

NOFA Notes



Quarterly newsletter of the Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont

Fall 2023



Vermont's Summer of Flooding | Local, Organic Milk in Schools |
Share the Harvest | Supporting Farmers for Climate Resiliency

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Dear friend of NOFA-VT,

What a summer it has been. In one of the hardest growing seasons on record, Vermont's farmers and farmworkers had to contend with unseasonably hot weather in the early spring, a harsh late frost in May, poor air quality from the wildfires during the height of the growing season, massive flooding in July, and ongoing relentless, record-breaking rains. Add to this chaotic weather a continued consolidation trend in dairy and the realities of how tough the economics of all small farming continue to be: it's been a very rugged summer.



Despite how hard the season has been, we also have seen the power of our collective resilience, strength, and support through the way the community has shown up for each other. I have felt myself swinging between strong emotions of loss and deep worry on one hand, and on the other, a profound, overwhelming gratitude for the strength of our community.

Vermont's small, diversified, and organic farms are the bedrock of our working lands, our local food system, and our healthy ecosystems. Farmers and farmworkers are at the frontlines of our shared quest to stabilize the planet and heal our relationship to it. Their organic practices clean water, increase biodiversity, sequester carbon in healthy soils, foster ecosystem health, and provide healthy, local, organic food to their communities.

And, our community knows that there are times when we need to nourish those who feed us. We are grateful and moved by the outpouring of community support. Close to 3,000 individuals have stepped up to donate to support our flood relief efforts. (More on that inside!) Other people self-organized parties to raise funds. Kids held lemonade stands and mailed us cash in rainbow-doodled envelopes. Farmers collaborated to share excess with those affected. Community members helped muck out flooded wash-pack sheds and brought meals to farmworkers daily.

Thank you, thank you for supporting the producers who keep us fed by showing up for them now. We are all in dynamic, reciprocal relationships of keeping each other safe and ensuring we can all thrive despite the challenging conditions. We are the ones we've been waiting for.

I am writing this in late September, coming off of a week-long gathering in Starksboro, where farmers, food producers, and organizers from all over the world gathered together to talk about the big trends facing the farming community and small-holder farmers all around the globe under the header of agroecology (for the kickoff of a new Agroecology Institute at UVM). Many thanks to the many planners and organizers who worked tirelessly to pull that gathering off! We shared our struggles that repeat in different forms all over the globe: climate chaos, corporate consolidation, development pressure and land grabs, and patterns of economic struggle. We began to notice how similar our issues were. While specific solutions and strategies look different from place to place, they are all connected. As we work to make small-scale farming and a regional foodshed viable in Vermont, we are in collaboration with farmers all around the world protecting the land while keeping communities fed and whole.

It is nourishing to know that this web of reciprocity and care that we have in Vermont is also nested into a larger one all around the globe of small food producers and the communities they feed. We are all connected in our struggles and our goals and connected through our mycelial networks; we can draw and share nourishment for the path ahead.

With deep gratitude and in partnership,

Grace Oedel
 Executive Director, NOFA-VT

Vermont's Summer of Flooding

Reviewing the short-term impacts and our response

By Erin Buckwalter, NOFA-VT Development & Engagement Director

Rain this summer brought widespread devastation to the state and, in particular, to our farms, many of whom had already been hit hard by a late frost earlier in the season. Along the spine of the Green Mountains, valley farms tending rich riverside soils found themselves quickly flooded, while others contended with months of water-logged fields due to the relentless, record-breaking precipitation, and others experienced severe erosion.

As we've worked to support farms across the state through the last frost, the flood, and the persistently wet weather, it's clear that extreme weather is having an enormous impact on our state's farm, food, and community resilience. Farmers of all sizes lost their whole season—with financial impacts up to the hundreds of thousands of dollars— to say nothing of the emotional impact and mental health on farmers and farmworkers. Farmers have experienced flood-damaged fields and crops, mini-landslides, and erosion issues. Livestock farmers have been extremely

challenged to find hay this summer, as crops have been destroyed, fields are inaccessible due to washouts from blown-out bridges and destroyed culverts, and fields have been inundated with sediment deposits and debris, rendering the hay unusable.

The disaster relief programs currently available from the federal government are not designed to support the small, diversified, organic farms that comprise much of Vermont's landscape. As a result, the federal response has been sorely lacking in the wake of this disaster, despite advocacy from NOFA-VT, our federal delegation, and partners around the state (more on this on page 5).

However, when tough times hit, the power of community heals. We are so grateful for YOUR SUPPORT. The incredible generosity and care that you have demonstrated to your neighbors, friends, and total strangers during this crisis is humbling and shows the power we have when we come together.

THANK YOU for the many ways you are showing up and supporting farmers and farmworkers in this tough time. We are all collaborators in building a thriving future.

\$16,063,154

Total losses

265

Farms impacted

27,320

Total acres impacted

30%

Lost annual income, on average

Data from the State of Vermont Agency of Agriculture Food and Markets "Loss & Damage Report"

Updates on NOFA-VT's Flood Response and Farmer Emergency Fund

Because of your support, NOFA-VT has been able to mount a robust response to support farmers across the state as they begin to recover from this summer's extreme weather. Below, you'll find some updates about our Farmer Emergency Fund, the many other ways we're working to mitigate the immediate harms from this difficult season, and advocacy for longer-term systems change to make us more resilient in the face of future challenges.

Since 1997, NOFA-VT has organized the Farmer Emergency Fund, which supports farmers in challenging times by moving money directly from donors to farmers in need with no strings attached. When the floodwaters hit this summer, we put out the call for donations to this fund—and you answered!

The response from this wonderful community has been humbling and inspiring. You all have made a massive difference to farms who otherwise have had little to no access to financial support. Thank you for showing up for those who keep us all fed.

\$1,500,000+
Raised through Farmer Emergency Fund

\$648,000
Awarded to farms

Almost
2,700
Individual donors

138
Farms supported

Numbers accurate as of September 22, 2023

To date, nearly 2,700 donors have made contributions to this fund. As of this writing on September 22, 2023, we have already awarded over \$648,000 to 138 farms. More applications come in each day, and we are continuing to process them with the goal of sending out checks within a week of when the applications arrive. (Thank you to the farmer committee members who read those applications daily!)

With your support, we are excited to share that we have raised \$1.5 million for Farmer Emergency Grants to distribute to farmers to weather this storm. This powerful generosity and reciprocity is an incredible testament to the strength of our relationships and our community strength. Thank you.

We want to provide transparency around our use of these funds. We have been working to approve applications and get checks out to affected farms as fast as possible. We are receiving direction from our Board's (majority farmer and farmworker) executive committee on how much of the fund to use and at which pace to ensure we use it all up and meet the emerging needs of as many farms as possible. Given the anticipated hay and livestock feed shortage, we are preparing for a second wave of applications this fall. Depending on this need, we will then assess whether we will be able to make a second round of grants.

Finally, we plan to keep a small amount in reserve to give out for future emergencies that will inevitably arise, so we will likely retain a balance of between \$50,000-\$100,000.

Due to the scale of need and the lack of meaningful federal and state relief, these Farmer Emergency grants are a very important lifeline for the many affected farmers and farms. We recognize that a \$5,000

grant is not a lot in the overall scope of loss many farmers have experienced. But it's a short-term cash flow boost, which is helpful as farms evaluate their options and make a resilience plan.

Beyond Emergency Funding Relief

Beyond emergency grants, we are supporting our community in myriad other ways. Here are some examples of the additional work we have been doing since early July:

- Working with farms one-on-one to provide personalized support related to the challenges they're facing, for example: talking through cash flow considerations of crop, infrastructure, or market losses; connecting farmers with any additional support they may qualify for, and advising on alternative infrastructure, sales channels, and market opportunities that will help operations be more resilient in the future.
- Supporting Vermont Organic Farmers (VOF) certified producers and processors by updating our forage guide to help producers find certified organic feed; accommodating requests to add land to producers' organic systems plans in an effort to make more organic feed available to organic livestock producers; and requesting (and receiving) approval for a temporary variance to the pasture rule for the 2023 season. This temporary variance provides important flexibility for organic livestock producers whose pastures were impacted by the flooding and continued rain.
- Working with student clinicians at Vermont Law & Graduate School's Food & Agriculture Law Clinic to collect data on who is—and who is not—currently served by federal disaster

and crop insurance programs to inform ongoing advocacy for improved disaster assistance at the state and federal levels.

- Supporting affected Farm Share participants to ensure they do not bear further economic losses if their farm had to cancel the remainder of the CSA season or significantly reduce the amount of food delivered to members due to the flooding and extreme rainfall. We have helped some people to switch to other nearby CSAs where possible, and we have covered the costs of refunding participants for any prepaid portion of the season they were not able to receive. Inherent in the CSA model is the risk-sharing commitment that members make to their farmers, though we know many limited-income Vermonters are less able to absorb such losses and, especially in the wake of such a widespread disaster, must be able to repurpose their food budgets to continue meeting immediate needs.
- Working with farmers markets across the state to assess their needs in the aftermath of the flooding. Some markets sustained damage to physical infrastructure or equipment, and we are working with affected markets by providing small grants to support markets with this recovery. Markets across the state, however, are continuing to experience significantly elevated demand for our Crop Cash program, which currently doubles each dollar of 3SquaresVT/SNAP benefits at participating markets. Food insecurity remains elevated in our communities resulting from the ongoing impacts of the pandemic and now the flooding, and this program is an effective way to support both impacted eaters and farms with the same dollar.

Why Federal Emergency Farmer Support Programs Aren't Working for Vermont Farms

We have been advocating for emergency relief both within the state and federally. We've been regularly meeting with our federal delegation, the Farm Service Agency, and the Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets to communicate farmers' needs and push for support in the swiftest way possible.

The mechanics of federal emergency programs meant for farms are built to support consolidated monocultures—not small-scale and diversified farms. We've seen from the State of Vermont Agency of Agriculture Food and Market's "Loss & Damage Report" that over 70% of the farms who reported

flooding loss and damage do not have crop or livestock insurance. Further, we have heard from farmers who were enrolled in these programs that the payouts they received paled in comparison to the losses they painstakingly documented and reported.

Here is a real-life Vermont example of how this plays out for farmers who have gone to the trouble of trying to access federal aid. A farm that was dramatically impacted by the flooding, who has asked to remain anonymous, shared their story with us recently. One of the many crops that they grow is strawberries, and in a normal year, they anticipate about \$15,000 of income from this crop. This year, they documented losses of \$12,000 and filled out the complicated paperwork to apply for federal aid to provide retroactive insurance for this crop. They were eventually approved for aid, but the payment they received was only \$380: 3% of their overall loss. Not only did the \$380 not even cover their labor to document the loss and fill out the required paperwork, they were also not allowed to clean up their fields and replant until an inspector came out to see it themselves—a process that took several weeks and cost them precious time in the waning weeks of this tumultuous growing season. We've heard from some additional farms who were still waiting for these inspections well into September.



We are seeing example after example of situations like this playing out, where federal aid is totally inadequate or impossible to attain. While we are trying hard to fill in the gaps left by the lack of meaningful federal support, we believe another equally important part of our role is highlighting these challenges in an effort to bring greater understanding among lawmakers as well as building political will to change the policies that prefer large-scale, industrial agriculture over appropriate-scale, sustainable agriculture. In response, one of the projects we have been working on is creating a farmer sign-on letter to be circulated around the northeast region calling on Congress to include key changes to crop insurance and disaster aid in the farm bill to ensure smaller scale, more diversified producers have a stronger safety net in place next time a disaster hits. You can find more details about this in the "Call to Action" box on the right, and we hope you will join your voice with ours for larger systemic changes that will lead to a more resilient future for us all!

