EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S MESSAGE

Dear Future Harvest Community,

2021 was a year of growth and transformation at Future Harvest: We orchestrated the return of in-person Field School events, doubled our continuing education programs for advanced farmers, expanded the Beginner Farmer Training Program in both geographic reach and diversity of training farms, increased access to soil testing for farmers committed to bolstering soil health, and launched the Pick-Your-Own-Consultant Program for farmers who need help from an expert. We also started planning for the 2022 launch of a brand new program, the Agricultural Leadership Development Institute (ALDI), which will offer leadership skills training to veteran farmers and farmers of color to amplify these voices in government and community efforts to build a more equitable and resilient food system.

Future Harvest must continually adapt its work to meet the changing needs of the farming community, especially in light of erratic weather from climate change, a pandemic-challenged farmer workforce and food supply chain, and racial inequality in the food system. Because of you – our donors, staff, board, and, most importantly, our community of farmers – we are able, year after year, to provide programming that truly advances agriculture that is good for the environment, farmers, and for all our communities.

It is with a full heart that I close my final annual report letter as Executive Director of Future Harvest. I am honored to have had the opportunity to both learn from and champion some of the most innovative and conservation-minded farmers – not just in our region, but in the world. While my tenure is done, Future Harvest will never stop its important work. Thank you for your ongoing support past, present, and future.

With Gratitude,

Dena Leibman
Executive Director
OUR VISION
We envision food flowing from farm and fisheries to table in ways that strengthen farming and the regional food economy; protect our land, water, and air; and provide nutritious food that sustains the region’s communities.

OUR MISSION AREA
Our mission area includes Maryland, Delaware, Virginia, West Virginia, and DC, with special focus on the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

2021 BY THE NUMBERS:

50 Mentor farms offered hands-on training to Beginner Farmers

85 Beginner farmers received technical and business training through the Beginner Farmer Training Program

652 Field School participants were exposed to the latest research and trends in agriculture in a farmer-to-farmer learning model

502 Conference attendees came together, filled with hope, to recall our communal responsibility to feed and heal

41,000+ Acres enrolled in the Million Acre Challenge

300% Membership increase

30 Farmers participated in small group oriented problem-solving in Study Circles of like-minded and like-scaled farmers

28 Inaugural Pick-Your-Own Consultant grantees received consulting from 16 regional experts in the following:

- Business planning, accounting, Quickbooks
- Strategic marketing plans
- Crop budget enterprises
- Advanced cover cropping & soil amendments
- Land access support
- Community engagement & food access

OUR MISSION
To advance agriculture that sustains farmers, communities, and the environment.
OUR FLAGSHIP PROGRAMS:

We recognize that in order to transform our foodshed into a more sustainable, resilient, robust, and equitable system, we cannot have a singular focus, but rather an ecosystem of programs and services working together. As a result, Future Harvest has intentionally incubated, cultivated and grown our flagship programs in four priority areas. These areas are:

- EDUCATION
- COMMUNITY
- ADVOCACY
- ON FARM RESEARCH

BEGINNER FARMER TRAINING PROGRAM
12-month immersive training experience for beginner farmers that combines a comprehensive classroom curriculum with hands-on learning at the region’s leading sustainable farms.

FIELD SCHOOL
In partnership with the Chesapeake region’s leading farmers, researchers, and technical service providers, the Field School offers farmer-to-farm education on the latest innovations in sustainable agriculture.

CONFERENCE
Since 1999, Future Harvest has gathered Chesapeake region farmers, agricultural service providers, and foodies each winter for our annual conference. Farmers and supporters who attend our conferences choose from 40+ sessions, farmer-to-farmer rountables, and clinics.

MILLION ACRE CHALLENGE
The Million Acre Challenge helps Maryland farmers build soil health, increase farm profitability, and improve water quality – while making farms resilient and active in the face of climate change. Our farmer-focused collaborative uses soil health science, economics, education, and incentives to achieve sustainable agriculture.

GO GRASSFED
Go Grassfed is a marketing and resource campaign championed by Future Harvest to support grass- and pasture-based farmers, the customers they feed, and to promoted meat consumption that’s good for you and the planet.

STUDY CIRCLES
Gatherings of 5-10 farmers, in-person and/or online, where like-minded and like-scaled farmers share experiences and challenges and engage in group oriented problem-solving.

AGRICULTURAL LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVE
Slated to launch in 2022, the Agricultural Leadership Development Initiative will create more equitable farming success in the region by providing an outreach and training program specifically for creating increased leadership in the BIPOC and veteran farmer communities.

