



We acknowledge the first peoples of this land, acknowledging their elders, both past and present, as well as future generations. We acknowledge the 29 tribes in Washington, and those unrecognized, as well as the land and waters that were the ancestral homelands of those who have inhabited this place for centuries. This acknowledgment is to recognize the violence, displacement, and erasure that Indigenous people here and throughout the world experience, and the resulting historical trauma. We hope the approach of this team can provide healing, reframing from a colonized lens promotes spiritual grounding within each individual that supports community connections so that we may know one another. It is also to honor and pay respect to the indigenous cultures and communities that are thriving today.

We want to acknowledge that Washington has benefitted from the system of white supremacy, which prioritizes the erasure, co-optation and appropriation of Blackness. We recognize that labor is not and cannot be the only value of Black bodies. We will uphold anti-racist values in all facets of our work — the art we make, our day-to-day operations, our work in the classroom, our farmlands, and in the community.

This living acknowledgement of Black Labor is a statement that recognizes and honors the African people who were enslaved at the hands of white colonizers and subjugated to unpaid labor and the descendants of enslaved African people. The purpose of recognizing this deep and difficult history is to show respect, gratitude and appreciation for the insurmountable contributions of the enslaved who worked the land against their will for generations for the sake of American capitalism, as well as increase awareness about the horrific outcome of a distorted Black American history.

# A LIVING ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF BLACK LABOR



# Equity in WA Food System

## What does it really mean

Presented by:  
Mercy Kariuki-McGee  
Co-Founder, Haki Farmers Collective



## WHO WE ARE

Haki means “Justice” in Swahili. Haki Farmers collective seeks to bolster and reincorporate traditional and inherently sustainable farming knowledge that is present in our migrant and indigenous communities.

