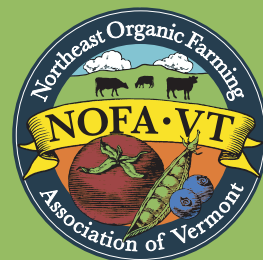


NOFA Notes



Quarterly newsletter of the Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont

Spring 2023



Protect Our Soils From PFAS | Organic Dairy Farm Interview |
Policy Updates | Washington D.C. Fly-In

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*Cover photo: Farmers at River Berry Farm, a
NOFA-VT member farm and certified organic by
Vermont Organic Farmers*



Dear friend of NOFA-VT,

I'm still buzzing with energy and joy from being together at the winter conference last month. It was so nourishing to reconnect and feel the pulse of the community. There were so many special moments: raising our voices in collective song; sharing the names of those we have lost since we were last together; taking notes and asking questions in packed workshops on everything from climate planning to small ruminants to grassroots organizing 101; making art that reflected our values; eating amazing snacks grown by our incredible community of farmers; and a fantastic keynote from Winona LaDuke. Winona asks us to "be the ancestors our descendants will thank."

This issue of NOFA Notes chronicles some of our recent attempts to live up to that ask. Being a good ancestor can take many forms. Soul Fire Farm, a working farm in upstate New York endeavoring to uproot racism and grow seed sovereignty in the food system, describes four possible modes of making change: resisting, reforming, building, and healing. Sometimes we are called to resist harm becoming the norm, or to reform existing systems to improve outcomes. Other times, we need space to imagine and create something truly positive and new, while still others we simply need the space and support to heal together.

In this issue, we're sharing some of our collective efforts in these modalities towards living into the role of "good ancestors." You'll read about some excellent organic farmers tending their land with care for future generations at the front of their mind, healing and investing in our shared future. You'll also learn about our membership in the Protect Our Soil Coalition to resist corporate takeover in "composting" and our shared refusal to accept microplastics in Vermont's soil and water. You'll be reminded about the power of signing up for CSAs, which offer a longstanding model of community resilience and collaboration between eaters and farmers, and a collective sensibility that is more needed than ever. (On a related note: NOFA-VT's Farm Share Program, which helps limited-income eaters access nutritious, delicious CSA shares while simultaneously supporting small organic farmers, is experiencing record demand as pandemic-related federal food program supports were abruptly cut off. Just another example of the power of creating simple alternatives to build the world we really need. Thanks to all who participate in or support this program!)

You'll have to stay tuned until the next issue of NOFA Notes to read the profiles of farms that receive this year's round of "Resilience Grants"—but right now our farmer and farmworker participatory review committee is reading through a pile of amazing applications for projects all around the state aimed at building a more socially, ecologically, and economically resilient, verdant, and just food future. More on that soon.

Whether through resistance or reforming, healing or building, thank you for the work you do to ensure a thriving future for all our children, and for taking seriously our responsibility to care for each other and the land so that all may be fed.

Warmly,

Grace Oedel

Executive Director, NOFA-VT



It's CSA sign-up season!

Community Supported Agriculture

CSA stands for **Community Supported Agriculture** and is like a subscription for local, fresh, seasonal food.

In addition to guaranteeing you'll have a steady supply of the **freshest local food** all summer long,

getting a CSA is one of the best ways to show up for farmers. Early-season CSA subscriptions provide a **dependable revenue** to farms when they need it most.

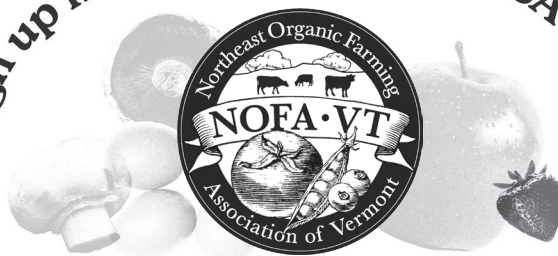


With more than **100 farms** with CSAs in Vermont, there's bound to be a CSA that's the right price, style, size, and frequency for you.



Some you pick up on the farm, others will deliver. With some CSAs you pick out exactly what you want, and others come pre-boxed. Some even offer add-ons like eggs, cheese, meat, bread or flowers.

Sign up now to secure your CSA share!



For a list of CSAs in your area, go to:

NOFAVT.ORG/CSAS

Growing Plastic Pollution and Profits for Multinational Corporations Was Not the Intention of the Universal Recycling Law

By Grace Oedel, NOFA-VT Executive Director

It was Vermonters' ethic of care for both land and people that motivated our policymakers to establish a Universal Recycling Law (URL/Act 148). This wise move, requiring composting, rightly identified food waste as an essential part of how we care for our place: sequestering carbon, restoring nutrients, and adding life to our soils. Healthy, compost-rich soil increases biodiversity and filters water. Composting additionally supports Vermont's goals around food resiliency by enabling us to grow more of the food we need with fewer energy-intensive and supply chain-reliant inputs like fertilizer required from "away." All these goals remain urgently needed for a thriving future. In creating the Universal Recycling Law, Vermont demonstrated an understanding that ecosystem health (including human health) is literally rooted in our soil.

And yet despite the original good intention of the Universal Recycling Law, the global pattern of corporate takeover across every sector, steamrolling forward with its myopic profit obsession and abject disregard for holistic community and ecosystem health, has found its way to Vermont.

Originally, food waste and plastics were required to be separated before composting, which makes logical sense if you consider what you'd put into your backyard pile. But since 2019, the Agency of Natural Resources has decided to re-interpret the section of the law on "source separation requirement" differently, essentially negating its original intent and allowing plastic trash to be crushed right in with the food mix. The

source separation requirement was designed to ensure organic material be completely separated from non-organic material before composting. The decision to not require source separation made it possible for large companies interested in getting into the new market to take that step. This change in interpretation of the law interestingly coincided with Agri-Cycle, a large food waste corporation, winning Hannaford's contract for disposing of food waste.

