



SUMMER 2020

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The Quarterly Newsletter of the Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont

Toward a Resilient Agricultural Future for Vermont

By Maddie Kempner, NOFA-VT Policy Director

We've all seen the headlines. Dairy farmers forced to dump milk. Massive lines forming at food box delivery sites. The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed a precarious food system that is not designed to support Vermont's farmers or our eaters in times of crisis.

The good news is that, in many ways, Vermonters were made for this moment. We are resourceful. We care for our neighbors. We pursue self-sufficiency with gleeful determination. Now we must apply these qualities not only to survive the immediate crisis, but to reimagine Vermont agriculture to shift toward a strong, diversified, and crisis-proof food system that can sustain both people and land into the future.

We must acknowledge that in addition to being unprepared for a crisis of the magnitude we are currently experiencing, our food system in

collective work to build a healthier food system going forward is dismantling the racist ideas and power structures on which it was founded and which persist today.

As lawmakers debate how to spend our state's federal CARES Act funding, Vermont has the opportunity to demonstrate

to the nation how to emerge from this crisis stronger than when it began. To that end, we are calling for a stimulus plan for an agriculturally resilient, emergency ready Vermont. It is one part of the blueprint that we

collectively need to move toward a better future.

In recent weeks, some shining examples of what this future can look like have emerged. As people began staying home to slow the spread of the virus, farmers all around the state joined together to offer home delivery of everything from meat and vegetables to prepared meals and pantry staples. Interest in Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) shares has spiked exponentially, with many farmers expanding

production in order to feed their communities. Dairy farmers who sell their milk directly from their farms have begun sourcing from other farmers in their area to provide an array of food to meet their neighbors' needs. Thousands of Vermonters have planted gardens for the first time, to grow more of their own food and share with their communities.

If we want a food system that can serve us both in good times and in times of crisis, we need to pay attention to these examples and expand on them exponentially.

Here's what we can do right now:

- Provide direct payments to Vermont farms of all types and scales suffering from lost markets, and resilience grants to allow them to expand and adapt to meet the changing needs of our communities.
- Administer direct payments to all Vermonters who have been excluded

Future, continued on next page

***In many ways,
Vermonters
were made for
this moment.***

Vermont is built upon the same structures of white supremacy and systemic racism underlying all of our social systems in the United States. A central part of our



NOFA-VT

PO BOX 687, Richmond, VT 05477
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On Mission

By Grace Oedel, NOFA-VT Executive Director

NOFA-VT's mission statement calling for an "economically viable, ecologically sound, and socially just" food system is more needed than ever. As we imagine a world healed from racial injustice and thriving agriCULTURE on the other side of the pandemic, we must be actively hopeful and tirelessly dedicated to the work to take us to a flourishing and just food system, in which all are fed. This issue of NOFA Notes offers a glimpse into what our piece of this collective work has looked like over these last few months. In many ways, this time period has helped catalyze the conversations, connections, and community that we'll need for the road ahead.

On the big picture side, we've developed a plan for an "agriculturally resilient, emergency ready" Vermont to help chart the path towards a thriving, ecologically sound and just agricultural system. We've been taking immediate, tangible steps too. We've provided forty-four farms with resilience grants to help them make swift changes to better respond to this crisis and ensure all Vermonters are fed. We've mailed out 60,000 packets of seeds to

start Resilience Gardens in close to 3,000 food insecure households. We've also increased our subsidized CSA, "Farm Share" program. See page 3 for more actions we've taken in our COVID-19 Response Fund.

There is much more work to be done, but we are inspired and grateful for the sense of community and togetherness, and the possibilities that emerge when we show up for each other. Thank you for being a part of our shared work. We are heartened to know that there are SO MANY other organizations, farmers, and people out there experimenting boldly and vigorously, collaborating like mycelium, and actively forging another path forward.

As we continue to build on this framework, we'd love to hear from you. Please share your ideas and feedback with me! Call (802) 434-4122 or email grace@nofavt.org.



Future, continued from page 1

from the federal stimulus and other benefits because of immigration status.

- Invest in programs that keep Vermonters fed while supporting Vermont farmers, including funding school meal programs' ability to purchase local food.

We need a thoughtful and comprehensive plan to take us from where we are now to a food system focused first and foremost on ensuring that all Vermonters are fed and all farmers are thriving. We should invest in the farmers who are currently stepping up to feed their communities, and enact policies that ensure fair compensation and dignified livelihoods for everyone working to get food

from these farms to our plates. If we want continued access to sustainably produced local food, we – both individuals and institutions – need to step up and support these farmers with our food dollars long after this crisis subsides, and have public policies that enable and incentivize this support.

I believe Vermonters know what a better future looks like – we just need a roadmap to get there. And we need everyone to get on the bus.

