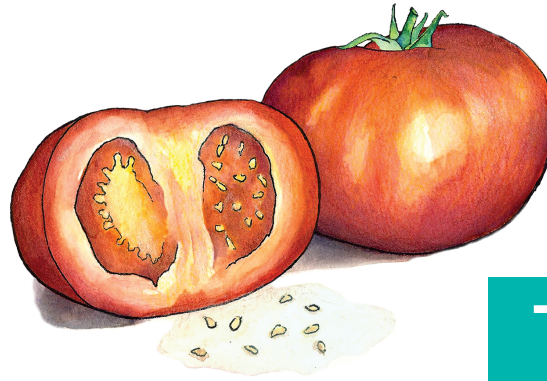


# HARVEST of the MONTH in the CLASSROOM



## TOMATOES

### HISTORY

Tomatoes are a member of the family Solanaceae, along with eggplants, peppers and potatoes. They are native to Central America and Mexico; their dissemination throughout the globe was sparked by the Spanish's colonization of the Americas

### FUN FACTS

In Massachusetts, over 500 farms produce 6.5 million pounds of tomatoes every year.

Tomatoes are classified as a fruit because they develop from a flower and have seeds.

Tomatoes are in the nightshade family along with eggplants, peppers, and potatoes.

There are over 25,000 varieties of tomatoes, from tiny currant tomatoes to giant beefsteak tomatoes.

### FARMER BIO



Dean Landale is a former ironworker who built big buildings but now grows 20 acres of mixed vegetables at Bar's Farm in Deerfield, Massachusetts on land that has been farmed since 1800. This season they're growing 5,000 jalapenos that they will make into hot sauce and sell to a distillery in Boston. Bar's Farm grows a variety of other vegetables including winter squash, zucchini, green beans, lettuce, cauliflower, flowers and tomatoes. Dean says that their customer's favorite variety of tomato is BHN 589, which is a beefsteak that grows well in hoop houses (see photo!).

*Photo credit: Bars Farm*



# Tomatoes: Food Justice & the Coalition of Immokalee Workers

## OBJECTIVES

Closely analyze an image.

Understand the experiences of tomato farmworkers.

Describe strategies used by farmworkers to create a more just and sustainable food system.

## MA STATE FRAMEWORK(s)

- United States History II Content Standards Topic 1: The role of economics in modern United States history [USII.T1]
- United States History II Content Standards Topic 4: Defending democracy: the Cold War and civil rights at home [USII.T4]
- Grades 9–10 Speaking and Listening Standards [SL] 112 1. Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grades 9–10 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.

## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

What is a sustainable food system? What are the experiences of farmworkers? How can food systems become more sustainable? Just? Who has the power to change the experiences of farmworkers? How can this take place? How can we know if foods are grown safely & fairly?

## MATERIALS NEEDED

Projector and screen

Journals or other note taking materials

Computer and headphones (*Optional if viewing clips individually*)

## BACKGROUND

This lesson focuses on an essential group within our food system: farmworkers. When exploring what a sustainable food system is, students often come up with definitions surrounding environmental and ecological impact. We can encourage students to consider a more holistic way to think about sustainability. One common analogy that I like to use with students is to consider sustainability as a three-legged stool where we are aiming to balance the needs and well-being of the environment, our communities, and the economy. Another phrasing that I often use with students is the three Ps of sustainability: people, planet, and prosperity. I introduce the idea of a sustainable food system at the beginning of the year. Throughout the year we use real life food examples and cultivate critical thinking skills by asking, how does this food's food system affect people, our planet, and our economies? Images and slides can be found and modified here:

<https://bit.ly/3cComPN>.

## BACKGROUND, cont.

As one of the most consumed fruits (by volume) globally, tomatoes are a great avenue from which to explore and focus on the people who harvest our food. California produces the majority of tomatoes grown in the United States and their tomatoes are predominantly used for processed foods. Tomatoes for sauces and other processed foods are typically harvested in the United States using machines.

While we can purchase and enjoy fresh tomatoes grown in Massachusetts during the summer months and greenhouse tomatoes are increasingly becoming an option in colder months, the majority of our wholesale fresh tomatoes found in grocery stores are grown and harvested in Florida. Wholesale fresh tomatoes are typically picked by hand due to the tomato's delicate skins that can bruise easily. Tomato harvesting can be challenging work and farmworkers have experienced low wages, hazardous weather and safety conditions, few worker protections or benefits, unsafe working conditions, violence, and sexual abuse while at their jobs.

The Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) in Florida uses a worker driven model that has organized for the past 30 years to improve the working conditions of farmworkers in the tomato industry and other food industries. Through their Fair Food Program (FFP) they focus on persuading food distributors to purchase produce from farms that follow the FFP code of conduct which includes: an auditing system, farmworker training and trilingual reporting mechanisms, and increased wages. Through this program farmworkers have reported decreased abuses in the field, improved working conditions, and an increase in pay. The CIW is one of the most successful models for social change within our food system.

This is a great example you can use to support food system education and other lessons about social justice movements as outlined in the History and Social Science Framework, "the movement to protect the health and rights of workers, and improve working conditions and wages (e.g., César Chávez and Dolores Huerta and the migrant farmworkers' movement, workplace protections against various forms of discrimination and sexual harassment)."

## LESSON

1. Show students the *Immokalee Statue of Liberty* by Kat Rodriguez > [https://americanhistory.si.edu/collections/search/object/nmah\\_1255703](https://americanhistory.si.edu/collections/search/object/nmah_1255703). Break students into small groups and use *See, Think, Wonder*: <https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/see-think-wonder> or, *Analyzing Images*: <https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/analyzing-images> from Facing History to encourage discussion and then share out with the whole class. These slides > <https://bit.ly/3qhFddK> have visuals you can use and modify.
2. Ask students to read the background information on the *Immokalee Statue of Liberty*. View here > <https://s.si.edu/3QjbxP>.

## LESSON, cont.

3. Have students brainstorm and share-out what things are important to them in a job and what makes a safe work environment.
4. Watch the 2018 Ted Talk, "How farmworkers are leading a 21st-century human rights revolution," > <https://youtu.be/6rtUy1apCWU> (20 mins.) featuring the founders of CIW. Shorter clip > <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LpKMHIUkPQk>. Project it together or have students watch it independently on Edpuzzle > <https://edpuzzle.com/>.

As students watch some questions they might respond to include:

What are farmworkers' experiences like in the field?

What are some concerns they may have about their jobs?

What is the Fair Food Program (FFP)?

How does it benefit farmworkers? Farmers? Supply Chain Stores?

How did the FFP start?

What strategies does CIW use to make change?

As you watch pick a comment, statistic, example etc., that stands out to you about the CIW and farmworkers. Explain why it feels important to you. After you watch the clip, create a question for discussion based on what you learned.

5. Delve deeper into the The Fair Food Program > <https://fairfoodprogram.org> and label. Have students try to find places they eat, or purchase foods from, that participate in The Fair Food Program here> <https://fairfoodprogram.org/partners/>. Optional: Sample tomatoes that have the FFP label. It's important to note that there can be farms and stores that don't participate in this program but do have fair food practices.
6. Brainstorm with students ways they can find out the working conditions of farmworkers at the farms and stores they shop at. It will be easier to connect with farmers directly about working conditions, as opposed to larger stores. This could lead to an important discussion about supply-chain transparency as well as exploration of other labels including the Fair Trade symbol > <https://info.fairtrade.net/what/the-fairtrade-marks>.

## EXTENSIONS & VARIATIONS,

- Watch the film, Food Chains (2014) > <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6vw-qTCW8fo>. Despite being filmed nearly a decade ago, the film excellently documents the experiences of tomato harvesters and CIW's work. Discussion Questions > <https://bit.ly/3DofRsw>. Please note: there are references to violence and sexual abuse within the film.
- Write a letter to a retail food company, farm, etc. in your area encouraging them to join the Fair Food Program. Follow these links to find other ways to support the Immokalee Workers > <https://ciw-online.org/> and FFP > <https://fairfoodprogram.org/>.
- Explore the proposed Fairness for Farmworkers Bill > <https://www.cwjjustice.org/fairness-for-farmworkers-bill-remains-in-limbo/> for Massachusetts. Analyze the argument here (claim, evidence, reasoning):
- Testimony for the Massachusetts Joint Committee on Labor & Workforce Development: Hearing on the Fairness for Farmworkers Act | Economic Policy Institute > <https://www.epi.org/publication/ma-fairness-for-farmworkers-act-testimony/>.
- Examine past farmworker movements and strategies (i.e. United Farmworkers Union strike). For example, you can watch a recent interview with Dolores Huerta here: The Backbone of our Food System: Farmworker and Rural Communities > <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ggAdrMFPfKU>.
- Have students do a jigsaw of different worker driven social responsibility programs > <https://fair-foodprogram.org/worker-driven-social-responsibility/>. They can analyze the similarities and differences between different movements and also propose their own suggestions.
- Have students explore art that has been used as part of social movements such as Art as Protest: Images from the United Farm Workers of America, 1973–1978 - Bill of Rights Institute > <https://billofrightsinstitute.org/activities/art-as-protest-images-from-the-united-farm-workers-of-america-1973-1978>. Have students design their own piece of art in groups around creating a more just and sustainable food system.