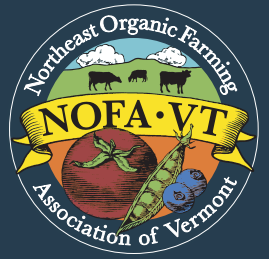


NOFA Notes



Quarterly newsletter of the Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont

Winter 2024-25



Agricultural Educators Cohort Update | Organic Farming Mentorship | Reflections
From Soil Stewards | Climate-Smart Agriculture

NOFA-VT

Nourishing people, land, and justice through organic agriculture.

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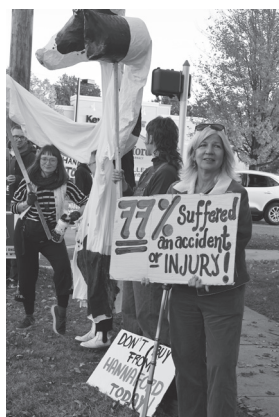
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NOFA Notes is a quarterly publication produced for NOFA-VT's members. To share feedback, thoughts, and ideas for future NOFA Notes articles, contact NOFA-VT's Marketing and Communications Director Lindsey Brand at lindsey@nofavt.org.

To find a full directory of NOFA-VT's staff and contact information, visit NOFAVT.ORG/STAFF.



Left to right, top to bottom: Checking out the new packaging at a staff visit of Baird Farm in Chittenden; Earl and Jackson Ransom give a tour of Rockbottom Farm and Strafford Organic Creamery in Strafford; NOFA-VT members connect at a member meeting at Minifactory in Bristol; Picketing outside Hannaford in Burlington, asking the grocery chain to join the Milk With Dignity program and provide a better milk pay price to ensure their supply chain doesn't exploit migrant farmworkers; Two generations participate in a Community Action Workshop in Johnson to build grassroots power around the emerging campaign for a Vermont climate resilience fund for farms.

Dear friend of NOFA-VT,

We're experiencing a complex and uncertain time. But the last few years have taught us that our capacity to navigate the challenges that lie ahead is rooted in the strength of our community.

But what is community, and how do we tend it?

Wendell Berry explains that "a community is the mental and spiritual condition of knowing that the place is shared, and that the people who share the place define and limit the possibilities of each other's lives."

Cultivating a community of care is our shared responsibility, and *we are the ones we've been waiting for.*

Over the past few months, we've been gathering with members around kitchen tables, in granges, and in town libraries. We've been having generative conversations about what keeps us up at night and what brings us hope. We've heard each other across differences. We've struggled over ideas and strategies. We've broken bread together.

We have raised the question again and again: **What can we do together that we cannot do alone?**

My predecessor at NOFA-VT, Enid Wonnacott, loved to sing. She encouraged our board, staff, and committees to begin their meetings in song. In her honor, we invite all attendees to open our annual winter conference by joining in harmony together as a thousand-strong chorus. When Enid passed away in 2019, she had already selected a song for that year's conference. It's a stunner by a duo named MaMuse:

*"We shall be known by the company we keep/
by the ones who circle 'round to tend these fires/
We shall be known by the ones who sow and reap the seeds/
of change alive from deep within the earth."*

(Ten years before Enid picked this out, MaMuse played at my wedding, strumming their upright bass in our apple orchard dance party. The social mycelial web is pure magic.)

We've been continuing Enid's tradition of singing with members whenever we gather, with staff at the lunch table, and with farmers as we talk and walk through fields. I've been taught songs in granges and while cleaning up from flooding.

Singing in groups is much like building community. We must show up for practice regularly – whether there is a concert coming up or not. In a choir, we must learn to find the same note and hold it together. Singing together requires discipline and precision, to be able to move together in tempo, words, pitch, and volume. But singing together also requires differentiation – knowing your niche. You must have the ability to hold a steady beat while another person does something different in order to create harmony. The skill of a choir, much like the health of an ecosystem, is a function of the diversity it holds while still moving together. The more diverse, the richer the sound.

We live in a time when the planet and its people are struggling. But together, we can move from individual isolation to a rich tapestry of community, in which we are more powerful and connected.

Whether you are a farmer or a person who depends on farmers, you are needed in our joyful work moving toward the world we need; the world we know is possible. We hope to see you soon at the Winter Conference or a member meeting. I look forward to harmonizing with you.

Warmly,



Grace Oedel

Executive Director, NOFA-VT



Start looking forward to the 43rd annual

NOFA-VT Winter Conference

As always, the conference includes a full slate of workshops, affinity group roundtables, activities, and more. Check out the full details on January 10 when registration opens. In the meantime, enjoy a sneak peek into a few conference details we're particularly excited about this year.

Local and Organic on the Menu

After *talking* about food and agriculture all morning, we'll be serving up a local, organic lunch! Thanks to the collaboration of Sodexo and UVM Dining's "Vermont First" program, we're able to source many ingredients from local and organic farms. This year's main dish is taco bowls made with organic beef from Vermont Family Farms.

If you bring your own lunch but are still feeling peckish, do not fear—the snack table is also stocked with local bounty, and this year marks the return of the fan favorite ice cream social, courtesy of our friends at Strafford Organic Creamery.



Twice the Perspective, Twice the Insight

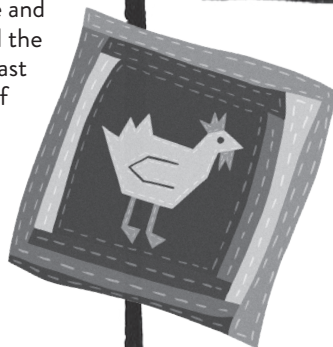
This year, the keynote stage will be graced by a powerhouse pair: Tim Gibbons from the Missouri Rural Crisis Center and Dănia Davy, founder of Land & Liberation, LLC. Both Tim and Dănia are experts in building meaningful power in rural, agricultural communities.

Maddie Kempner, NOFA-VT's policy director, had the pleasure of watching them speak at the farmer forum at this year's Farm Aid in Saratoga Springs. Says Maddie, "I was struck by how powerful it was for me to hear Dănia and Tim talk—individually, and together—about the work we all share in fighting for a more just, thriving future for farmers, our communities, and the land."

Fun for the Next Generation

We're not leaving all the fun to the adults! The Children's Conference is back this year for kids ages 5-10 years old. Kids can expect a day full of nature and farm-related games and activities while you attend the conference. We'll let our favorite kid review from last year sum up the experience: "It was the best day of my life!"

