



## La Esperanza Muere Ultima (Hope Dies Last)

Jim Goodman, NFFC board president

As we head into winter, having seen empty grocery shelves in the early days of the COVID-19 pandemic, the fragility of our highly consolidated food system became clear. We are victims of a market that lacks the resiliency to shift supply lines and fill those shelves, but also a food system that does not provide (and in most cases never has provided) fair farm prices, fair wages, or adequate safety protection to farm and food system workers. The rampant spread of COVID-19 among workers closed processing plants across the country, farmers lost their markets and some were forced to “depopulate” their livestock, dump milk or plow their crops under because the system had failed.

NFFC and our allies have always advocated and worked for a more diversified food system, one with more small farms and local processing facilities, a system that is much more resilient and less susceptible to the weaknesses that we see occurring due to this pandemic. The system was not, as *Progressive Farmer* magazine called it, “a well oiled machine”, but a disaster waiting to happen.

It is clear that there was an urgent need for economic aid in the early stages of the pandemic, not just for farmers and food system workers, but for everyone who lost their job, lost their health coverage, couldn’t afford food or rent, or had to close their business.

As the government moves ahead with new aid packages - which must be **soon** - they should target aid to small businesses, small-scale farmers, and farm workers rather than to commodity growers and corporations as happened with previous COVID-19 aid packages. Rural America is watching in real time as our crisis deepens. Empty rhetoric and bailouts may stroke the egos of some, but it should be shockingly clear that we need structural change, not band-aids.

We will continue to demand succeeding stimulus bills that pull all through this crisis as well as real structural change and systemic reform to build a food system that:

- Strengthens rural economic resilience and prevents food shortages by establishing supply management programs, parity pricing, and strategic food reserves that ensure producers and workers a living wage and consumers access to high-quality agricultural goods and seafood.
- Prohibit profiteering and corporate consolidation by enacting a moratorium on mergers and acquisitions in the seafood and food & agriculture sectors and enforcement of antitrust laws.
- Support fair agricultural contracts, producers’ rights, and competitive markets by re-instating the Packers and Stockyards Act.
- Increase transparency in the food system by reinstating and expanding mandatory Country of Origin Labeling (COOL) for meat, dairy, and seafood.

On the other side of this crisis, we cannot accept a return to what we understood as normalcy; we hope for a society that is better, fair to everyone, less divided, anti-racist, and more inclusive. In the words of Jessie de la Cruz, a retired farm worker, “I feel there’s gonna be a change, but we’re the ones gonna do it, not the government. With us, there’s a saying, ‘La esperanza muere ultima. Hope dies last.’ You can’t lose hope. If you lose hope, you lose everything.”



NFFC members, allies, and staff during a light moment of the winter meeting in Birmingham

### **NFFC Executive Committee Officers:**

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Family Farm Defenders

**Vice President: Betsy Garrold**

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**Dena Hoff**

Northern Plains Resource Council

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Land Loss Prevention Project

**Stephanie Peterson**

Dakota Rural Action

**Edna Rodriguez**

Rural Advancement Foundation Intl-USA

### **NFFC Staff:**

**Executive Director: Niaz Dorry**

niaz@nffcc.org

Ph: 978-865-3178

**Program/Policy Coordinator: Jordan Treacle**

jordan@nffcc.net

Ph: 202-543-5675

**Outreach/Comms. Coordinator: Lisa Griffith**

lisa@nffcc.net

Ph: 773-319-5838

**Finance Coordinator: Cynthia Bush**

Cynthia@nffcc.net

Ph: 978-865-3178

**Fundraising Coordinator: Danielle Tolley**

danielle@nffcc.net

Ph: 978-865-3178

**Media Consultant: Siena Chrisman**

siena@nffcc.net

Ph: 917-821-9631

### **Family Farm Agenda December 2020**

*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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## **Reviewing 2020**

**Niaz Dorry, NFFC director**

To say that 2020 was a challenging year would be an understatement.

As we all know too painfully, the COVID-19 pandemic limited our ability to travel, organize, and connect in person, forcing us to learn how to live and organize virtually like many across the planet. We held our summer board meeting online and will use those lessons to organize our virtual winter meeting and fly-in with Members of Congress starting the week of January 25. Sharing our voices and our vision with the administration and other government officials is crucial to addressing the needs of real food providers and eaters today and beyond this crisis.

Personally, a bright spot this year was being with many NFFC members in Birmingham, Alabama, for our winter meeting. We picked Birmingham as a place to deepen our shared understanding of the civil rights struggle in the US. This proved to be an important trip, offering a collective lens to view the subsequent uprisings for racial justice around the country and critical gathering for further developing our strategic campaigns.

