



Committed to a bright future

2023 REPORT





A word from our co-founders

Consider the humble seed.

A symbol of potential. And, easily, a symbol for The Common Market's newly conceived "forward commitment" program, which helps institutions support farms and the values they represent through their entire crop planning, growing, and harvest cycle. Like a seed, it represents the promise of a flourishing future for farmers, supply chains, and communities.



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In 2023, we broke ground on our Forward Commitments Program. We collaborated alongside institutional partners. We considered menu plans. We engaged farmers around their growing potential, shook hands and began to watch the program take root. Our partners found joy in connecting with the source of their food, planting the seed to ensure a consistent source of healthy, locally grown food for their communities. Farmers could focus on what they do best instead of worrying about markets for their harvests.

Representing a major paradigm shift compared to the standard model of institutional food purchasing, our forward commitment program moves away from on-demand, week-to-week ordering to embrace advanced seasonal production planning and guaranteed purchases.

The commitments made by our institutions were grounded in values like diversity, equity, and climate. About 20 institutions embraced the potential with us this past year, namely higher education sites in the Southeast committed to growing their procurement spend with Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) growers, representing \$400,000 worth of advanced orders.

Inevitably, we faced some growing pains with the program (climate impacts, infrastructure delays), yet ultimately, we all stayed rooted in the promise it represents.

The program is a critical step toward creating sustainable markets for producers presently scaling as a result of COVID-era federal and state programs, such as the Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement (LFPA) and Local Food for Schools (LFS). These USDA funding opportunities offer some of our farmer partners—especially those representing historically underserved and underrepresented groups—stability and the flexibility to experiment and grow to meet wholesale demand. But the funding will expire one day. At The Common Market, we envision a future where institutions fill the gap, enabling farmers to keep farming. [*Dive deeper: Read more about these programs on page 12.*](#)

Modeling forward commitments creates a foundation of trust, transparency, and collaboration. The seeds we plant today will bear the fruit of a more resilient, equitable food system.

As we reflect on 2023 through this report, and look ahead to the potential of 2024, we are reminded that our commitments, like seeds, have the power to transform.

Thank you for joining us in recognizing the potential!

With gratitude,

HAILE JOHNSTON & TATIANA GARCIA-GRANADOS
Co-founders, The Common Market

THE YEAR IN NUMBERS: ECONOMIC IMPACT

\$23,800,000

invested in local economies
through food purchases*

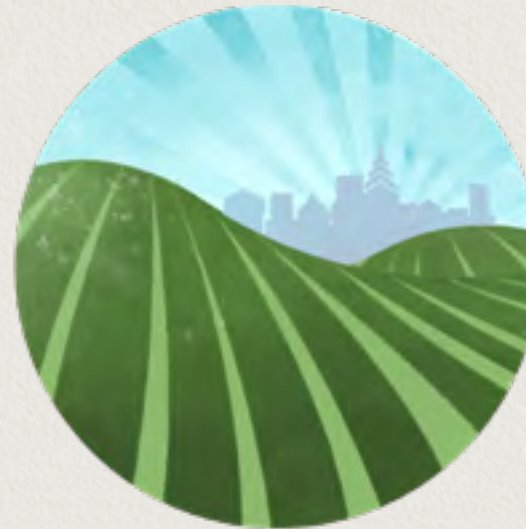


15%

reached BIPOC farmers and producers

\$62,500,000

induced/indirect impact
on the regional economy



\$86,300,000

total economic impact

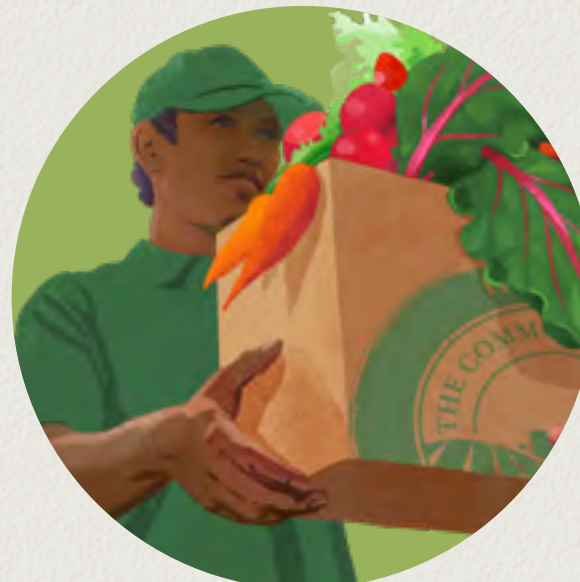
*Great Lakes data represents November-December 2023 data only

