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The Quarterly Newsletter of the Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont

Organic Farmers Cultivate Resiliency in the Face of Climate Change

By Nicole Dehne, Vermont Organic Farmers

Installing solar panels. Driving an electric vehicle. Buying less. Reusing and recycling. Riding a bike. Planting trees and native plants. All of these are seen as actions we can take in our personal lives to combat climate change and its negative effects.

But what about buying local organic products?

Many studies clearly show that organic farming practices help reduce climate change (including Ghabbour and Davies 2017), however, consumers are not yet consistently making the connection that purchasing organic products can help address climate change and increase sustainability. At least, not yet.

Of course, we know that organic farmers are on the front lines of combating climate change every day. They're building healthier soils, producing food, and cultivating biodiversity on their land, resulting in more resilient landscapes and

communities.

Vermont consumers are presented with opportunities to support their local organic farmers and producers nearly every day. Each purchase at the local grocery store, co-op, farm stand, and general store is a chance to buy into a model and ethic for more resilient landscapes and communities. Choosing items grown and produced by Vermont organic farmers is taking climate action and we have a goal of making this knowledge more widespread.

We envision a world where the connection between buying organic and taking climate action is implicit; where organic farming is understood as another key tactic when it comes to taking thoughtful and decisive action against climate change; and where, because the culture understands and embraces this concept, there is a larger market for organic products, an increase in resources, and more policies allowing local organic farms and producers to thrive and become the dominant farming methodology.

But first, people need to understand: how do Vermont organic producers play a role in addressing climate change?

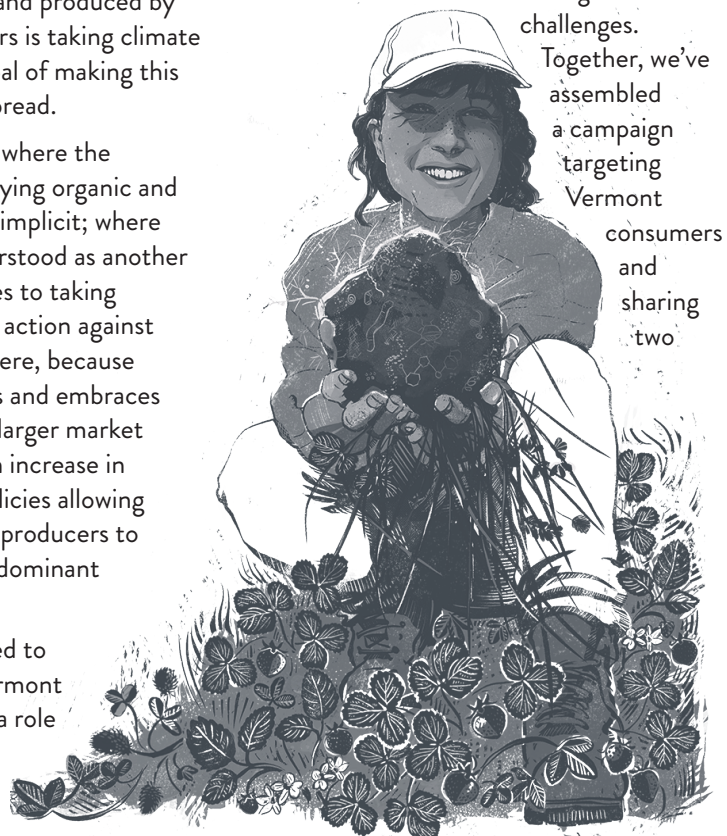
In partnership with

Vital Communities, Vermont Organic Farmers received grant funding to launch an educational campaign answering this question. Vital Communities is a nonprofit organization located in White River Junction, VT, engaging people, organizations, and communities across the Upper Valley to create equitable solutions

to our region's challenges.

Together, we've assembled a campaign targeting Vermont

consumers and sharing two



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Summer Thoughts from Grace

Dear friend of NOFA-VT,

What enormous changes these last few months have held. The strawberries are bursting, warm and ripe in the sun. People are emerging, slowly and cautiously—but oh so joyfully—out of bubbles and embracing again. While of course we're not back to “normal” (nor should we go there!), it's been an incredible joy to be together in community in creative ways again. It's also humbling to realize how much we used to take for granted. Even as we face big challenges—this season's early drought, sustained food insecurity, soaring costs of land and inequality across our agricultural system—we do so together, strengthened with the knowledge that our best bet for the way forward is with each other.



In a similar effort to move towards resilience, we just awarded a second round of Resilience Grants. Early in the pandemic, the idea for “resilience grants” kicked off when we gave out short-term grants of up to \$1,000 aimed to support farms through critically needed pivots due to the pandemic—projects like diverting product to a different market, buying processing equipment, and creating online stores. This second cycle of Resilience Grants shifted to the longer-term by asking: how can we emerge a stronger agricultural community, with more resilient practices better centering people and planet than before? What investments are needed now to build a truly just, ecological, and viable farming system here in Vermont and beyond?

We granted \$85,000 to thirty-six farms to invest in projects supporting resilience, (you can read more in detail further in this issue on page 13) ranging broadly from infrastructure improvements, water and irrigation systems, pasture management, farm stands and community access, biodiversity supports, as well as culturally relevant food access, equity-focused learning for farmers, maple infrastructure, and converting spaces into multi-purpose hubs. We so appreciated the inspiration from the many innovative ideas—and also heard that an equally important as innovation is the support for functional projects to make farms more efficient or to invest in something that will increase economic viability in the long run.

As part of our learning through the Resilience Grant process, we asked farmers to share their own definitions of resilience related to farm economics, justice, ecology, and beyond, and have been spending time processing what we heard.

Here are just a few of the definitions that farmers shared with us:

“Resilience is taking care of each other, tending the soil, the ecosystems, the earth

In this moment of transition, we are turning to our community as we build towards the future we need. We've been kicking off our summer season filled with farm visits, pizza socials on farms, serving lunch to farm crews with our “Feeding Those Who Feed Us” project, and gathering as a whole staff for the first time in over a year. We are also looking ahead to in-person workshops and on-farm social events all across the state! Part of the goal with our farm visit tour is to deepen our relationships one-on-one across the state and reconnect after a challenging year with many of the farmers and members who make up NOFA-VT. On these visits, we've been asking questions about farmers' needs emerging from the COVID-19 pandemic, how they are now thinking about resilience (ranging from climate change, community, equity, and economics), what support they would like from NOFA-VT, what they are experimenting with, any issues they are facing, and feedback or input they have for us. If YOU have any thoughts to share with us on these themes, please be in touch at grace@nofavt.org! This input will help us shape our priorities over the coming years.

and the people and they will tend to us. It is more than surviving depletion or toxicity, it is listening, learning, and repairing.”

“Resiliency is the capacity to not only endure, but thrive through difficulty. Resiliency calls for building systems that oppose climate change, environmental destruction, and the social and economic inequities that are currently plaguing our society.”

