



New Entry Farming Project Newsletter—Spring 2006

Volume 2, Issue 2

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New Entry's First CSA Director's Note from Hugh Joseph

Jody Biergiel and Kimberley Fitch
NESFP is launching a new initiative which "should go far in creating community in Lowell and in advertising New Entry's mission" according to New Entry's Consultant, Kate Sullivan. The new program, a Community Supported Agriculture project (CSA), allows consumers to pay in advance for the purchase of weekly shares of fresh, diverse, ethnic crops. Members will pick up their shares each week for 18 weeks, starting in mid June. The shares will include American favorites such as tomatoes and peppers, along with specialty crops from Asia and Africa, such as baby bok choy and ground

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Hugh Joseph, NESFP Director

The 2006 growing season is here. This is the time when everyone who wonders what we do all winter sees the results of all our training, planning, and prep work with both new and returning farmers. This year we have had the best 'crop' of new farmers yet. They are capable, energetic,

and ready to start pushing more than pencils and paper. We have a very busy spring already – getting a new farm site ready in Sutton and expanding the Richardson Dairy site in Dracut.

Our marketing coop is expanding, and we are launching our new farm employment initiative. On top of that, farmers will now be enrolling in our Independent Farmer Program – a new initiative to help farmers transition to their own farm enterprises. That also means continuing to look for new land in the area that farmers can expand to over the coming years.

To meet these challenges,

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NESFP and MORI Create Farm Employment Directory

Jericho Bicknell and Kimberley Fitch
A new partnership has been established to help immigrants and refugees find employment. The New Entry Sustainable Farming Project and the Massachusetts Office for Refugees and Immigrants (ORI) joined forces to develop an employment directory, which was based on a survey distributed to 350 farms in Massachusetts. The focus of the survey was to identify farms in Massachusetts which hire labor and may be interested in hiring refugees and immigrants with agricultural backgrounds.

ORI is the state office that assists refugees and immigrants to become self-sufficient and

participate in the economic, social, and civic life of Massachusetts. ORI is in the planning phase to assist refugees with farming backgrounds to tap into agriculture opportunities in Massachusetts.

In recent months, NESFP and ORI have been discussing better ways to serve the refugee and immigrant community interested in agriculture. ORI's primary focus is refugees while the NESFP concentrates mainly on immigrants.

Many refugees and immigrants wish to be part of the agricultural sector in this country and they also need to earn a living. It's hoped that the employment directory will allow them to

learn about agriculture first hand while earning a living. As this initiative progresses, opportunities for farm mentorships will also be developed.

The directory includes 18 farms which have indicated that they are interested in hiring refugees and immigrants. Directories have been distributed to area refugee service providers, employment training centers, and ethnic organizations.

It is anticipated that Asian, African, and Eastern European immigrants and refugees will use the directory. Please call NESFP at 978-654-6745 if you would like to receive a copy of the directory.

New Entry's Third Annual Winter Training Graduation

Jennifer Hashley spoke to the farmers about how this was "the start of their journey" and that it was time to "plant the seeds they'd been planting in their minds" during the training program.

Jody Biergiel and Kimberley Fitch

Enticing odors filled the NESFP offices as guests arrived carrying ethnic dishes. A number of graduates were dressed in the traditional garb of their homeland.

Trainees, their family members and friends, NESFP staff, Tufts interns and CTI representatives gathered on the evening of February 28th to honor the accomplishments of 11 participants of the NESFP training program. The ceremony, which began with an introduction by Hugh Joseph, Program Director, quickly became emotional as graduates took turns speaking about what the program has meant to them. Ly Khoxayo, originally from Laos, said that this day will always have



Seona Ban with her family.

particular significance for him. In addition to celebrating his training class graduation, he was also celebrating the 20th anniversary of his flight from Laos. Another graduate, Lamine Kebeh, (originally from Liberia) knows first hand about the influence that farming can have

