



SALVATION FARMS

Strategic Plan

FY 2026 - 2030





SALVATION FARMS

Dear Friends,

Since our founding in 2004, Salvation Farms has grown into a nationally recognized leader in the space of gleaning and surplus management. Through an innovative model and deep commitment to community, **we have gleaned millions of pounds of surplus produce from farms** throughout Vermont that would otherwise have not made it to people's plates, thereby reducing food waste and helping get healthy, local food to people in need.

While keeping true to our dedication to gleaning, surplus management, and education, we are now expanding our work to truly help farms be viable by directly purchasing surplus produce and processing products for institutional markets. **This year, Salvation Farms Processing Program is expanding, so we can get even more healthy food to Vermonters.**

In an effort to deeply reflect on where we have been over the past two decades and develop a roadmap for the next five years, we undertook a 6-month strategic planning process with support from InCommon Group. They engaged staff, board, and community members through surveys and interviews, supported us with a community forum, engaged us with systems mapping, and helped foster alignment among staff and board for our vision, mission, core goals and key strategies that will help us move towards a strong organization that continues to make positive impacts on food security, farm viability, and resilient communities.

With farms continuing to struggle and food needs remaining high,

as well as threats like climate change and pandemics, it could not be a more important time to build the systems and partnerships needed for a resilient food system that fully utilizes surplus foods and ensures healthy food access for all. **We invite you to explore our vision and strategy for the next five years, and look forward to collaborative partnerships to bring shared goals to life.**

Kelly Dolan,
Executive Director



20 Years of Transformative Impact

Salvation Farms' began mobilizing volunteers in 2014 to recover surplus produce left on farms ("gleaning") and distribute it to food programs serving nutritionally insecure populations—seniors, families, and youth. We not only developed our own system for gleaning, but we served as a champion, advocate, and educator for gleaning and surplus management. In 2013, we began the Vermont Gleaning Collective, a network of community-based gleaning initiatives, providing resources to launch and manage programs around the state.

Over the past decade, Salvation Farms undertook a variety of research initiatives to better understand surplus crops. This research resulted in a series of reports and articles to advance the practice of gleaning and surplus management, including: *Food Loss in Vermont: Estimating Annual Vegetable and Berry Loss* (2016), *Fresh Produce Needs Across Vermont: Results from a Fresh Produce Survey* (2016), *Salvageable Food Losses from Vermont Farms* (2018), and *Ideas from the Farm: Vermont Growers Insights on Reducing Food Loss* (2018). This research helped inform our move to expand beyond gleaning to include surplus crop aggregation, minimal processing, and job training, and in 2016, Salvation Farms opened Vermont's first surplus crop food hub, the Vermont Commodity Program.

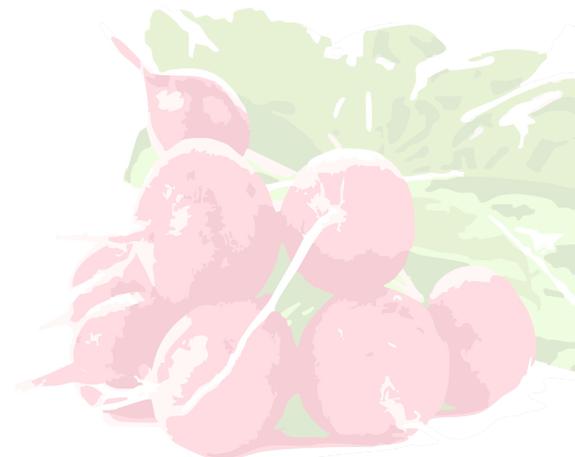


In 2024 and 2025, Salvation Farms partnered with the Center for an Agricultural Economy's Just Cut program to refine product development through minimal processing trials with squash, potatoes, apples, and other produce.

The Salvation Farms Processing Program aims to process purchased for use by institutions and charitable food programs, and broaden efforts to reduce farm-level food loss, support local farms, and increase food access in Vermont.



