



Winter 2016-2017

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The Quarterly Newsletter of the Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont

Going Beyond Borders for our Winter Conference

By Helen Whybrow, Roving Farm & Food Reporter

Our brave little state has been through a lot: a 2016 winter of no snow, followed by this summer's drought, an election season full of strife, and now with a new President, worlds of uncertainty about what's to come. It can be easy, in the dark days of winter, to wonder about the larger purpose of one's efforts on the farm or in the world.

Thankfully, NOFA-VT has attracted two international giants in the food and farming world to speak at the 35th annual winter conference on February 18-20 at University of Vermont. Dr. Fernando Funes Monzote, of Cuba, and Dr. Vandana Shiva, of India, will both bring a message of resilience, hope, and the power of people to make slow—but radical—change.

NOFA-VT has not typically looked so far beyond its borders for a relevant message. The winter conferences of years past have focused on themes such as local food and soil. But Executive Director Enid Wonnacott and board member Mimi Arnstein—who leads farmer-to farmer exchanges in Cuba and elsewhere—felt the time was



Dr. Fernando Funes Monzote (Saturday's Keynote Speaker) & Dr. Vandana Shiva (Sunday's Keynote Speaker)

ripe to break open the boundaries of how we think about the impact of our local food movement in Vermont.

For Wonnacott, inspiration came at the Terra Madre International Slow Food Conference in Turino, Italy, where the slogan was “They are Giants, But We are Millions.” The faces of the “Millions” of small-scale farmers from around the globe were represented by some 7,000 delegates at Terra Madre as they came together to raise a collective voice against the corporate “Giants” - for food sovereignty, the survival of family farms, and resistance to GMOs.

I asked Wonnacott how she saw Vermont

agriculture fitting into such a global people's food movement. “NOFA-VT has always had a social change agenda, and at Terra Madre I really saw the power of this idea that all small-scale farmers around the world are in this together,” she said. She noted that there are big similarities between how we farm and market food here in Vermont with indigenous and local food systems all over the world. Not only that, but the same challenges to seed sovereignty, land protection, and market control are remarkably similar.

NOFA-VT was instrumental in Vermont's own fight to pass a GMO labeling bill—the first in the country. Although the bill

Beyond Borders, continued on page 3



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Winter Thoughts from Enid

This is a time of thanks, of reflection, of remembrance, and of resolutions. It is also a time to celebrate the return of the light, seed catalogs, and diminishing wood piles. Just as every year has its markers, for some of us it is the solstice and equinox, or a special event, for many of us working at NOFA-VT, our year is defined by the Winter Conference, and what needs to get done “pre WC” vs. “post WC.” We are in the narrowing days of pre WC, still scheming the “what ifs” of how to spend our time together. While we focus on the tasks of coordinating workshops, following up with presenters, building on-line registration forms, communicating with the food service at UVM to plan the meals, and reaching out to our farmers to source food for those meals, etc... we also focus on infusing the interstitial spaces with opportunities to build community, or congregate our voices around a particular issue.

I spend a lot of time thinking about the songs that we will sing, and what those songs convey. I recently attended a great event held annually, called Winter Tales, where Pete Sutherland and Patty Casey played music, people told stories, and we all sang *Turn*,

Turn, Turn which was written by Pete Seeger and famously recorded by the Byrds. Perhaps they sing it every year, but it seemed like a particularly relevant song this season - A time to build up, a time to break down, A time to dance, a time to mourn, A time to cast away stones, a time to gather stones together. This is definitely the time to gather stones together, and I really look forward to the opportunity to share that sentiment and song with many of you at our Winter Conference.

Our winter has also marked a time to say goodbye to two staff who have moved on from NOFA to spend more time nurturing their budding food enterprises. It is always hard to lose beloved staff members, but losing them to food ventures ameliorates that a bit.

*A time to build up, a
time to break down, A
time to dance, a time to
mourn, A time to cast
away stones, a time to
gather stones together.*
- Pete Seeger

Sam Fuller, NOFA-VT's long-time Farm Services Director, will now be spending a lot more time making and marketing All Souls Tortillas, based out of Vermont Bean Crafters in Warren, where Joe Bossen and Sam make certified organic corn tortillas, with the tagline There's always room for one more at the table. And Amy Gifford, School Food Programs Coordinator, has left NOFA-VT to spend more time cooking, and nourishing our community through Richmond Community Kitchen. Amy and her business partner, Susan, started their enterprise to help people put healthy food on their table, with the tagline Making it easy for you to eat well. So, basically, we lost them both to really good causes. Fortunately, Amy will continue to serve as the Junior Iron Chef Coordinator this year – especially since it is the 10th anniversary of this amazing event!

And, lastly, I want to thank our friends and members for marking the end of the year with a contribution to our annual fund. Your support helps to make our work visible, and we really could not do it without you. In this time of thanks, I am especially

thankful for all of you. We are including the bumper sticker “Organic Matters” with all of our appeal thank you letters, and we will be distributing them widely as we traverse the state. Thank you for helping us spread the word!

