



RESPONDING TO COVID-19

Coming together to support the farm and food industry in King County and beyond in response to COVID-19.

KING COUNTY'S LOCAL FOOD FINDER



PARTNERS

**KING COUNTY LOCAL FOOD INITIATIVE
FARM KING COUNTY TECHNICAL
ASSISTANCE TEAM**

In July 2020, King County launched the Local Food Finder map to help connect consumers with farm products in King County. This creative response to economic crisis brought by COVID-19 was launched by Farm King County's Technical Assistance Team and supported King County LFI efforts to offer a free and convenient way for residents to support local farms. The website was designed to make it easy for farmers to update data on food and product availability, new drop sites, and pick-up locations.

Want to know if farms deliver to your neighborhood?
Go to: kingcounty.gov/localfoodfinder



Get fresh produce



Find flowers, cheese, berries and more

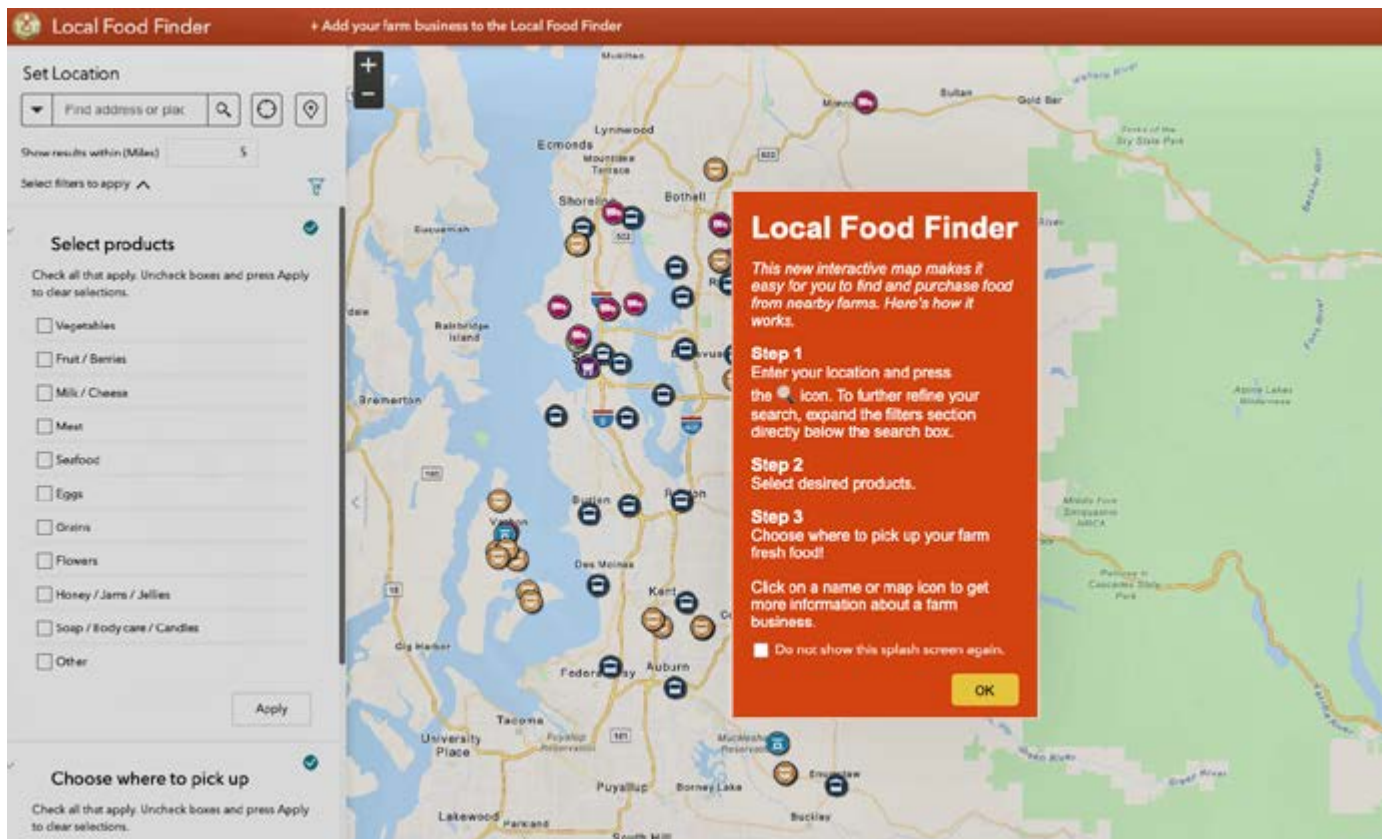




Connect to CSA's



Order directly from local farms



SUPPORTING THE FARM AND FOOD SECTOR THROUGH THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC



PARTNERS

HARVEST AGAINST HUNGER
 BUSINESS IMPACT NW
 WASHINGTON STATE FARMERS
 MARKET ASSOCIATION
 KING COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF
 NATURAL RESOURCES AND PARKS
 HMONG ASSOCIATION
 OF WASHINGTON
 PCC COMMUNITY MARKETS
 KING CONSERVATION DISTRICT

In 2020, the King County Council allocated \$1,380,000 to help King County farmers and farmers markets comply with public health and safety operating requirements to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and to overcome losses due to COVID-19. In addition to supporting farm businesses and farmers markets, relief funding under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act will ensure continued access to fresh, local farm products by income-challenged residents of King County.

