



# FARMER RESILIENCY INITIATIVE

2020  
Summary  
Report

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## BACKGROUND

The COVID-19 Pandemic has tested the resiliency of our local, state, regional and national food systems. The pandemic has stretched or even broken the “value-chains” that bring food from the farm to our plates, whether they are the long chains tied to retail groceries or short chains like farmers markets. As the combined effort of government, for profit, nonprofit and philanthropy works to fix or adapt these value chains, both farmers and consumers have taken a big hit. Grassroots organizations like those in the Central Appalachian Network have responded quickly to the needs of regional farmers and families, allowing us to invest in the farmers and communities in the most need, including those farmers with difficulty accessing federal assistance.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Coronavirus Food Assistance Program (CFAP) was intended to help farmers recover from losses related to COVID-19, yet the Program has been largely inaccessible for direct market, small-scale, and specialty crop producers. These farmers often receive premium prices for their products and the CFAP valuation formula undercuts the value of these products, paying well below direct market value, with a penny per pound for potatoes, for example. The long and tedious application process coupled with extremely low CFAP payments has discouraged struggling producers from seeking federal assistance. This was further exacerbated for socially disadvantaged farmers who have historically received unequal access to funding from the USDA.



# What is the Farmer Resiliency Initiative?

The Farmer Resiliency Initiative was comprised of two funds, the Central Appalachian Family Farm Fund and the Kentucky Black Farmer Fund.

The Central Appalachian Family Farm Fund (CAFFF) was created to help offset some of the impact of the pandemic to our most vulnerable farmers and consumers. The CAFFF provided direct support to beginning, limited-resource, and socially disadvantaged farmers to offset their loss of income and to direct their products to food insecure communities.

The Kentucky Black Farmer Fund (KBFF) was created in partnership with Black Soil: Our Better Nature following the launch of the CAFFF to address the needs of another vulnerable group of farmers with difficulty accessing federal funding and other relief programs.

This work was the outcome of many collaborations, beginning with the funds creation by the Foundation for Appalachian Kentucky, the Appalachian Impact Fund and the Community and Economic Development Initiative of Kentucky, then aligned with Farm Aid's national Farmer Resiliency Initiative, and finally strengthened and administered by the organizations comprising the Central Appalachian Network. Community Farm Alliance was honored to have played the role of regional facilitator.



"The amount of hoops a small scale farmer needs to jump through to receive funds, just to stay afloat during these times is intimidating and disturbing. To subsidize large scale producers for products that will be further subsidized at the box store leaves small farmers gasping for air in a pool of red tape."

**Lindsey & Andee Stevens | Happy Hens Homestead**

**CENTRAL APPALACHIAN FAMILY FARM FUND RECIPIENT**

"I never have applied to USDA funds for COVID relief, I just assumed I wouldn't qualify," says Michael. "The application is so complicated and the one thing you mess up could disqualify you, when we may be passed on regardless, so I don't even try."



**Michael Collins | Heartground Farm LLC**

**KENTUCKY BLACK FARMER FUND RECIPIENT**

# ADMINISTERING THE FUNDS

The Central Appalachian Family Farm Fund (CAFFF) and the Kentucky Black Farmer Fund (KBFF) were an internal collection of funds assembled from multiple private philanthropic resources, including individuals, with a common goal to support Central Appalachian and Black farmers in times of need. This includes members of the Appalachian Funders Network.

While this was a regional effort, each state or sub region had a lead organization for outreach, organizing a Review Committee, disbursing sub-regional funds, and providing contact and technical assistance support to best address local needs. Review Committees were selected for their deep network connections and experience working with family farmers in their subregion.

The organizations making up this consortium were all part of the Central Appalachian Network (CAN) and included:

Southeast Ohio – **Appalachian Center for Economic Development** (ACEnet)

West Virginia – **West Virginia Food and Farm Coalition** (WVFFC)

Eastern / ARC Kentucky – **Foundation for Appalachian Kentucky** (FAKY)

Central / Western Kentucky – **Community Farm Alliance** (CFA)

Southwestern Virginia / Eastern Tennessee – **Appalachian Sustainable Development** (ASD)

Outwardly facing, there was one application portal utilizing the expertise of the University of Kentucky based Community Economic Development Initiative of Kentucky (CEDIK). Care was taken to design an application that worked for farmers. CEDIK sorted applications based upon sub region administration and sent those to the sub-region Review Committee.

