

KEEPING FARMERS ON THE LAND DURING COVID-19

Cris Coffin, AFT

Holly Rippon-Butler, Young Farmers

Tim Fink, AFT

Sanaz Arjomand, Young Farmers

Marissa Codey, Columbia Land Conservancy



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- What federal/state resources are available for producers, and what more is planned
- What impacts are producers facing, and how are land trusts responding and assisting
- How is agricultural land protection work being impacted



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Farmers are experiencing:

- Universal stress & uncertainty
- Reduced sales outlets
- Added costs of implementing alternative sales strategies
- Loss of off-farm income
- Increased caretaking responsibilities
- Delayed access to needed materials, such as seeds
- Disruption to projects
- Lack of access to services
- Increased interest in CSAs & local food

Those who were already most vulnerable before this moment will experience the most insecurity during this crisis.

Farmer Impacts

"I am almost all CSA, but will sales be down -- or way up? NO IDEA! Will workers get sick during the season? Will the region be put on lockdown, preventing people from working on the farm?"

"Estimating it will cost **\$8000 to implement strategies on our CSA farm to protect customers and staff** due to the pandemic. We have a market style CSA and we will need to get packaging for CSA shares, have extra staff on hand to pack shares, extend pickup windows and create better driveway for better traffic flow for drive through."



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Farmer Impacts

Farmers Need:

- Direct financial assistance
- Policy advocacy
- Help connecting with consumers
- Affordable, equitable access to land
- Sanitation supplies
- Translated materials
- Training – we still need more farmers!
- Support in advance – such as CSAs



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Key Message

- **Farmers must not lose land as a result of this crisis.**
- **We must continue to protect farmland and keep it in the hands of farmers while addressing the inequity of land ownership.**
- **We must focus on building resilient local food systems with secure land access as the foundation.**



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National Young Farmers Coalition

How are we responding?

- **Listening** to farmers
- **Advocating** for policy that supports them
- **Helping** them navigate variability of markets & government regulation
- **Organizing** and working to connect farmers



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Farming in a Pandemic


American Farmland Trust



Farming in a Pandemic


American Farmland Trust
SAVING THE LAND THAT SUSTAINS US

American Farmland Trust Response

- Farmer Relief Fund
- Raising Awareness
- Federal & State Policy

FARMER RELIEF FUND


American Farmland Trust
SAVING THE LAND THAT SUSTAINS US

Federal Resources: COVID-19 Response in Congress

CARES Act ("Phase 3")

- USDA
 - \$14b for Commodity Credit Corp. (CCC)
 - **Eligible:** MFP recipients (e.g., corn, soy, cotton, rice, wheat, dairy, hog)
 - \$9.5b for producers impacted by COVID
 - **Eligible:** "Includes" specialty crops, local food systems, livestock, dairy
- SBA
 - Two major programs:
 - Economic Injury Disaster Loans (EIDL)
 - Paycheck Protection Program (PPP)
 - Money for both has run out as of 4/16



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COVID-19 Response in Congress

- CARES Act 2 ("Phase 3.5")
 - Now that SBA funding has run dry, need for an interim bill with more money
 - Debate around whether there will be policy changes in addition to funds
- Phase 4 and Beyond
 - General agreement that there will be a need to move to 'stimulus' after 'recovery' bills



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COVID-19 Response in Congress

Young Farmers Phase 4 Policy Priorities:

- Access to financial support for farmers, as with SBA programs
- Connecting local food with nutrition assistance
- Supporting essential workers in the food chain
- Maintaining land tenure, esp. for beginning farmers & farmers of color
- Forgiving student loan debt
- Filling the gap for state budgets



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COVID-19 Response in Congress

American Farmland Trust Phase 4 and Beyond Policy Ideas:

- Help Local/Direct Market Producers
 - Additional monthly SNAP incentive that can be spent only at farm direct-to-consumer markets (e.g. MA HIP)
 - Increase Local Agriculture Market Program (LAMP) funding
- Provide Relief while Protecting the Land
 - “Debt for Working Lands Program” could offer FSA loan debt relief in exchange for a permanent agricultural conservation easement or a long-term covenant.
 - Increase ACEP funding and create a Buy-Protect-Sell Rapid Response Fund
 - Capital Gains exclusions for transfer to young, beginning, and disadvantaged farmers



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How are land trusts responding?

