



The Urban Farm Incubator at Watkins
Regional Park
601 Watkins Park Drive, Upper Marlboro,
MD 20775

*Growing Food, Farms & Farmers in
Prince George's County, MD*

Policy Handbook 2024-2025

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Introduction

The Urban Farm Incubator (UFI) at Watkins Regional Park, Prince George's County, Maryland was created as a demonstration project to find ways to support the growing number of capable and under-resourced DC metropolitan-area residents from all backgrounds who possess a true desire to become farmers in urban or suburban settings to grow for the ever-expanding local food market.

Project background and partners

ECO City Farms and its partners at the M-NCPPC, The Prince George's Soil Conservation District, The Food Equity Council and The Capital Market comprise the Urban Farm Incubator (UFI) Steering Committee, who worked for more than a decade to develop the Urban Farm incubator at Watkins Regional Park to provide farmland for new farmers who do not otherwise have access to land, and to furnish the essential infrastructure, knowledge and skills needed to develop and grow their new farm businesses.

Purpose and goal of the Urban Farm Incubator

As recommended in earlier County Planning documents, the partnering organizations designed and structured the incubator farm to provide small-acreage entrepreneurial farmers a collaborative setting in which to develop their own farm businesses, and work toward making it successful, before they transition to a permanent location. This experience is intended to help farmers determine whether and how to make their business viable, and to better understand their particular land and infrastructure needs.

Independent projects in a collaborative space/structure

Farmers at the UFI are invited to develop independent projects and businesses within a mutually supportive framework under the supervision and guidance of the Steering Committee and the UFI site manager. The farm plots are adjacent to one another and interconnected, providing the opportunity to work in concert and mutual support, sharing resources, space and equipment in the interest of the site as a whole and one another.

Purpose of this Policy Handbook

The purpose of this Policy Handbook is to provide the information and understanding necessary to successfully grow at the Urban Farm Incubator at Watkins Regional Park site. M-NCPPC, ECO City Farms and its partners provide many resources to support the farmers, their businesses, and the extended community at the UFI. At the same time, farmers are encouraged to act responsibly and work in compliance with UFI rules and regulations, as articulated in this Policy Handbook, to assure farmer safety and the safety of all others on the farm, and to operate in accordance with legal, grant and insurance regulations. Please read this Policy Handbook carefully to understand and follow the many required practices and rules that are enumerated herein. Some of our policies and guidance stem from state and Federal regulations; others originate from the expectations, rules and regulations of Agency partners. Some are recommended by experienced farmers or drawn from other incubator farms, and others are proscribed by insurance, Board or funder requirements of ECO City Farms. Regardless of their origins, the policies in this Handbook constitute one set of regulations that must be observed. Should any policy generate additional questions, the best approach would be to put the question in writing and submit it to the UFI site manager.

Farmer and Management Responsibilities Overview

The following commitments are made by farmers and farms at the Incubator, many of which are outlined in more detail in later sections of this document.

What the Farmer Commits to:

Compliance	
	Adhere to the policies and procedures outlined in this handbook to ensure: continued use of plot, insurance protections, prevention of injury or accident to self, others or property
	Sign yearly Use Agreement by renewal date. The Use Agreement is renewable annually for up to 5 years, as long as specified farmer responsibilities are met.
	Actively manage , fully cultivate and maintain, and regularly weed plot year-round for the full period of occupancy
	An initial refundable deposit of \$500 per plot paid to ECO City Farms when a farm business first joins the incubator
	Fully participate in and attend three (3) yearly mandatory All-Farm meetings and bimonthly one-on-one meetings
	Complete specialized training sessions for use of particular equipment and shared spaces required before allowed use
	Manage people and personal property on farm responsibly
	Maintain logs for visitors, volunteers, and crew members (guests and workers) at their plot and ensure that all sign in daily, that all sign the necessary liability waivers and take responsibility for the safety and behavior of all guests and workers on their farm plot.
	Advise and seek prior approval from staff and/or fellow farmers for the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Adding structures or storage to farm plot or shared spaces ● Winter production in the high tunnel ● Hosting events, groups, or food distribution at site ● Media coverage at UFI ● Exceptions to any policy, ie. the Children on-site policy
	Responsible for knowledge of and compliance with the UFI Soil and Water Conservation Plan developed in concert with PGC Soil Conservation District
	Implement growing practices consistent with Certified Naturally Grown standards
Deliverables	
	Maintain daily logs, keep and share production and sales records, and track business progress
	Develop and update business and farm operation plans
	Provide yearly evidence of farm business progress—ie. milestones achieved, outcomes reached, goals accomplished
Expectations	
	Maintain community mindset , contribute to an inclusive, inviting and mutually supportive farm environment, and show respect for the shared communal space
	Use shared tools and facilities carefully and as intended, fully train crew and volunteers prior to their use of shared tools, return tool(s) to storage facilities daily after use. Inform UFI Site Manager immediately when tools or equipment are in broken, missing, need attention or repair
	Each farmer/farm business assumes responsibility for their business-related costs
	Carefully read and contribute to weekly UFI Listserv/Bulletin
	Provide regular feedback on UFI project

Collectively, the UFI site manager and partnering organizations provide many resources to support a variety of different farm businesses at UFI. Here's what farmers can expect to receive from them.

What UFI Management Provides and Commits to:

Production Resources	
	Access to a designated ½ acre farm plot for up to five years, with initial prep for the season as requested.
	Basic Infrastructure and Utilities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deer fence, parking lot and access road, deep well with buried irrigation supply lines • Water, electricity, 2 single-stall outdoor toilets, and a wi-fi hot spot
	Communal facilities, farm tools and equipment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High tunnel, nursery, wash-pack station • Multiple cold storage options on site, with temperature settings based on season and overall crop mix. • A selection of shared basic and specialized farm tools, suitable for intensive low-tillage farming methods (incl. BCS, broadforks, tilter, flame weeder) available on a rotating and as needed basis
	Compost and Compost Tea: Food grade quality compost is made on site from residential or pre-consumer food scraps and will be delivered to buffer strips next to each plot as needed on a rotating basis. Additionally, farmers have access to a system for brewing and applying aerated compost tea. Note: Compost production is limited and compost produced on site is shared by all farmers. Farmers may need to purchase additional compost elsewhere based on the needs of their particular crop plan and soil at their farm plot
	Bulk Buying Opportunities and Coordination: Potential for staff to facilitate cost-efficient cooperative bulk purchases of certain inputs and supplies
Support for Farmers	
	Training: A variety of training opportunities will be provided, covering a range of topics to support farming and business practices. Note: Some of these resources may be accessed online and specific training requests will be considered. Occasional work sessions, such as tool maintenance and care, winterizing shared spaces; spring gear up; cleaning/organizing shared spaces will be scheduled.
	Technical Assistance: One-on-one advice and connection to agencies, experts and other resources to address challenges, needs and opportunities
	Marketing Supports: Shared opportunities to market/sell limited quantities of produce through the Capital Market, the Capital Area Food Bank and others.
	Transitioning and land access: Help identifying available land and other supports to help prepare farm businesses for transitioning from the incubator site
	Farm Manager Labor Support - upon request– as needed and within capacity– assistance with land prep, tilling, plot maintenance and managing volunteers.
	Assist with the Development and Review of Business Plans to achieve their farm business goals
	Shared vision to support small-acreage farmers in developing their farm businesses and work towards growth and success
Project Management	
	Maintain Site and Farmer Liability and other required Insurance
	Evaluation and Progress Assessment: Ongoing assessment and guidance based on farmer information, feedback and objectives; Monitor and track farmer progress toward independence and competency
	Promotion, Advocacy and Replication or Redirection as needed; Networking supports, Introductions, and Connections
	Continuity of site operations and management of common areas and resources - high tunnels, utilities, shared spaces
	Equitable and fair enforcement of policies
	Site Activity Coordination and Site-wide Communication

Farmer Responsibilities

Dedicated Farmland Requiring Active Use

Upon completion of the selection and orientation process, the farmer will be assigned a designated ½ acre plot at the UFI with a Use Agreement renewable annually for up to 5 years, as long as specified farmer responsibilities are met.

