



2023 ANNUAL REPORT



DEAR FRIENDS OF RAFI,



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Roots!

2023 was marked by incredible milestones that we are excited to share with you.

We launched Living Roots, a farmer-focused magazine that shares resources with farmers and highlights their stories. Each triannual issue is available digitally or in print. We also successfully revamped our case management and tracking system, which is enabling us to serve farmers more effectively.

One of our proudest achievements is the role we played in drafting four important marker bills that can shape the upcoming Farm Bill to be more equitable for small- and mid-scale farmers, such as the *Fair Credit for Farmers Act*. Plus the *Strengthening Local Meat Economies Act* could redirect USDA funds to generate \$300 million for local ranchers and meat processors.

Two new vital programs took shape in 2023. We launched our partnership with the sustainable agriculture certifier A Greener World to promote regenerative farming practices and equitable markets for underserved producers, and began planning for the launch of Gaining New Ground, a new project for historically underserved farmers in NC, FL, US Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico.

Throughout 2023, staff and board worked together to revise and update our strategic plan. This three-year roadmap focuses on the urgent issues we face today, builds upon the achievements of our previous plan, and makes thoughtful adjustments to reflect our deepening commitment to climate-focused initiatives. The plan also reinforces our ongoing dedication to equity and strengthening farm viability. Additionally, it highlights RAFI's role as an intermediary funder and facilitator for underrepresented farmers and their organizations who are doing impactful work, but are not able to leverage funding or visibility to scale up.

With growth comes challenges, but your unwavering trust in our mission and generous support continue to be the pillars of our success. RAFI is more prepared than ever to transform our food system.