Included are grant programs for King County farmers markets impacted by COVID-19, funding to boost local farm product purchases by King County food banks and senior meal providers, and a technical assistance program for farm businesses to launch eCommerce marketing platforms.

Farmers Market Support Grants

This program assisted King County farmers markets comply with the Washington State Department of Health and Public Health – Seattle & King County safe operating requirements to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and other losses attributable to the pandemic.

27 number of King County farmers markets supported
\$397,000 to funding disbursed



Farm to Food Bank and Senior Meal Providers

The relief funding allowed food banks and senior meal providers to purchase produce directly from farmers, which gives local farmers an additional, much-needed market option and increases access to fresh, local farm products by income-challenged residents.

\$297,000 distributed to hunger relief organizations for direct farm purchases

35 number of participating hunger relief agencies

51 number of King County Farms purchased from



Grants to Impacted Farm Businesses

This grant program reimbursed King County farm businesses for the unanticipated costs of responding to COVID-19. The relief funding will not only help farmers survive 2020 but will position them to help enter the 2021 farming season in a stronger financial position.

22 number of farm businesses that received funding
\$110,885 total grant funds disbursed



E-Commerce Support Program

The 2020 “Ready to Sell” program was administered to farmers located in King County who were seeking to develop tools and strategies to effectively use farm-specific e-commerce platforms to sell their products.

16 Registered Farm Business applicants

50% had no e-commerce selling experience (*81% had no experience with a farm e-commerce platform*)



VIRTUAL CHOMP! SUMMER CAMP



PARTNERS

WAKULIMA USA
BLACK FARMERS COLLECTIVE
KING COUNTY DNRP

Since 2015, **CHOMP!** has supported King County Executive Dow Constantine’s Local Food Initiative by celebrating local farmers, chefs and restaurants using locally sourced food, and local organizations specializing in healthy food, sustainability, and social justice. This year, King County’s CHOMP! Summer Camp was a free virtual five-day event running August 24–28 where video content premiered for viewers to watch and participate in from home, including a look at a few of King County’s farmers, cooking demos, educational activities, and performances.

Each year, CHOMP! partners with local organizations working to improve access to healthy, locally grown food in King County. Black Farmers Collective and Wakulima USA were the two beneficiaries selected this year.

CHOMP! BENEFICIARIES: WAKULIMA USA AND BLACK FARMERS COLLECTIVE

Access to farmland is a significant barrier for many farmers, especially Black and Indigenous farmers and farmers of color, whether they are just starting out or have extensive experience growing food. Recently, King County partnered with the Black Farmers Collective to assist in expanding their farm operation, Small Axe Farm, on property in the Sammamish Valley, to grow more healthy and nutritious food.

Small Axe Farm in Woodinville is a four-acre teaching farm where expansion efforts are currently underway. Expanding Small Axe Farm to land in the Sammamish Valley will allow Black Farmers Collective to increase both the number of farmers they work with and the market channels they serve. King County is supporting this expansion by leasing the property to Black Farmers Collective so that more local food can be grown for more people, especially communities facing health disparities who are disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.



The Black Farmers Collective is a Black-led mutual aid network of BIPOC farmers, organizers, and leaders creating a food system for healthier communities. Their three sites, Yes Farm in the Central District, Africatown Grow in Columbia City, and Small Axe in Woodinville are part of their efforts for land acquisition, BIPOC farmer development, community building, and educational programs. Learn more at blackfarmerscollective.com

Wakulima USA is a farming collective focusing on cultural affirmation, widespread access to healthy food, and fostering the growth of farmers and food entrepreneurs. Wakulima, which means “farmers” in Swahili, promotes sustainable farming by using underutilized land, and transforming it into vibrant community spaces that can generate culturally relevant food and income for growers. Learn more about Wakulima USA at wakulimausa.com.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF WAKULIMA USA AND BLACK FARMERS COLLECTIVE

FARMERS MARKETS INNOVATE DURING COVID-19



PARTNERS

KING COUNTY FARMERS MARKETS
WASHINGTON STATE FARMERS
MARKET ASSOCIATION



In response to COVID-19 restrictions, [King County farmers markets](#) re-created many ways of doing business. While 30 of the 40 King County farmers markets were open in 2020, many opened later in the season or looked drastically different. Every farmers market operated with new signage requiring social distancing, limiting customers at a time, and moving booths 12 feet apart instead of side by side, which meant fewer vendors and fewer customers could be at farmers markets. In addition, COVID-19 restrictions meant markets were having to double staffing, leaving operations in the red.