THE YEAR IN NUMBERS: FOOD ACCESS



7,459,520

healthy meal equivalents distributed



298,034

Farm-Fresh Boxes distributed

\$89,343

Food Access Fund incentives extended



THE YEAR IN NUMBERS FARMER SUPPORT



185

family farms
supported

22%

representing
BIPOC growers

\$968,560

in no-interest Farmer Loans
distributed among **11 farms**



THE YEAR IN NUMBERS INSTITUTIONS SERVED

125

Community
organizations

103

school districts
40.8% fueled by Local Foods
for Schools (LFS)

11

Early Childhood
Education Centers

42

University/College
cafeterias

24

Healthcare sites

20+

Institutions made Forward Commitments

5

Local Food Incentive Pilot Programs in Schools

2023 IMPACTFUL MOMENTS

JANUARY

The Common Market was awarded a **ten-year, \$1MM Healthy Food Initiative Tax Credit** from the City of Philadelphia through our long-time partner Ballard Spahr LLP.



MAY

Bill A5459, **The NJ Farm to School Local Food Reimbursement Grant Program**, was introduced in the Assembly, a direct result of The Common Market Mid-Atlantic (CMMA)'s pilot program in Camden, Bridgeton, and Newark, and advocacy efforts over 1.5 years.

JUNE

Aramark Collegiate Hospitality teams met at our East Point warehouse to learn about our forward commitment program. In 2023, 18 institutions, including nine Aramark accounts and seven Morrison Healthcare sites **made commitments to our Southeast BIPOC farmer network**.



MARCH

Bill Green of The Common Market Southeast joined farmers for the signing of an agreement between USDA and the state representing **\$7.1MM to increase Georgia's purchase of nutritious, local food for school meals**. Georgia's Local Food for Schools Cooperative Agreement Program enabled **partnerships with 18 Georgia schools in 2023, representing over \$160K in sales from August to December**.



FEBRUARY

Builders Vision granted us **\$445,000** to continue our work in establishing The Common Market Great Lakes (CMGL).

JUNE

At the Nutrition Incentive Hub's National Convening, our National Partnerships Director Rachel Terry led a discussion on **innovation within food as medicine programs** with Dr. Rashi Sharma of Sanitas Medical Center and Aurica Donovan of Food Connect.

The **Green Family Foundation** awarded us a grant for a loan loss reserve for our **Farmer Loan Fund**.

AUGUST

Our **local foods incentive pilot program** expanded to Georgia with support from The Rockefeller Foundation and Georgia **ACRE Collective**, an initiative that brings together organizations to increase institutional purchases from local, diverse, and climate-smart farmers, ranchers, and producers. *News coverage:*

[Atlanta-Journal Constitution](#)

Left: School nutrition staff at Marietta City Schools participate in a local foods training.



Our co-founder Haile took the stage at the International Fresh Produce Association's annual foodservice conference to discuss the importance of supplier diversity, joined by representatives from Stanford University and the University of Arkansas.

Above: Haile and school food partner Arlethia Brown at the International Fresh Produce Association's Foodservice Conference.



The Houston Housing Authority unveiled Cuney Homes' Feeding our Future, the community's **first food pantry**. The Common Market Texas (CMTX) joined partners such as the American Heart Association of Texas and Fit Houston to support the effort.

Left: A joyous team celebrates the opening of Cuney Homes' first food pantry.

USDA Secretary **Tom Vilsack** **visits CMSE** and highlights our role in empowering small-scale farmers.



SEPTEMBER

CMGL moved its very first food in Chicago in partnership with the Cook County Sheriff's Office, in alignment with the county's commitments to the Good Food Purchasing Initiative.



