Moving Forward

BY: NELSON CARRASQUILLO, GENERAL COORDINATOR

“Wisdom is knowing what to do next, skill is knowing how to do it, and virtue is doing it.”
- Fortune Cookie Wisdom

CATA celebrated its Annual Assembly in September of 2013. We affirmed our strategic plan Vision 2020 as our main action plan for the challenges that we expect to face. We understand that there is a great difference between what we want and reality.

We strive for justice and to live with dignity and respect, however, we recognize that at the moment it is an ideal yet to be achieved. Fermin, a member of our Board of Directors, indicated that we must change our mindset to perceive ourselves as people who “work to live, not live to work.”

When we first laid out Vision 2020 in 2009, we were expecting immigration reform to happen by 2010. Our plan was to use the momentum generated by immigration reform to build and strengthen the capacity of our members so that, by 2020, they could begin to use their political power to break free from the oppressive conditions that they live under. But we underestimated the forces that are against the creation of a world grounded in the principles of fairness and justice. Immigration reform efforts failed. This was a wake-up call, making us inherently aware that we have to depend on ourselves to achieve our goals. Taking all of this into consideration, we set out to review our Vision 2020.

Therefore, we revised our plans and realigned our priorities. We realized that we cannot wait for immigration reform to address the needs of the migrant community. We reviewed the language that is the heart of the proposed immigration legislation and found it to be based on principles that deny the migrant population dignity and respect. This disregard to basic human rights requires us to be proactive. We need to

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take action now, for the betterment of our membership. We need to build our capacity in a tangible manner and to build our assets, both economically and institutionally, in order to have the power and resources to take control of our lives.

So we reviewed our strategic vision and decided to focus on the following priorities:

- Rights of Workers
- Food Justice Program
- Increase Communication Resources
- Formation of a Credit Union

We need the engagement of our leaders and the entire organization in order to bring this vision to fruition. Communication and capacity-building will be our main tools of advancement. We will work with our allies to move forward in our agenda and we want you, our supporters, to walk hand in hand with us to achieve this common goal of living with dignity and respect.

Upcoming Project: Establishing a Credit Union

CATA is currently in the initial stages of starting a Credit Union for its members. This has been something that the organization has wanted to do for a long time and we are excited to finally begin the process. The purpose of establishing a Credit Union is so that CATA’s members are able to take control of their personal finances. The Credit Union will be operated and controlled by its members. They will be able to get lines of credit, take out loans, build their savings, and have a checking account. Currently most of these services are unavailable to the undocumented population who don’t have safe and secure places to deposit their money. With the ability to save and have access to credit, the migrant community can build up economic power and have a positive influence in their communities. The process to establish a Credit Union can take up to 3 years. We will be sure to keep you updated on our progress and ways that you can be involved.
Year in Review: Outreach to Farmworkers

BY: JESSICA CULLEY AND JOSE MANUEL GUZMAN, ORGANIZERS

A critical part of CATA’s mission is achieved through outreach and education to farmworkers in the communities and farm labor camps where they live. Through these visits organizers engage workers in a dialogue about their worksites, health and safety at work, pay at work, etc. These dialogues allow CATA to maintain the pulse of what is happening on the farms, seeing what the current trends are and what the practices are like on particular farms. These visits also engage workers to participate and become members of the organization and facilitates the organizing process, allowing workers to address issues of injustice in their workplace. This past year, CATA organizers visited 91 farms in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Maryland and talked to more than 950 workers.

Number of workers who participated in 2013 trainings:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Training</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pesticide Safety Trainings</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heat Stress Prevention Trainings</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HIV Prevention Trainings</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Trainings (Immigration, Workers’ Rights, etc.)</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We noted a few new trends this year as well as the continuation of other concerns.

A number of farms in New Jersey recruited and transported additional Puerto Rican workers this year. Although there has been a stable workforce of Puerto Ricans on a small number of farms in New Jersey for many years, this year we found a marked increase in the number of workers coming from the island. We believe that this is a result of deliberate inaction of the federal government on immigration reform and a continuation of the enforcement policies that have resulted in 365,000 deportations of undocumented workers this year. Related to this trend, we saw a number of farms increasing the hourly wage that was offered to workers in an effort to retain workers throughout the season. While in the past most farms have paid only the legally required minimum wage, $7.25/hour in New Jersey, we saw some farms this year offering $8.00 or $8.50/hour.

In our health and safety trainings, we continue to find a flagrant disrespect for workers’ rights to field sanitation. Many farms do not provide bathrooms and hand washing facilities in the fields, which is not only a threat to worker health, but can be a concern for consumers and food safety. Oftentimes they are not provided with clean drinking water either. Remember: Safe Workers = Safe Food, Healthy Workers = Healthy Food!

