



Overview

Since our founding in 2013, Kaima, an international educational farm network, founded in the village of Beit Zayit, just outside of Jerusalem, has been making a marked difference in the lives of young people (ages 15-21) who have dropped out of school or lack the personal agency to enter adulthood. Kaima's unique, intergenerational outreach model is based on an integrative process that combines employment, enrichment and workforce-preparedness programming, with community engagement in order to redirect the young person to positive endeavor and improve his/her chances for a brighter future.

The movement currently includes four educational farms in Israel in Beit Zayit (our prototype, or "mother" farm est. 2013); Beerotayim (est. 2015, Hefer Valley); Hukuk (est. 2016, Galil); and Nahalal (est. 2017, Jezreel Valley). All Israel farms operate via the internationally-recognized Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) model within which members pledge to support local farms, paying a set price for a share of the anticipated harvest, and thus producing a regular income stream. Our first international farm, not a part of this report, is located in Tanzania (est. in 2018).

Select programmatic highlights

- Across the network, 142 youth (ages 15-18) and young adults (ages 18-21) participated in our fulltime farm employment program, reflecting attainment of 96% of our goal. This does not take into account other vulnerable youth populations temporarily integrated into some farms during Israel's first COVID shutdown.
- Each farm provided a minimum of 6.5 hours of farm experience daily, on average of four days weekly, amounting to 44,300 hours of annual farm employment across the network.
- ~50% of our participants assumed more than one position on the farm, including leadership roles.
- ~85% of our participants returned to normative educational/social settings within 3-9 months, a figure which varies between farms.
- ~95% left at the age of 18 to perform military/national service or enter the workforce.
- Provided intensive one-on-one mentoring to help each young person (upon turning 18) transition off the farm and into an undertaking of his/her choice, such as army/national service, additional education, or workforce placement.
- Provided fulltime alternative national service programming for 15 young men and women participating in the Tmura initiative for young people, who, for a variety of reasons, cannot be recruited into conventional army or civil service programs. This undertaking will expand considerably in 2021.
- Provided 1,200 hours of face-to-face and online supervision, mentoring and in-service training for farm management, under the auspices of the Kaima Center for Economic Development and Educational Training.

Highlights of agricultural activities and sales

- Increased our weekly CSA customer count across the network from 664 in 2019 to 845 in 2020, an increase of 27%.
- Delivered 845,000 pounds to our CSA customers throughout 2020, feeding a total of 42,250 people.
- Donated 6,750 pounds of food throughout 2020, feeding a total of 6,000 needy people.
- Increased field size on some farms by 50%.
- Diversified crops to reduce over time the need to source produce from other CSA farms to provide customers with a complete basket.
- Modified packing and delivery schedules on some farms to accommodate increased customer demand and production.
- Demonstrated the viability and desirability of our diverse financial operating model and capacity to play a prominent role in safe food-delivery systems, particularly important during the pandemic.

Impact of pandemic on programming and outreach

- **Impact on employment program:** From March 15 - May 3, referred to as the “first shutdown,” our prototype farm, a recipient of funding through the Ministry of Welfare, was required to cease working with youth, per Ministerial protocol. Related funding was also cut and will not be restored for the foreseeable future. A small percentage of youth at that farm, proscribed from participating during the first shutdown, demonstrated a return to risky behavior. This was immediately reversed once the youth returned, of which 100% did. All other farms remained fully operational throughout both the first and second shutdowns, stretching resources to absorb more vulnerable young people suddenly left without daily social and educational frameworks.
- **Impact on complementary educational programming:** The past year was to have been one in which we piloted new enrichment and skill-building programming, including a tutoring initiative to prepare youth, even those no longer attending school, for matriculation exams. The pandemic and social distancing challenges forced us to shutter this program, though we intend to adjust logistics to enable us offer the track in 2021 at our prototype farm. In addition, we were unable to implement more established programming across the network as planned.
- **Impact on public educational programming:** While each farm is a relatively safe place for people to gather, and while its function as part of Israel’s food-chain ecosystem qualifies it as an “essential service provider”, government limits on public assembly and shutdowns impacted educational programming for both local and visiting groups, initially projected to impact some 4,000 people across the network. Associated income losses are noted here: Beit Zayit (NIS 77,000/\$22,000); Beerotayim (NIS 110,000/\$31,500); Hukuk (NIS 25,000/\$7,150); and Nahalal (NIS 30,000/\$8,500).
- **Addressing the precipitous rise of hunger in the community:** While primarily focused on education and direct vegetable sales to the public, all network farms are committed to donating a portion of their crops to the needy. Prior to the crisis, network donations fed some 6,000 people annually. Given the economic shock triggered by COVID-19 and its impact on food insecurity, a crisis projected will become chronic for many, we felt compelled to do more. Kaima’s new “Feed my Neighbor” program will appreciably expand and unify vegetable donations to address the growing problem of food insecurity in the regions in which we work. The initiative is ambitious and will enable us to scale current donations by 275% in order to feed 22,400 people in the first year and a further 10% in each subsequent year.

