New Study Highlights the Value of Vermont’s Dairy Industry

Dairy Brings $2.2 Billion in Economic Activity to Vermont Each Year

By Alison Kosakowski, VAAFM

The Vermont Dairy Industry brings $2.2 Billion in economic activity to Vermont annually, according to a new study funded by the Vermont Dairy Promotion Council. Recognizing the need for up-to-date data about dairy’s impact on Vermont’s economy, the Vermont Dairy Promotion Council partnered with the Vermont Agency of Commerce and Community Development, the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, and Castleton Polling to quantify the impact of the industry on Vermont’s economy and way of life. The study, which began in March 2014, was funded by dairy farmers through the state’s dairy check-off program. The data has been consolidated in a new brochure called “Milk Matters: The Role of Dairy in Vermont,” which can be downloaded at http://vermontdairy.com/download/VTDairy_MilkMattersReport.pdf.

Findings describe the impact of the industry on Vermont’s economy, landscape, and way of life. The Fiske family is one of more than 800 dairy families contributing to Vermont’s dairy economy.
Higher education in Vermont is working together to make the state the best place for farm and food education in the country.

“First,” “Most,” and “Highest” most often describe the Vermont food system. On a per capita, Vermont has more local and organic farms, Community Supported Enterprises, and farmers markets than any other state in the country. The state is also the per capita national leader in direct sales to consumers, and ranks #1 among the top five states for new farmers to get their start.

With the foundation of Vermont’s leadership in sustainable agriculture, food systems development, and locally-sourced food products, our state’s educators in partnership with entrepreneurs, food producers, and farmers have formed a new collaboration to redefine farm and food system higher education in Vermont.

The Vermont Higher Education Food Systems Consortium, comprised of leaders from Green Mountain College, Middlebury College, Sterling College, University of Vermont, Vermont Law School, and Vermont Technical College, are tapping Vermont’s agricultural traditions and entrepreneurship to make Vermont the emerging epicenter of the nation’s food system renewal.

Providing academic programming and certificates in almost two dozen core areas of food systems study, the Vermont farm and food education emphasizes integration of classical academic instruction coupled with experiential learning engagements focusing on sustainability, and service learning with seasoned entrepreneurs.

As part of this experience, Vermont’s colleges, universities, and graduate schools are engaging a creative new generation of networked farm and food entrepreneurs as student mentors. These businesspeople are growing Vermont-scaled companies that create and market biofuels, beer, wine, and spirits, artisan and cave-aged cheese, specialty wood products, organic seeds, produce, fruits, grains, meats and many other value-added products.

Together, Vermont’s food system innovators are reaching potential students throughout Vermont, the U.S. and the world with a premier food system education experience— one that is grounded in the core Vermont values of entrepreneurship, community, and committed leadership. The Vermont food system education experience reflects Vermont’s identity, cultivating and inspiring the next generation of students interested in stewarding the working landscape while enhancing food systems enterprise development. By feeding Vermont higher education, a key economic driver, students are supporting the state’s working landscape, seeding the next stage of entrepreneurial activity, and creating an innovative sustainable food systems model that may be replicated in other communities and other regions. There are endless opportunities to learn among our leaders, right here in the Green Mountains.

As part of the collaboration, the Consortium has created a 21-day Vermont Study Tour, launching in June. In this moveable feast of learning, students will traverse the state to spend several days at each of the six schools, learning from farmers, policy experts, food justice advocates, agricultural education specialists, land conservationists, and entrepreneurs of all types. Examining place, players, policy, and profitability, the summer study tour uses Vermont education and agriculture as a framework to provide an insider’s perspective on what it takes to create a just, sustainable, and resilient food system. It empowers participants with invaluable tools for helping communities transform the way in which it sources, grows, processes, purchases, and contemplates food.

The Consortium has launched a Food and Farm Education website (www.vermontfoodeducation.org) directed at students to generate inquiries to schools within the context of food systems education in Vermont. The Consortium’s Facebook page (www.facebook.com/vhefsc) reflects a dynamic collection of real-time events, achievements, and news from Vermont’s corner of the food system education world.

Here in Vermont, educators and innovators are mentoring students from around the globe to become part of a larger community of leaders, researchers, and catalysts for the sustainability and integrity of global food systems. Together our higher education partners are making Vermont our classroom. Working together, Vermont food producers, farmers, and educators are leading the way to real change.
Dairy Industry  
continued from page 1

Highlights include:

Economy
- Dairy brings $2.2 billion in economic activity to Vermont each year
- Dairy brings $3 million in circulating cash to the state each day
- Dairy accounts for more than 70% of Vermont’s agricultural sales
- Annual sales of Vermont dairy products and by-products = $1.3 billion
- 63% of the milk produced in New England comes from Vermont
- Every cow brings $12,500 in economic activity to Vermont annually
- 91% of Vermonters say dairy is important to Vermont’s way of life
- 91% of Vermonters say dairy is important to Vermont’s overall economy.
- “Recently, there’s been a lot of discussion about the water quality challenges facing the dairy industry,” said Chuck Ross, Vermont’s Secretary of Agriculture. “This study underscores the importance of working together to solve those issues. I believe we can have both – a healthy lake, and a thriving dairy industry. From open lands, to jobs, to the impact on the Vermont brand, it is hard to imagine our state without dairy.”

Landscape
- 15% of the state is covered by dairy farms, and the fields that provide their feed
- More than 80% of Vermont’s farmland is dedicated to dairy
- 66% of Vermonters report using farmland for recreation

Way of life
- 97% of Vermonters say dairy farms are important to the state
- 92% of Vermonters say dairy farms add to the beauty of Vermont
- “The dairy industry is a significant economic driver for Vermont,” according to Patricia Moulton, Secretary of the Agency of Commerce. “This study helps contextualize the importance of dairy relative to Vermont’s overall economy.”

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To read the full report, visit www.VermontDairy.com.

Small State, Big Impact

63% of milk produced in New England comes from Vermont

15% of the state is covered by dairy farms that provide their feed

Over 80% of Vermont’s farmland is dedicated to dairy and crops for dairy feed

Dairy is 70% of Vermont’s Agricultural Sales

Vermont’s economy is small—just 0.2% of the US economy. But we produce more than 1% of the nation’s dairy products. That’s 5x our “economic share”.

5th Annual VT Organic Dairy Farmers Conference

March 11, 2015 at Vermont Technical College in Randolph Center

$25 per person, including lunch.
Visit www.uvm.edu/extension/organicdairy for more details.
Farm to School Awareness Day
Celebrated at Statehouse
Ten Vermont Schools Receive Farm to School Grants

By: Hannah Reid, VAAFM

On Thursday, January 29th, the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets, in partnership with the Vermont Farm to School Network, announced the recipients of the 2015 Farm to School grants at a special ceremony at the Statehouse cafeteria.

