



YOUNG FARMERS ORGANIZING HANDBOOK



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WELCOME



Margaret Schlass, One Woman Farm, Photo by Don Holtz Photography.

Who We Are

The National Young Farmers Coalition (Young Farmers/the Coalition) was founded by and for a new generation of farmers in the United States. We are a coalition of farmers, ranchers, and supporters tackling the many challenges that young farmers face in their first years of operating farm businesses. We believe there should be fewer obstacles to starting a farm, and envision a country where young people who are willing to work hard, get trained, and take on a little risk can support themselves and their families in agriculture.

With the average age of America's farmers nearing 60 and two-thirds of working lands transitioning hands in the next 20 years, we believe our country's food security depends on the success of young farmers. That's why we're taking action. Our coalition fights for policy that supports the next generation of farmers, organizes local farmer networks, and provides critical business services.

Our Start

In late 2009, three farmers in the Hudson Valley sat down together around a farmhouse table to talk about the challenges facing them and their peers: difficulties securing loans, access to affordable farmland, and student loan debt. They decided that they and other young farmers needed to step up and fight for the future of farming as a united, national front. Across the country, other young farmers were also coming to the same realization. Groups like the Washington Young Farmers Coalition, the Michigan Young Farmers Coalition, and the Connecticut New Farmers Alliance were taking shape around the same time. Our founders brought their idea for a national coalition to the first Stone Barns Young Farmers Conference in Tarrytown, NY in 2009. There was such excitement in the room that the farmers named the Coalition on the spot. Since then, our network has expanded to include tens of thousands of farmers nationwide.

This handbook is about creating change in your community.

The Coalition mobilizes young farmers around policy change and we believe much of this change starts at home. We owe most, if not all, of our federal policy wins to grassroots organizing at the local level. Coalition chapters facilitate local collaboration and give young farmers a voice in their communities, at the state capital, and in D.C. Policy aside, Coalition chapters serve as a platform for forging collective success through projects like cooperative buying clubs, equipment shares, crop mobs, and more. Coalition chapters have unique areas of focus driven by local needs, but our strength lies in our shared priorities.

This Chapter Organizing Handbook is a step-by-step guide to starting a Coalition chapter in your growing region. Our goal is to help young farmers launch a chapter in every region of the U.S. so that all young farmers have access to a supportive community of peers, and a voice in the policy that affects their future.

To make this happen, we need you!



National Young Farmer Coalition Staff, October 2018, Hudson, New York.

Guiding Principles

The National Young Farmers Coalition supports practices and policies that will sustain young, independent, and prosperous farmers now and in the future. Coalition chapters stand by a shared set of guiding principles that inform our work. *As a community of farmers and consumers, we support:*

INDEPENDENT FAMILY FARMS

Farming must remain a desirable and profitable career and livelihood. The healthiest future for food and farming in the United States will be achieved through the continued support for independent family farms that own and operate their land and businesses. An interdependent network of family farms is the key to maintaining a resilient farm sector and healthy rural communities.

SUSTAINABLE FARMING PRACTICES

As caretakers of the natural wealth of the nation, farmers must be conscientious and mindful environmental stewards. We encourage farming practices that sustain healthy soil, water, and air, and that will protect our climate for the next generation of farmers and consumers.

AFFORDABLE LAND FOR FARMERS

There must be high-quality farmland that is affordable for full-time farmers to purchase. Farmers must own their farmland in order to make capital improvements on their farms and to build equity for long-term financial security. Owning land provides personal satisfaction, confidence and practical efficiency that only comes with being in full control of the means of production of the farm. However, long-term leases for secure and affordable farmland tenure must also be available.

FAIR LABOR PRACTICES

Farming is deeply satisfying and joyful work that should allow each farmer to fully utilize his or her innate talents and abilities. Farmers should have the opportunity to be part of a community working toward the common goal of sustaining farming for the future. All farmers and farm workers should receive a fair wage for their products and work, and should receive proper care when sick or injured. We recognize the incredible contribution of immigrant and migrant farm workers working in the United States, and believe that these individuals deserve the utmost respect, fair compensation, and opportunities to build their own farms.

FARMER-TO-FARMER TRAINING

Farming cannot be learned entirely in a classroom, and the best teachers are often farmers themselves. We support the apprenticeship model of farmer education, modeled after other trades, and believe that mentorships and alternative farmer-to-farmer learning opportunities should be available to young farmers.

FARMERS OF EVERY GENDER, RACE, AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION

We strongly support inclusiveness in the farming profession, and believe that diversity among farmers is critical to maintaining a strong and vibrant agricultural sector to provide for a diversity of consumers.

COOPERATION AND FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN ALL FARMERS

We reject divisiveness between farmers over production philosophies or any other issue. For land, skills, and place-based knowledge to be transferred to the next generation, young farmers must embrace and collaborate with their elder farmers and each other. There are too few farmers in our country, and as such, each one contributes to feeding our nation and upholding farming traditions.





LAUNCHING A COALITION CHAPTER



Young Farmers Mixer, July 2016.

Young Farmers is a Grassroots Coalition

Our chapter leaders and members help shape our policy platform and national priorities. Each chapter has a representative on our National Leadership Committee which convenes at least quarterly via conference call to help determine our national policy strategy and to share best practices for local organizing. *(Please refer to National Leadership Committee section for more information).*

A Coalition chapter is run by and for young farmers. It is a collaborative group that works to ensure collective success. Our chapters are:

- ❑ Farmer-driven and are comprised primarily (but not exclusively) of working farmers and ranchers.
- ❑ Organized locally to bring farmers together within a growing region for regular communication and collaboration.
- ❑ Led by young farmers but inclusive of farmers of all ages and expertise.
- ❑ Run democratically by a team of chapter officers: President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary, and chapter members.
- ❑ Charged with building relationships with local, state, and national elected officials who, once aware of the issues young farmers face, are in the position to drive legislative change.
- ❑ Convened at least four times per year for meetings, social events, farm tours, workshops, and trainings.

“I’M PART OF YOUNG FARMERS BECAUSE IT’S ABOUT COMMUNITY, AND FEELING LIKE I CAN TAKE ACTION AND DO GOOD WORK IN THE WORLD.”

**–Tiana Baca,
Rio Grande Farmers Coalition**

Why is having a local Coalition chapter important?

A Coalition chapter:

- ❑ Builds and strengthens community.
- ❑ Provides opportunities for new friendships and business relationships.
- ❑ Offers cost-sharing opportunities for seeds or equipment, price negotiation, and labor pooling, a.k.a. “crop mobs.”
- ❑ Creates a venue for continuing education, mentorship, and open dialogue.
- ❑ Offers young and beginning farmers and ranchers a collective voice in their community.
- ❑ Provides a platform for advocacy and greater traction with elected officials.
- ❑ Forges a connection with other young farmers from across the country.

“THE NATIONAL YOUNG FARMERS COALITION IS REALLY IMPORTANT TO ME BECAUSE IT GIVES ME THE TOOLS THAT I NEED TO ADVOCATE FOR MYSELF AND MY FARM.”

**–Emily Mickley-Doyle,
Greater New Orleans Growers Alliance**

How to Get Started

Coalition chapters often form out of informal conversations in which farmers recognize a common challenge or need. Your first step as an organizer will be to reach out to farmers in your region by proposing your idea to start a Coalition chapter, brainstorming first steps, and asking them to join your team. The Coalition can help you find co-organizers through targeted emails to our network. Email us at organizing@youngfarmers.org to get started!

Finding Chapter Members

Who should be in your chapter? Your chapter should be primarily composed of farmers in their first 10 years of growing or starting a new farm. Coalition chapter members range from apprentices to established farmers, and from first-generation farmers to farmers taking over their family's multi-generational farm. Anyone is welcome to join your chapter, regardless of age! Farm service providers and other allies can certainly be involved, but chapter leadership should stay in the hands of young farmers. As you form your chapter membership, make sure to reach out to farmers outside of your inner circle. Are there immigrant farming communities or migrant farm workers in your region? How can your chapter help to form connections between the diverse landscape of growers in your region?

Identify the Geographic Region

Chapters need to organize around a growing region, rather than across an entire state, for ease of communication, event planning, and ability to gather in person on a regular basis. Many Coalition chapters were first formed as statewide chapters, but as we grew, we realized it was difficult for statewide chapters to truly represent all young farmers in the state. Organizing

farmers in your immediate growing region means more opportunities to meet regularly in person. A "growing region" could also encompass different states—for example, our Driftless Region chapter includes parts of Wisconsin, Iowa and Minnesota. We do encourage communication and collaboration between regional chapters and other chapters in your state, if they exist! Multiple chapters in one state will strengthen your collective voices, especially when it comes to state policy.

Connect With the Coalition's National Chapter Coordinator

This staff member is here to support you as you form your chapter. The national chapter coordinator will be your primary staff contact and an important resource to assist you, for example, as you seek co-organizers or plan your first event.