OCTOBER

CMMA joined the Coalition for Healthy Food in Newark Schools and received multi-year funding from Novo Nordisk, an investment in increased healthy, local food access for Newark students and community.



The Community FoodBank of New Jersey announced its \$9.7MM Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement and named CMMA as a key partner for the program's procurement needs, increasing participation with socially disadvantaged Jersey farms, including Smith Poultry of Williamstown, NJ (above).



CMTX marked more than **1.8 million pounds of food distributed to more than 70 different Texas communities** at a special distribution event with partners BakerRipley. The activity was enabled by the Texas Department of Agriculture's LFPA program.

The Common Market acquired the operations of Local Foods, a decade-old wholesale distributor in the Chicago metro, representing the most significant escalation of our work to date.





OCTOBER

We received a **3-year \$175K Partnership Fund grant from The Claneil Foundation** (our first funder, dating back to 2008) to support building our capacity to build regional food systems in all our current and future locations.




NOVEMBER

Our co-founder Tatiana was invited to present The Common Market impact story at the Closing Dinner of the Draper Richards Kaplan Foundation annual retreat in California, the premier covening of venture philanthropy and global social entrepreneurs.



Co-Founder Haile presented on building diverse supply chains at the USDA AMS Ag Marketing Summit in Crystal City, Virginia. The annual summit convened Farmer-Veteran Coalition grantees along with many of the burgeoning USDA Regional Food Business Center awardees. Haile's message focused on institutional commitments was noted by many as a key learning takeaway.

The **Georgia ACRE Collective celebrated its first year of work** – which included the creation of four goal-oriented subcommittees, support of Georgia's local foods incentive pilot work within schools, and 11 forward commitments made among metro Atlanta institutions to socially disadvantaged growers.



DECEMBER




CMSE celebrated a first-year milestone with **\$2MM+ distributed to Georgia BIPOC and women-owned farms** through the state's LFPA program.
[In the news: 11Alive](#)



DECEMBER

Methodist Healthcare Ministries of South Texas **renewed their partnership with CMTX** to support our work with their Wesley Nurse program along with funds to support our Texas Farmer Loan Fund program.



Chicago Region Food System Fund awarded CMGL **a grant for a Food as Medicine pilot project** with ChiFresh Kitchen and RUSH Hospitals.



2023 FEATURE

A launch pad for farms

**Leveraging USDA programs
across our regions**

Left: The Common Market invested in a greens washer for a Georgia farm in 2023, which enabled \$125,000 worth of collards sales.

Two USDA programs provide a foundation for our Forward Commitment work

Some of The Common Market's most significant growth in 2023 stemmed from the USDA's **Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement Program (LFPA)** and **Local Foods for Schools (LFS)**, two programs that jump-started deeper engagement with our farmer partners new and old.

Although the characteristics of the programs varied across our states, they allowed The Common Market to diversify how locally grown food could reach people who need it. The programs also **created new and stable economic opportunities for our farmers, spanning multiple growing seasons and providing up to 30 months of guaranteed procurement revenue.**

This multi-season, yet finite, funding opened doors for many of our supply chain partners, including historically underserved growers that had limited experience working at wholesale scale.







What is a forward commitment?

Forward commitments are agreements made in advance with institutions, like universities and hospitals, to purchase products from values-aligned growers over an extended period of time, often a growing season or calendar year. Although this sounds like a relatively simple concept, forward commitments reflect a major paradigm shift compared to the standard model of institutional food purchasing, which includes placing orders week to week, providing little to no stability to farmers. By making forward commitments, institutional customers harness their purchasing power and become engaged, mission-aligned investors in our regional economy and our agricultural communities, rather than mere purchasers and consumers of products.

1 The Local Food Purchase Assistance Cooperative Agreement Program (LFPA)

This program provides up to \$900 million of American Rescue Plan (ARP) and Commodity Credit Corporation (CCC) funding for states to purchase foods produced within the state or 400 miles of the delivery destination to help support local, regional and underserved producers.

