

# CAROLINA FARM TRUST

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ANNUAL REPORT  
FOR 2020



# LETTER FROM THE ED

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One of the major takeaways from the COVID-19 pandemic is how intertwined and fragile our food and health systems truly are. The statistics show that those who face food insecurity are also among the individuals who are most affected by the pandemic. . At the same time, the pandemic is affecting supply chains all across the world, which affects all of us - regardless of where we fall on the socioeconomic ladder. Now, more than ever, we need to rethink our local food systems and supply chains by bringing them closer to home.

COVID-19 has rendered CFT's work more important than ever as we invest in systemic solutions to build food security and food justice. The pandemic is a foreshadowing event for what will happen to our food systems in the future within the context of climate change, increasing income inequality, and ongoing systemic inequities. Our systems-change solutions are crucial to achieving permanent change to avoid breakdowns of our current food systems.

Bringing the political and social unrest into the equation yields even more challenges on the local, regional, and national levels. Problems seem easier to identify than solutions and, as with any conflict, we are faced with the opportunity to do things differently. As an organization, we have spent a lot of time thinking about and rethinking our role in changing the caste system of food distribution. This reflection is ongoing and will continue to inform every facet of the work we do.

This is not a time for slow progress. We are on a mission to build a circular local food system here in the Charlotte region. With continued refinement and building, this model food system will one day serve the entire region of the Carolinas - ensuring the viability of small farming in our region and the access of all to the freshest, most nutritious food.

**ZACK WYATT**

Executive Director

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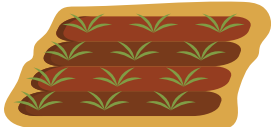
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# 2020 AT A GLANCE

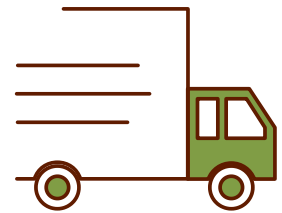
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Launched operations at 3 urban farm sites.



Absorbed 30 acres of farmland into our farm trust.

Moved 12,000+ lbs of food from local farms to people experiencing food insecurity, whether by donation or sale



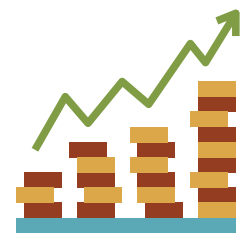
Connected 5 farmers to land to scale their businesses

Engaged 50+ partners in our work.



Supported 50+ local chefs and restaurants

\$60,000 in additional revenue raised over 2019.



Added 1 full time staff member, 3 part time and consultant staff members

# FUNDING

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## **Fundraisers**

CFT's annual fundraisers, Night at the Museum and Carolina Jubilee, are both in person events that were postponed to 2021 due to COVID-19. Based on current guidance issued by public health specialists, we are confident that we will be able to safely hold both fundraisers in the coming calendar year.

Night at the Museum will tentatively take place in June 2021 at the Mint Museum Uptown. We have secured the indoor and outdoor spaces at the museum, as well as Levine Avenue next to the museum in order to protect the health and safety of our guests. We will host guest speaker Malik Yakini and will serve dinner by local chefs, using local ingredients. Carolina Jubilee is scheduled to take place in September 2021 at Van Hoy Campground. If needed, the site allows for safe distancing between guests. The lineup has not yet been announced, and we intend to start selling tickets in Spring 2021.

## **Funders**

CFT raised an additional \$60k in revenue in 2020 over 2019, bringing on funders including Blue Cross Blue Shield of NC, Foundation for the Carolinas, Accenture, The Gambrell Foundation, Lendscout, Lowe's, Ally, Truist, Bank of America, Reemprise Fund, Charlotte Hornets, and Sierra Nevada, among others.

# FUNDING

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## **Funding Challenges**

Across projects, our main challenge is funding. With the help of our strategic advisors and partner organizations, we are able to network solutions to move projects forward to achieve rapid, visionary growth in our local food systems.

A long term challenge to systems change is the amount of funding directed toward addressing immediate community needs. Additional funding is needed to spur the systems change that we know needs to happen without taking away funding from the front line organizations helping meet near-term basic human needs. To achieve systems change, we need the funding community to foster deep, long-term collaboration between organizations.



# COVID-19 RESPONSE

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Carolina Farm Trust enacted short-term, rapid-response solutions to COVID-19 by supporting our frontline and on-the-ground partners in their enhanced response to the pandemic. We received grant funding from The Hornets Foundation, Ally, United Way of Iredell County, and The Friendship Fund to connect frontline organizations to sources of locally grown and produced food. Our systems-wide approach addressed the needs of farmers, consumers, chefs, and business owners.



