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Interfaith Sustainable  
Food Collaborative

# May 2021 Newsletter

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## CSA Farms Looking for Partners

Community Supported Agriculture has never been more important than during the recent pandemic. Interfaith Food talks about these weekly produce box programs as Congregation Supported Agriculture that connects consumers with fresh, local and seasonal produce while supporting the bottom-line for local farmers. We have worked to connect congregations and faith-based social service agencies since 2013. The most exciting programs develop close relationships between the farmers, and members of a congregation. This can include Sunday school visits to a farm, or a farmer coming to services to teach. CSA is not a big distributor/aggregator of produce from many farms doing home delivery. CSA is not a food donation program for low-income families. However, Interfaith Food has advanced several models to make sure CSA boxes can be affordable for all members of a congregation's community.

While many farms have waiting lists for their CSA's due to increased demand caused by the Pandemic, others have pivoted to this approach as they lost restaurant accounts or other marketing outlets. Is your congregation interested in CSA? Now is the time to plan, promote and launch your project. We can provide planning assistance, outreach materials, and most importantly connections to local farms. To discuss this more call our office at (707) 634-4672 or set up an appointment with this link.

Interfaith Food has been working hard to update its list of farmers seeking faith-based CSA partners. Farmers, didn't fill out our interest survey for working with faith groups? Farmers please fill out this survey [here](#).

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# A Year Since It All Began: Supporting Senior Nutrition through COVID Relief Bucks

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Interfaith Sustainable Food Collaborative established a program to serve low-income seniors who participated in the government sponsored Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP). This allowed seniors receiving \$20 in federal benefits an additional incentive to get to local markets by matching the money they received. When California temporarily suspended the program due to uncertainty related to COVID-19; Interfaith Food worked quickly to fill the void. We launched "COVID Relief Bucks" for low-income seniors in Marin and Sonoma Counties who received up to \$80 of incentives to fresh, local produce from farmers markets and the mobile market "Rollin' Root".

Following shelter-in-place orders, we pivoted to serve seniors who could not travel to markets. We were able to achieve a more than 520% increase in the dollar amount of Senior Farmers Market Bonus Buck incentives redeemed in Sonoma and Marin Counties when comparing March, 2020 to March, 2019. We developed and proved the success of a new, replicable, model from working with Area Agency on Aging SFMNP distribution partners, and farmers markets to serve seniors sheltering in place at low-income housing facilities. Low income consumers, especially seniors, have benefitted by getting affordable access to fresh, local produce. One farmers market manager told us that **a senior client began dancing in Rohnert Park when he received the script**; while another asked how they can get these for their senior friends.

Since September, 2020 we have been able to serve over 300 seniors through this program through 14 different partner sites. Special thanks to the Marin Community Foundation, Community Foundation Sonoma County, and Albertson's Foundation for financial support.

Continue reading [here](#).

## From Community Project to State

### Policy:

We are leading an advocacy campaign to get the Legislature and Governor to fund \$10.4 million for two healthy food access programs for seniors. This includes (1) Growing the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program (SFMNP) to serve more than 110,000 additional seniors who can cook at home; (2) Creating a pilot program to help long-term care facilities, home-delivered meals programs and others source of local food to seniors that depend on others to cook for them. Our proposal has been endorsed by the largest Christian and Jewish advocacy groups working in Sacramento, as well as dozens of secular groups including AARP, CA Association of Food Banks, Next Gen and the LA Food Policy Council. Now we need the Governor and Legislature to commit funding during the next month! To endorse the Senior Nutrition Budget request click [here](#).

