



**Carolina Farm Stewardship  
Association (CFSA)  
and  
Ben and Jerry's Foundation**  
Farm Incubator Development Project

Final Report  
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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Through the assistance of the Ben and Jerry's Foundation, the Carolina Farm Stewardship Association (CFSA) has been able to initiate the promotion and development of an Incubator Farm movement in North and South Carolina. Under its Farm Incubator Project, CFSA has created and disseminated educational materials reaching hundreds of community representatives through public speaking engagements, flyers, pamphlets, internet workshops and through the media.

Through its outreach and consultations, CFSA has been able to identify and assist seventeen (17) potential project sites. These represent five regions of North and South Carolina. CFSA has assisted these communities in evaluating the potentials for and the designs strategies for establishing Incubator Farms in their respective communities. Based on consultations and advisory meetings, nine of these project sites appear have a very good potential for establishing Incubator Farms for their respective communities. Others have chosen more appropriate ways to assist the local food movement.

Through this grant from Ben and Jerry's, CFSA has also been able to meet and advise at length with Raft Swamp Farms in Raeford, NC, a 501(c) (3) non-profit incubator farm. As the first Incubator Farm in NC, CFSA worked with Raft Swamp's founders and managers in an advisory capacity to strengthen the effort at an organizational level. Raft Swamp Farms and CFSA identified that more extensive participation of the community through an expansion of the non-profit's board of directors, incorporating more talent and community voices in the effort, is critical for the development of the organization.

Important work continues in the area of outreach to new project regions of North and South Carolina and the identification of community leadership to carry on the development of these potential Incubator Farms. CFSA continues to receive requests to assist communities throughout the Carolinas. We also continue receiving numerous requests to reach out to like minded projects throughout the country.

On December 10, 2008, CFSA hosted an internet based webinar which attracted over 200 attendees from over 46 states, 6 countries (Canada, US Virgin Islands, Mexico, Cuba and Brazil). This webinar featured Incubation Farm Project presentations from speakers in three (3) different regions of the U.S Presenters included:

Jennifer Hashley, Tufts University Farm Incubation Project, Massachusetts  
Noah Ranells, Orange County Breeze Farm Incubation Project, North Carolina  
Gary Peterson, ALBA Farm Incubator Project, California  
Travis Marcotte, Intervale Farm Incubation Project, Vermont

CFSA and presenters have received excellent feedback from the webinar from attendees representing projects from throughout the US and abroad. This 3-hour long webinar covered a wide range of topics related to Farm Incubation programs. General topics included:

- General Marketing Strategies
- General Program Structures
- Educational Program Designs
- Outreach Programming

People are continuing to access the webinar continues via the CFSA website, <http://www.carolinafarmstewards.org>.

During and after the webinar, CFSA received numerous requests for further webinar presentations that could discuss more specific program design issues such as:

- Legal Arrangements
- Liability Issues
- Curriculum Design
- Land Linking Programs
- Community Outreach Programs
- Market Developmental Strategies, and
- Cooperative Growing and Marketing

With further funding, CFSA will move forward with the design and implementation of a webinar series that will bring back together these model incubator farms. This webinar series will respond to the specific topic requests that we have been receiving.

CFSA continues to respond to requests for assistance from numerous emerging projects within the Carolinas and beyond. Additionally, CFSA is giving focused consultations to two key new farmer incubation programs emerging within the Carolinas, one at Western Piedmont Community College, in Morganton, North Carolina, and one on Wadmalaw Island, instigated by the Charleston, South Carolina-area BALLE network, Lowcountry Local First.

CFSA is offering consultation for these projects in areas of:

- Overall Program Design
- Educational Program Design and Curriculum Development
- Community Outreach Programming
- Farm Design
- Experiential Educational with Local Farmers
- Inter-Agency Collaborations
- Farm Management Strategies
- Land Linking Programs and Projects with Local Landowners
- Farm Product Market Development

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO DATE

CFSA, through the work of consultant Bryan Green, initially established a time line and strategy for achieving the goals of the Incubator Farm Project. By the time this project was underway, CFSA had already had contact with seven (7) potential sites interested in investigating the possibility of establishing a farm incubator in their communities (Table 1), in addition to its work with the first NC farm incubator, Raft Swamp Farm, located in Raeford in eastern North Carolina.

