

ASAN Strategic Planning Questionnaire Data Analysis

Data collected February 22 - March 24, 2024

Analysis prepared by Stephanie Pearl, ASAN Interim Executive Director

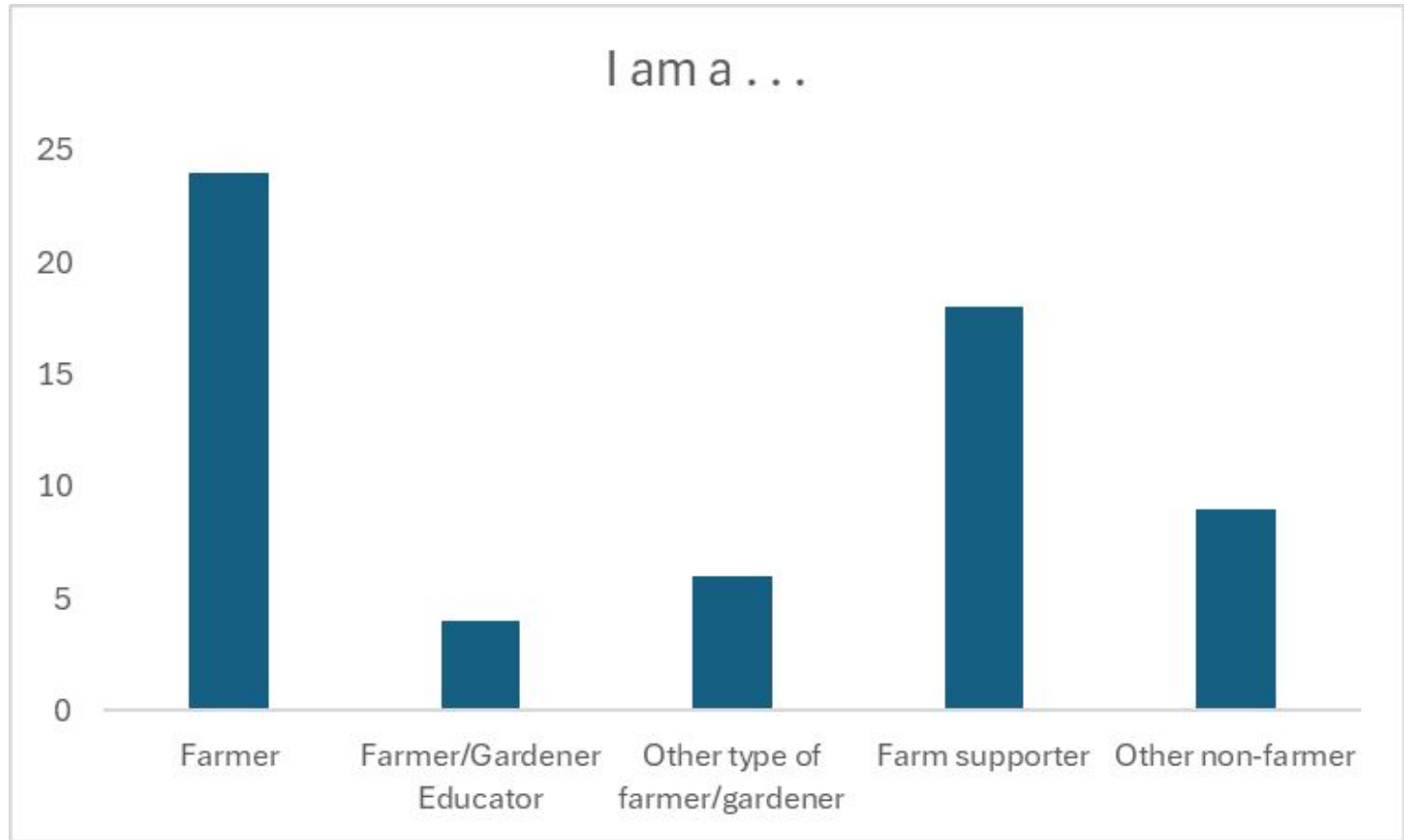
Overview of Analysis

- I. Who responded to the survey?
- II. How does ASAN support respondents' work in sustainable agriculture?
- III. How would you prioritize each of the currently stated roles of ASAN?
- IV. To what degree do you do you agree with following components of ASAN's current definition of a resilient system?
- V. Anything else?

