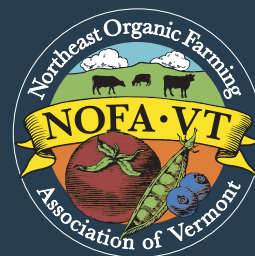


NOFA Notes



Quarterly newsletter of the Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont

• Winter 2023



2024 Winter Conference Preview | Farm Bill Updates | Winter Farmers Markets | The Importance of Solidarity and Organizing

NOFA-VT

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Photos, left to right, top to bottom: NOFA-VT staff visit Intervale Community Farm in Burlington; A happy chicken at New Village Farm in Shelburne (photo by New England Food and Farm); A sandwich from King Arthur Baking in Norwich, the sale of which helped support NOFA-VT's Farm Share Program through our Share the Harvest Fundraiser; Maddie Kempner, NOFA-VT's Policy Director, talks about the impact of the potential government shut down and farm bill expiration on WCAX news.



Dear friend of NOFA-VT,

I hope you are reading this newsletter as snow falls on the ground and you have a warm mug of tea in your hand. May the nourishment from winter rest be deep and restorative.



After a truly challenging year, we are thrilled to invite you to take time to connect, reflect, imagine, and build power for transformative change together at our beloved Winter Conference, coming up on February 17th and 18th at the University of Vermont (UVM) in Burlington. This year our conference theme is "Working Upstream."

We are delighted to shift our collective efforts from harm mitigation during this very rugged year to thinking upstream, envisioning the transformation that is possible when we come together and address the roots of the food system. Together at the conference, we gain sustenance, generate new ideas, find hope, give gifts, and build solidarity and power to nourish an agriCULTURE that works for people and the planet.

Toni Cade Bambara says that the job of a writer is to make the revolution irresistible. I would add that farmers help make the revolution DELICIOUS. I'm looking forward to feasting on local cheese and veggies at the snack table, listening to inspiring speakers in the ballroom, laughing with old friends while making community art, taking notes on a new seed variety for next season, getting involved in ongoing political action, and raising my voice in song with good company. All of these things help me feel rooted, strengthened, and connected—and allow me to access the part of myself that knows that true transformation is always possible. We are the ones we've been waiting for.

I hope you will join us at UVM (or if you prefer, tune in remotely for select portions of the day!).

May tending to our roots and growing together help support a thriving, just, and resilient organic future for all here in Vermont.

As ever, don't hesitate to reach out to me at grace@nofavt.org.

Warmly,

Grace Oedel
Executive Director, NOFA-VT

NOFA-VT Winter Conference

FEBRUARY 17 & 18, 2024 | BURLINGTON, VERMONT

live-streamed option available
keynote and workshops on Saturday, 2/17 | intensive workshops on Sunday, 2/18



Each year, the NOFA-VT Winter Conference provides a valuable opportunity for farmers, gardeners, land stewards, educators, students, policy-makers, and other food system activists to share ideas, resources, and skills.

After a rugged year of extreme weather and crisis for Vermont's farmers, this year's conference will provide a space to focus on transformational work. Together, let's shift our attention upstream and focus on food system issues at their source to create more holistic change. The main conference will take place on Saturday, February 17, at the University of Vermont (UVM) in Burlington, with some virtual live-streamed offerings. On Sunday, February 18, we will deep-dive into singular topics during all-day intensive workshops, hosted in-person only at UVM.



A sneak peek of some of this year's offerings...



Keynote Speaker: Reginaldo Haslett-Marroquin



Reginaldo Haslett-Marroquin has spent a lifetime working toward transformative food systems change. He began his work in his native Guatemala, collaborating on economic development projects with Indigenous communities while serving as a United Nations consultant and advisor to the World Council of Indigenous Peoples. After moving to the U.S., he continued his support of responsible, land-based economic development by helping launch several food and land-centric social enterprises and co-founding the Fair Trade Federation. Following this, he dove deeper into regenerative agriculture, and today he is one of the foremost leaders and innovators on climate-smart, scalable agriculture. He is the founder and former Executive Director of the Regenerative Agriculture Alliance, a nonprofit working on a scalable, systems-level regenerative poultry solution that restores ecological balance, produces nourishing food, and puts money back into the hands of farmers and food chain workers. They are developing a completely new supply chain that integrates grassroots organizing of farmers with physical infrastructure and other regeneratively stacked enterprises. Today he lives in Northfield, MN, as the co-founder and CEO of Tree-Range Farms, an aggregator, marketer, and distributor for the regenerative poultry products.

Workshops



Join us for over 40 workshops offerings on Saturday! There is something for everyone passionate about a just and verdant local food system, from commercial farmers to gardeners, policy wonks to grassroots organizers, and food system professionals to home cooks. Dig into topics like **Plant Propagation, Native Food Plants for Pollinators and People, Maple Syrup Business Planning, Farm Financials 101, Fermentation Demystified: Make Sauerkraut**, and tons more!

Connection



Winter Conference is about learning, but it's also a chance to connect, reflect, and have fun. Mingle with acquaintances new and old, sign your little ones up for our on-site **Children's Conference**, peruse the **exhibitors fair**, meet up with folks at an **affinity space** or **roundtable discussion**, participate in the **seed swap**, and more!

