



## In Memoriam - Ralph Paige, 1944-2018

Ralph Paige, former Executive Director of the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund, died June 28 at age 74. He worked for the Federation from 1969 to 2015, and stepped into the role of director in 1985, serving until his retirement in 2015 after a total of 46 years.

A native of LaGrange, Georgia, Ralph was the seventh of twelve children. He attended local public schools and graduated 1967 with a BA degree in Education from Fort Valley State College, an historically black college, where he was active in football and swimming.

After working briefly as a school teacher and coach, Ralph joined the Federation in west Georgia as a cooperative organizer. He helped the Harris County Farmers Co-op expand into the West Georgia Farmers Co-op, and continued to offer loan packaging advice and services to regional cooperatives and small businesses as head of the Federation's Business Development Office in LaGrange. Later he directed the Federation's national VISTA program, providing 110 volunteer staff to 60 locations from South Carolina to Texas, going to meet with the members and leaders of the Federation throughout the South. When Charles Prejean, the Federation's first Executive Director stepped aside in 1985, the organization's Board of Directors chose Ralph Paige to succeed him.

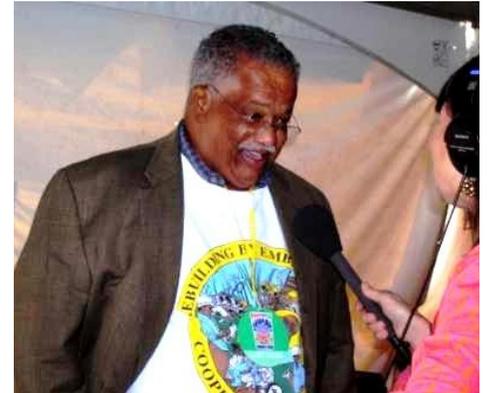
Ralph encouraged formation of the National Cooperative Bank and the expansion of farm credit to include micro-loans appropriate to family-size farming operations. He also worked with leaders of the National Family Farm Coalition, Rural Coalition and other organizations to create the Section 2501 Outreach and Technical Assistance Program for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers in the 1990 farm bill, and the Rural Cooperative Development Grant Program to support cooperative development and training centers.

Not least of Ralph's campaigns was the 1992 Black Farmers Caravan to Washington to highlight the discriminatory policies of the United States Department of Agriculture in Credit, Conservation and Rural Development. The caravan ended with several hundred Black farmers protesting on the US Capital steps and at the front of the USDA headquarters. The lawsuits later filed against USDA on behalf of Black farmers became known as Pigford I and II and resulted in \$2.3 billion in cash payments, tax payments and debt forgiveness. Ralph paved the way for similar suits to address longstanding, entrenched institutional discrimination against minority farmers, including Native American, Hispanic and Women farmers, at USDA offices throughout the country.

During his thirty years as Executive Director, Ralph built the Federation into the premier organization representing Black farmers and low-income rural people in the South. He helped to organize 70 cooperatives and 18 community development credit unions, and facilitated in the on-going development of the Federation's unique 1,000 acre Rural Training and Research Center in Epes, Alabama, including programs such as an agroforestry component.

In the wake of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, the Federation implemented a comprehensive Relief and Recovery Project (RRP), which focused on both short and long term assistance to thousands of farmers, fishers, families and individuals displaced and affected by the hurricanes. The RRP has enabled a significant number of victims and affected communities to receive the resources and assistance necessary for them to cope with their immediate situation while developing concrete plans for the future.

Despite numerous obstacles, including an often hostile, racially charged environment, Ralph maintained the Federation with an annual budget of \$3 million and a staff of 30 or more trained specialists around the South. A succession plan that he initiated has replaced the 'founding generation of core staff' with a new generation of capable leadership (continued p. 2)



Mr. Paige interviewed at Farm Aid 2006

## **NFFC EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:**

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## **Family Farm Agenda October 2018**

*The Family Farm Agenda is published by the National Family Farm Coalition, a nonprofit organization providing a voice for grassroots groups on farm, food, trade and rural economic issues to ensure fair prices for family farmers and fishermen, safe and healthy food, and vibrant, environmentally sound rural communities here and around the world.*

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## **New Beginnings, Old Friends**

### **Niaz Dorry, NFFC Executive Director**

May 1 marked new beginnings for NFFC, and for me. I'm honored to be serving as NFFC's new executive director as part of a shared leadership model with the Northwest Atlantic Marine Alliance (NAMA). As you may know, NAMA became the first NFFC member representing community-based fishermen. It's amazing that 10 years later we see the coming together of family farmers and fishermen in such a symbolic, dynamic, and practical way. I'm so grateful to all of you who have welcomed me into this role—whether we met 10 years ago or for the first time along the America The Bountiful Tour. Your faces are etched in my mind's eye.

