



# **Alianza Agrícola Annual Report 2020**

January 1, 2021

Compañeras y Compañeros,

2020 presented unprecedented challenges for everyone, and for those of us who already face so many obstacles, the pandemic added one more for us to overcome. We feared for our families so far away, we wondered what precautions our employers were taking to protect us, our crowded living conditions heightened the risk of contracting COVID, and yet our labor was more critical than ever, ensuring the continued production of food when our own communities were facing shortages. When we learned that the government labeled us as essential workers, we wondered why we aren't welcomed here and we live with the fear of deportation.

The presence of our small but mighty worker-led group is a symbol of hope for those in our community that helped us get by. We had to pivot from our original 2020 goals and quickly mobilize - using technology and social media to respond to urgent pandemic needs. We raised \$30,000 in cash donations in a gofundme campaign to generate financial support for all of us excluded from the stimulus and for anyone adversely impacted by the pandemic. That allowed us to donate \$15,000 to all members of the Alianza and provide additional financial support to five families impacted by the pandemic. Members, allies and organizations came together to collect and distribute food and supplies to our rural communities to help folks meet their needs. Our members were a vital voice in statewide and federal efforts to educate the public about how the pandemic impacted us. We testified, spoke out, published online videos and held a caravan with coalition partners to gain greater protections. We appreciate our members for sharing their testimonies and making huge strides to stay strong and active in the struggle that has helped us achieve so many victories since the Alianza formed. We want to highlight Alma Tzalain, a member of our Gabinete. She bravely published a widely distributed op-ed in the New York Times in May as a voice of farmworkers for the public to gain an understanding of the impact of the pandemic on our community.

Throughout all this, and despite not meeting in person, we continued to work on implementation of two 2019 legislative victories. The Green Light law went into effect in December 2019, but just when the community was getting ready to get their licenses, the DMVs shut down. Once they opened back up, we provided support to members to help navigate the process of getting their license and ensure that all DMVs across the state were accessible to us. The Farm Labor Fair Labor Practices Act also went into effect at the beginning of the year, so we worked hard to educate the community about their rights and how to file a complaint. Our members wrote and allies shared on our behalf 11 testimonies for the NYS Wage Board hearings in early fall, attempting to convince officials that we deserve to earn overtime after 40 - not 60 - hours. We authored an op-ed in the NY Daily News about why this is so important to our well-being.

As we look towards 2021 we are excited to share the news that we are now our own independent not-for-profit organization with 501(c)(3) status. This independence simultaneously opens up a lot of new possibilities, but also will challenge us with many more responsibilities. We also look forward to expanding our work to implement the labor rights that were granted in 2019 and continuing our work to make driver's licenses a reality for more farmworkers.

We thank all of you who have been with us from the beginning and continue to work with us. Matt Liston led some of the early pandemic-related food distribution efforts and later became our first full-time Coordinator. We are so grateful for his help during his time with us. We are also so grateful for the incredible support of the Food Chain Workers Alliance as our fiscal sponsor for the past year. With the continued presence and dedication of our community allies, we are sure we can keep achieving all that we set our minds to. Meanwhile, we will continue our dedication to producing the food that we all need to stay healthy.

*"Respect for the rights of others is peace"* - Benito Juarez

Cordially,

Luis Jimenez, President, on behalf of the Gabinete and members of Alianza Agricola

# **What is the Alianza Agrícola?**

The Alianza Agrícola (Agricultural Alliance) is a group of farmworkers that strives to improve the living and working conditions of the im/migrant community throughout New York State.

Alianza members participate in and lead advocacy efforts, educational/community outreach campaigns, and leadership development programs. While members live and work primarily in Western and Central New York, they collaborate with organizations around the state.

In recent years, the Alianza and its partners won victories that:

- Guarantee access to drivers' licenses for all residents in NY state
- Improve working conditions for agricultural workers
- Protect their right to organize.

Despite these victories, the im/migrant community in Upstate NY continues to face challenges that negatively impact their physical, social, and emotional well-being. The Alianza Agrícola actively addresses these factors and finds solutions that improve the lives of the organization's members as well as the im/migrant community at large.

