



Interfaith Sustainable  
Food Collaborative

# December Newsletter

2022

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## Message from the Executive Director

Friends,

As the year comes to an end, I am reflecting with gratitude on the people I've had a chance to work with this year through Interfaith Food. You are such a gift in my life and to the communities you serve!

There have been many highlights, but nothing has been on the top of mind like our work to facilitate access to produce at local farmers markets. We are on track to provide over \$100,000 in nutrition incentives to low-income consumers between last Summer and next Spring! These incentives more than double participants' power to purchase fruits and vegetables from local farmers. (See article below.) We were able to expand our program to include more Bonus Bucks, more partners, more markets and more tours. We expanded to serve WIC (Women Infant and Children) program participants.

Over the past year, we facilitated faith-groups advocating for local, state and federal policies including: nutrition incentives; COVID sick-pay for food chain workers; and more.

We completed a substantial research project covering thousands of sites owned by religious groups to identify the most promising larger parcels that can be used to grow food. We sent personal letters to over 600 landowners to begin relationships that will lead to beginning and women farmers getting access to faith community owned lands.

As we look forward to 2023, Interfaith Food will be growing our efforts on many fronts. We plan to broaden the work of faith-community advocates to shape the 2023 Farm Bill; we will build on the foundation of Faithlands work to implement pilot projects; and we are bringing back our Spring conference! In terms of the team that moves our work forward: we are recruiting for 2 open staff positions; and seek new Advisory Board members.

*We'll be updating our strategic plan in the coming months, and I want to hear from you! How can our mission serve your congregation or program in 2023 and beyond? Your input will help us shape that strategic plan.*

You can also help with a financial contribution. Simply put, our grants can not support our work alone. Individual donations leverage our ability to access new grants and provide successful food and faith programming. Please include Interfaith Food at the top of your donation list. I assure you a contribution of any level makes a difference!

With appreciation, and best wishes during this holiday season!

Steve Schwartz

Donate Here

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## 2023 Food & Faith Conference: Save the Date

Wednesday, March 8th,

**What to expect:**

Tour of Farms and Gardens on Faith Community Sites: 9:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.

Conference Session and Workshops: 3:30 p.m. - 7:30 p.m.

- Workshops: partnerships with local farms and congregations, sustainable food policy advocacy, reducing food waste, and more!
- Networking opportunities including collaborative dialogue to share solutions with other faith-based leaders making a difference in their communities!
- Inspiring speakers including: Tim Alderson, of Seeds of Hope Project based in the Los Angeles area; and local congregational leaders in food access.
- Lunch and Dinner with local, organic ingredients, as well as exciting food demos

**Where:** East Bay, Location Details Coming Soon

Scholarships are available. Sponsorship opportunities are also available.

**Look for more information, and registration links in your email soon.**

If your congregation has a successful program to highlight at the conference please be in touch at [info@interfaithfood.org](mailto:info@interfaithfood.org).



Conference participants talk at the Food & Faith Conference in Richmond, CA.





Farm and garden tour participants as part of 2021 Conference.

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## Endorse Nat'l. Sustainable Agriculture Coalition's New Farm Bill Platform

The 2023 Farm Bill will be the most important piece of legislation impacting our nation's food and agriculture for the next decade. The **National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition**, our national partner, has released its **2023 Farm Bill Platform** detailing its advocacy goal for the Farm Bill. The Platform focuses on:

- Advancing racial equity across the food system;
- Building a climate-resilient future;

- Investing in healthy rural and urban communities; and
- Leveling the playfield for small and mid-sized farms.

Each one of these goals contains three to four specific action items outlined in the comprehensive platform attached below. We are calling on our partners to show Congress we are committed to an equitable, sustainable, and locally-focused 2023 Farm Bill in several ways: a. sign on directly through the link below; and b. share this platform and endorsement [link](#) in their newsletters, bulletins. Let's not stop with our local networks – did you know there are 216 Religious Advocacy Groups in Washington, D.C.? (Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion and Public Life) Please reach out to your regional and national affiliates (e.g. United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries; Religious Action Center of the Union of Reform Judaism; or United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society). to get endorsement at that level also. Help us get the attention of Congress by getting your network to endorse. We are hoping to have 50 faith-based groups signed on by January 31, 2023. To discuss how you can engage your community and affiliated national groups in Farm Bill advocacy in 2023 reach out to Steve or Keagan at the Interfaith Food office.