The Vermont Farm to School Grant Program, now in its ninth year, works to improve nutrition among Vermont’s children by connecting food producers to their local schools, as well as providing enriched educational experiences and curricula. Farm to School grant funding allocated by the Vermont legislature enables Vermont schools to engage students in their local food system by incorporating local food and farm education in their cafeterias, classrooms and communities. This program has currently reached 101 schools, impacting 27,000 Vermont students.

This year, grants were awarded to ten Vermont schools, including five implementation grants and five planning grants. Student representatives from schools that previously received grants also attended the event to demonstrate how awarded grant monies were used to bring more local foods into their cafeterias, and to share success stories and lessons learned.

The Vermont Farm to School grant program is administered through the Vermont Agency of Agriculture with technical assistance from our partnership with VT FEED (Food Education Every Day), Green Mountain Farm to School, and Food Connects. Planning and Implementation grant applications are submitted by Vermont schools each fall, and awards are granted in January.

2015 Farm to School Grant Recipients are:
- Implementation Grants
  - Bennington School
  - Derby Elementary
  - Franklin Central School
  - Newport Elementary

In the case of leased land, lease agreements must be carried forward as the farm yields and/or does not owner chooses not to update the farm’s 2013 Counter Cyclical (CC) yields will be carried forward as the payment yields for 2014-2018. The first step is to visit your county FSA office, well before the February 27, 2015 deadline, where staff are available to assist with updating yield histories for each covered commodity, explaining base acre reallocation options, and also discussing the program alternatives; Agricultural Risk Coverage (ARC), both county and individual coverage options, and Price Loss Coverage (PLC). It is important to note that the new farm bill does not allow for an increase in the number of base acres on each farm. Instead, it allows for a reallocation of base acres between covered crops.

The second step is to select which program, either ARC or PLC, best fits your operation by March 31, 2015. This is a one-time decision that will remain in place for the 2014 to 2018 crop years.

For more information about this event or Farm to School Programming visit http://agriculture.vermont.gov/producer_partner_resources/market_access_development/farm_school or contact Ali Zipparo by phone at 802-505-1822, or by email at Alexandra.Zipparo@state.vt.us.
Friendship and Farmland Are At The Heart Of The Strafford Nordic Center

By Erica Houskeeper, HappyVermont.com

The 700-acre cross-country ski area is located on two adjoining Upper Valley farms and operated by three lifelong friends – Jeremiah Linehan, Rett Emerson, and Earl Ransom.

The base lodge, trail head, and scenic trails are located at Rockbottom Farm, a working organic dairy farm and home to Strafford Organic Creamery. Additional trails are hosted on the adjacent Tamarack Hill Farm, known for its high-level equestrian training and challenging terrain.

Ransom owns Rockbottom Farm, Emerson owns Tamarack Hill Farm, and Linehan is an accomplished Nordic skier. Put the three of them together and the result is one of the most unique cross-country ski centers in Vermont.

A Passion for Nordic Skiing, Preserving Land

In an effort to accommodate a need for local Nordic trails and to use the land to its fullest potential, the three worked together to restructure the two farms and create the Strafford Nordic Center with 30 kilometers of trails in 2012.

Linehan, 40, used to cross-country ski on snowmobile trails in Strafford when he was a boy. As a baby, he rode the trails while perched in a backpack carried by his older brother. After the family moved to Alaska when he was 10, Linehan pursued Nordic racing and went on to compete extensively around the country and in Europe.

Strafford native Jeremiah Linehan is an accomplished Nordic skier. When he returned to Vermont with his wife, Hilary, the couple purchased property in Strafford. They made 10 kilometers of trails for friends and families to enjoy on their land. “Then I started looking at grooming equipment, and I could not justify buying a snowcat” for his backyard ski trails, says Linehan.

That’s when the idea of using the two farms for an official ski area originated. “Both farms don’t use the land in the winter, and it was a way to optimize the land,” he says.

All the trails at Strafford Nordic Center are existing farm use trails, logging trails, and hay fields. The ski lodge is housed in a 800-square-foot apartment attached to the main farmhouse at Rockbottom Farm.

Operating Strafford Nordic Center on a Working Farm

The trio, who met sometime around kindergarten, find a way to work together and still be friends. Linehan manages the center, Emerson grooms the trails (they groom after every snowfall with a snowcat and other equipment), and Ransom takes care of logistics.

“It’s been good. We all communicate really well. We try to avoid problems before they happen, and the relationships are still good,” says Linehan.

More than 66% of Vermonters say they utilize Vermont Farmland for Snowsports, Hunting, and Recreation, according to a survey conducted by Castleton Polling.

While the fields are free of any farm activity in the winter, Rockbottom Farm continues its milking and ice cream making operations through the ski season. Skiers will likely see cows and day-to-day farm operations while visiting the ski area.

“We were a little concerned what people’s perception would be with a farm operation also being a ski center. But people really enjoy it,” Linehan says, adding that Nordic skiers of all abilities will find trails to enjoy. “We have everything from very flat areas with practice loops to hills for racers. We have a little bit of everything for everyone.”

If You Go: Strafford Nordic Center is located at 53 Rockbottom Road in Strafford. Open daily (except Christmas) between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. Rentals are available. Biathlon training/clinics are held every weekend, and fat bike demos are offered on weekends.

HappyVermont.com is all about exploring and enjoying the dynamic Green Mountain State. Editor Erica Houskeeper is a writer, mom, wife, and the former Communications Director for the Vermont Department of Tourism. Visit HappyVermont.com for tips about travel, food, and life in Vermont.

Sell Direct to Stonyfield

Stonyfield, the world’s largest organic yogurt maker, is looking for exceptional organic dairy throughout the Northeast for our direct-sourcing program. As part of the Stonyfield team, you’ll receive:

- A consistent milk price that addresses input costs over time.
- A direct relationship with a company and team personally vested in your success.
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For more information, visit www.Stonyfield.org or contact Kyle Thygesen (802) 369-0267 kthygesen@stonyfield.com

Dave Kynor/www.davekynor.com
Renewable Energy Resources for Farmers at the 2015 Vermont Farm Show

By Rachel Carter, VT Farm to Plate

As more farms and food enterprises minimize use of fossil fuels and maximize renewable energy, energy efficiency, and conservation opportunities, Vermont as a community inches closer towards reaching Vermont’s Farm to Plate goals to decrease environmental impacts and energy consumption while increasing renewable energy production. And farmers make strides to raise their level of self-sufficiency while increasing farm viability.

