



2017 World PEAS Food Hub Annual Report



World PEAS (People Enhancing Agricultural Sustainability) Food Hub
is a program of the New Entry Sustainable Farming Project.

Our mission is to improve our local and regional food systems by training the next generation of farmers to produce food that is sustainable, nutritious, and culturally-appropriate and making this food accessible to individuals regardless of age, mobility, ethnicity, or socio-economic status. In doing this work, we provide critical training, career development, and economic opportunity to new farmers.

www.nesfp.org



The World PEAS Food Hub

From the 2012 USDA Census of Agriculture, “Among principal operators, 6 percent are under 35 years old, 61 percent are 35 to 64 years, and 33 percent are 65 and older. The older age groups all increased in number.” The farmer population is continuing to age on the farm, and there are not sufficient numbers of next generation farmers to succeed them. It is imperative to support beginning farmers as they are such a crucial component of creating a more just, verdant, and inclusive food system. This is the very core of New Entry’s mission and integral to the work of the World PEAS Food Hub program.

The World PEAS (People Enhancing Agricultural Sustainability) Food Hub was founded in 2005 as a program of the New Entry Sustainable Farming Project. Its function is to provide beginning farmers with market-readiness training and multi-farmer aggregation and distribution services that support beginning farmers in Eastern Massachusetts to access new markets. To be an eligible producer for World PEAS, beginning farmers must have graduated from New Entry’s farmer training program within the prior three years. From its inception, the World PEAS Food Hub was developed to connect beginning farmers who often face barriers to accessing diversified markets (such as limited English language skills, limited production capacity, limited access to farmland, and lack of transportation) with local consumers interested in purchasing fresh locally grown fruits and vegetables. Over the past 12 years of running the Food Hub, operations have shifted and adapted to reflect the changes in the beginner farmer population that have come through New Entry’s training program. New Entry boasts a ‘wall of fame’ in our conference room, which recognizes all individual photos and bios of those who have graduated through our farmer training programs since 2003. At our inception, New Entry farmers were immigrants and refugees from a diverse array of countries. Now, our farmer population is predominantly US born citizens with a mixture of young farmers starting out and increasingly career changers.

The World PEAS Food Hub provides market-based technical assistance and training to beginning farmers by offering crop planning, guidance on market opportunities, feedback and training around crop quality, and by teaching best practices for selling produce to commercial accounts on a professional level. These skills will not only support producers in selling to the Food Hub, but will help them prepare for establishing and maintaining other markets.

Program Overview

In 2017, the World PEAS Food Hub purchased produce from approximately 15 beginning farmers—all are graduates of New Entry's Farm Business Planning Course—as well as an additional 12 regional independent farms. The Food Hub also developed a new partnership with Myers Produce, a produce aggregator based out of Vermont. Through this partnership, we were able to expand our work of stimulating the local food economy and to buy large quantities of specialty produce that New Entry's smaller farmers lacked the capacity to grow. The primary market channels for distribution through the World PEAS Food Hub include a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program, and a Food Access program which serves low-income individuals, families, and senior citizens.

Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)

The World PEAS Food Hub runs an aggregated CSA program in which fruits and vegetables are brought together from small producers throughout the region to create a weekly diversified produce box. We receive availability from farmers each week and then put together a bountiful share to distribute to shareholders. The produce changes weekly and is representative of the New England farming season and showcases local production in the region. Over a 20-week period, consumers enjoy the opportunity to receive a diversified box of fresh, locally grown produce delivered to a convenient location where they live or work.



Food Access Program

The World PEAS Food Hub also works to address food insecurity in our region by partnering with local community organizations through our Food Access Program, which provides fresh, locally grown food to low-income and underserved communities. We worked with 11 regional partners in 2017 including local senior centers, childcare organizations, a homeless shelter, and a food bank among others. We also supported 23 families receiving SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) with CSA shares through the HIP (Healthy Incentives Program) matching funds.

Institutional Market Program

This year, our institutional market continued to be Tufts University's Dining Service as it has been in prior years. Tufts purchased produce over the course of the season to be used at their community farmer's market. The total produce purchased in 2017 was \$1,783. We also supplied our Food Access partners with customized wholesale purchases for special events and functions with their clients.

Farmer Training and Earnings

The beginning of the 2017 growing season was fraught with difficulties for many New Entry farmers and other suppliers. Inclement weather and extremely wet fields delayed transplanting and harvesting activities, and as a result, the CSA season began two weeks later than originally planned. Once the CSA distribution season started, it still took a few weeks for farmers to hit their stride and begin producing in any sizeable quantities. Despite the early season setbacks, many New Entry farmers had a very successful growing year and produced high quality vegetables for the CSA program.



