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The Quarterly Newsletter of the Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont

Tapping the Market: Butternut Mountain Farm Brings Vermont Maple to the Masses

by Caitlin Jenness, NOFA Vermont Beginning Farmer Programs Coordinator and Revolving Loan Fund Administrator

In the 1970s, David Marvin started a small sugaring operation on his family's land in Johnson, Vermont. Over the last 40 years, Marvin's personal and business philosophy has led him to build a thriving company while staying true to the old-fashioned rural values that prioritize personal relationships and quality products. The once-small sugaring operation in Johnson now encompasses approximately 16,000 taps, and Butternut Mountain Farm employs over 85 people packaging and distributing syrup from over 300 producers to a range of customers, including major retail and grocery chains and natural foods markets throughout the nation. This syrup, processed in the heart of Morrisville, is sold locally and online under the Butternut Mountain Farm label, bottled for numerous retailers' private label brands, processed into maple sugar and candies, and sold to food producers who use it in products ranging from specialty cheese to vodka.

When Marvin began sugaring, Vermont produced an estimated 225,000 gallons of syrup per year, but efficiencies in production, namely sap collection and boiling technologies, have allowed Vermont's maple syrup industry to expand significantly; last year Vermont's maple syrup production neared 1,300,000 gallons.

That's a quantity that even Vermont's devoted maple-loving population can't hope to consume locally, so much of the syrup is sold out-of-state through various markets: approximately 15% of the state's production is sold directly through retail channels, and the remainder is sold either as bulk or wholesale. As an aggregator and distributor, Butternut Mountain Farm serves an important role that



Photo courtesy Butternut Mountain Farm

allows Vermont syrup from many family farms to reach these larger markets.

Marvin grew up surrounded by the sugaring industry; his father, a professor of botany at the University of Vermont (UVM), co-founded UVM's Proctor Research Center in Underhill, VT which focuses on research, demonstration, and education about sugar maples, collection, evaporation, and other management issues affecting the industry. In 1972, after completing his degree in Forestry at UVM and a few years in the Forest Service, Marvin wanted to return to his family's land in Johnson. Dairy farming had little appeal, so he started a Christmas tree farm and a small sugaring operation. In those first few years he sold his syrup primarily at the Burlington Farmers Market and through a mail-order list. Over time, he added retail customers and a delivery route around the state, continuing to expand his operation to meet this demand.

In the 1980s, after facing two difficult sugaring seasons back-to-back, Marvin found he was unable to fill his

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Winter Thoughts from Enid

It was great to see so many of you at what Phillip Ackerman-Leist dubbed our SNOW-FA winter conference. Getting northern Vermont's first big snow of the winter on the Friday before the conference was a hindrance, for sure, but I am impressed with the gusto of the attendees – undeterred by weather that would have shut down most of the states in this country, much less their winter conferences. We only faced one major cancellation due to the storm – one of our FarmsTED speakers, Darlene Wolnik, was unable to fly from New Orleans, but people drove from all over the east coast and farther reaches to spend the weekend together, despite the weather. Thank you all for your efforts.

If you were not able to be at the conference, I wanted to share some of the keynotes and a post-conference conversation I have had with one of our members that has kept me thinking. Our winter conference theme this year was “Growing Outside the Box.” We chose this to address the ways the organic movement has grown beyond the confines of its “box” to address other issues in our food system like social justice, climate change, and health care.

We invited Michael Rozyne, founder of Equal Exchange and Red Tomato, as our Saturday keynote to tackle questions like: How can organic be a leverage point for addressing new issues like social justice and fair labor? How do we get our message out to a larger choir? Can organic agriculture serve as an important gateway to other issues?

Recognizing the risk of taking just some sections of Michael's talk, entitled Something Bigger, out of context, these are some of his words that resonated for me:

“There is also organic fundamentalism, the belief that organic philosophy covers every aspect of sustainable food; that it's the only way to farm responsibly; and the belief that all growers using conventional pesticides are morally wrong.”

[This worldview] impedes dialogue between us and others. It greatly reduces the number of collaborators we can work with on large national or global issues. I want to see organic's best ideas presented and understood as innovative farming solutions proven by experience and science, not dismissed as unrealistic or elitist or as ideology.

We are part of something bigger, bigger than organic, fair trade, and all the critical issues put together. This Something Bigger is the future food system, emerging now.”

Shortly after the conference, I received an email from NOFA-VT member, and certified organic farmer, Peter Burmeister, who had this response to Michael's talk:

“Michael has clearly aligned himself with those commercial forces that have steadfastly worked to undermine organic standards in the cynical interest of pragmatism over principle. What may be very good for Red Tomato is very bad for the interests of NOFA and other similar organizations.

Putting it another way, local is not the equivalent of organic, not when the local producer uses the same noxious chemicals and harmful tillage practices as large industrial agriculture. ... And to further recommend that we, as organic producers, should find ways to break down the wall between us and “conventional” agriculturists sows the seed of destruction for the organic movement. In short Michael's speech was an outright exhortation for us to relax our standards and thereby give up the fight for pure, wholesome food.”

I appreciated Peter reaching out to highlight a very real debate – one being discussed among the NOFA-VT board, among producers, and at National Organic Standards Board meetings. At NOFA-VT, we are in an ongoing conversation about our “something bigger” – the goal of a robust local food system that stewards the land and supports communities – and how to balance our commitment to promote and market certified organic producers

NOFA Vermont is an organization of farmers, gardeners, & consumers working to promote an economically viable and ecologically sound Vermont food system for the benefit of current and future generations.

with our knowledge that organic certification is not the only way to measure a farm's commitment to conscientious and sustainable production. For example, by providing technical assistance to non-certified farms, are we diminishing the value of organic, or are we bringing more farmers toward better practices, some of who will eventually pursue certification?

Helen Whybrow contributed to the discussion as one of our Sunday FarmsTED speakers. Helen is an organic farmer in Waitsfield, a past member of the NOFA-VT board of directors, and currently works with NOFA on communicating the values of organic production through video and stories.

Helen said, *"It's time that we realize that this time is not about organic vs*

local, or certified vs non-certified, or even organic vs sustainable. It is much larger than all that. This time is about the integrity of our values as farmers and citizens, about how we treat everything from our soil to our customers. This time is about how we can show that agriculture can go from being the most exploitative pursuit the planet has ever known to the most generative and healing pursuit. And this time is about telling the full story of what we believe in as farmers and people."

