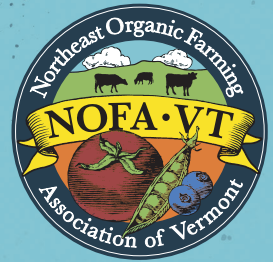


NOFA Notes



Quarterly newsletter of the Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont

Summer 2025



End-of-Session Policy Updates | Resilience Grantee Spotlight | Understanding Cuts to Federal
Farm-to-School Investments | Member Meetings



NOFA-VT

Nourishing people, land, and
justice through organic agriculture.

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Dear member of NOFA-VT,

A couple of years ago, when
NOFA-VT began crafting a new strategic
plan, we developed a set of core values
together with our members, board,
committees, and staff team. These values
serve as the bedrock on which we build
our work towards an economically viable,
ecologically sound, and socially just Vermont
agricultural system that benefits all living
things. Those values are:

Trust & integrity in everything we do.

Care & reciprocity between people and the planet.

Justice & wellbeing for all.

In these turbulent times, I've found myself literally saying these words out loud,
running the choices we face as an organization through a values filter. Does it build
trust and integrity? Does it originate from a place of care and reciprocity? Does it
create conditions for more justice and wellbeing? These questions remind us of what
we are about, where we are going, and how we want to show up – no matter the
conditions.

At a recent NOFA-VT member meeting, a member shared a powerful idea: that
our best work together is to embody the parable of the long-handled spoons (find the
spoon parable inside this issue on page 4!). At its heart, the parable reminds us that
when we recognize our need for one another and choose to show up in mutual support,
we ensure that, no matter what challenges arise, we will keep each other fed.

These are surely testing times. But values are just ideas until tested. Only through
action can they be proven real.

Lately, I have seen our values in action. I saw them in NOFA-VT farmers carrying
signs proclaiming “farmers and farmworkers, side by side!” while marching at an ICE
facility after a raid on a farm here in Vermont. I saw them displayed when a farmer
friend showed up on another member's property in the Mad River Valley, where there
was a flash flood in May, driving an excavator for hours and hours, helping to move silt
and mud out of the barn. I see values made real through the number of farms we have
enrolled in our Farm Share Program this year, providing more sliding scale CSA shares
than ever before, ensuring that those who are hungry can enjoy Vermont's bounty.

Values are like coals on a fire that must be tended to keep glowing hot enough
to keep us warm. We hope to see you on a farm this summer at a pizza social or an
on-farm workshop. Carve yourself a long-handled spoon, and bring it to a NOFA-VT
event soon to keep nourishing these values together, every day, strengthening our fire
through our practice.

Warmly,

Grace Oedel

Executive Director, NOFA-VT



Gathering and Growing

Agriculture is a profoundly social endeavor. Though farming can feel solitary—often filled with long, quiet days in the field—the act of cultivating food connects us to an intricate, living web: microbes cycling nutrients in the soil, flies and bees moving pollen from plant to plant, aphids munching on the crops and ladybugs in turn munching on the aphids, truck drivers filling up milk tanks and cargo beds, farmers market managers coordinating vendors, school nutrition directors signing food contracts and kitchen staff prepping the food, and all of us choosing what to feed ourselves, our families, and our friends. The moment food is grown to be shared, it becomes part of something special, something collective.

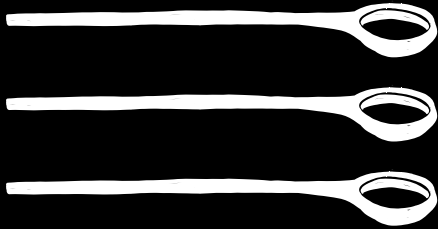
It's up to us, collectively, to support the kind of agricultural system that, in turn, supports us. Since a group of farmers founded NOFA-VT over 50 years ago, this has been a membership organization, and we've recently doubled down on our roots and placed renewed focus on member gatherings, meetings, and committees. Starting in late 2024, we've coordinated six member meetings in person and on Zoom to surface needs and ideas in the community that will guide our work.



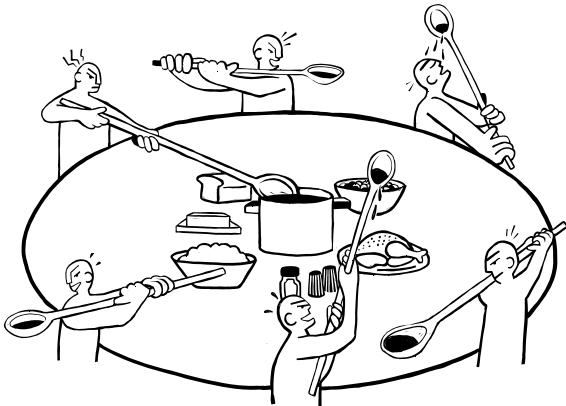
Member meetings facilitate connections between members and provide an environment for ideas to spark and grow into group actions, campaigns, or new services offered by NOFA-VT. Ideas surfaced at member meetings this spring resulted in a group action at the USDA office in Middlebury, amplifying the voices of our farmers and standing in solidarity with USDA staff as the Trump administration continues to ignore their experiences, cutting staff and programs. Other ideas generated during these member meetings have catalyzed larger ongoing conversations among smaller groups of members, with some becoming community-based projects and some informing our future work plans.

This summer, we're evolving these gatherings into shorter, regularly scheduled virtual meetings to create more continuity and connection over time. By joining a NOFA-VT member meeting, you'll stay up to date on current initiatives and help shape the collective work ahead. Don't worry, we'll still have in-person member gatherings throughout the year and public events like our upcoming pizza socials and workshops (see page 17 for this year's on-farm summer events lineup)! We'll be sharing the dates and details for upcoming member meetings soon—stay tuned! ♦

THE PARABLE OF THE LONG SPOONS



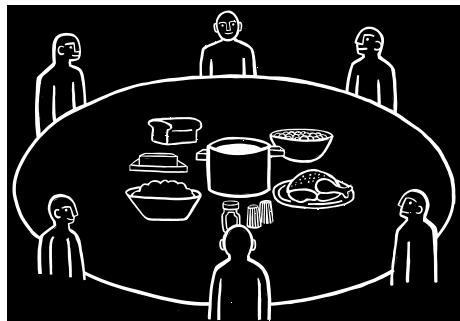
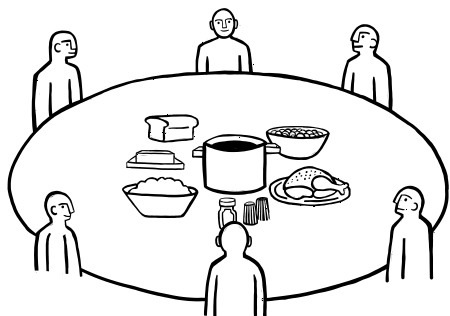
At the first table, they can reach the food with their long-handled spoons, but can't figure out how to reach their mouths. The people get hungrier and hungrier but can't figure out how to feed themselves.



