

# Farm Notes

CSA Newsletter

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Potomac Vegetable Farms  
www.potomacvegetablefarms.com

## The Farm Bill Matters to All of Us

By Megan Seldon

With a projected budget of over 500 billion dollars, the 2018 Farm Bill affects all aspects of producing and eating food in America. Originally passed as part of FDR's New Deal program during the Great Depression, it was intended to help farmers maintain America's food supply through commodifying certain crops. With funding primarily going to Supplemental Nutrition programs, today's Farm Bill is a comprehensive bill that still incentivizes crops like corn, soybeans, wheat, sugar, and dairy as well as affects conservation efforts, exports, credit for farmers, public school food, rural development, research, energy use, and so much more.

The Farm Bill is usually renegotiated and renewed every five years. The 2014 Farm Bill will expire at the end of September. The last Farm Bill was delayed by two years leaving programs

such as beginner farmer training, organic research, and rural development programs unfunded during that time. Programs that will be affected this year include the 2501 program, an equity building initiative that helps socially disadvantaged and veteran farmers, as well as FINI and LAMP, food initiatives that help farmers get healthy food to various local outlets such as schools and hospitals. The House and Senate have each passed a proposed bill for this year's Farm Bill, and although the bills vary greatly, it is now up to the Committee on Agriculture to pass a bill by the end of September.

It can be hard to see where the Farm Bill, so heavily influenced by big agribusinesses, directly affects Potomac Vegetable Farms. But, the Farm Bill promotes sustainable agriculture, provides funding for assistance programs such as extension agents that research and educate on increasing food production, pest issues, security, and quality. It helps small scale farmers get start up loans and has enabled us to connect with many people in need of cheaper, healthier options through programs such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentives (FINI). As a consumer, the Farm Bill affects your everyday life. SNAP feeds many people unable to work primarily because they are children or elderly. It has helped raise over 4 million people out of poverty and lowers the risk of heart disease and diabetes in disadvantaged communities.

Only about 2% of Americans are farmers and the number is declining. Even fewer people dictate the choices that affect the way America's farmland, over 50% of American land, is maintained. The Farm Bill ensures which crops are grown and funds the conservation efforts that helps maintain soil conditions and clean water that ultimately feeds you. In the coming weeks, we are asking you to help stand with your local farmers in support of the Farm Bill.

Please sign our petition for the proper and continued funding of SNAP, LAMP, FINI, and 2501 at markets or write a free postcard for us to deliver that lets our representatives and the Agricultural Committee know you value small farmers and not just big agribusiness.



*PVF sells at Crossroads Farmers Market which serves a diverse immigrant population. The market is a leader in providing healthy food for people who need assistance.*

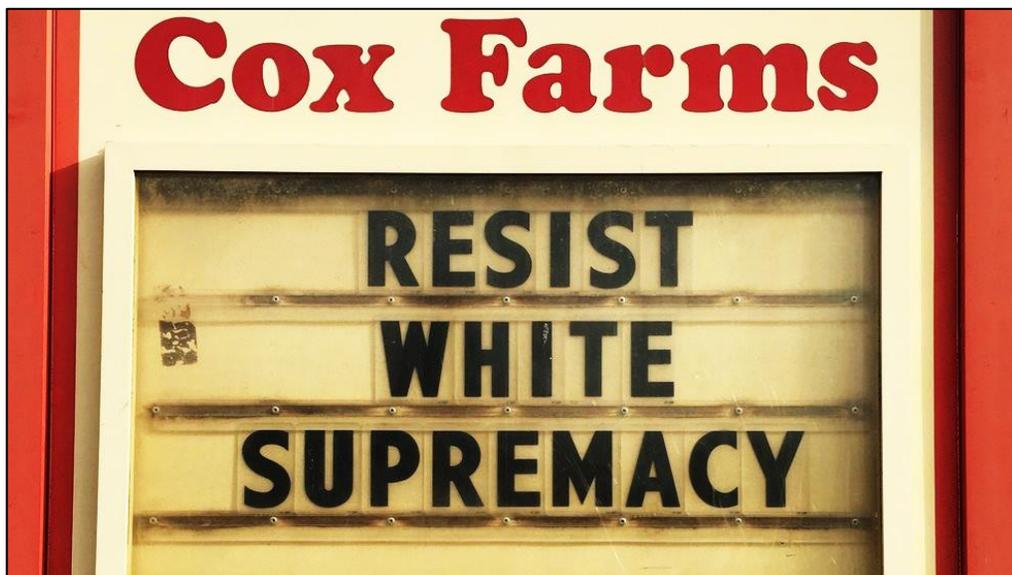
## "Rise and Resist" – Said the Farmers

By Hana Newcomb

From time to time Cox Farms (in Centreville) has been in the news because they made some political statement on their farm, and people reacted. Last February there was an article in the Washington Post after they posted "Rise and Resist" on their sign by the side of the road. This got a big response and it made them think harder about being more specific so people would understand what they were talking about. They changed it to "Resist White Supremacy." And the Facebook conversation began. It is amazing what people will say. Of course, some people were supportive, and there were also surprisingly nasty responses from people who said they would never shop there again. They had come to the farm with their children for a traditional experience and now they would stay away, and they had some missing-the-point comments to make on the way out.

