Dear Friends,

When we launched in 2015, we were a staff of four, working in a small space with an idea about how to tackle coverage of the biggest issues in food. Five years later, we are an award-winning publication with a newsroom of 15 editors and reporters, who publish daily context and analysis for a global audience on the politics, business, and culture of food and agriculture.

We are creatures of our time, of course, and this has been quite a year. The first six months of the fiscal year graphically raised public awareness of systemic racism, and the last six months, with Covid-19 on the march, brought to the forefront in an unavoidable way issues of supply chain stability, food access, and exploitable labor. All this stimulated more fact-finding and investigative work on our part, as well as a critical look at our own organizational culture.

We had already prioritized representation on our Board of Directors, and waived residency requirements to expand senior-level bandwidth in key regions to make job opportunities available to journalists in areas without a dominant food media presence.

In 2021, we went further, overhauling our employment contracts to make them more fair and less restrictive, and pairing overly legalistic agreements down to a single, shared code of conduct and ethics the entire organization is committed to. We also pioneered a first-in-nation beat that covers the movement around justice for Black farmers and farmers of color across the country. The result of this essential work has been a bigger, more dynamic pool of Counter contributors and a staff that feels supported, protected, and most importantly, encouraged to bring you the deeply reported and engaging stories The Counter is known for.

So, if you have only recently become acquainted with us, please sign up for our free, bi-weekly newsletter, Thinly Sliced, so that we can come to your inbox automatically. Feel free to share with us your reactions and ideas, and consider lending us your support.

Yours,

Jeffrey Kittay
About Us

The Counter is a nonprofit, independent, nonpartisan newsroom investigating the forces shaping how and what America eats.

We’re the multi-award-winning home of a new kind of food journalism that goes beyond the gustatory to uncover the money, power, and politics behind our plates.

In an economy driven by consumer demand, food literacy is leverage. We believe that an informed public, armed with unbiased context and analysis, can demand change and be empowered to make the choices that matter in their own lives.

In the midst of twin reckonings—the Covid-19 pandemic and systemic racism’s impact on every aspect of American life—food media faces a culture shift of its own. Responsible, vigorous reporting on the realities of our highly-efficient, ultra-processed food system have gone fully mainstream; the stories we cover make front-page news.

The Counter is a pioneer in inclusive reporting that represents the full spectrum of food stories, from the personal to the political. We are also pioneering an inclusive newsroom that is representative of the world we cover.

Our ongoing daily coverage of the pandemic this year brought many new journalists to our pages, whose reporting we’ve been proud to feature during a devastating period of job loss in our industry.

At the end of this fiscal year, we totalled 4.9 million pageviews, which was 10 percent higher than our previous fiscal year. Year over year, we’ve grown our monthly users from 151,000 to 222,000, which represents an almost 50 percent growth between 2019 and 2020.

Awards and Accolades

The Counter’s entire vertical of Covid-19 reporting, including the “Eating In” and “Shutdown Notebook” series, were inducted into the Library of Congress’s historical archive of coronavirus materials in November of 2020.

Awarded “Best Food Coverage” by the Association of Food Journalists in 2020.


Nominated for a 2020 James Beard Media Award for our investigation into decades of discriminatory loan practices by USDA against Black farmers.

Reporters H. Claire Brown and Jessica Fu were recognized by the North American Agricultural Journalists Association (NAAJA) for their 2020 series on USDA’s much-maligned Farmers to Families pandemic aid program.

Counter staffers Karen Stabiner, Joe Fassler, and H. Claire Brown, along with reporters Jessica McKenzie, and Leigh Kunkel were awarded “Best in Business” 2020 awards from the Society for Advancing Business Writing and Editing (SABEW).
In the last year, food media has undergone a profound cultural shift, confronting its history of bias and appropriation at the same time America is reckoning with its own 400-year racist history. Last summer, in the midst of our national collision with a pandemic of a different sort—ongoing police violence—Kate Cox penned a letter to our readers. In it, she detailed our commitment over the long-term to narrowing another chasm in American culture: the dearth of Black and other voices of color in food media, and in media writ large.

We started with our own organization: We have prioritized representation on our Board of Directors and made our newsroom fully remote to expand senior-level bandwidth in key regions, while publicly committing to hiring more editors and writers of color to help us shape our coverage. We publish stories that expose systemic injustice in every part of the food system from government agency to retail shelf, which requires us, at every turn, to challenge our biases as journalists. We will continue to do that.

