



Project Showcase 2015

Rhode Island
Local Agriculture
& Seafood Act
Grant Program





Dear Reader,

I am pleased to present the 2015 showcase for projects funded under the Rhode Island Local Agriculture and Seafood Act (LASA) grant program. In partnership with the Rhode Island Food Policy Council (RIFPC), we are proud to offer these grants to support innovation and growth of our local food economy.

Rhode Island is a progressive place where fresh, local food is in demand! Already our food system supports 60,000 jobs, and there is a tremendous energy around building on this strength and accelerating the next wave of food-based economic growth. The businesses and initiatives highlighted throughout this booklet reflect this desire and bolster our ability to expand and diversify locally produced and harvested food.

LASA would not be possible without our many dedicated partners in state government, philanthropy, and private industry. Governor Gina M. Raimondo continues to chart a bold course to move Rhode Island forward and to build a strong and vibrant local food economy. We thank her and other state leaders for their support of the LASA program. We also thank our partners at the Henry P. Kendall Foundation, the van Beuren Charitable Foundation, and the Rhode Island Foundation for matching state funding and working with us to develop the LASA program. And we extend grateful appreciation to the members of the LASA Grants Advisory Committee for lending their expertise and time – as well as to RIFPC for its continued partnership in the design and implementation of this program.

To the 2015 grantees, we salute you! Your vision and determination in growing your businesses and contributing to the economic vitality of our state is inspiring. Thank you. We are proud to showcase and support your extraordinary accomplishments. Congrats!

Janet Coit

*Director, Rhode Island Department
of Environmental Management*





Photo | Richard Howard

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Photos throughout this book courtesy of LASA 2015 Awardees, David Dadekian / Eat Drink RI , Richard Howard / Richard Howard Photography, Karen Petersen / RI DEM Division Of Agriculture, Michele Valliere / Michele-Yvette Photography



Rhode Island Local Agriculture & Seafood Act Grants Program 2015

Overview

The Local Agriculture and Seafood Act Grants Program was established by the Local Agriculture and Seafood Act (LASA) of 2012, with the explicit goal of supporting the growth, development, and marketing of local food and seafood in Rhode Island. Launched in 2014, the LASA Grants Program is co-administered in partnership between the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management's Division of Agriculture and the Rhode Island Food Policy Council, through an application process open to farmers, fishermen/women, nonprofit organizations, and producer groups based in Rhode Island. This unprecedented public-private partnership was made possible by \$100,000 in funding from the State of Rhode Island, and an additional \$130,000 in private funds from the van Beuren Charitable Foundation, the Henry P. Kendall Foundation, and the Rhode Island Foundation.

RI Department of Environmental Management Director Janet Coit assembled a diverse LASA Grants Program Advisory Committee, with representation across the food system, including agriculture, aquaculture, and seafood. The 2015 LASA Grants Program received 73 applications, with grant requests totaling \$1,025,993. The strong response underscores the need for a sustainable funding stream that will continue to support and strengthen the growing and vibrant local food system in Rhode Island.

Members of the 2015 LASA Grants Program Advisory Committee included:

Ken Ayars

*Committee Chair
RI Department of Environmental
Management, Division of Agriculture
Rhode Island Food Policy Council*

Sheila Brush

*Grow Smart Rhode Island
Rhode Island Food Policy Council*

David Dadekian

*Eat Drink RI
Rhode Island Food Policy Council*

Max Greene

Conservation Law Foundation

Phil Larson

Jamestown Aquaculture Movement

Mike McGiveney

Rhode Island Shellfishermen's Association

Jules Opton-Himmel

Walrus and Carpenter Oysters LLC

Kenneth F. Payne

*Rhode Island Agricultural Partnership
Rhode Island Food Policy Council*

Nessa Richman

Brightseed Strategies



African Alliance of Rhode Island

Providence

Awarded: \$17,165



Support for Refugee and Immigrant Urban Farmers

There is a small but thriving agricultural community in Rhode Island comprised of immigrant and refugee farmers from African, Caribbean and Central American nations. This diverse group of urban farmers has worked hard to establish itself in the state, growing produce native to their countries of origin and filling the growing demand among RI's immigrant populations for fresh, locally grown produce. LASA funding will allow the African Alliance of Rhode Island (AARI) to assist these farmers in a variety of ways.



AARI growers participate in the spring/summer Armory Market in Providence (with plans to expand to other summer farmers markets). With LASA support, AARI will establish a permanent presence at the Wintertime Farmers Market in Pawtucket, selling their produce during the fall/winter months to core customers and introducing their unique offerings to new customers. At the Wintertime Farmers Market, AARI will educate consumers about composting and avoiding food waste in conjunction with the "Food: Too Good Waste" program. They will also conduct cooking demonstrations utilizing their native produce.

AARI hopes to attract new farmers to the project, teaching about sustainable agricultural and season extension practices, marketing and selling strategies and management skills. By increasing crop production and expanding the reach of AARI's program, immigrant farmers will be afforded vital job opportunities and will fill an important need for low-income immigrant communities in Rhode Island to find produce that is integral to their native diets.

