



PROVIDENCE  
FARM COLLECTIVE

# The Collective

Newsletter Volume 1

Fall 2024



Growing  
the Future  
of Farming

# Cultivating Next Steps

By Kristin Heltman-Weiss

Farms are essential infrastructure—locally, nationally, globally. No community thrives without access to nutritious foods and farmers to grow it. At Providence Farm Collective, we build farms and we cultivate a vibrant community.

Providence Farm Collective received recognition in the past year for the work and culture of its inclusive community and leadership model. Halima, Zelalem, Asiya, Mo, Hamadi, and I have spent a lot of time together traveling to receive these honors. Long trips are a wonderful opportunity for conversations about our work, our challenges, and our dreams. For Halima, Zelalem, and me, it's thrilling to watch the barn being built this summer. We are fascinated by the construction process and, more importantly, invigorated by the opportunities that this incredible agricultural building will hold for our farmers and their families, our staff, our board and committee members, our volunteers, our CSA members, and our neighbors across Western New York.

PFC and its farmers provide impactful services for self-sufficiency that, without our organization and its farmers, would not exist. More than 11,000 people access fresh, nutrient dense foods grown on PFC's 29 farms with the impact of increasing under-resourced communities' access to locally grown produce and supporting the development of small farm businesses in the regional economy. More than 250 people access farmland at PFC, either as incubator farmers or community farm volunteers, to empower grassroots systemic change. Halima shares that through PFC there is "access to land to grow fresh veggies and access to markets. Buying fresh produce is expensive. Now, our community, they get fresh produce from their own community and where you come from. For me, I enjoy farming. I never thought I would be farming."

As the future co-president of the PFC Board of Directors, Zelalem is concerned with the sustainability of PFC and the success of its farmers. She sees a future at PFC where there is "more support for the individuals who want to be independent. Especially for the farmer who has to grow for the future. Has to get more support to be by themselves.

And a good farmer has to be highly supported than any other farmer. Some farmers are just there coming for hobbies. Some farmers who are there seriously want to grow in that business. So they should get more support than any other."

From PFC's founding in the Somali Bantu Community Farm, our work is centered in the belief that alone we each offer part of what is needed to address our most persistent challenges; coming together in community, however, with a commitment to equal and humble partnership, we forge solutions. Our commitment to listening to one another and understanding the diverse experiences and cultural contexts we each bring to the decision making table have cultivated an organization that has in a very short time become a change leader.

Just consider all of the ways that PFC has grown and all that we have accomplished in 5 years:

We implemented grassroots programs that provide farmland access, culturally and linguistically appropriate agricultural and business education, and fresh food access that centers the dignity of all farmers and all food consumers.

We authentically live our mission and values.

We own 37-acres of prime agricultural land.

We are protecting our land forever as farmland, and very soon we will have an incredible barn that all of us together have played a role in building.

All of this is possible because we at PFC are deeply committed to nurturing community and fostering connections through understanding—often shared over a delicious meal made by Sharif.

Through our collective work to grow the future of farming in our region, PFC and its farmers are building farm businesses and increasing fresh food access for our vision of a resilient and equitable food system. We are building leadership and fostering a thriving regional community.

Let us celebrate our new barn and the opportunities it brings to us all!



# Update on PFC'S Farmland Protection

In 2023, Providence Farm Collective secured ownership of its 37-acre farm thanks to a successful joint capital campaign with the Western New York Land Conservancy. By the end of 2024, PFC's farmland will be protected forever through a conservation easement. These milestones are significant not just for PFC and its farmers, but for all of us in Western New York.

Erie County has lost 40% of its farmland to development since 1970, pushing local food production further from population centers and exacerbating food insecurity. 1 in 5 children in our region faces regular food insecurity, with limited access to fresh, healthy foods, especially in communities of color and rural areas.

Rachel Chrostowski, Farmland Conservation Director at the Land Conservancy, notes, "We are proud to continue our partnership with Providence Farm Collective as we work together to permanently protect farmland in Western New York. This collaboration not only preserves vital agricultural land but also ensures that Buffalo's refugee population has access to space where they can farm. These lands are more than just places to grow food; they are integral to preserving cultural traditions and fostering a sense of belonging. By working together, we are creating a future where farming remains a vital part of our community and where everyone has access to fresh, local, culturally-significant food."



## Our New Barn

Imagine . . .

- An enclosed wash and pack that can accommodate 10 farmers at a time
- 2 cold storage units
- A farm store where CSA members can pick up their shares and neighbors can stop by for their weekly produce
- A kitchen to feed our farmers and where farmers can minimally process produce
- An office for staff where we don't have to wear ski pants to do our jobs
- A pavilion for us to gather in fellowship and have important conversations
- Two bathrooms (!) with hot water—need we say more!

. . . This is our barn!





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5701 Burton Road  
Orchard Park NY 14127

# help us GROW

Providence Farm Collective is Growing the Future of Farming — right here in Western New York! Do you love being a part of our vibrant community? Join our grassroots movement to empower just and equitable access to food and farmland. Our goal: Raise \$10,000 by October 11.

Join us!



## Upcoming Events

Celebrating Our New Look

Volunteer Opportunities

Special Tours

Special Market Stand Events

Cyanotype Exhibits

Join us at the farm for our first event:

A one-time **PFC & Friends Winter Market!**

**what**

Shopping for goods from PFC farms and partners, tours of the new barn, & enjoying seasonal bites

**when**

Saturday, December 7th  
from 10:00 AM - 1:00 PM

**where**

5701 Burton Road  
Orchard Park, NY 14127

**Sign up for our newsletter**

Stay up to date on the winter market and more. <https://zc.vg/XnG3C>