In these multinational corporate-owned, profit-driven depacker "composting" operations, large machines crush plastic food wrapping together with food scraps. Think here of a shrink-wrapped cucumber that a grocery store discarded when it passed the sell-by date. As you might imagine, this smashing process results in tiny microplastics (which we increasingly know pollute the soil and water, as well as our bodies) that are then part of the slurry that goes into the bio-digester, the "compost" (i.e. greenwashed toxic dirt) that is then applied on agricultural lands.

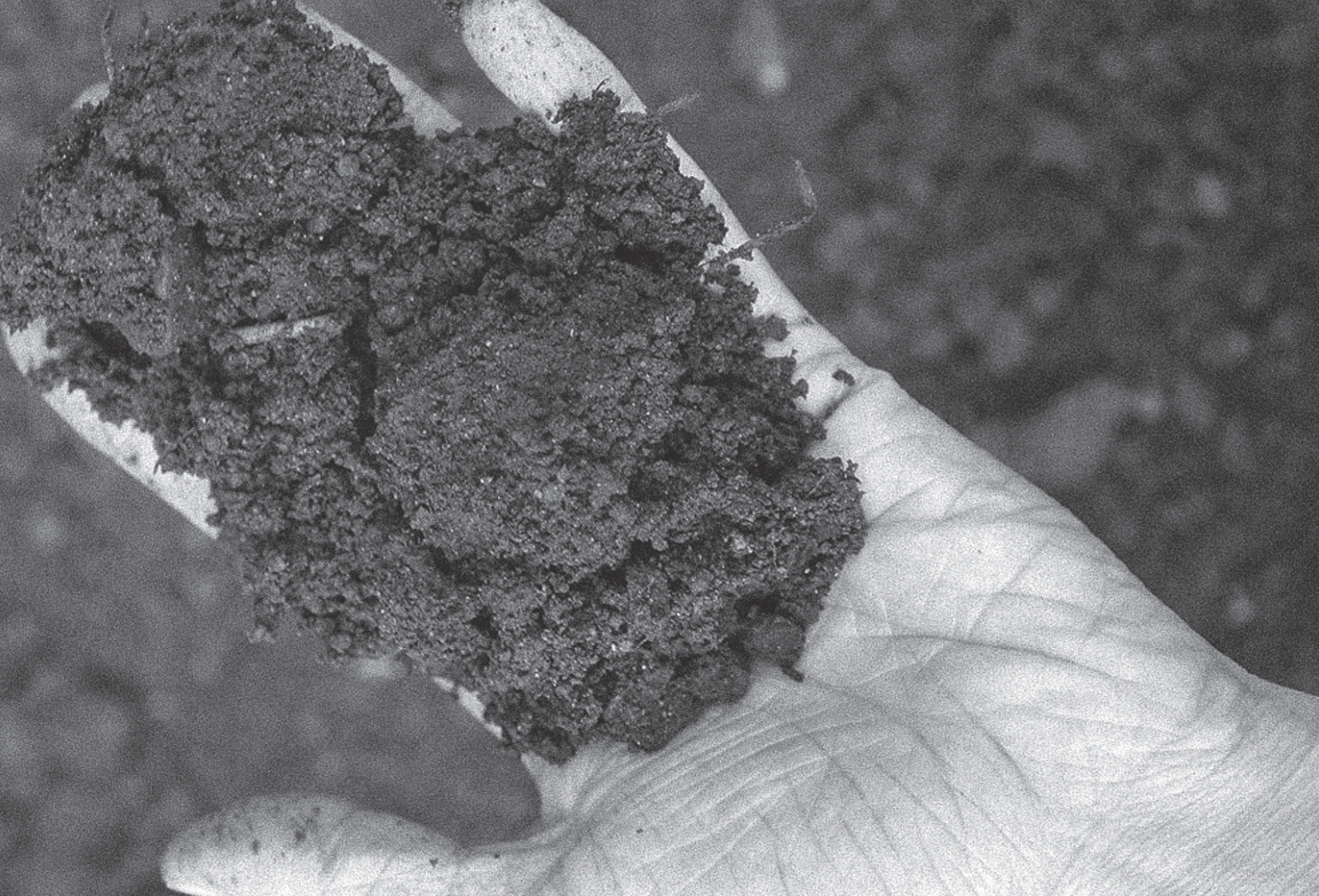
One of the major companies setting up shop to do this work is Vanguard Renewables, which has been expanding its facilities and operations nationally at an unprecedented pace—including in Middlebury, VT. Vanguard is now owned by Black Rock, the single largest investor in the global fossil energy supply (coal, natural gas, and oil). Black Rock itself holds the title of being one of the three biggest investors in plastics globally, with a focus on single-use plastics manufacturing. Making money on plastics both at the origin

and at the "end" (if only) of the plastics' life cycle is a sweet spot for the company's profit. All the better for corporate profit if plastic can be crushed back into soil and the persistent plastic problem can be hidden—at least for now.

But we know that the plastics remain in the soil. We are already seeing this issue play out around the globe as microplastics persisting in the soil are quietly polluting land and bodies. The issue of PFAS is the tip of the iceberg of plastics pollution.

Compare this with what was originally intended to process Vermont's waste: a Vermont-scale, human-centered composting operation in which plastic wrappers are sorted out before landing in the composting pile so that anything in that pile can be part of the breakdown process. This process cares holistically for the soil, understands food waste as an important resource to be well-stewarded, keeps organic material clean. The end product is alive, nutritious, and non-toxic. Composting is, and must remain, a benefit to our communities, our land, and our health.

In the additionally innovative practice of compost foraging, farmers raise their poultry on compost piles and are able to substitute most of their diet with nourishment from the ecology at the compost pile and save significant feed cost while raising their layers or meat birds. The birds then



inoculate the pile with their manure; pelleted chicken manure is a valuable fertilizer on vegetable farms. In that way, composting food residuals also support more holistic poultry management systems and the ethical production of poultry manure based fertilizers. Vermont lawmakers support this innovative practice and allow farmers that engage in poultry management while composting food scraps to make a business out of selling all of their compost (Act 41, 2021).