“After decades in refugee camps-resilience is the ability for resettled refugees to integrate into a new culture and put down roots in a new place. It is the ability to survive and to make the world a better place using our broad and varied abilities.”

“A resilient farm is humbled by its interconnectedness with the broader community and recognizes its responsibilities as part of that connection.”

“Resiliency is the degree of buffering capacity enmeshed in a living system, whether that ecosystem is the soil, relying on carbon to buffer floods and drought, or community, relying on neighbors and mutual aid.”

We look forward to moving together towards holistic resilience as an agricultural community while centering farmers’ voices in all we do.

Onward, in community,



Grace Oedel
Executive Director, NOFA-VT

Climate Farmers, continued from page 1

main messages: 1.) Consumers can be Climate Heroes by buying Vermont organic products, and 2.) Organic farmers in VT play an important role in addressing climate change.

While Vital Communities is supporting targeted local testing and implementation for this project, we’re supporting a statewide campaign that lays the foundation for consumer knowledge of resilient farming practices and the positive impact those practices have on mitigating against the harmful impacts of our changing climate.

Each month we’re focusing on a different aspect of how organic farmers practice climate friendly agriculture:

Resilience; Healthy soils are more resilient to extreme weather events. Organic farmers use practices that increase the organic matter in their soil. This improves the soil’s ability to hold water, which in turn improves the land’s resilience to flooding and drought.

Community; Organic farms are good for communities. When you buy your food from a Vermont organic farm, you are investing in local food security. Organic farms contribute to vibrant and strong communities.

Greenhouse Gases; Organic soils release fewer greenhouse gases. Organic farmers do not use synthetic nitrogen fertilizers, which are known to create emissions 310 times more harmful than carbon dioxide. As farms become certified organic, we see a reduction in these dangerous emissions.

Biodiversity; Organic practices protect natural resources. Dangerous herbicides or toxic pesticides are not allowed on organic farms, which will preserve our waterways, the environment, and our health. Organic farms also support biodiversity by protecting wildlife and pollinators.

Carbon Storage; Healthy soils store carbon. Organic farming practices build healthy soils, which are better at keeping carbon out of the atmosphere, thereby

reducing the impacts of climate change.

Our campaign is off to a great start! With a mix of traditional and digital advertising across major platforms in Vermont including Seven Days, VPR, and several regional newspapers, we’re speaking to consumers who care about climate change and may be looking for opportunities to take more action against climate change, but who may not be making the connection between organic farming and climate change mitigation. We’re also running digital ads and will be creating an educational video to promote online. The beautiful illustrations produced by artist and designer Cecily Anderson serve as the focal point of this campaign, and we’re excited to turn them into printed resources that farmers and producers can use on-farm and on their products to target their own communities and customers—amplifying this important messaging. In addition, photographer Andy Duback has captured beautiful images of on-farm practices that improve soil health and showcase biodiversity that we’ll be using throughout the campaign.



As Vermont Organic Farmers rolls out this public-facing campaign, we see the messages being spread through the rest of NOFA-VT’s work as well: We are cultivating agricultural literacy in youth through our farm-to-school programs.

Our policy team is ensuring that Vermont legislators know of the important role farmers play in fighting climate change and building community resilience. Our technical assistance team is helping farmers implement and improve soil health strategies and other climate-friendly farming practices. And our direct markets team is ensuring that as many Vermonters as possible have access to local organic produce and products.

Keep an eye out for our ads and don’t hesitate to tell us what you think. We’d love to hear your thoughts and ideas about how we can encourage more Vermonters to buy Vermont organic as a means of combating climate change. You can email your thoughts to nicole@nofavt.org. ♦

A Summer of Celebrations & Events

By Livy Bulger, Education & Engagement Manager

NOFA-VT turns 50 years old this year! We are thrilled to announce a full season of opportunities to gather (both virtually and on farms) and celebrate 50 beautiful years of building our movement together -- while collectively imagining our next 50 years. We hope you can join us at one (or all!) of the following events:



Celebrate Your Farmer Socials

Join us for farm-fresh pizza, joyful connection, and a birthday celebration! NOFA-VT's wood-fired pizza oven will be on-site serving up dinner in between farm tours and over activities. And of course we'll have cake and we'll cheers to 50 years! \$10 suggested donation. All are welcome, RSVP required.

ROOT 5 FARM | Fairlee

Thurs. July 15th | 5:30 - 7:30pm

BAIRD FARM | N. Chittenden

Thurs. July 22nd | 5:30 - 7:30pm

SUSU COMMUNITY FARM | Brattleboro

Wed. August 4th | 5:30 - 7:30pm

TAMARLANE FARM | Lyndonville

Thurs. August 12th | 5:30 - 7:30pm

CLEAR BROOK FARM | Shaftsbury

Wed. August 18th | 5:30 - 7:30pm

ABENAKI LAND LINK HARVEST FESTIVAL THE FARM AT VYCC | Richmond

Sat. Sept. 25th | 11-3pm



6th Annual Farmer Olympics

Tuesday, August 31st

4 - 7:30pm

Honey Field Farm, Norwich

Calling all farmers and farm crews! Use those agricultural talents and go for the gold at this annual mid-season competition. Individual farm teams will show off their finely-honed skills in events ranging from physical to cerebral to ridiculous. Dinner from the NOFA-VT pizza oven will be provided for all participants. May the best farm win! Teams must be 4-5 people. Mixed-farm teams are allowed. Larger crews may be split into smaller teams.

Thank You to our
Sponsors!





On-Farm Workshops

Learn on-farm alongside other farmers, homesteaders, and gardeners! Costs vary with discounts for NOFA-VT members.

WILDCRAFTED MEDICINE MAKING & HERB WALK WORKSHOP

Free Verse Farm, Chelsea
Sat. July 17th | 10 - 1pm

CARBON MANAGEMENT ON THE FARM

Sunrise Farm, White River Jct.
Tue. July 27th | 3:30 - 5:30pm

BUILDING PASTURE RESILIENCE DURING DROUGHT & OTHER UNPREDICTABLE CONDITIONS

Stony Pond Farm, Enosburg Falls
Thurs. Aug. 5th | 10 - 12pm

PEST & DISEASE WALK FOR COMMERCIAL GROWERS

Bear Roots Farm, Williamstown
Thurs. Aug. 12th | 3:30 - 5:30pm

PLANT-BASED COLOR WHEEL: GROW A DYE GARDEN WORKSHOP

Tommy Thompson Garden, Burlington
Sat. Sept. 4th | 10 - 12pm

THE ART OF GROWING FOOD: GARDEN TOUR & TALK

Turkey Hill Farm, Manchester
Sun. Sept. 12th | 10 - 1pm



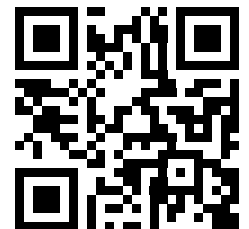
NOFA Summer Conference

July 30 - August 6th | virtual

Once again, the NOFA Summer Conference offers an amazing lineup of farmers, foodies, and activists for a week of skill-sharing, community-building, and learning. Join us and over 45 expert presenters for a virtual conference via Zoom. Sliding scale \$45-\$250.