Pick a Meeting Time and Spread the Word

Make sure the location is a community gathering place (farm, community garden, Grange, brewery, library) and work to get the space donated. Make a Facebook event and/or Eventbrite and invite attendees. Ask local organizations to share the event with their networks. The national chapter coordinator is available to help you market the event through email blasts and social media. Potlucks always help to create a community feel. Make considerations for families to attend (offer childcare, choose kid-friendly locations and times).

Talk To Existing Farm Organizations

It's helpful to know which farmer networks are already in place in your region and what they offer to make sure you are not duplicating existing efforts. Reach out to these networks early on to introduce your chapter. They'll likely be helpful in promoting your events and identifying potential organizers! The more you collaborate with other local organizations, the stronger you will be. A Coalition chapter is unique to other local farming organizations in several ways: Instead of having staff that create programming for local farmers, Coalition chapters are farmer-driven and make decisions democratically. They are a dedicated space for young farmers to lead, which means their priorities are highly focused.

Name Your Chapter In Accordance With the Coalition's Naming Guidelines

All Coalition chapters must be named using the chapter's growing region + Young Farmers Coalition. For example, "Central Ohio Young Farmers Coalition," "Middle Georgia Young Farmers Coalition," and "Hudson Valley Young Farmers Coalition." There are some, albeit few, exceptions to this guideline. Your growing region should be understood externally. Please avoid local lingo that is not understood or could be misconstrued outside your area.



Kate Farrar and Nadine Proctor, Perianth Farm, New York.

Why “young?” It is critical that Coalition chapters share the same name structure to build common branding and identity. We believe that “young” is an integral part of a Coalition chapter’s name: “Young” grabs the attention of policymakers, giving us a powerful voice in Washington. “Young” should not be misconstrued as a term to alienate any person; rather it is a call to action. Typically our chapter leaders are between 20-45 years of age, but there is no age cut off!

Hold a Vote to Elect the Four Chapter Officers

The election should be open to anyone who wants to be involved in the chapter. Two out of four chapter officers need to be actively farming. *(Please refer to the Running Meetings, Officer Elections and Voting section for more information).*



The Coalitions’ Fourth Annual Leadership Convergence, 2018 Lobby Day.

Communicating With Your Members

Creating space for communication will ensure your chapter members feel connected and informed. We suggest using multiple platforms for communication—Facebook, a listserv, chapter email, or Google group—so that everyone is well informed of your events and knows how to get involved!

Each time your chapter hosts an event or meeting, or participates in another organization’s event, you should have a sign-up sheet to collect participant information. These names should then be added to a master list of contacts for the chapter. That way every time you send out a chapter communication, you are capturing the new sign-ups!

Here are recommended platforms for communicating as a chapter:

Facebook

We recommend making a Facebook group to create a space for chapter members to share resources and information. Because every member of the group can post to the group’s wall, there is great opportunity for members to participate and feel ownership in the chapter. Facebook pages, in contrast, allow only administrators to post to the chapter’s wall. The major benefit to creating a Facebook page, however, is that you can create event pages and you can be tagged in posts by other organizations.

Listserv

The Coalition strongly suggests creating a listserv through Google Groups or a similar platform. You can either approve each message or allow people to post immediately. We recommend having an administrator approve each member as they join the listserv to avoid spammers.

Mailchimp or Similar Platform

Mailchimp is a very helpful platform to send emails to your chapter membership. Mailchimp allows you to upload up to 500 names for free and to create professional-looking emails. Consider using an email platform so that your emails do not get lost in the mix of the general listserv.

Chapter Website

Each chapter will have its own chapter page on the Coalition’s website. The chapter page will feature a photo and description of the chapter, as well as links to social media and upcoming events. The national chapter coordinator can make edits to your chapter page by request. Your chapter is free to make its own website as well.

Chapter Email

Setting up a chapter email address is easy and free with most platforms like Google. We suggest creating a chapter email that multiple leaders can access. This makes things easier when sending emails for official chapter business and makes the chapter look more professional when seeking in-kind donations. It should be the chapter secretary’s job to check this email routinely and respond in a timely manner.



TOP: The Coalition's First Annual Leadership Convergence, 2015.
BOTTOM: The Coalition's Fourth Annual Leadership Convergence, 2018.



RUNNING MEETINGS, OFFICER ELECTIONS, AND VOTING



Running Your First Meeting

The Coalition's Quick Guide to Electing Officers, Voting and Running a Meeting:
<http://bit.ly/2FkqQzS>

Preparation

Once you have a team of people interested in helping launch the chapter, it's time to build an agenda for an in-person meeting. What topics do you want to tackle? Set a time and place. Consider the environment—does it facilitate good conversation without too much noise? Spread the word to those who have already expressed interest and to others who may not know about it yet. You may want to create a farmer survey to distribute at the meeting as well. A short survey is a great way to capture information about what challenges young farmers are facing in your region and what they would like to work on. Make sure your first meeting works for farmers' schedules (i.e. avoiding harvest times and farmers market days).

Materials

Materials you may need for your meeting:

- Laptop to record meeting minutes in Google Docs or other platform
- Large Post-it paper for writing out ideas everyone can see
- Name tags—these are super helpful in facilitating networking
- Permanent markers/extra pens
- Sign-in sheets
- Participant survey
- Food and drinks



The Coalition's former Western Program Director, Kate Greenberg, talks with farmers in Colorado, 2016.

Facilitation

Well-facilitated meetings will keep people coming back for more! The chapter president will usually run the meetings and act as a facilitator. If they are unavailable, they will designate another chapter officer to do so.

A good facilitator:

- Communicates clearly;
- Starts the meeting on time and has prepared an agenda in advance;
- Helps establish ground rules and creates a safe space for participants to share ideas;
- Actively listens and remains attentive to the quality of the conversation and works to keep it positive and on-track;
- Ensures everyone's voice is heard;
- Respects everyone's time;
- Mediates among participants who have differing ideas, keeping the conversation constructive;
- Synthesizes group discussion and helps formulate next steps;
- Openly receives and acts on constructive feedback from the group.

Start with a round of introductions—even if most of you know each other already, there may be a few new faces in the room. Establish some ground rules to help create a safe space and make sure everyone feels comfortable. Aim to start the meeting on time. The chapter secretary will take minutes, or delegate another chapter officer to do so. Make sure everyone's voice is heard and that the conversation moves forward. Have everyone write their information on a sign-in sheet to collect emails and phone numbers. The national chapter coordinator can be available by phone to answer any questions that come up.

Many of our chapters use Robert's Rules of Order to run their meetings. Robert's Rules will help your chapter establish a streamlined procedure that will allow chapter members to have a voice in the decision-making process while increasing chapter transparency and engagement. It should also help your meetings run more smoothly as you will have a clear process to go by

that will quickly become second nature. Many organizations, from non-profit boards to the U.S. House of Representatives, use similar procedures. To learn more about Robert's Rules, visit: <http://www.robertsrules.org>.

Suggested Ground Rules

Actively participate and actively listen.

Be open and respect different opinions: everyone is coming from a different place, a different background, a different farm. Try not to lump anyone into a specific group.

Step up/step back: If you tend to take up space in meetings, try to step back and let others step up. If you tend to keep quiet, try speaking up.

Do not assume someone's silence is agreement.

Practice self-focus language: Use "I" statements when talking about your own personal experiences, don't assume anyone else's experience is the same as yours.

Maintain gender neutrality and use correct pronouns: Make an effort to replace phrases such as "you guys" and "ladies" with gender neutral alternatives like "you all", and "folks". Ask everyone to say their gender pronouns when making introductions.

Why Is Parliamentary Procedure Important?

An agreed-upon procedure for running meetings will help streamline chapter business and increase transparency and participation, thereby taking some of the weight off of your shoulders as chapter leaders. If you know the general process for running a meeting, voting, and record keeping, you won't have to think about it each time. Voting is important for chapter decisions that involve finances, elections, and policy decisions. This will also help with leadership succession and continuity as new leaders will be able to jump in and carry on a similar procedure. Taking meeting minutes helps to keep a record of past conversations and decisions for new leaders to learn from and review. Familiarizing yourself with parliamentary procedure is great training for future endeavors as you join boards, testify before Congress, or even run for office.

Formulate Your Goals and Objectives

- What needs drew you together to form a Coalition chapter?
- What is lacking in your growing region that you would like to see happen for young farmers?
- What do you hope to accomplish as a group?
- Where do you see your chapter in one year? Five years?
- How do you see your chapter helping to grow a more just and equitable food system?

Lay Out Specific Goals In Writing

Consider goals for the short-term and long-term. What do you want to accomplish this growing season and a few years down the road? Brainstorm your objectives for reaching those goals: what steps do you need to take to achieve them? Creating goals and objectives are critical steps for a well-functioning chapter.

Wrap-up

By the end of the meeting (or after a few meetings) you should have:

- A chapter name
- Goals and objectives
- A plan for electing chapter officers
- Next steps and delegated tasks
- An email listserv for participants to stay in touch
- A meeting time and place for the next meeting. Remember, meetings can happen at a member's farm, brewery, before a potluck event, or even on the phone.

