

THE AGRO-ECO PROJECT

IMPACT REPORT 2025



A note from the president:

What a year it has been! A year full of accomplishments, new challenges and a very unpredictable institutional landscape. While we do not rely on government grants, the US Government shut down and the consequent slowing down of funding for hunger relief activities surely sent our sector into uncharted territory.

The lessons to be drawn from this year are clear. Firstly, is the importance of mutual aid and of support throughout the hunger relief ecosystem, and secondly the need to build some degree of strategic self-sufficiency within one's operations. As the world changes and institutional partners are not as reliable as in the past, it is important to have contingency plans in place along with a strong network of like minded individuals, community members and organizations that can support each other and pivot quickly and creatively to meet the moment.

Our relationships with the food banks we serve as well as with other more flexible organizations such as the WooFridges were strengthened this year as we navigated funding cuts and shut downs. Lessons have been learned and we are better prepared to react once there is another inevitable disruption to the institutional landscape, which, alas, has become the new normal.

Now to our achievements this year. We have finally completed our building project! We have gained access to sorely needed office space, a brand new commercial kitchen and a heated greenhouse to use as a nursery for small plants. With this infrastructure in place, we are now professionalizing our operation. We had started as a small garden donating sporadically to food banks, and have now grown it into an operation capable of executing sophisticated crop plans carried out within a new agroforestry chestnut orchard.

I cannot stress how invaluable having access to a commercial kitchen on site is. The ability to store, freeze and dry produce, to be then transformed into value added products extends our season throughout the winter months and greatly expands the offerings we can bring to the food banks we work with. Jellies, jams, pies, sauces, dehydrated vegetables and much more are now included in our weekly donations.

Our educational activities have increased as well this year, and have included mushroom foraging, school trips, volunteer days and pasta classes, just to name a few of our events. We look forward to expanding these activities in 2026.

Our mission of producing tasty, healthy food for those in need within a farming system that not only conserves but regenerates our ecosystem would not be possible without our two star employees. Katie Greger is not only our farm manager extraordinaire, but has fashioned herself into our head chef of sorts, spearheading the detailed production of many of our value added products. It has been a pleasure seeing her grow into this new role.

Pieter Vanderbrug, a man of many talents, has taken his community outreach position to new heights this year. Not only did he schedule and organize school visits, seminars, volunteer groups and cooking classes, but steadfastly cultivated relationships with food banks and other hunger relief organizations during the shut down months that allowed us to pivot and set in place initiatives to mitigate the loss of funding.

Finally, a big shout out and thank you to our intern Quinn Johnson who helped us (rain or shine) with our field operations this growing season, contributing to a year of great success and the achievement of our organization's goals.

OUR FOOD DONATIONS



WHO DID WE DONATE TO?

RUTLAND FOOD PANTRY



ST. JOHN'S FOOD FOR THE POOR PROGRAM



BARRE FOOD PANTRY



WORCESTER COMMUNITY FRIDGES



WACHUSETT FOOD PANTRY



PRODUCE DONATED FROM FIELD



221.7 lbs.

429 lbs.

8,789.6 lbs.



LOCAL CHEF INITIATIVE



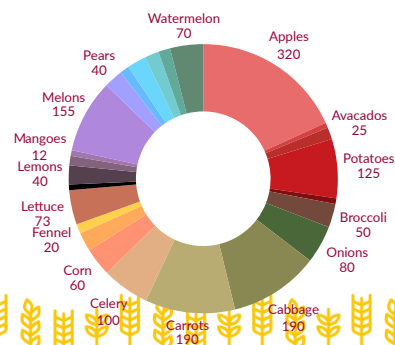
Metta Heart, our local chef, using some of our produce, made us 780 Meals. They were donated to St. John's and the Woo Fridges.



GREATER TABLE INITIATIVE

We worked with the Boston Area Gleaners this season to supplement our donations with additional fruit and veggies

Total Pounds (1,839.25) Donated



Value Added Products

This season yielded many new value-added products

We've Made:

For the Holidays:

Thanksgiving: 271 pumpkin pies and 26 apple and pear pies.

Christmas: 196 pumpkin pies, 20 peach crisps, 12 pear crisps, 74 berry crisps, 300 mini pies and 29 raspberry bars.

EVERYTHING ELSE:

- 27, 16oz. bottles of apple juice
- 191 pints of Salsa Verde
- 41 quarts of Tomato Soup
- 35 pints of Tomato Sauce
- 53 pint jars of Tomato Puree
- 7, 32oz. jars of Tomato Puree
- 4, 16oz. jars of Tomato Puree
- Jam to come



Workshops

MICROGREEN CLASS

At the start of the season, before the farm reached full swing, we hosted a microgreen class at the Council on Aging in Rutland. Katie led the session, offering participants a brief introduction to the farm and its growing practices. Attendees were able to see, taste, and take home pre-grown microgreens, along with the supplies and guidance needed to grow their own at home. The class concluded with a tasting of a pasta salad featuring a fresh microgreen pesto.



PASTA MAKING CLASS

During the summer, we partnered with Overlook Farm to host a hands-on pasta-making class. Giulio led the workshop, beginning with an introduction to the history and cultural significance of Italian pasta. Participants then learned how to make fresh pasta from scratch and enjoyed a pasta salad highlighting seasonal vegetables from the farm.



MUSHROOM FORAGING CLASS

This year, the farm hosted early summer and fall mushroom foraging classes, partnering with local mycologist Amanda Dye to explore the 50+ acres of forest surrounding the farm.

