Amidst it all, 2020 offered glimpses of what is possible, of all that we are capable of when we work TOGETHER. Since March, we have seen our communities’ power and the bold ways we are creatively re-imagining what could be. From activating an emergency local food network and adapting our mobile and traditional farmers’ markets, to shifting all our workshops and events to virtual platforms - at every level, there are reasons for hope and gratitude.

Since March, 2020 has been a year of change in so many ways, and you will see that change in the approach to this report, too. Throughout these pages, we hope you can see and feel our immense gratitude for each other, our team, who were able to be so resilient, quickly adapting our services by learning new skills, while facing the challenges of the pandemic in our personal lives; our program participants, who continued to show up and be present at our virtual meetings, at the community garden, and the farmers’ markets, keeping the community alive amidst a year of increased solitude; our BIPOC farmers, who endured through unique challenges and continued to feed our communities with dignity and pride; for the outpouring generosity from our volunteers and donors who stepped up their support in such a challenging time and allowed Fresh Approach to be the organization that our communities need us to be in this moment - and into the future.

Together, we are resilient.

- Laura deTar
Executive Director
Our staff at Fresh Approach had long-existing and meaningful relationships with Maria for years. As the Fresh Approach team was amidst pivoting programs to meet the challenges of COVID with new strategies and protocols, the negative impacts of the pandemic on our local food systems began to emerge first amongst our most vulnerable populations: our farmers and food access program participants.

By the end of March, Maria Catalan of Catalan Farms had lost 80% of her sales outlets and had laid off all but a handful of her farmworkers. It became clear that farmers like Maria that operate as small, immigrant-owned farms, were the most vulnerable during times of crisis because they lack the capacity that many of the industrialized food system players hold.

Our food access efforts started with purchasing excess produce from Catalan Farms and finding new distribution outlets. With some strategic planning, and securing grants from emergency relief grants and contracts, our team created an Emergency Food Relief Network that served food-insecure populations in seven counties in the Bay Area with fresh food from our regional farmers.

By Fall, our communities were faced again with uncertainty as devastating wildfires impacted our farms and residents throughout the Bay Area. With many families displaced and farmers rushing to harvest what crops they could, we leveraged our Emergency Food Relief Network to purchase harvested produce, assemble and distribute prepared meals to households impacted by the wildfires.

Maria’s business not only survived through the crisis, but the revenue from the emergency food project has allowed her to re-hire all her farmworkers. Furthermore, being able to feed the communities who needed it the most has given Maria and other farmers like her a renewed sense of purpose from their hard work.

The flow of emergency food relief across the Bay Area that Fresh Approach was able to activate has not only created a pathway of survival during these unprecedented times, but also paved a way for a more equitable, inclusive, and resilient food system.

The community figured out how to collaborate stronger by merging efforts in response to the pandemic and wildfires.

Moving forward, our collective efforts serve as a model for community organizing, greater connectivity within our local food system, and positive impact for vulnerable communities during times of crisis.

Isabel Medina
South Bay Food Access Program Manager
at Fresh Approach
I am thankful that Fresh Approach had already started a plan toward equity and inclusion. It speaks volumes of the heart and passion that’s behind every staff member, as we all collectively work toward a more equitable food system.

- Nina Campbell

FRESH APPROACH EDUCATION COORDINATOR
TOGETHER, WE RISE AGAINST RACISM

Racism is against everything we stand for as an organization, as a community, and as individuals who strive wholeheartedly for more inclusivity and diversity.

As a historically white-led organization, our board and staff members acknowledge that even organizations such as ours are not immune from exacerbating institutional racial inequality.

We hear the call that Black Lives Matter, and we rise to the challenge of mobilizing in solidarity with our BIPOC community.

Since 2018, Fresh Approach has been on a journey to become a radically inclusive and anti-racist organization through structural changes in how we operate internally.

Our Antiracism Journey

2018
- Develop our core organizational values.
- Start monthly Staff Consciousness Meetings to provide a safe space for conversations about values, diversity, and inclusion.

2019-20
- Correct staff compensation inequities and increase opportunities for leadership roles.
- Launch Community Ambassador Program
- Develop a road map to guide and track our progress towards diversity, inclusion, and equity.

2020
- Promote equity-oriented and anti-racism training for staff and Board Members.
- Plan our first Community Advisory Board.

Launch Community Ambassador Program

Develop a road map to guide and track our progress towards diversity, inclusion, and equity.

Correct staff compensation inequities and increase opportunities for leadership roles.

Develop our core organizational values.

Start monthly Staff Consciousness Meetings to provide a safe space for conversations about values, diversity, and inclusion.

Promote equity-oriented and anti-racism training for staff and Board Members.