Helen and filmmaker Michael Sacca from Tunbridge worked together over the summer to document the values held by organic farmers in Vermont. The resulting 9-minute video, *Organic Matters*, was shown at the winter conference and can be viewed on NOFA-VT's webpage (www.nofavt.org). Please share it widely to help organic

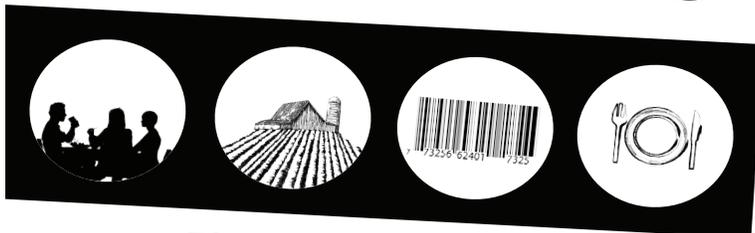
farmers in Vermont tell their story.

I am inspired by this organization that I have been part of for so many years, and I am inspired by our members – farmer and non-farmer, certified organic and otherwise – who serve as an important collective voice thoughtfully addressing many of the issues I have raised in this article. Please help us continue the conversation by sharing your comments on our blog or Facebook page, or by contacting me directly.



Watch Michael's and Helen's talks, the *Organic Matters* film, and more conference highlights on our YouTube channel, www.youtube.com/TheNOFAVT.

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Is That Organic Tomato Hydroponically Grown?

By Nicole Dehne, Vermont Organic Farmers Certification Administrator

Walk into any natural food store in any season and you are likely to find a prominent display of gorgeous, red, organic tomatoes. The stores understand that many of their customers want to be able to buy tomatoes year-round. But what most customers do not know is that those organic greenhouse tomatoes may well be grown hydroponically – in other countries.

“Hydroponics or aeroponics have their place in production agriculture, but certainly cannot be classified as certified organic growing methods.”

At January’s annual meeting of Vermont Organic Farmers (VOF), an LLC of NOFA Vermont and a USDA-accredited organic certification agency, the matter of whether hydroponic crops should be certified as organic and allowed to display the familiar USDA organic label was the subject of a long and serious discussion.

Organic farmers at the meeting spoke knowledgeably and passionately about the founding principles of the organic farming movement. They spoke of how reliance on chemical fertilizers degrades soil structure, fertility and microbial life, to the detriment of plant health and nutrient density.

Healthy soil is more than just a physical medium that holds plants upright: it is a complex ecosystem that recycles and makes available minerals and nutrients that enable plants to resist pests and diseases without the use of chemical inputs and synthetic fertilizers. The “building” of rich living soils is the central focus on every organic farm.

Since 2002, the USDA’s National Organic Program (NOP), which is responsible for developing national standards for organic farming and food processing, has recognized this principle of organic agriculture.

NOP standards require that that certified organic farmers maintain and work to continually improve the biological, chemical, and physical condition of the soil.

But there is no soil used in hydroponic production systems. So, how is it that that USDA Organic hydroponic tomatoes wind up on our market shelves?

Hydroponic crops are grown using 16 or 17 minerals, dissolved in water and in proportions that enable plants to grow. (In “organic” hydroponic systems, these nutrients would have to be derived from natural sources, like liquid fish.) Most often the plants are grown in moist inert media such as perlite or coconut husks that provide no nutrition. Almost any plant can be grown this way.

In 2010, the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB), a fifteen-member USDA advisory board that

represents the interests of the organic community, carefully examined the appropriateness of allowing hydroponically grown crops to be certified organic.

It concluded that, “[H]ydroponics, the production of plants in nutrient rich solutions or moist inert material, or aeroponics, a variation in which plant roots are suspended in air and continually misted with nutrient solution, have their place in production agriculture, but certainly cannot be classified as certified organic growing methods due to their exclusion of the soil-plant ecology intrinsic to organic farming systems and USDA/NOP regulations governing them.”

Despite this clear and direct recommendation, the current administration of the National Organic Program has continued to allow the certification of hydroponic operations and crops. This has angered informed organic consumers, many organic farming associations and organic farmers in Vermont and across the nation.

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Photo by Maria Reade

Hydroponics, continued from page 4

Late in 2013, a Vermont organic farmer, David Chapman of Long Wind Farm, initiated online petitions for consumers and farmers that demand that the NOP stop allowing hydroponic crops to be labeled organic. As of early March, these petitions have over one thousand signatures of concerned consumers and farmers.

At the VOF meeting in January, organic producers certified by VOF expressed serious concerns that the NOP is flagrantly ignoring the recommendation of the NOSB, and approved the following resolution: "Vermont Organic Farmers demands that the National Organic Program accept the 2010 NOSB recommendation to prohibit soil-less hydroponic vegetable production as certified organic." Senators Leahy, Sanders and Representative Welch support this position and have stated their intention to press the NOP on the matter.

The United States is one of the few

countries that allow hydroponics to be labeled organic. Mexico, Canada, Japan, New Zealand, and 24 European countries, (including Holland, England, Germany, Italy, France, and Spain) all prohibit hydroponic vegetables to be sold as organic in their own countries.

But that does not prevent hydroponic

organic consumers to sign on to Dave Chapman's petition and let the policy makers in the USDA and the NOP know that many thousands of organic consumers, advocates and producers care about the integrity of Certified Organic products, and that they expect the fundamental principles of organic agriculture to be respected – and not

The vast majority of the "hydroponic organic" produce sold in this country is grown in Mexico, Canada, or Holland. And it is not labeled as hydroponic.

producers in these countries from selling their hydroponic vegetables in the United States as certified organic! In fact, the vast majority of the "hydroponic organic" produce sold in this country is grown in Mexico, Canada, or Holland. And it is not labeled as hydroponic.

It is time to take a stand. We urge

treated like dirt.