An initial refundable deposit of \$500 per plot is paid to ECO City Farms when a farm business first joins the incubator. This deposit is intended to cover the costs of potential loss, damage or misuse of site equipment, or abandonment of the plot. Similar to a rental security deposit, it is refunded when farmers vacate their plot, once all farm property is returned and trash and weeds are removed from the plot.

The entire space assigned to the farmer must be actively maintained throughout the period of occupancy. Farmers are expected to visit and maintain their plots at very minimum once a week. Farmers are responsible for all cultivating, weeding, pest management, and watering of their own plots and maintaining the plot edges, pathways, and storage areas. All plots are subject to occasional visits, by the UFI site manager and/or ECO/M-NCPPC staff, for observation and assessment purposes.

Corrective Action: If the plot is not operating in accordance with the policies of this handbook, a written notice will be given. A second observation visit will be conducted two weeks later. If the issue has not been resolved, UFI site manager action may be taken to correct the situation and/or the plot may be surrendered back to UFI's care.

Corrective Action: Failure to maintain full and active use of the entire plot, including failure to control weeds and any other factor that would limit neighbor farmer's successful use of their plot, can result in loss of the site deposit, a Corrective Action Plan and/or other remedies, including forfeiting of an active Use Agreement.

Personal Tools and Structures

If farmers desire to store personal tools on site, the UFI site manager will help determine the best way to secure them and protect them from adverse weather, pests, and degradation. ECO City Farms' insurance does not protect farmer's personal property stored at the farm. Plans to create personal storage space should be clearly discussed and approved at the first meeting of the season. Personal items should not be left outside of the farmer's space unless they are in active use.

A farmer who wishes to install any fixed structure that will be long-term or permanent throughout their site use (such as a caterpillar tunnel, personal storage unit, or other such item) must first consult with and get approval from the UFI site manager, and where applicable, the Assistant Division Chief of the Natural and Historical Resources Division of M-NCPPC.

A discussion between farmer and the UFI site manager and approval must take place prior to installation to ensure that the proposed structure meets UFI guidelines and will not interfere with neighboring plots or shared spaces, especially with regard to possible shading and limiting access. All structures on the plot must be readily dismantled upon request at the end of the farmer's use of the space.

The UFI site manager must also approve in advance the installation of any fence, barrier or physical partition, the removal of live trees/limbs, and/or the making of any other structural changes to the plot or common spaces. Unless specifically coordinated and approved by the UFI site manager, farmers cannot alter anything on the site outside of their own plot.

Ongoing Meetings, Assessment, and Communication with the UFI Site Manager

Farmers are expected to meet regularly with the farm manager individually and in groups. Throughout the year, the farmer agrees to the following meetings and assessments:

1. Monthly Observations/Visits to Plot by UFI site manager
2. Bimonthly individual Check-in Meetings with staff
3. Three (3) Seasonal All Farm Meetings Yearly

Monthly Inspections

The UFI site manager conducts informal monthly assessments to track farmer progress and skills development through a modified case management and data collection system, wherein each farm plot is assessed monthly and notes are maintained, to share with farmers at the mandatory bimonthly meetings. The UFI site manager is responsible for ensuring that the entire site and each individual farm business plot is maintained and fully cultivated/ cover-cropped. Regular mowing and overall site maintenance is included in this obligation.

Note: In carrying out these and related roles, the UFI site manager/ECO and M-NCPPC staff are permitted to enter assigned plots when necessary and without notice or the express permission from that plot's farmer.

Corrective Action: If urgent matters, such as a pest infestation is noted, the UFI site manager will immediately notify the farmer who must take corrective action.

Corrective Action: If the plot is not operating in accordance with the policies of this handbook, a written notice will be given. A second observation visit will be conducted two weeks later. If the issue has not been resolved, UFI site manager action may be taken to correct the situation and/or the plot may be surrendered back to UFI's care.

Corrective Action: Failure to maintain full and active use of the entire plot, including failure to control weeds and any other factor that would limit neighbor farmer's successful use of their plot, can result in loss of the site deposit and/or other remedies.

Bimonthly Check-ins

Farmers meet individually with the UFI site manager every other month. The UFI site manager will reach out to each incubator farmer to schedule the bimonthly meeting, either in person or on phone/via Zoom, according to farmer preference. The purpose of these meetings is to share and discuss observations to ensure that farmers are: adhering to site policies and procedures; continuing to acquire the skills needed to be profitable and sustainable; making progress toward the goals and objectives of their farming businesses; and have open channels for ongoing feedback and support.

Three Yearly Mandatory Meetings

Throughout the season, UFI leadership will organize three mandatory meetings. Each meeting will focus on various aspects of the work. For example:

- The Pre-season meeting will likely discuss and assess farmer skills/needs, set season goals, review business/crop plans, and plan for season record-keeping.
- Mid-season meetings will likely check in on progress towards achieving goals, recount seasonal challenges, reflect and exchange notes on the quantity and quality of their produce, and check in on record keeping management and reassess needs.
- End-of-season meetings will likely be for reflecting on progress toward achievement of production goals, sales and basic financial outcomes, discuss the challenges of record keeping, and talk about winter preparation and planning.

Corrective Action: If a farmer does not attend two scheduled meetings in a row, they will receive a phone call and email notifying them of the missed meetings. They will have two weeks to reschedule and attend an alternative meeting. If the farmer does not reschedule and attend a meeting within the 2-week period, they will be considered out of alignment with this agreement and may have to follow a corrective action plan.

Weekly Shared Communications via Listserv

The UFI has an established UFI listserv that is updated weekly. This listserv is the main communications vehicle for all UFI farmers and the UFI site manager. It is the place where announcements about important meetings and events are conveyed, use of equipment is co-ordinated, and other important information impacting all farmers at the UFI is shared. Every farmer who is a signatory of the Use Agreement is required to provide their contact information and join, regularly read, and contribute to the UFI listserv so that all parties at the UFI can be kept abreast of UFI developments, activities and concerns.

Note: If more than one person farms a particular plot as part of a partnership, that farm may be asked to designate a single person to be the primary contact for communications purposes with the UFI site manager and their co-farmers. However, all signatories are expected to participate in the listserv and attend site Meetings.

Progress Milestones and Record-keeping

Every farm business at UFI has a different set of goals and ideas of what constitutes their success from year to year. There is no one rubric that will work to measure success that can be applied to all farms. Therefore setting yearly milestones will require collaboration between the farmer and UFI site manager/staff to determine a reasonable set of milestones for each year at UFI that might include the areas of successful crop planning, harvesting, high tunnel growing and marketing.

In addition to the general production records each farmer is expected to keep, each farm business will be asked to select the indicators of progress that will best serve as the milestones they hope to achieve each year. Farm progress will be discussed during bimonthly check-ins

and assessed during the Use Agreement renewal decisions/meetings. The UFI will provide templates, reminders, and tips for integrating record-keeping into the farm's workflow.

Documentation of milestones can include production and sales records, new crops grown, challenges overcome, etc. The farmer will share their records related to tracking milestones with the UFI site manager for assessment purposes.

In general, the following production records should be kept to ensure compliance with site-wide policies and conservation plans

- Any pesticide use (even organic ones): [log template](#)
- Crop plans with crop mapping/rotation indicated
- Fertilizers and nutrient/soil amendments use: [log template](#)
- Food safety practices and monitoring procedures
- Harvest records (e.g. overall weight, number of units harvested, etc.)
- Crop sales and related production expenses
- Documentation for nutrient management plan

Note: Accurate record-keeping is not simply a requirement for the UFI agreement. Record-keeping is a necessary practice for all farmers and is crucial for maintaining eligibility for Certified Naturally Grown certification, for demonstrating progress on the site's nutrient management, and compliance with site water and soil conservation plans.