We are a 501(c) 3 organization based in the South Sound

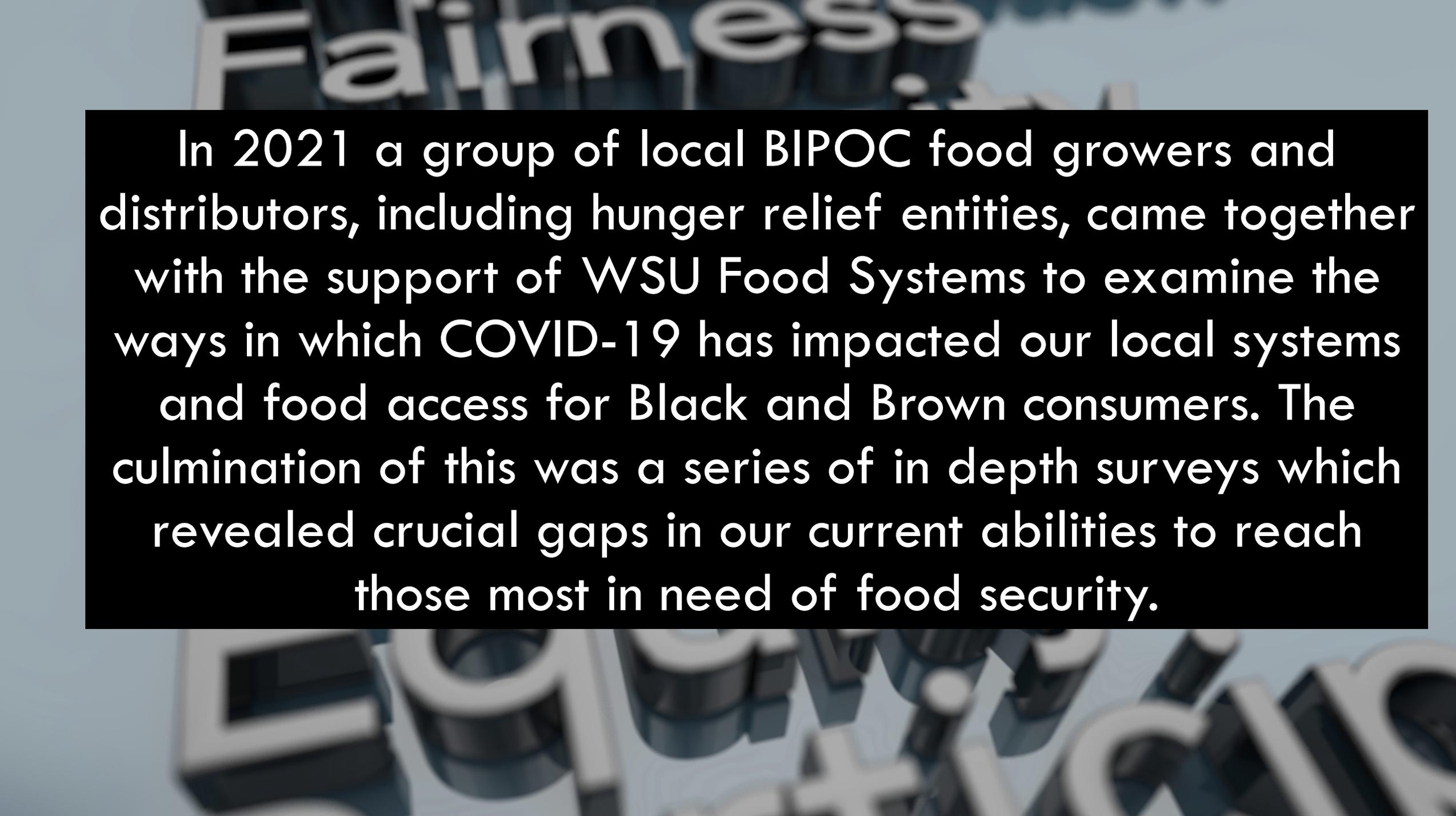
# ABOUT HAKI

Our goals is:

- To enhance food sovereignty for our communities of color
- Create spaces in which we can produce food together
- Increase the understanding of BIPOC needs in our state
- Preserve knowledge of traditional farming so we can pass it to next the generation
- Engage our communities of color in food access and production
- Increase land ownership for the BIPOC
- Steward the land with intention and mutual respect

**ASSESSING WA FOOD SYSTEM THROUGH  
AN EQUITY LENS:  
*BRIDGING THE GAP THROUGH  
CULTURALLY-RELEVANT FOODS***

Conducted by an Informal BIPOC Leadership Team that  
was assembled in August 2021 in collaboration with the  
WSU Food System



In 2021 a group of local BIPOC food growers and distributors, including hunger relief entities, came together with the support of WSU Food Systems to examine the ways in which COVID-19 has impacted our local systems and food access for Black and Brown consumers. The culmination of this was a series of in depth surveys which revealed crucial gaps in our current abilities to reach those most in need of food security.

# WHY EQUITY IN FOOD SYSTEM

- Most people miss the point of what equity means in food system
  - Food is a human right
  - Every child, every human deserves to eat
  - Food is not a luxury for most people
  - The need is much bigger than we imagine
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- It is not just about handing food to a poor person, it is removing barriers of accessing the food
- We stand in the way of creating a better food system by refusing to accept that food access is a problem
- Lack of food leads to poor health - everyone knows that
- A hungry child cannot learn on an empty stomach, just like they need a roof over their head

# EQUITY REPORT - EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Background:** WSDA Contracted WSU to do a Needs Assessment to inform and understand the food insecurity and food systems disruptions in BIPOC communities and socially-disadvantaged groups in Washington State.

## **Methods:**

- reviewed existing data, collected case studies
- hosted conversations and interviews.
- conducted a SWOT\* analysis.