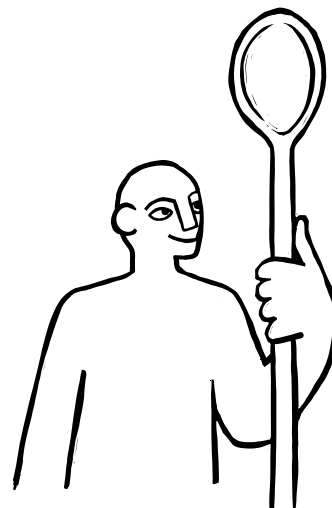
At the second table, the setup is the same. But together, the people realize that while the spoons are too long to reach their own mouths, they can easily feed one another.



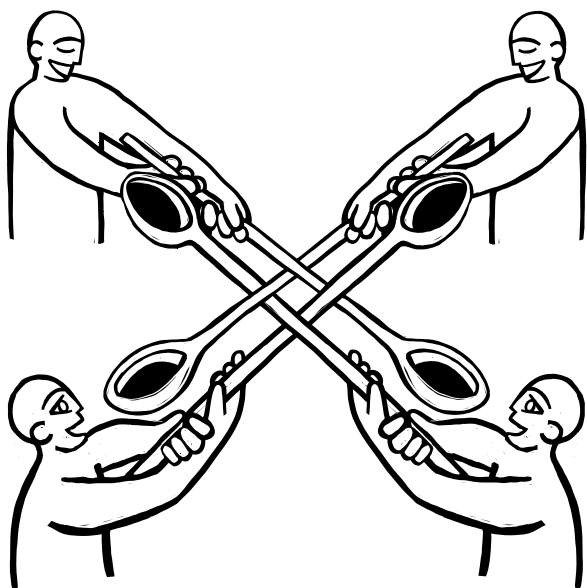
Imagine there are two banquets.



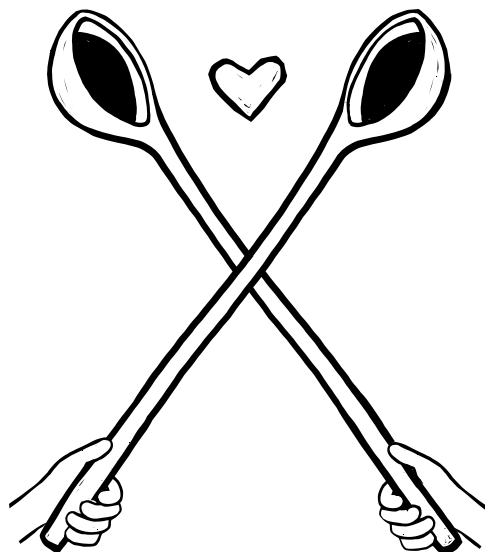
At both tables, there is a bountiful spread of food surrounded by hungry people. Everyone is given a long-handled spoon with which to eat.



At the second table, everyone is fed and happy, able to enjoy the delicious feast.



To nourish ourselves, we must nourish each other. We will keep each other fed.



This story is an adaptation of the parable of the long-handled spoons, which appears in the folklore of many cultures and the teachings of various religious traditions. A NOFA-VT member shared the parable as a fitting metaphor for our collective values and vision, and it has become a guiding story and symbol as we face federal divestment from a sustainable, just food system. Art by NOFA-VT member Christine Tyler Hill (@tenderwarriorco).



Building Community Through Farming

The Farm Upstream's Resilience Grant Journey



By Eric Boatti, NOFA-VT Climate Resilience Specialist

The NOFA-VT Resilience Grant program has supported farmers across Vermont, providing grants for over 250 farm-based projects that enhance resilience on individual farms and within rural communities since 2020. In 2025 alone, NOFA-VT received 135 applications totaling \$690,577 in funding requests—a 52% increase from 2024. Ultimately, 33 grants were awarded, benefiting 37 producers (including those participating in multi-farm projects), with a total of \$156,450 in funding distributed.

Of these grants, 21 (64%) were awarded to farm businesses led by Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), LGBTQ+ farmers, and/or disabled farmers. Thirteen recipients (39%) identified specifically as BIPOC. All grant applications are reviewed and scored by a rotating committee of farmers and farmworkers, underscoring NOFA-VT's commitment to participatory grantmaking and ensuring community representation in funding decisions.

Each year, we gain deeper insight into how farmers define resilience and recognize the critical need for flexible funding, often unavailable through other grant programs. Amid growing financial and social uncertainty, the Resilience Grant program empowers farms to continue investing in the social and economic vitality of their operations and communities while upholding a commitment to ecologically responsible farming practices.

One recent recipient is The Farm Upstream, a collectively-owned, diversified organic farm located in Jericho, Vermont. Currently cultivating about six acres of vegetables, fruits, and native shrubs and trees, the farm is rooted in a strong commitment to

local food and community resilience. Most of their produce is sold directly to neighbors through a small but growing CSA of around 40 members and an on-site farm stand, open Wednesday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

What began as a side project by four friends—Cory Froning, Jake Kornfeld, Spencer Hardy, and Jacqueline Huettenmoser—growing a few wholesale crops on leased land, took a significant leap forward in 2023 with the purchase of 52 acres on a former dairy farm. In 2024, following the devastating floods that affected many Vermont farms, The Farm Upstream deepened its roots by partnering with Tucker Andrews of Bone Mountain Farm, strengthening their shared vision and collaborative efforts.

Last spring, the farm received a NOFA-VT Resilience Grant to help transform an old garage into a vibrant new farm stand. The grant covered essential foundation and electrical work, allowing them to officially open the farm stand in August. The timing couldn't have been better. Community excitement was immediate, and the farm stand became a crucial touchpoint for connecting with local customers and introducing them to the farm's broader vision.

"The community energy around the stand gave us the confidence to keep investing," the farmers shared. "Tucker joining the team and the buzz from those early weeks helped us secure further support through a Vermont Family Farmer of the Month award."

For The Farm Upstream, location has become one of their most valuable assets. Situated along a well-traveled secondary road near several schools, the farm is ideally positioned to serve local families. "One of our keys to success will be building and maintaining a welcoming, well-stocked farm stand that draws in neighbors and makes the farm a community space," they shared. "The support from NOFA-VT made that feel possible on a realistic timeline. Without it, we might have leaned more heavily into wholesale and missed this opportunity to prioritize local connection."

Looking ahead, The Farm Upstream sees tremendous value in the Resilience Grant program—not just for their own growth, but for Vermont's broader agricultural landscape.

"These grants are incredible! Over the past few years, we've seen so many inspiring projects from other farms made possible with Resilience Grant support. The low administrative burden makes a huge difference, especially during the hectic growing season. It's one of the few funding opportunities that feels truly accessible and aligned with the realities of farm life."

Through innovation, collaboration, and strong community ties, The Farm Upstream is building a model of resilience that reaches far beyond their fields, strengthening both their business and the community they call home.

You can learn about all the projects funded by this year's Resilience Grant program at nofavt.org/resiliencegrants. This year's Resilience Grants were funded with donations to the NOFA-VT Resilience Fund as well as generous support from Canaday Family Charitable Trust, Lawson's Finest Liquids, Modesty is My Best Quality Fund at the Vermont Community Foundation, M&T Charitable Foundation, One Hive Foundation, and WaterWheel Foundation. If you're interested in supporting the resilience of local farms, please consider donating to NOFA-VT's Resilience Fund today. ♦

*Left: Jake, Cory, Tucker, Spencer, and Jacqueline outside the new farm stand.
Right: Onion seedlings in the greenhouse.*





A Chat With Liberation Ecosystem, Inc.

