



*“I love getting fresh vegetables out to so many people, including elders and children. It’s about much more than providing food for meals, it’s about helping people and communities to stay healthy. And these people are more than just my neighbors, they are my family.”*

YASSER, 23, DUDLEY FARM WORKER, DORCHESTER RESIDENT, NORTHEASTERN STUDENT



THIS FALL, YOUTH AND STAFF SPREAD

100  
TONS OF GRAVEL AND

360  
CUBIC YARDS OF SOIL IN PREPARATION FOR A NEW FARM IN LYNN!



Wenham and Lincoln farmers grew food for

200 CSA members



Photos by: Greig Cranna, Alex Pogany, Julia Preszler, and The Food Project.



## ON THE HORIZON

Despite fraught times, we are ever hopeful—planting seeds of change that will grow a more vibrant future. We broke ground for a new farm at Lynn Vocational Technical Institute; our new partners are opening doors for even more creative collaborations; and young people continue to turn to The Food Project, despite obstacles, to dig in for lasting change. Join us in nurturing a compassionate, thoughtful, and abundant tomorrow.

WWW.THEFOODPROJECT.ORG



The Food Project  
10 Lewis Street Lincoln, MA 01773

NON-PROFIT ORG.  
US POSTAGE  
PAID  
PERMIT NO. 53098  
BOSTON, MA





# THE *field* REPORT

THE FOOD PROJECT • [WWW.THEFOODPROJECT.ORG](http://WWW.THEFOODPROJECT.ORG) • FALL 2020



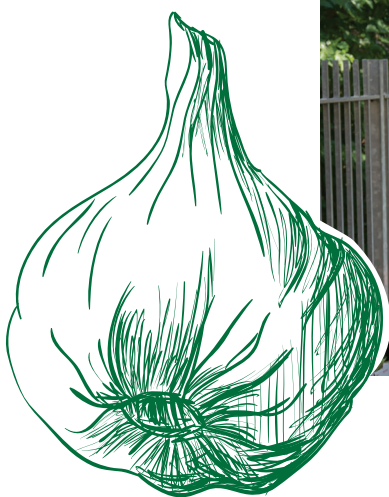
*“There’s a literal and emotional groundedness that comes from working on the land, in the soil. Although the world is reeling around us, with each vegetable we plant, we build our relationship with this earth and with each other.”*

YUN-YUN, LINCOLN ASSISTANT GROWER

## DEAR FRIEND,

As it was for so many of you, 2020 was an incredibly challenging year for The Food Project. Despite the struggles, we found moments of hope, resilience, and fortitude. Our community—all of you—rose to the occasion. Thanks to a wealth of support, we were able to muster our resources and quickly launch a Covid-19 response in late April that we called Farming for Resilience. The commitment that we made in April remains the same as we enter the final few weeks of the 2020 season: we will grow as much food as possible and get it to those who need it the most.

Youth, staff, and partners alike met rapid changes with extraordinary flexibility and determination. When we transitioned to virtual programming in March, teenagers in our youth crews adapted immediately, staying connected and active. When we sought new food distribution channels, our robust network of community partners responded, and we were able to get fruits and vegetables to more families in need. When our farmers faced unrelenting heat and drought, combined with an early frost, they dug in with grit and optimism, keeping the needs of our communities in the forefront of their minds.



### THE FOOD PROJECT HARVESTED

*150,000 pounds of produce this season and distributed 80,000 pounds (240,000 servings) to low-income households.*



We are pleased to share the results of these efforts and hope that this report will provide you with some optimism for what lies ahead after this difficult time. We *can* make this world a more vibrant, healthy, and connected place, as long as we remain resilient together.

With gratitude,

Anne Hayes  
Executive Director



# YOUTH



26

DIRT CREW  
MEMBERS



BUILT

14



RAISED-BED  
GARDENS FOR  
LOCAL FAMILIES  
LAST FALL

*"I love learning about the history of our farms. The West Cottage Farm was built on the site of an abandoned apartment complex. It's amazing how the Dudley community worked together to make their neighborhood a more beautiful place."*

ZANIAB G., 16,  
BOXBOROUGH, SPROUT  
CREW MEMBER



## SEED CREW

In early February, we were thrilled by the record number of applications for our summer Seed Crew program. Three months, and what felt like a lifetime later, we made the difficult decision to cancel the program—for the first time in 30 years—to protect the health and safety of our youth and staff. Our small-but-mighty farm crews deeply missed the enthusiasm, energy, and hands-on efforts that Seed Crew brings to the land on a typical summer.

## DIRT CREW

In the fall and winter of 2019/2020, 26 youth employed in Dirt Crew built 14 raised-bed gardens for local neighbors; spent 162 hours leading volunteer groups in farming projects; and offered 372 hours of direct service to hunger relief partners. These young people, many of whom had never set foot on a farm just four months prior, stepped into leadership roles as they engaged local community members in conversations related to food justice. The youth finished out the year virtually, and completed the 2020 session in May.

