

NOFA Notes



Quarterly newsletter of the Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont

Summer 2023



Summer Events Preview | Jack Lazor Memorial Soil Health
Stewards | Resilience Grants | Food Access Programs

NOFA-VT

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Dear friend of NOFA-VT,

Finally, finally—summer is here! Along with the height of the growing season comes abundant opportunities to get out onto farms, connect with community members and other growers, eat a VT maple creemee, and delight in this beautiful place we all call home.

Interconnection is a precursor to resilience. Knowing each other helps us to understand each other, which leads us to care about each other, and ultimately to help each other thrive. We're excited to make this summer about community connection, and we are doing our part to provide ample opportunity to do that!

If in-person connection is your jam, check out our line-up of summer on-farm events, including our ever-popular pizza socials and workshops. With 17 events held on farms across the state from July to September, we hope you'll join us at one!

You can also find inspiration and connection by reading about the myriad of Resilience Grant recipients this year. These funded projects are the creations of innovative, caring farmers and farmworkers who are helping to grow Vermont's agricultural and food resilience. (The granting committee is in fact also made up of farmers and farmworkers, and you can read about that participatory process in this issue, too!)

You'll note in reading the list of resilience-oriented projects that, among many other resilience efforts, farmers are increasingly trying to make their food accessible to all Vermonters. We're certainly experiencing record demand for our food access programs, and you can learn more about the broader state of food security in Vermont in this issue as well. We all need each other.

We hope to connect with you this summer, whether on a farm by the pizza oven, in a pasture, dipping in the river, or eating a creemee made with Vermont maple and milk (side note: with the support of a Vermont Family Farmer of the Month Award, Miller Farm in Vernon just produced the state's first Vermont Organic certified creemee mix. Their first batch went to the creemee stand at Lilac Ridge Farm in West Brattleboro and they're hoping to expand to others—keep an eye out!).

To abundance and connection,

Grace Oedel
Executive Director, NOFA-VT



2023 On-Farm Summer Events

We're thrilled to present another summer of community-building events! Dig into exciting topics and learn new skills at a **workshop** or enjoy a wood-fired pizza dinner and farm tour at one of our **pizza socials**.

Pre-registration is required for all events. To register, visit: **NOFAVT.ORG/SUMMER2023EVENTS**

Mon. 7/17

& Thur. 7/20



Farm Dreams | Online & Union Brook Farm, Northfield | 5-8 p.m.

Wed. 7/26



Pizza Social: Naga Bakehouse | Middletown Springs | 5:30-7:30 p.m.

Thur. 7/27



Soil Health for Vegetable Growers Workshop | Flywheel Farm, Woodbury | 4-6 p.m.

Thur. 7/13



Pizza Social: Foote Brook Farm | Johnson | 5:30-7:30 p.m.

Sun. 7/16



Cottage Baking With Local Grains Workshop | Brot Bakehouse, Fairfax | 3-6 p.m.

Sun. 7/30



No-Till Vegetable Production Workshop | Breadseed Farm, Craftsbury | 10 a.m.-12 p.m.

Wed. 8/2



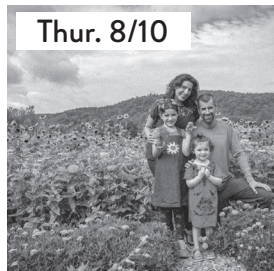
Pizza Social: Calabash Gardens | Wells River | 5:30-7:30 p.m.

Sat. 8/5



Pollinator Habitat Workshop | Luna Bleu Farm, South Royalton | 4-6 p.m.

Thur. 8/10



Pizza Social: Ananda Gardens | Montpelier | 5:30-7:30 p.m. *(This event is also part of Open Farm Week!)*

Mon. 8/14



Organic Certification for Vegetable Farms Workshop | 1000 Stone Farm, Brookfield | 4-6 p.m.

Wed. 8/16



Farmer Olympics | Smokey House Center, Danby | 4-8 p.m.

Sun. 8/20



Intro to Seed Saving Workshop | West River Seeds, Townshend | 10 a.m.-12 p.m.

Sat. 8/26



Protect Waterways With Riparian Buffers Workshop | Boneyard Farm, Cambridge | 3-5 p.m.

Mon. 8/28



Maple Regulations: Organic Certification and Food Safety Workshop | Gagne Maple, Highgate | 4-6 p.m.

Thur. 8/31



Pizza Social: Understory Farm | Bridport | 5:30-7:30 p.m.

Thur. 9/7



Pizza Social: Milkweed Farm | Westminster West | 5:30-7:30 p.m.

Sun. 9/10



Applying Agroforestry Practices in Vermont Workshop | Valley Clayplain Forest Farm, New Haven | 10 a.m.-12 p.m.

To see more details and register for events, please visit **NOFAVT.ORG/SUMMER2023EVENTS**



Checking In With the Jack Lazor Memorial Soil Health Stewards

And a Special Visit To Small Axe Farm

By Megan Browning, NOFA-VT Farmer Services Program Facilitator

When longtime organic dairy farmer Jack Lazor of Butterworks Farm passed away in November of 2020, NOFA-VT received several generous gifts to start a fund in his honor to continue his incredible legacy of dedication to building soil health through farming practices and his passion for sharing these practices with others. In 2021, the Jack Lazor Memorial Soil Health Stewards program launched its inaugural cohort, and the program continues this year with two new cohort groups—one for diversified livestock farmers and one for small scale diversified vegetable growers. These groups are intended to provide a space for farmers to learn from and with each other about the soil health topics that are most relevant to their farm businesses. Each consisting of about 12 farms, the structure and content of each cohort has been co-created by the participants alongside NOFA-VT facilitators and technical assistance providers.

The livestock cohort kicked off this winter with several virtual sessions to discuss soil health practices, learn about reading soil tests, and pick the brains of pasture agronomy experts. Topics ranged from increasing the productivity of worn-out hayfields to improving drought resilience, and from rotational grazing practices to the best ‘bang-for-the-buck’ choices for fertility amendments. This summer, a packed season of farm visits on cohort participants’ farms will allow for exploration of soil health above and below ground: soil biology, chemistry, and hydrology below; grasses, forbs, trees, and pollinators above.

