

SAFSF

2015 Year-End Report

SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE &
FOOD SYSTEMS FUNDERS



LETTERS FROM OUR LEADERSHIP

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Virginia Clarke, Executive Director

2015 was quite a year. In my mind, growth is the word that best describes it. We experienced growth in character, responsibility, membership, leadership, ideas, and programming. Someone told me that 2015 felt like a graduation for SAFSF, like we became a ‘real organization.’ So what does SAFSF as a real organization look like? It has depth. It has a strong balance sheet. It is an organization blessed with dedicated, energetic teams of people. It is a community of individuals and organizations that care—and in 2015, I realized just how important such care could be.

As many of you know, I spent significant time in 2015 dealing with ongoing family medical issues. While I may have been in and out, rest assured, SAFSF’s teams were on it—in particular our amazing staff. Together, the staff weathered a number of transitions, and individually, each of them was promoted. Bridget, SAFSF’s Program and Operations Manager, has taken over the lead on operations, including finances, and provides mentorship to staff as they move into their new roles. Huyen now leads our monthly learning calls/webinar series, directs our health programming, and devotes considerable time to membership activities. Abbie did a hop-skip-jump from an administrative role to communications, and is now directing our Policy Briefing and all policy-related activities, putting her MA in Public Policy to good use. Dylan, meanwhile, has jumped in to accelerate our communications work, including this new Year-End Report, while continuing to provide critical operations and program support.

In 2014, SAFSF re-crafted our organizational vision, mission, and values. We set a concrete goal of renewing and making more explicit our long-standing commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion. In fall of 2015, as part of our ongoing evaluation, we asked our members: “Are we meeting that goal?” Based on the feedback we received from the key informant interviews we conducted, we believe the answer is yes. The evaluation analysis showed that our equity, diversity, and inclusion work is solid, more visible, and critically important. We have every intention of keeping our focus on this work going forward.

I hope you will join us. There is always room for one more at our table.
Peace and blessings.

Virginia



CO-CHAIR

As my left arm arched over my body, I peered around nervously to see how the other 19 SAFSF Forum participants were doing as we stretched together in a circle before our walk. The intention of the walk was to experience GirlTrek, an organization that mobilizes African American women to live their healthiest, most fulfilled lives through a habit of daily walking. Some of us walked in tennis shoes, others in penny loafers, others in sandals—but despite our differences, we were united in our mission. With my new

walking partners, I discovered the historical beauty of Chicago while pumping my arms to try and keep up with the brisk 15 minute per mile pace. When we reached our destination 30 minutes later, we commemorated our experience with a celebratory jump.

This walk at the 2015 Annual Forum epitomizes what makes SAFSF so special. The experience made me realize that, while SAFSF members are so different from each other, we are all trying to make it possible for everyone—regardless of race, class, gender, physical abilities, religious belief, or sexual orientation—to live fulfilled lives. Doing so requires us to stretch ourselves, walk the talk, and find time to honor each other’s struggles and celebrate each other’s victories. Doing so also brings upon the realization that we cannot forge ahead alone. That is why I am so grateful for the community SAFSF has created.

This year has been a year in which many “stepped up” to make SAFSF better and stronger than ever. Executive Director Virginia Clarke stepped up to care for her daughter while leading an organization with humor, honesty, trust, and humility. SAFSF staff stepped up to keep the organization’s vision strong while engaging members and managing programs and conferences. SAFSF members stepped up to identify and welcome new members, design webinars, serve on committees, and lead the 2nd Annual Policy Briefing and the largest Forum to date. SAFSF Steering Committee members stepped up in their governance roles and as cheerleaders for the organization in so many ways. We all took ownership of our collective potential to learn, grow, and care for each other.

Here’s to stepping up and stepping out with each other!

