

NOFA Notes



Quarterly newsletter of the Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont

Spring 2024



Partnering on Market Development Work | The Nuances of No-Till Farming
The Importance of CSAs | Meet Our New Organic Practices Team



Dear friend of NOFA-VT,

On the cusp of spring, with another growing season ahead, we face an uncertain future. The memory of a challenging last year, and turbulent times still, can easily feel unmooring. Yet I'm writing just after the Winter Conference. There we reflected on how we can let that uncertainty overwhelm us, or we can allow it to motivate, connect, and inspire us to plant seeds of resilience, care, and nourishment now.

Even in, and perhaps because of, such a time of rapid change and crises, we have potent and ample opportunities to cultivate change. Jenny Odell, a perceptive naturalist, climate activist, and mind-expanding writer articulates in her book 'Saving Time' how, "there are two different words for time, chronos and kairos." (Bear with me!) "Chronos, which appears as part of words like chronology, is the realm of linear time, a steady, plodding march of events into the future. Kairos means something more like crisis, but it is also related to what many of us might think of as opportune timing or 'seizing the time'. In kairos, all moments are different, and 'the right thing happens at the right point'-- what I find in kairos- time is a lifeline, a sliver of the audacity to imagine something different. Hope and desire, after all, can exist only on the differential between today and an undetermined tomorrow."

Our conference's theme this year called us to "work upstream"— to ask not just how we can survive in the conditions we live in, but how we can change those conditions themselves. To hold the question: what is the opportunity of the moment of "kairos time" we are in, right now? What possibilities can emerge if we listen deeply enough and come together? Our keynote speaker, the farmer, activist, and visionary Reginaldo Haslett-Marroquin continuously reminded us: So often we see the world through merely a peephole. Can we open up our frame a little wider?

One way to expand our sense of what is possible is to think with other people. Coming together allows us to reconnect, and to imagine in ways not accessible when alone. Not only do we generate more creativity, we have a chance to experience what social scientist Dacher Keltner calls, "collective effervescence, defined as the joyful feeling of energy and harmony when people are engaged in a shared purpose and might even tap into collective awe." I felt collective effervescence at the conference: in conversation over the snack table and at art stations, in workshops, and in 800-person singalongs. The conversations that have spilled out and continued since the conference continue to humble and delight me, reminding me there is endless potential in our shared moment of 'kairos' time—that is, the brief moment we find ourselves living on this earth together. With you all, my sense of what is possible moved from the overwhelming to the hopeful, from crisis to opportunity.

We need to keep that creativity and joyful possibility flowing all year. NOFA-VT is a people's organization—not a staff that works in a silo, but a living organism made up of members, farmers, eaters, staff, board, advisors, and collaborators, all working in partnership with the earth. Thank you for being here, now, to widen our shared frame and seize this moment to plant a thriving future.

Together, onward.

Grace Oedel
 Executive Director, NOFA-VT

The "Vermont Way" Forward

Expanding Market Access and Increasing Demand for Vermont Organic Products

By Lindsey Brand, NOFA-VT Marketing & Communications Director

We are excited to announce that we're joining forces with Vermont Way Foods, Food Connects, and Migrant Justice to embark on a multi-year project that will expand the market for organic food produced in Vermont. The project aims to support Vermont's organic farmers and farmworkers while expanding the supply of local food across the region.

These partners are all long-time collaborators with NOFA-VT, as our missions deeply intersect. Food Connects is an entrepreneurial nonprofit that aggregates and delivers food from over 125 regional farms and producers to more than 280 buyers in southeast Vermont, southwest New Hampshire, and western Massachusetts. Along with three other food hubs, they launched Vermont Way Foods, a food brand that aims to provide Vermont producers with access to larger markets. Vermont Way Foods launched into the market in the fall of 2022 with a selection of fresh, organic Vermont-grown produce and expanded in 2023, securing a major retail partnership with 88 Market Basket locations across New England. Vermont Way Foods decided early on that organic certification would be a key component of their brand. This joint project will involve the growth of new organic Vermont Way Foods branded products and include assurance of fair-labor practices for new dairy products through enrollment in Milk with Dignity, a worker-driven social responsibility program organized by the Vermont-based human rights organization, Migrant Justice.

Together, we will:

- Create new products: Vermont Way Foods will bring new organic dairy, maple, fresh produce, and other products to market, selling food from local, organic farms under a unified Vermont Way Foods brand. Where applicable, the products will be produced on farms enrolled in the Milk With Dignity program. The brand will be distributed by Food Connects, an established food hub, across the region.
- Grow markets: The partners will help Vermont's certified organic farmers reach more customers by forging new sales channels between local, organic producers and wholesale buyers, using consumer research to inform which sales channels will be most successful for the farms. This will not only benefit the farmers, but also give more people access to organic goods produced with fair labor practices, both in Vermont and regionally.
- Increase the Demand: Through marketing and consumer education in Vermont and the region, we aim to increase awareness and demand for local, organic products.

All four partners will work together over the next three years to meet these goals. These are crucial steps forward as we continue to work towards an economically viable, ecologically sound, and socially just Vermont agricultural system. Stay tuned for more updates as we take on this collaborative market-building work.