The vegetable cohort met three times this winter, twice virtually and once in-person, and surfaced themes of interest including cover crops, amendments, and soil biology, as well as tillage and cultivation practices. Over the course of this year’s growing season, the group is slated to visit one farm per month with the opportunity to tour the farm,

practice in-field soil assessments, and build peer-to-peer connections among growers of similar scale and production type. In keeping with the goal of co-creating the learning experience with the farmers in the group, recently participants have asked to build out some simple on-farm trials to test the efficacy of various soil health practices in the context of their own operations.

In early May, the vegetable cohort began the season of farm visits with a gathering at Small Axe Farm in Barnet, VT. Driving out to Barnet on a perfectly sunny and warm spring day, it would be easy to miss the entrance to Small Axe Farm, one of many long and winding driveways off of a hilly gravel road in the Northeast Kingdom. Once the farm is in sight, however, it is unmistakable and extraordinary: a hand-built house and tidy one-acre production farm consisting of raised beds and several unheated high tunnels nestled atop the hill.



Photos from left to right: Vegetable growers cohort of the Jack Lazor Memorial Soil Health Stewards stand in a greenhouse at Small Axe Farm; Jack Lazor talks about soil health to a crowd; Fields and greenhouses at Small Axe Farm; Evan Perkins gives a tour to the cohort.

Participants joined Evan Perkins and Heidi Choate, co-owners of the farm, and their crew of farm employees for a tour and a discussion about their soil health goals and practices. In keeping with the goals of the cohort, and the spirit of Jack Lazor's passion for soil health and education, the farm tour was interactive and conversational. While the planned focus was Evan and Heidi's no-till systems, the learning was emergent based on the questions and observations from the group. Stopping atop a steep hill filled with terraced beds of greens, one participant took in the scene and asked in awe, "How is your soil still here?" Another noted the perfectly intact leaves of Asian greens, largely untouched by flea beetles (a common pest known for chewing holes in tender brassica leaves, often leaving them unsellable), and inquired about which practices were protecting the crop from this dreaded pest.

Evan calmly and humbly explained their general approach of keeping natural ecosystems surrounding the farm as wild and natural as possible as one of several strategies for maintaining balance. He shared his observation that keeping the land surrounding the fields mostly unmowed seemed to have a positive impact on their flea beetle population, and pointed out ways that they utilize the natural growth on the land to their advantage for decreasing water and fertility runoff and soil erosion. They like the idea, he shared, that after they stop running the farm, the land could just return to its natural state

as it had been before they started the farm in 2008.

After a look around the lower fields the group headed uphill to the main part of the farm to take a closer look at the soil. Becky Maden, a vegetable nutrient management specialist at UVM Extension who has worked with Small Axe Farm to improve their soils, commented on the low pH that she first encountered when she started soil sampling at the farm. Over the years, Evan and Heidi have worked to bring the pH up by spreading lime and wood ash, and the group saw the results through a pH test conducted in the field. Digging into the soil helped participants to visualize some of the physical properties of the Small Axe Farm soils, both in the field as well as in the tunnels. The group explored elements such as soil texture, color, and the root structure of plants growing in the soil.

The impact of their no-till systems on the soil was evidenced both by the physical elements observable in the soil as well as high vegetable yields and the gross income resulting from the one-acre farm that provides for their family. Evan was quick to point out, however, that while they have developed systems that work for them in this specific context, the same systems wouldn't necessarily work for everyone. That said, the group left with much to think about and try on their own farms.

In the closing circle, when asked to share back one takeaway from the farm visit, responses ranged from being inspired by the

way Small Axe Farm balances production goals with ecological goals to more specific things like an interest in learning more about nematodes and what they can tell us about the soil, a topic that came up during our walk around the farm. Others shared specific strategies they were taking home to try at their farms, such as lettuce-growing techniques and testing for salts in their high tunnel soils.

As part of our goal to build community and connection between farmers of similar scales and production types, we ended the visit by sharing food and drinks and taking the opportunity to connect socially. This can be rare for farmers during the growing season when getting away from the farm is often a challenge. Several participants shared their excitement about the chance to see other similar farms in action during the growing season and looked forward to the season of farm visits to come.

As the day came to an end, Evan shared that he has long been inspired by Jack Lazor and all that he contributed to the field of soil health practices, and has been grateful that this cohort group developed in his memory. Tasting Butterworks Farm's yogurt and learning from Jack about their farming practices was integral to Evan and Heidi's decision to move to Vermont and farm here. It is clear that Jack was revered by farmers around the state and the country, and it is an honor to have the opportunity to build on his legacy and inspire the next generation of farmers with his passion for soil health. ♦

Vermont Family Farmer of the Month Awards

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

The Vermont Family Farmer of the Month Award, funded by a generous anonymous donor and administered in part by NOFA-VT, provides grants of \$12,000 to a family farm each month to honor environmental stewardship and support an innovative project that will improve the farm's viability. We are honored to present the most recent recipients of the award. Congratulations to Lilac Ridge Farm, Foote Brook Farm, and Drift Farmstead for their excellence in environmental stewardship and the work they do to build social and economic resilience in Vermont.



Lilac Ridge Farm - February 2023

Lilac Ridge Farm is a certified organic diversified family farm in Brattleboro. With a 10-acre market garden, a 46-cow dairy, and expansive wood lots, they are known for producing high-quality vegetables, flowers, milk, maple syrup, and timber. Since its establishment in 1998 on the Thurbers' family farm, Ross Thurber and Amanda Ellis-Thurber have been dedicated to practicing organic and regenerative farming techniques, prioritizing the nurturing of the soil. For Ross and Amanda, farming is not just a livelihood but a means to share skills and knowledge, foster community, and leave a positive impact on the land. When asked what about their farm they are most proud of, it's their "creative resilience in order to create a solid base for the next generation."

In February, Lilac Ridge Farm received \$12,000 to acquire and install a new, larger, and more energy-efficient walk-in cooler. This project will enhance the farm's long-term environmental sustainability and economic viability. By expanding their production capabilities and reducing product waste, Lilac Ridge Farm can grow their business while simultaneously benefiting the Brattleboro area community.



