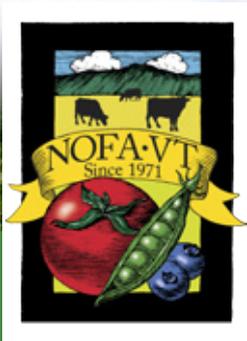


NORTHEAST ORGANIC FARMING ASSOCIATION OF VERMONT

# IMPACT REPORT 2015

Photo by Pennie Rand



NOFA Vermont is an organization of farmers, gardeners, and consumers working to promote an economically viable and ecologically sound Vermont food system.



“I feel honored to have served on the NOFA Vermont Board of Directors for the past 5 years, and am continually humbled and inspired by the joyful dedication of the staff, board, farmers and members. Bringing people together for nearly 45 years to grow and celebrate healthy soils, livestock, food and communities, NOFA-VT is a pioneer in the organic farm & food movement in Vermont and beyond. I believe in the power of this work to make our world better, and I am incredibly grateful for NOFA-VT’s leadership.”

– Sona Desai (outgoing Board Chair)



L to R, back row: Andrew Knafel, Seth Gardner, Steve Paddock, Ross Thurber, David Marchant  
L to R, front row: Sona Desai, Mimi Arnstein, Annette Higby, Kate Turcotte, Lynn Ellen Schimoler

## NOFA Vermont Board of Directors

- Mimi Arnstein**, *Farm Consultant*
- Sona Desai**, *Manager, Intervale Center Food Hub*
- Seth Gardner**, *McKnight Farm*
- Deb Heleba**, *Coordinator, Vermont SARE*
- Annette Higby**, *Attorney*
- Andrew Knafel**, *Clearbrook Farm*
- David Marchant**, *Riverberry Farm*
- Steve Paddock**, *Director, VT Tech Enterprise Center*
- Lynn Ellen Schimoler**, *Retail Asst. Director, City Market*
- Ross Thurber**, *Lilac Ridge Farm*
- Kate Turcotte**, *Cheesemaker, Shelburne Farms*



Kate Turcotte

# WELCOME!

We are excited to share our 2015 annual report to outline the impacts of our work. Our 2013-2018 five-year plan details our goals in three main strategic areas: **Growing the Demand for Organic Food**, **Growing the Supply of Organic Food**, and **Raising Our Voice**.

Since 1971, NOFA-VT has played a critical role in growing a robust local and organic farm and food movement in Vermont. Whether highlighting achievements in 2015 like the number of schools we have worked with to increase access to local and organic food for Vermont's schoolchildren (**Growing the Demand**), or the number of farm visits we have made to provide business and production support to organic farmers (**Growing the Supply**), or the number of people reached at our Winter Conference (**Raising Our Voice**) – we are nurturing this movement.

As a membership association, our job is to elevate the voices of all of our members – the commercial farmers, gardeners, and homesteaders; the educators, students and food processors. We are all eaters and we are all part of NOFA Nation, as I like to think of it, all working together to build healthier soils, raise healthier animals, and provide food for all, regardless of income.

Thank you for being an important part of NOFA-VT, and for your contribution to our work, on many levels.



Enid Wonnacott  
Executive Director, NOFA Vermont



Photo by Anne Campbell

## NOFA Vermont Staff

- Enid Wonnacott**, Executive Director
- Kirsten Bower**, Finance Director
- Erin Buckwalter**, Market Development Director
- Nicole Dehne**, Certification Director
- Stephanie Eiring**, Certification Specialist
- Sam Fuller**, Farmer Services Director
- Rachel Fussell**, Farmer Education Coordinator
- Amy Gifford**, School Food Programs Coordinator
- Michael Good**, Community Food Security Coordinator
- Erin McGuire**, Certification Program Assistant
- Kim Norman Mercer**, Communications Coordinator
- Maddie Monty**, Office Manager & Policy Advisor
- Abbie Nelson**, Food Systems Education Director
- Winston Rost**, Certification Specialist
- Gregg Stevens**, Certification Specialist
- Becca Weiss**, Office Assistant

# Growing THE DEMAND for organic.



We believe that every Vermonter deserves access to healthy foods. We grow the demand for organic food in Vermont by *creating relationships* between farmers and eaters, making farmers markets, CSAs, and farmstands *more accessible* to low-income Vermonters, and providing support to institutional buyers to purchase *local & organic foods*.



