

EFI Announces Marketing Advisory Council

Begins Path Toward Consumer Marketing and Brand Growth

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EINPresswire.com/ -- [Equitable Food Initiative](#), the workforce development and certification organization that partners with growers, farmworkers, retailers and consumer groups, is working to expand from primarily business-to-business marketing to business-to-consumer outreach as it aims to provide support and added value to retail partners and EFI-certified growers. The increased outreach and brand building efforts come as more Responsibly Grown, Farmworker Assured® produce becomes available in the marketplace.



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In an effort to hone the consumer message and strategy, EFI has formed a marketing advisory council to provide input and marketing insight to the EFI board of directors, staff and certified growers. The council, made up of a diverse set of members from various organizational landscapes, will provide guidance and recommendations for consumer outreach to bring greater awareness of EFI as the brand grows.

The marketing advisory council is currently tasked with evaluating consumer trends, expanding dialogue around

the core pillars of EFI’s social responsibility and workforce development programs, and providing context for messages that will resonate with today’s consumers.

EFI has always worked to fulfill its mission by bringing everyone in the supply chain to the table to find distinct solutions from multiple perspectives. EFI seeks to extend that philosophy to its marketing and communication efforts and include diverse voices and multiple perspectives across the consumer marketing and PR platforms as well.

To ensure an appropriate diversity of voices and roles, the recruitment process for council members spanned nearly a year as industry thought leaders and marketing professionals were invited to participate and the council structure was adopted. Current members include:

- Danielle Nierenberg, President and Co-Founder of Food Tank
- Chris Padgett, Marketing and Digital Strategy Leader for CPG companies
- Chisara Ehiemere, Senior Research Lead, ROSI, NYU Stern Center for Sustainable Business
- Christopher Pendergraft, Digital Marketing Strategist
- Yareli Esteban, CEO of Strategar
- Lori Taylor, Founder and CEO of The Produce Moms
- Gissel Neri Corcoles, Student President of Minorities in Agriculture Natural Resources and Related Sciences
- Miguel Campos, Health and Safety Farm Manager

The group had an initial virtual orientation in late 2020 and during its first meeting in early 2021 developed both an existing audience and consumer insights survey that sought to learn more about social responsibility priorities and how consumers educate themselves about socially responsible products.

The survey of EFI's existing audience received nearly 300 responses via an email survey. What was evident throughout the survey was a clear consumer interest in worker rights. This audience reported that improved working conditions for farmworkers was the most important value of the EFI program. When asked how they would support this, 80% of respondents said they would pay more for produce grown by socially responsible operations and that they want to see more about working conditions on packaging. Respondents also strongly connect social responsibility and worker rights to a company's sustainability efforts. Interestingly, more than 60% of respondents of the audience survey have either criticized or boycotted a brand due to its actions or beliefs.

Results from the consumer insights survey will be shared with the advisory council later this month. The marketing advisory council will meet quarterly and address specific marketing and messaging questions as developed by the EFI marketing and communication staff.

"The amount of experience offered by our marketing advisory council is staggering and provides for broad-reaching dialogue about current and future consumer messaging that will be instrumental to the expansion of the Responsibly Grown, Farmworker Assured label," said LeAnne Ruzzamenti, EFI director of marketing communications. Ruzzamenti continued, "The powerful insights and challenge to assumptions helps us stretch our own boundaries of how we think about the program and talk about it with consumers."

About EFI

Equitable Food Initiative is a nonprofit certification and skill-building organization that seeks to increase transparency in the food supply chain and improve the lives of farmworkers through a

team-based approach to training and continuous improvement practices. EFI brings together growers, farmworkers, retailers and consumers to solve the most pressing issues facing the fresh produce industry. Its unparalleled approach sets standards for labor practices, food safety and pest management while engaging workers at all levels on the farm to produce Responsibly Grown, Farmworker Assured® fruits and vegetables. For more information about Equitable Food Initiative, visit equitablefood.org.

View a list of EFI-certified farms at equitablefood.org/farms.

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