



March 7th 4-8PM

LAND STEWARDSHIP PROJECT

**INNOVATIVE
MARKET
FORUM**

**Hosted by LSP's Farm Viability
Steering Committee**

TC FARMS

Jack McCann

What produce and/or service does your business provide?

Our core business is pasture-based and organic-fed meats. This includes beef, pork, chicken, lamb, turkey and a wide range of organic deli meats, sausages, brats, bacon and 'warm and serve' meals. We also partner with some producers to provide items like apples, garlic, bread, mushrooms, etc.

What is the size of your business?

In 2019, we expect to deliver ~\$1M of retail sales and about ~\$250k of wholesale products.

What are your market channels?

~95% of our operating profit comes from direct to consumer sales; however, we would like to see more wholesale options to make our products available to diners and grocery shoppers.

Who are your customers?

The vast majority of our gross margin comes from direct-to-consumer sales. We have about 700 members with a wide range of demographics. Most are upper-middle class families, but we have many single person households or empty nesters. Some are looking for the best tasting food, some the healthiest options, and some are more concerned about animal welfare or the environment.

What is your business goal?

External Goal: To expand the availability of transparently- and honestly-raised meats to consumers who care about how their meat is produced. We hope to move into direct-to-home delivery and more customizable ordering options so our products are more convenient and can offer an alternative for mass produced items from Amazon in terms of convenience.

Internal Goal: Create a sustainable venture for our staff and farmers from both a financial and lifestyle perspective.

We believe everyone should be paid a fair wage to ensure an enjoyable and sustainable lifestyle. Many farmers end up earning less than this and are forced to take on too much market risk in their operations.

By working on the logistics of distribution and vertical integration (from field and animal husbandry, to processing and distribution, and delivery to consumers), we hope to reduce the risks and anxiety of farming.

We are also working to make our product more financially accessible for all consumers, as well as provide education about our products, as well as the why/how to cook easy and nutritious meals for busy families.



ABOUT TC FARMS

TC Farm is run like a cooperative of farmers and consumers – all who want the best possible food. Farmers produce the food seasonally, and TC Farm stores it until the customers are ready to order.

Customers can let TC Farms know their preference for meat items, set a budget for their household, and get monthly deliveries of the types of food they request and recommendations for food based on their budget and preferences.

We don't certify anything organic and allow for some transition organic feed when available. Farmers in the group determine the price and production schedules. TC Farm works with farmers to improve the quality, profits, and economics of the products each year. And TC Farm aggregates data from customers to project growth and commits to buying the scheduled food.

KEITH HARTMANN

Gibbon, MN

What do you farm?

I raise 350 soy-free, pastured organic hogs, annually, that are fed transition-to-organic feed. I also raise 2000 organic free-range chickens annually. I farm 320 acres in Gibbon, MN. I grow transition-to-organic field peas, barley, and corn for my livestock feed. My farm also includes some conventional corn and soybean production. And I also raise conventional hogs raised on bedding and antibiotic-free.

What are your primary markets?

My organic chickens and hogs are marketed through Jack McCann's TC Farms CSA. I have worked with Jack since 2011. I have been able to grow my farm's operation in conjunction with the growth of TC Farms. In addition to marketing through TC Farms, my antibiotic-free hogs are raised antibiotic-free, and they are contracted and marketed through Niman Ranch.

How did you get started farming?

I grew up on an organic dairy farm, and farming has always been a part of my life. After high school, I attended Ridgewater College and studied Farm Management and Agribusiness. After college, I began farming with my dad. I also worked as an agronomist at a local co-op. I was able to purchase my own farm in 2013, and I began farming full time.

SHARED GROUND COOPERATIVE

Aaron Blyth

Aaron has been involved with sustainable farming and growing food for over 12 years. Originally from Minnesota, he has helped grow food on Organic farms in California, Oregon, Wisconsin, and back in his home state of Minnesota. From 2003-2004 he studied and worked at the Center for Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems at the University of California at Santa Cruz.

He spent 6 years as the Farm Manager of the Minnesota Food Association running a 200-

member CSA and helping to train a diverse group of Immigrant Farmers in Organic vegetable production. Currently Aaron is the Director of Finance and Procurement at Shared Ground Farmers' Cooperative. Shared Ground is a marketing coop made up of three Latino-owned farms and two Anglo-owned.

SGFC is a marketing and distribution cooperative owned by seven farms in MN and western WI since 2014. We market our farms' sustainably grown produce to restaurants, grocery outlets, farm to school programs

and other wholesale accounts in the Twin Cities and direct to consumers through a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program. In addition to our owner farms, SGFC has a network of over twenty local farms that we contract with to supply our markets with the best local produce available. We have grown our markets each year and are always looking for new growers to help meet our market's demand. Furthermore, SGFC seeks to support new farmers who would like to sell wholesale but do not wish to do all the marketing themselves.