Pre-registration is required for all events to help us manage capacity and keep attendees updated about the governor's COVID-safe guidelines for gathering.

For details and to RSVP, visit nofavt.org/50



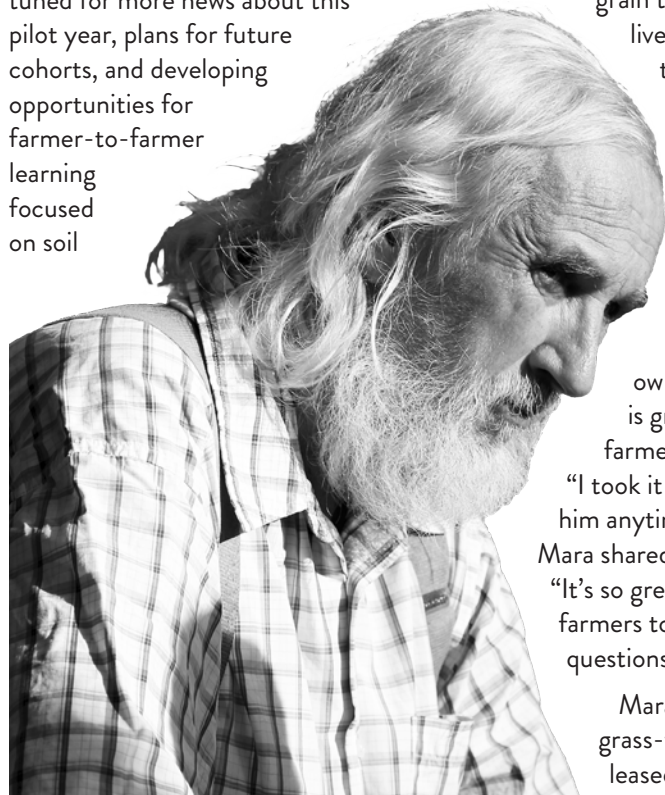
The 2021 Jack Lazor Soil Stewards Dig In

By Megan Browning, Farmer Services Program Facilitator

The Jack Lazor Memorial Soil Stewards cohort kicked off this spring thanks in part to generous support from Stonyfield Organic, the Lazor Family, and Organic Valley.

The first cohort for this pilot year is an incredible group of twelve inspiring livestock and dairy farmers who are excited to enhance their knowledge of soil health and share best practices with each other.

The group has gathered virtually twice this spring, once with Sarah Flack and once with Heather Darby to share goals and dive deep into soil tests and whole-farm nutrient cycling. The farmer cohort will gather in-person several times this growing season for on-farm visits that will include pasture walks, soil assessment demonstrations, in-depth farmer-to-farmer discussions, and many opportunities for shared learning! Since the launch of the Soil Stewards cohort, NOFA-VT has been grateful to receive additional financial support from several generous supporters, and has heard broad interest from farmers about participating in cohort based learning opportunities about soil health. Stay tuned for more news about this pilot year, plans for future cohorts, and developing opportunities for farmer-to-farmer learning focused on soil



health and climate resilience.

A SPRING VISIT TO LEVY LAMB & WAYWARD GOOSE FARM

On an unseasonably hot spring day, I drove down to West Pawlet to catch up with two of the participating Soil Health Stewards: Mara Hearst of Levy Lamb, and Dan and Laurie Brooks of Wayward Goose Farm. The farmers live just around the corner and collaborate frequently; Mara sells her lamb and other products at the Wayward Goose farm market and also works as their bookkeeper as part of her off-farm job.

Mara spent years working at Someday Farm in Dorset and met Jack Lazor through an interest in growing grain to feed livestock on the farm. Over the years, Mara learned a great deal from Jack about stewarding the land. Now in her fourth season running her own farming operation, she is grateful to have a group of farmers to continue learning with. “I took it for granted that I could call him anytime and ask him anything,” Mara shared about Jack. She continued, “It’s so great to have this group of farmers to ask questions of and who ask questions I didn’t even know I had.”

Mara manages a flock of 50 grass-fed ewes on two parcels of leased land, one in West Pawlet

and one in Dorset. She always knew she wanted to raise animals that fit into the landscape and over time, and came to believe firmly that sheep improve the land when managed well. This past year the herd produced 70 lambs, and with grass

season back in action, her flock is working actively each day to reclaim land that has historically been without much biological activity. Brush hogging pastures to clip down weeds and open up space for sunlight to kill off parasites has been helpful in advance of moving the herd in to do their work improving the land.

A few of the things Mara is thinking and learning about: proper stocking rates for her land base; how to improve winter housing for her herd; and the challenges of getting slaughter dates, especially for small ruminants like sheep. She is also navigating the realities of leasing land and how best to invest in land in which she may not have long-

term tenure.

After taking a walk through the pasture and moving the herd to a new paddock, we drove up the road to visit with Dan and Laurie at Wayward Goose Farm. Dan and Laurie have faced lots of twists and turns in their farming journey, the most recent of which was losing both their primary milk market and facing the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic within a few months of each other. Their skill, resilience, and community support have led them to open a farm market, downsize their milking herd, and diversify their operation through the production of sweet corn, potatoes, and



“I took it for granted that I could call him anytime and ask him anything... it’s so great to have this group of farmers to ask questions of, and who ask questions I didn’t even know I had.”

a few other vegetables this year. In addition to their raw milk, the market is stocked with a wealth of local products from nearby farms including a wide variety of cheeses, vegetables, honey, bread, coffee, home-baked treats and so much more. The space is full of beautiful artwork and feels like a celebration of all the delicious and nutritious food the area has to offer. Dan also delivers milk to a few local creameries for cheese production, and partners with Ice House Farm (another participant in the Soil Stewards cohort!) who makes cream-top yogurt from Wayward Goose Farm milk that is sold at their farm market.

