

Field Notes From A Learning Farm

Over the course of our work at Farmcity - working with kids in our MunchBunch programs, to speaking with adults at our weekly markets - we noticed an ever widening gap in food literacy levels. Inevitably, our conversations would veer towards the same old questions, "Who can I trust? What information is right? What should we be eating?"

At Farmcity, we are working hard to change that! Last year, we set out to establish Mauritius's first Learning Farm at Farmcity. We curated our programs to ensure every visitor experience is a learning one – wowed by what they see, but also feeling like they have learnt something on their visit. We kicked off our Pay What You Wish farm tours, where we spent our Saturday mornings sharing with people from all walks of life, not just about how we grow in harmony with nature, but also how other plants, including overlooked but equally nutritious parts of a plant (I'm looking at you, beet greens!), can be healthy alternatives to supplement the diet. We spent these mornings sharing and learning from each other, in a bid to demystify the idea of organic food and more importantly, to promote hyperlocal food. We also dedicated 2019 to hosting numerous Workshops, Learning Journeys and Impact-A-Thons at the farm, with a focus on building sustainable food systems.

The goal was simple: if people knew more about where their food came from, how it was grown, what challenges it faced as it made its way from the farm to the plate, then we'll be closer to empowering consumers to make informed choices about their food.



As 2020 rolls upon us, we know there is still much more to be done. If we want consumers to make informed choices, then we would also need to provide healthier and more sustainable alternatives on the market for them to choose from. And we will need Agripreneurs to do all of that! We need more agripreneurs to discover new ways of combining resources in a sustainable manner, so we can find the creative solutions needed to solve the most pressing challenges plaguing our local food system.

As we embrace 2020 and beyond, we are confident that developing agripreneurship capacity in the youths of today, will enable us to build the Agripreneurs of tomorrow.

We thank you for your continued support of Farmcity's efforts, and from all of us at Farmcity, we wish you a wonderful, productive and healthy year ahead.

Kelly Ann & Wesley Oxenham
on behalf of
Team Farmcity

“ We probably eat at least 3 meals a day,
yet how much do we really understand
about the impact of our food choices on
our health, our environment and even
our economy? ”



2019 in numbers

600

Visitors to our
Learning Farm

250

Pay-What-You-Wish
Visitors

150

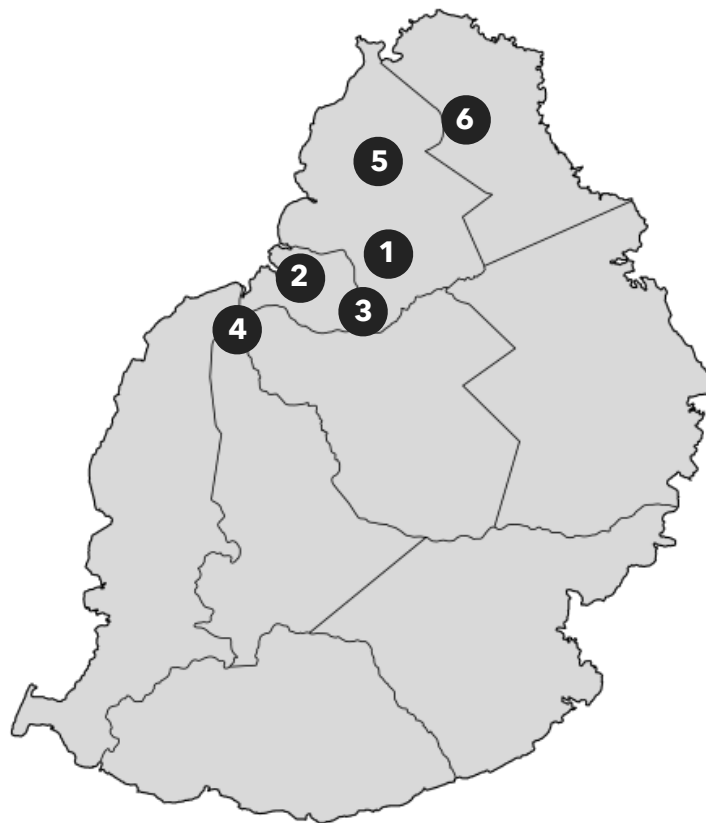
Agripreneurs in
the making

20

Schools and
Community Groups*

5

Speaking
Engagements



*Focus Areas

- 1 Bois Marchand, Terre Rouge
- 2 Baie du Tombeau
- 3 Sainte-Croix, Cité La Cure
- 4 La Tour Koenig
- 5 Triolet, Solitude
- 6 Cottage, Goodlands, L'amitié