Mailee Walker, Executive Director, Claneil Foundation

SAFSF MEMBERSHIP

The strength of SAFSF comes from a dynamic, engaged, and growing membership—just under 100 strong at the end of 2015! Members represent a wide assortment of funder types: individual donors, community foundations, family and private foundations, corporate giving programs, and various types of regranteeing organizations. Each member comes to our collective table with a different expertise, a new curiosity, an eagerness to learn and share, and the willingness to work with others to build a sustainable and just food system for all.

We offer many member benefits, including special member-only quarterly networking calls, discounted registration fees for our annual Forum and Policy Briefing, access to a member-only listserv, a directory of member funding interest areas, and more.

In the words of one of our members, *“SAFSF is such a surprising array of food funders—surprising in the sense that we have the highly sophisticated and the newly minted all interacting and learning from one another.”*

New to the issues but want to fast-track your learning? Been around the garden a time or two but need some new tools? We'd love to talk to you about membership: Virginia Clarke, at vclarke@safsf.org or Huyen Nguyen, at huyen@safsf.org

THE VALUE OF PARTNERSHIP

The value of finding peers and building partnership can be hard to articulate, but it's not hard to feel when you're involved with SAFSF. Many creative collaborations have coalesced from SAFSF members spending time together. Whether it's reviewing grant applications as a team, developing a cohort to support personal growth and “be a better grantmaker,” building a national partnership with USDA, or discovering investment partners with different types of capital—membership in SAFSF creates value for individuals, their organizations, and the food movement as a whole.

NEW MEMBERS IN 2015

Burt's Bees Greater Good
Foundation

California Certified Organic
Farmers' Foundation

Erik Kessler Fund

Farmland LP

Miller Johnson Fund

Panta Rhea Foundation

Small Planet Fund

The California Wellness
Foundation

The Duke Endowment

The Heinz Endowments

Thornburg Foundation

THE IMPACT ON YOUR WORK

*“Becoming knowledgeable, strategic funders in the complex area of sustainable agriculture and food systems is not easy. **Our SAFSF membership allows us to get ‘plugged in’ to what is happening nationally as well as regionally on the sustainable food and agriculture issues that we care about.** When we want to dig deeper on an issue, there always seems to be a well-informed SAFSF member or network of members ready and willing to share and help.”*

Jean Johnson
Miller Johnson Fund
Family Fund, member since 2015

*“SAFSF has helped me gain both a local and national perspective on food systems investments and has provided me with an incredible network of professionals at different stages of this work—all of whom have been so accessible to answer questions, provide data, and learn along with me. **The access through SAFSF has made me a better funder in the food system space.**”*

Jennifer Zuckerman MacDougall
Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation
Corporate Foundation, member since 2013

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

FORUM

For many funders in the network, the SAFSF Annual Forum is their 'must attend' event of the year. Since I started in 2009, every year someone comments in the evaluation that "last year was so good, I didn't think it could get any better, and then it did!" I am immensely proud to work for an organization that constantly pushes itself to listen and improve and adapt year after year. So how did it go at the 2015 Forum, titled *Digging Deeper*, in Chicago, IL?

"I've attended more than 10 of these Forums and this might have been one of the best ever. Great networking opportunities, fantastic field trip, quality presentations across the board, and always good food." – Bob Scowcroft, Nell Newman Foundation

The 2015 Forum Planning Committee was very serious about focusing on equity and diversity throughout the Forum, and integrating these conversations into all parts of the program rather than having them stand-alone. This was the first time that all three plenary sessions and seven site visits addressed issues of equity. For attendees who wanted to "dig deeper," we offered a three-hour Pre-Forum workshop about understanding race in the food system, and the challenges and opportunities that arise when working across racial differences. In addition, based on suggestions from previous Forums, we also offered a peer-to-peer learning workshop focused on what foundations can do within their organizations and grantmaking portfolios to better incorporate equity and diversity awareness. Chicago was an excellent location to talk about racial divides in America, and to see first-hand the impact those racial divides have had on individuals, neighborhoods, and the city. This is the first year that it felt like all participants, regardless of which parts of the Forum they chose to attend, took part in discussions related to equity, race, diversity, power, and inclusion. This outcome was an explicit goal of the Planning Committee (and part of our organization's values), and we believe, was successfully accomplished.