TABLE 1 Initial 7 Potential Incubator Sites

Farm Name	Location	Region
Maverick Farms	Valley Crucis, NC	North Western NC
Water Farm	Hillsboro, NC	North-Central NC
Celebrity Dairy	Siler City, NC	Central NC
Rae Farms	Hurdle Mills, NC	Central NC
Forever Green	Siler City, NC	Central NC
Broken Wing Farm	Honea Path, SC	North-Central SC
Breeze Farm	Hillsboro, NC	Central NC

### **1. Inventory Initial List of Potential Sites**

For each one of these sites, CFSA initiated a systematic process. The first phase of the process was a personal phone interview. This phone interview was designed to gather basic information about each site and determine if the critical resources existed to establish a full fledged incubator project.

The core information gathered in these initial interviews included evaluation of agricultural infrastructure, including:

- Land (quality and tenure)
- Equipment
- Irrigation systems (quality and quantity)
- Potential to mentor new growers (agricultural experience)
- Access to markets
- Housing capabilities
- Cost of living in the community
- Available land for incubatees to move onto after incubation period

If core resources necessary for an incubation farm did not exist, other avenues (i.e. apprentices, interns, students, hired help, land leases, etc.) were discussed with land owners/project participants. If there were sufficient resources for an incubator, time was allotted to visit the site and further assist the landowner to evaluate their resources and interests versus the needs of a farm incubator program.

Although many of these early contacts had clear potential for establishing farm incubators, it became clear that there were needs for a general educational effort to help people better understand the basic concepts of farm incubators. For this reason, CFSA initiated an educational outreach program. The principle objective of this phase of the project was to help our communities better understand the roles, functions and commitments involved in designing and running farm incubators. The secondary

objective was to extend the call for involvement to a greater number of communities throughout North and South Carolina.

## **2. Inform and Educate the Public**

Part of the project plan was to gather relevant information that could help Carolina citizens better understand the level of involvement and potential structures under which an farm incubator can operate. In order to achieve this, CFSA conducted a nationwide telephone survey of existing farm incubators across the country. From these telephone interviews, CFSA developed an informational packet to inform the general public about existing incubators and how they operate. This survey offers potential farm incubator project participants an educational opportunity and a list of personal contacts that they can use to learn more about innovative approaches to farm incubators. The survey information has been distributed to the individuals associated with the potential project sites identified in Table 4 below. (A copy of this survey was included as “Attachment A” in our Interim Report made to the Foundation in Summer, 2008, and can be sent again if desired.)

In addition, CFSA developed a document, “Important Considerations to Think of While Evaluating Potential Farm Incubators,” that can be sent to anyone contacting CFSA with potential interest in developing a farm incubator. This packet includes relevant information about what should be considered when someone is thinking of establishing a farm incubator in their community. This document is included at the end of this report as “Appendix A”.

Simultaneously, CFSA staff and the project consultant have given numerous presentations throughout North and South Carolina promoting the development of farm incubators as a means to reach out to new, predominately resource limited growers (Table 2). Due to these efforts and the dissemination of informational packets, CFSA has added several potential project sites (Table 3). We are happy to announce that two of these projects are now up and running in the Carolinas.

## **3. Extend the Numbers of Potential Project Sites**

Through extensive speaking engagements, letter writing and publications, CFSA continues to expand the list of potential sites. A continuous exchange of phone calls from interested parties allows CFSA to monitor farmland sites and assist the general public, mostly landowners, evaluate the capacity of their infrastructures (land, personnel, markets, equipment, etc.) to support a farm incubator type of project.