The family held firm. Aaron, an articulate graduate of Smith College, thank you very much, can hold her own on Facebook and whatever else. She knows what she thinks and she knows that as white people of privilege, the business has the opportunity to stand in support of others.

Recently Aaron and her partner put a small -- I mean a small, pretty quiet -- sign in the window of their own house that said Black Lives Matter. Their house happens to be in the middle of their farm, and it is their house where they live with their kids. This turned into a huge stink because the local police decided it was a statement directed at them, and they organized a boycott. Good grief. Needless to say, the Coxes left the sign up.



This is where I come in with my own opinion -- OF COURSE a family business has the right and responsibility to speak its mind. Customers are naive to think that principled business owners who have decided to use their sign to speak out are going to back down because a customer says they won't shop there anymore. It's not like the farmers didn't think of that already. And the customers aren't going to convince the farmers that white supremacists are a group that needs lifting up. It boggles the mind, what people are willing to write in public.

A brand-new business that is barely holding on would probably stay quiet. That makes sense too. It is premature to broadcast your opinions when you don't have any social capital yet. But this family has spent 47 years establishing itself in the community as a wholesome destination with all the hokey pretend moments that people love to have at a farm. They could easily be conservative, politically. Perhaps people made the wrong assumption about the politics of that family, since they had such lovely traditional experiences there. I find it completely

appropriate for the farmers to share their views and to engage in conversation, and I also think it is completely fine for people who can't support that to withhold their support.

Because, in fact, every purchase any of us makes is a political act, whether we like it or not. We can't do enough research to find out what all the business owners believe and we can't have too many simultaneous priorities, but sometimes the business decides to speak up and then we can make better choices. From the minute that I learned that Chick Fil-A was actively anti-gay, I decided with great regret to stop buying their delicious milkshakes. It's not such a big sacrifice and I am definitely not giving them another penny.

So, right on, Cox Farms. I see now that we have been tepid in our use of our own farmer voice. For years we have posted political signs in front of our stand (and got some heat for it) during election season. We are not big participants in social media and we are not prepared to be in a virtual conversation. But we have to think about this.

## PVF's 21-Day Racial Equity Challenge

By Julia Metzger-Traber

This past April, as the season kicked off, PVF farmers committed themselves to a 21-day racial equity challenge. Organized by Food Solutions New England, it "is designed to create dedicated time and space to build more effective social justice habits, particularly those dealing with issues of race, power, privilege, and leadership..." and "...to identify ways to dismantle racism and become better leaders for a more just, equitable food system." So, for 21 days, we did not go about business-as-usual. Every day we woke up and looked at the ugly reality of racism in our food system: our markets mostly serve white and wealthy costumers because the food system is set up such that healthy food is a privilege and a luxury; most of the land and farms around here are owned and run by white people, perpetuating the centuries of unequal economic and political power that comes from owning property; dozens of people were enslaved on this very land.

We thought, and felt and talked about our role in this racialized food system. We unpacked our own identities and histories, sharing stories of witnessing, struggling with

and benefitting from racism. When we let it all in--all of the layers of racism enmeshed in the food system—all the ways in which we don't nourish one another and rather deprive so many of nourishment—there was grief. It has been painful acknowledging the violent faces of a system we want to believe in, especially since we all believe so deeply in the work PVF does.

Through opening our hearts to the grief, however, we began to feel more connected and moved toward some hopeful ideas. We want to continue the dialogue, build relationships with people of color-led organizations, create ways to make our food accessible to those who need it, educate ourselves more on race and racism, explore the question of why this is a predominantly white farm, generally shift our perspective to see questions of race and social justice as central to farming and food, and experiment with alternative economic models (like the sliding scale) that make our community more inclusive and our veggies more accessible.

These are just first steps. We'd love to know what your ideas for next steps might be, so please join the conversation. Keep your eyes peeled for more articles on our journey toward racial equity.

## Linking Racial Equity and the Farm Bill

by Samuel Watkins

Pigford vs Glickman was a landmark class action lawsuit filed in 1997 against the USDA by a coalition of black farmers. The allegations were that the USDA treated black farmers unfairly when deciding to allocate loans, provide disaster support, and process previous filings of discrimination from the years of 1981-1996. The case settled in favor of Timothy Pigford, and over \$1 billion was allocated to over 13,300 farmers, which became the largest civil rights settlement to date.

Because some farmers who filed during Pigman I were not heard before the deadline and there was continued racial discrimination from the USDA, the Black Farmers and Agriculturalists Association filed another suit in 2004 for \$20 billion. It was denied. What is referred to as Pigman II came about due to changes in the legislation of the 2008 Farm Bill that allowed more cases to be heard from affected individuals during the original Pigman vs Glickford case who either never had their claims heard or were unable to file before the deadline. Pigman II resulted in another \$1.2 Billion to over 70,000 people.



