NOFA-NY
NORTHEAST ORGANIC FARMING ASSOCIATION OF NEW YORK

# NOFA-NY Policy Resolutions

Policy resolutions serve as the foundational guide to NOFA-NY's advocacy and policy efforts. All members are called upon each September to submit suggested policy resolutions. Resolutions are drafted by the policy committee and are presented to the Board of Directors for a vote, and then moved forward to a vote by the full membership at the annual membership meeting, typically held each January during NOFA-NY's Winter Conference. A two-thirds majority vote is necessary for passage of a resolution.

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# 2025

## Payment for Ecosystem Services Programs

Whereas the purpose of Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) programs is to increase New York State's capacity to mitigate, adapt to, and weather the effects of climate change by increasing understanding of how we can grow food and regenerate ecosystems;

And whereas, in 2019 New York State passed the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (Climate Act), which requires the state to reduce economy-wide greenhouse gas emissions from 1990 levels by 40% by 2030 and no less than 85% by 2050;

And whereas, to implement this act, the Climate Action Council's Scoping Plan, finalized in late 2022, includes a chapter on agriculture and forestry that, among other strategies, recommends a Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) program for agriculture (AF16) and charges the Department of Agriculture and Markets with finding a funding source and designing a program "that will sustain our natural capital providing ecosystem services of water quality, flood resilience, and climate stability and includes fair compensation for program participants;"

And whereas, the Climate Act recognizes that the burdens of climate change fall more heavily on lower-income residents of the state and requires that at least 35%—with a goal of 40%—of the benefits from the State's investments be directed to the most disadvantaged communities (DACS), which as defined by the Climate Justice Working Group includes many small-scale farmers, farmworkers, and BIPOC farm and food workers;

And whereas, climate justice advocates recognize Indigenous traditional knowledge and local ecological knowledge as central to any long-term strategy for withstanding future shocks, droughts, floods and violent storms resulting from climate change and warn against false solutions, particularly those, such as anaerobic digesters added to manure pits with caps, and unregulated carbon markets, that provide few if any benefits to small farmers practicing regenerative land use methods while enabling large-scale conventional farming operations and the corporations they supply to continue generating fossil fuel emissions by trading carbon offsets. As the Climate Justice Working Group identifies in their 2021 response to the Draft Scoping Plan, there are much more sustainable alternatives to this type of manure storage and handling. We join their call to "fund transformative practices upstream of manure storage and towards practices that smaller producers can adopt."

And whereas, various goals of PES are biodiversity, ecological function, clear water, clean air, species richness, conservation, and farming within nature, we must be careful to not let it lead to (and stop at) what seem to be easily reached goals of carbon sequestration and large scale commodity favoritism. It has been suggested that "small holdings" with their rich diversity can have just as much environmental value as large tracts of land with lesser diversity.

And whereas, a scientific review of over 1000 studies of PES programs found that PES programs can be "hyped as a proposed solution to ecological challenges, often without any credible evidence."

However, the Finger Lakes Payment for Ecosystem Services Plot Program and the Vermont Agency of Agriculture's Payment for Ecosystem Services and Soil Health Working Group report provide detailed examinations of program design possibilities and limitations.

And whereas, PES programs that are initiated and driven by communities or community members in collaboration with farmers or landowners are more successful and longer lasting when compared to programs that are started and funded by outside private interests.

**Therefore, members of NOFA-NY resolve that a Payment for Ecosystem Services program should:**

- **Include opportunities for networking and collective learning that are built on a common understanding and interest in protecting and enhancing ecosystems and supporting farm viability.**
- **Support building relationships among farmers, and between farmers and other community members, and with governmental representatives, and supporting agencies.**
- **Prioritize the participation of socially and economically disadvantaged farmers and small and mid-sized farms and be designed with meaningful input from diverse stakeholders including socially and economically disadvantaged farmers and other groups of farmers who are less engaged in state-run agricultural programs like farmworkers, small farms, and organic farms.**
- **Be set at a geographic scale that ensures shared ecological interests of participants and beneficiaries such as a watershed or local foodshed.**
- **Be regularly evaluated and improved with consistent, transparent, publicly available program reports and ongoing opportunities for feedback and stakeholder engagement.**
- **Include multiple points of entry and incentives to engage in the program including benefits for both experienced agroecological and organic farmers and for beginning farmers or those working to improve depleted soils and habitats.**
- **Provide a pathway for participants to become USDA-certified organic.**
- **Utilize public federal and state climate funding in the initial years of the program and ultimately aim to become self-sustaining.**
- **Engage participating farms in research to deepen our understanding of how farmers, farms, and farming methods contribute to ecological health and community well-being– while published publicly as appropriate, the data collected should be owned by the farmers themselves.**

## Reducing Microplastics and Nanoplastics on Organic Farms

Whereas plastics are used widely in organic production, and plastics degrade into microplastics (fragments of less than 5 millimeters); and nanoplastics (fragments smaller than one micrometer);

And whereas, recent peer-reviewed research has documented the ubiquitousness of micro and nanoplastics in agricultural soils, rivers and streams, irrigation water, tap water, and bottled water as well as human bodies, including in the placentas of unborn babies, the first bowel movement of newborn babies, and people's hearts, brains, and other organs;

And whereas, micro and nano plastics act as carriers of toxic synthetic chemicals, including endocrine disruptors and PFAS;

And whereas, micro and nanoplastics negatively affect the health soil microbial communities and their ecological functions, and microplastics can increase the spread of antibiotic resistance in the environment;

And whereas, soil organisms and plants have been shown to ingest microplastics and when animals consume plants containing microplastics or breathe in microplastics, they may end up in their flesh and organs or be excreted in their milk and manure;

And whereas, these tiny plastic particles persist in the environment for centuries or millennia;

And whereas, the health effects of micro and nanoplastics on the health of humans and other animals are of increasing concern, though this is an emerging research area and most toxicological studies on microplastics are based on animal research and human-derived cells;

And whereas, in the past few decades, the use of plastics in agriculture has become more prevalent; with agricultural plastics used by organic farmers including spun polyester and other row cover materials; insect exclusion netting; plastic trellises; round bale netting and square bale twine; plastic mulch; and silage tarps used to suppress weeds in some no-till systems; cell trays, 6-packs, nursery pots, and other seedling and plant production containers; as well as harvest crates, and product containers and other packaging;

And whereas, agricultural plastics also become a solid waste problem, when they are discarded; and waste incineration (and outdoor burning of plastics, which is prohibited in NYS) produces dioxin and other persistent organic pollutants, which contaminate soil, livestock, and crops, and pose significant environmental health risks; and most agricultural plastics cannot be truly recycled; and "chemical recycling" is a misleading term for a controversial process which generates large amounts of hazardous pollutants, and does not contribute to a circular economy. Landfilling is likely the least harmful option.

And whereas, farmers and handlers can properly dispose of any waste plastics that they generate by removing all agricultural plastics from farm fields after they are used; avoiding stockpiling, burying, or dumping waste plastic from any application on the farm; choosing the least hazardous method for disposing of waste agricultural plastic (currently shown to be landfilling); never burning plastic or allowing it to be taken to a trash incinerator/waste-to-energy facility or a chemical recycling facility which typically subjects waste plastic to pyrolysis, a form of incineration, and is not capable of producing recycled plastic.

**Therefore, the members of NOFA-NY advocate for research into the primary sources of micro and nanoplastics on organic farms, research into practical ways to reduce or eliminate the use of**

**plastics in all aspects of organic production and handling, and improved management and disposal of plastics in organic production to minimize the degradation of these plastics into micro and nanoplastics.**

## Support for Nutrition Programs that Improve Access to Nutrious Food from New York Farms

Whereas, food insecurity is widespread in both urban and rural areas of NYS, especially in households with children. In January 2024, the NYS Department of Health released a report on food insecurity, Self-Reported Food Insecurity Among New York State Adults by County, BRFSS 2021, which shows the counties with the highest rates of food insecurity among adults are the Bronx, Queens, Kings, Herkimer, and Oswego. Food insecurity is characterized by limited or uncertain access to adequate food due to limited economic resources. According to the report, approximately one in four adults (24.9 percent) in New York State experience food insecurity. Within New York State, the percentage of adults who report that they are food insecure varies by county and ranges from 11.2 percent to 39 percent. Adults experiencing food insecurity have a higher probability of several chronic diseases, including hypertension, coronary heart disease, diabetes, stroke, cancer, asthma, arthritis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and kidney disease, the report indicated.

And whereas, the federal nutrition programs within the Farm Bill provide a critical safety net for the 1 in 4 people in New York who experience food insecurity. The reauthorization of these programs by Congress provides an opportunity to improve and strengthen the way they work in New York and ensure all who are in need have equitable access to strong and responsive programs that improve nutrition security and local farm viability.

And whereas, farmers benefit from the produce sales paid for by nutrition programs which bring new low-income customers who seek healthier fresh food to farmers markets and CSAs. Direct sales cut out the middlemen and allow farmers to receive a larger portion of the food dollars. The NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets reports that in 2021, Fresh Connect Checks were issued at 87 market locations and 31 Division of Veterans Services offices in NYS, amounting to $538,478 in revenue for more than 500 farmers' market vendors and farm stand operators.

And whereas, since 2014, Field & Fork Network's Double Up Food Bucks has expanded from WNY to over 230 access points at farmers markets and grocery stores statewide. The program, which matches SNAP benefits dollar for dollar on fresh fruit and vegetable purchases, supports over 550 farms supplying their communities with affordable produce while being fully compensated.

And whereas, the NYS Enacted Budget for the fiscal year 2024 – 2025 included $54.3 million for the Nourish New York program (created during the pandemic to connect New York agricultural products with food banks serving those experiencing food insecurity). These funding levels reflect year-over-year increases of $1.3 million and $4.3 million, respectively.

And whereas, the members of NOFA-NY have previously resolved that the concept of Food Sovereignty (food as a basic human right, agrarian reform, protection of natural resources, domestic

production and consumption of food, ending hunger, social peace, and democratic control), as understood by the world community, is in line with our basic principles and beliefs, and that NOFA-NY will support policy initiatives that promote food sovereignty for disadvantaged communities to ensure nutrition security for all;

**Therefore, the members of NOFA-NY resolve that we strongly support increasing funding for state and federal nutrition programs that provide for the needs of food-insecure people by purchasing food grown by NY family-scale farmers improving food access and supporting food sovereignty in NY communities.**

# 2024

## Address Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) contamination

*This resolution is an update of the 2023 PFAS resolution.*

Whereas, per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are a class of carbon–fluorine bonded man made substances that have been used for decades in a wide range of products, including fire extinguishing foam, water-resistant clothing, grease-resistant food packaging, nonstick cookware, pesticides, and personal care products. Nicknamed "forever chemicals" because of their persistence in the environment, they have also been found in drinking water, dairy products, at industrial sites and military bases, and in soil due to land application of biosolids (the solid material left after municipal wastewater treatment, also known as sewage sludge). A 2015 NY Department of Environmental Conservation survey of publicly owned plants in NY found that the total biosolids generation rate in NY is approximately 375,000 dry tons (dt) annually the majority of which are disposed of in landfills with about 61,000 dts reclaimed for other uses including land application, particularly on farmland as a soil amendment.

And whereas, the municipal waste treatment process concentrates PFAS but there is no statewide requirement for wastewater treatment plants to test for or remove PFAS from effluent prior to discharge into a public waterway or on land. An analysis of 716 tap-water samples revealed that 45% of drinking water samples in the United States contained at least one tested PFAS. Municipalities are disincentivized to reveal the presence of PFAS in the sewage they are treating and therefore could be releasing contaminated water into rivers or surface waters ultimately exposing aquifers and wells used by residents and farmers to contamination.

And whereas, research is ongoing, the Environmental Protection Agency has acknowledged that PFAS exposure (possibly at low levels), including from eating and drinking contaminated materials, is linked to reproductive effects, developmental effects in children, increased risk of some cancers, and immune system impacts.

And whereas, over the past few years, PFAS have emerged as a growing contaminant of concern not only for drinking water nationwide (including in several communities in New York), but also in agriculture. Both milk from cows grazing on contaminated land or consuming contaminated water

and farmland have tested positive for PFAS at high levels. Some organic farms in the state of Maine have discovered PFAS-contaminated soils, most likely due to the application of biosolids decades ago, before the farms were organic.

And whereas biosolids application is not allowed in organic production, legacy pollution from practices used before a farm became organic can still harm organic producers and consumers.

**Therefore, the members of NOFA NY resolve to urge federal and state leaders and agencies to take immediate actions to address the issue of PFAS contamination including:**

- **Prohibiting the spreading of biosolids on any agricultural land.**
- **Prohibiting the addition of PFAS ingredients in pesticides.**
- **Limiting the sale of PFAS-containing products and holding manufacturers accountable for resulting contamination.**
- **Facilitating and funding state-wide testing of soil and groundwater where biosolids have been applied.**
- **Funding research into how PFAS contamination impacts farmland and potential methods for remediation of contaminated farmland.**
- **Establishing a threshold for PFAS contamination in food crops.**
- **Supporting farms impacted by contamination with expenses related to testing, compensating losses in revenue due to contamination, and assisting in navigating future business plans.**
- **Establishing a new disaster assistance program to support farms impacted by contamination.**

## Organic Agriculture is Soil-Based

*Update of 2018 resolution: "No Organic Certification for Hydroponic Crop Production (pg 44)" to incorporate language of the 2023 position statement drafted and adopted by MOFGA Certification Services; NOFA-NY Certified Organic, LLC; OEFFA Certification; OneCert, Inc.; OneCert International Pvt. Ltd.; Real Organic Project; Vermont Organic Farmers LLC in April 2023.*

Whereas, the USDA organic regulations define organic production as, "A production system that is managed in accordance with the Act and regulations in this part to respond to site-specific conditions by integrating cultural, biological, and mechanical practices that foster cycling of resources, promote ecological balance, and conserve biodiversity." 7 CFR 205.2 "Organic production"

And whereas, organic production requires a plan of management that has been agreed to by the producer and the certifying agent and that includes written plans concerning all aspects of agricultural production described in the Act and the regulations.

And whereas, according to the Organic Food Production Act (OFPA) 6513(b)(1), "An organic plan **shall contain provisions designed to foster soil fertility**, primarily through the management of the organic content of the **soil** through proper tillage, crop rotation, and manuring" (emphasis added)

And whereas, support for the idea that organic production is soil-based is found in the USDA's preamble to the regulations published in 2000 which states, "The **soil fertility and crop nutrient management practice standard** in section 205.203 [of the National Organic Program Final Rule] **establishes the universe of allowed materials and practices**" (emphasis added). Hydroponic production was not included in that universe because hydroponic production does not manage soil fertility.

And whereas, § 205.203 Soil fertility and crop nutrient management practice standard. (a) The producer must select and implement tillage and cultivation practices that maintain or improve the physical, chemical, and biological condition of soil and minimize soil erosion. (b) The producer must manage crop nutrients and soil fertility through rotations, cover crops, and the application of plant and animal materials. (c) The producer must manage plant and animal materials to maintain or improve soil organic matter content in a manner that does not contribute to contamination of crops, soil, or water by plant nutrients, pathogenic organisms, heavy metals, or residues of prohibited substances. (emphasis added) 7 CFR 205.203(a-c)

And whereas, the general requirements in the USDA organic regulations also include a requirement that presumes soil as a part of an organic production operation.

And whereas, § 205.200 General. Production practices implemented in accordance with this subpart must maintain or improve the natural resources of the operation, including soil and water quality.

And whereas, § 205.2 Natural resources of the operation. The physical, hydrological, and biological features of a production operation, including soil, water, wetlands, woodlands, and wildlife.

And whereas the National Organic Standards Board reiterated support of organic production as soil-based production in 2010 when it wrote, "Although the regulations do not specifically state 'soil only production', the exclusion of soil from organic production of normally terrestrial, vascular plants violates the intent of the regulations. This intent can be seen in these sections of the rule that require proper stewardship toward improving and maintaining the soil ecology within an organic farming system." The 2010 NOSB recommendation titled, "Production Standards for Terrestrial Plants in Containers and Enclosures," further confirmed that organic production was designed to be a soil-based system when it said**, "Based on its foundation of sound management of soil biology and ecology,** it becomes clear that systems of crop production that eliminate soil from the system, such **as hydroponics or aeroponics,** can not be considered as examples of acceptable organic farming practices. Hydroponics, the production of plants in nutrient-rich solutions or moist inert material, or aeroponics, a variation in which plant roots are suspended in air and continually misted with nutrient solution, have their place in production agriculture, but certainly **cannot be classified as certified organic growing methods due to their exclusion of the soil-plant ecology intrinsic to organic farming systems and USDA/NOP regulations governing them**" (emphasis added). Soil is important to organic systems because the nutrients come from the breakdown of organic matter by organisms in living soil. This is in contrast to nutrients being fed directly to the plant via the continuous introduction of soluble fertilizers that occurs with hydroponic growing methods.

And whereas,  it is clear that the organic regulations and OFPA were designed around the principle that crops would be grown in soil, certain exceptions for the production of planting stock, sprouts, and annual seedlings are specifically mentioned in 7 CFR 205.204 of the regulations in order to allow the production of crops which either a.) receive most of their nutrition from the seed, or b.) will eventually be planted in the soil and grown to maturity.[1] The NOP clearly meant to allow these types of production but without standards specific to these types of production[2], certifiers are unable to consistently implement the rule.

And whereas, the National Organic Program Final Rule states that production practices must maintain or improve natural resources, including soil and water quality (7 CFR 205.200). Furthermore, the Rule makes it clear that a producer must select and implement tillage and cultivation practices that maintain or improve the physical, chemical, and biological condition of soil and minimize soil erosion (7 CFR 205.203). Crop rotation is cited several times in the regulation as a primary method of managing crop nutrients and soil fertility, improving soil organic matter content, managing deficient or excess nutrients, managing crop pests, weeds, and diseases, and introducing biological diversity. Crop rotation cannot fulfill these functions if crops are not grown in soil. The regulations use the word "must" for each of these requirements, indicating that these practices are mandatory. Therefore, if an organic production plan is to comply with the full intent of OFPA and the National Organic Program Final Rule, crops must be grown in soil except with regard to those exceptions mentioned in 7 CFR 205.204.[3]

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[1] Microgreens are somewhere between sprouts and annual seedlings and deserve their own regulations. Fodder, while not mentioned in the regulations for crops, is a subset of sprouts meant as livestock feed that receive their nutrition from the seed. Mushrooms are not plants and deserve their own standards based on the 2001 NOSB recommendation.

[2] "During the 18-month implementation period, the NOP intends to publish for comment certification standards for apiculture, mushrooms, greenhouses and aquatic animals. These standards will build upon the existing final rule and will address only the unique requirements necessary to certify these specialized operations." https://www.federalregister.gov/d/00-32257/p-100

[3] Because there are no regulations for greenhouses the requirement for crop rotation has been interpreted differently in greenhouse situations, but certifiers agree that the function of the crop rotations must be fulfilled.

And whereas soil is defined by the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) as "(i) The unconsolidated mineral or organic material on the immediate surface of the Earth that serves as a natural medium for the growth of land plants. (ii) The unconsolidated mineral or organic matter on the surface of the Earth that has been subjected to and shows effects of genetic and environmental factors of climate (including water and temperature effects), and macro- and microorganisms, conditioned by relief, acting on parent material over a period of time. A product soil differs from the material from which it is derived in many physical, chemical, biological, and morphological properties and characteristics."

And whereas, the proposed organic poultry and livestock standards would define "soil" as "the outermost layer of the earth composed of minerals, water, air, organic matter, fungi, and bacteria in which plants may grow roots."

And whereas, if we view 'soil' in light of these important definitions, and apply these definitions when we review usages of the term 'soil' throughout OFPA and The National Organic Program Final Rule, it becomes clear that a compliant organic production plan must root itself in the outermost layer of Earth where plants are to be grown to maturity in that substance[4].

And whereas, the Organic Food Production Act (OFPA) begins by stating its purposes:

> §6501. Purposes. It is the purpose of this chapter —(1) to establish national standards governing the marketing of certain agricultural products as organically produced products; (2) to assure consumers that organically produced products meet a consistent standard; and (3) to facilitate interstate commerce in fresh and processed food that is organically produced.

And whereas, achieving OFPA's second purpose builds on the first purpose in the list. We can only "assure consumers that organically produced products meet a consistent standard" after such standards are established. Until the USDA publishes the standards it promised in the Preamble to the final rule in 2002, certifiers do not have consistent standards for the certification of beekeeping, fish,

[4] Looking at NOP regulations in the context of the global organic movement, we can see support for the idea that soil based growing methods must be central to organic production. The EU regulations, Soil Association Regulations, and COR regulations all include prohibitions against hydroponics and state that soil-related crop cultivation means producing in living soil or in soil that is mixed and fertilized with materials and products that are allowed in organic production in connection with the subsoil and bedrock.

mushrooms, or greenhouses.[5] It is clear that such operations were intended to be certified, but certifiers have had to develop their own policies in the absence of clear national standards, which is contrary to achieving the first and second purposes of OFPA despite the best intentions of the individual certification agencies. In the meantime, certifiers must enforce the regulations that exist bearing in mind the intent of organic movements worldwide.