Stepping into this new role is both exhilarating and intimidating. I'm really inspired by the possibilities ahead. NFFC's membership and history offers a strong foundation for building a solid future for our organization. What's intimidating is following in the footsteps of Kathy Ozer, someone whose shoes I can never fill (and I have HUGE feet!). I hope to be able to do justice to her legacy while being myself in this next phase of NFFC's life.

As we wade our way forward together, I hope you will be patient with me. I'm not new to NFFC, but I'm new to this role within NFFC. And I'm certainly new to being shared by two organizations whose missions I deeply believe in and whose individual and collective work moves me. I promise to bring all of me to this work: my mistakes, wisdom, energy, experience, trust, and commitment—because it's going to take all of that and more. Not just from me, but from all of you, too.

NFFC has amazing leaders. My job is to make room for all of you, whether members or staff, to step into your unique leadership roles. I want to remove barriers that get in the way of your leading this work. My focus will be on nurturing a healthy organization that brings the voices of our leaders into key circles, communities, policies, and opportunities. I realize that for a little while, the spotlight will be on me because of my role in this new world. But the novelty will wear off. My goal is to be in this moment with the right intentions so that when the light does move on—and believe me, it will!—it's directed toward all of you where it belongs.

I look forward to the journey into this exciting, somewhat new, territory with all of you. Thank you for your trust, friendship, and camaraderie—and for feeding us all.

## **In Memoriam - Ralph Paige, 1944-2018**

*(continued)* to guide the organization into the future, including Cornelius Blanding as executive director, whom he mentored and trained.

Ralph served on numerous boards and received many honors throughout his lifetime, including the Martin Luther King Humanitarian Award from the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, Congressional Black Caucus Leadership Award, NCBA Co-op Month Leadership Award and induction into the Cooperative Hall of Fame and the George Washington Carver Public Service Hall of Fame at Tuskegee. In August, the Federation of Southern Cooperatives/Land Assistance Fund honored Ralph Paige posthumously with the 17th Annual Estelle Witherspoon Lifetime Achievement Award, but his greatest legacy is that the Federation has continued to grow and flourish, celebrating its 51st anniversary this year.

# Coal Reclamation Benefits Taxpayers, Creates Jobs

Robin Bagley, Powder River Basin Resource Council

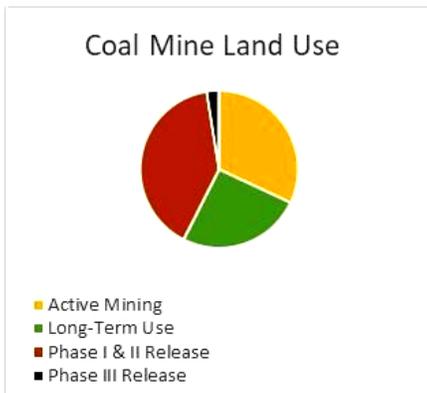
A new report by Powder River Basin Resource Council (Powder River) found that approximately 206 square miles of land from 14 Wyoming coal mines have been disturbed, but only 2.4 percent has been fully reclaimed. This report, “Reclaim Wyoming: Prioritize Coal Mine Reclamation”, tracked reclamation statistics from these 14 mines to determine why the rate of reclamation is slow even though state and federal law requires it to take place alongside active coal mining. It also highlights the economic benefits of increased reclamation efforts.

“Reclamation takes a lot of time and money and as much as possible needs to be completed while mines are profitable. Waiting until the end of a mine's life adds risk that

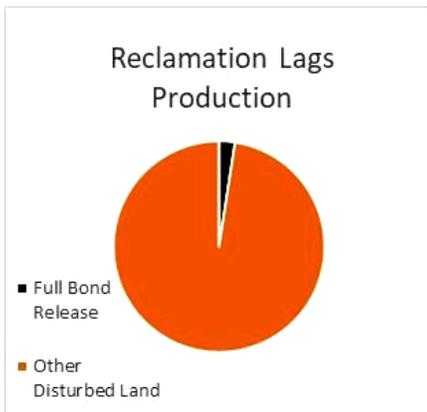


Wyoming coal mine; photo courtesy of Shane Moore, 2018

reclamation may not meet the required standards and could become a burden to the state, counties, and companies,” said Stacy Page, a Powder River member and former regulator involved in reclamation.



Powder River found several reasons why mine reclamation lags behind production, and identified solutions. The report proposes three recommendations to improve reclamation rates. First, it recommends ending the practice of self-bonding to ensure that companies are financially invested in completing reclamation activities. Self-bonding is not a financial guarantee but rather a promise to pay from the company. Second, the report recommends establishing a firm definition of the “long-term mining or reclamation facilities” to reduce the amount of land that companies can delay reclaiming. Last, the report calls for increased enforcement of contemporaneous reclamation requirements by state and federal regulators so that reclamation happens as it should, and more jobs are created.



