



Funding Local Food In Virginia



March 2020

The inherent goodness and resilience of humanity always seems to shine brighter during times of crisis. Our local food system is a case in point. Rather than surrendering to the dire circumstances they face, many farmers are feverishly working to connect with customers through online ordering, drop-sites, and home deliveries. Restaurants are doing the same. Drive thru-farmers markets are replacing regular markets, as we all adapt to the sudden and dramatic virus containment policies.

So many others are hard at work ensuring access to food for marginalized communities hit especially hard by school and business closers. [The Charlottesville Food Justice Network](#) is one example of an organization doing just that by mobilizing hundreds of volunteers over the past few weeks to deliver meals to school children and others in need.

What this all proves is what we've known all along: That a healthy, robust local food system is critical to the resilience and strength of our communities. It's certainly not the time (yet) to be preaching about lessons learned, but we must not forget what this crisis is trying to teach us.

Thank you to all of you who've been supporting our farmers with your purchases. Please continue to do so. So much has happened so fast in the past few weeks that it's difficult trying to keep up with all the changes and opportunities for people to buy local food. (More on that below.) Please stay patient and flexible. Together we'll prevail and prove that a strong local food system is the best way to build resilient and healthy communities. Local food also safeguards us from interruptions in our long global food supply chains. Pandemics notwithstanding, these interruptions will undoubtedly become more and more common in the years and decades ahead, from climate change alone.

Here at Virginia Foodshed Capital we are more dedicated than ever to our mission of providing the critical financial stewardship necessary for our farms and food enterprises to thrive in a rapidly changing world that will increasingly rely on them. We're working with our farm partners on a reprieve of repayments on all loans until this crisis is over. And we're continuing to offer financing as much as we can. You can read about some of our newer loans below. But the truth is, we are not able to meet the demand that exists, so we kindly ask for support during this difficult time. A donation of any size helps tremendously as we all work together to get through this crisis and make our food system stronger on the other side.

Thank you,

Michael Reilly
Co-founder & Executive Director

Please Donate To Our Soil Fund!

New Loan: Goldman Farm

[Goldman Farm](#) is a 250-acre vegetable and row crop farm near Cullen, in Charlotte County. It is owned and operated by Cornell "Brick" Goldman. Since 2013, the farm has been a partner farm of Charlottesville-based Local Food Hub, which itself is part of a greater regional food distribution network through a partnership with 4P Foods. Brick Goldman is also the founder/president of a regional food network in Southside Virginia. With its 0% SOIL Loan, Goldman Farm will purchase supplies and pay for improvements that will help boost production and meet the growing demand for its vegetables, particularly from local grocery stores.



Brick Goldman from Goldman Farm

New Loan: Earth's Echo Farm

[Earth's Echo Farm](#) is a 146-acre livestock farm located in Fredericksburg, owned and operated by Robert and Virginia Greenlaw. The farm has been in business since 2014, and sells 100% grass-fed beef and pastured chicken and eggs at Richmond and Stafford farmers markets. The farm is committed to resilient, regenerative agriculture, farming with the intention of improving the soil, biodiversity, water quality, and overall health of their land, which was originally purchased by Robert's grandfather. Broiler chickens have always been their forte. With their 0% SOIL Loan, Earth's Echo Farm will purchase a new poultry scalding and plucker, which will help them increase their chicken production and allow them to begin raising turkeys to grow revenue and expand the business.

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



The Greenlaw Family at Earth's Echo Farm

Total SOIL Loans Made: 22
Total Value of Loans: \$160,000

** since January 2019*

Nurture Capital At Work

Nurture Capital continues to do its job in our local foodshed. [Timshel Permaculture Farm](#), a new training hub for the Savory Institute, began installing fencing this past week to increase its pastures for holistic planned grazing. This project, funded in part by a 0% SOIL Loan, will help the farm restore and regenerate land degraded by clear-cut logging.



Mid-Atlantic Food Resilience and Access Coalition



MID-ATLANTIC FOOD RESILIENCE AND ACCESS COALITION

Head us spread the word! Follow #MAFRAC

Through the leadership of [4P Foods](#) Founder/CEO Tom MacDougall, the Mid-Atlantic Food Resilience and Access Coalition has formed as a partnership of diverse organizations throughout the region to address the COVID-10 crisis. Known as MAFRAC for short (think Aflac!), it is coordinating efforts among local agriculture, food access and social service organizations to keep people fed, farmers growing, and small food businesses operating. Virginia Foodshed Capital has partnered with 4P through our SOIL Fund to provide financial support toward their [Emergency Food & Farm Fund](#), which is helping purchase food from local farms and distributing it in locations where food insecurity is exacerbated by the crisis.

Where's the Beef?

... and all the other healthy, delicious food our local farmers are working hard to make available to you?

This question is difficult to answer here because there are so many choices around the state, and so much continues to be under development. We are working with a small team to hopefully provide a Food Map with available options, so look for that soon. In the

meantime, we'd like to point to two examples of drive-thru markets that exemplify the ingenuity and adaptability of our local food system. One is the [Micro Market run by the Local Food Hub in Charlottesville](#). Another is the [Staunton Local Food Drive-Thru at Newtown Baking](#).

There is also good news regarding Virginia's farmers markets. After several days of concern that they may be effectively shut down due to very tight COVID-19 restrictions, the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services has clarified the rules that now allow markets to operate safely but effectively. We have the [Virginia Farmers Market Association to thank for this, and they've posted the guidelines on their website](#).

If you've never signed up for a CSA, now is the time to do so! And remember, many farms and businesses have set up online ordering. Search them out online or on social media. Thank you.



The Drive-Thru Market in Staunton (photo courtesy of Polyface Farm)

"To be hopeful in bad times is not just foolishly romantic. It is based

on the fact that human history is a history not only of cruelty, but also of compassion, sacrifice, courage, kindness. What we choose to emphasize in this complex history will determine our lives. If we see only the worst, it destroys our capacity to do something. If we remember those times and places—and there are so many—where people have behaved magnificently, this gives us the energy to act, and at least the possibility of sending this spinning top of a world in a different direction. And if we do act, in however small a way, we don't have to wait for some grand utopian future. The future is an infinite succession of presents, and to live now as we think human beings should live, in defiance of all that is bad around us, is itself a marvelous victory." (Howard Zinn, American historian)

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