

2024 ANNUAL REPORT

Resilient Landscapes, Lasting Impact

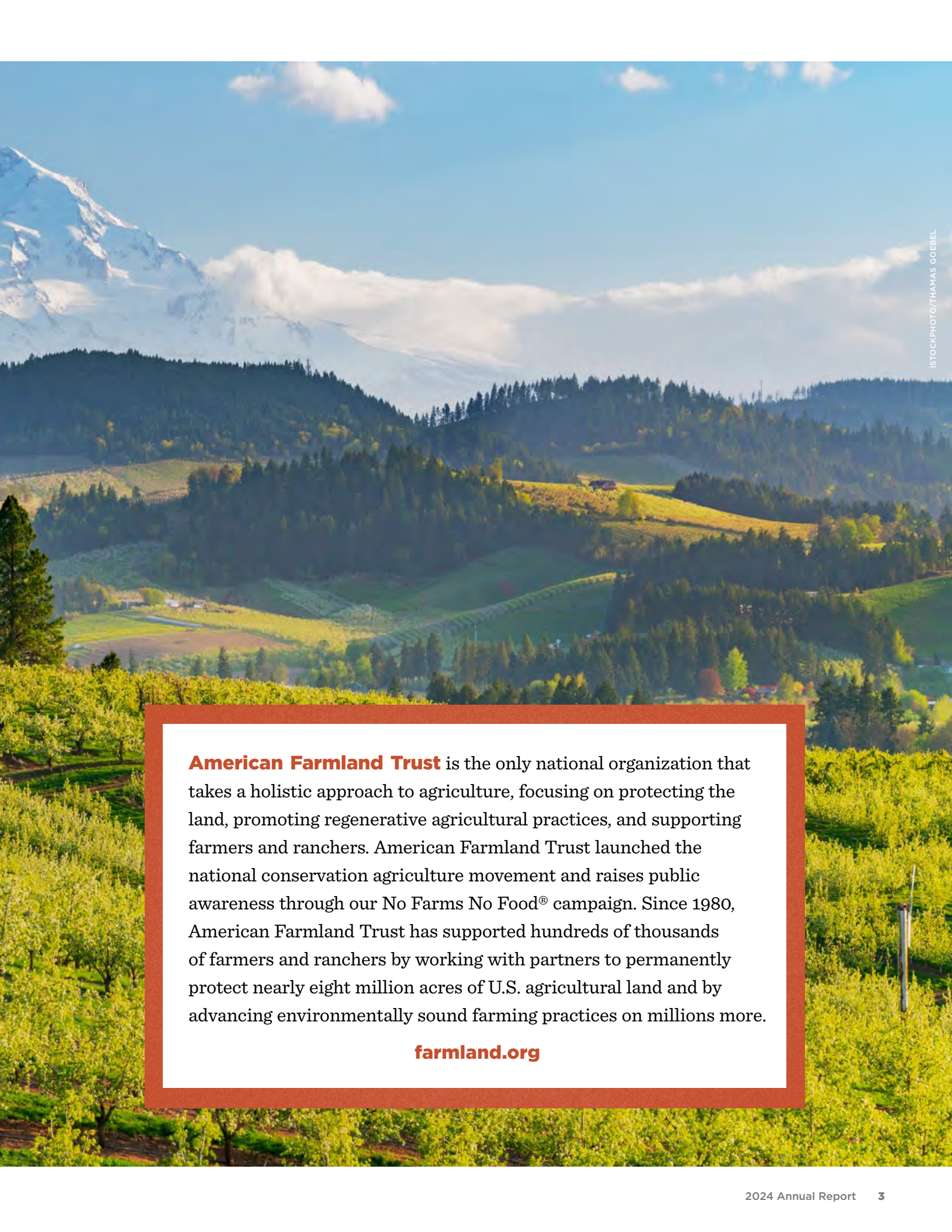


American Farmland Trust
SAVING THE LAND THAT SUSTAINS US



ON THE COVER: Early morning light shines on farmland in western Loudoun County, Virginia (iStockphoto by Gerville). Inset circles: North Carolina farmer Joe Thompson with soybeans (Shawn Linehan); Riverland Farms, a vegetable and fruit farm in Corvallis, Oregon (Shawn Linehan); Mino Bimaadiziwin Farm, an Indigenous-owned farm operated by the Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, Wisconsin (USDA).

Pear orchards bloom in the valley below Oregon's Mount Hood.



ISTOCKPHOTO/THOMAS GOEBEL

American Farmland Trust is the only national organization that takes a holistic approach to agriculture, focusing on protecting the land, promoting regenerative agricultural practices, and supporting farmers and ranchers. American Farmland Trust launched the national conservation agriculture movement and raises public awareness through our No Farms No Food® campaign. Since 1980, American Farmland Trust has supported hundreds of thousands of farmers and ranchers by working with partners to permanently protect nearly eight million acres of U.S. agricultural land and by advancing environmentally sound farming practices on millions more.

farmland.org

*Munching organic
blueberries at Berkey's
Blueberries in
Lebanon, Oregon.*

*Farmers have only
temporary control over
their land. It can be
theirs for a lifetime and
no longer. The public's
interest, however, goes
on and on, endlessly, if
nations are to endure.*

Dr. Hugh Hammond Bennett
pioneer of soil conservation

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SHAWN LINEHAN

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From the Leadership

For 45 years, American Farmland Trust has championed conservation agriculture at a national scale.

We are unique in our approach—considering not just the land, but also the people who farm it and the vital relationships that sustain agriculture.

In 2024, American Farmland Trust achieved unprecedented milestones. We expanded our reach, strengthened our programs, and deepened our impact. Seven years ago, our staff was just 20% of current size. Our regional work has grown from a handful of states to 34, and our national initiatives have quadrupled in scale.

This extraordinary growth has been possible because of you—our members, donors, and steadfast supporters. Your commitment ensures that American Farmland Trust is positioned to advance our mission in a time of historic challenges.

As you'll read in the following report, this past year we played a pivotal role in shaping transformative initiatives while promoting agricultural innovation and resilience—from California and Washington state to Maine and New York and all the heartland in between.

Yet 2025 presents daunting new challenges. The economic and

Sea Matías of Serra Vida farm in Delaware Country, New York, worked with American Farmland Trust to find land to farm.





John Piotti



Grant Winthrop

political landscape has shifted, and federal funding for agriculture and conservation is under fire. American Farmland Trust remains committed to ensuring that our vital national resources are not only protected but also enlisted to help drive meaningful change. Our on-the-ground efforts reinforce a fundamental truth: farming done right is key to combating climate change, safeguarding food security, and strengthening rural economies.

Throughout our history, American Farmland Trust has advanced farmland protection, sustainable farming practices, and smart agricultural policies through research, advocacy, and hands-on programs. In this report, you'll see how we are supporting farmers and ranchers, tackling farmland loss, championing regenerative agriculture, and leading groundbreaking research to drive policy change at every level.

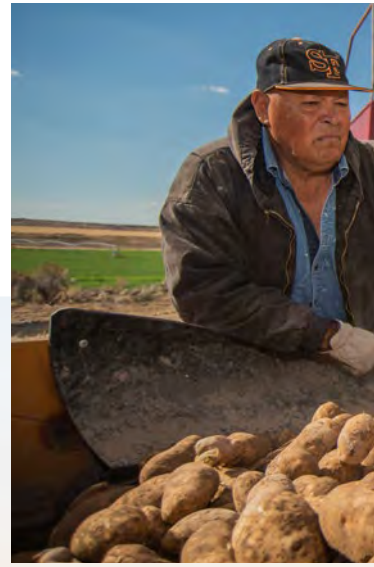
With your generous support, we will continue to create and implement solutions designed to transform agriculture, protect our precious farmland, and meet the urgent challenges ahead. The future of our farms, our food, our citizens, and our planet depends on the choices we make today.

Thank you for standing with us.


John Piotti
PRESIDENT & CEO


Grant Winthrop
BOARD CHAIR

THE LAND



America's farmers and ranchers face growing pressures as they work to feed the nation. Over the past 20 years, the U.S. has lost tens of millions of acres of farmland and ranchland due to poor urban planning, unchecked development, and economic factors such as rising costs. This decline in farmland and ranchland threatens local food systems, ecosystems, and our nation's resilience. Yet, thanks to your support, American Farmland Trust and our partners at land trusts and state and federal farmland protection programs have saved nearly eight million acres.



Challenge

According to our report, **“Farms Under Threat 2040: Choosing an Abundant Future,”** the U.S. loses 2,000 acres of agricultural land to development every day. In 2024, this rapid loss of our most productive land continued to jeopardize our nation’s capacity to produce food and safeguard our most precious natural resources.



Key Successes

Saving Working Lands

- American Farmland Trust permanently protected more than 10,800 acres of farmland and ranchland in Wisconsin, California, Indiana, and Wyoming. Our innovative approach not only employs agricultural conservation easements to keep farms viable but helps landowners maintain environmentally sound practices. In addition, many of our land protection projects are designed to facilitate transfer to the next generation.
- Our **National Agricultural Land Network**, or NALN, strengthens the capacity of people and groups working to save agricultural land. In 2024, NALN grew to over 1,400 organizations and individuals from Alabama to Wyoming. Our state NALN roundtables helped build support for new state-level strategies and programs to save farmland and ranchland.

And the NALN used webinars, an online community platform, and a monthly Network News to keep its members informed about American Farmland Trust research findings related to saving land.

- In Idaho, American Farmland Trust worked with local partners to enact important new farmland protection legislation. The Agricultural Protection Area Act, passed by the Idaho State Legislature in 2024, promotes the protection of Idaho working farms and ranches that provide important economic and cultural benefits.
- Our training on **Local Advocacy: Protecting Farmland in Washington** convened farmers and food systems advocates from across the state to learn how to push local governments to plan for agriculture and

SHAWN LINEHAN; INSET: KIRSTEN STROUGH/ U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Top: A farmer sorts potatoes in Declo, Idaho. Left: Rich Collins’ farm in California’s Central Valley.



ISTOCKPHOTO/DEPTHOFFIELD

Flowers bloom on a tulip farm in Rhode Island.

the future of food. Since 2017, Washington experienced a 5.6% reduction of land in farms, with over 800,000 acres of

farmland no longer in production. The total number of farms decreased by 10.4%, with the loss of over 3,700 farms.

