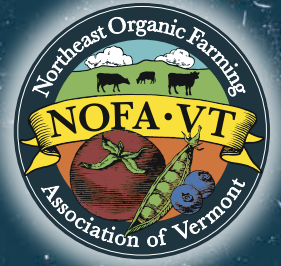


NOFA Notes



Quarterly newsletter of the Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont

Winter 2021-2022



Winter Conference Preview | Ice House Farm Feature | Farms Feeding VT Kids
Abenaki Land Link Recap | Horizon Organic Update

NOFA-VT

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Photos, from left to right, top to bottom: Koasek Calais Mix Corn harvested for the Abenaki Land Link Project, food prepared to stretch the harvest through winter, the NOFA-VT staff and board at our latest quarterly meeting, and Jon Turner of Wild Roots Farm with his Algonquin squash harvest for the Abenaki Land Link Project.

Dear friend of NOFA-VT,

I've recently come back to work from maternity leave. As always when we can lift our heads out of our daily patterns, I've regained a sharpened sense of clarity and purpose.

In my first weeks back I've had my baby in tow, from a Zoom team meeting to a farm visit, from a pre-session discussion with legislators to a collaborative planning retreat with international farmers' associations. I've been nervous about how this would go—how would I/we handle the logistics of nursing while discussing the working lands budget? How would comforting a fussy newborn feel while walking through a muddy field during stick season? Would this be "professional"?

On one of my first days back, we had an all-staff and board meeting outside on a farm, where I took a deep sigh of relief to see I was just one of three people who had children joining them. I remembered the picture of Enid (in blessed memory) and Kirsten, long-time NOFA-VT leaders, holding their babies while standing by as the Organic Awareness Day Proclamation was signed in 1995. I was reminded that how we do our work—in community, in service to land, welcoming our whole selves, with children—is inseparable from the outcome of our work, for all our children. We're only going to get to where we're all longing to go if the path we chart to get there reflects our values. In fact, there may be no "arrival" but rather, the constant remaking of how we live, now, together.

I am grateful to work in a community that celebrates wholeness. For colleagues and farmer members who not only accepted that I had a baby who sometimes fussed, but who took turns in cooing to or bouncing her.

Movement organizer adrienne maree brown shares an idea about successful movements working like a flock of geese: collectively moving towards a goal they feel in their bodies so strongly that they do not need to stop and discuss directions. They all take turns at the tip of the V formation, pushing hard against the wind, and then fall back into an easier position when they need to. They cycle elegantly between leading and resting because they are moving as one, instinctively pulled towards their collective home.

I felt a taste of that sense watching other people lead meetings while I stepped back to nurse the baby. I also felt a sense of that watching The Vermont Farm to Plate Network's recent plenary, hearing other farmers raise up the messages I'm also longing to speak and hear: the need to treasure and protect our soil and biodiverse forms of life; the need to keep our communities fed with nutrient-dense food; the need for clean water for all life to flourish; the need to center those voices most marginalized and oppressed by our current systems for the most critical wisdom to emerge. It's so relieving to know we're all in this together; we can't and won't do it alone. We're all going to take turns and play our small roles, cycling between leading and listening.

A profound thing that happens when you have a new baby in your arms is you are humbled and raw in your love for the world. Your sense of how precious and beautiful it all is, your tenacity and commitment to defending our planet as a home for all our children is made new. Jaded cynicism does not feel like an option when you're holding a little one. Of course, there is the fear: what will happen to this planet and the communities we love if we do not get it together? But more, there is a primal feeling of love: how stunning is this day. How grateful I am to be here on this piece of land, watching the frost creep over the last of the twisted brown leaves. How thankful I am to watch the pond change from glossy to white crystal. How appreciative I feel when a friend drops a meal off to nourish us that we still have each other, even in these challenging days. How fiercely I long for all our children to have such a beautiful place to look forward to, and how deeply grateful I am to know there are so many of us out there. How much more motivating to move from the position of love—to remember that like the geese we can fly together, and in this way, we will lead ourselves home.

Onward, in community,



Grace Oedel
Executive Director, NOFA-VT



NOFA-VT'S 40TH ANNUAL WINTER CONFERENCE

DREAM INTO BEING

FEBRUARY 17TH - MARCH 5TH, 2022

“ At the human scale, in order to create a world that works for more people, for more life, we have to collaborate on the process of dreaming and visioning and implementing that world. We have to recognize that a multitude of realities have, do, and will exist. ”

-adrienne maree brown, *Emergent Strategy*

We are thrilled to share space with you once again—both virtually and in person—at our beloved Winter Conference! For over two weeks starting February 17th, we invite you to join us for a mix of virtual learning, sharing, and discussions, as well as in-person opportunities to connect and grow our movement.

We have doubled our online workshop offerings since last year and are excited about the array of knowledgeable speakers and timely topics.

To complement this virtual space, we have planned a handful of social opportunities to gather outside on farms throughout the state (and just across the lake!) for some winter fun-time and space for joyful connection. We hope you'll bundle up and come out.



Enjoy a sneak peek of some of this year's offerings:



Featured Speakers **Kristin and Mark Kimball from Essex Farm** in Essex, NY, ponder how they can meet the triple bottom line. Kristin will read excerpts from her book, and together they will spark a lively discussion about balancing a robust business with the meaning of life.