2019 in review

Feb'19

Pay What You Wish Farm Tour

Our Pay What You Wish tours are held on Saturday mornings, and we spend the hour taking our visitors around the farm, sharing how we cultivate organically inside the greenhouse and out, trading tips and recipes as well as debunking some commonly held beliefs around organic food. We chose to do it on a "Pay What You Wish" basis because we didn't want income to be a barrier to learning more. Since our tour launched in early January, we have welcomed over 250 visitors from all walks of life, across all ages and from all continents! The average group size has grown from of 4 to around 12 each week, and it even has its own [Eventbrite registration page](#) now!

May'19

Learning Journeys

In May of 2019, we launched our learning programs at Farmcity. From 90 minute Learning Journeys, to full day workshops, we developed our learning programs so participants could engage in important conversations around food and ecology. Beginning with an interactive field trip into the TropicBird and our raised bed gardens, we use the local food system as a lens to promote student learning about food security and nutrition for future generations. Above all, we strive to ensure that all participants leave with a greater understanding of the impact of their actions, however little, on the world around them. Some of our previous discussions include:

- For ages 6 - 10:
 - Irrigation by Capillary Action
 - Upcycling & Me
 - Compost Creatures
- For ages 11 - 16:
 - Sustainable Food Systems
 - Fair Trade
- For ages 16 - 21:
 - Social Entrepreneurship



Jun'19

GlobalGiving Accelerator: Official Graduate

Earlier this year, Farmcity's Centre for Agriculture Research and Entrepreneurship (CARE) joined nonprofits around the world and participated in the June Edition of GlobalGiving's Accelerator Program. After an intense month of training, we launched our first crowdfunding campaign and managed to raise US\$6000 in 10 days from 59 donors across the globe! With that under our belt, Farmcity earned itself a permanent membership on GlobalGiving's platform. This has enabled us, a tiny nonprofit in the middle of the Indian Ocean, to now have access to an international crowdfunding platform that connects nonprofits, donors, and companies in nearly every country in the world! The GlobalGiving platform also offers many valuable tools and training that will help us become a more effective nonprofit social enterprise.

Aug'19

Building Agripreneurs - Chapter 1: Setting The Scene

Chapter 1 was made possible through our first successful crowdfunding campaign on GlobalGiving, and with the help of several volunteers and staff who gave their time to this project.

Between 31 August and 27 November 2019, Farmcity welcomed 150 junior youths across the Northern region of Mauritius: La Tour Koenig, Bois Marchand, Cité La Cure, St. Croix, Triolet, Baie du Tombeau, Goodlands and Cottage. In Chapter 1, participants are first introduced to the possibilities of sustainable farming in a modern way through a tour of our Learning Farm. On their tour, they learn about the different strategies employed to farm in harmony with nature, taste some farm fresh produce, and even conduct a mini experiment to understand irrigation through capillary action. In the second half of the day, we turn the floor over to these bright, young junior youths! They are each given 2 scenarios to role play - first, as Minister of Agriculture to propose ways to make agriculture attractive to youths; and then taking on a superpower to solve some of the most pressing issues facing their communities today.

As Minister of Agriculture, these junior youths had some fantastic suggestions to make agriculture more attractive to youths. The most popular of all was to introduce agriculture as one of the core subjects in schools, because *“if we are learning about Maths and Science, we should also be learning about agriculture too!”* Besides the need for greater formative training in agriculture, the junior youths also highlighted that youths needed fuss-free and affordable access to facilities such as land, tools and equipment, and updated advice relevant to their realities. For example, if available land was far away from where they lived and difficult to access because of a lack of public infrastructure, then it would not be helpful even if the land was provided for free. The youths also recognized that litter and pollution was a direct result of people losing the connection with their environment. They reasoned that if communities were provided with greater support to care for their environment - such as making plants (in the nurseries) cheaper so everybody can afford to buy them to beautify their gardens, posters to remind community members not to litter, and more activities where parents could plant with their children, then it is likely that there people would care more about their environment.