This project is funded by a \$1 million grant awarded to NOFA-VT from the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Agricultural Marketing Service's Organic Market Development Grant Program. ◇

The Nuances of No-Till Farming

By Megan Browning, NOFA-VT Farmer Services Program Facilitator

“We’re going to have a lot more [challenging seasons] for all of us who continue farming,” Evan Perkins of Small Axe Farm recently shared during a winter meeting of the Jack Lazor Memorial Soil Health Stewards cohort. “This will probably be looked back upon as a good year in a few decades,” he said, reflecting on this past growing season that brought record-breaking levels of precipitation to many parts of Vermont. Evan cautioned against the mindset that we just have to get through this one hard year and asserted the imperative for longer-term planning and solutions.

During this meeting, farmers shared reflections on soil management practices and approaches that either held up or changed for them over the course of this past growing season. A critical emerging theme was that flexibility and adaptation are some of the most essential components of managing soil health. There is not one “right” way that “works” or will keep working over and over again. Rather, managing for soil health is a process that evolves over time and must be considered in relation to changing conditions across all three pillars of sustainability: environmental, social, and economic.

“I would say this season challenged some of my assumptions that I didn’t really know were assumptions,” Ansel Ploog of Flywheel Farm reflected. Ansel continued, “I have been trying to have a standard operating practice for every task that we wanted to do on the farm. And what we have instead is a really robust toolbox, full of many different options. This year was the first year that I realized what an advantage that is for us because we can choose which tool and which practice to do according to the weather, the labor we have available, and the tools we have available. And it’s really easy to tweak and incorporate new knowledge into whatever we’re doing.”

While the concept of “no-till” has been gaining popularity over recent years as the focus of many discussions on soil health and climate-mitigating agricultural practices, it is critical to understand that there are a plethora of management practices that contribute to building soil organic matter and that there is not just one right way to manage for soil health. In fact, having a diverse toolbox of options is key. “Our goal, as farmers and land stewards, is not to grow vegetables without doing any tillage. Our goal is to grow food for our community in a way that improves the productive potential of this land, without imposing harm onto our local, regional, and global ecosystem,” Ryan Fitzbeauchamp from Evening Song Farm in Shrewsbury recently shared. Ryan continued, “In general, our farm is doing less tillage than we used to in order to meet that goal. And also, certain forms of tillage, in certain contexts, can help us to improve the long-term productive potential of this land. While it’s true that excessive tillage can rapidly diminish the health of the soil, it’s also true that skillful use of tillage can be used together with other soil care practices to increase the long-term fertility of the soil.”

Illustrated by the examples below, gathered from participants in the current Jack Lazor Memorial Soil Health Stewards Cohort, we’re excited to share a glimpse into the dynamic practices of soil health management, and how intricately each of these farms and others are thinking about soil and soil management. Note that although each of these farms is smaller scale—five acres or less—many of these practices and approaches are scalable and also being employed on larger farms.

Patrick Sullivan From Ananda Gardens in Montpelier

Permanent Bed System



“We use a permanent bed approach for the majority of the crops we cultivate so that we don’t have to till or disturb the soil with any equipment other than our hands, garden rakes, and a digging fork for crops like carrots.

This lets us farm while focusing on growing soil organic matter, not disturbing beneficial fungi, and improving overall soil health. We layer fertility on top of the bed and our goal is to never leave garden soil bare. We grow lots of cover crops with this system too. We let them winter kill or crimp down and solarize with tarps if they are grown in spring and summer.”

Straw Mulch



“We started our permanent beds by using lots of compost, but have turned more and more to using mulches and cover crops for fertility. One of our favorite mulches is CLEAN straw. It is easy to use, can be stored overwinter and used as needed, and provides great winter cover for beds. We are leaving the garden completely protected with mulch over the winter in case of heavy rains. We can no longer rely on winter snow cover to protect our soil.”

Ryan Fitzbeauchamp From Evening Song Farm in Cuttingsville

Planting Into Cover Crop Residue



“Since 2020, our farm has been transplanting crops directly into dead cover crop residue, without first incorporating that residue into the soil through tillage. In our farm’s context, there are several advantages to this approach. The thick cover crop residue mulches the soil surface, which greatly reduces the risk of erosion, suppresses the growth of annual weeds, and conserves moisture in the soil for the following crop. The soil itself is also well structured from the undisturbed root system of the previous cover crop and the associated microbial community of those roots. We see our transplanted crops consistently flourish in the weeks after transplanting due to the well-structured soil. The mulched soil surface prevents soil from splashing on plant leaves and we see remarkably less disease in these crops compared to our previous growing methods on bare soil. In some instances, transplanting through legume cover crop residue allows our farm to grow all of the fertility needed for good yields on the following crop. Experimenting with these systems to improve the fertility of our farm’s soil is one of the most energizing and rewarding parts of my work.”

Ansel Ploog From Flywheel Farm in Woodbury

Living Wheel Tracks Between Growing Beds



“We plant Dutch white clover and native grasses in strips between annually planted beds. This creates habitat for pollinating insects and critters, while also being an enjoyable experience for humans as it helps the soil to stay cool. The living root systems of the clover and native grasses support soil biology and also minimize overall soil disturbance – we’re not trying to maintain weed-free soil between beds.”

Henry Webb From Old Road Farm in Granville

Cover Cropping



“We are using a mustard cover crop mid-summer in our high tunnels that see intensive lettuce production in the spring and fall as a way to add organic matter as well as for soil biofumigation. After two seasons I have definitely seen reduced disease pressure in the tunnels, which I attribute partially to this practice.