Featured Speakers **Amber Arnold and Naomi Moody of SUSU commUNITY Farm** (Brattleboro, VT) discuss possibilities, fractals, a life of purpose, culture of liberation, and the ancestrally powered commUNITY centered movement they're building to bring afrofuturistic visions and dreams to life in one of the whitest states in America.



Featured Speaker **Austin Unruh** explores the growing silvopasture movement restoring farm economies and ecologies, discussing how integrating trees into pastures represents a complete shift in agriculture, creating holistic, perennial farm ecosystems that can support more livestock, wildlife, and farmers.



During the Social & Food Justice workshop track, representatives from **Migrant Justice** recap milestones from their Milk with Dignity Program and accompanying campaign. Other workshops are led by **Tony VanWinkle from Guilford College**, **Kenya Lazuli from Northeast Farmers of Color Land Trust**, and **Hayley Jones from Community Action Works**.



Health and social justice activists **Amanda David and Mandana Boushee** host the In Living Color (ILC) BIPOC space, centering the needs & voices of Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) to go deep in their work, celebrate lineages and experiences, and find mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical support.



The In the Kitchen workshop track celebrates cooking and teaches methods of creating value-added goods. The track features **Heike Meyer of Brot Bakehouse School and Kitchen and Brotbakery**, **Ellen Ogden, author of "The New Heirloom Garden"** and **"The Complete Kitchen Garden"**, and **Sarah Shaw of Hillside Botanicals**.



As part of the Soil Health workshop track, a panel discusses the state of soil health in Vermont, featuring: **Alissa White and Heather Darby, UVM**; **Justin Rich, Burnt Rock Farm**; **Erin Lane, Dartmouth College** and **USDA Northeast Climate Hub**; and **Melanie Harrison, Harrison's Homegrown**.



The Farm Reflections workshop track explores the agri-culture of beginning, burnout, grief, and transparency with presentations from **Doug Wolcik and Kayleigh Boyle of Breadseed Farm**, **Adam Wilson of Brush Brook Farm**, and **Shannon Hayes of Sap Bush Hollow Farm**.



At the Collaborative Farming & Land Access roundtable, learn about community-driven farming models from people with firsthand experience, including **Francine Miller and Shona Sanford-Long of the White River Land Collaborative**, **Brandon Bless of Bread & Butter Farm**, and **Alisha Laramée of AALV**.



Explore on-farm innovations during the Creative Grower workshop track, digging into the experiences of fellow growers, including **Buzz Ferver of Perfect Circle Farm**, **Caroline Gordon of Rural Vermont**, **Katie Spring of Good Heart Farmstead**, **Paul Feenan of High Mowing Organic Seeds**, and **Ross Conrad of Dancing Bee Gardens**.



Missing the in-person connection? Us too! Join us for safe, outdoor winter fun—think bonfires, snowshoeing, cider, hot chocolate, and new and old friends—at **Earth Sky Time Farm** (Manchester, VT), **Knoll Farm**, (Waitsfield, VT), **Essex Farm** (Essex, NY), and **Stannard Farm** (Stannard, VT).



In lieu of our in-person Children's Conference, entertain the kids with our digital, hands-on activities and coloring pages on our website. Download, print, and enjoy (adults can color the wonderful garden artwork too). Plus, be sure to join us for our on-farm, family-friendly events with snow play and hot chocolate!

Registration opens the first week in January—stay tuned!



Chief Don Stevens, Chief of the Nulhegan Abenaki and Executive Director of Abenaki Helping Abenaki, and Jake Kornfeld, Farm Manager at VYCC, looking over Algonquin squash at the Abenaki Land Link Harvest Festival this September.



Recap: Abenaki Land Link Project's Second Year

By Zea Luce, Events
& Engagement
Coordinator

“This section of the Brookmead Food Pantry Garden is dedicated to our partnership with the Nulhegan Band of the Coosuk-Abenaki Nation, Rooted in Vermont, and NOFA-VT to provide healthy foods to Abenaki citizens. The Nulhegan tribe’s Abenaki Land Link Program provided Indigenous seeds of their crops for us to grow. In turn, UVLT will donate the produce and seeds back to the Nulhegan Band for the exclusive use by Abenaki citizens and future growers.”

—Sign at the Upper Valley Land Trust’s Brookmead Conservation Area in Norwich, VT

The growing and harvest season for the Abenaki Land Link Project is wrapping up. What an exciting second year! The project grew from 15 growers around the state in last year’s pilot to almost 40 gardeners and farmers this year. The growers persevered, as some experienced 16 inches of rain in July, had their crop devoured by a bear, and waited and waited for the latest frost on record.

Food has always meant many things. Food is nourishing, it’s medicine, it brings us

together. Food is intertwined with culture and connects us to the land. We are all more resilient when everyone has their needs met, and food is one of our most basic needs. In this project, food growers have shared their resources, time, skills, and land to grow Algonquin squash, Koasek Calais Mix corn, Calais Flint corn, True Cranberry beans, Skunk beans, and Vermont Mohawk beans to be returned to Indigenous community members.