TABLE 2. Speaking Engagements and Promotional Efforts

Location	Event	Region
Asheville, NC November 9, 2007	Public Access Television Program	Western NC
Durham, NC Nov 11, 2007	CFSA Sustainable Agriculture Conference	Central NC
Charlotte, NC December 5, 2007	County Planning Meeting	Southwestern NC
Charlotte, NC December 15, 2007	Newspaper Interview Charlotte Observer	Southwestern NC
Carrboro, NC January 25, 2008	Land Trust/Ag. Lands Meeting	Central NC
Asheville, NC March 8, 2008	Organic Growers School	Western NC
Walterboro, SC March 20, 2008	Farmland Preservation Workshop	Eastern SC
Concord, NC May 1, 2008	NC Agriculture Extension Farm Incubation Workshop	Southwestern NC
Charleston, SC June 1, 2008	Lowcountry Local First Farmers and Local Food Meeting	Eastern, SC
Wadmalaw, SC August 12, 2008	Incubator Farm Planning Meeting	Eastern SC
Greensboro, NC September 15, 2008	NCSU State Wide Food Planning Session	State Wide NC Planning Meeting for New Growers

TABLE 3. Additional Potential Incubator Sites Resulting From Outreach Efforts

Farm Name	Location	Region
Ruffin Farm	Raleigh, NC	East-Central NC
Bio-Fuels Farm	Pittsboro, NC	Central NC
OGS Farm	Asheville, NC	Western NC
Foothills Family Farm Coop	Old Fort, NC	Western NC
Case Farm	Charlotte, NC	Southwestern NC
Wind Crest Farms	Charlotte, NC	Southwestern NC
Cabarrus County	Concord, NC	Southwestern NC In operation, 2009
Western Piedmont Community College	Morganton, NC	Western, NC Potentially Operating 2010
Wadmalaw Farm	Charleston, SC	Southwestern NC Potentially Operating 2010

#### **4. Evaluations and Consultations for Individual Sites**

CFSA has now completed the interview process for the initial seven (7) potential farm incubators as well as the nine (9) additional farms added through our outreach efforts. Through phone calls, site visits and follow up calls, CFSA, along with community members, have identified several potential new sites. Others have moved on to offer different types of outreach to new growers. Of the total number of sites, we are happy to report that several are nearly ready to operate Incubation Farm activities, and have great potential to serve their communities in the coming years. (Table 4).

As the table shows, of the sixteen (16) farms evaluated to date, eight (8) show a good potential to establish themselves within the next several years. Although the number of incubatees each site may be able to handle varies (from 2 to 10), substantial resources and a good foundation of understanding exists at each. How quickly these specific projects move forward will be unique to each circumstance.

In addition, since this project began, two projects, Breeze Farm and Cabarrus County Farm, have already initiated programming for the 2009 and 2010 growing seasons. Thus, the Carolinas now have three farm incubators up and running and two very close to offering programs:

- Raft Swamp Farm, Eastern NC
- Breeze Family Farm, Central NC
- Cabarrus County, Southwest NC

CFSA will continue working with the new and operating farm incubators to assist in any way possible. As much as our resources allow us, CFSA will also continue to work with the oncoming farm incubators to help them evaluate their resources, make sound developmental decisions and, if appropriate, establish themselves in their respective communities.



TABLE 4. Evaluations of Potential Incubator Farms

Farm Name	Actions				Incubator Potential
	Phone Calls	Personal Interview	Farm Visit	Outcome	
Maverick	X	X		Possible integration of incubator in the future	Possible Future Potential
Waters	X			Incorporating apprenticeship/internship	No
Celebrity	X	X	X	Further development underway	Possible Future Potential
Ruffin	X	X	X	Further development underway	Possible Future Potential
Breeze	X	X		Programming Under Way Active 2009 <b>Operating 2009</b>	Yes Active
Foothills Family Farms	X			Possible integration of incubator in the future	Possible Future Potential
Cabarrus County	X	X	X	Programming Under Way Active 2009 <b>Operating 2009</b>	Yes Active
Broken Wing Farm	X	X		Incorporating apprenticeship/internship	No
Rae Farm	X	X		Incorporating apprenticeship/internship	No
Forever Green Farm	X	X		Incorporating apprenticeship/internship	No
Piedmont Bio-fuels	X	X	X	Incubator Farm Potential 2008-2009	Possible Future Potential
OGS Farm	X	X	X	Possible integration of incubator in the future	Future Potential
Case Farm	X	X	X	Possible integration of incubator in the future	Possible Future Potential
Wind Crest Farm	X	X	X	Incubator Farm Potential 2008-2009	Possible Future Potential
Low Country Local First	X	X	X	Possible integration of incubator in the future <b>Potential Incubator Offering 2010</b>	Yes Planning Stages
Western Piedmont Community College	X	X	X	Possible integration of incubator in the future <b>Sustainable Agriculture Classes 2009</b> <b>Potential Incubator Offering 2010</b>	Yes Future Potential

