

## CASE STUDY

# Free Union Farms

## Martin County, NC

Website still under development.



### SUPPLY CHAIN REGION (S)

North Carolina



### DEMOGRAPHICS SERVED

Rural predominantly Black, low-income



### LEADERSHIP

William Barber III, founder of Rural Beacon Initiative (<https://www.ruralbeaconinitiative.com/>)



### LEADERSHIP DEMOGRAPHICS

BIPOC



### MAIN CROPS OR PRODUCTS

This project is under development so no crops are being produced produced yet, but the plan is for: Livestock, Pecans, and Timber.



## OVERVIEW

Free Union Farms, (previously name Vera Brown Farm) is a 52-acre heirs property located in a historic freedmen's community in an economically distressed region of eastern North Carolina. A 0% unsecured loan from Foodshed Capital, backed by a small loan guarantee from Croatan Institute, enabled the land to be purchased by the Rural Beacon Initiative (RBI). RBI was founded by William Barber III, an environmental / climate justice scholar and advocate with nearly a decade of social justice organizing experience and academic training in both science and law. As the son of pastor William Barber II, his work is deeply rooted in faith,

a devotion to building "beloved community," and a mission to alleviate chronic poverty. This project is currently under development. The financing was provided to ensure that the farm, a roughly 50-acre constellation of cropland and forest, with an historic homestead and barn, would remain under Barber family stewardship in order to avoid on-going Black land loss in the region. Project partners RBI and Croatan Institute have a strong vision for the site becoming a hub and model for regenerative agroforestry, rural resilience, and community economic development in a highly distressed area.

## FINANCE SNAPSHOT

While this project is in early stages of development, revenue will be developed from crop sales, timber harvesting, and value-added products from a pecan grove. In addition, subsequent phases of the project will deploy community solar to deepen the site's off-grid capability, and a cultural and educational center will be developed to document and train future generations in the history of progressive activism in eastern NC.

## REGENERATIVE PRACTICES USED

- Agroforestry
- Silvopasture
- Rotational grazing
- Multi-species grazing
- Crop rotation
- Rainwater harvesting
- Pollinator strips
- Closed loop production
- Composting
- On-farm renewable energy deployment



**YEAR OF DEAL/INVESTMENT**  
2022

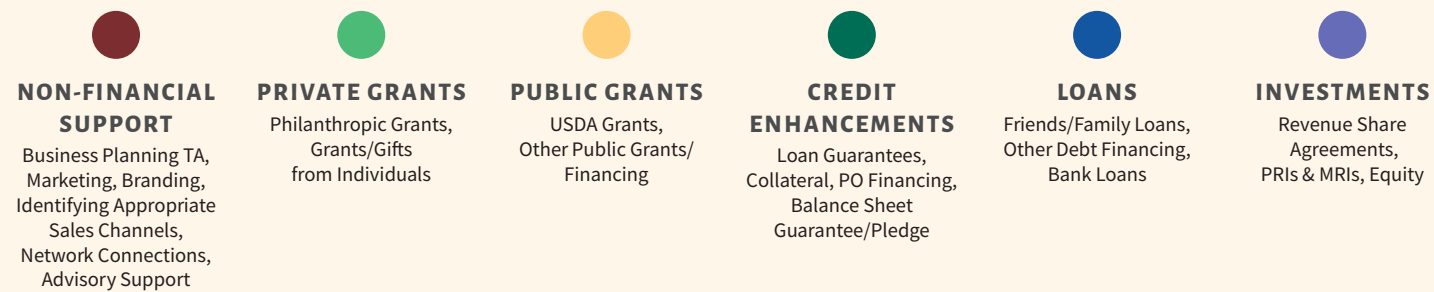


**TYPE & MAGNITUDE OF INVESTMENT**  
Loan: \$125,000, 0%, unsecured, 3-year grace period

## CAPITAL STACK



### TYPES OF CAPITAL



## INTENDED OUTCOMES



### ECOLOGICAL

- Carbon Sequestration
- Climate Mitigation
- Climate Adaptation
- Healthy Soil Organic Matter
- Animal Health and Welfare
- Bird Friendly
- Increased Biodiversity
- Ecological Intensification
- Restore Native Habitat
- Reforestation
- Reduced Inputs
- Reduced GHG Emissions
- Nutrient Efficiency



### SOCIAL & RELATIONAL

- Knowledge Creation and Sharing
- Food Sovereignty
- Equitable Food Access
- Restored Cultural Identity
- Community Ownership
- BIPOC Ownership