Each Review Committee determined individual applicant eligibility and an amount to be awarded up to \$750. The sub-regional administrative organization then disbursed awards. All Committees began accepting applications and notifying awardees in multiple rounds over the summer and into the fall of 2020.







# GRANT MAKING PRIORITIES

Each partner organization and affiliated review committee set eligibility and grant-making priorities for their region, with the following general guidelines:

- Farms must be located in an Appalachian county (CAFFF) or be managed by a Black farmer in the state of Kentucky (KBFF)
- Farmers must be “family” farms, typically with 10 or fewer employees
- Farmers must make some amount of income from agricultural sales
- Priority was given to farmers expressing a clear need and impact from COVID, persons of color, veterans, those with disabilities, and those having the largest proportion of their income from farming

Funds were available to be used for any effort that would aid in stabilizing the family farm operation. The fund’s goal is to help fill gaps in farm operations that were created by the current economic challenges from the COVID-19 pandemic. Awardees used their funds for many things, including costs associated with:

- Cold storage and other methods of extending the shelf life of their harvests
- Safety supplies such as hand-washing stations, masks and extra product packaging
- Transitioning to an online ordering system
- Unexpectedly high prices for supplies such as seeds, plants, animal feed, etc.
- Lost income from market closures and spring product sales
- Pasturing livestock longer while waiting for an appointment with a slaughterhouse
- Expanding production to meet rising demand for local food