Having grown up on a fifth-generation dairy farm, Dan has a great deal of experience managing pastured animals. While we visited, the cows grazed nearby on lush pasture that has been coming back to full life over the ten and half years that Dan and Laurie have been managing the farm and grazing cows on the land. Through the Soil Stewards cohort, farmers like Dan, Laurie and Mara come together with other farmers from across the state with a wide range of experience to learn together, inspire each other, and carry on the legacy of soil building that Jack Lazor leaves behind. “We feel fortunate to have other inspiring farmers like Mara nearby that we can share resources and ideas and manpower with,” Dan and Laurie shared, “and the soil cohort has given us a broader range of farmers and farms from further afield to connect with and learn from.” ♦



Dan & Laurie Brooks
Wayward Goose Farm
West Pawlet, VT



Matt Choiniere
Choiniere Family Farm
Highgate Center, VT



Serena Best
Ancestral Farm | White River
Junction, VT



Kelsey & Phelan O'Connor
Pigasus Meats | South Hero, VT



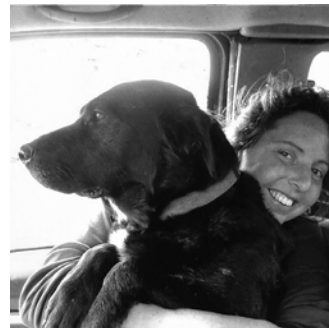
Chad & Morgan Beckwith
Ice House Farm | Goshen, VT



Mara Hurst
Levy Lamb LLC | Dorset, VT



Patrick Harrison
Addison County



Melanie Harrison
Addison County



Christine Lazor
Butterworks Farm | Westfield, VT



Guy Choiniere
Choiniere Family Farm
Highgate Center, VT



Danielle Zimmerman
Maeflower Farms | Rupert, VT



Ashlyn Bristle
Rebop Farm | Brattleboro, VT

SUPPORT OUR SOIL HEALTH STEWARDS NETWORK

To make a gift to the Jack Lazor Soil Health Memorial Fund, please visit nofavt.org/ donate and select Jack Lazor Soil Health Memorial Fund.

Alternatively, you can mail a check made out to NOFA-VT to:

NOFA-VT
PO Box 697,
Richmond, VT 05477

For checks, please add the note 'Jack Lazor Soil Health Memorial Fund' in the memo line.

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Apply to be a
vendor!

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Downtown

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Open 7am - 10pm every day

Burlington, Vermont • www.citymarket.coop/vendors

South End

207 Flynn Ave • (802) 540-6400

Open 7am - 9pm every day

A Warm Welcome to our New Staff!

Expect to see big moves on our website, social media, and right here in NOFA Notes, because we have a whole new marketing department! If you would like marketing support for your farm or food business, please don't hesitate to reach out to our Farmer Services team. We're here to help!



Christine Hill

Marketing & Communications Director

Christine is a natural communicator and storyteller about the things she's passionate about, which are the people, movements, and organizations changing the world. For the past 10 years she's worked at community-based non-profit organizations in Vermont using design, digital and traditional media, and storytelling to inspire social change. She's thrilled to work in service to the farm and food workers who sustain her and her community! Christine is also an illustrator, artist, and burgeoning naturalist. On summer weekends you'll find her seeking out class 4 roads on her gravel bike, searching for the most scenic campsites to park her '87 Westfalia, and preparing truly enormous salads with farmers market finds.



Lindsey Brand

Marketing & Communications Coordinator

Lindsey is a communicator, educator, and lifelong learner committed to the justice movements changing the conditions of people's lives. She studied environmental science and strategic communication at University of Denver before pursuing a career in environmental education. She worked as a communicator and marketer for a number of environmental and social nonprofits, including The Nature Conservancy and the Farm to Ballet Project. Lindsey grew up in Vermont and is excited to return and support a just and thriving local food system. When not at work, she enjoys gardening, ski touring, and trying to transform old fabric into clothes on her sewing machine.

Your Neighboring VERMONT FOOD CO-OPS

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Putney Food Co-op — Celebrating 80 Years at the Heart of the Community!

Food co-ops are people like you, working together to ensure access to healthy food, support local producers, and build good jobs. Find out what the buzz is about at your neighboring Vermont food co-op!

- Brattleboro Food Co-op, Brattleboro, VT
- Buffalo Mountain Food Co-op, Hardwick, VT
- City Market, Onion River Co-op, Downtown & South End Burlington, VT
- Co-op Food Stores, White River Junction, VT
- Hunger Mountain Co-op, Montpelier, VT
- Middlebury Natural Foods Co-op, Middlebury, VT
- Morrisville Food Co-op, Morrisville, VT
- Plainfield Food Co-op, Plainfield, VT
- Putney Food Co-op, Putney, VT
- Rutland Area Food Co-op, Rutland, VT
- Springfield Food Co-op, Springfield, VT
- Upper Valley Food Co-op, White River Junction, VT



Working Together to Grow a More Healthy, Just & Sustainable Food System!



LEARN MORE AT WWW.NFCA.COOP



12 Years of SNAP Incentives at Vermont's Farmers Markets

By Emmet Moseley, Community Food Access Coordinator

Harvest Health, Vermont's first farmers market SNAP Incentive program, began in 2009. In 2015 the program was renamed Crop Cash, but the mission remained the same: to boost the buying power of SNAP (known in Vermont as 3SquaresVT) shoppers to purchase local fruits, vegetables and edible plant starts to and support direct market farms at the same time. When a customer uses their SNAP benefits at a participating market (find a list of these at nofavt.org/cropcash), the first \$10 they spend is matched with \$10 of Crop Cash. Crop Cash can be used to purchase fruits, vegetables, seeds, and edible plant starts directly from producers at that market. NOFA-VT then uses federal funds to reimburse the growers for the Crop Cash they receive.

In 2018 NOFA-VT received funding for another four years and

expanded the program to include some CSAs and Farm Stands, but Farmers Markets have remained at the core of the program. This year in coalition with organizations in Rhode Island, Maine, New Hampshire, and Connecticut, NOFA-VT has applied for another three years of funding through the USDA's Gus Schumacher Covid Relief and Response Program. 2020-2021 saw the largest amount of Crop Cash redeemed in the program's history—over \$80,000—which is more than 20 times what SNAP shoppers redeemed in 2011. In 2020, Pandemic related

restrictions on the operations of farmers markets meant that seven participating markets did not open at all and many remaining markets had their seasons curtailed. In spite of all the challenges, SNAP sales and



Crop Cash redemption at Vermont farmers markets increased compared to 2019, showing once again that farmers markets are vital food access points for lower income Vermonters.

We at NOFA-VT are looking forward to many more years of supporting SNAP shoppers, Vermont farmers, and thriving farmers markets through the Crop Cash Program. ♦



Thank you!