My hope is that, in the coming weeks and months, our stimulus plan for Vermont agriculture will become one of many other such roadmaps from all sectors that together, will help guide our state through this crisis and deliver us collectively into a more resilient, thriving society on the other side.

I can't wait to see you there.



Read the whole plan at www.nofavt.org/agstimulusplan

Rising to the Occasion: NOFA-VT's COVID Response Fund

Thanks to your generous support, we've been able to rise to this occasion and help our community navigate the COVID-19 crisis. Through our COVID Response Fund, we have been able to:

- ✦ **Provide 44 'Resilience Grants'** of \$1,000 each to help farmers mitigate the impact of the COVID pandemic as they pivot their operations and respond to the unexpected changes brought about by this crisis.
- ✦ **Support over 2,700 food insecure households** with 60,000 seed packets to add to their food security and that of their neighbors through our Resilience Gardens Project in partnership with High Mowing Organic Seeds. We've also provided some funds to the UVM Extension's Huertas Project to ensure food access for often isolated and food insecure farmworkers.
- ✦ **Successfully advocate for farmers markets** to be able to reopen safely this year, and provide much needed technical assistance to support markets as they adjust their systems to meet the state's guidelines. We also conducted a statewide marketing campaign to let consumers know that markets are opening for business and are doing this safely.
- ✦ **Raise funds to support farmers and farmworkers.** We've been in coalition at the statehouse testifying on the issue of stimulus payments for people excluded by the CARES Act. Through our Dairy Milking Relief Program, we also continue to raise money for our Farmer Emergency Fund to support farmers in emergency situations and to pay sick leave in the event that a farmer or farmworker falls sick with COVID. And we've established a weekly meeting with all the organizations who work with farmworkers to build a better support network.
- ✦ **Meet low-income Vermonters' needs for access to healthy food** by matching them with subsidized CSA shares at local Vermont farms through our Farm Share Program. Our Crop Cash and Farm Stand Match programs, matching 3SquaresVT purchases at farmers markets and farm stands respectively, also launched June 1st.
- ✦ **Advocate for policies and stimulus funds** that support Vermont's farms and farmworkers on both the state and federal level. We are also developing a bold vision for systems changes so that we do not return to business as usual, but instead emerge stronger and more resilient.

Thanks to your incredible support, this work, and more, is possible.

Thank you!



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Living in Responsive Uncertainty: Rebop Farm Reflects on Farming During COVID-19

By Megan Browning, Farm Services Program Facilitator

With concerns about national food supply disruptions due to COVID-19, local food systems are experiencing a new wave of interest and demand. While grocery store shelves in many cases at the beginning of the pandemic were consistently empty, it was notable among the NOFA-VT farming community that farm stands were fully stocked, CSA memberships were selling out, and farmers were working creatively and collaboratively to adapt and do whatever it took to feed their communities. Now labeled and acknowledged as essential, farmers are in a period of recognition for their critical work to feed communities, and pushed to build out systems that will keep them viable and feeding their communities now and into the future.

Ashlyn Bristle and Abraham McClurg own and operate Rebop Farm in Brattleboro, VT, a highly diversified farm producing raw milk, meat, maple syrup and honey. Rebop Farm also partners with other farms to sell a variety of products through their farm stand. We spoke with Ashlyn and Abraham about their experience as farmers during this time, and what it is taking to be resilient and adapt to the ever-changing times.

What is it like for you to be a farmer right now in light of the pandemic and shifting values/perspectives on local food?

Being a farmer right now is like a magnification of what being a farmer is almost always like: we are subject to the whims of the weather, the pressure of the growing season where it feels like every minute matters while we rush towards solstice, and then towards harvest. But now, there's added pressure and uncertainty. We're trying to make our business be the best fit for the needs of the community we're serving within our current skill set. We are trying to produce as much as we can sustainably on our land, with our current systems. And we're not sure if an extended recession is coming, how it will affect our business, and what kind of supports will be in place to help people through it, such as

federal funding for SNAP. So we're trying to lean into the knowledge that we've been cultivating, and build redundant, resilient systems to weather all kinds of disruption and change. We know that living in that responsive uncertainty is at the heart of farming.

What are some specific ways you have changed/adapted your business in response to the pandemic?

We've shifted into doing more retail sales than we have historically, and we're working with a lot more other producers in our retail space than we were before. We decided to offer spaces in our winter CSA early, to give ourselves a little financial security and our customers some food security, which has almost sold out as of mid-June. We're moving to make sure that all of our systems are as efficient as possible at slightly larger scales, and we've been in grant writing mode to try to cover some of the capital expenses of new systems as needed. With the help of a Resilience Grant from NOFA-VT, we're putting in what we think is the smallest milking pipeline in Vermont (it has made our installation person chuckle a few times), which should help us milk and wash up faster. We're also putting in a few larger pieces of equipment, like a larger walk-in freezer, with help from a Farm Viability grant, and considering other moves to help us save time and position us to scale, should demand for local meat and milk remain steady.