## **Our response included the following:**

- Sourcing over 2,000 units of organic baby food to distribute to five partner organizations
- Working with a local brewery to transport over 8,000 pounds of local produce and meat from local farms to on-the-ground organizations in Mecklenburg County and Iredell County, such as the Latin American Coalition, Project 658, the West Boulevard Neighborhood Coalition, and the Iredell County Council on Aging
- Working with local food trucks to provide free meals to frontline responders, including nurses, medics, and firefighters.

# LAKEVIEW CSA

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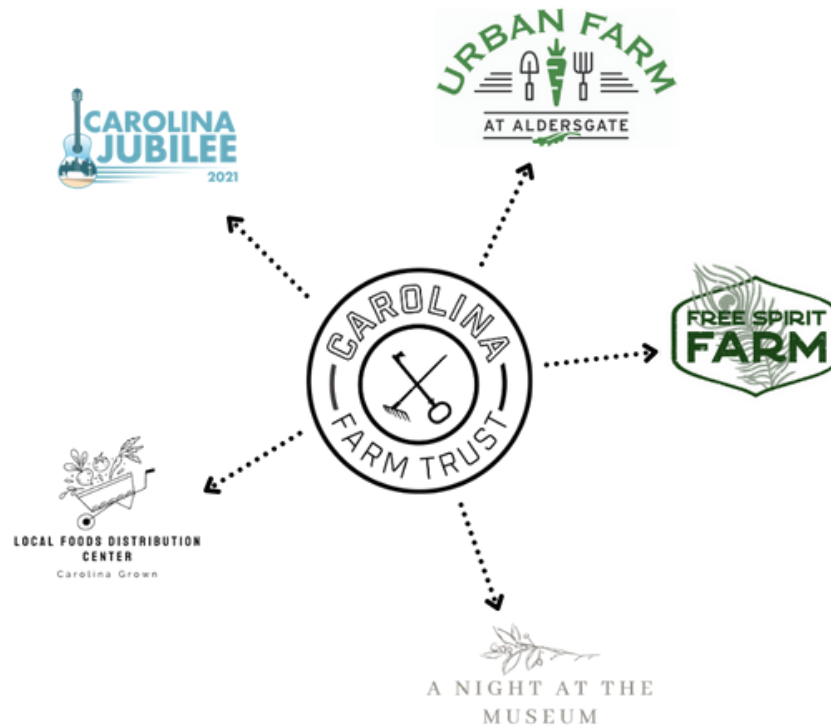
Carolina Farm Trust is proud to have helped Wild Hope Farm continue to facilitate a weekly delivery of fresh produce to members of the Lakeview Community. Lakeview is a historic neighborhood north-west of downtown where buying fresh produce isn't easy due to lack of access to high quality foods and grocery stores. In partnership with Jamall Kinard, the president of the Lakeview Neighborhood Alliance, and other Charlotte based nonprofits, Wild Hope was able to continue to provide 20 families in Lakeview access to their CSA program by raising \$9,859 of a \$8,960 goal.





# PROJECTS & IMPACT:

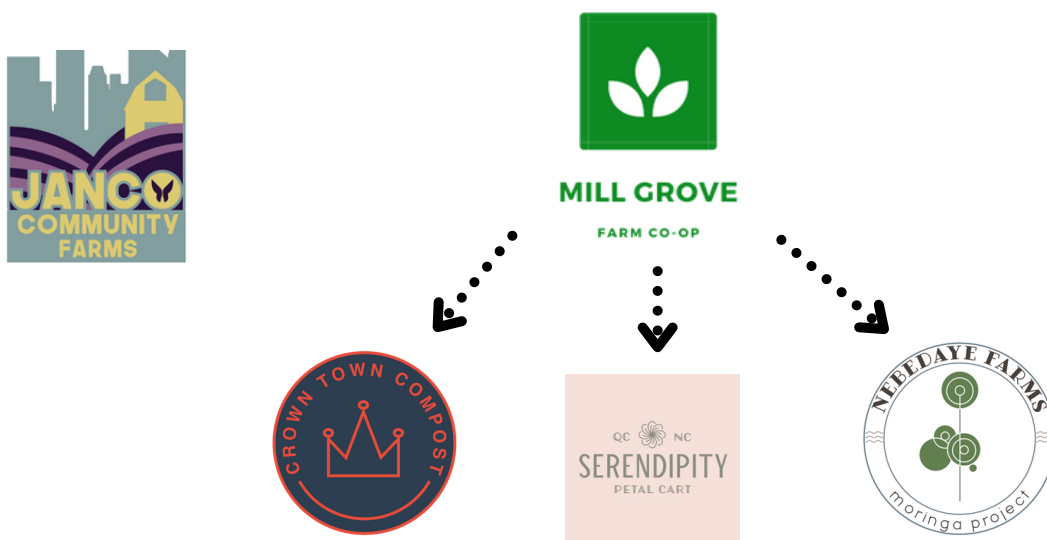
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## Other supported farms:

