



Farm Profile:

J&C Cockfield Farm

by Amy Armbruster,
 Communications Coordinator

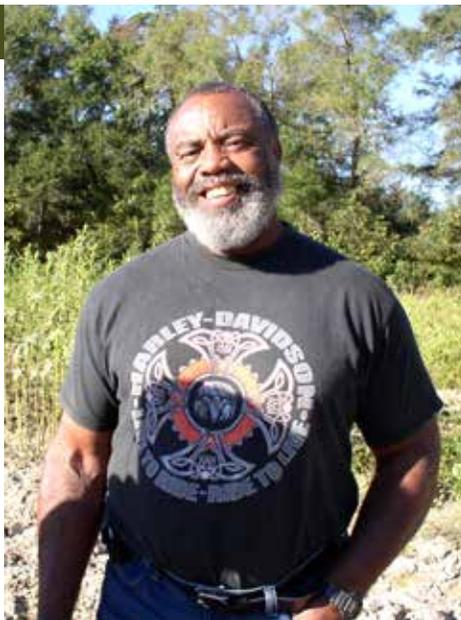
Allen Cockfield grew up on the same farm as his grandfather and mother, but when he left Coward, SC, he had no intention of coming back. He spent 31 years as a police officer in Florida. However, his sisters did not have the same financial security that a pension provided Allen, and he had promised his mother that he would keep the family together.

He saw an opportunity to do that with the family farm. He invested "way too much" and began work on J&C Cockfield Farms – named for his parents, James and Cecile.

Allen followed the footsteps of his grandparents, but he is also a trail-blazer. He talked to me from the cab of his old John Deere tractor while planting non-GMO soybeans. Allen is a big guy with broad shoulders and a deep, commanding voice; you can tell he was a cop. When you get him started on healthy food and soil, you might not guess that farming is his second career. He has big plans for this land.

"I told them, I'd only do it if it was organic," he begins. But the farm had worn-out soil. "When I inherited this family farm, there wasn't a bee flying around anywhere," he added. To transition into organic crops, Allen sought help.

His first stop was the local Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) office. The NRCS gives out funds for



*Allen Cockfield is transitioning his family farm to certified organic production
 Photo courtesy of Larry Cantrell*

Conservation Activity Plans (CAP 138). CAP 138s are invaluable to farmers interested in transitioning from conventional to certified organic production. Completed with a technical service provider, CAPs document practices that address site-specific natural resource needs like those that were a problem on Allen's farm: erosion, runoff, poor soil quality, pest problems.

The CAP tells you how to address identified needs and opens the door to additional cost-share assistance to implement conservation practices. If that wasn't a good enough deal, it also forms the basis of your Organic System Plan – the core document you need to become certified organic.

A Helping Hand from CFSA

The NRCS connected Allen with CFSA's Keith Baldwin, a technical service provider and organics expert. Keith worked with Allen to create a CAP for his farm that included an 8-year cover crop and vegetable rotation, plus a nutrient management plan.

"What Keith did for me was very helpful," Allen said. "He talks with you at a level you can understand. He doesn't overwhelm you with his knowledge, but he is very knowledgeable."

In J&C Cockfield Farms' CAP, Keith identified several resource concerns, including practices that could result in soil erosion and organic matter depletion, lack of irrigation for crops, potential off-farm nutrient movement, sub-optimal productivity and potential pest problems – all ghosts of the farm's conventional history.

He recommended a comprehensive vegetable and crop rotation plan, a water well and drip irrigation system, cover crops for nitrogen fertility, conservation cover for beneficial insect and pollinator habitat, mulching, a high tunnel, and a rotational grazing pasture.

