



# So long, 2024!



**Well, here we are, \*{{First Name}}\*.**

Has it been far too fast or incredibly slow? That's the question I ask myself every year on this, the final day of the year. While I can't say anything for certain about the actual passage of time, I can say that our work in the foodshed this year has certainly been... felt!

**Buckle up, I'm going to cheese a little.**

2024 was a year of borrowers shedding actual tears of joy on Zoom calls when we closed their loans. **A year of warm welcomes and dirty high fives on farm visits.** A year of vigorous nodding at conferences, where peers and farmers alike shared small joys, deep frustrations, and resolute commitment to foodsheds that work better for all - despite the enormous obstacles. And, lest we forget the point, it was a year of incredibly delicious food that nourished bodies and spirits.

**It was also a year of spreadsheets (so many spreadsheets), plenty of professional development (here's lookin' at you, Julia Shanks), and a dedicated re-examination of our specific role in this complicated food ecosystem.** With Foodshed's next strategic plan in active development, we thought long and deep about our theory of change; I'm genuinely excited to share the updates we made with you - soon!

December itself was quiet on the lending front. As you may recall, we met and exceeded our lending goals for 2024 at the end of Q3, **so please enjoy the last two loan highlights of the year below. Both projects came our way via partnership with The Conservation Fund's Working Farms Fund (WFF),** and we're thrilled to have supported these early-stage farmers going all in to feed their communities. And of course, we're excited to keep growing our footprint in the Atlanta and Chicago areas through referrals from the WFF team in 2025.

Although I've likely exhausted my cheese quota for one newsletter, I'll stretch it just a little further to say a **big and loud THANK YOU** to everyone that supported Foodshed Capital, in every way, in 2024:

---> **To our board of directors**, who share their time and hard-earned insights to help us grow, alongside their own full-time jobs.

--> **To our donors and grantors**, who quite literally make our work possible with their dollars.

--> **To our investors**, who support our work long-term as we actively grow our fund and footprint to meet farmers' needs wherever they are.

--> **To our peer service providers** who build out this food ecosystem through farmer training, land security, technical assistance, research, food access, value-add, distribution, lobbying, business support, and agrivoltaics.

--> **And to our borrowers and business support clients**, who are growing, processing, moving, and selling the food we all eat... and who trust us when we tell them the spreadsheets are worth it.

**We thank you all - sincerely - and look forward to another year of intentional growth, deeper service, and truly regenerative food.**

To a better foodshed,



Erica Hellen

Director of Development

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Capital in the Field



**Otter Oaks Farm**

**Chicago, Illinois**



**Otter Oaks Farm** was launched in 2021 by Soraya Alem with the intention of **growing food with regenerative and closed-loop farming practices**, feeding the community while passing on knowledge, creating connections, and sharing resources.

After two successful years cultivating on a half acre at **Windy City Harvest**, a farm training program of the Chicago Botanic Garden, Soraya and spouse/head grower Jarvi Schneider have found success growing diversified vegetables. They reach customers through a CSA, wholesale aggregator, and sales at two local farmer's markets.

In pursuit of long-term land security, Otter Oaks became a partner of The Conservation Fund's **Working Farms Fund** in 2024, signing a lease for a 40-acre property in Woodstock, Illinois. Over the next five years, TCF and Otter Oaks will work to have a conservation easement placed on the property, at which time they **will have the opportunity to purchase the farm property at a reduced price**.

Otter Oaks has planned a thoughtful transition to the new land, which includes continuing cultivation at their urban farm site during the 2025 season while subletting the 40 acres to an established tenant. **A low-interest loan from Foodshed Capital will provide Otter Oaks working capital to improve soil health and cover maintenance costs** before they fully transition to living and farming on the property in 2026.

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## **Smyly Farms**

**Chattahoochee Hills, Georgia**



**Smyly Farms** is a regenerative pastured poultry and vegetable farm 40 minutes outside Atlanta, Georgia launched in 2019. With an undergraduate degree in horticulture, owner and farmer Michael Gault got his start growing veggies and small-scale poultry at an established certified organic poultry farm nearby.

After five years of successful operations at a modest scale, **Michael secured a new land lease through The Conservation Fund's Working Farms Fund in 2023. The new land allowed him to significantly expand his laying hen and meat duck operation.** Now a fixture in the metro Atlanta local food scene, Smyly Farms provides pastured eggs and meat to five weekly farmers markets as well as small grocers and local restaurants.

**A low-interest loan from Foodshed Capital allowed Smyly Farm to cover production costs, including feed and processing, as the farm expands its egg, meat, and vegetable enterprises on the new acreage.**



## Recapping the Year



Another year of meeting farmers where they are has found Foodshed Capital in a lot of new places. I'm incredibly proud of **the work we did in 2024 to provide regenerative farmers and food enterprises with the capital and coaching they need to succeed:**



23

Total Loans Closed



\$1,440,456

Deployed in 2024



7

Six-Figure Loans



5 New States & 1 New Territory (Puerto Rico)  
Served with Capital



76%

Funding to BIPOC and  
Low-Income Borrowers



282 Hours  
Of Zero-Cost Business Support



933

New Regenerative Acres  
Supported



Donate to the Foodshed



**It's the very last day of the year, but it's never too late to show your financial support.**

Whether you're an individual who wants to give a little or a lot, we've got options for everyone, including those with donor advised funds, foundations, and family trusts. And **you can always [reach out to me \(Erica!\)](#) with any questions** about how your gift will be put to work.

**1**

**Give Online With Credit Card or ACH**

**2**

**Make A Major Gift**

**3**

**Donate Stock**

**4**

**Mail Us A Check**

**5**

**Make an IRA Qualified Charitable Distribution**

**6**

**Donate Through Your Atmos Bank Account**

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**Foodshed Capital is a 501(c)3 non-profit with a mission to build more equitable, more regenerative foodsheds.**

**Follow along with our journey here:**



**Our Contact Information**

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