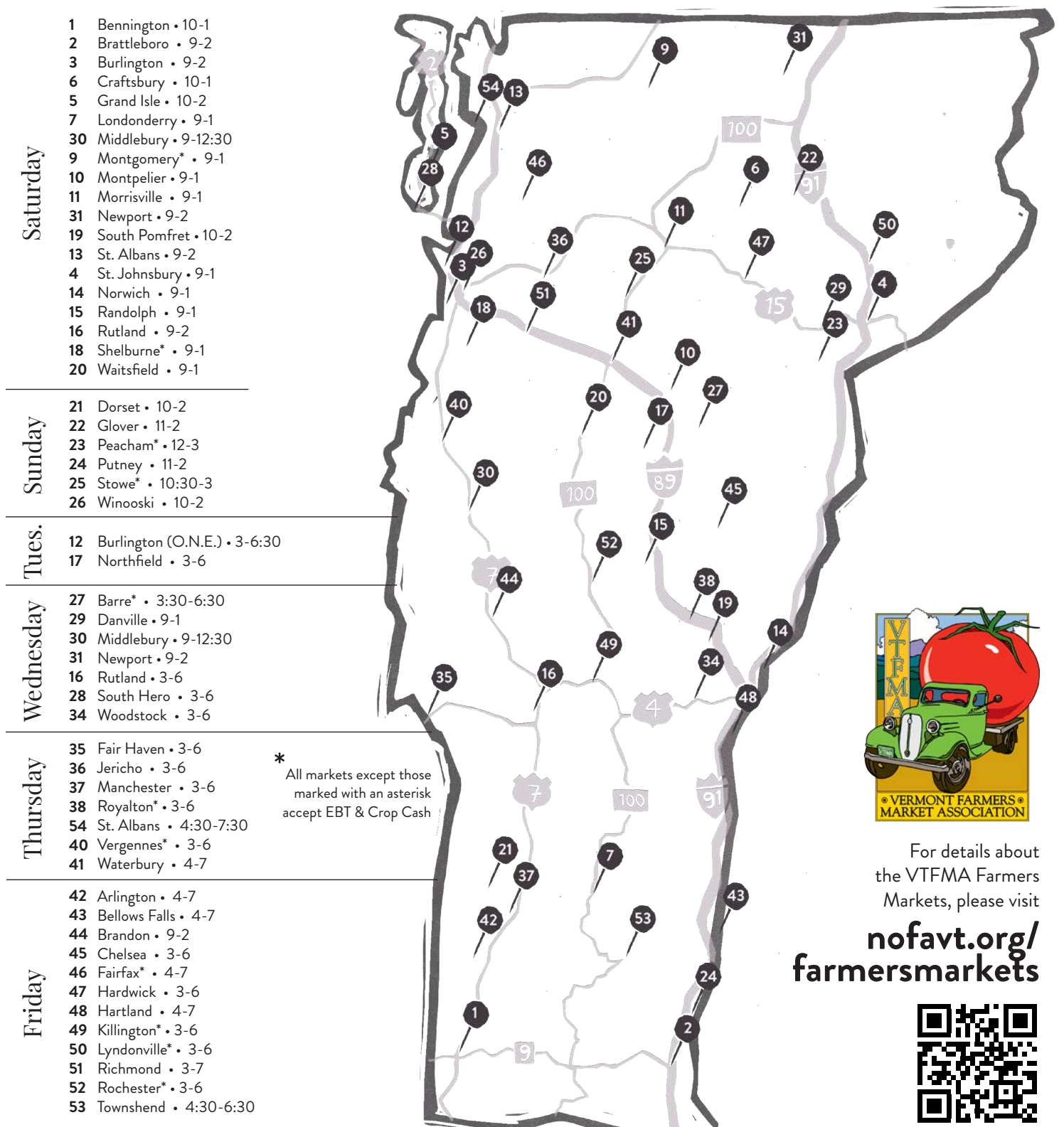
We're so grateful for the support of our gleaning and Vermonters Feeding Vermonters partner farms. Together, we're sharing Vermont's bounty with all.

Vermont Foodbank
vtfoodbank.org

2021 Summer Farmers Markets

By Andrew Graham, Direct Markets Coordinator

Farmers markets across Vermont are opening up again! Several markets shut down completely in 2020, and the markets that were able to stay open often faced intense restrictions, shorter seasons, and lower attendance. Now is the time to show up and support farmers by buying direct! Farmers markets are a wonderful way to support your local farmers while reconnecting with our communities after a long and difficult "pandemic winter." Check out our 2021 Vermont Farmers Market Association Summer Markets:



Saturday

- 1 Bennington • 10-1
- 2 Brattleboro • 9-2
- 3 Burlington • 9-2
- 6 Craftsbury • 10-1
- 5 Grand Isle • 10-2
- 7 Londonderry • 9-1
- 30 Middlebury • 9-12:30
- 9 Montgomery* • 9-1
- 10 Montpelier • 9-1
- 11 Morrisville • 9-1
- 31 Newport • 9-2
- 19 South Pomfret • 10-2
- 13 St. Albans • 9-2
- 4 St. Johnsbury • 9-1
- 14 Norwich • 9-1
- 15 Randolph • 9-1
- 16 Rutland • 9-2
- 18 Shelburne* • 9-1
- 20 Waitsfield • 9-1

Sunday

- 21 Dorset • 10-2
- 22 Glover • 11-2
- 23 Peacham* • 12-3
- 24 Putney • 11-2
- 25 Stowe* • 10:30-3
- 26 Winooski • 10-2

Tues.

- 12 Burlington (O.N.E.) • 3-6:30
- 17 Northfield • 3-6

Wednesday

- 27 Barre* • 3:30-6:30
- 29 Danville • 9-1
- 30 Middlebury • 9-12:30
- 31 Newport • 9-2
- 16 Rutland • 3-6
- 28 South Hero • 3-6
- 34 Woodstock • 3-6

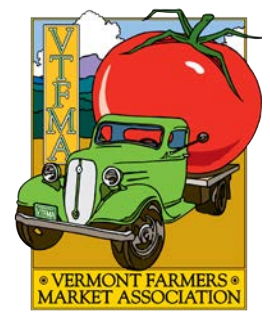
Thursday

- 35 Fair Haven • 3-6
- 36 Jericho • 3-6
- 37 Manchester • 3-6
- 38 Royalton* • 3-6
- 54 St. Albans • 4:30-7:30
- 40 Vergennes* • 3-6
- 41 Waterbury • 4-7

* All markets except those marked with an asterisk accept EBT & Crop Cash

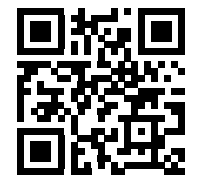
Friday

- 42 Arlington • 4-7
- 43 Bellows Falls • 4-7
- 44 Brandon • 9-2
- 45 Chelsea • 3-6
- 46 Fairfax* • 4-7
- 47 Hardwick • 3-6
- 48 Hartland • 4-7
- 49 Killington* • 3-6
- 50 Lyndonville* • 3-6
- 51 Richmond • 3-7
- 52 Rochester* • 3-6
- 53 Townshend • 4:30-6:30



For details about the VTFMA Farmers Markets, please visit

nofavt.org/farmersmarkets



Local Purchasing Incentives for Vermont Schools

By Kayla Strom, Farm to School Coordinator

The 2021 legislative session brought about a big win for the Farm to School movement in Vermont. We are thrilled that the Vermont Legislature passed a Local Foods Purchasing Incentive bill, and that they have allocated \$500,000 towards this initiative. Throughout the legislative process, we heard incredible testimony from parents, schools and Farm to School allies about how important it is to make sure our school children have access to fresh, nutritious local food.

The Local Foods Purchasing bill will establish a program that encourages schools to buy more Vermont food for their school meals by offering an additional



reimbursement to schools that achieve local purchasing targets. Those schools that are already purchasing local food will get an immediate boost in year one, while others will get help to be ready to benefit from the program in future years. The bill also creates a new position in the Child Nutrition Program at the Agency of Education to support schools who want to purchase more local food, and it sets up a task force to help the state move toward our goal of Universal School Meals for all Vermont students.

