



Serving Tioga County Farms, Families & Youth for 100+ Years

Cornell Cooperative Extension Tioga County



Requests for Applications for the Hilltop Community Farm Incubator Program — Livestock

Last year, CCE Tioga purchased a 107-acre farm in Candor, NY and officially named it Hilltop Community Farm. One of the primary goals of Hilltop Community Farm (HCF) is to serve as a farm incubator for beginning farmers and as a model for regenerative agriculture techniques and systems. We envision a diverse set of aspiring farmers working the land using regenerative techniques; learning from on-site mentors as well as experienced local farmers, Cornell staff and researchers, and from each other in a mutually beneficial system.

HCF Plan for the Livestock Farmers

Land tenure: 3 years

We will work with you from the start to build your farm business, including marketing your products, so that in three years you can take your business to your own farm or lease acreage from a local farmer.

Land acreage size: 9 -11 acres

Livestock: We seek farmers who will raise small ruminant livestock (sheep/goats) with possibility for chickens/ducks as well. The suggested livestock stocking is up to 10 bred ewes/does for each plot, assuming that each ewe/doe has two lambs/kids to raise. If you wish to raise another species of livestock, we are open to that but it will have to fit with our fencing and plot size. All animals shall be primarily grass fed (a small amount of organic grain is allowed if you wish) and be raised on a rotational grazing system that maximizes animal health and promotes soil and vegetation health.

The expectation is that you will strive to follow organic principles, although HCF will allow the judicious use of medications to preserve the health of your animals. You should also plan on raising your animals according to the standards of animal welfare set by *A Greener World*.

HCF will provide:

1. 9—11 acres of pasture/grazing land for the spring through fall. Plot size is based on availability

and planned herd/flock size. There will be a stranded electric perimeter fence for your plot.

2. Water from frost free hydrants that can be transported to grazing plot using the tractor or riding lawn mower and cart. When the ground is snow free, you can fill up our 35-gallon tank with water, drive it to your plot and gravity feed the water into your stock tank. There will be a small fee (\$10/hour) for using the tractor and no fee for using the lawn mower and cart. Other options for watering your animals (rain catchment, etc.) are fine as well.
 3. For the winter (non-grazing) season, you have the option of keeping your animals in our barn or having them outside in a winter paddock. You may work with the other livestock farmers to share the winter chores, if you wish.
 4. CCE Tioga is applying for a grant to purchase a small ruminant livestock handling system. As incubator farmers, you will have access to the handling system and a small trailer to transport your animals (holds up to 5 small animals).
 5. Technical assistance with the raising and marketing of your livestock, both from the CCE Tioga staff as well as the sheep/goat/poultry experts at Cornell University, Cornell Small Farms, and other Cornell Cooperative Extension staff throughout the state. You will also have connections with the Tioga County Agriculture Resource Group.
 6. We have completed a Cornell Soil Health Assessment of your plot to serve as a baseline for soil health. We will work with you to improve the health of the soil and will pay farmers at the end of their tenure for improvements to the health of your grazing plot's soil.
 7. Hilltop Community Farm is located within the service area of the Cornell Ambulatory and Production Medicine vets and vet students. Their services are expert and provided at a reasonable cost to you.
 8. Recordkeeping is an important part of farming, and the staff at CCE Tioga will help you set up a recordkeeping system for your farm venture.
 9. As part of your farm incubator training, you will be expected to learn or take courses about how to make a business plan and work with a mentor to create a strong business plan. You will be expected to take two online courses from Cornell Small Farms this winter: *Plan Your Farm* and *BF 102 Exploring Markets and Profits*. *Plan Your Farm* is self-paced and *BF 102* begins January 12th and ends on February 16th. Our grant will cover the cost of these courses.
 10. The staff at CCE Tioga will provide technical assistance for you in finding land to lease or purchase at the end of your incubator tenure. CCE Tioga is a regional navigator for the *Farmland for a New Generation* and will help connect you to resources to access land.
1. CCE Tioga will provide the beginning farmer a comprehensive soil test report from Cornell's Soil Health Laboratory that will serve as a baseline for soil health for your grazing plot.
 2. CCE Tioga staff will assist you in applying for a microloan to finance your livestock infrastructure (Kiva loan, FSA, etc.)

The beginning farmer is responsible for:

- a. You must commit to at least 10 hours per week, year round, to care for your livestock. Animal welfare standards state that you must inspect your animals at least once per day and treat sick animals as soon as is reasonable. We will expect that you will be at the farm every day to check on, and manage, your animals. During the growing season, you should commit to rotating your livestock to ensure healthy pastures with reduced parasite load. Livestock should have access to water, minerals, and shade at all times. During the winter, you may work with other livestock farmers to share the load of caring for your animals.
- b. Cost of plot will be \$100 for the first year, increasing \$100 each year.
- c. You must supply your animals. We will connect you to livestock breeders throughout the area. We will help you to apply for a micro-loan to purchase the animals.
- d. Providing all portable fencing, water tanks, mineral feeders, and moveable shelters. You can take everything you purchase with you when your tenure wraps up.
- e. It is our hope that the perimeter fence will mean you will have much reduced predator pressure, and not need the services of a guardian animal.
- f. All costs related to the care of the livestock (hay, feed, straw, shearing, vet bills, marketing costs) will be the responsibility of the beginning farmer. We have some small square bales of hay you can purchase, or we can help connect you to hay suppliers in the area.
- g. You will be expected to follow biosecurity measures to ensure the health of your flock/herd as well as for the other animals on the farm.
- h. We expect the incubator farmers to respect that their farm enterprise has been partially subsidized by very low cost land access, and commit to seeking marketing channels that do not directly reduce or undercut the ability of our local farmers to sell their products. That is, we expect you to charge the “going rate” for your products even though your cost of production may be lower as you will benefit from the land access and infrastructure at Hilltop Community Farm for a very low fee.
- i. We expect the incubator farmers to attend all-farm meetings and trainings (held monthly) and to work to keep your plot and area clean and presentable.
- j. Hilltop Community Farm gives tours frequently. Your animals will be part of the tour, so folks will have the opportunity to see your animals. We will work together to ensure biosecurity for your flock or herd. You will be expected to be an ambassador for the farm and your livestock.
- k. Hilltop Community Farm and CCE Tioga is not responsible for the loss of one or more of your animals due to illness, weather events, or predator attack.