I'm looking forward to seeing you in February!

Enid Wonnacott



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.

was ultimately gutted at the federal level, a lot of good came out of it, with several major food brands agreeing to label their products. “The GMO labeling law is a great example of how Vermont is an innovator,” Wonnacott said. “It’s a small place full of people who care can start big change.”

Dr. Vandana Shiva is perhaps best known for her tireless crusade on behalf of seed sovereignty and against GMOs, a message she has delivered for over three decades. Bill Moyers called her “the rock star in the worldwide battle against genetically modified seeds.” She started her center for seed sovereignty Navdanya (“nine seeds” in Hindi) to “protect the diversity and integrity of living resources, especially native seed, and to promote organic farming and fair trade.”

Personally, hearing Dr. Shiva will be a highlight of my year. It’s hard to think of anyone who has more presence, conviction, and boldness when it comes to speaking out for what she believes in.

Dr. Shiva came to Vermont two years ago and gave a talk, co-sponsored by NOFA-VT, at City Hall in Burlington and at The Vermont Law School. She gave a bow to Vermont’s efforts to resist GMOs: “By demanding a right to know, you are demanding a right to live,” she said. Such a bold, clear statement is typical of Dr. Shiva; she is capable of throwing a net over freedom, democracy, civil rights, food, soil and the future of the planet in one sentence, showing me how they are all connected, and convincing me that it’s possible to fight for them all at once.



NOFA-VT’s Enid Wonnacott, at the Terra Madre International Slow Food Conference in Turino, Italy

Equally inspirational as a speaker and global in his thinking is Dr. Fernando Funes Monzote, an agronomist and farmer from Cuba where he is building a food revolution from his bio-intensive 20-acre model farm, Finca Marta. Now, when Cuba is undergoing such change and trade channels have opened up with the U.S, it will be prescient to have Funes give us his perspective.

Margarita Fernandez, who runs the Vermont Caribbean Institute in Burlington, takes groups of people to Cuba several times a year. Whenever possible, she includes a visit to Finca Marta, “a huge highlight.” She describes Funes as “an incredible storyteller, whose whole life has a great arc to it.” Funes often tells the story about his journey back to the land in Cuba after getting a doctorate in agroecology in Europe, and how he was determined that his next life project was to earn a PhD as a farmer, to put into practice what he had learned in theory.

That practice began by digging a well—by hand. Now, with its acres of terraced beds, beehives, living fences, solar irrigation systems, a methane biodigester, and organic practices, Finca Marta is a model of how small farms can use natural resources and innovative production methods to be profitable, pay living wages, keep families and neighbors on the land, and also improve fertility and biodiversity of natural habitats.

“If we don’t want foreign companies to come in and dominate Cuban agriculture

all over again, that means we need to give Cuban families a way to stay on their farms,” said Funes, as quoted in a profile by Nick Miroff of the *Washington Post*. The article points out that Cuba has to import 60 to 80 percent of its food. “Funes’ vision of Cuban agriculture is radical because it’s a throwback. He advocates smart, resource-efficient, artisanal farming as an alternative to both capitalist agribusiness and the disastrous state-run agricultural model...,” wrote Miroff. Sounds like Vermont, and in fact, there are lots of similarities between the way Funes farms and the way many of us farm here.

“Fernando is a super motivational speaker,” says Fernandez. “I’m really interested to watch how the farming movement in Cuba is going to respond to and resist current forces. As they enter the global food movement, how do they maintain sovereignty?” This is a theme that Vermont farmers also care about. “He will be able to talk about the context of what we are facing now as farmers,” she said, pointing out that with the death of Fidel Castro and the election of Donald Trump we are all working in a new and unknown political landscape.

The winter conference this year is embracing a huge global theme of change and resistance at a time when populist movements and corporate power are both surging.

We need more than ever to come together, be in relationship, and find our common strength as a community. “People need something positive to believe in. They feel like the world is out of control and they need something to rally around.” said Wonnacott. At the NOFA-VT winter conference this year, we should get an incredible taste of what that something is. ✨

Hearing Dr. Shiva will be a highlight of my year. It’s hard to think of anyone who has more presence, conviction, and boldness when it comes to speaking out for what she believes in.

NOFA Vermont Welcomes New Team Members

Look who we've hired recently! We're delighted to introduce you to the newest staffers on Team NOFA!



JEN MILLER, Farmer Services Coordinator – After a couple of seasons farming in California and Massachusetts, Jen came to Vermont in 2007 and spent the next five years working on and managing farms in the Intervale, growing diversified vegetables, pigs, and broiler chickens. Jen also spent time at the Intervale Food Hub, coordinating the subscription program and managing membership. In 2014, Jen completed her masters' degree in Community Development and Applied Economics at the University of Vermont with a focus on USDA conservation programs and agricultural best management practices. After a few years providing business planning and educational services to beginning farmers in southern Vermont, Jen joined the NOFA team, excited to work statewide with farmers of all experience levels.



