

## Natural Borders Farm

My name is Elva Svendsen, and I own and operate Natural Borders Farm, which specializes in raising grass-fed beef and lamb naturally and humanely. I also raise a limited number of pigs, free-range chickens, and Maremma livestock guardian dogs on a 60-acre former dairy farm located in McDonough, NY (in Chenango County). Although not certified organic, I use no chemicals, hormones, or routine drugs on my farm. Natural Borders Farm focuses on diversity, sustainability, and respect for livestock, wildlife, and the land.



**SEEKING:** Someone who wants to run their own independent business onsite that would complement my farming enterprises, and if there's a good fit, become my successor, beginning to take over some of my business as I age, and eventually purchasing the farm. My intention is to have a solid succession plan in place within 10 years.

### The Immediate Opportunity

Short-term, I can offer an incoming farmer a written one-year lease to four flat tillable acres that I do not utilize, to launch their own business. These four acres are primarily Mardin channery silt loam (MaB), 3% to 8% slopes, and would be appropriate for growing vegetables and/or small fruit, both of which are greatly under-represented at the nearby farmers' market in Oxford, NY. Located an hour south of Syracuse, an hour west of Oneonta, and an hour east of Ithaca, Natural Borders Farm also has good proximity to larger markets in this region.



There is the potential for the same incoming farmer to raise livestock (such as poultry, goats, or rabbits) on shared, cattle-grazed land. (I estimate someone could easily raise 1,000 meat birds annually by moving meat birds behind my cattle, especially in the upper 25-acre field, which has a water system running through the center of the field that could supply water for the birds in every paddock.)

I have machinery, experience, and other resources that I am willing and able to share. I am also happy to make sections of various agricultural buildings



on site available right away, and to work collaboratively to determine how we could best share the land I am currently farming, to enable the success of a second operation on site.

### **The Long-Term Opportunity**

The longer-term opportunity is for a farmer who has launched a second enterprise on-site to become my successor if there is a good fit. If I can identify a successor, I can make a commitment to them by offering a long-term lease, including occupancy of the farmhouse, with an option to purchase at an affordable price, or a lease-to-own arrangement. I would like to have a solid succession plan in place within ten years, by which time I plan to vacate the big farmhouse, so that it can be occupied and purchased by the successor farmer. Within ten years, I would also like to have the option of phasing out of running certain aspects of my farm business, and want to have a successor in place who can take over these aspects.



### **Property Description**

*Farmer housing:* Owner-occupied, 3,000 sf, five-bedroom house on site, the upstairs of which I use very little, since my own bedroom is located on the first floor. Launching your farming enterprise on site would come with the opportunity for communal living. There is the opportunity to rent the entire upstairs of the big farmhouse, with shared use of the bathroom, kitchen, and living room, and the possibility of meals being included with the rental, or the possibility of sharing the purchase/preparation of food with me in a more collaborative way. I realize that ten years is a long time to share space with someone, and want to approach this with conscientiousness. My intention is to develop a retirement house on site, vacate the big house within ten years, and retire on-site. At the time when I vacate the farmhouse, my chosen successor will be able to purchase it at an affordable price. The farmhouse is a well-built structure, exterior most recently painted in 2016, with a steel roof added in 2001.



#### *Barns/structures:*

- **Main Barn** (140' x 40'):
  - Fully enclosed bank barn with wood siding and new steel roof
  - Milkhouse and additional large box stall in barn entrance area
  - Built ~1870, addition of four box stalls 1952
  - In very good condition

- New pump installed in 2009
- New electric wiring installed in 2001
- Drainage and foundation work completed in 2009
- Painted in 2007
- **Pole Machinery Shed (60' x 18')**:
  - Open-front five-bay machinery shed
  - Built ~ 1990
  - In good condition
- **Quonset Hut (42' x 21')**:
  - Built ~ 1975
  - In fair condition
  - Currently houses truck and tractor
- **Shed (16' x 25')**:
  - Built ~1970
  - In fair condition
  - Located near the house
  - Currently used to store a cider press and wood for maple syrup production
  - Wood siding
  - New steel roof in 2017
- **Greenhouse (8' x 16')**:
  - Built in 2008
  - Currently used to grow heirloom tomatoes



