

# SOLID GROUND NEWSLETTER



## Meet our Consultants

Meet **Shuresh Chimire**- Associate Extension Educator specializing in vegetable and hemp production with UConn Extension. He grew up on a 2.5-acre farm in Nepal, where his family grew a diverse range of crops, including rice, wheat, corn (called maize in Nepal) intercropped with beans and squash, potatoes, heirloom cherry tomatoes, ginger, turmeric, taro, garlic, onions, mustard, dry beans, gourds, radish, spinach, and the list goes on. He also foraged wild mushrooms, jiuressag (a wild spinach-like green), and various wild fruits. His family raised milking cows, water buffalo for milk and draft work, and goats, giving him hands-on experience with integrated crop and livestock farming. Before coming to the U.S., Shuresh worked for five years as a vegetable and fruit Extension Specialist with Nepal's Department of Agriculture, supporting smallholder farmers with production techniques and pest management. He then earned his Ph.D. in Horticulture from Washington State University, where

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## AG MECHANICS

Nothing feels quite so good as being able to tackle a project/problem on the farm yourself and NOT having to hire someone else to do it. Whether it is taking down trees, building a basic structure, figuring out your tractor, etc. our Ag Mechanics classes are a great way to learn in a small, hands-on environment some of the practical skills you use on your farm. As one of the students mentioned of our last chainsaw class- "I really like the format of going from theory, to demonstration, to practice one right after the other in a field setting... The sharing of experiences and concerns of the group were one of the highlights of the class."

To see the list of current classes and sign up, [visit our website here!](#)

he researched biodegradable plastic mulch for vegetable production. Now at UConn, Shuresh applies his deep-rooted agricultural knowledge and research expertise to help farmers improve their production practices and integrated pest management (IPM). He is passionate about working with growers to implement science-based, sustainable solutions for vegetable and hemp farming, enhancing both productivity and environmental stewardship.

To find out more our FREE consultations and what we have to offer you as a farmer, visit [solidground.extension.uconn.edu/consultations/](https://solidground.extension.uconn.edu/consultations/)

## SOLID GROUND

### Upcoming Events

#### Land Ownership Readiness

**Course:** March 8- virtual & in person for the cost of \$30. (This course is one of the options for a pre-requisite for [grant funding](#) to aid in the purchase of agricultural land)

#### Online Climate Smart Adaptation Strategies for Beginning Farmers

**Course:** Class cost \$60, but on completion you will receive a \$30 rebate for the cost of the class. Farmers that complete the class will be eligible to apply for our Climate Smart Microgrants

[Cohort 2 \(starts Mar 5\)](#)

#### Ag Mechanics:

Mar 15- [Chainsaw Safety & Use](#) - 9am-3pm, Mansfield Forests

Mar 22- [Tractor Safety, Maintenance, and Operation](#) - 9am-3pm, Vernon CT

Mar 29- [Intermediate Chainsaw](#) - 9am-3pm, Mansfield Forests

Apr 9- [BCS/Walk Behind Tractor](#) - 9am-3pm, Portland CT

## FEBRUARY FARM TASKS: MAKE WAY FOR BABIES!

While vegetable and flower growers have their tasks ([see last year's newsletter](#) for to-dos), we want to focus on one of the busiest—and most stressful—times for livestock farmers: birthing season.

Some start as early as December, but many welcome lambs, kids, calves, and piglets during the slushy late-winter months. Even if you're experienced, a few expert tips never hurt. Key considerations include:

- Are your facilities clean and ready?
- Do you have all necessary supplies?
- Can you meet animals' varied nutritional needs?
- Have you consulted your vet?
- Do you recognize normal vs. abnormal behavior?
- When should you intervene during birth?
- Did you account for all newborns?
- What are common post-birth issues?

These basics apply across species, but for specific guidance, many Extension programs offer tailored resources. Check out:

["Lambing and Kidding Cheat Sheet for Beginning Small Ruminant Producers"](#) – North Carolina Cooperative Extension

["Preparing for Calving Season"](#) – South Dakota State University Extension

["Care of Pigs From Farrowing to Weaning"](#) – University of Missouri Extension

Need more help? UConn's [Mackenzie White](#), our diversified livestock educator, is happy to connect producers with local resources! She is ready for a one-on-one free consultation or a quick email to help get you connected to great resources to make sure you are doing the best you can for your animals.

Stay safe, have healthy farm babies, and happy farming!

