

Dearing Country Farms Policy Manual

Table of Contents

[Contact Information](#)

[Farm Vision and Mission Statement](#)

[History](#)

[Current Business Plan](#)

[Future Business Planning](#)

[Worker Policy](#)

[Volunteer Policy](#)

[Visitor/Guests Policy](#)

[CSA Policy, Contract and Expectations](#)

[Release and Waiver of Liabilities and Claims](#)

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Farm Vision/Mission Statement

Dearing Country Farms is a small family farmstead that utilizes best practices in sustainable agriculture, organic production gardening, humane livestock management, natural resources/wildlife habitat development, agriculture education and community outreach.

History

In 2003, Brad and Jackie Dearing purchased 31.4 Acres in Dry Grove Township with the goal of designing their own rural property with a custom home and recreational lands. After designing and building their dream home, plans changed due to their loss of twin boys in the winter of 2004. Priorities changed and the decision was made to have Jackie leave her corporate job at Country financial in Bloomington in order to be a stay at home mom and raise a family when expecting their daughter in 2006. Income however was still an issue as the only household income was through Brad's teaching salary at University High School in Normal. An idea was brought up to raise a small backyard flock of production chickens for eggs and utilize organic methods in order to meet a niche market in the area. 300 chickens were purchased and a coop was constructed. Sales began at the Downtown Bloomington Farmer's Market and several health food stores in the region. Soon demand outpaced supply and more chickens were needed. In addition, customers began requested organically grown produce, so a small garden was developed. Quickly, once again demand outpaced supply and gardens were increased. Next came meat requests and we started raising broilers, then beef. We soon noticed our son had allergy reactions to cow's milk and the decision was made to raise a few dairy goats for our family and soon thereafter our dairy operation was developed to move our excess raw, unpasteurized milk. Operations continue along with improvements on soil quality, livestock management, wildlife habitat, product diversity, community outreach and education, farm tours, and CSA planning and implementation.

Dearing Country Farms Business Plan

Objectives: To develop a working, profitable homestead farm that utilizes sustainable agricultural practices to cultivate a wide diverse selection of produce, fruit, herbs, nuts, and berries, as well as grow livestock in a humane and sustainable environment.

Rationale: With more and more research pointing to the degradation of our environment and a greater emphasis put on farming to increase productivity many times at which compromise conservation practices and sustainability, a need has arisen for farms with those aspects in mind and to serve the local populace with "organically" grown produce and humanely treated livestock products.

Resources/Organizations:

- University of Illinois Agroecology/Sustainable Agriculture Program, www.aces.uiuc.edu/asap;
- Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences, www.nres.uiuc.edu;
- The Land Connection www.thelandconnection.org;
- Illinois Stewardship Alliance, www.illinoisstewardshipalliance.org;
- Illinois Farmers Union www.ilfu.org;
- Farm Aid, www.farmaid.org;
- Illinois Department of Agriculture, www.agr.state.il.us;
- US Department of Agriculture, www.usda.gov;
- Certified naturally Grown, www.naturallygrown.org

Organizational Profile

P.1 ORGANIZATIONAL DESCRIPTION

P.1a. Organizational Environment

Dearing Country Farms was developed by Brad and Jackie Dearing as a means for additional household income as Jackie removed herself from the corporate workforce to become a homemaker and provide for their growing family.

Employee Profile

Dearing Country Farms has 2 full time employees and 1 or 2 part time employees as seasonal work dictates.

Technologies

The most used advanced technology is the use of computers and the internet for seed and planting ordering, webpage development, plot planning, spreadsheet and document development and email communications. Cellular telephones and 2 way radios combine to provide on farm communications. Additional technologies are acquired and implemented on a needs basis with a ROI schedule developed and analyzed.

Equipment

In addition to computers, Dearing Country Farms utilizes a vast array of equipment and farmstead tools. These include such things as hand and power tools, planters, generators, tractor, loader and 3 point attachments, trailers, cars, trucks and other miscellaneous tools and equipment.

Facilities

The farms consists of 31 acres with land set aside for USDA Conservation Reserve Program, Natural Wildlife restoration, homestead, organic crop production, organic livestock development.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

Regulatory Environment

County, state and federal statutes, regulations, and mandates significantly impact Dearing Country Farms. Every attempt is made to ensure compliance with those regulations. In addition, Dearing Country Farms follows all USDA National Organic Program standards and is a member of Certified Naturally Grown. In addition, the USDA Farm Services Agency issues and maintains records for crops and issues a respective farm number, and the Natural Resources Conservation Services maintains records for conservation practices on the farm.

