

The FruitGuys Community Fund Sustainable Farming Manifesto



The FruitGuys Community Fund (TFGCF) helps farmers to implement the most innovative and ecologically sustainable farm management practices available to preserve and enhance the quality of the farmland and the surrounding landscape while respecting farmer's autonomy and their need to make a good living from farming. Our farmers and their farms are vibrant participants in the local ecology, economy, and community.

This Manifesto is a comprehensive list of sustainable farming practices that The FruitGuys Community Fund seeks to promote and support. While no one farm uses all of these techniques, we believe that this Manifesto clearly expresses our values, and describes the positive, on-the-ground practices that we support and help to implement through The FruitGuys Community Fund.

Sustainable Farming Practices

Water Management

TFGCF supports good water management practices including:

- Conserving water
- Using the most efficient form of irrigation appropriate for a given crop & soil type and
- Water availability and delivery situation (i.e. drip irrigation or micro sprinklers rather than flood irrigation or traditional high-powered sprinklers)
- Protecting water quality
- Using winter cover crops to protect soil from erosion during the rainy season
- Keeping roads, ditches and culverts in good repair so no road runoff reaches waterways
- Planting filter strips of grasses and shrubs to keep sediment and pollutants out of waterways
- Taking care not to allow chemical drift into ponds, wetlands, or other water resources
- Dealing proactively with water shortages
- Creating opportunities for offstream storage whenever possible

- Designing their land to slow, sink, and spread water for groundwater recharge by using swales & berms, keyline ploughing, or other techniques

Soil Management

TFGCF supports good soil water management practices including:

- Using compost, cover cropping, and reduced tillage to build soil fertility and organic matter
- Composting crop wastes onsite and/or purchasing and applying locally made compost
- Keeping the soil covered as much as possible by using appropriate cover crops
- Minimizing tillage in order to keep carbon in the soil and protect soil structure and microbiology
- Conserving soil by applying erosion control measures wherever needed
- Minimizing the quantity of bare soil and the amount of time soil is bare
- Using appropriate erosion control measures to protect waterways and keep soil in the fields
- Sequestering carbon in the soil by increasing soil's organic matter content over the long term
- Building soil carbon by using compost and/or cover crops
- Retaining soil carbon by minimizing tillage

Biodiversity

TFGCF supports biodiversity practices including:

- Diversifying the cropping system
- Growing more than one crop
- Incorporating livestock to consume crop wastes, pest insects, and weeds and to provide on-farm fertility
- Diversifying non-crop areas
- Installing hedgerows, insectaries, and conservation plantings of all types in non-crop areas: along roadsides, fence lines, and “edges and corners” of the property
- Installing habitat for natural enemies (predators of crop pests), both by creating perennial vegetated areas, and by installing owl boxes, raptor perches, bat boxes, bluebird boxes, etc.
- Restoring and protecting wild areas and critical habitat areas on the farm: upland
- Forests, riparian zones, wetland areas, etc.

- Managing invasive species and keeping them out of wild areas and critical habitat areas
- Providing wildlife corridors by providing safe passage for wildlife and/or connecting wild areas on the farm to surrounding wildlands

Pollination

TFGCF supports good pollinator management practices including:

- Modifying farming practices to protect native pollinators
- Using crop-protection products, if necessary, that are less toxic to pollinators
- Spraying crop-protection products at times that minimize their impact on pollinators (i.e. at night)
- Avoiding spraying flowering plants whenever possible
- Leaving some areas untilled to provide habitat for ground-nesting native bees
- Creating on-farm pollinator habitat
- Installing hedgerows and insectaries that include plants that flower year-round and that provide good pollen and nectar resources including in hedgerows plants that are used by cavity-nesting species
- Providing bee boxes and nesting materials for ground- and cavity-nesting species
- Managing honeybee hives on site so that it is unnecessary to bring in hives from offsite that may spread diseases to local bees
- Never spraying insectaries and/or habitat areas
- Participating in the Bee Friendly Farming certificate program
- Certifying their farms BFF and using the logo and other materials to educate customers about the importance of farming practices that protect pollinators

Nature First

TFGCF supports good pest management practices including:

- Using non-chemical methods to manage weeds
- Hand weeding, cultivating, mowing, grazing, flaming, mulching, cover cropping and/or intercropping rather than spraying herbicides
- Creating on-farm habitat for natural enemies/pest predators so that Ecological Pest Management and Conservation Biocontrol can work to control pests on the property
- Understanding that natural enemies, like bats, owls, raptors, snakes, and predatory and parasitic insects can keep many pests under control without the need for other intervention.