This is an opportunity for the growers, as attendants for the land that has for millennia been stewarded by Indigenous people, to recognize and use the privilege they have to grow food—an option not currently available for many Abenaki citizens in Vermont. By participating in the Abenaki Land Link Project, growers are doing so in solidarity with the Nulhegan Band of Coosuk - Abenaki Nation to build a more resilient food system.

Growers are located across the state and range from backyard gardens, Land Trust



A Harvest Festival attendee learns how to process corn by hand.

Green Corn ceremony, stories, and music. Attendees participated in a corn processing demonstration, enjoyed field walks across the property, and sampled the project's harvest.

Before the crops can be stored and then distributed throughout the winter, they need to be processed. About thirty growers, project partners, and volunteers met in early November to thresh and winnow the beans as well as husk and shell the corn to be ready for distribution. The squash was distributed fresh throughout the fall and the remainder was peeled, cubed, and frozen to make sure it can be eaten for many more months. Over 3,600 pounds of squash has been harvested so far this season, with some of the largest weighing 15 pounds each!

This project hinges on relationship building, and it was a joy to see the community partnerships continue to grow this year. NOFA-VT coordinates and communicates with the growers. Chief Don Stevens distributes the harvest to Abenaki citizens via three food shelves as part of the food security program of the nonprofit, Abenaki Helping Abenaki. Vermont Youth Conservation Corps graciously provides space in their farm's propagation house to cure and dry the crops. Joe Bossen generously lends his facility at Vermont Bean Crafters to process the harvest. With many hands making light work, the result is stocked pantries and, crucially, the preservation of ancestral crops.



"My feelings about land ownership are fraught and complicated; I deeply and fiercely love this land, and I know I can only "own" it because long ago it was stolen. I am grateful to this project for the opportunity to put some of my labor and the bounty of this soil into the hands and bellies of Vermont's Native people. It doesn't solve the conflict at the heart, but it feels like one small step toward reparations, or paying toward an unpayable debt, and also something I owe to the land itself, somehow. I hope to have the opportunity to participate next year and going forward."

- Caitlin Gildrien, Gildrien Farm

properties, school gardens, and commercial farms.

In September, we held a harvest festival to celebrate the season and project. Overlooking the beautiful fall foliage on a gorgeous, sunny day, 120 people gathered at the farm at the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps (a Land Link grower). Chief Don Stevens, Chief of the Nulhegan Abenaki and the Executive Director of the nonprofit Abenaki Helping Abenaki, led the day and shared stories like the Corn Mother. Alnôbaiwi, a nonprofit dedicated to preserving Abenaki cultural heritage, shared some of the



Growers from right to left: Peter Jenkins of Healthy Roots Farm with Algonquin squash, JoAnne Dennee of Common Roots Farm with Koasek Calais Flint Corn, and Shawn Grenier of Cedar Circle Farm with Vermont Mohawk Beans.



Horizon Organic Update

By Nicole Dehne, Vermont Organic Farmers Certification Director

This August, Danone N.A.'s wholly-owned subsidiary, Horizon Organic, terminated its contracts with 89 organic dairy farms across the Northeast, including 27 farms in Vermont. The company stated that their reason for these contract terminations was because the farms no longer fit their "manufacturing footprint" and that after August 2022, the farms would no longer have a buyer. This abrupt exit by Danone N.A. has created turmoil in the dairy industry, severely hurting these farm families, and will ultimately have ripple effects on the region's rural economy and ecology. Organic farmers exceed environmental regulations required for dairy farms, and organic farming conserves open spaces, establishes wildlife habitats, filters clean water, conducts effective long-term carbon sequestration, and builds soil health. Horizon Organic's exit from Vermont is leaving these 27 organic dairy farms without a market, meaning many of the farmers may be forced to either sell their farm or sell their milk into the conventional dairy market, where margins are smaller and most of the environmental benefits are lost.

This move by Horizon Organic was unexpected and unprecedented in its scale. In response, we've been working in coalition with partners across the region to support Vermont's organic dairy farmers. In addition to working directly with the impacted farmers to try to understand and meet their individual needs, we're also advocating for the group as a whole:

State of Vermont Task Force

We're continuing to work with producers and Vermont policy makers to try to find a solution for both the immediate crisis as well as longer-term viability issues for organic dairy production in the state. This includes a statewide task force that meets monthly to facilitate matchmaking between the dairies that Horizon organic dropped and other producers and processors.

USDA Northeast Dairy Task Force

The USDA also formed a Northeast regional task force that met for the last time on December 3rd. This task force broke into subcommittees to evaluate different approaches to solve the problem. These subcommittees included institutional purchasing, federal response & policy, farm viability, a group focused on working with and supporting the individual producers affected, and expansion of processing. The goal of this group is to have a list of recommendations to Secretary Vilsack by mid-December.

Complaint With B Lab

Recently, 11 organizations representing organic farmers and consumers, including NOFA-VT and Vermont Organic Farmers (VOF), filed a complaint with B Lab, the agency that oversees B Corporations, against Danone N.A. for violating the terms of their "B Corp" status. Thousands of individuals have signed onto an accompanying petition as well.