While the UFI site will not apply for USDA Organic certification as a whole, should any incubator farmer decide to pursue future organic certification, keeping records is also mandatory to obtain (and maintain) USDA Organic certification.

Farmer Business Plans

Each farm must develop the business plans necessary to guide its operations over several years. Subsets of the business plan are:

- An Annual Nutrient Management Plan
- A Crop Plan
- A Food Safety Plan
- A Weed and Pest Management Plan
- Annual Cash Flow Plan
- A Risk Management Plan.

Many of these plans are subsets of an overall business plan that are expected to develop and maintain.

Note: As of 2024, business plans are a requirement for new applicants to the site. For current farmers at the UFI site, by their 3rd year at UFI, all farms are expected to have drawn up a business plan and shared it with the UFI site manager for mutual planning and milestone development purposes.

Media Release Form and Permissions

Farmers are requested (but not required) to sign a blanket release form to enable ECO to publicize the Incubator and resident farm businesses on its website and elsewhere at the time of the annual signing of the Use Agreement.

In addition, media, press, visiting photographers, researchers, funders, donors, or other organizations may on occasion visit the farm and take photos or video to describe or publicize the site. Written media release forms are required for any entity to publish images of anyone at the site. The UFI site manager will endeavor to notify farmers in advance of these events and as best as possible inform photographers/videographers of those farmers who opt-out of the media release.

Note: Farmers who wish to invite elected officials and/or members of the media, reporters, press or related organizations to UFI must inform and secure permission from the UFI site manager in advance of such a visit or event.

Permit Lengths and Renewals of Farmer Use Agreement

Farmers may have use of a plot at the Urban Farm Incubator for a total of five years. The 5 years are broken up into five one year increments. This first year is an opportunity for both the farmer and the UFI site manager to gauge whether farming at the Urban Farm Incubator best serves the goals of that farm business and its ability to develop using the resources available in this particular setting.

At the end of the first season on the site, the UFI site manager will meet with the farmer(s) to review that business' goals and to determine whether to continue farming at the UFI site. Renewals for each additional year are subject to review and progress made toward achieving the specific farm goals and Milestones outlined in the Use Agreement.

Note: The yearly Use Agreements renewal is contingent upon the completion and sharing of achievements, evidence of record-keeping, and compliance with site-wide requirements for all members of the site. A demonstration of progressive achievement of progress toward business goals each year and meeting the defined Milestones is needed in order to continue to farm on-site.

Corrective Action: If farms and farmers are unable to demonstrate progress toward achieving yearly Milestones, the UFI site manager, together with the farmer, will discuss the reasons and potentially chart a different course of action, revise the business plan, or negotiate a Corrective Action plan.

Corrective Action: Should a farm or farmer consistently be unable to demonstrate progress, develop a viable business plan and/or refuse to comply with requests for showing progress toward meeting the Milestone requirement, they will jeopardize their ability to renew the Use Agreement.

Renting/Subleasing the Plot

Farmers are not allowed to rent out the plot to anyone else for any purpose. The Use Agreement is specifically and only with the farmers who sign it.

Note: While farmers may partner with other organizations, permission for these organizations to run and advertise programs, host events, or gather on site must be granted by UFI Management and/or the Steering Committee. Farmers may host events, and partner with outside organizations to do so, as long as these events follow the guidelines set out in this Policy Handbook.

Vacating the Plot

At whatever point farmers vacate their Incubator plot— whether at the end of their Use Agreement term, or before that— all farmers are required to return the site to the condition in which they received it in order to be refunded their deposit. Any exception to this policy must be specifically agreed upon with the UFI site manager on a case-by-case basis.

Corrective Action: In cases of consistent negligence and/or repeated disregard for responsibilities outlined in these guidelines and policies, farmers may be asked to leave the incubator. No refund of deposit or fees will be issued should a farmer be asked to leave the program or give up their farm plot.

Right to Harvest

As is standard practice in fixed-term agricultural land use agreements, in the event of an early and unexpected end to the farmer's use agreement, the farmer will have the opportunity to harvest any annual crops they have planted that will mature before the original fixed expiration date of the use agreement (i.e. way-going crops). Farmers will also have the opportunity to recover personal materials/equipment until the original end of the use agreement period.

Note: Exceptions to this policy will be made in cases where the Steering Committee determines that allowing materials to remain or the crop to mature once the plot is abandoned/unmanaged would create lasting damage to the property or would contradict the original Use Agreement (for example, if the crop encroaches on a neighboring plot or the buffer strips, weeds are overwhelming the crop and generating seeds, the presence of materials/equipment are causing a hazard, or otherwise interfering with other incubator farmers' full use of their plots and/or shared space).

Corrective Action: In cases like those described above, the plot may have to be cleared and harvesting crops would not be possible.

Community Mindset and Shared Spaces Use

Our Farm Work Ethic

Farming is a mix of working hard and working smart. Each of us continually strives to balance speed with efficiency, and the objective of meeting the greater vision of the farm and the season as a whole. We look out for one another. We recognize that there are a finite number of days and hours to get our work done, and in depending on shared space, tools, and resources, we

are also depending on one another. Long hours, unexpected outcomes, interacting with people with a variety of different communication styles, and in all types of weather are all part of farming. We ask that you realize these contingencies and strive to bring your best self to the farm.

Everyone connected to the Incubator Farm has the right and obligation to treat one another with dignity and respect. The guiding principle for behavior at the UFI is to be considerate of the needs and concerns of our neighbors— whether they are other farmers on site, site staff and Steering Committee members, groups and organizations visiting the UFI, local community members, elected officials, groups and institutions operating adjacent to the site and/or the general public.

Collaborating with Other Growers On-site

While providing separate plots for each farmer, the UFI is also a collaborative space, requiring flexibility when using the shared resources, and consideration of the needs of all neighbors and partners in the space. Thoughtfulness is required to ensure that no one farm's operations impede a neighboring plot, and that common resources, like the Cooler Space and Wash-Pack Station, are fairly allocated. Each farmer will continually be challenged to think about the implications of their actions on others at the site when developing their own crop, business, or other space use plans. There is also a great benefit to be gained from this culture of cooperation. Individual farmers can be more successful at the incubator and beyond through learning from the other farmers on the site, sharing their own areas of expertise, and developing peer-to-peer relationships for the long term.

Tool Shed and Storage

The tool shed area is intended to store shared tools. The farmer may use these tools and must return them in good condition to the storage area daily. The farmer may also possess personal tools. There is a designated shipping container for the storage of these tools. Farmers should label their tools and supplies; personal property cannot be taken by others without permission.

Note: If farmers desire to store personal tools on site, the UFI site manager will help determine the best way to secure them and protect them from adverse weather, pests, and degradation. ECO City Farms' insurance does not protect farmer's personal property stored at the farm. Plans to create personal storage space should be clearly discussed and approved at the first meeting of the season. Personal items should not be left outside of the farmer's space unless they are in active use.

Use of UFI Shared Tools

Shared UFI tools are clearly marked with purple paint indicating they are intended for shared incubator use. Farmers should keep all shared equipment and supplies secure and use as follows:

- Keep storage areas clean and avoid items that invite insects, pests, rodents or mold;
- Keep walkways clean and clear; store items neatly;
- Label personal items and supplies to avoid confusion among fellow farmers;
- Respect all shared property and the property of your fellow farmers;
- Each tool should only be used in the manner intended

- Bring to the attention of the UFI site manager immediately any items missing, broken and/or requiring repair. Sometimes the solution to a problem requires prior experience with it to figure it out.
- If you break something, fix or replace it ASAP, and let the site manager and other farmers know about it now! Whether it's a shared incubator tool or something owned by one of your fellow farmers, it's incredibly frustrating to show up to work and find a relied-upon tool unavailable.
- If not sure about how something works, ask the UFI site manager or another farmer.
- If you want to use a tool without a purple paint marking, permission from the owner is required whether the item is in another farmer's plot or in an assigned high tunnel/nursery area.
- Cooperation and success is built on a foundation of mutual trust and respect.