Sign on to David Chapman's petition:

- www.keepthesoilinorganic.org

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- www.ams.usda.gov/AMSv1.0/getfile?dDocName=STELPRDC5084677

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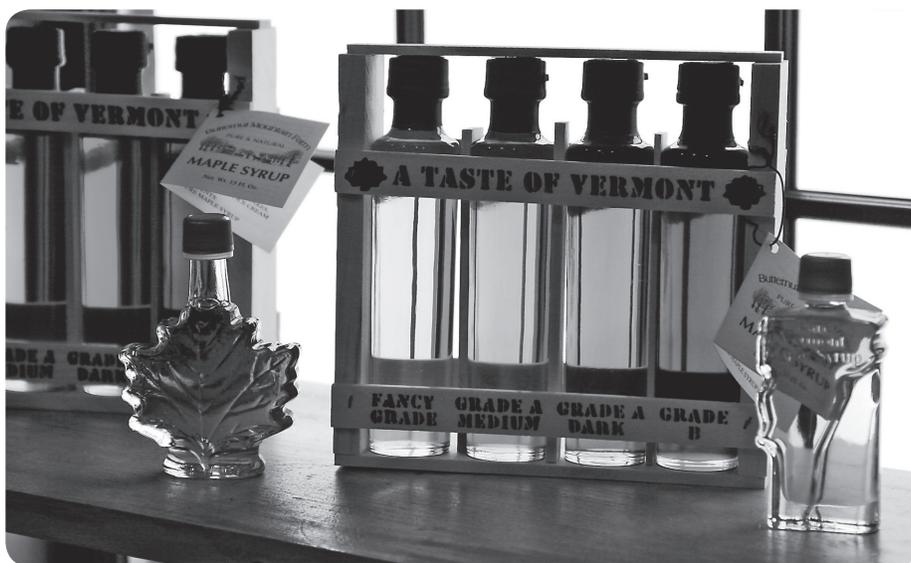
accounts from his own production. Faced with possibility of losing his customers, he began to work with other producers as a distributor. Marvin realized that diversification of supply (through sourcing syrup from himself and others) along with diversification in sales channels was the key to a reliable business model – and following that model, Butternut Mountain Farm has grown, expanded, and continued to find success. Marvin still operates the sugarbush on his family land in Johnson, and now also purchases syrup from approximately 250 Vermont farms, as well as farmers in New Hampshire, Maine, New York, Quebec, Wisconsin, and even Ohio.

Going Organic

In 2000, Marvin was approached by a customer – a large, national natural foods store – which suggested Marvin have his maple syrup certified organic, and told him he could expect a 30% increase in sales for the organic syrup. Grasping this opportunity, Marvin applied for and gained organic certification for his sugaring operation. Marvin and the store were both surprised when, instead of the predicted 30% sales increase, sales of organic syrup actually doubled.

Marvin and the store were both surprised when, instead of the predicted 30% sales increase, sales of organic syrup actually doubled.

Based on that principle of the importance of diversification in sales channels, Butternut Mountain Farm strives to ensure that no single customer makes up more than 20% of their business. To keep with this, Marvin challenged himself to grow the sales of organic syrup in his other market channels as well. Now, 50% of the syrup sold by Butternut Mountain Farm is certified organic, and in addition to his own production, Marvin



Maple syrup ready to meet the world. Photo courtesy Butternut Mountain Farm

purchases organic syrup from at least 50 other certified organic maple syrup producers. This organic syrup is then sold nationwide, often in chain stores serving traditionally lower-income demographic. In this way, Butternut Mountain Farm is bringing a pure, organic, natural sweetener to the masses, and its sales continue to outpace its conventional counterpart.

Marvin initially resisted certification; feeling that the guidelines were common sense for sugar makers anyway, he did not want to deal with the

additional paperwork that it requires. He now recognizes the importance of organic certification, not just because of the sales it brings, but as a way to guarantee that he himself, and the sugar makers he works with, follow sound management practices.

Organic standards for maple syrup address two major areas: food safety and integrity, and the long-term health and sustainability of the sugarbush.

The regulations protect the organic integrity of the syrup itself by requiring sugar makers to use non-synthetic defoamers (which are added to sap during boiling), clean equipment with food-grade sanitizers, avoid galvanized buckets and storage tanks (which contain tin), and periodically test their syrup for lead content.

More extensive are the requirements producers must follow to protect the long-term health and future growth of their sugarbush. These practices center around the creation of, and adherence to, a forest management plan which outlines strategies to promote and manage overall forest health, biodiversity, invasive species management and stand regeneration. [See sidebar.]

As Marvin indicated, these steps should be common practice among those interested in preserving the longevity of Vermont's maple industry, but with the steep increase in new producers Vermont has seen in recent years, the organic guidelines serve as a set of best management practices to ensure producers keep long-term forest health in mind. Organic producers are required to work with a forester to create and follow their forest management

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Protecting the Organic Sugarbush



Organic standards have a lot to say about ensuring the long-term health of our maple forests.

Logging practices:

- Producers must log in a sustainable manner that minimizes impact.
- Logging roads must not cause runoff, unnecessary compaction, or erosion issues.
- Producers cannot use whole-tree harvesting to remove logs from a forest, the practice of which can significantly limit re-growth of future forests.

Tree selection:

- To ensure growth of sizeable trees for a future maple crop, producers must wait until trees are at minimum 9" in diameter before tapping.
- Producers must maintain biodiversity in their sugarbushes to prohibit the transformation to maple mono-crops.

Tapping:

- Each year's tap holes must be far enough apart from the previous year's tap to ensure the tap holes can heal properly.
- Producers can only put a limited number of taps per tree.
- Producers can't use fungicidal treatments, which prevent tap holes from closing, invite disease and bacteria into the trees, and can stunt their future growth.

plan, and they also must submit to a yearly inspection where all of these processes are verified by an independent third party.

Sweet Success

Small-scale sugaring was once a common, off-season addition to other farming activities, providing an important source of early season cash flow for farmers needing to pay off the winter grain bill or purchase seeds, supplies, or equipment for the upcoming season. While many of these smaller operations still exist, the state now has larger, more efficient operations, from which people are gaining a full-time income.

These producers have a choice to invest in processing and bottling equipment and manage their own distribution, or sell to wholesale purchasers such as Butternut Mountain Farm. Marvin prides himself in the relationships he has with the producers who supply him. He tries to visit all of their farms at least once every three years, recognizes them by name, and has had long-term purchasing relationships with many, some of which extend through multiple generations.

