

MASSACHUSETTS Farm to School

Farm to Institution Viability *Case Study: Allandale Farm*

Overview

Allandale Farm is a mid-sized suburban farm that grows a wide range of vegetables for sale through three primary channels – a CSA, a farm stand, and wholesale accounts primarily to restaurants and other farms. For the past two years they have sold a variety of vegetables to the Brookline public schools, a relationship they view positively.

Farm Profile

Farm Name: Allandale Farm

Farm Structure: Incorporated. The owners of the family business are land owners but not farm operators.

Farm Location: Boston, Brookline and Groton, MA (urban, suburban)

Proximity to Markets: Very close

Acreage: 130 acres in Boston/Brookline of which 15 are cultivated. Cultivate 2 additional leased acres in Brookline and 40 acres in Groton, of which 19 are cultivated.

Sales Channels: CSA (31% of sales by value), farm stand (41%), and wholesale (28%).

Labor: 2 year round farm managers and 6 year round field crew. Approximately 7 seasonal field crew (some full season, some summer only); Farm stand has 2 year round staff.

Crops

Due to the CSA model, the farm grows a huge variety of produce, almost entirely vegetables. Other varieties of crops are specifically grown for wholesale accounts and the farm offers other products wholesale based on availability. Primary wholesale crops to the public schools have included lettuce, tomatoes, potatoes, and kale.

Land

Allandale Farm occupies approximately 172 acres of land in three towns, Boston, Brookline and Groton, MA. Of that acreage, 130 are in Boston/Brookline of which only 15 are cultivated. Approximately half of the 40 acres in Groton are cultivated. An additional two acres of leased land in Brookline is actively cultivated. Allandale's land situation is impacted by the farm owners' desire to keep land in active farming and does not necessarily represent optimal efficiency of land use as the two primary plots of land are quite far from each other and the farm does not have complete equipment sets at each site. The farm does not have any room for

expansion of cultivation, but the farm could increase productivity by shifting more acreage to higher yield and/or higher value crops and shifting away from land intensive crops such as winter squash.

Sales Channels

The farm has three primary sales channels – a retail farm stand on site, a CSA, and wholesale accounts. The majority of wholesale sales are to area restaurants (approximately 12-15), multi-producer CSAs and area Whole Foods markets. A smaller percentage is sold to traditional produce distributors. In 2014, the farm stand sold \$355,230 of Allandale grown produce, eggs, and wood, as well as \$383,312.00 of Allandale grown plants. The CSA sold \$167,900 of shares, and wholesale accounted for \$163,130 of sales. The farm manager is actively seeking to increase the wholesale business.

Financials (2014 Growing Season)

Total Income: \$3,066,872

Total Farm Income: \$1,013,714 (includes all farm grown produce, livestock, eggs, flowers, and plants). Remaining income includes retail farm stand sales of non-farm grown products, bought in garden center products, and their on-site summer childrens' program

Total Wholesale Sales: \$163,131

Direct Sales to Institutions: \$2,894

Sales to Institutions via Distributors: \$0

Institutional Sales as a % of Wholesale: 1.8%

Why Institutional Sales Work

The farm views the relationship with the Brookline Public Schools positively for three primary reasons:

- 1) The school system provides an outlet for high volume sales of commodity crops and accepts delivery at one central location.
- 2) The school pays the same wholesale price as restaurants, which is significantly higher than what traditional produce distributors offer.
- 3) School sales provide a good marketing opportunity for the farm, which has a very limited advertising budget and is located within the school district. The school food service director puts the farm name on menus and other materials seen by all public schools parents in the town, a reach few other marketing venues would provide.