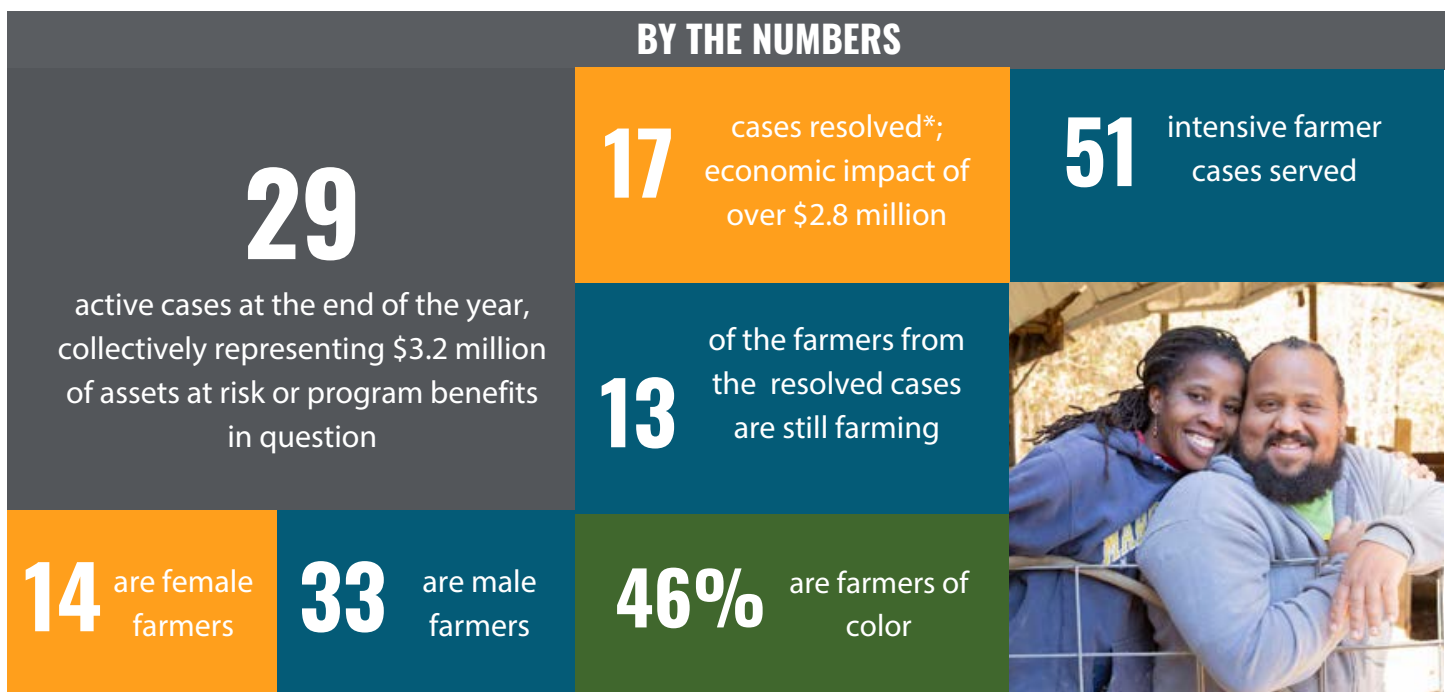
Edna Rodriguez, Executive Director



Farm Advocacy

In 2023 we achieved the long-needed expansion of our Farm Advocacy team by hiring a new full-time Farm Advocate to train with long-time RAFI expert Benny Bunting. An important part of work this year was providing information to farmers and helping them apply for the assistance available through Sections 22006 and 22007 of the Inflation Reduction Act. 22006 was for distressed borrowers with certain types of Farm Service Agency (FSA) loans, and 22007 was for farmers who experienced discrimination in USDA Farm Loan Programs before January 2021. We were also able to share our expertise with FSA regarding how to implement the programs for the greatest benefit while avoiding unintended consequences.

The development of the *Fair Credit for Farmers Act*, as well as many of RAFI's other policy efforts, is informed by our Farm Advocacy casework.



*A farmer can have more than one Farm Advocacy case.

WHY THE FARM BILL MATTERS

"I am a farm owner and operator in Vacherie, LA. My farm is impacted adversely by climate change. Crop yields have diminished due to hurricanes, drought, and floods. Food insecurity and hunger are directly related to climate change and can be addressed in the Farm Bill. I want to see it support farmer-centered research, provide incentives for on-farm conservation, and expand the local agriculture market for farmers. The Farm Bill can help make family-owned farms more sustainable and improve food access in food insecure communities." —[Leroy Conish, Farmer, Vacherie, LA](#)

Farmers of Color Netowrk

Throughout 2023, RAFI's Farmers of Color Network (FOCN) nearly tripled in size from 340 to 816 members, a surge largely fueled by alliances with key partners in the U.S. Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico.

Our focus this year was on enhancing the value of FOCN membership by offering more benefits such as educational webinars, in-person events, community-building opportunities, and corporate discounts. FOCN staff organized a successful two-day Georgia Mini-Conference in the metro Atlanta area focusing on urban farming. Participants enjoyed farm tours, a resource rodeo, and a lively social gathering. Other popular events were an educational Tunnel-Raising Event at Fairport Farms, NC, and a Mississippi Farmer Field Day.

New this year, alongside our infrastructure grant fund, we opened three more granting opportunities: Beginning Farmers stipends, Caribbean Farmers fund, and Capacity-building training stipends.

BY THE NUMBERS

400

attendees convened for
5 informational webinars

200

farmer attendees at 5
field days

21

farm visits conducted

15

partner events and
conferences attended
by RAFI staff

On February 27, 2023, 31 volunteers gathered at Elvin Eaton's Fairpoint Farms to help with a high tunnel build and learn new skills. Seeing the community come together and build the high tunnel was deeply emotional for Elvin.



“More people came than expected. It was more than gratifying. I can’t even express my appreciation... I would love to have enough high tunnels out there to teach, especially young people, that this is something you can do to feed your family and community.”

-Farmer Elvin Eaton, Fairpoint Farms

Come to The Table

2023 was a busy year for the Come to the Table (CTTT) staff. The team hosted regional gatherings, produced the guidebook “The Land Cries Out – A Guide to Racial Land Loss in the US,” held the second and third cohorts of the School for Food Justice, Faith, and Storytelling (SFJFS), met with farmers and church members, and presented at many conferences and events. It seemed as though every week one CTTT team member or another was out and about around North Carolina — and sometimes beyond. The team also started planning for the biennial 2024 CTTT Conference (to be held September 30-October 1, 2024), which will be the first in-person conference since 2019.

The School for Food Justice, Faith, and Storytelling

The School for Food Justice, Faith, and Storytelling (SFJFS) brings together faith leaders to learn, grow, and sharpen their abilities to offer new and creative solutions to the issue of hunger within their communities. The cohort centers on the power of story for good or bad and features weekly discussions about how stories and narratives hold power over our beliefs about people experiencing hunger.

In 2023, there were two cohorts with a combined 83 faith leaders participating. Here is some of what cohort folks said:

“Our time together has made me look at food totally different.”

“Our communities are shaped by stories that sometimes disempower as well as empower. We need to assess the stories we tell and listen to.”

“SFJFS has helped me recenter my work around food insecurity and help me think critically about how it informs my work and action.”

