

NOFA Notes



Quarterly newsletter of the Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont

Fall 2024



New Strategic Plan | Reflections on Flooding | The Every Town Project | Food
Security Roadmap | Farmers Advocate for Better Policy



Dear friend of NOFA-VT,

Last year in our fall newsletter I wrote that “despite how hard the season has been, we also have seen the power of our collective resilience, strength, and support through the way the community has shown up for each other. I have felt myself swinging between strong emotions of loss and deep worry on one hand and, on the other, a profound, overwhelming gratitude at the strength of our community.” These sentiments ring true for me today; we need each other.



On the policy front, our farmer-led policy and organizing steering committee has identified the impact of the climate crisis on the farming community as a primary area of focus. See page 10 for reflections on grassroots leadership and advocacy from one of the committee’s farmer members—and other exciting work coming this legislative session.

Programmatically, we’ve been working with farmers around the state who are making climate resilience plans and receiving significant funding to invest in their resilience.

Socially, we gathered as a community at on-farm social events across the state, supporting community members in deepening relationships with the land and people our food comes from; spreading joy, even in times of challenge.

Personally, I’ve been holding the question of what shifts to make in my personal life to really meet this moment. What will help me to keep showing up to this challenging work with as much hope as possible? I think of “hope” with the meaning the poet Seamus Heaney gave it: “Hope is not optimism, which expects things to turn out well, but something rooted in the conviction that there is good worth working for.”

Years ago, I read Barbara Kingsolver’s book “Animal, Vegetable, Miracle” documenting her family’s yearlong journey to eat only food they could grow themselves. Inspired, for several months I ate only what I could grow or could source from an arbitrary boundary of fifty miles around me. While my family still produces some of our food, I’m less interested in the idea of my own rugged individualism, and much more interested in the strength of our community as a whole. As our communities have been tested, whether through a pandemic, political turmoil, or climate chaos, it is clear that the strength of our relationships is what keeps us nourished.

So, this year, my family and I are leaning into our relationships. We’re taking on the project of trying to eat as much—or all—of our food grown by people we know on land we love. We want this project to be less about rigidity (I try to remain ruggedly non-fundamentalist in everything I do!) than it is about coming into alignment with our values. We’ll use this practice to strengthen our relationships with the understanding that if we want a strong local food system that can withstand the challenges of our time, we must invest in it now and use it daily. I’d like to orient myself not to what I’m afraid of losing, but rather to what I already love.

My friend, farmer and writer Adam Wilson, wrote recently, “How will we act on the day the industrial supply chains inevitably fail to deliver on their fantastical promise of an unlimited life? Will we build taller fences and gather our munitions? Or set the table with everything we’ve got left and invite the whole neighborhood over for supper? On that day we are likely to do whatever we practice now.”

I am grateful to Adam for reminding me that we are always practicing. What I want to practice is loving the land and the people who tend it. Leaning into this delicious practice of community, we’ll surely have a feast to share no matter how hard the season.

Together, onwards,

Grace Oedel
Executive Director, NOFA-VT

NOFA-VT

Nourishing people, land, and justice through organic agriculture.

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NOFA Notes is a quarterly publication produced for NOFA-VT’s members. To share feedback, thoughts, and ideas for future NOFA Notes articles, contact NOFA-VT’s Marketing and Communications Director Lindsey Brand at lindsey@nofavt.org.

To find a full directory of NOFA-VT’s staff and contact information, visit NOFAVT.ORG/STAFF.

Introducing NOFA-VT's New Strategic Plan



Earlier this year, NOFA-VT finalized our next strategic plan, which will inform the direction of our work through 2030. When we began the process of writing a new strategic plan last year, it became clear to us that if we continued to do everything we do today—even if we did it all exceptionally well—not enough would be fundamentally different by 2030.

We are living in a time of great environmental and social disruption, and what we do in the next seven years matters. But hopelessness in the face of these challenges is a false narrative that has been fed to us. We have the seeds for the solutions we need. Every day, by tending and protecting land and feeding our communities, Vermont's organic farmers and farm workers, NOFA-VT members, and community leaders are nourishing those seeds and bringing us closer to the future we need.

This plan seeks to be a bridge from the world we have today to the future in which people and the planet flourish together. In addition to our existing core programs that are critical for supporting people to survive in the challenging conditions in which we're living now, we are adding greater focus on working upstream, on building power from the ground up, and putting more time and resources toward efforts that create new systems enabling us all to thrive.

Read the full plan:

NOFAVT.ORG/PLAN



NOFA-VT | Our Staff

A Warm Welcome to Our New Staff!



Jessica Hays Lucas

Grassroots Policy Organizer

Jessica has a passion for organizing and is excited to be working alongside Vermonters to pass policy initiatives to move toward a just, resilient, thriving Vermont food and farming system. She's from a small town and farming community in Kentucky, where she organized for economic justice, climate and energy justice, and a healthier democracy. She's inspired by regular people working together, tapping into the power we need to change what's possible. Jess and her partner have two kids, and she loves to be with her family doing anything, but especially spending time in the woods or on the water.



Kiya Vega-Hutchins

Development Coordinator

Kiya brings her experience organizing around climate justice to her position of Development Coordinator at NOFA-VT. Kiya grew up amongst the community gardens of the Lower East Side of NYC, and was drawn to Vermont by her love of the outdoors and the local food movement. She first came to Vermont as a Posse Scholar to attend Middlebury College, where she graduated with a degree in Environmental Chemistry. She loves hiking with her dog Hobbes and cooking with friends and family.