"These growers bring generations of agricultural knowledge and growing experience. They seek to become established producers of specialty crops that are highly sought by their diverse ethnic communities. These specialty vegetables will enrich Rhode Island's agricultural diversity and bring new, highly nutritional and exciting cuisine choices to markets that serve the general public while improving food security for low-income families in the growers' communities."

— Julius Kolawole, AARI Board President

Big Train Farm

Cranston

Awarded: \$13,000



CSA Expansion to SNAP Recipients

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is a popular program that allows consumers to buy local, seasonal food directly from a farmer. It can also be an integral income supplement for a small farm. John Kenny and Mindy Walls of Big Train Farm, a certified organic vegetable farm located on Urban Edge Farm in Cranston, want to expand their CSA program to low-income families in Rhode Island. As a vehicle for food justice, a CSA provides a great opportunity to offer fresh, delicious and local produce to a population that typically does not have easy access to it.

To expand their CSA program, Big Train Farm needs to purchase the wireless device necessary to process Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) payments. They will also need a larger market vehicle to accommodate additional deliveries. LASA funding will cover the cost of a quality used box truck and the technology needed for SNAP payments.

The LASA grant will also cover the cost of hiring a consultant to establish and build relationships with community leaders in churches, community centers and nonprofits to identify participants for the expanded CSA program. The consultant will also work to educate these new consumers on the benefits of fresh local produce. The long-term hope is that the relationships will last indefinitely and low-income populations in RI will continue to have access to fresh, locally grown vegetables and herbs.



"We will continue to be listening to our membership's wants and desires for particular farm products. It is well understood that poverty disproportionately affects communities of color, including differing immigrant populations, who carry with them a wealth of diverse food cultures. We would be very receptive to hearing these new members' interests about what they would like to see at their CSA pick-up."

— **John Kenny, Co-Owner**

Blue Skys Farm

Cranston

Awarded: \$6,973



Construction of Professional Drying Room

Blue Skys Farm grows chemical-free produce, cut flowers and culinary and medicinal herbs. If the products do not sell fresh, owner Christina Dedora will dry and sell herbs and flowers (and hot peppers!), making dried products a full third of her small farming business. Producing and selling dried crops generates needed income for Blue Skys during the slower growing months.

LASA funding will be used to build a professional drying room inside an existing structure at the farm. Previously, Dedora was hanging herbs, flowers and hot peppers in the barn to dry them, a process that could take up to 3 months to complete, with rainy and humid days delaying the process even further. A professional drying room includes a heater, fans and a dehumidifier, which quickens the drying process from 2-3 months to 2-3 weeks. Not only does this allow the products to be sold much quicker, but it also preserves the quality of the products with better color, flavor, medicinal properties and oil content – better products faster!

Dedora estimates that crop production will increase 50% with the new drying room, and she will hire a staff person to harvest, monitor, process, package and keep inventory of the larger output, which she sells at farmers markets across the state, and through CSAs and Farm Fresh RI's Market Mobile. Blue Skys Farm also collaborates with a handful of small, local businesses, providing them with culinary and medicinal herbs for their own herbal teas and beauty products.

“Building a professional drying room will increase production and sales. Demand on both retail and wholesale levels will be met earlier in the season because of the quicker processing time. In addition, there will be relatively low waste of product. If the crop does not sell fresh, it can be dried and sold later as a value added product which plays a significant factor in increasing revenue of a small scale farm.”

— Christina Dedora, Owner

Providence Healthy Communities Office

Providence

Awarded: \$7,600



Marketing and Outreach Materials

The City of Providence supports urban agriculture through its initiative, Lots of Hope, which converts vacant, city-owned property into urban farms and offers low-cost, long-term leases to urban farmers, particularly those who are economically disadvantaged.

Part of the difficulty for beginning farmers, especially non-English speaking farmers, is understanding and navigating the laws and regulations related to on-site farm sales in Providence. LASA funds will allow the Healthy Communities Office to hire a consultant to collect all relevant information into one comprehensive report called the “Report on Rules, Regulations, and Best Practices for Urban Farm Sales in Providence”. The report will be available in both English and Spanish and will be targeted to community organizations assisting urban farmers. It will include relevant regulations and requirements across all city and state governing bodies in one digestible and accessible document.

The consultant will also produce a more concise and colorful document for urban farmers called “A Farmer’s Guide to On-Site Farm Sales in Providence”. Available in English, Spanish, Hmong and Swahili, this document will summarize key information and will be geared toward community growers interested in starting a small urban farming business.

A portion of the LASA funding will also be used for designing and printing outreach materials for the Prairie Avenue Farm, part of the Lots of Hope initiative, which is located in a neighborhood without adequate access to grocery stores and healthy food.



“In December 2014, the City of Providence passed a new comprehensive zoning ordinance which explicitly permits plant agriculture and on-site farm sales in most zoning districts. While this is a step forward in increasing the viability of urban agriculture, we recognize that small and beginning urban farmers need more than supportive zoning to effectively grow businesses as food producers.”

— Ellen Cynar, Director

Eating with the Ecosystem

Warren

Awarded: \$16,432



Seafood to Food Pantry Pilot Project

Eating with the Ecosystem would like to connect local undervalued seafood to local food pantries in the most beneficial way possible for both Rhode Island fishermen and food insecure Rhode Islanders. With the support of the RI Community Food Bank, EWTE president Sarah Schumann and her colleagues will conduct a pilot project to integrate seafood into the local food pantry distribution system. The current lack of seafood at local food pantries has been due to gaps in infrastructure and logistics, such as a lack of refrigerated or freezer space at food pantries or the lack of relationships with processors able to package seafood in family-sized portions.