BY THE NUMBERS

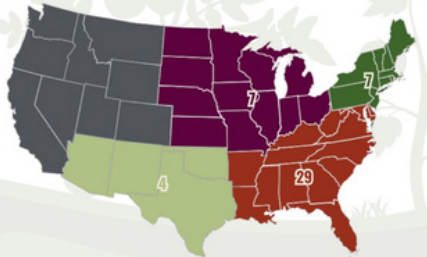
12

farmers in the Farm and Faith Partnerships CSA program saw a combined \$117,985 of income

SCHOOL FOR FAITH, FOOD JUSTICE, AND STORYTELLING

PARTICIPANT LOCATIONS 2023 COHORT

COME TO THE TABLE



5

events were held with 129 attendees

26

external speaking engagements by CTTT

87.5%

of SFJFS participants reported gaining new and useful resources

\$40,000

in small grants awarded to six rural United Methodist Churches to support direct purchasing of fresh produce from farmers of color

Policy / Challenging Corporate Power

Much of the 2023 work of RAFI's Policy and Challenging Corporate Power programs was centered on listening to stakeholders and working within coalitions to craft RAFI's Farm Bill platform. The platform includes four planks: reversing the trend of corporate consolidation, fighting climate change, giving all farmers a fair shot, and supporting local/regional food system infrastructure. While 2023 was not a year of Farm Bill passage, it was still a year of intensive Farm Bill advocacy.

RAFI was an integral part of the drafting and introduction of several marker bills and evaluated others for endorsement and support. We built an online marker bill tracker to help partners and digital advocates keep track of our legislative priorities.

FAIR CREDIT FOR FARMERS ACT

RAFI also drove the drafting, bill introduction, and advocacy for the *Fair Credit for Farmers Act* in partnership with the National Family Farm Coalition, and in collaboration with Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand's (D-NY) office. RAFI hosted or attended briefings for congressional offices, recruited organizational sign-ons, created summary materials, and sent out action alerts. And with Rep. Alma Adams' (D-NC) office, we organized two congressional briefings on the *Fair Credit for Farmers Act*, where 20 congressional staffers heard two farmers anonymously share stories of their experience with FSA.



ABOVE: Dayna Rivera, of the Cooperativa Organica, Madre Tierra, PR; Karen Lawrence of Southwest Georgia Project; and RAFI's Carolina Alzate Gouzy prepare for congressional visits in Washington, D.C.

CLIMATE AND EQUITY PROJECT

In March, RAFI organized a delegation of 33 advocates to participate in the Farmers for Climate Action: Rally for Resilience in Washington, DC. We organized a lobby training and supported 16 lobby visits. About two-thirds of attendees were lobbying for the first time, and 87% of those surveyed said they were interested in lobbying again. Our advisory committee also announced the second round of 24 grantee awards.

STRENGTHENING LOCAL MEAT ECONOMIES ACT

In collaboration with Sen. John Fetterman's (D-PA) office, RAFI wrote the *Strengthening Local Meat Economies Act*, which if passed would require USDA over four years to redirect more than \$300 million in meat procurement contracts from dominant corporate meatpackers like JBS to local meat processors that serve independent ranchers. RAFI also hosted four current or former poultry growers for 12 congressional office visits to advocate in defense of the USDA's Packers and Stockyards rulemaking process.

BY THE NUMBERS

101

congressional meetings
attended or supported by RAFI
staff

1,396

Policy Action Network members
made 9,820 legislator connections
via 17 action alerts

44

stakeholder comments
supported stronger FTC/DOJ
Merger Guidelines submitted to
the Federal Register



Just Foods

Since 2009, RAFI's Just Foods program has focused on regionally adapted seed work, supporting small- and mid-scale farmers. This initiative aims to diversify farm production and market opportunities while enhancing ecological assets for future generations. Our current projects include the Southern Farmers Seed Cooperative and NC Seed Stewards.



NC Seed Stewards is a collaboration with the Farmers of Color Network and the N.C. Botanical Garden that drives efforts to increase native wildflower seed production. Three farmers are growing four varieties, which were selected for criteria such as appeal to the general public for marketability, ease of harvesting and cleaning, and how well they work in a wildflower mix. The Southern Farmers Seed Co-op is, to our knowledge, the only cooperative of growers who are producing Southeast-adapted, non-GMO organic commodity seed for market. 2,700 bushels of four varieties of organic soybeans were produced, marketed, and sold for the 2023 growing season.

Resources for Resilient Farms

Many USDA programs and funding opportunities are available to help farmers develop or grow their operations. However, historically, these resources have been tailored primarily for large-scale, commodity farmers, making them less accessible to all farmers. This is especially true for farmers who produce on a small- to mid-scale, produce specialty crops, or are beginning farmers or farmers of color. Resources for Resilient Farms provides plain-language information, farmer trainings, and one-on-one assistance for USDA programs. Working with various partners in the mainland and Caribbean territories this year, RAFI has helped farmers with applying for Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) funding, Farm Service Agency (FSA) loans, Emergency Relief Program (ERP) Phase 2 funding, and access to support for implementing climate-smart farming practices.



