



August 2024

{{First Name}},

In the ten years I spent as a full-time farmer, the Labor Day "holiday" always made me roll my eyes a little. Farmers around the country are gearing up for a busy weekend at market, packing coolers or planning an extra harvest, and urging customers to ready their grills or stock up on the late summer bounty. What they're very likely *not* doing is... kicking back.

As we roll into Labor Day weekend, I encourage you to show up to the market and **make it a bang-up sales day for the folks who feed us.** And to any farmers reading this, please accept our sincere gratitude for the work you do! **Here's hoping the resources I've shared below will be a boon to your business** in one way or another.

As for August in the foodshed, I'm excited to share the *salty* news of our very first loan in Texas - and our first non-terrestrial loan, to boot. Read on for a highlight of a conservation biologist-owned operation making sustainably produced oysters available on the Gulf coast.

Things also got pretty sweet for our favorite local jam company, who received a loan from us in 2023, and this month, was **written up in none other than the Wall Street Journal**. **Scroll down for the juice on [Jam According to Daniel](#).**

To all of you eaters, farmers, and friends who share my **growing understanding that "[rest is resistance](#)," I hope you're able to soak up the holiday weekend in ways that make you smile**. Thanks, as always, for keeping up with our journey, and for helping us build more equitable, more regenerative foodsheds.

With gratitude,

Erica Hellen
Director of Strategy & Comms.



Capital in the Field



Big Tree Oysters
Rockport, Texas



When conservation biologist Amy Belair was growing up in the small coastal town of Rockport, TX, oysters were everywhere. **A foundational part of the local food system, wild-grown oysters have been shucked and savored by families in the region for generations.**

In 2023, **Texas began permitting oyster mariculture farms with the hope of protecting wild oyster populations** that play such a vital role in the gulf ecosystem, and ensuring oysters continue to be part of the gulf coast food culture.



One of the first operations to receive a permit was **Big Tree Oyster Company**, owned by **Amy and her husband Seth**, who are now cultivating oysters on five acres in Copano Bay.

While this method of farming is new to the state of Texas, it is considered **one of the most restorative types of food production in the world because of the net benefit to ecosystems**. Oyster mariculture improves water quality, enhances habitat structure, and reduces pressure on wild oyster reefs.

Big Tree oysters do not require any feed, fertilizer, or chemical inputs. They feed exclusively on nutrients that exist in the water around them, making them a **prime example of truly regenerative food production**.

After stocking 200,000 oyster seeds in August 2023, **Big Tree made their first harvest and sales in May of this year**. Now they're planning for growth and expansion, with plans to stock an additional 400,000 oysters in 2024.

To support their expansion, **Big Tree was awarded a Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure grant from the Texas Department of Agriculture**, which will receive \$11.2 million from USDA Ag. Marketing Services to support Texas farmers in the middle of the food supply chain. The grant funding will allow Big Tree to purchase essential processing equipment, cold storage, and machinery to scale their operation.

Foodshed Capital will be supporting Big Tree with a low-interest bridge loan to cover upfront costs ahead of grant reimbursement. With the extensive vetting that comes with receiving a grant of this kind, this loan is a great example of how and when we extend financing to farmers beyond the East Coast.



Are we secretly planning a staff retreat to Copano Bay?? You bet we are.

Jam According to Daniel + Fairweather Farm Tea
Charlottesville, VA



If you've been in Charlottesville for any length of time and like to eat, it's likely you've come across [Jam According to Daniel](#). Owner Daniel Perry has been jamming - literally and metaphorically - for nearly 20 years. **With concoctions that are both unexpected and memorable, he combines perfectly ripe fruit with herbs like lavender, turmeric, ginger, or pepper.** What started as a hobby became a thriving business: one could reasonably say the Damson Plum has a cult following.

"Preserving local fruit with minimal sugar, working directly with the growers, and picking much of the fruit by hand, I'm on a scavenger hunt all summer long for the best fruit, which I take home and cook down in a 5-gallon copper jam pan," Daniel says.

Early this month, [the Wall Street Journal featured Jam According to Daniel in an article that describes the "true alchemy" of crafting a low-sugar, no pectin jam that packs a pound of local fruit into every jar.](#) Unfortunately the article is no longer available digitally without the paywall, but intrepid aspiring jam-makers can squint at the pic of the print version below to find Daniel's recipe.



I'd be remiss not to mention that **Daniel works side by side with his wife, Rachel Perry, owner and farmer at [Fairweather Farm Tea](#).** Rachel's herbal teas and custom culinary spice blends are **100% homegrown and regeneratively produced on the couple's small but positively abundant residential property**, and regularly featured in Daniel's jams. Her clever branding also makes her teas and spices the most gift-able local treats at C-ville farmer's markets.

In fall 2023, Foodshed Capital supported the couple with a low-interest loan for fencing and the build-out of their new processing space, which has proved a wise investment. According to Daniel (see what I did there), after the WSJ article went live, they received two months' worth of orders in just a couple days!

Charlottesville couple get national attention for tea and jam businesses



Farmer Resources



Ag-X Mini: Selling Your Product in the Off Season

September 18 & 19, 5:30 pm - 7 pm

Cost: Free

Location: DEIC, 201 Duncan St,
Ashland, VA 23005

Who Should Attend: Agricultural
Producers, Food Artisans, Small-Scale
Vendors

Presented by:  



Free Marketing Workshops Sept. 18 & 19

Winter is coming! This comprehensive two-part workshop will equip participants to **maintain and grow sales during the winter** months when traditional farmer's markets are no longer available.

[Register here.](#)



Two-Year Paid Fellowship for Food Systems Leaders

The Castanea Fellowship is for **diverse leaders working for a racially just food system** in the areas of health, environment, agriculture, regional economies, or community development. Fellows receive the time, space, and resources they need to connect and innovate.

Applications open now. [Learn more here.](#)



Down Payment Assistance Grants

BirdSEED's housing justice program offers **down payment grants to qualifying BIPOC first-time home-buying residents in DC, Maryland, Virginia, and the Philadelphia area.** Awards range from \$5,000 to \$15,000, and grants are made multiple times per year.

[Learn more here.](#)

Support Our Work

If you made it this far, I'd like to think something about Foodshed Capital's work is resonating with you.

Please help us continue supporting regenerative farmers and food entrepreneurs by **making a financial gift today.** And thanks!

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