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## Farmer's Market Tours Highlight Bonus Bucks Program

This Fall Interfaith Food hosted tours of 8 farmers markets including San Rafael, Santa Rosa, Healdsburg, and Hayward. Over 100 low income seniors, women and children attended.

The tours focused on participants receiving Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) checks along with Interfaith Food Bonus Bucks. Together, these incentives represent \$125 of fruits and vegetables at farmers markets per person.

Paula Downing, who coordinated tours for Interfaith Food, reflected on “What did we hope to accomplish with the tours?”

1. Give people the opportunity to meet farmers and get comfortable talking to the people who grow their food.
2. Offer the experience of tasting alive and delicious food picked the day before market or the same morning - as opposed to old, dead food that has been sitting in storage for a week or two or more.

Tour presenters included Guedi Beltran, Public Health Program Manager for the WIC program with Marin County Health and Human Services. Guedi provided information about the nutritional value of farmers market food and the value of eating locally grown food in season. She suggested participants tune in to the knowledge they have intrinsically about what is healthy for their families. Participants learned leafy greens are needed when the weather is cold to build strength and vitality and oranges, lemons, and grapefruit fill the body's need for Vitamin C, the sunshine vitamin.

Describing her switch to a diet with more fresh produce, Toni Evans, said “I feel so much better... I'm gonna be like super, super healthy! I'm definitely coming back to the farmers market.”

Everyone enjoyed the pleasure and human sweetness of being together at the farmers markets. One of the highlights was taking home a basket of fresh strawberries provided by the tour hosts - Marin Farmers Market Association and Agricultural Community Events.

The Freedom Farmers' Marketplace is a multicultural market bringing Black Farmers and other under-served Farmers to the Bay Area for a **Direct - to - Consumer** selling experience. For Bay Area congregations, this Saturday, December 10th is a great day to tour Freedom Farmers Market. For more information go to: [this link.](#)

If your congregation would like to set up a farmers market tour during the coming months reach out at [info@interfaithfood.org](mailto:info@interfaithfood.org)

Interfaith Food would like to give special thanks to the California Department of Food and Agriculture and Marin Community Foundation for supporting this work.



Toni Evans at San Rafael Farmers Market Tour.





Tour participants with Spectrum Community Services, with Tyler Thayer of AIM at the Hayward Farmers Market.

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## **Welcome to the Team Keegan Horton!**

In the role of Outreach and Advocacy Associate, Keegan is responsible for supporting faith-groups advancing a range of diverse projects including Faithlands leases. He also will facilitate members of the Interfaith Food network doing advocacy impact directed at all levels of government to build a more just and sustainable food system. Having grown up in Marin County, Keegan has always appreciated the food systems that bring our locally grown food home. Previously, Keegan has helped establish farms in areas affected by the remnants of war in Vietnam. He possesses a Juris Doctorate from the University of Denver and a Master of Social Work from Loyola University Chicago. Keegan believes in the unique ability of faith groups to empower their participants towards sustainable food practices, health, and policy change. In his free-time, Keegan both plays and coaches rugby. He happily lives in Fairfax, CA with his wife and three cats.



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## Interfaith Food is Hiring!

Interfaith Food is hiring a Communications and Reporting Associate position based in Sonoma County. In addition, we are recruiting for two Americorps\*VISTA positions to start in January, 2022. Details are available [here](#). Interested individuals should contact [Steve@interfaithfood.org](mailto:Steve@interfaithfood.org).

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## FOOD FAITH KITCHENS AND NAFES!

By Carey Campbell

It's early August and you can tell it's going to be a warm day. On the edge of Santa Rosa the grape vines are getting heavy, gardens are full of color and the congregational kitchen at St. Seraphim Orthodox Cathedral is a buzz. Kristina Daya and her Mazza Catering team are preparing for a weekend full of events. They will be feeding around 600 people through the weekend. Kristina's food is colorful, seasonal and full of 'Nafes' (an Arabic word for the expression one's soul).

Mazza Catering has utilized the congregational kitchen at St. Seraphim's since 2020. The church has a large, licensed commercial kitchen that was not being used most of the week. "Kristina asked me if they could use it. Go on, use it, sure, and they kept it running and all the maintenance going and somebody was here during the week," recalls Father Lawrence Margitich, Rector at St. Seraphim's.

Originally, Mazza Catering paid a nominal fee, with the growing success of the business the owners renegotiated a mutually agreeable rental price per month.



Kristina was able to sit down with us in the garden and share a bit of her journey through family, faith and food. To view a beautiful video showing more about the project click here: <https://vimeo.com/747786985>

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