Do you have an older kid in your life who'd be interested in participating in the conference? We're looking for feedback and input from our members about possible tween or teen offerings at next year's conference. If this is an opportunity you'd be excited about, let us know at winterconference@nofavt.org.



Save the Date!

Full Details and Registration

Available on January 10 at

NOFAVT.ORG/CONFERENCE

Growing Connections: Stories from the Agricultural Educators Cohort

By Kayla Strom, NOFA-VT Farm to School Manager



Misse Axelrod at Drift Farmstead in Roxbury

In Vermont, where the connections between land, food, and community are deeply rooted, the Agricultural Educators Cohort has fostered a powerful network of farmers across the state passionate about sharing their skills and stories with the next generation. Funded by a one-time USDA Farm to School Grant and facilitated collaboratively by NOFA-VT and Shelburne Farms, this peer-to-peer learning initiative explored innovative ways to deepen young people's understanding of food systems, and strengthen the ties between farms and their communities.

Running from the winter of 2023 through the spring of 2024, the cohort included fifteen farmers, each paired with a mentor farmer to exchange best practices, receive advice, and share resources. Together, they explored ways to engage youth on their farms, inspire future farmers, and cultivate deeper agricultural literacy in their communities.

In pairing each participating farmer with a mentor farmer, this program created a partnership rooted in mutual learning. Ariana Wild of Wild Farm in West Topsham worked closely with Misse Axelrod of the Vermont Farm and Forest School and Drift Farmstead in Roxbury, whose expertise in farm-based education provided valuable insights and encouragement. "Coaching isn't just about giving advice—it's about building relationships," Misse reflected. "I learn so much from the farmers I coach, and together

we create something greater than the sum of our parts."

Another defining feature of the Agricultural Educators Cohort was the sense of community it created. During a fall gathering at Drift Farmstead in Roxbury, farmers shared stories, struggles, and successes. For many, this space provided much-needed encouragement and solidarity. One moment stood out for Misse: "We were in the barn, sharing our experiences, and one farmer began tearing up as she talked about her challenges. It was so moving to see everyone rally around her with support and understanding. This kind of connection reminds us that we're not alone in this work."

This theme of collective support extended to the cohort's structure, which offered participants a treasure trove of practical resources, from lesson plans to activity guides. "If I didn't have this program, my goals would feel so much farther away," Ariana noted.

Although the Agricultural Educators Cohort wrapped up this year, the connections and lessons from this initiative continue to ripple through Vermont's farming and education communities. At NOFA-VT, we're working to ensure that there are thriving farm to school and early childhood (FTSEC) programs in every Vermont community. For over 20 years, we've partnered with schools, early childhood programs, and farmers to forge strong connections between the cafeteria, classroom, and community.

Through Vermont FEED, a statewide initiative that we coordinate in partnership with Shelburne Farms, we deliver professional learning and technical assistance to educators, administrators, child nutrition professionals, and farmers.

Below are some ways you can get involved and help shape the future of our next generation:

- Engage with the Vermont Farm to School & Early Childhood Network: Connect with a supportive community of educators, farmers, and leaders working to expand farm to school initiatives across Vermont.
- Collaborate with schools: By selling to schools or early childhood programs, you directly support healthy, local meals for students while strengthening the connection between your farm and the next generation.
- Join the Farm-Based Education Network: Become part of this free member network that supports educators, farmers, and community leaders offering hands-on learning on farms.
- Participate in the ABC's of Farm-Based Education Workshops: Offered every spring and fall at Shelburne Farms, these workshops provide tools and inspiration for creating meaningful farm-based programs.
- Share your voice: Farmers are the heart of farm to school programs. Share your ideas, challenges, and successes with us, your local schools, and early childhood programs to help shape the next chapter of farm to school in Vermont.
- Access resources and technical assistance: From activity guides to procurement information, NOFA-VT and the Vermont FEED partnership are here to support your farm to school goals.

Get in touch with Kayla Strom, NOFA-VT's Farm to School Program Manager, to learn more and be a part of this movement: kayla@nofavt.org, 802-419-0062. ♦

Peer-to-Peer Mentorship Paves the Way for Organic Certification

By Zea Luce, NOFA-VT Organic Practices Specialist

Kirsten Tyler and Elias Rosenblatt of Rocky Hill Farm in Westford, now in its fourth season, have always used organic practices. They developed an interest in farming toward the end of grad school. Starting in 2019 and into the COVID-19 pandemic, they did the “homestead-y thing,” which quickly evolved into a micro-farm. As an invasive plant scientist and wildlife biologist respectively, they care very deeply about the ecosystem, feeling that humans are part of the landscape, not separate from it. They are invested in providing nutritious food for their community and the next generation.

Both Kirsten and Elias have worked on certified organic farms in the past, giving them some exposure to the organic certification process. However, when they started their own farm, they felt they didn’t have the capacity to embark on the certification process—despite recognizing that they were already following the practices. This feeling changed when they saw NOFA-VT’s peer-to-peer mentorship opportunity through the Transition to Organic Partnership Program (TOPP) and they thought, “ok, this is how we’ll do certification!”

TOPP is a national program supported by funding from the USDA that exists in every state. NOFA-VT coordinates the program in Vermont, matching mentors and mentees. Kirsten worked with James Donegan of Trillium Hill Farm in Hinesburg. The two had met previously and Kirsten says the prior connection was helpful to establish trust in their working relationship. They started by getting to know one another over Zoom and identifying a list of Kirsten and Elias’ farming goals. This developed into a plan that included distinct topics for each meeting. They met consistently over the winter and then continued the fruitful partnership by swapping farm visits throughout the growing season.

Rocky Hill Farm consists of 0.3 acres of permanent vegetable and herb beds beautifully laid out on the one-acre property, along with a greenhouse and rabbit hutches. Kirsten and Elias grow produce and raise meat rabbits. Their products are primarily sold at their local farmers market and to area restaurants. Kirsten is the co-manager of the Westford Farmers Market and explained that it used to be a vibrant weekly market that she helped restart. In an earlier iteration, it was a monthly market, though the decision was made this season to transition back to a weekly format. While the rabbits aren’t currently included in their organic certification due to cost barriers associated with certified organic feed, the rabbits were the “in” to connect Kirsten and Elias with restaurants, largely due to support from the Vermont Fresh Network, which helps facilitate farmer-to-chef connections. Why rabbits? It works well to raise them on rented land with minimal infrastructure and there is a market for them (Kirsten shared that they could be raising ten times more due to market demand from chefs). The restaurant meat sales have also allowed Kirsten and Elias to sell more of their organic produce to restaurants.