Armed with this guidance, Allen plans to certify almost 30 acres and grow sweet corn, cucumber, Irish potatoes, peppers, watermelon, leafy greens, okra, lettuce and tomato, plus grain corn, wheat, canola and sweet potatoes. Allen was also interested in

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CAROLINA FARM STEWARDSHIP ASSOCIATION (CFSA)

CFSA is a membership-based organization of thousands of farmers, processors, gardeners, businesses and individuals in North and South Carolina. CFSA's mission is to advocate, educate and build connections to create sustainable food systems centered on local and organic agriculture.

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From the Director

FSMA Proves What Our Movement Can Achieve

Due to necessities of scheduling, this edition of the Stewardship News is likely arriving in your mailbox just a few days before, or a few days after, the Dec. 15 deadline for comment to the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) on revised proposed regulations under the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA). Hopefully, you are already receiving CFSA action alerts via email and are following us on social media, so have had the chance to be a part of our comment campaign on those new rules (and if not, please visit www.carolinafarmstewards.org/advocacy right away and connect with us!).

It was just about a year ago that, thanks to a concerted nationwide, grassroots effort and intense engagement by sustainable agriculture leaders with the agency, FDA announced that it would issue new FSMA proposals. This September, FDA offered revised language in several key areas, including the use of manure and compost; rules for water testing and treatment; the impact of the rules on local food systems; and due process for small direct-market farms and food businesses that Congress wanted to shield from the full impact of federal control under FSMA.

FDA made some important concessions, most notably on the issue of manure and compost. Originally, FDA demanded a 9-month window between applying raw manure to a field and harvesting produce crops from that field, and a 45-day window between applying treated compost and crop harvest. CFSA argued that these rules were unjustified, and indeed could increase foodborne illness risk in the food supply: In the absence of beneficial microbes from compost and manure application, sterile chemically-fertilized farm soils would be a breeding ground for pathogens. In the revised proposals FDA acknowledged that there is insufficient scientific evidence to support such draconian restrictions, or any restrictions for that matter. The feds now plan to study the subject to learn more about how these natural fertility systems work, and in the meantime decline to impose any mandatory withdrawal periods between applying natural fertilizers and harvesting produce. Our community should support FDA's approach.

A qualified improvement is FDA's definition of 'farm.' Under existing law, farms can be treated as food manufacturing plants if they pack or store fruits and vegetables from other farms. Under FSMA, they would be subject to onerous, industrial-scale paperwork requirements. This would impact multi-farm CSAs or cooperative packing houses, and in the revised proposals FDA acknowledges that this treatment isn't necessary or justified when the packing and holding takes place on a farm. Of course, these low-risk activities shouldn't be subject to food manufacturing rules if they take place at a location other than a farm either, such as a food hub, and CFSA is demanding the



Roland McReynolds, Executive Director

feds make further revisions to ensure that community-based, local food networks can survive.

At the bad end of the spectrum, FDA's re-proposals call for food facilities to institute supplier verification systems whereby they won't purchase crops or foods from farms or other facilities unless those suppliers are in compliance with FSMA. This would essentially collapse the market for local foods, making it close to impossible for FSMA-exempt small farms and food makers to sell outside of direct markets. And the requirement violates Congress' express prohibition that FDA cannot require farms to undergo third-party audits.

There are many additional areas of significant concern in the original FSMA proposals that FDA did not reopen for comment, and the new proposals still have other major problems, which is why we organized our current comment campaign and why we will continue to fight hard to fix the final rules. We can win this fight. No one outside of sustainable agriculture believed we could get the small farm protections of the Tester-Hagan amendment in FSMA in the first place. No one believed FDA would back down from its original rules. And yet we've scored against-the-odds victories every time, because of the passionate support and hard work of our community.

We can't let up now. These battles over farm and food policy can drag on and on, and corporate interests count on wearing out the grassroots advocates over time. That's why being a part of CFSA is so important. When you are a member of CFSA, when you support us with your financial contributions, when you share our action alerts with others who care about healthy food and farming, you are building healthy 'soil' for our community to thrive and overcome political obstacles. From that soil grows more passionate advocates to sustain the fight and carry it forward, until we reach the tipping point that will transform our agriculture for good. I'm proud to be part of such a hopeful and nurturing tradition, and you should be, too.