- **Landing pages** with information for landowners, consumers, and farmers.
- **Sharing resources** to help consumers connect with local food.
- **Advocating** on behalf of farmers.
- **Messaging** the importance of farmland protection for a resilient food system.
- **Organizing** a happy hour & community book club to connect with their network.
- **Hosting webinars** on climate change & resilient food systems.
- **Encouraging landowners** to suspend rental payments.



"Four ways to support Maine farms right now"



"Supporting Local Farms During COVID-19"

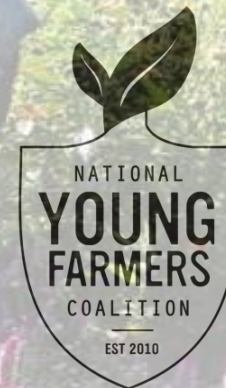


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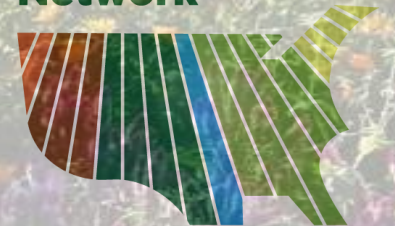


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How is your organization responding?



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How can land trusts assist farmers?

- **Land trusts are already helping!**

Farmland is the foundation of resilient local food systems. By protecting land, and ensuring farmers have secure access to it, land trusts are already incredibly important work. NEFOC, Minnow, and other efforts are already underway to build a more just food system based on secure land access for farmers of color.

- **Listen to farmers.**

Connect through conversations, emails, surveys, and whatever makes sense where you are. Try not to place huge demands on farmers' time.



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Communicate with Your Networks

Landowners

- Communicate with landlords in your network, encourage them to **suspend rent payments for farmers** immediately if they can.
- Encourage landowners to **help pay for cover cropping unplanted acreage** or to support in other ways, such as infrastructure projects to meet demand.

Donors

- Ask your donor list to **consider contributions to emergency relief funds**, particularly those focused on supporting local food and farm businesses and providing support to vulnerable populations.

Network

- Help direct your network to **resources to connect with local farms** and purchase local food (sharing maps, publicizing farmers markets, listing CSAs, etc).
- Support food access efforts, **especially those that are purchasing from farmers.**
- Publicize resources that **specifically support farmers of color** & encourage landowners to take action to address land-based injustice. One example is Soul Fire Farm's Reparations Map.

Projects & Funds

Existing Projects

- Where land trusts own land, consider **suspending rent payments**.
- Educate yourself on the new challenges faced by farm businesses and work to **identify opportunities in the context of existing easements** to support on-farm infrastructure needs and other changes that farmers are making.
- Explore options to **turn opportunity funds for farmland acquisition into emergency land loss prevention funds** to help farmers retain land security while they struggle to navigate the upheaval and uncertainty of this moment.

Future Projects

- Prioritize **projects with farms that serve local communities**, are closer to urban growth boundaries, and be more open to working with farms under financial strain.
- Consider **changes to be made to future easement** documents based on challenges current easements are creating for farmers in this time of crisis.



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Organizational Resources

- Offer **communications staff** to help farmers connect with new marketing opportunities.
- Land trusts can offer their **GIS mapping skills** to help make these farms visible where maps don't exist.
- Help with **funding requests**: ghostwrite grants with farmers (e.g. VAPG), be a Kiva loan intermediary.
- Help **provide specific resources** for farmers in your area – for example, some need hand sanitizer, others need help navigating food safety recommendations, others are looking for help with marketing and reaching new audiences. Listen to farmers and get creative!



