

FARMS FUND

2023 Summer Update



We are growing!

Like the entrepreneurial farmers we serve, the Farms Fund program is scaling and expanding to meet the needs of next generation farmers across the country. In 2023, we are working closely with local partners on expansion to Charlotte, North Carolina, while exploring future expansion opportunities in Philadelphia, Minneapolis, San Diego and Austin, Texas. Join us as we build more equitable and resilient local food systems across the U.S.



Why the Farms Fund Matters:



Creates a pathway to affordable land ownership and builds wealth for entrepreneurial next generation farmers



Grows a more resilient and equitable local food system by increasing the supply of healthy, locally-grown food



Conserves farmland at risk of being lost to development in growing metro regions



Breaks down traditional barriers to capital and business support for diverse agricultural businesses ready to scale



Accelerates farm innovation and adoption of sustainable agricultural practices

What Our Farmers Say:



“

What interested us in working with the Farms Fund program was that we were looking for the right location and also the right opportunity. Being able to consolidate our farming into one location has helped us focus and lay the foundation for growth.”

— Arturo Caines, The Garlic Escape Farm, IL

FARMS FUND IMPACTS TO DATE:

10
FARMS

745
ACRES

40
FARMERS

\$7M
IN LAND VALUE
SECURED

\$190K
INVESTED DIRECTLY IN
ON-FARM INFRASTRUCTURE

27% OF FARMER OWNERS
ARE WOMEN

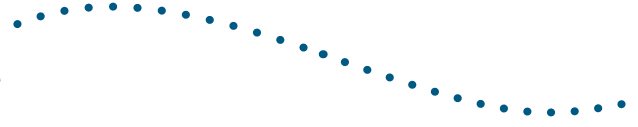
68% OF FARMER OWNERS
ARE BIPOC



COMMITMENT TO SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES

We partner with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and other organizations committed to conservation and climate-smart practices to incentivize sustainable practices on Farms Fund farms, so far investing:

\$325,000



Connecting Farmers to Markets

A major challenge in food systems across the country is delivering locally produced, fresh products to food-insecure communities. In Georgia, The Common Market — a key partner of the Farms Fund program — is partnering with the Georgia Department of Agriculture to meet that challenge by supplying locally grown food to Georgia's community food banks through the federally funded USDA Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement (LFPA) program. The new LFPA program is also designed to purchase food from historically disadvantaged farmers to build and expand the economic success of local and diverse farm businesses. Farms Fund farm teams like Snapfinger Farm and Local Lands are scaling their production through this program and fulfilling their goals of connecting communities to healthy and fresh local food options.

In Chicago, the Farms Fund is teaming up with Greater Chicago Food Depository, which services over 800 food pantries across metro Chicago and Cook County, to deliver fresh food from farms to nearby food pantries. The Farms Fund recently assisted the Chicago Urban Farm Solution in securing 20 acres of farmland in South Cook County, which will help expand the farm team's production of healthy, fresh produce being delivered to communities that face food insecurity. Chicago Urban Farm Solutions will also recruit and hire aspiring farmers to gain hands-on, paid experience and other business skills on this new farm site.

RECENT NEWS

Georgia's Farmland Conservation Program signed into law by Governor Kemp on April 18th, 2023

Georgia's new Farmland Conservation Fund Program, the first Purchase of Agriculture Conservation Easement program (PACE) in the state's history, enables the state to protect critical farmland and the wildlife habitat, water, air and soil quality that farms contribute to their communities. Like other PACE programs across the country, Georgia's Farmland Conservation Fund Program will incentivize farmers to voluntarily sell development rights on their land, supporting their farm business and securing a local supply of food, fiber and grain into the future.

The Conservation Fund worked with the Georgia Conservancy and state agricultural champions like Georgia Department of Agriculture Commissioner Tyler Harper, Senate Agriculture Committee Chairman Russ Goodman (R-8), and House Agriculture Committee Chairman Robert Dickey (R-145) to pass this historic legislation. This new state source of funding for farmland conservation will enable Georgia to leverage and secure more federal funds for these efforts and create opportunities for local jurisdictions to increase farmland protection. The program will provide important resources for the conservation of agricultural land in the Farms Fund program and for many other farms across the state.

New Farms Fund Team Members



ILLINOIS
Kelly Larsen
Chicago Metro
Farms Fund Specialist

Kelly supports Farms Fund farmers to scale their businesses and achieve land ownership, protecting critically endangered farmland in the Chicago Metro region. She provides technical assistance to establish farm operations and leverage available resources to meet their goals. Kelly has 20 years of experience in sustainable agriculture, including farm production, design and operations. Kelly's work has focused on equity including small farm businesses development support through USDA beginning farmer training programs, as well as market channel identification for farmers.

Prior to joining The Conservation Fund, Kelly was the Associate Vice President of Windy City Harvest at the Chicago Botanic Garden, leading workforce development urban agriculture programs and operations. Kelly has a degree in environmental studies from Northeastern Illinois University in Chicago and lives on the west side of Chicago, where she runs a community farm and native gardens with her partner.



GEORGIA
**Justin "MasterPeace"
Nickelson**
Georgia Farms Fund Specialist

Justin joined the team in July and will bring critical resources together for farmer technical support, build a strong farmer network, and expand capacity for wholesale market opportunities in the Atlanta metro area. He is a practiced urban agriculture professional and creative strategist in programmatic design and relationship building. His tertiary education in architectural design from Howard University has led to cultivating skills supporting international site design and development. Justin's professional experience spans across the fields of urban agriculture, public policy, grants management, event facilitation and food service, focusing on local food production and procurement, education, consultancy and community engagement.

Prior to his urban agricultural and green infrastructure endeavors, his community engagement has been rooted in the arts and entertainment spaces in Atlanta, hosting events and performing as a multi-instrumentalist and music producer, with a focus in music as a social change agent.

For more information, please contact:

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We cannot do this work alone! The unique Farms Fund model relies on strong partnerships. We welcome inquiries from investors, funders, procurement and market partners and other collaborators.

THE
CONSERVATION FUND

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