The Whole Group! Back row (left to right): Kate Sullivan, Chheath Srey, Thongsay Saysongkham, Mangkone Sananikone, Odongo Makokha, Beo Leong Lim. Middle row: McKenzie Boekholder, Ignatius Asamany, Seona Ban, Lamine Kebeh, Ly P Khoxayo, Jennifer Hashley, Kimberley Fitch. Front row: Hugh Joseph, Suliman Kamara, Larry Dixon.

on a community. He has seen how people can suffer when farming is mismanaged. Beo Lim, originally from Malaysia, spoke about the importance farming networks. He said that wherever he travels, he finds that "the farming commu-



Lamine Kebeh presenting his professional-looking business plan.

nity is all family." Mangkone Sananikone, originally from Laos, who leads a Buddhist temple in Westford, hopes to draw on the skills he has learned in class to develop a farm at the temple's three-acre site. Chheath Srey (originally from Cambodia), wishes to learn all he can about agriculture and eventually transfer this knowledge to his home country so that he can develop a thriving farming sector there.

Larry Dixon, who conducted the training class with Jennifer Hashley, presented three special awards. Ly Khoxayo received the "Most Inquisitive Mind" award. Seona Ban was given the "Perfect Attendance" award. Lamine Kebeh was presented with the "Best Business Plan" award. Lamine created a

large poster-board of his crop schedule which he shared with the guests. The award winners received \$50 gift certificates to Johnny's Selected Seeds.

Jennifer Hashley, Project Coordinator, spoke to the farmers about how this was "the start of their journey" and that it was time to "plant the seeds they'd been planting in their minds" during the training program. Karen Frederick, Executive Director of Community Teamwork, Inc., voiced her appreciation to the participants who she said "help us (at CTI) implement our mission to assist people to participate in the decisions that affect their lives." She is also excited to receive her first share of farm produce from the World Peas CSA of which she is a member.

The evening ended with a potluck feast and music. The table was spread with curries, chicken, rice noodles, and sweet bread with a fish salad.



The Graduating Class of 2006: One Dream

Jody Biergiel and Kimberley Fitch

Nine immigrants, representing eight different countries, together speaking over 12 different languages, collectively having attended over 400 hours of training class, are all working toward one common dream. The dream of farming is the force which has drawn these people together from various corners of the globe. They are the most diverse class in the 3-year history of the New Entry training program. They are from Ghana, Cameroon, Zimbabwe, Liberia, Kenya, Cambodia, Malaysia, and Laos.

Hugh Joseph boasts that this class has high-level language skills, and are competent and inquisitive. This is also one of the largest graduating classes, with the greatest number of enrolled students finishing the entire course.

All of the farmers rearranged busy schedules in order to accommodate the weekly three-hour classes. Vocations of the graduates include: animal care technician, realtor, electrical assemblyman, Buddhist Monk, childcare



Back row (left to right): Chheath Srey, Thongsay Saysongkham, Mangkone Sananikone, Odongo Makokha, Beo Leong Lim. Front row (left to right): Ignatius Asamany, Seona Ban, Lamine Kebeh, and Ly P Khoxayo

provider, corporate manager, and horticulturalist.

Graduates will grow a large variety of crops at four different sites. One of the sites is owned by a Buddhist Temple, and another site, consisting of 55 acres, was recently purchased by a graduate. The remaining two sites are NESFP managed. Farmers intend to grow crops including both ethnic and American favorites, such as: okra, hot peppers, long beans, pea tendrils, summer squash, tomatoes, cucumbers, baby

bok choy, shallots, and blueberries. Sale outlets will include grocery stores, farmers markets, direct sales to families, and sales through the NESFP World Peas Coop and CSA. One farmer plans to focus on value added products for internet and specialty food store sales.

The graduates are anxious to make practical use of their classroom training, but first, they will tackle a task they probably didn't address in training class—rock picking.