Butternut Mountain Farm now has a waiting list of producers who want to sell syrup to them. As Vermont's maple production continues to increase, Marvin will continue to seek new markets and value-added products. While Marvin initially set out to work the land, he now spends much of his time in the offices and packaging plant. This type of work may not have the back-to-the-land allure that initially attracted Marvin to sugaring, but Butternut Mountain Farm can measure its success and contributions to the agricultural economy in many arenas, ranging from being a quality employer and active community based business, to being a reliable purchasing partner.

Businesses such as Butternut Mountain Farm are often unsung heroes in the diversification and growth of Vermont's agricultural sector. While many have recently been drawn to farming as a way of life, businesses like Marvin's are essential to build the infrastructure and sales channels that support many of those farmers. And while the local, direct-to-consumer sale is deservedly praised, there is still an important place in the farming economy for the export of products that Vermont produces well and in quantity.

Vermont is the nation's leader in maple syrup production, and as long as weather conditions favor its production in the state, Butternut Mountain Farm will be a key driver supporting the strength of the sugaring industry for those involved.



For more information:

- Butternut Mountain Farm: www.butternutmountainfarm.com/
- Organic Standards for Maple: www.nofavt.org/VOF

The Lexicon of Sustainability: Tapping Into Practitioners and Innovators

By Maria Buteux Reade, NOFA Vermont member

This article explores the work of Douglas and Laura Gayeton, creators of “The Lexicon of Sustainability.” The Gayetons presented their project at a lunchtime session during the NOFA-VT Winter Conference in February. The couple then traveled to Green Mountain College where they spent four days working with graduate students in Philip Ackerman-Leist’s Masters in Sustainable Food Systems program.



Douglas Gayeton discusses his process in a class at Green Mountain College following the Winter Conference.

Fair trade, free trade, direct trade. Grain fed, pasture raised, cage free. Food security, food sovereignty, food justice. How about bio-regionalism? Face certification? Aguoir? Farm fairies? If you can accurately define these terms, congratulations. If you struggle a bit to explain them, don’t worry – you are not alone.

There’s a limited amount of real estate on food packages. Savvy marketers can exploit the public’s vague understanding of how our food is produced and thus use trigger words that impact our food decisions. Eggs are a prime example with descriptors such as cage free, free range, pasture raised. But did the hens actually live and scratch outside in the grass or was there merely a door in the corner of the warehouse? Or beef: some consumers are puzzled by the distinction between grain finished and grass fed. Can a farm be organic but not certified organic? If neither, does that mean the farmer is purely conventional and maybe uses GMO seeds?

No wonder people are confused. Each year, new vocabulary evolves to explain how food is grown, marketed, and distributed. Unfortunately some of these terms confuse more than clarify. Yet Douglas Gayeton claims that with a little education, these same words can also change the world. Especially when that education blends with art.

Gayeton and his wife, Laura, have launched “The Lexicon of Sustainability,” a resource to help people better understand the concepts behind sustainability. They believe that “people can’t be expected to live more sustainably if they don’t comprehend the basic principles.” This multi-platform approach includes a website, a series of short films, and a body of photo collages. A book (*Local: The New Face of Food and Farming in America*) will hit the shelves this June.

In 2004, the Gayetons were raising goats in Petaluma, California and started a goat milk ice cream company, the first in the U.S. They sold their product at farmers markets, and

that’s when they saw firsthand people’s confusion over what to eat and how it’s grown. Market days became an exercise in education as the Gayetons patiently explained concepts such as lactose intolerance, gluten free, organic versus local, sustainably raised. People appeared bewildered by the terminology related to food and farming. So the couple decided to merge their talents to create a lexicon of sustainability, using art and words to clarify the concepts.

Douglas is a filmmaker, photographer, and writer, and Laura has twenty years of experience producing commercials. Their first step was to travel the country and abroad to interview thought leaders, farmers, and food systems innovators, asking people to define the key terms and concepts of their practices. Certain people are synonymous with specific solutions. For example, Alice Waters and the edible schoolyard, Wes Jackson on prairie restoration, Vandana Shiva on seed saving, Paul Stamets on mushrooms and Temple Grandin on humane slaughter.

Along the way, the Gayetons also came across fascinating people who introduced new terms and principles. “We’re less expert about the subjects we document and more adept at finding those experts and bringing their ideas to the widest possible audience,” says Gayeton. They met Benzi, a young farmer from Israel who coined the term “Economies of Community,” as opposed to economies of scale. And Alejandro and Nikhil of Oakland, California who practice upcycling, adding value (inoculated fungi spawn) to a potential waste product (spent coffee grounds) and converting it to a viable new product (oyster mushrooms).

From Inspiration to Information Art

Back in California, Douglas and Laura developed a unique form of art featuring hand-written text etched onto a photo collage made of up to 500 images. The end result, which can take from a week to a year to complete, is a rich and vibrant large-scale (2 ft x 3 ft) photograph that tells a story through the merged images and the handwritten text which captures the subject’s own words. Those pieces, called “information artworks,” can exist on their own while also forming the basis of the short films. The artworks document our food systems and practices, from agriculture to fisheries, rural to urban. More than 200 have been created all across the United States over the past five years.

At the NOFA Winter Conference in February, Douglas and Laura gave an hour-long presentation of five short films they have produced for pbs.org. Entitled “Know Your Food,” the films’ power stems from their brevity: they range from three to six minutes. Each film offers an intensive, creative immersion into a single concept, for example, “Local vs. Organic,” “True Cost Accounting,” “Food Waste,” and “Economies of Community.”

“The Story of an Egg,” which quickly became the most-watched video on pbs.org, tackles the issue of mass-production versus pasture-raised methods. 21 additional short films will appear on pbs.org throughout 2014. The goal is to explore how food (or water or energy) is created, harvested, distributed, and consumed.

The Lexicon project exists to spark dialogue, to get consumers and producers thinking and talking. The multi-platform approach allows people to enter the conversation through a variety of portals: website, video, photo collage. For the Gayetons, it’s all about open-sourced ideas and information. People are both information disseminators

project user-friendly. Project Localize teaches kids to map their local food system and identify who grows and distributes their food. Their 2013 pilot program, working with 75 high school students in Ames, Iowa, ended up travelling to Capitol Hill in a presentation to the USDA.

