THE CONSERVATION FUND

FARMS FUND

Farms Fund
Summer Update 2025

Dear Farms Fund Friends and Partners,

In this season of abundance, it can be hard to slow down, appreciate, and see the growth and impact of building local food systems. Like our farmer partners whose carefully stewarded seedlings are now reaping food for their communities, we find ourselves gathering stories of the incredible impacts in our Farms Fund communities.

In the last year, TCF's Farms Fund team has grown to include new communities (Northwest Arkansas) and reached the milestone of providing a critical pathway to affordable farmland ownership for more than 20 farm business owners. We have also proven our farmland transition model by protecting and selling our first property to the farm business Global Growers Network.

In this Summer Update make sure you also check out Farms Fund's site visit with investment partner Proofing Station to Urban Grower's Collective's Z Farm, our new team members Emmie Gooding, Pam Nelson, and Eva Caison, and a great piece about Deep Roots, our farm partner in Charlotte!

FARMS FUND MILESTONES

Over one million pounds of food produced by farmers in the program

Grew to 21 farms and over 1,600 acres

Expanded into Northwest Arkansas and studying growth into 2 additional metro areas

In 2025, transitioning 3 farm business teams to permanent land ownership

FARMS FUND IMPACTS

1,621	35	$21.85M
Impact Acres	Farmer-Owners	Land Value Secured

40%	63%
Women-Owned	BIPOC Owned

Farms Fund Hits Major Milestone with First Farm Sale

We are thrilled to share a major milestone in our mission to support land access and long-term sustainability for farmers! Global Growers Network has officially become the first farm partner to purchase their permanently protected farmland through The Conservation Fund's Farms Fund program.

With the acquisition of their beautiful 22-acre farm in Rockdale County, Global Growers Network is poised to expand their farmer training/incubation programs and fresh food production capacity, building resilient networks of land, resources, markets, and people across the Atlanta region. Global Growers Network, a hub for more than 200 growers, has long been a cornerstone of farmer development in Metro Atlanta. Their leadership and vision continue to inspire, and we are honored to have served as their conservation acquisition partner on this incredible journey.

We also extend our heartfelt thanks to Athens Land Trust for their vital role in establishing the agricultural easement that ensures this land will remain protected and productive for generations to come.

Together, we're building a future where land is accessible, farming is sustainable, and communities thrive. We look forward to all that lies ahead as Global Growers Network continues to thrive!

Chicago-Metro Working Farms Fund and Urban Growers Collective host Proofing Station!

In May, Proofing Station's Board of Directors gathered for a dynamic field day at Urban Growers Collective's 30-acre "Z Farm." The day included a farm tour highlighting Urban Growers Collective's social enterprises in the greenhouses and included a field walk highlighting the conservation practices underway leading to a healthy farm ecology. Proofing Station conducted an interactive activity coaching on how investments are made with integrated capital. "Z Farm" was secured by Midwest Farms Fund program for Urban Growers Collective in South Cook County, IL. Proofing Station made a catalytic $1M investment in the Farms Fund in 2024, which supported the purchase of Z Farm and will cycle into many more farmland purchases. The Farm's Fund team in Chicago is proud to partner with Proofing Station to re-build a resilient regional food system for Chicago.

An Exciting Farm Purchase in Chicago Southland – Growing our Network and Expanding Impact

Last month TCF secured a 114-acre farm on behalf of Fresher Together, that is part of one of the largest contiguous tracts of agricultural land remaining in Cook County! We now have protected a total of seven farms in Chicago, four of which are clustered in a network in the Chicago Southland. Fresher Together (owners pictured above at the new farm) is a Black LGBTQ+ owned and led food and farming collaboration dedicated to serving the people in their community with local, culturally relevant foods and providing restorative spaces for healing, economic development, training, and retreat through agritourism. Fresher Together grows specialty flavor crops and herbs. The new farm will allow the business to scale production of small grains, beans, and staple crops, as well as to add a variety of artisan stone-milled products to their business offerings.

