The Somali Bantu Community Association (founded in 2005) and its Liberation Farms program (founded 2014) was created and has operated for the past six years.

The Somali Bantu Community Association (SBCA) is an organization run by, and for, the Somali Bantu community of greater Lewiston. SBCA’s largest program, Liberation Farms, provides community members with access to resources for culturally appropriate and sustainable food production. The program has seen incredible growth, expanding from 26 to 186 participants in just six years. This is a testament to the ambition of the Bantu to grow their own food and to the program’s community-responsive model.

1 https://www.dataforprogress.org/memos/land-access-for-beginning-disadvantaged-farmers
Over the past six years, the SBCA has realized land security is essential to providing the community with reliable space for cultural gatherings, secure food production, and the growth of farm enterprises. Since 2014, the SBCA’s Liberation Farms Program has farmed at six different locations, often having to operate on multiple, disconnected sites. The farm’s core operation has had to move multiple times, with the landowner for one of the current sites terminating the organization’s lease in order to sell the property’s topsoil.

Losing land, and the threat of land loss inherent to short-term leasing is a significant threat to food security for the 200+ families who grow on these parcels every season. Moving farm operations takes considerable staff time and organizational resources, compromising the functionality of this small, grassroots organization. Additionally, for a community that has been displaced from their homeland due to violence and discrimination, the instability related to leaving a farm site can be retraumatizing.

SBCA needs land security to ensure that members of the Somali Bantu community have reliable space for community gatherings, food production, and the development of farm enterprises. The Somali Bantu are a farming people and possess generations of agricultural knowledge, which is critical to pass on to future generations. Meaningful, sustained reconnection with the land is essential to the survival of their cultural heritage. Long-term lease tenure would mean:

- **Food security** – Secure land access will support the community’s ability to grow culturally appropriate vegetables and grains (especially African flint corn for drying and meal), as well as producing halal meats, such as goat and chicken.
- **Healthy land management** – With control of 107 acres at the Hilliard farm secured via a 99-year, rolling lease, this farming community can plan for and invest in sustainable agriculture, including soil fertility, which requires a comprehensive plan implemented over the course of several growing seasons.
- **Economic security** – Production farmers can expand to meet growing market opportunities through both the ability to produce on more acreage, as well as construct infrastructure that will enable a scale-up to larger markets such as a permanent wash station, sufficient irrigation infrastructure (wells, rainwater catchment, etc.), on-site cold storage, additional high tunnels, a greenhouse for seedling production, as well as space for cleaning, drying and storage of flint corn, to name a few immediate needs.
- **Community Building** – Beyond supporting the farming program, which is just one of the SBCA’s programs, this lease will ensure a safe, affordable way for the Bantu people to hold gatherings, cultural events, access green space, and get exercise in culturally appropriate ways.
• Cultural preservation – The community will experience security and peace of mind, knowing that they have the forum to celebrate and pass down cultural traditions and knowledge around farming and agriculture, which in turn will maintain access to foods grown chemical-free with traditional growing practices.

• Healing – The community the SBCA serves will have a place where people can enjoy the outdoors on their own cultural terms, to heal collectively, and stop the continuing cycle of retraumatization that results from land displacement.

Further, this model shifts the paradigms of land access to a more equitable model that centers justice, while simultaneously eliminating significant barriers faced by disadvantaged communities like this one.

“For the last 30 years we have been refugees, moving through different towns in Somalia, and living in refugee camps in neighboring Kenya. For 30 years we have been looking for a place we can call home. Home in our community means a place that is safe and secure, where we can farm freely and where we can exercise our cultural traditions. Getting this property will check all the boxes and for the first time we have a place we call home.”

“Our vision for the land is grounded in our successes to date and by the demonstrated needs within our community. In the first three years following the land acquisition, Liberation Farms could expand from 30 acres of corn and vegetables to 50 acres and from 2 acres of goat pasture to more than 10 acres. The land can support the expansion of our most culturally significant crop, flint corn. We carried flint corn seeds with us to the United States because we know this staple crop is what has sustained us for generations—eaten fresh after the harvest, and dried and ground through the winter. The growing season in Maine is short, but we have our corn all year round. The ability to grow more flint corn, for which this property offers significant viable acreage, is particularly exciting. The land includes several buildings that can be used to dry, store, and process flint corn; house our goats for a community halal meat source; and enable a much needed expansion for SBCA’s other programming, especially our Kasheekee youth program. The location is ideally suited for a farmstand and is only 20 minutes from the center of Lewiston, where many community members live so it is very accessible. For all these reasons and more, this is perhaps the most meaningful opportunity our community has had to support and uplift our people.”

