



# Intervale Center Farms Program Application Packet



# Application Process for Incubator Program

**Step 1: Read over this packet and familiarize yourself with the Intervale Center incubator program and the policies and procedures.**

**Step 2: Complete the application contained in this packet. The application deadline is August 31<sup>st</sup>.** The application process is expected to last at least three to six months from application date to final decision, depending on the time needed to write a business plan. It consists of the following steps:

## **Step 3:**

### **Staff Review:**

- Applicant meets with program staff in person or over the phone, which includes an introduction to the Intervale Center and Farms Program.
- Applicant will submit initial application form to program staff by deadline stated above. Applications are considered for tenure the following spring. (Note: The timeline does vary on a case by case basis depending on the progress of the business plan.)
- If the application is a good match for available opportunities in the Intervale and the farmer has necessary experience, staff will ask applicant to submit a full business plan and any relevant additional materials.
- Once the applicant's business plan has been submitted, Intervale staff will prescreen applications for completeness and basic ability to comply with contract and the following criteria:
  - Sound Business Plan that demonstrates good market opportunity
  - Minimal three years farm experience
  - Personal capacity to take risk: resources to cover living expense
  - Strong awareness of organic production criteria
- Applicants will be asked to visit the Intervale if possible
- If the applicant is applying for a business that involves livestock, they must include a Livestock Emergency Flood Management plan. See "Livestock Policies" in the appendices for more information.
- Staff presents application, business plans and supporting materials to current farmers for their recommendation.

## **Step 4:**

### **Farmer Review:**

- Existing farmers will review application, business plan and supporting materials
- Staff will provide farmers with electronic version of application and business plan
- Applicants make presentation at the farmer meeting that includes their business plan and supporting materials, such as charts, list of markets, etc. (all information pertaining to new farm business will remain confidential). This in-person presentation is a requirement so that existing farmers have a chance to meet perspective farmers.

- Farmers discuss application and assess the compatibility of the application in relation to the following aspects of the proposed business:
  - Equipment and resource use compatibility with existing farms
  - Market focus and competition with existing farms
  - Traffic and land use issues
  - Openness to feedback and recommendations
  - Good community member and neighbor
  - Business plan provides measurable financial and social goals
  
- If application is approved, the new farmer will receive an orientation with the Farms Program manager and the land manager to familiarize them with the land options, water access, infrastructure, etc.
  - Land will be assigned by the Intervale Center, and program staff will prepare contract and lease
    - Contract and lease will be signed by new farmer and Executive Director (or his or her appointed representative)
    - Typical lease terms will run from January to December. Special terms can be negotiated on case-by-case basis

## **The Farms Program**

Farmers at the Intervale share space and resources as well as take part in the community life. This section will present the mission and goals of the Farms Program and give an idea of how it came to be in its current form and some of the guiding principles that govern the program.

The Farms Program is here to help with the logistics of shared resources, farmer meetings, land expansion, technical assistance, business planning, land transition, and more.

### **Mission of the Farms Program**

The Intervale Center’s Farms Program mission is to incubate and grow viable, independent farm businesses, to increase food security in Vermont and to serve as a model beginner agriculture development program.

### **Program Goals**

- Accommodate up to 15 participating farms
- Build infrastructure necessary to fulfill mission and serve as a model agricultural development organization
- Provide professional program administration and technical support to Intervale farmers

### **Farms Program Structure**

#### ***Farm Categories***

Two categories of farmers exist at the Intervale – incubator and mentor –to encourage information sharing and enable new farmers to learn from the ones who have experience with the land and equipment at the Intervale.

Incubator Farms (year 1 through 5 at the Intervale) receive financial support in their first three years through lower prices for equipment, facilities and compost. This rate is billed at 80% of cost, the other 20% of which is subsidized through the Intervale Center. They pay in full for year three and four of incubation. They also receive advice, technical assistance and support from mentoring farms and Farms Program staff. When a farmer applies to become an Intervale farmer, IC program staff informs the farmer about the mentor program. Once the farm is accepted, IC staff assigns each incubator farm with a mentor farm, according to compatibility.

