



Finding a Home for Liberation Farms

A Land Search Case Study



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Executive Summary

The Somali Bantu Community Association (SBCA) of Maine faced structural and institutional barriers when seeking farmland for its expanding community farm program, Liberation Farms. As nontraditional land seekers (a community of Black, predominantly Muslim, refugee farmers supported by a grant-funded nonprofit), few support resources or financing options matched the specific needs or the scope of this land-search and purchase. By dedicating significant organizational time and resources plus with support from partners from several farm service organizations, the SBCA moved through a process of landsite visioning, planning and decision-making. Thanks to strong leadership and collaboration, the SBCA acquired farmland that meets all of its community's criteria via a partnership with Agrarian Trust and formation of the Little Jubba Central Maine Agrarian Commons.

Losing access to land as part of short-term leases and other informal arrangements taxed the farming program and its small staff. Intercultural communication challenges, time constraints, and power dynamics hindered these negotiations. Thus, the SBCA realized that to ensure food security for its community, it would need to seek secure land tenure. The organization first developed a community-informed vision, gathered and created land-seeking resources, and built a shared vision of its goals with the wider community. Then, the SBCA assembled a knowledgeable team, made collaborative decisions about options, sought out alternative financing models, and searched for farmland in a challenging market. Once a suitable farm was identified (over two years after initiating the search); the SBCA fundraised, purchased the farmland, and started planning for the future.

This case study serves to share the SBCA's process with other nontraditional land seekers and the service providers who support them. The story of Liberation Farms and experiences of land loss are shared in part 1. Strategies for long-term land tenure and associated challenges experienced are documented in part 2. Recommended actions for preparing, seeking, and purchasing land are listed in part 3. Tools and other resources are included as appendices.

*Case study by
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Introduction

LAND OWNERSHIP AND ACCESS IS UNJUST

As of 2021, land ownership patterns in the United States are inequitable, and even more so in Maine. White people own 98% of American farmland, and, writes Bates senior Jesse Saffeir, “In Maine, 99% of farmland is white-owned.”¹², Saffeir’s report, including a thorough literature review, articulates the structural inequity found in dynamics of US land ownership (see p. 1-10 for a review of historical injustices that frame this case study).

In this context, and well aware of structural inequities from recent experiences of land loss, the Somali Bantu Community Association of Maine (SBCA), began searching for a farm of its own in early 2018. To the credit of the SBCA’s staff, board, and supporting farmers; this project was pursued as the next logical step in the steadfast pursuit for a community-informed vision to realize its well-being. Having just lost access to a beloved farming site, the search would be marked by the organization’s hopes to expand Liberation Farms, their community farming program, and memories of past tensions with landowners and their power dynamics on other leased parcels of farmland.

The process of seeking and financing land is plagued by systemic and institutional racism, classism, and discrimination on many levels. Dominant-culture narratives and practices continue to bar Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC); Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, Intersex, Asexual, and Two-Spir-

WHY A CASE STUDY?

The SBCA is hardly alone as a nontraditional land seeker. The intention behind presenting this case study is the following:

- Share tools, resources, and strategies with other nontraditional land seekers undertaking a cost-prohibitive process in an increasingly land-insecure and volatile real estate climate.
- Document the SBCA’s success with the hope that other groups find similar successes.
- Expose and address injustices in land access.

1. Horst, Megan, and Amy Marion. 2019. “Racial, Ethnic and Gender Inequities in Farmland Ownership and Farming in the U.S.” *Agriculture and Human Values* 36 (1): 1–16. doi:10.1007/s10460-018-9883-3

2. Saffeir, Jesse Bull, “This Land is My Land: racism and antiracism in farmland succession in Auburn, Maine” (2020). Honors Theses. 337. <https://scarab.bates.edu/honorstheses/337>



Introduction (cont.)

it, etc. (LGBTQIA2S+); poor people; and people with different norms for borrowing money (for example Muslim cultures that bar usury) from accessing land. Many organizations that support land ownership have little to no experience or resources for working with nontraditional land seekers³ such as Somali Bantu farmers. The SBCA applauds individuals from support organizations who have stepped outside of the norm and learned how to support nontraditional land seekers as they forged their way. Ultimately, the SBCA has secured a farm that will serve its community's needs for years to come. This happened thanks to the SBCA leadership and staff, but also in part from well-connected, knowledgeable supporters and an innovative model for community land ownership developed by [Agrarian Trust](#) (AT)⁴. Their model attempts to decommodify land – that is, arrange land tenure outside of real estate markets – and, in doing so, makes secure land tenure more possible for nontraditional farmers.

This case study is organized in three parts. First, it presents an overview of the SBCA, the rapid expansion of its farming program, and challenges to growth of the organization, describing how all of these have factored into the search for secure land tenure. Second, it recounts the SBCA's land search process itself, including the steps taken, strategies explored, and associated successes and challenges. Finally, this case study compiles practical recommendations for nontraditional land seekers and the service providers who support them.

3. The SBCA defines “nontraditional land seekers” as those who fall outside of the majority of people who are owners of land, which in the United States is white, cis-gendered, heterosexual individuals and families from middle and upperclass households. This definition somewhat overlaps with, but is distinct from the USDA's definition of “socially disadvantaged” farmers.

4. The Agrarian Commons model is a unique network for holding land in trust for community-based agriculture in the United States. Agrarian Trust has been inspired by and guided by: Community Land Trusts, New Communities Farm, the Bhoodan land gift movement, India, Terre de Liens, France, and the Access to Land Movement, Europe. Learn more about the influence European models such as France's Terre de Liens have had on guiding Agrarian Trust's principles and work in an article written by Agrarian Trust Director Ian McSweeney: Struggles and Strategies of the Farmland Trust Movement Across Europe.



The origins of Liberations Farms and need for secure land

Part I

Photograph: Ashley Bahlkow

Muhidin Libah co-founded the [Somali Bantu Community Association of Maine \(SBCA\)](#) in 2005 as a response to the needs expressed by Somali Bantu people, who were arriving and settling as former refugees and immigrants in the twin cities of Lewiston and Auburn, Maine.

Well over a decade later, the SBCA continues to be a powerful force for maintaining strong inter-community support networks. Many staff members at SBCA, and all leaders in decision-making positions, identify as Somali Bantu. In addition, the Board of Directors and Liberation Farms Advisory Committee are composed entirely of Somali Bantu people. The organization is well-positioned to serve its community, but it also experiences hurdles related to racism, religious discrimination (most Somali Bantu people in this community are Muslim), and poverty when dealing with actors external to the community.



Thus, it should be noted that while this community has flourished, thrived, and in doing so been a significant part of uplifting the Greater Lewiston and Auburn area (formally economically depressed mill towns), this plight has not been without challenges. These challenges can be attributed to the hurdles named above, as well as trauma stemming from the refugee/immigrant experience and historical adversity. The following are important to name for context of both how high the hurdles are and have been, and demonstrating extensive perseverance.

- The Somali Bantu population in Lewiston is composed of refugees who were granted P2 resettlement status, which denotes that they were at particular humanitarian risk from persecution in Somalia and Kenyan refugee camps. They hail from the Jubba and Shebelle River valleys of Southern Somalia, where many were farmers. Prior to colonization, Bantu people were forced into slave labor. Later, under exploitative Italian and English colonization, and then under a regime dominated by western Cold War politics, Bantu people became an oppressed minority despite the abolition of slavery. In the present, Somalia remains a politically unsettled place, continually exploited in the Western quest for cheap and accessible oil near the Arabian and Red Seas.⁵
- The vast majority of Somali Bantu people live in downtown Lewiston, in three census tracts that are among the poorest in the nation. In 2019, over half (51%) of Black or African American people in Lewiston lived below the poverty line.⁶ Language and cultural barriers facing Somali Bantu people in Lewiston prohibit their access to social services and compound poverty-related challenges.

Because many of the families who access services from the SBCA live in urban Lewiston and Auburn and rent apartments with little to no access to green space and farmland, the SBCA community members expressed a strong desire to farm (on a scale beyond the space offered for community gardening), as a way to grow and eat culturally preferred food. The SBCA would soon learn that farming also enabled its community to get more exercise, improve physical and emotional health, access safe outdoor space for their children, preserve and share cultural knowledge intergenerationally, and heal from the trauma associated with being forced from their homelands.⁷

5. A more detailed history of Somali Bantu people can be found on SBCA's website: <https://somalibantumaine.org/>

6. Based on American Community Survey 5-year estimates, as reported in the Lewiston Subcommittee on Poverty Report and Recommendations, December 2021. <https://www.lewistonmaine.gov/DocumentCenter/View/12798/Lewiston-Schools-Poverty-Subcommittee-Report-Recommendations?bidId=>

7. Based on information obtained from farming program survey data and community listening sessions conducted in 2018-2019.



SBCA's farming program, later to be named Liberation Farms, emerged in 2014. The following is a timeline that shows simultaneously how the program grew in participants and expanded in scale, land, and infrastructure based on both an understanding of community needs but also the pressures and challenges associated with short-term land access.

The SBCA staff recognized the need for secure land tenure, with operations consolidated on one farm, in order to protect community food security. As Whiting Farm's non-renewable lease was due to expire in 2022, the SBCA began to actively seek long-term farmland tenure.

Ultimately, this project ended in a statistically extraordinary success with the formation of the [Little Jubba Central Maine Agrarian Commons](#) (LJCMAC) and the purchase of a 104-acre farmstead in nearby Wales, Maine. LJCMAC grants the SBCA a 99-year, renewable, equitable lease; making Wales the new and permanent home of Liberation Farms and the farmers who comprise this SBCA program. Section two of this case study outlines this project—from searching for a farm, to forming the Commons, to purchasing the farm—and everything in between.





CHALLENGES RESULTING FROM LAND LOSS

As refugees, land loss is a significant part of the Somali Bantu community's history and ongoing experiences. **Losing access to farmland in the United States has been retraumatizing on an individual and collective basis.** Liberation Farms participants often become attached to their designated growing spaces. Further, the loss of short-term land leases **has challenged the organization's small staff and resource capacity.** Moving a farm operation demands time and costs that could be better spent on sustaining the program and better-supporting participants. Conflicts with landlords (and the sometimes resulting mediation sessions) have been especially taxing on SBCA staff's time and emotional energy. These stressors are compounded by Maine's short growing season, which further limits the window of time devoted to supporting the program's farmers.

Additionally, **accessing infrastructure has been challenging on leased land.** While subject to the wishes of landlords, SBCA has contended with unreliable access to high tunnels, greenhouses, seeding areas, cold storage, and wash and pack spaces. The organization paid above-market rates and drove long distances for space to grow seedlings, which is a necessity for some culturally important crops. Some spaces and equipment were donated – particularly for flint corn production – but processing still required transport to off-site locations as long as SBCA was prevented from building infrastructure at their main farming sites. This too **has created additional hurdles related to upholding food safety practices.**

Land loss under short-term leases **threatens community food security.** Liberation Farms has enhanced food security for the Somali Bantu community by promoting access to nourishing, culturally-appropriate foods. Without secure land tenure however, this improvement in food access is tenuous.

LIBERATION FARMS TIMELINE

2014

Inaugural year of SBCA's farming program in North Yarmouth

2015-2018

Farming and wash station in New Gloucester at Intervale Farm. Retiring farmers of Intervale Farm in New Gloucester leased the SBCA four acres of land. More community members farmed tenth-acre plots. This site became particularly loved by many farmers due to its beautiful location, prime agricultural soils, and larger size.

2016

Farmers begin to organize into *Iskaashito*[®] groups to grow not only for their own families and community members, but for commercial production for two food pantries as part of the Mainers Feeding Mainers program. SBCA begins to access greenhouse space for seedlings at Whiting Farm in Auburn. At this location, the SBCA farmers could grow their own, culturally relevant, seedlings in small areas of rented greenhouse space.

2017-2022

Farming at Whiting Farm. The SBCA signed a formal five-year lease with the John F Murphy Homes (JFM) Foundation for 20 acres, to be put in rotational production. With soils of statewide importance and also close proximity to the homes of many farmers, Whiting Farm was a prime location for this community of farmers. Unfortunately, JFM had plans to expand their own organization's programming, which meant the SBCA's lease would not be renewed beyond 2022.

2018 - 2019

Seedling production at Sweet Relief Farm in Steep Falls: JFM expanded into all greenhouses and the SBCA grew increasingly concerned about growing chemical-free seedlings in greenhouses also being used for conventional flower production. While Sweet Relief was inconvenient (almost an hour away), Julie, the farmer, was incredibly accommodating and also shared values around organic/chemical-free production.

OCTOBER 2020

SBCA signs a lease with Agrarian Trust (AT). Goats, cold storage and wash and pack moved to a new farm in Wales. A temporary lease is signed as a placeholder during the drafting of the Little Jubba Central Maine Agrarian Commons' equitable lease with SBCA.

2022

SBCA fully consolidates Liberation Farms to one site on 104 acres of cropland, pasture, and woodland. Over 200 families access tenth-acre plots with extra space for *Iskaashito* groups, expanded flint corn production, goat pasture, and more.

2022-2121 - Plan to finalize a 99-year lease between the SBCA and AT for the farm in Wales.

2014-2016

Farming in North Yarmouth. The SBCA started farming on two acres of land leased in North Yarmouth and located approximately 30 minutes from the center of Lewiston. Just over 20 families grew flint corn and diversified vegetables, each on tenth-acre plots. Many more families expressed interest in accessing farmland and those already participating asked for more space to grow more flint corn, a cultural staple in Somali Bantu cooking. While this site had prime agricultural soils, it was a small site with limited water access and relatively far from Lewiston.

2016-2019

Cold storage space at Good Shepherd Food Bank's Auburn facility

2016-2020

Start of lease of 10 acres (5 cultivable by SBCA), in Lewiston on Old Webster Rd. While the amount of usable land on this site was small, this location was convenient for those without reliable transportation to go far from the city.

2018

Move wash and pack station and start of Halal goat meat production on leased land in Turner. The SBCA formed a partnership with Dawud Ummah in Turner to house the wash and pack station and a small herd of meat goats for access to affordable and fresh halal meat.

2019

Construction of cold frame for production of seedlings and for flint corn processing at Whiting Farm.

2019-2020

Goat herd moves to Greene on leased land.

Wash and pack and coolbot cold storage trailer moved to Lisbon with sublease with Cultivating Community's New American Sustainable Agriculture Program's leased land.



Searching for and securing land to provide food justice, community building, and education⁹

Part II

Photograph: Kelsey Kobik

This section highlights strategies the SBCA employed to secure land tenure for Liberation Farms. It also highlights challenges experienced during the process so that future land seekers can know what to expect, and so that service providers can better assist BIPOC and other nontraditional growers.

⁸ Iskaashito is a traditional Somali method of cooperative growing where farmers work together on one piece of land and equitably share the profits of their combined labor and efforts.

⁹ Food justice, community building and education are the three goals of Liberation Farms.

STRATEGY 1: DEVELOP A COMMUNITY-INFORMED VISION TO GUIDE LAND SEEKING AND SITE PLANNING



Since SBCA serves so many farmers and families, it was crucial to broadly gather information about the type of farm the organization sought. This was a significant staff undertaking: over 200 farming families were invited to give input. Ultimately, SBCA relied on surveys, listening sessions, and facilitated “retreat” sessions to gather this data.

Based on responses gathered, the SBCA developed specifications and priorities to serve as a criteria when farm seeking (Appendix A). For example, a site needed to be organic/chemical-free and located no more than 30 minutes from the center of Lewiston. Staff also created a timeline for farm expansion, generating a list of what would be needed immediately (to continue operations at the current scale) and what would be needed over the next three, five, and ten years according to community priorities (Appendix A). These were further broken down by organizational capacity and cost. The list included elements that were not specific to farming, such as private prayer spaces for men and women, and a community kitchen for heating up meals during long days in the field.

Regular communication about these criteria with SBCA’s Board of Directors, the Liberation Farms Advisory Committee, and Executive Director Muhidin Libah helped ensure that the collective vision for the farm program was up-to-date as staff worked through the lengthy land-seeking process. Constant check-ins created a useful flow for communication and decision-making as major questions and opportunities arose, such as those around ownership structure or final approval of the purchase.

CHALLENGES TO DEVELOPING A COMMUNITY INFORMED VISION:

- Liberation Farms consists of over 200 farm families. The Iskaashito farmers who market their crops consist of over 20 farmers broken into nine cooperative groups. This means there are many people with many differing opinions, goals, and (at times competing) priorities. Whose ideas hold the most weight? How does a community-based organization prioritize competing interests and voices? How does a grant-funded organization incorporate priorities related to funding preferences and strategies that aren’t always perfectly aligned with community members’ desires? These are all questions the organization grappled with throughout the information-gathering process. Further, Somali Bantu culture is patriarchal and elders, especially male elders, often serve as final decision-makers. Due to this, certain voices were amplified and led this visioning process. While this wasn’t completely democratic within the context of the dominant culture, it was culturally relevant. Ultimately, because the process was community-led based on the norms of the community’s culture, there has been little conflict associated with the decisions made for choosing a farm in these early stages.