Can you provide some rough numbers that reflect things like increase in sales, increase in traffic and visitors to your farm, number of other farms you are purchasing from and what types of products you are selling most and/or buying in.

Our retail sales increased 700%, and overall business doubled in March, April and May over



Jan/Feb averages. In addition, we went from working with 13 other producers in February to over 40 in May. We're buying in lots of cheese, ice cream, veggies, flour, and eggs from other farms. We're close to sold-out of our own meats, and really looking forward to moving into the season of harvest, so we can share an abundance with people again. We are lucky that we have a lot of cows in milk and coming into milk, so we have been selling an increasing amount of raw jersey milk from the farm.

Is there anything else to share regarding farming in a pandemic and shifting realities that you'd like to highlight?

We're so grateful to our community for holding us and supporting us, through this moment of uncertainty, especially. Strong food systems are dispersed, and decentralized, and we hope the future holds more of this push for local foods from many sources.



Farmers Markets: Local as Usual, Safer than Ever

The State of Vermont permitted farmers markets to open starting May 1st. Since then, many markets have opened, but it has not been business as usual. To ensure the safety of customers and vendors alike, the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets (VAAFM) issued extensive guidelines for markets to follow, which were then updated in mid-June. As a result, farmers markets will not resemble the social gathering places we know and love. They will, however, continue to be a source of the freshest local products and a place to connect directly with farmers.

Here's how markets will be different this season: children's activities will not be permitted; market traffic will flow in one direction with designated entry and exit points; vendor booths will not be self-serve - they will hand you what you want; vendors are encouraged to accept pre-orders for pick-up; vendors are required to wear face coverings or stand behind shields; and some markets are requiring customers to wear face coverings as well. Importantly, participating markets will still be able to accept 3SquaresVT/SNAP/EBT and offer NOFA-VT's SNAP matching coupon program, Crop Cash.

The news of farmers markets being permitted to open under specific guidelines came out on April 24th, leaving many markets scrambling to be ready to open in full compliance in early May. NOFA-VT, as the parent organization for the VT Farmers Market Association, hosted weekly check-in

calls for markets with VAAFM representatives present so that markets were able to have their questions answered as well as connect with each other about challenges they were facing. It has been truly amazing to watch how quickly market leaders and vendors have been able to adapt their market operations to comply with the guidelines. Most markets in the state are run on shoe-string budgets and rely heavily on volunteers. The necessary modifications required significantly more human and financial capital than markets typically have, and it has been nothing short of amazing to see markets step up and find a way to continue providing local products for their communities in a safe environment.

The state-issued guidelines require modification of market operations, and some markets have determined it would not be logistically and/or financially feasible to comply with them this season. As of June 1st, we know of at least nine markets that will not be opening this season. Others have decided

to open later than normal in order to have time to modify their operations successfully. All markets are facing a great challenge this season to stay afloat while serving as a safe access point for fresh, healthy food. Please support your local market and be patient with market operators as they continue to adapt to this evolving crisis. **Find a market near you at www.nofavt.org/farmersmarkets.**



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NOFA-VT'S ANNUAL REPORT

Our 2019 Impact Report is available online! The report details the impact of our programs in 2019 and provides a financial overview. If you'd like a hard copy, we'd be happy to send you one. Just call our office at (802) 434-4122 or email info@nofavt.org.

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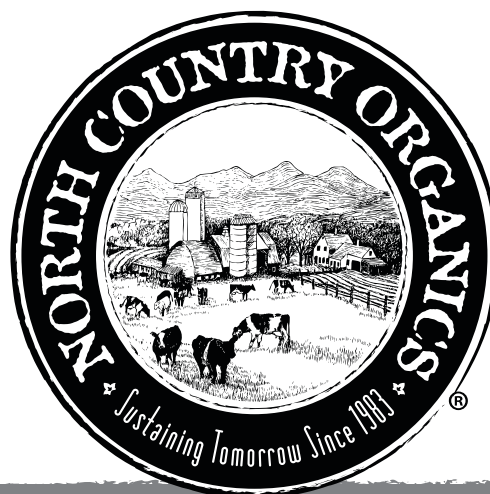
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Summer Policy Update

By Maddie Kempner, NOFA-VT Policy Director

Since the COVID-19 pandemic reached the U.S. back in March, both the Vermont State House and the halls of Congress have been bustling – virtually, of course – with legislators scrambling to respond to the needs of families and various sectors of the economy. Throughout that process, NOFA-VT has also been busy working with partners both nationally and here in Vermont to advocate for relief for farmers, farmworkers, and the increasing number of food insecure Vermonters struggling as a result of the crisis.