Sincerely,

CFSA's New Organic Input Finder

Farmers have consistently identified the limited supply of organic agricultural inputs as one of the most significant obstacles to increasing organic crop production in the Carolinas. You told us and we listened!

CFSA has done the legwork to find out what inputs growers in the Carolinas are using. We've built the Finder so you can find suppliers near you that carry the products you need as an organic grower.

Looking for OMRI-approved pesticides, NOP-compliant organic inputs, organic dry or liquid fertilizers, potting mix, and cover crop seeds or compost in the Carolinas? We've got you covered with three convenient ways to search: by supplier, by pest control product and by hay and feed suppliers.

>You can find the Finder at www.carolinafarmstewards.org/organic-agricultural-inputs/

CFSA is Creating Sustainable Community Food Systems in the Carolinas

We are pleased to announce our 2015 Food Systems Consulting Projects:

NC Food Systems Projects

Epiphany Craft Malt
Bull City Cool Food Hub
Sugar Hill Grain Company
The Naked Pig Meat Company

SC Food Systems Projects

F.A.R.M.S.
SPACE
LowCountry Street Grocery
Waccamaw Market Collaborative

Our team will work one-on-one with these sustainable aggregation, processing, distribution and/or transportation businesses in order to launch and develop their business. All projects selected will use raw or processed food products from sustainable producers in the Carolinas.

CFSA services include:

Feasibility Assessment
Market Channel Development
Business Planning Assistance

Investment/Lending Matching
Product Sourcing Assistance
Legal Structure Guidance

> Learn more about our recipients at www.carolinafarmstewards.org/foodsystems.

Congrats to CFSA's Sustainable Agriculture Award Winners

Every year at our Sustainable Agriculture Conference, CFSA recognizes sustainable agriculture award recipients. The awards honor institutions and individuals who have made outstanding contributions to the sustainable food movement in North and South Carolina and have helped make the Carolinas one of the fastest growing sustainable agricultural sectors in the country.

Lifetime Achievement Award:

Tom Trantham, Happy Cow Creamery
Farmer of the Year:

Walker Miller, The Happy Berry
NC Extension Agent of the Year:
Amy-Lynn Albertson, Davidson Co.

SC Extension Agent of the Year:
Mark Nettles, South Carolina State University

Institution of the Year:

Lowcountry Local First

Business of the Year: 7 Springs Farm

Activist of the Year: Lee Barnes

CFSA Rocks Farm Aid

We were thrilled to be a part of Farm Aid 2014 in Raleigh, NC, on September 13. CFSA staffers dressed up as a chicken, turkey and a carrot had the opportunity to meet and connect with thousands of concert goers in Farm Aid's HOMEGROWN Village. We were joined by many other amazing farm organizations from across the state and country, all celebrating the ways family farmers are enriching our soil, protecting our water and growing our economy, in addition to bringing us good food for good health.

Prodigal Farm wins \$25,000 in Small Business Contest

When we heard that CFSA member Prodigal Farm won the Wells Fargo Works Project, we were ecstatic. The farm, located in Rougemont, has long been a favorite stop for visitors on our Eastern Triangle Farm Tour. Farm Tour attendees have been able to see their goat dairy operation in action, as well as sample their exceptional cheeses.

As a finalist in the national Wells Fargo contest, they won \$25,000, which they plan on using to expand their dairy to include cows.

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CFSA's Laura Stewart and Elizabeth Read having a blast at Farm Aid

Germination Chambers

by Aaron Newton, Lomax Farm Coordinator

It is almost that time of year when we start to dream of all the wonderful vegetables we will grow in 2015. Before you know it, January will arrive and with it the need to get seeds started.

