

# Direct Markets: The Next Generation of Farming



National Institute of Food and Agriculture  
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE





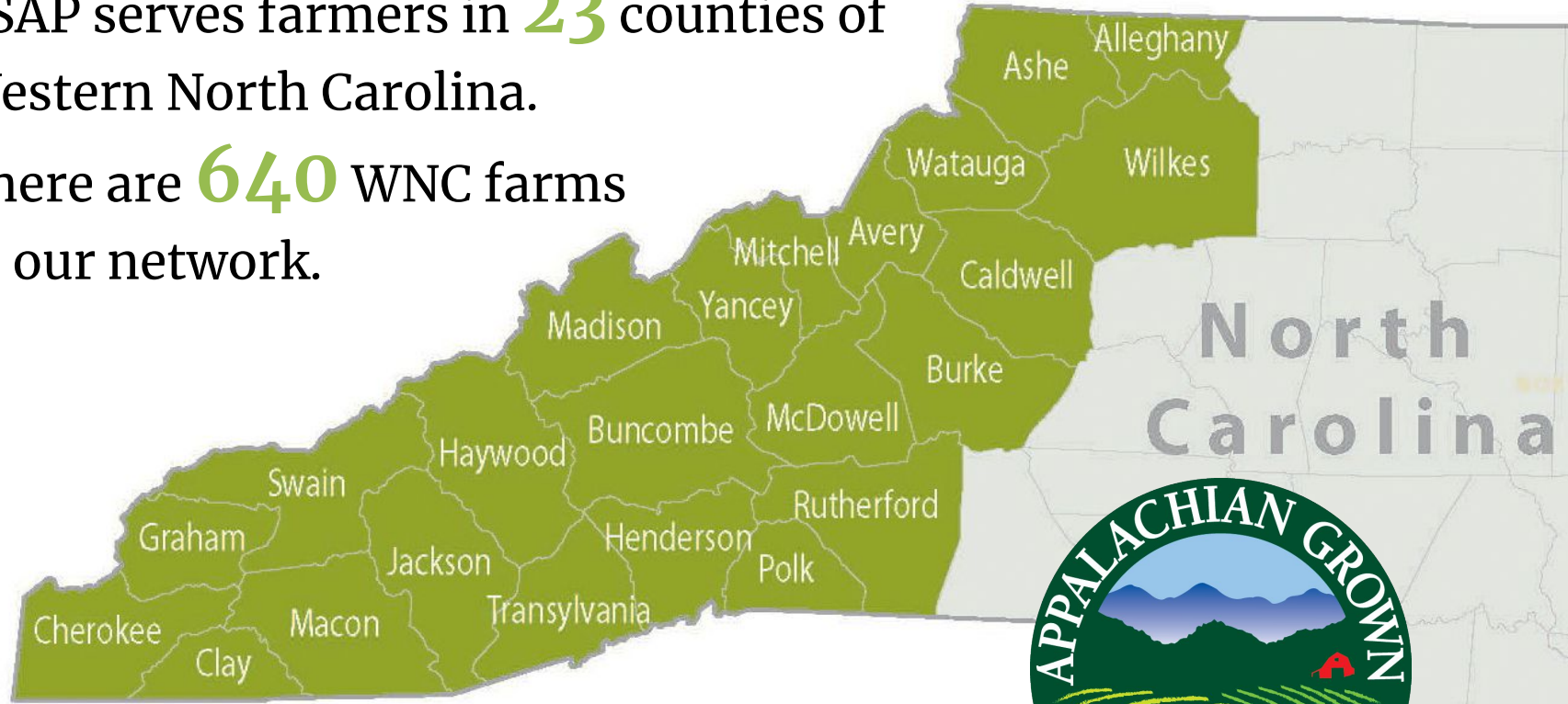
**Mission:** Our mission is to help local farms thrive, link farmers to markets and supporters, and build healthy communities through connections to local food.

**Vision:** Our vision is of strong farms, thriving local food economies, and healthy communities where farming is valued as central to our heritage and our future.



ASAP serves farmers in **23** counties of Western North Carolina.

