You probably don’t think of farming when you think of Minecraft. When farming comes to mind, you may not even think of Minecraft at all. Minecraft is that now-classic Swedish videogame that looks a lot like blocks. There is no narrative or plot. Instead, you are given an explorable environment in which to mine for materials and craft a wide range of items and structures. Many people build houses, fight monsters, and build all sorts of crazy contraptions. Even though the game was released more than ten years ago, many people still play it, and some are doing cool new things with it. They are designing farms that generate in-game produce and resources at extremely high rates. Well-known farmers on YouTube like Ilmango and SSundee have millions of views and tens of thousands of followers. Here’s an interview with one of those Minecraft farmers, Gabe Davis. He started farming in Minecraft to improve his skill in the game and to gain a sustainable source of food and materials. I interviewed Gabe about his farm, the Minecraft farming community, and why sustainability is important to him.

When did you start your farm?
I started farming about a year after I started Minecraft. I think it was around 2014 that I started farming. I was around 7 or 8, and I am now almost 14. I don’t have just one farm. I make a farm on every Minecraft world I play.

How did you start farming in Minecraft? What appealed to you?
I started farming a while back when I was watching YouTube tutorials about Minecraft. I wanted to improve my skill in Minecraft. I wanted a sustainable source of as many foods and materials as I could get, and, fortunately, you can make most things in Minecraft sustainable.

What crops do you grow? Do you rotate your crops?
I started farming in Minecraft by growing melons and pumpkins, and very few of them, because I had learned how to automate my farms yet. As I improved, I grew better crops in larger quantities, such as automated potato, carrot, and wheat farms. Eventually, I started working with farms that manipulate game mechanics to get the most crops possible. These are called zero-tick farms. They constantly update the block you are farming on, and this forces the crops to grow even faster. In Minecraft, there’s no need for crop rotation, because you have unlimited space to work with. Also, all the land is fertile if you give it enough water and light.

How many products does your farm produce a day? And what are they worth?
I don’t know the exact numbers, but a farm can produce thousands of products per day. This can be worth a lot. There isn’t really a measure of value in Minecraft, other than usefulness. “This resource is useful, and this one isn’t.” I usually only farm what is useful.

How do you decide what crops to grow? Have you tried other types of farms?
I decide what crops to grow and farm based on what I need. Golden carrots are the most efficient food source in the game, so I would make a carrot farm as well as a gold farm. I can also exchange crops or materials with traders (villagers) to get profits. I have tried a lot of different types of farms, including iron farms, food farms, and entity farms.

What happens to the crops after they are harvested?
I mostly farm things that I profit from, so most products are traded with villagers. I also use the crops as a food source, for me or for animals.

How much does design impact your process? Are there other variables that play an important role?
I focus mainly on function. If a farm is optimized, the bigger the better.

What kinds of other experiences have helped you with this project?
Because my dad works on crop science, that interested me more in this.

Did you make mistakes when you first started? What did you learn from them?
Lots of mistakes. Before I watched tutorials, I didn’t understand the game mechanics of Minecraft. This made it very hard to make good farms. I learned how to learn from other people to help me improve. There is a community of Minecraft players on YouTube, where other people post tutorials on how to create farms of all sorts. I often follow some of these tutorials, because there are some really efficient and easy designs out there that are better than anything I could think of myself.

Do you use things you learn in school or in other hobbies in your farming?
I don’t really have any knowledge I have outside of Minecraft that influences my gameplay. As I aged, I have gotten smarter and more capable of doing greater things in Minecraft, both better and more efficiently.

You mentioned that you wanted a sustainable source of foods and materials. Why was that important to you?
It is important to have a sustainable source of materials, because you can use them for different purposes, like keeping your game character alive and safe. Ultimately, you can even use them to make huge player structures. I sometimes get large quantities of things just to have them around, as well.

Thanks so much for talking with me about this, Gabe!
Thank you for taking interest in this! It’s fun to share my experience.