



CASE STUDY

Farmer Training Program: Promoting Land Preservation Through Sustainable Agriculture



"The ultimate goal of farming is not the growing of crops, but the cultivation and perfection of human beings."

- Masanobu Fukuoka, The One-Straw Revolution

Client Profile

Willistown Conservation Trust (WCT) is a non-profit land trust that endeavors to protect the rural beauty of the 28,000 acres surrounding Willistown, Pennsylvania. It accomplishes this mission through a number of activities, including operation of a six-acre, sustainable farm called Rushton Farm. To expand its agricultural land activities, the WCT proposes to develop and demonstrate a model toward promoting sustainable agriculture by training, networking and positioning farmers with a much-needed combination of applied ecological knowledge, farming experience, business skills, and support networks.

The Project

Willistown Conservation Trust engaged Fox Management Consulting (Fox MC) at Temple University's Fox School of Business to develop a business model, corresponding business plan, curriculum recommendations, and financial model for the proposed farmer manager training program, tentatively named Rushton Master Farmer Training Program.

Recommendations

The research indicated there is a demand for well-trained farm managers led by land owners and a demand for training programs by prospective students. There are also four (4) areas for training program differentiation, including business training, applicant selection, alumni network development and sustainable farming in a bio-diverse environment.

The Fox MC team recommends that WCT move forward with the implementation of a two-year program. This is a unique opportunity for WCT to advance their mission of promoting sustainable agriculture in a bio-diverse environment and establishing WCT as the leading example. Training students and having them practice their newly acquired farming techniques integrated with effective business management will help advertise the unique farming methods at WCT. Over time, WCT will develop an extensive network of Rushton trained farm managers.

