



Aumtat Kaima  
Planting Hope, Harvesting Opportunity  
2024 Activity Report

---

## Reflections

---



December 2024

Dear Kaima friends and partners,

The *annus horribilis* that began last Simchat Torah continues. The last 15 months have reminded us of our shared destiny in the face of rising anti-Israel/Jewish sentiment. It is our collective strength, determination, and innate resilience that sustain us. Of course, for us as farmers, it is our fields that ground us, literally and figuratively, as well as your encouragement.

We feel this in so many ways. Across our network, my colleagues and I are profoundly grateful for the texts, letters, and prayers, repeated inquiries about how to help, and unsolicited donations. As true friends, you were there for us. Without you, we would have had a much harder time surviving the challenges brought on by the terrible year that was.

As others have discovered, one of the best ways to bridge some of the social gaps and to cope in the wake of such upheaval is to help others. Through our ongoing [Feed my Neighbor](#) initiatives, increased veggie baskets were provided to the needy, including single mothers, cancer patients, holocaust survivors, and displaced families. We also focused on absorbing youth evacuated from war zones to Kaima network farms, a priority that continues until today, though on a smaller scale. Consequently, recruitment is up.

This leads me to share a significant development. After a multi-year effort to secure a government tender authorizing our sister farms as service providers, we did it! Within the coming months, Kaima Hukuk and Kaima Nahalal will begin to receive assistance for their work with 15-18 year-old participants as Kaima Beit Zayit has been doing for some years.

The report below summarizes our youth employment and enrichment programming across three of Kaima's therapeutic farms located in Beit Zayit (outside of Jerusalem), Hukuk (Lower Galil), and Nahahal (Jezreel Valley). We will also update you on our [modern-day shepherding program](#) in the Judean hills and our newest initiative [to work with IDF reservists](#) struggling with PTSD symptoms at Bein Haltmim Farm, and other emotional challenges.

From our fields to your home, we wish a quieter, more pleasant 2025...a year of hope...a year in which we can all rest a little and gather strength for the mighty tasks ahead. And, of course, a year in which it will be possible to meet face to face.

*Yoni Yefet Reich*, Aumtat Kaima Co-founder, CEO



Working the land as those who came before us...

---

## The organization

---

Established in 2013 on the outskirts of Jerusalem, Amutat Kaima's mission is to provide both long- and short-term, hands-on therapeutic agricultural experiences for vulnerable people. Initially established to cultivate resilience for high-risk youth/young adults unable to relate to normative educational/social settings, to date, we have inspired the creation of nine farms/agricultural initiatives to address the needs of several vulnerable populations, including high school dropouts, sexual abuse survivors; former addicts; PTSD sufferers; special needs individuals; and others. In the process, we bring communities together around issues of environmental stewardship, collective gardening, food justice, and more. We support our efforts through a combination of farm sales of our tasty, pesticide-free harvest, income from providing government services, and philanthropy.

---

## Our network

---

Operating Under The Kaima Umbrella	Kaima Inspired Farms Operating Independently
Kaima Beit Zayit - Jerusalem environs	Meshek Lev Adam – Hof HaCarmel
Kaima Hukuk – Lower Galil	Ruca's Farm - Sdot Yam RC
Kaima Nahalal – Jezrel Valley	Beerotayim Farm – Hefer Valley RC
Bein Hatlamim – Menashe RC	
The Shepherd's Group – Judea Hills	
Kaima Tanzania - Africa	

---

## Primary services provided

---

### 1. Youth

- Provide salaried work experience to a) develop employability skills; (b) promote financial literacy and, thus, social mobility; (c) teach problem-solving through critical thinking, teamwork, and individual initiative/accountability; and (d) provide enrichment programming to stimulate curiosity and creativity.
- Facilitate opportunities for positive interaction with others, particularly adults.
- Encourage the return to some form of academic education and pursuit of matriculation.

- Lay the groundwork for meaningful participation in military/national service/workforce.
- Extend educational resources and vocational training beyond regular working hours for current participants and alumni.

## 2. Community

- Extend therapeutic farming to other populations including demobilized soldiers struggling with emotional distress, special needs individuals, and others.
- Offer the public community access to organically-grown vegetables grown by young people finding a sense of purpose; support urban renewal; and provide eco-educational experiences that bring together people of different backgrounds.