Filling Out Required Equipment Logs

Farmers are expected to fill out the Equipment Check-out/check-in Logs for shared equipment, especially the BCS. This will help the proper maintenance and repair of UFI equipment, which is key to ensuring everything is working and available for all on-site users when needed.

Corrective Action: Repeated disregard for the requirement of checking out specific equipment could result in inability to use the equipment available

Workshops and Trainings

Farmers are strongly encouraged to attend the workshops and trainings scheduled throughout the season. Attendance at workshops is generally optional. However, training related to food and equipment safety and use of the Wash-Pack Station and BCS are mandatory and use of these resources is contingent on completion of training by the UFI site manager. Farmers with significant experience with the BCS and other tools, may have abbreviated sessions, but one-on-one training with the site manager is still required for all who wish to use the shared equipment.

Trash and Agricultural Waste

The farm site is very public, with high visibility from the road and our neighbors. One aspect of taking responsibility for occupying this site is the duty to keep it reasonably neat and clean at all times. This is also key for shared spaces to operate smoothly and to prevent accidents. Each farmer is responsible for the removal of all trash and/or excess materials from their farm site. There are designated and marked trash containers at the farm, in the nursery, Wash-Pack Station, or tool storage container.

Municipal trash removal services are not contracted to collect within the deer fence. Farmers are therefore asked to place personal trash items, such as disposable water bottles, food wrappers and plastic/paper bags in the designated trash cans in the nursery, wash-pack station, and tool storage container. The UFI site manager will bring bagged trash outside the fence to be collected weekly.

When disposing of agricultural production waste— such as stakes, trellis netting, damaged tarps and other items that cannot be reused— farmers should consult and coordinate with the UFI site manager for proper disposal. Small amounts of these items may be placed outside the fence for municipal removal; however, for large quantities, dumpster disposal will need to be coordinated.

For organic waste not suitable for composting (grass, weeds with seeds, diseased crop residues), there is a M-NCPPC dump trailer on-site. When the trailer is full, the UFI site manager should be notified, and will dispose of these organic waste items.

General principles regarding trash and waste on site are:

- Keep fields and all common areas clean and organized at all times.
- Remove all trash daily.
- Stack and secure personal farm supplies to prevent them from blowing into the fields or otherwise obstructing the work of others.
- Minimize waste and reuse items as much as possible.
- Store personal tools in designated shipping container.

Note: If a dumpster is required at UFI for year-end disposal in excess of what is generated the site as a whole, farmers are required to rent and pay for a dumpster.

High Tunnels and Nursery Space

The two unheated high tunnels on the site are there for shared farmer use. Specific beds inside the high tunnels for crop production, and tables within the nursery/seed starting area, will be allocated to individual farms at the beginning of the farming season. Each farm plot has a designated area in the tunnels, indicated by a site map inside the tunnels.

All farmers who use their allocated spaces in the high tunnels are responsible for coordinating among themselves a schedule of managing, venting and watering the high tunnels daily when in use. Each farmer is responsible for managing weeds in their individual farm plots and high tunnel spaces, and for turning over crop residue at the end of each harvest cycle.

Farmers are expected to provide their own soil amendments and planting mixes, seeds, seed trays, drying racks and/or other specialized equipment. Bulk buying of some desired materials may be arranged. All farmers using the high tunnels share responsibility for its upkeep and repair, and must keep it clean to prevent insect, weed, disease, & rodent problems. All trash (potting soil bags, broken trays/flats, etc.) should be removed from the high tunnels on a daily basis, and regular sweeping of the tunnel's non-growing space is strongly encouraged. All plant material unsuitable for field production should be removed from the space to eliminate pest and disease pressure. Farmers are required to take part in regularly scheduled cleanup days for the high tunnels as part of their responsibility of taking care of shared spaces on site.

Note: The high tunnels are not a place to store tools, equipment, or personal belongings. Personal items used in the tunnel(s) must be removed after each visit.

Note: In general, at the end of each visit, a farmer must properly secure the high tunnel doors, vents, and all materials in them, depending upon the time of day, weather conditions and the needs of other users.

Note: Snow removal: Farmers using the high tunnels in the winter are responsible for manually removing snow accumulated on the high tunnel plastic, around the edges of the high tunnel, and in front of the doors, so that hoops do not collapse from snow load.

Wash-Pack Station Use

There is one central wash-pack station for all farmers operating on site. Farmers must decide on a mutually agreeable schedule for everyone to access the space as and when needed. In general, it is the responsibility of every farmer to:

- Provide their own crates, boxes, bags, labels and packing materials;
- Leave the space clean, empty and ready for the next person to use;
 - Hydrant turned off
 - Hoses off the ground
 - Dunk Tanks fully emptied
 - Tables clear and wiped with Sanidate solution (labeled spray bottle)
 - Debris swept and/or sprayed from floor
- Use the equipment only as it is designed to be used;
- Report any broken or mal-functioning equipment immediately to the UFI site manager;
- Follow all post-harvest food safety practices and wash-pack station policies and procedures
 - [UFI Produce Handling Flowchart](#)
 - [Food Safety Plan Overview](#)

Only raw farm products may be handled in the wash-pack station area.

Corrective Action: No prepared foods, meats, dairy or value-added products are allowed. Given how central the wash-pack station is to food safety plans, and timely care of crops to prevent loss, repeated misuse of the area will result in loss of wash-pack station privileges.

Access to Shared Cooler and Use Policy

The UFI is equipped with 2 twenty (20) foot refrigerated shipping containers, and a cooler truck, for the exclusive use by UFI farmers. They are designed to store raw, uncut produce that must be refrigerated. The coolers are set at different temperatures for cool and cold storage crops. The UFI site manager will coordinate with farmers to make desired temperature changes throughout the season with the incubators farmers, depending on the type of crop being harvested and stored at different points of the season. As the space is shared, farmers are advised to clearly mark each of their crates with provided tape and markers. No personal marketing or packing materials may be stored inside or around the cooler unless farmers receive prior temporary approval. No storage of seeds, dirty bins, tools, pesticides, or fertilizers.

Regardless of which cooler is used, produce must be kept in accordance with UFI 's food safety plan and the Food Safety Modernization Act requirements:

- **All items must be in a container and all boxes in any cooler must be labeled** with the following:

- Farm business name
- Crop name
- Date of harvest
- Items must not protrude into the central walkway of the cooler.
- All product must be stored so that it does not have direct contact with the floor and any crop residue must be removed daily and placed in designated compost piles.
- **Only raw, uncut vegetables may be stored in the coolers.** Cut flowers without soil may be stored in designated areas. No prepared foods, meats, dairy or other products allowed, with the exception of items on the designated snack shelf. No storage of seeds, dirty bins, tools, pesticides, herbicides, fertilizer.
- Only clean boxes and bins can be put in the cooler. Harvest bins unless cleaned and sterilized before use should not be put in the cooler.
- Farmers must load and unload quickly and be sure that the cooler door is firmly closed to minimize strain on the cooling systems and preserve even temperatures.
- **All produce and boxes must be out of the coolers by November 30th.**

Corrective Action: Unlabeled boxes and/or spoiled crops will be disposed of at the discretion of the UFI site manager and a disposal fee of \$5 per crate/item will be assessed and taken from site deposit.

Corrective Action: Access to and use of the cooler is contingent upon following the above stipulated safety protocols and cooperation with fellow farmers. Repeated violation of these policies and practices and three warnings by the UFI site manager will result in lack of access to the coolers.

Water Use and Irrigation

Irrigation Schedule

It is not possible for all plots to run irrigation at the same time. As a result, farmers are required to work out watering schedules with one another and the UFI site manager. A spirit of cooperation is necessary to appropriately share this common resource, and for the irrigation system to function properly.