LASA funds will test the feasibility of bringing undervalued species of seafood (scup, dogfish, skate, bluefish, sea robin, mackerel, herring and whiting), which are abundant in local waters, to food pantries in accessible family-size portions. The RI Community Food Bank will donate transportation of the seafood to local pantries and conduct community-cooking classes to teach clients how to prepare the local seafood. Forty local food pantries have recently installed freezer space, making storage of the seafood possible. What remains to be explored by this pilot project is: 1) the willingness and capacity of licensed seafood processors in the state to package the seafood in a form that food pantry clients find usable; and 2) whether catching, transporting, processing and packaging the fish to meet this need is cost effective for fishermen and processors.

A part-time Project Coordinator will oversee the entire project, facilitating business connections among fishermen, processors and the RI Community Food Bank. The coordinator will also develop educational handouts, evaluate success and explore future funding models to sustain the project if successful.

“Since the health benefits of seafood are widely recognized, the lack of availability of seafood at food pantries represents a gap in nutritional offerings. Some fish species available for harvest by Rhode Island fishermen suffer from a problem of low prices linked with low local demand. There is an ecological and socioeconomic imperative to improve the local market potential for these species; this would help to sync local consumer demand with the ocean’s changing supply, while supporting our local fishing fleet.”

— Sarah Schumann, President

Elizabeth McDonnell & Michael da Cruz

Providence

Awarded: \$9,464



Artisanal Sea Salt Business

Elizabeth McDonnell and Michael da Cruz have been experimenting with producing sea salt since 2011, when they collected their first buckets of seawater at a Jamestown beach. They discovered that each batch of sea salt they produced had its own unique flavor and mineral content, which varied depending on the collection site, the season and the weather and tidal conditions at the time of collection.

As demand for their locally produced sea salt increased from friends and local restaurants, McDonnell and da Cruz decided to pursue entry into New England's budding sea salt industry. Their vision is an artisanal Rhode Island sea salt that will be sold not only in Rhode Island, but across the country and internationally, with each bottle labeled with its particular RI collection location, date, time, tide and weather to reflect the unique taste of salt harvested from the waters of Narragansett Bay and Block Island Sound. This RI salt will give consumers, restaurateurs and cooks a true local option for this essential ingredient.

LASA funding will allow for purchase of the equipment needed to collect sea water in drums and transfer it to rooftop solar evaporators, which will initially be capable of holding 120 gallons of sea water, yielding up to 100 pounds of salt each month. McDonnell and da Cruz will also hire a RI-based environmental services and testing company with expertise in ground and drinking water to provide detailed analysis of the seawater collected for the purposes of health, education and meeting FDA requirements for out-of-state export.

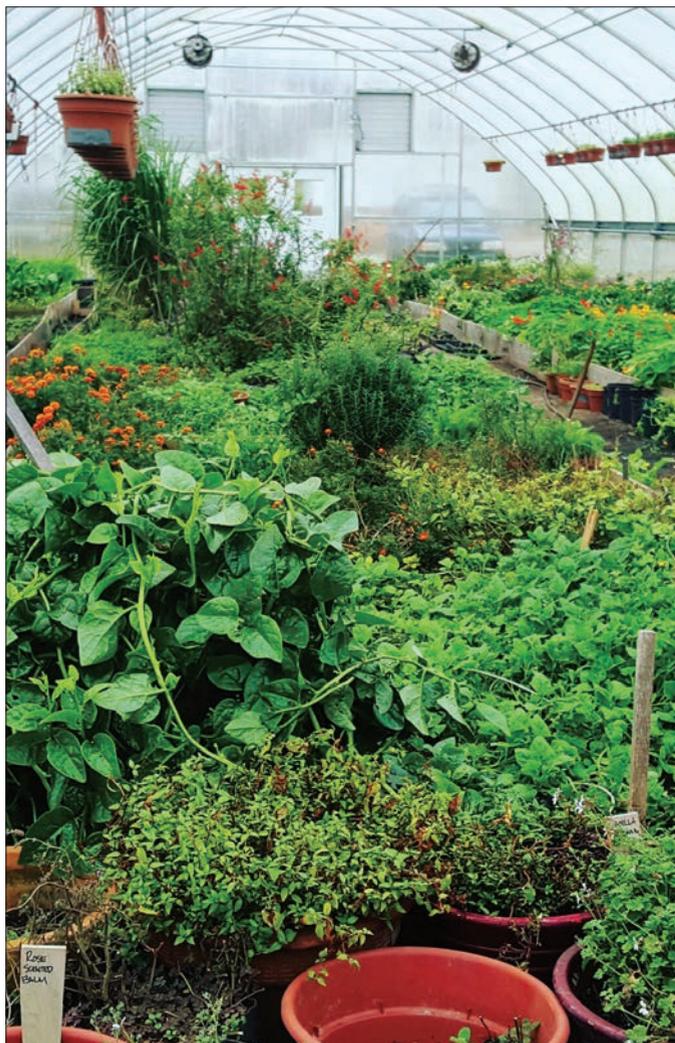
"Over the last four years we have discovered that the waters of the Narragansett Bay produce a sea salt that is both of high quality and of a unique character. We believe, after having provided samples to experienced chefs, restaurateurs and other food professionals, as well as myriad Rhode Islanders, that there is a strong demand for this product were it available in the appropriate volume."

