



CISA

seed+harvest

SUMMER 2024 NEWSLETTER

*Farms for
Our Future*

Hadley Farmland
PHOTO BY PAUL SHOUL

Your support is essential to building a better local food system for everyone!

"I feel fortunate to live in a region that is still home to an abundance of farms. I donate to CISA because I believe in their vision of a local food system that supports our farms and farmers, provides equitable access to locally grown food, and promotes resilience and environmental sustainability."

Seth Deysher, CISA Supporter

Learn about all of the ways you can support CISA at

**[buylocalfood.org/
support-cisa](https://buylocalfood.org/support-cisa)**

Questions or feedback?

wendy@buylocalfood.org
(413) 665-7100 x11

Community Involved in
Sustaining Agriculture
One Sugarloaf Street
South Deerfield, MA 01373



PHOTO BY STEPHANIE CRAIG

The End of an Era

After 16 years as our chief advocate for local farmers, voice of CISA and the local food system, Philip Korman has decided to step down as Executive Director of CISA.

Under Phil's leadership, CISA has grown in both scope and size—expanding programs for food access and climate resilience, deepening racial equity work, and doubling the staff.

"I'm beyond grateful to have spent these years working alongside a dedicated and brilliant board and staff to build a local food system in western Mass that is more strong, resilient, and just," said Phil.

He has worked tirelessly to advocate for farmers and to make sure more of our community has access to the local harvest. We couldn't be more grateful to him for all that he has done.

Long-time staffer Kelly Coleman, our Deputy Director, will serve as Interim Director while we conduct an open search for our new Executive Director.

Phil Korman stepped down as Executive Director of CISA at the end of August. Thank you for everything, Phil!



Song Sparrow Farm in Florence

PHOTO BY GROW FOOD NORTHAMPTON

Emergency Farm Fund Helps 10 Farms

As the rains, floods, freezes, and frosts wreaked havoc on local farms last year, CISA received an outpouring of support from you and our community to be available to farms who needed the extra help getting by this year. In partnership with the Franklin County CDC, our Emergency Farm Fund gave \$222,400 in zero-interest loans to 10 local farms affected by extreme weather — including freezes that killed fruit crops, river flooding, and excessive rain — during the 2023 growing season.

One round of lending was completed soon after the floods in 2023 for farmers who needed immediate relief, and a second round was completed in 2024 for farmers who needed more time to assess their losses and what other resources were available to them.

Loan recipients included: Antonellis Farm, Deerfield; Barstow's Longview Farm, Hadley; Calabrese Farms, Southwick; Granny's Place, Southwick; Many Graces, Northampton; North Hadley Sugar Shack, North Hadley; River Valley Farm, Whately; Rooted Flowers, Agawam; and Song Sparrow Farm, Florence.

Thanks to your support, the Emergency Farm Fund will be available for farmers that need it, now and in the future.

A photograph of Stephen Taranto, a man with grey hair and a beard, wearing a green button-down shirt and blue jeans. He is standing in a field of tall, green grass, gesturing with his hands as if explaining something. In the background, there is a line of trees and a blue sky with some clouds.

Down in the Ditch

CISA's Stephen Taranto surveys the ditches at a farm in Hadley as part of his work building resilience on farms.

PHOTO BY PAUL SHOUL

TWO YEARS AGO, when he was relatively new to the job, CISA's Climate Program Coordinator Stephen Taranto was not expecting to find himself waist-deep in an overgrown agricultural ditch on the Hadley-Amherst boundary line. Nor did he expect the passion this issue would ignite in a group of nearby farmers frustrated about the ditch's capacity to effectively drain water off their farmland in an era of increasingly intense and concentrated precipitation.

"Across the region," Taranto explained, "we are faced with the broad concern of whether the sometimes centuries-old agricultural ditches found throughout the Valley have the capacity to manage the amount of rain we are seeing."

"At the ground level, however, we are dealing with an extremely complex situation

CISA can respond and devote time and expertise to help farmers solve problems because of your support. With the Growing Resilience Campaign now complete, we have increased ability to take on sticky issues like this and literally get into the trenches to help farmers build a more resilient future. Thank you for being part of this work!

because many ditches cross multiple properties, so over the years sections have been filled in for residential and commercial development, or haven't been maintained regularly, and are now heavily overgrown with vegetation."