PICK-YOUR-OWN CONSULTANT
Provides farmers with the grants to strengthen their business and address challenges with the support of in-depth consultations with experts.

TOOL AND EQUIPMENT SHARING & RENTAL PLATFORM
A resource to facilitate farmer-to-farmer lending, renting, or custom hire, with the aim of increasing access to the tools of the trade.
Caitlin Patton is a farmer, nonprofit consultant, and arts administrator. She lives on Double Forte Farm in Galena, MD with her husband and a menagerie of dairy goats, horses, poultry, dogs, cats, and bees. She is working toward creating a farm and food processing business, through which she and her team will raise dairy goats and sheep, make cheese, and have a commercial kitchen to make and sell a variety of other products. Participating in Future Harvest’s Beginner Farmer Training Program has taught her a great deal and gave her the opportunity to make cheese in a commercial setting for the first time.

D’Real Ryan Graham is an educator with over thirteen years of direct service as a youth worker and program manager in the Midwest and the Mid-Atlantic. “I made a pivot away from in-office day-to-day work to return to on-land and ancestral ways of being in the spring of 2019. I joined the field crew at Deep Roots Farm in spring 2021, with the responsibility of providing direct care for chickens, livestock guardian dogs, and several plots of land dedicated to growing organic fruit, herbs, and vegetables for community tables scattered across the DMV. “I have learned how to operate the infamous BCS tractor, in addition to water irrigation management best practices. I look forward to deepening my understanding of herbal energetics, especially as we make progress with our 2022 medicinal herb crop planning. My goal is to match plants with people (people with plants) in an effort to encourage healing earth-earthling relationships, while centering indigenous plants in the Chesapeake Bay nature-positive food system.” D’Real will return to the Beginner Farmer Training Program to complete his level 3 training in 2022.

SJ Brekosky is a farmer, florist, and freelance artist based in Baltimore City. They are dedicated to supporting the efforts of farmers—both in the field and from behind the screen—by working at urban gardens and devoting their graphic design practice to organizations such as National Young Farmers Coalition. SJ joined the BFTP with a background in flower farming and the intention to deepen their knowledge of sustainable land stewardship, cultivating food security, and building cooperative frameworks. Over the course of the program, they have gained many helpful resources and engaged in fruitful conversations around these topics. Their vision for the future is to assist in the co-creation of a queer farming and housing collective that provides access to nutritious food, stable shelter, community building, and space for creative expression.
As an experienced farmer, I struggle to find classes and resources that answer my questions. Most of my challenges are specific to my farm, and what I really need is a mentor’s eyes on the issues at hand. That’s why when I first read about the Pick-Your-Own Consultant program (PYOC), I thought that Future Harvest must have somehow been inside my head. This program is providing exactly what I need: the right farmer’s eyes on my operation.

We grow cut flowers on five acres; we’ve been in business for nine years. We’re moving towards growing in heated tunnels so that we can provide blooms for our florists during those valuable flower holidays in the winter months: Valentine’s Day, Easter, Thanksgiving, and Christmas. There are only a few cut flower growers across the country who grow in heated tunnels like we do, following sustainable practices and relying on integrated pest management. We’ve paid out of pocket before for consultations with some of these other growers, but there’s only so much room in our budget for continuing education. The PYOC is such a huge gift for us- as we grow our operation, we need the advice of the others who have operations like ours.

Further, having Future Harvest as the platform for consultations provides an extra level of incentive for consultants to actually make the time to speak to me. Consultants can put on their resumes that they provided mentorship through the program; they can rely on the program coordinators if any issues come up. Future Harvest makes the process easy and smooth, which means that I can still focus on my operation while participating in this program.

I sincerely hope that this program will continue to get funding for years to come. I’d like to participate as often as I can so that I can seek the advice of different mentors and continue to learn nuanced tricks of the trade. There is no “farming school” that could have prepared me for owning my own farm operation; but Future Harvest is filling that void for me as I learn and grow. To all who may read this and consider funding the PYOC again - please know that it is crucial to small farmers’ success!

Laura Beth Resnick
Owner and Operator of Butterbee Farms
BFTP Graduate and Trainer Farm
Pick-Your-Own Consultant Grant Recipient
Our programs are making a difference! At the end of 2021, the Million Acre Challenge had engaged 367 farms, managing over 43,000 acres, in soil health education and research, and through enrollment in the Count Your Acres campaign. We continue to see interest growing alongside participation in Soil Health... To Go lunch-and-learns and other soil health focused programming. Farmers and citizen scientists engaged with the Pasa Soil Health Benchmark Study (SHBS) are improving soils in the Chesapeake region, and building and preserving soil health, which is a fundamental component of a secure food system that effectively protects ecosystems and communities.