Nine immigrants, representing eight different countries, ... all working toward one common dream.

NESFP Training Program: Passion and Commitment

Jody Biergiel and Kimberley Fitch

An 18-week class is a serious commitment for anyone, especially those with full-time jobs, families, and community commitments. Though most NESFP trainees are faced with major competing time demands, their passion for farming drives them to dedicate their energies to completion of an 18-week course, which is required for NESFP graduation. NESFP staff carefully assesses each candidate, and enroll only those applicants who seem most motivated. Candidates must be competent with English and have

some farming background.

The program has graduated about 50 students over three years. The 18-week training includes field trips and class lessons, with subjects ranging from pest management and soil health to the development of business plans.

NESFP training continues long after the course is completed. Farmers can work on land managed by New Entry and receive one-on-one technical assistance. They utilize the skills they learned in the training program and refer to the knowledge base they de-

veloped while farming in their homeland. Farmers are allowed to stay on NESFP land for three years before they move onto their own land, thus allowing room for the next generation of trainees.

In addition to classroom learning and farm site training, New Entry offers a 4-week Explorer Course. This "awareness building" course introduces the political and market culture of American agriculture, and encourages trainees to be realistic about their goals and abilities.

Though most NESFP trainees are faced with major competing time demands, their passion for farming drives them to dedicate their energies towards completion of the 18-week training course.

Farmer Profile: Seona Ban of Cameroon



She was surprised by the convenience food environment, which is created by the prevalence of grocery stores and corner markets. In contrast, Bamenda contains only one single large open-air regional market.

Kimberley Fitch

She misses the large open cooking fires. She misses the intense flavor of fresh corn after it roasts in the outdoor flames. "People here prefer the soft-kernel corn," she says. "In my country, we feel that the best flavor comes from the hard kernel."

It's been three years since Seona Ban, originally from Bamenda, Cameroon, has tasted the hard-kernel corn of her homeland. Seona left Cameroon in 2003, and was able to eventually settle in Lowell, mainly through the efforts of her brother, who had immigrated 12 years earlier. Seona provides childcare for her brother's two children (aged three and four years-old). Seona's cousin also lives in Lowell. Seona left behind her parents, three sisters, and another brother. She keeps in touch with friends and family members in Cameroon by phone.

When she lived in Cameroon, an integral part of Seona's daily life included working with family members

on the farm. She says, "Since opportunities for employment are limited... everyone farms." Seona has not farmed since leaving Cameroon. She graduated from the NESFP farmer training program in February, 2006, and has recently been assigned a plot on NESFP managed land.

Seona feels that farming in Cameroon is probably much easier than farming in Massachusetts since, "there are only two seasons in Cameroon: its either rainy or dry. The rainy season lasts for nine months." These conditions allow for a longer growing season, and a somewhat more predictable climate. Average temperatures in Cameroon are in the 80's. The crops that Seona grew in Cameroon included cassava (a tropical root plant), cocoyams (with a gestation period of up to six months), black beans and corn.

When Seona arrived in the U.S., she was amazed by the abundance of grocery stores and corner markets. In Cameroon, she had no shopping alternatives. The choice was either

fresh food, or no food. Bamenda contains only one single large open-air regional market. This market attracts both local residents and people from surrounding towns. Those who live outside of town utilize the market as a wholesale supplier, and they carry purchases home for resale to their neighbors.

Seona has experienced her first taste of digging in the in the U.S. soil. She is farm organically on her assigned plot at Richardson's Dairy farm in Dracut. Seona will participate in the World Peas Coop and CSA operations. She is confident about the farming skills which she developed while in Cameroon. At the same time, she is somewhat tentative about new technologies (such as plastic mulch and row cover), which she will be trying for the first time. She looks forward to enjoying some of her own fresh vegetables, making some money, and showing her farm to her young niece and nephew.