(\*SWOT means Strengths, Weakness, and Opportunities)

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# EQUITY REPORT - EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Key Take aways:

- Inequities were exacerbated during COVID
- We must center racial equity in this work
- We must build new collaborative infrastructure
- Funding is needed to create robust and sustainable solutions
- Supply chains are stressed and are still evolving

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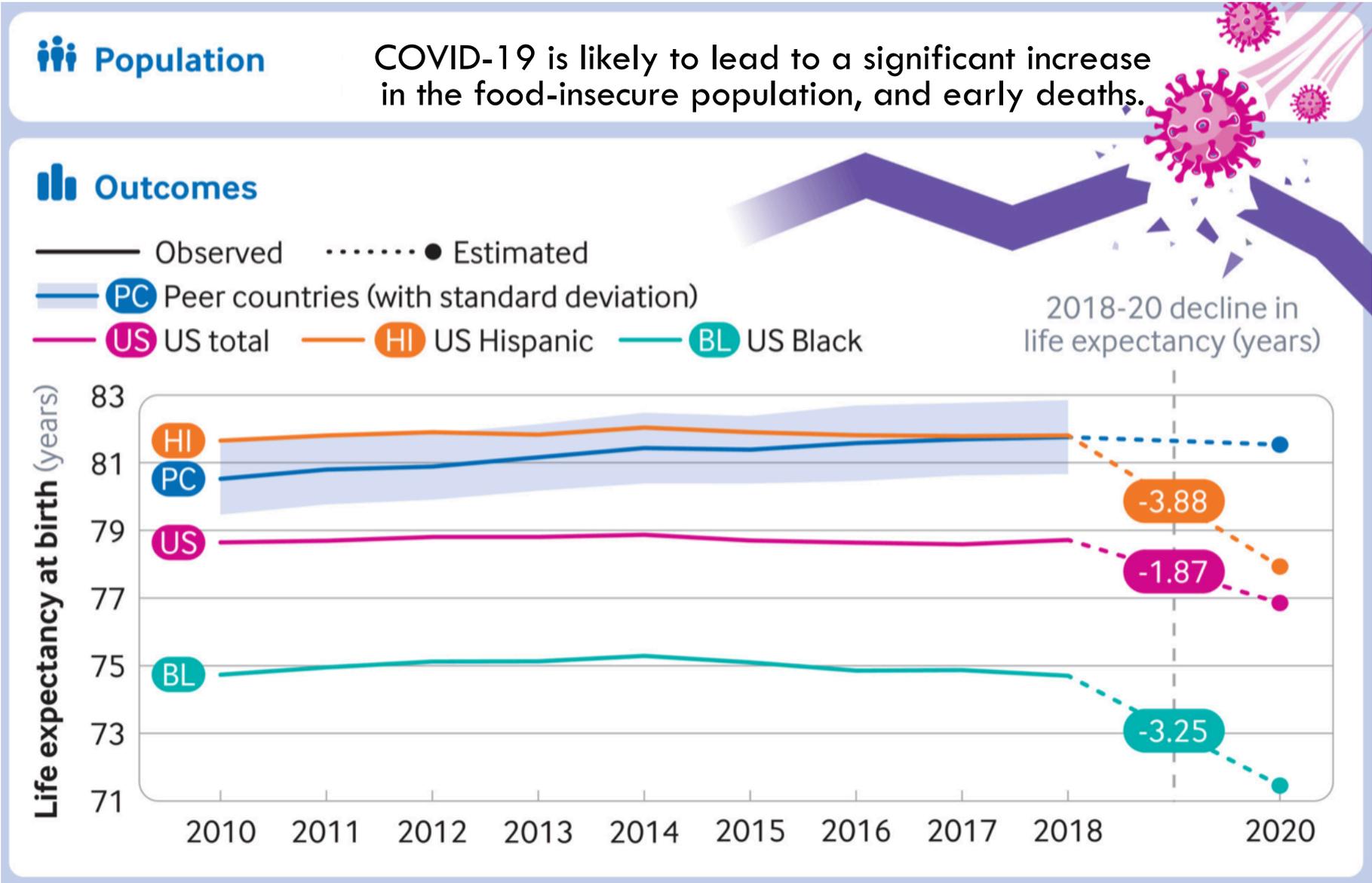
# Addressing hunger as a racial equity issue

Food insecurity and hunger are related to: health crises, climate change, racism and social injustice, or civil unrest.