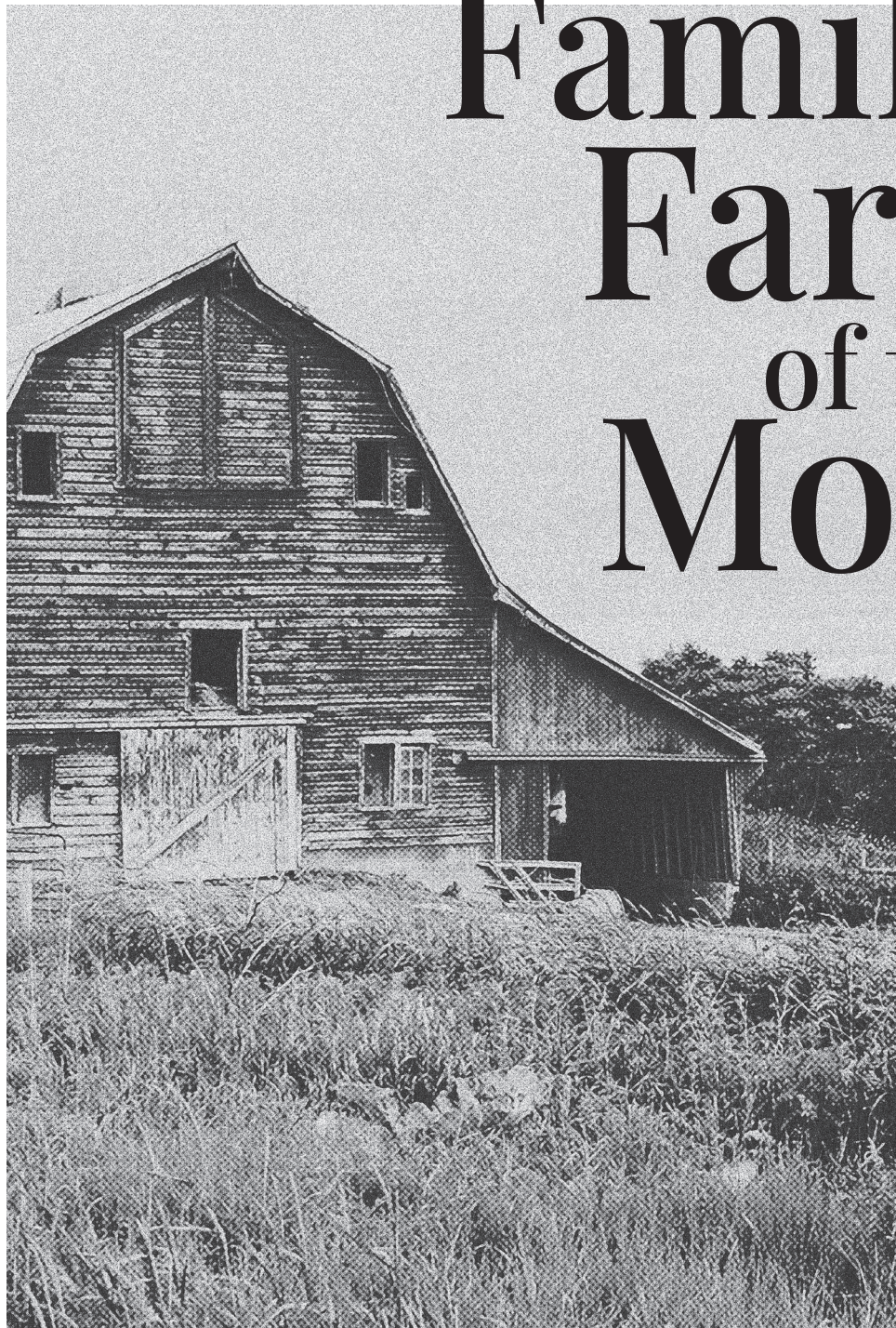
Intensives



Intensive workshops devote a full day to deeply exploring a single topic. Led by knowledgeable presenters, there is plenty of time for discussion, question and answer, and networking with peers. Intensive workshops are available in person only on Sunday, and registration is an optional add-on when registering for the main Saturday conference.

**Mark your calendar! Registration opens January 10
at NOFAVT.ORG/CONFERENCE**

Vermont Family Farmer of the Month



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

The Vermont Family Farmer of the Month Award provides grants of \$12,000 to a family farm each month to support an innovative project that will improve the farm's viability. Award recipients are farm businesses that contribute to a more resilient agricultural landscape and demonstrate environmental stewardship through their sustainable practices. This grant is funded by a generous anonymous charitable gift and is administered by NOFA-VT in partnership with VHCB Vermont Farm & Forest Viability Program, Shelburne Farms, and the Vermont Grass Farmers Association.

We are honored to present the most recent recipients of the award and share a bit about their farms and projects. Congratulations to Sandiwood Farm, Moo Acres, and Does' Leap for their excellence in environmental stewardship and the work they do to build social and economic resilience in Vermont.

The next round of applications are due January 22, 2024. To learn more, visit www.vermontfamilyfarmeraward.org.



Sandiwood Farm - August 2023

Sandiwood Farm, founded by Bob and Sara Schlosser 35 years ago in Wolcott, is a family-run, multifaceted farming business. The farm includes a maple sugaring operation and a small diversified CSA and offers various farm-based activities like stays, dinners, and a unique venue for rent. Together, the Schlosser family ensures that Sandiwood Farm is a vibrant hub of sustainable agriculture, embracing new opportunities while preserving treasured traditions.

Sandiwood Farm received a \$12,000 award to expand their sugarbush and upgrade the infrastructure necessary to increase sap production and maple syrup yields. Project costs include acquiring a 3000-gallon stainless sap storage tank, constructing a covered tank platform, obtaining additional fittings, mainline and secondary lines, taps, and gauges, and installing necessary equipment. This project not only enhances the economic viability of the farm but also contributes to the ecological health of the land through the sustainable forest management practices employed by the family.



