

# RIVERSIDE FOOD SYSTEMS ALLIANCE 2019 ANNUAL REPORT



## OUR VISION

Riverside Food Systems Alliance (RFSa) coordinates with organizations to build a complete local food system that includes growers, distributors, and consumers for improving our food system. By increasing access and demand for healthy food, our communities will also benefit with improved health outcomes among all segments of the population. The greater Riverside area will benefit economically by more job opportunities and keeping dollars local.

In the coming year RFSa will also focus on shifting from relying on volunteers to staff. We hope you will support us.

## THE FUTURE

The Northside Heritage Meadows Project will bring opportunities to establish an urban agricultural center in Riverside. The Project includes tree and shrub plantings to produce food and mitigate air pollution; trail construction; a community garden; and a Cowork Learning Center with an outdoor pavilion that will host a produce stand; events center; small office and conference spaces; and an incubation farm.

We are “growing” new farmers with the NextGEN Beginner Farmer Training Program. Graduates will have the option to become part of a cadre of new farmers by becoming part of the Northside incubation farm where they will have access to land for growing crops, mentoring, and sharing of equipment.

*RFSa's mission is to cultivate local food and agriculture for a healthier community.*

# 2019 ACHIEVEMENTS

- The 6th GrowRIVERSIDE Conference featured Joel Salatin and his thriving, multi-generational family farm and Javier Zamora, farmer/owner of JSM Organics who is known for his environmentally sustainable fruit and vegetable operation. Over 200 people participated in three conference tracks: urban agribusiness, sustainable farming and community health, food justice and equity.
- RFSA supported low agricultural water rates as part of the City of Riverside's Ag Water Task Force. The Riverside Public Utility Board and Riverside City Council unanimously approved a lower ag water rate.
- RFSA was awarded a \$117,000 Riverside Unified School District contract to conduct Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) training that will help ensure safe food for consumers and safer workplaces for farm workers.
- RFSA was awarded \$60,000 from a Healthy Soils Grant to provide assistance to growers in applying for healthy soils funding. The California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) grant provides for RFSA to help farmers fund their conservation practices that conserve water and sequester carbon, including compost, hedgerows and cover crops.
- RFSA's partner, the Riverside Food Co-op, was funded by CalRecycle to develop a unique Food Rescue and Ambassador Program with the goal of reducing food waste. During 2019, the combined effort diverted 93,172 pounds of food from backyards, restaurants and food manufacturers to feed those in need. Three cohorts of community members trained and certified as Food Ambassadors; they then shared their knowledge with others.



The Riverside Food Co-op formed and started crop box service



Stakeholders developed a Food and Ag Policy Action Plan that was adopted by the Riverside City Council. The RFSA emerged.



Gleaners for Good was launched to harvest backyard fruit, which is then donated.



RFSA administered Market Match funds for local farmers' markets through the Ecology Center.

2012

2014

2015

2016

2017



First annual GrowRIVERSIDE conference. Initiative launched.



*Start-up grants for food system partners to build local capacity:*

USDA Food Hub grant awarded to Riverside Unified School District (RUSD) for \$436K



Invest Health grant from Robert Wood Johnson Foundation awarded to City of Riverside for \$60K



Kaiser Permanente awarded \$50K to RFSA



National Association of Conservation Districts and USDA awarded a \$50K Urban Ag Conservation grant to Riverside-Corona Resource Conservation District (RCRCD)



The Public Relations Society of America, Inland Empire recognized the first *Fresh & Local* guide with a Capella award.

- A third year of Food Hub funding was awarded to RFSa partner Riverside Unified School District (RUSD), which provided for a full-time manager and a driver to expand the food hub's reach. Evaluation of RUSD's Food Distribution Hub pilot project (2017-2019) showed that \$2.9 million California-grown specialty crops were distributed. Twelve local growers supplied food.
- Market Match is a healthy food incentive program that doubles the value of CalFresh purchases at participating farmer's markets, which helps low-income Californians purchase more fresh produce. Again in 2019, RFSa facilitated the local program with direct incentives to SNAP/EBT recipients: \$ 11,942 through market matching and \$8,600 in incentives at four farmer's markets.
- The NextGEN Beginner Farmer Training Program completed its first cohort of farmer training. Through this effort, RFSa developed partnerships with FIELD (Farmworker Institute for Education, Leadership and Development), UCR Extension, and Riverside County Workforce Development. The partnerships make it possible for students to earn a high school diploma, acquire university extension credits and be eligible for workforce development scholarships.
- RFSa's *Fresh and Local* food and ag guide (second edition) was distributed to over 40,000 households, thanks to our sponsors and the developer: Riverside Corona Resource Conservation District. The 48-page guide helps consumers find locally grown produce and provides resources for growers, gardeners and educators.