## **5. Assist Existing Raft Swamp Incubator Farm**

CFSA continues to support the incubation farm efforts of Raft Swamp Farms, a 150-acre tract of land in the Antioch District of Hoke County, North Carolina. The CFSA consultant is assisting the RSF effort as they strengthen their strategies for furthering the development of Eastern NC's first IF project. Several initial interviews and follow-up phone conversations have been key to the identification of developmental needs.

Although RSF has developed an impressive infrastructure to house the RSF incubation farm, several key steps for development were identified with the help of the CFSA consultant. Included in this list are:

1. Further strengthening the RSF non-profit organization with key members of the greater community.
2. The need for an expanded and stronger board of directors which reflect both the real needs and growth interests of RSF and the interests of the greater community.
3. More intense advertising for positions open at RSF for potential farm incubatees through local, regional and national newsletters, web-sites, conferences, and mailing lists.

To assist with community outreach efforts and board development, CFSA met with the owners of RSF to identify key needs of the RSF non-profit organization. This process helped the owners of RSF think through the specific needs of the organization and design systems of support from the community to meet these identified needs. From this, a list was made of key people and resources in the community that could reach out and help the organizational efforts of RSF. The plans were then made to communicate with these community resources and people and begin to connect the efforts of RSF with the greater community.

To further the strength and connection of RSF to the community and its potential resources, a second list was made to identify key players in the community who could fill the expanded needs of the board of directors of RSF. Once the specific skill areas and networking potentials were identified, a list of potential board members was made. The focus of the work has now turned towards creating 'white papers' about the RSF farm incubator project. Following this, a full board of director's invitation packet will be generated. This packet is to include introductions to the project, white papers, goals, objectives, organizational information, indemnification information, etc. The goal of this part of the project is to expand the efforts of RSF deeper into the community and to create appropriate connections between this non-profit organization and the community it serves. The end result of this effort should assist in the running of the operation and improve the effectiveness with which this organization meets the needs of the greater community.

## **6. Educational Outreach Programming**

On December 10, 2008 Bryan Green and CFSA hosted an internet-based webinar which attracted over 200 attendees from over 46 states, and 6 countries, including Canada, US Virgin Islands, Mexico, Cuba, and Brazil. This webinar featured speakers from three different regions of the US. These regions included the southeast (North Carolina), the

northeast (Vermont and Massachusetts) as well as the west (California). The presenters included:

Jennifer Hashley, Tufts University Farm Incubator Program, Massachusetts

Noah Rannels, Orange County Breeze Farm incubator Program, North Carolina

Gary Peterson, ALBA farm Incubator, California

Travis Marcotte, Intervale Farm Incubator Program

CFSA received excellent feedback from the webinar from attendees representing projects from throughout the US as well as projects outside the US. This 3 hour webinar series covered a wide arrange of topics related to Farm Incubation programs. General topics included: general marketing strategies, general program structures, educational program designs, and outreach programming, and farmland preservation programs. This program/webinar was recorded and made available to the public via the internet. People throughout the US and beyond continue to view the webinar which is linked through the CFSA website.

Website link: <http://www.carolinafarmstewards.org/>

## **FUTURE EFFORTS AND CONTINUED PROJECT PLANS**

### **1. *Identify Local Leadership for Each Region Represented in the Project Areas.***

To enable the continuation of these community-based incubation farm projects, CFSA plans to identify local leaders committed to the incubation farm movement within each region. CFSA seeks to establish regional network leaders that can assist the existing incubator farm projects in development as well as new projects which may develop in the future. These leaders will continue to monitor the progress of projects in their areas and assist any new incubator farm developers find proper support. In addition, these community leaders will network with each other across North and South Carolina to share information, ideas and support systems within the farm incubator movement and be points of cross-pollination between all projects in the two states.