Shortly after returning home from Birmingham, the country began shutting down, leading us to pause our campaign plans and reflect on meeting the moment's challenges. COVID-19 clearly demonstrates what consolidated aggregation, processing, and distribution in our food system has wrought, forcing farmers to dump foods from eggs to zucchini. It's been inspiring and gratifying to see the Davids of our food system - the small and mid-scale food providers from coast to coast - become the main portal for our country's food. To prevent these success stories from being relegated to a pandemic anomaly we must work with a broad spectrum of allies - inside and outside Washington - to ensure long-term, systemic change.

To meet the sudden but not exactly surprising crisis last spring, NFFC staff engaged with several members and key allies to develop a set of policy demands, starting with a COVID-19 Stimulus Package for the Food System. Our message to Congress emphasized that family farmers, ranchers, and fishermen should not lose their income or their operations; that farm and food workers should be treated as essential workers, because they are; and that short-term COVID-related provisions should be linked to systemic reforms. (Please see page 5 of this newsletter for more highlights.)

We are grateful to all our members, allies, supporters, funders, and broader circles for your ongoing commitment to NFFC and our collective work this year. As 2020 comes to a close - with the election behind us and hopeful news about vaccines ahead - we wish all of you good health and much peace into the new year.

With gratitude and in solidarity,

Niaz



Marker on US Civil Rights Trail toured during NFFC 2020 winter meeting

## Support NFFC members offering excellent fair-trade products!

### Northwest Atlantic Marine Alliance

[www.namanet.org](http://www.namanet.org)

is a fishermen-led organization building a broad movement toward healthy fisheries and fishing communities through effective policies and market strategies.

Our good friend Madeleine Hall-Arber has once again been busy making ornaments for NAMA. Honoring the role food providers have played in ensuring we are all fed amid a global pandemic, this year's ornament's message is simply "Eat Local 2020". We're pleased to offer this one-of-a-kind ornament to folks donating \$50 or more to NAMA during our Year-End Giving Campaign. All proceeds go to NAMA's work to expand the movement fighting the corporate takeover of our ocean.



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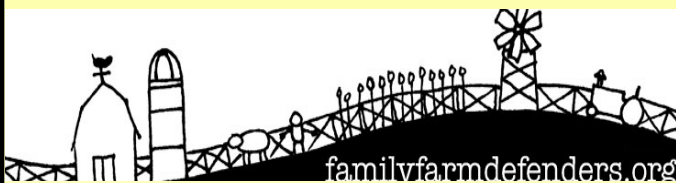
- "MAKE AMERICA GRAZE AGAIN" bumper stickers
- "GIVE A FORK" bumper stickers
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[www.ruralvermont.org/merch](http://www.ruralvermont.org/merch)



Your purchase supports Rural Vermont's advocacy for public policy that delivers health and well-being to our farmers, communities, and ecosystems.

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### Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance



Activist bumper stickers (\$2) and FARFA t-shirts (\$25) are free at various membership levels.

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Food Justice poster with  
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Family Farms* also help support Missouri's independent farm  
families, rural communities and a healthy environment.

*Patchwork Family Farms* is a program of the *Missouri Rural  
Crisis Center (MRCC)*, a committed and successful family farm  
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day for policies that support America's farm families,  
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(Progressive Agriculture Organization member)

# NFFC 2020 Campaign Updates and Work Highlights

**Short Term Goal: Economic Justice for Dairy Farmers** – After launching our Fair Price for Dairy Farmers Campaign at Farm Aid 2019, we began interviewing NFFC dairy farm members to design an appropriate policy platform for congressional champions to introduce by April 2020. The pandemic altered the political landscape and our schedule but we are completing a detailed policy proposal incorporating member insights on the dairy crisis. We see increasing opportunities to advance systemic dairy pricing reform as themes of corporate concentration and chronic low prices, which preclude economic justice, unify our communities.

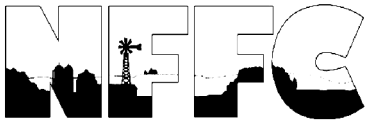
**Long Term Goal: Economic Justice for All Food Providers** – Over the past year NFFC partnered with American University to develop better tools for achieving long-term economic justice for food providers and eaters and a thriving ecosystem. The 'From Disparity to Parity' project assembled a range of farmers and advocates to write essays promoting economic, land, and social parity. GRACE Communications Foundation design team built a website (<https://disparitytoparity.org/>) to house the materials. Ally ActionAid USA created videos on supply management and land reform to accompany the texts, and will create more early 2021. A virtual press briefing is planned for next spring to share materials with members of Congress, the media, and the public.