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# URBAN FARM AT ALDERSGATE

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## Progress

The Urban Farm at Aldersgate broke ground in February 2020, launched operations in March 2020, and hosted its first Farm Stand (and celebrated its first retail sale!) in June 2020. In its first year of production, the Urban Farm at Aldersgate served over 40 families from the surrounding community, including non-native English speaking families from the Windsor Park Neighborhood. CFT brought on Deep Roots CPS in August 2020 to manage the day-to-day operations of the Farm, and Deep Roots launched a farm apprentice program shortly after they joined our team. We look forward to this continued partnership.

Providence Day School installed the Urban Farm at Aldersgate apiary in September, and our UFA team took over the maintenance of and additions to the garden beds at Windsor Park Elementary in the same month. We were able to host a safely distanced social gathering for the Farm neighbors on Halloween, during which we enjoyed live music from a neighborhood band, painted and carved pumpkins, and got to know our fellow community members. The farm staff cleared the second and third fields in November, and She Built This City finished phase 1 of the pavilion renovations in December.



# URBAN FARM AT ALDERSGATE

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## Challenges

Our first year of operations was incredibly formative. We experimented with and learned how to manage the soil conditions on this former community pool site; we tightened up our organizational policies around hiring and employment; and, we adjusted our plans based on the realities of the COVID-19 pandemic. Our ongoing challenge is to garner enough initial investments in the operation to drive us to a stage where the Farm is completely funded by self-generated revenue.





# MILL GROVE FARM CO-OP

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## Progress

2020 was a growth year at Mill Grove Road Farm Co-Op. Crown Town Compost and Nebedaye Farms continue to expand their operations and have been recently experimenting with biochar creation using compost. Nebedaye Farms added a sustainability school and continued to grow The Moringa Project with a line of value added food items. In October 2020, CFT purchased a John Deere tractor that will be housed at Mill Grove Farm Co-Op and available for use by small local farmers in the Charlotte Metro. With this tractor, Nebedaye Farms has been able to make its farm operations more efficient, setting the business up for continued growth in 2021.





# MILL GROVE FARM CO-OP

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## Challenges

In Summer 2020, a neighbor of the Mill Grove Rd Farm Co-Op was arrested for ethnic intimidation against Bernard Singleton, founder and owner of Nebedaye Farms. This experience reinforced the racial violence and injustices that have garnered national attention in 2020.

The owner of the Mill Grove Road Farm Co-Op has listed the property for sale, meaning that the current producers on site will one day need to relocate their operations. This challenge underscores the importance of building stakeholder support to be able to absorb land into the trust through purchases, fully guaranteeing the availability of the land for farming for generations to come.





# JANCO COMMUNITY FARM

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## Progress

Serendipitously, CFT acquired a lease on 2 acres of property in Statesville when Janco Community Farm was looking for land to scale their business. We've since partnered with Janco at the Statesville property where Christina Benton, founder and owner, has plans to serve communities facing barriers in access to healthy foods by distributing harvest with a mobile market truck. Recently, CFT facilitated a partnership with 5th Street Ministries so that Janco can utilize their previously unused greenhouse space.

## Challenges

Funding remains a challenge at the Statesville property. Any interested donors can visit our website and direct their donation toward Janco Community Farm.

# FREE SPIRIT FARM

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## Progress

CFT announced the vision for Free Spirit Farm in 2020 with the premiere of our short video, *Feeding a Region*, followed by a soft launch of our capital campaign for the project. We have started to develop preliminary site plans in partnership with Deep Roots CPS while building community support for the farm.

## Challenges

In order to build a sustainable funding model for Free Spirit Farm, we are looking to build support from 1,000 stakeholders at \$500 a piece. To do this, we need to invest time and resources into marketing and stakeholder engagement in the North Mecklenburg area.



# THE YEAR AHEAD

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## Goals & Plans for 2021

Stay tuned for a Strategic Plan that will detail our priorities and objectives for 2021..

## Call to Action

Carolina Farm Trust is ready to lead the effort to transform our local food systems for food justice and equity. We cannot turn away from the challenges we face - we have no choice but to act. Become a supporter today by visiting our website - **[www.carolinafarmtrust.org](http://www.carolinafarmtrust.org)**, or email Zack Wyatt to learn how to get involved: **[zack@carolinafarmtrust.org](mailto:zack@carolinafarmtrust.org)**.