STRATEGY 1: DEVELOP A COMMUNITY-INFORMED VISION TO GUIDE LAND SEEKING AND SITE PLANNING (CONT)

- Also challenging was both asking community members to dream big and think creatively about what a farm site could offer, but within the context of the organization's reality. The SBCA is a small nonprofit with a small staff and limited access to financial resources. As with most nonprofits of its size, the SBCA must constantly consider affordability and capacity and operate within a scarcity mindset. Staff feared that asking the community to dream big may create unrealistic expectations and lead to conflict. At times, leading voices in the community proposed timelines for achieving their priorities that ran counter to what was financially feasible for the SBCA.
- Timing makes the process of land acquisition tricky. The Greater Lewiston-Auburn area has a frenzied real estate market, especially for farmland, so SBCA was not able to leisurely consider possible purchases. After seeing a few viable farms come on the market and sell quickly, SBCA realized that they needed to be ready to say "yes" within days or hours of it being listed. A community-determined criteria list was useful for quickly testing new farms by, and later for testing ownership structures and financing plans. This scarcity mindset created angst, especially in the early days of land seeking, that SBCA would not find a farm large enough for Liberation Farms' relocation.



Photographs: Kelsey Kobik

STRATEGY 2: GATHER AND CREATE RESOURCES TO FIND AND ACQUIRE LAND



Without the expertise in seeking long-term land tenure, the SBCA sought resources from organizations like [Land for Good](#) (LFG), [American Farmland Trust](#) (AFT), and [Maine Farmland Trust](#) (MFT). There was no specific roadmap for the SBCA's situation to guide the purchase of farmland as a small, low-resourced organization serving a large community of black, Muslim people experiencing the effects of poverty associated with arriving as refugees and immigrants only a decade prior. Appendix B lists resources that SBCA's staff consulted and that initially informed the SBCA's general understanding of the process. The SBCA's staff used some of these in the creation of more culturally relevant resources for their English Language Learners (ELL) counterparts and decision-makers.

CHALLENGES TO RESOURCE-GATHERING:

- The SBCA's situation was unique. Resources were geared for more traditional land seekers. While many printed resources existed, none were specifically geared for a nonprofit organization's acquisition of land. None presented to an audience of a large group of farmers. None were geared for poor people, let alone a small, grassroots organization headed by Black, Muslim people. In particular, there was no roadmap for learning about how to finance land as a small, low-resourced organization with little credit that sought Sharia-compliant lending/financing. No one was able to help SBCA definitively answer critical questions: Do we need to raise the entirety of the funds before identifying the farm? How will we know how much to raise? How can we run a capital campaign before identifying a farm? What lending options exist for our organization? And, if we do find the perfect farmland, how can we be sure to raise enough funds in time to make the purchase? How do we convince a seller to choose our offer in a competitive real estate market? How do we contend with racism and discrimination that emerge during this process?
- Resources were written and presented in English. To inform SBCA's decision-makers, many of whom do not speak or read English as their first language, the SBCA needed time and funding to create its own tools for fostering understanding about the process and for making key decisions.
- Many resources available from AFT and LFG were geographically general or otherwise not specific to Maine and the Greater Lewiston-Auburn area context.
- Technical support offered by service providers and lenders was most often specific to traditional farmers and situations – those with race, class, and/or educational privilege; mostly heterosexual, cis-gendered couples and their families.



STRATEGY 3: BUILD COMMUNITY SOLIDARITY AND SEEK SUPPORT

Once the SBCA clarified the need for secure farmland and began to communicate this need outwardly, there was an almost immediate response from other groups seeking land and from other support organizations. Young people in the Lewiston-Auburn community were asking for more, larger and better-accessible community gardens. Farmers, including many refugee/immigrant farmers, conveyed a need for more land access to expand growing crops for household consumption and for market. The SBCA learned that articulating this need was important for building solidarity with others. This in turn created momentum for the SBCA's land seeking process.

[The Good Food Council of Lewiston Auburn](#), [Cumberland County Food Security Council](#), land conservation groups, farmers, prospective farmers, community food advocates, Bates College professors, and more hosted meetings and forums that helped SBCA and other groups build awareness of a collective need for farmland and access to locally grown foods. Events and forums that helped SBCA identify important partners were:

- Farm owner/farm seeker matchmaker events (especially one held for the Lewiston-Auburn area)
- Local Foods Local Places community forum listening sessions
- Auburn farmland rezoning feasibility study
- Informal community meetings investigating land, equipment, and funding collaborations between area farmers.

Early in the process, the SBCA reached out to other local organizations who had recently supported the farmers in the [New Roots Cooperative Farm](#) – a farm owned and run by four Somali Bantu farmers from the Upper Jubba Valley. Three organizations facilitated this land access project – [Maine Farmland Trust](#) (MFT), [Cultivating Community](#), and the [Cooperative Development Institute](#) (CDI) – which culminated with MFT's purchase of farmland on the outskirts of Lewiston and a lease-to-own arrangement between MFT and New Roots Cooperative Farm in 2017. Find more about New Roots Cooperative Farm in Appendix C.

At this initial stage of the process, MFT was unable to work with the SBCA as they had with New Roots, due to staff changes and lack of capacity. Later, as part of new strategic goal planning around “diversity, equity and inclusion,” several MFT staff took strides to support the SBCA, particularly in the land seeking realm. Also, CDI sought and was awarded grant funding to help pay for consultants like SBCA's land access lead, who helped bolster the SBCA's capacity.

The SBCA met with Cultivating Community's New American Sustainable Agriculture Project staff to

STRATEGY 3: BUILD COMMUNITY SOLIDARITY AND SEEK SUPPORT (CONT)



explore the idea of land sharing and seeking a large farm jointly. Appendix D includes the template the SBCA used (from American Farmland Trust) for starting a conversation about farmsite collaboration between two organizations, as well as the agenda for this collaborative meeting. This conversation would continue for several months.

Many outside partners and funders proposed a joint land search between the SBCA and Cultivating Community – two organizations that support refugee/immigrant farmers with a common need for more farmland. In the end, however, the logistics did not make sense due to different priorities and leadership styles of the two organizations. The two agreed to support each other but not seek a joint farm. divergent visions and needs.

From this process, the SBCA initiated its important relationship with Ian McSweeney. Ian had recently headed the Russell Foundation, which supported [ORIS](#) in Manchester, NH, to raise funds for the purchase of the 56-acre Story Hill Farm in Dunbarton, NH. ORIS supports a collaboration of refugee farmers in a way similar to the SBCA's Liberation Farms, and so Ian's guidance offered experience that other service organizations could not. Ian assisted the SBCA in the community information gathering stage. Soon afterwards, Ian took a position as head of Agrarian Trust (AT) and encouraged the SBCA to join AT's first cohort of [Agrarian Commons](#).

CHALLENGES TO BUILDING SOLIDARITY:

- In the early stages of the project, it made a lot of sense to articulate a broad vision for secure land tenure within community forums and to resonate with others who had similar needs. That being said, eventually the project became specific to meeting the SBCA's own community-articulated goals and realizing the SBCA's specific vision.
- As a BIPOC-led organization, some service providers have their own reasons and incentives for partnerships that relate more to advancing their own reputation than actually realizing a BIPOC partner's needs. In early stages, the SBCA spent time trying to work with white-led service providers with little gain for the organization itself.
- In the case of Cultivating Community, there was significant outside pressure to collaborate on seemingly similar goals. Ultimately though, while superficially similar in function, differences in the SBCA and CC's missions and organizational compositions meant a collaborative land search, however theoretically practical to onlookers, wasn't in either organizations' best interest.



STRATEGY 4: CONVENE A TEAM OF KNOWLEDGEABLE PEOPLE

Beyond the SBCA's internal prioritization of precious staff time and organizational funding, perhaps the second most important part of the land-seeking process was networking with knowledgeable individuals who championed the project and helped the SBCA achieve its goal. Early on, Executive Director Muhidin Libah assigned SBCA Program Advisor, Ashley Bahlkow, to lead the land project. It should be noted however, that all SBCA staff made significant contributions to this project that were above and beyond the scope of their position descriptions. Additionally, the SBCA received funding to hire outside consultants from Land for Good and [FarmSmart](#). Ashley called upon, mobilized, and coordinated a large team of people, all of whom brought important elements to the project at various points in the process.

Some of the most committed and active supporters created a Memorandum of Understanding (Appendix E), in which each articulated the support they would offer the SBCA. They included:

- Agrarian Trust's Ian McSweeney
- American Farmland Trust's Suzanna Denison
- Cooperative Development Institute's Jonah Fertig-Burd
- Land for Good's Abby Sadauckas
- [Land in Common](#)'s Ethan Miller
- Maine Farmland Trust's Erica Buswell

SBCA also worked with longtime supporter Bonnie Rukin of Slow Money Maine, Bates College professor Francis Eanes, and Bates student Jesse Saffair, author of "This Land is My Land: racism and antiracism in farmland access in Auburn, Maine." Long-time supporter Jason Lilley from [Cumberland County Cooperative Extension](#) advised on technical questions throughout the process.

CHALLENGES TO CONVENING A TEAM:

- Making time to work with partners is often a struggle for small organizations with few staff. Even with a part-time person leading the project, communicating and coordinating with so many people took time that the SBCA struggled to forfeit, especially during the busy growing season.
- Ensuring the SBCA's priorities were always taking the lead was, at times challenging. Service organizations and other nonprofit supporters often seek to advance their own missions and priorities. SBCA learned to say no to offers if that support was not directly needed or relevant, or if it pulled staff away from the project's goals.
- Gaining clarity and accountability, especially around financial commitments can be complex. Funders and grant-seeking partners are not always clear about financial commitments. Social norms and power dynamics around the prospective disclosure of a large donation can mean an awkward dance rather than a secure commitment, especially when the exact farm has not been identified. Similarly, the long timeline of grant funding adds additional challenges to knowing how much money is available for immediate land purchase.

STRATEGY 5: MAKE COLLABORATIVE DECISIONS ABOUT LAND TENURE



SBCA needed to create its own resources to inform decision making. Assembling information from multiple resources (people with expertise and written guides) and also interpreting/translating it for the ELLs Board and Advisory Committee members took time and effort. One of the largest decisions the Board of Directors and ED needed to make was about ownership structure. The community had at first envisioned land ownership outright, but financing this was complex for SBCA. Traditional bank loans were not a fit for this Muslim community and its adherence to Islamic finance, which demands the avoidance of *riba* (usury) and *gharar* (ambiguity or deception).¹⁰ The SBCA turned instead to nontraditional land tenure options via organizational partnerships.

The SBCA benefited from working with Land for Good consultant Abby Sadauckas, who offered support at all phases of the process. Ethan Miller from Land in Common also offered support, creating an outline of possible ownership models (Appendix F), and Ian McSweeney from Agrarian Trust offered the SBCA an overview of the newly-established Agrarian Commons model. This included a series of nation-wide working meetings between all prospective Commons members to offer feedback on AT's founding documents, including the Commons Bylaws, the Equitable Lease template, and the Good Faith Understanding.

At Abby's suggestion, the SBCA's English-speaking staff held its own sessions to discuss these opportunities. From this, as well as Land for Good's [Farm Access Methods Decision Guide](#), the SBCA worked with animator Sara Cannon to create an [audio-visual decision-making tool](#)¹¹ for the Board and other ELL decision makers. The SBCA held additional interpreted meetings to discuss components of the land search, including financial planning and fundraising, with all decision-makers

Once Muhidin, the Liberation Farms Advisory Committee, and the SBCA Board had chosen to form an Agrarian Commons, SBCA created a second animation for the SBCA Board and the inaugural Commons Board to understand the newly-formed [Commons' Bylaws](#).¹² This animation was also used for the first annual membership meeting with the larger community of non-voting Commons members. These animations have proven to be useful tools due to their multilingual accessibility for most people in the community¹³, since they follow Somali Bantu traditions of oral information-delivery.

The Little Jubba Central Maine Agrarian Commons also has created a structure and process for decision-making, which, because it includes and is led by the SBCA's Executive Director and staff as well as members of the SBCA community, means representative decision-making can happen relatively quickly. This feature was crucial when deciding on the Wales farm purchase and its fundraising.

10. Find an overview of Islamic Finance at: https://www.investopedia.com/articles/07/islamic_investing.asp

11. Find at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RRP1XtVgh3I>.

12. Find at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AVgHcphCoEg&t=7s>.

13. Authors would like to note that these tools are not completely accessible or inclusive of those with different hearing and seeing abilities.



STRATEGY 5: MAKE COLLABORATIVE DECISIONS ABOUT LAND TENURE (CONT)

However, the Commons Board still uses dominant Western-style decision-making processes. At the time of writing, the Commons Board is developing a more collaborative decision-making model.

CHALLENGES TO DECISION MAKING:

- As was challenging to many parts of this land tenure project, everything has been translated or interpreted for ELLs on the SBCA Board, the LJCMAC Board, and the Liberation Farms Advisory Committee. There are always aspects of language that are lost in translation but because of the sheer amount of information to be translated and interpreted, undoubtedly aspects were missed, making for gaps in communication and understanding. Further, the amount of new information decision-makers needed to learn to make these decisions was significant, even without language and cultural barriers
- Further, the fact that English-speaking SBCA staff and consultants with a dominant culture framework were synthesizing complex information about ownership structures, bylaws and their functionality ultimately has meant some details have been lost, miscommunicated and/or misunderstood. It will take time to fully understand the impact of this and how it may affect decisions made, despite that Somali Bantu leaders themselves ultimately decided.
- While service providers and partners offered significant guidance, at times their motives correlated to their advice and offered resources. The SBCA needed to sort through what would ultimately best serve itself in the present moment based on its own stakeholders' articulated needs and desires, as well as the organization's capacity and resources. This didn't always perfectly align with partners'. Having to contend with the possibility of creating conflict, particularly with those who were offering significant support and resources was challenging, but something the SBCA learned to do throughout this process.
- Also challenging was the internal differences in staff perspectives about the need to project and document financial sustainability for the organization. Dominant culture and American-born staff had different ideas about the need for making future plans beyond the current reliance on grant funding, which was secured in the present moment. Most Somali Bantu decision-makers saw the present reality—a thriving land and food access program for all community members—as the main point of focus. This made the creation of a traditional financial plan as well as business planning documents challenging to create, despite that in the dominant cultural framework the organization operates within, these are a needed component when seeking financing.
- To SBCA's leaders, making the decision to participate in an untested, alternative land ownership structure felt risky at times, as one of the first farms to participate in the initial cohort of Agrarian Commons forming across the country. This type of land tenure is new and participating in this experiment comes with the risks of unknown future challenges.

STRATEGY 6: SEEK OUT ALTERNATIVE LAND TENURE MODELS: FORMING AND OPERATING AN AGRARIAN COMMONS



With the promise of the financial support to purchase farmland, and resources to navigate the process, the SBCA Board, Executive Director Muhidin Libah, and the Liberation Farms Advisory Committee decided to form the [Little Jubba Central Maine Agrarian Commons](#), joining [ten other Agrarian Commons](#) across the United States, all of which are affiliated with the nonprofit Agrarian Trust (AT).

This involved working closely with Agrarian Trust and legal support from BCM Environmental Land Law to officially form as a 501c2¹⁴ land-holding entity. This entity, the Little Jubba Central Maine Agrarian Commons (LJCMAC), is led by a local board that includes the farmers and community members of the land it holds. The LJCMAC nominated its inaugural board and approved bylaws in early May of 2020.

In general, the responsibilities of an Agrarian Commons include the following:

- Biannual Board of Directors meetings.
- Convening an annual meeting for all non-voting members. In LJCMAC's case, this includes several advisor members in addition to over 200 farmers who participate in Liberation Farms.
- Submitting an annual financial report to parent organization Agrarian Trust.
- Managing and overseeing landholdings (including leases and subleases).
- In the case of LJCMAC, reviewing the Working Management Plan and other components of the Equitable Lease that require annual review and/or oversight; and collecting and donating Indigenous Solidarity Payments.

CHALLENGES TO FORMING AND OPERATING THE LJCMAC:

- The SBCA knew from the start a major challenge would be making time for the operation and administration of the LJCMAC. The drafting of foundational documents such as the Bylaws and Equitable Lease, and the associated creation of translated materials and presentations for an ELL community has taxed staff capacity. Many elements are still in progress.
- The Agrarian Commons model is creative and nontraditional in terms of its structure for land holding and tenure. However, this model and foundational documents are still created within the bounds of our current legal system. It can not be emphasized enough that such systems are grounded in a history of violent colonialism and genocide of Indigenous people and enslavement and persecution of African people. The outputs of these systems continue to deliver inequity up to the present day. Documents are penned by lawyers who are subservient to U.S. laws and IRS structures. Further, these documents are written in English and the

14. A 501c2 is an affiliate to a parent 501c3 and is exclusively for the purpose of holding title to property. Many churches for example, use this parent and affiliate land holding structure.