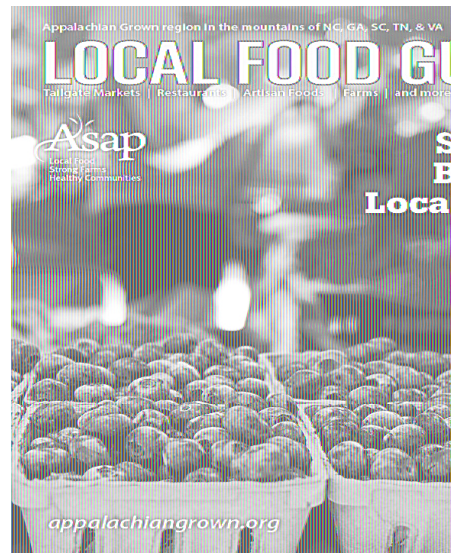
There are **640** WNC farms in our network.



Almost **1/3** of these farms qualify as new or beginning farmers



# Local Food Campaign Since 2000







**Farm Fresh for Health** encourages healthy eating through a farmers market prescription program, cooking demos, and other partnerships with health professionals.





Our **Local Food Research Center** examines the role and the impact of regional food systems.



A close-up photograph of two hands planting a small green seedling into dark, rich soil. The hands are positioned on either side of the seedling, with fingers gently holding it in place. The soil is dark brown and appears moist. In the background, a wooden plank is visible, suggesting a garden bed or planter box. The lighting is bright, casting shadows on the soil and hands.

**Growing Minds Farm to School** provides training to teachers, school staff, parents, community members, and farmers.



growing m

farm to school  
an asap program

We offer lesson plans,  
mini-grants, and free  
seeds for **school gardens**.







Our **Local Food Campaign** works to drive the demand for local food.



We help farmers develop and grow their businesses through **workshops, training, and one-on-one support.**





We focus on **making connections** across the community and local food systems



# Why Direct Markets?



## Why Buy Local? Our Choices Matter.

### *Keep Value in the Local Economy*

Buying local is about more than how we spend our dollars—it's about supporting what we value in our community like fair pay, sustainable agriculture, healthy food, and strong local economies.

### *Build Community Resilience*

Buying local supports a diversity of innovative and inter-dependent businesses that make it possible for communities to both survive and thrive in good times and bad.

### *Strengthen Community Ties*

Purchasing products made or grown by our neighbors builds relationships that strengthen the economy while creating opportunities for greater civic engagement.

### *Create the Food System We Want*

When we buy local, we exercise our power to change the food system to one that is more transparent and better supports our farms, workers, environment, and the entire community.

### *Celebrate Our Character and Heritage*

Buying local ensures that our farms and local businesses remain vibrant and productive and contribute to preserving our scenic landscape and unique culture.



© 2014 ASAP's Local Food Research Center





Our **Local Food Research Center** examines the role and the impact of regional food systems.



## The End of Tobacco and the Rise of Local Food in Western North Carolina



### The Growth and Transition of Sustainable Production Practices in Western North Carolina



## 2020 Appalachian Grown Annual Producer Survey Report



# Relevant and Responsive

- Staying connected with emerging consumer trends
- Monitoring the changing needs of farmers
- Providing evolving and timely content



# Why people are buying local: Transparency and Trust





# Local food shoppers want to know the growing practices farmers are using



# Consumers are seeking direct experiences with local farmers, farms, and food

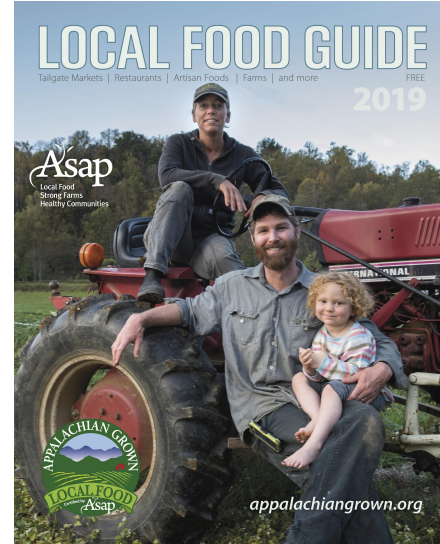




# Regional Local Food Campaign



- Collecting and sharing farm stories
- Developed the Appalachian Grown local branding and certification program
- Creating opportunities for the public to connect directly with farms
- Building transparency and connections in the food system
- Promoting the diversity of seasonal offering and diversity of farms in the region





# Collaborative and Comprehensive Approach



Knowledge Experience Connections Trust Capacity Partnership



# Direct Markets: The Next Generation of Farming

**Goal:** To enhance the viability of new and beginning farmers in WNC by providing them with the knowledge, skills, and tools needed to start and/or grow successful farm operations focused on direct market opportunities.