Several booths at the 2015 Farm Show provided renewable energy resources. Here is a brief recap on some of the highlights at the Farm Show and where farmers and food entrepreneurs can go for more information.

Efficiency Vermont sparked conversations at the Farm Show as they continue to develop their Agricultural Energy Efficiency Program to provide ways for farmers to keep energy on the farm. In response to farmer interest, LEDs for inside dairy barns, extending refrigerated storage, and a new maple program on reverse osmosis for small farmers are all in the works. Learn more at www.efficiencyvermont.com or call 802-860-4095.


Two solar companies exhibited at the Farm Show: Catamount Solar of Randolph provides financial analysis, design, and installation for homes, farms, and businesses. More information at www.catamountsolar.com or 802-299-6669.

Daedalus Solar of Williamstown specializes in Do-It-Yourself (DIY) solar kits for smaller farms and families and works with contractors, but can also provide installation. More information at www.daedaluswork.com or 866-211-5843.


H.A. Manosh out of Morrisville provides farmers with a full suite of well drilling services from hydro-fracturing and pump installation to water treatments and pond construction. A trusted Vermont company since 1959, Manosh recently added geothermal heating systems, which pull energy stored underground to generate without the need for a furnace or chimney. Learn more at www.manosh.com or 802-888-5722.

Vermont Golden Harvest Biofuels, located in Addison, sells locally produced corn and the stoves, furnaces, and boilers to burn the corn. Biomass from the corn plant is used for heat and remaining organic matter can help increase soil nutrients. Learn more at www.vermontbiofuels.net or 802-475-4007.

Learn about the emerging frontiers in bioenergy at the website www.VermontBioenergy.com – a collaboration with UVM Extension. Oilseeds for biodiesel and livestock feed, algae for biofuel and organic fertilizer, perennial grasses for pellet fuels, and increased use of animal waste and food scraps for anaerobic digesters were included in the materials available at the Farm to Plate booth.

To learn more about how Vermont is doing to reach the statewide Farm to Plate goals to lessen environmental impacts and Foster more renewable energy in the food system, visit www.vtfarmtoplate.com.

For Immediate Release

The Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets have received an application for a Milk Handlers license from the following entity: Irene Glazer, Cold Moon Farm, 251 Pratt Bridge Road, Jamaica, VT 05343 to sell, process, package and transport milk and milk products in the State of Vermont. If anyone has germane information as to why or why not this company should or should not be licensed those comments are to be sent to:

The Vermont Agency of Agriculture Food and Markets
Dairy Section Office
116 State Street, Montpelier, VT 05620-2901

All written comments must be received by March 17, 2015. At that time the Agency will make a determination as to whether a hearing will be held. If we determine that a hearing is necessary and you wish to attend please write to the above address attention Dairy Section.
Dairy Banquet Recognizes Vermont Quality Milk Producers

By Andrew Wood, Vermont Dairy Industry Association

Vermont dairy farmers were recognized for producing high quality cow and goat milk at the Dairy Farmers’ Appreciation Banquet on January 29th during the 81st Vermont Farm Show. The 2014 overall highest-quality (cow) milk award was presented to Alan and Karen Bathalon of North Troy. The 2014 overall highest-quality goat milk award was awarded to Roland and Joan Therrien of Newport Center.

Based on nomination criteria rolled out last year for the quality awards, 82 cow milk quality nominees and 10 goat milk quality nominees qualified for the 2014 competition. Quality parameters such as bacterial and somatic cell counts as well as farm inspection scores are factored into identifying the winners. “Farms demonstrating low counts month after month deserve this recognition,” according to VDIA Board member and AgriMark, Inc. employee Brady Metcalf.

The 2014 Dairy Farm of the Year, Dolloff Acres operated by Mike and Heidi Dolloff in Springfield, VT were recognized with a hand-painted sign. The Finley award was presented to Greg Lockwood of the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets.

The Vermont Dairy Industry Association works for the mutual benefit of its members, dairy farm families, and the dairy industry; and encourages and promotes close cooperation with educational institutions and other agencies concerned with the dairy industry. For more information about the Vermont Dairy Industry Association, its events, or the Vermont Dairy Industry Association Memorial Scholarship please visit www.vdia.org. For more details on the Vermont Farm Show, visit www.vtfarmshow.com/

A complete list of nominees and overall winners and runners-up follows.

2014 Quality Cow Milk Nominees
Aires Hill Farm Inc. - Enosburg Falls, VT
Alan and Karen Bathalon - North Troy, VT
Allandra Farm Inc. - Vergennes, VT
Amanda & Chad McCormick - Newport, VT
Andersonville Dairy LLC - Glover, VT
Andrew and Debra Hogan - Whiting, VT
Andrew and Lisa Sherman - East Dover, VT
Anthony and Christine Brown - Randolph Center, VT
Armon and Kathy Lewis - Williston, VT
B&T Black Creek Farm LTD - Enosburg Falls, VT
B. Danyow Farm LLC - Ferrisburg, VT

Barb & Robert Laduc - Orwell, VT
Barne’s Black & Whiteface Ranch - Addison, VT
Ben Moulton & Amanda Taylor - North Troy, VT
Benjamin Williams - Fairfield, VT
Brett and Marjorie Urie - Craftsbury Common, VT
Bullis Savage View Farm

For Immediate Release

The Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets have received an application for a Milk Handlers license from the following entity: Cate Hill Orchard, 697- Shadow Lake Road, Craftsbury Common, VT- 05827 to sell, process, package and transport milk and milk products in the State of Vermont. If anyone has germane information as to why or why not this company should or should not be licensed those comments are to be sent to:

The Vermont Agency of Agriculture Food and Markets
Dairy Section Office
116 State Street, Montpelier, VT 05620-2901

All written comments must be received by March 20, 2015.

At that time the Agency will make a determination as to whether a hearing will be held. If we determine that a hearing is necessary and you wish to attend please write to the above address attention Dairy Section.
Terrariums: GARDENS IN GLASS

Dr. Leonard Perry, Extension Professor University of Vermont

What do fish tanks, brandy snifters, and Mason jars have in common? They are all containers that can be used to make gardens in glass, or terrariums. Whether you put together a terrarium on a rainy summer day or for garden-relief in the dead of winter, this activity is suited for all ages. Terrariums are once again quite popular, perhaps due in part to the interest in fairy gardens—one possible theme for a terrarium.