Part I:

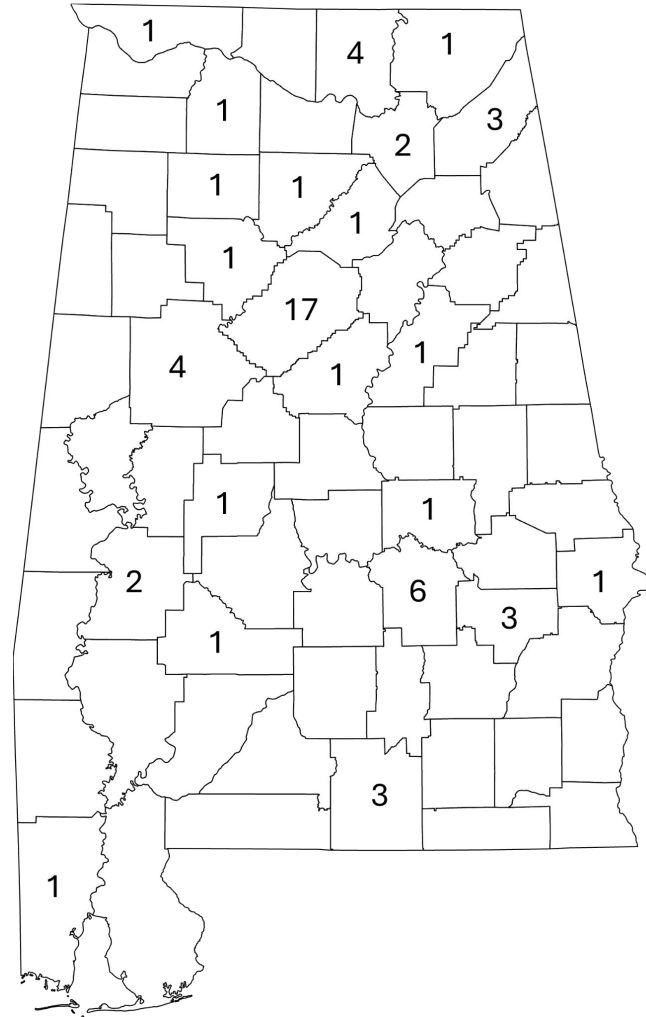
Who responded to the survey?
(Total respondents = 61)

