

Codman Community Farms

Five Year Plan

2021-2025

This document was prepared collaboratively. Each section was written by one of the authors listed below. It is a different format from prior years, as we endeavor to build upon the **Five Year Plan 2020-2024** as the base, with updates related to program changes, farming operations, building and grounds and financials.

5-Year Plan Committee:

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Executive Summary:

Codman Community Farms (CCF) operates as a 501(c)3 non-profit based on 18 acres of land owned by the Town of Lincoln. In the whole of Lincoln, we are the largest leaseholder of conservation land with over 80 acres leased from the Conservation Commission and an additional 40+ acres leased from land trusts and private landowners. CCF manages its own budget derived from sales of agricultural products, donations, memberships and a small endowment. With all of our endeavors we seek to retain a mindful presence towards the land, the community and our animals. Through all of this, our goal remains to consistently and regularly refine and hone our overall operations and farming practices in keeping with our mission as responsible members of our community.

As we near our 50th anniversary of a community farm, we have entered a new era in our agricultural mission. Our farming practices are widely acknowledged to be progressive, sustainable, humane and environmentally sound. We practice regenerative agriculture which restores degraded land, builds fertility and our new no-till drill helps to improve our pastures, and the town fields, so that we can sequester more carbon in the soil. CCF prides itself on our healthy, locally-grown, sustainable produced food which is vital for the health of our community, and the land on which we live.

As with much of the country, we found ourselves slowly emerging from the pandemic in 2021 as vaccinations expanded in the spring, and the number of covid cases slowed down over the summer. We were cautiously optimistic that the surge in Farm Store sales in 2020 would be carried over into 2021, and that has generally been true. We had an extremely wet summer with July rainfall of nearly 20 inches hitting an all-time record. While needed after last year's drought, this was almost too much rain impacting fields, animals' pastures and our new vegetable production.

We added to our staff to manage the growing business, and we currently have four full-time staff – Pete Lowy, Farm Manager; Jared Martin, Assistant Farm Manager; Tyler Kennedy, Farm Store Manager; and a Market Garden Manager position we are currently recruiting to fill for the 2022 season. We also hired Jess Myles as our Education, Outreach and Volunteer Coordinator, and Ginger Reiner as our part-time Finance and Administrative Manager. We employed a number of seasonal farm workers, who worked during the peak of the farming season from April-early November. We also now outsource a portion of our financial management to a financial services company, eCratchit, to help us manage our increasingly complex finances.

We were able to welcome the community back to the Farm for some of our favorite community events, held outdoors and slightly modified. Our first event was the resumption of the June BBQ dinner, which is normally a campout/BBQ dinner for young families. We eliminated the campout component, and served our own Codman meats to a crowd of about 180 folks under a beautiful starry sky. We held two family-friendly movie events called "Farm Flicks" in the rear of "C" barn to a small crowd of eager children and adults alike (with a Fire detail, of course). And, this October we held our Codman Fair to the delight of young families, and three weeks later, we roasted two of our own pigs on an outdoor grill to a sold-out

crowd at the Codman Harvest Feast, along with a live bluegrass band. In November, we held our Volunteer Appreciation Brunch inside our new greenhouse to everyone's delight.

We held our annual dinner with the Codman Trustees this year after a hiatus last year. For the first time ever, we held dinner outside in the vibrant vegetable gardens adjacent to a beautiful pergola that an Eagle Scout made for us last year. It was a truly memorable night for everyone as the weather was perfect and the board of directors provided all of the homemade dishes from the farm's bounty of meats and vegetables.

This year a number of board members participated in the town's WIDE (Welcome, Inclusion, Diversity and Equity) anti-racist training sessions to help us evaluate our own role in being more inclusive and equitable at Codman Farm. We have created a DEI Committee to help us understand our past history with slavery, and what concrete steps we can take to be more inclusive. We are looking at our mission statement, communication about our past history, our events, our Farm Store and our outreach. Our new point-of-sale system will allow us to accept SNAP payments, which is one big step forward.

Despite the pandemic, we were able to push forward with some of our long-term buildings and grounds plans to continue to upgrade the infrastructure of the farm buildings. We are nearing completion of our commercial kitchen after some delays due to covid and other reasons. We finished and occupied our new greenhouse that is the center of our market garden venture. This greenhouse allows us to propagate and grow from seed all the plants we need for our market garden as well as additional seedlings for sale to the community. Lastly, we have installed garage doors inside of Barn D to seal the space against the weather in the colder months, thus providing more usable work space for our farming operations.

In 2021, we rehired an Education, Outreach and Volunteer Coordinator after a year without that position. Jess Myles joined us part-time as a seasoned professional with an extensive background in agriculture and education. With Jess's help, we were able to re-engage volunteers for help with gardening projects, egg washing, chicken catching and other valuable tasks. Jess also spearheaded some new programs for us including Barnyard Buddies, Sugar Shack Storytime, Farm Flicks and Wreath-making workshops. We plan to expand the depth and breadth of our educational programs next year. We strive to make education a part of all that we do with more educational signage in the Farm Store, more sign boards on the fields where we pasture animals, and Pete's bi-monthly informational newsletters which are sent electronically to farm friends and supporters.