Growing plants in clear containers dates back to at least 2,500 years ago in Greece. The terrariums we know today began with a 19th century London physician, N.B. Ward, and were named after him. These large, enclosed glass containers called “Wardian cases” were the original means of transporting newly discovered plants back to Europe from voyages around the world.

In America, the earliest terrariums were made by women settlers placing the native partridgeberry in handblown glass bowls. This is a woodland plant with dark green, small evergreen leaves and red berries. These simplest of terrariums we know as berry bowls.

If making a larger terrarium, many plants may be used— in fact any that are small, or grow slow and can be kept clipped to size. Keep in mind that, depending on the plants used, terrariums will need to be renovated every year or two as plants grow. You’ll need to remove any that die, or get too large, and replace with new, smaller plants. When doing so, take the opportunity to introduce some fresh soil. If the plants are too out of control, you may just want to start again with new and different small plants.

Low woodland plants which can be used include mosses, ferns, lichens, foamflower, wintergreen, and partridgeberry. Some taller plants include other ferns and violets. Just make sure if collecting such plants during the summer that they are not endangered (check with the state natural resources agency), and that you only collect a few plants from a native population.

Some common garden and house plants can be used such as aluminum plant, asparagus fern seedlings, creeping fig, English ivy, strawberry begonia, spider plants, nerve plant, selaginella moss, palm seedlings (which of course as they grow will need to be removed), and peperomias. There are many low perennial plants you now can find for planting in walks and patios and stepping on, such as the herb thyme, which may be suitable in terrariums.

You may even want a theme of a specific ecological area. For a desert, use some of the many slower growing cactus seedlings and succulent plants such as echeveria, panda plant, or haworthia. For a bog, use mosses, ferns, and even carnivorous plants such as the Venus fly trap.

For a rock garden, consider perennials such as saxifrage, sedum, sempervivum (hens and chicks), erodium (alpine geranium), or low dianthus (pinks). Keep in mind, though, if using perennials that they may need some winter rest in a cool area. This may be an unheated, yet non-freezing garage, with indirect light.

Materials you’ll need, beside plants, include proper soil (humus soil for woodlands, sandy for deserts, for instance), sand or fine gravel for drainage, and charcoal bits to keep the soil sweet. For desert themes, you may want to layer colored sands in the bottom. White or colored aquarium gravel, and miniature figures or fairy garden accessories (available at many garden and craft stores), can be used for accents. Sphagnum sheet moss is the usual liner for traditional and woodland terrariums.

Tools you’ll need are scissors, a dowel rod, wire hooks or fork, water sprayer, funnel or tube, and brush or paper towels. Long-handled bamboo or similar tongs are useful for placing plants, pebbles, or accents. A small paint brush, as used in crafts, helps in cleaning leaves. First, if using a moss liner, insert it green side out into the bottom quarter of the bowl. Then add a layer of gravel or sand. Sprinkle the charcoal bits on top. Finish with the soil, moistened. The container should now be about a quarter to third full. Add a little extra soil, as it will likely settle a half inch or so over the coming months.

Check your plants for pests before placing in the container. If foliage plants, it may be a good idea to dunk them in a mild, soapy bath and rinse before planting. This may help get rid of any lurking pests. Then check your terrarium frequently for pests, especially the undersides of leaves. If palm seedlings, check for mites, although mites prefer drier environments. Mealybugs may be the more commonly found, and if so, swap them with a cotton swab and rubbing alcohol.

Insert the plants, roots first, into holes made with a fork. Start with the largest plants first, filling in with those smaller. Use the dowel rod to place plants, and firm soil around them. Spray the plants with water (unless of course a dry garden), clean the inner sides of the container, then add your decorative accents.

Keep the terrarium in bright but indirect light. In direct light it can get too hot, cooking the plants. Since the moisture and humidity remains in the container much longer than with...
Not watering too much is probably the most important key to success. If in doubt, best is not to water. For a new terrarium, or one with young and small plants, you may need to water only a couple times a month. For those with well-grown plants, and little soil or sandy soil, you may need to water a couple times a week.

You may need to water cacti and succulents very seldom—once or twice a month—and during sunny days. If watering when cloudy, the soil may stay wet too long and these arid-loving plants can rot. When watering any terrarium plants in winter, make sure the water is room temperature and not icy cold. Avoid fertilizing, or do so very sparingly at very low rates, to keep plants smaller longer.

If a large container, such as large rectangular fish tank, you may want to put a layer of gravel on the bottom and very small pots of miniature plants on top, as in a greenhouse. Plant choices here might be miniature African violets, small seedlings of cacti and succulents, or rooted cuttings of small-leaved houseplants such as some gesneriads, peperomias and begonias.

There are many attractive containers you can purchase for terrariums, such as miniature greenhouses and Victorian-style large glass cases with many sides. Round glass “rose bowls” are available at many florist shops. Those with sides lower than the plants are used to make “dish gardens.” Look around the kitchen for clear containers such as glass tea cups or mugs, large spice jars, gallon cider jugs (the thin necks will be harder to work through), or the tops of plastic soda bottles cut off and placed over pots.

If you find a clear glass or plastic container, the size and shape of a Christmas ornament, this can be used for a one-plant hanging terrarium. I have one with a tillandsia air-plant which needs very little water, just an occasional misting. You also may find suitable and unique containers at craft stores, flea markets, yard sales, antique shops, and on the internet. The next time visiting any of these, think “terrarium containers.”
nice ice layer on the houses and then the next snowfall all stuck right on. Happy to see it slide off on its own!

[Shelburne/South Burlington] Despite the warm Nov/Dec this stretch of well-below normal temperatures is going to make for interesting regrowth under the hoops. The kale, surprisingly, looks good. We will see how this coldest weather yet treats them. The spinach is more troubling looking. I am confident that any damaged leaves will just be removed and the plants will eventually regrow well, but it’s hard to tell at this point. I have a lot more visual freeze damage than in years past. I am still not working beds yet. Usually I plant a new round of kale, lettuce, cilantro, escarole and other crops in a week! Not going to happen this year with the sleet/rain we had (even though air temperatures were only about 3 degrees!). The sleet had created a

(Huntington) Local wholesale markets have been steady. It seemed like there was a whole lot of product put up on many farms going into winter, but it seems to be moving at this point. Winter farmers’ markets have been somewhat disappointing in 2015, but below-zero temperatures on those Saturdays probably hasn’t helped casual foot traffic. Plowing in semi-weekly 2-degree snow storms has me dreaming of a cab on the utility tractor, but I take as consolation that this wasn’t the winter we dove head-first into winter greens production. We’re nearing the end of an insulation project in our shop, so that is a pretty good bet that a warm-up is imminent. We will be clearing out a room in the storage barn in the next two weeks to take advantage of the radiant floor to germinate our onion flats prior to turning on the greenhouse. We started doing that last year and had germination in four days on a 75-degree slab.

