

LOCAL FOOD HUB ANNUAL REPORT 2022

Dear Friends of Local Food Hub,

In 2022 we held the first Community Food Awards since 2019 to honor partner farmers and supporters. We enjoyed fresh food grown nearby, and recognized minority and small-scale farmers, food system innovators, and community partners. In 2022 we also launched new food access programming, received multiple federal grants, added a position dedicated to the Eastern Food Hub Collaborative (EFC), grew the Virginia Black Farmer Directory, and provided extensive grower support services. In short, Local Food Hub celebrated another banner year.

The team of staff and board volunteers who call our mission their life's work are the reason for our success. Their drive to solve some of the greatest challenges in our food system is awe-inspiring. This work is hard and cannot be done in a vacuum. We thrive in collaboration with each other and our community. Our success is yours to celebrate too, and we are grateful you're here with us.

The year also brought changes to the team. Early in the year, we wished Kristen Suokko (the organization's longest-serving executive director) a bittersweet farewell in addition to Laura Brown, the former food access lead. With our former board co-chair Anna Fife's strong interim leadership, we hired food access coordinator Emily Smith, and accountant Tina Morrison as we prepared for our longstanding accountant, Logan Blanco's impending retirement. We welcomed a new executive director following an extensive search, and he determined he was not the best fit to guide Local Food Hub into our next chapter. The latter change led to Vice-Chair of the board, Dr. Marcus Comer, stepping in as board president, so I could step in to serve the organization during a strategic planning process and Executive Director search.

Since I first came to know Local Food Hub in 2014, what's been clear to me all along is the team's unwavering commitment to our mission and our legacy, and the notion that Local Food Hub is bigger than any one of us. I have the privilege of writing this letter from my new post and am honored to support Local Food Hub as we enter 2023.

Our year ahead will be another exciting one; we'll launch a renewed strategy, doubling down on our vision of achieving a healthy, sustainable and equitable food system by focusing our efforts on supporting the most critical aspects of the food system and ensuring the legacy of Local Food Hub carries on with renewed leadership.

May 2023 bring you and yours a deeper connection to the roots of our food system and an immense appreciation for the hands that feed and nourish our bodies. In the meantime, I hope you'll take pride in our accomplishments from 2022 and celebrate with us as we look ahead.

Thank you for your support,
Elizabeth Beasley
Interim Executive Director



We've accomplished a lot this year.

11

Fresh Farmacy partners, spanning four counties

7.2

thousand disbursed to VA farmers

12

No-cost farm stands in Louisa County

17.4

Million dollars in sales across the Eastern Food Hub Collaborative

As a nonprofit, we rely on community support to continue our programs. Your investment ensures small farms are always at the center of our work, and that our community has access to healthy, local food.

Board of Directors

Kathryn Barker
John Blackburn
Steve Byrd
Michele Gibson
Tom McDougall
Elizabeth Beasley
Martha Hodgkins
Bettina Ring
Marcus Comer
Gordon Walker
Lehman Bates

2022 Staff Includes

Logan Blanco, Accounting
Portia Boggs, Director of Advancement, Communication
Anna Fife, Interim Executive Director
Will Gray, Managing Director of the Eastern Food Hub Collaborative
Stasia Greenewalt, Director of Grower Services
Melissa Luce, Bookkeeping
Tina Morrison, Accounting
Emily Smith, Food Access Associate
Briana Stevenson, Grower Outreach and Diversity Coordinator
Andy Wood, Program Coordinator

Our Partner Farms

Local Food Hub's farms represent the bounty and diversity of the Virginia foodshed. Some operate 100 acre farms, others less than five acres. They are certified organic and conventional farmers, orchardists and value added producers, and those new to farming as well as seasoned veterans.

FARM SUPPORT

2022 REFLECTIONS:

2022 started on a high note for our Farm Support programming, with the launch of the Virginia Black Farmer Directory (VBFD). Until 2021, our Grower Services programming was not meeting the needs of many BIPOC farmers. With partnership support from Cultivate Charlottesville and Africulture, the idea for the VBFD was born. This innovative platform places Black farmers front and center – the farmers directing us as to how they want their business represented, which ultimately facilitates meaningful connections with appropriate buyers. Local Food Hub also launched support services for members – including an inaugural gathering and networking event in November, and a series of workshops scheduled for this winter.

Beyond the Directory, our programming continues to grow – we built a custom food safety recordkeeping app to streamline and assist farms with food safety compliance standards and this winter, we will pilot! Our grower service team is continuing to provide one-on-one technical assistance and certification cost-share to our partner farms, and help institutional buyers set attainable and realistic expectations for small farms.



12

Farmers added to the Virginia Black Farmer Directory

2023: A Look Ahead

2023 will be a big year for the recordkeeping app – the pilot program will include farmers utilizing it throughout the entire growing season, culminating with their food safety audits in the fall. Once the auditors review the data that was collected and stored through the app, we will be able to make any necessary adjustments for a wide-scale launch. We'll also be launching a series of Farm Innovation Activities, which provide hands-on learning opportunities for farmers on a variety of topics. Lastly, we'll release an updated version of the Rules to Reality food safety class. These modules break down food safety compliance into easy-to-follow steps, and include examples of real-life implementation on Virginia farms.