With Tim Higgins guidance, we have revised and shortened the content of our 5 Year Plan, trying to make it more manageable to write and to read (last year's plan was 39 pages). Tim suggested that we use last year's plan, 2020-2024, as a baseline, and provide a brief update touching on contemplated program changes, changes in the land or buildings, facilities assessments and updated financials. We hope that you agree we have accomplished that goal.

Farming and Agriculture:

CCF currently operates on roughly 18 acres in the center of Lincoln where the home farm and barns are located and we lease over 140 additional acres of land to support our overall farm operation. We farm 80 acres of Lincoln conservation land which are used for our livestock production where we raise 100% grass fed Red Devon beef cattle, heritage-breed pigs, laying hens, meat chickens, turkeys, and occasionally lesser amounts of sheep, goats and layer ducks. We also have a small high-density fruiting orchard and in 2021 added a 1-acre vegetable market and flower garden. All of our livestock are grown using rotational grazing methods and fed certified organic grain.

Our farming program continues to lie at the core of CCF's mission. Over the past six years we have expanded our operation, improved the infrastructure on the home-farm by adding water systems, fencing, two new high tunnels for growing crops and seedlings, cleared invasive plants, and re-purposed the use of the barns to better serve this growth. We have also upgraded our farming equipment and increased staffing levels as we have grown as an organization.

Our 2021 livestock production included approximately:

- 40 head of cattle, of which 11 are breeding cows, 1 is a bull, and the remaining are growing calves and yearlings.
- Our egg laying flock has remained at a stable size of 1300-1400 hens.
- Our pig production remains stable at 100-130 finished pigs per season (of which 30-50 piglets are born on the premises).
- Meat bird and turkey production remains stable at 5500 chickens and 250-300 turkeys.

All of our livestock are grown on fields in both Lincoln and Concord where we also manage land at Minuteman National Park. We practice rotational grazing which means our livestock are routinely moved through pastures to provide fresh forage and to improve pasture productivity and regrowth. This practice yields healthier and more robust livestock and builds denser pastures and more carbon rich soils.

Looking forward to the next several years, our plan is to moderate our growth with our primary focus of serving the needs of our community of customers who shop in our on-site Farm Store - which provides the majority of funding to support our operations. Our vegetable market garden has experienced tremendous success in its first year and is the one enterprise we plan on expanding slightly. The gardens provided not only nutritious produce for our community but also an opportunity for folks to volunteer and gain an appreciation for where good, wholesome food comes from. We envision expanding our vegetable production further into Police Pasture and possibly even onto Codman North field where we are currently using pigs to renovate the rear section of the field which is experiencing an increase of invasive horse nettle. Any field usage change will be carried out with the approval and coordination with the Lincoln Conservation Commission who oversees our field usage.

Overall the farm has reached a nice equilibrium over the past six years. With cooperative weather the fields under our care are able to grow and thrive with the grazing systems we use and the livestock stocking densities appear to be appropriate for our current land base. Field fertility is improving each

year and our ability to feed our cattle through the winter with our own hay is also improving. With the use of our new no-till drill and other equipment improvements we are increasing our efficiencies and capabilities with regards to proper land management and our close collaboration with the Conservation Commission further improves our outcomes.

As the farm continues on its trajectory of growing food for the local and regional community, we are also continuing to refine and improve our infrastructure and management systems. As previously mentioned we are expanding our outreach and education to inform the public about our innovative, pasture-based farming practices and how these practices benefit the land, animals and the public at large. In the coming years we anticipate being even better stewards of the land and demonstrating how our model of farming can not only feed our communities but improve the land under our stewardship at the same time.

Buildings and Grounds:

Since Pete's arrival in 2016, we have embarked on multiple buildings and grounds projects to address aging infrastructure and expanded needs as we grow and stabilize the farming operations. We estimate that we have spent over \$1 million dollars on infrastructure improvements over the past six years, highlighted with the new solar panels, the commercial kitchen, a new generator, the Farm Store upgrades, Barn D improvements, high tunnels for vegetable propagation, fencing, equipment upgrades etc.

In the near future, we look forward to moving ahead with the driveway and parking lot renovations to address safety, space and drainage concerns and to create a welcoming and accessible "green space" in front of the main barn, now often used as a parking lot. This plan would include an integrated crosswalk from Police Pasture to the farm, across Codman Road. Codman Farm has already contributed \$30,000 to this new driveway plan, and has offered another \$20,000 in our application for additional funding from the Community Preservation Committee.

In addition, the following projects are things that we hope to accomplish in the next five years:

- Driveway safety and parking lot improvements & renovation to the area in front of Barn C
- Safe crosswalk into Codman Farm barnyard from Codman Road
- Install a fire suppression system in barns B & C
- Move the Farm Store to the rear of Barn C
- Build an Educational Pavilion with an integrated outdoor cooking area with a wood-fired pizza oven for food related events and educational classes

We look forward to working with the Town Administrator and the Building Inspector to develop a Master Plan.

