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**Farmers and Farm Workers Unite to Help Consumers
Understand Ethical Food Claims,
Strengthen Movement for Integrity in Labeling**

Domestic Fair Trade Association adds emerging farm certification program, Equitable Food Initiative, to its growing list of market claims examined for how they address sustainable food issues such as workers' rights, organic agriculture, and fair and stable pricing for farmers.

Seattle, WA – On April 2nd the Domestic Fair Trade Association added the Equitable Food Initiative (EFI) to its Fair Facts program — an initiative that evaluates fair trade and social justice certification programs in order to help consumers navigate the tricky landscape of ethical food labeling. The Equitable Food Initiative is led by a partnership of farm worker unions, businesses, and non-profit organizations, including, the United Farm Workers, Costco, and Oxfam America.

The evaluation is the newest of seven and examines how EFI meets, exceeds, or falls short of domestic fair trade principles. These principles, 16 in all, were crafted to translate traditional principles of international fair trade into the North American agricultural and food system. Domestic fair trade principles were agreed upon through consensus by farm workers, farmers, retailers, processors, and NGOs throughout the US and Canada and therefore serve as an important foundation for evaluating claims found in the grocery aisle. Other fair trade and social justice certification programs evaluated by the DFTA include Food Justice Certified, Fair for Life, Fair Trade USA, Fairtrade International, Rainforest Alliance, and Food Alliance.

The DFTA's findings on the Equitable Food Initiative include both laudable and innovative approaches to workers' rights on large-scale farms, as well as areas of concern in regards to pesticides and the omission of support for small-scale organic agriculture and fair and stable pricing for farmers.

Specifically:

- EFI has comprehensive language in regards to its primary claim about developing and ensuring safe and fair working conditions for farm workers. Workers have the explicit right to freedom of association and play an integral and active role in the monitoring process and implementation of EFI standards.
- EFI's program does not specifically ban any pesticides harmful to the environment or human health. EFI does not reference GMOs, alone among the evaluated programs, and does not require organic certification or other independent certifications that might cover responsible handling of agrochemicals and other basic aspects of good production and agricultural practices.
- The DFTA is concerned that the program as designed would involve and benefit primarily large-scale agricultural operations, counter to the domestic fair trade vision of a food and farming landscape led by small-scale and/or family scale farms practicing organic agriculture.
- EFI does not have standards that address fair and stable pricing for farmers.

It should be noted that Equitable Food Initiative does not claim to be a domestic fair trade program, but was chosen for evaluation based on its clear social claim to fairness and justice. Other non-fair trade identified programs evaluated by the DFTA are Food Alliance and Rainforest Alliance, which both failed to meet DFTA's criteria for workers' rights. Specifically, the Equitable Food Initiative is the only non-fair trade identified program that ensures workers have freedom of association and the recognized right to hold meetings of any kind outside of working hours.

"One of the primary goals of the Fair Facts program is that it serves to further the dialogue between evaluated programs and stakeholders in the food and farming sector impacted by their claims," says Domestic Fair Trade Association Executive Director Colette Cosner. "We are encouraged to hear that programs such as EFI are making revisions or updating their standards based on our evaluations. Our Fair Facts program is also a testament to the power of farm workers and farmers working together for their common cause: an educated and empowered consumer base who can grow the demand for food produced in ways that are more healthy, just and sustainable."

For a complete analysis and comparison of all the evaluated programs in the Fair Facts program visit www.fairfacts.thedfta.org

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The Domestic Fair Trade Association is a non-profit coalition that fosters collaboration between North American farmers and farmworkers in the sustainable agriculture movement. The DFTA seeks to build supply chains dedicated to principles of fairness and equity by uniting these efforts with mission-based traders, retailers, and consumers. More about the domestic fair trade movement www.thedfta.org

