



support local food + farms

IMPACT REPORT

2023



Berkshire Grown supports and promotes local agriculture as a vital part of the Berkshire community, economy, and landscape.

A Message from Our Director

PHOTO: ALLISON SHEEHY



Berkshire Grown's roots reach back to 1985 when a group of community members grew concerned with the loss of farms in Berkshire County. They started Berkshire Regional Food & Land Council to raise awareness about Berkshire farms and develop local food networks. This group evolved into Berkshire Grown, which continues connecting community members with farms to build a strong

local agricultural economy and keep farmers farming.

At the start of the pandemic, local farmers lost wholesale accounts almost overnight and thousands of community members faced increased food insecurity. With your support, Berkshire Grown broadened and expanded our food access work. Over the next three years we built connections between farmers and food access sites and learned that one of the most effective ways to support local farmers is to purchase their produce, meat, and eggs and get it to families facing food insecurity.

In 2023, Berkshire Grown received two transformational grants to expand our Farm to Food Access program and launch the Berkshire Mobile Farmers Market. These collaborative programs significantly expanded our ability to purchase and distribute local food throughout Berkshire County. By the end of the year, we doubled our staff to grow these programs, purchased over \$300,000 worth of local food from 40 farms, and distributed that food to tens of thousands of low-income community members.

Your generosity fuels the connections Berkshire Grown facilitates to Keep Farmers Farming and makes a profound impact on our vision to build a sustainable regional food economy. But our work alone is not enough to support a thriving regional food system. I invite you to shop at your local farmers markets and farmstands, join a CSA, visit a pick-your-own farm, and use your community connections to SPREAD THE WORD about the food grown right here in the Berkshires.

That, coupled with your continued support of Berkshire Grown, will go a long way to *Keep Farmers Farming!*

With Deep Gratitude,

Margaret Moulton

Executive Director, Berkshire Grown

OUR 5-YEAR STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



STRENGTHEN LOCAL FARMS

Provide resources for local farmers to grow their businesses and advance climate resilient farming strategies.



GROW CONNECTIONS

Facilitate relationships between community members and local farmers to expand the audience for local food.



FOOD EQUITY

Work with strategic partners to build an equitable local food system where everyone has access to fresh, affordable locally grown food.



PROMOTE LOCAL AGRICULTURE

Increase public awareness about the challenges and successes of the agricultural community in the Berkshires.



SUSTAIN BERKSHIRE GROWN

Create a nimble, equitable, stable and efficient organization with broad community support.





Financial Overview

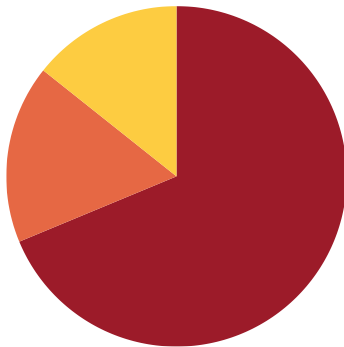
2023 WAS AN INCREDIBLE YEAR FOR BERKSHIRE GROWN!

Your support allowed us to deepen connections between farmers and consumers, almost tripling the amount of food purchased from local farmers to feed tens of thousands of individuals struggling with food insecurity in Berkshire County.

Since its inception, Berkshire Grown has carefully managed our budget, with all expenditures balanced by income. In late 2022, we received generous government funding to support two innovative collaborative programs: Farm to Food Access and the Berkshire Mobile Farmers Market. These grants, combined with support from community members and foundations, nearly doubled our budget from \$587,233 in 2022 to \$1,093,717 in 2023. We hired additional staff to effectively manage the two programs that keep farmers farming and significantly increase the amount of locally grown food distributed to individuals struggling with food insecurity throughout Berkshire County.

