

Growing Together

ANNUAL REPORT 2023

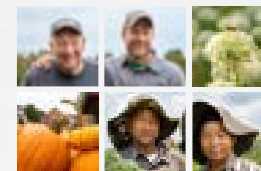




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Growing Together

ANNUAL REPORT 2023



American Farmland Trust
www.americanfarmlandtrust.org

ON THE COVER

TOP ROW: *Frank Ziehm (left) and his son Stuart of Tiashoke dairy farm in Buskirk, New York, protected their family farmland with conservation easements, easing the transition from one generation to the next.*

BOTTOM ROW: *Kue Lor (left) and Bao Xiong were able to purchase the former Singing Hills goat dairy in Nerstrand, Minnesota, after American Farmland Trust's Buy-Protect-Sell-plus program acquired the farm, protected it from development, and made it available for the Lor family to farm using regenerative practices.*

THIS SPREAD

Rich Collins grows asparagus seed at his protected farm in Solano County, California. Collins is a strong advocate of regenerative farming practices, including cover crops.

PHOTOS BY SHAWN LINEHAN



AMERICAN FARMLAND TRUST is the only national organization that takes a holistic approach to agriculture, focusing on protecting the land, promoting regenerative agricultural practices, and supporting farmers and ranchers. American Farmland Trust launched the national conservation agriculture movement, and we raise public awareness through our No Farms, No Food® campaign. Since 1980, American Farmland Trust and our partners have permanently protected nearly eight million acres of agricultural land while advancing environmentally sound farming practices on millions more and supporting thousands of farm families.

WWW.FARMLAND.ORG

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*When land does well for its owner,
and the owner does well by his land;
when both end up better by reason of their partnership,
we have conservation.*

—CONSERVATIONIST ALDO LEOPOLD



From the Leadership

THIS IS OUR TIME.

American Farmland Trust has worked for more than four decades to enact conservation agriculture at a large scale. Our strength lies in being a unique organization that considers the whole system of agriculture: the land, the people, and the relationships among them.

Our organization has grown considerably in recent years. Seven years ago, we had 55 staff. Today, we have over 200, with plans to add 75 more in the coming year. Not too long ago, our national work was limited to a few small initiatives, and we were doing substantive work in just eight states. But the scale of our national initiatives has now quadrupled, and by next year, we will have on-the-ground programs in 34 states.

Much of this growth is thanks to you—our members and donors—including many people who have stood behind us for years and even decades.

Our growth is not for growth's sake but rather a well-planned expansion to advance the cause that American Farmland Trust was created to serve, allowing us to capitalize on a time of unprecedented opportunity.

Congress has never authorized so much money for conservation agriculture at any time in history. Last year's Inflation Reduction Act included a historic investment to help farmers and ranchers protect their land and adopt climate-smart practices: \$20 billion to expand existing conservation programs. The U.S. Department of Agriculture singled out American Farmland Trust to provide farmers and ranchers with technical assistance to help them use this new funding wisely.

At the same time, we are helping the Biden Administration bring to life some of the most far-reaching agricultural initiatives in history, including nearly \$4 billion to fund innovative grants that address climate-related challenges and opportunities across the entire supply chain—from farmer to consumer. American Farmland Trust leads one of the funded projects and is a partner in four others.



John Piotti



Grant Winthrop

Our sustained advocacy helped ensure that Congress and the Administration understood this critical fact: farmers and farmland must be part of the climate solution. This unprecedented level of funding is sorely needed to get these practices to scale. Yet in some ways, the most significant outcome was the recognition at the highest levels of government that farming done right is fundamental to combatting the climate crisis.

This represents a sea change.

The key now is to help ensure that those funds are spent well and make a difference. We can't squander this time in history.

American Farmland Trust's mission since our establishment has been about getting agriculture to this point. Since our founding in 1980, we have advanced farmland protection and better farming practices through research, advocacy, technical assistance, and demonstration projects.

In this report, you'll read about our effort to reduce the conversion of farmland and promote cutting-edge regenerative agriculture practices. And you'll see how we advance better agricultural policies within federal, state, and local governments while conducting groundbreaking research to advance food and farming.

With your generous support, American Farmland Trust will continue creating these powerful solutions to transform agriculture and meet some of the biggest challenges facing our nation and future, from climate change to food security.

The fate of our farmers and farms—and the food, fuel, and fiber on which we all depend—is in our hands.

