



# REAP *Reporter*

Newsletter from REAP Food Group • WINTER 2022

## NOSES TO THE GRINDSTONE TO SHAPE REAP'S FUTURE

There's a curious expression: "work hard in your twenties, play hard in your thirties." At REAP we at least take the former to heart in these early Twenty-Twenties of the young century. While 2021 doled out continued disruptions in food supply chains, school nutrition programs, and opportunities for gathering, it also gave us an opportunity to dig into our work and build our capacity to serve REAP's stakeholders.

In 2022, after years of planning, networking and fundraising, we look forward to building on our strengths in connecting growers to buyers and are thrilled so many of you have invested in this growth.

In the following pages, you'll see how our strategizing efforts--coupled with your outpouring of giving--have positioned REAP to make major gains in our programming, and

come out even stronger through transition. From wholesale readiness training for our Atlas farmers, to the development of a Latino Food Advisory Board, to expanding our Farm to School assistance to schools throughout Dane County, REAP remains agile, creative, and laser-focused on transforming the food landscape of Southern Wisconsin. If not play hard, we'll certainly find pleasure in the journey.

## READY, SET, GROW: THE ATLAS EXPLORES WHOLESALE ARM

An early win in 2022 began several months and many planning meetings ago. The result: the USDA awarded REAP one of only eighty-five Local Food Promotion Program grants in the country.

Building off of the strengths of the direct-to-consumer Farm Fresh Atlas, REAP will use the 2-year, \$250,000 grant award to design and pilot a Wholesale Farm Fresh Atlas and Readiness Program.

The resulting website and technical resources will serve small-to-medium scale farmers who want to engage wholesale customers, including aggregators, food hubs, grocery stores, restaurants, and anchor institutions such as hospitals and schools.

"With many years assisting Wisconsin's second largest school district with local food procurement, our farmer connections and our partnerships with hospitals and higher ed, REAP is well positioned to help both food producers and buyers negotiate



the hurdles to get local food into institutional kitchens," says REAP Executive Director Helen Sarakinos.

While many of the materials will be available and useful to producers and buyers statewide, the project will be centered in southern Wisconsin.

"With the wealth of family farms and anchor institutions in southern WI, this region can really reap the economic benefit of investing in local and sustainably-grown food," explains REAP Farm to Business Director Anna Landmark.

The first steps in execution will focus on developing resources for pilot program participants: a wholesale readiness website for farmers interested in selling to institutions, virtual training days and networking opportunities, and the development of a sales platform for farmers to market their products.

Along with REAP's grant, the USDA invested a total of \$75.4 million across 41 states to a diverse range of projects that similarly support producer-to-consumer markets and local and regional food business.

# A LETTER FROM HELEN SARAOKINOS



I love the turning of a cycle that New Year's brings, even facing down year three of this pandemic. I am also humbled with how the whole REAP team regrouped in January excited to dive into our big plans for 2022. We have spent years sowing the seeds to build a talented team and grow our impact.

We are seeing the shoots of new growth emerging in the year ahead: wholesale readiness training for farmers, increased community partnerships, serving more schools in Dane County and southern Wisconsin. But my excitement is tinged with bittersweet feelings as I will be stepping down from REAP and the Executive Director role this spring as my family prepares for an overseas opportunity. While it is challenging to step away as the momentum is growing, I know the mission and the work is in smart, competent and passionate hands with this team of staff and board.

I wrote this in our e-newsletter in January but it bears

repeating: REAP is doing important work at the nexus of food systems, social justice and environmental protection and we are seeking that next dynamic leader to harness the momentum, continue to forge deep partnerships and lift up the ridiculously talented team at REAP who serve farmers, children, chefs, and food businesses and dare greatly every day to build a just and sustainable local food system. Maybe you know that person? Maybe you are that person? I couldn't imagine a better place to land, or a better time to be joining REAP. The position description is posted on our website, please help us spread the word.

It has been a privilege to do this work alongside so many amazing humans who are committed to caring for each other and this beautiful earth. I look forward to joyously writing those checks, attending farm dinners and contacting elected officials as a proud member of REAP Food Group on my return home.

Yours truly,

Helen

## UNLOCKING THE BENEFITS OF FOOD IDENTITY

A perfect storm of COVID-19 variants and cold weather may have disrupted opportunities for indoor gathering, but our Community Partnerships Coordinator, Yolibeth Rangel FitzGibbon, and Farm to School Director, Allison Pfaff Harris, still found safe ways to engage students with exciting hands-on programs about foodways and agriculture.

In December, REAP and the Centro Hispano Juventud Youth Program kicked off the Youth for Food Justice Cooking Series with 14 students from Sennett and Sherman middle schools, along with guest chefs Julian and Heidi Zepeda of Tortilleria Zepeda.

Julian and Heidi shared a brief history of maize, the nutritional and cultural staple of Mesoamerica, and explained the crucial step of nixtamalization in masa production to unlock corn's nutrients. The students then got to

knead and press their own tortillas and taste test their work.