Game Changer Local Farms & Food Security

DONATIONS BY TYPE

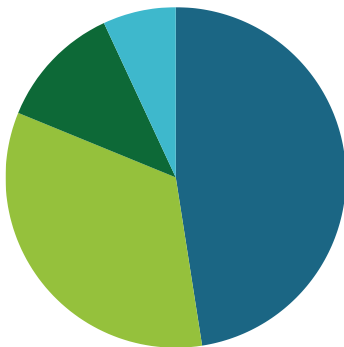


69%
Federal & State Government
\$736,791

17%
Individual & Corporate
\$181,781

14%
Foundation
\$153,357

SPENDING BY AREA



48%
Program
\$521,915

34%
Local Food Purchases
\$367,506

12%
Administrative & General
\$128,509

7%
Fundraising
\$75,787

In 2023, Berkshire Grown, with our food access partners including Berkshire Bounty, received a Local Food Purchasing Assistance Program (LFPA) grant of \$550,000 from the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources to support local farmers and feed Berkshire residents facing food insecurity.

In late 2023, this food access partnership was granted an additional \$750,000 exclusively to purchase locally grown food. These funds will dramatically increase the number of individuals receiving free, local food from 11,000 to 14,000 and extends the Farm to Food Access purchasing power to even more local farms through May 2025.

The LFPA program demonstrates the powerful impact of investment in local farms. But the success of the program depends on our two small non-profits to raise significant funds outside of the LFPA grant to manage this complex community service. To continue our Farm to Food Access work, we will strengthen community partnerships and implement strategies to ensure vital support for local farmers and ongoing access to fresh, local food for food insecure families.

Program Spotlight

Farm to Food Access

Anna Houston, Off the Shelf Farm,
New Marlborough, MA

“We’re hearing from farmers that F2FA is working. We make a commitment to purchase large quantities of products, which helps their financial stability.”

—MARTHA SUQUET
Berkshire Grown

Martha Suquet knows how important diverse income streams are for a farm. As Berkshire Grown’s Farm to Food Access (F2FA) Program Manager, Martha supports the bottom line of 26 regional farms by purchasing hundreds of thousands of dollars of their crops. She also coordinates the collaborative efforts of several nonprofits to distribute that locally grown food to pantries and meal sites throughout Berkshire County.

“We’re hearing from farmers that F2FA is working,” Martha shares. “We make a commitment to purchase large quantities of products, which helps their financial stability.” Martha continues, “Farmers are interested in supplying food access sites, but it isn’t financially feasible for them to donate their crops. They can sell their crops to Berkshire Grown to align with their values, and still make it work for their business.”

A hallmark of F2FA is its flexibility to support farmers through the unpredictable fluctuations of a growing season. “Farmers might anticipate raising a certain amount of product, but then disaster strikes or there’s a bumper crop, and Berkshire Grown does all we can to accommodate them. Farmers know the price they need to keep their business going, and Berkshire Grown pays them

fair wholesale prices. It’s our mission to support farmers, not get the best deal.”

From the quantity and quality of food moving through Berkshire Grown’s central storage cooler, Martha sees the impact F2FA has on the traditional food supply pantries receive. “They are getting lots of fresh, local products for free through F2FA that they could not afford otherwise.” The program also builds relationships between local farmers and food pantries. “Creating more connections within a local food system lays a solid foundation for greater resilience.” Through those relationships, food access partners share specific needs, desires, and challenges of the clients served, especially from immigrant communities. Martha affirms, “We want to provide the food that people want to eat.”

As Berkshire Grown’s F2FA program expands in 2024 with additional funding from Massachusetts Department of Agriculture’s Local Food Purchasing Assistance grant, the program will expand the quantity of food purchased, the number of farmers supported, and amount of people fed across the Berkshires. This program is one of the many ways Berkshire Grown increases local food consumption in the region, feeds the community, and keeps farmers farming!

FARM TO FOOD ACCESS BY THE NUMBERS

\$299,479

local food purchases

26

farms supported

18

food pantries and community meal sites served

11,000+

people fed per week

GOOD FOR FARMS AND GOOD FOR FOOD PANTRIES

BERKSHIRE GROWN'S Farm to Food Access Program (F2FA), "is a win-win," according to Martin Stosiek of Markristo Farm in Hillsdale, NY. "Good for farmers and good for the food pantries and the people they serve."

"Whatever we grow is sold; there's little risk," Martin shared about F2FA. "With wholesalers, I don't know what they'll take." The flexibility of selling through F2FA has allowed Martin to change the way he grows food at Markristo. "I don't want to grow the same thing all season. It's nice to have a crop for a few weeks and then move on to something else. And the pantries are happy to get different products each time."

