

ANNUAL REPORT 2019



LOCAL
ENVIRONMENTAL
AGRICULTURE
PROJECT



MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

I write this letter in July 2020, needing to acknowledge the real challenges that our communities are facing right now. We are all struggling to respond to Covid-19 and to the widespread call to finally address systemic racism in the food system, in our communities, and in our institutions. If this is the “undoing” of our reality, I am excited and ready to work together to rebuild our community and food systems so that they are less fragile, more equitable, and perhaps actually sustainable.

Now for 2019, which marked 10 years for Grandin Village Farmers Market and LEAP. In 2009, the Roanoke Co-op and Brent Cochran wanted to support farmers in the region and piloted Roanoke’s second farmers market. After the first season, the team realized that this was bigger than a market and founded Local Environmental Agriculture Project (LEAP). LEAP continues to be rooted in farmers/food entrepreneurs and in community, as evident in our current work highlighted in this report.

I started 2019 as a second-time new mother with a two month old-- pumping in between (and during) meetings, working in a cramped and busy office, and struggling to balance the demands of LEAP’s local, regional and statewide work. I am oriented to see the challenges and to be critical of our systems and I work hard to keep a positive and hope-filled perspective about the future. I rarely celebrate successes—my head and heart immediately focus on the next challenge to think about and how we can work together to create a more equitable world. I am incredibly thankful to be part of a team who balances me.

Connie Kenny is a loving mother and she is the smiling, warm, and compassionate side of the LEAP markets—she loves everything about farmers markets! Kelly Key, a new mother in December 2018, is committed to supporting farmers and balances the roles of farmer, parent, and keep-everything-together at LEAP with so much grace and purpose. Ned Savage can connect with anyone and people gravitate towards him for his sincerity and his respect of people—he is passionate about food and community and is always ready to step in, help out, and fill the gaps. Katie Struble is genuine, people-centered, and a great listener-- she makes the Mobile Market hum and makes some mean sauerkraut. Sam Hedges, who started in late 2018 and became a father in 2019, is the support structure that holds the people, programs, and grants together. Frances West throws creativity and light into the often-structured world of Quickbooks. And Sam Lev is an incredibly even-keeled, committed, and kind person—he is the do-er of all do-ers, has perfected the chocolate chip cookie, and is the reason things get done at LEAP.

I ended 2019 with a happily weaned and toddling baby, a signed lease for a more spacious home for LEAP at Villa Heights, an ever-more committed team ready to spend the “off-season” reflecting, evaluating, and improving our work for 2020 and beyond, and State House and Senate bills and budget amendments filed for the 2020 legislative session to support food access and Virginia Fresh Match.

When I allow myself to stop, pause, and reflect on my six years with LEAP, I am overwhelmed with gratitude for your continued commitment to our community food system and for your ongoing trust in me and the LEAP team.



Maureen McNamara Best

DIRECTOR, STRATEGIC PLANNING

2019 SNAPSHOT

In the Roanoke Valley Foodshed, LEAP served...

