

THE EDIBLE SCHOOLYARD PROJECT

ORGANIC AND ACTION

Summary: In this lesson, students learn about three different forms of action that can be taken to make positive change. They then study individuals and organizations employing each of these kinds of action on issues related to "organic."

Time: 60 minutes

Teacher Notes:

- This lesson emphasizes open discussion. For tips, suggestions, and resources on leading open discussions please see our resources: [Facilitating Open Discussions](#) and [Mindsets for Open Discussions](#).
- The "READ" and "DISCUSS" sections of this lesson plan can be used as talking points or as a script to introduce activities.
- If teaching this in the garden, you can make a whole-class chart in place of worksheets for your students to fill out collectively.
- If teaching asynchronously or assigning the lesson plan as homework, for the sections that instruct students to READ, consider recording yourself reading the sections aloud and sending the recording to students. This adaptation offers a helpful strategy for differentiating learning that supports all students, especially English Language Learners.



ORGANIC AND ACTION

Teacher Notes Continued:

- This lesson asks students to look through case studies of profiles of individuals or groups that are taking action around issues related to organic. These profiles are adapted from online resources to accommodate garden-based instruction. If your class has access to computers, we recommend that students conduct online research of each individual or group. We also encourage you to create profiles of individuals or groups doing work in your area.
- This lesson is part of Edible Schoolyard Project's [Understanding Organic](#) curriculum and is the eighth lesson in the “core lessons” of the curriculum.

Materials:

- Profiles (pages 2 to 9)
- Forms of Action chart

References:

Westeimer, J., & Kahne, J. (2004). What kind of citizen? The politics of educating for democracy. *American Educational Research Journal*, 41(2), 237-269.

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ORGANIC AND ACTION

READ: Thinking and learning about organic and food justice might make you feel like taking action to improve conditions for yourself, your communities, and society at large. When we take action, it is helpful to act critically, with awareness of what our actions are building towards.

DISCUSS: Read through the [Forms of Action Chart](#). Discuss what you notice about the descriptions of each type of action. Then, read through the examples of each type of action as a class, and write down what you notice about the different actions.

WRITE: Use the [Forms of Action Chart](#) to write down the similarities and differences between the three types of action. Then note any overlap that might exist. For example, could there be ways that someone could take action that is participatory and also justice-oriented?

DO: Choose ONE of the three profiles of individuals or groups who have taken action around issues related to organic. The individuals or organizations profiled represent a range of relationships to organic and to land, including community activists, non-profits, policy-workers, and farmers.

READ AND ANSWER: Read the profile once for understanding. Then read it again and look for the answers to the following questions. When you are done, share your answers with your classmates:

- Describe their work. **Circle** parts of the profile that describe the work/action(s) they are taking. (Hint: look for 'doing' verbs like 'create,' 'facilitate,' 'lead,' 'work,' 'stand up,' etc.)
- Refer back to the [Forms of Action Chart](#). What form(s) of taking action might this profile be an example of? Why? (Hint: reread the chart and look for words and ideas in the description that stand out to you. Some profiles might demonstrate multiple forms of action.)
- What else did you learn?
- What would you like to know more about?

DISCUSS

- Notice the different types of action you learned about in the profiles. What similarities and differences stand out to you? Which profiles and forms of action do you feel most inspired by? Explain your answer.

Karen Washington

Karen Washington has lived in New York City all her life and has spent decades promoting urban farming as a way for all New Yorkers to access fresh, locally grown food.



Karen has been a resident of the Bronx for over 26 years, although in 2015 she began living part time in Orange

County, NY near the farm. Since 1985 Karen has been a community activist, striving to make New York City a better place to live. As a community gardener and board member of the New York Botanical Gardens, Karen worked with Bronx neighborhoods to turn empty lots into community gardens. As an advocate, she stood up and spoke out for garden protection and preservation. As a member of the La Familia Verde Community Garden Coalition, she helped launch a City Farms Market, bringing garden fresh vegetables to her neighbors. She also co-founded Black Urban Growers (BUGS), an organization of volunteers committed to building networks and community support for growers in both urban and rural settings. In 2012 Ebony magazine voted her one of their 100 most influential African Americans in the country, and in 2014 she was awarded with the James Beard Leadership Award.

About Rise and Root Farm

Rise & Root Farm is a five-acre farm, run cooperatively by four owners who are women, intergenerational, multi-racial, and LGBTQ. [They]’re located in the Black Dirt region of Orange County, NY, in the lower Hudson Valley. The farm is rooted in social justice, and through the healing power of food and farming [they] work to build a more equitable food system.

Karen Washington Continued

About Rise and Root Farm continued

[They] are blessed to steward the land [they] grow on and to have the opportunity to support [their] communities through farming. [They] invite people, especially from the BIPOC and LGBTQ+ communities, to come to the farm through a variety of events and find a welcoming agricultural space.

