

# 2024 Our Year in Review





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Dear friends,

When our food system is under threat, our future is under threat. How we grow, move, and share food is a direct reflection of how humans are treating the planet and each other.

Our mainstream food system has long been industrialized and consolidated, harming both people and planet. The work being done everyday to reverse these trends–regenerative farming by small-scale farmers, ecological land stewardship, community-supported fisheries and food hubs, youth education, programs that support local food economies, and so much more–has been particularly threatened this year.

In this moment, we have been called to make bold decisions about what we want our food system and our future to look like. This is not the time to backtrack our vision; comply with a regressive, vengeful agenda; distract ourselves with infighting; nor code switch. We're not being prideful–we're being strategic.

At the San Diego Food System Alliance, we know that a resilient food system is far more than a political football. A resilient food system–with shorter supply chains, diverse crops and growers, land that is cared for, and a workforce that is respected and supported–is key for keeping our planet livable. A resilient food system feeds families and livelihoods, passes on essential land and ocean stewardship skills, preserves vibrant culture, keeps our economies diverse and under local control. It is what our future generations and our planet deserve.

And while we now know that we cannot depend on a capricious federal government to fund nor support this vision, we also know that community resources do exist. To fund essential food system work that cultivates justice, fights climate change, and builds resilience in our region, we must find abundance and accountability in our community.

What our Alliance achieved in 2024 shows that our region is ready to invest in our own great shift. We're so grateful to our community for dreaming and working together to seed deep roots for a food system that belongs to all of us in San Diego County.

Thank you for being a part of this movement.

-The San Diego Food System Alliance team

We work to transform our food system to change how we live, not just how we eat.



MISSION

# Our mission is to create a just and resilient food system in San Diego County.

#### WHO IS THE ALLIANCE?

The San Diego Food System Alliance is a diverse community of leaders in San Diego County—farmers, fishermen, food business owners, workers, organizers, policymakers, funders, and residents committed to creating a food system that works for everyone.

Together, we are working toward the goals and objectives in San Diego County Food Vision 2030, collectively outlined by our community.

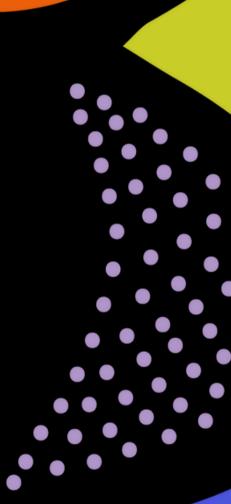


#### VISION

We envision vibrant community food systems rooted in justice and sustainability, where everyone has equitable opportunity to produce, distribute, prepare, serve, and eat nutritional and culturally appropriate food.

In our vision, producers and food workers are treated fairly, sustainable and regenerative practices are prioritized, people are engaged, communities are empowered, and farms, fisheries, and food businesses are thriving and contributing to local economies.

We dream of a world where we live in harmony with each other and nature, where we honor our sacred relations, and where we fully embody love.



# What Sets the Alliance Apart

#### It's in our name—we work as an Alliance.

The Alliance is not a single organization; we convene many diverse organizations, individuals, institutions, communities, and agencies. Transforming our food system takes dedicated relationship-building and enormous tactical coordination on a regional scale. Our network spans San Diego County and beyond, from rural communities on working lands, to urban communities in city centers, and everyone in between.

# We're focused on seeding long-term transformations, not just temporary solutions—in culture, governance, and economy.

Food is at the intersection of these axes of power. To transform our systems, we first need deep cultural transformation. We need to change our basic habits and patterns of disconnecting from each other, and lean into our vision for a shared world and future. The Alliance's work addresses inequities in our food system at their root, and seeds programs that intend to shift power long-term.

# We're guided by <u>San Diego County Food Vision 2030</u>, a shared vision and strategic plan co-created with thousands in our community.

Our work is guided by a shared regional, strategic vision, which keeps us focused on our communities' most important needs over time. With three goals, ten objectives, and strategies to inform policy, program, planning, and investment opportunities, <u>Food Vision</u> <u>2030</u> serves as the north star that all in our Alliance can reference.