Moo Acres - September 2023

Ben David Williams is the dedicated steward behind Moo Acres, an organic dairy farm located in the heart of Fairfield. Having taken over ownership in 2007 from his parents, Ben's mission is to uphold the land's integrity and cultivate a sustainable future for his family and the broader community. Today, Ben and his wife Hillary raise their four daughters on the farm, instilling the next generation with a commitment to environmental stewardship, community building, and innovation.

Moo Acres was granted \$12,000 to equip a new bedded pack barn for winter housing for their cattle, a crucial component of the innovative manure management system adopted by the farm. By converting winter manure storage into a bedded pack housing and composting system, Moo Acres aims to minimize nutrient runoff and cultivate healthier soils. This approach improves animal well-being, reduces environmental impact, and enhances the overall economic viability of the farm. The improved manure management system also builds soil-based resiliency and improves labor efficiency, ensuring financial sustainability for the next generation on the farm.



Does' Leap - October 2023

Does' Leap, led by George van Vlaanderen and Kristan Doolan in East Fairfield, excels in producing a diverse range of certified organic goat cheeses and pastured whey-fed pork. The farmers are recognized leaders in Vermont's agricultural community, implementing innovative management-intensive grazing and browsing systems for goats, prioritizing fresh, nutrient-dense forage to enhance both their animals' health and cheese quality.

In October, Does' Leap was granted \$12,000 to support the addition of solar power to the farm, aiming to reduce operating expenses. This solar energy project aligns with their core values of environmental stewardship and self-sufficiency, and their steadfast commitment to sustainable agriculture. The funding will propel Does' Leap toward their goal of aligning farming practices with the harmony of nature, while simultaneously improving the energy efficiency of their cheese production. ♦

Applications are open three times a year. To learn more, visit VERMONTFAMILYFARMERAWARD.ORG

Vermont Winter Farmers Markets



FOR MORE DETAILS ABOUT THE VTFMA MEMBER MARKETS, PLEASE VISIT: NOFAVT.ORG/VTFARMERSMARKETS



1. **Barre Winter Farmers Market**
Old Labor Hall | 46 Granite Street, Barre
3:30 PM - 6:30 PM | Monthly | 1/31/24 - 4/24/24
2. **Bennington Farmers Market**
First Baptist Church | 601 Main Street, Bennington
10:00 AM - 1:00 PM | Monthly 11/11/23 & 12/16/23
3. **Brattleboro Winter Farmers Market**
Winston Prouty Campus | 60 Austine Dr, Brattleboro
10:00 AM - 2:00 PM | Weekly | 11/4/23 - 3/30/24
4. **Burlington Farmers Market**
Burlington Beer Co. | 180 Flynn Ave, Burlington,
12:00 PM - 3:00 PM | Every two weeks 11/18/23 - 4/27/24
5. **Caledonia Farmers Market**
St Johnsbury Welcome Center | 51 Depot Square, St. Johnsbury
10:00 AM - 1:00 PM | Twice per month | 11/4/23 - 4/20/24
6. **Capital City Farmers Market**
Caledonia Spirits Distillery | 116 Gin Lane, Montpelier
10:00 AM - 1:00 PM | Twice per month | 12/9/23 - 4/27/24
7. **Champlain Islands Farmers Market**
South Hero Congregational Church | 24 South St, South Hero
10:00 AM - 2:00 PM | Weekly | 11/4/23 - 12/16/23
8. **Dorset Farmers Market**
JK Adams Kitchen Store | 1430 VT-30, Dorset
10:00 AM - 2:00 PM | Weekly | 10/15/23 - 5/5/24
9. **Greensboro Farmers Market**
Greensboro United Church of Christ Fellowship Hall | 165 E. Craftsbury Rd, Greensboro
4:00 PM - 7:00 PM | Monthly | 11/15/23 & 12/2/23
10. **Middlebury Farmers Market**
VFW Post | 530 Exchange St, Middlebury
9:00 AM - 12:30 PM | Weekly | 11/4/23 - 4/27/24
11. **Morrisville Farmers Market**
Lost Nation Event Space | 87 Old Creamery Road, Morrisville
9:00 AM - 1:00 PM | Happening once | 11/18/23
12. **Northfield Farmers Market**
Northfield, VT | northfieldfm.eatfromfarms.com
10:00 AM - 10:00 PM | 11/9/23 - 4/3/24
Order online Thu. - Mon | pickup Wed 5:00 - 6:00 PM
13. **Norwich Farmers Market**
Tracy Hall | 300 Main Street, Norwich
10:00 AM - 1:00 PM | Twice per month | 11/18/23 - 4/20/24
14. **Putney Farmers' Market**
Green Mountain Orchard | 130 West Hill Rd, Putney
11:00 AM - 3:00 PM | Weekly | 11/19/23 - 12/24/23
15. **Randolph Elem. School Holiday Market** * (no Crop Cash)
Randolph Elementary School | 40 Ayers Brook Road, Randolph
9:00 AM - 1:00 PM | Happening once | 12/2/23
16. **Randolph Holiday Farmers Market**
Bethany Church | 32 N Main St, Randolph
10:00 AM - 2:00 PM | Happening once | 12/16/23
17. **Shelburne Winter Market**
6655 Shelburne Rd | Shelburne
10:00 AM - 2:00 PM | Weekly | 11/18/23 - 3/30/24
18. **The Vermont Farmers Market**
Franklin Convention Center | 1 Scale Ave, Rutland
10:00 AM - 2:00 PM | Weekly | 11/4/23 - 5/4/24
19. **Winooski Winter Farmers Market**
O'Brien Community Center Gym | 32 Malletts Bay Ave, Winooski
10:00 AM - 2:00 PM | Twice per month | 11/12/23 - 4/14/24



Winter Bounty: Vermont Farmers Markets Thrive Year-Round

By Andrew Graham, NOFA-VT Direct Markets Coordinator, and Johanna Doren, NOFA-VT Local Food Access Coordinator

Winter has arrived in Vermont, but that doesn't mean that you can't buy fresh local food anymore. Many people associate farmers markets with the summer and fall seasons, but here in Vermont, many farmers markets operate year-round. The Vermont Farmers Market Association, which is administered by NOFA-VT, counts over 20 member markets operating across Vermont for at least some portion of the 2023-24 winter season. This is more than in previous years, a good sign that our local food system is resilient after a trying season for many farmers and producers.