CFSA will move into identifying these leaders in the next stages of this program development. We intend to conduct at least one web-based or in-person meeting to bring these regional leaders together to become better acquainted and to initiate collaboration.

### **2. *Continue Canvassing and Assisting the Development of New Incubator Sites in North And South Carolina***

Even as this report is being written, three new interested communities have contacted CFSA requesting information and guidance in establishing incubator farms in their regions. CFSA will continue to support these new arrivals with information, advice and consultation. It appears that the challenging state of economic times has made this incubation concept even more appealing, especially to our economically challenged communities in the eastern part of North and South Carolina.

In addition, CFSA plans to maintain close contact with the other projects that have promising structures in place. There is an ongoing need that will require continued communications with these projects in an advisory capacity. This need should and will diminish as the regional representatives move into position as regional leaders to take over this ongoing effort. Until this has been completed, CFSA will continue to assist these efforts.

### **3. *Evaluate the Needs of Existing Informal Incubation-Like Activities by Carolina Small Farmers***

Small farmers throughout North and South Carolina have been serving an important role for new farmers. Every year diversified, local-market-based small farmers have been offering internships, apprenticeships and even employment for new farmers. This has equated to on the job training similar to the efforts being promoted through the Farm Incubator Project. Although most of these situations are distinct from farm incubators in that new growers are not normally developing their own markets, the activities still are important to the practical training of new farmers in farm business operation.

It is therefore of great interest on the part of CFSA to survey these farm operations and see what needs if any exist in these important community efforts. CFSA plans to write

up a survey form for its member/producers and get clear feedback on ways in which this system can be supported.

#### **4. Ongoing Educational Activities**

During and after the webinar, CFSA received numerous requests for further webinar presentations that could discuss more specific program designs such as:

- Legal Arrangements
- Liability Issues
- Curriculum Design
- Land Linking Programs
- Community Outreach Programs
- Market Developmental Strategies
- Cooperative Growing and Marketing

With further funding, CFSA will move forward with the design and creation of a webinar series dealing with specific aspects of designing, managing and maintaining incubator farm programs. To accomplish this, CFSA, will again canvass successful programs and record presentations that can be made available on the internet. All of the presenters from the first webinar have expressed interests in participating in an expanded series of presentations related to these specific topics.

#### **5. Assist the emerging Wadmalaw Island and the Western Piedmont Community College Incubator Farm Projects**

CFSA continues to reach out to two of the newest farm incubators in the Carolinas. These two programs continue to request assistance from CFSA and our Farm Incubator. These programs are both already established within their communities and are now designing the actual farm incubator initiatives in their respective communities.

With further funding, CFSA will be able to offer a wide range of services to these emerging programs. Specifically CFSA is being asked to help with:

- Wadmalaw Island, SC:
  - Curriculum Development
  - Overall Farm Planning
  - Incubator Farm Design and Structure
  - Community Outreach Programming
  - Experiential Education Program Development
  - Recruitment of Student/Growers
  - Land Linking Project Development for Low Country, SC
- Western Piedmont Community College:
  - New Farmer Recruitment
  - Curriculum Design
  - Local Land Link Program
  - Experiential Learning Programs with Local Farmers

- Evaluation of Legal Concerns for the Community College
- Long Term Planning/Growth Planning

## **6. Conclusions**

Over the next decade, it is estimated that 70% of all US farmland will change hands. This tremendous shift of farmland ownership will be dominated by the transition from farm-productive land to non-agricultural use. To address the dangerous trend, CFSA will continue to address the major obstacles making farmer-entry difficult.

At the forefront of this vision simply must be a regionally-based training and resource centers for emerging farmers. We must continue to address the issues of financing, land availability, a lack of applied training programs, marketing and informal educational opportunities in order to grow out a healthier local food networking system.

Farm incubators can play a critical role in providing a multi-service center, appropriately located for new growers in the regions of high population where land accessibility and local food needs are the greatest. There will continue to be a need for reaching out to these efforts and coordinating a local, state wide and region wide approach linking rural and urban communities while providing an increased food security network for the people of North and South Carolina. Our hopes are that this type of effort will be able to spread as a model for other areas, states and bioregions and to international efforts.