— Elizabeth McDonnell and Michael da Cruz, Partners

Indie Growers

Bristol

Awarded: \$15,442



Solar Heating System

Indie Growers is a chemical-free small farm of less than one acre that produces unique vegetables, greens and herbs. Owner Lee Ann Freitas has found her niche growing unusual specialty items, such as micro garnish mixes and edible blossoms.

Freitas grows in fields during the summer, and in a leased greenhouse year-round in order to maximize income for her small farm. There is also a heated high tunnel on the property, which is used April-November to extend the growing season by a few months, but while the high tunnel is equipped with a propane heater, monthly propane expenses make this option cost-prohibitive during the cold winter months. The solution for Indie Growers is the installation of solar panels and a radiant floor in the existing high tunnel, which will use solar energy in place of propane to provide the necessary heat, a system that has proven extremely effective in Indie Growers' leased greenhouse.

LASA funds will be used for materials for the solar heating system and its installation. Freitas will also collaborate with the Roger Williams University physics department to determine the best location for the solar panels to ensure the highest energy efficiency. The data gathered from temperature measurements and records of winter heating costs and crop outputs throughout the winter growing season will be used in RWU physics classroom projects and shared with other farmers as a successful option for year-round growing, thus providing Rhode Islanders with fresh, locally grown produce every month of the year.

"The overarching goal of this project is to allow Indie Growers to produce its signature micro-greens and other unique specialty items in this high tunnel, to supply to local restaurants and farmers markets, not only in the usual growing season but also through the otherwise dormant months of December, January, February, and March. Adding a solar-heated radiant floor to this small high tunnel will serve as a prototype project for future expansion of Indie Growers business while standing as a quintessential example of sustainable agriculture."

— Lee Ann Freitas, Owner

Ninigret Pond Oyster Farmers

Charlestown

Awarded: \$13,406



Research Study

Six oyster farmers from Ninigret Pond have joined Dr. Michael Rice, a fisheries and aquaculture professor at the University of Rhode Island, to conduct a study that will help determine optimal oyster plantings for healthy crops and sustainable production.

The collaborative consists of Brian Pinsky (401 Oyster Company), Matt Behan (Behan Family Farms), Jules Opton-Himmel (Walrus and Carpenter Oyster Company), Jim Arnoux (East Beach Oyster Farm), Rob Krause (Ninigret Oyster Farm), and Nick Papa (East Beach Oyster Company). URI's Dr. Rice, whose research focus is the environmental physiology and ecology of bivalve mollusks like oysters, will work closely with the team and a graduate student to collect water samples and analyze tidal data to determine the seasonal and tidal variation in oyster food levels from a variety of stocking densities. The study will observe growth and condition index (ratio of meat to shell) of the cultivated oysters and will lead to data that determines optimal pond stocking densities to ensure healthy crops, good growth rates and increased economic success for oyster farmers.

LASA funding will be used to pay the graduate student a stipend and transportation costs, with the Ninigret Pond growers and Dr. Rice volunteering their time and resources to the study. The project design and resulting data will be shared with other growers through the Ocean State Aquaculture Association (OSAA) and Coastal Resource Management Council (CRMC). Study results will support the growth and sustainability of the small aquaculture producers of Ninigret Pond and, more broadly, will inform all RI aquaculture practices with a better understanding of the coastal pond's ecology.

"In recent years there has been a rapid and substantial increase in oyster plantings on leases in a concentrated portion of Ninigret Pond. Farmers have noted decreases in growth rates and increases in mortality on their farms. This study will examine the levels of food depletion and help the farmers establish optimum stocking densities for the six contiguous farms in Ninigret Pond."

— **Matt Behan, Behan Family Farms**

Northern RI Area Health Education Center

Woonsocket

Awarded: \$18,000

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CELEBRATING NATIONAL NUTRITION MONTH, LOCALLY!

HEALTHY FUTURE
In the face of uncertainties from climate change, resource scarcities, and political conflict, a strong New England food system can guard against food shortages.

HEALTHY PLANET
When farmers are invested in their community they are more likely to adopt better stewardship practices, which may improve water, soil, and air quality.

HEALTHY ECONOMY
Purchasing local food keeps money in the local economy and builds community wealth.

Rhode Island Health Care Local Food Challenge
A FRIENDLY COMPETITION TO SUPPORT OUR FARMERS AND FISHERS

What is the RI Health Care Local Food Challenge?
Using a fun and competitive structure, the Rhode Island Health Care Local Foods Challenge is inspiring participating Rhode Island hospitals to support Rhode Island and New England food producers and fishers. The Challenge is a competition for \$1000 in prize money to the hospital deemed the Local Foods Champion. However, no one loses, as all participants will be acknowledged for their great work and the real winners are our communities.

