

January 2012

Dear Picadilly Farm shareholders and friends,

It finally feels like winter, with some cold, cold nights (but no snow accumulation since the Halloween blizzard came and went!). For your farmers, winter is the time to hunker down, reflect on the season past and make grand plans for the season to come.

This is our 2011 Annual Report. The report contains information about the activities at Picadilly Farm this past year, a summary of our 2011 income and expenses, and an outline of our plans for 2012. As a community-supported farm, we want this information to be available for all. Please let us know if you have any questions about the information presented here.

Five years into our farm and CSA operation, we are enjoying a well-rooted feeling, finally a deep sense that Picadilly Farm is gonna “make it”! We’re enjoying the support of, and community with, a strong group of shareholders. Thankful for this solid backdrop, we spent much of 2011 with our catcher’s mitts on, just trying to catch the curve balls. Between the endlessly soggy spring and the unbearably soggy autumn, we fielded more wild pitches than expected: the remnants of hurricane Irene that tore through our valley in August; a slip in the field for a long-standing employee that led to knee surgery; multiple bee stings that sent another employee to the ER with a newly-diagnosed allergy; and an October blizzard to boot. Not a season I’m too jazzed up to re-visit in this writing, actually! And yet, many farmers in our region fared far worse. We feel pretty lucky, seeing that we dodged the flooding experienced by many bottomland farmers, and also seeing that our sandy soils regularly dried out to a workable state.

## **Crop Production**

We grew twenty-six acres of cash crops in 2011. We managed the remaining nine field acres with a mix of cover crop and bare fallow periods, for weed control and soil improvement. We “double cropped” about two acres this season – meaning we planted each acre with two subsequent cash crops. This past season marked our third year of growing certified organic crops. Our new greenhouses, finished last spring, were a real pleasure to use. One of them is now our designated propagation and curing house, used for seed starting in spring and crop drying and storage in the fall. In the second house, we grew our first crop of greenhouse tomatoes, which was a success.

The weather in 2011 was a mixed bag, beginning with a wet and cool April and May that set back our earliest harvests. Summer was lovely for about ten weeks, with a period of really hot weather, and very good growing conditions. Then in late August, the vestiges from hurricane Irene hit, dumping five+ inches of rain on us, but thankfully sparing the farm significant damage. We were very lucky. More damaging to our crops was the subsequent, persistent rain in September and October, including twelve additional inches in just one week, which brought the end for many crops. The October 30<sup>th</sup> blizzard was surreal, particularly in that we didn’t have the forecast for significant snow until the afternoon before! We came through fine, back harvesting in the field within five days and with minimal crop damage. The late frost and warmish November made for pleasant late-season harvesting and cleanup.

Spring crops were difficult because of the wet, cool conditions. We experienced a new challenge – a fungal disease called “scab” on our first round of greenhouse melons, squash, and cucumbers. The fungus may have been seed borne, or could have been introduced on an improperly sanitized greenhouse tray from the previous season. Weather conditions were perfect to keep the scab going. We

discarded the entire planting of seedlings, as well as our first zucchini, summer squash and cucumber transplants, and started again with a hard lesson learned. We had no further problems with the scab, though the late melons in September weren't very sweet. June harvests were light, and we even skipped a week of eastern Massachusetts share deliveries (made up in November). By July, though, crops were coming in nicely, with good quality and yields. It was a great summer for tomatoes, cucumbers and eggplant. We had our best sweet corn ever, and some really nice early lettuce and spinach. August melons were sweet and abundant. Fall crops were a mixed bag. Sweet potatoes and carrots were excellent. Napa cabbage came in beautifully, along with leeks and gorgeous fall celery. We struggled with three well-loved crops: fall spinach (consistent germination failure); head lettuce (bottom rot, which is as described); and broccoli plus other brassica family crops (black rot and alternaria). None of these persistent challenges have an easy "fix", though we are reaching out to many sources for information in the quest to improve.