**For Jr Iron Chef  
Vermont 2015  
there were:**

- **1,200 SPECTATORS**
- **260 STUDENTS**
- **61 TEAMS**
- **43 SCHOOLS**
- **20 JUDGES**

## Farm to School

We are working towards developing a farm to school program in every Vermont school in collaboration with Shelburne Farms, our Vermont Food Education Every Day (VT FEED) partner. The root of the VT FEED project is the belief that by reconnecting students and school communities to local agriculture and the food they eat, the diets and eating behaviors of school-aged children will improve and Vermont's agricultural economy will grow.

**Junior Iron Chef** is a statewide culinary competition hosted by VT FEED. The annual event challenges teams of middle and high school students to create healthy, local dishes that inspire school meal programs.



# Farm to Institution

Farm to Institution is a term that encompasses Farm to School, Farm to College and Farm to Hospital, as well as other institutions serving the public. We are building consumer demand for local and regional and organic food by strengthening our agricultural economy, and creating a values-based local and regional supply chain.

## IN 2015, NOFA-VT WORKED WITH:

- DAYCARES
- COLLEGES
- HOSPITALS
- PUBLIC & PRIVATE K-12 SCHOOLS
- NURSING HOMES

## TO INCREASE LOCAL BUYING.

“Thanks to NOFA-VT and Abbie Nelson’s mentorship as part of the VT FEED project, Northshire

Grows was able to launch a Farm to School program in Bennington County in 2015. At every step of the way - planning, recruitment, and professional development for teachers, administrators and food service directors - NOFA provided us with great advice, sound strategies and access to the information and resources we needed to get the program up and running...quickly and well. We connected with 20 schools around the region, engaged many in VT FEED courses and NOFA ran several formal and informal procurement trainings for food service directors. Thank you NOFA VT!”

— Liz Ruffa, Northshire Grows



## Farm to Community Mentors

We believe ongoing engagement between communities and local farms is the key to developing a healthy agricultural system.

NOFA-VT has 8 regional Farm to Community Mentors who facilitate links between all members of their community - farmers, gardeners, parents, children - in order to reconnect communities to their local agriculture.



The  
Bennington  
and

southern Rutland  
County Mentors,  
Scout Proft and  
Maria Reade

from East Dorset,  
collaborated with

Poultney High School to develop a “Working Lands Oral History Project of Poultney.” The students interviewed, recorded and photographed the people who work the land in Poultney.

They presented their project at a kick-off event for Agricultural Literacy Week, at the Middlebury Folklife Center, where Director of Education Gregg Sharrow spoke about the importance of oral history by “helping people become visible to one another.” In 2016 the Oral History Project will be expanded to Addison County.

Secretary of Agriculture Chuck Ross underscored the importance of increasing the agricultural literacy of Vermont citizens by reminding us that, “Less than 2% of Vermonters are actively involved in agriculture, so we are losing that connection to our history. Our working landscape is the soul of our state.”



L to R: Maria Reade, Connor (student at Poultney H.S.), Scout Proft, and Janet Chandler (teacher at Poultney H.S.)



Connect  
with  
your regional Farm  
to Community  
Mentor: visit  
[nofavt.org/  
mentors](http://nofavt.org/mentors)  
for contact  
information.

# Community Food Access

NOFA-VT believes **all people**, regardless of circumstance, should have access to local, organic food that **nourishes** them and supports a sustainable working landscape. Our community food security programs support the many farmers and markets we work with who are committed to **feeding everyone** in their communities. They serve as a key mechanism for engaging Vermonters seeking the opportunity to participate in a **just & sustainable** food system.