Just over a quarter of those markets are what we consider "holiday markets," operating only in November and December, but the rest will be open throughout the winter until at least March or April, with a few farmers market organizations operating truly year-round. Last year, half of the 16 winter markets were holiday markets, so there has been a significant increase in markets—and farmers—providing local food to Vermonters for a larger portion of the year. These markets showcase the best local food that you can buy directly from farmers, so if you're interested in having some cold-season vegetables and finding out from the grower how they're able to grow them, visit a farmers market! Of course you can also find meat, dairy products, baked goods, and other value-added products at these markets too, along with many different items from local artisans and crafters.



Deep Meadow Farm's booth at the Brattleboro Farmers Market in early December.

According to a recent NOFA-VT survey of farms that sell food directly to consumers, farmers who are market vendors earn over 17% of their income from farmers market sales. This means that farmers markets are an important sales channel for the farmers who make the effort to sell at them. The USDA's Economic Research Service has found that "farmers who market goods directly to consumers are more likely to remain in business than those who market only through traditional channels." In addition, direct markets can play a critical role for beginning farms. According to USDA's Economic Research Service, "beginning farms with direct-to-consumer (DTC) sales had a 54.3 percent survival rate, while 47.4 percent of those without DTC sales survived."

Typically, winter farmers markets would be utilizing NOFA-VT's Crop Cash program, which provides SNAP customers with extra funds to spend on fruits and vegetables. However, we experienced unprecedented use of this program during the summer and fall of 2023, ultimately tripling the amount of Crop Cash used on local food at farmers markets this year compared with last! While we see this in part as a huge success—these funds buoyed revenue for farmers affected by this summer's floods while significantly increasing local food security—we have had to pause Crop Cash from December until the beginning of the 2024 summer market season. Because it is clear how impactful this program is for Vermont households and producers alike, we are taking this year's sudden surge in Crop Cash use as an opportunity to communicate to the Vermont Legislature that demand for our local food access programs has increased in great magnitude since the pandemic and that we need both state and federal funds to continue supporting this growth. If you would like to help us make the case to continue the Crop Cash Plus pilot and increase funding so we can continue to operate the Crop Cash program year-round, we invite you to share how important these programs are to your household and/or your farm by sending a statement to NOFA-VT's Local Food Access Coordinator, Johanna Doren, at Johanna@nofavt.org.

To find a winter farmers market near you, including times and locations, visit www.nofavt.org/VTfarmersmarkets or reach out to NOFA-VT's Direct Markets Coordinator, Andrew Graham, at Andrew@nofavt.org or 802-434-7165.◊

Solidarity & Organizing Get Us a Food System that Supports Workers' and Farmers' Wellbeing

By Jon Magee, community organizer and Technical Assistance Coordinator at the Agricultural Justice Project

“We have to break with the professional doctrine that ascribes virtually all of the problems that clients experience to defects in personality development and family relationships...This is a political ideology as much as an explanation of human behavior. It is an ideology that directs clients to blame themselves for their travails rather than the economic and social institutions that produce many of them.”

—Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward, “Notes Toward a Radical Social Work” in *Radical Social Work*, ed. Bailey and Brake, 1975

“Things are really terrifying and enraging right now, and feeling more rage, fear, sadness, grief, and despair may be appropriate. Those feelings may help us be less appeased by false solutions, and stir us to pursue ongoing collective action for change.”

—Dean Spade, *Mutual Aid: Building Solidarity During This Crisis (And The Next)*, 2020

You would have to be completely checked out not to have difficult feelings right now. In our society farmworkers and farmers already get the short end of the stick, and mounting large-scale crises only make the situation worse. Farmworkers earn low wages, enjoy few protections from harm and abuse, and have limited ability to improve their working conditions without leaving farming altogether. Community-scale farms struggle with high costs, low prices, difficult marketing conditions, and the increasingly harsh vagaries of the weather. Add to all this the physical and mental strain of overwork.

Calling this situation a mental health crisis is only partly correct. It's more accurate to say that farmworkers and farmers are struggling through an ongoing political crisis that has devastating implications for our health and well-being, including our very survival. Don't get me wrong—it's absolutely necessary to offer timely mental health interventions that support people to cope with acute, difficult circumstances and support healthy relationships. We also must honor the strategies that individuals find helpful in navigating difficult times. My question is, how do we also honor the root causes of people's

suffering and work to transform the larger-scale conditions of our well-being? We already have compelling visions for how to farm in ways that nourish the people working the land—agroecology and food sovereignty—but we will never achieve those visions without collective political action.

Collective action is a deep and necessary resource for building our mental health. It is a force that will transform us and the world we live in. When we join together for mutual aid, help and care for each other, and also work towards addressing the causes of our shared suffering, we build the infrastructure to deal with our immediate needs and the power to take on our much bigger problems. By connecting with others we help transform despair and grief into anger, defiance, and action. That group connection also becomes a basis for shared joy, camaraderie, and courage. In the words of [lawyer, author, and activist] Dean Spade, those feelings can “enliven us.”