Reclamation is a key factor in diversifying and stabilizing Wyoming’s economy. To fully reclaim all of the eligible disturbed acres will require many years of work, which would keep miners working right in their communities during downturns. For communities heavily dependent on coal, reclamation can help ease the boom-and-bust cycle until new industries are established.

“In an economic downturn, if contemporaneous coal reclamation is a priority, as it should be, miners will not be laid off as quickly because there is still important work to do,” said Joyce Evans, Powder River Chair. “Reclamation jobs are good jobs and ensure that the mine workers will have employment for several more years, no matter what happens with the coal markets. Plus, coal miners already have the skills needed for successful reclamation.”

The lack of reclamation also negatively impacts agriculture near the coal mines. While the majority of coal mining takes place on land owned by the coal company, it can also occur on public lands. Wyoming’s Thunder Basin National Grasslands is

home to North America’s largest open pit coal mine, the North Antelope Rochelle Mine. A lack of reclamation at this mine has impacted LJ Turner’s ranch for years, resulting in widespread dewatering on the grasslands as well as his ranch, 12 miles away.

When companies dewater coal seams to mine them, it can result in the water table dropping so drastically that springs and wells dry up. This means less water for cattle and wildlife on ranches and grasslands, where the Turner family has held grazing permits for 80 years. Just this year, the US Forest Service, which manages the grasslands, informed the Turners that they no longer have grazing permits due to dewatering. Since reclamation is not keeping pace with mining, the grasslands have not reclaimed land to replace what they withdrawing. The Turners are left with no alternatives.

For more information on the report, contact [info@powderriverbasin.org](mailto:info@powderriverbasin.org) or call 307-672-5809.

## Last Days for Monsanto's Snake Oil? Round-Up Gets its Comeuppance

By John E. Peck, Executive Director, Family Farm Defenders

Martin Luther King, Jr. once famously said, "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice." One could perhaps say the same about truth in the battle for scientific knowledge.

On Friday, August 10, a San Francisco jury awarded DeWayne Johnson \$289 million in a criminal complaint against Monsanto, affirming widespread evidence that the company's flagship herbicide, Round-Up, causes cancer. Johnson's lawyers successfully argued that Monsanto was liable for its product that led him to contract non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. His case was expedited since Johnson, age 46, is not expected to live much longer. As a school groundskeeper, he was directed for years to spray Round-Up from a 50-gallon tank on school grounds, often with the wind blowing it directly into his face. More than once the hose broke, dousing his entire body. He had read the label—which includes no cancer warning—many times, and had even contacted Monsanto directly when he developed a skin rash, but was told everything was fine.

The company has vowed to appeal the California ruling—except now it's Bayer that will have to do so, as it recently received the green light from the U.S. Department of Justice to buy Monsanto and create one of the largest biotech/agrochemical giants in the world. The merger might not be as good for Bayer as it had hoped: its stock plummeted 14 percent in response to the verdict, and with over 4,000 similar court cases pending, this verdict sets a costly precedent in the U.S. and around the world.

Last fall, veteran investigative reporter Carey Gilliam published her long-awaited exposé, *Whitewash: The Story of a Weed Killer, Cancer, and the Corruption of Science*, which carefully lays out the scientific evidence of adverse human health and broader environmental impacts stemming from use of Monsanto's Round-Up. Perhaps more importantly, her research reveals the corporation's ruthless campaign to target, discredit, and silence any critics of its most popular (and profitable) herbicide. Gilliam was herself attacked by Monsanto over the course of her 20+ years of reporting on the subject while at Reuters. She is now research director at U.S. Right to Know.

In testimony before the European Parliament on October 11, 2017 (<https://usrtk.org/pesticides/carey-gilliams-presentation-to-european-parliament-hearing-on-the-monsanto-papers-glyphosate/>), Gilliam outlined many of the insidious tactics deployed by Monsanto: ghostwriting research papers to support Round-Up; launching campaigns to punish scientists who did not support the herbicide as "safe"; strong-arming officials to limit regulation while sacking others that raised concerns; creating "astroturf" organizations to promote Round-Up and related GMO crops; and even providing the EPA with talking points to use against other regulatory agencies. The clear message is that, given such systematic corruption of science, media, and government, it is not surprising that we get the "best" rules for an obvious poison that private interests can buy. Public good is not part of the equation.

