

carolina farm 
stewardship association

2020 Impact Report



Letter from Leadership

Dear Friends,

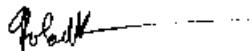
Without doubt, 2020 was the most tumultuous year for food and agriculture that we've experienced since Carolina Farm Stewardship's founding in 1979. The COVID-19 crisis has demonstrated in stark relief the fragile, exploitive nature of America's food system. At the same time as grocery store shelves emptied in early 2020, millions of animals were culled and billions of dollars worth of crops were plowed under. Meanwhile, countless farm laborers and meat processing workers—disproportionately Black, Indigenous, and other people of color—were infected with the virus.

And yet the pandemic has also shown that local food economies built on collaboration, trust, and mutual respect are a real alternative. Although farms and small food businesses were hurt by the loss of revenue streams and the added cost of new safety protocols, they survived by drawing from strengths that are unique to local, sustainable food and agriculture. Those strengths now position local food systems to thrive as the world wakes up to the need to do things differently.

Adaptability has been the key to resilience through this crisis, and that's been as true for CFSA as it has been for our members. Throughout 2020, CFSA adapted our work to the needs of our community. We successfully fought to keep farmers markets open, provided new tools for consumers to buy directly from small farms, bought almost \$1 million worth of food from local farms to feed communities hard-hit by the pandemic, and completely reimaged our annual Sustainable Agriculture Conference to adapt to social distancing.

The events of 2020 showed us that CFSA's mission to build resilient and just local food ecosystems is more vital than ever. In the following pages you'll find stories of collaboration and interconnectedness that remind us how important that undertaking is to our collective well-being. This moment is a once-in-a-generation opportunity for us to put our shared vision into action. We are so grateful to have you with us as we rise to this challenge together.

Sincerely,



Roland McReynolds
Executive Director



About CFSA

Carolina Farm Stewardship Association (CFSA) is a farmer-driven, membership-based 501(c)(3) organization that works across North and South Carolina serving more than 2,500 members.

Our Mission

CFSA advocates, educates, and builds connections to create sustainable food systems in the Carolinas centered on local and organic agriculture.

Our Vision

A sustainable regional food system that is good for all consumers, farmers, farmworkers, and ecosystems.

2020 Board of Directors

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We're Working Toward A Better Food System

Since our founding in 1979, CFSA has worked to unite farmers, consumers, and businesses to build a healthy, just, and sustainable food and farming system. We have done this important work while addressing pressing challenges including a loss of farmers and farmland, a lack of research and resources tailored to family farms, and the ongoing threat of climate change.

Here is how we do it:

We advocate for fair farm and food policies

CFSA advocates for food and farm policies that benefit small and mid-scale sustainable farms and strengthen local food systems through grassroots advocacy, lobbying, coalition building, and policy research and analysis.

We build systems that sustainable farms need to thrive

CFSA provides support to grow and sustain an environmentally sound, economically viable, and socially just food system. We provide direct technical assistance, workshops, and resources to farmers on: organic production and certification, conservation activity plans, food safety and Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certification, high tunnel production, and accessing new markets for their products. We also conduct on-farm research and provide education opportunities for the next generation of farmers at our Elma C. Lomax Research and Education Farm.

CFSA South Carolina Local Produce Safety Coordinator Kim Butz (left) with Barbara Hemmingway (right), co-owner of Land-Tec USA, LLC (Florence, SC)
Credit: CFSA

We educate communities about local, organic farming

CFSA brings together farmers, researchers, agricultural service providers, buyers, consumers, and activists through educational events to strengthen the connections and networks throughout our food system. Our annual agriculture conferences and farm tour provide educational opportunities for thousands of people from across the Carolinas each year.



Member Spotlight

“CFSA has saved my livelihood not once, not twice, but three times,” said Paula Hall, owner of Eden Song Wheatgrass and a CFSA Member. A farmer for more than 20 years, Paula grows nutrient-dense wheatgrass for wholesale markets at her small farm in Zebulon, NC. “At the outset of 2020, I employed two part-time staff to help with the labor-intensive production of wheatgrass, my only crop. COVID definitely impacted my buyers; I could cry over it.”