By Erin Buckwalter, NOFA-VT Deputy Director of Development & Engagement

NOFA-VT works in partnership with many other organizations to mutually support our intersecting visions. One such partner is Liberation Ecosystem, Inc., formerly Releaf Collective, a Vermont-based nonprofit that cultivates relationships and resources related to the environment, agriculture, and food among people of color in Vermont. This spring, we caught up with Samantha Langevin, Liberation Ecosystem, Inc.'s Director of Partnerships & Community, to provide an update for our members on their important work.

NOFA-VT: Please tell us about Liberation Ecosystem, Inc. and the work you do. What values ground your work and what makes your community unique?

Liberation Ecosystem, Inc. (LEI): Liberation Ecosystem, Inc. (LEI) is a BIPOC-led climate and social justice organizing hub striving to build power and opportunity centered in the needs of BIPOC and multiply marginalized Vermonters. Our ultimate vision is the creation of a robust and thriving ecosystem that centers the power of Black, Indigenous, and Vermonters of Color to (re) create meaningful, reciprocal relationships with ourselves, one another, and the Land we call Home.

Grounded in our four priority areas—Land, Environment, Agriculture, and Foodways—Liberation Ecosystem provides programming, training, and solidarity offerings to simultaneously honor the needs and expertise of BIPOC Vermonters in achieving access to critical conversations to increase equity and justice across our state. Our core programs include: Building Community, our collaborative platform to support networking, technical assistance, meaning making, bread breaking, skillshares, and the development of affinity groups for Vermont residents; Sharing Opportunities, our thriving listserv with hundreds of participants highlighting employment opportunities, grants, events, training and technical assistance offerings, and land access opportunities, all in service to create on ramps for BIPOC community members to serve in critical industries related to racial, social, and environmental justice; and Amplifying Voices, our statewide advocacy work to uplift BIPOC community members and values-aligned supportive organizations as existing resources and critical

stewards in combating systemic racism across our state.

There are many problems facing our world right now, and we believe that the solutions to these problems are going to come from the people who have been most impacted. As an organization led by and for people with the lived experience of marginalization, we intimately understand what it means to be left out of the picture. That lived experience comes with barriers and challenges, but it also means that we have a clear view of who else needs to be brought in. For example, we are the only organization led by and for Vermonters of color that is specifically focusing on providing statewide technical assistance to farmers and growers of color. Within this work, we acknowledge that our food system depends on more than just commercial farms, and we intentionally consider how homesteading, gardening, and other non-commercial food production support and sustain our communities. This unique approach guides many of the ways we provide programming, conduct advocacy, and support our members.

NOFA-VT: What are the primary projects you're currently working on?

LEI: So many! We have a staff person who focuses on technical assistance to growers—we see this project as resource navigation, helping farmers navigate bureaucracy to access critical resources (financial, informational, relational). Within that work, we are actively creating ecosystems of support for growers to build strong connections to each other and to share communally held skills and knowledge.

Our program offerings, particularly during the warmer months, are also robust. We host monthly Community Dinner & Conversation gatherings, one of our longest-standing traditions, focused on sharing food, resources, and connection. We also offer a range of workshops, including Farm Skills 101, Outdoor Cooking, and Foraging. Additionally, we work to create pathways for our members to lead their own programs and gatherings. This year's member-led offerings include Emergency Preparedness and Alternative Paths to Home Ownership.

We also devote time to growing and supporting relationships with our peers. We believe that our success requires their

success, and we pursue these connections in the spirit of non-competition. Active peer relationships include the Land Access & Opportunity Board, Vermont Professionals of Color Network, Community Resilience Organizations, New Suns Community Center, Vermont Farm to Plate, NOFA-VT, the Knoll Garden at Middlebury College, and our LibEco Agrarian Cohort, a group of community members who work in collaboration to plan agricultural programming.

Presently, we are also placing internal focus on questions like: When do we stop growing? How do we respond to urgency? How can we best plan ahead to continue to center our community? Our small staff of three intentionally sets aside time to consider these questions, and more, as we develop an organization that has a flat hierarchy and is accountable to its community.

NOFA-VT: Please share a story or highlight from your work in the past year.

LEI: In honor of this year's equinox, we collaborated with members of the Institute for Agroecology at UVM, the Knoll Garden at Middlebury College, and LEI members in the food system to host an afternoon-long conference. Rise & Return was an intergenerational gathering centered around sharing and preserving agricultural, food-based, and land-centered knowledge held within communities of color, reinforcing traditional ways of teaching and learning. Held at Middlebury College, we saw a great turnout despite a March ice storm. Notably, we had really high participation from younger, college-age members of our community. Their energy and perspective are critical to our continued work, and in turn, it is just as important for them to have spaces where they can see their voices are valued. Excellent enchiladas and tres leches cake didn't hurt either....

NOFA-VT: Can you share more about the ways you work to support farmers and promote food sovereignty through your work at Liberation Ecosystem?

LEI: We believe that food sovereignty is not just having the ability to choose what and how you eat, but that it also means you have the power to change your food system. A large portion of our programming is focused on skill-building with the goal of providing

participants with pathways to increased self-resilience. With greater self-resilience comes the ability to feed the people around you, creating local foodsheds that are both place and people-based. When we provide these kinds of skillshares, we make a big effort to source teachers and instructors from our community, reinforcing the idea that we aren't just passing on ways to feed ourselves, but that knowledge sharing is a part of food sovereignty. Skills-based workshops that center food, land, and agriculture are a core part of what we do.

We interpret agricultural technical assistance in a unique way, through a lens that focuses first on relationships, and we strongly believe that this focus is critical to increased food sovereignty. Relational technical assistance lays a strong foundation for farmers in our network to trust us and the resources we pass along, and also gives us a deeper understanding of their needs and context beyond just what is in the field or greenhouse. For example, when we work with farmers to identify goals for the season, we are able to not only be more targeted in our efforts to get them access to the right resources, but we are empowering them to take on big challenges and build relationships with additional service providers in the state because they are not alone—we are taking those challenges on with them.

NOFA-VT: How can folks get involved with your work?

LEI: There are a couple of ways that folks can get involved! As a state-wide organization with a fully remote staff, we do not have a centralized office or physical location. This means that when we run programming, particularly in the northern- and southern-most parts of the state, we are often doing a lot of homework to find indoor and outdoor spaces. Access to welcoming spaces—whether buildings, wild lands, or other gathering places—is a much-needed resource for our community to learn and connect.

We are also always interested in exploring in-kind support from peer organizations. We have many positive current relationships with folks in our ecosystem, like NOFA-VT, that began this way. We are also open to equitable partnerships and collaborations with folks looking to support and grow our food system. Because we are a small (but mighty!) staff, we have a handy intake form to collect and detail these kinds of offers and communications.

Securing resources is an ever-present dance for a small nonprofit like ours, and we also welcome financial support from our fellow Vermonters. In our current society, where and how we spend money says a lot

about what and who we value, and we encourage anyone who values our work to support us. You can do so by following this link to our secure donation platform, <https://secure.actblue.com/donate/lei1>.

