

**AVAILABLE LONG-TERM  
Annual/Perennial/Livestock/Agroforestry Opportunity  
Phoenix Farm  
5133 Strawbridge Rd. Iowa City, IA 52240**

**Request for Proposals Due Nov. 15, 2018:**

**Available Dec. 1, 2018 or as soon as possible after that** - 63 acres, chemical- and GMO-free farm between Iowa City and Solon available for long-term ground lease, option to purchase infrastructure. This farm is designed for multiple enterprises including perennial fruit and nut production, annual vegetable production, multi-species managed livestock production and agroforestry.

**Included:** A double-wide (former office) 4-room trailer in compliance with county as a residence, with bathroom, water heater, A/C, well, septic, but no kitchen, a single wide trailer for storage, 70' x 23' hoop house with end walls, vents and side curtains. Farm also includes a well with a powerful pump capable of watering livestock across entire 63 acres plus the residence and a septic that can support up to 10 people. 9-foot fence surrounds 3 sides with a cooperative landowner on the 4<sup>th</sup> (south) side. Potential exists for constructing fence along 4<sup>th</sup> side with many materials already available.

Land is contoured and planted with chestnuts, paw paws, peaches, persimmons, apples, honeyberries, seaberries, elderberries, gooseberries and more. This planting is approximately 5 years old and will require significant attention to become successful. Hoop house and approximately 3-5 flat acres are above flood plain.

**Offering**

- 3-year starter lease with 20-year subsequent inheritable lease subject to limitations of landowner rights. See below.
- Rent-to-own the current residence/building at \$6,000 per year for each of 3 years. Tenants own all improvements. Utilities not included.
- If tenant chooses to sell building instead of leasing, will share proceeds 50/50 with landowners. (Preferable especially if tenants do not plan to live on farm.)
- Any new construction costs will be borne solely by tenants and building(s) will be owned by them. They will have the right to sell the building(s) to the next tenant for the farm.
- Engineering and construction of any farm roads or other access necessary for residence(s) will be mutually agreed upon and expenses will be shared equally by landowners and tenants.
- There will be **no charge** for use of farm ground first three years *except to this extent*: Tenants keep first \$5,000/year of farm income (including fruit and nuts). Split annual profits 50/50 over that amount with landowners. Must show Schedule F annually. Any significant change in current farm use will require mutual consent. (i.e. clearcutting, pond building, agri-tourism, etc.)
- Ground lease 4<sup>th</sup> year and beyond will be sufficient to pay property taxes and insurance plus 10 percent of those net expenses for administration (2018 est. costs: \$1,500).
- Landowner retains right to custom farm hay on field east of Rapid Creek and field at top of the property. Tenants have access to fields between planted trees for grazing. Fields to be marked on aerial map.

- Due to the long-term investment in the perennials, the Winter/Spring of 2018-19 will involve culling and replacing them in consultation with the landowners, generally following a plan recommended by Tom Wahl of Red Fern Farm. (Available upon request)

#### **Limitations of landowners:**

Landowners are donating the deed to the Sustainable Iowa Land Trust with a Reserve Life Estate which means they continue to control the property in all ways except for the right to sell it.

Any lease signed by the landowners is subject to that agreement. If landowners give up their Reserve Life Estate, SILT becomes the new landlord and will negotiate a new lease with the tenants.

The landowners are making a good faith effort to design an opportunity and a lease in keeping with SILT's philosophy of sustainable agriculture and long-term access to land.

Landowners commit to communicating with SILT their desire that SILT give tenants who prove themselves worthy in the first three years right of first refusal of a SILT farm lease.

#### **Proposals are due Nov. 15 and must include:**

- Answers to essay questions below
- 3-year business plan (narrative only)
- 3 references

Landowners will schedule Open Houses in October and November or applicants can contact Carolyn, Ilsa or Will below to see if they are available.

**Landowner Note to Applicants:** We strongly favor a cooperative arrangement like one that has begun at the farm this year. Contact current farmers Carolyn Scherf, [carolyn.scherf@gmail.com](mailto:carolyn.scherf@gmail.com) William Kresse [wjkresse@gmail.com](mailto:wjkresse@gmail.com) or Ilsa DeWald [dewald.ilsa@gmail.com](mailto:dewald.ilsa@gmail.com) for more information about their plans for the future and/or about joining them. Applicants who choose not to join them are welcomed to explain why it isn't a good fit and propose their own model.

#### **Essay questions – answer in 750 words each or less. (If one sentence will do, use it.)**

1. How did you first become interested in farming and why do you want to be a farmer?
2. What does it take for a farmer to be successful? Which of those skills or characteristics do you have, and which challenge you? How will you overcome challenges when they arise?
3. What goals and expectations do you have for your life beyond farming? How will you meet those? (This might include relationships, education, leisure time, hobbies, travel, health, community building, and other income, living expenses, and retirement.) If you have a partner or family, how will their needs be met?
4. Describe your need for land and current access to it. What are your minimum acreage requirements? The maximum you could reasonably use? Do you have any other access to property or the means to purchase it? Do you expect to inherit a farm someday?
5. Why do you want to farm a Sustainable Iowa Land Trust farm? How does SILT fit into your career trajectory and your values as a farmer? Do you want to put your roots on this SILT farm until you retire, or is farming here a stepping stone to something else?

6. (Optional) How do you identify yourself? How has your identity shaped your desire to farm and the challenges you've faced in becoming a farmer?

**A final note from Suzan and Paul:**

**This entire project is an experiment.** We are seeking new ways to provide food farmers access to affordable land for nature-friendly farming. We want you to succeed, but we also want our soils and waters to become healthy again, our neighbors to be comfortable and happy with you and our community to look upon your work as a valuable contribution to the greater whole. We wish for this land to become a gift to future generations of sustainable food farmers, so that when you and your heirs are done farming it, another family may have a chance, whether that's a decade or a century from now. We invite you to join us in this experiment and help us build a better Iowa. We know it takes trust, and we know what it's like to be betrayed. We will have legal documents drawn up and we strongly recommend that you invest in legal review of them so we all know what we're getting into. But legal documents are only as good as the money anyone's got to enforce them, so we also strongly recommend you study up on the Sustainable Iowa Land Trust, ask questions and get involved, because it is this land that launched SILT. And it's that relationship that will outlive all of us.

Thank you and we look forward to hearing from you.

Contact Suzan at [suzan@lastdraft.com](mailto:suzan@lastdraft.com) or Paul at [epd2@psu.edu](mailto:epd2@psu.edu) or (319) 480-4241