How to Play
To win, participants will compete in a variety of activities that fall under the 3 main goals of the challenge:

- Procurement:** Increase the purchases of local foods by the hospital.
- Education:** Increase the knowledge and awareness of hospital staff and our communities about the value of purchasing local foods.
- Employee Engagement:** Create programs and support activities that increase the access and purchase of local foods by hospital staff.

Eat, Play, Love RI Foods!

- Attend Challenge events!
- Eat local foods in your cafe!
- Sign up for Veggie Box!

Participating hospitals include:
Bradley Hospital, Miriam Hospital, Newport Hospital, Our Lady of Fatima Hospital, Roger Williams Hospital, and South County Hospital.

Project Partners
Health Care Without Harm, is managing the Challenge while utilizing the support of our partners, Farm Fresh Rhode Island and Northern Rhode Island Area Health Education Center.

Supporting Partners

- The Hospital Association of Rhode Island (HARI)
- The Rhode Island Food Policy Council
- The Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management
- Hospitals for a Healthy Environment in Rhode Island

Learn More
Visit: <https://noharm-uscanada.org/RI/LocalFoodChallenge>

HARI nriAHEC

RI Hospital Local Foods Challenge

Rhode Island hospitals are some of the biggest food purchasers in the state. Patients and employees alike would benefit from an increase in local food in hospitals, but there have been challenges to incorporating more local food into their food purchasing systems, from budgetary constraints to inexperience utilizing seasonal produce to lack of motivation to change.

Northern RI Area Health Education Center, in collaboration with Healthcare Without Harm, Farm Fresh RI and Johnson & Wales University, will conduct a contest, the RI Hospital Local Foods Challenge, to try and instill new food purchasing behaviors in hospitals, while supporting the state's food producers and fishermen. The goals are to increase purchases of RI foods by the healthcare sector by facilitating supply chain relationships, educating hospital chefs and purchasers, and promoting RI foods to the community. Three RI hospitals with internally managed food services (Newport, Bradley, and Rhode Island) will take part in the Challenge, with the winner deemed "Rhode Island Local Foods Champion", determined by dollars spent on local foods and promotion of these foods to their communities.

LASA funding will allow Healthcare Without Harm to develop and coordinate the project, including assistance from Farm Fresh RI personnel to educate hospital chefs about FFRI's Market Mobile ordering system for local produce. There will also be educational sessions on the Balanced Menus Program resources to show hospitals how to save money by reducing meat in their menus. JWU personnel will conduct kitchen staff trainings at the hospitals to teach the practice and value of using seasonal, local ingredients in meal preparation.

"Promotional events will include a "Seafood Throwdown", a cooking competition using local foods and underutilized species of fish, a summer BBQ featuring RI-raised meat, and a Food Day/Relish Rhody event in October to celebrate the harvest season. After the conclusion of the Challenge, HCWH will prepare a case study of the effort to share the results and encourage replication in the remaining RI facilities."

— **Linda Andrews, Executive Director**

RI Seafood Marketing Collaborative

Providence

Awarded: \$20,000

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(401)222-6800

Promotion of RI Seafood

Rhode Island's local food sector is often cited as an area of strength that is vital to moving the state forward, and local seafood is poised to spur the next wave of food-based economic growth. The state boasts a robust, active commercial fishery that supports shore-side businesses, processing facilities and thousands of local jobs. Last year, nearly 100 million pounds of seafood were landed at Rhode Island ports – with an ex-vessel value over \$75 million. And the state is increasingly a destination for food tourism.

To help differentiate local seafood in the marketplace and better support local fishermen and distributors in growing their businesses, a new RI Seafood brand was developed by DEM in partnership with the Rhode Island Seafood Marketing Collaborative in 2014. The RI Seafood logo guarantees the seafood was landed in the Ocean State and helps integrate the commercial fishing industry into the state's growing food and tourism economy. In 2015, a marketing campaign to support this new brand was executed, resulting in important business partnerships being forged between local fishermen, seafood distributors and restaurants; coveted editorial placements in news outlets; and features at prominent events such as Newport Restaurant Week, Ocean State Oyster Festival, and the Narragansett Calamari Cook-Off. Promotional materials and equipment – including a branded tent, rackcards, and apparel – were developed in addition to materials for a Dealer's Toolkit; the toolkit is designed to offer valuable information and promotional items to assist new logo users with their marketing efforts. There are now 20 registered users of the RI Seafood logo. www.seafoodri.com.

"A statewide seafood marketing campaign was envisioned as a component of the Local Agriculture and Seafood Act and meant to be complementary with the LASA grant program. Together these initiatives promote locally caught seafood, a vital part of the RI economy, and build sustainability in the local food system. We are, after all, the Ocean State."

— Ken Ayars, Chief, RIDEM Division of Agriculture

RI Shellfishermen's Association

Coventry

Awarded: \$10,700



Shellfishing Apprenticeship Program

The Rhode Island Shellfishermen's Association participated in the creation of the state's Shellfish Management Plan, providing comprehensive policy guidance regarding management and protection measures for shellfish, such as quahogs and oysters, located in state marine waters. A clear concern to the group of plan collaborators, which included multiple state agencies and the URI Coastal Resources Center, was the lack of young people seeking careers as commercial shellfishermen. There is a definite need to attract a younger generation to this important trade.