Since that first ditch walk, Stephen has talked with dozens of farmers and technical assistance providers throughout Western Massachusetts and it turns out that those frustrated farmers' concerns are widespread. Through ongoing conversations with colleagues at UMass, NRCS, MDAR, American Farmland Trust, and the Hampden-Hampshire Conservation District, the issue has emerged as a priority for many stakeholders in our local food system. Given the complexity of maintaining and updating a vast earthworks system, building relationships and exploring solutions together is an essential first step.

"CISA helps solve problems like this by having the relationships and capacity to pull people together, creating space to tackle tricky issues, and helping farmers figure out who to talk to about their concerns," says Stephen. As they work together to determine best practices, Stephen is now focused on sharing the outcomes to help other farmers and climate partners. To start, CISA and our partners recently hosted a well-attended workshop to review the legal and practical aspects of ditch management.

More Local Food to More Seniors!

Thanks to your support of our Growing Resilience Campaign, we have been able to steadily increase the number of people receiving a Senior FarmShare up to 800 low-income seniors.

Patty Greene, the site coordinator of a new host site, Hilltown Residence in Westfield, says, "The residents are thrilled about this program. Even as a new site, we had no problem filling the spots. Last year, I picked up shares for our members at the West Springfield Council on Aging, and this year, we have our own site at Hilltown Residence. Our residents are low-income and deeply appreciate this program. It's even inspired them to plant their own herb garden! We're all in this together, and you can't ask for better than that."



Senior FarmShare at West Springfield Council on Aging

You and your support of our Growing Resilience Campaign made this new Senior FarmShare site possible. Thank you for helping get more of our delicious local food to more of our neighbors in need!

Trying to Turn Down the (Effects of Extreme) Heat

In addition to increased rainfall, climate change means higher temperatures year-round and longer stretches of intense heat during the growing season. Together, these impacts have major repercussions on farmworkers, farm animals, and crops. CISA received a grant from the Northeast Extension Risk Management Education Center to offer a series of workshops on the broad impacts of increased heat for farms, including impacts related to production, harvest and marketing, urban farms, and farm workers. One of our first activities was to partner with the Pioneer Valley Workers Center to conduct two focus groups with farmworkers to listen and learn from their experiences and to identify practical tips to help adapt to hotter days in the fields.

With more heat and humidity forecast for our region in the future, collaborative efforts like this one will help identify strategies for building resilience in specific, on-the-ground ways.

"We're already seeing all of these changes start to happen, and it's expected to get significantly more dramatic in the next few decades. I attended a really helpful CISA webinar about the effects of climate change on agriculture—knowing what to expect helps us to plan for the more difficult growing conditions."

Alice Coleman, Stony Hill Farm

Welcome German and Greg!

We are thrilled to welcome two new board members to the CISA board of directors.



German Alvarado

German is the Director of Culinary Services at Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts. He is focused on local and sustainable goals for his department while building connections

with the community. "My interest in joining the CISA board is in helping to cultivate a more sustainable relationship between colleges and universities and our local food systems."



Greg Garrison

Greg is the President and Owner of Northeast Solar. Northeast Solar (NES) is one of the most recognized renewable energy companies in western Massachusetts. NES offers solar, storage,

EV chargers, and air-source heat pumps to homes, businesses, and farms. "Joining CISA's board allows me to honor my farming heritage while supporting the dedicated farmers who nourish our Valley community."

CISA's Board of Directors

are active members of our community, engaged in supporting local farms and local food! They help set the strategic direction and goals of the organization.



Jenny Ladd
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Benjamin Lee Bland, III
Vice Chair



Myra Marcellin
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Coffey



Greg
Garrison



Samaita
Newell



Caroline
Pam



Shawn
Robinson



Catherine
Sands



Jeremy
Werther

“Farming is not just white men on tractors. Women, black people, immigrants, people with disabilities are all farmers, and we are beginning to claim that space and feed ourselves, our souls, and our communities.”

*Suna Turgay of Flowerwork Farm
and 2024 Field Notes storyteller*

Ten incredible stories in three languages from Field Notes are available to watch online!

buylocalfood.org/FieldNotes2024



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PHOTO BY TOM ADAMS

