

SOLID GROUND NEWSLETTER



2026 FSMA PRODUCE SAFETY RULE GROWER TRAINING

Are you interested in improving your produce safety? The Produce Safety Rule states that at least one responsible person must complete training if you sell over \$500,000 (three year average) worth of fresh produce OR that sells more than \$25,000 and up to \$500,00 (three year average), if they do not meet the requirements of the Qualified Exemption.

The Produce Safety Alliance (PSA) Grower Training Course has been designed to provide a foundation of good agricultural practices knowledge that includes emphasis on co-management of food safety and environmental management goals, while outlining the requirements of the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) Produce Safety Rule. The PSA Grower Training Course is one way to satisfy the FSMA Produce Safety Rule.

Date: March 23 & 24; (March 25 Snow Date)

Time: 8:30 a.m.-3:30 p.m.

Location: Tolland County Ext. Center

Registration Deadline: Feb 23

Space is limited to 30 participants.

[Sign up HERE](#)

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LAND ACCESS READINESS COURSE



If you want to be introduced to key concepts, and raise your awareness about the range of issues, concerns, challenges and obligations connected to leasing, purchasing and owning farmland than you should take our Land Access Course! With this introduction, farmers will develop a checklist of important criteria and an inventory of helpful resources to navigate the process of accessing farmland. For farmers who complete this course and want to pursue leasing or buying farmland, technical assistance providers will be available to help guide them further.

[Join the Class](#)



FEBRUARY FARM TASKS: STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

Soil Health Discussion Series 2026

We're holding a Farmer-to-Farmer Discussion series this February and invite you to use a registration link below to sign-up to attend. Each session will be small and provides an opportunity to discuss relevant topics of soil health with other farmers, facilitated by UConn Extension educators.

[Tolland County Soil Health Discussion](#)

Date: Sunday, February 22

Time: 1:30-3:30p

[Fairfield County Soil Health Discussion](#)

Date: Tuesday, February 24

Time: 9:30-11:30pm

[Find out More here](#)

If you're like us, you're itching to start seeds and checking trays every two hours to see if anything has popped (we shared more seed-starting tips in last year's newsletter). But while the snow is still melting and you've (hopefully) got a little desk time left, this is the perfect season to create an SOP.

SOP stands for Standard Operating Procedure. In plain terms, it's a clear, step-by-step guide for how a specific task gets done on your farm.

Why bother? Because if more than one person is involved in the work, things can easily get lost in translation. Everyone has their own way of doing a task. And often, not everyone knows the why behind certain steps. An SOP gets everyone on the same page.

When created thoughtfully—whether on your own or with your team—an SOP can:

- Create consistency
- Reduce mistakes
- Save time spent re-explaining tasks
- Preserve knowledge from previous activities
- Support produce safety and sanitation
- Make training new crew much easier

This “pre-work” can feel like another task, but you don't have to tackle everything at once. Start with just one task and write down exactly how it's done and why. Test it. Refine it. Notice what changes.

If you'd like guidance, the [University of Maine Extension has a helpful article](#) that walks through both the “why” and the “how” of creating an SOP, along with a worksheet to get you started. They also include examples of farm tasks that benefit most from having a written procedure.

So give it a try, and hopefully it will make things a little easier this year. Happy Farming!

The Solid Ground Team

SOLID GROUND Upcoming Events

[Land Access Readiness Course](#)

Date: Fridays- Feb 20, & 27 and Mar 6, from 9:00- 1:30

Location: New Haven County Extension Center

Ag Mechanics:

[Tool Sharpening II](#)

Feb 21, 9:30 -12:30

Rockville High School

[Small Engine I \(waitlist only\)](#)