**Therefore, the members of NOFA-NY resolve that based on organic agriculture's foundation of sound management of soil biology and ecology, systems of crop production (for crops that naturally grow in soil) that eliminate soil from the system, such as hydroponics or aeroponics, are not acceptable organic farming practices and cannot be classified as certified organic growing methods due to their exclusion of the soil-plant ecology intrinsic to organic farming systems and USDA/NOP regulations governing them.**

## Support for state funding for farmer and farmworker housing

Whereas the majority of the United States has been in a housing crisis for over two decades, made worse by the financial crash of 2008; and

And whereas the housing crisis in upstate New York has been worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic-related exodus of wealthy urbanites to rural and suburban areas, concentrated especially in the Hudson Valley, which has exerted massive upward pressure on rents; and

And whereas low-wage workers across the land- and service-based economies throughout rural regions of New York State are struggling to find affordable housing; and

And whereas the Hudson Valley Farmer Housing Working Group—a cohort of farm owners, managers, workers, and service providers who've convened to take the next steps toward farmer housing solutions—has done research that reveals the detrimental effects the housing crisis is having on the

[5] The 2002 Preamble states, "During the 18-month implementation period, the NOP intends to publish for comment certification standards for apiculture, mushrooms, greenhouses and aquatic animals. These standards will build upon the existing final rule and will address only the unique requirements necessary to certify these specialized operations."

agricultural economy in the region and across New York State, including an exodus of domestic farmworkers from the field and downsizing of farms; and

And whereas the long-standing research of scholars and policymakers with immigrant farm workers (cf. the work of Margaret Gray, Emily Hamilton, et al.) points to ongoing challenges building and maintaining dignified farmworker housing in New York State; and

And whereas these research streams all indicate a strong need for additional farmer/farmworker housing and the technical assistance and funding to support its construction and maintenance; and

And whereas the housing insecurity and unaffordability facing low-wage land-based workers, including farm workers, threatens their ability to continue the important ecological stewardship they perform that has important implications for climate change mitigation, food security, and local and regional economic development, which NOFA-NY has prioritized in other resolutions; now therefore

**Therefore, the members of NOFA-NY resolve that we support:**

- **The development of pilot projects for centralized and on-farm farmworker housing in the Hudson Valley and beyond that can serve as proofs-of-concept for similar developments statewide**
- **The members of NOFA-NY support policies that include farm workers as a special needs category in federal funding streams, allowing the state to prioritize projects addressing these workforce housing needs in requests for proposals and expressions of interest (RFPs and RFEIs)**

- **A dedicated funding stream for construction and maintenance of farmer and farmworker housing to be included in the state budget that is maintained or increased in future years.**

## Establish Air Quality Standards for Farm Work

Whereas, the frequency of exposure to wildfire smoke which is made up of harmful particles and gasses has been increasing each year, and the smoke can not only affect workers in the field but penetrate barns and other farm buildings;

And whereas, certain conditions—youth, age over 65, pregnancy, pre-existing heart and lung conditions, and weakened immune systems—may make workers more sensitive to smoke;

And whereas, employers can reduce exposure to smoke by having a careful plan of action, paying close attention to the air quality index, and providing high quality masks at AQI of 50 or higher, an indoor space with filtered air if AQI over 200, and cancel work if AQI over 300, with no retaliation against workers who act to protect themselves by taking time off;

**Therefore, the members of NOFA-NY resolve that we urge New York State and the federal government to adopt rules and regulations that protect farm employees from poor air quality**

**impacted by smoke and particulate matter and commit resources to enforce those rules and regulations.**

## Support for Urban Farming and Community Gardens

Whereas, with the increasing frequency of weather disruptions as well as climate-related supply-chain disruptions, it is urgent to build everyone's capacity to grow their own food, including skills and knowledge, and especially access to land and resources (water, seed);

And whereas, although in most cities available lots are not adequate to supply all the food needs of city dwellers, community and individual urban gardens and city farms can make important contributions to the food supply, especially of specialty crops including vegetables, herbs, flowers, mushrooms and fruit. During World War II, fruit and vegetables harvested in the home and community Victory Gardens were estimated to be 9,000,000–10,000,000 short tons (8,200,000–9,100,000 t) in 1944, an amount equal to all commercial production of fresh vegetables;

And whereas, gardens provide educational and aesthetic oases in the urban landscape, places where people can gather, engage in healthy activities, transfer useful skills from generation to generation, relax, socialize and build community;

And whereas, by focusing on building healthy soils and perennial plantings of fruit and nut trees and berry shrubs, city farms, and gardens can contribute to mitigating climate change.

And whereas, in cities scarred by racial injustice, full government support for urban agriculture can provide training and jobs while beautifying city neighborhoods.

And whereas, although NYS has a recent policy that supports urban farms and gardens and an excellent 2023 Community Gardens Task Force Report with practical recommendations, too many NY cities, and townships have policies and regulations in place that create barriers to gardening, and, instead of protecting gardens, cities consider gardens as holding space for future development;

**Therefore, the members of NOFA-NY resolve that we support:**

- **The recommendations of the NYS 2023 Community Gardens Task Force Report that calls on the state and local governments to protect community gardens**
- **Establishing a Right to Farm law in urban areas**
- **Providing financial support for staffing and the resources needed to sustain a garden in a way that is accessible to the least resourced gardeners and grassroots groups**
- **Legislation that would broaden the purview of the Community Gardens Office to an Office of Urban Agriculture, including, but not limited to urban farms, community gardens, farmers markets, and Community Supported Agriculture.**

## Support sustainability in New York State's farmed seaweed industry and honor indigenous farming techniques and traditions

Whereas kelp and seaweed products are an important organic soil amendment (fertilizer and biostimulant) due to their superior capacity for carbon sequestration, proven ability to support soil health, unique qualities that drive robust crop production, and their potential to reverse the ecosystem damaging effects of synthetic chemical fertilizers;

And whereas the use of macroalgae such as kelp for fertilizing and bio-stimulating purposes in crop production is an ancient practice, originating with Indigenous cultures in North American coastal communities dating back thousands of years. By reviving ancient indigenous farming techniques and implementing them in modern-day crop production practices, these methods are honored and preserved for future generations while homage and gratitude are directed towards indigenous peoples worldwide;

And whereas 100% of all kelp and seaweed products currently used for organic farming purposes in New York State are imported from outside of the state, the majority of these imports originate from outside of the country. Imported wild seaweed products are often available at very low cost due to an absence of harvesting regulations and suppressed labor rates for harvesters overseas;

And whereas rapid adoption of U.S. farmed kelp fertilizers throughout the NYS and Northeast bioregion will serve as a means to capture carbon, mitigate the effects of climate change, restore soil health, increase organic crop production, protect clean water sources, prevent ecological disruption, and create new jobs locally;

And whereas the USDA's recently announced Fertilizer Production and Expansion Program has recognized the national importance of building a domestic supply chain in fertilizer production in order to combat the effects of inflation and foreign supply chain disruption which negatively affect both the farmer and end consumer;

**Therefore, the members of NOFA-NY resolve that we support the development of a farmed seaweed industry that:**

- **ensures that farms are in appropriate locations, of an appropriate size, and protect biodiversity**
- **prioritizes local, source-verified, organic kelp farmed from U.S. waters, including kelp produced by indigenous farmers themselves working in this industry today and carrying on their ancestral techniques from which we all benefit**
- **encourages organic certification through the development of strong standards that protect health and the environment.**

## Working Group to Study and Make Recommendations on Labor Policies

Whereas, due to social and economic changes over the past few decades, in many rural areas of NY, there is a shortage of local residents available for farm jobs;

And whereas, as a result of willing departures, deportations, and the increased danger of crossing the border with Mexico, the supply of prime-age immigrant workers available for farm work has been shrinking;

And whereas, Congress has not been able to agree on immigration reform policies that would resolve the farm labor dilemma, and all recent legislative proposals include mandatory E-verify, a requirement that would entail legal hardships for mid-sized and smaller farms as well as threaten existing farm workers lacking legal status with deportation;

And whereas, when NOFA-NY polls farmer members on labor issues, there is no consensus on how to respond to current policy proposals at either the state or federal levels;

And whereas, to create a domestic farm workforce will require changes in both policy and practices, and a long-term vision to guide that change;

**Therefore the members of NOFA-NY resolve to establish a working group of members which will invite contributions from other stakeholders and scientists to develop a process to study organic and small farm labor needs, seek consensus on labor issues and create a long-term vision for the establishment of a domestic farm labor force.**

**Furthermore, the members of NOFA-NY will call on local, state, and federal governments to use this vision as a guide toward creating policies to resolve the farm labor dilemma in a humanitarian and practical manner.**

## Support for Legislation to Stop Wildlife Killing Contests

Whereas sustainable, local, organic food and farming contributes to an ecologically sound and economically viable food system that promotes organic food production, local businesses, and land stewardship in New York;

And whereas, NOFA subscribes to the Principles of Organic Agriculture from IFOAM Organics International which states that Organic Agriculture is based on:

> The Principle of Health, where Organic Agriculture should sustain and enhance the health of soil, plant, animal, human and planet as one indivisible;
>
> The Principle of Ecology, where Organic Agriculture should be based on living ecological systems and cycles, work with them and emulate them and help sustain them;
>
> The Principle of Fairness, where Organic Agriculture should build on relationships that ensure fairness with regard to the common environment and life opportunities; and
>
> The Principle of Care, where Organic Agriculture should be managed in a precautionary and responsible manner to protect the health and wellbeing of current and future generations and the environment;

And whereas, the North American Model of Wildlife Conservation, the principles which guide wildlife management in the United States, states that:

> The reason for killing wildlife must be valid. Wildlife shall be taken by legal and ethical means, in the spirit of "fair chase', and with good cause. Animals can be killed only for legitimate purposes - for food and fur, in self-defense, and for the protection of property.
>
> Science plays a key role in managing wildlife. Wildlife populations are sustained and scientifically managed by professionals in government agencies.

And whereas, killing large numbers of wild animals like bobcats, foxes, and coyotes in wildlife killing contests solely for cash and prizes is counter to the North American Model of Wildlife conservation, and disrupts natural ecosystem regulation, which can create problems on farms and impact the farming industry;

And whereas, scientists have recently published a study documenting that protecting and enhancing wildlife around the world could significantly enhance natural carbon capture by supercharging ecosystem carbon sinks, as wild animals play a critical role in controlling the carbon cycle in terrestrial, freshwater, and marine ecosystems through a wide range of processes including foraging, nutrient deposition, disturbance, organic carbon deposition, and seed dispersal. It has been shown that the dynamics of carbon uptake and storage fundamentally change with the presence or absence of animals. "Wildlife species, throughout their interaction with the environment, are the missing link between biodiversity and climate," says Yale School of the Environment Oastler Professor of Population and Community Ecology Oswald Schmitz who led the study.

And whereas, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), along with top carnivore scientists and wildlife agencies across the country, have found that indiscriminate killing of coyotes, the most common target of killing contests, can cause coyote numbers to grow and increase conflicts with livestock;

And whereas, the best available science overwhelmingly shows that random killing of native coyotes is counterproductive because it disrupts the sensitive coyote pack structure that allows coyotes to self-regulate their populations and teach pups appropriate hunting behaviors;

And whereas, science demonstrates that this disruption of the coyote pack structure causes coyote populations to expand with increasing immigration of new coyotes, reproduction and pup survival rates which in turn causes coyotes to find bigger and easier prey like sheep to feed larger litters of pups;

And whereas, USDA data shows that most carnivores do not prey on livestock and that all carnivores combined are responsible for less than 0.5% of sheep and cattle losses;

And whereas, carnivores are beneficial to farmers because they contribute to ecosystem health through trophic cascades, scavenge animal carcasses, eat rodents and other animals that damage crops, and serve as guardian animals that keep other carnivores away;

And whereas, the scientific literature clearly documents that non-lethal measures are the most effective means of preventing and reducing livestock conflict (for citations see Non Lethal References by Renee Seacor of Project Coyote);.

And whereas, the DEC states, "Most problems can be avoided with proper husbandry techniques" and further highlights that proactive prevention is the most effective at minimizing conflicts with wildlife stating, "it is much easier to prevent depredation from occurring than it is to stop it once it starts;"

And whereas, the DEC finds that lethal control of specific, problem-causing carnivores may be necessary at times, nonlethal deterrents and traditional animal husbandry should be the dominant method for avoiding conflict.

And whereas, farmers respect wild animals and their habitats and do not support the mass killing of them for cash and prizes; therefore,

**The members of NOFA-NY resolve that we oppose wildlife killing contests conducted in New York State.**

## Reaffirming NOFA-NY's commitment to organic certification and education

Whereas NOFA-NY defines organic according to international principles of Health, Ecology, Fairness and Care, and the definition of agriculture outlined by IFOAM: "Organic Agriculture is a production system that sustains the health of soils, ecosystems, and people. It relies on ecological processes, biodiversity, and cycles adapted to local conditions, rather than the use of inputs with adverse effects. Organic Agriculture combines tradition, innovation, and science to benefit the shared environment and promote fair relationships and good quality of life for all involved." and

And whereas, NOFA-NY has been certifying organic producers since 1984 – well before the USDA got involved– and since 2002 has been a USDA-accredited organic certifier, and is the largest organic certifier in NYS, certifying about 1000 entities; and

And whereas USDA "certified" organic standards, are designed to provide a baseline even playing field for all producers, and consistent regulations for marketing the organic label; and

And whereas, the organic standards are established and updated with significant input from the organic community including through the National Organic Standards Board which carefully and thoroughly considers and makes recommendations on a wide range of issues involving the production, handling, and processing of organic products; and

And whereas, since the USDA National Organic Program's inception, NOFA-NY has engaged in public commenting and advocacy to ensure fairness, consistency and continuous improvement of the organic standards; and

And whereas, third party certification, by USDA-accredited organic certifiers, ensures that organic farmers are using systems that promote soil, animal, worker and ecosystem health and that consumers can have confidence in the integrity of the organic label; and

And whereas 'regenerative', 'sustainable' product claims are not consistently defined or enforced and can create inequity among producers and confusion among consumers; and

And hereas NOFA-NY's vision outlines our dedication to a just and resilient food and farming system, as well as our goal to achieve that through our mission of demonstration and education; and

**Therefore, the members of NOFA-NY affirm the organization's dedication to organic certification, organic education and organic advocacy and ongoing commitment to grow a strong, healthy, just, and environmentally and socially resilient food and agriculture system.**

# 2023

## Address Per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) contamination on farmland

Whereas, per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) are a family of chemicals that have been used for decades in a wide range of products, including fire extinguishing foam, water-resistant clothing, grease-resistant food packaging, nonstick cookware, pesticides, and personal care products. Nicknamed "forever chemicals" because of their persistence in the environment, they have also been found in drinking water, dairy products, at industrial sites, and more recently in agricultural land as a result of the application of biosolids (the solid material left after municipal wastewater treatment, also known as sewage sludge), industrial sludges and ash.

And whereas, while research is ongoing, the Environmental Protection Agency has acknowledged that PFAS exposure (possibly at low levels), including from eating and drinking contaminated materials, is linked to reproductive effects, developmental effects in children, increased risk of some cancers, and immune system impacts.

And whereas, over the past few years, PFAS have emerged as a growing contaminant of concern not only for drinking water nationwide (including in several communities in New York), but also in agriculture. Both milk from cows grazing on contaminated land or consuming contaminated water and farmland have tested positive for PFAS at high levels. Some organic farms in the state of Maine have discovered PFAS-contaminated soils, most likely due to the application of biosolids decades ago, before the farms were organic.

And whereas biosolids application is not allowed in organic production, legacy pollution from practices used before a farm became organic can still harm organic producers and consumers.

**Therefore, the members of NOFA NY resolve to urge federal and state leaders and agencies to take immediate actions to address the issue of PFAS contamination of agricultural land, including:**

- **Prohibiting the spreading of biosolids on any agricultural land.**
- **Prohibiting the addition of PFAS ingredients in pesticides.**
- **Limiting the sale of PFAS-containing products.**

- **Facilitating and funding state-wide testing of soil and groundwater where biosolids have been applied.**
- **Funding research into how PFAS contamination impacts farmland and potential methods for remediation of contaminated farmland.**
- **Developing a program to support farms impacted by contamination with expenses related to testing, compensating losses in revenue due to contamination, and assistance in navigating future business plans.**
- **Establishing a threshold for PFAS contamination in food crops.**
- **Establishing a new disaster assistance program to support farms impacted by contamination.**

## Advance our vision for a fair and equitable Farm Bill

Whereas, at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, cascading disruptions in our global supply chains left shelves in grocery stores bare while an increasing number of families turned to emergency food services for meals. At the same time, local growers and processors found renewed consumer appetite for local food and demonstrated how nimble, responsive, and resilient local food systems can be. Within a week of the declaration of the pandemic in March 2020, NOFA member farms had developed protocols for providing food to their customers safely, farms set up online stores to sell not only their own food, but food from neighboring farms as well, farmers donated generously to mutual aid networks in their areas, and were eventually able to receive payment for produce for lower-income families through the Nourish NY Program. See The Natural Farmer special issue on the challenges of COVID-19.

And whereas, nearing three years into the pandemic, prices on agricultural inputs and transportation have continued to increase at an even higher rate in 2022, farmers who are able to source fertilizer, feed, and other inputs locally, are insulated from some of the added costs associated with fuel and overextended global supply chains.

And whereas, even the most resilient local food systems are not immune to the national and global economic landscape. Too often, corporate control over agriculture markets pits farm profitability and fair wages for farm- and food-chain workers against family food budgets while companies are making record profits. We must challenge this false dichotomy and advocate for local, state, and federal policies designed to support farmers, farmworkers, and food sovereignty alike.

**Therefore, in the next and future Farm Bills, NOFA-NY calls on federal leaders and agencies to support and strengthen local food systems that boost local economies and decrease greenhouse gas emissions (GHGs). We want a Farm Bill that:**

- **Invests in and protects the integrity of organic and agroecological practices as a core solution to our climate and biological crises.**

- **Ensures fair treatment and just livelihoods for farmers and workers throughout the food and farming system.**
- **Invests in rural communities, increases fairness and resilience of local and regional supply chains, and breaks up consolidation in agriculture.**
- **Centers racial justice across all programs and repairs past and ongoing racialized harm.**
- **Promotes food sovereignty for disadvantaged communities and ensures nutrition security for all.**
- **Eliminates the use of toxic substances on farmland and in our food system while supporting a just transition for farmers.**

## Support for extended producer responsibility legislation

Whereas, agricultural enterprises of all kinds use an enormous amount of plastic, most of it single-use. According to a 2019 report from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), agricultural value chains used 12.5 million tons of plastic for plant and animal production for mulch, silage, tunnel and greenhouse films, irrigation tubes, and drip lines, bags, sacks, and bottles, coatings on fertilizers, pesticides, and seeds, with an additional 37.3 million tons for food packaging, which is roughly 15% of all annual plastic production;

And whereas, plastics are produced from fossil fuels contributing to global warming and damaging air quality, and most of the factories that make them are located in low-income communities, often communities of color as in "Cancer alley" in Louisiana;

And whereas, the complex mixtures of polymers and additives in these plastics make them difficult to make recyclable or biodegradable versions;

And whereas, plastics are very persistent in the environment and cause widespread harm to marine and terrestrial ecosystems through physical effects, such as entanglement or entrapment; chemical effects, such as the release of additives or combustion products; and biological effects, such as root impediment or tissue/cellular damage;

And whereas the hollowing-out of government since the 1970s has led to fewer and fewer state resources allocated to waste management or the development of innovative waste solutions, with even basic recycling services often failing to deliver promised results in sustainable reuse of consumer plastics;

**Therefore, the members of NOFA-NY support the "polluter pays" principle, and call upon state and federal legislatures and executive agencies to mandate Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) schemes that promote closed-loop recycling of agricultural plastics, funded by the corporations that produce them, and that these corporations be held responsible to fund and develop the infrastructure needed to collect and recycle all agricultural plastics.**

## Support for farm to school expansion

Whereas farm to school programming brings nutritious, fresh, local food to school and early care and education sites across the nation increasing access to healthy food for children, creating markets for farmers, and building local supply chains that are more resilient to shocks in our global food economy;

And whereas, the farm to school movement has grown since 1997 in New York State, and today, New York's Farm to School Reimbursement Incentive (also called the 30% Initiative Program) and the Farm to School Grant Program incentivize school food authorities to purchase NY grown and raised foods for school lunches—the 30% Initiative Program raises the state portion of school lunch reimbursement from 5.9 cents per meal to 25 cents per meal for any district that purchases at least 30% of their total food costs for lunch using New York State products, defined as either NY Grown & Certified, or containing 51% or more raw NY agricultural product;

And whereas, the 30% Initiative has generated approximately $13 million in spending on products from New York farms and has reached nearly 100,000 kids statewide, a small fraction of the nearly 1.7 million school lunches and nearly 800,000 breakfasts served each day in New York pre-pandemic (2018-2019 school year); this gap demonstrates a large opportunity to expand farm to school and increase the share of school meals that include fresh, locally grown and raised products;

And whereas this increase in farm to school programming can be achieved through federal and state support and investment that increase equity and access to resources for schools and communities while supporting and prioritizing participation in programming by small and mid-sized local producers;

