

## Stories of Success:

Our 2018-2021 Strategic Plan offered us an opportunity to create a roadmap that underpinned 3 core goals: Land Stewardship, Sustainable Development of the organisation and Beacon Status of our Farms.

So, what have we achieved?

### 1. More Land in Trust

At the time of writing the strategy the Trust was stewarding 300 acres of land, consisting of Brambletye Fields at Tablehurst, Huxhams Cross and Oakbrook and custodian stewardship of 150 acres at Rush Farm. To date, we have increased land in Trust to 529 acres due to acquiring our new land and tenants Springham Farm in East Sussex who are stewarding the diverse mixed enterprises across 229 acres. In the early stages of developing the land and business, Springham is already adding to the environmental, social, health, education and stewardship objectives of the Trust that align with 'public good' status.



### 2. Development of Family of Farms Status

All of our family of farms embrace the journey toward 'beacon status'. This encompasses:

*"...practicing respectful, regenerative agriculture that is inclusive of multiple and diverse enterprises and provides the local community with healthy food, opportunities to interact with nature, and enables learning from the land and improves the local economy."*

On the back of this, we have added an additional dimension: *Family of Farms status*. The principle being for all tenant and associate farms to come together yearly in a collaborative spirit. To take part in a creative, learning and sharing process of experiences and challenges in farming with different business models and realities. Themes will change relevant to the needs of the farms, but the recurring challenge is how each farm goes about generating a viable income while placing the needs of the nature, climate and people at the centre.

### 3. Development of Associate Farm Membership Process

Our Associate Farm Member status is a work in progress designed to support those connecting closely to the Trust's work with land and those intending to leave land to the Trust in the future. Working with such farms to refine the mutual benefits of the membership, allows the Trust to offer a much richer set of support systems to farms in the following ways:

- To provide mutual support in becoming a farm ecosystem/organism
- To understand different management systems
- To support the marketing and promotion of each farm's activities to a wider audience
- Succession planning with the help of the Trust to take on land ownership offered through behests and in a way that reflects the Trust's vision and aims.

St Giles Farm is our first Associate Farm Member and as we strengthen our working relationships with our existing and future tenants, we expect this process and relationship to evolve in a variety of ways.



#### 4. Partnership and Network Building

It was a bumpy road through the pandemic but coming out on the other side we're starting to feel the conscious momentum of our Trust and others reconnecting and finding collaborative opportunities that act upon our shared aims and vision as an organisation.

Organisations such as the Soil Association Land Trust and Ecological Land Cooperative are like-minded bodies and similarly to the Trust, are faced with very significant limitations - including access to finance, land, resources and skills. We have teamed up with the aim to build a UK-wide network of Land Trusts and combine our knowledge, learn from each other's experience, and share resources. By doing so, we aim to raise the profile, effectiveness and impact of all our work whilst retaining our individual identities and autonomy.

#### 5. Staff Development: Communications and Operation Roles

Funding is always the biggest challenge to sustaining the vision and carrying out our work. We were delighted to secure funding through increasing our farm-based income in 2021. As a result, we broadened our team by recruiting Amber Lawes-Johnson who runs our Communications and supports the Trust's development and Martin Neicho running Operations. We are beginning to see results through a strengthening of relationships across our farms, increased readership in our newsletters, greater connections with UK and European based organisations and general enquiries seeking guidance and support in accessing land and building farming careers or addressing farm succession issues.

With extra hands-on board, we've been able to provide more detailed advice and 1-1 support sessions with individuals enquiring about accessing land. We've successfully linked many individuals to other projects on farms and establish connections across our wider network hosting job opportunities and traineeships.

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#### Where are we now?

The Trust aims to further develop its role in securing and caring for the land biodynamically, supporting farmers, and engaging communities. We have recently developed our five-year 2026 strategy, which seeks to build on the successes of our existing farms and Trust work, and continue to expand the biodynamic and agroecological land movement. Underpinning this vision is a clear set of objectives outlined in our strategy:

- Secure long-term stewardship and security of existing land and further land for biodynamic agriculture.
- Provide a clear vision for our farms to achieve climate mitigation, become viable and thriving businesses, support local and rural economies with food supply and job creation.
- Expand our partnerships, share knowledge and resources with national and international networks to broaden our reach and achieve our aims.

#### What do we offer?

As a Trust we act as a vehicle for:

- Securing biodynamic and organic land in trust to enable people to connect to land and carry out viable, community supported food production in thriving landscapes.
- Tenancy agreements with communities that have a business plan to provide food, nature connection, and rural jobs in the local community.
- Support individuals running farms and looking towards the future of their farmland; we offer advice and facilitation for succession or bequest opportunities to secure land in trust.
- Those seeking land opportunities can initially expect support in the form of guidance and advice. We are then able to take this forward in several ways: help generate community support and buy-in, fundraising guidance, searching for land, support for building organisational status in the form of Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), Community Interest Company (CIC) or Community Benefit Society (CBS).

