

SPRING 2021

# NATIONAL FARM WORKER MINISTRY NEWS & VIEWS

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AWARENESS WEEK 2021



National  
Farm Worker  
MINISTRY

## Message from the Executive Director

2021 has brought us a New Year, a new administration, new legislation for farm workers and new opportunities. It has also carried over concerns about the pandemic and ongoing frustrations about farm worker challenges with immigration, housing, wage theft, and more. And so, in 2021, we find ourselves at an inflection point. **We are poised to see what could become the most significant shift in the farm worker experience since the beginning of the movement.**

Congress is passing and will pass legislation on immigration and farm worker regulations for the first time in 20-30 years. Farm workers have officially been recognized as "essential" workers and are seeing more attention as part of the crucial fabric of our country. There is renewed emphasis on faith-based initiatives and efforts. And there is a farm worker presence in the White House, both through the bust of Cesar Chavez in the Oval Office and with Julie Chávez Rodríguez. There is great potential in these things.

Similarly, NFWM has great potential. 2021 marks the 50th year since we were incorporated as a nonprofit. 50 years ago, in the throws of the newly formed United Farm Worker Union, NFWM became an entity that moved from the charity of Migrant Ministries to the determined mission of accompaniment of farm workers in their campaigns for self-determination and justice. Over the years we have supported farm worker-led campaigns from the grape and lettuce boycotts in the 1960s to the ongoing Wendy's and VUSE boycotts today.

We have expanded from just supporting the UFW to including a wider number of farm worker organizing groups with farm worker led/elected leaders. These range from unions to a coalition, an

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association, a support committee, and other efforts growing in other locations. Wherever farm workers are organizing themselves, we offer support as we can. We invite our supporters to work on federal, state and local legislation and regulations. We urge our supporters to participate in marches, vigils, protests, petitions, letter/postcard writing, calls and social media efforts. We promote educational opportunities and resources. In all these ways, we are accomplishing our mission to educate, equip and mobilize in the farm worker movement.

As we celebrate our 50th year in 2021-2022, we are recognizing this long history of standing with farm workers AND we are putting our face forward to the years ahead of us. We want to work ourselves out of a job but we still have a lot to do. And we need you! The pandemic has taught us that we can do a lot of digital outreach to put pressure on corporations and government officials. We want to continue this and to expand it. If you haven't already, sign up for our enews and Action Alerts and then respond when we send opportunities. Beyond that, we need to add more supporters and organizations to grow our list.

Another thing we have learned is that education is critical. During the first four months of the pandemic, there was intense interest by journalists, news outlets, etc. in the challenges farm workers face. While that has diminished in intensity, there is still interest in keeping essential workers safe during this time. Our website has good resources, and we continue our efforts to annually produce materials, but much more needs to be done. Messaging, presentations, and outreach are all vital to having people connect with us and respond to our calls to action.

At the core of this is relationships. People engage with people they know. Our years of connecting with people, making presentations, working through our member organizations and attending events around the country, although suspended during the pandemic, will need to make a creative comeback. Staff are already working on new approaches and opportunities. In 2021 we've added a Zoom account for webinars. One of our current interns is giving us a stronger presence on Twitter. We will be developing new resources this year to promote more online engagement. But this is just a beginning. **There is so much more we can do.**

Be part of this with us. Talk about NFWM. Connect us to supporters and organizations in your spheres of influence. Help us find more financial resources to do this work – either by making a special **ADDITIONAL** donation in honor of our 50th anniversary or by finding other ways to provide significant financial resources to invest in the present and in our future. We need you. We need **YOU!**

This is an exciting time. We can see a change for farm workers and we are building our capacity to move in that direction.

**Join us. Si Se Puede! Yes we can!**

# Action Needed!

## A Letter from Faith Leaders to BAT/Reynolds

We invite faith leaders to sign a letter to the Chairman of the Board of British American Tobacco about ensuring freedom of association for farm workers on Reynolds American contract farms.

We want to overwhelm BAT/Reynolds by urging them to call on BAT to negotiate a memorandum of understanding – as requested by the Farm Labor Organizing Committee – that will guarantee freedom of association, without retaliation, to farm workers employed on Reynolds American's contract farms. And, we call on BAT to prohibit contract growers and H2A farm labor contractors from retaliating against farm workers for exercising basic workplace rights.