We can stand together as a community and insist on our shared values: care for our land, and for our communities— to push back and ask that our original ethical intention that motivated the URL be restored. Vermonters are stewards. We value ecosystem health. We value soil. We value community-scale businesses that support communities, not mega corporate profits that enrich the few. You can also help to maintain a shared culture

around stewardship by tending your own food scraps well, removing wrappers and stickers (even if they say they are compostable as long as it's not absolutely clear that they can compost at the home scale), and also by considering whether you need to purchase a shrink-wrapped zucchini in the first place.

I often remind my children when they are going to “throw something away” that there truly is no “away”—there is only what we are

willing to keep close and what we ignore by sending farther. This is the only home we have. Raise your voice by writing or calling your legislator and the House and Senate Natural Resources & Agriculture committees to share the fundamental message: “Protect our soil and stand by the source separation requirement. Depackaging technology uproots that requirement of the URL and is currently illegal. Your Name, Town.” ◇

You can learn more about
this important issue at
protectoursoil.com

Vermont Family Farmer of the Month Awards

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

The Vermont Family Farmer of the Month Award provides grants between \$10,000 and \$12,000 to a family farm each month to support an innovative project that will improve the farm's viability. Award recipients are farm businesses that contribute to a more resilient agricultural landscape and demonstrate environmental stewardship through their sustainable practices. This grant is funded by a generous anonymous charitable gift and is administered by NOFA-VT in partnership with VHCB Vermont Farm & Forest Viability Program, Shelburne Farms, and the Vermont Grass Farmers Association. We are honored to present the most recent recipients of the award and share a bit about their farms and projects.



Cedar Mountain Farm - September 2022

Kerry Gawalt & Stephen Leslie believe that organic farming practices are a potent way to create the change they wish to see in the world and have dedicated their lives to building regenerative farm ecosystems. In 1999, they started Cedar Mountain Farm on 60 acres of land at Cobb Hill, a farming and living collective in Hartland, Vermont. Cedar Mountain Farm is a small, diversified farm that produces cheese, beef, vegetables, culinary herbs, milk, and compost.

Cedar Mountain Farm was awarded \$12,000 to purchase a roller-crimper and a ground-driven manure spreader to maintain permanent beds in their no-till market garden systems. With the addition of these implements, Kerry and Stephen will be able to continue to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their permanent bed system.



Mamas Farm - October 2022

Theogene Mahoro and Hyacinthe Ayingeneye arrived in Vermont from Rwanda through the Refugee Resettlement Program in 2004. Having both farmed in their home country, Theogene and Hyacinthe decided to raise chickens and started Mamas Farm on land at the Pine Island Community Farm in Colchester, a farming collective initiated by the Association of Africans Living in Vermont (AALV), the Vermont Land Trust (VLT), and local, resettled refugee farmers.

This year, Mamas Farm was able to purchase their own farmland in Williston, Vermont. Their new property is perfectly suited for their growing business' needs while retaining their existing customer base in the greater Burlington area. In December, Mamas Farm was awarded \$12,000 to relocate and update their slaughterhouse from their previous farm location onto their new farm property. This grant will help launch Mamas Farm into their next chapter at their new location.



Miller Farm - November 2022

The Miller family has been taking care of the land, their cows, and their community in Vernon, Vermont for generations. Today, the farm is co-owned by brothers Peter and Arthur Miller, long-time family friend Keith Franklin, Peter's daughter Abigail, and son-in-law Brandon Bucossi. The farm has an established organic milk line that is sold to stores, food hubs, institutions, and distributors across Vermont. The milk that they do not bottle on farm is sold to Stonyfield, their milk buyer of over 10 years. At Miller Farm, farming is not just a tradition but an innovative and an ever-evolving opportunity to better care for the world.

In January, Miller Farm was awarded \$12,000 to develop a certified organic creamer mix. This award will allow the Miller Farm to purchase bulk bagging equipment and invest in the time and ingredients needed to develop an organic maple creamer featuring Miller Farm dairy and organic maple syrup from neighboring maple producers. Creamers are an icon for Vermont summer and developing an organic creamer line has been a goal for Miller Farm for years. A successful creamer line will be BIG news for Vermonters and will allow the farm to evolve to meet much desired market demand.◇

Applications are open three times a year. To learn more, visit vermontfamilyfarmeraward.org



Notes From the National Family Farm Coalition Fly-In

By Stephen Leslie, Co-Manager of Cedar Mountain Farm and Cobb Hill Cheese



I recently had the honor and privilege to represent NOFA-VT at the National Family Farm Coalition Fly-in that took place this year from February 6-8th in Washington, DC. It's my wish to share here with readers these few reflections on that experience.

National Family Farm Coalition (NFFC) was founded in 1986 to be a voice for farmers, ranchers, and fishers in Washington. The coalition comprises thirty member groups (including NOFA-VT) in forty-two states. NFFC's stated mission is to, "fight for farmer rights, fair prices, clean air and water, strong local economies, the right to sell and buy locally-grown and -processed food, the right to be free from corporate domination, [and] the right to live in vibrant and healthy rural communities."

The trip to our nation's capitol exceeded my expectations both with the meaningful encounters with congressional staffers (and two house members!) and all the great new friendships and invaluable networking with NFFC staff and regional reps. The NFFC staff did a tremendous job coordinating the trip, from arranging travel logistics and accommodations to strategic planning and implementation of the meetings with staffers. In total, over the three days there were 25 participants coming from 15 of NFFC's member organizations who visited 32 offices and spent 16 hours educating our legislators.

Participants were divided into four teams: local food, land access, farm credit, and dairy. I was part of the dairy team, tasked with introducing NFFC's Milk from Family Dairies Act, an act that would ensure dairy farmers receive a fair price for their product while also protecting costs for consumers and revitalizing rural areas. All the teams met on our first night to get acquainted and strategize.

On February 7th, the dairy team met with staffers from five house representatives:

- Rep. Kuster, D-NH
- Rep. Pocan D-WI
- Rep. Golden D-ME
- Rep. Duarte R-CA
- Rep. Pingree D-ME

On February 8th, we met with staffers from another house rep and two senators:

- Rep. Khana D-CA
- Sen. Sanders D-VT
- Sen. Smith D-MN

Our team quickly developed an effective strategy of having one member introduce the Dairy Act and then having other team members share personal testimony and policy recommendations. Our team was well-prepped and we played off each other's strengths. I was quite impressed with the degree of agricultural literacy reflected in the questions of many of the staffers. In every case, the dialogue felt genuine and fruitful.

