

Foodshed Alliance's Sustainable Agriculture Enterprise (SAgE) Information and Application for Sustainable Farm Businesses



The Foodshed Alliance is an equal opportunity provider

Foodshed Alliance’s Sustainable Agriculture Enterprise (SAGe) Application

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Vision

The vision of the Sustainable Agriculture Enterprise (SAgE) program is to make farmland accessible to natural and regenerative farmers and ranchers by granting long-term affordable leases, allowing them to invest in their businesses and futures. The goal is to grow the number of producers growing nutrient-dense food for our communities, and to rebuild a resilient food system that is equitable and just for people, animals and the land.

WHY

The Foodshed Alliance, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, works to strengthen sustainable farming in New Jersey, expand access to local, healthy food, and protect the environment for all members of our communities. Our Sustainable Agriculture Enterprise (SAgE) program was designed to address one of the biggest challenges to New Jersey farmers—long-term access to affordable farmland. New Jersey has the second most expensive farmland in the country, yet has preserved more of its farmland than any state in the country, roughly one-third of all farmland in the state. Short-term leasing is the norm in New Jersey on deed-restricted farmland, and this is problematic for farmers since it inhibits investment in infrastructure and long-term improvement in soil health, critical to farmers using sustainable methods to produce food.

The goal of the SAgE program is to lease preserved farmland to natural and regenerative farm businesses at affordable long-term rates. The Foodshed Alliance works with land trusts and/or government agencies that hold deed-restricted farmland throughout the state of New Jersey to facilitate farmers’ access to affordable 10-year lease agreements.

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SAgE Sites

The SAgE program, which launched in November 2018, currently has three sites in this statewide program. In addition, the Foodshed Alliance is working to identify and establish other SAgE sites in New Jersey to provide long-term affordable access to preserved farmland for organic and regenerative farm enterprises.

Current SAgE Sites

Bread Lock Park, Warren County: This five-acre site in Stewartsville, NJ, is on preserved parkland. The Foodshed Alliance in partnership with the County of Warren created this opportunity as an incubator that evolved into SAgE. **This land is fully leased.**

SAgE at Muckshaw, Sussex County: This site has 70 acres of state preserved farmland and 230 acres of woodland adjacent to the Muckshaw Pond Preserve, located in Andover and Fredon Townships, between State Route 206 and County Route 519. This property was originally preserved by The Nature Conservancy and is now owned by the Foodshed Alliance. **This land is fully leased.**

SAgE at Sergeantsville, Hunterdon County: Located in historic Sergeantsville within Delaware Township, NJ, this site has 19.6 acres of preserved farmland that the Foodshed Alliance leases from our partner, New Jersey Conservation Foundation. **Currently accepting applications for agricultural leases.**

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Requirements for Acceptance

The Foodshed Alliance's Sustainable Agriculture Enterprise is available to career-oriented, professional farmers who can demonstrate solid farming experience as well as marketing and business plans.

Ideal candidates should have:

- 2+ years farm management experience
- 3+ years farming experience
- Detailed Farm Management Plan
- Detailed business/marketing plan

Sustainable Agriculture Practices and Environmental Stewardship

In keeping with the Foodshed Alliance's mission of protecting our rural environment, we recruit farmers who are dedicated to regenerative agriculture through the use of sustainable, organic and/or biodynamic methods. We encourage organic and humane certification for all relevant agricultural practices taking place. However, organic certification is not required as long as National Organic Program (NOP) guidelines are used. For specifics, please see Land Use Protocols on page 10. We encourage participating farmers to prepare and file a conservation plan with the Natural Resources Conservation Service. We also encourage participating farmers to apply for certification through the River Friendly Farms initiative, managed by North Jersey RC&D and the Foodshed Alliance, to protect waterways.

Partnership with Foodshed Alliance

The Foodshed Alliance assumes responsibility for the following:

- Shared well and mainline irrigation
- Common area maintenance
- Working with agricultural nonprofits, NGOs, federal, state and local governments to share ongoing opportunities for funds, technical assistance, etc., with farm tenants
- Overseeing through an annual review that farm tenants are in compliance with the terms of their lease and the Farm Management and production plans submitted with applications
- Marketing the SAgE Program and the farmers within the program when possible
- Property taxes
- Submitting annual Farmland Assessment paperwork (FA-1) to local tax assessor

We envision working in partnership with the farmers in this program, providing ongoing technical assistance and facilitating synergistic and cooperative relationships with all farmers on the land. In addition, we will facilitate opportunities for the general public to learn about the source of food and importance of supporting local farmers.

