

Meet our New Farmers!

Who's growing what at the Ignatius Incubator Farm



SIMON JACQUES

Simon Jacques is using the New Farms Incubator Program to pioneer organic coloured bean production in Ontario.

Simon Jacques is the New Farms Incubator Program's original participant – his farming activities at Ignatius actually predate FarmStart's New Farms initiative.

Simon has an urban background, but was drawn to organic agriculture through undergraduate work in Environmental Studies at the University of Guelph. After earning his degree, Simon worked for five years at Greenfields Organic Farm, and spent another two years as an independent organic inspector - a line of work that he continues to pursue.

Simon also rents about 120 acres directly from Ignatius Jesuit Centre, which he plants with spelt and soy – commodity crops for export. He therefore brings a wealth of organic farming experience to the New Farms team.

In 2007 – Simon's third season at Ignatius – he rented 77 acres from FarmStart, on which he cultivated organic popcorn, amaranth, lentils, chickpeas, and coloured beans: Romano, black turtle, kidney and pinto.

The Series

FarmStart's New Farms Incubator Program supports new farm enterprises by offering access to land, equipment, and infrastructure at reasonable rates, and by providing participants with mentorship and training.

The *Meet Our New Farmers!* series introduces our incubator farm participants, a group of new farmers whose diverse entrepreneurial strategies contain the seeds for a more just and sustainable regional food supply.

Participants in the program include:

Mike Driscoll - A second-career organic hops and barley grower

Matt Reeves - A young farmer with a background in biodynamic agriculture and horticultural therapy

Simon Jacques - A regional pioneer in organic coloured bean production

Tarrah Young - The New Farms Incubator Program's first graduate farmer!

Missing a profile? Please visit www.farmstart.ca for the complete series.

As a participant in the New Farms Incubator Farm program, Simon's receives a 20% subsidy on his \$50/acre rent at Ignatius, for a significant saving of \$770 over the season. This subsidy has encouraged Simon to shift his production from standard organic commodity crops, which are sold to an export broker, to coloured beans for market through local distributors, restaurants, and individuals.

In addition to the subsidy, Simon enjoys access to the informal training provided by the Ignatius Incubator Farm's Farm Manager, Lorne Jamieson. Much of the work involved in field crop production involves assembling, maintaining and repairing agricultural machinery. Lorne's expertise in this area has been enormously helpful for Simon, whose background in vegetable production has only partially prepared him for the challenges of growing grains and beans on a larger scale.

This season has been a good one for Simon: the yields from his chickpeas and coloured bean crops were fair, and he negotiated an excellent price for the beans, which he is selling to a Hamilton-area organic food box company.

Given the current gap in organic coloured bean production in Ontario, Simon's beans are making an important contribution to our regional food system. They are also set to earn good prices from consumers eager to source locally produced staple foods.

However, Simon has also faced some serious production challenges this year: his lentil crop failed, he lost much of his popcorn to raccoons, and he learned the hard way that coloured beans require specialized harvesting equipment: many of his beans were split by the combine.

But participating in the New Farms Incubator Program has

allowed Simon to subsidize some of these losses, thereby enabling him to continue to experiment with specialized crops.

Although Simon has amassed a lot of experience at Ignatius, he has no plans to leave just yet. For one thing, he loves being able to bike between his house in Guelph and the farm. Perhaps more importantly, Simon recognizes that many of the lessons that he's learned at the Ignatius Incubator Farm are specific to the site's unique agroecology.

For this and other reasons, Simon looks forward to remaining with FarmStart as a mentor farmer, and to sharing his knowledge of organic field crop production and marketing with new generations of New Farms participants.

What is FarmStart?

The objective of FarmStart is to **support and encourage a new generation of farmers** to develop locally based, ecologically sound and economically viable agricultural enterprises.

There are many challenges in agriculture today but there are also **many exciting opportunities**. By thinking about agriculture in new and innovative ways we can meet the challenges head on with a variety of solutions that promote a **sustainable, healthy and regional food supply**.

Successful farms make important contributions to the health and vibrancy of both rural and urban communities. FarmStart encourages new farmers to engage in **entrepreneurial strategies that creatively turn challenges into opportunities**.

To learn more please visit www.farmstart.ca or call 519.836.7046



The Ignatius Incubator Farm - Guelph, ON