The topics that James and Kirsten covered together were far-reaching on a range of organic farming practices and certification requirements. A key part of growing food organically is the health of the soil, so they had several discussions about Kirsten’s soil. She completed a soil test and they had a helpful conversation about the results, allowing her to make informed decisions about actions to take to improve the health of the soil at Rocky Hill Farm. This also led to shared learning opportunities around crop production and spacing, cover cropping, and compost applications.



A key piece of the certification process is record keeping - ensuring that a third party can verify a farm's organic practices. Kirsten shared that at first, she and Elias were keeping very few records beyond sales and an annual planting plan. James helped elevate their record keeping, sharing his documents as helpful resources. He led them through his entire production plan and harvest-to-sales records from his farm stand and wholesale accounts. While Kirsten didn't specifically use James's record keeping templates, having the opportunity to see how he organized his documents gave her ideas and the confidence to make her own.

Lastly, Kirsten found the farm visits invaluable from an operations perspective. She and James were able to walk around Rocky Hill Farm together, providing the opportunity for Kirsten to ask specific questions and have a helpful discussion with an experienced organic grower on the spot. Overall, Kirsten found the accountability of being part of a structured program with a mentor extremely helpful to keep her on track toward meeting her certification goals. She was nervous about the on-site inspection of their operation as part of the certification process, but says that the inspector was kind, helpful, and explained everything as they went through the process, resulting in a successful experience that ultimately resulted in being awarded their certification.

James shared that, "Kirsten was highly motivated in the mentoring program, so it made our meetings fun. She had some clear goals and had topics she wanted to cover for each of our winter Zoom or phone calls. I enjoyed sharing my techniques and answering her questions. Initially, she seemed intimidated by the certification process, but I encouraged her to just get started and explained that it was a pretty user-friendly process. She earned her certification and seems to have had a successful season!"

What does the future hold for the farm? Kirsten and Elias plan to increase both their vegetable and rabbit production, with the goal of eventually moving to a new and larger property.

Join us in congratulating Rocky Hill Farm on their organic certification! ♦



Learn more about organic mentorship and the certification process on our website at NOFAVT.ORG/ORGANIC-MENTORSHIP.



Becoming Soil Stewards

By Megan Browning, NOFA-VT Farmer Services Program Facilitator; Ryan Demerest, Farmer at Naked Acre Farm; Hannah Blackmer, Farmer at Fieldstone Farm; and Patrick Helman, Farmer at Sandy Bottom Farm.

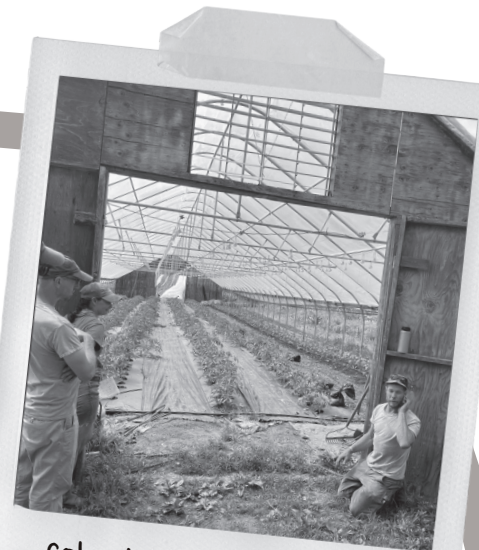
NOFA-VT's Farmer Services team provides a great deal of direct services to farms in a one-on-one format, though we also offer cohort-based programs because we believe that farmers have incredible knowledge among them and the simple act of coming together creates the conditions for shared learning and invaluable relationship building. Over the past two years, NOFA-VT has worked in collaboration with Becky Maden, Vegetable Nutrition Specialist at UVM (and NOFA-VT Board Member), to facilitate a cohort of small-scale vegetable growers focused on soil health, some of which have been featured in recent editions of NOFA Notes. This is the third cohort to come out of the Jack Lazor Memorial Soil Health Stewards program, inspired by the legacy of Jack Lazor, a farmer, co-founder of Butterworks Farm, and soil health enthusiast who passed away in 2020. Over the past two years, this group has met regularly, visiting each others' farms, building relationships, and learning from each other. The group has often expressed the inherent value of getting off their respective farms during the season to connect with other growers and see other farms in action. The cohort structure allows space for sharing specific practices and building social networks among farmers who may otherwise feel isolated. In the following reflections, three participant farmers share their experiences with this program and their enthusiasm for the cohort model.

Ryan Demerest, Naked Acre Farm, Hyde Park

Being a part of NOFA-VT's Soil Health Cohort over the past couple of years has been an absolute joy and has reinforced my identity as a grower. Becky and Megan created an incredibly valuable program that was tailored to the various needs that we expressed as the next generation of small-scale growers. The program allowed for deep dives into specific topics, generated important discussions that highlighted the group's diversity, and fostered a sense of camaraderie. Honestly, I wish the cohort could continue indefinitely. The nature of being a grower is often isolating, but I believe the best way to improve as a grower is through discussion and witnessing other operations. This program offered not only solidarity but also the opportunity to connect and exchange ideas that serve to better ourselves in our challenging profession. It was a vehicle that afforded access to each other, to see other farms, and to connect with the deep well of knowledge offered by Becky at UVM Extension and through Megan's experience, both from her work at NOFA-VT and her previous experiences as a farmer.

Eleven years into my growing career, I feel like I have a good foundation for successful farming on our land. Meeting as a group provided a framework to learn and discuss tweaks to the foundation that would benefit my practices in the future. We were able to deeply discuss and demonstrate our own unique methods, thereby creating a type of knowledge pool that we each could individually draw upon for our specific needs. Some especially helpful topics were bed preparations, fertility sources and methods, practices around cover cropping and soil health, and, as always, work-life balance and lifestyle improvements. The knowledge generated from the cohort provided a fresh perspective to continue thinking about how to incorporate better practices in the future. For me personally, the direct interaction with growers served as a gauge for my success. Our meetings and field trips provided insight into where I could improve, but also where I was already succeeding. Welcoming cohort members to visit my farm provided an especially important component because it offered valuable feedback and validation.