The impacts of COVID-19 on Vermont agriculture have been extremely variable depending on a farmer's crop, workforce, and markets. While conventional dairy farmers have seen a precipitous drop in their pay price, the pay price for organic dairy farmers has been relatively stable. Many farmers with direct to consumer sales have seen demand skyrocket, while farmers selling primarily to wholesale markets were forced to pivot quickly as many of these accounts dried up. Across the board, farmers have faced increased expenses in order to keep customers and workers safe, comply with new regulations, and set up new marketing channels and distribution methods. The refrain of farmers being "July tired" in April has become a common one.

As the Scott administration and the Legislature have worked to allocate Vermont's \$1.25 billion in federal CARES Act funding, NOFA-VT has advocated for relief to be provided equitably across all farm types and scales. We

understand that the impact on conventional dairy farmers was immediate and severe, and support the state's efforts to provide them with some relief. At the same time, we believe it is the responsibility of the Agency of Agriculture and policy makers to understand the impact of the crisis on all types of farms, and provide relief accordingly. If we want a future with diverse farms feeding all of our communities across Vermont, we need to provide support for those farms stepping up to feed their neighbors during this crisis and ensure they can remain in business going forward. To that end, we were able to successfully advocate, alongside Rural Vermont, for \$5 million in Vermont's CARES Act funding to be distributed directly to non-dairy farms experiencing economic harm as a result of COVID-19. Despite our success in securing these funds, we remain concerned that certain eligibility requirements included in the legislation could prevent many farmers from accessing much needed relief. As the legislature adjourns, we plan to work closely with VEDA, the organization tasked with distributing grant funds to non-dairy farmers, and other service providers to track the program's progress and ensure that it is serving the needs of Vermont's diverse farmers and food producers.

NOFA-VT has also worked closely with partners at Hunger Free VT, The Vermont Foodbank, and Shelburne Farms to advocate for significant funding to ensure that all Vermonters can be fed during this time of increasing food insecurity. Our newly formed food security

coalition wrote an open letter to legislators in early June outlining recommendations including increasing 3SquaresVT benefits, increasing support for the Foodbank's food distribution efforts, funding for school and summer meals programs, and funding for local purchasing through Farm Share, Crop Cash, and the Foodbank's Vermonters Feeding Vermonters program. While the legislature failed to adequately fund several local purchasing initiatives core to our coalition's requests, many of our priority programs, such as summer meals and charitable food distribution, did receive funding through the State's Coronavirus Relief Fund.

Finally, we continue to work in coalition with farmworker and human rights advocates to push the State to create a relief fund to support those excluded from federal stimulus payments due to citizenship status. As of this writing, that fund is not included in the legislature's Coronavirus Relief Fund (CRF), but we will continue to push for its inclusion when the legislature reconvenes for budget discussions in August.

As we advocate for these immediate legislative priorities, we are also putting forward a long-term vision and action plan for building a just, viable, and ecologically sound food system.

Check out nofavt.org/agstimulusplan to read about our vision, share your feedback, and learn how you can get involved.



Welcome to our newest staff!

MEGAN BROWNING Farmer Services Program Facilitator

Megan Browning is a farmer, communicator, and community organizer whose interests, knowledge and passion center on the continued viability of small-scale farming, and the redistribution of land, wealth and power to achieve a just and sustainable food system. Megan grew up in New York City, graduated from Colby College in Maine, and has spent the past ten years on farms around New England. She moved to Vermont in 2014 and was immediately taken with the strong agricultural community, so she stuck around! Among other things, Megan enjoys cooking, eating, traveling, swimming, growing plants, and spreading love.



ISABEL COCHRAN Certification Specialist

Isabel graduated from Smith College in 2015. After her sophomore year she interned on a farm in the Northeast Kingdom and discovered her passion for agriculture! She found it brought together her love for food, the natural world, and communities, and went on to enjoy many great seasons farming in Vermont and New York. Isabel is excited to support awesome farmers throughout Vermont.



Farm Share: Helping Local Farms Nourish Us All

By Emmet Moseley, Community Food Access Coordinator

This spring, NOFA-VT's Farm Share Program has seen a 26% rise in demand from limited-income Vermonters for CSA shares from local farms. The Farm Share Program, which is in its 26th year of operation, provides limited-income Vermonters with the opportunity to support their local CSA farm and receive reliable access to quality, nutritious food through an innovative cost-share model. NOFA-VT and the farm each fundraise 25% of the share cost so that the applicant pays only 50%.

