
FARMERS **RISING**
LEARN · GROW · CONNECT

A black and white photograph of a woman with her hair in a bun, wearing a dark sweater, looking off to the side in a rural setting with trees and a fence in the background.

2025
ANNUAL REPORT

APRIL 1, 2024 - MARCH 31, 2025

This annual report covers our first full programming year as Farmers Rising, an impactful time when we not only renewed but deepened our commitment to regenerative farmers, to ensuring a safe, healthy food supply, and to educating our community about the importance of sustainable farming. This year, we opened up a new farmer incubator program and welcomed two livestock incubator farmers onto our land. We graduated 14 farmers—both new and aspiring—from our flagship holistic business management course. Our CSA boxes from Farmers Rising Rockford were filled to the top with delicious, organically grown vegetables. We welcomed hundreds of youth to experience the joys of farm life. And we jumped at the chance to participate in a new local food access program called IL EATS, which allowed us to purchase over \$725,000 in fresh food from 18 local farmers, and deliver it to 7 food pantries throughout Northern Illinois. During this time, we also successfully turned around our organizational finances and ended the year with a small budget surplus.

I'm so proud. And yet, I'm also tired. We had a great year, but we've also had to withstand federal funding freezes and grant cancellations, difficult decisions with an impending farm sale and organizational move, and worst of all, grief, shock, and dismay as we witnessed our loved ones, families, friends, co-workers, and neighbors being attacked in our communities.

Last year, we put out a call to action to all who care about climate change, food sovereignty, and fresh food grown by local farmers, and asked you to join our efforts to lift up the people doing local and regenerative farming. We are so grateful that you responded with enthusiasm and support. This year, I ask you to please join us in solidarity, in resistance, in resilience, and in renewing our commitment to each other, to our farmers, to this important work to feed our communities, and to fighting for a more just society.

*Thank you for your ongoing support
and for being an invaluable part of our
beautiful community.*

*I wish you peace, joy, full bellies, and
firm resolve this winter season.*



Jackie de Batista

Executive Director, Farmers Rising

For the past four years, it has been my profound honor and privilege to serve as the Board President for Farmers Rising. My journey with this organization began back in the Spring of 2021 when I first attended a class on caring for chickens. That simple moment—stepping onto the farm and being hooked by the surrounding nature and the inspiring work—ignited a commitment that led me to programs like the Stateline Farm Beginnings' "Farm Dreams Intensive." Watching my fellow cohorts turn their dreams into achievable realities remains my biggest takeaway.

My time as President has allowed me to participate firsthand in the incredibly important work we do every day: Lifting up the people doing local and regenerative farming. It is this mission that fuels our efforts to change the future of food in the Midwest, and it is a true honor I will always cherish. I am especially proud that this year, we welcomed our first incubator farmers to the livestock incubator farm - an initiative of ours that equips farmers with immediate and long-term strategies to help build financial resilience and address risks inherent to farming.

As we enter a new cycle of leadership, I am thrilled to pass the torch to our new President, Shelby Leick. Shelby brings a deep passion for local food systems and regenerative agriculture, including her most recent professional expertise with American Farmland Trust (AFT). I am confident that Farmers Rising will continue to thrive and expand under her leadership.

I hope you'll join me in welcoming Shelby Leick, and in supporting the next chapter of Farmers Rising. Wishing you joy this holiday season.



Brad Kemp

Former Board President, Farmers Rising

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Rashad X, Facilitator & Communications Specialist
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Payton Moros, Camp Counselor
Rowan Mermel, Camp Counselor
Payton Skupien, Camp Kitchen Assistant

Access to land

Access to knowledge

Access to fresh food

Access to opportunity

WE'VE MOVED!



This land has shaped us, held us, and become a part of who we are. This is why we say this farm is a place you carry in your heart. Like all working farms, however, seasons of transition are inevitable. With last year's closure of Angelic Organics Farm and an upcoming farm sale, we have thoughtfully consolidated our operations, bringing our work fully to the overnight Lodge, incubator farm, and surrounding 80 acres of creek and wooded trails. While this move brings its share of sadness, it also opens the door to new creativity, renewed energy, and a clearer sense of purpose.