Another thing we have been working on the last couple of years is bringing more land into production so that we can incorporate longer rotations between intensive vegetable cropping. I would like to see anywhere from 1/3 to 1/2 of our cropland in a full-season cover crop any given year to increase organic matter on our sandy soil and help manage weed pressure.”

Tarping



“We use tarping as part of our rotation for certain short-season crops like arugula and spinach that we seed every week. After preparing beds with tillage in the spring and seeding our first rounds of those crops, we experimented with tarping to terminate the crop after harvest and then seeding again into the existing bed. We had good results, and those beds held up better under the adverse conditions we had last season with less soil crusting from the pounding rains, better germination, and less weed pressure. It doesn’t work for every crop but at our scale, it is a good tool to have. The picture shows beds freshly seeded after the tarp was removed. We lightly rake the bed tops to incorporate amendments and remove large residue that would interfere with the seeder. In a year like last year, it was much easier to find a dry window to prep beds that way than wait to be able to bring the tractor into the field without creating problems.” ◇



CSAs as a Tool for Resilience

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

We are in the midst of spring and summer CSA sign-up season once again! For those who don't know, CSA stands for Community Supported Agriculture and it is a key way for some farmers to gain early-season income. The basics are that customers (many of us) give a farmer a lump sum of money at this time of year, in exchange for a weekly share of vegetables or meat throughout the growing season and sometimes into the fall and even winter. There are many permutations beyond that basic model and many unique options.

“These community relationships are key to our success as we navigate the challenges of climate change”

-Andy Jones at Intervale Community Farm, Burlington

At the core of CSA is resilience. The CSA model gives farmers income at the beginning of the planting season when they often have high expenses— seeds, compost, labor – and before harvesting leads to income. In addition, as a community-held entity, a CSA spreads some of farming's inherent risks to the community members who choose to support the farm as CSA members. In turn, this model helps community members better appreciate the connections between factors like weather and growing practices and their direct impact on the food that they may or may not receive in their CSA share. It also helps members develop a deeper understanding of what grows in one's area during each part of the year. In a typical year, a CSA provides an abundant supply of food to shareholders and a sense of community with others also invested in sourcing their food locally.

In difficult seasons, such as 2023, CSAs can provide a vital backbone of support that farmers need by spreading the impact to customers, hence the “community support.” This idea was underscored during a NOFA-VT staff tour last October of the Intervale Community Farm in Burlington focused on climate resilience. Among the many strategies and innovations that the farm has employed, farmer Andy Jones shared that, “perhaps the farm's strongest climate resilience tool is the support we received from our CSA members when the farm flooded in July. These community relationships are key to our success as we navigate the challenges of climate change.” Jones went on to share that, “as much or more than the prepayment aspect of CSA, the market certainty provided by people joining a CSA is one of the key aspects that makes CSA a powerful tool for farms. You can borrow against known future income to fund spring cash flow, but knowing where you are selling your product and avoiding the need to look for a market while holding a highly perishable product is a huge advantage. This really helps farms level out demand fluctuations and plan production appropriately.”

The flooding this past summer caused several farms to reduce their CSA offerings, but in most cases, their customers accepted the changes without complaint. Sharing the risks of a bad season in this way can be critical to helping a farm make it through to the next year and is an investment in a thriving food system.

While the upfront payment is a cornerstone of the CSA model, not all community members can afford this cost—something most farmers are well aware of. The Farm Share Program, begun by NOFA-VT in 1995 in response to requests from farmer members, provides discounts on CSA shares for folks who need financial assistance. Once Farm Share participants select the CSA they'd like to join, NOFA-VT covers the cost of a portion of the share, allowing the CSA member to pay for the remainder and pick up their food in the same way as all other CSA members,

while still ensuring the farmer receives market price. In its first year, the program served a dozen individual families and three farms and has since grown to reach over 500 Vermont families and more than 60 farms in the past year.

The Farm Share Program, one of a suite of NOFA-VT food access programs, has become an increasingly important market for farms. In 2023, NOFA-VT and Farm

“We want everybody in our community to be able to access nourishing local food, regardless of their class or income. The Farm Share program has been instrumental in our ability to support those needs in our community.”

- Caitlin Burlett at Wild Carrot Farm, Brattleboro

Share participants contributed over \$204,000 towards CSA shares at farms, compared to \$74,000 in 2019. While these programs break down barriers for Vermonters to access local food, they simultaneously broaden the customer base for farmers, reaching folks who may not have been able to purchase from them otherwise and providing a new income source.

Farm Share offers great market potential for Vermont food producers, but only as long as there is funding to cover the share discount. NOFA-VT has relied on philanthropy and contributions from the farms' community members to support this cost-sharing. While these are vital sources of support, philanthropy alone cannot support the increasing need. Because of this, NOFA-VT is advocating this legislative session for a state budget request for \$478,500 in FY25 to support Farm Share and our other food access programming, Crop Cash and Farm Stand Match. A state allocation would bring more sustained funding to these crucial programs, ultimately stabilizing our ability to meet demand while ensuring the programs are a reliable source of income for farms. If you would like to share your support for this budget request with your legislators, please email johanna@nofavt.org with your town, name (or your desire to stay anonymous), and why you support funding for the Farm Share and NOFA-VT's other food access programs.