At the end of your meeting, go around the circle and have attendees say what they will take on before the next meeting. At the next meeting, check in on everyone's progress! This helps keep your chapter members accountable and engaged.



California young farmers at the Coalition's Fourth Annual Leadership Convergence, 2018.

After Your First Meeting

Guide to the Chapter Agreement: <http://bit.ly/2CeQqlR>

Make It Official

Your next step is to sign the Chapter Agreement! By signing our Chapter Agreement, your group will be an official part of our national coalition. Benefits of becoming an official chapter include:

- ❑ Coordinated national campaigns and projects;
- ❑ Representation on our National Leadership Committee which helps develop our national policy platform and facilitates best practice sharing among chapters;
- ❑ Chapter page on youngfarmers.org;
- ❑ Chapter activities promoted via targeted emails, social media and network newsletter;
- ❑ Targeted emails to find organizers and encourage event turnout;
- ❑ Resources for organizing including tabling materials, membership benefits, and event support;
- ❑ Event insurance for events co-sponsored by the Coalition.

Helpful Tips When Starting Out

Consistent communication is important, especially at the beginning. You want to maintain the momentum of the chapter moving forward, so keep engaging with those who come to meetings and events through your listserv, Google group and Facebook page. Individual emails or calls can also be very helpful for encouraging participation in the early days.

Aim to have a larger event that is open to the public within the first year. This is a great way to increase participation in the chapter, gain media coverage of your new chapter, and have some fun with your fellow farmers!

Keep meetings and events open and inclusive of all farmers and community members interested in agriculture. Diversity and racial equity, including age, gender, religion, sexual orientation and ethnicity are key components of the Coalition's guiding principles. Try to incorporate these ethics into all of your chapter's events.

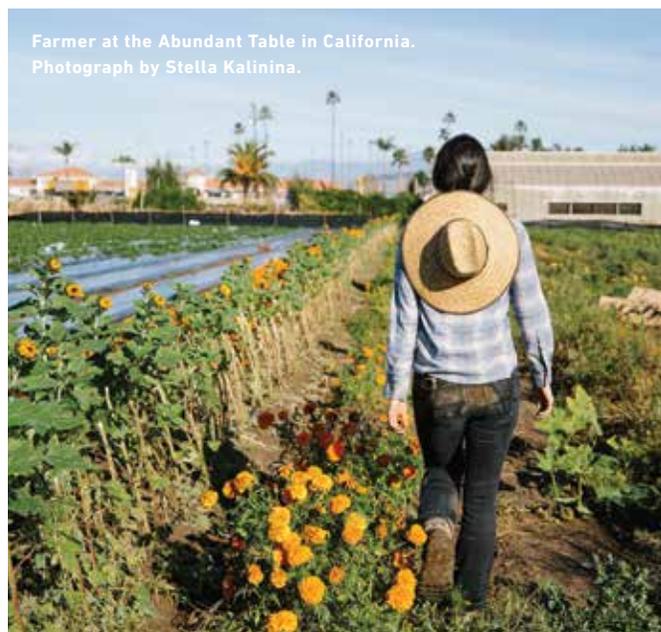
Stay engaged with the NLC listserv and Facebook page, and take advantage of opportunities to get involved at the national level. These include: "Fly-ins" to D.C. to speak to your representatives, attending the annual National Leadership Convergence in November, participation in regional events with other chapters, and state-level advocacy work.

Active Chapter Requirements

In order to meet the requirements of an active chapter, the chapter must:

- ❑ Elect four chapter officers; all officers must be dues-paying members of the Coalition and two of the four officers (or 50% of leadership) must be actively farming;
- ❑ Host four events and/or meetings per year;
- ❑ Participate in quarterly National Leadership Committee calls;
- ❑ Maintain a baseline of 10 dues-paying Coalition members annually (can include the four officers);
- ❑ Stay in good contact with the national chapter coordinator throughout the year and participate in an annual chapter check-in call each winter;
- ❑ Send the national chapter coordinator the annual chapter report by January 15th of each year.

Engaging in political activity that is not compliant with our 501(c)(3) status **may result in immediate termination of the chapter's relationship with the Coalition**. Chapters are encouraged to work with the national chapter coordinator to ensure all political activities are in compliance, particularly any activity relating to candidates for public office.



Farmer at the Abundant Table in California.
Photograph by Stella Kalinina.

Officers and Voting

The Coalition encourages leadership succession to a) avoid burnout; b) avoid power consolidation; and c) cultivate new leadership.

Our chapters elect officers in order to establish clear roles and duties within the chapter, and to help facilitate leadership transition. It is also incredibly helpful to have an official title when talking to the press, attending a town hall meeting, or speaking with your representatives.

Coalition chapters are required to establish a minimum of four officer roles and a formal voting process once they become official. Chapters have six months from signing the chapter agreement to hold their first elections. Two out of four chapter officers must be actively farming (or 50% if you have more than four officers). This is to ensure Coalition chapters are farmer-led and maintain a space for young farmers to lead in their communities.

Your chapter can decide whether officer terms are one year or two years from point of election. Officers may be re-elected for up to three consecutive terms, after which they will need to take

a minimum of a one-year break from that officer role before being re-elected to that seat. Officers may take on a different officer role in this time, but must observe the break period for that same role. (For example, after three years the chapter secretary could choose to run immediately for president, but would need to take a one year break before running again for secretary).

Voting should take place annually at the first meeting of the new year. Chapter members can nominate themselves or another chapter member to fill an officer role. Officers are then elected through the motion and voting process outlined below.

The four essential officer roles include: Chapter President and National Leadership Committee (NLC) Liaison, Chapter Vice-President, Chapter Treasurer, Chapter Secretary/ Communications.

If there are additional members who wish to take on a leadership role or your chapter sees additional needs, you may add more

CHAPTER PRESIDENT AND NATIONAL LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE (NLC) LIAISON

- Represent the Coalition in your community by wearing your "Young Farmers hat" at public events, town hall meetings, and other gatherings;
- Prepare and distribute meeting agendas;
- Run meetings, including keeping meetings on time and facilitating the voting process; if unable to attend, appoint VP to run the meeting or another officer if VP is also unavailable;
- Act as the chapter representative on the Coalition's National Leadership Committee (NLC), or if unable to participate, appoint another chapter officer to act in your stead.

CHAPTER VICE PRESIDENT

- Represent the Coalition in your community by wearing your "Young Farmers hat" at public events, town hall meetings, and other gatherings;
- Understand the responsibilities of the president and be able to perform these duties in his or her absence;
- Chapter can create further responsibilities for the VP and/or elect multiple VP positions such as VP of Policy and VP of Events.

CHAPTER TREASURER

- Represent the Coalition in your community by wearing your "Young Farmers hat" at public events, town hall meetings, and other gatherings;
- Oversee finances, including—as relevant—chapter bank account, fiscal sponsorship, donations, and accounts payable/receivable;
- Understand the responsibilities of the president and be able to perform these duties in the absence of the president and vice president.

CHAPTER SECRETARY/COMMUNICATIONS

- Represent the Coalition in your community by wearing your "Young Farmers hat" at public events, town hall meetings, and other gatherings;
- Record meeting minutes or, if unable to attend a meeting, coordinate with another chapter member to record minutes; Properly file meeting minutes;
- Send meeting minutes to chapter following each meeting (coordinate with president);
- Understand the responsibilities of the president and be able to perform these duties in the absence of the president, vice president, and treasurer.

officer roles to your leadership. Chapter members who are not in officer positions also play an important role in the chapter. Chapter members are expected to attend meetings, show up for events, participate in voting and decision making, recruit new membership, and keep chapter momentum going. Without active members, the chapter won't continue to function!

Quorum

A quorum is the minimum number of voting members present during a meeting in order to conduct business on behalf of the chapter. This is to protect against unrepresentative action taken by one or two individuals acting under the chapter name. The baseline quorum required for a Coalition chapter is three people. As your chapter grows, you may want to consider increasing the quorum.

Meetings

Your chapter should plan to host at least one open membership meeting per year to elect officers and vote on important orders of business. This meeting can count as one of the four meetings and/or events your chapter is required to host per year. Some examples of things that require a vote are approving the last meeting's minutes, chapter financial decisions, officer elections, name changes and fiscal sponsorship. If you're uncertain as to whether a decision requires a vote (not all do), use your discretion to decide the best path forward. **All chapter members participating in the voting process are expected to be current members of the Coalition to help encourage a culture of Coalition membership within our chapters.** NYFC will not be regulating this but hopes it will be followed through the honor system. With your vote, you are committing to remain involved with your chapter and with the Coalition for the upcoming year.

Meeting Minutes

The chapter secretary is usually responsible for recording minutes. If the secretary is unable to attend a meeting or take minutes, he/she can request that another officer or chapter member do so. **Meeting minutes are important for a number of reasons:**

- To record actions and decisions made by the chapter at each meeting, and have these records available for reference;
- To share with members who were unable to attend the meeting;
- To help prepare the information you will need to send in your annual report-back to the national chapter coordinator.