Foote Brook Farm - March 2023

Foote Brook Farm is a certified organic vegetable farm in Johnson, owned and managed by Tony and Joie Lehouillier. Having previously studied soil science, Tony knew that land management would be crucial to rebuilding soil health on the farm when he started transitioning his family's conventional dairy farm to an organic, diversified farm in 1995. Over the years, Tony and Joie have implemented systems to improve the health of their soil and have dedicated years to learning best practices from other organic growers and the Natural Resource Conservation Service.

In May, Foote Brook Farm was awarded \$12,000 to purchase and install an Orisha automated roll-up kit for the sides of their greenhouse. Implementing this automated system will yield stronger, healthier plants. The improved quality of transplants from the greenhouse will directly result in reduced pest and disease damage, ultimately leading to higher harvest yields. Additionally, this project will significantly reduce labor demands and alleviate the stress associated with manual management of outdated greenhouse.



Drift Farmstead - April 2023

Misse Axlerod's love for farming is rooted in her passion for environmentalism, food, and culture. For the past 18 years, she has used farming as a continuous learning and teaching tool, to nourish communities, and to connect people to each other and the environment. Misse sees food as a conduit to address many of the challenges of our time; if we can learn healthy ways to eat, we can learn healthy ways to nurture our land and combat climate change. With the support and partnership of her husband, Josh, they started Drift Farmstead in 2005 because they see so much hope for the future of our communities, our people, and our land.

In April, Drift Farmstead was awarded \$12,000 to build a new facility that includes a wash-pack shed and two bathrooms. Bringing people together and sharing the wonders of farming is core to Drift Farmstead. This grant will allow the team to easily wash and package the harvest. Having a central workstation where staff can wash and store vegetables will lessen the load of moving around the farm to wash at different hose stations. This project will also reduce the stress of handling portable restroom facilities and will be more convenient for the many educational guests visiting the farm. ♡

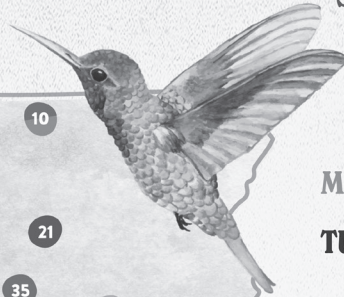
The next round of applications will open in September. To learn more, visit VERMONTFAMILYFARMERAWARD.ORG



VERMONT SUMMER FARMERS MARKETS



FOR MORE DETAILS ABOUT THE VTFMA MEMBER MARKETS, PLEASE VISIT: NOFAVT.ORG/VTFARMERSMARKETS



#RootedInVermont

- SAT**
1. Bennington Farmers Market | 10 AM - 1 PM
 2. Brattleboro Area Farmers Market | 9 AM - 2 PM
 3. Burlington Farmers Market | 9 AM - 2 PM
 4. Capital City Farmers Market: Montpelier | 9 AM - 1 PM
 5. Champlain Islands Farmers Market: Grand Isle | 10 AM - 2 PM
 6. Craftsbury Farmers Market | 10 AM - 1 PM
 7. Middlebury Farmers Market | 9 AM - 12:30 PM
 8. Montgomery Farmers Market * | 9:30 AM - 1 PM
 9. Morrisville Farmers Market | 9 AM - 1 PM
 10. Newport Farmers Market | 9 AM - 2 PM
 11. Northwest Farmers Market: Saint Albans | 9 AM - 2 PM
 12. Norwich Farmers Market | 9 AM - 1 PM
 13. Randolph Farmers Market | 9 AM - 1 PM
 14. Rutland County Farmers Market | 9 AM - 2 PM
 15. Shelburne Farmers Market | 9 AM - 2 PM
 16. St. Johnsbury Farmers Market | 9 AM - 1 PM
 17. The Vermont Farmers Market: Rutland | 9 AM - 2 PM
 18. Waitsfield Farmers Market | 9 AM - 1 PM
 19. West River Farmers Market: Londonderry | 9 AM - 1 PM

- SUN**
20. Dorset Farmers Market | 10 AM - 2 PM
 21. Glover Farmers Market | 10:30 AM - 2 PM
 22. Isham Family Farmers Market: Williston * | 1 PM - 4 PM
 23. Newfane Flea & Farmers Market * | 8 AM - 2 PM
 24. Putney Farmers Market | 11 AM - 3 PM
 25. Stowe Farmers Market * | 10:30 AM - 3 PM
 26. Winooski Farmers Market | 10 AM - 2 PM

- MON**
27. Bristol Farmers Market * | 4 PM - 7 PM

- TUES**
22. Isham Family Farmers Market: Williston * | 4:30 PM - 7:30 PM
 28. Milton Farmers Market | 4 PM - 7:30 PM
 29. Northfield Farmers Market | 3 PM - 6 PM
 30. Old North End Farmers Market: Burlington | 3 PM - 6:30 PM
 31. West Hartford Farmers Market * | 4 PM - 7 PM

- WED**
32. Barre Farmers Market | 3:30 PM - 6:30 PM
 33. Champlain Islands Farmers Market: South Hero | 3 PM - 6 PM
 34. Danville Farmers Market | 9 AM - 1 PM
 35. Greensboro Farmers Market | 3 PM - 6 PM
 36. Jeffersonville Farmers and Artisans Market * | 4:30 PM - 7:30 PM
 37. Market On Main: Bradford * | 4 PM - 7 PM
 38. Market on The Green: Woodstock | 3 PM - 6 PM
 10. Newport Farmers Market | 9 AM - 2 PM
 14. Rutland County Farmers Market | 2 PM - 6 PM
 17. The Vermont Farmers Market: Rutland | 1 PM - 5 PM

- THURS**
39. Jericho Farmers Market | 3 PM - 6:30 PM
 40. Manchester Farmers Market | 3 PM - 6 PM
 41. Peacham Farmers Market * | 3 PM - 6 PM
 42. St. Albans Bay Farmers Market * | 4:30 PM - 7:30 PM
 43. Vergennes Farmers Market * | 3 PM - 6:30 PM
 44. Waterbury Farmers Market | 4 PM - 7 PM

- FRI**
45. Arlington Village Farmers Market | 4 PM - 7 PM
 46. Brandon Farmers Market * | 9:30 AM - 2:30 PM
 47. Chelsea Farmers Market | 3 PM - 6 PM
 48. Greater Falls Farmers Market: Bellows Falls | 4 PM - 7 PM
(Once Per Month on 3rd Friday)
 49. Hardwick Farmers Market | 3 PM - 6 PM
 50. Hartland Farmers Market: Windsor | 4 PM - 6:30 PM
 51. Ludlow Farmers Market * | 3 PM - 7 PM
 52. Lyndon Farmers Market: Lyndonville | 3 PM - 6 PM
 53. Richmond Farmers Market | 3 PM - 6:30 PM
 54. Rochester Farmers Market | 3 PM - 6 PM
 55. Royalton Farmers Market * | 4 PM - 7 PM
 56. Townshend Farmers Market: West Townshend | 4:30 PM - 6:30 PM



Updates on
NOFA-VT's

Resilience Grants

For the fourth year, NOFA-VT's Resilience Grants invest in the creativity and strengths of local farms, with democracy at the heart of it all.