Vermont Family Farmer of the Month

By Kayla Strom, NOFA-VT Farm to School Coordinator and Vermont Family Farmer of the Month Administrator

The Vermont Family Farmer of the Month Award continues to recognize outstanding farmers across the state for their commitment to sustainable agriculture and innovative projects. Funded by a generous anonymous donor and administered by NOFA-VT in collaboration with VHC Vermont Farm & Forest Viability Program, Shelburne Farms, and the Vermont Grass Farmers Association, this award highlights farms that contribute to a resilient agricultural landscape and demonstrate environmental stewardship. We are honored to introduce the latest awards:



Woods Market Garden, Brandon - November, 2023

Dan and Elyse Wulfkuhle took over Woods Market Garden in 2022, after years of managing farms in Vermont. With a century-long legacy, Woods Market Garden offers certified organic vegetables, berries, plants, and garden starts through their vibrant farm stand. Their commitment to environmental stewardship and community resilience underscores every aspect of their operation.

Woods Market Garden was awarded \$12,000 to purchase a larger irrigation pump and water reel, crucial for meeting the farm's water demands sustainably. With 25 acres of owned farmland and 35 acres leased, efficient irrigation is essential to the success of the farm. The enhanced capacity created by this project will improve their efficiency, resilience, and economic viability, aligning with their commitment to sustainable agriculture and community resilience.



Burnt Rock Farm, Huntington - December, 2023

Founded by Justin and Lindsay Rich, Burnt Rock Farm in Huntington is quite literally a “rock” for Vermont's agricultural community. Specializing in winter storage crops and summer greenhouse produce, Burnt Rock Farm cultivates 25 acres of vegetables for local markets, co-ops, and restaurants. Justin's dedication to environmental stewardship and community engagement is evident in every aspect of the farm's operations.

Burnt Rock Farm was awarded \$12,000 to expand their wash-pack facility, enhancing operational efficiency during the winter months. The project will transform an existing open porch into a climate-controlled space dedicated to washing and packing orders, streamlining post-harvest activities and maximizing productivity.



Tup's Crossing Farm, Orwell, VT - January, 2024

Holly and Faruk Menguc's journey from urban chef life to pasture-based animal husbandry led them to establish Tup's Crossing Farm in Orwell. With a herd of 420 goats, Tup's Crossing Farm specializes in shipping goat milk to Vermont Creamery while prioritizing sustainable farming practices and community building.

Tup's Crossing Farm was awarded \$12,000 to transition to a double-16 milking parlor, reducing the energy and labor costs associated with milk production. The expansion will enhance efficiency and allow more time for the farmers to spend managing their animals and the farm. ♦

Applications are open to any small or medium-sized farms in Vermont. The next round of applications are due May 28th. To learn more, visit WWW.VERMONTFAMILYFARMERAWARD.ORG.

Looking Back at Our 42nd Annual Winter Conference

In the middle of February, we hosted our 42nd annual Winter Conference—and it was one for the books! Thank you to the nearly 1,000 people who joined us virtually or in person for a weekend of learning, growing, connecting, reflecting, and celebrating. We're also continually grateful for the sponsors and exhibitors who support the conference and make this event possible. We all can make a difference in our food system, and we're stronger together!



Top to bottom, left to right: The crowd listens to the keynote presentation in the main ballroom in the Davis Center; Attendees of the Children's Conference learn a song with the Swarm Pollinator Protectors; An attendee stops by Center for an Agricultural Economy's table at the exhibitors fair.

Top to bottom, left to right: Reginaldo Haslett-Marroquin gives the keynote address; Fatuma Nyukuri Hussein and Hadija Petro from New Farms for New Americans present at the "Culturally Meaningful Seeds and the Communities They Nourish" workshop; The exhibitors fair remains a popular spot, including tables for organizations like The Addison County Relocalization Network (ACORN); Yohann Hanley provides tips at the tool clinic; Attendees pose in front of the "Climate Farmer Stories Project" art exhibit provided by Vital Communities; The community artwork (provided by Madeline Halsey of Fruits of Our Labor) is filled in bit-by-bit by attendees.

Introducing NOFA-VT's Organic Practices Team

By Nancy LaRowe, NOFA-VT Organic Practices Program Director

NOFA-VT's Farmer Service team has recently expanded to include new staff and resources to support farm viability across the triple bottom line of financial, environmental, and social resilience. We are thrilled to have additional capacity to provide greater focus on supporting farms interested in improving their soil health and water quality, adopting organic practices, and building climate resilience. Our Organic Practices team will offer a range of support services including climate risk assessment and planning, organic practice technical assistance, organic certification support, funding for implementing climate-smart practices, and shared learning and educational opportunities.

Climate forecasts for our region indicate a need to be prepared for a range of weather conditions including extreme precipitation, short-term drought, heat stress, warmer

winters, late spring freezes, and increased pest pressure, as well as the increased production costs associated with mitigating these conditions. Organic farmers employ soil health and conservation practices that build greater resilience in the face of these challenges, and the Organic Practices team is eager to work with farmers to integrate more of these practices so that we can be proactive and well-positioned to meet the changing demands. In coordination with the Farm Business Development team, NOFA-VT's Farmer Services Program will provide holistic and customizable services that support farms to increase their climate resilience and business success.

The Organic Practices team has been quickly orienting to the work, meeting and talking with farmers and project partners, and diving into active projects, like Resilience

Grants and workshop planning. The team is also excited to dive into longer-term projects, which are discussed in more detail below.

