



Northeast SARE DEIJ Values Statement

Context

There is no sustainable agriculture without a foundation of diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice. Honoring the dignity and value of all people, plants, animals, other organisms, and our environment go hand in hand in advancing the sustainability of our region’s agriculture and food systems. **People of color’s contributions to agriculture in the Northeast have been critical.** Long before the colonization of the northeastern United States, Indigenous cultures maintained food sovereignty for generations. Even today, most of the world’s food supply comes from crops originally cultivated by Indigenous farmers. The agricultural labor of enslaved Black people formed the foundation of U.S. wealth. The knowledge and labor of Latinx people, immigrants, and other foreign-born farm employees of color continue to undergird the U.S. food system and produce much of the food we eat. Throughout history, people of color have led movements to ensure the true sustainability of our agricultural systems: to cultivate land sustainably, protect the rights of farm employees, maintain land and small farms through farmer cooperatives and community land trusts, and so much more. Many farmers and communities of color have generously shared their abundance and brilliance with the Northeast SARE community and helped to inform our commitment to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice.

Yet, too often U.S farm systems have reattributed and erased people of color’s vital contributions to agriculture while exploiting and excluding the communities making these contributions. **The systematic exclusion of people of color and other marginalized and socially disadvantaged groups in agriculture is neither sustainable nor just.** Northeast SARE has operated as a predominantly white institution and acknowledges its role in perpetuating this exclusion. At Northeast SARE, our mission is to “advance the whole of American agriculture.” We recognize that our organization — through its structures, processes and procedures — has abdicated our responsibilities to tribal nations, farming communities of color, and other socially disadvantaged groups. We acknowledge the history and impact of white supremacy in Northeast SARE, our partners, and agriculture more broadly, as well as the harms we have created and perpetuated. **We must work to undo the harmful impacts of these injustices and we understand this requires us to be actively anti-racist.** We believe Northeast SARE has both the obligation and the opportunity to advance a vision for sustainable agriculture that is built on a foundation of equity and justice.

Values

Clear, strong, and shared values will strengthen our ability to redress racism. Northeast SARE seeks to operate by the following values in fulfilling our commitment to being anti-racist and striving to continually move toward equity and justice:

- **Centering and supporting the leadership of previously marginalized voices.** We value a diversity of voices and lived experiences and recognize that too often the voices of communities of color and other marginalized groups are excluded and not honored. We seek to support their leadership across our organization and build reciprocal rather than extractive relationships with communities of color. We appreciate, listen to, and learn from the communities we seek to support. We strive to defer to knowledge and ways of knowing held in communities of color and uplift farmers and farm employees of color throughout our work.
- **Being accountable** to communities of color and communities who have been marginalized in our region's agricultural systems. We recognize that we are gatekeepers, and it is our responsibility to use our power to be anti-racist and proactively break down barriers and provide boosts to communities of color who have been historically excluded from USDA and SARE programs and resources.
- **Working in coalition** toward an equitable and sustainable future by removing systemic barriers in sustainable agriculture and building and repairing strong and mutually beneficial relationships with communities who have been marginalized and organizations that support them.
- **Fostering abundance** over scarcity as a foundation for how resources are shared, ensuring we benefit the communities of color that have previously been excluded.
- **Acknowledging oppression as intersectional** so we acknowledge race alongside ethnicity, gender, language, religion, culture, food, region, sexuality, disability, socioeconomic status, etc.
- **Welcoming discomfort and allowing for growth.** Exploring unfamiliar paths is essential to finding new solutions. We know that undoing racism and dismantling white supremacy is uncomfortable work. We are committed to leaning into this discomfort.

Our Action Plan

We have developed a [strategic plan](#) for how Northeast SARE will implement this commitment to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice, which was adopted by the Northeast SARE Administrative Council in February 2022.