As a certified B Corp, Danone N.A. is required to use its business as a force for good, and after examining their actions alongside the B Corp standards, it is clear to us that their actions put profit above the community good. We can keep Danone N.A. (and Horizon Organic by extension) accountable for their actions by keeping pressure on B Lab to review Danone's B Corp certification and to live up to these standards or risk losing their B Corp status.

Getting Vermont Organic Milk Into Our Institutions

VOF and NOFA-VT staff have facilitated meetings with Sodexo, Vermont Way, and Organic Valley to discuss the feasibility of marketing a brand of Vermont organic milk and what it would take to get it into public institutions. While this is a time of great upheaval, we are looking for opportunities to get creative in our solutions and invest in better, more resilient systems. One key investment could be to add or expand processing facilities to produce a reliable supply of organic dairy products with the specifications that schools (and other institutions) need, such as kid-friendly 8-oz milk cartons. We want to leverage the state's new local food purchasing incentive program (Act 67) to identify and support a price point for these products that works for both institutions and producers.

As Horizon Organic abandons small dairy farms across the Northeast, Vermont has the opportunity to ensure that our dairy farmers can keep farming organically and that our schoolchildren can have access to Vermont's excellent organic milk. While some very real challenges exist around pricing, processing, marketing, and distribution, it is possible for our schools and other institutions to play an important role if we have the will to invest. This must not be viewed as a singular solution, but rather as part of a diversified strategy that will contribute to our state's long-term resilience. Vermont has historically been ahead of its time in regards to agriculture, and the crisis we face now with the impending loss of Horizon Organic's dairy contracts presents an opportunity to set an example again. Together we can pivot from this detrimental blow with imagination and grace. ♦

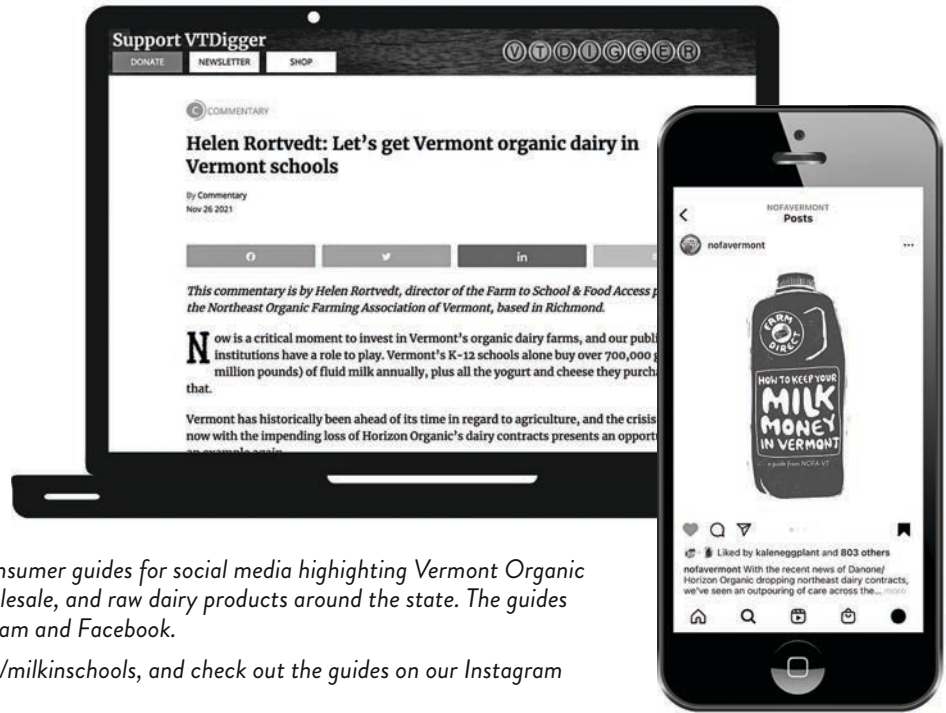


NOFA-VT has been working hard to educate the public about the Horizon news and what they can do to support our organic dairy producers.

Helen Rortvedt, NOFA-VT Director of Farm to School and Food Access, recently penned a well-received op-ed in VT Digger titled "Let's Get Vermont Organic Dairy in Vermont Schools," outlining the win-win proposition of creating government incentives, systems, and infrastructure enabling schools to purchase local organic dairy.

Christine Hill, NOFA-VT Marketing & Communications Director, made three consumer guides for social media highlighting Vermont Organic certified dairy producers of farm-direct, wholesale, and raw dairy products around the state. The guides were seen by over 20,000 people on Instagram and Facebook.

You can read Helen's op-ed at nofavt.org/milkinschools, and check out the guides on our Instagram account at instagram.com/nofavermont.