“We recognize that no single person with a camera could ever capture the extraordinary volume of innovative thinking happening across the country, so we decided to crowd-source the making of the information artworks.” Ideally, a body of artworks coalesces into a pop-up show, curated by a local volunteer to share with their community, with the goal of sparking discus-



and collectors. Douglas encourages this concept of “promiscuous distribution,” generating free information for the public to use and spread. For him, the more people who take and distribute content, the more opportunity for enlightenment.

Project Localize is yet another initiative under the Lexicon umbrella. The Gayetons teach interested groups of students, from high school juniors and seniors to graduate students, how to interview movers and shakers from their own community food systems and create information artworks. They equip participants with a tool kit of instructions that makes the digital

sion and action. Lindsay Arbuckle of Alchemy Gardens in Rutland serves as the curator for Vermont.

The Lexicon of Sustainability team taps into the people with ideas that can change the way we think and live. The Lexicon focused on food and farming first. Next up: water and energy. Stay tuned and remember, our words *can* change the world. 🌱

For more information:

- www.lexiconofsustainability
- www.pbs.org/food/shows/the-lexicon-of-sustainability/



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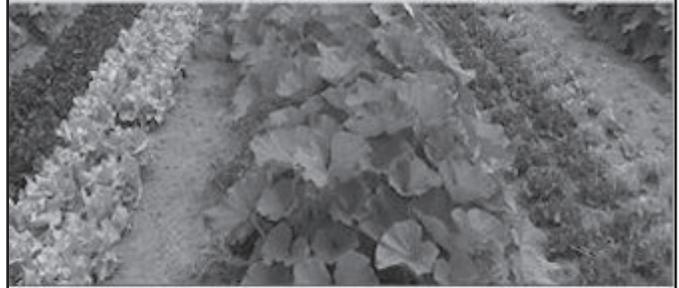
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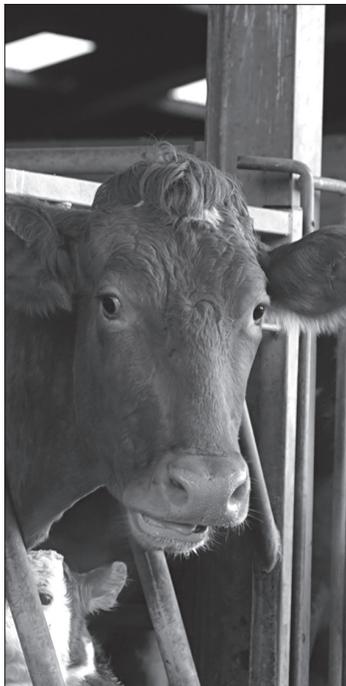
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Organic Dairy Wins Milk Quality Award for 10th Consecutive Year

For the 10th consecutive year, North Hardwick Dairy has received Vermont's Highest Quality Milk award. Owned and managed by Nick and Taylor Meyer and their parents Steve and Patty, North Hardwick Dairy has been in operation as a dairy since early 2000 and became certified organic by Vermont Organic Farmers (VOF) in 2003.

VOF Livestock and Dairy Certification Specialist Ashley Green asked Nick Meyer about the evolution of North Hardwick Dairy and to what, in addition to hard work, they attributed their dairy's successes.—

Q: High milk quality can be attributed to animal husbandry practices and general cow cleanliness. Are there aspects of your animal husbandry practices that make your farm unique?

Nick: We like the way our barn is set up. The Super Structure tarp barn provides excellent light and the air is fresh with an east-west orientation. We bed with sawdust and rake three times a day. Our alley scraper operates on a timer that can be set for multiple runnings per day, which helps with debris tracked into the stall from the cows' feet.

Q: Has your operation had any challenges achieving their production and quality goals due to the organic regulations? If so, how have you been able to overcome these challenges?

Nick: We had some challenges when we became organic in 2003 due to our lack of knowledge. Not only were there not many tools available at the time, we were not sure how to use them. It took some trial and error to see what our cows responded to the best. Being organic helped in a huge way because each year we saw the cows' immune system become stronger and stronger. Elements from free choice minerals, kelp, and salt to long-stem hay all contributed to the cow's health. Prevention has become the best word on the farm. If we can supply what the cow needs in a given day, then there will be less problems and treatments down the road.

On behalf of NOFA-VT, congratulations North Hardwick Dairy! Keep up the hard work. 🌱



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Insurance on the Farm

By Paul Betz, NOFA Vermont member and certified organic farmer at High Ledge Farm, Woodbury, VT

If you had asked me to tell you what kind of insurance I had on April 8th, 2009, I wouldn't have had much of an answer. I had a small farm policy, had coverage on my market booth, and I had insured some buildings and tools, but everything was undervalued. Who wants to pay for insurance? I hadn't really ever sat down to really think about what a loss would look like to my business. My real interest was keeping the premium as low as I could.



Would your insurance cover a disaster that destroyed farm buildings and tools? Photo courtesy Paul Betz.

On April 9th, when a 500-gallon propane tank catastrophically failed and burned down my barns, greenhouses, three vehicles, tractors, tools and my house, I was thinking about insurance in a very different way. All those tools that I had gradually acquired suddenly needed to be replaced all at once. As my business grew, I had added new greenhouses to the farm that I never added onto my policy. The amount of insurance that I carried on all the farm buildings ended up covering about 70% of the material cost for the replacement barn we built.

In addition to the devastation of the losses themselves, it was April: there was that whole farm season thing starting. I had to get back to work to pay bills, and I had to do it without the barns, greenhouses, tractors, and tools I'd been using for the past 9 years. Our policy did have some coverage that we didn't even know about, but which turned out to be pretty important, like loss of income coverage and a cost of living adjustment that helped us turn a barn into a little house so we could get back on the farm before winter.

To have or not have insurance is a choice best made by you; I am not going to try to convince you either way. But I would suggest that if you do choose to carry a policy on your business, be sure that what you have adequately meets your reasons for having it.

My choice to undervalue my buildings and equipment made perfect sense to me, until I needed to rebuild all those buildings and purchase new equipment. The coverage I have today looks a lot different than the coverage I had in early 2009.