LAURA NUNZIATA, Quality Assurance Specialist – Laura has worked for NOFA-VT's organic certification program since May of 2010, taking a brief hiatus during 2016. She started as the Certification Program Assistant, worked for 4 years as the Processing Certification Specialist, and is now the Quality Assurance Specialist. In 2001, she earned her degree in Landscape Development and Ornamental Horticulture from Vermont Technical College. She lives in Williston where she loves to focus her energy on raising a family and studying traditional nutrition and wellness.



MARISSA WATSON, School Food Programs Coordinator – Marissa came to NOFA after falling in love with the Farm to School program in Georgia, where she got her MS in Agricultural Economics. For the past five years, she has worked as a farm manager for two different farms in South Carolina. Her career began in Washington, DC, with National Geographic and Discovery Television. While travelling to produce a television series, she dove into books about organic agriculture, and became hooked on the idea of making fresh food available to children and families. Marissa enjoys working in the community to connect all kinds of people with local, organic food. She lives in Worcester with her partner and their two dogs, which are always a handful and always ready to play outside.

Sharing the Harvest - more than ever!

On October 6th, 2016, NOFA-VT sponsored the 22nd annual Share the Harvest fundraiser to support NOFA's Farm Share Program. Since 1994, the Farm Share Program has successfully assisted limited-income individuals and families by offering subsidized memberships to local CSAs as a way to increase access to, consumption, knowledge, and appreciation of fresh, locally grown foods.

On the day of Share the Harvest, participating restaurants, co-ops, and food stores statewide pledge a percentage of their total sales or make donations to build funding for Farm Share Program recipients. In turn, NOFA-VT encourages consumers all over Vermont to eat at participating restaurants or shop at participating stores on the Share the Harvest date.

This year, there were 65 Share the Harvest participants and several individual donations. As of press time, \$17,450 has been raised for the Farm Share Program. A list of this year's participants, as well as links to donate to the Farm Share Program year round, can be found at: <http://nofavt.org/events/annual-nofa-vt-events/share-harvest>.



Agricultural Literacy Week, celebrated statewide

NOFA-VT partnered with Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets, and the VT Department of Libraries for the 4th annual Agricultural Literacy Week, November 14-19, 2016. It was celebrated with library story times, community movie showings, and by partnering with the Vermont Historical Society on the opening of their new exhibit.

Agricultural Literacy Week is designed to educate Vermont citizens about the depth of our connection to agriculture in the landscape, environment, and our personal health. People young and old had the opportunity to rediscover the beauty of our state and the powerful role that farms play in its economy, energy resources, sustainability efforts, and resiliency.

A number of community libraries presented the documentary, *Unbroken Ground*, created by Patagonia company in 2016, with follow up discussions by farmers and other community members. The film explains the critical role food will play in the next frontier of our efforts to solve the environmental crisis.

One of the movie viewers at the Waitfield Joslin Memorial Library commented, "Vermont is a perfect example of a corner of the world that cultivates sustainable food raising practices. It is imperative that community continues to support sustainable farms and that farmers continue the practices."

The Vermont Historical Society hosted an open house at the Vermont History Center's new exhibit, "Freaks, Radicals, and Hippies: Counterculture in 1970s Vermont" in Barre, VT.

The exhibit covers the decade of the 1970s: a crucial turning point for food and agriculture in Vermont and nationwide. Vermonters, both longtime farmers and new commune members, began experimenting with organic agriculture, heirloom seeds, locally sourced produce, food buyers' cooperatives, and farmers' markets.

In addition, Grace Gershuny, organic agriculture pioneer in Vermont and author of the newly released book *Organic Revolutionary: A Memoir of the Movement for Real Food, Planetary Healing, and Human Liberation*, spoke about the evolution of organic agriculture and the early days of NOFA-VT.

Secretary of Agriculture, Chuck Ross, has been promoting Agricultural Literacy across the county and stated, "Ag Literacy is essential for Vermonters to understand and reconnect to Vermont farms and farmers." Through these events, we build that Literacy across Vermont and the generations. ✿

Left: Grace Gershuny, speaking at the Vermont History Center in Barre about her book *Organic Revolutionary*.



Above: Historic photo showing Vermonters Grace Gershuny (upper left) and NOFA-VT's Enid Wonnacott (bottom row, second from the right).



BULK ORDER COMING SOON!

NOFA-VT will once again be offering the Bulk Order to its community of farmers and growers of all shapes and sizes. Production Grower? We have what you need! Homesteader? We have what you need! Backyard Gardener? We have what you need! To get an idea of what has been offered in the past, please see the 2016 Bulk Order Catalog (www.nofavt.org/bulkorder). Catalog and order forms will be made available January 13th. Order forms will be due by Friday, February 3rd. Pick-up will be held Saturday, March 4th. All proceeds benefit NOFA-VT's Farm to Community Mentor Program.



