Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont’s 2020 Impact & Gratitude Report
A food system where everyone thrives and land is healed is possible.

Our mission is to promote organic practices to build an **economically viable**, **ecologically sound** and **socially just** Vermont agricultural system that benefits all living things.

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**NOFA-VT**

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Dear Friend,

This past year has been a whirlwind: the pandemic, political unrest, an overdue reckoning with our nation’s reality of racism, record drought in Vermont, and more evidence than ever of changing climate. Yet, we have also seen the power of community. Farmers teaming up to keep communities fed; school nutrition professionals sending kids home with plant starts; people tending their first gardens with their neighbors. We are all being asked: how will we respond in these most trying of times? Will we step up to protect each other and our planet? Will we keep each other fed and steward the land with care? Will we be good ancestors?

You, NOFA-VT farmers, members and community collaborators, inspire us and are the reason we have been able to deliver on our essential and ambitious work in response to these times. You are why we can celebrate a long list of hopeful projects and successful efforts.

The pandemic has shown how critical a more verdant, viable, and just food system is. Our core work addresses both short term needs in our community as well as longer-term, systems changes. Especially during this moment of disruption, we center work that lays the path to a healed food system—with ecology and justice at its heart.

Your support is a vote for organic farming practices that sustain communities, nourish land, and build a just food system. In this year’s impact report, we share our highlights from 2020. Please reach out if you have questions or ideas.

Our ability to do this work is thanks to you; we offer our deep gratitude.

Grace Oedel, Executive Director

Your generosity enabled us to rise to this year’s challenge.
Perseverance and flexibility was our motto for 2020. Farmers needed both our core services as well as an array of supports to ensure that they were able to weather the pandemic.

~ We supported 39 farms with Resilience Grants to adapt to changes brought about by the pandemic, enabling quick investments at this critical time.

~ We provided a wide range of farmer services to over 150 farms. 73 farms received in-depth one-on-one business development services, 22 farms enrolled in our Farm Beginnings Program, 6 farms enrolled in our Journey Farmer Program, and 51 farms received pandemic assistance application support.

~ We ran 5 forums with nearly 120 participants, to support peer-to-peer learning and resource sharing.

~ Through organic certification, we supported market-based incentives for farms to adopt and utilize organic practices. Vermont Organic Farmers certified 783 producers and processors committed to soil health, biodiversity, and animal welfare. This represented 159,505 acres in organic, ecological practices and more than $312 million in sales.
A big part of our farm business is selling to restaurants and for agritourism events. When the pandemic hit, our orders and events started to get cancelled and we had to pivot quickly. With the help of NOFA-VT’s farmer services team, we started a CSA. They helped us navigate this change quickly and effectively, and provided invaluable resources for us that we will be able to use for years to come!

Resilience Grant recipient
We’re always impressed at the breadth of good work that NOFA-VT manages under its umbrella. Just in the past few weeks we got to be part of the effective state advocacy work that you led, we received helpful technical support from the farmer services team, and are participating in the farm share program to get CSA shares to people in need in our community. NOFA-VT does such a wide spectrum of work to support farms like ours!

Kara and Ryan Fitzbeauchamp, Evening Song Farm, Cuttingsville, VT
Deepening agricultural engagement & community

2020 started in our usual frenzy of activity leading up to our Winter Conference. Shortly after, the pandemic swept into Vermont, forcing us to cancel or reimagine many of our events. Through it all, we held fast to our commitment to foster community, share gratitude, and build a better food system through joy, learning, and of course, good food!

~ Over 950 participants gathered at our 38th Annual Winter Conference to learn about organic farming and food systems, celebrate, and deepen community connections.

~ In lieu of on-farm pizza socials, we shared our appreciation for the essential workers who continue to fill our plates through the “Feeding Those Who Feed Us Project,” baking lunch at 10 inspiring farms. At each stop, neighboring farms—as well as a team of school nutrition professionals—received meals for their crews too.

~ More than 300 individuals registered for our 11th Annual Agricultural Literacy Week, to learn about and build community around the topic of resilience.

~ With school group visits to farms on hold, we developed News from the Farm, a biweekly newsletter providing farm-to-school based videos, photos, recipes, and activities to foster farm-based learning and connections.

Resilience Garden participant

“My garden was my sanity when I was furloughed in March, my therapy when I was terminated from my job in June, and my savior throughout the summer. I feel grateful to have learned to can, pickle, dry, and freeze the abundance for the months to come.

Photo of Green Mountain Girls Farm by Kim Norman Mercer
Increasing food access & inclusivity

With researchers estimating food insecurity increased at least 25% across the state in 2020, we doubled down on our commitment to ensure that all may be fed.

~ We nearly doubled the number of participants who received half-priced CSA shares through our Farm Share Program. This win-win program also ensures that farms earn the full value for these shares, accounting for more than $207,000 of economic impact at 55 participating farms.

~ We worked in coalition to ensure significant CARES Act funding supported school meals and farm to school programs so they could continue to grow and nurture their farm to school commitments during the pandemic.

~ We provided 60,000 free seed packets to 2,700 food insecure families throughout Vermont in partnership with High Mowing Organic Seeds to grow Resilience Gardens to feed themselves and share with neighbors.

