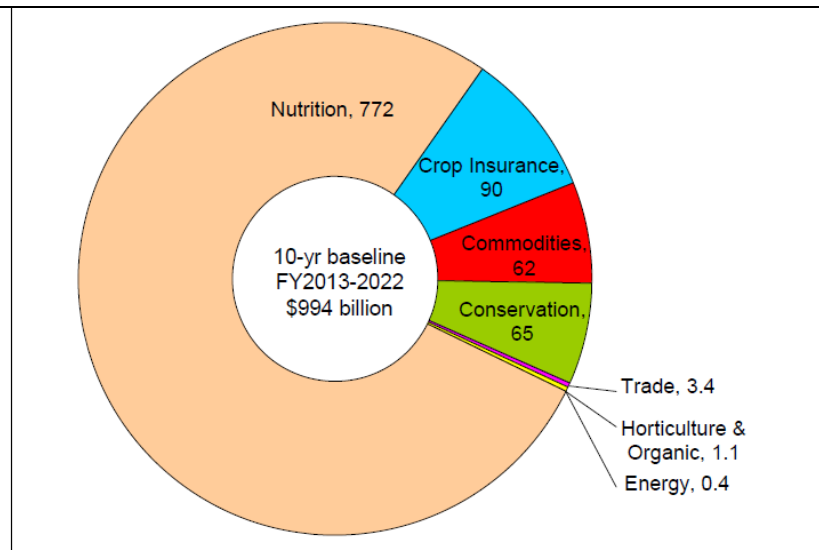
Act were a clear minority within the Senate Agriculture Committee, the leading members of the Senate Agriculture Committee have not made a strong visible commitment to developing local and regional food systems, and no champion of the local food movement has arisen with Congress capable of challenging the enormous financial advantage that the industrial agriculture lobbying industry holds over the local food movement. The efficiency regime still present in the 2008 Farm Bill may have been slightly weakened in S.3240, but maintains a dominant presence in its support for industrial agriculture over other marginal interests.

Conclusion

S. 3240 did pass the Senate by a vote of 66-39 on June 21, 2012 (US Senate, 2012). However, it died with the ending of the 112th Congress because the House failed to pass their partner bill onto the floor for voting. We truly will not have an indication of how successful local food has been in mobilizing their transformative capacity until the 2013 Farm Bill becomes law, a process likely to begin this April. Recent predictions from the CBO and the Congressional Research Service do not create a picture favorable to their success. Of the 10 year baseline of

\$994 billion, only \$1.1 billion is allocated towards Horticulture and Organic, as opposed to over \$150 billion for Crop Insurance and Commodities (See Figure 2). This means that disregarding the Nutrition title, Horticulture and Organic continues to occupy less than half of 1 percent of mandatory allocations within the Farm Bill. While these numbers are merely

Figure 3. Baseline for Mandatory Farm Bill Programs, FY2013-2022 (in billions of dollars) (Chite, "Previewing the Next Farm Bill, 9)



estimates and still subject to change, this initial prediction strongly supports hypothesis #1. The lack of federal funding mirrors a lack of strong commitment to local food in this directed political setting. The local food movement has taken a vital first step in gaining a foothold in the agriculture policy realm but they face a long uphill battle before achieving funding parity with the level of financial support for industrial agriculture.

Although activists, like Michael Pollan, within the alternative food movement have recognized the need for political action from the local food movement, my research draws from political process theory to determine why, even after engaging in political action, the local food movement continues to struggle to transform agricultural policy. Past research has recognized the movement's contributions to changes in American food culture and local economies, but my study delves further into the policies that continue to restrict the local food movement, as well as identifies the policies that might be leveraged in their favor. Through the understanding of the political opportunity structure and setting that forms the agricultural policy regime, the local food movement may better be able to utilize their allies, their growing economic strength, and their popular appeal to leverage their transformative capacity into truly impactful agricultural policies. One approach lies in forming strong connections with their elite allies within the Executive Branch (the First Lady and Secretary Vilsack) and Congress (such as Senator Sherrod Brown) to cut federal spending on the farmer safety net and re-direct those funds to the establishment of local and regional food system infrastructure. Their best hope, however, may be in forging a unified coalition to exploit the fractures within the directed agriculture regime.

Within the proposals submitted by the local food movement, there already exists a natural tie between advocates of local food and proponents of rural development. This is especially apparent with promotion of "food hubs" that would benefit small farmers, local food growers, and rural economies. Such a partnership may be able to further divide the interests of industrial agriculture between small and mid-size farms versus huge industrial farms and agribusinesses, which have benefited the most from the efficiency driven agricultural policies. Furthermore, a partnership with advocates of rural development would allow for a continued strengthening of local and regional food systems at the state and local levels, as states are often the distributing agency for funding from the Specialty Crop Block Grant and Value-Added Producer Grant programs that could be used for "food hub" investment that would benefit a local community's and the state's economies. Beyond federal funding, states have also started to find their own means to increase local food production and consumption, such as the Vermont Food to Plate Network, which seeks to double local food consumption in the state by 2020 (Carter, 2013). The local food movement should continue to support and expand these efforts in other states as well. Federal policies may set the rules for farming and food, but increasing allies and momentum within the local and state levels can only benefit the local food movement's bargaining power at the national stage.

This coalition should not be limited to local food and rural development, as potential exists for strong partnerships with education and nutrition interest groups as well. Both of these groups are interested in reversing the national trend towards unhealthy, processed foods that is a product of the industrial agricultural system. Education groups hope to increase access to fruits and vegetables in schools, and nutrition wants to turn the rising rates of diet-related diseases like obesity and diabetes back around. Another group that stands to benefit from local food system development is organic food producers and consumers, although distinction should be made between small organic farms and industrialized organic agriculture, like Horizon Dairy³¹. Increased investment in local and regional food systems is a practical and relevant solution for all these groups. If they are able to join together, these interest groups could form a powerful coalition capable of drastically shifting the national discussion on food and farm policy in their favor.

“Only by creating a fully healthy food and farming system-economically, ecologically, and socially-will citizens also gain full health. It is also essential to keep in mind that the Farm Bill is an ongoing process. It will require our ongoing attention long after the next version becomes law” (Imhoff, 2012, 112). While provisions contained within the Agricultural Reform, Food and Jobs Act of 2012 could have increased the spread of local food, questions remain as to whether it would have allowed local food to really penetrate the American food system and flourish. As noted by Jody Hardin, a successful Arkansas farmer and local food advocate, at the March 7th Senate Hearing on Local Food Initiatives, there exists a “glass ceiling” that limits how much local food can grow without serious federal investment the initiatives proposed by the local food movement (CQ Transcripts, 2012, 48). My research suggests that agricultural policy still clings to the tenets of the efficiency regime, preferring to support the farmer safety net of industrial agriculture over developing local and regional food systems. The Farm Bill is not well-known for making “sharp turns” in any radical departure from previous bills, and thus outlook for local food holds potential but guarantees to be a slower process than the local food movement had hoped for (Martin, 2009).

³¹ Certain organic producers, like Horizon Dairy, are actually subsidiaries of huge agribusinesses, (Dean Foods in this instance), and often use some of the same destructive agricultural tactics to produce mass quantities of “organic” food and distribute their products across the country. Controversy exists over whether or not these “big organic” companies serve to promote the best interests of the organic food movement.

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