We know that

- COVID-19 impacts were higher amongst communities of color.
- COVID19 data gaps has failed to fully describe the unique impacts on communities of color and socially disadvantaged -
  - Entries showing "Unknown" for race
  - Vaccination site accessibility issues
  - Trust issues

# Decline in Life Expectancy in BIPOC Communities during COVID-19



Source: <https://www.bmj.com/content/373/bmj.n1343>

# MOST COMMON INDICATORS OF FOOD ACCESS DISPARITIES

- Economic Stability
- Education
- Transportation
- Health and Health Care
- Race, Ethnicity, and Language
- Neighborhood and Built Environment
- Social and Community Context + Racial Inequities



# COVID-19 Facts

- COVID-19 created worsening inequities
- People built resiliency despite all the constraints

# SWOT ANALYSIS

## INEQUITIES / INNOVATIONS

Inequities were exacerbated during COVID.

Communities and grassroots efforts increased

New solutions were created with very little funding.

# INEQUITIES / INNOVATIONS

S - New Collaborations

W - Fragility

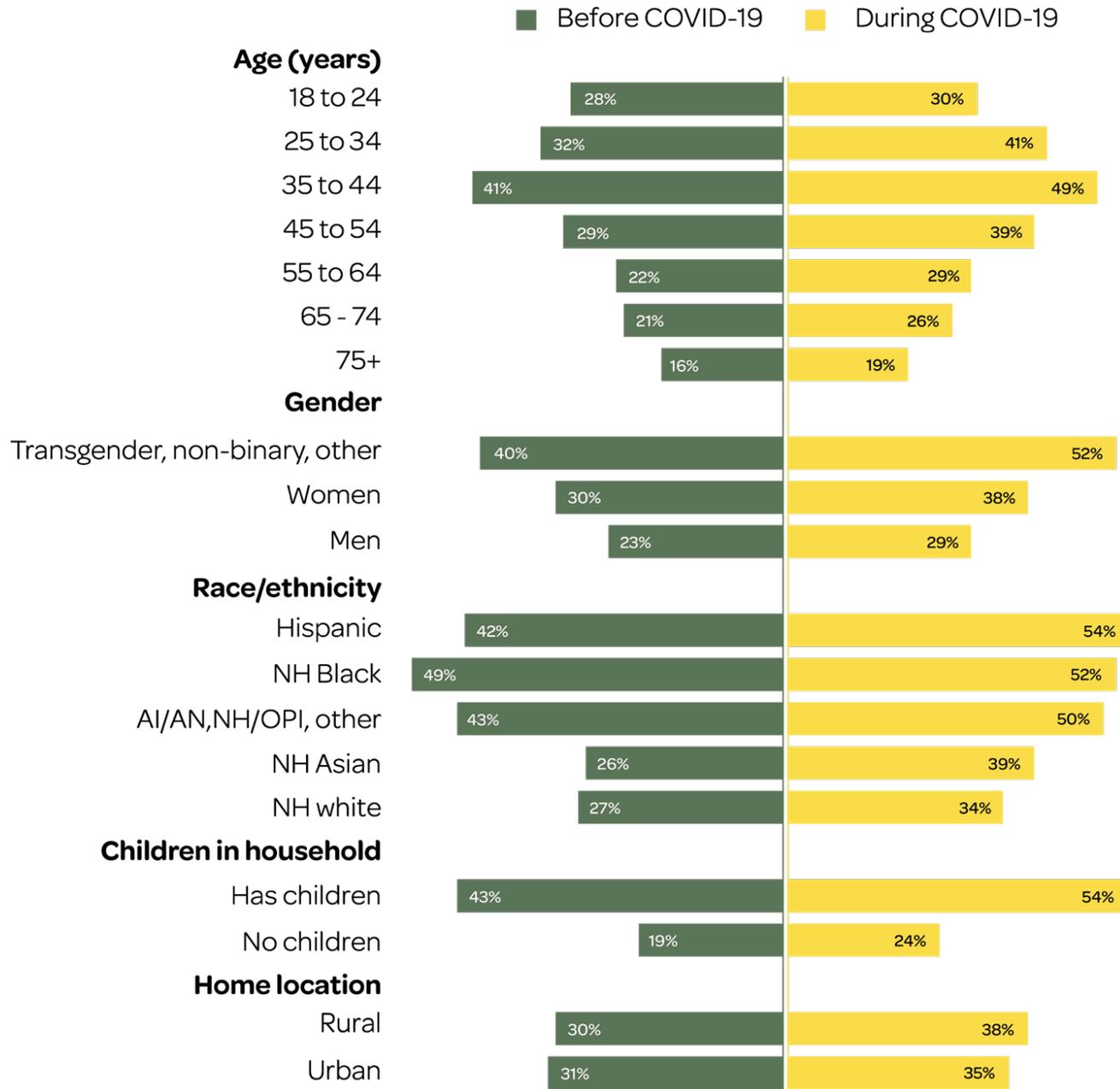
O - New funding for Sustainable Partnerships