When asked to identify some of the challenges facing their communities today, the top 3 issues highlighted were: drugs, violence, and poverty. Despite the bleakness of what they were faced with in their daily lives, and even if they had all the superpowers in the world, their solutions proposed were overwhelmingly positive and practical. Top of the list was to create more spaces for leisure - spaces such as football and basketball courts, places for community gardening, and safe spaces where people could simply sit and chat with each other. They also advocated for a complete ban on alcohol, cigarettes, drugs and pesticides. They reasoned that such measures would be for the betterment of everyone's health, would reduce the risk of alcohol-related fights and violence, as well as reduce the attraction to drugs. Another solution proposed was the need for more education on various topics including: effective parenting, teenage pregnancy, and drug prevention. These solutions were a recurring theme across each of the six groups that came to Farmcity - imagine the wonders that could be achieved if we simply gave young people a voice!

Initially planned as a single workshop to introduce modern farming to 150 youths, the learnings that emerged from the youth presentations left us reeling - we could be doing so much more, and indeed, we needed to be doing more! In response to their earnest and sincere sharing, we will be floating their

suggestions to the relevant Ministries so we can give their voice a chance to be heard. Beyond that, we realized the urgent need to accompany these youths over a longer period of time. It was from this point of realization that Chapters 2 and 3 of the Agripreneurship Program was born. In Chapter 2, participants will dive heads-in (and hands on) learning the basics of farming. As a group, they will learn how to prepare the soil, sow seeds, manage weeds, irrigate and tend to their own bed of crops on the farm. Their efforts will then culminate in Chapter 3: The Agripreneurs' Club, where they will follow a 10 week program to develop a selection of their ideas (raised in Chapter 1) into a first prototype to be tested on the ground. It is our belief (and hope) that improving their local food system, through initiative(s) that are developed by the community for the community, will pave the way for more positive changes. More on these in the following pages!





Nov'19



Building Agripreneurs - Chapter 2: Tools Of The Trade

After having the privilege to witness such passion and potential among the junior youths in Chapter 1, we were determined to find a way to accompany the same group of 150 youths on their journey towards discovering their entrepreneurial talent. We applied for the Public Diplomacy Grant offered by the US Embassy of Mauritius, and was overjoyed when they informed us that they would be funding our project! Thanks to their generous support, Chapter 2 of our Agripreneurship Program kicked off on 25 November 2019.

In the second chapter, the focus is very much on learning the basic 'tools of the trade'. The junior youths come back to Farmcity for the second time, this time around spending the day helping out on the farm. They dive heads on (and hands in), learning about weed management, transplanting, and irrigation, as they work in teams on different areas of the farm. The goal is for them to gain some practical experience that they can easily use at home, whether they are planting in containers (such as when space is limited) or tending to an outdoor plot of their own. However, we recognize that isn't enough. To be an agripreneur, one must be able to identify opportunities where others see unsurmountable barriers, and having a keen sense of curiosity about the world around them is key! To spark that curiosity, we send the junior youths out on a journey of scientific exploration in the later part of the day. They travel into the hidden universe of the microscopic world, examining different samples of things found around the farm - from pollen grains of the squash flower, to the digestive tract of the amazing earthworm, to the beautiful exoskeleton of the Coconut Rhinoceros Beetle. They also learn about the different physical states of matter through an activity called "Drawing On Water", where they engage their inner Picasso and dabble in some hydro dipping. Finally, the participants, activating their innate sense of logic and reason, race against time to piece a 3D-puzzle together.

Chapter 2 of the Agripreneurship Program is currently ongoing, with the remaining 75 participants expected to come in January and February of 2020.

2020: What's Ahead?

“ We need to be empowering the next generation with ‘soft’ skills that the future economy demands: initiative, persistence, higher order thinking and problem solving skills. ”

We are dedicating 2020 to nurturing agripreneurship capacity in the next generation.

As we think about the abundance of opportunities in the Future of Food, we also need to be considering the skill gaps within the agricultural market system. Agribusiness workforce development cannot be done in a vacuum - beyond teaching the technical skills of agriculture, we would also need to be empowering the next generation with ‘soft’ skills that the future economy demands: initiative, persistence, higher order thinking and problem solving skills.

