

# NOFA Notes



Quarterly newsletter of the Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont

Fall 2022



Share the Harvest | Organic Dairy Crisis | New Agricultural Education  
Farmer Cohort | Payment for Ecosystem Services



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Cover photo: Farmers at Luna Bleu Farm, a NOFA-VT member farm and certified organic by Vermont Organic Farmers



Dear friend of NOFA-VT,

We recently hosted our annual “Farmer Olympics” celebration—an occasion for farmers to get off the farm and gather for some *serious* competitions. We start with a kazoo rendition of the Olympic theme music, making way for a fence post javelin toss, water bucket relay, and card tower building challenge (using High Mowing Organic Seeds’ packets as cards, of course). The event finishes strong with medals, spirit awards, and an oven-fired pizza party. It’s an event that is simple and glorious, dreamed up by a brilliant lover of all things fun, playful, and community building: Enid Wonnacott.

It’s been an intense season, with high inflation costs and wells running dry, to name just a few issues. (More on these challenges in this newsletter). By all accounts, farmers are tired, spread thin, and up against enormous pressures. And yet, more farmers showed up to Farmer Olympics than ever before, wearing pollinator-themed costumes and doing team cheers to the tune of “YMCA”. People **SHOWED UP**, with eleven different farm teams coming from all over the state. Folks shared cake with fresh blueberries they’d just picked, served with hard cider they’d been fermenting since last fall, with friends they hadn’t had time to catch up with since late winter.

It’s hard not to get stuck in a spiral on the challenges of our time. With organic farmers facing unprecedented economic stress and climate change concomitantly, it can be difficult to remain hopeful. But then I come to an event like Farmer Olympics. Sitting in the cool shade as a misty rain fell, I felt the relief offered by the simple fact of community. Leaning against the barn at Cate Farm in Plainfield that has served many different farming families across the generations, I heard people talking with one another about the new irrigation system they’re trialling, the new market in their town, and their highs and lows. Folks expressing challenges, but mainly affirming how much they’d missed each other. I heard two crews commit to visiting each other’s operations. I felt the palpable sense of togetherness and was renewed by how much restoration is possible when we come together. It doesn’t need to be complicated: a kazoo or two, some pizzas, and a way to remember that we’re in it together.

With gratitude,

Grace Oedel  
 Executive Director, NOFA-VT



# Share the Harvest

supporting NOFA-VT’s Farm Share program

Share the Harvest is back! For 28 years, folks have supported our Farm Share Program, which provides half-priced CSA shares to low-income Vermonters, through our Share the Harvest fundraiser by eating, drinking, and shopping at local businesses during the month of October. Share the Harvest is a win-win-win month-long event. By dining and shopping at participating restaurants, co-ops, breweries, and stores, you’re supporting local farms, increasing food access for food-insecure Vermonters, and supporting restaurants and other food-based businesses—many of whom have been hit hard in the past few years.

## How It Works

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

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

3. NOFA-VT gives \$ to farmers who provide half-priced CSAs for limited-income Vermonters in their local CSA program

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

## Restaurants, breweries, co-ops, & food stores—want to participate?

If you would like to participate in Share the Harvest 2022 or partner with the Farm Share Program, please contact Erin Buckwalter at erin@nofavt.org or 802-434-7152.

## Donate Directly to Farm Share

We also accept direct donations to support our Farm Share Program year round. The program has grown from serving a dozen individual families and 3 farms in 1995 to serving over 800 Vermonters at 52 farms in 2021, and we’ve already exceeded that number so far in 2022 as food insecurity in the state remains incredibly high! NOFA-VT believes that all Vermonters should be able to eat local organic food, regardless of their income level, while also making sure farmers get a good wage for their hard work. Donate online at nofavt.org/donate, or mail checks made out to NOFA-VT to PO Box 697, Richmond VT 05477. Please put “Farm Share” in the memo line.

**THANK YOU FOR HELPING US SHARE THE HARVEST!**



# What's at Risk

## The ongoing Vermont dairy crisis and what we stand to lose if organic dairies can't survive

By Grace Oedel, NOFA-VT Executive Director

I belong to a local CSA that supplies my weekly milk from a small herd of fifteen or so cows. Across Charlotte's gentle hills the small herd grazes—one of the farming practices known for sequestering carbon out of the air and growing healthy soil, while creating wildlife corridors, pollinator habitat, and filtering water. Truly exemplary people tend this land. They regularly host pasture walks to share with other farmers how they have restored so much ecosystem health to their land and soil. They also are incredibly generous and build community within their pricing model, offering milk at a sliding scale range so that all Vermonters have equal access to this nourishing product. They exemplify the “best of the best” in small-scale farming.

Then, two weeks ago, an accident: tractor flipped, broken leg. It was a harsh moment of reality. The family had a brief debate and quickly made the call that after being in dairy for almost twenty years, they would sell the cows. This accident wasn't the main reason, but it was the last straw; dairy farming has become simply too taxing, too costly, and despite caring deeply and being the best managers and community members—dairy simply isn't tenable.

Why is this? Why are Vermont's postcard-perfect farmers one broken leg away from having to sell their cows? Factors surely vary

farm to farm, but the big picture remains the same at present: economic crisis (inflation, fuel, feed all up in cost enormously, while the price of milk is not) and climate crisis (ever drier and hotter years, making hay more costly and scarce, cows harder to keep cool and healthy, new infrastructure demands to beat the heat)—both layered onto a federal policy background that values giant corporate profit above all else.

And dairy isn't unique. Farms of all types are having a rough season—wells running dry, transport costs up to get to market, consumers who themselves have less in their wallets to spend on food. Corporate consolidation—that is, a few major companies gobbling up all they can of food production and distribution—is a pattern that repeats across the whole food system.

I've painted this picture to some non-farmer friends who have replied with some form of, “yeah, true. But it's hard for all small businesses.” Which is absolutely correct, and we should interrogate why being small in any sector is impossible right now. (You don't have to dig too deep—corporate consolidation is ubiquitous.) But also, for two major reasons farming is different, and we all need to care.



