

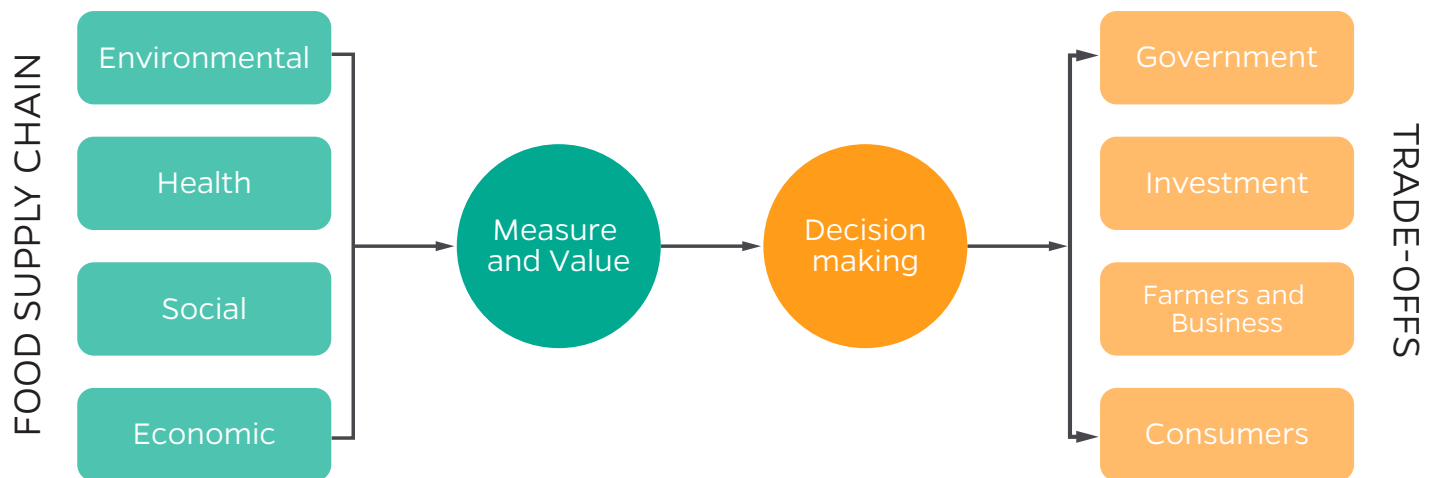
MECHANISMS FOR RESILIENT AND EQUITABLE FOOD SYSTEMS: AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT

TRUE COST ACCOUNTING (TCA)

A practice that accounts for all external costs (environmental, health, social, and economic) generated by the creation of a product, that are not reflected in the price.

The U.S. food system currently relies on access to artificially cheap resources and labor, emphasizing processed and exportable goods over the environment and human health. TCA works to measure the costs and benefits of different agricultural production systems to identify pathways for transformative, structural change.¹

TCA FRAMEWORK MODEL



Through this conceptual framework, TCA researchers and partners work to identify economic externalities across the food supply chain. These externalities are then measured and undergo economic valuation in order to inform decision-making and present trade-offs for diverse stakeholders.^{2,3}

AREAS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Inclusive, democratic process within TCA

Applying TCA frameworks to create new value systems in food and agriculture requires leadership from indigenous groups, communities of color, and small and mid-size farmers. TCA assessments should incorporate concepts of racial equity and historical justice.

Critically analyze natural capital valuation

Placing a monetary value on the natural world and regarding it as “capital” has historically led to exploitation of Earth’s resources. Further TCA research should explore ways to enhance human value towards conservation without “putting nature on the balance sheet.”⁴

Investigate best practices for transformative governance

Transformative governance is a strategy to confront existing power structures and establish institutional processes to reinforce food system change. Therefore, TCA should investigate ways to utilize this approach to limit corporate control in the food system and incentivize agroecological production and food sovereignty.

1. On True Cost Accounting and the Future of Food. Global Alliance for the Future of Food. 2019.
2. Measuring What Matters in Agriculture and Food Systems: A Synthesis of the Results and Recommendations of TEEB for Agriculture and Food’s Scientific and Economics report. The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity (TEEB). 2018.
3. A Framework for Assessing Effects of the Food System. IOM (Institute of Medicine) and NRC (National Research Council). 2015.
4. The True Cost of American Food. Conference Proceedings; April 14-17, 2016; San Francisco, CA.