RISA will create a video, "How to Shellfish," demonstrating the trade, with the goal of assisting and encouraging prospective shellfishermen. The video will highlight current RI fishermen educating viewers on various topics such as buying a boat, obtaining a license, purchasing shellfishing equipment, safety, and product sales.

As part of the effort to recruit new commercial shellfishermen, RISA will set up an apprenticeship program aimed at high school and college students. Interested students will accompany a shellfisherman on two fishing trips for a hands-on educational experience, giving students the opportunity to see what the profession entails and hopefully fostering an interest in it as a career choice. RISA will work with various school systems in RI to promote the apprenticeship program to their students.

LASA funds will be used to produce the video, which will be posted on the RISA website and used for promotional and recruitment purposes, and to compensate the shellfishermen who will serve as mentors in the apprenticeship program.

"Shellfishing is a very difficult trade to learn for those who have not grown up in the business or been mentored properly. The video will help educate those that are not familiar and the outreach to high school students will allow the industry to expand their potential pool of entrants. New entrants in the student category will help keep shellfishing a viable trade by allowing the aging fleet to retire in time, and stabilize the industry to keep it vital into the future."

— **Mike McGiveney, President**

South County Food Co-Op Market & Café

Wakefield

Awarded: \$20,000



South County Farm to Market Initiative

The South County Farm to Market Initiative is a partnership between the South County Food Co-Op Market & Café and the South County Farmers Cooperative, a collection of local farmers that have joined together to expand their farm businesses into new markets and broaden the ways they serve their current customers.

The farmers, operating as Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farms, need to grow their produce, package the produce into CSA portions, and schedule times for pickup by CSA members. Partnering with the Co-Op would allow farmers to use its Wakefield store, with longer hours of operation, as a more convenient and efficient pickup option for their CSA customers. The Co-Op will also make their certified commercial kitchen available to the farmers, giving them a place to make prepared foods, an option previously beyond their reach. In order for the farmers to sell their products directly to the Co-Op, each farmer must have a Wholesale License, and the annual fee is a barrier. A portion of the LASA funding will allow for a subsidized annual fee for eight farmers for the first two years, after which the increased income realized from this partnership will make the fee more affordable.

The Co-Op will use LASA funding to purchase equipment specifically for use by the Farmers Cooperative members – a walk-in cooler for CSA produce storage and a steel prep table for making prepared foods. The goal of this initiative is a mutually beneficial relationship, with a new market and products for local farmers, and increased business and potential new members for the Co-Op.

“This initiative will increase market opportunities for local farmers by allowing them to serve more CSA customers with less labor by utilizing the central location and long operating hours of the Co-Op for their CSA distribution. They will expand their offerings by having access to a certified commercial kitchen to prepare foods for sale...and will gain experience working cooperatively and sharing resources. The South County Food Co-Op will gain regular, reliable, committed local farmers to provide produce for the Co-Op’s Market and Café, and farmers will gain just as reliable an outlet for their produce.”

— **Elizabeth Furcolo, President**

The Local Catch

Charlestown

Awarded: \$13,728



Smoked Fish

The Local Catch owner Richard Cook is adding a smoking operation to his successful business of bringing fresh seafood directly from local fishers to consumers.

Cook will focus on the undervalued, underutilized fish species that are plentiful at the Point Judith docks, such as scup, sea robin, squid and herring. In a pilot program conducted to gauge demand for smoked fish in 2014, The Local Catch contracted with an outside company to smoke a limited amount of locally landed fish. The smoked fish sold well and profitably at farmer's markets across the state, and the positive reaction and demand prompted Cook to consider purchasing his own smoker. His idea was to not only smoke the usual species of fish, but also to concentrate on the fish that are in low demand, but have ample supply in RI. This gives RI fishers another outlet to sell their catch and keep more RI-landed fish in Rhode Island, hopefully setting a precedent for other seafood vendors to follow. If successful, this would push prices for these species higher for the local fishing industry.

While Cook will purchase the smoker from company funds, LASA funding will be used for the accompanying supplies (smoking wood, brining salt, storage bins, sinks, drying carts). The LASA funds will also provide promotional and marketing materials for smoked seafood products, will help in the development of a new line of smoked seafood products and will pay for an employee to be trained in the process of smoking.

"Our goal is to promote and sell local seafood and in doing so, help fishers to stay in business while providing RI consumers with the highest quality product. Fresh seafood has a limited shelf life. We can smoke any fish, extending its saleability as a fresh, non-frozen product by up to a month."

— Richard Cook, Owner

Thundermist Health Center

Warwick

Awarded: \$8,090



SNAP/WIC and Credit Card Access at Farmers Markets

Thundermist Health Center, a community health center serving Woonsocket, West Warwick and South County (Washington County), operates farmers markets at the Woonsocket and West Warwick locations in partnership with Farm Fresh RI.

Thundermist's two farmers markets have credit card access and offer Bonus Bucks, a 40% incentive on all SNAP and WIC purchases. In 2014, Thundermist partnered with the South Kingstown Indoor Market to create and promote a SNAP/WIC and credit card access point for South County residents, and will use their LASA funding to expand that access and incentive program to at least three additional markets in Washington County: Coastal Growers, URI/East Farm and Marina Park.

