



## **Spring Forum: Supporting Farms & Farmworkers Table Discussion Report Out**

April 7, 2019, 3 pm–6 pm  
Mohonk Mountain House Parlor

What follows are some thoughts articulated or jotted down during the breakout session of our forum regarding concrete ways the Hudson Valley can better acknowledge and support the community of farmers and farmworkers who grow our food.

Barriers exist to farmworkers organizing. Many are undocumented, work long hours, and lack communication options. They don't have the time or means to organize, and it is very risky for many of them to try. Therefore, it is important for people outside the farmworker community to be made aware of the workers' issues, organize on their behalf, and take these concerns to Albany.

### **Welcoming and Celebrating Our Farming Community**

In order to foster a community of respect between workers, owners/producers and consumers:

- Special events bringing together and embracing all members, ensure the visibility of workers through Bienvenido festivals, family farm festivals, New Paltz Apple Festival, and focused events at county fairs and festivals
- Consult farmworkers as resources for educational programs at community colleges.
- Create opportunities for workers participate in bilingual educational programs so they can learn more about food and the food supply systems in the Hudson Valley.

Provide better housing for workers by creating a "Habitat for Humanity" type program. Work with local planning boards and building departments to help avoid or lower regulatory barriers. Are there possibilities for mobile housing for those who must relocate?

Language justice: call for more multilingual resources, including signage throughout the community, printed information, and food labeling.

Spread the word about [AgHelp](#), an online/mobile resource for farmers and farmworkers.

[UlsterCorps](#) is a good local resource for volunteers wishing to support the farming community. See volunteer opportunities and check the event calendar regularly.

Start a show on Radio Kingston devoted to local agriculture.

Support the rights of immigrants; encourage efforts of farmers to advocate for workers to remain in the U.S. and recognizes the contributions of this critical, skilled labor force.

## **Supporting the Economy of the Farm Community**

Americans have developed the expectation that food should be cheap. We pay a lower portion of our incomes on food than other countries of the world. If that culture could be changed, farmers could get a fair price for their produce and there would be less pressure to keep labor costs low.

Increase awareness on labeling of local foods so that we can all support [Farmer's Pledge](#), [non-GMO](#), and [Fair Labor Practices](#).

Purchase of development rights from farmers could help preserve farms. Connecting farmers and aspiring farmers with affordable land will help preserve farmers and farmland:

- New York City-owned watershed land is offered for lease at reasonable rates to farmers. A good opportunity and if not exploited, land could fall out of cultivation.
- Create a matching system to connect farmers who are aging out or want to quit more efficiently with potential farmer-buyers
- Create a program where contributed land could be transferred over a period of time based on labor put into working the land—sweat equity.
- Resource: [Northeast Farm Access](#)

Look for ways to bridge agritourism and support for farmworkers—farm stays, educational farms such as Phillie Bridge, wine trails, u-pick farms, Restaurant Week, Chronogram, [Field Goods](#). How could these entities solicit material support for farmworkers?

Farm-to-table restaurants—how about an app or program that solicits donations for organizations that support local farmworkers?

Crop insurance, perhaps funded through a box on the New York State tax return.

Support year-round farming as a way to help migrant workers stay in place.

Encourage seasonal menu planning at local institutions to support local food production. Celebrate the food service directors who are buying local produce.

Speak out on immigration, support legislative policies that will support farmworkers and farmers.

Include the produce managers from supermarkets such as Shop Rite, Hannaford, and Topps in these discussions. Big grocery stores are an efficient means to reach new customers and

markets for local farmers, but there are inspections needed that require time and money, and sales are influenced by how products are displayed—a responsibility of produce managers.

## **Expanding Transportation Options for Farmworkers**

Public transportation requires more funding and greater range.

Potential alternatives to public transportation for farmworkers and their families:

- Volunteer rideshare
- Possibly a spinoff of [511 Rideshare](#)
- Sponsorship for a *collectivo*—a van for local transport of farmworker families (possibly through above-mentioned collaboration with wine/u-pick trails)?