



Democracy  
at Work  
Institute  
USFWC

An Introduction To  
Worker Cooperatives for Farmers  
and Start-Ups  
Thursday, January 30th, 6pm est

# Welcome

- Welcome from Democracy at Work Institute and National Young Farmers Coalition
- Introduction to Farming:
  - Faith Gilbert, Author of The Cooperative Farming Handbook
- Worker Cooperative Examples:
  - Frederic Theriault, Tourne-Sol Cooperative Farm
  - Dylan Zeitlyn, Diggers Mirth Farm
  - Stone Soup Cooperative Farm
- A First Look at Steps in Cooperative Development
- Cooperative Resources
- Questions?



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# COOPERATIVE FARMING

TOOLS AND FRAMEWORKS  
FOR FARMING TOGETHER

# COOPERATIVE farming LANDSCAPE

LAND SHARING  
BUYING TOGETHER  
LEASING TOGETHER

CO-OP HOUSING  
ECOVILLAGES

COOP  
PAULTRY

WORKER COOPS  
GROUP FARMS

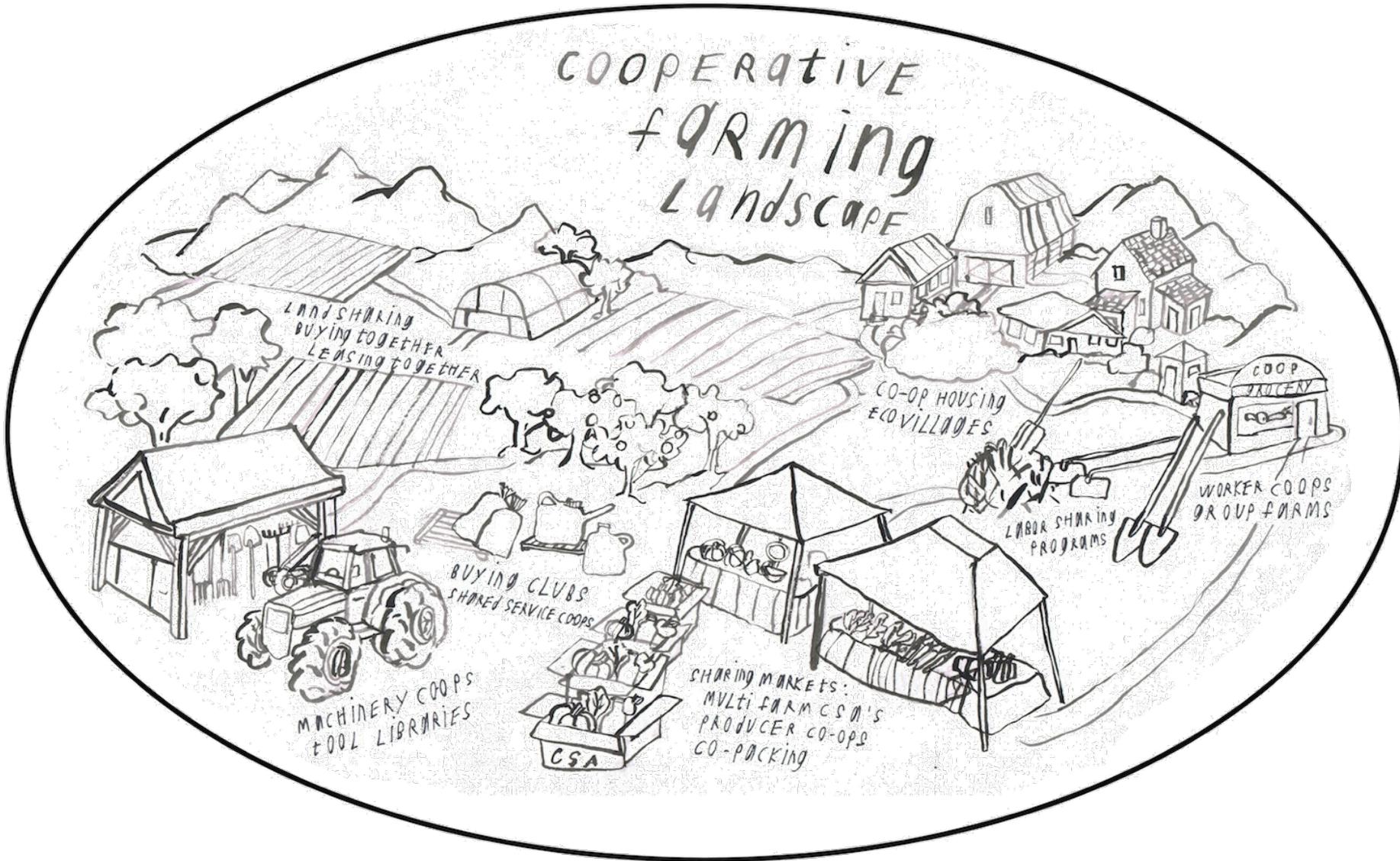
LABOR SHARING  
PROGRAMS

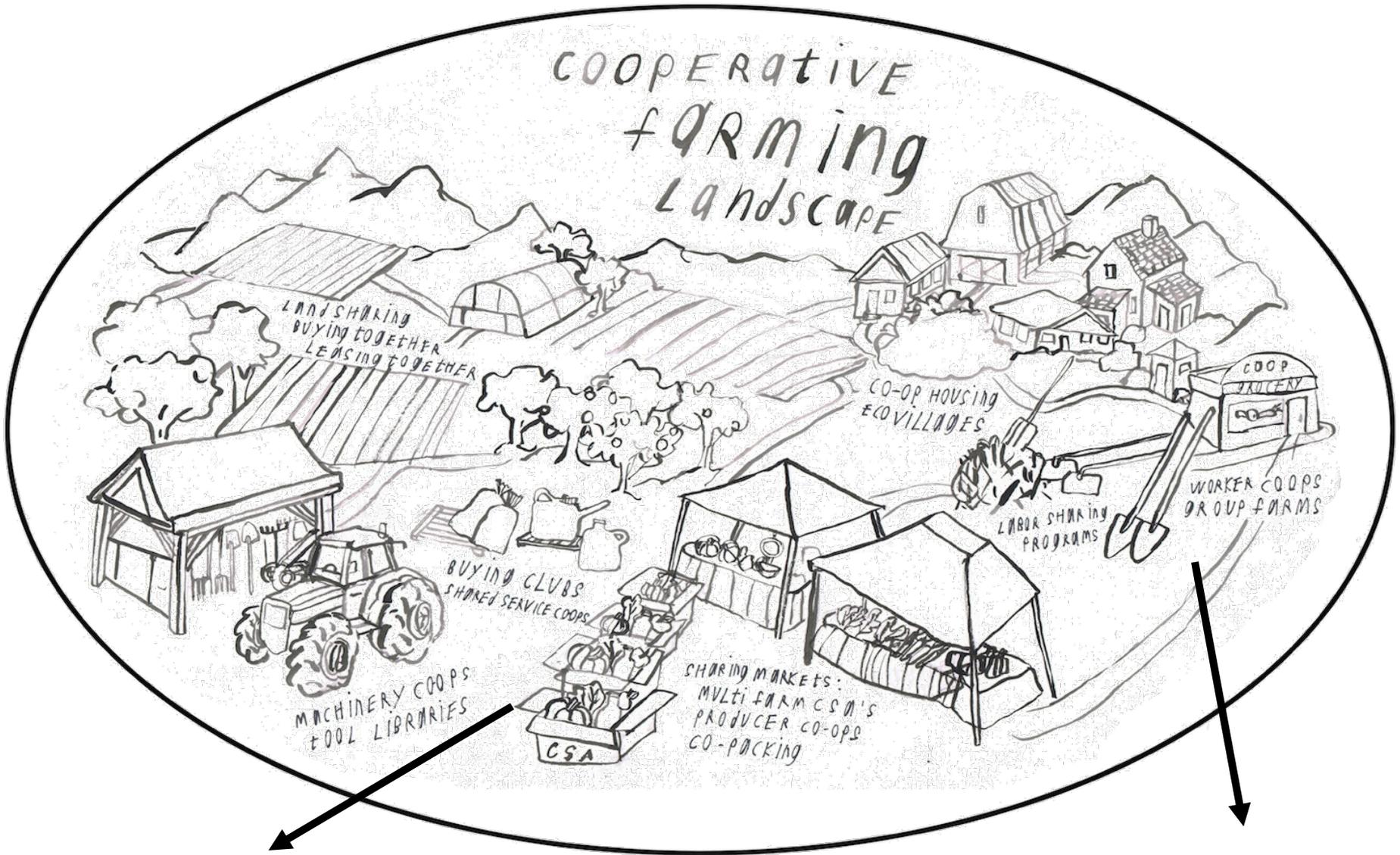
BUYING CLUBS  
SHARED SERVICE COOPS

MACHINERY COOPS  
TOOL LIBRARIES

SHARING MARKETS:  
MULTI-FARM CSA'S  
PRODUCER CO-OPS  
CO-PACKING

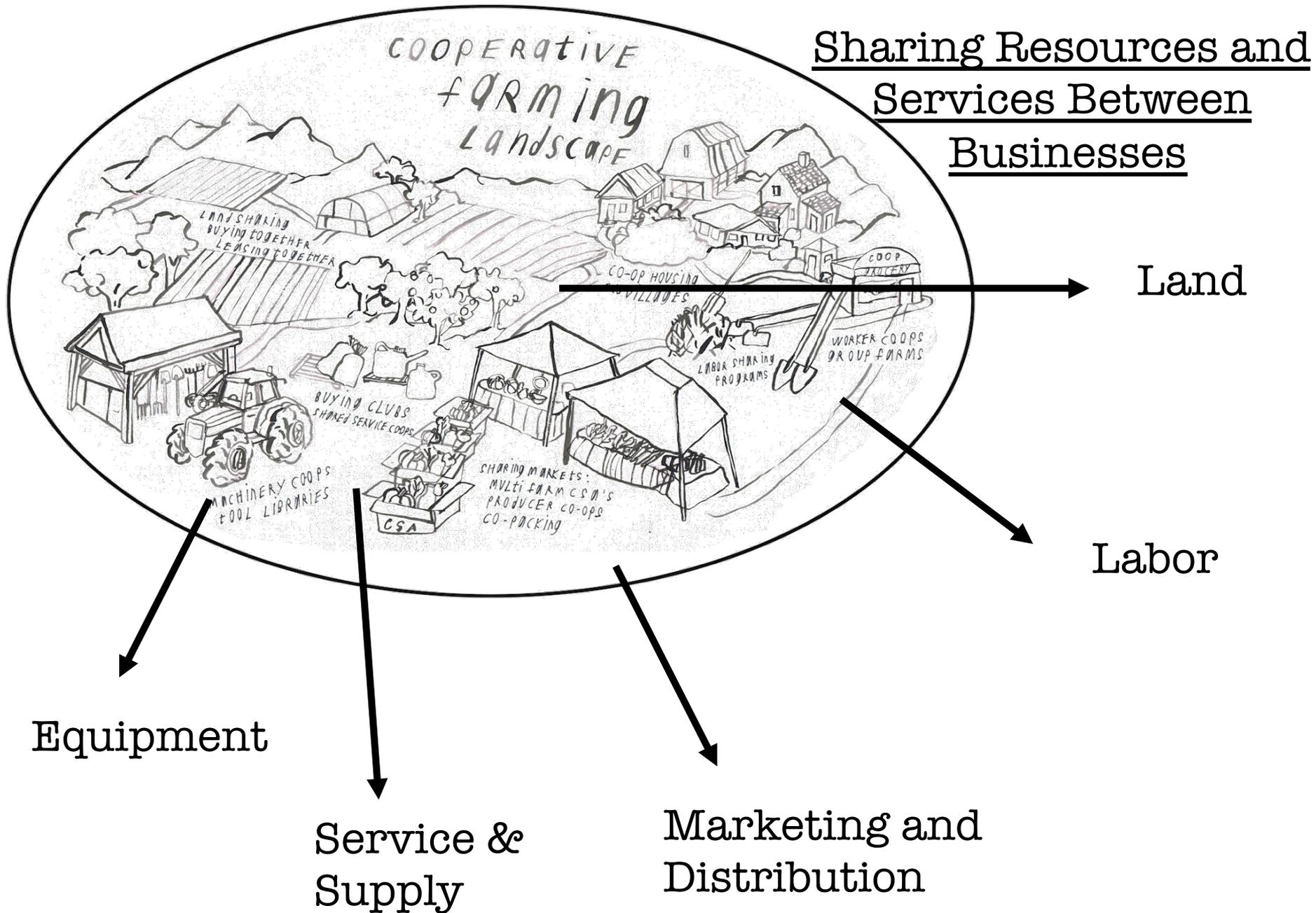
CSA

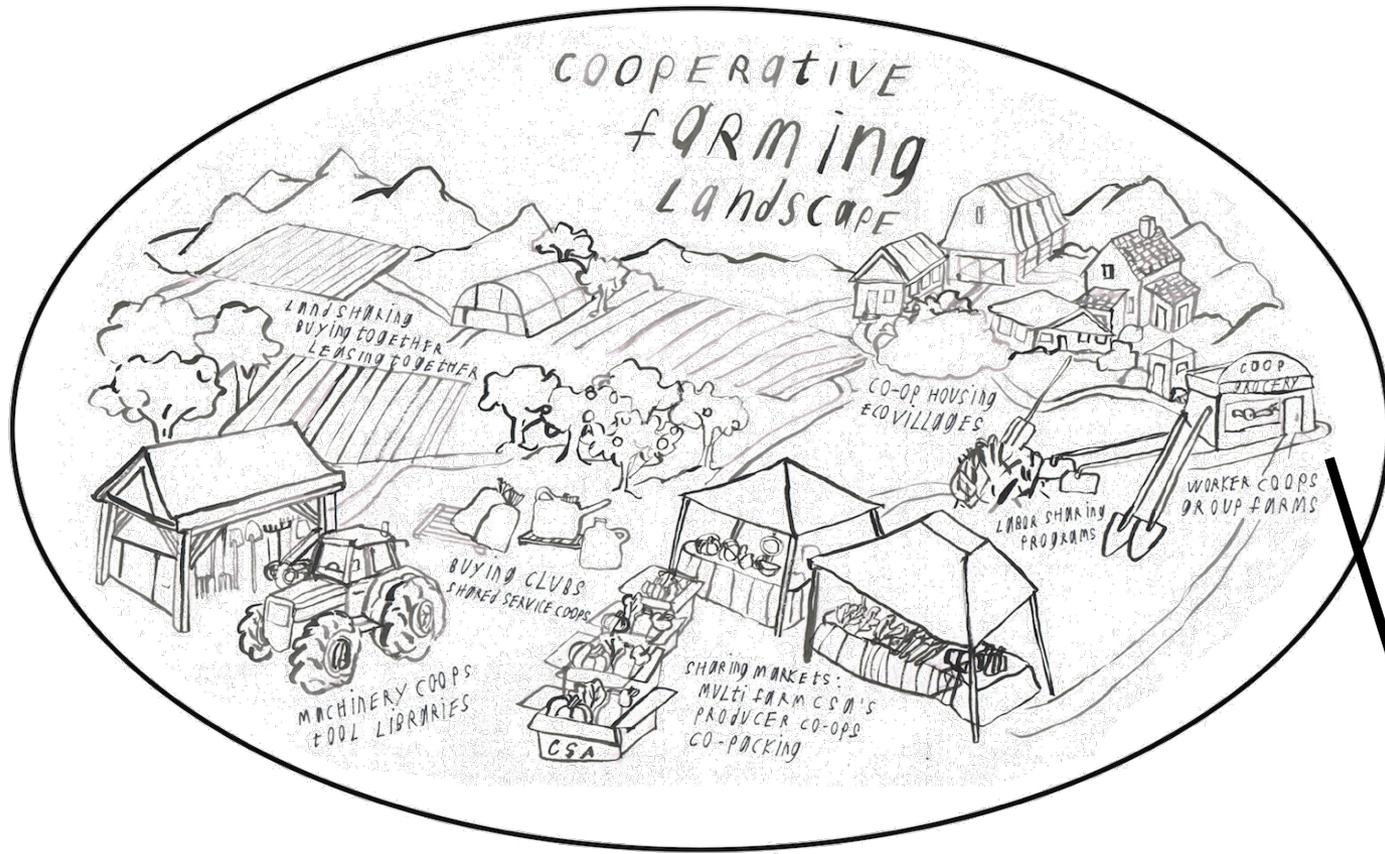




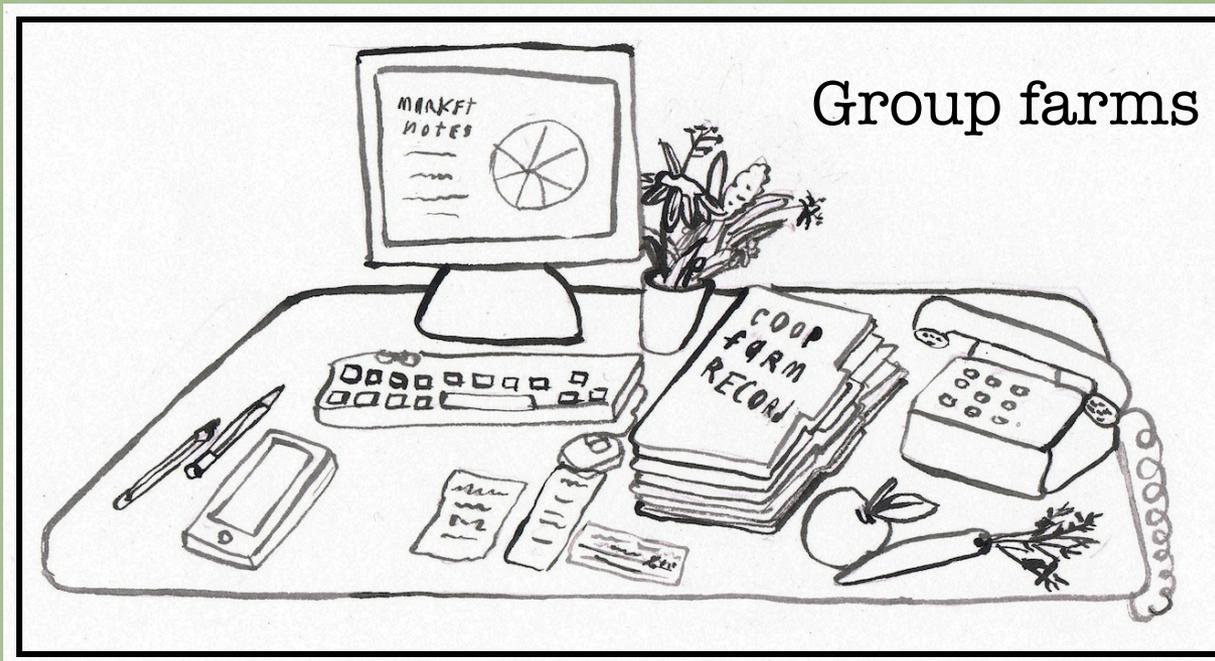
Sharing Resources and Services  
Between Businesses

Managing a Farm as a Group