"I was surprised, relieved, and inspired by the degree to which the program located the issues raised in terms of commitments to justice & equity, and the complementary perspectives of scientific & spiritual practices." – Anonymous

The 2016 Forum, *THE STAKES: Race, Class, Gender, & Power In The Food System*, is moving the equity focus forward with an extra emphasis on rural communities. The Forum will be held June 28-30 in Louisville, KY, with two optional add-on activities scheduled for Monday, June 27. Keep up to date as the program develops via our listserv and website. Registration will launch at the end of March.



Bridget Dobrowski,
Program and Operations Manager



2015: BY THE NUMBERS

734

TOTAL FUNDER
ATTENDEES AT
SAFSF EVENTS

160

NON-FUNDER
SPEAKERS AT
SAFSF EVENTS

2,122

CUPS OF
COFFEE & TEA
CONSUMED
AT SAFSF
EVENTS



230

HOURS SPENT ON
PLANNING CALLS

NUMBER OF CHOCOLATE
BARS CONSUMED BY
SAFSF STAFF:

INFINITY





Abbie Nissenson, Policy Associate

POLICY

The Policy Briefing... Providing unique networking, educational, and collaboration opportunities with the goal of deepening funders' understanding of policy issues to create a shared space for sustained, strategic conversations that can become actionable.

Building Power... Our policy work is anchored in the theme of "Building Power," reflecting the premise that community organizing, grassroots efforts, and sustained funder engagement together can create shifts in local, state, tribal, and/or federal policy. In 2015, we headed to Des Moines, Iowa for our 2nd Annual Policy Briefing: *Building Power in the Center for an Inclusive Food System*. The speakers represented 'conventional' and 'sustainable' approaches; local, state, and federal policymakers; and NGO leaders, community organizers, and farmers. The inclusion of non-funder speakers for the duration of the Briefing allowed for continued, deeper policy conversations and increased opportunities to build collaborations.

2015 Highlights... An opening session on the policy of agriculture and water quality featured Bill Stowe, the CEO of the Des Moines Water Works and the force behind the public utility's lawsuit against three upstream Iowa drainage districts over excessive nitrate runoff. Later that day, Iowa's Secretary of Agriculture, Bill Northey, gave a presentation and fielded audience questions. Having the top agriculture policymaker from one of the highest corn and soybean-producing states attend the Briefing and engage in discussions about sustainability highlights the cooperative dynamic that SAFSF seeks to create as part of our policy work. In addition, attendees had the opportunity to supplement their Policy Briefing experience with two extra curricular activities: a crop insurance reform meeting with our partners at the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition (NSAC), and a trade policy dinner co-hosted by SAFSF and GRACE Communications Foundation.

Moving Forward... SAFSF will host topical policy discussions throughout the year to continue strategy conversations and identify action items. Mark your calendars for the **2016 Policy Briefing, December 12-14 in Sacramento, CA.**



HEALTH

SAFSF has a longstanding commitment to strengthening ties between funders working at the food/ag/health nexus. Over time, this work has continued to grow, and it has become increasingly ingrained into the core framework of our organization. SAFSF has health funders in leadership roles on our Steering Committee and our Planning Committees, allowing us to better engage with the health community, deepen our aligned goals, and strengthen our collective impact.

The linkages between food and health were showcased in many aspects of SAFSF programming in 2015, from a webinar on indigenous farmworker health care to a Forum site visit at a Chicago high school that incorporates food and health into its science curriculum. One particular highlight from this past year was a plenary session at our 2nd Annual Policy Briefing, titled *Linking Community, Food, Health, & Sustainability for Policy Change*. The dynamic panel of speakers engaged in a discussion with attendees about grassroots policy victories for tribal health, the use of social justice as a lens for creating linkages with other groups of change seekers, and attempts to change the federal dietary guidelines.