# OUTCOMES



223

Underserved  
Farmers Funded



\$160,429

Distributed  
to Farmers



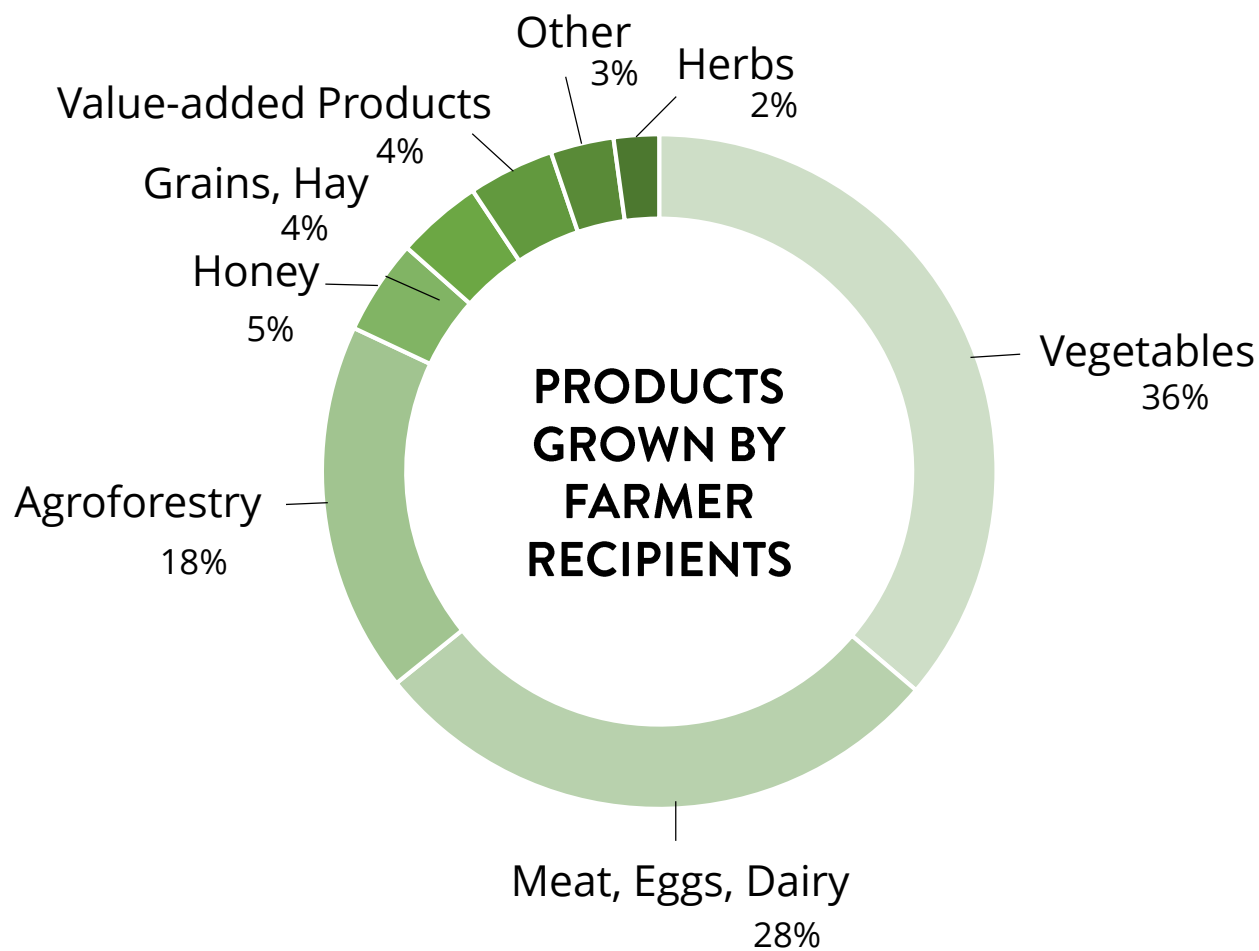
45

Central  
Appalachian  
Counties

***"Ironically, I have a higher demand for produce than pre- COVID-19. Many local residents are inquiring and searching for fresh local produce and I am working harder to meet that demand and require more help with labor... As a result of COVID-19 I have had to spend extra funds on packaging supplies to be in compliance with safety regulations."***

**- CAFFF recipient / Letcher Co., KY**





**Figure 1.** Agricultural products produced by all farmer grant recipients. Agroforestry products include fruit, nuts, mushrooms, forest herbs, and maple syrup. Other includes flowers, potted plants, hemp, wine and firewood.



**186 Appalachians**  
**54 African Americans**  
**49 Women**  
**33 Veterans**  
**27 People with Disabilities**  
**5 Immigrants**  
**3 Latinx**  
**1 Indigenous**

# CENTRAL APPALACHIAN FAMILY FARMER FUND

*The CAFFF has thus far funded 171 farmers with \$121,429 in 45 Appalachian counties across West Virginia, Kentucky, Virginia, Tennessee and Ohio.*

**Table 1. CAFFF Awards Disbursed per Appalachian County**

KENTUCKY	
Bell	3
Breathitt	6
Clay	7
Clinton	2
Estill	10
Floyd	4
Harlan	1
Jackson	13
Johnson	3
Knott	2
Knox	13
Laurel	7
Lee	3
Leslie	1
Letcher	24
Owsley	8
Perry	7
Pike	6
Whitley	16
Wolfe	2
TENNESSEE	
Carter	2
Greene	1
Other	1
Washington	1

VIRGINIA	
Carroll	1
Floyd	1
Rockbridge	1
Scott	2
Smyth	1
Tazewell	1
Washington	1
Wise	4
OHIO	
Highland	1
Muskingum	1
WEST VIRGINIA	
Barbour	1
Clay	1
Fayette	1
Grant	1
Jefferson	1
Marion	1
McDowell	2
Pendleton	1
Preston	2
Roane	1
Summers	1
Wayne	1



# KENTUCKY BLACK FARMER FUND

After launching the first round of applications for the CAFFF and in the midst of the active Black Live Matters movement across the country, the Board of Community Farm Alliance saw a need to provide additional support to black farmers in Kentucky, including those farming outside of Appalachian counties.

To accomplish this, CFA forged a relationship with Black Soil, a social enterprise centered around educating and celebrating the narratives, experiences and expertise of black farmers in Kentucky. The KBFF Review Committee was comprised of leaders within the black agriculture community.

The KBFF was administered by Community Farm Alliance. In addition to \$750 awards, recipients received a free CFA membership and the opportunity to guide and participate in the future work of this fund and associated programming.

Many awardees of the KBFF requested funds to increase their production to meet the needs of their community due to grocery store closures or reduced stock.

***“COVID-19 affected my community by having empty shelves of the nearest grocery store. We are already in a food insecure community and the strain on the supply chain, put an even deeper strain on this food insecure community. Production needed to be increased to help my community that was in need.”***