NOFA-VT's Farm to School & Food Access Programs Director,

Helen Rortvedt, and Farm to School Coordinator, Kayla Strom, will be expanding their reach this fall to provide more technical assistance throughout the state by supporting schools strategize and track local purchases and help to build relationships with farms and local food hubs and distributors in their region. But the work does not end there. NOFA-VT and our partner Farm to School organizers will be back at the State House in January to ensure that this important program will be permanently funded so increased local purchasing becomes the new standard.

Until then, it's time to raise our pints (of strawberries), cheers, and celebrate this victory for Vermont kids and farmers! Many thanks go out to everyone who helped pave the way for this bill to pass. And, as always, we hold deep gratitude for the farmers, school nutrition professionals, parents, and teachers who work tirelessly to feed children fresh, healthy, local food each day, in every school in Vermont. ♦

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\$85k in Resilience Grants Rewarded to 36 Farms Around Vermont

By Megan Browning, Farmer Services Program Facilitator

This spring, NOFA-VT conducted our second round of Resilience Grants, intended to fund projects that will improve longer term resilience on farms.

These grants were funded in part from donations to our COVID-19 Response Fund as well as generous support from The WaterWheel Foundation, King Arthur Baking Company, The Alchemist, Lindsay Quella & Nick Haslett, and Jamie Quella.

We received 100 applications from farmers around the state, and with the available funds, were able to award thirty-six grants totaling over \$85,000. Ten of the grants went to farms and food businesses led by Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC).

We learned a lot through this process about how farms are thinking about resilience as well as the vast range of needs to keep farms viable into the future.

We've highlighted a few of the projects here to give you a sense of the range of projects that we funded:

THE ABENAKI TRIBAL GARDEN, KOASEK OF THE KOAS TRADITIONAL BAND OF THE ABENAKI NATION, WEST BRAINTREE

This project is run by a group of Abenaki growers in the Koasek band who will use the funds to expand their Abenaki Tribal Garden. At this garden, they teach children and their parents to grow organic vegetables, especially traditional Indigenous varieties.

UNDERSTORY FARM, BRIDPORT

This flower farm will use the grant to plant blackberries and raspberries to diversify their farm products and markets, and also use the foliage for floral bouquets.

FLYING DOG FARM WITH LUNA BLEU FARM, SOUTH ROYALTON

This multi-generational farm operation will use the funds to implement a cover cropping system that benefits vegetables, pigs, and whole ecosystem health with a focus on the farm's long term soil health.

REBOP FARM, BRATTLEBORO

This dairy and livestock farm will use the funds to purchase poultry slaughter infrastructure, which will allow them to expand their poultry operations, improve their soil health, and meet their community's demand for local poultry.

1000 STONE FARM, BROOKFIELD

This diversified vegetable farm will expand biodiversity and overall ecosystem health by inter-planting tree lanes of fruit trees, cover crops, wood shrubs, biomass willows, and extensive pollinator habitat.

INTERVALE COMMUNITY FARM, BURLINGTON

This CSA vegetable farm will use the funds to pay a racial equity trainer to do an intensive racial justice training with their staff and board.

NORTHWIND FARM, CABOT

This farm has experienced firsthand the threats posed by climate change as they have had increased power outages in recent years that have resulted in pauses in their production. The funds will be used



to purchase a generator to keep the farm operational during future power outages.

GREENFIELD HIGHLAND BEEF, PLAINFIELD

This beef farm hosts many on-farm agritourism opportunities and will use these funds to create wheelchair accessibility for viewing their heritage highland cattle in order to offer more inclusive agritourism opportunities on their farm. ♦

We encourage you to visit nofavt.org/resilience to read through the full list of awardees and projects.

Thank you to our generous sponsors:



Farming & Parenting: an interview with Hannah Doyle of Boneyard Farm

Interview by Kate Spring of Good Heart Farmstead

Hannah Doyle is the owner of Boneyard Farm in Fletcher where she and her husband, John, recently purchased an old dairy farm with help from the Vermont Land Trust. They raise pastured pork and chickens, grow vegetables for their farm stand and farmers markets, and are busy setting up their new place. Hannah participated in NOFA-VT's, "Help! I'm Farming and Caretaking in a Pandemic!" series this winter, and on a Tuesday in mid-May, she took a break from planting to talk with me more about the juggle of farming and parenting.

Kate: Before we get into farming and parenting, I'd love to hear about how you got into farming.

Hannah: I grew up homesteading. My family always had a really big garden, we made maple syrup, we raised sheep, cows and pigs as household livestock, just to feed our family. So it was always part of my life. Knowing where your food came from was important but it wasn't dogmatic — it was just how we did it growing up in rural Vermont.

I worked on other people's farms for a long time and really loved the lifestyle of waking up early and working hard outside all day no matter what weather was thrown at us. The tangible work of farming really means a lot to me. Eventually, I ended up at a year-round farm and managed their hoop houses and home farm operations. I loved being in a management position, organizing people's strengths and all the tasks that had to happen on a farm.



Then in 2017, I got pregnant and couldn't stay there because they didn't offer health insurance. I was six months pregnant when I left. It was so clear to me that I wasn't going to be able to get to someone else's farm at 6:30 every morning and stay till 8pm. That's when I decided to become a farm-at-home mom. It made a lot of sense to come home and help my husband with his business. We already had a homestead on the side, and were selling chicken and pork shares to family and neighbors, so we had a proof of concept.

Kate: I've talked with other young farmers who've said that they don't see how they'll be able to turn farming into a career because they didn't have health insurance.

Hannah: It's so common for farmers to not have health insurance. Then there's also the schedule and the demands of working for someone else. I felt like there was no path for me to be a parent working on someone else's farm, but this is the work that I really really want to do.

When I was managing someone else's farm I had a ton of responsibility and a ton of work, but I didn't have the flexibility. I was so excited to have my own farm because I knew that in the heat of the day, I could go indoors with my kids. Like last week was really hard for [my son] Reuben. He's 3 and he's had a ton of huge changes in his life recently. So I had to just say, "I'm not going to get that much done on the farm this week. I'm going to keep the animals alive and focus on parenting."

It's that kind of flexibility



that I really looked forward to in having my own farm and schedule. You're working 7 days a week, but not necessarily 14 hours straight. There's always work to do, but you can also go inside to get a popsicle whenever you want.

Kate: What are some challenges you've felt, specifically as a mother and a farmer?

Hannah: There's so much I could say. The physical and mental workload is often underestimated. It's tricky because people think it's very quaint, like you get to be relaxing on this beautiful farm with your children all day long. But farming is not relaxing. There are moments of great joy and beauty and serenity, but also — I'm putting out fires all day long, problem solving and trying to work around animals and children, and dragging hoses from one end of the farm to the other with a double stroller and a bucket. Every single task is made more difficult because there are kids involved.

Kate: If you could go back and tell your pregnant self something from your current self, what advice would you give?