# We're anchored by our commitment to food sovereignty and self-determination.

Food sovereignty is at the heart of our work. We believe everyone has a right to healthy, ecologically produced food that reflects their culture–as well as agency to define their own food and agriculture environments. We actively work to eliminate inequities, dismantle racism, and elevate food sovereignty. "The Alliance gives me a sense of progress and hope for improvement. Their role as a food system convener is incredible, bringing together diverse stakeholders to drive meaningful change."

Anonymous contributor,
San Diego Food System Alliance
Community Survey (2024)

# Our Tools for Transformation >>>



# **Community & Coalition Building**

We believe in the power of community and collective action. We nurture relationships, seed connections, build coalitions, advocate for policy changes, and cultivate intergenerational leadership.

#### Read more on page 13

#### Summary of 2024 Highlights

- Welcomed over 550 attendees to our 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Gathering
- Regularly convened our **26-member Stewardship Committee**-made up of local farmers, fishermen, food business owners, organizers, and nonprofit leaders
- Served as a key partner and community liaison to the County of San Diego for their Food Justice **Community Action Plan**. The plan passed unanimously with Alliance and community support
- Hosted 3 sold-out community events open to the general public, in addition to the Annual Gathering
- Convened 8 youth-led organizations working on food justice and food system impacts on youth
- Welcomed 40 high school and college students to the inaugural Youth Summit at the Annual Gathering

# **Community Wealth Building**

We honor community self determination and ownership. We support cooperative local food economies, mobilize resources for equitable business stewardship, land tenure, and capital, and work to build greater community power.

#### Read more on page 17

#### Summary of 2024 Highlights

- Supported over 150 businesses with technical assistance, workshops, coaching, and other services
- Coached 13 local food businesses through the Pollinator program
- Published 8 Resource Libraries for small-scale farmers. fishermen, and food business owners
- Engaged 100+ individuals in our Land Tenure & Stewardship initiative
- Held 3 workshops with 140 attendees
- Supported 2 local farms with securing credit-building loans they otherwise would not be able to access
- Have mobilized \$450,000 for local food since the inception of our Local Food Economy Lab

# **Community Storytelling**

We imagine a food system that works for everyone. We share the stories of community changemakers, documenting their transformative work and relations and crafting narratives that uplift joy, healing, and liberation.

#### Read more on page 21

#### Summary of 2024 Highlights

- Regularly reached an audience of over 6,000 people, which continues to grow
- Published 8 issues of Rooted Relations, our community newsletter that aggregates events, jobs, and volunteer opportunities
- Published 25 videos on our growing YouTube channel, including event recordings, community stories, and educational videos about issues in our food system
- Refreshed our brand and logo, leveling up our communications and operations to better reflect and serve our vibrant, diverse community





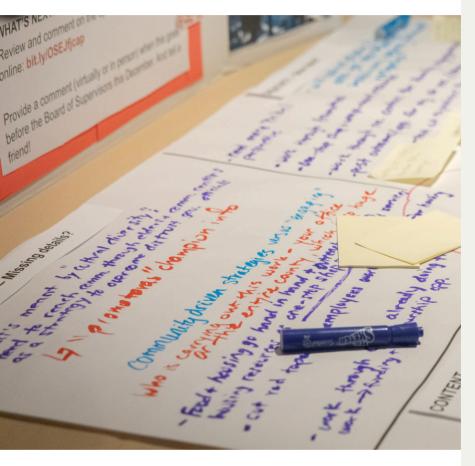




#### 2024 Highlights 🅨

# **Community & Coalition Building**

We believe in the power of community and collective action. We nurture relationships, seed connections, build coalitions, advocate for policy changes, and cultivate intergenerational leadership.



# County of San Diego's Food Justice Community Action Plan

The Alliance served as a **key partner and community liaison** to the County of San Diego for their Food Justice Community Action Plan. We brought in community voices, rallied **60+ public comments** supporting its passage, provided detailed recommendations and feedback, and facilitated space for dialogue between community members and the County at the Annual Gathering. The plan was **unanimously passed** by the County Board of Supervisors.

The Alliance continues to advocate for greater funding and dedicated staff at the County for food justice.



## San Diego County Food Vision 2030

2024 marks the **fourth year of San Diego County Food Vision 2030**, a ten-year plan and shared vision for transforming our region's food system that the Alliance published in 2021. We have seen **increased references to the Vision** in both local and broader policy advocacy and organizing efforts by our community members and peers.

