

OUR HARVEST CO-OP 2015 ANNUAL REPORT

WE ARE A WORKER-OWNED LOCAL FARM AND FOOD HUB, WORKING TO MAKE SUSTAINABLY-GROWN FOOD AVAILABLE TO ALL OF THE GREATER CINCINNATI COMMUNITY. OUR HARVEST IS COMMITTED TO:

- CREATING FAMILY-SUSTAINING JOBS
- STRENGTHENING THE LOCAL FOOD SYSTEM
- INCREASING ACCESS TO HEALTHY FOOD
- SUSTAINING THESE EFFORTS BY TRAINING NEW FARMERS



Bahr Farm



College Hill Farmers Market



Whole Foods



Food Hub Distribution Center



Bahr Farm

"We have such an issue around jobs and inequality in our country right now. My hope is that Our Harvest Cooperative and the Mondragon USW union co-op template can serve as a model for communities across the country as a way in which we can truly improve our food system, employ our neighbours, and create the type of society we all want to live in."

-Ellen Vera, Co-founder of Our Harvest

OUR STORY

Our Harvest Co-op (OHC), a farm and food hub, is the first co-op founded by the Cincinnati Union Cooperative Initiative (CUCI), a non-profit which develops worker-owned businesses that sustain families. CUCI follows the Mondragon union co-op model by building a network of co-ops to enhance the long-term success of each co-op.



Our Harvest came into being to address the problems associated with: insufficient local produce; decline in the number of produce farmers; lack of family sustaining jobs; and the unmet high demand for locally grown, sustainably grown produce. The Ohio State South Center staff was interested in solving the same problems statewide. With their technical assistance and our community organizing, OHC was born in April 2012. Since climate change forecasts indicate that the US will be increasingly dependent on the Midwest for vegetable production in the years ahead, it is all the more important to figure out a scalable model.

Designing a viable business model that pays all workers in the food chain fairly, expands food access, and restores soil health through organic practices, is both rewarding and challenging. The seasonal nature of produce, the intensive capitalization required, and the unpredictability of the weather, reduces the margin of error we have to work within. In addition, being the first Mondragon union co-op means we are often building the road as we walk it.

We persist because the stakes are high and our goals are too important. After 3 years in operation and Integration of lessons learned, Our Harvest Co-op is stronger than ever and poised for growth.

AT A GLANCE

Our Harvest Began Operation: April 2012 following successful feasibility and impact study with Ohio Cooperative Development Center of Ohio State

Workforce: 18 diverse & talented people, 11 of whom are full time, year-round

Our Harvest Farms:

Urban Farm: 4 acres on Bahr Farm in College Hill, Cincinnati

Rural Farm: 15 acres on White Oak farm in Morrow, Ohio

Our Harvest Food Hub Distribution Center: Located inside the Freestore Foodbank on Tennessee Avenue

Supporting Local Growers: 21 produce farmers and local food artisans sell through the Our Harvest Food Hub

Distribution Channels:

Weekly Harvest Box: Available at 13 distribution points

Produce Perks Harvest Box: Piloting at 2 distribution points in food deserts

Wholesale: 21 customers including Whole Foods, Green B.E.A.N. Delivery, Cincinnati State

Farmers Markets: College Hill, West Chester, Lettuce Eat Well (Westside)



Increasing Food Access

Our Harvest has begun a pilot Produce Perks Harvest Box program, teaming up with **Interact for Health**, the Cincinnati Health Department, and community partners to find an economically sustainable way to deliver fresh local produce to food deserts. Interact for Health has been a key funder for this initiative.

Training of Worker Owners

Our founder and partner, the Cincinnati Union Co-op Initiative, specializes in education and delivers weekly on-the-job educational sessions to worker-owners. Sessions serve to demystify financial statements, tap into people's collective intelligence about how to problem solve and build the business, develop communication skills, and integrate co-op values.