Incubator farms have a five year limit to this status and are only guaranteed land in the Intervale for five years. For more information on farm tenure in the Intervale, please see the Policies and Procedures section of the Farmer Manual or ask Intervale Center program staff for clarification.

Mentor Farms are mature farms that were established in the Intervale prior to January 1, 2005. They are paired with incubator farms to foster relationships and encourage the mentoring role. Mentor farms provide technical assistance to incubator farmers on crop plans, crop rotations, marketing, cultivation practices, equipment use, etc. Each mentor farm allocates 20 hours of their time each farm season to mentoring an incubator farm or a farm that is part of the New Farms for New Americans Program, mentoring another new farmer in the state, hosting a workshop or training, or training and troubleshooting equipment.

## **Mentorship Protocols**

### **Mentorship**

The mentorship concept originated as a voluntary system organized by established farmers in order to collectively assist newer farmers in the Intervale. Over the years, this informal system has allowed flexibility among both mentor and incubator farmers to provide and access the appropriate kinds of mentoring and technical assistance on their own terms. It has also helped foster a culture of mutual dependence and cooperation among Intervale farmers.

It is assumed that mentor farms should spend – and are spending - a minimum of 20 hours each year mentoring incubator farms and/or contributing to the common good of the community. These mentorship efforts are one of many valuable and unique parts of the farms program. Mentors are asked to report on how they spent their mentorship hours in annual farm reports, which are due each February.

Though incubators are encouraged to build their own relationships with neighboring farmers, all incubators are assigned a specific mentor who they can call when they have questions. This relationship is established by Intervale Center staff – in consultation with

farmers - after an incubator has been accepted into the program but before they begin farming in the Intervale. Mentor farmers are expected to make the first contact with incubators to welcome them to the community and assess their needs. Subsequent meetings can be arranged by either party and are often informal.

The Intervale Center sometimes offers additional training opportunities for both mentors and/or incubators. If you have an idea for the training you would like, please let Center staff know.

Mentors are also encouraged to report problems connecting with or advising incubators to Center staff.

### **What are common mentor tasks?**

- Equipment follow up training and troubleshooting
- On-farm technical assistance, soil and production advice for incubator and enterprise farms
- Marketing and business management assistance for incubator and enterprise farms
- Utilizing unique skills to contribute to the common good of the community
- Mentoring or hosting a workshop for other beginning farmers in the state

### **Who are the mentors?**

Intervale Community Farm

Diggers' Mirth Collective Farm

Straycat Farm

Sugarsnap

Half Pint Farm

Pitchfork Farm

### ***Intervale Farm Equipment Company (IFEC)***

The Intervale Farmer Equipment Company, LLC also known as IFEC, manages use, maintenance, and rental of equipment, greenhouses, and some barn and shop space. IFEC is comprised of the Intervale Center, Diggers' Mirth Collective, Intervale Community Farm, Stray Cat Flower Farm, Pitchfork Farm, and Half Pint Farm.

IFEC purchased two greenhouses and most of the farm equipment formerly owned by the Intervale Center in 2007. In 2011, IFEC took over the lease and maintenance of the facilities formerly housing the Intervale Compost Project; this building is shared between IFEC and Intervale Community Farm and is now called "Red Top" in reference to the barn's red metal roof. IFEC's goal is to maintain the purchased equipment, greenhouses, and leased facilities in a way that allows their full use for the various needs of the members of the LLC. Incubator farms have access to IFEC equipment and greenhouses through the Intervale Center's membership. For more information about IFEC's governing body, fees, and policies, please see IFEC's Policies and Procedures in the Appendices.

# **Intervale Center Land Use Protocols**

**Updated May 2013**

All Intervale farms produce crops by following the organic standards set by the Vermont Organic Farmers (VOF) organization. The following land use protocols are additional standards that all farms in the Intervale must comply.

## **1. Cover Crops and Rotation.**

As the first step in the process of restoring the Intervale land, Intervale will cover crop newly acquired fields for the first 3 years or until management is assumed by a farmer(s). Farmers must cover and rotate crops once they acquire land as a standard practice to maintain soil tilth and health.

