



CATSKILLS
AGRARIAN
ALLIANCE



2023 Annual Report

catskillsagrarianalliance.org

OUR MISSION

Catskills Agrarian Alliance models food sovereignty in our region by establishing and managing local agricultural initiatives that help protect and promote the right of all people to healthy, culturally-appropriate food produced through ecologically sound and sustainable methods. Our grassroots, participatory approach supports our right to define our own food systems.

OUR VALUES

INCLUSION AND EMPOWERMENT

CAA uplifts and centers marginalized communities within our work to offset historic and ongoing inequities, with a particular attention to Queer, Trans, Black, Indigenous, and Communities of Color.

LIVING WAGES

CAA strives to forge funding strategies that recognize and honor the complex knowledge, undying creativity, and immense physical endurance of agricultural workers.

RECIPROCAL STEWARDSHIP

CAA supports the development of a reciprocal relationship with our ecology: small farms, ecological diversity, intact forests, and holistic management practices.

REAL CLIMATE SOLUTIONS

Our commitment to participatory decision making, stewardship of the land, and management of our own local, networked (and therefore resilient) supply chains underscores our commitment to creating practical, adaptive solutions to our current climate reality.

FINANCES

INCOME

Grants and Foundations \$709,929.88

Sales (CSA, FTI, Wholesale, Star Route) \$678,736.32

TOTAL REVENUE \$1,388,666.20

COGS (passthrough to farms) -\$534,935.26

GROSS PROFIT \$853,730.94

EXPENSES

Payroll (admin, farmers, CSA team) \$552,259.64

Contractors / Legal \$22,949.25

Office and Marketing \$10,940.64

Rent and Utilities \$20,597.46

Farm Supplies \$29,621.44

Fleet Fuel and Maintenance \$31,613.00

3rd Party Warehousing / Delivery \$150,760.95

TOTAL EXPENSES \$818,742.38

The 2023 Annual Report is a publication of Catskills Agrarian Alliance (CAA), a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization. CAA is an Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer.

“WE HAVE FOUND THAT WHEN WE WORK TOGETHER IN A TIME FILLED WITH UNCERTAINTY ABOUT THE FUTURE, OUR COMMUNITIES ARE RESILIENT, ADAPTABLE, TRANSFORMATIVE, IMAGINATIVE AND WELL-EQUIPPED TO MODEL A WAY FORWARD.”

—Co-Executive Directors Francis Yu & Tianna Kennedy

Catskills Agrarian Alliance (CAA) is a regional food sovereignty project born out of the Covid-19 pandemic. Its origins were in a grass-roots collaborative farming and logistics initiative carried out by an enterprising group of Catskills’ farmers that culminated in a full-diet community supported agriculture project called The 607 CSA. The logistics network of The 607 enabled wholesale, farm-to-institution, and mutual aid deliveries from the same group of partner farms as well as its regular service to CSA members, both upstate and in New York City. This logistics network continues to be the backbone of the organization. In 2023 we joined a group of NYS food hubs coordinated by Cornell University to see how our respective logistics networks might better collaborate to increase our local buying power supporting more NYS farms and to strengthen the efficiency, efficacy, and resilience of our local food webs.

The pandemic put into relief the ongoing challenges of an agricultural region faced with economic, environmental, health, and equity crises. We realized we had to think beyond our private enterprises to ensure a future Catskills where farms could not just survive, but thrive, and local residents had access to the food produced in their backyards. We broadened our work to include the formation of a farm commons (West Branch Commons), and prioritized collaborations with local academic institutions to see how we might better feed our children. Through these projects and our food relief efforts, we have found that when we work *together* in a time filled with uncertainty about the future, our communities are resilient, adaptable, transformative, imaginative and well-equipped to model a way forward.

Our days are filled with growing food, securing land, mentoring young farmers, making connections, and operating an extensive logistics network (in order to control our means of production and our supply chain). We farm responsibly in order to feed all of our community beautiful, healthy food. We crop-plan with our partners to make sure the food is relevant to our various communities’ cultures and food traditions. It has been our honor to get to know and work with groups across our bio-region who are rallying to take care of their communities through mutual aid.

