



# Realizing a Just Transition for Food and Agriculture



Institute for  
Agriculture &  
Trade Policy

## IATP Strategic Plan 2025–2027

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# IATP Strategic Plan 2025-2027

## IATP Vision and Values

The Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy (IATP) is a nonprofit research and policy organization dedicated to the realization of just and resilient food systems. We work at the intersection of food systems, climate change, and international trade. IATP upholds the twinned principles of food sovereignty and agroecology. Food sovereignty gets at the question of who gets to make the decisions that shape food systems and how those decision-makers are held accountable. Agroecology is rooted in the traditional knowledge of food producing communities and ecology.

It has emerged as a set of practices based on principles that guide how to produce food sustainably, and how to fairly manage the social relationships that govern food production, processing, exchange and waste management. We are leaders and advocates in a globally networked and locally rooted ecosystem of social movements and public interest organizations who together advocate for strong and effective regulations in the public interest, and increased investment in food systems. Our local work and engagement are rooted in the U.S. state of Minnesota.

## Values

- **Protect and promote food sovereignty, defined as the right of people to determine their food systems democratically at every level of governance.**
- **Protect and promote agroecology, which is a systems-based understanding of food production and consumption that is scaled to specific landscapes and respectful of human-ecological interrelationships.**
- **Protect and promote remunerative incomes and the right to decent work for all who work in food systems.**
- **Protect ways of living that respect planetary boundaries and that see humanity as a part of (not apart from) nature.**
- **Uphold the principles of feminist leadership, including self-care and care for others, power sharing, inclusion, accountability, and the dismantling of systemic discrimination.**



# IATP Strategic Plan 2025-2027

## Our Mission in Practice

For IATP, home is Minneapolis, Minnesota. We also operate small offices in Washington, D.C., and Berlin, Germany. Since our incorporation as a nonprofit organization in 1987, IATP has been active in local, state, national and global policy debates and negotiations. Our board maintains a mix of U.S. and foreign directors. As of December 2024, we employed 17 staff.

In 2023, IATP introduced two framing questions to explain what we do, and why. We asked: what will we eat in 2040, and who decides? Food systems around the world are undergoing very rapid transformation. Hunger and food insecurity are rising, as are the chronic diseases associated with the consumption of too many low-quality calories. Agriculture is a leading cause of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and biodiversity loss. Farmers everywhere struggle to make a living from concentrated markets in which they hold too little power. It is IATP's mission to change the arc of that transformation, to bend it towards more just and resilient outcomes.

IATP challenges the dominant myth that large-scale intensive agriculture "feeds the world" with global markets providing the distribution mechanism. We disagree that productivity increases are the core purpose of agricultural policy and investment, or the basis for global food security. These claims are used to justify an extractive model of agriculture that is dominated by too few multinational corporations. In these systems, farmers and farm workers struggle to thrive, and food production competes with bulk commodities destined for feed and fuel, produced in monocultures. The system is wasteful and polluting.

IATP is making the case for a different food system, one in which the scale of production and distribution is contained, activity is distributed rather than concentrated, and in which decision-making is democratic. Our work is integrated into networks of politically engaged social movements. Everywhere there are examples of food systems that provide an economically vibrant and socially just alternative. We want to publicize and support those examples, increase their share of public investment, and advocate for the removal of the obstacles they face to prosper and propagate more widely.

IATP analysis is built on a systems analysis of how change happens. We recognize the outsized role the U.S. plays in the world, and the outsized importance of U.S. investment and consumption in causing and perpetuating global problems, including climate change, biodiversity loss, high levels of inequality, and the persistence of extreme levels of sovereign debt in many countries of the Global South. We document and challenge the power of multinational corporations who extract disproportionate wealth through their dominant market power, bargaining power, political influence, and through their control of proprietary technologies, including genetic and digital technologies.



# Theory of Change

IATP's theory of change is built on three interconnected pillars: building power through leadership in coalitions of civil society organizations, research and policy advocacy.

## Building Power

IATP is part of a broadly based social movement that is building more just and sustainable food systems everywhere. Systems change requires civic power. Day to day, this means program staff work in an array of coalitions and networks. Though IATP's policy capacity is bigger than that of many of our social movement allies, we are also much smaller than many of our NGO allies. Our strong policy skills are anchored in a small and cohesive staff which enables us to respond quickly, and to adapt as our context changes. We know who to consult. Many of our networked relationships go back decades, and we are highly trusted by coalition partners. IATP staff are often called upon – by a wide range of actors – to help with research, analysis, and strategy, as well as with coalition leadership.