Participants spent an hour in each session identifying local fungi and discussing the environment that supports their growth. During each session, the farm also offered a tour of its mushroom cultivation efforts, including wine cap wood chip beds and a mix of shiitake and oyster logs. At the end of the events, fresh pasta mixed with farm-grown mushrooms was served.



EDUCATION ACTIVITIES

BANCROFT SCHOOL

The farm's collaboration with Bancroft School continued this year with another presentation during their Youth Equity Action Day. This year, the farm presented on food insecurity in collaboration with the Worcester Community Fridges. Following the presentation, a group of students visited the farm to help with weeding, seed starting, and mulching between berry rows.



CLARK UNIVERSITY & COLLEGE OF THE HOLY CROSS

This year, we established two new academic partnerships with Clark University and the College of the Holy Cross. In the spring, students from Clark University's Sustainable Food Systems master's program visited the farm to assist with planting new trees and to learn about the farm's unique operations and long-term vision. Later in the year, students from the College of the Holy Cross toured the farm and engaged in discussions about what an optimistic and sustainable future for farming might look like.



Volunteer Groups

WOO FRIDGE VOLUNTEER DAY



In May, Worcester Community Fridge volunteers came out to the farm to help weed, move compost, and plant tomatoes. The volunteers also got the opportunity to tour the farm and discuss the importance of local food systems.

REC VOLUNTEER DAY

In July, the REC Youth Grow team visited our farm for the second year in a row. They helped weed, prune tomatoes, and kill squash bugs.



MED STUDENT VOLUNTEER DAY

In June, a group of Umass Chan medical students drove out to the farm to help weed beans and apply straw mulch. The students were particularly interested in the differences in nutrient density based on grow style, which was discussed at length.



LAB CORP VOLUNTEER DAY

In July and September, volunteers from Labcorp visited the farm to help weed and take down winter squash plants. They found the work challenging, yet fulfilling, and asked lots of questions about our work and local food-insecurity.



From Our Farm

From our Farm Manager Katie

Closing out my eighth season on the farm we continued to grow and expand the not-for-profit. We maintained weekly/biweekly donations. We had the help of another farm hand and we increased the number of volunteer groups we hosted. We added more trees which aided in our ever expanding food forest system. We created a new market garden area that we will be able to put into production for next season. We have a new propagation greenhouse that will aid in starting many more plants. And, we have a commercial kitchen on site which has made providing value added products that much easier. It was the season of infrastructure to be able to increase production for following seasons to come.

Here's to another season!

From Our Community Outreach Coordinator Pieter

Over the past year, I am proud to reflect on the significant growth that our organization has made. We continue to make strong new connections with organizations in our community. Our collaboration with Holy Cross and Clark University were a highlight of the year. It was refreshing to see young passionate adults come to the farm and learn about local sustainable agriculture projects and see them inspired by our work.

Looking ahead, I am excited to continue the partnerships with local colleges, and hopefully host students to do research on our farm. Not only do we want to farm sustainably, we want to continue to collect data to prove that we are growing healthy food and sustaining a healthy environment. Additionally, I am excited to integrate drop-in volunteer hours on the farm, find more volunteer groups and continue to grow nutrient dense food for our Worcester County community.



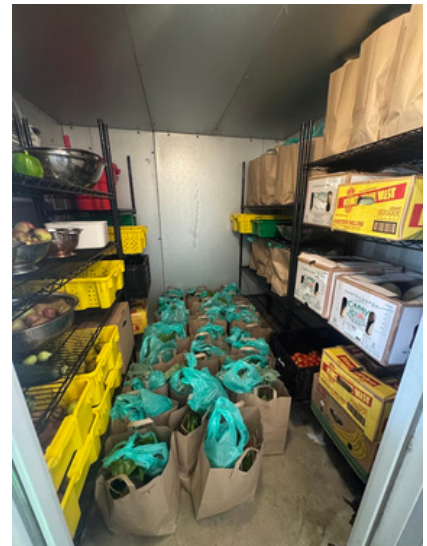
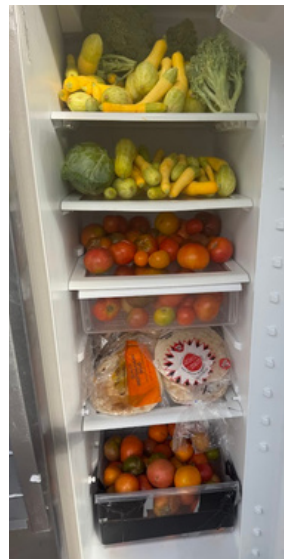
Pictures from the Team



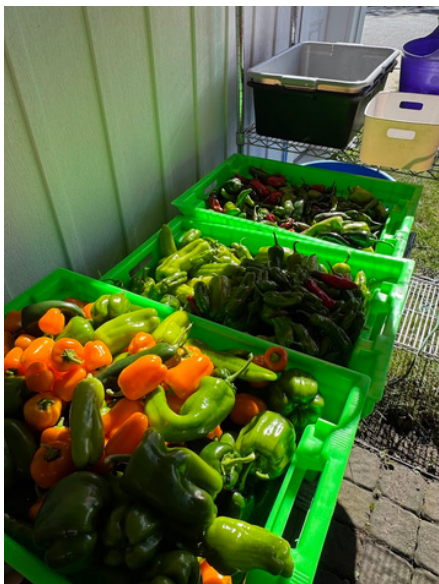
This season our farm hand was Quinn Johnson who joined us fresh from graduating from University of Rhode Island. He was a great helping hand this season.



Pictures From our Donations



Lots of Produce!



The Holiday Season in the Kitchen

