A YEAR OF CRISIS AND RESILIENCE

2020 ANNUAL REPORT

FUTURE HARVEST
Chesapeake Alliance for Sustainable Agriculture
Future Harvest was founded in 1998 with the mission of advancing agriculture that sustains farmers, communities, and the environment through education, community building, advocacy, and research.

Our mission area covers Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, and Washington DC with a focus on the Chesapeake Bay Watershed within those states.
2020...

It seemed a new crisis emerged every day -- racial injustice on stark display; the build up to violent assaults on our democracy; and, of course, the COVID-19 crisis. Remember the pandemic's early days, when restaurants closed, grocery shelves lay empty, hungry people lined up at food banks? These were the bleakest days. But at Future Harvest, we witnessed cause for great hope: Chesapeake region farmers stepping up, keeping food flowing in imaginative and innovative ways.

Future Harvest has long known how important regional agriculture is to the country's well-being and security. But it was not until the COVID-19 pandemic that the rest of the world got it, too. Regional farmers selling into nearby markets were able to nimbly pivot. Sales went online. Safety protocols were put in place. Local produce was sent to overwhelmed food banks. And the customers came – going to farmers markets and signing up for CSAs in numbers never before seen.

Future Harvest also pivoted. In addition to forging ahead with our key programmatic activities, we raised nearly $100,000 that went directly to farmers to provide food to the hungry via our new Feed the Need campaign and to pay them to share their production, marketing, and COVID-era experience with other farmers. This campaign paid farmers to divert a portion of their harvest to food banks and families in need. Thanks to donors and grant support, we awarded nearly $50,000 in mini-grants to farmers who delivered produce to food banks, senior centers, and hungry families in their communities.

We began the RCR project -- Resilient, Crisis-Ready -- which aims to create a stakeholder-driven action plan for policy and other changes needed to build a strong regional food system able to weather global shocks. We also created the Find a Farmer map, a tool to help consumers find farmers faster and more efficiently, and moved all our field education and beginner farmer training online, serving a record number of farmers and advocates with programming to help them weather the storm and grow well and profitably.

It was a tough year, for sure, but also inspiring and hopeful: We seized this historic moment of clarity about the need for a robust Chesapeake food system and created new programs and partnerships to better serve our mission – advancing agriculture that sustains the region's farmers, communities, and environment.

Thank you to all our supporters who helped us help heroes of the pandemic, our local farmers.
We pivoted our programs and created new ones to help farmers weather the crisis, and distributed nearly $100,000 in mini-grants and other payments.

**RESILIENT, CRISIS-READY PROJECT & FIND-A-FARMER MAP**

We began the RCR project - Resilient, Crisis-Ready - to help build a strong regional food system able to weather global shocks. We also created the Find-a-Farmer Map, a tool to help consumers find farmers faster and more efficiently. Page 4.

**FEED THE NEED CAMPAIGN**

We created this campaign to provide fresh, healthy food directly from farms to those in need. Pages 5-6.

**CHESAPEAKE FIELD SCHOOL & 2020 CONFERENCE**

We kept the learning and sharing going with our record-attendance conference, held just before the pandemic hit. Our Field School pivoted online and served 1,280 farmers regionally and nationally through 40 free webinars, many to help farmers weather the COVID crisis. Pages 7-8.

**MILLION ACRE CHALLENGE**

We and partners launched a large-scale, 10-year project to advance healthy soil – the foundation of good agriculture – on one million acres by 2030. Page 9.

**BEGINNER FARMER TRAINING PROGRAM**

We conducted the 11th year of the program despite COVID limitations, providing online instruction and training to grow the next generation of farmers supplying food to Chesapeake region communities. Page 10-12.

**GO GRASSFED CAMPAIGN & OTHER INITIATIVES**

Grazing is critical for soil; critical for carbon drawdown. That’s why we work to raise consumer awareness and bring more grazers online with our Go Grassfed film and programming. Page 13.
The COVID-19 pandemic revealed fractures in our global food system. In our region, food banks struggled to meet sudden high demand, consumers faced empty grocery shelves and staples were scarce. Many local farmers, distributors, and aggregators quickly pivoted their operations and kept produce and other food flowing through the region. But farmers are still working with ill-suited infrastructure, skilled labor shortages, erratic weather, and the uncertainty of what the new normal poses for their businesses. Further, the scourge of systemic racism has amplified these issues for farmers and food business owners of color.

