To Whom It May Concern:

Below is a press release announcing Elliot Farm’s Laser Scarecrow Project, funded by Northeast SARE. The release provides an overview and results of the project, as well as a link to the free plans for small farmers to build-their-own laser scarecrow.

Please share this story widely, if you can.

Many thanks,

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Elliot Farm Offers Small Farmers a Solution to Bird Crop Damage with Laser Scarecrow Prototype, Funded by Northeast SARE**

LAKEVILLE, Mass. November 7, 2018— For the past 25 years, family-owned Elliot Farm in Lakeville, MA has provided southeastern Massachusetts with quality, native produce. The 50-acre family farm grows mixed vegetables, beefsteak tomatoes, and specializes in sweet corn. Elliot Farm’s roadside farm stand is open seasonally 7 days a week, and also offers a Community Shared Agriculture (CSA) program. Founder Kenneth Elliot, 60, has been farming for over 40 years, and welcomed his two children into the family business at the ripe ages of 10 and 8, now 34 and 33. Now, as proud co-owners, the siblings are determined to keep agriculture in their community for generations to come.

Unfortunately, sweet corn crop damage from red-winged black birds is threatening the viability of Elliot Farm and hurting other farms across the region. Despite tremendous efforts to keep these pests at bay, including balloons, bird distress calls, bird repellent, reflecting tape, and netting, in 2016 season, Elliot Farm lost 80% of its sweet corn crop during the height of bird season, roughly mid-July through mid-October, estimated at $18,000 in lost product.

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In search for an effective solution, Elliot Farm joined a laser scarecrow feasibility study, conducted by University of Rhode Island professor of plant sciences, Dr. Rebecca Brown in 2017. While the feasibility study proved that the laser scarecrow technology was effective, the prototype used broke many times throughout the season due to poor design.

There are three well-known laser bird repellent products currently on the market, ranging from $500 for a hand-held unit to $10,000 for an automated stationary unit, none are suitably designed for small farms. The $10,000 unit is arguably the most effective of the three, but it is not financially attainable. These products are especially financially unattainable for Elliot Farm since its 50 acres of crop land is spread out over 14 small fields. As such, the farm would need a minimum of 9 units to protect all fields.

In 2018, Elliot Farm was awarded a grant from Northeast SARE to design and manufacture an effective laser scarecrow prototype for under $500 so that this technology is cost effective for small farms, who may require multiple units to protect their crops.  Elliot Farm collaborated with Stephen Chomyszak, Assistant Professor in the Department of Mechanical Engineering & Technology at Wentworth Institute of Technology, and his student engineers, Nick Stratton, Chris Thierauf and Ken Costa, on this project.

After piloting 9 units during the 2018 farm season, Elliot Farm reported a reduction in bird damage, recording a 20% damage rate in the height of bird season, down from the historical 80% damage rate. The farmers also found that if the lasers were used in conjunction with a bird distress call, the damage was further mitigated to just 8%.  The preemptive installation of the technology was vital to crop protection success.  The laser scarecrows and bird distress calls had to be up and running prior to the corn ripening to deter the birds from ever entering the field. Plans on this website <https://deannaelliot.wixsite.com/laserscarecrow> may be freely used to make laser scarecrows for personal use. With this technology, small farmers can increase the sustainability and viability of their agricultural enterprises.

**About Elliot Farm**

Elliot Farm’s homegrown produce is available at the family’s roadside stand, conveniently located 2 miles off of Exit 4 on Route 495 at 202 Main St., Route 105 in Lakeville. Open 7 days a week from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., Elliot Farm is your one-stop veggie destination to stock-up on Massachusetts’ freshest produce. Sharing summer’s edible commodities with the southeast year after year, Elliot’s has secured its presence as a community hotspot. Elliot’s customer-coined slogan, “the best sweet corn in the world,” succinctly describes why patrons keep coming back for more. With its open-air stand structure and panoramic cornfield views, Elliot Farm prides itself on its no-frill, authentic farm ambiance. Simply put, Elliot Farm is the real deal, and offers real deals on native vegetables.

For additional information on Elliot Farm please visit: [www.elliotfarm.org](http://www.elliotfarm.org). Follow Elliot Farm on Facebook: [www.facebook.com/elliotfarm](http://www.facebook.com/elliotfarm). Plans on this website <https://deannaelliot.wixsite.com/laserscarecrow> may be freely used to make laser scarecrows for personal use.

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