T - Invest Community organizations

Source: [https://nutr.uw.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/WAFOOD2\\_disparities\\_brief\\_11\\_20210811.pdf](https://nutr.uw.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/WAFOOD2_disparities_brief_11_20210811.pdf)

**Pre-COVID:** 1 in 10 WA State households reported food insecurity.

**Now:** 1 in 3 WA State households report food insecurity **and the rate is higher - 1 in 2 for BIPOC households.**



- Changes indicate that communities of color had continuously experienced lack of food even before COVID-19.
- there was an increase in communities' usage of grocery vouchers and mobile boxes
- Improved data collections can give better indication

# PRODUCERS PIVOTED

**S - Expansion of community networks and collaboration supports**

**W - Labor. Many larger farms reduced workers' hours or staff**

**O - New funding**

**T - Climate change**

Source: <https://nutr.uw.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/WA-Farm-Brief-1.pdf>

In 2021, 42% of WA FARM COVID-19 farms with employees reduced employee numbers, hours, or hiring plans.

65% of WA FARM respondents increased their prices due to COVID.

# STRESSED SUPPLY CHAINS

**S - Rapid coordinated emergency response**

**W - Logistics**

**O - New funding to support supplier and supply chain diversification and**

**T - Existing racial disparities reinforced**

July 2021, WAFOOD survey found about 39% increase in food bank deliveries for food insecure.

In 2021, (76%) of WA experienced at least moderate drought.

In three months, 43% of food processors reported the closure of market distribution and sales channels as a key challenge.

Source: [https://nutr.uw.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/WAFOOD2\\_disparities\\_brief\\_11\\_20210811.pdf](https://nutr.uw.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/WAFOOD2_disparities_brief_11_20210811.pdf) (WAFOODS)  
<https://ecology.wa.gov/Water-Shorelines/Water-supply/Water-availability/Statewide-conditions/Drought-2021> (DROUGHT)  
<https://nutr.uw.edu/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/WA-Farm-Brief-1.pdf> (Closures)

## WHAT WE HEARD

“[We need] more vehicles, larger cold storage, more synchronized logistics and production for small and medium scaled food businesses [for]...culturally relevant shelf-stable food.”

- *BIPOC Impact Survey participant*

# INVEST IN EQUITY

S - More commitment to racial equity in data and implementation

W - Missing data

O - More paid support for BIPOC convening and leadership teams

T - Without quality data, it's difficult to assess equity



According to USDA data:

Only 4% of farmers across Washington state identifying as a BIPOC.