Call to Action: Demand better relief programs for small farms



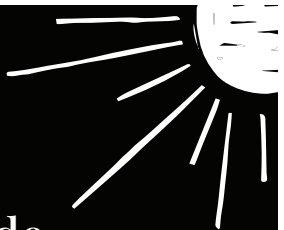
We're calling on Congress to include key changes to crop insurance and disaster aid in the farm bill. These changes are crucial for small, diversified farms in the northeast—the bedrock of a sustainable, just food system—to have disaster safety nets in place that are as strong as those offered to larger industrial farms.

In order to amplify the shared needs of our community, we're collecting farmer signatures on a letter to Congress.

Learn more and sign on at:

NOFAVT.ORG/SAFETY-NET-SIGN-ON

Thank You!



Major support for NOFA-VT's flood relief efforts has been made possible in part by generous contributions from:

Abigail Faulkner and Hobart Guion · The Alchemist · Baird Farm · Barbara and Richard Heilman · Ben & Jerry's Foundation · Champlain Investment Partners Charitable Ventures · Chelsey Ring Giving Fund · Christina Heroy Foundation · Clear Brook Farm · The D'Avino Family Charitable Gift Fund · Dealer.com · Global Atlantic Charitable Gift Fund · Grace River Foundation · Greg & Maria Jobin-Leeds · Hanover Co-op Food Stores · Harris and Frances Block Foundation · Harvey L Miller Family Foundation · Henry P. Kendall Foundation · Hill Farmstead Brewery · Johnson Family Foundation · Judy Geer & Dick Dreissigacker · K. B. Ceramics · Krithi Govindarajan · Lawson's Finest Liquids · Lena Fund of the Vermont Community Foundation · Lintilhac Foundation · M&T Bank · Marilyn Comb, Peter Kamitses, and Jovial King · Mary-Howell Martens · Nathaniel Winthrop · New Visions Foundation · Peter Swift and Diana McCargo · Pincus Family Fund · Poppy Cafe · Raven Ridge Fund of the Vermont Community Foundation · Rob Freeberg · The Robert Saligman Charitable Foundation · Sara Coffey · Scott Family Charitable Trust · Serena Foundation · Stonyfield Farm Inc. · Stowe Cider · Sunflower Fund of the Vermont Community Foundation · Surfing Veggie Farm Foundation · Sweet Relief Fundraiser · Vermont Flood Response & Recovery Fund of the Vermont Community Foundation · Vermont Mutual Insurance · Zero Gravity Brewery

and over 2,600 donations from generous community members!

A Bright Spot

Magnetic Fields shares how an investment in their farm's resilience helped them weather the storm

We were also incredibly heartened to hear some success stories about how the work we do when it's NOT an emergency helps build resilience to future events.

We recently heard from farmers at the cooperative farm Magnetic Fields, located in Athens, VT. In 2021, they received a NOFA-VT Resilience Grant to make resilience improvements on

their site. Earlier this summer, one of the farmers, Ike Leslie, wrote to us:

"My farm, Magnetic Fields, received a NOFA-VT Resilience Grant a few years ago to put in a series of flood protection systems like reshaping and grassy swales. Before that, once since I've been on this land, a culvert backed up in a storm and sent an enormous amount of water across my growing spaces, causing a lot of erosion and damage. This time, the culvert backed up again, but all of the swales worked and kept all the water off the growing spaces! I'm working on getting a new culvert from NRCS, but it's very gratifying that the swales worked so well even without it. Total success story. Thank you NOFA-VT!!"

Learn more about how farmers are building up resilience across Vermont with the help of our Resilience Grants at NOFAVT.ORG/RESILIENCE.

NOFA-VT | Advocacy

We Need to Support Farmers Now for a Climate-Resilient Future

By Grace Oedel, NOFA-VT Executive Director

Despite Vermont's reputation as a climate haven, the climate crisis is here. Increasingly erratic and extreme weather, including large storms, droughts, and flooding events like those we've seen over the last month, are affecting the viability of farms and our food security. According to the 2021 Vermont Climate Assessment, Vermont's annual precipitation has increased a whopping 21% since 1900. This recent flooding and relentlessly wet season is not an unprecedented or unique event. At the same time, we need to prepare for an influx of people moving to Vermont for a more habitable climate since other areas of the country are experiencing even greater impacts. According to a recent ProPublica study, six out of ten of the best zip codes to live in during this time of climate change are in Vermont. How we respond to July's flood, its fallout, and rebuilding efforts, while simultaneously preparing for a growing population, will serve as the foundation for our resilience plan for the future.

It's time to pull on every lever we can to reduce the harm from climate change's worst effects while also working beyond mitigation for a truly transformative, holistic vision of a thriving future. In order to (re)build well, we need a collective sense of what might be

possible to keep our growing communities supported and our land healthy.

In my vision of a thriving future, despite strange weather conditions, all Vermonters are fed and nourished. Take a minute to imagine with me: we support organic farmers who invest time and resources in growing healthy, living soil that, in turn, helps to slow, spread, and absorb water like a sponge. Healthy soil means that even after a storm,



runoff is less abundant and less dirty. Our water remains clean and drinkable. Farmers have enough economic leeway to make the best possible choices of how to tend the land in ways that provide benefits to us all by

sequestering carbon, ensuring clean water, and enhancing biodiversity, all while providing healthy foods for our communities and removing harmful chemicals from the water system. When storms do occur, we practice collaboration and resource-sharing so well that farms remain viable through turbulence. Farmers and farmworkers make enough money to send their children to high-quality childcare and don't worry about unexpected medical needs throwing them into deep debt. Young people see farming as a viable career choice and want to stay in-state to do it. All Vermont kids eat organic and local food in their schools and are nourished and thriving, regardless of economic status. Lake Champlain and other waterways in Vermont have fewer and fewer algal blooms, and we are no longer limited on when we can swim safely. Eco- and agri-tourism thrive. Our sense of connection, both to each other and our place, is stronger than ever. The identity of Vermont as a beacon of natural beauty continues to shine.