Key Milestones for Salvation Farms



Year	Milestone
2004-2005	Founder Theresa Snow piloted a gleaning project while working at Pete's Greens, serving areas in the Lamoille Valley and the Northeast Kingdom. This was the seed of what would become Salvation Farms. Under the fiscal umbrella of NOFA-VT, Salvation Farms was formally established as a community-based organization.
2008-2011	The gleaning program moved under the umbrella of the Vermont Foodbank; gleaning was integrated into their operations and regional gleaning initiatives were developed.
2012	Salvation Farms became an independent non-profit! The organization also began experiments in <i>minimal processing</i> of surplus produce, including creating frozen foods in partnership with other groups using commercial kitchens.
2013	The Vermont Gleaning Collective was created. A network of community-based gleaning programs, in this model, member organizations collaborate on volunteer coordination, data tracking, sharing best practices, etc.
2016	Vermont's first surplus crop food hub in Winooski was launched! This was a major step, combining large-scale cleaning, packing, frozen food production all under one roof, along with a job training program for people facing employment barriers.
2017	The food hub was fully operational, supporting workforce development, and distributing produce and frozen goods to various food programs. The Harvest & Volunteer network (gleaning and surplus processing) expanded.
2020 - 2023	After operating the surplus crop food hub in Winooski for over three years, Salvation Farm moved out of the facility and evaluated its educational and operational data to guide future work; strengthened the Vermont Gleaning Collective during COVID-era pressures; received state funding; and explored partnerships and strategies to aggregate and process surplus food to build resilience in VT's food system.
2024-2025	Leadership transitioned from Theresa Snow to Kelly Dolan. New developments included the transition of the Vermont Commodity Program into the Processing Program, federal funding opportunities, developing a processing space and an increased focus on food security and community-based impact while also increasing opportunities to support farms.

Values, Vision & Mission

We value:

- Community Resilience
- Food Security
- Farm Viability
- Equity
- Collaboration

Our vision is...

...a resilient, community-based food system where farms thrive, surplus food is fully utilized, and everyone has reliable access to local, sustainable food.

Our mission is...

...to create a future where all are fed and farms are thriving. Through partnerships, effective use of available resources, and skill-building, we work to fully integrate surplus food from local farms into a resilient and sustainable food system.

