Food Justice For All

BY: NELSON CARRASQUILLO, GENERAL COORDINATOR

Everyone has a basic human right to food, however, within our current food system, the privilege of having access to Good Food is predicated on other people’s disadvantages. We see Good Food as being nutritious and healthy, environmentally sustainable, organically grown, culturally appropriate, ethically produced and accessible to all.

The food industry has created the expectation of a cheap food culture and has placed it squarely on the backs of producers and workers. Most jobs along the food chain pay low-wages because cheap labor means cheap food. Being inexpensive has become an ideal quality for food, driving companies to look for ways to produce food in the cheapest way possible. This is achieved by cutting labor costs which leaves working families with limited means to access Good Food.

The fundamental challenge to achieving Food Justice is being able to break the cycle of poverty of low-wage workers. As long as workers have a level of pay that keeps them at or near the poverty level, their only option is to make difficult financial choices in order to survive and make their food budget stretch. The majority of jobs being created today are low-wage and for most working families, the take-home pay barely makes ends meet. Therefore an essential condition of Food Justice is the ability to earn a living wage.

Job creation has to be grounded in ensuring that workers have the ability to earn a living wage, work in a safe environment, and that human dignity and respect form the basis of the work relationship. In the absence of these conditions, working families are subject to the uncertainty and risk of not being able to provide for their basic needs and there is no framework through which a family can sustain and develop its capacity to live

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healthy and full lives.

We promote the Food Justice Certification label of the Agricultural Justice Project as the necessary baseline for a fair food system through which consumers can drive the changes to ensure that they have access to healthy and ethically-produced food. The Food Justice Certification verifies social justice claims and represents food production and distribution under a set of high bar social justice standards for all people throughout the food chain, from field to fork. This means that farmers are compensated fairly for their products through transparent and equitable agreements and that workers are treated with respect and dignity, offered living wages, and have the ability to negotiate adequate working conditions. Consequently, consumers achieve a high level of certainty, indicated by the Food Justice Certified label, of the quality, healthfulness, and fairness of the food that reaches their table.

As a national initiative, the Agricultural Justice Project envisions a food system where everyone has access to Good Food at their table. We intend to promote the Food Justice Certification program in our region as an example of what can be done to progress away from a food system that is based on treating people as commodities towards one that is grounded in the dignity of the human being, a respect for the earth, and the wellbeing of all people, especially the new generation and the generations yet to come.

CATA is Starting A Radio Station!

Having a radio station will help CATA get information out to its members and the wider Latino community. The station will be integral in spreading CATA’s message so that workers can organize and fight for their rights. Through the radio station, we intend to provide accurate news reports and information on issues concerning the migrant community. A space will be created to talk about questions and concerns that members have in their workplaces and communities. We will provide information on immigration processes, current immigration reform news, worker’s rights, and healthy food access, as well as inform people of CATA’s meetings, trainings, workshops, and other activities.

CATA was approved for a low-power FM radio license in January of this year. CATA members are currently working hard to fundraise and get the necessary equipment so we can start broadcasting next year.
“El eje de mi carreta nunca lo voy a engrasar.” Atahualpa Yupanqui, Argentine Singer

This song quote refers to axles turning the wheels on a cart. The axles turning the wheels and moving the cart are a metaphor for how CATA is pushing forward.

CATA, as an organization, finds itself at a specific moment in time, a moment when we are in a position to achieve the next level in the implementation of our strategic plan, Vision 2020. With the adjustments that were made during our Annual Assembly in 2013, we are positioned to move our struggle forward. The refocusing of our energy from immigration to the development of the credit union permits us to be clearer in our message of empowerment to the Latino community.

The long road to immigration reform, while definitely not a road that we have abandoned, has been one that has left many behind. Deportation and the fear of deportation plus the sheer lack of will in Washington, even when confronted with the massive mobilization of millions of immigrants, has left many at the very least distrustful of and alienated from the political process. CATA’s shift towards the creation of a credit union is meant to help individuals and families consolidate the base of their economic power in a way that can benefit them as individuals and the community by showing the strength of their potential.

The membership has been involved from the beginning in the process of forming the Credit Union, explaining its purpose and benefits to friends and families and the larger migrant community. It is a priority to move this work forward.

We have also received approval to create a radio station in Bridgeton. This means we will have the means to increase our communication among the membership and with the wider community, thereby ensuring that everyone has access to the most up to date information possible.