The seeds of this vision are already planted, and in how we rebuild from flooding, we will choose what to tend. Ensuring that small, diversified, and organic farms remain viable and are centered in the climate conversation is an imperative step toward

realizing this thriving future. Unfortunately, current policy and funding structures are leaving the exact farmers we need far from supported in the rebuild. Farmers are treated differently than all other businesses and excluded from FEMA relief, and USDA programs are primarily designed for mega-scale farms (and regardless, have yet to kick in). Vermont's own climate goals are woefully quiet on how farming can be a viable solution to climate change. We can and must do better.

In a time when all ecosystems are under unprecedented threat, small-scale organic farming allows us to feed ourselves in a way that nurtures and regenerates the land. A strong, locally-rooted farm economy helps us build human resilience in unpredictable times, centering relationships and community rather than corporate profits that suck resources out of our state. Buying from local foodsheds doesn't just mean that we burn less diesel getting food to our plates. It means that we are part of the same community as those who grow our food, and we are tending the networks of mutual care and support that we can turn to in times of disaster. On a federal level, policies must shift from supporting corporate agri-businesses that consolidate

money and power at the expense of people and our planet to policies that incentivize good land stewardship, climate mitigation strategies, and community resilience.

Despite the challenges of this last month, I see many signs of hope and promise, north stars to chart towards. Following July's historic flooding, we have had thousands of individuals give generously to NOFA-VT's Farmer Emergency Fund, and we turn 100% of that money right back around to support the farmers our future needs. We've had overwhelming volunteer offers to help with cleanup efforts. Elderly community members have been regularly baking cookies for the farmworkers cleaning up in my neck of the woods. We are building our muscles of connection and mutuality in thousands of small interactions of care across the state. Let's keep it up.

These short-term mitigation strategies are absolutely crucial to ensuring that farms can weather literal storms. But after donating, volunteering, and continuing to shop local (if our situation allows), what can we do together to move towards a livable future?

Transformation won't happen all at once but rather through a mix of policy-level,

community-scale, and individual steps that, combined, will shift the gears of business as usual. There are so many joyful (and needed!) roles to play in creating a livable future: Get to know your neighbors (including those who grow your food) to build the relationships that will ultimately keep us safer in times of crisis. Plant trees and native perennials along your roads or sidewalk strips outside your kids' schools. Grill food at your block party that was grown in your backyard or from a local organic farm. Ask the institutions you frequent to choose local and organic farms, and thank them with your business when they do. Ask your legislators to invest in programs that support local farmers and incentivize organic ecological practices by pushing for more federal and state flood relief to small and medium diversified farms and sensible farm bill priorities. We are all collaborators for a livable future.

A resilient future relies on small-scale, diversified, and organic farmers and farmworkers who can be seen as a keystone indicator. If they are flourishing, we all are flourishing. As we rebuild from the flooding, let's center these land-tenders to ensure a thriving, nourished, and climate-resilient future. ♦

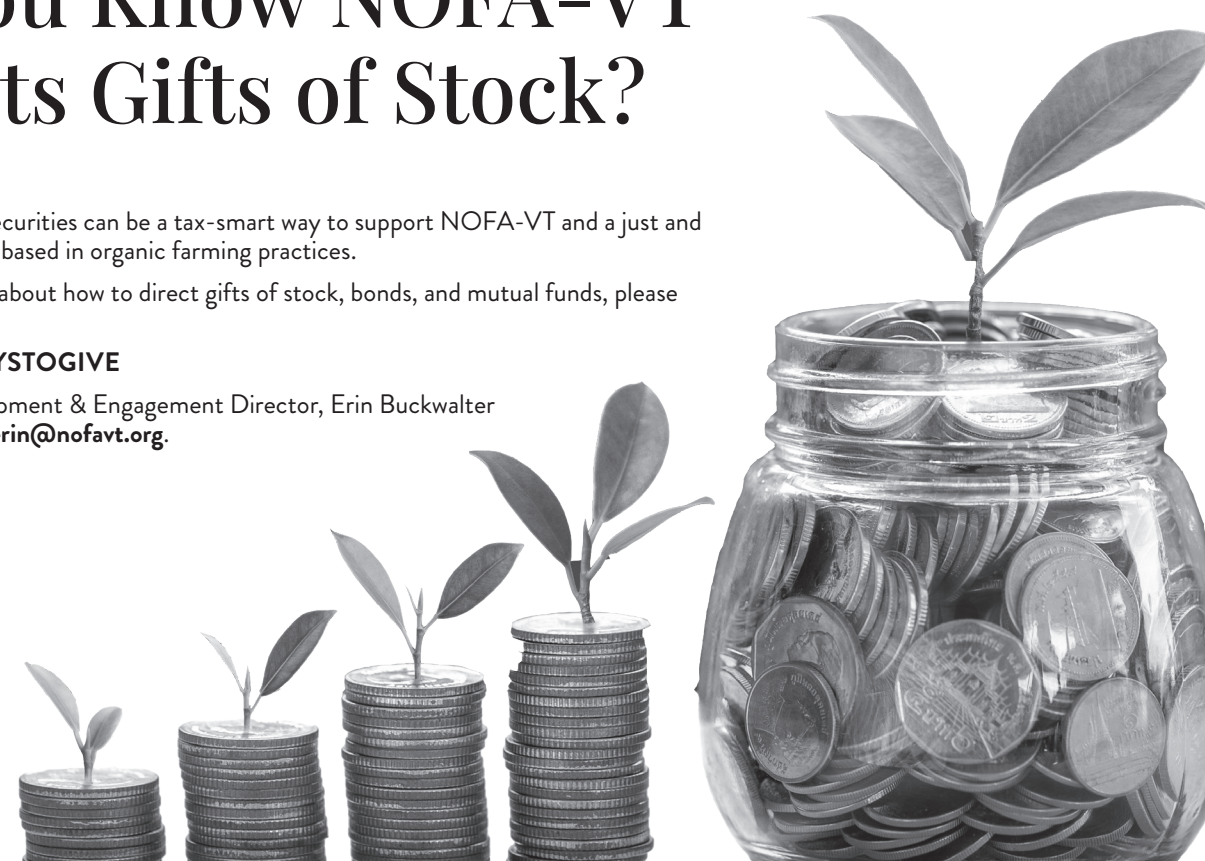
Did You Know NOFA-VT Accepts Gifts of Stock?

