****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****

Foodshed Alliance Welcomes Baris Sonmez as New Executive Director

A New Chapter of Growth, Innovation, and Community Impact Begins

Hope, NJ [March, 2026] — Foodshed Alliance is proud to announce the appointment of Baris Sonmez as its new Executive Director, marking an exciting and strategic new chapter for the organization and the regional food system it serves.

Sonmez brings a powerful combination of hands-on agricultural experience and high-level financial leadership that positions Foodshed Alliance for long-term growth and sustained community impact. '*I'm honored to be chosen by the board of trustees to lead Foodshed Alliance*, 'states Sonmez, '*This is an organization anchored by 18 years of farming and community impact with a growing reputation of leadership in addressing food insecurity and river friendly, sustainable farming in New Jersey.'*

Previously, as Founder and CEO of LifeCap Farms in Jersey City, Sonmez built a specialty mushroom farm from the ground up, designing sustainable growing systems and forging relationships with local restaurants, grocers, and wellness retailers. His experience working directly in food production gives him firsthand understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing New Jersey farmers.

In addition to his farming background, Sonmez held senior roles at BASF and Johnson & Johnson, where he managed multimillion-dollar budgets, implemented global financial systems, and led cross-functional teams. Across these roles, Sonmez became known for aligning mission with strategy, an approach that will directly strengthen Foodshed Alliance's programs and growth trajectory.

Sonmez has demonstrated a strong commitment to food access, establishing Jersey City's first rooftop garden to donate produce to nonprofits and served on the board of Green Acre Community Garden in Paterson, where all food is distributed free to the community.

At Foodshed Alliance, he will leverage his farming and financial expertise to strengthen internal systems, enhance programs, and deliver measurable value to farmers across the region.

'*It's a pleasure to turn over the reins of Foodshed Alliance 2.0 to Baris*', states outgoing (Interim) Executive Director, Warren Love, who will continue as treasurer of the board and focus on project responsibility for the Center for Food, Farming and the Environment at SAgE Farms. This leadership transition reflects Foodshed Alliance's continued commitment to strengthening sustainable agriculture, protecting the environment, and ensuring access to healthy local food for all.

About Foodshed Alliance
Foodshed Alliance serves farmers, families, and communities throughout Northwest New Jersey through farmer support initiatives, land access programs, local food distribution efforts, and environmental stewardship. As the organization expands its reach, Sonmez's leadership will focus on strengthening internal systems, building strategic partnerships, supporting fundraising efforts, and ensuring that donor investments translate into measurable impact for local farms and food-insecure families.

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