---

## Impact on the individual

---

### 1. Quick stats across our network

- 122 youth (ages 15-18) participated in our full-time farm employment program:
  - Kaima Beit Zayit: 45 youth
  - Kaima Hukuk: 35 youth
  - Kaima Nahalal: 42 youth
- 31 young adults, ages 18-21, took part in our full-time residential farm employment programming for those unable to be recruited into conventional national service programming:
  - Kaima Beit Zayit: 15
  - Kaima Hukuk: 9
  - Kaima Nahalal: 7
- ~50% assumed more than one position on the farm, including leadership roles.
- ~85% returned to normative educational/social settings within six months.
- ~95% left at the age of 18 to perform military/national service or enter the workforce.

### 2. Additional details across the network

- Provided each participant with a minimum of 7.0 hours of daily farm employment and complementary educational programming, on average, four days weekly, amounting to 214,200, hours annually, a 22% increase over the previous year.
- Facilitated offsite certification courses for 33 youth (ages 15+) in a variety of offsite, certificate-granting courses (i.e. accounting, computer science, cyber security, animation technology, sustainable beekeeping, tractor driving, welding, carpentry, jewelry making, music appreciation, and aerobic instruction and more) and/or academic studies:
  - Kaima Beit Zayit – 10 took part, of whom 9 are alumni
  - Kaima Hukuk – 16 took part of whom 4 are alumni
  - Kaima Nahalal – 7 took of whom 2 are alumni

*This does not account for 16 enrolled in continuing courses the previous year which brings the total to 49*

- Implemented new, highly successful financial literacy, personal empowerment, and workforce-entry programming, facilitated by external professionals across the network.
- Facilitated onsite Project Based Learning (PBL) programming for 28 youth in Kaima Beit Zayit's sophisticated carpentry workshop. PBL projects benefit either the individual or the farm, for example by upgrading infrastructure. This was consistent with the previous year. Another similar initiative, though on a smaller scale for 15 youth, was established at Kaima Hukuk.
- Sustained our enrichment programming (i.e. woodworking, welding, landscaping, yoga, music, art, climbing).
- Provided 2,400 hours of educational mentoring to our professionals across our network. In addition, we organized a day-long workshop for 35 Kaima network professionals to focus on team-building and program improvement.

---

## Impact on the community

---

1. Maintained our weekly CSA customer count of 500 families, who consumed over 280,000 pounds of our harvest, the proceeds of which helped support ~60% of our budget.
2. Donated 910 boxes of veggies (7,835 pounds) to hungry families.
3. Carried out programming for the general community on agricultural diversity, conservation, zero-waste farming, farm-to-table lifestyles, etc.
4. Painstakingly restored 50 meters (165 feet) of ancient, damaged terracing on land on which the farm sits. This is a multi-year undertaking and part of our commitment to environmental stewardship.
5. Perfected our efforts to bring to market one of our favorites--the heavenly blueberry! Through perseverance, teamwork, and all that is good about sustainability, after eight years of hard work and tinkering, we successfully cultivated the small, but mighty king of berries so favored by Israelis.
6. Re-devoted ourselves to the hard work ahead as a leader in Israel's social farming efforts as the winds of war hopefully leave our region and our hostages and soldiers return home.



---

## Memories

---

When asked what about their favorite memories of the past year, most asked that it was working together as a group that made the most difference in bringing meaning to their lives. Beyond this, the answers were varied:



*“I loved, loved, loved our two-nighter in the desert. Even though I am at home on the farm, getting out and being in under the open skies was amazing. It made me feel important and small at the same time”*

All Kaima farms organize a multi-day team-building trip to the desert to practice survival skills and enjoy a break from the daily demands of farming the land. We eat, sleep, trek, share and build memories together, learn about farming in arid climates, and more. We always return to our fields refreshed and ready to roll up our sleeves again. It’s wonderful, restorative, thought-provoking and fun.



*“That crazy 48 hours when we harvested more than 900 kilos of olives – that’s one of my strongest memories”*

Kaima Beit Zayit organized an overnight marathon to harvest a nearby abandoned grove in Mount Heret. The work was tough but exciting. Together, our youth and adults managed to harvest one ton of olives which produced 200 liters of refined, precious oil—our liquid gold! While the extraction and bottling process was done at a rented facility, once our national center is operational, we will tackle the entire process from the harvest to the finished product and offer production services to other farmers. We can’t wait!