STRATEGY 6: SEEK OUT ALTERNATIVE LAND TENURE MODELS: FORMING AND OPERATING AN AGRARIAN COMMONS (CONT)

Bylaws and Equitable Lease are written in legalese. As noted in challenges above, this means dedicating significant time, attention, and cost to ensure all members of the Board and SBCA community understand and have the option to participate in the LJCMAC, but with the caveat that some information will be omitted for length and/or lost in translation.

- The LJCMAC was formed to create secure land tenure through a 99-year, renewable lease for the SBCA. While this long-term land security is at the heart of this project's success in the present, the AT-LJCMAC-SBCA relationship is complex by the nature of the Commons model. While every attempt is being made by all three organizations to build absolute land security into the equitable lease for the SBCA's community, there is the small but present possibility that the SBCA could default, or that sometime in the future, the community's desires for the land could change and run counter to the agrarian framework outlined in the lease.



Photographs: Kelsey Kobik

STRATEGY 7: SEARCH FOR FARMLAND



Early in the land search process, the SBCA realized how farmland that met search criteria was scarce, and, in turn, how competitive the bidding process would be. Land prices in the Greater Lewiston-Auburn area were becoming increasingly expensive with an influx of people moving to the area during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The SBCA created a profile with [Maine FarmLink](#) and [New England Farm Finder](#) and regularly perused the sites as well as spread the search by word of mouth. Almost nothing was available in the 30-minute vicinity of Lewiston for many months. What came up in searches was often prohibitively expensive due to vastly different infrastructure (horse farms, dairy farms). Sometimes the SBCA was alerted by an ally or supporter that a farm might come on the market soon. This happened more than once but then it did not actually come up for sale, there was no follow up, or it sold even before the SBCA could get any details.

As advised by the team of supporters, the SBCA reached out to the land owners of existing Liberation Farms locations, but unfortunately all had different or more lucrative plans for their land sites than selling acreage as cropland and at farmland prices (\$2000/\$3000 an acre in the area of interest at the time).

Supporters kept the SBCA abreast of the town of Auburn's farmland rezoning process¹⁵ with the hope some farmland would come up for sale as a result. The SBCA also joined an Auburn community group formed to explore the idea of developing a collaborative farming site. However, discussions about using Lewiston-Auburn Water Pollution Control Authority land and concerns about PFAS/PFOS¹⁶ in sludge spread on the land closed the door on SBCA's interest in this collaboration. When an organic farmer was selling her small parcel in Auburn, the SBCA considered the idea of linking nearby smaller parcels together to attain the desired acreage, though with deeper investigation, GIS soil maps on the surrounding open land showed less-than-optimal soils for diversified vegetable production. SBCA also expanded its land search to encompass commercial lots within City limits, recognizing soil contamination could be an issue.

Former MFT's staffer, Erica Buswell, who had supported the New Roots Cooperative Farm in finding their land on the outskirts of Lewiston, suggested identifying greenspaces on Google Maps in the greater Lewiston-Auburn area and then going to see them in person to determine if any might make promising farmland. Then, she suggested using tax records and contacting the owner to see if there was interest in selling.

15. For more information visit <http://www.crcworks.org/meauburnagrp18.pdf>

16. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Per-_and_polyfluoroalkyl_substances#Environmental_concerns



STRATEGY 7: SEARCH FOR FARMLAND (CONT)

Many of these search techniques required additional time and creative thinking with significant potential for less-than-ideal outcome. What ultimately yielded results was being in communication with a well-connected ally, who had a close working relationship with MFT's Maine Farms Realty broker. The farm the SBCA did ultimately find was posted through Maine FarmLink over two years after SBCA initiated the search.

CHALLENGES TO FARMLAND SEARCHING:

- Large parcels (50 - 100 acres or more) that have organic/chemical-free land with soils suitable for diversified vegetables are often broken up and sold as smaller lots for housing developments, especially within and immediately surrounding Lewiston-Auburn.
- Some of the American-born staff members of the SBCA heard rumors from service providers that some in the area did not want to sell their land to Somali Bantu farmers. While unconfirmed, racism surely added a complicating layer to the search, especially the unpredictability of where and how the SBCA may encounter instances of overt racism throughout any stage of the search and purchase process. Initial communications about the Wales farm that ultimately was purchased were conducted by American-born staff and partners. It should be noted that in this case, the owners did not discriminate against SBCA, and were, in fact, reassured that their land would be kept in chemical-free agricultural production as part of Liberation Farms and the LJCMAC.
- Working with many partners and supporters in most cases proved important to the overall success. That being said, during the farm-seeking phase and before formal roles had been defined as part of the shared MOU, working with so many partners was, at times, complicated. In the early stages, lack of a shared understanding and lack of an agreed upon process for seeking and securing land meant the SBCA lost out on at least one possible farmsite for sale.

STRATEGY 8: PURCHASE FARMLAND



Despite all of the challenges that SBCA experienced with land-seeking, a viable farm appeared on Maine FarmLink two days after LJCMAC held its first Board meeting. And thanks to Slow Money Maine's Bonnie Rukin, who had been an important supporter throughout the process, SBCA was one of the first to know about it.

This farm met all of the criteria that SBCA and its community had outlined. Thanks to a long-time supporter of the organization who offered to provide the down payment, the SBCA had the ability to move quickly on the purchase. This ability to instill confidence in the sellers was incredibly helpful, and, fortunately, there were no better offers, at least none that SBCA learned about. Formerly farmers themselves, the sellers were taken with AT and the SBCA's values and stories and commitment to chemical-free agricultural practices. These relationships assured all parties that the sale's due diligence would be streamlined, and that the farmland was to stay well-cared-for.

Once the SBCA determined that the farm was indeed suitable based on the community's criteria (see description of the farm and associated soil maps in Appendix G), AT quickly made a deposit to convey the SBCA/AT's serious interest. Over the next 5 months, the SBCA and AT worked through the due diligence period and steps of the purchase. The SBCA and AT simultaneously launched a fundraiser aimed at raising the initial \$367,000 needed. The original project summary is included in Appendix H, which outlines not only the costs of the land but costs associated with the purchase process and creation of endowment funds for the future of LJCMAC. The next page shows a timeline that outlines steps in the purchase process.

CHALLENGES TO PURCHASING FARMLAND:

- Initially and without any knowledge of the seller, the SBCA worked carefully with non-Somali Bantu staff and with AT to manage communications and set up a tour to attempt to circumvent any barriers related to racism. A majority of white staff and supporters toured the farm first and met the sellers, with only the SBCA's ED and no other Somali Bantu community members in the preliminary tour group. Initially, Ian McSweeney of Agrarian Trust, who is white, led communication with the sellers. Fortunately, this investigatory period was short-lived as it was unnecessary in this particular case. The SBCA was able to build rapport and relationship with the sellers.
- AT's Ian McSweeney emphasized the fortunate circumstances of working with Maine Farms Realty/Maine FarmLink/MFT, which enabled sellers and buyers to avoid working with conventional realtors. While not a challenge in this case, working with conventional realtors can add layers of difficulty because they work within a system that treats land purely as a commodity and fosters a buyer/seller relationship that is merely transactional. In this case, MFT's relationship with buyer

LAND PURCHASE PROCESS

MAY 2020

First LJCMAC meeting (May 6). Wales farm offered for sale on Maine Farmlink. AT and SBCA's EDs visit the farm. SBCA Board of Directors and ED Muhidin Libah decide to move forward with the purchase process. SBCA/AT make the initial deposit(\$5,000). AT begins negotiations with sellers. In partnership, SBCA and AT launch fundraising campaign. Sellers agree to sale. Both parties sign a purchase agreement. SBCA makes the down payment. LJCMAC becomes an official entity (May 27). SBCA/AT confirm organic certification by obtaining the organic certificate. AT sets up an online donations page and creates a webpage to tell the SBCA/LJCMAC's story to funders.

JULY 2020

SBCA searches out an appraiser with farmland valuation experience and arranges for the appraisal. AT continues to conduct the title work. Collaborative fundraising continues, including coordination for photography, interviews and video with interested media outlets (list of media stories about this project, see Appendix I). SBCA coordinates shooting several short videos about the project including the Dream Purpose Project's video* by Duran Ross and a video for the LJCMAC and SBCA** by Alexander Sutula. SBCA communicates with the Town of Wales to understand local regulations, permitting requirements, etc. re: future site expansion plans. SBCA hires and coordinates water quality testing and water resources assessment.

SEPTEMBER 2020

SBCA conducts a board and staff retreat with SBCA Board and Liberation Farms Advisory Committee to discuss land transition plans, land management visioning and planning as well as plans for scaling up staff capacity. AT makes the next payment towards purchase (\$195,000) with owner financing agreement for four years (\$200,000). This includes ongoing fundraising for the debt service. SBCA explores the option of a farmland conservation easement with MFT as part of this financing. Negotiations between the SBCA and AT as part of drafting of temporary lease¹⁷ between AT and SBCA. LJCMAC board members begin participation in First Light*** and increase awareness about Indigenous sovereignty and stolen land. SBCA creates, negotiates, and finalizes a sublease agreement with neighboring Milkhouse**** Farm & Dairy farmers who had been haying the farm for the past several years.

JUNE 2020

LJCMAC Board of Directors vote to purchase the Wales farm. AT's legal team conducts title work. SBCA coordinates an environmental inspection. SBCA consults the NRCS re: water resources used for irrigation. SBCA consults Maine State Soil Scientist and conducts an on-site assessment. SBCA hires inspectors and participates in water, radon, septic, building and property inspection. AT manages corresponding negotiation with sellers to decide which party will pay for repairs and issues identified. SBCA/AT continue fundraising and media generation, including developing and disseminating press releases.

AUGUST 2020

AT/SBCA makes the next payment to landowners (\$30,000). Continued collaborative fundraising and media coordination. SBCA and AT begin a collaboration with RSDI professor in landscape architecture to develop visual site plans for the farm.

OCTOBER 2020

SBCA signs temporary lease with AT and acquires keys to the house and farm! SBCA/AT decide to expand the collaborative fundraising effort to address SBCA's growing need for bolstered capacity. SBCA consults with partners and conducts ongoing land management planning. SBCA and AT continue to draft and refine the Equitable Lease that will guide the LJCMAC-SBCA relationship for the next 99 years.

STRATEGY 8: PURCHASE FARMLAND (CONT)



and seller fostered an understanding of shared values such as respect and reverence for the land itself. This relationship also created a foundation for building trust and straightforwardness that ultimately facilitated a smooth purchase process.

- While the Wales farm met the SBCA's search criteria in nearly all ways, one concern was its soils. The original GIS soil map (Appendix G) demonstrated that most of the land was not considered prime farmland soils and not much was considered farmland soils of statewide importance, in large part due to the sloping topography.

SBCA's staff walked the farmland with the Maine state soil scientist David Rocque *before* the purchase was finalized and were grateful to have done so. Dave offered several important recommendations for addressing challenges with the soils. Ultimately, he believed the land was farmable with significant investment and care to appropriately prepare the ground for diversified vegetable farming in the way SBCA farmers were interested in doing. This would lead the SBCA's plans for a gradual transition to the farm over two to three seasons. His assessment also helped with planning and locating cropland fields versus grazing pasture locations. Since the SBCA farmers have yet to grow in Wales, it remains to be seen how the farmers feel about growing in vastly different soil than that in prior locations. Spring of 2022 will be the first season in African flint corn and diversified vegetable production.

- One specific challenge had to do with the cost of the farm versus the estimated appraised value. A nonprofit can not pay substantially more than the appraised value of a property and thus the appraised value had to be within 15% of the agreed upon purchase price. While this is specific to this particular situation, this may be important to note for other 501c3 buyers and/or those partnering with land trusts. Fortunately in this case, the SBCA worked with partners at MFT and LFG to find an appraiser who understood how nonprofit land trusts work, the value of agricultural assets and infrastructure, and the uniqueness of this farm (acres, organic certification, distance to Lewiston, etc.). This appraiser valued the property taking all of this into account and the value did come in within 15% of the purchase price.
- The SBCA and AT now had to fundraise to complete the purchase (including closing costs and endowment funding to support future financial viability of the Commons) and do so on a tight timeline as the sellers requested a closing date of December 1.

* [Dream Purpose Project's video](#) by Duran Ross

** [Video for the LJCMAC and SBCA](#) by Alexander Sutula

*** [First Light](#)

**** [Milkhouse](#) Farm & Dairy farmers

17. This temporary lease guides the SBCA-AT-LJCMC tenure arrangement pending IRS designation and finalizing equitable 99-year lease)



STRATEGY 8: PURCHASE FARMLAND (CONT)

On its face, it seemed nearly impossible to the SBCA, as such a small organization, to raise the \$580,000¹⁸ estimated need for purchase and viability of the LJC MAC. Ultimately the SBCA and AT raised the amount needed for purchase and endowment in the first year, and continues to raise funds for the debt service¹⁹

There are a few important notes regarding the SBCA's successful fundraiser:

1. The SBCA saw the need to bolster capacity and to do so, expanded the hours of one of its program advisors to lead this endeavor.
 2. The SBCA leveraged its partnership with AT. Part of AT's original commitments to the SBCA was support in financing the farm. AT added significant capacity by sharing its own staff's time. As a national organization, AT increased prominence of the fundraiser. AT also mobilized their large donors and leveraged their own partnerships to support with either cash or in-kind donations.
 3. The timing of this fundraiser in relation George Floyd's murder,²⁰ the national attention this brought to the Movement for Black Lives, and the intense need for antiracism work meant many people were looking for Black-led organizations to support. Being such an organization, this undoubtedly increased donations to the SBCA's project. And, with IRS COVID funding going to many US households during the early part of 2020, financially-privileged supporters had extra money to donate, inspired by local campaigns encouraging just that.
 4. SBCA received significant support from the Maine farming community, which was also receiving increased support from customers and government subsidies during the COVID pandemic. Small farmers, as people who intimately understand the significance of land tenure, resonated with the SBCA's cause. Bo Dennis of MOFGA leveraged the Journey person listserve to publicize SBCA's fundraising, encouraging farmers to donate percentages of their profits, run mini-fundraisers, and more. This significantly amplified the project in Maine.
- The SBCA had not fully accounted for the added costs of expanded land tenure, particularly in years transitioning from its current leased farm sites. Once the farm was identified, this project moved ahead quickly and inside of the busy growing season that included additional COVID-related capacity challenges. At the time of purchase in October of 2020, AT and the SBCA had not fully communicated about the costs of assuming this new farmsite. Expanded liability insurance, property insurance, utilities, etc. needed to be paid effective immediately. Operating on an

18. See Appendix H for a complete breakdown of the components of this total

19. Donations can be made at <https://agrariantrust.org/agrariancommons/little-jubba/>

20. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Murder_of_George_Floyd

STRATEGY 8: PURCHASE FARMLAND (CONT)



already tight, grant-funded budget meant that these added costs were taxing to the SBCA, as they had not been planned for in proposal funding nor the fundraiser. In light of fundraising success, the SBCA and AT decided to add a \$52,000 request for some of the unforeseen components of this expansion, as well as a new staff position for a property manager and soil fertility expenses. The two latter items became clear needs as SBCA turned to farmsite planning. While this fundraising has also been successful, anticipating these costs would have alleviated stress that could have been avoided with better foresight and planning.

- The closing happened two months sooner than expected due to the success of the fundraiser, a smooth due diligence process and the seller's request to move as quickly as possible. While this was widely seen as positive, it left the SBCA scrambling for time to formulate its own version of the Equitable Lease that would ultimately guide the relationship between the LJCMAC and the SBCA. The SBCA's LJCMAC Board members quickly realized this would be time-consuming and, being such a critical component of the Commons-SBCA relationship, felt important not to rush. The SBCA worked with LFG and AT's staff to create and approve a temporary lease. This lease will be in place until the SBCA, LJCMAC, and AT can collaboratively finalize and approve the equitable lease. The fact that the SBCA is currently bound to a more traditional style lease is admittedly an unideal added risk, though due to positive partnership relations with AT at present, isn't hugely concerning in this short-term period. Most important is developing a high-quality and Equitable Lease that will guide this land tenure relationship long into the future.





STRATEGY 9: PLAN FOR THE FUTURE

Future planning, while not at the forefront through the purchasing process, quickly becomes large task once tenure is secured. Despite pressure from excited farmers to use the land as soon as possible, there was a year left on SBCA's lease with Whiting Farm, enabling a more gradual transition. This was beneficial for many reasons, but especially for incorporating the soil building recommendations from the state soil scientist. It also gave the SBCA some time to scale up staff capacity, which the organization quickly realized was needed for managing its own farmland. During this time, the SBCA intensely focused on finalizing the equitable lease that would be the guiding document for its relationship with LJCMAC.

SBCA held a facilitated retreat for the SBCA Board, Liberations Farms Advisory Committee members, and SBCA staff to create and discuss a transition plan. The retreat built collective understanding and forged collaborative agreements among community leaders, who would then help deliver the message to the wider community of farmers. There was overall consensus around the transition timeline, and a renewed visioning process that clarified priorities for upgrade, expansion, and buildout over the next months and years. This retreat also helped the SBCA prioritize new staffing positions. Coming out of this retreat, the SBCA decided to hire a property manager to facilitate and oversee the transition over the next three years.

