



PROVIDENCE  
FARM COLLECTIVE

# The Collective

Newsletter Volume 2

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Growing  
the Future  
of Farming



# Collaborating for Farmland Access

By Beth Liepler and Mahamud Mberwa

There's a critical issue facing new and beginning farmers in Western New York — access to and ownership of farmland. For many farmers, owning land provides the security needed to invest in their businesses through infrastructure and capacity building. Knowing that resources won't be lost if a lease expires or can't be renewed provides farmers with the piece of mind needed to take essential next steps. Without access to land, new farmers face immense challenges in building sustainable, long-term businesses, which impacts us all by putting our local food system at risk.

## The Loss of Farmland in Western New York

According to the Erie County Agricultural and Farmland Protection Plan, since 1970, Erie County has lost nearly 40% of its farmland to development, pushing food production farther from the County's population centers. Additionally, research by the Partnership for Public Good found that 20% of children are food insecure in Western New York, particularly in rural areas and communities of color. Farmland loss is deeply felt throughout our region and negatively impacts the health and well being of our community. Transitioning farmland to a new generation of farmers is key to building sustainable, resilient, and equitable local food production.

## Overcoming Barriers and Keeping Farmland in Agriculture

At Providence Farm Collective (PFC), many of our farmers are actively working to secure farmland as they prepare to launch their agriculture businesses. Progress through opportunity has taken many forms in the programs and the partnership offered by PFC staff that include:

- Providing assistance to farmers as they apply for grants
- Connecting farmers to markets and resources through produce aggregation and bulk purchasing of materials and supplies
- Fostering network building for farmers through attendance at national conferences, connecting farmers with New York State's Department of Ag & Markets, and hosting onsite networking events
- Creating a farmland access strategic plan with input from stakeholders to support the success of farmers and their independent farm enterprises

Through our work as Regional Navigators with American Farmland Trust, we support our farmers in navigating the complexities of securing land and helping them explore options like cooperative farming, lease-to-own agreements, and land purchases. Of course, relationship building with local farmland owners who would like to keep their land in agricultural use through leasing or selling is key to our farmers' success. Consequently, if you own farmland in Western New York that is available for rent or for sale now or in the near future, please reach out to us at [info@providencefarmcollective.org](mailto:info@providencefarmcollective.org).

You also can help us by:

- Completing the short survey at this link: <https://providencefarmcollective.org/land/>
- Supporting the work of Providence Farm Collective by sharing our mission with your network and encouraging others to get involved.

Thank you for your partnership in empowering just and equitable access to food and farmland!





# Support Your Local Farmer

Join Providence Farm Collective's CSA vegetable share program and savor the flavors of our diverse farmers' harvests! As a CSA member, you will enjoy 18 weeks of classic Western New York favorites AND discover unique cultural produce grown right here at PFC. CSA shares are a great way to support your local farmer(s), eat fresh, just-harvested produce, and build community connection. Become a member today!



## Welcome to the PFC Farm Store

For the past 4 years, Markets Manager Hamadi Ali welcomed market-goers and CSA members every Monday under PFC's trusty farm tent to shop for their fresh veggies. This year, however, Hamadi is thrilled to introduce the PFC Farm Store located in our new barn! The store provides an opportunity for the markets team to better serve customers in a climate controlled space and offer new items like value-add products from local farm partners and producers. Throughout the season, look for items like PFC honey, PFC merchandise, and other specialty products. The store will be open on Mondays from 3:00 PM to 7:00 PM and Thursdays from 11:00 AM to 4:00 PM, mid-June through October. We look forward to welcoming you to the PFC Farm Store!



## Meet PFC Farm Manager Aravindh Yaggadi

We're thrilled to introduce you to Aravindh Yaggadi, PFC's new Farm Manager! In addition to experience in commercial farming, with a focus on sustainable agricultural practices and integrated pest management, Aravindh majored in food innovation and technology for his master's degree. He is eager to use his diverse skills to enhance efficiency and sustainability across PFC, especially in the demonstration farm. PFC customers can look forward to an extended growing season and the opportunity for fresh vegetables earlier in the year, thanks to Aravindh's agricultural expertise.

Apart from managing farm operations, Aravindh is collaborating with PFC's Farm Director Beth Leipler, Farm Mentor Mo Mberwa, and Cornell Cooperative Extension Crop Specialist Elizabeth Buck to help PFC farmers create a vision for their farming operations once they launch from PFC. He emphasizes the importance of crop planning and efficient ways for cultivation that make the best use of smaller farmland plots.

*"I'm genuinely excited to dive into PFC's approach to farming and collaborate with our farmers on innovative, sustainable practices. As Farm Manager, my focus is on maximizing yields from the demo plot while staying true to PFC's commitment to organic growth. I'm eager to explore ways to enhance productivity while nurturing the land, ensuring we can offer fresher, healthier produce. By integrating smart crop planning and efficient cultivation methods, we'll help our farmers thrive—delivering more abundant harvests and extending the growing season for our community."*





# PROVIDENCE

FARM COLLECTIVE

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## help us GROW

**Providence Farm Collective is Growing the Future of Farming—right here in Western New York!**

Through investment and partnership by our greater community, PFC is a leader in building resiliency, sustainability, and equity in our region's food and farm systems. While most grants provide organizations like ours with program support, very few provide operations support. It is through investments like yours that provide unrestricted funding that empowers PFC to cultivate farmer-led and community rooted programs for just and equitable access to food and farmland.

As the federal government cuts essential funding for agriculture and food access, your investment in our work is more important than ever. Thank you for joining us!



## find out MORE

We are happy to share more information with you, including details about partnership opportunities, programs, and news.

Email us [info@providencefarmcollective.org](mailto:info@providencefarmcollective.org)

Visit our website [providencefarmcollective.org](http://providencefarmcollective.org)

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