We grow demand for organic food through our **Farm Share Program** which assists limited-income Vermonters in obtaining farm fresh foods by partially subsidizing **Community Supported Agriculture (CSA)** shares from Vermont farms.



IN 2015, THE FARM SHARE PROGRAM SERVED A TOTAL OF **769** INDIVIDUALS FROM **39** FARMS.

“I have two little girls. We live in Burlington. We have always enjoyed the local farmer’s markets. For some time now, however, I have stopped purchasing fruits and veggies at the market and have opted instead on the large chain supermarkets where the prices and coupons were more competitive.

As a sole parent, those kinds of choices are difficult to make. I’d prefer purchasing from the local farmers, whose produce I truly believe is healthier for my children. But being food insecure makes my choices inevitable.

Or does it?

This morning I opened a letter outlining a new program called Crop Cash. Upon reading it, I immediately grabbed the phone to thank you for this incentive. I am so very excited and truly grateful for this program that will certainly benefit me and my children and their health (I believe that wholeheartedly), as well as the farmers that will benefit from higher sales.

What a fantastic idea! Thank you, thank you! My kids and I are going to the farmer’s market once again! Blessings!”

- K.A., Burlington



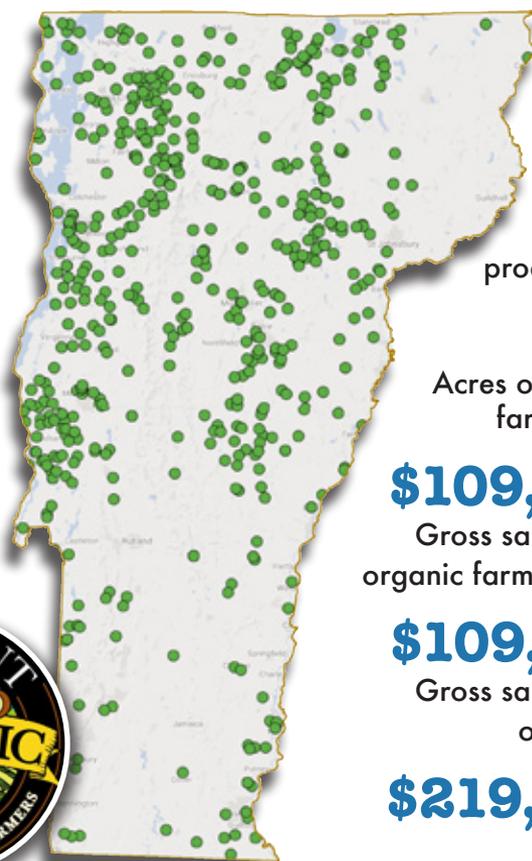
.....  
**CROP CASH** is the double value coupon incentive program that promotes the purchase of fresh fruits, vegetables, and herbs at farmers markets that accept 3SquaresVT benefits.  
.....

# Growing THE SUPPLY of organic.

NOFA Vermont works to grow the supply of organic food while maintaining the **viability** of organic farms. Through the **Vermont Organic Farmers** organic certification program, coordinating a team of **farm advisors** and farmer mentors who work with farmers on business, marketing and production plans, and supporting the **next generation** of organic farmers through our **Beginning Farmer** programs, we are **growing supply**.

## Vermont Organic Farmers

Vermont Organic Farmers LLC (VOF) is the USDA-accredited certification program of NOFA-VT. Our producers are dedicated to practices that use a holistic approach to soil fertility, pest control, plant, animal and human health.



