

# FIRST FRUITS FARM, INC

## 2016 SEASONAL REPORT

**GROW FOOD.  
GIVE FOOD.  
SERVE OTHERS.**



First Fruits Farm is a Christian non-profit dedicated to growing and harvesting **millions of pounds of fresh produce** for hungry people along the East Coast through the work and service of thousands of volunteers.

[firstfruitsfarm.org](http://firstfruitsfarm.org)

## **2016 was quite a year!**

As the farm ministry has grown from a few acres to over 200 acres, we have been able to maintain our valuable volunteer culture. In addition to over 5700 harvest volunteers last year, our day to day operations still depend on dozen or so of “heavy-lifters”. These regulars, some of whom donate well over 20 hours a week, have been, are, and will continue to be the foundation of what makes the ministry work.

There are many benefits to growing into something much larger: more ministry opportunity and more produce for brothers and sisters in need. However, it also comes with real challenges: managing thousands of volunteers, daily vegetable logistics, complex dangerous machinery, raising sizable annual financial support, finding the next generation, and more.

Our goals this year are visibility, reach, and stability. Can you help us reach our goal of increasing our distributorship, volunteer base, and donorship? **If you love what God is doing at the farm, please consider a monetary donation or connect with us to create new distribution relationships.**

To quote the Apostle Paul, “we are hard pressed but not crushed”, and confident that God is in control for this next season of planting, patience, and eventually, harvest.

**Make a donation today!**

**[www.firstfruitsfarm.org/donate](http://www.firstfruitsfarm.org/donate)**

Sign up to volunteer during the 2017 season:  
email [Carol@firstfruitsfarm.org](mailto:Carol@firstfruitsfarm.org)

# FIRST FRUITS FARM

## 2016 YIELDS



### apples

2.5 acres  
1,224 lbs/acre

3,060 lbs produced

### zucchini



2 acres  
9,633 lbs/acre

19,265 lbs produced

### tomatoes

(also peppers  
+ pumpkins)

6.5 acres  
9,969 lbs/acre



59,870 lbs produced

### cabbage

(also greens  
+ turnips)

15.5 acres  
9,969 lbs/acre



154,525 lbs produced



### corn

34.5 acres  
9,104 lbs/acre

314,090 lbs produced

### beans

108 acres  
4,049 lbs/acre



437,250 lbs produced

### potatoes

44 acres  
15,600 lbs/acre



686,423 lbs produced

## 2016 TOTAL: 1,674,483 lbs



## Distribution Shifts in 2016

The MD & PA Food Banks historically make up 75-80% of our production. This past year that percentage declined to 56%. Some of this was intentional (greater distribution diversity), but most was not.



### SWEET CORN:

Record deer damage and poor tip worm control on our mid/late season sweet corn crop reduced our distribution options with both major food banks.

Having built a foundation of relationships over the past few years yielded benefits; many new partners were able to process and distribute the sweet corn.

## FFF Brings Relief to West Virginia

**POTATOES:** We were not able to share our potato crop with one of our major distributors due to dust and dirt processing issues. However, God had bigger plans - and our potatoes went to good use through our relationship with the Archdiocese. Floods and other hardships in West Virginia and North Carolina have created great need. FFF partnered with other archdioceses and a local trucking firm (Mainfreight) to **ship over 50,000 lbs.** to each region.



The Archdiocese and Mainfreight team worked with First Fruits Farm and brought hope and potatoes to friends in desperate need in WV and NC this fall.