Fortunately, the King County Council allocated \$410,000 of [CARES Act funds](#) for farmers market relief. This funding along with the innovative nature of many farmers and farm organization led to the development of online ordering systems, delivery services, and new pickup locations. Some markets even offered pre-sales for pick-up with online services as well as shopping at the market itself.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF SEATTLE NEIGHBORHOOD FARMERS MARKETS



PLANT BASED FOOD SHARE PROVIDES HEALTHY AND CULTURALLY RELEVANT PLANT-BASED MEALS TO COMMUNITIES AND FAMILIES



PARTNERS

PLANT BASED FOOD SHARE
CHEF ARIEL BANGS



Plant Based Food Share (PBFS) is a community food program that provides healthy plant-based food boxes to Seattle area families facing food insecurity. PBFS was founded when Ariel Bangs, Executive Director of Plant Based Food Share, witnessed the need to offer healthy plant-based food boxes to urban communities in King County when COVID-19 began to impact everyone’s lives in March.

PBFS serves low income, underserved urban communities who live in food deserts and includes African American, Indigenous, Latinx communities as well as BIPOC children, families, elders, and domestic violence victims. PBFS is designed to offer three things to clients receiving boxes:

1. Produce and pantry essentials for families to prepare meals during the week;
2. Healthy plant-based meals cooked by chefs of color; and
3. Tools to grow food at homes with limited space.

PBFS has provided food to over 22,270 families and supported local BIPOC farmers by incorporating over almost 575,000 pounds of their locally grown produce. PBFS has offered over 30,000 plant starts so that families can grow their own food indoors; 30,000 heirloom seeds; and provided over 2,000 plant based healthy meals from local BIPOC chefs.



PHOTOS COURTESY OF PLANT BASED FOOD SHARE

“We do this work as a way to heal our communities and encourage healthy lifestyles for those that are underserved and have historically been unable to grow their own food or access healthy foods. Ultimately, we want to people to have access to healthy plant-based food, and we want them to think differently about how they are fueling their minds, bodies, and communities.”

– Ariel Bangs, Executive Director of Plant Based Food Share

GOOD FARMER FUND PROVIDES EMERGENCY RELIEF TO FARMERS



PARTNERS

SEATTLE NEIGHBORHOOD
FARMERS MARKETS

The [Good Farmer Fund](#) was established in 2008 to provide emergency relief to market farms experiencing crop loss or setbacks from weather-related disaster (flood, fire and wind) or medical emergencies. Since 2008, Neighborhood Farmers Markets Association (NFM) has provided over \$310,000 to our farmers. In 2020, with the support of a large gift of stock, NFM established temporary resiliency grants to stabilize farms and food businesses experiencing a loss of markets, restaurant sales, or other financial setbacks due to COVID-19. Over \$350,000 in support enabled 71 farms and food producers to purchase coolers for crop storage, cover payroll expenses, and purchase supplies and equipment needed to pivot to online sales. This support enabled stability and resiliency in the local food community during an uncertain time.

“Thank you for your generous relief grant. We’ve been shocked with the endless challenges this 2020 year has presented us with. Not only with COVID, but also the wildfires that forced some market closures due to poor air quality. We lost about \$10,000 of product that weekend. Not to mention the labor expense that needs to be covered whether the product is sold or not. But thanks to your generous contribution we were able to minimize our losses that weekend, and your funds helped cover our workers’ labor expense. It’s been said before that farmers are eternal optimists, and this is what keeps us doing what we do.”

– Alvarez Organic Farms

FARM KING COUNTY: SHARING RESOURCES TO SUPPORT THE LOCAL FARM COMMUNITY



PARTNERS

- KING COUNTY AGRICULTURAL PROGRAM
- KING CONSERVATION DISTRICT
- WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
- USDA
- TILTH ALLIANCE
- WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION
- NORTHWEST AGRICULTURAL BUSINESS CENTER
- CITY OF SEATTLE
- SNOVALLEY TILTH BUSINESS IMPACT NORTHWEST

Across the region, agricultural service providers deliver training on topics including technical farming, business development and funding, market access, and farmland access. Farm King County brings these service providers together with regular coordination meetings and hosts a website to keep farmers up to date on services and resources.

In the spring of 2020, King County farmers faced new regulations related to Covid-19 which impacted everything from food production to market outlets. The Farm King County team - a network of agricultural service providers - met weekly to share updates and keep everyone current on rapidly changing regulations and exchange knowledge of the resulting impacts so organizations could focus their support where it was needed most. FarmKingCounty.org added a robust section on Covid-19 regulations and resources.

While consumer demand for locally grown products expanded, farmers markets were temporarily suspended. Flower growers experienced unique challenges because many rely on farmers markets as their primary sales outlet. In addition, many flower growers are immigrants and refugees, and market accessibility and communication barriers only exacerbated an already challenging business landscape. The Farm King County team collaborated to detail ways to buy directly from flower growers, dedicate space on FarmKingCounty.org to share lists of purchasing options, and partner on a social media campaign to reach consumers interested in buying from local flower growers.