The UFI site manager should be notified immediately of major irrigation problems or failures, especially involving the wellhead, pump, hydrants or main water lines. UFI Management assumes responsibility for maintaining and repairing the irrigation system up to each hydrant, and farmers are responsible for maintaining and repairing irrigation systems beyond each hydrant. **Note:** It is important to fix any leaks as soon as they are noticed in order to avoid waste of water, time, and money. Turn off all watering systems at night and before leaving the farm.

To prevent damage from freezing, farmers who are growing crops during winter are required to remove and drain all irrigation equipment from each hydrant at the end of each work day. This includes irrigation equipment (hoses, valves, splitters, filters, nozzles) in the shared high-tunnels, and in the wash-pack station.

Water conserving strategies should be used as much as possible:

- Avoid watering on sunny, windy days between the hours of 10 AM and 4 PM to avoid wasting water — more than 50% can evaporate.
- Check the soil 6 to 8 inches below the ground (root zone), before and after irrigating to see how much water to apply and whether you watered the root zone.
- Watch the weather. Irrigate less on cool, cloudy, or foggy days. Measure precipitation amounts with a rain gauge.
- Use mulch, compost, hay or plastic to conserve soil moisture.
- Watering too much causes weak roots and unhealthy plants. It also washes away fertilizers.

Corrective Action: It is critical to think about and use water resources responsibly and in keeping with stated regulations. Repeated violation of these regulations may result in loss of use.

Limitation of liability regarding water

UFI cannot guarantee continuous access to water at all times. The site is equipped with a deep well at the farm and UFI maintains the necessary equipment and pumps to accommodate water access needs during the growing season. If an event occurs that limits access to farm site water beyond the financial or physical control of UFI Management, UFI does not assume liability.

Site-Wide Policies

Each farmer is expected to understand the plans and policies that govern site use as a whole and participate in enacting those plans.

Production and Food Safety plans and policies include:

1. Soil and Water management and conservation plans
2. Policies for COVID and public-health related concerns
3. Certified Naturally Grown standards
4. Food Safety Plan
5. Crop Planning, with key limitations including:
 - a. No invasive plants. Plants like mint, burdock, borage and others with strong root systems should only be grown in containers. A list of invasive plants and information about statewide noxious weeds can be found on the Maryland State Plant Protection Weed Management site: https://mda.maryland.gov/plants-pests/Pages/plant_protection_weed_management.aspx
 - b. Other state and federally regulated plants such as **tobacco, cannabis, hemp**, etc. are not allowed within the scope of the site lease agreement with M-NCPPC.
 - c. Livestock, including beekeeping, is not allowed on site. Farmers interested in beekeeping, may pursue joining the [Beekeeper Collective](https://www.pgparcs.com/3299/BeeKeeper-Collective) located nearby the Incubator site. For more information: <https://www.pgparcs.com/3299/BeeKeeper-Collective>
 - d. All garlic seed used on site should be certified seed or tested for [white rot fungus](#). This fungus can remain in the soil for up to 20 years once it is introduced and

eliminate the ability to grow garlic and other allium crops on the incubator. It is a priority to exclude the presence of this plant pathogen

Note: Water conservation: Turn off the hydrants when not in use. Even if planning to come right back, turn off water, so that it will not be forgotten and to prevent damage to hoses from constant pressure.

M-NCPPC Guidelines for Agricultural Use

All activities of the farmers and managers of the UFI at Watkins Regional Park must comply with the guidelines for agricultural uses on M-NCPPC parkland and the provisions of ECO's Use Agreement with M-NCPPC. Any and all exceptions must be agreed to in writing by the UFI site manager and the appropriate M-NCPPC staff, and stipulated in that farm/farmer's Use Agreement.

General use restrictions include but are not limited to: no open fires at UFI, no use or possession of federally designated illegal drugs and/or alcohol on site, no possession or use of firearms or other weapons. Discharge of any firearms for any reason (i.e. hunting/pest control) is strictly prohibited.

The complete rules and regulations governing the use of M-NCPPC property can be found [here](https://www.mncppc.org/DocumentCenter/View/5033/PARK-RULES-AND-REGULATIONS---FIN-AL-ADOPTED?bidId=): <https://www.mncppc.org/DocumentCenter/View/5033/PARK-RULES-AND-REGULATIONS---FIN-AL-ADOPTED?bidId=>

Rules Governing Site Access

The UFI site is open from sunrise to sunset, generally within the hours of 6:00 am and 9:00 pm. Recognizing that farm-work is weather-dependent and seasonally-aligned work, farmers are also permitted to access the UFI site outside of those hours, to ensure their ability to respond to weather events (windstorms, heat, frosts) and similar considerations related to managing their farm production. Residing on-site is not permitted, and overnight stays are not allowed, outside of extenuating circumstances (i.e. heavy snow storm.)

Locks and Gates

The gates on the perimeter fence (deer fence) must remain closed at all times –even when farmers are working at the UFI farm – to prevent deer/pest incursion. Farmers and visitors must take special care to ensure that all gates, especially the vehicle gate, are appropriately closed and locked when they are the last person leaving the site.

Note: Repeatedly leaving the fence unlocked and/or open is grounds for corrective intervention.

Entrance, Parking and Driving On-site

All vehicles are confined to stay within designated areas, namely the perimeter access road and the parking lot. Access to the UFI for farmers and visitors must only be made through the designated driveway and primary vehicle gate. Parking vehicles (of farmers and visitors) is permitted only in the UFI parking lot. Drivers should be certain that they do not block other vehicles or trailers, shipping containers, compost equipment, the portajohn and/or accessways to any other facility at the UFI. Short -term parking in front of the cold storage shipping containers is temporarily permitted to load or unload products.

Driving on the site is restricted to the perimeter access road, which should be used exclusively for the pick up and drop off of supplies, to ensure that the road is clear for others to use.

Note: In order to ensure the integrity and full functionality of the site's soil and water conservation strategies and preservation of the site's grounds and plots, no personal vehicles are permitted to enter any field space/plot, buffer strip or the waterways for any reason at any time.

Accessing Roadways and Buffer Strips

Incubator farmers are permitted to use the parking lot area, the perimeter access road, and (when on foot) the buffer strip between plots to access their individual growing spaces. At the same time, however, these spaces (as well as the grassed water way which runs through the middle of the property) should **never** be permanently blocked, and must at all times be kept free of debris, trash, and/or anything that would damage the grass, inhibit mowing, or impede access to neighboring plots. Depending on crop plans and site maintenance needs, farmers may be asked to help keep the edges of their plots and/or the separation strip between plots clear.

Access to Farmer Plots

The UFI site manager, Executive Leadership of ECO City Farms and M-NCPPC staff are allowed to enter assigned plots when necessary and without notice or the express permission from that plot's farmer. Anyone who may be on-site as part of a tour or other event who is not a staff member of ECO City Farms or M-NCPPC will not be allowed to enter or interfere with anything in any farmer's plot, unless given access by that farmer.

Visitors/Crew Members Supervision Policy

People engage with the UFI site and its farmers in different capacities. They may come as site staff or as guests, visitors, volunteers, and/or employees of specific farmers. They may also come at the request of groups of farmers, site employees or Steering Committee members. It is important that a record is kept of all who are at the site and when they are there, in order to ensure their safety and security, and to keep the liability insurance in force at the site.

The insurance and good safety protocols require that every person on the farm must in some way be directly supervised by a legitimately authorized party. That is, no one is allowed to simply enter the space and wander around on their own. While the public is permitted onsite, the UFI is primarily a working farm. Detailed below are the supervision requirements for each category of engagement. For engagements involving children, please refer to the "Children on Site Policy" section.