More than half of respondents are some type of farmer/gardener

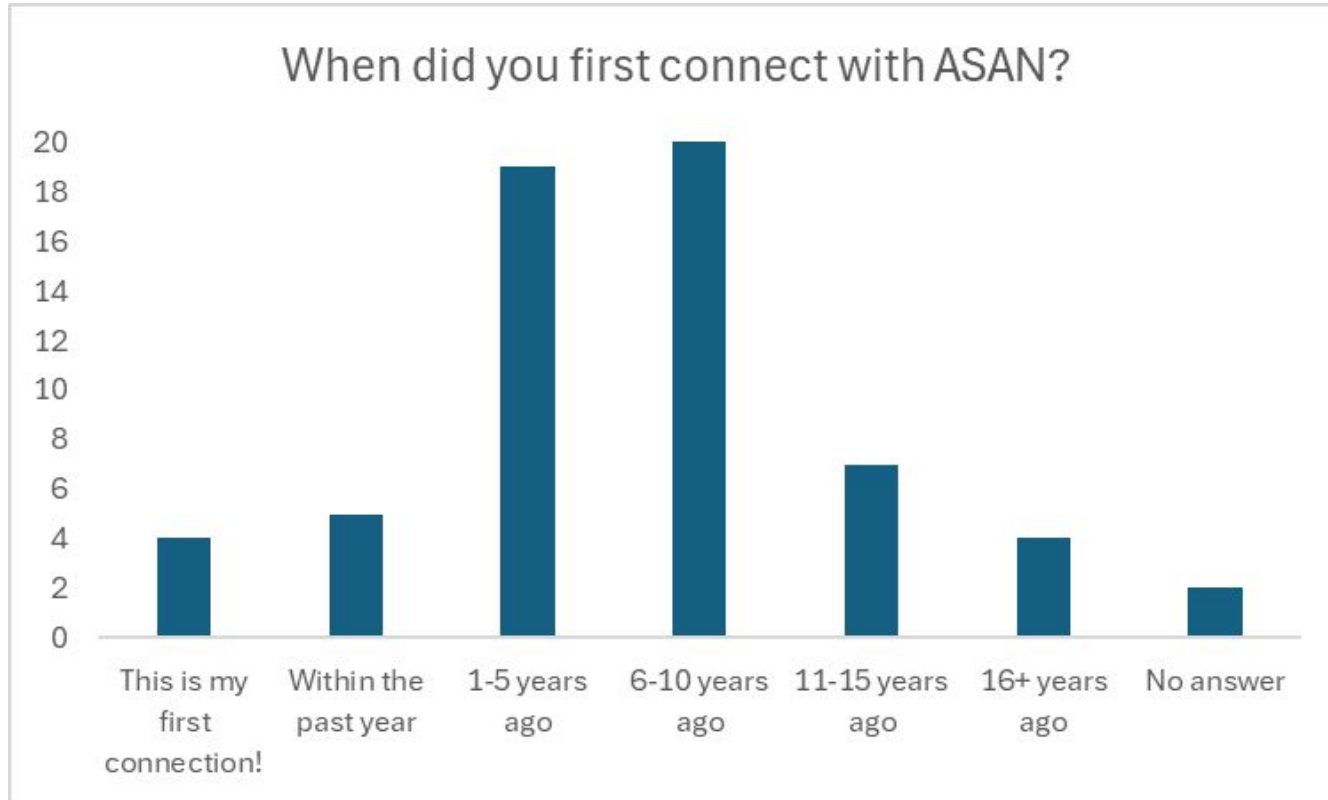


Most respondents are located in/near:

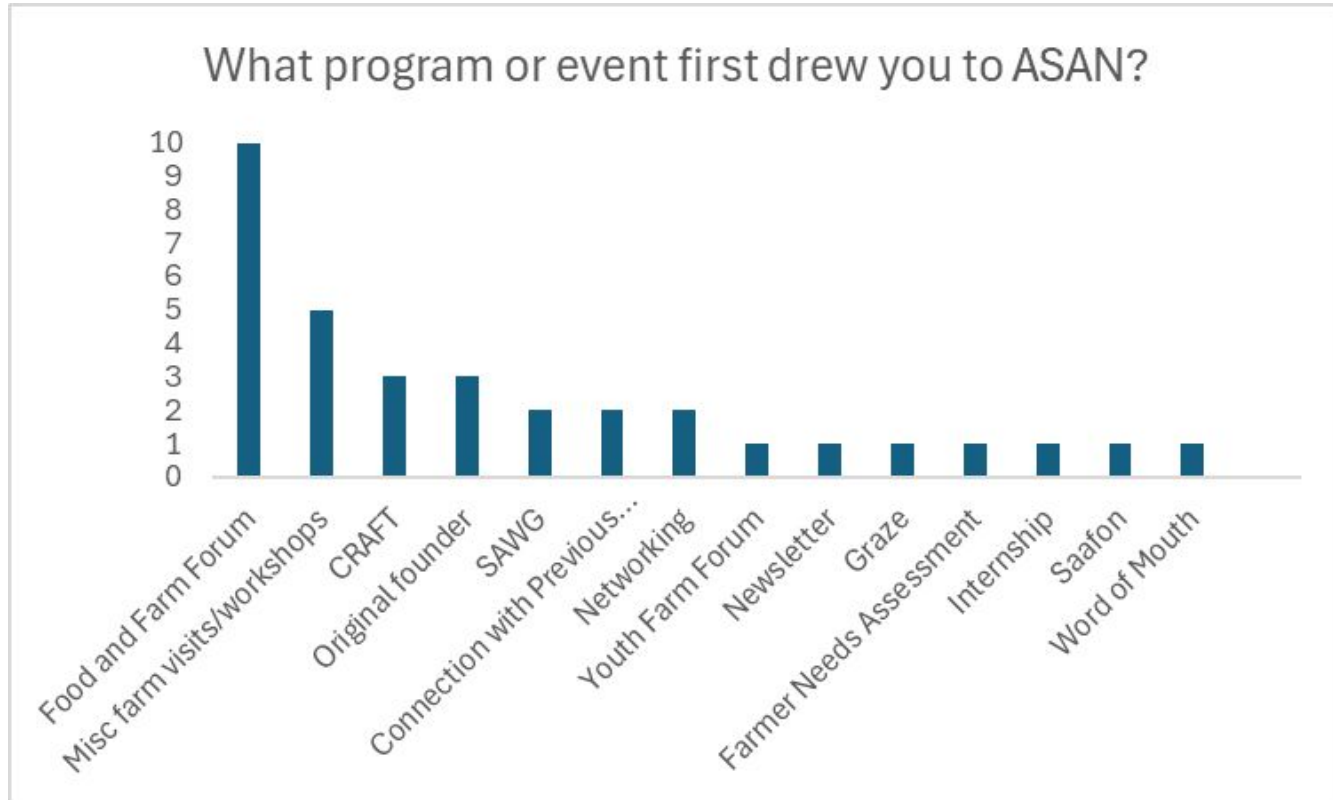
- Birmingham (17)
- Montgomery (6)
- Huntsville (4)
- Tuscaloosa (4)



Most respondents first connected with ASAN in the last decade.