Climate Risk Assessment, Planning, and Resources

Farmers, our communities, and our society depend on successful, thriving farms that are resilient to the impacts of a changing climate. Through organic farming practices, farm adaptation, and mitigation planning, Vermont farms can strengthen their climate resilience while growing their profitability, improving soil and water quality, supporting ecosystem and biodiversity health, and cultivating community resilience. The Organic Practices team is currently developing a toolkit of resources to help farms identify what climate impacts they should expect,

assess their strengths and risks to the impacts of the climate crisis on their farm, and assist farms in making plans that will increase their resilience.

In addition to the assessment of strengths and risks, the planning process includes supporting farms to clarify their goals, prioritize strategies, and create an adaptation plan that includes finding needed resources, implementation, evaluation, and consistent reassessing. Knowing that each farm is unique and at a different point in their farm development, we are developing tools and resources that are flexible and adaptable to provide the level of planning each farm needs— from quick self-assessments to in-depth months-long assessment and planning processes. The Organic Practices team will also work closely with the Farm Business Development team to conduct cost-benefit analyses to ensure that farmers are implementing practices that make fiscal sense for their farms.

One of the tools in the Organic Practices team toolbox is funding support to help farmers invest in their soil health and climate resilience. NOFA-VT is a partner on Pasa Sustainable Agriculture's Climate Smart Commodities Program project, "Climate-Smart Farming and Marketing - Financial Support and Technical Assistance from Maine to South Carolina." This 5-year collaborative grant provides funding and technical assistance for farms to adopt climate-smart practices. As part of this project, NOFA-VT will be able to provide proactive support and grants to farms to incentivize their implementation of a suite of climate-smart practices that positively impact soil health and climate resilience on farms.

Staff members on the Organic Practices team will serve as Technical Assistance Providers (TAPs) throughout this 5-year grant program, working closely with Vermont farmers to identify and implement appropriate climate-smart practices that will promote the health and resilience of

their operations. Farmers will get paid for the implementation of these practices, with the average contract award projected to be around \$15,000 per grant contract which will vary according to the practices implemented. We anticipate working with 40-50 farmers per year through this program, but the project is still in the development phase and we expect to have more information to share about this opportunity in May.

Going beyond implementation, a key component of this project is to develop a network of farmers engaged in community science around climate-smart agricultural practices. Participating farms will be involved in the monitoring and measuring (depending on the practice) of the impacts of adopting climate-smart practices through soil health testing. Participating farms will be eligible to join the Pasa-led Soil Health Benchmarking Study. In future years, this project will also include financial benchmarking, offer marketing strategies to help farmers communicate the benefits of these practices to their customers, and develop tools to help climate-conscious consumers find climate-smart farms near them.

Shared Learning & Resources for Organic Certification

Central to NOFA-VT's mission encouraging farmers to transition their farming operations to organic practices. In close coordination with the Vermont Organic Farmers (VOF) team, the Organic Practices team will develop educational opportunities and resources to support farms with the certification process.

To lower the barriers and ease the transition for Vermont farmers seeking to become certified organic, NOFA-VT is a core partner in the Mid-Atlantic/Northeast Regional Transition to Organic Partnership Program (TOPP). With the Organic Practices team, producers transitioning to organic will find support through the transition and

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The Big Picture for Farmer Services

Our Farmer Services Program provides customized technical assistance and business development services for farms that are certified organic, transitioning to organic, and non-certified farmers using organic practices. Services are delivered at the individual farm level and also through the cultivation of peer learning opportunities.

Farmer Services now includes two complementary departments. The **Organic Practices** team provides production technical assistance, resources, and educational opportunities for farmers interested in implementing organic and climate-resilient practices. The **Farm Business Development** team supports farmers at all stages of business development to develop plans and build the skills needed to meet their business and quality of life goals.



Meet the Team



Nancy LaRowe, Organic Practices Program Director, has been supporting farm viability for ten years as a service provider after operating a pasture-based livestock farm for 15 years.



Kevin Haggerty, Climate Resilience Specialist, has more than ten years of production and management experience at certified organic farms in Vermont and Washington.



Eric Boatti, Climate Resilience Specialist, has worked on and/or managed diversified livestock and dairy operations for eight years in the Carolinas and Vermont.



Zea Luce, Organic Practices Specialist, completed the organic farming program at UCSC, has years of farming experience, and a rich background in farm/environmental education & outreach. Zea came on board in 2021 as the Events & Engagement Manager and is excited to shift into this new role.

certification process through one-on-one technical assistance, workshops, webinars, and on-farm events. Educational events across the state will offer opportunities for farmers to learn about organic production, the certification process, market opportunities, and more.

We are also coordinating a Farmer-to-Farmer Mentorship program as part of the TOPP project that matches experienced certified organic producers or processors with those interested in certification and/or improving their organic practices. The year-long mentorship is an opportunity

to be in community with peers and share knowledge that will increase organic practices and resilience. If you're interested in learning more about this mentorship program, please contact Zea at zea@nofavt.org.