Sincerely,



John Piotti
PRESIDENT AND CEO



Grant Winthrop
BOARD CHAIR

Cheryl Alston, right, founded the Little Washington Growers Group in Goldsboro, North Carolina, to grow fresh produce for her community while educating children about farming and healthy food. In the Southeast, American Farmland Trust and Black Family Land Trust collaborate to bring women in agriculture together to support their success.

PHOTO BY REBECCA DROBIS





Farmmland



Our projections indicate that we'll lose an additional **18 million acres of farmland by 2040** if development trends continue.



Is

IN COMMUNITIES AROUND THE COUNTRY—especially in rural places outside growing cities—pastures, fields, and woodlands are becoming subdivisions, warehouses, and parking lots.

All this occurs while severe droughts, intense floods, and shifting temperatures challenge the nation's ability to produce food, fuel, and fiber.

American Farmland Trust's "Farms Under Threat 2040" research found that 11 million acres of agricultural lands were converted to non-farm uses between 2001 and 2016. Our projections indicate that we'll compromise an additional 18 million acres of farmland by 2040 if development trends continue.

We've also experienced a decline in the number of farms. Since 1997, the total number of farms in America declined by eight percent, or about 180,000 farms, suggesting a continuing trend toward fewer and larger operations.

When it comes to the farmers themselves, the demographics paint an alarming picture. The average age

of the American farmer continues to increase, while many new and beginning farmers can't afford the price of land.

And although more women and people of color are gaining opportunities in farming, we still see historic and present-day legacies of discrimination impacting American agriculture.

Farmland is a nonrenewable resource. Once it's converted to another use, it's gone. We need places to live, work, and play, but we need places to grow food, too.

We also need the many ecological services that farmland can provide, particularly when that land is carefully tended with regenerative practices. Our planet faces dire threats from climate change. But with care and commitment, agriculture can be part of the solution

rather than part of the problem.

If we want a better fate for farmers and farming—and in turn, a better future for ourselves and the planet—then we must address our current agricultural reality.

To solve these problems, we need partners and supporters who recognize that without farms and food, we have no future. Thank you for joining us.



Our Future.

Saving Working Landscapes

America's farmers and ranchers face many challenges while producing bountiful farm products every day. But the pressures grow more intense with every sunrise and sunset.

As if growing our food and fiber weren't challenging enough, too many farms and ranches are disappearing at an alarming rate. In the past 20 years, our nation lost tens of millions of acres of good farmland—2,000 acres per day—due to poor planning, rising costs, increasing land values, and misplaced development.

This loss is a blow to local food systems. Losing this farmland is also a blow to the environment. When farmland disappears, we lose entire ecosystems.

We need these lands to clean drinking water and recharge aquifers; provide habitat for countless species of wildlife, plants, and trees; and absorb tremendous amounts of carbon dioxide from our atmosphere—combating climate change in the process.

Yet there is good news. Your support over decades has allowed American Farmland Trust to put farmland at the top of our national and state policy agendas.

American Farmland Trust has helped land trusts and state and local farmland protection programs save nearly eight million acres—with millions more to come—through conservation easements that permanently protect agricultural land. And through better land-use planning, current use taxation, and other tools, the rate of farmland conversion—while still too high—has decreased since our founding.

▼ *Carl Hunter of Northfield, Minnesota, protected his farm with help from county and federal agricultural conservation easement programs.*



SHAWN LINEHAN

CHALLENGE

Every day, the U.S. loses 2,000 acres of agricultural land to development, according to our “Farms Under Threat 2040: Choosing an Abundant Future” report. We are losing our best land at an alarming rate, compromising our nation’s ability to grow food and protect the natural resources we need to fight climate change.

SUCCESS | In **South Carolina**, American Farmland Trust launched “Palmetto 2040: Visioning Alternative Futures, Launching Solutions.” The geospatial mapping and policy analysis identifies threats to the state’s farmland. Using the rapidly developing Lexington County as a pilot, the analysis will project which land faces the highest risk of development.

SUCCESS | **Texas** is the number one agricultural state in America with more than 127 million acres of agricultural land. Texas also has the highest amount of threatened agricultural land, according to our research. We launched a new Texas office to address this threat and hired Sarah Fulton-Smith to lead the effort. We also joined the Texas Land and Water Coalition in support of legislation to create the Texas Land and Water

Conservation Fund, a \$1 billion endowment for land conservation in the state.