The Counter’s newsroom is increasingly representative not just in terms of race and ethnicity, but in age, gender, and geography. Building an inclusive newsroom and representative board are processes we’re proud to talk about publicly.

Access to land, capital, and to enough food for an active, healthy life for vulnerable children and families—especially children of color—are systemic issues that require human stories to bring them out into the light. To do that work in earnest demands a staff of reporters who challenge our blind spots, question assumptions, and open the door to new networks of sources. That’s the work we do in tandem with journalism, and that work never ends.

Just before the 2020 election, The Counter’s editorial team went wide-lens, extending our coverage beyond the Covid crisis of the moment and into what recovery for America’s food and agriculture systems will actually require. Disaster reporting doesn’t end when the country moves from peak- to low-boil crisis. But it shifts from the acute circumstances...
of the moment to the need for longer-range thinking about resilience, including how to approach existing issues
the pandemic laid bare: the systemic racism of Black land loss and lack of access to capital; disproportionate impacts on the supply chain at both farm gate and last-mile; and the changing dynamics of food aid, from USDA to food banks.

We believe in the value of reportage that focuses on the reemergence and reinvention of people who work in this disparate food system as we reshape, repurpose, and realign the fundamentals key to establishing an equitable and sustainable normalcy in food today.

Counter audiences depend on our daily reporting to understand and inform their work, demand change, and make educated decisions. The Counter’s readers are deeply food-curious, but their interests are diverse. They look to us to help them understand food through the lenses of news, politics, culture, and business. They work in media, politics, academics, advocacy, and in every part of the food chain, from production to processing to restaurants and food service.
**Who We Reach**

**Top Countries by Readership**
1. United States
2. Canada
3. United Kingdom
4. India
5. Australia
6. Philippines
7. Germany
8. South Africa
9. New Zealand
10. Ireland

**Top U.S. Cities by Readership**
1. New York
2. Chicago
3. Los Angeles
4. Dallas
5. Atlanta
6. Washington
7. San Francisco
8. Houston
9. Seattle
10. Boston

**Who Else is Reading Us**

Pickups and citations from hundreds of major outlets in 2019 and 2020, including:

- The New York Times
- Miami Herald
- Fast Company
- The Washington Post
- The Atlantic
- npr
- EATER
- THE VERGE
- Vox
- The New Yorker
- WSJ
- Bloomberg

**Year in Numbers**

- ~ 5,000,000 Annual Pageviews
- ~ 300,000 Weekly Readers
- ~ 30,000 Subscribers
Sustainability

In 2020, American journalism saw its most devastating year since the 2008 global financial crisis. More than 16,000 reporters and editors across the country lost their jobs. Not only were journalists in every sector covering a pandemic we were also living through in real time, a record number were imprisoned for their work in 2020, as governments cracked down on coverage of Covid-19 and ongoing civil unrest.

At the same time, the nonprofit news industry grew. The Counter was fortunate to see continued strength in our fundraising efforts, which sustained us into the end of the fiscal year and looking forward. While overall revenues were down from our original expectations, our operation maintains a strong show of long-term commitment from our seed funder and board president, S. Donald Sussman, who made a multi-year pledge of support. His gift provides a cushion in our growth strategy and sustains us against any prolonged distress in running our day-to-day operations—even in the face of a global crisis.

After incorporating as a nonprofit in October 2019, we built a fundraising strategy focused on growing revenue through four key initiatives: major gifts, foundations, board support, and reader support. We have invested in our fundraising strategies in three key areas to date:

- **Major gifts/foundations:** We have and continue to build relationships with foundations in both the media and food/agriculture spaces. In fiscal 2019, we are funded by: The Chicago Community Foundation, Shachar Foundation, Eli & Edythe Broad Foundation, The Marcus Foundation and the Ida and Robert Gordon Foundation.

- **Board Support:** Primary funding comes from our Board of Directors, which provides annual operating support throughout the course of the year. Our Board President provided seed funding and continues to provide major financial support annually, but our members of the Board continue to support our operation in several aspects throughout the year.