Social movements for mutual aid and power-building are not a new concept, in agriculture or anywhere else, but they are not familiar strategies for many farmers, especially white farmers and those with class privilege. There are two great lineages of mutual aid organizing in and around U.S. agriculture: Black freedom movements, Indigenous and Latin American movements, and allied movements of immigrant farmworkers.

For Black farmers and Black communities in general, mutual aid has long been a strategy to resist oppression, displacement, and state-sponsored violence, as Monica White documents in her excellent book *Freedom Farmers*. White describes the long tradition of self-help and cooperation among Black farmers, farm laborers, civil rights organizers, and scholars, from the Tuskegee cooperative extension to the Federation of Southern Cooperatives and the Detroit Black Community Food Security Network. Some of the most transformative, movement-building work of the Black Panthers took place through their free breakfast program and other community survival programs. Today a whole host of movement groups, many sprung out of the Movement for Black Lives, continue to do important mutual aid work in Black communities across the U.S., often with a strong and clearly stated goal of building collective power.

Mutual aid has long been a strategy for community survival in Latin America in the face of state violence and ongoing extraction and underdevelopment led by corporations from the Global North. One well-known example of this tradition is the Landless Workers' Movement in Brazil, who has long organized schools for teaching farming methods to members, who then seize underutilized industrial

farmland for their own use as subsistence farmers. Another inspiring contemporary example is the Argentinian movement *Ciudad Futura*, which started out as a movement to resist land grabs by developers in the settlements on the outskirts of Santa Fe. They later started a cooperative dairy farm to help feed their members, as well as a host of businesses to create jobs and provide services and an electoral party to push through more progressive policies. Across Latin America, numerous organizations together form a “social and solidarity economy” based on mutual aid, self-help, and provision of basic needs through shared effort. Mutual aid has also been a key part of farm worker organizing in the U.S., not least because of cultural and personal ties to organizing traditions in Latin America.

What's different about these traditions of organizing, as opposed to the landscape of small farmer advocacy in the U.S.? Politicization, solidarity, and connection to an organizing tradition.

First of all, at a time when grassroots movements are claiming wins across the U.S. and around the world, the farming world is surprisingly disconnected from much of this political organizing. I recall a talk that Kali Akuno of Cooperation Jackson gave in 2018, when he told the crowd at UMass (and I paraphrase): Don't look to Cooperation Jackson to learn about how to build cooperative organizations. We come up here to learn how to do that. Look to us because we have a political analysis and a political program that grounds our work. That's what you all need and what you should learn from us.

There are many overlapping causes for the depoliticization of small/family farmer movements. Government policies displaced

and depopulated rural communities by directly targeting and driving out farmer and worker organizers. Much like other movements in the '80s and '90s, the fledgling organic movement retreated from its earlier political ambitions. Many in the movement shifted towards sharing gardening and farming know-how and establishing local markets, which later morphed into consumption-based, “vote with your dollar” strategies aimed at affluent customers. The nonprofit industrial complex now dominates the sustainable farming movement, and that leaves us susceptible to the political pressures that come with foundation and government funding and creates fewer openings for grassroots mobilization. Labor law and financial pressures pit owners against workers, and a strong culture of rugged individualism and self-striving diverts our energies away from collective projects. However we got to this point, our movements will never be able to offer systemic solutions for our personal struggles unless we develop a clear political analysis, strong community connections, and a grassroots vision for how we take power.

Solidarity is the next missing ingredient. As Dean Spade says, “Solidarity is what builds and connects large-scale movements... Solidarity across issues and populations is what makes movements big and powerful.” Successful movements are built by people who view themselves as equals working towards shared goals, and we have a long way to go before farm owners and farm workers can legitimately view themselves as equals, even among organic and community-scale farms. Each group has its own struggles—owners regularly face extreme financial pressures trying to keep a farm business afloat, and workers struggle under difficult working and living conditions that are partly dictated by the owners and partly a result of much bigger systems of oppression and exploitation. A small portion of farms do live their values and offer better working conditions, but they still struggle to earn revenues that can sustain the farm. Mutual aid, driven by a deep commitment to solidarity, is a method to bridge divides by foregrounding politics and acknowledging each other's circumstance; we see how our struggles come from the same root and learn how to meet our needs together. This kind of solidarity is urgent and essential.

The third missing ingredient is a connection to an organizing lineage. Despite setbacks and cycles of mobilization and demobilization, Black freedom struggles and Indigenous and Latin American movements have weathered severe repression for centuries. White and multi-racial farmer movements in the U.S. largely did not survive the double blow of state/vigilante violence (Red Scare, Jim Crow, COINTELPRO) and government farm policies of industrialization

and depopulation. Even the hippie back-to-the-landers eventually sorted themselves out into those who wanted to focus on political action and those who wanted to focus on growing food, not least because of the general crisis of Left movements after the '70s. Organic farmers today have very few connections to the farmer justice networks of the '70s and '80s, who organized food strikes, dumped milk rather than sell at rock bottom prices, and ran volunteer crisis lines. How often do we talk about the tractorcade of 1979, when hundreds of tractors and thousands of farmers occupied Washington, D.C., to stop farm foreclosures and return U.S. farm policy to “Parity, Not Charity”? Without strong connections to the past, it's no surprise that many farmers today, especially white people, have trouble seeing what role they can play in building movements. But we cannot just be spectators, hanging back in the wings, offering little more than admiration and monetary donations. We must grapple with the directive from Subcomandante Marcos: “haces el Zapatismo donde vives”—be a Zapatista where you are. In a spirit of deep humility and learning from elders, we must connect to living lineages of organizing, build solidarity every day, and claim power.