SNAPSHOTS OF IMPACT: LFPA

| | DATES | FOOD DISTRIBUTION METHOD | FARMS SUPPORTED | VALUE OF FOOD PURCHASED 2023 | POUNDS OF FOOD DISTRIBUTED |
|---|--|--|-----------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|
|  | January 2023 or November 2022–May 2025 | Farm-Fresh Boxes are filled with 5-7 items sourced from Texas growers and distributed weekly or bi-weekly to 70+ sites like clinics, churches, senior centers, etc. throughout the state. | 20 | \$1.89MM | 1,883,237 |
|  | November 2022–November 2024 | Wholesome food, including pastured pork from Black farmer Smith Poultry , is distributed to pantries in all 21 counties by way of the Community Food Bank of NJ and their affiliated sites. | 18 | \$804K | 717,400 |
|  | May 2023–November 2024 | The Common Market Southeast manages a \$4M procurement contract as the state's designated specialty produce distribution partner. It delivers locally grown fruits, vegetables, dairy, nuts, and other fresh offerings directly to eight food banks serving the state. | 21 | \$2.41MM | 2,325,832 |
|  | July 2022 | Distribution of fresh, local food occurs through the charitable food system serving all 67 counties. | 9 | \$550K | 447,926 |



Meet our LFPA growers in the Southeast



② Local Food for Schools Cooperative Agreement Program

The USDA Agricultural Marketing Service also established the [Local Food for Schools Cooperative Agreement Program \(LFS\)](#), which stimulated untapped school food relationships for The Common Market. With funding made available through USDA's Commodity Credit Corporation, the funding was intended to help states deal with the challenges of supply chain disruptions brought on by the pandemic.

LFS allocated \$200 million to states for the purchase of local foods to be distributed to schools as assistance. The program was created to strengthen the food system in schools by establishing a fair, competitive, and resilient local food chain. The program also aimed to expand local and regional markets, with a focus on purchasing from historically underserved producers and processors.

The Common Market was an ideal partner for state agencies working on implementing LFPA and LFS as they shared the same mission to support local, regional, and underserved producers while increasing access to healthy food in communities through schools and other institutions.

In 2023, LFS reached several states where we operate, fueling Common Market partnerships in more than 418 individual schools across New Jersey, Georgia, and Illinois. LFPA was consistent and strong with formal agreements in Georgia, New Jersey, and Texas. The procurement demand allowed us to onboard at least 20 new producers and significantly expand our purchasing from BIPOC producers by participating in these programs. For example, in the Southeast, sales from Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) growers in the region increased over 2,000% from 2022 to 2023.



Local Lands, a Black-owned pasture-raised cattle and poultry farm in Georgia, saw a 400% growth in commitments through the LFPA program. The increase in demand enabled the farm to scale its capacity from 400 dozen eggs per week to 2,000 dozen eggs per week.

For smaller farms, the opportunity was an eye opener:

“Working with The Common Market through LFPA opened up a new door for me. I always thought wholesale production seemed out of reach for a small farmer like myself.”

— Tianna Rose Neal of Starlit Root Farms (right).

This work impacts the needs of here and now, but The Common Market is thinking long-term with its growers. Together, we identify what technical assistance (TA) our farmer partners may need to develop crop or food safety plans that enable wholesale readiness.

We facilitate intentional advanced production planning, especially with smaller and/or historically underserved producers, including Smith Poultry and Provenance Farms, a women-owned operation based out of White House Station, New Jersey, and a grass-fed beef supplier.

“[LFPA] benefits not just me, but the whole concept of farming and other Black farmers that I work with. They have never had the opportunity—or even just a conversation—where their product is already sold before it is out of the ground. Farmers are used to putting out money and losing money. This opportunity is good.”

— Kyle Smith, Smith Poultry, NJ



Our producers engaged in our Farm Impact Assessment, a second-party verification of production practices that mirrors the pillars of the [Good Food Purchasing Program](#) (local and community, environmental sustainability, animal welfare, and nutritious and clean). The goal of this evaluation is to collect baseline data on our supply chain and identify opportunities for improvement as well as infrastructure needs. The information allows us to confidently prepare producers for institutional sales and market products based on their attributes.