First: farmers aren't just business owners. Farmers—particularly organic farmers—are ecosystem stewards. Organic dairy farms keep land open (organic regulations require cows to be on pasture), sequestering carbon, protecting biodiversity, and filtering water. What happens if an un-conserved farm goes out of business? Look no further than the mini storage units recently plunked down in what had previously been a farm field up in Fairfax, Vermont. Then think about that pattern repeated across the state: the ripples of box stores slapped onto any field that a farmer can't afford to keep in production. Consider what this does to Vermont's identity as a pastoral, beautiful place people wish to come visit and live. What it does to the rural community that the farm helped to sustain. Think also of the environmental difference of a store versus a farm field. What happens to the rain that falls on that impermeable concrete parking pad and the soil underneath

it. Consider the pollinators that used to find food for their journey in the hedgerows and the wildlife that came to the pond to drink. While on the surface this looks like an outcome of an economic crisis, it morphs into yet another small piece of kindling tossed onto the climate fire that grows hotter by the year. Or in the hopeful alternative: each small, organic farm that can remain viable protects a bucket of water for dousing climate chaos.

Second: farmers grow food, which, at the risk of stating the obvious, we all need to stay alive. Currently you can go to a box store and buy food brought in from away. But we must not quickly forget the lessons we learned at the start of the pandemic about how utterly brittle massive food supply chains are. How it

doesn't take much to disrupt that food showing up stocked on our shelf. What will we eat when the next disruption happens if there is no local farmer who has been able to keep producing?

We cannot let short-term economic crises exacerbate longer-term climate chaos and food insecurity. Vermont's small and organic farmers feed us, help Vermont thrive, and feed our chances of a habitable planet. Every way we as individuals, (if we are in the fortunate economic group who can) or we as a collective (through state policy and investment), can support organic, small farms in thriving is a step towards a livable future for us all. ♦

**You can support local dairy farms while you stock your fridge!**

Go to [nofavt.org/milk-money](https://nofavt.org/milk-money) for a guide to finding local, organic dairy products.



# Coming This Winter: NOFA-VT's Agricultural Education Farmer Cohort!

By Kayla Strom, NOFA-VT Farm to School Coordinator



Fletcher Elementary students at West Farm in Jeffersonville, VT

The amplitude of benefits that farm to school programs offer students is clear. Hands-on learning opportunities, nutritious foods in school meals, knowledge and skills to grow lifelong healthy habits— the list goes on! But what about the benefits that farm to school education can have for farmers? This year, we're diving into this field head first and equipping farmers with the tools to answer this question. So, if you're a producer that is interested in beefing up your farm to school offerings, the following opportunity could be for you!

Farms that engage in farm to school activities offer an incredible service to our communities. Not only are they helping raise the next generation of eaters, but their efforts help build greater understanding of Vermont's working landscape and connection to land and place. While having farm to school champions that do this work out of the goodness of their

heart is so valuable (we are deeply grateful!), this is a service that we can and should invest in. With the right tools, hosting students and developing relationships with schools can go beyond an act of community service and become a way to diversify farming enterprises and create new opportunities for farms and farmworkers.

This summer, NOFA-VT was awarded an USDA Farm to School Grant to refocus and adapt certain farm to school and early childhood activities to better integrate and serve farmers and producers. A major goal of this grant is to improve and expand farmers' agricultural education services in Vermont. To address this, NOFA-VT and the Farm-Based Education Network (a free member network administered by Shelburne Farm) will be facilitating a cohort of 10-12 Vermont producers for a year-long course to build capacity, knowledge, and skill in offering farm

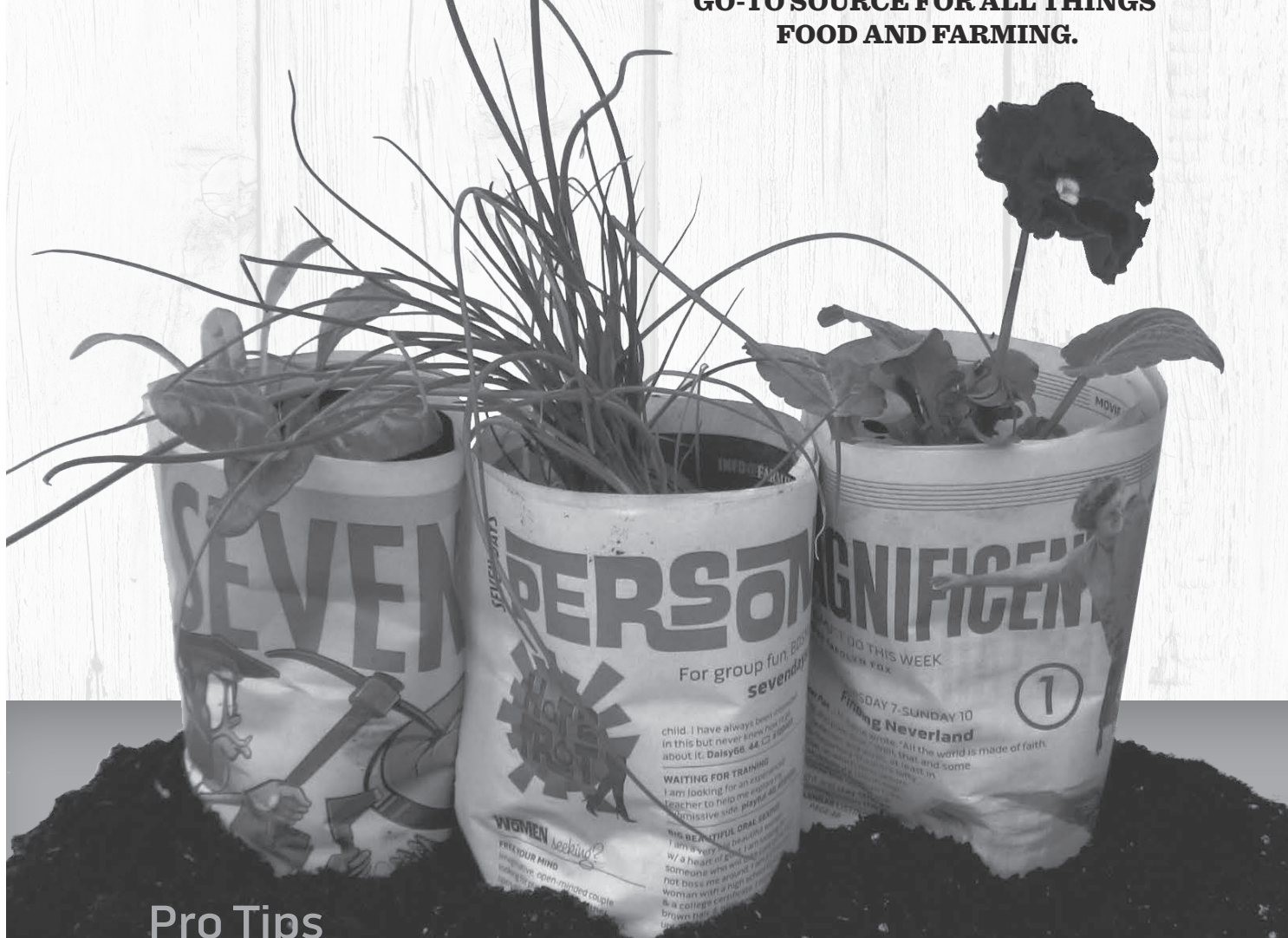
field trips and other agricultural education services to schools.

