Preparations Underway for Second Annual Food Day

October 24, 2012 to Galvanize Support for Better Food Policies

WASHINGTON—Food movement leaders are gearing up for the second annual Food Day, the nationwide celebration of healthy, affordable, and sustainably produced food. More than 2,300 events in all 50 states took place on the first Food Day, and organizers intend for Food Day 2012 to represent an even bigger grassroots campaign for improved food policies. Food Day is October 24 every year.

Food Day brings together organizations and individuals working on food issues as varied as hunger, nutrition, agriculture policy, animal welfare, and farmworker justice. Some 2011 Food Day events were large in scale, such as a big festival in Savannah, GA, and a Times Square Eat In, attended by celebrities, chefs, and prominent food activists.

Next year, Food Day will take place just 12 days before the 2012 elections, and organizers expect that it will provide an opportunity for citizens to make their voices heard, and for candidates to discuss, important food policy issues. (Food Day, like the Center for Science in the Public Interest, the nonprofit group that is spearheading the event, does not take sides in campaigns or otherwise engage in electioneering.)

Last year, elected officials used Food Day to launch new food policies, highlight locally grown produce, or issue proclamations. Massachusetts Governor Deval Patrick promoted gleaning on farms with the state’s Agriculture department, while Mayor Thomas Menino of Boston used Food Day to deliver a “State of the Food Union” address. In Maine, Rep. Chellie Pingree announced a new bill to assist small and mid-sized farms, while in Los Angeles, Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa’s Food Policy Council coordinated healthy cooking demonstrations, film screenings and other events. New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg handed out apples to commuters and appeared on ABC’s The Chew on Food Day.

“Food should be healthy, affordable, and produced with care for the environment, animals, and the women and men who grow, harvest, and serve it,” said Food Day founder and
CSPI executive director Michael F. Jacobson. “But too often, our policies fall short of that ideal. Food Day aspires to celebrate our food system when it works, and fix it when it’s broken.”

Food Day’s 2012 advisory board includes author Michael Pollan; prominent physicians Caldwell Esselstyn, Michael Roizen, and David Satcher; nutrition authorities Walter Willett, Kelly Brownell, and Marion Nestle; actor Jane Fonda; filmmaker Morgan Spurlock; Rodale, Inc. CEO Maria Rodale and Bolthouse Farms CEO Jeff Dunn; chefs such as chefs Dan Barber, Nora Pouillon, and Alice Waters; and cookbook author and Food Network host Ellie Krieger.

The Academy for Nutrition and Dietetics (formerly the American Dietetic Association), American Public Health Association, Community Food Security Coalition, Earth Day Network, Farmers Market Coalition, Humane Society of the United States, National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, Prevention Institute, and Slow Food USA all participate in Food Day, as do many city, county, and state health or agriculture departments.

“Food Day helped us to create a roadmap towards better policies and health interventions and the foundation we established was very powerful,” said Alexa Delwiche, coordinator of the Los Angeles Food Policy Council. “I am very excited about the future. We saw what can happen with a small amount of planning and momentum.”

“With Food Day, Arizona’s public health system was able to build momentum with the initiatives we have been promoting for a long time,” said Adrienne Udarbe, community programs manager for the Arizona Department of Health Services. “The food choices we make can have unintentional consequences that influence poor health leading to things such as chronic disease and environmental degradation. Food Day is a great opportunity for Americans to enjoy real, whole foods as opposed to packaged and heavily processed foods. Americans are craving change in our homes, our schools, on our farms, and in our communities.”

Food Day will reach millions of Americans through events on college campuses, schools, houses of worship, and even restaurants. But Food Day can also be celebrated by simple, solitary acts of personal responsibility, such as stopping drinking soda or other sugar-based drinks, or forgoing fast-food in favor of a healthy, brown-bag lunch. Organizers welcome restaurants, manufacturers, growers, and other food companies to consider using Food Day to announce changes that benefit the health of consumers, employees, farm animals, or the environment.

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