SUCCESS | In **Georgia**, American Farmland Trust entered a new partnership with the USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service to increase the pace of farmland protection. We hired Annalise Sampson as Southeast Farmland Protection Associate to join Southeast Director Courtney Owens, PhD,



▲ American Farmland Trust’s New York director Linda Garrett joined Genesee Valley Conservancy and State Agriculture Commissioner Richard Ball in celebrating 100,000 acres of protected New York farmland at Mulligan Farm in Livingston County.

in supporting this partnership.

SUCCESS | Our Farmland Information Center released “Analyzing the Lasting Impacts of the Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP),” a report conducted with Purdue University that demonstrates how the federal program saves threatened agricultural land. We will use the findings to strengthen the case for increased farmland protection

funding during Farm Bill deliberations.

SUCCESS | **New York** state, where American Farmland Trust has worked on the ground for decades, reached a significant milestone when we joined partners in celebrating 100,000 acres of protected farmland. We also advocated for the successful passage of a \$4.2 billion Environmental Bond Act, with at least \$150 million for farmland protection.

SUCCESS | Leveraging our “Farms Under Threat 2040” analysis to make the case for building better cities, American Farmland Trust joined with smart growth and housing proponents to successfully advocate for zoning reform in Washington state. American Farmland Trust was the only agricultural organization engaged.



There is tremendous development pressure everywhere. We have a lot of land preserved in Maine, but only about 3% of it is farmland. We’re going to need that land to support ourselves. The slogan for American Farmland Trust is ‘No farms, no food.’ Isn’t that simple enough?

— **HELEN NORTON**,
AMERICAN FARMLAND
TRUST SUPPORTER AND
FOUNDER OF THE HELEN
AND WALTER NORTON
FUND FOR MAINE FARMS



SHAWN LINEHAN

▲ An aerial view of Bowles Farming Company in the San Joaquin Valley of California, where farmers are challenged by development pressure, water scarcity, and a changing climate.

Creating Climate Solutions

In farming, the success of every growing season is often determined by the weather. But many farmers and ranchers now face extended droughts, floods, and the threat of raging wildfires.

In much of the country, the realities of a warming climate are all too real. Growing seasons have become more unpredictable, and it has become harder for farmers and ranchers to do what they do best—steward the land and keep the rest of us clothed and fed.

But all is not lost. Society can limit warming and greenhouse gas emissions while increasing the resilience of agricultural land. And, with the right tools and support, farmers and ranchers can adapt to the changes and help reverse those trends—becoming a critical part of climate solutions.

American Farmland Trust is committed to advancing the widespread adoption of regenerative farming practices that rebuild soil health

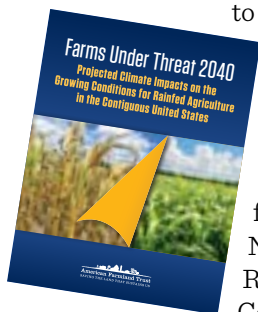
and store more carbon in the ground. This work is deeply connected to our other efforts to protect farmland and keep farmers on the land.

Our mission is to create a new conventional agriculture where diverse, climate-smart, and soil health-promoting farming systems ensure a prosperous and resilient future for farmers and ranchers—and for us all.

CHALLENGE

For America's farmers, climate change is a daily reality. Over 80% of cropland in the contiguous United States depends on timely and predictable rainfall to stay in production. Farmers and ranchers are on the front lines of climate change, experiencing extreme weather events that impact their crops, livestock, and livelihoods.

SUCCESS | American Farmland Trust released "Farms Under Threat 2040: Projected Climate Impacts," a report that shows how the decisions we make in the next few years will affect the likelihood that present day crop varieties and farm production practices remain viable. The report reinforces the pressing need to reduce emissions to stop climate change from getting worse.



SUCCESS | Biochar is a natural climate solution that turns organic waste into a carbon-rich, charcoal-like substance. In the right conditions, it can last hundreds—and even thousands—of years, holding on to carbon dioxide that would otherwise end

up in the atmosphere. Our new project, Breaking Down Barriers to Biochar Adoption on Farms from Coast to Coast, was selected to receive a Conservation Innovation Grant award from USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service to trial this potential solution on farms.

SUCCESS | California's San Joaquin Valley supplies more than 300 food products worldwide, yet faces unprecedented climate challenges, including wildfires, droughts, and floods. Our collaboration in the San Joaquin Valley Land and Water Strategy helped hundreds of farmers adopt growing practices that conserve water, build soil

health, deliver climate benefits, and comply with the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act.