Farming is slow and change occurs over time. I liken it to changing the course of a massive ship. Having this experience with the cohort while "captaining" my operation provided valuable insight as to the decisions needed to steer my operation. I want to ensure that what I do is intentionally kind to our soil and to the broader environment, biologically and socially. Being a part of this group with soil health as its guiding principle supported this drive and opened the door to more thoughtful ways of treating the soil and ultimately, the earth. The dynamic of the group was sensitive, kind, generous, and supportive, creating an environment that fostered learning and growth. I think this stems largely from the space that Megan and Becky created and the level of trust established in our group. I feel incredibly fortunate to live in Vermont and to be a part of the agricultural community where we have close relationships with folks like Megan and Becky whose overarching goal is the enrichment of the growing community. Plus, the cohort was just really fun!



Cohort visit to Naked Acre Farm in June.

Hannah Blackmer, Fieldstone Farm, Northfield

To be on a learning journey with a group of farms, on such a deep and enduring topic as soil health, for an extended period of time was transformative. As someone who runs a farm solo, I often feel isolated and stagnant, stuck in my head and my own day-to-day routines. This cohort provided a framework to explore the topic of soil health on our farms, while also fostering deeper farmer-to-farmer relationships. The semi-structured spaces created through the cohort fit my personal learning style and facilitated a deeper connection than that typically achieved by a one-off event or conference. The experience also helped me stay curious and inspired throughout the growing season and into winter planning sessions.

One of the main “aha!” moments inspired by this cohort was the practice of removing as little organic matter from our beds as possible. Previously, when a cash crop such as lettuce was finished, we’d cut the plants out, bring them to the compost pile, run through the bed looking for weeds going to seed, and then run a tarp over the bed to solarize anything left behind. Now, instead of removing all that material, we run through the bed looking for problematic weeds, cut and drop the crop right on the surface, then drag a tarp over to solarize the remaining material, allowing it to decompose in place. This practice doesn’t work for everything we grow. For example, bigger, woodier plants like broccolini still need to be removed from the field as they take much longer to break down, but the practice improved our ability to keep organic matter and nutrients in our growing spaces, and as a bonus, vastly reduced trips back and forth to our compost pile. We’re also now looking at weeds through this lens: weeds that have become too big to hoe out but are not yet at a seeding phase are cut at the soil surface and laid in the pathways or used to “mulch” the crop growing in that bed, again keeping organic matter and nutrients in our growing spaces.

I looked forward to each farm tour, not only as an opportunity to get away from my own farm for a few hours but also as an opportunity to be introduced to new tools to add to my expanding soil health toolbox. The tours also provided helpful opportunities to continue building relationships and watch members of this farming community experiment, take risks, and generally be nerds. Their willingness to explore and be vulnerable encouraged my own ability to do so; many of the conversations I had, whether one-on-one or with a small group, were foundational building blocks of support. A group of people dedicated to learning about a topic, and dedicated to being resources for each other? Count me in! Cohorts rock!



Cohort visit to
Fieldstone Farm in July.

Patrick Helman, Sandy Bottom Farm, Isle La Motte



Cohort visit to Sandy
Bottom Farm in October.

Over the past two years, I have been lucky enough to meet periodically with a group of farmers who share my interest in soil health. Meeting on other farms and learning on-site has been invaluable, both for my farm and for my personal growth. I have become a substantially better farmer as a result of this cohort. We have implemented new practices on our farm including some no-till plantings, several crop additions, longer greenhouse rotations, modifications to our season extension, and paperpot transplanting. We have also expanded other practices based on our experiences with this group, including much more cover cropping, tarping, and exclusion netting.

On a personal level, being able to get away from my farm amid the growing season frenzy to interact with other farmers who have similar operations was valuable; I find that without a good external justification (like this group) it is otherwise difficult for me to create space for this. The relationships between farmers that have developed as a result of this group are likely deeper, and in some cases probably wouldn’t have happened otherwise. Even from a geographic standpoint; the group brought together farmers from a substantial portion of the state, bringing a richness of experience and perspective that wouldn’t have happened without this program. While outside the stated scope of the cohort, combating what can sometimes feel like isolation by bringing these farmers together is indeed a worthy outcome.

A group like this can’t happen without someone like Megan, whose work facilitating meetings, keeping us all on track, and finding time in over a dozen busy farmers’ mid-season schedules made this group possible. Without her (and NOFA-VT’s) contribution, I doubt something like this could be maintained over a two-year span. Becky Maden, from UVM Extension, also facilitated and taught at every meeting, which I found tremendously helpful as a farmer somewhat new to regular soil testing and navigating the intricacies of soil health. She provided a focus for each farm visit and a scientific lens through which to interpret the various practices we encountered. I found this group to be very valuable and I am glad to have been a part of it!

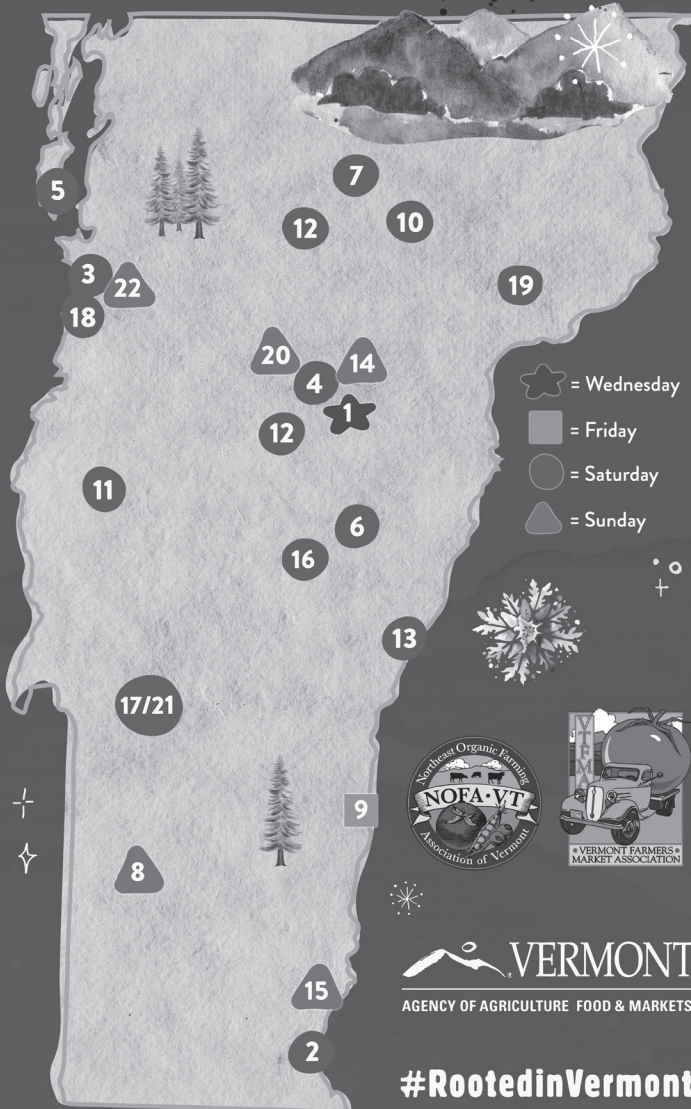
This winter NOFA-VT will launch another Soil Health Stewards cohort for vegetable growers. We’ll accept applications through January and bring the group together for our first gathering in February. The specific topics and structure of the group will be informed by its participants. We look forward to bringing together another group of enthusiastic growers to support each other and build upon the legacy of Jack Lazor by learning together to be the best soil stewards they can be. To learn more, contact Megan Browning, NOFA-VT Farmer Services Program Facilitator, at megan@nofavt.org or 802-419-0073. ♦



