

Making a Living on a Small-Scale, Non-Profit Farm

S&S Homestead Farm

Timeline

- 1970 Purchased 10 acres, established 100x100 home garden/orchard, annually raised a cow and calf pair
- 1970 Developed fifty-year farm plan providing values-based production goals and long term plans for economic, infrastructure and landscape development (reviewed annually)
- '70-'94 Owners, Henning Schmsdorf and Elizabeth Simpson, held off-farm teaching jobs to support farm development (residence, barn, processing kitchen, greenhouse, irrigation pond, fencing)
- 1994 Henning became a full-time farmer, Elizabeth worked half-time (retaining half-time teaching job)
- 1994 Initiated on-farm educational programs including intern- and apprenticeships, workshops, farm tours
- 1994 Initiated farm-to-school and farm-to-cafeteria program linking the farm to Lopez Public Schools
- 1994 Leased 25 acres from neighbor to supply hay and summer pasture for cattle, sheep, pigs, chickens
- 1994 Purchased 5 acres from second neighbor
- 1995 Constructed second hay barn and milking parlor
- 1997 Electrified farm fencing
- 2000 Constructed bale house for interns
- 2005 Built wood working shop
- 2006 Installed rain catchment and irrigation system
- 2007 Purchased 10 acres (including house) from third neighbor
- 2008 Dug second well
- 2010 Developed farm website
- '11-'12 Installed 16,000KW photovoltaic system
- 2013 Constructed additional housing for farm stay guests and trainees

Established in 1970, the *mission* of the farm is to “produce fresh, local, biodynamic, seasonal and sustainably grown food while providing education in ecological farming and sustainable living for the community.”

S&S Homestead Farm produces food for on-farm use and direct sales, animal feed, animal replacements, fertility, solar energy, water, and wood products.

S&S Center for Sustainable Agriculture provides educational programs, farm stays, rentals, and social services, such as elder care and food for families in need.

Principles of Biodynamic Practice

“More than a production system, biodynamic agriculture is a practice of living and relating to nature in a way that focuses on the health of the bioregion, landscape, soil, and animal, plant and human life, and promotes the inner development of each practitioner” (*Toward Sustainable Agricultural Systems in the 21st Century*, National Research Council, 2010, p. 21)

- **Whole Farm Organism:** As in natural ecosystems, the biodynamic farm integrates plant and animal life to provide energetic feedback loops in a state of equilibrium
- **Farm Individuality:** Rather than a prescriptive model, the individual farm evolves organically over time as the farmer interacts with soil, water, air, light/warmth in the context of local soil, climate, social and economic conditions, to create an individualized, bounded system (self-organization, self-correction)
- **Resource Self-Sufficiency:** Ideally, the biodynamic farm produces all fertility needed on the farm, as well as other inputs (food, feed, energy, water, seeds, animal replacements)
- **Astronomic Calendar:** In recognition of all plant and animal life on earth having evolved in response to cosmic energies, biodynamic practice takes note of the diurnal and seasonal rhythms of sun, moon, stars and planets to guide on-farm activities. Practical calendars (such as *Stella Natura*) have been worked out over decades correlating growth dynamics of plant root, stem, leaf, flower and fruit with astronomical rhythms.
- **Biodynamic Preparations:** Fermented preparations made from nettle, dandelion, chamomile, oak bark, yarrow, silica quartz and horsetail are applied in minute dosages to composts, soils and plants to organize minerals, enhance humus formation, and control fungal disease
- **Economics:** Biodynamic practice revives the Aristotelian definition of economics (from *oikos*=farm household + *nemein*=to steward) as the activity of creating natural and social capital rather than extracting profit. Ideally, debt is avoided and financial surpluses are reinvested in farm infrastructure and programs (self-capitalization).

Production for On-Farm Use

Food: \$30,989

Meat, dairy, vegetables, fruit, staples

Feed: \$21,260

Hay and forages

Animal Replacements: \$4,050

Calves and lambs

Fertility: \$6,378

Manures, composts, biodynamic preparations)

Energy: \$1,523

19,500 KWH

Water:

Rain water catchment and well for 3 households and agricultural use, 620,000g) \$2,294

Wood products: cord wood, hog fuel \$960

Total value of production for on-farm use:
\$67,494

Labor Budget (2013)

Farmer 1: Henning 2,000 hours
 Compensation: in-kind

Farmer 2: Elizabeth 1,000 hours
 Compensation: in-kind

Farm hand: Rafael 416 hours
 Compensation: rent

Mechanic: David 400 hours
 Compensation: cash

Intern 1: Emma 336 hours
 Compensation: in-kind

Intern 2: Annabelle 672 hours
 Compensation: in-kind plus cash stipend