**Therefore, NOFA-NY members support the expansion of federal, state, and local farm to school programming that:**

- **Enables and incentivizes increased local and regional food procurement for all school meals including breakfast and meals served in early care and education settings including through the 30% initiative program**
- **Increases public investments in farm to school program expansion including through the 30% Initiative Program and the New York State Farm to School grants program**
- **Prioritizes participation in programming by small and mid-sized local, organic, and agroecological farms**
- **Ensures fair pricing and contracting for all participating farmers including by increasing the small purchase thresholds to enable schools to purchase more fresh food directly from New York farmers using informal bidding methods**
- **Reduces or eliminates costs to children and families who receive school meals such as through universal free meals legislation.**

## Support for safety on farms of all sizes

Whereas, A holistic approach to farm safety encompasses not only physical hazards, ergonomics, hazardous materials, noise, air quality, and equipment use and repair, but also interpersonal relationships, conflict resolution, and workers' rights;

And whereas, farms often make the top of the national list for workplace injuries and even deaths. In 2020, 368 farmers and farm workers died from a work-related injury, resulting in a fatality rate of 18.0 deaths per 100,000 workers. Transportation incidents, which include tractor overturns were the leading cause of death for these farmers and farm workers;

And Whereas, the New York Center for Agricultural Medicine and Health (NYCAMH) provides comprehensive resources that cover every imaginable farm safety hazard in English and Spanish, free visits to assess safety issues on farms as well as training for farmers and their staff in farm safety, funding to add ROPS to tractors that lack them greatly reducing deaths from roll overs, testing for skin cancer at farmer events, and readily available advice;

And Whereas, New York FarmNet offers its services to farms of all sizes and crop mixes, providing guidance in strategies to manage finances, family communications, and all kinds of stress-related emotional issues (Relationship issues, Family and/or parent-child concerns, Domestic violence, Divorce/separation adjustment, Alcohol, and drug concerns, Grief/loss, Depression and anxiety, Farm conflicts and concerns, Farm retirement, transfer or exit adjustment, Health concerns, Referrals to additional organizations and specialists;

And Whereas, the New York State Agricultural Mediation Program (NYSAMP) offers free or low-cost remote and in-person workshops on farmer well-being, community circles, and professional mediation, conciliation, facilitation, and conflict coaching services for farmers and our communities;

And Whereas, the Agricultural Justice Project, a not-for-profit in which the NOFA Interstate Council is a founding partner, provides technical assistance free of charge in farm labor policies and practices, including an easily adaptable model employee handbook;

**Therefore, NOFA-NY supports continued and full funding for the NY Center for Agricultural Medicine and Health, NY FarmNet, and NYS Agricultural Mediation Program. It is essential for these State programs to have enough funding to provide staff to work with farmers through education and providing assistance in complying with safety regulations and law.**

# 2022

## Establish Heat Standards for Farm Work

Whereas 2021 was the hottest summer on record in the United States, the average temperature throughout the year has risen 2.4 degrees since 1970 in New York State, and more frequent extreme heat is likely as the climate changes;

And whereas, doing physical labor, like farming, can be stressful to the human body when the heat index, which is how the body experiences the combination of temperature and humidity, is over 80 degrees Fahrenheit, which can cause heat exhaustion, heatstroke, kidney damage, fainting and dizziness, heat cramps, and heat exhaustion;

And whereas, agricultural workers are reported to die of heat-related causes each year in the United States;

And whereas, employers can reduce the chance of heat-related illness and death by providing employees with cool drinking water, shade, and extra and extended breaks during hot weather, by gradually acclimating workers to working in hot conditions, and by watching for signs of heat-related illness in their employees and by training employees about these symptoms, so they can watch for these symptoms for themselves and their co-workers;

And whereas, the states of California, Minnesota, and Washington already have rules that protect workers from the dangers of heat on the job;

And whereas, the United States Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration announced in October 2021 that it was beginning the rule-making process for a heat safety standard;

**The members of NOFA-NY resolve that we urge New York State and the federal government to adopt rules and regulations that protect farm employees from heat illness.**

## Endorse the Good Food Purchasing Program

Whereas, the New York Organic Action Plan, which NOFA-NY released in 2018, calls for an increase in the amount of local, organic food available in institutional settings, like schools and hospitals, throughout New York State;

And whereas, based on a model first adopted in Los Angeles, community organizations have worked in local coalitions in cities and counties across the country, to advocate that local public institutions adopt Good Food Purchasing Program (GFPP) standards, which are administered by the Center For Good Food Purchasing, leading to the adoption of GFPP in places such as Oakland, Minneapolis, and Cooke County, Illinois;

And whereas, the government of New York City is working with the Center for Good Food Purchasing to implement the Good Food Purchasing framework;

And whereas, the Good Food Buffalo Coalition has been advocating for the implementation of GFPP in institutions in Buffalo, NY since 2018;

And whereas, the GFPP standards fall into five value categories, Local Economies, Environmental Sustainability, Valued Workforce, Animal Welfare, and Nutrition;

And whereas, participating institutions must meet baseline standards in all five value categories, choosing from a list of options in each value category of how to improve the food purchased;

And whereas, buying locally and regionally grown food, especially from smaller producers, is one way that institutions can choose to meet standards in the Local Economies standard;

And whereas, buying Certified Organic food is one that institutions can choose to meet standards in the Environmental Sustainability and Animal Welfare categories;

And whereas, New York school lunch programs that spend 30% of their food budgets on NY food products are eligible for reimbursements of up to twenty-five cents per meal, providing a model for how better institutional food buying can be incentivized and supported;

And whereas, buying food from Food Justice Certified farms, which is the label of the Agricultural Justice Project, of which the NOFA Interstate Council is a partner, is one way institutions can choose to meet standards in the Valued Workforce Category.

**The members of NOFA-NY resolve that we urge NYS school districts, municipalities, county governments, and the State University Of New York system to adopt Good Food Purchasing standards for their institutions and urges the state and federal government to allocate funding to school districts and municipal and county governments in support of such efforts.**

## Recognize Ecocide as an International Crime

Whereas, ecocide means mass damage and destruction of ecosystems and severe harm to nature which is widespread or long-term and includes (but is not limited to) oil spills, industrial fishing, plastic pollution, deep-sea mining, fracking, deforestation, industrial livestock farming and industrial agrochemical farming, mining and, mineral extraction, mountaintop removal, tar sands, textile chemicals, chemical disasters and weapons, nuclear spills and waste, contamination from nuclear testing, and industrial emissions.

And whereas, ecocide committed repeatedly over decades, has created the climate and ecological emergency that we now face. Ecocide examples from above have been known by the companies and agencies responsible, yet little to no action has been taken by those at the top of industry, finance, and government to prevent and remediate the damage to natural systems.

And whereas, the International Court of Justice will be able to prosecute ecocide as a crime like genocide so that actions can be brought against governments and corporations for environmental destruction. And whereas the independent expert panel of Stop Ecocide International defines ecocide as follows:

1. For the purpose of this Statute, “ecocide” means unlawful or wanton acts committed with knowledge that there is a substantial likelihood of severe and either widespread or long-term damage to the environment being caused by those acts.
2. For the purpose of paragraph 1:
    a. “Wanton” means with reckless disregard for damage which would be clearly excessive in relation to the social, and economic benefits anticipated;
    b. “Severe” means damage which involves very serious adverse changes, disruption or harm to any element of the environment, including grave impacts on human life or natural, cultural or economic resources;
    c. “Widespread” means damage which extends beyond a limited geographic area, crosses state boundaries, or is suffered by an entire ecosystem or species or a large number of human beings;
    d. “Long-term” means damage which is irreversible or which cannot be redressed through natural recovery within a reasonable period of time;
    e. “Environment” means the earth, its biosphere, cryosphere, lithosphere, hydrosphere and atmosphere, as well as outer space.

**The members of NOFA-NY resolve that we stand with Stop Ecocide Foundation’s proposed definition of ecocide and call for the adoption of ecocide as an international crime.**

## Call on all State and Federal Governments to Declare a Climate Emergency

Whereas climate change as the result of human activities is underway, as we farmers and gardeners, people who live close to the land, have been aware for three decades, causing wild swings in the weather with massive hurricanes, flooding, drought, wildfires, and heatwaves;

And whereas, greenhouse gas levels hit a record high in 2020, according to the United Nations, heading the world towards 2.5 to 3 degrees of warming. Meanwhile, governments are still planning to use more than double the amount of fossil fuels in 2030 than would be consistent with limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius;

And whereas, the United States has been both the principal driver of climate change with per capita greenhouse gas emissions that far surpass other countries (the richest 1% are responsible for more emissions than the poorest 50% of the entire world population) and the Group of 20 major economies (G20) accounts for 78% of global greenhouse gas emissions..

And whereas the U.S was a major barrier to coordinated worldwide climate action, under Clinton refusing to ratify the Kyoto protocols, under Obama opposing mandatory emissions cuts, and under Trump pulling out of the climate accords altogether;

And whereas, the August report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, summarizing eight years’ worth of climate science, laid out the consensus among climate scientists in stark terms: Humans have warmed the planet about 1.1 degrees Celsius so far, and if there is still any hope of halting warming at 1.5 degrees, governments must act to decarbonize within the next two decades;

And whereas, in NYS alone, it is estimated that air pollution, driven by the burning of fossil fuels, kills 3,000 people annually with the heaviest toll in low-income communities of color and results in $30 billion in increased health care costs while an estimated 5 to 10 million die annually worldwide from air pollution;

And whereas, like asbestos, tobacco, and opioid manufacturers, the fossil fuel industry has known for a long time that their products were contributing to the warming of the planet, and instead of taking steps to prevent climate change and investing in renewables, the industry concealed that knowledge, discredited climate science and continued with business as usual;

And whereas, big banks, fossil fuel corporations, and food conglomerates are proclaiming "net-zero by 2050" pledges, "net-zero" is not the same as "zero emissions;" these claims are misleading distractions that paint a false facade of climate action while continuing to exacerbate the crisis in order to protect profits and power while using off-setting schemes that contaminate vulnerable communities and make money from investments in unproven technologies that threaten interference with the Earth's atmosphere through geoengineering.

**The members of NOFA-NY resolve that the US government must declare a national Climate Emergency to communicate the urgency of the climate crisis and unlock specific statutory powers that the federal government can use to ban crude oil, and LNG exports and promote clean energy development.**

**To meet the 1.5-degree Celsius target, the State of New York and the federal government must:**

- **halt all new permits for fossil fuel infrastructure,**
- **cease leasing state or federal lands for drilling,**
- **increase commitments to emissions reduction (the "Nationally Determined Contribution") to reduce emissions to near zero by 2040, and**
- **commit to the rapid transformation of land use to regenerative organic systems that restore soil health and build organic matter with its many benefits.**

**The government must support a research agenda that focuses less on forecasts for climate change, and more on predictions of the societal consequences of future warming and how to weather them.**

**In addition, the US must meet its commitments to provide financial and technological support to poorer countries so that they can reduce their emissions and enable vulnerable communities to survive the climate disruption already underway.**

## Support for Whole Milk in School Meal Programs

Whereas, milk is the number one source of nine essential nutrients in young Americans' diets and provides multiple health benefits, including better bone health, lower blood pressure, and reduced risk of cardiovascular disease or Type 2 diabetes.

And whereas, milk is a source of three out of four under-consumed nutrients – calcium, potassium, and vitamin D and no other beverage naturally comes close to this level of nutritional value;

And whereas, numerous comprehensive scientific reviews have shown that dairy foods have, at worst, a neutral association with cardiovascular health, regardless of the fat content with two clinical trials in 2016 finding no difference in heart disease and diabetes risk factors when consuming whole milk compared to lower-fat milk;

And whereas, recent review has shown that institutional consensus supporting the decades of dietary low-fat dogma was based on researcher bias, cherry-picked data, lack of thorough and unprejudiced information, inadequate scientific inquiry, conflicts of interest, and payments to researchers by the sugar industry in the 1960s to place blame on saturated fats rather than sugar for the epidemic of heart disease;

And whereas, in 2010, Congress passed the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act which amended nutrition standards in the School Lunch Program mandating that flavored milk must be fat-free within the program; this law, along with lower participation in the program, led to an alarming decline in milk consumption in schools since 2010;

And whereas, from 2014 to 2016, schools served 213 million fewer half-pints of milk despite the fact that public school enrollment was growing; children over four years old are not meeting the recommended daily servings of dairy in the Dietary Guidelines of America and given the nutritional value of milk, and the fact that young minds need to be well-nourished to perform at their best, this is cause for concern;

And whereas, to combat this decline in consumption of dairy, the U.S. Department of Agriculture finalized a rule in February 2019 that included the option for schools to offer flavored, low-fat (1%) milk to children who participate in the school meal programs; while whole milk is still outlawed for use in schools participating in the National School Lunch Program.

**The members of NOFA-NY resolve that we support and promote the passage of legislation that will again allow flavored and unflavored whole milk to be offered under the National School Lunch Program as well as lower-fat options and calls on all New York State Members of Congress to co-sponsor and support H. R. 1861, the Whole Milk for Healthy Kids Act of 2021 and future versions of this legislation.**

# 2021

## Carbon

Whereas greenhouse gas emissions, including carbon dioxide, are a major cause of climate change, a grave threat to the future of our communities and farms; and

Whereas one of the critical ecosystem services that healthy soils provides is increased carbon sequestration, thus mitigating the impact of greenhouse gas emission into the atmosphere; and

Whereas organic farming practices build organic matter and sequester carbon in the soil, and our farmers, by virtue of their organic certification, have already implemented these practices to build soil health and store carbon; and

Whereas there are market-based proposals under consideration designed to limit carbon emissions and reward carbon sequestration, including Cap & Trade programs; and

Whereas carbon markets, and cap & trade in particular, have proven to benefit financial intermediaries, while allowing big corporations license to continue adding to the greenhouse gases poisoning our atmosphere; and

Whereas these same market proposals, while offering the allure of payments to farmers, have been a disappointment to farmers wherever they have been tried. The paperwork, time, and expense required of farmers to participate in these schemes have not been offset by the payments, which have been highly variable, unreliable, and have ultimately collapsed; and

Whereas more research is needed into measuring soil carbon. Current research suggests that there is no agreement yet among scientists on how or what carbon to measure; and

Whereas programs that focus on whole-farm, agroecological systems and practices, and their known ability to sequester carbon, would acknowledge the contribution by our members' on-going, but decades old, commitment to sustainable food systems and a healthy planet;

**Be it therefore Resolved by the members of NOFA-NY that:**

1. **We oppose the expansion of cap-and-trade programs in New York that only benefit polluters and intermediaries at the expense of our environment, our soils, our farms and our futures;**
2. **We oppose measuring soil carbon as a condition to receive benefit or assistance, until such time as the tools exist to accurately measure long term storage, as well as year to year changes in storage;**
3. **We encourage the state to pass Healthy Soils legislation that takes a whole-farm systems approach and that would provide payments and/or financial assistance to farmers who implement or continue to maintain practices that build healthy soils and sequester carbon.**
4. **If cap & trade becomes a reality, all certified organic farmers should be given permits to sell in the market in recognition of their organic practices.**

## Reduce Concentration

Whereas a tiny handful of companies control almost every link in the food chain, standing between two million farmers and 300 million consumers, exerting tremendous power over consumer food choices and prices, controlling the markets available to farmers and sucking money out of rural communities; and

Whereas it is clear that CAFOs have a much worse environmental footprint than smaller, integrated farms; and

Whereas consolidation in the meatpacking sector has enabled the largest players (that slaughter four out of five cattle, two out of three hogs and almost every chicken) to dominate the marketplace, push down the prices farmers receive, offer unwarranted deals to favored livestock suppliers, and force producers into unfair marketing arrangements; and

Whereas similar concentration has occurred in the farm inputs sector, limiting farmers' choice of inputs, increasing manufacturer power over conditions for repair, maintenance and data generated, and reducing farmer access to preferred seed, as when the only source of non-GMO seed requires long distance, expensive shipping; and

Whereas many smaller independent organic companies have been bought by vertically integrated corporations that now control large segments of the organic market;

**Resolved, the members of NOFA-NY urge the state and federal governments to restore anti-trust actions using existing anti-trust law to break up consolidated mega-corporations; and in addition, urge the passage of new legislation that prevents anti-competitive mergers, bans construction of new and expanding factory farms, holds big meat and chemical companies responsible for the costs of pollution and other harm caused by industrialized monocrop agriculture and CAFOs, and provides funding to contract growers to transition to more sustainable production systems.**

## Ensure Fair Contracts

Whereas many farmers – especially poultry, hog and chicken, but also increasingly fruit, vegetable and dairy farmers – produce agricultural products under contract with processing, distribution and retail food companies that force farmers to accept unfair or abusive contract terms in order to secure any contract. Even though the terms of most fresh market produce sales are verbal, those are still contracts, though harder to defend legally if the buyer fails to uphold the terms; and

Whereas the distribution of natural and organic foods is controlled by fewer and fewer corporations reducing the markets available to farmers and the distributors available to food co-operatives; and

Whereas private corporations with too much power raise prices for shoppers, depress payments to farmers and wages for workers;

**Resolved, the members of NOFA-NY agree that fairness, real competition, small business viability, and equity must be restored to the food and farm sector through legislation and policies that ensure that all contracts between corporate buyers or input suppliers and farmers must contain basic protection standards including:**

1. **requirement for plain language contracts and disclosure of risks;**
2. **requirement for good faith in negotiations;**

3. **the right to promptly review and withdraw from a contract, with clear deadline for cancellation;**
4. **prohibition of confidentiality clauses;**
5. **recapture of capital investments if buyer cancels a contract after farmer has made capital investments in order to meet the terms of the contract;**
6. **fair procedures for inspecting fields and farm products;**
7. **a ban on binding mandatory arbitration clauses, and maintaining individuals' rights to a trial and any other rights to which they would normally be entitled;**
8. **affirmation of farmer's right to join with others in association, to speak out against unfair practices, and to engage in collective bargaining in order to have greater power free from industry retaliation.**

## Ban Bisphenols and Phthalates – the "Everywhere Chemicals"

Whereas bisphenols (BPA) and phthalates are a known hormone disrupter and can mimic or block hormones even in very low doses; and

Whereas young children and fetuses are especially vulnerable; and

Whereas, Bisphenol-A (commonly known as BPA) and phthalates are found in many plastic products, leaching from plastic into food, liquids, dust, and directly into children's mouths while sucking on pacifiers or teethers. Exposure also takes place through ingesting and inhaling dust and through skin absorption; and

Whereas BPA is used to make polycarbonate plastic, a shatter-resistant and clear material used in products ranging from plastic bottles and eyeglasses to sports safety equipment, contamination in low doses over extending time is toxic. BPA is also found in baby bottles, sippy cups, teethers, water bottles, food storage containers, and the lining of many food and beverage cans; and

Whereas phthalates make plastic soft and flexible, and are often found in car interiors, shower curtains, deodorant, cosmetics, and medical devices, they are also found in children's products such as toys, rattles, teethers, rubber ducks, bath books, baby shampoo, soap and lotion; and

Whereas bisphenols and phthalates contaminate the environment by leaching from products during the manufacturing process and recycling, and whereas these chemicals are found in marine and freshwater ecosystems, contaminating aquatic wildlife with the same low levels of exposure; and

Whereas bisphenols (BPA) and phthalates are detected in most people's urine, this high frequency of detection indicates that our exposure is ever- present and continuous; and

Whereas Bisphenol (BPA) is linked to asthma and neurodevelopmental problems such as hyperactivity, anxiety, depression, and aggression when exposed early in life; obesity, type 2 diabetes, heart disease, decreased fertility, and prostate cancer in adults; and

Whereas prenatal and early life exposure to phthalates is linked with asthma, allergies, and cognitive and behavioral problems, phthalates are also thought to affect reproductive development in boys, and reduced fertility in adult men; and

Whereas many products are labeled BPA free, but they are often replaced with Bisphenol S (BPS) and Bisphenol F (BPF), which are less studied but appear to have similar hormone-disrupting effects. The Consumer Product Safety Commission banned the use of six phthalates in toys and child care products, but they are still widely used in other products, such as food packaging, personal care products and building materials. Like BPA, the phased-out phthalates are often replaced with other phthalates with similar properties and less health information.

**Resolved, that NOFA-NY supports a total ban of the use of bisphenols and phthalates in all products used in New York State.**

## Increase Slaughter/Processing Capacity

Whereas, slaughter/processing capacity has been an obstacle for organic, sustainable, direct-market livestock/poultry producers for decades. As the meat/poultry industry
has become more consolidated, small and mid-sized plants that served regional markets and smaller farmers have disappeared; and

Whereas, recent supply chain breakdowns caused by the pandemic have aggravated this long-standing problem and brought it to public attention as large plants shut down and there was no capacity in the system to get animals processed. It is now common in New York and around the country for small farmers to have to book dates a year or more in advance, and to travel several hours to have their animals processed; and

Whereas, this lack of processing capacity is holding back the growth of farms that would like to take advantage of consumer demand for grass-fed and locally raised meat, livestock, and livestock products;

Whereas, the siting of slaughter/processing plants has become extremely difficult due to concerns of water, wastewater, and food safety, as well as residential proximity;

Whereas, the significant lack of slaughter/processing plants over more than a generation has caused a lack of skilled labor to work at such plants; and

Whereas, the burden of onerous USDA meat/poultry inspection standards created for the largest processing plants and not scale-adaptable for small and mid-sized production, has contributed to the loss of the majority of small plants.

