

## Farms to Food Banks Farmer Spotlight:



### Tobacco Farmers now major contributors to Farms to Foods Banks

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**Bagdad, KY** – When Mary and Shane’s jobs brought them to Shelby County in 2003, they had no plans of becoming farmers. But, both having childhoods rich in farming and with Mary working as a financial lender to farmers and Shane an agriculture teacher, the idea of them becoming farmers wasn’t too farfetched. Childhoods filled with farm memories and time spent outdoors inspired the Courtneys to take the plunge; they bought their first farm in 2006. Although they began as traditional tobacco farmers like their parents before them, the Courtneys added corn, beans, and mixed vegetables to the fields as well as cattle and hogs in the pastures in order to diversify and answer a growing need for local, nutritious food in their community.



“We’re raising food to feed the world, to feed people locally,” declared Shane of their produce.

Along with what they sell at the market, Courtney Farms has donated 511,240 pounds of fresh Number 2 grade or surplus produce to the Farms to Food Banks program. These vegetables are distributed at no cost to struggling Kentuckians and their families. In exchange, Farms to Food Banks reimburses farmers for the cost of picking, packaging, and transporting the produce to the nearest major food bank, so that the farmers can donate without a large financial cost to them. The program’s goal is to reduce food waste, strengthen Kentucky’s food system and feed food insecure Kentuckians.



“Farms to Food Banks is a win-win for our state. We are helping to feed our hungry while financially strengthening our farm families” Mary praised.

In addition to feeding people in need, the Courtneys have a passion for the environment. They use their farm as a way to educate people on environmental issues, food cultivation, how consumer needs and farmer responsibility collaborate and to foster a love of nature.

Food waste is an issue that has become close to the Courtneys in their farming. In the past they have allowed hunger relief organizations glean their fields of the vegetables that would normally rot on the vine. This was one reason they started contributing to the Farms to Food Banks program.

“When we have excess vegetables it’s tough to see them turn into compost” Mary confessed. “Farms to Food Banks provides an outlet for the “ugly” vegetables—the same ones that I take home to feed our four children—that have no place in the marketplace. This program not only helps fill a void from a moral standpoint of watching good food rot on the vine, but it decreases income loss when a factor out of your hands impacts your ability to sell.”



Courtney Farms values the consumer/farmer relationship and creating a bridge through education. You can find out more information on the farm and the work that the Courtney Farms does beyond the field at [courtneyfarmscsa.com](http://courtneyfarmscsa.com).