The last concern that continues to be an issue is the lack of information workers have about the chemical pesticides used on the farms where they are working. Very few know exactly what pesticides are applied, how toxic they are, how long they should wait before re-entering a field that has been sprayed, and how their health could be compromised by those chemicals. Despite a struggle for a strong right to know law, many farmers do not publicly post their pesticide applications, and even when they do, those postings are usually in English and not in a language that the workers understand.

CATA continues to involve workers in efforts to change these conditions. With these trainings and the outreach that CATA does, workers feel empowered to stand up for themselves and speak out against injustices in their workplaces and communities.
This year has seen a lot of growth in the Food Justice Program at CATA both on a local level with our members and on a regional and national scale with our advocacy and food policy work.

Locally, CATA’s Organic Community Garden in Bridgeton, New Jersey, celebrated its grand opening this June. It has been incredible to witness the transformation from a vacant unused lot to a productive community garden and also to see the passionate group of gardeners unite throughout the process, empowering themselves and their community to fight for better access to healthy food.

The way the members talk about their involvement in the project is awe-inspiring. They speak excitedly about organic methods of cultivation and the fairly recent history, before the so-called Green Revolution, when no pesticides or chemical fertilizers were used to grow food and everyone was better for it. During regular garden work days, people share ideas about how to prepare the different vegetables and talk about ways to eat better and keep their family healthy.

In order to increase their capacity, garden members recently opted to attend a hoop house construction workshop and are planning on increasing the production in the garden for the 2014 season in order to be able to better distribute garden produce to the community at large (by way of a low-cost farm market). A hoop house is a passive solar heated greenhouse with a polyethylene covering that can help farmers and gardeners extend the spring and fall seasons and/or be able to grow year-round.

The success of the Bridgeton Garden as a vehicle to increase families’ access to healthy food while amplifying the food justice conversation within their communities has encouraged us to start a similar project in Kennett Square, Pennsylvania this coming year and, further down the line, garden projects in Glassboro, New Jersey at the site of CATA’s main office, and in Salisbury, Maryland. We look forward to expanding the project to these other regions as well as continuing to offer educational opportunities and other events around topics of food justice and health and wellness to our membership.

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The Agricultural Justice Project (AJP) has taken a huge leap forward this year in the Northeast region of the country. In October, 12 certifiers and worker representatives were trained in Binghamton, NY, led in part by CATA’s very own AJP Master Trainer Jessica Culley. This means that we are now prepared to offer Food Justice Certified farm and business inspections and certifications in the Northeastern states.

AJP, for those who are not yet familiar, is an initiative to create a fair and equitable food system via social justice standards for organic and sustainable agriculture. A partnership between CATA, the Rural Advancement Foundation International (RAFI), Northeast Farming Association (NOFA), and Florida Organic Growers/Quality Certification Services (FOG/QCS), it uses its Food Justice Certified label as a tool to promote fair relationships and social justice throughout all aspects of the food system, from field to fork.

We are excited to finally be able to fully promote Food Justice Certification in our region with the assurance that we have the institutions and processes in place to support the certification here. Next step – farmer outreach and consumer awareness! We will be focusing this coming year on reaching out to concerned and conscious consumers (like you!) in order to garner brand recognition and consumer support. Please support us in this work by learning more about the Agricultural Justice Project and Food Justice Certified label, and responding to our action alerts surrounding the upcoming consumer campaign.

Help Us Bring Food Justice Certified Products to Whole Foods!

Some Whole Foods Stores have started to carry Farmer Direct Bulk Bin products like lentils, barley, and split peas that are Food Justice Certified.

Visit our website, www.cata-farmworkers.org, to download a letter you can send to the Whole Foods in your area asking them to carry these products.

A Food Justice Certified grain cooperative in Canada is already selling their products in the bulk bins of some Whole Foods Stores (see box). Help us create a market for Food Justice Certified products in farmers and super markets across the country and raise the bar on social justice standards in the food system. Help us prove that savvy consumers care about more than just their own health and safety; that they care about workers’ rights, health and safety, and fair relationships for workers and farmers too!

CATA remains a passionately committed member of the Domestic Fair Trade Association which draws on principles of both the organic and international fair trade movement to advocate for a “fair, equitable, and sustainable agricultural system that supports family-scale farms, farmer-led initiatives such as farmer co-ops, just conditions for workers, and organic agriculture.” Through our work with AJP, we have learned about the importance of this type of “watchdog” institution wherein domestic fair trade standards are held to the highest accountability and we believe their work is essential to maintaining the integrity of domestic fair trade standards and labeling structures.

As always, none of this work would be possible without the commitment, enthusiasm, and participation of our members, but also of you, our friends and allies, whose support and solidarity we forever appreciate. We must all come together to strive for fairness in the food system, not only as workers and producers, but as conscientious consumers as well.

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

Visit www.agriculturaljusticeproject.org and www.dfta.org for more information!
CATA held its Annual Assembly on September 15, 2013 and we discussed the following topics: Immigration and Vision 2020, establishing a credit union and radio station, and the Food Justice Program.