Seniors Eat Well Thanks To Farmers

By Michael Good, NOFA-VT Community Food Security Coordinator

Since its inception, NOFA-VT has prioritized connecting farmers growing great food for all people in Vermont, including vulnerable populations like the economically disadvantaged and the elderly. In 2001, NOFA-VT recognized an opportunity to expand their efforts to connect limited-income seniors directly with Vermont farmers through an innovative program called the Senior Farm Share Program.

Coordinated by NOFA-VT and funded by the Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program, the Senior Farm Share Program began as a pilot program connecting 130 residents living at 5 affordable housing sites to one of 4 participating farms. In the 15 years since the program began, it has grown over 600%, improving the food security of seniors and adults with disabilities living at affordable housing sites across Vermont through expanded access to fresh, seasonal foods. In 2016,

946 seniors and adults with disabilities from 61 housing sites across Vermont received weekly shares from one of 17 participating farms.

While the program operates for only a limited window each summer (typically over a 5 to 10 week period), each share pick-up day is a highlight for program participants. Not only do shares provide participants with their staple favorites, like tomatoes, lettuce and cucumbers, but it also offers them opportunities to try exciting new vegetable varieties. As one participant perfectly said, “fresh fruit and vegetables are better than canned!”

And let’s not forget about the farmers who choose to participate in the program. They love knowing that seniors in their community get to eat their produce, and enjoy the opportunity to connect with an audience that they might not otherwise be able to.

We continue to support the efforts of the Senior Farm Share Program because supporting relationships between farmers and consumers, particularly the disadvantaged, matters. Many of the farms and housing sites participating in the program have relationships that span years, and sometimes decades, and they value their opportunity to partner on this program. As benefits for participating in the program, farmers get paid the full price for each \$50 share they provide (the program provides \$47,300 to farms) and seniors receive a weekly share of healthy, nutrient-dense foods to supplement their weekly diets. Each year more and more interest is generated in the program, and farms are rising to meet the demand. As funding allows, NOFA-VT will continue to grow the program to reach more seniors in the state and provide the opportunity for new farms to take part.



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~ Energy Balls ~

These delicious little nuggets are easy to make and would be a wonderful alternative to your usual cookie. Or if you're thinking about eating healthy in the new year, this recipe will satisfy your sweet tooth while providing real nutrition.

Ingredients:

- 1 cup oats
- 2/3 cup unsweetened coconut
- 1/2 cup nut butter
- 1/2 cup ground flax seeds
- 1/2 cup mini chocolate chips
- 1/3 cup honey
- 1 Tbsp chia seeds

*This recipe courtesy of
Erin McGuire, VOF Certification
Program Assistant*

Combine all ingredients in large bowl and stir well. Chill in the fridge for 1-2 hours. Using your hands, roll into 1-inch balls. Store in the fridge and enjoy!



Jr Iron Chef VT: registering teams until January 17th.

Jr Iron Chef VT is a statewide culinary competition, presented by VT FEED, a partnership of NOFA-VT and Shelburne Farms. The event challenges teams of middle and high school students to create healthy, local dishes that inspire school meal programs. Registration for Jr Iron Chef VT 2017 is now open. Go to www.jrironchefvt.org for information, team rules & guidelines, and to register your team!



Above: Middle school chefs work together to roll out fresh homemade tortellini dough for the afternoon heat of Jr Iron Chef VT 2016.

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Golden Russet Farm, Shoreham

photo by J. Silverman

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Crop Cash helps bring \$124,000 to Vermont Farmers' Markets

By Michael Good, NOFA-VT Community Food Security Coordinator

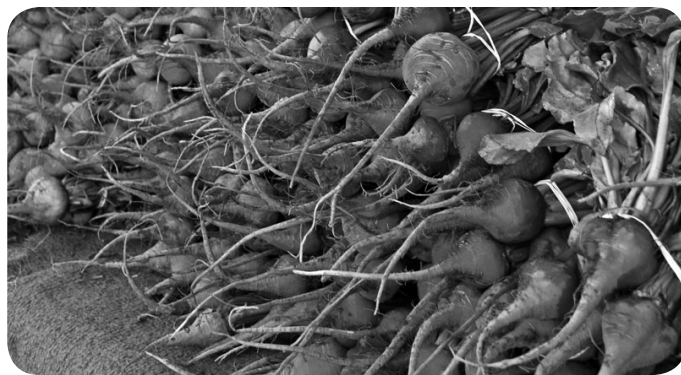
In the summer of 2015, a new currency, called Crop Cash, began circulating through farmers markets in Vermont. The Crop Cash Incentive Program (CCIP) promotes the purchase of fresh fruits, vegetables, and herbs at the 44 farmers markets that accept 3SquaresVT benefits by doubling the value of the 3SquaresVT benefit.

