



TEAM PROFILE

Transplanting Traditions Community Farm

Based in Chapel Hill, North Carolina on the traditional territory of the Lumbee, Skaruhreh/Tuscarora, Cheraw, Mánu: Yj̯ Isuwa (Catawba), Saponi, Occaneechi, Sissipahaw, Eno, and Shakori.



F2FA PROGRAM QUICK FACTS

► **F2FA PROGRAM REACH:**

Transplanting Traditions' Farm to Food Assistance program focuses on the Piedmont Region of North Carolina. Food access partners procure from seven farmers, providing about 700 pounds of culturally significant vegetables for distribution to refugee community members monthly.

► **FUNDING SOURCES:**

- Government funding
- Individual Donations
- Foundation grants via food banks

*Transplanting Traditions was established in 2009
F2FA program has been in operation since 2015*

► **WEBSITE:**

transplantingtraditions.org

ABOUT TRANSPLANTING TRADITIONS COMMUNITY FARM

Transplanting Traditions Community Farm (Transplanting Traditions) envisions a world in which all people have access to healthy, affordable food, land, education, satisfying work, a space to celebrate culture, and a place to build strong, resilient communities. The organization's mission is to uplift food sovereignty in the refugee and immigrant community through access to land, education, and business development opportunities. The organization's programs support refugee and immigrant adults, youth, and children to come together, recreate a sense of home, build healthy communities, and carry on their agricultural traditions in North Carolina.

The group accomplishes its mission through three interconnected focus areas: agricultural business development, food access, and leadership development. Its

business development program supports immigrant and refugee farmers who are originally from Southeast Asia and Latin America to establish small farms by providing education and technical assistance and facil-



try picks up produce from the farm site once a month from May through October for distribution to clients originally from Southeast Asia. Pantry staff have shared that all of the produce gets eaten when it comes from the farmers at Transplanting Traditions.

Transplanting Traditions also distributes bags of Asian produce to a nearby refugee services organization twice a month. For this partnership, Transplanting Traditions pays the farmers for their produce and the farmers coordinate delivery to the organization.

CULTIVATING LEADERSHIP, COMMUNITY, AND VALUES-BASED PARTNERSHIPS

Transplanting Traditions is putting into practice its own values of being equity-centered and community-driven. It is led by refugees who have been central to the organization since its beginnings and are reflective of the community. Most staff and board members are refugees from Burma and Thailand. A participating farmer sits on the board of directors and a third of staff are farmers. The organization seeks input from farmers, parents, and youth participants to shape programs and ensure that their voices are included in the organization's decisions and overall vision.

Additionally, Transplanting Traditions provides concrete ways for refugee and immigrant communities to affirm and nurture cultural identities and traditions. Their farm has become an important cultural center for refugees and immigrants across the state, providing a space where people feel welcome and can connect with other members of their community and with their homelands. The center includes features reminiscent

itating access to land, equipment, and markets across the state of North Carolina. Through its food access program, a food pantry and a refugee services organization distribute ethnic crops grown by refugee farmers to local families who are refugees and immigrants. Transplanting Traditions' leadership development program builds farmers' skills to manage their businesses and builds capacity among the broader refugee community to take on leadership roles within the organization.

The first and largest Transplanting Traditions site is on an 8-acre property in Chapel Hill owned by the Triangle Land Conservancy. This space has become a significant cultural center for refugees and immigrants across the state. The land is farmed by more than 30 refugee families.

TRANSPLANTING TRADITIONS' F2FA PROGRAM

Transplanting Traditions has been facilitating farm to food assistance since its inception—improving food security and food sovereignty by connecting refugee communities with land to grow their own food. Their F2FA model for providing local produce to wider communities began in 2015 in response to requests from participating farmers. Faced with receiving unfamiliar foods at a local food pantry, farmers ended up donating food to Transplanting Traditions staff. Transplanting Traditions started talking with the food pantry about partnering to provide produce that would be familiar and culturally important to immigrant and refugee community members experiencing food insecurity. Today, this same food pantry purchases Southeast Asian produce like bittermelon and lemongrass from Transplanting Traditions, paying a fair market rate. The pan-



"I truly believe in the importance of paying farmers from my community to grow the food they know best how to grow as a key solution to reducing food insecurity within my community. I do this work to ensure that my own family and friends have access to healthy, fresh traditional food in hopes that in the future more farmers can be a part of this solution. Transplanting Traditions' food access program not only provides the direct service needed; it also preserves the food legacy and traditions of the refugee community."

**- REE REE WEI, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,
TRANSPLANTING TRADITIONS COMMUNITY FARM**



WHO'S AT THE F2FA TABLE?

Transplanting Traditions includes those it serves – refugee farmers primarily from Burma and Thailand – at every level of the organization, from staff to organizational leadership to board members. Refugee farmers, youth, and other community members also provide guidance and contribute to decision-making for programs and activities.

of farms in Burma, including a house made of bamboo and a traditional sticky rice pounder—a wooden machine which requires three people to operate and is used to de-husk rice and sticky rice and to create rice flour, a rice-based dessert, and other products.

Finally, Transplanting Traditions is committed to ensuring that farmers are paid a fair price and treated with dignity. Many farmers who supply the F2FA program are mothers with limited sources of income, and being part of the program has improved their overall economic security. The organization has found that when they clearly and explicitly state their values—including working towards equity, being community driven, and treating farmers with dignity—partners are on board with paying farmers fair prices.

Transplanting Traditions' F2FA program provides meaningful income for farmers while expanding the availability of fresh, culturally important foods. Grounding its approach in a holistic set of values has created a pathway for Transplanting Traditions and its partners to align their goals of paying farmers a fair price, and providing high-quality foods, traditional foods to those who need them.





IN THEIR WORDS



KEY SUCCESSES

Farmers are growing culturally significant food for their own communities

Partners are shifting their thinking about equity in the food system

Locally-grown Asian produce has become more available in the community



KEY CHALLENGES

Securing long term funding to sustain F2FA programs

Limited capacity & commitment of food banks to pay market prices to farmers

Finding ways to put values into practice and make them concrete and actionable when working with partners



VALUES IN ACTION

Purchasing from farmers who are refugees and ensuring a fair price

Creating a mechanism for farmers to grow and community members to access culturally significant produce, which is a way of nurturing and affirming cultural identities

Seeking input from participating farmers, youth, and parents to shape organizational activities and decisions

Fostering leadership that reflects the farmer communities engaged through the program



LESSONS LEARNED

"We are constantly learning and evolving - what we did the year before is going to shift, and that's normal..."

Be clear with vision and values from the beginning when entering into partnerships with food pantries

The Farm to Food Assistance Learning Lab was made possible through a 2021 USDA Local Foods Promotion Program (LFPP) grant, with supplemental support from The Rockefeller Foundation. This profile features one of ten participating teams who served as co-investigators in the Wallace Center's research on the field of Farm to Food Assistance.