The justice system cannot undo the civil rights violations that happened, it can only try to reimburse the farmers monetarily. However, so many civil rights violations from our history cannot be made right in court. One cannot buy back what land was lost throughout much of the 20th century.

In many southern states black farmers owned a considerable percentage of the farmland. In Mississippi alone, black farmers held 2/3 of all farm land property. Systematically these farmers were forced to sell their land or become sharecroppers because they weren't afforded the same support from the USDA that white farmers were.

The problem wasn't in the way that the system was set up, but instead in the way individuals chose to operate within a system that was meant to reflect equality. What resulted was a white dominated political landscape where black people still held population majority, because when the black farmer's land was taken away so too was their political power

## The Possibilities That Come With Growing Food and Holding Your Ground

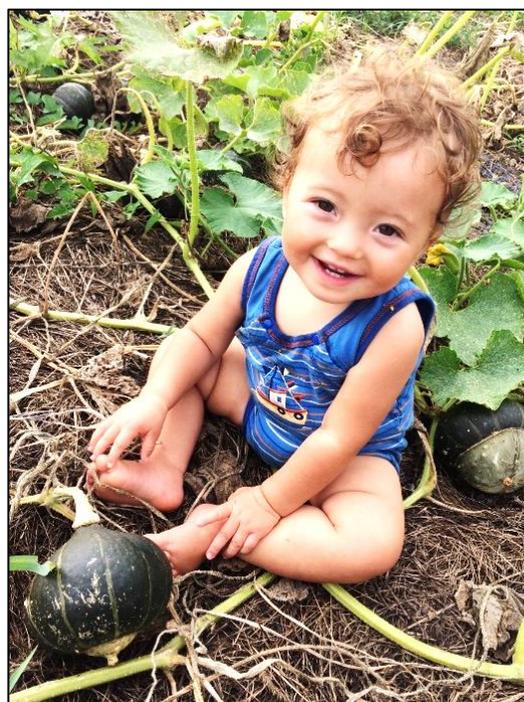
By Stephen Bradford

I have come to feel that there is something deeply political, revolutionary even, intrinsic to the simple act of growing food. This belief has its roots in the landscape of my childhood, on the last family farm in Fairfax County, which I have imagined locked in a stance of resistance to the strip malls and McMansions that were cropping up all across the once agrarian landscape. However, this proposition became somewhat muddled for me through my study of politics and involvement in activism, which revealed a much more complex world in which the farm could be seen as complicit in this system of excess and exploitation. We profit by selling vegetables to many of those who are most invested in the political and economic structures that have threatened the agrarian landscape. In my frustration and confusion, I left my home on the farm to live abroad and work in international human rights.

My work accompanying indigenous farming communities facing violence and displacement from the agents of globalized capitalism may have had a misplaced intention to validate the victim narrative that had fallen apart back home. But what I found upended this lens, and brought me closer once again to an understanding of the transformative potential of cultivating the earth. Rather than giving in to the economic pressure to abandon their land, these communities rose above these existential threats by tapping in to the deep cultural and spiritual traditions that were manifest in their agricultural practices. They understood that we are inseparable from the land we tend and the food we grow, and these communities had a grounded identity from which to resist the ideologies of consumption and individualism. But perhaps equally important, their traditions gave them the economic and political autonomy necessary for their continued flourishing in the face of adversity.

I came back home to Potomac Vegetable Farms, where I have begun to explore the question “how might this farm cultivate its potential as a place of peace, healing and transformation on an individual, communal and societal level?” that framed my recently completed MA thesis in peace and conflict.

Potomac Vegetable Farms may be the last remaining farm in Fairfax County, but it has perhaps more meaningfully been the first, in a new wave of small farms and urban gardens which have challenged the prevailing economic logic and dared to offer a new vision of resilient community and sustainable interdependence. I now believe deeply in the potential of a new, intersectional, agrarian movement to cultivate a shift in our relationship to economy, land and politics.



Farm-based liberation: Shaia helps the farm to cultivate its potential as a place of peace, healing, and transformation.

## Cooking at Home – A few words from a CSA Member

by Jean Petty

I have been introduced to all sorts of new vegetables as a CSA member. The latest new vegetable is delicata squash. Like butternut squash, it is creamy and sweet when it is baked with a little olive oil, but unlike butternut, delicata squash does not have to be peeled. Just slice this pretty striped squash in half lengthwise, scoop out the seeds, and then cut into slices, discarding the squash top and bottom. Drizzle the slices with olive oil and a little salt and bake in a 425-degree oven for about 20 minutes, turning every 7 to 10 minutes with a spatula. Or, as I did this past Wednesday, (pictured left) include it as one of the vegetables you bake with chuck roast, along with CSA garlic, peppers, and potatoes, some olive oil and seasoning, in a 350-degree oven 2 to three hours, until the meat is tender. The squash is a creamy, sweet, delicious addition!