This project will include educating farmers about SNAP and WIC, and helping those who are not WIC-certified through the certification process in order to accept WIC payments. LASA funds will be used to produce marketing materials and signage to promote the markets to the community at large, and specifically to low-income residents of South County.

The effort is highly collaborative. URI/SNAP-Ed will underwrite postage for a mailing to low-income residents; Thundermist staff and volunteers will donate their time to conduct community outreach and assist at the markets; RI's WIC office will conduct WIC training for farmers to become certified; and South County Hospital and others will provide funding to underwrite the costs of WIC incentives.

"Thundermist expects this project will be directly responsible for increased revenues to local farmer and fishers of no less than \$24,800 in year one. We expect that the one-time LASA investment will pay dividends over the years due to anticipated continued growth in annual revenues."

— **Chuck T. Jones, President and CEO**

Tilted Barn Brewery

Exeter

Awarded: \$20,000



Barn Improvements and Expansion of Hop Production

In 2014, Matt and Kara Richardson founded Tilted Barn Brewery, Rhode Island's first farm brewery. Tilted Barn is a microbrewery located on the Richardson's 30-acre Exeter farm. The brewery uses crops grown on-site, including hops, pumpkins, maple sugar and spruce tips. Initial demand and sales from the brewery convinced the Richardsons to expand this part of their farming business.

LASA funding will assist with improvements to the barn brewery operation and expand the hop yard. While structural improvements have already been made to the barn (which dates back to the 1800's) and a small 300 square foot brewery has been constructed, a portion of LASA funds will cover the cost of expanding the brewery into the remaining space in the barn. Construction will include a hop "oast", where the harvested hops will be dried before being packaged, and the renovated barn will showcase the brewery with construction of a viewing and guided tour area. The remainder of the funds will be used to increase the acreage of the hop yard and install informational signs in the fields, highlighting the crops grown and harvested for the beer and their contribution to the brewing process.

When all improvements are complete, the Richardsons will conduct a workshop during the hop harvest at their farm to educate farmers on the brewing process and the opportunities available to start a farm brewery themselves or grow crops to support the expanding number of craft breweries in Rhode Island.

"The number of craft breweries in New England has been dramatically increasing in recent years. Rhode Island alone has seen nine new breweries in the past three years. The demand for local hops and other locally-grown ingredients used by these craft breweries has also been increasing steadily and far outweighs the supply. RI farms are in a position to greatly benefit from this demand. Farm breweries are becoming a new source of year-round revenue for many New England farms."

— Matt and Kara Richardson, Owners

Wild Harmony Farm

Exeter

Awarded: \$20,000



Insulated Freezer Trailer for Transport

Wild Harmony Farm in Exeter is home to a healthy collection of responsibly raised livestock, including beef cattle, sheep, pigs, chickens and turkeys. Farm Manager Ben Coerper strives to produce the highest quality food while respecting the animals, the land, and the consumers. Wild Harmony Farm sells meat and eggs to the public through Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) shares and at their farm store on the property.

Transporting meat, dairy and seafood requires mechanical refrigeration, particularly for longer distances when simply having the products on ice is not enough. The cost of mobile refrigeration units is prohibitive to small producers but, without it, business is limited to a smaller geographical area. Wild Harmony Farm will use LASA funding to purchase a freezer trailer for the transportation of fresh and frozen meat to and from the farm, and make it available for rent to other farmers and small producers. Access to this vehicle will present more opportunities for Wild Harmony Farm and others to market their products to restaurants and other establishments that were previously too far away.

Coerper has also seen a rise in demand from restaurants for whole animal carcasses instead of individual cuts; transport of whole animal carcasses from USDA slaughterhouses to the restaurants would be impossible without a mobile refrigeration unit. And while Wild Harmony Farm raises their animals following organic principles, they have been unable to obtain USDA organic certification because the nearest organically-certified slaughterhouse is a two-hour drive away. With a freezer trailer, the farm will be able to transport whole carcasses from an organic facility and open up an entirely new Rhode Island-raised, organically certified product line of meats.

"Our long-term goal is to educate about our food system; how supermarket food is being produced and how our food differs. We offer educational tours and work days, primarily for school groups. We believe that informed consumers will prefer locally-sourced and responsibly-raised food, which in turn will benefit our local farming community."

— **Ben Coerper, Farm Manager**





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CHRIS ANN

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LASA 2015 Applicants

The LASA Grants Advisory Committee reviewed an impressive pool of applicants, with over 70 grant proposals submitted for the 2015 LASA Grants Program. The Committee would like to recognize all applicants for their time, energy and engagement in this process.

Albert Brando

Narragansett

Single axle tractor to grow new produce business

American Mussel Harvesters, Inc.

