



## Funding Local Food In Virginia



*June 2020*

Wendell Berry is quoted a lot. Many of his quotes we've heard over and over again. But I heard one recently for the first time. Since I caught this second-hand, I am paraphrasing and trusting it's indeed attributable to Berry. If it's not, please forgive me, but it sure sounds like him. So here it goes: "Artificial Intelligence (AI) can do many things, but it can not do anything with love."

Love in this sense should not be confused with an emotion; it should never be confused with an emotion. I don't think Berry's talking here about love as a feeling or action either. I'd guess he's speaking of love as a Living Power, one that helps us exist in better relationship to the natural world and all its living creatures, with a consciousness toward the reality that everyone and everything is connected through otherness.

Can we integrate this living power into our economic mindset? We started our organization by giving loans with 0% interest. We've received some skeptical questions about this from those who perceive themselves to be financial authorities. Zero is a number that connotes failure in the financial world. It expresses emptiness. But when contemplated with a more expansive mind, the circle signifies fullness. While zero stands for nothing, adding it to the end of a number can multiply it tenfold, a hundredfold, and a thousandfold.

With this mindset, we can align economics with nature and not against it, to paraphrase William J. Ginn in his book, [\*Valuing Nature, A Handbook for Impact Investing\*](#). That's not to say that zero is always appropriate or what should be automatically accepted. But it is to say that real change takes risk, and catalytic risk can rarely be engineered out of the way by traditional thinking. The Sufi mystic Hafiz said: "Zero is where the fun starts. There's too much counting everywhere else."

Our farmers take huge risk every day, doing what they can to mitigate it and knowing there is no guarantee. I am certain our latest SOIL Loan recipient knows this well. [Verdant Acres Farm](#) is relatively new. I first met farmer Mary Pedersen in April 2019, when she and her husband John were just starting their business in the Shenandoah Valley. But farming was by no means new to them. They'd been doing it for years under the security of other people's farms, before forging a path for themselves. The evening of the day in which we gave them their loan in early June, a microburst severely damaged parts of their property. Fortunately, they've bounced back quickly with lots of community support, proving that risk takes not artificial intelligence, but resilience, courage... and a whole lotta love.

Thank you to all those who are taking risk with us, and supporting those who are taking risk to create a more beautiful, just, and loving world.

May all be well,

Michael Reilly  
Co-founder & Executive Director

**Please Donate To Our Soil Fund!**

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## **New Loan: Verdant Acres Farm**

[Verdant Acres](#) is a 39-acre farm near the town of Raphine in Rockbridge County. It is owned and operated by John and Mary Pedersen, who live on the farm with their children. Verdant Acres has been in operation since 2019 but John and Mary have extensive backgrounds in farming, including stints with [Polyface Farm](#) in Virginia and [White Oak Pastures](#) in Georgia, where they both met. Prior to starting their own farm, the Pedersen's raised livestock and sold meat under the Polyface label.

Staunchly committed to organic, regenerative practices, the Pedersens grow vegetables for a CSA and raise pastured chicken, pigs, and sheep. They supplement their pastured poultry with Certified Organic feed.

With its 0% SOIL Loan, Verdant Acres is completing its poultry processing station, which will allow them to greatly expand their pastured poultry business.

Please see our [website](#), [Facebook page](#), and [Instagram account](#) for ongoing updates on all our projects.



*The Pedersen Family at Verdant Acres Farm*

**Total SOIL Loans Made: 24**  
**Total Value of Loans: \$180,000**

*\* since January 2019*

### **Nurture Capital At Work**

Nurture Capital continues to do its job in our local foodshed. Just in time for the surge in demand for locally raised protein caused by the snags in our industrial food supply from the pandemic, [Earth Echo's Farm](#) got its new poultry processing equipment up and running. The 146-acre farm located in Fredericksburg is run by Robert and Virginia Greenlaw. They received a 0% SOIL Loan in March to help pay for the equipment.



# RACIAL JUSTICE IN THE FOOD SYSTEM

*Framed by themes from Food Solutions New England's  
21-Day Racial Equity Challenge*

**JUNE 29**

**3:00-4:30 PM EST**

*Getting at the Roots of  
Whiteness and Anti-  
Blackness*

**AUG 13**

**3:00-4:30 PM EST**

*Sovereignty and Self  
Determination*

**JULY 23**

**3:00-4:30 PM EST**

*Structural Racism and  
New Narratives*

**SEPT 14**

**3:00-4:30 PM EST**

*New Patterns,  
New Visions*

<https://foodsystems.centers.vt.edu/events-and-speakers.html>

This summer the [VT Center for Food Systems and Community Transformation](#) is hosting a virtual learning circle series focused on racial justice in the food system. This is part of the Center's commitment to fostering cultural change for social justice and racial equity through university-community dialogue. The first session takes place this coming Monday, June 29, and is entitled, "Getting at the Roots of Whiteness and Anti-Blackness."

[To Learn More and Register](#)

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**[Virginia Foodshed Capital's Statement on  
Black Lives Matter, published June 10.](#)**

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## Accepting Farmer Loan Applications

During these especially unsettled times for farmers, we want to re-emphasize our commitment to supporting the financial needs of our local sustainable food producers. To that end, we are continuing to

accept loan applications for our signature grassroots program called **SOIL**, a 0% revolving loan program for amounts up to \$10,000. We are particularly seeking applications in the Tidewater region.

[Virginia Foodshed Capital Borrower Information Form](#)

## MAFRAC Grants for Local Food



[The Mid-Atlantic Food Resilience and Access Coalition](#) (MAFRAC) grant program offers funding for DC, MD, and VA nonprofits and businesses to source from local farmers and food businesses for free or pay-what-you-can food distribution efforts. MAFRAC's funding can cover the cost of local food purchased for such efforts, up to \$15,000 per organization.

