

# Linking Up: Creating Fair and Sustainable Agricultural Supply Chains

## Domestic Fair Trade Association Bi-National Conference, December 14-16 in Atlanta

BY ERIKA INWALD

**W**hen there is so much wrong with our food system—corporate control and monopolization, an abundance of unhealthy food and unsustainable production practices, unfair pricing for farmers, low wages and dangerous conditions for food and farm workers—it can be hard to believe that any other way of agricultural production is possible.

This year, the Domestic Fair Trade Association ([thedfta.org](http://thedfta.org)) is hosting a conference with the theme Linking Up: Creating Fair and Sustainable Agricultural Supply Chains, in order to remind us that there are alternatives to our current food system and to inspire us to believe that these alternatives can become the norm. Experts from throughout the United States and Canada will gather to share concrete strategies and best practices for how all the sectors in our food system can work together to develop a vision for agricultural production that is based on health, sustainability, and justice.

The first day of the conference will center on tours highlighting businesses and organizations throughout the Atlanta metro area that are grounded in fairness and sustainability. In keeping with this year's conference theme, there will be three tours that illustrate different points of the agricultural supply chain. At Truly Living Well ([trulylivingwell.com](http://trulylivingwell.com)), conference attendees will experience an example of urban agriculture that embodies environmental stewardship and strengthens communities. We will also visit the Turnip Truck and hear from Georgia Organics about innovative ways to distribute local and organic produce. Finally, we will end the day of tours learning about Emory University's path toward sourcing sustainable and fair food for their cafeterias.

Many of our past conference attendees have found these tours to be instrumental in creating new connections and sparking fresh ideas of how to improve local, regional, and national food and agricultural systems.

On the second day of the conference, farmers, farmworkers, retailers, processors, distributors, manufacturers, advocates, and activists will gather to hear an inspiring keynote from Paula Daniels, founder of the Center for Good Food Purchasing Program ([goodfoodpurchasing.org](http://goodfoodpurchasing.org)). To facilitate cross-sector education, we have planned six exciting workshops, with topics ranging from cooperatives in the food chain to transforming supply chains through building coalitions. The day will conclude with a special presentation from Shirley Sherrod, executive director of the Southwest Georgia Project ([swgaproject.com](http://swgaproject.com)) and former Georgia State Director of Rural Development

for the USDA, and a screening of her film, "Arc of Justice." After a day filled with education and collaboration, there will be an evening celebration including delicious local food and drink, a silent auction, and the ceremony for our 2nd Annual Domestic Fair Trade Award.

The third day of the conference will be dedicated to our membership meeting. Domestic Fair Trade Association members will vote by consensus in annual elections, assess this past year's initiatives, and help to plan our work for 2018. Many sectors throughout the agricultural supply chain have their own conferences in which the primary reason for gathering is to discuss the nuts and bolts of the sector and to improve technical skills. There are not as many instances in which all the sectors throughout the food supply chain—farmworkers, farmers, processors, manufacturers, distributors, retailers, and advocacy organizations—gather with the idea that we are stronger together, and that creating a fair and sustainable agricultural system cannot be done by one sector on its own. •

**Join us on December 14-16 in Atlanta, Georgia to move one step closer to more agricultural supply chains centered on domestic fair trade, justice, health, and sustainability.**



The CGN website at [www.grocer.coop](http://www.grocer.coop) is one place to learn more about food justice and fair trade issues. Enter your query in the Search field and filter by content type, audience, and date with the options on the left side of the page.