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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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ASAP Announces Immediate Needs Grants for Farmers

Grants will help farmers quickly respond to added costs caused by COVID-19

ASHEVILLE, NC (April 22, 2020)—ASAP has established a new grant program for farmers experiencing lost income and added expenses due to COVID-19. Farmers are facing unexpected costs in reaching new sales outlets with the closure of restaurants and reduction or cancellation of farmers markets. In response, ASAP has raised funds and initiated the Appalachian Grown Farmer Immediate Needs Grants, which will provide quick and much-needed support. Farmers who sell locally may apply at asapconnections.org for grants of up to \$500.

“For many farmers, this is a critical time,” said ASAP’s Executive Director Charlie Jackson. “Farms have crops in the ground and no place to sell. This is make or break time for many of them.”

Restrictions implemented to slow the spread of COVID-19 have caused major disruptions for farmers. ASAP estimates that \$16 million in restaurant and farmers market sales is impacted by the public health restrictions in WNC alone. Farms in the Appalachian Grown region served by ASAP are rapidly pivoting business plans and processes to adapt to the new market environment. Moving quickly is paramount, as farms have perishable products and limited alternatives for sales. Many farms have immediate needs where modest investments, such as updating technology to allow for online sales or purchasing essential packaging materials, will allow them to meet new market requirements.

“Farmers are resilient and creative and with some help they will figure out how to get what they grow to the people who want to eat it,” said Jackson. “We all depend on farms and they need us too. An investment in our farmers is an investment in our community.”

Priority will be given to farmers who 1) face a significant loss or disruption of market outlets due to COVID-19, 2) depend on the farm business for more than fifty percent of their household income, and 3) plan to use funds to help shift their farm business to new models or adjust to new market requirements. Nonprofits are not eligible to apply at this time.

Support for the Appalachian Grown Farmer Immediate Needs Grants comes from the Appalachian Grown Farmer Relief Fund. Donations to the fund may be made at asapconnections.org.

[High-resolution photos available. Contact Sarah Hart at 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.

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