Working with Wholesome Wave and the 44 eligible farmers markets in the state, NOFA-VT developed Crop Cash to encourage the 77,000 Vermonters currently receiving a 3SquaresVT benefit to turn \$10 of their 3SquaresVT into \$20 for food from local farmers every time they visited the farmers market. In its second year, the program has enjoyed tremendous success. Comparing data from 2016 and 2015 (the first year of the program), 71% more 3SquaresVT

transactions took place, resulting in a 59% increase in 3SquaresVT benefit, spent at farmers markets across the state. As a consequence of the increase in 3SquaresVT transactions and spent benefits, 77% more

Crop Cash was distributed and 80% more Crop Cash has been redeemed. All totaled, over \$124,000 in 3SquaresVT benefits and Crop Cash have been spent at farmers markets this summer, a 77% increase from the same period (May-October) last year, despite overall decreases in the distribution of 3SquaresVT benefits in the state.

Before the program began, Vermont had the distinction of having the highest per capita percentage of the SNAP dollars



distributed in the state being spent at farmers markets. With the help of the Crop Cash Incentive Program this percentage will continue to grow.

To learn about the Crop Cash Incentive Program, visit www.nofavt.org/croptcash. 

The Crop Cash Incentive Program is funded by the Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) Grant Program in partnership with Wholesome Wave.



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Fall Policy Update

By Maddie Monty, NOFA Vermont Policy Advisor

Required Agricultural Practices (RAPs) Rule Finalized

On November 18th, 2016, the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets (VAAFM) filed its final draft of the Required Agricultural Practices (RAPs) rule with the Legislative Committee on Administrative Rules (LCAR). Following the required review by LCAR, the RAPs are now finalized and the majority of the RAPs' provisions took effect on December 5, 2016. Certain cover crop seeding deadlines – section 6.04(d) – and manure spreading restrictions – section 6.05(b) – take effect on April 15, 2017. More information, including the final rule, can be found on VAAFM's Water Quality web page at agriculture.vermont.gov/water-quality. If you have questions or comments about the RAPs, call VAAFM at (802) 838-2431.

Pollinator Protection Committee Gets to Work

Mandated by the passage of Act 83 in May, a Pollinator Protection Committee was created and has been meeting monthly since September to evaluate pollinator health and existing regulations, identify funding sources, and develop a state pollinator protection plan to present to the legislature. The committee, as required by law, is made up of ten members, including two beekeepers, a dairy farmer, a vegetable farmer, a tree fruit farmer, a greenhouse/nursery operator, a nonprofit representative, a university employee, a licensed pesticide applicator, and the Secretary of Agriculture or a designated representative. Their report is due to the legislature on or before January 15, 2017.

NOSB Meeting Highlights

At the NOSB's November meeting in

St. Louis, several hot topics were up for discussion, including carrageenan, Ivermectin, bioponics, and the definitions and scope of excluded methods (i.e. GMOs). You can read NOFA-VT and VOF's full comments on our blog at nofavt.org/blog.

Carrageenan is an artificial emulsifier and stabilizer used primarily in processed products. After 4.5 years on the NOSB's agenda, the board voted 11-3 to remove carrageenan from the National List of approved substances. Ivermectin, an emergency parasiticide used in organic livestock production, was also removed from the National List due to the availability of alternatives and the substance's negative impact on dung beetles.

Perhaps the most widely debated question of the fall meeting was whether the NOP should continue to allow hydroponically-produced crops to be certified organic. After hearing from many speakers on both sides of the debate, the board voted to send the hydroponics issue back to the crops subcommittee for further consideration. Going forward, the subcommittee decided to consider hydroponics, aquaponics, and aeroponics individually rather than under the broader banner of "bioponics". The board also passed a resolution supporting the NOSB's 2010 recommendation, which would have excluded hydroponics from organic production. Stay tuned for more



debate to come and check out the op-ed article on page 10 to learn more.

Finally, the NOSB voted unanimously to pass a recommendation that helps to clarify which technologies are prohibited under the existing regulatory definition of excluded methods (GMOs). This vote has been widely considered a win for keeping GMOs out of organic food and farms.

The spring 2017 meeting of the NOSB meeting will be held from April 19th to 21st in Denver, Colorado. ✨



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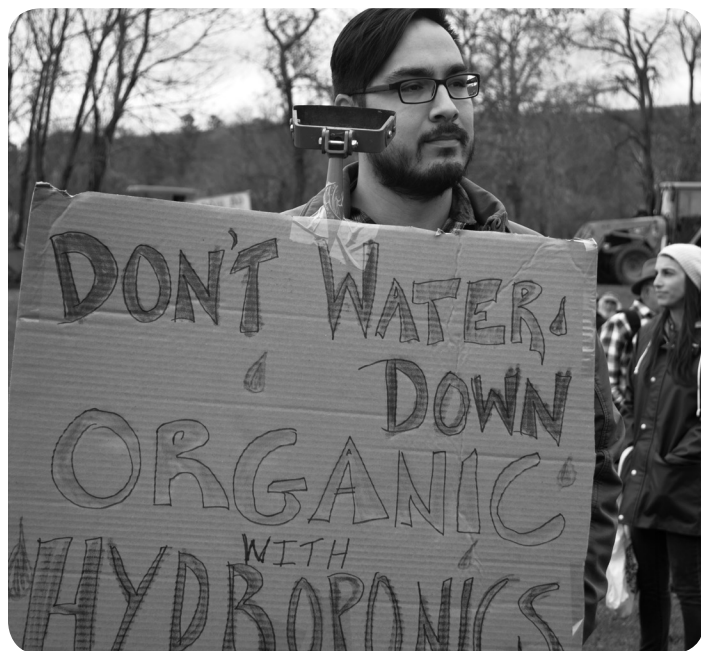
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Organic Farming's Deep Roots in Soil