Hannah: I think the advice I'd give to first time pregnant Hannah is the same

advice I'd give myself now, which is to manage expectations better than I'm doing. I am my own worst critic and my own biggest source of pressure and stress. I always want things to be perfect and on time, and I'm so high-strung about a lot of things I don't need to be high-strung about. I'm getting a little better at it, which is why I'd give the advice to younger me to just relax and enjoy it more than I do.

I often feel this invisible pressure from my customers, who are literally just cheering me on. I think they're going to be so disappointed if I don't have lettuce at the first farmers market, or they're going to say, 'what do those people think they're doing buying this 180-acre farm when they just have 20 pigs and 140 laying hens?'

But no one is saying that at all. They're just happy we bought this farm and we're doing something, and I'm out here working my butt off every day. They're not disappointed in me and I don't need to put that on myself.

It's important to celebrate the wins more. My kids are happy, all the animals got water today and we do have a beautiful life, and somehow I'm still going to get something to the first farmers market this year, despite having moved a month ago and having a four-month old baby and a toddler and a million things to do.

So I'd say go easy on myself, and know that people around me are actually cheering me on.

Kate: I judge myself, too. We get all these societal messages that mothers are supposed to do everything, and do it really well, and it's not good enough to just sit and be with your kid, or sit and celebrate the wins, because there's 20 other things you need to get done and you need to get it done perfectly. Every time I talk to

someone about this, I realize it's not just me being hard on myself.

Hannah: It's everybody. Yeah, it definitely helps to have solidarity. Like the NOFA-VT's Zoom calls about caregiving and parenting during a pandemic this winter, it was helpful to say I'm not doing this alone, and there's a whole bunch of mostly women caretakers out there who are struggling with these same things.

Sometimes I feel pressured to want to parent all the time. It would be totally warranted for John to have a construction business and for me to "just" be a stay-at-home mom. I have these two kids and they demand a lot from me. I could just be hanging out in the shade in the backyard playing in the sandbox, but I want to be working on my farm.

Sometimes I also feel this guilt about trying to be productive while parenting. I'm shaming myself for being productive and being unproductive at the same time. I'm darned if I do and darned if I don't. If I'm

transplanting lettuce, I'm feeling guilty that I'm not parenting. If I'm parenting then I'm not only feeling guilty that things on the farm should be getting done, but I want to be doing those things. I like doing those things. That's my passion and my career choice, and I can't do it right now because of this time of my life. That can sometimes lead to some resentment and I feel gross about it, but I also want to be able to say that. I don't love being a mom 100% of the time. There are days I can really use a break from it.

I've been working so hard for a decade to get to where I am right now, to own my own large farm

and be setting it up, and then to have to take a break to wipe a bum...it's frustrating some days. AND I love love love where I am and what I'm doing. But I want to be able to say, this kind of sucks sometimes.

Kate: It does, and I think it's really important to say all of those things. I've been reading a book called *Hunt, Gather, Parent*, about parenting in the US versus parenting in most of the rest of the world, where Indigenous approaches to parenting are still the norm. One thing I've learned is that the idea of a stay-at-home parent and making everything kid centered is atypical for how humans have developed.

There's a lot of benefit to having your kids helping and working alongside you, or having other people coming in to help, too.

Hannah: Yeah, that's nice to hear. That's comforting... ♦

"It was helpful to say, 'I'm not doing this alone, and there's a whole bunch of mostly women caretakers out there who are struggling with these same things.'"

To read the full interview, visit nofavt.org/hannah

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Legislative Recap

Maddie Kempner, Policy Director

Vermont's 2021 legislative session adjourned on May 21st. We saw progress on several of our policy priorities this year, as well as initiatives championed by some of our partners. Here's what's going on (at the time of this printing):

VERMONT LEGISLATIVE RECAP

FOOD SECURITY & SCHOOL NUTRITION

The Local Purchasing Incentive for schools passed both the Senate and the House (via H.106), and was signed in June by Governor Scott. This program provides increased reimbursement rates for schools who source a certain percentage of their food for school meals locally. In addition to language establishing the program, \$500,000 was appropriated for FY22 to this initiative. Since the appropriation was made using one-time federal funds (through the American Rescue Plan Act, or ARPA), we will need to be back at the State House next year to advocate for continuing this program with permanent funding. Companion pieces of this package, including Universal Meals and the Farm to School and Early Childhood grants program, did not make it all the way through this year and we will be back to work alongside our partners on these initiatives in 2022.

ADEQUATE SHELTER FOR LIVESTOCK

An amendment was made in H.421 to clarify that farmers are not subject to enforcement if they do not provide shade/shelter for animals at all times to "prevent direct exposure to the elements."

AGRICULTURAL INNOVATION BOARD

H.434 was passed by the House and Senate and signed by the Governor

on June 1. This new law creates an "Agricultural Innovation Board" to replace the VT Pesticide Advisory Council and, among other things, "Recommend[s] practices that reduce the use of and exposure to pesticides and synthetic fertilizers in order to protect soil biology, human health, and environmental health."

RAW MILK

H.218 (now Act 22) expands raw milk sales for tier two producers to farm stands and CSAs of other farms in Vermont.

ON-FARM SLAUGHTER

H.420, the so-called "miscellaneous ag bill," included provisions that double on-farm slaughter allowances, repeals the sunset of the law, and directs legislation by 2022 that will clearly allow for CSAs with animal shares.

SOCIAL JUSTICE & EQUITY

While we are pleased with the progress we saw in several of our priority areas outlined above, unfortunately we saw little (or no) progress on bills that focus in whole or in part on racial equity. S.25, a bill that addresses aspects of the emerging adult-use cannabis market, fell far short of the demands we and our partners put forward in terms of social and economic equity, as well as market access for small cultivators. The lead advocates behind H.273, the BIPOC-Led Land Access and Opportunity Act, were offered only minimal opportunities to testify this session and the bill did not pass out of its initial committee. We will continue to work in partnership with allies to advocate for meaningful and substantial progress around land access and equity across all parts of our food and farming system.

PAYMENT FOR ECOSYSTEM SERVICES & SOIL HEALTH WORKING GROUP

The "PES" & Soil Health Working

Group continues to meet biweekly and has broken into task groups focused on soil health, economics, and program design. In our seat representing small scale, diversified farmers, NOFA-VT tries to be a voice for and connector to those producers, while advocating for an approach to PES that acknowledges and includes "early adopters," and accounts for a broad suite of ecosystem services including biodiversity, both below and above ground. During this session, the legislature extended the life of the Working Group to February 2023 and provided \$250,000 in additional funding to support its continuation.



FEDERAL ADVOCACY

ORGANIC CERTIFICATION COST SHARE

In more good news for the organic community, USDA will be providing up to \$20 million in additional organic certification cost share assistance. This additional funding is a much-needed boost for organic producers after the previous Administration—in the midst of the pandemic—cut organic certification cost share funding part-way through the 2020 growing season. The additional organic certification cost share funding will also include assistance for producers who are transitioning to organic.