Shared learning and educational opportunities are fundamental to increasing the adoption of organic and other conservation practices. Virtual forums, workshops, and intensives at our annual Winter Conference, and workshops on farms in the summer will all include farmer-driven topics and content. Last month, The Organic Practices team, in collaboration with partners,

hosted the Winter Conference intensive "Mapping for Farm Resilience." The all-day workshop introduced the adaptation assessment and planning process with 40 attendees and heard from a panel of farmers about how they manage their farm with resilience in mind.

Aside from these new additions, the Organic Practices team will take the lead on overseeing the Jack Lazor Memorial Soil Health Stewards Cohort (read a recent update on page 4) and the Resilience Grants. We are excited to connect more with you soon. Please don't hesitate to reach out! ◇

Farmer Emergency Fund Update

By Erin Buckwalter, NOFA-VT Events & Engagement Director

We are so grateful to you, our community, for coming together this year to support farmers recover from the past year's devastating weather. Since mid-July, when flooding impacted farms and communities across the state, you have helped us raise nearly \$1.8 million for the NOFA-VT Farmer Emergency Fund. By year-end, we had awarded over \$1,550,000 in grants to 217 farms, providing crucial cash flow to farms while they waited for slow state and federal emergency funding, if it materialized at all.

As many of you know, before July's flooding, we typically awarded 2-4 emergency grants a year. Yet the need generated by the July flooding wasn't an isolated occurrence. More extreme flooding in December and hurricane-force winds in January severely impacted more farms. The July flooding and subsequent support we were able to generate through the fund has dramatically increased awareness about it and as of this writing in mid-March, since the start of the year alone, we have made an additional 6 grants of \$15,000. Additionally, we have another 10 farmers who have requested applications but have not yet submitted them! This powerful generosity and reciprocity is an incredible testament to the strength of our relationships and our community - thank you again!

As we look ahead to a world in which extreme weather causes more frequent challenges, we know we cannot rely only on the generosity of our community. We are doubling down on our efforts to advocate for state and federal funding options that support small and diversified farms. Last year, we worked with student clinicians at Vermont Law School to collect data on who is—and who is not—currently served by federal disaster and crop insurance programs. We are proud of this work and this collaboration informed our ongoing advocacy for improved disaster assistance at the state and federal levels, leading to the introduction of the WEATHER Act by Senator Welch (<https://bit.ly/weatheract>). We are also working in coalition with partners at the state level this session to advocate for more funding for the Business Emergency Gap Assistance Program (BEGAP) program, while also looking further ahead, strategizing about what longer-term strategies are needed to more effectively support farms through emergencies moving forward. If you're interested in getting involved in this work, please reach out to our Policy and Organizing Director, Maddie Kempner, at maddie@nofavt.org.

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, 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 Alfond 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!** ◇

Get Involved in Our New Projects Supporting Organic Certification:

Interested in transitioning to or becoming certified organic?

Certified organic producers can serve as paid mentors and will be paired with a transitioning producer, providing support through the certification process. Transitioning producers receive mentorship at no cost.



nofavt.org/topp

Learn more about mentorship opportunities!

All farmers and producers: help us tailor future resources to fit your needs!

Certified and non-certified producers, please share your experience with the organic certification process in Vermont. Your input will be used to develop programming and resources that will make obtaining and maintaining certification easier in the future. Thank you!



Take the quick survey



United States Department of Agriculture
Agricultural Marketing Service
National Organic Program
Transition to Organic Partnership Program



2024 Spirit of Enid Wonnacott Awardees



Enid Wonnacott was the Executive Director of NOFA-VT for 31 years and worked tirelessly to connect farmers across the state and build the strong organization we know today. After her passing in 2019, we began to honor her memory by annually awarding one or more farmers who embody the qualities that made her such a beloved leader in the organic food movement—who have helped agriculture to flourish in Vermont, are deeply committed to building community, and live with joy, kindness, and relationships at the heart of their work.

Congratulations to this year's awardees, Patrick Sullivan and Melisa Oliva of Ananda Gardens and Pete Miller of Miller Farm. On behalf of the NOFA-VT staff and board, thank you for your commitment to your communities and Vermont's farming future. ◇

A Warm Welcome to our New Staff!



Eric Boatti

Climate Resilience Specialist

Eric brings a background in diversified livestock management and environmental education to his work promoting the resilience of Vermont farms in the face of a changing climate. Since leaving his hometown of NYC in 2013, Eric has either been studying, working on, or managing diversified and pasture-based livestock operations. In 2018, Eric received his B.A. in Sustainable Agriculture & Environmental Education from Warren Wilson College. After three years of farming in the southern Appalachian mountains, Eric moved back north to join the robust Vermont agricultural community he has always admired from afar, where he spent two seasons serving as the Farm Director at Maple Wind Farm. When not out chasing livestock across pastures, you can most often find Eric spending time in the kitchen with those he holds dear, or attempting to read a book over his 120lb Pyrenees lap dog, Finn.



Kevin Haggerty

Climate Resilience Specialist

Kevin is a farmer and agricultural educator focused on building resilient communities and a just food system. Since graduating from Lewis and Clark College, Kevin has worked on a variety of organic farms and nonprofits in Arkansas, Ireland, Washington, and Vermont. This work included owning and operating a vegetable farm in Washington, serving on the board of the Snoqualmie Valley Farmers Cooperative, and overseeing the crop production, research, and food access programs at Oxbow Farm and Conservation Center. Kevin is currently pursuing an MS in Food Systems from UVM with a focus on perennial agriculture. When not daydreaming about weed-free carrot fields, Kevin loves escaping to the mountains and can be found hiking, camping, biking, snowboarding, and jumping in cold bodies of water.