Vermont Winter Farmers Markets



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



- ★ = Wednesday
- = Friday
- = Saturday
- ▲ = Sunday



#RootedInVermont

- 1. Barre Winter Farmers Market**
Old Labor Hall | 46 Granite Street, Barre
3:30 PM - 6:30 PM | Monthly | 1/29/25 - 4/30/25
- 2. Brattleboro Winter Farmers Market**
Winston Prouty Campus | 60 Austine Dr, Brattleboro
10:00 AM - 2:00 PM | Weekly | 11/2/24 - 3/29/25
- 3. Burlington Farmers Market**
Burlington Beer Co. | 180 Flynn Ave, Burlington
10:00 PM - 1:00 PM | Twice per month | 1/9/24 - 4/12/25
- 4. Capital City Farmers Market**
Caledonia Spirits Distillery | 116 Gin Lane, Montpelier
10:00 AM - 1:00 PM | Twice per month | 12/7/24 - 4/19/25
- 5. Champlain Islands Farmers Market**
South Hero Congregational Church | 24 South St, South Hero
10:00 AM - 2:00 PM | Weekly | 11/2/24 - 12/21/24
- 6. Chelsea Holiday Market**
Chelsea Public School Gymnasium | 6 School Street, Chelsea
9:00 AM - 2:00 PM | Once | 11/16/24
- 7. Craftsbury Farmers Market**
Craftsbury Academy Gymnasium | 1422 North Craftsbury Road, Craftsbury
11:00 AM - 2:00 PM | Holiday | 11/23/24 & 12/14/2024
- 8. Dorset Farmers Market**
JK Adams Kitchen Store | 1430 VT-30, Dorset
10:00 AM - 2:00 PM | Weekly | 10/20/24 - 5/4/25
- 9. Greater Falls Farmers Market**
Flat Iron Cooperative | 51 The Square, Bellows Falls
4:00 PM - 7:00 PM | Monthly | 11/15/24 & 12/20/24
- 10. Greensboro Winter Farmers Market**
Highland Center for the Arts | 2875 Hardwick St, Greensboro
11:00 AM - 3:00 PM | Once | 12/7/24
- 11. Middlebury Farmers Market**
VFW Post | 530 Exchange St, Middlebury
9:00 AM - 12:30 PM | Weekly | 11/9/24 - 4/26/25
- 12. Morrisville Farmers Market**
Lost Nation Brewing | 87 Old Creamery Road, Morrisville
9:00 AM - 1:00 PM | Happening once | 11/23/24
- 13. Norwich Farmers Market**
Tracy Hall | 300 Main Street, Norwich
10:00 AM - 1:00 PM | Twice per month | 11/23/24 - 4/19/25
- 14. Plainfield Farmers Market* (no EBT/Crop Cash)**
Plainfield Opera House | 18 High St, Plainfield
11:00 AM - 3:00 PM | Monthly | 12/1/24 - 3/2/25
- 15. Putney Farmers Market**
Green Mountain Orchard | 130 West Hill Rd, Putney
11:00 AM - 3:00 PM | Weekly | 11/24/24 - 12/22/24
- 16. Randolph Holiday Farmers Market**
Bethany Church | 32 N Main St, Randolph
9:00 AM - 2:00 PM | Happening once | 12/14/24
- 17. Rutland County Farmers Market**
Rutland Regional Community Center | Dorr Drive, Rutland
9:00 AM - 4:00 PM | Happening once | 12/7/24
- 18. Shelburne Winter Market**
Pierson Library | 5376 Shelburne Road, Shelburne
10:00 AM - 2:00 PM | Weekly | 11/16/24 - 3/15/25
- 19. St. Johnsbury Winter Farmers Market**
St. Johnsbury Welcome Center | 51 Depot Square, St. Johnsbury
10:00 AM - 1:00 PM | Twice per month | 11/12/24 - 4/16/25
- 20. Stowe Farmers Market* (no EBT/Crop Cash)**
Stowe Cider | 17 Town Farm Ln, Stowe
10:00 AM - 1:00 PM | Happening once | 12/15/24
- 21. The Vermont Farmers Market**
Vermont Farmers Food Center | 251 West St, Rutland
10:00 AM - 2:00 PM | Weekly | 11/2/24 - 5/3/25
- 22. Winooski Winter Farmers Market**
Winooski Senior Center | 123 Barlow St, Winooski, VT 05404
10:00 AM - 2:00 PM | Weekly | 11/10/24 - 12/29/24

Vermont Family Farmer of the Month

By Kevin Haggerty, NOFA-VT Climate Resilience Specialist

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



Free Verse Farm, Chelsea - August 2024

In 2012, after years of farming and traveling the world together, Taylor Katz and Misha Johnson settled in Chelsea and founded Free Verse Farm, intending to connect their interests in local agriculture with the growing herbal sector. Now 12 years later, Free Verse Farm specializes in producing certified organic bulk herbs and an array of value-added products, including herbal body care products and herbal remedies.