Impact of pandemic on network finances

Each farm--confronted with funding cuts as well as increased demand for educational services and vegetable donations--adjusted its 2020 budget, a process requiring each farm to examine its particular income mix and expenses. Below are highlights of aggregate changes made across the network:

Income:

- **Self-generated:** Farm sales (steady at 63%); user fees/tourism (down 69%)
- **Government:** Down 34.5%
- **Philanthropy:** Donor support fluctuated from farm to farm owing to postponed/cancelled grant payments; notification by multiple donors not to reapply for funding in the foreseeable future; and rejections of new appeals. Countering this, some donors stepped up and advanced payment at the front end of the crisis, thus easing the financial strain. Three of the four farms even managed to raise new funds during this period. We also launched two modestly successful social media appeals for public support of our food donation efforts.

Expenses: Budgets were balanced by cutting select complementary educational programming and one-time capital upgrades; freezing staff salaries initially projected to increase and planned new staff hires; increasing volunteer usage; and generating additional income from increased farm sales reflecting a new appreciation in safe food channels and a corresponding uptick in CSA membership. On this point, each farm saw demand increase, sometimes by as high as 200%, a number that could not be sustained with current resources. In addition, all farms increased staff hours for the first three months of the pandemic by 40%, with each person working 12 hours daily, without compensation.

2021 select network projections

- **Young farmer employment initiative:** To provide 170 youth with fulltime employment across our network, an increase of 17% over 2020. Each farm will provide ~ 6.5 hours of farm experience daily, on an average of four days weekly. This is an ambitious goal in such difficult times but reflects our capacity to operate in compliance with safety measures.
- **Expansion of enrichment programming:** To expand the range of activities and number of hours offered to youth by 20% with an emphasis after work hours.

- **Expansion of Complementary Educational Programming:** To expand programming to foster student independence, encourage entrepreneurial action; prepare for matriculation; and develop important skills tied to educational advancement and workplace readiness through the following initiatives: Project Based Learning (50 to take part); Workforce Entry and Professional Skill-Building (45 to take part); and Vocational Certification Courses (40 to take part).
- **Launching new housing initiative for young adults over 18:** To provide a 12-month supervised housing program and expanded wraparound services for approximately 20 young adults (ages 18-21) who participate in Kaima's daily agricultural activities across the network. Participants come to us through HaAgudah LeHitnadvut's Tmura program, which has already committed partial funding. We are seeking to launch the undertaking in September 2021.
- **Resumption of group programming:** To facilitate at least 50% of our eco-educational programming for Israeli groups (i.e. families, schools, synagogues, the IDF, etc.) through new marketing programs stressing each farm's safety features. Should these efforts fail, we will look more seriously into moving limited educational programming online. Note: extending outreach to Diaspora visitors is entirely dependent on tourism reopening.
- **Restoring government funding:** To remount efforts under the umbrella of the Kaima Center for Economic Development and Educational Training to restore government funding at our prototype farm to its pre-pandemic levels and mount what we anticipate will be a challenging appeal process to secure funding for our sister farms.
- **Scaling of our vegetable basket donation program:** To substantially increase vegetable-basket donations through our new Feed my Neighbor program. Beneficiaries—to be identified by welfare authorities, NGOs, synagogues, soup kitchens, and the public—will include some of the most vulnerable among us, including: Holocaust survivors; victims of sexual abuse and PTSD; single-mother-led households; special needs adults; families facing serious financial challenges, including the chronically or suddenly unemployed; those who are critically ill; and others.
- **Sustaining our less experienced sister farms:** To build our capacity to provide value for and sustain our younger, less experienced network farms through the efforts of the Kaima Center for Economic Development and Educational Training. Those farms are financially challenged owing to the following reasons: a) all are in peripheral regions in which there is significant competition with other small-yield farms vying for the same CSA customers; b) they are particularly reliant on ecotourism and user fees, not projected to increase to pre-pandemic levels for the foreseeable future; and c) none currently have access to Ministry of Welfare funding. This means that each farm will have to maintain greater reliance on philanthropy than originally envisioned.

Closing statement

Kaima is highly relevant and well positioned to continue our work. Indeed, the pandemic reinforced our assertion that farmers are adept at pivoting to meet ever-changing conditions. Be it adjusting to harsh weather conditions, blight, soil erosion, or a change in market conditions, keeping a farm alive and thriving requires discipline and adaptability. This perspective has served us well as the pandemic forced an evolution of our identity as a youth employer, service provider, and operating farm to a true driver of social change. Thus, as we moved through this difficult period which has placed many already vulnerable young people at even greater risk and weakened many of the structures designed to address their needs, a few things have come to light. First, Kaima--both the people and the place--are resilient. Second, we have at our disposal a truly unique asset which has allowed us to operate safely, that being the outdoors. Third, our employment-as-education model has proven itself particularly effective for the young person during this challenging. And, finally, in partnership with others, we must commit more resources to reducing food insecurity through our veggie-donation program.

Kaima extends its gratitude to those who financially sustain our efforts, purchase our harvest, volunteer in our fields the community at large. Thank you for believing in our work and dream to make a difference.