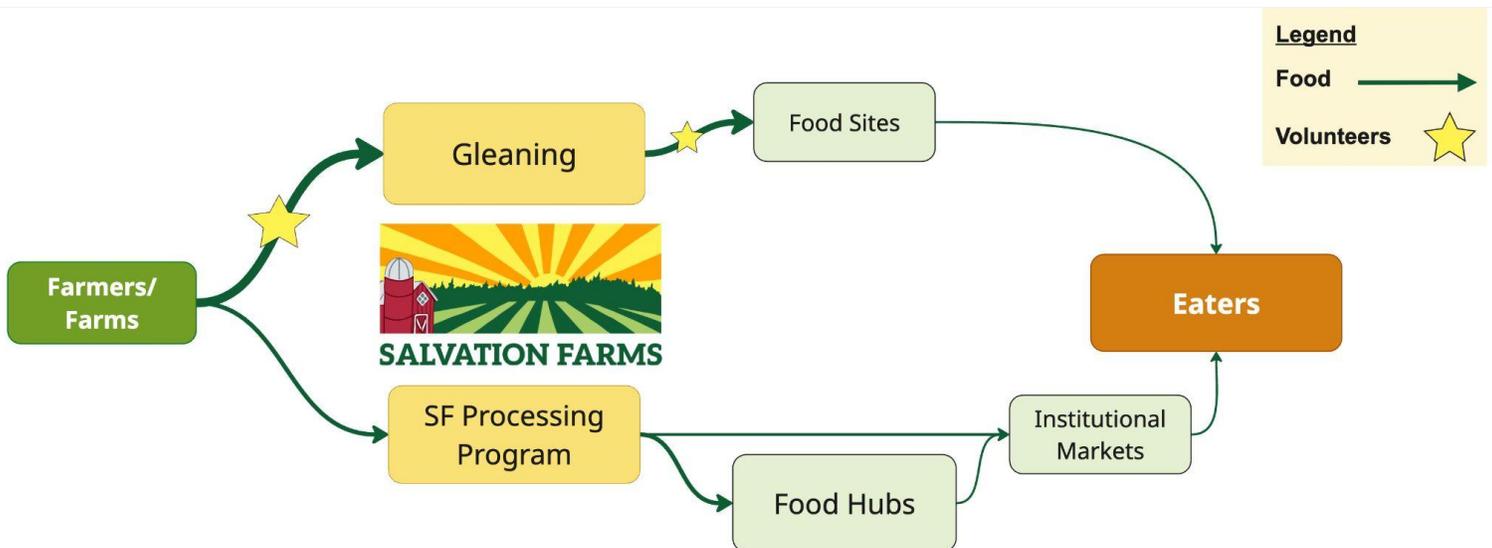


Our Approach To Change

It is estimated that **14.3 million pounds of berries and vegetables grown in Vermont never make it to people's plates**. Almost 3 billion pounds of food are not harvested each year across the US, according to ReFED. There are many reasons for this, including limited harvest labor, aesthetically imperfect crops, and lack of end-markets. That is where Salvation Farms comes in - **our teams of staff and volunteer gleaners coordinate with farms to harvest food that would otherwise not make it to consumers**. We also purchase surplus crops from farmers - crops that they won't be able to market—and process foods like applesauce and squash purees for institutional and charitable markets that have been historically priced out of purchasing local food - prisons, schools, Meals on Wheels programs, and more. This helps more Vermonters get access to healthy, local food, and provides a needed source of income to farms who may otherwise not have a market for their harvest.

We work in tandem with many partners along the way—farmers, community volunteers, community food distribution and meal sites, and institutions. We also work closely with the food system supply chain, like food hubs and distributors.

The graphic below summarizes our work with partners to manage surplus.



Towards 2030 Impact

By 2030, Salvation Farms will establish a secure financial foundation with thriving gleaning, educational, and food processing programs—increasing access to affordable locally grown, whole and processed surplus products.





#1 Strengthen Organizational Resilience & Culture

To improve surplus management in Vermont, Salvation Farms will:

- Ensure organizational financial solvency through diversified revenue streams, expanded donor and grantmaking capacity, and efficient internal systems.
- Foster a positive, supportive workplace culture with competitive compensation, professional development, and clear, transparent decision-making.
- Build strong internal systems for data collection and evaluation to support adaptive learning and meaningful outcomes; this includes feedback and data-gathering from farmers, partners, institutions, community members, volunteers, staff and board.

2030 Performance Targets:

- Salvation Farms will have a balanced revenue portfolio
- Instituting an annual assessment of workplace culture; this assessment will indicate that **100%** of staff report being happy with their work at the organization and feel aligned with the vision, mission, and work.
- **80%** of community partners (farmers, distribution sites, volunteers) will provide positive feedback regarding their experiences working with Salvation Farms.
- Review, develop and **improve data collection systems** that gather feedback on program performance and impact.



#2 Advance Food Access & Farm Viability Through Surplus Management



To have a strong and effective organization, Salvation Farms seeks to:

- Continue refining and improving gleaning, processing, and distribution systems to maximize use of surplus food.
- Maintain balance between supporting farm viability and expanding food access, making them equally central to the mission.
- Develop infrastructure (e.g., processing space, efficient routes) to scale operations without compromising quality.

