

## Summary & Resources - Rootbound Farm June 2022 OAK Farmer Field Day



### From Arugula to Zucchini - Diversified Organic Production on a Mid-Sized Market Farm

Serving more than 1,000 customers each week puts a lot of demands on a mid-sized farm with 18 employees. Yet Bree Pearsall and Ben Abell consider the strong customer base a good way of spreading out their risk: 600 CSA members, 2 weekly farmers markets, local restaurants, Fresh Stop markets and an online store ensure sales throughout the growing season.

[Rootbound Farm](#)'s 80% direct-to-consumer focus also allows these Oldham County farmers to connect with, learn from and serve their local community in the shared work towards a more sustainable, healthy food and agriculture system.

Diversifying their production adds an additional layer of risk management, growing more than 60 varieties of certified organic vegetables, fruits and herbs, and producing certified organic eggs, lamb and chicken. Their 80 acres of crop production are integrated with the pasture rotations of 700 broiler and laying hens and 400 sheep in order to minimize their off-farm fertility inputs, aerate their soil, and increase their soil carbon and fertility.

When in production, the silt-loam crop fields at Rootbound Farm are in rotation of plant families for 3 years, followed by a full year of rest, pasture or cover cropping. Crops are managed differently, depending on the crop and season: sweet corn, cucurbits and fall brassicas are on bare ground, for example, while spring greens and brassicas, tomatoes, squash and peppers are transplanted into plastic mulch with annual rye planted in their pathways. The black plastic mulch offers a weed barrier, helps to warm the soil in spring, retains water throughout the heat of summer and provides a cleaner crop at harvest due to minimal soil "splashback" on plants from rain. Drip irrigation is pumped from nearby Harrods Creek in most years, but costs of diesel fuel for the pump has made municipal water more cost-effective in 2022.

Rootbound has recently invested in Flex-Net irrigation with welded fittings that hold emitters better. Other investments include a Harnois automated greenhouse where half of the farm's transplants are grown from seed, microgreens are produced and the season is extended; an imants rotary spader, which minimizes soil inversion, reduces trips through the field and speeds up ability to cover crop; a four-row MaterMacc vacuum seeder, and various cultivator implements for creating a stale seedbed and managing weeds in-row and between the rows. Yet not all of Rootbound's oft-used tools are pricey, like the crockpot containing vegetable oil, placed inside an old chest freezer they're using as a germination chamber with an Inkbird meter for moisture and temperature regulation. Standardizing and shortening their 400' rows in the field has been a no-cost way to improve their efficiencies, too.

OAK is grateful to Ben, Bree, and all the crew at Rootbound Farm who shared their time, experience and practices with us for OAK's Farmer Field Day of June 2022. Great farm hosts always include a hayride - thanks, Rootbound!! :) Follow them @rootboundfarm on Facebook / Instagram, or email them at [bree@rootboundfarm.com](mailto:bree@rootboundfarm.com)

#### Resource Links:

- OAK resources:
  - [Upcoming OAK Farmer Field Days](#)
  - [Join OAK today!](#)
  - [OAK newsletters](#) - for farmers and consumers
  - [OAK YouTube](#) farmer resources / conference and field day playlists
  - [OAK Transition Trainer program](#) - for assistance with certifying organic
    - USDA's [National Organic Program](#)
- Markets:
  - [Fresh Stop markets](#)
  - [Kentucky Farm Share Coalition](#)
- Equipment:
  - [Flex-Net irrigation](#)
  - [MaterMacc vacuum seeder](#)
  - [imants rotary spader](#)
  - [Winstrip seed trays](#)
  - [Kult Kress](#)
  - [Harnois automated greenhouse](#)
  - [Rough Brothers Inc greenhouse](#)
  - [Scenic Acres](#) - KY greenhouse provider
  - [Getting Started with a Germination Chamber](#)
- Chickens:
  - [Novogen laying chicken](#)
  - [King and Sons](#) Poultry processor
- [Celite diatomaceous earth](#)
- [Jones Family sweet potatoes](#)