Safety

Safety is of utmost importance to Dearing Country Farms and its employees. No employees has ever experienced a work related injury requiring medical attention.

Accreditation and Certification Requirements

Dearing Country Farms follows all USDA National Organic Program standards and is a member of Certified Naturally Grown, with both produce and livestock certified.

Environmental

Dearing Country Farm's activities include monitoring soil and air quality, research relative to how construction and maintenance of projects impact the migration and habitat of wildlife and impacts on the landscape and tertiary effects of any land use and alteration. A filter strip and wildlife habitat is of utmost importance to the operation of the farm.

Financial Regulations

Current profit margins and the overall farmstead budget regulates all purchases and places limitations on supplies, project viability as well as land and other capitol procurement activities.

Product Regulations

All produce, meat and eggs are randomly inspected, and/or tested and must meet stringent quality standards before they are sold. In addition, all materials used on the farm must also pass a strict adherence to sustainable, earth friendly and organic standards scrutiny.

P.1b. Organizational Relationships

P.1b(1) Major Market Segments

The citizens of Bloomington/Normal are the major market for Dearing Country Farms. We also have a presence in Springfield, Champaign/Urba, and Peoria. Our customers are entitled to a safe, well-designed and maintained farm experience when touring or doing business on site. Every attempt is made to keep the farm free from traffic congestion, hazards, and barriers. It should be attractive and free of weeds, litter, and graffiti. Customers visiting the farm expect quick, efficient, accurate, and friendly service for their business. Deliveries should be on time and accurate. However, the farm is a working enterprise and typical agricultural business, traffic, hazards and barriers should be expected.

P.1b(2) Suppliers and Dealers

Most all work is done by the owner/operators of Dearing County Farms, so little to no contracts are necessary. Most supplies are procured from local retailers or the internet and are typically seasonal in nature.

Communication Mechanisms

Dearing Country Farms employs several methods for communicating with its customers. A web presence, email, mass customer mailings, and local newspaper advertisements are utilized. Website ordering, on farm sales, and deliveries are used, however the most widely used method is our attendance at local farmer's markets, primarily the Downtown Bloomington Farmer's Market. Formal partnerships are established in meetings, and supplier relationships are typically established through an internet procurement process.

P.2 ORGANIZATIONAL CHALLENGES

P.2a. Competitive Environment

As of September 2009, Dearing Country Farms is the only Certified Naturally Grown farm operating in McLean County, Illinois. There are several other local farmsteads, but to our knowledge they are not following USDA NOP standards and guidelines, nor Certified Naturally Grown.

P.2b. Strategic Challenges

Dearing Country Farm's key strategic challenges are:

- Variety** - To offer a wide selection of vegetables, fruits, nuts, berries, herbs, eggs and meat to the customer.
 - Quality** – An importance is placed on the quality of our goods. Purity, cleanliness, taste and freshness are all aspects of our produce, meat and eggs.
 - Customer Service** - 1) Ensuring ease of access to services, 2) Identifying alternate service delivery methods, 3) Informing customers in a timely, accurate manner regarding products and services and 4) Providing quality customer service to an increasing population.
 - Funding** - Securing dependable funding sources and/or allocating funds for building and maintaining the various projects around the farm.
 - Reputation** - Enhancing Dearing Country Farm's reputation to a broader community; improving the accessibility and availability of our products, and performing outreach and on farm tours to increasing public awareness and confidence in our products.
 - Environment** – Owning and operating an organic farm efficiently and productively within a budget while, at the same time, protecting and conserving the environment (air, water, wildlife, and all natural resources.)
- Addressing these challenges requires us to consider new methods, new/revised laws, multi-modal alternatives, new on-line services, extensive evaluation and research, public involvement, expanded use of alternate outreach and market strategies and process improvements.

Dearing Country Farms must overcome these strategic challenges in order to attain its goals that are:

- Improve the overall land and wildlife integrity.
- Increase the quality, timeliness and cost effectiveness of our products and services.
- Develop and retain high performing soils and livestock.
- Optimize the use of all resources.
- Improve public and political support necessary to meet local, organic farming needs.

P.2c. Performance Improvement System

Overall operational performance is evaluated by the executive and operations level staff with key objectives in the strategic plan being measured and discussed monthly. Gaps are identified, course corrections are generated, and action plans are made with the due dates and task owners identified. Workers have been empowered to do process improvements related to performance measures.

Three breakthrough strategies are employed to improve operations:

- Measurements** - Develop and employ a measurement system that provides information for income and spending to maintain profits and allocating resources for further *improving performance*.
- Resources** - Allocate resources according to mandates, planned priorities, customer requirements, and a return on investment.
- Markets** - Developing new markets and communicating the current market availability for purchasing our products.

