Dear friend of NOFA-VT,

I hope you are reading this newsletter from beside a wood stove, cup of tea in hand. After a couple years of remotely connecting, we are thrilled to invite you to gather again at our beloved Winter Conference, coming up on February 18th at UVM. This year our conference theme is ‘Back to the Roots.’

We hope our time together at the conference will help us all to strengthen, grow, and connect our roots: to share support; to spread and receive nourishment through our networks; to expand those networks of care and mutuality; and to build community ‘deeply and firmly.’ Our relationships are our roots, our origin, the ‘basic cause’ of our community and work.

It’s an understatement to say that it’s been a challenging few years. We no longer can take for granted the precious gift of being able to gather together. It is through twining and rooting together that we gain sustenance, generate new ideas, find hope, give gifts, build solidarity and power.

We hope you will join us at UVM (and if you prefer to tune in remotely that will be available too!). 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, and raising my voice in song in good company. All these help me to feel rooted, strengthened, and connected–deep sustenance and rejuvenation at the foundation that I’ve really been missing.

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
Each year, the NOFA-VT Winter Conference provides a valuable opportunity for farmers, homesteaders, gardeners, land managers, earth tenders, educators, students, policy-makers, and other food-system activists to participate in our vibrant community event by sharing ideas, resources, and skills.

This winter, join us for a conference designed to return to, nourish, and regrow our roots: our relationships! It’s been a long while since we’ve gathered, and we’re excited to do what matters most: connect with each other. Join us for a conference designed to connect, inspire, network, and deepen the roots that sustain the movement for a thriving agriCULTURE.

**February 18 & 19, 2023**

**UVM Davis Center | Burlington, VT**

live-streamed option available

keynote and workshops on Saturday | intensive workshops on Sunday

Winona LaDuke is an internationally renowned activist working on issues of food systems, sustainable development, and renewable energy. She co-founded and is Executive Director of Honor the Earth, an organization whose mission is to create awareness and support for Native environmental issues and to develop needed financial and political resources for the survival of sustainable Native communities. Her other organizations, Akiing and Winona’s Hemp & Heritage Farm, help communities produce sustainable energy and materials for a restorative and regenerative economy. Winona lives and works on the White Earth reservation in northern Minnesota and is a two-time vice-presidential candidate with Ralph Nader for the Green Party. A rural development economist and graduate of Harvard and Antioch Universities, she has written extensively on Indigenous struggles for environmental justice and has authored a multitude of books, including All Our Relations and, most recently, To Be a Water Protector. She has received many awards, including a 2007 induction into the National Women’s Hall of Fame and, in 1994, recognition by Time Magazine in their list of fifty most promising leaders under forty years of age. Her White Earth Land Recovery Project won the prestigious 2003 International Slow Food Award for Biodiversity. Winona was also Co-founder and Board Co-chair of the Indigenous Women’s Network for fifteen years and maintains a significant role in international advocacy for Indigenous people, including numerous presentations at United Nations Forums.

**Keynote Speaker: Winona LaDuke**

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**Mark your calendar! Registration opens January 9 at NOFAVT.ORG/WC**

**Workshops**

Join us for over 35 workshop 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:

- Building Resilient Pastures in a Changing Climate
- Kimchi Demystified
- Culturally Responsive Local Food Access
- Climate Justice 101
- Getting Started in Organic Beekeeping
- Marketing in a Pinch for Farmers
- Perennial Vegetables for Your Garden
- Agritourism in Vermont: How Has it Changed Since 2020?

...and tons more!

**Intensives**

Intensive workshops devote a full day to exploring a single topic. Led by knowledgeable presenters, there is plenty of time for discussion, question and answer, and networking with peers. The intensive workshops will be offered on February 19 (the day after the main conference) and include:

- People-Powered Change from the Ground Up
- Building Biodiversity & Ecological Resilience On Farms
- Successful Farm Labor Management
- Raising Small Ruminants

...and so much more!

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 on Saturday, peruse the exhibitors fair, spend time in the BIPOC Affinity Space, participate in the seed swap, enjoy a local and organic lunch, and more!

**A sneak peek of some of this year’s offerings...**
Processing the Harvest for the Abenaki Land Link Project

By Jaden Hill, NOFA-VT Education & Outreach Assistant Americorps Member

It is a warm day in late September as I wrestle open a tent behind the West Monitor Barn at the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps in Richmond, VT. Chief Don Stevens of the Nulhegan Band of the Coosuk Abenaki arrives and begins unloading items from his truck: a corn sheller, a grain mill, Mohawk Beans; and Algonquin Squash. While several participants focused specifically on growing for seed, most grew food crops to be distributed to Abenaki community members by Chief Stevens and through food shelves.