UFI farmers are responsible for the safety and behavior of any and all persons they bring to the site and must agree to supervise all children under sixteen (16) at all times, meaning you need to know where they are and what they are doing. Anyone who has not signed the farmer's Use Agreement **must complete a liability waiver and sign in/out** of the site on the visitor's log daily, unless they have signed a blanket waiver form indicating their regular schedule at the site. Farmers are responsible for the ability to provide the names and contact information for all persons they invite to the site, and provide dates and times when they will be/were on-site. This procedure is crucial for maintaining the site's safety and insurance coverage.

Farmers should also ensure that their visitors are aware of and understand basic farm guidelines. Use of shared space and equipment by visitors is allowed **only** when they are accompanied by and working along with the farmer. Visitors may not enter or interfere with anything in other farmers' plots or use any tools which require training to use.

Note: Visitors are generally restricted to their host farmer's plot and are not permitted to enter the plots of other farmers uninvited or interrupt the work of other farmers.

Note: The requirements for training and sign-in logs are directly related to compliance with the terms of site liability insurance and are intended to protect all participants, partner agencies and farm businesses on site.

Guests/Visitors (not engaged in farm work)

Farmers intending to hold a tour, workshop, or event with more than 5 guests at any one time must get prior approval from the UFI site manager. See "Events and On-Site Sales Policy" for more guidance about hosting events.

For all guests, farmers must:

- Ensure all visitors sign liability waiver
- Ensure all visitors sign in/out of the site on the visitor's log daily
- Be present on-site and supervise visitors at all times

Note: For visitors with an on-going, fixed schedule for coming to the farm, a blanket long term waiver can be secured, but it is still advisable that farmer's document who is on the site at all times.

Volunteers

Farmers intending to host volunteer groups with more than 5 people at any one time must get **prior** approval from the UFI site manager.

For all volunteers, farmers must:

- Ensure all volunteers sign liability waiver
- Ensure all volunteers sign in/out of the site on the visitor's log daily
- Be present on-site and supervise volunteers at all times
- Ensure volunteers do not handle any power tools or equipment for which training is required to use.

Farm Crew Employees

There are different arrangements for farmers to work with paid farm labor. There are distinct supervision requirements for the different labor supports.

For farm crew directly employed and paid by the principal farmer, farmers must:

- Ensure all crew sign liability waiver
- Ensure all crew sign in/out of the site on the visitor's log daily.
- Confirm crew understands and follows the farm guidelines and visitor policies

- Train crew members on site policies and regulations at minimum once per season using the Crew Member training packet, supplemented with the farm-specific SOPs for harvesting and processing.
- Orient and train crew to have approval from site manager to work independently from principal farmer supervision
- Ensure crew has undergone required training and been approved before handling any power tools or equipment.

Note: For farm crew with an on-going, fixed schedule, a blanket long term waiver can be secured, but it is still advisable that farmer's can document who is on the site at any one time. A timesheet or time tracking records can be used as this documentation.

For farm crew paid by another entity, farmers must:

- Ensure all visitors sign liability waiver
- Ensure all crew sign in/out of the site on the visitor's log daily.
- Confirm crew understands and follows the farm guidelines and visitor policies
- Be present on-site and supervise visitors at all times
- Ensure crew has undergone required training and been approved before handling any power tools or equipment.

Children on Site Policy

Any activities hosted on site where minors under the age of 18 will participate must follow site policies regarding such activities. This policy provides guidance regarding all visits and activities hosted on site where minors under the age of 18 will participate.

Children who are Family Members

The UFI Use Agreement and Visitor Policy guides the activity of any family members of farmers, including minors, as follows:

- Farmers agree to supervise anyone they bring to the site who is under 16 on site at all times, remaining in that farmer's plot or shared spaces under farmer's supervision;
- Farmers should sign a **season-long permission slip** for any children they will have on site regularly;
- No one under 18 is allowed to use any specialized equipment or tools, except for non-mechanized hand-tools (such as rakes, trowels, wheelbarrows).

Note: Everyone over 18 must have completed training with the UFI site manager prior to using any mechanized equipment (including mowers, BCS, tiller, weed-whackers, tiller, and propane torch).

Outside groups of children and/or children who are not family members of farmers

In recognition that the primary purpose and use of the Urban Farm Incubator site is as a working farm, and in order to respect the needs of the multiple businesses operating on site, **events with children as the primary audience are limited to no longer than 4 hours. Hosting multi-day events for children on site (e.g. camps) is not allowed.** As with any on-site group visit, **coordination with the UFI site manager before committing to the event is required.**

- Provide written details: a list of the activities, date(s), time, tools needed, etc. and create an event on the UFI Google Calendar. If co-hosting with another organization, an MOU is required.

Note: Any exception to this policy would have to be approved by the UFI site manager **and** all UFI farmers.

If each child will be accompanied by a parent:

- All visitors must sign a visitor log. Minor accompanied by a parent should be signed in by their accompanying adult .
- Have the parents sign in themselves and then each child (checking the under 16 box), on the visitor log and media waiver.

School or other group to chaperone without parents:

- Create a short overview agreement with any organization you are working with on an event with children: [MOU template](#) for tailoring
- Email a copy of the signed MOU to the UFI site manager ASAP;
- Collect permission slips signed by their parent/guardian for each child on the trip.
- Or if the organization has an overarching permission already covering this activity, give a copy of those to the UFI site manager. [Here is a template permission slip](#) to modify with your event details.

Events and On-site Sales Policy

Farmers wishing to hold a workshop, event, or host volunteers at the UFI must get prior approval from the UFI farm staff. Depending on the nature of the event and whether it is covered by the scope of the site Use Agreement, permission from the Assistant Division Chief of the Natural and Historical Resources Division may also be required.

Wholesale purchases/pickup on site for produce, flowers, and other farm-based products are allowed.

However, individual sales to the public on-site must be approved by and coordinated with the UFI site manager and the other farmers, in consideration of alternative shared marketing/sales efforts for the whole farm incubator site.

Note: Pick-Your-Own events and sales are not allowed for edible crops. Ticketed events which include harvesting are allowed if other activities are part of the event, and there is not a direct correlation between the harvesting and a sale.

Site-Wide Events

Upon occasion, ECO and /or other Steering Committee members will host field visits, volunteer events, and educational tours at the site. The UFI site manager will notify all resident farmers in advance of these events, and all farms and farmers are encouraged to be involved.

It is expected but not required that UFI farmers will be willing to engage with visitors to the farm who may be learning about, writing about, wishing to replicate and/or promote/support the farms and farmers at the Urban Farm Incubator. The UFI site manager will communicate with

farmers ahead of these events to ascertain whether that farmer is willing to engage with a tour group of other site-wide events.

Hosting Events On-Site

All farmers are welcome to host events at their plots. Farmers intending to hold a workshop, event, or volunteer groups with more than 5 people at any one time must get prior approval from the UFI site manager. Depending on the nature of the event and whether it is covered by the scope of the UFI Use Agreement, permission from the Assistant Division Chief of the Natural and Historical Resources Division, may also be required.

Recognizing that multiple farmers may want to use the shared space to host concurrent events, the UFI site manager may prioritize and/or mediate potential scheduling conflicts, taking into consideration such matters as the amount of advance notice, the number, size, frequency and outcome of previous events hosted by the farmer on site, and the number and degree of collaboration required of other farmers intending to participate the event. All efforts will be made to weigh these factors in a fair manner when needing to mediate scheduling conflicts.

Note: Requiring approval for groups of more than 5 people is in recognition of the fact that if all farms brought 5 additional people on site at any one time would mean 50+ additional people (and their vehicles, etc) on the site.

The amount of lead time given for hosting an approved event will be one factor when resolving scheduling conflicts and use of shared resources:

- **More than one month's notice**, Prioritizing the use of shared tools and staff logistical support
- **At least one week's notice:** Next level of priority for tools
- **Less than one week's notice:** No guarantee that tools, parking, or staff support can and will be available. Staff may restrict the time and size of the event if other events are scheduled at that time.
- **Less than 48 hours' notice:** If there is a conflict with other events, deliveries, activities etc. on site that are scheduled at that time, it is likely that **staff will be unable to approve the event**. Even if approved, staff may restrict the time and size of the event and the use of more than one set of shared tools. Staff will likely be unable to provide logistical support for the event or prepare the space.
- **Less than 24 hours' notice:** Staff will be unable to approve events for a general public audience (see insurance considerations below) or any groups of more than 5 people.