Farmers, workers, and everyone on this planet all need the same things: good food and clean water, community, livelihood, dignity and purpose, and a connection to the land. Entrenched power structures make it hard to satisfy these needs. When we come together to figure out how to build our collective power, we bring our actions in harmony with our spirit. We lay the foundations for well-being even amidst struggle and find the energy and courage to carry on. We do this not just for ourselves but for everyone and for future generations.

In the words of Assata Shakur:

It is our duty to fight for our freedom.

It is our duty to win.

We must love each other and support each other.

We have nothing to lose but our chains. ◇

Jon Magee is a community organizer based in the Connecticut River valley of Massachusetts. He's also Technical Assistance Coordinator at the Agricultural Justice Project, which offers practical tools for building solidarity, cooperation, and fairness on your farm, including through their extensive AJP Toolkit at agriculturaljusticeproject.org/toolkit. For more information, email jon@agriculturaljusticeproject.org.

*This article was originally printed in *The Natural Farmer* in December of 2022.*

Navigating the Farm Bill Expiration and Extension

By Maddie Kempner, NOFA-VT Policy Director

On October 1, 2023, the 2018 Farm Bill officially expired. The federal farm bill is an omnibus bill (i.e. a package of legislation combined into one bill) passed roughly once every five years. This bill includes the bulk of the federal legislation that relates to agriculture, food, and the food system, and has a massive impact on the way food is grown, sold, distributed, and bought in this country. In addition to programs that directly affect farmers, the farm bill authorizes and funds critical nutrition programs like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), known in Vermont as 3SquaresVT.

Having run out of time to pass a new farm bill before the end of the year, Congress included a one-year extension of the 2018 Farm Bill in a stopgap funding measure passed in November. This extension will ensure continued funding and authorization for many important programs that support organic, beginning, and socially disadvantaged farmers through September 2024.

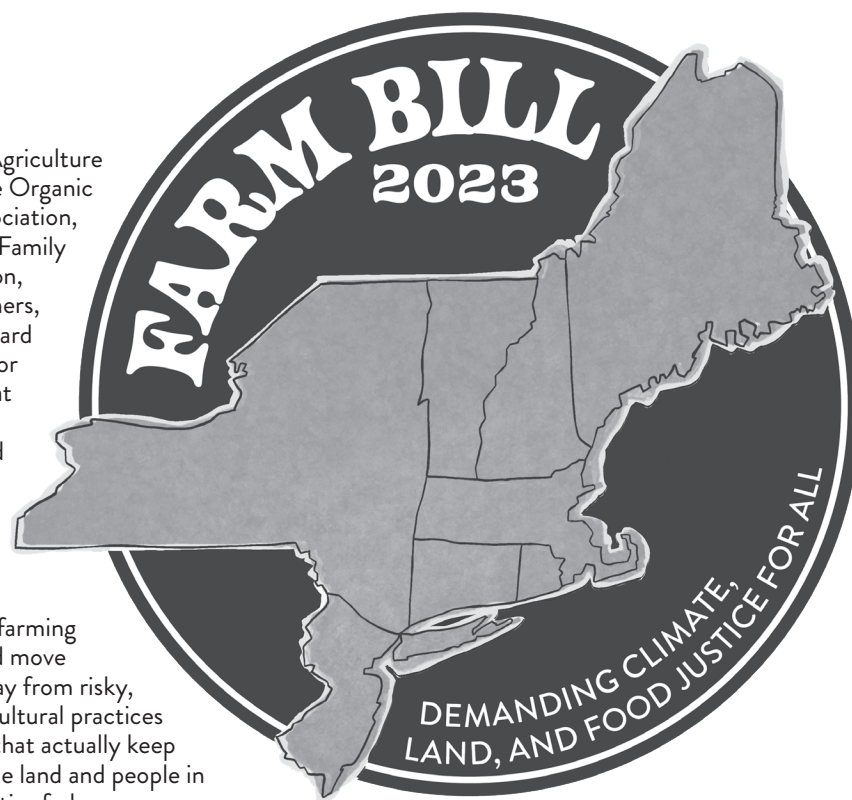
In each farm bill cycle, powerful agricultural interest groups spend a great deal of time and money lobbying Congress. This time around, commodity trade groups (like the National Corn Growers Association and the American Soybean Association) are focused on calling for Congress to raise “reference prices”. Reference prices are target prices that act as a trigger for support payments to commodity farmers. If the season-average price for a given commodity is below the reference price, growers receive support payments. However, raising reference prices would be extremely costly and would benefit very few farmers at the expense of many other critical programs that support farmers’ abilities to invest in soil health, protect biodiversity, and improve their overall resilience in the face of increasingly extreme and erratic weather.

NOFA-VT is part of a large, powerful coalition of agricultural and food chain workers’ organizations calling for a farm bill that will benefit the many rather than the few. We, along with our partners at the National Organic Coalition, the National

Sustainable Agriculture Coalition, the Organic Farmers Association, the National Family Farm Coalition, and many others, are working hard to advocate for a farm bill that will improve access to land for beginning farmers, invest in organic and other truly regenerative farming practices, and move resources away from risky, harmful agricultural practices toward ones that actually keep farmers on the land and people in our communities fed.

With the one-year extension of the 2018 Farm Bill comes a major opportunity to continue raising our voices to our Representatives and Senators.