## ROOT CREW

In the fall and winter of 2019/2020, 20 Root Crew youth (our most experienced) worked closely with community organizations, Dudley Grows and Lynn Grows, to find solutions for the inequities in our food system. In the spring and summer of 2020, Root Crew transitioned to virtual projects that included video production, campaigns to increase community awareness of food access resources, and youth crew program development. 20 Root Crew members returned to the Food Project this fall to help with the harvest, mentor their peers, and build 40 raised-bed gardens for local families.

## SPROUT CREW

In September 2020, we launched our first ever Sprout Crew: a "hybrid" Seed/Dirt youth crew model composed of 11 teenagers on the North Shore and 12 youth in Greater Boston, selected from our pool of Seed Crew applicants. Sprout Crew members are growing fluent in the language of equity, sustainability, and food justice through safe, hands-on farmwork and virtual workshops.

# FOOD



60%  
of The Food Project's  
farmers' markets  
sales were transacted  
via federal, state, or  
local food assistance  
benefits.



Dudley Grows Open House, Winter 2020.



*“With record unemployment, lost wages, and many having little-to-no savings to protect them from the economic impact of Covid-19, food insecurity [in Massachusetts] has skyrocketed from 8.4% of households, to 16.6% of households as of July 2020.”* PROJECT BREAD

## FARMS

The Food Project grew 150,000 pounds (450,000 servings!) of produce on 70 acres of farmland located in cities and suburbs of Greater Boston and the North Shore. To compensate for the manpower of the 1,000 plus volunteers and 100 plus youth that could not safely work on the farms this summer, we shifted seven staff members to farm roles and hired 32 young adult farm workers (many of whom are recent alumni). Together we grew as much food as possible, while honoring our commitment to sustainable practices.

## FOOD DISTRIBUTION

The Food Project distributed 80,000 pounds of vegetables (over 240,000 servings) to low-income households with the help of 20 local partners, expanding our reach beyond Dorchester, Roxbury, Acton, and Lynn to include Chelsea, East Boston, Malden, and other locations in and around Boston. Regional Directors John Wang and Maritza Rosario forged 10 new distribution partnerships in the spring of 2020 to address the Covid-19 food security crisis.

## DUDLEY GREENHOUSE

The Dudley Greenhouse remained a cornerstone of community growth, despite the pandemic. In 2020, 64 residents used the greenhouse to grow produce for their families and local organizations of their choice. Due to social distance precautions, The Food Project farm staff took on the care of many of the plants in the spring,

sending photos to the growers to mark the progress of their “babies.” The Dudley Greenhouse donated an additional 10,000 seedlings—grown in our Dudley Greenhouse—to urban farming groups in Boston.

## FARMERS’ MARKETS

We’ve never seen a year like 2020 at our farmers’ markets, which have always been geared toward getting fresh, local produce to people at food access prices. We had record sales at our Dudley Market. A 67% increase from 2019, we brought in \$25,000, with 68% of market produce purchased via federal, state, and local benefits, such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Healthy Incentives Program (HIP), and farmers’ market coupons. In Lynn, we tripled our mobile market farmers’ market presence to a total of 11 sites and 60 market events—serving seniors and others with mobility challenges.

## COMMUNITY SUPPORTED AGRICULTURE

The Food Project’s Wenham and Lincoln farmers grew food for 200 CSA members. CSA members consistently reported how grateful they were for the opportunity to connect with the land from which their food grew, especially during these fraught times.



## DUDLEY GROWS AND LYNN GROWS

The work of building truly sustainable food systems extends beyond the process of growing food and getting it to those who need it most. Sustainable food systems are forged through lasting coalitions of people dedicated to growing vibrant, equitable communities—from the inside out. The Dudley Grows and Lynn Grows partnerships represent just that—residents, business owners, and government officials offering up ingenuity, passion, and diverse perspectives in service of healthy, green, connected cities. In the winter of 2020, approximately 200 people attended our two Dudley Grows open houses and Lynn Grows Year-One Celebration.

*“It’s been so great to be a part of a community-led process to build a better food system in Lynn. While it took two years of food assessments, listening sessions, recruiting residents, relationship building, and developing a vision and set of priorities, the Lynn Grows Year-One Celebration showed what perseverance can lead to. It was a place of celebrating dozens of accomplishments, eating delicious food together, building solidarity, and taking a big step towards building that better food system together.”*

JOHN WANG, THE FOOD PROJECT’S NORTH SHORE REGIONAL DIRECTOR, FEBRUARY 2020

## JUSTICE, EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION

Racial and social equity has always been core to the Food Project’s mission. In the fall of 2019, The Food Project created the Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) Committee to double down on our commitment to the ideals out of which The Food Project was born, nearly 30 years ago. The work of this committee—which includes nine staff members (four of whom are members of the Executive Leadership Team) is as relevant as ever, especially in light of our nation’s recent reckoning with personal and systemic racism. The JEDI committee is mapping our plan to ensure that our foundational principles are truly reflected in our language, our operations, our relationships, and our work. We are both auditing our current practices and designing actionable steps, including extensive staff training.

COMMUNITY

