

*Environmental Business Council of New England, Inc.  
Sustainable Solutions Lab at the University of Massachusetts Boston*

## **Climate Disruptions and Dinner How is climate change impacting our food systems?**

Friday, November 19, 2021



Save the Date!  
**Friday, March 4, 2022**

EBC & Sustainable Solutions Lab at UMass Boston – Quarterly Climate Adaptation Forum  
EBC Contact: Ann Gisinger, [agisinger@ebcne.org](mailto:agisinger@ebcne.org) | SSL Contact: Rebecca Herst, [rebecca.herst@umb.edu](mailto:rebecca.herst@umb.edu)  
[www.climateadaptationforum.org](http://www.climateadaptationforum.org)

## AGENDA

### 10:00 a.m. **Welcome**

- Ann Gisinger, Forum Organizer  
Executive Director, Environmental Business Council of New England

### **Forum Introduction**

- Gabriela Boscio Santos, Forum Co-Chair  
Sustainability Engagement Manager, Boston University

### 10:10 a.m. **Keynote Presentation: Food Systems in a Changing Climate: Vulnerabilities, Adaptation, and Resilience**

- Margaret Walsh, Ph.D., Senior Ecologist, Office of Energy and Environmental Policy, U.S. Department of Agriculture

**Moderator:** Melanie Gárate, Forum Co-Chair  
Climate Resilience Manager, Mystic River Watershed Association

### 10:50 a.m. **Break**

### 10:55 a.m. **Mini Sessions – Breakouts – Sessions will be offered twice.**

#### **Re-Defining Resilience for Puerto Rico's Food Future**

- Israel Meléndez Ayala, Anthropologist and Historian
- Alicia Kennedy, Writer

#### **Growing Food, Growing People, Growing Healthy Environments**

- Patricia Spence, President and CEO, The Urban Farming Institute of Boston

#### **Climate Change: Threat and Opportunity for Local Food and Farms**

- Susan Futrell, Director of Special Projects, Red Tomato

#### **Moderators:**

- Melanie Gárate, Forum Co-Chair; Climate Resilience Manager, Mystic River Watershed Association
- Rebecca Herst, Forum Organizer; Director, Sustainable Solutions Lab, University of Massachusetts Boston
- Gabriela Boscio Santos, Forum Co-Chair; Sustainability Engagement Manager, Boston University

### 11:55 a.m. **Adjourn – Closing Remarks**

- Melanie Gárate, Forum Co-Chair  
Climate Resilience Manager, Mystic River Watershed Association

## FORUM CO-CHAIRS

**Melanie Gárate**, Climate Resilience Manager  
Mystic River Watershed Association  
20 Academy Street, Suite 306, Arlington, MA 02476-6401  
781-330-5485 | melanie.garate@mysticriver.org

Melanie Gárate is the Climate Resilience Manager for the Mystic River Watershed Association (MyRWA) in the Boston area. At MyRWA, she works with municipal staff, community based organizations, public health officials, and local residents to increase climate resiliency regionally. With community equity and health as a priority, she focuses on enhancing climate solutions within the watershed via nature based solutions and social change. Prior to MyWRA, Melanie focused on coastal conservation and environmental education in the greater Boston area at Mass Audubon and the New England Aquarium. Melanie holds a Master of Science degree in Marine Ecology and Climate Change from the University of Rhode Island, where she obtained a NSF Graduate Research Fellowship to study mangrove ecology and perform community outreach in Puerto Rico.

**Gabriela Boscio Santos**, Sustainability Engagement Manager  
Boston University  
120 Ashford Street, Boston, MA 02215  
617-353-1284 | gboscio@bu.edu

Gabriela is a sustainability professional with over ten years of experience in the climate change and nonprofit sectors. She is the Engagement Manager for Boston University Sustainability, a team that focuses on implementing BU's bold Climate Action Plan. Before that, she served as the Climate Program Manager at NOAH (the Neighborhood of Affordable Housing) in East Boston, leading inclusive community-based climate resilience planning. Growing up in Puerto Rico shaped her approach to sustainability work, which is driven by the desire for a just transition. Her interests include climate action, resilience, sustainability, and justice.

## SPEAKERS

**Israel Meléndez Ayala**, Anthropologist and Historian  
israelmelendezayala@gmail.com

Israel Meléndez Ayala (he/him) is an anthropologist and historian. His work has appeared in the New York Times, Washington Post, Whetstone, and more.

**Susan Futrell**, Director of Special Projects  
Red Tomato  
10 Sims Avenue, Suite 102, Providence, RI 02909  
508-316-3494 | Sfutrell@redtomato.org

Susan Futrell has been involved in food and sustainable agriculture for over 40 years, with 25 years in distribution, sales and marketing in the wholesale grocery industry. She has been with Red Tomato for over 15 years, where her strong relationships with farmers and scientists help drive our strategy and our Eco certification program. She has an MFA in nonfiction writing from the University of Iowa and is the author of Good Apples – Behind Every Bite.

**Alicia Kennedy**, Writer

aliciadk@gmail.com

Website: alicia-kennedy.com

Newsletter: aliciakennedy.substack.com

Alicia Kennedy (she/her) is a food writer and cultural critic whose weekly newsletter has over 16,000 subscribers. Her work has appeared in the New York Times, Eater, Bitch, Bon Appétit, and more, and she is at work on a book about the cultural and culinary history of vegetarian cuisine for Beacon Press.

**Patricia Spence**, President and CEO

The Urban Farming Institute of Boston, Inc. (UFI)

487R Norfolk Street, Mattapan, MA 02126

M 617-680-5378 | pspence.ufi@gmail.com

Website: <https://urbanfarminginstitute.org/>

Patricia Spence is President and CEO of The Urban Farming Institute (UFI) of Boston. Prior to UFI, Pat had a successful career in corporate sales & marketing for Xerox Corporation and the Digital Equipment Corporation, and at WILD 1090 radio and WGBH-TV. Pat has also worked in education for the Boston Public Schools, developed the Educational Options Series for families and founded They Made It So Can I, The 5th Grade Speakers Series. Patricia grew up near the historic Fowler Clark Epstein Farm in Mattapan (headquarters for UFI) and comes from a family that has always grown its own food. She is passionate about passing these growing skills on to the next generation, expanding urban farm land, training more urban farmers and educating the community on growing food in their backyards, porches and windowsills.

**Margaret Walsh**, Ph.D., Senior Ecologist, Office of Energy and Environmental Policy

U.S. Department of Agriculture

1400 Independence Ave. SW, Washington, DC 20250

202-720-9978 | [Margaret.Walsh@usda.gov](mailto:Margaret.Walsh@usda.gov)

Margaret Walsh, Ph.D. is the Senior Ecologist in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Office of Energy and Environmental Policy. Dr. Walsh leads multi-sectoral scientific analyses and assessments to inform policy and meet strategic land management and food security goals, including the Climate Change, Global Food Security, and the U.S. Food System report. Dr. Walsh has performed field research in East Asia, Latin America, Europe, and North America, and has developed scientific reports and guidance documents issued by the Framework Convention on Climate Change, the U.S. Global Change Research Program, and the U.S. National Academy of Sciences/National Research Council.