Date: Feb 25, 4:30-7:30

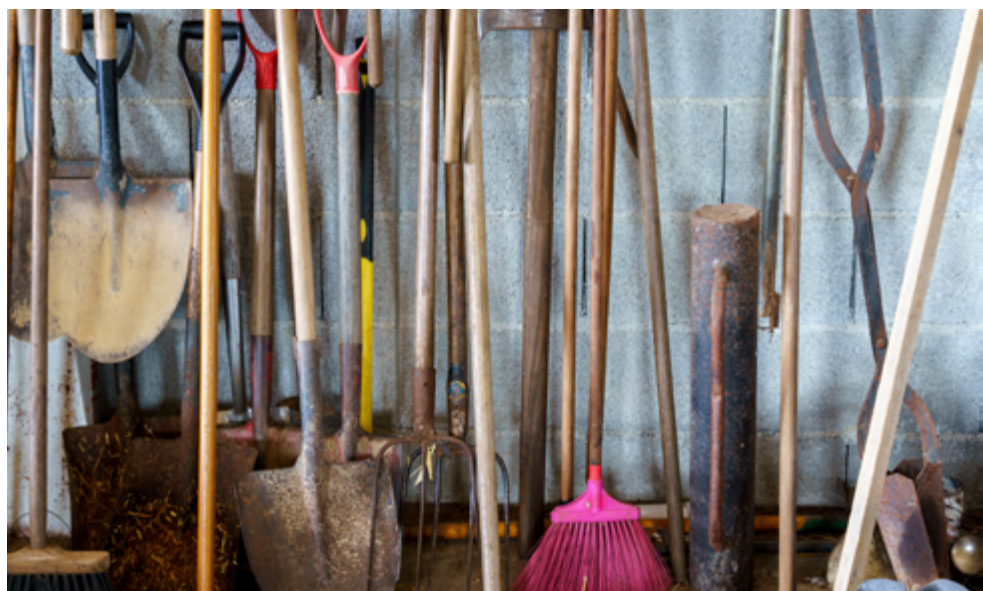
Middletown High School

[Small Engine II \(4 Stroke\)](#)

Date: Mar 11, 4:30-7:30

Middletown High School

[And more on our trainings page!](#)



This project is supported by USDA-National Institute of Food and Agriculture, Award 2023-49400-40870 supported by USDA-National Institute of Food and Agriculture, Award 2023-49400-40870

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Upcoming:

Partner Events

[Legal Food Hub Webinar Series](#): Feb 12, 19, 26 & Mar 5, Virtual - 12PM to 1PM

[URI Cooperative Extension Winter Agricultural Webinar Series](#): Feb 12, 19, & 26, Virtual - 12PM to 1PM

[Farm Energy Workshops](#): Feb 17, 26, & Mar 3, Virtual and Multiple locations and times

[FMNP Farmer Certification Meetings](#): Feb 18, 25, 26, Mar. 4, 9, & 19-Multiple locations and times

[Soil Health Practices for Water Conservation](#): Feb 19, Virtual - 12PM to 1PM

[NCTFA Hootenanny & Annual Meeting](#): Feb 21, Manchester- 1PM to 4PM

[2026 Farmers' Market Manager Meetup](#): Feb 24, Lyceum, Hartford- 8:30AM to 12PM

[Cultivate Your Farm Brand with 1-1 Marketing Workshops](#): Feb 24, Priam Vineyards, Colchester- 12PM to 2PM

[2026 Insects and Climate Change Education Day](#): Feb 24, Virtual- 9:30AM to 1:30PM

[Urban Farmer Training Program](#), Weds. Feb 25-Apr 22, Online- 6:30PM to 8:30PM

[CT Grown Academy: Spring Marketing Webinar for Farmers](#): Mar 2, Virtual -1PM to 2PM

[CT NOFA Winter Conference](#): Mar 7, Wesleyan University- All day

[Developing Strong Systems for Communication, Feedback, and Decision Making](#): Mar 12, virtual- 2PM to 3:30PM

[Northeast Food Systems Forum](#): Mar 13, Foundation House, Greenwich- 8:30AM to 11:30AM

