

Training for Farm worker and Intern Inspectors for NOFA-AJP Food Justice Pledge

Objectives for training: achieve adequate familiarity with AJP standards and verification process to do credible inspection of small-scale direct sales farms with limited hired employees

1. intro to AJP
2. intro to Farmers Pledge and Food Justice Pledge
3. Overview of verification process
4. Standards
5. Inspection skills
6. forms – checklist and report
7. inspection
8. final review

1. Introduction to the Agricultural Justice Project (AJP)

1. Have you ever worked on an organic farm or know someone who has worked on one?
2. What was it like? Was it different from other farms where they use synthetic pesticides?
3. Would you expect it to be different? Why or why not?

What is AJP from Training 1.3.2

2. Introduction to Farmers Pledge and Food Justice Pledge

Alongside Organic Certification, NOFA-NY offers farms the possibility to take the Farmers Pledge. In 2002, NOFA decided to create the pledge as well as continuing to provide organic certification. There were 6 farmers on the board at that time – 3 certified, 3 not. And when we looked over the membership of NOFA, we realized that the Board was fairly representative – fully half the organic farmers who belonged to NOFA had decided, for a whole variety of reasons, not to go for certification. Before the program was implemented, NOFA had written comments to USDA as that agency was writing the regulations for the National Organic Program (NOP) expressing the strong feeling of the NOFA membership (as expressed in a resolution passed that year that you can see in the listing of NOFA policy resolutions on the NOFA-NY website) that the NOP should regulate “certified organic” but leave organic alone. As Mark put it in his speech, USDA was “taking” the word organic by limiting its use in the marketplace to entities that were certified organic by a certification agency accredited by USDA. That deprived half of the NOFA member farms of the use of the organic label – and some of these farms were the pioneers in organic farming. The pledge at least provides a collective identity for those farms. As it turns out, certified organic farms are using it as well because they like the additional principles that belong to organic historically, but were left out of the NOP.

AJP Pledge for Local Fair Trade – An Addition to the NOFA-NY Farmers Pledge

We pledge that in our farming and in our sales to the public we will:

- Adhere to the domestic fair trade standards of the Agricultural Justice Project;
- Base our prices on a careful calculation of our farm’s costs of production, including living wages for us as farmers and for people employed on our farm, plus a percentage

for future investments in the farm, retirement, and savings;

- If we participate in training new farmers (internships, apprenticeships, on-farm training programs), provide useful and practical training that contributes to their farming and management skills;
- Treat all hired workers with respect, acknowledging their right to freedom of association and collective bargaining, and providing clear written labor policies;
- Pay all the people who work on our farm at a living wage rate; if we cannot afford to pay a living wage, we make a commitment to share any increase in our revenues with our farm's workers.

To qualify for the Food Justice Pledge label a farm must participate in the NOFA-NY Farmers Pledge, sell direct to consumers (CSA, farm market, farmers markets, internet sales, etc.) and hire a limited number of workers (no more than 5 full-time seasonal workers).

Farms that sell through third parties – retailers stores, brokers or to processors – would not be eligible for the Pledge, but would be eligible for Food Justice Certification which will be offered as an additional claim to Certified Organic. NOFA-NY Certified Organic LLC will be trained to do this certification in the near future.

Right in our own local foodshed, small-scale farmers are struggling economically and farm workers earn poverty wages. Under downward pressure from the dominant cheap food policies, farmers have trouble charging enough to cover the costs of production for the food they grow.

To reduce the fragility of local farm enterprises and help make these farms more economically viable, the Food Justice Pledge brings the concept of fair trade home.

When Food Justice Pledge farms charge a small premium for their products, you can be sure that the money will go to improve the quality of life for the farmer and all the people who work on the farm. For the farms that hire labor, local farm worker or community groups are receiving this training so that they can verify the farmers' claims to fair labor practices. This participatory verification process will provide assurance to customers that farms are treating their hired workers with respect, paying living wages and fulfilling the farm's commitment to continual improvement towards ever greater social justice.

Freedom of Association

The right to Freedom of Association (FOA) describes the internationally recognized right of workers to meet and take action collectively to improve their working conditions. FOA does not automatically imply unionization, although it does mean that employees have a right to form a union if they so choose. Rather, FOA refers to anything as informal as two workers approaching a supervisor about a perceived problem in the workplace, a group of workers forming a committee, all the way to all the workers in the workplace wishing to form a union or formal association in order to negotiate the terms of employment - or anything in between. FOA does not guarantee any outcome; it does not mean that workers acting collectively will necessarily receive from management everything they are seeking. It does mean that there will be no retaliation of any kind against any worker(s) engaging in this activity, whether that be termination, deduction of wages, changes of assignment as a form of penalty, denial of raises or promotions that would otherwise be given, explicit or implicit threats, harassment, etc.

The right can and should also apply to others in a position of relatively less power, such as farmers associating with each other for the purpose of negotiating fair terms on their contracts with a shared buyer.

3. Verification process:

1. Farmer reads AJP standards and fills out application and pays small fee for administration.
2. Staff person in NOFA-NY office reviews the application and decides whether farm qualifies and is ready to apply. If farm needs additional technical assistance, staffer helps farmer find necessary resources and training. If farm hires labor, staffer and farmer seek trained verifiers.
3. Farm inspection with interviews of employees. Inspector may have to do follow-up calls to absent workers.
4. Inspectors fill out report which is posted on NOFA-NY and AJP websites.
5. NOFA-NY staffer reviews inspectors' recommendations and either grants Food Justice label use or asks for some changes before allowing use.

4. Standards Review - *Section 3: Farmer Responsibilities to Farm Employees and Interns training manual pp. 8 - 29.*

5. Inspection Skills

From manual - Techniques of Interviewing - 4 pp.

6. Inspection in Detail

1. Inspection group makes appointment with farmer to come to farm at time that is convenient for farmer and inspectors
2. Inspection begins with short meeting of entire farm staff. Inspectors explain why they are there and farmer talks about why farm in engaging in Food Justice Pledge.
3. Inspectors go with farmer to farm office and examine employee files, including contracts and disciplinary records, files of terminated employees, and records of trainings.
4. Inspectors then interview each employee individually, taking notes on the Inspection checklist.
5. When interviews complete, inspectors inform farmer that inspection has been completed except for follow-up calls that may be needed if any employees are absent on the day of the inspection. Inspectors will call those workers and interview them. After all interviews are complete, inspectors fill out inspection report that will be posted on the NOFA-NY and AJP websites.

7. Forms

- Checklist for Food Justice Pledge Inspection
- List of questions to use to guide interviews
- Final report for posting on NOFA-NY and AJP websites