



Luzum Heritage Farm Opportunity

SILT is proud to announce applications are open for its 170-acre Luzum Heritage farm and farmstead 6 miles south of Decorah, the fourth and largest farm donated to SILT in its 3 short years.

70 acres plus buildings are available starting as early as Fall 2018 for the 2019 growing season.

**Application deadline: Feb 28, 2018.
Decision by April 1, 2018.
First Full Growing Season - 2019.**

The Farm

The Luzum family has farmed this land in NE Iowa since 1873. The total size is approx. 170 acres in central Winneshiek County, 6 miles south of Decorah in what is known as the Driftless Area. The farm includes 98 acres of CRP (SILT will receive all payments for current CRP contracts.)

Available for farming are: 32 acres of farmstead, woodland, and miscellaneous; 19 acres of pasture, and 19 acres of rotational cropland. Cropland and pasture have been certified organic for 9 years.

The farm is an early soil-conserving farm in Winneshiek county, with approximately 2.5 miles of plow-built contour terraces dating from 1943 – some of the oldest remaining such terraces in the county.

The hilltop farmstead consists of a large pole barn plus attachment, machinery storage pole shed, 2 grain bins, and two outbuildings that have seen better days as hog and chicken barns, with one having potential for re-purposing.

The home is a 2-story, 1906 farm-style house with recent additions and renovations, comprising 2,275 sq ft of living area, with: kitchen, living, dining, office/misc, 4 BR (3 up, 1 down), 2 baths, sunroom, attached 2-car heated garage, and a wrap-around porch great for dining or simply being. There is a basement under the main house.

Heating/cooling is geothermal. A solar array built in 2013 provides ~60% of the farm's utility needs. Good wireless internet access from a tower near Calmar. Digital broadcast TV antenna with some internal cabling. Electrical circuit and solar array monitoring systems are internet accessible. Good major appliances included (washer, electric dryer, refrigerator, new electric range and new dishwasher). Antique wood kitchen range dating from 1936. Additional detached 2-car garage also exists.

There is a full line of appropriately sized, older equipment included with the farm, capable of servicing (planting, tending, and harvesting) a traditional livestock-oriented organic rotation of hay, small grains, corn. Applicants have the opportunity to gain equity of up to \$7,000 in the equipment with \$1,000 per year payments.

A small family of farm cats is included and must stay with the farm.

Decorah has both the Oneota Community Food Co-op and the Winneshiek Farmers Market in addition to great restaurants using local ingredients. The nearby Iowa Food Hub also provides opportunities to market into regional institutional markets. A robust local and sustainable food culture exists beyond what is usually found in a normal community of this size, providing opportunities for imaginative and energetic producers. Access to larger urban markets, from Minneapolis to Cedar Rapids is not uncommon among local food producers.

The Luzum Heritage Farm has most recently been known as Driftless Hills Farm – a name registered in Winneshiek County. Driftlesshills.com is the registered domain name. Both names are available for continued use with this farm and for marketing its products.

The donor of this farm still lives in the area and is willing to mentor (but not pester) a farmer who is interested in making use of any of the above resources to enhance sustainable local food production and availability.

Candidates

The ideal SILT candidate will have a high level of experience in their centerpiece enterprises, with extensive knowledge and skill sets to operate those enterprises at the Luzum farm. A successful candidate should also provide a thorough, specific business plan that articulates a clear vision of where the applicant is going and a realistic plan for how to get there.

Ideal candidates will have a passion and long-term intention to farm, and share SILT's values. They will respect the history of this farm, the loving care with which the farmstead has been maintained, and the value of this affordable donation to sustainable food production for all farmers. Such candidates value whole farm systems that meet the spirit of SILT's Sustainability Guidelines and Requirements available at silt.org.

To make the most of this opportunity, applicants may consider cooperative business relationships with fellow local farmers in their business plans. SILT is looking for applicants interested in building the SILT model who exemplify the kind of farmer we had hoped to help when creating our organization – someone otherwise locked out of long-term land access who is interested in building soil, improving water quality and growing the community of sustainable food farmers and consumers.

SILT encourages applicants to get creative. This farm has the potential for multiple species managed grazing, diverse fruit and vegetable operations, agri-tourism, agroforestry, niche markets and/or using the extra rooms in the home as a potential revenue stream.

Initial Lease

SILT is offering this incredible home, buildings and farmland for a first year discount of \$12,800 and \$13,800 for the last two years of a three-year lease. This rate reflects the true cost of payment, interest, taxes, insurance and management. SILT farmers may not undercut average local market rates due to benefiting from affordable rent.

The operator on this land may also be eligible for an ag risk payment through FSA. The donor estimates it will be around \$2,000 but all estimates come with the caveat that the current U.S. Congress is unpredictable at best.

Land Tenure

SILT intends to offer long-term land security to eligible farmers. Once a SILT Farmer has completed a 3-year probationary period, during which he or she has been consistently prompt with rent payments, and a good collaborator, farmer and neighbor, that farmer will have the opportunity to “rent-to-own” the house, buildings and farm equipment.

SILT will offer a 20-year ground lease that gives a farmer the ability to renew it and/or leave the farm to heirs interested in continuing to farm. (20 years is the maximum allowed under the Iowa Constitution.) Once CRP contracts expire, the parties will discuss whether or not to renew or end them and who will receive payments if renewed. (SILT is in the process of developing the policies regarding home ownership and will provide those materials when available. No part of this description is to be construed as legally binding.)