Partners REAP and Centro Hispano



designed the cooking series to offer a fun learning environment for Juventud's Latino and Spanish-speaking middle school members

that showcases Latinoamerican ingredients, invites culturally-relevant chefs and food entrepreneurs into the classroom, and advances food justice in the community.

"Engaging the youth in our community is key in moving towards just, sustainable and healthy food systems where everyone has access to good food," Yolibeth explained. The next cooking class will take place in February of this year.

Building on the mission to showcase Latino foodways and entrepreneurs in the classroom, Yolibeth and the newly inaugurated Latino Food Advisory Board planned to meet again in February to prioritize steps for bolstering the same platform in the wider community.

We're excited to witness the evolution of the Cooking Series and Advisory Board, and continue to find new ways in 2022 to learn from and celebrate our community partners.



# A STRONG START TO THE NEW YEAR

by Meghan Salzwedel,  
Development Director

**You did it!** Thanks to you, our year-end fundraising campaign raised over \$87K for our work to transform communities, economies, and lives through the power of good food. Thank you again to our incredible matching donors and board members for kickstarting the campaign.

We are so excited about what 2022 holds for REAP and we are honored to do this work alongside each of you! Here's what your kindness and generosity will help us do this year:

**Increase** the purchase of Wisconsin-grown foods by anchor institutions in our community through our wholesale readiness grant project.

**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 the Madison Metropolitan School District.

**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.

Thank you for your belief in our mission to make good food, grown well, accessible to all!

## A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO OUR SUPER VOLUNTEER, DAVID

REAP staff and board extend a heartfelt thank you to former Board member and volunteer David Waisman for his 12 years of service both as a board member, and then

as a community member of REAP's Finance Committee. We are lucky to have had David's sharp intellect and wise, calm insights to guide our organization. We will miss you, David.

## BEETS TO BABY BOK CHOY

**The numbers are in:** In Fall of 2021, REAP spent roughly \$15,000 on over 8,000 lbs of local fruits and vegetables for snacks served to students at participating Madison Metropolitan School District (MMSD) schools.

• **4,772 students** received snacks across

• **13 elementary schools** over the course of

• **12 weeks** during the Fall semester

• **9 farms** were represented

• **10 different fruit and vegetable products** were served

• **150 miles:** the maximum distance to any participating farm

Thanks to all of the farms, David Rodriguez and the International Catering team, and MMSD for a great fall! We look forward to more local fruits and veggies and welcoming more farms to the program in 2022!

# FARM FRESH ATLAS

January marks the deadline for Farm Fresh Atlas registration, and we are excited to usher in a new year of programming. The 2022 Atlas will once again feature Wisconsin farms, farmers markets, restaurants, and other businesses that sell local food and use sustainable practices.

## GET THE MOST OUT OF ATLAS

- Review the seasonality chart in the print version to determine when certain types of produce will be available
- Use the website search bar to find specific foods, farmers markets, farms, events, retail spaces and organizations
- In winter, the Atlas is a great place to search for CSAs for the 2022 season!

## WHERE TO FIND

Web: [farmfreshatlas.org](http://farmfreshatlas.org), Public Libraries, Farmers Markets, Independent Grocery Stores, Member Stores, Restaurants, Cafes, and Farms, REAP Events

## NEW FEATURES FOR 2022

This year, the Atlas will have features on REAP programming including our Farm to School and Farm to Business Programs, as well as our Community Outreach efforts.



## IN THIS ISSUE...

- REAP Earns USDA Grant
- A Letter from Helen
- Showcasing Latino Foodways in our Community
- Year-End Fundraising Success
- A Semester of Snack
- Farm Fresh Atlas 2022 Arriving Soon



306 E. Wilson St., Suite 2W  
Madison, WI 53703  
[reapfoodgroup.org](http://reapfoodgroup.org)



@EatLocalFood



@REAPMadison



@reapmadison

### Board of Directors:

Nan Fey, Chair  
Andrew Hanson, Vice Chair  
Emily King, Secretary  
Tommy Stauffer, Treasurer  
Nic Mink  
Adam Barr  
Heather Clefisch  
Mark Finando  
Sarah J. Elliott  
Lauren Rudersdorf  
Katie Rozas Fahrenkrug  
Vivek Swaminathan

### Staff:

Helen Sarakinos, Executive Director  
Susan Coffin, Administrative Director  
Meghan Salzwedel, Development Director  
Allison Pfaff Harris, Farm to School Director  
Anna Landmark, Farm to Business Director  
Yolibeth Rangel FitzGibbon, Community Partnerships Coordinator  
Noah Bloedorn, Atlas Program Manager  
Samantha Kincaid, Communications Manager



**REAP Food Group's mission is to transform communities, economies and lives through the power of good food. You can support our mission by making a donation online at [reapfoodgroup.org/give](http://reapfoodgroup.org/give). Every annual donation above \$45 makes you a REAP member.**