Share the Harvest Success

By Kayla Strom, Farm to School Coordinator

With your incredible support, our Share the Harvest fundraiser in October helped bring in over \$16,000 to support the Farm Share Program. Thank you! This fundraiser will support 165 families with steady access to healthy, local, and organic food through half-priced CSAs, while the participating farms will receive the full cost of the CSA to support the viability of their farm businesses. Thank you also to the following participating restaurants and food businesses for making this fundraiser a huge success:



City Market, Onion River Co-op, Burlington



King Arthur Baking Company, Norwich



Middlebury Natural Foods Co-op, Middlebury



Skinny Pancake, Burlington, Stowe, Quechee, Montpelier

- American Flatbread, Waitsfield Hearth, Waitsfield
- Bleu Northeast Kitchen, Burlington
- Bobcat Café & Brewery, Bristol
- Brattleboro Food Co-op, Brattleboro
- Buffalo Mountain Food Co-op, Hardwick
- Colatina Exit, Bradford
- Deep Root Organic Co-op, Johnson
- Green Peppers Restaurant, Middlebury
- Hunger Mountain Co-op, Montpelier
- Juniper Bar & Restaurant at Hotel Vermont, Burlington
- Mule Bar, Winooski
- Mulligans of Manchester, Manchester
- Otter Creek Bakery, Middlebury
- Penny Cluse Café, Burlington
- Plainfield Food Co-op, Plainfield
- Rail City Market, St Albans
- Red Mill Restaurant at the Basin Harbor Club, Vergennes
- Sarducci's, Montpelier
- Shelburne Farms, Shelburne
- South Royalton Market, South Royalton
- Springfield Food Co-op, Springfield
- Stone Leaf Teahouse, Middlebury
- Sweet Clover Market, Essex Junction
- Switchback Brewing Company, Burlington
- Upper Valley Food Co-op, White River Junction
- Wood Meadow Market, Enosburg Falls

Please support these local businesses throughout the year and let them know how much you appreciate their participation in Share the Harvest!



Exploring the Cost of Dairy Production

By Jen Miller, Farmer Services Director



How many mature cows did you have as of January 1, 2020? Did you buy or sell any equipment in 2019? How much milk did you produce that year? How much did you spend on repairs and maintenance? Can I see your Schedule F tax return?

I pepper the farmer sitting opposite me (whether on Zoom or across the table) with these questions and so many more, inputting the answers into my spreadsheet. There are frequent

pauses not only to shuffle through papers or click through QuickBooks categories but also to talk about how a new production technique is working or how their neighbors' kids have started helping out on their farm.

Twenty-four organic dairy farmers scattered across Vermont experienced a similar visit in 2021. They had all agreed to participate in NOFA-VT's Organic Dairy Cost of Production (COP) Project. In short, a farmer's cost of production is how much it costs them to produce a hundredweight (cwt) of milk (1 cwt is approximately 11.6 gallons of milk). This includes not only expenses you would automatically think of, such as the cost of grain and labor, but also needs to take into account their family living allocations and debt payments. In an ideal world, all farmers would be selling their products for at least their full cost of production, plus a bit more for farm improvements and a rainy day fund.

NOFA-VT's Farmer Services Program has been conducting this Organic Dairy COP work since 2018; carrying on the legacy of late UVM Extension Professor Bob Parsons who started collecting the data in 2007. Each year we collect financial and production information from a subset of organic dairy farms in Vermont, input the data into a spreadsheet, and analyze their cost of production and other key financial and production metrics. The analysis happens at both the individual and aggregated levels, enabling farmers to compare their performance to both statewide benchmarks and also to their own business' historical results. The information assists farmers with identifying opportunities to increase revenue and decrease expenses in order to maximize their profit margins and improve their long-term viability. Results are also disseminated to and used by Vermont's network of agricultural service providers, lenders, milk buyers, industry stakeholders, and the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets, with the same long-term goal of supporting the profitability and sustainability of these businesses.



My takeaways from our 2021 COP effort (which included collecting two years of data after skipping last year due to the pandemic) fall into three different categories: farmers, NOFA-VT staff, and industry stakeholders.

Farmers

We have so many amazing organic dairy farmers in this state caring for their land, their herds, and their families, while upholding the highest of standards. Results are variable from farm to farm, but two things are certain. First,

the cost of producing milk in the Northeast is higher than in other areas of the country, primarily due to our geographic location and climate. And second, labor efficiency (think of milking in some of the older, historical barns in this state) and sourcing (finding reliable and skilled employees) is a challenge on many farms that needs to be addressed.

NOFA-VT Staff

2021 marked the first year that Bill Cavanaugh, NOFA-VT's Farm Business Advisor, joined me in the COP quest. When asked about his overarching thoughts about this project, Bill had this to say: "It was an educational and enlightening chance to connect with farmers on their numbers. It also was a good opportunity for me to build relationships with more dairy farmers."

Industry Stakeholders

This project catalyzes the deepening of working relationships between NOFA-VT and key stakeholders of the organic dairy industry such as milk buyers (Organic Valley and Stonyfield), lenders, grain dealers, UVM Extension, and the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Market's Dairy Section. This year I have felt especially aware and appreciative of these collaborative relationships.