The Pasa Soil Health Benchmark Study was designed to help farmers monitor and evaluate the nuanced soil health strengths and challenges that can exist simultaneously within their fields. The study was developed and is administered by Pasa Sustainable Agriculture in collaboration with farmers and partners including the Cornell Soil Health Testing Laboratory, Future Harvest and the Million Acre Challenge, Penn State Extension, Rodale Institute, and Stroud Water Research Center. This study is one of the largest and most diverse community soil health research projects in the nation, amassing data from a wide range of farm scales and management systems, soil types, and farmer experiences. Identifying soil health benchmarks helps farmers determine whether their soil health management practices are achieving the desired results, or where improvements may be possible. In addition, participants are provided with opportunities to learn from one-another, and collaborate on innovative solutions to soil health management problems- through regional hubs, workshops, webinars and field-school programs.

Tillage intensity, calculated from field management records from over 100 Pasa Soil Health Benchmark Study Research Collaborators, using NRCS STIR values, and showing a significant decline in tillage among diversified vegetable farms from 2018-2020.
Born and raised in rural Louisiana, where his family grew produce and practiced animal husbandry on their land, Nazirahk began his professional career as an EMT and a medic in New Orleans. He later moved to Seattle to pursue a degree in alternative medicine and became a licensed naturopathic doctor and acupuncturist in Maryland, where he currently farms. For Nazirahk, the connection between food and health was obvious.

“I always knew where my food was coming from, but, moving to the city, you realize a lot of people have no clue how their food gets to them,” Nazirahk explains. “As a holistic health practitioner, introducing people to whole, non-processed foods not only connects them to the food system, but also improves their nutrition and health.”

Nazirahk founded Purple Mountain Organics in 2004 out of his desire to help others grow food and support local, sustainable food systems. Since 2010, Purple Mountain Organics has conducted research and custom farm work at the University of DC-CAUSES Firebird Farm in Beltsville, MD, where food is grown for local non-profits. Through this work, Nazirahk has expanded his reach, assisting farmers across the Mid-Atlantic with small-scale grain production.

Beyond growing food for donation, Nazirahk also grows grains - rice, heirloom wheat, oats, beans, and dry beans - to sell at local markets. Grains aren’t typically grown on a small scale in the U.S., because they need to be processed with large, expensive machinery - or by hand, which can be very time consuming. Nazirahk and a few other farmers are part of an innovative movement to bring small-scale grain production back to the region.

Recently, Nazirahk has been working to increase crop diversity, reduce tillage, and move away from plastic usage, based on research on the negative effects of plastic on soil health.

“We do everything we can to keep the carbon in the soil and help bring life back to the land,” Nazirahk says. “Healthy soil is essential for our food to keep its nutrients.”

When global supply chains were disrupted by COVID-19, regional farms filled the gaps in providing resources to those in need. People looked to regional production of food crops, including grain, for human consumption. Nazirahk hopes this shift can be a pathway to focus more on local, regenerative agriculture, so food can be grown within the regions where it is consumed.

Through his life’s work, Nazirahk has witnessed how urban and peri-urban farms have strengthened community health, not only through nutrition, but also by healing trauma, empowering individuals, and forming deeper ties among people and the land. Nazirahk advocates for everyone to be involved in changing the food system: “If we want to change the way we live for the better, growing your own food is one of the most revolutionary things you can do.”

Future Harvest is honored to have Nazirahk’s continued participation in our annual conference, the Million Acre Challenge, and to list him among our Feed the Need grantees.
CONTINUING EDUCATION FOR FARMERS: THE FIELD SCHOOL

The Field School is a series of educational programs offered throughout the year. We partner with the Chesapeake region’s leading farmers, researchers, and technical service providers to offer hands-on learning and skills building opportunities, professional development opportunities, and exposure to the latest research and trends in agriculture. Our programs follow a farmer-to-farmer learning model and are conducted through a variety of formats: field tours, hands-on days, intensives, panel discussions, and webinars. All experience levels are welcome to engage in our on-farm events, webinars, and workshops.

We attended an event to learn more about the grant-writing and administration process. We have applied for various grants since starting our farm in 2014 and received several awards this year and were looking for advice on administering our grants. Our main takeaways were to cultivate a relationship with our grant officer, which we are prioritizing in our current Value-Added Producer Grant. We also learned about sitting on grant review committees and anticipate getting involved in this in future years.

FutureHarvest provided this and other workshops in a convenient virtual format that was easy to follow and follow up on. This allowed us to attend the class while working with our hands. We hope the organization is able to continue such high-quality virtual meetings in the future!