Here in the Charlotte Region, we start high tunnel tomato transplants from seed in January, and soon after that peppers and eggplant for outdoor production. Of course it is still quite cold and so the cost of heating a greenhouse for the purpose of getting those seeds started is a serious financial consideration for any vegetable producer. To address this issue at the Elma C. Lomax Incubator Farm, we built a germination chamber two years ago and dramatically reduced greenhouse heating costs and improved the quality of our transplants.

On our farm we have a 95' X 32' plastic-glazed greenhouse with dual propane heaters. It is quite possible to keep the entire space above 50 degrees even if the outdoor ambient temperature is in the single digits. This, however, requires a lot of energy and considerable cost! So, we decided to convert some of the floor space in our greenhouse into a germination chamber. Germination chambers come in many shapes and sizes. The idea is to create a small space for getting seeds started that can be heated cheaply.

For our germination chamber we purchased a 9' X 12' polycarbonate panel-glazed, aluminum-framed greenhouse, the kind many homeowners use in backyard gardens. In an effort to take advantage of the solar heat trapped by our larger greenhouse, and to protect our germination chamber from high winds, we built it inside the greenhouse. The kit was \$800 and included a dual sliding door entrance and four roof vents.

To provide stable soil temperatures



Lomax Farm's germination chamber

Photo courtesy of Aaron Newton

for germination, we installed racks with heat mats attached to commercial grade thermostats. This helped with germination rates and transplant quality. We also installed a ceramic heater to help keep the air within the germination chamber at a target temperature. A standard 11" X 21" flat can start more than 250 tomato transplants. With a two-level rack system we have room for more than 60 flats. That means we can start 15,000 transplants in our germination chamber.

As the transplants grow in size, the flats leave the germination chamber and each transplant is "bumped up" or moved into a larger-sized container where it can continue to grow until ready for the field. These larger containers need more conditioned space to keep the transplants at the proper temperature. But, by then outdoor temperatures have warmed and the cost of providing that supplemental heat to the entire greenhouse has gone down considerably.

Three improvements were made in the second season that enhanced the performance of the germination chamber. The first was the addition of an exhaust fan and louvered vent. A thermostat turns on the exhaust fan when the air in the chamber reaches a certain temperature and pulls in cooler air from outside the chamber. This helps keep the chamber from overheating and destroying the transplants. It also reduces the need to manually open the germination

chamber for cooling purposes.

The second improvement was the addition of two dedicated electrical circuits. Multiple heating units and the exhaust fan running on separate thermostats meant that the electrical load fluctuated and the demand sometimes exceeded what a single circuit could provide. During our first season we occasionally tripped circuit breakers, turning off power and therefore heat to the chamber. Luckily, this never caused loss of transplants but the possibility continued to exist. We calculated maximum load based on the heating units in the germination chamber and installed two additional circuits, dividing the load evenly.

Our third improvement was the installation of GFCI (ground fault circuit interrupter) outlets within the chamber. Previously, we ran drop cords into the chamber to provide electricity. Having GFCI outlets inside the chamber provides easier access to electricity and, given the moisture within the chamber, they also provide a safer environment for our farmers.

Future improvements might include germination tables constructed with tubing that runs through sand, carrying hot water to provide warm soil temperatures for germination without all the heat mats. An automated, overhead irrigation system would also improve the operation. 

Association News

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In addition to receiving their own financial support, Prodigal Farm's owners, Kathryn Spann and Dave Krabbe, were asked to designate a local non-profit to receive a \$5,000 gift. We were honored to be chosen by Kat and Dave, and look forward to putting their gift to work in support of our mission to serve organic and sustainable farmers throughout the Carolinas. In their comments at the September awards ceremony in Raleigh, Kat praised CFSA's work both in educating the public about sustainable farms and putting in behind-the-scenes work on policy issues, such as the Food Safety Modernization Act.

