CCOF

Advancing organic agriculture through certification, education, advocacy, and promotion.

November 18, 2021

Dr. James Woodard, National FFA Board Chair
CC: Scott Stump, National FFA CEO
CC: Cole Baerlocher, President
National FFA
6060 FFA Dr.
Indianapolis, IN 46278

Dear FFA Leadership,

Over the past eight years, CCOF has donated $139,750 to the National FFA Foundation. It has been a pleasure to support youth across the country as they learn how to run a business, hone their leadership skills, and explore career opportunities in agriculture. We are impressed with how FFA guides students to become agricultural leaders and young professionals.

Given this, we are troubled by the widespread behavior exhibited at the 94th National FFA Convention. This behavior, which included hand gestures associated with white supremacy and neo-Nazism, the selling and wearing of politically partisan merchandise, and crowd-wide chants of "Let's Go Brandon" is unacceptable.

CCOF is the largest organic certification company in the county. We represent over 4,500 members in 43 states. Our members, like the agricultural community at large, is diverse. Our members span dozens of ethnicities, religions, and creeds. Our members are small farmers and large farmers. Our members come from varied political parties and beliefs. At CCOF, we believe this diversity, much like diversity in an agricultural ecosystem, makes us stronger, healthier, and more resilient.

We appreciate your letter from November 5 condemning the behavior at the Convention. While FFA made the first step to call out divisive, racist rhetoric as inappropriate, more needs to be done.

We call on FFA to investigate the root causes of these incidents. Ask the hard questions. Create a public dialogue and share the learning with leadership, advisors, students, and agricultural stakeholders.

If FFA is going to live up to the new values that you "*respect and embrace every individual's culture and experiences, welcome every individual's contribution to advance our communities and the industry of agriculture, cultivate an environment that allows every individual to recognize and explore their differences, and create leadership opportunities for every individual to enhance their personal and professional endeavors"* it is going to take time, dedication, and work to get there. Shifting organizational culture takes time.

We offer support for your journey with agriculturally relevant resources we have used to guide tough conversations with our diverse membership.

As donors, we want to know what is your plan? How will you lean into your values? How will you support students, advisors, staff, and leaders as you create a space where every individual feels respected, and where every individual is welcome to contribute to the advancement of agriculture?

Sincerely,

Jessica Parr
Chief Program Officer
CCOF

Kelly Damewood
CEO
CCOF