

# A Small, Profitable Farm

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My goal, from the beginning, was to keep my farm business small. In fact, a couple years ago, we actually decreased our acreage. Work demands during the growing season now are far less than 40 hours per week for each of us.

## WHY?

Generally working 9am-5pm 3-4 days per week during the growing season, my farming partners and I still have energy at the end of the day and week to enjoy various other pursuits. I realized a few years into farming that I really enjoy having free time. I do not like feeling that the farm is completely dominating my life, and rather I would like it to be just one component of my life. The farm provides a livelihood and yet, I have plenty of time for family, friends and community engagement, as well as other hobbies & experiences. Most farmers I know work 50-80 hours per week (and many are chronically exhausted). For me, this is physically, mentally and emotionally unsustainable. I also want the freedom of not being responsible for a crew of employees.

## HOW?

By keeping both our personal financial needs low, and farm expenses at a minimum, we have designed a farm that can remain small while paying the bills and meeting our needs.

Over the years, we have always made decisions based on how the farm can meet *our* needs- not how we can meet the needs of the farm. For us, this has been key to developing a farm life that is enjoyable and ultimately sustainable for the farmers.

Some components of what has enabled Old Path Farm to remain small and profitable include:

- *Sharing equipment with neighbors*
- *Renting rather than owning land*
- *Growing slowly and depending on cash not credit for capital purchases*
- *Relying on used, rather than new equipment & tools,*
- *always improving efficiencies,*
- *welcoming high quality volunteer labor*
- *keeping personal expenses low*

## **ENOUGH INCOME?**

We actually prefer to have a “low income”. Two of the three business partners would like remain below the federal tax level in order to avoid contributing to the war industry. We also are continually seeking a life that decreasingly depends on The Industrial Economy for our joy and well-being. Our goal is to rely on the abundance that nature freely provides. We are, therefore, very keen on keeping our personal expenses low. Earning around \$10 per hour is enough for us to live lives that feel abundant, comfortable and full of joy. One partner supplements income with winter employment. We drive old cars. We live in small simple homes. We have no outstanding debts. We collect all our own firewood. Most of our hobbies are free (exploring and celebrating nature, enjoying neighbors, community engagement, political activism, creating music, being with family etc.). We eat the best food that money can buy. We feel our needs are fully met.

## **BUT WHAT ABOUT ... (FAQs)**

Health Insurance? Two of the 3 of do not hold the health care industry in high regard, and we hold the health insurance industry in even lower regard- therefore we gladly do without this expense. Retirement? We expect that our major infrastructure investments will soon be completed, and our income will therefore increase. Even so, we currently are often able to save money at the end of a year. Since we are still in our early 30s, we do not yet have our retirement planned out, but we are not worried, and we feel that with our income, our expenses will continue to be easily met. Sending the kids to college? We have no children and wouldn't want to send them to Ivy League schools anyway.

## **\*HOWEVER\***

\*If\* we wanted these things, yes, our farm would need to be larger in order that we could purchase these things.