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NEWS & UPDATES  
JUNE 2023



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Hi \*{{First Name}}\*,

I'm writing from beneath the [wildfire haze that is blanketing so many parts of the country today](#)—a visceral reminder that the ways we interact with our planet have consequences—while neurotically glancing out my window on squirrel watch.

To explain myself, **I must first make a confession: I hate sunflowers.** Am I the only person on Earth who hates sunflowers? Based on the horrified stares I receive whenever I say this out loud, it's possible. But as this is my first year gardening in a new home and the front yard was the only sunny spot to grow food, I decided they'd be a cheerful way to reassure the neighborhood we're not (entirely) anti-lawn vigilantes. Pro-tip for fellow urban gardeners: [sunflowers are excellent bioremediators!](#)

Anyway, **sunflowers are like kryptonite for squirrels.** After they bite through your fencing and hop over your electric polywire, they climb up the stalks, bite off the heads just before they bloom, nibble on a mere fraction of the tasty morsels inside, and then leave enough evidence of their work to make you audibly wail at each discovery.

As a former full-time farmer, I find this both deeply annoying, and... an oddly comforting reminder that we humans are not the only creatures that live here on this planet. **Pests and predators are just other living things that like to eat and know a payload when they see one.**

If you'll go with me as I stretch this metaphor even further, it's also a nice reminder of why **we at Foodshed Capital choose to support the small-scale regenerative farmers who are best at finding balance and coexistence with the natural world.** It's the diversified producers whose systems are most responsive and resilient as they encounter whatever nature throws at them. In a world fraught with hungry creatures, hazy skies, and weather that gets wilder with each passing year, producing food in a changing climate is risky. We think it's only fair that lenders shoulder some of that risk, and that's why [our loan terms are more flexible, more patient, and more customized than just about any other lender out there.](#)

While things have been somewhat low-key for our team this month (squirrel watch aside), **we've partnered with some inspiring farmers (highlights below!) and had a chance to dive deep on how to make our work as impactful as possible.** Be on the lookout over the next few months for news of how we're building up our business support services to help farmers be as savvy at strategic planning as they are at squirrel prevention.

Please enjoy the following snapshots of June in the foodshed, and rest assured no squirrels were harmed during the writing of this newsletter.

Wishing you [flowers and fortitude](#),

Erica Hellen  
Director of Strategy & Comms.



SPOTLIGHT



## HEALING HOPE URBAN GARDENS



**Healing Hope Urban Gardens** is a woman- and veteran-owned veggie farm getting started on just a quarter acre of land in Petersburg, VA. This month, **FoodCap supported Healing Hope with a 0% interest loan for startup equipment.** Owner Natasha Crawford is one of several new BIPOC farmers launching their farm business at the [Petersburg Oasis CommUNITY Farm](#), the managing entity at the [Central Virginia Agrarian Commons](#) that Foodshed Capital supported in 2022 with the purchase of its land.

**As a veteran of the Iraq war, gardening acted as a way to strengthen Crawford's mental health and reconnect with herself.** With training from the VSU Beginner/Small Farm program, business planning assistance from SCORE, and completion of VSU's Sustainable Urban Agriculture Program, she is now also working towards GAP certification.

Crawford avoids using chemicals or pesticides, uses integrated pest management and natural soil amendments, and will soon install drip irrigation. **To ensure that every member of her community can enjoy fresh produce,** Natasha sells at [Petersburg's River Street Market](#) which accepts SNAP, and is applying to the Virginia's Senior and WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program.

SPOTLIGHT



## SILLER POLLINATOR COMPANY



This month, FoodCap extended a second loan to [Siller Pollinator Company](#), a woman- and LGBTQ-owned company on a mission to help people help pollinators. The SPC

team offers hive management, beekeeping consulting, native bee husbandry, pollinator habitat development, beekeeping supplies, honey, and more throughout central Virginia. They have seen a massive demand for their services since we first partnered with them in 2021, and have recently teamed up with a local net-zero meadery to ensure the honey is flowing. With opportunities to expand their footprint all the time, **SPC sought additional capital to streamline operations, support their growing staff, and combine their existing loan into the second one at a lower rate by enrolling in our new auto-pay option.**

**Two big takeaways here:**

- 1) If you're one of our farm partners and you're wondering whether or not we offer additional capital, the answer is yes!**
- 2) I'm a host-a-hive customer myself and can't say enough good things about this team! Bees love sunflowers too—who knew??**

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## UPDATE LAND SECURITY WORK

**We're disappointed to share that the application we submitted to the [USDA's Increasing Land, Capital, and Market Access](#) program last fall was *not* selected to receive an award.**

While this is a discouraging blow to the concept of fully reparative, debt-free land ownership, we were inspired by the list of organizations that were chosen. One of our application partners, [RAFI-USA](#), did receive an award, alongside dozens of other folks doing exciting and impactful work. **It seems [the USDA has made good on their commitment to put \\$300 million of funding to work for the farmers who deserve it most](#)—and we are truly glad to see it.**

For now, we will be pausing our work on the [LND Initiative](#). While **we are incredibly proud of the partnerships we developed and the countless hours spent designing a system of BIPOC land ownership based on wealth redistribution**, we are heartened by the opportunity to return our full attention to making our existing work as impactful as possible.

**We know success for farmers begins with land security**, and we will continue to advocate for BIPOC land ownership and work with mission-aligned funders to finance land purchases wherever possible. Our thanks again to all of you who supported this effort!

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## PLEASE SUPPORT OUR WORK

- Do you have an advanced degree?**
- Do you benefit from racial or class privilege?**
- Do you have access to generational wealth or trust funds?**
- Do you have investments?**
- Do you own your own home?**

If you answered yes to any of the above, we hope you'll consider making a gift to support our work. Your dollars go directly to making low- and no-interest capital available to regenerative farmers and food entrepreneurs who can't get it elsewhere.

**Thank you!**

Support Now



### Our Contact Information

\*{{Organization Name}}\*  
\*{{Organization Address}}\*  
\*{{Organization Phone}}\*  
\*{{Organization Website}}\*

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