Group-managed farms



# Group farms

Worker Co-ops

Participatory management

Multi-owner Farms

Farm communities





Diggers Mirth, VT



Ferme Tourne-Sol, QC

# A worker co-op is based on cooperative principles:

1. Owned by the workers in the business.
2. One member, one vote.
3. Surplus is shared equitably among members.

Some have “flat” structures; some have managers/employees and tiered income.

Can have employees that are not co-owners.

# Ferme Coopérative Tourne-Sol worker coop farm in Québec

Frédéric Thériault ([frederic@fermetournesol.qc.ca](mailto:frederic@fermetournesol.qc.ca))



# Ferme Coopérative Tourne-Sol



- Founded 2005
- Certified organic
- Les Cèdres, Qc
- 16 acres rented land
- Diversified crops
- Marketing
  - CSA – 300 baskets
  - Farmer's market









# Worker's Cooperative



*from Left to Right:* Emily Board, Daniel Brisebois, Frédéric Thériault, Reid Allaway and Renée Primeau

- 5 founding members work full time
- 3-5 apprentices seasonally full time
  - Mid Apr to end Oct

# The advantages of being a coop farm

- Pool resources together at startup
  - Experience, money, assets
- Collective decision making
- Competent work force stays with coop
- Synergy
  - accomplish more than you would on your own
  - Share the burden and responsibility
- Flexibility in schedules

# The Challenges

- Learning to communicate
- Efficient decision making
- Delegation of responsibilities
- What is someone wants to leave?
- You won't always be right, learn to let go





Diggers Mirth Collective Farm

**DYLAN ZEITLYN**













# **STONE SOUP FARM**

STONE SOUP FARM





# **CREATING A WORKER COOPERATIVE**

# Resources for Starting Out

- Technical Assistance Providers
  - [Democracy at Work Network](#)
  - [Cooperation Works!](#) network of rural cooperative development centers
  - Local Cooperatives
- Online Resources
  - [USDA Rural Development](#)
  - [Democracy At Work Institute](#)
  - Cooperative Farming Handbook

Questions?