### MARKET/SECTOR

- Offtake Contracts
- Market Development and Partnerships
- Material Recycling, Re-use and Reduction
- Localized Infrastructure
- Renewable Energy Infrastructure



### FINANCIAL

- Healthy Local Economies
- Community Wealth Building
- Land Access and Affordability
- Diversified Income
- Farm Resilience



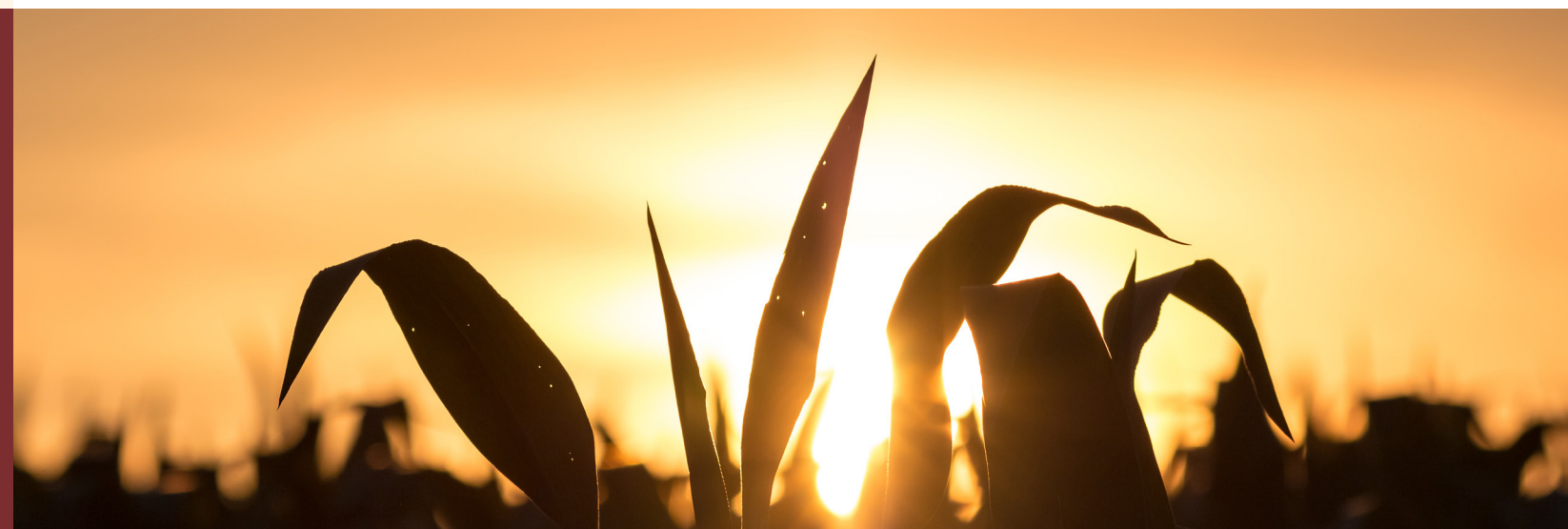
## MAIN BARRIERS OR NEEDS

### LAND PURCHASE

This was an heirs property and they had failed to find a funding source that was compatible with their needs until Foodshed Capital and Croatan Institute stepped in.

### FUTURE FUNDING

To ensure the project develops to its fullest potential, funding will be needed to support infrastructure and equipment needs, as well as future land acquisition of adjoining parcels. This funding should ideally come in the form of philanthropy or reparative capital.



# Free Union Farms



## OVERVIEW

While the initial financing for this project was relatively small, it is illustrative of the need for more reparative capital to support land security for BIPOC communities. Foodshed Capital stepped in to facilitate acquisition of the land after numerous other traditional lenders and CDFIs declined to support it.

This project has enormous potential to demonstrate the ability of regenerative agriculture to serve as a foundation for resilience in communities of color. Over the next 3-5 years, more funding will be needed to make the vision of the project partners come to life.

## DUE DILIGENCE

### THIS WAS 100% A RELATIONSHIP DEAL

Given that it's a new project with no income and rough estimates on projections, this deal was consummated on the strength of the partnership with Croatan and Rural Beacon Initiative, and the desire of Foodshed Capital to expand its work into reparative capital.



## IMMEDIATE CAPITAL NEEDS

None.



## FUTURE CAPITAL NEEDS

Additional capital will be needed however no specific amount has been determined yet.