(Grand Isle) Very cold, we are happy there is a good amount of snow insulating the strawberries. Rounding up wood pellets for opening the propagation greenhouse in early March. Cheapest we have found is $2.39 a ton, but limited availability. Should have stocked up in the early winter! We are trying out some vole traps in our empty high tunnels, as described in Eliot Coleman’s The Winter Harvest Handbook. They are simple rectangular wooden boxes with removable lids, and space for two spring loaded traps inside. We cut a small vole hole into the bottom corner on two opposite sides for the voles to get in and get out. The vole/mouse natural instinct is to scurry into a small dark hole, and once there they walk into the trap as they try to go out the opposite side. We’ve caught five so far without even baiting the traps, a successful trial. Looking forward to putting them to expanded use once transplants start to go out in the early Spring. Also, we set up a new invoicing system to use for 2015, with waveapps.com. It’s a free web-based invoicing solution, and looks like it will fill our needs. Most importantly, you can export all your data periodically so you aren’t relying one free service to save it all for future reference.

(Elmore) Wading through chest-high light fluffy snow to check deer fences and carry boxes of tools and handouts to winter shows. Not too many deer tracks, hopefully due to time put in patching and strengthening our perimeter fence. We made a lot of spreadable fruit jam and now taking it on the road to stores, the NOFA conference, the flower show. Our jam won three ribbons including ‘best of class’ at the farm show. This feels good for all our effort and originality. Sometimes it seems buyers don’t care about local organic anymore, just price or what sells the fastest. But then people stop you on the street and say: “Wow, I can’t eat any of other jam, only yours.” This gives us strength for another season. We’re busy looking at inventory software for keeping track of all we grow, what we need to grow more or less of, and what we need to order for our production season. It is challenging not to know what fruit trees are alive or not, because it has been so cold for so long. Compare this to a shopkeeper, who knows what’s on the shelf, ready to sell. Meeting with crew to plan for the season and focusing on ‘keep it simple and true to the pathway that has heart.’ To us this means not trying to do everything, but remembering we started farming to make the make the world a little better, a little kinder and we saw that we could do this in our own way, one row and one day at a time.

(Westminster West) Definitely a throwback winter! We have two greenhouses running now and thanks to all the snow piled around the house, they are snug and staying warm without much fuel. Today I started pricking out the first crop of tomatoes for grafting next month. Onions and leeks are popping up in packs and herbs and lettuce is almost ready for transplanting. We have extra 128’s of kale and lettuce and I will do a list serve message for those soon. Response to listing for our own grafts for sale has been tremendous and we increased production to meet the demand. Still working on finalizing field plans for veggies, I like to work it out in my head first before committing it to paper, eh I mean computer! Meeting with buyers and working it all out. Almost all our staff are returning once again this year, I guess this isn’t too terrible a place to work! A few new faces that need to get some training, not my most favorite part of the job but important to get people started on the right foot. After buying lots of new equipment the last few years I’m cutting back the spending to a bare minimum and focusing on building maintenance and some new product development. I enjoyed attending the NOFA winter conference in Burlington and once again enjoyed our Governor’s good natured ribbing but I must add that I was not a founder of NOFA, I was only there at the birth by luck and somehow I’m still here, so I’m tenacious if nothing else. Spring is just weeks away and although it’s hard to believe, all this snow will be gone in six weeks and crocuses will

continued on page 15
Wholesale Prices
February 2015
Wholesale prices paid per dozen for Vermont Grade A brown eggs delivered to retail stores.

Vermont Egg Prices:
Jumbo .................. $2.61
X-Large ............... $2.15
Large ................. $2.10
Medium ............... $1.59

Market is steady and supply is good.

You can find more reports online at http://www.ams.usda.gov/ marketnews.htm
This is the web source for USDA Market News

Northampton, MA • February 10, 2015
All prices are per hundredweight on the hoof unless otherwise indicated.
Source: Northampton Cooperative Auction Association, Inc., www.northamptonlivestockauction.homestead.com

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Calves:</th>
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<tr>
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<td>Rabbits</td>
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<td>10.00 each</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hay (7 lots)</td>
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Addison County Commission Sales • Middlebury, VT • February 16, 2015

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Cattle: 115 Calves: 164</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Slaughter Cows</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Breakers 75 - 80% lean</td>
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<tr>
<td>Boners 80 - 85% lean</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lean 85 - 90% lean</td>
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| **Feeder Calves**         |
| Holstein Bulls: 90-120 lbs| 357.50| 410.00 cwt |
| 80-90 lbs                  | 302.50| 330.00 cwt |
| Utility: 70-120 lbs        | 60.00 | 162.50 cwt |

| **Cows: 85 lbs-90 lbs**    |
| Holstein Heifers:          |
| 85 lbs 90 lbs              | 77.00 | 81.00 cwt |

Bees & Honey
BEES 5-FRAME NUCLEUS COLONIES: Our Northern Survivor Stock bees are a hybrid mix of several strains, bred for best traits. We have developed a hardy, gentle, productive bee. Order now for May through June pick ups. $155 each with $40 non-refundable deposit toward each nuc. Please include your address and phone number. See our website: www.vtbees.com or send a check or money order to Singing Cedars Apiary, 77 Singing Cedars Rd., Orwell, Vt. 05760. (802)948-2057 (4/15)

Cattle

7 month old Black Angus Bull, great temperament and great bloodline $1600 call (802) 558-8196 (2/15)
February 20, 2015

**Black Angus 2 year old Heifer**


- 2/500-600 pound sows for slaughter, were breeding

- Asking $300 each. 603-256-8422 . (3/15)

**Hereford cow and Heifer bred to Hereford $1200 each or BO, alsoAll Jersey calfand 8 mons Jersey heifer $550 or BO. Trade for Itay 503—336-0017 (3/15)**

- Grass-fed Angus beef now available. Whole, 1/2, - 25, 50 and 100 lb lots. Shrink wrapped and frozen. call 802-482-2870 after 6. (3/15)

**New Holland dischne 411 new rolls excellent overall $6,900.00 john deere 18 mo’s old . $900 . New Holland 10 ton tilt bed trailer tandem axle, with air brakes. Very nice condition . Call for more details 802-343-7303 Asking $1,100.00 or Best offer (2/15)**

**2 Holstein and 1 Holstein Cross Bred Heifers due May (2)** 802 773-8898 (3/15)

- 802-325-3064 . (4/15)