Financial Breakdown

** Confidential **

Future Business Planning

** Coming Soon **

Worker Policy

** Coming Soon **

Volunteer Policy

** Coming Soon **

Visitor/Guests Policy

Farm visits and Volunteering:

We offer 'Open Farm' on the second Sunday of each month May through October (weather permitting) from 2-4 pm. You are welcome to visit the farm at any time during those hours. We also provide personal tours at other times for a minimal donation, please contact us to schedule those.

We also invite you to help out on the farm during our regular volunteer hours. To volunteer you will also need to sign a 'Release and Waiver' agreement. We do all sorts of tasks in the fields to learn how we grow and take care of your food. This requires you to be in good physical condition. We always have fun! Contact us for more information about those volunteer opportunities.

Reminders:

- Be sure personally recognize and notify your kids of the electric and barb wire fence at various locations around the farm.
- When walking through the gardens, monitor your children and be sure to stay on the paths. We take care not to compact the soil of the vegetable beds and/or trample our plantings.
- No dogs, cats or other outside animals permitted on our property.
- And finally, as Illinois residents, I'm sure you know to look out for poison ivy, bees, wasps, ants and other small critters. Please be aware of these pests and steer your children away from them. Ants and wasps are our friends, but they are very protective of their homes and can bite and/or sting.

CSA Policy and Expectations

We at Dearing Country Farms, wish to provide you with fresh, local, seasonal food and you, the member, wish to receive a portion of our harvest. This agreement outlines our shared commitments to that relationship.

Section 1. Introducing Our CSA Farm

A. Becoming a Part of Our Farm

We propose to grow food for individual family shares known as CSAs (Community Supported Agriculture). The shares are limited and are accepted on a first come basis. There is an application at the main farm webpage for full shares.

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) is a relationship between our farm and you as our customer. Rather than simply purchasing food, our customers become “members” of this CSA farm who receive a portion of the farm’s harvest.

Our CSA runs for 25 weeks, from May through October. Members are responsible for showing up at the farm/pick-up site each week to pick up your share of freshly harvested produce, meats and/or eggs. You will generally receive 3 to 5 varieties of vegetables, dozen eggs, 2 pounds ground beef or a 3 pound chicken, or a combination of the above, equivalent to a small grocery bag of produce. Detailed information regarding pick-up is discussed below in Section 3. Variety and quantity may vary as described below in Section 2.

B. Our Growing Practices

Started in 2005, we are a local, family farmstead in Bloomington, IL. We believe in *sustainable agricultural practices*, feed our livestock *certified organic, non-GMO feed* and allow them to graze on grass pasture. We do not use routine antibiotics, vaccines or growth hormones on any of our animals; and our produce is *grown using natural and organic gardening methods*. We never use synthetic or harmful herbicides, pesticides, or fertilizers. Using only methods and practices accepted by the *USDA Organic Program Standards* and homestead farming knowledge. We take pride in the wholesomeness and great quality of our products we place a major emphasis on creating good healthy soil. We apply the biodynamic processes to our 4-acre, intensively grown gardens. It is in constant production with fruits, vegetables, herbs, and flowers grown for CSA members, regional health food stores, restaurants and community members. Our mission includes growing nutritious, healthy, fresh, wholesome real food; providing hands-on education for all ages; and pursuing the highest level of sustainable soil, natural wildlife habitat and humane livestock management.

We treat our land respectfully and do not add any chemical fertilizers or pesticides. As a living system, we feed our soil the best natural nutrients, organically derived. We use many different soil-building techniques that improve the health and bio-diversity of the land, such as crop rotations, bio-dynamic practices, and cover crops.

C. The Products We Expect during our growing season

The chart below outlines some of the vegetables we hope to deliver and when you may see them in your share. This chart is based on our best estimate, but of course weather, pests, and other events will affect actual production.

Month Harvested	Expected Crops
April to May	Arugula, Asparagus, Broccoli, Lettuce, Kale, Carrots, Beets, Swiss Chard, Peas, Mesclun Mix, Green Onions, Garlic Scapes.
June to July	Beets, Green Beans, Sweet Corn, Tomatoes, Peppers, Okra, Squash, Cucumbers, Green Onions, Lettuce, Mesclun Mix, Kale.
August to September	Sweet Corn, Tomatoes, Peppers, Okra, Squash, Cucumbers, Green Onions, Lettuce, Mesclun Mix.
October to November	Arugula, Lettuce, Kale, Carrots, Beets, Swiss Chard, Peas, Mesclun Mix, Green Onions, Garlic Scapes.