The EPA has argued since the 1970s that glyphosate—the main ingredient in Round-Up—is perfectly safe if used as directed—but this finding relies heavily on Monsanto's own sponsored research that cannot be verified due to various "proprietary restrictions." The EPA's assessment of the chemical's benignity is not widely shared among other regulatory authorities. For instance, in March 2015, the International Agency for Research on Cancer at the World Health Organization ruled that glyphosate is "a probable human carcinogen," based on its own review of independent studies. Extensive toxicology research by professor Warren Porter at the University of Wisconsin-Madison has long pointed to serious sublethal synergistic impacts of glyphosate, in combination with other agrochemicals like atrazine, on fetal development, childhood learning, and adult reproduction.

Of course, the harm done by Round-Up is not limited to humans. According to the National Pesticide Information Center, the toxic half-life of glyphosate in the environment can be up to 197 days. Field runoff tainted with Round-Up has been shown to have a lethal impact on freshwater invertebrates, amphibians, and fish. Studies in Argentina have even shown birth defects in chickens exposed to glyphosate. Back in 2011, Purdue University plant pathologist Don Huber sent a private letter to USDA Secretary Tom Vilsack, later leaked to the public, warning that Round-Up use was leading to new pathogens that could be responsible for miscarriages in livestock, among other deleterious consequences ([https://www.organicconsumers.org/sites/default/files/artman2/uploads/1/May2011\\_Huber.pdf](https://www.organicconsumers.org/sites/default/files/artman2/uploads/1/May2011_Huber.pdf)). Other scientists have noted increased fungal disease and nutrient deficiencies in fields planted with Round-Up resistant crops—notably soybeans that can suffer from Sudden Death Syndrome. And, as many predicted, ubiquitous spraying of the herbicide has led to the emergence of "superweeds" resistant to Round-Up. More than 70 million acres of U.S. cropland are estimated to be affected by superweeds, forcing the biotech giants to develop new GMO crops that resist both glyphosate and other even more toxic herbicides like dicamba and 2,4-D (a major component of Agent Orange, which lethally affected so many soldiers and civilians during the Vietnam War).

(continued p. 5)

## Last Days for Monsanto's Snake Oil? Round-Up Gets its Comeuppance

*(continued)* The Center for Food Safety is currently challenging EPA approval of this next generation of GMO crops—specifically, Dow's Enlist Duo varieties (resistant to glyphosate and 2,4-D) and Monsanto's XtendiMax varieties (resistant to glyphosate and dicamba)—with Family Farm Defenders and NFFC among the plaintiffs. Dicamba and 2,4-D are notorious for their propensity to form vapor clouds that can drift widely and damage neighboring crops. Millions of acres of soybeans, as well as vegetable and fruit crops, trees, and shrubs were damaged by such drift across the country last year.

Jim Goodman, longtime organic dairy/beef farmer, NFFC president, and board member of FFD, noted, "The combination of 2,4-D and glyphosate in Enlist Duo is a recipe for disaster. It may control Roundup-resistant weeds, but only for a while, and at what cost to the health of farm workers, consumers, and the environment?" As these cases wend their way through the courts, some states are taking action on their own: Missouri and Arkansas banned the use of dicamba in July 2017 after hundreds of soybean farmers reported crop losses of 30-50 percent from toxic drift.

Approaching the Bayer/Monsanto merger from another angle, Senator Cory Booker (D-NJ) and Representative Mark Pocan (D-WI) have introduced bills in their respective houses of Congress to limit agricultural mergers ([https://www.booker.senate.gov/?p=press\\_release&id=844](https://www.booker.senate.gov/?p=press_release&id=844)). The bill would put an 18-month moratorium on mergers in large agribusiness, food and beverage manufacturing, and grocery retail consolidation, and study the impact of such mergers. In the past two years, mega mergers and corporate takeovers have enabled just three conglomerates to control 66 percent of the crop seed and 70 percent of the agrochemical market. Meanwhile, net farm income for US farmers has fallen by more than half in just the last five years. More than 80 family farm, consumer, and environmental groups have expressed their support for the legislation. The bill is modeled on a similar measure introduced back in 1999 by Senator Paul Wellstone (D-MN), another great champion of family farmers before his untimely death in a plane crash in 2002. While the full toll from decades of Monsanto's carefree toxic peddling has yet to be determined, we may finally see the last nails being hammered into the coffin for Round-Up.