I realize that insurance is not an exciting topic, until you wish you had more of it. I gave a presentation at the NOFA conference a few years ago, and two people came. (It was a pretty amazing presentation by the way.) For all of you who were learning to prune apple trees or make cheese instead of listening to me, here are the basics of what I had to say:

- **If you have an insurance policy, sit down and read it.** It's a legal document, and was written by someone who knows a lot more about contract law than you do. If there's something that doesn't make sense, ask your insurance agent to explain it to you.
- **Really think about the full cost of rebuilding** or replacing a part of your business or home. I am not generally recommending insuring everything to full value, but think about what amount of risk you can afford to take. It turns out that being underinsured can be a very expensive way to save money.
- **Have an unscheduled policy for your tools and equipment.** This will allow you to add and sell equipment over time without having to track all the transitions. Do look at the coverage amount when your renewal comes, and adjust it if needed.
- **Include a loss of income coverage equal to one season's net income.** We went back to work and finished the season, making 60% of a normal year's income, and having the insurance for the rest was important.
- **Take the time now to walk through the farm and inventory everything.** You can do it on a video, narrating as you go. Make a copy, and store it off site. Every nut and bolt has value, and even if you don't end up replacing everything, their value will be important somewhere else if you have to rebuild.

Our disaster, like most, was unpredictable and improbable. The recovery was also long and expensive. I was grateful for the coverage that I had. Our insurance company treated us with respect, and put cash in our hands when we really needed it. I truly hope that if you choose to insure, you never need it. For us, having the coverage we did meant being able to rebuild and continue to farm. 🌱

Spring 2014 Program Supporters

Thank you to recent donors:

Thank you to all the members and friends of NOFA for your generous donations to our annual appeal which raised over \$51,500. And thank you for your contributions to the NOFA Winter Conference scholarship which raised \$260 and supported 12 conference attendees.

- Buffalo Mountain Coop, \$500 for the Farmer Emergency Fund and \$500 for the NOFA Farm Share Program
- Green Mountain Coffee Roasters, \$500, general membership donation
- Localvore Today for promoting our Farm Share Gift Card program, which brought in \$1,225 in individual donations
- Vermont Community Foundation, Nouvelle Fund, \$6,985 for general support
- Vermont Fiberworks Association, \$1,000, for the Farm to Community Mentor Program and fiber education
- Vermont State Employees Credit Union We Care 2, \$400 for the Farm to Community Mentor Program

General Support Grants:

- Mrs. Barbarina Heyerdahl, \$10,000 gift for annual appeal
- Porpoise Fund at Fidelity Charitable, unrestricted gift as recommended by Mrs. Francis W. Hatch, \$5,000
- The Franklin Conklin Foundation, \$5,000
- Morel Family Fund at Schwab Charitable Fund, \$5,000
- Vermont Community Foundation, Peter Backman & Annie Christopher Fund, \$500

Program Grants:

- Organic Consumers Association, \$12,500 to support GMO advocacy
- Organic Farming Research Foundation, \$9,195 for Organic Seed Production and Improvement Training Program for Vermont
- The John Merck Fund, \$50,000 to support NOFA Vermont's Farm to Institution Phase 2 Pilot Program Implementation
- Stonyfield Farm, \$5,000 to support NOFA Vermont's winter conference, summer workshops, directory of certified organic producers, and general support.
- Vermont Community Foundation, \$54,656 Farm and Food Initiative grant: Scaling Up and Out to Increase Local Foods in Institutions Project, Part 2
- Vermont Community Foundation, \$3,000 from the Johnson Family Foundation as advised by Barbara Fenhagen, grant to support educational programs, especially for the Winter Children's Conference
- WhiteWave/Horizon Organic, \$3,000 to support the Dairy Technical Assistance Program
- Wurster Family Foundation, \$2,500 grant to support the Farm Share Program
- Donations to support the Farm to Community Mentor Program and school field trips to farms in their communities:
 - Eric Hanson of Hanson & Doremus Investment Management, \$500
 - Buffalo Mountain Co-op, \$250
 - Northeastern Vermont Regional Hospital, \$250
 - Northfield Savings Bank, \$50
 - Union Bank \$250

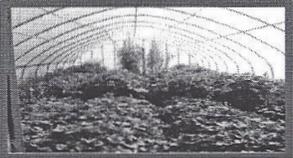


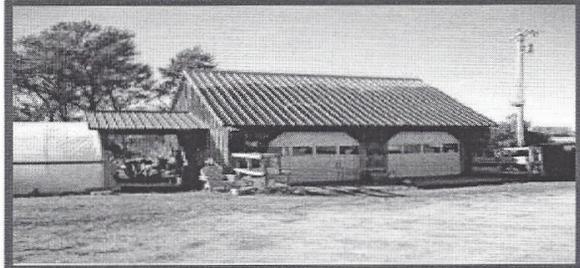
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Spring 2014 New Members

NOFA welcomes the following members who recently joined through the NOFA Winter Conference, Direct Market Conference, Bulk Order, gift memberships, website, VOF certification applications, and other events.

Thank you for supporting Vermont organic agriculture!