Leading up to the trip I was feeling some angst about supporting a proposal that might extend the life of a consolidating (and polluting) conventional dairy industry in Vermont. Even though I had studied the NFFC proposal, it wasn't until I heard Siena Chrisman, NFFC staff and lead author of the Milk from Family Dairies Act, explain it that I understood how it could radically reform the dairy sector through a non-monetized national quota system—incentivizing small and mid-size farms and de-consolidating the concentrated animal feeding operation (CAFO) operations.

For my part, I spoke to the trend of massive consolidation in our state—2500 dairies in 1975 to less than 500 in 2023—all the while producing approximately the same volume of milk. I spoke up for the migrant workers often forced to live and work in sub-par conditions on the large farms. I talked about my own small, diversified, and value-added dairy farm, and how in partnership with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) we have seen huge improvements in our soil health and yields through stacking soil health practices, such as: intensive management grazing, silvopasture, riparian buffers, pollinator hedgerow, compost application, and cover cropping. I emphasized the need for USDA to funnel more conservation dollars to fully fund the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) and to ensure that Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP) dollars are not spent to prop up large farm operations.

Jim Goodman, a retired dairy farmer and fellow dairy team member, and other leaders, including NOFA-VT, consistently advocate for tightening up the enforcement of the organic rules to make sure small farmers get a fair shake and to dis-incentivize CAFO-style operations in the organic dairy sector.

One morning while sitting at breakfast at our uber-chic-cyber-punk hotel, I had a wonderful conversation with Leonardo Wasille, a Yupik fisherman, farmer, and CPA from Alaska. Leo told me some of his life journey that reflected the deep resilience of the Yupik people. When I described to him the efforts we were making to restore our farmland he commented, "You are calling back the salmon!"

A couple of unexpected high notes occurred during meetings with staffers when in two instances the representatives themselves unexpectedly joined our meetings: Rep. Chellie Pingree D-ME (one of my congressional heroes) and Rep. Golden D-ME each gave us some quality time.

Well, that's just a thumbnail sketch of the trip, but I hope it gives you a sense of the great work NFFC and all its affiliates are doing knocking on the doors of power, advocating for small farmers, and forwarding a farm bill agenda that will bring meaningful change.

Many thanks to Grace Oedel, Maddie Kempner, and the whole NOFA-VT team for entrusting me to represent NOFA-VT at this event—and for everyone involved who offered such amazing support for this initiative!

In solidarity,

Stephen Leslie

Cedar Mountain Farm & Cobb Hill Cheese

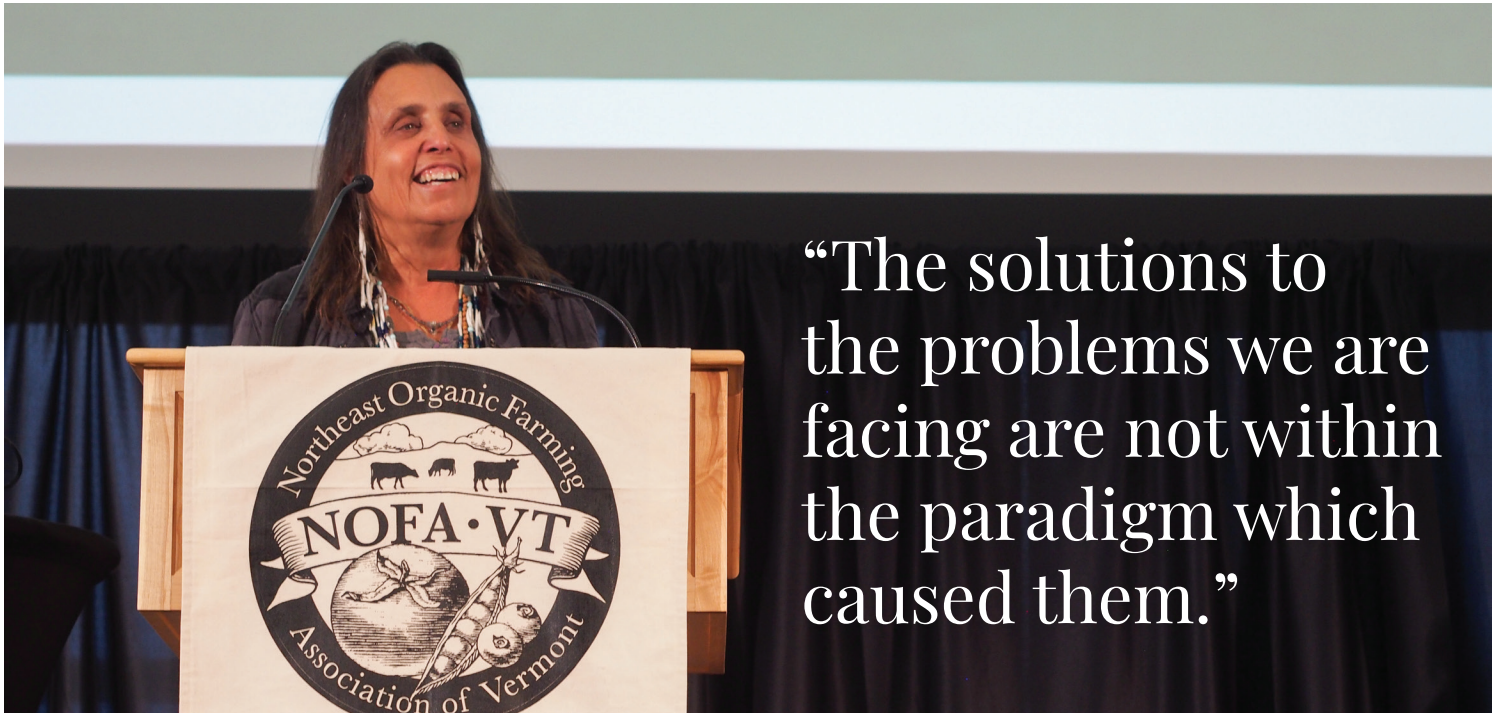
Hartland, VT ♦

Looking Back at Our 41st Annual Winter Conference

At the end of February, we hosted our 41st annual Winter Conference—and it was one for the books! Thank you to the over 1,000 people who joined us virtually or in person for a weekend of learning, growing, connecting, reflecting, and celebrating. We're also continually grateful for the sponsors and exhibitors who support the conference and make this event possible. We all can make a difference in our food system, and we're stronger together!