Simultaneously to communicating the transition plan, building a short-term vision with SBCA community leaders, and expanding organizational capacity; the SBCA staff began creating a working land management plan. This would also be important in the collaboration with the LJCMAC and serve as documentation of land use and sustainability measures as per the Commons model and as required by the equitable lease.

In creating a land management plan, the SBCA developed a series of maps of the farm. One map created by the SBCA's Farm Operations Manager, Lana Cannon Dracup, contains her notes from a site walk with the Maine State Soil Scientist David Roque, overlaid on the original GIS soil map (Appendix J). Lana also created a hand-drawn visual representation of the farm with designated growing spaces, proposed structures, future pasture rotations, and more, to enhance multilingual planning sessions at the retreat. From these, Gavin Zeitz, a professor of landscape architecture at Rhode Island School of Design, volunteered to create a map of the farm, which now serves as a planning tool for SBCA (Appendix K).

The SBCA was able to fundraise for many soil inputs and tools for implementing the soil management plans. Local NRCS agent Jim Johnson is working with the SBCA to support conservation and water resources management near the streams that cross the farm. The SBCA has also created a list of people and organizations to call upon for support with sustainable forest management, solar en-

STRATEGY 9: PLAN FOR THE FUTURE (CONT)

ergy production, and more. Many of these people are already engaged in the project as non-voting advisors and community members of the LJCMAC.

Another important aspect of the project relates to the SBCA and LJCMAC's acknowledgement of this farm as stolen Abenaki land. At the time of writing, two SBCA staff and LJCMAC board members are participating in the [First Light](#) learning journey. Considering a strategy for Indigenous land reparations, in addition to exploring cultural land use easements and Land Back initiatives, are an important part of future planning for this project. LJCMAC and SBCA have decided to explore collaborations with Indigenous peoples ahead of placing a farmland easement with MFT. Acknowledging land theft²¹, creating a strategy for making reparations payments, and consulting local Indigenous leaders about this land are priorities now, with more to learn.

CHALLENGES TO PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE:

- While the SBCA has every intention to operate well into the future, the ability to operate depends on funding and funders as well as the political and economic climate of the moment. With renewed and widespread support of the Movement for Black Lives, which coincided with the fundraiser for this project, the SBCA has gained support and built capacity. This has enabled the organization to expand in a much-needed way. Whether this increase in support for Black-led organizations will continue and be sustained is uncertain, though it has created hope and increased creativity in how the SBCA and the LJCMAC approach planning.
- The SBCA (and the LJCMAC, by extension) are hard-pressed to make time for future planning. Equipping and building out the new farm, and coordinating the many new projects required for startup of the Agrarian Commons, add to the already heavy workload the organization carried before. Further, creating new positions requires additional fundraising and grant-writing work. This growth phase, while exciting, is and continues to be taxing. However, once fully transitioned to one farmsite, the hope is that these capacity challenges will ease and even streamline the Liberation Farms program.

21. Please view the SBCA's land acknowledgement: <https://somalibantumaine.org/liberation-farms/>



Recommendations for securing land for low-resourced and non-traditional farmers

Part III

Photograph: Kelsey Kobik

PREPARING

- Acknowledge that this will take significant time and human capital at all stages. Raise and/or designate funds to expand capacity. Ideally, designate a point person to serve as project lead. Network with partner organizations who can offer funding to support capacity.
- Involve the community of farmers in co-developing a vision for the land sought.
- Develop a specific, prioritized set of criteria for land-seeking, based on a co-developed vision.
- From the vision, the criteria, and the group's history, develop a meaningful story about seeking land tenure—one that will resonate broadly with a variety of supporters and donors.
- Identify and designate decision-makers for the land purchase: individuals, board members, etc.



PREPARING

- Designate significant time and funding to involve these decision-makers in every major step. If this includes translation and interpretation of resources, seek out or create those that are as useful as possible, ideally based on culturally-relevant ways of conveying information.
- Periodically check in with community leaders to ensure that the vision and search criteria match community needs and priorities as they evolve.
- Understand your financial capacity and create a funding plan. Secure funds for a down payment based on an estimated value of land sought. If possible, plan for funds to cover some of the costs of transitioning to a new location and scaling up organizational/staffing capacity. For a list of funding resources see Appendix L.
- Gain clarity around financial commitments (for example, ask what aspects donors want to fund specifically and the dollar amounts).
- Tell your story to your funders. Do they have donor-advised funds or other large donors who may be interested in this specific project? Find forums for networking with new donors and investors.
- Make preparations for launching a fundraiser.
- Prepare a press release and develop a list of media contacts who are likely to tell your story. Track your media stories. Revisit your press release, and revisit and revise your media list periodically.
- Maintain a regular social media presence. Consider paying a consultant, hiring an intern or finding a knowledgeable volunteer to manage social media.
- Learn about the purchasing process. Seek out resources, particularly region-specific resources and initiatives. Recognize the limitations of these resources related to your own community. For a list of funding resources, see Appendix L.
- Find knowledgeable people, especially people who have supported nontraditional farmers, or who are willing to do so, and who are willing to prioritize your goals with, not below, their own. For BIPOC communities, be cautious of exploitative relationships. Sometimes these people can serve as a means to an end, but enter them knowingly.



- Investigate possible alternative and/or creative ways to broaden your search criteria.
- Investigate possible alternatives to conventional ownership structures such as Agrarian Commons, community land trusts, public and conservation land arrangements and more. Seek out long-term arrangements and leases if not outright ownership.
- Look for success stories from similar groups of nontraditional, low-resourced farmers acquiring land. Talk to those involved in these projects for strategies, information, and support.
- Create MOUs/other structured agreements to bring accountability to the land seeking and purchasing process. Ask service providers and consultants to be explicit about their commitments and who is doing what to prevent duplication of efforts.
- Evaluate the pros and cons of each land tenure option that you may pursue, recognizing each option will have both. Be clear and open with decision-makers and the wider community about the challenges these options may present in the short and long term (e.g. capacity challenges of operating a land commons).
- Participate in creating the documents that dictate land tenure agreements (e.g. leases, bylaws, etc.), particularly alternative ownership structures that offer this leeway. Ask questions about power dynamics and, when possible, seek to balance them.
- Create space for recognizing stolen land. Make a plan for raising funds and making reparations payments to the Indigenous people of the land you will occupy. Investigate Indigenous land use, sharing, and Land Back opportunities. Create relationships with the Indigenous people of the land and listen to the specific desires of local Indigenous leaders and tribes for guidance. Consider Indigenous access and cultural use easements ahead of farmland easements or other conservation easements.

FARMLAND SEEKING

- Tell and share your story. Spread your search criteria through word-of-mouth to whoever will listen. Talk about and present on land justice and the need for land tenure and land access for BIPOC people broadly. Amplify your own needs as well as those of other BIPOC and nontraditional groups and make connections between them.



FARMLAND SEEKING

- Attend events and conferences that support farmers and seek to match land seekers with land owners.
- Create a profile on [Maine FarmLink](#) and [New England Farm Finder](#) (or similar for your region if they exist – ask American Farmland Trust for a regional equivalent). Regularly check these sites.
- Move quickly in touring farms of interest and be prepared to secure the farm as soon as you know it is a likely match. The due diligence process will give you the leeway to change your mind if deal-breaking challenges emerge.
- Before touring a farm, access the electronic soil maps. Evaluate tax records for any easements, right-of-ways, etc. Research the surrounding land and history of the land related to possible contamination from spreading biosolids that would indicate the presence of PFAS/PFOS²² or other similar carcinogenic residuals, upstream pesticide use that may contaminate water resources, and/or nearby conventional agriculture or timber operations where pesticide residue or GMO seed contamination may end up affecting your own growing (e.g. aerial herbicide sprays for conventional blueberry crops, tree defoliation, etc.). Often, you can learn a lot from talking to neighbors.
- Seek and evaluate possible collaborations. Be honest if collaboration does not make sense.
- Think creatively if the perfect parcel has not and is unlikely to become available. How could you modify your search to create more possible options? What aspects of the criteria is the community willing to compromise on that may enable a broadened search?
- Drive around to identify farms and greenspaces. Seek tax records and contact owners about the possibility of selling.

²² https://www.fishbase.org/abstract/DownloadFile?abstract_id=54188&file_id=104188

PURCHASING

- If you are a BIPOC community, acknowledge the realities and barriers you may face due to racism. Consider mitigating the possible loss of a land purchase by asking white allies/accomplices to be the face of early negotiations.
- If the farm was posted to Maine FarmLink and New England Farm Finder or the equivalent, it is



PURCHASING

likely the owners are interested in selling to a farmer and keeping it as an intact farm. Communicate your intentions to do so and tell your story about why farming and land stewardship is meaningful to you. Building rapport could increase your chances during a competitive bidding process.

- Explore farmland conservation easements if needed as part of your funding plan. Is it possible to wait on placing an easement until you have a better understanding of your/community's land use? Is it possible to wait on placing an easement until you have sought out possible collaborations with Indigenous leaders, groups, and tribes related to their desired land use and access?
- If you are fundraising for the farm, launch your fundraiser as soon as you have made the initial deposit. Have a plan and messaging campaign prepared in case this particular farm purchase falls through.
- Once the down payment has been made (or you otherwise feel fairly confident the sale will go through) launch your social media campaign and disseminate press releases to your list of contacts. Create a media alert (google alert) for your organization/your name, or related keywords so you can learn about unexpected media generated.
- Consider hiring a videographer to create a short piece that tells your story (e.g. what this land would mean for your community/family, why this land is special, why your style of farming is special, etc.) to add interest to your fundraising campaign.
- Ask for the up-to-date organic certification (if land has been in organic agriculture).
- Communicate with the town clerk and permitting officer to learn about local regulations, permitting requirements and etc.that may impact your plans related to land use, infrastructure development, etc. You can also learn what your estimated property taxes will be.
- Communicate with your county's Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) representatives related to water resources and any restrictions, conservation strategies, and possible uses. Ask the seller what, if any history they may have working with the NRCS on the land.
- If possible, walk the land with a soil expert to confirm your anticipated farming and land use goals are compatible with soils present. The State of Maine's Department of Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry offers a free consultation with the state soil scientist.



PURCHASING

- The building inspections, water quality testing, septic inspection, radon testing, etc. will reveal costs you would assume as the new owner. Make preparations for assuming these costs based on the timeline for repair. Can you plan to cover these costs via in-progress grant proposals or as part of loans?
- As you near the completion of the sale, make preparations to assume costs associated with land tenure (e.g. property taxes, expanded insurance coverage as may be required by affiliate organizations, utilities, etc.). The sellers are likely to be able to offer helpful estimates.

PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

- Work with community members, farmers, and stakeholders to develop a revised vision for land use. The SBCA has found it helpful to plan in three-year, five-year, and 10-year increments. Develop a farm transition plan and timeline. Seek to balance what is realistic (based on your capacity) with what is optimal for land use, continuity of your farming operation, and with community desires.
- With a better understanding of the elements of the farm and its structures, the associated challenges, and known expenses and upgrades (gleaned from the inspections) as well as an updated understanding of the community's specific desired land uses in the short and medium term, create estimates for assuming these costs, expanding capacity (including personnel), and making upgrades and retrofits needed for the immediate transition. Expand your fundraiser, ask investors and/or large donors, or place these costs in grant proposals to be awarded in the year ahead.
- Work with volunteers and supporters who may have skills to help with site planning and land management.
- Ask supporters and service providers to connect you with others who can help you achieve/execute specific elements of your plan.
- Find out who the specific Indigenous people are from which this land was stolen. Are there local tribes or Indigenous leaders to contact? Investigate ways to raise reparations funding (from supporters, Commons members and advisors, Board members, etc.). Converse with leaders about



PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

how they view this land and ways they may want to relate to it. Consider forming shared land use agreements.

- Seek to build rapport and community with the surrounding farmers and neighbors. Consider creating a written letter and delivering it by hand to surrounding neighbors. Network with other nearby farmers in the spirit of collaboration (versus competition). Explore leases/subleases with current users/farmers and communicate land use and transition plans to them. Invite neighbors, local supporters, donors, town employees and town representatives to the farm²³. Offer tours.
- Become familiar with use requirements of affiliate organizations (Agrarian Trust, land trusts, etc.). Consider creating a shared working management plan that can be revisited annually/periodically related to these requirements.
- Generally, engage in and support policy that furthers land justice and equity. A 2020 [Land Policy Toward a More Equitable Farming Future](https://www.youngfarmers.org/land/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/LandPolicyReport.pdf) report²⁴ came out with recommendations for policy and advocacy approaches to land justice. This document offers policy recommendations that would improve land tenure and access for BIPOC and other marginalized people.

23. This may be challenging and require virtual invites and tours in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

24. Find at: <https://www.youngfarmers.org/land/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/LandPolicyReport.pdf>



Photographs: Kelsey Kobik

Conclusion



Securing access to a large parcel of farmland that fulfilled this community's criteria has signaled an enormous step for Liberation Farms. As this community of farmers approaches its first full growing season on the land (2022), there are feelings of relief and hope, among others. Many of the aforementioned challenges have not disappeared but continue to weave through the organization's everyday work. For example, staff members serving on the Little Jubba Central Maine Agrarian Commons board continue to work out the terms in the novel 99-year lease between the SBCA and LJCMAC.

Going forward, the SBCA is committed to supporting its community, nourishing and stewarding this land, and collaborating with partner organizations toward shared goals. As the organization moves onto the new farmsite, farmers and staff are in the midst of planning and fundraising to construct a pavilion for hosting community events as well as to create much-needed playspace for children. Fulfilling other community-articulated dreams are also in process, including an on-site farmstand, a space for its Kasheekie summer youth program, a Halal meat slaughtering station, GAP-certifiable wash and pack station, and more. Most important of all, this land is the central component to realizing food security for this agrarian community long into the future.



Addendum

The ongoing nature of such an endeavor has taught us lessons in acceptance and patience. The delay in land transfer was due to: Somali Bantu Community Association (SBCA) concerns about placing an agricultural conservation easement on the property; a reconsideration of the land holding structure; and leadership change at Agrarian Trust (AT).

As part of the initial fundraising effort in 2020, AT pursued placing an agricultural conservation easement with Maine Farmland Trust (MFT) in order to add \$80,000 to the debt service payoff. SBCA and AT discovered that placing an easement would have the following implications: Wabanaki Nations are not legally allowed to hold a conservation easement in the State of Maine; and the Maine State legislation does not specify Indigenous or cultural uses as a proper land use in agricultural conservation easements. Furthermore, the restrictions, limitations, monitoring, and enforcement through easements inhibit Wabanaki self-determination around land care and relationship. AT and SBCA agreed to find other funds to pay the debt service which did delay the land transfer timeline. Together with partners, SBCA is considering an “intention of use” document to support potential Indigenous land stewardship in the future and clearly state the intentions of the communities who access land at Liberation Farms.

In 2022, AT discovered that the application to create 501(c)(2) entities (the legal framework to establish the Agrarian Commons), had not been approved by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). The Little Jubba Central Maine Agrarian Commons (LJCMAC), AT and SBCA began to explore a transfer of the Wales farm directly to SBCA. This was possible because SBCA is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization in its own right.

In April 2023, a now-former executive director of Agrarian Trust (Ian McSweeney) left the organization abruptly and without notice to their Board of Directors. This unexpected change added layers of complexity to the land ownership transition. AT and SBCA began working on developing a relationship based on equity and transparency and moving forward with the title transfer process with legal assistance. The first step was to dissolve LJCMAC and entrust leadership to the Somali Bantu community to inform the decision making process of the SBCA. AT's board and new executive leadership worked with SBCA to accomplish these goals.

SBCA and AT are thrilled to announce that as of May 2025, SBCA is the sole owner of Liberation Farms. This transfer will ensure land tenure without encumbrances for the SBCA community indefinitely, as was the original intent of the project.

This has all occurred alongside the flourishing of Liberation Farms in Wales, which has included on-farm buildout of infrastructure and the SBCA's staff and program expansion. The farm now has a wash-and-pack station, a Halal meat slaughter station, a Suuq/Farm Stand, and a large pavilion. In 2023, SBCA built a permanent goat barn and purchased a larger tractor, and in 2024 completed construction of a flint corn processing building.

In all of its ongoing complexity, Liberation Farms continues to model what is possible with dogged perseverance, strong commitment to relationships, and holistic community support. This project was and is focused on equitable land justice and long-term land security for the Somali Bantu community. The conclusion of the SBCA's land acquisition journey reflects a diversity of perspectives and understandings that spring from the people who steward the land at Liberation Farms now and into the future.