[CT Compost Conference](#): Mar 19, Wesleyan University- 9AM to 4:30PM

Grants

[Farmer Veteran Fellowship Fund](#)- DUE FEB 17

[CT Dept of Ag Specialty Crop Grant](#)- DUE MAR 16

[Ignite: A Women's business Development Council Grant](#)- DUE MAR 18



If you're heading to the CT NOFA Winter Conference (see next page for more details!) then we recommend coming to visit the CT Department of Agriculture table sharing info (and giving away some swag) for the new CT Grown Certified Organic program.

You'll have a chance to talk about how you can use this new logo and give input on how you would like to see the Department continue to promote it throughout the state!

And of course, Dave - the organic Outreach Specialist, will be there too, to do some quick brainstorming on the most effective way to integrate this into your farm marketing.

But if you don't want to wait until March, you can sign up now at the link below! Dave can also help with your website, your farm-stand set up, signage, where to market, and more.

If you're a certified organic farmer, sign up today while this FREE opportunity lasts!

[Find Out More](#)



“FINDING YOUR MARKET” GUIDE

Knowing Your Markets

With the help of local farmers we have revised a publication we put out in 2018- Our Finding Your Market Guide. This guide looks at the increased market opportunities for farms in the state and how your farm fits in with these markets. The updated guide is FULL of photos, quotes and insights from our farming community. Whether it's the pros and cons of selling to restaurants, or the impact a CSA has on the whole business, it is full of farmer experiences that you'll want to hear from.

[View the Guide here](#)

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CT NOFA Winter Conference

March 7, 2026

CT NOFA is proud to present their 44th Winter Conference, featuring a series of virtual workshops on March 3-5 in the lead up to the full day, in-person gathering and celebration on March 7, 2026 at Wesleyan University in Middletown, Connecticut.

They'll be offering a variety of workshops, covering topics such as farming, organic land care, government policy, homesteading and gardening, food equity and justice, and more! The in-person celebration will also feature the presentation of the Bill Duesing Organic Living on the Earth award and our members' annual meeting.

The heart of the CT NOFA Winter Conference is their slate of workshops. Run over the course of 3 days of virtual sessions (March 3-5) and throughout the in-person conference (March 7), this year's workshops will cover:

- Beginning farmer topics
- Transitioning to organic farming
- Organic land care
- Policy and advocacy
- Gardening and homesteading
- Livestock management
- And more!

Cost is sliding scale of \$70 to \$140 and scholarships are available!

[Sign up Here](#)



For questions surrounding this newsletter, please reach out to rebecca.toms@uconn.edu

FMNP Farmer Certification Meetings

To accept FMNP WIC and senior electronic benefits, Connecticut fruit, vegetable, cut herb, eggs, and honey farmers must become certified to sell at an FMNP-authorized farmers' market. Because your time is tight, CT DoAg has provided multiple options around the state to fit into farmer's schedules. Sign up for one today!

- Feb 18 at Hartford Extension Ctr in Farmington: 9AM to 11AM
- Feb 25 at Jones Auditorium in New Haven: 10AM to 12PM
- Feb 26 at Middlesex Extension Ctr in Haddam: 11AM to 1PM
- Mar 4 at Windham Extension Ctr in Brooklyn CT: 11AM to 1PM
- Mar 9 at New London Extension Ctr in New London: 10AM to 12PM
- Mar 19 at 450 Columbus Blvd, Hartford: 1PM to 3PM

[Find Out More](#)

Tri-State SARE Project

Registration is now open for our 2026 Tri-State SARE Project webinar series, focusing on livestock carcass performance:

February 18: Animal Physiology's Role in Carcass Performance

March 10: Forage Composition and Quality for Optimal Carcass Performance

April 2: Nutritional Impacts on Carcass Performance and Meat Quality

April 14: Online Discussion Group

[Register Here](#)