## Food Sovereignty is Sweeping Maine

Betsy Garrold, President, Food for Maine's Future

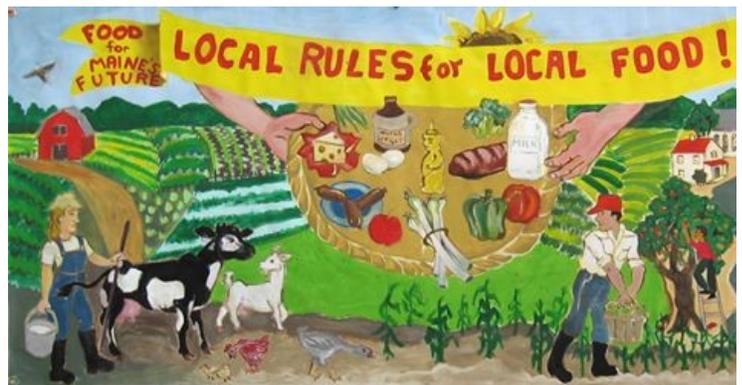
In 2009, Maine Department of Agriculture's dairy inspector walked down the wrong driveway. Two wrong driveways, in fact: those belonging to the Retbergs at Quill's End Farm (Penobscot) and the Hickman-Blom farm, Annabessacook (Winthrop).

The Department had suddenly and internally changed their definition of "milk distributors," classifying anyone who produces and sells milk as a distributor. This moved the jurisdiction of these licenses to a different part of the bureaucracy, leading to a crackdown on raw milk producers

in the state. The Retbergs and Hickman-Bloms had to submit to new licensing and inspection regimes to continue doing what they had done for years: selling milk and yogurt directly to their neighbors and farm patrons.

In response, Heather Retberg sat at her kitchen table with local food activists and wrote the Local Food and Community Self-Governance Ordinance (LFCSGO). Craig Hickman ran for the state legislature and won, later serving as the Chair of the House Agriculture Committee. Together, these actions (along with much additional work by many other people) led to the 2017 passage of a Maine statute recognizing that any town passing the LFCSGO can regulate food exchanges within its borders without state interference. This law is one of a handful in the country that directly addresses a community's right to have control over their own food system, to varying degrees. Other states with some version of a "food freedom" law are Wyoming, North Dakota, Colorado and Utah. Many others have so-called cottage food laws that protect small, homegrown food producers.

The LFCSGO has passed in 43 towns and cities across Maine—roughly doubling the number passing the ordinance before the new state law went into effect. The number keeps growing, and with grassroots pressure and our muddy boots in Augusta's halls of power, we hope enough towns will pass the ordinance to lead to a statewide Food Sovereignty law. Even better: an amendment to our state constitution that enshrines the right to food of one's choosing as a human right not to be infringed by government.



## President's Message

By Jim Goodman, Representative, Family Farm Defenders

Sometimes it seems you can never catch a break. 2018 has so far been one of those years. Many of us remember the farm crisis of the 1980s; some of us managed to farm our way through those times.

Farmers had easy access to credit in the late 1970s into the '80s. Banks and private lenders knew land values were rising, and any improvements farmers added to the farm protected their investment. Lenders encouraged farmers to borrow more than they probably should have; farm debt doubled during that period, and if it was too much for one farmer and they went out, there was always someone to replace him and start the cycle over again.

Farms were the direct victims of the crisis, but rural communities, stores, schools, health clinics—businesses that depended on farm dollars flowing into the small towns—watched their incomes dry up and their tax base diminish.

Now, in 2018, as Yogi Berra said: "It's déjà vu all over again." Well over 250,000 farms were lost in the '80s and over 900 farmers committed suicide in the upper Midwest alone. Over the past year in Wisconsin, about 1.5 farmers a day are going out of business, while the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate that the current suicide rate for agricultural workers in 17 states is nearly 500 percent greater than in the general population.

Any farmer will tell you their biggest problem is low prices for whatever they produce. In dairy, overproduction—especially from farms milking many thousands of cows (something we didn't have in the 1980s)—is forcing small family farms like mine out of business. Economies of scale would dictate that the bigger you are, the better your chance of surviving price downturns, but now even herds milking hundreds of cows are too small to make it, and mega-farms, with their ability to continuously expand production and their dependence on an underpaid immigrant labor force, will keep the market flooded with milk and farm-gate prices well below the cost of production.

Farmers took another blow when tariffs were placed on many agricultural commodities this summer. The Trump Administration's trade war will cut deeply into the export of farm goods and will cause irreparable damage to the farm sector.

As in the 1980s, credit is playing a major role in today's farm crisis. Lack of credit, especially for minority, young, and women farmers makes it nearly impossible to survive in this extended period of low prices.

All of these issues can be traced back to poor farm policy. NFFC was formed during the 1980s farm crisis, to support family farms through policies to raise farmer prices to profitable levels and promote environmentally sound farming practices. We have always advocated for supply management and a floor price to be part of US agricultural policy.