MAFRAC's north stars are the health of the regional food system and supporting emergent and established food relief needs in the Mid-Atlantic region. A healthy regional food system is one that is sustainable, resilient, diverse, and equitable, in crisis times and beyond. As such, MAFRAC prioritizes funding projects that serve historically under-resourced, disadvantaged, or marginalized communities, farmers, and businesses.

More information about the program can be found here: <https://mafrac.com/faqs/>, and here is a link to [the grant application \(tinyurl.com/local-food-incentive\)](https://tinyurl.com/local-food-incentive).

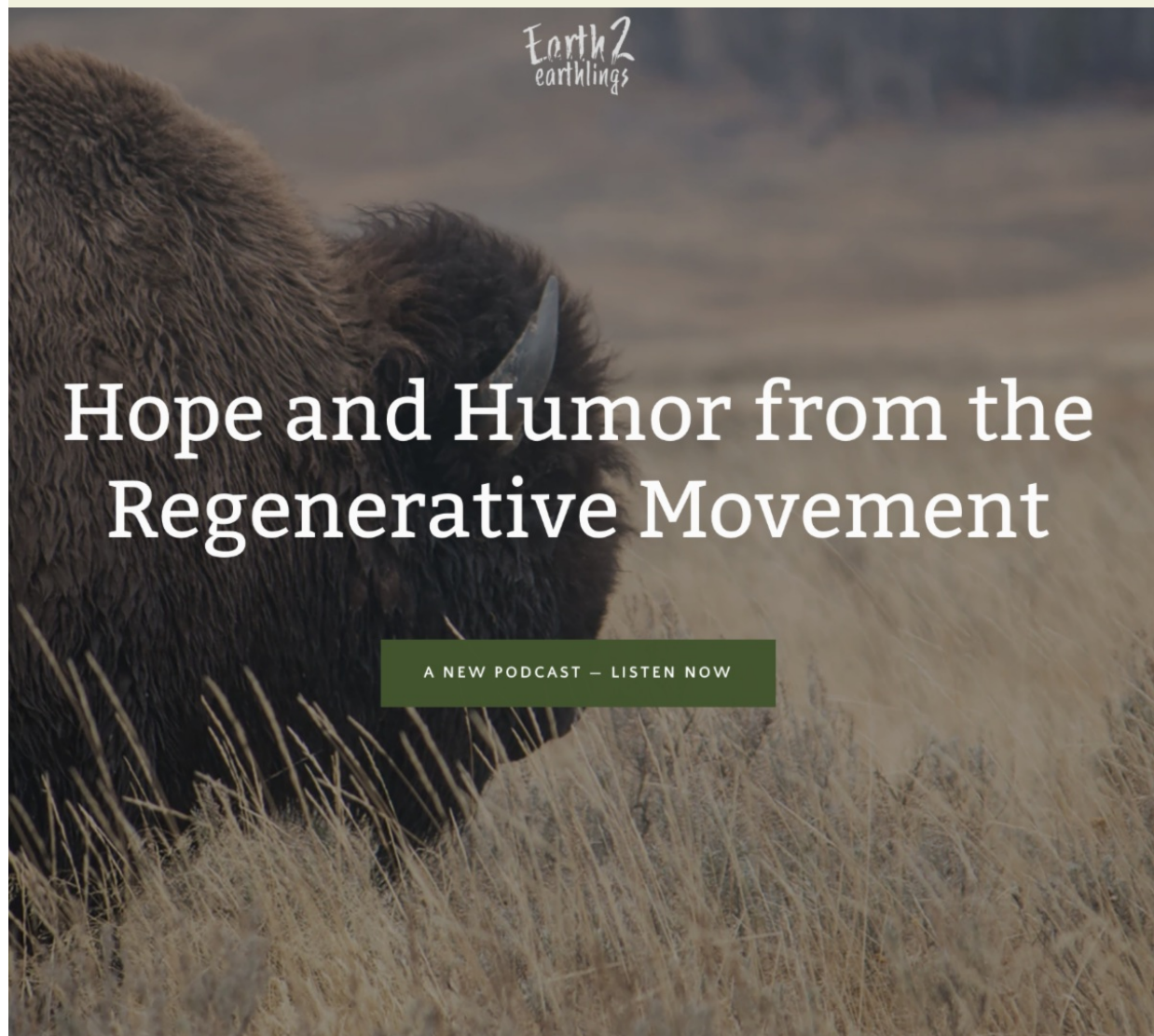
If you have any questions about the grant application process, or if you're simply new to applying for grants and would like to discuss your application with an advisor, please reach out to [info@mafrac.com](mailto:info@mafrac.com).

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## Earth2Earthlings Podcast

Be sure to check out the new [Earth2Earthlings](#) podcast now available on Apple and Spotify, and sponsored by Virginia Foodshed Capital. The podcast is hosted by Daniel Griffith, who along with his wife Morgan, runs [Timshel Permaculture](#), one of our SOIL Loan partner farms. Daniel's co-host is Jesse McDougall from [Studio Hill Farmin](#) Vermont.

The latest episode features a delightful interview with Abbey Smith, Global Network Coordinator with [The Savory Institute](#), promoting holistic land management worldwide.



# Hope and Humor from the Regenerative Movement

A NEW PODCAST – LISTEN NOW

"Ultimately, we have just one moral duty: to reclaim large areas of peace in ourselves, more and more peace, and to reflect it toward others. And the more peace there is in us, the more peace there will also be in our troubled world."

-Etty Hillesum

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