

U.S. Hunger Concerns: the Hidden Costs of AI Infrastructure

Data centers,
food sovereignty,
environmental justice,
and faithful action





AI Infrastructure is also Food System Infrastructure

THE PROBLEM

Rapid growth of hyperscale data centers is reshaping rural land use, water access, energy systems, and local economies.

These changes affect whether communities can remain on the land, produce food, and sustain livelihoods.

Decisions about data centers and AI development belong within conversations about hunger, poverty, ecological health, and justice.

Who receives the benefits, who bears the costs, and who has the power to decide?

How Data-Center Growth Can Affect Hunger

AI / INFRASTRUCTURE

Data centers • Land • Water • Energy • Subsidies

COMMUNITY PRESSURES

Reduced farmland access • Energy & water competition
Higher utility bills • Weaker rural economies

POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES

Reduced local food production • Pressure on farms & workers
Poverty & food insecurity • Less community control

Rural Hunger Begins with Community Instability

HUNGER & RURAL STABILITY

Rural food systems depend on viable farms, farmworkers' livelihoods, affordable energy, accessible water, stable land tenure, and local businesses.

When rural economies are hollowed out or agriculture is destabilized, communities can lose their capacity to sustain themselves.

The PC(USA) has framed the threat to rural self-sufficiency and the ability to feed local populations as an existential concern.

Infrastructure decisions become food security decisions.

“Can rural communities sustain themselves?”

Prime Farmland

Hyperscale data centers create speculative demand for land near transmission lines, water sources, fiber networks, and transportation corridors.

Speculation can raise rural land prices, squeezing farmers, ranchers, and new entrants to agriculture.

Once prime farmland is converted to industrial facilities and associated infrastructure, it is usually permanently removed from food production.

Food sovereignty requires communities to retain meaningful control over how farmland is used.

**Land purchases in the U.S. for
future data centers:**

\$6 B. in 1st 6 months of 2026

*** Northern VA - \$3-8 million p/acre**



A Competition for Essential Resources

ENVIRONMENTAL
JUSTICE

WATER

Cooling demand

Aquifers & watersheds

Agriculture & households

ENERGY

Massive electricity loads

Generation & transmission

Grid upgrades

LAND

Industrial siting

Farmland conversion

Community control lost

Tech infrastructure should not displace food, water, health, or ecological resilience.

Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement (ICCI)

PHP PARTNER

A PHP partner is organizing and mobilizing in Iowa in response to public concerns about AI, data centers, and water contamination.

- Since late July, organizers had conversations with just over 2,500 folks
- Identified 2,002 who are concerned
- 1,353 people signed a petition or filled out a brief survey
- Getting lots of media attention



Private Gains, Public Costs

**POVERTY &
ENVIRONMENT**

CORPORATE BENEFITS

Subsidies & tax abatements

Discounted power

Land access

Water access

Construction activity

COMMUNITY COSTS

Higher utility costs

Grid-upgrade costs

Loss of farmland

Aquifer & watershed stress

Long-term environmental risk

What If Jobs Are Not Replaced?

AI, WORK &
DISPLACEMENT

Previous technological shifts have often created new kinds of work even as they eliminated others.

Advanced AI and robotics could potentially automate a broad range of cognitive and physical tasks.

If AI reaches the capacity to outperform human labor, the historical pattern of “new jobs replacing old jobs” may not hold.

That possibility makes protections, income supports, labor rights, and democratic control increasingly urgent.

Not only “Can we build it?” — but “Who benefits, who is protected, and who decides?”

Consent, Sovereignty, and Indigenous Knowledge

FPIC

Free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) is a central international human-rights principle concerning Indigenous peoples' rights to decisions about lands, territories, resources, cultures, and communities.

Applied to data centers, FPIC means timely information, meaningful decision-making power, **and the ability to withhold consent**—not simply notification.

Indigenous advocates have also raised concerns about AI systems **harvesting Indigenous knowledge, language, and cultural materials** without permission or sharing of benefits.

International standards can strengthen organizing, public accountability, litigation, diplomacy, and future legislation—if enforceable...

If you use AI, use it responsibly!
And say “please” & “thank you,” just in case...

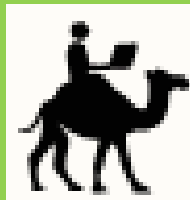
YOU & AI

Try thaura.ai. Thaura was developed by two Syrian brothers and is based in Finland.

It provides powerful AI with zero surveillance and no data selling.

The first principles in the Thaura constitution are ‘Side with the oppressed’ and ‘Anti-colonialism’. See thaura.ai/constitution

Its infrastructure, based in Finland and Germany, is powered entirely by renewable energy. 100%.



“Algorithm and the Almighty”: A Faithful Framework

PC(USA)

ENVIRONMENT

Advocate for environmental & ecosystem safeguards.

CONSENT

Demand transparency, notice, and meaningful consent.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Ensure clear human responsibility and legal accountability.

COLLABORATION

Work with ecumenical, interreligious, and secular partners.

DISCERNMENT

Use AI sparingly and maintain human agency and discernment.

Not a rejection of technology — a call for moral limits, democratic accountability, ecological responsibility, and human dignity.

When the Stakes Are High, Slow Down

PRECAUTION &
SLOW DOWN

The **Precautionary Principle** says society should prevent foreseeable harm rather than wait for irreversible damage.

PC(USA) policy connects technological decision-making to **sustainability, participation, sufficiency, and solidarity.**

A precautionary approach means **pausing or limiting development** until communities can assess impacts and establish enforceable safeguards.

The **Seminole Nation's moratorium** on generative-AI-related data center development as an example of community sovereignty.

***Not faster than communities can understand, govern,
and safely absorb.***

Standards & Safeguards Before Advancing

RESPONSIBLE POLICY

LAND

Protect prime farmland; use zoning, easements & cumulative-impact review.

ENERGY

Account for demand, emissions, grid upgrades, rates & subsidies.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Assign responsibility for environmental & public-health harms.

PACE

Slow or pause frontier AI where safety and governance are inadequate.

WATER

Set enforceable limits, drought protections & aquifer monitoring.

CONSENT

Require meaningful notice, participation & FPIC where applicable.

WORK

Plan for technology-driven displacement and equitable transitions.

Hope in Organizing, Solidarity & Advocacy

HOPE & ACTION

Learn what is proposed in your community: land, zoning, utilities, water permits, subsidies, and hearings.

Stand with farmers, farmworkers, rural residents, Indigenous nations, environmental justice groups, labor, and local advocates.

Support safeguards, democratic oversight, meaningful consent, and accountability before any infrastructure is approved.

Ask churches and institutions to reduce unnecessary AI use and consider the environmental impacts of digital systems.

Join or support efforts seeking a slowdown or moratorium on frontier AI and AI-chip expansion until systems are proven safe, accountable, and socially just.

*Communities can choose food sovereignty, economic justice,
and the flourishing of creation.*