The Pick-Your-Own garden was a fun draw for shareholders, as usual. The new raised-bed herb garden was a big hit, with increasing numbers of shareholders popping out for fresh herbs each week. Strawberries were a weather-related wash-out, but with some delicious fruits nonetheless. Since we simplified our bean plantings to just green beans and edamame, we did better at avoiding the excessive Mexican bean beetle damage that plagued our beans in recent years. Basil was prolific, especially early, with more folks trying out the exotic types. There were still more weeds than we want, especially in the flowers, and we're looking at a few strategies to improve for next year.

On our farm, we strive for optimal soil and crop health, as the foundation for abundant and nutritious harvests. And our farm embodies a unique set of physical, chemical, and biological characteristics. Each season, we decide how best to use, amend, and steward these resources, with both the immediate harvest and the long view in mind. Primarily we work within a "feed the soil" framework, knowing that healthy soils grow the healthiest food. Our practices center on enriching organic matter within soils that are kept biologically diverse and full of micro life. In 2011 we amended our soils with various combinations of: compost; liquid fish fertilizer supplemented with biological stimulants such as humic acids and micronutrients; a blend of dry powders; and once the crops were growing we side-dressed the heavier feeders (such as onions, beets, cabbage, broccoli, corn, potatoes, and winter squash) with several organic N-P-K blends made principally from chicken manure, blood meal, and soybean meal. For fine tuning, we sent leaf samples of various growing crops (corn, tomatoes, potatoes, kale) to the UNH lab to see if the plants were deficient or excessive in nutrients.

Healthier plants are more resistant to pests and disease, but we still have to contend with pests and crop diseases every season. We used many strategies in 2011, all in keeping (at minimum) with the National Organic Standards. We chose our seed varieties carefully. We stuck to our established rotation of crop groups through eight four-acre blocks around the farm. Crop rotation helps us keep the populations of some pests in check, including Colorado potato beetles, cabbage loopers, cucumber beetles, flea beetles and squash bugs. Rotations may also diminish the presence of diseases that we struggle with, including alternaria in many crops and black rot in the brassicas. We continued to use row cover as physical exclusion against flea beetles and cabbage maggots in the brassicas. Once again, we released beneficial parasites, trichogramma wasps, to control European corn borer. In 2011 we used two certified organic pesticides: "Entrust" to control Colorado potato beetle in potato and eggplant; and "Pyganic" to control for flea beetle in two plantings of greens and for leaf hoppers in potatoes. We sprayed one certified organic fungicide, a copper spray, on tomatoes, and on the cucurbit family crops as a hedge against the scab fungus that we experienced in our greenhouse. We also used a biological spray called Serenade on tomatoes and cucurbits, attempting to colonize the plants with "good" bacteria before the disease-causing ones could take hold. Along the same lines, we utilized a seed

treatment called “Actinovate” on crops in the Chenopod family (spinach, chard, beets), as well as on many of our young transplants, to colonize “good” bacteria and enhance germination and vigor of these sometimes-tricky crops.

Weeding continues to preoccupy much our late spring and summer days, and we’d like to see the farm have fewer weeds. The biggest offender is crabgrass. Crabgrass was already here in the corn production that preceded us, allowing time for the seed bank to grow. And, crabgrass grows most prolifically in June and July, right when our attention shifts from planting and weeding to harvesting. We will look for strategies to knock back the grassy weeds in 2012.

***Crop production outlook for 2012:*** Twenty-six acres of field crops is a good size for our farm business, and we’re planning to continue growing at this size in 2012. With no bold initiatives in view, 2012 will be a year to refine and improve ongoing efforts. We’re taking a hard look each crop to make sure it’s worth the space and time allotted. We’ll have to improve or cut back on the poor performers, addressing the challenges of spinach germination, and lettuce and brassica diseases. We’ll reorganize plantings in the PYO garden, to enable more successful weeding. We plan to dabble more in hoophouse crop production, with tomatoes again, winter greens, and possibly other crops. We’ll develop the ability to side-dress crops with more nutrients while they’re growing, to better accommodate excessive rains that leach nutrients away from plant roots.