It was certainly a challenging season, with growers sharing stories of plant growth stunted by drought, late-season rain rotting entire bean crops, organizational transitions, and persistent raccoons, rabbits, and mice. With all these, however, there was still an abundance to celebrate: lessons learned from growing the crops; a beautiful Harvest Celebration and sharing of Abenaki culture; recipe experimentation by growers, including a delicious cheese-stuffed squash; and growers collaborating across the state to aggregate and transport harvested crops for processing and distribution. The project has also facilitated connections with other communities. For example, Chef Stevens shared 110 squash with the Vermont Racial Justice Alliance to enjoy over the November holiday.

When asked why they wanted to participate, many growers referenced wanting to support Abenaki communities in their goals of food security and food sovereignty. Most saw their participation as acts of solidarity and reparations, especially non-native growers with access to or ownership of land, while several Abenaki participants expressed their desire to bring traditional foods and seeds back to Abenaki people. Many expressed the understanding that Abenaki people have stewarded these lands and seeds through centuries of colonization and are committed to strengthening Abenaki health and culture in the present.

Furthermore, the Abenaki Land Link Project embodies a spirit of reciprocity. While offering their resources, growers learn from working with traditionally-stewardied seeds and the rich Abenaki culture they represent. This, in turn, is a great educational opportunity for others, as many growers integrate their participation into school projects, demonstration gardens, and more. Students felt the stakes of such a tactile and local example, ultimately holding both the project’s weight and joy of growing food for people.

While the Abenaki Land Link Project focuses on building relationships with landowners in the state, it represents a step toward, not a solution, addressing health disparities and lack of access to traditional foodways for Abenaki community members in Vermont. In discussing this, Chief Stevens distinguishes food security from food sovereignty: “We’re not in charge of our own destiny. I rely on [other people] to help grow our food because we don’t have land. If any [of them] decide not to do it anymore and leave, then I’m back to not having any way to grow food...to have true sovereignty, we have to own our own land, we have to grow some of the food on our land.” Hefner recognizes this as well: “As an educator, learner myself, this is a real, tangible way to think about decolonizing the literal soil. But I am reminded it is so preliminary. We are just scratching the surface and I want to keep thinking of concrete steps to participate in reconciliation.”

Processing the Harvest for the Abenaki Land Link Project
Thank you for helping us Share the Harvest

By Cailey Gibson, NOFA-VT Development Manager

With your incredible support, our annual Share the Harvest fundraiser in October raised over $17,000 to support our Farm Share Program. Thank you! These funds will support over 128 families with consistent access to healthy, local and organic food through half-priced CSAs. Participating farms receive the full cost of the CSA to support the viability of their farm businesses. We are so grateful for your support!

Thank you to the following participating restaurants and food businesses for making this fundraiser a big success:
The Alchemist, Stowe
City Market, Burlington
El Cortijo Taqueria, Burlington
Farmhouse Tap & Grill, Burlington
Guild Tavern, South Burlington
Kng Arthur Baking Company, Norwich
Middlebury Natural Foods Co-op, Middlebury
Colatina Exit, Bradford
Deep Root Organic Co-op, Johnson
Fire & Ice Restaurant Middlebury
Great Harvest Bread Co., Burlington
Green Peppers, Middlebury
Hunger Mountain Co-op, Montpelier
The Inn at Shelburne Farms, Shelburne
Juniper Bar & Restaurant at Hotel Vermont, Burlington
Marshfield Cooperative at Marshfield Village Store, Marshfield
Mulligans of Manchester, Manchester
Otter Creek Bakery Middlebury
Penny Cluse Cafe, Burlington
Springfield Food Co-op, Springfield
Stone Leaf Tea House in the Marbleworks Middlebury
Upper Valley Food Coop, White River Junction
Waybury Inn, Middlebury
Werner Tree Farm Middlebury
Wood Meadow Market, Enosburg Falls

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
Every month the Vermont Family Farmer of the Month award recipients; congratulations to Sunday Bell Farm, Wild Shepherd Farm, and Wild Carrot Farm! Your dedication to community, food access, and sustainability help build a resilient farm and food system in Vermont. Thank you!