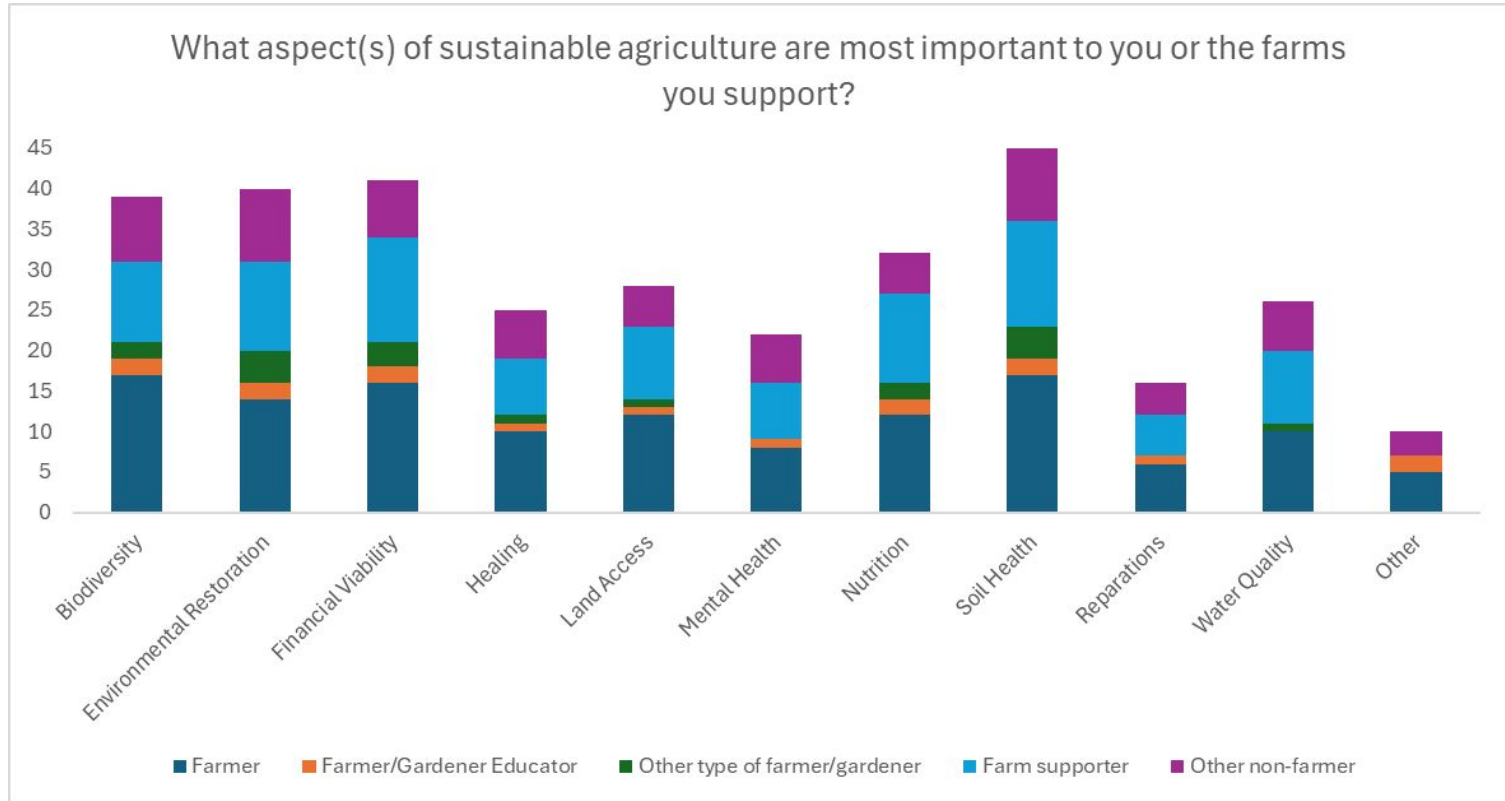
Of the 34 question respondents, the majority first connected with ASAN via the Food & Farm Forum.



