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Dear farmer and spouse/partner,

I few years ago I attended a symposium called *Farming for Health: Exploring Benefits of Green Care Farms for People with Dementia and their Caregivers* at the Gerontological Society of America Annual Conference in Washington D.C. (November 2014). What I heard there from leading practitioners and researchers mostly from the Netherlands was fundamentally different than most of what I am familiar with in my 23 years in the aging field in traditional care settings (such as nursing homes). I learned that Care Farms for people with dementia enable these individuals to live their lives to the fullest despite substantial cognitive disabilities.

Care Farms is an extensive model in the Netherlands and other European countries (It is estimated that approximately 200 Care Farms are specialized in adult day services for people with dementia in the Netherlands). While more research is needed, several studies have already shown promising therapeutic outcomes for this population. Participating and working with carefully selected and well-trained farmers on dementia-friendly Care Farms enable these individuals to feel useful and renew a sense of purpose and meaning in their lives. Participation on a Care Farm reduces the stigma commonly experienced by these individuals and enables them to feel normal and worthy. One of the secrets of Care Farms is the farmer's humane approach towards these individuals.

You are invited to watch this 3-minute video about a **Care Farm "De Port"** for elders with dementia in Keplen-Oler in the Netherlands: <https://vimeo.com/109903443>

You may wonder how in the world people with dementia could participate meaningfully on farms. My colleagues and I will be glad to sit with you and address any questions and concerns you may have. Meanwhile, you can read my research-based piece ***Potential Therapeutic Benefits of Participation of People with Dementia on Care Farms***: <http://tinyurl.com/p36l9kd>

The symposium inspired me to travel to Montana in 2015 and visit Maarten Fischer (a Dutch native, an expert in "multi-functional" farms) and his award-winning program **Lifeside Care Farming / Flathead Care Farming**: <https://flatheadcarefarming.wordpress.com>

What I saw at the Care Farms in Montana was moving and inspiring in terms of the potential positive effects on participants (some of these farms work with cognitively healthy elders, elders with depressions, others work with elders with dementia, people with traumatic brain injuries (TBI), and younger folks with intellectual disabilities).



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I returned to Minneapolis determined to encourage local farmers to consider opening their farms to elders in general those living with dementia (after receiving specialized training in working with these populations and ensuring that their farms are as safe as possible for these individuals).

In short, Care Farms for people with dementia represent a major gap in the U.S. healthcare system.

I am looking for pioneer, visionary, accomplished, and compassionate farmers who will be willing to walk with me into this “uncharted” territory. Many like to think of Care Farms as an innovative model but the truth is that for centuries elders aged on farms among their families, friends, and neighbors. We are simply going back to the historic roots; this time in a more intentional and structured way. Is there a better place to continue this tradition than in Minnesota and Wisconsin?

Are you ready to join this rapidly growing international movement and help unlock the healing powers of Care Farms for this underserved population of elders with dementia?

In the words of an elder with dementia who participates on a Care Farm:

*“I feel useful. It contributes to my dignity. I feel appreciated, the things I do. I have something to offer; to other people, the soil, to the fruits. Yeah, I like that.”*

If you are interested in exploring this further and discuss the possibility of opening your farm to people with dementia, please email me at: [eiloncaspi@gmail.com](mailto:eiloncaspi@gmail.com)

Thanks for your consideration,

Have a good Spring!

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Archival Blog: Care Farms for People with Dementia: <http://carefarmsdementia.tumblr.com>