Nine months into the pandemic, Paula was preparing to apply for farmer assistance funds. She found that application after application, and call after call, went ignored because wheatgrass wasn’t specifically listed as an eligible crop for relief payments. “After receiving an email from CFSA, reminding farmer members of the assistance deadline, I shot off an email back to them bemoaning my fate that no one seemed interested in helping me with any

“CFSA has saved my livelihood not once, not twice, but three times.”

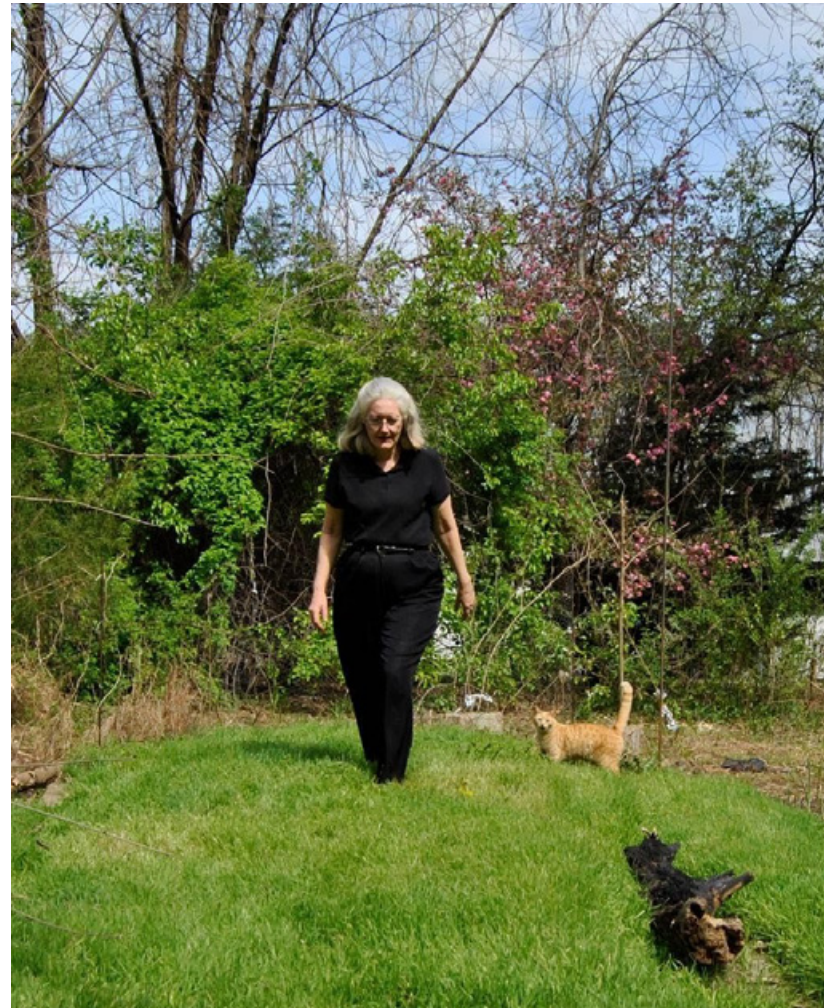
**Paula Hall of Eden Song Wheatgrass
Zebulon, NC**

pandemic assistance programs – not with PPP, EIDL, or CFAP2. CFSA, however, responded and advocated to the Farm Services Agency on my behalf. That advocacy produced the reasonable response that wheatgrass was definitely in the ‘sprouts’ category. I applied for farmer assistance funds that day and received \$6,100 within two weeks.”

Paula also recalled CFSA’s advocacy efforts from nearly 15 years ago that helped keep her farm open when city ordinances threatened it. Then a few years later when food safety regulations intended for large-scale farms would have proved insurmountable, CFSA was there to make sure laws made sense for small, local growers, too. “I’m lucky to be able to pay my bills and keep farming,” said Paula. “I’m nearly 70, and farming is what I was meant to do. There’s no other life for me.”

“You guys are fighting for us. I’d say this to a farm considering membership: Join! It could save your livelihood. It could be the best, most necessary experience of your life.”

Paula Hall at home on the farm. Credit: Eden Song Wheatgrass (Zebulon, NC)



Join the Movement



When you [join CFSA](#) as a member, you become part of a vibrant network of over 2,500 farmers, consumers, foodies, businesses and organizations all working together to ensure a just, healthy and sustainable food system – now and for future generations.

Together, we can support more sustainable family farms, grow more local food businesses and add more voices to advocate for fair farm and food policies in the Carolinas.