NOFA-VT's Agricultural Education Farmer Cohort is intended to be a peer-led learning course, which means we will be calling upon the expertise of farms with established farm to school educational offerings to host workshops, site visits, and provide mentorship to participating farms. Each participating farm will be matched with a mentor in their region to address a range of topics from on-farm visit safety and logistics, to developing engaging and relevant educational activities. This cohort is designed to support already established farm businesses. Over the course of the yearlong program, we aim for this course to build connections and relationships among farmers in the cohort.

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# Want to Grow Your Business?

PLANT THE SEED IN VERMONT'S GO-TO SOURCE FOR ALL THINGS FOOD AND FARMING.



## Pro Tips

- Get your message into our popular food and drink section, the Bite Club newsletter, and Nest, our quarterly home and design magazine.
- Growing your staff? We can help you recruit talented, like-minded workers with our print/online job board.

## SEVEN DAYS

Get started at [sevendaysvt.com/](http://sevendaysvt.com/) advertising or reach out to [sales@sevendaysvt.com](mailto:sales@sevendaysvt.com).



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From March 2023 through April 2024, participants will come together both virtually and in person for a series of workshops and meetings, regional on-farm gatherings, and one-on-one site visits with an experienced farmer and agricultural education mentor. Check out the draft schedule below for the time commitment that this course entails. *Please note that this schedule is subject to change. Details will be informed by participants' availability and desired learning topics.*

**Virtual Course Kickoff**  
March 7, 2023 | 7-8:30 pm

**On-Farm Workshop #1**  
April 17, 2023 | 1-4pm | Southern Vermont  
or  
April 20, 2023 | 1-4pm | Northern Vermont

**Virtual Workshop**  
May 15, 2023 | 7-8:30 pm

**Virtual Workshop**  
August 21, 2023 | 7-8:30 pm

**On-Farm Workshop #2**  
October 11, 2023 | 1-4pm | Central VT

**Virtual Workshop (Specific date TBD)**  
January 2024 | 7-8:30 pm

**In Person Course Closing & Celebration, (Specific date & location TBD)**  
March 2024

**Available 1-on-1 Mentorship Hours**  
Spring 2023 - June 2024 | 10 - 15 hours

Thanks to a Farm to School Grant from USDA Food and Nutrition Services, NOFA-VT's Agricultural Education Farmer Cohort is free to participating farms. Mileage reimbursement for on-farm workshops is available. Applications open fall 2022. To learn more, visit [NOFAVT.org/ag-ed-cohort](http://NOFAVT.org/ag-ed-cohort) or contact Kayla Strom at [kayla@nofavt.org](mailto:kayla@nofavt.org) or (802) 434-7176.

## Farmers, we want to learn from you!

Are you currently offering farm to school activities in your community? Are you interested in being a mentor for this course? If so, please contact Kayla Strom at [kayla@nofavt.org](mailto:kayla@nofavt.org) or (802) 434-7176 to discuss! Mentors will be compensated for their time. ◇



Fletcher Elementary students making observations



Twin Valley Elementary student at Boyd Family Farm in Wilmington, VT



Twin Valley Elementary students learning hands-on

# Your Neighboring VERMONT FOOD CO-OPS

Locally owned by 49,450 people like you!

**Last Year, Vermont Co-ops Sold Over \$45.6 Million in Local Products! THAT'S JUST PART OF THE STORY.**  
Food co-ops across the Northeast are working together to ensure access to healthy food, build good jobs and a just & sustainable food system for everyone!

**VERMONT**

- Brattleboro Food Co-op, Brattleboro
- ★ Buffalo Mountain Food Co-op, Hardwick
- Caledonia Food Co-op, St Johnsbury
- City Market, Union River Co-op, Downtown & South End, Burlington
- Co-op Food Stores, White River Junction
- Hunger Mountain Co-op, Montpelier
- Middlebury Natural Foods Co-op, Middlebury
- △ Morrisville Food Co-op, Morrisville
- Plainfield Food Co-op, Plainfield
- Putney Food Co-op, Putney
- Rutland Area Food Co-op, Rutland
- Springfield Food Co-op, Springfield
- Upper Valley Food Co-op, White River Junction

**FOOD CO-OP**  
**STARTUP FOOD CO-OP**  
**NEW LOCATION!**  
**MORRISVILLE FOOD CO-OP**

**FIND A FOOD CO-OP NEAR YOU!**

**MORRISVILLE FOOD CO-OP**  
celebrating 5 years serving the community!

**There's More to Your Local Food Co-op Than Great Food!**

COOP Co-operative enterprises build a better world. LEARN MORE AT [WWW.NFCA.COOP](http://WWW.NFCA.COOP)

# EAST HILL TREE FARM

## Nursery for Fruit Trees, Nuts and Berry Plants

**Fall is a great time to plant!**

The plants you are looking for:  
Apples, blueberries, raspberries, currants, gooseberries, hazelnuts, seaberrries, hardy kiwi and more!