Draft Meeting Agenda

1. Call To Order

President starts the meeting; secretary records when meeting begins.

2. Intros/Roll Call

This is a good way to welcome in new members and make sure everyone is acquainted; secretary will record who is present.

3. Vote To Approve Last Meeting's Minutes

These should be made available to all members in advance of the meeting. *(Requires a motion).*

4. Updates and Action Items

As an example you may want to follow, Robert's Rules include: Officers Reports; Committee Reports; Special Orders already booked for this meeting; Unfinished Business; New Business; Announcements. This is basically the items you need to discuss at the meeting.

5. Adjournment

(Requires a motion).

Expressing yourself in the form of a motion and making a vote:

1. During the meeting, a member can make a motion for the membership to discuss and vote on, i.e. "I move to re-elect our current officers for another term."
2. The president can also call for a motion on a specific item.
3. The motion is then seconded by another member, i.e. "I second the motion to re-elect our current officers for another term."
4. If there is no second to your motion, the motion is lost.
5. The president calls for any discussion.
6. Following any discussion, the president calls for a vote on the motion: "All in favor say 'aye'. All opposed say 'no.'"
7. A vote passes if the majority of the voting members present say 'aye' (given there is a quorum).
8. The secretary should record all motions made and their outcome.

Committees

Some Young Farmers chapters find it useful to create committees. Having committees can help divide up the workload of running a chapter. This will also increase buy-in among chapter members outside the core leadership group. Committees provide a platform for drawing on individual chapter members' strengths and interests. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- ❑ **Policy:** working on state campaigns; participating in the Coalition's national policy work.
- ❑ **Fundraising:** creating and implementing a fundraising plan for the chapter; building relationships with local businesses and foundations, outlining an annual budget.
- ❑ **Events:** planning chapter events such as a monthly farm tour series, crop mobs, and mixers.
- ❑ **Education:** creating an educational schedule for the year, including farm tours, workshops, speakers and classes.
- ❑ **Racial Equity:** focusing on integrating chapter activities and processes with racial equity work; partnering with other local organizations working on these issues.

National Leadership Committee (NLC)

The NLC is comprised of one representative from each chapter (the chapter president or alternate), the national chapter coordinator, national field director and national policy director. The NLC convenes at least quarterly each year via conference call. The purpose of this committee is for chapter leaders to hear updates on the Coalition's programs and campaigns, provide input and recommendations for our national policy platform and national actions, and to share tips for successful organizing. This is an important opportunity for chapters to help set the direction of the organization, so don't miss it!



TOP: California Organizer, Mai Nguyen, at a listening session, 2018.
MIDDLE: Panel speakers at Fourth Annual Leadership Convergence, 2018.
BOTTOM: HVYFC chapter members at 2017 roundtable.



PLANNING EVENTS, MEMBERSHIP, AND, FUNDRAISING



Young Farmers' Hudson Valley Farm Future Fundraiser, August 2018.

Planning An Event

Farmers work hard, but we also like a party now and again! Whether you're hosting a party for 20 or 250, good planning will go a long way.

Organize And Delegate

Create a planning team and assign yourselves roles. This could be a committee you've already formed within the chapter. Create a shared Google doc with event details, contact information and delegated tasks. Recruit chapter members to sign up for volunteer shifts: setting up, staffing registration, cleaning up, etc.!

Choose a Date, Time, and Venue

Pick a date when farmers will have time—either before or after the growing season is usually the best. Reserve a location early. Farms, breweries, libraries, universities, and grange halls make great venues.

Food and Music

Do you want to host a potluck or provide food? BYOB or get beer donated? For music, a playlist and speakers will do, but live music is so much fun. As with the venue, book early. One year the Washington Young Farmers Coalition paid their band with a CSA share; the band loved it.

Donations and Sponsorship

There are many ways to cover your costs, starting simply with a suggested donation at the door. Want to do more? Solicit specific sponsors for an event. Establish tiers of sponsorship in which different levels might get a sponsor's name on your poster or a table at the event. The national chapter coordinator can help you get started. You can also ask for in-kind donations from local businesses like bakeries, breweries, cheese shops, and more. Co-ops have donated gift certificates, breweries have donated beer, and national organic food companies have provided free item coupons.

Put one person in charge of donations and sponsorship (usually the chapter treasurer). Develop a form letter for solicitations, and share with the planning team. Young Farmers has template letters available, and the national chapter coordinator can help you through the process. Brainstorm all of the personal connections your chapter members have with local businesses, organizations, and individuals and start there. Cold calls to local businesses can be very successful as well. Track all sponsorships and donations on a spreadsheet as they come in. This will help with thank yous following the event, and help you continue to build relationships with your sponsors.

New chapters planning their first kick-off event can process sponsorship funds through Young Farmers. Young Farmers will accept all funds for the event and then reimburse you for your expenses.

Create An Invite and Share With Your Community

A well-designed poster is a great promotional tool for your event. Include important details and distribute through your networks. Ask the Young Farmers Communications Director to send an email blast to our supporter network in your region. Is there anyone in particular you want to attend? Send them an invite directly. Ask for RSVPs through a Facebook event page or Eventbrite. Call local reporters to tell them about the event and invite them to cover it. Invite your local, state, and/or federal representatives to attend so they can learn more about the young farmers in their district.

Promote Your Chapter and Young Farmers

Be sure to have time at the mic to introduce yourselves and your chapter. Take advantage of the audience you've gathered! Decide in advance who will make this speech, or if you want to do it as a group. Tell them what you're working on, how they can help and remember to thank your sponsors. Don't forget to mention Young Farmers and make a case for membership! The national chapter coordinator can talk you through this before your event, as well as provide postcards and other informational material to hand out at your event and a sign-up sheet to collect information. Make sure to take pictures. If there are no photos, it didn't happen!

Follow-up

Following the event, send thank you notes to all sponsors, donors and tabling organizations, and to your volunteer crew for the time and effort they put in. Did you invite media to your event? Send reporters photos from the event and let them know you are available to speak to them about the event. Did elected officials attend? Send their staff a thank you e-mail.

Stay In Contact

As soon as you can, add new supporters to your listserv and send any new supporter information to the Chapter Coordinator. Send an e-mail to all the new listserv members to thank them for coming and keep them updated on how to be involved. Post photos to your chapter's social media channels!

Membership

Membership is very important to the Coalition. Membership dues help fund programming, policy work, operational expenses, promotion, and chapter organizing. Also, a strong membership base gives the Coalition leverage at the state and national level to fight for the needs of young farmers. **All chapter officers are required to be dues-paying members of the Coalition, and each chapter is required to maintain a membership of 10 dues-paying members annually (this can include the four officers).** The recruitment of 10 dues-paying members is our ask to our chapters to help increase our membership numbers as a whole. It is not necessary to recruit 10 new members each year.

As a creative way to recruit new members, our Adirondack, New York chapter asked a local bakery to host a pizza party and membership drive. Attendees paid a ticket price which included an annual membership and free pizza. The chapter was able to recruit 40 new members in one night!

Encouraging your chapter members to join Young Farmers is a crucial step towards building a strong young farmer movement. Having stronger membership numbers shows lawmakers and

others that our ranks are strong and that our policy requests truly reflect the needs of a new generation of farmers and ranchers. There are lots of great benefits to membership, from awesome discounts to having a voice in D.C.

All chapter members participating in the voting process are expected to be current members of Young Farmers to help encourage a culture of membership within our chapters. The Coalition will not be regulating this, but hopes it will be followed through the honor system. Your chapter can require separate dues apart from national dues, and you are free to engage in independent fundraising campaigns from NYFC.

youngfarmers.org/join

Georgia young farmers, 2015.



Chapter Fundraising

You may decide you want to organize projects as a chapter that require raising money. Hiring a paid coordinator can be a big boost to your chapter's capacity for organizing during the growing season. Raising money for events allows you to hire a band, provide food and drinks, and rent an event space. There are multiple ways to go about raising money, including grants, sponsorships, donations, and memberships dues.

Fiscal Sponsorship

If you would like to take donations, but aren't ready to become a 501(c)(3), consider applying for Young Farmers' fiscal sponsorship program. Fiscal sponsorship is a written arrangement in which a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization (the "fiscal sponsor") offers its legal and tax-exempt status and certain administrative benefits to another group so that it can receive grants and tax-deductible contributions. Through fiscal sponsorship, your chapter becomes an integrated part of the Coalition, with no separate legal identity. This helps your chapter to open a joint bank account with Young Farmers, enabling your chapter to receive donations and grants. Young Farmers is now offering fiscal sponsorship to our chapters on a yearly application basis.

When Does It Make Sense For Your Chapter to Become Fiscally Sponsored?

Fiscal sponsorship is recommended for chapters that are ready to raise their own funds, but may not be ready to obtain their own non-profit status. Is your chapter raising money at events? Are you receiving donations from community members, other organizations or local businesses? Is your chapter interested in fundraising to hire a part-time staff member? Are you applying for grants? If you've answered yes to any of these questions, get in touch with the national chapter coordinator about the potential for fiscal sponsorship. If you would prefer to find a local fiscal sponsor, any 501(c)(3) can serve as your fiscal sponsor. Your fiscal sponsor will take a percentage of your revenue in exchange for banking services and handling your chapter's taxes.