Free Verse Farm was awarded \$12,000 to build an irrigation pond to provide a reliable water source. In recent years, Taylor and Misha have lost entire crops due to water stress during dry seasons. This improved irrigation infrastructure will provide Free Verse Farm with the water they need to consistently produce herbs and support their business growth to meet increasing market demand for their products. Expanding their irrigation capacity will also allow Taylor and Misha to continue to plant windbreaks, hedgerows, and pasture trees across the landscape, further increasing the long-term climate resilience of their farm.



Khelcom Farm, Barre - September, 2024

Inspired by the potential of small-scale farming to increase food sovereignty and create a better future, Abdoulaye Naine started Khelcom Farm in Barre with his wife Marja Makinen and their three children. Now in its third season, Khelcom Farm has grown into a thriving diversified micro-farm, producing a wide array and impressive volume of certified organic vegetables, herbs, cut flowers, and eggs on three-quarters of an acre. Khelcom Farm has also grown to be an invaluable community gathering space, providing a refuge for those who have been marginalized and offering a testament to the strength and resilience of community.

Khelcom Farm was awarded \$12,000 to build a welcoming farm stand at the front of their property. The addition of a dedicated, purpose-built farm stand will increase the accessibility of Khelcom Farm's offerings, extend its marketing season, and help retain customers through the winter months. This project also supports the farm's social mission, bringing people together to learn about growing food, connect with the natural world, gather with friends and family, and find a moment of peace in a challenging world.



Hunger Moon Farm, Fairfield - October, 2024

Driven by their shared love of the land, desire for an agrarian lifestyle, and commitment to providing their community with nutritious, culturally relevant foods, Colton and Danielle Cummings started Hunger Moon Farm in Fairfield in 2018. Hunger Moon Farm now offers certified organic eggs, pasture-raised chicken, freeze-dried dog treats, and goat meat, available through an on-farm slaughter program. Colton and Danielle are also dedicated stewards of their land and watershed and have designed their entire farm system to build soil health, sequester carbon, and improve water quality.

Hunger Moon Farm was awarded \$12,000 to purchase a used 60-90 hp tractor with a front loader. Since the farm was founded, Hunger Moon Farm has operated on leased land and used the landowners' tractors to manage their pastures and chickens. The purchase of their own tractor will not only allow Hunger Moon Farm to more reliably manage the complexities of their ecologically focused production systems but also provides Colton and Danielle the equipment and confidence needed to be able to purchase land and move their operation successfully when the right opportunity is presented. ♦

Applications are open to any small or medium-sized farms in Vermont. The next round of applications are due Monday, January 13. To learn more, visit VERMONTFAMILYFARMERAWARD.ORG.

Facilitating Partnerships for Climate-Smart Agriculture

By **Eric Boatti**, NOFA-VT Climate Resilience Specialist

In late 2023, NOFA-VT expanded the farmer services offerings and created several new staff positions to expand our ability to support farms to implement organic practices, assess their farms for climate resilience, and implement practices to grow farm and community resilience. One of the new partnerships that has supported this growth is our involvement in a federal Partnerships for Climate-Smart Commodities Project (PCSCP).

The PCSCP is a federal agricultural assistance program offered by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), designed to provide technical and financial assistance to producers to implement voluntary climate-smart production practices on working lands. The whole PCSCP comprises over 140 regional projects nationwide, including a handful here in Vermont.

NOFA-VT is a sub-awardee and partner on a PCSCP administered by Pennsylvania Sustainable Agriculture (PASA). This specific PCSCP is designed to offer a financial incentive for farmers to implement practices from a predetermined list of 26 “climate-smart” agricultural practices. NOFA-VT staff act as technical assistance providers on the project, working intimately with participating farms to provide direct guidance at all stages of the project, from navigating the application process to designing and enacting practice implementation plans.

Farmers first enroll in the program via the application found at climatesmart.org. Unlike many federal funding programs, there is no set enrollment period for the program. However, as capacity can be limited, priority in periods of heavy enrollment is given to small and historically underserved farms. The USDA defines “small” as farms that have a gross farm income of under \$350,000/year, and “historically underserved” as farmers that are classed as either beginning (have not operated a farm for more than 10 consecutive years), socially disadvantaged (the farm is at least 50% BIPOC-owned), veterans, or of limited resources (having a household income below federal poverty level). Additionally, to combat historic inequities within the USDA

relative to funding access, 90% of all funds in PASA’s PCSCP-administered program have been earmarked for small and historically underserved farms.

Once enrolled, farmers work closely with their technical assistance providers to identify which of the 26 practices they wish to implement on their farms. The covered practices (see box below) are all defined by the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and farms must implement them according to Vermont NRCS’ standards. Each practice has a payment rate prescribed to it, often scaling with the amount of land upon which the practice is implemented.

Beyond offering financial incentives for farms to adopt climate-smart practices, another major component of the program is the opportunity for farmers to engage in a large regional Soil Health Benchmark Study concurrently facilitated by PASA. This study offers comprehensive soil testing as a way to better understand the impacts that climate-smart practices have on soil health

while providing farmers with valuable data & insights on the health of their soils.

The guiding structure of our work within the Organic Practices Program is to offer, in tandem with the Farm Business Development team, holistic and wrap-around business services and technical assistance to farmers in Vermont. A fundamental component of that work is providing climate adaptation planning. Essentially, NOFA-VT staff work one-on-one with farms to conduct climate risk assessments, identifying aspects of their operations that are particularly vulnerable to climate change, and then utilizing a suite of tools to create climate adaptation plans focused on addressing those vulnerabilities. We view the PCSCP as an excellent tool to help farmers fund components of their climate adaptation plans.

Over the last year, 35 Vermont farms have applied to participate in the PCSCP, 10 of which have been fully enrolled and are currently receiving funding for adopting climate-smart practices. The other 25

Practices Supported by the Climate-Smart Commodities Project

Alley cropping	Livestock Pipeline
Contour Buffer Strips	Mulching
Cover Crop	Pasture and Hay Planting
Conservation Cover	Prescribed Grazing
Conservation Crop Rotation	Range Planting
Fence	Residue and Tillage Management, Reduced
Field Border	Riparian Herbaceous Cover
Filter Strip	Silvopasture
Forest Farming	Stripcropping
Grassed Waterway	Tree/Shrub Establishment
Hedgerow Planting	Vegetative Barrier
Herbaceous Wind Barriers	Watering Facility
Nutrient Management	Windbreak/Shelterbelt Establishment
Residue and Tillage Management, No-Till	

Of note, many of these “climate-smart practices” have roots in Indigenous land stewardship techniques.