**Located at 3499 East Hill Rd, Plainfield, VT**  
**OPEN: Saturdays 9-4:30 or by appointment**

[www.easthilltreefarm.com](http://www.easthilltreefarm.com)  
**(802) 454-7874**



# Summer Sweetness

Everything starts with relationships. Our movement towards a more resilient future can only be as strong as the connections we build and maintain with one another, and that's best accomplished on the farm. You all showed up for (and hosted!) 6 pizza socials, 8 workshops, and dozens of farm tours, visits, meetings, and more. It's an honor to collaborate with farmers around the state to create these opportunities for connection, celebration, and learning. Thank you to all who participated!



Top to bottom, right to left: Katie Rose Leonard of Head Over Fields Farm in Charlotte poses with fresh cut sunflowers during a video shoot for Vermont Organic Farmers; Rocket, Chuck, and Hunter pose for a photo at the pizza social at Sunrise Farm in White River Junction; Abe Collins educates farmers about the Vermont Rip Sower—a project funded in part through the NOFA-VT Resilience Grants—at a workshop hosted by Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) of Vermont at Does' Leap Farm in East Fairfield; Participants in a workshop on raising ruminants meet the goat herd at Ice House Farm in Goshen; Jeffrey Sherwin, NOFA-VT's pizza chef, prepares topping-laden pizzas for the wood-fired oven at the High Meadows Farm pizza social in Putney.

Top to bottom, right to left: The 2022 Farmer Olympics hosted at Cate Farm in Plainfield were the biggest yet with 11 teams participating; the team from Tamarak Hollow Farm competes in the High Mowing Organic Seeds packet stacking competition; Zay Gamez and Valerie Woodhouse from Honey Field Farm compete in the three legged farmer relay; Tim Sandford of Luna Bleu Farm competes in the javelin (fence post) toss; Drea Emslie of Sunrise Farm wears their medal for Team Spirit; everyone enjoys wood-fired pizza and cake after the games.



# A Spiral of Regeneration

How a Payment for Ecological Services program can become a pathway for a just transition to organic, regenerative agriculture in Vermont

Stephen Leslie, Co-Manager of Cedar Mountain Farm and Cobb Hill Cheese

*This essay is adapted from comments originally given in May 2022 at a meeting of the Payment for Ecosystem Services and Soil Health Working Group, a Legislature-appointed group charged with recommending financial incentives to encourage farmers in Vermont to implement agricultural practices that provide benefits to the broader community and natural resources.*

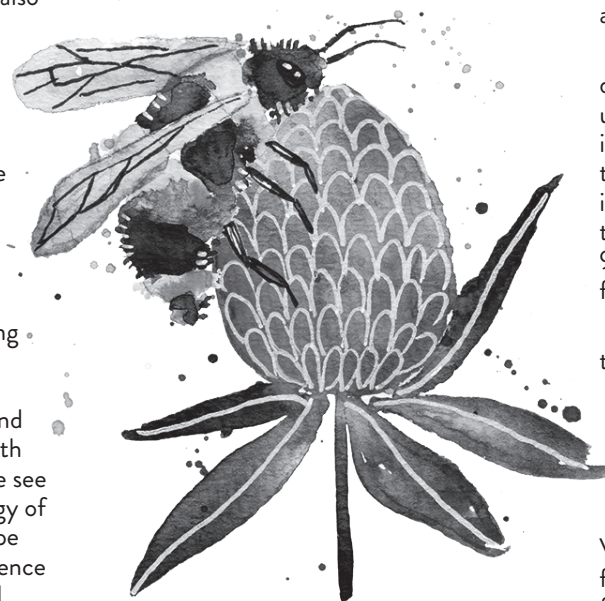
My wife, Kerry Gawalt, and I began farming in the Upper Valley in 1996. Cedar Mountain Farm is a micro dairy of 20 Jersey cows and a CSA market garden. We are also partners in Cobb Hill Cheese, makers of artisanal raw milk cheeses. Other products include farm-raised beef and finished compost. Our farm is located at Cobb Hill co-housing in Hartland, VT, a 23 household eco-village situated on 275 acres of conserved land and dedicated to sustainable living, forestry and farming.

By practicing no-till vegetable production and adaptive rotational grazing with elements of silvopasture, we are attempting to mimic the processes of long-term stable carbon sequestration and storage endemic to the ancient old growth forests that once covered our region. We see all these practices as comprising a synergy of effects to restore the totality of landscape functions in the farm ecosystem. Experience has shown us that if we focus first on soil health—crop yields and livestock health will follow. We want to build more resilience into our systems now so that we can be part of the climate solution rather than contributing further to the problem. We want to help our region transition to a re-localized sovereign food system and ecological economy. Organic regenerative agriculture is not just about farming—it’s about regenerating the entire biosphere.

We Vermonters have before us the opportunity to create a Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) program that is both aspirational and inclusive. We can design a program with the long-term goal of transitioning land management to organic-regenerative practices. But to be successful such a program must offer a “just transition” where we meet farmers where they are. That’s why voluntary enrollment is critical and a tiered approach is essential for appealing to

the widest audience—ensuring the broadest possible on-ramp into the program.

Imagine two 60 acre fields in the Champlain Valley. Both fields have been under conventional management and planted to corn year after year for decades. They are sprayed with slurry, receive annual applications of NPK chemical fertilizer, the corn seed is coated with fungicide and neonicotinoids, the field is sprayed with the herbicides



glyphosate and Atrazine. When growing corn for silage, the maximum volume of biomass is harvested leaving very little stubble. For seven months of the year the ground is exposed. The soils in these fields are degraded and lifeless. They are prone to run-off and wind erosion.

Now imagine for a moment that you can travel back in time 300 years to the same location pre-European settlement, walking into the original old growth forest of the Champlain Valley. Into the cool shade of the towering white oaks and pines that once existed here, the first thing you might notice is that although there are very large trees, there are also trees of every size and age. The canopy structure is multi-level and there are gaps, nothing is neat and tidy, there are snags and lots of deadwood scattered

around. Seedlings rise up from the rich humus accumulating on old logs. The forest cover beneath your feet feels soft and spongy. Your steps hardly make a sound. There are greater varieties of wildflowers and understory shrubs than you’ve ever seen. Liverworts, mosses and lichen top root-rimmed boulders and drape off trunks and limbs. Fronds of ferns grow thick where the shade is deepest. The place teems with wildlife and birdsong. Beavers slow down water and create meadows, and salmon and trout brim the frequent brooks and streams.