#### **Stewardship Committee**

The Alliance's **26-member** Stewardship Committee holds us accountable to our goals. It's made up of local farmers, fishermen, food business owners, organizers, and nonprofit leaders–**68% of whom identify as people of color**. Members value this crosssector space for dialogue and collaboration.



# Community Events & Engagement

We hosted **3 sold-out community events** for the general public, providing opportunities for San Diegans passionate about our local food system to connect, learn, and build community. As conveners and weavers, we are constantly supporting our peer organizations with **making connections, finding the right resources, and more**. Finally, we also deepened tribal relations –we were invited to participate in events with Pauma Tribal Farms, support Mesa Grande Business Development Corporation and Golden Eagle Farm, and more.



"The power of the Alliance is the fact that it brings together so many amazing, qualified people who are actually doing the work."

— Chuck Samuelson, Heal the Earth at Wild Acres Farm

#### 4th Annual Gathering: Cooperation

On October 17, we hosted our 4th Annual Gathering, which drew **over 550 attendees** keen to explore the theme of "Cooperation." San Diegans are eager to know about **cooperative culture and economies**, shared wealth, and how to transition from a society focused on capitalism and individual profit, to one that focuses on shared human and planetary needs.

**65% of attendees** identified as people of color, **52% identified** as actively working in the food system. **52 scholarships** were awarded. **98% of attendees** indicated that the Gathering was good, great, or the best event they've attended in a long time.

See Spotlight on next page 🕨

#### **Youth Engagement**

This year, the Alliance intentionally created several opportunities to engage youth more deeply in the food system movement. Through a pilot landscape scan, we convened **8** youth-led organizations. We also welcomed **40 high school and** college students from various schools in San Diego County at the inaugural Youth Summit at this year's Annual Gathering.

"This event was great because it was created with intention—the food was incredible, the sessions were so relevant to the attendees, and the cultural and organizational sharing was off the charts!

I learned about organizations that could improve the programs I work with and learned all about community efforts, conflict management, and seed saving-all things I never would have learned about in a corporate conference."

— Annual Gathering attendee, event survey



#### 1) Opening Ceremony ft. Naruwan Taiko

This year's Opening Ceremony was one of the most powerful in memory, thanks to an earnest and vitalizing, intergenerational, all-female performance by local taiko drumming group Naruwan Taiko.

#### 4) This year's theme: Cooperation

This year's theme was **Cooperation**-the ancient practice of group work, pooling resources, sharing responsibility and reward, making collective decisions to benefit both community and individual, and practicing a reciprocal culture. We need it now more than ever-as an economic model, but also as a cultural norm.

#### 2) 15 Breakout Sessions

Alliance staff and community partners developed 15 breakout sessions for the day, including workshops, panels, and dialogues. Topics included local food system issues, conflict resilience, resource mobilization, storytelling, and a Cooperation track.

#### 5) Community Altar, Seed Table

The hallways of the Annual Gathering included interactive displays from our partners, a seed table, as well as a Community Altar-a beautiful complement to our day's mission of inspiring system-level change, and a reminder of our collective remembrance and power.

#### 3) Networking & Collaboration

94% of Gathering attendees surveyed reported that they formed valuable new relationships at the event.

#### 6) "Rekindling Connections" Panel

Our partners at the Pauma Band of Mission Indians helped organize a diverse panel of tribal leaders on repairing relationships and returning power to tribes, as well as traditional practices for stewarding land, sea, and a shared future.

#### 2024 Highlights 🕨

# **Community Wealth Building**

We honor community self determination and ownership. We support cooperative local food economies, mobilize resources for equitable business stewardship, land tenure, and capital, and work to build greater community power.

#### PRODUCE Locally Grown

Farm

#### **The Local Food Economy Lab**

2024 marks three full years of operating the Local Food Economy Lab, which supports the viability of small-scale farmers, ranchers, fishermen, food business owners, and the communities they serve in San Diego County.

This year, the Lab directly impacted over 150 businesses with technical assistance, workshops, coaching, and other services. Since launching the Lab, we've mobilized nearly \$450,000 in coaching, services, equipment, and loans for businesses in our local food economy, and secured an additional \$700.000 for a Farmer Fund.