Whereas, multiple levels of efforts are needed to address this situation, including:

- Making food safety and other regulations at federal, state, and local levels feasible and scale-appropriate;

- Providing technical assistance for plants to upgrade their food safety plans and physical plant;
- Creating job training and workforce development programs;
- Evaluating and coordinating regional food systems needs in identifying locations for the siting of plants that is reasonable for the communities, and feasible for the producers; and
- Providing economic development assistance to facilitate new plants being sited and opened.

**Resolved, that NOFA NY supports multi-pronged efforts to increase slaughter/processing capacity serving regional food systems and the small/mid-sized farm sector. These actions include policies, financial incentives, and other efforts at the local, state and federal level to ensure existing small and mid-sized plants continue to operate and to facilitate the opening of new plants.**

## Support of a "Green Amendment" to the New York State Constitution

Whereas, the right of New Yorkers to clean water, air and a healthy environment is not given any protection in the State of New York's Constitution; and

Whereas, there are a multitude of issues threatening New York's water, air, natural resources, such as climate change; loss of agricultural productivity; emerging contaminants in our drinking water supplies; poor to failing air quality; and

Whereas, these impacts disproportionately affect frontline communities, creating environmental injustices; and

Whereas, Assemblyman Steve Englebright and Senator David Carlucci sponsored the Green Amendment Bills (A.2064/S.2072) that passed the New York State Legislature in April 2019,

"proposing an amendment to article 1 of the constitution, in relation to the right to clean air and water and a healthful environment"

Whereas, to enact a Green Amendment in the New York State Constitution the above-mentioned bill must be passed by the New York State Legislature in 2021 and then be voted on as part of a statewide referendum; and

Whereas, the Northeast Organic Farmers Association hereby supports the Green Amendment Bill (A.2064/S.2072) that passed the New York State Legislature in 2019 and its second passage in 2021; and further have

**Resolved, that the members of the Northeast Organic Farming Association of New York support the Green Amendment to the Bill of Rights of the New York State Constitution which states: "Each person shall have a right to clean air and water, and a healthful environment."**

# 2020

## Siting of Renewable Energy Installations on Farmland

Whereas, high quality farmland is a limited and invaluable resource and recently developers have proposed a large number of solar projects in New York State on thousands of acres of our most productive soils—creating a perceived conflict between food security and energy security;

And whereas, owners of farmland can derive higher rental payments from renewable energy companies than from the farmers to whom they currently rent and 24% of the farmland in New York is on leased land;

And whereas, there are many potential sites for solar, wind and other renewable energy installations (highway margins, flat rooftops, brownfields, etc.) that do not encroach on farmland;

And whereas, with good design and management, farming and energy production can co-locate on the same land in ways that are compatible with a farmer's operation so as to benefit, rather than detract from farm viability;

And whereas, community and public control of energy usually results in lower prices for electricity;

And whereas, regional least-conflict siting processes for the generation of energy for non-local use in which developers, farmers, farmland conservation organizations, environmental organizations, residents, and other stakeholders participate can result in sound decisions for renewable energy siting that also ensures that damage to wildlife is kept to a minimum.

**The members of NOFA-NY resolve that:**

- **The siting of solar, wind and other renewable energy projects on prime and productive farmland of statewide importance should minimize the impact on current and future agricultural uses of the land;**
- **Developers should be required to follow the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets guidelines on construction, operation, and decommissioning of arrays when siting on farmland to protect the future agricultural use; and,**
- **Studies should be undertaken to determine the impact of the growth of renewable energy on the leasing and availability of farmland.**

## Parity Pricing System for Farm Products

Whereas NOFA-NY favors a viable farm economy for the family-scale farmers of NYS and for rural communities, and for farms to achieve economic viability, farmers want to receive a decent price from the marketplace, not the government, and the prices they receive for their products must cover the full costs of production, including living wages for everyone who works on the farms;

And whereas, NOFA-NY is a member of national networks that have set parity as a top priority and we want to publicly support their campaigns;

And whereas current prices from most markets, especially for milk, vegetables for processing and retail, and such storable crops as grains and beans, are not high enough to maintain farm viability;

And whereas there is enough value in the food and fiber supply chain for farmers, processors, retailers and consumers to all get a fair deal;

And whereas profitability is achieved when supply and demand are in balance;

And whereas, farmers are more likely to invest resources and time in regenerative practices that mitigate climate change by removing carbon from the atmosphere while improving the health of the soil when they are not worrying about going out of business;

And whereas, the farming population in NYS is aging and beginning farmers are deterred from getting started or from making a life commitment to farming when they cannot see a way to make a decent living.

**The members of NOFA-NY resolve that the United States government should abandon its cheap food policies and implement parity pricing for the 21st century. Parity pricing is a system of price supports combined with supply management and conservation that is based on equity and fairness, and should emerge for today's agriculture from a country-wide process of discussion and debate among all relevant stakeholders, similar to the process that created the Campaign for Sustainable Agriculture in the 1990s. Parity pricing would be governed democratically through farmer committees in every county, and balance the needs of farmers with food access for people of all income levels.**

## Local Regulation of Pesticides

Whereas, synthetic pesticides and herbicides such as neonicotinoids and dicamba and have been widely proven to cause plummeting declines in populations of pollinators;

And whereas, these pollinators include ants, butterflies, birds, beetles, bats, flies, moths, wasps, and bees. Besides honeybees, which are not a native species to North America, there are over 4,000 native bee species that are at risk due to pesticides;

And whereas, the decline of pollinators has a direct economic impact on agriculture, by decreasing crop yields and threatening the food available to feed the planet;

And whereas, synthetic pesticides have been linked to human health problems, including but not limited to: Alzheimer’s disease, asthma, birth defects, diabetes, cancer, endocrine disruption Parkinson’s disease and miscarriage;

And whereas, the use of synthetic pesticides has a detrimental effect on groundwater, well water, and aquifers. During large precipitation events which climate change is accelerating, there is a higher risk of drinking water being breached by unwanted chemicals;

And whereas, synthetic pesticides may directly harm the health and lower the life expectancy of farmworkers, landscapers, municipal gardeners, and golf course workers.

**The members of NOFA-NY resolve that we encourage localities and counties to pass laws regulating the use of synthetic pesticides not approved for organic production that may harm its citizens, animals and plants, so that the web of life that has evolved for millennia can continue to sustain us all.**

### Right of Individuals to Grow a Few Marijuana Plants for Personal Use

Whereas people must have the right to grow their own food and medicine;

And whereas the current bill before the New York State Legislature prohibits individuals from growing marijuana for their own personal use.

**The members of NOFA-NY resolve that the legalization of marijuana in New York State must allow individuals to grow marijuana for personal use. We believe the Massachusetts model, which allows a maximum of six plants per individual or twelve per couple, is fair.**

## 2019

### Dairy

Whereas, many New York organic dairy farmers are no longer profitable because of the substantial drop in pay price (up to 25% for most NY farms), caused by a surplus of organic milk coming from an increase in the number of non-New York based 'organic' concentrated animal feeding operations (CAFOs) in the western and mid-west U.S.;

And whereas, 'organic' CAFOs are able to provide organic milk at a lower price because of their non-compliance with the pasture and origin of livestock federal regulations, which has been allowed by their certifier;

And whereas, it is NOFA-NY's belief that New York State organic dairy farmers comply with requirements of the USDA National Organic Program, including access to pasture and origin of livestock;

NYS organic dairy farmers are therefore at a significant competitive disadvantage to industrial factory farm organic dairies, and are now feeling the result, causing many farms to barely stay in business and others to go out of business or surrender their organic certification;

And whereas, if actions are not taken immediately, we will see a significant loss of organic dairies and organic Grass Fed dairies in NYS;

And whereas, if action is not taken, we will see a significant loss in the integrity of the organic label which will also lead to a loss in profitability of all of our NYS organic farmers.

**The members of NOFA-NY demand that action be taken on multiple levels to stop the assault on the integrity of the organic label, including:**

**Organic Dairy buyers and processors should refuse to accept milk from operations whose certifiers do not comply with the letter and intent of the Organic Foods Production Act of 1990, including:**

1. **Compliance with the 2015 Origin of Livestock Proposed Rule;**
2. **Full Compliance with the access to pasture requirement; and,**
3. **If they have been named by the USDA as having certified fraudulent domestic or imported products.**

**On the State level, we request assistance from the NYSDAM and the Governor in being an advocate at the USDA/NOP and at National Association of State Departments of Agriculture. That the NYSDAM work with PA and VT, with whom it has entered into an Agreement for Collaboration, in advocating for organic dairy farmers everywhere – and specifically at the NASDA meetings.**

**On a Federal level, that the USDA immediately and consistently enforce all organic standards, as intended by the Organic Foods Production Act of 1990 and required by law.**

## Support in Principle for Farmworker Fair Labor Practices Bill (If carefully renegotiated with representation of family-scale organic farmers and farmworkers at the table)

Whereas, while the NYS Assembly has regularly passed the Farmworker Fair Labor Practices (FFLP) Bill, but not the State Senate;

And whereas, the language of the Bill has changed several times, yet organic farmers and actual farm workers, both immigrant and local workers, have not been at the table when changes have been decided on;

And whereas, in 2013, NOFA-NY polled farmer members to find out what sections of the original FFLP Bill they supported, and which ones they would want to change;

And whereas, the Fairness Principles of Organic Agriculture emphasizes that those involved in organic agriculture should conduct human relationships in a manner that ensures fairness at all levels and to all parties – farmers, workers, processors, distributors, traders and, consumers.

**The members of NOFA-NY affirm that we stand for fairness for all of the people who work on farms, farmers and hired workers alike, and would support a revised version of FFLP IF family-scale farmers and representative farmworkers, including both NYS residents and immigrants, can be at the table to negotiate final language.**

## Ban Harmful Systemic Insecticides

Whereas, since their introduction in 1994, neonicotinoids (neonics) have become the most popular insecticides in the U.S., with more than eight million pounds having been applied nationwide—the vast majority since 2005;

And whereas, neonics are neurotoxic and harmful to bees and other insects at even miniscule doses. A large and growing body of scientific research demonstrates that widespread neonic use is a leading cause of recent massive declines in pollinator populations that threaten global food security, the U.S. agricultural economy, and the environment;

And whereas, neonics are "systemic" insecticides, designed to be absorbed into plant tissues—including nectar, pollen, and fruit—making them poisonous. This property also allows neonics to be easily transported in rain or irrigation water, leading to broad-scale neonic contamination of soil and water, also threatening aquatic ecosystems;

And whereas, the European Union and Canada have both moved to ban outdoor use of the three most commonly used neonics given concerns regarding their injuries to pollinator populations and aquatic animals;

And whereas, preliminary results from several recent general population studies have raised human health concerns that prenatal and early-life exposure to neonics could be linked to disorders like autism, heart deformations, muscle tremors, and memory loss;

And whereas, other systemic insecticides, including fipronil, flupyradifurone, and sulfoxaflor, share many of the same harmful properties as neonics and may be used as substitutes for neonics.

**The members of NOFA-NY call for NYS legislation to ban outdoor uses of harmful systemic insecticides, including all neonicotinoid insecticides, in New York. Consequently, we support the Birds and Bees Protection Act, which places a moratorium on the use or sale of all outdoor-use products containing neonic pesticides or fipronil for five years.**

## Improve NYS Apiary Program

Whereas, beekeepers throughout the state are opposed to any mandatory registration to require traceability of hives and their beekeepers, citing: lack of transparency by Albany, lack of services, misuse of information, and adding fees to an already costly profession;

And whereas, the current registration form states that by registering, you will be notified of bee health developments, but these have not been forthcoming from Albany;

And whereas, what is needed is to form a consensus among beekeepers of what would constitute an acceptable Apiary Program.

**The members of NOFA-NY call upon Governor Cuomo and Agriculture Commissioner Ball to improve the Apiary Program in the following ways:**

- **Keep hive and apiary registration voluntary in NYS.**

- **Provide notification and communication of county spraying for mosquitoes, use of bee toxic substances for tick abatement, and outbreaks of honeybee disease such as American Foulbrood, for all beekeepers and the public.**

## Ban Glyphosate-Based Herbicides

Whereas, since 1974, over 1.6 billion kilograms of glyphosate active ingredient have been applied in the US, and two thirds of the total volume of glyphosate applied in the US between 1974 and 2014 was sprayed between 2005 and 2015;

And whereas, the World Health Organization's International Agency for Research on Cancer working group's 2015 decision to classify glyphosate as a grade 2A probable human carcinogen followed an extensive review and evaluation of the weight of all available evidence;

And whereas, where testing is done, detectable levels of glyphosate are rising in the urine of people in the US and in NYS, in particular, and where found, the mean level of glyphosate in also rising;

And whereas, herbicides with glyphosate as the main ingredient are used on millions of farm acres in NYS, sprayed in parks and other public places in and around New York City, and also routinely sprayed around homes and yards by members of the public who have no training in pesticide application.

**The members of NOFA-NY call for NYS legislation to ban the use of all glyphosate-based formulas on farmland, parks and other public spaces, and further that Round-Up products should be removed immediately from the shelves of hardware and other stores in NYS. Consequently, we support Senate Bill S126/Assembly Bill A8889 which prohibits the sale and distribution of glyphosate and products containing glyphosate, and urge its sponsors to resubmit it in the 2019 legislative session.**

## Climate Victory Gardens

Whereas, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report released in Oct. 2018 predicts as few as 12 years to dramatically reduce atmospheric carbon or risk an uninhabitable planet.

And whereas, lack of action by the US Federal government (and others), leaves realistic emergency solutions to state and local governments and non-governmental organizations;

And whereas, the fossil fuel-based food economy is a significant cause of rapid climate change, due to large mechanized industrial operations, long distance transport, synthetic fertilizers and pesticides, extensive processing, refrigeration, plastic packaging, etc.;

And whereas, restoring depleted soils through regenerative practices (e.g., planting cover crops and perennials, eliminating monocultures and tilling) could sequester up to 60 tons of carbon per acre in the soil, increase crop productivity, and improve nutrient uptake, water retention, and pest resistance while avoiding the synthetic fertilizer and pesticide treadmill;

And whereas, the ocean has become a carbon sink, causing its acidification, which harms shellfish and coral, and disrupts the food chain;

And whereas, the sustainable offshore farming of seaweed - requiring no inputs and protecting the commons - would absorb carbon and also serve as food, fertilizer, and fuel. A 300' x 300' offshore plot can grow 24 tons of seaweed in 5 months. And a 20-acre seaweed garden can remove 134 tons of carbon a year;

And whereas, fishing communities can begin offshore vertical gardens that harvest fast-growing seaweed and also bivalves that filter seawater as they take in nutrients. Unlike salmon aquaculture, seaweed and shellfish require no fertilizers, antibiotics, pesticides, or complex infrastructure, and do not become a risk to wild fish;

And whereas, through regenerative farming and gardening, both soil and seaweed, we can drawdown CO2 and feed ourselves, while healing the planet.

**The members of NOFA-NY resolve that we support state and local emergency solutions to the climate crisis, including a return to the successful WWII Victory Garden model where the government encouraged everyone to turn their lawns and yards into gardens. Climate Victory Gardens, as proposed by Green America, would use regenerative practices to quickly convert lawns, public spaces, and coastal waterways into carbon sponges and nutritious food. Every place for a land or marine garden, and every person can be part of this fast, low-tech contribution to victory over our climate crisis.**

## Nature Needs Half

Whereas, to avoid the worst of the two great environmental catastrophes — climate change and the sixth extinction crisis — looming on the horizon, several empirical studies suggest that we need to set aside about half of the terrestrial and marine realms.

**The members of NOFA-NY call for a massive, global agreement that would dramatically increase the amount of the world covered by park and indigenous protected areas — up to the Half Earth goal. Such an agreement would likely fall under the United Nation's Convention on Biological Diversity.**

## Agricultural Workforce Development

Whereas, a resilient agriculture sector in New York relies on creating and retaining a well-trained and highly skilled agricultural workforce and preparing the next generation of farmers for long-term success. New York State provides some support for agricultural workforce development through currently available programs, but more can be done to provide young farmers with the training they need to work in agriculture and eventually own their own viable operations;

And whereas, New York State has an opportunity to build on existing workforce development programs to direct new resources toward supporting more agricultural workforce training

opportunities, such as those in the Colorado Agricultural Workforce Development Program. This program provides a financial incentive to agricultural businesses, by reimbursing up to 50% of the cost of paid internships that provide real-world work experience of at least 130 hours and not more than 6 months.

**NOFA-NY encourages New York State to consider establishing a financial incentive program for workforce development that would complement existing resources by paying up to 50% of the cost of paid internships, plus health insurance, and be available for interns who pledge to farm in NYS.**

## Student Loan Forgiveness

Whereas, student loan debt is preventing many young people from pursuing careers in agriculture. Higher education often comes at a steep cost, leaving young graduates with tens of thousands of dollars in student debt. Managing debt is a challenge for any young person starting a career, but for farmers, this existing burden can prevent them from accessing the necessary credit to launch and grow their farm businesses;

And whereas, there is lobbying at the Federal level to include farming as an eligible profession through the Federal Public Service Loan Forgiveness program, but until that happens, forward-thinking state programs like the New York State Young Farmers Loan Forgiveness Incentive Program—administered by the New York State Higher Education Services Corporation—can provide some financial relief. However, as currently structured, it is difficult to qualify for the New York program. These changes could improve young farmer access to the program;

And whereas, currently, the program requires that eligible applicants be employed in a full-time managerial position on a farm, and that they apply within two years of graduating. This creates a difficult window of eligibility for an aspiring farmer to work their way into a management position within only two years after graduating. Also, if they work on a small farm, they may be performing many managerial roles without formal recognition as a manager. We recommend changing the statute to extend the window for applying for up to twenty years from graduation, but to require that they have been farming for at least five years and commit to farming in NYS;

And whereas, the program is only available to graduates of colleges and universities within New York. Opening the program to graduates of colleges and universities from other states could help attract young farmers to launch their businesses in New York.

**The members of NOFA-NY call on New York State Higher Education Services Corporation to lengthen the window of application eligibility for the New York State Young Farmers Loan Forgiveness Incentive Program, broaden eligibility to graduates of colleges outside of New York, expand eligibility to include full time positions that have a management role as well as a labor role, rather than limiting eligibility to only positions that are classified as management, and require a commitment to farming in NYS.**

## Improved Grants for Beginning Farmers to Invest in Their Operation

Whereas, access to grant funds can be a significant boon for beginning farmers who need to invest in their operation with new equipment or farm structures, but lack the access to traditional loans to finance such investments. The Empire State Development Corporation New Farmers Grant Fund Program is an important resource for beginning farmers, having provided $3.27 million in funding since 2014. But access to the program could be improved by adjusting some of the eligibility and application requirements;

And whereas, the minimum award amount of $15,000 together with the minimum 50% applicant match requirement, exclude potential participants who are in need of support for smaller projects. The program could be restructured to allow for a lower tier, or tiers, that would accommodate projects under $15,000. The match requirement could also be adjusted depending on project size. While the intent of the match requirement is clearly well intentioned—to ensure that awardees have a significant financial interest in the project—this seems duplicative since awards are also structured as reimbursements;

And whereas, many farmers grow their operations on leased land. While in some cases, long-term leases and ground leases can provide an effective solution to land access, the program does not currently allow applicants who farm on leased land to use grant funds for farm structures that are difficult to relocate;

And whereas, for some applicants, the current timing of the grant cycle creates a challenge. Farmers often make improvements to their operations in the early spring. Because awards are not announced until late spring or early summer, farmers may need to implement projects without knowing the outcome of their application, or wait a full year to move forward. Additionally, some farmers would benefit from a shorter timeline between when a project is approved and when project cost reimbursements are received.

**The members of NOFA-NY call upon the Empire State Development Corporation to improve the New Farmers Grant Fund Program in the following ways:**

- **Create a lower tier, or tiers, of award opportunities and adjust applicant match requirements.**
- **Allow farmers with long-term lease arrangements to utilize funds for construction projects constructed in such a way that they can be moved from the land with the farmer.**
- **Adjust the grant cycle to reflect the farming season and reduce processing time between awards and reimbursements.**

## Farmland for a New Generation

Whereas, beginning farmers in New York, and throughout the nation, face major barriers in getting started in farming—including finding affordable farmland;

And whereas, according to recent reports released by the National Young Farmers Coalition and the American Farm Bureau Federation, access to land is one of the biggest barriers to farming in New York and across the country;

And whereas, according to the USDA census, there were 30% fewer young farmers in New York in 2012 than in 2002;

And whereas, more than 30% of New York's farmers are 65 or older and there is evidence that over 90% of these senior farmers do not have a succession plan;

And whereas, these senior farmers own or operate nearly 2 million acres of land throughout New York State that is vulnerable to being lost to development when farmers decide to retire;

And whereas, there is renewed interest and vigor in farming, both from people who grew up in farm families and from those who did not; and, a real and immediate need to connect farmers with landowners and available land across New York State over the next decade.