Our goal is to decolonize the process, to share our bounty with all who would partake, to prioritize commons, cooperatives, and collectives over private interests and profit. Our logistics network, CSA members, farm-to-school partners, donors, legal aid team, farmers, wholesale customers, and mutual aid allies are all part of the story. Together we are moving past simply being resilient farmers in response to the conditions that were thrust upon us. Instead, we are becoming a creative, generative, and dynamic alliance working to improve our environment, strengthen local economies, and foster social equity in our hometowns, even when that hometown is New York City.

In our first full year as a fledgling nonprofit, we are proud to report that all of our project areas have exceeded our expectations. Thanks to the support of all of our constituencies, we are no longer simply braced for what lies ahead, but are embracing it. We lean into the work as we continue to envision our collective path toward the future. In an exciting step forward, and in an

attempt to further democratize our work, we begin 2024 as a co-directorship with Francis Yu and Tianna Kennedy sharing the role of Executive Director. Join us in our journey!

Credits:

Written by Tianna Kennedy, program leads, & CAA staff

Edited by Benedict Kupstas & Amy Helfand

Art Direction & Graphic Design by Benedict Kupstas

Photos by CAA staff, except: CSA veggie photo by 607 member Kara Haupt; tomato sauce project photo courtesy of SUNY Delhi



Enterprises & Projects

FARM UPDATES



**20,000 lbs. of
vegetables** grown for
mutual aid

10 farmers employed

Choy Commons launched

Worked with **over a dozen
value-aligned mutual aid
organizations**

In 2023, **STAR ROUTE FARM** (located in Charlotteville, NY) made major headway in our move from the original rental farm to our newly purchased “forever farm,” while still growing more food than ever for mutual aid—over 20,000 pounds. Thanks to Natural Resource Conservation Service, we built the first two cold frames at our new property and hired a temporary crew to help with the demolition and shoring up of the collapsing barn. Our stellar crew included two amazing Anne Saxelby Legacy Fund apprentices: Katherine Ayber and Rebecca Huang. Thank you to Bliss, Victor, Francis, Tianna, Walter, Andy (returning from our 2015 crew!), Anne, Ken, Mango, Samar, Amanda, and the hoards of weekend helpers who made farming fun and beautiful this past year.

In collaboration with Gentle Time Farm and Choy Division, we launched Choy Commons, a project focused on weaving relationships between AAPI growers, mutual aid, and community-based organizations in the Hudson Valley and NYC to better serve the regional Asian diaspora. We worked with CADE to donate to the pantries of the Otsego Hunger Coalition; with Otsego Community Fund and Catholic Charities to run a small CSA for food insecure residents of Otsego County; partnered with Glynwood Farms to help feed the constituents of St. Ann’s food relief network in the Bronx;

continued our longstanding mutual aid collaborations with Bushwick Ayuda Mutua as well as our many other mutual aid partners, including RaisingHealth Partners (AMPHS), Brooklyn Supported Agriculture, Heart of Dinner, Ho Foods, Academy of Learning & Mentoring Services, La Morada, Nhà Minh, NYU Langone, Red Canary Song, Send Chinatown Love, and Serra Vida Farm.

THE 607 CSA

THE 607 CSA, founded in 2015 as an LLC and now a program of CAA, had a very successful year as well. We successfully partnered with Local Harvest for our ordering platform (CSAware), working out many software kinks members had experienced in the past. CSA members in the Catskills, Hudson Valley, and NYC purchased 878 full shares and 877 half shares in 2023, which means we fed local, nutritious, delicious, healthy food to approximately 2,760 individuals. 306 of those shares were discounted or solidarity (fully subsidized) shares, ensuring that anyone who asked was fed. We also sold wholesale products from the same partner farms to local and NYC restaurants, grocers, farm stores, and buying clubs. We passed on half a million dollars in sales to our several dozen member farms and suppliers, taking a small step to shore up our Catskills farm economy. The retail mark-up from the CSA pays for the logistics network which also supports CAA's farm-to-institution and mutual aid work, and provides third party trucking for interested partner farms.