"I wish for this type of support for every farmer. We used to say, 'What are we doing next month?' but with this program, we're now able to say, 'What are we doing in the next three years?'-which is amazing."

- Byron Nkhoma, Hukama Produce, Pollinator program participant

## **Online Resource Libraries**

We published 8 Resource Libraries of vetted tools and resources for farmers, fishermen, and food business owners. Libraries include a Consultant Directory. **Resources for Farmers, Resources for Fishermen, Resources for Food Business Owners, Cooperative Development Resources, Lender Directory, Grants** Directory, and Community Capital Glossary.

# **Pollinator: Tailored Business Planning** & Coaching

Through Pollinator, our two-year tailored business planning and coaching program, we supported 13 food businesses with technical support, with 85% of beneficiaries from under-resourced communities.

All participants surveyed reported gaining new, tangible skills and greater confidence in the long-term viability of their business.

See Spotlight on next page 📦



## Land Tenure & **Stewardship Initiative**

Through the Land Tenure and Stewardship initiative, the Alliance engaged over 100 individuals in a collaborative effort to develop a strategy for securing equitable land tenure for underserved farmers. Our hope is to establish an agricultural community land trust, nurture community stewardship of lands, and build cooperative economies through this initiative.





## Workshops for Farmers, Fishermen, and Food Businesses

This year, we held three workshops with 140 attendees. These included Introduction to Worker Co-ops. Introduction to Producer Co-ops. and Advocacy 101 for Food Business **Owners**.

## **Lending Partnership** with the Center for **Economic Opportunity**

The Alliance established a Lending Partnership with IRC's Center for Economic Opportunity (CEO) to offer credit-building loans to small, underserved businesses. By the end of the year, we supported two local farms with securing \$5,000 loans.

Five Alliance staff completed training to provide loan readiness technical assistance, credit education, and capital access support for future beneficiaries.

See Spotlight on next page 🕨

#### **Farmer Fund**

In 2024, we also secured an additional \$700.000 for a Farmer Fund, co-designed with 10 farmers. Look out for further development of community funds in 2025.

# Who participates in the Local Food Economy Lab's programs?

#### **Spotlight**

# **Lending Partnership with the Center** for Economic Opportunity

In 2024, the Alliance supported two local farms with securing \$5,000 loans through our Lending Partnership with the Center for Economic Opportunity.



## José Alcaraz, La Chispa Farm

La Chispa Farm, located in Ramona, CA, is on a mission to provide high-quality produce to low-income communities through regenerative practices, fostering a resilient local food system.

#### Spotlight

# **Pollinator: Tailored Business Planning & Coaching**

Through Pollinator, we supported 13 food businesses with coaching and \$25,000 of funding to pay for their choice of education, contracts, technical assistance, and consultations.



#### **Alyssa Brodsky & Christian** Frutos, Ranchito Milkyway

Alvssa and Christian started Ranchito Milkyway in Bonita, CA, committed to three practices: 1) connecting people with their food, 2) making a local impact, and 3) farming regeneratively.

Services received through Pollinator: Business planning, bookkeeping support, farm business and market gardener courses, tax preparation and e-filing, farm design consultations, leaf analysis, pathogen testing, video marketing



## Darian Schramm. Paramount Fish Co.

Darian is a fisherman based in Sherman Heights with a focus on delivering his catch back to the community. He works closely with communitysupported fisheries and farmers' markets to increase high-quality seafood accessibility across our inland areas. His main focus is on species that are widely-available and affordable.

Services received through Pollinator: Business planning, bookkeeping support, fishing equipment, metal fabrication classes, welding gear



## Byron Nkhoma, **Hukama Produce**

Hukama Produce was founded in 2015. On their 4acre farm, Byron and his wife Joyce are dedicated to growing pesticide-free, wholesome produce with care and passion, nurturing land and community with every harvest.

Services received through Pollinator: Business planning, farm water testing, marketing consultation, brand and social media strategy, support with finding new market channels, fertigation consulting

Café X: By Any Beans Necessary is a motherdaughter-owned cooperative coffee shop built to support generational wealth building in the Black community and other marginalized communities.