Cameroonian Cuisine

Colleen Matts

Situated between the northern, western, and central areas of the African continent, the cuisine of Cameroon is a meld of the many flavors throughout Africa, along with lingering French overtones remaining from colonial times. While the lively big cities offer a variety of western cuisines and restaurants, every one of the ethnic groups in Cameroon boasts a specialty dish as well. With vast areas of land within the country suitable for agriculture, the staples of Cameroonian cuisine are many; cassava, yams, rice, plantains, potatoes, maize, beans, and millet are just a few. Millet is a particularly important dish in northern Cameroon where the best ways to preserve this staple are to grind it into flour for steaming (*dakéré*) or forming into pastas or to brew it into beer known as *bil-bil*. The leaves of many plants, like manioc leaves (*feuille*), are an important base of Cameroonian meals that also include a variety of meats (beef, chicken, goat, sheep) and fish from the coast.



Clockwise from top: cassava, yam, and maize.
Pictures from www.iita.org



Cameroon's bustling cities are modern and sprawling but they recede into landscapes and climates of all types – rainforests, savannahs, deserts, and coastal plains – which comprise some of Africa's most prized parks, wildlife reserves, and long beaches. For the more adventurous traveler, the Mandaras Mountains, surrounded by traditional villages, can provide days of rugged hiking.

The ethnic groups in Cameroon are as diverse as the climate and terrain. There are more than 250 ethnic groups in this country, and many are known for their distinct styles of art and craftsmanship: the Kirdi of the western mountains fashion unique pottery, the Bamileke create statuettes of human and animal figures, and the Tikar pound brass into pipes.

Cultural Tidbit: Cameroon

By Colleen Matts

The Bali, the Ngoutou and the Bamum people all have incomparable styles of masks, some of which are two-faced and others that are smiling.

The artwork and craftsmanship of Cameroon have developed throughout a relatively stable, peaceful past compared to many African countries. Cameroon was originally a German colony but it was divided among the British and the French following World War I. The people of Cameroon began their journey toward independence with violent uprisings that were squashed by French forces. In 1961, however, the French and British areas of Cameroon were merged to create the country as we now know it. Since 1982, Cameroon has been governed under an ethnic oligarchy led by President Paul Biya, who allowed multi-party presidential elections in 1992 to accommodate the slow but steady push toward democracy. Corruption within the government has slowed the country's progress somewhat and kept a heavy hand over the

media, especially newspapers. Nevertheless, the people of Cameroon have enjoyed the development of agriculture, transportation systems like roads and railways, and the petroleum industry along with substantial investments into social services like health care and education, which has given Cameroon one of the highest literacy rates in all of Africa. While the country is still recovering from a long recession, Cameroon is considered very well endowed with great cultural, agricultural, and industrial resources.



Njamma-Jamma

Ingredients

2-3 Tbsp vegetable oil
2-3 garlic cloves, minced
1 onion, finely chopped
1/2 tsp cayenne pepper or red pepper flakes (more or less to taste)
2 or more lbs of greens (collards, kale, mustard greens, Swiss chard, or other)
1 c water or vegetable or chicken stock
Salt to taste

Remove stems, then clean, drain, and tear or shred greens. Then heat oil in a large skillet or pot. Over high heat, saute onions and garlic for a few minutes. Add pepper and stir for one minute. Reduce heat.

Add greens to the pot, and cook over medium heat for several minutes. Stir greens often, but keep the pot covered as much as possible. Add the water or broth and cover. Cook over low heat until the greens are tender, about 10-20 minutes longer. Add salt to taste. Serve hot!



Source: www.congocookbook.com

African Hot Sauce

Ingredients

12 hot peppers
1 small green pepper, sweet or bell
1 clove garlic
1 medium onion
2 small cans of tomato paste
4 Tbsp vinegar
1 tsp sugar
1 tsp salt

Remove stems and seeds from hot peppers. Be very careful not to touch your eyes or face while handling hot peppers and be sure to wash your hands after handling! In a food processor, grind hot peppers, green pepper, garlic, and onion. Combine all ingredients in a sauce pan, and simmer over low heat for 1-2 hours. Refrigerate in jars, and serve with everything!