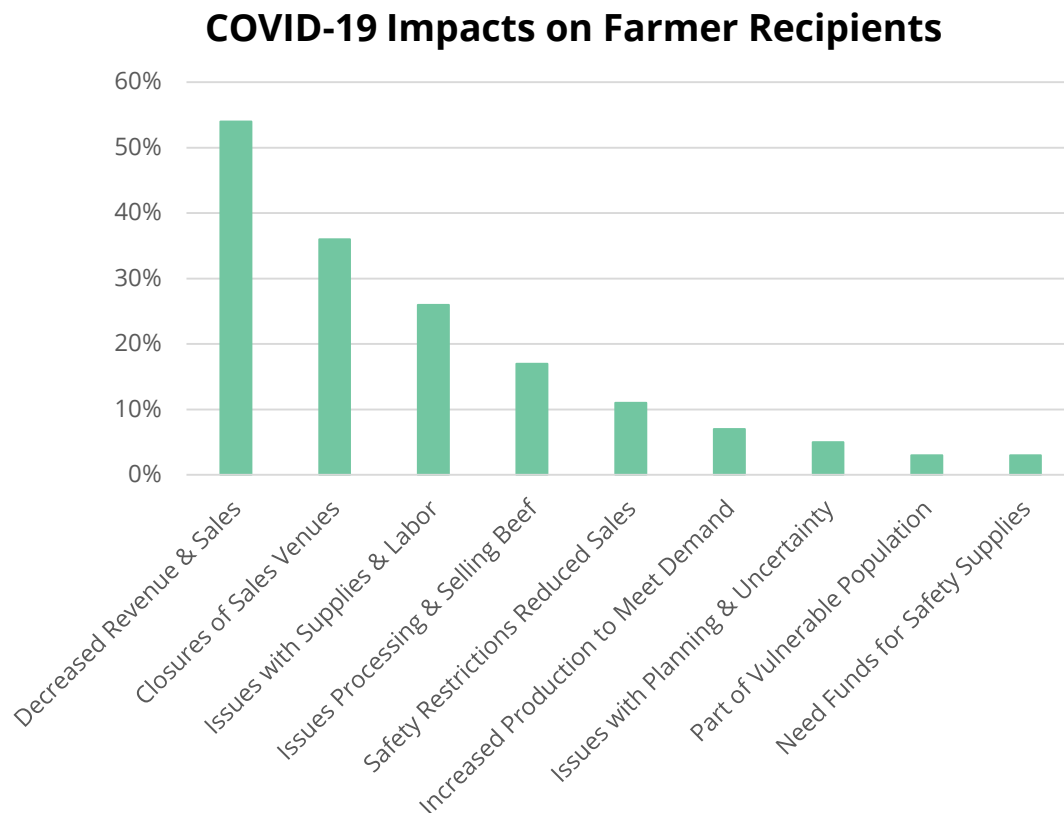
***– KBFF recipient***

Regarding a KBFF recipient, a farmers market manager said, ***“JD and his wife and stepson really blossomed this season. Their booth kept getting better and better. They went from hand-scrawled price signs to artfully handmade decorated signs. And lots of people shopped with them-even made a beeline for them. I suspect a lot of customers wanted to show their support in a general way to the Black Lives Matter movement and atmosphere of the summer. And I noticed we had a slight increase in black customers at the market and they always shopped with JD. A success story- at least for this season!”***

**Table 2. KBFF Awards Disbursed per County**

KENTUCKY	
Adair	6
Anderson	1
Bourbon	1
Breckenridge	1
Fayette	5
Green	2
Hart	2
Jefferson	8
Jessamine	1
LaRue	4
Laurel	1
Lincoln	2
Logan	1
Madison	2
Marion	1
Meade	1
Mercer	1
Montgomery	1
Muhlenberg	1
Scott	1
Shelby	1
Taylor	3
Warren	3
Washington	1
Wayne	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>52</b>

# COVID-19 IMPACTS



**Figure 2. Self-reported COVID-19 impacts on all farmer recipients (total = 223). Many recipients listed multiple impacts.**

Applicants described a wide range of COVID-19 impacts. The most common impact described was a decrease in sales and revenue (54%). One recipient described,

*"COVID-19 has reduced traffic and sales to our farm and farm store,"* while another shared *"Sales dropped 90% compared to last year."*

Often a decrease in sales was related to closures in sales venues, such as farmers markets, restaurants and events, which was the second most common COVID impact (36%).

*"All of our bigger events have been cancelled this year... These events were big events for our value added sales. Just one day at Hillbilly Days was a \$3,000 event last year,"* shared a CAFFF recipient in Eastern Kentucky.

Many farmers were also impacted by sold-out supplies, including seeds and transplants, increased prices of supplies and additional shipping costs, and trouble finding labor when it was needed. This resulted in either increased costs of production or major delays in planting and harvesting. One recipient shared, *"I have had a hard time finding seeds and plants this year and the prices have gone up due to low availability."*

Nationwide slaughterhouse shutdowns and low beef prices also caused major losses in the region, where farmers often had increased costs to pasture their animals longer while waiting for an appointment to have them processed.