## José Silva, Papa Joe Farm

Papa Joe Farm grows produce in southeastern San Diego County with all-natural fertilizers-kelp, compost, worm castings, fish emulsion. The farm is owned and managed by a Marine Corps Disabled Veteran.



#### **Additional Pollinator** participants:

**Project New Village** Baraka and Bilal Pan y Paz Saraspe Seafoods La Chispa Farm Cafeina Cafe Olivewood Gardens Seabo Seafoods Fishermen's Market of North County

# Khea Pollard, Café X: **By Any Beans Necessary**

Services received through Pollinator: Contract negotiations consultation, business space analysis, opportunities consultation, personal growth and branding, industry event registrations

#### 2024 Highlights 🕨

# **Community Storytelling**

We imagine a food system that works for everyone. We share the stories of community changemakers, documenting their transformative work and relations and crafting narratives that uplift joy, healing, and liberation.

#### **Rooted Relations**

In 2024, the Alliance started our "Rooted Relations" newsletter, a digest of upcoming Community Events, Volunteering Opportunities, and Jobs in the Food System. We sent 8 issues in our first year.

In 2025, we plan to continue Rooted Relations, as well as increase our educational content on our local food economy, nonprofit governance, and movement building, as well as community stories.







Original logo (2010)

# New logo! (2024)

## A new look for the Alliance

The Alliance undertook a **rebranding project** this year to better align our "look" with who we are. Our new logo reflects the dynamic, energetic community that makes up our Alliance, and the passion within our region to connect people with food, land, ocean, and each other.

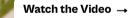
## **Video Storytelling**

This year, we published 25 videos on our growing YouTube channel, including recordings of all Annual Gathering sessions and workshops throughout the year, as well as community stories and videos about issues in our food system. Stories are constantly blooming across our community of farmers, fishermen, food system workers, and organizers-and we hope to continue to invest in video to highlight our region's shifting food culture and encourage participation in the movement.



"When you're from a tribe, you have a connection to Mother Earth—we need to take care of her. This land will always be a farm."

— Cha<mark>irm</mark>an Temet Majel, Pauma Band of Luiseno Indians, Pauma **Tribal Farms** 



"We have a mental health aspect to the program... and being in the garden already helps regulate the nervous system

— Daria Van Nice, Second Chance Youth Garden

#### Watch the Video $\rightarrow$

"Commercial fishermen have so much long-term knowledge about what our ecosystem is doing—and if we lose that, we can't bring it back later."

- Emily Miller, Fishful Future, California Sea Grant

#### 2024 Highlights 🕨

# Organizational Resilience

This year, the Alliance invested deeply in our organizational infrastructure and team resilience. Together, our staff and board continue to advance a shared leadership model and democratize our organization. The Alliance is honored to have received the **2024 Kaleidoscope Award for Good Governance** from the Nonprofit Institute at the University of San Diego during its 20th Annual Nonprofit Governance Symposium. This award celebrates **excellence in nonprofit governance** in the San Diego region.



The Alliance is not just a place of work, but a **home for the work we have been called to do**: to uplift the movement for a just and resilient food system, and advance self determination and belonging. As such, we spent much of this year asking ourselves,