NEW ENTRY SUSTAINABLE FARMING PROJECT

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We're on the Web
www.nesfp.org

NESFP Wish List

- Storage tubs / crates
- Hoses / wash tubs
- Irrigation equipment
- Picnic tables
- Storage lockers and shelves for sheds
- Hand tools for farms
- Wheelbarrows
- Pop up tents and plastic tables for markets
- Graphic design work (for NESFP logo)
- Framed Artwork for office (farm /veggie themes)
- Conference table and chairs

To donate any of these items to the NESFP, please contact Jennifer Hashley at 617-636-3793 or email: jennifer.hashley@tufts.edu.



The Summer Training Program

Jennifer Hashley

Each summer, NESFP

hosts a series of on-farm training workshops and field trips to local farms and suppliers. This season the focus is less on workshops and more on individual on-farm technical assistance to assist growers with production needs. Field trips as part of the local CRAFT program (see <http://www.emasscraft.org>) will be scheduled for farmers to visit other farm operations and network with beginning farmers throughout Massachusetts. There are two workshops that will be held and are required for all farmers involved in our program. The workshops will focus on preventive pest management and safe equipment use. The pest management workshop will be held in early May and emphasize cultural (preventive) practices that can be used to manage pests. Pesticide safety and hands-on practice calibrating a sprayer are taught and growers will learn how to treat specific pests (emphasizing the use of organic controls). The equipment use

workshop will be held in mid-May and cover the basics of farm safety and mechanical considerations for use of the BCS rototiller that NESFP provides for farmer use at training sites. In addition to these two workshops, field-based assistance is provided to growers in the areas of soil testing, fertility management, record-keeping, irrigation, post-harvest handling, marketing, and more!

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Jennifer Hashley training Hmong farmers in a past Summer training Session.

New for 2006! Farmer Field Manual

Jennifer Hashley

This spring, NESFP created a new "Farmer Field Manual" that highlights all of the important on-farm guidelines and recommended practices for NESFP training farms. Since so many people share the same space and resources, NESFP created some ground rules to keep everyone happy. The manual has contacts for NESFP staff, landowners, and farmers in the program, farmer plot locations, the seasonal training schedule, basic program information, fees, schedules, and

rules of the NESFP training farms. The manual also contains recommended preventive pest management actions, information about purchasing crop and liability insurance, and guidelines for organic production. After review of the manual with NESFP, each farmer is asked to sign an "Agreement to Farm" before beginning the growing season. Farmer feedback has been positive – "having all the guidelines and contact info in one place is great!"

New CSA, Continued from page 1

cherry.

NESFP staff held information sessions, made phone calls, and hung posters in strategic locations around Lowell to promote the CSA. Efforts paid off and shares sold out quickly. Demand far exceeded the supply of fifteen CSA memberships.

Nine New Entry farmers will coordinate their crops to ensure abundant and diverse shares for CSA members. The CSA will also allow consumers to connect with producers. CSA members and farmers met for the first time in April to discuss produce preferences. Farmers and CSA shareholders will continue to cultivate relationships during the upcoming farm tour (scheduled for June 10th), and during CSA share distribution days.

Sullivan hopes the CSA will be a motivation for new farmers due to the guaranteed market and community support that the CSA will provide.

Director's Note, Con't from page 1

our staff has grown again. We are now eight regular staff, (consisting of consultants, part-time, and full-time staff) in addition to the many student interns for the summer and throughout the academic year. Welcome to McKenzie Boekholder (Technical Assistance Coordinator), Bruce Wooster (Farm Manager), and Susan Phinney (Program Associate). We wish all the farmers a great season with good weather.

— Hugh Joseph