Martin also has the benefit of being able to set his own price. "I'm charging a wholesale rate, but there are major cost savings for me. There is little waste since I can sell everything, delivery is so close, and the pantry sites return my containers so I can use them over again, which saves on a major expense of packaging."

Martin delivers the food Berkshire Grown purchases from him through F2FA directly to South Community Food Pantry in Pittsfield and a few other smaller pantries. These regular deliveries have allowed him to build relationships with the pantries. He gets feedback from the people who run South Community Food Pantry that clients who get the food really appreciate it. And he's thrilled his farm "provides local and organic food to those who can't afford it otherwise." Martin is also honored to be "the story behind the food. Clients receiving the food at the pantry know it's from a local farmer, not just the grocery store."

Martin hopes Berkshire Grown's F2FA program will stick around. "It's profitable for farmers, and the quality of food that pantries are getting is really good. It's a really direct way to make an impact."

“It's profitable for farmers, and the quality of food that pantries are getting is really good. It's a really direct way to make an impact.”

—MARTIN STOSIEK
Markristo Farm



Share the Bounty

In 2023, Berkshire Grown's Share the Bounty program completed its 21st season buying CSA shares from local farms and delivering those farm-fresh products to food pantries in the Berkshires, Hudson Valley, and Northwestern Connecticut. This long-running program provides small-scale farmers with advanced funding toward the cost of buying seeds and operating expenses during the winter months. In 2023 Berkshire Grown arranged for more than 74 CSA shares of produce, meat, cheese, and eggs from 18 local farms to be delivered directly to 20 food pantries and community kitchens in the region, or to subsidize low-income families to participate in CSA programs at their local farms. As our Farm to Food Access programs expand, Share the Bounty remains an important avenue to support smaller CSA farmers who don't sell products wholesale, yet want to participate in local food access programs.

SHARE THE BOUNTY BY THE NUMBERS

\$36,500

local food purchases

18

farms supported

20

food pantries and community meal sites served

74

CSA shares purchased



Berkshire MOBILE FARMERS MARKET

ALYSSA PROGRAM MANAGER

Few people work with the determination of Alyssa VanDurme, who took the lead in translating the concept of the Berkshire Mobile Farmers Market (BMFM) into a successful, community supported food access program.

Under Alyssa's leadership, the Berkshire Mobile Farmers Market brought fresh, local food to 1,300 shoppers in three low income and low food access areas of Berkshire County—North Adams, Pittsfield, and Becket—during a 10-week pilot program. She worked closely with collaborative partners, Berkshire Bounty and Berkshire United Way, twenty-five volunteers, and nearly 30 farmers and food producers to make the pilot an overwhelming success.

"Food is the key to life," Alyssa notes. "One thing that can make everything else in life better is if you start the day not hungry and know where your next meal is coming from." The Fair Share Payment system developed for the mobile farmers market ensured that everyone could access the fresh, local food, including a free, food pantry option—which nearly 70% of shoppers relied on. "Seeing shoppers feel fulfilled and grateful with bags of food to feed themselves and their family was a program highlight."

Alyssa's can-do attitude, which made her such a great start-up program leader, also brings the necessary energy to her work as a farmer. She enjoys sharing her personal experience in local agriculture to educate BMFM shoppers about the time, effort, and resources that go into growing food on a small, local scale and how that impacts pricing—but also keeps dollars in the community.

“ In a world where there are so many things that we can't control, the Berkshire Mobile Farmers Markets offer a broad spectrum of shoppers the opportunity to buy locally grown food and feel really good about that decision. ”

—ALYSSA VANDURME
Berkshire Grown



*Pittsfield Market Ambassador, Brennah Brickley;
Mobile Farmers Market set-up at MCLA;
North Adams Market Ambassador, Kaiya Cocliff.*

The Berkshire Mobile Farmers Market is a collaboration of six partners* that brings fresh, locally grown food to low-income neighborhoods and rural communities that lack easy access to a grocery store, farmers market or food pantry.