Top to bottom, left to right: Allie Dercoli, founder and operator of fermented food business FinAllie Ferments, presents on the importance of salt during her kimchi-making workshop (photo courtesy of Winter Caplanson); An attendee poses with the "scrumptious" collage sign (photo courtesy of Winter Caplanson); In-person attendees in the ballroom for the conference opening.



“The solutions to the problems we are facing are not within the paradigm which caused them.”



Top to bottom, left to right: Renowned activist Winona LaDuke gives the keynote address; People peruse the exhibitors fair; Folks take in an afternoon workshop; Attendee displays a print made with the help of Sarah Koff of Ink & Light Creative; A panel presents on building resilience in our changing climate; Willy Clemetson, Elsie Gawler, and Ethan Tischler lead attendees in a wassail song.



A Day-in-the-Life on an Organic Dairy Farm in Cornwall, Vermont

By Bill Cavanagh, NOFA-VT Farm Business Advisor

The dairy industry is inextricably linked to the working landscape of Vermont. Even if you have never set foot on a working dairy farm, you're likely familiar with the iconic tableau of cows grazing in a scenic pasture and may have some familiarity with the dairy process—cows get milked, hay gets made—but the real day-to-day operations of a dairy farm are far removed from the lives most of us live.

So what does life look like when you're part of this centuries-old farming tradition? To get an inside perspective, we reached out to Nate Severy, an organic dairy farmer in Cornwall, Vermont.

4:00 am: Breakfast and cup of tea before heading down the barn to begin the day.

4:30 am: Turn the lights on in the barn and do a quick check of all the cows to make sure no issues arose the previous night. Then it's time to get the wash cycle started to sanitize the milking equipment. While that's going on, Nate gets all the cows up and puts out fresh feed for them to eat while he cleans their sleeping area.

5:30 am: It's time for the first milking of the day. After they finish their breakfast, the cows know to start moseying into the holding area so Nate can start letting them into his milking parlor once he's done cleaning. Milking his 60 cows takes about an hour and a half from start to finish.

While Nate is in the parlor milking, a local high school student shows up around 6 am and hops on the skidsteer to clean the alleys and scrape manure out of the barn. Once he's done, he'll put fresh sawdust down in the stalls to get them ready for the cows to return later in the day.

7:00 am: With the morning milking and barn chores done, Nate has a couple hours to eat breakfast with his family and help get his young son and daughter ready and off to school and daycare.

9:00 am: Back to the barn to check on the cows. In the summer, the cows are outside grazing most of the time. In the winter, they stay warm in the barn and munch on hay. Nate puts out more feed and moves back anything the cows have nosed too far away.

9:00 am to 12:00 pm: With the kids off to school and the cows fully fed and comfortable, Nate has flexibility in his morning. It's certainly not leisure time though: "This time of year, I'm basically spending a couple hours every morning doing paperwork." From taxes, to organic certification record keeping, to looking at overall business health, the winter is when the administrative side of farming happens for an organic dairy farmer. Soon enough spring will be here and any available moment will be dedicated to making hay to feed the cows throughout the winter.

12:00 pm to 3:00 pm: Nate drives down the road to a rented facility to check on the heifers—young female cows who will rotate into the milking herd once they have been bred. He'll make sure they have food and water, and check for any issues that need his attention.

3:00 pm to 7:00 pm: Some family time after his kids get home. They'll have dinner, and Nate helps the kids get ready for bed before heading back out to the barn.



7:00 pm to 10:00 pm: Nighttime milking. Just like in the morning, Nate heads down the barn, sanitizes the parlor, and feeds the cows before milking them all and closing up the barn for the night.

It's quite the day—one that is repeated seven days a week, 52 weeks a year. No matter how deep the snow piles or how hot the summer gets, the cows still need milking. For Nate, it's very much a labor of love. He talks fondly of his Jersey and Jersey-Ayrshire crosses; they're great grazers who are able to convert their 100% grass feed into delicious milk with a high butterfat content. That high-quality milk is perfect for cheese production; just under half of their milk is sold to a local cheesemaker, with the rest being sold as fluid milk to Organic Valley.

As any dairy farmer can attest, the industry as a whole is facing massive upheaval at the moment. Rising input costs (fuel, grain, parts for repair, etc.) are coupled with flat pay prices from milk buyers to create a situation in which very few farms are being paid more for their milk than it costs to produce it. As a 100% grassfed farm, Nate is insulated from rising grain prices but is dealing with the fallout from last summer's drought conditions and the impact it had on hay production.

"We go through dry spells all the time—that's just part of farming—but what's challenging about last year is we never consistently got enough rain." In fact, only 50% of the average rainfall occurred in the months of May through August 2022, meaning they were only able to harvest

about 60% of their usual hay crop. The 40% or so they had to purchase to make up the difference is dramatically more expensive than was even a couple years ago. This cost pressure and uncertainty in the market has him looking at long-term resilience for his farm. They're exploring "side hustles" in small-scale produce and custom-hire fieldwork that could help diversify their income streams.

Nate credits his work with NOFA-VT's Jen Miller via the Farm Viability program as being hugely important to the early days of his farming career. "The nice thing about working with [NOFA-VT] folks is having someone you're able to bounce ideas off of and having someone else look at your financials. The first thing Jen said when I gave them my P+L [a.k.a. profit and loss statement] is 'wow you're spending a lot of

money on interest.'" Nate was able to take that advice and refinance the farm's debt in a way that saved a significant amount of money and helped boost the farm's cash flow during the transition in ownership from his father to him.