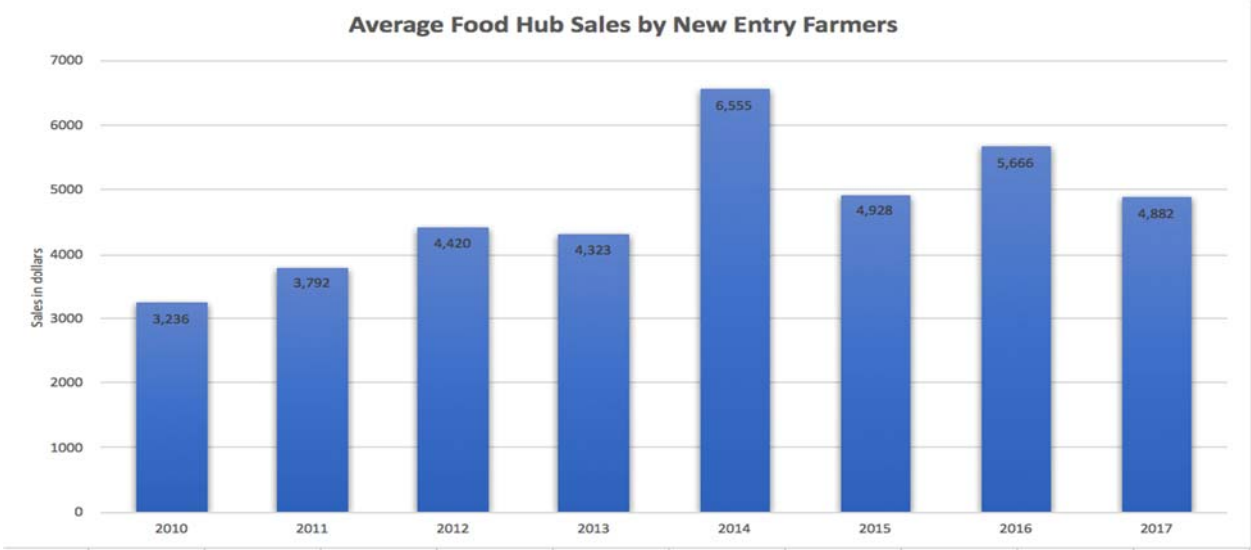
World PEAS Food Hub strives to support local agriculture by growing and supporting successful, resilient farmers. An ongoing challenge over the years has been a desire to balance providing market-based training and crop quality feedback and a reliable market outlet for beginning farmers without creating an entirely dependent relationship. That is, New Entry is not fully executing our mission if we do not adequately prepare the farmers who go through our training programs to develop their own direct markets and succeed in establishing lasting buyer relationships to maintain and grow their produce sales over time. Therefore, Food Hub staff are preparing to implement a number of significant changes to how we operate the Food Hub next season. First, we have done extensive research into local market prices and have adjusted our crop pricing to reflect more accurately current market rates. We approached it on a crop-by-crop basis adhering to our mission of helping to support beginning farmers and provide a leg up in their businesses (a “fair wage”); we factor in a slight increase in farmer payment per unit price of crops sold to the Food Hub above established market rates.

Another significant change for next season is that the Food Hub will begin encouraging the farmers to move towards crop specialization. As a result, crop production will no longer center on the diversification common to CSA models (cultivating large ranges of crops on limited plots) and will instead focus on 4 or 5 crops that beginning farmers can learn to grow well and eventually scale-up production to better align with the Food Hub’s distribution requirements. After introducing this concept to current farmers, they all responded positively and agreed it is a more efficient and effective way to utilize their land base and labor resources. This will also allow the Food Hub staff to be more efficient in operations as we will be able to aggregate from fewer farmers for each crop. This in turn will allow us to actually purchase more from farmers, as we will be able to buy larger quantities from each person over the course of the season. This system also more closely reflects how a wholesale or conventional food hub model functions.



