



**\$40,000 Match:
Double your
impact!**

As 2021 comes to an end, we want to take a moment to thank you for your belief in our mission to make good food, grown well, accessible to all.

Among the countless ways these last 18 months have taken a toll, it's been heartbreaking to see how this pandemic denied children access to fresh and healthy food and cruelly upturned so many food growers and producers' livelihoods.

The pandemic surfaced a hidden problem that REAP has long worked to address. As a community, we have not invested in the skills, networking, and infrastructure to create a resilient, local food system. When this crisis hit, it hurt a lot of families - from those who could not access fresh and nutritious food to those who could not easily get their animals processed, their vegetables delivered, or pivot to new and online customers when their markets disappeared.

Let me tell you a story... when our community shut down on March 13, 2020, to slow the spread of COVID-19, REAP had just received a delivery of 1,500 pounds of local organic sweet potatoes, beauty heart radishes, and golden beets to prepare fresh snacks for Madison Metropolitan School District (MMSD) students. We paid our farmer but never got to serve the produce. Madison College was shutting down and we needed to get those vegetables out of their cold storage.

As we scrambled on a Friday afternoon to find a new storage option, NessAlla Kombucha offered a temporary space to buy us a little time. In exchange, we shared some of the golden beets, which they brewed into a limited-edition batch of kombucha.



“Scott and I would like to thank Farms to Families for their business especially through the COVID pandemic. Many small businesses like ours struggled with sales since markets were mostly closed or had limited orders.

In addition to the pandemic, the harsh weather this spring killed all of our hives which necessitated having to replace the dead bees. With your orders, we were able to purchase the bees needed for this season.”

**Scott and Janis Wegner,
Owners of Mandt
Honey Works**



The following week, RE Golden, a local fresh food distributor, offered to store the vegetables and even purchased some to supply their clients. Meanwhile, a conversation with our partners, Roots4Change, offered a lightbulb moment! Their client families, many of whom were immigrants and employed in the service industry, experienced loss of food and housing security. Could we craft a way to get our excess fresh produce to these families?

And the 14-month Farms to Families project was born! RE Golden delivered that produce to Charlie's on Main, who generously loaned us space to pack our very first resilience boxes.

Vegetables, eggs, cheese, and bread were delivered to over 100 families by drivers who were themselves from these families. With those first 100 resilience boxes, the long journey of our sweet potatoes, beets, and radishes finally came to an end.

Those near me may have heard this story before because it shines a light on two important truths:

- 1) Organizations and businesses in Dane County are incredibly caring and creative; and**
- 2) We face huge obstacles trying to get Wisconsin food to Wisconsin families in this region of the state.**

We are facing the consequences of 50 years without investment in the people, infrastructure, and resources to sustain and support a local food system. Something as simple as rerouting a few hundred pounds of root vegetables to willing consumers became a difficult task involving several businesses, a lot of creativity, and goodwill. Many other groups also found creative ways to use interstitial spaces to store, pack, and cook food to support food producers and families impacted by COVID-19.

This is where REAP plays a critical role, but we should not have to be this creative to get local food to local plates. It's time to build a better, more just, and more resilient food system in Dane County. REAP has been thinking about and acting on solutions for over 20 years and we know what needs to be done, we just need the investments to make it happen.

You can help change this story! Your support helps build a more resilient and just food system for all residents.

A little of what you helped make possible:

- From April 2020 to May 2021, **we delivered over 6,000 resilience boxes** to Latino and Indigenous families hard-hit by the pandemic together with Roots4Change. 53 local farmers and food businesses supplied produce to our resilience boxes, 40% of these businesses were BIPOC or women-owned. Overall, **we invested \$142,283 into locally grown produce** through Farms to Families.

- We got fresh food to MMSD students every week. We worked with local farmers to make sure kids didn't miss out on all the amazing food that Wisconsin has to offer! Last fall, **we provided 13,000 servings of fresh fruits and vegetables** to students through MMSD's market boxes. This fall, we are serving a fresh fruit or vegetable to students in 13 elementary schools every week.

- **In September 2021, we hosted the Harvest Dinner at Yowela?talih^ with Dan Cornelius.** This on-farm event was a celebration of the harvest bounty, community, and afro-indigenous foodways right here in our backyard! A beautiful meal was provided by Dan Cornelius, Greg Johnson, Yusuf Bin-Rella, Francesca Hong, Sam Kincaid, and Jon Nodler. The event raised funds for REAP and the Tribal Elders Food Box program.

- **We supported local BIPOC farmers and food producers.** This included purchasing local products for the Farms to Families resilience boxes, collaborating with local chefs of color for the Harvest Dinner at Yowela?talih^, and sponsoring Farm Fresh Atlas listings for farmers of color.



“Collectively with Roots4Change and REAP, we are trying to develop or create a different paradigm of how primarily white-led nonprofits work with communities of color.

When we are able to grow programs and a vision where food is not only the thing that nurtures us physically - but also spiritually and culturally - there is a sense of community and a sense of place. Those types of programs are priceless and hard to come by.”

Mariela Quesada Centeno, Manager at Roots4Change



The incredible individuals who made the Harvest Dinner at Yowela?talih^ possible.



We are just getting started! Here's what your support will help us do in 2022:

- Increase the purchase of Wisconsin-grown foods by anchor institutions in our community (hospitals, schools, corporations). We will create a first-of-its-kind "wholesale ready" program to prepare local farmers for selling their products to anchor institutions.
- Expand Farm to School to new school districts in Dane County to reach more children and to leverage the lessons we've learned working with MMSD.
- Explore policy tools, like the Good Food Purchasing Policy, so that we can serve more local food to children in schools and incentivize buying Wisconsin-grown produce.

We anticipate that 2022 will be a big year for REAP, as we develop new programs, expand existing ones, and dive into new areas of interest that have the potential to have an expansive impact on our community. While we are excited about what the new year holds for us, we know we can't do it alone.

Please consider supporting REAP at reapfoodgroup.org/give. Thanks to a generous match, every gift will be doubled!

Thank you for your support this holiday season!

Warmly,

Helen Sarakinos
Executive Director



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P.S. - Did you know that your gift will be *doubled*?! Thanks to a generous match, your gift will make double the difference!