



GROUNDSWELL

Center for Local Food & Farming

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The Groundswell Farm Enterprise Incubator

The Groundswell Farm Enterprise Incubator is a new program designed to support beginning farmers and market gardeners who need affordable access to land. Conveniently located at EcoVillage, just outside the City of Ithaca, NY, the incubator will offer a relatively low-risk entry avenue for new producers by providing land, production and marketing infrastructure, support services (such as tractor tillage), and ongoing mentoring from experienced farmers.

The incubator farm aims to encourage entrepreneurs from diverse economic and cultural backgrounds. A field of about 10 acres has been designated by EcoVillage as the initial site of the Groundswell Incubator. Expansion of the Incubator to additional acreage is possible depending on the demand from beginning farmers, their requirements for infrastructure such as deer fencing and irrigation, and competing needs for use of this land.

In order to participate in the incubator program, aspiring farmers and market gardeners will have to meet certain eligibility requirements, which will be determined by an oversight committee. Once approved, they will enter a lease agreement with EcoVillage at Ithaca, Inc. and be able to launch their new enterprise. Specifics of the lease agreement, such as the length of the lease period and the size of the parcel being leased, will depend on the type of production being proposed, the amount of land needed, and future expansion plans of the new enterprise.

By the fall of 2013, our goal is to help launch at least five new farm/market garden businesses at the incubator farm. In 2011, we'll prepare the site by mowing, plowing and disking and planting a cover crop; installing irrigation system; and if funds are available, constructing the shared-use high tunnel and shed and installing a deer fence. The Oversight Team will develop criteria for selection of applicants to the program, and will develop policies governing Incubator farms, including leases and graduated lease fee schedules, liability insurance, equipment and facilities usage and fees, public access, etc.

We will begin recruiting applicants in 2011, with launch of the first enterprises in 2012. Applicants will need to enroll in Groundswell's New Farmer Training Program and complete a business plan before beginning production. If you think you might be interested in participating in Groundswell's Farm Enterprise Incubator, get in touch early. Send us an email at info@groundswellcenter.org, or call 607-379-9270.

Funding to organize and administer the Groundswell Farm Enterprise Incubator is provided by Grant #2010-49400-21799 from the USDA Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program of the National Institute of Food and Agriculture. However, all the physical infrastructure costs will need to be raised from individual and business supporters in the local community, and other sources. We are conducting a fundraising campaign to develop the needed infrastructure, which includes water supply, irrigation lines, deer fence, hoop house, toilet and wash facilities, and a multi-purpose shed.

Groundswell's sponsor, the EcoVillage at Ithaca Center for Sustainability Education, is a project of the not-for-profit Center for Transformative Action. For more information visit www.groundswellcenter.org, www.ecovillageithaca.org, and <http://cta.sas.cornell.edu>.