

the real dirt on farmer john

SCREENING EVENT &
FACILITATORS GUIDE



This unprecedented story captures the rise and fall of the Peterson family farm and its resurrection through John's courage to build a new form of community. Against all odds, eccentric Peterson abandons conventional chemical farming and fights local hysteria to build a thriving organic farm and a progressive farm community.



TOPICS AND ISSUES RELEVANT TO THE REAL DIRT ON FARMER JOHN

As you plan your screening, you might consider finding speakers, panelists or discussion leaders who have expertise in one or more of the following areas:

- Agriculture
- Anti-bias education
- Biodynamic farming
- Community-supported agriculture
- Family history
- Farming
- Organic farming
- Rural issues
- Sociology
- Sustainable agriculture
- U.S. history: 1960s–1980s

AS YOU PLAN YOUR EVENT

A screening of THE REAL DIRT ON FARMER JOHN can be used to spark interest in any of the topics listed above as well as to inspire individual and community action. Use the checklist that follows to help ensure a high-quality, high-impact event.

Set realistic goals.

Will you host a single screening or use the film to spur ongoing efforts? Will you steer a panel or discussion toward a specific topic or let the audience pursue whatever issues they choose? Be sure to include your event partners in the decision-making process. Being clear about your goals will make it much easier to structure the event, target publicity and evaluate results.

Structure your event to match it to your goals.

Do you need an outside facilitator, translator or sign language interpreter? If your goal is to share information beyond that which is included in the film, are there local experts on the topic who should be present? How large an audience do you want? (Large groups are appropriate for information exchanges. Small groups allow for more intense dialogue.)



Arrange to involve all stakeholders.

It is especially important that people be allowed to speak for themselves. If you expect audience members to plan action that affects people other than those present, decide how you will give voice to those not in the room.

Choose an accessible venue.

Is it wheelchair accessible? Is it in a part of town easily reached by various types of transportation? Can you provide clear signage? If you are bringing together different constituencies, is it neutral territory? Does the physical configuration of the room allow for the kind of discussion you hope to have? Can everyone easily see the screen and hear the film? Is the room comfortable?

Leave time to plan for action.

If you hope that your screening will have lasting impact, it is important to leave time to plan actions. Planning next steps can help people leave the room feeling energized and optimistic, even when the discussion has been difficult. It is also important to be prepared to facilitate networking. Consider having a sign-in sheet at the door so people can share contact information of their choice, like their e-mail address or their phone number. Tell participants exactly how that information will (and will not) be shared.



FACILITATING A DISCUSSION OF THE REAL DIRT ON FARMER JOHN.

People who feel safe, encouraged, respected and challenged are likely to share openly and thoughtfully. As facilitator, to encourage that kind of participation you can:

Prepare yourself.

Identify your own hot-button issues. View the film before your event and give yourself time to reflect so that you aren't dealing with raw emotions at the same time that you are trying to facilitate a discussion.

Be knowledgeable. You don't need to be an expert on farming or rural issues to lead an event, but knowing the basics can help you keep a discussion on track and gently correct mis-statements of fact. Prior to your event, take time to check the Background Information and Suggested Resources sections in the film guide handout.

Be clear about your role. Being a facilitator is not the same as being a teacher. A teacher's job is to convey specific information. In contrast, facilitators remain neutral, helping to move along discussions without imposing their views on the dialogue.

Know who might be present. It isn't always possible to know exactly who will attend a screening, but if you know which groups are present in your community, you may be able to predict who might be represented at your event. Keep in mind that issues can play out very differently for different groups of people. Factors such as geography, age, race, religion and socioeconomic class can all have an impact on comfort levels, speaking styles and prior knowledge. And take care not to assume that all members of a particular group share the same point of view.

Preparing the group.

Agree to ground rules around language. Prior to starting a discussion or Q&A with a panel, remind the audience of basic ground rules to ensure respect and aid clarity. Typically, such rules include no yelling, no use of slurs and asking people to speak in the first person ("I think ...") rather than generalizing for others ("Everyone knows that ..."). When speakers break a ground rule, gently interrupt, remind them of the rule and ask them to rephrase.

Ensure that everyone has an opportunity to be heard. Be clear about how people will take turns or will indicate that they want to speak. Plan a strategy for preventing one or two people from dominating the discussion.

Talk about the difference between dialogue and debate. In a debate, participants try to convince others that they are right. In a dialogue, participants try to understand each other and expand their own thinking by sharing viewpoints and listening to each other actively. Remind people that here, they are engaged in a dialogue.

Encourage active listening. Ask the group to think of the event as being about listening as well as discussing. Encourage participants to listen for things that both challenge and reinforce their own ideas. You might also consider asking people to practice formal "active listening," in which participants listen without interrupting the speaker, then rephrase what the speaker said to see if they have heard correctly.

Remind participants that everyone sees through the lens of their own experience. Who we are influences how we interpret what we see, so audience members may have different views about the content and meaning of the film, and all views may be accurate. Inviting speakers to identify the evidence on which they base their opinion can help people to understand one another's perspectives.

Take care of yourself and group members. If the intensity level rises, pause to let everyone take a deep breath. Also, think carefully about what you ask people to share publicly so that you are not asking them to reveal things that could place them in legal or physical danger. Inform the audience and invited speakers if press will be present.

THE REAL DIRT ON FARMER JOHN WILL AIR NATIONALLY ON THE EMMY AWARD-WINNING PBS SERIES *INDEPENDENT LENS* ON TUESDAY, JUNE 13, 2006 AT 10:00 PM. CHECK LOCAL LISTINGS.

THE REAL DIRT ON FARMER JOHN is produced by *Collective Eye, Inc.*, for the *Independent Television Service (ITVS)*. The Emmy award-winning series *Independent Lens* is jointly curated by *ITVS* and *PBS* and is funded by the *Corporation for Public Broadcasting (CPB)* with additional funding provided by *PBS* and the *National Endowment for the Arts*.

ITVS COMMUNITY is the national community engagement program of the *Independent Television Service*. *ITVS Community* works to leverage the unique and timely content of Emmy Award-winning *PBS* series *Independent Lens* to build stronger connections among leading organizations, local communities, and public television stations around key social issues and create more opportunities for civic engagement and positive social change. To find out more about *ITVS COMMUNITY*, visit www.itvs.org/outreach.