Lastly, as a nonprofit that centers Vermonters of Color, we are in a time of heightened scrutiny and visibility. We cannot change how we look. This means that support can often look like privileged and resourced people and organizations maintaining public-facing policies, language, and work that does not “hide” or fly under the radar, as those actions make us more vulnerable. ♦



When Federal Cuts Undermine Local Progress

The Termination of LFSCC and Its Impact on Vermont's Farm to School Community

By Lauren Griswold, NOFA-VT Wholesale Markets Program Director, and Kayla Strom, NOFA-VT Farm to School Manager

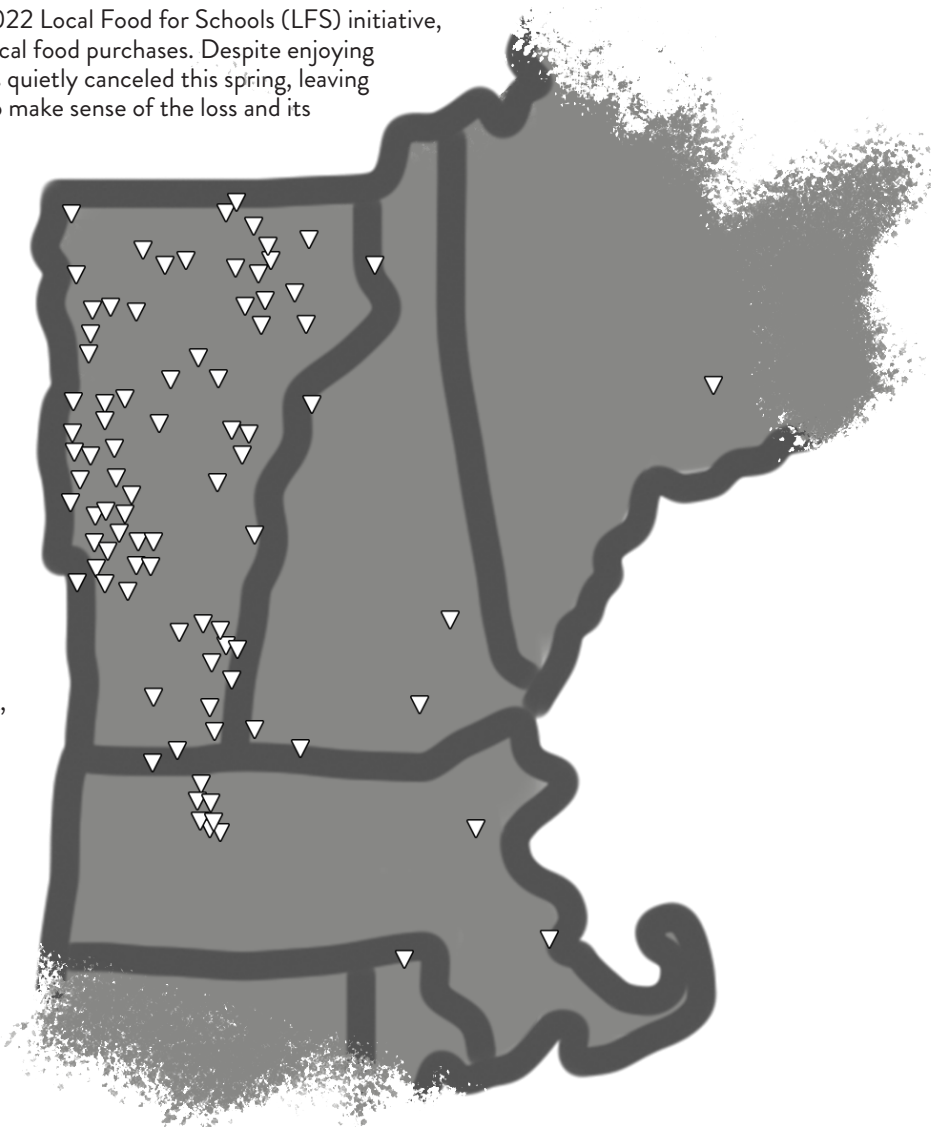
Amid sweeping federal budget cuts, one recent decision has delivered an especially heavy blow to Vermont's farm to school and early childhood community: the abrupt termination of USDA's Local Food for Schools and Child Care (LFSCC) program. This program, an expansion of the 2022 Local Food for Schools (LFS) initiative, aimed to strengthen school meal programs by funding local food purchases. Despite enjoying broad bipartisan support across the country, LFSCC was quietly canceled this spring, leaving advocates, schools, farmers, and food hubs scrambling to make sense of the loss and its implications.

In Vermont, the termination was more than symbolic. It cut short a promising model that had already shown measurable success. The Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets had received \$333,763 in 2022 through a USDA LFS cooperative agreement to increase schools' access to local and regional food. In an innovative move, the Agency distributed this funding as credits to each of Vermont's 69 School Food Authorities (SFAs)—essentially the school food equivalent of supervisory unions—through one of four Vermont food hubs. This streamlined access to local food for all SFAs, while fostering long-term relationships between schools and food hubs that extended beyond the grant term. The results were impressive. During the 2023–2024 school year:

- All 69 SFAs received free local food via their assigned food hub
- Funding ranged from \$1,000 to \$13,400 per SFA, based on student enrollment
- 98% of food service directors surveyed reported a positive experience with their food hub
- 66 local farms made first-time sales to schools
- 90 schools became new local food buyers
- The top products purchased included apples, maple syrup, ground beef, and cheese curds
- 97% of participating farms were small businesses
- 147 farms benefited overall—90 from Vermont, and 57 from neighboring states (see map)

This infusion of federal dollars didn't just bring more local food into cafeterias, it also helped Vermont schools leverage additional state support. The LFS program acted as a catalyst for schools participating in the Vermont Agency of Education's Local Foods Incentive Grant Program (LFI), which rewards SFAs that meet the following local purchasing thresholds:

- At 15% local purchasing, SFAs are awarded \$0.15 per meal served
- At 20% local purchasing, SFAs are awarded \$0.20 per meal served
- At 25% local purchasing, SFAs are awarded \$0.25 per meal served



This relatively new state program has already shown strong momentum. In its first year (2021), five (out of 69) SFAs reached 15% or more local purchasing. In the program's second year, six achieved that threshold. But in the program's third year in 2023–2024, thanks in part to LFS, the awardee count doubled to 12 SFAs. These 12 SFAs collectively spent \$1.2 million on local food. This marked a tremendous achievement for Vermont students, farms, and our broader communities. With support from the LFS, SFAs were able to access and unlock additional support from the state, significantly strengthening their local purchasing power and enabling them to invest even more in their local communities— a shared goal for many of Vermont's school buyers.

Together, the LFS and LFI programs demonstrated the power of aligned state and federal funding. They worked in tandem to build a more resilient local food system that supports schools, children, and small farms alike. The sudden termination of LFSCC, which was poised to provide an additional \$1.2 million to Vermont and \$660 million nationwide this year, has left a gaping hole in this progress.

The response to the news that this program was canceled from Vermont's farm to school community was swift. Within 48 hours of the announcement, 70 members of the Vermont Farm to School & Early Childhood Network gathered on an emergency call to express concern and strategize. Farmers, food hub operators, school nutrition directors, and early childhood providers spoke out about the vital role the LFS program had played.