Typically, we are unable to approve every application we receive due to limited funds, but this year we approved every application, thanks to the widespread support of our COVID-19 Response Fund. As a result, we were able to fund 229 applications, a 56% increase

from last spring.

During this crisis, we've seen a rise in demand for CSA shares across the state, and oftentimes, farms are seeing customers that haven't previously subscribed to a CSA. This increased interest in local CSA shares has also been reflected in our Farm Share Program, with 45% of applicants not having received a CSA share in the last 3 years or more.

If you or someone you know could benefit from a cost-supported CSA share, be sure to look out for our application for fall/winter shares, which will be open from August 1 - September 30, 2020. We expect the increased interest in CSA shares and need for financial support to persist through the summer, so please consider donating to the Farm Share Program if you are able to. A donation of \$90



will help us fund one CSA share, which, on average, provides local, nutritious food for an entire season for a family. ✨

You can learn more, donate, and access the program application at nofavt.org/farmshare. Please contact Emmet Moseley, Community Food Access Coordinator, at Emmet@nofavt.org or (802) 434-7162.

Growing Resilience, One Garden at a Time

By Livy Bulger, Education & Engagement Manager

Through the generous support of High Mowing Organic Seeds, People's United Bank, and the Sustainable Future and Raven Ridge Funds of the Vermont Community Foundation, NOFA-VT has distributed over 60,000 packets of vegetable, herb and flower seeds to 2,700 households across the state this spring.

This project aims to build a collective momentum around the opportunity to create a Resilience Garden with free seeds, with the goal of reaching folks who are food insecure, have lost a job due to COVID or want to expand their garden to help feed neighbors during these trying times.

Packages containing 50 packets of seeds were distributed to larger gardening efforts including community gardens, non-profits, food shelves and neighborhoods

banding together to grow collectively. Packages containing 10 packets of seeds were distributed to individual or household gardening efforts.

The demand for this project was exponentially higher than we ever anticipated and we're so grateful and humbled to learn from folks how they plan to use these seeds, and ultimately the produce, to feed their communities and themselves. ✨

A few stories of hope & resilience from seed requests:

- ✂ "I have a huge garden I am excited to share with neighbors, especially since I can't work due to the pandemic."
- ✂ "I work teaching life skills and in group homes in our community. I will use these seeds to teach gardening and self sufficiency in our community. Thank you for this resource."
- ✂ "Thank you!! Our field is ready and waiting to feed people <3"

We all have a role to play in building a resilient food system - happy gardening!



Pictured: NOFA-VT's Livy Bulger, Kayla Strom, and Becca Weiss met at the Richmond Post Office to bundle and mail the first huge batch of seeds.

How Schools are Adapting

An Interview with Karyl Kent, Food Service Director for the Lamoille North School District, conducted by Helen Rortvedt, NOFA-VT Farm to School Program Director

The COVID-19 crisis has shone a light, like never before, on the incredible work done by school nutrition staff. When schools closed their doors, they had less than a week to completely reimagine their distribution models and keep students fed and nourished. We are honored to share some voices from the frontline school nutrition programs that so many families depend on. There's so much innovation, creativity, and hard work happening right now— but that happens every day in our schools' cafeterias, pandemic or not. Hear firsthand how schools are adapting, keeping kids nourished, and dreaming big. First up, Karyl Kent.

Karyl Kent is the Food Service Director for the Lamoille North School District, which includes the six towns of Belvidere, Cambridge, Eden, Hyde Park, Johnson, and Waterville with five elementary schools, the Lamoille Union Middle School, Lamoille Union High School, and the Green Mountain Technology and Career Center.

What are you doing right now to serve the families in your community? Tell us about your program and how you have needed to pivot.

Once schools closed in March, we jumped right in and decided to start off with curbside pickup. Two days later, we moved into delivery by bus route. So, we're serving around 850 kids a day. On Mondays, we send out one breakfast and one lunch for each child. On Tuesday and Thursday, we send out two breakfasts and two lunches per student. Friday is a work from home day for our staff.

Right in the beginning, it was such a big unknown—we had no idea how many meals to prepare for. We planned for the worst and we way overproduced. And then it was a matter of figuring out what to do with all the extra food, which was to give it away to the families and keep honing in on the numbers.

And we learned to order all the to-go containers we can! We have a storeroom for them right now. I just buy whatever I can find. And the same thing with the pre-prepackaged food items that everybody's using—like fruit

cups and baby carrots. When the baby carrots sold out, that wasn't a problem. We have a farm. I just called Sam Rowley (Sustainable Agriculture & Food Systems Instructor at Green Mountain Tech & Career Center) for carrots! The school chef asked, "What are we going to do with those whole carrots?" It was simple: put them in the food processor, make carrot coins, and it was easy. They're fantastic. I asked Sam if he would plant spinach and greens for us, so we could start using those, too.