- American Farmland Trust and a coalition of farmland advocates celebrated success when the Rhode Island State Legislature and Governor Dan McKee passed critical legislation to boost funding dedicated to farmland protection and other land conservation efforts. The state's latest budget includes \$5 million for farmland conservation, \$3 million for state open space, and \$5 million for forest stewardship. This land conservation win was a result of active advocacy dedicated to ensuring that Rhode Island's natural resources are preserved.

- In Texas, American Farmland Trust served as the lead sponsor for the 2024 Texas Land Conservation Conference



ALL PHOTOS BY SHAWN LINEHAN

The Upton family are conservation pioneers in California, known for their dedication to wildlife. American Farmland Trust protected the ranch with an agricultural conservation easement.

A Conservation Legacy at Lost Wagon Wheel Ranch

A 14-ACRE WILDLIFE RETREAT on Lost Wagon Wheel Ranch in Chowchilla, California, attracts hawks, owls, bobcats, and more. Since 1946, the Upton family has operated the ranch with a strong conservation ethic.

"We work to save wildlife because we have an obligation to keep the land the way it was originally," said Kole Upton, who passed away in 2024. "It's a family

effort. If we see a harrier raptor nesting in the field, we wait until the fledglings can leave safely before we harvest."

When a transportation project threatened the ranch, American Farmland Trust partnered with Kole Upton and California's Department of Conservation in 2022 to secure an easement protecting 1,062 acres. "Kole was an exceptional person and a visionary

conservationist," said Alison Volk, land protection projects deputy director. "His partnership kept Lost Wagon Wheel in the Upton family and secured these vital resources for future generations."

This easement was the first project of American Farmland Trust's San Joaquin Land and Water Strategy, which addresses future impacts on the region's farmland and water resources.

ALL PHOTOS BY SHAWN LINEHAN



A view of the recently protected Lor farm in Minnesota. Right: Kue Lor and Bao Xiong and their grandchildren.

A New Future for Singing Hills Dairy and the Lors

FOR 26 YEARS, LYNNE REECK poured her heart into Singing Hills Dairy, crafting small-batch goat cheese on a farm surrounded by rolling hills and ancient oaks. Nearing retirement, she faced a tough choice: sell to a developer or find a way to keep the land in farming.

Meanwhile, Kue Lor and Bao Xiong, Hmong farmers in Minnesota, had spent 20 years growing produce on rented land, only to lose leases abruptly—sometimes after planting scores of

crops. “It had always been a dream of mine to own a piece of land,” Kue said, “but because of finances, I couldn’t do it myself.”

The Lors were exactly the kind of farmers Lynne hoped would continue her farm, but the land’s high price was a barrier. With increasing development pressure, farmland near urban markets is becoming even more expensive.

American Farmland Trust’s Buy-Protect-Sell-plus program helped bridge the gap. By protecting the farm from development, American

Farmland Trust made it possible for the Lors to purchase a farm of their own.

“This project secured the future of Singing Hills and created a model for helping more farmers access land,” said Ben Kurtzman of American Farmland Trust. Now, the Lors can continue feeding their community for generations to come.



in Austin. As a member of the Texas Land Trust Council, we partner with organizations to protect agricultural lands in Texas, which has more threatened agricultural land than any other state, according to our Farms Under Threat: 2040 analysis. At the conference, we presented preliminary results from a pilot study with partners to prioritize the conservation of agricultural lands that are important for wildlife habitat.



ISTOCKPHOTO/HUNDLEY_PHOTOGRAPHY

A Landmark Easement at Ladder Ranch

FOR SIX GENERATIONS, THE O'Toole family has raised cattle and sheep at Ladder Ranch in Wyoming's Little Snake River Valley, which abounds with wildlife and scenic vistas.

In 2024, American Farmland Trust partnered with the O'Toole family to permanently protect 3,000 acres of grazing land on the Carbon County ranch—our first agricultural conservation easement in the state and one of the largest in American Farmland Trust's history. This easement not only secures productive ranchland for future generations but also safeguards the region's ecological balance.

"Protecting Ladder Ranch permanently with an easement is a big win," said Director of Land Protection Ben Kurtzman. "In addition to ensuring that a significant number of acres remain open to the next generation of ranchers, the easement also protects a virtually unmatched natural habitat as well as



American Farmland Trust worked with the O'Toole family to permanently protect Ladder Ranch, a sheep and cattle operation on the border of Wyoming and Colorado.

migration corridors for a variety of threatened species."

This achievement was made possible through funding from USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), the state of Wyoming, and the Little Snake River Conservation District—demonstrating the power of collaboration in keeping working lands intact for ranchers and wildlife.

One goal of the project is to inspire further land protection in the Mountain West.

"The use of easements to protect rangeland in this area is not common, and the project has spurred inquiries from other ranchers interested in conserving neighboring land to protect their community's rural vitality and ranching heritage," Kurtzman added.

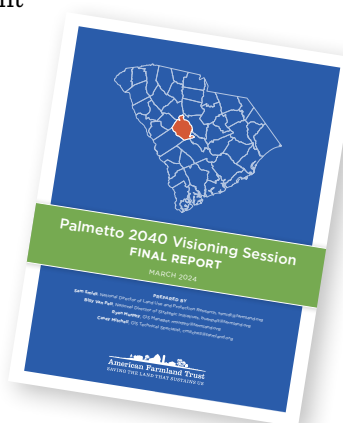
- In 2023, American Farmland Trust received a competitive grant from USDA's Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP) to complete multiple projects that protect up to 1,000 acres of farmland in Virginia through our Buy-Protect-Sell-plus model. The innovative solution helps farmers who are priced out of buying land. In one such project, we helped Virginia farmer [Dustin Watson](#), the fourth generation to own Long Acre Farm. We supported Dustin by securing funds for an agricultural conservation easement, which allowed him to buy his aunt's share of his family's land and

protect it forever. The project—the first of its kind in the state—is part of our pioneering [Regenerate Virginia plan](#).

- South Carolina is at high risk for future farmland loss. In partnership with the South Carolina Department of Agriculture, Lexington County Farm Bureau, and Sustain SC, we launched the [Palmetto 2040: Visioning Session](#), a geospatial mapping and policy analysis

to identify future threats to South Carolina's farmland. With the state's Lexington County as a pilot, our analysis projected land at highest risk of development by 2040. American Farmland Trust made 10 recommendations for how Lexington County should move forward to protect its quality of life.

- Advocacy by our Wisconsin Farmland Protection team led Governor Tony Evers to allocate \$80 million for farmers in the 2025–2027 budget, including \$15 million



to revive the unfunded PACE program. Partnering with others, we secured \$7.5 million to protect nine farms (1,050+ acres). Buoyed by this success, we secured an additional \$1.9 million to expand farmland protection capacity in Missouri, Illinois, and Indiana.

- Our Land Use and Protection Research team created a Massachusetts Farmland of Local Importance Screening Tool, now used by state and local agencies, land trusts, and research institutions to help farmers



USDA/LANCE CHEUNG

A flooded cranberry bog ready for harvesting in South Carver, Massachusetts.

Protecting Wisconsin Farmland for the Future

GEORGE AND ELAINE MONIS' 91-acre farm in Ashippun, Wisconsin, has been in the family for 175 years, passed down through generations since George's great-grandfather purchased it in 1876. The farm, which produces no-till corn and soy, is part of Dodge County, a region known for its diverse agriculture and family farms, 96% of which are family-owned.

In 1965, George and Elaine moved onto the farm, raising their four children on the land. Twelve years ago, their son Peder took over the farm operations. The

Monis family actively supports farmland protection, hosting Tall Pines Conservancy's annual Ride to the Barns event, raising funds for preserving local farmland.

However, with development encroaching on nearby land, the Monis family sought ways to protect their farm's future. They chose an agricultural conservation easement funded in part through the [Wisconsin Farmland Protection Partnership](#). American Farmland Trust leads the partnership, a coalition of organizations that work together to protect Wisconsin farmland, conservation easements,

and regenerative agricultural practices.

Through the partnership—supported in part by NRCS's Regional Conservation Partnership Program—the Monis family received compensation for the value of their easement, which perpetually restricts development on the land.

The easement represents more than protection; it reflects the family's hope for future generations to connect with the land. "I trust that other generations will have the opportunity to fall in love with the land too," said Kim Monis.



George And Elaine Monis protected their Wisconsin family farmland for future generations through an agricultural conservation easement.



PIERO TALCO

I am grateful for American Farmland Trust's efforts to protect farmland in Idaho. In addition to AFT's efforts to support leaders on the local level, AFT worked closely with the Idaho Farm Bureau to craft legislation that will provide landowners such as myself with incentives to stay on the land and continue farming.

Jennifer Riebe, farmer and county commissioner





ISTOCKPHOTO/JENNIFER SHARP



The historic farmers market in Kansas City, Missouri.

evaluate their eligibility for farmland protection programs. The team's work in Texas helped farmers and staff from USDA's NRCS prioritize farmland and ranchland for riparian restoration, water quality, and wildlife habitat, which helped the farmers bolster their cases for protecting their land.

- In Missouri, American Farmland Trust and Cultivate Kansas City partnered on an RCPP grant through NRCS to support land protection for urban farmers. The project will permanently protect five parcels of significant urban farmland that face intense development pressure and address the unique natural resource concerns of urban and

innovative producers in the Kansas City metropolitan area.

- Our [Farmland Information Center](#) is a clearinghouse for information about farmland protection and stewardship, developed in partnership with USDA's NRCS. The FIC tracks PACE program activity, as well as the acres protected by land trusts. In 2024, the FIC estimated that nearly eight million acres of farmland and ranchland are now permanently protected through agricultural conservation easements nationwide.



Jean and Charlie Siegchrist of the protected Barber Farm in Vermont.

SHAWN LINEHAN

Cattle graze near Boise, Idaho.

THE PRACTICES

An aerial photograph of a vast, green agricultural field. A small, green tractor with a red implement is visible in the center of the field, moving from left to right. The field is divided into sections by straight lines, likely furrows or rows of crops. The overall color is a vibrant green, with some yellowish-green patches. In the top right corner, there is a circular inset showing a close-up of a person's hand reaching towards a plant with yellow flowers.