Although I take his quote out of context, the sentiment of William Jennings Bryan was correct when he said "destroy our farms and the grass will grow in the streets of every city in the country." All of us who live in rural America know at least of one of those towns where, indeed, the grass is growing in the street, the small farms are gone, and with them, the rural economy.

NFFC has undergone a lot of change over past year, as has the political environment in Washington. The changes at NFFC are, we feel, making us stronger and keeping us in a position to continue to advocate for sensible, fair farm policy. We are also encouraged by the upwelling of true progressive populism; populism that has the best interests of everyone at its core, like that of the populism that ushered in the parity programs of the New Deal that benefited farmers, and programs like Social Security that benefit everyone.

Those of us who have been oppressed for so many reasons are realizing we are not alone. Minorities, union members, farm workers, immigrants, women, rural folks, seniors, the disabled, the young—have put up with enough. Income inequality does not exist because we are somehow inferior, but rather because we have allowed society to tell us we are. We can take back our farms, our streets, our dignity—indeed, we are "sick and tired of being sick and tired" (thank you, Fannie Lou Hamer): words by which we should all live.



Patti & George Naylor, Niaz Dorry, Jim & Rebecca Goodman on the Churdan, IA, stop of the Bountiful Tour

# US Food Sovereignty Alliance IV National Assembly

By USFSA Members

The US Food Sovereignty Alliance (USFSA) held its IV National Assembly October 12-14 in Bellingham, WA with the participation of 117 members and allies from 71 organizations and seven countries. Board president Jim Goodman and vice president Betsy Garrold officially represented NFFC, while a number of NFFC members were present on behalf of their organizations.

The Assembly was the culmination of a process to construct a two-year work plan. It began with assemblies in each region (South, Northeast, Midwest, West), where members analyzed current conditions, challenges and opportunities to advance food sovereignty and the right to food. The work plan will be carried out within the regions, affirming the overarching importance of local access to and control of resources, and support for a grassroots movement to be built and led regionally. National issues were prioritized under five collectives: Political Education; Youth; Narrative Strategy; International Relationships; and Agroecology: Land and Water. Additionally, the Alliance confirmed solidarity with several important movements:

**The USFSA stands in solidarity with La Via Campesina as it works towards the UN adoption of the Declaration of Peasant Rights.** Peasants and small- and medium-scale farming families are increasingly at risk of displacement, criminalization, violence, and harassment, with rural women particularly affected. Existing legal instruments are not enough to protect peasants and rural workers from ongoing systematic discrimination and abuse. This Declaration would draw attention to the threats and discrimination suffered by peasants and others engaged in small-scale food production around the world and offer a new legal tool for addressing abuse. We call on the United States and other member states to support the Declaration of Peasants Rights.

**The USFSA stands in solidarity with farmworkers—critical workers who risk their lives and health in farm fields every day for incomes that are the lowest of any sector in the economy and on whom our food system depends.**

The current H2A agricultural visa program is a temporary guest worker program that employers may use for agricultural labor. However, the program has dehumanized workers by legalizing migratory employment, offering them no chance for residence, legalization, or permanent livelihood in the US. The H2A program ties workers to a single employer, and those not organized into a union are subject to abuses and economic extortion by labor contractors, foremen and employers. The guest worker system views farmworkers as resources, not as human beings. The USFSA opposes the H2A program and denounces, in the strongest terms, the proposed H2C program which would dramatically worsen worker conditions, continue displacing domestic workers, expand guest worker provisions into the food processing, nursery and other food system industries, eliminate worker housing support, and continue the exploitation of workers through systems ultimately derived from plantation slavery.

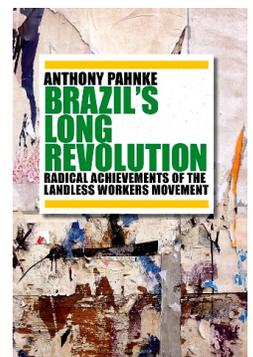
**The USFSA stands in solidarity with the [Call to Protect Food Systems from Genetic Extinction Technology](#).**

Gene drives are a new tool that force genetically engineered traits through entire populations of insects, plants, animals and other organisms that could spread engineered genes uncontrollably, altering ecological systems and food webs. Their use could undermine the food sovereignty of indigenous communities, farmers, food workers and consumers, and infringe on the right of all peoples to healthy, ecologically produced, culturally appropriate food. USFSA calls for a global moratorium on any release of engineered gene drives, and urges governments to establish participatory technology assessment processes to ensure full free, prior and informed consent of indigenous peoples and other affected populations for all emerging biotechnologies.

