


 VICFA Voice

**Our Mission:** *To promote and preserve unregulated direct farmer-to-consumer trade that fosters availability of locally grown or home-produced food products*

**Charis Eco-Farm**  
with Guy Freesen and his farm animals.

December 2011

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## Conversations: Local Farmer

**Guy Freesen, VICFA Member and Small Farmer, Talks to Doug Dua for Washington & Lee University**

*Used With Permission from W&L; Originally Published September 28, 2011*

Guy Freesen and his wife Sue are the co-owners of Charis Eco-Farm in Augusta County. I caught up with Guy at the Lexington Farmers Market, where he sells meat, eggs, seasonal produce, nuts, and occasionally quiches and baked goods on Wednesdays from 8am— 1 pm. His goods are available until the Market closes for the winter in November. He was happy to answer a few questions for me about his farm and about some of the issues facing farmers in Virginia, and at large.

**Q:** So what are some of the biggest issues facing farmers in this area of the country?

**A:** *It depends on the kind of farming one is engaged in. I do direct-market farming. The issues that I face are regulatory and economic: animal identification, getting blamed for avian viruses without substantiation, and increasingly rising costs due to an inflationary medium of exchange.*

**Q:** You belong to the Virginia Independent Consumers and Farmers Association (VICFA). Can you describe a bit about this organization and what it stands for?

**A:** *It is an advocacy organization that is made up of producers and consumers who are concerned about food regulations. Frequently, these are burdensome impositions on small producers, often with information that has been paid for and lobbied by giant food conglomerates.*

**Q:** How do you respond to criticisms that our national population is simply too big for this food emancipation to function? Do you agree or disagree? Do you see any space for any kind of industrial food production system in the future, or is it necessary for any reason to entirely do away with that system?

**A:** *In the past, small farms provided more than abundant food for everyone. There are technological advances that can assist us in greater efficiency and effectiveness in growing food. That said, there are limits to going against nature—whether it is through monoculture or excessive confinement, as has been seen in the last 70 years, or contemporary tampering with the genetic codes, all of these practices may seem to be more efficient and beneficial at first, but over time, nature will work to correct it.*

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Q: How about criticisms that movements referred to as “locavore and “slow food” are ill-suited to feed the entire socioeconomic spectrum of society; i.e., that certain groups in our country are better endowed with the time or money resources to shop for and prepare locally-grown products, whereas others will have no choice but to continue obtaining their calories cheaply and quickly from the industrial system?

A: As long as we perpetuate this myth, it will continue to be true for us. Slavery was once a way of life, but now we scratch our heads about this once-pervasive practice. Racism is still alive and well, but there is much difference between 2011 and 1950. How we think about food impacts us in so many ways. If it's just energy to keep us moving, then we have left it to its least common denominator. However, are we not what we eat? And how we eat, and with whom? What are the results of the current industrial system: We have increased diseases, cancer of greater variety, etc.; a health crisis. We veer away from the natural order

and end up paying in other ways. Good nutrition reduces the potential for ill health. Healthy food is more than calories. So much more needs to be done to change our way of thinking, and in turn, make it economically feasible for healthy food to be fairly priced and abundant.

Q: What are some ways a W&L student might get involved in order to work toward a food ecosystem like the one you support?

A: Volunteer a summer season to work on a farm in World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms (WWOOF, [www.woof.org](http://www.woof.org)) and the National Center for Appropriate Technology's Sustainable Agriculture Project (formerly known as ATTRA, [attra.ncat.org](http://attra.ncat.org)) are two good places for looking into; internships. Look into local expressions of Buy Fresh Buy Local ([www.buylocalvirginia.org](http://www.buylocalvirginia.org)) and join a committee. Join VICFA ([www.vicfa.org](http://www.vicfa.org)).

Q: Finally, are there any quick pointers you keep in mind as you raise and manage the livestock on your farm?

A: I always keep an eye on my big teddy bear, a 600-lb boar hog, when I am out feeding. All of my birds and animals express their individual, unique personalities. Some hens will travel around the farm regardless of how many times you attempt to keep them where they belong. One bull will push the empty water trough all across the field. My sheep give me one chance to corral them on the first try, but after that, they're on to me and will do whatever it takes to go the opposite direction! ■

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# VICFA Notes

## Come to our Dec. Meeting

The December Meeting will be held in Shipman, VA on Dec. 11 2011.

We will share in a potluck lunch at **12:00** pm, followed by our general business meeting from 1:00 - 3:00 pm. VICFA membership meetings are open to the public. Please bring a dish and a big helping of enthusiasm to share. Broaden our reach - invite a friend or neighbor to join you.

**Sunday, December 11, 2011**

**6556 James River Road (Rt 56)**

**Shipman, VA 22971**

**Phone: (434) 263-4946**

**hosted by Anne, Dan and**

**Elizabeth Buteau**

### DIRECTIONS:

From the Charlottesville area: South on Rt 29 towards Lynchburg. Go about 30 miles to Lovingson and turn left at the traffic lights (the 3rd Lovingson exit). Turn right on James River Road/Rt 56 East. Go about 7 1/2 miles on this road and you come to our house on the left hand side, mailbox number: 6556, just before an old big white barn. (When you come down a mountain with 25 mph curves you are about 3/4 mile from our house.)

From the Lynchburg area: North on Rt 29, pass through Amherst, Colleen (Look for Blue Ridge Medical Center on right/Big Ice Cream Cone on the left). Go another 1 1/2 miles, turn right towards Shipman/OakRidge on Rt 653. Go to T junction (by the Corner Market) and turn right on James River Road/Rt 56 east. We are approximately 4 miles from this point, on the left, next to the big white barns. Mailbox number: 6556

From the Farmville area: Go west on Rt 60. Go through Buckingham. Turn right on Rt 56. Cross the James River and we are 6 1/2 miles from there on the right. Mailbox number: 6556, next to big white barn.

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# VICFA

PO Box 6838  
Charlottesville, VA 22906

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## VICFA

Virginia Independent Consumers and Farmers Association

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Vice President, Lois Smith

Treasurer, Rose Lawhorne

Secretary, POSITION AVAILABLE:

*Contact Lois Smith for details*

Members At Large: Richard Altice, Suzi Croes,  
Christine Solem, Emily Turtlewoman, Martha Boneta

Website: [www.VICFA.org](http://www.VICFA.org)

E-group: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/VICFA>.

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## Share this newsletter with a friend - encourage others to join VICFA!

Annual membership is \$25.00.

Please make check payable to VICFA and send to PO Box 6838, Charlottesville, VA 22906.

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