Grants

Applying for a grant takes time, but if the application is successful, that time will be paid for. Grants are available from governmental and non-governmental sources, such as the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) and Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE), Farm Aid, Patagonia, and Ben & Jerry's. Many statewide organizations offer grants as well. You can look for grants using the Foundation Center Online—many public libraries have this program on their computers for you to use for free. If you see a foundation that looks like a good fit, send them an LOI, or Letter of Interest.

This is a one-pager that outlines who your chapter is and why your project is aligned with the foundation's interest. If the foundation is interested, they will invite you to submit a full proposal. If you know someone connected to the foundation it is useful to ask for an introduction.

Sponsorship

Consider local and regional companies that interact with the farm community as potential sponsors for your chapter or a particular event. These could be agricultural supply stores, breweries, the local Farm Credit agency, or organic seed companies. Businesses are often happy to sponsor an event in exchange for their logo in the event flier and/or for a few minutes at the mic. We can walk you through the sponsorship process and offer support in initial outreach.

Individual Donations

Individuals in your community may be looking for ways to support their local food system, and donating money to a local chapter is a great way to do that. Utilize your existing networks to reach out to community members who may be interested in donating. Place a donation jar at each of your public events as a way to receive smaller donations. Fundraising events are a great way to meet individuals interested in contributing to your chapter. Be sure to follow up with attendees—many larger donations are gained when you sit down with someone one-on-one.

Merchandise Wholesaling

The Coalition offers chapters the opportunity to purchase Young Farmers merchandise (e.g. hats, t-shirts, tote bags) at wholesale prices to sell at chapter events. The chapter then keeps the profit. Get in touch with the national chapter coordinator if your chapter is interested in purchasing merch at wholesale. You can also create merchandise of your own to sell!





ADVOCACY



Take Action

National Young Farmers Coalition Advocacy Guide: <http://bit.ly/2FlkvU6>

Chapters are platforms for making young farmer voices heard at the local, state, and national level. In fact, the Coalition owes most of its state and national policy wins to outspoken chapter leaders organizing at the grassroots level in their communities. On the local and state level, chapters are running bills and winning change. At the federal level, they are playing a critical role in changing policy by building strong relationships with their Members of Congress and asking for support in the farm bill and beyond.

The Coalition got started because we knew that young farmer voices were not being adequately heard in Washington, D.C. and we wanted a seat at the table. As the next generation of farmers and ranchers, we have an important stake in farm policy as decisions made today will impact our operations for decades to come. As young entrepreneurs in rural (and urban!) districts, we are an important constituency and have the power to share our stories and ask for support.

You and your chapter members are the voice of young farmers in your region, and it is essential that your voice is heard at both the Statehouse and in Washington. As chapter leaders and Coalition members, you have the opportunity to increase land and water access, address land affordability, work to ease the financial burden of student loans, protect natural resources and more.

We've seen it again and again, when elected officials hear the stories of young farmers in their districts, they are motivated to help them overcome the challenges they face. They learn about their farms, they understand the challenges they face, and they work to make changes in farm policy. The result is legislation that directs public resources to programs that invest in the next generation of farmers and the future of food in our communities.

No matter the current political landscape, it is the duty of your representatives to listen to and serve their constituents (that's you!). That means it is essential that your legislators are aware of your needs. Our most powerful tool is our collective voice.

HERE ARE A FEW EXAMPLES OF HOW OUR CHAPTERS HAVE ENGAGED POLITICALLY:

In 2013, chapters **hosted letter-writing parties** across the country to tell the FDA how the new food safety regulations would impact their operations. The FDA listened, and many provisions were changed in the final rules.

In the lead up to the 2014 and 2018 Farm Bills, Coalition chapters **hosted Young Farmer Roundtables** across the country, inviting their Members of Congress to visit a farm in-district and hear from young farmers about the challenges they face and needed changes in the farm bill.

Colorado chapters worked together to **pass a state agricultural workforce bill** that offers financial support to farmers to hire apprentices.

The Central Minnesota Young Farmers Coalition **passed a historic tax bill** that incentivizes landowners to rent or sell to beginning farmers. The chapter testified before the committee, mobilized phone calls and emails, and worked with partner organizations to ensure final passage.

The Washington Young Farmers Coalition wrote letters, made calls, and **testified in support of a bill** to increase farmer mental health services in Washington State. That win on the state level reverberated to the federal level where support for farmer mental health services were included in the 2018 farm bill.



What Is Advocacy?

Advocacy is the act or process of supporting a cause or proposal. It can be done by individuals or groups, and the ultimate goal is to influence a decision. Effective advocacy happens when you can share your personal story and connect it to the larger context. It's the job of our elected officials to represent us, but it's OUR job to convey to them our needs. They will never make the changes we want if we don't ask for them. **Here is a tried and true process for effective advocacy:**

1. Have An Ask

The first step in successful advocacy is identifying the changes you want to see and having a clear and concise ask. Whether you are advocating at the local, state, or national level, the decision maker is likely a very busy person running a complex organization. To figure out your ask, sit down with your chapter and identify the problem that needs solving. Then, brainstorm potential solutions. There are likely to be many solutions, so pick the one that seems the most attainable and politically feasible.

2. Choose the Right Audience

When thinking about who to direct your advocacy towards, there are two main groups you want to consider. The first and most important are the people who have the power to give you what you want, the 'deciders.' In politics, that person is typically your elected official. It could also be representatives who are on the right committee, or the chair or speaker of the House. If your chapter is working to make a change at an institution, the deciders are likely the president or members of the board.

The second group are the 'influencers,' or the people who your decider listens to. In the case of your Representative, influencers could be major donors, heads of organizations in their district, state representatives, etc. If you're having trouble making progress with your rep., try to bring the influencers on to your side. For example, reach out to members of your county Farm Bureau to earn their support. If they support your proposal, your Representative is more likely to take you seriously.

**Note: If your Member of Congress is not on the agriculture committee, there is still a lot they can do to help you. You'll have the most luck working with the Member that represents you. They can work with their colleagues on the committee to help address your challenges.*

3. Make Your Ask Memorable

Human brains are wired to remember stories. For most of human history, stories were the main way to pass along knowledge. As a result, our brains are set up to not just hear or listen to stories, but to experience them along with the storyteller.

Common Challenges

You don't need to start from scratch. If you're working with a common young farmer challenge, check out the Young Farmers policy platform for state and federal policy solutions (<https://www.youngfarmers.org/policy-change/>). Here are a few ideas of policy changes you can push forward at the state level:

- Grant opportunities for beginning farmers
- Affordable health care for small businesses
- Student loan forgiveness for working farmers
- State farmland protection dollars fund the "Option to Purchase at Agricultural Value" in conservation easements to ensure farmland stays affordable and in the hands of working farmers
- Tax incentives for landowners who lease or sell to beginning farmers
- Funding for farmer mental health services

When given only data, your audience is more likely to mold that information to fit their beliefs than allow it to change their minds. But when you combine facts and values in a narrative, you're more likely to change public opinion and policy. Ideally, this story will be personal. Connect your individual story with a piece of data about the bigger picture.

Showing strength in numbers can also make your point stick. The Southern Maine Young Farmers Coalition brought a poster-sized letter from its members to their meeting with Senator Susan Collins to ask her to support beginning farmer training programs in the farm bill. A few days later, she co-sponsored a farm bill marker bill to do just that.

4. Be Assertive But Respectful

Your first meetings are the beginning of a longer relationship with your representatives and their staff. You want them to come away from the meeting willing to work with you more closely—be assertive, but always be respectful. You can think of this lobby visit like a first date—clearly communicate your interests, but know that it's important to get to a place of trust before anything big happens.

5. Turn Up the Volume on Your Ask

If your chapter is the only group asking for this particular change, it's easier for your representatives to ignore your ask. That's why coalitions and partnerships are so important—they convey that your issue impacts the agricultural community at large and that everyone has a stake in the outcome. These partnerships are not earned overnight but your efforts to build coalitions will certainly pay off. Identify a few of the big players in your district and start with those who share the most common ground. Call them up and start talking!

Another way to turn up the volume is to get active in the media and on social media. If your issue keeps coming up in the press and online, they won't be able to ignore you.

Often policy change that happens on the local or state level can serve as model legislation for federal policy. If you're successful in getting something passed in your state, or have a compelling campaign, share what you're learned with other chapters. If there

is momentum to address farmer student loan debt in several states, for example, it will be easier to make the case for change at the federal level.

6. Follow Up

You've just had an amazing meeting with your Representative. It's easy to pat yourself on the back and start planning your next action. But following up is probably the most important part of successful advocacy. Send a thank you note or at least an email to the staff you met with. Make sure to answer any questions they had that you needed more time to answer. Send along any follow up materials or one-pagers. If any partner organizations joined you, make sure to thank them and ask if there's anything they need help with.