This year we will celebrate the General Assembly. It is in the General Assembly where we will approve the mandates that will guide our work from November of 2014 through October of 2016. Each of our leadership counsels will prepare their plans of action and priorities according to the realities faced in their communities and work places to determine what actions they will take as members of CATA.

CATA is a living being, full of life from our members that makes the organization a vehicle to achieve their greatest aspirations. For this reason, our actions are the axles that unite to turn the wheels, moving us all forward towards a better life with dignity and respect.
The Harmful Effects of Pesticides on Human Health

BY: MARCO SALERNO
RESEARCH COORDINATOR FOR THE FARMWORKER HEALTH AND SAFETY INSTITUTE

Pesticides are inherently toxic materials – they are developed and used with the explicit intention to destroy or prevent the growth of life. The connection between pesticide exposure and common diseases affecting the public’s health continues to strengthen causing more and more concern for individuals directly and indirectly exposed to pesticides.

Farmworkers are directly exposed to and work with pesticides on a daily basis. Pesticide exposure causes farmworkers to suffer more chemical-related injuries and illnesses than any other workforce in the nation. Diseases that are most linked to pesticide exposure include asthma, birth defects, developmental and learning disabilities, Parkinson’s disease, and several types of cancer.

Asthma
Acute or chronic low-level inhalations of pesticides may increase the risk of developing asthma, exacerbate a previous asthmatic condition or even trigger asthma attacks. Researchers have found that pesticide exposure can induce a poisoning effect linked to asthma.

Birth and Fetal Defects
Infants whose mothers are exposed to pesticides are most at risk for birth defects. Many studies have demonstrated positive association between pesticide exposure and birth defects such as prematurity, low birth weight, and congenital abnormality at birth. A study published in the April 2009 issue of the medical journal Acta Paediatrica reports that the highest rates of birth defects for U.S. babies arise when conception occurs during the spring and summer months, when pesticide use increases and high concentrations of pesticides are found in surface waters.

Cancer
Research shows that there is a significant association between cancer and pesticides used in agriculture and throughout the urban environment in homes, schools, and public places. The most common types of cancers that are associated with pesticide exposure are brain cancer, breast cancer, leukemia, lymphoma, and prostate cancer. According to the Lymphoma Foundation of America, 75 out of all 99 epidemiologic studies conducted on lymphoma and pesticides find a link between the two. The report states that people develop lymphoma often in states and locations with the highest pesticide use.

Developmental and Learning Disabilities
A developing brain is much more susceptible to the toxic effects of chemicals than an adult brain. That vulnerability extends from fetal development to adolescence. Research has shown that environmental toxicants, such as pesticides, at low levels of exposure can have important adverse effects, such as decreases in intelligence or changes in behavior. These include general developmental delays, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder.
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(ADHD) and autism.

**Parkinson’s disease**
In a review of 40 studies from 1983-2005 published in the journal Environmental Health Perspectives, researchers evaluated the relationship between Parkinson’s disease and pesticide exposure, finding sufficient evidence that an association exists and is strongest for exposure to herbicides and insecticides, and after long durations of exposure.

Farmworkers are at the greatest risk to be poisoned because they are in direct contact with pesticides at their greatest concentrations on a daily basis. **While agricultural settings present countless cases of pesticide-related illnesses, surrounding communities and general consumers are also at risk to be poisoned.**

The Worker Protection Standard (WPS) is the primary set of federal regulations aimed at reducing the risk of pesticide poisonings and injuries among agricultural workers. On February 20, 2014 the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced proposed changes to the Worker Protection Standard, giving us the opportunity to increase the protections for workers who are exposed to pesticides. **The EPA is allowing for comments on the proposal until August 18, 2014 (see box).**

Making the WPS stronger is an immediate way to address the risks that farmworkers face from pesticide exposure. However, we believe that the best method of risk reduction is to mitigate and eliminate pesticide usage in agriculture. More support should be given to organic farming, Integrated Pest Management programs and other traditional agricultural techniques to help farmers transition to organic farming. Phasing out the use of pesticides will not only benefit farmworkers, but will improve the health of farmers, consumers, and the natural environment as well.

*To see the complete article with works cited, please visit [www.cata-farmworkers.org](http://www.cata-farmworkers.org)*

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**What Can You Do?**

The EPA is allowing for comments on the proposal until August 18, 2014. We need you to submit comments to tell the EPA what needs to be done to maximize protections for workers!

