

## Elma C. Lomax Incubator Farm Farmer-in-Training (FIT) Program

The Elma C. Lomax Incubator Farm is a certified organic incubator farm located in Concord, NC. It is a training ground where beginning farmers can gain access to land and equipment to start their own farm business. Started by Cabarrus County government and Cooperative Extension as a place to grow a new generation of organic farmers, the farm is now managed by the Carolina Farm Stewardship Association (CFSA).

### What Support Is Provided to Farmers In Training?

Beginning farmers need a supportive environment that provides knowledge and guidance as they learn how to build and run a successful farm business.

The Farmer-in-Training Program provides classroom instruction on the business of farming, as well as hands-on experience on the farm. Participants in the program develop and manage their own farm-based business while receiving guidance from staff and seasoned farmers.

Farmers In Training (FITs) have a 3 to 4 year participation period at the farm and then Lomax Farm staff aim to help the new farmers find land of their own.

### What Kinds of Farm Enterprises Could Work?

The farm is certified organic and all Farmers In Training must train and adhere to NOP standards of production. The farm site is suitable for a variety of farm enterprises, including (but not limited to): annual vegetables, cut flowers, herbs, bees, and mushrooms.



### Farmers In Training Receive:

- Affordable access to land to develop production skills
- Access to shared equipment and facilities, including but not limited to: office, bathroom, green house, high tunnel, post-harvest wash station, walk-in cooler, tractor and tools
- Hands-on training with CFSA staff plus focused learning opportunities by Cooperative Extension staff.
- Network with and learn from the experience of other FITs training at Lomax
- Assistance finding land - Cooperative Extension and CFSA staff help link farmers-in-training with landowners looking to rent or sell farmland in the area

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### What Farmers in Training Are Expected To Do:

- Develop and maintain a Production Plan
- Develop and maintain a Business Plan
- Pay participation fees. Fees are dependent upon level of participation at Lomax
- Follow Lomax Farm rules and standards including NOP for organic certification
- Devote a minimum of 20 hours per week on your farming operation
- Attend monthly meeting the third Thursday of each month from 6-8 pm
- Attend twice annual development meeting with Lomax Farm staff
- Attend 4 volunteer work days at Lomax Farm annually
- Maintain \$1,000,000 product liability insurance
- Sign a lease agreement with CFSA
- Be a CFSA Member

**Questions?** Learn more about the program at [www.carolinafarmstewards.org/lomax-farm](http://www.carolinafarmstewards.org/lomax-farm) or email Aaron Newton, Lomax Farm Manager, at [aaron@carolinafarmstewards.org](mailto:aaron@carolinafarmstewards.org)

### Applying for the Program

Program Space is limited. Applications will be evaluated by a committee of CFSA staff and partners.

#### **Step 1: Application and Become a CFSA Member**

Completely fill out the online application at [www.carolinafarmstewards.org/apply-to-be-a-farmer-in-training](http://www.carolinafarmstewards.org/apply-to-be-a-farmer-in-training)

You must be a CFSA member to apply. The apprentice membership fee is \$20/year.

#### **Step 2: Interview Phone Call**

The Lomax Farm Manager will schedule a short phone call to review your application.

#### **Step 3: The Pre-reqs**

- Completion of Rowan Cabarrus Community College Organic Vegetable Production Class hosted at Lomax Farm
- Completion of farm mentorship program

