



*The Farm to Community Food Connection program, initiated by the Solano Land Trust, is designed to get meat and produce from local agricultural operations to families in need. (Courtesy photo)*

## Land Trust buys local livestock, produce to help farmers, families

By [Todd R. Hansen](#)

SUISUN CITY — The Solano Land Trust has gotten into the food biz.

“With donations from the community, the Land Trust has begun purchasing livestock animals at auctions, canceled their in-person events and moved online,” the nonprofit said in a statement released this week.

“Additionally, the Land Trust began purchasing and facilitating the donation of farm produce from farming families who have lost their normal markets for sale and distribution. The food is distributed through the food bank to people in need.”

The initiative is in response to Covid-19.

“The Solano Land Trust is not normally in the food relief business, but in these abnormal times the organization was looking for targeted ways to help that made sense with its overall mission,” the statement said.

“It turns out staff did not have to look far for inspiration: Cattle and sheep graze over much of the 12,000 acres of public access open space owned by the Land Trust, while farmers grow all kinds of produce upon the 11,000 acres of highly productive private working land the Land Trust has partnered to protect.”

The project started in May when the Land Trust properties were still closed to the public.

Additional funds were raised and Conservation Program Manager Tracy Ellison, who participated in FFA and 4H programs in her youth, suggested purchasing livestock animals at the Dixon May Fair online auction.

“It was pretty exciting to get down to that last pig,” Ellison said of her purchase. She won the bid at \$1,700. The swine was cut and wrapped into servings to feed a family of four.

Recently, the Land Trust purchased a 1,229-pound steer from Maritza Partida Cisneros, 15, and a 253-pound hog from Garret Seifert, 13. The teens are members of the Dixon Ridge and Maine Prairie 4-H clubs, and their animals were purchased at the Solano County Fair online auction.

To date, more than a ton of produce has been delivered to the Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano.

In partnership with Morning Sun Herb Farms, Solano Land Trust also handed out more than 1,000 tomato, squash, melon, pepper and eggplant plants to people around the county.

Participating produce suppliers in the program include Full Belly Farms and Eatwell Farms.

The Food Bank of Contra Costa and Solano regularly serves an estimated 43,650 people in Solano County – including 14,080 children – but with Covid-19, that number is expected to climb.

Solano Land Trust expects to continue the program until October.

“Solano County is fortunate to have independent farms and ranches just outside the major cities of the region, but not all citizens get a taste of this bounty or even though its out there,” the Land Trust said in the statement.

“Although it was developed under grim circumstances, the project has inspiring future potential, and lines up with the Land Trust’s mission to ‘protect land to ensure a healthy environment, keep ranching and farming families on their properties, and inspire a love of the land.’”