

Deconstructing the '**Food Production**' Category: Transatlantic Perspectives on Representing the Farming Community in Food Policy Councils

Presentation for Food Policy Councils in Action: Experiences,
Lessons, and Work in Progress Workshop

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June 20th, 2025

Personal Introduction



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Research Focus:

- Inclusion and engagement practices
- Perceptions of procedural justice
- Food Policy Groups in the US and UK

Problem statement: The 'food production' umbrella

- Current research often groups the farming community under 'food production,' providing a broad sector overview. This can obscure the diversity within the farming community and mask important differences among actors. Despite the farming community's central role in the food system, there is a lack of analysis on:
 1. Who from the farming community is represented in Food Policy Councils (FPCs).
 2. What the nature of that representation is.

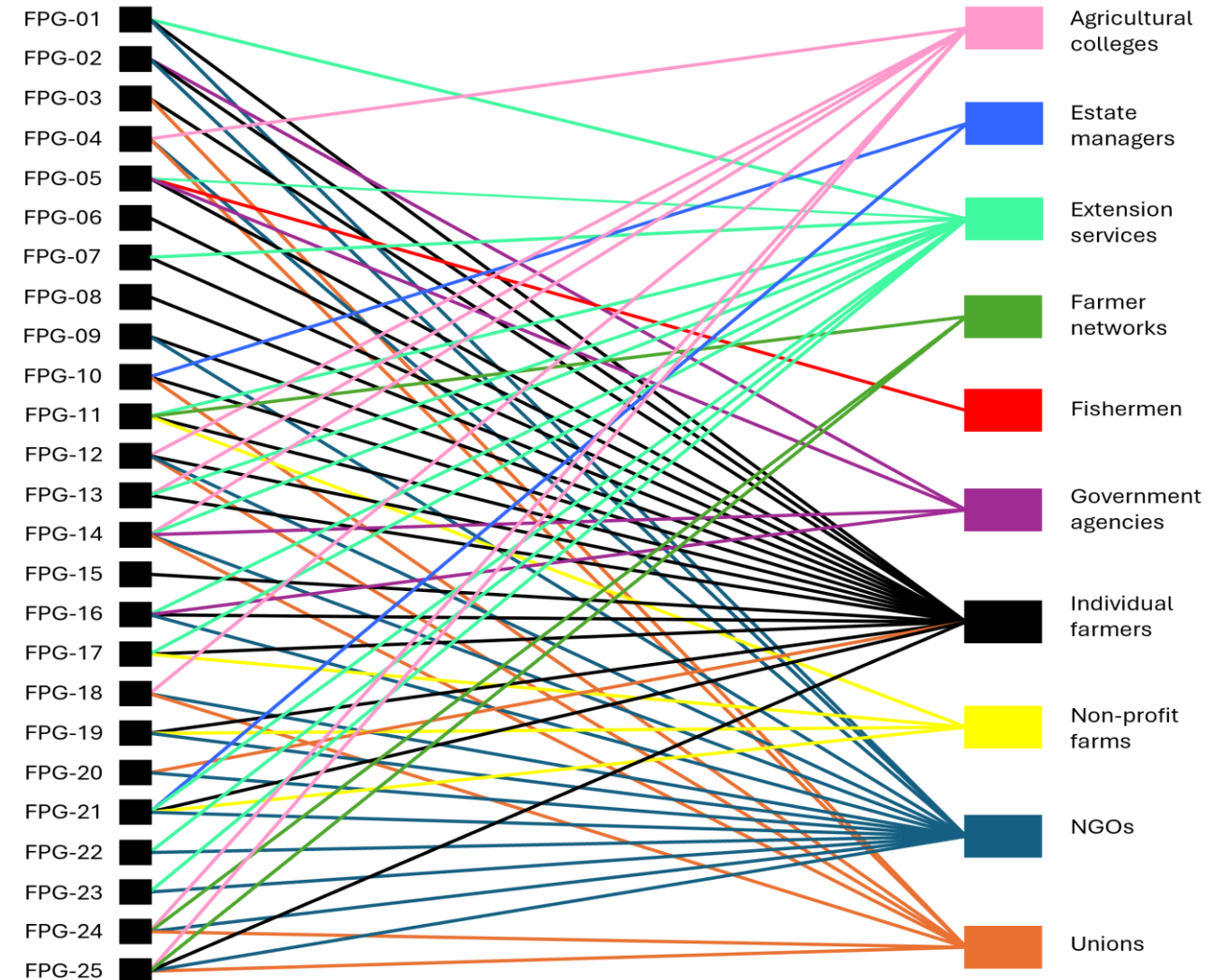
Methods

Utilizing an **explorative qualitative approach**, this case examines the representation of the farming community in FPCs **across the US and UK** through **25 semi-structured interviews** with FPC leaders



Findings: *Who is at the table (and who is not)?*

- 10 different types of stakeholders representing the farming community
- FPCs tend to include between three to five types of farming stakeholders
- Hybrid representation model (e.g., direct and indirect representatives)
- Missing voices:
 - Large-scale industrial farmers (US and UK)
 - Non-white farming stakeholders (US)
 - Indoor agriculture (US and UK)



Direct versus Indirect Representation Challenges

Direct Representation:

Individual farmers practicing alternative agriculture

- New entry farmers
- Tenant farmers (UK)
- Urban farming (US)

Challenges:

- Recruiting individual farmers (limited time and capacity)
- Ability to separate personal and sectoral interests

Indirect Representation:

‘Anchor Institutions’

- Unions
- Agricultural colleges/US Extension services
- NGOs
- Government agencies
- Farmer networks

Challenges:

- Dilute lived experiences of the farming community
- Some larger organizations may grow detached from their members' priorities

Context specific challenges

Organizational Factors

- Mandated membership quotas
 - **Example:** Export-oriented farmer 'seat' and local sales farmer 'seat'
- Scalar (mis)match between FPC activities and scale of farming operations
 - **Example:** Focus is often on local and regional food systems, which attracted the participation of small-scale farmers looking for alternative markets, rather than large-scale industrial farmers oriented towards export food production

Conclusion: *Questions for Discussion*

1. How should "**adequate representation**" be defined and measured in Food Policy Councils—is it about socio-demographics, food system sectors, spatial inclusion, affected communities or types of expertise?
2. How does **representation change over time** in Food Policy Councils as community demographics shift, leadership changes and organizational priorities evolve?

Thank you!