**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

June 16, 2021

Contact: Teresa Davenport, Director of Communications, Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance

SAN MARCOS – Three Texas-based organizations and a Texas office of a national non-profit – all of which are dedicated to the support of small-scale farmers and local food systems – are combining forces to host the 2021 Southern Family Farmers & Food Systems Conference.

This 3-day event (Sunday, August 8, through Tuesday, August 10) brings together farmers, ranchers, cottage food producers, homesteaders, home gardeners, plus local foods activists and enthusiasts.

The Conference is a union of events previously hosted separately by [Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance](http://farmandranchfreedom.org) and its sister organization (the [Council for Healthy Food Systems](http://healthyfoodsystems.org)) and by Texas State University’s [Small Producers Initiative](https://www.smallproducersinitiative.txstate.edu/). As official hosts of this year’s event, the three also have extensive planning support from the Southwest regional office in San Antonio for [NCAT-ATTRA](https://attra.ncat.org/), a program providing information and technical assistance to farmers and others involved in sustainable agriculture.

Much of this year’s agenda reflects significant inflection points from the past year: the COVID-19 pandemic and the spotlight on systemic injustice, and how each impact our food systems.

Keynote addresses feature Will Harris, owner of White Oak Pastures in Bluffton, Ga., and author, artist, and activist Lyla June Johnston from the Santa Fe area in New Mexico. Harris is recognized as a worldwide leader in humane animal husbandry and environmental sustainability. Johnston’s messages focus on Indigenous rights, supporting youth, traditional land stewardship practices, and healing inter-generational and inter-cultural trauma.

A unique quality of this Conference is that it includes sessions focused on policies and activism centered on food and agriculture. Other sessions fall into categories of raising livestock and crops sustainably, business and finance, technologies for small farms, and current research.

Sunday’s pre-Conference workshops are specifically designed for farmers and ranchers and offer in-depth training on small-farm marketing, building a regulatory compliant produce wash-and-pack station, avoiding the circumstances that can make farms fail, and creating and running a cooperative.

[Registration](https://secure.everyaction.com/3MV21EsmokCxer14-_udqg2) for the Sunday workshops is $25 for half-day and $45 for full-day sessions. The rate for the full Monday-Tuesday regular Conference is $180-215. [Scholarships are available](https://secure.everyaction.com/Ym61OAXPQk6aco9Smdo-6w2) to farmers, ranchers, and other local food producers.

Farm and Ranch Freedom Alliance has a 15-year history of successfully advocating for national, state, and local policies that support the success of independent farms and local food producers. Its sister non-profit, the Council for Healthy Food Systems, provides education and research relating to local food systems. The Small Producers Initiative is a USDA-funded program housed in the Department of Agricultural Sciences at Texas State University with a mission to provide research, outreach, and extension to small, mid-sized, and historically underserved farmers and ranchers in Texas.

# # #