**589**

Total number of certified organic producers in Vermont

**122,825**

Acres of certified organic farmland in Vermont

**\$109,801,305**

Gross sales by VT certified organic farmers (farm income)

**\$109,219,333**

Gross sales by VT certified organic processors

**\$219,020,638**

Total gross sales



## Promoting Certified Organic

In 2015, VOF developed outreach tools to increase farmer and consumer confidence in the organic label. Five short videos were created by Helen Whybrow and Michael Sacca, featuring VOF organic producers telling their stories about why organic matters to them, to their land, and to their customers. These messages are being used as critical outreach tools on our website, by our farmer members, in coops and on social media to help spread the message of the value of organic.

For new farmers considering whether or not to certify their farm, VOF developed a video and a brochure that outline the certification process from a farmer's perspective and clarifies the certification process for those farmers who have questions.

All the videos can be found on the NOFA Vermont YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/user/TheNOFAVT/>



“Kimball Brook Farm has been in the DeVos family for 40 years. Over the years it has changed from a conventional farm to an organic farm which we believe has helped us nurture the land, protect the environment and provide healthy food for our citizens.”

– Cheryl DeVos, Kimball Brook Farm

## Farmer Services

NOFA-VT supports farmers as the foundation of our working lands, local economies and agricultural heritage. We provide on-farm technical assistance and organize educational workshops to grow the supply of organic foods. We foster the ecologically based management of our food supply, while expanding markets for Vermont farms and food businesses.



“I always learn something visiting another farm.”

“The farm tours were extremely helpful for a budding farmer like myself.”

NOFA-VT Farmer Services provided on-farm technical assistance to **73 organic farms** in 2015, providing **120 visits** by farm advisors or farmer mentors.

## Beginning Farmers

Our beginning farmer programs grow the supply of organic by growing the next generation of organic farmers.

**The Journey Farmer Program** provides hands-on experience and support for beginning organic farmers as they move into independent farming situations. Each Journey Farmer is paired with a farmer mentor based on their skill sets, interests, and learning goals.

The **Collaborative Regional Alliance for Farmer Training (CRAFT)** provides on-farm educational experiences for farm workers throughout the growing season, which include farm tours, workshops, and networking opportunities.



We partner with local organizations to run 3 regional CRAFT programs in Vermont: Addison County, Rutland-Bennington Counties (partner RAFFL), and the Upper Valley (partner Vital Communities).



“There’s definite satisfaction in teaching other farmers what we’ve learned, and it supports my own philosophy in that local small-scale agriculture is a sustainable way to feed our communities.

It can be hard for most new farmers to just call up an experienced farmer and ask a bunch of questions. This program makes the networking more official, and it really helps the new farmer make a connection. NOFA is a great resource that brings together all types of farmers. It just makes a lot of sense.”

- Christa Alexander, Jericho Settlers Farm, provided mentoring and technical assistance for NOFA Vermont in 2015. (Pictured above with beginning farmers Taylor Hutchison and Jake Mendell of Footprint Farm)



# Raising OUR VOICE for organic.

## Advocacy

NOFA Vermont is committed to advocating for policies that strengthen our food system by supporting sustainable farming practices, improving economic opportunities for farmers, and expanding access to local and organic foods for all Vermonters.

## Spotlight: Keeping the Soil in Organic

At the Spring 2015 meeting of the National Organic Standards Board (NOSB) in Stowe, NOFA-VT participated in a farmer-organized rally to “Keep the Soil in Organic.” During the meeting’s lunch break, Executive Director Enid Wonnacott spoke about the importance of soil to organic farming from atop a pile of compost trucked in by one of the rally’s many tractors (see picture, right).

The friendly demonstration on that cool October day was a reminder that soil is the foundation of organic growing, and that hydroponic operations (which use a combination of a nutrient feeding solution and an inert growing medium) don’t belong under the banner of organic. Despite a recommendation in 2010 from its advisory board, the National Organic Program (NOP) has continued to allow soilless hydroponic operations to obtain organic certification.



In addition to participating in the Stowe rally, we provided key support in 2015 to a group of passionate organic farmers, securing support for the cause from long-time organic champion Senator Patrick Leahy. While the campaign to Keep the Soil in Organic is not over, we were able to work with Senator Leahy to send a strong message to the USDA that hydroponic is not organic and requesting an immediate moratorium on any new certifications for hydroponic systems.

