



Photos courtesy of farm website

ENVIRONMENTAL BENCHMARKING

CASE STUDY: Remembrance Farm

Nathaniel Thomson – Remembrance Farm

Remembrance farm is located in the Trumansburg area with land that is in both Tompkins and Schuyler Counties. It is a vibrant operation specializing in salad greens and root vegetables through various retail outlets, restaurants and through individual shares of a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program. Growing food at any scale, including a commercial enterprise, is a balancing act in managing a wide landscape of risks. Risks take the form of weather, production strategies and yields, pest and weed control, consumer markets, the economy, cash flow and debt to name a few. Owners Nathaniel and Emily Thompson operate and manage “risk” of this one-hundred acre, certified organic vegetable produce and organic dairy farm with a focus on biodynamics. About forty acres are owned and another sixty are rented to accommodate full production. During our conversation, Nathaniel shared that working this land starts with a philosophy and appreciation that the farm is in itself a living and breathing organism, and that the methods and practices used enhance and balance all aspects of health to the farm. The human health and spiritual aspects are also nourished through these methods. Make no mistake, Nathaniel is a trained agricultural scientist. Growing up in the Hudson valley, he gained some farm experience as a young man and refined his existing awareness of biodynamic culture. His interest was keen and with education and a few decades of persistence, now makes this farm and philosophy a continued work in progress. Using tools and services available including: soil nutrient testing, grazing

Farm Details



MUNICIPALITY:
Trumansburg

FARM SIZE:
100 Acres

PRODUCTS:
Vegetable Crops
Mixed Livestock

PRACTICES:

- Conservation Stewardship Program
- Reduced Tillage
- Cover Crops
- Grass Waterways
- Field Drainage by Tiles
- Field Drainage by Ditches
- Rotational Grazing
- Silvopasture
- Windbreaks
- Double Covering Greenhouse Insulation
- High-Efficiency Lighting
- Insulated Buildings

MOST PROUD OF:

Intensive cover cropping

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management plans and soil health assessments all help to monitor improvements made and amendments needed. Nathaniel's use of animals in organic and biodynamic production helps contribute to the living organisms and the fertility in the soil.

This farm uses a number of recognized healthful agricultural practices that contribute to a healthy ecosystem. An important practice for this farm is that of using mulches and cover crops. The planting of cover crops improves the soil, as well as the farm's financial bottom line. Species and varieties of cover crop seeds used is a yearly balancing act with considerations that include seed cost per pound, market availability and unique crop characteristics. Reducing soil compaction, soil erosion, and weeds along with improving the soil's water holding capacity and the nutrient stores go a long way towards helping improve crop yields. Rotational grazing and pasture management are key to help with nutrient cycling and building organic matter. Nathaniel did share that it is sometimes challenging economically to manage both livestock and crops. In part this is due to the essential separation of livestock from the high-value produce. Remembrance Farms applied and received money through the Conservation Stewardship Program for high-tunnel construction as well as for practices that help actively manage, maintain existing conservation practices, as well as to implement additional conservation activities.

Nathaniel imagines the future in helping others realize and take an interest in the farmer experience. Like many farmers, there is a desire to have the non-farming public understand the farming lifestyle, but the important contributions of growing food for our neighbors near and far is a challenge and a complex business.

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