Policy change doesn't happen quickly. Sometimes campaigns can take years to win. But when you win, it's going to be because you were persistent and always followed up.

Farmers Casey Holland and Ron Williams at June 2017 D.C. fly-in.



Communicating With Your Elected Officials

Tell Your Story

Politicians want (and need) stories from their constituents to share at the Capitol. Personal narratives are tools for them to push legislation through because they paint a picture beyond the (often confusing) bill language. When you share your personal story with your representatives, you are providing them a resource to cite when they are advocating for or against a bill. A personal narrative on how a law impacts a real person is one of the most powerful tools in advocacy work.

In 2014, members of the Hudson Valley Young Farmers Coalition met with Congressman Sean Patrick Maloney (NY-17) to talk about the issue of student loan debt. One of the members told her story about her debt burden and the implications for her farm career. Her delivery was so passionate and honest that it made a real impact on the Congressman. He became a champion for this issue in Congress and regularly shares the farmer's story to illustrate the barrier.

Be Concise, Be Respectful

Whether you are communicating in person, by phone, or in writing, clearly state who you are, what issue (or bill) you are commenting on, and how it affects you. Keep it short and sweet. Your rep (or a staffer) will follow up for more information if they need it. People who work in government are immensely busy. Their daily schedule pivots based on what is at the top of the political agenda and what the media is covering. In your communication, be understanding of this!

Focus on Building a Relationship

Take any opportunity to see, meet, or get in front of your rep. This could be a Town Hall meeting, an in-district meeting when your rep is back in home turf, an issue-based listening session organized by your chapter, or a legislative meet and greet at the Capitol. Attend meetings held by your representatives. Most often it is the same people who show up to these meetings over and over. You could have a real opportunity to shake things up, take the floor and be heard.

Calling Is a Highly Effective Strategy

With email as ubiquitous as it is these days, we need other strategies to cut through the noise. Congressional staffers agree that aside from in-person meetings, phone calls are the best way to get your point across on the Hill. Strength lies in numbers. Mobilize your chapter members to make calls at key moments—remind them that an intern or voice mail system will likely answer their call and that it only takes a minute or two.

Reach Out to Your Representative In-state or In-district

Whether it is working with Young Farmers to coordinate an in-district meeting with your representative or building relationships with their home office staff, communicating your message on your rep's home turf gives you a chance to break through the clutter and noise of Washington. It's easier to build relationships with district staff because they live in-district and likely focus on constituent relations. Get to know them, keep meeting, and they'll start coming to you for advice on young farmer issues.

“THAT’S SOMETHING I WANT OUR SENATORS AND REPRESENTATIVES TO KNOW—THAT YOUNG PEOPLE WANT TO DO THIS AND THERE’S A LOT OF OBSTACLES AND BARRIERS TO DO SO AND WE NEED THEIR HELP.”

**—Jocelyn Story,
Flatirons Young Farmers Coalition**

TOP: Young Farmers at 2nd Annual National Leadership Convergence in Encinitas, California, 2016.
BOTTOM: Farmers working at Abundant Table farm in California. Photo by Stella Kalinina.



RACIAL JUSTICE



Racial Inequity in the Food System

The National Young Farmers Coalition's Racial Equity Statement:

<http://www.youngfarmers.org/equity/>.

Thank you to Sara Black, Tess Brown-Lavoie, and Michelle Hughes for their contributions to this section.

The National Young Farmers Coalition is a national organization that holds space for many different kinds of farmers and farm operations: urban and rural, large and small-scale, with identities that cross or blur lines of race, class, and gender difference. Our community includes recent immigrants and indigenous farmers, multi-generational farmers, and farmers looking to re-establish a connection to the land. Difference and diversity do exist among young farmers, but from the founding of the Coalition, our membership has not been a full reflection of this diversity. Thanks to the leadership of many farmers and thinkers of color, we have been called to ask: what will Young Farmers contribute to the movements for racial justice at work today? As an organization we are committed to actively confronting racial inequity in the food system and invite our chapters to join us in this journey.

In this section, we offer some thoughts and resources for reckoning with white supremacy and working towards racial justice as farmers and organizers. Links to additional resources are available towards the end of this section.

The Small Farm Movement: An Incomplete Narrative

There is a long and vital history of black, indigenous, and people of color-led food justice organizing in the U.S. and around the world. However, narratives of the alternative food movement have largely relegated people of color to marginal, passive

roles in the story (hungry, poor, disempowered workers who are 'disconnected' from their food). This dynamic underwrites an entire system of values: judgments about what counts as good food, what counts as successful organizing, what is "effective" changemaking, what are viable solutions, and what compromises are acceptable (see work by Margaret Marietta Ramírez, Julie Guthman, Alison Alkon, Krisen Reynolds, and more in our resource list). Building a just food system requires us to question these frameworks. Racial justice is not simple inclusion of diversity, but rather for a shift in power and values informed and led by people who have been historically marginalized from land and power in the U.S. food system.

Our Food System Is Rooted In Stolen Land and Stolen Labor

A just and healthy food system for all people will not be possible if we don't reckon with legacies of harm to people of color in the U.S.—forced migration, enslavement, and centuries of violent intimidation, disenfranchisement, and discrimination. For Indigenous people, land loss has been constant since European settlers came to this continent. In African-American communities, legacies of sharecropping and tenant farming prevented many farmers from building equity in land after emancipation. For those who did purchase property, discriminatory lending practices and ingrained racism at USDA offices caused significantly higher rates of land loss over the



Farmer Chad Hunter, Georgia.

ensuing century. Japanese-American farmers experienced land loss as a result of forced internment during WWII. Many other communities of farmers have faced similar discrimination, causing land loss or preventing their ability to gain secure access to land at all. Unfortunately, these aspects of our shared history are not solely of the past, but ongoing problems for people in the U.S. and all over the world. The crisis of land loss and displacement in the United States continues to disproportionately impact people of color and Indigenous people.

Land-related policy has played a role in this loss by authorizing the theft of land and prohibiting land ownership. Concurrent barriers to voting, holding office, and participating in legislative systems hindered the ability to change these political conditions. Further contributing to forced land loss is the issue of **heirs' property**—or fractionated land ownership—and partition sales. Heirs' property refers to the vulnerable condition of land ownership in which property is passed between generations without clear title, often due to the absence of a formal will. There are a number of factors that might have resulted in landowners not creating a will, including: lack of access to legal resources; insufficient financial resources to undergo complex estate planning; and differences in cultural values that prioritize verbal, communal transfer of property rather than formal succession to individuals. Without a clear designation of heirs, the state becomes responsible for determining legal ownership of the land at the time of transfer, resulting in land owned "in common" by all the heirs, regardless of whether they live, work, or pay taxes on the land.

Heirs' property land ownership has disproportionately affected African-American communities, but also impacts Indigenous, Hispanic, and rural Appalachian farming communities. Heirs property issues can prevent farmers from accessing loans, grants, and government assistance, as well as complicate infrastructure investments or land management decisions. In addition, heirs' property can make a parcel less marketable for sale or lease, and a single landowner can force a sale of the property. This scenario often results in land being sold for much less than market value, property being broken up into parcels that are too small to be efficient for agricultural use, and/or wealthy buyers acquiring land by taking advantage of the vulnerabilities of farmers affected by heirs' property ownership.

Access to land is the foundation of a just food system. As farmers, activists, and people whose work depends on the land, we have a responsibility to understand the context in which we work and to ensure that narratives of injustice are heard. Understanding the history of land loss and discrimination informs our advocacy as well as our relationship with the land, helping us to shape policies and take action towards building a stronger, more just future for agriculture. In seeking to rectify the injustices of our agricultural

system, we must look to the food and land justice movements which have been formulating small and large-scale solutions since the beginning of colonization. There are some resources for learning more about these movements below.

White Supremacy and Systemic Racism Impact People of Color In Almost Every Aspect of Life

Issues in the food system cannot be siloed from other social issues, because food and land are foundations of life and community. Increasingly, activists, farmers, consumers, and scholars are asserting the clear connection between agriculture and food systems issues, and other articulations of systemic racism, including mass incarceration, gentrification, labor rights, immigration, climate change (for examples, see our recommended readings below). As we organize to lower barriers for entry into agricultural careers, and to increase political and substantive support for farmers, we must also continue to raise our awareness of the ways these issues intersect with systemic racism and injustice. Solidarity movements such as the **Poor People's Campaign** are working to unite people across the country regardless of race or class. Injustice to any particular group of people is a threat to justice for everyone as a whole, and systemic racism negatively affects **all communities**.

Farmers Have Always Been Organizing For Racial Justice

There have ALWAYS been farmers organizing for racial, economic, gender, land, and climate justice in the United States and around the world. Farmers of color have been leaders in farm labor and immigrant rights movements, pioneers in cooperative economics and community land trust development, and instrumental in the fight for black enfranchisement in the deep south, the sustainable agriculture movement, water conservation efforts in the arid west, urban agriculture practice and innovation, and the fight against food apartheid.