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Farm Management Plan

Each applicant must submit a Farm Management Plan. The plan will outline the farming approach proposed, timing, and needs, and designate what contingencies will be followed to adjust to unforeseen conditions. Farmers are expected to follow their Farm Management Plans as approved. Changes in the plan must be presented to and approved by the Foodshed Alliance. **Farmers who do not comply with their approved Farm Management Plan will be asked to leave the program at the end of the growing season.** The plan should address the following:

FARM OPERATION: A description of intended crop or livestock production, including how they relate to the program's Sustainable Agricultural Guidelines.

LABOR: The maximum number of farm laborers that will be employed seasonally.

TEMPORARY INFRASTRUCTURE: What structures are proposed, needed or anticipated? All structures must be approved, including design, materials and locations. Structures must be kept in viable condition.

STORAGE AND MAINTENANCE OF EQUIPMENT: How will equipment be stored? Abandoned equipment must be removed. No equipment can compromise the sustainable farming guidelines (no leaking fuel, fluids, etc.).

WEED CONTROL: How will weeds be controlled? Farmers must incorporate control of noxious and invasive weeds into their farm management plan and carry out approved practices.

PEST MANAGEMENT: Identify the means by which you plan to control pests. Solutions shall adhere to the sustainable farming tenets outlined above, be humane, and shall not impinge on the operations of other farmers.

FERTILITY/COMPOSTING: Describe your plans for fertilizing and on-site composting. All fertilizer should be approved for organic usage. Any composting must be in compliance with local ordinances and state statutes.

LIVESTOCK: If raising livestock is proposed, the farmer must define how animals will be secured and well tended, demonstrate that the carrying capacity of the land proposed to be used will not be exceeded, and how slaughtering or marketing of animals will be addressed, if this is planned.

EVENTS: Any events relating to Agriculture and Agriculture Education or to promote the farm project are to be included in the Farm Management and/or Business Plan. All events of any kind must be approved by the Foodshed Alliance.

Other Requirements

BUSINESS/MARKETING PLAN: Business plan should include your gross sales goals and five- to ten-year sales projections. Marketing plans should include plans to advertise and access markets such as CSA, roadside stand, online, farmers markets, etc.

RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN: Provide a document on how you evaluate and manage risk related to production, marketing, finances, legal and human risks.

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COOPERATION: Farmers must recognize and cooperate with the needs of other farmers and the public and be responsive to decisions of the Foodshed Alliance. Farmers may have the opportunity to participate in state and federal cost-sharing opportunities or programs. (i.e. NRCS EQIP grants)

GENERAL SIGHTLINESS: This is a shared space on private land so while we recognize that farming is not always attractive, an effort must be made to keep things safe, neat, and orderly, i.e. pathways mowed, etc. Farmers must not damage or block farm lanes used for field access. All field supplies--stakes, row cover, plastics, etc.--must be kept in a designated area when not in use and removed and stored at the end of each season.

VEHICLES: Vehicles will be kept in good working order and stored in approved, designated areas. Abandoned vehicles must be removed from the premises upon notice by the Foodshed Alliance.

UTILITIES: Farmers may arrange to have electric service brought to their site by approved means. Electric delivery conduits must not interfere with any other infrastructure on the farm. Farmers must arrange to have a separate electric meter installed and will be responsible for paying the electric bill themselves.

DAMAGES: Each farmer is responsible for any damage caused by themselves or their farming operation to their farm plot.

INSURANCE: Each farmer must carry a liability insurance policy in the minimum amount of \$1 million. The Foodshed Alliance shall be named as secondary insured.

EMPLOYEES: Farmers may hire employees. Employees must be properly registered and paid according to all local, state, and federal labor regulations. It is the responsibility of the farmer to be aware of all relevant labor regulations, including payroll taxation, workers compensation, child labor, and minimum wage. Farmers are expected to provide employees with adequate time for water, bathroom, and lunch breaks, as well as to provide adequate training on food safety measures, tool safety techniques, and other relevant matters.

HOUSING: At this time, no housing is available on site. Living on the property will not be permitted.

Program Description and Standards

PLOT CONFIGURATION AND ACREAGE: Applicants awarded a lease will be involved in choosing their plot. Acreage and configuration of each plot depends on the scale and type of farming planned and which plots are appropriate to these needs. Plot markers will be placed and reviewed with each farmer before signing their lease. Farm lanes are considered to be part of individual farm fields and managed as part of the farm operation.