MARIA VOLUNTEER

As a leader in the Pittsfield community, Maria Encalada deftly connects immigrants with vital resources. An immigrant herself, Maria knows that asking for help can be especially hard when people don't speak the language. "Without help," Maria shared, "it's hard to move up." That's why Maria took on a vital volunteer role for the Berkshire Mobile Farmers Market in Pittsfield, helping Spanish-speaking customers access fresh, local food. Maria made sure that shoppers understood the tiered payment structure, including the free, food pantry option. "People were so happy to receive fresh, local food and be able to save that money for other pressing expenses like rent and transportation. Some of the families that shopped at the market can't access the SNAP benefit system, so having vouchers for free food made a big difference." As Maria helped set up the mobile farmers market each week, she was excited by the wide variety of local products offered—fresh, seasonal produce, protein (dairy, eggs, and meat), and other key products (like bread, honey, and maple syrup). Maria especially enjoyed seeing kids and parents shopping together noting that, "The Berkshire Mobile Farmers Market made a wonderful impact on the community."

Maria looks forward to volunteering again in 2024 and knows many families eagerly await its return. "Everyone deserves to eat," Maria asserts, "and they deserve to eat good, fresh, local food."

The Berkshire Mobile Farmers Market will continue to make fresh, local food accessible in 2024 thanks to amazing volunteers like Maria and supporters like you!

ERICA SHOPPER

The first time Erica visited the Berkshire Mobile Farmers Market (BMFM) in Becket, she was thrilled. "It was nice having fresh vegetables so close to home [the nearest grocery store is 20 minutes away] and much better produce than the grocery store offers." Erica is one of the more than 900 shoppers who relied on the BMFM's free, food pantry option during the ten-week pilot in Fall 2023. She learned about the program from Pastor Bill who runs the Becket Food Pantry. "Without the free food from the pantry, we would really be struggling." As food insecurity continues to grow, Erica has seen more and more people visiting the Becket food pantry. For Erica and many others in the community, "the mobile farmers market added a big supplement. We were able to get a lot of produce over the 10 weeks for free. And they had stuff at the mobile market that we wouldn't get at the food pantry."

Erica likes the BMFM's focus on fresh, local food and is excited to bring her son to shop at the market this summer. "He likes picking out his own produce, and he's more likely to try it if he has picked it out himself." At one visit Erica picked up a honey nut squash, which was a new variety to her. She noted that if she was at a grocery store, she probably would have walked right by it to pick up something more familiar, but the overall supportive environment of the mobile farmers market made her feel empowered to try new things, and she was glad that she did because, "it was delicious." Erica can't wait for the return of the BMFM to Becket this summer and is excited to see what new foods her family can try.

**With Berkshire Bounty, Berkshire Regional Planning Commission, Berkshire United Way, Community Health Programs, and Southern Berkshire Rural Health Network.*

BERKSHIRE MOBILE FARMERS MARKET BY THE NUMBERS

\$31,532
local food
purchases

27
farm + food
producers
supported

69%
of shoppers
received free
food

1,300
shoppers

25
volunteers



Berkshire Grown Winter Farmers Market

Local Food & Community

Winter Farmers Markets

Berkshire Grown's Winter Farmers Markets were the first Winter Farmers Markets in the Berkshires. They began in 2009 to address a growing demand from farmers to sell directly to consumers during a typically low-revenue season. 15 years later, nearly 6,000 shoppers engage directly with 40 farmers and 17 artisan crafters during the six winter markets in Great Barrington and two in North Adams.

Elizabeth Keen of Indian Line Farm says, "Berkshire Grown's Winter Farmers Markets have become a major source of income for our farm. The markets are well organized and Berkshire Grown strives to have high quality vendors." In 2023, Berkshire Grown's Winter Farmers Markets generated over \$151,540 in revenue for the local farmers and producers.

The Winter Farmers Markets provide a terrific way to connect with friends and local farmers. Vendors

from the Berkshires and surrounding region offer an abundance of locally grown food, including fresh greens, winter squash, root crops, apples and pears, eggs, meat, cheese, honey and maple syrup, and baked goods. Specialty farm products like yarn, candles, spices, and super-soft alpaca products round out the market. Add live music and grilled sausages from North Plain Farm, and the Winter Farmers Markets become a gathering spot in the chilly winter months. "The community really comes out for these markets, and they are a great meeting place during the off season," says Elizabeth Keen.

The Winter Farmers Market accepts SNAP and HIP (Healthy Incentives Program) and offers a 1:1 Market Match program supported by winter farmers market sponsors, helping to stretch SNAP benefits even further.