Reflecting on Two Years of Historic Flooding

By **Bill Cavanaugh**, NOFA-VT Farm Business Advisor, **Maddie Kempner**, NOFA-VT Policy & Organizing Director, and **Zea Luce**, NOFA-VT Organic Practices Specialist

July 2024 marked the one-year anniversary of 2023's historic floods while simultaneously calling us to respond to yet another significant flooding event impacting farmers and communities across the state. Like last year's "historic" flooding, this year's extreme weather came at a time when farms had invested heavily in seed, labor, etc. and were just starting to recoup these investments with their harvests. While we are grateful the damage was less widespread than last year, we recognize this is little consolation to the many farmers who faced devastating losses to their infrastructure, crops, or livestock in this summer's climate-change-fueled extreme weather events.

While our farmers will rise (again), we recognize the need for durable changes that address the reality of the unfolding climate crisis. Farmers do crucial work tending ecosystems and producing food, yet are faced with challenging market dynamics, slim margins, and weak structural support despite the necessary role they serve. Additionally, organic farmers are already on the frontlines of the climate crisis, contending with its brutal impacts while simultaneously mitigating them through their farming practices. Organic farming practices create more erosion-resistant soil, shore up riverbanks through treed buffers, enhance biodiversity, and sequester atmospheric carbon to name just a few of the benefits.

Support for affected farms is crucial not only for their short-term recovery but also for building a more just, sustainable food system in the long term. Throughout these extreme weather events, we have seen the power

of community coming together – people donating to crowd fundraisers, volunteers cleaning up flooded fields, and farmers helping farmers, to name a few examples. We may not immediately change the extreme weather, but we can come together to support each other and change policies to make sure our farms and communities are more resilient.

Farmers Helping Farmers

As we reflect on the impact of these flooding events, we continue to be inspired by the way that our community pulls together. Growers in southern Vermont provided a poignant example, mobilizing to help those hit hard in Burlington's Intervale and the surrounding area in the wake of the 2024 flooding. Coordinated through the Vermont Vegetable and Berry Growers Association's email newsletter and its manager, Vern Grubinger, three farms executed the delivery of tens of thousands of vegetable and herb starts to fellow farmers during a time of need.

The Harlows of Harlow Farm in Westminster donated organic vegetable seedlings in trays ready to plant, Jack and Karen Manix of Walker Farm in Dummerston donated hundreds of retail-ready trays along with potted vegetables and flowers, Howard Prussack of High Meadows Farms in Putney provided the driver and truck for delivery, and Andy Jones of Intervale Community Farm in Burlington coordinated the distribution of these donated plants to flooded farms, including Diggers' Mirth Collective Farm, Pitchfork Farm, Sugarsnap, New Farms for

New Americans, Jericho Settlers Farm, and beyond. Andrew Knafel of Clear Brook Farm in Shaftsbury also offered a separate donation of many trays of cabbage seedlings. "This was a huge help to us! Intervale Community Farm was able to plant around a half acre of fall cabbages and romaine lettuce," said Andy Jones.

Howard shared that his farm needed to make deliveries in Brattleboro, so with an empty truck returning north, he planned extra stops at Walker Farm and Harlow Farms to fill the truck with donated veggie starts. There was help at each farm to load tray after tray until the truck was fully stocked—not one more tray would have fit. Howard estimates the total to be somewhere in the ballpark of 15,000 seedlings. At that point in July, farms in the southern part of the state had largely been spared flooding and saturated fields. However, the day that we spoke to Howard in early August, he had just experienced a "freak hail thunderstorm" the day prior, reporting at least three inches of precipitation in ten minutes, causing downed trees and hail damage to the crops and greenhouse.

"It's weird times. We don't know what to expect, but farmers always try to help each other out. We help them and then we don't know what we're going to need. When it happens, it's like a hammer. We're resilient farmers, but these weather events are wearing and the financial part is hard to swallow," says Howard.

Evan Harlow says he's still waiting to see if it turns out to be a decent year, but knows that farms in the northern part of the



Farmers from Harlow Farm in Westminster load trays of crop starts into a truck from High Meadows Farm to be transported and donated to flooded farms up north.

state got hit a lot harder. The Harlows felt particularly bad for the farms that got wiped out two years in a row and were happy to donate extra transplants. They remain hopeful that the fall will bring good weather, drying out some of the August rain to produce a good winter squash crop, among other things.

Farmer-to-farmer donations of vegetables were also helpful in fulfilling CSA shares this summer. Jack Manix said that he feels fortunate that Walker Farm is having a really good year and they have been happy to share their farm's abundance with those impacted by flooding. He feels that Vermont organic farmers have a strong network and that it's important to help when there are opportunities to strengthen the weaker spots in the network. They happened to have a good load of seedlings that they were happy to donate in July and a bumper crop of peppers and eggplants in August that they donated to Joe's Brook Farm to round out their CSA.

Asking the Hard Questions

One farm that was hit hard two years in a row is Jericho Settlers Farm. In July 2023, the Winooski River rose rapidly, completely inundating the farm's 35 acres in Richmond, and destroying their carrot, beet, and potato crops. As Jericho Settlers Farm's owner, Christa Alexander put it, "Those three crops alone were worth a couple hundred thousand dollars for us." The rainy summer weather didn't relent and the farm saw increased disease and pest pressure in the fields that they managed to replant. It all added up to a historically poor harvest that left Jericho Settlers Farm without their usual root crops to sell in the less productive winter months. As a result, they had to downsize their farm crew for the winter and came into 2024 with a significant loss in expected revenue.

Unfortunately, more flooding in 2024 means that this year is proving to be just as difficult for Jericho Settlers Farm. Exactly one year after the 2023 flood, the waters of the Winooski River once again overflowed the banks causing Jericho Settlers Farm's summer root crop of beets, carrots, and potatoes to be flooded and lost. The back-to-back floods have had a huge impact on the business and Jericho Settlers Farm is not yet in the clear. "We're just hoping to get to November with no major issues," Christa says. "Everything will depend on the fall harvest."

Like so many other farms in Vermont last year, Jericho Settlers Farm accessed state and private relief funds to help bridge the gap. "Between the State's Business Emergency Gap Assistance Program (BEGAP), NOFA-VT's Farmer Emergency Fund, Vermont



Tomatoes growing at Jericho Settlers Farm.