Part II: How does ASAN support your work in sustainable agriculture?

Q1: What aspects of sustainable agriculture are most important to you?

Soil health, financial viability, environmental restoration, and biodiversity are most commonly important aspects of sustainable agriculture



Q2: What do you hope to gain by being part of ASAN?

Summary of what respondents hope to take away from being part of ASAN:

- **Connection and networking** with other farmers and like-minded individuals for **support, knowledge sharing, and collaboration.**
- **Access to resources, information, and education** to **support sustainable farming practices** and holistic living.
- **Advocacy** for a better food system, **support**, and **a unified voice** for **small-to mid-sized and urban farmers.**
- Promoting **equitable access to resources.**

Q3: In the next 5 years, how can ASAN best address the needs you see in sustainable agriculture?

How ASAN can best meet needs in the next 5 years?

Summary of all responses

- Develop **peer networks** and a **knowledge hub**.
- **Provide resources and information** related to sustainably growing fruits, vegetables, nuts, and perennial plants as well as agroforestry.
- Host engaging in-person events and **educational programming**.
- Collaborate with organizations, agencies, and individuals to **advocate for policies that advance sustainable agriculture, address environmental concerns** related to agriculture (e.g., waste disposal and chemical use), and **raise public awareness**.
- Address challenges such as **land access, heir property issues, and intergenerational connections** among farmers.
- Offer educational opportunities and provide resources to **help farmers access markets, land, and funding**.
- **Facilitate partnerships, coalitions, and mentorship opportunities** within the agricultural community.
- Explore innovative ideas to **promote the sustainability of farming**, such as **farm sitters, internships, and land allotments for aspiring farmers**.

Part III: How would you prioritize each of the following currently stated roles of ASAN?

How would you prioritize each of the currently stated roles of ASAN?

1. (Weighted score: 1.71): **Listening to and aggregating the needs** of growers and other stakeholders in the food system.
2. (Weighted score: 1.95): **Convening** Alabama stakeholders in sustainable agriculture in order to **facilitate relationships** among growers, consumers, policy makers, institutions and resource providers.
3. (Weighted score: 2.26): **Creating resources** to lessen barriers to ownership and to promote wider meaningful participation in the food system.
4. (Weighted score: 2.37): **Distributing resources** to lessen barriers to ownership and to promote wider meaningful participation in the food system.
5. (Weighted score: 2.44): **Amplifying the voices of the marginalized** in the food system.

Sample comments on ASAN's role

- *I would put all of these as high priorities, but the first two [convening and listening] allow for a more open conversation and I think it's great to let the group drive the mission.*
- *Honestly, all of those should be top priorities. Connections and resources might be the most important though.*
- *Talking and listening to those involved are important, but DOING is the most important in closing the gaps.*
- *I think marginalized farmer voices can be amplified through these other avenues.*
- *I'm not excited about policy work, but no one else is doing it on behalf of sustainable farmers in Alabama.*
- *Alabama desperately needs a program that rallies farmers that are focused on quality products and making those available to consumers. Also teaching the importance of our small farmers.*

Part IV: ASAN promotes a resilient system.

To what degree do you do you agree with following components of ASAN's current definition of a resilient system?

#1: . . . is Intergenerational

- Agricultural knowledge and wisdom inherited from our elders and ancestors should be maintained and celebrated. (94.8% agree)
- The system we sustain and work for should be worthy of our children and youth. (94.8% agree)
- Our youth should be engaged and invited to participate in growing. (93.1% agree)
- Our youth should be invited to participate in harvesting. (93.1% agree)
- Our youth should be invited to consume healthy foods. (89.7% agree)
- I do not agree that a resilient agricultural system is intergenerational. (1.7%)

Comments on “a resilient agricultural system is intergenerational”

- *Integrate with global sustainable community.*
- *While it is important to remember the elders way of doing things we should continue learning and trying new things as alternate methods come around and they should be explored and shared.*
- *Our youth should be invite to learn how to prepare healthy foods.*
- *As well as teaching those ways to younger generations to learn to live to thrive from good food sources and not dependent on large corporations for all foods.*
- *This is key for sustainability.*

#2 . . . is Just

- All laborers within the food system must be justly compensated and treated with dignity. (89.1% agree)
- Inequity and exploitation in any form, from producer to consumer, are threats to sustainability. (81.8% agree)
- The historic and modern racism and sexism that pervades current agricultural institutions and practices must be specifically addressed. (76.4% agree)
- I do not agree that a resilient agricultural system is just. (1.8%)

Comments on “a resilient agricultural system is just”

- *Need to be more inclusive.*
- *Communities share in food production on multiple agricultural levels and free themselves from supporting a broken system.*
- *I believe that if a community is moral, that none of these would be an issue. However given that this is not a perfect world there will always be injustice. It is up to we the people to treat people with respect no matter sex or race.*

#3 . . . centers around those who work the land. For an agricultural system to thrive . . .