OUR NEW ADDRESS:
1936 Rockton Rd
Caledonia, IL 61011

Please update your records!



Signs of this new chapter are already taking shape: a vibrant mural painted on the barn, incubator farmers rotating poultry through the fields, and construction underway on a new campground, cob pizza oven, and demonstration farm. Each change carries the joy and promise of a new era - one rooted in the same spirit, care, and community that brought us here in the first place.



ACCESS TO FRESH FOOD



Blackhawk Court's urban farm is more than a growing space - it's a cornerstone of the Rockford community. For years, alongside Zion Lutheran Church and our local partners, we've nurtured not only fresh food but deep relationships with one another and with the land. One of the true highlights of our year was the time spent with members of Rockford's refugee community. What began as an effort to increase food access and nutrition security grew into something far more meaningful: a shared space where cultural traditions, new skills, and belonging could flourish together. Seven community members met weekly with Farmers Rising staff. With the help of interpretation support, we identified a few vegetables they wanted to grow; before long, that list blossomed as their excitement and confidence grew. Their eagerness to cultivate and taste new specialty crops, many grown at the Rockford farm, was a joy to witness.



ACCESS TO LAND

Farmers Rising's regenerative livestock incubator is the first of its kind in the country, and the next step in our commitment to building a regenerative food system rooted in access, opportunity, and community. Launched in 2024, the incubator provides farmers with long-term access to land and the support needed to grow thriving, regenerative livestock businesses. Our farmers are gaining valuable hands-on experience in rotational grazing, diversified production, and climate-resilient practices while receiving technical assistance, training, market support, and a community that walks alongside them. As we strengthen our programs' home base, this farm will become a living classroom for regenerative practices that heal soil, nourish animals, and restore ecosystems..





ACCESS TO OPPORTUNITY

Farmers Rising was a Lead Agency administering the Local Food Purchase Assistance Program, also known as IL EATS, in Northern Illinois. In 2024, we purchased more than \$725,000 worth of fresh locally grown food from 18 small farmers, with 14 farmers participating regularly in the program. We chose to implement this program because we have been working with new and beginning farmers for 25 years, and we recognize that the lack of scale-appropriate investment for local food producers is the number one barrier to our collective ability to grow the local food economy and more importantly sustainably feed our own communities.

Within only one short year of growing and producing for a wholesale-designed system while receiving market prices, the incredible impact of this program is clear. Our farmers built new high tunnels, purchased and installed critical cold storage, hired additional staff, expanded acreage in production, and acquired necessary implements enabling them to scale up production.

ACCESS TO KNOWLEDGE

In 2024, our organization served approximately 2280 individuals, with 70% of participants being youth. Through 78 public and custom programs, staff delivered over 1600 hours of quality instruction. Additionally, we provided \$13,385 in scholarships to 136 participants from underserved communities, ensuring greater access to our programs for those in need.

Our community programs inspire, educate, and connect people to the land and its resources. We aim to cultivate a deeper connection between participants and the natural world. As a hub for sustainable agriculture and environmental education, Farmers Rising empowers individuals of all ages to develop practical skills, build ecological awareness, and gain knowledge around a variety of agricultural practices and the importance of supporting local farms.



OUR IMPACT

At Farmers Rising, we ensure everyone has access to a sustainable, food-secure future by feeding our communities, strengthening the local food economy, educating the public about the importance of regenerative agriculture, and training the next generation of farmers.