2030 Performance Targets:

- 100,000 pounds of food gleaned
- 200 volunteers engaged per year
- 90% of volunteers have a greater appreciation and understanding of local farms after participating in a glean
- **Additional capacity** added to the organization including a Lamoille Valley Gleaning Coordinator
- 50 partner farms working with both SFG and SFPP



#3 Deepen External Partnerships, Communications & Systems Change Impacts

To deepen engagement and grow impact, Salvation Farms will:

- Be a systems-change leader by building strategic alliances, and expanding our role in statewide advocacy (e.g., food is medicine funding, surplus utilization policy, DEIJ frameworks in food security).
- Develop a clear communications strategy, including stakeholder mapping, to amplify engagement and education and shape how surplus management is understood, valued, and integrated into Vermont's food system.
- Create a replicable model for the Salvation Farms Processing Program and develop capacity to provide technical assistance to other organizations.
- Develop ways to measure experiential learning through gleaning & education programs
- Deepen public knowledge of gleaning and its positive impacts on local farms and community food security.

2030 Performance Targets:

- At least **3** other organizations are helped by SF to adopt the processing program model
- **100%** volunteers and community participants will report to have gained experiential knowledge about food surplus and healthy, local foods.
- **75%** of institutions in Vermont will receive information about the benefits of surplus food is and how it can be utilized
- Salvation Farms will have a robust volunteer program with at least **20** regular volunteers and hundreds of gleaning and event-based volunteers each year.

Five-Year Strategies in Action

2026

- Strengthen core gleaning and distribution systems through partnership and streamlining service schedules and distribution routes.
- Develop additional product lines to maximize farm surplus
- Build robust impact data collection & analysis systems across farms, food sites, partners, staff, and volunteers
- Bring on new farm partners
- Establish a Community Advisory Committee
- Build and strengthen collaborative partnerships, and expand education and services for partner sites and volunteers

2027

- Implement an integrated communications plan to expand programmatic reach strategically and geographically
- Expand and diversify gleaning partner farms
- Deepen partnerships with advocacy groups and position Salvation Farms as a policy/advocacy ally in statewide food access, food is medicine, and farm viability conversations.
- Create Emergency Response Plans in collaboration with food distribution sites that identify how surplus food can be utilized in times of crisis.
- Explore offering experiential learning and roles with Food is Medicine programs.

2025

- Finalize retrofitting, operations agreements, and financial and marketing plans for the Processing Program; define first products!
- Develop a clear, multi-year financial sustainability plan
- Nurture community and donor relationships

2028

- Expand role in statewide advocacy
- Amplify communications and education efforts to shape how surplus management is understood, valued, and integrated into Vermont's food system.

2030

Track progress on our 5-year strategic plan and start planning for the next five years !

2029

- Continue expanding the Processing Program to buy more surplus products from farms and sell more product lines to an increasing number of institutions.
- Create a replicable model for the Salvation Farms Processing Program and develop capacity to provide technical assistance to other organizations.
- Implement a system for tracking carbon sequestration through gleaning and processing programs.

Abundant Gratitude

Salvation Farms is incredibly grateful for our partners, volunteers, and donors who are helping advance a future where farms thrive, food is not wasted, and Vermonters have access to local, sustainably-grown foods. We welcome you to reach out to us to learn more about how you can become involved in creating healthy, resilient communities.

Salvation Farms

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Appendix

Strategic Plan Development Methodology

Salvation Farms worked with food systems consulting firm InCommon Group over a six month period to develop the 2030 Strategic Plan. They engaged staff, board, and community members to understand our theory of change, values, vision, mission, goals, strategies, and ways to measure our impact over time. The process included stakeholder mapping, staff and board surveys and interviews, a community survey and in-person forum, a strategic planning retreat for staff and board members, and a follow-up session to prioritize strategies.

Staff and Board Member SWOT

Salvation Farms staff and board members explored the strengths, weaknesses, threats, and opportunities for the organization.