Community Foundation funds, and support from our CSA members and customers, we were able to replace about 30% of our total loss.” This year, relief funds from the state are still in the works, although Jericho Settlers Farm has been able to access assistance through the NOFA-VT Farmer Emergency Fund.

Looking to the future, Christa sees risk diversification as the key to the farm’s long-term resilience. In addition to their Richmond fields, they also have farmland at their home farm in Jericho: “We do have resilience in terms of the different locations; that helps a lot,” Christa says. Moving forward, the important work is to make thoughtful choices about which crops are planted in each location and to identify the crops that make the most sense for the farm to focus its efforts on. “We want to focus on the crops that give us the most bang for our buck in a given year,” shared Christa. Even in light of back-to-back six-figure losses, she is hopeful for the future and feels positive about farming’s role in Vermont’s working landscape: “We could

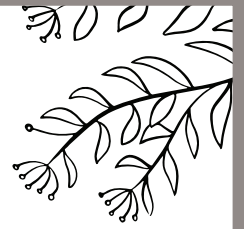
downsize the farm,” which could minimize the risks, “but that would get away from what we want to do, which is to feed the community. Philosophically, I think growing food in our floodplains, with good conservation practices in place, is an appropriate thing to do. It’s much easier to recover food crops from flooding than villages.”

The Hopeful Path Forward

The past two years’ flooding events have brought the reality of climate change in Vermont into stark focus. Challenging and complex conversations are unfolding in communities around the state about farming in floodplains and climate adaptation more broadly, all in the context of an ongoing housing crisis and shrinking access to farmland. Through the complexity, two things remain clear: farming in Vermont is critical to the path to true food security for our state and Vermonters know how to pull together when we need to.

In the coming months, NOFA-VT will convene with farmers and community members around the state to share ideas and get organized around solutions that will help make our farms and communities better prepared in the face of climate change, while ensuring everyone has access to nourishing, locally produced food. Together, we will bring these solutions to our elected leaders and work with them to secure public investment and policy changes that support food security, emergency preparedness, and long-term climate resilience.

At this critical moment, we’re calling on policymakers and all Vermonters to recognize that our farms are critical to our future. Our farmers keep us fed, keep our rural economies healthy and functioning, care for the land, and protect biodiversity. We envision a future where anyone who wants to farm can do so, where farmers are fully supported to continue doing their important work, and where every Vermonter has the food they need. Our collective action will get us there. ◇



Steps Toward Repair

A Conversation About Land Access and the Every Town Project

Land access is a frequent topic at the forefront of our work at NOFA-VT, and land justice—the practice of centering ecological, social, and racial justice in decisions about how land is used, loved, and governed by people—is an important area of focus given the long history of land dispossession and systemic structural inequities associated with land access for community members who are Black, Indigenous, or people of color (BIPOC). With this in mind, we were thrilled to connect with Kenya Lazuli, founder of the Every Town project, and are excited to share this interview with Kenya so you can learn more about Every Town’s goals, progress, challenges, and more. We hope you enjoy and will consider getting involved with this important work.

Erin Buckwalter, NOFA-VT Director of Development and Engagement (EB): Please tell us about the Every Town Project and your parent organization, the Northeast Farmers of Color Land Trust (NEFOC). What values ground this work?

Kenya Lazuli (KL): Every Town is focused on placing at least one healthy piece of land in trust from every town in the state of so-called Vermont for permanent BIPOC access and stewardship. Although the project was started in the summer of 2020 it wasn’t until a full year later that I joined the Northeast Farmers of Color Land Trust as a way to further the work of Every Town utilizing the tools and resources of the land trust. NEFOC is a regional organization whose work is centered around BIPOC liberation. In collaboration with other organizations like the VT Releaf Collective, Community Resilience Organizations, and Seeding Power VT, we have been able to form a statewide mutual aid network called the Neighbors Network and a BIPOC advisory board tasked with creating an equitable process for matching land stewards with donated land. (Our values and principles can be found here: <https://nefoclandtrust.org/values-principles-1>)

EB: What progress have you made and what challenges are you hoping to overcome?

KL: Our first land donation was completed in December 2022. We were given a church in North Thetford, which we have begun to transform into the New Suns Community Center, complete with a library full of books centered around themes of liberation, a tool library, roller skates, and a ceramics studio. The challenges we face every day are racism, white supremacy, settler colonization, and violence in our tiny corner of Vermont and across the world.

EB: We were excited to help celebrate the New Suns Community Center by bringing our pizza oven to your Fall Festival. Please tell us a little more about the vision for the Community Center and what you’re most excited about in the coming year.

KL: The community center is a living expanding project of liberation patterned after Octavia Butler’s quote, “there is nothing new under the sun, but there are New Suns.” We are excited about the ways New Suns is becoming a hub of

possibilities rooted in Afrofuturist definitions of freedom. Since we opened, it has already been a place of all kinds of artistic expression, an activist organizing home, and a justice-oriented educational center. We are most excited for the seeds we have been planting to bloom. New Suns is a community center that prioritizes life-giving resistance and healing work for BIPOC folks. This next year we are excited to have more programming and even more community to welcome into the fold.

EB: Can you tell us a little about how you got involved in this project and what inspires you most?

KL: The project was founded due to the inequities surrounding land access in so-called Vermont. It is crucial now more than ever to understand the nuances of settler colonialism and the ways in which Black and Brown folks all over the world have been denied access to the right to land, housing, and food. We are in this moment inspired by Palestinian resistance and the network of anticolonial solidarities forming in different pockets of the country and world, insisting on creating a radically different kind of living.

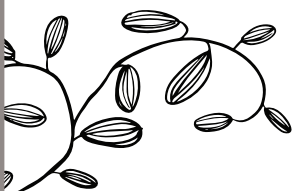
EB: How can folks get involved with your work?