- The Solid Ground Team



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## Upcoming:

### Partner Events

[Northeast Extension Fruit Consortium Winter Webinar Series](#): Feb 19, 26, Mar 5 & 12, online- 12PM to 1:30PM

[Successes and Barriers in Biochar Production](#): Feb 20th, online- 1PM

[New England Vegetable & Berry Growers' Association Winter Meet Up](#): Feb 22, Bull Run Restaurant, Shirley, MA- 9AM to 3:30PM

[Feed Your Garden Before 8 AM w/ Craig Floyd](#): Feb 23, East Lyme Community Center- 10AM

[Legal Food Hub- Food Safety Liability Basics](#): Feb 26, online- 12PM to 1PM

[Planning for the Future of Your Farm](#): Feb 26, Killingly Town Hall- 6PM to 8PM

[Pasture Based Systems for Sustainable Livestock Production Series](#): Mar 5, 31, Apr 9, online- 10AM to 12PM

[CT NOFA Winter Conference](#): Mar 1, Eastern Connecticut State University- 9AM to 5PM

[Climate Mitigation Field Day](#): Apr 15, Gresczyk Farms, New Hartford- 3PM

[Climate Mitigation Field Day](#): Apr 16, Bishops Orchard, Guilford- 9:30 AM

[3rd National DisABILITY and Agriculture Conference](#): Apr 16, Camp Harkness, Waterford- 8AM to 4PM

### Grants

[Women's Business Development Council Ignite Grant- DUE MAR 10th](#)

[CT Dept of Ag Agricultural Enhancement Grant- DUE FEB 28th](#)

## Avian Flu Updates!

Keep informed on the most recent updates and recommendations from the CT Department of Agriculture to keep your flock safe.



For those of you who haven't heard of the Farmers Circles being put out by the New CT Farmer's Alliance, it's a great place to gather with fellow farmers on a multitude of topics to expand your learning and build camaraderie! There are [currently 7 topics](#) to choose from, including the most recent addition of the Organic Production Farmer Circle. This new circle is done in partnership with the Transition to Organic Partnership Program from CT NOFA.

This circle is meant to be a community of farmers dedicated to organic production. Whether you're certified organic, in transition, or exploring adopting an organic system, this space is for sharing insights, troubleshooting challenges, and learning from fellow producers who are committed to strengthening the future of organic agriculture together.

Facilitated by long time organic farmer, Susan Mitchell of Cloverleigh Farm, this might be the perfect environment for you if you enjoy group learning.

The first meeting is Feb 19, 2025, 4:00 PM -5:00 PM, so sign up below if you'd like to join!

[SIGN UP TO JOIN](#)



## GETTING TO THE ROOT

### Video Highlight

"Getting to the Root" is our video series that focuses on the entrepreneurial spirit of farm businesses in our region and highlights the unique markets farms have formed in order to succeed and create a loyal following of consumers. Hear how these farmers identified a need, applied a unique approach to their business and continue to innovate in their agricultural enterprises. Each video is accompanied by a recorded webinar with other farmers discussing different approaches to growing their business. Topics include Cut Flower Farming, Raising Niche Livestock, Growing Ethnic and Specialty Crops, and Including Value-Added products in Your Farm Business.

[View the Videos here](#)



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# CT NOFA WINTER CONFERENCE

## MARCH 1ST (ONLINE FEB 25-27)

CT NOFA is proud to present our 43rd Winter Conference, featuring a series of virtual workshops on Feb 25-27 in the lead up to our full day, in-person gathering and celebration on March 1, 2025 at Eastern Connecticut State University, in partnership with their Institute of Sustainability.

We'll be offering a variety of workshops, covering topics such as farming, seed saving, organic land care, community food security, social justice issues, and more, including a keynote address keynote panel discussion focused on food access and equity that will feature Reggy St Fortcolin, Jennifer Rothman, and Phoebe Godfrey. Our in-person celebration will also feature the presentation of the Bill Duesing Organic Living on the Earth award and our members' annual meeting.

Conference registration includes your ticket to our in-person event, lunch at the conference, access to all virtual and in-person sessions, as well as exclusive access to all recordings for 3 months after the event.

This year, we will continue to implement a sliding scale pricing model, allowing us to practice economic solidarity while providing mutual support for the cost of our programs. In this way, we make our education more accessible and help cover costs of operation. Choose the pricing tier that fits with your income and access to wealth, and help us create a more just, inclusive, and equitable conference. Scholarships are still available thanks to our generous donors and sponsors.

### Find Out More



*For questions surrounding this newsletter, please reach out to [rebecca.toms@uconn.edu](mailto:rebecca.toms@uconn.edu)*

## Liver Fluke Alert: Black Disease in Small Ruminants

Sheep and goat farmers in the Northeast have reported around 20% losses from herds this winter due to liver fluke, a trematode or flatworm that gets in the liver, causing damage and a deadly secondary bacterial infection- black disease.

This is likely due to the increasingly wet conditions we have been experiencing and is often attributed to animal exposure to slime trails and other interactions with fresh water snails.

To find out more information and details on this disease and how to keep an eye out for it, and treat it, give this article a read and reach out to your local veterinarian.

[Read the article here](#)

## Land Management and Land Rental Funding Available for CT Livestock Producers

NRCS and AFT are accepting applications for financial assistance for livestock producers in CT for Land Management and Land Rental activities through the Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP). Applications are accepted year-round, but the Round 3 deadline for fiscal year 2025 applications is March 7, 2025. To find out more [visit the website here](#)