

Achieving Food Security and Food Sovereignty in Indian Country

NATIVE COMMUNITIES EXPERIENCE HIGHER RATES OF FOOD INSECURITY AND DIET-RELATED DISEASES THAN THE GENERAL POPULATION

- **Nearly 25% of all American Indian and Alaska Native households are food insecure.**
- **Rates of obesity and diabetes in Indian Country are nearly twice that of the rest of the U.S. population.**
- Virtually all of Indian Country is **considered a “food desert”** because of the relative isolation of reservations, despite the potential for thriving tribal agricultural economies.
- Barriers to food security among tribes include **high rates of poverty, greater geographic distances, lack of access to traditional foods,** and a **lack of greater tribal control and administration of federal nutrition assistance programs.**

MAZON SUPPORTS NATIVE-LED POLICY SOLUTIONS

MAZON has partnered with the Indigenous Food and Agriculture Initiative at the University of Arkansas (IFAI) since 2014 on federal food and nutrition policy to improve and strengthen food security and food sovereignty in Indian Country.

In 2017, **MAZON joined the Native Farm Bill Coalition**, founded by the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community, National Congress of American Indians, Intertribal Agriculture Council, and IFAI. Established to give Native Americans a strong and united voice in the Farm Bill process, the Coalition represents the **largest-ever coordinated effort in Indian Country on federal food, agriculture, and nutrition policy.** According to tribal leaders, the 2018 Farm Bill acknowledges the fundamental sovereignty and competence of tribal governments more so than any previous Farm Bills.

Key among the **achievements for Indian Country gained in the reauthorized Farm Bill** are protections and improvements to two critical federal nutrition assistance programs, the **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)** and the **Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR):**

- **SNAP will be protected from onerous work requirements** that would have created barriers to access for eligible participants.
- **FDPIR improvements include expansion of traditional foods, streamlined federal funding requirements, and a pilot to allow tribes to enter into 638 self-determination contracts to procure foods for FDPIR packages.**

MAZON will continue to partner with IFAI and the Coalition to ensure these federal nutrition assistance program policies in the new Farm Bill are implemented as intended to achieve food security and food sovereignty across Indian Country.



“I’m a descendant of Crazy Horse, and I live in a trailer on our ancestral land in Wounded Knee, raising seven grandchildren. I get food stamps —otherwise I couldn’t feed my family.”

- Dorothy (Lakota)

Pine Ridge Reservation, South Dakota

For more information and to discuss opportunities to address food insecurity in Indian Country, contact **Liza Lieberman, Director of Public Policy** at **llieberman@mazon.org** or **(202) 888-6449.**

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