**GOT FOOD?**

**THANK A FARMWORKER**

# Structure and Meetings

The Alianza Agrícola is led by a six-person Steering Committee, or Gabinete. These six members consist of a president, two co-treasurers and three other members.

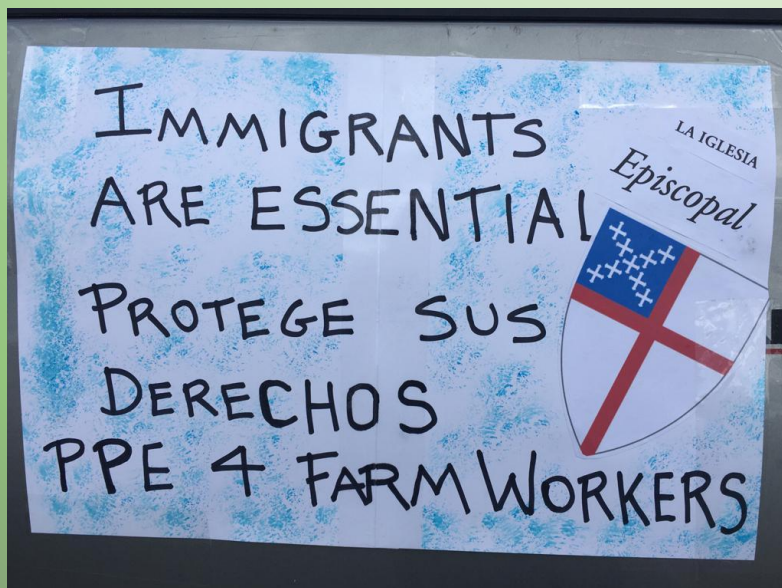
## Monthly Meetings

Prior to the Covid-19 Pandemic, the Alianza Agrícola held monthly in-person membership meetings as a way to build capacity, increase membership, boost morale, and educate members about current campaigns. Due to the spread of Covid in the spring, in-person meetings were suspended for the months of March-August. Limited activities continued throughout the rest of the year. In-person meetings were held in September and October, but activities went virtual again starting in November due an increase in Covid cases in the areas around Alianza member farms.



## Membership

In order to become a member, workers must attend 3 consecutive meetings and maintain consistent participation. The Alianza is comprised exclusively of low-wage immigrant workers – the majority of whom currently work in the dairy industry. Prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Alianza had 42 active members.



# This Year's Work: Implementing New Laws

## Green Light Law

The Green Light Law went into effect in December of 2019. This law creates a pathway for all residents of NY to apply for and obtain drivers' licenses, regardless of their immigration status.

Although the passing of the law was a huge victory, much work still needs to be done. The Alianza Agrícola spend the past year collaborating with other coalition members across the state to ensure that the Green Light Law would be implemented by:

- Contributing to a statewide inventory of DMV offices
- Participating in monthly meetings of the statewide Green Light Coalition
- Helping to organize a virtual celebration to recognize the law's 1-year anniversary.
- Developing a network of allies to support with DMV process. This network helps with:
  - Rides to/from DMV's
  - Interpretation
  - Driving Practice
  - Lending Alianza members their cars for the road test

DEC. 16 | 7PM  
**Green Light NY  
Anniversary  
Celebration!**  
BIT.LY/GREENLIGHT\_CELEBRATION

15

Alianza Members with  
Drivers' Licenses as of  
Dec. 2020

27

Alianza Members in the  
process of obtaining a  
license or permit

## How Has a Drivers' License Affected your Life?

*In my own case, before having a license, the situation was harder and more sad. We could not leave the farm very much because we weren't able to drive without a license. So, we would get rides to go shopping. But getting rides is always complicated and as a family we did not have the time we needed on those trips.*

*Now, thank God, I have the privilege of having a licence, and much has changed in my personal life. I feel more safe and confident to drive. My kids and family are also happy. Having a license has helped me a lot. I have many compañeros that work here in New York. We are here out of necessity, and the Green Light Law has given us the confidence to be more safe and happy.*

--Raúl C.