Gifts of appreciated securities can be a tax-smart way to support NOFA-VT and a just and equitable food system based in organic farming practices.

For more information about how to direct gifts of stock, bonds, and mutual funds, please visit:

NOFAVT.ORG/WAYSTOGIVE

or contact our Development & Engagement Director, Erin Buckwalter at [802-434-7152](tel:802-434-7152) or erin@nofavt.org.





Summer Sweetness

Building strong connections is the heart of the movement towards a livable future. Over the past year, we've gathered for four delightful pizza socials, engaged in ten enriching workshops, and embarked on countless farm tours, visits, meetings, and more. It remains a privilege to collaborate with farmers across the state, coming together to create these invaluable opportunities for connection, celebration, and knowledge-sharing. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all who joined us at an event this summer!



Top to bottom, right to left: Wood-fired pizza gets its final toppings at a pizza social at Understory Farm in Bridport (photo courtesy of New England Food and Farm); Workshop attendees learn about riparian buffers at Boneyard Farm in Cambridge; Members of the Farmer Olympics team from Luna Bleu Farm/Flying Dog Farm celebrate their medal; Joyful connection at a pizza social at Understory Farm in Bridport (photo courtesy of New England Food and Farm); Workshop attendee checks out the oven that will be used to cook bread made from local grains at Brot Bakehouse in Fairfax.

Top to bottom, right to left: All the teams at the 2023 Farmer Olympics at the Smokey House Center in Danby; A beautiful garlic bouquet at a pizza social at Milkweed Farm in Westminster West; Learning about agroforestry at Valley Clayplain Forest Farm in New Haven; Farmer Olympics competitors from Cedar Circle Farm sort seeds into a seed tray as quickly as possible; Melisa Oliva and Patrick Sullivan welcome guests to their farm, Ananda Gardens in Montpelier, for a pizza social; Workshop attendees observe no-till beds at a workshop at Breadseed Farm in Craftsbury.



Great “Moos” for Vermont Students as School Year Begins!

Pilot Program Offers Students Organic Milk from Local Farm

By Olga Moriarty, Executive Director of the Northeast Organic Family Farm Partnership



Cheers to a delicious lunch at Grafton Elementary School.

Opening day of the 2023-24 school year brought great ‘moos’ for hundreds of Vermont elementary and high school students: new organic milk dispensers in their cafeterias, not only introducing them to the benefits and great taste of fresh organic milk, but also helping the regional economy by providing milk sourced from a local certified-organic dairy farm.

Miller Farm in Vernon was able to make equipment upgrades needed to provide bulk organic white and chocolate milk to the schools, thanks to \$175,000 in funding from a Northeast Dairy Business Innovation Center grant.

The Northeast Organic Family Farm Partnership, an organization with a mission to increase the demand for Northeast organic dairy, is

spearheading this pilot program with collaboration from NOFA-VT. Gary Hirshberg, founder of the Northeast Organic Family Farm Partnership and former CEO of Stonyfield Farm, says it can provide the blueprint for similar local farm-to-school programs. The goal is not only to introduce youngsters to organic foods but also to help local economies by giving organic dairy farmers a financial boost through school sales.

In recent years, a combination of economic pressures such as inflation, the Ukraine war (a major source of the world’s organic feed), trade disputes in India, increased transportation costs, labor shortages, and extreme weather events like the 2022 drought and 2023 flooding have pushed the cost of producing Northeast organic milk to a breaking point. The impact is especially evident in Vermont,

where 62 organic dairies closed between January 2020 and August 2023.

Projections by NOFA-VT indicate that an additional 30 organic dairies may be lost by the end of 2023, a trend mirrored in other Northeastern states. The consequences of these closures are far-reaching, including severe economic repercussions for rural communities in the Northeast, potential loss of vital ecosystem services like carbon sequestration and habit conservation, and a greater reliance on products from farms located thousands of miles away, resulting in longer and more complex supply chains.

Lauren Griswold, Local Food Access & Farm to Institution Program Director at NOFA-VT and a key contributor to the pilot, explains, “This project is about Vermonters taking care of Vermonters. Our schools spend \$20 million on food per year, so there’s tremendous potential in localizing that spending to benefit our farms and our kids. NOFA-VT is thrilled to support this project that does just that, especially for Vermont organic dairy, given the past few years.”

Schools participating in this year’s pilot program, all part of the Windham Northeast Supervisory Union (WNEUSU), are Westminster Center School and Bellows Falls Union High School in Westminster, Rockingham Central Elementary School in Bellows Falls, and Saxtons River Elementary School in Saxtons River.

On the first day of school this year, the response to the new Miller Milk dispensers was joyous from both staff and students. Rather than grabbing milk in cartons—one of the most wasteful components of school meals—kids filled up cups at bulk milk dispensers, lining up to grab cupfuls of fresh milk. Harley Sterling, the WNEUSU School Nutrition Director and a key pilot partner, says the school district is “thrilled” to offer local, organic milk to the students and connect local dairies with public schools, “the largest institutional buyer of milk in most Vermont towns.”

Says Pete Miller of Miller Farm, “This model of local small processors working with area schools could be replicated across the nation. It’s so important for each generation to know where food comes from: when people can draw a straight line between a product and a producer, there is built-in a certain amount of accountability and trust.”



A kid fills up a cup of chocolate milk at Westminster Center School.



Harley Sterling, Food Service Director for the Windham Northeast Supervisory Union, accepts a delivery of milk from Pete Miller of Miller Farm.

