



## What do Food Justice Certification standards offer to farm operators?

Farmers cannot provide fair working conditions to workers—nor can they enjoy fair working conditions themselves—unless they get a fair deal in the marketplace. AJP standards outline both fair working conditions for farm workers and fair practices for businesses who buy from farms. These standards are the basis for AJP's Food Justice

Certification program and serve as a practical vision for a food system that works for everyone—workers, farm operators, and communities. The standards are written and maintained by farm workers, community-scale farmers, and other stakeholders.

**By law** farmers have the right to **freedom of association** and **collective bargaining**: the freedom to form groups, associations, or cooperatives with other farmers, and the right to democratically choose a group's representative to negotiate with a buyer, free from any interference from the buyer.

### Fair trading relationships between producers and buyers

**Food Justice Certification standards** require buyers to offer basic transparency and good faith commitments in their agreements with producers:

- Buyers must **comply with all laws** regarding farmers' freedom of association and rights to collective bargaining.
- Farmers have the right to **freedom of association** and **collective bargaining**, free from retaliation by buyers. Farmers may **choose a representative** to negotiate on their behalf or to be present during any meeting related to agreements or contracts.
- Farmers must receive a **fair price** for their products, meaning that the price covers at least the cost of production, plus a fair margin for profit and investment. Note that the cost of production must include fair wages and basic benefits for themselves and their workers.
- If a buyer is **unable** to pay a price that covers, they must document their inability to do so by **sharing their financial records with the farmer**, and the buyer and farmer must **negotiate a price** through good faith negotiations.
- Purchasing agreements must be **negotiated** in good faith with farmers, and “take it or leave it” prices are not allowed. **Binding arbitration clauses are not allowed**. Buyers and farmers should work in good faith to establish long-term and stable relationships which provide mutual respect for the needs and rights of both parties.
- Farmers and buyers must have access to a defined, fair **conflict resolution** process without reprisal.
- Written contracts or informal agreements should include terms for price setting, quality, quantity, shipping schedule, equity-sharing, other benefits, standards, conflict resolution, and any pre-finance/credit arrangements.
- Farmers should be **first in line to recover all payments due** from the buyer should the buyer file for bankruptcy.
- No farmer/buyer agreements or contracts may be terminated without **just cause**.
- If the farmer feels a price is not fair, the buyer must be **transparent** about their costs and pricing formulas and engage in good faith negotiations.

- Farmers must have **full access to their contract files**. Farmers are always allowed to discuss their contracts with others, including other farmers.
- If a buyer requires a farmer to make **capital investments** in order to fulfill a contract and the buyer subsequently terminates the contract, the farmer can collect damages from the buyer related to that required investment.

## Additional benefits of Food Justice Certification

**Price premiums.** Demonstrate your values to your customers and earn a premium in the market. AJP can help you communicate about FJC with your market and CSA customers and invite them to pay the true cost of producing food. Wholesale buyers who are certified must pay farmers prices that cover the full cost of production, including fair compensation and investments in the future of the farm, or else share their financial situation and negotiate an alternate price with the farmer.

**Attracting and retaining employees.** Farm businesses benefit from having a team that is committed to the farm's long-term success. One way to help develop that team is to invest in workers and build a fair farm workplace. Workers want a workplace that values their contributions and treats them well, and they're much more likely to stick with a business and work towards its success if they are treated fairly.

If we want to build a movement strong enough to win a truly sustainable food system, we have to build solidarity and connect **justice for farmworkers** with **justice for farmers**. In a globalized food system dominated by huge corporations, it is difficult to make finances work on a family- or community-scale farm. The number of farms in the US has shrunk by over 4 million over the past generation. When we talk about food justice, we are not just talking about something farmers need to do for others - for exploited farm workers or undocumented food service workers. Farmers need food justice, too.

This list is not complete and is intended only as a brief summary. For details and a complete list of standards, see the full AJP standards sections 1 & 2 on our website, [AgriculturalJusticeProject.org](http://AgriculturalJusticeProject.org).



1.0 Buyer responsibilities



2.0 Farmer responsibilities