

Flowers by the Sea

Farm Lease Opportunity, 2011

The following information is intended to assist in the initial evaluation of the farm lease potential on the site formerly farmed as Flowers by the Sea, in Elk, California. Please contact us directly at info@fbts.com for further information.

It is not intended that this document be broadcast in any way, rather that it be made available to appropriate parties who are interested in this opportunity.

Farm History

Flowers by the Sea began operation on this property in 1995. Since then, nearly all the farmable land has been cleared and cropped, with special attention to building long term soil fertility using Biodynamic methodology. The focus for the last few years has been to vegetable and fruit crops marketed directly and locally. The farm is locally famous for its great variety of high quality and poison free produce, flowers, eggs and meat.

Prior to the current use, the land was unused since the early 1930s, when it was the home to a small organic goat dairy. The soils are clean, fertile and free from pesticide residue.

Due to the age, health and outside family responsibilities of the current ownership it is now necessary to hand the management of this farm over to the next generation. It is our strong desire that farming continue here. In any case, various options for the sale of the property are actively being pursued, and the property will be actively marketed for sale during the 2011 season.

Farm Facilities

The property is a ridge overlooking the Pacific Ocean with three wave cut terraces, varying in elevation from 160 feet to 620 feet. There are approximately 12 acres of croppable fields and 8 acres of improved pasturage. All are suitable for and equipped for irrigation. Wooded areas surround the spine of the ridge that is the natural boundary of the property. A year round creek is on the northern boundary. It is a highly scenic and private plot, yet only a few minutes from the town of Elk.

Soils are of marine origin, with clay loam in the lower fields graduating to silty clay, silty, sandy and gravelly loams as the elevation increases. The broad variety of soils and exposures allows for a long, varied and productive growing season.

Summer high temperatures vary some 10 to 15 degrees F between the lower and upper fields. Temperatures in the lower fields allow for summer production of traditionally cool season crops, while cropping more traditional varieties in the upper fields. Frost free days are generally in excess of 270.

Two agricultural water systems service the fields, one which is gravity powered from springs with storage tanks, one from a pump from an irrigation pond. Water is available in all fields suitable for planting.

A 40 x 120 foot redwood barn, built as a kidding facility for dairy goats, is a multipurpose structure. It includes a large concrete floor utility room with large sinks, washer and dryer, reach-in refrigerator, etc.

An 8 x 40 foot tool shed, three silos, electrical distribution structures, an unfinished guest house and a walk in cooler/freezer are also functional.

The Elk Creamery, California's first organic goat dairy, milked a flock and made cheese here from 2004 to 2008. The facilities are largely intact.

A 60kv diesel generator powers the upper portions of the farm – the lower portions are grid connected.

Telephone and high speed internet connections are available.

At one time we managed 25 honeybee colonies, and have equipment and supplies to manage at least 50 – the number we feel can be practically supported from the farm and surrounding areas.

Egg, fryer chicken and turkey production have also been an on-and-off-again feature of the farm, and all necessary equipment is available.

Fencing and cross fencing on numerous fields has been completed, but is in need of repair in some cases.

Greenhouses and a nursery facility are located by the lower fields. These will be used by the owner during the lease, but some space for crop seedlings will be available.

A BCS 853 13 hp. diesel tractor and a Kubota M5030 54 hp. 4wd diesel tractor/loader, with a great variety of implements, are available to the lessee.

Extensive drip irrigation pipe and supplies are in place and usable for annual cropping. A large quantity of 3" aluminum sprinkler pipe, fittings and impact sprinklers are also in place.

A few field production tools – Glassar wheel hoe, walk behind seeders, etc. are also available for use.

All of the accoutrements of the farm are intact – it is a "turn key" opportunity.

Markets

The local and proximate Farmer's Markets have been our primary outlet for over 10 years. In addition, local retailers, caterers and restaurant accounts are used for seasonably excess production. Our reputation is of having the finest, cleanest and most vital products available. There has never been any difficulty in selling 100% of our production.

A team of dedicated contractors have sold for us at these Markets, and could continue to do so. They are “the face of the farm”, and represent its interests well. All wholesale distribution has been done in conjunction with the Markets, simplifying off-farm trips and harvest schedules. A fully outfitted truck is available under separate arrangement.

The Coastal markets (Fort Bragg, Mendocino and Gualala), all within 40 minutes drive, run May through October. The largest market, some 60 miles distant in Ukiah, runs year round with 8 to 10 strong months/year depending on the Fall weather.

Farm Labor

In the past, local Hispanic workers have been employed for the bulk of the farm work. Apprentices, WOOFERS, etc. have also been utilized, within the constraints of the available housing.

Because the former farmer/owner lives on the property, the number and nature of people living here needs to be a negotiated item.