## 2016 First Fruits Farm Quick Facts

**212**

Volunteer  
Events

17% increase vs 2015

**25-30**

Average  
Group Size

11% increase vs 2015

**199**

Volunteer  
Groups

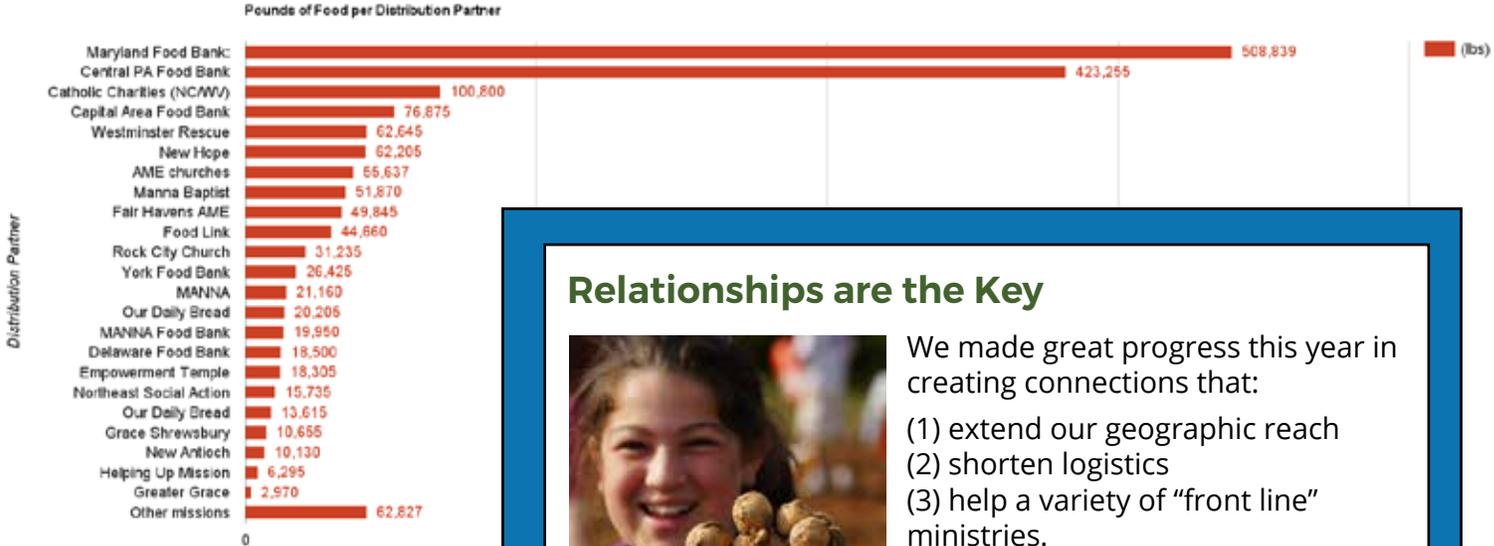
**5766**

Total  
Volunteers

5% increase vs 2015

**1,674,483** lbs of food harvested in 2016

# First Fruits Farm Distribution Partners



## Relationships are the Key



We made great progress this year in creating connections that:

- (1) extend our geographic reach
- (2) shorten logistics
- (3) help a variety of “front line” ministries.

We are working during the off season to further this progress for 2017's harvest.

## Internal Growth in 2016

While we continue to technically operate with no paid staff, we funded two subcontract positions to allow for more focused efforts on fundraising and volunteer experience.

Steve Troy is our experienced farm manager. Hiring a dedicated staff member to oversee operations during the season allows:



- \* others to focus on volunteer experience/ministry
- \* improved farm practices
- \* increased machinery uptime
- \* improved safety.

In addition to funding the farm manager position in 2017, we also

are funding a part time marketing role with Jenny Klump, a local non-profit professional who rebuilt the website in 2016.

**Our plan is to considerably improve the regularity, breadth, and depth of our communication with existing volunteers, stakeholders, and new friends!**

## Multimedia at The Farm

The video, completed last season, continues to attract viewers and a lot of positive feedback. It is used regularly at our main Freeland location to orient volunteers. The video inspires others to start their own farm ministries! We are excited about new initiatives that will improve our communication and outreach. We hope to record a podcast series on How To Start A Farm Ministry, covering different questions we've been asked over the years by those who are hoping to try their hand at farming.

## Board Governance

In parallel to the changes being made at the operating level, the Board has approved changes to First Fruits Farm by-laws with respect to the board organization. Although the committee details are still being worked out, **the objective is to focus team member talents into board committees**, including: development, finance, marketing, nominating, and operations.

## Advocacy & Networking

We continue to build relationships within the agricultural community and beyond:

- \* Board members of **Baltimore County Farm Bureau** and the **Maryland Agricultural Resource Council**.
- \* Remain “of counsel” for **McDonogh School’s Roots** program.