Maddie Monty, Policy Advisor, NOFA Vermont



Lady Eve Balfour was an early pioneer of organic farming. Born in the U.K. in 1898, she bought her first farm in 1919 and in 1939 launched The Haughley Experiment, the first long-term comparative study of organic and chemical-based farming. Her 1943 book, *The Living Soil*, became a foundational text of the organic movement. In it, she wrote:

“The criteria for a sustainable agriculture can be summed up in one word -- permanence, which means adopting techniques that maintain soil fertility indefinitely; that utilise, as far as possible, only renewable resources; that do not grossly pollute the environment; and that foster life energy (or if preferred biological activity) within the soil and throughout the cycles of all the involved food-chains.”

Viewed in the context of modern industrial farming and the federal organic regulatory paradigm, it is easy to see the debate over hydroponics in organic as a simple story of stubborn, aging organic farmers protecting their markets against an influx of new urban innovators. However, Lady Eve Balfour's words from over 70 years ago are a poignant reminder of just how deep the roots of organic farming

go, and how firmly they are planted in the soil. They also help to explain why the hydroponics debate has roused the passions of long-time organic farmers and controversy within the organic community.

At the November meeting of the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) in St. Louis, board members heard from impassioned speakers on both sides of the

debate over whether the National Organic Program (NOP) should allow hydroponic operations to be certified organic. Among the speakers were several of Vermont's dedicated organic farmers who, like many others, have worked for decades developing and maintaining healthy, biologically active soils to provide nutrition for their crops and to the people they feed. To them and to so many others, caring for the soil is what it means to be organic.

Proponents of hydroponics' inclusion in organic claim there is no practical difference between the biological activity present in soil-based and hydroponic systems. However, to claim that coconut coir and rockwool can replicate the biological activity of healthy soil is of course an exaggeration. These inert substrates used by hydroponic producers support plants' roots but cannot supply sufficient nutrients on their own to provide crops with what they need, which is why hydroponic crops need to be fed with a liquid fertilizer solution almost constantly to survive and grow. To compare the biological activity that occurs in these inert substrates to that found in a healthy soil ecosystem is a fallacy.

Those advocating for organic hydroponics say it shouldn't matter how crops receive their nutrition as long as the fertilizers are organic-approved. Reading Lady Eve Balfour's ideas that were so formative for organic, it is hard to imagine that she would have accepted this way of thinking - and neither should we. Organic was and is still meant to be a system that embraces ecological complexity and “that [fosters] life energy (or if preferred biological activity) within the soil and throughout the cycles of all the involved food-chains.”

Consumers' expectations for organic go beyond simply the use of only approved pesticides and fertilizers. Organic consumers, not to mention the organic standards, also hold the broader expectation that organic production supports biodiversity and improves soil health, something hydroponics do not and cannot accomplish.

Hydroponic and other so-called “bioponic” systems, by purporting to know precisely what nutrients plants need and supplying them through liquid feeding solutions, represent the conventional model and dismiss the ecological complexity organic farmers have cultivated and nurtured for decades. This does not make hydroponics a bad system. Hydroponic systems have a lot of attractive qualities. They can be great for urban producers and farmers with limited land access. They can conserve water and produce high yields. The hydroponic organic debate is not about whether hydroponic systems are good or bad; it's about whether or not they can be called organic.

Sometimes, in thinking about how we got here and where we're going next, it's important to remember where we came from. If you're in the mood for some winter reading, Lady Eve Balfour's *The Living Soil* can help us do just that. ✨

The Rally in the Valley

The Rally in the Valley took place on October 30th, 2016, and featured a 26-tractor cavalcade that started at Long Wind Farm in East Thetford, VT, and rolled slowly to nearby Cedar Circle Farm. "Keep the Soil in Organic" and "Take Back Organic" were among the hand-made signs that marchers carried as they

sang to onlookers. NOFA Vermont's twelve-foot-tall puppets, depicting the sun and the moon, led the way.

Organic farmers and their supporters came from all over New England to rally and protest the federal government's allowance of hydroponically-grown fruits and vegetables to be labeled as "USDA Certified Organic." Among the speakers who addressed a crowd of roughly 250 farmers, food advocates and organic consumers were U.S. Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT), U.S. Representatives Peter Welch (D-VT) and Chellie Pingree (D-ME), farmer/authors Eliot Coleman and Will Allen, and organic farmer David

Zuckerman, who is also a state senator and Lieutenant Governor-elect in Vermont.

Read more at www.keepthesoilinorganic.com.