**NOFA-NY supports State funding to be allocated for a Farmland for a New Generation-NY Resource Center, including a statewide website enabling farmers to find land in every region of New York and landowners to list land available for farming; and to support a Network of Regional Navigators at Cornell Cooperative extension, Land Trusts and other organizations to provide coaching and personalized assistance to farmers and landowners across New York in order to secure land deals.**

# 2018

## Drivers Licenses for Undocumented – Green Light NY

Whereas, New York currently bars hundreds of thousands of immigrants in our state from obtaining driver's licenses due to their immigration status. Without access to licenses, many immigrants are unable to purchase, register, and insure their own vehicles. As a result, they face major barriers to meeting the most basic needs of day-to-day life: traveling to work, school, grocery shopping, medical appointments, and places of worship. Out of sheer necessity, many immigrants drive without licenses, putting them at odds with law enforcement, undermining trust between police and immigrant communities, and increasing the risk that a routine traffic stop will result in arrest, detention, or even deportation; truly or truly;

And whereas, many NOFA farmer members work side by side with immigrants in our fields and work on farms started and owned by immigrants, and recognize the huge risk farm workers take every day when they drive to work on farms without a license;

And whereas, following the lead of other states, such as our neighbors in Connecticut and Vermont, expanding access to driver's licenses will allow more immigrant New Yorkers to fully understand traffic laws, pass a road test, and operate registered, inspected, and insured vehicles;

And whereas, expanded immigrant access to driver's licenses will reduce the number of uninsured vehicles on the road, thereby lowering insurance premiums for all New York motorists;

And whereas, this will allow immigrant families to more fully participate in community life and contribute to economic growth in our state.

**The members of NOFA-NY resolve that we support Green Light NY: Driving Together! to ensure equal access to driver's licenses for all residents of New York State, regardless of immigration status, and urge New York lawmakers to give a green light to driver's licenses for immigrants in our state.**

## Health Care for Farmers and Their Employees

Whereas, as business owners, farmers understand the challenges of providing health benefits for themselves and their employees. Insurance plans that seem to meet the needs of staff and families turn out to have high premiums, deductibles, copays, and out-of-network costs that are hard to afford. Plans often cut costs by locking subscribers into restricted networks and drug formularies, limiting freedom to choose the right providers or get the right medications for health care;

And whereas, each year employers must brace for premium increases, often in double digits and are unable to predict health care costs year-to-year;

And whereas, an improved Medicare-for-all, universal single-payer system of health care financing would reduce and stabilize health care costs, allowing owners and managers to focus on running businesses, rather than wasting time dealing with the complexities of providing private insurance;

And whereas, private health insurance wastes hundreds of billions of dollars on administration, hurting the nation's health, while remaining unaffordable for a third of our citizens.

**The members of NOFA-NY resolve that it's time to have a health care system that can support business in the 21st century, an improved Medicare-for-all, a single-payer universal health plan covering every resident, with fully comprehensive coverage, funded through a simplified payroll premium clearly spelled out for both employers and employees, such as the New York Health Act or similar legislation.**

## Support for National Organic Standards Board

Whereas, the authors of the Organic Foods Production Act (OFPA) and creators of the National Organic Program (NOP) designed the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) to enable significant citizen input and mechanisms to ensure the integrity and continuous improvement of organic standards;

And whereas, the National Organic Standards board (NOSB) is the only Federal Advisory Committee to the USDA that has specific statutory authority to approve additions to the National List of Approved Synthetics or Prohibited Naturals through public meetings and advisement from the 15 volunteer members from stakeholder groups in the community as well as direct input from comments to that

Board from all interested parties. (The US Secretary of Agriculture appoints the members for five-year terms from nominations from the public: the 15 volunteers include four organic farmers/growers, three environmental / resource conservationists, three consumer/public interest representatives, two organic handlers / processors, one retailer, one scientist (toxicology, ecology or biochemistry), and one USDA accredited certifier);

And whereas, recent discussions in Congress and the organic industry have called into question both the autonomy, membership and public participation of the NOSB.

**The members of NOFA-NY resolve that we support the NOSB and oppose any efforts to change the careful balance of participants or the open public discussion of issues. The National Organic Standards Board must be maintained with the strong statutory authority outlined in the OFPA, including the 15-member stakeholder positions, and bi-annual public meetings including public comment and publicly available transcripts. The Secretary of Agriculture must appoint nominees from the public who are truly representative of their designated category.**

## Stronger Enforcement of Organic Integrity by the National Organic Program

Whereas, the integrity of the organic label is dependent on consistent standards, uniform accreditation of certification agencies, and steady, thorough enforcement;

And whereas, recent reporting has revealed that the USDA National Organic Program's enforcement has been lax or failed on several accounts, both within the United States, and globally.

**The members of NOFA-NY resolve that we support strong, enforced organic standards:**

**The National Organic Program (NOP) must undergo oversight mechanisms of its own operations as outlined in International Accreditation regulations and detailed in ISO l7011.**

- **NOP must increase enforcement of standards on foreign imports including foreign organic certification agencies and product coming in through 3rd parties.**
- **NOP must improve enforcement of standards within the US by evenhanded and consistent accreditation of organic certifying agencies, both state run and private.**
- **The NOP must receive more funding for enforcement.**

## Share Cannabis Production Among Many Family-Scale Farms

Whereas, following the example of states like Colorado and California, it seems likely that NYS will legalize the production of medicinal and recreational cannabis;

And whereas, cannabis is a highly profitable crop to grow organically, and a small acreage can assure the economic viability of a farm if legislation can be passed that prevents consolidation of control of this industry in just a few hands;

And whereas, the State of Massachusetts has passed legislation that provides NY with a good model for regulating the market and allowing the lucrative market for this crop to be shared among many smaller farms.(MA Bill 3818 provides for a schedule of cultivator license fees commensurate with cultivation size and regulations to create a craft marijuana cultivator cooperative system, including: (1) a limitation on ownership of interests in a marijuana cultivator cooperative; (2) a limit on the total marijuana produced by a craft marijuana cultivator by the number of plants, surface area used for cultivation or output by weight; and (3) a reasonable fee for licensure as a craft marijuana cultivator cooperative).

**The members of NOFA-NY resolve that the Department of Agriculture and Markets should promote and encourage full participation in the regulated marijuana industry by self-employed farmers and businesses of all sizes.**

## Rapid Adoption of Renewable Energy

Whereas, we, as farmers, gardeners, and consumers who notice the conditions under which our food and fiber are raised, understand the tremendous importance of making changes in the way we live in order to mitigate the effects of global climate change;

And whereas, we see how extreme weather is making farming much more difficult, but we also understand that systems operate holistically; changing the way that we get energy to renewable systems will require our best holistic thinking in order to steadily move our society from fossil fuels to renewable energy;

And whereas, we support any and all efforts that engage citizens and empower them to change as quickly as possible from fossil fuels to renewable energy. At the same time, we understand that systemic change requires more than just goals, it also requires an understanding of the interrelated nature of business trends, social mores and individual efforts to make change, and persistence in showing a good example. Just as we have slowly convinced a large portion of our country and the world that organic and regenerative agriculture can contribute to stemming the worst impacts of global climate change, so, too, can we encourage a rapid, but holistic, move toward renewable energy.

**The members of NOFA-NY resolve that we support federal and state policies that encourage the shift to renewable energy as quickly as possible, including support for OFF Fossil Fuels for a Better Future Act (HR 3671); and for policies that incentivize use of renewable energy supplies for farmers (specifically in USDA programs) and for consumers through energy and environmental agencies as well as ongoing tax relief for renewable energy.**

## No Organic Certification for Hydroponic Crop Production

Whereas, the members of NOFA-NY in 2016 resolved that "until a clear definition of organic hydroponics in keeping with principles of organic as a soil based system based on managing

ecological balance has been provided by the NOP, certifiers should not be allowed to certify hydroponic systems";

And whereas, in the two years since, the NOP has failed to develop such a definition;

And whereas, the NOP also continues to fail to implement the 2010 NOSB resolution opposing the organic certification of hydroponic crops;

And whereas, some certifiers have continued to certify hydroponic operations which have expanded significantly, grabbing markets from family-scale organic farmers who produce crops in soil.

**The members of NOFA-NY therefore resolve that the NOP should instruct organic certification agencies to cease the certification of hydroponic crops and other non-soil based agricultural systems, such as aeroponics, under the National Organic Program and the labelling of hydroponic crops as organic**.

### Organic Checkoff

(ratified January 2018)

Whereas checkoffs have historically been damaging to small and medium sized farmers;

And whereas, the organic checkoff proposal was made with very little input from farmers;

And whereas, organic farmers are innovative and creative and have a history of finding solid solutions to the community's problems, we can do better at organic research and promotion than a mandatory adoption of a failed federal program.

**The members of NOFA-NY oppose the creation of an organic checkoff.**

## 2017

### Healthy Soil/Farming Carbon Incentives

Whereas, soil health is an essential focus of organic farming and essential to the future of human existence on the planet earth;

And whereas, increasing carbon in the soil through building organic matter (52% carbon), reducing tillage, using cover crops, rotations and compost are basic practices on organic farms;

And whereas, to reach the world wide goal of holding temperature rise to 2 degrees centigrade, it will not be sufficient to reduce carbon emissions from fossil fuels without also restoring soil carbon through regenerative organic agriculture practices;

And whereas, over 100 developed and developing countries and not-for profits have already signed onto the "4% per 1000 Initiative: soils for food security and climate," a voluntary action plan to raise soil organic matter by .4 percent per year under the Lima Paris Agenda for Action (LPAA). The French

Agriculture Ministry initiated this campaign because they have research which shows that a 0.4-percent annual growth rate in soil carbon content would make it possible to stop the present increase in atmospheric CO2 and achieve the long-term objective of limiting the average global temperature increase to the 1.5°C to 2°C threshold beyond which the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) says would lead to a climate disaster. Visit the official 4 per 1000 website to learn more.

And whereas, the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative in 9 northeast states, including NY, provides funding for greenhouse gas abatement programs.

**The members of NOFA-NY call upon the Governments of NYS and the USA to become signatories to the "4 per 1000 Initiative," and also call upon the NY DEC to allocate funding from the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative to a NY Healthy Soils Initiative that will provide funding for increased research on soil health, for identifying simple measurement tools for monitoring carbon sequestration in soils to a depth of at least 1 ½ feet, and for incentives to farmers in NYS to improve regenerative soil health practices that restore soil carbon. The members of NOFA-NY also call upon DEC to expand the Climate Smart Communities model action plans for county and municipal governments to include food and agriculture.**

## Just Wages for Farmers and Farmworkers

Whereas, wages for farmers and farmworkers are unconscionably low compared to salaries in other sectors of the economy;

And whereas, over the past 50 years, farm products have been getting a shrinking portion of the final food dollar paid by consumers.

**The members of NOFA-NY resolve to work for regulations and legislation that will increase the farmer share of the food dollar so that farm income covers the full costs of production, including living wages for farmers themselves and for all of the people who work on farms.**

## Applying the Precautionary Principle to Genetically Modified Organisms

Whereas, the precautionary principle (or precautionary approach) to risk management states that if an action or policy has a suspected risk of causing harm to the public, or to the environment, the burden of proof that it is not harmful falls on those taking an action that may or may not be a risk. The principle implies that there is a social responsibility to protect the public from exposure to harm, when scientific investigation has found a plausible risk. These protections can be relaxed only if further scientific findings emerge that provide sound evidence that no harm will result. In some legal systems, as in Law of the European Union, the application of the precautionary principle has been made a statutory requirement in some areas of law. The United Nations General Assembly has adopted the principle;

And whereas, the science of genomics is in its infancy, despite the disproportionate investment of public research dollars to the detriment of ecological alternatives;

And whereas, genetically engineered material (GEs/GMOs)* can be transferred to other crops and weeds, but once released it is impossible to "clean up" any unforeseen consequences;

And whereas, the collateral damage of genetically engineered crops can include the deaths of beneficial insects and other organisms, as well as the loss of usefulness to organic and conventional farmers of natural biological pesticides, such as Bacillus thuringiensis;

And whereas, the only potential guarantee of the safety of any specific novel or existing GMO comes from its subjection to a rigorous process of risk assessment. Such a risk assessment must protect all living beings (wild, domesticated, and human) that are necessary components of healthy farmland ecosystems. Moreover, these organisms should be protected at all stages of their life cycles, in subsequent generations, and from any substances produced by GMO crops that, even when not immediately toxic, nevertheless could interfere with the normal behavior or reduce the functioning and reproductive fitness of these organisms in other ways;

And whereas, even when individual GMO transgenes are claimed to be not harmful on the basis of existing test results and risk assessments, GMO transgenes in combination (i.e. stacked transgenes) may be potentially harmful. Such possible hazards, which exist in vast numerical permutations and which each have potentially diverse and/or serious consequences, must all be evaluated and prevented from occurring.

**The members of NOFA-NY resolve that, given the proven possibilities that GMOs could cause harm, consequences of which have already been demonstrated in scientific publications, no currently existing system of risk assessment is sufficient to achieve this task. Thus, on the grounds of the Precautionary Principle, we conclude that GMO crops, animals or microorganisms cannot be adequately tested to provide sufficient assurance of safety. They are, therefore, inappropriate for use in agriculture**.

*The following definition of Genetically Engineered Organisms (GEO/GMOs) has been recommended by the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) and adopted in the American Organic Standards of the Organic Trade Association: Genetically engineered is defined as: made with techniques that alter the molecular or cell biology of an organism by means that are not possible under natural conditions or processes. Genetic engineering includes recombinant DNA, cell fusion, micro- and macro-encapsulation, gene deletion and doubling, introducing a foreign gene, and changing the positions of genes. It shall not include breeding, conjugation, fermentation, hybridization, in-vitro fertilization and tissue culture. NOFA considers this definition to encompass new so-called gene editing technologies.

## Food Sovereignty

Whereas, Food Sovereignty asserts that the people who produce, distribute and consume food should control the mechanisms and policies of food production and distribution, rather than the corporations and market institutions that have come to dominate the global food system;

And whereas, Food Sovereignty was first introduced by the global peasant network, La Via Campesina, in 1996 in response to the United Nations World Food Summit that convened to develop a global response to growing hunger, malnutrition and concerns of agricultural capacity to feed the world;

And whereas, Food Sovereignty defines much of the work that the seven NOFA chapters have done over more than 40 years and supports NOFA-NY's mission to create a sustainable regional food system that's ecologically sound and economically viable;

And whereas, the Food Sovereignty framework is defined by the following original principles:

1. Food: A Basic Human Right - Everyone must have access to safe, nutritious and culturally appropriate food in sufficient quantity and quality to sustain a healthy life with full human dignity. Each nation should declare that access to food is a constitutional right and guarantee the development of the primary sector to ensure the concrete realization of this fundamental right.
2. Agrarian Reform - A genuine agrarian reform is necessary which gives landless and farming people – especially women – ownership and control of the land they work and returns territories to indigenous peoples. The right to land must be free of discrimination on the basis of gender, religion, race, social class or ideology; the land belongs to those who work it.
3. Protecting Natural Resources - Food Sovereignty entails the sustainable care and use of natural resources, especially land, water, and seeds and livestock breeds. The people who work the land must have the right to practice sustainable management of natural resources and to conserve biodiversity free of restrictive intellectual property rights. This can only be done from a sound economic basis with security of tenure, healthy soils and reduced use of agrochemicals.
4. Reorganizing Food Trade - Food is first and foremost a source of nutrition and only secondarily an item of trade. National agricultural policies must prioritize production for domestic consumption and food self-sufficiency. Food imports must not displace local production nor depress prices.
5. Ending the Globalization of Hunger - Food Sovereignty is undermined by multilateral institutions and by speculative capital. The growing control of multinational corporations over agricultural policies has been facilitated by the economic policies of multilateral organizations such as the WTO, World Bank and the IMF. Regulation and taxation of speculative capital and a strictly enforced Code of Conduct for TNCs is therefore needed.
6. Social Peace - Everyone has the right to be free from violence. Food must not be used as a weapon. Increasing levels of poverty and marginalization in the countryside, along with the growing oppression of ethnic minorities and indigenous populations, aggravate situations of injustice and hopelessness. The ongoing displacement, forced urbanization, repression and increasing incidence of racism of smallholder farmers cannot be tolerated.
7. Democratic control - Smallholder farmers must have direct input into formulating agricultural policies at all levels. The United Nations and related organizations will have to undergo a process of democratization to enable this to become a reality. Everyone has the right to honest, accurate information and open and democratic decision-making. These rights form

the basis of good governance, accountability and equal participation in economic, political and social life, free from all forms of discrimination. Rural women, in particular, must be granted direct and active decision making on food and rural issues.

**The members of NOFA-NY hereby resolve that the concept of Food Sovereignty (food as a basic human right, agrarian reform, protection of natural resources, domestic production and consumption of food, ending hunger, social peace, and democratic control), as understood by the world community, is in line with our basic principles and beliefs. NOFA-NY will uphold the principles and work to actualize them within the organization, among our networks and in coordination with our allies. Furthermore, we resolve to support policy initiatives that uphold the principles, as well as fight policies that threaten and undermine them. Thereby, NOFA-NY resolves to participate in the movement toward Food Sovereignty.**

## Seed Sovereignty

Whereas, Seeds are a foundation of life, and humans have a history of using and sharing seeds that have led to the creation and supported civilizations for over 10,000 years;

And whereas, "As a fundamental input in agriculture, seed serves as a farmer's first defense against pest, disease, and other production challenges. Seed genetics also largely dictate the quality and integrity of our food – from appearance to flavor to nutritional content. In this way, seed holds endless potential for transforming the food we eat and how we farm, especially when coupled with the principles that helped build the organic movement – the principles of health, ecology, fairness, and care;

And whereas, "…seed is much more than an input. It's a living, natural resource that demands careful management to ensure a secure and healthy food supply. Currently, the dominant seed system abuses intellectual property rights and fiercely protects them. They discourage farmers from participating in research and seed saving." (OSA, State of Organic Seed 2016);

And whereas, Seed Sovereignty – the right of farmers, gardeners and all individuals to use, exchange, and sell their own seeds and plants – is foundational to agriculture, food production, and life on this planet.

**The members of NOFA-NY hereby resolve to support and initiate efforts in the education, legislative, regulatory, and other arenas on a federal, state, and local level that encourage seed saving and the principles of seed sovereignty.**

BACKGROUND:

Principles Guiding an Alternative Seed Protection Model:

- Seed is a limited natural resource that must be managed in a manner that enhances its long-term viability and integrity

- The equitable exchange of plant genetics enhances innovation and curtails the negative impacts of concentrated ownership and power in decision making
- The maintenance and improvement of genetic and biological diversity are essential for the success of sustainable food systems and greater global food supply
- Farmers have inherent rights as agricultural stewards, including the ability to use, save, store and sell seed, and are key partners in seed system development
- Public research should serve the public good and remain in the public domain

Seed Libraries: Seed Libraries support the non-commercial sharing of seeds without legal barriers of labeling fees and germination testing requirements in seed library or interpersonal seed sharing.

The Federal Government must reinvigorate public, classical plant and animal breeding programs and provide farmers with publicly-available, regionally adapted seeds and breeds. Current funding streams for these research programs are massively unbalanced in favor of lab-based methods at the expense classical, field-based plant and animal breeding.

Independent Initiatives: The Open Source Seed Initiative (OSSI) is an example of a voluntary, non-legal pledge and variety-labeling platform which aims to preserve rights of farmers, to freely use, save, replant, and improve seed. Other legal structures are needed to support the development and protection of open-source seeds and end utility patents.

Future Needs of Seed Sovereignty:

- Policies that acknowledge the significance of public plant breeding, organic plant breeding and support public plant breeders.
- Education about regionally appropriate seed sources and organic equivalents.
- The maintenance and availability of Open Pollinated varieties.
- Regional networking to support resilient seed systems.
- Creation of a national organic trials network.
- Raising the bar on USDA/NOP organic seed requirement.
- Addressing problems of market concentration and restrictive intellectual property rights.

## Country of Origin Labeling

**The members of NOFA-NY demand quick reinstatement of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) requirements for Country of Origin Labeling for beef, pork and chicken. Citizens have the right to know the origin of all food products.**

## Organic Checkoff

Whereas checkoffs have historically been damaging to small and medium sized farmers;

And whereas, the organic checkoff proposal was made with very little input from farmers;

And whereas, organic farmers are innovative and creative and have a history of finding solid solutions to the community's problems, we can do better at organic research and promotion than a mandatory adoption of a failed federal program.

**The members of NOFA-NY oppose the creation of an organic checkoff.**

# 2016

## Incentives for Farming Career

Whereas, the members of NOFA-NY believe that Farming should be honored as public service. As the National Young Farmers Coalition states in their report "Farming as Public Service" Farmers provide a public service because:

Agriculture meets one of our most basic needs—producing the food we eat;

Farmers manage and steward almost a billion acres of land, which is about half of the land area of the U.S.;

Farmers support rural economies, providing jobs and income. To help bring young people into farm and ranch careers in this critical time of need, we urge Congress to add farmers to the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program;

And whereas, The Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) Program, which provides loan forgiveness for people who enter professions that serve a public good, but have salaries too limited to manage student loan debt, is a good example of the kind of debt relief program we support. The PSLF provides debt relief for people who have proven their commitment to farming as a career by forgiving the remaining balance on Direct Loans only after a person has made ten years of payments while working in farming;

And whereas, The National Young Farmers Coalition surveyed NYFC members and supporters in the fall of 2014 to find out what impact student loans are having on young and prospective farmers. The average student loan debt carried by the 700-plus survey respondents is $35,000. Fifty-three percent of respondents are currently farming but struggle to make their student loan payments. Nearly 30% didn't pursue farming or are waiting to start farming because their student loan payments are more than a farming salary would support.

