

Table Facilitator #1 Reflection: This was a powerful, transformative, and beautiful the Farm Supper was for me. It felt like an authentic experience of connection, relationship-building, and collective care. Thank you so much for inviting me to be a part of this important gathering.

Table Facilitator #2 Reflection

Key themes that emerged during table conversations: The challenges posed by decreased funding opportunities and the many barriers and uncertainties facing immigrant communities and small farmers under the current administration. There was a degree of concern and uncertainty that everyone seemed to be navigating in some capacity. On the positive side, table guests emphasized the resolve of farmers banding together and providing support to one another during these challenging times. I found both the challenges and opportunities shared by table guests to be genuine and from the heart and while not everyone was facing the same issues, everyone felt comfortable sharing their experience and connecting with each other.

Level of participant engagement: The entire table was engaged in conversation over dinner and furthermore during the organized table discussion. I would rate the level of engagement as 10/10!

Expressed desire of participants to continue connecting afterwards: During the conversations each participant shared the name of their organization and/or farm and encouraged each other to connect over social media and through their respective websites. I felt this to be an organic outcome, where we all felt invested in the success of each other.

What went well? What was hard? What went well, in my opinion, was the exceptional translation and interpretation by our facilitator (Eduardo) who enabled all table guests to feel welcome to share and express themselves fully. He really did a fantastic job and I am very appreciative for his support over the evening. I didn't find anything to be too hard with my group. I believe everyone felt heard and respected, which allowed folks to be vulnerable and open with each other, even though most of us were strangers before the dinner.

Thanks again to you, all the program team members and facilitators for such a great event. I hope we can continue to have these kinds of Farm Suppers to support SFP's efforts to build and strengthen networks of care around NYS.

Table Facilitator #3 Reflection

- Level of engagement was high – everyone participated
- One theme - falling out of your comfort zone can lead to new ideas
- What is needed? Showing up when people are being taken away; helping people understand the reality of what is happening with farmworkers being detained; people to change their views; more conversation like this across different communities

Table Facilitator #4 Reflection

Key themes:

- everyone is struggling financially and worried about how to continue farming and working the land while still keeping a roof over their head; worried about what further financial strain will come with all the changes
- men reflected on how hard it is to struggle with the gender role of being the provider and the mental health impact when they cannot do it
- the importance of taking care of yourself even when your “to do” list keeps growing
- needing the ask for help with the financial/bookkeeping aspects of farming

- the group agrees that gatherings like the supper were a wonderful way to connect, find hope, and have collective support in getting through the hard times

Full Group Table Facilitator Debrief and Reflection

Farm Supper Debrief Notes

Conversation Topic Themes:

- Personal financial hardship
 - Current economic realities of farming do not match cost of living or how hard the work of farming is – farm owners need to work off the farm to supplement their income (and for medical insurance); farm employees are thinking about if they can or want to continue working on farms
 - Staying organized and up on the farm business financial and tax administration is challenging while managing all the other demands of farming, working off the farm, and raising a family
 - The seasonality of income from on and off the farm can make managing finances challenging during months when cash flow stalls
- Access to housing challenges
 - Farm owners and farm employees have or are struggling to find affordable housing near where they work and in general
- Socio-emotional wellbeing and balance is difficult; being together helps
 - Farmers experience an inexhaustible to-do list and have to navigate when to “shut off” farming for the day or week and make peace with what was done and what still needs doing; being present, grateful, and taking in time to savor the lifestyle of farming (why we do it) can be hard when juggling so much and experiencing high levels of stress
 - Farming can be isolating or lonely – the opportunity to be with each other and have space to listen and be heard without “fixing” is important and healing
 - Folks are craving more opportunities to strengthen the community web and gather (ie: cooking and sharing meals together)
 - The issues on our respective farms/in our respective lives can feel consuming and defeating; being with others and understanding others’ experiences brings perspective and relief from this
 - Folks are feeling the weight of humanitarian and climate crises around the world, as well as the divisions in WNY that have been constructed to keep us from common struggle (rural versus urban, discrimination, cruelty, and hatred based on gender and sexual orientation, race, etc.) – being connected in-person is a medicine for the “doom scroll” – still, there are communities where people really care about and tangibly show up for and support each other in times of need or celebration; this is easier be plugged into for those who were born, raised, and continue to live in the same community; how do we create community for those who are newer to places?
- Love of the land, the work, high quality food, and nourishing others
 - Folks love farming – fair pay, housing, health care, access to land, etc. would make it more possible and sustainable to enter and continue in farming (and be more present in enjoying farming)

Level of Participant Engagement in Conversation:

High – folks listened attentively and shared openly, honestly, and with vulnerability; folks were thoughtful, brave, and gentle; we could have continued talking for longer!

Expressed Desire of Participants to Continue Connecting Afterwards:

Over dinner, folks were exchanging knowledge and resources regarding meat processing; it is likely that they will connect in the future on this topic. Overall, the group expressed the desire for ongoing opportunities to connect, break bread, and be in heartfelt conversation with other farmers in a similar way as the farm supper.

What went well? What was hard? What was enlivening? Level of comfort?

- What went well: The collaboration between Small Farms and CCE Erie. The timing of the event, end of summer, was good. The venue at Groundwork was wonderful. All the food was delicious. The program design – song and poems were grounding – touchstones and facilitator questions supportively shaped/created framework for the conversation – seating/table was a good mix of familiar and new-to-each-other folks – it was nice to have time to mingle before dinner. The number of people in total at the event felt good. It was positive to have extension staff there for this event for farmers to form a fresh perspective and relationship with those who work in extension – as well as for those who work in extension to listen to and learn more from farmers
- What was hard: Being at one table meant not being able to say hello or connect with others at the event. It was a long day for the Ithaca folks with traveling! At times it was hard to hear due to a lot of background noise.
- What was enlivening: Being at Groundwork. Being with other farmers; the conversation. The food.
- Level of comfort: I think folks felt comfortable enough to “get uncomfortable” (comfortable and safe enough to push the boundaries of their comfort zones in being honest and vulnerable) in connecting with new people, sharing deeply personal things, listening to what other’s were sharing with compassion, and trusting each other to hold the conversation and its contents.