"We deeply value having the expertise of the LFH and access to their broad agricultural networks in our region. They have significantly helped our farm over the years become more food safety conscious and have helped us sort through the myriad of food safety regulations and certifications to enable us to make practical day-to-day advancements in a more safe food system."

– WENGER GRAPES

EASTERN FOOD HUB COLLABORATIVE

2022 REFLECTIONS:

There's a common refrain amongst the food hub community – half joke, half complaint, and 100% true – “if you know one food hub, you know one food hub.” As the food hub movement has grown over the past two decades, food hubs have sprung up throughout the United States. Each one operates on a unique model – some are for-profit, some non-profit, and some cooperatively owned. Some focus on food access, some on wholesale, and some on direct-to-consumer. You get the idea. At the same time, they share many of the same challenges – efficiencies of scale, transportation barriers, limited product quantities, and the fact that the strawberry season is so darn short. In 2020, Local Food Hub founded the Eastern Food Hub Collaborative, a network of 12 food hubs across the East Coast (from South Carolina to Maine!) committed to sharing best practices, ideas, and inter-hub transactions. It is our intention that through the EFC, food hubs can crowd-source solutions to common (or uncommon) challenges and supplement the quantity and diversity of their product offerings, while consistently supporting small, independently-owned farmers.

2022 was a banner year for the EFC, as we hired the first staff position fully dedicated to Collaborative management. Managing Director Will Gray spent the year meeting one-on-one with all member hubs to better understand their needs and how the EFC can help. We've seen member Hubs take on significant leadership roles in the implementation of state and federal programs, including network building, farm to school procurement, and farm-to-food assistance programming.

Within the EFC, Hub to Hub transactions have continued to grow, both in frequency and size, and we anticipate even more growth in 2023!



369

thousand dollars
in interhub sales
facilitated by EFC

2023: A Look Ahead

2023 will be a busy year for the EFC. We'll be coordinating inter-collaborative teams to design production planning and product availability technology for use at a network level – this will help facilitate and streamline inter-hub transactions at greater levels than ever before. We're also working to increase coordination across food access and food justice efforts, increasing the communities served, and building regional food access resiliency.

We look forward to adding more hubs to the collaborative in 2023, as well as hosting our second in-person gathering for EFC members.

“The Local Food Hub continues to be an amazing resource for our small farm. We appreciate the constant support and ease of working with the food hub. It seems as if they are always trying to improve and expand to help as many farmers and consumers as possible.”

PHANTOM HILL FARM

COMMUNITY AND POLICY

2022 REFLECTIONS:

At Local Food Hub, we are deeply committed to community collaboration, avoiding duplication of efforts and leveraging the programs of all players in food systems. In 2022, Local Food Hub brought on a new staff member – Emily Smith – as Food Access Advocate. Emily helped further connect Local Food Hub to our community in a number of new ways. For example, we've started having a presence at community events like Westhaven Day, where we can connect directly with Fresh Farmacy Participants. We also grew in our role as Regional Lead for the Virginia FreshMatch program, which doubles the value of SNAP dollars when spent on produce. We continue to participate in several coalitions, including leadership roles in the Charlottesville Food Justice Network and the Blue Ridge Hunger Action Coalition.



6

Networks and coalitions that LFH participates in

2023: A Look Ahead

Local Food Hub has hired Davenport Strategic Innovations & Design (DSID) to facilitate and create a renewed strategy. As part of this work, Sarad Davenport, principal of DSID will be reaching out to gather input and feedback from our community partners and constituents. This feedback will help guide the strategic direction of Local Food Hub over the next several years. Central to our strategic planning process is the intention to embed racial equity into our organization's culture, operations, and programming. Lastly, this strategy will catalyze a search for Local Food Hub's next executive director and will support our continued involvement in community partnerships and coalitions.

"Since 2021, Local Food Hub has been instrumental in the development and organization of the Blue Ridge Hunger Action Coalition, which brings together individuals and organizations from across our planning district to solve issues related to hunger and support a more just and equitable local food system. LFH has been a key partner as a member of our small planning committee, helping to determine objectives for the coalition, planning meetings, recruiting new members, developing outreach materials, and supporting meeting facilitation. The coalition simply would not exist without "the contributions of Local Food Hub!"

FOOD ACCESS

2022 REFLECTIONS:

After the exponential growth of our food access programming during the height of the pandemic, we used 2022 to think strategically about the long-term vision and sustainability of our food access work. We leveled off participation in the Fresh Farmacy program at 416 households max at any given time (though served 466 households over the course of the year), and maintained year-round programming and home delivery. Our program participants are diverse, including immigrants, residents of public housing, senior citizens, college students, migrant workers, free clinic patients, and more. What they have in common is difficulty in accessing local food, and a commitment to bettering their health through lifestyle changes. In partnership with Sentara Martha Jefferson, we also launched a series of 12 no-cost farm stands in Louisa County, which cumulatively provided over \$40,000 worth of local food to the community.



466

Households served
by Fresh Farmacy

2023: A Look Ahead

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"Thank you for putting your heart into this program! I am so excited about it! And I just want you to know how much I appreciate the love that went into your choices, the presentation, and the accompanying paper!"

FRESH FARMACY CLINIC PARTNER