KL: To get involved in this work, folks can start by educating themselves on antiracism and anti-oppression. We have a collection of radical liberatory readings about dismantling systems of white supremacy, patriarchy, imperialism, and neoliberalism that you can find here: librarycat.org/lib/LiberationLibrary

- Join the Neighbors Network: email everytownvt@gmail.com
- Donate to the BIPOC Emergency Fund: Venmo @Radical-Imagination
- Donate land: email Kenya@nefoclandtrust.org or Everytownvt@gmail.com
- Donate to NEFOC: visit nefoclandtrust.org/reciprocity
- Donate to VT Releaf Collective: visit vtreleafcollective.org/support ♦



Attendees mingle at the New Suns Fall Festival to celebrate the first land donation for the Every Town Project.





For Many of Our Challenges, the Vermont Food Security Roadmap Charts the Way Forward

By Helen Rortvedt, NOFA-VT Director of Programs

During the early COVID-19 pandemic, bare grocery shelves laid plain the brittleness of the industrialized, consolidated food system. And in the years since, the compounding crises of flooding and other climate-fueled emergencies along with historic inflation have left increasing numbers of Vermonters hungry and farmers struggling to stay in business. We've had enough disruption in the food system and understand that we need to collectively take bold action now.

The 2021-2030 Vermont Agriculture & Food System Strategic Plan called for the development of “a Vermont food security plan, centered around a thriving food system and inspired by community-based responses to food insecurity and disruptive events.” The new Vermont Food Security Roadmap to 2035, released earlier this year, is the result of a years-long intensive process led by a coalition of food access, farming, and community organizations that engaged the voices, ideas, and experiences of hundreds of Vermonters along the way, outlining bold actions we can collectively take to achieve big results for our state. NOFA-VT was one of the core organizations leading the development of this plan and we participated in its development by hosting focus groups with farmers, reviewing and integrating hundreds of suggestions and ideas from community interest holders, and serving on the team tasked with drafting the language in the plan.

The Roadmap guides our way to a future where all Vermonters will be food secure. It lays out a set of strategies that will lead us to a future in which everyone has the food they need, local farming remains viable, and resilience in a changing climate is planned for with intention. The United Nations defines food security as “when all people, at all times, have physical,

social, and economic access to sufficient, safe, and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.” The Roadmap further clarifies that “equitable food security for Vermonters is entwined with strengthening Vermont agriculture so that we have a secure, reliable, and resilient food supply in times of emergency.” Alongside complementary federal initiatives, the Roadmap focuses on effective strategies that Vermont communities, farms, and legislators have the agency and power to execute — and that address root causes rather than applying band-aids.

The plan centers the reality that Vermont's food security depends fundamentally on a viable agricultural sector. Last summer, many farmers lost their whole crop to a combination of late frosts and record flooding. This summer, many of those same farms were faced with comparable losses in a series of floods impacting central and northern Vermont. In the face of a changing and erratic climate, federal risk management programs did not serve Vermont's farmers well, leaving them wondering how, or if, they would be able to continue to produce food while protecting Vermont's working landscape and contributing to their community's food security.

We need our local farmers to be able to continue growing the food we need here in Vermont. In the face of inadequate federal risk management programs, one

objective in the Roadmap directs the state to “create a Vermont farm emergency fund and other innovative funding mechanisms to provide immediate support to Vermont farms following extreme weather events. Rapid, easily accessible funding supports can make the difference between business survival and failure when climate change-related events occur.” We must support our farmers, ensuring that they can recover from disasters and continue growing the food we all need and want. Our small-scale, diversified, and organic farmers graze animals, plant perennials and cover crops, and maintain highly diversified crops to support biodiversity, build topsoil, soak up carbon, and help mitigate future climate catastrophes, all while providing nourishing food and vital food security.

We also need to ensure that everyone in Vermont has access to the food our hardworking farmers produce. Another objective in the Roadmap seeks to “ensure consistent, dignified access to nourishing, adequate, culturally responsive food, today and in the future.” Our food security programs, Crop Cash and Farm Share, are proven and effective tools to provide dignified support to limited-income Vermonters to purchase healthy, fresh, local, and organic food while ensuring that our farms are paid a fair market price for their food. In these innovative programs, every dollar lifts twice its weight: providing food assistance for limited-income Vermonters and the same exact value in critical revenue for Vermont farms.

To learn more about the Vermont Food Security Roadmap, visit the Farm to Plate website at VTFARMTOPATE.COM/VERMONT-FOOD-SECURITY-ROADMAP

Since the onset of the pandemic, demand for these programs has grown rapidly and remained elevated, paralleling high, sustained food insecurity rates. Our farms deeply value these programs as well and increasingly view them as important pillars of their farm viability. This year, we secured a one-time appropriation of \$300,000 from the Vermont Legislature to support these win-win programs—but we know that the historic levels of food insecurity, which drives demand for Crop Cash and Farm Share, will not be erased within the confines of the fiscal year. We need to increase the funding for these critical programs and convert this one-time investment into annual base funding in the State’s budget.

So, as we begin traveling the path laid out in the Roadmap toward true, durable food security, we are preparing to launch two strategic campaigns in the coming Legislative

biennium. We will be working to build power, develop leaders, and win two key policy changes related to the entangled crises of food insecurity and climate change:

- We are building a farmer-led coalition to establish a permanent State-funded farm emergency relief program so that farms can recover from and be protected against future climate events, like the ones we have become all too familiar with in recent years.
- We are calling upon the Legislature to increase its investment in our innovative and critical Crop Cash and Farm Share programs and to affirm their commitment to supporting these programs annually, at least until we have implemented the other key strategies of the Roadmap and they are no longer needed.

Together, these campaigns will represent an important investment in resilience for our farms and increased food security for our neighbors. Join us! ◇

Did You Know NOFA-VT Accepts Gifts of Stock?