We can then make purchasing commitments to growers and issue purchase orders based on our capacity conversations and TA investments. Based on the value of their purchase orders, we can offer zero-interest loans to the growers for up to 50% of the cumulative purchase order value. We consider loans for capital improvements with the same terms.

Both programs were inspired by the need to support our country's hardworking farms and create resilient supply chains. But, what happens once the various program periods end? How do we preserve the recent increase in capacity and investments made by our farmer partners?

Our [forward commitment program](#) (agreements made in advance with institutions, like universities and hospitals, to purchase products from values-aligned growers over an extended period, often a growing season or calendar year) is the ideal next step – ensuring farmers do not lose substantial market demand they just worked so hard to meet.

Why would institutions want to make forward commitments?

1. Advanced and localized planning helps to sustain a resilient and dependable supply chain. This provides reassurance to institutions that the food they need is not only grown especially for them but is also grown nearby. These arrangements act as a solution to the supply chain disruptions faced by many schools, hospitals, and other institutions during the COVID-19 pandemic. If weather or equipment failure lead to a product shortage, our ability to substitute for similar products grown by a producer in a neighboring town or state becomes a reliable safety net.
2. The commitments go beyond menu planning and invoices. They can foster community building, connecting a community of consumers and chefs to the source of their food in novel ways. Our early adopters have had the opportunity to visit our farms in person, where they have met and interacted with the farmers who are responsible for growing the ingredients that will be used in student cafeterias the following season. This program helps our educational institutions establish close relationships with their food sources.
3. Forward commitments to our grower network, especially those representing BIPOC leadership and/or advanced climate-smart practices, are a strategic avenue for institutions to align with their Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) goals. Institutions can promote diversity and equity in their procurement practices by supporting environmentally friendly farming methods that champion fair labor practices, and ethical animal treatment. These principles are often consistent with ESG principles. By committing to these practices, institutions can not only enhance their reputation for responsible practices but also contribute to building a sustainable and interconnected food system. This has a positive impact on both the local community and broader societal well-being.

Aramark higher education sites in the Southeast are among the first to step up and embrace forward commitments as part of their responsible sourcing strategies. Katelyn Repash, Aramark's Responsible Sourcing Procurement Director, says their decision to make forward commitments relates to their goal to increase spending with small local farmers.

“Pursuing forward commitments is an essential component in how we approach sourcing and growth opportunities with small-scale farmers. Aramark seeks to support small and underrepresented farmers, including BIPOC and women, throughout our supply chain. When we commit to consistent purchasing volumes, the farmers know they will have a guaranteed market for their produce at the price they need, and our chefs know the product is going to arrive when they planned for it.”

—Katelyn Repash, Responsible Sourcing Procurement Director, Aramark

2023 was a transformative year for our farmer partners. They rose to the occasion to grow for our schools, for our food banks, for our communities. In the year ahead and those that follow, it will be up to us collectively to stand up for them.