Climate-Smart Success Stories

Common Roots



One of the first participants in the PCSCP was Common Roots, who joined as a pilot farm during the early months of the program's roll out. Common Roots is a diversified vegetable farm in South Burlington that also offers educational programming and on-farm events for their community. They applied for the program to explore new ways to deepen their environmental stewardship and build resilient systems better able to weather both drought and heavy precipitation. The result of their climate risk assessment and planning process has been to emphasize climate-smart practices that would improve their soil health while also increasing shoulder season production to support the sales goals of their on-farm farm stand.

NOFA-VT's team worked collaboratively with Common Root's farm manager Colin O'Brien to develop an improved cover cropping plan, diversifying the plant species in their seeding mixes to increase their soil's organic matter content. The Common Roots team and NOFA-VT staff also worked together to formalize a crop rotation that would meet the farm's financial goals, while also intentionally reducing weed pressure, breaking pest cycles, and including dedicated periods of soil building. Common Roots is now also enrolled in the PCSCP's soil health benchmark study and looks forward to deepening their understanding of their soils by receiving personalized management recommendations and contributing to a regional knowledge base of the ways climate-smart practices contribute to building climate resilience.

Birdsong Farm



Birdsong Farm in Stockbridge is another farm enrolled in the PCSCP and is using the funding and support to meet the unique needs and positionality of their businesses. Lucia and Jeremy Tonachel-Read founded Birdsong Farm in 2022 when they purchased the historic Luce Farm. They use an ecological approach to producing diversified vegetables, herbs, and flowers, and also rotationally graze cows, sheep, and a flock of laying hens across the farm's 40 acres of pasture. Lucia and Jeremy are committed to taking big steps towards strengthening the long-term resilience of their new farm and have been working closely with the NRCS and American Farmland Trust. They are also members of the Northeast Agroforestry Transition Hub's agroforestry cohort, providing helpful support to reimagine the farm's landscape for the future.

With all this in mind, Birdsong Farm has worked closely with NOFA-VT's Organic Practices Program team to creatively identify how the PCSCP could best align with the other ongoing programs in which the farm is enrolled and deepen the impact of these existing initiatives. To do this, Birdsong Farm is using the PCSCP to provide financial support for a comprehensive agroforestry planting developed as part of their participation in the agroforestry cohort. This project involves stacking climate-smart practices to plant, maintain, and manage diverse tree species across their pastureland for the next two years, creating a silvopasture system that will provide shade for their animals, improve the quality of their forage, and maximize the amount of carbon their farm is able to sequester.

businesses are developing appropriate projects that build climate resilience and meet the unique needs of their enterprise. The range of complexity and depth of each project varies depending on the farmers' goals and the climate change impacts faced by each operation. Some farms have used the PCSCP as a means to build upon climate-smart practices they are already employing on their farms, such as diversifying their cover cropping mixes, experimenting with new approaches to mulching, or deepening the complexity of their crop rotations. Other farmers have taken advantage of the funding and technical assistance available through the program to implement large-scale, capital-intensive projects that take dramatic steps toward increasing the holistic resilience of their farms like planting acres of trees and shrubs for perennial food production and agroforestry systems and utilizing new fences and livestock pipelines to dramatically increase grazing capacity. Like their project requests, the farms enrolled thus far in the program vary greatly. From a diversified organic vegetable farm operating on a single acre to a grass-based dairy grazing hundreds of acres; producers of all shapes and sizes have found value in the program.

As we gear up for 2025, we are excited to continue enrolling farms in this highly beneficial program. All the program information, including application instructions, can be found at climatesmart.org. The program is only funded through 2028, so please don't hesitate to reach out to the members of the NOFA-VT Organic Practices team if you are interested!

The Organic Practices Program at NOFA-VT is here to support the needs of Vermont farmers. Whether it be PCSCP enrollment, organic transition support, or working through the creation and implementation of a climate risk assessment and adaptation plan, we encourage interested farms to reach out to us at OPP@nofavt.org. ♦

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 & RENEWING MEMBERS

Alan & Cynthia Kempner, Scottsdale, AZ
Alissa White, Huntington, VT
Amy Huntington & Pat Brown, Williston, VT
Anderson Household, Tunbridge, VT
Andy Simon & Ruby Perry, Burlington, VT
Ann Hammerle, East Arlington, VT
Anne Cary Dannenberg, Huntington, VT
Barbara Jensen, Pittsford, VT
Bird Jones, Weybridge, VT
Bob & Juliet Gerlin, Cornwall, VT
Caleb Smith, Danby, VT
Camila Carrillo, Bristol, VT
Carl Kautz, Bakersfield, VT
Carol Degener, Lake Elmore, VT
Cat Duffy Buxton, South Strafford, VT
Charlene Parker, Midlothian, VA
Charles & Sarah Calley, So Ryegate, VT
Christina Castegren, Berlin, VT
Christina Erickson, Burlington, VT
Claire Scherf, Williston, VT
Cori Tebbetts, Plainfield, NH
Dan & Gail MacArthur, Marlboro, VT
Danielle Blackmore, Georgia, VT
Dean & Terri Conant, Randolph Ctr, VT
Debbie & Art Friedman, Shelburne, VT
Dick Chase, Alburgh, VT
Douglas Evans, Bristol, VT
Elizabeth Janthey, Olney, MD
Eric & Teresa Bauernschmidt, West Windsor, VT
Evan Dell'Olio, Ludlow, MA
Fiona Small, Bristol, VT
Gail Worcelo, Greensboro, VT
Hayley Williams, Hardwick, VT
Helen Prussian, Hartland, VT
Hilary Gifford, North Ferrisburgh, VT
Iztok Ferluga & Adrienne Vento, Poultney, VT
James Jones, Craftsbury, VT
James Parent, Northfield, VT
Jane & Del Neroni, South Burlington, VT
Janet Dowell, North Thetford, VT
Janet Steward & Ray Shatney, Plainfield, VT
Jeanne Fox, Ludlow, VT
Jenny Kilbourne, Canterbury, NH
Jessie Hoyng, St. Johnsbury, VT