Contemporary organizers have the opportunity to both learn from these historical movements and support the inheritors of this work, the folks who continue to develop racial justice strategies and practices today.

A question for you might be: what stake do farmers—especially farmers who don't feel directly harmed by white supremacy—have in movements for racial justice? How can farmers show up for racial justice broadly?

Read more about heirs' property:

<https://www.thenation.com/article/african-americans-have-lost-acres/>
<https://www.uniformlaws.org/HigherLogic/System/DownloadDocumentFile.ashx?DocumentFileKey=a71c418b-c240-a2d6-631a-c4de1d60ec13&forceDialog=0>
https://www.landloss.org/docs/1/Ten_Ways_to_Save_Your_Land_2011.pdf
https://www.fsa.usda.gov/Internet/FSA_File/whatyouneedtoknowheirproperty.pdf
Listen to the Young Farmers Podcast episode on Black Southern Cooperatives and heir property: <https://youngfarmers.simplecast.fm/corneliusblanding>
Center for Heirs' Property: <https://www.heirsproperty.org/>

The Future of Young Farmers' Racial Justice Work

The Coalition continues to pursue racial equity in our work in the following ways:

Developing Our Racial Equity Lens As We Build Our Programs and Policy Platforms

We will continue to conduct anti-racism trainings with our board, staff, and chapter leaders to develop our capacity to examine young and beginning farmer issues with an awareness of structural racism. We will build our capacity to address agricultural and related justice issues and events with greater understanding of the legacies of land dispossession, slavery, and other racist policies that touch our work. We are building partnerships with organizations led by people of color and indigenous peoples to ensure that the needs of farmers identifying as part of these historically marginalized groups are reflected in our policy platforms. Our program development and policy recommendations will increasingly reflect this internal and external work.

Working For Federal Policy That Supports Young Farmers of Color and Indigenous Farmers

The Coalition is supporting POC-led efforts to: 1) Increase funding to USDA programs that address historic discrimination and disproportionate rates of land loss among farmers of color and indigenous farmers; 2) Support first-time landowners including cooperatively-owned entities, and that address heir property issues—the leading cause of involuntary land loss by black farmers and; 3) Improve oversight of federal programs that address historic and current racial disparities in agriculture by requiring collection and public release of demographic data.

Providing Support to Our Chapters to Address Issues of Structural Racism In Their Local and Regional Communities

Our staff will develop resources to support our members in hosting and participating in local anti-racism trainings and facilitating conversations about the current and historical intersections of racism and agriculture through history and in contemporary contexts. Our understanding of racial equity in agricultural contexts will be informed by local work on these issues with our chapters.

How Your Chapter Can Incorporate Racial Equity Into Its Work:

Agriculture-related racism manifests differently in different places and therefore there is no single template for organizing towards equity. Local histories and current political and geographical landscapes inform the shape of this work and individual chapters' involvement. Still, we hope to learn from our chapters about what forms of organizing and bridge building have worked in one place that might be applicable elsewhere.

Examples of equity-related organizing from our chapters include:

- Study-groups that read and discuss history, current events, and local circumstances;
- Anti-racism trainings with external facilitators;
- Collective research to unearth obscured histories of the land farmed by chapter members;
- Initiating collaboration with local POC-led partners through substantive support: including labor, food donations, and donations of space;
- Ensuring that all farmers and farmworkers are invited and made to feel welcomed at events and gatherings, including through providing multi-lingual programming and communications..

Young Farmers helps to coordinate between chapters, and has also collected resources that our chapters can use in their organizing. These resources include a forthcoming Racial Equity Toolkit, which will provide structure (e.g. a sample agenda and a sample reading list) for convening conversations about racial equity.

We also hope to provide our members with:

- Resources on dealing with conflict and conflict resolution;
- Collaborative space to share best practices on organizing on racial equity;
- A list of referrals to anti-racism trainers who can be contacted and hired to facilitate a more formal local training.

Sources and Resources

It is not possible to make a prescriptive anti-racism agenda for any one person, because your own identity and your local context matters deeply to this work. But to quote Southerners on New Ground (cited below), “We believe in approaching this work, our conditioned selves, and our inevitable mistakes, with a combination of chutzpah and humility.” Below are some resources we recommend for thinking through these questions of race, land, food, and justice in the past, present, and future.

BOOKS:

Land Justice: Re-imagining Land, Food, and the Commons in the United States edited by J.M. Williams and Eric Holt-Giménez (2017)

Farming While Black: Soul Fire Farm’s Practical Guide to Liberation on the Land by Leah Penniman (2018)

The Color of Food: Stories of Race, Resilience, and Farming by Natasha Bowens (2015)

Cultivating Food Justice: Race, Class, and Sustainability edited by Allison Hope Alkon and Julian Agyeman (2011)

Food Justice by Robert Gottlieb and Anupama Joshi (2013)

Beyond the Kale: Urban Agriculture and Social Justice Activism in New York City by Kristen Reynolds (2016)

ESSAYS:

“Agrarian Questions and the Struggle for Land Justice in the United States” by Eric Holt-Giménez in *Land Justice* (2017). <https://foodfirst.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/HoltGimenezIntro.pdf>

“4 Not so Easy Ways to Dismantle Racism in the Food System” by Leah Penniman in *Yes! Magazine* (2017). <http://www.yesmagazine.org/people-power/4-not-so-easy-ways-to-dismantle-racism-in-the-food-system-20170427>

“The Elusive Inclusive: Black Food Geographies and Racialized Food Spaces” by Margaret Marietta Ramírez in *Antipode* (2014). <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/anti.12131>

“Food-Systems-Racism: From Mistreatment to Transformation” by Eric Holt-Giménez and Breeze Harper in *Dismantling Racism in the Food System* by Food First (2016). <https://foodfirst.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/DR1Final.pdf>

“If They Only Knew’: Color Blindness and Universalism in California Alternative Food Institutions” by Julie Guthman in *The Professional Geographer* (2007). https://www.ssc.wisc.edu/~wright/Sociology%20929-assignments-2010_files/iftheyonlynewcolorblindfood.pdf

“Disparity Despite Diversity: Social (In)justice in New York City’s Urban Agriculture System” by Kristen Reynolds in *Antipode* (2016). <https://nycfoodpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Reynolds-2014-Disparity-Despite-Diversity-Antipode-vol-47-no-1.pdf>

“Decolonization is not a Metaphor” by Eve Tuck and K.W. Yang in *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education, & Society* (2012). <https://www.latrobe.edu.au/staff-profiles/data/docs/fjcollins.pdf>

“There is Honor in Struggle, There is Honor in the Work: SONG on the Role of White People in the Movement at this Time” via *Southerners on New Ground* (2015). <http://southernersonnewground.org/2015/03/white-people-movement-role/>

FARMS AND ORGANIZATIONS:

This is not an exhaustive list by any means, but we recommend checking out these organizations that have shaped Young Farmers’ thinking on confronting racism within our own work and in the food and farming system at large.

Soul Fire Farm <http://www.soulfirefarm.org/>

Wildseed Community Farm <http://www.wildseedcommunity.org/>

Rise & Root Farm <http://www.riseandrootfarm.com/>

H.E.A.L Food Alliance <http://healfoodalliance.org/>

Real Food Challenge <https://www.realfoodchallenge.org/>

Black Urban Growers <https://www.blackurbangrowers.org/>

Why Hunger? <https://whyhunger.org/>

Food First <https://foodfirst.org/>

La Via Campesina <https://viacampesina.org/en/>

U.S. Food Sovereignty Alliance

<http://usfoodsovereigntyalliance.org/what-is-food-sovereignty/>

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TOP: Washington Young Farmers Coalition chapter members and founders of City Grown Seattle urban farm.
BOTTOM: Young Farmers Coalition of Southeastern PA, 2018.



CHAPTER CASE STUDIES



Case Study

State Policy:

Central Minnesota Young Farmers Coalition

Thank you to Eric Sannerud and Matthew Fitzgerald of the Central Minnesota Young Farmers Coalition for sharing their experience with passing a bill on the state level.

Leaders of the Central Minnesota Young Farmers Coalition knew they wanted to change state policy from the very beginning. Early on, the chapter identified an opportunity to change Minnesota's tax policy to help young farmers access farmland. Through on-the-ground organizing work, the chapter won champions in the State House and built a coalition of supporters for the Minnesota Beginning Farmer Tax Credit.

Their policy work was not without its challenges, however. Coordinating efforts with other organizations advocating for similar change was difficult, and keeping up to date on the legislative process and the bill's progress was challenging, especially once the farming season began.

All of their hard work paid off! The Minnesota Beginning Farmer Tax Credit is now the first of its kind in the country to incentivize the sale and rental of farmland to the next generation of farmers and has ignited conversations in other states and at the federal level about how tax reform can enable young farmers to get on affordable land.