Eastern Triangle Farm Tour Inspires Visitors to Buy Local

Many thanks to the farmers who participated in the 9th Annual Eastern Triangle Farm Tour! A record-breaking 1,450 folks made about 4,700 visits to 26 farms in the Triangle Area. Tour-takers enjoyed fun activities: petting animals, milking goats, and sampling delicious farm fresh food.

Aside from fun, visitors reported that having the chance to talk to and learn from the amazing farmers was one of their favorite things about the tour. Plus, many visitors now plan to take more action when it comes buying local or growing their own food.

A special thanks to our sponsors at Whole Foods Market, and of course, a big thank you goes out to our amazing volunteers!

Save the Date!

Organic Commodities and Livestock Conference
February 12 in Rocky Mount, NC

For all the details & more events:
carolinafarmstewards.org/events

Aaron Newton Joins CFSA's Staff

CFSA is excited to announce that we have hired Aaron Newton to continue operations of the Lomax Incubator Farm. Aaron, the former farm manager at Lomax, is a local food advocate born and raised in Concord, NC. In 2002, he returned to his hometown where he lives with his wife, Jennifer, and their two daughters. His family owns and operates Peachtree Market, a small local foods-focused grocery store in downtown Concord. Aaron is the coauthor of *A Nation of Farmers: Defeating the Food Crisis on American Soil*. He earned a bachelor degree in Landscape Architecture from the College of Design at North Carolina State University. Aaron raises chickens in his backyard, practices yoga and rides a bike.

CFSA Farm Services Takes Technical Services for Farmers to the Next Level

CFSA has received four grants that will allow us to expand and enhance our technical farm services.

First, the Local Produce Safety Initiative, funded by the NC Tobacco Trust Fund Commission will allow CFSA to assist 25 small-scale, NC farms in passing a USDA GAPs audit. This is an ambitious goal as there are currently only 80 GAPs certified operations in NC. In order to do this, CFSA will collaborate with Feast Down East, TRACTOR, Sandhills Farm to Table, and the



Aaron Newton, CFSA's new Lomax Farm Coordinator.

NC Growing Together (NCGT) project. We estimate this work will result in an increase in the volume and value of products produced by \$10,000 - \$32,000 per participating farm. By providing direct assistance to farmers wanting to become GAPs certified, we will enable them to improve access to the local produce market, which we estimate to be at \$180 million in current annual demand statewide.

The Local Produce Safety Initiative III, funded by the NC Dept. of Ag., will build upon our current produce safety program by establishing USDA-certified Group GAP programs with three food hubs in North Carolina and providing direct assistance to 40 specialty crop growers developing food safety plans. We estimate that as a

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The goats at Prodigal Farm were a bit hit on the Eastern Triangle Farm Tour.

Photo courtesy of Elizabeth Read





*Farmer Allen Cockfield planting non-GMO soybean transitioning to organics
Photo courtesy of Allen Cockfield*

growing lavender, ginger, tomatoes and baby greens in high tunnels, so Keith investigated these crops' nutrient needs for him, too.

"The CAP plan enhanced my knowledge and ability to plan what I'm going to do next in this field. Because of the soil, you just can't plant corn in the same place year after year. It will wear out the soil. Planting corn drains nitrogen, so the next year, you need to plant something in that field that will replenish the nitrogen. The plan tells me how to do that," Allen said.

Healthy Soil Produces Healthy Plants

"One of the biggest mistakes you see in farms transitioning to organic is that farmers don't apply enough nutrients to the soil. The Nutrient Management Plan for Allen's farm spells out in detail exactly how to get that nutrient mix right for each type

of vegetable, specially formulated to his soil type," clarified Keith.

In Allen's words, "I can see that [the CAP plan] is going to be instrumental to my farm's profitability because my soils will be healthy. Healthy soil produces healthy plants."

After completing a CAP-138, producers can apply for cost-share assistance to implement conservation practices identified in the plan. "Since the beginning of the EQIP-Organic Initiative in 2009, nearly \$900,000 has been allocated to farmers in SC," according to NRCS Soil Agronomist, Gordon Mikell.