CATA has put together sample comments that you can submit on behalf of yourself or organization. To view the sample comments and instructions on how to submit them, go to: [http://www.cata-farmworkers.org/english pages/News.htm](http://www.cata-farmworkers.org/english pages/News.htm)

Email catamlh@aol.com to let us know when you have submitted comments

Any questions, please contact us at 856-881-2507 or catamlh@aol.com
Growing Community and Harvesting Change

BY: RACHEL WINOGRAD, FOOD JUSTICE COORDINATOR

One of the most exciting new initiatives of our membership in the past couple of years has been the Organic Community Gardens project created by CATA members in our Food Justice Committee. When we say community garden (*huerto comunitario*), we really mean community-led garden. The CATA gardens are formed, maintained, and directed by the gardeners themselves and their families. That means that participants work together through every step of the process, from design, creation and search for land to the daily maintenance and future planning. Summer 2014 marks the second growing season of the community garden in Bridgeton, New Jersey and the first season of the community garden in Kennett Square, Pennsylvania, and there is a lot to show for it.

Encouraged by the success of the “flagship” garden in Bridgeton last summer, this year the gardeners wanted to put up a greenhouse to be able to start seeds and extend the growing season from earlier in the spring to later in the fall (even grow year-round!). It was a challenging task for novices, but with hours of work by CATA members and the generous help of volunteer and friend Rob Ferber of the Philly Chile Company Farm in Monroeville, NJ, in March the group installed a 12’x40’ passive solar heated high tunnel with roll-up sides. From lessons learned during the last growing season and continual experimentation in the garden, production continues to increase and the group remains committed to increasing food security and food sovereignty in the community and serving as a model for others. With increased production, they’re beginning to sell excess organic produce at low cost to people in the neighborhood and have plans to maybe establish a small farmers’ market and/or mobile market in the future in collaboration with the city government.

The second garden, in Kennett Square, began this June after a lengthy process of dialogue with the town government to ensure a fair land use agreement of part of borough-owned property. Despite the late start, the group has worked quickly to install a rainwater catchment system with 55 gallon repurposed food-grade barrels (the only source of water for the garden) and a number of permanent unframed raised garden beds. They’ve planted extra seedlings from the Bridgeton garden as well as donated seedlings from a local organic farm using donated organic mushroom compost from a nearby mushroom farm. Gardeners are preparing for a late summer/early fall

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harvest, and are gathering materials to fence off the garden to discourage curious and friendly groundhog neighbors.

When we originally began the organic community gardens project, there were many reasons behind it besides increasing the community’s food security: Allowing for people to grow together and share gardening techniques brought from rich agricultural backgrounds in Mexico and Central America, beautifying the neighborhood and increasing neighborhood pride, encouraging friendly interaction between neighbors across social and cultural barriers, promoting a healthier lifestyle in general, and increasing children’s food and agricultural literacy, to name a few.

At the last Food Justice Committee meeting in Bridgeton, we were discussing strategies to recruit more people and the group brainstormed reasons that they themselves are committed to the project. Many of their reasons were the same reasons that CATA members initiated the project in the first place. Others were: A general willingness to contribute to the community, a love for working with nature and growing things, the desire to be doing something that they grew up doing, and the ability to be together with the group (they have become close friends through the process). Everyone also agreed that it was because they wanted to be doing something, not just talking about it. Crescenciano Sanchez, CATA Board Member and co-coordinator of the garden, put it well when he said that participating in the garden is a way of *materializando el dialogo*, in essence, putting our theories into practice – of the benefits of organic agriculture for farmworkers and consumers, of the need for systemic change in the food system and for all people to be food sovereign, and of the strength in collective action. It’s this particular sentiment that inspires us to keep growing.

“Like” CATA’s Facebook page for pictures and updates of the gardens!

**Growing Community… Continued from page 6**

CATA members of the Bridgeton Organic Community Garden built a solar-heated high tunnel this past spring to be able to start seeds and extend the growing season from earlier in the spring to later in the fall.
Yes, I want to be part of the farmworkers’ struggle for justice!

Here is my donation of:

$30____ $50____ $75____

$100____ $250____ Other____

Name:__________________________________________________________

Address:________________________________________________________________

City/State/Zip:_______________________________________________________

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Organization (if applicable):____________________________________________

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