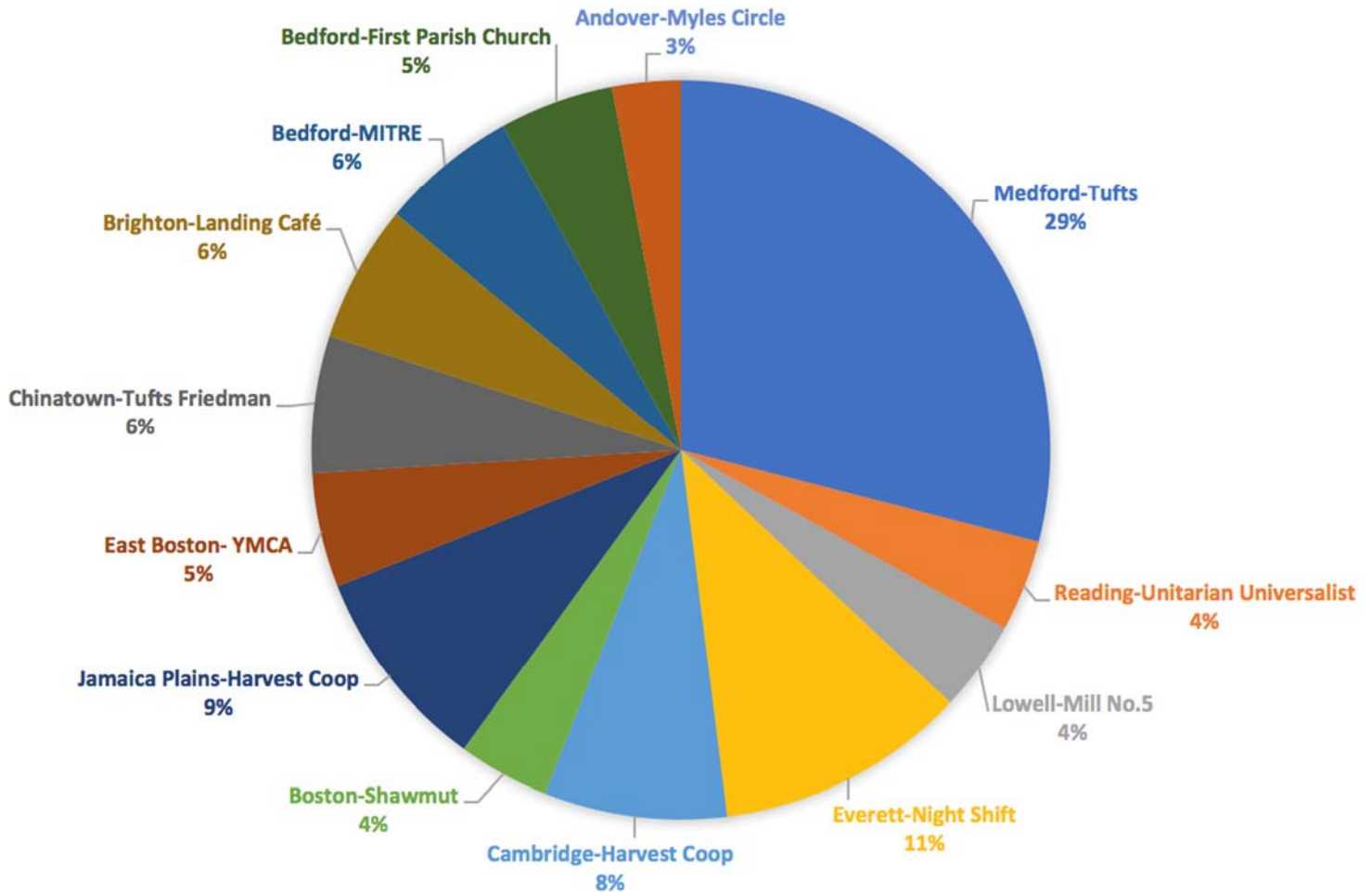
In 2017, the World PEAS Food Hub purchased a total of \$124,200 of produce from participating farmers compared to \$173,000 in 2016. This decrease is attributable to several factors. First, the Food Hub experienced a continued decline in CSA membership, particularly for the full season and summer memberships. This is the fourth year in a row we have experienced declining CSA share sales despite continual outreach and recruitment efforts. In 2016, total full season and summer membership was 263, whereas the 2017 season engaged only 235 share members. We also eliminated the option for a specialty share this season, which had existed last season. 2017 also proved to be a very transitional year for the Food Hub, experiencing complete staff turnover; all staff in 2017 were new to New Entry’s Food Hub operations and the region. The Food Hub’s new partnership with Myers produce and more economical purchasing policies were also important factors in lowering Food Hub expenses towards overall program viability. Food Hub staff were able to negotiate lower produce rates for bulk purchases from Myers Produce on numerous storage and specialty crops. During the course of the season, staff worked diligently to increase Food Hub distribution efficiencies and decrease surplus produce each week by closely aligning weekly CSA and wholesale order volumes.

As in previous years, the World PEAS Food Hub supplemented purchases from New Entry incubator and graduate farmers with produce from established commercial farms in the region to ensure an adequate amount and variety of produce was available to customers. **In 2017, we sourced 51% of Food Hub produce from New Entry’s beginning farmer graduates and 49% of produce was purchased from established independent farmers, versus 63% and 37% respectively in 2016.** The increase in purchases from established regional farms can largely be attributed to the need for produce at the beginning of the growing season that New Entry farmers were not able to meet. As mentioned, inclement weather and field conditions significantly hampered early production. **In 2017, the average New Entry farmer earned \$4,882 while in 2016 the average New Entry program farmer earned \$5,666.** While the earnings through the World PEAS Food Hub are insufficient to constitute a farmer’s only source of income, these earnings are an essential component of household income for many New Entry farmers. Most New Entry farmers are among the 80% of American farmers who have an off-farm job.



Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) Program

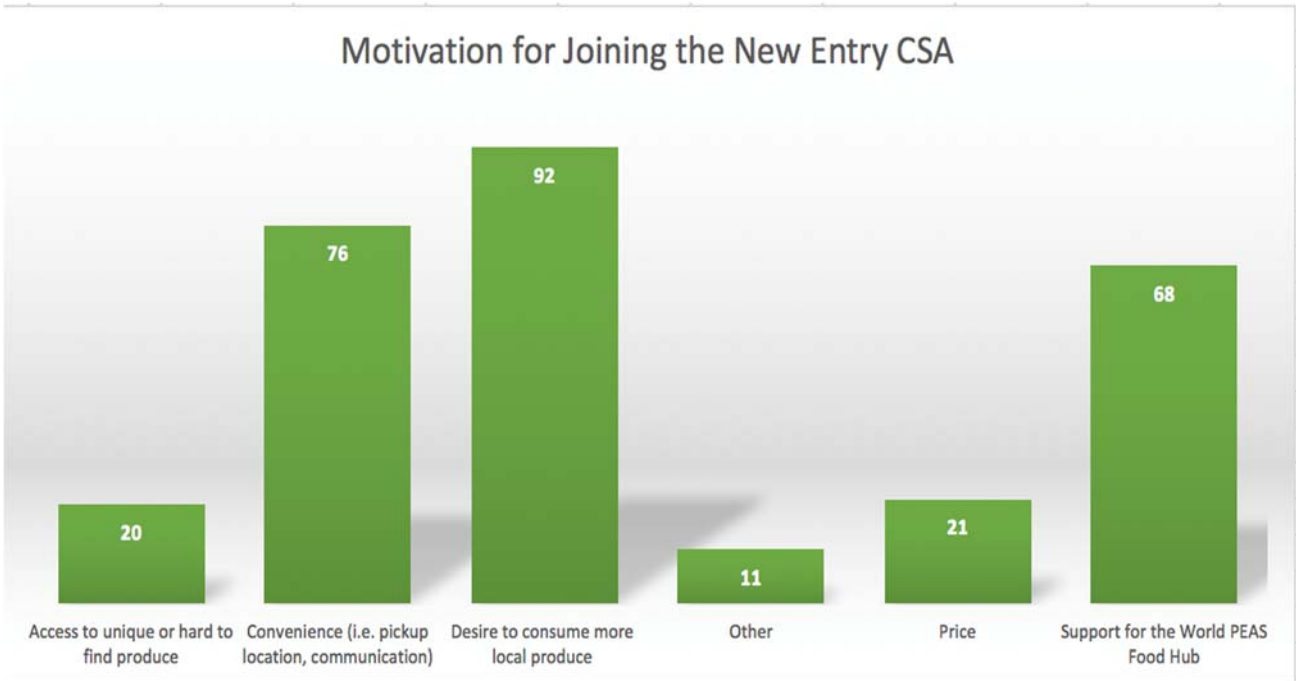
CSA CUSTOMER DISTRIBUTION BY PICK-UP SITE



This year, World PEAS CSA membership was 303 individuals or families. For our full Farm Share, which is a weekly box for the full 20-week season, we had 175 small shares and 16 large shares. For our Summer Share (the first 10 weeks of the season) we had 37 small shares and 7 large shares, and for our Fall Share (second half) we had 57 small shares and 11 large shares. Over the course of the season, we also had 27 egg shares. Embedded within our small share customers are the 23 SNAP customers that were recruited this growing season to participate in the HIP (Healthy Incentives Program). **61% of CSA members who responded to our end of season survey indicated that this was their first season as a customer with World PEAS, while 39% of respondents were returning customers.** CSA shares were delivered to 17 locations throughout greater Boston and Middlesex County. We had two main distribution days - one day was managed by New Entry trucks and drivers and for the other distribution day, Myers Produce was contracted for the Boston area drop-offs.

New Entry staff worked together in 2017 to provide quality feedback and additional training and support to New Entry program farmers concerning crop production. **As a result of the improved training, 91% of shareholders reported that crop quality was either consistently good or generally good. The same proportion of shareholders gauged the value of the produce in their share as at or above the price of the share.**

In the World PEAS Food Hub Annual CSA Member Survey, CSA members also provided information about their motivation for joining the World PEAS CSA this season.