But all this biomass above ground is dwarfed by the more than 60% of the total underground. For all the tons of carbon held in the trunks and branches—the real long-term stable carbon was built up over centuries in a substrata of deep humus, estimated to have had soil organic matter (SOM) at 9-12%. That is the carbon bank we are still farming on.

Now back to the present. We see these two mono-cropped 60 acre fields of corn. No matter how good the yields might be, we realize that a once vibrant forest ecosystem has been utterly reduced to an ecological desert—and continues to be degraded.

Now along comes the state of Vermont offering PES incentives. The two farmers who manage the two 60 acre corn fields (Farmer A & Farmer B) are up-to-speed with a Nutrient Management Plan and Required Agricultural Practices compliance, and choose to sign on to the program. In the first year they both plant a post-harvest cover crop of winter rye and receive a base pay and credits.

Both fields are managed by one person operating a 150 hp tractor (except at harvest time, when two people are needed—one on the chopper and another towing the silage cart). After costs, the value of the corn silage is about \$625/acre.

The next year, Farmer A is happy with the cover crop program and continues to grow conventional corn but now keeps the ground protected over winter with the rye.

Farmer B is so impressed with the soil buffering effect of the cover crop, that she decides to enter into tier two of the

program. She gathers a team of TSP advisors, administered by the local Conservation District. Using the Soil Health Principles as a metric, they develop plans for a Soil Health Management System. The program guarantees a base income to ensure a smooth transition.

Her next step is to try growing no-till corn. Rather than discing in the rye, it is terminated with glyphosate and a no-till drill is used to plant. Rather than spreading slurry a liquid manure injector is used, which reduces the need for nitrogen fertilizer and mitigates run-off.

At the end of the year, Farmer B is again impressed and decides to go into tier 3 of the program. A three year crop rotation of corn, soy and small grains (grown for a local bakery) is introduced into the no-till system along with diversified cover crops. Rather than using raw liquid manure, compost is now spread on the field. Perimeter electric fencing is set up so that beef cows can rotationally graze on the crop residue and hardy winter cover crops. The farmer uses a roller-crimper to terminate covers and reduces glyphosate use in her first year by 85%.

This is still a one person operation. The diversified revenue stream of beef, soy, wheat & corn improves the farmers’ bottom line and allows her to take on a seasonal employee. New equipment has been purchased for sowing and harvesting but old tillage equipment has been sold. Ever since growing corn in rotation, the farmer discovers that pest cycles are disrupted and treated seed is no longer necessary. Row crops are undersown with diversified cover crop mixes that can be mown with an inter-row-crop mower. Nitrogen-fixing legumes begin to replace soluble Nitrogen fertilizer, and the return of mycorrhizal fungi delivers phosphorous and metabolites to the plant rhizosphere. Soil carbon begins to increase.

An established riparian buffer at the edge of the field is planted to native species of shrubs and trees to mitigate flooding and serve as a wildlife habitat and corridor. There is a 10 acre section of the field that is a class 2 wetland. The farmer opts to stop production on 5 acres and to begin a program of wetland restoration. Native plant and shrub species are reintroduced. Wildlife, amphibians, reptiles, ground-nesting birds, waterfowl and insects return to the area. On the remaining 5 acres of wetland solar panels are installed and permanent sod is planted underneath. A neighbor brings their flock of sheep in to graze under the panels 2-3 times over the course of the season.

Another 20 acres of the field are steeper uplands. In tier 5 of the program, the farmer establishes permanent cool-season grasses and legumes and grazes 20 cow/calf pairs

with adaptive management grazing. Shade trees that build soil on the steep grades and bear hard mast, such as hickory, oak, and chestnut, are introduced into the uplands to create a silvopasture system. A third of the mast is harvested by a local nut processing cooperative to make flour and to press for oils. The cows are followed in rotation by chicken tractors with 1000 meat birds and 200 layers. With the increased labor and revenue streams two more full-time farmers are hired on.

In tier 6, 3 acres close to the stream and the road are converted into a no-till vegetable operation complete with propagation & season extension tunnels, wash/pack station and farm stand. Nine people are employed in this operation during the growing season and two of them work year round. All the farmworkers earn a Vermont Living Wage and are currently in negotiation with Farmer B

**“It’s not a matter of getting rid of cows—it’s a matter of adding back in everything else.”**

to transform the farm into a worker-owned cooperative.

The farmers introduce alley cropping with perennial fruit and nut shrubs and trees into the no-till garden. A pollinator hedge separates it from the larger fields. The no-till garden grosses \$100,000/acre.

Meanwhile Farmer A is still growing corn silage with a rye cover crop but he has been watching the progress on the other side of the fence and decides to take the leap to no-till. His regenerative journey has begun.

Farmer B feels like she is just getting started. Even in a drought year, her field holds water and remains productive. When the next door field is inundated with too much rain, her 60 acres are able to infiltrate it all. Next steps include the establishment of a 5 acre food forest and digging a spring fed pond

to enhance wildlife and augment irrigation capacity.

Farmer B’s 60 acre field may not have the fully restored landscape function of an ancient old growth forest, but it is well on its way to achieving high quality soil health, enhanced biodiversity, meaningful employment and a bounty of nutrient dense food products to feed the local community.

A quarter of all terrestrial life lives in soil. Seven times more carbon is stored in soil than in all the above ground plants and atmosphere. A third of worldwide annual emissions is sequestered in soil. When soil biodiversity is restored, every living being reaps the benefit. By offering incentives and technical assistance, the 80% of VT Ag acres currently devoted to dairy can be justly transitioned to produce not only dairy but a wide diversity of annual and perennial crops. It’s not a matter of getting rid of cows—it’s a matter of adding back in everything else. This kind of farming is management-intensive but that can translate into an era of opportunity for future farmers.