3 new sheep



386 Farmers Served



\$726,650 purchased from farmers



9 food pantries served



\$13,385 Scholarships



2280 Program Participants



9 Events in Blackhawk Courts



14 Farm Beginnings Graduates



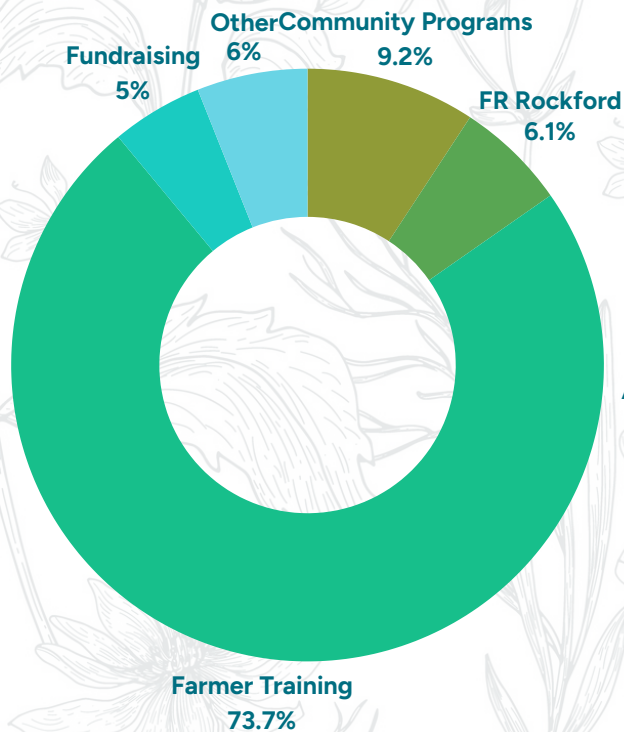
2 Incubator Farmers



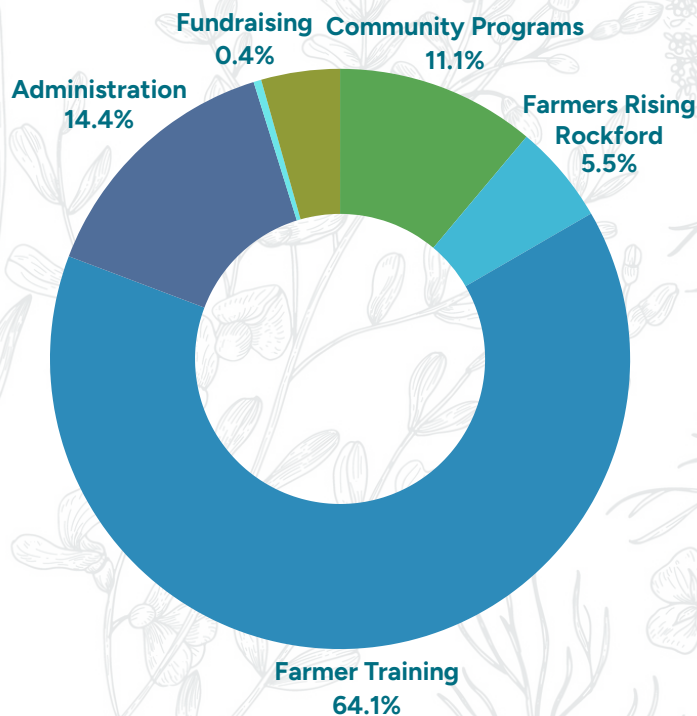
FINACIALS

Your Support Helps Farmers Rise

Income



Expenses



This year has been one of the most important and transformational in our organizational history - one that ensures we remain strong, stable, and ready to serve farmers for decades to come. We asked ourselves hard questions about our long-term impact on food systems, and are moving forward with a new clarity of purpose.

Farmers Rising is now better positioned than ever. Leaner, steadier, and more deeply connected to the land where our farmers learn, grow, and build their futures.

Your belief in our work allows us to adapt, evolve, and emerge stronger. Your support equips us to meet this moment with hope, creativity, and the confidence that we can continue rising together.



Donors like you made this resilience possible, helping us broaden our services, stabilize our organizational finances, and end the year with a small budget surplus.

INDIVIDUAL DONORS

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Illinois Department of Human Services
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“Farmers Rising builds sustainable local food & farm systems in partnership with rural & urban people.”

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farmersrising.org