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WE SPEAK ORGANIC



Ask Callie

Dear Callie,

The other day I told my Uncle Stubby that I bought some organic maple syrup and he about blew a gasket. “What the heck, all syrup is organic, it comes from a tree for Pete’s sake. I think your mamma dropped you on the head!” he says.

I tried to explain how it could be organic, but I was so mad at him about the being dropped on the head bit that I lost my train

Dear Pats Fan,

Your uncle might not realize that approximately 170 certified organic maple producers in Vermont get about 20 cents more per pound for their syrup than non certified producers. That ought to pipe him down. And he might not know that 7 of the 25 largest maple producers in the USA are certified organic by VOF!

That extra .20 cents doesn’t come easily though. Those certified producers have a few hoops to jump through. They have to prove they’re managing their sugar bush for long term sustainability and bio diversity; they have to keep detailed records on

of thought and fell back to talking about Tom Brady and the Patriots.

What gives? How can it be organic?

~ Pats Fan with dent in head

just about everything: boiling logs, canning logs, sales, purchases and so much more. They aren’t allowed to use synthetic defoamers and they have to prove there has been no whole tree harvest in their sugar bush for the previous 3 years.

So thanks for putting your money where your mouth is by rewarding those hard working maple producers with your business.

~ Callie

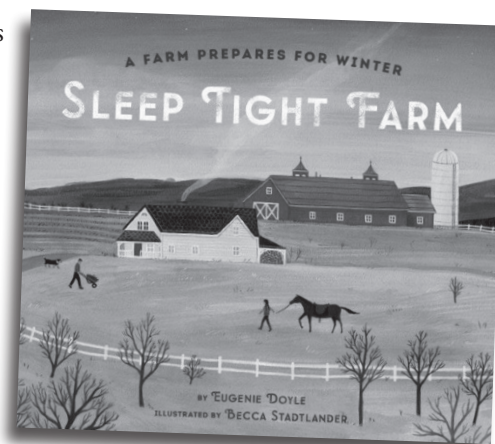


New book by local farmer Eugenie Doyle

The NOFA-VT Farmer Correspondence Program is a winter and early spring letter-writing relationship between VT farmers and classrooms (mostly K-8th grade) sharing what life is like on a farm and what farmers do when snow is on the ground. One of the farmers who has participated in this program for eight of these years is Eugenie Doyle, co-owner of Last Resort Farm with her husband Sam Burr, in Monkton

Eugenie has just published a children’s book, *Sleep Tight Farm*, wherein her author’s note expresses that although farming is a lot of work, it gives back so much joy.

For the last six years, Eugenie has been exchanging letters with Ruth Beecher’s third and fourth graders at Robinson Elementary in Starksboro. Eugenie notes, “The kids are so curious, they love farms and want to both learn more and share what they know. They always sign the letters with love. As do I. We are each others perfect readers. What more can a writer ask for?”





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Farm Labor Management Workshops in Jan & Feb

UNH Extension partners with federal and state organizations to offer farmers in New England an educational series on **Farm Labor Management: Developing Leadership and Human Resource Management Skills**

Farmers and Agricultural Professionals are invited to a four-session series to build farmers' skills in managing their labor force. This series will be offered in two locations: West Lebanon, NH and Portsmouth, NH.

The University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension's Seth Wilner received a federal grant from the Northeast Risk Management Education Center, and is partnering with NOFA-VT and the New Hampshire Farm Bureau.



This series brings in nationally recognized industry professionals to guide participants through the legal aspects of employment law, training employees to create efficient teams and operations, setting clear expectations for daily goals, effective communication and performance management skills, and the ability to calculate the true

costs of each employee, and when it makes sense to hire people versus buy equipment. The series wraps up with how to find good employees and create effective new hire training and job descriptions.

Beginning January 30th, 2017, this series will be held in two different locations: Lebanon, NH and Portsmouth, NH. Please see below for locations and dates:

January 30, February 6, 13 and 20, 2017

10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Kilton Public Library, West Lebanon, NH

To register: <http://bit.ly/2dTouJx>

January 31, February 7, 14 and 21, 2017

10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

NH Urban Forestry Center, Portsmouth, NH

To register: <http://bit.ly/2erUmpo>

\$25 per person, per session (includes lunch). For more information please email seth.wilner@unh.edu or call Seth Wilner at 603-863-9200.



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NOFA welcomes the following members who recently joined us, as well as the following businesses for their ongoing support. Thank you for supporting Vermont organic agriculture!

