



Leading an Ecological and Accessible Food System (LEAF)

LEAF is fighting food insecurity by building lasting connections to local food systems, facilitating participation in regenerative growing practices, and developing healthy eating habits—all while combating climate change.

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ABOUT STONE BARNS

The Stone Barns Center for Food & Agriculture (SBC) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit farm, education, and research center with a mission to catalyze an ecological food culture. Our Hudson Valley campus, shared with our partner restaurant Blue Hill at Stone Barns (Blue Hill), is a living laboratory where farmers, chefs, scientists, and eaters come together to push the boundaries of sustainable farming and eating.

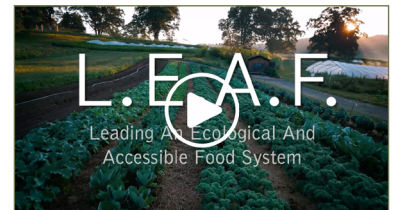
THE PROBLEM

1 in 9 New Yorkers face food insecurity, with low-income communities of color affected at double the rate of white communities. While food distribution is a critical baseline solution, most programs lack thoughtful community engagement, resulting in the provision of foods that are not culturally relevant and are highly processed or nutritionally insufficient.

SBC launched LEAF in 2023 in response to the lack of access to nutritious agricultural resources in the South Bronx, and to spread awareness about the benefits of fresh, local, seasonal produce grown using regenerative farming practices.

THE LEAF MODEL

LEAF is a community-driven evolution of previous SBC food distribution and agricultural education programs as a unified resource for some of New York City and Westchester's most underserved and food-insecure communities. Our objectives are: to improve community nutrition and access to fresh, healthy food; to provide hands-on training for participants to grow their own food at home and/or in community gardens; to educate participants about regenerative farming and how food choices affect the environment and human health; and to empower families to become engaged participants in their local food system while advocating for their own environmental and food futures.



LEAF builds upon SBC's long-standing relationships with community gardens and organizations in New York City and Westchester. We work closely with a task force of local partners who are deeply involved in their communities, helping us to understand the specific needs of LEAF participants and support our fresh food distribution and supplemental programs. Task force members include [Word Up Community Bookshop](#), [UpBeat NYC](#), and [La Morada Community Kitchen](#) in the South Bronx, [RSHM Life Center](#) in Sleepy Hollow, and representatives from [Columbia University](#).

SBC distributes fresh, locally grown produce, grains, and meat from the farm as well as culturally relevant prepared meals to community members every two weeks between April and November. Additionally, SBC: distributes plant material, soil pouches, and gardening tools; provides training to help participants grow their own food; invites participants to SBC for special educational experiences and to participate in existing SBC programming free of charge; and conducts surveys, in collaboration with Columbia University Teachers College, to track LEAF's effectiveness through an ongoing series of behavioral research studies.

During community education events, participants learn about soil health, sustainable farming, and the effects of climate change on agriculture directly from SBC farmers, and about simple and healthy ways to prepare the food they're growing directly from Blue Hill cooks.

In our pilot year, 2023, LEAF served 80 South Bronx-based families (300+ people). In 2024, all families voluntarily re-enrolled in the program and we launched an expansion in Tarrytown and Sleepy Hollow, serving 40 additional families for a total of more than 525 individual participants. We are now seeking funding for LEAF 2025 to expand the program's reach to a minimum of 60 additional families (300+ additional participants) who have requested to join. \$2,000 is enough to support one family for an entire LEAF season.