



October 7, 2021

Commissioner Richard Ball
Diversity and Racial Equity Workgroup
New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets
10B Airline Drive
Albany, NY 12235

Dear Commissioner Richard Ball:

The Northeast Organic Farming Association of New York stands with Black Farmers United NYS in their recent letter to New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets (NYSDAM) Commissioner Richard Ball outlining their experience participating in the NYSDAM Diversity and Racial Equity Workgroup.¹

We understand that the group that sent this letter on April 7, 2021, has not received a reply from the Commissioner, and request, as they have, that such a response is made.

We also support the Black Farmers United NYS request that future work towards addressing inequity in New York State agriculture be guided by:

1. An informed and empowered workgroup;
2. A workgroup that has a clear and transparent decision-making process; and
3. A process that has been agreed upon by the workgroup members.

We also support the proposal that NYSDAM reconvenes and supports this workgroup to develop and employ a group decision-making process and use that decision-making process to:

1. submit advice on the budget allotted for diversity and racial equity;
2. support the leadership for the Office of Diversity & Inclusion within AGM; and
3. ensure continuation and facilitation of this workgroup through democratic processes.

We applaud all groups and participants involved in this process, NYSDAM, the Diversity & Racial Equity Workgroup, and Black Farmers United NYS, for their diligence in beginning important conversations around the significant solutions necessary to end racial inequity in policies of NYS.

Sincerely,

Bethany Wallis,
Executive Director
Northeast Organic Farming Association of New York, Inc.

¹ Response to Diversity and Racial Equity Working Group Report sent to Commissioner Richard Ball on Wednesday April 7, 2021: https://docs.google.com/document/d/1tkrmCdsT-kw9GZRuKoKDIlhLDDNXqkac_tStgUk8otl/edit?usp=sharing