For decades, American Farmland Trust has worked to research, test, and advance innovative farming practices that restore soil health, store carbon, and build agricultural resilience. These practices, which boost productivity while making farms more resilient to extreme weather, include conservation methods like no-till, cover cropping, and composting to rebuild soil health and store carbon. However, scaling up requires time, money, and support. Investing in regenerative farming practices is essential for a future where U.S. farms and ranches thrive and contribute to a sustainable future for us all.



Challenge

For America's farmers and ranchers, extreme weather events such as droughts, floods, and storms directly impact their crops, livestock, and livelihoods. As these challenges intensify, the need for regenerative farming practices has never been greater. Healthy soils make farms and ranches more resilient.

Key Successes

Advancing Regenerative Farming Practices

- American Farmland Trust partnered with the USDA Agricultural Research Service (ARS) and Regrow on four Resilience Reports evaluating Illinois corn and soybeans, western New York forage crops, California almonds, and California wine grapes. With climate change intensifying, new research methods are needed to demonstrate how crops and soil management practices will perform in the future. The project used satellite imagery and a computer model to evaluate various soil health practices and how likely they are to benefit farmers over time.
- Our team in California released a free guide that helps farmers and ranchers find funding for agricultural practices that build soil health, protect natural resources, and conserve groundwater. This funding for conservation planning can be applied towards everything from cover crops and irrigation management to hedgerows and pollinator plants.
- In a significant move to advance the integration of solar energy and agriculture, American Farmland Trust launched a partnership with Sol Systems—a leader in renewable energy financing and development—to promote solar development alongside ecosystem-focused land use practices. The initiative aims to reduce the environmental impact of solar energy projects while promoting agricultural and land stewardship practices that focus on sustainability and conservation.

Top: Christine Gemperle checks the cover crop in her California orchard. Left: John Macauley of Macauley Farm in Groveland, New York, uses a roller crimper in a beneficial cover crop practice called “planting green.”

- American Farmland Trust's Climate and Agriculture team in New England launched a year-long course in Soil Health Management Planning that guides farmers through the NRCS Soil Health Management Planning process in a peer group with other farmers. The pilot launch of the program included 10 small-scale diversified vegetable, hemp, flower, and fruit farmers from Connecticut.
- We launched two major partnerships working with corn, soy, wheat, cotton, dairy, and beef producers on ground-breaking projects that help farmers adopt practices that benefit soil health and climate resiliency. American Farmland Trust carried out year-long Advanced Soil Health Trainings to build

a community of trusted, highly trained advisors to work on the ground with farmers.

- Building soil health provides both economic and environmental benefits. American Farmland Trust produced **26 soil health case studies** in conjunction with NRCS, providing farmers from Idaho to Oklahoma with high-quality, real-world examples that make the economic case for adopting regenerative practices.



- As part of a special national partnership with NRCS, American Farmland Trust began work in 13 states (Washington, California, Wyoming, Arizona, Texas, Missouri, South Carolina, North Carolina, Georgia, New Jersey, New York, Vermont and Maine) to help farmers, ranchers, and landowners plan and implement conservation practices, permanently protect their land, and enroll in Farm Bill conservation programs.
- We were the lead sponsor and major force behind the 2024 Solar Farm Summit in Chicago, the largest cross-sector forum on agrivoltaics in the U.S. The event drew 750 attendees from 21 states, bringing together farmers and solar experts to discuss soil health, land access, agrivoltaics research, and livestock grazing.

Farmer-Led Conversations in New England

A HISTORIC DROUGHT PUSHED New England farmers to the brink in 2022, drying irrigation ponds, slashing hay yields, and forcing tough decisions about the future. At Plainville Farm in Hubbardston, Massachusetts, Wally Czajkowski summed up the reality: "There is no more normal." His words inspired American Farmland Trust's No More Normal Farmer Roundtable series, creating a space for farmers to share climate adaptation strategies.

At these roundtables, farmers voiced growing concerns about unpredictable weather disrupting planting, extreme temperature swings reducing yields, and shifting rainfall patterns complicating pest and weed control. Development



Erinn Roberts (AFT) and John McGarry of Muck and Mystery Farm, part of Osamequin Farm in southeast Mass., sample soil.

pressures worsen the problem, forcing wildlife onto farms and increasing crop damage. The loss

of deep frosts has intensified soil compaction, making farming even harder.

Despite these challenges, farmers are adapting. Many are investing in soil health, using cover crops and mulching to build resilience. Others are scaling down operations or strengthening customer relationships to navigate financial uncertainty.

Through these conversations, one thing is clear: farmers aren't waiting for stability—they're forging ahead, finding new ways to thrive in an unpredictable climate. Our No More Normal roundtables foster farmer-led solutions, ensuring that shared knowledge leads to stronger, more resilient farms.

CARO ROSZELL

Innovative Farmers Test “Planting Green”

FOR THE PAST FIVE YEARS, American Farmland Trust has partnered with farmers in the **Genesee River Demonstration Farms Network** of western New York to test soil health practices and share results. What began with two farms has grown to 20 across the Genesee River Watershed and Great Lakes region, reflecting a rising interest in sustainable farming.

In 2024, American Farmland Trust released case studies from three farmers testing “planting green”—planting crops directly into a living cover crop. Second-generation dairy farmer JD Pankow, who manages 1,500 acres and 800 cows, has practiced strip-till and no-till since 2003 and cover

cropping since 2005. In 2020, he added planting green to his conservation toolbox.

JD joined AFT’s two-year study to compare planting green with standard cover cropping and no cover crop. The results? Higher yields and reduced fertilizer inputs—but with conditions playing a key role. “It’s not for every field,” JD says, “but where it worked, it worked well.”

For JD, on-farm trials provide more than data—they offer real-world insights. His experience echoes a broader lesson: improving soil health can support both the



JD Pankow of New York tested soil health practices on his farm.

environment and a farm’s bottom line, proving sustainability and profitability can go hand in hand.

- American Farmland Trust established an on-the-ground presence for the first time in New Jersey, hiring two staff to advance agrivoltaics and agricultural land protection. The new staff members accelerate our impact in the state, which is projected to lose the highest percentage of farmland to development by 2040, according to our “Farms Under Threat” research.
- A program to help Illinois farmers earn rewards for soil health improvements is paying dividends for farmers and the environment. The initiative pays Illinois farmers to adopt regenerative practices, such as cover crops and no-till, in order to improve soil health, water quality, and farm profitability. In 2024, American Farmland Trust and our partner ADM enrolled over 225,000 acres in cover crops and 630,000 acres

in emissions scoring through the re: generations™ program.

- Our Water Initiative created a seven-part series for farmers and grazers called “A Farmer’s Guide to Soil Health Economics.” The guides—including three row crop



Jim Ifft, a cover crop leader in Illinois.

and four grazing guides—compile recent economic studies and format them into easy-to-read handouts written specifically for farmers and agricultural professionals. The guides were viewed over 1,700 times on our website and presented at multiple conservation conferences.

- Thanks to our Soil Health Stewards program, organized by the National Agricultural Land Network, staff from 127 land trusts and public agencies were trained on the basics and benefits of farm soil health practices, and we developed plans to guide their work. During our fourth year of training and support through this program, we not only equipped land protection practitioners with new strategies to engage farmers and ranchers, but we also galvanized participating organizations to do more.

We don't know what the future will hold, but protecting our farm means we will always have land to farm, and we know we need healthy soils to be successful.

Morgan and Kevin Bond of B&R Farms,
Schuylkill County, Pennsylvania

The Power of Soil Health Trainings

HEALTHY SOIL IS THE FOUNDATION of a thriving farm, and farmers are leading the way in restoring it.

In 2024, American Farmland Trust expanded our Advanced Soil Health Training, equipping more agricultural “influencers” with the tools to expand regenerative practices in row crops, funded by the USDA’s Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities program.

With networks across the Midwest, New York, the Southeast, and the Mid-Atlantic—and a New England network coming soon—129 trainees, including 62 historically underserved producers, are helping transition their fellow farmers to climate-smart systems.

By strengthening farmer-led networks, American Farmland Trust made a lasting impact: healthier



Virginia farmer Joe Gray with wife Candace and sons Asa and Benjamin.

soils, greater resilience to drought, improved yields, and stronger farm economies.

Joe Gray, a fourth-generation Virginia farmer, saw a 208% return

on investment after adopting cover crops, no-till, and better nutrient management—boosting his per-acre income by \$209 annually. After years of struggling with soils that were either too wet or too dry, he found these practices improved moisture retention, loosened compacted soil, and increased crop yields.

Savannah, a New York trainee, said, “Soil health is key to adapting to climate change. This training was a once-in-a-career opportunity—bringing together researchers and farmers to share real-world knowledge.”

With continued investment, American Farmland Trust is ensuring regenerative agriculture becomes reality, equipping farmers with the tools to build resilience and boost productivity.

Innovation Driven by Smart SolarSM

AS SOLAR ENERGY development expands across the nation, American Farmland Trust has emerged as a leading national voice representing the interests of farmers, ranchers, and landowners. With the U.S. Department of Energy estimating that 10 million acres will be needed for solar energy over the next 25 years—90% of it in rural areas—thoughtful planning is critical to balancing renewable energy goals with food security and farmland protection.

Our Farms Under Threat 2040 report found that without policy changes, 83% of future solar projects will be sited on farmland, nearly half on the most productive land. However, solar and farming

don't have to be at odds. Through our Smart SolarSM initiative, American Farmland Trust promotes agrivoltaics—a solution that intentionally integrates solar energy with agricultural production to protect high-quality farmland and ranchland and enhance farm viability while supporting domestic energy goals.

Over the past three years, American Farmland Trust has expanded our solar-focused efforts across key states, including California, Colorado, Illinois,



Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Texas, Virginia, and Washington.

In 2025, we will solidify our growing leadership role as the leading national organization driving forward agriculturally compatible solar development.

Through national conferences, partnerships, farmer stories, and policy innovation, American Farmland Trust is at the forefront, ensuring that our solar future aligns harmoniously with our agricultural heritage.

Participants in an American Farmland Trust farmer training program learn about the benefits of agrivoltaic systems at Rutgers' Agricultural Research and Extension Center in New Jersey.



