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For the first time, SAFSF takes weight of \$3.1 billion in philanthropic investment to Capitol Hill

Sustainable Agriculture & Food System Funders (SAFSF) share federal policy principles and offer partnership with lawmakers

Washington, DC, Tuesday, June 13, 2023 — Funders in the SAFSF network log many miles every year walking fields with farmers, or in communities across the country working with those directly on the ground building sustainable agriculture, food, and fiber systems. For the first time, however, nearly 100 funders from 34 states walked the halls of Capitol Hill to visit with 33 different Congressional offices, as well as staff members of the House and Senate Agriculture Committees. Representing philanthropies investing \$3.1 billion annually in the U.S. and internationally, funder representatives discussed the [SAFSF Federal Policy Principles](#). In addition, funders highlighted how philanthropy and the federal government can work together to make our agriculture, food, and fiber systems more sustainable and productive for the benefit of farmers, communities, and a healthy population.

“This is the first time in our more than 20-year history we have conducted a Hill Day around a set of common federal policy principles. As a network, we believe federal policies can and should support just and sustainable agriculture, food systems, and fiber systems, in which it is possible for all people to equitably participate in and benefit from these economies,” said SAFSF Executive Director Virginia Clarke.

Federal policy has a direct impact on farming livelihoods, who has the opportunity to farm, how and what is produced, rural community vitality, and how economically distressed families eat. SAFSF’s Federal Policy Principles focus on four key areas to address these issues:

- closing the racial and economic gaps that are the result of subsidized farm consolidation and racial discrimination;
- protecting our rich agricultural lands and long-term environmental health by supporting conservation-based farming systems;
- repairing and rebuilding thriving rural communities damaged by federal policy; and
- building resilient local and regional food and fiber systems.

“Our Hill Day meetings were a great opportunity to build relationships and explore how philanthropy can collaborate with federal policymakers to advance our common federal policy principles. We are inviting them “into the field” to see how SAFSF network members are investing in communities in their state and districts, as well as to connect policymakers directly to the grantees who are carrying out that work on the ground,” noted Mark Muller, Executive Director, Regenerative Agriculture Foundation and SAFSF Board Member.

SAFSF’s Hill Day was part of their 2023 Forum, held in Washington, D.C. for the first time. The SAFSF Forum attracts funders, food system practitioners, researchers, and advocates from around the country to strategize approaches to building more resilient, sustainable, and equitable farm, food, and fiber systems.

Tenzin Dolkar, Program Officer with the Midwest Climate and Energy Program of the McKnight Foundation based in Minneapolis, MN, noted, “As funders, we are key partners for the federal government. We provide matching funds for federal programs, investment capital to seed new ideas, and direct connections to nonprofits doing the heavy lifting in communities across the country. Working together in partnership is key to addressing core challenges and fostering opportunities to level the playing field, lifting up the voices not often heard while centering the leadership of farmers and rural communities’ prosperity.”

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ABOUT SAFSF

SAFSF is the leading national network for philanthropic grantmakers and mission-based investors supporting just and sustainable food and agriculture systems. SAFSF’s 100+ member organizations include community and corporate foundations, private foundations, health conversion foundations, investment organizations, individual donors, and investors. Collectively, SAFSF’s members are responsible for roughly \$3.1 billion annually in philanthropic funding, of which \$264 million is specifically directed to support justice, farms and farming systems, environmental sustainability, markets, health, agricultural products, and much more within the farm, food, and fiber system.