We are considering a change for the five acres of crops we now grown in plastic-covered beds, to growing them in beds covered with biodegradable mulch made from corn polymers. On the plus side, the mulch wouldn’t have to be removed from the field, saving many unpleasant work hours as well as eliminating seventy large bags of trash annually. On the minus side, the biodegradable mulch, while approved for organic production in Europe and Canada, has not yet been considered by USDA. Some farmers we respect and emulate are shifting to an elegant use of this biodegradable mulch on the plant beds, combined with straw mulch in between – a system that can control weeds, conserve moisture, prevent soil compaction, build soil organic matter, and look pleasing to boot. So, we’re considering whether use of this one product – no doubt a more environmentally friendly product than our current plastic mulch – is worth dropping our organic certification in 2013.

## **Animal Production**

We continued apace with years past, raising pigs, sheep, and laying hens to compliment the vegetable production. For the fifth year, we raised half a dozen pigs from piglet to slaughter. Three lambs grazed at the farm crew house, keeping the grass mowed and the neighbors entertained. We managed two flocks of laying hens, with the second round of 180 hens starting egg production just as the first flock of 75 hens was sent to the butcher in November. Susie and Biz also raised and slaughtered about thirty meat birds on the farm this summer, for themselves and to share with the farm crew. Though our animal operations are not certified organic, we fed the animals certified organic, Vermont-processed grain, as well as produce scraps from our washbarn.

Each animal had a role to play, in addition to the products that we eat and sell from them. The pigs ate lots of discarded produce, and occupied a shady corner of the field unsuited for vegetable production. The sheep took care of much lawn mowing at the crew house. The pastured hens provided valuable nutrients through their manure, and we fancy that they help with pest control. Of course, shareholders and farm visitors enjoyed spending time with the farm animals, and we enjoyed caring for them.

We invested some time and resources into the chicken coops, yet again. Rolling nest boxes carry the eggs away from the hens (and their poop!) so that the eggs are naturally clean and we don't have to spend a long time on daily egg washing chores. With these boxes, and two mobile coops set up just how we like, we should be well poised for egg production from now on.

Brendan Taaffe, a Brattleboro musician and beekeeper, continued to assist us as beekeeper at the farm. We've decided to continue with two hives, rather than four, wondering if perhaps the "carrying capacity" of our open fields were stressed by too many bees looking for food (and getting angry and letting us know with their stingers when they didn't find enough). We had a very small, very tasty honey harvest.

Overall, the animal operations at Picadilly are not big money makers. We lost money in 2011, when accounting for our daily time spent feeding and moving the animals, and keeping them safe and healthy. But because the animals played positive roles besides the income we derived from them, we quantify their value based on more than just the bottom line.

***Animal production outlook for 2012:*** We plan to keep on with much the same. Our pork and lamb sell easily by the half or whole. The chicken flock is now at a good size (175-200), and the infrastructure is set up. We hope to offer an Egg Share at some of our eastern Massachusetts CSA sites this season. We're able to wholesale the eggs at a local co-op and farm stand in the winter, but still have surplus from January through May to figure out how to move. We're thinking about raising meat birds someday – Bruce wants to start with turkeys – but probably not in 2012.

## **Labor**

The farm crew was experienced, quick, and talkative this season, with many folks returning from 2010. We remain pleased with our decision to discontinue an apprenticeship program for the present time, and we've been able to hire and retain skilled farm workers. Our Assistant Manager, Susie Parke-Sutherland, finished her third season here, quickly becoming irreplaceable with her knowledge of all things field, equipment and office. Returning farm workers included: Antonio, Adelina, Iver and Alejandro in the field; Harold in the farm shop; and Noah and Maggie on the summer weeding squad. We were joined by Biz, Jodie, Laura, Chris, and Jess on the field crew – they proved to be absolutely reliable, and also had a lot of fun growing the food. The weeder crew expanded in the summer to include newcomers Jose, Julia, Elizabeth, and Jasmine – they worked hard to keep back the grasses especially. Joe drove our box truck with shares into eastern MA two days each week, and never missed a beat. Albert Hudson, previous owner of this farm, continued to generously offer his skills, time, guidance, and sage intuition, along with part-time help operating equipment. Overall, the crew put in approximately 16,000 hours this season. Bruce and Jenny spent 4100 hours combined caretaking the farm in 2011.