This customer feedback is extremely valuable data as we look toward next season. In a recent article on Small Farm Central, which was the CSA software platform we used for the first time in 2017, it was noted that one of the biggest challenges in the CSA model is customer retention. According to their CSA farming annual report, the customer retention rate was 45.2% in 2014 and 46.1% in 2015 (Small Farm Central, *CSA: We Have a Problem*). At New Entry, we want to collect as much feedback from customers to optimize satisfaction with the shares.

CSA Member Testimonials

"I loved my World PEAS CSA share- it was a delicious variety of familiar and unique produce!"

"Supporting immigrant, refugee, and new farmers is now more critical than ever as we face uncertain, challenging times. This is one small but important way that you can literally see- and taste- your impact. The produce is high quality and we loved reading the stories and recipes. "

"We cannot say enough about how much we love World PEAS! From their mission to employ immigrants and refugees to their high level of communication about upcoming share items and recipe ideas for produce, New Entry is a privilege to partner with and benefit from. Tuesday- CSA pick-up day- was our favorite day of the week! If you're questioning whether or not to come alongside and join them in their objectives, without hesitation, we would say "DO IT!"

"Every week is like opening a gift on your birthday- you never know what you will get, but you know it will be unique and delicious!"

"World PEAS is a fabulous program. I was inspired by the recipes to make new things each week, and a small share easily provided enough vegetables for a week or more. I highly recommend an egg share if you like eggs- they are super delicious and a half dozen is perfect for snacks or breakfasts for a week."

"If you have the chance, you should sign up for this great opportunity. You support an excellent cause and it becomes a treat every week when you simply pick up your fresh produce conveniently in your own office all ready to go. My family would text me not to forget after I left it at work one week! Very good bang for your buck for fresh variety in your hand every week."



Food Access Program

11 Partnering Organizations

12,960 Meals Provided

In 2017, we partnered with Springwell in Waltham, Westford COA (Council on Aging), Burlington COA, Arlington COA, Medford Farmers Market, Somerville-Cambridge Elder Services, Lowell Senior Center, CTI Daycare in Lowell, Bridgewell in Lowell, Dorchester Senior Services (Kit Clark), and Merrimack Valley Food Bank. In total, we provided 12,960 meals (each share contains produce for 3 meals). The distribution style and frequency varied at each location as outlined below.

Burlington COA (50 seniors with a share value of \$14) and **Arlington COA** (70 seniors with a share value of \$15): these two organizations distributed produce through a weekly free farmers market on site partnered with Lahey Health.

Westford COA (45 seniors with a \$13 share value) distributed produce every other week through a free farmers market on site. For

Springwell, they received 40 CSA shares at a \$25 share cost for homebound seniors.

Lowell Senior Center had three deliveries for 45 seniors at \$11/share.

Medford Farmer's Market "Produce in a SNAP" for seniors distributed \$11 of produce each week for 45 individuals and families at the Medford Senior Center for \$2 of SNAP payment from customers.

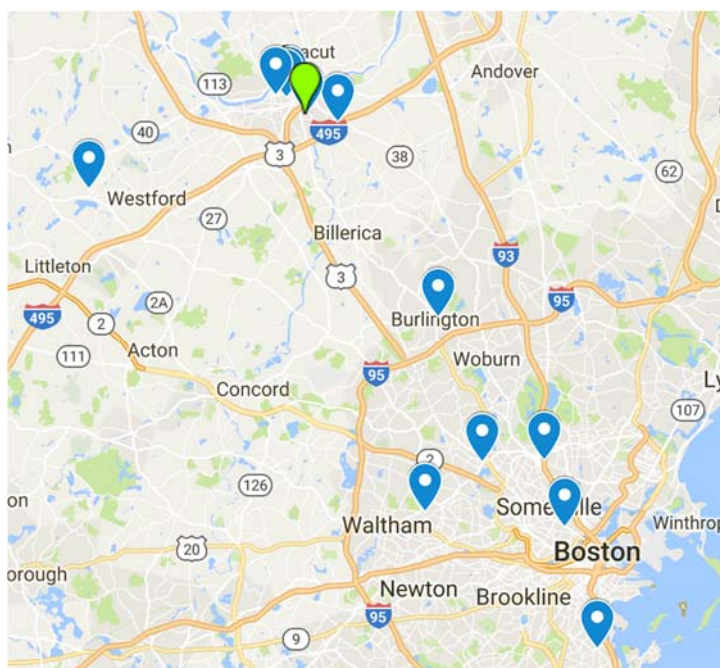
Somerville-Cambridge Elder Services received a one-time delivery of 77 shares with a value of \$25 each.

CTI Daycare had three large deliveries of fruit to distribute to children in their afterschool program.