We need to keep the pressure on Congress because we know commodity groups and agribusiness corporations will be, too. When we come together, we can build our power to win meaningful change. In order to do that, we need your help. Thank you for being a supporter of NOFA-VT—we have strength in numbers. To engage more directly with the farm bill, start by checking out our platform at nofavt.org/farmbill, where you can learn more and take action. From there, you can remain involved in other ways, such as coming to a NOFA-VT workshop or member meeting or joining us at the NOFA-VT Winter Conference in February where we can continue collaborating on this work that moves us all toward the future we need. ♦



Farmer Emergency Fund Update

NOFA-VT set to award over \$1.6 Million in Farmer Emergency Grants by the end of 2023

By Bill Cavanaugh, NOFA-VT Farm Business Advisor

As no doubt many of you know, the 2023 growing season has been incredibly challenging for Vermont’s farmers. A very late frost hit fruit growers hard, and the massive flooding in early July was only a precursor to a historically wet summer. In response to the unprecedented loss we were seeing from farmers this year, NOFA-VT activated our Farmer Emergency Fund and began seeking widespread support. Since 1997, this fund has supported organic and NOFA-VT member farmers who have been adversely affected by natural and unnatural disasters such as crop failure, extreme weather and flooding, fires, and barn collapse.

Due to the scale of emergency this year, we expanded access to our Farmer Emergency Fund. In order to support local, sustainable farms, this fund has always been available to operations who are certified organic with Vermont Organic Farmers or are members of NOFA-VT. This year, we waived the pre-existing one-year waiting period for new members, allowing people to become members and immediately apply for funds. Earlier this year, we added a \$1 membership level to remove cost as a barrier to membership, and this was an important way for farmers experiencing great losses to easily join and access this fund. Because of the scale of devastation that farms experienced, we also increased the total amount of grant funding available per farm from \$2,500 to \$5,000. This expansion of our Farmer Emergency Fund came along with an outpouring of support from individuals, organizations, and foundations from around the country and abroad.

Thanks to this incredible solidarity with Vermont’s farmers, we have raised a few thousand dollars shy of \$1,750,000 for the Farmer Emergency Fund as of the first week of December. We have received 182 applications for funding and have so far granted \$833,362 in emergency grants to farmers. While \$5,000 isn’t a lot in terms of the overall scale of the loss we’ve seen for many farms, it was a much-needed cash flow boost in a season marked by uncertainty, mounting challenges, and a lack of other financial supports.

While we do still have some first-time applications coming in for the Farmer Emergency Fund, the pace has slowed significantly and we are now launching a second round of grant funds for folks who have already been awarded a grant earlier in the year. This second round will be awarded in tiers proportional to the loss that farmers have experienced, meaning that farmers who have seen the biggest loss will be awarded a larger grant. Our plan is to hold \$100,000 in savings in the Farmer Emergency Fund for the next disaster and fully distribute the remaining \$1,650,000 by the end of the year. We hope that this second round of grants to impacted farms will further bolster farmers’ businesses as they head into the 2024 season.

Major support for NOFA-VT’s flood relief efforts has been made possible in part by generous contributions from:

Abigail Faulkner & Hobart Guion, The Alchemist, The Alcyon Foundation, Baird Farm, Barbara & Richard Heilman, Ben & Jerry’s Homemade, Brattleboro Food Co-op, Champlain Investment Partners Charitable Ventures, Chelsey Ring Giving Fund, Christina Castegren, Christina Heroy Foundation, City Market, Onion River Co-op, Clear Brook Farm, The Cotyledon Fund, D’Avino Family Charitable Gift Fund, Dealer.com, Farm Aid, Global Atlantic Charitable Gift Fund, GlobalGiving, Gold Shaw Farm Fundraiser, Grace River Foundation, Greg & Maria Jobin-Leeds, Hanover Co-op Food Stores, Harris & Frances Block Foundation, Harvey L Miller Foundation, Henry P. Kendall Foundation, Hill Farmstead Brewery, J.E. Fehsenfeld Family Foundation, Jane’s Trust Foundation, Johnson Family Foundation, K. B. Ceramics, Katherine Buechner Arthaud, Kathleen Houlahan, Kirthi Govindarajan, Laurie Grigg, Lawson’s Finest Liquids, Lena Fund of the Vermont Community Foundation, Lintilhac Foundation, Inc, M&T Bank, Marilyn Comb, Peter Kamitses & Jovial King, Mary-Howell Martens, The Mud Studio, New Visions Foundation, Nunez Family Charitable Fund, Peter Alford Foundation, Peter Swift & Diana McCargo, Pincus Family Fund, Poppy Café, Raven Ridge Fund of the Vermont Community Foundation, Richard Dreissigacker & Judy Geer, Rob Freeberg & Judy Fink, The Robert Saligman Charitable Foundation, Sara Coffey & David Snyder, Scott Family Charitable Fund, Serena Foundation, Soundtoys, Stonyfield Farm, Inc., Stowe Cider, Sunflower Fund of Vermont Community Foundation, Surfing Veggie Farm Foundation, Susan & Bob Titterton, Sweet Relief Fundraiser, Vermont Mutual Insurance, VT Flood Response & Recovery Fund of the Vermont Community Foundation, The WaterWheel Foundation, Wolfpeach, Zero Gravity Brewery...and over 2,800 more donations from generous community members! ♦

Donors as of December 3, 2023.



Thank you for helping us

Share the Harvest

By Cailey Gibson, NOFA-VT Development Manager

With your incredible support by shopping at participating businesses, our annual Share the Harvest fundraiser raised over \$15,000 this October to support our Farm Share Program. Thank you, thank you!

These funds will provide up to 75% off the cost of a CSA for 85 families, ensuring they have consistent access to healthy, local, and organic food through the season. Participating farms still receive the full cost of the CSA—it's a win-win that supports the viability of their farm businesses too. We are so grateful for your support!