"Thanks to LFS funds, we grew our business and provided food to local schools," said Mary Skovsted of Joe's Brook Farm in Barnet. "Losing this funding affects our ability to hire staff and expand production. It was a source of pride to supply fresh, organic food to our children's schools."

Julia Irish of Pitchfork Pickles in South Burlington noted, "We saw a substantial jump in schools ordering our products. The LFS program bridged the gap between school food budgets and the real cost of local food. Cutting it doesn't make sense—it supported farmers, schools, and rural economies."

Karyl Kent, School Nutrition Director at Lamoille North SU, reflected, "LFS funds allowed us to put fresh, local food on every lunch tray. Students noticed the difference—local carrots were sweeter, and apples, eggs, and dairy were appreciated. We saw less food waste as a result."

Emily Ruff, Executive Director of Afterschool in Nature at Sage Mountain, added, "We were relying on our network of Vermont farms to support our program, which serves primarily low-income families. We're devastated to lose this support, not just for feeding our kids, but for backing the farmers who make it possible."

In the world of farm to school, which stitches together the three C's of the classroom, the cafeteria, and the community, NOFA-VT finds an effective role in the cafeteria: supporting schools in local food



Long Winter Farm in Stowe, who supplies food to local early childhood centers.

purchasing, expanding access to fresh, local food for students, and building meaningful markets for Vermont farmers and food producers. We help schools access local food, connect with farmers and food hubs, and navigate the structural barriers that make local purchasing difficult. We also play a leadership role in the Vermont Farm to School & Early Childhood Network, providing backbone coordination, facilitating the Local Purchasing Action Team, and advocating for supportive legislation in the State House. Additionally, we serve as the sole statewide technical assistance provider for schools looking for support to increase their local purchasing. Through this role, having worked with most SFAs in the state over the past two decades, we have developed a clear understanding of the existing opportunities and complex challenges for both schools and farms in developing the K-12 market for local producers.

It will likely come as no surprise to hear that one of the most significant hurdles is the price point. Schools operate under constrained budgets. Farmers, particularly small-scale operations that receive far less governmental support and investment than corporate agri-businesses, survive on thin margins. Neither stakeholder has much flexibility to compromise on pricing. Without financial assistance to bridge the gap between fair prices and affordable food, this market simply cannot scale. While technical support and relationship-building are critical, dollars make the difference.

If we value farm viability, rural economies, and student nutrition, we must invest in programs like LFS and LFI to help level the playing field for our local producers. These initiatives don't just feed kids, they generate powerful ripple effects across the state. Research has shown that every school dollar spent on local food generates an additional \$1.60 in economic activity in Vermont. That money supports not just farmers, but food hubs, distributors, processors, and entire rural communities by keeping money circulating and growing in our state's food economy.

The success of LFS and its synergy with state programs like LFI show what's possible when policies align with values. And the cancellation of LFSCC has exposed how fragile that progress can be without sustained commitment. Both federal and state investment are essential to ensuring our students have access to high-quality, locally sourced food while sustaining small farms and food businesses across the state.

Thanks to the fast action by the Vermont Farm to School & Early Childhood Network, local advocates, and legislative champions, the Vermont Legislature secured \$500,000 in one-time funding to help close the gap and sustain the progress achieved through Local Food for Schools (LFS) in the upcoming year. While this funding does not fully replace what was lost, it serves as a critical bridge for schools and farmers who had already planned around these anticipated sales. We are deeply grateful that Vermont is honoring its commitment to providing students with fresh, local food and thankful for the Vermont

Farm to School & Early Childhood Network, legislative leaders, and countless Vermonters who mobilized quickly to secure this support.

But stopgap funding can only go so far. If we value farm viability, rural economies, and student nutrition, we must continue to advocate for permanent, reliable investments at both the state and federal level. These programs don't just feed kids—they generate lasting, local impact. Let's build on what works, and ensure that every child in Vermont can access fresh, local food at school.

NOFA-VT's farm to school work is a collaborative effort in partnership with Shelburne Farms Institute for Sustainable Schools, known as Vermont FEED (Food Education Every Day). Vermont FEED provides network and advocacy leadership, educational resources, and professional development to an evolving farm to school movement—involving hundreds of school communities and producers across the country—in order to increase equitable access to local, nourishing food and strengthen food, farm, and nutrition education. ♦



Schoolchildren visit Paul-Lin Dairy in Bakersfield.

Learn more and find ways to get involved with The Vermont Farm to School and Early Childhood Network at **VERMONTFARMTOSCHOOL.ORG**.



Vermont's Farmers Markets Celebrate 40 Years of Connection

By Andrew Graham, NOFA-VT Farmers Market Specialist

Every year, as part of our support for the Vermont Farmers Market Association (VTFMA), NOFA-VT hosts the annual Vermont Farmers Market Conference. The 2025 conference was particularly meaningful, commemorating the 40th anniversary of the original gathering of the Vermont Federation of Farmers Markets, held in 1985 at Vermont Technical College in Randolph Center (now VSU Randolph). In honor of this milestone, we returned to the Randolph Center campus—departing from our usual location in South Royalton—to celebrate where it all began.



The conference serves as a professional development and networking event for farmers market leaders from across Vermont. While it typically draws 40 to 50 attendees, participation has been steadily increasing since the pandemic. Each year, the event features workshops on key topics related to managing farmers markets. This year, sessions included bookkeeping, with a focus on best practices for managing financial systems; managing SNAP/EBT incentive programs, particularly the recent changes to the Crop Cash program; and power building, which explored how markets can act as platforms to foster positive change within their communities.

A fourth workshop at this year's event focused on the history of Vermont's farmers markets. Jay Bailey, operator of Fair Winds Farm and an early member of the Brattleboro Area Farmers Market, led the session. He shared vivid stories from the late 1970s and early 1980s, a formative time when the "modern" model of farmers markets was just beginning to take root in towns across the state. Bailey was the first president of the Vermont Federation of Farmers Markets, the first statewide organization dedicated to sharing information and resources among markets and vendors, while also advocating to the state on behalf of markets as a vital sales channel for small farms and local businesses. He also reflected on the critical role NOFA-VT played in supporting a new generation of young farmers who were building the vibrant market culture that continues today.

For Jay, returning to the annual gathering 40 years later was deeply meaningful, and he shared that sentiment with the assembled market leaders. He reflected on the values that have endured over the decades—such as maintaining a strong presence of agricultural vendors to ensure markets don't drift toward becoming craft fairs or flea markets, and the importance of producers selling their own goods. He also expressed admiration for the range and depth of topics covered in the current workshops, noting how far the sector has come since its early days. His reflections invited all of us to consider the future of farmers markets in Vermont, and what they might look like in the decades ahead.