The first deadline for signing is April 23rd. The signatures gathered by that time will be delivered to the shareholders meeting on April 28th, but we will continue to push so that we can send a second, and perhaps a third wave of signatures over the next month or so.

In 2014, this effort garnered 300 signatures. We are challenging you to help us reach 500 this time, for the first wave, and ultimately 1,000 or more for the next waves. We want BAT/Reynolds to see the resolve of faith leaders as they represent multitudes more in our pews.

**If you are a faith leader, please sign the letter at:**

**<http://nfwf.org/bat-letter/>**

## Board Update

NFWF held our second virtual meeting January 28-30, 2021.

Highlights included the decisions that were made to endorse the Milk with Dignity Program of Migrant Justice, the adoption of the 2021 budget, the affirmation of NFWF committees and working groups, and the election of our officers/ Executive Committee members for the next two years. We also spent time listening and sharing stories, and hearing updates from our farm worker partners.

## Executive Committee

Hector Rodriguez, President  
John Hill, Vice President  
Sam Trickey, Vice President  
Joy Warren, Treasurer  
Felix Garza, Secretary  
Sylvia Campbell,

Immediate Past President  
Sharon Stanley-Rea,  
Member at large  
Kimberly Emery, Member at large  
Nathan Hosler, Member at large

A full list of board members is available at:

<http://nfwf.org/faith-based-partners/member-and-supporting-organizations/>

# UPDATE:

## The Farm Workforce Modernization Act

The Farm Workforce Modernization Act (FWMA) has been introduced as a bipartisan bill and includes a long-needed path to citizenship for farm workers specifically. While the bill is not perfect, it has passed in the House and now moves on to the Senate, which is why now is the opportunity to make improvements.

We've heard opposition to the bill from farm worker partners in the Northwest and East. While this bill could improve conditions for some workers under the H-2A system, long-term farm workers within the U.S. working in smaller settings are left out, and are frightened by the concession to require E-Verify—which was attractive in getting growers to sign on.

Additionally, there are concerns about housing provisions, transportation reimbursements, wage calculations, oversight of farm labor contractors (FLCs), the ability to negotiate

grievances, and the expansion to year-round H-2A visas for dairy workers and others (if workers are needed year-round, then why not offer them green cards or citizenship?).

This is a good time to remind our elected officials of the need for other basic farm worker protections including the right to organize and collectively bargain without retaliation.

Please also encourage support for President Biden's goal of providing immediate green cards for farm workers.

The National Farm Worker Ministry supports all our farm worker partners as they seek farm worker rights and improved conditions for farm workers.

Be sure to check [www.nfwm.org](http://www.nfwm.org) and our Facebook, and Twitter accounts for updates.

### We're asking you to call your Senators to ask for:

- A reasonable path to citizenship for farm workers
  - Immediate green cards for farm workers
- Removal of the E-Verify requirement
- H-2A regulations that better benefit farm workers and ensure fair wages
  - Provision for transportation reimbursements and housing
  - Living wages
  - Stronger oversight of farm labor contractors and mutual responsibility of FLCs and growers for labor conditions at their farms
  - Grievance policies and boards
  - No expansion to year-round visas under the H-2A program

#### **Farm Workforce Modernization Act of 2021 (House version)**

H.R. 1603

Originally introduced 2019, reintroduced March 3, 2021

Passed March 18, 2021

Sponsors: Lofgren (D-CA) and Newhouse (R-WA)

# Milk with Dignity

At the January 2021 board meeting, the NFWM Board voted to affirm the Milk with Dignity Program of Migrant Justice.

As part of this decision, NFWM has sent a letter to Hannaford Supermarkets asking them to join the program (right).