In mid-summer, one of our long-time employees slipped and twisted her knee in the field. She has been recovering since then, after surgery to repair torn ligaments. A few weeks later, another employee was stung twice by honeybees while operating a tractor a few hundred yards from the hives. After an unanticipated reaction, she was diagnosed with a serious allergy. We decided to decrease the number of hives on the farm from four to two, considering the possibility that the carrying capacity of our fields/area may be too small for four hives. Needless to say, we're hoping for no trips to the hospital in 2012.

**Labor outlook for 2012:** We look forward to working with a very experienced Picadilly crew, with the returning roster including Susie, Harold, Antonio, Adelina, Iver, Jodie, Joe, Alejandro and Jose. We hope to maximize on the depth of this crew to refine our systems, to make more reasonable choices day to day, and to reduce the grassy weed pressure in our fields.

## Sales

Picadilly is succeeding as a Community Supported Agriculture farm. We benefited greatly in 2011 from our efforts to streamline our markets into “all CSA”. In 2011, we offered CSA shares through multiple streams (details about each follow after this list):

- Local shares
- Pre-boxed shares delivered to eastern Massachusetts
- Collaboration with Waltham Fields Community Farm, in Waltham MA
- Extended season shares for Sunrise Farm CSA in White River Junction VT
- Partnership in Shared Harvest CSA for winter shares to Arlington and Canton MA

Locally, our CSA grew to 260 shareholders, up from 205 in 2010, and reaching our build-out goal of 250-300 local shareholders. We delivered thirty-five of these shares to off-farm pick-up sites in Keene (the Cheshire Medical Center and Keene State College), and shareholder volunteers delivered a handful of shares to Brattleboro and Greenfield. The rest of the shareholders picked up here at the farm. About 85% of these shareholders were Full Season shareholders (25 weeks), and the other 15% were Summer shareholders (12 weeks). Our shareholder retention rate from 2010 was great, over 90%. Our Mix-and-Match distribution style on the farm continued to be successful and well-liked.

We delivered 360 pre-packed, boxed shares to pick-up sites in eight eastern Massachusetts towns. Nearly 70% percent of the 2010 shareholders renewed for 2011, which seems to be our average renewal rate for eastern MA shareholders. These Tuesday and Thursday deliveries went off quite smoothly. Shareholders had the opportunity to receive surplus cucumbers and tomatoes, and several dozen eastern MA shareholders came out to visit the farm over the course of the growing season. Our ambitious goal for the season was to sell 425 shares. We came up shy of this target, primarily because we stopped selling shares early due to the poor spring weather and an anticipated small early harvest. We filled in the financial gap this left in our income by planting some “custom crops” for a few other farms.

We worked with Waltham Fields Community Farm (where Jenny worked in 1998 and 2001), to expand our collaboration. WFCF has a small piece of farmland in the midst of a large and supportive urban area. We’ve been growing the winter squash and potatoes – crops that require relatively more space – for their CSA, for the past five years. In 2011, we expanded to offer an additional 100 shares – Picadilly did the growing, WFCF sold and distributed. With some tweaking of the details, we plan to proceed similarly in 2012.

With crop yields also below average in the fall, and our intention to “make up” the skipped June week to our 360 eastern MA shareholders in November, we eliminated our usual offering of local late-fall shares. Only our local Full Season shareholders, as well as Late-fall shareholders from last year, had the opportunity to receive two December distributions, which we sold to 85 of these shareholders. We did sell an extended season Nov-Dec share to forty-five regular season shareholders at Sunrise Farm in White River Junction, VT (owned and operated by Bruce’s brother, Chuck).