Resilience Grants

The Power of Participatory Processes

By Grace Oedel, NOFA-VT Executive Director

To understand how our organization's work can be of most use, we need to understand the answer to three questions: who are we, when are we, and where are we? These questions help guide us to be the most useful and relevant to the work needed in the community now. There is a phrase in organizing: "nothing about us, without us, is for us."

NOFA-VT's identity has in large part been defined by being led by the people we serve. We were founded over fifty years ago by a group of farmers, for farmers. For the last half-century, we have maintained the practice of having a majority farmer and farmworker board to ensure that those we work in service to are at the helm of our organization. Vermont Organic Farmers (VOF), our organic certification agency, has also always had a Farmer Review Committee—a committee of certified organic farmers of all production types that reviews any changes to VOF's certification guidelines and truth-tests them before they become implemented. The committee asks: are these regulations valuable for ecological goals? Possible to implement on working farms? Ethical? Necessary?

The late community organizer, Grace Lee Boggs, used to pose the question: "What time is it on the clock of the world?" When I ask myself this question, the clock rings out: it's a time of climate instability, of persistent food insecurity, of economic and racial inequality, and of a worrisome decline in democracy all around the world. We live in a moment of unique challenge and fracture, but knowing that the outcome of this moment is still undecided also presents an opportunity. Any time of change and disintegration offers us all clarity in our possibility and purpose.

Understanding where we are is also critical to the content of our work. As NOFA-VT, our "where" has particular relevance for the above struggles of our "when." We live and farm in Vermont, a state that still shuts down each year for Town Meeting Day. While studies track the decline and suppression of democratic participation around the nation, we have an extremely proud tradition of direct participation in town governance, budgeting, and rule-making. In Vermont we are also a largely rural state, with agricultural land still celebrated in the working landscape—though we too struggle intensely with economic stratification and racial inequality. Finally, many reports have predicted Vermont as the best places to live for the coming decades in a changing climate. We are uniquely poised to be a haven for people in a rapidly changing world.

In assessing who, where, and when we are, we have identified that we are best positioned to build on our member-leadership and, whenever possible, shift towards more community participation. We seek to center the knowledge of the people most affected to combat the pressing challenges of our time and generate durable solutions that work for our community. To say it another way: the people most

affected know what is needed. Centering farmer and farmworkers' voices makes sense for good work outcomes for our organization.

A participatory process can be defined as any time people directly affected by policies, programs, advocacy campaigns, or institutions in power have the opportunity to provide input. There are many forms of what participatory process looks like. Sometimes it's as simple as voting once on an issue. Sometimes it's like a process called "sociocracy," in which there are small groups that have clear and delineated authority. Sometimes it's a blend.

Early in the COVID-19 pandemic, generous donors and collaborators responded to emergent needs in the farming community and gave support that allowed us to begin to offer Resilience Grants, which over time have grown to include investments in social, economic, and climate resilience innovations that are hard for farmers to fund otherwise. The funding pool is intended to help support projects that address the above "when are we living" questions by: mitigating against the harmful effects of our changing climate; repairing harms that have been committed due to the historic and widespread systemic racism embedded in our food system; are innovative and will encourage others to adopt new and more promising practices; and will lead to broader community resilience through enhanced food security, community-based solutions, and connectivity. We have left the definition of resilience intentionally broad so that applicants can share their own ideas about resilience with us.

In 2022, we realized that farmers and farmworkers would know best about what resilience means in their daily work, and shifted to a fully participatory process in which a racially, economically, and geographically diverse committee of farmers and farmworkers make the funding decisions for the Resilience Grants. This committee decides what to ask on the application, how to evaluate and rank the projects, and ultimately decides which projects should be funded. NOFA-VT staff work on the fundraising and supporting the administrative side, but the committee holds the decision-making authority.

This participatory grantmaking process has grown our understanding of how our community thinks about resilience and helped improve our Resilience Grant operations enormously. It has also helped us to become more in line with our values. A participatory process shifts the way we do our work to a more mycelial mode: distributing resources, information, and power-sharing as much as possible, which ultimately strengthens our whole relational web. We are excited to continue to deepen and expand the opportunities for participatory engagement and leadership within, and beyond, our little hub in this exciting movement for a more just, sustainable food future. Together, onward!◇

“The people most affected know what is needed.”

Resilience Grants

\$152,000 Granted to 63 Farms to Build Resilience Around Vermont

By Aaron Guman, NOFA-VT Farm Resilience Specialist

This spring, NOFA-VT awarded our fourth round of Resilience Grants for projects that will improve long-term resilience on farms and in communities across Vermont. We received 159 applications from farmers around the state and made 58 grants benefiting 62 farmers, totaling over \$15,000. Thirty-three of the grants were awarded to farm businesses that are led by farmers who are Black, Indigenous and/or People of Color (BIPOC), LGBTQ, and/or disabled.

In agriculture, resilience is often referred to as the ability of a farming system to withstand and recover from shocks and stresses while maintaining its ability to sustain productivity. These shocks and stresses include natural disasters, droughts, floods, erratic weather patterns, and increases in pests and diseases. Farms also need resilience in the face of economic and social disruptions, as the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated with abrupt changes in markets, supply chains, the labor force, and more. What a farm needs to build and maintain resilience is often context-specific, and no one knows their farm better than the farmers themselves. The grant application asked farmers to define what resilience means to them and identify their most pressing needs for building resilience on their farms and in their communities.