FARM MANAGEMENT PLAN: Farmers have the right to carry out an approved Farm Management Plan. The plan will be reviewed at the end of each season. Farmers have the right to modify plans and carry out changes, after getting approval from the Foodshed Alliance.

ACCESS TO WATER: All farmers will have access to the mainline irrigation system, are expected to be courteous with their irrigation usage, and stay to the cooperative schedule unless approved otherwise by the Foodshed Alliance.

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ACCESS TO ELECTRICITY: Farmers have the right to arrange for the delivery of electric power to the site. Farmers will be responsible for the metering and delivery system. The system must be approved by the landowner and have all necessary zoning approvals.

FENCING: Farmers have the right to erect fencing to keep deer, other wildlife, and the public off of areas of production. Fencing must be secure and well-maintained and must not block public access areas. Electric fences must be labeled as such to provide a warning and maximize safety. Fencing plans must be in compliance with NOP protocols and approved by the Foodshed Alliance.

IMPROVEMENTS: Any improvements the farmers wish to make, such as hoop houses, pole barns, farm stands, etc., will be made at the farmers' own expense, within easement restrictions, and with the approval of the Foodshed Alliance.

SIGNS: Farmers have the right to erect signs identifying their operation or marketing their products, so long as the signs do not interfere with the operations of other farmers and are approved by the Foodshed Alliance.

MARKETING ON-FARM: Farmers have the right to incorporate an on-farm marketing strategy in their management plans, and to carry out those plans once approved. Final approval shall be based on any required local zoning approval of marketing structures, ingress and egress, hours of operation, etc. Farmers may form independent cooperatives for marketing purposes.

LANDOWNER INCENTIVE PROGRAMS: The Foodshed Alliance will cooperate with farmers who wish to pursue available landowner incentive programs that benefit the farm operation. The potential for any cost-sharing will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

COMPLIANCE TO FARM MANAGEMENT PLAN: The Foodshed Alliance will monitor compliance with your Farm Management Plan. Farmers who do not comply with their farm management plan and the land use protocols of this program will be asked to leave the program at the end of the growing season.

LEASE RENEWAL: Farmers have the right to renew their lease, if they are in compliance with their approved farm management plan and in good standing with respect to all other requirements.

LABOR: Compliance with the New Jersey Fair Labor Standards Act in hiring and retaining employees.

Land Use Protocols

Farmers who do not comply with the land use protocols of this program will be asked to leave the program at the end of the growing season.

SEEDS: Farmers may choose to purchase conventionally produced seeds but may NOT use genetically modified/engineered seed (aka GM or GE), nor seed that has been treated with a non-approved chemical seed treatment.

COVER CROPS AND ROTATION: Farmers must implement a crop rotation and cover crop plan as a standard practice to maintain soil tilth and health. Crop rotations and cover crops to be used must be included in the Farm Management Plan. Any fields inside the leased area cannot remain fallow for more than one year. Perennial crop farms must rotate perennials whenever feasible. Farmer(s) that require an exemption from these protocols must request the exemption in writing.

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WEED MANAGEMENT: Farmers may not use chemical substances to control weeds unless approved for organic use by the NOP. Farmers are responsible for making regular field inspections for weed growth. Fields, field edges and roadsides are required to be regularly maintained.

INSECT MANAGEMENT: Farmers are required to understand current organic methods of control, including crop rotation, row cover and screens, biocontrols, attracting and encouraging beneficial insect populations, and other NOP approved products. They should be versed in monitoring techniques such as scouting and trapping. Synthetic pesticides that are not approved by NOP standards are not allowed.

Farmers must keep records of all pest controls in a log from year to year. This log is subject to inspection by Foodshed Alliance staff and may be requested for annual reporting.

DISEASE MANAGEMENT: The use of non-NOP approved synthetic chemicals, fungicides, or bactericides is not allowed. Acceptable controls include: crop rotation, promotion of air flow, diseased plant removal and disposal, tool sanitation, restriction of foot traffic, cleanliness of clothing, boots, and gloves, straw mulch, black plastic mulch use, drip irrigation, and NOP-approved organic fungicides and biocontrols. Farmers need to be familiar with plant diseases and be able to identify them when they appear. **Farmers must keep records of all disease controls in a log from year to year. This log is subject to inspection by Foodshed Alliance staff and may be requested for annual reporting.**

CRITTERS: Farmers are responsible for deer fencing and other systems to keep unwanted wildlife from interfering with their farming operations. Possible wildlife includes deer, bears, foxes, rabbits, voles, mice, raccoons, and groundhogs. Means of wildlife management must be safe and humane, and approved by the Foodshed Alliance.