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# 8th Annual Food, Faith and Farms Conference

## Save the Date!

### August 25th

**After postponing through the most difficult months of the Pandemic, our conference is coming back stronger than ever! We'll have a morning tour of farms and gardens on religious community owned sites, followed by a broad range of workshops and speakers. More details coming soon!**

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## Congregational Highlight

### Congregation Shir Shalom and First Congregational Church in Sonoma

This spring, Interfaith Food has partnered with Sonoma-based Congregation Shir Shalom and First Congregational Church to expand the community garden on their shared campus. While the garden has grown food in the past, they have faced issues with having consistent watering and protection from deer and other critters. Within the first few weeks of spring, community volunteers installed a deer fence, creating a protected garden space for the first time! This was followed by the installation of a timed irrigation system that was led by Interfaith Food staff member Abby Runte. With these systems in place, the garden is growing well without needing daily staff or volunteer time for watering. This makes a huge difference!



New irrigation and fencing at garden site in Sonoma.

The garden is cared for by the faith communities that share the campus, as well as by students from Old Adobe School and the Shir Shalom Hebrew school, which are also based on this shared campus. Led by Abby of Interfaith Food, the kids have helped plant out the first round of crops in the garden including: sweet peas, kale, basil, cilantro, cucumbers, tomatoes, chard, and a variety of pollinator flowers. The garden is already looking bountiful, and is inspiring excitement for converting even more land on the site to grow food. Does your congregation have a space that could be growing food? For more information about how Interfaith Food can help make that happen, please contact Abby Runte at [abby@interfaithfood.org](mailto:abby@interfaithfood.org).



Shir Shalom Hebrew School kids join Abby Runte in planting.

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## CFAP Announcement: Calling farmer partners!

The deadline for the Coronavirus Food Assistance Program 2 (CFAP 2) is quickly approaching for farmers who have been directly impacted by the Coronavirus pandemic on **June 5, 2021**. The USDA is offering federal aid to those who faced market disruptions due to COVID-19. The President's administration extended the deadline in part to facilitate enrollment by Black, Latinx and Asian farmers who may not have previously enrolled. Eligible

## Summer Meals and P-EBT Update

As we wait for California's P-EBT plan to be approved by the USDA, Interfaith Food would like to remind congregations about the increased food insecurity among children who are not in school during the summer months. Faith communities have an opportunity to fill this gap by offering summer meals to children during the months of June through September. If your organization is planning to host a summer meals program, or you are interested

producers include livestock, specialty crops, dairy, wool, and floriculture among others. To apply, head to <https://www.farmers.gov/pandemic-assistance/cfap> to fill out an application or go to the USDA Service Center closest to you. For more information about this timely opportunity, please contact [stephanie@interfaithfood.org](mailto:stephanie@interfaithfood.org).

in options, please contact Laura at [laura@interfaithfood.org](mailto:laura@interfaithfood.org). We plan to facilitate shared learning among faith groups on this important work.

## We are Hiring!

Interfaith Food is hiring a Communications and Reporting Associate. For more information about this professional position contact: [Steve@interfaithfood.org](mailto:Steve@interfaithfood.org)

## COVID Reopening Resources:

[Best Practices for Houses of Worship](#) and [COVID-19 Federal Resources Available to Communities of Faith](#).

## Faith Lands Toolkit Released:

Agrarian Trust shares: "The FaithLands Toolkit supports partnerships between farmers, faith communities, and food systems in celebration of our interconnectedness to one another and our common home." To access the FaithLands Toolkit, click [here!](#)

## Mark Your Calendar!

**May is CalFresh Awareness Month!** A great time to promote fruit and veggie nutrition incentives, including [Market Match](#).

**May 16th:** Marin Fruit and Veggie Fest, family friendly event to learn about community food resources this Sunday 11:45 am to 3:30pm hosted by Marin County Health and Human Services Nutrition Wellness Program via facebook live and [zoom](#).

**May 19th:** Lutheran Lobby Day This important event will include a dynamic speaker, Rev. Cornell William Brooks, as well as opportunities to work for food justice for undocumented people and much more. <https://lutheranpublicpolicyca.org/lobby-day-2021>

**Save the Date:** Interfaith Food Conference 8/25/2021



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