SUCCESS | American Farmland Trust released "Building Climate Resilience with State and Federal Farm Policy," a report based on regional workshops we held across the U.S. to hear from farmers and ranchers and others about the next Farm Bill. The conversations explored what can be done to support increased adoption of conservation practices that address climate change while improving soil health, water quality, and farm profitability.

SUCCESS | Carbon market programs could be critical to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, but agriculture currently represents only 1%

of the global carbon market. American Farmland Trust and Sierra View Solutions released "Agricultural Carbon Programs: From Chaos to Systems Change" at the Soil and Water Conservation

Society's annual conference in Iowa. The study analyzed 22 agricultural carbon market programs and recommended changes to help those programs succeed by better partnering with farmers.



PRESTON KERES/USDA

We know that farms are part of the solution to the climate crisis. Farmland can draw carbon from the air to rebuild soil when farmed using climate-smart practices like cover crops and reduced tillage. We also need to dramatically ramp up solar energy production while retaining our farms and ranches.

— JOHN PIOTTI, PRESIDENT AND CEO, AMERICAN FARMLAND TRUST

Advancing Regenerative Agriculture

As old as farming itself, the concept of regenerative farming is gaining renewed attention—aided by new research and, in some cases, new technology.

American Farmland Trust has spent four decades helping farmers and ranchers adopt conservation practices that reduce the runoff of nutrients and contribute to healthy soils. Regenerative farming focuses on increasing a farm's soil organic matter through practices such as no-till, cover cropping, composting, and crop rotations.

By using these practices, farmers and ranchers can simultaneously rebuild soil health, sequester atmospheric carbon, and increase productivity—a powerful combination. Importantly, they may be able to avert some of the direct impacts of climate change on their operations while taking steps to limit the impact of climate change on all of us.

Our planet's future hinges on getting more farmers and ranchers to adopt regenerative farming practices. But this much-needed transformation is not yet happening at scale.

Adopting new practices may sound simple, but abandoning past farming methods can be challenging, especially to farmers who operate on thin margins. Change requires investments of time and money, both of which can be in short supply on a farm. In some cases, change may also require purchasing new equipment, installing new infrastructure, or even finding new markets.

It's time to elevate regenerative farming practices to restore our planet's health.

▼ *Cover crops are an important practice for improving soil health, reducing runoff, and increasing the land's resilience to climate change.*



CHALLENGE

Farmers and ranchers care deeply about their land and want to do what's right by it. They know it's in their long-term interest to follow practices that are environmentally beneficial. But farmers have not always been quick to adopt the most innovative practices, in part because farming is so demanding, and farms operate on such tight profit margins.

SUCCESS | American Farmland Trust and food company Archer-Daniels-Midland launched a new season of the Illinois Re:generations program, which offers contracts to farmers who adopt cover crops and collect data on carbon benefits. In the program's first year, American Farmland Trust enrolled nearly 300 farmers who planted 112,414 acres in cover crops and enrolled 278,696 acres in data collection, generating \$2 million for Illinois farmers.

SUCCESS | Thanks to our advocacy in a broad coalition, the Massachusetts Legislature funded over \$21 million in support of healthy soil practices and for farmers facing climate-related disasters. And in Maine, we helped to secure funding for two critical programs: the



▲ The Thorndyke family of Ford County, Illinois, are soil health stewards who participated in one of our soil health case studies.

Farmers Drought Relief Grant Program and the Healthy Soils Program, which created a hub for information and assistance to help more Maine farmers build soil health practices.

SUCCESS | The Vermilion Headwaters Watershed in Illinois has been identified as a major contributor to nitrogen in the Mississippi River, one of the principal causes of the hypoxic zone in the Gulf of Mexico that threatens fish and wildlife.

For years, American Farmland Trust has advanced water quality goals in the watershed. In 2023, we completed a watershed plan with partners that helps farmers adopt conservation cropping systems, leading to improved water quality and soil health.

SUCCESS | Our Farmland Information Center released a new State Conservation Program Dashboard, an interactive database of programs that advance

soil health practices. The dashboard raises awareness about effective approaches, informs state and federal policy action, and encourages more agricultural land conservation. FIC staff examined programs in all 50 states, followed up with surveys and interviews, and shared the resources with state conservation program managers and partners.