New NOFA Vermont Members

- Jeffrey Casel, Masonville, NY
- Cathleen Dennison, Hanover, NH
- Maire Folan, Derry, NH
- Bruce Fowler, Fowler's R&R Ranch Corp., Whiting VT
- Phyllis Hayward, Chelsea, VT
- Emma Hempstead, Law Offices of Emma Hempstead, S Royalton, VT
- Edward & Joyce Horowitz, Huntington Beach, CA
- Karl & Lisa Johnson, Happy Hill Maple Farms, Lyndonville, VT
- Todd Lengacher, Putney, VT
- Mary McCarthy, Cozy Hollow Farm, Northfield, VT
- Eric Packer, Wellesley, MA
- George Plumb, Washington, VT
- Elizabeth Sawin, Hartland, VT
- Jeanette Stewart, South Burlington, VT
- Randall Stratton, Spannoccchia Foundation, Cambridge, VT
- Jennifer Swanson, Tomorrow's Harvest, Williston, VT
- Jessica Waite, Middlebury, VT
- Seth Wolcott-MacCausland, Pumpkin Village Foods, Burlington, VT
- Shannon Zimmerman, Life of Pies, Downingtown, PA

New & Renewing Business Members

- C & K Foods, LLC, Rockingham, VT
- Capitol Grounds Coffee, Montpelier, VT
- Castanea Foundation, Montpelier, VT
- Cellars at Jasper Hill, Greensboro Bend, VT
- Courtyard by Marriott Middlebury, Middlebury, VT
- Depot Farm Supply, Whiting, VT
- Franklin Foods Inc, Enosburg Falls, VT
- Green Peppers Restaurant, Middlebury, VT
- Harlow Farm, Westminster, VT
- Hotel Vermont, Burlington, VT
- Ismael Imports, Burlington, VT
- King Arthur Flour, Norwich, VT
- Kinnell Farm, Sheffield, VT
- Lazy Lady Farm, Westfield, VT
- Le Jardins du Roulant, Montreal, Quebec
- Nutricopia, Montpelier, VT
- OMRI, Eugene, OR
- Organic Consumers Association, Finland, MN
- Red Hen Baking Company, Middlesex, VT
- Rhapsody Natural Foods, Cabot, VT
- Rhino Foods, Burlington, VT
- Rockbottom Dairy, Strafford, VT
- Small Batch Organics, Manchester Center, VT
- Smith Hill Farm, Barnard, VT
- Stowe Maple Products, Stowe, VT
- Surfing Veggie Farm, E Hardwick, VT
- The Alchemist, Waterbury, VT
- Tomorrow's Harvest, Williston, VT
- Vermont Farmstead Cheese Company, South Woodstock, VT
- Vermont Fresh Foods, Proctorsville, VT
- Vermont Technical College, Randolph Center, VT
- Wellscroft Fence Systems, Harrisville, NH
- Wind Gap Farm, Pawlet, VT
- Woodstock Farmers Market, Woodstock, VT



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Thank you to our recent supporters

Thank you to all the participating restaurants, coops, farm stands, and stores as well as members and donors that participated in the 2016 Share the Harvest Fundraiser. We were able to raise over \$17,000 to support farm shares for individuals and families in need.

- Farmhouse Tap & Grill, \$1,226 September Special Burger Fundraiser for general support
- William Gefell, \$200 general support
- Hunger Mountain Coop, \$100 Register Donations Program, for general support
- Red House Design, \$92 for Farm Share Program
- Stonyfield Farm Inc., \$1,500 for the Organic Dairy Study
- West Hill Energy & Computing, \$1,000 for Farm Share Program
- Vermont Community Foundation
- Fountain Fund, \$500 by advisor Patricia Fontaine for general support
- Sustainable Future Fund, \$2,000 by advisor Ron Miller for general support
- Acorn Fund, \$1,000 by advisors Aaron J and Barbarina M Heyerdahl for annual fund

Program Grants:

- Farm Credit Northeast AgEnhancement Program, \$1,500 to sponsor a workshop series to help beginning and experienced farmers and food businesses improve human resource skills
- USDA NIFA \$61,836 grant for Expanding Food Safety Outreach Education to Small and Mid-sized Farms in New York and Vermont, subcontract with NOFA NY



"The VFF provided a critical piece of financing for our project on a short timeline, when we needed it, with minimal hassle."

-- Christa Alexander
Jericho Settlers Farm


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.

- Bonaspecta Holsteins, Addison
- Bone Mountain Farm LLC, Jericho
- Cerridwen Farm, Poultney
- Charlton Farm Inc., Benson
- Cross Farm, Barnet
- Good Heart Farmstead, Worcester
- Gratitude Farms, LLC, Northfield
- Happy Hill Maple Farms, Lyndonville
- Hazen Monument Farm, East Hardwick
- Heath McAllister, Swanton
- J & M Ladd Families Farm, Alburgh
- Jake Smith, St. Albans
- Lajeunesse Heifers, Enosburg Falls
- Leibold Farm, Cabot
- Old Road Farm, Bristol
- Our Gold-In Maples, Jeffersonville
- Sunrise Organic Farm, White River Jct
- Sweet Jerseys, Danville
- Vermont Amber Candy Co., White River Jct



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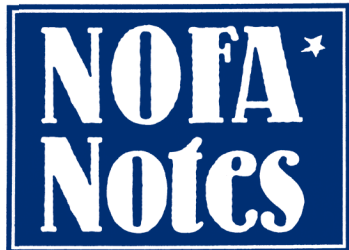
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