Recap, continued on page 19

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

A warm welcome to the following members who joined us or renewed their membership in the 2nd quarter of 2021:

New Members

Alpenglow Farm, Warren, VT
Amy Robinson and Simeon Geigel,
Newport, VT
Annette Higby and Marty Strange,
Randolph, VT
Barbara Richardson and Terry Souers,
Brandon, VT
Black River Equipment, Albany, VT
Brian Basor, Calais, VT
Brian O'Connor, Concord, MA
Bridget Sampson, Charlotte, VT
Chris Sims, Jericho, VT
Coburn Gardens, Plainfield, VT
Dan & Gail MacArthur, Marlboro, VT
Deborah Kahn, Montpelier, VT
Denison Farm, Schaghticoke, NY
Des Marais Farm, Brandon, VT
Drinkwine Household, Starksboro, VT
Elizabeth Urie, Brookfield, VT
Fable Farm, Barnard, VT
Farm Craft VT, Shelburne, VT
Fiala Household, Glens Falls, NY
Greg & Jennifer Bouchard, Franklin, VT
Greg Smith, Reading, VT
Harrison's Homegrown, Addison, VT
Helen Fields, Stamford, VT

Ingrid Thornton, Fairfield, VT
Jennifer Cassidy, Burlington, VT
Johannesson Household, Shoreham, VT
John Payne, Winoski, VT
Jon Deloge, Newfane, VT
Julie Holland, Guilford, VT
Julie Vincent & Chris Jones, Brookfield, VT
June Leggett Murphy, Lyndonville, VT
Karina Warsaw, Charlotte, VT
Kevin Powers, Marlboro, VT
Laporte Household, Waterbury Center, VT
Leona Bergman, Orford, NH
Lilly Farms at Marshall Park, East Dover,
VT
Long Winter Farm, Stowe, VT
Lopez Household, Bolton, VT
Louise & Richard Bouffard, Newport
Center, VT
Luke & Lori Choiniere, Highgate Center,
VT
Maeflower Farms, Pawlet, VT
Maisie Anrod, Newport, VT
Meaghin Kennedy & Justin Reidy,
Charlotte, VT
Michael Kornfeld, Norwich, VT
Michele Bushey, Fletcher, VT

Miller Farm, Vernon, VT
Myrrh Meadow Farm, Hartland, VT
Naked Acre Farm, Hyde Park, VT
North Hollow Berry Farm, Hardwick, VT
Old West Church Farm, Adamant, VT
On Farm Focus, South Royalton, VT
Opera House Farm, Vershire, VT
Paul Kervick, Ferrisburgh, VT
Penny Miller, Underhill, VT
Phyl Newbeck, Jericho, VT
Rhonna Cass, Manchester Center, VT
River House Farm, Randolph Center, VT
Rosenthal Household, West Berlin, VT
Russell Brown, East Haven, VT
Sam Crocker, Eden, VT
Sav Thomas, South Royalton, VT
Seth Wilner, Newport, NH
Shawn Bryan, Berlin, VT
Side Hill Cider Mill, Vershire, VT
Simplicity Farm, Waitsfield, VT
Susan McGarry, Middlebury, VT
Sweet Roots Farm, Charlotte, VT
Twery Household, Burlington, VT
Two Sisters Farm, Johnson, VT
Wayward Goose Farm, West Pawlet, VT
Yvette Lanneaux, Princeton, NJ

New & Renewing Business Members

Addison County Commission Sales Inc., Middlebury, VT
All Souls Tortilleria, Burlington, VT
Aromed Essentials, Barre, VT
Bravo Botanicals, Brattleboro, VT
Clear Brook Farm, Shaftsbury, VT
Dobra US LLC, Burlington, VT
Elmore Mountain Farm, Morrisville, VT
High Mowing Organic Seeds, Wolcott, VT
Jericho Farmers Market, Jericho, VT
King Arthur Baking Company, White River Junction, VT
Moon and Stars, Vershire, VT
Nitty Gritty Grain Company of Vermont, Charlotte, VT
O Bread Bakery, Shelburne, VT
Peter Young, Plainfield, VT
Quarry Road Farms, Middlebury, VT
Retreat Farm, Brattleboro, VT
Rhapsody Natural Foods, Cabot, VT
Sunsoil, Hardwick, VT
Sustainable Woodstock, Woodstock, VT
Sweet Tree Holdings, Island Pond, VT
The PlantDoc, South Burlington, VT
Upper Valley Food Coop, White River Junction, VT
Upstate Elevator Supply Co., Burlington, VT
Vermont Land Trust, Woodstock, VT
Vermont Soap, Middlebury, VT
Willsboro Farm, Willsboro, NY

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1. Support organic farmers & the Vermont working landscape
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4. Increase agricultural awareness and understanding
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ORIGIN OF LIVESTOCK

USDA reopened the comment period (again!) for the Origin of Livestock rule. Comments were due July 12th. The primary questions USDA asked were: 1) whether dairy animals transitioned from conventional to organic (rather than raised organically from the last third of gestation) should be allowed to be sold as organic, and 2) whether the USDA can/should regulate the transition of dairy livestock at the "producer" level vs. the "operation" level as a means of preventing continuous transition. We will continue to advocate and report on this issue.

CLIMATE SOLUTIONS

Finally, we are proud to have joined a letter along with over 450 agriculture and conservation groups calling on Congress to invest more than \$200 billion over ten years to bolster farm bill conservation, research, renewable energy, forestry, and regional food system and supply chain resilience programs as part of the pending climate change and infrastructure package—the American Jobs Plan Act. We continue to track negotiations at the federal level around climate-smart agriculture, and will push for inclusion of organic agriculture as a key piece of the solution. ♦



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for all or a portion of their operation, joining the more than 700 organic farmers & processors throughout the state.



AJ's Happy Chick Farm, LLC

Andre Villeneuve

Chris Comishock

Eco Bean and Greens

Golden Dog Farm LLC

Griffin Corse

Head Over Fields, LLC

Homestead Permaculture, LLC

Hunger Moon Farm

John Andersen

Joseph G Daley Jr

Mad River Botanicals

Morgan Brook Farm

Muchacho Taco

Next Chapter Farm, LLC

Northeast Maple Products

Prospect Maples

Side Hill Cider Mill

Learn more about the benefits of certified organic, locally grown at NOFAVT.ORG/WHY-ORGANIC



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Thurs. July 15th | 5:30 - 7:30pm

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Wed. August 4th | 5:30 - 7:30pm

TAMARLANE FARM | Lyndonville

Thurs. August 12th | 5:30 - 7:30pm

CLEAR BROOK FARM | Shaftsbury

Wed. August 18th | 5:30 - 7:30pm

ABENAKI LAND LINK HARVEST FESTIVAL, THE FARM AT VYCC | Richmond

Sat. Sept. 25th | 11-3pm

Pre-registration is required. Learn more and RSVP at NOFAVT.ORG/50