How can we create a regional food system that is more resilient and crisis ready, especially in the face of global food supply disruptions? This question is at the heart of the Resilient, Crisis-Ready (RCR) Project, which asked stakeholders for answers. The result was a pile of great ideas for building a robust and regional food system and reducing our over-dependence on the national and global supply chain. These ideas are being compiled into an action plan for policymakers, funders, other nonprofits, and others -- and could be a key element in the future State of the Chesapeake Foodshed System report so decision makers can track progress.

Due to a surge in demand for local food that can be delivered or picked up from the farm, as well as grocers turning to local food suppliers as they struggle to stay well-stocked, Future Harvest partnered with the Maryland Farmers Market Association (MDFMA) and the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG) to provide farmers and consumers with a directory of local food resources for direct sales.
Our first-ever Feed the Need initiative supported farmers and addressed food access, as consumers and local food banks and pantries turned to farmers more than ever before to help feed communities impacted by the COVID crisis. Thanks to individual donors, funds awarded from the Mid-Atlantic Food Resilience & Access Coalition and the Greater Washington Community Foundation, and region-wide partner support, grantees received mini-grants ranging from $2,250 - $2,500. With these funds, grantees served the hungry in a variety of ways, such as sliding scales on CSA orders, conducted home deliveries and donated produce to local food banks and pantries and other nonprofits in Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, Delaware and Washington, DC.

**Close to $50,000 in mini-grants awarded to 22 farmers in the Chesapeake region.**

- Selected 14 Black, Indigenous, and other farmers of color out of the 22 grantees, as part of our commitment to racial equity.
- Received 102 applicants with funding requests totaling more than $300,000.
- Partnered with 14 regional food banks/pantries to support their efforts.
Liz Whitehurst is in her fifth season as the owner of the Owl’s Nest Farm in Upper Marlboro, MD where she grows a diverse array of vegetables on 4 ½ acres of land. Since 2009, she has developed her interest in the intersection of farming and food justice, focusing on how to meet the needs of community residents.

Liz has been a farm educator and an urban farmer at DC-based farms before owning her own farming operation. Each year, her team meets to do a visioning session to plan for the upcoming season. “Last year, we made a commitment to see how we can make the food we are producing more available to share our produce with people who otherwise couldn’t afford it,” says Liz. “We wanted to build more partnerships so we could make sure that the food we were producing could be used in the most efficient ways and have the distribution process led by community leaders who best understood the community needs.”

Each week, from July through October 2020, Liz used her grant award to provide CSA shares to families at the Richardson Dwellings public housing complex. “

“The grant money we received from Future Harvest helps us fulfill our goals to help those most in need of fresh produce.” Liz formed a unique partnership between Owl’s Nest Farm and Beet Street Gardens that has allowed her to work with community leaders to support their efforts to feed residents in the Richardson Dwellings public housing complex.

“The grant money we received from Future Harvest helps us fulfill our goals to help those most in need of fresh produce.” – Liz Whitehurst
Future Harvest’s annual conference is the Chesapeake region’s premier three-day event of workshops, inspiring speakers, and farmer and foodpreneur learning and networking.

Our 2020 Conference, “Farming for Our Soil, Livelihood, and Community,” was held just before the pandemic hit and was our largest to date with close to 750 regional farmers and ag service providers participating. Leah Penniman of SoulFire Farm and Dr. Elaine Ingham of the SoilFood Web delivered our 2020 keynote addresses, and Bryan O’Hara of Tobacco Road Farm presented a two-part deep dive into no-till farming. Attendees enjoyed three days of networking, seven conference tracks, locally sourced meals, farmer-to-farmer chats and an all-star line-up of speakers.

Who attends our conference?