**The members of NOFA-NY hereby resolve that as an incentive to encourage more people to become farmers, the Federal and State programs that provide debt relief for other public service jobs, such as teaching, medicine, public interest attorneys, etc., should include farming as an occupation eligible for student loan debt relief.**

## Emerging Technology and Novel Organisms

Whereas, Precaution is at the basis of some U.S. environmental and food and drug legislation, although the principle is not mentioned by name. These laws incorporate foresight, prevention, and care, and many give regulators authority to take action to prevent possible but unproven harm. One of the best examples of precautionary action is the National Environmental Policy Act. NEPA is precautionary in two ways: 1) It emphasizes foresight and attention to consequences by requiring an environmental impact assessment for any federally funded project, and 2) it mandates consideration of alternative plans;

And whereas, other laws are precautionary in intent. The Endangered Species Act sets the goal of protecting biodiversity. The Clean Water Act establishes strict goals to restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the nation's waters. Unfortunately, precautionary action has been the exception rather than the rule in U.S. agricultural policy. Instead, even laws with precautionary intent and substance have been undermined, overridden, and poorly enforced. The application of the precautionary principle in agriculture is becoming ever more important as new and novel technologies and organisms are being promoted by industry to solve agricultural issues;

And whereas, New York is a high profile state for emerging technologies and novel organisms in agriculture. Currently, Oxitec is working with Cornell University on a plan to release GM diamondback moths (scientific name Plutella xylostella) as part of an experiment within the grounds of the Cornell University New York State Agricultural Experiment Station (NYSAES) in Geneva, New York. Oxitec, recently purchased by US-based Intrexon Corporation for $160 million, has been funded by venture capital and UK government grants. In addition to GE Diamondback moths, Oxitec is developing other GM agricultural pests, such as fruit flies, bollworms and olive flies, and GM mosquitoes. All the company's GM insects are intended to be released repeatedly in large numbers (multiple millions on an experimental scale, or billions if commercialized) into the open to mate with the wild species;

And whereas, Oxitec's GM mosquitoes have been released in open experiments in the Cayman Islands, Malaysia, Panama and Brazil, but only Brazil has decided to continue with these trials. Applying the precautionary principle, no country has yet given approval for releases of GM mosquitoes on a commercial scale. Oxitec has previously sought to release GM diamondback moths in the UK, GM olive flies in Spain, and GM fruit flies in Brazil, but none of these experiments have taken place, due to concerns about potential impacts on the environment and human health and the likelihood of contaminating fruit and vegetables with GM insects. The current permit to release GM moths in New York State would therefore be the first open release anywhere in the world of GM insects with the "female-killing" trait;

And whereas, for the health and safety of humans and the environment and in order to protect the viability of New York State's organic agricultural community and its economic value to New York State, we urge the use of the precautionary principle be rigorously applied to the trials of the GE Diamondback Moth and all other emerging and novel organisms and technologies.

**The members of NOFA-NY hereby resolve to urge the use of the precautionary principle as the guide for the testing and implementation of emerging technologies and novel organisms to solve**

**agronomic problems. History has shown that emerging technologies and novel organisms have the potential to cause serious and at times irreversible harm to human and environmental health when released into the wild. As a part of any proposed or current trial or implementation of emerging technology and novel organisms, we call for businesses, organizations, universities, governments, and individuals engaged in these trials/implementation to:**

**Fully explore and identify alternatives to deploying novel organisms or other technologies, including organic and sustainable methods to addressing pest, disease, fertility, and other agronomic issues.**

**Place the burden of proof of both safety and efficacy, as well as the liability for consequences of the technology or organism, including unintended contamination or exposure to humans or the environment, on the proponents/owners of the activity/technology rather than on victims or potential victims of the activity/technology.**

**Set and work toward goals that protect human health and the environment collaboratively with other stakeholders; and**

**Bring democracy and transparency to the process of reviewing, approving, and managing trials and implementation. This includes clear communication to all stakeholders and the community before trials are approved to allow for appropriate public discourse and comment, sharing results and impacts of any trials that occur, as well as any new information that comes forward during implementation.**

## Organic Agriculture

Whereas, USDA/NOP is about to promulgate standards for organic aquaculture. It is likely to include the allowance of open-water net pens and wild caught feed. NOFA believes that there are many paths to organic aquaculture that could comply with basic principles of organic, but confining fish to pens in open water leads to unhealthy fish and adds to water pollution because confinement practices compete with wild fisheries and other marine life by reducing their opportunities for food. Open net pens also threaten marine ecosystems with the spread of disease and parasites. This is not organic, and USDA/NOP should not approve these systems just because they are approved elsewhere in the world;

And whereas, Land-based, closed-loop, recirculating aquaculture systems have the potential to meet the spirit, intent, and letter of the Organic Foods Production Act (OFPA). These systems should be assessed for their compliance to promote biodiversity and ecological harmony and rely upon the system's underlying ecology to feed plants and animals. Synthetic materials must not be routinely used to fulfill or prop-up system functions;

And whereas, USDA/NOP, in consultation with the NOSB should move slowly and deliberately in allowing organic fish, and certainly make sure that any allowance fully complies with the Organic Foods Production Act.

**The members of NOFA-NY hereby resolve that open-water net pen aquaculture systems of any type cannot be organic because inputs and outputs of the system cannot be monitored or controlled and neither can the exposure of a fish raised in this system to synthetic, toxic chemicals that could be present in the marine environment.**

**In addition, confinement of migratory and anadromous fish (fish migrating from salt water to spawn in fresh water), such as salmon, would not allow them to express their natural behavior, which is a requirement of organic agriculture.**

**Finally, organic livestock production requires 100% organic feed, so wild caught fish, fish meal and/or fish oil used as feed should be prohibited as feed for organic aquaculture systems so that organic aquaculture products meet standards consistent with other organic animal products.**

For more background, see "Ocean based Fish Farming: Pollution Pathogens and Environmental Impacts" from the Center for Food Safety.

## Organic Certification for Hydroponic Production

Whereas, The central theme and foundation of organic farming is the maintenance and management of organic matter in the soil, along with the diverse populations of organisms that are the foundation of soil ecosystems. Macro and micro-organisms found in abundance in a well- maintained soil tie together a web of interactions that conserve and recycle the elements among all the living organisms and minerals in the system. It is the management of this ecological balance that defines organic production. Any system labeled organic, (including hydroponics) should also be based on management of this ecological balance;

And whereas: Hydroponics is the most widely used term for the production of crops without soil. That system of production most often provides nutrients needed to produce a crop by suspending the roots in a nutrient rich solution grown in moist inert material. Nutrients most commonly used in hydroponic nutrient solutions are synthetic salts. Hydroponic solutions can be made using only natural materials, including natural mineral salts and organic residuals. While some certifiers believe that this makes the production system organic, other certifiers do not because they believe that there is much more to organic production than simply adding materials for crop fertilization or crop protection;

And whereas: Based on these differing interpretations, some organic certifiers are certifying some hydroponic operations, while others are not allowing the certification of hydroponics. NOC finds this differing implementation of the NOP standards by certifiers disturbing. Inconsistencies among certifiers weaken the organic label and reflect poorly on the industry. The NOSB agrees. In 2010 the NOSB made a recommendation to the NOP in which they provided guidance on which kinds of soilless production systems should or should not be labeled organic;

And whereas: The NOSB Crops Committee Recommendation from January 2010 "Production Standards for Terrestrial Plants in Containers and Enclosures" underscores this point. The recommendation stresses that organic farmers are not just tillers of the soil, but also stewards of the

soil ecology on the farm and shepherds of the myriad organisms that support thriving soil ecosystems. They do not just open bags of nutrients to feed crops and then become certified organic farmers. The USDA National Organic Program recognized this foundation of organic when they wrote the Organic Rule. At the heart of the regulation of organic production (7 CFR Part 205 National Organic Program; Final Rule) is the definition:

Organic Production- A production system that is managed in accordance with the Act and regulations in this part to respond to site-specific conditions by integrating cultural, biological, and mechanical practices that foster cycling of resources, promote ecological balance, and conserve biodiversity;

And whereas, In organic agriculture, soils are valued for the multiple functions a biologically diverse soil food web provides, not just as a substrate for holding plant roots so the plant grows upright. Many soilless systems, including hydroponics, represent the antithesis of organic production systems because they aim to diminish the ecological complexity of the natural production systems. By reducing the living organisms in a hydroponic system to solely the crop, the ecological balance is lost. Such a 'system' merely feeds the crop with simple inputs of 'required' nutrients. On the other hand, soilless crop production that is part of a complex ecological system may fit the definition of organic as laid out in the Rule (for example, transplants which eventually are planted in soil, or a system of aquaponics that cycles nutrients from fish through plants and back, and adds worm castings and compost).

**The members of NOFA-NY hereby resolve that until a clear definition of organic hydroponics in keeping with principles of organic as a soil based system based on managing ecological balance has been provided by the NOP, certifiers should not be allowed to certify hydroponic systems. Certifiers need to be directed as to which systems may be certified, and which do not meet the criteria and are not eligible for organic certification. Together with the National Organic Coalition (NOC), NOFA-NY urges the NOP to write "NOP Instruction to Certifiers" that leads to Rulemaking. The instruction should include clear criteria that follow the NOSB 2010 recommendation, and adhere to the definition of organic production presented in the Rule.**

## Renewable Energy

Whereas, New York State is in the midst of one of the most ambitious programs in the US to accelerate the transition from the traditional way in which electric energy was generated, managed and delivered, to a completely new, less environmentally damaging, model of an electric energy system. An excellent overview of this transition, termed by the NYS Public Service Commission the REV (Reforming the Energy Vision), can be found in this recent article by David Roberts, New York's Revolutionary Plan to Remake Its Power Utilities. Our support for a move to more distributed energy generation (known as "DER") and efforts to make our electric grid more efficient and ready to accept green energy from DER is essential, as the alternative to this approach is an ever-greater reliance on natural gas from fracking, which our policy identifies as a dangerous practice that should be banned worldwide. Currently, New York is experiencing a trend of increasing use of natural gas in electric generation, consistent with national trends, as explained by the US Energy Information Agency.

Additionally, there is an unprecedented rise in the use of natural gas for heating in New York State, as explained in this recent article by Scott Waldman and Bill Mahoney. If natural gas increases continue, they will result in the need for vast networks of pipelines, compressor stations, and storage facilities to be capitalized and funded across the state. These projects represent real threats to our farmland, as so well explained in the book by past NOFA-NY Conference Plenary Speaker, Atina Diffley, in her book Turn Here Sweet Corn. These pipelines, as Atina points out, seem to specifically target organic farms-- as natural gas companies recognize that those of us who do not use their synthetic fertilizers made of natural gas are less likely to support the growth of their industry. In New York, we now have the political leadership and will to transition to greener alternatives for heat and power, but the State is looking to the private sector-- which includes us -- to change the direction of the capital markets from supporting the build-out of additional natural gas delivery infrastructure to the widespread support of wind, solar and other renewable DER (distributed energy resources). Now is the time for us to urge divesting from the dirty fuels that threaten to decrease the clean land available to farm, and encourage investment in the technologies compatible with organic farming, which can provide revenue streams to our farms, as well as cleaner energy for our communities.

**The members of NOFA-NY hereby resolve to support the transition to renewable energy sources and join in the call for institutions and individuals to divest from fossil fuel-based energy industries. We support investment in community-based distributed renewable electric and heat energy systems that do not harm ecosystems and that support healthy soil and clean water required for organic agriculture to thrive in our region. We particularly support community-based distributed energy generation using renewable energy sources because community-based projects allow us to keep our energy local, which results in greater system efficiency and resilience for the general public and for farmers.**

# 2015

## Nanotech Materials

Whereas, IFOAM defines nanomaterials as follows: “Substances deliberately designed, engineered and produced by human activity to be in the nanoscale range (approximately 1-300 nm) because of very specific properties or compositions (e.g. shape, surface properties, or chemistry) that result only in that nanoscale. Incidental particles in the nanoscale range created during traditional food processing such as homogenization, milling, churning, and freezing and naturally occurring particles in the nanoscale range are not intended to be included in this definition”;

And whereas, there are more than 1,600 consumer products containing man-made nano-ingredients on the market today and the Project on Emerging Nanotechnologies database lists 96 food items currently on US grocery shelves that contain unlabeled nano-ingredients; and,

And whereas, research indicates that they can have a high toxicity to aquatic life, bacteria and human cells and tissues in vitro due to the ability of nanoparticles to be directly taken up by individual cells

and cell nuclei (where they may cause DNA mutation and even cell death), especially through the respiratory system, and to pass the blood brain barrier; and

Whereas, the US Food and Drug Administration which oversees the safety of the food supply, acknowledges in a 2012 draft report, that 1. nanoparticles pose risks that are substantially different from those of their regular-sized counterparts and 2) "particle size, surface area, aggregation/agglomeration, or shape may impact absorption, distribution, metabolism and excretion (ADME) and potentially the safety of the nano-engineered food substance," and

And whereas, nanomaterials are advertised as a component of market-available fertilizers—designed to increase the effectiveness of fertilizers by making them the same size as plant and root pores—but there is no pre-market safety assessment, therefore:

**The members of NOFA-NY hereby resolve that manufactured nanomaterials are intentionally transformed in new and novel ways that render them unnatural or 'synthetic' by most common forms of understanding, and should be defined as one of the "excluded methods" as defined in the regulations of the National Organic Program (7 CFR § 205.2), and be considered as inputs excluded from organic production, processing and packaging, even if they are identical in name and chemical composition to natural and permitted substances and materials. In the future, these materials could be reconsidered if they have been proven safe through peer reviewed science and compatible with the principles of Organic Agriculture.**

## Food Hubs and Food Procurement Policy

Whereas, Food Hubs facilitate the ability of small and mid-sized farms to gain access to wholesale and institutional markets and distribution channels, as well as to add value-added services that cannot easily be accomplished on-farm, such as peeling, chopping, freezing, drying and packaging;

And whereas, farmers selling to these larger markets often are subject to unfair pricing and contracts, "take it or leave it," without negotiation, and are unable to cover their full costs of production;

And whereas, far too many of the jobs in the food system do not provide living wages, forcing people who work long hours to resort to government support programs like SNAP to be able to provide for their families, therefore:

**The members of NOFA-NY resolve that whenever public monies are invested in the development of food hubs or similar improvements in the food supply chain and when municipal, county and state government create food procurement policies, NOFA-NY shall advocate that there be the requirement that farmers will be paid fairly negotiated prices that fully cover their costs of production and any jobs created will be living wage jobs with market competitive benefits.**

## Traditional Cheese Making

**The members of NOFA-NY resolve that in making value-added products, farmers should be free to use traditional materials such as wooden boards to age and store cheeses.**

## GMO Labeling

Whereas, bona fide GMO labeling is not currently the law of the land;

And, whereas, we support and encourage local, state and national food campaigns to promote GMO awareness, therefore:

**The members of NOFA-NY resolve that we support and encourage local, state and national food campaigns to promote GMO awareness by communicating to the public that over 75% of processed foods already contain a GMO.**

## Synthetic Biology

Whereas, Synthetic biology (Synbio) broadly refers to the use of computer-assisted, biological engineering to design and construct new synthetic biological parts, devices and systems that do not exist in nature and the redesign of existing biological organisms. While synthetic biology incorporates the techniques of molecular biology, it differs from recombinant DNA technology in that synthetic biology introduces synthetically constructed parts and is not limited to the modification of natural organisms, but also extends to the construction of new life forms with no natural counterpart. Additionally, according to Friends of the Earth, synthetic biology is working at an increased level of complexity not seen in "traditional" genetic engineering. Like genetic engineering, synbio involves tinkering with DNA, except instead of transferring genes between unrelated species—such as putting genes from a bacteria into corn—synbio involves synthesizing entirely new life forms or gene constructs in a laboratory that are sometimes released into the environment, which happens with no real regulatory oversight or labeling;

And whereas, The ways in which synthetic organisms will interact with the natural environment are unpredictable and potentially devastating and permanent. While other types of pollution can be cleaned up and do not breed, synthetic biological creations are designed to self-replicate and, once released into the environment, they will be impossible to recall. A synthetic organism designed for a specific task, such as eating up oil from oil spills in the ocean, could swap genes with naturally occurring organisms and outcompete them, potentially disrupting entire ecosystems as a new class of invasive species.

Examples of a few of the current uses of synbio from Jaydee Hanson, Senior Policy Analyst with Center for Food Safety:

- Evolva is planning to market its synthetic biology version of vanillin this year and plans to market synthetic biology copies of stevia and saffron flavors.
- Solazyme is developing a "synthetized in algae" version of cocoa butter, as well as an oil designed to mimic the properties of palm oil.
- Amyris, the first company in the field, is already marketing its farnasene oil to a Japanese pharmaceutical company and to the US military as "jet fuel."

And whereas, These potential threats underscore the need for a precautionary approach. As a first step, we are pushing for a moratorium on the release and commercial use of synthetic organisms until there is a better understanding of the risks and appropriate regulations are in place;

And whereas, “Synthetic biology is an extreme form of genetic engineering that is developing rapidly with little oversight or regulation. A strict adherence to the Precautionary Principle is fundamental in guaranteeing the safe development of synthetic biology. A precautionary approach requires mandatory, synthetic biology-specific oversight mechanisms to account for the unique characteristics of synthetic organisms and products of synthetic biology. Within those mechanisms, ensuring public health, worker safety and ecosystem resilience requires a committed focus on critical risk research and immediate action to mitigate potential exposures until safety is demonstrated. Protection of the public includes a ban on using synthetic biology to manipulate the human genome in any form. Decisive action must also be taken to protect the environment and human health, and to avoid contributing to social and economic injustice. Developers and manufacturers must be responsible for the safety and effectiveness of their processes and products, and must retain liability for any adverse impacts. Throughout, oversight must be transparent and provide public access to information regarding decision-making processes, safety testing and products. Open, meaningful and full public participation at every level is essential and should include consideration of synthetic biology’s wide-ranging effects, including ethical, social and economic” (Friends of the Earth Petition, 2015) therefore;

The members of NOFA-NY resolve that manufactured synbio materials are intentionally transformed in new and novel ways that renders them unnatural or ‘synthetic’ by most common forms of understanding, and should be defined as one of the "excluded methods" defined in the regulation at § 205.2 Terms defined, and should be considered as a process excluded from organic production, processing and packaging, even if Synbio products are identical in name and chemical composition to natural and permitted substances and materials. In the future, these materials could be reconsidered if they have been proven safe through peer-reviewed science and compatible with the principles of Organic Agriculture. For more information see Synthetic Biology 101 by Friend of the Earth.