*Getting a license with the new Green Light Law has made my life a bit more positive. I have been able to buy a pickup truck, and now I can drive in town without fear. In the town where I live the police tend to be racist. Before having a license I always moved around very carefully to limit the possibilities of being detained or being exposed to ICE or BP. Now I have more confidence. I no longer have as much fear of a police stop. It's hard to say it in this way, but I used to despise the police because the way they have treated me. Today, I can say that, thanks to this law, the confidence I should have in the police is beginning to be restored.*

--Eladio B.

# This Year's Work: Implementing New Laws

## Farm Laborers Fair Labor Practices Act

The Farm Laborers Fair Labor Practices Act (FLFLPA) was passed in 2019 and went into effect on Jan 1, 2020. This law guarantees farmworkers the right to overtime pay, paid sick leave, a weekly day of rest, disability insurance, paid family leave, and the right to organize.

Throughout the past year, the Alianza Agrícola collaborated with statewide partners to ensure the law's implementation. These efforts included:

- Trainings with labor lawyers and organizers to educate Alianza members about their new rights.
- Collecting, preparing, and translating farmworker testimonies in favor of reducing the current overtime limit to present to the Department of Labor's Wage Board.
- Publishing an opinion piece in the NY Daily News.

### #EQUALPAY4EQUALHOURS

“

*What we are earning is not fair compared to what all the farmers earn.*

That's why I ask for a just salary and equal treatment since we are working jobs that are very tough and the bosses don't value it, they are only looking at what they profit, not at how they made those profits."

— DAIRY WORKER  
Genesee County, NY



**PAY ALL WORKERS WHAT THEY DESERVE,  
LOWER THE OVERTIME LIMIT FOR  
AGRICULTURAL WORKERS!**

### #EQUALPAY4EQUALHOURS

“

*I have a wife and a daughter who is 6 years old. I want to be a good father who is involved in the upbringing of my daughter.*

I would like to be there and have the chance to read with her, draw with her, and go outside a little while with her to play. But unfortunately, it's hard to work so many hours and still have free time and enough energy to be able to spend time with her."

— DAIRY WORKER  
Wyoming County, NY



**PAY ALL WORKERS WHAT THEY DESERVE,  
LOWER THE OVERTIME LIMIT FOR  
AGRICULTURAL WORKERS!**

# Testimony from Wage Board Hearings

*“I don’t want to get back to my country and die without the ability to work, without strength in my arms, my feet. I want to see my children grow up, I don’t want to die without seeing my grandchildren running around. And that’s why I ask you to consider that farmworkers deserve the same respect, recognition, and equality as other industries and that at the same time we are as important to help raise up this country.”*

*“I have a wife and a daughter that I left in Mexico, and I believe that it is important to stay in communication with family. Because being far from our loved ones is not easy, and because I think that for many immigrants like myself, not staying up-to-date with one’s family can be hard. Much of the time we spend all of our time working and we spend all of our youth working.”*

*“We, as immigrant workers, are doing the daily work that no one else will do. We pay taxes to the federal government and the state of New York, but we do not receive the same protections as other workers. At the very least, we deserve to receive a piece of the money the employer is saving for our ability to work efficiently.”*

*“I am leaving my life here, I’m leaving my youth here and even though I earn more money, I’ll never get that back ever.”*

*“I’m married, and I live here with my wife. We would like to have children together and start a family, but we both work a lot and would not have enough time to raise our kids and continue working at the same time. We are not H2A workers, and we do not come for a season and then leave. We are here for the whole year, giving up the best years of our youth to provide for this country with our work and with the taxes that we pay.”*

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Alianza members presented testimony at the [NYS Department of Labor Wage Board Hearing on September 30](#)

*“To work so many hours every week, year-round, year after year, is not a sustainable way to maintain the health of the workers nor to care for their children, nor to maintain a family.”*

*“I was really young and I started to work earning \$6.50 an hour, working 85 hours a week. I was happy at first because I came here to work. But with time I realized that money isn’t everything. After 16 years here, I have left my youth behind and my strength to work and contribute day after day with my labor so that you have food on your table.”*



# This Year's Work: Covid Relief

The spread of Covid and subsequent shut-down of New York State left many Alianza members isolated on their farms without reliable access to food, staples, and personal protective equipment.