Farmers must lease enough land for proper crop rotation. Intervale recommends for all non-perennial farmers an equal number of acres in cover crops as in cash crops. A minimum of 2/3 tillable acreage in cash crop and 1/3 tillable acreage in cover crop is required. A winter cover crop on all parcels is required whenever possible. Lease agreements will be the same for cash crop and cover crop parcels.

Perennial crop farms do not need to maintain this ratio of cover crop land. However, farmers must rotate perennials when feasible. Perennial crops require extra attention to under-sowing and compost applications. Practicing interplanting and companion planting is required to avoid a monoculture. After moving perennials, different crops must be grown or a cover crop planted in the interim.

Any farmer(s) that require an exemption from these protocols must do so in writing. The Land Committee will review requests on a case-by-case basis.

## **2. Compost Application.**

Organic matter such as compost is a valuable addition to the Intervale soils where the percentage of organic matter is low. Annual soil tests, taken in the fall by farms, will be used as a guide to determine the compost needs for each field.

Proper compost application and soil management is the responsibility of each farm.

Intervale Compost Products is responsible for annual testing of the compost produced in the compost facility. These tests will reflect nutrient levels and will aid in determining any additional amendments useful for given crops.

Farmers must spread compost shortly before planting in a field or over cover crops. Once applied, farmers need to manage their fields properly to conserve nutrients and organic matter.

Compost may not be applied between December 15 and April 1. It is acceptable to apply organic mulches, which may include partially composted materials (not including manures), at any time.

## **3. Weed Management**

Preventing weeds from reseeding and regenerating is essential to organic farm management. Acceptable means of controlling weeds are as follows: mulching, mowing,

hoeing, cultivating and torching with flame weeders. Farmers may not use chemical substances to control weeds unless approved for organic use by VOF. Farmers are responsible for making regular field inspections for weed growth. Fields, field edges, roadsides and around buildings are required to be regularly maintained. Areas determined mismanaged by Intervale staff will be subject to a written complaint submitted to the Land Committee.

#### **4. Insect Management**

Insect management requires attracting and encouraging beneficial insect populations as a means to balance populations of insect pests. Farmers are required to understand current organic methods of control. They should be versed in IPM monitoring techniques such as scouting. All farmers must work cooperatively and with Intervale to discourage pests.

Chemical pesticides that are not approved and regulated by VOF are not allowed. If new organic products appear on the market that VOF has not certified, the farmer(s) must present the pesticide to VOF for review. If VOF approves the pesticide, the farmer(s) must also receive approval of the Land Committee before using it in the Intervale.

Farmers must keep records of all pest controls in a log from year to year. This log is subject to inspection by Intervale staff. Intervale may request this information for annual reporting.

#### **5. Disease Management**

Intervale does not allow the use chemicals, fungicides, or bactericides in Intervale operated land. Acceptable controls include: crop rotation, VOF approved organic fungicides, diseased plant removal and disposal, tool sanitation, restriction of foot traffic, cleanliness, black plastic mulch use and/or drip irrigation or watering at ground level. Farmers need to be familiar with plant diseases and be able to identify them when they appear. Resources for plant disease identification are available through Intervale staff, other farmers, VT Department of Agriculture, UVM Diagnostic Lab, outside labs and textbooks. Farmers must keep records of disease infections and controls to provide for the Intervale in annual reports.

#### **6. Irrigation**

Water is available from the drilled well near the pumphouse, the drilled well in the home garden area, a temporary pump at the river and from natural precipitation. Hauling water from a source outside the Intervale is acceptable as long as it comes from an approved and tested source. Intervale will conduct water tests annually on all water sources. Intervale is responsible for making sure all wells and water sources are operable and set up to accommodate main line hook ups. If mainline equipment is not available on a given field, Intervale and the Farm will reach an agreement to accommodate water needs. Farmers must present irrigation needs to Intervale staff. Intervale will devise an operating schedule based on the needs of every farm. Each farm is responsible for maintenance on their main line from pump to field.