Once the UFI site manager has approved the event, farmers must:

- Post the details on the shared UFI Google calendar;
- Collect permission slips for any minors unaccompanied by parents ;
- Collect liability and release waivers for all guests;
- If co-hosting with an organization, complete an MOU as appropriate.

Pet Policy

A farmer is permitted to bring one leashed dog onsite only if they can ensure continued restrained and non-aggressive behavior on the part of their animal. The dog must remain leashed at all times, and be restricted to proscribed areas on their own plot.

Visitors, volunteers and event participants are never permitted to bring pets to the site, regardless of size or breed, with the exception of a certified service animal. In addition, all pet owners are responsible for monitoring and removing their pet's waste, restricting and monitoring their pet's movement, and accommodating to requests of other farmers, volunteers or visitors.

Note: To ensure compliance with food safety protocols, no pet/live animal may be brought into any of the food production areas (even on leash). Food production areas include all growing spaces, food growing plots, high tunnels, the wash-pack station, and the compost processing area.

Corrective Action: Permission for a UFI farmer to have a pet onsite can be withdrawn by UFI site manager if there is more than one violation of the pet policy.

Illness and Injury Policy

Everyone regularly present at the UFI should know what to do when an illness or injury occurs, what reports need to be completed, and what needs to be communicated to site staff.

In the event of an illness or injury:

1. Assess the area where injury occurred to make sure it is safe to enter and does not pose an immediate or continuing danger.
2. Determine the extent of the illness or injury. Assess whether the injured party can drive themselves home or whether they need transportation to a clinic or hospital.

Note: If the injury or condition is life-threatening or severe, dial emergency services (9-1-1) and wait for emergency personnel while assisting the ill or injured person as best as possible using the first aid kit located in the tool shed.

3. If the injury is a cut or scrape, thoroughly wash the area with soap and water. Apply antibacterial ointment and a bandage. **
4. If the illness or injury is accompanied by **diarrhea, jaundice, fever, sore throat, or vomiting**, the person should not resume any tasks until those symptoms are properly treated and have subsided. **
5. Check the area where the illness or injury occurred. If **blood, vomit, or other bodily fluid** is on equipment or a cleanable surface, wash the area with soap and water to remove the bodily fluid then apply a sanitizer. **
6. Notify the farmer in charge of the plot where the incident occurred as well as the UFI site manager to make them aware of the illness or injury in as timely a manner as possible.
7. Write down the details on the **Illness and Injury Reporting Log** for review, filing, and retention by UFI site manager.

Note: To comply with food and safety protocols, impacted areas must be sanitized, any fresh produce exposed to any bodily fluids must be thrown away and any injured person who returns to work on the farm should adequately cover all exposed cuts and injuries.

Insurance Coverage and Considerations

ECO City Farms maintains general liability insurance yearly for farming activities which take place on the UFI site. This insurance covers all registered participant farmers with signed Use Agreements while they are engaged in supervised and sponsored organization activities at the

farm. To ensure coverage and protection remain in force:

1. All people visiting and participating in activities on site must sign in on the visitor's log, or be signed in as a crew member.
2. In order for activities to be considered "supervised and sponsored," the UFI site manager must be notified at least 24 hours in advance of all events and be provided with specific details regarding the size, scope and activities to be included.
3. Activities which ECO serves as "supervisor and sponsor" are only those that physically take place on the site, meaning liability does not cover all business activities, such as participation in farmer's markets or other events off-site.

There are many types of insurance available to and helpful for successful farm businesses.

Worker's Compensation

Farmers are required to follow applicable laws for worker's compensation for any paid workers who are not family members. Any farm business operating onsite which meets Maryland state requirements for worker's compensation coverage for paid workers must show proof of appropriate coverage. An overview of Maryland workers' compensation coverage requirement thresholds for agricultural workers can be found here:<https://www.agrisk.umd.edu/post/when-is-worker-s-compensation-coverage-required-for-agricultural-workers>

Liability Insurance

Many of the farmers at UFI are at the start of their farm business development. The purchase of liability insurance is not mandatory to begin farming at the site. However, as each farm business evolves, they will eventually require their own liability insurance. Insurance may be needed to conduct certain activities, such as selling produce to a wholesale buyer or selling value-added goods. However, ECO City Farms' liability insurance policy for the entire UFI site should suffice for each farmer's initial few years for selling of raw crops.

Should a farm/farmer choose to secure their own liability insurance, ECO City Farms and the M-NCPPC should be listed as additional insured parties for farming onsite. Farmers must follow all applicable regulations and requirements for insurance with regard to any value-added, processed or otherwise altered farm-products.

Note: Site-wide liability insurance held by ECO City Farms is restricted to raw farm products such as uncut vegetables, herbs, plants, and cut flowers and applies exclusively to Use Agreement signatories.

Other Types of Insurance

While not required to farm at the Urban Farm Incubator, farmers may also opt to purchase other forms of insurance which limit risk and provide benefits in the case of extreme events. Common examples of this type of insurance are crop insurance, Catastrophic Risk Protection (CAT), and Adjusted Gross Revenue-Lite (AGR-Lite) insurance.

Honoring this Agreement and Appeals Process

Corrective Action Plan

The Policies within this Handbook are intended for all parties engaged in the UFI. In particular the UFI Site manager and Steering Committee members as well as each farmer specifically agrees to follow the rules and regulations of this Policy Handbook. Use Agreement renewal and continued use of the farmer's assigned plot is contingent upon this compliance. In turn, violations of these regulations can result in forfeiting select privileges, shared resources and ultimately, loss of use of the plot itself. The corrective action steps and plan is intended to negotiate a way of restoring the farmer to full access.

Farmers will be given a number of chances to gain clarity about and correct prior actions which were not in compliance with the Use Agreement and Policy Handbook. Notices of noncompliance may be issued at any time throughout the season and/or after UFI site manager's monthly inspections. Notices will be in writing and emailed to the respective principal farmer(s) with a deadline for intervention.

Farmers will be put on a **Corrective Action Plan** and **given specific terms for correcting the violation and remaining on site**. This will happen when and if the farmer:

- Misses more than 2 mandatory workshops or meetings (without prior notification and just cause, and without scheduling an alternative meeting with the UFI site manager to be brought up to speed).
- Consistently fails to communicate with the UFI site manager about matters/ incidents/ conditions which affect the safe and successful operation of the site (e.g. broken wellhead, food safety violations, excessive weeds on plot, etc.).
- Does not keep and/or share mandatory farm records .
- Does not follow site-wide plans, such as soil and water conservation and/or safety plans.
- Does not follow the guidelines stipulated in this Handbook and Use Agreement
- Takes actions and/or exhibits behavior that threatens, endangers or puts others at risk, and/or causes physical, monetary or reputational damage to another party at UFI.

If a **Corrective Action Plan** is required, the UFI site manager will meet with the farm(ers) to discuss the reasons for the corrective action plan and the terms and conditions for being able to continue farming on-site. A document will then be issued, which both parties are required to sign detailing the conditions of the agreement.

In cases of consistent and repeated disregard for responsibilities outlined in this document, a farmer(s) may be asked to leave the UFI plot and the UFI incubator program. No refunds of deposit or fees will be returned if a farmer is required to leave the program due to refusal or inability to follow these guidelines.