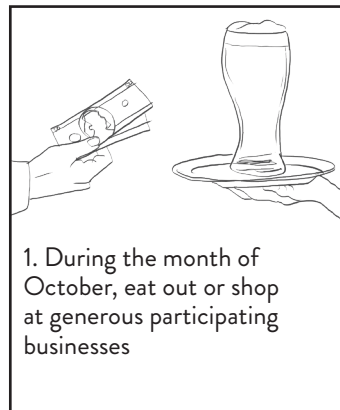


Share the Harvest

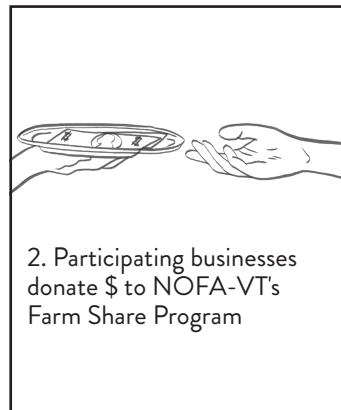
supporting NOFA-VT's Farm Share program

Share the Harvest is back! For 29 years, folks have supported our Farm Share program, which provides half-priced CSA shares to low-income Vermonters, through our Share the Harvest fundraiser by eating, drinking, and shopping at local businesses during the month of October. Share the Harvest is a win-win-win month-long event. By dining and shopping at participating restaurants, co-ops, breweries, and stores, you're supporting local farms, increasing food access for food-insecure Vermonters, and supporting restaurants and other food-based businesses—many of whom have been hit hard in the past few years. Visit NOFAVT.ORG/STH to find participating businesses near you!

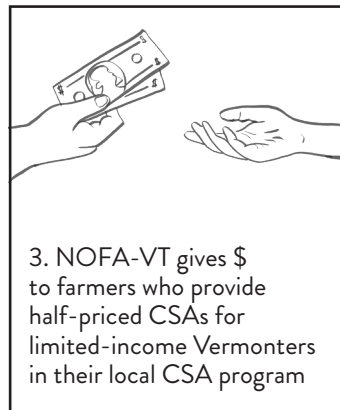
How It Works



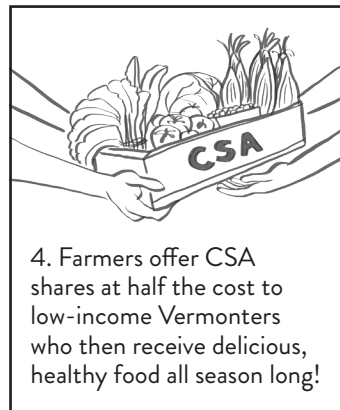
1. During the month of October, eat out or shop at generous participating businesses



2. Participating businesses donate \$ to NOFA-VT's Farm Share Program



3. NOFA-VT gives \$ to farmers who provide half-priced CSAs for limited-income Vermonters in their local CSA program



4. Farmers offer CSA shares at half the cost to low-income Vermonters who then receive delicious, healthy food all season long!

Donate Directly to Farm Share

If you want to ensure that limited-income Vermonters can access healthy, local food, but you can't partake in Share the Harvest, that's okay! We accept donations to support our Farm Share Program year-round. The program has grown from serving a dozen individual families and three farms in 1995 to serving 1499 Vermonters at 63 farms in 2022, and we're on track to exceed that number in 2023 as food insecurity in the state remains high and many communities are recovering from this summer's flooding! NOFA-VT believes that all Vermonters should be able to eat local organic food, regardless of their income level, while also making sure farmers get a good wage for their hard work. Donate online at nofavt.org/donate, or mail checks made out to NOFA-VT to PO Box 697, Richmond, VT 05477. Please put "Farm Share" in the memo line.

THANK YOU FOR HELPING US SHARE THE HARVEST!



Vermont Family Farmer of the Month Awards

By Kayla Strom, NOFA-VT Farm to School Coordinator and Vermont Family Farmer of the Month Administrator

The Vermont Family Farmer of the Month Award provides grants of \$12,000 to a family farm each month to support an innovative project that will improve the farm's viability. Award recipients are farms that contribute to a more resilient agricultural landscape and demonstrate environmental stewardship. This grant is funded by a generous anonymous charitable gift and is administered by NOFA-VT in partnership with VHCB's Vermont Farm & Forest Viability Program, Shelburne Farms, and the Vermont Grass Farmers Association. We are honored to present the most recent recipients of the award and share a bit about their farms and projects.



High Meadows Farm - May 2023

In 1978, Howard Prussack established High Meadows Farm in Putney and became Vermont's first certified organic farm. Since then, his unwavering mission has been to grow nourishing food for his community, care for the land, and promote the organic farming movement. Today, Howard and his wife Elizabeth run High Meadows Farm with their dedicated farm team. They grow nine acres of herbs, fruits, and vegetables along with vegetable starts, which they sell to various grocery stores and garden centers in Vermont, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire.

High Meadows Farm was awarded \$12,000 to drill a new well to increase irrigation capacity and water security on their farm. Access to adequate water sources is critical for High Meadows Farm to increase production and yields and to protect themselves from future droughts. The additional well, coupled with other conservation practices, will significantly increase the resilience of their land to future droughts and other climate disturbances.



Boneyard Farm - June 2023

In 2021, after three years spent expanding their homestead into a farm business, Hannah and John Doyle purchased their forever farm in Fletcher, Vermont and have been deeply committed to transitioning the farm from an old conventional dairy into a grass-based diversified farm. Boneyard Farm specializes in pasture-raised pork and chicken, eggs, and grass-fed beef and sheep. Additionally, they maintain a half-acre market garden where they grow certified organic vegetables.

Boneyard Farm was awarded \$12,000 to improve their post-harvest process by constructing a practical and efficient three-season wash-pack facility. Buoyed by the unwavering support of their community, Hannah and John have experienced two incredibly busy years at their new location. Motivated by this, their goal is to enhance their capacity and efficiency in order to meet the growing local demand for their food. With the new facility, Hannah and John will be able to safely bring a larger quantity of their vegetables to market and into the homes of their valued consumers.