#### **7. Testing**

Farmers must submit a yearly soil test during the Incubator years. Tests must include macronutrients, NPK, pH and CEC. Fields just coming into production must also include micronutrient testing. Yearly farmers must also test for organic matter content as specified in the Compost Applications section of this document.

### **8. End of Year Reports**

Farmers are required to submit an end of year report each year as part of this agreement. A form for this report will be submitted at the beginning of each growing season so that farmers will know in advance information that must be tracked.

### **9. Buildings and Improvements**

As the Intervale is situated on a floodplain, many legal restrictions apply to construction in the Intervale. Any land improvements (moving or altering of soil, building construction, fence construction, growing or removal of trees or any activity that could impact the topography of the land) are subject to formal approval by the Intervale. Overnight camping or structures intended for those purposes are not allowed.

## Intervale Center

### Livestock Protocols

**April 18, 2014**

*The goal of this policy is to ensure the good health and humane treatment of animals kept on Intervale property and to provide a baseline standard from which everyone will operate.*

All Intervale Center farms that produce livestock must be certifiable by organic standards set by the Vermont Organic Farmers (VOF) organization by the year 2013. Intervale Center farmers are further governed by the USDA's National Organic Program Final Rule. Farms that follow these standards, but decide not to be certified organic, must market and label animal products appropriately. The following livestock protocols are additional standards and exceptions for Intervale farms.

**Requesting Livestock on your Farm.** All farmers wishing to have livestock on their farm must submit a request to the Intervale Center, who will evaluate the request based on the policies below and based on available land and resources.

**Animal Feed.** All grain fed to livestock must be certified organic. Food scraps or food wastes are allowable if they meet the Vermont Agency of Agriculture Food and Markets guidelines (for swine regulations see Appendix A).

**Food Storage.** Properly packaged meats and eggs can be stored in shared coolers and freezers provided that they are contained so that there is no leakage from packages. Birds, eggs and other meat products must be labeled with product type, farm name, address and telephone number.

**Buildings and Improvements.** As the Intervale Center is situated on a flood plain, many legal restrictions apply to construction in the Intervale. Any land improvements are subject to formal approval by the Intervale Center.

**Liability.** Farmers who have livestock are responsible for any damage that livestock might cause to Intervale Center property, other farmers' crops, and any other damage caused by livestock. Payment must be made within 2 weeks of damage.

If a livestock operation becomes a nuisance to IC or farmers' property, the Intervale Center reserves the right to terminate lease agreements for the safety of the community.

#### **Livestock Emergency Flood Plan**

Each year there is a serious risk of land being flooding at the Intervale. To ensure the safety of livestock, any farm raising livestock must create an Emergency Flood plan with the IC Land Manager and submit it in writing to Farms Program staff. The plan must specify where the animals will go in case of a major flood event, how they will be moved, how they will be accessed, and how they will be fed and watered in that area.

**Dispute Resolution.** As specified in the Farms Program Manual, our dispute resolution policy is as follows. The Intervale Center staff and participating farmers agree to mediate all problems with one another through face to face meetings. If an agreement cannot be reached, the individual must provide a written notification of the unresolved conflict to the other parties involved and cc: Farms Program Staff and IC Executive Director. This notification should occur within 15 days of the meeting. The Intervale Center will provide a trained facilitator/mediator to attempt to resolve the conflict. The parties involved will be financially responsible for the facilitator/mediator.

The mediator will provide a written summary of conflict to IC staff. If mediation fails, the written summary will be forwarded to the Land Manager and the Executive Director who will work together to make the final determination. The Land Manager and the Executive Director will attempt to come to consensus in all decisions, but if that fails, disputes will be presented to the Land Committee for final decision.

**Additional Resources.** The regulatory texts of the National Organic Program standards are available on the USDA's National Organic Program website, <http://www.ams.usda.gov/nop>. A slightly more readable summary of standards can be found on the NOFA VT website: <http://www.nofavt.org>.