This year, our farmer-applicants shared in their definitions of resilience many common themes, such as perseverance, the crucial support of being deeply embedded in their community, and continuing to be able to feed their family and neighbors through hard times. One definition of resilience that captured many applicants' spirits reads: "Resilience is the ability to adapt to change. For farmers, it has meant providing food for our communities while adapting to changing climate conditions, markets, and supply chains." Another farmer wrote about the interconnected nature of resilience: "Resilience is connected

with community. What can we offer each other? How can we build a food system that keeps us flourishing in the face of chaos? It means relying on local resources and grass to feed [the] animals which sustain us."

The applications demonstrated a wide range of ways farmers seek to increase their resilience. Equipment and infrastructure comprised 1/3 of funded projects, the largest category overall, including hoop houses, farmworker housing, and equipment such as no-till pasture seeders and processing equipment. One example is a joint effort between three producers: Northwoods Creamery and The Spotted Ewe, both located in Newport, and Maple View Sugarworks in Westfield. This collaborative project will purchase a mill for the farms to use the waste wool from sheep operations to produce wool pellets, which can be used as a soil amendment. As a result of this project, the pellets will increase these sheep farms viability by creating a waste product market, thus increasing their income potential (with the potential to also scale to using waste wool from other sheep farms). This project also increases resilience in the local food supply by offering an innovative new fertility input for growers, as these wool pellets provide an organic source of slow-release nitrogen, increase soil water retention capacity, and build organic matter and soil structure. No other inputs are needed to produce the pellets, and they offer a source of nitrogen without phosphorus, a boon for water quality in many farm contexts.

Around a quarter of the projects selected for funding support climate-smart agriculture by helping farmers adopt resilience-building practices. One of those, New Tradition Farm, plans to use their grant funds to support their long-term goal of moving toward perennial cropping systems by establishing a hillside food forest. Other projects in this category include enhancing rotational grazing systems, soil-health building through cover cropping, and agroforestry projects integrating trees and shrubs into agricultural production. New Tradition Farm's food forest will start with a one-acre planting of over 100 nut and fruit-bearing plants, including hazelnuts, chestnuts, and American persimmons. Perennial plants introduce greater resilience into farms through carbon sequestration, building biodiversity, reducing erosion, and protecting crops and livestock from extreme weather events.

Building resilience through initiatives related to justice, land/food access, and community is a focus of about a fifth of the projects. Projects in this category include community gardens, farm-to-school



initiatives, and educational programming. One grantee, The Huertas Garden Project, a joint initiative of the Vermont Garden Network and UVM Extension, is sourcing and distributing plants for kitchen gardens to migrant farmworker households across Vermont's dairy industry this spring. These kitchen gardens will help address disparities in access to nutritious and culturally familiar food and help bridge isolation and social inequality barriers. In Newfane, the SUSU CommUNITY Farm,

a charitable food system nonprofit, will provide free "Box of Resilience" CSA shares to 45 families and access to their Food as Medicine classes with their grant. As a result, families receive both food and the knowledge to cook and preserve their share.

Water is essential to all agricultural systems, and we know that climate change in New England will cause a net increase in precipitation—with many instances of heavy, damaging rains and floods—as well as increased periods of drought. One of our final two categories, each representing ten percent of projects, addressed water resource management. Valley Clayplain Forest Farm, a perennial agroforestry and mushroom farm in New Haven, is using a grant to increase water resilience by establishing an irrigation pond to supply water for their

mushroom, berry, and vegetable operations. This more consistent water supply will dramatically build this farm's resilience in the face of increasingly uneven and irregular summer rainfall.

The final category of projects aims to increase economic viability through methods such as marketing material development, promotion of on-farm sales, and agrotourism. Increasing a farm's financial stability allows them to better weather the unexpected challenges and fluctuations inherent in agriculture. Grace Farm in Athens is one of a number of farms that is building, enhancing, and outfitting farm stands. They hope to create a significant income stream for the farm with on-farm sales and establish what will be the only source of food in a town where the nearest store with fresh produce is over a half-hour drive away. In addition, local neighbors in need will have access to a "pay what you can" produce program, increasing critical access to local, nutritious food.

NOFA-VT is honored to help support these projects fostering long-term resilience in Vermont's farms, landscapes, and communities. This diverse range of projects exemplifies the power of resilience in agriculture, where proactive adaptation and sustainable, organic practices play a crucial role in ensuring farms' long-term viability and success. These projects showcase innovative, varied approaches to enhancing farm resilience. By investing in these initiatives, NOFA-VT is strengthening individual farms and contributing to the overall sustainability and adaptability of Vermont's agricultural landscape.

This year's Resilience Grants were funded with donations to the NOFA-VT Resilience Fund as well as generous support from Ben & Jerry's Foundation, Comment start Judy Geer & Dick Dreissigacker, Modesty Is My Best Quality Fund of the Vermont Community Foundation, Sustainable Future Fund of the Vermont Community Foundation, and WaterWheel Foundation.

You can read more about all the projects awarded this year at nofavt.org/2023ResilienceGrantees.◇



Photos from left to right: Sheep at The Spotted Ewe in Newport; Folks at the Huertas Garden Project show off some potatoes; A plum tree blooms at Valley Clayplain Forest Farm in New Haven.



Pulling the Levers of Change in the Face of Food Insecurity

By Johanna Doren, NOFA-VT Food Access Coordinator

While food insecurity rates in Vermont have always been serious, the COVID-19 pandemic magnified challenges to food access. Nearly one-third of Vermonters experienced food insecurity in 2020, up from approximately 11% before the pandemic. In response, the federal government created several emergency assistance programs (e.g. SNAP emergency allotments, Vermont Everyone Eats), yet with the end of the Federal COVID-19 Public Health Emergency this May, these pandemic-era assistance programs are no longer available to help address the need, which only continues to be intensified by inflation and the increasing wealth gap. When approaching work in food security, we at NOFA-VT believe that it is important to consider the dual components of supporting folks in meeting their immediate needs while also identifying long-term structural changes to address the root causes of inequities and food insecurity. In response to significant growth in demand for food assistance programs over the last few years, we have been assessing NOFA-VT's role in both short- and long-term food security work, with a desire to ensure our food access programs are both effective and equitable as they grow and impact more Vermonters.