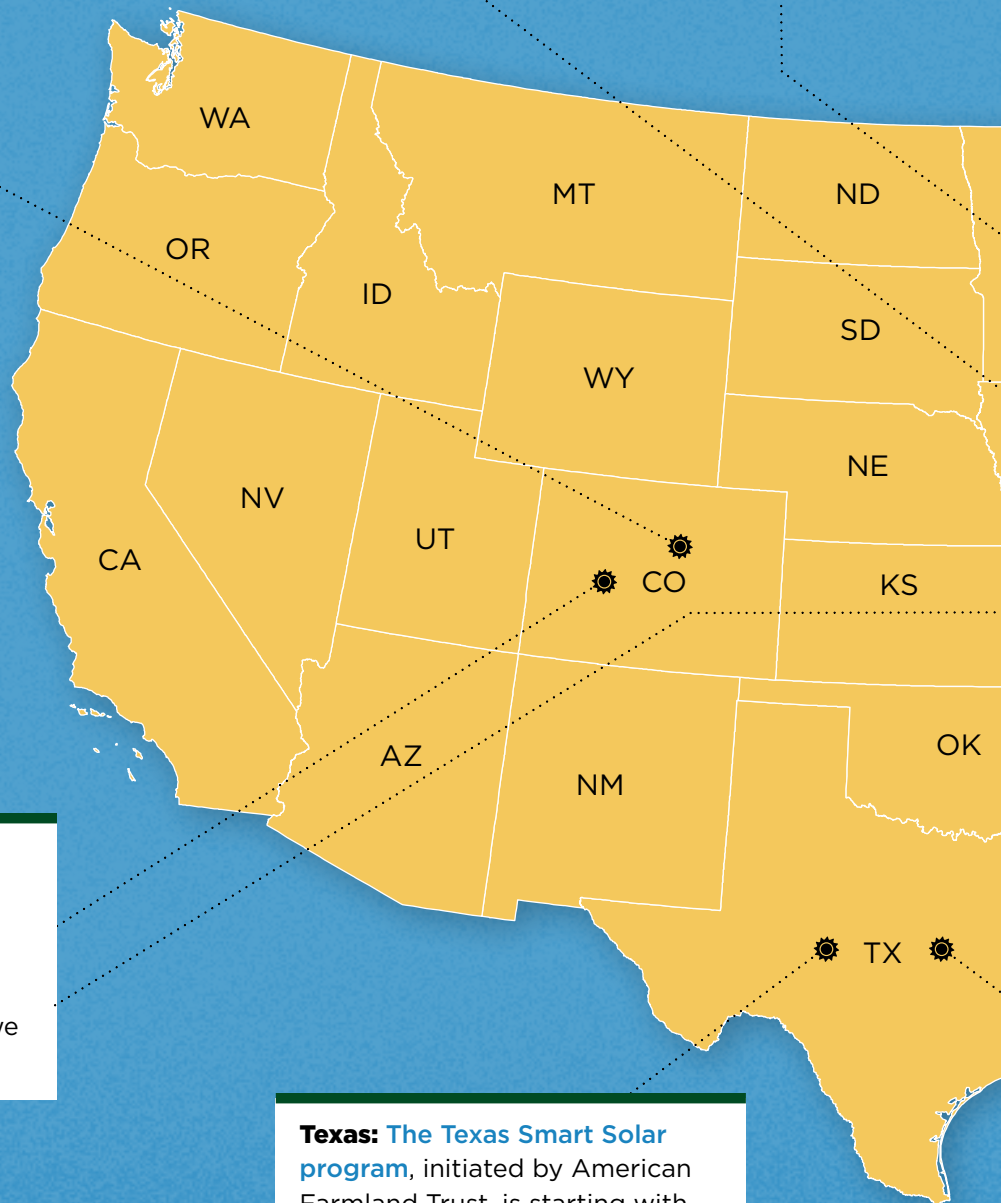


Momentum for Smart SolarSM

Denver, Colorado: At the first Agrivoltaics World Conference, American Farmland Trust took the lead as a sponsor and presenter, sharing crucial survey insights and advocating for farmer-focused solar development.

Illinois: Sol Systems, in collaboration with American Farmland Trust, launched [an innovative four-year research project](#) to examine soil health across 2,000 acres of solar sites.

Chicago, Illinois: [The 2024 Solar Farm Summit](#) brought together 750 solar stakeholders, including 75 farmers. American Farmland Trust was the title sponsor.



Colorado and Virginia: Colorado's [first-ever survey on agrivoltaics](#) garnered farmer and rancher perspectives on the integration of farming and solar energy generation. And we launched a survey in Virginia.

Texas: [The Texas Smart Solar program](#), initiated by American Farmland Trust, is starting with a new landowner survey to explore solar and agriculture compatibility.

Builds Around the Country

New York and Illinois: The Farmers Powering Communities program, led by American Farmland Trust and Edelen Renewables, is driving the development of solar projects in New York and Illinois, with plans to expand to Maryland and Michigan in 2025.

New York City: [The 2024 Climate Week NYC Summit](#), co-hosted by Food Tank and American Farmland Trust, featured a keynote conversation between John Piotti and Former Secretary of State John Kerry on agriculture and climate resilience.



Maine: American Farmland Trust was engaged in Maine, where agrivoltaics was considered in state mitigation policy.

Massachusetts: Evidence continues to build in Massachusetts demonstrating the [benefits of combining solar energy with agriculture](#).

New Jersey: A new educational initiative in New Jersey called the [Technical Assistance for Agrivoltaic Program](#) will train local farmers in agrivoltaics practices.

New Jersey: Beginning farmer Saphan Pickett of Grow Folk Urban Farmhouse [shared personal insights](#) on agrivoltaics in New Jersey.

Texas: [Texas Solar Sheep](#) is pioneering a promising model for agrivoltaics through grazing partnerships under solar panels.

THE PEOPLE

Farmers and ranchers face growing challenges—from extreme weather to economic pressures—that threaten their livelihoods, especially for small and mid-sized operations. American Farmland Trust has supported farmers and rural communities since 1980. We support rural vitality and farm viability in many ways, including microgrants and business support services to keep farms thriving. We also uplift the people who are essential to agriculture's future—including women, underserved farmers, and new growers. Our Women for the Land initiative empowers female farmers, while we help aspiring farmers secure land and resources through our Farms for a New Generation program. By investing in farmers today, we ensure a resilient, diverse agricultural future.





REBECCA DROBIS

Challenge

Women and other underserved farmers and landowners face barriers to managing land sustainably and accessing conservation programs. Meanwhile, new farmers struggle to secure land to grow their operations, and farm viability is a challenge for all farmers and ranchers. Increased support can help bolster farmers and transfer protected farmland to the next generation, ensuring a thriving and diverse agricultural future for our rural communities.

Key Successes

Supporting the People Who Power U.S. Agriculture

- Approximately 3,060 underserved farmers participated in American Farmland Trust trainings or received support from our staff—nearly twice as many as the year before. Underserved farmers include farmers who face unique circumstances and challenges, which includes socially disadvantaged farmers and ranchers, as well as women, beginning, limited resource, and veteran farmers and ranchers.
- American Farmland Trust awarded over \$700,000 to 139 farmers through this year's Brighter Future Fund, bringing total grants since 2020 to new heights. Prioritizing beginning, young, and women farmers, [these grants](#) support farm viability, land access, and regenerative practices while empowering farmers facing climate, economic, and disaster-related challenges. Special grants also aided Texas ranchers recovering from the Smokehouse Creek Fire.
- In 2024, American Farmland Trust and partners in the Land Transfer Navigator program trained or coached over 7,100 farmers, ranchers, and landowners on land succession. With 35 partner organizations, the program has supported 4,500+ farmers and launched \$1.5 million in Farm and Ranch Transition Support grants for succession planning.



Top: Carter Farms in Virginia hosted a women's learning circle with the Black Family Land Trust. Left: Kellee Matsushita-Tseng of Second Generation Seeds in Santa Cruz, California, participated in the Real Farmer Care program.

Strengthening Farms, Communities, and Markets

WITH SUPPORT FROM THE Women for the Land Southeast Transformational Grant, Sarah Morton and her family expanded their impact as farmers, leaders, and advocates for sustainable agriculture. The grant provided essential financial resources, strengthening their farm operation, fostering regional partnerships, and



Sarah Morton of Cattle Run Farms.

creating new income streams for local farmers.

Recognizing the need for hands-on training, the family transformed their farm into a regional learning hub for new and beginning farmers, with a special focus on veterans entering the food system. This hub provided practical education, mentorship, and technical assistance to help farmers build successful, sustainable operations.

To address gaps in the local supply chain, they also launched a food hub, ensuring small-scale farmers had better access to markets and economic opportunities. By connecting producers with buyers, they helped strengthen the local food system while increasing profitability for regional farmers.

A key part of their success was peer-to-peer networking and

the learning circle model, which created a space for farmers—especially women and historically underserved producers—to share experiences, challenges, and solutions. These gatherings fostered knowledge-sharing, strengthened relationships among growers, and empowered participants to improve their operations.

While the grant was awarded to Sarah Morton and Cattle Run Farms, its impact extended far beyond their farm. Through education, mentorship, and infrastructure improvements, the program helped build a stronger, more connected agricultural community—one that uplifts local farmers, supports sustainable practices, and strengthens regional food security.

- American Farmland Trust released a new Land Transfer Training curriculum, available in English and Spanish, to help beginning farmers and ranchers navigate land transitions. With roughly 300 million acres expected to change hands in the next 15 years, this resource provides key steps, legal tools, financial guidance, and communication strategies for successful transfers. Developed with agricultural experts, it supports both retiring farmers and new land seekers through worksheets, training plans, and case studies, strengthening farm succession planning nationwide.
- In partnership with the Black Family Land Trust, American Farmland Trust



Carlos L. Valery Jr. of Orinoco Cattle Products in Meredith, New York, found his farm through American Farmland Trust's New York Farmland Finder website.

launched a yearlong program supporting 20 Black and Indigenous women farmers in Virginia. Through hands-on and

virtual learning, participants explored regenerative agriculture, climate resilience, and leadership development while building



REBECCA DROBIS

Ebonie Alexander, executive director of the Black Family Land Trust and member of American Farmland Trust's board, speaks at a Virginia women's learning circle.

a strong network. Farm visits and learning circles deepened their knowledge, and each participant received a stipend.