—Michael Grantz, Great Day Gardens

2021 IMPACT

• In 2021, we offered 11 on-farm programs and nine webinars directly serving 430 farmers (note, these numbers are lower than normal due to attendance restrictions per COVID safety protocols)
• Our highest attended events were Grant Writing for Farmers and Soil Health Record Keeping, both of which were held online in late winter/early spring.
• At these events, we provided new and experienced farmers with a space to collaborate, brainstorm, learn, and problem solve on topics ranging from marketing and distribution pivots, health and safety concerns, managing financial risk, meat & slaughterhouse shortages, and more.
• We exposed farmers of all experience levels to new research, funding opportunities, technical service support opportunities, and regional initiatives.
• We connected farmers with other farmers and researchers to improve and understand soil health practices.

This material is based upon work supported by USDA/NIFA under Award Number 2018-70027-28588 and is supported by the Northeast Extension Risk Management Education Center (NERME). NERME provides competitive grants that fund education projects focused on helping farmers and ranchers successfully manage the unique risks associated with production agriculture across the northeast.
CONTINUING EDUCATION FOR FARMERS: FUTURE HARVEST STUDY CIRCLES

Future Harvest Study Circles are intimate gatherings of 5-10 farmers, in-person and/or online, where like-minded and like-scaled farmers share experiences and challenges and engage in group oriented problem-solving. These groups are supported by a skilled farmer facilitator. We see the immense benefits of farmer-to-farmer conversations during our Field School events and decided to facilitate them more intentionally! Each group discusses topics agreed upon by the participants of the groups; examples of topics addressed include: crop production, finances, pests, labor management, legal issues, and more. These sessions are a space for honest, productive discussion about the state of your farm operation and the issues and decisions your farm is facing in real time.

BENEFITS FOR PARTICIPATING FARMERS

• Build a close community of farm peers
• Create a safe space to troubleshoot, problem solve, and celebrate
• Have reliable contact with an experienced farmer consultant who will share hard-earned insights and offer strategic guidance as you make big decisions for your farm
• Tap into the greater Future Harvest community for resources, contacts, and assistance.
• Get support for your farm beyond the start-up years

“We have participated in a study circle for two years now and it has been invaluable! We look forward to this monthly hour: some months it is filled with mentorship, problem-solving or education and other months it is filled with support, empathy and words of encouragement. Farmers live a very unique lifestyle that others simply cannot relate to. Having a small cohort of other farmers that we check in with regularly as a sounding board, source of inspiration and pool of knowledge has made a huge difference for us personally as well as for our business.”

—Brian Knox and Jennifer Vaccaro, Where Pigs Fly Farm

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More than 500 individuals attended our first ever online conference: CRISIS & RESILIENCE - FARMERS BUILDING A NEW FOOD FUTURE. Even in the midst of the pandemic, we were able to attract more than 70% of our previous year’s attendance, which was our highest attended event to date.

Half of the 2021 attendees noted that the ability to attend online was a major draw for attendance. Education was listed as attendees’ number one reason for attending the conference, with Networking and Community Building Community as the number two reason.

Attendees engaged with the virtual conference platform using their computers, phones, and tablets heavily during the event, and returned to watch recorded sessions in the weeks and months following the live event.

Being virtual, the conference attracted attendees from outside the Chesapeake Region as well.

About the Attendees
69% of polled attendees identified as Farmer/Producer.
84% of those farmers identified themselves as Beginner Farmers with less than 10 years experience.

Sources: NeonCRM (registration), SurveyMonkey 2021, Socio
2021 STAFF LIST

Dena Leibman
Executive Director

Amy Mullan
Development Manager

Deb Dramby
Communications Manager

Laurie Savage
Administrative Assistant & Grants Manager

Jess Armacost
Conference Manager

Gail Taylor
Conference Manager

Niamh Shortt
Field School Director

Samaria King
Field School Manager

Lisa Garfield
Research Manager

Amyrose Foll
Beginner Farmer Training Program Director

Cathy Tipper
Beginner Farmer Training Program Volunteer

The work of Future Harvest would not be possible without our dedicated team of volunteers and independent contractors. Thank you for all that you do to move the Chesapeake region’s food system forward!
Future Harvest sincerely appreciates our donors for their contributions in 2021, including those who wish to remain anonymous and those who gave in-kind contributions.