~ We partnered with the Nulhegan Band of the Coosuk Abenaki Nation and Rooted In Vermont on the Abenaki Land Link Project, coordinating farmers and gardeners to grow Indigenous food for Abenaki tribal citizens.

“The quality and quantity of food we get through our CSA is incredible. It makes being healthy possible for my family. We don’t have to sacrifice the quality of our food just because we are lower income.”

Farm Share Program participant

Photo: Jordan Barry for Seven Days
The Abenaki Land Link Project has been an amazing success story. As a disadvantaged population with extensive health disparities, this project has been a lifeline in accessing healthy foods sources to our Abenaki citizens. Food has always been a universal language among people. This program brings people of different races and backgrounds together to learn about each other and the food we all share.

Chief Don Stevens, Nulhegan Band of the Coosuk Abenaki Nation
We’re NOFA-VT members because we respect and appreciate the hard work that NOFA-VT does to support Vermont farmers, improve access to organic food in our communities, and advocate for Vermont organic farms on a local and national level.

Danielle Allen & Ben Dana, Root 5 Farm, Fairlee, VT
Working for systemic change

We cannot return to business as usual after the pandemic. Using this moment of disruptive change, we focused on advocating for programs and policies that lay the groundwork for a healed food system with ecology and justice at its heart, and that are secure and resilient in the face of future disruptions.

~ We successfully advocated for policies and stimulus funds that support diverse food and farm businesses.

~ In coalition with Migrant Justice and others, we advocated for the Vermont Economic Stimulus Equity Fund, standing with farmworkers as frontline, essential workers in our farming community.

~ We continued to support the advancement and integrity of the National Organic Program by updating guidelines on grazing season length, sap filtration, and certifying new beef operations.

~ We are advancing soil health in Vermont as a founding partner and leader of the Vermont Soil Health Policy Network and we are advancing climate policy solutions as members of Vermont’s Act on Climate Coalition and the Renew New England Alliance.

Thanks to your team for taking the lead on this policy issue. Your attention to detail and clear understanding of the structure and implications of the legislation allows us to be pointed in our advocacy.

Coalition Partner

Photo: Jordan Barry for Seven Days
The Enid Wonnacott Fund was established in 2019 after the passing of NOFA-VT’s beloved Executive Director of thirty-one years. In 2020, we met our goal of $500,000 from over 300 generous individuals. The fund was used to support NOFA-VT through our leadership transition and the remainder will support our ongoing community building work to foster vibrant agricultural communities, including signature programs that Enid lovingly created to bring people together joyfully around food, farming and nourishing relationships. Thank you for supporting Enid’s legacy and a joyful, thriving future for NOFA-VT and our food system!

**2020 Financial Overview**

**INCOME** $3,427,995

**EXPENSE** $2,821,799

**EXPENSES BY CATEGORY**

- Administration $307,750
- Fundraising $121,049
- Membership Services $68,476
- Programs (see chart) $2,324,524

These are unaudited numbers. A copy of NOFA’s 990 tax form is available upon request.

**KEY CASH & INVESTMENTS**

| Beginning 2020 | $3,479,704 |
| Ending 2020   | $4,213,597 |

**SOURCES OF INCOME**

- Grants & Contracts 30.9%
- Certification Fees 28.7%
- Membership & Donations 27.5%
- Interest/Investments 6.7%
- Program Fees 3.4%
- Admin Allocation 2.1%
- Sales 0.6%
- (Other 0.1%)

**EXPENSES BY PROGRAM**

- Vermont Organic Farmers 42.3%
- Farmer Services 20.9%
- Market Development & Farmers Markets 11.4%
- Farm Share Programs 8.1%
- Farm to School & Agricultural Engagement Partners 7.5%
- On Farm Workshops & Winter Conference 6%
- Advocacy 3.8%
- (Loan Fund <0.1%)
Thank you for supporting our work!

We are so grateful for YOU—our many members, donors, businesses, and organizations who supported us in 2020.

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Carolyn McLaughlin, in honor of Kyle McLaughlin, Heather Payson, and Shuggie • Werner Ostmann, in honor of Gale B. Neave • John Davis, in honor of Nancy Tarnowsky • John Belding, UMaine Woodsmen’s Teammates, Michael Greene, Christine Howe, Mary Howe, Dave Larsen, Susan Noble, and Ginny & Doug Wilson, in memory of Ken Van Hazinga • Robert & Theresa Paquin and Lynn Reynolds, in memory of Enid Wonnacott • Jeanmarie Fitzgerald, in memory of Missy Fitzgerald
Members have been the heart of NOFA-VT for 50 years!

Our members are farmers, homesteaders, gardeners, engaged eaters, and food system enthusiasts who believe that a better food and farming system is possible. Your participation adds power and momentum to this movement and is an investment in a thriving agricultural future for all in our communities. nofavt.org/join

“NOFA-VT’s mission as a leader in promoting a healthy, sustainable food system that works for the betterment of people in VT as well as all life on this planet, is crucial now and on into the future.”

Andrew Knafel, Clear Brook Farm, Shaftsbury, VT

Cover photo: Kim Norman Mercer • Above: Penni Rand