Lease Terms

The property will likely be for sale during some or all of the 2011 growing season. A sale may be made during the course of the lease to a group desirous of continuing the agricultural work here. To facilitate any change of ownership and out of fairness to the potential farmer, a one year lease will be the initial contract. Any property sale will be done with language to allow for at least the completion of this season. It is our hope that this one year beginning can become the basis of a longer term arrangement.

The lease will run for twelve months, beginning at a mutually agreed upon date early in 2011. Monthly payment will be \$3,000, \$500 of which can be credited to necessary and agreed upon infrastructure repairs or improvements. Three months payment will be due at the signing of the contract: one month for the initial period; one for the final period, and one to act as a security deposit to be returned at the completion of the lease.

Comprehensive insurance for the operations, employees, etc. will be the responsibility of the lessee. Additionally, an umbrella policy in the amount of \$1M will be maintained by the lessee.

All production from the existing perennial crops: strawberries, raspberries, fruit and nut trees, etc. will be available to the lessee.

With the exception of the existing nursery operation, all areas and facilities of the existing farming operation will be available for the exclusive use of the lessee. The owner intends continued operation of the nursery, including participation in the Farmers’ Markets.

Certifications

Since the first year of our operation here, we have been certified for Biodynamic and Organic production. In the fall of 2010 we allowed these certifications to lapse. No operations have been performed that would disallow an immediate re-certification by the lessee.

Whether certified or not, only “real” organic production methods will be allowed as a condition of the lease, with a preference for Biodynamic methodology.

Timetable

The growing season here begins as early as March, with greenhouse work beginning in February. As fields dry, initial planting stretches from March through May. The close of the soil working season, heralded by the onset of Fall rains, is generally in late October or early November. Season extension facilities have not been used in any large way.

Financially viable and strong Farmers’ Markets run May through November, with a slightly subdued December dependant on weather. January and February Markets are slow – March and April ramp up to the May rush.

Ideally, the lessee will be able to begin work here no later than March 1st, to fully profit from the 2011 season.

CROPPING INFORMATION

Crops that have played an important part of the farm plan in the past are identified here. All have been grown at a level of 100% sales into the local markets.

Perennial and Tree Crops

Strawberries

Plantings sufficient for an average weekly production of 30 flats of 12 pints for a period from late April/early May to late October/mid November has been maintained.

Red Raspberries

Approximately ¼ acre of older canes exists, which could be cropped in 2011.

Boysenberries

A small heritage boysenberry planting produces 300 to 400 ½ pint baskets each year.

Apples

Some 300 espalier trees on M 7 and M 9 rootstocks, heirloom and older varieties, are in full production

Asian pears

Two rows of 10 each of two varieties of mature trees are in full production.

Deciduous fruits

Some 300+ trees, large to small - cherries, plums, pluots and apricots – have been semi-neglected for the last two years. Substantial cropping in 2011 is possible with early maintenance.

Miscellaneous Crops

Herbs

Various herbs have been established about the farm, including rosemary, various sages, oregano, marjoram, thymes, chives, comfrey, lemon grass, etc.

Annual herb production has been practiced in the past, with an emphasis on basil. This is an area that could be expanded substantially.

Vegetables

The crops briefly described below have been the core of production on the farm, and are well adapted, profitable and easy to market. Many other have been grown (radicchio, dry beans, sweet corn, lentils, Asian greens, micro mix, turnips, parsnips, grains, etc.), and could be added to the product mix.

Potatoes

Onions

Cabbage

Broccoli & Cauliflower

Spinach

Beets

Swiss Chard

Carrots

Radishes

Lettuce & Salad mix

Snap peas

English peas

Summer squash

Winter squash & Pumpkins

Tomatoes

String beans

Garlic

Flowers

Annual

Cosmos, sunflowers, larkspur, sweet peas, tithonia, aster, zinnia, etc.

Perennial

Delphinium, dahlia, sweet William, violets, Cymbidiums, a variety of bulbs, corms & tubers.

Poultry

The following have been part of our production on-and-off over the years. Basic facilities exist, including coops, silos and cleaning areas and tools.

Egg Production

Egg sales are highly seasonable, as homestead producers flood the Spring Markets. Summer through winter, at least 50 dozen dozens/week have been sold retail. If year round production can be maintained, wholesale demand is strong.

Fryer Production

Raising 100 at a time, sale of fresh and frozen dressed birds at the local markets has been profitable. Price sensitivity exists, and grain prices strongly affect margins.

Turkey Production

Thirty plus or minus birds have been sold each fall. This market could be greatly expanded with multiple crops.

Meat Animals

In the past hogs, sheep and meat goats have been a part of the farm. Opportunities for raising small numbers of any or all of these exist, and various appliances are available.