Insights from this initiative will shape future Women for the Land programs in the Mid-Atlantic.

- American Farmland Trust's partnership with the Klamath Trinity Resource Conservation District, based in the Hoopa Valley Tribal Community in northern California, resulted in a StoryMap highlighting how Hoopa women and their families have been resilient throughout shocks to their food system over the past 170 years, and how they are embracing the power of growing crops, gathering and preserving food in traditional ways, educating youth, and forging creative partnerships on their land.
- The New England Farmer Microgrants Program (NEFMP) awarded a record \$954,850 to 117 farmers in 2024, bringing total funding to over \$2 million since its inception. Grants support

Support for California's Underserved Farming Communities

FOR MORE THAN A YEAR AND a half, Harol Gonzalez Gallardo, American Farmland Trust's California Agricultural Specialist, has worked alongside NRCS to help historically underserved farmers access the technical support needed to improve climate resilience and business viability.

Born in Cuba, Harol's passion for agriculture runs deep—his grandparents farmed peanuts, rice, and avocados, and he pursued degrees in agronomy and plant biotechnology before moving to the U.S. He began working with NRCS as a Technical Service Provider but saw a critical gap: too few Spanish-speaking specialists available to assist Latino growers in California. Now, through American Farmland Trust, he is scaling up efforts to provide in-field technical support and conservation



Harol Gonzalez Gallardo.

planning to this vital agricultural community.

Harol spends most days on farms, offering customized conservation advice, organizing

workshops, and sharing our research on soil health and regenerative practices. He also helps farmers access NRCS programs that fund more than 14 conservation practices—including irrigation upgrades, nutrient management, and soil health improvements—to increase efficiency, cut costs, and protect natural resources.

"The most fulfilling part of my job," said Harol, "is helping farmers—especially in historically underserved communities—benefit economically and environmentally from conservation practices." By bridging gaps in technical assistance and financial support, Harol ensures that more farmers can thrive in a changing climate while building a more resilient future for California agriculture.



NANCY J. PARISI

Emma Smalley of Allegany County found her land through the Farmland for a New Generation New York program.

farmland access, succession, and regenerative agriculture. Recipients include Natural Roots

Farm (MA) and Pat's Pastured (RI), improving soil health, water quality, and farm viability.

- Farmland for a New Generation New York, led by American Farmland Trust, welcomed 38 organizations to its Regional Navigators network, helping farmers access and transfer land. With support from state funding, the program has facilitated 211 matches on 10,000+ acres since 2018, ensuring farmland remains in production for future generations.
- Susan Payne joined American Farmland Trust as Senior Farmland Viability Advisor to advance our work in farmland protection, farmland access, farm viability, and other issues. As former Executive Director of New Jersey's Farmland Preservation Program, she brings over 35 years of experience in

Our Impact

Transforming North Carolina Farms, Businesses, and Leadership

OUR NORTH CAROLINA COHORT Training empowered farmers and aspiring farmers with the knowledge, resources, and networks needed to grow their businesses and lead in agriculture. A key part of the program, learning circles, created peer-to-peer spaces for women in agriculture to share expertise, connect with mentors, and navigate challenges together. The impact was profound.

Deborah Patterson, who inherited 600 acres of land, enrolled in competitive USDA conservation programs and secured a federal grant to support new and beginning farmers—connections forged in the cohort made this possible.

Erin and Carrie Martin of Footprints in the Garden expanded their farm-to-table catering business, took on

leadership of a local food hub, and began planting an orchard to diversify their farm.

Afraka Yates, initially a learning circle facilitator, secured a new role with ToxicFree NC, where she now leads peer-learning programs for BIPOC women farmers.

The program also hosted a Get Climate Smart Cohort Training for Black and Indigenous women farmers, shaping how participants approach soil conservation, policy engagement, and community resilience. “We are changing how we build resilience—not just on the farm, but by understanding the policies that affect what we do,” said one participant.

By fostering connections and sharing knowledge, learning circles are helping farmers build stronger businesses, advocate for

change, and create a more resilient agricultural future—together.

Erin Martin of Footprints in the Garden in Mt. Olive, North Carolina, hosted a Women for the Land learning circle.



REBECCA DROBIS

A Tale of Two Farm Transitions

FULLER ACRES FARM, A FOURTH-generation dairy in Fort Ann's "Welch Hollow" Valley of Upstate New York, transitioned from dairy to beef production after securing a conservation easement in 2017. Olivia, a next-generation farmer, was initially unsure about farming but embraced the change despite a steep learning curve. With mentorship, including her role at American Farmland Trust as New York Communications Manager, Olivia gained confidence and expanded the farm, including opening a farm store.

The journey was challenging. After losing her best friend in 2018 and her mother in 2020, Olivia turned to the land for healing. In 2023, her father sold the dairy herd, and Olivia took full ownership, navigating financial hurdles to secure the farm's future and her father's retirement. American Farmland Trust's Farmland for a New



SHAWN LINEHAN

Douglas Fuller and his daughter Olivia of Fuller Acres Farm successfully protected their land and transitioned it to the next generation.

Generation New York program, especially advisor Tim Biello, provided steady support.

Now, Olivia has built a successful beef operation, allowing her father to step back and enjoy retirement.

"He bought a fishing boat this summer, and we went out on the water for the first time since I was a kid," Olivia said. "Seeing him take time for himself—that made it all worth it."

farmland protection, having led nationally recognized initiatives. Payne will advance our mission to protect farmland and support farmers nationwide.

- Farm to Institution New York State (FINYS), led by American Farmland Trust, selected six schools for the 2024–25 New York State Farm to School Institute. This yearlong program helps schools expand farm-to-school initiatives, bringing more local food to cafeterias while supporting farmers. Participants receive training, coaching, and implementation funding.
- Without a legally valid will, agricultural land can become heirs' property, making



JOSH BALDO



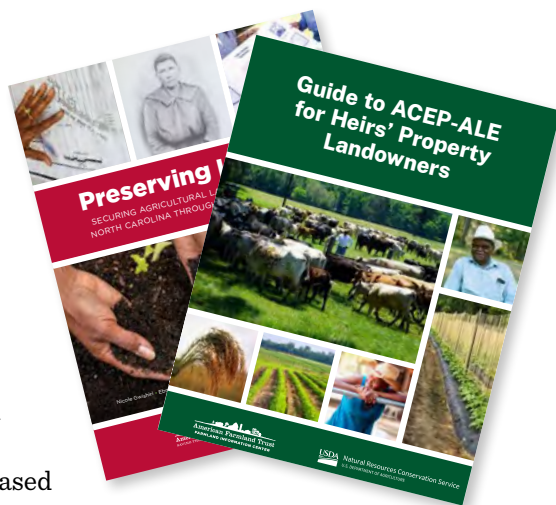
JOSH BALDO

American Farmland Trust's Farm to Institution initiative brings healthy local food to schools.



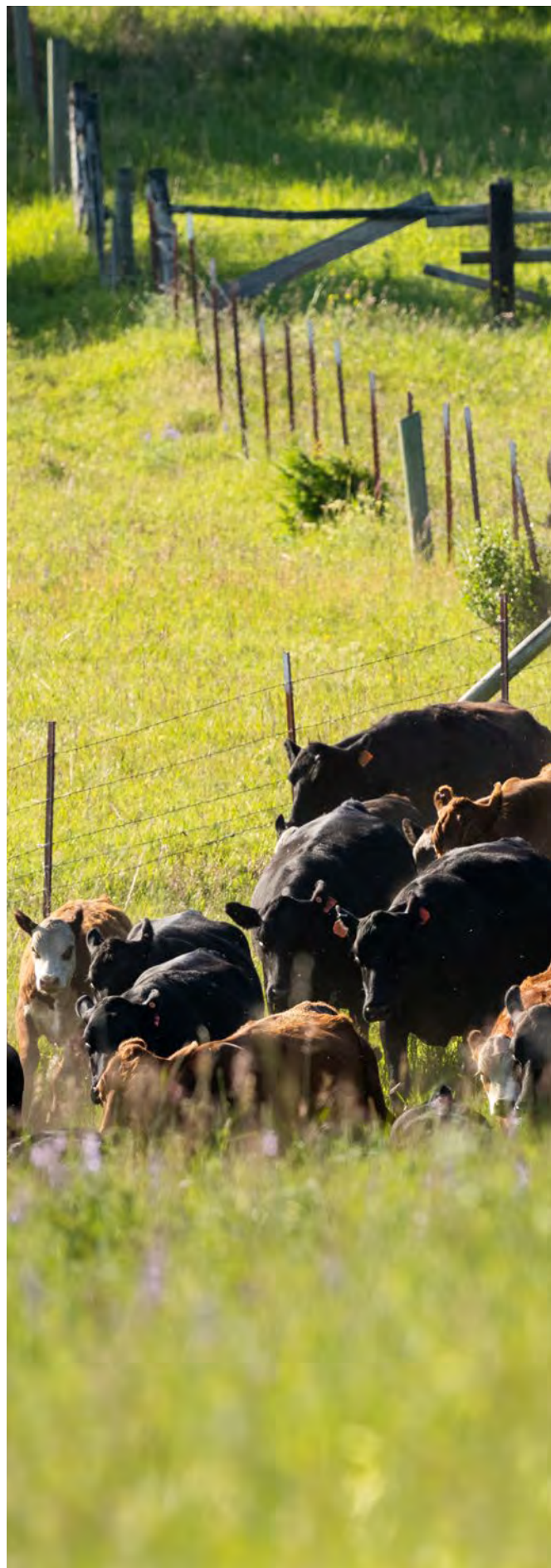
it vulnerable to division and sale. This issue has disproportionately affected Black families, leading to significant land loss. The problem is greatest in Southeastern states such as North Carolina. American Farmland Trust released a guide, “Preserving Legacy,” that helps North Carolina landowners secure their farms by providing legal resources and connections to key organizations. A separate guide explores how heirs’ property owners can protect their land through federal conservation programs. Download both guides at farmlandinfo.org.

