

# Jimmy Acres: A Tommerdahl Family Farm

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Hello Friends and Neighbors!

We're finally getting into the swing of things this month...let's jump right into some updates!

- ♣ The Chapel Hill farm stand opened this month, with lots of plants and the first of our spring veggies, herbs, and eggs. If you have not yet picked up your pre-ordered plants or scheduled a delivery for them, you are welcome to do that whenever your garden is ready. We are anticipating opening the Semora farm stand soon—keep your eyes peeled for details of our new hours for this summer.
- ♣ The chicks are no longer chicks (they grow so fast!) and have been moved into their mobile homes in the orchard. Their houses are moved daily to fresh grass, leaving behind a trail of fertilizer for the trees. Check out the link [here](#) for more info and to pre-order birds by May 16<sup>th</sup>!
- ♣ Things are finally starting to take off in the garden. It's always fun to see how fast things grow! Tomatoes, cucumbers, squashes, and beans have gotten their roots in the ground and are looking good so far. The covers have been taken off the hoophouses since we're past any cold weather. Our first attempt at growing things under cover was pretty successful and it definitely jumpstarted our season. There are lots of things to do differently next time and I'm looking forward to future seasons with it, especially as the soil builds up in a somewhat soggy spot.
- ♣ Strawberries are on their way!! We've spotted (and eaten) our first couple berries, and the plants are loaded with green ones. We may just have a decent harvest within the next few weeks!
- ♣ Jake had a successful first market day at the VF office in Greensboro. We're excited to start building a new community to share our food with and look forward to more market days there over the summer!



## GFE 2019: Regeneration Rising

Earlier this month, Jake and I (Anna) had the amazing opportunity to attend the Grassfed Exchange conference in Santa Rosa, CA as Herd Scholars—which means we were selected as 2 of the 35 people out of 150 applicants of young farmers from around the world to attend on a scholarship. The Grassfed Exchange is an annual meeting of some of the top names in regenerative agriculture—a meeting of a group of farmers who all share the common goal of restoring natural ecosystems to their full resiliency while building and feeding community along the way. Being in the presence of these seasoned farmers was an outstanding opportunity to catch a glimpse of what we hope to accomplish through our farming ventures.

Attending as Herd Scholars not only allowed us to hear amazing talks, tour successful beef and dairy farms to see theory being put into practice, be inspired by what others are doing, and get motivated to use our new knowledge to keep improving our own farm and share what we've learned with others, but it also gave us the opportunity to meet and network with people we wouldn't have otherwise been able to and to feel more of a part of a community that is driving change that reaches into all parts of our society.

At its surface, the Grassfed Exchange's aim to educate about grazing practices seems quite narrow. However, we find the focus to be much deeper and much more connected to the human experience as a whole. The idea of soil health runs deep through every talk, conversation, and farm tour. Healthy soil is not just what allows grass to grow to feed a cow, or helps wheat grow grain to produce a loaf of bread. Soil health dictates the nutrition content of our food, the diversity of our ecosystems, the quality of our waterways, and, stemming from these factors, the health of humans and the vibrancy of our society as a whole. Each conference session, farm tour, and conversation with fellow farmers illustrated this concept.

Conventional thought today bins agriculture and ecology into two very separate and distinct categories, and we don't see our food as being a part of a healthy ecosystem. Instead, we often hear how all agriculture is contributing to climate change and polluting our air and water. But this conference flips that perspective, acknowledging that our agriculture system is an opportunity to build healthy ecosystems, restore our soils by incorporating more carbon from the atmosphere into the ground, clean up our air and water, grow healthy, nutrient-dense food, and reverse the epidemic of chronic disease among humans today. Each of these issues in isolation sounds like a lofty goal, but all of them are already being addressed by farmers around the globe who are focused on maximizing the amount of LIFE that their farms regenerate rather than simply struggling to minimize the destructive and extractive nature of conventional agriculture.

The title of the conference this year of "Regeneration Rising" spoke to the underlying themes of sharing and spreading the message of healthy soil/healthy food/healthy people, as well as the rising up of a younger generation of farmers. It was extremely inspiring to see how many young people were in attendance and to hear about the incredible operations that they are helping to create. Sharing ideas, hearing other's solutions to problems, and simply commiserating about shared problems keeps us motivated and it gives us hope for the possibilities of what can be accomplished at a larger scale as we move into the future.

Coming back to our farm, we were inspired to rethink our goals and timeline for adding animals. We've been working on building healthy pastures for grazing but weren't sure they were ready for animals. Particularly after hearing of a dairy operation in the deserts of Mexico, we've realized that our grasses might never be ready for cows until we have those very same cattle present to wake up the life in the soil and jumpstart the nutrient flow. Despite this Mexican ranch only getting 8 inches of rain per year, their herd has reinvigorated fields, growing tall, lush, green grass alongside their neighbors' barren dry desert-scapes. After hearing this and many similar examples, we may be pushing to get cattle sooner rather than later!

One of the speakers made the comment that we, as farmers, should be asking our customers, "**How does your food make you feel?**" In a society where we often forget to think about where our food comes from (and are considered "crunchy" for asking), this may sound like a silly question. But we invite you to start thinking seriously about how your food gets to your table and how it makes you feel...at least with some of the bites that you take. Whether this be how you physically feel after eating a meal or how you feel about the practices that your food dollars support, we hope that you will join us in working to grow a better world for tomorrow, *one bite at a time!*

*If you have any suggestions for things you'd like to see in future newsletters, or have any ideas for how we can improve our customer service or your produce-buying and -consuming experience, please let us know! And as always, please feel free to pass this along to all of your produce-loving friends and neighbors!*

*"Behold the turtle: he makes progress only when he sticks his neck out."  
~James Bryant Conant~*

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