COVID-19 Response

Financial Support for Small Farms

In April, CFSA conducted a survey of farmers in the Carolinas to quantify the impact of COVID-19 on their businesses. Results showed that small and mid-scale farms selling in local food markets were suffering greatly with 35% of respondents reporting sales decreased by \$1,000 or more every week. CFSA campaigned in North Carolina, South Carolina and Washington, D.C. (virtually) to win financial relief for these farms, including the introduction of the Local Farms Act in Congress by Rep. Alma Adams (NC). When the federal government opened the second Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP 2) for farmers in September, CFSA supported hundreds of small farms to successfully apply.

“Thank you. Received [CFAP2] funds. Would not have if not for you!”

Judy McPherson,
Uwharrie Farm
Asheboro, NC

On-Farm Pickup Map

At the onset of the pandemic, CFSA swiftly addressed food shortages and safety concerns by curating a free, interactive map of more than 180 farms across the Carolinas that were offering on-farm pickups, home delivery, CSAs, and online pre-orders to accommodate for social distancing. By the end of 2020, there were 180,000 views of the map.

35th Annual Sustainable Agriculture Conference Goes Virtual

For the first time in 35 years, CFSA hosted our annual Sustainable Agriculture Conference virtually. This format made the conference more affordable and accessible than ever before while allowing our 700+ attendees (including 33 Dow scholars) to connect, learn, and share in ways they haven't been able to in the past.

Credit: *The Farm at New Garden Park (Greensboro, NC)*



Advocating for Farmers Markets

As COVID-19 related restrictions shut down businesses and institutions, farmers markets were not spared. CFSA collaborated with members, allies, and community partners to promptly respond with a comprehensive approach. In addition to co-authoring a toolkit to guide communities in their fight to keep farmers markets open, CFSA worked directly with local and state governments. In South Carolina, CFSA provided written guidance to the governor's office to ensure farmers markets were recognized as essential grocery stores. Where many municipalities tried shuttering them anyway, CFSA provided direct support to local SC markets and hubs across the state to help keep them open for business. In North Carolina, CFSA helped successfully advocate for a \$750,000 program from the NC Department of Agriculture to provide grants for farmers markets' and food hubs' adaptations to COVID-19.

Growing Food for Donation

The team at CFSA's Elma C. Lomax Research and Education Farm in Concord, NC, grew and donated over 9,600 pounds of fresh produce to area food banks to support families in need.

Feeding Communities Through FarmsSHARE

FarmsSHARE by the Numbers

\$900,000+
paid directly to local farmers
and food hubs

21,811
total food boxes delivered

166,500
lbs produce

11,600+
lbs meat

10,500
dozen eggs

80
farm partners from 25
different counties

3,000
households served

140
restaurant & hospitality
businesses served

From education to healthcare, every system and institution has endured challenges and hardships in the face of COVID-19. Local and global food systems are no exception as they were pushed to their limits, exposing their greatest weaknesses. Widespread restaurant and hospitality closures caused a rift in the local food system that negatively impacted business owners, employees, and consumers as well as farmers, whose business models rely on those markets.

CFSA responded to this crisis and its ripple effect on communities across North Carolina by developing an emergency food assistance program called Farms Serving Hospitality and Restaurant Employees (FarmsSHARE). Key funding to launch FarmsSHARE was obtained from Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina and Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation with additional funding from individuals and other community partners.

CFSA efficiently utilized FarmsSHARE funding to provide a free, weekly box of locally-grown food to households in need across North Carolina, while offering farmers and food hubs a fair price for their products. CFSA's goal was to establish a stable system that will thrive beyond the pandemic by investing in small Carolina businesses and connecting them to their own community members in need. The swift progression of FarmsSHARE from an idea to successful execution is a direct result of CFSA's extensive North Carolina network, built on years of trust.

As Gabriel Cumming of Working Landscapes, a FarmsSHARE partner based in Warrenton, NC, explains, "Food system resilience is something that is going to serve our rural, economically distressed region well for years to come. So this is a program that is crucial during the pandemic but it's building resilience we need to have a stronger food economy in rural North Carolina going forward."

For more information about FarmsSHARE and how the program is evolving, please visit carolinafarmstewards.org/farmsshare.