List of Appedicies



Appendix A: Ideal prospective farmland criteria and timeline for buildout priorities

Appendix B: Resources consulted for farmland seeking

Appendix C: About New Roots Cooperative Farm

Appendix D: AFT's template for entering into a collaboration and agenda for meeting with Cultivating Community

Appendix E: Memorandum of Understanding

Appendix F: Ethan Miller's land tenure education tool: Land Tenure Options for SBCA

Appendix G: Farm description and soils map

Appendix H: Project summary

Appendix I: Media coverage

Appendix J: Advanced soils assessment by Dave Rocque and created by Lana Cannon Dracup

Appendix K: Site plan by Gavin Zeitz

Appendix L:



APPENDIX A: IDEAL PROSPECTIVE FARMLAND CRITERIA AND TIMELINE FOR BUILDOUT PRIORITIES

Summary of what LF is using now (2019):

- Roughly 30 acres between Whiting Farm in Auburn and Jim Marsh's land in Lewiston plus extra acres for 13 goats in Greene. This land is used for 180, tenth-acre plots for family farmers--those who are farming for their own subsistence and food security. Additionally, cooperative groups, consisting of 30 Iskaashito farmers, are accessing additional land to collectively grow and sell commercial crops.
- List water infrastructure at Lewiston site and how much land it's irrigating
- 144 square feet of greenhouse space accessed at Whiting Farm
- Two 72' x 36' high tunnels currently at Lewiston site plus smaller, grant funded tunnels for corn drying and chickens
- Mobile wash station currently at 44 Littlefield Road, Lisbon at Cultivating Community
- Cold storage at Good Shepherd Food Bank (1 pallet)
- SBCA office is currently used to clean, mill and store corn, as well as the Blue Ox Malthouse.

What Liberation Farms is looking for in a farm site over 10 years (Community-informed):

- **Rough Estimate of Total Land Needs:** 60 - 100 acres. 30 - 50 acres with "farmland of state importance" or "prime farmland" classification according to the USDA Web Soil Survey. *See breakdown below for more detail.
- Within 30 minutes drive of center of Lewiston
- Chem free/organic

Immediate Needs:

- Space for current high tunnels, wash and pack, storage plus room to expand all of these as operations scale.
- Sufficient water for crop irrigation. Well or potable water source.
- Parking for several cars on a road that is passable without 4 wheel drive.
- Space for an improved, permanent wash station.
- Waste collection/removal system. Space for program farmers to store personal items on-farm.
- Greenhouse and space for seedling propagation.
- Cold storage.
- Space for corn processing: drying, milling, storing.
- Tool storage.
- High tunnels for season extension.



1 - 3 years

- Bathrooms with running water (to minimize cost of renting porta potties).
- Electricity.
- Office and community space with a prayer room, classroom/meeting room, showers, electricity, meeting spaces for other SBCA programs, kitchen for day to day farming for heating foods during long days at the farm and for events.
- Safe place for children to play.
- Tractor and implement storage/repair area.

3 - 5 years

- Barn for goats/sheep, chicken coop, milk parlor, milk room, hay storage, grain storage, running water to barn.
- Farmstand.
- Commercial kitchen.

5 - 10 years

- Halal slaughter space
- Housing for 3+ families (option to develop affordable housing opportunities?)

*Breakdown of acreage usage (by Lana Cannon Dracup)

The SBCA is in need for more farmland than used now, approximately 30 acres, whether it be for more farmer plots; expansion of Iskashito plots; needing more land to grow the budding corn enterprise, or all three. Potentially raising 100 head of goats (and possibly sheep), with up to 1,000 layer hens

The below range of acres can be considered for the following:

Diversified crops and flint corn: 30 - 50 acres

- SBCA is currently using about 30 acres
- More acreage would allow for expansion in several aforementioned areas
- More acreage would allow for a 3 year crop rotation with 5-10 acres in rest for 1 year at a time, perennial beds, etc.

Goat/Sheep and Chicken Pasture: 20-35 acres

- 2-4 goats can be supported on one acre of POOR pasture (100 goats @ 3 goats per acre = 33 acres needed)
- 5 goats can be supported on one acre of FAIR pasture (100 goats @ 5 goats per acre = 20 acres needed)
- 8 goats can be supported on one acre of GOOD pasture (100 goats @ 8 goats per acre = 12.5 acres need)*

* It is smart to expect POOR or FAIR pasture when estimating acreage, and if GOOD pasture exists, then more goats can be had! Better not to overcrowd on inadequate pastures

Rough Estimate of Total Land Needs: 60 - 100 acres



APPENDIX B: RESOURCES CONSULTED FOR FARMLAND SEEKING

For learning about land tenure options and the purchase process the SBCA used the [Farm Access Methods: A Decision Guide](#) from Land for Good. There are an almost overwhelming number of resources LFG offers. A good place to start is the [Toolbox for Farm Seekers](#) page of their website.

For land-seeking advice and tools, The SBCA consulted Maine Farmland Trust and posted on [Maine FarmLink](#) and worked with [Maine Farms Realty](#). Also important was networking at the Maine Farmland Access and Transfer Conference every year (co-hosted by LFG), especially once the conference included land justice content (2019 and 2020).

The SBCA also posted on [New England Farmland Finder](#).

The SBCA consulted [New Entry Sustainable Farming Project Resources](#) such as [Finding, Assessing, and Securing Farmland: A Plain Language Guide from the New Entry Sustainable Farming Project](#).

The National Young Farmers Coalition offers resources such as [Finding Farmland: A Farmer's Guide to Working with Land Trusts](#).

The [Teaching Handbook: Refugee Farmer Training](#) may be helpful for English-speaking service providers in creating their own tools and strategies for learning and decision-making.

Katie Painter (formally of AFT) also shared [several land tenure resources](#) for supporting beginning farmers, some of them refugee and immigrant farmers, in Idaho.

Grow NYC also offers some [Technical Assistance resources](#), including information on purchasing land and access to capital.

American Farmland Trust has now made much of their [Land Access Curriculum](#) materials available. These were shared with the SBCA project lead.

Early stages of a process for rezoning agricultural land in Auburn created some interest and hope that more farmland may come up for sale in the future. The SBCA attended community listening sessions and followed this process. [This report](#) offers information. The SBCA found land before a viable farm came up for sale in Auburn.



APPENDIX C: ABOUT NEW ROOTS COOPERATIVE FARM

Find out more about New Roots Cooperative Farm including how to join their CSA and donate:
<https://newrootscooperatiefarm.com/>



APPENDIX D: AFT'S TEMPLATE FOR ENTERING INTO A COLLABORATION AGENDA FOR MEETING WITH CULTIVATING COMMUNITY

Land Search Visioning Pre-Work: Leasing/Purchasing Shared Farmland

The Farm Business Model:

1. How much land do you currently farm?
2. What are your goals for farming in the next 1-3 years?
3. What would be the ideal number of acres for your farm in the next 1-3 years?
4. Which best describes your planned method of management for the next 1-3 years?
 - a. Certified organic
 - b. Sustainable or organic but not certified
 - c. No restrictions on chemicals or methods used
5. How much can you afford to pay for land?
 - a. to purchase land: \$
 - b. to rent land: \$
6. Do you need help determining how much you can afford to pay for land?
7. What portion of your work life will farmers be able to devote to the farm?
 - a. Full-time
 - b. Part-time (with a 2nd job)
8. What do you want to grow on your farm?
9. Will you grow for subsistence, retail or wholesale?

Land Tenure for the Next 1-3 Years:

1. Are you open to the idea of leasing a farm?
2. If you lease land, how long do you want the lease term (length of time) to be?
3. If no land is available with your ideal lease terms, would you consider a shorter lease?
4. What are some details that will be important in your land use agreement with a landlord?
In other words, what must you be allowed to do on this land? What restrictions will you not agree to?
5. What questions do you have about what might be in a lease agreement? Why is this important to you?
6. Do you want to have your own piece of land or do you want to be on a piece of land with other farmers?



APPENDIX D: (CONT)

Sharing Farmland: (fill out if the answer to the above question is be with others)

1. Who would want to share a farm with?
2. Would sharing farmland with the people you named above be good for your business?
3. Is there anyone you didn't name above who would be good for your farm business if they farmed on the same land?
4. What agreements and expectations need to be developed for a positive shared farmland experience?
5. What will be the shared responsibilities and investments on the farm?
6. How will those shared responsibilities and investments be planned for?
7. What are the main benefits to each organization about sharing farm land?
8. What are the main concerns or worries about investing in land together?

The Land Search:

1. If you found good farmland that didn't offer housing, how far from your home would you be willing to drive to get to your farm?
2. What are some requirements for your new farm site?
 - a. Choose all that apply: water, road access, parking, greenhouse, high tunnel, electricity, storage for vegetables/coolers, good soils, flat land, ability to make changes to the site, safe neighbors, tractor/equipment access, ability to use organic or conventional sprays, price of land, good, flexible landlord, other:
2. If not all of your requirements are available, which of them could you live without?
3. Do you need help in assessing whether a property meets your farm's needs?
4. In the business plan section above, you said that you needed ____acres to farm on in the next 1-3 years. What is your plan for how you will use those acres?
5. How much will it cost to get that amount of land into production?
6. How much will it cost to establish the infrastructure you'll need to farm on this new land?
7. Who are the resources we will turn to in our land search?
8. Who will be taking primary responsibility for the land search from your organization?

Financial Readiness:

1. Which one is more true of your business plan?
 - a. I have a written business plan, which is carefully detailed to cover the next 1-3 years of farming.
 - b. I am ready to write a business plan.
 - c. I need help with a business plan.
2. Do you own all the farm tools you will need to be on a new piece of land?



APPENDIX D: (CONT)

1. If you need to get more tools, how will you do it?
 - a. buy them on my own
 - b. buy them cooperatively
 - c. Other
2. Will you hire someone else to do tractor work?
3. Do you have an idea of what your expenses will be on a new piece of land?
4. If you don't know how much something will cost, do you know how to find out and plan for those costs?
5. Have you ever had a loan?
6. What form of financing would be most acceptable to you?
 - a. A standard loan with interest (from a bank or the government)
 - b. Rent-to-own
 - c. Private financing (from an individual or private organization)
 - d. Other:
7. Do you have a farm savings account?
8. Do you like the bank that you work with?
9. If you do not have a bank account, would you consider having one or another alternative for handling your money? Please explain.

Land Visioning Agenda
January 30, 2018, 1:00-3:00pm
Cultivating Community Office, 62 Elm Street

Opening (1:00-1:10)

- Pass out copies of agenda and pre-work questions
- Assign note taker and time keeper
- What are everyone's priorities for the meeting? What do we need to cover while we are together?

Pre-Work Review (1:10-1:40)

Each organization (SBCA, CC, Isuken) will briefly report out on the following from the pre-work questions:

- How much land do you currently farm?
- What are your goals for farming in the next 1-3 years?
- What would be the ideal number of acres for your farm in the next 1-3 years?
- How much can you afford to pay for land? (To purchase? To rent?)
- Will you grow for subsistence, retail or wholesale?
- What are some details that will be important in your land use agreement with a landlord? In other words, what must you be allowed to do on this land? What restrictions will you not agree to?



APPENDIX D: (CONT)

- If you found good farmland that didn't offer housing, how far from your home would you be willing to drive to get to your farm?
- What are some requirements for your new farm site?
 - Choose all that apply: water, road access, parking, greenhouse, high tunnel, electricity, storage for vegetables/coolers, good soils, flat land, ability to make changes to the site, safe neighbors, tractor/equipment access, ability to use organic or conventional sprays, price of land, good, flexible landlord, other:
- Do you own all the farm tools you will need to be on a new piece of land?

Envisioning Collaboration (1:40-2:45)

- Would sharing farmland be good for your business?
- What agreements and expectations need to be developed for a positive shared farmland experience?
- What will be the shared responsibilities and investments on the farm?
- How will those shared responsibilities and investments be planned for?
- What are the main benefits to investing in land together for each organization?
- What are the main concerns or worries about investing in land together?

Closing (2:45-3:00)

- Outline next steps in land search process
- Delegate responsibilities and roles
- Choose next meeting date/time/location
- Final closing thoughts and comments



APPENDIX E: MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING FOR THE collaboration to identify and secure long-term access to farmland for the Somali Bantu Community Association of Maine for the benefit of the farmers its program serves. This includes guidance and assistance in accessing funds, support in fund-raising to access land and to develop an operating budget to support long-term farmland tenure to support the community SBCA serves

BETWEEN THE:

Somali Bantu Community Association of Maine; and Agrarian Trust; and Cooperative Development Institute; and Land For Good; and Land in Common community land trust; and Maine Farmland Trust and American Farmland Trust

This Memorandum of Understanding (hereinafter referred to as the “MOU”) is made and entered into by and between the Somali Bantu Community Association (hereinafter referred to as “SBCA”); and Agrarian Trust (hereinafter referred to as “AT”); and Cooperative Development Institute (hereinafter referred to as “CDI”); and Land For Good (hereinafter referred to as “LFG”); and Land in Common community land trust (hereinafter referred to as “LC”) and Maine Farmland Trust (hereinafter referred to as “MFT”); and American Farmland Trust (hereinafter referred to as “AFT”) all for the purpose of securing long-term farmland ownership or farmland access for the SBCA. The above SBCA, AT, CDI, LFG, LC, MFT, and AFT are hereinafter collectively referred to as “the Parties”

WHEREAS the Parties have an expressed interest in supporting and guiding immigrant and refugee farmers in their land access searches;

WHEREAS the Parties acknowledge their organizations each have unique specializations and expertise that can be of use to support the Somali Bantu farmers who comprise the Liberation Farms Program of the SBCA;

WHEREAS the Parties agree that they can have more of an impact supporting Somali Bantu farmers by working together collaboratively instead of -individually;

WHEREAS the Parties acknowledge that because of structural and institutional racism as well as classism, Somali Bantu Farmers are excluded from or have greater barriers of entry to accessing land and capital than traditional farmland seekers.

WHEREAS the Parties would like to foster clear roles and modes of communication amongst themselves to most effectively work in this collaboration to support the Somali Bantu farmers who comprise the Liberation Farms program



APPENDIX E: (CONT)

NOW, THEREFORE, in consideration of the above:

This MOU provides the framework by which the Parties agree to support the values²⁵ of the SBCA, its Board and farmer community members in order to achieve the goal of securing long-term farmland access through collaboration that provides resources, assistance, capacity, and guidance to:

1. Assist with the development of land search criteria, community outreach, and property screening;
2. Engage in visioning, discussions, and considerations to develop a holistic understanding of SBCA's farmland needs;
3. Identify suitable and available farmland sites in the Lewiston/Auburn (L/A) area;
4. Evaluate, assess, and complete due diligence to determine the most viable and appropriate farmland site;
5. Develop a funding plan to: (1) purchase and/or secure a long-term lease tenure to farmland and (2) to support necessary capital expenses and improvements
6. Support purchase negotiations and partnership agreements;
7. Draft legal documents and/or agreements for the purchase or lease of land and infrastructure; and/or draft legal documents between partners (i.e., land trusts, service providers, etc.) related to this process;
8. Participate in outreach, engagement, raising awareness, and fundraising in regard to the acquisition of or access to land and any major and necessary upfront infrastructure developments;
9. Participate in conference calls and email communication as needed;
10. Develop, manage, and support communications, education, and social media about this collaboration.

This MOU also identifies the Parties' shared belief that the scope of support could be expanded to include...

1. Exploration of new collaborative models of landholding and investment;
2. Support of regional land access and investment through ongoing collaboration;
3. Exploration of policy supports and or changes to ensure access to farmland.

From 2019 - 2020, the Parties agree to develop the following :

A. Land For Good Agrees To:

1. Provide consultation and resources related to:

²⁵ As an organization that is run for and by the Bantu community, the Somali Bantu Community Association is uniquely able to adapt to the ever-changing needs of its members. This structure reflects our core value of centering and uplifting Bantu voices when providing services for, or making decisions about, the Bantu community. As a historically marginalized group, the SBCA demonstrates what equity and inclusion could look like here in Maine. <https://somalibantumaine.org/>



APPENDIX E: (CONT)

- a. Site assessment and evaluation of land options
- b. Land search criteria
- c. Land search & Community outreach
- d. Land tenure & lease models
5. Provide input, consultation, and resources related to all items (1-10 and 1-3) mentioned above, as needed and as called for by SBCA and its allies
6. Provide support in negotiating farm land leases as currently supported by existing agreements between Land For Good & SBCA

B. Agrarian Trust Agrees To:

1. Provide input, consultation, and resources related to all items (1-10 and 1-3) mentioned above
2. Participate in group process in order to support the above activities
3. Facilitate the creation of a 501c2 Lewiston-Auburn Agrarian Commons land-holding entity ("LA AC"); independently or in collaboration with Land in Common. The LA AC would hold the role of fee acquisition, ownership, and 99-year lease conveyance to SBCA of farmland. Through this role the primary items of negotiations, legal document drafting, due diligence, funding plan would have direct engagement by AT

C. Land in Common Agrees to:

1. Provide input, consultation, and resources related to all items (1-10 and 1-3) mentioned above, as we are able and as needed and as called for by SBCA and its allies
2. Participate in group process in order to support the above activities
3. Serve, if deemed desirable by SBCA and if approved by the membership of Land in Common following a concrete proposal, as the long-term conservation land holder for acquired land, leasing its use via a 99-year lease and conveying ownership of all improvements to SBCA. If such a pathway is not pursued, LC will provide support as we are able toward other options, including the Agrarian Commons, direct ownership by SBCA, or other models.
4. Provide support, if requested, to design and implement a grassroots community financing initiative in accordance with Sharia law (e.g., no interest). In a scenario in which LC is the long-term land holder, LC would administer such an initiative. In other scenarios, we would work with partners to determine the most appropriate administrator.