## Policy Advocacy

IATP is primarily focused on public policy – what local, national and international governments should be doing differently, or additionally, to realize more just and resilient food systems, including how private business should be regulated. We document and call out false claims made by global agribusinesses and demand public standards that hold companies accountable. We help research what those standards should be. We advocate for better public laws and regulations. We support policies that enable communities to speak for themselves. We are not affiliated with any political party, single ideology or social movement but we do have a clear, principled worldview that determines what we do, how we do it, and with whom we do it. We are known for – and proud of – the quality of our analysis, our ability to engage with and explain complex problems, and our clear communications with a broad audience.

## Research

IATP produces exceptionally high quality, original research and analysis on agriculture, climate and trade policy. In our research, we collaborate with academics, farmers and social movements. We rely on formal and informal peer review, especially for longer reports, and we offer peer review to others in our networks. We pioneer methodologies and create new knowledge. Our staff are experts and networked with other experts, including those whose expertise is in firsthand and practical experience. We are interdisciplinary, curious, and open to where our research takes us.



# Program Goals 2025-2027

Our work is organized around three cross-cutting teams: climate and rural strategies, community food systems, and trade and international strategies. Our principles of agroecology, food sovereignty and corporate accountability cut across all three program areas. The teams all have their own geographies: the climate work is primarily national in the U.S. and at the EU level from our Berlin office.

The trade and international strategies team works in multilateral spaces, such as the UN Committee on World Food Security; in the U.S. on trade policy machinery; and, in a wide range of Global South countries on every continent through bilateral and regional networks. Community Food Systems leads our work in Minnesota, with participation in some national alliances.

## Overarching Goals

- **Realize a just transition for food systems and rural communities, from exploitative and polluting systems to systems that offer fair prices to farmers, fair wages to farm workers, much lower greenhouse gas emissions, protected biodiversity, and food systems that respect the principles of agroecology.**
- **Transform food systems that exclude and exploit to promoting equity in food and agricultural law and policy. All parts of the system need to be transformed. IATP focuses especially on the mechanisms of food distribution: markets, trade and procurement.**
- **Define and adopt new measures of value and success in agriculture to give weight to the vital role of natural capital and ecosystems for human flourishing, and to create space for a resilient economy that is not wholly dependent on price to guide economic decisions. Good food systems are nurturing and remunerative.**



# Climate and Rural Strategies

Rapidly accelerating climate change is damaging food systems around the world. Those food systems are themselves partly to blame for rising GHG emissions. Most governments have been timid in their responses to the crisis; some, as is again now the case with the United States' federal government, are actively inciting further climate destruction.

Agriculture and food were late arrivals on the multilateral climate agenda and, even now, many governments would prefer to leave the sector off their list of commitments to reduce emissions. Yet food systems writ large account for more than 30% of all emissions (upwards of 38% by some counts), making the sector too big to ignore in efforts to curb climate change, and too complex to make simple carbon caps effective.

IATP's climate research and advocacy is committed to stop public funding for policies that further lock in highly polluting and exploitative systems of food production, such as factory farmed animals. Industrialized food systems are dominated by a relatively small number of multinational corporations, including seed companies and tractor makers, fertilizer and pesticide producers, commodity traders and processors, food companies and supermarkets.

These firms exercise huge economic, political and social power. They fight to exempt their operations from climate regulations and push responsibility for better practices onto weaker actors in the value chains they dominate, such as farmers and farm workers.

Understandably, climate policies that focus on the farm and let agribusiness off the hook have angered farmers. A second objective for our team is to ensure there are proper funds and support for farmers making a transition to more agroecological production, including lower GHG emissions. Many farmers are already struggling with low incomes and high costs. It is common for them to see climate conditionality as a threat to their ability to stay on the land.

IATP research demonstrates that few of agribusinesses' net zero proposals withstand scrutiny. We will continue to document these failed proposals and to push for policies that protect "real zero" ambition and cut emissions in the agriculture of industrialized countries. In addition, we are working to create and protect robust public standards and measures to assess climate initiatives and ensure they make a significant real cut to global GHG emissions.



