

Family Farm Defenders

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FFD Mission

Family Farm Defenders is a tax-deductible non-profit activist organization made up of farmers and concerned consumers. We are seeking ways to bring fair prices back to farmers and to insure a safe and sustainably produced food for consumers.

The Family Farm Defenders

The President Message

Joel Greeno - President of Family Farm Defenders

It's been a busy end of the year with a lot of good things keeping all of Family Farm Defenders busy, spreading the word, getting the message out, and most importantly building relationships.

Mid September I pulled out with truck, trailer, and two tractors headed for Chicago and the Farm Aid 30th Anniversary Concert. Early on Sept. 17th I left the hotel headed for the Farmers' Market at Daley Plaza not far from the Chicago Board of Trade and the Chicago Mercantile Exchange where we have held protests against price fixing for years. On arrival at the market I was met by Farm Aid staff and curious vendors and shoppers.

The two old Allis Chalmers tractors drew a lot of attention and even some old Allis stories. People were quite surprised to see tractors in Chicago, especially one with two seats. For my parents' 50th wedding anniversary we put a second seat on dad's old Allis WC so mom could still argue with him while he was driving his tractor!

Then it was off to the Fourth Presbyterian Church for the "Strength From Our Roots" event. Farm Aid really knocked it out of the park with an all star cast and not just because Willie, Neil, John, or Dave showed up. It was because Farm Aid had brought together the original farm crisis activists from the 1980s- the likes of Jim Hightower, Roger Allison (MRCC), Ralph Paige (FSC), Helen Waller (NFFC), Mona Lee Brock (NFCC), Benny Bunting (RAFD), Lou Ann Kling (FLAG), Betty Puckett (LA Inter Church Conf.), Shirley Sherrod (SGP), and many more.

These people told moving stories of how they got started in crisis counseling, risk management, suicide prevention and credit advocacy. Many of them are still at it after 30 years, and most of them started because some one had to - often with no funding, no organization, even no idea what to do. Thirty years later we're still in the same mess - all the same, we broke out into song and sang anyway, because we could and we did!

Farm Aid Eve was next - a fundraiser banquet celebrating local food. Stations featured everything from roast pork to soup and vegetables and even pie - individually made with your choice of fillings - YUM! Farm Aid concert day itself started with a press event featuring Willie Nelson, Neil Young, John Mellencamp, Dave Matthews, Carolyn Mugar, and Glenda Yoder. Again, we had a good mix of veteran family farm activists, young farmers, urban gardeners, and famous entertainers. One left with a good sense of the past, present, and future. *(Continue on pg.3)*



U.S. Food Sovereignty Alliance Meeting - October 12th to October 15, 2015

The U.S. Food Sovereignty Alliance had its 3rd Annual Assembly at the 340 acre Wesley Woods Retreat Center outside Des Moines, IA from Oct. 12th - 15th - a beautiful setting to discuss food sovereignty. All of our sessions began and ended with a *mistica*, a ceremony that honors the culture of our indigenous hosts, as well as the four directions, plus Father Sun and Mother Earth. These *misticas* did a good job of preparing us for the day and respecting all of the elements that provide us with food and fiber. There were people from nearly every corner of the U.S. and every continent across the globe at the assembly, making for a very well rounded discussion.

The USFSA has its roots in the 2007 Nyeleni gathering in Selengue, Mali, where many members and allies of La Via Campesina gathered, followed by more discussions in Washington DC in 2008 that led to a Call to Action to End the Food Crisis. Over 500 people then participat-

ed in a "Step up to the Plate" event in New York City, and the USFSA took the food sovereignty theme onward to the U.S. Social Forum in Detroit. Part of the purpose behind the USFSA was to give groups that could not join La Via Campesina a venue in which to come together with farm groups and others who were members to support the growth of food sovereignty in the U.S.

When the Community Food Security Coalition disbanded in 2012, the USFSA also took on the task of awarding the Food Sovereignty Prize, and this year I was one of the emcees for the award along with Diana Robinson of the Food Chain Workers Alliance. The 2015 winners were the Federation of Southern Cooperatives and the Honduran Black Fraternal Organization (OFRANEH). Cornelius Blanding of the Federation was on hand to receive the award and is the successor to Ralph Paige, who had served as its director since 1985.

Miriam Miranda was present to accept the award for OFRANEH- a powerful woman dedicated for life to defending her ancestral territory and Garifuna culture, including their farming and spirituality. The event was live streamed around the world for all to view.

My daughters, Abby and Anna, joined me at the "Stink-In" Protest at the Capitol in Madison on Sat. Nov. 7th where we heard from many excellent speakers about the effects of CAFOs and why we need to oppose them. I spoke about how easy it can be to forget our history.

Then it was off to Monroe, WI for the last meeting of the Churches Center for Land and People and the first gathering of the Food, Faith and Farming Network! It was really good to see old friends and make new ones over a great local food meal. And thanks to all of you for your hard work and generous contributions as we celebrate another harvest season together.