- **Reader support:** Our community of readers supports The Counter with gifts of various sizes, and we’ve placed a special emphasis on developing relationships with readers who make recurring donation commitments. In this aspect of our fundraising, we work with News Revenue Hub, which provides a user-friendly donor dashboard and runs the annual NewsMatch fundraising campaign, during which funds are matched dollar-for-dollar up to $1,000 per individual donor.
On top of our ongoing investments in capacity-building, we take our role as stewards of donor funds very seriously. In 2019, we prioritized and continue in 2021 to maximize efficiencies in development and operational costs—specifically overhead—by becoming a fully remote newsroom, which has eliminated the enormous cost of maintaining office space in New York City. We have also contracted to third parties our accounting, human resources, insurance services, benefit packages, and technology support through a bidding process overseen by our Board.

While we continue to strive for capacity on both sides of our organization, the attached statement of functional expense demonstrates that our development and operational costs are on par—and often come in under—those of our peer organizations in similar early-stage lifecycles.
Supporters

S. Donald Sussman, board president and philanthropist, provided the funding to launch The New Food Economy in 2015, and has made a sustaining three year pledge for $6 million.

Foundations

Eli & Edythe Broad Foundation
Fund for Nonprofit News at The Miami Foundation
Ida & Robert Gordon Foundation
The Chicago Community Foundation
The Columbus Foundation / Grace Communications
The Marcus Foundation
Ruth and Stephen Fund - Triangle Community Foundation
Shachar Foundation

Individual Giving

$25,000 AND ABOVE
Bonnie Porta

$1,000 AND ABOVE
Douglas Phillips
Gregory Muth
Jeffrey Kittay
Rohit Shukla
Steven Lipin

$500 AND ABOVE
Ann Brown
Anthony Fagnant
Corinna Baban
Gretchen Wetzel
Harley Seligman
James Ferguson
Jason Ingle
Jennifer Johnson
Marc Kramer
Marcie Rothman
Nathaniel Pazik

$250 AND ABOVE
Anjali Oberoi
Ben Palen
Corie Brown
David Puente
Geraldine Wang
Glenn Reed
Joan Brucha
John Vena
Sue Zelickson

$100 AND ABOVE
Aleksa Prathivadi
Alison Arnett
Allan Abramson
Amy Rogers
Andrea Folds
Andrew Gold
Andrew Smith
Barbara Knecht
Ben Miller
Benjamin Roberts
Beverly Gilbert
Bill Horne
Brian@ Mind Full of Food
Brittany Solano
Carrie Balkcom
Christine Matthews
Christine Ryan
Christine Tkac
Christophe Hille
Christopher Fagnant
Christopher Hirsch
Corby Kummer
Dan Liu
Dan O’Dea
Dana Smith
Daniel Pullman
David Dietz
David Hankin
Michael Adsit
Michael Beall
Michael Berger
Michael Campbell
Michael Gallagher
Michael Rozyne
Mihaly Csoto
Molly Anderson
Molly Jenkins
Morgan Minogue
Naeemah Chike
Nan Wilson
Nancy Adams
Nancy Brewer
Nancy Fabrizi-Miller
Naomi Scheman
Nicholas Williams
Noreen Warnock
Patricia G Iwasaki
Pearl Shavzin-Dremeaux
Penny Heiple
Peter Molenaar
Peter Stillman
Philip Wong
Pia Hinckle
Renee Marton
Rex Tayag
Reza Vojdani
Richard Stein
Richard White
Rob Eshman
Robbi Mixon
Robert Brewer
Robert Sager
Ronald Kint
Rosy King
Russell Haynes
Ruth Denton-Howes
Ryan White
Safeer Mirza
Samantha McKenna
Sammy Koenigsberg
Sarah 1811 Ward St
Sarah Beebout
Sarah E. Wood
Sarah Hunt
Sarah James
Sarah Spira
Scott Edwards
Scott Samuelson
SE Hausmann
Shanice Martin
Sharon Nielson
Sheila Ryan
SooHyen Park
Soroush Jamali Pour
Stephen Cerny
Stephen Miller
Steven Boss
Susan Futrell
Susan Hirsch
Susan Keller
Susanne Freidberg
Suzanna Rumon
Tamanna Mohapatra
Tania Herbert
Tara Hammes, R.D.
Teresa Hammes
Teresa Travis
Tiffany Fehr
Tina Castanares
Todd Fuson
Tricia Sauer
Tristan Loper
Uli Koester
Virgie Ellington
Wendy Bazil
Wendy McGill
Wendy Weiden
Whitney Oxendahl
Will Sullivan
William Gilbert
Ximena Greenhouse
Yulia Ivanova
Zainab Pixler
Zol Heyman