# Climate and Rural Strategies

IATP advocates for a fair share approach to emissions reduction that accounts for the historic debt of the Global North to the South for the GHG already in the atmosphere. Together with a network of think tanks and food system experts, we will build on the initiative launched by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization to develop a global "roadmap" to guide investment and strategies that protect food security while holding global warming within the 1.5 degrees Celsius target for average temperature increases. These twinned objectives underpin our work with climate and food organizations and activists, supporting policy coherence while protecting the objectives of vibrant local food systems, resilient food security and decent farm income.

IATP's office in Berlin is primarily focused on the policy proposals and decisions of the European Commission at the intersection of climate and agriculture. This includes the ambition for agriculture in the 2040 GHG reduction targets and the need to transition away from industrial livestock production. IATP is focused on policy approaches that will deliver for farmers and the planet, without the distraction of carbon markets or certification schemes, which are not fit for purpose. IATP seeks reforms to the EU's Common Agricultural Policy that would reduce harmful subsidies and better support farmers in their transition to more agroecological production.

## GOALS

- 1. Redirect public spending toward real climate solutions that support food sovereignty and agroecology. In Europe, promote the establishment of a fund to support farmers to make the transition to agroecological farming.**
- 2. Hold agribusiness accountable for their emissions and set clear targets for mitigation.**
- 3. Strengthen government climate targets and actions for the agriculture sector, including investment in adaptation. This includes an ambitious target for the agricultural sector in the EU's 2040 targets.**
- 4. Eliminate or limit the adoption of false climate solutions, including voluntary and regulatory carbon market schemes that allow polluters to use land as an offset without meaningfully addressing the climate crisis.**

# Community Food Systems

IATP is building on its long investment in supporting decentralized and distributed food systems for Minnesota that are accountable to the people who provide and consume the food, and that respect and protect nature. Transformative change can create risk for vulnerable populations; a just transition requires engaging those populations to ensure their voices shape the transition, that programs limit their risk exposure, and that the results make them stronger. A just transition for Minnesota will protect and promote the universal right to food, strengthen the political voice of emerging and historically marginalized food producers, and protect access to diversified markets for small and medium-scale sustainable farmers in the state.

A priority of the program for over a decade has been to build public support and finance for the state Farm to School programs, and more recently, for Farm to Early Care as well. These public procurement programs remain central to our work. We are now expanding our research and outreach to explore additional markets to create remunerative opportunities for small-scale resilient producers in the state. We are networked with other like initiatives across the country and will also look for allies with whom to build a national policy agenda that supports a just transition through better use of public investment.

This work led us to co-create a new organizing space called MinneAg in 2022. This initiative provides a common space for MN food and farm organizations – including emerging and smaller-scale producers and others facing systemic barriers to success – to learn about the public policy agenda and decision-making processes for agriculture and food in the state, build capacity to engage, and create opportunities for those farmers and their organizations to go before state legislators and have their needs and ideas heard. We are supporting the development of MinneAg into an independent platform.

We are investing in our program in Minnesota to work more explicitly on agroecology. We will bring together climate and community food systems initiatives to create a more holistic platform for food systems change in the state. That work is globally connected through the Agroecology Fund partners in a program that seeks to establish agroecology as a pathway to climate resilience for agriculture.



## GOALS

- 1. Ensure fresh and local foods on every child's plate at school and early care in Minnesota.**
- 2. Tripling the Minnesota state budget for Farm to School and Farm to Early Care.**
- 3. Bolster state Farm to Early Care infrastructure, resources and support to be equal to that for Farm to School.**
- 4. Establish an independent and effective MinneAg Network by 2028 in which IATP is an active member.**
- 5. Build the case for agroecology as a pathway to climate action in Minnesota.**
- 6. Increase support for public funding to farmers that build local markets and remuneration for diversified family farms.**

# Trade and International Strategies

The advent of the second Trump administration has brought chaos to international trade. The ascendance of the neoliberal trade order is over. At the same time, the volume and value of internationally traded goods continues to grow. The social, economic and environmental costs of that production and trade also remain largely unaccounted for. The mounting constraints on available freshwater, arable land and genetic diversity loom large over questions of where and how we will grow our food. National borders are highly relevant for policy purposes, but we still need rules for the food that is moving across them.

