

Dismantling Racism and Integrating Equity for Presenters at Conferences and Field Days

NOFA strives to promote organic food and farming that are inclusive of all farmers and consumers, regardless of race, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation or belief. We urge conference presenters to consider their workshop content through the lens of race, equality, social justice and domestic fair trade. For example, please be mindful about assumptions that come along with words like Farmer (a land-owner? hired farm manager?), Farm Worker (would-be farmer? migrant worker? full time worker? intern? are people paid fairly?), Customer (well-paid suburbanites? low-income city dwellers?) Please reach out to your NOFA contact if you have questions, clarifications or want to discuss how to address these topics.

Below are some questions to consider while preparing for your presentation:

Clarifying Definitions – make sure everyone is on the same page.

When you use the word **farmer**, do you assume a self-employed landowner; farmers who work on contract with a school or not-for-profit; farmers who do not own land; would-be farmers who may spend many years working for others and may never acquire land of their own or may choose not to become owner-managers? Will you share your definition with your audience?

When you use the term **farm worker**, are you referencing migrant workers; would-be farmers in training—apprentices, interns; local residents who choose to do farm work; family members; people who might want to make a career working on a farm without ever becoming owner-manager? When the subject of labor laws and hiring and maintaining employees is discussed are both farmers and farm workers equally engaged in the conversation? Will you share your definition of farm worker with your audience?

If you are a farmer:

Do you employ farm workers and/or interns? Do they share your background, or is theirs significantly different? Do you treat farm workers from different backgrounds than you differently? How has their experience influenced their decision to work for or with you today? What factors might influence them in their farming career in the years to come?

Do the prices you receive cover the full costs of production? (This includes living wages for farmers and their employees, and the costs of maintaining safe equipment, decent housing if provided to workers, training for farm staff.) Are you able to pay living wages? Do you recognize workers' right to negotiate with you for better working conditions? If you sell under contract, do you consider the terms of the contract fair? Are/Were the terms of the contract negotiable? Do you benefit from freedom of association with other farmers when negotiating with buyers?

If you are a farmer, business person, processor, educator, activist or organizer (everyone!):

What does your work have to do with social equity? Has your background of family, community, and/or region influenced your work and your place in your community?

How do you see race and/or class as factors influencing access to organic, sustainable farm products? Are they factors influencing the next generation to engage in organic farming, directly or indirectly?

Brainstorm about how your workplace, labor and perhaps workshop topic may affect those for whom equity is still wanting.

What goals do you want to see the organic community achieve to improve equity in its food production and distribution systems? What would be the first steps toward these goals?

Can you imagine a set of equity practices, much like a skills guide, that would gradually lead farmers, producers and consumers toward practices that could impact issues of equity in a positive way? What would it include?

For true social and economic compassion, understanding and equity!