**The USFSA stands in solidarity with producers, eaters and Mother Earth who would all be victimized by cruel and unjust proposals in the House version of the farm bill.** Some proposals would increase work requirements for eligibility for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), defund critical conservation programs, reduce support for beginning and socially challenged farmer programs, and end the Double Up Bucks farmers market program. The USFSA also strongly denounces the King amendment to the House farm bill, which would give corporations and agribusiness greater control over the food system. This provision would restrict state and local governments from regulating agricultural products and could nullify the local [Food Sovereignty Ordinances](#) passed by many towns in Maine. It could potentially preempt laws that curb pesticide use, regulate farmworker safety, prevent cruel livestock practices, label GMO foods and support state efforts and initiatives to legalize and recognize certain local foods, such as raw milk and wild rice.

**Speaking of food sovereignty...**

Anthony Pahnke, longtime NFFC friend, Family Farm Defenders vice president and a national coordinator of Friends of MST (the Landless Workers Movement of Brazil), recently authored a book about the MST. *Brazil's Long Revolution: Radical Achievements of the Landless Workers Movement* is based on five years of research, detailing how MST confronts inequality through cooperatives, movement-run schools and decentralized agrarian reform. Please request the book, published by the University of Arizona Press, from your local bookstore.



# Growing Organic Farming in New York

By Emma Ertinger, NOFA-NY

Farmer-to-farmer education is the backbone of our work at the Northeast Organic Farming Association-NY (NOFA-NY). We were pleased to offer a series of five on-farm field days for the summer 2018 season and grateful to the host farms that shared their time and expertise so generously.

This year we crisscrossed the Empire State, with field days in Poughkeepsie, Hoosick Falls, Ontario, Keeseville, and Buffalo. It's been a difficult season, but from the North Country to the shores of

Lake Erie, we saw signs of resiliency and innovation on New York's organic farms. We also learned about our state's capacity to build a robust regional foodshed—like Headwater Food Hub, which connects a network of over 140 farms to local buyers. Additionally, all our field days included a food safety component, addressing a critical need as farmers prepare to come into compliance with the Food Safety Modernization Act.

With fall around the corner, the NOFA-NY staff turns its focus to our upcoming winter conference. The [37th Annual Organic Farming & Gardening Conference](#) will take place on January 18-20, 2019, at the Saratoga Hilton and City Center in Saratoga Springs, NY.



NOFA-NY Irrigation Field Walk



Our theme this year is Climate of Change, and we're honored to have Leah Penniman as our conference keynote speaker. Leah is the co-executive director of [Soul Fire Farm](#) in Grafton, New York; a people of color-led project working to dismantle racism in the food system. The conference will also host the Second Biennial Northeast Organic Seed Conference, featuring 12 in-depth seed-saving and plant-breeding workshops for beginners and experts alike. Additional speakers this year are champions for seed sovereignty: Rowen White from [Sierra Seeds](#), and Ken Greene from [Hudson Valley Seed Company](#).

[Registration](#) for the conference is open—hope to see you there!

## NFFC in the News

By Siena Chrisman, NFFC Communications Advisor

NFFC seeks to change the narrative on farm policy—more family farmers, less “fencerow to fencerow”; more agroecology, less “feeding the world”—so we're pleased that our positions on the [farm bill](#), [dairy](#), [trade](#), [credit](#), and [other big issues](#) have been featured in a variety of media outlets this year.

Board president Jim Goodman had an op-ed about the estate tax published in the [Washington Post](#); about the president's \$12 billion farm bailout in [Daily Yonder](#); and about the Monsanto-Bayer merger in the [Des Moines Register](#) (co-written with Tiffany Finck-Haynes of Friends of the Earth). *The Nation* editor Katrina vanden Heuvel quoted Mardy Townsend (“an Ohio member of the National Family Farm Coalition”) in her [Washington Post](#) op-ed against privatization of the Postal Service.

The dairy crisis and our response garnered the majority of press attention, largely because of NFFC's early call for a real solution in the form of supply management and a price floor, setting us apart from most other organizations. [Our letter](#) to federal agriculture leadership and a press call on Canada's supply management system co-hosted with Family Farm Defenders, Wisconsin Farmers Union, and Food & Water Watch got over a dozen press hits in local and national newspapers and radio. We also pitched a story on the ins and outs of supply management to reporter Leah Douglas at the Food and Environment Reporting Network, which ran in [Mother Jones](#) in May.

NFFC has also been quoted regularly in the press on the farm bill process and NAFTA renegotiations—and several outlets featured stories along the America the Bountiful tour. Visit [nffc.net](#) > News > NFFC In The News for the full list.

## Tour is Over. Now What?

By Niaz Dorry

Although we got home a few months ago from the America The Bountiful Tour, my body is still expecting to wake up in the back of the RV! My heart is still in many of the communities we visited along the way.