Donna Samson

Finance Director

Donna is a Certified Public Accountant whose career started in public accounting where she was first exposed to the complex and unique issues facing nonprofit organizations. For the past twenty years, her career focus has been in the private sector working for nonprofit organizations while also running a small tax preparation business. She is very enthused to work for NOFA-VT with its emphasis on organic farming practices while promoting human and environmental justice. Donna lives in Plainfield, VT and has many happy places, but her favorites are located within the woods surrounding her home and in various locations along the mid coast of Maine. When not working or exploring the woods Donna enjoys hiking, kayaking, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and spending time with family including her two horses, two rescue dogs, three hens, and a cat named Jasmine.

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 spring.

NEW MEMBERS

Abigail Blake, Waterbury, VT
 Andrew Plotsky & Rita Champion, Bethel, VT
 Bill Chidsey, Hardwick, VT
 Blake Goldberg, Burlington, VT
 Byron Garcia, North Hero, VT
 David Pratt, Brooklyn, NY
 Doug Bradford, Franklin, VT
 Ehrin Lingeman, Strafford, VT
 Greg & Julie Garceau, St. Albans, VT
 Israel Helfand, Cabot, VT
 Jaquelyn Rieke, Plainfield, VT
 Kevin Brown, Fairfax, VT
 Nichole Wolfgang, Groton, VT
 Nicole D'Agata, Waterbury Center, VT
 Rachel Kendall, Strafford, VT
 Shannen Coffey, Wilton, NH
 Susan Aldrich & Winnie Jones, Barton, VT

NEW & RENEWING BUSINESS MEMBERS

Accredited Certifiers Association, Fredericksburg, VA
 Am brook, New York, NY
 American Flatbread Waitsfield, Waitsfield, VT
 April's Maple, Canaan, VT
 Aqua ViTea, Middlebury, VT
 Autumn Rayne Acres, Berlin, VT
 Barefoot Farm, Westfield, VT
 Ben & Jerry's Homemade, S Burlington, VT
 Bennington Farmers Market, Bennington, VT
 Bertrand Family Maple, Swanton, VT
 Big Picture Farm L3C, Townshend, VT
 Bloodroot Designs VT, Barnet, VT
 Bluebird Dream Farm, Trumansburg, NY
 Boneyard Farm, Cambridge, VT
 Branon Family Maple Orchards, Fairfield, VT

Bravo Botanicals LLC, Guilford, VT
 Broad Reach Farm, Charlotte, VT
 Butternut Mountain Farm, Morrisville, VT
 Cambridge Corner Farm, Cambridge, NY
 Carman Brook Farm, LLC, Swanton, VT
 Catamount Solar, Randolph, VT
 Cedar Brook Homestead, Barre, VT
 Champlain Acres, Bridport, VT
 Champlain Orchards, Shoreham, VT
 City Market, Onion River Co-op, Burlington, VT
 Clean Yield Asset Management, Norwich, VT
 Colburn's Village View Maples, Glover, VT
 Crazy 8 Farm, Inc, Newport Ctr, VT
 Crossmolina Farm, Corinth, VT
 Crossroad Maple, East Fairfield, VT
 Davis Family Maple, Underhill, VT
 Daybreak Maple, East Fairfield, VT
 Does' Leap Farm, E Fairfield, VT

Dwight Miller & Son Orchards, E Dummerston, VT
 Efficiency Vermont, Winooski, VT
 Emery Mountain Farm, Johnson, VT
 Erik's Sugarbush, Kirby, VT
 Fable Farm, Barnard, VT
 Farr View Maple, East Hardwick, VT
 Fawn in the Flora, Hinesburg, VT
 Fibonacci Acres, Waterbury Ctr, VT
 Field Stone Farm, Northfield, VT
 Firefly Farm at Burke Hollow, West Burke, VT
 Fledgling Farmstead LLC, Tunbridge, VT
 Foley Services, Rutland, VT
 Forrest & Frances Lattner Foundation, East Greenwich, RI
 Franklin Farm, Guilford, VT
 Gagne Maple LLC, Swanton, VT
 Gardner Family LLC, Pownal, VT
 Georgia Mountain Orchards & Sugarbush LLC, Georgia, VT
 Good Hill Farm, Hardwick, VT
 Got Weeds?, Royalton, VT
 Great River Farm, Windsor, VT
 Green & Gold CSA, Sudbury, VT
 Green Mountain Girls Farm, Northfield, VT
 Green Mountain Solar, South Burlington, VT
 Green Valley Organic, Derby Line, VT
 Green Wind Farm, Enosburg Falls, VT
 Hazendale Farm, Greensboro, VT
 Hi Vue Maples LLC, Richford, VT
 Hill Top Maple, St Albans, VT
 Hotel Vermont, Burlington, VT
 Hudak Farm, Swanton, VT
 Hunt's Farm Supply, LLC, Jeffersonville, VT
 Idle Hour Maple Inc., Rutland, VT
 Intervale Center, Burlington, VT
 Jesse Soule, Montgomery, VT
 John Cushman Maple, Waterville, VT
 Johnny's Selected Seeds, Winslow, ME
 Johnson Family Foundation, Poultney, VT
 Knee Deep Farm, Jeffersonville, VT
 Lahar's Maple Ridge, Newport, VT
 Lintilhac Foundation, Inc, Shelburne, VT
 Little Charlie's Sugarbush, Jay, VT
 Little Flower Farm, Middletown Springs, VT
 Lost Barn Farm, Putney, VT