While economic forces at play have been difficult for Vermont's organic dairy industry, the farmers are continuing to do the crucial work of caring for their animals, keeping farmland in organic production, and maintaining dairy's important place in Vermont's working landscape. Vermont would be a much different place if it weren't for the hard-working folks who get up at 4:00 am to make sure that organic milk, cheese, butter, and ice cream are available for all to enjoy. ♦



Policy & Advocacy Updates

By Maddie Kempner, NOFA-VT Policy Director

This spring, Vermont kicked off a new legislative biennium, and we've been hard at work representing the organic farming movement and our members at the statehouse. Read on for updates on our advocacy work. Note: these updates are accurate at the time of writing, March 15, 2023.

Organic Dairy Crisis

On January 26, 2023, NOFA-VT staff and seven organic dairy farmers testified in a joint hearing of the House Agriculture, Food Resiliency and Forestry Committee and the Senate Agriculture Committee about our proposal requesting \$9.2 million in relief for organic dairy farms. If you're unfamiliar with the crisis unfolding in the organic dairy industry, visit nofavt.org/dairy to learn more.

Our House championed our proposal to put \$9.2 million in relief in the Fiscal Year 2023 (FY23) Budget Adjustment Act (BAA), which ultimately opened the door to the conversation happening now.

We're learning a lot about the budgeting process. When we first brought our proposal to the legislature, we thought that putting this relief into the BAA was the only option for getting much needed financial relief to farmers on a short timeline. We've since learned that there are multiple vehicles to get this relief out quickly.

The NOFA-VT team is now working with key legislators and the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets to draft language that will allow this money to be appropriated and get out to farmers, likely in May. As of this writing, this relief has not been included in the FY23 BAA, but will likely instead take the form of a standalone bill or be included as part of the FY24 budget that would be applied retroactively, meaning farmers would still be able to get the support in May even if the funding is added to the FY24 budget, which starts in July.

We applaud our legislators for their commitment to supporting our state's organic dairy farmers and ensuring that this relief will be distributed quickly, equitably, and with relative ease. We're eager to see this relief happen and we'll keep you updated as this process continues to unfold.

Small Farm Action Days with Rural Vermont

NOFA-VT is excited to once again be co-hosting Small Farm Action Days with our friends at Rural Vermont! This event series offers farmers and the agrarian community at large opportunities to speak with lawmakers, voice their real life issues, and learn more about the legislative process.

Our 2023 series kicked off in February with a successful day of farmer and advocate testimony to the House Agriculture, Food Resiliency and Forestry Committee and the Senate Agriculture Committee about payment for ecosystem services, followed by a March event testifying on issues of youth, land access, and housing.

In April, we're working with partners at Vermont Legal Aid and Let's Grow Kids for an advocacy day all about care—health care, child care, and elder care—and the particular needs and challenges around care in the farming community. Details will be announced soon - in

the meantime you can find the details and RSVP at ruralvermont.org/ events. Farmer stipends are available to make this event accessible to all!

State Legislative Updates

Universal School Meals (H.165)

Last year, the legislature instituted Universal School Meals for the first time, making school breakfast and lunch available for free to all Vermont students for the 2022-2023 school year. A new bill, H.165, would make this funding permanent through the Education Fund and continue to ensure that meals are provided to all students regardless of their family's income. Universal School Meals have been proven to reduce stigma in the lunchroom, improve educational outcomes for students, and—especially when combined with the Local Foods Incentive Grant—have positive ripple effects for our local farms and rural economies. NOFA-VT proudly supports the continuation of Universal School Meals, along with continuing to fully fund the Local Foods Incentive, and Farm to School and Early Childhood Grants.

Right to Repair (H.81)

H.81 is a bill that aims to ensure accessible, timely, and affordable repairs of agricultural and forestry equipment by restricting equipment dealers' ability to impose excessive costs, burdens, and/or limitations on equipment owners or independent repair providers.

Accessory On-Farm Business (H.128)

H.128 would clarify and expand upon previous legislation designed to support accessory on-farm businesses as a means of diversifying and increasing farms' income and long-term viability. "Accessory on-farm businesses" include on-farm processing and sale of agricultural products, events and farm stays featuring farm practices or products, and aggregation and resale of products purchased directly from other farms—think farm stands, farm tours, farm dinners, camps or workshops. This bill would exempt accessory on-farm businesses, as well as small forest products processors, from needing an Act 250 permit.

Small Farm Diversification and Transition (H.205)

H.205 would create a new grants program at the Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets to provide financial assistance specifically to small farms seeking to diversify their production and/or transition from one type of farming to another. This would include support for on-farm processing of agricultural products and the development of accessory on-farm businesses.

Land Access & Opportunity Board

NOFA-VT supports the work of the Land Access & Opportunity Board (LAOB), which was created under Act 182 in 2022 to improve

access to land and home ownership for Vermonters from historically marginalized or disadvantaged communities.

The LAOB is primarily made up of representatives of organizations working on behalf of historically marginalized populations, and convenes with support from the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB). The LAOB recently delivered its initial report to the legislature, in which it states, “The Board believes that equitable access—to decent, safe and secure housing, land, and land-based enterprise—is a human right that all inhabitants of Vermont should fully enjoy without the historical and existing barriers that keep many persons from historically marginalized and disadvantaged communities from realizing these objectives. The need for action, now, to protect Vermonters from historically marginalized and disadvantaged communities, is all the more urgent in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, the economic shock that the pandemic caused, the contraction of available housing and rental stock, and the resulting sharp increases in the cost of home ownership, rental housing, and land.”

Seeding Power Vermont, a collective of organizers whose advocacy led to the creation of the LAOB, is requesting an appropriation

of \$4.8 million over four years to provide baseline funding for the Board’s operations, staffing, and legal consultation. This funding will help set the board up for success to carry out their mandate of creating equitable land access programming that actually puts land into the hands of those who have traditionally been subjected to marginalization.

