




Making Farm to Food Bank Programs Work

Elisa Gonzalez, Ph.D.

Panelists: Jenna Umbriac, Megan Joe, and Indhu Balasubramaniam

A person wearing a black and white striped long-sleeved shirt is holding two ears of yellow corn with green husks. The person's hands are visible, and the corn is held in front of their chest. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

Today's Takeaways

- **Strategy to address food insecurity and strengthen local food economy**
- **Experience from food assistance and farm partners**
- **Farm to Food Bank Fulfillment Process**
- **Lessons learned to expand impact**



Agenda

The Problem

Farm to Food Bank Programs

Partner Experience #1

Partner Experience #2

Q&A



Welcome

Your Host & Practitioner



Elisa Gonzalez, Ph.D.
Associate
Community Science

Your Panel



Jenna Umbriac
Director of Programs
Manna Food Center
Montgomery County,
MD



Megan Joe
Operations Director
Hunger Relief Program
Montgomery County, MD



Indhu Balasubramaniam
Farmer
Amaranth Acres
Montgomery County, MD

Community Science

Effective Strategies. Equitable Systems. Strong Communities.

Community Science is an award-winning research and development organization that works with governments, foundations, and non-profit organizations on solutions to social problems through community and other systems changes fostering learning and improved capacity for social change.



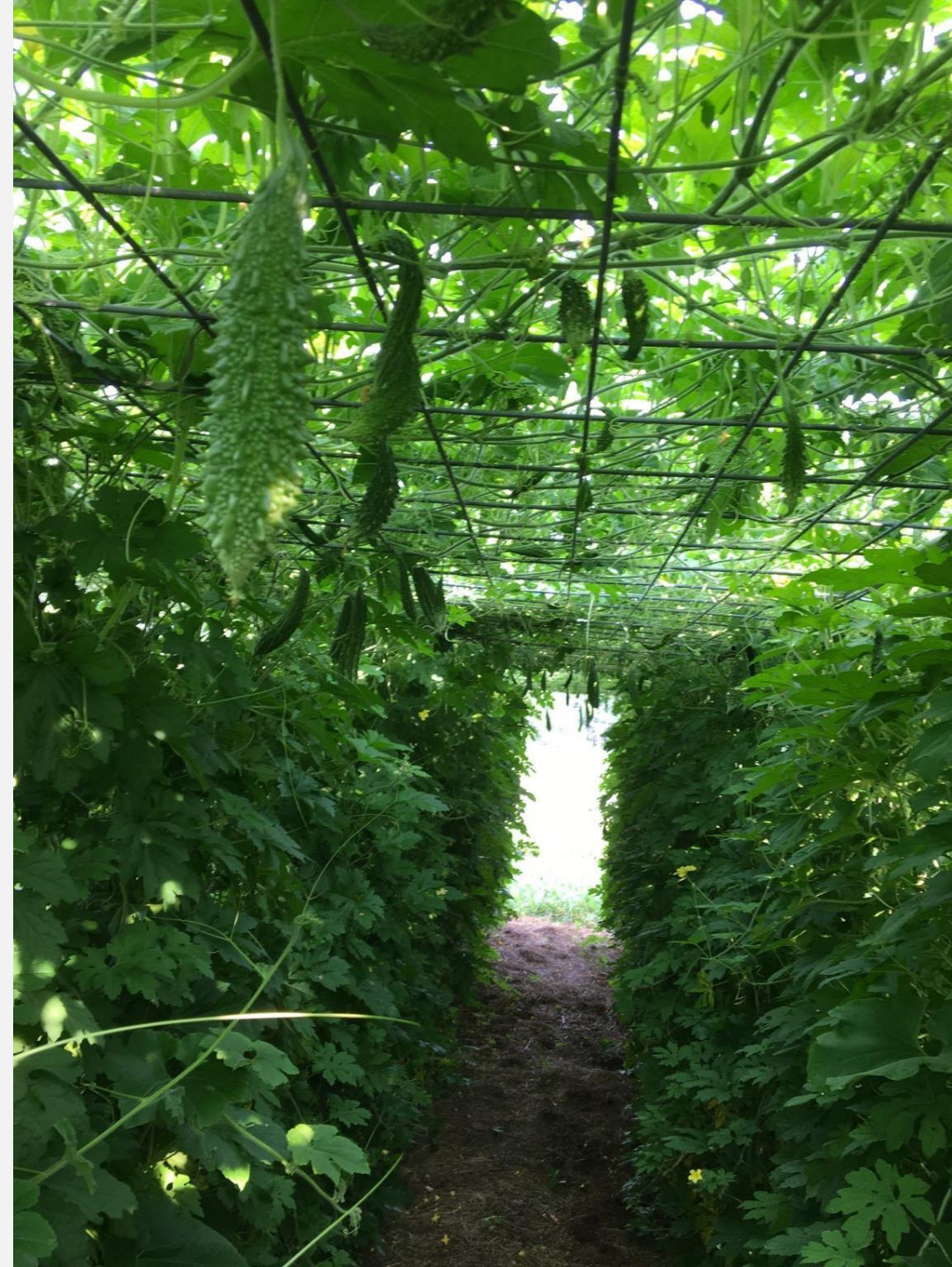
The Problem

How can food assistance organizations contribute to strengthening local food systems?



Engagement with Local Agriculture

- Gleaning, Gardening, and Farmer partnerships
- Farm to Food Bank programs as a strategy to connect food assistance and local agriculture
- Promising strategy to contribute to community capacity for healthy food production





What are key components of Farm to Food Bank Programs?