North Kingstown

Marketing materials for promotion of Blue Gold Mussels

Anthony Ponte

Wakefield

Fishing net for targeted fish species

Aquidneck Land Trust/Island Commons

Middletown

A comprehensive food plan for Aquidneck Island

Barbara Pelletier

Tiverton

Promotional signage for Tiverton and Little Compton farmers/fishers

Bella Farms

Johnston

Cultivation tractor and other start-up equipment

Brown Family Seafood

West Kingston

Renovation of current space to support more sales

Candace Clavin

Barrington

Equipment to extract essential oils from specialty herbs and produce

Caserta Productions

Cranston

Production of promotional videos on RI fishing industry

Charles Chase

Coventry

Well and equipment for hydroponic lettuce business

Christopher Babcock

Wakefield

Tractor for growing gourmet local garlic

Christopher Gomes

North Smithfield

Construction of greenhouse

Coggeshall Farm Museum

Bristol

Restoration of working organic orchards

Commercial Fisheries Research Foundation

Saunderstown

"Understanding Wild Caught RI Seafood" educational project

David Zoglio/Joseph Paliotti

Providence

Update of greenhouses at Classical and Hope High Schools

Dawn Brooks-Rapp/Mark Rapp

Little Compton

Construction of compost-heated greenhouse

Erika Lamb

Providence

Food recovery pilot program using imperfect produce

Fish 'n Tales Adventure

Newport

Educational materials promoting RI lobster industry

Groundwork Providence

Providence

Equipment for developing Prairie Avenue Farm into a working urban community farm

Hillandale Farm/AYERS Foundation

Westerly

Refrigerated delivery truck for transporting perishable farm products

Hope and Main

Warren

Local Food Expo series to facilitate connections between food producers and purchasers

House of Hope Community Development Corp.

Warwick

Creation of a community shelter garden at Harrington Hall

Legend's Creek

Foster

Purchase of 8 beehives and honey extractor

Leyden Farm Vineyard and Winery

West Greenwich

Construction of a greenhouse to extend growing season

Little River Farm

Exeter

Construction of a greenhouse and low tunnels to extend growing season

Lucayda Farm

Saunderstown

Construction of a farmstand and associated marketing materials

Luckyfoot Ranch

Charlestown

Construction of a cool room for produce storage

Makayla Martel

Wakefield

Equipment for starting a hops farm

Marc Renaghan

Charlestown

Construction materials for starting a hops farm

Mark Goerner

Jamestown

Equipment for cultivating a quality half shell oyster

Melanie J. White

Shannock

Construction of a greenhouse and low tunnels to extend growing season

New England Farm and Food Fund

Pawtucket

Construction of a storage cooler for Ocean Breeze Farm

New England Grass Fed

Hope Valley

Start-up costs for the "Home Meat Rabbit Project"

New Urban Farmers

Pawtucket

Well-house and solar irrigation system for Warren farmland

Niche Microgreens Farm

East Providence

Updates to current greenhouse and retail equipment

Northeast Organic Farming Association of RI

Chepachet

Expansion of three current specialty crop programs

Ocean State Oyster Festival

Providence

Festival to showcase RI's oyster industry

Pickin Rock Produce

Little Compton

Roller crimper for "No-Till" farming

**Radio Newport/Arts and Cultural Alliance of Newport
Newport**

Radio program/podcast series featuring local farms

Red Planet Vegetable Farm

Johnston

Farm improvements to improve efficiency

Renewable Resources, Inc.

Hopkinton

Construction of a small-scale prototype aquaponics system

RI Farm Bureau

West Greenwich

Research into best ways to connect farmers and institutions for food purchases

RI Fruit Growers Association

Cumberland

Development of an enhanced website and online data management tool

RI Maple Syrup Producers' Association

Ashaway

Production of a Best Management Practices manual for RI maple syrup producers

RI Public Health Institute

Providence

Equipment for the expansion of "Rhody Food on the Move" initiative

RI Shellfishermen's Association

Coventry

Production of a PSA teaching safe handling practices for hard clams

Ryan Martins

Rumford

Start-up costs for a new business making Kombucha from fresh local vegetables

Sakonnet Farm

Little Compton

Equipment for expansion of broiler chicken production and processing

Snake Den Farm

Johnston

Development of a farmer cooperative through professional development opportunities

Southside Community Land Trust/Providence

Urban Farmers Network

Providence

Farm improvements at Urban Edge Farm





Stephen Ramos

Bristol

Purchase of specialty fruit trees and farm equipment

Stephen Ramos

Bristol

Purchase of furnace to heat a year-round greenhouse

Steve Crandall

Westerly

Equipment to expand oyster production

The Worm Ladies of Charlestown

Charlestown

Start-up costs for a new vermiculture grower and marketing cooperative

The Worm Ladies of Charlestown

Charlestown

Start-up costs for a sustainable vermiculture program at RI College

WaterFire Providence

Providence

Development of new food event promoting RI seafood and produce

Westbay Community Action

Warwick

Equipment/staff to increase access to fresh produce for low income and disabled seniors

Zephyr Farm

Cranston

Construction of a vegetable processing workspace



The **Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management** is committed to preserving the quality of Rhode Island’s environment, maintaining the health and safety of its residents, and protecting the natural systems upon which life depends. Together with many partners, we offer assistance to individuals, business and municipalities, conduct research, find solutions, and enforce laws created to protect the environment. www.dem.ri.gov



The **Rhode Island Food Policy Council** envisions a day when Rhode Island’s food system will be a national model because of the strength of its local food system and its success at achieving community food security and optimal public health. We envision a Rhode Island where safe, nutritious and culturally appropriate food is accessible and affordable in every Rhode Island community and in which an increasing proportion of the state’s food supply is raised, caught, and processed locally. www.rifoodcouncil.org