Other Bills:

The Senate Agriculture Committee is also actively working on legislation related to:

- right to farm (i.e. expanding protection for farmers from nuisance lawsuits),
- state milk pricing (i.e. establishing an equitable minimum price paid by milk handlers to dairy farmers in the state), and
- a miscellaneous agriculture bill.

Looking for more frequent updates on our advocacy work or to be alerted when there are calls-to-action? Sign up for our e-newsletter on our website! ◇



A Warm Welcome to our New Staff!

The NOFA-VT team is growing! Welcome Lauren and Mark!



Lauren Griswold

Local Food Access & Farm to Institution Program Director

Lauren originally hails from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. She studied English and Environmental Studies with a concentration in food systems at UVM. Upon graduating, her uncle invited her to work on his grassfed beef and pastured pork farm back in PA, where she became enamored with the regenerative potential of rotational grazing. For the following four years she worked on a number of livestock and vegetable farms and worked as a garden educator for a school. She returned to Vermont about five years ago and joined the Food & Farm team at Vital Communities in White River Junction. She has been especially inspired these past few years by the creative work being done in Vermont to ensure that local, organic food feels relevant and accessible to all, and enjoys puzzling over—and taking a crack at—the inherent big and little questions involved therein.



Mark Killian

Office & IT Manager

Born and raised in NY, Mark spent a number of years in the Northwest, during which they received a BA in the Humanities. After spending five years in the restaurant industry, Mark became interested in the farm-to-table concept and agriculture, eventually leading them to NOFA-VT. Mark is currently pursuing a master’s degree in Technology Management. Some of their hobbies include cooking, mushroom growing, history, hiking/ biking, listening to podcasts, and being in nature!



Spirit of Enid Wonnacott Awardees, 2023

Enid Wonnacott was the Executive Director of NOFA-VT for 31 years and worked tirelessly to connect farmers across the state and build the strong organization we know today. Thusly, the criteria for recipients of the award are people who have helped agriculture to flourish in Vermont, are deeply committed to building community, and live with joy, kindness, and relationships at the heart of their work. In 2020 after Enid's passing, we began to honor her in this way, and this award is given annually to one or more deserving recipients who embody the qualities that made her such a beloved leader in the organic food movement.

Congratulations to this year's awardees, Jack & Karen Manix of Walker Farm and Mari Omland of Green Mountain Girls Farm, who were presented with this award at the 2023 Winter Conference. On behalf of the NOFA-VT staff and board, thank you for your commitment to your communities and Vermont's farming future.

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

Amber Reed, Barnet, VT
Amy Haders, Wolcott, VT
Amy Kennedy, Waitsfield, VT
Armando Crespo, Shoreham, VT
Ava Murphey & Genevieve Spellman, Huntington, VT
Bonnie & Nancy Bordelon, Jericho, VT
Carl Garguilo, Putney, VT
Charlie Witherell, Johnson, VT
Chaska Richardson, Huntington, VT
Connor Self, Shrewsbury, VT
Dan & Ann Green, E Montpelier, VT
Daron Tansley, Putney, VT
Dina & Erik Jacobs, Townshend, VT
Elizabeth Conway, East Hardwick, VT
Erica Zimmerman, Montpelier, VT
Erin Bucchin, Burlington, VT
Giovanna & Roger LaChance, Wolcott, VT

Irene Hamburger, South Burlington, VT
Janet Dowell, North Thetford, VT
Jennifer Glenister, Hustontown, PA
Jeremy Read & Lucia Tonachel, Stockbridge, VT
John Deleo, St. Johnsbury, VT
Jonathan & Laura Bicknell, Tunbridge, VT
Lee Medford, Rebecca, GA
Lucy Higgins, Cambridge, VT
Luke Lampugnale & Emily Wilmer, Plainfield, VT
Nancy Ross-Ascutto, Highgate, VT
Philip Mason, Fairlee, VT
Rich Jones, Burlington, VT
Sarah Hobson, Burlington, VT

NEW & RENEWING BUSINESS MEMBERS

Alchemy Acres, Greensboro Bend, VT
American Flatbread Waitsfield, Waitsfield, VT
April's Maple, Canaan, VT

Aqua Vitea, Middlebury, VT
Barber Farm, Burlington, VT
Barefoot Farm, Westfield, VT
Ben & Jerry's Homemade, S Burlington, VT
Bertrand Family Maple, Swanton, VT
Big Picture Farm L3C, Townshend, VT
Bird in Hand Farm, Bolton, VT
Boneyard Farm, Cambridge, VT
Bonum Natura LLC, The Woodlands, TX
Branon Family Maple Orchards, Fairfield, VT
Butternut Mountain Farm, Morrisville, VT
Cabot Creamery Co-operative, Waitsfield, VT
Cambridge Corner Farm, Cambridge, NY
Catamount Solar, Randolph, VT
Cattywampus Farm, Topsham, VT
Cedar Circle Farm and Education Center, East Thetford, VT
Center for an Agricultural Economy, Hardwick, VT
Champlain Valley Compost Co., Charlotte, VT

Charlotte Steiner, East Calais, VT
 Clean Yield Asset Management, Norwich, VT
 Co-operative Insurance Companies, Middlebury, VT
 Colburn's Village View Maples, Glover, VT
 Community Bank N.A., Plattsburgh, NY
 Community Food Project- MoonScape Farm, Westminster Station, VT
 Corey's Sugarhouse, Fairfax, VT
 Crossmolina Farm, Corinth, VT
 Crossroad Maple, East Fairfield, VT
 Davis Family Maple, Underhill, VT
 Deep Root Organic Co-op, Johnson, VT
 Dunham Family Maple, Starksboro, VT
 Emery Mountain Farm, Johnson, VT
 Erik's Sugarbush, Kirby, VT
 Fable Farm, Barnard, VT
 Farm Credit East, Enfield, CT
 Firefly Flowers, Colchester, VT
 Fledgling Farmstead LLC, Tunbridge, VT
 Foley Services, Rutland, VT
 Four Farmers Herbalist Collective, Londonderry, VT
 Frazer Insurance Group, Windsor, VT
 Gagne Maple LLC, Swanton, VT
 Gardener's Supply Company, Burlington, VT
 Georgia Mountain Orchards & Sugarbush LLC, Georgia, VT
 Golden Dog Farm LLC, Jeffersonville, VT
 Got Weeds?, Royalton, VT
 Grace Farm, Athens, VT
 Green Mountain Girls Farm, Northfield, VT
 Green Wind Farm, Enosburgh Falls, VT
 Growing Possibilities Farm, Underhill, VT
 Half Wild Farm, Enosburgh Falls, VT
 Hark, Burlington, VT
 Head Over Fields LLC, Charlotte, VT
 Herb Hollow Farm, Arlington, VT
 Hi Vue Maples LLC, Richford, VT
 Hill Top Maple, St. Albans, VT
 Hudak Farm, Swanton, VT
 Hunt's Farm Supply, LLC, Jeffersonville, VT
 Ian Johnson, Charlotte, VT
 Ice House Farm, Goshen, VT
 Idle Hour Maple Inc., Rutland, VT
 Intervale Center, Burlington, VT