## **Appendix A**

### Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets: Policy on Swine Garbage Feeding

Revised April 1, 2013

#### **Background**

Vermont state statutes do not allow the feeding of prohibited food waste to swine or the supplying of the waste itself to others for the purpose of feeding to swine. Prohibited food waste is defined in 6 V.S.A. § 1671 as all waste material derived from the meat of any animal (including fish and poultry) and refuse of any character that has been associated (handling, preparation, cooking, disposal, or consumption) with meat and meat products. The purpose of this law is to prevent the introduction into Vermont of economically devastating animal diseases transmitted through this practice, with the Foot and Mouth Disease outbreak in the United Kingdom serving as an example of how this can occur. This guidance document was developed based on input from the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets' (VAAF) State and Assistant State Veterinarian and Meat Inspection Program managers, in consultation with USDA-APHIS-VS' Veterinary Medical Officer and Animal Health Technician. The development of this document in support of existing statute was deemed necessary based on reports of noncompliance detected during VAAF retail inspections and USDA site inspections, as well as an increasing number of inquiries fielded from swine producers and recyclers in anticipation

of implementation of Act 148.

### **High-Risk Feed Sources**

The determination if organic waste (such as produce, bread products, certain dairy products) is acceptable to collect and feed to swine depends on the nature of the brick and mortar establishment that would be providing the waste. Any establishment where meat (cooked or raw) is present or could be present is considered a high-risk source. Examples of high-risk sources include grocery stores, cafeterias, and bakeries. Bakeries are considered to be a high-risk source as they often serve sandwiches or pastries containing meat. Contamination can occur in grocery stores and cafeterias through the cross contamination by workers who handle meat and then handle produce, dairy, or bakery products or by the placement of meat-containing products in containers/barrels with non-prohibited waste, such as produce. Once a product has been contacted by meat, it is considered to be contaminated; removal of the meat does not remove the contamination that has already occurred.

The Agency of Agriculture strongly recommends that these types of establishments do not provide organic waste to farmers if it will subsequently be provided to pigs as a feed source. Stores that do provide such material should have policies and protocols in place that prevent contamination and they should be in communication with the Vermont Agency of Agriculture for review of the prevention practices. Stores should contact the Animal Health Section of the Agency at 802-8282-2421.

### **Other Feed Sources**

As the law allows the feeding of processed dairy products to swine, it would be acceptable provide this type of waste, including pasteurized and unpasteurized whey. It is also acceptable to provide bread products from a bread manufacturer's outlet.

### **Best Practices**

VAAFM asks that farmers who feed waste to swine maintain an awareness of the statute and ensure that they do not feed their pigs meat or meat products, waste that contains meat or meat products, or waste that has been contaminated by meat or meat products. VAAFM asks that facilities that provide organic waste to producers ensure they are not providing contaminated materials to producers who feed waste to swine as they are violating 6 VSA 1671 and are subject to administrative penalties. Please communicate with individuals who source organic waste from your establishment to ensure compliance with the statute.

### **Compliance and Enforcement**

VAAFM is charged with administration and enforcement of the provisions of this chapter, and is authorized to adopt and enforce all rules and regulations it deems necessary to carry out the purposes of this chapter. At the time of this writing, the Agency has not adopted rules on this practice; as a result, all guidance language may be found in the applicable portions of 6 V.S.A. VAAFM is authorized to cooperate with the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), which has compliance and enforcement responsibilities for this practice due to the Swine Health Protection Act. In all instances,

USDA enforcement parallels state statute so there is variability in allowed practices between states. For more information or if you have questions, please call the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets at (802) 828-2421.

### **Statutory References**

Title 6 Chapter 113 Feeding Prohibited Food Waste to Swine

#### **§ 1671. Definition**

For the purpose of this chapter, "prohibited food waste" means all waste material derived in whole or in part from the meat of any animal (including fish and poultry) or other animal material, other than processed dairy products, and other refuse of any character whatsoever that has been associated with any such material, resulting from the handling, preparation, cooking, disposal, or consumption of food, except that such term shall not include waste from ordinary household operations which is fed directly to swine raised exclusively for the use in the household of the owner of the swine by members of the household and nonpaying guests and employees. (Amended 2003, No. 37, § 4.)