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

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

We’re honored to announce another round of Vermont Family Farmer of the Month award recipients; congratulations to Sunday Bell Farm, Wild Shepherd Farm, and Wild Carrot Farm! Your dedication to community, food access, and sustainability help build a resilient farm and food system in Vermont. Thank you!

Sunday Bell Farm - August 2022

Sunday Bell Farm is a diversified livestock and micro-dairy in North Danville, Vermont owned and operated by Kylee and Sam Rossier. The Rossiers work hard to make their farm products accessible to all members of the community and set an incredible example of what a small, diversified farming operation can do to steward their land while providing food for their community. Their innovative farming practices focus on ways to reduce carbon consumption and waste in all aspects of their land use, animal husbandry, and business operations.

Sunday Bell Farm was awarded $12,000 to purchase and install a commercial dishwasher for washing half-gallon and quart-sized glass milk bottles that are used in their milk subscription program. As farmers who are dedicated to finding ways to minimize their carbon footprint, bottling milk in reusable glass containers is an important ethical environmental commitment for Kylee and Sam. Completing this project will have significant labor, cost and energy savings and will help Sunday Bell Farm achieve their goals of providing nutritious food for their community while also supporting the growth and long-term viability of their farm.

Apply by January 22nd to be considered for March, April, May and June awards. To learn more and apply, visit www.vermontfamilyfarmeraward.org.

Wild Shepherd Farm - September 2022

Emily Amanna and David Hassan started Wild Shepherd Farm in Athens, Vermont in 2010 with a few herds of sheep and a field of garlic. Since then, they have significantly grown their business to include a diverse blend of livestock, mixed vegetables, and a dairy facility for their sheep. They have developed a strong local customer base selling through several local farmers markets, a variety of wholesale accounts, and an on-farm store that they recently built. Emily and David are incredible land stewards and their dedication to increasing food access in their community allows many limited-income people in the southern part of the state to utilize Crop Cash, a NOFA-VT program that doubles the value of 3SquaresVT/SNAP benefits when spent on fruits, vegetables, herbs, and culinary seeds and plant starts at participating Vermont farmers markets.

Wild Shepherd Farm was awarded $12,000 to purchase and construct a heated greenhouse to propagate their plant starts. The new heated greenhouse will significantly increase Emily and David’s capacity to meet the market’s demand for their high-quality plant starts. In addition, it will increase the production and vigor of the plant starts, allowing them to maximize their vegetable production while providing more community members with starts for their own gardens. We’re excited for Wild Shepherd Farm to be able to provide more plant starts to their community.

Wild Carrot Farm - October 2022

Wild Carrot Farm is a diversified, horse-powered farm in Brattleboro, Vermont with an enthusiastic customer base. They sell 100% of their products through their farm store and CSA. Caitlin Burlett and Jesse Kayan raise over 200 varieties of vegetables, flowers, and mushrooms, as well as pigs, chickens, turkeys, and draft horses. The farm is a thriving center of community activity. Caitlin and Jesse are dedicated to making their products accessible; one-third of their CSA shares go to limited-income community members through NOFA-VT’s Farm Share program, which subsidizes the cost of the shares by 50% to make their healthy, sustainably grown food more accessible to folks in need. They have built food access, community, and environmental stewardship as the three integral pillars of their work.

Wild Carrot Farm was awarded $12,000 to replace two aging horses, which are critical to the farming systems they have in place. Through their investment in tools suited for horse-powered equipment, they have increased their soil health and productivity in ways beyond what could have been achieved with mechanical tillage and cultivation. Caitlin and Jesse are committed to minimizing their use of fossil fuels and working with horse-powered equipment allows them to do just that. This project will allow Wild Carrot Farm to continue to show that horsepower can be an economically viable and environmentally sustainable mode of power to grow food for their community.

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NOFA-VT’s 2023 Farm Bill Platform

By Maddie Kemper, NOFA-VT Advocacy Director

The farm bill is an omnibus bill (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. As such, it has a massive impact on how food is grown, sold, distributed, and bought in this country.

A new farm bill will be passed in 2023, and the seven Northeast Organic Farming Association chapters have come together to identify our region’s greatest farming and food system needs and the policies that can address them. As the farm bill process unfolds, we will need your input and help to inform and strengthen our advocacy campaign. This platform has been informed by input we gathered during listening sessions hosted by NOFA chapters across the region this past spring and summer and through careful evaluation of campaign being developed by organizations and coalitions that share our values and priorities. Read on to learn about the principles guiding our farm bill 2023 platform.