Keeping the soil in organic is just one example of NOFA Vermont’s advocacy on issues impacting organic farmers and consumers in Vermont and beyond. *Other issues we worked on in 2015 include:*

- \* GMO labeling
- \* New statewide water quality regulations on farms
- \* Protecting pollinators through critical updates to Vermont’s pesticide regulations



# NOFA Vermont Events

## 2015 Winter Conference

NOFA-VT's Winter Conference is the best opportunity in Vermont to gather with other farmers, gardeners, homesteaders and food lovers for three days of learning, inspiration, good food and great conversation about all things organic. Our 2015 conference theme, "Growing the Good Food Movement," elevated the issues of farm and food equity - building a fair and just food system where everyone has access to healthy food, and where the farmers and farm workers who grow that food receive respect and a living wage. These themes were addressed throughout the conference – in our art displays, workshops, social action zone, films, story slam and keynote speaker, Natasha Bowens, who spoke about a change taking place in the Good Food Movement:

“We are changing the soil right beneath our feet. It is not just a movement for good food, but a movement for good.”

## On-Farm Workshops & Celebrate Your Farmer Socials

NOFA hosted 28 workshops and socials during the 2015 On-Farm Workshop Series. These events provide a critical opportunity for members and non-members to learn more about farming, gardening, homesteading, and learn more about the organic farms in their community. Events help us build the base of Vermonters who understand the value of organic food production.

One of our most successful events and socials during the summer series was the **first annual Farmer Olympics**, held at Maple Wind Farm in Bolton, VT (pictured here on this page). There were 14 farm teams and over 70 participants who came out to compete in events such as beet bunching, blind-fold seeding, wheel barrow racing, and many more.



Find up-to-date  
information about all of  
NOFA Vermont's events at:  
[nofavt.org/events](http://nofavt.org/events)



## Financial Information

**Income:** \$1,825,511  
**Total Expenses:** \$1,842,397

Expenses by Category:

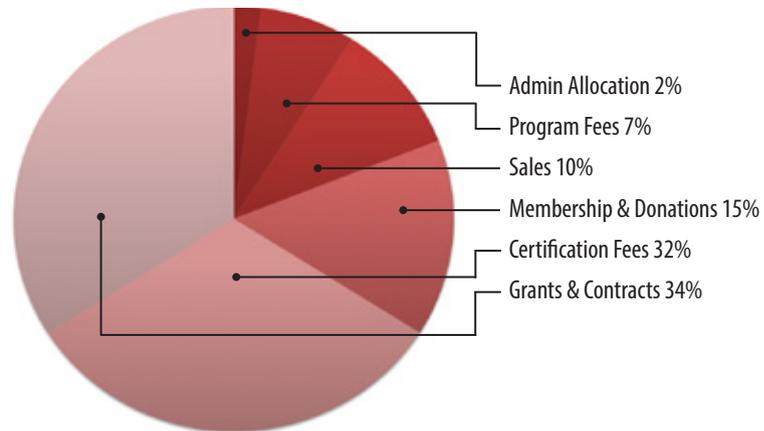
Administration	\$182,239
Fundraising	\$39,656
Membership Services	\$35,398
Programs (see chart)	\$1,585,104