**$50,000+**
- USDA Agricultural Marketing Service Farmers’ Market Promotion Program
- USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture Beginner Farmer and Rancher Development Program

**$49,000 - $20,000**
- Maine Community Foundation
- Prince Charitable Trusts
- USDA - NERME I Risk Mgt
- USDA - NERME II Risk Mgt
- USDA NIFA Organic Transitions

**$19,000 - $10,000**
- Chesapeake Bay Foundation
- National Fish and Wildlife Federation
- Nicholas and Gardiner Lapham Family Fund
- USDA Office of Partnerships and Public Engagement 2501

**$9,999 - $5,000**
- Blue House Fund
- Brendan Iribe
- Cathy Tipper
- Easton Economic Development Corporation
- Kaiser Permanente
- MARBIDCO
- Patricia Valas

**USDA NIFA Food Safety Outreach Program**
- Julia Guth
- Morning Ag Clips
- Penelope Breese
- Robert Gross
- Walker and Tritt Family Foundation
- Watterrock Fund
- Wawa Foundation
- What’s For Dinner Technologies
- Wheatland Spring Brewery, LLC
- Zigbone Farm Retreat

**$4,999 - $1,000**
- Buckler Family Giving Fund
- Charles Planck
- Dug Network
- Edible Delmarva
- Edible DC
- Eric & Susan Rubel Fund
- Foodshed Capital
- Growing For Market
- Hiu Newcomb
- Jay Wells Sustainable Agriculture Fund
- Johnny’s Selected Seeds

**Anonymous**
- Arcadia Center for Sustainable Food & Agriculture
- Beth McGee
- Bloom Soil
- Bresler Foundation

**Alexandra Warren**
- American Farmland Trust

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- Arcadia Center for Sustainable Food & Agriculture
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- Bloom Soil
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**Buckler Family Giving Fund**
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- Eric & Susan Rubel Fund
- Foodshed Capital
- Growing For Market
- Hiu Newcomb
- Jay Wells Sustainable Agriculture Fund
- Johnny’s Selected Seeds
OUR GENEROUS FUNDERS

$999 - $250
Agape Foundation
Amy Brown
Amy Mullan
Catherine Gearhart
Cathy Laws
Carolyn Brunette
Common Market Co-Op
Compost Crew
Full Circle Mushroom Compost
Harriet Iglehart
High Mowing Organic Seeds
Jane Wolfson
Jewelry for Good
Joseph Bohart
John Teasdale
Lauren Greenberger
Lindsay Smith
Lisa Stephens Trust
Mary Kathryn Barnet
Maryland Agricultural Education Foundation
Mullan Nursery Co
Patricia Bond
Veteran Compost

UP TO $250
Adam Gerson
Adrienne Granston
Allison Worman
Allison Roe
Alyssa Walsh
Amanda Cather
Amir Reda
Amy Rowe
Andy Andrews
Ariel Shaw
Aron Cooper
Becky Steward
Belle Grove Organics
Benjamin Tipper
Carey Hedlund
Carrie Vaughn
Catherine Nardi
Dale Johnson
Dave Cavanaugh
David Giusti
Darel Farmer
Darla Shores
Deb Dramby
Deborah Smith
Dana Slater
Eleanor Bundy
Elizabeth Beggins
Elizabeth Cook
Ernest Sota
Eric Plaksin
Erika Crowl
Fred Sachs
Felicia Hodge Denison
Garrett Ziegler
Geoffrey O’Gara
The Hamilton Mercantile
Hana Newcomb
Ian Hertzmark
Jacob Gilley
Jamie Baxter
Jean-Francois Seznec
Jenna Umbriac
Jeffrey & Susan Coleman
Jeremy Criss
Joanna Winkler
Joanna Kelly
Joseph Scott
Kandice Freeman
Kimberly Raikes
Leah Peterson
Lindsay Gilmour
Liz Whitehurst
Local Food Marketplace LLC
M. Footner
Martha Rose Echols
Matthew Wilson
Megan Larmer
Meredith Epstein
Michael Kane
Michael Pierce
Monkton UMW
Nathan Bergdoll
Nazirakh Amen
Neith Little
Nick Stavely
One Acre Farm
Pete Zizos
Plow and Stars Farm
Pierre Grahn
Ray Weil
Rick Clark
Rob Schnabel
Sage Dennis
Sage Devlin
Sarah Everhart
Sarah Hirsh
Sarah Rider
Sonia Keiner
Spike Gjerde
Stephanie Jones
Stephen McHenry
Steven Jones
Susan Pardee Baker
Steve McHenry
Tanya Doka-Spandhla
Tom Farquhar
 Watson’s Fireplace & Patio
THANK YOU
We hold so much gratitude for our members, donors, and funders who make our work of strengthening farming and the regional food economy; protecting our land, water, and air; and providing nutritious food that sustains the region’s communities, possible. From all of us at Future Harvest, our deepest thanks.