MacArthur (Mac) Epps grows hay and vegetables in Hinds County, Mississippi. He also serves as the CEO of Mississippi Move, a non-profit coalition that advocates for students and people under the age of 25. Epps connected with Otis Wright to discuss applying for a FSA Ownership Loan to expand his hay production business through the purchase of additional farmland and equipment. Wright helped Epps develop a business plan, complete the FSA loan paperwork, and joined Epps' meetings with his loan officer. *“Otis was very hands-on and he made it simple. He taught me a lot and connected me with the folks I needed.”*

BY THE NUMBERS

118

farmers successfully applied for NRCS programs

415

farmers received individualized technical assistance

238

farmers submitted climate-smart project interests forms

595

attended 9 webinars

363

attended 12 events

“So many organizations get USDA funding to support small farmers and it doesn’t ever benefit us. But RAFI does what it says it’s going to do.”

-GA farmer who received NRCS Technical Assistance

Audited Financial Statements

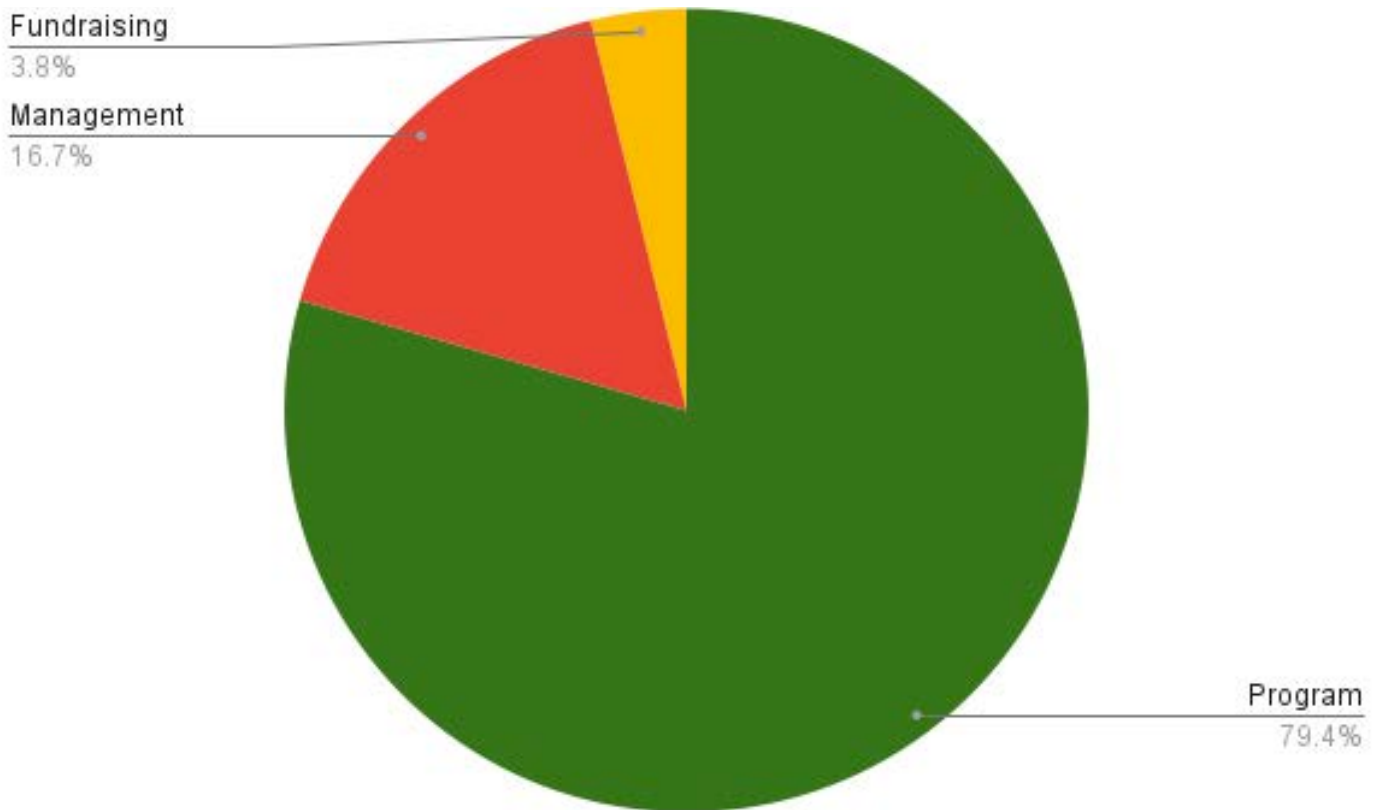
STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION - DECEMBER 31, 2023 AND 2022

LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS			ASSETS		
	2023	2022		2023	2022
CURRENT LIABILITIES:			CURRENT ASSETS:		
Accounts payable and accrued expenses	\$ 148,209	\$ 174,825	Cash and cash equivalents	\$ 1,784,288	\$ 2,015,142
Accrued wages and benefits	94,989	79,317	Grants and contracts receivable, current portion	1,498,890	852,304
Deferred revenue	35,000	-	Other receivables	1,615	13,013
Notes payable, current portion	21,484	101,622	Investments	30,516	6,540
Operating lease liability, current	1,520	3,491	Prepaid expenses	90,762	13,553
TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES	301,202	359,255	TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS	3,406,071	2,900,552
LONG-TERM LIABILITIES:			PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT:		
Security deposit	150	150	Land	168,229	168,229
Notes payable, noncurrent portion	85,907	25,294	Building	913,420	913,420
Operating lease liability, net of current portion	-	1,520	Building improvements	51,079	12,709
TOTAL LONG-TERM LIABILITIES	86,057	26,964	Office equipment	6,723	6,724
TOTAL LIABILITIES	387,259	386,219	Computer equipment	3,197	1,600
NET ASSETS:				1,142,648	1,102,682
Without donor restrictions	1,894,285	1,851,180	Less: accumulated depreciation	(547,016)	(517,481)
With donor restrictions	2,022,732	1,743,625	NET PROPERTY AND EQUIPMENT	595,632	585,201
TOTAL NET ASSETS	3,917,017	3,594,805	OTHER ASSETS:		
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS	\$ 4,304,276	\$ 3,981,024	Grants and contracts receivable, net of current portion	283,553	454,373
			Security deposits	17,500	35,887
			Right of use asset - operating leases	1,520	5,011
			TOTAL OTHER ASSETS	302,573	495,271
			TOTAL ASSETS	\$ 4,304,276	\$ 3,981,024

STATEMENT OF ACTIVITIES AND CHANGES IN NET ASSETS

	2023			2022
	Without Donor Restrictions	With Donor Restrictions	Total	Total
SUPPORT AND REVENUE:				
Private foundations	\$ 823,900	\$ 1,573,645	\$ 2,397,545	\$ 1,303,481
Government grants and contracts	1,130,826	-	1,130,826	775,317
Individual contributions	121,652	31,816	153,468	167,303
Member dues	-	49,670	49,670	161,393
Other income	5,621	-	5,621	11,851
Net investment income	21,251	-	21,251	909
	2,103,250	1,655,131	3,758,381	2,420,254
Net assets released from restrictions	1,376,024	(1,376,024)	-	-
TOTAL SUPPORT AND REVENUE	3,479,274	279,107	3,758,381	2,420,254
EXPENSES:				
Program services:				
Program services	2,664,438	-	2,664,438	2,205,433
Fiscal sponsorships	64,339	-	64,339	425,183
Total program services	2,728,777	-	2,728,777	2,630,616
Supporting services:				
Management and general	575,307	-	575,307	425,253
Fundraising	132,085	-	132,085	128,352
Total supporting services	707,392	-	707,392	553,605
TOTAL FUNCTIONAL EXPENSES	3,436,169	-	3,436,169	3,184,221
CHANGES IN NET ASSETS	43,105	279,107	322,212	(763,967)
NET ASSETS - BEGINNING OF YEAR	1,851,180	1,743,625	3,594,805	4,358,772
NET ASSETS - END OF YEAR	\$ 1,894,285	\$ 2,022,732	\$ 3,917,017	\$ 3,594,805

FUNCTIONAL EXPENSES 2023



Thank you to our generous financial supporters!

We extend our heartfelt thanks to our generous financial supporters, who make RAFI's vital work possible. Our initiatives are funded by a diverse group of donors ranging from individuals, businesses, and faith communities. Their consistent support has contributed to RAFI's impressive 59% donor retention rate. We are also grateful to the more than 26 foundations and federal agencies that have provided grants to RAFI.

Committed to transparency, ethical accounting, and responsible stewardship of donations, we are pleased to have earned the 2023 Platinum GuideStar Exchange Seal, and the eighth consecutive 4-star rating from Charity Navigator.



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FOUNDATION INTERNATIONAL-USA

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