It was a wonderful gathering, enjoyed by all, and I was proud to be a part of that legacy. I look forward to many more years of NOFA-VT supporting markets across the state, and I hope that you will take the time to visit one of the more than 60 markets across Vermont this season. All VTFMA member markets are listed in the NOFA-VT Farmers Market Directory, which can be found at NOFAVT.ORG/FARMERS-MARKETS. ♦



State Policy Wins in the 2024-25 Session and What's Next

By Jessica Hays Lucas, NOFA-VT Grassroots Policy Organizer, and Johanna Doren, NOFA-VT Direct Markets & Local Food Access Director

It's been a remarkable legislative session, and we're proud of what we've accomplished together. The continued turbulence at the federal level has undermined states' ability to plan and budget, including ours. But even in the midst of that turbulence, we introduced ground-breaking legislation with great momentum and secured two important

from our local farms. This one-time state funding will set a strong precedent for our continued request for base funding.

Another food security measure taken up by the legislature this session was in response to an urgent and unexpected challenge. In March, the USDA abruptly canceled the agreement they had with Vermont's Agency

change and extreme weather disrupt our farms, it's up to all of us to ensure that our farmers can continue to feed us all.

We are also proud to have launched the campaign to establish a state-funded Farm Security Fund (S.60) this year. In partnership with a broad coalition of farmer organizations and with farmers leading the way, we crafted



funding requests for state investment in food security programming.

NOFA-VT is a proud member of the Vermont Food Security Roadmap Coalition, working toward true food security for all people in Vermont by 2035. This legislative session, we worked hard to advance this goal by requesting \$500,000 in base funding for our local food access programs—Crop Cash, Crop Cash Plus, and Farm Share. Despite a rapidly shifting policy landscape, we successfully secured \$450,000 for these programs—a 50% increase over last year. This additional investment will allow us to support Crop Cash and Farm Share at their increased levels of demand, as well as bring back Crop Cash Plus, which expands access for EBT shoppers to dairy, grains, meats, and all other SNAP-eligible foods at participating farmers markets. These three programs together support low-income Vermonters in accessing a full diet, invest in more diverse producers, and attract even more eaters to buy directly

of Agriculture, Food, and Markets for \$1.2 million in Local Food for Schools and Child Care contracts with Vermont farmers. (To learn more about this important program and its impacts on farmers, find the NOFA Notes story on page 10.) Thanks to swift advocacy by the Vermont Farm to School and Early Childhood Network, support from Vermonter, and legislative leadership, the state has stepped in with a \$500,000 appropriation for Farm to School. We are deeply grateful that Vermont is honoring its commitment to students who deserve fresh, local food and to the farmers who had already planned to provide it.

These investments in local food security affirm that, even in turbulent times, Vermonters remain committed to feeding and supporting one another. Vermont's food security is rooted in the strength of our farms, especially as we face growing economic and global food system instability. When climate

legislation to support farms and working lands businesses impacted by climate-related losses.

We made powerful progress with S.60, which passed unanimously out of the Senate Committee on Agriculture and the full Senate with a few key amendments: expanding eligibility to include forestry operations (aligned with the House version of the bill, H.229), setting a \$150,000 cap to the maximum award, and linking that cap to 5% of the total funds appropriated. S.60 was then sent to the House Committee on Agriculture, Food Resiliency, and Forestry, where it also passed with unanimous support, with one minor amendment.

The Farm and Forestry Operations Security Fund, as it is now known, made it to the House Appropriations Committee, yet with the end of the legislative session, this is where the bill is paused until the legislature reconvenes next year. Advancing so far with

this ground-breaking policy in its first year is encouraging, and we're energized to continue pushing together for its passage in the year ahead. The appropriation, however, is where much work remains. Despite the bill's strong, bipartisan support, the associated funding request was steadily reduced from our original \$20 million proposal to \$7.5 million, then \$5 million, and finally just \$1 million. To truly invest in the resilience of Vermont farmers and our food security, adequate funding is essential. We're optimistic about the opportunity to keep building momentum to secure the resources this fund and our farmers deserve.

We're deeply grateful and inspired by the way NOFA-VT members organized and came together to drive systemic change. Our members are the engine behind this work.

For Margaret, being part of this effort has been both impactful and personally grounding. She shared, "Being on the [Policy & Organizing] committee is a way to connect with and influence state-level decisions that affect our communities and our farms. In the crazy federal political climate we live in, this feels both important and—honestly—really therapeutic for me."

Longtime NOFA-VT member Maria Reade also began organizing in her Bennington County community even before the legislative session began. She hosted a Farm Security Fund Workshop at a local library, bringing together dozens of farmers to learn more, build connections, and organize for collective action. "In today's tumultuous world, it's so refreshing to be part of a larger group like NOFA-VT that steps up to tackle

carefully as I talked about strengthening our communities and knowledge base to survive the difficulties of climate and economic stress."

Christine Bourque of Blue Heron Farm in Grand Isle also delivered powerful testimony as a vendor at the Champlain Islands Farmers' Market, describing the deep impact of Crop Cash on her farm and her values: "Our farm is founded in social justice—so all can eat—because everyone needs to eat... Children hand me their wooden tokens for a cucumber or a pint of cherry tomatoes. Their moms hand me Crop Cash for the bags of potatoes they can now afford with the extra help... 3SquaresVT, Crop Cash, and Crop Cash Plus support the whole Vermont community—the eater and the farmer—it is a double investment, a double win."



Margaret Loftus is a member of NOFA-VT's Policy and Organizing Committee—the dedicated committee of NOFA-VT members who helped initiate the work to create a Farm Security Fund. Margaret co-owns Crossmolina Farm in Corinth, VT. At the farm's year-round farm store this February, Margaret hosted a Farm Security Fund workshop to engage her local community, gather input on the legislation, and encourage action. She has remained deeply involved throughout, keeping neighbors informed and motivated to support the bill. Margaret was moved to get involved, in part, by the devastating floods last July:

"I woke up and realized that Joe's Brook Farm was flooded yet again. I was overwhelmed, wondering how they found the strength to get up and go back to farming after that. How can we keep asking that of farmers? No one's work should be that heartbreaking."

meaningful work," Maria says. Thanks to the efforts of Maria and local farmers, more than 120 people across Bennington County alone have become supporters of the Farm Security Fund.

NOFA-VT members also led by sharing their stories throughout the session, offering testimony on the importance of Crop Cash Plus to their businesses and communities, meeting with legislators to discuss their on-farm climate mitigation practices, and describing firsthand the devastating impacts of flooding and frost on their farms and communities.

Peggy Newfield of Newfield Herb Farm in Craftsbury Common met with her legislators over lunch, sharing how she and her neighbors actively work to mitigate flooding. Peggy spoke to the broader importance of food security in her community. "I really valued meeting with Senator Douglass and Representative Harper... They listened

Stories like Peggy's, Christine's, and those of many other NOFA-VT members and allies were instrumental in building momentum and driving systemic change that will make a real difference for Vermont farmers and eaters alike.

As we look ahead to another year, we are grounded in purpose and resolve, and grateful that we can link arms together. "One of NOFA-VT's perennial strengths is our commitment to grassroots collective action," Maria says. "Together, we set the stage, hone in on the issues, and raise the questions that catalyze the rest of us to get involved and generate approaches that work in our communities. 'We the people' are part of the solution, standing shoulder to shoulder—listening, guiding, supporting, and inspiring each other...Smaller groups of determined folks truly can make a difference, starting at the grassroots level." ♦

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:



Green Dream Farm, Enosburg Falls - February 2025

Chris and Annie Wagner founded Green Dream Farm in 2005 when they purchased the commercial dairy where Chris had long been a partner. Together, they ran the operation with a renewed commitment to environmental stewardship, animal comfort, and climate resilience. In 2018, they made the difficult decision to sell their herd and transition away from dairy. Today, Chris and Annie raise grass-fed beef cattle and transform manure into high-quality commercial compost. After decades in the dairy industry, the pivot to new enterprises has been a challenging journey, but the Wagners' deep belief in organic farming, love for their land, and dedication to their community and family have guided their perseverance.