- Understanding that they must create the conditions for natural enemies to be present and thrive
- Understanding that a low, non-economically damaging level of pest activity is normal in an agroecosystem, and necessary in order to sustain populations of natural enemies.
- Using Integrated Pest Management techniques to determine whether treatment is necessary and choosing the least-toxic treatment technique
- Monitoring for pest presence and pest damage rather than spraying “by the calendar”
- Employing the concept of an economic threshold, below which they do not treat pests chemically
- Understanding that spraying a pesticide destroys natural enemies as well as pests, and can lead to a secondary pest infestation, so only using chemical solutions when absolutely necessary.
- Using chemicals in a way that minimizes harm to non-target species
- Using least toxic chemicals and chemical formulations
- Avoiding spraying in windy conditions and when pollinators are active
- Avoiding spraying habitat and insectary areas

Carbon Emissions

TFGCF supports climate change mitigation and adaptation measures including:

- Recognizing the potential need to change farming practices and/or crops or crop varieties in order to remain successful and productive in the face of a changing climate
- Reducing greenhouse gas emissions by producing and using renewable energy (i.e. solar, wind, etc.)
- Reducing fossil fuel use by making investments in energy efficient structures (i.e. greenhouses, cold storage, etc.)
- Reducing greenhouse gas emissions by minimizing fuel use and using alternative fuels
- Reducing greenhouse gas emissions by fertilizing appropriately and minimizing tillage
- Sequestering carbon in farm soils by applying compost and growing cover crops
- Sequestering carbon in above-ground biomass by planting trees and other perennial plants that store carbon over the long term.

Air Quality

TFGCF supports good air quality management practices including:

- Tilling when the soil is at the appropriate moisture level to minimize dust
- Keeping soil covered whenever possible to minimize dust
- Spraying only under appropriate weather conditions to minimize drift
- Planting hedgerows as dust buffers
- Planting trees to sequester atmospheric carbon and promote clean air

Waste

TFGCF supports good waste minimization practices including:

- Reducing waste at all stages of the production cycle
- Using recycled materials in packaging whenever possible
- Creating a “closed system” where all on-farm waste is reused through composting or biofuel production
- Reducing the need for off-farm inputs by producing their own fertility, compost, mulch, pollination services, pest management, etc.

Certification

TFGCF supports third-party certification verify sustainable farming practices including:

- Organic certification, under the standards or the National Organics Program of USDA
- Biodynamic certification by Demeter USA
- Bee Friendly Farming certification by Partners for Sustainable Pollination/Xerces Society
- Other reputable specialty-crop certifiers, such as the Stewardship Index for Specialty Crops, the Sustainable Agriculture Standard, or the Food Alliance Certified

Neighbors

TFGCF supports good neighbor policies including:

- Welcoming customers and visitors to the farm whenever practical
- Educating customers and visitors about sustainable farming practices
- Sharing knowledge, tools, and resources with neighboring farmers
- Helping to show that local, urban-edge farms can be good neighbors

Employment

TFGCF supports good employment policies including:

- Providing a safe and healthy working environment
- Providing year-round employment when possible
- Paying a living wage
- Providing sick leave and health insurance
- Providing basic job-skills training for workers
- Complying with labor laws

Preserving Heirlooms

TFGCF supports practices that preserve heirloom varieties including:

- Not using GMOs (genetically modified seeds or organisms)
- Saving seeds from superior varieties and/or individuals for future propagation
- Buying seeds through heirloom seed companies or seed saver's exchanges
- Using heritage varieties of fruit scion wood for grafting, and making heritage scions available to others when possible

Food Quality

TFGCF supports practices that produce safe, healthy, and delicious food including:

- Harvesting food at the peak of freshness and distributing it locally
- Producing heirloom & traditional varieties that taste great and that reflect the local culture & history
- Producing, harvesting, and processing food safely
- Complying with all food safety laws and regulations