

SOLID GROUND NEWSLETTER



Team Talks

Hey- I'm Robert Chang and I farm at Echo Farm in Woodstock where we grow organic vegetables and cut flowers. I also work part time co-directing Solid Ground with Jiff Martin.

Before I started farming, I didn't have the chance to intern or apprentice, so I've relied on beginning farmer training programs like Solid Ground to help me learn what I missed. As a beginning farmer, I've felt enormous pressure to do nearly everything myself, to save money instead of hiring professionals to assist or do the work for me. As I have learned to be a better grower, I similarly tried to teach myself how to file my own taxes, do all the bookkeeping and accounting, plus sales, marketing, branding and graphic design, fundraising, grant writing, writing a coherent business plan, etc.

The business has matured to the point where I no longer have the skill nor the time to do everything myself, but learning to become a jack of several trades has sustained me and the business. This winter, Solid Ground is

This Month

[Meet the Team- Robert Chang](#)

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We've already tackled so much heat this season, but we know that more heat waves are on their way. So if you haven't thought about what are the best steps to take for your livestock, farm crew and yourself when the heat hits big, let's get you that info.

CT Department of Ag recently [put out a press release](#) specifically addressing the stress that heat can cause on animals and provided several steps that farmers can take to prevent animals from being stressed or becoming ill from excessive heat. This includes:

offering a Business of Farming training course that will introduce beginning farmers who have just started their business, to these concepts and skills that are vital to success. You won't become an expert in any of these topics from a single course, but you will have a much better head start than figuring it out on your own.

The class will meet in person and online, with presentations from other farmers as well as service providers. Upon completion, you will have not only a good overview of starting a farm business, but also lists of resources, guides, sample worksheets, your own online business plan plus introductions to service providers who can help you further. It's a course I wish I had taken years ago when I started to farm. For anyone just getting started and wondering about some or all of these business topics, I invite you to join us in the upcoming Business of Farming training course. Keep your eyes open for more details coming this fall!

SOLID GROUND

Upcoming FREE SKILL SHARES 2024 Season

Check out our newest series of learning events this growing season: Skill Shares! These groups will meet 2-4 times throughout 2024 in smaller groups (8-10). We still have openings in these groups:

Growing Hemp for Fiber Skill Share: Aug 31st | Sept. 30, Ag Expiement Station, Griswold- 10am to 12pm

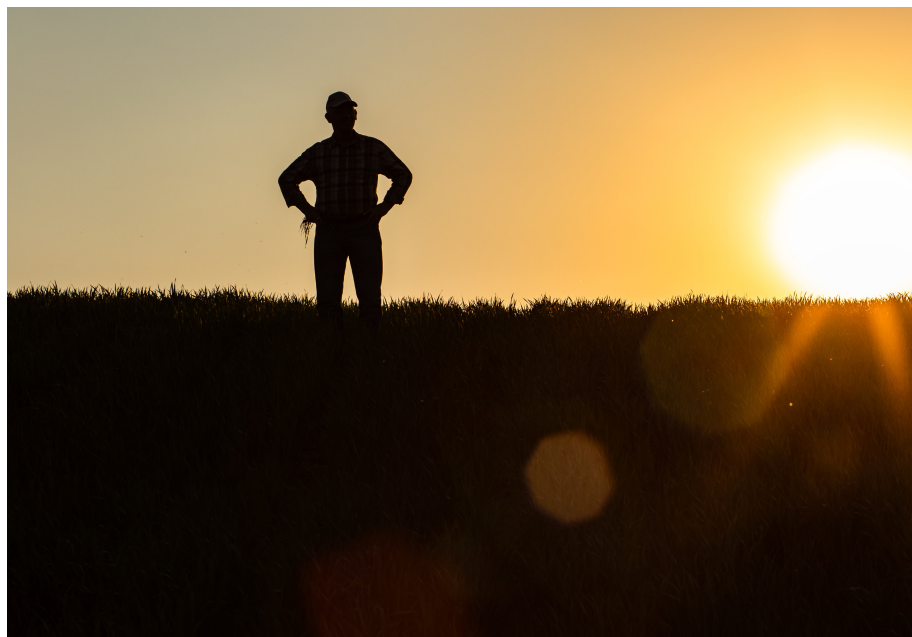
Land Evaluation and Farmland Access: Sep 8 | Sep 15, multiple locations and times

- Provide ample shade calculating square footage based on herd size and resource guarding. Temporary movable shade structures can be built and relocated for rotational grazing setups.
- Maximize airflow – position shelters to take advantage of breezes or install fans with fully enclosed motors rated for agricultural use.
- Add spray misters to fans or sprinklers for added relief.
- Drinking water should be clean and out of direct sun.
- If you need to transport or work livestock, do so during cooler parts of the day.
- Be aware of fire risks associated with overloaded circuits or faulty electrical, stored hay that hasn't been properly cured, or parking equipment in barns that hasn't properly cooled.

In addition to keeping our animals cool, is important that we consider ourselves, the farmers, who are caring for our plants or animals. UConn has [put out notes \(pg. 47\)](#) for anyone that is working outdoors:

- Prevent heat illness through acclimatization by gradually increasing the time spent working in hot environments.
- Drink two to four cups of water every hour while working. Don't wait until you are thirsty to drink.
- Avoid drinks that contain caffeine, alcohol, or large amounts of sugar, as these can increase the loss of body fluids.
- Heavy sweating removes salt and minerals from the body that need to be replaced. A sports drink can help replace the salt and minerals you lose in sweat.
- Wear and reapply sunscreen as indicated on the package.
- Look for sunscreens that say "broad spectrum" or "UVA/UVB protection" on their labels—these products work best.
- See if some tasks can be scheduled for earlier in the day to avoid the hottest period of the day (between 11 a.m. and 4 p.m.).
- Wear a ventilated wide-brimmed hat (e.g., straw or mesh) and loose, lightweight, light-colored clothing.
- Spend time in air-conditioned buildings during breaks and after work.
- Encourage coworkers to take breaks to cool off and drink water.
- Seek medical care immediately if you or a co-worker has symptoms of heatrelated illness, such as muscle cramps, headache, nausea, or vomiting.