The U.S. was the chief architect of the international trade system now in place. It has also been active in its diminishing. As President Donald Trump proceeds to break U.S. trade obligations and impose unilateral tariffs, it is time to create a new basis for trade relationships. Already beleaguered trade institutions such as the World Trade Organization (WTO) may not survive the Trump administration, or not in a recognizable form. The current administration is not pursuing the regional and bilateral partnerships that were being negotiated by the Biden administration. Crucially, the trust that trade rules both depend upon and can help to create has been deeply damaged by Trump's on-again, off-again approach to tariffs, decisions that have been accompanied by inflammatory rhetoric and false accusations. It is not clear how that trust will be re-established, nor what the intervening period will bring.

The collapse of U.S. government support for deregulated trade creates both dilemmas and opportunities. We stand behind our analysis, and that of many allies, that demonstrates "free" trade has come at a very high cost for agriculture and rural economies. We also believe in multilateralism. Effective trade rules can support international cooperation, if they are based on respectful relationships. IATP will continue to propose and advocate for different and better rules than those we have now, and to argue that sovereignty must include limits on unilateral actions.



# Trade and International Strategies

IATP is co-leading an international expert-led process to articulate and advocate for a new international treaty for agricultural trade that will culminate in June 2026. With our partners, we argue that the framework offered by the existing WTO Agreement on Agriculture is constrained by assumptions and principles that do not reflect the realities of agricultural markets. We are also engaging in coalition efforts to advance better trade rules for North America. The attempt to isolate trade agreements from other areas of

international law has undermined food security (among other public goods, including climate action). IATP is committed to developing new trade principles and new trade rules that clarify trade's role in more resilient and interdependent but sovereign food systems.

Linked to this visioning work, IATP is tracking and analyzing existing and proposed sustainability clauses and agreements to understand how higher standards within value chains could address problems created by unsustainable agricultural production. We are particularly interested in the

arable and diverse but heavily over-exploited ecosystems, such as the Brazilian Cerrado and the U.S. Midwest, that are big export producers, and a critical link in unsustainable livestock systems.

IATP will work with allies in the U.S. and globally to articulate and advocate for food security from agroecological and sovereign food systems. That work will support farmer-led seed saving and breeding, as well as public procurement to support markets for smaller-scale and diversified agricultural production.

## GOALS

- 1. Develop proposals for and promote the adoption of a new treaty for international trade and agriculture.**
- 2. Define and advance a just transition for agriculture that builds on principles of fair trade and sovereign food systems, working with allies in the U.S. and abroad, including the Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples' Mechanism and the UN Committee on World Food Security, UN organizations such as UN Trade and Development and the Food and Agriculture Organization, agencies like the United Nations Development Programme, and UN processes including Financing for Development and the Sustainable Development Goals.**
- 3. Oppose the use of trade rules to undermine public policy priorities that support food sovereignty and agroecology. Increase protections for fair prices for farmers, effective food safety regulations, biodiversity and environmental protection, limits on the use of biotechnologies, reduced reliance on fossil fuels and bans on the most harmful agrichemicals, including herbicides and pesticides.**
- 4. Protect and rebuild farmer-controlled seed sovereignty by blocking the use of trade agreements to force countries to accede to the UPOV91 Agreement.**
- 5. Support partner and allies in the Global South, especially in Africa, to ensure that their natural resources and large farmer population are the basis for greater food self-sufficiency, breaking the vicious cycle of agricultural commodity production for export that generates foreign exchange spent buying staple foods.**
- 6. Develop tools in partnership with feminist researchers and activists, to support the case for a care economy approach to food system transition that supports the co-existence of monetized and non-monetized food and agriculture.**

# Communications

IATP generates a lot of well researched, tightly written and widely disseminated content. Our staff are experts in their fields and are frequently sought out as speakers and commentators on the issues we cover. Communications is a core pillar of IATP's work and has been since we were founded. Our mission is rooted in public education.

We are committed to changing the dominant narrative in the U.S., a narrative that the U.S. government also champions internationally. Among other claims, that narrative maintains that the U.S. "feeds the world," that food needs to be cheap to protect access for low-income families, and that pollution is a necessary trade-off to ensure there is enough food at low enough cost. The argument supports food production that relies on lots of fossil fuel inputs, wastes water, strips soil of microbial life, exploits its workforce, and generates too much poor-quality food.

IATP's narrative offers a different vision for food systems, one built on the concepts of agroecology and food sovereignty. In this vision, food systems are decentralized, and local communities and food producers have a political voice in the regulation of their markets and land. Diversified family farms thrive, farm work is decent work, and environmental costs are internalized.

