

# Action Plan

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## Introduction and Background

We are representatives of students and youth from the **University of Gastronomic Sciences (UNISG)** in Italy and the **U.S. Youth Food Movement**, and **Slow Food USA**.

We have united together under the philosophy of Slow Food, encapsulated by the idea of creating a “New Gastronomy”—striving for greater sustainability in the production and consumption of food, ultimately attaining **Good, Clean and Fair** food for all. \* We see a lack of opportunities for student and youth involvement in the “kaleidoscope” of food issues threatening what we eat today. Thus, we must **act now** to mobilize the resources and potential of youth. Through research and a great deal of thought, we have developed a plan for how we can awaken and strengthen **an international network of young farmers, producers, students, chefs, and activists that builds on the strong foundations established by organizations like Slow Food**.

Our **network** will work to initiate opportunities for interaction, to share information, to build leadership, to connect through projects, and to create student and youth exchange. We created a **work group** made up of youth representing: Australia, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Mexico, Spain, Switzerland, Trinidad, the UK and USA. Each youth, along with Slow Food leaders, is developing an action plan best **suited for their own culture**, as well as working as a **unified whole** to develop international opportunities and action. As we continue to contact more students and universities, the size of our work group and the extent of action plans will increase.

## Our Impact: Globally and Locally

We recognize everyday how ‘globalized’ the world is becoming. It is important that we strive for both global and local **social and economic sustainability**. We want to harness the potential of international fluidity and communication to positively affect local food communities and economies.

Whereas often ‘globalization’ leads to standardization of local cultures and the marginalization of the environment and its citizens, we hope that through the global sharing of experience and knowledge, youth will return to their local communities to **conserve, protect, and promote** their own biodiversity and tradition through food.

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\* Good: Naturally delicious food created with care from healthy plants and animals. Clean: Grown and harvested with methods that have a positive impact on ecosystems and biodiversity. Fair: Produced by people who are treated with dignity and justly compensated for their labor, and available to all.

We strive to be youth that are globally aware with the resources of international information, yet still put our efforts toward the preservation of local histories. International inspiration and support through the network for nurturing and strengthening one's home community.

Since, **Terra Madre**, and with the increased focus on food communities, it has become apparent that there are many people involved in food systems that will never be Slow Food members, nor can we expect them to be. Our goal is to **actively unite all players in the agro-food sphere**, members and non-members, to work together toward the objective of **Good, Clean and Fair** alimentation.

## The Proposal

At the most recent Slow Food International Leader's Congress, our work group presented a six-point proposal, which was enthusiastically endorsed and accepted by the leaders present and by the members of the Slow Food International staff, led by Carlo Petrini. It is this proposal, with ideas developed further in this document, that forms the basis of our plans for youth engagement in Slow Food:

### **International Youth Food Movement Proposal to the Slow Food International Congress:**

In support of the growing International Youth Food Movement, we the leaders of Slow Food resolve to:

1. Create an international youth network for all, led by students, based in universities, to solidify connections, share knowledge and exchange experiences.
2. Encourage *convivia* to involve youth in their activities and increase youth membership
3. Develop university-based *convivia* around the world.
4. Create opportunities in the future to have students and young people involved in the various levels of Slow Food leadership.
5. Invest in young farmers by creating opportunities for exchange and education.
6. Build youth and students into Terra Madre and Slow Food communities to provide and extraordinary educational and life experience.

These six points cover opportunities for access, strategies for communication and information sharing, and development of youth leadership and membership within the organization. Each of these points is explored through the themes of: **The Network: Communication and Exchange**, and **The Role of Slow Food**

## The Network: Communication and Exchange

Academic relationships already exist between universities, students, farmers, and producers. Our network is different in that it will create and reaffirm connections between these parties that are based on food—more specifically, food that is **Good, Clean and Fair**.

We have chosen the **internet** as the **main communication medium of our network** because in the contemporary world, it is the most effect means with the most extensive reach. We recognize that there are many actors in the agro-food chain that have no access to the internet. This is why **universities will be the foundation of this network**. **Students** will be the messengers, facilitators, and also the active participants in projects, communication, research, education and more. By getting students directly involved with farmers, fishermen, and breeders, as well as with activists and educators, **we give back value** to their work in societies where they often struggle for accreditation.

## The Slow Youth Website

We will have a **website** that serves as a **resource and communication medium for the network**. This website will be open to all, but will be focused on youth and rely heavily on new technology and new forms of communication.

The Website will consist of the following:

- **A database** of all those who join the network. Including a profile of what their interests are and how to contact them.
- **A resource center**. A place for the posting and publishing of materials—papers, journals, reports, studies, theses, research etc. For example, people can **upload** documents in word and PDF formats for others to later **download**. A place for the posting of resumes, CV's, and job listings in the agro and eco-gastronomic sectors. A place to **share** experiences, successes and general ideas. It will also provide the links to other pages of associations, NGOs, schools, etc., all of relevance.

- A **proposal center**. People can announce a call for papers on a subject or an interest in developing projects or initiating collaboration efforts.
- **Photo sharing**. A place for sharing photos that are in harmony with the Slow Food philosophy.
- **Video**. Similar to YouTube, yet also allowing for live webTV broadcasting.
- **Blogs** and **Forums** encompassing a wide range of topics. For example: where to locate a farmers market in one's neighborhood, how to cook/recipes, where to find organic and GMO free products, how to hold a beer tasting, etc.
- A **wiki** resource of food and food related topics. Similar to Wikipedia, but centered solely around food that is good, clean and fair. Producers and Co-producers, Activists and Students, Convivium leaders and Campus Convivium leaders, UNISG students and associates, can **share their knowledge** and wisdom more widely and with greater impact.