Lost Meadow Land Coop Farm, W Corinth, VT
 Makeshift Farm LLC, Derby, VT
 Mama Tree Farm, Worcester, VT
 Mansion House Maple Syrup, Johnson, VT
 Maple Valley Farm, Woodstock, VT
 McIndoe Farm, White River Junction, VT
 Meach Cove Farms, Shelburne, VT
 Meadows Bee Farm, West Townshend, VT
 Merck Forest & Farmland Center, Rupert, VT
 Metcalf Pond Maple LLC, Jeffersonville, VT
 Mettowee Valley Maple, Pawlet, VT
 Michelle & Irving Mossey, Jeffersonville, VT
 Midnight Goat Farm, Huntington, VT
 Mighty Food Farm, Shaftsbury, VT
 Naga Bakehouse, Middletown Springs, VT
 Neighboring Food Co-op Association, Shelburne Falls, MA
 New Day Farm, Dorset, VT
 New Leaf CSA, Dummerston, VT
 New Tradition Farm, Williston, VT
 Next Chapter Farm, Middlebury, VT
 Nomad Farm, Bellows Falls, VT
 Norwich Solar, White River Junction, VT
 NutriHarvest, Burlington, VT
 Old City Syrup Company, Strafford, VT
 Oliver Hill Farm, Leicester, VT
 Organic Valley/CROPP, La Farge, WI
 Overstory Farm VT, North Chittenden, VT
 Ovitt Sugarhouse, Fairfax, VT
 Pete's Stand, Bellows Falls, VT
 Plenitud VT, Newbury, VT
 Poor Farm Sugarworks, Colchester, VT
 Proctor Maple Research Center, Underhill, VT
 Provender Farm, Cabot, VT
 Putney Farmers' Market Inc., Putney, VT
 Retreat Farm, Ltd., Brattleboro, VT
 Ricky Emery, Johnson, VT
 River Berry Farm, Fairfax, VT
 Rock Dust Local, Bridport, VT
 Royal Yellowstone Maple Co, Underhill, VT
 Rural Vermont, Montpelier, VT
 Salvation Farms, Morrisville, VT
 Scott Farm Orchard, Dummerston, VT
 Seven Days, Burlington, VT
 Shaker Mountain Farm, Starksboro, VT
 Small Axe Farm, East Ryegate, VT

Smokey House Center, Danby, VT
 Sodexo at UVM, Burlington, VT
 Sorrel Field Farmstead, Norwich, VT
 Stagecoach Hollow Maple, Barre, VT
 Stannard Farm, Craftsbury, VT
 Steadyfoot Farm, Walden, VT
 Stone Hollow Farm, Enosburg, VT
 Stone's Throw Farmstead, Shrewsbury, VT
 Stonyfield Farm, Inc., Londonderry, NH
 Sugar Moon Hill LLC, Woodstock, VT
 Summit Maple Farm, Fairfax, VT
 Sunshine Valley LLC, Rochester, VT
 Sweet Roots Farm LLC, Charlotte, VT
 Sweet Tree Holdings 1, LLC, Island Pond, VT
 Sweetland Farm, Norwich, VT
 The Ol'Horsehoe, Marshfield, VT
 The Skinny Pancake, Burlington, VT
 The Vermont Maple Farm, West Topsham, VT
 The Wild Farm, West Topsham, VT
 Two Brothers Maple LLC, Richford, VT
 UVM College of Agriculture and Life Science, Burlington, VT
 Valley View Farm, Stowe, VT
 Vermont Bean Crafters Co, Waitsfield, VT
 Vermont Compost Company, Montpelier, VT
 Vermont Family Farms, North Springfield, VT
 Vermont Grass Farmers Association, Barre, VT
 Vermont Growers Association, Burlington, VT
 Vermont Herb Growers Cooperative, Hyde Park, VT
 Vermont Land Trust, Montpelier, VT
 Vermont Tortilla Company, Shelburne, VT
 Vermont Willow Nursery, Fairfield, VT
 VHC Farm & Forest Viability Program, Montpelier, VT
 Vitalis Organic Seeds, Salinas, CA
 VT Artisan Coffee & Tea Co, Waterbury Center, VT
 Westford Stone Walls Sugarhouse, Westford, VT
 Wild Hill Organics, Fairlee, VT
 Wild Shepherd Farm, Athens, VT
 Wilder Farm, Lyndonville, VT
 Wildstone Farm, Pownal, VT
 Willing Hands, Norwich, VT
 Williston Village Farm, Williston, VT
 Zack Woods Herb Farm, Hyde Park, 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 over 750 organic farmers & processors throughout the state.

Stephen Purdy
Heffernan Family Sugarworks LLC
Charb Inc
Dean Wright
Doug Bradford
Sweet Ridge Maples LLC

Otter Brook Farm Maples LLC
Brookvale Farm LLC
Poor Farm Sugar Works
DKB Dairy
Royal Yellowstone Maple Co
Waterville Mountain Maples LLC

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



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It's CSA sign-up season!

Community Supported Agriculture

For a list of CSAs in your area, go to: NOFAVT.ORG/CSAS