New Members

- Carl Ashley, Huntington
- Faith Bellemare & Jon Wagner, Bear Roots Farm, LLC, Barre
- Thomas Bivins, Randolph
- William Blandford, Groton
- Luc Bodin, MA
- Charis Boke, Putney
- Nicole Burke, NM
- Jason Buss, Burlington
- Reed Cass, CT
- Thomas & Christina Cavin, Shelburne
- Sarah Coleman, MA
- Peter Colman, Plainfield
- Angela Cottrill & Daniel Burwinkel, Groton
- Bryan & Susan Davis, Grandview Farm, Derby
- Chris Day, Wallingford
- Aaron de Long, Barnet
- James DeWeese, Middlebury
- Warren B Dodge, K&W Farms, Hardwick
- Linda Doll, Chester
- Edith Drury, Waterbury
- Dean & Sarah Easton, Putney
- Jamie Eckley, Westminster
- Jane Engelman, IL
- Fairfield Center School, Fairfield
- Marielle Fisher, Waitsfield
- Don & Susan Foster, White River Junction
- Remy Franklin, NH
- Erica Frey-Delaportas, Shelburne
- Timothy Gallagher, MA
- Richard Goeke, Bridport
- Yves Gonnet, Midnight Goat Farm, Huntington
- Kim Goodling, Vermont Grand View Farm, Washington
- Laurie Greenberg, Warren
- Thomas & Mary Jean Grime, Tamarack Nursery, Brownington
- Nathan Hammer, Bristol
- Mary Ellen Hannington, Pippin Tree Arts, Island Pond
- David Hazel, Westford
- Nicole Henry, Manchester
- Chris Higgins, Birch Hill Investments, So. Woodstock
- Jen & Toby Hirschak, Black Dog Acres, Hyde Park
- The Holowaty Family, Enosburg
- Jean & John Hutchinson, NC
- Emily Laine, So. Royalton
- Judith Larson, Addison
- Isaac Leslie, CO
- Walter & Lois Liggett, Montpelier
- Marie Louka, Middletown Springs
- Mary Manghis, Burlington
- Maplehill School, Plainfield
- Katy Marshall, Swanton
- Alicia Marvin, Burlington
- Wilmer McAllister, McAllister Orchard, NY
- Colin McGee, Wallingford
- Hannah McLeod, Montpelier
- Nathan McNaughton & Marina Wood-McNaughton, Springfield
- Carol McQuillen, So. Burlington
- Katherine Merrill, Burlington
- Philip Meyer, IA
- Pete Newton, Windham
- Lisa Newton, Shelburne
- Holly Nolan, Winooski
- Paul Ohlson, Adamant
- Peggy O'Toole, Putney
- Victoria Pearson, Montpelier
- Frank Peterson, Worcester
- Kelsey Petterborg, Waterbury
- Anne Peyton, So. Strafford
- Matthew Pich-Maxon, Worcester
- Paul Pinka, Enosburg Falls
- Jennifer Prada, NY
- Titus Pressler, IN
- Sophie Quest, So. Burlington
- Deborah Robinson, Huntington
- Karyn Rocheleau, St. Albans
- Helen Rortvedt, Brattleboro
- Michelle & Stewart Ross-Robinson, Grand Isle
- Daniel Schmitz, Brandon
- Ellen Sharkey & Mary Sharkey, Putney
- Alissa Shethar, Bridport
- Denise B. Smith, St. Albans
- Judith St. Hilaire & Philip LaPorte, St. Albans
- Richard Stoner & Theresa Hyland, Shelburne
- Kristen Street, Pawlet
- Rebekah Thomas, Jericho
- Julie Tower-Pierce, East Burke
- Carolyn & Chris Trapeni, Shelburne
- Kim Villemaire, Richmond
- Dan Vooris, Montpelier
- David White, Ski Hearth Farm, LLC, NH
- Victoria Wideman, Charlotte
- Kuenzi Wiswall, No. Middlesex
- Flint Wiswall, No. Middlesex
- Iona Woolmington, Burlington
- Christine Wulff, Waterbury
- Edward Zabalski, Waterbury Ctr.

New & Renewing Business Members

- Albert Lea Seed House, MN
- Alltech, St. Albans
- American Flatbread, Waitsfield
- Back to the Land, LLC, Wilmington
- Brandon Farmers' Market, Brandon
- Bitternut Mountain Farm, Morrisville
- City Market/Onion River Coop, Burlington
- Concept 2 Rowing, Morrisville
- Dartmouth Organic Farm, NH
- Eastview Farm, LLC, E. Hardwick
- Efficiency Vermont, Burlington
- Evergreen Gardens of Vermont, Waterbury Ctr.
- Farm & Wilderness Foundation, Plymouth
- Farm at South Village, Shelburne
- Fletcher Allen Health Care, Burlington
- Georgia Mountain Maples, Georgia
- Green Mountain Coffee Roasters, Inc., Waterbury
- Groton Growers Farmers' Market, Groton
- Hanover Coop Food Stores, NH
- Heartbeat Lifesharing Corporation, Hardwick
- Juniper, Burlington
- Just Dancing Gardens & Greenhouse, So. Burlington
- Kingdom Mountain Farm, Westfield
- Kinnell Farm, Sheffield
- Kreher Enterprises, NY
- Lamoille Economic Development Corp., Morrisville
- Larkin Realty, So. Burlington
- Mama's Special Family, Inc., Hyde Park
- Metta Earth Farm & Gardens, Lincoln
- Plainfield Co-op, Plainfield
- Progressive Asset Management, Wells
- Provender Farm, Cabot
- Pumpkin Village Foods, Burlington
- Resource Management, Inc., NH
- Retreat Maple Products/Retreat Farm, Richford
- Ridegveiv Farm, Inc., Fairfield
- Simplicity Farm, Brookfield
- Sourwood Mountain Orchard, Proctor
- Springfield Farmers' Market, Springfield
- Stearns Hoof N Hay Ranch, Johnson
- Sunrise Farm, White River Jct.
- TD Bank, Burlington
- The Corse Farm Dairy, LLC, Whitingham
- Vermont Association of Conservation Districts, Waitsfield
- Vermont Law School Center for Agriculture & Food Systems, So. Royalton
- Vermont's Local Banquet, Saxtons River
- Wheeler Sugarworks, Derby

New VOF Certifications



Vermont Organic Farmers would like to welcome the following new producers who have recently obtained organic certification for all or a portion of their operation, joining the nearly 600 organic farmers and processors throughout the state.

Learn more about the benefits of certified organic, locally grown at www.nofavt.org/why-organic.

- Cer-Krit Farm, Putney
- Holyoke Farm, St. Albans
- Newhall Farms, Ltd., Redding
- Dahlicious Lassi, Whiting
- LeBlanc Family Farm, East Hardwick
- Backcountry Coffee Vermont, Montgomery Ctr.

Scout Proft Receives Jack Cook Award

Scout Proft of Someday Farm in East Dorset, VT was the winner of the Jack Cook Award, a recognition that NOFA-VT presents annually at our Winter Conference. The award is in memory of long-time NOFA-VT bookkeeper, Jack Cook, and is given annually to a NOFA-VT member who embodies the theme of the conference, and shares their knowledge with others.

Scout is an exceptional educator on a community level and state level. She currently serves as a Farm to Community Mentor for NOFA-VT for Bennington and Rutland Counties, working with as many youth as is humanly possible. Scout believes that, "We all eat, so farming is the one thing everybody should know about."



Congratulations Scout for your well-deserved award!

(You can see Scout's dramatic acceptance of her award on our YouTube channel at www.youtube.com/theNOFAVT.)

Yes! I want to support NOFA Vermont!