What are some ways you've seen your staff/team come together and creatively address a challenge you're experiencing?

Our staff members have really stepped up and taken leadership roles. And they're innovative and creative thinkers. They think on their feet. I've been really amazed, impressed, and inspired by them. They're the boots on the ground. They're practical. They see what's going on. They're thinking about things from a kid's point of view. It's been really inspiring to see some of the innovations that have come from my team. That's been a big benefit of all



of this: to see people rise.

What are your favorite menu items that are working in your new system?

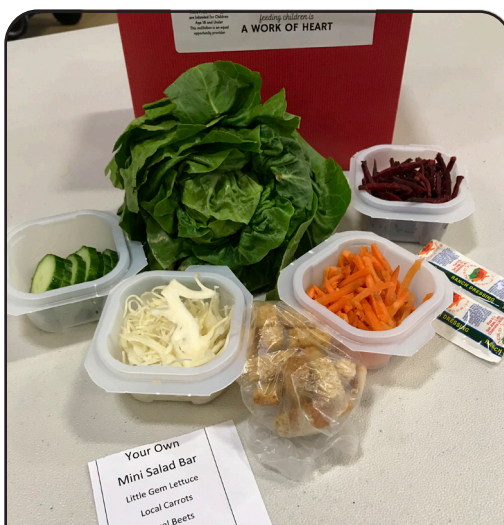
We've been doing a lot of hot meals. The parents are so grateful to be getting really nourishing, hot meals. This crisis is not just about sending food to kids, it's about nourishing them. We're not sending prepackaged snack foods. We made chicken and biscuits today—our chef braised the meat. It was beautiful and made from scratch. Those kinds of things: the casseroles, lasagnas, raviolis, mac and cheese, shepherds pie.

And on Thursdays, our chef even sends out a big breakfast with bacon, scrambled eggs, home fries, donut holes one day, and then homemade banana bread another day. It's a big weekly farmer's breakfast. He's very proud of that. It's impressive.

And we send a little "cheat-sheet" home with all the instructions for reheating and refrigerating. It also includes a list of resources for families so they can find support for other things they may be needing right now.

Has your meal participation increased? Stayed the same? Reduced? Why do you think this is the case?

It's increased. We started with about 250 meals that first day, and since have gone up to feeding 850 children a day. When I went back and looked at our typical participation numbers, it's somewhere around 750 a day district-wide. So right now, we're sending food to a lot of siblings who are not in school yet. We coordinated outreach with the Lamoille County Hunger Council to get word out about free meals for children to daycare centers and



"Work of heart" build-your-own-salad-bar kits, featuring lots of local ingredients, created by the LNSD school meals team.

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NOFA-VT Awards "Resilience" Grants totaling \$42k

By Bill Cavanaugh, Farm Business Advisor

At the end of May, NOFA-VT awarded the first round of our farmer Resilience Grants to farmers across the state who are making changes to their business in response to the COVID-19 crisis.

The intention behind the grant was to encourage farmers to think creatively about how to respond quickly to challenges arising from the pandemic, and to make funds available to help facilitate that creative thinking. NOFA-VT staff was hugely impressed with the quality of applications we received, and the inventiveness and entrepreneurial spirit that farmers are bringing right now.

In all, 44 grants were awarded for a total of \$42,000. Projects covered a wide range of farm-related activities, including value added

production, website and online presence building, and covering costs associated with responding to increased demand for local food.

Some interesting highlights include:

- Purchasing a dehydrator to extend the shelf life of produce to better weather changes in demand
- Construct a farm stand to provide easy food access for a community
- Offsetting fees associated with home delivery of grassfed, organic meat
- Employee PPE and food safety upgrades

In addition to responding to changing market forces, almost all of the grant applications made mention of a focus on providing food for the farms' local neighbors

as a way to build community resilience. It's amazing to see that even in these difficult times, farmers are determined to make sure that their community is fed through their efforts.

As more funding becomes available, we hope to open a second round of grants later in the year to support even more farms as they navigate the challenges presented by the COVID-19 market disruptions. Any NOFA-VT member-farmer or VOF certified farm with a project related to pivoting their business operation is eligible to apply for the grant

Please go to nofavt.org/resilience-grants for more information.



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preschools. The numbers keep inching up, up, up.

What are your community relationships that are proving really valuable in weathering this storm?

I think the biggest connection is with the Lamoille County Hunger Council—they've been a huge support in getting the word out.

And Salvation Farms has been supplying us with great produce—we got 64 20-pound bags of potatoes last Friday! They connected us with Black River Produce who had products they needed to move before sell-by or freeze-by dates. So I was able to buy a lot of local yogurt, fresh Maplebrook mozzarella cheese, and North Country Bacon at prices we could afford.