At NOFA-VT, our food access programs prioritize both food access and farm viability in tandem, and we aim to think about what a food system can look like beyond the status quo. While our suite of local food access programs have positively impacted many Vermont households and producers for decades, we continue to examine how they still may play into systems of oppression. We are learning to take a critical eye to the programs, asking ourselves and our community members what feels inequitable about them and how we can use these programs as tools for creating a more just, equitable food system. And, as a currently predominantly white-led organization, we know we will continue to make (and learn from) mistakes as we work to deconstruct any harmful internalized assumptions.

While our food access programs primarily focus on reducing financial barriers, we recognize that there are many challenges to eating fresh, locally-grown food beyond

finances. Providing financial assistance is a short-term solution for only a portion of folks experiencing food insecurity. Aside from limited program funding, participation in these programs is also restricted by a number of barriers that financial assistance does not resolve, including those related to transportation, cooking knowledge, time and equipment to prepare food, familiarity with the local food products available, and public awareness about these programs. Our goals in our local food access work are three-fold: 1) operating our programs successfully and meeting as much demand as we can, 2) evaluating, updating, and improving our programs to reflect the changing needs of people living in Vermont, and 3) supporting longer-term systems change to advance more equitable local food access in Vermont.

Short-Term, Responsive Solutions to Food Insecurity

We operate multiple programs that reduce the cost of local, organic food while ensuring farmers are fully compensated for their work. Two programs in particular, Farm Share and Crop Cash, offer widespread support and have been our recent focus for growth.

Farm Share

The Farm Share Program provides discounts on community supported agriculture (CSA) shares at local farms for folks who need financial assistance. Once Farm Share participants pick which CSA they'd like to join, NOFA-VT pays the farm for a portion of the share, allowing the CSA member to pay for the remainder and pick up their food in the same way as all the other CSA members. In wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the program saw rapid growth—demand for discounted shares nearly doubled from 2019 to 2020, and demand in 2022 was triple the pre-pandemic numbers.

As the program has grown to impact more people, we conducted a comprehensive survey of program participants, participating farms, and folks who don't take part in the Farm Share Program to identify where the program flourishes and where it falls

short. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive; most participants shared that they enjoyed the quality of the food and greatly appreciated receiving financial assistance for local food. Similarly, participating farms felt the program had a positive impact by supporting more community members in being able to purchase their food, while providing them with additional revenue. However, challenges in the program model were also identified, including transportation to pick up shares, the cost of food even with the subsidy, and barriers of culture, language, or other communication.

From this stakeholder engagement process, we produced short-, medium-, and long-term recommendations to increase access to the Farm Share program and better meet the needs of both the participants and the farms. Some of these steps were implemented into this summer's application process, including a new sliding scale for cost-sharing up to a 75% discount on shares (an increase from the historical 50% discount), translated application materials and one-on-one support available in Spanish, and increased outreach to organizations supporting refugee and immigrant communities.

Longer-term shifts to the program will focus on building relationships with community partners to better serve BIPOC, immigrant, and refugee communities, exploring avenues for greater participant involvement in program development and funding decisions, and restructuring the application review process from first-come-first-served to something more equitable. It is also evident that the Farm Share model cannot be adapted to fit everyone's needs, especially for folks in the most marginalized communities experiencing numerous barriers. In order to support these communities that may not benefit from Farm Share, we are working with other partners to support local food access initiatives in their communities.

Crop Cash, Crop Cash Plus, and Accessibility at Farmers Markets

Crop Cash matches customers' SNAP benefits with "incentive coupons" that

can be used to purchase local produce at roughly 40 farmers markets across the state, allowing shoppers to purchase more food with the same amount of SNAP benefits. We know that farmers markets provide an important opportunity to support local farmers and producers directly, yet for many community members, there are a number of transportation, financial, cultural, and linguistic barriers to utilizing them. This program reduces the financial burden of purchasing fresh, local food, but we know that only a small percentage of SNAP participants in the state use it. While some barriers to usage lie within the federal rules that govern this program, we have increased our efforts to raise awareness about Crop Cash and support its inclusivity by providing farmers markets with increased SNAP and Crop Cash signage, as well as recommending best practices for inclusive market communication and design.

Thanks to the support from the Vermont Foodbank's grants program last year, we have been able to expand language access for both Farm Share and Crop Cash, with the aim of better serving traditionally underserved communities in Vermont—particularly immigrants, refugees, and migrant farmworkers. Over the last year, we have had conversations with community partners, farmers market managers, and the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI) Vermont Refugee Resettlement Office to determine which languages would be most effective to have materials translated into. The Crop Cash web page now houses information about the program in eight languages other than English, and we gave several farmers markets and local agencies translated materials to match the linguistic diversity of their communities to better serve clients with languages other than English. This summer, we are planning outreach events with interpreters at Burlington-area farmers markets to support folks who may be new to using SNAP and the Crop Cash program at these markets. We look forward to evaluating these efforts, expanding them, and supplementing them with additional outreach to community partners.

Another exciting pilot we are coordinating this summer is Crop Cash Plus, a companion program to the Crop Cash coupon. Crop Cash Plus, made possible by an allocation from the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets, will enable farmers market SNAP customers to receive an additional \$1 matching coupon for every \$1 of SNAP they spend. Whereas federal rules dictate that Crop Cash can only be spent on fruits,

vegetables, herbs, and culinary plant seeds and starts, Crop Cash Plus coupons can be spent on any SNAP-eligible item. This means that customers will have greater agency and spending power for meat, eggs, dairy, baked goods, and more, and vendors selling those items will directly benefit from those purchases.

The Larger Systems of Change

While we celebrate these programmatic changes for advancing equity in NOFA-VT's long standing local food access programs, it remains that these programs provide relatively short-term fixes to food insecurity. They also entail a significant amount of administrative burden, especially for farmers market managers in the case of Crop Cash, and rely on the grant-making decisions of funders. We know that while it's important for us to work to meet immediate needs, we also cannot miss the opportunity to zoom out and additionally support foundational changes to our food system that make it work better for all communities.