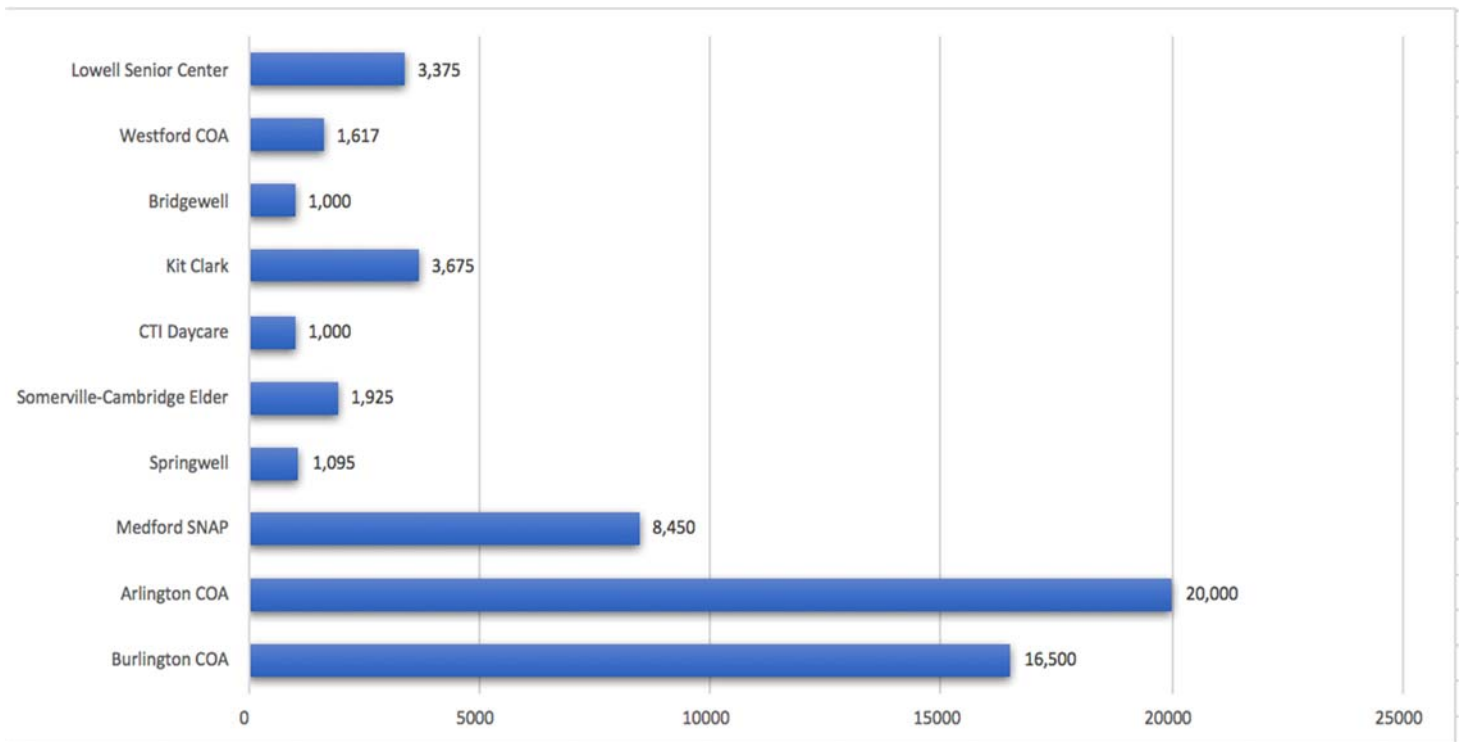
Bridgewell in Lowell provides transitional housing units for men and this year had a shared kitchen space for group meals. We delivered produce at a \$15 share cost for the 12 individuals who live there.

Kit Clark Senior Center has a Meals on Wheels program that we supplied various produce to for 147 seniors at \$25/share.

We provided numerous produce deliveries to the **Merrimack Valley Food Bank**, totaling 1,209 pounds of produce.



In 2017, we also increased our SNAP CSA participant numbers from 10 to 23. These customers paid \$80 through their EBT (Electronic Benefits Transfer) account monthly for their share and were reimbursed \$40 through the Healthy Incentives Program (HIP). This was the fifth year of our SNAP CSA program and the first year of the HIP matching program. Each season, we evaluate how to best work with SNAP recipients given our distribution model (pre-boxed shares) and staff capacity to process payment transactions. After this year's evaluation, we determined that we will not participate in the SNAP/HIP program next season. The SNAP CSA does not work well with our box-share CSA model that does not provide individuals or families with choice in which produce items they purchase each week and share sites are self-serve with little opportunity for consumer education. Instead, we will focus efforts on building partnerships and providing produce to food access organizations who can accept SNAP benefits in a more farmers' market-style system providing improved choice and direct customer service to recipients. This will increase the customer satisfaction for individuals who appreciate more choice when allocating limited resources to fresh produce purchasing. Below is the total value of the produce shares delivered to each of our partnering food access groups.