We offer additional grocery items during the meal pick-ups for families. We've been getting biweekly deliveries of assorted root vegetables in two-pound bags from Salvation Farms, and we've been able to hand those out to our families at curbside pickup. It's the same for all the potatoes we get from Chappelle's—we're packaging those in 5-pound bags and handing those out, as well.

We hear that incorporating local foods into school meals has been more challenging right now. Has anything been working for

you? Can you share any tips?

We're lucky to have the staffing to be able to still make a lot of dishes from scratch. We had a ton of beets in the refrigerator when this all happened. We had been planning to use them for Harvest of the Month taste tests, and we asked ourselves, "What are we going to do with all of these?" So: We pickled them! We made two 5-gallon pails filled with pickled beets. We portioned them up and sent them out. That was truly rewarding. The kids loved it. Also coleslaw, carrot coins, tossed salad in little Ziplock bags... Depending on how much labor you have, and how much time you have to portion and package all these things, these can be great ways to use local produce.

Yogurt has been another thing that's been really, really hard to get in small packaging. So we've been buying 17-pound containers and portioning it ourselves, which is a lot of extra work. We got the Green Mountain Creamery Greek yogurt, and we add maple syrup and vanilla into it, and it's delicious. But again, we have the people to do that work.

In light of this crisis, or even before COVID-19, what are your big dreams for your program? What would you like to see on the

other end of this?

We're in the beginning stages of the cafeteria remodel that we've been looking forward to for two years, and the cafeteria is all torn up! I don't know if anyone's even going to see the cafeteria in the fall—they might be eating in the classrooms. But it's really given

This is a great moment to teach about sustainability and food systems, and valuing and treasuring our local farms.

me pause to think about how we serve food and the food waste from overproduction. I'm dreaming about an online ordering system so kids can order online the day before, how we simplify our menus, and cook

to order like a restaurant.

Also, I think this is our opportunity to start highlighting more plant-based menus. We're in Lamoille County, and it's very "meat and potatoes". But I'd love to see us move in a more plant-based direction, and have kids embrace those kinds of foods. That's been my dream for a long time. And I kind of see this as my chance.

This is a great moment to teach about sustainability and food systems, and valuing and treasuring our local farms. We were in the process of opening up our school farm for more field trips and community activities, and showing the county what a treasure it is. We want farms to come out as the hero in all of this, too.



NOFA-VT Members: THANK YOU for supporting organic agriculture!

We welcome the following members who joined us or renewed their membership in the 2nd quarter of 2020:

NEW MEMBERS

Karen Albrecht, Bennington, VT
Anderson Family, Montgomery Ctr, VT
Jennifer Amstutz, Albany, NY
Randolph Back, Worcester, VT
Angus Baldwin, Jeffersonville, VT
Rico Balzano, Wells, VT
Carol and Steve Berry, Manchester, VT
David Blais, Springfield, VT
Justin Bramhall, Putney, VT
Genica Breitenbeck, Hyde Park, VT
Kali Brgant, Jeffersonville, VT
Samantha and Brian Buczek, Morrisville, VT
Pam Bullock, Brattleboro, VT
Wendy Burkewitz, Irasburg, VT
Paul Cayer, Barnard, VT
Lanny Clark, Colchester, VT
Justin Colgan, Northfield, VT
Kyle Doda, Brookfield, VT
Darlene Doyle, Chelsea, VT
Doug Edwards, North Hero, VT
John Fagan, Waterbury, VT
Lynne Fagan MD, Bethesda, MD
Carrie Fenn, Charlotte, VT
Peter Fenn, Charlotte, VT
Samuel Gorton, Sheldon, VT

Sara Greenfield, Landgrove, VT
Allison Gulka, Walden, VT
Christine Hager, Troy, VT
George Hollister, West Pawlet, VT
Josiah Jackson, Lincoln, VT
Marie Journey, Richford, VT
Karolina Kawiaka, White River Junction, VT
Greg Kittredge, Dorset, VT
Matt Lasser, Burlington, VT
Faye Mack, Winooski, VT
Emily Mitchell, Burlington, VT
Barbara Murphy-Warrington, Lincoln, VT
Chip Allen Natvig, Braintree, VT
Jason Nerenberg, Jericho, VT
Kristen Olbrys, E Charleston, VT
Orest Pelechaty, Springfield, NY
Alex Pissalidis, Northfield, VT
Suzanne Podhaizer, Essex Junction, VT
Charles & Caleb Russell, Brookfield, VT
Matt Sayre, Hinesburg, VT
Jessica Tompkins, Waitsfield, VT
Darby Weaver, Wolcott, VT
Helen Whybrow, Fayston, VT
Ben Wilcox, Sutton, VT