Bill and I will be off to the COP races again beginning in January of 2022, continuing to document the development and challenges of the organic dairy industry and support Vermont's organic dairy farmers. For more on the project and to see past results, visit nofavt.org/DairyCOP. ♦

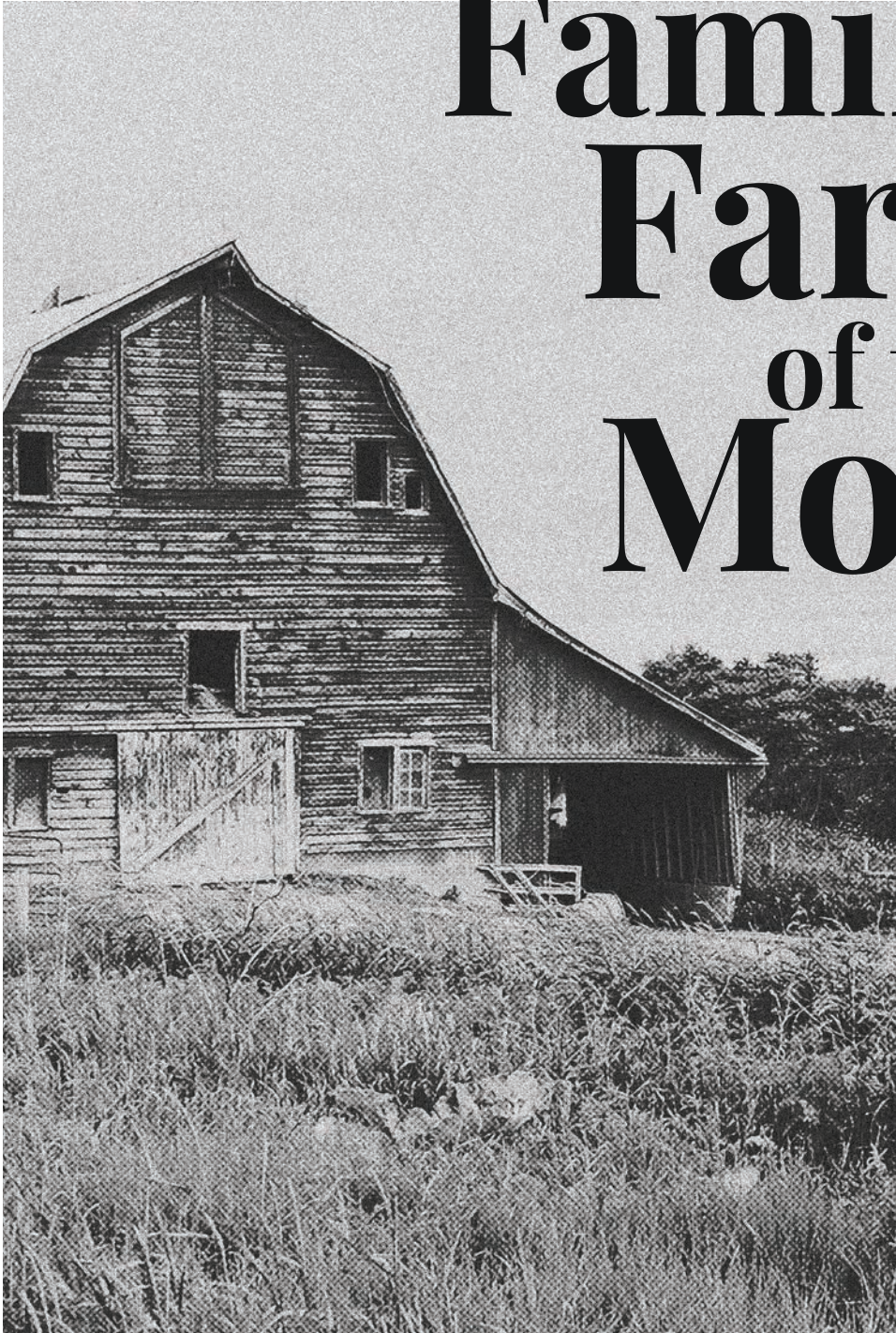


Rural Vermont's NEW mission is to organize, educate, and advocate in collaboration with local and global movements to strengthen the social, ecological, and economic health of the agrarian communities that connect us all.

Learn more and join at ruralvermont.org



Vermont Family Farmer of the Month



**By Kayla Strom, Farm to School
Coordinator & Vermont Family Farmer
of the Month Award Administrator**

Every month, the Vermont Family Farmer of the Month Award gives a grant to a Vermont farm business that is contributing to a more resilient agricultural landscape and demonstrates environmental stewardship through sustainable practices. The grants of between \$10,000 and \$12,000 support innovative projects on the farms that also improve the viability of the enterprise.

NOFA-VT, in partnership with the Vermont Housing & Conservation Board's Vermont Farm & Forest Viability Program, Shelburne Farms, and the Vermont Grass Farmers Association, are able to grant the monthly awards due to the funding of a generous, anonymous charitable donor.

We are honored to administer this award and support so many incredible on-farm projects across the state. Here are a few recent projects to give you a sense of the range of projects that have been funded.



Maple Wind Farm, August 2021

Maple Wind Farm is a diversified, pasture-based livestock operation in Richmond, VT, owned and operated by Beth Whiting and Bruce Hennessey. In August, they were awarded \$12,000 to purchase two additional field shelters (aka Mobile Range Coops) for their broiler chickens and turkeys that enable them to meet the strong and increased demand for their products.

With two more Mobile Range Coops, Maple Wind Farm is able to house fewer birds in each shelter space, which means greater access to pasture for each bird and an even higher quality product. Fewer birds per shelter also means that the poultry will reduce their impact on the pastures, leading to a faster pasture recovery time. Healthier soils with more organic matter increase the water holding capacity and carbon capture per acre, which are critical outcomes for the Maple Wind Farm team as they strive to foster and steward an increasingly resilient farm ecosystem.