The communications team advances IATP core narratives by disseminating our publications widely and strategically. We aim to position IATP as a source of credible information on the systems changes that we need, backed by science and research. The team will continue to adapt to the rapidly evolving media landscape in the U.S. and globally, creating compelling and accessible entry points for the wider public to understand our work. These entry points include short videos, podcast series, social media posts and placements in traditional news media. Our goal is to both reach decision-makers and to foster public understanding and sway opinions to create the conditions for policy change.

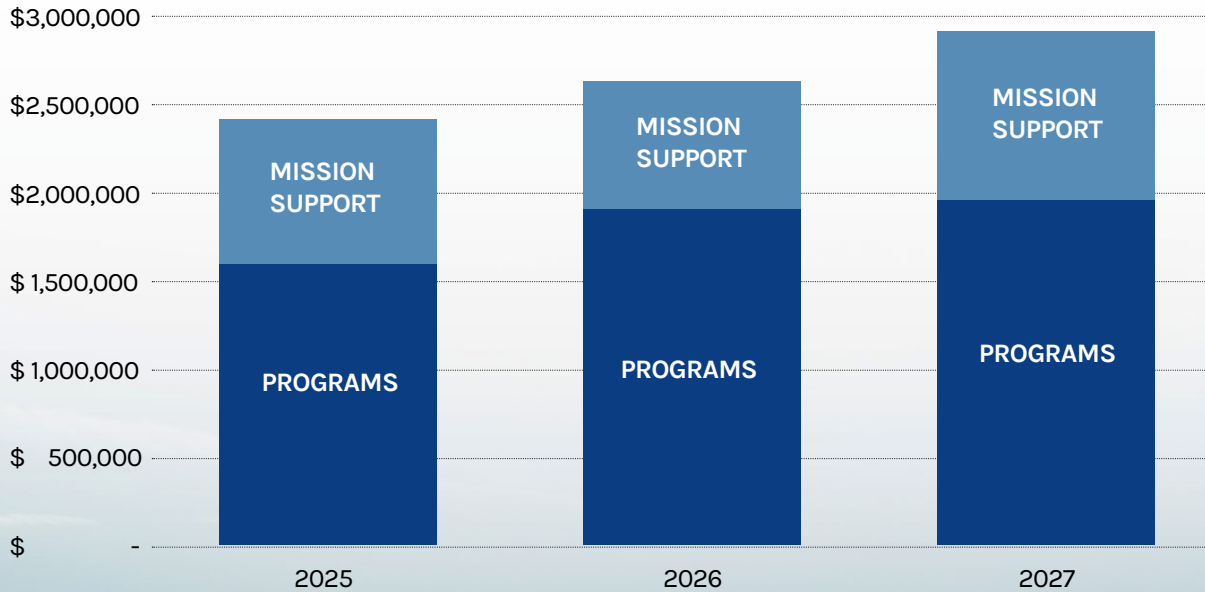


## GOALS

- 1. Establish baseline information about our existing audiences and expand our reach through improved social media strategy, press mentions, search engine optimization, strategic email communication and in-person engagement.**
- 2. Renew our media outreach strategy and develop relationships with trusted news outlets to position IATP as a go-to source for expert analysis.**
- 3. Create more compelling and accessible multimedia content, including additional podcast series, short videos and interactive website features.**

# Operations & Budget (projected)

## ANNUAL BUDGET & USE OF FUNDS



In January 2025, IATP had a **staff of 17**, with 10 staff members fully dedicated to program work, supported by the executive director. The communications team consists of two staff, and four team members provide mission support in operations and development.

IATP's organizational objective for the next three years is to continue to diversify our funding while increasing the share of unrestricted support and multi-year grants in the total budget. We are also investing in raising a larger share of our budget from individual donors. Allowing for a modest increase in the size of our staff and for inflation, we estimate the budget for 2027 will be just over \$2.8 million.

**We have a lot of work to do! And we are excited to be doing it. In the final year of this plan, 2027, IATP will turn 40 and we will have much to celebrate: We will honor our founders, celebrate our achievements, and look to the next 40 years of shaping a world in which food comes from somewhere, nourishes us without depleting our natural world, and honors the dignity and rights of all.**



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<https://www.iatp.org/about/staff>



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