- 63% of attendees are farmers/producers
- 62% are vegetable farmers
- More than 22% are raising livestock
- 61% has farmed for fewer than 10 years
The Foodshed Field School offers farmer education on the latest innovations in profitable and sustainable growing. Our programs range from introductory to advanced, and come in a variety of formats: panel discussions, field days, intensives and workshops. The Field School begins each year with our annual winter conference, and continues throughout the year. We cover a long and ever-changing list of topic areas, including but not limited to:

- Sustainable fruit & vegetable production
- Sustainable livestock production
- Business planning for farms and foodpreneurs
- Cut flowers, small grains, tree fruit, mushrooms, and more.

Due to the pandemic, we pivoted and offered 40 courses online for free and recorded these webinars to make them available to a wide audience.
The Million Acre Challenge is one of the largest, most comprehensive soil health projects in the lower Mid-Atlantic.

BUILDING SOIL HEALTH

The Million Acre Challenge (MAC) is a collaborative, multiple-approach, 10-year project with the goal of healthy soil and regenerative practices on one million Maryland acres by 2030. The MAC's activities help Maryland farmers build soil health, increase farm profitability, and improve water quality – while making farms resilient and active in the face of climate change.

Future Harvest's role is to provide farmer education, soil testing to ground-truth practices that build soil health, and work with others on needed policy changes.

The Soil Benchmark Study:

Future Harvest has partnered with Pasa Sustainable Agriculture to extend Pasa’s Soil Health Benchmark Study into Maryland. To date, Future Harvest has enrolled 30 farms in this long-term research project that provides free soil testing and analysis to participating farmers, including a comprehensive assessment of their soil health and comparisons of soil health data among peer farms.
The Beginner Farmer Training Program (BFTP) develops a new farmer workforce, well-trained in practices that are profitable, protect our water, land, and climate, and provide healthy food for our region’s communities. The BFTP offers a 12-month immersive training experience that combines a comprehensive classroom curriculum with hands-on learning at some of the region’s leading sustainable farms.

We are grateful to all of our funders and donors who support the the BFTP program and contribute to the Tipper-Gurley Fund.

Provided free training to more than 330 new farmers since 2009.

- Distributed thousands of dollars annually directly to limited-resource farmers in the form of needs-based, farm start-up mini-grants.
- In our 2020 class, 40% were racial minorities and 71% were women.
The Beginner Farmer Training Program is playing a major role in training the next generation of farmers who can heal our soil and ensure our region’s food security.
MEET SOME OF OUR 2020 TRAINEES

Terican Gross  Pearnell Wilson  Hannah Young  Patty Engler  Brittany Ness

Rich Faucher  Caitlin Lundquist  Samantha Brekosky  Jason & Adrienne Granston  Nate and Carrie Fox

Katie Dunnigan  Katerina Chaconas  Lydia Woolever  Charlotte Henderson  Josue Barrera & Gloria Romano-Barrera

Many of these trainees are already developing farms with great potential as engines for local workforce development.
Research conducted by Future Harvest in 2019 revealed that access to tools and equipment can be a limiting factor on both new and established farms. In response to this dilemma, and to recurring requests from farmers, Future Harvest provides a Tool and Equipment Sharing Platform - a resource to facilitate farmer-to-farmer lending, renting, or custom hire, with the aim of increasing access to hard to procure or leading edge tools of the trade.

The “Go Grassfed” campaign is designed to boost demand for local, grassfed meat, dairy and other pasture-based projects in the Chesapeake region. Future Harvest has debuted a film, launched a new website, and hosted numerous field days as a part of this campaign. We work in collaboration with grant partners, Mountains-2-Bay Grazing Alliance, Central Farm Markets, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Edible DC, Maryland and Virginia Extensions, the Maryland Farmers Market Association, and many grazers to conduct this robust multi-media, multi-year effort.
MEET OUR TEAM

Dena Leibman
Executive Director

Carole Bernard
Membership & Donor
Outreach Manager

Deb Dramby
Communications
Manager

Aleya Fraser
Food Safety & Go Grassfed
Consultant

Lisa Garfield
Million Acre Challenge
Manager

Laurie Savage
Administrative Assistant
and Grants Manager

Caroline Selle
Central Chesapeake
Program Manager

Niamh Shortt
Field School Director

Sarah Sohn
Director. Beginner Farmer
Training Program

Michelle Strobel
Information Technology
Consultant

Gail Taylor
Conference Manager

Cathy Tipper
Beginner Farmer Training
Program - Volunteer
MEET OUR 2020 OFFICERS & DIRECTORS