CALA FARM

Rodrigo Cala

Cala Farm is an 11-acre certified organic farm with four main crops; broccoli, cauliflower, heirloom tomatoes and garlic. The farm's main markets are in the Twin Cities and include wholesale and direct buyers specifically Coop Partners, the Wedge, Kowalskis, and Shared Ground Cooperative.

What do you value about your relationship with your buyers?

Coop Partners has provided a fair price with a large enough volume to make it worthwhile, and now I market all four of my crops to Coop Partners.

There is a good relationship that has been built over to make changes when needed. Working with Coop Partners, I trust that I can be honest about crop issues, such as damage, losses, or drought, or even years when the market is short on broccoli to negotiate a higher price.

How did you decide what to sell wholesale?

I started with peppers with Chipotle but within 3 years they dropped their purchase price in half. The lower price barely covered the out-of-pocket costs of growing peppers. After peppers, I switched to broccoli because there was significant market demand.

I started working with Linda Halley and Chris Blanchard on a project to improve and increase local broccoli production. They connected me with buyers including Coop Partners. And I learned that I had the skills, knowledge, and soil conditions to produce really amazing broccoli.

When I delivered this broccoli, Coop Partners gave me a good price and could buy enough of volume to make it profitable. Direct markets have not provided a good return for the amount of time needed to develop and maintain those relationships.

ABOUT RODRIGO CALA

Rodrigo grew up farming with his mother in Mexico to earn money for himself and his extended family. He had a chance to come to this country with his brother.

As he and his brother prepared meals, they were disappointed by the variety and quality of vegetables, so they decided to start growing their own. And soon they needed more land than what was available.

They found access to land through the Minnesota Food Association (MFA) and participated in their training from 2005 through 2008. Rodrigo learned about organic practices through MFA's training program.

In 2008, Rodrigo purchased the current farm in Turtle Lake. In 2011 Rodrigo started as a farmer organizer with Latino Economic Development Center (LEDC).



GOOD TURN FARM

Annelie Livingston-Anderson

Where do you farm?

My husband Kevin and I farm in Stockholm, WI; about an hour and half south-east of the Twin Cities. We farm 2 acres, including two high tunnels. And We primarily grow certified organic vegetables and flowers.

What are your primarily markets?

We offer weekly special orders picked up on the farm, and we sell to several local restaurants, a small grocery store, a local kimchi company, a monthly farmers market, and through an aggregated Market Share CSA with Wabasha Farmers Market.

We are also a part of a group of local farmers and consumers called the Lake Pepin Local Food Group. This group started marketing cooperatively through an online sales platform last year to institutions and individuals.

This was funded by through the USDA's Sustainable Agriculture, Research, and Education (SARE) grant.

From 2016-2018 we sold about half our vegetables through the Hungry Turtle Farmer Cooperative in Amery, WI which is now closed.

How did you get started farming?

I was a hobby vegetable gardener for about 10 years before making the decision to move to Kevin's family farm in WI to start our own farm in 2015. I have a background in science and have always had a drive to conserve our natural resources so working within sustainable agriculture combined that passion with my love of growing plants. During college, I also worked as a florist which has influenced my decision to expand our cut flower enterprise.

How did you meet your current distributor? And why do you choose to work with them?

I met Sara George when the Lake Pepin Local Food Group began working on the SARE grant to create a cooperative market channel for local farmers. Our farm, Good Turn Farms, sold to Wabasha Market Share CSA, and Wabasha Farmers Market vendors were given first priority.

Sara is well connected in the local community, and she is great at marketing and selling produce. We are still beginning farmers, and we trying out a lot of different markets right now. We care about keeping produce in our local community as much as possible, and Sara is helping us to achieve this goal through the Market Share CSA and online sales to local institutions.



SARA GEORGE

D&S Gardens

Wabasha Farmers Market

What produce and/or service does your business provide?

We provide aggregated online sales for local products to institutions and an aggregated Market Share CSA. On behalf of our farmers, we provide a service that builds relationships with buyers, markets and aggregates product, and delivers the produce to the customer.

Who are your customers?

Our primary customers are Institutions (schools, hospitals, grocery stores, restaurants), as well as market share CSA customers, which includes both individuals and businesses with healthy eating initiatives.

Where is your business located? What are your market channels?

Our business is located with the Wabasha Farmers Market in Wabasha, MN. Farmers deliver pre-sold produce to my farm's cooler or the produce is brought to the Wabasha Farmers Market by the farmers. I then sort and box produce for the online orders and fill Market Share CSA boxes. Online orders and Market Share CSA boxes are then either picked up at my farm, or at the market, or they are delivered to buyers.

What is your business goal?

Our goal is to increase sales of local foods to make farming more sustainable and to increase healthy food access for institutions & individuals.

What do you value about your farmers?