# 2014

## Neonicotinoids

Whereas, these newer chemical compounds were introduced as substitutes for older insecticides such as carbamates and organophosphates that have proven to be high risk for people and the environment, neonicotinoids are poisonous to birds and are implicated in colony collapse syndrome that has ravished populations of honey bees;

And whereas, neonicotinoids are relatively persistent in the environment and mobile in water so that they can find their way into streams, wetlands, and lakes where they may harm aquatic life as well as birds and bees;

And whereas, seed for major crops like corn, grown on over 90 million acres in the U.S., is now routinely coated with these systemic chemicals that travel through the plant and end up in pollen (and the edible parts of the crop) where they are picked up by pollinators, or the treated seeds are eaten by birds, where they may cause mortality or reproductive problems, therefore:

**The members of NOFA-NY hereby resolve that the EPA should ban the use of neonicotinoids and other agrichemicals that harm bees, pollinators so essential to our food supply.**

## CSA and SNAP

Whereas, NOFA-NY members agree that people of all income levels should have access to organically grown food from our NY organic farms. To increase access by low-income people, NOFA-NY has been providing information to help organic farmers gain authorization from USDA to accept SNAP benefits (formerly called Food Stamps). For several years, SNAP benefits have come in the form of Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) swipe cards that resemble credit cards. While USDA allows farms that do Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) to accept SNAP payments with an EBT card, USDA does not allow payment in advance for more than two weeks at a time and prefers that farms process weekly payments. This results in a greatly increased administrative burden for CSA farms;

And whereas, in order to qualify to administer food stamps, Community Based Organizations have to supply a social security number of an executive director or board member. As this person is not the owner of a business, we feel it is unreasonable to require them to supply this information as this may stop some organizations from moving forward with licensing, therefore:

**The members of NOFA-NY resolve that USDA should simplify the process for EBT customers to participate in Community Supported Agriculture (CSA). Two possibilities for EBT policy changes that would address this are:**

1) **allowing EBT customers who are joining a CSA to pay ahead one month at a time for their share, or**
2) **2) allowing EBT customers to sign and post-date enough vouchers for the entire CSA season. Both of these changes would allow the farmer to bill for each CSA share on the day it is delivered rather than having to connect with the customer every week.**

**The members of NOFA-NY resolve that the USDA should allow CSA farms to keep their EBT machines year-round, even during months of no income.**

**The members of NOFA-NY resolve that the USDA should allow Community Based Organizations (CBOs) to use their Federal EIN number on the SNAP licensing application, rather than an individual's social security number, to increase the ability for CBOs to support EBT customers participating in CSA.**

## Free Trade Agreements

Whereas, our government has been engaging in secret trade negotiations with the other governments around the Pacific Rim and across the Atlantic;

And whereas, the NAFTA promised an increase of 200,000 jobs in the United States, but resulted in a job loss of over 250,000;

And whereas, since the NAFTA and other free trade agreements, imports of fresh produce from Canada, Mexico and Central America have grown faster than US exports to those countries resulting in serious economic damage to the farmers of the Northeast;

And whereas, the Trans-Atlantic and Pacific Rim Treaties may allow corporations the right to sue legal local, state and national governments for control of public resources, such as the fresh waters of the Great Lakes;

And whereas, the Trans-Atlantic and Pacific Rim Treaties may allow corporations to sue legal governments for the removal of standards or laws designed to protect public health and safety if those laws or standards increase corporate operating costs or reduce profits; therefore;

**The membership of NOFA-NY resolves that the United States government should withdraw from the Trans-Atlantic and Pacific Rim Free Trade negotiations, and that our representatives in government should vote against the fast track process and against ratifying the Trans-Atlantic and Pacific Rim Treaties.**

## Force Majeure by Gas Companies

Whereas, the “force majeure” clause is a common contractual clause that frees both parties from liability or obligation when an extraordinary event or circumstance beyond the control of the parties, such as a war, strike, riot, crime, or an event described by the legal term Act of God (such as hurricane, flooding, earthquake, volcanic eruption, etc.), prevents one or both parties from fulfilling their obligations under the contract;

And whereas, most force majeure clauses do not excuse a party's non-performance entirely, but only suspend it for the duration of the force majeure; therefore:

**The membership of NOFA-NY opposes the application of "force majeure" by gas companies to extend gas leases when the delay in drilling is due to government regulation.**

## Genetically Engineered Apples

**The membership of NOFA-NY opposes the introduction of GE Arctic Apples in the United States of America and requests APHIS to extend the comment period.**

# 2013

## Glyphosate Ban

Whereas, glyphosate (commonly marketed under Monsanto's brand name Roundup) is already used heavily in agriculture, and scientifically has been shown to be a powerful soil biocide, resulting in the increase of microbial plant pathogens, some of which form mycotoxins. Through natural selection, glyphosate is creating the rapid development of herbicide-resistant weeds, limiting the longevity of this chemical as a weed control tool. Glyphosate is being implicated as a possible threat to animal health and ecological diversity, both through its direct effects and through the effects of mycotoxins in our food. Given the real and documented risk of these toxic effects, there is no valid justification to increase the use of glyphosate in the environment by growing or developing new glyphosate-resistant plants, or by any other means;

And whereas, the discovery of glyphosate in the bloodstream of unborn babies suggests that everyone in North America may have glyphosate in their systems due to the enormous agricultural, suburban and urban acreage around the country doused with this herbicide. This presence, persistence and the consequent problems from glyphosate use are inconsistent with industry-funded research and claims resulting in U.S. Food & Drug Administration approval of this herbicide and the patented crops genetically-engineered to tolerate it.

And whereas, there are much better ways to control weeds, improve soil health, grow healthy nutrient dense crops, and make for productive, profitable farms than increasing the use of glyphosate, 2,4-D, dicamba and other synthetic herbicides. Rather than increasing the volume of these chemicals used by perpetuating unwise farming practices and the continuing development of herbicide-resistant GMOs, it is much more important for government to encourage farmers to adopt alternative practices that improve soil health, soil microbial diversity and competition, natural weed control and crop health, and produce healthy, reasonably priced food and feed.

**The members of NOFA-NY resolve that in view of the many troubling questions about livestock and human infertility, health and environmental impacts linked to the production and consumption of round-up ready GMOs, the precautionary principle requires us to ban glyphosate until it is proven safe. We support mandatory disclosure of all glyphosate-related research findings, including any industry-funded research that may reveal threats to public well- being. We support government mandates allowing independent research of genetically-engineered crops, including any patented chemicals these GMO's have been engineered to work with. We urge testing for glyphosate be made a regular procedure that doctors can prescribe for their patients.**

## Manufacturer Responsibility for Consequences of 2-4D and Dicamba

Whereas, there is a likely increase in the use of 2-4D and Dicamba as Round-up's effectiveness as an herbicide decreases and GMO varieties resistant to 2-4D and Dicamba are commercialized;

And whereas, organic and conventional farms that choose to grow non-GMO crops should not suffer crop losses or contamination due to the actions of these herbicides and should be able to seek compensation from the manufacturer.

And whereas, 2-4D and Dicamba must be used much more carefully than Round-up and have a significant risk of volatilizing, causing problems well beyond the buffer zone. For example, a sprayer could be some distance from the damaged crop and it may not be possible to identify which farm actually did the spraying, which impacted the crop on a nearby organic or non-GMO farm.

**The members of NOFA-NY reaffirm our position that the manufacturers of 2-4D and Dicamba herbicides must be held responsible and liable for the consequences of the spraying of these herbicides. The farm that suffers damage should be able to claim compensation that reflects the farm's actual losses; i.e., if the farm is 100% retail, the loss in retail sales, not an arbitrary wholesale value.**

## State Minimum Wage for Farmworkers

**The members of NOFA-NY support linking the floor for farmworkers' hourly wage to the state minimum wage or the federal minimum wage, whichever is higher.**

## Liquid Natural Gas Exportation

Whereas, the extraction and production of natural gas puts our soil, and water at risk, adding greenhouse gases to the air;

And whereas, developing a non-renewable resource that will be exported does not increase US energy independence while it harms all farmers, both organic and conventional, endangering the purity of locally produced food.

**The members of NOFA-NY oppose the international export of Natural Gas derived from sources within the United States and the development of Liquid Natural Gas international export facilities in the United States.**

## Federal Ethanol Purchasing Mandates

**The members of NOFA-NY oppose federal ethanol purchasing mandates because these mandates raise the price of feed and food.**

## Extension of the National Labor Relations Act & Fair Labor Standards Act

**The members of NOFA-NY call for an extension of the National Labor Relations Act and the Fair Labor Standards Act to all currently exempted groups and for the expansion of unemployment**

**insurance coverage to all workers with a change in the funding mechanism to make the expense more affordable to small-scale employers.**

# 2012

## Reside Testing By Organic Certifiers

Whereas, we support the National Organic Program's (NOP) progress towards defining residue testing, we note that the National Organic Program is a process-based standard, rather than a product-based claim:

"The organically-produced label authorized under this bill therefore pertains to the production methods used to produce the food rather than the content of the food." (Senate Report Accompanying S. 2830, the Food, Agriculture, Conservation and Trade Act, S. Report 101-357, p. 292).

And a mandatory product residue testing program as outlined in the NOP rule on residue testing comes perilously close to re-defining organic as a product claim;

And whereas, the NOP has not been clear as to the actual purpose of testing. Is it simply to avoid fraud or to also evaluate the possibility of contamination, either purposeful (through use of a prohibited substance or excluded method) or inadvertent (such as through drift, soil contamination, hygiene, or adventitious presence);

And whereas, by requiring that 5% of all operations be tested, the costs related to this rule are not scale neutral. Data from the Accredited Certifiers Association (ACA) shows that the NOP estimate of this testing regime reflecting 1% of an ACA's operating budget is only accurate for the larger certifiers, but can range to as high as 11% for the smallest of certifiers. In addition, given economies of scale, it will be the smaller certifiers who will pay more for tests, and will also be the ones who will need to increase their certification fees to implement this;

And whereas, the Organic Foods Production Act (OFPA) states that the National Organic Standards Board shall advise USDA "on the testing of organically produced agricultural products for residues caused by unavoidable residual environmental contamination."

**We thereby resolve: The NOP should withdraw its Rule on Residue Testing and ask the National Organic Standards Board to propose a residue testing regimen for Accredited Certifiers that includes the full range of testing of organic farms, including plant tissue, soil, water, inputs, or feed, that is needed to assure the organic integrity of the USDA Organic label and to discourage fraud. This testing should not be random, but based on careful risk assessment or complaints from the public, consistent among all certifiers, including the certifiers of organic products imported into the US, and not place an undue financial burden on the smaller certification programs.**

## Pure Honey Law

Whereas honey is defined the natural sweet substance produced by honey bees from the nectar of plants or excretions of plant sucking insects on the living parts of plants, which bees collect, transform by combining such substance with specific substances of their own, deposit, dehydrate, store, and leave in the honeycomb to ripen and mature;

And whereas, approximately 60% of honey consumed in the United States is imported; domestic supply cannot meet demand. Unfortunately, some of this imported honey has been tested and found to be adulterated with other components such as corn and rice syrups, or beet sugar. There have also been contamination issues, as antibiotics such as chloramphenicol and quinolone have been found in some imported honeys;

And whereas, in New York State, if honey is tested and found to be adulterated, there is no definitive recourse, because there is no law in New York that technically describes what honey is. The current regulation, section 205: defining honey, is a one sentence dictionary style definition of honey, dating back to 1902, and has never been revised.

**We thereby resolve: We support the upgrade of the honey detailed in law S3321/A5164 that lists the parameters by which any item labeled pure honey, must meet. These parameters include sucrose level, moisture content, fructose/glucose levels, and floral exceptions and give the consumer confidence that when they buy a jar labeled "pure honey" there is truth in labeling in New York State.**

On July 24 2010, the Empire State Honey Producers Association, the state beekeeping organization of New York, voted to adopt as a resolution the proposed honey definition. Other NY beekeeper groups voiced their support: Western New York Honey Producers Assn., Southern Tier Beekeepers, Southern Adirondack Beekeepers Assn. The Ontario Finger Lakes Beekeepers, with almost 500 members, also favor a new honey law.

## Additional Resolution to the 2009 Resolution on the SGEIS-Methane Mitigation

New number 11 Added to Existing Policy 1-10:

**The Northeast Organic Farming Association of New York condemns the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's ("DEC's") draft Supplemental Generic Environmental Impact Statement ("SGEIS") concerning hydraulic fracking of horizontal gas wells as not protective of New York State's agriculture, environment and people. We demand that DEC:**

1. **Include in the SGEIS a comprehensive cumulative impact assessment of the numerous gas wells planned, not limit the SGEIS to the environmental impact of one well at a time (as currently is the case).**
2. **Include in the SGEIS a comprehensive assessment of impacts on human health by numerous gas wells.**

3. **Include in the SGEIS an assessment of the environmental impacts on the environment and human health of a vast pipeline, condenser and compressor system needed to service numerous gas wells.**
4. **Develop a practical plan for the disposal of all waste water (currently estimated to be in the billions of gallons) that will be generated by hydraulic fracking of numerous horizontal gas wells, inclusive not only of fracking fluids, but the radioactive waste that will be generated by drilling and fracking of the Marcellus Shale (which itself is radioactive).**
5. **Expand the parameters for testing of water from gas well sites, as well as explicitly declare that all mandated water monitoring and testing costs be the financial responsibility of gas companies.**
6. **Declare that all expenses to county and local government to implement the SGEIS be the responsibility of gas companies.**
7. **Ban the use of water from aquifers for the purpose of hydraulic fracking of horizontal gas wells.**
8. **Fully disclose to the public the complete list of chemicals to be used in fracking fluids.**
9. **Ban the use of carcinogenic or suspected carcinogenic chemicals in fracking fluids, as well as chemicals in fracking fluids that act as endocrine disrupters or mutagens.**
10. **Develop and publish DEC's strategy to train and hire the many additional staff needed to enforce the SGEIS, as well as a description of penalties to empower the DEC to protect the public.**
11. **Understand and determine the means to prevent methane migration in the Marcellus Shale from horizontal hydrofracking before any horizontal hydrofracking occurs in New York State. Since the first SGEIS was presented in 2008, a 2011 peer reviewed and published study from Duke University of contamination of aquifers in the Marcellus Shale determined that about 50% of the 68 wells studied in Pennsylvania were severely contaminated with methane from the Marcellus Shale, because they were within a kilometer of horizontal hydrofracking. The use of water in one's home must never be the source of explosive and dangerous gas.**

## Horizontal High-Volume Slick Water Hydrofracking Ban Policy

Whereas through the process of careful consideration of the scientific evidence pertaining to the recovery of gas from shale or "tight gas" formations, and listening to the direct experiences of farmers from regions where shale gas recovery is underway and under consideration;

And whereas, Shale gas formations, despite being located deep, deep underground, host thriving communities of anaerobic bacteria adapted to life at these depths. While little is known by biologists about the specifics of this ecological system, due to its remote and difficult to access location, some

experts in the field estimate that the sheer volume of living material located in this ecosystem exceeds the volume of living matter located on the earth's surface. In keeping with our organic principles, we believe that the injection of massive amounts of biocides (poisons) into functioning ecosystems, to accomplish a wholesale eradication of all life in the area, is always counter-productive. When we, as humans, work within and with respect for the ecosystems around us, rather than as poisoning conquerors obliterating those ecosystems, we maintain the delicate web of sustainable life on which we, as well as other creatures, depend for our survival as a species. Horizontal high-volume slick water hydrofracking gas extraction technology depends upon the injection of tons of poisons into the little-studied underground ecosystems, as well as the application of tremendous physical force to crack and crush the rock environment in which the ecosystem is situated. Although little is known to science about the effects of this particular onslaught on the impacted ecosystem, we can extrapolate from other, similar human attacks on biotic communities to conclude that no good can come from proceeding in such a violent and death-dealing manner;

And whereas, the introduction of manufactured poisons into ecosystems inevitably has unintended consequences, as natural cycles move air, water, soil and living germplasm from place to place. Human transportation and industrial practices often accelerate this geographic mixing, as well. We therefore understand that, while we may somewhat limit ecosystem damages locally by calling for a prohibition of the practice within our own municipality, state or country on the practice of horizontal high-volume slick water hydrofracking, it is ultimately necessary to stop the practice world-wide;

And, whereas, in keeping with our concerns regarding the serious problem of global climate change, already having devastating effects on farmers around the world, we assert that it is absolutely necessary that we, as a species, find ways to decrease our dependence on the fossil fuels that create the greenhouse gases that cause the problem, rather than devise ever more destructive technologies to extract more fossil fuels.

**We hereby resolve that we reject horizontal high-volume slick water hydrofracking technology as an acceptable human activity. We call for a world-wide agreement to cease the horizontal high-volume slick water hydrofracking technology because it is an unconventional, and unwise, means of extraction of fossil fuels. We support and encourage all local, state and federal efforts to end the practice of horizontal high-volume slick water hydrofracking technology, as well as all efforts at every level of government to contain and mitigate the environmental damages associated with the practice of horizontal high-volume slick water hydrofracking. We support institution of laws that will protect taxpayers, farmers, and owners of rural natural areas from unfairly being forced to shoulder financial or other responsibilities for environmental damages caused by horizontal high-volume slick water hydrofracking. The state of NY, the USA, and the world should accomplish a drastic reduction in the use of natural gas by effecting an orderly and rapid conversion to organic farming methods, obviating the need for natural gas and other petrochemical inputs for use in synthetic fertilizers. The experienced organic community of NOFA-NY stands ready to assist in this essential transition through education, outreach, and certification of compliance with organic methods.**

# 2011

### New Farmer Training Program

**NOFA-NY should cooperate with other organizations in NYS to establish a new farmer training program that is recognized by the State Government (the appropriate departments of Labor and Education) such that the contributions of farmers as mentors and teachers will be recognized, compensated and legal.**

### Garden at Every Public School

**We support funding to allow as many children as possible to have the opportunity to learn how to grow food. NOFA-NY members should work with their communities to create a garden at every public school and to encourage teachers to include the gardens in every relevant aspect of the curriculum.**

### Re-instatement of Home Rule

**We support the reinstatement of home rule for gas and oil drilling in New York State.**

### Moratorium on Hydrofracking

**We support a moratorium on hydrofracking of horizontal gas wells unless the environment, land and water are fully protected.**

# 2010

### Raw Milk

**We support funding for education and research supporting the production, consumption, marketing and distribution of raw milk intended for consumption and/or use as raw**

**We encourage the New York State Department of Agriculture & Markets to regularly meet with and participate in the Raw Milk Working Group for purposes including review and potential revisions to existing regulations for improved support of the production, testing, marketing and distribution of raw milk intended for consumption and/or use as raw**

**We support development of a New York Certified Raw Milk Program and we request the support of the New York State Department of Agriculture & Markets to develop this program**

## Food Policy Council

Whereas, the present NYS Food Policy Council was established by executive order of the governor. A new governor will be free to eliminate it.

**The members of NOFA-NY urge the passage of legislation establishing a NYS Food Policy Council by law. This legislation should provide modest funding for staff support for the council so that it will function effectively to coordinate increased production and sale of NYS farm products and increased access to those products by people of all income levels.**

## Meat Processing

1. **We recommend that the NY Farm Viability Institute make expansion of small scale meat processing facilities a priority issue**
2. **We recommend that the NYS Department of Agriculture and Markets allow separation by time instead of space for dually licensed 5A & USDA custom exempt facilities**
3. **We recommend that the USDA pre-approve processing facility blueprints to assist processors through the requirements associated with constructing a plant.**
   **end**

## Protecting State From Imported Diseased Plants

Whereas, During the 2009 growing season, the importation into the Northeast states of tomato plants that were diseased with late blight and their sale by several large-scale retailers, led to the rapid spread of the disease all over the region. As a result, farmers and gardeners lost entire crops of tomatoes and potatoes. Late blight caused significant financial losses to farmers.

**NOFA-NY calls upon the NY Department of Agriculture and Markets to inspect shipments of "starts" that are imported into the state and to ban the importation of diseased plants. If disease shows up on plants already for sale at garden departments in the state, Ag and Markets should have the power to require the immediate withdrawal of those plants from sale and their destruction.**

## Farm Labor Legislation

**We oppose the current Farmworkers Fair Labor Bill (as of January 23rd, 2010) in the New York Legislature because it creates new law on a mix of labor issues that are historically identified, debated and crafted with separate legislation: collective bargaining, minimum wage, workers compensation, unemployment insurance. However, we strongly support legislation that would grant collective bargaining rights to farmworkers, and legislation that would establish the same minimum wage for all employees regardless of age.**

## Natural Gas Drilling

**We support HR 2766, FRAC Act (Fracturing Awareness and Responsibility Act), which would repeal the exemption of hydraulic fracturing in the Safe Water Drinking Act, and require the public listing of all chemicals in hydraulic fracturing fluid.**

## Natural Gas Drilling-DEC's SGEIS

**The Northeast Organic Farming Association of New York condemns the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation's ("DEC's") draft Supplemental Generic Environmental Impact Statement ("SGEIS") concerning hydraulic fracking of horizontal gas wells as not protective of New York State's agriculture, environment and people. We demand that DEC:**

1. **Include in the SGEIS a comprehensive cumulative impact assessment of the numerous gas wells planned, not limit the SGEIS to the environmental impact of one well at a time (as currently is the case).**
2. **Include in the SGEIS a comprehensive assessment of impacts on human health by numerous gas wells.**
3. **Include in the SGEIS an assessment of the environmental impacts on the environment and human health of a vast pipeline, condenser and compressor system needed to service numerous gas wells.**
4. **Develop a practical plan for the disposal of all waste water (currently estimated to be in the billions of gallons) that will be generated by hydraulic fracking of numerous horizontal gas wells, inclusive not only of fracking fluids, but the radioactive waste that will be generated by drilling and fracking of the Marcellus Shale (which itself is radioactive).**
5. **Expand the parameters for testing of water from gas well sites, as well as explicitly declare that all mandated water monitoring and testing costs be the financial responsibility of gas companies.**
6. **Declare that all expenses to county and local government to implement the SGEIS be the responsibility of gas companies.**
7. **Ban the use of water from aquifers for the purpose of hydraulic fracking of horizontal gas wells.**
8. **Fully disclose to the public the complete list of chemicals to be used in fracking fluids.**
9. **Ban the use of carcinogenic or suspected carcinogenic chemicals in fracking fluids, as well as chemicals in fracking fluids that act as endocrine disrupters or mutagens.**

10. **Develop and publish DEC's strategy to train and hire the many additional staff needed to enforce the SGEIS, as well as a description of penalties to empower the DEC to protect the public.**

**If the Northeast Organic Farming Association of New York does not believe that the final SGEIS is fully protective of New York State's agriculture, environment and people, NOFA-NY may join a lawsuit with other likeminded organizations and individuals to force the Department of Environmental Conservation to create a fully protective and enforceable SGEIS.**

# 2009

## Fair Labor Standards

Whereas, in recent years Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) has dramatically increased workplace and community raids resulting in widespread detentions of immigrant workers and their families;

And whereas, New York's farmers are facing a serious labor shortage exacerbated in large part by this increase in ICE raids;

