



STUDENT SUSTAINABILITY COMMITTEE

Funding Application – Step 1

Please submit this completed application and any relevant supporting documentation by the deadline listed on the SSC website to Sustainability-Committee@Illinois.edu. The Working Group Chairs will be in contact with you regarding any questions about the application. If you have any questions about the application process, please contact the SSC at Sustainability-Committee@Illinois.edu.

General Information

Project Name: Increased SSF Food Production

Total Amount Requested from SSC: \$18,250

Project Topic Area(s): Energy Education Food & Waste
 Land Water Transportation

Contact Information

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Project Team

Name	Department	Email
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Name	Department/Organization	Email Address
Name	Department/Organization	Email Address

Project Information

Please provide a brief background of the project, the goals, and the desired outcomes:

The Sustainable Student Farm was started in 2009 with a grant from the SSC to provide locally-grown, sustainably produced food to the campus community. Our goals are to create space for students to learn about organic vegetable production, to provide high-quality, fresh food to the campus community and to support ourselves financially through produce sold. Though we have largely attained these goals, we strive to continually to improve the educational experience for our students and look to provide even more fresh produce to the campus. It can be challenging to reach our economic/production goals due to our growing season being out of synch with the residency of the campus student population. Past investments by the SSC have helped us overcome this challenge by providing us with high tunnels to extend our season and equipment for the Food and Bioprocessing Pilot Plant to preserve many of our warm season crops for later use. These developments have been game changing and will help us maximize the amount of food that can be produced for consumption during the academic year.

As the SSF continues to optimize the production of local food for campus consumption, a piece of equipment that would improve our operations significantly is a new tractor specifically designed for specialty crop production. The tractor that SSF has been using since the inception of the farm is from the early eighties and has had a number of chronic problems including a transmission fluid leak, and throttle issues, and the fact that the transmission is not geared for vegetable production. This past Spring the tractor's head gasket blew. When we considered the cost of this repair as well as the machine's compounding issues, we felt that it was unwise to continue investment in a tractor that was poorly suited to our needs. In the absence of our own functioning tractor we have been borrowing equipment from the Crop Science Department this season hoping to raise money to buy a new SSF tractor this winter.

A replacement tractor is needed for three reasons. First, the tractor work done at the SSF is very time sensitive. Borrowing tractors from other groups within Crop Science Department can work on occasion, but often times ground needs to be tilled, or transplants must be planted within narrow time windows between weather events. These are the moments when such equipment is in high demand, and unrestricted access to a tractor is most critical. A new tractor will allow us to engage in timely field activities, making us more effective in producing food for the campus community.

Second, none of the tractors currently owned by the Crop Sciences Department were purchased with vegetable production in mind. Our tractor doesn't need to be as powerful as most of the tractors already in use, but more importantly needs to be able to travel at a slow enough speed to allow for transplanting. Most of our vegetables are started in the greenhouse (thank you, SSC!), and then transplanted into the field. Our transplanter must be pulled by a tractor at a speed slow enough to allow student transplanter time to pick up and place the transplant plug in the appropriate hole in the ground (0.2 mph). A new tractor with proper gearing will enable us to operate efficiently for many years to come, not only in transplanting but in other operations such as seeding, tillage, cultivation and mowing.

Third, our old tractor didn't have many modern safety features and was a little quirky and delicate to operate, making SSF management hesitant to train student workers in using it.

tractor skills to our student workers. Tractors are a major component of our farm system and experience in tractor operation is necessary to understand what it takes to run a farm our size. A tractor that is fully-functional and user-friendly will allow us to safely incorporate tractor operation into the student experience at the SSF, providing a valuable perspective to those most interested in food production.

Please provide a brief summary of how students will be involved in the project:

Students are involved in two primary ways with the SSF. Approximately 8-12 paid student staff work on the farm each year. We also have a significant number, 100-200, of student volunteers each year. The paid student staff will usually be directly involved with our transplanting operations and other uses of the tractor, which are vital skills in the operation of a vegetable production farm.

Please provide a brief summary of the project timeline:

We would like to purchase the tractor sometime in the late winter/early spring of 2018 in order to be ready for transplanting and other farm operations for the 2018 growing season.

Additional comments

We at the SSF received a grant last year from Dining Services, we have used this money for different tractor implements and tools to be used on the farm, and we have enough of this grant money left to pay for half of the tractor that will meet our needs a Kubota M7060, so we are asking you to pay for the other half of this expensive but vital piece of equipment.

We often share our equipment with groups around us who have less time sensitivity required of their tractor use, so I imagine that the Woody Perennial Polyculture would use this tractor to mow and maintain their research area. I have also spoken with Brian Jacobosen at the Pilot Plant about their using this tractor for safely and efficiently moving the grain wagons from the fields on campus to their mill a couple of times a year. In this way the tractor will also be able to support that grain milling project that you have helped to fund in the past.