We also want to thank the following participating restaurants and food businesses for making this fundraiser a big success:



Brattleboro Food Co-op, Brattleboro



Foam Brewers, Burlington



Middlebury Natural Foods Co-op, Middlebury



City Market, Onion River Co-op, Burlington



Skinny Pancake, Burlington, Montpelier, Queechee, Stowe



King Arthur Baking Company, Norwich

Colatina Exit, Bradford
Bobcat Cafe and Brewery, Bristol
Minifactory, Bristol
American Flatbread, Burlington Hearth, Burlington
Juniper Bar & Restaurant at Hotel Vermont, Burlington
Cedar Circle Farm & Education Center, East Thetford

Wood Meadow Market, Enosburg Falls
American Flatbread, Middlebury Hearth, Middlebury
Fire & Ice Restaurant, Middlebury
Green Peppers, Middlebury
Stone Leaf Teahouse, Middlebury
Waybury Inn, Middlebury
Caledonia Spirits, Montpelier
Hunger Mountain Coop, Montpelier

Shelburne Farms Inn, Shelburne
South Royalton Market, South Royalton,
Springfield Food Co-op, Springfield
Red Mill Restaurant at Basin Harbor Club, Vergennes
Lareau Farm, Home of American Flatbread, Waitsfield
Upper Valley Food Co-op, White River Junction

Please join us in supporting these local businesses throughout the year and let them know you appreciate their participation in Share the Harvest!

Learn more about our Farm Share Program at NOFAVT.ORG/FARMSHARE

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 this fall.

NEW MEMBERS

Blessing Yen, Bellows Falls, VT
Bob & Juliet Gerlin, Cornwall, VT
Brennan Michaels, Salisbury, VT
Bryan Dickinson, North Troy, VT
Caleb Smith, Danby, VT
Camila Carrillo, Bristol, VT
Charlene Parker, Midlothian, VA
Christina Bertorelli, Huntington, VT
Donna Chin, Niverville, NY
Gordon Murray, East Ryegate, VT
James Jones, Craftsbury, VT
Jeanne Fox, Ludlow, VT
Jeremy Michaud, East Hardwick, VT
Mary White, Corinth, VT
Maya Sakellaropoulo, Frelighsburg, QC
Michele Capron, Derby, VT
Michelle Boleski, White River Junction, VT
Paul Mazza, Colchester, VT
Penn Hackney, Pittsburgh, PA
Remy Porfido, Chester, NJ
Stephen Purdy, Morristown, VT
Susanna Karwoska, Guilford, VT
Thomas Galinat, Peacham, VT

NEW & RENEWING BUSINESS MEMBERS

Backwoods Betty Farm, Guilford, VT
BarnYard Dairy, Barnard, VT
Bonum Natura LLC, The Woodlands, TX
Brattleboro Food Co-op, Brattleboro, VT
Bryce Farms, Cambridge, VT
Cedar Circle Farm and Education Center, East Thetford, VT
Cedar Mountain Farm, Hartland, VT
Center for an Agricultural Economy, Hardwick, VT
Certified Naturally Grown, Temple, NH
Champlain Valley Compost Co., Charlotte, VT

Co-operative Insurance Companies, Middlebury, VT
Curiosity Farm, Barnard, VT
Farm Credit East, Enfield, CT
Fat Sheep Farm & Cabins, Hartland, VT
Fedco Seeds, Clinton, ME
Hanover Co-op Food Stores, Hanover, NH
Hark, Burlington, VT
Howling Wolf Farm, Randolph, VT
King Arthur Baking Company, White River Junction, VT
Lake Hill Farm, Wells, VT
MacGregor Garlic, Williston, VT
Meristem Farms LLC, St Albans, VT
Myers Produce LLC, Craftsbury, VT
Nordic Roots Farm LLC, Island Pond, VT
Nourse Farms Inc, S Deerfield, MA
O Bread Bakery, Shelburne, VT
OMRI, Eugene, OR
Osprey Hill Farm, N Middlesex, VT

Rebop Farm, Brattleboro, VT
Rock Bottom Dairy, Strafford, VT
Shelburne Farms, Shelburne, VT
Soaring Meadow Farm LLC, Poultney, VT
Sous Bois Farm & Vineyard, Randolph Center, VT
South Royalton Market, S Royalton, VT
Sparrowhawk Farm, Charlotte, VT
The Alchemist, Stowe, VT
The Hummingbird Center NH, Dorchester, NH
The Sole Connection Farm, Arlington, VT
Uphill Farm, Rochester, VT
Vermont Economic Development Authority (VEDA), Montpelier, VT
Vermont Foodbank, Barre, VT
Vermont Vines, Springfield, VT
Waywards End Farm LLC, West Burke, VT
Wellscroft Fence Systems, Harrisville, NH
Wellwood Orchards, Springfield, VT

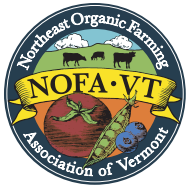
New Organic Certifications



Vermont Organic Farmers welcomes the following new producers who have recently obtained organic certification for all or a portion of their operation, joining the nearly 750 organic farmers and processors throughout the state.

Juna Organics LLC
Fog Lake Enterprises
Brad Sprague
Zon Eastes

Learn more about the benefits of being certified organic and locally grown at VERMONTORGANIC.ORG/WHY-ORGANIC



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Association of Vermont
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Thank you to everyone who has made a year-end contribution to NOFA-VT! Your support is the bedrock of our work for an economically viable, ecologically sound, and socially just Vermont agricultural system.

(If you haven't had a chance to give yet and would like to, there's still time! Simply visit NOFAVT.ORG/DONATE or send a check to our return address. Thank you!)