*Jeff Pharr, Mobile Market Assistant at The Bulb, passes out food boxes.
Credit: The Bulb (Charlotte, NC)*





Ray Tuegel, Moriah Gendy, Theron Heath and Jonny Scoble harvest garlic.
Credit: Plum Granny Farm (King, NC)

Sustaining a Community

When Reverend Richard Joyner became the pastor of Conetoe Missionary Baptist Church in 2002, he was overwhelmed and heartbroken by the number of funerals he was overseeing - sometimes two or three per week. Recognizing that his congregation was struggling with a number of food-related illnesses, he decided to start a community garden and use food as a tool for healing. From that seed of an idea the Conetoe Family Life Center (CFLC) was born.

The center's garden is now a thriving 25-acre farm that employs community members and is used as an outdoor classroom for Conetoe youth who are learning how to grow their own food and sell it to local businesses like Vidant Health, Prime Smokehouse, and other area restaurants. The farm sustains a CSA program, mobile farm stand, and a flourishing honey bee operation. All proceeds are invested back into educational programming and jobs for the community.

CFLC's corporate customers now require them to be Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) certified, which is something the center's Executive Director, Helen Collins, takes very seriously. "With everything we do we want to make sure that it is safe for the public," Helen says. Since 2019, CFLC has been working with Chloe Johnson, CFSA Local Food System Manager, to achieve certification. "Chloe has been absolutely awesome. She walked us through everything step by step."



The CFLC team was not only able to get certified in 2020 but was also able to help share knowledge of best practices in food safety to other farms across Eastern North Carolina by inviting some of their farm partners to attend the food safety trainings. "To get that GAP certification completed with Chloe and CFSA's help meant a lot. It has helped us to move forward and become more self-sustaining," Helen says.

Sustainability has become the driving force behind everything that the Conetoe Family Life Center does and they hope to be a model for their region of North Carolina. As Reverend Joyner says, "We want community sustainability to take place. We want to show communities that they can do this. They can produce something that sustains them - and that is food."

"We want community sustainability to take place."

Reverend Richard Joyner,
Conetoe Family Life Center
Conetoe, NC

Farmer Support by the Numbers



581 people
attended 25 workshops/
webinars on food safety



431 people
attended 13 workshops/
webinars on organic
certification and production



197 people
attended 7 workshops/
webinars on high tunnels

From Research to Hunger Relief: Lomax's Food Donation Program

Each spring, CFSA's Elma C. Lomax Research and Education farm is a bustling hub of activity. Whether the staff is leading a workshop on high tunnel construction or cover crop management, the farmers-in-training are starting transplants in the greenhouse, or local school children are engaging in on-farm STEM activities, there is always a lot going on. Yet when the pandemic hit in March, much of the farm's usual programming was cancelled and the Lomax team had to quickly devise a new strategy.

"We were looking for some way to leverage the farm, our knowledge, and our time to help the community," says Gena Moore, CFSA Organic Research Coordinator. "The county plays such a big role in supporting the farm and we value that. So we looked into growing food for the community. We knew that our expertise and resources were best suited to grow the crops but we couldn't distribute them."

The team reached out to Cabarrus County-based Cooperative Christian Ministry and The Bulb, who Lomax had previously donated crops to from the farm's research trials. Both were excited to receive fresh produce to distribute to families who were struggling with food insecurity. "In March and April, we were seeing huge increases in the number of people who were coming for food assistance," says Kris Edscorn, Cooperative Christian Ministry's Food Program Manager. "About half of them were coming for the first time. Lomax planted a 1/4 acre of squash and zucchini for us, which was wonderful. We received a lot of their research crops—peppers, tomatoes, eggplants, all kinds of good stuff. Near the peak of the summer season, we received close to 3,000 pounds."

Despite the challenges brought on by the pandemic, old and new volunteers, farmers-in-training, and Lomax staff collaborated to grow and harvest more than 9,600 pounds of food to donate. The program was so successful that the team plans to expand it in 2021. As Gena explains, "The biggest thing we learned is that it was doable. Now we are more intentionally integrating the food donation program with other things that are going on at Lomax. We're going to keep growing as much food as possible."