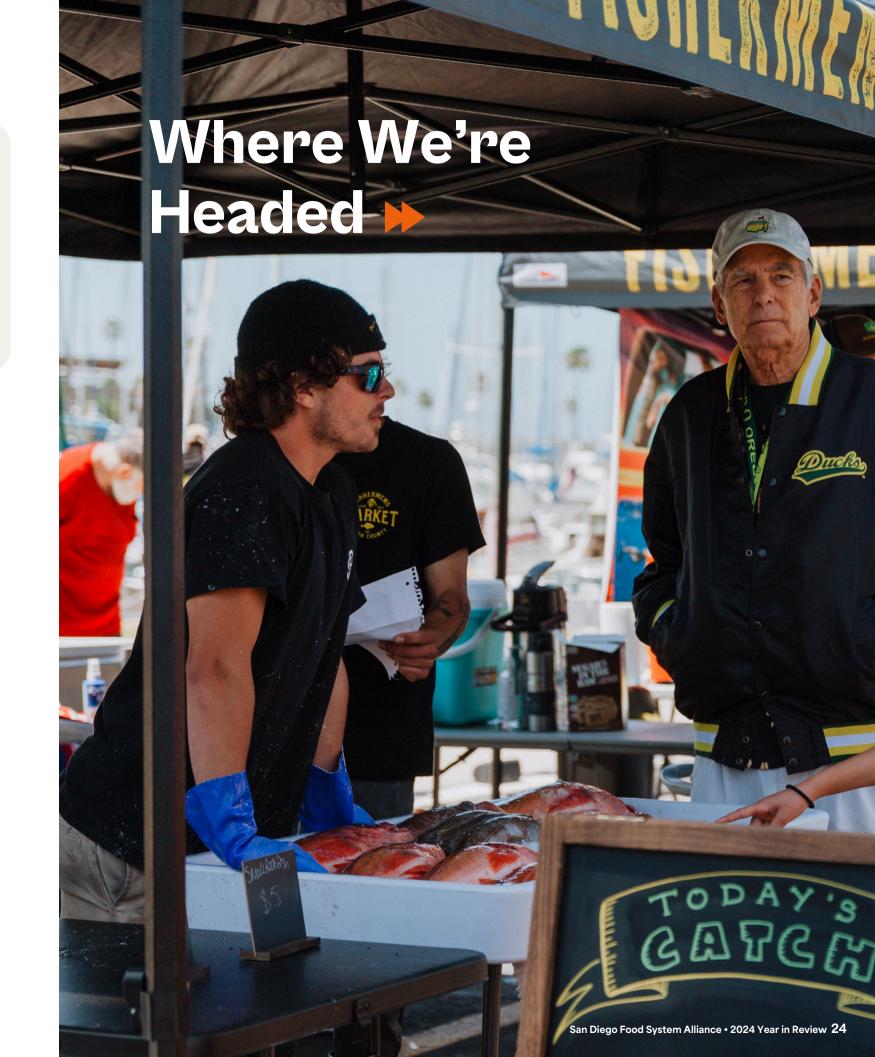
- Are we nurturing a culture of shared leadership, equity, and care within the organization?
- Do we have equitable and democratic organizational decision making processes and policies?
- Do we have structures to facilitate shared accountability, professional growth, and self-management?

Together, our staff and board work to model the cooperative values we wish to see in the world.

"One of the most beautiful things about the last 5 years is that I could show up authentically every day. There was no need to put on a mask or try to be someone else. I showed up authentically and in return I have felt so much love from the community."

— Rachel Oporto, Community Building & Partnerships Director

Reflecting on 5 years at the Alliance



# The possibilities of a local food economy

With the conclusion of 2024, we celebrated **three full years of operating the Local Food Economy Lab**. The last few years have shown us that this work is needed now more than ever: Local economies driven by community-based spending are better equipped to withstand economic downturns, global market shocks, climate change, and more.

When money circulates within our community, it benefits multiple local businesses, individuals, and neighborhoods. A strong local economy generates revenue for public services, infrastructure, and community well-being; creates fulfilling job opportunities; promotes a sense of identity and connection; and allows diverse cultures to coexist and thrive. There is enormous potential in San Diego County, where we have agriculture, working waterfronts, and metropolitan areas all present.

In 2025, the Alliance will continue to advance ongoing efforts through the Lab.

- Host workshops, trainings, and events to support small-scale farmers, fishermen, and food business owners
- Offer tailored business planning, coaching, and technical assistance through Pollinator
- Add to our online Resource Libraries
- Steward the establishment of an **agricultural** community land trust
- Strengthen relationships with farmers, Tribal communities, and municipalities
- Facilitate **credit-building and business loans** through our partnership with the Center of Economic Opportunity
- Develop **community food fund** strategies, including establishing a **Farmer Fund**







# Advocacy to meet the moment

In the first 100 days of 2025, without warning nor explanation, the U.S. **federal government froze funding for dozens of essential, ongoing programs** that directly impact San Diego County's local farmers, fishermen, food businesses, and nonprofit organizations. Federal agencies ceased all communications, sowing chaos and confusion, and failing to honor contract terms already in place.

This has left countless beloved farms, fisheries, food businesses, and organizations in San Diego County without the funds to maintain operations and staff livelihoods. Safety nets supporting working families and enforcing ecological protections across the country have also been compromised. These funds and programs were guaranteed by contract, and relied upon by our local food system leaders and workers–and many agreements have been abruptly abandoned.