A farmer and farm will be permanently removed from Urban Farm Incubator if and when they:

- Do not meet the terms of their corrective action plan;
- Consistently do not cooperate and communicate with other farmers or the UFI site manager on critical health and safety matters;
- Consistently disrespect farm property and/or the collaborative culture of the site - such as deliberately damaging or neglecting shared equipment/spaces, blocking access to

another person's plot or shared spaces, dumping trash or a taking a specific documented egregious action;

- Use non-organic chemicals, pesticides or fertilizers on their plot/crops or in shared spaces;
- Use of federally illegal drugs, alcohol or firearms at the UFI and/or pursuit of other specifically prohibited activities;
- Create an unsafe environment for others and/or show active disrespect for other UFI farmers, neighbors, staff and visitors.

Complaints and Appeals

It is also the intent of these policy guidelines to maintain personal relationships that are healthy and constructive.

Farmers and/or staff are encouraged to minimize conflicts and foster goodwill through direct dialogue whenever possible, before following formal resolution procedures.

Urban Farm Incubator and its management aim to ensure that the farm is free from negative, aggressive, and inappropriate behaviors, and that the environment provides a high quality farming atmosphere of respect, collaboration, openness, safety, and equality.

All complaints of mistreatment, harassment or bullying behaviors in any form will be taken seriously and followed through to resolution, and no one who files a complaint will not be retaliated against for reporting others for their inappropriate behavior.

The following are the steps to take when experiencing hard to resolve disagreements or disputes at the farm, large or small, resulting from differences of opinion, belief or understanding, personality or behavior or in violation of policies, procedures or laws at the UFI, which negatively impact its functioning, reputation and/or its social environment.

Step 1) A formal complaint may be filed against another principal farmer, on-site worker, the UFI site manager, ECO City Farms, M-NCPPC or any other individual or group on the premises. The complaint must be in writing, with sufficient details to clearly explain the issue/violation and the time and place that it occurred. A complaint should be made as soon as possible after the incident or problem arises and should include as much documentation as is possible. It can be initiated verbally to the UFI site manager, but must be sent in written form via email to be acted upon.

Step 2): The UFI site manager will work to address the problem directly with the farmer and/or seek mediation help to resolve the situation.

Step 3) If satisfaction is not achieved, or if the complaint involves the UFI site manager, the complaint may be elevated to the Steering Committee, ECO City Farms management or M-NCPPC staff in writing with documentation.

Step 4) If the situation is still not resolved, the issue may be referred to the Board of Directors of ECO City Farms.

An outside arbitrator may be engaged at any point if sufficient documentation has been submitted by the complainant and/or such engagement is requested and/or would facilitate resolution.

Note: Having consistent and accurate records of who was at the farm at what times is also important to documenting and resolving complaints and/or related issues.

Changes to Site Policies

The Urban Farm Incubator at Watkins Regional Park launched in 2022 is a work in progress. It is the first such entity in the County, and its plans, procedures and infrastructure continue to be assessed and revised as needed to assure the health, security and success of all involved.

During the initial five year launch period, UFI's operation is dependent upon compliance with specific grant and agency funding, and relies upon the cooperation and participation of its founding partners' for guidance and support.

Each year, ECO and the Steering Committee will work with all incubator farmers to review site guidelines and develop some collective ground rules as a group to ensure the guidelines to consider the needs of everyone working in the space. This may mean that some procedures, responsibilities, and rules regarding space use may change from year to year based on the outcome of collective decision-making.

Given that the site is evolving, the policies detailed herein stipulate the expectations and responsibilities specifically covering the 2024 season (January 2024 through December 2025). The conditions of use, guidelines, and fees enumerated herein will be reviewed annually and are subject to change, and farmers signing their Use Agreements that extend beyond 2024 acknowledge that the terms of the Use Agreement may be revisited and revised each year, with farmer input and consent where possible. Nevertheless, without specific new guidance, all of the policies and regulations enumerated in this document continue to pertain to 2025. and beyond.

Policies in this Handbook may be changed for simplification, clarification or better management reasons. When changes are made, they will be reviewed with all members of the farm community: Steering Committee members, staff and farmers prior to implementation. The yearly Use Agreement stipulates that each farmer will follow all of the requirements stipulated in the Handbook, including newly clarified or issued policies.

Appendices

i. Site Wide Conservation

A Soil Conservation and Water Quality Plan has been developed by the Prince George's Soil Conservation District (PGSCD) in partnership with Maryland Department of Agriculture (MDA) and United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The objectives of this plan are to:

- Maintain implemented Best Management Practices (BMPs) that will help reduce soil erosion and manage stormwater runoff with an overall goal of improving water quality.
- Advance urban farming efforts in Prince George's County in a way that promotes the conservation of natural resources.

This plan details required practices such as crop rotation, cover crop, and protecting and managing the grassed water way. Review the Site Wide Conservation Plan:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/u/2/folders/1pFi6BvqyYB0iUFNEdCmAC6DOCSKHqI2X>

ii. Required Food Safety Policies and Procedures

Food safety is a priority at the Incubator farm; All visitors and farmers must review and follow food safety guidelines at UFI at all times:

1. If you are **ill**, please come back another day to visit us. If you have **diarrhea, jaundice, fever, sore throat, or are vomiting**, you will not be allowed to enter the farm or wash-pack station.
2. Please **remove all jewelry** and place it in a pocket. If this is not possible, let your host know so an alternative safe storage spot can be provided. It is okay to wear a plain ring that does not contain a stone or jewel.
3. Please **wash your hands** at the beginning of your visit as well as after using the restroom or eating.
4. Please **eat meals only in designated areas**. If you have any questions about the location of these areas, please ask your host.
5. Smoking is not allowed- **tobacco can spread the Tobacco Mosaic Virus** to tomatoes and other susceptible plants.
6. If asked, please **wear all protective gear** provided for you.
7. If you are **injured**, tell your host immediately. Please let your host know if any blood or bodily fluid has come in contact with any surfaces or fresh produce, so we can clean the area and properly dispose of the contaminated produce.
8. **Pets are not allowed in any food production areas on the farm**. To reduce food safety risks, pets and service animal access is denied in areas where fresh fruit and vegetable production, handling, or packing occurs.

Example / Template of a Food Safety Plan (for GAP or other certifications)

- [W UFI Food Safety Plan Final 10/23.docx](#)

iii. UFI Policies and Record log templates

Policies	Policies, SOPs, and Logs (Hyperlinks to files)	Notes
General Site Operations Policy	Policy Handbook	
Required BCS Training	BCS Training completion to sign	Required for food safety plan
Visitor/Volunteer policies and forms	General Visitor Policy Visitor log Recurring volunteer liability and media form Visitor liability and media form Children on Site Policy Permission Slips for: - Farmer children vs - General public	Visitor policy includes rules for hand-washing, sickness, jewelry, eating, etc. for food safety plan
Crew Member Training	Complete 2023 Packet of Materials	Each farm must document training of regular crew
Food Safety Plan and SOPs	Food Safety Plan Overview and Documents	
Cooler Use and Temperature Logs	Cooler Use Policy	Part of Food Safety plan
Pesticide, fertilizer Use - “Keep it in your plot”	CNG standards Pesticide/Fertilizer Use log	
Illness and Injury	Illness and Injury SOP Illness /Injury Report Log	
Water and Irrigation Policy	Irrigation Priority Schedule	

iv. CNG Standards

The Certified Naturally Grown (CNG) Produce Standards are based on the USDA National Organic Program standard, but *Certified Naturally Grown* is neither accredited by nor affiliated with the National Organic Program. CNG standards are based on the highest ideals of the organic movement. The approach is based on transparency, direct relationships and a firm belief in our ability to create something uniquely valuable by working together.

Accurate record-keeping is crucial for maintaining the UFI site's eligibility for Certified Naturally Grown certification. While the UFI site is not organically certified, should any incubator farm decide to pursue future organic certification, keeping records is also mandatory to obtain (and maintain) Federal Organic certification.

For compliance purposes, please refer to guidelines about CNG Produce and Flower Standards on their website: www.cngfarming.org

- [List of Allowed and Prohibited Substances](#) in CNG Produce & Flowers operations.
- For detailed information for flower farmers, please review our [Considerations for Flower Growers](#) documentation.