FIREARMS: SAgE Properties are privately owned farmlands. Firearms are not permitted on the property for any reason including animal/pest control, with the exception of hunting programs sanctioned by the Foodshed Alliance and their partner organizations. If animal/pest control is an ongoing problem, a hunting depredation permit can be applied for through Fish and Wildlife by the Foodshed Alliance. Depredation hunting will be conducted by licensed hunters approved by the Foodshed Alliance.

IRRIGATION: Farmers that have need for water and approval through their management plan have the right to connect to irrigation sources. Water use will be based on a conservation-based irrigation plan, i.e. plans designed by NRCS, availability of water from source, and viability of the delivery system. Irrigation delivery systems shall not interfere with other infrastructure, access to water by other farmers, or be wasteful. All irrigation infrastructure shall be removed at the end of the lease period, unless other arrangements are made.

END-OF-YEAR REPORTS: Farmers are required to submit an end-of-year report each year. End of year reports are due by December 1 each year. Starting in Year 2 and after, the End of Year Reports should also include a copy of the previous year's Schedule F tax return. For example, with the December 2021 report, the farmer's 2020 Schedule F should be included.

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Understanding of Application Requirements

I, _____, (applicant) understand and agree to all the terms and conditions of this lease application with the Foodshed Alliance's Sustainable Agriculture Enterprises program. By signing this document, I acknowledge that the terms and conditions described in this lease application will become part of the terms of my agricultural lease agreement.

Applicant Name (print)

Foodshed Alliance witness (print)

Applicant Signature

Witness Signature

Date

Date

The Foodshed Alliance, P.O. Box 713, Blairstown, NJ 07825

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Lease Rates

Annual Operating Fee: \$250

Lease rate per acre: starting at \$150 per year

Application Procedure

Foodshed Alliance Sustainable Agriculture Enterprise applicants should apply with a completed application and Farm Management Plan. The plan should include the business concept, mission and goals, organizational details, market plan, financial plan, production plan, and risk management plan. Applications are evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Application Requirements

Applications may be emailed or mailed to Eric Derby, Program Manager, at:

Foodshed Alliance
P.O. Box 713
Blairstown, NJ 07825
eric@foodshedalliance.org

Applications must be submitted as one package that includes your cover letter, cover page, all farm plan sections and appendices. Applications received piecemeal or handwritten will not be accepted. Be concise whenever possible. This is a working document that will be useful to you as well.

The business/marketing plan should be primarily focused on the current year of production, but should also provide insight into the future. How far into the future you project, and with how much detail, is up to you.

Please include a cover letter that describes your interest in the Foodshed Alliance's Sustainable Agriculture Enterprise program and why you think that you are a good candidate to participate.

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Application Checklist

Applications must include the following:

- Cover Letter
- Cover Page
- Executive Summary
- Personal Business Concept
- Description of how the business is organized
- Farm Management Plan
- Business/Marketing Plan
- Financial Plan
- Good Neighbor Policy/Code of Conduct
- Understanding of Application Requirements
- Appendices
- Resume(s)
- Other documents that may be helpful in providing evidence of the robustness of your plan and your abilities.

Upon acceptance to the program Enterprise farmers will be expected to supply the following:

- Copy of Business Registration
- Copy of IRS EIN Confirmation Letter
- Copy of current liability insurance for minimum of \$1 million.
- Completed production plan for all crops/products

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Appendix: Application Template

Cover page

Farm Management Plan

Farm Business Name

Business Address

Business Phone Number

Business Email

Logo (optional)

Your Name

Home Address

I. Executive Summary

(250-word summary of your farm business.) Summarize your goals, objectives, business structure, and marketing plan in a few sentences. State what you plan to grow. The executive summary will also state your projected income, costs and profit goal. Write this section last, drawing key points from each section.

II. Business Concept, Mission and Goals

Mission Statement

- What do you plan to produce?
- How do you plan to sell it?
- What is the purpose of the business? What does it provide the consumer that makes your business different and competitive?

Answers should be one short statement, such as "X Farm will provide fresh, organically grown tomatoes and specialty peppers to the Z Farmers' Market, supplying local families with unique, specialty ingredients for salsas and summer garnishes."