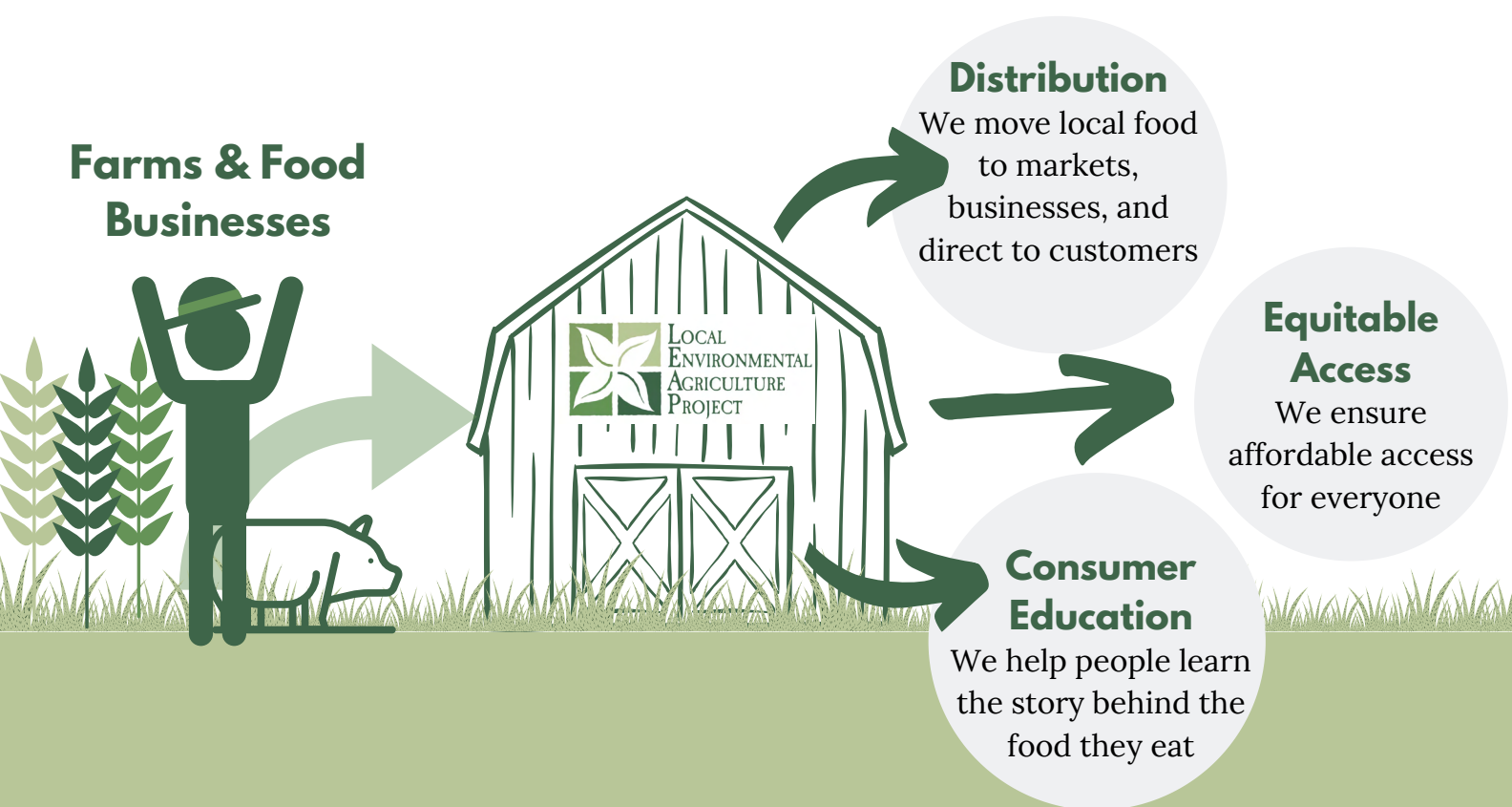
2,040 + 159 = \$590k

Roanoke Valley
residents

Food
businesses

in locally
produced food

**LEAP nurtures healthy communities and
builds resilient local food systems.**



FOOD HUB

Supporting our local and regional farmers

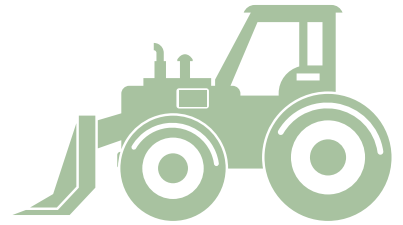
The LEAP Food Hub serves our Mobile Market, Farm Share, West End Farmers Market and, for the first time this year, institutional buyers.

In 2019, LEAP's Food Hub provided 125 farmers a wholesale market, via the Mobile Market, 175-member Farm Share, and institutional sales. Access to stable, diverse markets helps farmers build viable businesses.



"The Farm Share has created a customer base for our farm and a key outlet for larger volumes of a single crop. Nothing makes this farmer happier than having a reliable home for our food. LEAP helps us plan for the future."

– Kat Johnson, Field's Edge Farm



125

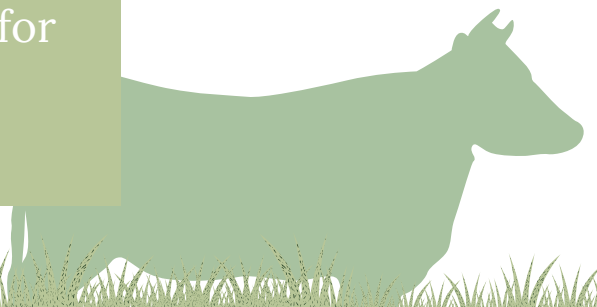
Farmers & Food
Businesses Supported

\$238k

Income generated
for Food Businesses
& Farmers

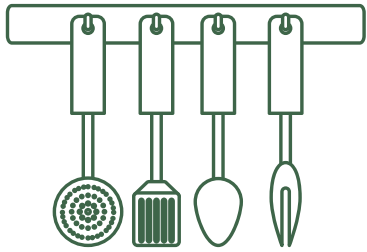
182

Locally grown Fruit
& Vegetable
varieties purchased
via the Farm Share



LEAP KITCHEN

Helping small businesses make delicious food



44

SWaM
businesses

3

Businesses
graduated from
the kitchen

80%

Surveyed
members agreed
that the LEAP
Kitchen has
helped their
businesses
expand

The LEAP Kitchen provides commercial kitchen space, access to equipment, and technical and business planning support for Small, Women-owned, and Minority-owned (SWaM) businesses and entrepreneurs. We help small businesses overcome regulatory barriers and provide lower start-up costs so that they can do what they do best: craft delicious food products for Roanoke!