The demand for locally grown produce and orders from institutions has exceeded what was available from more traditional vendors. We have reached out to local farmers to not only supplement product but to also try and build the local food economy in the Pepin & Stockholm area.

Pricing is set by each of the farmers individually on the online sales platform. Pricing is negotiated between retail and wholesale price points for market share items that farmers are selling in bulk quantities.

As farmers and mothers in the same community, I also share a lot of the same experiences (triumphs and challenges) with Annelie, yet we are still figuring out how to this model sustainable to the person aggregating. We are currently working with a grant to look specifically at the sustainability and scalability of this model.



ABOUT SARA GEORGE

I am a farmer (D&S Gardens), and I manage the Wabasha Farmers Market. Wabasha was one of the first Farmers Markets in MN to receive a Wholesale Food Handler's License, which allows us to aggregate produce from multiple farms and distribute these products to institutions.

This model of farmers market aggregation has been replicated throughout the state as part of the MN Farmers Market Aggregation Project, which was funded by the Specialty Crop Grant from MN Dept of Ag, and awarded to Renewing the Countryside (RTC), MN Institute for Sustainable Agriculture (MISA), and MN Farmers' Market Association (MFMA).

I met Annelie through the Lake Pepin Local Food Group, and we implemented an aggregated online sales platform for our community separately from the farmers market.

THRESHING TABLE FARM

Mike Lenz

Our farm is located in Star Prairie, WI. We are your farmers - Mike and Jody Lenz along with our 3 children (and a few amazing employees). We are a small family farm that works hard to feed our community!

I myself have been farming for 12 years. My wife and I took Farm Beginnings through LSP and got started the very next year on our farm. We grow about 8 acres of vegetables, and we market most of our produce through a CSA.

We sell about 100 shares to local families in western WI. And we sell half of those shares to people in a 10-mile radius from us. Taher Food Service buy another 130 shares, and we also sell produce wholesale to a hospital and a restaurant.

CSA is all about community, and that's why we love this farm model. We enjoy knowing that the food we grow goes right to our farm members' tables. If you are a member, you and your family will eat the same produce we do. We also enjoy sharing our

gifts- whether it's giving tours of the farm, delivering food to the food pantry or volunteering in our extended community, we want to strengthen the lives of those around us.

Our produce is grown here, on our farm. We only use sustainable farming methods. We follow organic farming practices as well as go above and beyond. Our kids are out in the fields working, playing and eating- just like we are. We want our family to be healthy and yours too.

TAHER FOOD SERVICE

Trent Taher

Trent Taher is the VP of Purchasing for Taher, Inc. Taher is a food service co. started by Trent's dad over 30 years ago. Trent grew up in the family business and has worked for Taher full time since 2011. Taher is based in MN but their chefs work in 19 states. Trent helps to acquire food from local farms to support Taher's mission to feed the best food to their clients. He also works to inspire their chefs to embrace local foods, leading by example.

Taher, Inc. provides over 34 million meals per year in K-12 schools, campuses, businesses, and senior dining, employing over 2600 staff nationwide.

Since its founding in 1981 by President and CEO Bruce Taher, the company has focused on serving fresh foods expertly prepared by a team of chefs, monitored by a group of seasoned veterans, and delivered at a reasonable price.

While our clients, who range from kindergartners to retirees, pursue an incredible variety of personal and professional goals, we focus exclusively on food.

We know it, we love it, and we're dedicated to making sure all of our customers have one important thing in common: eating outstanding meals, every single day.

We cook from scratch with fresh, quality ingredients. We partner with farmers and growers who are committed to sustainable practices and humane standards. Our licensed dietitians stay current on advancements in nutritional knowledge, and continuously weave these into our menus - like the addition of more whole grains, and the complete phase out of all trans fats.

INNOVATIVE MARKET FORUM

Hosted by Land Stewardship Project's
Farm Viability Steering Committee

- 4:00 – 4:10 – Welcome**
- 4:10 – 4:50 – Panelist Intros**
- 4:50 – 5:00 – Coffee Break**
- 5:00 – 6:00 – Market Panel**
- 6:00 – 6:45 – Dinner Break**
- 6:45 – 7:50 – Audience Q&A**
- 7:50 – 8:00 – Closing Remarks**

Right now, big agribusiness controls the vast majority of our food markets, prioritizing corporate profitability over the needs of the people and the land. That's why LSP members are working to transform our food and farming system to create thriving local foods economies good for farmers, rural communities and the land. As traditional local foods markets have become increasingly saturated, a number of farmers and buyers in Minnesota are working together in new and innovative ways to gain access to local markets.

The local foods system is continuing to evolve. Farmers are willing to produce food for this expanding system. However, the puzzle is how to break down the barriers between buyers and sellers. We hope to give farmers attending a glimpse of some partnerships that are working. By learning from each other, we hope to identify areas where systemic changes benefit everyone in the local foods system.

- **The Land Stewardship Project's (LSP) Farm Viability Steering Committee**