**12 +1/4 acre parcels vast trail surveyed 400 ft well 750 gal septic, pond nice horse barn, 1 bedroom camp access to 100’s of trails. Able to develop organic gardens and fruits. Part of a very exciting community. 150 k firm, 802-751-9826. (4/15)**

**10 ton tilt bed trailer tandem axles, with air brakes. Very good condition; $6000 OBO 603-543-3616 (4/15)**

**1986 EBV Aluminum Cattle Trailer 8’ X 18’; Good condition; $4,000 (802) 897-8201 (4/15)**

**1984 JD 410B bucket loader/ back hoe 3500 hrs straight 4 wh dr $11500. 2004 Chevy truck 4 wheel drive/ club cab gas/6/8 ft box with cover over 107,311 miles excellent condition/oil undercoated $9995 802-236-3412or 802-236-3460 (4/15)**

**Farm & Farmland 61 acres on paved town road in Whitehall, NY. 14 acres, flat, certified organic. Balance are woods. Excellent hunting, timber, Adirondack Mts. and Green Mts. views. Must lease back hay land for 2015 crop year. $125,000. gsears@verizon.net (3/15)**

**American Milking Devons: 10 month old-$1100. Ready to go in the spring. Please call Liza 802-247-9309 or email derricminder@gmail.com (4/15)**

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**General**

- Trucking cattle, sheep, goats to CVLM every Tuesday, strong Market prices. 802-483-2210 (4/15)

**Hay, Feed & Forage**

- Seed corn for sale. Vermont grown open pollinated organic Early Riser $150/50 lb. bag. Also available Ontario grown DeDell hybrid seed corn from 78 day to 115 day maturity. All De Dell corn is non GMO. Some organic varieties available. For more information or a catalogue, contact Jack Lazar Butterworks Farm Westfield, VT. (802) 744 0855 or 999 7722. Catalogues will be available at the Northern Grain Growers table at the Vermont Farm Show. (3/15)

- 2nd cut sq bales $4 per bale 802-796-0667 (1/15)
Excellent quality 2nd cut square bales. 802-728-5000 (3/15)

Corn Silage, 800 Ton, $60 / ton. Delivery available. Robeth Holsteins, Rochester, Vt 802-767-3926. Email-beth@libertyhillfarm.com (4/15)

2nd cut grass silage 45.5% dm, Taking orders for Lazy Lady Second cut, wrapped, round GRAnd isle County Large or small square bales .

2nd cut mixed hay. Top quality, CAledoniA County 2014 corn silage for sale, 550 Addison County Corn Silage, 800 Ton, $60 / ton. Excellent quality 2nd cut square bales . 4 1/2 by 4 ‘bales . $35 per bale . Crescent Bay Farm, 802-324-5563 or Email crescentbaybh.com (2/15)

36x72 12-stall horse barn by behlen country . It is designed to be moved and disassembled/reassembled designed to be moved and disassembled/reassembled without special tools or equipment. barn is priced $6500 . 802-673-6474 or charlston@northcountrycreamery.com (3/15)

AlpineGlo Farm is taking orders on 2015 alpine dairy goat kids. All will be ADGA registered, vaccinated, disbudded, and come from CAE, TB, and Brucellosis free herd. Superior genetics including; Roeburn’s, Mamm-Key, Missdee’s and Kickapoo Valley bloodlines. Follow us on Facebook, visit www. vthorscheshoer.com/sales, or call Rachel at 802-463-2018 for full details. Prices starting at $300 (call for info on discounts). (4/15)

Horse Equipment Meadowbrook Horse Cart, good condition. Harness with bridle, Western Saddle almost new, Bridle, blanket and other accessories. Perfect size for Standard Bred. Crescent Bay Farm, South Hero 802-324-5563 or Email crescentbaybh.com (2/15)

36x72 12-stall horse barn by behlen country. It is designed to be moved and disassembled/reassembled without special tools or equipment. barn is priced to sell. call Newton farm in Chittenden 802-773-8898 for pricing, photos and complete details (3/15)

Sugaring Equipment 4x14 Waterloo Evaporator oil fired with preheater hoods and extra pans in good shape $6500. 802-673-6474 or 802-755-6202 (3/15)

2014 Maple Syrup for sale. Grade A dark and B 1 quart $15. Half gallon $25. And gallon$40 also have cooking syrup in half gallons and quarts. 802-728-5241 (3/15)

4x12 Leader pan complete and arch brand new. 802-805-4683 (4/15)

2 maple syrup signs, some pipeline and wire, stove pipe cover, large size, old sap spouts and more.$100. 802-728-9102 (4/15)

Maple tubing washer, air and water injection system made by Goodrich’s Maple Farm and Equipment. Used 3 seasons, in good condition. Bought new for $1000, asking $600. Call 802-848-3885 or email fleurymaple@hughes.net. (4/15)

Goats Taking orders for Lazy Lady Farm registered Alpine spring kids. Please visit the website for the complete listing and prices. We are on DHIA testing and our herd average is over 2200lbs. The herd is CAE negative and tested annually. 30 years of fine herd management for milk production and type. Call 802-744-6365. Write to laini@lazyladylfarm.com (4/15)

Wanted Help wanted on diversified organic dairy in southern Vermont. Learn and participate in all aspects of organic dairy,milk sugaring, and woodland management. Room and board with farm family plus a competitive wage based on ability, willingness to work hard and learn, and experience. 802-254-2228 Guilford (2/15)

I used Same (Drago) tractor rear wheel rim. Tractor is 120 horsepower. Rim size 18.4”x 38”. 8 bolt hole rim. Richard Alexander, Chester. 802-875-3659. (2/15)

1st cut hay, square bales 40 - 45 lbs, Will pay up to $3.25 bale. Large quantity wanted. Call cell: 603-848-2477 (2/15)

Holstein Brown Swiss crossed bull calves 802-775-5316 (2/15)

1967 -1972 Chevrolet or GMC pick up truck. I need trim parts, but can take the whole truck. 802-446-2870. (3/15)

Apple Boxes – bushel size. Eastern or “SCAPA” style. 8-2-438-5068 (3/15)

Hay squares or round del. Price also corn chopper belt driven chopper/blower 603-336-0017 (3/15)

Dairy cattle, beef cattle, bulls, steers, feeders, sheep, and goats. 413-441-3085 (3/15)

Looking for set of skidder chains to fit 16.9 -30 tire at least 50% or up worn. 802-434-2275 (3/15)

Looking for steel panel fencing and gates for cattle and sheep. Various sizes needed. Must be in good condition. (802)362-2290. (3/15)

Proven nurse cow, in milk or due in late February / early March. Normande preferred, though Jersey okay. Would also consider a non-proven nurse cow that doesn’t fit well in your parlor (3 teats, etc.). Call Meghan: (802) 451-6548 (3/15)

4-stall “Step-up” (pass-thru or flat-barn) milking parlor; CIP milk machines & pipeline. Ashlee 518-645-2697, info@northcountrycreamery.com (3/15)

Classifieds

Organic Farming

Responding to the 2014 Organic Survey is important!