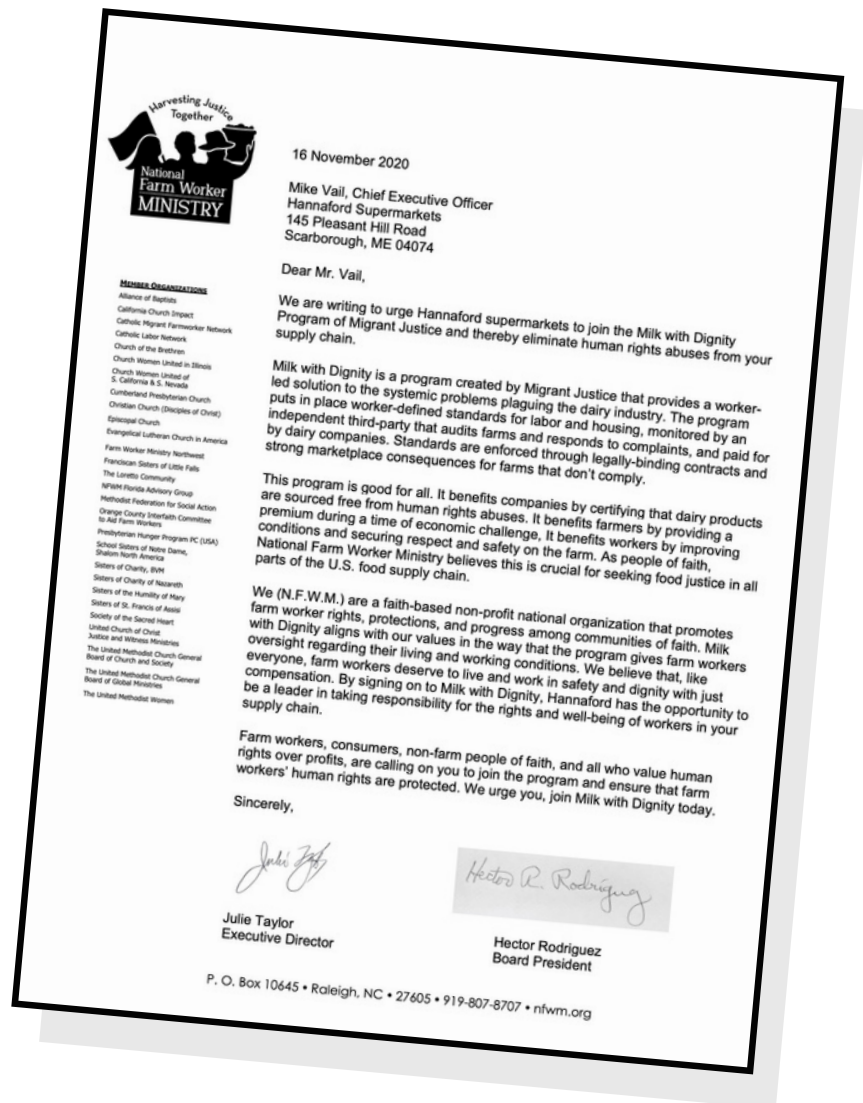
The Milk with Dignity Program was created by Migrant Justice, a nonprofit, farm worker-driven, human rights organization based in Burlington, Vermont and is patterned after the Coalition of Immokalee Workers' Fair Food Program.

The Milk with Dignity Program brings together farm workers, farmers, buyers and consumers to secure dignified working conditions in dairy supply chains. The Program enlists the resources of food industry leaders to provide a premium for milk to participating farmers who agree to work towards compliance with the labor standards in the Milk with Dignity Code of Conduct. The premium helps offset farms' costs of compliance with the Code and rewards farms that comply.



# MILK WITH DIGNITY

**A NEW DAY FOR  
HUMAN RIGHTS IN DAIRY**



## Milk with Dignity

- Worker-Driven Social Responsibility (WSR) model
- First agreement: Ben & Jerry's, 2017
- Covers 65+ dairies and protects 250+ workers
- Independent 3rd party monitor, the Milk with Dignity Standards Council (MDSC)

[www.migrantjustice.net/MDProgram](http://www.migrantjustice.net/MDProgram)



# Celebrate 50 Years of NFWM!

This year, we celebrate 50 years of the incorporation of NFWM, and you're invited to be a part of this special celebration.

We're creating a variety of resources for you to share with friends and your faith communities throughout the year, so check back often at [www.nfwm.org/50th](http://www.nfwm.org/50th).

Currently you can find a flyer and a video, presented by Julie Taylor, available for download.

**We'll also be launching an exciting online history exhibit, highlighting 50 people, places, things, and events that have brought us to where we are today.**

Stay tuned for more, and CELEBRATE! Your involvement in this mission is what makes this possible.

We invite you to:

- Consider a special one-time anniversary gift
- Consider becoming a recurring donor
- Consider increasing your regular gift

Because together, we can make a real difference in the lives of farm workers.



