

## Help sought for farmers flooded out



An image from the World Farmers site off Route 117, from the website

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Item Editor

LANCASTER – With all the rain this year, crops are being lost.

A Farmer Flood Relief Campaign is being held for the farmers of Flats Mentor Farm, off Route 117, who have experienced catastrophic flooding, according to a letter from Liz O’Gilvie, director of the Springfield Food Policy Council, posted on a GoFundMe site. The address is <https://www.gofundme.com/f/FMF-flood-relief-2023>

World Farmers operates Flats Mentor Farm and includes immigrant and refugee farmers who have been working the site for years and selling throughout the region.

Maria Moreira, Flats Mentor Farm founder, wrote on the website, “The impact of the rains has been, once again, devastating, with a total flood at Flats Mentor Farm in Lancaster, our largest landsite, and near total flooding at our second largest landsite.

“All fields were completely submerged at Flats Mentor Farm (FMF), and all 214 farmers who plant on the 70 acres at FMF have lost 100% of their crops, and the 87 farmers supported on our second largest landsite have experienced 65% crop loss,” Moreira wrote. “The value of the loss is immeasurable and impacts not just the farmers’ livelihoods and food security, but also the communities who depend on the cultural variety of FMF crops.”

O’Gilvie wrote “This was the second flood of the season, after a series of excessive rainfalls throughout the late spring and early summer.”

The farmers are feeling the effect.

One, named Ruth, said “This is the worst rain I’ve seen. And they didn’t come early. We are not going to be able to harvest. It’s like a lake or an ocean here. Otherwise, this is the best place to farm. Usually, we used to get the best greens here. But now, all the hard work we did it gone. It’s very hard.”

Another, named Mary, said, “The water is too much. I have a plot, but I can’t even reach there with my boots on. The water is too high. I had just planted the whole plot with corn, beans, vegetables ... all is gone. I lost everything.”

Josephine called it “crazy. I’ve never seen a year like this since I started farming here. Nothing like this. Nothing. It’s supposed to dry, but the water is still flowing all over the place. It’s not going anywhere. It’s hard to put my heart into this after losing so much.”

The farmers do not have an easy time in the best of times, according to O’Gilvie.

“FMF farmers engage in labor-intensive farming with minimal machinery across multiple land sites. This requires weekly travel between sites and to and from their homes across Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and New Hampshire. Farmers were only a few weeks, or even days, away from harvesting and selling their crops before they were taken by the floods,” she wrote. “The loss of income is compounded by the fact that at this point in the season, there is not enough time left to replant most of the crops that were lost.”

In addition to selling the crops at market, the food grown feeds their families, friends and neighbors.

“The flooding has put many already food insecure families and children at even greater risk for not having enough food to eat,” she wrote. “This is their second total loss of crops due to flooding in just three years, and the fourth season in a row of business uncertainty due to market changes from COVID, and an extreme drought in 2022.”

The Farmer Flood Relief Campaign is hoping to raise \$100,000 for the 270 immigrant and refugee farmers of Flats Mentor Farm.

In addition to giving to the GoFundMe website, one can send a check, payable to World Farmers, Inc., mailed to 769 Main St., Box 112, Lancaster, MA 01523 and visit them on their website, at: [www.worldfarmers.org/flood-2023](http://www.worldfarmers.org/flood-2023).