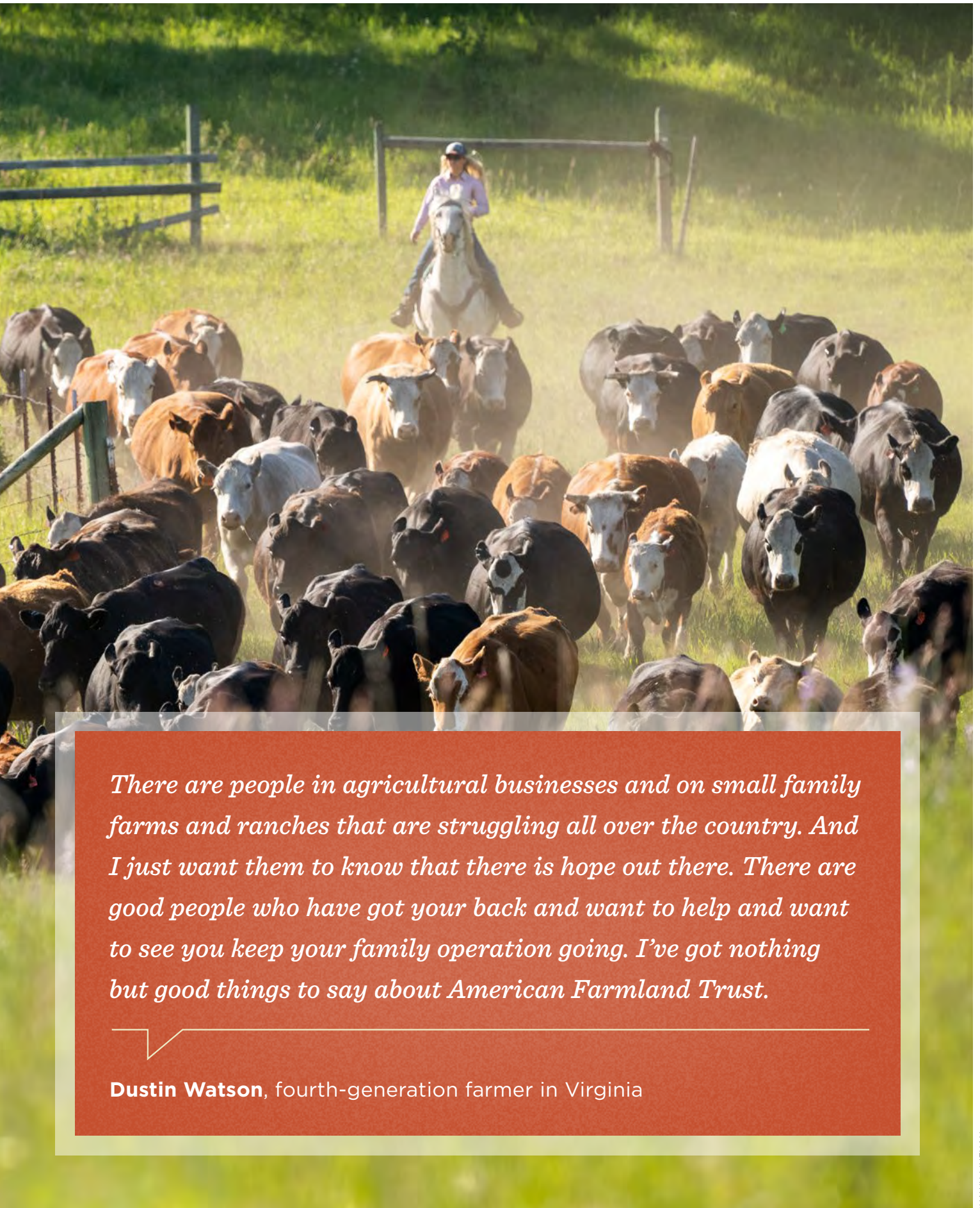
- American Farmland Trust used funds from our New



York Farmland Access Fund to purchase 122 acres of farmland in Columbia County, New York. The property will be re-sold to one or more farmers subject to a Preemptive Purchase Right affordability restriction, while we work in close partnership with the Columbia Land Conservancy to ensure that the land always remains affordable for future generations of farmers.

Brittany Jewett herds cattle on Nelson Ranch in Washington.

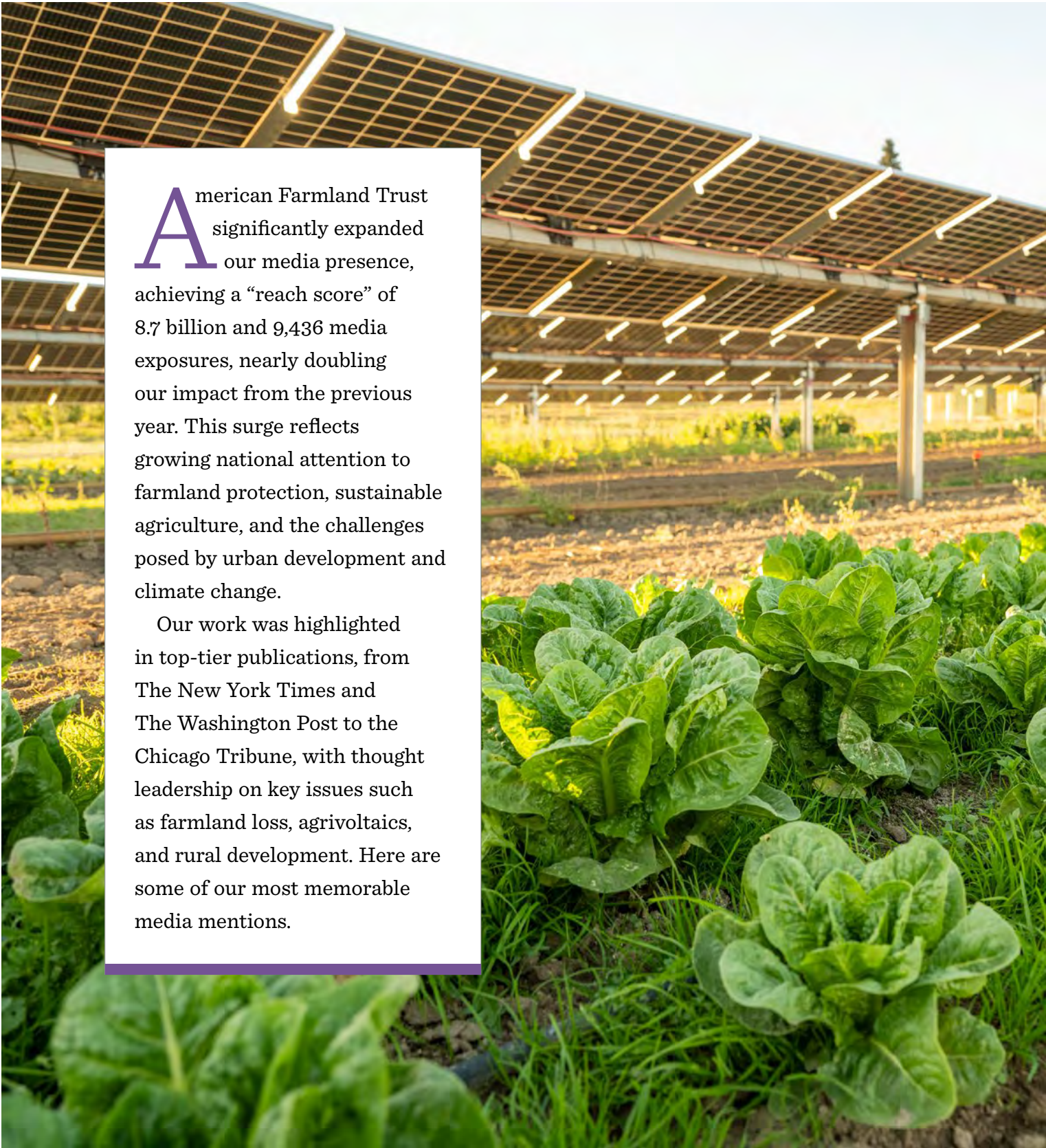




There are people in agricultural businesses and on small family farms and ranches that are struggling all over the country. And I just want them to know that there is hope out there. There are good people who have got your back and want to help and want to see you keep your family operation going. I've got nothing but good things to say about American Farmland Trust.

Dustin Watson, fourth-generation farmer in Virginia

American Farmland Trust in the



American Farmland Trust significantly expanded our media presence, achieving a “reach score” of 8.7 billion and 9,436 media exposures, nearly doubling our impact from the previous year. This surge reflects growing national attention to farmland protection, sustainable agriculture, and the challenges posed by urban development and climate change.

Our work was highlighted in top-tier publications, from The New York Times and The Washington Post to the Chicago Tribune, with thought leadership on key issues such as farmland loss, agrivoltaics, and rural development. Here are some of our most memorable media mentions.

News



SHAWN LINEHAN

FOOD TANK •

Strengthening land—and those who steward it—is central to creating a more resilient and nourishing future, panelists said at Climate Week.

“Land, practices, people: It all comes together, with each building off of one another,” said John Piotti, President and CEO of American Farmland Trust.

WASHINGTON POST • July 10, Op-ed: **Rural America is vanishing. This tiny county is fighting back.** By Dana Milbank

“Industrial development and Amazon-style warehouses jeopardize rural life on the edges of America’s metropolitan areas. Solar fields to help power these energy gluttons are expected to gobble up 10 million acres of rural land over the next 10 years. What might be lost? ‘Some of the absolute best farmland we have,’ [American Farmland Trust President John] Piotti says, ‘is also the land that’s most threatened.’”

CHICAGO TRIBUNE • July 31: **Instead of competing for land, some farmers and solar developers want to work side by side.** By Karina Atkins

“You have food deserts all over the Midwest where farmers markets are about the only thing going in terms of getting produce there. Is there a way for us to rebuild some specialty crop supply at scale?” posed Ethan Winter, director of American Farmland Trust’s Smart Solar division. The passive income stream from solar arrays could give Illinois



AGROSOLAR CLEARINGHOUSE

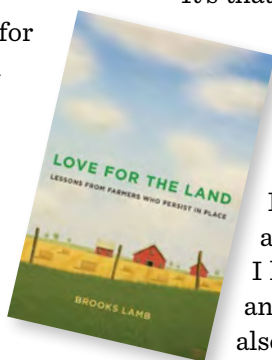
Left: The Solar Panel Research Station at Oregon State University. Right: Sheep graze under agrivoltaic solar panels.

farmers the cushioning they need to diversify their harvests.

