

For Immediate Release
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Land Link Landowner Information Session March 24 Seeks to Grow new MoCo Farms

[Land Link Montgomery](#) is a program seeking to match aspiring and expanding farmers with local landowners offering long term leases. The program seeks overcome high land prices to jump start new farm businesses in Montgomery County and strengthen the local food system.

Since 2011, Land Link Montgomery has matched farmers with 500 acres of land by connecting private landowners with farmers from all backgrounds looking to get started. The mechanism is a website where farmers and landowners post anonymous listings and contact each other through the portal to discuss lease agreements. **“It’s like a dating site,”** says Kristina Bostick, the program administrator, **“we set farmers and landowners up to discuss what they are looking for, hopefully they make a match and we all reap the benefits of increased local food production.”** The site currently lists 45 land seekers and 16 landowners. Since the pandemic, there has been a marked increase in land seekers entering the program. In order to promote the program to more landowners, an information session will be held on March 24th (on zoom) at 7:30pm. ([RSVP Here](#))

“We really want to invite anyone with any amount of land to join us and find out more,” Bostick says, **“the needs really vary but a number of these farmers are looking for about an acre to get started.”**

The benefits of the program to landowners go beyond lease income. **“I feel like I can help with food security, it is a really good feeling,”** says Susan Davis, hosting a new farmer Nia Nyamweya on just under an acre in Barnesville. Both Nia and Susan will join the info session to discuss how they came to the program and answer any questions from attendees.

Land Link Montgomery is project of [Montgomery Countryside Alliance \(MCA\)](#), a small nonprofit charged with the protection of the County’s Agricultural Reserve, a 93,000 acre area of the county with a special class of zoning designated for Agriculture and open space since 1980.

Despite the protections for farming provided by the Reserve, purchasing land is far out of reach for aspiring farmers. **“Farmers make about a starting teacher salary, you can’t even afford a town house on a starting teacher’s salary in Montgomery County, how are you going to afford farmland?”** Asks Woody Woodroof of Red Wiggler Farm in MCA’s [‘Growing Legacy’ documentary about the Ag Reserve.](#)

Montgomery County is an area of high demand for local and sustainably grown food, leases of 5 or more years are the tool to get farmers growing to meet this demand. Matches include popular farms that sell at local farmers markets, including Dodo Farms, Passion to Seed Gardening, Your Chef’s Table Farm and more. More than 60% of farmers in the Ag Reserve lease their land from landowners. When Zoning Text Amendment 20-01 opening the Ag Reserve to large scale solar was first proposed, farmers were concerned that solar contracts promising ten times the going rate farmers paid would outcompete all farming throughout the entire Reserve. An amendment sponsored by Councilmember Friedson maintained the Reserve’s most productive soils (Class I and II) for farming, allowing large scale solar arrays on Class III and above soils with the goal of balancing farmers and now solar generation.

This push to bring more landowners into the program is coinciding with continuing food insecurity caused by the pandemic and a renewed reckoning with racial equity, particularly racial disparities in farm ownership. As the Justice for Black Farmers bill that would provide increased land access to farmers of marginalized backgrounds moves through congress, Land Link Montgomery is seeking to broaden land access at the local level. Though the program does not collect demographic data, the majority of land seekers in the program are from underrepresented backgrounds, including People of Color, women, immigrants and refugees. **“Teachers, Doctors, Veterans, people come to farming**

from many different backgrounds and we want to help each of them get started. The first step is land.” Said Caroline Taylor, Executive Director of Montgomery Countryside Alliance.