“Berkshire Grown's Winter Farmers Markets have become a major source of income for our farm.”

—ELIZABETH KEEN
Indian Line Farm

BERKSHIRE GROWN WINTER FARMERS MARKETS BY THE NUMBERS

\$151,540

revenue generated for vendors

40

farmer and food producer vendors

263

shoppers benefited from Market Match

21

volunteers

8

winter markets

Skill Building

1:1 Consulting for Farmers

When Ashni Sunder visited the Berkshires early in the pandemic, she discovered a pre-existing farm that seemed to be waiting for an attentive farmer. Inspired by “the substantial Black history of the area,” notably W.E.B. Du Bois and Elizabeth Freeman (also known as Mumbet, her enslaved name), Ashni invited two friends to stay and farm with her. “I fell in love with the land and was struck by the community and culture.”

“Mumbet’s story spoke to us. I was deeply impacted by how Elizabeth Freeman utilized the law to advocate for her sovereign rights to be free.” Mumbet’s Freedom Farm took shape, a Black and Brown queer-led farm that works toward becoming “a space to explore and embody love and liberation...that uses Earth as our guide and teacher and source of inspiration.”

As the farm grew, and Ashni began selling to Berkshire Grown’s Farm to Food access program, she needed additional training, particularly around developing a crop plan. She was excited to learn about our 1:1 consulting for farmers that would pay an experienced local farmer to help Ashni create a plan. “Jen Salinetti of Woven Roots Farm has years of experience farming. It was beautiful to have that connection and that Jen’s valuable time was compensated. It is important to support an amazing woman of color and recognize the work she’s doing.”

Jen and Ashni met weekly for several weeks. “I appreciated the time with Jen, and the guidance and mentorship she provided. Working with Jen made me feel less isolated going into the season. We have continued to build our relationship and now I have a fellow farmer who I trust and can go to for support.”

Ashni implemented her new crop plan during the very wet 2023 growing season. “I didn’t grow as much food as I would have liked and am hoping to produce more next year, but I learned so much working with Jen.” Ashni recognizes that support is essential “for newer farmers to have a sense of community. It’s important they don’t feel they have to know everything, and that there is a network of farmers working the land” who can provide guidance. Even for experienced farmers, “It’s imperative to have access to education, tools and support to keep farmers up-to-date on skills necessary to be a farmer in this changing landscape.” Berkshire Grown will continue to provide educational resources that help local farmers develop the skills to strengthen their farm businesses and build a resilient farming community.



Ashni Sunder,
Mumbet's Freedom Farm

HEALTHY SOILS & PASTURES

IN MID-APRIL 2023 livestock farmers gathered at Gould Farm in Monterey, MA for Berkshire Grown’s final workshop of the 2022-2023 winter season, co-sponsored by Berkshire Agricultural Ventures. At the full-day Grazing School, pasture management expert Sarah Flack focused on optimizing grazing from the perspective of both the plants and animals.

In the farm-based setting, Sarah spoke about pasture plant identification, rotational grazing plans, evaluating pasture quality, and more.

Participating farmers learned a tremendous amount. John Primmer of Wildstone Farm shared how he will begin implementing his new knowledge: “First, we’ll take the time to get to know our pastures by observation. Second, take soil tests. Third, develop a grazing plan based on the principles we learned. We’re excited to make better use of our pasture.”

Cricket Creek Farm,
Williamstown, MA



RESOURCES FOR FARMERS BY THE NUMBERS

370

farmer members served

4

farmer workshops

28

hours of 1:1 consultation for 10 farms

12

monthly resource newsletters for farmers



Collaborating for the Future of Livestock Farming

Square Roots Farm, Lanesborough, MA

A thriving local food system includes local meat, and that system requires an interconnected network of farmers, processors, distributors, and retailers. To address the gaps and sticking points in the local meat economy, Berkshire Grown and Berkshire Agricultural Ventures have been working in partnership to convene the Livestock Working Group, part of Berkshire Agricultural Ventures' Local Meat Processing Support Program. The working group is unique because it brings together stakeholders from different groups across the supply chain who don't often get to sit down together and share perspectives. The Group is facilitated by Ren Conostas of Berkshire Grown and Jake Levin of Berkshire Agricultural Ventures, and consists of 10 members who are livestock farmers, processors, distributors, and service providers. For almost two years the Group has met every other month, discussing topics ranging from live animal trucking to on-farm processing. These businesses depend on each other for viability, but relationships can be challenging when both farmers and processors work with the constant pressures of time, costs, and staffing. The Livestock Working Group has identified cold storage, transportation, and opportunities for cooperative marketing as some areas requiring more attention.