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Policy

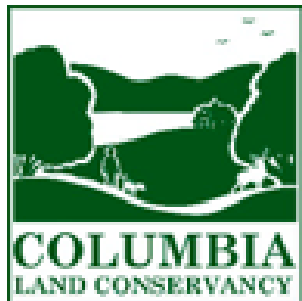
- **We need land trusts to be advocates on behalf of the land and farmers!**
- Advocate for farmland protection dollars that keep land affordable for farmers—such as prioritization of OPAV projects.
- Follow the lead of grassroots farmer and food system advocacy organizations, such as American Farmland Trust, National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, Rural Coalition, National Young Farmers Coalition, National Family Farm Coalition, HEAL Food Alliance, Farm Bureau, United Farm Workers, and Farmworker Justice, to name a few.



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Supporting the farm community; what's our role?

As a local land trust, we have strong ties in our region, and are a trusted resource among:

- Farmers
- Non-farming landowners
- Municipal leaders and officials
- Service providers
- Donors
- Consumers
- Partner organizations
- Others





Website (resources & connections)

<https://clctrust.org/farm-program/matching/community-response-to-covid-19>

COLUMBIA AND DUTCHESS COUNTIES

Farmer-Landowner Match Program

From the Columbia Land Conservancy and
the Dutchess Land Conservancy

Community Response to COVID-19

As we adjust to the COVID-19 health crisis and recognize its far-reaching impacts, it is clear how much our communities and local farms depend on each other.

Many organizations throughout our region and state, including CLC and our partners, are coming together to find ways to support farmers and maintain emergency food supplies. We offer a list of some of these efforts and resources below.

We will keep this page updated with new information and opportunities as available.

Last updated: 3/31/2020

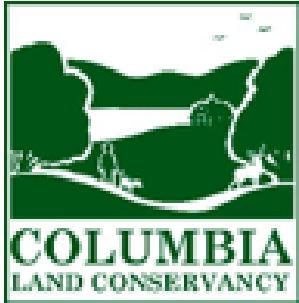
What can I do to support local farmers?

Where can I find help if I'm a farmer?

Where can I buy local food during this time?

What can I do to support local emergency food relief?





Working together, diverse challenges

- Wide-ranging needs (disparities, access to services, resources, technology, networks)
- Flow of information
- Think beyond our own organizations (direct aid to areas of greatest need, relief funds, etc.)
- Creativity & partnerships; learn from each other
- Opportunities to fill future needs (distribution, knowledge sharing)



What immediate impacts are you facing in your agricultural land protection work?



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How is your land trust being impacted?

Some resources that might help:



COVID-19 NON-PROFIT RESOURCES

1. First and foremost, if you are sick, stay home!
2. As the situation changes, develop a plan to respond to COVID-19. You can adapt from this [checklist](#), and review these [Resources for Preparing for COVID 19](#) from 501 Commons.
3. Keep your employees and community informed with reliable information:
 - o At this time, the CDC recommends self-quarantine for 14 days for individuals that have traveled to [Level 2 and Level 3 travel notice countries](#).
 - o [Center for Disease Control](#)
 - o [Washington State Department of Health](#)
 - o [King County Department of Public Health](#)
 - o [Snohomish Health District](#)
4. In the event of banking, postal, or other disruptions, be prepared by setting up disbursements by electronic transfer (EFT/ACH) and [Informed Delivery® by USPS](#).
5. Transition to a virtual fundraising with online donations, virtual paddle raises, online auctions, and other ways to engage your donors safely. For your remote meetings, Zoom has several [webinars and guides](#).



"Conservation Easement Monitoring in a Pandemic"



LTA Learning Center Resources – webinars and more



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What concerns you the most about your agricultural land protection work over the next 12-24 months?



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