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# Digital Farm Collective



## INTRODUCTION

If you could watch an entire head of lettuce grow in a matter of minutes, would it give you new perspective on how our food is produced? If you knew it took 160 days to grow a carrot, would it change the way you think about the produce you eat? We live in a time in which our daily food choices have tangible effects on the sustainability of local communities and the world at large. While the global population rapidly rises, the number of farmers continues to drop, and we face a dwindling resource of agricultural knowledge. Even so, we live in promising times where people are increasingly curious about where their food comes from and the impact their food choices make.

The Digital Farm Collective (DFC) was conceived of by fourth-generation farmer and visual artist Matthew Moore. He responded to troubling global food production trends by creating DFC to seize the public's growing interest in food and inspire and educate children, consumers, and future growers. DFC's mission is to broaden the understanding of how food grows and preserve growing practices by telling the story of cultivated crops using video and digital media in schools and public spaces.

Working with growers and educators, we are documenting cultivated crops around the globe by collecting time-lapse footage, interviews with farmers, and scientific and practical data about produce as it grows from seed to harvest. This content is compiled, edited, and packaged for use in an online "Living Library" that preserves the growth practices of edible plant species from all over the world. Concurrently, our *Seedlings* and *Lifecycles* educational programs use video and digital media to bridge the gap between farmers and consumers. We leverage strategic partnerships in these efforts to expand our reach and hone in on specific initiatives such as eliminating food waste, teaching growing practices, advocating fresh produce, and encouraging healthy eating.

DFC is unique in that we operate at the nexus of storytelling, science, and art, filling a gap in contemporary exchanges on issues of food, agriculture, and resiliency. Our initiatives are timely and imperative, as we quickly continue on a course toward a post-agrarian society. DFC will be a part of a growing international effort to raise public awareness about the source of food, agricultural sustainability, and the impact of climate change on farming. We are ensuring that future generations have access to the firsthand growing knowledge that has been accrued for centuries and a commitment to the stewardship of agricultural practices.

## PROGRAMS & GOALS

DFC has two major programs in development—*Lifecycles* and *Seedlings*—respectively focused on consumer education for the general public and elementary school students. *Lifecycles* is a series of public installations of short time-lapse films that dynamically reveal how fruits and vegetables are grown from seed to harvest. *Seedlings* inspires curiosity amongst children using lesson plans and media tools that help students create their own time-lapse media of the food they are growing in their school gardens.

*Lifecycles* has been featured at the Sundance Film Festival in Park City, Utah; Nuit Blanche in Toronto; and the University of Arizona Museum of Art. Additional programs are planned for 2014. Time-lapse videos form the centerpiece of the installations. They are supported by multi-media and low-tech tools that the consumer can employ both on site and at home.



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These tools will bolster their experience and provide the means through which they can continue to learn, engage, and share.

In fall 2013 we will introduce *Seedlings* at two schools in the Phoenix area: Arcadia Neighborhood Learning Center, a public school, and Awakening Seed, a private school. During these trials, teachers and principals will help us test the *Seedlings* curriculum with their students, develop the *Seedlings* program guide, and try out Seed Snap time-lapse app for the iPhone. In early 2014, DFC will expand the program nationally in partnership with FoodCorps, a national service member organization focusing on food that places motivated leaders in limited-resource communities. We hope to expand *Seedlings* to serve fifteen states by 2015 through our collaboration with FoodCorps. Within two years we will create a collaborative community by engaging social media platforms in order for students to share their classroom experiences with other children and families across the country.

Over the next five years, we will build our database of film footage, farmer interviews, and growing data. The *Living Library* database will be created in collaboration with universities and technology and design companies. This online archive will act as a digital herbarium, preserving the stories of a collection of produce species from all over the world. The library will grow exponentially over the years as we actively collect images and data from farmers.

We imagine our database will become a go-to resource for farmers and educators over the next fifteen years, as well as contribute significantly to global climate change research and species preservation. The *Living Library* will map crops that are in the direct path of rapidly changing growing zones. As a result, we will aid in preserving endangered cultivated species by raising awareness, documenting the fundamental knowledge of farmers, and becoming a resource for finding new areas to propagate these species as our climates shift.

DFC is an arts-meets-science project driven by agricultural stewardship. Just as growing our food and cultivating the land is a long-term engagement, the ambitious vision of DFC will take decades to achieve. We are dedicated to becoming a resource for farmers and scientists the world over and to shifting our consumer culture to inspire more appreciation of the food that we eat.

## FOUNDER'S STATEMENT - MATTHEW MOORE

I'm a visual artist and the last of four generations to farm my family's land outside of Phoenix, Arizona. Due to suburban development and changing family needs, my son will never farm the land I grew up on. I have made agricultural encroachment an ongoing subject of my art practice, employing my direct experiences and responses to these issues. The increasing disconnect between consumers and the source of the food they eat inspired me to create DFC, the goal of which is to document and share the most important daily process of agriculture: the growth of our food.

I present audiences with evidence of the lost connection between the farmer and consumer, land and market, and consumption time and production time. My aim is to reconnect people with the growth process of their food, and stimulate personal and public dialogue on the social, environmental, and human elements inherent in the life cycle and consumption of produce. By retaining and sharing generational knowledge and scientific growing data, my hope is to reinsert farming back into the public discourse and for DFC to be a resource and inspiration for future generations of farmers.

It is my hope that the realization that it takes 160 days to grow a carrot and 210 days to grow an artichoke can revolutionize a consumer's relationship to the produce they buy. Furthermore, the engagement of children through digital media might just inspire new generations of needed growers.