

Cooperative Organizing: Building Collective Power in the Food Web

Participant Packet

Our Guiding Precepts

These precepts are designed to summarize the facilitators' analysis of farmers' current predicament, and their strategic outlook on how to change it. They're intended to share the context behind the creation of this skillshare.

1. **Without political intervention, small farms and farmers will increasingly struggle** in the private market because of broader ongoing economic and technological developments — regardless of individual farms' or farmers' successes.
2. **Large farms and farmers are organized politically and economically** — to the detriment of smaller farms and farmers.
3. In order to reverse the trends of declining profit margins, agricultural consolidation and exclusion, and farmer exploitation — small farms and farmers **have and will need to organize together economically and politically.**
4. We, as farms, farmers, and allies, will need to understand (and build) helpful forms of organization — as well as learn methods and practices of **organizing** — that we as independent and **interdependent** entities can use to democratically exert political and economic power.
5. Cooperatives are one historically- and politically-aligned tool of working-class agricultural organization; their **economic organization has always been accompanied by political organization with similar methods and practices.**
6. Political organization of small farms and farmers on their own is not enough to exert the necessary power on the broader food system, and that small farms and farmers will have to ally with broader movements for economic, social, and environmental justice — and build bonds of solidarity.


Our Guiding Question:

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What we hope you'll take from this skillshare:

Networking, trust and community building • Toolkit expansion, including introduction to different relevant cooperative models • Experience doing ecosystem mapping and a robust ecosystem map of the local independent produce landscape • Actionable next-steps for deepening your connection to cooperative models — or even just growing your farm business • Routes for expert (technical) support from a number of relevant industries & struggles post-program.

Day 1: Humanist Hall, 390 27th Street in Oakland

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|  | Description: |
| 9:30am | <i>Greeting, Snacking, Socializing, Settling in</i> |
| 10am | <p>Introductions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Welcome ● Mística — by Agroecology Commons & Co. ● Quilting the Self: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>In this activity, we'll craft personal bios expressing</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Who you are</i> ● <i>What you do</i> ● <i>Your purpose for attending the skillshare</i> <p><i>Once crafted, we'll weave our bios to form a quilt-like display. This activity draws inspiration from the Freedom Quilting Bee cooperative rooted in rural Alabama.</i></p> |
| 11am | <p><i>Introduction to Cooperatives for Marginalized Farmers</i></p> <p>Musical Chairs Gallery Walk & Discussion:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Vibe: <i>to the music during this immersive gallery walk, musical chairs-style.</i> 2. Explore the Stations: <i>There are multimedia stations across the hall covering a variety of different topics in the history of cooperatives — explore them liberally, and join other station visitors in discussion. Many stations include a station steward, who can help answer — or pose — questions.</i> |

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| | <p>3. Stop & Discuss: <i>When the music stops, stay at your station: it's small group discussion time! Wait for the facilitators to give the cue to launch back into the gallery walk.</i></p> <p>4. Repeat!</p> |
| 12pm | <p style="text-align: center;">Lunch</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Follow @UnderstoryOakland and visit their James Beard Award-Winning worker-owned BIPOC restaurant & bar in Oakland (Ohlone Land)</i></p> |
| 1pm | <p>Powermapping</p> <p><i>“The chief way to help ordinary people go from object to subject is to teach them about their potential power by involving them as central actors in the process of developing the power-structure analysis” — Jane McAlevey, Organizer; “No Shortcuts”</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Join a station with people you don't know.</i> ● <i>Observe the axes on the wall chart at the front of the hall: the horizontal axis represents the target's interest in supporting small, independent, marginalized farmers. The vertical axis represents the target's relative power, i.e., its ability to make decisions today that actually bring about positive changes for said farmers.</i> ● <i>Consider the following — and, when your group is called — place one answer for each question on the powermap:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>Which institution or individuals is already maximally contributing to a vision of the cooperative food system that you want to see?</i> ○ <i>Which institution or individuals who're not currently involved would be well situated to contribute to the collective realization of a cooperative food system?</i> ● <i>Continue moving through stations with the group with whom you last finished; groups will be pulled from their stations to make connections on the larger powermap.</i> ● <i>We'll close by reflecting on the newly-available knowledge we hold together — and the newfound connections we've understood between them.</i> |
| 2pm | <p>Optional: Socializing, Networking & Scheming</p> |

Day 2: Agroecology Commons Farm, El Sobrante

(Park at 1060 Manor Road El Sobrante and walk to 836 Marin Road- see map below)

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| 9:30 | Socializing |
| 10am | Panel: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Roman Pinal of the United Farm Workers ● Daniella Preisler of Colmenar Cooperative ● Kellee Matsushita-Tseng of Second Generation Seeds ● Njoubé Dugas of Saba Grocers |
| 11am | Dorian Payán - Farmer-focused Legal Cafe's with the Sustainable Economies Law Center |
| 11:15 | Group Project Introduction & Small Group Work Time |
| 12:15 pm | Lunch! Follow @reemscalifornia "Where man'oushe meets the movement" and visit Reem's California at their Arab street corner bakery in (Ohlone Land) SF in the Mission St or at the Ferry Building in SF |
| 1pm | Group Presentations & Close |
| 2pm | Optional: Socializing, Networking & Scheming |

