

# *The FARMER'S PLEDGE* ©™

Knowing your farmer is the best assurance that the food you buy is responsibly grown with methods that honor the web of life. Northeast Organic Farming Association of New York, Inc. (NOFA-NY, Inc.) believes that farmers should work in harmony with nature and leave the little piece of the world over which they have stewardship in better condition than when they found it.

To further enable consumers to identify the farms they want to support with their food dollars, NOFA-NY has established The Farmer's Pledge, a separate and distinct program from USDA Certified Organic. This Pledge is based on the integrity of the farmer. It seeks to describe sustainable practices in a document that both certified organic growers and growers that use agro-ecological systems can attest is an accurate description of how they farm. It serves as a bridge for consumers and farmers alike to better know the agriculturists who struggle to create healthy communities, local food security and food sovereignty.

Farmers who adhere to the Pledge sign the Pledge annually, which they may display for customers. Those who sign this Pledge agree that customers may inspect, by appointment, the farm to judge if the farmer is adhering to the Pledge. NOFA-NY does not investigate or make any guarantee that the individual farmer is complying with The Farmer's Pledge. If a customer visits a farm and believes the farmer is not honoring the Pledge, the customer may write the Executive Director of NOFA-NY to register a complaint.

In 2001, the USDA created a National Organic Program, which defined and regulated the agricultural uses of the word organic through a set of national organic standards. Therefore, taking this Pledge does not entitle a farmer to represent their products as organic. However, NOFA-NY believes that certified organic farmers and farmers that sign the Farmer's Pledge have far more in common than they have differences. We hold this principle inviolable. We should never forget that humanity's seed stock and growing practices are the result of farmers sharing seeds, knowledge, values, farmer-tested innovations and agricultural science over thousands of years.

## **WE PLEDGE THAT IN OUR FARMING, PROCESSING, AND MARKETING WE WILL:**

- **Build and maintain healthy soils by applying farming practices that include rotating crops annually, using compost, cover crops, green manures, and reducing tillage;**
- **serve the health of soil, people and nature by rejecting the use of synthetic insecticides, herbicides, fungicides, and fertilizers;**
- **reject the use of GMOs, chemically treated seeds, synthetic toxic materials, irradiation, and sewage sludge in our farming, and all synthetic substances in post harvest handling;**
- **treat livestock humanely by providing pasture for ruminants, access to outdoors and fresh air for all livestock, banning cruel alterations, and using no hormones, GMOs or antibiotics in feed;**
- **handle raw manure and soil amendments with care;**
- **support agricultural markets and infrastructures that enable small farms to thrive;**
- **conserve natural resources including the atmosphere and climate, by reducing erosion and pollution of air, soil and water through responsible farming practices;**
- **maximize the nutritional value of food and feed by practicing careful post harvest handling;**
- **practice minimal processing for all food products to preserve the natural nutritional value of food: NO use of irradiation, ultra-pasteurization, excessive heat, synthetic preservatives, or GMO processing agents or additives and include all ingredients on labels;**
- **ensure food safety by using potable water for washing crops;**
- **reduce the ecological footprint of farms and homes by limiting energy use and converting to renewable sources of energy;**
- **reduce food miles by selling produce locally and regionally;**
- **create beneficial habitat for wildlife and encourage biodiversity;**
- **help preserve farmland;**
- **share and develop farming skills and know-how;**
- **use ethical business practices;**
- **pay a living wage to all farm workers and acknowledge their freedom of association and their right to collective bargaining;**
- **treat family members and farm workers with respect, and ensure their safety on the farm;**
- **work in cooperation with other farmers and with the neighboring community to create a more sustainable way of life;**
- **encourage the distribution of unsold but edible food to people who need it;**
- **sustain the land in healthy condition for future generations.**