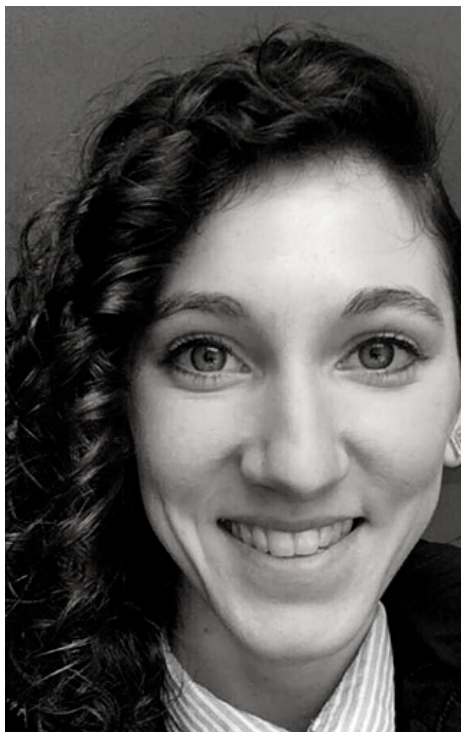
# [www.nfwm.org/50th](http://www.nfwm.org/50th)

# NFWM Updates

## NFWM Welcomes new Administrative Assistant, Meagan Fisher!

Meagan was born and raised amongst the corn fields of northern Indiana. She earned a Bachelor's degree in English and Philosophy at Bethel College in Indiana and a Master's in Theology from Princeton Theological Seminary in New Jersey.

Meagan moved to North Carolina in the Fall of 2019 where she completed a year of service as an Americorps VISTA (Volunteers in Service to America). Meagan enjoys being outside - hiking, biking, and being on the water. She loves playing card games and board games as well as watching and discussing movies and TV with friends. She is a poet and self-taught cellist. She hopes to grow a garden someday. She has a little dog named Willow and a cute hamster named Ginger.



Meagan Fisher

## "See you soon," with appreciation!

NFWM says "see you soon," and a big THANK YOU to two of our board members whose terms have ended: Carol Barton, of United Methodist Women, and Lauren Brownlee, of the Society of the Sacred Heart. We give thanks to both of them for their dedicated service to NFWM.



Carol Barton



Lauren Brownlee

## Farmworker Awareness Week 2021



Thank you for joining with us in celebrating Farmworker Awareness Week 2021!

Hundreds of people "gathered" online to engage with educational and inspirational resources from a variety of organizations supporting farm workers. Coordinated by Student Action with Farmworkers. Activities included film screenings and discussions, educational webinars, rallies, t-shirt drives, volunteer opportunities, and more. NFWM also supported Catholic Labor Network and Farmworker Association of Florida's participation .

The week was capped with the annual celebration of Cesar Chavez's birthday, which included a day of service in Los Angeles as well as a visit to the UFW by First lady Dr. Jill Biden.

Thanks to your generous support, NFWM is able to be a proud partner of Farmworker Awareness Week every year.

**National Farm Worker Ministry**

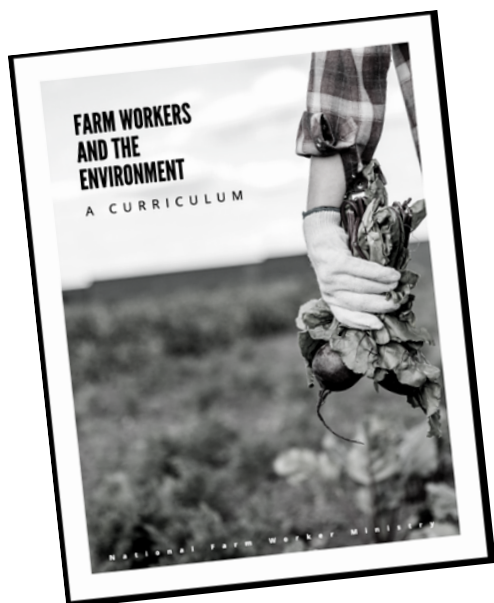
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[www.nfwm.org/curriculum](http://www.nfwm.org/curriculum)

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Staff Team:

Meagan Fisher

Cathy McGaughey

Emily Miller

Julie Taylor