[They] are strongly rooted in New York City and committed to engaging rural and urban communities through food and farming. [They] have worked with community gardens and urban farms in NYC and beyond and have dedicated [their] lives to increasing the number of people growing and eating good food. [They] came together with a common dream, to continue [their] food justice work by growing food and community beyond the city boundaries. [They] believe we can accomplish more together than any one of us could do on our own.

References:

*All quotes, texts, and images are from Rise & Root Farm website. Retrieved from <https://www.riseandrootfarm.com/index#/karen-washington>.

Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF)

[The mission of CAFF is] to build sustainable food and farming systems through policy advocacy and on-the-ground programs that create more resilient family farms, communities, and ecosystems.



Founded in 1978, the Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF) and The Farmers Guild is a California-based nonprofit that builds sustainable food and farming systems through local and statewide policy advocacy and on-the-ground programs in an effort to initiate institutionalized change. [Their] programs address current problems and challenges in food and farming systems, creating more resilient family farms, communities, and ecosystems. [CAFF] works to support family farmers and serve community members throughout the state, including consumers, food service directors, schoolchildren and low-income populations with the aim of growing a more resilient, just and abundant food system for all Californians.

From the grassroots up, [the CAFF] organization is built *by* the community for the community, from farmers in the field to citizens fighting for a more just, regenerative food system, from fourth generation ranchers to the farmworkers who make our food system possible. Members comprise the foundation of [their] work; [they] are guided and empowered by people like you to continue [their] efforts supporting family farms throughout California.



Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF) Continued

Highlights from the organization's timeline

2004

- A longtime advocate for the rights of farmworkers, [CAFF] was the only agricultural organization to support a bill to allow undocumented workers to access California driver's licenses.
- Led a coalition that secured \$40 million over three years for grants to help farmers reduce off-farm drainage. CAFF also sponsored legislation to make it less burdensome for farmers with salt-laden lands to adopt innovative irrigation practices that leach salt from soil and restore soil health.
- Unique among ag organizations, supported local efforts to restrict the use of genetically modified organisms in crops, especially when they could contaminate neighboring crops.

2005

- Sponsored legislation to create a statewide Farm to School program in the Dept. of Education. Although the bill was vetoed, it led directly to the legislature including Farm to School funds in the state budget.

2009

- Became a founding member of the California Climate & Agriculture Network (CalCAN), a statewide coalition that advances state and federal policy to realize the powerful climate solutions offered by sustainable and organic agriculture.

2013

- Supported CSAs by enacting laws that standardized rules to make it easier for single farms, or a small group of farms, to sell their products through CSAs.

References:

*All quotes, texts, and images are from CAFF's website. Retrieved from <https://www.caff.org/about/>

Kathleen Merrigan

Kathleen Merrigan is the inaugural Executive Director of the Swette Center for Sustainable Food Systems at Arizona State University and the Kelly and Brian Swette Professor of Sustainable Food Systems, with appointments in the School of Sustainability, College of Health Solutions, and School of Public Affairs.



She assisted in writing the 1990 Organic Foods Production Act while a professional staff member of the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry. From 2009-2013, Dr. Merrigan served as U.S. Deputy Secretary and Chief Operating Officer of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, a \$150 billion, 110,000 employee institution. As Deputy Secretary, Dr. Merrigan created and led the Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food Initiative to support local food systems; was a key architect of First Lady Michelle Obama's Let's Move! campaign, and made history as the first woman to chair the Ministerial Conference of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations. Before joining the USDA, Dr. Merrigan was a professor at the Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy at Tufts University where she directed the M.S./PhD Agriculture, Food and Environment Program. Her prior career includes a variety of agriculture policy positions, including Administrator of the USDA Agricultural Marketing Service and senior staff on the U.S. Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry, where she wrote the law establishing national standards for organic food.

Recognizing the history and scope of her work, Time Magazine named Dr. Merrigan among the "100 most influential people in the world" in 2010.

Kathleen Merrigan Continued

[About Swette Center for Sustainable Food Systems, where Kathleen is Executive Director.]

[The Swette Center for Sustainable Food System] Supports the development of more equitable, diverse and resilient food systems at all scales – from local to global – that can adapt to evolving uncertainties and opportunities and enable sustainable societies.

ASU's Swette Center for Sustainable Food Systems works to ensure food security by enhancing equity, efficiency, and resilience of food systems locally and globally. Through unique collaborations and partnerships that demonstrate community-based social embeddedness and global transformation, [they] deliver real-world solutions in public health, governance, technology, and policy.

[They] combat hunger and food insecurity by driving a use-inspired, transdisciplinary research agenda focused on scalable solutions that enable equitable participation in food systems worldwide.

References:

*All quotes, texts, and images are from Arizona State University. Retrieved from <https://sustainability-innovation.asu.edu/person/kathleen-merrigan/> and <https://sustainability-innovation.asu.edu/food/>