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Develop a road map to guide and track our progress towards diversity, inclusion, and equity.

As a historically white-led organization, our board and staff members acknowledge that even organizations such as ours are not immune from exacerbating institutional racial inequality.

Since 2018, Fresh Approach has been on a journey to become a radically inclusive and anti-racist organization through structural changes in how we operate internally.
In August 2020, the CZU Lightning Complex Fire reached our farm. Although we did not suffer major losses, our lives and farm were changed dramatically. We fought re-surging spot fires. We had no water, nor power. We were in an evacuation area, unable to exit without being denied re-entry. It was in the crucial days and weeks after the fire first hit the farm that we were left feeling grateful for not losing our crops nor our homes, but also overwhelmed by the inability to carry on our operation and sell the produce we had worked so hard to grow.

Thanks to Fresh Approach, we were able to supply large volumes of our produce to be prepared as meals for evacuees and first responders. As we protected our farm and our home, we were nourished with these hot meals made from our own produce. Despite the aftermath of the fire, what was truly felt was solidarity and resilience.

- Verónica Mazariegos-Anastassiou
FARMER, OWNER OF BRISA RANCH
PESCADERO, CA
TOGETHER, WE UNITE IN RESPONSE TO EMERGENCY

As a response to the pandemic, we expanded our food access work by partnering with local farms and community-based organizations to form an Emergency Food Network.

Collectively, we sourced from over 50 local and BIPOC farmers and delivered over 110,000 boxes filled with fresh produce to food-insecure populations. Boxes included recipes, food waste prevention techniques, ways to eat healthy on a budget, and information about using government benefits at farmers’ markets.

During the CZU Lighting Wildfires, we leveraged our established network to coordinate the distribution of 23,330 meals made from locally grown produce. Meals were distributed to individuals and families who were displaced by wildfires.

We are immensely grateful for the following partners who helped ensure more than 3 million dollars were spent with local farms for emergency food relief: Agricultural Institute of Marin (AIM), Frog Hollow Farm, Gil Tract Farm, Off the Grid, Pie Ranch, Sanzuma, Spade & Plow, The Edible Schoolyard Project, The Urban Edge Farm, and Veggielution. The success of our Emergency Food Network Project clearly shows that goals of hunger relief and supporting the local food system can be achieved in concert.

- Ellen Olack
  Fresh Approach Food Access Manager

"The fact that fresh produce is making it to the people who need it the most has brought even more meaning to what I do.

- Veronica Mazariagos-Anstassiou
  Founder & Owner, Brisa de Ano Ranch

"It was so fulfilling to connect our amazing farmers to community members greatly affected by Covid-19. Everyone was so grateful to have such high-quality, local produce delivered straight to their door.

- Ellen Olack
  Fresh Approach Food Access Manager

110,000 BOXES
of locally grown fruits and vegetables distributed to food insecure households.

9 FOOD HUBS
activated to aggregate, pack, and deliver emergency food boxes.

50 Community Based Orgs
mobilized to distributed food boxes to food insecure households.

>$3 million PAID
to regional farmers and food producers.


As an 80-year old single person, I am relieved to be able to make my produce purchases in the open air.
- Mobile Farmers’ Market Shopper

This market keeps my business alive. We’re going forward and everything is going to be okay.
- Gilbert Castillello Farm at the East Palo Alto Community Farmers’ Market

Despite the challenges of the shelter-in-place mandate, the Mobile Farmers’ Market has operated as an essential business. Throughout 2020, we continued to offer **50% discounts to low-income customers** that receive federal benefits such as CalFresh, WIC, SSI/SSDI, Medi-Cal and began offering the discount to customers who are receiving Unemployment Benefits (Expanded Match program).

The East Palo Alto Community Farmers’ Market moved to a new location generously offered by The Bloomhouse community center. The larger site allowed us to **better meet the safety criteria and social distancing guidelines**. The market continued to offer up to **$10/household/day** to customers receiving federal benefits or self-identified as food insecure, and up to **$20/household/day to customers with CalFresh benefits** (Market Match program).

We deepened our partnership with the Richmond Certified Farmers’ Market and began accepting CalFresh, as well as offering the Market Match program.

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TOGETHER, WE INCREASE FOOD ACCESS FOR ALL

**$80,974 PRODUCE DISTRIBUTED** through the Market Match and Expanded Match programs

**83.19% LOW INCOME**
Shoppers at Mobile Farmers’ Market, a 13.57% increase from 2019

**60.2% INCREASE IN AVERAGE SALES**
dollars spent at our Mobile Farmers’ Market and Farmers’ Markets.

**$26,994 in CalFresh**
dollars spent at our Mobile Farmers’ Market and Farmers’ Markets.

**$80,974 PRODUCE DISTRIBUTED**

**Shoppers at Mobile Farmers’ Market, a 13.57% increase from 2019**

**60.2% INCREASE IN AVERAGE SALES**
dollars spent at our Mobile Farmers’ Market and Farmers’ Markets.

**$26,994 in CalFresh**
dollars spent at our Mobile Farmers’ Market and Farmers’ Markets.
“Fresh Approach makes farm fresh food more affordable. I would not be able to get the fruits and vegetables I buy without the discount.”