NEW & RENEWING BUSINESS MEMBERS

American Flatbread, Waitsfield, VT
Bravo Botanicals LLC, Brattleboro, VT
Cedar Circle Farm, E. Thetford, VT
Clear Brook Farm, Shaftsbury, VT
Craftsbury Outdoor Center/Concept 2,
Morrisville, VT
CT Greenhouse Company LLC, Middlefield, CT
Dobra US LLC, Burlington, VT
Elizabeth Ferry & Karen Thorkilsen, S Royalton, VT
Green Bee Lawn & Garden, Chester, VT
High Mowing Organic Seeds, Wolcott, VT
Highland Sugarworks, Websterville, VT
Johnny's Selected Seeds, Northampton, MA
Northeast Kingdom Hemp, Barton, VT
Quarry Road Farms, Middlebury, VT
Rhapsody Natural Foods, Cabot, VT
Stone Leaf Teahouse, LLC, Middlebury, VT
Sweet Tree Holdings 1, LLC, Island Pond, VT

The Maple Standard, Burlington, VT
Upstate Elevator Supply Co., Burlington, VT
Vermont Land Trust, Woodstock, VT
Vermont Soap, Middlebury, VT
VT Community Loan Fund, Montpelier, VT
Willsboro Farm, Willsboro, NY



NEW VOF CERTIFICATIONS

Vermont Organic Farmers welcomes the following new producers who have recently obtained organic certification (certified between 3/1/20-6/1/20) for all or a portion of their operation, joining the more than 700 organic farmers & processors throughout the state.

Andre Letourneau
ANM dba Artesano
Anthony Trombly
Barred Woods LLC
Belaski Family Maple LLC
Ben Wilcox Enterprises LLC
Dan Fay
Deep Root Organic Truck Farmers Cooperative
Edward Brannagan
Family Cow Farmstand LLC
Floodwoods Maple LLC
Gilbert Sweet
Jesse Soule
Kenneth Button
Larry Carabeau
Lyman Gilman
Moon Castle Farm
Old City Syrup Company
Patrick Fondry
Primal Botanical LLC
Ricky Emery
Russell AG LLC
Sandy Bottom Farm
Sharpshooter Sugarworks LLC
Shelley Lewton
Summit Maple Farm
Sundog Agricultural Ventures LLC
Walnut Hill Farm LLC

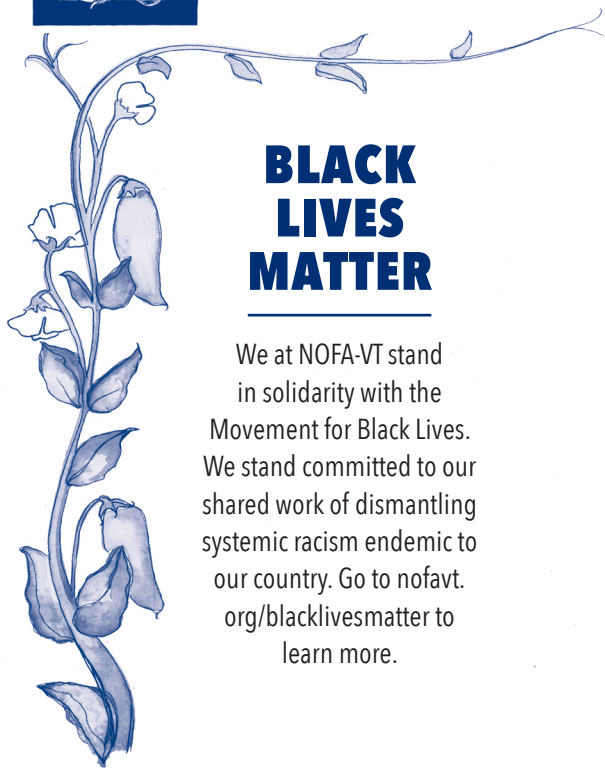
Learn more about the benefits of certified organic, locally grown at www.nofavt.org/why-organic



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BLACK LIVES MATTER

We at NOFA-VT stand in solidarity with the Movement for Black Lives. We stand committed to our shared work of dismantling systemic racism endemic to our country. Go to nofavt.org/blacklivesmatter to learn more.

Enjoy the **beauty & bounty** of Vermont's farms!



Local as usual, safer than ever! Farmers markets, farm stands, and pick-your-own farms are opening, but it's not business as usual! Markets and farms are required to follow state guidance to ensure the safest environment for shoppers and farmers alike. **Please be patient with farmers & market vendors** as they are doing their best to comply with the guidance and still be able to offer local products to their communities. **Get outside & enjoy the farm season!** 🌱

FIND FARMS & MARKETS NEAR YOU: **NOFAVT.ORG/BUYDIRECT**