To complement our own programming, we work closely with our partners at Grantmakers in Health (GIH) and the Health and Environment Funders' Network (HEFN) to bring food/ag issues to their members. For example, at the 2015 GIH Annual Conference, SAFSF and HEFN staff co-hosted a dinner for funders, allowing for an intimate conversation about common interests and various efforts to improve children's health. It is our hope that through this work, we will continue to foster and build partnerships for funders to work together in building a vibrant, healthy, and just food system.



Huyen Nguyen, Program and Membership Associate

STEERING COMMITTEE

ABOUT

The SAFSF Steering Committee (SC) is the governing body of SAFSF and provides organizational direction and oversight. Led by co-chairs, the SC members meet annually for an in-person retreat, participate in quarterly conference calls, and serve on additional committees including Forum and Policy Planning, Membership, and Finance.

SC members are committed to the mission and values of SAFSF, are strong advocates for the organization, and are representative of the diversity within SAFSF, both in terms of organizational diversity (type of funder, regional location, funding interest areas and strategies) and individual diversity (gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation). SC members serve for a three-year term (with a two-term limit).

SAFSF members interested in learning more about SC service are encouraged to contact 2016 co-chairs: Mailee Walker, at mwalker@claneil.org, and Kyle Datta, at kdatta@ulupono.com.

MOVING FORWARD INTO 2016

The SAFSF Steering Committee meets for a few days each year in January to talk shop and strategize. In 2016 we were fortunate enough to meet on the incredible island of Hawai'i, and while we enjoyed the beautiful setting, we spent 12+ hours a day working—so it wasn't exactly the resort experience one might assume given the location. The combination of beauty and hard work led to some very productive staff-leadership conversations, and several important decisions were made about SAFSF's direction going forward.

First and foremost, staff and steering committee acknowledged SAFSF as a membership organization, and therefore, we will be devoting even more time to our members—individually and collectively—in the coming months. We will be working on our communications and how we amplify and give voice to our work, as well as the work of our members and their partners. We want to strengthen the value you get from being part of this network and make sure that we can continue to welcome new members. We also committed to expanding our partnership work with the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) over the next four years. We will be sharing more in the coming months and look forward to the work we can accomplish together.



2015 SAFSF Steering Committee Members and Staff

Back Row (L to R): Mailee Walker (co-chair), Claneil Foundation; Virginia Clarke, SAFSF; Jeff Rosen, Solidago Foundation; Tim Crosby (outgoing co-chair), Thread Fund; Mike Roberts, First Nations Development Institute; Kyle Datta (incoming co-chair), Ulupono Initiative; Bridget Dobrowski, SAFSF; Dylan Tompkins, SAFSF

Front Row (L to R): Maria Cadenas, Driscoll's; Jennifer MacDougall, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina Foundation; Kathleen Fluegel, HRK Foundation; Stacey Barbas, The Kresge Foundation; Abbie Nissenson, SAFSF; Huyen Nguyen, SAFSF

Not Pictured: Scott Cullen, GRACE Communications Foundation; Andrew Kang Bartlett, Presbyterian Hunger Program; Livia Marqués, W.K. Kellogg Foundation



LEARNING IN HAWAII

“The partnership with our colleagues at the Sustainable Ag and Food Systems Funders made this one of the best trips I’ve ever been involved with.”

Josh Stanbro, Hawaii Community Foundation

When the SC meets annually each January, in addition to getting the governance work done, we also spend time meeting with local and regional funders to learn about their work, and to introduce them to SAFSF and our work. In January 2016 we traveled to Hawai’i Island (aka the Big Island) where SAFSF co-chair Kyle Datta of Ulupono Initiative is based, and other SAFSF members have grantee partners. It was a terrific opportunity for staff and leadership to travel west and learn about an important part of the U.S. food system that is too often overlooked.