**Approach:** Training, technical assistance, and resources to develop and implement direct marketing strategies in four key areas:

- **Marketing**
- **Farm business planning**
- **Production for direct markets**
- **Development of market opportunities**



# Direct Markets: The Next Generation of Farming

Impact summary (so far – 3 year project end Aug 2021)

- 205 NBFs served (including 42 new farm start ups)
- 131 1:1 consultation meetings
- 36 Business of Farming conference workshops
- 18 on-farm (or virtual) production workshops
- 15 farms participated in leader group
- 10 presentations to Crop Associations





# Objective 1: New and beginning farmers learn and implement direct market strategies.

## Activities:

- Training/technical assistance on direct market strategies through a NBF track at the ASAP Business of Farming Conference (BOF) 2019–2021.
- Workshops targeting next generation NBFs through 3 grower associations.
- Half-day agritourism training 2019–2021.
- Individualized marketing and branding support to NBFs.



## Objective 2: New and beginning farmers use farm business planning and recordkeeping to develop and manage their direct marketing business.

### Activities:

- workshops on farm business planning and recordkeeping
- Individualized business planning and recordkeeping assistance through coaching sessions.

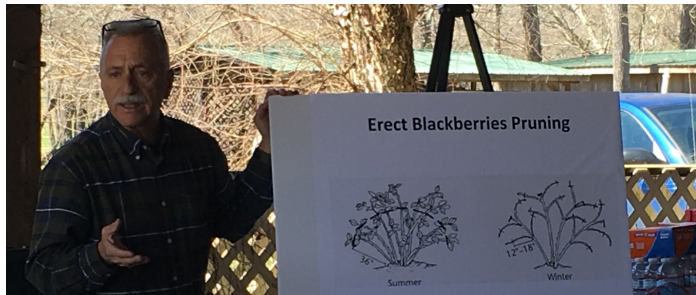




# Objective 3: New and beginning farmers learn and develop appropriate direct market production strategies.

## Activities:

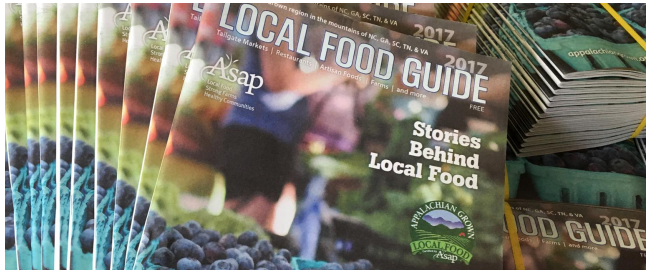
- Six on-farm production workshops annually.
- Individualized NBFs assistance in production strategies.



# Objective 4: The businesses of new and beginning farmers have increased visibility and competitiveness.

## Activities:

- Regional direct market promotional strategy
- Drive the direct sales of beginning farmers each year through special publications, promotions, and events.
- Develop and share the farm stories of NBFs

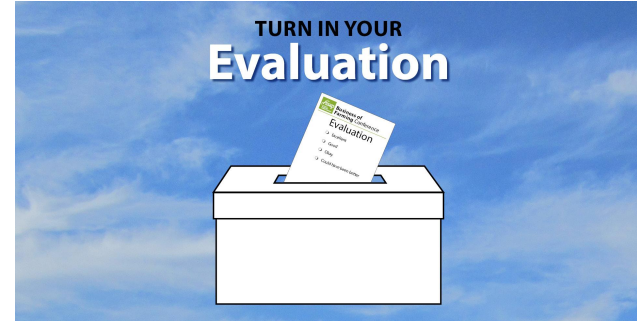




# Objective 5: New and beginning farmers provide input on training content and promotions.

## Activities:

- Input from NBFs on project activities and outcomes through evaluations, annual surveys, and interviews.
- Work closely with a small group of leader NBFs each year.



