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## NAMA - Press release for NAMA NFFC shared leadership May 2018

Northwest Atlantic Marine Alliance

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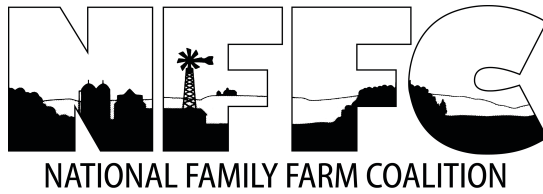
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For Immediate Release  
May 1, 2018

## **Family Farmers and Fishermen Declare Their InterDependence**

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### **National Family Farm Coalition and Northwest Atlantic Marine Alliance to Share Leadership**

**Gloucester, MA and Washington, DC** - Two national organizations fighting on the front lines for a just food system have decided to share their strength and leadership to increase their collective impact. The Northwest Atlantic Marine Alliance (NAMA) and the National Family Farm Coalition (NFFC) announced that, as of May 1, Niaz Dorry will lead the work of both organizations. Dorry has been the coordinating director of NAMA for a decade and has served as an NFFC board member for the past eight years; treasurer for the past two.

Following the loss of its long-time leader Kathy Ozer in January 2017, NFFC was conducting a search for a new executive director when a new proposal emerged to share leadership and key organizational services with NAMA. Since Kathy Ozer's passing, Lisa Griffith, NFFC's long time outreach and membership coordinator, has served as interim director.

"We cannot thank Lisa enough for filling the void at NFFC, providing leadership, holding things together, and helping guide us to the conclusion of a long difficult process that followed the untimely death of our beloved Kathy," said Ben Burkett, fourth-generation farmer from Petal, Mississippi who served as NFFC's board president for the past decade. "Today, we are beginning a new era and look forward to Niaz building on the solid foundation of the past. I wish her the greatest success and am standing to support her in any way I can to bridge the path from land to water."

The desire for the two organizations to work together more formally began in 2008 when NAMA joined NFFC. Both organizations recognized the similarities in the threats facing "land food" and "sea food" and the challenges faced by family farmers and fishermen in recent decades: corporate consolidation of all aspects of the food system at the expense of small- and mid-scale farmers and fishermen, rural communities, food workers, the environment, our access to real food, and our collective health.

"We share a common history with family farmers and are interconnected by the truths of our present where the fundamental elements of an ethically, socially, economically, and environmentally responsible food system are eroding by the tide of corporate America," said Shannon Eldredge, fifth-generation commercial fisherwoman and NAMA's board president. "The expansion of a more sustainable food future is dependent on this declaration of interdependence and solidarity between us. Niaz has the vision and energy to bring together family farmers, ranchers, and fishermen in our collective efforts for economic empowerment and food justice."

NAMA and NFFC will be able to expand their reach to organize, represent, and mobilize small- and mid-scale family farmers and fishermen across rural America, fighting to strengthen our democracy, advocating for fair producer prices while ensuring a safe, just, and healthy food system for all.

“Because Farm Aid has the privilege of working with farmers all over this country, we see the grassroots power of the people who are members of National Family Farm Coalition and Northwest Atlantic Marine Alliance,” said Farm Aid executive director Carolyn Mugar. “Farmers and fishers have the know-how and wisdom of how our food system operates and what changes need to occur. Under the guidance of Niaz, these two organizations, working together, have the unique capacity to lead us in that change. They deserve our support.”

The two organizations will remain legally separate and maintain their own missions, values, strategic plans and boards of directors, while sharing leadership and some key services such as finance, administration, human resources, and logistics. Lisa Griffith will become national program coordinator for NFFC, while Brett Tolley, NAMA’s community organizing coordinator will become the national program coordinator for NAMA.

“I am truly humbled and excited to serve both organizations and build on our synergies. I find this idea an energizing strategy for broadening the movement for an equitable food system that is healthful for the planet and eaters, and economically empowering for farmers and fishermen,” said Dorry. “Together with our members and networks, we will represent the largest coming together of grassroots communities representing the first set of hands that touch our food, who are fighting for a more just food system from sea to shining sea, and the amber waves of grain in between them. This is revolutionary, and it stands to be a boost in resources, energy, camaraderie, and solidarity allowing us to capitalize on the synergies and efficiencies that this idea embodies.”

Boards of both organizations agree that sharing leadership and core functions will strengthen the work of each into the future.

“In considering this innovative solution, it was obvious that Niaz clearly had the skills we were looking for, nonprofit management experience, understanding of NFFC’s mission, and a very innate ability to relate to the struggles of family farmers. She is an organizer and I have no doubts that she will be an effective leader,” said Jim Goodman, Wisconsin dairy farmer and NFFC’s new board president.

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