Farm to Food Bank Programs

**Funding and
coordination**

**Support for farm
partners**

**Capacities of food
assistance providers**

**Data collection
strategies**

Funding and Coordination

- Availability of funding
- Strong collaborative infrastructure
- Experienced administrator
- Support from local agencies





Support for Farmers

- Formalized relationships
- Availability of capacity- building support
- Integration into food security network

Capacities of Food Assistance Providers

- Logistics and infrastructure
- Connections with other service providers
- Community engagement capacity





Data Collection Strategies

- Understand beneficiaries' food needs
- Learn about farmers' motivations and constraints
- Identify gaps and barriers to access
- Document successes and challenges

Montgomery County Farm to Food Bank Program



COVID-19 Food Security Response

- ~100,000 Montgomery County residents experiencing food insecurity due to economic impacts of COVID-19 (up from 60k pre-COVID)
- Manna has seen a 40% increase in the need for food assistance from 2019 to present
- As of mid-June, 86% of food assistance providers reported a need for more fresh produce
- Desire to provide culturally appropriate food





Farm to Food Bank Program Goals

- Understand beneficiaries' needs and preferences
- Provide fresh, sufficient, nutritious, and diverse produce to food assistance providers in Montgomery County.
- Reduce food waste by procuring products based on shelf-life and establishing a secondary sales market for these local products.
- Supporting Montgomery County farmers through:
 - New market opportunities and purchasing partnerships
 - Building farms' production capacity to ensure a sustained and resilient food supply

Farm to Food Bank Program Direct Purchasing

Program administrators maintain a dynamic list of accepted products at prices that are between average wholesale and retail.



How the program works:

01

Farms make offers through ChowMatch application

02

Manna's Community Food Rescue team matches offers with food assistance providers across the network

03

Accepted offers are transported to recipient agency via volunteer food runners

04

Farms invoice Manna for product purchased

From Farm at Our House to Rainbow CDC



Eggs from Bella Vita Farm to Judy's Center



From Savage Acres to So What Else



From Lewis Orchards to Manna Food Center

Farm to Food Bank Program Capacity Building Grants

Eligible projects include:

- Building infrastructure to extend the growing season
- Purchasing seedlings to grow greater quantities
- Purchasing and installing equipment that will allow more efficient planting, harvesting, and processing of culturally-appropriate crops.
- Simple application process
- Priority for historically marginalized farmers



Packing house at Amaranth Acres



Soil amendments at Beauty Blooms



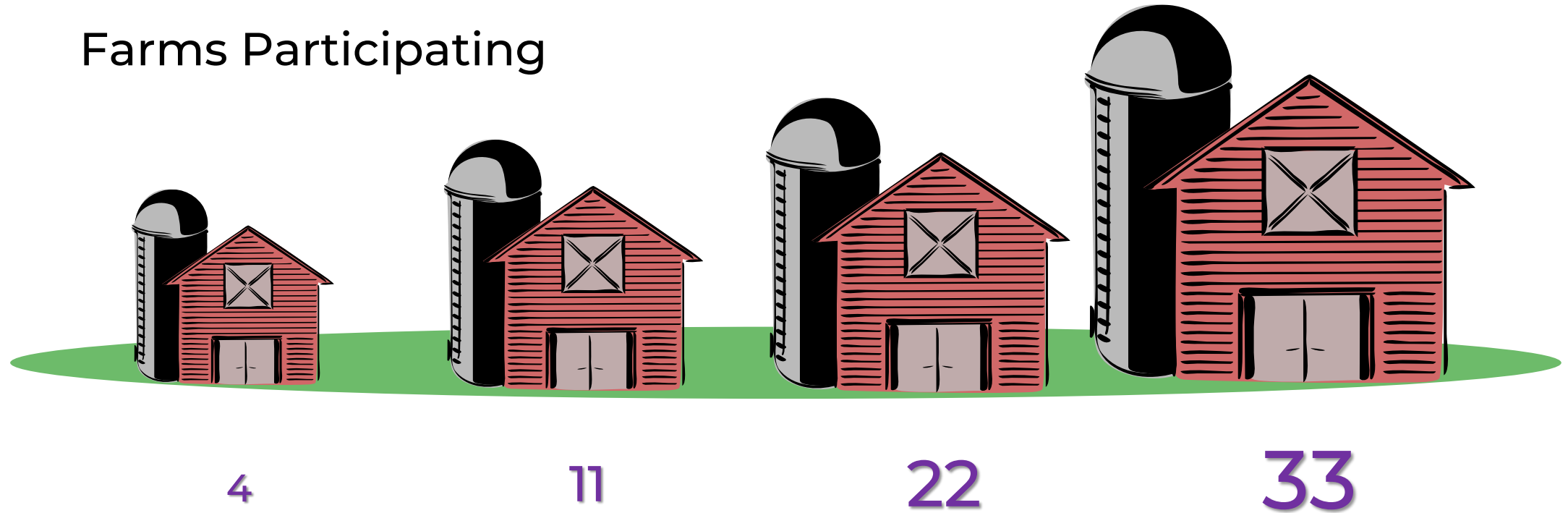
Reconstructed raised beds and grubbing
hoe at Button Farm



Deer Fence at Passion to Seed Gardening

Farm to Food Bank Program Progress

Farms Participating



Farm to Food Bank Program Progress

Delivered Since July 2020



The program delivered 112, 235 pounds of fresh, locally produced food purchased and shared with over 30 food assistance providers.

Including:

- 942 dozen eggs
- 3,390 apples
- 1,875 pounds of beef and pork
- 400 sacks of oats

Several participating farms specialize in culturally diverse foods including bitter melon, long beans, kiwano, bottle gourd.

So, What Else? Food Assistance Partner





Amaranth Acres, Farmer Partner



Discussion



Effective Strategies
Equitable Systems
Strong Communities



Q & A

Community
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Additional questions or a free
consult about your approach

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For more information on the
Farm to Food Bank program

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THANK YOU

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