**Campaign to End Corporate Control of Land and other Resources** – The pandemic has slowed but not stopped our progress:

- \* With NFFC members' input, began building an ambitious federal policy campaign framework with short- and long-term goals.
- \* Worked with staff of Senators Booker, Warren, and Gillibrand to include NFFC recommendations for the Justice for Black Farmers Act introduced on November 19, 2020. See NFFC's press release with member quotes, summary, and links to more documents at [https://bit.ly/NFFC\\_PR\\_BlKFrMrJusticeAct](https://bit.ly/NFFC_PR_BlKFrMrJusticeAct).
- \* Began exploring regional approaches to demonstrate how oil, gas, water, and mineral rights extractors grab land, often through eminent domain for the 'public good'.
- \* Co-created a toolkit to help pass divestment resolutions through faculty senates in higher education similar to one passed in Wisconsin with other Stop TIAA Land Grabs Committee members ([https://bit.ly/faculty\\_TIAA\\_toolkit](https://bit.ly/faculty_TIAA_toolkit)).
- \* Worked with the Environmental Studies of University of California-Santa Cruz to design a survey to better understand how corporate land investment impacts farmers of color, particularly by investment entities such as TIAA.
- \* With Vermont Law School's Center for Agriculture and Food Systems launched a project to trace US corporate investment in prime agricultural land. Their initial research identified laws regulating land investment in the US and examined the role federal regulation can play. Our website's Land Grab section will eventually host this material.

## Highlights of COVID-19 Relief and other Efforts

- \* Helped to gather more than 60 farming organizations to support the Relief for America's Small Farmers Act, which forgives up to \$250,000 of small-scale farmers' and ranchers' USDA loan without penalty. (See [https://bit.ly/NFFC\\_SmllFrMrReliefPR](https://bit.ly/NFFC_SmllFrMrReliefPR) for info.)
- \* Facilitated the draft and introduction of a second COVID-19 bill, the Local Food Assistance and Resilient Markets (FARM) Act of 2020 ([https://bit.ly/NFFC\\_localFARM2020](https://bit.ly/NFFC_localFARM2020)), to increase funding and access for farmers to sell products to schools, farmers markets, food hubs, and food banks; improve access to farm loans; and expand use of online SNAP benefits to direct-sales markets.
- \* Recommended prioritizing family dairy farms to USDA for spending CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security) funds: direct payments to farmers based on scale of operation; debt relief; and expanded credit. Under CFAP (Coronavirus Food Assistance Program) direct payments, the dairy sector was the second largest recipient with \$1.25 billion.
- \* Continued efforts to stand by our commitment to racial equity by inviting two member organizations – RAFI-USA and Dakota Rural Action – to organize an anti-xenophobia training for our virtual summer meeting.
- \* Offered solidarity to allies worldwide: the Landless Workers Movement of Brazil; a statement on the US-Kenya Free Trade Agreement; the Movement for Black Lives; and Wet'suwet'en First Nation. (Visit <https://nffc.net/resources/> for full details.)
- \* The courts recognized, for the first time, drift-prone properties of dicamba and its destruction to the social fabric of many farm communities, thanks to ongoing collaboration between NFFC, Center for Food Safety, Pesticide Action Network, and others. (See [https://bit.ly/NFFC\\_dicambaJune2020ruling](https://bit.ly/NFFC_dicambaJune2020ruling) for a list of media mentions.)
- \* Board President Jim Goodman contributed numerous articles, opinion pieces, and interviews representing NFFC's stance on resource grabs, climate change, and the Green New Deal. (A Google search brings up many!)
- \* Supported the selection of NFFC farmer Patti Naylor as representative to the Civil Society and Indigenous Peoples Mechanism-North America at the UN's Committee on World Food Security (CFS) and at various UN gatherings. A letter from NFFC and allies to US Ambassador Kip Tom denouncing CFS obstruction to agroecology at the UN is at [https://bit.ly/NFFC\\_USFSA\\_letter\\_Tom](https://bit.ly/NFFC_USFSA_letter_Tom).
- \* Celebrated the 2nd anniversary of our shared leadership model with our member group, the Northwest Atlantic Marine Alliance (NAMA), on May 1.



110 Maryland Ave NE, Ste. 307  
Washington, DC 20002

Phone: 202-543-5675  
Fax: 202-543-0978  
Email: [nffc@nffc.net](mailto:nffc@nffc.net)

## FIRST CLASS

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Fishermen & Workers!

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## Seeking wisdom from ancestors and authors to navigate 2021

*The Common Pot* - Lisa Brooks uses Algonquian and Iroquoian texts to show how crucial writing was to Native American resistance.  
*Driftless* - David Rhodes writes of the beautiful region in Wisconsin where the Kinsmans, Goodmans, Greenos, and other farmers live.  
*The Bone and Sinew of the Land* - Anna-Lisa Cox highlights America's forgotten Black pioneers and the struggle for equality.  
*The Poison Squad* - Deborah Blum follows one chemist's single-minded crusade for food safety at the turn of the 20th Century.  
*The Good Immigrant* - Nikesh Shukla and Chimene Suleyman edited this collection of 26 reflections on America.  
*My Grandmother's Hands* - Resmaa Menakem examines the damage caused by racism in America from the perspective of trauma.  
*Station Eleven* - Emily St. John Mandel depicts a global pandemic much deadlier and catastrophic than COVID-19.