STRENGTHS

- Hardworking & well-qualified team that is about the work and mission
- A great reputation, name recognition, long-standing, and credibility
- Consistency of mission over time and tremendous impact
- Systems thinkers, systems impacts, addresses gaps
- Serves as an innovative model
- Hands-on and effective
- Strong partnerships
- Dedicated supporters, donors, and volunteers
- Compassionate, thoughtful & passionate staff and board members
- Thoughtful and caring leadership of new executive director

WEAKNESSES

- Finances and fundraising
- Lack of capacity - for community outreach, fundraising, communications, and for current staff to have more capacity
- The new processing space is a risk, need to ensure financial solvency
- Need clearer public understanding of programs and impact
- Need more efficient systems
- Workforce training was difficult and has now ended
- The board is small - need to grow and diversify
- Rapid change in the last two years; growing pains

Staff and Board Member SWOT, continued

OPPORTUNITIES

- Processing program development
- Opportunities for growth, visibility, education, new markets, and bringing in new funds
- Develop new partners, more network collaboration and coordination
- New areas / programs to explore: Food as Medicine/Health, Climate change / resilience, Partnering with culinary orgs/institutions and chefs, Retail food rescue, Grow our own food / develop community farm
- Gleaning - Expand geographic reach, explore expanding Gleaning Collaborative to include all of New England
- Fundraising - Developing more relations with donors and foundations and make more effective requests
- Advocacy efforts - Explore policy options for gleaning, donation reimbursement, and other food access options

THREATS

- Processing facility- While also a strength and opportunity, there are threats involved (high costs of renovation and equipment, operating cost, and understanding the institutional procurement model)
- Federal impacts - Uncertain funding landscapes with federal cuts and freezes, cuts to core food security program increasing need for food
- Fundraising - minimal access to large donors
- Gleaning program - Most of the produce comes from just a handful of farms, which is not resilient
- Farms going out of business or financially struggling
- The weather and climate change



Community Input

Salvation Farms worked with InCommon Group to conduct a community survey and held a community input forum to gain insight into shared goals and actions SF can take to help achieve them. Community input highlighted Salvation Farms’ core strengths in managing surplus produce, mobilizing volunteers, supporting farms, and expanding food access with limited resources. Stakeholders see major opportunities in expanding minimally processed and prepared meal offerings, developing markets for seconds at fair prices, deepening educational programming, and using the new facility as a community hub. Partners and farmers emphasized the need for better communication, predictable access to storage and markets, and stronger coordination with other organizations. While appreciation for Salvation Farms is strong, some expressed concerns about long-term infrastructure sustainability and the potential for overlap with other food hubs—underscoring the need for clear priorities, partnership alignment, and continued leadership in Vermont’s food system resilience.

Summary of Community Input

Category	Key Themes from Survey & Forum
Core Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Surplus and gleaned food management ● Strong volunteer engagement ● Trusted farm relationships ● Efficient operations with a small team ● Improved food access
Top Opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Expand processing: minimally processed & prepared meals ● Develop markets for seconds (fair prices, institutional buyers) ● Launch education programs (youth, nutrition, food systems) ● Use facility as a hub for community, meals, and learning
Community Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● More education on gleaning, “seconds,” local/seasonal food ● Prepped meals and easy-to-use produce for clients ● Leadership in food system resilience & climate response ● Stronger outreach & communication to partners and public
Farmer Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reliable markets for surplus produce ● Payment guarantees or incentives for donations ● Access to storage, processing, seed pickup ● Labor support via “Farm Brigades” or volunteers

Summary of Community Input, continued

Category	Key Themes from Survey & Forum
Partner Needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Regular product updates, online ordering & payment options ● Clarity on partner site capacity (cold storage, etc.) ● Coordination to avoid duplication across gleaning orgs ● Greater outreach to meal sites & food access programs
Collaboration & Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Work closely with other food hubs ● Join/lead statewide efforts on climate resilience and food access ● Advocate for ag policy and community-based food systems
Concerns Raised	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Processing facility could compete with existing efforts ● Sustainability of infrastructure without long-term funding ● Need to clearly define goals, success, and communications