Walden Heights Nursery and Orchard - July 2023

Walden Heights Nursery and Orchard in Walden was established in 1997 by Todd Parlo and Lori Augustyniak and has over 1,500 trees, 500 berry plants, other bush fruits, nursery beds for rootstock production, and a preservation orchard that maintains genetic variation for research and biodiversity. They sell their plants and rootstock wholesale and through their own direct retail channels, reaching a diversity of customers, including farms, plant nurseries, and homesteaders across the region. Another branch of the farm business includes education and consulting services for organic fruit production, driven by their mission of supporting their community to grow their own food organically and sustainably.

In July, Walden Heights Nursery and Orchard was awarded \$12,000 to construct a 16 x 24' mist propagation house specifically designed for rooting their woody perennial fruit cuttings. The new mist propagation house will enable Walden Heights Nursery and Orchard to cultivate healthy plant starts more effectively, particularly for species that are hesitant to root using traditional outdoor methods. By implementing intermittent mist propagation techniques, they can achieve successful, healthy, larger yields of hardwood cuttings and seedlings. ♦

The next round of applications will open in December. To learn more, visit VERMONTFAMILYFARMERAWARD.ORG

NOFA-VT Members: Thank you for supporting organic agriculture and a just, ecological food system!

A warm welcome to the following members who joined us or renewed their membership this summer.

NEW MEMBERS

Adrienne Vento & Iztok Ferluga, Poultney, VT
 Alena Andrews, South Royalton, VT
 Amanda Franz, Worcester, VT
 Amy Dukette, Colchester, VT
 April Parms Jones, Akron, OH
 Beverly Keim, South Burlington, VT
 Birgit McCall, Dayton, OH
 Brendan Perry, Newport Center, VT
 Brett Cluff, Shelburne, VT
 Brian Kayhart, Vergennes, VT
 Caralyn Roeper, Hillsdale, NY
 Carissa Brewton, Brattleboro, VT
 Cassidy Munger, Castleton, VT
 Charles & Sheila Browning, New York, NY
 Charles Morse, Northfield, VT
 Danielle Berg, Waterbury Center, VT
 Danielle Blackmore, Georgia, VT
 Danielle Nickolson, Essex Jct, VT
 Dick Chase, Alburgh, VT
 Donna Dzugas, Westmore, VT
 Elena Santos, Pawlet, VT
 Eli & Dan Fox, Sudbury, VT
 Ella Price, Hardwick, VT
 Elsa Lang, Panton, VT
 Emalee Garboski & Ethan Smith, Barre, VT
 Emily Landenberger, Middlebury, VT
 Emily Michaud, Greensboro Bend, VT
 Erica Walch, Newfane, VT
 Francine Tuerk, Newfane, VT
 Heidi Jones, Pownal, VT
 Holly Menguc, Orwell, VT
 Jackie Merriam, Randolph Center, VT
 James Parent, Northfield, VT
 Jan Ellis-Clements, North Hero, VT
 Janet Switzer, Beulah, CO
 Jeanne Atchinson, Duxbury, VT
 Jennifer Colby, Randolph, VT
 Jennifer McDermott, East Arlington, VT
 Jenny Garrison, Colchester, VT
 Jessica Buxbaum, Bethesda, MD
 Jessica Hoague, East Fairfield, VT
 Joe Sperlak, Lincoln, VT
 John Thurgood Sr, Stowe, VT
 Joyce Belter, South Burlington, VT
 Juanita Facticeau, East Burke, VT
 Judith Elford, Hardwick, VT
 Kaitlin Cameron, Williston, VT
 Kasie Enman, Huntington, VT
 Kate Hayes, Marshfield, VT
 Kate Solisti, Rutland, VT
 Katherine Innis, Brattleboro, VT

Katie Steere, Randolph Center, VT
 Kendra Dias, Newfane, VT
 Kesstan Blandin, Essex Jct, VT
 Kimberly Goodling, Washington, VT
 Kristianne Gale, Chelsea, VT
 Krystie Wood, Island Pond, VT
 Laura Hardie, Waterbury, VT
 Lawrence Rowley, Milton, VT
 Lilah Krugman, Middlebury, VT
 Lily Weinstein Terry, Norwich, VT
 Liz Weir, Shelburne, VT
 Lori Fetters, Waltham, VT
 Lorie Loeb, Hartland, VT
 Lotty Roozeekrans, Hardwick, VT
 Mark Caban, New Haven, VT
 Micah Beahan, Springfield, VT
 Michael Bickley, Westford, VT
 Michael Wells
 Michaelan Martin, Brattleboro, VT
 Nicholas Lima, Lyndonville, VT
 P. Martin Lyman, White River Junction, VT
 Philip Pearo, Alburgh, VT
 Rhoda McLure, Johnson, VT
 Robert Nelson, Randolph Center, VT
 Sam Ronci, Montpelier, VT
 Sandi Vincenti, Wentworth, NH
 Scott Thomas, Craftsbury, VT
 Senait Mareligne, Enosburg Falls, VT
 Shannon Fisher, Danville, VT
 Shawn Flanigan, Burlington, VT
 Signe O'Neil, Pownal, VT
 Sophie O'Brien, Georgia, VT
 Steven Thomas, Chelsea, VT
 Tom Hill, Greensboro Bend, VT
 Tom Mason, Johnson, VT
 Tom Wood, Orleans, VT
 Trish Tretiak, Colchester, VT
 Wesley Davis, Peacham, VT
 Will Engleman, Ballston Spa, NY
 Yvette Palmer, Newport Center, VT
 Zahar Racine, Cambridge, NY

NEW & RENEWING BUSINESS MEMBERS

All Souls Tortilleria, Burlington, VT
 Backwoods Betty Farm, Guilford, VT
 Black Dirt Farm, LLC, Greensboro Bend, VT
 Blue Door Flower Farm, Woodstock, VT
 Boyd Family Farm, Wilmington, VT
 Bravo Botanicals LLC, Guilford, VT
 Capital Grounds & 802 Coffee Roasters, Montpelier, VT

