

## Workforce Development at Salvation Farms' Vermont Commodity Program

Twenty-one (21) individuals have completed a 16-week job readiness training in food handling and light manufacturing at Salvation Farms' food hub. All but three (3) individuals secured full- or part-time employment post training, a rate of 86%.



The individuals who completed Salvation Farms' job readiness program confronted diverse barriers to employment.

- 6 were in recovery from substance abuse
- 10 had criminal records and 7 had been incarcerated
- 5 were single parents
- 7 had a disability
- 8 had diagnosed mental health challenges
- 7 had physical health challenges, not qualifying as disabilities
- 5 had experienced homelessness
- 3 were youth between 18 and 24 years of age
- 2 were from refugee families

87% of trainees report changes in food system knowledge and food choices while 73% report an increase in self-esteem and confidence.

Salvation Farms seeks a one-time appropriation for planning and buildout of infrastructure needed to move the job-training program and food hub into a new and permanent location.

Additionally, Salvation Farms seeks an annual appropriation to support the job-training components of the food hub's operation. Salvation Farms will report annually the program's impact to the Legislature; how many individuals receive training, move into employment, and report changes in their self-esteem and diet-related behaviors.

Through distributing wholesome food and providing job training in its food hub, Salvation Farms serves an individual's whole person. This fosters self-worth and affects physical and mental health. Salvation Farms prepares people for employment, helping them support themselves and contribute to the local economy. A win-win-win.

**Watch this brief video to learn more:** <https://youtu.be/bC7QvE1fw7w>

Salvation Farms is a federally recognized, 501c3 non-profit. The organization has a Board of Directors and its founder serves as its Executive Director. Salvation Farms began gleaning in 2004, collecting surplus crops from farms for distribution to the hungry. In 2008, Salvation Farms' founder instituted the Vermont Foodbank's gleaning program. In 2012, Salvation Farms established the Vermont Gleaning Collective (an association of gleaners), built a web application to support gleaning in Vermont, and began developing the Vermont Commodity Program to clean, process, and package Vermont's surplus produce for distribution to those in need. The Vermont Commodity Program is Salvation Farms' food hub and job-readiness program. In 2016, Salvation Farms surveyed farmers and discovered an estimate of more than 7,000 tons of edible produce remain on Vermont farms each year.

**Salvation Farms' Vermont Commodity Program** has distributed more than 1,845,330 servings of local food since 2012.

**Salvation Farms' Lamoille Valley Gleaning** has distributed more than 429,100 servings of fresh, local food since 2004 to sites like food shelves, Meals on Wheels, affordable and senior housing, and a variety of care facilities.

**The Vermont Gleaning Collective** has served more than 200 farms and gardeners, moving more than 2,938,240 servings of fresh, local food since 2012.

"Salvation Farms is a change-maker where social capital creates community strength and resilience: having established the Vermont Commodity Program to process and package surplus crops in the same site that is dedicated and invested in jobs training. By understanding the full spectrum of the challenge behind hunger and taking it head on: not only by feeding people but by helping people to feed themselves. I am fortunate to be one such proud recipient. Having experienced hunger firsthand I can say I have walked in those shoes. Everyone deserves access to good food and being able to provide for themselves and their families. Salvation Farms has helped to change my life and I can say with assurance this is true for my fellow trainees."

- Vermont Commodity Program Trainee

"Being a part of this program has really opened my eyes in so many ways. I can now see the things that I need to work on and give myself a big pat on my back for my accomplishment because of the skills that you all have taught me in this short time together."

- Vermont Commodity Program Trainee