If you follow these steps, perhaps these hotter days will be a bit more manageable!



Upcoming:

Partner Events

NCTFA Grow Together Nights-Farm Grants 101: July 14, Hungry Reaper Farm, Morris- 6PM to 8:30PM

Crazing Workshop with Berkshire Crown: July 15-16 at farms in MA and NY. Full day events

CT NOFA Compost Tea Workshop: July 20, The Hickories, Ridgefield- 10AM-1PM

Northeast Cooperative Soil Survey Conference: July 29- Aug 1, Bridgewater State Univ. MA

UConn Vegetable IPM Field Workshop: Aug 1, UConn Plant Science and Resesarch Education Facility, Storrs- 3PM to 6PM

NCTFA Grow Together Nights-Scaling Up: Aug 7, River Ridge Farm, Portland-6PM to 8:30PM

Pasture Based Systems for Sustainable Livestock Production with Tri-state SARE, Aug 14th, Muddy Roots Farm- 9:30AM to 11:30AM

CTFB:Understanding PA 490 Webinar Introduction to Farm Estate Planning, Sept 17th, Online - 6PM to 9PM

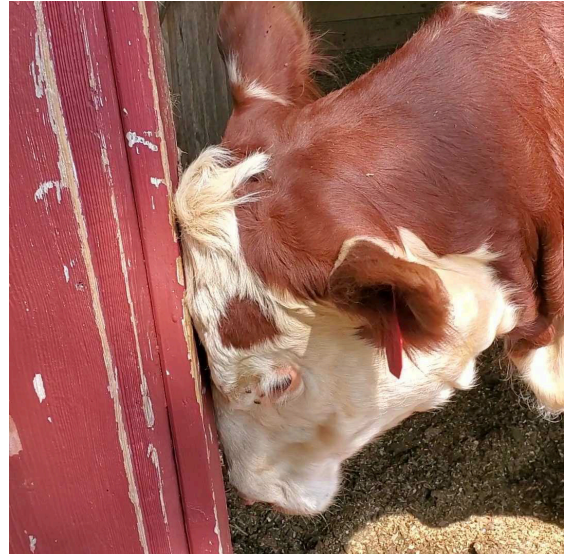
Grant Opportunities

Piloting Rewards for Ecosystem Services from AFT- DUE SEPT 6

HPAI Updates

CT DoAg has issued milk handling recommendations for exhibitors and event organizers to minimize the transmission of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI H5N1) and pertain to milking practices and disposal of milk collected on-site. The full recommendations [can be found online here](#).

CAPTION THIS!



IS IT OCTOBER YET?

send photos or captions here!



PHOTO BY ASSAWAGA FARM

Video Highlight

We know summer means a lot of dead plant matter- from weeds, to trimming plants, to animal manure, to products that don't sell. We also know that many of you would love to turn some of that material into compost to help your farm! Well, a couple years ago we had Alex and Yoko of Assawaga Farm sit down and lead a webinar on how they operate their compost operation at their farm and we thought it just might be the perfect July watch for you farmers.

View the video here





Crop Acreage Reports

Agricultural producers in Connecticut should make an appointment with their local Farm Service Agency (FSA) office to complete crop acreage reports before the applicable deadline after planting is complete.

"Many USDA programs require producers to file an accurate crop acreage report by the applicable deadline in order to receive program benefits," said Dr. Emily Cole, State Executive Director in Connecticut.

An acreage report documents a crop grown on a farm or ranch, its intended use and location. Filing an accurate and timely acreage report for all crops and land uses, including failed acreage and prevented planted acreage, can prevent the loss of benefits.

The following acreage reporting dates are applicable in Connecticut:

July 15, 2024: Annual Spring/Summer seeded crops (including hemp).

September 30, 2024: Value loss crops.

January 2, 2025: Honey and Bee Colonies.

January 15, 2025: Peaches, Grapes, Apples, fall seeded grains.

February 17, 2025: Maple Taps.

Find out more here 

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

Free Consultations!

Just a friendly reminder that we have free consultations from professionals at UConn Extension on a range of topics that can help you with your farm this summer. Consultants can come out to your farm, or meet you over a video chat to help you tackle the challenges you are facing. Topics for Consultation include:

- **Vegetable and Hemp Production** (Shuresh Ghimire)
- **Fruit Production and IPM** (Evan Lentz)
- **Urban and Small Space Agriculture** (Jacqueline Kowalski)
- **Soil, Conservation and Land Evaluation** (Kip Kolesinskas)
- **Resources for Organic Transition** (Saquana Seltzer)
- **Branding and Marketing** (Becca Toms)
- **NEW* Farm to Institution Sales** (Shannon Raider-Ginsburg)

Once you sign up, Consultants will reach out to you in about 2 weeks to schedule a time to meet and get more details

Nominations Open for the 2024 County Committee Elections

The USDA & Farm Service Agency is now accepting nominations for county committee members & encourages all farmers, ranchers, & FSA program participants to take part in the New Haven & Middlesex County Committee election nomination process. For more information on FSA county committee elections, including fact sheets, nomination forms and FAQs, visit fsa.usda.gov/elections