SUCCESS | American Farmland Trust's Water Initiative released "A Farmer's Guide to Soil Health Economics" at the Soil and Water Conservation Society annual conference in Des Moines, Iowa. Focused on corn, soybean, and small grain production, the series of guides help farmers understand the potential costs and benefits from adopting soil health practices such as no-till, reduced

till, cover crops, nutrient management, and conservation crop rotation.



SHAWN LINEHAN



LAUREN MOORE/USDA

The soil is the great connector of our lives, the source and destination of all.

—KENTUCKY AUTHOR AND FARMER
WENDELL BERRY

*Emily Garrity of Twitter
Creek Gardens grows
vegetables in Homer, Alaska.*



Empowering Women in Agriculture

The future of agriculture is increasingly diverse.

In the U.S., women now account for 36% of farmers and ranchers. While women have always been an essential part of the farming community, their roles have historically been behind the scenes.

That is changing. Today, there are 1.2 million female farmers overall, and 56% of U.S. farms have at least one female producer. Increasingly, women are pursuing leadership roles as farm managers, farmland owners, and advocates for sound agricultural practices.

The growing presence of women in agriculture has an impact on how the industry operates, with research showing that women-led businesses are more likely to take a community-minded approach to how they operate.

But more work is needed to support *all* farmers and ranchers.

Our national Women for the Land initiative works to address the gender and racial discrimination that women farmers and landowners often face when accessing financial, technical, and informational resources to support their farming operations.

The initiative combines three strategies. We host peer-to-peer learning circles to engage women in agriculture and connect them with resources. Our research arm studies the barriers that women in agriculture face and finds ways to help. And our advocacy advances policies that address the barriers hindering women from accessing land and resources.

Although we still have a long way to go, American Farmland Trust is working toward a future where there are meaningful opportunities for everyone in farming and ranching.

CHALLENGE

Women farmers and landowners often face barriers to managing their land and operations for long-term sustainability. And while women farmers increasingly are the primary decision-makers on farms, they remain underrepresented in their utilization of federal and state conservation programs.

SUCCESS | Despite their rising presence in U.S. agriculture, women face disparities in access to financial and technical resources, according to American Farmland Trust's "The State of Gender Equity in U.S. Agriculture" report, released in 2023. Recommendations include placing more women in farming leadership roles; providing training for agricultural support staff; making increased investments in rural community infrastructure, including child-care; and improvements to programs for small- and mid-sized farms.

SUCCESS | American Farmland Trust established a Veteran Women for the Land program in the Pacific Northwest to support a small but growing demographic

of women veterans. The program works closely with partners who serve the farming-veteran communities, providing information on entering agriculture, and hosting learning-circles and virtual connections for Pacific Northwest participants, with plans to expand the female veteran program around the country.

SUCCESS | Our Women for the Land national initiative advanced a three-year collaboration with the Women Food and Agriculture Network and Iowa State University to understand how women farmers and landowners in Iowa are coping with climate change. Through listening sessions, learning circles, and storytelling, the project is developing programming to

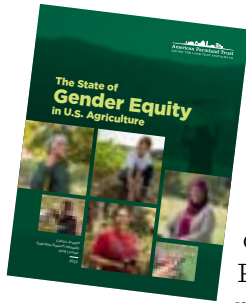
help Iowa women become more climate resilient. The end result: a network of women farmers and landowners working to adapt to, and mitigate, climate change impacts on their farms.

SUCCESS | Our Women for the Land learning circles have supported women agricultural producers and landowners in 19 states with access to resources, information, and peer networks to help them advance toward farm viability and improved conservation on their land. Our

research has shown that 73% of participants were "very likely" or "extremely likely" to act on conservation after attending a learning circle.

SUCCESS | Although Black, Indigenous, and other People of Color farmers represent nearly one-quarter of the U.S. population, they operate less than five percent of the nation's farms and cultivate less than one percent of our farmland. In the Southeast, our

Women for the Land initiative counters this trend. The program collaborated with Black Family Land Trust and North Carolina State University to host our first trainings in North Carolina. The trainings focused on connecting Black and Indigenous women farmers with resources to grow their farming operations, implement conservation practices, and develop leadership skills to build community resilience in food and agriculture.



REBECCA DROBIS



If you care about agriculture and farming and sustaining that way of life for all people involved, then you should care about equity. Because we know the more equitable any industry is, the better off it makes everybody.