But for this to happen we need to elevate healthy soil as the essential ingredient to solving the climate and ecological crisis. An aspirational and inclusive PES program can protect this most precious “public good” by offering transformational incentives for the adoption of Soil Health Management Systems.

When we engage in land restoration, we begin to repair ourselves.

Farmer B has touched off a spiral of regeneration and repair on her land by farming in a way that restores and improves the habitat for every living species while she produces and harvests the materials necessary to build a prosperous human community.

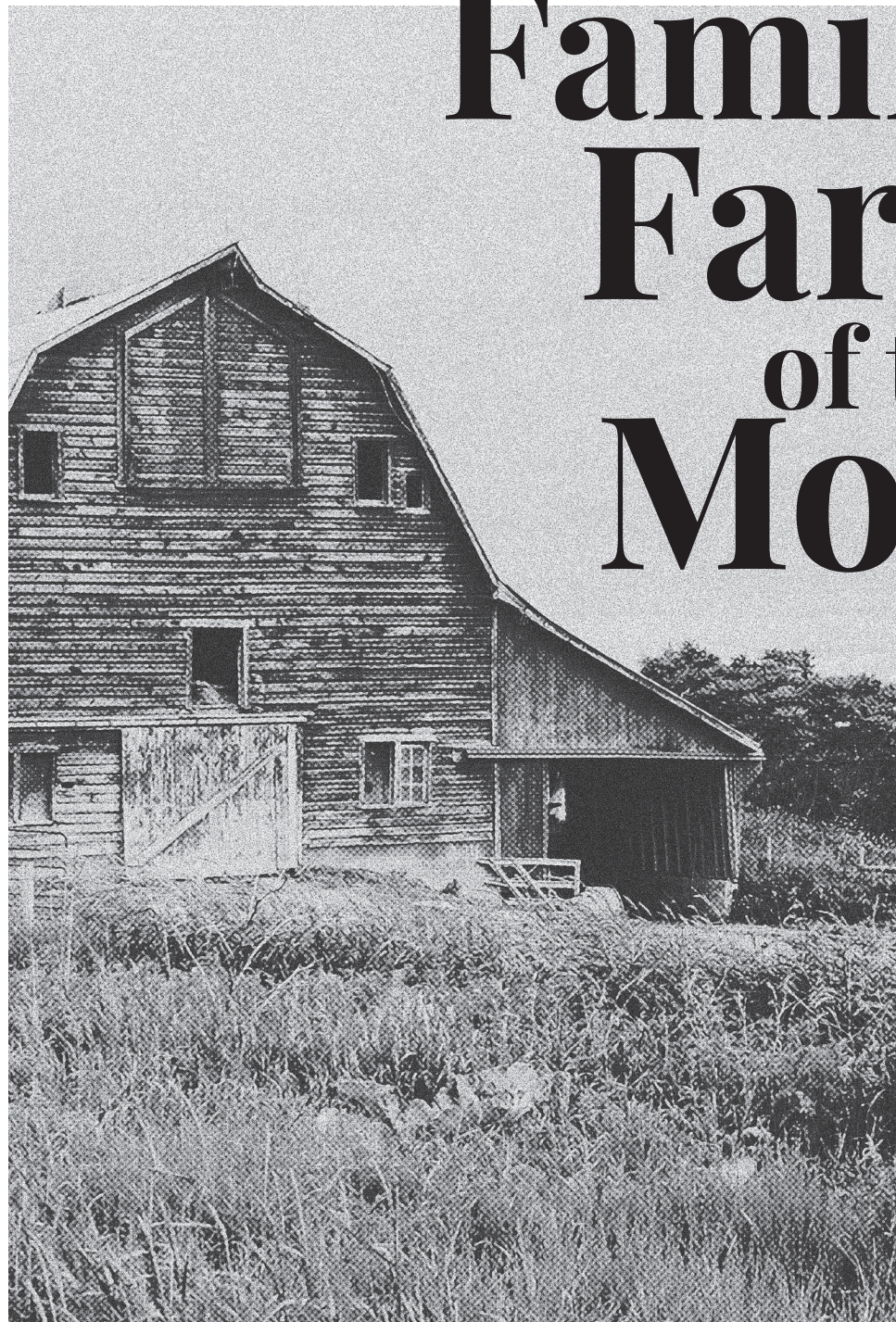
Climate scientists the world over have declared that a transition to regenerative land management and habitat restoration must begin now in order to stave off the worst effects of irreversible abrupt climate change. A PES program that incentivizes soil health protection and restoration may be our last, best chance to pass on a livable planet to the next generation.

Vermont can lead the way!

*Stephen Leslie co-manages Cedar Mountain Farm & Cobb Hill Cheese, both located at Cobb Hill Co-housing in Hartland, VT. Stephen regularly attends Vermont’s Soil Health & PES Working Group meetings as a member of the public, and collaborates with other farmers, service providers, and advocates, including NOFA-VT, to ensure an outcome that supports thriving farms and ecosystems. ♦*



# Vermont Family Farmer of the Month



**By Kayla Strom, Farm to School Coordinator & Vermont Family Farmer of the Month Award Administrator**

Every month, the Vermont Family Farmer of the Month Award grants between \$10,000 and \$12,000 to exemplary farms across the state that contribute to a more resilient agricultural landscape and demonstrate environmental stewardship through their sustainable practices and supports an innovative project that will improve the farm's viability.

Congratulations to Northwind Farm, Valley Dream Farm, and Understory Farm for your incredible environmental stewardship and work to create a more resilient farm and food system in Vermont.

Applications for the Vermont Family Farmer of the Month are open three times a year. Applications for March - June 2023 awards will open in December and are due by the end of January. To learn more, visit [www.vermontfamilyfarmeraward.org](http://www.vermontfamilyfarmeraward.org).



**Northwind Farm - May 2022**

Emery and Geordie Lynd started Northwind Farm 12 years ago on the hillsides of Cabot, Vermont with a passion for tending to land and caring for their cows and pigs. In everything Emery and Geordie do on their farm, they strive to maximize the positive effects farming can have on the land. For this reason, their intensively managed, rotational grazing system is at the center of their operation.