ALBANY TIMES UNION • Aug. 19,
Letter to the Editor. By Linda
Garrett, American Farmland Trust
New York Regional Director

“Done right, agrivoltaics projects can enhance farm viability and keep land in farming for current and future generations. To realize this potential, we need incentives and support from the state agencies. American Farmland Trust applauds the Hochul administration’s recent steps to provide funding for agrivoltaics research and demonstration projects.”

THE DAILY YONDER • Feb.
16, **Why Do Small-Scale
Farmers Persist in
Place? A conversation
with author Brooks**



Lamb about his book “Love for the Land.”

By Olivia Weeks

“There are three primary kinds of adversity I focus on in the book. The first is farmland loss from haphazard real estate development, the kind that leads to rural gentrification. It’s truly rampant in Tennessee, where some data suggest that over a million acres of farmland will be compromised by development in the next two decades. The second is the issue of agricultural consolidation. It’s that ‘get big or get out’ mantra

that has hurt so many rural communities and economies, not to mention the land and ecosystems and environment itself.

Finally, for farmers of color and especially Black farmers, I looked at issues of racism and injustice—in the past, but also still in the present.”

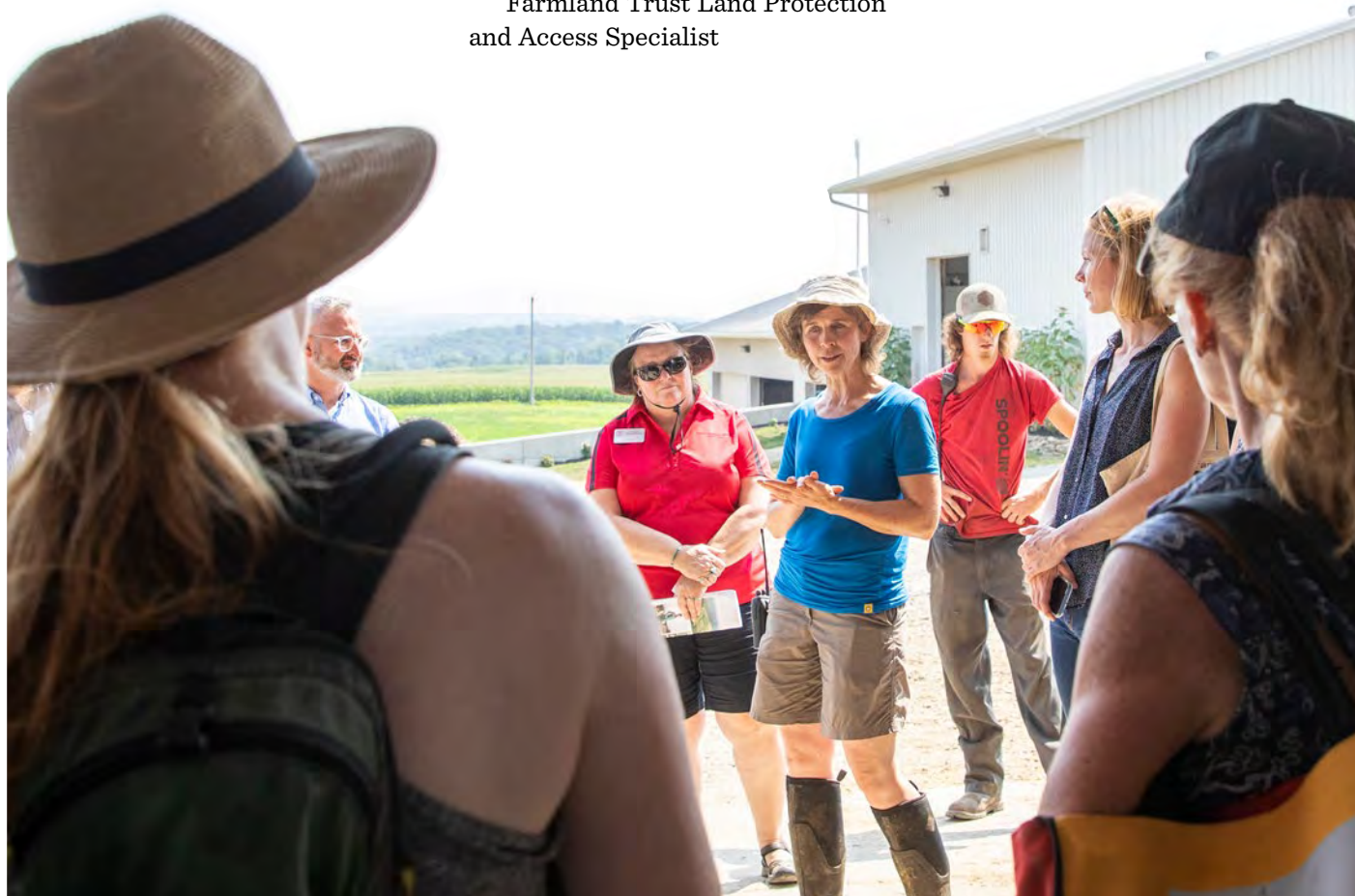
—Brooks Lamb, American Farmland Trust Land Protection and Access Specialist

AGDAILY • March 13, **Women bring a growing positive influence on ag industry.** By Liza Thuy Nguyen

Gabrielle Roesch-McNally, director for American Farmland Trust’s Women of the Land Initiative, spoke about the unique challenges that women face and how different projects housed under Women of the Land are tackling these issues.

To develop programs that help drive change, Roesch-McNally has developed projects and learning circles where women in agriculture can gather and connect over practical farming practices, legacy planning, and other farm viability issues.

Because the agriculture sector can be heavily male-dominated, “Women often feel like they are an outsider in the group,” said Roesch-McNally. “Women [in these spaces] don’t feel like they have a voice, and they don’t feel welcome. So, women like women-centric spaces.”



Dairy farmer Meghan Hauser leads a women’s learning circle at Table Rock Farm in Wyoming County, New York.

REBECCA DROBIS



SHAWN LINEHAN

Three generations at Washington's Nelson Ranch (left to right): Averie Lee Stanley with Katie, Brian, and Cynthia Nelson.

IDAHO PRESS • Jan. 11, **'Honor and respect': Idaho leaders talk farmland preservation.** By Erin Banks Rusby

In the U.S., 40% of working lands, including those in agricultural production, are managed by someone over the age of 65, said David Anderson, the Idaho program manager for American Farmland Trust.

"This is an unprecedented generational shift that's about to occur in working land ownership," Anderson said. "So the emphasis that you're hearing on succession planning and the need for succession planning, so we can have a safe and a gentle landing in this transition of ownership, is critical to our agricultural industry and agricultural economy here in the U.S."

AGRIPULSE • April 17, **Ohio clears way for biggest agrivoltaic farm in US.**

By Fran Howard

Samantha Levy, conservation and climate policy manager at American

Farmland Trust, said 83% of solar development is likely to be on farmland and ranchland, "with nearly half of that on the most productive farmland because these are attractive sites for developers. They are flat and less expensive to develop." Instead of buying land outright, many solar projects offer landowners 20- to 40-year leases, some with options to renew, and "solar developers are willing to pay on the order of magnitudes more than a farmer would be able to pay to rent the land," she added.

Lucrative solar leases offer a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity for farmer landowners who face economic challenges or don't have a successor to take over the farm, Levy noted. At the same time, though, as "projects get bigger and larger amounts of land are taken out of farming, it affects the entire economic ecosystem of the host community. It can have a ripple effect."

BROWNFIELD AG • April 18, **Ag land protection key to climate strategy.**

By Nicole Heslip

"I think one of the most important benefits is that folks who have protected their farm or ranch understand that they are now in it for the long haul, not just for them, but for the generations to come," Senior Policy Advisor Cris Coffin told Brownfield Ag about how the demand for agricultural conservation easement programs far exceeds enrollment.

"Through a combination of local, state, federal, even including private efforts, nearly eight million acres of farm and ranch land have been permanently protected across the country," said Policy Director Tim Fink. "And this is a really significant achievement, but at the same time, it represents less than one percent of our nation's total agricultural land."

The People of American Farmland

In 2024, American Farmland Trust grew by 25% and added new staff members to our team. This growth reflects our deepening commitment to protecting farmland, promoting sustainable agriculture, and supporting farmers nationwide.

With this growth, American Farmland Trust had staff members working across 36 states, further strengthening our regional presence and on-the-ground impact. A major focus of this growth has been in regional teams.

Among the regions, New England saw the most significant expansion, growing by 38%. The Southeast team nearly doubled in size. Other key regions, including New York, the Midwest, the Mid-Atlantic, Pacific Northwest, California, and Texas, also experienced growth as we reinforced our presence in these critical agricultural areas.

The numbers tell a powerful story. American Farmland Trust's expanding team reflects the increasing demand for farmland conservation, climate

resilience, and farm viability efforts across the country. By adding passionate, dedicated professionals to our ranks, American Farmland Trust continues to build our impact, ensuring that farmland remains productive, protected, and accessible for future generations.

With more boots on the ground and expertise in every corner of the country, American Farmland Trust is more prepared than ever to tackle the challenges facing American agriculture and farmland conservation.



Trust

DIGGING DEEPER



Circles, left to right: Bianca Moebius-Clune, Aaron Ristow, Anel Trujillo, Floreal Crubaugh, Ignacio Villa. Top right: Jennie Kapszukiewicz.



American Farmland Trust staff gathered at a retreat outside Chicago, Illinois.

American Farmland Trust Around

In 2024, American Farmland Trust showed up—big time. From engaging with farmers, policymakers, and community members to attending farmers markets, national conferences, and learning circles, we strengthened connections and deepened our impact in agricultural communities.

WHAT WE LEARNED

- Farmers need access to funding, technical assistance, and markets to remain viable and competitive in changing economic and environmental conditions.
- Climate resilience is a top concern, with farmers seeking practical solutions to extreme weather, soil health, and water management.
- Succession planning and land access remain critical issues for farmers needing help to transition land to the next generation and keep it in agriculture.
- Peer-to-peer learning and farmer-led discussions are essential for sharing knowledge, fostering innovation, and strengthening farming communities.
- Policy engagement and advocacy are key to shaping agricultural policies that protect farmland, support farmers, and invest in regenerative practices.