LEAP is thrilled that three successful businesses (Hanu Food Truck, Roasters Next Door, and Bent Mountain Salsa) grew out of the incubator kitchen and into their own production spaces in 2019!

"Since our move to Roanoke to start our business, the LEAP Kitchen has been so great at facilitating small businesses, like ours, in providing a comfortable and affordable space to grow. "

- Hanu Food Truck



MARKETS

Where good people meet good food



1,441

Customers visited our markets

43

Local vendors sold food produced within 100 miles

\$240k

in food dollars kept in our local communities

67

Community events, musical performances, partnerships with local businesses and organizations

LEAP's Markets in Grandin and West End are community spaces for growing businesses, local food lovers, and people looking to learn more about food and each other.

2019 was a banner year for LEAP markets. Customer traffic and vendor sales increased. Grandin celebrated its 10-year anniversary, and we hosted 5 fun-filled events, including a Tomato Fest, Harvest Festival, and 6 monthly brunch cocktail events!



"Every year my family tries new produce items we've found at the market. This summer we discovered micro greens. We are always eating different foods and also finding new ways to cook our old favorites. Farmers are always ready with suggestions on how to get the best out of their produce."

-Market shopper

MOBILE MARKET

Bringing good food directly to neighborhoods

Equitable Access to local food

Customers purchased fresh, local food **5,461** times

Affordable Access to healthy food

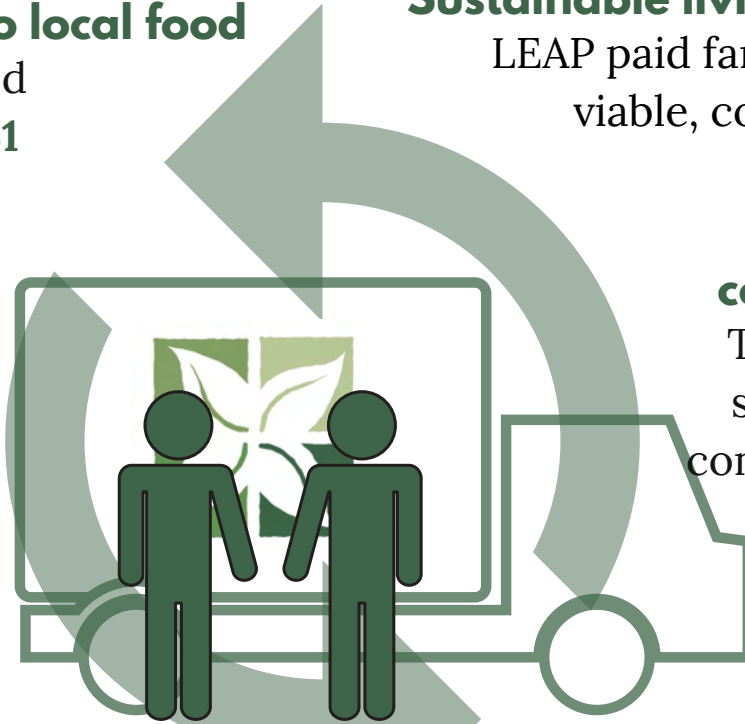
57% of annual Mobile Market sales used incentives that made fresh food more affordable

Sustainable livings for farmers

LEAP paid farmers **\$36,500** at viable, competitive prices

Creating community space

The Mobile Market spent **483 hours** in communities sharing good food with people



The LEAP Mobile Market finds community wherever it goes, at senior living centers, social service agencies and childcare centers. By meeting people where they are, the Mobile Market creates space for people to come together and savor good food.

“It makes a big difference because you have the flexibility of choosing better foods. With most government funded programs, they choose. With this one, I get to choose what’s right for my family.”

-LEAP Market shopper



BLUE RIDGE REGION

LEAP continues to grow into its role as a regional leader in the Roanoke Valley foodshed and beyond. In 2019, LEAP worked closely with Roanoke Valley Alleghany Regional Commission Local Food Stakeholder Committee to support regional food system planning. We partnered with Virginia Association for Biological Farming to source over \$5,000 in local food from 16 farmers for their Annual Conference held at Hotel Roanoke. As the Virginia Fresh Match Blue Ridge regional lead, LEAP provided direct support and funding to area farmers markets, including joint advertising (TV and print) and equipment to improve their incentive programs.