I want to thank all those who were instrumental in making the tour exceed our expectations. NAMA's Fish Locally Collaborative network of thousands of fishing families and the 27 member groups of NFFC opened up their hearts and doors to us. In the end, we visited 67 communities, covered roughly 13,000 miles, and connected with so many folks—some old friends and many new ones—who have helped shape my thinking around what kind of future for fishing and farming is possible. Thank you all for your generosity of wisdom, time, spirit (and often spirits!), and great food.

Before we hit the road, members of the executive committee developed these questions for us to listen for during the tour:

- What things aren't happening (from other national orgs) that we should do? What gaps can we/should we fill? What niche can we/should we fill?
- Test our mission and values: are we sticking to them? Are we staying true to what we say we do?
- What policy decision would be most helpful in helping you to stay on farm and pass it to next generation?
- How do farmers feel they've been left behind by groups who are supposed to be representing them? What can NFFC do to help instead?
- What would make members more active with NFFC? Why have members been less active? What would engage, excite, members to be more active? What are barriers?

Our goal was to make sure the answers to these questions are taken into account during our strategic planning process. As you can imagine, with so many conversations under our belts, it's taking us some time to summarize the answers to these questions. But some common themes emerged, whether visiting a farming or a fishing community:

- Problems with corporate consolidation and concentration of power
- Economic disempowerment—lack of fair prices, cost of production
- Lack of access to resources, infrastructure, markets, money and knowledge
- "Nobody comes here"—feeling of disenfranchisement
- We need more power and to be aligned with other movements
- We need to have a better way of talking about what's happening in our communities and food systems

Of those, the one that surprised me was the fourth point. *Nobody comes here*. Think about that. Most of the people we are collectively working to lift up feel they live below our collective radars. I keep asking myself: why and when did that happen? Are we spending too much time around conference tables and not enough time around kitchen tables?

There is one other piece about the tour worth sharing: it allowed me to form my opinions and ideas about NFFC's work based on the membership's desires, not my own. So what's next?

NFFC started a strategic planning process that we tackled full force at the summer board meeting on August 5 and 6. We have formed a strategic planning committee, comprised of Lisa Griffith, Mardy Townsend, Pat Sweeney, Dena Hoff, Tim Gibbons, Jim Goodman, Bruce Drinkman, Judith McGeary, Patti Naylor, Andrianna Natsoulas, Betsy Garrold, and me, coordinated by our facilitator, Jeremy Phillips. The committee is having calls every 2-3 weeks and our goal is to have a plan for all to discuss and possibly vote on at the winter board meeting.

We are also looking to fill the position of DC-based policy director permanently. Hopefully by the time you get this newsletter, we will be well on our way towards finding that person.

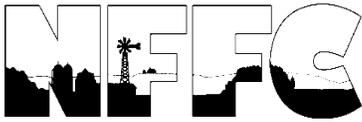
Finally, I thought it was worth sharing how we picked the communities we visited and the trajectory of the tour.

First of all, we knew we wanted to prioritize rural farming and fishing communities because we knew the rural communities we work with are the most marginalized economically, socially, and culturally.

Second, there were two stops we had to make: Montgomery, Alabama, to visit the National Memorial for *(continued, p.10)*



Niaz with Shirley Sherrod (FSC) on Ms. Sherrod's SW Georgia farm during America the Bountiful Tour



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## Tour is Over. Now What?

*(continued)* Peace and Justice, and Nisqually, Washington, to participate in the Indigenous Environmental Network's Protecting Mother Earth Gathering. The initial southern trajectory to Montgomery was important to ground us in the history of racism and slavery that are at root of today's industrial, exploitive food system. IEN's gathering reinforced indigenous knowledge and wisdom that was key to sovereign and sustainable farming and fishing for centuries before the industrial food system usurped power, natural resources, and profits away from tribes and eventually from all our communities.

Third, with these points set, we reached out to NFFC and NAMA networks asking where we should go. I was struck by the number of responses that opened with, "I'm not sure if we are worth your time..." That those who feed us feel they are not worthy of a visit was stunning, and anyone who felt that way was prioritized.



Steve Charter (NPRC) pointing to pastures from his Billings, MT ranch on the Bountiful Tour



Wayne Riley (LCAA), Tiffany Bellfield (CFA), Niaz, Elliott Snow (tour intern), Kelsey Voit (CFA) on the Bountiful Tour's central KY stop

The impact of our stops will stay with me for a very long time, and from feedback during the tour and since, the people and communities we visited will have a long memory of this tour, also. To hear how those of us traveling felt about the trip, check out [Drunk History of America the Bountiful](#) recordings. Enjoy!

My commitment is to keep the love and camaraderie felt during the tour going through not only my personal life but also my personal calling: to work for a more just world, starting with a more just food, farming, and fishing system.