Lomax volunteers prepare produce for donation. Credit: CFSA

(Opposite side) Right: Chloe Johnson, CFSA Local Food System Manager (right), shows Lindsey "Lint" Dixon (left) and Minnie "Bunch" DeLoach (middle) how to prepare properly sanitized produce wash water during a food safety training. Credit: Conetoe Family Life Center (Conetoe, NC)



114 farmers

received direct technical assistance on food safety, 24 obtained GAP certification



61 farmers

received direct technical assistance on organic production and transition, 3 obtained organic certification



52 farmers

received direct technical assistance on high tunnel production



8 farmers

received Conservation Activity Plans



*Martha Thompson harvests beans.
Credit: Bio-Way Farm (Ware Shoals, SC)*

A New Path Forward

"As soon as the pandemic hit, it hit us hard," says Oscar Chavez, owner of Microledon Farm, in Conway, SC. The farm, which started in 2018 and specializes in microgreens and salad mixes, was just hitting its stride in early 2020. They had amassed 15 restaurant customers and were selling produce at a local farmers market. By March however, all of their restaurant accounts vanished, their market was suspended, and their family's main source of income, a candle shop owned by Oscar's wife Michele, was closed temporarily.

"We looked at our field and thought, ok, what are we going to do now? We had time on our hands so we put our nose to the grindstone. People were going to need food whether things were shut down or not." The couple pressed onward, finding creative ways to continue selling their produce. In the meantime, Oscar began to work on getting HGAP certified with Kim Butz, CFSA SC Local Produce Safety Coordinator. "I thought it was even more important to have these systems in place to show that we're doing everything as safely as possible. And we want to be open to other markets too."

"Kim has gone above and beyond for us. It would have been overwhelming if I had tried to do it on my own but she almost made it feel easy. If it wasn't for her I probably wouldn't have gotten CFAP2 relief funds, which helped us a lot. Every resource CFSA has to offer she has thrown our way."

Oscar also began working with Mark Dempsey, CFSA Farm Services Manager, on a Conservation Activity Plan (CAP138). The CAP138 is a comprehensive conservation and organic plan that will help Oscar access cost-share money from the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) to implement conservation practices such as cover cropping, nutrient management, drip irrigation, and crop rotations. It will also provide him with all of the paperwork to get certified organic at no cost.

Now that the state has reopened, Microledon Farm is back at market, selling produce to 17 local restaurants, and they've even started a subscription service. It was a challenging year but they made the most of it. "The guidance that we've gotten from the people at CFSA has been phenomenal. We got HGAP certified. We're working on the CAP138 plan now. And all of this wouldn't have been possible if we weren't working with you."



Oscar Chavez and his son Niko prep beds.
Credit: Microledon Farm (Conway, SC)

Fighting for Farmers Markets

As the manager of the Greensboro Farmers Curb Market (GFM), Lee Mortensen knows firsthand how challenging the pandemic has been for the local food community. Like many farmers markets across the Carolinas, GFM was suspended in early 2020. Despite the closure, Lee pushed forward, rethinking her entire operation to ensure that her vendors still had a market and their customers had access to fresh, local food at a time when grocery store shelves were routinely empty. “We take our role in providing fresh food to the community very seriously and know how much farmers and vendors rely on the market for their livelihood. We forged ahead during the pandemic because we are passionate about supporting small family farms,” says Lee. “As a management team, we’ve had to be resilient.

“We forged ahead during the pandemic because we are passionate about supporting small family farms.”

**Lee Mortensen,
Greensboro Farmers Curb Market
Greensboro, NC**

From developing a vendor directory and partnering to support a local farm stand reactivation, to creating an offsite outdoors drive thru market, to establishing a pre-order online distribution program to support vulnerable customers and vendors — we have gone through a lot of changes.”

In response to market closures, CFSA and allied organizations assembled an advocacy toolkit for consumers and reached out to state and local governments in North and South Carolina to make sure that farmers markets could stay open. Within a few weeks of these efforts, most markets were able to reopen. But the challenges were not over once GFM was fully operational again. “Market managers were faced with supplying safety and sanitation protocols



while keeping our vendors, customers, interns, and staff compliant and safe with few resources,” says Mortensen. In order to address this lack of support, CFSA, along with partners like RAFI-USA and NC State Extension, began hosting weekly video calls with farmers market managers from across North Carolina to establish a support network and share best practices for keeping markets open safely. As Mortensen recalls, “it was extremely helpful to have a forum to share experiences and information.”