~\$30k

Raised for the Alianza's Covid Emergency Fund

4

Summer distributions of food/hygiene supplies to Alianza members and members of the im/migrant community at large.

>150

People received food during each distribution

\$500

Additional support that was distributed to each Alianza member who missed work due to Covid.



# This Year's Work: Covid Relief

In the fall of 2020, the Alianza continued to find ways to address the short-term and long-term needs of farmworkers in New York. Alianza members, the group's leadership, and volunteer allies supported:

- Statewide efforts to pass the NY HERO Act--A bill that proposes enforceable workplace protections from airborne communicable diseases
- Statewide efforts in the Fund Excluded Workers campaign to pass a bill that would provide emergency relief to the thousands of essential workers that have been excluded from government support during the pandemic.



The Gabinete also:

- Distributed \$40,000 in direct cash assistance to Alianza and community members that didn't receive federal or state stimulus money.
- Compensated community members for lost pay when they became sick or had to quarantine.
- Organized 2 more distributions of food to members who were sick or struggling with reduced work hours.

# Presentations and Public Events

In previous years, Alianza members' schedules have been full of public presentations to university classes, faith groups, activist organizations, and politicians.

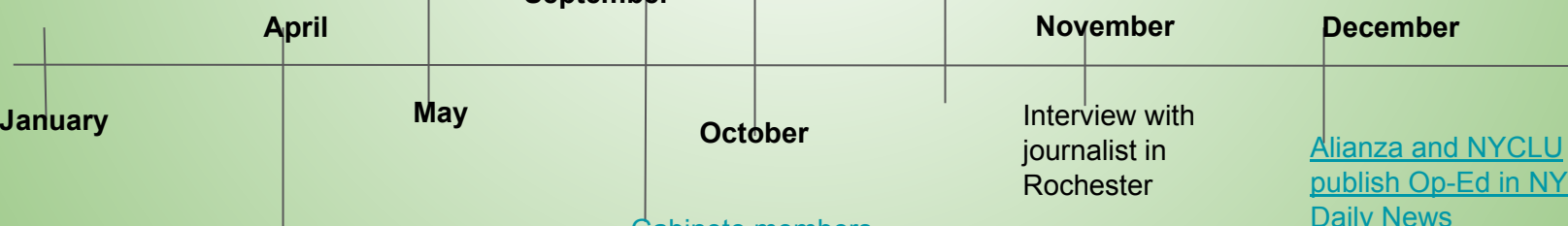
Given Covid restrictions, the Alianza did not participate in as many public events as in previous years. Nevertheless, they still found ways to engage with the public by speaking with university students, publishing Op-Ed articles, being interviewed by journalists, and meeting with state politicians.



In collaboration with a statewide caravan effort led by Rural and Migrant Ministries, Alianza organizes a local caravan to recognize workers involved in all levels of the food chain.

Gabinete members speak on virtual panel for Tufts University

Meeting with Senator Tim Kennedy's staff to discuss NYHERO Bill



[Gabinete member, Alma Tzalain, publishes Op-Ed in New York Times](#)

[Gabinete members contribute to video for NYHERO Campaign](#)

Interview with journalist in Rochester

[Alianza and NYCLU publish Op-Ed in NY Daily News](#)

Opinion  
**I Harvest Your Food. Why Isn't My Health 'Essential'?**

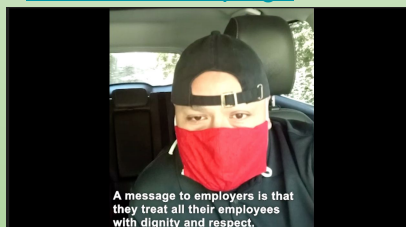
We sacrifice so much for a country that doesn't value our lives.

