

Plan demonstration farm to include farm business incubator and educational use

Abstract: A farm plan was created to guide land use decisions for the demonstration farm at the Midwest Center for Entrepreneurial Agriculture in Marshalltown, Iowa.

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More details:

www.leopold.iastate.edu/research/grants/2009-1/M2006-24.pdf

This farm plan provides a practical, visible, hands-on example of a working diversified farm so that college administrators, beginning farmers and the community have the opportunity to see and learn all that is possible with small diversified farming in central Iowa.



MARKETING

What was done and why?

Marshalltown Community College (MCC), part of the Iowa Valley Community College District, initiated the Entrepreneurial and Diversified Agriculture (EDA) program in 2003. This program offers courses leading to a degree as well as non-credit courses in diversified agriculture. The Midwest Center for Entrepreneurial Agriculture (MCEA), part of the larger vision for the diversified agriculture program, is teaching students of all ages how to launch farm businesses that focus on growing food for local consumption. Farmland adjacent to the MCC campus is used as an important teaching site and demonstration farm for the MCEA program. The Leopold Center provided funds to research and plan and uses for the land. Besides helping college officials make choices about land use, it also served to inform community stakeholders and potential funding agencies with a basis for appreciating the goals of the demonstration farm.

What did we learn?

Three types of plots will be located on the farm: demonstration, community and incubator. The primary intent of the farm is to move individuals from one level of involvement to another: i.e., visitors to consumers to producers or students.

Demonstration plots will be used by EDA students to practice various methods of sustainable and organic production, as well as to exhibit the diversity of crops that can be raised in the Midwest, including biomass, food, and grain crops. Some areas of the farm will be used to showcase conservation practices.

Community plots will be small parcels of land that individuals and families can rent to raise crops for their own consumption. These growers will have access to advice on production and land stewardship as well as shared tools and resources.

Incubator plots will be larger parcels of land that entrepreneurs can rent to start sustainable, organic or specialty production. Once they are established, these farmers will receive assistance in finding and securing larger plots of land and equipment to buy or rent elsewhere. Besides having access to shared tools and resources, the farmers will be mentored on production and business practices.