Our collaborative growing for Shared Harvest Winter CSA continued in 2011. Shared Harvest is a multi-farm CSA, organized by Gretta Anderson (with Jane Hammer in 2012), serving about 400 shareholders at pick up sites in Arlington and Canton MA. We produced about half of the vegetables for the shares, and made six deliveries between October and December.

In addition to our CSA shares, we also sold our produce to:

- Waltham Fields Community Farm (where Jenny worked in 1998 and 2001). They contracted with us to produce potatoes and winter squash for their 465+ CSA shareholders.
- Green Meadows Farm in Hamilton MA. They contracted with us to produce potatoes, winter squash and sweet potatoes for their 200+ CSA shareholders.
- The Farm Direct Co-op in Marblehead, Salem and Melrose, MA. They contracted with us to produce celery and watermelons for their 700+ co-op members.
- The World Peas Co-op of the New Entry Sustainable Farming Project in Dracut MA (where Bruce worked in 2006). They contracted with us to produce various crops for their 130+ CSA shareholders.
- Very small-scale wholesale deliveries to local co-ops, one farm-to-school program, and other area CSA's.

***Sales outlook for 2012:*** The same trajectory holds for 2012 – most of our sales through CSA. We will continue to grow our local and eastern MA shares to match our production capacity. Included in this is our interest and intention to continue collaborative relationships with Waltham Fields Community Farm, Sunrise Farm, and Shared Harvest CSA. We're hoping to serve 275 local shareholders, 425 eastern MA shareholders, 100 Waltham Fields shareholders, 45 Sunrise Farm shareholders, and 400+ Shared Harvest CSA shareholders. We will continue to grow custom crops on a smaller scale for other farmer friends and neighbors.

## **Infrastructure and Equipment**

We had a busier year than planned, in terms of new purchases and construction work at the farm. The winter months found us sourcing and purchasing a second 1980's-era "high crop" Kubota tractor, to spread our high-use demands on this machine among two. By April, we'd just about finished construction on the two new greenhouses, and we began using them. We made significant, but unsuccessful, efforts to have the failing engine on one of our 1950's-era Allis Chalmers tractors rebuilt. The season progressed with just the other tractor working, and we'll see about a rebuild this winter. In the spring, we built yet another chicken coop, and purchased fancy nest boxes for both coops – now, we are well set up for two flocks of laying hens (175-200 birds each). We picked up an inexpensive, used "bunch washer", which has quickened our pace and saved our backs a bit while washing bunches of carrots, beets and other roots. Early summer found Harold and Albert building the raised herb beds outside the barn, a fun project that has added beauty and functionality to this part of the barnyard. Harold also built a new table and shelf in the distribution barn -- simple and perfectly useful. Just a few weeks ago, with anticipation of winter snow, we re-roofed the last barn section of old asphalt shingles over the half the washbarn, by the loading dock.

In September, we found ourselves with the sudden opportunity to purchase a small mobile home that sits on our farm property. The home was owned by the sister of the previous farm owner, and she was moving out after living there for 25 years. The home is no longer moveable, and we'd long expected the farm business to buy it for farm crew housing whenever the owner was ready to move. After some minor renovations, a farm crew member moved into the home with his family in November.

The farm was awarded a \$27,000 grant from the USDA, to offset about three-quarters of the cost of installing a series of drainage ditches and grass-lined waterways around the farmstead area. Our goal was to reduce topsoil erosion over the edge of the fields during significant rain events. The past season provided more opportunities than we really needed to test the capacity of the drainage system (it worked with flying colors).

We finished three years of work with the Natural Resources Conservation Service of USDA on implementations of plans related to Nutrient Management, Cover Cropping, and Integrated Pest Management. Adding up all our successful practices with the NRCS, we earned the “Cooperator of the Year” award from Cheshire County’s Soil Conservation District!

