We are excited to share with you the news that Minnesota Food Association (MFA) operator of Big River Farms is now a program of The Food Group. This merger has been under discussion for some time and we want to share with you the official announcement, as well as some of our thoughts about this new partnership.

This new program area focuses on providing sustainable agriculture training for immigrant and minority farmers. MFA has been operating as a smaller nonprofit and the merger will significantly enhance their administrative capacity.

The Food Group is excited to be bringing on a successful program like Big River Farms as it presents unique opportunities to develop our work in sourcing locally grown fresh produce for people in need, as well as to address issues of sustainability and access all along the food chain.

The addition of Big River Farms allows The Food Group to work on both ends of the food system from production to distribution. We can now focus on breaking the barriers that exist to growing good food locally while also fighting the barriers that exist to getting good food to those who need it most in our community – hungry Minnesotans.

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A NOTE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, Lori Kratchmer

Spring is here. A season of new growth; a season of new beginnings. Here at The Food Group we are extremely excited for the coming season!

We are eager to join hands with Minnesota Food Association and merge Big River Farms into our portfolio of programs. This unique opportunity allows us to gain a greater understanding of the vital role sustainable farming plays in increasing food access to neighbors throughout our community. Food that is local. Food that is fresh. Food that is sustainable.

Our fight against hunger demands new approaches. Recent data continues to show many of our neighbors struggle to put food on their tables. Seniors continue to be the fastest growing group of food shelf users. Children lack the nutritious food they need. 2016 marks the 6th consecutive year with over 3 million visits to food shelves in our state. This has become the new normal. In light of the trends we see, we’re poised to take a fresh perspective in the fight against hunger. A perspective that will lead to greater understanding; a perspective that shows great promise.

We remain continually grateful for your support and generosity. Join us as we look ahead to another season of fighting hunger and nourishing our community.

NEW PROGRAM AREA: BIG RIVER FARMS

Continued from front page...

The Food Group is the only independent food bank in Minnesota. As a grassroots-based organization we have the freedom to continually innovate in our response to local needs. While our primary role has been to support families that are struggling with meeting their own food needs, over the past decade we have developed strong partnerships with local farms, managed a micro-farm at our warehouse location, and coordinated large gleaning operations. Through this work we have learned more about the important role small-scale, sustainable farms play in our local food system, and increased our commitment to helping all members of our community have access to the high-quality foods produced by these farms.

We will find innovative ways to work together that support local farmers and help alleviate hunger in our community. Our focus will remain on our same good work while enhancing our programming with Big River Farms. This addition differentiates our work, broadens our focus on the local food system as a whole, and allow us to work more deeply on equity, access, and nutrition issues related to food and hunger. We’re excited to start working towards achieving our shared goal: a better local food system for all.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

- Become a Big River Farms CSA Member – help support new immigrant and minority farmers while enjoying fresh, local, organic produce. Sign-up online at: http://www.mnfoodassociation.org/members/types
- Take a tour of the farm on Thursday, June 8 at 10am or Monday, June 12th at 5pm. RSVP to Emily at eeddy@thefoodgroupmn.org or 763-450-3868
- Save the Date for “Eat Local Farm Tour” at Big River Farms on Saturday, July 15th
- Volunteer | Donate
It was 7:30pm on a summer evening. Sara was waiting patiently at a neighborhood food shelf for a family who was scheduled to come at 7pm. The father called earlier that day to schedule the appointment. He recently lost his job and his family was struggling to make ends meet. He and his wife needed help in feeding their children. Now, they were late.

Concerned, Sara placed a phone call. She got ahold of the father. He apologized for missing the appointment, and offered an explanation – the electricity was shut off that day because they couldn’t pay their utility bill. He expressed how hard it was to explain to their young children why the lights and television weren’t working. And he wasn’t sure what to do.

But Sara knew. She helps families every day. She told him how to apply for Energy Assistance to get the electricity turned back on. Sara also made sure they set up another appointment to come to the food shelf the next evening. The father couldn’t express enough how much it meant to him that Sara called. He promised to show up the next evening. And his family did - to get the nutritious food they needed.

We remain extremely proud of our network of food shelf partners. They continue to help families struggling with hunger in many ways. They know their clients will need other types of assistance – job training, foreclosure prevention, crisis management – to name of few. Assistance they can’t directly give, but know how to provide direction.

Our network of food shelf partners know how to get the nutritious food and resources their clients need. We work together to make sure food shelves have the food and support they need to serve the heightened levels of food shelf visits in our state. Your generosity remains a vital resource in helping food shelves do the great work they do. Through your gifts, food shelves in more than 18 counties ensure struggling families have access to “good foods in the good fight against hunger”.

Together, let’s continue to help our food shelf partners meet the needs of families that contact them each day. Let’s continue to be a reliable resource for them in getting the nutritious food every Minnesotan deserves.

“The state of hunger in MN
Adults, children, and seniors made 3,327,388 visits to food shelves in 2016. Since the recession, reaching over 3 million food shelf visits in a year has become the new normal for the emergency food system.

-Data from Hunger Solutions Minnesota.
LEARN MORE ABOUT OUR WORK & HELP FIGHT HUNGER WITH US

Network News
SPRING 2017

In this issue...
• A New Program
• Letter from Lori
• Helping our Neighbors
• State of Hunger In MN

Volunteer
Join us for upcoming individual volunteer opportunities. New this month - we have added Tuesday dates to the schedule!

Tuesdays: May 23 & June 6 - 9 to 11 am
Wednesday: June 14 - 5 to 7 pm

To sign up contact Dan Johnson: 763-450-3889 or djohnson@thefoodgroupmn.org

Take a tour
Come check out our warehouse and operations. Get an up-close glimpse into our work in action.

Tours take place June 6 at 5 pm & July 13 at 10 am.

RSVP to Emily Eddy White: 763-450-3868 or eeddy@thefoodgroupmn.org

Hunger Bash
save the date

An evening benefiting The Food Group
September 8, 2017

dinner • auction • entertainment

Join us September 8 at McNamara Alumni Center for the 6th annual Hunger Bash gala benefiting The Food Group. The event includes live & silent auctions, games, great food & drink, live music & a brief program.

Tickets available June 1 at www.thefoodgroupmn.org