

October 20, 2020

Dear CSA members,

We are sad to announce that we are eliminating our vegetable operation for the 2021 season, and we wanted to fully explain to you our reasons. This change is not in any way COVID-related; we have known for about 2 years now that a major change is in order, and have been carefully contemplating what that would be.

Ever since we started this farm 12 years ago, we have believed in maintaining a diversity of enterprises for a number of reasons. Raising a diverse array of plants and animals assists in our dual goals of sustainable land stewardship and maintaining a viable business, plus it brings us a lot of joy. But recently, many challenges have reached a tipping point and we find ourselves in need of reducing the number of enterprises that we are managing.

Many of these challenges hark back to an issue facing many first-generation farmers, that is, lack of access to sufficient farmland. Since starting this business, we have made it all work with a patchwork of small fields and some very temporary rigged-up infrastructure. For many years we have been searching for a single cohesive property that would be a better fit for the business, on which we could build infrastructure that is permanent and more appropriate. Early on, we figured that our temporary infrastructure would make do for a few years while we searched for and transitioned to new land. But the barriers to accessing farmland are many and steep (another story for another day). Now that we are 12 years in and still searching, the inadequacies of our stop-gap infrastructure are causing significant problems on a daily basis. We know what is needed to solve these problems, but we still do not have a place to put the infrastructure we need. Our current leased land does not have the physical space for it, plus the acreage is too small to justify such an investment.

In addition to our infrastructure problems, we are still dedicating so much time and energy to the search for land, on top of the enormous amount of work required to keep the farm running in its current form. Given all of this, we have reached a point at which there are simply not enough hours in each day to accomplish the farm's basic needs, let alone attempt to get enough sleep and seek some semblance of work-life balance. On top of that, there is a lot of mental stress from not having the security of a long-term plan. All of these factors have led to symptoms of burnout, and the current situation cannot be sustained.

To address this (in the absence of the panacea of an adequate land base on which we could build appropriate infrastructure), we have concluded that we must cut out a major enterprise from the farm in order to reduce our stress and workload. It doesn't make sense for us to eliminate our meat or egg operations, since they require the least amount of labor and cause the least amount of stress. They only need relatively simple mobile infrastructure to run properly, which we have. So the options are to eliminate dairy or to eliminate veggies. Eliminating dairy has the advantage of sweeping away all of our infrastructure woes in one fell swoop. However, we know that our raw milk is what brings the vast majority of our customers to the farm store. Without it, the sales of our

eggs and meat would plummet, and thus it is very questionable whether or not the business would survive.

So, we have decided to eliminate the veggies. The fact that this is the most sensible conclusion does not blunt the pain of it. Our veggie operation is one that has evolved significantly over the years, and it is something that we are truly proud of and enjoy immensely. But ultimately, we knew that one thing had to go, and selling our herd of cattle would be just as hard emotionally speaking, and would be much more difficult to reverse if we decided the wrong choice was made. In addition, we know that there are many other options for our customers to buy local organic veggies in our area. Milk that is grass-fed and raw is much harder to come by, so we feel that our dairy is filling a greater need.

We don't know how to adequately capture in words how hard this decision was. While we feel content that we made the best choice of bad options, we still feel heartbroken over it. For the past 12 years, the rituals of the garden have marked the seasons for us more than anything else. The garden has fed our bodies, minds, and spirits, and has been a source of beauty, nourishment, and joy for many others as well. We will also sorely miss our CSA distributions, which have given us the opportunity to get to know all of you members.

Many of you will be looking for a new CSA, and we have decided to withhold recommendations out of fear of forgetting one of the many amazing farms in our area. We will direct you to the Hudson Valley CSA Coalition (<https://hudsonvalleycsa.org/>) which can help you find a good fit. We hope to continue feeding you through our farm store. The store will continue to sell vegetables year-round, but they will come from other local organic farms once our 2020 stash has run out. And of course we will always have our meats, eggs, and raw milk. Your consistent support of our farm store is appreciated more than you know.

Thank you all for your support and encouragement. As farmers we know better than anyone that in death there is always new life!

With gratitude,
Becky and Joe