

# GAME-CHANGING LOCAL FARMER AWARDS



In a year of flooding, drought, and escalating costs, the Local Farmer Awards were valued more than ever. Projects sought to **create efficiencies** through significant savings of time, money, and resources. We saw farmer's eagerness to **combat climate change** with numerous projects dealing with weather-related damage. Still others reflected concern for overall well-being in order to **enhance the health and safety of both their farm teams and their animals**. Numerous projects helped farmers purchase items to **boost sales in the marketplace** and also **take long delayed projects "off the back burner."** Fortunately, these projects are ongoing and continuing to promote farmers' success. One hundred percent of the 2023 recipients rated their projects Important or very Important.



## CREATING EFFICIENCIES

The goal of many projects was crystal clear: to save time, reduce labor, and expand production. In most cases, the degree of success was a surprise and a delight. At **Laurentis Farm**, the Cole Seeder "seeded seven acres of pumpkin, squash and gourds in a day and a half with one person and a tractor as opposed to several days with 2-4 employees." And **Agric Organics** reported that, with its new Jang Seeder, "An arugula bed that would take nine passes now takes just two!"

New Hog Feeders have been "life changing" for **Swallowbelly Farm** because they can now fill feeders once or twice a week rather than twice a day. In addition, these large and secure feeders reduce significant waste due to spillage and pests. **Yellow Stonehouse Farm's** 80-gallon fertilizer spray can handle larger areas more thoroughly in half the time – an estimated savings of five worker-days. And **Woven Roots Farm** bought 85 reusable vegetable crates that provide the necessary dark and humid environment to store crops 2-3 times longer in the cooler, thus extending CSA offerings.



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## COMBATING CLIMATE CHANGE

At **Holiday Brook Farm**, high tunnels now allow stable growing conditions to protect crops from wind, rain, drought, and unseasonable temperature fluctuations.

To produce more robust lettuce seedlings, **Brookfield Farm** bought several items – a vacuum seeder, an injector to fertilize seedlings, and a shade cloth to germinate them. The effort enables the farm to counter climate challenges from unpredictable weather and other sources, which are “creating more pressure than a decade ago,” and gave Brookfield Farm a critical jumpstart against heat, disease and pest stress.

A Tilmor plastic mulch layer had an “immeasurable impact” on **Four Corners Farm**, reducing the impact from heavy rains during the wet season and conserving soil moisture during the dry season. While crops planted in soil were either a complete loss or yielded poorly, crops planted into the mulch have thrived.



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*We have seen heightened pressures from disease, pests, and weather problems over the past few years in comparison to a decade ago.*

*Brookfield Farm*

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# ENHANCING HEALTH AND SAFETY OF BOTH THE FARM WORKERS AND THE ANIMALS



More than ever, farmers were mindful of conditions that taxed their farm teams and affected their animals. So they came up with creative solutions.

**Blue Heaven Blueberry and Raspberry Farm** found its Electric Pruner to be a godsend for the “aging farmer” and, more important, for the safety of workers. The pruning saves on labor and contributes to healthier bushes. **Just Roots Inc.** says that its Undercutter Bar “lifts both crops and spirits!” It slices the soil to lift and loosen under crops so the farm team can more swiftly harvest beds of vegetables. The reduced impact on the body has been “a game changer and back saver.”



Farmers love their chickens and cows and sheep and goats – and want the same health, safety, and positive environment for their animals as they do for their farm workers. A number of projects enhance animals’ comfort, leading to improved overall health, successful breeding, and reduced lameness. **Barstow’s Farm** called its updated mattress for 45 stalls in the heifer barn “a big improvement for our girls.” The **Hicks Family Farm** used High Tensile Fencing to create more pasture area for the beef herd and keep the animals safe.

## BOOSTING SALES IN THE MARKETPLACE

**Crimson & Clover Farm’s** cold storage expansion increased their space so they can store an additional 36,000 pounds of produce for winter CSA shares and sales. Even in a very wet year, the new herb drying room for medicinal teas is enabling **Sweet Birch Herbals** to dry many more pounds of herbs used in its tea blend for sale at markets and fairs.

With the purchase of a commercial cotton candy machine, **Ferrindino Maple, LLC**, has doubled the number of Big Y stores they supply and tripled their monthly revenue from maple cotton candy sales. And a new maple cream machine allowed **Shaw’s Sugarhouse** to double its cream production within the same amount of time.



# TAKING KEY PROJECTS OFF THE BACK BURNER

It's no surprise that at the start of each season, farmers must manage their budget to address urgent needs. What happens is that other priority projects must be delayed, often more than once. Thankfully, the Local Farmer Awards provide farmers with timely and generous funds critical to farm management.

Instead of "a few years down the line," **Ayrhill Farms, Inc.** moved forward with a mounted rotary tiller and doubled its pumpkin patch. For **Graves Glen Farm**, a Cattle Management System is proving to be "an incredible asset," allowing them to administer care to multiple animals within the same hour and save both time and money.

"Without the award," they wrote, "this project could not have come now." **Musante Farm** finally took a project off the "to do" list, installing water lines and frost-free hydrants. "Between the expense and the arduous task of installation, it kept getting pushed to the back burner." Today the easy access to water greatly improves the efficiency of countless farm chores such as watering the chicken flock and washing the beekeeping and honey processing equipment.



Ayrhill Farms, Inc.

“Receiving this award changed not just our farm but also our thinking, our priorities, and our future plans.”  
*The Petrie Family Farm*

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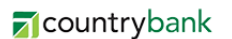
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