



# ***Growing Resilience***

A stronger and more equitable local food system for an uncertain future.

**CISA** *Community Involved  
in Sustaining Agriculture*

STRATEGIC  
CAMPAIGN

**Community Involved in  
Sustaining Agriculture (CISA)  
works to build a stronger, more  
resilient, and more just local  
food system in western  
Massachusetts.**

Farms are essential to the health, well-being, landscape, and culture of the Connecticut River Valley of western Massachusetts – a place we are lucky to call home.

Our farmers steward tens of thousands of acres, including rocky Hilltown orchards and pastures, highly fertile valley land, urban farms, and gardens on corner lots and in schoolyards. Over the past 30 years, CISA has made it possible for hundreds of farms to thrive and tens of thousands more people to share in their bounty. Crises like the COVID-19 pandemic reinforced just how critical our local food system is, and how fortunate we are to have an abundance of farms in our region.



Our *Be a Local Hero, Buy Locally Grown*® program, the longest-running agricultural buy-local campaign in the country, connects farmers and the community, improving farm business viability and enhancing the quality of life for residents across the region.

**“CISA bridges the gap between the public and the farm.**

They offered in-person support and were a big help. They make me feel like they appreciate us [farmers] as much as we appreciate them.

We’re all in this together to let the public know why it’s beneficial to buy local food.”

— *Donna Calabrese, Calabrese Farm*

*Tom and Joe Calabrese  
at Calabrese Farm in  
Southwick*



**Our local farms are facing crisis after crisis, from inflation to droughts, labor shortages to freak storms. Nothing is predictable in farming any longer, even the seasons.**

Making matters worse, inequity is built into our broken global food system, affecting everything from who can farm and access farmland to the high prices we all pay, whether it's at the cash register or in environmental degradation and food injustice. Healthy local food is too often a luxury when it should be a birthright.

It doesn't have to be this way.

**CISA needs your help to keep farmers farming and ensure that local food is accessible to everyone.**

**We need to *Grow Resilience*.**

***We envision a future in which:***

**Locally grown food is recognized as fundamental to our communities.**



**Forest Park Farmers' Market**  
*Photo by Lizzy McElaney*

**Farmers can withstand ever-changing conditions.**



*A water management workshop at Kitchen Garden Farm, Sunderland*

**Everyone can afford and enjoy locally grown food throughout the year.**



*Senior Farm Share pick-up at the Montague Senior Center.*

**In short, we need to do more.**

**That's why we are creating our *Growing Resilience Fund* to expand our ability to make a difference.**

**We will draw on our 30 years of expertise and extensive network to provide the help farmers need to respond to challenges and crises.**



*Photo by Zoe Elkin*

With your help, CISA will safeguard and strengthen our local food system. We will expand services to farmers and fill gaps to get more local food on more people's tables.

CISA will strive to ensure that:

- People who are farming continue to farm and have the resources and know-how to adapt to a changing climate;
- Beginning farmers, especially farmers of color, can access land and critical resources and build successful enterprises;
- Government policies support family farms and local food access.

“Through CISA, we met other farms and food producers who use honey as an ingredient, which ensured a flow of customers.

We got to know other farmers and each other’s business, and that’s where the magic happened. **We transformed from a group of farmers into a farming community.”**

— Dan Conlon, Warm Colors Apiary

*Warm Colors Apiary in  
South Deerfield*





Photo by Allison Bell

Compost feeds the apple trees at Quonquot Farm in Whately.



# How the *Growing Resilience Fund* will be used

**1**

## **Keeping Farmers Farming**

- Support and train farmers in preparing for climate change
- Increase funding for local farms through government grants and community support
- Advocate for policies that support local farms and farmers

**2**

## **Expanding Access to Local Food**

- Double Senior Farm Share to reach 1,000 low-income seniors
- Support farmers' markets as community resources and important local food access points
- Increase the use of Healthy Incentive Program (HIP) benefits among food insecure population

**3**

## **Deepening Equity and Diversity**

- Proactively support farmers, food businesses, and organizations from diverse communities, especially communities of color
- Partner with others to diversify farm ownership and facilitate farm succession
- Weave racial equity more tightly into every aspect of CISA's work

**4**

## **Enlisting Community Support**

- Connect and support volunteers to help farms, farmers' markets, and food access programs
- Advocate for local farms in public policy
- Expand awareness of the benefits of local farms towards climate resilience, food security, health, and community

## How the *Growing Resilience Fund* will be used

### 1 Keeping Farmers Farming

CISA will help farmers adapt to climate change, supply chain issues, and recover from emergencies. By providing customized solutions and wraparound support, CISA will assist in keeping farms productive and vibrant.