Key Cash & Investments

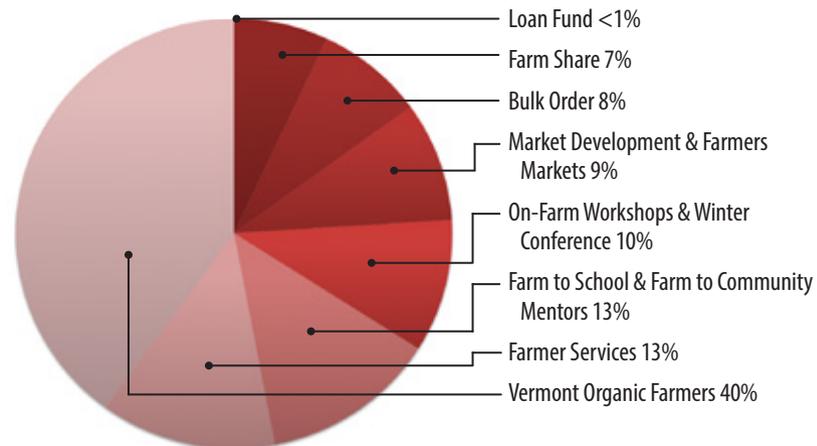
Beginning 2015:	\$2,557,838
Ending 2015:	\$2,574,883

*These are unaudited numbers. A copy of NOFA's 990 tax form is available upon request.*

### SOURCES OF INCOME



### EXPENSES BY PROGRAM



# Thank you for supporting organic!

## SUPPORT FROM GRANTS, CONTRACTS, & DONATIONS OF \$5,000 OR MORE

- City Market/Onion River Cooperative
- King Arthur Flour
- Stonyfield Farm, Inc.
- UVM Food Systems Spire
- Franklin County Community Development/Farm to Institution New England Project
- Shelburne Farms
- USDA (prime award Vermont Law School)
- USDA Agricultural Marketing Service FMPP
- USDA AMS National Organic Program Contract
- USDA FNS Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program grant from VT Department of Disabilities, Aging & Independent Living
- USDA Food and Nutrition Service
- USDA NIFA Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (prime recipient Wholesome Wave)
- USDA NIFA Northeast Center for Risk Management Education (prime recipient U of Delaware)
- USDA Risk Management Agency (prime recipient UVM)
- UVM Cost Offset CSA Project funded by USDA AFRI
- VT Agency of Agriculture subaward USDA Specialty Crop Block Grants
- VT Agency of Agriculture Working Lands Enterprise Board
- Vermont Department of Children and Families
- VT Housing & Conservation Board, Vermont Farm & Forest Viability Program
- Vermont Technical College

.....

NOFA Vermont would like to thank our 1,150+ members, as well as all the individuals, businesses, and organizations who have supported us through their generous donations between Jan. 1, 2015 and Dec. 31, 2015.

.....

## FOUNDATION SUPPORT

- Amazon Smile Foundation
- American Endowment Foundation
- Ben & Jerry's Foundation
- The Coca-Cola Foundation
- Farm & Wilderness Foundation
- The Forrest & Frances Lattner Foundation
- The Franklin Conklin Foundation
- The John Merck Fund
- Lintilhac Foundation
- Newman's Own Foundation
- The Prudential Foundation Matching Gifts
- UNFI Foundation
- Vermont Community Foundation & Funds:
  - Vermont Local Food and Farms Fund
  - Honey Pot Fund
- Ira and Anne Kaplan Fund
- Lyman Orton Fund
- Raymond P and Kathleen (Sullivan) Betit Family Fund
- Advisor Patricia Fontaine
- Johnson Family Foundation Fund
- Nouvelle Fund
- Peter Backman and Annie Christopher Fund
- Advisor Ron Miller
- Hills and Hollow Fund
- Walking Stick Family Fund
- Wholesome Wave Foundation
- The Wurster Family Foundation





# Members are the heart of NOFA Vermont!

When you join us, you'll experience the **profound satisfaction** of supporting local, organic agriculture in Vermont by **joining** together with the farmers, gardeners, and local food lovers in your **community** to build a sustainable food system. **Join today: [www.nofavt.org/join](http://www.nofavt.org/join)**

“NOFA Vermont is the soul of organic agriculture in Vermont. Being a member of NOFA-VT has helped me make connections with other farmers and consumers. Those relationships are invaluable!”

— Adam Hausmann, Adam's Berry Farm in Charlotte, Vermont