Carrie Vaughn
President
Clagett Farm, Chesapeake Bay Foundation
Upper Marlboro, MD (Farmer)

Steven Jones
Vice President
Eastern Shore Agriculture Sustains
Cecil County, MD (Founder)

Temitope (Tope) Fajingbesi
Treasurer
Dodo Farms & UMD Institute of Applied Ag.
Central MD (Farmer, Lecturer, Accountant)

Amy Crone
Secretary
Market Link
Annapolis, MD (Farmer)

Mary Kathryn
(MK) Barnett
Open Book Farm
Western MD (Farmer)

Jamie Baxter
Chesapeake Bay Trust
Annapolis, MD (Environmental Professional)

Eric Bendfeld
Virginia Cooperative Extension
Blacksburg, VA (Agriculture Professional)

Nathan Bergdoll
West Virginia Department of Agriculture
West Virginia (Planning Coordinator)

Tom Croghan
Vice President
The Vineyards at Dodon
Davidsonville, MD (Winemaker)

Nevin Dawson
SARE & UMD AGNR
Denton, MD (Agriculture Professional)

Lisa Duff
Oak Spring Farm
Central MD (Farmer)

David Giusti
Second Spring Farm
Purcellville, VA (Farmer)
MEET OUR 2020 OFFICERS & DIRECTORS

Shane Hughes
Liberty Delight Farms
Reisterstown, MD
(Farmer/CPA)

Hiu Newcomb
Secretary
Potomac Vegetable Farm
Northern VA
(Farmer)

Jason Lambros
Coastal Sunbelt Produce
Savage, MD,
(Food Distributor)

Gardiner Lapham
The Farm at Sunnyside
Washington, VA
(Farmer)

Kimberly Raikes
Whitelock Community Farm
Central MD
(Farm Manager)

Edwin Remsberg
Edwin Remsberg Photographs
Fallston, MD
(Photographer)

Eric Rubel
Arnold & Porter Law Firm
Washington, DC
(Partner)

Shelley Rudick
The Taft Organization
Southern MD
(Vice President)

Chip Planck
President Emeritus Wheatland Vegetable Farms
Purcellville, VA
(Farmer)
THANK YOU TO OUR MAJOR DONORS

Agua Fund
Amanda Buczynski
Anonymous (3)
Brendan Iribe
Bruce Behrens
Baltimore Community Foundation
Cathy Tipper
Chesapeake Bay Trust
Greater Washington Community Foundation
Hex Ferments
Jay Wells
Mary Ellen Bates
Maya Leibman & Robert Gross
Mid-Atlantic Food Resilience and Access Coalition
Nicolas Galassi
North County Preservation
Patricia and Walter Valas
Prince Charitable Trust
State of Maryland
Stephen and Susan Immelt
Town Creek Foundation
Turning Point Solutions
USDA AMS
USDA NIFA
Wheatland Spring Brewery
Future Harvest thanks all of our donors for their generous contributions, our funders for their support, and all of our region-wide partners and volunteers for their commitment to our work!

It is these investments in our programs and initiatives that help to advance our mission to provide education, training, networking and inspiration to farmers in the Chesapeake region.

We are looking forward to all that we can, and will, accomplish in 2021.

Together, we are building a stronger and more resilient, and equitable regional food system.

*Financial Information Available Upon Request*
Financials are not yet audited.
Receive exclusive discounts on regional brands, plus valued member benefits that will help you become a more educated and connected farmer, producer, advocate, or consumer. Your membership is also an investment in Future Harvest’s work to create better food and farming in the Chesapeake foodshed. Visit www.futureharvest.org.

Membership Benefits

- 40% discounts on all field school programming throughout the year, including field days, tours, workshops, and more
- Steeply discounted admission to our annual conference, three full days of hands-on and workshop learning, and networking
- Voting rights at our annual Membership Meeting
- Discounts with industry partners
- Event volunteer opportunities, for further event discounts
- Joining a community of like-minded farmers, foodpreneurs, and food lovers in the Chesapeake foodshed