D. The SBCA

Organizational information relevant to this partnership:

Governance Structure:

The Somali Bantu Community Association of Maine is a registered 501c3 nonprofit organization led



APPENDIX E: (CONT)

and run by members of the Somali Bantu community it serves. Decisions are made collaboratively by the Farmer Committee, Board of Directors, and Executive Director (and organization founder)

Executive Director (ED):

- Muhidin Libah

Board of Directors:

- Mohamed A. Mohamed, Board President
- Ali Bule, Board Treasurer
- Sahal A. Jimale, Board Secretary
- Halima Mohamed, Board Member
- Habiba Salat, Board Member
- Bashire Haji, Board Member
- Haji M. Haji, Board Member
- Jowhara Kabir, Board Member
- Jijo Mohamed, Board Member

Farmers' Committee:

- Ahmed Baraki
- Mohamed Mohamed
- Suban Waledi
- Halima Mohamed

SBCA Community Farm Program Decision Making Process:

1. The ED will gather and learn information.
2. The ED will then bring this information and their opinion to the Farmers' Committee. The Farmers' Committee makes the preliminary decision.
3. Farmers' Committee, Board, ED all sit together to weigh options and to discuss the final decision.
4. Ultimately, a simple majority vote²⁶ by the Board of Directors determines the decision.

Mission of the SBCA:

Our mission is to provide vital transitional services, advocacy, and programming that empowers members of the refugee community to uphold cultural identity and thrive in their new life here in Lewiston, Maine. Please link to our [webpage](#) for a list of services and programs beyond the Liberation Farms program.

26 The Oxford Dictionary definition of a simple majority is "a majority in which the highest number of votes cast for any one candidate, issue, or item exceeds the second-highest number" for example, five of the nine members voting in favor would pass a decision



APPENDIX E: (CONT)

Mission of the Liberation Farms Program:

The mission of Liberation Farms, the Community Farming Program, is to provide new American farmers access to, and culturally-appropriate resources for, the means of sustainable food production for themselves, their families, and their communities.

Liberation Farms Overview:

Liberation Farms is food justice in action. It is a demonstration of the success that is possible when marginalized communities have the opportunity to organize and lead themselves. It provides new American families struggling with food insecurity with the tools and resources to grow healthy, culturally-appropriate foods for themselves and their community. This investment in growing nourishes body and soul as farmers ground into familiar traditions and meaningfully utilize their agricultural roots as they build new homes here in Maine.

Permanent land access is the most important resource in guaranteeing food security to over 150 families in the program²⁷.

Somali Bantu farmers are considered limited-resource, socially disadvantaged²⁸ by the USDA and most if not all are living at or below the poverty line as marginalized members of society whose history is rooted in the upheaval of fleeing their homes in Somalia/refugee camps in Kenya as a persecuted minority. This means Somali Bantu people have additional barriers to accessing and owning land.

Program Goals:

- Food Justice – Access to growing fresh, chemical-free, culturally-relevant produce for themselves and their families
- Community Building – Enhancing the economic, social, environmental, and cultural vibrancy and health of Lewiston, ME
- Education – Intercultural and intergenerational exchange and reciprocal learning of farming traditions

Liberation Farms has two different tracts for participation:

1. Family Farmers: The program assists Somali Bantu Family Farmers by providing access to land, seeds, trainings, technical assistance, and marketing. All of the farmers receive 1/10 of an acre to grow food for themselves and their families.

²⁷ 150+ families as of 2019

²⁸ https://lfrtool.sc.egov.usda.gov/SDFP_Definition.aspx



APPENDIX E: (CONT)

2. Iskashito Farmers: In addition to participating as a family farmers, some choose to grow commercially and self-organize into Iskashito groups. Iskashito is a traditional Somali method of cooperative growing where farmers work together on one piece of land and equitably share the profits of their combined labor and efforts.

What the Liberation Farms program is working on:

As of 2018, the organization has started small-scale meat goat and broiler chicken production to sell within the Somali Bantu community.

As of 2019, the organization has started commercially selling flint corn, which farmers in the program have expertise growing as a staple and culturally important crop. Grain production includes a need for expanded and secure space and infrastructure for drying and storing.

2019 represents Liberation Farm's 6th year growing diversified vegetables for family food security and fourth year of marketing vegetables to food pantries. This season is also the 3rd year of selling to Portland Public Schools and other wholesale buyers.

Land Access Priorities for the SBCA:

SBCA's criteria for land would be a parcel that is no more than 30 minutes drive from the center of Lewiston with loam/soil suitable for commercial vegetable production as well as livestock (goats and cows), dairy and poultry/broiler production.

The first priority is fertile farmland of approximately 35+ acres for vegetable production with proper crop rotation, including storage spaces for curing produce, equipment storage, space for greenhouse and high tunnels. The second priority is a property with space and shelter for livestock (goats and cows), dairy and poultry/broiler production (acreage would need to be calculated based on best practices for goats 50-100, chicken 300, cows 50-100), including a slaughter space/facility and potentially space for an on-site halal market. The third priority is a community gathering space, ideally that is a four-season or could be made a four-season/heated space with electricity and running water. Separate bathrooms and prayer spaces for men and women would be ideal.

Biggest priorities as articulated by community representatives include:

Greenhouse, barn, bathroom, wash station, ample parking space, space for community gatherings

The SBCA Agrees to:

1. Communicate with partners who support this process of seeking, acquiring, funding, and fundraising for farmland for the SBCA and the farming community SBCA serves²⁹
2. Convene meetings and calls as needed, including one, in-person meeting in conjunction with the Land Access and Transfer Conference (November of 2019).



APPENDIX E: (CONT)

3. 4 - 8 hours/month of SBCA staff time related to this collaboration³⁰
4. Facilitate communication with the SBCA farm committee, the SBCA Board, and engaged Liberation Farms participant farmers to make major decisions related to land tenure.
5. Maintain the google drive folder entitled, "SBCA Food and Land Security Collaboration"

E. AFT Agrees to:

1. Farmer/farm support (related to the toolkit and overall education of the SBCA staff and decision-makers)
2. AFT Land Access Training Curriculum and English-Language Learner translation educational resource support for SBCA staff
3. Support for documentation (i.e. case study) of SBCA land search process

F. CDI Agrees to:

1. Provide input, consultation, and resources related to all items (1-10 and 1-3) mentioned above
2. Participate in group process in order to support the above activities
3. Provide guidance, training or support for cooperative and collaborative relationships both on the land and in the L-A community.
4. Assist with fundraising for the land purchase.

G. MFT Agrees to:

1. Identify suitable and available farmland sites within the Lewiston Auburn (L/A) Area.
2. Share information about its experience with searching for and securing a piece of farmland for the New Roots Cooperative Farm. (If this role is not desired, please feel free to strike it from our list.)
3. Participate in a group process in order to support all land search activities.

IT IS MUTUALLY AGREED THAT:

1. All parties will, to the best of their abilities, attempt to accomplish these activities.
2. This MOU does not authorize the transfer of funds between the Parties. Any transfer of funds authorization will need to be described in a separate Agreement between the Parties."
3. This MOU becomes effective upon signature of all parties.
4. This MOU may be amended or terminated upon written agreement by all parties.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the Parties hereto have executed this MOU as of the last date written below.

This page may be signed in counterpart.

²⁹ SBCA serves refugee/immigrant farmers, primarily those in the Somali Bantu Community in Lewiston-Auburn area
³⁰ # hours dependent on the time of year (growing season will have fewer hours) and staff capacity (ideally all staff positions filled).



APPENDIX E: (CONT)

Date

Organization Name

Somali Bantu Community Association of Maine
Its: Director

Date

Agrarian Trust
Its: Director

Date

Cooperative Development Institute
Its: Director of Cooperative Food Systems

Date

Land For Good
Its: Maine Field Agent

Date

Land in Common Community Land Trust
Its: Director

Date

Maine Farmland Trust
Its: Vice President of Programs

Date

American Farmland Trust
Its: Program Manager, Farms for the Next Generation

Date

APPENDIX F: ETHAN MILLER'S LAND TENURE EDUCATION TOOL: LAND TENURE OPTIONS FOR SBCA

	Details	Variations	Strengths	Challenges
SBCA as sole land owner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SBCA, with support from allies, would purchase land directly and be owner. SBCA would hold equity, responsibility, management, and costs of ownership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An agricultural easement for the land could be held by Maine Farmland Trust or a similar organization. SBCA ownership/use of land and lease conveyance out to members/farmers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SBCA has maximum control of land, including ability to sell it Fewer "moving parts," less complexity around collaborations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SBCA has full responsibility for land. More work and capacity may be required to pursue and maintain this option over time. Allies have a more "distant" role in supporting long-term land security; may not be as invested in the project. Depending on whether other layers of protection have been added (easement, for example), the land itself may not be as well-protected for the long-term. This could reduce attractiveness to some funders. Smallest community of funders/supporters Little to no experience in real estate and land ownership, management
	<p>Agrian Trust would set up a 501(c)(2) "Agrian Commons" (AC) organization specific to Lewiston Auburn area to hold land and agrian property.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The "L-A Agrian Commons" would require participation from SBCA and other community stakeholders in "L-A" region, with bylaws and incorporation and Board. SBCA would hold a 99-year "equity building lease" that secures its use of the land. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SBCA ownership/use of land and lease conveyance out to members/farmers Any buildings on the land could be either owned separately by SBCA or SBCA farmers ("ground lease"), or owned by the AC and leased and/or rented to SBCA. An agricultural easement for the land could be held by Maine Farmland Trust or a similar organization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Agrian Trust is a national organization that has built a strong network of allies across the country, has a diverse, experienced, and dedicated team that brings the capacity to carry out the roles needed. Agrian Trust brings legal, networking, learning, collaborating, and funding connections and resources to the process. Agrian Trust has a stated commitment to justice and equity in its work, has a diverse team, and has worked with and is developing other "Agrian Commons" with individuals and communities who are excluded from land, which may resonate with the values and experiences of SBCA. The Agrian Commons model requires the leaseholder (SBCA) to participate in the governance and board and key decisions around the management of the land-holding ACT organization. This is not a traditional "landlord" relationship The Agrian Commons model has been developed over time in collaboration with many experienced and thoughtful people and organizations around the U.S. and partners and allies internationally The AC model is flexible with regards to whether SBCA would own the buildings and other infrastructure. If it seems better for SBCA not to own these things (but to have a long-term lease instead), this structure would allow for this. Other developing ACs in MN (with Main Street Project that is also a New American Incubator farm program) and in MN and central Appalachia (with existing community land trusts local to each place and general agriculture training/incubator farm programs) all create potentials and opportunities to collaborate, learn, and work collectively 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Agrian Commons model is new has not yet been implemented on-the-ground (though a number of ACs are in the works across the country). Though careful conceptual work has gone into the structure, it is still experimental in terms of its implementation in practice. The AC, by law, must be controlled by a 501(c)(3) organization. In this case, the organization would be Agrian Trust. Challenges could arise (or not) from having a national organization as the controller of the local land-owning entity. The governance of the AC would call for one or more representatives from SBCA to participate on the 501(c)(2) Board of Directors. This would be an added responsibility for SBCA to attend to.
Agrian Commons 501(c)(2), controlled by Agrian Trust, as land owner; SBCA holds long-term lease	<p>This is similar to #2 above, except that the "Agrian Commons" organization is jointly controlled by more than one 501(c)(3) organization, with all named in bylaws and have designated roles, responsibilities and board representation.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SBCA ownership/use of land and lease conveyance out to members/farmers Any buildings on the land could be either owned separately by SBCA or SBCA farmers ("ground lease"), or owned by the AC and leased and/or rented to SBCA. An agricultural easement for the land could be held by Maine Farmland Trust or a similar organization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See #2 strengths above; plus... Adding other (more local) organizations to the group that controls the 501(c)(2) Agrian Commons organization could create more direct accountability between the entities, and more responsiveness on the part of the controlling group(s) to local needs. Agrian Commons is an entity held and governed by SBCA and other L-A community stakeholders. Adding more organizations to the AC oversight may also create a more secure long-term structure of support for SBCA's work, with more organizations directly invested in SBCA's success. Other developing ACs in MN (with Main Street Project is also a New American Incubator farm program) and in MN and central Appalachia (with existing community land trusts local to each place and general agriculture training/incubator farm programs) all create potentials and opportunities to collaborate, learn, and work collectively 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> See #2 challenges above, plus... Adding more organizations to the governance might make things more complicated and demand more work from everyone around negotiating the various relationships. The set-up of this joint-ownership structure is quite complex and has not yet been tried. It is more experimental, and has less groundwork behind it to date, than the simpler #2 Agrian Commons model above.
Land in Common community land trust as land owner; SBCA holds long-term lease	<p>Land in Common, with support from allies, would acquire the land and SBCA would hold a 99-year "ground lease" to secure its tenure. SBCA members would become members of Land in Common, and could participate in its governance. All buildings and other improvements on the land would be owned by SBCA or SBCA-associated farmers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An agricultural easement for the land could be held by Maine Farmland Trust or a similar organization Lease options to SBCA and farmers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Land in Common (LC) is a Maine-based organization (rooted in Androscoggin County) with a growing local/regional membership and a growing local/regional network of allies and supporters. LC has a stated commitment to racial and economic justice in all of its work, which may resonate with the values and experiences of SBCA. LC's structure is set up to enable leaseholders to participate directly in the organization's governance and development. LC is a democratic, member-run organization, and all leaseholders are members (along with people from the wider community who support the organization's work). The Board of Directors is elected from the membership. LC's structure draws from a long tradition of community land trust organizations, and a deep pool of knowledge exists to support its long-term success. LC has 10 years of experience managing its current property (250 acres) in Greene. LC has developed a grassroots community financing structure (used in the purchase of its Greene land) that could be modified to enable Sharia-compliant loans for land purchase. (Note: LC is happy to share this structure regardless of which ownership option is chosen). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LC is a small organization with currently limited staff capacity. While it is in the midst of fundraising to grow this capacity, it currently employs one half-time staff person. LC's fundraising networks are not yet well developed, and it would need significant support from other allies to help raise money for SBCA land acquisition. LC's governance process may (though this could be an open conversation) ask a bit more of any SBCA member or staff serving on its Board of Directors in comparison to the Agrian Commons model, since this would involve direct participation in the governance of the whole statewide organization (as opposed to a locally-focused AC group). (Note that this could also be seen as a strength as well, depending on perspective)



APPENDIX H: PROJECT SUMMARY

Overview

The Somali Bantu Community Association (SBCA) is an organization run by, and for, the Somali Bantu community of Lewiston-Auburn. SBCA's largest program, Liberation Farms, provides community members with access to resources for culturally appropriate and sustainable food production. The program has seen incredible growth, expanding from 26 to over 200 participants in just six years. This is a testament to the ambition of the Bantu to grow their own food and to the program's community-responsive model.

Over the past six years, the SBCA has realized land security is essential to providing the community with reliable space for cultural gatherings, secure food production, and the growth of farm enterprises. Since 2014, the SBCA's Liberation Farms Program has farmed at six different locations, often having to operate on multiple, disconnected sites. The farm's core operation has had to move multiple times, with the landowner for one of the current sites terminating the organization's lease in order to sell the property's topsoil.

Losing land, and the threat of land loss inherent to short-term leasing is a significant threat to food security for the 180+ families who grow on these parcels every season. Moving farm operations takes considerable staff time and organizational resources, compromising the functionality of this small, grassroots organization. Additionally, for a community that has been displaced from their homeland due to violence and discrimination, the instability related to leaving a farm site can be retraumatizing.

SBCA needs land security to ensure that members of the Somali Bantu community have reliable space for community gatherings, food production, and the development of farm enterprises. The Somali Bantu are a farming people and possess generations of agricultural knowledge, which is critical to pass on to future generations. Meaningful, sustained reconnection with the land is essential to the survival of their cultural heritage. Long-term lease tenure would mean:

- Food security – Secure land access will support the community's ability to grow culturally appropriate vegetables and grains (especially African flint corn for drying and meal), as well as producing halal meats, such as goat and chicken.
- Healthy land management – With control of 107 acres at the Hilliard farm secured via a 99-year, rolling lease, this farming community can plan for and invest in sustainable agriculture, including soil fertility, which requires a comprehensive plan implemented over the course of several growing seasons.



