

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FOR INTERVIEWS & RESOURCES, CONTACT:

Mary Elizabeth Kidd, Georgia Organics
404-502-4685, maryelizabeth@georgiaorganics.org

LOCAL & ORGANIC GEORGIA FARMERS DEVASTATED BY WINTER STORM ELLIOTT *Coalition of Local Food and Farming Groups Unite to Raise \$100,000*

ATLANTA (Jan. 19, 2023) - In the days leading up to Christmas Day 2022, Winter Storm Elliott brought historic single-digit temperatures to Georgia.

Few experienced the brunt of Winter Storm Elliott's destruction more than Georgia's local and organic farmers, who lack critical infrastructure to protect against freeze-related natural disasters.

These farmers face significant losses—up to 90%—in crop loss and lost revenue, plus unanticipated repair expenses and wage impacts for farm laborers.

FARMER TESTIMONIALS (continued below)

- “We have never experienced anything like this type of loss before...simply devastating.” Ilana Richards of Levity Farms (Madison)
- “The polar storm that came through Atlanta has decimated 90% of Patchwork City Farms' crops.” Jamila Norman of Patchwork City Farms (Atlanta)
- “All the farmer's markets in our region will be impacted for weeks and months to come...” Eugene Cooke & Nicole Bluh, Grow Where You Are (Atlanta)

THE FARMER FUND (thefarmerfund.org/)

The Farmer Fund was established in 2015 and is managed by Georgia Organics to offer disaster relief. The Farmer Fund serves as a safety net for local and organic farmers who lack affordable crop insurance options, access to capital, health insurance and government programs, which prioritize larger commodity farms.

Farms who apply to The Farmer Fund are typically those who feed Georgia communities through farmers' markets, Community Supported Agriculture (CSAs), and local restaurant and wholesale markets. They are key drivers of community health, climate mitigation, and local food economies.

As of Jan. 18, The Farmer Fund has received applications requesting well over \$300,000 for emergency relief.

To meet this need, a coalition of Georgia food and farm groups has united to raise more than \$100,000 in funds to support these farmers with timely disaster assistance through The Farmer Fund.

As of Thursday, Jan. 18, this coalition includes:

- [The Conservation Fund](#)
- [The Common Market](#)
- [Community Farmers Markets](#)
- [Food Well Alliance](#)
- [Georgia Organics](#)
- [Wholesome Wave Georgia](#)

Alice Rolls, president & CEO of Georgia Organics, explains, “Winter storm Elliot is testing The Farmer Fund in unprecedented fashion. This is not a flood or hurricane that impacted a particular region of the state—all our farmers were impacted by the sustained hard freeze.

“The Farmer Fund is seeing a record number of applications and financial need. I am grateful for the cooperative spirit of our allies and sister organizations to promote and raise more than \$100,000 for our impacted farmers.”

Our collective call to action is, for those who are able to give, please donate today at thefarmerfund.org to support these community-feeding farmers.

WINTER STORM ELLIOTT FARMER TESTIMONIALS

Ilana Richards of Levity Farms (Madison)

“We have never experienced anything like this type of loss before. List of crops lost (several rows per bed): 350' of bolero carrots, 150' of Salanova lettuce, 75' sugarloaf chicory, 100' of cauliflower, 100' of Romanesco cauliflower, 75' of fennel, 50' napa cabbage, 50' kohlrabi, 100' of Caraflex cabbage, 100' of Bok choy, 75' of collard greens, as well as newly sprouted winter crops in tunnels such as watermelon radish, arugula, ruby streaks mustards, and hakurei turnips. We were very excited to have enough crops to "get us through the winter," but sadly the erratic weather got the best of the farm. We harvested as much as we could before the storm to provide our chefs with some produce starting next week, but the loss is simply devastating.”

Eugene Cooke & Nicole Bluh of Grow Where You Are (Atlanta)

“The Arctic air that came through at the end of this year, froze many crops for a majority of local growers. Many of us made efforts to cover our field crops with row covers, while other farmers were fortunate enough to have grow tunnels. The 8 degree and below temperatures decimated crops that were uncovered even inside of grow tunnels. The wind also damaged tunnel structures. All the farmer’s markets in our region will be impacted for weeks and months to come, as local growers strive to replant strategically. Important factors in our strategic growth considerations are more season extension and weather protection infrastructure needed for all the small and midsize farmers in Metro Atlanta and surrounding rural areas.”

Jeni Jarrard and Nicolas Donck, Crystal Organic Farm, Newborn, GA

Today, many farmers in the Southeast are facing major devastation and total crop losses from Winter Storm Elliott. Our friends and farmer families are now calculating how to make it through this season with no income.

In this region, we are not set up for sustained temps for almost one week below freezing. It is a tricky balance for us because while we grow in high tunnels and hoop houses which offer protection, they did not block the sub-zero wind chills this winter. In fact, many of our high tunnel doors were ripped off and torn as well as the frost covers inside.

For us personally, any vegetable or herb we grow is already sold to an extent, so these losses hit hard. We have 6 year-round employees, not including ourselves, and no one was able to work this week. That's multiple families impacted. We truly stress the importance of supporting your local farmers...perhaps now more than ever.

Nicolas summed it up best: "In 30 years of farming I've never encountered a winter storm like the one we experienced over this Holiday weekend. Despite our best efforts to cover and protect the crops in the ground, our farm took a significant hit. In farming, it is understood that one must simply do the best they can, let go and know it is somewhat out of our control. This letting go eases the sting of crop losses a bit, but does not take it away by any means. As farmers, Mother Nature commands our respect in a different way, each season, year-round."

ABOUT THE FARMER FUND

Following flooding that wiped out several local farms in 2015, The Farmer Fund was founded to support farmers facing increasing yet unpredictable natural disasters. Georgia Organics began managing the fund in 2018 and frequently works with sister organizations to mobilize The Farmer Fund and support a network of local and organics farmers. The Farmer Fund is a critical resource for farmers in need of emergency relief from hurricanes, tornadoes, storms, drought (level 3), medical crises and more recently pandemics. To date, The Farmer Fund has distributed more than \$300,000 in disaster relief to mitigate damages and costs related to crop and livestock losses, loss of equipment and infrastructure, and unanticipated expenses related to health crises. To learn more, visit thefarmerfund.org.