The CMYFC firmly believes that beginning farmers are the best people to advocate for beginning farmers, and that we must lead on our own issues while understanding our limits. Leaning on coalition partners or pro-bono lobbyists to support policy priorities during the farm season is a good tactic. Generally speaking, beginning farmer issues are non-partisan and there are plenty of low-hanging policies to start with. We take the long view, building small wins now to grow our power towards more difficult priorities in the future.



The process of passing a bill is often non-linear and requires dedication. Here are some general steps to follow:

- 1. Identify Your Campaign:** Identify an issue, ideally where there is already some energy or movement towards finding a solution. How can your chapter help address this problem? Can you add a key young farmer voice to the campaign? Can you tweak an existing policy or do you have to start from scratch?
- 2. Don't Go It Alone:** Keep in mind that nothing gets passed by one person or one group (unless you have oodles of money), so you will likely need support from other groups to help move your campaign forward. It is helpful to start with organizations that your chapter members are already involved with.
- 3. Find a Champion:** Your champion is the elected official who will help you turn your idea into a piece of legislation, introduce your bill, and help recruit his or her colleagues to support it. When looking for a legislative champion, make a "top 5" list of legislators you think are the most likely to support your cause and go to bat for it. This is where having existing relationships is very helpful. If you don't have existing relationships, start with your representatives or members of relevant committees.
- 4. Active Lobbying:** Show your farmer support for the bill! This includes testifying in committee, meeting with members of important committees, and garnering public support through social media and talking to the press.
- 5. Voting and Passage:** You don't have much to do here, except for celebrating if the bill passes, or going back to a previous phase and trying again if it doesn't!

LEFT: Central Minnesota Young Farmers Coalition at MOSES conference, 2018.

Case Study

Justice and Agriculture Working Group: SE New England Young Farmer Network

Thank you to Tess Brown-Lavoie of the SE New England Young Farmer Network for sharing her chapter's experience working towards racial justice.

The Justice and Agriculture Working Group is made up of farmers and collaborators who organize towards food justice in our region. We study lineages of stewardship on this land, as well as ongoing histories of colonization and slavery here, which are the roots of present-day injustices in the food system. As land stewards we must share these understandings, make them visible, and work towards reparation and liberation. We activate the land, food, and members of the local farming community to support anti-racist work led by indigenous peoples and people of color.

The Young Farmer Network of Southeastern New England started engaging explicitly in issues of racial equity in the winter of 2015. Since then our work has taken several forms: we have convened a monthly **Justice and Agriculture Working Group**, partnered with Brown University on a research project about the history of Rhode Island farmland (the Census of Dispossession), and conducted a formal anti-racism training with Leah Penniman of **Soul Fire Farm**. We have also organized a resource distribution network: a list of farmers who provide food and space donations to movement building organizations in our area. When an organization reaches out to the group to solicit donations for an event, we coordinate donations among member farms, and make sure the event is provisioned with local food. Farmers from our group also volunteer in the garden at the Tomaquag Museum—a local museum of indigenous history which asked for support in building their soil and growing native crops in their garden.

The study group has been useful in building shared vocabularies that can be used to talk about structural oppression and racism in our community and in the history of our land and institutions. We read together about racism and resilience, and talk about actions and partnerships we can pursue to address these issues. Through the working group and coalition building that we did leading up to and following the anti-racism training, we have built a foundation for a community of anti-racist farmers that can respond to requests from activists and organizational partners to support their work. We have donated food and flowers to actions and events, and have participated in dialogues about land, food, and justice.

The challenges of this work include that we are seasonal workers, with more time and energy to organize around racial equity in the off-season. Our growing season meetings are sparsely attended, and our follow through on projects slows down during peak season. Our group is also still relatively racially homogeneous. We partner with POC-led organizations for various projects and food donation efforts, but we rarely have many of the farmers of color in our community in attendance at our meetings (the anti-racism training was an exception). We don't necessarily think more POC farmers should come to our meetings; perhaps this is a space mostly for white people to build consciousness and frameworks for accountability, and scheme about resource aggregation without burdening people of color with more organizing work. Still, we prioritize building trust with POC-led groups, and demonstrate our enduring commitment to partner on issues of racial equity.

Moving forward, we hope to continue to populate the Census of Dispossession—building a case for land reparations by unearthing the violent histories of land and labor in our region's agriculture. We will also continue to study texts in our group, organize educational events to raise consciousness in our greater community, and share what we learn with other farmers locally, at regional farmer meetings, and through the the Coalition's chapter network. Finally, and most importantly, we will continue to build relationships with activists and organizations that have decades of experience and institutional knowledge about anti-racist efforts in our city and state. We have found that humility and generosity are crucially important in entering partnerships with long-standing justice organizations. Through these partnerships, we can leverage the resources we have on our farms and in our communities towards existing movement work.

“...WE HAVE BUILT A FOUNDATION FOR A COMMUNITY OF ANTI-RACIST FARMERS THAT CAN RESPOND TO REQUESTS FROM ACTIVISTS AND ORGANIZATIONAL PARTNERS TO SUPPORT THEIR WORK.”

Case Study

Hiring a Chapter Coordinator: Washington Young Farmers Coalition

Thank you to Becky Warner, Chandler Briggs, Tierney Creech and Brian Estes of the Washington Young Farmers Coalition for sharing their experience with hiring a chapter coordinator.

The Washington Young Farmers Coalition has been organizing since 2010, making it the Coalition's longest standing chapter. We are a tight-knit group of farmers and friends, and had several very successful years of organizing and event planning before we hired a paid chapter coordinator. But, by 2015 we had hit a point of serious leadership burnout. Most of our core organizing team had moved on from apprenticing to starting their own farm businesses that year, and we just didn't have the time or energy to organize as a chapter, let alone plan our big annual mixer. One of our chapter leaders attended the National Leadership Convergence that fall, and came home re-energized to organize, with one condition—that the chapter hire a part-time coordinator. The rest of us agreed this was the solution needed for us to continue as a chapter.

Our next step was finding and securing a source of funding to pay the coordinator's salary. One of our chapter leaders had an existing relationship with a local foundation that we thought might be a good fit, so we wrote a proposal

requesting funding for one year of a coordinator at 5-10 hours a week (about \$5,000). The foundation accepted our proposal, and we then formed a Hiring Committee to create a job description, spread the word, and review candidates.

Creating the chapter coordinator position has helped our chapter continue to be active, plan our annual mixer, and expand the scope of our capacity and chapter work. Having a coordinator does not mean that the rest of the organizing team can step down; rather we have a paid person to answer emails, organize meetings, and coordinate event planning logistics which lightens the load and allows us to work on other projects such as policy. It is critical that the other leaders stay involved to ensure the chapter continues to be democratically run.

BELOW: Members of the Washington Young Farmers Coalition at the Washington Farmer Mental Health bill signing, 2017.



Case Study

Meeting with Representatives: *Four Corners Farmers and Ranchers Coalition*

Thank you to Mike Nolan of the Four Corners Farmers and Ranchers Coalition for contributing this piece and sharing his chapter's experiences of meeting with representatives.

When it comes to meeting with elected officials, from town councils to state senators, our chapter has been lucky to have had positive and productive experiences. We approach the meetings differently depending on the issue and/or person, but there are some rules we follow. First, do your research! Look at your representative's voting history, Facebook profile, and personal anecdotes. Find something that you can thank them for or congratulate them on. You may or may not align with them politically, but in order to work together a rapport must be built. Second, dress nicely, use firm handshakes and make eye contact. It may sound silly, but it helps! Put on some flare from your region or something to represent where you are from. Third, have a story to tell. One of the most important things to marketing a farm is your narrative; this is also the best way to ensure a legislator will remember you. Make it short, sweet and unique and perhaps your legislator will use your story to fight for a policy! Finally, follow up: even if the meeting didn't go as well as you hoped, make sure you email them and say thank you for their time.

Sometimes the mere purpose of meeting is not to convince your reps to support a policy/bill/issue, but to introduce yourselves so they know who you are, where you are from, and what you are passionate about. Meetings can be rough—you may not be listened to, and instead told what to do rather than be asked what you need. This can be very challenging, but never compromise the relationship because of one bad meeting. Remember, they are public servants and will not always be in office! So breathe, smile, and move on to your next meeting.



Coalition staff and farmers at the Western D.C. fly-in, 2017.



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



Chicago Activism Toolkits

<http://chicagoactivism.org/toolkits/>

Community Catalyst Grassroots Organizing Toolkit PDF

<https://www.communitycatalyst.org/resources/publications/document/2017/ItsAllAboutTheBase-Report-FINAL.pdf>

Organizing for Power, Organizing for Change Conflict Resolution, Facilitation, Campaign Planning, Fundraising

<https://organizingforpower.org/organizing-resources/>

Power Mapping

<https://beautifulrising.org/tool/power-mapping>

Racial Equity Tools, Racial Equity Library

<https://www.racialequitytools.org/home>

Robert's Rules

<https://robertsrules.org>

Safe Space and Ground Rules

<https://www.bsc.coop/index.php/fall-waiting-list-guide/10-members-resources/128-health-safety-safe-spaces>

https://www.glsen.org/sites/default/files/guidelines_discussion.pdf