One of the ways we engage in this work is by participating in the Vermont Farm Bill Nutrition Coalition, a group of food security organizations, legal advocacy organizations, farmers and growers, food retailers, school partners, and more advocating for federal change in food access programs to make the programs more accessible and better meet folks' needs. This looks like NOFA-VT staff, farmers, and farmers market managers testifying at the statehouse on SNAP Awareness Day to speak about the importance of having farms and farmers markets be able to accept SNAP benefits and Crop Cash.



This work also looks like being a part of the Vermont Food Security Action Plan process, identifying strategies and investments we can collectively make in a future where all Vermonters have access to the food they want to eat. We know longer-term systems change also requires expanding our concept of what “food security work” looks like and advocating for farmworker rights, holistic and affordable healthcare, universal pre-K, universal school meals, supports for organic farmers, and moving away from farm business “viability” being reliant on profits made from consumers paying for the product. We must continue to question our role in oppressive systems and support the work of those most harmed by them in constructing alternative paths. This process of systemic change will be messy. But, we can always remain grounded in a collective understanding that the food system is our connective tissue and that locally grown, nutritious food is a basic human right. Our food system continually lays plain both the weaknesses and strengths in our society, and thus it is the optimal setting to make radical, impactful change. ♦

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

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

NEW MEMBERS

Anne Greensfelder, Montpelier, VT
Annie McLean, Glover, VT
David Gilliam, Brattleboro, VT
Heidi Lynch, Rutland, VT
Jason Uth, Putney, VT
John Mejia, Hinesburg, VT
Leanne Porter, Glover, VT
Lisa Nichols, Putney, VT
Mark Killian, Burlington, VT
Rosalie Williams, Bakersfield, VT
Sridhar Manthena, Cary, NC
Tom Warner, Bridport, VT
Una Pease, Barnet, VT
Zeb Swick, Warren, VT

NEW & RENEWING BUSINESS MEMBERS

1000 Stone Farm, Brookfield, VT
47th Avenue Farm, Portland, OR
AC Dairy, St Albans, VT
Adam's Berry Farm, Charlotte, VT
AJ's Happy Chick Farm, West Glover, VT
Alston Farm, Williamstown, VT
Arcana Gardens & Greenhouses, Jericho, VT
Aurora Farms, Charlotte, VT
Back Beyond Farm LLC, Chelsea, VT
Bailey Farm, Craftsbury, VT
Baird & Morgan Swift, Claremont, NH
Basin Farm, Bellows Falls, VT
Bear Roots Farm, LLC, Williamstown, VT
Bennington Farmers Market, Bennington, VT
Birdsong Herb Farm, Cornwall, VT
Blackbird Organics, Plainfield, VT
Blue Heron Farm, Grand Isle, VT
Bone Mountain Farm, Jericho, VT
Bordertown Farm, Brattleboro, VT
Bourdon Maple Farm, Woodstock, VT
Brattleboro Food Co-op, Brattleboro, VT
Bread & Butter Farm, Shelburne, VT
Breezy Valley Farm, Irasburg, VT

Brigham Family Farm, Cuttingsville, VT
Burlington Farmers Market, Brookfield, VT
Butterworks Farm, Troy, VT
Camp Merrishko, East Randolph, VT
Carman Brook Farm, LLC, Swanton, VT
Carrier Farm, Washington, VT
Cate Farm, Plainfield, VT
Cedar Acres, Fair Haven, VT
Chambers Farm, North Clarendon, VT
Champlain Orchards, Shoreham, VT
Choiniere Family Farm, Highgate Ctr, VT
City Market, Burlington, VT
Clearfield Farm, Granville, VT
Common Roots, South Burlington, VT
Crazy 8 Farm, Inc, Newport Ctr, VT
Creative Windrows, Landgrove, VT
Cross Road Dairy, Newport Ctr, VT
CT Greenhouse Company LLC, Waianae, HI
Deep Meadow Farm, Windsor, VT
Does' Leap Farm, E Fairfield, VT
Dog River Farm, Berlin, VT
Donegan Family Dairy, Charlotte, VT
Dry Brook Farm, W Pawlet, VT
Dubs Farms, Berkshire, VT
Dwight Miller & Son Orchards, E Dummerston, VT
Earth Sky Time Farm, Manchester Ctr, VT
Elmer Farm, Middlebury, VT
Elmore Roots Nursery, Elmore, VT
Elysian Fields, Shoreham, VT
Engelbert Farms, Nichols, NY
Evening Song Farm, Cuttingsville, VT
Everett Driver, Newport Ctr, VT
Fairy Tale Farm, Bridport, VT
Farm at Vermont Youth Conservation Corps, Richmond, VT
Farm on the River, Springfield, VT
Fedco Seeds, Clinton, ME
Fibonacci Acres, Waterbury Ctr, VT
Field Stone Farm & CSA, Northfield, VT
Firefly Farm at Burke Hollow, West Burke, VT
Flack Family Farm, Enosburg Falls, VT
Flag Hill Farm, Vershire, VT

Flying Dog Farm, Tunbridge, VT
Flywheel Farm, E Montpelier, VT
Foote Brook Organic Farm, Johnson, VT
Footprint Farm LLC, Starksboro, VT
Foster Farm Botanicals LLC, East Calais, VT
Four Farmers Herbalist Collective, Londonderry, VT
Franklin Farm, Guilford, VT
Franklin Foods Inc, Enosburg Falls, VT
Free Verse Farm, Chelsea, VT
Friends & Neighbors Organic Farm, LLC, Marshfield, VT
Full Moon Farm, Inc, Hinesburg, VT
Gardner Family LLC, Pownal, VT
Giroux's Poultry Farm, Inc., Chazy, NY
GMG Farms, Shelburne, VT
Golden Russet Farm, Shoreham, VT
Good Heart Farmstead, Worcester, VT
Gopher Broke Farm Inc, Hyde Park, VT
Grateful Greens Vermont, Brattleboro, VT
Grateful Morning Farm, Shaftsbury, VT
Great River Farm, Windsor, VT
Green & Gold CSA, Sudbury, VT
Green Mountain Feeds, Bethel, VT
Green Valley Organic, Derby Line, VT
Hartshorn Farm Market, Waitsfield, VT
Haven Hill Farmstead, Wallingford, VT
Highfields Farm, Randolph, VT
Hilary Martin, Burlington, VT
Hill Section Farm, Hyde Park, VT
Hillside Lane Hemp LLC, Randolph, VT
Honey Field Farm, Norwich, VT
Houde Family Farm, St Johnsbury, VT
Howmars Farm, Franklin, VT
Howvale Farm, Tunbridge, VT
Hoyt Hill Farmstead, Tunbridge, VT
Hunger Moon Farm, Enosburg Falls, VT
Hurricane Flats, South Royalton, VT
Intervale Community Farm, Burlington, VT
Ismael Imports, LLC / Boswellnes, Colchester, VT
J & M Ladd Families Farm, Alburg, VT
Joe's Brook Farm, St Johnsbury, VT