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

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

NOFAVT.ORG/WAYSTOGIVE

or contact our Development & Engagement Director, Erin Buckwalter at **802-434-7152** or **erin@nofavt.org**.





Better Agricultural Policy Through Farmer Leadership

By Kara Fitzbeauchamp, Farmer at Evening Song Farm in Cuttingsville and NOFA-VT Policy and Organizing Committee Member

NOFA-VT has always been a vital player in farm policy advocacy, currently spearheaded at the staff level by Maddie Kempner, NOFA-VT’s Policy & Organizing Director, for the past nine years. Successes in recent years include winning \$6.9 million in emergency relief for organic dairy farms in crisis, and in 2024, a meaningful \$300k public investment in food security programs that support local food access and farm viability.

Throughout the past year, NOFA-VT held several community forums across the state, as well as many one-on-one discussions with farmers and other NOFA-VT members to learn about the issues that are most pressing to the farming community, providing NOFA-VT with a robust list of persistent themes that need to be addressed. Some of the most popular topics that have emerged include land access, farm financing access, health care and insurance access, retirement and farm transfer planning, universal basic income (i.e. direct payments) for farmers and farmworkers, farm housing, restructuring the Use Value Appraisal policy, farm to school and institution improvements, agricultural literacy for the wider community, balancing farm viability with food access to vulnerable folks, and the climate crisis.

To better address the vast body of work ahead and ensure that farmers’ voices and perspectives are centered, we formed a policy and organizing committee to steer NOFA-VT’s policy work as a meaningful next step. Since early 2024, this committee of Vermont farmers has been meeting to assess which of the many topics proposed would be the best first issue to address through community action, using the resources and experience within the broader NOFA-VT community. The committee is staffed by Maddie, and, in addition to myself, the other committee members include:

- Scott Greene, Singing Cedars Farmstead (Orwell)
- Eli Hersh, Honey Field Farm (Norwich)
- Margaret Loftus, Crossmolina Farm (Corinth)

- Pete Miller, Miller Farm (Vernon)
- Jacob Powsner, Baird Farm (North Chittenden)
- Katie Spring, Good Heart Farmstead (Worcester)

In April, this group met with Mark Schultz, the former executive director of Minnesota’s Land Stewardship Project and a longtime

organizer for successful agricultural policy initiatives spanning decades of work. He facilitated a discussion with the committee to teach us about building community power and how to use a screening tool to determine which issues might be the most impactful for NOFA-VT to put its resources behind. The screening tool asks questions like, “Is this a widely and deeply felt issue?”, “Is there



a decision maker who can give us what we want?”, “Does this help us build allies or deepen existing alliances?”, “Is this campaign winnable?” among other guiding queries. We left that meeting with enthusiasm to begin using the screening tool to determine which topics were the right ones for a widespread and strategic campaign.

By the time we met again in July, we had narrowed down our list of issues to run through the screening tool to direct payments to farmers, health care for farmers, climate change, farm-to-school and institution improvements, and food security programs. The stark realities of the climate crisis felt especially pressing given the disastrous flooding that happened exactly one year after 2023’s catastrophic flooding. We discussed how NOFA-VT’s Farmer Emergency Fund and individual farms’ GoFundMe campaigns are essential band-aids in response to catastrophic losses due to climate chaos, but recognized the need for bigger systems change to address the intensity and increased frequency of these extreme weather events. Responding to the increasing frequency of crises is unsustainable and the resources available are currently insufficient. We want to build the resilient foodshed we need, with ample support for farms and farmers who are directly and intensely impacted by the climate crisis while we try to provide a vital public good for our community: food. Choosing one particular issue to pursue as a solution to a challenge as vast as the climate crisis feels daunting and perhaps even impossible, but it is also essential given what Vermont farms and communities have had to contend with these past two summers. Currently, the committee is working on identifying a particular issue and strategy for change to address the climate crisis. We then plan to sharpen that campaign into a cohesive initiative that we can organize around.

Someone recently asked me why I was drawn to working on this committee. The short answer is that I want my efforts as a farmer to make a larger impact on our foodshed and communities than our small farm can accomplish alone. But also, it’s hard on my heart to witness the intensity and frequency of destruction that farms around the state have dealt with in just the past two seasons, and I want to dive into a space of creativity and energy to facilitate solutions and transformation. My body knows firsthand how deeply painful, chaotic, and draining it is to sustain unimaginable damage to a farm from an extreme weather event. Our first farm location was destroyed in 2011 during Tropical Storm Irene when the Mill River

carved its new channel through our vegetable fields.

With support from our wide community, we were able to move Evening Song Farm a couple of miles away, out of the river valley. The new location is on a hill, and over time we have learned how to grow vegetables in a way that takes care of the soil on sloping land. Part of our transition included substantial earth moving to create gentle, grassy swales between 40’ wide vegetable gardens that slowly moved excess water from dramatic rain events to the edges of fields where there were already ditches. In the first season, we watched as those ditches turned into raging creeks, causing erosion in the ditches and below the fields in the woods. It didn’t feel responsible to create a downstream erosion issue, so we stuck hundreds of willow cuttings into the ditch to create a living speed trap for the water.

Now, over a decade into our management plan at Evening Song Farm, walking around the fields during an extreme rain event does not elicit the body stress response it used to. July 2023 gave us the opportunity to see the impact of an Irene-scale storm on our farm. The resources and time we put into water movement were worth it; our growing fields are protected from erosion with cover crops, mulches, tarps, and grassy swales, and the water that runs off the swales moves slowly through ditches planted heavily with willows, slowing the water and holding the soil. But the effort we have put in over time to design and manage a place of food production for the chaotic climatic future we are living in has been incredibly daunting, time-consuming, resource-intensive, and potentially unrealistic for many farms without more institutional support. And honestly, I don’t think it should be the sole responsibility of individual farms to redesign food production systems to feed our communities without collective help.