Carolina Farms Fund Awarded Women's Impact Fund Grant

We're honored to share that The Carolina Farms Fund was selected as a 2024 grant award finalist by the Women's Impact Fund—an organization that has invested more than $8.5 million in over 110 grants to nonprofits across Mecklenburg County since 2003. Out of more than 160 applications, only 20 finalists were chosen, and we're proud that our farmland preservation and farmer access work rose to the top.

The Women's Impact Fund's grantmaking process is built on the principles of trust-based philanthropy, aiming not only to award high-impact grants but also to develop thoughtful, informed philanthropists. Their commitment to a fair and transparent process makes this recognition especially meaningful. Being named a finalist is a significant milestone for the Carolina Farms Fund and affirms the urgency and relevance of our mission: keeping farmland in farming and in the hands of the next generation of producers.

Farms Fund expands to Northwest Arkansas!

We are thrilled to announce the launch of the Farms Fund program in Northwest Arkansas, one of the fastest growing regions in the United States. As development accelerates and farmland disappears, the need to grow and support small to mid-sized farms has never been more urgent. In a state where nearly 19% of residents struggle with food insecurity, investing in local farms is essential to building a more equitable and resilient food system. To help combat food insecurity, Northwest Arkansas is strengthening its commitment to local food initiatives and farmer education. We are proud to invest in the people and places that will shape the region's agricultural future.

Meet our New Team Members

We are excited to announce the addition of new team members to TCF's growing Farms Fund program:

With expansion to NW Arkansas, **Pam Nelson** joins us as the Program Manager in the region, bringing with her nearly a decade of experience in land protection and conservation partnerships in the region. As Director of Land Protection at the Northwest Arkansas Land Trust, Pam negotiated conservation easements, managed land acquisitions, built trusted relationships with governments and communities and secured significant public and private funding. Pam brings skills in conservation planning, with a career dedicated to protecting natural landscapes and advancing sustainable land use. She lives in Fayetteville, Arkansas with her husband Maury and two sons, Miles and Alex. She loves exploring new places, hiking and any activity on the water.

Eva Caison joins us as the Program Manager for the Carolina Farms Fund to help farmers scale and achieve land ownership of farms that are at-risk of development in the Charlotte Metro region. Prior to joining the Fund, Eva directed national educational programs for Farm Commons where she taught producers to identify legal risks and take action steps to manage them. She has more than a decade of experience working in food and agriculture, including operating her own small farm, marketing for local food supply chains, and teaching food systems courses at Guilford College. Eva holds a bachelor's degree in Anthropology from the University of the South and a Master of Food and Agriculture Law and Policy from Vermont Law and Graduate School.

Farms Fund Georgia has a new Farms Services Specialist, **Emmie Gooding**, to provide key support to farmers as they expand their operations on newly accessed farm properties. She will lead the development of farmer support systems, connect producers with technical assistance, and help strengthen our growing network of farms working to meet the increasing demand for local food. Emmie brings a wealth of experience in conservation and land stewardship. Most recently, she served as the Land Conservation Director at Mainspring Conservation Trust in Western North Carolina. Emmie holds a B.S. in Biology with a minor in Environmental Studies from Berry College.

Welcome Pam, Eva, and Emmie!

Farms Fund in the News

Chicago Tribune

Urban Growers Collective farms 30 acres near Lynwood

Kakadoodle farm in Matteson, Frankfort gets help to produce healthy food

NBC NEWS

Growing pains: The next generation of farmers struggles to fit on preserved farmland

EMORY UNIVERSITY

Emory honored for climate action efforts

WCNC CHARLOTTE

Family grows community impact with urban farm in Charlotte

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.

About The Conservation Fund

The Conservation Fund protects the land that sustains us all. We are in the business of conservation, creating innovative solutions that drive nature-based action in all 50 states for climate protection, vibrant communities and sustainable economies. We apply effective strategies, efficient financing approaches, and enduring government, community and private partnerships to protect millions of acres of America's natural land, cultural sites, recreation areas and working forests and farms. To learn more, visit **conservationfund.org**.

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