APPENDIX H: (CONT)

- Economic security – Production farmers can expand to meet growing market opportunities through both the ability to produce on more acreage, as well as construct infrastructure that will enable a scale-up to larger markets such as a permanent wash station, sufficient irrigation infrastructure (wells, rainwater catchment, etc.), on-site cold storage, additional high tunnels, a greenhouse for seedling production, as well as space for cleaning, drying and storage of flint corn, to name a few immediate needs.
- Community Building – Beyond supporting the farming program, which is just one of the SBCA's programs, this lease will ensure a safe, affordable way for the Bantu people to hold gatherings, cultural events, access green space, and get exercise in culturally appropriate ways.
- Cultural preservation – The community will experience security and peace of mind, knowing that they have the forum to celebrate and pass down cultural traditions and knowledge around farming and agriculture, which in turn will maintain access to foods grown chemical-free with traditional growing practices.
- Healing – The community the SBCA serves will have a place where people can enjoy the outdoors on their own cultural terms, to heal collectively, and stop the continuing cycle of retraumatization that results from land displacement.

Further, this model shifts the paradigms of land access to a more equitable model that centers justice, while simultaneously eliminating significant barriers faced by disadvantaged communities like this one.

“For the last 30 years we have been refugees, moving through different towns in Somalia, and living in refugee camps in neighboring Kenya. For 30 years we have been looking for a place we can call home. Home in our community means a place that is safe and secure, where we can farm freely and where we can exercise our cultural traditions. Getting this property will check all the boxes and for the first time we have a place we call home.”

“Our vision for the land is grounded in our successes to date and by the demonstrated needs within our community. In the first three years following the land acquisition, Liberation Farms could expand from 30 acres of corn and vegetables to 50 acres and from 2 acres of goat pasture to more than 10 acres. The land can support the expansion of our most culturally significant crop, flint corn. We carried flint corn seeds with us to the United States because we know this staple crop is what has sustained us for generations—eaten fresh after the harvest, and dried and ground through the winter. The growing season in Maine is short, but we have our corn all year round. The ability to grow more flint corn, for which this property offers significant viable acreage, is particularly exciting. The land includes several buildings that can be used to dry, store, and process flint corn; house our goats for a community halal meat source; and enable a much needed expansion for SBCA's other programming, especially our Kasheek youth program. The location is ideally suited for



APPENDIX H: (CONT)

a farmstand and is only 20 minutes from the center of Lewiston, where many community members live so it is very accessible. For all these reasons and more, this is perhaps the most meaningful opportunity our community has had to support and uplift our people.”

- Muhidin Libah, Co-founder and Executive Director of the Somali Bantu Community Association.

This Somali Bantu community is descended from people who were enslaved in Somalia during the 19th century before escaping to freedom in the Jubba Valley, where they formed independent farming communities. During Somalia’s civil war, many Bantu, facing violence, evacuated to refugee camps in Kenya. In 1999 the U.S. government began resettling Somali Bantu refugees around the country. In the early 2000s, Somali Bantu people began arriving in Lewiston, Maine, where they have become part of the cities’ economic and cultural revitalization

The Lewiston community experiences some of the highest poverty rates in the nation. The Somali Bantu, as a Black and predominantly Muslim community, face the additional oppression of institutional racism and religious discrimination. This prevents members of the Bantu community from equitably accessing resources to address food insecurity and its root cause—poverty. Food insecurity rates for Black Mainers born in the US to US-born parents is a disproportionately high rate of 27.6 percent. This doubles to 51.6 percent for Black Mainers who are first or second generation immigrants. Furthermore, “Farmers from socially disadvantaged groups – African-American, Latinx, Native American, women, immigrants, LGBTQ+ – face an even longer list of barriers, including structural socio-economic inequalities and a history of discrimination in credit markets, state and federal farm programs, and real estate.”³¹ This is the context in which the Somali Bantu Community Association (founded in 2005) and its Liberation Farms program (founded 2014) was created and has operated for the past six years.

Intentions

The [Little Jubba Central Maine Agrarian Commons](#) (LJCMAC) intends to purchase the 107+/- acre farm in Wales, Maine. The LJCMAC, a 501c2 land-holding entity, was recently founded through a partnership between [Agrarian Trust](#) and the [Somali Bantu Community Association](#) of Maine, and will create expanded land access opportunities for the SBCA’s [Liberation Farms](#) program.

The LJCMAC is a self-funded entity that holds land equity, conveys secure and affordable lease tenure, and collects lease and rent revenue while also supporting a community-centered farm envisioned by SBCA. The LJCMAC will lease the farm to the SBCA through a rolling 99-year equitable and affordable lease. Land security will ensure food security for the more than 180 families who participate in the Liberation Farms program and more who want to farm next season. Some in the program also practice Iskashito farming, a traditional Somali method of cooperative growing where

³¹ <https://www.dataforprogress.org/memos/land-access-for-beginning-disadvantaged-farmers>

APPENDIX H: (CONT)

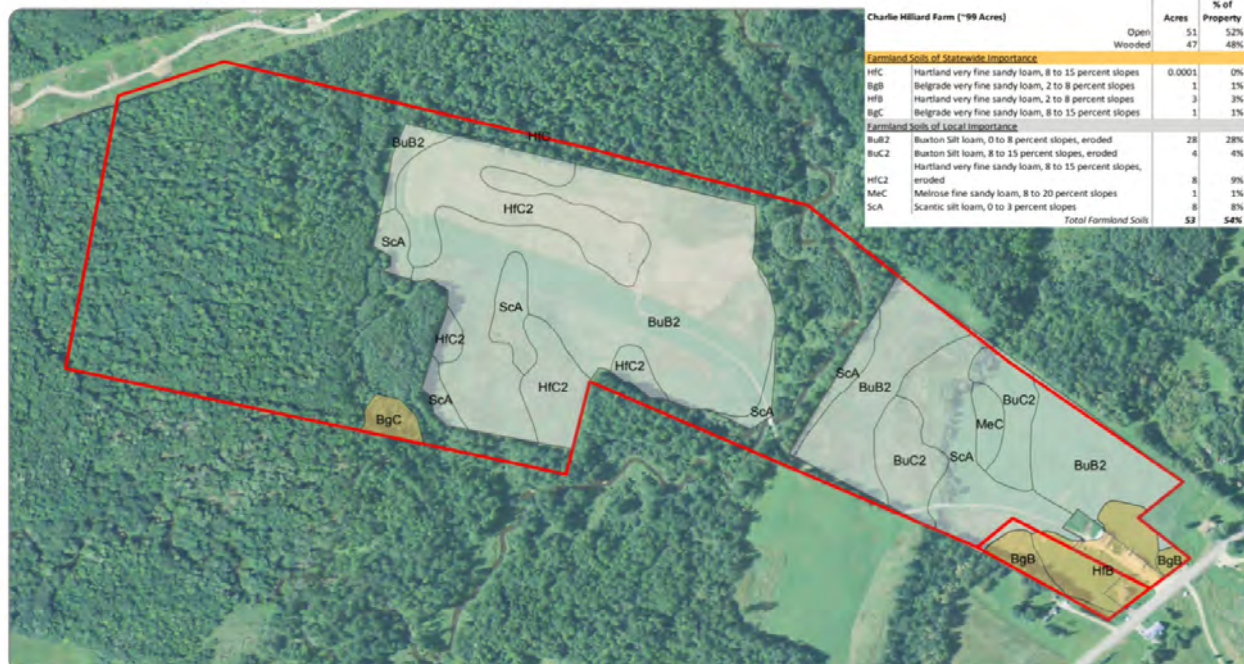
farmers work together on one piece of land and equitably share the profits of their combined labor and efforts. These farmers generate income by selling their produce to schools, food pantries, organizations, food producers and at nearby farmers markets.

The land, agricultural infrastructure, and ecosystem endowments will sustain food production, regenerative land stewardship, and viable farm management for the benefit of soil fertility, biodiversity, carbon sequestration, and human and ecosystem health.

Additionally, the partnership will:

- Protect the land with a conservation easement held by Maine Farmland Trust
- Maintain the health and biodiversity of forest land
- Maintain organic, natural, regenerative chemical-free practices
- Support the expansion of SBCA programs, activities, and enterprises
- Create new possibilities for agricultural viability and agrarian community-building on the farm

Wales, Androscoggin County, Maine





APPENDIX H: (CONT)

Funding Requirements Going Forward

Agrarian Trust, in collaboration with partners and in support of Somali Bantu Community Association, is raising capital to:

- **Acquire Hilliard Farm** (\$430,000) \$230,000 needed at purchase
- **Fund Endowments**
 - **Land Stewardship** (\$25,000) soil and ecosystem investment
 - **Building Reserves** (\$60,000) systems and structures maintenance
 - **Carry Cost Reserves** (\$20,000) taxes, insurance, utility, and related
- **Project and Closing Costs** (\$32,000) needed at purchase

Total on or before December 1, 2020 - \$367,000³²

[CLICK HERE TO DONATE](#)

Agrarian Commons Structure:

Agrarian Trust, a national 501c3 agriculture land trust, is creating community-centered land holding commons (501c2 Agrarian Commons) to provide long-term lease tenure for chemical-free, regenerative, diversified agriculture that produces food for the surrounding community. This land holding model creates shared land stewardship through investment in pollinator habitats, soil fertility, ecosystem diversification and protection, farm viability, community food security, and agrarian engagements.

³² See a more detailed breakdown of funding requirements in Attachment A

APPENDIX H: (CONT)



Little Jubba Central Maine Agrarian Commons

Board of Directors:

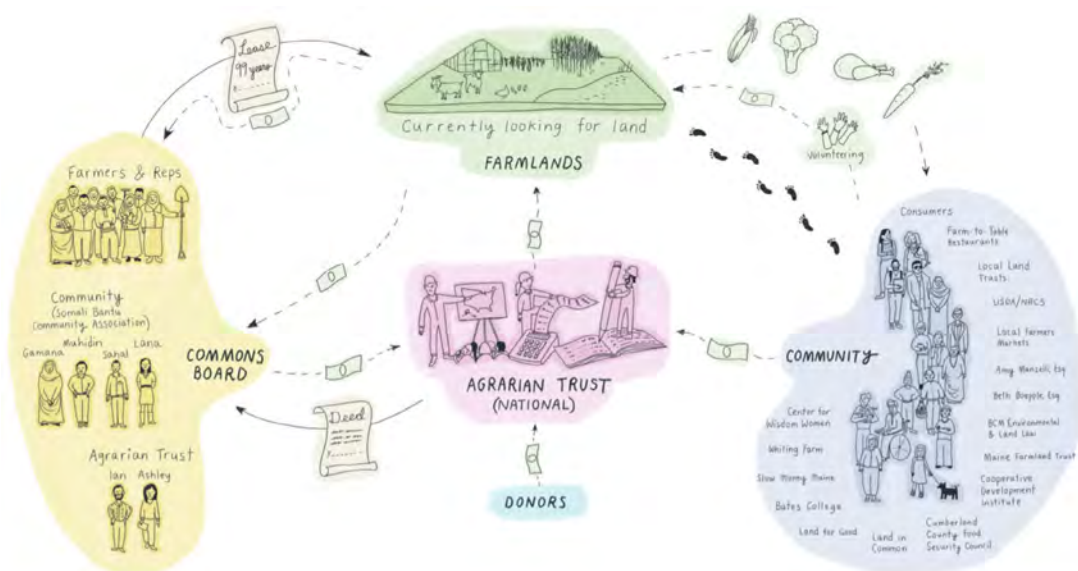
Muhidin Libah - President
 Sahal A. Jimale - Vice President
 Lana Cannon Dracup - Clerk

Ian McSweeney - Treasurer
 Gamana A. Yarow
 Ashley Bahlkow

Members:

Farmers participating in the Liberation Farms Program

Abby Sadaukas - Land for Good	Jesse Saffair - Land in Common
Bonnie Rukin - Slow Money Maine	Ethan Miller - Land in Common
Erica Buswell - Formerly Maine Farmland Trust	Bill Toomey - Maine Farmland Trust
Catherine Besteman - Colby College	Francis Eanes - Bates College
Jim Hanna-Cumberland County Food Security Council	Jason Lilley - UMaine Cooperative Extension
Julia Harper - Good Food Council of Lewiston-Auburn	Jonah Fertig-Burd - Cooperative Development Institute



AGRARIAN TRUST



APPENDIX H: (CONT)



Somali Bantu Community Association Details

Board of Directors:

Mohamed A. Mohamed - President

Ali Bule - Treasurer

Sahal A. Jimale - Board Secretary

Halima Mohamed

Habiba Salat

Bashire Haji

Haji M. Haji

Jowhara Kabir

Jijo Mohamed

[Somali Bantu Community Association](#)'s mission is to provide vital transitional services, advocacy, and programming that empowers members of the refugee community to uphold cultural identity and thrive in their new life here in Lewiston, Maine. The mission of the SBCA's Liberation Farms is to provide new American farmers access to, and culturally-appropriate resources for, the means of sustainable food production for themselves, their families, and their communities.

Learn more about the SBCA's Liberation Farms and other programs [here](#).

APPENDIX H: (CONT)



Agrarian Trust Details

Board, Staff, Collaborators, Contributors, Advisors, and Supporters

[Agrarian Trust Team](#)

[Agrarian Commons
Creation Committee](#)

Vision

Nationally-supported, community-held land and agrarian property that supports diversified sustainable food production, shared ecological stewardship, agrarian community vitality, and the next generation of farmers and ranchers.

Need

The U.S. is in the midst of 400 million acres of farmland changing hands as a generation of farmers and ranchers retire. Next generation farmers struggle with land access, affordability, and tenure and farmers of color own less than 2% of the farmland, while making up over 60% of the farm workers. At this same time, from 2012 to present, small to midsize farms are closing at a rate of 37 per day and almost 30 million acres of farmland has been lost to development, extraction, and speculation.

Mission

The mission of Agrarian Trust is to support land access for the next generation of farmers and ranchers, guided by our [Principles](#) of: Commons, Transparency, Equity for Farmers, Dignity, Opportunity, Affordability, Protected in Perpetuity, Restorative Justice, Diversity, and Food Security all framed within the realities of farmland management in the U.S.





APPENDIX H: (CONT)

[Agrarian Trust Initiatives](#)

Agrarian Commons: a model focused on the structural roots of sustainable and viable agriculture and regenerative food systems. Land ownership, stewardship, and tenure define the equity, viability, and justice within agriculture and food systems. Most of the farmland that people see in their regions is not producing healthy, nutrient-dense, short-supply-chain foods for local and regional needs. Most of that same farmland is not secure or affordable as a long-term asset for local food production.



Agrarian Commons hold equity and authority in the community to manifest decommodifying land, permanent reinvestment in soils, sharing ecological stewardship, returning equity and control of land to local communities, and providing secure, long-term tenure for regenerative agriculture. The 10 Agrarian Commons across the country are developing an interconnected national network of community land trusts to hold farmland for sustainable food production, carbon sequestration, and soil and ecosystem regeneration. Oversight, guidance, and support is provided from the 501c3 Agrarian Trust. The Agrarian Trust and Agrarian Commons model supports and creates accountability for land stewardship and organic/natural/biodynamic chemical-free farming practices. This structure promotes soil health, carbon sequestration, water protection, habitat diversity, and regenerative agricultural practices across all of the diverse farms and land that make up the Agrarian Commons.

Agrarian Legal Support: a network and learning community of attorneys, landowners, farmers, land-based organizations, and service providers dedicated to supporting/cultivating/nurturing the next generation of sustainable farmers and ranchers, and to advance our collective mission of healing land and communities through equitable land tenure and ownership, reparative justice, and regenerative agriculture.



FaithLands: a national movement focused on connecting, inspiring, and guiding faith communities to use their land in ways that promote ecological and human health, support local food and farming, enact reparative justice, strengthen communities, and benefit their communities and the Earth. FaithLands recent [articles](#).



Our Land Symposium: a series of talks, exhibits, and events that aim to advance the broadening discourse on land commons and farmland futures. View [ourland.tv](#) and symposiums [2014](#) and [2016](#).