- Mobile Farmers’ Market shopper

“I’ve actually lost weight now that I’m not eating fast food, and I’m loving the veggies because they taste so much better than the grocery stores and it’s safer with Shelter in Place.”

- Mobile Farmers’ Market shopper
My family and I have thoroughly enjoyed learning about nutrition and have been looking forward to visiting our local farmers’ market every Thursday. My daughters have been eating more local fruits and veggies from the farmers’ market since we started this program. I lost my job a couple of months ago and this program has been helping me put food on the table.

- Nina Campbell
Fresh Approach Education Coordinator

As a response to the current crisis, most of our education programming shifted to online platforms. The online curriculum has covered the same topics as the in-person classes but also adapted to include a trauma-informed approach to help participants cope with COVID-19’s disruptions and better tackle food insecurity.

With the transition to virtual programs, we needed to address the technology barriers that existed for many of the communities we were trying to reach. As our Education team worked through those challenges, we noticed that through online and self-paced classes with flexible timing we significantly grew the reach of our classes - both in the number of participants and geography served.

Our participants have adapted well to virtual meeting spaces, whether it’s participating in Zoom online classes, watching Facebook and Instagram live videos, or utilizing phone calls with our nutritionist team. There was so much interest in our virtual meeting spaces that we hosted a very well-attended End-of-the-Year Event with participants, volunteers, and donors to foster socializing and community building.

When COVID-19 challenged our means of in-person facilitation, our team was able to recognize and welcome our participants’ present circumstances, and foster bonding over their personal health journeys. Ultimately we were able to build this same sense of physical community and beyond within the virtual space.

- Nina Campbell
Fresh Approach Education Coordinator

644 participants learned to cook healthy, fresh produce on a budget through the virtual VeggieRx classes

98% participants said the program made them feel more comfortable preparing healthy meals at home

80% increase in daily consumption of fruit and vegetables after program completion.

$36,794 in VeggieRx Fruit and Vegetable Vouchers distributed to class participants to shop at nearly 100 local farmers’ markets.
During the pandemic, the garden has held a unique space for individuals to seek solace and shelter from social isolation, restrictions, and anything else beyond their control.

In 2020, we continued to safely operate the Collective Roots Community Garden program in East Palo Alto. We offered online gardening workshops, and small in-person volunteer opportunities with the adoption of safety protocols resumed in September. We mailed seed packets to gardeners who needed to start their garden. We gave away seedlings at the East Palo Alto Community Farmers’ Market once the season resumed.

Our Community Compost Hub in East Palo Alto grew in popularity amidst the pandemic. Through this hub, food scraps were collected from residents and then composted at our community garden.

Residents were incentivized to participate in the project by receiving VeggieRx vouchers to purchase fresh produce at the farmers’ market.

With the help of our Community Ambassador, volunteers, and interns, we transformed food waste into high quality compost for gardeners throughout East Palo Alto.

When I have a problem, I come to my garden and my mind is at ease. I focus on my garden and think about what I am doing well and what I need to change to make it better.

- Hilda Martinez
Collective Roots Community Gardener

I saw the spark in people to start growing their own gardens more than ever before. It was so exciting to see seeds and seedlings spread all over the East Palo Alto community.

- Najha Al-Asmar
Community Gardens Program Manager

Collective Roots Community Garden

69 GARDENERS
served through our Collective Roots Community Garden programs.

3 TONS FOOD WASTE
diverted from landfills and converted into 600 lbs. of usable compost.

476 COMPOST DROP OFFS
by participating Community Compost Hub members in East Palo Alto.

$1,904 VOUCHERS
distributed to Community Compost Hub members to shop at local farmers’ markets.
When working to promote equity and inclusion, decision-making and resources to community members matters. Our organization focuses on recruiting and empowering participants who are already connected to the communities we serve.

THE TRAIN-THE-TRAINER PROJECT

In 2020, we developed a virtual Train-the-Trainer program, which has equipped AmeriCorps Members with the skills, tools, and knowledge to facilitate our VeggieRx program at various Lifelong Medical Care clinics in the East Bay. Investing in the Train-the-Trainer program has allowed us to significantly scale up the reach of our education programming far beyond what Fresh Approach’s staff alone can achieve.