\* **United Way of Central Maryland (UWCM)** partnership is growing with the arrival of new Executive Director Franklyn Baker. FFF continues to benefit from regular United Way sponsored days at the Farm, designated UWCM donations, and also a steady referral of additional volunteer groups.

\* The **Archdiocese of Baltimore** relationship continues to be robust. This was our second season using all 70 acres at the Belfast Road location. Prior capital investments, such as the three bay barn at the stone house and the large Belfast Road barn were a great blessing this year. **Archdiocese Annual Appeal funds added a high performance water well and electric at the Belfast Road barn.** A “barter” arrangement with the road construction company, CJ Miller, added a greatly improved road and substantial parking area.

\* **The longer term objective is to establish an endowed fund at the Archdiocese in order to fund partnership needs well into the future.** We are working with the Archdiocese to connect with new parishes for volunteer recruitment and retention in the years ahead.

## Equipment and Cattle

Major capital additions included:

- \* a rebuilt two row Lockwood potato harvester
- \* a second John Deere 250 skid steer loader;
- \* three new harvest wagons,
- \* 100 new collapsible produce bins.



The Lockwood harvester was used exclusively at the Belfast and Harn Road potato fields. Having dedicated skid steers at both loading sites makes produce loading more efficient and safer. **The additional harvest wagons allow us to keep equipment movement to a minimum during harvest events; improving volunteer safety and engagement.**

We are growing our cattle ministry with minimal extra costs. Our 2017 goal is to process 6 to 10 steers per season (3000-5000 lbs of ground beef).

## Financials

Actual 2016 financial results are largely in line with the 2016 Plan. The exception was actual capital spending which was around \$25,000 above budget. **Cash balances at the end of 2016 are expected to be approximately \$120,000. We will report final 2016 financial results at our early February board meeting.**

Our preliminary 2017 production plan of 222 acres (adjusting up for field corn planting), is largely unchanged from last year's actual acreage of around 223 acres. Similar to 2016, we expect to receive shared maintenance cost from the Maryland Food Bank in the amount of \$ 0.12 per pound and similar funding from Central Pennsylvania Food Bank. **We are working on a number of grant possibilities and improving the diversity of our revenue sources.** Although our subcontractor expenses will be meaningfully higher in 2017, we anticipate a break-even cash flow as forecasted capital spending should be materially less.

## Volunteers

We remain thankful to God for his faithful provision of joyful servants! We are blessed to have a dedicated and experienced core of servant/leaders. Given the median age (early 60's) of our most dedicated volunteers, we are working on how to engage/recruit the next generation.



Most groups hailed from the DMV area, but some traveled from New York and PA. Median age was 13-45, but we welcomed toddlers up to 80 year olds. Most groups worked around 3 hours in the fields per visit.

## Harvest Helpers Old & New

Many "old friends" joined us in the fields this year: **Brown Advisory, FCA Lacrosse, Gerstell Academy, Gilman School, Living Word Community Church, Loyola Blakefield, McCormick & Company, McDonogh, St. Pius X, and Xavier High School,**

We added many new groups: **Empowerment Temple, First Financial, Planit Agency, SIG, Textron AAI, and United Parcel Service.**

We continue to experience a diverse array of groups and people who are changed by a few hours of working with their hands to help their neighbors in need.

## 2017 Production Plan (in acres)



Apples	2.5
Collards/Kale	3
Cabbage	13
Potatoes	44
Snap Beans	102
Sweet Corn	35
Field Corn*	13
Pumpkins	3
Zucchini	3
Other	3.5

**Total vegetable 209\***

\*Does not include 13 acres of field corn as it is used in the cattle operation

## Dear First Fruits Farm Supporter,

This preliminary plan is always subject to some change, given weather, soil conditions, machinery, and volunteer availability. **The Lord is in control!** With great faith in God's provision and providence, we eagerly await what He has ordained for this ministry in the coming 2017 growing season!

## Blessings, Rick and Carol Bernstein



**TO GOD BE THE GLORY!**

**First Fruits Farm, Inc**

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