Stay Informed

[Land News Blog](#)

[Agrarian Commons media](#)

[Agrarian Commons Newsletter](#)



ATTACHMENT A - FUNDING REQUIREMENTS

Immediate Funding Requirements

Acquisition details	Due Date	Amount
Deposit - 1	June 15, 2020	\$5,000
Deposit - 2	August 1, 2020	\$30,000
Date of Purchase	December 1, 2020	\$195,000
<u>Acquisition Total at purchase</u>		<u>\$230,000</u>
Project and Closing costs		\$32,000
Farm Endowment and Reserves		\$105,000

Total on or before December 1, 2020 - \$367,000

\$282,000 needed in philanthropic funds and \$85,000 can be in multi-year philanthropic pledges

Land Transfer Budget

Expense	Amount
Acquisition	\$430,000
Recording fees / real estate transfer tax	\$4,000
Appraisals	\$3,500
Surveys	\$10,000
Environmental assessment	\$3,000
Title review and insurance	\$2,500
Field work and baseline report	\$3,000
Project management	\$10,000
Legal	\$8,000
Land stewardship endowment	\$25,000
Building endowment	\$60,000
Miscellaneous	\$1,000
Reserves	\$20,000
TOTAL	\$580,000



APPENDIX I: MEDIA COVERAGE

Overview

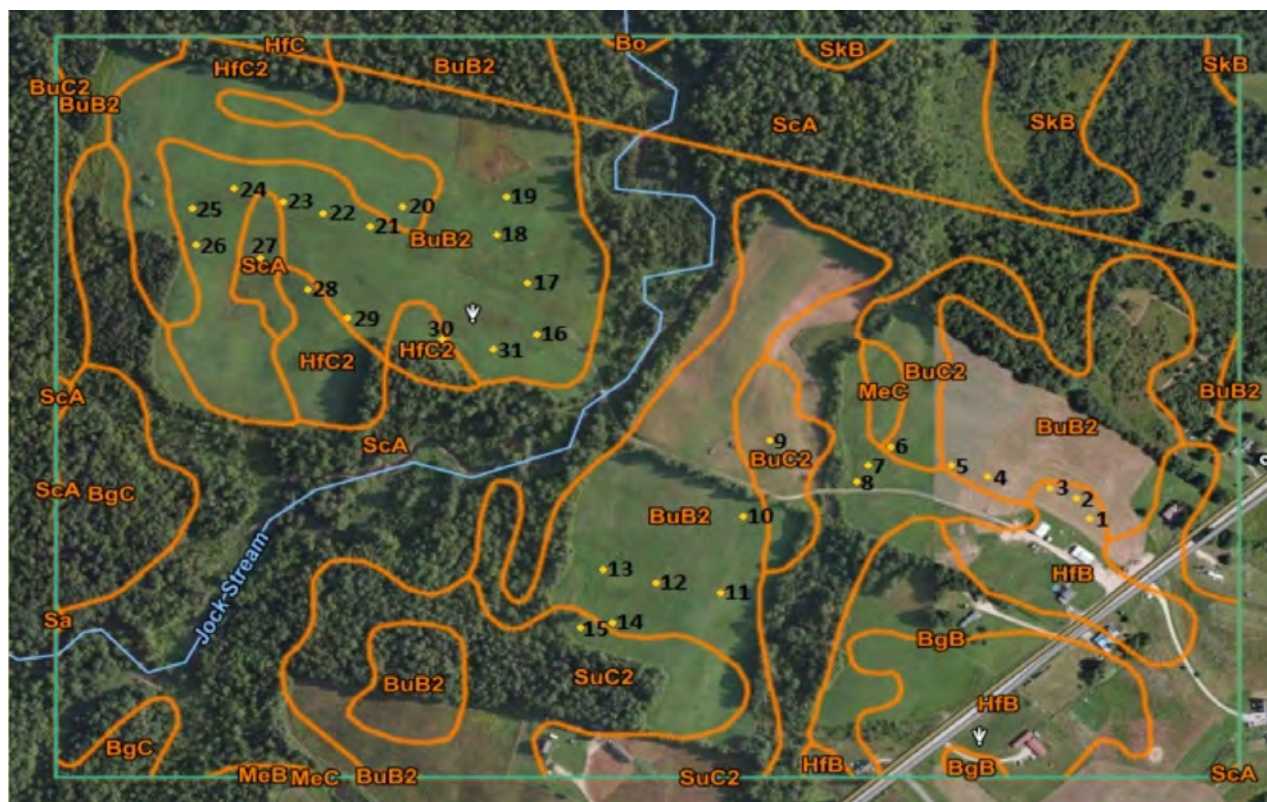
- [“We’re trying to recreate the lives we had: the Somali migrants who became Maine farmers.”](#) by Audrea Lim, The Guardian, February, 25, 2021.
- NPR: [A Community Approach to Farmland](#)
- Maine Monitor: [Farming helps reduce food insecurity among Somali Bantu community in Lewiston-Auburn](#)
- Mainebiz: [New Mainers group raises \\$367K to purchase Androscoggin County farm](#)
- Sun Journal: [Wales land opens world of possibilities for Somali Bantu farmers](#)
- FOX22: [Farmers help Somali Bantu community buy community farm](#)
- WGME (Video): [Somali immigrants find dream farming land in Wales](#)
- Civil Eats: [Could Putting Farmland in the Commons Support Land Justice and Sustainability?](#)
- Downeast magazine: [Shared Soil](#)
- Legal Reader: [The Grain in Maine \(Milk and Veggies Too\)](#)
- America’s Test Kitchen: [The Somali Farmer Rises](#)



APPENDIX J: ADVANCED SOILS ASSESSMENT BY DAVE ROCQUE AND CREATED BY LANA CANNON DRACUP

Notes on Ground Truthing with Dave Roke, Maine State Soil Scientist

The below is a map of the soil types present at the property under contract by the Little Jubba Central Maine Agrarian Commons, in partnership with Agrarian Trust and the Somali Bantu Community Association of Maine, located at 1002 Gardiner Road, Wales, Maine. Accompanying this map are notes taken from the ground truthing, to better inform decision-making about land use and conservation.



Soil Samples:

- Dense hard pan 10" down Can be fixed with subsoiler and continuous adding of organic matter (OM).
- So dry it is hard to auger (taken during drought) Heavy soil with shallow hard pan Granular structure and roots signify a high water table in the spring Good OM.
- More OM, deeper to hard pan at 12".

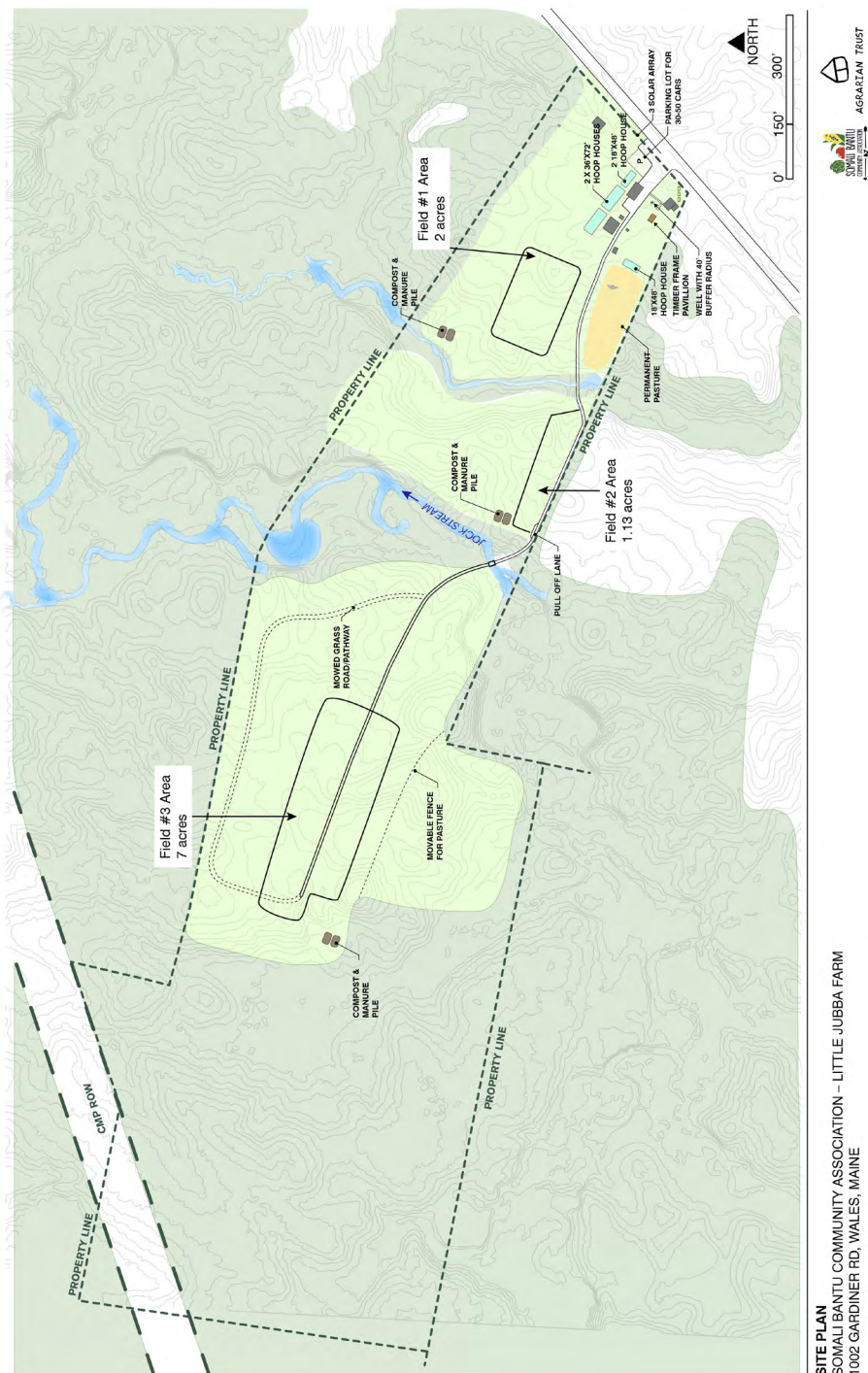


APPENDIX J: (CONT)

- Rain still not penetrating below roots of grass in drought- hard to augerHard pan at 12”.
- Deeper to hard pan at 18”-20”. Starting to be more suitable in the valley of the hills where nutrients wash down and settle.
- 18” to hard pan and lighter soil, has good potential and is a very fine sandy loamWill drain well in spring for working the soil early.
- Hilly - high spots are highly eroded. Leave strip of untilled road or pasture in between hill and cropland to mitigate erosion.
- Rocks lower - soil was flipped at some pointWill be wetter in spring, with deeper hardpan layer and not as much clay present.
- Rocks lower - soil was flipped at some pointWill be wetter in spring, with deeper hardpan layer and not as much clay present.
- Poor soils highly eroded as the land slopes.
- Better soils than sample #10, with hardpan 18” downDubbed “good stuff.”
- Back to eroded soils with 8” hardpan - use this as boundary of cropland.
- Better soils - fine sandy loam and 18” deep hardpan.
- Better soils with 10” deep hardpan.
- Better soils with 10” deep hardpan.
- Would be wet in the spring.
- Nice Hartland soil.
- Wet, use as boundary of cropland fields and border with grass road to prevent erosion.
- Very shallow hardpan and eroded soils.
- “Good stuff” with 12” hardpan.
- Shallow hardpan at base of hill.
- 6” hardpan on hill.
- Lighter and better soils.
- Dense but not wet soils. Use as boundary to cropland.
- Heavier soils with 10” hardpan.
- Very poor soils, dubbed “bad.”
- Wet!
- Poor soils.
- Nicer Hartland soils at bottom of hills with 15” hardpan depth.
- Great soils before hill starts with 18” hardpan depth.
- Wet, use as border to cropland.
- Nice sandy loam.



APPENDIX K: SITE PLAN BY GAVIN ZEITZ





APPENDIX L: FUNDING AND FINANCING OPTIONS FOR BLACK, INDIGENOUS, AND PEOPLE OF COLOR FARMERS IN MAINE BY JONAH FERTIG-BURD

Raising funds for your farm can be challenging but fortunately, there are various options. There are different funding and financing options for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) farmers in Maine to purchase land and develop infrastructure. Some of these funding and financing options were used by the Somali Bantu Community Association and New Roots Cooperative Farm in the purchase of their farmland and the development of their infrastructure.

Financing:

The following organizations provide loans to for-profit and cooperative businesses and nonprofit organizations.

- **Coastal Enterprises Inc:** provides loans, including Sharia-compliant loans, for farms and food businesses, www.ceimaine.org
- **Cooperative Fund of the Northeast:** provides loans for cooperatives and nonprofits and will do Sharia-compliant loans, www.cooperativefund.org
- **Farm Credit East:** provides loans to farmers in the Northeast, www.farmcrediteast.com
- **Black Farmers Fund:** a new Black-led fund offering loans and grants to Black-owned farms, they are exploring expanding into Maine, www.blackfarmerfund.org
- **Indus Fund:** micro-loan fund for immigrant businesses in Maine, www.theindusfund.com
- **Fair Food Fund:** investments, and loans for food businesses, fairfoodnetwork.org/projects/fair-food-fund/
- **Sewall Foundation:** flexible loans, and investments for values-aligned businesses and nonprofits, www.sewallfoundation.org
- **Sandy River Charitable Foundation:** offers some loans and investments for values-aligned businesses and nonprofits, www.srcfoundation.org
- **Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association Loan Fund:** for certified organic farmers, www.mofga.org/organic-farmer-loan-fund
- **Maine Organic Lenders:** provide flexible loans to organic farmers, www.maineorganiclenders.org
- **Four Directions Development Corporation:** provides financing for Wabanaki-led businesses, fourdirectionsmaine.org



APPENDIX L: (CONT)

Other Lenders: These lenders aren't specifically involved in farm financing, but may be a resource for different aspects of business or housing financing: Community Concepts, MaineStream Finance, Bangor Savings Bank, Norway Savings Bank, Androscoggin Savings Bank, Community Credit Union, Eastern Maine Development Corporation, Genesis Fund

Funding

The following sources of funding do not need to be repaid and can be used for different aspects of farm development.

Foundations

Each foundation will have different requirements and priorities. Foundations can not make grants directly to for-profit businesses but sometimes will make a grant to a nonprofit that fiscally sponsors a for-profit business or collaborates with that for-profit business on a specific project. Fiscal sponsorship involves building a relationship with a nonprofit organization that receives the funding and manages a grant or donation. You can visit the website of each foundation to learn more about their grant programs and reach out to the foundation to see if your farm may be eligible for a grant.

- Sewall Foundation: www.sewallfoundation.org
- Maine Community Foundation: www.mainecef.org
- Quimby Family Foundation: www.quimbyfamilyfoundation.org
- Sandy River Charitable Foundation: www.srcfoundation.org
- Henry P. Kendall Foundation: www.kendall.org
- Point 32 Health Foundation: point32healthfoundation.org

Donations

- **Crowd-Sourced Funding:** This method of fundraising generally involves a web-based platform that enables individuals to make donations. There are now many different platforms out there and they have different fees and options. Most of these platforms take a credit card processing fee (2-3% of the total money raised) and a platform fee (another 2-5%), although some platforms don't take a platform fee or those fees can be passed onto the donor. While this funding can raise a significant amount of money it is important for there to be a clear campaign with a large network of supporters in order for this to be successful.
- **Large Donations:** Sometimes individuals are able to provide larger donations (over \$1000) to farms. Generally, these donations are made through a nonprofit organization that fiscally sponsors the farm.



APPENDIX L: (CONT)

Fundraising events: Fundraising events like farm dinners or farm concerts can be another option for farms to raise money and can help kick-off

Other Funders:

Maine Technology Institute: supports innovation in different sectors of Maine's economy through grants and loans, www.mainetechnology.org

Maine Farmland Trust: They can support farmers with agricultural easements and through other loan and grant programs.

Good Shepherd Food Bank: They have a few grant programs that they have launched that have supported farmers, www.gsfb.org

Business Donations: Sometimes businesses will donate to different projects, this could include other farms donating old equipment or money, hardware stores donating building supplies or other businesses donating their time or money. Generally, these donations would be going to a nonprofit and not a forprofit business.

State and Federal Resources

Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (DACF)

www.maine.gov/dacf/about/grants/index.shtml

DACF provides different grants and loans that support farmland access and agricultural marketing.

United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)

The USDA has many different funding programs that can support farmers. Some of these programs require a nonprofit to be the lead applicant and some of these programs go directly to farmers. These grant programs change year to year, regarding what money is available, the requirements, and what new grants may be available. USDA grants can provide a lot of money, but they can be very difficult to write, are highly competitive, can be challenging to manage and some of them require matching funds and many of them operate on a reimbursement basis (so you need to spend the money first and get reimbursed on a monthly or quarterly basis). The best option for a farmer that is interested in pursuing USDA grants is to work with someone or an organization that has experience with these grants who can help with writing and managing these grants.



APPENDIX L: (CONT)

There are different departments of the USDA so the following grants are organized based on the department that oversees the grant program.

USDA Rural Development

<https://www.rd.usda.gov/>

Rural Development provides a range of different grants and loans. One that is particularly targeted at farmers is the Value Added Producer Grant. The Socially Disadvantaged Groups grant goes to nonprofits that support BIPOC and women groups including cooperatives.

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Services

www.nrcs.usda.gov

The USDA Natural Resource Conservation Services offers various programs that support farmers in conducting ecological and conservation practices on their farms. The funding that is available changes every year but in the past farmers have used these funds to get hoopouses, wells, irrigation systems, forest management plans, climate-friendly practices.

USDA Agricultural Marketing Services

www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants

Agricultural Marketing Services has a range of different grant programs that help promote local foods, farmers' markets, dairy, and more.

USDA Northeast SARE

northeast.sare.org/Grants/

SARE provides a range of supports for farmers to do applied research on their farms while also providing technical assistance to farmers.