CFSA’s policy and programs teams translated the concerns and conversations taking place on the weekly calls into a list of recommendations for partners in the NC Department of Agriculture. These recommendations directly shaped the \$750,000 COVID-19 Emergency Aid for Farmers Market Operators and Local Food Hubs program, which reimbursed farmers markets and food hubs for costs associated with improving and ensuring safety. The market manager community that started as a COVID-19 response has grown into a network that meets bimonthly to share ideas, resources, and support.



Looking Ahead

Here is what you can expect from CFSA in 2021 and beyond...

- Our North Carolina Food System Advocacy Coalition, which includes farmers, farmers markets, food hubs, farmworker advocates, environmental justice organizations, food banks, and more is strengthening. The coalition will focus on issues such as expanding markets for local food producers, racial equity, food security, worker safety, climate change, and farmland conservation.
- CFSA is working to secure additional funding to transition FarmsSHARE into a longer-term food distribution program that addresses persistent food insecurity and chronic health issues in North Carolina while prioritizing the use of locally-raised agricultural products from food hubs sourcing from small farms.
- Our new Market Access Initiative will help farmers and food businesses better meet the demands of the market. This initiative will provide business planning services, crop planning, and buyer relationship building to small, diversified, sustainable farms, food hubs, and farmer cooperatives.
- In February 2021, CFSA launched our Member Advocacy Program. Our policy team is training the first cohort of 12 farmers and local food champions on the necessary skills to engage local and state leaders through direct and grassroots advocacy.
- We're enhancing our membership benefits to include: a crowdfunding board where members can post their projects and seek funding from the community, a revamped job board to make it easier for members to fill their on-farm opportunities, and deep discounts to our conferences and events.

(Opposite side) Left: *Lee Mortensen at the Greensboro Farmers Curb Market (Greensboro, NC)* Credit: *Lee Mortensen*

Right: *Mike Perry and Cathy Jones of Perry-winkle Farm (Chapel Hill, NC) sell produce at the Carrboro Farmers Market, Credit: CFSA*

Dominique Gadsden of Boone Fox Farm (Columbia, SC) holds bunches of bupleurum. Credit: Boone Fox Farm



Why Invest in CFSA?



You play a critical role in your local food system: a system that CFSA supports, strengthens, and advocates for every single day. In addition to buying local food and goods, making a philanthropic contribution to CFSA is a powerful way to be part of our mission and movement.

Thank you for considering a [charitable donation to CFSA](#).

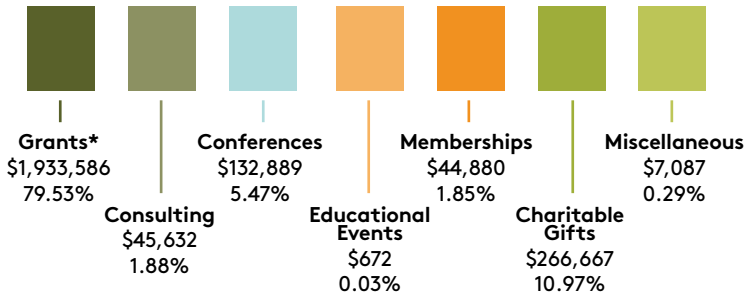
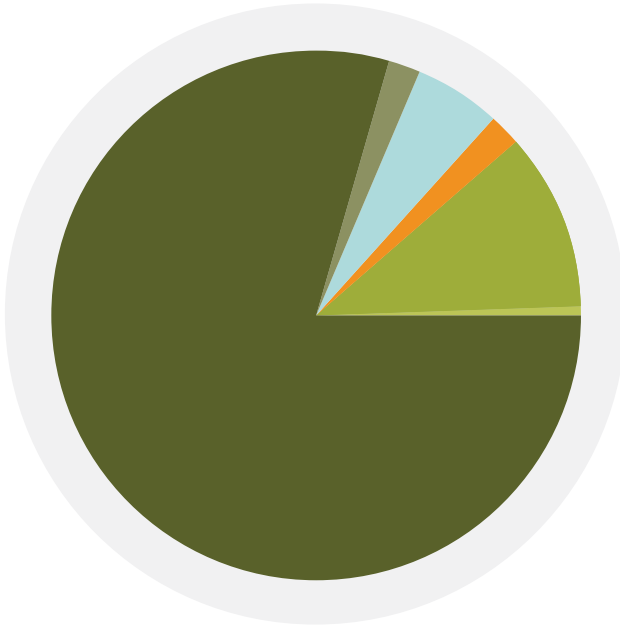
Financials

This financial report reflects CFSA's fiscal year 2020, pending a third-party audit.