What could it look like to have structures in place to help farms in high-risk areas plan, adapt, or relocate? What type of financial and technical assistance should be available to develop food spaces to be able to withstand extreme weather events if a move is unrealistic? How should Vermont preserve and invest in land for food production, given the reality that the traditionally used spaces (river valleys) are at higher risk and some less common areas (like the hillside we farm on) can be quite effective with creative manipulation? How can we grow the collective understanding that we all depend on the land, that farmers steward that land, and that our farms are an essential underpinning of our ability to have thriving communities? There are only so many

disasters a farm can handle recovering from before burning out or being financially unable to continue—and those are losses for us all.

The goal for the work of the NOFA-VT policy and organizing committee is to address the long-term resilience of Vermont farms and communities through organizing powerful state-level policy campaigns. We believe that the policies and changes we pursue here in our brave little state can be a catalyst for change on a larger scale. What policies can we push through here that will be emulated in other states, and hopefully, eventually nationally? We recognize that this work will take more than NOFA-VT’s policy arm and this organizing committee to advance key issues and bring about the effective transformation we need for a resilient future. It will take all of us to mobilize and make our voices heard to build the food system and communities that we need for a thriving future.

Stay tuned for opportunities to engage in community meetings across Vermont in November that NOFA-VT will host to discuss the future of a farm emergency funding campaign. Thirty-nine other states already have financial mechanisms in place to support disaster response and recovery, and with the climate catastrophes we are currently experiencing, now is the time for Vermont to have a more effective plan for our farms and communities. If you’re interested in making your voice heard on these and other issues that impact you and your community, NOFA-VT offers opportunities for you to get involved. Get your friends and family to join NOFA-VT’s membership, attend an organizing meeting this fall, and let’s amplify the need for collective action around our food future. ♦

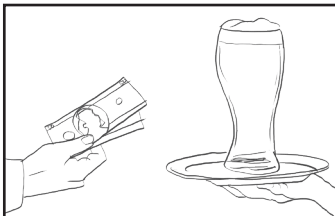


Share the Harvest

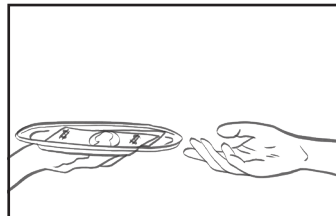
supporting NOFA-VT's Farm Share program

Share the Harvest is back! For 30 years, folks have supported NOFA-VT's Farm Share program, which provides discounted CSA shares to low-income Vermonters, through our Share the Harvest fundraiser by eating, drinking, and shopping at local businesses during the month of October. Share the Harvest is a win-win-win month-long event. By dining and shopping at participating restaurants, co-ops, breweries, and stores, you support local farms, increase food access for food-insecure Vermonters, and support restaurants and other food-based businesses in your community—many of whom have been hit hard in the past few years. Visit NOFAVT.ORG/STH to find participating businesses near you!

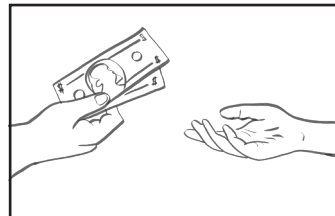
How It Works




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



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



3. NOFA-VT gives \$ to farmers who operate CSA programs and participate in NOFA-VT's Farm Share Program.



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

Donate Directly to Farm Share

If you want to help ensure that limited-income Vermonters can access healthy, local food, but you can't participate in Share the Harvest this year, you can still help! We accept donations to support our Farm Share Program year-round. The program has grown from serving a dozen individual families and three farms in 1995 to serving nearly 1,400 Vermonters at 63 farms in 2023. We're on track to exceed that number in 2024 as food insecurity throughout the state remains high and many communities are recovering from this summer's flooding! NOFA-VT believes that all Vermonters should be able to eat local, organic food, regardless of their income level, while also making sure farmers get a fair wage for their hard work. Donate online at NOFAVT.ORG/DONATE, or mail checks made out to NOFA-VT to PO Box 697, Richmond, VT 05477. Please put "Farm Share" in the memo line.

THANK YOU FOR HELPING US SHARE THE HARVEST!



Vermont Family Farmer of the Month

By Kevin Haggerty, NOFA-VT Climate Resilience Specialist

The Vermont Family Farmer of the Month Award continues to recognize outstanding farms across the state for their commitment to sustainable agriculture and innovative projects. Administered by NOFA-VT in collaboration with VHCBC Vermont Farm & Forest Viability Program, Shelburne Farms, and the Vermont Grass Farmers Association, this award highlights Vermont farms that contribute to a resilient agricultural landscape and demonstrate environmental stewardship. We are honored to introduce the latest awards:



Hurricane Flats, South Royalton - May, 2024

After a decade of farming in upstate New York, Ashley Loehr and Antoine Guerlain purchased Hurricane Flats in December of 2021. Together with a dedicated team, they produce certified organic popcorn and vegetables using innovative approaches that build long-term climate resilience on their farm. Hurricane Flats also hosts a collaborative native tree nursery, supporting community-driven riparian restoration projects and food justice initiatives.

Hurricane Flats was awarded \$12,000 to purchase two key tractor implements, a sickle bar mower and a rotary rake. Together, these two implements will allow Hurricane Flats to transition their garlic, winter squash, and straw production entirely to no-till systems that maintain continuous living ground cover all season long. By advancing their no-till production, Hurricane Flats will reduce their greenhouse gas emissions, improve the health and vigor of their soils, and improve the farm's financial stability, enabling Ashley and Antoine to allocate resources towards building human capacity and expanding their product offerings.



Deep Meadow Farm, Ascutney - June, 2024

Driven by a passion for sustainable agriculture and a deep-rooted commitment to local food production, Jon Cohen embarked on his farming journey 23 years ago when he started Deep Meadow Farm. Today, Deep Meadow Farm spans 49 acres in Ascutney, cultivating a diversity of crops ranging from leafy greens and root vegetables to berries and herbs. Deep Meadow Farm stands as a testament to the power of collaboration, connecting farmers with eaters, and promoting a healthier, more sustainable way of living.