***Infrastructure & equipment priorities for 2011:***

- Irrigation well re-development, to increase capacity in case of drought
- Replace our plastic mulch layer with an improved model for raised beds
- NRCS drainage work continued with one more waterway
- Allis Chalmers G tractor – another swing at the engine rebuild
- Re-skin and repair the two older hoop houses
- Monitor our aging box truck and Massey Ferguson tractor

## **Financial Summary**

Financially, the farm is healthy, though carrying more debt than we prefer. In 2011, our actual income came in as budgeted, but our expenses were higher. In particular, we decided in late the spring to make investments in our laying hen production infrastructure, anticipating good return in future years. We also made the unexpected purchase of the mobile home that sits on the farm property, which we are now using for crew housing. After deliberation, we decided to do so from our regular operating budget and cash reserves, rather than through a loan. The business maintains a modest cash reserve to allow for positive cash flow in the spring, and to provide a rainy day fund for when we face unbudgeted and unexpected expenses.

Dating to business start-up in 2006, Picadilly Farm LLC owes \$110,000, at zero percent interest, to two friendly lenders. We were unable to make any re-payment on our farm start-up debt in 2011. We are focusing on repaying this debt in the next few years, before we plan for any major infrastructure expansions or new initiatives. The business also holds a mortgage of \$69,000 on the farm crew house, with Greenfield Cooperative Bank, which is paid from the annual operating budget. Jenny and Bruce hold the farm mortgage personally, and Picadilly Farm LLC rents the land and barns from us.

Our personal income from the business decreased from 2010 to 2011. Nonetheless, our family made our entire living from the farm, with no supplemental work off the farm.

Labor costs are by far the most significant expenses of the farm. Add in compensation that our family takes from the farm, and nearly two-thirds of every dollar spent on Picadilly produce goes directly toward the livelihood of one of us working here. Add again the attention we take to working with individuals and local businesses when we have projects to do, machines to fix, seeds to buy, animals to feed – much of what shareholders spend on a share goes to people and good livelihood.

A summary of the 2011 income and expense report, as well as our budget for 2012, follows below.

	2011 projections		2011 actual		2012 projections	
<b>Income</b>						
Animal product sales	\$9,500	2%	\$11,300	2%	\$17,500	3%
CSA shares, on farm	\$108,500	21%	\$114,600	21%	\$162,500	29%
CSA shares, off farm	\$332,000	64%	\$285,900	51%	\$345,500	61%
Contract/Co-op growing	\$45,000	9%	\$74,400	13%	\$35,000	6%
Wholesale & shop sales	\$14,000	3%	\$25,600	5%	\$9,000	2%
NRCS Program payments	\$10,000	2%	\$44,200	8%	\$0	0%
<b>Total Income:</b>	<b>\$519,000</b>		<b>\$556,000</b>		<b>\$569,500</b>	
<b>Operating Expenses</b>						
Animal production	\$8,000	2%	\$15,000	3%	\$11,000	2%
Payroll (J&B excluded)	\$196,500	48%	\$198,800	43%	\$215,000	47%
Admin, Insurance, Certifications	\$16,700	4%	\$14,450	3%	\$17,900	4%
Marketing & events	\$5,500	1%	\$4,500	1%	\$4,000	1%
Purchase for resale	\$3,000	1%	\$3,750	1%	\$4,000	1%
NH taxes	\$2,000	0%	\$2,100	0.5%	\$2,500	1%
Growing expenses	\$54,000	13%	\$61,000	13%	\$66,000	15%
Repair & maintenance	\$18,500	5%	\$22,100	5%	\$22,600	5%
Fuel and oil	\$11,400	3%	\$11,900	3%	\$14,500	3%
Utilities	\$15,000	4%	\$16,500	4%	\$18,000	4%
Farm rent (from J&B)	\$18,000	4%	\$18,000	4%	\$18,000	4%
Crew house mortgage & taxes	\$9,700	2%	\$10,200	2%	\$10,200	2%
Debt repayment	\$15,000	4%	\$0	0%	\$15,000	3%
<b>Capital Expenses</b>						
Infrastructure & Equipment	\$25,000	6%	\$16,900	4%	\$35,000	8%
NRCS Program expenses	\$10,000	2%	\$49,000	11%	\$0	0%
Mobile Home purchase & repair	\$0	0%	\$16,100	3%	\$0	0%
<b>Total Expenses:</b>	<b>\$408,300</b>		<b>\$460,300</b>		<b>\$453,700</b>	
<b>Surplus (pre-tax):</b>	<b>\$110,700</b>	27%	<b>\$95,700</b>	21%	<b>\$115,800</b>	26%