OUR IMPACT IN 2024

31,750
Farmers, Ranchers, and Landowners
Trained or Supported

4,028
Underserved Individuals
Trained or Supported

12,835
Professionals Working with Farmers
Who Were Trained or Supported



d the Country

Cherries, Cookbooks, and Conversations in Michigan

At the National Cherry Festival, American Farmland Trust partnered with America the Bountiful for a media collaboration. Our staff ran the booth with volunteer support, celebrating cherries and their growers while raising awareness about farmland loss. A highlight: Capri Cafaro signed her cookbook and spoke on behalf of American Farmland Trust at Industry Day, spreading the word deliciously!

America's Farmers Market Celebration

This year's America's Farmers Market Celebration was a whirlwind. Despite a shorter season, voter turnout remained strong, and we doubled our market involvement from last year.



For the 16th consecutive year, AFMC honored farmers markets' role in strengthening communities and increasing access to healthy food. From June 1 to July 31, 2024, more than 1,500 markets participated, garnering 97,000 votes. Winners received funding to support marketing and communications, helping them expand their reach.

Climate Resilience Through Agriculture

In September, American Farmland Trust partnered with Food Tank at Climate Week NYC to highlight agriculture's role in addressing climate change. Discussions focused on reducing emissions, sequestering

carbon, and building farm resilience through farmland protection and regenerative practices. Our event brought together experts, farmers, and innovators. American Farmland Trust President and CEO John Piotti spoke on a panel with John Kerry, the 68th U.S. Secretary of State and former Special Presidential Envoy for Climate. The event was an inspiring opportunity to exchange ideas, foster collaboration, and advance solutions for a sustainable food system.



John Kerry and John Piotti spoke on a panel for Climate Week NYC.

Free Range Conversations

American Farmland Trust President and CEO John Piotti and special guest Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack discussed USDA initiatives and investments, with a focus on the department's priorities to center agriculture as a solution to climate change and provide meaningful benefits to producers, including small and underserved farmers and ranchers.



A Women for the Land panel at Wild Hill Farm.

Storytelling at Regenerate 2024

In November, our Women for the Land team and Women Food and Agriculture Network attended the Quivira Coalition's Regenerate



Cultivating Resilience at Wild Hill Farm

We enjoyed a splendid fall evening at Wild Hill Farm in Bloomfield, New York, listening to a panel of three women farmers—Erin Bullock (Wild Hill Farm), Amanda Grisa (Schenk Farmstead), and Kyli Stevens (Fire Creek Farms)—who are cultivating resilience amidst challenges, such as land access, childcare, and work-life balance. Following our discussion, Erin led us on a tour of her farm, an organic vegetable operation that provides food for 350 families.

Brighter Future Fund: Making a

In 2024, our Brighter Future Fund awarded \$1.7 million in grants to 256 farmers and ranchers across all 50 states and 4 U.S. territories. The grants support farm viability, regenerative practices, and land access or protection. The fund expects to award \$4.5 million in 2025, while partnering with Real Farmer Care, offering funds for underserved farmers' mental and physical self-care.

Farming in America demands resilience and resourcefulness, and for many, especially underrepresented groups, securing resources can be challenging. The Brighter Future Fund helps farmers and ranchers tackle challenges, adopt sustainable practices, and strengthen community ties.

"The Brighter Future Fund has become a beacon of hope for farmers looking to overcome challenges and innovate," said Ashley Brucker, senior manager of grantmaking. "This year's success is due to our donors, staff, and, most importantly, the farmers who share their dreams and dedication. Together, we are shaping a more resilient and sustainable agricultural future."

Here are some inspiring stories from awardees, showcasing the impact of these grants where it matters most.



(Left) Shonda Gaylord of Mountain Echoes Farm. (Right) Kathedy Lopez of Sovereign Herbs.

Mountain Echoes Farm, West Virginia

Shonda Gaylord leads Mountain Echoes Farm, a 19-acre herb, vegetable, and flower operation in rural West Virginia. Dedicated to sustainable farming, food sovereignty, and land stewardship, Shonda and her partners focus on free-range chickens, pollinator gardens, water conservation, and herbal products. The farm, the only Black, women-led operation in Hardy County, also hosts The Mountain Women Collective, serving local families. Shonda plans to use her Brighter Future Fund grant to remodel a vintage camper into an honor-system farm stand, increasing visibility and reducing waste.

Sovereign Herbs, New York

Kathedy Lopez, founder of Sovereign Herbs, grows culturally significant herbs like cilantro, epazote, and marjoram for Black and Latinx communities in New York's Hudson Valley. "This



fund helps our farm deepen sustainable practices and grow herbs relevant to our community," Lopez said. After years of working on farms that overlooked Black contributions, Lopez started her own operation using regenerative practices.

The Brighter Future Fund grant will help her purchase tools like a flail mower, landscape fabric, and cover crop seeds to enhance sustainability and efficiency.

Tijuana River Valley Community Garden, California

Javier Flores, a beginning farmer in the Tijuana River



Javier Flores of Tijuana River Valley Seed.



(Left) Nikki Ross of Peculiar Pig Farm. (Right) Hungry Work Organic Farm.

Valley, leads Tijuana River Valley Seed, an initiative promoting urban farming and regenerative practices. With a grant from American Farmland Trust, he plans to build a greenhouse to extend his growing season and implement water-efficient systems. The grant will also help him purchase seed starting trays, tools, and seed processing equipment. Javier aims to expand his farm's role in urban farming education and strengthen local food security through sustainable practices.

Peculiar Pig Farm, South Carolina

Nikki and Marvin Ross run Peculiar Pig Farm in Dorchester, South Carolina, raising heritage hogs, chickens, goats, and cows with compassion and respect. "Born into a lineage of farmers, my connection to the land and animals is my commitment to farming," Nikki says. The Brighter Future Fund will help them secure five acres of land to grow crops for animal feed, reduce costs, and increase

sustainability. This expansion will allow them to provide ethically raised, high-quality meats while securing a brighter future for their farm.

Hungry Work Organic Farm, New Jersey

Hungry Work Organic Farm in Stockton, New Jersey, is run by Devin Cornia, who provides fresh produce to the local community using a pay-what-you-can model and donates half of the farm's crops to food pantries. With help from the Brighter Future Fund, the farm will build a FSMA-compliant wash station and walk-in cooler to reduce food waste, improve efficiency, and increase donations. Devin plans to scale up operations and transform the farm into a nonprofit focused on food security.

Texas Solar Sheep, Texas

Texas leads the nation in installed solar capacity, and as solar farms expand, many developers are partnering with farmers who use their

flocks of animals as a vegetation management tool. The dual use of land for energy and agricultural production, called agrivoltaics, benefits both solar developers and farmers by improving soil quality, sequestering carbon, and reducing costs. JR Howard's Texas Solar Sheep operation specializes in solar grazing, using sheep to manage vegetation. With support from the Brighter Future Fund, JR is improving his grazing system and expanding market access for local lamb production.



Texas Solar Sheep farm.

Summary of Activities

for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2024*

SUPPORT AND REVENUE

Individual Contributions	\$19,438,322
Foundation & Corporate Income	\$6,125,749
Government Grants	\$19,991,272
Operating Investment Return	\$1,151,551
Non-Operating Investment Gain & Other	\$4,746,367
Donated Farm Property, Equipment & Other Contributions on Land Projects	\$1,743,739
Other Income, Gains & Losses	\$592,133
Total Revenue and Support	\$53,789,133

* Unaudited figures.

Complete financial statements are available upon request.

EXPENSES

National and Regional Programming	\$32,285,559
Public Education	\$2,297,932
Outreach and Communications	\$2,503,108
Other Programs	\$1,846,505
Total Program Services	\$38,933,104
Management and General	\$1,143,677
Fundraising	\$4,177,838
Total Expenses	\$44,254,619

NET ASSETS

Beginning of Year	\$62,616,670
End of Year	\$72,151,184
Change in Net Assets	\$9,534,514



Hanako Myers and Theresa Saludo of Midori Farm in Quilcene, Washington.

U.S. Farmed: Strengthening American Agriculture

IN MARCH, AMERICAN Farmland Trust launched U.S. Farmed™, a first-of-its-kind certification and transparency standard that verifies consumer-packaged goods as containing at least 95% U.S.-grown ingredients through independent audits. The U.S. Farmed Seal helps consumers make informed choices, gives brands a way to differentiate their products, and supports American farmers and domestic agriculture.



The program launched with Anheuser-Busch featuring the seal on two billion cans from four major beer brands—Busch Light, Bud Light, Budweiser, and Michelob Ultra—as part of the “Choose Beer Grown Here” campaign. Additional brands are in the certification process, with rollouts expected in 2025.

The U.S. Farmed seal received endorsements from trade associations, wholesalers, retailers, peer nonprofits, and government officials while



generating nationwide retail promotions involving hundreds of wholesalers in all 50 states.

By choosing U.S. Farmed Certified products, consumers are not just buying food and beverages—they're investing in the future of American agriculture.

In Memoriam: Robert Julio Gallo

A Passionate Supporter of Farms and Wildlife

AMERICAN FARMLAND TRUST mourned the passing of wine leader and benefactor Robert J. Gallo. A scion of the Gallo family wine business, Bob was a firm believer that nature and agriculture could coexist sustainably.

The son of co-founder Julio Gallo, he carried on the family business as co-president and co-chairman of E&J Gallo, the world's largest winery, which employs about 7,000 people at its Modesto headquarters and across the nation.

A former member of American Farmland Trust's board of directors, Bob helped to preserve thousands of acres of land for wildlife habitat,

setting aside one acre for every California North Coast acre planted with grapevines. Bob also helped to develop, with other California wine producers, the Code of Sustainable Wine Growing Practices.

“Bob was a great entrepreneurial leader, a true steward of the environment, and a strong advocate for farming and farmland,” said American Farmland Trust President and CEO John Piotti. “He spent every moment trying to make the world a better place, and as a result, touched countless lives.”

Bob took a special interest in innovative ways to promote conservation of wildlife in one of



the most productive agricultural regions in the world. One example: He worked closely with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Audubon Society to preserve the winter habitat of the Aleutian Cackling Goose, a formerly endangered species he helped bring back from the edge of extinction.

One of Gallo's children, Tom, previously served on American Farmland Trust's board, while another, Gina, served on the board through 2024.



Combined Federal Campaign
Number 10631

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