The NRCS provides assistance to implement practices like "establishing buffers, installing pollinator habitat, establishing cover crops, and improving irrigation efficiency by converting to micro-irrigation. Financial assistance to purchase high tunnels or hoop houses are also an available

for organic producers who want to extend their growing season, improve soil organic matter and improve plant quality," added Mikell.

Allen took advantage of this opportunity and is one step closer to building a profitable organic farm. The NRCS awarded financial assistance to implement the cover crop plan in his CAP 138 and to buy a high tunnel.

As an added benefit, Allen can also apply for organic certification using the strategies Keith recommended. "Much of the CAP 138 can go into your Organic Transition Plan. You can take the language from your CAP and plug it into your Whole Farm System Plan," Keith said.

Allen confirms that the plan will make certification easier for him, "It shows that I have a plan in place to deal with pests, to encourage beneficial bugs like bees and wasps, to help build my soil, and what would be best to grow in the soils I have – organically."

With only 27 certified organic farms in SC and consumer demand on the rise, certification will allow Allen to take advantage of great price and market opportunities, especially in wholesale markets.

Allen's vision? "Growing healthy for healthier people." He hopes to have trucks displaying this slogan and the J&C Cockfield Farms logo, delivering healthy, organic produce all over the Pee-Dee region.

"I don't want to be part of the problem. I want to be part of the solution," said Allen. "If I can grow organic, non-genetically modified plants, that's what I'm going to do."

Apply for a CAP-138: Take advantage of CFSA's technical services and receive a rebate of up to \$859 for completing a CAP-138. Visit www.carolinafarmstewards.org/cap-consulting-services for more information or to check out a sample CAP plan.

IMPORTANT: The deadline to fill out your NRCS application for a CAP plan is Dec. 19 in South Carolina. NC NRCS has rotating deadlines.

29th annual SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE CONFERENCE

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Association News

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result of this work, total sales through food hubs will increase by \$190,000 in the first year with the potential to increase by \$400K to \$1.2M by the end of the project.

The SC and NC Organic Farming Conservation Outreach Projects will allow us to continue to provide our members with Conservation Activity Plans, direct consulting to assist with the organic certification process, and workshops on organic production practices. We are excited for the continued support from the NCDA&CS Specialty Crops Block program and the SC Dept of Ag. for this program. In 2013, this initiative resulted in 18 specialty crop producers transitioning to certified organic production in NC. In SC, we estimate that this work will increase organic acreage in the state by 200 acres over two years, resulting in an additional \$870,000 in farm sales of organic fruits and vegetables per year by 2016.

> Interested in taking advantage of CFSAs technical services for GAPs, Conservation Activity Plans or organic certification? Visit www.carolinafarmstewards.org/farm-services

Building a Stronger, More Productive and Sustainable Food Community at the 29th Annual Sustainable Agriculture Conference

Our annual Sustainable Agriculture Conference, which happened in Greenville, SC, Nov. 10-12 featured over 50 food and farm workshops, farm tours, hands-on intensives, and locally sourced, organic meals. Farmers, gardeners, foodies, and agriculture professionals from all across the Carolinas came to learn about the latest in sustainable farming methods, urban farming, food policy activism, and how to build local food systems. We were especially proud to be able to send 25 beginning farmers to the Conference on the William W. Dow Memorial scholarship. Thank you to the generous donors who made this possible! Conference highlights included our annual award ceremony honoring the brightest lights in sustainable food and farming in the Carolinas, Mark Shepard's incredible keynote, and, as always, the out-of-this-world food.

> Check out the blog at www.carolinafarmstewards.org/blog for great stories from our conference bloggers and plan to join us next year in Durham, NC!



Dow Scholars listen intently to Mark Shepard's Sustainable Ag Conference keynote with Daryl Walker at the Local Food Feast. Photo courtesy of Grace Kanoy

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