The Annual Assembly is held every other year, in between General Assemblies, with the purpose of reviewing our work to make sure we are on track with our goals and discuss what we will do in the coming year. The purpose of this meeting is for all of CATA’s members to get together to discuss how to address the issues and challenges we face in our communities and how to increase the membership of the organization.

We know that there is talk of an Immigration Reform, but we also know that it is not favorable to the migrant community because it will not change the reality of what life is like for those of us living here now. What would change is that we would have legal documents and work permits, but with the same living conditions, the same challenges, the same treatment that we receive now. However, we also realize that this is all that is being offered and could be the only opportunity we have for any real change to the immigration system in this country.

At the Assembly, we also talked about creating a Credit Union. I think this is the one of the best things we can do, knowing that it is in our best interest, not in the interest of third parties. With a Credit Union, we will have the opportunity to build our own credit, as well as save for the future, take out mortgages, start our own businesses, and learn how to manage our money better.

We discussed the Food Justice Program as well. We already have our Community Garden in Bridgeton, NJ and have the city’s support to establish more gardens there. We hope to establish gardens in Pennsylvania and Maryland. We will continue our work with the Agricultural Justice Project and the Domestic Fair Trade Association in order to guarantee that the rights of workers are included in the creation of a just and sustainable food system.

Therefore, taking into consideration all the things listed above, we see that we will be able to gain economic and political power in order to influence social change that is in our favor. We are going to be able to show how much the migrant community contributes to this country. We are also concerned about our food and the way we eat. All of this together is our way of trying to make the future better for ourselves and our children, helping to grow the power of the Latino community and the migrant community.

Upcoming Project: A CATA Radio Station

CATA is always looking to recruit more members to the organization and get our message out to the wider migrant community for them to organize and demand the rights that they deserve. With this in mind, CATA is looking to improve and enhance it’s communication with its membership. One way we hope to do that is by establishing a radio station. In November of this year, CATA applied for a low-power FM station license. We will know in January if we are approved. Keep a look out for updates and ways that you can get involved!
Everyone At the Table for Health

BY: NELSON CARRASQUILLO, GENERAL COORDINATOR

Food Justice for All is one of the central themes that define CATA’s work. For us, there is no justice when our children are forced to eat food that we know will be harmful to them, and our members, as farmworkers, are regularly exposed to the harmful chemicals that sprayed on the crops they work with. It is on all of us to raise our voices and denounce this reality in order to create solutions to the injustices that saturate the food chain.

We are fortunate to participate in the Jessie Smith Noyes Foundation’s initiative “Everybody at the Table for Health” in partnership with the Union of Concerned Scientists and our brothers and sisters of the Eat 4 Health fellowship program coordinated by the Praxis Project. The purpose of the initiative is to “fill gaps in the existing food policy advocacy ecosystem in order to make it more inclusive of low-income and people of color communities, more responsive to grassroots needs and ideas, and more effective in terms of protecting the environment, promoting good health, and rebuilding strong local economies.”

CATA is working with the Union of Concerned Scientists to frame the reality on the ground for farmworkers. Through this work, we are taking the necessary steps to promote policy changes that would better regulate the use of pesticides, thus protecting the workers from harmful exposure. We want to create a just food system based on the promotion of fair treatment of farmworkers. A system where the food is healthy, grown free of pesticides, accessible to all and that provides both the farmers and farmworkers with fair prices and fair wages. Visit eat4healthpartners.org for more information.

CATA Members Help Raise the Minimum Wage In New Jersey!

In November of this year, New Jersey residents voted to raise the minimum wage to $8.25/hour with annual adjustments. CATA members have been advocating for the raise since March of 2012. They provided written and spoken testimony at hearings in support of the raise, handed out flyers, hung up posters, spoke at press conferences, and passed out information at meetings. They shared the most important point of view, that of someone trying to survive on minimum wage. For CATA and its members, raising the minimum wage is not a political issue; it is a moral issue, necessary to ensure that all workers in New Jersey are compensated fairly for their work and able to meet their own needs and the needs of their family members. We recognize that 8.25 is far from a living wage and will keep advocating so that all workers receive far pay.

CATA is proud to be a member of EarthShare New Jersey (ESNJ), a non-profit organization created and directed by member organizations to represent us in employee workplace giving campaigns. Please consider making a donation to CATA through your workplace. Don’t have a workplace giving campaign at your office? Contact CATA to assist you in setting one up. The code for CATA for the Federal Campaign is 39411 and the NJ State Campaign is 3341. Visit www.cata-farmworkers.org for a complete list. For more information on ESNJ go to www.earthsharenj.org.
Yes, I want to be part of the farmworkers’ struggle for justice!

Here is my donation of:

$30____ $50____ $75___ $100___ $250___ Other_____

Name:_____________________________________________
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