Your agriculture operation and products are a valuable part of the ag industry and should be counted.

1. Total organic sales by farms in the U.S. increased by 83 percent between 2007 and 2012.

2. Sales from farms with certified or exempt organic product sales totaled more than $3.1 billion in 2012.

3. Organic agriculture producers reported direct-to-consumers sales more often than conventional producers, with 42 percent of organic farmers selling directly to consumers in 2012.

Please respond! Learn more at www.agcensus.usda.gov

Organic Agriculture National Ag Statistics Service
Vermont’s Clean Water Initiative Moves Forward
State Leaders Describe the Plan to Enhance Stewardship and Accountability

By Alison Kosakowski, VAAFM

State leaders have outlined the new plan for addressing agricultural runoff in the Lake Champlain basin. New resources, deeper partnerships across state government, and new accountability tools have been established to improve water quality across Vermont.

“In the State of the State, the Governor emphasized the state-wide commitment we will all engage in to clean up Lake Champlain. As you know, we have a particular challenge in meeting that goal here in Franklin County. Today, we are here to tell you more about the Clean Water Initiative and the collaborative approach we will take to meet this commitment,” said David Mears, Commissioner of the Department of Environmental Conservation.

Commissioner Mears, Ag Secretary Chuck Ross, and Vermont Attorney General Bill Sorrell outlined The Statewide Plan to Enhance Stewardship and Accountability, a four-pronged approach to address agriculture-related water quality issues.

Stewardship & Accountability

1. Resources for Stewardship Practices: Fueled with new resources, State partners will expand their work with farmers to provide technical assistance and implement additional stewardship practices, proven to improve water quality. These practices include…
   - Cover crops
   - Buffers
   - Contour Tillage
   - No Till
   - Livestock Exclusion
   - Barnyard Repair
   - Grass Waterways
   - Crop Rotation

The state has worked diligently to identify and secure these resources. The USDA has committed $45M as base program funding, an additional $16.8M for two Regional Conservation Partnership Program projects, and $3M of Lake Champlain Basin Program funding. The Administration has also proposed a Clean Water Fund that is estimated to raise $5M to help levy additional resources and implement water quality improvements.

2. Increased Capacity: Staff from the Agency of Agriculture and the Agency of Natural resources are being re-deployed to address the priority regions. Additional staff will also be hired. This will add capacity for…
   - Outreach and Education
   - Technical Assistance
   - Additional Inspections
   - Investigations
   - Data Tracking

3. Enhanced Partnerships: State partners, Federal partners, NGOs, farmers, and business owners are collaborating in new ways to increase efficiency and improve results. For instance…
   - Training new partners to assist in educating farmers at the farmstead about conservation practices and programs
   - Creating watershed specific plans that incorporate these partnerships for increased on-the-ground efficiency
   - Meeting regularly with these groups at the local level to keep the plans moving

4. Accountability Tools: The Agency of Agriculture, Agency of Natural Resources and the Attorney General have established enhanced, coordinated enforcement for agriculture water quality; the State is also proposing new ways to hold offenders accountable. For instance…
   - Current Use penalties
   - New Enforcement Authorities
   - Emergency Order Authority
   - Civil Penalties
   - Authority to Limit Livestock

“We have honed our focus to enhance the statewide culture of stewardship and accountability,” said Chuck Ross, Vermont’s Secretary of Agriculture. “Stewardship means greater partnership across state government, more technical assistance and new, unprecedented resources for farmers to implement conservation practices. Accountability means we have more tools to bring those who fly in the face of the law into compliance.”

“The majority of farmers are working hard to protect our natural resources,” said Secretary Ross. “Now there are more resources available to assist them in their efforts.”

“This initiative leverages one of the state’s most vital resources—Vermont farmers who have demonstrated a commitment to stewarding the land to protect clean water. The initiative offers support for farmers to take actions that will conserve soil and protect water, and ensures that all farmers are held to the same standard,” said Commissioner Mears.

“My office is working closely with the Agency of Agriculture and the Agency of Natural Resources and is committed to bringing enforcement actions when necessary to address violations of Vermont’s agricultural water quality laws, and especially here in Franklin County,” said Attorney General Sorrell.

“We understand that most Vermont farmers are trying to run sustainable farms that operate within the law and live up to the expectations of Vermonters, but when farms fail to do so, we are ready to step in.”

State leaders are urging farmers to contact their local USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service to discuss how they can become eligible for these unprecedented new financial resources to implement conservation practices.
Vermont Vegetable and Berry News

continued from page 10

be flowering on my front lawn!

(Ange-Gardien, Quebec) Everything is frozen solid in the greenhouse, will see what survives in the spring. Planning is almost completed. I try to push further the concept of double and triple cropping in the greenhouse. The effort in finding little-used machinery treasure should pay off anytime soon.

(Plainfield NH) Tomato grafting 2015 has commenced, but that is not the big news on our farm. Snow removal is the featured lifestyle at the moment, and trying to survive frostbite while doing it. Because ten of our greenhouses have been nestled in a limited area, they fit only 2 feet apart, sidewall to sidewalk. This, according to Ed Person apart, sidewall to sidewall.

Area, they fit only 2 feet on a house without this point can mount up to 2 feet on a house without much concern, but I have come close to collapsing greenhouses with 3 inches of white sludge in an April storm. All snow is not created equal. The point is always be prepared for the next event before it lands at your farm. This winter has taken a toll already on greenhouses in MA and CT, and a NH grower lost 2 tunnels this winter. (Editor’s note: see www.uvm.edu/vtvegandberry/factsheets/PreventGreenhouseCollapse.html)

(Little Compton RI) Coolbot warning! During the first storm our Coolbot was on to keep our carrot storage down to 33 degrees. With all the blowing snow and wind, a bunch of snow got into the side fins of our GE a/c and an ice dam got going next to the fan blades and that burned up the motor. Now I know to turn the unit off during snowy, blowing weather. Our heat systems and greenhouse designs are just not a match to the slings and arrows of this season’s storms! Next season we will insulate some benches with 1.5 inches of styrofoam, put hydronic heat mats down and top it off with some electric conduit ribs covered with Agribon 30 so in effect we will have mini greenhouses. Our goal is to keep everything warm and not worry about the overall air temperature of the entire house. Regarding grafting, a big lesson this year was to consider the extra drying effect of the continuous bottom heat needed to keep them warm. Our plugs were not growing because the bottoms of the plug cells got too dry for root growth. So for the last couple of weeks we’ve watered everything very thoroughly, then we push up random plugs to be sure the water got down to the bottom. Not having a well-rooted Maxifort plug probably led to failure of some grafts. Another wakeup call was finding out our Therm-alarm unit had slight oxidation on the contacts. One we checked had been in place 12 years and wasn’t working. We took some emery cloth and a touch of vinegar to clean them up; another idea is to get a tube of some anti-oxidation lubricant that electricians use when setting up an electric panel in a moist environment…like a greenhouse!