Riverside Garden Council became a non-profit to assist community gardens



The CA Natural Resources Agency funded a \$3M Urban Greening Grant to the City of Riverside for Northside Heritage Meadows, which will include an Urban Agriculture Education Center.



Riverside County Supervisors' Public Health Champion award

**2017** **2018** **2019**



USDA awarded \$468K to RUSD to support food hub operations.

Ag Water Task Force created to determine appropriate agricultural water rate by RPU; resulted in lowest potable water rate in Southern California to sustain local agriculture.

CDFA funded a Healthy Soils Grant for \$60,000 to assist farmers to prepare conservation grant applications.



The Inland Empire Economic Partnership recognized GrowRIVERSIDE and partners with the Sustainability and Green Development Award.



CalRecycle awarded the City of Riverside and Riverside Food Co-op \$209K to pilot three food rescue and waste prevention programs.



RFSa began a foundational project to educate new farmers and increase access to local foods with collaborations with FIELD, UCR Extension, and Riverside County Workforce Development.



Dear RFSA Community,

Thank you for your participation in creating a resilient urban farming and local food system. Whether you shared a resource, attended one of our events, referred someone, made an introduction, a donation, sponsorship or offered to volunteer, the dividends are pouring back into our community.

Riverside Food Systems Alliance (RFSA) has expanded our network of collaborators, influenced major policy changes and increased food access by closing gaps in our food waste stream and doubling the purchase power for EBT users at farmer's markets. In addition, RFSA played a central role in addressing appropriate agricultural water rate increases. We also helped generate nearly \$4.5 million in contract and grant funding over the past four years.

There's a lot to be excited about. This annual report is a recap of what we accomplished in 2019. There's never been a better time to support local agriculture and a healthy community. The leverage from collective impacts is building community equity. We hope you agree.

Our dedicated volunteers have been building a strong foundation for a resilient food system. In addition to our founding supporters listed on the back, strong relationships have been developed and nurtured this year with the Inland Empire Health Coalition, Riverside

County Nutrition Action Plan, Riverside County Workforce Development Center, Farmworker Institute for Education and Leadership Development (F.I.E.L.D.),

Riverside University Health System, Growing Hope, and UCR Cooperative Extension. We have also added to our network of local farmers, other non-profit organizations, and our local colleges and school districts.

It has become abundantly clear to the RFSA Board, that leveraging these developing relationships and resources, requires paid staff and stable funding. The opportunities before us are far too numerous and complex to attempt managing them with a completely volunteer run organization. For 2020, we are directing our focus on board development and funding to hire the requisite staff to further our impact.

We invite you to continue to be a part of our ongoing story and support the RFSA's ability to continue to develop a robust local food system that will benefit farmers, distributors, and consumers and ensure access to healthy food and minimize food waste. Our efforts will result in a healthy, vibrant local economy and community.

*Susan*

Susan Fahrney, MPH  
RFSA Chair

## THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS

City of Riverside  
Kaiser Permanente  
Riverside Corona Resource Conservation District  
Riverside Unified School District  
Riverside University Health System  
Farmworker Institute for Education, Leadership and Development (FIELD)  
Fox Farm  
The Grove  
American Ag Credit  
Citizens United for Resources and the Environment (CURE)  
Riverside Food Co-op  
UCR Extension  
Cutting Edge Capital  
Nutrition News  
Five Keys Schools and Programs  
Riverside Garden Council

### RFSA BOARD

**Susan Fahrney - Chair**  
MPH, Community Member

**Scott Berndt - Co-Chair**  
Riverside Unified School District and Local Farmer

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Riverside Food Co-op

**Sandy Ramirez**  
Consultant

**Deborah Ghamlouch**  
The Grove - Local Farmer

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Riverside University Health System

**Joyce Jong**  
City of Riverside and Local Farmer

**Patrick Mitchell**  
Five Keys Schools and Programs

**Allison Paap**  
American Ag Credit

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Nutrition News

**Nick Melquiades**  
Riverside Garden Council

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RFSA is a project of Community Partners, a Section 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization.