

of color, and was surprised that for some, such an idea was not even on their radar. People actually thanked her for bringing it to their attention.

“It was so eye-opening — it was a helpful reminder for me to recognize that we have a lot of work to do, and we have to start somewhere,” she says.

Reno, who recently began working as an assistant planner with the West Central Initiative Foundation, undertook the market analysis for the Community Assistantship Program, which is coordinated by the University of Minnesota’s Center for Urban and Regional Affairs and the Regional Sustainable Development Partnerships. As a result of the slight side path her research took, Reno feels the final report has a wider audience than she had originally envisioned. Besides cooperatives like Agua Gorda looking for tips on how to access local, wholesale markets, the study has a message for anyone interested in creating communities that have room for all types of food and farming enterprises, owned and operated by all sorts of people.

Lack of local wholesale markets in the communities farmers live and work in is a problem for a lot of producers, and Reno says at a time when the COVID-19 pandemic is showing the fragility of the mainstream food system, there’s a prime opportunity to create a more resilient infrastructure based on localized production and distribution systems. That’s an important lesson to keep in mind for any farmer, business owner, or local service provider, no matter what their color.

“We get excited about this idea of local foods and selling to urban centers, but there’s so much more diversity within our food system that doesn’t get a lot of attention, especially in Minnesota,” says Reno. “There’s a whole other side of the population that lives in small towns and rural places, and they want to eat good food too.”

And those eaters, through their buying choices and support of public policy, can have a lot of influence over what type of farm and food system dominates their community. Reno says for her, this research also brought home an important lesson about how widespread change occurs in our communities — it starts with individual action.

“Figure out where you are on your spectrum of cultural competency and understanding and don’t be afraid to fail and to stumble along the way and make a fool of yourself,” she says. “What matters is the attempt, and the intent.” □

## Taking Advantage of this Moment & Opportunity

Emily Reno’s spring 2020 study for Agua Gorda Cooperative is available at [conservancy.umn.edu](http://conservancy.umn.edu) by searching the title “Taking Advantage of this Moment and Opportunity: Regional Market Analysis and Marketing Recommendations.”

### Emerging Farmers

For more information on the Minnesota Department of Agriculture’s Emerging Farmers initiative, including its recent report to the Minnesota Legislature, see [www.mda.state.mn.us/emerging-farmers-working-group](http://www.mda.state.mn.us/emerging-farmers-working-group).



TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THIS MOMENT AND OPPORTUNITY

Regional market analysis and marketing recommendations

Prepared for  
Agua Gorda Cooperative

Spring  
2020

## LSP’s Core Values: Stewardship, Justice, Democracy, Health & Community

*Vision for the Future: 2019-2024* is the Land Stewardship Project’s long range plan for working toward our goals of creating a sustainable, just, farm and food system. The plan opens by presenting LSP’s core values:

→ **Stewardship** is the value of living in right relationship with the land and all that is connected to it: the soil, the water, the air, the plants, microorganisms, animals, and our climate. It means giving to the land and receiving from it, and caring about the entire biotic community. Conservation-minded farmers who live on the land, farm it, and care for it are essential to stewardship of farmland.

→ **Justice** means there is economic, racial, and gender equity for farmers, workers, and all those who are engaged in the food and agriculture system. It means the achievement of related rights like food sovereignty for all communities, and high-quality healthcare for everyone.

→ **Democracy** means a society in which

the people hold the power to govern, in which those people directly impacted by issues name solutions, set priorities, and win change. It means the health and well-being of people and the land is put before corporate profits.

→ **Health** is the value of nourishing the beauty, function, and vitality of an ecosystem made up of people, landscapes, plants, animals, soil, and water. The health of the land is a gift that current generations are obligated to provide for future generations.

→ **Community** is the value of understanding our interdependence and caring for the relationships that sustain each of us. Living in community we are more resilient, creative, resourceful, and powerful — we have greater ability to be the change we seek in the world. □

LSP’s long range plan is available at [www.landstewardshipproject.org/about/longrangeplan](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/about/longrangeplan). Free paper copies are available by calling LSP’s Minneapolis office at 612-722-6377.

## LSP ‘Rural Voices for Racial Justice’ Videos

The Land Stewardship Project has launched a new video series, “Rural Voices for Racial Justice,” featuring LSP members across the Upper Midwest who are amplifying their voices for racial justice in the food and farming system. Links to the video series are on LSP’s Racial Justice web page at [www.landstewardshipproject.org/about/racialjustice](http://www.landstewardshipproject.org/about/racialjustice).

### Racial Justice E-letter

While on the Racial Justice web page, you can sign-up for *Amplify!*, LSP’s racial justice hotlist. Stay up-to-date on LSP’s equity work, upcoming events, and opportunities to engage while connecting with other people doing important racial justice work in their communities.



Hog farmer Dayna Burtness speaking on a “Rural Voices for Racial Justice” video.