Training the Next Generation of Farmers

Our Harvest serves as the practicum site for the Sustainable Agriculture Certificate program at **Cincinnati State**.

Our Harvest launched a non-profit, the Our Harvest Research and Education Institute, and serves as the lab space for the Specialty Crop Grower Apprenticeship Program.

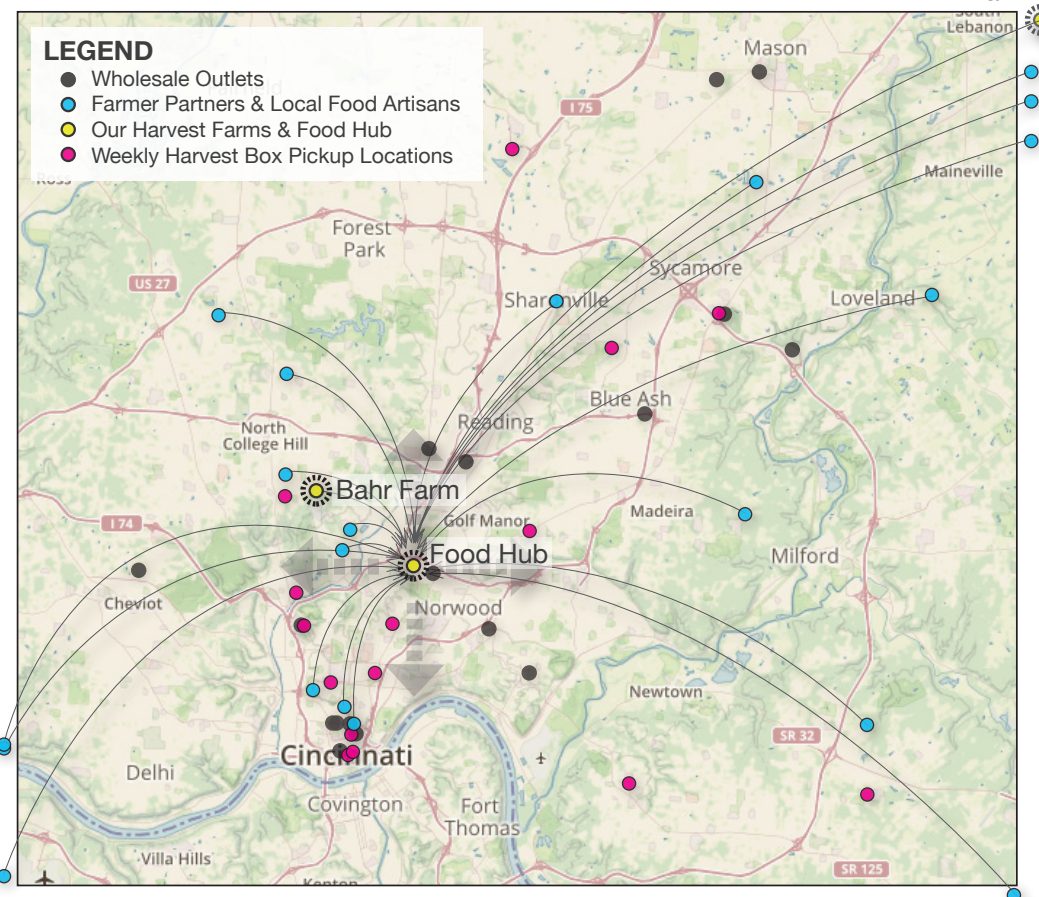
Building Soil Health, Building Human Health

According to Daphne Miller, MD PhD:

"When you really look at where the healing qualities from our food come from, they come from... the soil... the more micro life in the soil, the more nutrients a plant will have... Ecological farming produces a lot more [micro life] than conventional farming."

That is why it is so important that Our Harvest is working to transition lands from conventional to organic farming.

OUR HARVEST SUPPLY AND DISTRIBUTION



Reducing Carbon Footprint

On average, food travels 1,500 miles from farm to consumer. In comparison, OHC's produce travels an average of 40 miles, which translates into a significant saving in the carbon environment.

