

To Whom it May Concern:

6/5/16

I decided to start farming in 1995. I had absolutely no agricultural background, from land to animals, or experience. I learned early on the importance of land available for agriculture in New Jersey, as in my quest to grow my new business, I was severely handicapped due to the fact that there was not much land available for sustainable, agricultural enterprises.

In 1997, I purchased my 1<sup>st</sup> farm in NJ and learned about farmland preservation, where the county and state paid farmers to NOT develop their properties. I quickly reviewed and researched this option to see how I could incorporate this program into the model I was building. I saw this as a way to help me fund my farm venture. I had no tractors, equipment or livestock, and I needed the seed money from selling my development rights to fulfill my objective of farming and providing healthy, organic food for my family and others.

By 2000, it became apparent that in order to build a sustainable, organic farming enterprise, I was going to need more land that was not going to be developed at any given time, as it takes many years to bring conventional farm land into a profitable, organic status. It was then that I realized how important this protected land was to me and more important how vital it was going to be for future generations. Without this protected land, I would not have been able to start my company, nor would other farmers have farm land available to them in perpetuity so they too would be able to continue growing their agricultural ventures. I had made the commitment to follow through with preserving my farm and any other farms that I could help take these necessary steps to ensure the future of agriculture for everyone, now and for generations to come.

In 2003, I preserved my farm in NJ and also facilitated preserving 3 other farms that I was using in my operation.

In 2010, with available land in NJ quickly shrinking, my family and I purchased our first farm in Washington County NY in order to fulfill the growing demand for our products. When we did this, we instantly looked into available funding from state or federal agencies interested in protecting the farm land, forever, like we are. This leads us up to our current position today.

We have had an excellent relationship with Renee Bouplon from the Ag Stewardship Association. When we first met Renee, we told her of our intent to preserve our farm and possibly secure some funding to invest in more agricultural land. By doing so, we feel we can give something back to our community, be a role model for other farmers in the area, who are thinking of their future and the future of their children, and be the pioneers in our town as we would be the first permanently preserved farm in Harford. We feel that the ag Stewardship program has committed staff. They are very well organized and share the same views and values that we have.

In closing, Simply Grazin' today employees 11 people in its' NY operation and 35 employees company wide in 3 states. We currently farm an estimated 3,000 preserved acres in all 3 states and we are one of the largest organic, grass-based livestock operation on the East Coast. None of this would have been possible without the foresight of past and current farm land conservationists.



Mark Faille, President

Simply Grazin' Organic Farms LLC