Education:

Education is a key component of our mission at CCF. In 2021, with the help of Jess Myles, we were able to offer a host of old, and new educational programs:

- Farmer's Helper - offered two times per year for younger children
- Barnyard Buddies - pairing older children with younger for a shared farm experience
- Twilight Tales - weekly chapter by chapter reading of a farm novel with older kids
- Sugar Shack Storytime - story time in the Sugar Shack with young children
- Flower wreath making workshops - very popular with adults
- Grow Your Own Mushrooms - in partnership with Fat Moon Mushrooms for adults and families
- Seed Sowing & Seed Saving Classes - two free workshops in partnership with the Concord Seed Lending Library.
- Farm Flicks - first time ever, farm-themed movies in the barn for families

When we look ahead, we hope to expand Jess's hours and build a paid internship program for 2-3 youth with hands-on farming work, hold cooking classes in the new kitchen, such as making bone broth, create a regular workshops series for adults and families in the new kitchen and garden with guest instructors and CCF staff. We wish to increase our volunteerism as we move out of covid, and share the amazing agricultural work that we are doing everyday as there are countless educational applications. We hope to reinstate our Farm Tours in the spring and the fall.

Fundraising:

In 2021, as we do each year, we raised funds through our membership drive in the spring and our annual drive at the end of the year. We raised approximately \$49,000 in our membership drive starting in the spring, and our end of the year appeal brought in close to \$27,000 in 2020-2021.

In addition, we submitted six grant requests in 2021. We wrote grants to the Codman Trust, three family foundations, and two grants for funding from the state of Massachusetts. Each year we write a grant to the Codman Trust, and this year they awarded us \$25,000 for funding for a used Holland TL – 80 hp tractor. In addition, we received \$25,000 from a family foundation for partial funding for our Educational Coordinator position, and \$5,000 from another family foundation for general operating expenses. A third family foundation has agreed to upgrade our Point of Sale system to further enhance our checkout experience and our back-end management. It will also allow us to accept SNAP payments which will allow us to serve a broader segment of the population.

The two state grants were to the MA Food Insecurity and Infrastructure Grant (\$85,000) & MDAR (\$16,000 for an 80/20% split). We were denied funding last year for the Infrastructure Grant, so we are unsure whether they will accept our application this year, or not. We have not heard a response from either grant as of yet.

In addition, we have added a donate button on our POS system in the Farm Store, and year- to-date, we have received \$9,290 in smaller and a few larger donations for the farm, and \$2,310 for donations collected for the Lincoln Food Pantry.

Finances:

Under the able leadership of Farm Manager Pete Lowy, the financial performance of Codman’s farm operations continues to be strong. Coming off of extraordinary farm store revenue growth in FY 2020 driven by Covid related demand for locally grown food, it was very difficult to predict the trajectory for 2021 and we therefore budgeted conservatively. The current forecast for the fiscal year ending December 31, 2021 anticipates full year product sales revenue of approximately \$1.8 million, slightly higher than the prior year and also comparing favorably to our budget. About half of product sales are beef, pork, eggs, chicken, turkey and vegetables grown at Codman Farm, and the other half are goods produced by other carefully selected local farms. Profitability (income from operations) for FY2021 is expected to be lower than the prior year due to needed investments in staffing and strengthening financial management infrastructure to prudently manage our higher volume of business – but still significantly in excess of our budget for the year.

Our projections for FY2023 – FY2025, we expect continuing but modest growth in farm store revenues. With profitable farm operations and continued strong community support through farm memberships and donations, we are looking forward to post-pandemic resumption and expansion of our traditional community outreach and educational programs.

It is important to note the level of operating and capital investment in farm operations. As referenced above, financial management was significantly restructured in FY2021 with the addition of a new staff position, Finance and Administrative Manager. In addition, we have contracted with an outsourced accounting services management firm, which has resulted in vastly improved financial transaction processing and monthly reporting. As discussed elsewhere in this report, major capital investments over the past year have included completion of a much-needed full renovation of our farm kitchen that will support education and classes around cooking with locally grown produce, funding of a new market garden initiative that added significant Codman grown vegetables and fruit to our product mix, and acquisitions/upgrades of farm equipment. Capital investments have been supported by fundraising and endowment distributions.

With profitable operations, strong investment market returns, and discipline around annual endowment spending, Codman’s long-term investment pool has shown significant growth over

the past few years and is expected to be near the \$2 million mark at FYE 2021. Maintaining this pool will be important to ensuring the long-term financial health and stability of CCF. In prior years, significant draws from the investment pool were needed to offset losses from farm operations; since achieving profitability under Pete Lowy's leadership, the Board has maintained a spending rate of 4 – 5% annually and all distributions are supporting capital investment rather than funding operating losses.

Significant long-term financial management objectives:

- 1.) Continue to strengthen financial infrastructure and controls to prudently manage the new mix and size of farm revenues
- 2.) Maintain operating and capital budget discipline to provide a strong basis for forward planning and appropriate allocation of financial resources
- 3.) Ensure continued growth in our long-term investment pool by maintaining a stable spending rate, and continue to direct endowment distributions to capital investments only