*Water access:*

- Two wells on the property
- Main barn has a new powerful pump that in addition to providing water to the barn, supplies water for the grazing system pipeline that runs 1,800 feet up a fairly steep hill
- House has a separate well that also supplies water to a grazing pipeline that is utilized on the hayfield
- Small, deep pond located at a boundary of four-acre field

*Equipment:*

- Some haying equipment, including baler, rake, tedder, and sickle-bar mower
- PTO-driven manure spreader, chain harrow, and lime spreader
- Truck and tractor

*Other experience:* I also have experience working with draft horses, as at one time, I

made all of my hay with the use of my own team of draft horses and also used them to spread manure daily. However, I no longer own a team of horses. I have considered using oxen on my farm, but have not yet accomplished this goal.

*Preservation of the farm:*

- *Current protections:* 42.5 acres of Natural Borders Farm are permanently protected through the Federal Grasslands Reserve Program (GRP). This land can be used for hay or pasture. The use of nine acres bordering the creek, that are steeper and wooded, is restricted until 2024 through the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP), such that livestock are not permitted access, which is consistent with how I believe the land should be used.



- *Future protections:* I am planning to permanently protect the affordability of the farm property for farmers, and am currently working with Equity Trust ([www.equitytrust.org](http://www.equitytrust.org)) towards this end. I am 59 years old and do not have children or heirs. I will likely use the model used to protect Caretaker Farm ([www.caretakerfarm.org/our-history/](http://www.caretakerfarm.org/our-history/)) where the farmer owns the buildings and farm business, and holds a secure 99-year ground lease to the land, owned by a nonprofit land trust organization. My vision is that within 10 years I will vacate the big farmhouse, so that it can be occupied and purchased by my successor. Upon my retirement, my successor will be able to purchase the agricultural buildings as well.

*Current farming practices:* Natural Borders Farm specializes in raising grass-fed beef and lamb. My cattle are managed on a rotational grazing system and spend the grazing season moving daily to fresh paddocks of native grasses. I graze poultry and sheep with my cattle to encourage an increased variety of native grass species and to provide natural predator protection. I strive to provide a natural, healthy, non-stressful, and enjoyable environment for all my livestock.



I utilize pigs for compost production in the barn. These pigs are housed in a 70-foot section in the cattle barn and also have access to a sizeable area outside. They rummage through the bedding material while the cows are outside during the grazing season. Pigs are also fed milk from my Ayrshire cow, cornmeal, garden excesses, and apples from the farm. I usually raise four pigs per year and have a limited amount of pork available in

both the fall and spring seasons. I also raise a small number of free-range meat chickens, usually 100, and keep a small flock of laying hens. I have a Maremma livestock guardian dog and occasionally have puppies for sale. I also have two Border Collies that work the sheep and cattle daily.

My cattle, sheep, and pigs are slaughtered on the farm to avoid stress for the livestock associated with trucking off the farm. My processor then takes the carcasses to his facilities where they are properly aged, and then cut and wrapped to my customers' specifications. Beef is sold directly to customers in quarters, halves, or whole, as are the pigs. Although not certified organic, no chemicals, hormones, or routine drugs are used on the farm.



Natural Borders Farm is located in a very private setting, surrounded on three sides by beautiful wooded land that is improved with hiking trails. Visitors are struck by the quality of this land and by the natural beauty all around. There are thousands of acres of nearby New York State forest land. I'm looking forward to finding the right person to launch their own farming enterprise here and become my successor, a farmer whose business and ethics will be a good fit with this remarkable place.



If you are interested in exploring this opportunity, please contact me by phone at (607) 647-9227 or at [gracyfarm@hotmail.com](mailto:gracyfarm@hotmail.com).