This year, Green Dream Farm was awarded \$12,000 to make long-overdue improvements to a section of their stall barn that had deteriorated. With the funds, Chris and Annie will pour a new concrete base, replace worn-out free stall dividers and headlocks, and upgrade their cow comfort mats. These investments are essential to supporting their farm's holistic goals: achieving financial security, ensuring animal welfare, stewarding the land sustainably, and enhancing their family's quality of life.



Severy Farm, Cornwall - March, 2025

When Nate and Kerianne Severy returned to Nate's family farm to help his parents run the business, they held onto a dream: to one day take over the operation and reimagine it as a place where future generations could thrive. Ten years later, they accomplished what once felt impossible, becoming the new owners of Severy Farm. Since taking the reins, Nate and Kerianne have strategically diversified the business to improve its economic stability and deepen its impact within the local community. Now in their seventh season, they have added a steadily growing strawberry enterprise to their 100% grass-fed organic dairy operation, with a focus on direct-to-consumer sales through pick-your-own offerings and an on-site farm stand.

Severy Farm was awarded \$12,000 to invest in specialized planting and harvesting equipment for their strawberry enterprise. These new implements will significantly reduce labor hours and the physical demands of core tasks, enabling Nate and Kerianne to continue expanding their berry production and meet growing wholesale and retail demand for their certified organic strawberries.



Old Road Farm, Granville - April, 2025

In 2015, Henry Webb and Gabrielle Tuite founded Old Road Farm on a half acre of family land in Monkton, driven by a belief that growing ecologically conscious food is one of the most meaningful ways to serve a community. Over the past ten years, they purchased land of their own and have grown Old Road Farm to a thriving, diversified operation with six acres of certified organic vegetable production. Deeply committed to their town and farming community, they often step away from the fields to support neighbors or respond to local emergencies as volunteers with the Granville Fire Department.

Old Road Farm was awarded \$12,000 to automate the irrigation, ventilation, and heating systems in three of their greenhouses. The new Orisha automation systems will lead to more efficient use of propane, electricity, and water; lower pest and disease pressure; and increased production. Beyond the economic benefits, this automation will give Henry and Gabrielle greater flexibility to leave the farm when needed, the ability to more reliably commit to their roles in emergency response, and will support their continued investment in the long-term ecological health of Old Road Farm. ♦

Applications are available to any small or medium-sized farm in Vermont. The next round of applications will open in September. To learn more, visit VERMONTFAMILYFARMERAWARD.ORG.



2025 On-Farm Summer Events

We're thrilled to present another summer of community-building events! Dig into exciting topics and learn new skills at a **workshop** or enjoy a wood-fired pizza dinner and farm tour at one of our **pizza socials**.

Space is limited and pre-registration is encouraged. To learn more and register, visit: NOFAVT.ORG/SUMMER2025

Wed. 7/16



Old Road Farm Pizza Social | Granville | 5:30-7:30 pm

Sat. 7/19



Incorporating Mushrooms Into Your Garden | The Sole Connection, Arlington | 2:30-4:30 pm

Thurs. 7/24



Forested Buffer Repair in Action | Shelburne Farms, Shelburne | 5:15-7:15 pm

Mon. 7/28



Designing Perennial Plantings for Pollinator Health and Farm Profitability | Cloud Water Farm, Warren | 5-7 pm

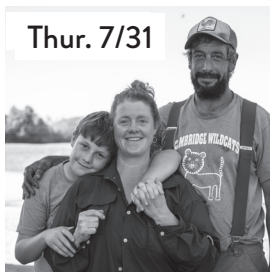
Wed. 7/30



& Tues. 8/5

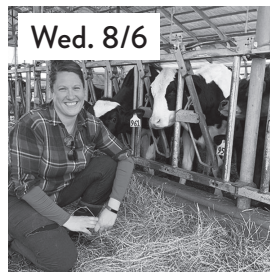
Farm Dreams | Part 1: Milkweed Farm, Westminster, 5-8 pm | 5:30-7:30 pm | Part 2: Online, 5-7 pm

Thur. 7/31



The Farm Between Pizza Social | Jeffersonville | 5:30-7:30 pm

Wed. 8/6



Corse Farm Dairy Pizza Social | Whitingham | 5:30-7:30 pm

Tues. 8/12



Farmer Olympics | High Meadows Farm, Putney | 4-8 pm

Tues. 8/19



Climate Adaptation Field Walk at Scott Farm Orchard | Scott Farm Orchard, Dummerston | 3:30-5:30 pm

Thurs. 8/21



Stone's Throw Farmstead Pizza Social | Shrewsbury | 5:30-7:30 pm

Mon. 8/25



Baking With Local Grain Varieties | Brot Bakehouse School and Kitchen, Fairfax | 5-7:30 pm

Tues. 8/26



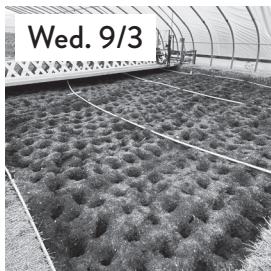
Joe's Brook Farm Pizza Social | Barnet | 5:30-7:30 pm

Weds. 8/27



Digging Deeper Into Organic No-Till System Management | Ananda Gardens, Montpelier | 5-7 pm

Wed. 9/3



High-Impact Backyard Composting | Sterling College, Craftsbury Commons | 2-4 pm

Wed. 9/10



Trillium Hill Farm Pizza Social | Hinesburg | 5:30-7:30 pm

Tues. 9/16



Cultivating Biodiversity and Resilience at Cedar Mountain Farm | Cedar Mountain Farm, Hartland | 5-7 pm

Tues. 10/7



Forest Farming With Botanicals | Smokey House Center, Danby | 1-5 pm

Wed. 10/8



Forest Farming With Botanicals | UVM Research Forest, Jericho | 9 am-1 pm

To see more details and register for events, please visit NOFAVT.ORG/SUMMER2025

Thank You for Supporting Organic Agriculture and a Strong Food System!