— **GABRIELLE ROESCH-McNALLY, PhD,**
DIRECTOR OF THE WOMEN FOR
THE LAND INITIATIVE

◀ *Nicole Gwishiri of American Farmland Trust's Women for the Land initiative speaks to a landowner at a North Carolina learning circle.*

Supporting Farm Viability

Farmers and ranchers must be able to make a living in order to feed us and provide many other benefits to society. But challenges from severe weather, market changes and disruptions, and other factors make it dramatically more difficult for farmers and ranchers—especially small- and mid-sized operations—to stay afloat.

Since our founding in 1980, American Farmland Trust has worked to strengthen the viability of farms and ranches. This year, we launched a new national initiative to bolster this effort—and better support

the ability of farmers and ranchers to earn a living from the land and achieve their goals in agriculture.

The Farm Viability Initiative finds innovative solutions to the complex challenges facing modern agriculture. Under this umbrella are three American Farmland Trust initiatives. The Brighter Future Fund is a microgrant program to help farmers overcome barriers to succeeding in agriculture. The Smart SolarSM program connects the need for renewable energy with the need for productive farms and ranches (learn

more about our solar work on page 18). And the Growing Equity Partnership brings together a community of business technical assistance providers across the country.

This work is not new for American Farmland Trust. But as economic forces make it ever harder for farms and ranches to stay in business, we are amplifying our commitment to the farms and ranches who give so much to us all.

▼ *Luis and Marc Bernard of Illinois' Rustic Road Farm received a Brighter Future Fund Award to support their goat dairy operation.*



CHALLENGE

Agriculture is a rewarding, yet risky, business. Farmers and ranchers experience booms and busts, periods of high and low prices, and weather-related disasters. They need to make a living and achieve a quality of life worthy of their commitment and hard work.

SUCCESS | American Farmland Trust announced this year's Brighter Future Fund grant awards. In 2023, the fund granted its highest amount yet: over \$1 million to 110 U.S. farmers and ranchers in 48 states, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands, boosting the total awards given over the life of this program to \$4 million. The grants prioritize historically underserved farmers and ranchers—often beginning or family operations—providing them the freedom to experiment without excessive financial risk. Projects range from basic needs that keep farms going to innovative and creative projects that push the envelope. For the first time, the work of a translator allowed us to fund Spanish speakers.

SUCCESS | We launched the New England Farmer Microgrants



▲ Antajuan Adams of New Roots Urban Farm.

Program (NEFMP) in 2020 with support from two long-time donors to address some of the obstacles faced by farmers in the region. Since 2020, NEFMP has awarded \$775,000 to 165 farmers in all six New England states. This year, the program awarded over \$538,000 to 69 farmers.

SUCCESS | We announced the launch of our Growing Equity Partnership with Black Family Land Trust, the Carrot Project, and the Agricultural Viability

Alliance. The project will increase the quality and quantity of business technical assistance to underserved farmers and ranchers, including socially disadvantaged, limited resource, LGBTQ+, and veteran farmers, as well as farms that are small- and mid-sized, serve local and regional markets, and are located in impoverished areas.

SUCCESS | We championed the Office of Small Farms Establishment Act introduced in the U.S. House and Senate. If enacted, the legislation will create an office within USDA focused solely on small, independent farms—the most vulnerable and often overlooked operations. Although small farms only cover 8% of agricultural land, they are responsible for 20% of all agricultural sales. Yet they only receive 12% of payments



Brighter Future Fund recipient Aimee Danch of Oregon's Square Mile Ranch.

from federal programs, which often have been designed with a one-size-fits-all approach that can disadvantage smaller operations.



REBECCA DROBIS

▲ Chana White of North Carolina's Native Brand Honey.

Small family farms are declining at rapid rates in the U.S. Little Dipper Farm knows the struggle. This grant will fully fund our first high tunnel, which will extend our growing season and help keep us competitive with bigger farms. This is truly a lifeline to our little farm.

— FIRST GENERATION FARMER **ARIANNA JACOBSON** OF LITTLE DIPPER FARM IN OLYMPIA, WASHINGTON



AGRSOLAR CLEARINGHOUSE

▲ A solar array on Oregon farmland.

Promoting Smart Solar

The question is not if solar energy development will impact America's farms and ranches, but how. Solar projects are trending larger and already creating tension in rural communities, where there is concern that solar projects take important agricultural land out of production.