Income

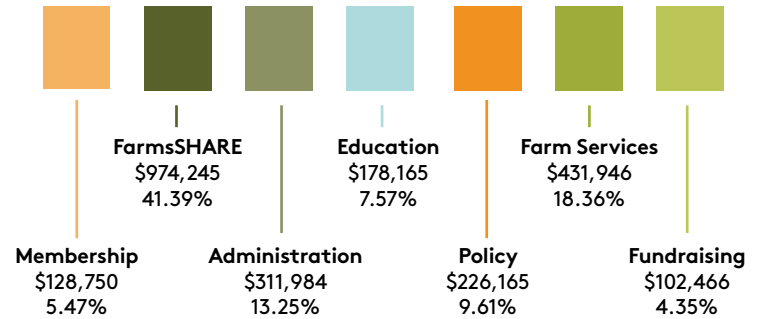
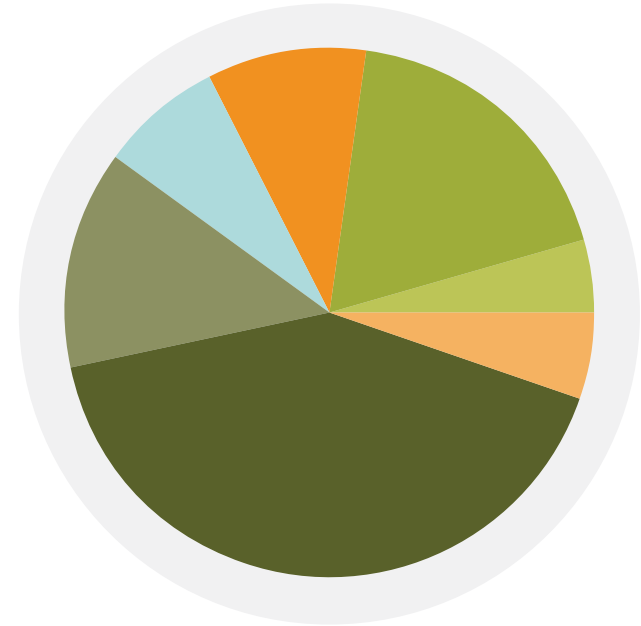
Total Income: \$2,431,413

*includes \$820,234 of multi-year funds released from restriction



Expenses

Total Expenses: \$2,353,721



We've achieved GuideStar's highest Seal of Transparency. GuideStar is an information service specializing in reporting on U.S. nonprofit organizations. Visit our GuideStar profile for more information on our strategic goals, programs, and financials.

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Food Animal Concerns Trust (FACT)
Gowan USA
Johnny's Seeds
Land Stewardship Consulting
Morning Ag Clips
Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)
NC SARE
Organic Valley/CROPP Cooperative
Santa Fe Natural Tobacco Company
SC SARE
Southern Exposure Seed Exchange
Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation
Waters Agricultural Laboratories, Inc.
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North Carolina Tobacco Trust Fund Commission
Organic Valley
Santa Fe Natural Tobacco Company
South Carolina Department of Agriculture
Southern SARE
U.S. Department of Agriculture Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS)
National Institutes of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)
Risk Management Agency (RMA)
U.S. Food and Drug Administration
Whole Foods Market*
Xylem Watermark*

*FarmsSHARE Funder

Credit: Braeburn Farm (Snow Camp, NC)

Join Us

Become a [member](#) today to connect with a vibrant network of farmers, consumers, businesses, and organizations all working together to ensure a just, healthy, and sustainable food system.

Support Us

Set up a [monthly](#) donation to sustain and grow our movement.

Advocate with Us

[Sign up](#) for federal and state alerts about policy affecting local food and farms.

Amplify Us

Connect with us on social media and [subscribe](#) to and share our newsletter.



carolina farm 
stewardship association

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Front Cover: *Jacey Preston (left), Mary Stone (middle) and Rachel Klein (right) preparing to harvest.*
Credit: *Wild Hope Farm (Chester, SC)*
Back Cover: *Taij and Carleigh Cotten transplant sunflowers.*
Credit: *Cotten Picked at Perry-winkle Farm (Chapel Hill, NC)*