- **Technical assistance** for farmers to prepare for more extreme weather
- **In-depth support** to make agricultural businesses stronger, more efficient, and nimbler.
- **Grant writing assistance** and small climate adaptation grants to bring more financial resources to local farms
- **Confidential assistance** in crisis situations for farms, food businesses, and enterprises that are critical to the local food economy

“I knew that business-as-usual farming would not work on my hilltop farm.

CISA connected me with experts to identify resilient crops that also prevent soil erosion, helping increase our financial viability.

**Having an organization like CISA that can hold the big picture, with close relationships with so many farmers, is really critical.”**

— *Abby Ferla, Foxtrot Farm*

*Foxtrot Farm in Ashfield grows medicinal herbs and more.*



## How the *Growing Resilience Fund* will be used

### 2 Expanding Access to Local Food

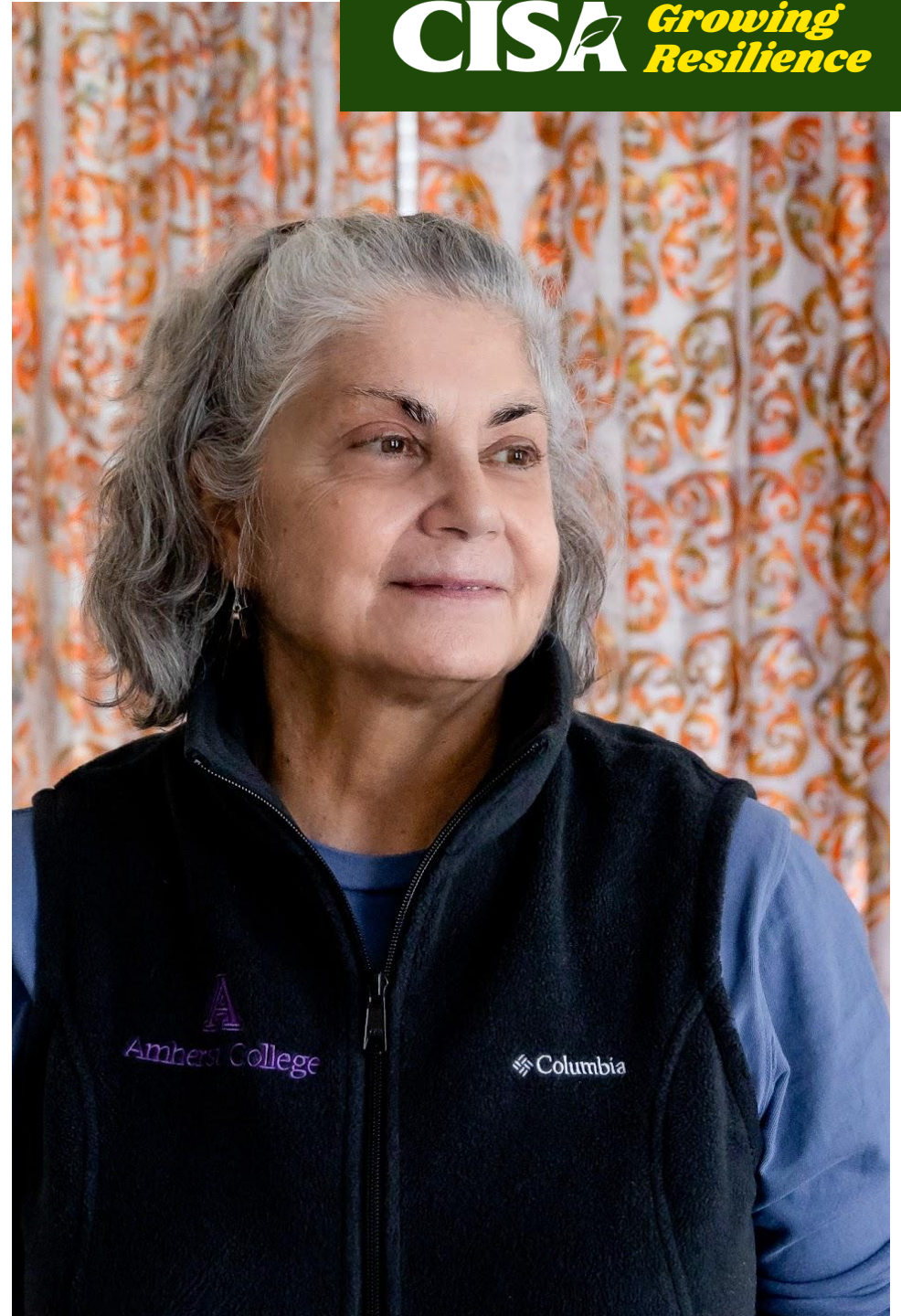
CISA will make local food available to people with limited incomes by supporting farmers' markets, expanding the number of low-income senior citizens receiving a summer farm share, and bolstering the state program that provides fresh produce to those who lack enough resources to feed their families.