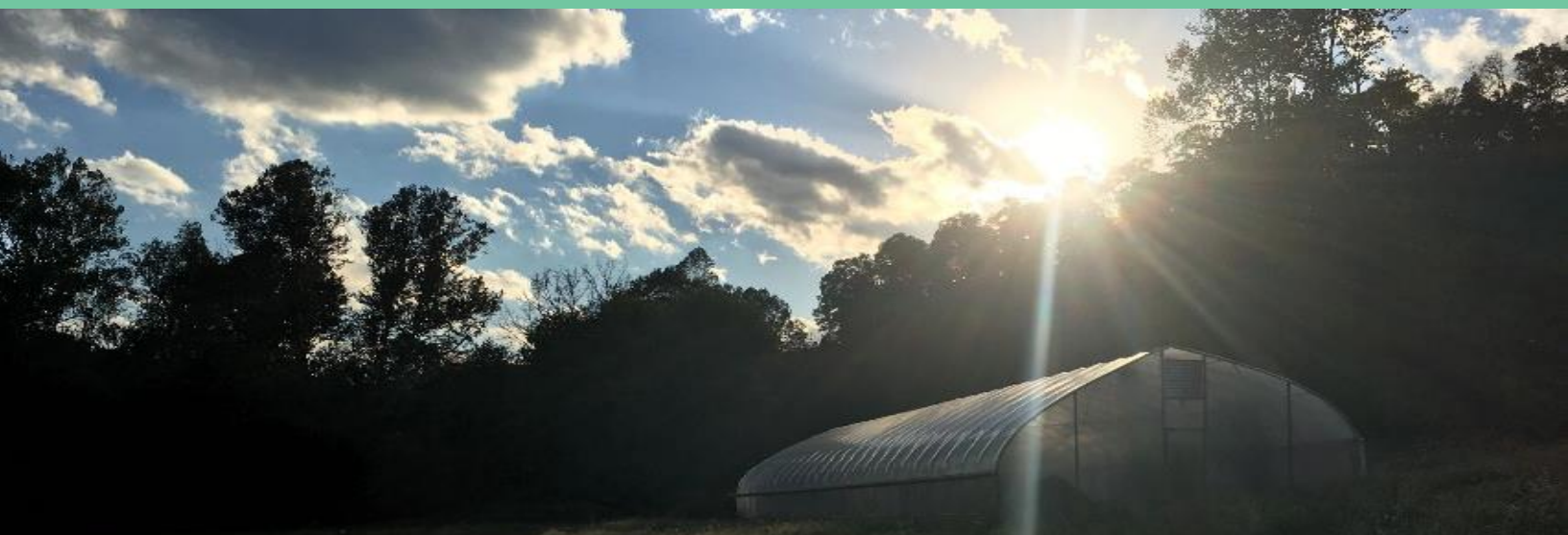
# WHAT WE LEARNED

**The COVID-19 pandemic has made a few things very clear.**

(1) In times of crisis, people turn to their neighbors. Local food systems, with their short supply chains, can respond quickly to the needs of their communities, providing fresh and healthy produce, meat, eggs and more in a safe environment. This in turn builds community wealth and resiliency.

(2) Federal aid often leaves small and diversified farms out of the picture. And it is simply not worth it for these farmers to spend great amounts of time going through the federal aid application process, only to receive pennies on the dollar for their losses.

(3) COVID-19 has highlighted community vulnerabilities and has initiated local and regional dialogues about building resiliency in not only the food supply, but also water, housing and energy, including how to address climate change.



## WHAT'S NEXT

**Partners in the Central Appalachian Network are continuing to monitor the needs of family farms throughout the pandemic and in conjunction with CAN's Healthy Food Access Project, are seeking additional funding to continue this important work.**

Community Farm Alliance's partnership with Black Soil has opened a new avenue in CFA's work, specifically focused on supporting farmers of color. CFA and Black Soil are now working together to develop and distribute a Black Farmer Needs Assessment, to identify the needs of Kentucky's Black farmers and inform the development of future CFA programs.

Through this partnership, CFA is working to develop a sustainable, long-term support system for farmers of color in Kentucky, including expanding the Kentucky Black Farmer Fund into a permanent fund for Farmers of Color across the state.

# THANKS TO OUR PARTNERS!



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