

Salvation Farms – House Agriculture Committee

March 17th 2015

Mission

Salvation Farms' mission is to increase resilience in Vermont's food system through agricultural surplus management.

Our mission is achieved by fostering collaborative, cross-sector partnerships that engage and utilize available resources, skills and knowledge to create efficient practices for managing Vermont's farm surplus foods.

Primary Goals

1. Reducing food waste on farms.
2. Increasing use of locally grown foods.
3. Fostering an appreciation for Vermont's agricultural heritage and future.

Programs

To achieve our goals, Salvation Farms developed the Vermont Gleaning Collective: a network of programs that actively engage community members in the responsible management of available farm-fresh food resources, through gleaning. This statewide collective consists of food focused organizations, like the Rutland Area Farm & Food Link and the Intervale Center, which are committed to increasing our state's food independence.

Our vision also includes the development of the Vermont Commodity Program. We know from experience that much of the farm surplus currently captured is lost prior to being utilized. We have developed partnerships to help us move and process large volumes of surplus. Partners such as Black River Produce, the Vermont Food Venture Center, and the Southeast State Correctional Facility enable us to easily clean and pack raw surplus or create minimally processed products for distribution to institutions that serve Vermont's vulnerable.

Impact

Vermont Gleaning Collective in 2014

- 5 independent community-based organizations
- 54 different crops totaling 120,000+ pounds, gleaned from 47 farms, distributed to 57 different agencies
- 2400+ volunteer hours contributed
- Website created to recruit volunteers, announce gleans and track data

Vermont Commodity Program 2012 to Date

- More than 13,500 servings of surplus crops were processed (at community/incubation kitchens including Green Mountain College and the Vermont Food Venture Center) and froze for distribution to food shelves and meal sites
- 50 inmates have participated in the "Vermont Commodity Program" pilot at SESCOF; all have received on-the-job training, some trainings included certifications of completion
- More than 275,000 pounds of 7 different crops from only 14 farms, have been received, sorted, and packed at SESCOF
- These crops have been distributed to 14 sites including SESCOF, Southern State Correctional Facility, and local schools as well as into the Vermont Foodbank's network of more than 200 agencies statewide
- SF has invested \$7,231 in Black River Produce to transport produce into and out of SESCOF

The Opportunity, Our Strategy & Our Evolution

Salvation Farms is committed to the efficient rescue and integrate Vermont's farm surplus into food access sites that serve some of our most vulnerable neighbors; the young, the sick, the elderly, the incarcerated, and the hungry. We estimate that more than 85% of available farm surplus crops in Vermont go unused annually, close to 2 million pounds. With a 14% food insecurity rate and 19 million institutional meals served annually in Vermont, Salvation Farms increases local food consumption by making unmarketed farm crops accessible.

Salvation Farms is building a new segment of the food system that works in tandem to the for-profit food system, supplementing traditional food sourcing avenues. Dependent on citizen and cross sector participation that results in experiential learning opportunities across socio-demographic populations, we increase individual and institutional investments in Vermont's agriculture, thus strengthening appreciation for agriculture in Vermont building food system resiliency and independence.

Our work goes beyond the operational activities of capture and distribution. We strive to provide financial benefit to farmers and to build a skilled agricultural and food system workforce. And we are seeking to understand and address the liabilities inherent in minimally processed donated surplus food utilized by institutions so this can be a viable and reliable sector of the food economy.

Our History

After a pilot year Salvation Farms was established in 2005 under the fiscal umbrella of the Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont to build a replicable model for community-based gleaning. Gleaning is the act of reaping after the harvest, historically done by the poor. As a proof of concept, we were instrumental in instituting the Vermont Foodbank's gleaning program and have advised most gleaning initiatives statewide. Since developing the practice of professional community-based gleaning more than ten years ago, Salvation Farms has assisted with the capture of more than 1.5 million pounds of Vermont's surplus farm food. Out of our roots in gleaning our approach has evolved to include aggregation, processing, and workforce development.

Since obtaining our federal non-profit status in 2012 we are most proud of two achievements: our creation of an online platform supporting communities to organize gleaning and track the impact of their work; the engagement of inmate work-crews in the cleaning, quality assessment and packaging of more than 275,000 pounds of donated crops.