#### **§ 1672. Feeding of prohibited food waste**

No person shall feed prohibited food waste to swine or supply prohibited food waste to others for the purpose of feeding it to swine. (Amended 1989, No. 256 (Adj. Sess.), § 10(a), eff. Jan. 1, 1991; 2003, No. 37, § 4.)

#### **§ 1675. Inspection and investigation; records**

Any authorized representative of the Vermont agency of agriculture, food and markets or United States Department of Agriculture is authorized to enter at reasonable times upon any private or public property for the purpose of inspecting and investigating the feeding of prohibited food waste to swine. (Amended 1989, No. 256 (Adj. Sess.), § 10(a), eff. Jan. 1, 1991; 2003, No. 37, § 4; No. 42, § 2, eff. May 27, 2003.)

#### **§ 1677. Penalties**

A person who violates any of the provisions of, or who fails to perform any duty imposed by this chapter, or who violates any rule or regulation adopted hereunder shall be fined not less than \$10.00 nor more than \$100.00 for each offense. Each day upon which such violation occurs constitutes a separate offense. In addition thereto, such person may be enjoined from further violation. The secretary may also seek administrative penalties under section 15 of this title for violations of this chapter. (Amended 2003, No. 37, § 4; No. 42, § 2, eff. May 27, 2003.)

## 2017 Equipment Rental Rates

<b>Item</b>	<b>Annual Fee for Mentor Farms</b>	<b>Annual Fee for Incubator Farms (yr 1-3)</b>	<b>Unit of measurement</b>
Land	\$210	\$168	Per Acre
Water Access (if using well water)	\$285	\$228	Per Meter
Water Rate (if using well water)	0.0051	.0051	Per Gallon
Land Management Fee	\$775	\$620	Per Farm
Propane	Market rate	Market rate	
Greenhouse Lot (tenant pays for installation of electricity, gas, and water. IC pays for water access and water per gallon)	\$400	\$320	Per Lot
Cooler Pallets in IC owned cooler	\$320	\$256	Per Year
Hay Barn Basement	\$9.50	\$7.60	Square Foot
Farmer Barn Loft Space (May-Oct, 1/2 bay minimum)	\$430/bay	\$344/bay	Bay = roughly 1/3 loft
Farmer Barn Access Fee (Wash station Access)	\$310	\$248	Per Farm
Farmer-Owned Cooler space (for the installation of farmer-owned coolers & assoc. costs)	\$310	\$248	Per year
Corn Crib	\$330	\$264	Per year
Bunker	\$115	\$92	Per year
Metal Barn	\$170	\$136	Per year
Food Hub Cooler Pallet	\$75	\$75	Per month

## **INTERVALE CENTER FARMS PROGRAM APPLICATION**

- **Please submit this form electronically to [maggie@intervale.org](mailto:maggie@intervale.org) or by mail to 180 Intervale Rd, Burlington, VT 05401**
- **Please note that this application is just the first step in your Incubator Program application. Please read the “Application Procedure” for more information about all of the required steps.**

**Names of All Farmers:**

**Business Name, if applicable:**

**Contact Person**

**Name:**

**Address:**

**Daytime Phone:**

**Evening/Weekend Phone:**

**Email:**

**Type of Business:**

1. Please describe the farm you wish to establish in the Intervale. Tell us what crop(s), live goods or livestock you plan to grow, approximately what size you think your farm will be, etc.:

2. What markets are you planning on selling to? Why do you think your products will sell?

3. Tell us about your experience farming.

4. If you're accepted as an Incubator Farmer, how do you see your farm in three to five years? Where do you envision transitioning off to after your 5 year tenure in the Intervale is complete?

5. The Intervale is located in a floodplain. How will your business survive a potential flood event? If you are planning to raise livestock, what will be your plan for moving your animals?

6. Is there anything else you think we should know about you at this juncture?

7. Please provide two references who we may contact.

**Reference 1:**

Name:

Address:

Title:

Relationship:

E-mail:

Phone:

**Reference 2:**

Name:

Address:

Title:

Relationship:

E-mail:

Phone: