

Case Study (#4 of 5) in southwest Iowa: Innovative Local Foods Access

This case study series highlights an innovative local foods access initiative happening in southwest Iowa. It includes a variety of initiatives and projects that can serve as idea-starters to incorporate in other communities. The Center for Rural Affairs is able to assist in developing local food access plans across the region. Visit cfra.org for more information.



 Matt Johnson and Tiffany Clifton

 Long Walk Farm

 Council Bluffs, Iowa



2020

Matt and Tiffany decided to buy a farm in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. It was an idea that was always in the back of their minds. Tiffany grew up on a farm, often doing chores for the neighbors. Matt would have loved to have been a farmer, but his family did not own land. They decided to become vegetable farmers due to a lower barrier of entry, when compared to row crop farming.

2023

Long Walk Farm sells its produce at the Legacy Farmers Market in west Omaha on Saturdays and Aksarben Omaha Farmers Market on Sundays. Matt and Tiffany also sell directly from their farm machine shed via an honor system roadside stand, which they refer to as the “honor shop.”

Research before starting

Matt and Tiffany read a lot of books and used online resources prior to starting their farm. They followed other farms’ work—big and small—attempting to pick up best practices and others’ tools.

They studied what others were doing in various climates and attempted to adapt those practices in their own climate.



Community interest

“ The former owners had lived on this land for 50 years, and their grandparents another 50 years before that.

The general public and folks who are interested in eating locally and in organic practices are really excited and welcoming—very inquisitive.

We do a lot of business with restaurants; the chefs are interested and glad to have options for fresh produce. We work with local restaurants who are known to buy local.

-Matt ”



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| INFO@CFRA.ORG

| 402.687.2100





Value-added and prepared products

“ We are adding a commercial kitchen to the farm to process our produce into value-added products such as refrigerator-pickled produce, Mason jar salads, spiralized vegetables, etc. to make it easier for our customers to do less prep work.

We also want to lower the barrier for people who want something as easy as opening a jar of pickles, or a Mason jar salad.

-Matt ”

Customers evolve

Over the past few years, Matt and Tiffany have seen a lot of younger shoppers. They have noticed those in their 20s and 30s have come to a better understanding of local, fresh, and real food.

Moving forward in the local foods space

“ Things that will move the needle forward are year-round local food availability, more food pop-ups, and more grass-roots education.

We offer a lot of educational opportunities during the months of May through October. You teach the kids and the kids teach everybody else.

-Matt ”



Future plans

Matt and Tiffany collaborate with other farmers and help bring produce to their customers. They believe they are not in competition, even though they are asking for money from the same people.

Additionally, they are in the process of redesigning the honor shop and will launch a local site to allow for pre-ordering for farmers market pick up and pick up at the farm. Honor shop hours are 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. daily.

They were pleasantly surprised that with no advertising and no set prices at the honor stand, they had plenty of customers who were very generous.



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