Deep Meadow Farm was awarded \$12,000 to purchase a Forigo Power Harrow. This power harrow will streamline Deep Meadow Farm's field preparation process, reducing on-farm emissions and minimizing soil disturbance. Investing in these efficiencies will not only allow Jon and his family to redirect their focus towards long-term strategic farm planning, but also help improve quality of life and foster a more balanced work-life schedule for Jon, his family, and the farm team.



Vermont Hillside Farm, West Glover - July, 2024

In 2016, Hannah Pearce returned to the farm she was raised on and joined her father, Bill, in the management of Vermont Hillside Farm. Over the past eight years, their pastured poultry operation has grown to include broilers, turkeys, layer hens, and pigs, all raised with a deep commitment to pasture stewardship and animal welfare. Now, with Hannah and Bill's partnership moving into a new chapter as Bill looks to retire, their focus is increasingly on refining efficient systems, improving working conditions, and identifying the most profitable products and markets for long-term farm viability.

Vermont Hillside Farm was awarded \$12,000 to upgrade their on-farm poultry processing equipment and install a water purification system. This project automates their existing scalding system and upgrades their current plucker, doubling their capacity. The installation of a new water purification system will mitigate the risk of water-borne food adulteration and allow the Pearces to safely explore new business opportunities like parting and packaging poultry on the farm. This new infrastructure will increase the profitability of Vermont Hillside Farm without upscaling, allowing Hannah and Bill to continue to focus on animal welfare, thoughtful land stewardship, the farm's work environment, and the long-term resilience of their business. ♦

Applications are open to any small or medium-sized farms in Vermont. The next round of applications are due Tuesday, October 15. To learn more, visit VERMONTFAMILYFARMERAWARD.ORG.

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

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

NEW & RENEWING MEMBERS

Abi Charlebois, Richmond, VT
Abra Levin, Evanston, IL
Adams-Shango Household, Montpelier, VT
Al Torrens-Martin, Montpelier, VT
Alana Potts, North Ferrisburgh, VT
Alexsys Thompson & Carrie Austgen, Starksboro, VT
Alyssa Greaney, Burlington, VT
Amber Bennett, Hyde Park, VT
Bascom Household, Montpelier, VT
Beth Demers, White River Junction, VT
Beverly Keim, South Burlington, VT
Bob & Sara Schlosser, Wolcott, VT
Brennan Michaels & John Beattie, Salisbury, VT
Brett Cluff, Shelburne, VT
Brian Basor, Calais, VT
Brian Kayhart, Vergennes, VT
Buster Caswell, Milton, VT
Caitlin Richards, Brooklyn, NY
Carissa Brewton, Brattleboro, VT
Caroline Noonan, Richmond, VT
Carolyn Chauvin, J Raymond Chauvin & Michelle Langmaid, Hyde Park, VT
Charlie & Tamaran Goldensher, Post Mills, VT
Charlotte Carr, Winooski, VT
Christine Hill, Burlington, VT
Christopher & Amy Carey, Cornwall, VT
Courtney Jones, Essex Junction, VT
Danielle Berg, Waterbury Center, VT
Davis Barnett, Greensboro, VT
Devon Moulton, Winooski, VT
Dianne Pedley, Fairfax, VT
Elena Santos, Pawlet, VT
Eliana Moorehead
Ella Price, Hardwick, VT
Emalee Garboski & Ethan Smith, Barre, VT
Emely Perez, Brattleboro, VT
Emily Hoyler, Ripton, VT
Emma Radeka, Montgomery, VT
Eric Boatti, Richmond, VT
Erica DeLorenzo, Brattleboro, VT
Ethan Kociela, Burlington, VT
Floyd Household, Montpelier, VT
Gena Zollman, Burlington, VT
Georgette & David Huffman, Cambridge, VT

Giannullo Household, Shelburne, VT
Glenn & Beth Urie, Brookfield, VT
Heidi Jones, Pownal, VT
Henry Harris & Lucy Martin-Harris, Marshfield, VT
Ingalls Household, Underhill, VT
Jacques & Pauline Couture & David Myers, Westfield, VT
Jeannette Stewart, S Burlington, VT
Jennifer McDermott, East Arlington, VT
Jess Messer, Starksboro, VT
Jessica Churchill, Burlington, VT
Johanna Mirenda
John Dyck, N Bennington, VT
John Thurgood Sr, Stowe, VT
Joseph & Sara Farley, Stowe, VT
Joseph Corrow, Fairfax, VT
Joshua Pincus, Athol, MA
Joyce Belter, South Burlington, VT
Julia Grunewald, Hinesburg, VT
Karen Albrecht, Bennington, VT
Kate Strolle, Jeffersonville, VT
Katherine Innis, Brattleboro, VT
Katie Steere, Randolph Center, VT
Kelle Malkewitz & Kirt Henning, Poultney, VT
Kevin Haggerty, East Thetford, VT
Kevin, Diedre, Chris & Margaret Gish, Sharon, VT
Kiya Vega-Hutchens & Bryan Dickinson, North Troy, VT
Kristianne Gale, Chelsea, VT
Lance Thompson & Mellen Kennedy, Lincoln, VT
Laura Hardie, Waterbury, VT
Lauren Ebersol, Burlington, VT
Levitt Household, Stowe, VT
Lily Hou, Burlington, VT
Linda & Bill Dunnack, Fairlee, VT
Liz Weir, Shelburne, VT
Lukens Household, Jeffersonville, VT
Magie Young & Paul Davis, Sudbury, VT
Marielle & Michael Ambroch, Montgomery Center, VT
Mark Caban, New Haven, VT
Mark Schultz, Minneapolis, MN
Martha Bentley, Gloucester, MA
Matt Wojciak & Alyssa Baldino, Bradford, VT
Michaila Musman, Charlotte, VT
Miller Household, Underhill, VT

