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## **Public Justice Food Project, Only Legal Project Solely Reforming Food System, Undertakes Significant Expansion**

*Legal advocacy organization takes on one of America's most abusive and toxic industries; Website launched today will feature resources for community members and lawyers*

Public Justice continued its commitment today to bold legal action against food industry giants that thrive on deception and unfair rules at the public's expense, and engage in some of nation's most environmentally destructive business practices, by announcing the significant expansion of the Public Justice Food Project. It is the only legal project in the country focused solely on dismantling the systems that prop up industrial agriculture by bringing cases that are built to win and focused on high-impact structural reform.

Using a movement-oriented approach, it is more than its lawsuits: it ties its litigation with political advocacy, building a base of popular support for change in America's food system, and shifting the narrative surrounding farming in America from the inevitability of factory-scaled production, benefitting the few and harming many to the necessity for, and the necessity of, building a system that respects workers, our planet, rural ways of life, and the health and wellbeing of eaters everywhere.

As part of Public Justice members' commitment, and thanks to generous foundation support, the Food Project has expanded from two attorneys working solely on the issue just last year, to a current staff of six. Recent additions include Senior Attorney Brent Newell, who is one of the leading attorneys in the country tackling air pollution and climate change impacts from industrial animal agriculture and Outreach Manager Ameesha Sampat, who has become a leader in organizing with movement allies to build a more powerful base of communities and attorneys. In addition, the Food Project has added a new Associate Attorney Kellan Smith, and Paralegal Lisa Reed. Two-year fellow Kristina Sinclair begins this fall from Berkeley Law.

The new website dedicated to the Project – [food.publicjustice.net](http://food.publicjustice.net) – shares Public Justice's vision for how to meaningfully reform our animal agriculture system and brings resources to the people who can use them. The new site is intended to become a substantial resource for helping attorneys bring their skills to litigation against Big Ag, for impacted communities, farmers, and workers looking for guidance, and for anyone who wants to help make a difference and support Public Justice's work.

"We've seen plaintiffs' attorneys rise to the challenge of deadly lies from Big Tobacco, threats to everyone's public safety from the auto industry, and expose the pharmaceutical industry for its role in the opioid crisis," said Jessica Culpepper, Director of the Public Justice Food Project. "It's time now to take on Big Ag. Animal agriculture at an industrial scale is a prime contributor to catastrophic climate change and antibiotic resistance, and is the leading cause of water pollution in America. Like no one else, the trial bar has a special role to play here, too. The expanded Food Project will leverage Public Justice's tradition of bringing the best private-sector litigators to matters of urgent public

interest, and will connect the trial bar with communities in Big Ag's path to win lasting systemic change to benefit independent farmers, rural communities, and eaters across America."

To date, Public Justice Food Project attorneys have been lead counsel in two cases putting independent American producers of beef back on a level playing field with multinational meatpackers, have taken a lead role in fighting for a more transparent food system by striking down several state laws banning or inhibiting undercover investigations of factory farms (and have many more such cases pending), have helped win clean drinking water for neighbors of mega-dairies and poultry processing plants, and among many other examples of groundbreaking legal advocacy.

"Partnering with the Public Justice Food Project has helped us continue to elevate our organizing by collaborating with legal and communications experts to pair exciting, innovative legal and communications strategies with our bread and butter organizing," said Adam Mason, State Policy Director at Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement (Iowa CCI). "Because of this partnership, we are in the midst of a game-changing lawsuit that could not only bring systemic changes to Iowa's woefully weak environmental rules and regulations, but also puts the issues of clean water and our corporate-controlled food and farm system squarely in the public conversation."

"It is the most vulnerable communities impacted by industrial polluters. Without the legal resources that Public Justice brings to communities, like the RCRA suit with Mountaire, these communities would not have a fighting chance against these powerhouses," said Maria Payan, an organizer with the Socially Responsible Agriculture Project (SRAP) in Delaware and Maryland. "When Jessica Culpepper with Public Justice stepped in, the odds changed very quickly. They are the lifeline for communities, literally."

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