**Farm Proprietor Panel**

**Class activity for Chapter 13**

***Food, Farms and Community***

**Material Requirements: None**

**Time Requirement: 60-90 minutes**

If you live in an area with farms, reach out to a few of them to see if their proprietor or a farm manager is willing to visit your class and sit on a panel of 3-4 people to discuss issues of farm succession and getting new entrepreneurs interested in agricultural ventures. Chapter 13 in *Food, Farms, and Community* outlines a wealth of issues related to recruiting the next generation of entrepreneurs to run what are increasingly industrialized agricultural operations, both at larger and smaller scales. A few of the issues that you can bring up for the panel to discuss include the debt burden carried by farms, the profitability of the regions’ agricultural ventures, the effects of the demographic transition within farming, impacts of land and labor costs on the profitability of farm businesses, and availability of land more generally.

As you reach out to potential panelists, consider what types of agricultural ventures are prevalent in your region and attempt to feature diverse panelists. If you have a few large commodity farms that grow corn or soybeans and several small farms that specialize in fruit, vegetables or meat, try to represent all or most of these ventures. Featuring farmers whose operations represent diversity in scale can be extraordinarily informative for students, as differently scaled enterprises can face different challenges in terms of farm succession and farm viability more generally. Also attempt, if possible, to represent on your panel a variety of farmers in terms of whether they seek organic certification or not, or pursue other certifications. Exposing students to farmers with a diverse array of business models and ethics can broaden their appreciation of the challenges inherent in the business of farming.

In addition to giving students an opportunity to ask questions directly of the farmers on your panel, you may also invite them to write a reflection on the experience that is due a few days afterwards. Having time to digest what they hear and analyze it can deepen the learning experience.