Johnathan Belanger, Irasburg, VT
 Kettle Song Farm, Worcester, VT
 Kimball Brook Farm, North Ferrisburgh, VT
 Kindred Mountain Farm, Putney, VT
 Kingsbury Market Garden, Waitsfield, VT
 Kiss the Cow Farm, S Royalton, VT
 Larson Farm LLC, Wells, VT
 Last Resort Farm, Bristol, VT
 Leaping Bear Farm, Putney, VT
 Lewis Creek Farm, Starksboro, VT
 Lewis Creek Jerseys Inc, Danville, VT
 Lilac Ridge Farm, Brattleboro, VT
 Lilly Farms at Marshall Park, East Dover, VT
 Long Wind Farm, E Thetford, VT
 Long Winter Farm, Stowe, VT
 Love Your Mother Farm, Hinesburg, VT
 Lovers Lane Farm, Hartland, VT
 Lucia Rising Flowers, East Dummerston, VT
 Luna Bleu Farm, S Royalton, VT
 MacBain Homestead, West Danville, VT
 Maple Wind Farm, Richmond, VT
 Marandale Farm, Westford, VT
 McKnight Farm, E Montpelier, VT
 Meadow Brook Farm, Irasburg, VT
 Merck Forest & Farmland Center, Rupert, VT
 Miller Farm, Vernon, VT
 Mocha Joe's Roasting Company, Brattleboro, VT
 Moksha Farm, Roxbury, VT
 Molly Brook Farm LLC, West Danville, VT
 Mount Hunger Jerseys, E Burke, VT
 Mountain Meadows Farm, Jamaica Plain, MA
 Mountainyard Farm, Ripton, VT
 Naga Bakehouse, Middletown Springs, VT
 New Leaf Organics, Bristol, VT
 Newfield Herb Farm, Craftsbury Common, VT
 Nitty Gritty Grain Company of Vermont, Charlotte, VT
 Northeast Kingdom Hemp, Barton, VT
 Norwich Farmers Market, Norwich, VT
 Old Friends Farm, Amherst, MA
 Old Road Farm, Granville, VT
 Oliver Hill Farm, Leicester, VT
 Opera House Farm, LLC, Vershire, VT
 Philo Ridge Farm, Charlotte, VT
 Pigasus Meats, South Hero, VT
 Pleasant Mount Farm, Huntington Ctr, VT
 Quarry Road Farms, Middlebury, VT
 Quill Hill Farm, Poultney, VT
 Ramblebramble, Huntington, VT
 Red Hen Baking Company LLC, Middlesex, VT
 Red Wagon Plants, Hinesburg, VT
 Rene J Fournier & Sons Farm Inc., Swanton, VT

Rise Sugarworks, Lincoln, VT
 River Berry Farm, Fairfax, VT
 Riverview Market Farms, LLC, Westminster, VT
 Rockledge Maple Trust, St Albans, VT
 Rolling Bale Farm LLC, Shoreham, VT
 Root 5 Farm, Fairlee, VT
 Savage Gardens, North Hero, VT
 Schoolhouse Farm, LLC, Plainfield, VT
 Scott Farm Orchard, Dummerston, VT
 Seize the Day Farm, Tunbridge, VT
 Severy Farm LLC, Cornwall, VT
 ShareMRV, Waitsfield, VT
 Small Axe Farm, East Ryegate, VT
 Snug Valley Farm, E Hardwick, VT
 Stimets Knoll Farm, Woodstock, VT
 Stone Leaf Teahouse, LLC, Middlebury, VT
 Stony Pond Farm, Enosburg Falls, VT
 Sunday Bell Farm, Danville, VT
 Sunrise Orchards, Cornwall, VT
 Sunrise Organic Farm, White River Jct, VT
 Sunshine Valley LLC, Rochester, VT
 Sweet Roots Farm LLC, Charlotte, VT
 Taconic End Farm, Leicester, VT
 Tamarack Hollow Farm LLC, Barre, VT
 Taylor Valley View Farm, Washington, VT
 The Corse Farm Dairy LLC, Whitingham, VT
 The Farm Upstream, East Montpelier, VT
 The Killeen Crossroads Farm, Shelburne, VT
 The PlantDoc LLC, South Burlington, VT

The Preserved Garden LLC, Carton, OR
 The Sayre Fields LLC, Hinesburg, VT
 Thistle Hill Farm LLC, N Pomfret, VT
 Too Little Farm, Barnet, VT
 Trillium Hill Farm, Hinesburg, VT
 Triple J Pastures, Irasburg, VT
 Tunbridge Hill Farm, Tunbridge, VT
 UVM Health Network, South Burlington, VT
 Vermont Compost Company, Montpelier, VT
 Vermont Herb Growers Cooperative, Hyde Park, VT
 Vermont Land Trust, Woodstock, VT
 Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund, Montpelier, VT
 Vermont Trade Winds Farm, Shoreham, VT
 Von Trapp Farm, Waitsfield, VT
 Walker Farm, East Dummerston, VT
 Wayside Farm, Randolph Ctr, VT
 Whitetail Acres, Williamstown, VT
 Wilbur Farms LLC, Whiting, VT
 Wild Hill Organics, Fairlee, VT
 Willsboro Farm, Willsboro, NY
 Witchcat Farm, Enosburg Falls, VT
 Woodard's Farm, Waterbury Ctr, VT
 Woodstock Resort Corporation, Woodstock, VT
 Zack Woods Herb Farm, Hyde Park, VT
 Zafa Wines, Isle La Motte, VT



New Organic Certifications

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

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Burke Mountain Maple
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