Coburn Gardens, Plainfield, VT
 Crazy 8 Farm, Inc, Newport Ctr, VT
 Crooked Sapling Farm, Newark, VT
 Darling Homestead, LLC, Williamstown, VT
 Davis farm, Middlesex, VT
 Dutchess Farm, Castleton, VT
 Eddy Farm School For Horse and Rider, Middlebury, VT
 FEAST Farm, Montpelier, VT
 Grateful Morning Farm, Shaftsbury, VT
 Green Acres Homestead, Burlington, VT
 Green Heart Farm, Springfield, VT
 Green Mountain Spinners, Putney, VT
 High Low Farm LLC, Woodstock, VT
 High Mowing Organic Seeds, Wolcott, VT
 Jericho Settlers' Farm, Inc., Jericho, VT
 Khelcom Farm, Berlin, VT
 King Arthur Baking Company, White River Junction, VT
 Mama Tree Farm, Worcester, VT
 McDonald Farmstand LLC, Danville, VT
 MG Coffee Roasting Enterprises LLC, White River Junction, VT
 Mighty Oak Farm, Norwich, VT
 Morrison's Custom Feeds, Barnet, VT
 Neighborhood Roots Food Collective, Guilford, VT
 O Bread Bakery, Shelburne, VT
 Old Gates Farm, Castleton, VT
 Peaceful Harvest Mushrooms, Worcester, VT
 Philo Ridge Farm, Charlotte, VT
 Pleasant Mount Farm, Huntington Ctr, VT
 Pumpkin Village Foods, Burlington, VT
 Red Hen Baking Company LLC, Middlesex, VT
 Reinhart Food Service LLC, North Springfield, VT
 Resource Management, Inc., Holderness, NH
 Revolution Farm LLC, Corinth, VT
 Rhapsody Natural Foods, Cabot, VT
 Rocca Di Cambio Farm, LLC, Washington, VT
 Simplicity Farm, Brookfield, VT
 Stone Leaf Teahouse, LLC, Middlebury, VT
 Stonewood Farm Inc, Orwell, VT
 Sub Edge Farm, Farmington, CT
 The Mackenzie Inc, Woodstock, VT
 The Sugarman of Vermont, Inc., Hardwick, VT
 Three Rivers Law PLLC, Montpelier, VT
 True Love Farm, North Bennington, VT
 Vermont Farm & Cheese Collaborative, Lebanon, NH
 Vermont Foodbank, Barre, VT
 Vermont Soap, Middlebury, VT
 West Farm, Jeffersonville, VT
 Wild Meadow Farm, Jamaica, VT
 Wiley Side Farm, Whiting, VT

New Organic Certifications

Vermont Organic Farmers welcomes the following new producers who have recently obtained organic certification for all or a portion of their operation, joining the almost 800 organic farmers & processors throughout the state.



Vermont Food Venture Center, Center for an Agricultural Economy
 The Preserved Garden LLC
 Haven Hill Farmstead
 Ascutney Harvest LLC
 Golden Apple Orchard and Family Farm LLC
 Back Roads Farm LLC
 Zafa Wines LLC

Agrigorial, LLC
 West Farm
 Thornhill Farm, LLC
 Cate Farm
 Robert & Sharon Tetrault
 Stone's Throw Farmstead
 Free Verse Farm

Learn more about the benefits of being certified organic and locally grown at VERMONTORGANIC.ORG/WHY-ORGANIC



NOFA-VT | Our Staff

A Warm Welcome to our New Staff!



Emily Landenberger
 Marketing & Communications Coordinator

Emily has spent the past decade in service to her community of farmers and eaters through her role in food systems education and community outreach at her local food co-op where she amplified the stories of Vermont farmers and food producers through various modes of visual and digital storytelling. She loves fostering meaningful connections between producers and consumers! Emily is proud to serve on the board of the Addison County Relocalization Network (ACORN-VT), co-chair her community Hunger Council through Hunger Free Vermont, and tend a subsistence-scale farm and retail perennial plant nursery called Taproot at her home on Snake Mountain in Weybridge, VT.



Sophie Perry
 Education & Outreach Assistant
 AmeriCorps Member

Sophie brings a background of farming, soil science, agricultural policy, and event planning to her AmeriCorps position as the Education and Outreach Assistant. She got a taste for sustainable agriculture while living on a dairy farm in rural Vermont during her high school years. After obtaining her BA in Environmental Science at Scripps College, Sophie moved back to Vermont to work as a part of the state's robust food system. She has worked three seasons as a vegetable farmer, published soil carbon storage research, written agroecological policy briefings, and coordinated on-farm educational programming. Outside of work, Sophie loves to cook with local food, create fiber art, jump in cold bodies of water, and explore Vermont's woods.



Nancy LaRowe
 Organic Practices Program Director

Nancy (she/her) has been working for systems change that increases farm viability, fosters healthy ecosystems, and builds community resilience for more than 25 years. Most recently, she was cultivating a thriving food system and local economy in the Upper Valley as Vital Communities' Director of Food & Farm and Economy where she led programming to support farmers, farm success, and worked to increase connection between farms and community. Before working to support farms, she operated a Vermont pasture-based livestock farm for more than ten years. In her free time, you'll likely find her outdoors hiking with her dogs, working in the garden, or mountain biking.



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Association of Vermont**
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Wishing you autumn abundance!

May this season bring
you a bountiful harvest,
connection, and joy.

“We are so grateful to have NOFA-VT supporting us and all the other small organic growers in VT. It really does make resiliency in the face of climate change seem possible.”

- Farmer Emergency Fund grant recipient

“I am so eternally grateful to have grown up in a state with the incredible farms and the amazing people who run them. My thoughts are with you all.”

- Farmer Emergency Fund donor

“Thank you, farmers, for loving our land and growing our food.”

- Farmer Emergency Fund donor

INSIDE: Updates on NOFA-VT's flood response and Farmer Emergency Fund, why federal emergency farmer support programs aren't working for Vermont farms, and resilience in the rain.