Early on we reached out to the Hawaii Community Foundation and their subgroup, the Environment Funders’ Group (EFG), several of whom work on food/ag issues on the islands. Recognizing an opportunity to partner, SAFSF and EFG co-hosted a 1.5 day gathering, including a day-long “marathon” site visit for over 30 funders and staff. The site visit was long, but highly productive. We heard about the Mauna Lani Resort’s efforts to partner with Hawai’i Island farmers before boarding a bus and heading to Big Island Dairy in O’okala on the east side of the island—one of only two remaining dairies in the state, down from a few dozen in past decades. As we toured the operations, owned by the Whitesides family, we learned about some of the challenges they face: meeting demand, processing options (or lack thereof), milk pricing, input costs (huge when operating on an island), and keeping overhead costs low.

During our lunch stop at Parker Ranch, the 5th largest ranch in the United States, CEO Dutch Kuyper shared with us their current business model and how in his five-year tenure the trust has shifted management practices to focus on niche markets, minimizing profit volatility instead of maximizing cattle head numbers and short-term revenue. Following the delicious and nearly all-local lunch prepared by Stephen Pagano, we headed to Wow Farm, owned by Mike and Tricia Hodson. The Hodsons are Hawaiian Homestead farmers who began growing tomatoes for family consumption several years ago. Their work has greatly expanded and together with other Homestead families, they are working to grow a sustainable community by not only growing produce, but by growing farmers as well.

Later in the afternoon, we headed to Mala’ai, the culinary garden at Waimea Middle School, where the staff gave us an overview of the 11-year operations of the school garden, and led us in group clean-up activities to help maintain the gardens.

The day ended at the Paniolo Heritage Center, where we heard from Kamana Beamer, executive director of the Kohala Center. He gave an overview of agricultural and farming programs, and introduced the “Planet Hawaii” initiative that brings cohesion to the Kohala Center’s priority areas of food, water, place, and people. Over local fare, we shared stories, and came away with a much greater appreciation for the complexity of the islands’ agriculture and food system.

SAFSF FINANCES

FY15 FINANCIAL SNAPSHOT

Revenue: \$809,493
Expenses: \$763,213
Net Operating Surplus: \$46,281
Beginning Balance: \$380,989
Ending Net Assets: \$427,270
Funds Held for Reserve: \$300,000
Adjusted Net Assets: \$127,270

SAFSF pays close attention to our financial health. Over the course of the last few years, we have carefully managed fluctuating revenues and expenses while expanding our programmatic options, adding new staff, and maintaining a prudent reserve fund. In 2015, our fiscal sponsor New Venture Fund moved to true accrual accounting. Members of our Finance Committee have significant financial and budget expertise and worked closely with staff throughout the accounting transition. At the close of 2015, SAFSF is in excellent financial health, with a balanced budget and a healthy reserve fund.

SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE & FOOD SYSTEMS FUNDERS



VISION

SAFSF envisions a world in which food and agricultural systems enhance and sustain the well-being of people, animals, and our planet—now and into the future.

MISSION

To create networking, educational, and collaboration opportunities for the philanthropic community working to support vibrant, healthy, and just food and farm systems

VALUES

Values drive our organization on an everyday basis. We use these values to guide our decision-making process in all our work, from developing programs and hiring new staff to choosing caterers and hotels. We are committed to seeing these values embedded in everything we do. The word “sustainable” is part of our name; it encompasses environmental, economic, and social concerns, and we feel a sustainable future must incorporate all of these values:

collaboration • *the action of working with someone to produce or create something*

equity • *fairness and justice in the way people are treated*

respect • *to hold in esteem or honor*

stewardship • *the responsible overseeing and protection of something considered worth caring for and preserving*

integrity • *the state of being whole and undivided*

STAFF

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