OHC's Policy Work & Systemic Change

Kristin Gangwer, OHC Food Hub Manager, plays a key role both on the Greater Cincinnati Regional Food Policy Council, as well as on Green Umbrella's local food action team. Bob Hyland, OHC sales coordinator, co-chairs the Healthy Eating Subcommittee of the Creating Healthy Communities Coalition.

Capital Investments

OHC has built a climate controlled propagation house, 2 GAP (Good Agricultural Practice) certifiable wash-out/clean-out facilities, and 2 coolers. We have restored 13 low tunnels for season extension. We have acquired 2 refrigerated trucks, as well as tractors and other farm equipment.



LOOKING AHEAD

Our Harvest Co-op is excited for the future. OHC will focus on growing its collaboration with local farmers through new partnerships and increased acreage. OHC is expanding wholesale distribution and food access efforts. Apple Street Market, full service grocery sister co-op, will open in summer of 2016, providing a large, secure market, which will propel OHC growth.

TESTIMONIAL

Zeke Coleman, laid off from his previous job in the food industry, has found a living wage and his passion.

"Working for Our Harvest is not like any other job I have had before. Here it's a family. Its a friendly environment to work in... you get really close to people. The opportunity to be a worker-owner really got my attention. It means a lot working to get more jobs for people. Here, I learned about sowing and weeding and it opened my eyes about eating healthy. The healthy food we provide helps us and our customers get the fiber and nutrients we need."



MEET THE FARM TEAM



From left to right: First row (Rosa Michaels, Apprentice; Dan Whorton, Farmworker; Juan Garza, Seasonal Farmworker; Eliezar Rodriguez, Farmworker)

Second row (Stephen Dienger, Assistant Farm Manager; Jose Avalos, Farmworker)

Not pictured: Cori Yaeger, Part-time Farmworker; Dale Bahr, Mentor Farmer; Evin Peters, Apprentice; Julie Flickner, Coop Student from Cincinnati State; Steve Edwards, Assistant Farm Manager.



MEET THE FOOD HUB TEAM



From left to right: (Ezekiel (Zeke) Coleman, Senior Sales & Distribution Staff; Bob Hyland, Sales Coordinator; Terry (TJ) Jones, Food Hub Team Member; Kristin Gangwer, Food Hub Manager; Reid Bradford, Operations Coordinator)

Not pictured: Amy Gerth-Schreiner, Food Hub Contractor; Melissa Brown, PT Driver

MEET THE LEADERSHIP

From left to right: Phil Amadon, Co-founder and Board Member; Eileen Frechette, Board Member; Kristen Barker, Interim CEO and Board Chair;

Additional Board Members: Steve Dienger; Kristin Gangwer; Zeke Coleman; Mary Steele, Bookkeeper

WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING ABOUT OUR HARVEST

"[Our Harvest's] offerings are unique, the quality is exceptional. It allows us to pair [their products] alongside the other things that we're getting locally, so that they're not in direct competition with the other producers that we already have been working with for a number of years."

-Mike Madison, Madison's at Findlay Market, local grocer (re-printed from *Edible Ohio* article in June 2014)

"Although the worker-owner model is still in its early stage, workers are already being paid fair wages, which has engendered a sense of ownership in the company. [The worker-owner aspect] makes me feel really valued in addition to just the good relationships that I have with the rest of the Our Harvest team and the board... Structurally, I feel like I have a say in what happens and that my opinions matter, so it is a powerful thing."

-Casey Henry, former OHC Sales Coordinator (re-printed from *Edible Ohio* article in June 2014)

OUR GRATITUDE

We want to thank the amazing community of people who have supported us. We are grateful for all the people who are committed to restoring the earth, increasing food access, and who value paying farmworkers and all members of the food chain fairly. We especially thank those who have been willing to take a risk and lend patient capital with little financial return to help bring something into being that they believe in.