Northwind Farm was awarded \$12,000 in May to construct an addition onto their main barn, connecting the farm's extensive pasture lane system with their livestock housing and milking facilities. With this new system, the cows will be able to choose to go to pasture as they leave the milking parlor instead of waiting for the whole herd to finish and go to pasture as a group. This means the cows will spend significantly more time grazing and spreading their own manure on the pastures.



**Valley Dream Farm - June 2022**

Valley Dream Farm is home to three generations who collectively care for the land in Cambridge, Vermont. Anne and Joseph Tisbert own and manage the farm while three of their four children and their families are integrated either in Valley Dream Farm directly or have their own farm enterprises on the land. Valley Dream Farm grows plant starts and vegetables and hosts farm dinners.

Valley Dream Farm was awarded \$12,000 in June to install a septic system for their soon to be on-farm certified kitchen. The certified kitchen will be a space for Valley Dream Farm to process value-added products, provide space for community members to rent, and will support the farm's ability to expand their Farm to Table dinners. Completion of this project will support current and future agricultural successes and further actualize Anne and Joe's original vision of deepening the interconnectedness of land, animals, and people while building up Vermont's agricultural community.



**Understory Farm - July 2022**

In 2014, when Jessie and Gregory Witscher started Understory Farm, they sold pork and vegetables at their farm stand and local farmers market. At that time, Jessie brought bouquets of cut flowers from her garden to their market stands, which quickly attracted their customers' interest. Driven by popular demand, Jessie and Gregory have since focused their farming efforts on growing flowers using organic practices.

Understory Farm was awarded \$12,000 in July to install an irrigation system by restoring an existing pond and upgrading to a solar water pump. Currently, Understory Farm isn't able to reliably irrigate as much as they need to in order to meet their production and sales goals due to an outdated farm well for field irrigation and the cost of using municipal water in their high tunnels. Completing this project will create security for business growth and improve their work-life balance so they can spend less time problem solving current water issues and moving irrigation lines, and more time doing what they love—bringing joy and beauty to their community, growing their local economy, and working with the land. ♦

**Applications are open three times a year. To learn more, visit [vermontfamilyfarmeraward.org](http://vermontfamilyfarmeraward.org)**



## A Warm Welcome to our New Staff!

The NOFA-VT and Vermont Organic Farmers teams keep growing! Welcome Cailey and Jenn!



### Cailey Gibson

Development Manager

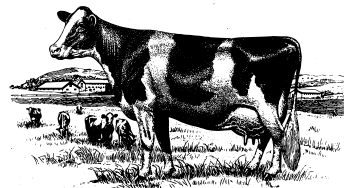
Cailey grew up in a small town in central Vermont, where her family tended a large garden and raised chickens. Her first job after college was as a farm educator. She is excited to be joining the NOFA-VT team to strengthen the intersection between food systems, community health, and ecological sustainability. Most recently, she managed fundraising and partnership efforts at the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy in the San Francisco Bay Area, helping connect people to parks. Prior to that, she worked for domestic and international public health projects, including stints in Mali and Nepal. Cailey graduated from Carleton College and has a Master of Public Health degree from UC Berkeley. She loves time spent outdoors with her husband and daughter, whether that's hiking and camping, river rafting, skiing or digging in her backyard garden.



### Jenn Megyesi

Certification Specialist

A native Vermonter, Jenn grew up in Addison County, with two younger sisters and a menagerie of chickens, ducks, ponies, dogs, and cats. After a year-abroad in Brazil as a high school student, she realized that her previous choice of college to become a veterinary nurse would not be the end, but a path to a master's in wildlife biology and conservation. After living and working both as a refuge manager and biologist for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for 12 years in Hawaii, Maine, and Massachusetts, she returned to Vermont to farm. Now in the 23rd year, Fat Rooster Farm is home for her and, once again, a menagerie of heritage breed turkeys, chickens, guinea hens, peacocks, and organic vegetables and fruits. Her enthusiasm for finding solutions to food insecurity through sustainable agricultural practices is what excites her about joining the team at NOFA-VT and VOF.



## Did you know NOFA-VT accepts gifts of stock?

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

For more information about how to direct gifts of stock, bonds, and mutual funds, please visit [NOFAVT.ORG/GIVE-STOCK](http://NOFAVT.ORG/GIVE-STOCK) or contact our Development & Engagement Director, Erin Buckwalter at 802-434-7152 or [erin@nofavt.org](mailto:erin@nofavt.org)



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## We're Here to Support Farm Viability

As we head into the busy fall preceding the intensive winter planning season, remember that NOFA-VT offers services and technical assistance that support farmers at all stages of development to reach their business and quality of life goals.

Farmers can access services including, but not limited to:

- Business planning
- Transfer planning
- Cash flow and enterprise analysis
- Marketing support
- HACCP plan development
- Grazing & pasture management technical assistance
- Organic transition support

Plus, stay tuned for more information about how to connect with us to focus on soil health and climate resilience!

To get the conversation started, please contact Jen, NOFA-VT Farmer Services Director, at [jen@nofavt.org](mailto:jen@nofavt.org) or 802-434-7159.



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

A warm welcome to the following members who joined us or renewed their membership in the third quarter of 2022:

### NEW MEMBERS

Amanda Lott, Trumansburg, NY  
 Cailey Gibson, Burlington, VT  
 Carolyn Chauvin, J Raymond Chauvin & Michelle Langmaid, Hyde Park, VT  
 Cody Ouimette, Alburgh, VT  
 Dominic Paolantonio, Bristol, VT  
 Erika Goldstein, Newfane, VT  
 Ginny Paton, Charlotte, VT  
 Jennifer Megyesi, S Royalton, VT  
 Jennifer Strickler, Burlington, VT  
 Lacie Smith, Danville, VT  
 Letitia Allyson Wulff, Portland, OR  
 Lindsey Berk, Brandon, VT  
 Mitzi & Nicholas Motley, Corinth, VT  
 Pamela Mischen, Braintree, VT  
 Phoebe Vaughan, New Haven, VT  
 R Kirsten Tyler, Westford, VT  
 Steve Pecsok, Cornwall, VT  
 Tom Lisak, Punxsutawney, PA