- Muhidin Libah, Co-founder and Executive Director of the Somali Bantu Community Association.
Intents

The Little Jubba Central Maine Agrarian Commons (LJCMAC) intends to purchase the 107+/- acre farm in Wales, Maine. The LJCMAC, a 501c2 land-holding entity, was recently founded through a partnership between Agrarian Trust and the Somali Bantu Community Association of Maine, and will create expanded land access opportunities for the SBCA’s Liberation Farms program.

The LJCMAC is a self-funded entity that holds land equity, conveys secure and affordable lease tenure, and collects lease and rent revenue while also supporting a community-centered farm envisioned by SBCA. The LJCMAC will lease the farm to the SBCA through a rolling 99-year equitable and affordable lease. Land security will ensure food security for the more than 200 families who participate in the Liberation Farms program. Some in the program also practice Iskashito farming, a traditional Somali method of cooperative growing where farmers work together on one piece of land and equitably share the profits of their combined labor and efforts. These farmers generate income by selling their produce to schools, food pantries, organizations, food producers and at nearby farmers markets.

The land, agricultural infrastructure, and ecosystem endowments will sustain food production, regenerative land stewardship, and viable farm management for the benefit of soil fertility, biodiversity, carbon sequestration, and human and ecosystem health. Additionally, the partnership will:

- Protect the land with a conservation easement held by Maine Farmland Trust
- Maintain the health and biodiversity of forest land
- Maintain organic, natural, regenerative chemical-free practices
- Support the expansion of SBCA programs, activities, and enterprises
- Create new possibilities for agricultural viability and agrarian community-building on the farm
**Funding Requirements Going Forward**

Agrarian Trust, in collaboration with partners and in support of Somali Bantu Community Association, is raising capital to:

- **Acquire Hilliard Farm** ($430,000) $230,000 needed at purchase
- **Fund Endowments**
  - Land Stewardship ($25,000) soil and ecosystem investment
  - Building Reserves ($60,000) systems and structures maintenance
  - Carry Cost Reserves ($20,000) taxes, insurance, utility, and related
- **Project and Closing Costs** ($32,000) needed at purchase

**Total on or before December 1, 2020 - $367,000**

[CLICK HERE TO DONATE]

**Agrarian Commons Structure:**

Agrarian Trust, a national 501c3 agriculture land trust, is creating community-centered land holding commons (501c2 Agrarian Commons) to provide long-term lease tenure for chemical-free, regenerative, diversified agriculture that produces food for the surrounding community. This land holding model creates shared land stewardship through investment in pollinator habitats, soil fertility, ecosystem diversification and protection, farm viability, community food security, and agrarian engagements.

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2 See a more detailed breakdown of funding requirements in Appendix A
Little Jubba Central Maine Agrarian Commons

Board of Directors:
Muhidin Libah - President
Sahal A. Jimale - Vice President
Lana Cannon Dracup - Clerk
Ian McSweeney - Treasurer
Gamana A. Yarow
Ashley Bahlkow

Members:
Farmers participating in the Liberation Farms Program
Abby Sadaukas - Land for Good
Bonnie Rukin - Slow Money Maine
Erica Buswell - Formerly Maine Farmland Trust
Catherine Besteman - Colby College
Julia Harper - Good Food Council of Lewiston-Auburn
Jesse Saffir - Land in Common
Ethan Miller - Land in Common
Bill Toomey - Maine Farmland Trust
Francis Eanes - Bates College
Jason Lilley - UMaine Cooperative Extension
Jonah Fertig-Burd - Cooperative Development Institute
Somali Bantu Community Association Details

Somali Bantu Community Association's mission is to provide vital transitional services, advocacy, and programming that empowers members of the refugee community to uphold cultural identity and thrive in their new life here in Lewiston, Maine. The mission of the SBCA's Liberation Farms is to provide new American farmers access to, and culturally-appropriate resources for, the means of sustainable food production for themselves, their families, and their communities.

Learn more about the SBCA's Liberation Farms and other programs here.