And whereas, the federal government has failed to pass comprehensive immigration reform that will satisfy farmers' labor needs while at the same time respecting fundamental workers' rights, therefore:

**We support legislative proposals that establish humane alternatives to detention for illegal immigrants, respect due process, and grant farmworkers currently in the U.S. the opportunity to work here legally. We further support legislative reforms to the current H2A guest worker program, such as AgJobs, that will provide farmers with needed labor and reform current guestworker programs to make them more accessible to small-scale farmers, while correcting the injustices of the current program by granting such farmworkers legal rights equal to resident workers and providing a path to citizenship.**

## Fair Emergency Compensation to Organic Farmers

Whereas, there have been repeated weather disasters that destroy farm crops;

And whereas, the USDA makes disaster payments based on the commodity rate that it sets for each crop, including different rates for different end uses (processing as distinct from fresh market);

And whereas, USDA refuses to differentiate payments based on differences in production systems; therefore:

**USDA should make disaster payments to farmers based on rates that take into consideration the production systems used in producing those crops so that organically grown crops or grass-fed livestock that command a higher price in the market receive an appropriately higher payment than conventional products.**

## Self-Employed Rights

Whereas the majority of New York Farmers are self-employed and the viability of the self-employed as the largest agricultural producer in New York State is directly related to the regulations covering the self-employed;

And whereas, the self-employed farmer should not be the New York citizen who bears the greatest regulatory and tax burdens while receiving the fewest legislative and regulatory protections;

And whereas, the right to be one's own boss is as fundamental to American democracy as the right to privacy; therefore:

**Policy towards all legislative and regulatory changes shall be shaped by their impact on the self-employed and the rights of the self-employed shall be one of our highest priority issues.**

## Food Safety

Whereas, organic farmers are committed to supplying consumers with safe food and to taking appropriate measures to ensure sanitary conditions in crop handling;

And whereas, repeated incidents of illness and even death from food contaminated with pathogens have resulted in proposals for regulations that will drive small-scale farms out of business while failing to address the root cases of these foodborne illnesses; therefore:

**We support the mandatory use of potable water for washing produce. We further oppose mandatory chemical treatment of wash water, particularly with chlorine, for fruits and vegetables for the purpose of disinfecting crops. We oppose livestock setbacks and requirements for farmers to destroy natural areas on their farms in order to protect the public from food pathogens; such regulations do not serve public health, but, instead, eliminate integrated farms and reduce biodiversity.**

## Local Meat Processing Facilities for New York

Whereas, there is a shortage of USDA inspected slaughtering and meat processing facilities in New York State, requiring livestock farmers to drive all the way to Pennsylvania for the services they need if they want to sell packaged cuts of meat;

And whereas, the regulations for slaughterhouses were written for large scale facilities; therefore:

**State and federal regulations for facilities that slaughter and process meat should be revised to be scale appropriate, and NOFA-NY calls on the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets to revise its regulations to encourage existing plants to certify organic.**

## Natural Gas Drilling

**We support passage of legislation that would restore the statutes in the federal Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act, and Safe Water Drinking Act that were dropped in the 2005 Energy bill that exempted these laws from applying to oil and gas drilling. Until these statutes are restored on a federal level, we support making these provisions and protections New York State law. We support passage of state legislation that would require oil and gas drilling companies to report publicly all chemicals used to drill oil and gas wells, and how and where waste material and products are disposed of. We support the passage of state legislation that prohibits the use of water from aquifers for the purpose of oil and gas drilling or fracking.**

## Raw Milk

Whereas, there are many citizens who would like to purchase raw milk for their personal consumption;

And whereas, dairy farms that are certified by NYS to produce raw milk are currently selling raw milk that meets the highest safety standards, yet they are prohibited from selling that milk except directly from the farm; therefore:

**We support legislation that would allow dairy farms to sell raw milk through off-farm retail outlets.**

# 2008

## Local Fair Trade

**The members of NOFA-NY hereby resolve that we would like our organization to work for the implementation of local fair trade. We believe that everyone involved in the organic supply chain from seed to plate is entitled to living wages, a safe workplace and respectful treatment. Farm prices should enable farmers to cover the costs of production, sustain their families and farms, including a living wage for all farm workers, and additional revenues to ensure the continuing development of the farm. Farm workers should enjoy the rights to freedom of association that are protected by law for workers in other sectors. Fair and transparent negotiations should provide long-term contracts between the buyers of organic products and farmers, and between farmers and farm workers.**

## Grower (Farmer) Group Certification

Whereas, a few large corporate retailers are claiming that their corporate organic plan ensures that every branch store is in full compliance with organic standards in order to take advantage of the

grower (farmer) group clause in the National Organic Program regulations to cut certification costs by avoiding annual inspections of every branch store;

And whereas, the National Organic Program requires annual inspections of all certified entities; therefore:

**The grower (farmer) group regulations should apply only to groups of small farms that are geographically proximate, organized into cooperatives that have strong internal control systems and marketing similar crops as a group.**

## National Organic Program Proper Procedures Manual

Whereas, after years of repeated consumer complaints about the farming practices of mega-dairies that have managed to qualify for organic certification;

And whereas, a few certification Programs that have certified these mega-dairies appear to be held to different NOP standards than the vast majority of certification programs; therefore:

**We believe that the National Organic Program should write a proper procedures manual as required for the proper functioning of an accreditation system that protects organic integrity and is necessary for ISO compliance; and That the National Organic Program should implement accreditation in a fair and even-handed way.**

## Upholding Strict Organic Standards

Whereas, the negotiations and the resulting Consent Agreement between USDA and Aurora Organic Dairy (AOD), after USDA issued a Notice of Proposed Revocation to AOD, were completely outside the procedures for noncompliance spelled out in 205.662 of the National Organic Program Regulations;

And whereas, the Consent Agreement allows AOD to continue to be certified and produce organic milk after 14 "willful violations" were listed in the document attached to their Notice of Proposed Revocation;

And whereas, these actions exhibit disregard by USDA in following the regulations, demonstrates special treatment afforded very large scale operations, reveals uneven and unfair enforcement of the regulations, and jeopardizes the integrity of the USDA organic seal;

And whereas, organic rules are meaningless without scale neutral, unbiased, proper enforcement;

Whereas improper enforcement of the National Rule undermines consumer confidence in the USDA organic label, and proper enforcement remains one of the primary responsibilities of the USDA; therefore:

**The US Government Accountability Office (GAO), the audit, evaluation, and investigative arm of Congress, should undertake a thorough, systemic investigation into the compliance and**

**enforcement procedures and practices of the USDA with regard to upholding strict organic standards.**

# 2007

### National Animal Identification System (NAIS)

**The members of NOFA-NY resolve that we oppose the National Animal Identification System because it would be unduly intrusive and burdensome to family farmers.**

### National Uniformity for Food Act

**The members of NOFA-NY resolve that we oppose the proposed National Uniformity for Food Act because it takes away the right of states to protect their food and citizens.**

### Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs)

**The members of NOFA-NY resolve that we believe if a farm that does not intentionally grow GMO crops becomes contaminated with GMO genetic materials, the farmer should not be held liable for possession of that GMO genetic material. Liability for contamination should be the responsibility of the manufacturer of the GMO seeds.**

### Animal Cloning

**The members of NOFA-NY resolve that we call upon the FDA to ban the use of animal clones in food production until the food safety and animal cruelty problems in cloning have been resolved, and until public discussions have addressed the troubling ethical issues that animal cloning brings. In the event that those conditions can be met, we call upon the NOP to consider cloning among the excluded methods.**

# 2006

### Organic Food Production Act

**The members of NOFA-NY resolve that we condemn the unilateral and surreptitious method used by the Organic Trade Association (OTA) to amend the Organic Food Production Act. NOFA-NY is a dues-paying member of OTA and has depended upon the organization, comprised of individuals, farmers, food processors and organizations, to represent our interests, NOFA-NY believes that to maintain organic integrity and consumer confidence in the organic label, it is**

**essential to preserve high standards. We affirm that any changes to the OFPA must occur through an open and participatory process that includes all stakeholders in organic foods.**

### National Organic Standards Board (NOSB)

**The members of NOFA-NY resolve that we believe the NOSB should review all substances to be used in organic processing through the national list process. As in organic production, there should be a very limited list of categories of allowable substances, including ingredients. NOFA-NY further resolves that the Secretary of Agriculture should not have the power to allow emergency use of non-organic agricultural ingredients, if organic forms are not commercially available, thus by-passing the NOSB process. And NOFA-NY resolves that once a dairy herd has converted to organic production, organic management from the last third of gestation should be required for all replacement livestock.**

### Unpasteurized Cider

**The members of NOFA-NY resolve that we strongly support rescinding the 2005 state law, which prohibits the sale of un-pasteurized cider as of January 2006, to once again allow the direct sale by producers of un-pasteurized cider to the general public.**

### Patenting of Life Forms

Whereas, the plants, animals and microorganisms comprising life on earth are part of the natural world into which we are all born, the conversion of these species, their molecules or parts into corporate property through patent monopolies is counter to the interests of the peoples of this state, this country and of the world. With the temporary exception of a patent on an original cultivar of a plant, no individual, institution or corporation should be able to claim ownership over species of living organisms. Nor should they be able to hold patents on organs, cells, genes, or proteins, whether naturally occurring, genetically altered or otherwise modified.

**As part of a world movement to protect our common living heritage, we call upon the Congress of the United States to enact legislation to change existing law and override judicial interpretation of this law to exclude living organisms and their component parts from the patent system.**

## 2003

## Industrial Hemp

Whereas the cultivation of Industrial Hemp was ended in the United States with the passage of the 1937 Marijuana Tax Act;

And whereas, Industrial Hemp is the same species as marijuana (Cannabis sativa), but does not have enough of the psychoactive ingredient, THC, to intoxicate people;

And whereas, Industrial Hemp was grown for hundreds of years throughout the colonies and the United States to meet diverse needs of the American people; including rope, paper, fabric, fuel and food oil;

And whereas, many times more pulp may be harvested from an acre of Industrial Hemp than an acre of managed forest, and this pulp may be used to make high quality paper without the ecologically unfriendly bleaching process required of pulp from timber;

And whereas, hemp cloth is one of the strongest plant fibers on earth three times stronger than cotton, but unlike cotton, now the most herbicide and pesticide intensive crop on the planet, hemp needs no pesticides or herbicides to cultivate;

And whereas, there are thousands of uses for Industrial Hemp and many more would be discovered if farmers, private investment and the imaginations of the American people would be allowed to produce Industrial Hemp to meet the needs and demands of the market;

And whereas, Canada, the European Union, Australia. Russia, India, China and many other nations produce Industrial Hemp, much of which is imported into the United States in the form of clothing and paper;

And whereas, worldwide Industrial Hemp sales have grown from 5 million dollars in 1993 to approximately 500 million dollars in 2000;

And whereas, Industrial Hemp also incorporates more phosphorous in its harvested product than most crops, and this ability to uptake phosphorous makes Industrial Hemp the ideal crop to plant in the New York's watersheds where the water quality is suffering from an excess of phosphorous;

And whereas, the future of rural America should be tied to sustainability.

**NOFA-NY calls upon the New York State Legislature and Congress to legalize Industrial Hemp.**

# 2002

## Chemicals Banned For Use in the USA

Whereas foods produced with chemicals banned for use in the United States are regularly imported into the USA and consumed by the American people;

And whereas, the forbidden chemicals that produce these foods originate both in foreign nations and in the United States (nine tons of domestically banned pesticides are produced in the United States and shipped overseas for use on foreign lands every day).

**NOFA-NY supports an Act of Congress that would prohibit the import of food produced with chemicals banned in the USA.**

## Use of the Word Organic By Non-Certified Organic Farmers

Whereas organic farmers whose farms are certified organic have more in common with organic farmers who have not certified their farms than they have differences;

And whereas, the implementation of the Organic Food Production Act may cause hardship for uncertified farmers because they will not be able to describe themselves as organic in commercial speech;

And whereas, the justification for federal control of the word organic is not based on food safety.

**NOFA-NY favors amending the Organic Food Production Act because this Law replaces voluntary organic certification with mandatory certification, and prohibits the use of the word "organic" for commercial use if farmers are not certified organic by USDA accredited organic certifiers. We believe this is a violation of free speech, and has the effect of turning the use of the word organic into a mandatory licensing fee. We believe that the National Organic Program's Final Rule undermines communication between farmers and consumers, and will hurt many of the farmers and consumers that have participated and encouraged the growth of organic agriculture.**

## North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)

Whereas, our government has been engaging in secret trade negotiations with the other governments of this hemisphere since 1998 to expand the North America Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) to include 31 countries of Central and South America in the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA);

And whereas, the NAFTA promised an increase of 200,000 jobs in the United States, but resulted in a job loss of over 250,000;

And whereas, since the NAFTA, imports of fresh produce from Canada and Mexico have grown faster than US exports to those countries resulting in serious economic damage to the farmers of the North East;

And whereas, the FTAA may allow corporations the right to sue legal local, state and national governments for control of public resources, such as the fresh waters of the Great Lakes;

And whereas, the FTAA may allow corporations to sue legal governments for the removal of standards or laws designed to protect public health and safety if those laws or standards increase corporate operating costs.

**The United States government should withdraw from the FTAA negotiations, and that our representatives in government should vote against ratifying the FTAA.**

# 2001

## Rights of the Self-Employed

Whereas the vast majority of New York farmers are self-employed and the economic viability of the self-employed is directly related to the regulations covering the self-employed;

And whereas, the right to be one's own boss is as fundamental to American democracy as the right to privacy;

And whereas, today's agricultural economic climate is one of increasing corporate concentration and record low commodity prices, forcing more and more farmers to sell their produce to large scale processors, brokers and retail chains, which have much greater economic power than any individual farm.

**NOFA-NY policy towards all legislative and regulatory changes shall be shaped by their impact on the self-employed, and the rights of the self-employed shall be one of our highest priority issues; and, We support the strong enforcement of antitrust laws; and, New York State should pass legislation that will protect the right of farmers to form bargaining associations or cooperatives to negotiate contracts, and ensure that processors, brokers and retail chains bargain with the farmers in good faith. The legislation should make it an unfair practice for processors to retaliate or discriminate against farmers who exercise their rights and/or join farmer associations. Contracts should be in plain language, be free of confidentiality clauses, and disclose any material risks. Contract growers should have a three-day contract review period. Contractors should be obliged to negotiate any changes in contracts with the farmers. The legislation should guarantee farmers a first-priority lien on payments should the contractor go out of business. The Department of Agriculture and Markets should accredit the voluntary associations of farmers, provide mediation to resolve impasses in bargaining, investigate instances of unfair or deceptive practices on the part of processors, brokers or retailers, and protect producers from having contracts terminated for no real reason as a form of punishment of some kind.**

## Collective Bargaining for Agricultural Workers

Whereas, addressing the need for both farmers and farmworkers to gain institutionalized rights and dignity in their workplace is vital to the future sustainability of our food system;

And whereas, "small farmers will earn fair incomes only if farmworkers on large farms are paid fair incomes," (from A Time to Act, the USDA National Commission on Small Farms report).

**NOFA-NY supports amending the National Labor Relations Act to include agricultural workers under its collective bargaining protections.**

### Food Safety

Whereas, the increase of food borne illnesses has led to an increase in government regulations aimed at eliminating pathogens by using high tech methods, instead of cleaning up the large scale industrialized food production system that causes the increase of pathogens in foods.

**NOFA-NY is opposed to the use of ionizing radiation, and opposes any laws requiring the mandatory irradiation of food; and**

**NOFA-NY opposes the mandatory processing of fresh juice and vegetable products, such as the pasteurization of apple cider.**

**Producers should follow strict food safety guidelines based on the organic principle of reducing "pollution that may result from farming and processing systems" (NOFA-NY 2000 Certification Standards, p. 2).**

### Municipal and State Spraying

Whereas, the spraying of pesticides by county and municipal authorities to attempt to control the mosquitoes which carry West Nile Virus threatens the integrity of crops on New York State farms, and may destroy the farmer's ability to market those crops, whether organic or conventionally grown.

**Local and county authorities should maintain lists of all farms and be obliged to notify those farms of any planned pesticide spraying. We oppose spraying by government or other entities of synthetic chemicals on people, their dwellings and their property without their consent. We also oppose spraying crop land without explicit permission from the farmer. Local, county and state authorities should invoke the precautionary principle in dealing with public health emergencies. We support protecting the public from mosquito borne illness through 1PM practices.**

## 2000

### Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOS)

Whereas Genetically Engineered Organisms (GEO/GMO's)* may affect our lives and the environment in many ways: The science of Genomics is in its infancy, despite the disproportionate investment of public research dollars in this area, to the detriment of ecological alternatives. While scientists may have identified the function of particular genes, there is very little understanding of the complex interrelationships of genes, and there has been very little research done to assess the health and safety implications to humans from ingesting genetically engineered organisms. Genetic engineering may result in the creation of new toxins (examples already exist). Unexpected allergic reactions can be

triggered (a Brazil nut gene inserted into soya resulted in a reaction in people allergic to nuts). There are concerns that genetically engineered soya may contain higher estrogen levels. There is a risk of increasing the incidence of antibiotic resistance in humans and livestock;

And whereas, due to current Food and Drug Administration labeling policy, consumers have lost their right to choose whether or not to eat products that contain genetically engineered ingredients;

And whereas, genetically engineered material can be transferred to other crops and weeds, but once released it is impossible to "clean up" any unforeseen consequences, and no legislation exists to protect the crops of farmers who want to stay GEO/GMO free from GEO/GMO tainted pollen, resulting in all crops being contaminated over time;

And whereas, genetically engineered plants which are designed to kill pests can kill beneficial insects and other organisms as well, and thus genetically engineered crops may have unpredictable effects on the ecological balance;

And whereas, genetic engineering to develop insect resistant crops is expected to destroy the usefulness to organic and conventional farmers of natural biological pesticides, such as Bacillus thuringiensis.

**The membership of NOFA-NY therefore resolves that there should be an immediate moratorium on the planting of Genetically engineered crops; No new genetically engineered crops should be commercialized until such time as adequate research has been done to assure the safety of such crops to humans and the environment; and**

**The Food and Drug Administration should require the labeling of all foods containing genetically engineered ingredients, as they are already mandated to do for food additives. These labels should state precisely what genes have been added. The federal government should develop a comprehensive framework for the regulation of genetically engineered organisms that protects the natural environment, the farm environment and public health.**

*The following definition of Genetically Engineered Organisms (GEO/GMOs) has been recommended by the NATIONAL ORGANIC STANDARDS BOARD (NOSB) and adopted in the American Organic Standards of the Organic Trade Association:

Genetically engineered is defined as: made with techniques that alter the molecular or cell biology of an organism by means that are not possible under natural conditions or processes. Genetic engineering includes recombinant DNA, cell fusion, micro- and macro-encapsulation, gene deletion and doubling, introducing a foreign gene, and changing the positions of genes. It shall not include breeding, conjugation, fermentation, hybridization, in-vitro fertilization and tissue culture.

## 1999

## Comprehensive Food Labeling

Whereas consumers have the right to know what they are eating, where food comes from and how it was produced;

And whereas, we want to be able to vote with our dollars for a sustainable, regional food system.

**The membership of NOFA-NY therefore resolves that all foods sold in the United States should be labeled as to country of origin, any irradiated ingredients, any ingredients derived from genetically modified organisms, any foods grown on sludge-amended soils, and, for dairy, any products from cows treated with synthetic bovine growth hormone (Bst or rBGH).**

## Sewage Sludge

Whereas in New York State, 360,000 dry tons of sewage sludge are produced every year;

And whereas, the Clean Water Act amendments (Federal Code section 503) passed in 1992 lower the standards for land-application of sludge, allowing higher concentrations of heavy metals to be applied to soils;

And whereas, unlike the organic components of sludge, the heavy metals do not decompose, but remain in the soil, accumulating to levels that eventually make the soil unfit for food production;

And whereas in addition to heavy metals, sludge may contain a host of synthetic organic compounds, including dioxins, PCBs, and pesticides;

And whereas, heavy metals and synthetic organic compounds accumulate and "biomagnify" in the food chain, and livestock eating forages grown on sludge-amended soils can absorb these substances, including dioxins and PCBs into their fat and transfer these chemicals to their milk.

**The membership of NOFA-NY therefore resolves that industries should be required to remove all chemical pollutants from any waste stream that enters sewage treatment systems. In addition, manufacturers should be required to remove hazardous ingredients from household products that make their way to drains and sewage treatment systems. Until that is done, sewage sludge should not be used on land for crop and forage production, or for grazing. The sale of all sewage based biosolid products should be prohibited. As an alternative to this source of contaminated biosolids, farmers should be encouraged to use green manures, cover crops, and animal manures through tax exemptions or other incentives.**

# 1998

## National Organic Program

Whereas for 11 years, the NOFA-NY Organic Certification Program has certified organic farms and processors according to clear, high published standards that earn the confidence of NY consumers;

And whereas, the National Organic Program Proposed regulations threaten the integrity and the very existence of the NOFA-NY Organic Certification Program.

**The membership of NOFA-NY therefore resolves that USDA should withdraw the proposed regulations and rewrite them fundamentally following the recommendations of the National Organic Standards Board, adhering to the Organic Food Production Act and consistent with accepted organic principles.**