In 2025, the Alliance will continue to urge representatives at all levels of government to broadly protect our local food economy. In the future, we also hope to seed education and mentorship opportunities for youth interested in organizing and stepping into governance.

# Securing resources for resilience

Our region urgently needs to shift more capital toward our local farmers, fishermen, and food businesses. Federal grants, while a critical source of funding and support, can be restrictive, rarely last more than a few years, and are vulnerable to abrupt changes like the ones we're seeing. **No region can thrive without a vibrant and resilient local food economy.** We must support ours now.

In 2025, the Alliance seeks to partner with visionary, philanthropic leaders to invest in the work our farmers, fishermen, and food business owners are doing everyday to realize this vision.



#### Where We're Headed 🏓

# **Continuing to build our Alliance**

Fear and chaos have been sown at the start of 2025. It's clear that our consolidated, capitalist economy and food system do not provide for most of us, and they are on a dwindling timeline.

To return to the cooperative systems of our ancestors, to live into community, solidarity, and democracy in a world that bitterly needs it, we first need deep cultural transformation. We must change our basic habits and patterns of disconnecting from each other, and reconnect with our relational instincts. We must lean into our communities, and embody our commitment to a shared world and future, before we can succeed at building systems that encourage resilience and liberation. This remains at the core of the Alliance's work.

In 2025, the Alliance continues to welcome allies aligned with our vision for a more just, resilient food system and future. Together, we are learning to transform ourselves in order to transform our systems.







"So far, I've learned about the struggles of growing fresh produce, and what our community is doing about it. We really don't learn about this in school."

— Participant in Youth Summit, 2024 Annual Gathering

# Supporters & Leadership





# 2024 Supporters

#### Thank you to our generous supporters.

**Angell Foundation** Avila Fund **Better Food Policy Fund Beyster Foundation for Enterprise Development Builders** Initiative California Air Resources Board California Foundation for Stronger Communities County of San Diego Community Enhancement Program County of San Diego Neighborhood Reinvestment Program Dr. Bronner's Feeding America - Food Security Equity Impact **Globetrotter Foundation** Good Roots Hattie Ettinger Fund Hervey Family Fund International Community Foundation JEM Project **Jewish Community Foundation** Kellogg Foundation **Mission Fed** North County Philanthropy Council **Prebys Foundation** Rancho Santa Fe Foundation **Robin Pruitt** Samuel & J Henry Fox Foundation San Diego Food Bank San Diego Foundation Schmidt Family Foundation 11th Hour Project Self-Help Credit Union Sharp Healthplan The California Endowment Tomida Fund **US Bank Foundation UNFI** Foundation USDA FSA Increasing Land, Capital, and Market Access Program USDA AMS Regional Food Business Center Program USDA AMS Regional Food System Partnerships Program

# Leadership

#### Staff

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#### **Stewardship Committee**

Alex Armendariz – Caly Poly Pomona, Cahuilla Tribal Community Alex White – ProduceGood Amanda Subish – Pauma Band of Mission Indians Anchi Mei – MAKE Projects Ariel Hamburger - County of San Diego, LUEG/CAP Bianca Bonilla – Botanical Community Development Initiatives Casey Ng – Foodshed Christina Ng - Chinita's Pies, Berry Good Food Foundation Chuck Samuelson – Heal The Earth at Wild Acres Farm Cris Juarez – Inecui Cynthia Ajani – Cafe X: By Any Beans Necessary Darian Schramm – Paramount Fish Co. Derrick Robinson – UCANR Deysi Merino – Vista Community Clinic, Farmworker CARE Coalition Diane Moss - Project New Village Iana Castro – BrightSide Produce Janice Reynoso – Mundo Gardens Jeni Barajas - Olivewood Gardens Juan Pablo Sanchez – Super Cocina, Business For Good Kemi Pavlocak - Oshun's Orchard, Savage Bee-Ches Khea Pollard – Cafe X: By Any Beans Necessary Kimberly Greene - County of San Diego, OSEJ Meghan Murphy – County of San Diego, HHSA Melanie Hall - SDFSA Board Naomi Billups - County of San Diego, HHSA Tanner Saraspe – Saraspe Seafoods

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# sdfsa.org/2024