Section 2. Our Shared Commitments

A. Sharing in the Risk of Crop Failure

We promise to do our best to provide you with a bountiful share each week. The quantity of produce, however, may vary from week-to-week due to extreme weather, insects, or other production factors despite our best efforts. By joining our CSA, you are agreeing to share the risk of crop failure with us and other members. In the unlikely event of a crop failure, our procedure is as follows:

If only a small portion of crops fail, we compensate for the failed crops by filling your share with other crops grown on the farm that are ready for harvest at that time. If a large portion of crops fail, we may not be able to deliver any product in some weeks. As a last resort, we may cover for a crop loss by buying in from another local farmer with the same certifications and agricultural philosophy as our farm. This may not be a feasible option for all crops because of cost or widespread failure, and again is a last resort.

In addition to our CSA, our farm sells to farmers markets, restaurants, and grocery stores. Although production is not segregated, our CSA receives priority. After filling our CSA share with the week's harvest first, the remainder is sold to our other markets. We pack as much as possible into your share to cover the allotted share pricing, and most of the time provide more than the allotted share price for the week, however, we don't want to overwhelm our members or deliver so much produce that it goes to waste. Please note that we may produce some items exclusively for our other outlets. You may see our products at other venues that you will not receive in your CSA share.

Section 3. Picking Up Shares

You are responsible for picking up your share each week.

City	Name of Location	Address	Day	Time
Bloomington	Dearing Country Farms	16410 N 800 East Rd	Thursdays	4pm - 8pm
Bloomington	Downtown Bloomington Farmers Market		Saturday	7:30am - 9am

Directions:

From Normal, IL - Take Raab Rd West 5 miles past Heartland Community College, turn left on 800 East Rd, go ½ mile, the farm is on the right. Or from Route 9 west, turn right on Mitsubishi Pkwy, go 3 miles, turn left Yuton/Raab Rd., go 3 miles, turn left on 800 East Rd, go ½ mile, the farm is on the right.

How to Pick-Up Your Vegetables:

The vegetables in your share will be in bins on tables, clearly labeled and scales will be nearby. Some items will be bunched; some you may have to weigh for yourself.

You will need to sign in on the clipboard to show that you picked up your share that day.

You are responsible for observing our drop site rules, which are as follows:

1. Bring your own bag to transport your weeks share.
2. Pick up your share within the timeframe stated. Although we deliver high-quality produce to the site, quality will decline quickly if not picked up in time.
3. Be respectful of our property.
4. Follow additional rules posted at pickup.

What to do if you can't make it:

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

You have a couple of options if you know that you'll miss a CSA pick up.

If you'll be out of town, you can have a friend or neighbor pick up your share. Please let us know if someone will be coming in your place, be sure to educate them what to do - remember how you felt the first time you picked up.

You can also call, email or otherwise let us know at least 3 days in advance that you will not be picking up and we can double your next weeks share.

If you miss a farm share without notifying us in advance, we cannot double your share for a future distribution. **You will forfeit that weeks share.**

Food Safety

We take the safety of your food seriously. For your added protection, wash all produce before eating, refrigerate milk and eggs and put frozen products in the freezer as soon as possible. The milk we sell is raw and unpasteurized. (As a legal disclaimer....Please know that some individuals in the agricultural and food safety industry feel that unpasteurized milk and milk products contain harmful bacteria and the consumption of them can be dangerous. Please do your research before consuming to know your risks and rights as a consumer.)

Recipes and Newsletters:

Each month you will receive our newsletter with a recipe section. If you have photos of a recipe that you've prepared, please send photos and the recipe and we'll include it on that section.

We also love having guest articles, send in your creative writing, poetry, or farm tales.

Here are some pictures of last year's CSA's:

Section 4. Communicating with Us

The best way to communicate with us is via email or phone. Our email is farms@dearingcountryfarms.com. Our phone number is 309-963-4932 and the best times to reach us are daily from 8:00 am to 6:00 pm. We will do our best to respond as soon as possible, but please understand that we spend most of our time in the field growing your food and not at our desk. Please contact us with any news of the following: changes to your postal or email address, changes to your drop-site location, problems with your drop-site, or dissatisfaction with your share.

We will communicate with you by email. When you sign up, you will be added to our distribution list. Please read your email from us. We depend on being able to communicate important information such as necessary changes to your distribution schedule or to our farm

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

events. Every month we email an updated newsletter giving you information about the crops available that week, recipe ideas, or other farm related news. We also maintain a website and blog, Twitter feed, and Facebook page.