Baird Farm, September 2021

Baird Farm has been owned and operated by the Baird family for four generations. Today, Bonnie and Bob, the third generation, manage production while their daughter Jenna and her partner Jacob manage retail with plans to fully take over the farm in the coming years. Baird Farm produces maple syrup, maple-based value-added products, and Christmas trees on their land in North Chittenden.

This September, Baird Farm was awarded \$12,000 to install an eight foot tall deer fence around their three acre pick-your-own Christmas tree operation. Two years ago, the farm lost hundreds of Christmas trees over the winter to deer damage. After the loss, the family explored ways of deterring deer and found that enclosing the perimeter with a fence is the only effective chemical-free way. The new fence will help stabilize their Christmas tree enterprise, enabling the farm to diversify their revenue sources.



Lazy Dog Farm, October 2021

In 2011, Jesse and Stefanie Wilbur found their home in Orwell, VT, starting their journey as owners of Lazy Dog Farm. Today, Jesse and Stefanie own 250 acres of pasture, hayland, and woodlands in the Champlain Valley and are dedicated to sustainable stewardship. This October, Lazy Dog Farm was awarded \$12,000 to build two cabins on their land to host farm-based retreats for veterans and survivors of trauma and grief.

The goal of this project is to help veterans and survivors of trauma to connect with nature, animals, and agricultural practices to aid in their healing. At the same time, it will diversify sources of income for the farm. The increase in consumers' presence on their farm will also help increase agricultural literacy in the general population. This project brings vital contributions to the social resilience of their community and emotional well-being of everyone who visits. ♦

To be considered for the March, April, May, and June Vermont Family Farmer of the Month awards, apply by January 26th! Learn more and apply at:

vermontfamilyfarmeraward.org



Farm Feature: Ice House Farm

By Bill Cavanaugh, Farm Business Advisor

When you ask the question, “Why goats?” to Chad and Morgan Beckwith from Ice House Farm, they smile and answer almost simultaneously: “Because they’re so sweet and fun.” “Because they’re basically like dogs but you can leave them outside.” Knowing Ice House Farm, the dog comparison is the highest praise. The thoughtful care they put into rotational grazing and managing their herd using organic practices is evidence of the deep love and respect they have for their animals. Their excellent cheese, yogurt, and kefir further speak to their commitment to the highest quality ingredients and products.

When Morgan and Chad first moved to a rented farm in Addison, they just wanted a few goats. After taking a yogurt making course, Chad remembers, “We wanted to make cheese at home so we bought a couple goats and started milking them.” Very quickly they had more milk than they needed and began selling at the Middlebury Farmers Market. That first season went so well that they decided to grow their herd and their business. Chad credits that early success to their strict welfare and feed standards. “We always operated with organic practices, even from the beginning, and the people who support organic supported us.”

Now located in Goshen, VT, Ice House Farm grazes their goats with a million-dollar view of the mountain ridgeline behind them. Grazing has always been central to the philosophy Morgan and Chad bring to raising their goats. “The goats move to a new spot every day, sometimes twice a day,” Chad explains. Morgan adds, “Chad really has that dialed in terms of looking at an area and saying ‘this will last the day’ or ‘we’re going to need to move them again.’” Not just great for goat health and happiness, access to pasture and woodland comes through in the flavor of the milk the goats produce.

These days Ice House Farm produces fresh goat cheese like feta, ricotta, and paneer, as well as probiotic yogurt, kefir and pet food

supplements. If you spend any time around the farm, you’ll quickly learn that the pet food enterprise isn’t too far afield for them. Morgan and Chad’s two English Shepherds, Wyeth and Josie, are practically part of the family as well as hard-working farm employees. The rotational



grazing practices that Ice House Farm employs would be difficult to handle without their well-trained four-legged herding help—but the dogs make it look easy!

Morgan and Chad have been involved with NOFA-VT since the beginning of their farming journey. They both love the Winter Conference. “We always go to the Winter Conference—it’s our favorite thing to do in the winter,” Chad says. “We’ve met a lot of great people that way,” Morgan adds. They participated in NOFA-VT’s Journey Farmer program in 2018 and credit NOFA-VT with being a big support to them as they were growing their business. They mention working with Jen Miller, Farmer Services Director, as



being especially helpful. “Jen really helped us take our ideas and build the whole business plan around them,” says Chad. “Jen is awesome!” Morgan agrees.

Through their work with NOFA-VT’s Farmer Services team, Morgan and Chad were able to identify what they needed to achieve their production and profitability goals. They successfully applied for grant funding to help upgrade their parlor and cheese room, and the new equipment and space have been huge for integrating the increased goat numbers. It helps that both Morgan and Chad are heavily focused on building and improving their farming system. Chad says, “Instead of trying to just keep getting bigger, we’re trying to get more efficient—with milking and with the creamery. Sometimes building the systems around farming is as much fun as nurturing the animals.”

You can find the products of Morgan and Chad’s (and the goat’s) hard work all over the state. During the summer they sell at the Waitsfield and Stowe farmers markets, and they supply co-ops, specialty food stores, and farm stands. If you plan ahead, you can even order to pick up on the farm—and you might just get a peek at the goats while you’re there!





