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**IN RESPONSE TO SURGE IN FOOD BANK DEMAND, FUTURE HARVEST LAUNCHES
“[FEED THE NEED](#)” CAMPAIGN**

To raise funds to provide cash mini-grants to farmers to help them directly address food bank shortages and food access in Maryland, DC, Virginia, Delaware, and West Virginia

Chesapeake Region – *May 5, 2020* In partnership with a [growing list of regional food banks](#) and pantries, [Future Harvest](#) is addressing food shortages while aiding small- to mid-scale farmers through its “[Feed The Need](#)” Fund. The campaign, which kicks off this #GivingTuesday, now, May 5th, expects to raise more than \$15,000 for the region’s farmers who are rising to the occasion to feed and sustain the region with fresh, healthy, and local food.

“One of the many things we are quickly learning from the COVID-19 pandemic is how vulnerable our regional food supply chain is. All across the nation, as well as right here in our Chesapeake region communities, we see empty grocery shelves, ag producers losing their wholesale revenues, closed restaurants, and the shut-down of some farmers markets,” said Future Harvest’s Executive Director, Dena Liebman. “Consumers and local food banks and pantries are turning to farmers now more than ever in search of healthy and nutritious food.”

But the food banks are struggling to meet the demand.

“Donations at the Maryland Food Bank are down 90%. The need among our partners has increased 50 – 70%. We are projected to spend \$12 million in the first 90 days of this pandemic to try and meet this increased need for food,” said Amy Crawley, Farm-to-Food Coordinator at the [Maryland Food Bank](#), a campaign partner.

The [Feed the Need Fund](#) will not only help address this shortage and keep produce on the shelves of area food banks, but it also will help farmers weather market changes caused by the pandemic and provide food access to those in need. Mini-grants ranging from \$500 - \$5,000 will be awarded to farmers to facilitate such activities as sliding scale CSA (Community Supported

Agriculture) shares and home delivery systems. Grant award recipients will have the flexibility to participate in this effort using the tools and means that work best for them to help others.

Future Harvest has been working doubletime to help farmers since the start of the pandemic. Alongside hosting a number of [free webinars](#) addressing the changing market in March and April, they collaborated with several regional farming organizations to create the [Find-A-Farmer or Market](#) Map, a tool which allows customers to search a database for a farmer or market near them; learn about their safety practices during COVID-19; and purchase produce, dairy and meats directly. The organization also teamed up with food safety and industry experts to develop and publish [Safety Protocols for Food Distribution and Purchases During COVID-19](#) and [Communications Resources for Farm Businesses During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#).

“We recognize the incredibly important role that our farmers play when times are good, and especially now, when times are rough,” said Leibman. “Whether they are in the cities, the suburbs, or rural areas, our farmers are resilient. They are rising to the occasion to feed and sustain the region with fresh, healthy, and local food. They are our second line of defense; they are the heroes and sheroes we champion. We must support them now as they feed our communities!”

Through public donations and region-wide partner support, funds raised for the [Feed the Need](#) grant will be awarded to vegetable, fruit, meat, and dairy producers throughout the Chesapeake region. [Wheatland Spring Brewery](#), located in the Wheatland agricultural community in Northern Virginia, has committed proceeds from their [Hope Grows campaign](#) to Future Harvest’s network of farmers in Maryland, Virginia, West Virginia, Delaware, and Washington, DC.

Mike Curtin, Executive Director of [DC Central Kitchen](#) and partner in the campaign, has been dedicated to providing healthy meals with fresh ingredients to those they serve since 1989. “We’re thrilled to be joining Future Harvest’s “Feed the Need” campaign, he shared. “This partnership ensures our nonprofit partners and their clients continue to receive top-quality, nutritious food and at the same time invests in our local farmers – something we have been proud to do for years as we look to support our region’s sustainable food system. We look forward to meeting the needs of our community with the support of this collaborative effort.”

[Applications](#) are expected to open for farmers soon. For more information and to contribute to the [Feed the Need Fund](#), visit www.futureharvestcasa.org.

About Future Harvest

Future Harvest was founded in 1998 with the mission to advance agriculture that sustains farmers, communities, and the environment through education, community building, advocacy, and research. Learn more about the organization at www.futureharvestcasa.org