### The Ark of Knowledge

**Exchange** is a very important theme of our network. Not just of information, knowledge, and experience through long distance communication, but actually getting **youth moving around the world**. We want to give youth the opportunity to travel with positive impact in their communities, countries, continents, and around the globe. We also aim to facilitate visits for young producers, students, chefs and activists to the **University of Gastronomic Sciences** (UNISG) – giving a wider range of people the occasion to learn more about **Slow Food** and **New Gastronomy**.

Much like the Ark of Taste, where products are selected for preservation and promotion based on the qualities of Good, Clean, and Fair, we will establish an **Ark of Knowledge** where people and places are nominated as **exceptional stores of information and tradition**. These people and places, as a condition of being placed on the Ark of Knowledge, will agree to provide mentorship to young farmers, chefs, students and activists. By opening their farms, restaurants, creameries, organizations, and vineyards to the next generation, we will ensure that the vast, and often undocumented, wisdom of these producers and organizers will not be lost.

In return, those youth participating in stages with the Ark of Knowledge program will be asked to document or reflect on their experience by producing a piece of writing (fiction, non-fiction, or poetry); by creating a short film, song, or audio piece; with photographs or visual art; or through another creative outlet. These will be archived as

tangible products of the stage, beside the intangible experiences gained by both the mentor and the mentee.

## Terra Madre 2008

Our **working timeline** is to have reached out to all the universities currently in the Terra Madre network, plus other academic institutions and organizations, by **Terra Madre 2008**. Through these connections, we will develop a strong **Terra Madre youth/student delegation** to come to Turin. This delegation will be a mix of students and producers from our own and other food communities. With that delegation, we will **launch the network to the public**.

The Terra Madre Youth Delegation will be chosen from farmers, students, chefs, activists, and organizers. These delegates will come together two days prior to Terra Madre, at the UNISG in Pollenzo, in a unique 'pre-conference', with the aim of unifying the delegation and galvanizing our message. During Terra Madre, this delegation will participate in the full event, with special content developed to support Youth Network initiatives, such as the website and the Ark of Knowledge. Closed sessions among the youth delegates will be held to continue developing the focus of the movement.

## The Role of Slow Food

Slow Food, through its organizational structure, its programs, and its networks, already has much to offer this youth network.

## Youth Engagement

**Slow Food Convivia**, the cornerstone of Slow Food, are able to initiate and support projects and activities through their strong member-based networks. We envision Slow Food Convivia being active participants in engaging youth in local communities. In the United States, strong relationships are being formed between **Slow Food on Campus Convivia** and local convivia. This program is an example of how Slow Food is connecting university campuses to their local food community. Although this model may be culturally specific in some ways, allowing students the capability of having their own convivia gives them the means to engage with Slow Food and plan activities and events that reflect their voice.

An international **research project**, conducted by a student from the University of Gastronomic Sciences, shows us that youth from all over the world are ready for change. By re-evaluating a **membership system for students** so that it is more affordable, and by developing university-based convivia around the world, students get the much desired autonomy they need to work on their own initiatives. They are ready and they can be trusted to do so, as many examples have shown.

Youth can also help to **change the dynamics within convivia**, allowing for a wider variety of opinions to be shared and supported. By involving youth in their activities and facilitating greater youth membership, convivia will experience **increased diversity of membership**, and therefore increased impact in their communities. Convivia programs will also benefit. For example, students' ability to work with children, and have the children look up to them, takes food education to a level previously not achieved by the conventional convivium. Their fresh energy, availability, hunger for knowledge, motivation toward change, and fun spirit means **unfathomable potential** for raising awareness and spreading of a knowledge dialogue.

### Youth Leadership

The above benefits of increased youth engagement are only compacted by integrating youth into leadership positions at all levels of the organization. The youth perspective, coupled with the experience and wisdom of older leaders, will make for a more inspired and dynamic organization.

At all levels of leadership—from **convivium leaders to regional governors to board members to staff to International vice presidents**—youth should be considered as candidates. On the local level, this means empowering youth to take on establishing new convivia. At national and international levels, sharing leadership with the next generation ensures continuity of focus while encouraging new ideas to sprout and grow.

### Conclusion

Through a focus on building a network with strong, deep opportunities for communication and exchange, and by encouraging investment in youth engagement by Slow Food, we are strengthening an organization and ensuring its future with the next generation.

**Youth are the future--built on the foundations of the past.**

## The International Student Workgroup

Mauro Avino	Italy	m.avino@studenti.unisg.it
Mikey Azzara	USA	mazzara@nofanj.org
Stefania Borsotti	Switzerland	s.borsotti@studenti.unisg.it
Edoardo Cervigni	France/Italy	e.cervigni@studenti.unisg.it
Bernard Glaude	South- und Central- America and Caribbean	b.glaude@studenti.unisg.it
Laura Hess	USA	laura.hess@yale.edu
Patrick Hoehn	Germany	p.hoehn@studenti.unisg.it
Alyssa Jumars	USA	ajumars@gmail.com
Lucia Lantero	Spain	l.lantero@studenti.unisg.it
Siv Lie	USA	sivblie@gmail.com
Elizabeth Manning	USA	eemanning12@yahoo.com
Riccardo Migliavada	Italy	r.migliavada@studenti.unisg.it
John Kariuki	Kenya	j.kariuki@studenti.unisg.it
Gen Ohhashi	Japan	g.ohhashi@studenti.unisg.it
David Prior	Australia, Ireland, UK	d.prior@studenti.unisg.it
David Schwartz	USA	david_schwartz@brown.edu
Anim Steel	USA	asteel@thefoodproject.org
Cecily Upton	USA	cecily@slowfoodusa.org