Joan Weed, Charlotte, VT
John & Lauren Cleary, Plainfield, VT
John Deleo, St. Johnsbury, VT
John Snell, Montpelier, VT
Joseph Ninesling, Brattleboro, VT
Joseph Nolan, Sandgate, VT
Judith Carpenter, Greensboro Bend, VT
Julie Haupt, Bennington, VT
Juliet Ryneer, St Albans, VT
Kara Shannon, Waterbury, VT
Kelly Dolan
Kenneth & Sandra Button, Middlebury, VT
Kim Goodling, Washington, VT
Kiya Vega-Hutchens & Bryan Dickinson, North Troy, VT
Kristin Blodgett, N. Ferrisburgh, VT
Larry Kupferman, South Burlington, VT
Lenore Sopher, Charlotte, VT
Linda Sukop, Burlington, VT
Maggi Landau, Waterbury, VT
Marci & Joe Robinson, Warren, VT
Margarita Fernandez & Benjamin Hodgdon, Jericho, VT
Martha Flanigan, Burlington, VT
Marty Bell & Cathleen Gianfranceschi, Barnard, VT
Mary Metcalf, Vergennes, VT
Matt Reeve, Kirby, VT
Meg Davidson, Jericho, VT
Michael Pill, Shutesbury, MA
Molly Anderson & John Cook, Middlebury, VT
Nedeau Household, South Strafford, VT
Paul Boudreau, Craftsbury, VT
Paul Stewart, Stowe, VT
Penn Hackney, Pittsburgh, PA
Polly Maguire, Shoreham, VT
Rivers Household, Burlington, VT
Robbie Nuzzo, Jeffersonville, VT
Ronnie J. Sweet II, St Albans, VT
Roy Mark, Springfield, VT
Ryan Yoder, Danby, VT
Sadie Gay, Shelburne, VT
Sally Burrell, Bristol, VT
Sarah Kaeck, New Haven, VT
Sarah Vecchi, Waterbury Center, VT
Senait Mareligne, Enosburg Falls, VT
Silas Proft, Rye, NH

Sophie Cassel & Nathan Lake, Shelburne, VT
Susan Dunning
Susanna Karwoska & Benjamin Kligler, Guilford, VT
Tanya Balsley, Guilford, VT
Vera Simon-Nobes, Charlotte, VT
Walter & Lois Liggett, Montpelier, VT
Will Engleman, Saratoga Springs, NY
Wilmot Household, Underhill, VT
Zeb Swick, Warren, VT

NEW & RENEWING BUSINESS MEMBERS

AALV, Inc. New Farms for New Americans, Burlington, VT
Blue Ledge Farm, Salisbury, VT
Cedar Mountain Farm, Hartland, VT
Clear Brook Farm, Shaftsbury, VT
Couching Lion Maple Sugar Farm
Dancing Bee Gardens, Middlebury, VT
Flack Family Farm, Enosburg Falls, VT
Four Leaf Farm, North Ferrisburgh, VT
Franklin Foods Inc, Enosburg Falls, VT
Giant Journey Farm, Newfane, VT
HomeShare Vermont, South Burlington, VT
Lewis Creek Farm, Starksboro, VT
Mad River Botanicals, Waitsfield, VT
McCarthy Farm, North Troy, VT
MG Coffee Roasting Enterprises LLC, White River Jct, VT
Middlebury Natural Foods Co-op, Middlebury, VT
Miller Farm, Bradford, VT
Mohawk Valley Trading Company, Utica, NY
Neighborhood Roots Food Collective, Guilford, VT
Nordic Roots Farm LLC, Island Pond, VT
One River Farm, Lincoln, VT
Opera House Farm, LLC, Vershire, VT
Peaceful Harvest Mushrooms, Worcester, VT
Presidential View Farm, Jefferson, NH
Red Hen Baking Company LLC, Middlesex, VT
Reinhart Food Service LLC, North Springfield, VT
Resource Management, Inc., Holderness, NH
Sandiwood Farm, Wolcott, VT
Shepherd Moon Farm, Corinth, VT
Singing Cedars Farmstead, Orwell, VT
Snug Valley Farm, E Hardwick, VT

Soaring Meadow Farm LLC, Poultney, VT
 Stimets Knoll Farm, Woodstock, VT
 Stone Leaf Teahouse, LLC, Middlebury, VT
 Sundown Farm, Marshfield, VT
 Sunja's Oriental Foods, Inc., Waterbury, VT
 The Sole Connection Farm, Arlington, VT

The Sugarman of Vermont, Inc., Hardwick, VT
 Top Notch Holsteins, Derby, VT
 Two Worlds Farm, N Ferrisburgh, VT
 Uphill Farm, Rochester, VT
 Vermont Tortilla Company, Shelburne, VT

VT Artisan Coffee & Tea Co, Waterbury Center, VT
 Waywards End Farm LLC, West Burke, VT
 West Meadow Apiary LLC, Randolph Center, 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 700 organic farmers and processors throughout the state.

American Meadows

Benuel S Stoltzfus

Couture's Maple Shop/B&B

Gemmo Forest

Maple City Candy

Marty's Local, Inc.

McCarthy Farm

Montshire Packing LLC

One River Farm

Roland Ayer

King's Coffee LLC

Tobias Stoltzfus

Vermont Ayrshire Club

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



A Warm Welcome to Our New Staff!



Emily Tompkins
 Education and Outreach
 Assistant Americorps Member

With a strong commitment to local food systems and a passion for community building, Emily is thrilled to join NOFA-VT as the Education and Outreach Assistant Americorps Member. She has worked with kids for almost two decades, mostly in preschools and more recently in outdoor education. She also has worked in the nonprofit sector and community organizing. She is looking forward to proudly representing NOFA-VT at events throughout Vermont. Emily is a dedicated homesteader, getting endless amounts of joy growing as much food as possible at home. She also enjoys bike riding, spending time with friends and family, and playing in two bands around the greater Burlington area.



Mia Smith
 Farm Business Advisor

Mia is a farmer, educator, and community builder who is passionate about the health and resilience of human and natural ecosystems. After graduating from the University of Vermont with a B.S. in Environmental Studies, she spent a decade working on dairy, meat, and veggie farms, including her own diversified farm in MA for four years. Mia went on to attain her teaching license from Champlain College, and enjoyed teaching middle and high school science, with a focus on place-based education and climate science. In her free time, Mia loves to run uphill, bake cakes, walk her old dog Broccoli, and spend time in the garden with her family.



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or send a check to our return address. Thank you!)

