Infrastructure & Equipment Financing

For Food and Farm Businesses in Western North Carolina

Partner Community Capital (PCAP) and **EmPOWERing Mountain Food Systems (EMFS)**, a project of the Center for Environmental Farming Systems, are teaming up to provide affordable financing and support to small and mid-scale and limited resource farmers, fiber farmers and food businesses to obtain the infrastructure they need to expand and grow their businesses.

This grant/loan program is designed to "buy down" the cost of purchasing equipment or infrastructure. Eligible uses can range from cold storage and value-added processing equipment to planting and harvesting equipment.

Who Is Eligible?

1. **North Carolina businesses that farm in, produce in, or purchase from producers in twelve western counties of NC (Buncombe, Madison, Rutherford, Burke, McDowell, Swain, Cleveland, Mitchell, Watauga, Haywood, Yancey, Jackson and Qualla Boundary & Tribal Members) who currently sell or process vegetables, fruit, meat, fiber or other agricultural products or run other food-related businesses.**
2. **Have a business plan in place for their business.**
3. **Attend at least one counseling session with their local Small Business Center or EMFS Agribusiness prior to financing to create loan package.**

EMFS and the Small Business Centers will work with you to develop your loan application!

Jamie and Alena Melton with their kids Reese and Abigail at Jaar Farms, near Sylva. The Meltons participated in our Infrastructure and Equipment Financing program.

"The loan process was a really good experience. (EMFS) helped us create a business plan, create a budget and create a plan for the next year on how to reach the goals that we wanted to reach. And it benefitted us because we've since used the business plan and the projected budget to help make our farm system work."

– Alena Melton, Jaar Farms

Over For More

How Does the Financing Work?

The program is eligible for equipment/infrastructure purchases of $10,500 or more.

Grant

The EMFS grant will cover up to 30% of the cost of the infrastructure or equipment being purchased. Minimum grant: $3,150 (30% of 10,500). Maximum grant: $7,500 (for projects of $25,000 or more).

Loan

- Use of funds: Purchase of infrastructure by eligible businesses.
- Minimum loan of $10,500, based on detailed invoices prepared by vendors.
- Terms range from 24 to 120 months, depending on loan size and farm/company's ability to repay.
- Interest rate: Fixed, 8.5%-10.5% as of 4/2025. Rates reset after 5 yrs. for loans with terms > 5 yrs.
- Origination fee: 1% of loan amount.
- Collateral: A first lien on the equipment/infrastructure to be purchased; additional collateral may be required (e.g., for used equipment or self-constructed infrastructure).
- Guarantee: Personal guarantee by any owner of 20% or more of the enterprise.
- Underwriting includes review of credit report and tax returns.
- Borrower equity: A minimum of 5% required on all loans.

First Steps

- Fill out this interest form to see if you are eligible: **http://bit.ly/4cTlAQJ**
- Obtain a quote and/or prepare an enterprise budget for your purchase.
- After completing the interest form, EMFS will reach out to confirm your eligibility and will connect you with a Partner representative to discuss your financing needs and determine if a loan is right for you.
- If required by EMFS or PCAP participate in training and/or business counseling as requested.
- Provide PCAP with annual tax returns including all statements for the life of the loan.
- Participate in evaluation related to the impact of these funds on your business.

General Inquiries/Get Started

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About Partner Capital

Partner Community Capital™ is a 501(c)3 small business loan fund that supports entrepreneurs creating jobs and businesses in underserved communities in central Appalachia and the Southeast. PCAP is deeply committed to working with borrowers, other lenders, funders, investors, and community leaders as partners in supporting communities to develop healthy, more diversified, and resilient local economies. **Read more at partnercapital.org.**

About EMFS

EmPOWERing Mountain Food Systems (EMFS) is a project focused on bringing expanded opportunities & capacity to food and farm businesses across the Western North Carolina region. EMFS is based at the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians Cooperative Extension Office through a partnership with the Center for Environmental Farming Systems. Funding Partners include Dogwood Health Trust, WNC Bridge Foundation, and the Appalachian Regional Commission. **Read more at go.ncsu.edu/emfs**