Our steadfast logistics partners, Myers Produce, Brooklyn Fish Transfer, and EssexFoodHub facilitated Hudson Valley and NYC deliveries and warehousing.



Our in-house team of packers and drivers, as well as participating farms' staff, pack shares each week and then drive the Catskills route—and all the way to New Jersey for our wholesale deliveries.

In late 2023, we piloted our first “Winter CSA.” Its overwhelming popularity means we plan to expand year-round opportunities for 2024. Finally, The 607 CSA has partnered with Rural Health Network's Produce Prescription Program allowing local residents the option of a home delivery CSA to fulfill their food-as-medicine prescriptions. We piloted the project in 2023 with eleven local residents and hope to expand the service in years to come.

1,755 households fed

306 subsidized or free shares

50 participating farms & food businesses

More than \$500,000 passed through to participating farms

Year-round CSA launched

Produce Prescription Program of South Central NY (PRx) launched

LAND ACCESS

2023 saw the official establishment of **WEST BRANCH COMMONS (WBC)**, the inaugural land access project of Catskills Agrarian Alliance. WBC is a community-centered initiative involving regional farmers and supporting organizations working together to make farming and farmland accessible to a new generation of farmers.

The land that WBC occupies was purchased by American Farmland Trust (AFT) from 4th-generation dairy farmer Tommy Hutson, while CAA and PACE Law collaborated to shepherd the formation of our own local community land trust.

The site spans 257 acres of prime fertile bottomland, situated at the headwaters

of the Delaware River in Delancey, NY. Our overarching objective is to establish equitable land access for aspiring, young farmers, fostering the future of agriculture while bolstering our local communities and economies. WBC aims to create a constellation of resources for farm viability, regional collaboration, and intergenerational knowledge transfer. Original owner Tommy Hutson is still an anchor farmer, as are Iridescent Earth Collective and Serra Vida Farm. Other project partners include: Berry Brook Farm, CADE, East Brook Community Farm, Morning Glory Farm in the Bronx, and Agrarian Trust.

For 2024, CAA also joined AFT as a Regional Navigator so that we might

better connect farmers and landowners to the resources and information they need to access, transfer, and conserve farmland.



**257-acre
West Branch
Commons founded**

**Property purchased by
American Farmland
Trust to hold until
take-out**

Board formed

**Legal entity in
formation**

**3 farmer tenants
established**

**Welcome Garden
created**



FARM TO INSTITUTION

2023 saw the successful continuation of our two-year tomato sauce project in partnership with SUNY Delhi, Rural Health Network, BT and DCMO BOCES, a group of local farmers, and resident school children. CSA partner farmers grew 11,000 pounds of organic tomatoes and other ingredients. Culinary students at SUNY Delhi and volunteers processed and froze the vegetables. The culinary students developed and taste-tested recipes with the local school kids, then took the winning recipe and produced enough sauce to replace bought-in tomato sauce in twelve school districts with delicious, local, organic sauce.

The twelve schools serve 42,000 local students! Our local CSA drivers carried out the behind-the-scenes logistics and

deliveries. We also grew and lightly processed other vegetables to introduce to the local schools. We are now in the process of absorbing lessons learned and are planning to scale this model of local processing work for nearby Otsego, Schoharie, and Delaware county schools.

We've also managed to enter the school bid system and are regularly delivering our locally grown, organic produce and dry goods to local school districts. We moved over \$100,000 worth of produce and dry goods into our local school systems from local farms in this first year of work. We're working to secure funding that will allow us to introduce more local, fresh food into school backpack programs that send healthy food home with families over the weekends.

We hope to do more work in collaboration with school staff and families around farming, cooking, and the Community Supported Agriculture model in 2024.