Ishmael Ahmed, Burlington, VT
 Jesse Soule, Montgomery, VT
 Jibril Kyser, San Gregorio, CA
 John Cushman Maple, Waterville, VT
 Johnny's Selected Seeds, Winslow, ME
 June Farm, Burlington, VT
 King Arthur Baking Company, White River Junction, VT
 Lahar's Maple Ridge, Barton, VT
 Lake Hill Farm, Wells, VT
 Lara Gentchos, Grand Isle, VT
 Little Charlie's Sugarbush, Jay, VT
 M&T Bank, Burlington, VT
 Maine Potato Lady, Guilford, ME
 Mansion House Maple Syrup, Johnson, VT
 Maple Mountain Homestead, Milton, VT
 McIndoe Farm, White River Junction, VT
 Meadowstone Farm, Bethlehem, NH
 Metcalf Pond Maple LLC, Jeffersonville, VT
 Mettowee Valley Maple, Pawlet, VT
 Michelle & Irving Mossey, Jeffersonville, VT
 Midnight Goat Farm, Huntington, VT
 Morey Hill Farm, Craftsbury, VT
 Morrison's Custom Feeds, Barnet, VT
 Naked Acre Farm, Hyde Park, VT
 Neighboring Food Co-op Association, Shelburne Falls, MA
 New Day Farm, Ira, VT
 New England Farmers Union, New Boston, NH
 New Leaf CSA, Dummerston, VT
 Next Chapter Farm, Middlebury, VT
 Nomad Farm, Bellows Falls, VT
 North Country Organics, Bradford, VT
 North Country School, Lake Placid, NY
 Old City Syrup Company, Strafford, VT
 OMRI, Eugene, OR
 Organic Valley/CROPP, La Farge, WI
 Proctor Maple Research Center, Underhill, VT
 Provender Farm, Cabot, VT
 Reap & Sow Farm, N Ferrisburgh, VT
 Retreat Maple Products, Inc, Richford, VT
 Rock Dust Local, Bridport, VT
 Rural Vermont, Montpelier, VT
 Salvation Farms, Morrisville, VT
 Schoolhouse Farm, LLC, Plainfield, VT

Seven Days, Burlington, VT
 Shaker Mountain Farm, Starksboro, VT
 Sirius Garden, Guilford, VT
 Sodexo at UVM, Burlington, VT
 Solar Haven Farm LLC, Shoreham, VT
 Stagecoach Hollow Maple, Barre, VT
 Stannard Farm, East Hardwick, VT
 Stitchdown Farm, Bethel, VT
 Stonyfield Farm, Inc., Londonderry, NH
 Sugar Moon Hill LLC, Chestnut Hill, MA
 Summit Maple Farm, Fairfax, VT
 Sweet Tree Holdings 1, LLC, Island Pond, VT
 Sweetland Farm, Norwich, VT
 Tanamas Varas & Amber Canty, Nashua, NH
 The Alchemist, Stowe, VT
 The Farm Upstream, Richmond, VT
 The Skinny Pancake, Burlington, VT
 The Vermont Maple Farm, West Topsham, VT
 The Weston, Weston, VT
 The Wild Farm, West Topsham, VT
 Tree of Life Farm, Bristol, VT
 True North Fish & Fowl, Albany, VT
 Twin Maple Sugarworks, Lincoln, VT
 Two Brothers Maple LLC, Richford, VT
 USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service, Colchester, VT
 Valley View Farm, Morristown, VT
 Vermont Businesses for Social Responsibility (VBSR), Burlington, VT
 Vermont Economic Development Authority (VEDA), Montpelier, VT
 Vermont Family Farms, North Springfield, VT
 Vermont Grass Farmers Association, Barre, VT
 Vermont Growers Association, Burlington, VT
 Vermont Technical College, Randolph Ctr, VT
 VHCB Farm & Forest Viability Program, Montpelier, VT
 Westford Stone Walls Sugarhouse, Westford, VT
 Wild Ginger Farm, LLC, East Fairfield, VT
 Wild Shepherd Farm, Athens, VT
 Wilder Farm, Lyndonville, VT
 Wildstone Farm, Pownal, VT
 Williston Village Farm, Williston, VT
 Winding Brook Farm, Sharon, VT
 Wood's Market Garden, Brandon, 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.

Beech Hill Farm and Maple LLC
Bonum Natura LLC
Georgia Mountain Orchards and Sugarbush LLC
Jacobs Family Maple Grove LLC

Martin Family Farm, LLC
Mayotte Farm Maple LLC
John DeLeo
Phil Young
R. J. Fournier and Sons Farm INC



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Wishing you spring renewal!

May you find joy and
growth this season.

Give a gift that will keep working for the next generation

Your legacy gift supports NOFA-VT's work to build a thriving and just food and farming system. Whether you're a farmer, gardener, homesteader, or enthusiastic eater, **you can make a difference** by including NOFA-VT in your estate planning. Legacy gifts can come in all sizes and can be made in a variety of ways.

To learn more, visit nofavt.org/WaysToGive or contact Development & Engagement Director Erin Buckwalter at erin@nofavt.org or 802-434-7152.

