Sustainable Farming Group Pledges More Inclusive Policy on Juneteenth Anniversary
Commits to Diversify Leadership, Expand Outreach to Black, Indigenous, and People of Color

(Chicago – June 19, 2020) The board of directors and staff at Food Animal Concerns Trust (FACT), which promotes the safe and humane production of meat, milk, and eggs, are witnessing a historic civil rights movement that is reverberating everywhere around us. Along with the rest of the world, we are appalled by the killings of Rayshard Brooks, George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and so many other Black people. As our nation commemorates the June 19 anniversary of the ending of slavery in the United States, we stand in solidarity with the protesters and the call for justice. **Black Lives Matter!**

As we read, watch, and listen, as we grieve the deadly police violence and as we protest, we recognize that we are not immune from the systemic racism that permeates our country. We have not paid enough attention to racial injustice as it continues to impact our mission and we have not done enough to counter it. FACT envisions that all food-producing animals will be raised in a healthy and humane manner so that <u>everyone will have access to safe and humanely-produced food.</u> We need to take steps to make sure that "everyone" truly includes *everyone*.

American agriculture is literally rooted in racial inequity. The land itself was taken by violence and theft from native communities and worked by enslaved people. From these brutal origins, racial injustice has continued against Black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC). This deeply disturbing pattern includes BIPOC farmers who continue to struggle to gain equal access to land, capital, credit, and markets. Both the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the largest organized farming institutions have long histories of supporting racist policies. This injustice does not stop at the farm gate. Black, indigenous, and people of color face increasing disparities in health care, leading to a higher incidence of acute and chronic health conditions, severe illness, and lower life expectancy. The COVID-19 pandemic shines a glaring light upon these inequities.

Institutional racism affects most aspects of local food and sustainable farming networks and initiatives. During the past 20 years, we at FACT have attended and organized many conferences and gatherings to promote organic and sustainable farming. We have failed to address how few people of color we have seen at most of these events. We have reached out to farmers across the country and urged them to be a part of our humane farming community. We are a small organization that relies on word of mouth and electronic messaging and we have seen our network grow to over 6,500 farmers. Yet, most of those farmers are not Black, indigenous or people of color. We have given out grants to hundreds of farmers without making specific efforts to include the BIPOC farming community.

How do we change? How can we as an organization promote a more equitable farming system, one in which everyone means **everyone**? We must begin to ask and answer this question more inclusively.

1. We must dedicate ourselves to reaching out and listening to BIPOC farmers throughout the country.
2. We must address our lack of diverse leadership, starting with our board of directors.
3. We must examine our programs and policies to identify how they can reflect and sustain broader societal inequities and take corrective steps.

FACT has long been recognized as a leading organization in food safety and humane farming. Now we must recommit ourselves to our mission, so that everyone, no matter the color of their skin, has access to safe and humanely raised food.

FACT promotes the safe and humane production of meat, milk, and eggs. Learn more at FoodAnimalConcernsTrust.org.

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