- Farmers must be able to sustain themselves economically. (93% agree)
- Farmworkers must be able to sustain themselves economically. (89.5% agree)
- Farmers must be able to sustain themselves socially. (71.9% agree)
- Farmworkers must be able to sustain themselves socially. (70.2% agree)
- I do not agree that a resilient system centers around those who work the land. (1.8%)

Comments on “a resilient system centers around those who work the land”

- *I think it's a complex community interaction that includes farmers, but also consumers and intermediaries like processors.*
- *A community that sees how important a local food supply is and to eliminate food deserts.*

#4 . . . is ecologically regenerative. In order to flourish, our agriculture should . . .

- Replenish the soil. (87.9% agree)
- Enhance the ecosystem. (86.2% agree)
- Protect the watershed. (82.8% agree)
- Additionally, we must understand ourselves to be humble participants in an interdependent ecological community. (75.9% agree)
- Protect the air. (72.4% agree)
- I do not agree that a resilient system is ecologically regenerative. (3.4%)

Comments on “a resilient system is ecologically regenerative . . .”

- *Economically and culturally viable*
- *Be more than islands of regerativeness in a large landscape of destruction.*
- *Be indigenously-led*
- *A resilient system cares for all beings & all relationships (including the self)*
- *I do not know enough about the subject to comment.*
- *Honor indigenous knowledge and foodways.*
- *Replenish the soil in natural ways not with city waste sludge and other industrial sludges.*

#5 . . . is rooted in community. A thriving agricultural system is driven and stabilized by a network of . . .

- Strong connections among members of an entire food system. (87.7% agree)
- Personal connections between members of an entire food system. (77.2% agree)
- Place-based connections among members of an entire food system. (71.9% agree)
- I do not agree that a resilient agricultural system is rooted in community. (0)

Comments on “a resilient system is rooted in community.”

- *While I believe that knowing how your food was grown and hopefully even knowing the farmer, I don't think it is reasonable for there to be strong connections among members of an entire food system.*

Sample section comments on “ASAN promotes a resilient system.”

- *I think resiliency is important, but I think creating/supporting/promotion a thriving agricultural system is just as important. Being resilient can become exhausting, not just in terms of agriculture but I think it's important to remember people can become tired to being resilient and just want to exist in a space where they can thrive. I'm not sure exactly how to make this point, but language is important. And I think it's important that we work toward/imagine systems where we/ag/communities don't have to anticipate/constantly recover from setbacks.*
- *A resilient agricultural system must be found outside the current and future economic and political policies.*
- *Alan Booker is working on what he calls “Biocompatible design principles.” He clearly defines what it means to be regenerative in a landscape of greenwashing. I appreciate how well ASAN articulates ecological/social restoration. Keep it up.*

Part V: Anything else?

Sample comments from “Is there anything else you would like to add?”

- *Small farmers/beginners could use access to affordable tools machinery and resources to sustain*
- *ASAN has such great potential and I hope that as it grows and improves it will have space for all kinds of farmers and growers. Cancel culture in all of its forms is dangerous. Food justice and sovereignty are extremely important, but ensuring that there is space for all people is essential to achieving those things.*
- *Would like to see more ASAN activity in the North AL area*
- *Excited to see the Food & Farm Forum come back! It was one of our favorite gatherings we have attended as an organization. Would love to see a "Food Educators" track or a "Farm/Garden Educators" track to bring together food/farm/garden educators from around the state in a peer-learning group. Thank y'all for all you do!*
- *I have enjoyed the smaller Craft sessions. Please keep those up. I also hope that you will bring back the annual Conference. That annual gathering of other small sustainable, (hopefully organic) farmers is rewarding and so much knowledge gained through the sessions. We lost Southern SAWG and then ASAN. :-(*
- *Each of our groups are passionate about working with certain groups of people. To move forward, we need to work outside of our comfort zones and work across different groups of people.*
- *Financial viability is the major issue for growers. We need to stop feeling sorry for the pricepoint and tell the value of these locally grown foods.*