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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The new “Rhody Feeding Rhody Alliance” is empowering food producers and food access providers to take care of local needs first

All concerned Rhode Islanders invited!

RHODE ISLAND, June 13, 2023 – A new USDA-funded project that improves food security and supports the local food economy is calling for Alliance Members. The Rhody Feeding Rhody Alliance, led in partnership by the Commercial Fisheries Center of RI, Eating with the Ecosystem, Farm Fresh RI, Southside Community Land Trust, and the Rhode Island Food Policy Council, is working to build sustainable market channels between local farmers, fishers and food manufacturers and Rhode Island’s emergency food providers in order to make sure all residents of the Ocean State have access to fresh, local, culturally-relevant food.

The goal of the Rhody Feeding Rhody Alliance (RFRA) is to create a larger, more reliable wholesale market for local producers and harvesters while also increasing access to fresh, healthy, culturally-relevant food for local food insecure families. Membership to the Alliance is open to farmers, fishers, food manufacturers, and emergency food access providers. All concerned citizens are invited to sign up to stay informed. Farmer and fisher members will be connected with opportunities to SELL their food. Food access providers will be connected with opportunities to BUY local food. All members will be invited to attend quarterly meetings to hear updates and stories from the people and organizations doing this work in the field.

The RFRA is launching with funding through a three year grant from USDA Agricultural Marketing Service's Local Food Promotion Program. The core (funded) partners are Farm Fresh RI, Commercial Fisheries of RI, and Southside Community Land Trust. The initial pilot through which we developed the

program and partnerships was funded through an LFPP planning grant:

<https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/lfpp>. This grant was strongly supported by all members of the state's Federal Congressional delegation. Additional funding has been provided by Rhode Island Foundation, Angell Foundation, Henry P. Kendall Foundation, and Island Foundation. The Council will measure and evaluate the project's impacts, and use the findings to improve program operations and advocate for sustainable funding.

To learn more about Rhody Feeding Rhody and to join the Alliance, visit www.rhodyfeedingrhody.org.

SUPPORTING PARTNER QUOTES

"Since the onset of the pandemic, Rhode Island farmers and fishers have become more invested than ever in ensuring food security for their food insecure neighbors." According to Nessa Richman, Network Director of the RI Food Policy Council, "We're excited to see the Rhody Feeding Rhody Alliance grow this market, increasing the viability of our farm and seafood businesses while putting fresh, healthy local food on tables across the state." Richman noted "We need all interested farmers, fishers and seafood processors, local food manufacturers, and emergency food providers to join, so the Alliance can start off strong and achieve sustainability."

"DEM is thrilled to support the Rhody Feeding Rhody Alliance (RFRA) and see how the work of its partners and members will bolster Rhode Island's food security and supply chain resiliency," said DEM Director Terry Gray. "Local farmers and fishers drive the Rhode Island food system, and the RFRA will expand their ability to provide local and fresh food to our communities. Food security is impacted by events in our backyard and around the world – building connections across the emergency food system is at the heart of DEM's efforts to support a more locally based and resilient food system"

Eva Agudelo, Hope's Harvest Program Director at Farm Fresh RI says, "Farm Fresh is glad to partner with organizations across the state to bring more market opportunities to local food producers and increase access to healthy food for all Rhode Islanders. Connecting and coordinating our efforts will make these new relationships stronger, more efficient, and better able to meet the needs of our communities."

Fred Mattera, president of the Commercial Fisheries Research Foundation, adds "For decades, fishermen have supported the South County Community by having Seafood Dinners and special events to support students, the elderly, and families that have lost family members at sea. When I approached fishermen with the idea of feeding families in need, there was no hesitation." As the program has proceeded, more fishermen have stepped up with wanting to provide their seafood bounty to feed more of the RI Community. Local Seafood – Feeding our Local Communities! This is the essence of Rhody Feeding Rhody Alliance, providing and expanding the opportunity of Seafood throughout the RI Community."

“Our local waters produce a huge diversity and abundance of delicious, healthy, local seafood that all who live here should be able to enjoy. Seafood is such an important part of our food culture for so many of us living in Rhode Island. At Eating with the Ecosystem we are excited to be a part of a program that is helping to provide access to local seafood for those who may not have had it and connect more people with our incredible fishing communities, ecosystems, and seafood!” Kate Masury, Executive Director of Eating with the Ecosystem.

According to Margaret DeVos, Executive Director at Southside Community Land Trust, “when people have control over the assets of the food system they make sure that others in their communities get fresh, healthy and affordable food. This happens day after day at SCLT gardens and farms and it will happen even more often through the work of the Rhody Feeding Rhody Alliance.”

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