Goals

- What is your personal goal for your new agricultural business? (e.g. to provide 50% of your income, and contribute positively to my community.)
- How much do you plan to sell?
- How many hours do you plan to work?
- How many people will be working on the farm/will you have employees?

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- What is your profit goal?

III. Organizational Details

Business Structure

Describe the legal structure you chose for your business, who owns the business and their shares if there is more than one owner.

Government Regulations

Describe any taxation and regulation you face in your agricultural business and how you plan to comply. Generally, businesses selling unprocessed fruits and vegetables have few regulations to comply with. To pay taxes as a farm business you must fill out at least an S4. See the IRS Farmers' Tax Guide for more information <https://www.irs.gov/publications/p225>.

Management Issues

If you plan to have employees or co-own your business, please describe the responsibilities of each person. If you plan to hire outside labor, describe how you will recruit them and how you will comply with regulations such as workers' compensation.

IV. Marketing Plan

Please write a brief description in each of the following areas.

Customer analysis: Who are your customers? Describe them. What about them will make them want to buy your product?

Competitive analysis: Who are your competitors? What are their strengths and weaknesses? Market potential: How much of your product do people want/are willing to buy?

Production potential: How much of the potential market can you provide?

Marketing strategies: Where do you plan to distribute your product (farmers' market, delivery, on farm sales, etc.) How will you use price and/or quality to get customers to buy your product? How do you plan to promote your product? Do you plan to advertise? Do you plan to use networking and/or social media to market your product?

V. Financial Plan

Budget

Create a budget similar to this example in Microsoft Excel, adding rows and columns as needed, and paste the resulting table into your farm plan. All costs and sales projections are best guesses. Include additional categories as needed.

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Item	Quantity	Unit	Price	Total
INCOME				
Crop/Product #1				
Crop/Product #2				
Crop/Product #3				
Crop/Product #4				
TOTAL INCOME				
EXPENSES				
<i>Variable Costs</i>				
Seed				
Soil Amendments				
Pesticides (NOP guidelines)				
Materials				
Row Cover				
Irrigation infrastructure				

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Mulch				
Marketing materials				
Tools				
Services				
Labor				
Soil testing				
Electricity				
<i>Total Variable Costs</i>				
<i>Fixed Costs</i>				
Annual operating fee				
Lease costs				
<i>Total Fixed Costs</i>				

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Cash Flow Statement

A cash flow statement divides income and expenses into a month by month basis. The purpose of the cash flow statement is to ensure that you have enough money to meet your expenses each month. Contact the Foodshed Alliance if you need a sample cash flow form.

VI. Production Plan

Provide a production plan that covers your 4-6 main crop groupings. The format for this plan is flexible. Feel free to produce charts or maps rather than descriptions for some parts of this plan.

Soil Management Plan

- What is your plan to address the soil fertility needs of your 4-6 main crop groups? List crop needs as indicated by the most recent soil test and crop averages, what amendment you plan to use, the composition of the amendment and the amount you plan to apply.
- What is your plan to maintain and increase soil organic matter? Please describe any practices you plan to use including cover cropping, compost and manure applications. Include rates and timing when applicable.

Cropping Plan

- Seeding schedule
- Transplanting schedule
- Field Map (should include rotation for 2-3 years, bed spacing and planting arrangement and irrigation set-up)

Disease Management Plan

- List key diseases for 4-6 of your main crops or groups of crops.
- Identify cultural controls you plan to use.
- Identify chemical controls allowed by NOP guidelines you plan to use if necessary.

Pest Management Plan

- List key pests for 4-6 of your main crops or groups of crops
- Identify cultural controls you plan to use.
- Identify chemical controls allowed by NOP guidelines you plan to use if necessary.

Weed Management Plan

- Identify weed management techniques for each group of crops (e.g. mulch, cultivation, hand hoeing).

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- Describe how bed and row spacing will be integrated with your chosen weed management techniques.

VII. Risk Management Plan

Farming is a risky business so please outline your plans for the following scenarios.

If everything goes according to plan:

- How do you plan to reinvest back into your business?
- What changes will you make for the following year(s)?

If you can only grow half of what you planned:

- Which expenses can you cut out?
- What changes, if any, will you make in your production plan for the remainder of the season, and what impact should those changes make?
- How will you respond to your customers, markets, etc.? If you can only market (i.e. sell) half of what you grow?
- What will you do with your excess produce?
- What additional markets could you work with, etc.?