By Alma Patty Tzalain  
 Ms. Tzalain is a member of the grass-roots organization Alianza Agrícola.  
 April 15, 2020

Leer en español



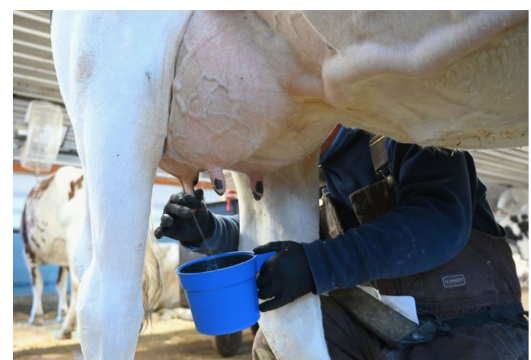
Alma Patty Tzalain has been a farmworker for 11 years. Libby March for The New York Times



A message to employers is that they treat all their employees with dignity and respect.

OPINION  
**Pay farmhands for the work they do**

By LUIS JIMENEZ and LISA ZUCKER  
 NEW YORK DAILY NEWS | DEC 10, 2020 AT 5:00 AM



Tollgate farm on January 17, 2020 in Ancramdale, New York. (ANGELA WEISS/AFP via Getty Images)

# Allies of the Alianza Agrícola

*History teaches us that change is often made when an organized segment of those most affected, leading in solidarity with allies, disrupts business as usual.*  
– Makani Themba

Allies of the Alianza Agrícola support the organizing efforts of the Gabinete to advance the Alianza's efforts to improve the living and working conditions of the im/migrant community in New York.

Throughout the past year, Allies of the Alianza Agrícola have provided rides to/from:

- Monthly meetings
- Doctors' appointments
- DMV appointments
- Grocery stores

Allies of the Alianza Agrícola have also helped with driving practice, delivery of food distributions, and interpretation for Alianza members and their neighbors.



This holiday season, support the:

## **Alianza Agrícola** **Holiday Gift Program**

Recently, Alianza members have been struggling from reduced hours and lack of sick pay.

Help support families in the Alianza Agrícola by buying or delivering presents for kids in Alianza member homes.

### **Deadlines:**

- \***Wed, 12/16 at 5pm:** Last day to complete the online volunteer form (link below).
- \***Sunday, 12/20:** Drop off presents. Presents must be purchased and dropped off at the Southwedge Mission or St. Michael's
- \***Dec 22-Dec 24:** Presents will be delivered to families

Volunteer to buy and/or deliver presents here:

<https://forms.gle/KznCszukG4XvWKb7>

Last day to complete the volunteer form is Wed, 12/16 at 5pm.

Questions? Call or email Matt 720-560-8484, [mattwliston@gmail.com](mailto:mattwliston@gmail.com)



## Holiday Gift Program

In November and December, Alianza Agrícola member families were feeling tight on resources due to lack of sick pay and reduced hours. The Gabinete decided to ask allies for support with Christmas gifts for these families. St. Michael's Church in Geneseo and the South Wedge Mission in Rochester helped support the Alianza Agrícola's Holiday Gift Program, which delivered presents, wrapping supplies, produce, chicken, fish, and gift cards to the families of more than 25 children.

# ¡Exciting News!



We are pleased to announce some exciting news about the Alianza Agrícola's future. At the beginning of the calendar year, the group was under fiscal sponsorship of the Food Chain Workers Alliance (FCWA). Thanks to the hard work of the Alianza's leadership, the support of the FCWA, and several funders, the Alianza applied for and was incorporated as an independent, 501(c)3 organization in the fall of 2020.

This development means that the Alianza Agrícola is taking another step forward toward being an independent, farmworker-run organization. The Alianza is grateful for FCWA's support in this process. Although the Alianza Agrícola will no longer be fiscally sponsored by the FCWA, the two organizations remain united in our efforts to improve the living and working conditions of farmworkers across the country.

The beginning of 2021 will mark a period of transition as the Alianza Agrícola establishes itself and builds new systems as an independent organization. As part of this transition, our donation page has recently changed, and we are now accepting donations on Actblue using this link:

<https://secure.actblue.com/donate/alianza-agricola>

# Stay Updated, Stay in Touch!



@TheAlianzaAgricola



@Alianzaagricola

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[contacto.alianzaagricola@gmail.com](mailto:contacto.alianzaagricola@gmail.com)



## Donate:

<https://secure.actblue.com/donate/alianza-agricola>