



community
involved in sustaining
agriculture

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact:

3/31/20

Philip Korman, Executive Director
413-665-7100, ext. 13

phil@buylocalfood.org

Margaret Christie, Special Projects Director
413-665-7100, ext. 23
margaret@buylocalfood.org

CISA Emergency Farm Fund now open

Loans available for farms affected by COVID-19

CISA (Community Involved in Sustaining Agriculture), in collaboration with the FCCDC (Franklin County Community Development Corporation) and the PVGrows Investment Fund, announced today that its revolving Emergency Farm Fund is reopening on April 1st to aid Pioneer Valley farms that have been affected by COVID-19.

This new collaboration will enable the Emergency Farm Fund to offer no-interest loans up to \$25,000, and the first application period will be open until April 13, 2020. Application information can be found at buylocalfood.org. A second round of lending is expected in May.

Spring is always a vulnerable time of year for farms: expenses begin to pile up and most income is still months away. This year, as sales outlets including restaurants, colleges, and winter farmers' markets have closed to limit the spread of coronavirus, many local farms have seen a sharp downturn in much-needed income. Meanwhile, farms have invested significant time and resources to ensure that they meet new guidelines related to sanitation and food safety, and to develop new sales systems including online ordering, home delivery, and curbside pickup.

"We've seen amazing adaptability from our local farmers in response to this crisis. They've pivoted quickly so they can keep offering healthy, local food to our communities. But the loss of income that many of them have suffered is threatening their ability to stay viable at the most precarious time of the year," says Philip Korman, CISA's Executive Director. "We hope these loans will offer farmers options for bridging financial gaps caused by COVID-19."

This round of lending is possible thanks to resounding community support, including \$5,000 each from River Valley Co-op and the Beveridge Family Foundation, and a new partnership. CISA raised \$100,000 for the Fund in just ten days, and the FCCDC has stepped up to increase the total available funds to \$300,000 with available capital from the PVGrows Investment Fund, which provides financing to farm and local food businesses through community investments available capital from the PVGrows Investment Fund,

"The PVGrows Investment Fund, which is managed by the FCCDC, exists to enhance the economic sustainability and vitality of the Pioneer Valley food system. We saw an urgent need to provide extra support to local farms during this crisis, and combining forces with CISA will enable the Emergency

Loan Fund to offer larger loans to more farmers," says John Waite, Executive Director of the FCCDC.

"During the COVID-19 public health emergency, Massachusetts farmers continue to work hard to provide residents with fresh, healthy food, but they need support as they face these new challenges," said John Lebeaux, Commissioner of the Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources. "CISA's Emergency Farm Fund is a great example of how the community can step up during these very difficult times to help sustain and fill an important gap in the safety net for the farms that feed us.

The CISA Emergency Farm Fund was launched in 2011 in response to the damage suffered by farms in western Massachusetts due to Hurricane Irene. This is the first time in the Fund's history that CISA has opened it in response to a non weather-related crisis.

The Fund is managed by CISA, and loans above \$5,000 will be administered by the FCCDC. The Loan Review Committee includes people with a variety of agricultural backgrounds, including farmers, CISA staff and board members, and representatives from the FCCDC, PVGrows Investment Fund, Massachusetts Department of Agricultural Resources, and Equity Trust.

CISA is a nationally recognized organization of farmers, community members, and advocates working together to strengthen farms and engage the community to build the local food economy. Working in western Massachusetts and the region for over 25 years, CISA offers technical assistance to farmers, works to make local food more accessible to more people, and runs the nation's oldest agricultural "buy local" campaign - "Be a Local Hero, Buy Locally Grown®." Find out more about our work at buylocalfood.org or call 413-665-7100.

CISA is an equal opportunity provider.

###