

NOFA-NH's "The CRAFT* of Farming"



In 2019, NOFA-NH launched "The CRAFT* of Farming" (*Collaborative Regional Alliances for Farmer Training) with three certified organic Merrimack County farm tours.

The purpose of the program was to: develop a farmer-led peer-to-peer support network focused on best practices in organic farming, create networking opportunities for farmers and farm workers, promote fair labor education, and strengthen recruitment and retention of organic farmers in New Hampshire by providing employers with resources to improve recruitment and management practices.

Participating Farms:

- **Brookford Farm, Luke Mahoney:** Certified organic vegetables, livestock, dairy
- **Work Song Farm, Dan & Abby Kilrain:** Certified organic vegetables
- **Kearsarge Gore Farm, Sam Bower:** Certified organic vegetables, livestock, maple syrup, wood lot

Program Impact:

- Established a CRAFT hub in Merrimack County with three certified organic farms.
- Conducted three educational farm tours reaching approximately 70 farmers, farm workers, students, gardeners and eaters.
- Provided farmers and participants with resources on farm labor recruitment and retention, fair labor practices, and soil health assessment resources.
- Assisted farm partners with marketing and recruitment of new employees.



The Northeast Organic Farming Association of New Hampshire (NOFA-NH) is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization dedicated to building local, sustainable, healthy food systems by actively promoting organic, regenerative, ecologically sound gardening, farming and land care practices for healthy communities.



Each farm tour focused on a different educational theme and was open to farmers, farm workers, families, students and the general public. Topics of discussion included: soil health, rotational grazing, season extension, organic dairy, vegetable, pork and poultry production, marketing, cover crops, electrical fencing, tools, and more. The tours also included a social component designed for networking amongst attendees.

A formal soil health panel featuring Julie Davenson of Stonewall Farm, Gene Jonas of Hungry Bear Farm, and Sam Bower of Kearsarge Gore Farm was incorporated into the final farm tour and followed by a lively roundtable discussion about soil health practices.

"It's always useful to learn about the practices of other farmers. Sometimes you can implement those ideas into your own farm, other times you tuck them away in your mental file and they can help later. It can be something as simple as a tool you didn't know about or a way to move items around the farm efficiently...It's always informative to view other farm operations. I wish I could do it more often. It's also good to connect with other farmers in person to build relationships. Too often a farm can become a sort of island, and we need programs like this to force us to connect," said Dan Kilrain, CRAFT tour host and owner of Work Song Farm.

NOFA-NH is expanding on this program in 2020. Please visit www.nofanh.org/craft for photos, additional resources, and information about this year's CRAFT program.

Thank you to our sponsors, Farm Credit Northeast AgEnhancement and Farm Aid.



 **Farm Credit**
Northeast AgEnhancement

The Northeast Organic Farming Association of New Hampshire (NOFA-NH) is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization dedicated to building local, sustainable, healthy food systems by actively promoting organic, regenerative, ecologically sound gardening, farming and land care practices for healthy communities.