## Appendix A

# Important Considerations in Evaluating Potential Incubator Farms

### Land:

This is an essential part of the equation we are trying to provide through incubator farms. Keep in mind that this should be quality farm land. New farmers entering into this market have plenty of challenges. This land should be not only available but very suitable for farming endeavors. In some cases, we have identified land that can be appropriate given a season or more of cover cropping. The essential focus here is to not consider unproductive land as a possibility for incubating successful enterprises.

### Equipment, Infrastructure:

Equipment needs vary with the type of agricultural enterprise that is developed. Not all farms must have the same equipment available but should have the necessary and appropriate equipment to complement the type of farming design being promoted. The equipment should be in good working order. Other examples of infrastructure can include irrigation systems, perhaps greenhouses if needed for farming enterprise, appropriate shelters, processing/shipping and handling areas, and other utilities needed for the farming enterprise.

### Experience/Mentorship

Keeping in mind that we are reaching out to new farmers, it is imperative that experience and guidance is available to the prospective new grower. The needs for this will be new grower specific. The manner in which this educational support is designed will be specific to the resources each incubator has available. Some incubators are already offering or planning formalized educational courses/workshops/classes/field trips into the incubator offering. The experience on how to use this equipment properly and safely is an important part of the incubator concept. (i.e., tractors, greenhouses, post harvest handling equipment, etc.). Also, if these are starting farmers, we must consider the vital components of a well designed farm production system. New farmers will need educational/mentoring opportunities in the areas of soil management, irrigation scheduling, pest management, fertility and rotation designs, harvesting techniques, planting and harvest schedules, etc. etc. It is imperative that experience is available to assist the new farmer in the creation of a profitable and biologically sound business/production plan. If not all the experience needed is available from the local incubator mentor/manager, then these resources must be found in the community and brought to these new farmers.

### Market and Business Components

It is important to keep in mind that we are incubating profitable businesses. This requires that a business plan and cost considerations are carefully made for each enterprise. This will require that an incubator manager/mentor be familiar with the market place. If not, then local people can be recruited to bring this vital understanding and insight to the incubator farm. New farmers may be able to simply fit into an existing market. It is still important to help the new farmers understand how to evaluate a market place and the tools necessary to do so. We lose a lot of new farmers to bad business ideas. This is a very critical part of creating new growers.

## Housing

One of the capstones of the incubator program is that we are creating shared resources for people who may be resource limited. If an incubator program exists near a very strong market, then the higher costs of living may be assumed. Although there are very few situations where housing can be provided by incubator programs, it is nonetheless important to keep in mind. We should foresee that the people we are hopefully addressing, perhaps even limited resource farmers will not be able to sustain themselves if the costs of living supersede the flow from the revenue of early incubation years. This is not to say that incubators can only exist if they provide housing. This is just to say that we must understand and support the real situations that the new farmer faces as they move towards independence. There are several things that can be done. Search out your area for affordable housing. Consider some form of temporary housing for your incubatees. Consider shared housing situations, local campgrounds, cooperative housing. Again, providing housing is not a prerequisite to incubation farms but an important consideration

## Insurance

The ideals of incubating new farmers and having more people on the farm are indeed an inspiring. We should also keep in mind issues of liability and injury potentials on the farm. We neither want to have a situation where incubation farms are liable and at risk or a situation where new farmers are injured and have no means of seeking care. All should seek advice from people familiar with these issues and ways to construct creative solutions. We should remember that agriculture is still in the top of the list of occupations with injuries. Plan this carefully.

## Available Land for Graduated Incubatees.

One goal of the incubator farm movement is to get independent producers out on the land and set up for market. Although it seems far down the road, it's never too early to be thinking of land availability outside of your incubator farm. All indications appear to be saying that land is going to continue to be a major challenge for aspiring producers. So, it's never too early to work with your neighbors, towns, counties to identify areas that may eventually house new growers. This project and the Responses of the community at large, are testimonies to the willingness of landowners, given good design (economic, environmental, cultural), to make their land available (sale, lease, rent, etc) for new growers/producers. So, talk to your neighbors and local representatives.