We want a farm bill that...

1. Invests in and protects the integrity of organic and agroecological practices as a core solution to our climate and biological crises.

   Organic practices improve soil health, clean water, promote biodiversity above and below ground, and require biological, mechanical, and cultural means of pest and disease control like cover crops and crop rotation. By actively working with natural systems and avoiding the use of synthetic fertilizers and toxic pesticides, organic and agroecological systems eliminate some of the most potent GHG emissions while sequestering carbon and protecting wildlife and their habitats. The 2023 Farm Bill must protect the integrity of the National Organic Program and invest a substantial proportion of its funding to support organic and agroecological systems to 30% of farmland by 2030.

2. Ensures fair treatment and just livelihoods for farmers and workers throughout the food and farming system.

   Farming is essential work that, at its best, provides food for our communities while nourishing and protecting ecosystems and contributes to the creation of community wealth. At present however, much of federal funding to support expansion of organic and agroecological systems to 30% of farmland by 2030.

3. Invests in rural communities, increases fairness and resilience of local and regional supply chains and breaks up consolidation in agriculture.

   To enable rural prosperity and increase local food system resilience, the farm bill should expand organic and regional food processing, distribution, and marketing infrastructure; invest in community leadership and cooperative ownership models; expand risk management opportunities and market access for small and medium-scale and diversified farms and ranches; and prioritize support for Black, Indigenous and people of color (BIPOC), and new and beginning farmers and ranchers in all programming. For communities to thrive and build more just and vital regional food systems, more investment and support is also needed for affordable and accessible broadband, healthcare, housing, childcare, and renewable energy.

4. Centers racial justice across all programs and repairs past and ongoing racial harm.

   The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has a demonstrated history of discriminating against farmers of color in lending and credit practices and program implementation. Taken in the context of a broader history of land theft, forced labor and other forms of disenfranchisement, USDA must actively work to support access to land, credit, and other resources for self-determination for farmers of color and other marginalized communities. In doing so, they must meaningfully engage with and be held accountable to BIPOC farmers and other stakeholders to develop programs and policies that support their needs on the ground.

5. Promotes food sovereignty for disadvantaged communities and ensures nutrition security for all.

   It is time to shift the U.S. food system to localized food sovereignty with access to farmland and farming resources for ecosystems, which nourish plants and animals, including humans. It is time to end public policies that subsidize pollution, and to require the manufacturers of pesticides, herbicides and genetically modified organisms to pay to clean up the contamination from which they profit. The U.S. must adopt the precautionary principle in introducing new materials and products and carefully weigh the climate impact of fossil fuels and their derivatives, especially synthetic fertilizers. These policies are necessary to protect biodiversity as well as the health of farmworkers and farmers, wildlife, and all who eat. A just transition must be provided for farmers who have been coerced into the chemical-GMO-CAFO treadmill with incentives to transition their operations to organic and agroecological systems with localized markets.

Learn More and Get Involved

We also welcome your input at any time; email our Policy Director Maddie Kemper at maddie@nofavt.org.

Policy Priorities

We have outlined proposed farm bill policy recommendations that support the above principles at nofavt.org/farm-bill and will continue to amend this list as new bills and proposals emerge. Please note that some of our top priorities for agriculture are typically not included in the Farm Bill and are implemented or regulated by agencies other than the USDA.

Marker Bills

Because the Farm Bill is such a huge piece of legislation with many, many programs and policies included, marker bills are used to signal specific policy proposals for parts of the larger farm bill but are typically not passed as stand-alone bills. Introducing marker bills allows members of Congress and advocates to build support for policy asks that may then be included in the larger farm bill package. You can see the existing marker bills that align with our principles and policy priorities at nofavt.org/farm-bill.

Support and Engage

We will continue to update our website as our platform develops. Want to make sure you stay in the know on when to take action and how to share input? Sign up to receive email alerts at nofavt.org.

Stay up to date on all things Farm Bill at NOFAVT.ORG/FARM-BILL
NOFA-VT Members: Thank you for supporting a just, ecological food system!