2023 Financials

REVENUES

\$24,916,894

Sales Revenue
\$19,014,755

Grants et al
\$5,000,854

Facility Revenue
\$901,285

EXPENSES

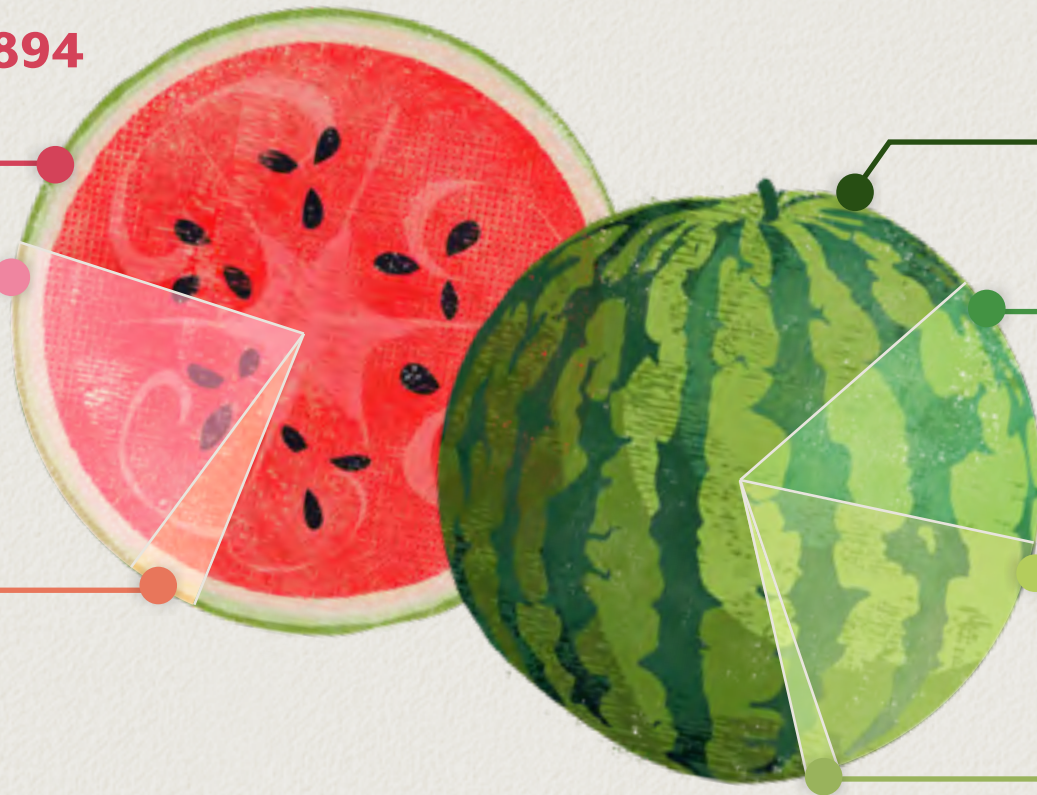
\$21,288,733

Product Costs
\$14,317,205

COGS
\$3,141,966

Program Expenses
\$3,504,900

Building Expenses
\$324,662



Our Leadership

STAFF LEADERSHIP

Tatiana Garcia-Granados | Co-founder, Co-CEO

Haile Johnston | Co-founder, Co-CEO

Rachel Terry | National Partnerships Director

Bill Green | Executive Director, Southeast

Sanjay Kharod | Development Director

Eliana Pinilla | Partnership Director, Great Lakes

Harold Dutton III | Chief Financial Officer

Caitlin Honan | Communications Director

Heather Luken, Neil Ringer* | National Operations Director

Dan Dahir | Executive Director, Great Lakes

Jamie Phelps Proctor | Partnership Director, Great Lakes

Jeremy Logan, Margaret Smith* | Executive Director, Texas

**Transitioned off team in 2023*

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COMMONS Andrea Smith, *Janney Montgomery Scott LLC*
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Robert Maggiani, *National Center for Appropriate Technology*
Samuel Newman, *Concentric Community Advisors*
Shakera Raygoza, *Terra Preta Farm LLC*

**Transitioned off Board in 2023*

Supporters

Thank you to our funding and donor partners!

The Common Market is grateful to all of the individuals, corporations, foundations (listed below), and government partners that supported our work in 2023. Their investments supported **capacity building for farmers of color**, fueled our **Food Access Fund**—allowing our food access partners to purchase healthy foods at cost—strengthened our **infrastructure**, supported our teams, brought life to our values-based **partnerships** within institutions, and **advanced our mission** in countless ways—all in pursuit of the health and wealth of all people.



11th Hour Project – Schmidt Family Foundation
American Heart Association – Bernard Tyson Fund
Anonymous
Atlanta Foundation
Ballard Spahr LLP
Builders Vision
Campbell Soup Foundation
Chick-Fil-A Foundation
Claneil Foundation
Cousins Foundation
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Truist Trusteed Foundation
Tull Charitable Foundation
United Way of Greater Atlanta
USDA
David, Helen & Marian Woodward Fund – Atlanta

We thank you.



On behalf of our sustainable family farms, food access partners, and teams, thank you for supporting The Common Market in 2023!

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