This is a valid concern as America seeks to scale up renewable energy production by 2050. In fact, the U.S.

Department of Energy estimates that over 10 million acres of land in the next 25 years will be required for solar energy to meet climate goals. Meanwhile, modeling by American Farmland Trust's "Farms Under Threat 2040" report estimates that 83% of this development will take place on farmland.

At the same time, done well, solar development can provide a much-needed opportunity for producers to develop

alternative income streams, build long-term farm viability, and help combat climate change.

American Farmland Trust's Smart SolarSM initiative provides a solution by seeking to accomplish three main, equally important goals: (1) safeguarding land well-suited for farming and ranching, (2) strengthening farm viability, and (3) accelerating solar energy development.

CHALLENGE

Solar energy development presents economic opportunities for farmers and ranchers, but it also increases competition for land. Agrivoltaic arrays, which integrate agricultural production with solar energy generation on the same land, are a promising alternative but require additional investments in on-the-ground implementation, research, and incentives to gain wider adoption.

SUCCESS | To guide solar development in a manner that maximizes benefits to farmers, ranchers, and rural communities, American Farmland Trust released four Smart Solar principles. Our approach prioritizes siting solar on buildings and land not well suited for farming; safeguards soil and water for future production; advances agrivoltaics; and promotes equity and farm viability. Our principles place farmers and ranchers at the center of decisions about how and where solar gets built.

SUCCESS | Through our Farmers Powering Communities (FPC) partnership, American Farmland Trust began working with solar industry leaders to produce 500 MW of community solar over the next five years. FPC helps ensure that solar development



BILANOL/ISTOCKPHOTO

▲ *Our Smart Solar principles call for solar panels on existing buildings.*

maximizes benefits to farmers and low- and moderate-income energy customers. Most importantly, it provides farmers with an opportunity to build long-term farm viability.

SUCCESS | In a survey conducted of more than 175 Connecticut farmers, American Farmland Trust found that a majority view solar arrays in their fields as an attractive option—provided the panels are positioned to allow for growing crops or grazing livestock. American Farmland Trust released “Smart Solar in Connecticut,” a

report that summarized findings from the survey and made high-level recommendations to advance Smart Solar while protecting farmland.

SUCCESS | To advance understanding of agriculturally compatible solar development, we helped form and shape a listening and learning process called “Uncommon Dialogue,” convened by the Solar Energy Industries Association, The Nature Conservancy, and

Solar is a big deal. It will dramatically change our rural landscape and communities. The only question is how. As the national voice in farmland protection and agricultural conservation, American Farmland Trust is leading a conversation throughout the country on how to advance smart solar through policies and programs all at levels of government, much as we did with smart growth.

— **NATHAN L'ETOILE**, DIRECTOR OF AMERICAN FARMLAND TRUST'S FARM VIABILITY INITIATIVE

Stanford University. This resulted in a “Collaboration Agreement for Large Scale Solar Development: Climate, Conservation,

Community,” a strategy to guide America’s solar future.

SUCCESS | Colorado announced a major investment in American Farmland Trust as part of the state’s inaugural funding for agrivoltaic grants administered by the Colorado Department of Agriculture. American Farmland Trust and partners are engaging Colorado farmers and ranchers on agriculturally compatible solar development.



▲ *A Texas ranching family builds a business integrating solar energy arrays and agriculture with support from American Farmland Trust's Brighter Future Fund.*

Helping Next Generation Farmers and Ranchers

Our nation's ability to produce food, steward natural resources, and support rural economies depends on the next generation of farmers and ranchers.

The U.S. needs future farmers. For every five farmers aged 65 and older, there is only one farmer aged 35 or younger, according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

For many exiting farmers and ranchers, retirement can be a challenge, especially if they do not have heirs who are interested

in taking over the farm business.

For aspiring and incoming farmers, particularly those who do not come from farming or ranching families, accessing affordable land is a major barrier.

The future of American agriculture requires a new generation of workers and leaders from all backgrounds. These new farmers will need greater access to quality land, culturally relevant technical assistance, and enhanced access to government programs and resources.

Efforts to help new farmers enter the agricultural field must be inclusive, including support for immigrants, refugees, People of Color and Indigenous people, as well as women and LGBTQ+ farmers.

With your support, we will work to get more land in the hands of next generation farmers and ranchers so they can flourish—putting our nation on the path to a stronger, brighter, and more equitable agricultural future.