Total Produce Share Values at our 2017 Food Access Partnering Organizations

Population Served

With over half of the participants in the Food Access program being senior citizens, staff measured the impacts of the programs on this population utilizing a paper survey tool. Surveys are collected at the start of the program and at the end of the program in order to assess the impact of the fruit and vegetable distribution on their health, quality of life, and food security.

Analysis of the survey results displayed that 45% of senior citizens from our four most regular senior partner organizations (Burlington, Arlington, Westford, and Medford) participated in the survey, revealing interesting outcomes around increased access to fresh produce, improved health and wellness, and connection to the community. These results demonstrate the critical need to continue to promote Food Access programming, especially for underserved and vulnerable senior citizen populations.

Impacts on Healthy Eating

Survey respondents reported that the World PEAS Food Hub Food Access program had a major impact on their consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables. **For example, 83% of senior citizens reported that they ate a wider variety of produce as a result of the program. 77% said they ate better quality produce during this program.**

Impacts on Health and Wellness

Senior citizen participants also reported that the program had positive impacts on their overall health and wellness. **An unexpected benefit of the program has been the social aspect and sense of community that many have gained from participation. 94% of respondents said that it is important that the program provides an opportunity to interact and socialize with others.** The

social impact is one which the Food Hub and our partner organizations are very interesting in exploring further next season. Another significant benefit has been that the program has brought many new seniors to their respective town's senior center. As a result of this, many seniors have been able to receive information about other health and wellness programs that they are able to participate in.



Food Access Participant Testimonials

"I liked being introduced to kale and other vegetables that I normally wouldn't have. The program has a nice friendly atmosphere. Thank you!"

"I really enjoyed receiving great quality, locally grown fruits and vegetables with this program. I'm grateful to New Entry."

"Great program, great people. Wonderful vegetables, fun time, good variation, thank you!!"

"I enjoyed the surprise of getting various vegetables and fruits each week. I am pleased with the program. The fruits and vegetables were excellent."

"Growing up my family always had fresh fruits and vegetables. Later in life that was not an option. It is great to have fresh grown veggies and fruits again. Store bought are not as fresh or tasty. Thanks to this program they are not expensive like stores."



Profit and Loss Statement

For 2017, the Food Hub realized an operating loss of \$32,625. The Food Hub experienced a complete change in management just months prior to the start of the growing season and another staff transition occurred mid-season, so there was additional overlap of a second full-time staff position for training purposes. Personnel transitions, in combination with a difficult start to the growing season due to weather, and reduced CSA share numbers were all contributing factors to this deficit. Food Hub staff are developing more streamlined and efficient programming and new marketing strategies to implement for the 2019 season.

| New Entry Food Hub | | | |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------|--|-----------------|
| 2017 Profit and Loss Statement | | | |
| Revenue | | | |
| | Contributions | | 3,650 |
| | Sales Revenue- Non-Taxable | | |
| | CSA | | 158,103 |
| | Food Access | | 62,128 |
| | CDBG produce subsidies | | 2,202 |
| | Peabody produce subsidies | | 21,802 |
| | GLCF produce subsidies | | 3,549 |
| | New Entry subsidy Westford | | 2,450 |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | Total Revenue | | 253,884 |
| Expenses | | | |
| | Benefited Personnel | | 70,821 |
| | Benefited Fringe | | 17,903 |
| | Delivery Driver | | 6,445 |
| | | | |
| | Credit Card Serv Fees | | 7,560 |
| | Contractual Services | | 10,000 |
| | Farmer Payments | | 124,200 |
| | | | |
| | Travel | | 1,767 |
| | Fuel | | 948 |
| | Rent | | 15,756 |
| | Conference Event Exp | | 1,010 |
| | Translation Consultant | | 165 |
| | Telecommunications | | 720 |
| | Program Supplies | | 3,186 |
| | | | |
| | Total Direct Costs | | 260,481 |
| | Indirect Costs - 10% | | 26,048 |
| | | | |
| | Total Expenses | | 286,529 |
| | | | |
| | Net Profit/(Loss) | | (32,645) |

Staff, Intern, and Volunteer Experiences

The World PEAS Food Hub volunteers make the operation thrive! Volunteer share packers assist the World PEAS Food Hub staff in packing CSA shares and bulk orders each day during the season, sorting produce that will eventually feed CSA members, senior citizens, children, and other local community member in the greater Boston and Middlesex County region. Without our dedicated volunteers, our farm-fresh produce would never make it to so many plates around the region. **In 2017, the World PEAS Food Hub worked with 14 committed volunteers who reported to the Food Hub several mornings each week for CSA share and produce packing. The World PEAS Food Hub also engaged an additional four volunteers who primarily supported efforts on the incubator farms.**



The World PEAS Food Hub CSA relies on dedicated volunteers within the community. Volunteer “Cluster Coordinators” enable the World PEAS Food Hub to establish pick-up locations in neighborhoods across eastern Massachusetts, making fresh produce accessible and convenient for customers. The Cluster Coordinators are responsible for coordinating each of the CSA and Food Access sites, assisting with outreach and promotion of the program, overseeing logistics at the site, and putting forth a friendly face to customers.

