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Satur Farms owners to wind down farming operations

By

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Since starting [Satur Farms](#) more than 25 years ago, Paulette Satur and Eberhard Muller have dedicated their lives to growing the highest-quality field-grown baby leaf items, spring mixes and other products here on the bucolic North Fork of Long Island.

Clients, including retailers and restaurants in the New York metropolitan area and beyond, eagerly await the fresh and flavorful bounty produced each season under the Satur Farms label.

A combination of factors has brought the couple to the difficult decision to wind down their commercial farming operations most likely by the end of 2023.

“We love what we do, but it has to make economic sense, and right now that is not the case,” said Satur. “There have been a lot of changes here on the North Fork, with a lot of land being acquired by developers.”

Satur said the North Fork has some of the best growing conditions for their crops, with its sandy soil as the perfect growing medium and the location near the Long Island Sound with moderate temperatures that protect their plants from extreme conditions.

“It offers almost Salinas-like growing conditions,” Muller said of the North Fork, “but without the cross-country trip from the West Coast.”

On the far eastern end of Long Island, the land is also in high demand by real estate investors, who are scarfing up available acreage for potential development.

Satur Farms currently farms on approximately 200 leased acres, down from the 250-300 they farmed at the height of their operations. The largest of their plots of land (140 acres) abuts the Long Island Sound and was recently sold to a private investor, who plans to build luxury waterfront homes.

Without that land, Satur Farms, based in Cutchogue, NY, would be forced to seek other land on which to grow their crops. Unfortunately, there is little available land in the region.

“Two hundred acres is the bare minimum of what we need for our operation, so we would have to farm on several smaller plots, and that means moving crews and equipment from place to place,” said Muller. “At that point, you are looking at much higher cost to produce, and the loss of efficiency.”

Additionally, Muller said he and Satur are looking to slow down a bit and enjoy life without the burden of running a commercial farming operation. With no heirs or succession plan in place for the company, the next logical step is the sale of Satur Farms.

“We had a couple of interested parties who were looking to buy the company, but things did not come together in time for an April transfer, which was our goal,” said Satur. “So we decided to keep things going for another season while we continue to negotiate. Most likely by the end of the year, we will cease operations, with or without a buyer.”

Reflecting on their 25-plus year run, Satur said things have really come full circle for her and Muller.

“When we first started in 1997, we were a much smaller operation and were considered artisan growers,” she said. “Now, there are a lot of small artisan growers here, similar to how we were when we started. They sell most of their products at local farmers markets here on the North Fork.”

Satur is most proud of the fact that she and Muller were able to build Satur Farms into a well-respected and recognized New York State brand.

“I think during the last 25 years we helped create a locally grown marketplace here in New York, and we went the extra mile by having our branded product on grocery store shelves,” she said. “Also, the fact that we delivered the product ourselves to the stores and restaurants helped fuel the locally grown movement.”

“We had a lot of setbacks along the way, but we always found a way to make it work and that has been very satisfying,” she added.

“We succeeded where a lot of people gave up,” said Muller. “We always did it for our customers, and when people recognize the hard work we put in to bringing our products to market, that was very gratifying.”

As for what comes next for the couple, Satur said they intend to stay in the area and grow a small amount of product for their personal consumption or perhaps to sell at one of the ubiquitous farmers markets that pop up seasonally in the area.

“I was raised on a dairy farm, so farming is in my blood,” she said. “We’ll continue to grow, but nothing on the scale that we have been, and nothing as rigorous as baby leaf items, which takes a lot of work.”

Satur added, “It’s a shame to think about leaving the business, because we built it from nothing and now have a brand that people love. We had plans to make Satur Farms a lifestyle brand, but we got so consumed with production. It is at a point now where it would be a great springboard for someone else.”

Photo: Eberhard Muller and Paulette Satur, owners of Satur Farms, in one of their fields in Cutchogue, NY. The couple is winding down their commercial farming operations after more than 25 years.

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About John Groh | 

John Groh graduated from the University of San Diego in 1989 with a bachelors of arts degree in English. Following a brief stint as a sportswriter covering the New York Giants football team, he joined The Produce News in 1995 as an assistant editor and worked his way up the ranks, becoming publisher in 2006. He and his wife, Mary Anne, live in northern New Jersey in the suburbs of New York City.

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