Virginia Fresh Match in the Blue Ridge, 2019

23

Farmers markets, mobile markets, and grocery stores participated in VFM

102

Farmers received added income from matching

1,115

SNAP shoppers bought more affordable fresh food

\$74K

In SNAP and SNAP Match spent at VFM outlets in Blue Ridge



“The matching-funds program enables me to purchase the local, farm-fresh produce that I love to eat and enjoy high quality nutrition I could not otherwise afford.”

– Brenda, SNAP shopper in the Blue Ridge Region

VIRGINIA FRESH MATCH



Making fresh food more affordable throughout Virginia

LEAP is the co-lead for the statewide Virginia Fresh Match network and grant manager for its Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive grant.

In 2019, Virginia Fresh Match saw...

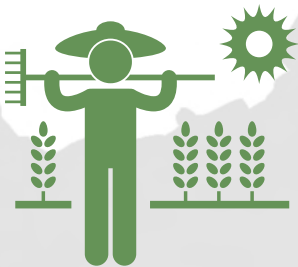
\$332,000

**In SNAP and SNAP
Match spent at
partner outlets**



532

**Farmers sold
SNAP shoppers
fresh produce**



6,800

**Shoppers spent
SNAP funds at
partner outlets
20,590 times**



75

**Partner
Outlets**

**71 farmers markets
4 neighborhood grocery
stores**



"Everyone should get an opportunity to shop at farmers markets. Nobody should be excluded because they can't afford it."

- Alfredo Gutierrez, Little Green Farm
Thornburg VA

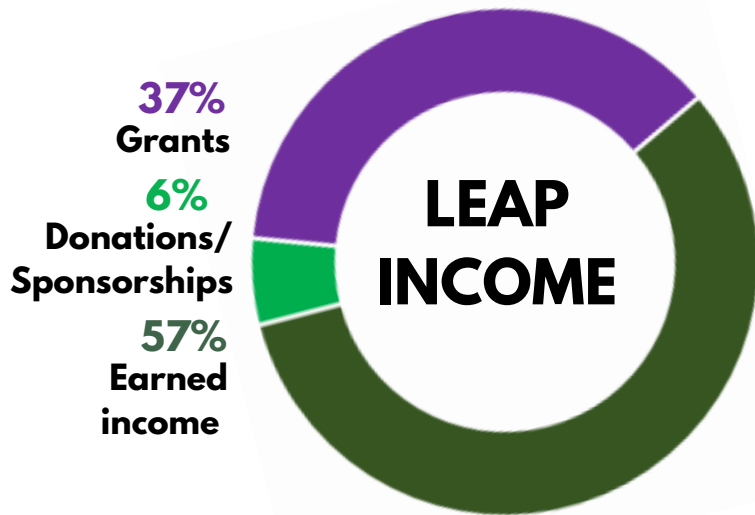


For more information: www.VirginiaFreshMatch.org | 540. 212.9482 | virginiafreshmatch@gmail.com



"Virginia Fresh Match has eased the accessibility of fresh produce to our lower income shoppers, encouraging healthy eating and a healthier lifestyle."
- Norm Gold, Grocery Store Developer & Operator,
Market @ 25th, Richmond VA

ORGANIZATIONAL HEALTH



The health of LEAP is rooted in having diverse income streams. We serve the community and spend our limited funds in alignment with our values.

In practice this means--

- Invest and value team members as whole people.
- Pay farmers a fair price for food. Good food is not a luxury item.
- Improve systems and work together to better serve the community.

In 2019, LEAP invested its annual budget in...



People Power 45%

In our team, via competitive salaries and benefits

Food Power 29%

In local food, at fair prices for local farmers

Purchasing Power 14%

In extra dollars for Roanoke Valley residents to spend on fresh, local food

Infrastructure Power 13%

In community spaces (LEAP Kitchen, Hub, office) vehicles for distribution, and insurance

57

individual and business donors

\$380K

in Federal funding LEAP brought into Virginia

35

community parnters

2019 BOARD & STAFF

Brent Cochran
Board President

Susan Clark
Board Vice President

Dave Prosser
Board Treasurer

Pat Young
Board Secretary

Betty Bailey

Laura Reilly

Christina Nifong

Diane Elliot

Maureen Best
Director, Strategic Planning

Sam Lev
Director, Programs & Operations

Sam Hedges
Program Grant Manager

Connie Smith Kenny
Market Manager

Kelly Key
Program Coordinator

Ned Savage
Community Outreach Specialist

Katie Struble
Mobile Market Manager

Mission: To nurture healthy communities and
resilient local food systems.

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