With respect to core staff members, New Entry hired a new World PEAS Food Hub Coordinator in January 2017 and a new World PEAS Food Hub Manager in March 2017 to oversee operations and management. New Entry also re-hired a seasonal Operations Coordinator, as well as hired an Assistant Operations Coordinator to assist with warehouse operations and delivery. All of these individuals, while new to the program, made serious improvements to the operational efficiency of the Food Hub in 2017.

New Entry has also benefited from continued involvement in the AmeriCorps VISTA program. In July 2017, New Entry said goodbye to its second round of AmeriCorps VISTAs, and welcomed three new staff members into the roles of Food Access Facilitator, Development Facilitator, and Volunteer Recruitment Facilitator. These three new staff members will continue to serve with New Entry through August 2018, and they are focused on building capacity at the organization, including setting up new systems that will improve New Entry and World PEAS Food Hub operations for years to come.

Moving Forward

As we look to the future, one big change for the 2018 season is our “new” name change: we will now call World PEAS the **New Entry Food Hub**. We are choosing to say goodbye to the World PEAS name to associate more directly the Food Hub as an integral part of the overall New Entry organization and mission. New Entry Sustainable Farming Project’s World PEAS Food Hub is just too long of a name and many people did not realize PEAS was an acronym (People Enhancing Agricultural Sustainability)! We often hear feedback that customers didn’t realize that World PEAS was part of New Entry, so it is time to strengthen consumer connection between the produce they receive and the larger mission of our farmer training and food systems organization.

Another structural change for 2018 we will be to launch our new Food Hub software, **Local Food Marketplace**. This new system will allow us to have a centralized place to keep all our customer and produce ordering data - both on the customer side and the farmer side. Local Food Marketplace will allow us to customize our user interface to create a more appealing and easy-to-use website for CSA members to place their orders. We discontinued use of Small Farm Central and will be continuing to program and build out the customized Local Food Marketplace platform for use in 2018.

A larger transition for the 2018 CSA will be to phase out of the Boston market and increase sales and marketing efforts closer to the Merrimack Valley. The Boston market has increasingly become saturated with competing CSAs, customized meal boxes, and other produce home delivery services. Rather than compete with for-profit farms who need to sell shares to sustain operations, we will instead market in areas where there is currently a void to be filled. Specifically, we are approaching a number of companies and corporate office parks that offer wellness and nutrition-based programs and are interested in offering produce shares to their employees as a wellness benefit. We aim to establish larger, corporate drop off sites and consolidate the many smaller, geographically dispersed sites that were inefficient and challenging to deliver shares. Additionally, after evaluating our sales data from 2017, we have decided to forgo the large share option. A very small percentage of sales came from the large share box and it posed a significant coordination challenge for staff to maintain smaller distinct share values and produce offerings. In keeping with creating greater operational efficiencies, for customers who want a “large share,” will be able to purchase two small shares at a percentage discount.

In the upcoming season, the New Entry Food Hub team will also be working more closely with the New Entry Farmer Training team to strengthen our training curriculum and programming for beginning farmers including collaboration for increased food safety education. We are also offering a Direct Market Education Program for producers, a four-week workshop series to support producers with building a brand, increasing online presence, and attracting and retaining new customers. Individual technical assistance will also support producers to focus on fewer crops and increase their scale of production.

Regarding our food access work, we are excited to further develop our relationship with Lahey Health by adding the Billerica COA (Council On Aging) to our weekly senior share deliveries. We are also planning to grow our partnership with the Merrimack Valley Food Bank and are exploring options that would allow us to provide significant contribution towards their community markets at low-income housing units. Finally, we are working to create a partnership with the Lowell Transitional Living Center and aid them increasing the quantities of fresh produce that they serve to their clients through a community meals program. We have much to look forward to in 2018!

Thank you to all who helped make 2017 a great year for New Entry Food Hub!



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You can make a difference!

Your Gift at Work

\$50 - Provides tractor services for a farmer at our incubator training farms

\$150 - Pays for one-on-one technical assistance for a farmer

\$500 - Pays for a farmer's tuition in the Farm Business Planning Course

\$10,000 - Purchases a full season of fresh fruits and vegetables for a low-income food access organization



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