# SMM Farms: The Moreno Family





# Next Generation Farmers



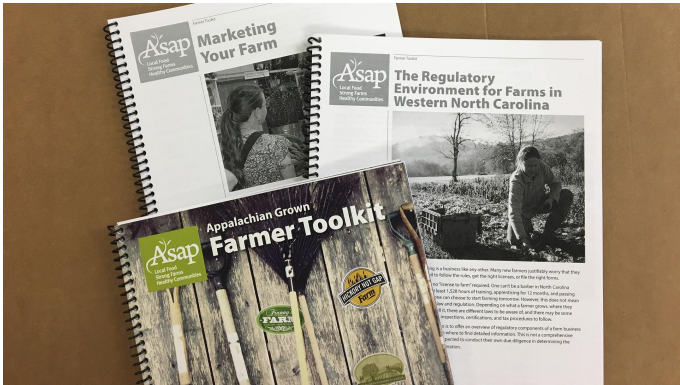


# Production workshop in partnership with Extension



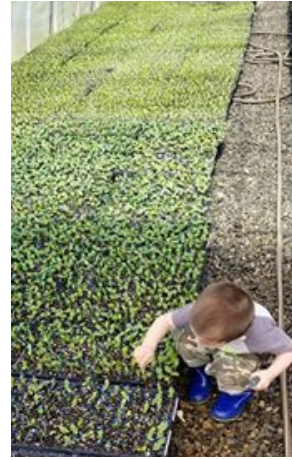


# Business of Farming Conference



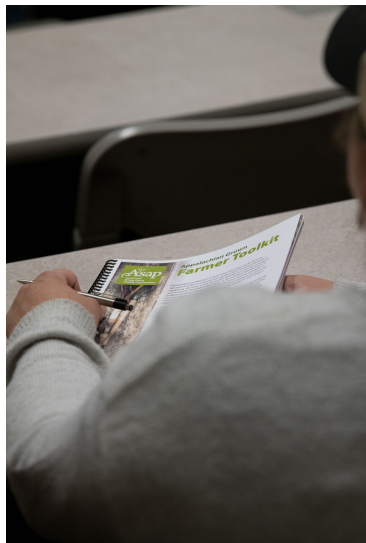


# Individualized 1:1 Support





# New and Beginner Farm Working Group



**Salvador's** Riverside Farm

GENERATIONS OF  
FARM FRESH GOODNESS



# Production workshop





# Making Connections



## Meet Your Farmers: The Moreno Family



Cookie policy



[asapconnections.org](https://asapconnections.org)  
Meet Your Farmers: The Moreno Family

 SOUNDCLLOUD

 Share



4:00

 192

100

100 Days in Appalachia @Appalachia100 · 25m

“Your typical farmer, he was just a dude,” says Salvador Moreno Jr., owner of SMM Farms. “Honest truth is, that dude? He’s a hydrological engineer. Heavy machinery worker. He’s a chemist. He’s a carpenter. He’s a welder. All of those things.”

[bit.ly/3eKvfwU](https://bit.ly/3eKvfwU)



# Farm Development and Growth is Not Linear

New and beginning farmers need support that is:

- Multi-faceted/comprehensive
- Built on trust and relationships
- Responsive to changing needs
- Ongoing over time





# Bearwallow Valley Farm – Henderson County, NC

**2014** -Started working with ASAP through farm to school/Health Department

**2017** -ASAP planning consultation

2018 -Attended Business of Farming Conference

**2019** First year farming

- Attended Business of Farming Conference
- Created Local food Guide listing
- ASAP planning consultations
- NC Cooperative Extension 1:1 production support
- Farm-business development coaching with Mountain BizWorks
- Nominated for NBF working group
- Growing Local story feature
- ASAP farm visit and custom photography
- Attended production workshop in Henderson County
- Individualized branding support (ASAP+CAKE Websites and More)

**2020**

- Business of Farming Conference
- CSA Fair participant
- Continued 1:1 consultation/coaching with ASAP, Mountain BizWorks, and Cooperative Extension
- Custom branding/marketing support
- Grower-buyer connections - workplace CSA
- ASAP's Appalachian Farms Feeding Families program
- ASAP connected media story/interview