A warm welcome to the following new NOFA-VT members who have joined this spring:

802 Craft Cannabis LLC, Sudbury, VT	Davis Farm, Jericho, VT	Kiana Donegan, Shelburne, VT	Roger Brown, Richmond, VT
Adam Fronhofer, Poultney, VT	De La Bruere Organic Dairy, Swanton, VT	Lady Bug Farm, Hardwick, VT	Rutland Area Shepherds, East Wallingford, VT
Adamant Sugarhouse, Adamant, VT	DKB Dairy, Derby Line, VT	Laura Johnson, Berlin, VT	Sam Bliss, Burlington, VT
Adams Turkey Farm and Maple Products, Westford, VT	Eagle View Acres, North Troy, VT	Lazy Dog Farm, Orwell, VT	Samuel Stoltzfus, Newport Ctr, VT
Alison Stannard, Manchester Center, VT	East Creek Stock Farm, Orwell, VT	Lexi Leacock & Jim Edgcomb, Warren, VT	Sandy Bottom Farm, Isle La Motte, VT
Allissa Vigil, Barre, VT	Elam Stoltzfus, Newport Center, VT	Liesha McKinley-Barnett, Charlotte, VT	Sara Rochford, Newfane, VT
Anders Aughey, Johnson, VT	Elijah Brigham, Milton, VT	Lydia Carlson, Charlotte, VT	Sarah Camille Wilson, Burlington, VT
Andrés Oyaga, Burlington, VT	Elise Simone, Burlington, VT	Lynd Farm, Walden, VT	Sarah Lillibridge, Bakersfield, VT
Andrew Becker, Montpelier, VT	Emma Rothe, Richmond, VT	Lynne Gavin, Richmond, VT	Savannah Kelly, Cabot, VT
Anika Adams, East Calais, VT	Equation Formulary, Guilford, VT	Maggie Wood, Springfield, VT	Scott Oeschger & Edmond Lessard, St Johnsbury, VT
Anne Obelnicki, South Burlington, VT	Eric Seitz, Burlington, VT	Mariah Richards, Hope, ME	Sebastien Latraverse, Westfield, VT
Anthony Trombly Sr, Hyde Park, VT	Evan Sullivan, Winoski, VT	Marianne Eaton, New Haven, VT	Shelburne Farms Market Garden, Shelburne, VT
Antoinette Jacobson, Norwich, VT	Fresh Roots Farm, North Pomfret, VT	Mark Morrison, Monroe, NH	Sherwin Farm, Norwich, VT
Ari Lattanzi, Randolph, VT	Gilbert Sweet, Franklin, VT	Martha Machia, Morristown, VT	Sittin' Pretty Farm, Wells River, VT
Barbara Bean, West Danville, VT	Gillian Wigton Bell, Burlington, VT	Mary Joy Patchett, Richmond, VT	Skimmer Hellier, Bristol, VT
Ben Lanza, Sheldon, VT	Glennview Jerseys, Hyde Park, VT	Mead Brothers Dairy LLC, West Charleston, VT	Sophia Deemer, Shelburne, VT
Benuel Stoltzfus, Newport, VT	Good Body Products, Guilford, VT	Meg Bookless, Bradford, VT	Sophia Livingston, Lincoln, VT
Boissonneault Family Farm, Georgia, VT	Granite Grains, Amherst, NH	Meghan Livingston, Lincoln, VT	Melanie Sands, Middlebury, VT
Brad Sprague, New Haven, VT	Greens Corners Maple Products, Sheldon, VT	Micah Barritt, Burlington, VT	Michelle Jacobson, South Burlington, VT
Brandon Bless, Shelburne, VT	Hannah Systrom, Whiting, VT	Misty Maples Farm, Inc, Fairfield, VT	Molly Semler, Waitsfield, VT
Brickey Brothers Valley View Farm, Plainfield, VT	Haynes Dairy, Claremont, NH	Molly Severeid, Jericho, VT	Molly Severeid, Jericho, VT
Brit Kelleher, Denver, CO	Head Waters Farm, Newbury, VT	Montpelier Vineyards LLC, Montpelier, VT	Neil Mauck, Jericho, VT
Browe Farm, Pawlet, VT	Henry Stoltzfus, Newport, VT	Neil Mauck, Jericho, VT	Noah Novotny, Starksboro, VT
Bryn Cariad Farm, Poultney, VT	Hilary Rosa, Newport, VT	Northeast Kingdom Processing, St Johnsbury, VT	Northeast Kingdom Processing, St Johnsbury, VT
Burpee, Warminster, PA	Hillcrest Farms, LLC, Randolph Center, VT	Northern Grain Growers Collaborative, St. Albans, VT	Oakland Station Dairy LLC, Georgia, VT
Catherine Cusack, Newport, VT	Iana Debrea, Poultney, VT	Oakland Station Dairy LLC, Georgia, VT	Olivia Littell, Barnet, VT
Catherine Thompson, Craftsbury Common, VT	Ike Mulqueen-Duquette, Montpelier, VT	Paul Lambert, Randolph Center, VT	Paul Lambert, Randolph Center, VT
Charlotte Rootblum, Waterbury, VT	James Clark, West Topsham, VT	Quintessential LLC, Cabot, VT	Rachel Schmidt, Burlington, VT
Christine Hadekel, Richmond, VT	Jamie Abbaticchio, Burlington, VT	Rachael Schmidt, Burlington, VT	Rayna Joyce, Shelburne, VT
Claire Fischer, Fairfax, VT	Janica Anderzén, Hinesburg, VT	Reuben Stoltzfus, Troy, VT	Rick Woods, Lebanon, NH
Clara Abell, Burlington, VT	Jay Herbert, Adamant, VT	Rocky Hill Farm, Westford, VT	Rocky Hill Farm, Westford, VT
Claybrook Farm, Hinesburg, VT	Jim Stiles, Saint Albans, VT		
Clover Ajamie, Brattleboro, VT	Joachim Hubele, Keene, NH		
Cobble Creek Nursery, Monkton, VT	Julian Wise, Burlington, VT		
Critter Meadows, Williamstown, VT	K Freeman, Newport, VT		
Dan MacLean, Charlotte, VT	Kara Brown, Johnson, VT		
	Kate Patenaude, Derby Line, VT		
	Kathryn Field, Charlotte, 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!



1844 Maple

Pleasant Valley
Firewood & Maple

Smokey House Center

Kingdom Maple

Granite Grains

Fat Loon Farm, LLC

Cedar Acres

Witt Acres Farm

Compagna's Dairy LLC

Benjamin Jr. Stoltzfus

Henry M Stoltzfus

Shire Beef, LLC

Oakland Station Dairy
LLC

Upstate Elevator
Supply Company LLC

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



NOFA-VT | Our Staff

A Warm Welcome to Our New Staff!



Jessie Hoyng

Development Coordinator

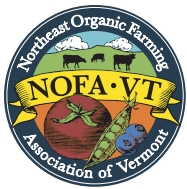
Jessie lives in St. Johnsbury, where she is dedicated to building and participating in her community. In addition to her work at NOFA-VT, Jessie works with an organic vegetable farm in Barnet to support the farm's operations, including running their farmers market booth and helping manage the farm's CSA. Prior to joining the NOFA-VT team, Jessie worked with Vermont Fresh Network to build partnerships within Vermont's food system. She also has a diverse professional background in marketing and communications. She loves exploring new trails, canoing, quilting, dancing to live music, and reading mysteries while cuddling with her cat Winnie.



Brooklynne Sundseth

Membership & Development
Manager

Brooklynne has a variety of experience in development and donor relations from organizations in the Southwest. She worked as campaign manager and then development director for local political races and organizations in Phoenix, Arizona, through 2020. Most recently, she was living at a permaculture education nonprofit in northern New Mexico, working both in the field and supporting development and grant writing for the organization. She moved to Vermont in 2024 and has been enjoying getting to know the people and beautiful scenery of the state. Brooklynne loves being outside hiking, camping, and most of all being by a river or lake.



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