Mitzi & Nicholas Motley, Corinth, VT
Paige Cascio, Burlington, VT
Patrick McElroy, St. Johnsbury, VT
Paul Kervick, Ferrisburgh, VT
Pauline & Jeremy Singley, Salisbury, VT
Peter & Kathy Leonard, Randolph Center, VT
Phyl Newbeck, Jericho, VT
Reagan Household, Jericho, VT
Rhoda McLure, Johnson, VT
Rita Sweeney & Brice Rader, Hyde Park, VT
Robert Kurth, South Burlington, VT
Robert Nelson, Randolph Center, VT
Ron Miller, South Burlington, VT
Rosie Kissel, Springfield, VT
Rowan Hawthorne, Burlington, VT
Rowen Gorman, South Portland, ME
Ryan McElroy, Winooski, VT
Sam Ronci, Montpelier, VT
Samantha Sanders, Winooski, VT
Sandi Vincenti, Wentworth, NH
Sarah Bangs, South Burlington, VT
Seth Wilner, Newport, NH
Steve & Joan Moore, Springfield, VT
Steve Pecsok, Cornwall, VT
Steven Herbert & Michelle DeVost, St Johnsbury, VT
Steven Thomas, Chelsea, VT
Susan & Bob Titterton, Morrisville, VT
T Hanson, Spencer, NY
Tara Beattie, Winooski, VT
Taylor Household, Stowe, VT
Taylor Ralph, Burlington, VT
Trish Tretiak, Colchester, VT
Vera Simon-Nobes, Charlotte, VT
Wallace Household, Bristol, VT
Wendy Blakeman, Montpelier, VT
William Huntoon, Hardwick, VT
Yvette Palmer, Newport Center, VT

NEW & RENEWING BUSINESS MEMBERS

All Souls Tortilleria, Burlington, VT
Boyd Family Farm LCC, Wilmington, VT
Bravo Botanicals LLC, Guilford, VT
Broad Reach Farm, Charlotte, VT

Capital Grounds & 802 Coffee Roasters, Montpelier, VT
 Choiniere's organic Farm, Enosburgh Falls, VT
 Connecticut River Farmer Watershed Alliance, West Lebanon, NH
 Crooked Sapling Farm, Newark, VT
 DBC Property Management LLC, Shelburne, VT
 Duxbury Community Garden, Duxbury, VT
 Eagle's Flight Farm, Orwell, VT
 Earth Sky Time Farm, Manchester Center, VT
 Four Springs Farm, Campground & Learning Center, Royalton, VT
 Gallagher Close Farm, West Wardsboro, VT
 Gardener, Craftsbury, VT
 Green Heart Farm, Springfield, VT
 Green Mountain Feeds, Bethel, VT
 Green Mountain Spinnery, Putney, VT
 Growing Wise LLC, Lincoln, VT
 High Mowing Organic Seeds, Wolcott, VT
 High Street Early Risers, Walpole, NH
 Hobby Hill Farm, Newfane, VT

Holyoke Ag LLC, Milton, VT
 Ismael Imports, LLC / Boswellnes, Colchester, VT
 Juanita's Kitchen, East Burke, VT
 King Arthur Baking Company, White River Junction, VT
 Longfield Farm, Barnet, VT
 Lucky Fields, Chester, VT
 Marandale Farm, Westford, VT
 Maya Zelkin Pottery, Shrewsbury, VT
 McDonald Farmstand LLC, Danville, VT
 Meach Cove Farms, Shelburne, VT
 Meadowstone Farm, Bethlehem, NH
 Middlebury Natural Foods, Middlebury, VT
 Miller Farm, Vernon, VT
 Mobius Meadows Farmstead, Colchester, VT
 Mocha Joe's Roasting Company, Brattleboro, VT
 Moonchild Farm, Springfield, VT
 Morrison's Custom Feeds, Barnet, VT
 Neighborhood Roots Food Collective, Guilford, VT
 Northeast Kingdom Hemp, Barton, VT

O Bread Bakery, Shelburne, VT
 Old Gates Farm, Castleton, VT
 Pumpkin Village Foods, Burlington, VT
 Retreat Farm Ltd., Brattleboro, VT
 Rhapsody Natural Foods, Cabot, VT
 Rocca Di Cambio Farm, LLC, Washington, VT
 Seven Springs Farm Supply, Check, VA
 Small Step Farm, Roxbury, VT
 Smokey House Center, Danby, VT
 Sourwood Mountain Orchard, Middletown Springs, VT
 The Corse Farm Dairy LLC, Whitingham, VT
 The Mackenzie Inc, Woodstock, VT
 Tup's Crossing Farm, Orwell, VT
 Union Brook Farm LLC, Northfield, VT
 Vermont Bean Crafters Co, Waitsfield, VT
 Vermont Community Garden Network, Essex Jct, VT
 Vermont Soap, Middlebury, VT
 VTSU Center for Agriculture and Food Entrepreneurship, Randolph Center, 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 over 750 organic farmers and processors throughout the state.

Holyoke Ag LLC

Khelcom Farm, LLC

Rocky Hill Farm, LLC

Sajima Properties LLC

Uphill Farm

William Huntoon

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

Do you want to **learn more** about organic practices?

Do you want to **teach others** about organic practices?

This fall, join NOFA-VT's farmer-to-farmer mentorship program, part of the nationwide Transition to Organic Partnership Program. Certified organic producers can serve as paid mentors and will be paired with a transitioning producer, providing support through the certification process. Transitioning producers receive mentorship at no cost.

Learn more about the organic mentorship program at NOFAVT.ORG/TOPP.



United States Department of Agriculture
 Agricultural Marketing Service
 National Organic Program
 Transition to Organic Partnership Program





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Association of Vermont**
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Thank You for a Great Summer!

We're looking back with joy on another season of pizza socials, on-farm workshops, and good times gathering with members across the state.