**Financial Outlook for 2012:** We plan to have a year well in the black. We are budgeting very carefully, as our costs continue to rise across the board. A strong returning crew means that our payroll costs will rise, but we anticipate a good return in terms of efficiency and quality of work. We continue to think “lean” regarding infrastructure and equipment improvements, and have committed to paying off our start-up debt before undertaking any major infrastructure projects or new initiatives.

## Community Involvement

The Picadilly community continues to grow and deepen. Our community extends from four focal points: local shareholders, shareholders from Eastern Massachusetts, farm workers and the broader community.

The local shareholders comprise a robust cadre of returning and new faces. We are happy to enjoy deepening connections and friendships with and among this crowd. A highlight of the season was our second annual strawberry shortcake picnic. The event featured a performance by the Arlington, MA-based Family Folk Chorale, a multigenerational chorus conducted by Chris Eastburn, whose family hosts one of our eastern MA CSA pick-up sites. The event was open to the public, and drew shareholders and community members out to enjoy the farm. With rain threatening, the performance was relocated inside the new greenhouse, where the acoustics were surprisingly good! A dozen shareholders and neighbors volunteered to pick berries, and to make and serve shortcake – our thanks to everyone who created a spirited afternoon. We drew on our local shareholders and neighbors again in October to help us bring in a quick harvest during the day of the blizzard, and we are grateful for these volunteers. With the extra demands of this fall, we did not have our usual harvest dinner celebration in November – we missed the gathering, and it will be back next year!

In Eastern Massachusetts, our shareholder community grew both from expanding numbers and from another year together. It was a good challenge to keep up with the email correspondence back and forth. In February we gathered in Arlington for a potluck and lacto-fermentation workshop led by shareholders Matt Bastress and Jane Hammer.

Where would we be without such a fine group of dedicated farm workers? That's tough to say! Certainly, we at Picadilly are fortunate to enjoy the skills and commitment of a fine group, many of whom have been here for multiple years. While our friendships mature, responsibilities increase, and old jokes are replaced with new, the working farm community flourishes.

With five production years under our belt, Picadilly Farm is no longer such a new kid on the block. Many people, besides shareholders, know and appreciate what we're up to here. In 2012 we engaged with the broader community in a number of ways. Picadilly donated surplus produce to various hunger relief organizations, though in much smaller quantities than in other seasons. A group of high school students from the Waring School in Beverly, MA, stayed and worked at the farm for three days in June, as part of their study of local agricultural systems. We hosted a workshop on Good Agricultural Practices for farmers, in conjunction with UNH Cooperative Extension and the Soil Conservation District. We hosted several visits from Winchester school children, including a summer cooking club and the garden club. We participated in the annual Health and Wellness Fair the Winchester School, and a local food days at the Winchester Thayer Library.

Several anonymous donors purchased and subsidized CSA shares for the benefit of the community: one for the Winchester Learning Center, an early childhood education program serving low-income families; and a second for the Early Sprouts program at the Child Development Center at Keene State College. We extend special thanks to the donors of these gifts!

***Outlook for farm community in 2012:*** Let's continue to deepen, expand, and develop this aspect of the farm that runs hand-in-hand with the crop production. For 2012, we're likely to carry forward a similar array of community involvement, and to re-instate our year-end harvest celebration.

In summary, we continue to feel grateful and humble, after another year of working with the elements of nature, people, and the current economic uncertainties. We know that we are fortunate to participate in work we believe in and are satisfied by every day. We both love to grow food, and we love to do it even more for you. We appreciate your ongoing support for Picadilly Farm, and for local, sustainable food production.

Warmly,  
Jenny & Bruce Wooster  
Picadilly farmers