This year, we will be launching 2 additional programs - Rooting For Change, and The Agripreneurs’ Club - both focused on developing different facets of an agripreneurial mindset. We are also excited to share that we will piloting one of them in a new country - Singapore!

Rooting For Change

Developed for participants aged 16 - 21, Rooting For Change is a program that is impact-focused, participant driven, and industry relevant. Presented with real-life challenges that stakeholders within the local food system are grappling with, participants are tasked to come up with solutions that could bring about a positive change.

The Agripreneurs’ Club

What is an Agripreneur? Simply put, agripreneurs are individuals who establish an enterprise with the aim of solving social problems or effecting social change within the local food system.

In the Agripreneur's Club, participants hone their entrepreneurial mindset over a 10-week program inspired by the best of Silicon Valley and Singapore. Junior youths explore, invent and innovate out-of-this-world solutions to some of the challenges that they have themselves identified within their local community and food system. Our systems thinking approach allows participants to explore ideation and prototyping, market research, budgeting, and effective marketing, all while balancing the social impact of their ideas.

As always, we maintain our dogged insistence on quality over quantity with everything we do, even if it means it will be even harder to ‘measure’ our work. It means affirming our commitments to transparency and sustainability, and strengthening our monitoring and evaluation toolkit to better understand our impact. We will also be leveraging funding and strategic partnerships so we can enable our programs to generate a wider range of benefits in the longer term. We trust that our track record will speak to the legitimacy of our work, and will set the firm foundations for the magnitude of the work that lies ahead.



In Mauritius



Rooting For Change

A version of this program was first conducted at Farmcity with 25 exchange students from William & Mary College, one of the oldest and most prestigious research university in the United States.

This year, a second iteration of this program will be held for students from the University of Mauritius. Planned for the first half of this year, program planning and development is currently ongoing. This program is only possible with the generous support of the Currimjee Foundation.



The Agripreneurs' Club: The Journey Continues With Chapter 3

In keeping with our commitment of quality over quantity, it is our hope to continue accompanying the same 150 youths that we worked with in 2019. Building on all they have done in Chapters 1 and 2, the junior youths will continue their agripreneurship program with the Agripreneurs's Club. Instead of coming to the farm however, we will be heading into the villages this time around! We will work on developing some of the ideas that was raised in Chapter 1, build a prototype using the skills they learnt in Chapter 2, and culminate in a Pitch Day where they will pitch their solutions in front of a panel of judges.

The 'winning' idea will then be trialled in the community.

We plan to start 6 Agripreneurs' Club, one in each of the following localities: Baie du Tombeau, La Tour Koenig, Bois Marchand, Cottage, Sainte-Croix, and Triolet. Can you imagine testing out their ideas, developed by the community, for the community? We can, and we hope you can too! We will require significant resources to make this happen, and it wouldn't be an understatement to say that this will truly 'take a village' for it to come to fruition.

In Singapore

The Agripreneurs' Club: Train-The-Trainer Model

With the generous support of the eBay Foundation, we are bringing The Agripreneurs' Club to Singapore! We are able to do so through The Maju Collective, our official trainers on the ground. Over the past



year, we have been working hard, in collaboration with The Maju Collective, to adapt our curriculum to the local Singaporean context. We also held a dialogue session with different players within Singapore's food ecosystem in an attempt to better understand how Singapore could achieve its goal of being 30 percent food secure by 2030. Through the dialogue, we saw the instrumental role that educational institutions can play in ensuring a secure food future for the nation. This year, The Agripreneurs' Club will be piloted in two schools in Singapore - a local primary, and a local secondary school.

We will also be digitalizing our curriculum on an online platform so that it will be easier for others to start an Agripreneurs' Club where they are in the near future. The learnings that can be shared from around the globe will be invaluable!

About Farmcity

Farmcity is a social enterprise with the aim to increase access to healthier vegetables for everybody. We use agriculture as a tool to develop entrepreneurship capacity in the Youths of today, so we can build the Agripreneurs of tomorrow.

Support Our Work

Your gift will create a future where everybody has fair and equal access to food.

Mauritius Commercial Bank

Account No: 000 446 926 671

IBAN No.: MU70MCBL0901000446926671000MUR

SWIFT Code: MCBLMUMU