Name: _____

Business/Farm: _____

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Town: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Membership Options

<input type="checkbox"/> Individual	\$30
<input type="checkbox"/> Farm/Family	\$40
<input type="checkbox"/> Business	\$50
<input type="checkbox"/> Sponsor	\$100
<input type="checkbox"/> Sustainer	\$250
<input type="checkbox"/> Basic*	\$15-25

*The Natural Farmer not included

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___ Organic cotton baseball hat (butternut orange) with Vermont Organic Farmers color logo
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\$20 + \$3.50 s/h = \$23.50

___ Organic cotton tote bag with NOFA's color logo
\$10 + \$3.50 s/h + 6% VT Sales Tax = \$14.31

___ Organic cotton tote bag with NOFA's logo in blue
\$6 + \$3.50 s/h + 6% VT Sales Tax = \$10.07





2014 NOFA-VT Board of Directors Election

According to the Association by-laws, NOFA-VT shall have not less than 9 and not more than 12 directors on the Board. The Nominating Committee develops a board slate based on self-nominations, nominations from other members, or committee nominees. The following criteria are taken into account when developing the board slate: gender balance, geographic representation, and skills and expertise. A guideline is that 50% of the board of directors shall be commercial organic farmers, and the balance of board members shall represent the other member classifications (gardener, homesteader, consumer). Board members are elected for 3-year terms and may serve two consecutive terms. Several years ago, the Board recommended that we not have a competitive election, and instead nominate a slate based on the number of open seats. You have the option to either vote yes, no or abstain for each nominee.

Although we have never held an on-line election before, since many members are not able to attend the Winter Conference or other annual meeting, we decided to trial this approach. Please provide feedback on the ballot on this process.

*** To vote, please mail in this form, or visit www.nofavt.org.**

Member Name: _____

Seth Gardner: Yes No Abstain
David Marchant: Yes No Abstain
Steve Paddock: Yes No Abstain

Please return to:

**NOFA-VT
PO Box 697
Richmond, VT 05477**

Please respond by May 16, 2014.

New Board Members Nominated for their first term, 2014-2017



Seth Gardner

is the working owner and operator of McKnight Farm, a certified organic dairy and beef farm in East Montpelier, VT. He

manages a 280-head milking herd with five full time employees. Seth has been involved in farming ventures since 1962. In 1992 Seth bought the McKnight Farm, a working dairy farm since 1796. He started the McKnight Farm with just 10 heifers and has grown the farm to its present-day operation of over 500 cows. Seth has over 50 years of experience in all phases of productive farming, cropping, and dairy management. He also serves his community as Chair of the East Montpelier Selectboard after serving for three years on the East Montpelier planning commission. As a dairy farmer, he hopes to represent in particular the best interests of organic dairy and beef farmers. Seth says, "I am honored to be nominated to serve on the Board of Directors for NOFA. I will work hard to move the organic brand to the forefront in VT and nationally by advancing the Vermont Organic Farmers (VOF) Certified Organic label. Organic farmers deserve to profit from their hard work."



David Marchant,

along with his wife Jane Sorenson and two children, Huck and Ada, manage River Berry Farm, a family owned certified

organic small fruit and vegetable farm operating on the Lamoille River in Fairfax, Vermont since 1992. Dave and his crew farm 50 acres of organic vegetables, 3 acres of strawberries, 1.5 acres of organic raspberries and 18,000 square feet of greenhouse. Dave has been commercially farming for over 20 years and prior to that worked as a research technician in the strawberry IPM program at the University of Massachusetts. During his farming career, Dave has been involved in research projects including organic strawberry production, the use of biological controls of thrips in bedding plants, and beneficial insect populations on organic farms. Dave says, "My involvement in commercial agriculture allows me to understand the importance of research directed specifically to organic farming methods, background that I will bring to the NOFA-VT Board of Directors."



Steve Paddock brings a forty-year career in small business management and ownership to his roles as the Vermont Small Business Development

Center's statewide coordinator for Agribusiness Programs, Addison County Area Business Advisor, and director of the Vermont Tech Enterprise Center business incubator in Randolph. His agriculture background includes beef cattle, poultry, and hay production. He earned a B.A. in Economics and Accounting from Hendrix College, and an MBA degree from the John Molson School of Business at Concordia University, Montreal. Prior board service includes Addison County Chamber of Commerce, United Way, Porter Medical Center, Porter Health Systems, and The Bridge School. He served as a Guardian Ad Litem in the Vermont Family Court system. Steve looks forward to bringing his experience in facilitation, strategic planning, financial planning and management, training, and leadership to the NOFA-VT Board of Directors, stating, "I understand what it takes to be an effective member of a team and enjoy working with others in a productive environment."

Standing Board Members

- Mimi Arnstein* Farmer, Wellspring Farm CSA, Marshfield, VT
 - Paul Costello, Executive Director, VT Council for Rural Development, Montpelier, VT
 - Sona Desai* Manager, Intervale Center Food Hub, Burlington, VT
 - Mara Hearst, Student Board Representative, University of Vermont and farmworker, Someday Farm, East Dorset
 - Deb Heleba, Vermont SARE Coordinator and eOrganic Team Coordinator, Lincoln, VT
 - Andrew Knafel* Farmer, Clearbrook Farm, Shaftsbury, VT
 - Andrea Scott, Farmer/Processor, Champlain Orchards, Shoreham, VT
 - Ross Thurber, Farmer, Lilac Ridge Farm, Brattleboro, VT
 - Kate Turcotte, Cheese Maker, Shelburne Farms, Shelburne, VT
- * NOFA-VT leadership team

Join NOFA-VT and your local farms for CSA Open Farm Day!

Sunday, May 4, 2014
1:00–4:00 PM
Statewide!



Have you ever wanted to visit a CSA farm in your community and see what they're up to? Do you want to learn more about the Community Supported Agriculture model? Well, you're in luck!

We're hosting an Open CSA Farm Day Sunday, May 4th from 1-4 PM. Certified organic and NOFA-VT member CSA farms around the state will open their doors for tours and activities. Our vision is to connect consumers with CSA farms in their area – building new relationships and interest in CSAs.

Call the NOFA office at 802-434-4122 or visit www.nofavt.org/CSA-day for more details and to find a participating farm near you!

Advertise in NOFA Notes and Support NOFA Vermont!

Ad sizes and rates:

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- 1/6 pg - \$40 (2.25" w x 4.75" h)
- 1/4 pg - \$50 (3" w x 4.75" h)
- 1/2 pg - \$85 (7" w x 4.75" h)