Jake Levin, who manages the Local Meat Processing Support Program, says that farmers and processors often come away from The Livestock Working Group sessions with a new appreciation for each other's challenges and needs. "It's a conceptual and emotional shift," he says, and that shift has been one of the surprising and satisfying outcomes of the project.

LIVESTOCK WORKING GROUP BY THE NUMBERS

177
subscribers
to The Meat Up
Newsletter

90
members on
The Meat Up
Listserv

6
Livestock Working
Group meetings
in 2023

KEEP FARMERS FARMING



Berkshire Grown relies on the generosity of our community to *Keep Farmers Farming*.

The support of individual donors, local businesses, and foundations are vital to advance our mission. You can scan the QR code above or visit www.berkshiregrown.org/support to make a gift online.

Checks can be made payable to Berkshire Grown and mailed to:

Berkshire Grown
PO Box 983
Great Barrington, MA 01230

Contact Stephanie Bergman,
Director of Development
for additional ways to give:
stephanie@berkshiregrown.org
or (413) 528 0041

Charitable Contribution Deduction for Massachusetts taxpayers

On Jan. 1, 2023, Massachusetts revived its charitable contribution deduction. If you are a Massachusetts taxpayer, every charitable donation you make can be deducted from your state income tax return, whether you itemize deductions on your federal return or not. This deduction is universal and permanent, so it will be available to you every year.

Thank you TO OUR PARTNERS

Appelbaum-Kahn Foundation
Berkshire Agricultural Ventures
Berkshire Bount
Berkshire Regional Planning Commission
Berkshire Taconic Community Foundation
Berkshire United Way
Charlesview Foundation
CHP Berkshires
The Donald C. McGraw Foundation
Dr. Robert C. and Tina Sohn Foundation
Feigenbaum Foundation, Inc.
Green Pastures Fund
Greylock Federal Credit Union
James and Robert Hardman Fund
for North Adams
Janey Fund Charitable Trust
Jewish Women's Foundation of
Berkshire County
Josephine and Louise Crane
Foundation, Inc.
Katharine L. W. and Winthrop M. Crane, 3d
Charitable Foundation
Lee Bank Foundation
Massachusetts Coalition of Local
Food and Farms
Massachusetts Department of
Agricultural Resources
OCF Foundation
Ruth Krauss Foundation, Inc.
Shoval Foundation
Southern Berkshire
Rural Health Network
Wayne D. Pharmer Fund
Wendling Fund

We are grateful to everyone who makes our work possible.
Thank you for your support!

Indian Line Farm, South Egremont, MA



PO Box 983
Great Barrington MA 01230

support local food + farms

OUR VISION

A thriving, equitable local food system where farmers can access affordable farmland to grow food to feed all community members.

WE BELIEVE

- Everyone should have access to fresh, culturally relevant, nutrient-dense food.
- Prosperous and diverse local farms are essential to the region's economic health and environmental quality.
- An informed and engaged community is essential to the long-term sustainability of our local food system.

STAFF

Margaret Moulton
Executive Director

Kate Bailey
Berkshire Mobile Farmers
Market Program Manager

Stephanie Bergman
Director of Development

Ren Costas
Livestock Working Group
Coordinator

Sharon Hulett-Shepherd
Membership and
Office Manager

Martha Suquet
Farm to Food Access
Program Manager

Alyssa VanDurme
Business Member
Program Manager

2024 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Amy Rudnick, President
Peter Platt, Vice President
Katy Sparks, Treasurer
Lee Venolia, Clerk
Allison Rachele Bayles
Ariel Bock
Susan Bronson
Sarah Gardner
Katherine Hand
Tu Le
Jake Levin
Nick Martinelli
Dawn Masiero
Jim Schultz
Laura Tupper-Palches

ADVISORY BOARD

Molly Comstock
Tom Curtin