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These Farms Feed Vermont Kids

By Helen Rortvedt, Farm to School Program Director

You may have noticed a new lawn sign dotting the roadways near many of the farms in your area this October. Vermont FEED, in partnership with the Vermont Farm to School & Early Childhood Network, took the opportunity to celebrate the farmer side of the farm to school movement with the “This Farm Feeds Vermont Kids” campaign.

This campaign highlighted the many farmers who sell their products to schools and early childhood programs around the state. These farm to school champions are integral to creating a strong local food system that provides nourishing local and organic food for our children, while also increasing the agricultural literacy of our schoolchildren.

In every county across the state, over 100 farms proudly displayed these signs in support of the movement.

Our gratitude goes out to all the farmers working with school and early childhood programs to supply healthy, local, and organic food to Vermont kids and grow the local food eaters of our future.

Thank you, farmers! ♦



Check out all the farms at vermontfarmtoschool.org/farm-feeds-vt-kids

Vermont FEED is a Farm to School partnership of NOFA-VT and Shelburne Farms.



A Warm Welcome to our New Staff!

The NOFA-VT and Vermont Organic Farmers teams keep growing! Welcome, Johanna and Nick!



Johanna Doren

Local Food Access Coordinator

Originally from southeast Pennsylvania, Johanna grew her love for all things food in Massachusetts, Wisconsin, and now Vermont. From working on small, organic diversified vegetable farms to supporting local producers through community-based nonprofits, Johanna developed a passion for thinking radically and working collaboratively to build a just, equitable food system. She pursued a Master's in Food and Agriculture Law and Policy at the Vermont Law School to learn about the policies that shape our food system and is excited to work towards greater food access and sovereignty in Vermont and beyond. She spends her free time baking and consuming pastries, musing over her plants, and trying to burn off her dog Reya's inexhaustible energy.



Nick Sibley

Certification Specialist, Vermont Organic Farmers

Nick grew up idolizing his dairy farmer grandparents and dreamed of working their farm. The development of his family's land changed his trajectory, however, and Nick pursued a career in environmental science. After working as an ecologist for a decade, he revived his childhood dreams and began working on farms in Vermont and Massachusetts. Nick has experience in food safety, vegetable production, dairy, hemp, and maple. He currently co-owns a small maple sugaring operation in the Northeast Kingdom. Nick is committed to honoring our region's agricultural legacy while also promoting innovative, equitable, and sustainable farming practices.

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- Co-op Food Stores, White River Junction
- Hunger Mountain Co-op, Montpelier
- Middlebury Natural Foods Co-op, Middlebury
- Morrisville Food Co-op, Morrisville
- Plainfield Food Co-op, Plainfield
- Putney Food Co-op, Putney
- Rutland Area Food Co-op, Rutland
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- Upper Valley Food Co-op, White River Junction

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

A warm welcome to the following members who joined us or renewed their membership in the 4th quarter of 2021:

New Members

Becca Knouss, Bennington, VT
Bill Coleman, West Burke, VT
Bill Council, Brookfield, VT
Brian Drayton, Lyndeborough, NH
Brynn Kent, Middlebury, VT
Dr. Timothy & Sharon Butterfield, Derry, NH
Edge Fuentes & Katie Spring, Worcester, VT
Kristen Getler, Roxbury, VT
Lyndon Virkler, Waitsfield, VT
Marci & Joe Robinson, Warren, VT
Mary Spicer & Amy Gamble, Shelburne, VT
Peter Wagner, Thetford, VT
Philip Stoltzfus & Terrie Alafat, Braintree, VT
Richard Dreissigacker & Judy Geer, Craftsbury Common, VT
Sadie Gay, Burlington, VT
Sarah Blanchard, Barnet, VT
Todd Hardie, Greensboro Bend, VT

New & Renewing Business Members

Black Dog Market Garden, South Londonderry, VT
Feel Good Farm, Wolcott, VT
Flying Buffalo, LLC, Montpelier, VT
Foothills Goods Company, Underhill, VT
High Mowing Organic Seeds, Wolcott, VT
Jeannie Bartlett, Montpelier, VT
Jenny Monfore, Montpelier, VT
Lucky Fields, Norwich, VT
New Tradition Farm, Richmond, VT
New Village Farm, Shelburne, VT
Rosalie Williams Farm, Enosburg Falls, VT
Schoolhouse Farm, LLC, Plainfield, VT
The Farm Upstream, Richmond, VT
Uphill Farm, Rochester, VT
Willis Towne Farm, Florence, VT
Woodard's Farm, Waterbury Center, VT

New Organic Certifications

Vermont Organic Farmers welcomes the following new producers who have recently obtained organic certification (certified between 9/1/21-11/30/21) for all or a portion of their operation, joining the more than 700 organic farmers & processors throughout the state.



Andy Carr
FUNJ. Shrooming Company LLC
Justin Lang
Longhouse Farm LLC
LPT Inc

Meristem Farms LLC
Quill Hill Farm
Robert Nelson
Shacksbury Holdings Inc
V.I.B.E Farm LLC

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NOFAVT.ORG/WHY-ORGANIC



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Enjoy a sneak peek at some of the
speakers, workshops, and on-farm
socials inside this
issue!