(Argyle NY) This winter is bearing down hard. Our winter greens production in our unheated houses has been minimal, though I noticed the spinach under one layer of row cover has started to grow again. May be some harvest this week. Our two tunnels with underground heat had less than usual production in January, due to lack of sun in Dec. and first two weeks of Jan., but with more sunny days production is almost back to market demand now. Starting to clean up beds and replant the first fall plantings now. With heated soil emergence is about a week at mid-Feb. light levels. With our minimally heated soils, production is more about sunlight levels than outdoor temperature. Lately, this is the only time of year we can retain a significant amount of salad greens. I have noticed a falling off of demand for greens at our farmers’ market due I think to falling prices as organic production from out west reaches the economies of scale of conventional. Three new stores (and many existing supermarkets) in our area feature organic greens, plus home and workplace delivery services. Time for a new way of retailing. We are teaming up other local farms selling yogurt, eggs, apples, and vegetables to create a farmer-owned delivery service in our area.

(Enfield NH) Clearing snow and planning for the 2015 season. Looking at changing how we seed and cultivate our beds and other field setup practices. Will start seeding onions and shallots in about three weeks.

Survey Responses Requested For Digital Record Keeping and Labeling

$250 RAFFLE entry for each completed surveys! Produce growers: please complete the following survey to help this project find the right solution(s) for you. The goal of this project is to research, select, and pilot test affordable, easy to implement, and easy to use digital traceability solutions for Vermont produce growers, in order to meet FDA and market-enforced food traceability requirements. The survey link is on the project homepage http://bit.ly/vtproduce. Questions? Contact: Stan Ward, stan@stanward.com or 802-595-3232.

State Agencies Announce Factsheet on Farm Labor Housing, Wage and Hour

By Diane Bothfeld, VAAFM

Farming in Vermont has undergone several changes in the last 10 to 15 years with many farms adding value to their raw agricultural products, inviting the public to their farms and retailing products directly from the farm to customers. These changes coincide with changes in agricultural labor needs and sources for farmers. To address these changes, multiple state agencies worked with farm organizations to develop a factsheet to educate Vermont farmers on the requirements for farm labor housing and wage and hour.

The Farm Labor Housing, Wage and Hour factsheet can be found at the Vermont Department of Labor’s website at http://labor.vermont.gov/vermont-farm-worker-wage-hour-and-housing-factsheet/, This factsheet will assist all types of Vermont Farms to navigate the requirements of state and federal law surrounding agriculture, value added agriculture, interns and housing requirements.

The Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets, Department of Labor, Health, Community Development and Fire Safety as well as agricultural groups including NOFA-VT, Migrant Justice, UVM Extension Migrant Education, Green Mountain Dairy Farmers all worked diligently to produce a factsheet that would answer frequently asked questions from farmers, provide the regulations and some best practices for housing and retaining labor. Hard copies of the factsheet are available at the Agency of Agriculture and training for agricultural groups is available. For more information please contact Diane Bothfeld or Louise Waterman at 828-1619.
Consumer Night at the Vermont Farm Show
Local Producers, a “Lake to Plate” Culinary Theme, and a New Capital Cook-Off Champion

By Ali Zipparo, VAAFM

Farmers and foodies from across the state converged last Wednesday night, January 28th, to participate in the 4th Annual Consumer Night at the Vermont Farm Show in Essex Jct. Held on the second night of the Farm Show, Consumer Night celebrated a wide range of Vermont's agricultural products – both in the hands of the Capital Cook-Off competitors, and on display at the Buy Local Market. While attendees sampled and purchased locally-made specialty goods (including: cheeses, wines, ciders, maple products, and more) from over 50 vendors, the Capital Cook-off began at 5pm.

Hosted by Vermont Secretary of Agriculture Chuck Ross and Deputy Secretary Diane Bothfeld, the Iron Chef-style cooking competition challenged three teams comprised of Vermont Senators, Representatives, and Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets staff to craft a delicious dish using local ingredients over the course of one hour. Much anticipated was the competition’s secret ingredient: freshly caught Lake Champlain Yellow Perch. The secret ingredient and the event’s overarching “Lake to Plate” theme was revealed by Dep. Secretary Bothfeld alongside Champ, mascot of the Vermont Lake Monsters, and Clover the Cow, mascot of the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets.

Agriculture Secretary Chuck Ross went on to reiterate that, “The ‘Lake to Plate’ theme is a reminder of the importance of our communities’ collective responsibility to support our working landscape, keep our rivers and lake healthy, and sustain viable agriculture.”

Each Cook-Off team prepared Yellow Perch, alongside a number of other local foods, including vegetables, beans, honey, and meats, to be tasted and reviewed by a panel of judges including Lyndon Virkler, Dean of Education at New England Culinary Institute, Brian Roper of Sodexo, Allison Weinragen of City Market, Hannah Egan Palmer, food writer from Seven Days, Paul Dunkling, owner of Ray’s Seafood, Doug Paine, head chef of Juniper and Bleu in Burlington, Richard Jarmusz of UVM Medical Center Nutrition Services, and Lt. Governor Phil Scott.

After a thorough debate, the judges declared the Agency of Agriculture team to be the 2015 Capital Cook-Off champions, dethroning the defending team from the Vermont House of Representatives. The Ag Agency’s winning dish, a spin on fish tacos, featured seasoned and fried perch on a bed of slaw and paratha bread. The Agency team members - John Roberts, Maria Steyaart, Lauren Masseria, and Shelly Saleem, were thrilled with their dish and proud to have participated in such a fun and exciting event celebrating local foods.

“Consumer night was a wonderful combination of Lake to Plate and Farm to Plate, all in one location,” said Dep. Secretary Bothfeld, “we looking forward to an excited rematch next year.”