Ferry, King, and Whatcom Counties have the highest proportions of BIPOC farmers (10%, 8%, and 7%, respectively).

# INVEST IN EQUITY

We must center racial equity in this work and invest in creating spaces and building new collaborative infrastructure.

“Too many agencies are doing performative equity instead of the real work. ...We must break the cycle of simply calling on Black and BIPOC leaders when you need our data and networks.”

- BIPOC Impact Survey Participant



## RECOMMENDATIONS & NEXT STEPS

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## RECOMMENDATIONS & NEXT STEPS

1. Approach food access programs using an inclusive equity-based model.
2. Use a bottom-up approach to increase BIPOC participation outreach within BIPOC communities.
3. Increase support for BIPOC-led teams, farmers, producers, distributors and food justice advocates.
4. Increase BIPOC participation in the food system program design, implementation, evaluation, and policy-directed interventions.

## RECOMMENDATIONS & NEXT STEPS

5. Data collection and aggregation show gaps that reflect systemic and structural racism:
  - Partner with BIPOC community leaders to ensure realtime demographics in data.
6. Increase BIPOC leadership in hunger relief programs and other government contracting.
7. Prioritize culturally relevant solutions for hunger relief that are focused on individual communities and lead by BIPOC organizations.

## BOTTOM LINE:

We must center and support authentic & equitable BIPOC leadership.

“We must center racial equity in food security work and invest in creating spaces and building new collaborative infrastructure”  
- *feedback given during BIPOC Leadership Team meetings*



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Looking across data on food insecurity, producer insights, distributors, and other key stakeholders we noticed many common themes. Analysis was complex, but we found that overall BIPOC farmers and producers need more support, particularly logistical and financial support so they can help create sustainable food systems.

# LOOKING AHEAD

- Continue finding ways to create equity in our food system
- Increase BIPOC producers/farmers participation in the food system
- Look at factors that contribute to inequities
- Use real data to inform policy changes, design and implementation
- Shift the paradigm and connect the dots if you want to create equity in our food system
- Use an equity lens to help build a more resilient and sustainable food system



# EQUITY TODAY

Equity has become a complete myth

It is destroying progress before it is even made

Equity cannot be realized unless those impacted are involved

# MY MAIN POINTS - TAKE AWAYS

- The systems that exist approaches equity with such low points for cultural relevancy
- System fails to address the imbalance and race within the food system in the design or in the evaluation process
- System continues to incentivize equity and prioritize large sized white-led orgs with capacity to carry equity based projects.
- Government is only concerned with the costs and capacity of the large organizations to sustain the current system and not the impacts or the deliverables.

# MOREOVER....

- There is absolutely no consideration of the ability of BIPOC providers to connect with underserved communities in need
- Many organizations do not have the capacity to do equity
- Money allocated to train on equity is rather following an outdated protocol for diversity inclusion and diversity training
- The system does not believe that people of color can provide for their own
- Public money is used by those who claim to do equity to check the box

READ THE FULL REPORT  
AND SHARE WITH YOUR PARTNERS

<https://hakifarmers.org/equity-report/>

WSU

<https://foodsystems.wsu.edu/equity-report/>

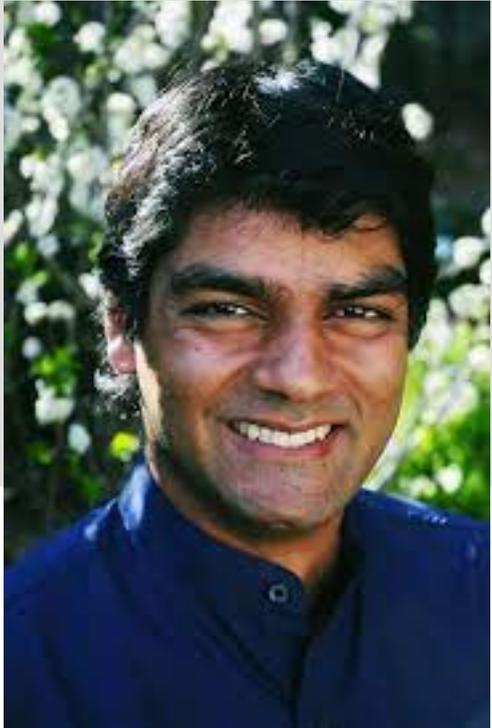
# CONNECT WITH US

On the Web: <https://hakifarmers.org/>

IG: [@hakifarmers](#)

FB: [@hakifarmers](#)

*"Food Sovereignty is mostly characterized by its conversations around how to end hunger and poverty."*



**Raj Patel**  
Award-Winning Author  
New York Best Seller  
Film Maker

*"For me, one of the major reasons to move beyond just the planting of trees was that I have tendency to look at the causes of a problem. We often preoccupy ourselves with the symptoms, whereas if we went to the root cause of the problems, we would be able to over-come problems once and for all."*

**Wangari Maathai**  
Founder of the Green  
Belt Movement and  
2014 Nobel Peace  
Prize Laureate

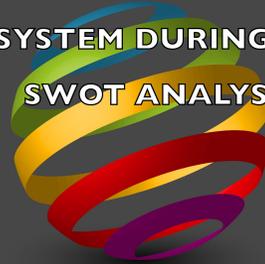


## FOOD SECURITY



## WSDA NEED ASSESSMENT ON WA FOOD SYSTEM DURING COVID19

### SWOT ANALYSIS



WHAT DO WE KNOW?



## FOOD CONCEPT



## STRENGTHS

- 1) State-wide organizations growing support for BIPOC communities
- 2) Grass-roots, on-the-ground mutual aid groups working in their communities
- 3) Access to national and state-wide statistics showing consumer trends
- 4) Larger organizations now starting to allocate funds directly to distributors
- 5) BIPOC grassroots organizations are leading the food insecurity movement
- 6) Focus on including schools as a partner in reaching communities
- 7) Collaborate with local EDC to align hunger relief



## WEAKNESSES

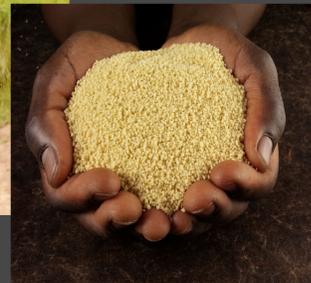
- 1) Lack of locally sourced culturally relevant staple crops such as millet, sorghum, amaranth, teff,.)
- 2) Lack of support for the local BIPOC farmer producer
- 3) Burdensome requirements and limited technical assistance for RFQ and other funding sources
- 4) Many community needs are related to food needs- like access to capital and ability to farm their own food
- 5) Policy-directed data is often dismissed if older than three years old, which discounts historical documents specifically relevant to Indigenous treaties, reports, etc
- 6) Need more support to develop deep and robust community-owned data, agreements
- 7) Food waste in food distribution



## OPPORTUNITIES

- 1) COVID-19 can be a wake-up call to develop a proactive year-round preparation and support to be ready for the next crisis
- 2) Increase access to fresh food and culturally relevant meals and distribute food directly to community instead of food banks
- 3) Translators and interpreters can help expand outreach and increase access to resources
- 4) Chance to grow a low-emissions and worker-owned food distribution system, as well as a food logistics system for BIPOC producers and products
- 5) Improve technological infrastructure and support
- 6) More systems reform, more redistribution of resources and access to economic development

## FEEDING OUR COMMUNITY



## THREATS

- 1) Climate injustice impacts
- 2) Large companies have incentive to donate based on quantity not food quality
- 3) Lack of cultural sensitivity within different BIPOC communities, homogenization
- 4) Asymmetries in who has access to data, larger organizations have more access
- 5) Short timelines for a rapid needs assessments of data from

