



The Food Justice Certified label is now available to farms and food businesses that qualify. The Agricultural Justice Project (AJP) developed food justice certification to reward honest and open relationships between farmers and buyers and with people working in their fields, all the way up the food chain to those stocking local grocery shelves or serving food in restaurants – something not included in National Organic Program standards. The label can be used as an additional claim along with certified organic, and as a stand-alone label for farms using advanced integrated pest management. A pledge certification for small-scale direct market farms with limited hired labor will also be made available. This certification is unique in the high level of integrity set by the comprehensive standards, the nonproprietary approach and the inclusion of farm worker organizations in the audit.

Florida Organic Growers (FOG) is bringing food justice certification to farms and businesses in the South by providing technical assistance, tools and free food justice certification to farms with support from a SSARE grant awarded in 2009. AJP is also offering trainings for existing not-for profit certifiers and farm worker organizations to ensure that the verification process has integrity without excessive costs.

Through its food justice certification program and development of tools, trainings and policies, AJP is transforming the dominant food system that has failed its workers and farmers into one where human rights and dignity are valued and rewarded. In addition to environmental standards, the third-party Food Justice Certified label means the highest standards of equity and fairness have been met, respecting all those who labor together to bring food to the table – making our meals truly digestible.

AJP's food justice certification covers fair conditions and relationships for:

- Farmers and Buyers
- Farmworkers and Food Business Workers
- Farm Interns

- Children on Farms
- Protection of the environment (organic and sustainable farming practices)
- A way for all people who labor in the food system to have a way to submit a complaint and a dependable process for resolving conflicts

In May 2010 Quality Certification Services (QCS) certified Farmer Direct Co-operative Ltd. (FDC), a farmer-owned business of 70 certified organic family farms in Canada, as the first non-pilot Food Justice Certified business, the culmination of years of standards development and piloting at farms and a food coop in the Upper Midwest. AJP published revised social justice standards for organic and sustainable agriculture in July 2010 after several rounds of public and stakeholder input. Organically Grown Company in Oregon and four of the farms that sell under its Ladybug label recently went through a pre-certification assessment in preparation for expanded adoption of the standards and eventual application for Food Justice Certification, a sign that interest is growing as other farms and handlers are pursuing or have completed technical assistance to get ready for certification. The AJP is now finalizing its policy manual to make the program as transparent and accessible as possible.

As part of the work to bring Food Justice Certification to the South, FOG staff helped organize a presentation and discussion along with a film screening of *What's Organic About Organic?* Sept. 13 at Virginia Garden Organic Grocery in Virginia Beach. In true AJP spirit, the presentation was an authentic stakeholder event with representation from the entire food system including farm interns, farmworkers, farmers, the grocery store owner who hosted the event, and her employees as well as members of the Virginia Beach community and regular shoppers from the store. During a lively discussion following the presentation a farmer asked how justice and fairness is going to be achieved through this label and certification. The question was answered with enthusiastic responses from the public and consumers in the room. "We as consumers need to spread the word...if I saw that Food Justice Certified seal on food I would buy it. I wouldn't bat an eye," one attendee said. "To know that the people are getting their fair shake - it's important."

"Healthy people and a healthy environment make healthy food," Ann Scott Collinn, Virginia Garden Organic Grocery employee, said.

The most recent version of the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements' (IFOAM) Principle of Fairness declares:

Organic agriculture should build on relationships that ensure fairness with regard to the common environment and life opportunities. Fairness is characterized by equity, respect, justice and stewardship of the shared world, both among people and in their relations to other living beings. (IFOAM Principles 2005)

That is what AJP steering committee members FOG Executive Director Marty Mesh; Michael Sligh from the Rural Advancement Foundation International-USA; Richard Mandelbaum from CATA/Farmworker Support Committee and Elizabeth Henderson from Peacework Organic Farm and the Northeast Organic Farming Association set out to do when they founded the Agricultural Justice Project more than a decade ago. The AJP steering committee is advised by the AJP advisory council, composed of farmers and farmer advocates, farmworkers and

# Food Justice Certified Label Rewarding Socially and Environmentally Sustainable Farms and Businesses

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farmworker advocates, food co-op managers, organic certifiers, and other food system business.

For information and questions about the standards, trainings and technical assistance email [Sally Lee](mailto:ally@ruraladvancement.org) at the Rural Advancement Foundation International. To sign up for participation in the launch of the program in the South email [Leah Cohen](mailto:leah@ruraladvancement.org) or visit [www.foginfo.org/ssarejustice](http://www.foginfo.org/ssarejustice)