Sea Matias (left) of Serra Vida Farm in DeLancey, New York, with dairy farmer Tom Hutson. American Farmland Trust protected Tom's farm and is helping him transition it to younger farmers, including Sea.



SHAWN LINEHAN

CHALLENGE

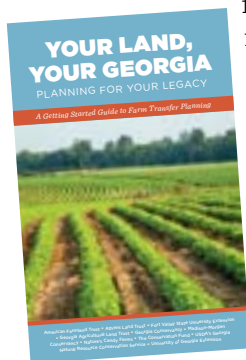
Success for a new generation of farmers and ranchers often hinges on whether they can secure suitable land to start and expand their operations. Yet, this can be a major challenge. With greater support, we can help guide landowners in the transfer of protected land to a new generation of farmers and ranchers.

SUCCESS | American Farmland Trust launched a new “Land Transfer Navigators” program in partnership with USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service to guide retiring farmers and landowners while helping new, beginning, and underserved farmers gain access to land. Over the next four years, American Farmland Trust will train organizations and staff around the country to serve as “navigators” in aiding farmers in the land transfer process.



grant from the USDA Farm Service Agency’s new Land, Capital, and Market Access Program to launch “On Solid Ground,” a game-changing project to support a viable future for a new, diverse generation of farmers and ranchers. Over five years, the project will expand access to land, resources, and markets for underserved farmers.

SUCCESS | American Farmland Trust’s “Farms Under Threat 2040: Choosing an Abundant Future” report identified Georgia as number four in the nation in projected farmland development by 2040.



We released “Your Farm, Your Georgia” as a guide to farm transfer planning in Georgia, in an effort to provide resources that push back on the development pressure. The publication covers basic considerations for farmland owners as they plan to retire, giving them resources and information on how to keep the land in farming.

SUCCESS | In New York, we announced the launch of a new revolving fund—supported by Upstate Curious and other partners—to help first-time farmers buy and preserve land for their agricultural businesses. The new fund will benefit farming projects across



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▲ (Left) A workshop for underserved farmers in California; (right) farmer Vivan Hwang in Fresno, California.

the state—with at least half from historically underserved populations. American Farmland Trust also leads the Farmland for a New Generation New York program, which features a farmland finder website where farmers can search for land across the state and obtain one-on-one support.

SUCCESS | In California, our multilingual staff worked with partners to support more than 250 underserved specialty

crop farmers through culturally relevant trainings, conferences, and events for women, Latino, Hmong, Punjabi, Chinese, Black, veteran, and Hoopa Valley Tribal Community producers. This work impacted more than 2,228 acres across California, giving historically underserved farmers assistance and training in topics ranging from climate resilience to business viability.

Summary of Activities

*for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2023**

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SUPPORT AND REVENUE

Individual Contributions	\$16,940,595
Foundation Grants	\$3,968,351
Government Grants	\$10,660,260
Operating Investment Return	\$1,061,824
Non-Operating Investment Gain & Other	\$1,905,407
Donated Farm Property, Equipment & Other Contributions on Land Projects	\$1,825,262
Other Income, Gains & Losses	\$358,845
Total Revenue and Support	\$36,720,544

** Unaudited figures.*

Complete financial statements are available upon request.

EXPENSES

National and Regional Programming	\$22,277,348
Public Education	\$2,487,976
Outreach and Communications	\$1,844,465
Other Programs	\$1,763,423
Total Program Services	\$28,373,212
Management and General	\$1,096,388
Fundraising	\$3,850,678
Total Expenses	\$33,320,278

NET ASSETS

Beginning of Year	\$59,104,258
End of Year	\$62,504,524
Change in Net Assets	\$3,400,266



ON THE BACK COVER

TOP ROW (Left) *San Joaquin Valley vegetable farmer Vivian Hwang and Anel Trujillo from American Farmland Trust.*

TOP ROW: (LEFT AND CENTER) SHAWN LINEHAN, (RIGHT) DELLA HUFF/ALAMY; BOTTOM ROW: (LEFT) SHAWN LINEHAN, (CENTER) KULBABKA/ISTOCKPHOTO, (RIGHT) SHAWN LINEHAN

THIS PAGE

Herding cattle at Nelson Ranch, a protected family-run farm in Oroville, Washington.

SHAWN LINEHAN



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Edi Kim, farmer & artist, Foglight Farms.

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