Somali Bantu Community Association

Board of Directors:
Mohamed A. Mohamed - President
Ali Bule - Treasurer
Sahal A. Jimale - Board Secretary
Halima Mohamed
Habiba Salat
Bashire Haji
Haji M. Haji
Jowhara Kabir
Jijo Mohamed
Agrarian Trust Details

**Vision**
Nationally-supported, community-held land and agrarian property that supports diversified sustainable food production, shared ecological stewardship, agrarian community vitality, and the next generation of farmers and ranchers.

**Need**
The U.S. is in the midst of 400 million acres of farmland changing hands as a generation of farmers and ranchers retire. Next generation farmers struggle with land access, affordability, and tenure and farmers of color own less than 2% of the farmland, while making up over 60% of the farm workers. At this same time, from 2012 to present, small to midsize farms are closing at a rate of 37 per day and almost 30 million acres of farmland has been lost to development, extraction, and speculation.

**Mission**
The mission of Agrarian Trust is to support land access for the next generation of farmers and ranchers, guided by our Principles of: Commons, Transparency, Equity for Farmers, Dignity, Opportunity, Affordability, Protected in Perpetuity, Restorative Justice, Diversity, and Food Security all framed within the realities of farmland management in the U.S.
Agrarian Trust Initiatives

Agrarian Commons: a model focused on the structural roots of sustainable and viable agriculture and regenerative food systems. Land ownership, stewardship, and tenure define the equity, viability, and justice within agriculture and food systems. Most of the farmland that people see in their regions is not producing healthy, nutrient-dense, short-supply-chain foods for local and regional needs. Most of that same farmland is not secure or affordable as a long-term asset for local food production.

Agrarian Commons hold equity and authority in the community to manifest decommodifying land, permanent reinvestment in soils, sharing ecological stewardship, returning equity and control of land to local communities, and providing secure, long-term tenure for regenerative agriculture. The 10 Agrarian Commons across the country are developing an interconnected national network of community land trusts to hold farmland for sustainable food production, carbon sequestration, and soil and ecosystem regeneration. Oversight, guidance, and support is provided from the 501c3 Agrarian Trust. The Agrarian Trust and Agrarian Commons model supports and creates accountability for land stewardship and organic/natural/biodynamic chemical-free farming practices. This structure promotes soil health, carbon sequestration, water protection, habitat diversity, and regenerative agricultural practices across all of the diverse farms and land that make up the Agrarian Commons.
**Agrarian Legal Support**: a network and learning community of attorneys, landowners, farmers, land-based organizations, and service providers dedicated to supporting/cultivating/nurturing the next generation of sustainable farmers and ranchers, and to advance our collective mission of healing land and communities through equitable land tenure and ownership, reparative justice, and regenerative agriculture.

**FaithLands**: a national movement focused on connecting, inspiring, and guiding faith communities to use their land in ways that promote ecological and human health, support local food and farming, enact reparative justice, strengthen communities, and benefit their communities and the Earth. FaithLands recent [articles](#).

**Our Land Symposium**: a series of talks, exhibits, and events that aim to advance the broadening discourse on land commons and farmland futures. View [ourland.tv](#) and symposiums [2014](#) and [2016](#).

**Board, Staff, Collaborators, Contributors, Advisors, and Supporters**

- **Agrarian Trust Team**
- **Agrarian Commons Creation Committee**

**Stay Informed**

- **Land News Blog**
- **Agrarian Commons media**
- **Agrarian Commons Newsletter**
Appendix A - Funding Requirements

Immediate Funding Requirements

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acquisition details</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
<th>Amount</th>
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<td>Deposit - 1</td>
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<td>Deposit - 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date of Purchase</td>
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Acquisition Total at purchase \( \text{\$230,000} \)
Project and Closing costs \( \text{\$32,000} \)
Farm Endowment and Reserves \( \text{\$105,000} \)

**Total on or before December 1, 2020 - $367,000**

$282,000 needed in philanthropic funds and $85,000 can be in multi-year philanthropic pledges

Land Transfer Budget

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<td>Recording fees / real estate transfer tax</td>
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<td>Appraisals</td>
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<td>Surveys</td>
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<td>Environmental assessment</td>
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<tr>
<td>Title review and insurance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Field work and baseline report</td>
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<td>Project management</td>
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<td>Legal</td>
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<td>Land stewardship endowment</td>
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<td>Building endowment</td>
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<td>Miscellaneous</td>
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<td>Reserves</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
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