- **Double** the number of low-income seniors participating in our Senior Farm Share program from 500 to 1,000
- **Support** the 40 local farmers' markets to be welcoming and accessible to all
- **Increase** uptake of the Healthy Incentives Program, which provides up to \$80/month in local food to the 100,000+ people receiving SNAP food benefits in western Massachusetts

**“Because of CISA’s Senior Farm Share program, I was able to cook amazing meals for my dad.**

That’s what kept him alive – organic healthy food. I’ve seen how important it is for our senior humans to eat real, fresh produce. You have no idea how it enhances their wellbeing and brain function.”

— *Debi, caretaker & Senior Farm Share advocate*



## How the *Growing Resilience Fund* will be used

### 3 Deepening Equity and Diversity

CISA will pursue equity in all aspects of the local food system, cultivating a community of farmers who reflect the full diversity of our region and helping them develop successful food enterprises.

- **Proactively support underserved farmers**, especially Black, Indigenous, and Hispanic farmers, businesses, and organizations
- **Partner** with organizations supporting farm succession and farmer training in the state and region to bring a diverse array of people into the field
- **Incorporate** the needs, assets, and perspectives of people and communities of color into our programming, advocacy, organizational culture, and policies.



### 4 Enlisting Community Support

CISA will expand our advocacy work in all aspects of strengthening our food system, adding community voices and votes to support agriculture on local, state, national, and global levels.

- **Connect and support volunteers** to help farms, farmers' markets, and food access programs
- **Advocate** for government policies that benefit local farms and farmers through candidate forums, farm tours, and community outreach
- **Share the critical importance** of the local food system's role in climate change, food security, human and environmental health, and community vibrancy

## How the *Growing Resilience Fund* works

CISA will develop a new \$1.8 million board-designated fund.

It will serve as a flexible reserve beyond the annual operating budget that expands our capacity and ability to make a difference.



Photo by Allison Bell

- **The *Growing Resilience Fund* is not an endowment.** Instead, we will use both the principal and interest as needed, thereby having flexibility and greater ability to address the most urgent or unfunded needs.
- **CISA is run in a fiscally prudent manner and is in a strong financial position.** This Fund is needed to expand our capacity to respond to the increasingly volatile conditions that farmers experience, ongoing inequity, and the decline in public funding we anticipate.
- **The Fund will be used to fill gaps and add capacity to 2030.** We will also expand our fundraising capacity over this period to grow our base of support and ensure that we remain in a strong financial position beyond 2030.
- In addition to the issues identified here, **the Fund will be available to support unanticipated needs** emerging in the coming years.



Jack Hornor and his husband Ron Skinn believe in supporting local institutions and collaborating with other community members.

“We’ve been impressed by CISA’s effective programs that help local farmers, who are such an important part of providing healthy food to those who need it,” says Jack. That’s why he and Ron stepped forward with a leadership gift for CISA's Growing Resilience campaign.

**“We can see the many challenges our local farmers are facing and are so pleased to contribute to CISA's ability to help farmers adapt and respond.”**

*Ron Skinn and Jack Hornor*



## **This is ambitious and critical work.**

Your generosity to the Growing Resilience Campaign, in addition to your annual giving, will ensure that CISA can remain responsive and help local farmers face mounting challenges head on. With your help, we can help make local farms more resilient and ensure that an abundant supply of locally produced food continues to nourish us all.

We welcome donations of all amounts as one-time gifts or pledges up to 5 years.

Thank you for your support!

*For more information,  
please contact:*

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**The “community” involved  
in sustaining agriculture  
includes you, our Board,  
and the *Growing  
Resilience* Committee.**

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