### NEW & RENEWING BUSINESS MEMBERS

Bailey Farm, Craftsbury, VT  
 Bordertown Farm, Brattleboro, VT  
 Crooked Sapling Farm, Newark, VT

Doolittle Farm, Shoreham, VT  
 Earth Sky Time Farm, Manchester Center, VT  
 Elysian Fields, Shoreham, VT  
 Farm on the River, Springfield, VT  
 Flying Dog Farm, Tunbridge, VT  
 Franklin Foods Inc, Enosburg Falls, VT  
 Grateful Morning Farm, Shaftsbury, VT  
 Green Heart Farm, Springfield, VT  
 Green Mountain Feeds, Bethel, VT  
 Green Mountain Organics, Lyndonville, VT  
 Green Mountain Spinnery, Putney, VT  
 Ismael Imports, LLC / Boswellnes, Colchester, VT  
 Jim Williams, Charlotte, VT  
 King Arthur Baking Company, White River Junction, VT  
 Kumm and Sons, East Clarendon, VT  
 Latchis Arts, Brattleboro, VT  
 Luce Farm LLC, Killington, VT  
 Maple Valley Farm, Woodstock, VT  
 Maple Valley Jerseys, Enosburg Falls, VT  
 Marandale Farm, Westford, VT  
 Meristem Farms LLC, St Albans, VT  
 MG Coffee Roasting Enterprises LLC, White River Jct, VT  
 Mocha Joe's Roasting Company, Brattleboro, VT

Morrison's Custom Feeds, Barnet, VT  
 Neighborhood Roots Food Collective, Guilford, VT  
 North Branch Coffee LTD, Montpelier, VT  
 Northwoods Apiaries, Westfield, VT  
 O Bread Bakery, Shelburne, VT  
 Pangea Farm LLC, Shoreham, VT  
 Pumpkin Village Foods, Burlington, VT  
 Putney School, Putney, VT  
 Reinhart Food Service, North Springfield, VT  
 Rock Bottom Dairy, Strafford, VT  
 Sandiwood Farm, Wolcott, VT  
 Seize the Day Farm, Tunbridge, VT  
 Stone Leaf Teahouse, LLC, Middlebury, VT  
 Sugarsnap, South Burlington, VT  
 The Sugarman of Vermont, Inc., Hardwick, VT  
 True North Granola LLC, Brattleboro, VT  
 Vermont Bean Crafters Co, Waitsfield, VT  
 Vermont Tortilla Company, Shelburne, VT  
 VT Artisan Coffee & Tea Co, Waterbury Center, VT  
 Yellow Farmhouse Inn, Waitsfield, VT



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## New Organic Certifications

Vermont Organic Farmers welcomes the following new producers who have recently obtained organic certification for all or a portion of their operation, joining the almost 800 organic farmers & processors throughout the state.

**Cody Ouimette**  
**Green Mountain Organics**  
**Nelson Farms Organics LLC**  
**Nomad Farm**

**Robert Ovitt Jr**  
**Scott Farm Inc.**  
**Sweet Pickins Farm**  
**Sweet Roots Farm LLC**



Learn more about the benefits of certified organic, locally grown at [VERMONTORGANIC.ORG/WHY-ORGANIC](http://VERMONTORGANIC.ORG/WHY-ORGANIC)





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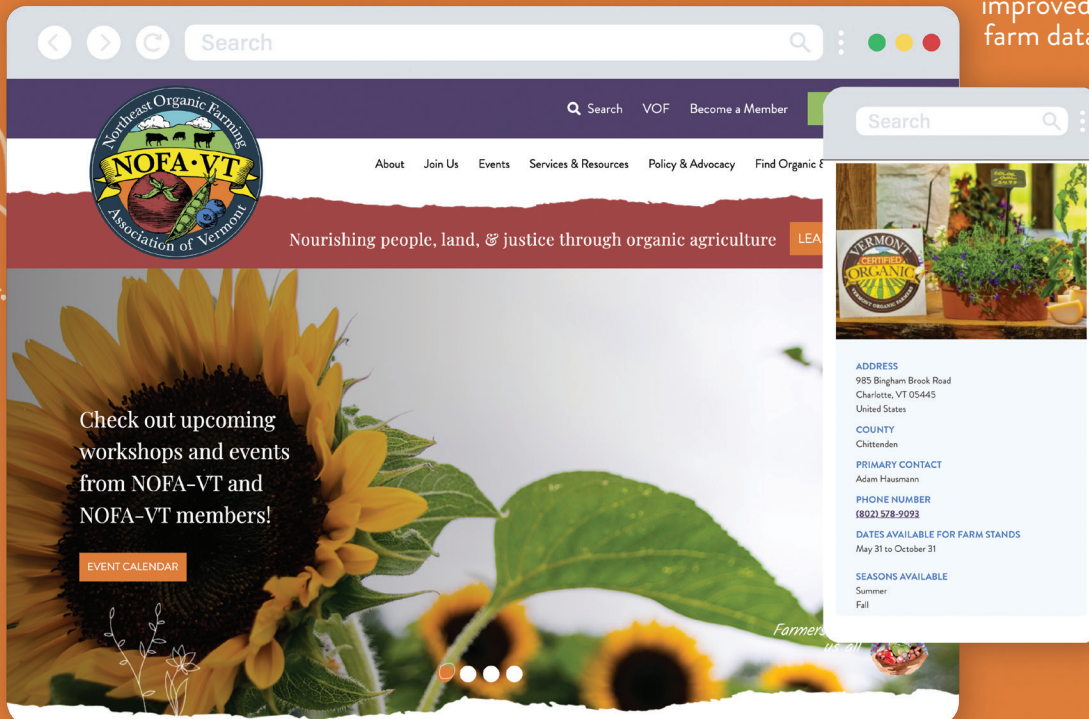


## Wishing you autumn abundance!

May this season bring  
you a bountiful harvest,  
connection, and joy.

## NOFA-VT Has a New Website!

Go to **NOFAVT.ORG**  
to find services, updates,  
event and classified  
listings, and our new and  
improved searchable  
farm database.



(Plus, check out **VERMONTORGANIC.ORG**, our new site just for the specific needs of VOF-certified farms.)