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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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**ASAP Launches Appalachian Grown Farmer Relief Fund**

*Donations will provide emergency assistance to farms and farmers markets*

**ASHEVILLE, NC (April 9, 2020)**—ASAP has launched the Appalachian Grown Farmer Relief Fund to strategically address the emergency needs of farms during COVID-19 disruptions. Funds will be used for public health preparedness grants to farmers markets, to subsidize essential farm product packaging, and to purchase unsold food for donation to hunger programs. Donations to the Appalachian Grown Farmer Relief Fund can be made online at [asapconnections.org](http://asapconnections.org) or by mail or phone.

In a recent survey of farmers about the effects of the COVID-19 emergency, conducted by ASAP's Local Food Research Center, eighty percent of respondents reported an immediate decrease in customers and sales. Two thirds reported that, if disruptions persist for several months, the long-term financial hardship would be severe enough to result in bankruptcy, business closure, and leaving the industry. The full report is available at [asapconnections.org](http://asapconnections.org).

"Farmers need our support," said ASAP executive director Charlie Jackson. "This fund and grant program will immediately provide direct assistance to address the most pressing needs of farmers and markets at this critical time."

Farmers' need for safe packaging materials have increased as they respond to public health imperatives and new market models. Packaging materials such as wax boxes and bags will be made available to farms to help ease the increased expense of meeting new market demands.

Farmers markets are one of the region's key sales outlets for farmers, as well as important food access points, and have been critically impacted. ASAP is providing emergency grants of up to \$200 each to farmers markets in the region to implement public health procedures, such as signage, caution tape, traffic cones, sanitizer, hand washing systems, masks, gloves, and packaging materials and labels for farm products. Appalachian Grown farmers markets may apply at [asapconnections.org](http://asapconnections.org).

Finally, ASAP will make connections between community organizations working to alleviate hunger and farms that have unsold, perishable products. As funds are available, ASAP will help to cover the cost of these products so that food does not go to waste and farms have much needed income.

Read about other ways ASAP is responding to the COVID-19 emergency at [asapconnections.org](http://asapconnections.org).

*[High-resolution photos available. Contact Sarah Hart at [sarah@asapconnections.org](mailto:sarah@asapconnections.org).]*

**ABOUT ASAP (APPALACHIAN SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE PROJECT)**

ASAP's mission is to help local farms thrive, link farmers to markets and supporters, and build healthy communities through connections to local food. To learn more, visit [asapconnections.org](http://asapconnections.org).

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