THE COMMUNITY AMBASSADOR PROJECT

In 2020, two community ambassadors joined the Fresh Approach team, Sherry Flamer and Towanna Turner. Our Community Ambassadors helped sustain the Community Compost Hub, nutrition education, and food access programming.

CREATING A COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD

In 2020, the team began planning the first Community Advisory Board (CAB). CAB is intended to be a safe space created for community members, primarily BIPOC, to work together to dismantle the current oppressive systems through regular collaboration. Fresh Approach will support CAB members in creating their own community-led solutions to address the racial inequities in the food system.

CAB members will help the improvement of Fresh Approach’s programs to make sure they are accurately reflecting the needs and desires of our BIPOC community members.

I feel a stronger sense of belonging in the community since becoming a Community Ambassador.

Conducting Community Ambassador trainings helped me realize that I do have things to offer, and I can help educate people. It showed me how receptive people can be, and helped boost confidence levels within myself.

Towanna Turner
Community Ambassador
San Pablo, CA

The South Bay programs team, their Community Ambassador, and intern at the East Palo Alto Community Farmers’ Market.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT INITIATIVES

115 VOLUNTEERS
a 48% reduction from 2019

2 COMMUNITY AMBASSADORS
in Richmond and East Palo Alto.

1,749 HOURS
completed by volunteers

15 INTERNS
a 50% increase from 2019
2020
AT A GLANCE

50,000 community members served
7 Counties served
110,000 boxes delivered to food-insecure households
1,300,000 pounds of produce
6,500,000 servings of fresh fruits & vegetables
$2,050,855 produce purchased from local farms

94 days operating Mobile Farmers’ Markets
126 days Virtual Nutrition Education Classes
27 days operating East Palo Alto Farmers’ Market
27,000 coupons distributed to CalFresh and Market Match recipients
2020 FINANCIALS

TOTAL REVENUE $3,603,646

TOTAL EXPENSES $3,326,904

PROGRAM EXPENSES $2,728,984

*ALL 2020 FINANCIALS ARE AWAITING AUDIT
A Year Unlike Any Other

We are grateful for all of the supporters who joined us in responding to the COVID-19 crisis. And we are proud that with the funding we received we were also able to provide a pillar of support for our partner organizations and farmers. While we won’t miss 2020, we will carry forward the many lessons of resiliency and empowerment it provided.

TRANFORMATION PARTNERS: $200,000+
San Mateo County Office of Sustainability, California Department of Food and Agriculture, United States Department of Agriculture

RESILIENCE PARTNERS: $100,000 - $199,999
Wallace Alexander Gerbode Foundation, El Camino Health Care District, Growing the Table, Sunlight Giving, Kaiser Permanente Community Benefits Program

EMPOWERMENT PARTNERS: $50,000 - $99,999
The Health Trust, Chan Zuckerberg Initiative, Lucille Packard Children’s Hospital

CHANGE PARTNERS: $25,000 - $49,999
City of Berkeley, City of Oakland, John Muir Health Foundation, David and Lucile Packard Foundation, Peninsula Health Care District, Silicon Valley Community Foundation

HOPE PARTNERS: $5,000 - $24,999
2020

STAFF & BOARD

STAFF MEMBERS
Andrea Abundiz
Najiha Al-Asmar
Shelby Bustria
Yeun Byun
Lizette Calderon
Nina Campbell
Raffaella Cerruti
Vera Cordova Mendoza
Laura Detar
Stephanie Flores

Samiha Hamdi
Danielle Hamilton
Andie Kolbeck
Isabel Medina
Ellen Olack
Andy Oloove
Ana Pereda
Betsy Rosales Avalos
Rubie Simonsen
Christopher St. Pierre

BOARD MEMBERS
Patrick Fabian
Christina Stork
Janet Venturino
Allen J. Moy
Lucy Norris
When life gives you lemons, distribute them.

At the beginning of pandemic, in talking with our colleagues at Fresh Approach, we realized that we could join efforts to address the new and pressing challenges faced by our local farmers and households in our communities. We had the packing and distribution infrastructure, relationships with farmers, and Fresh Approach had long standing partnerships with organizations that served communities experiencing food insecurity. Together, we leveraged philanthropic support, and later public funding, to be both hunger relief for urban residents and economic stimulus for local farmers (especially farmers of color).

In August of last year, when the fires ripped through our coastal farming community, our partnership with Fresh Approach combined with a third partner, Off the Grid, allowed us to transform locally grown produce into prepared meals.

We are grateful to Fresh Approach for being such a solid partner. It is clear that these relationships are critical for future disasters. When we work together, we are more resilient in the face of future disruptions to a globalized food system.

- Jered Lawson
Co-Founder at Pie Ranch