Section 5. Release and Waiver of Liabilities and Claims

State of Illinois - County of McLean - Dry Grove Township

In consideration for and as a condition to the undersigned being a customer and consumer of edible products from and permitted to enter and use the property of Brad and Jackie Dearing (the “Owners”), the CSA MEMBER/ CONSUMER/ VISITOR/ WORKER on his or her behalf of his or her heirs, legal representatives, and assigns (collectively hereinafter referred to as the “Undersigned”) hereby RELEASES, WAIVES, AND DISCHARGES the Owner and the Owner’s respective heirs, legal representatives, officers, employees, agents, assigns and affiliates, as appropriate (such parties, together with the Owner, hereinafter collectively referred to as the “Released Parties”), from any and all liability, claims, demands, or causes of action that the Undersigned may have now and hereafter for any and all injuries to his or her person or property and for damages, including but not limited to, those injuries or damages CAUSED BY THE NEGLIGENCE OF THE RELEASED PARTIES while the Undersigned is on the property or consumes food items from and/or of the Owner, for any purpose or participation in any activity whatsoever.

The Undersigned hereby EXPRESSLY AGREES he or she WILL NOT SUE OR MAKE A CLAIM against the Released Parties for damages or other losses sustained as a result of his or her presence on or participation in any activity on such property or from the consumption of farm and/or food items from the Released Parties.

The Undersigned further AGREES TO INDEMNIFY AND SAVE AND HOLD HARMLESS the Released Parties and each of them from any loss, liability, damage, or cost that the Released Parties may incur due to the presence of the Undersigned on the property of Owner, including, without limitation, subrogation and/or derivative claims brought by any third party or insurer in connection with any injury or damage the Undersigned may suffer while on the property of Owner or from the consumption or use of products and/or food items from the Released Parties. The Undersigned AFFIRMS he or she is covered under appropriate general liability and personal health insurance policies issued through a licensed insurance carrier. The Undersigned REPRESENTS AND WARRANTS his or her participation in any activity on the property does not violate any federal, state, and/or local laws and ordinances regulating such activity, if any, and he or she has obtained any necessary permits or licensed to engage in such activity, if required by law.

The Undersigned EXPRESSLY ACKNOWLEDGES, AGREEES, AND UNDERSTANDS his or her presence and participation in activities on the property have inherent risks and dangers and no amount of care, caution, instruction, or expertise can eliminate these risks and dangers, and he or she EXPRESSLY AND VOLUNTARILY ASSUMES ALL RISK OF DEATH OR PERSONAL INJURY SUSTAINED WHILE PARTICIPATING IN SUCH ACTIVITIES ON THE PROPERTY and/or CONSUMPTION OF FOOD ITEMS FROM THE RELEASED PARTIES WHETHER OR NOT CAUSED BY THE NEGLIGENCE OF THE RELEASED PARTIES. The Undersigned further EXPRESSLY AGREES the foregoing release, waiver, and indemnity agreement is intended to be as broad and inclusive as is permitted by the law of the State in which the activities are conducted and that if any portion thereof is held invalid, it is agreed that the balance shall, notwithstanding continue in full legal force.

THE UNERSIGNED HAS READ AND VOLUNTARILY SIGNS THE RELEASE AND WAIVER OF LIABILITY AND CLAIMS, AND UNDERSTANDS THAT HE OR SHE HAS GIVEN UP SUBSTANTIAL RIGHTS BY SIGNING IT FREELY AND VOLUNTARILY WITHOUT ANY INDUCEMENT, ASSURANCE, OR GUARANTEE BEING MADE TO HIM OR HER, AND INTENDS THAT HIS OR HER SIGNATURE IS A COMPLETE AND UNCONDITIONAL RELEASE OF ALL LIABILITY OF THE GREATEST EXTENT ALLOWED BY LAW. The Undersigned further AGREES than no oral representations, statements or inducements apart from the foregoing written agreement have been made.

FOR CSA MEMBERS, YOUR SIGNATURE ON THE CSA APPLICATION FOR DEARING COUNTRY FARMS IS RECOGNITION AND ACCEPTANCE OF THIS RELEASE AND WAIVER OF LIABILITIES AND CLAIMS, AS MENTIONED IN THE APPLICATION AND IS IN LIEU OF YOUR SIGNATURE ON THIS PAGE.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

GUEST/CUSTOMER SIGNATURE: _____ **DATE:** _____

GUEST/CUSTOMER NAME: _____ **ADDRESS:** _____

PARENT SIGNATURE: _____ (if under 18 years old)

EMERGENCY CONTACT: _____

PRE-EXISTING MEDICAL CONDITIONS OR ALLERGIES WE SHOULD BE AWARE OF: _____