*“For me, one of my favorite memories was Chanukah. The holiday is extra special because it is our birthday. This year, Kaima turned 12! Together we lit the candles and enjoyed our (funny looking) sufganiyot (donuts)”*



*“It might sound funny but one of my favorite things we did this past year was to restore the ancient terracing and reuse the rocks we had cleared to plant a new fruit orchard. It’s just the right thing to do. It felt complete somehow.”*

---

## Offsite undertakings

---

This past fall, we launched [Anchored in the Earth](#), a pilot initiative for IDF reservists dealing with PTSD and other types of emotional distress. The initiative is based at Bein Hatlamim, one of five Kaima-inspired agricultural initiatives. As its name suggests, Anchored in the Earth taps into the healing power of nature and the highly satisfying and therapeutic experience of productive agricultural work. The process increases resilience and redirects the lives of people dealing with post-trauma by reducing isolation and building new capacities. Significantly, Kaima graduates, who intimately understand how working in nature can restore a sense of purpose, will help run the program. As one of our alumni notes: “People can change and go from the worst places to the best places because of a couple of supporting and loving people.”



Additionally, we are now entering the second year of our unique social farming initiative, the [Shepherd's Group](#). The undertaking supports a group of modern-day shepherds who live and travel Jerusalem's hillsides with a herd of goats and other livestock whose voracious appetite for flammable brush helps to reduce fire threat. This is an outstanding example of applying knowledge learned as a Kaima farmer to an entirely new and unique sustainable agriculture venture. We are so proud of the young people who have committed themselves to this venture.

---

## Challenges

---

1. **Reserve duty:** We were challenged to move forward on some programming, especially for our alumni, owing to the ongoing need for our network social worker to return to the army on multiple occasions. We anticipate (hope, like everyone else) that call-ups in 2025 will be less frequent and shorter in length. During the first part of 2024, we are also challenged to engage external service providers for the same reason. This said, we found alternatives and were able to facilitate three very successful workforce readiness programs, one of the key components of our complementary educational programming.
2. **Recruitment challenges:** The war has negatively impacted recruitment efforts, particularly in our northern farms where the cross-border threat reached deeper into the country and government support was slow to kick in. We anticipate that this will begin to shift in 2025 given that our sister farms are now recognized by the Ministry of Welfare as service providers. This is likely to trigger increased requests from local authorities to immediately refer additional youth to our programs.
3. **Decrease in tourism income:** We have never returned to our pre-pandemic level of tourist income, much of it coming from visitors from abroad. Even as we were building momentum, the war again halted redevelopment efforts. To adjust to this new reality, we will continue to focus on building connections with local groups, families, NGOs, and corporations.

---

## Notable media

---

As projected, we significantly increased our presence in the Hebrew press. For example, The Maker, a Hebrew-language daily business newspaper published by the Haaretz Group, published a wonderful interview with Kaima Co-founder and CEO, Yoni Yefet Reich on the successful platform of intergenerational farming. The lead headline was "We are building a living environment for people of all ages. The level of joy in this mix is extraordinary." We also received shout-outs from some of the most important players in Israel's culinary sector, including chefs, food journalists, and social media influencers (Shaul Amsterdamski, Michal Ansky, Erez Komarovsky, Hedai Offaim, and Ronit Vered) interested in food security, nutrition, safe food channels, and community building.

---

## Looking forward

---



In the coming year, we hope to break ground on [Beit Kaima](#), the Training Center for Social Farming in Israel. The undertaking will help shape Israel's future by a) training the next generation of agriculturalists, educators, caregivers, and change agents in modalities that connect people to the land and one another; b) helping people heal from trauma; and c) strengthening Israel's food chain through sustainable farming and the encouragement of local consumption. Physically, Beit Kaima has been designed as a beautiful, multi-functional 8,200 sq ft compound encompassing a study hall; a packaging house for daily use and training purposes; an oil press; a demo kitchen for the development of new agricultural products; a carpentry workshop; a visitor center; administrative offices; and more. This is our biggest dream as we search for new partners to join us on this journey! There are naming opportunities for those interested.

ON BEHALF OF THE KAIMA FARMING NETWORK AND THE MANY PEOPLE  
TOUCHED BY DONOR SUPPORT, THANK YOU!

FOR MORE INFORMATION, CONTACT [KAIMA.OFFICE@GMAIL.COM](mailto:KAIMA.OFFICE@GMAIL.COM)