MUTUAL AID

Over \$100,000 of local produce and dry goods into local schools

Democratized planning and execution of mutual aid work

Project partners grew, processed, developed recipe, and delivered local tomato sauce for 12 local school districts serving 42,000 children

We believe that mutual aid goes beyond emergency food relief. Our staff develop programs in collaboration with mutual aid partners across the state to support undocumented workers, jail relief programs, labor organizing, and distribution of other non-food essentials. Our program joins these efforts in coalition to build a future where the people are in control of their own food systems. Our partners farm with us, crop plan with us, and guide our programming through biannual summits.

FELLOWSHIPS

FRANCIS YU received the *Community Food Funders Seeding Power* fellowship to begin nine months of movement building and leadership development to advance food justice in our region.

TIANNA KENNEDY was invited to participate in the *National Young Farmers' Land Advocacy Fellowship*. Participants are building momentum to advocate for policy change in the 2024 Farm Bill in order to elevate equitable and affordable land access. In the spring, Kennedy flew to DC to meet with representatives.

EVENTS

FRANCIS YU organized and hosted *Just Food Futures: The Nexus of Climate and Racial Justice*, a half-day presentation and panel discussion as a part of NYU's 2040 Now Initiative. This event made the connection between racial and environmental justice, how these lenses intersect with our food systems, and ultimately the role of food justice and sovereignty in the New York City food shed. This event was produced in partnership with NYU's Environmental and Racial Justice Network.

Executive Director **TIANNA KENNEDY** was invited to participate on the panel for *A Quest to Repurpose Agricultural Support: Benefits & Trade-Offs of Reforming Food System Policies to Achieve an Inclusive, Health-Enhancing, and Environmentally Sustainable Future Food System*, speaking alongside experts representing the FAO, the World Bank, IFPRI, Columbia Climate School.

The panel, a collaboration between the Columbia Climate School and The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), took place during Climate Week in New York and shared concrete examples of transformative change, stressing the importance of political economy reform. Topics included the findings from the Food Systems Economics Commission (FSEC) and the World Bank's recently published Detox Development report, academic research and conclusions focusing on the harmful effects of current agricultural support policies.

Help Us Strengthen Our Local Food System

We work hand-in-glove with local farms while making sure all people are fed. We provide the resilient alternative local logistics that will weather climate volatility, supply chain disruptions and pandemics. Helping to create a thriving agricultural economy is the work that unites a divided political population.

**DONATE TODAY TO HELP US BUILD
A BETTER TOMORROW FOR NEW YORK.**

CATSKILLS AGRARIAN ALLIANCE

THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS & DONORS:

Academy of Learning & Mentoring Services (ALMS)
Agger Fish Transfer
Agrarian Trust
American Farmland Trust
Ann Saxelby Legacy Fund
Berry Brook Farm
Bollinger Foundation
Brooklyn Supported Agriculture
BT BOCES
Bushwick Ayuda Mutua
Center for Agricultural Development & Entrepreneurship (CADE)
Catholic Charities
Center for Less Unpleasant Living
Choy Commons Farms
Community Food Funders

Cornell Food Hub Project/
Participating Food Hubs
CSA Members
Delaware Academy
DCMO BOCES
East Brook Community Farm
Essex Food Hub
Food Issues Group
FRK Maryland Pantry
Glynwood Center
Heart of Dinner
Ho Foods
Iridescent Earth Collective
La Morada
Local Harvest
Market in the Heights
Merrill Foundation
Milford Food Pantry
Morning Glory Farm
Myers Produce

Nhà Minh
NOVO Foundation
National Young Farmers Coalition
NYU Langone
Otsego Community Foundation
Otsego Hunger Coalition Pantries (12)
PACE Law
Participating Farms
Pickup Locations
RaisingHealth (formerly AMPHS)
Red Canary Song
River Haven Farm
Rural Health Network
Schoharie Economic Enterprise Corporation
Send Chinatown Love
Serra Vida Farm

St Ann's Pantry & Soup Kitchen
SUNY Delhi
Trellis Capital L3C
Watershed Agricultural Council
Walton Middle School and High School
Wayside Cider

WHOLESALE PARTNERS:
Closter Farm
Insa
Mother Earth
Roman's
Wen Wen