# Lee's One Fortune Farm



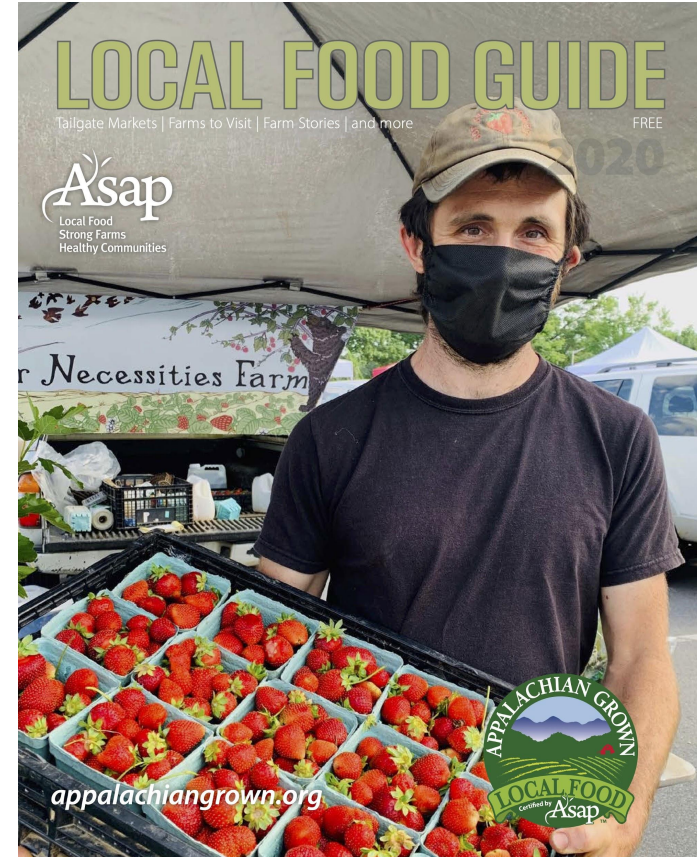
MEET YOUR Farmer: Lee's ONE FORTUNE FARM





# Local Food Campaign COVID-19 Response

- Immediate response to gauge need and help farms & markets pivot
- Expanded updates and communication
- Building on new and existing partnerships
- Shifting to virtual engagement and training
- Staying connected to evolving farmer needs and changing market environments



# Questions?







**Questions?**

Stretch your legs & take a 10 minute break







# 2021 Business of Farming *Virtual* Conference

Welcome to the 18th Annual  
**Business of Farming Conference**

**Learn  
Share  
Connect**





**Questions?**



# Lessons Learned

- Successful NBF learning and implementation of new practices requires a combination of:
  - Resources
  - Ongoing training
  - Individualized support.
  - Evolving and timely content, offered through multiple partners and a variety of training formats.
- Peer to peer learning, farmer networking, and grower-buyer connections were instrumental in increasing NBF participation and knowledge gain throughout the project.
- Leader NBF cohorts provided useful feedback for improving project offerings, as well as demonstrated the effectiveness of custom, individualized assistance and peer support.



# Lessons Learned

- 1:1 consultations specific to individual NBF needs, particularly when held on-farm, were key to supporting their move from the learning to implementation phase.
- Commodity crop growers associations were not as effective for reaching next generation farmers as introductions through project partners and peers.
- Production workshop content/modules developed were adopted and shared across NC Cooperative Extension network and are highly replicable.
- Incorporating NBF stories and involvement in regional promotions is an effective strategy for connecting with and directing consumer demand for local products.
- ASAP's multi-faceted support (trainings, business planning tools, emergency response programs, etc.) helped NBFs to pivot for business survival through the Covid-19 crisis.





# Beginning Farmer Testimonials

- Nicole Coston - [Bearwallow Valley Farm](#)
- Alyssa Moreno - [SMM Farm](#)
- Holly Whitesides - [Against the Grain](#)
- Chu Lee - [Lee's One Fortune Farm](#)
- Mark McDonagh - [Mighty Gnome Market Garden](#)



# Next Steps

- Continued partnership
- Sharing resources & tools
- Building on lessons learned

Questions?

Learn more at [asapconnections.org](https://asapconnections.org)