1. Could you introduce your purpose of research on the project of food justice?

*UEPI has a social justice mission and does program, policy, and research in multiple areas of the urban environment (transportation, air quality, freight traffic and ports, etc). Our approach to food issues grew out of that mission and we have ultimately framed that research based on our own definition of food justice: food system focus; access; and social justice linkages*

2. What social problems caused by food injustice at present? Are there differences of food injustice between advanced country (such as the US) and developing country (such as China)?

*The food justice issues within the food system cross the issue areas. Example: the Florida-based Coalition of Immokalee Workers which addresses labor rights, immigration status and a variety of food issues. There are obvious and subtle differences between the U.S. and China and other developing countries, but there are some similarities as well. With respect to food justice issues, there are environmental impacts from the use of inputs in an industrial model; labor impacts; increasing health and diet impacts; detachment from the land. Struck by the work of Renmin University Dean Wen Tiejun and others who discuss the need to rebuild rural agriculture that can resonate in the U.S.*

3. What’s the government’s responsibility when the injustice of food is prevailing? Are there any model governments and success experiences to administrate food justice, for example, to punish the bribed officials and clear out the harmful and filthy food?

*Government has a crucial role around food justice. Examples include: in protecting the rights of farm labor; health-based and environmental regulations; animal welfare; etc. The L.A. Food Policy Council approach is one type of model at the local and regional scale. There are not any clear national models – Cuba comes to mind but due to very specific circumstances and that might change – these are global food system issues as well. Global food players influence national/domestic food economies. On corruption: accountability and transparency is key and a need to rethink the notion of national well-being where environment, inequality, and health are also prioritized*

4. Why many scientists and social scholars deliberately join the activities of promoting food injustice? For example, in China, Clenbuterol, we called it as “lean meat powder”, and fruit vegetable ripener (mainly hormone) has caused many healthy and treacherous catastrophes in the recent score years. It is just economic benefits?

*It ties back to the discussion of what drives the food system. If the purpose of growing and selling food is to maximize profit then abuses can easily become part of the process. We’ve had food safety scandals/additives in the U.S.; we’ve had a food marketing and food production and food retail system that promotes unhealthy food. In 1906 Upton Sinclair wrote The Jungle; 96 years later Eric Schlosser wrote Fast Food Nation. Those issues remain important in the U.S., although some of the food safety scandals may differ in their scale and the context in which they occur.*

5. Could you give us a brief introduction and comments about Monsanto Co.?

*Monsanto is an interesting case study of how the global food system operates.*
Monsanto produces the largest volume pesticide product – Roundup. It had earlier been a focus of critics as the chemical producer of Agent Orange. Monsanto now calls itself a “Life Sciences” company by working to establish monopoly of the seed market through its GMO strategy. Consequences: loss of seed diversity; further consolidation of the industrial/global food system; further commodification of food.

6. How to understand the inequality of food consumption caused by traditions and habits of different peoples. It is undoubtedly the American people consume much more food resources than the natives in Africa, and Japanese whale hunting tradition looks like unfair to other people.

The resource/food consumption issue is a huge one and presents an unfortunate model globally. An interesting illustration is what we discovered at LAUSD – a coincidence of both young people who are overweight and are also periodically hungry.

7. When we talk about “justice”, it regularly relates to social hierarchy. In some country (I mean in the former USSR), it was available and common for interest group to consume much safer food (such as the “special supply” food). What is the history and results of “special supply” food?

Social hierarchy operates in the U.S. as well when it comes to food. Access is a key issue, but the deeper issue is growing inequality which is fast becoming a global issue, U.S. and China and Russia. One illustration of the food-inequality link: a CSA/organic farm for the wealthy. But keep in mind: obesity affects everyone, even if some more than others.

8. In some country, some internet users joked that the serious air pollution (esp. densely p.m. 2.5) is beneficial for justice, because it is difficult for the interest group to breathe the “special supply” air. What is your viewpoint?

There is a photograph from the 1950s of a group called the Optimists Club in Los Angeles where men in business suits are wearing gas masks. I was struck by how images of L.A. from the 1950s and 1960s and 1970s when air pollution problems were at their worst, are similar to some of the images – and humor – today in Hong Kong and China. There are the schemes to sell “pure air”, the use of gas masks as performance art and as part of everyday life. There is no justice in air pollution, nor with climate change. It’s still a huge problem in Los Angeles; even more magnified in China. Changes in Los Angeles to regulate and begin to reduce exposures occurred due to pressure from below through grassroots mobilization and eventually a response, albeit uneven, from policymakers. In both Los Angeles and China, the key is not only how sources can be controlled and mitigated but that the direct structural causes – development patterns, market failures, and, yes, inequality and the need for social justice are addressed. The environmental justice movement in the U.S. has a saying derived from the civil rights movement of the 1960s: speak truth to power. That’s true whether in Los Angeles or Nanjing, the United States or China.