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

NEW MEMBERS
Beth Bernt, Jericho, VT
Brand Cunningham, Newapnt, VT
Dakik Freeman, Burlington, VT
Elisa Loveless, Burlington, VT
Elizabeth Devane, Newport, VT
Emily Landeberger, Weybridge, VT
Geoffrey & Martha Bentley, Lexington, MA
Jen Dowell, North Thetford, VT
Juan Moore, Springfield, VT
Joe Slavns, Quechee, VT
John Smil, Montpelier, VT
Joseph Newing, Brattleboro, VT
Juana Fectee, East Burke, VT
Kara Shannon, Waterbury, VT
Kelena Devine, Ferrisburgh, VT
Kelley McGill, Stowe, VT
Kara Shannon, Waterbury, VT
Karlene DeVine, Ferrisburgh, VT
Kelley McGill, Stowe, VT
LePage Farm, Barre, VT
Linda Johnson, Weybridge, VT
Little Flower Farm, Stowe, VT
Meadows Farm, Hardwick, VT
Monty Hill Farm, Craftsbury, VT
New Village Farm, Stowe, VT
Nodes Farm Inc, Stowe, VT
One Farm, Brattleboro, VT
Paul Stewart, Stowe, VT
Phyllis Fox, Hanover, NH
Rebecca Hall, West Townshend, VT
Reed & Chris Case, Cornville, VT
Sally Burr, Bristol, VT
Sarah Laggis, East Junction, VT
Sarah-Auer, St Albans City, VT
Sheila, Ken, South Burlington, VT
Sera Proct, Rye, NH
Wendy Verne-Benack, Jericho, VT
Wichit Amsu, Athens, VT
Wichit Amsu, Athens, VT

NEW & RENEWING BUSINESS MEMBERS
ADF Consulting, Marshfield, VT
Backwoods Betty Farm, Enosburg, VT
Baldwin Brothers, LLC, Morrisville, VT
Brattleboro Food Co-op, Brattleboro, VT
Carversville Farm Foundation, Carversville, PA
Cedar Mountain Farm, Hartland, VT
Center for an Agricultural Economy, Hardwick, VT
Elmore Mountain Farm, Morrisville, VT
Elmore Mountain Farm, Morrisville, VT
Fat Sheep Farm & Cabins, Hartland, VT
Forest & Forces Lattorne Farm, Stowe, VT
Gallagher Clover Farm, West Wardsboro, VT
Harlow Farm, West Townshend, VT
Health Hes Farm, South Hero, VT
High Mogul Organic Seeds, Westport, VT
Hicks Farm LLC, East Calais, VT
Ilakari Farm, Jericho, VT
Johnson Family Foundation Fund of the Vermont Community Foundation, Poultney, VT
La Ferme Sophie, Derby Line, VT
Laraway Youth & Family Services, Johnson, VT
LePage Farm, Barre, VT
Little Flowers Farm, Rattle, VT
Meadows Farm, Hardwick, VT
Monty Hill Farm, Craftsbury, VT
New Village Farm, Stowe, VT
Nodes Farm Inc, Stowe, VT
One Farm, Brattleboro, VT
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Rebecca Hall, West Townshend, VT
Reed & Chris Case, Cornville, VT
Sally Burr, Bristol, VT
Sarah Laggis, East Junction, VT
Sarah-Auer, St Albans City, VT
Shelby, Ken, South Burlington, VT
Sera Proct, Rye, NH
Wendy Verne-Benack, Jericho, VT
Whit Amsu, Athens, VT
Wichit Amsu, Athens, VT

A Warm Welcome to our New Staff!

Jaden Hill
Education & Outreach Assistant Americorps Member

Jaden Hill grew up in rural Pennsylvania, where she spent her time exploring the surrounding rivers, fields, and forests with her family. She recently graduated from Middlebury College with a degree in Conservation Biology (Biology and Environmental Studies). Everything she does orbits around interconnectedness, whether that be farming, studying ecology, making art, or participating in community organizing. Now that she’s finished school, she’s excited to play with kids, hike, bike, cano, cook, and, of course, meet new people, starting with folks at NOFA-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 almost 800 organic farmers & processors throughout the state.

Farm on the River, LLC

Upstate Elevator Supply Company LLC

Sitting Pretty Farm

Vermont Dog Eats LLC

Learn more about organic certification at VERMONTORGANIC.ORG/WHY-ORGANIC
Wishing you winter wonder!

May this season bring you abundance and connection.

Inside this newsletter:

Winter Conference Preview (pg. 4)

Abenaki Land Link Project Recap (pg. 6)

Farm Bill Platform (pg. 12)

... and more!