

SOLID GROUND NEWSLETTER



Team Talks

Hey all! I'm Jiff Martin, Food Systems Educator at and Co-Director of Solid Ground. Near the time of my arrival at UConn Extension as a Food Systems Educator, a report titled "[A Proposal for Growing Connecticut's Farms, Food & Jobs](#)" (2011) was presented to the CT Governor's Council on Agricultural Development which highlighted the need for more beginning farmer training.

In response, in 2012, UConn Extension launched a new training for beginning farmers that were attempting to move from 1-2 acres to larger acreage. Initially, this programming was called 'Scaling Up', and delivered whole farm planning and technical assistance to 11 beginning farmers.

In 2016, UConn Extension launched the Solid Ground Farmer Training Program to expand our reach and meet growing demand. Funded by the USDA-NIFA Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development Program, the Solid Ground Program

[Meet the Team- Jiff Martin](#)

[August Farm Tasks: Storing Your Crops](#)

[Upcoming Events](#)

[Grants Open](#)

[Venture Farming Institute](#)

[Heavy Rain Simulation Video](#)

[Partner Highlight: CT SBDC](#)



STORING YOUR CROPS

Storing your crop can be stressful. Finding the storage, regulating temperature/moisture, having it in the right containers to packaging. From hay to potatoes, it can be a big stressor if something goes wrong in storage and you lose the crop that you worked so hard to put away.

For our livestock folks, you know hay making is a science and finding bales that have gone bad in December is never a good feeling. Obviously timing of the cutting, drying, and baling in the field is a science in it's own right (interested in starting? [Check out this article from UNH Extension](#)) but then, once

features a buffet of learning opportunities in various formats, including virtual and in-person, one-time field days and workshops, online classes, and free one-on-one consulting sessions. I'm amazed by the ever-growing population of beginning farmers and humbled by the skills and focus of so many of them as they navigate climate-related challenges, pandemics, shifting markets for local food, limited capital, on top of tremendous barriers to accessing farmland.

When we started in 2012, farm business owners with less than 10 years of experience accounted for 25% of farmers in CT. A decade later, that number has grown to 33%. UConn Extension's work with beginning farmers wouldn't have been possible were it not for our partners, especially New CT Farmer Alliance, CT NOFA, CT Farm Link, Land for Good, CT Dept. of Agriculture, and USDA. Looking ahead to our 2024-2025 winter season of trainings, I'm most excited about the trainings that Co-Director (Robert Chang) and I are pulling together on the topic of enterprise budgeting, accessing grants, as well as our 2nd Farm Manager Summit (save the date - Jan 29th!). Hope to see many of you in the colder months ahead!

SOLID GROUND

Upcoming FREE Events

[Growing Hemp for Fiber Skill Share:](#)
Aug 31st | Sept. 30, Ag Expiement Station, Griswold- 10AM to 12PM

[Organic Pest & Disease Management:](#)
Aug 24th, Lathrop Farmstead, Lebanon- 2PM to 5PM

[Land Evaluation and Farmland Access:](#)
Sep 8 | Sep 15,
multiple locations and times

[Microgreens Indoor Production:](#) Aug 10,
GVI, Bridgeport- 11AM to 1PM

[Indoor Hydroponic Farming:](#) Aug 15,
nOURish Farm, Stratford- 5:30PM to 7:30PM

you've put all that work into baling it, it needs to be stored properly so moisture doesn't get in and spoil all that hard work. Not to mention the threat of nutrient loss. To help you get a better handle on all the ins and outs of how to best store hay, it starts with the cutting- [and this article from Univ. of Minnesota Extension](#) does a great job of considering storage at every step.

For veggie/fruit growers it can be a little more complicated. Each vegetable is unique in it's storage needs and yet, as new farmers, you're limited in resources- meaning you can't always cater to every veggie's storage "wants." Regardless, it's helpful to know what the preferred temps are, so if you're not sure, you can reference [this article from University of Maine Extension](#) that lists the major crops we grow.

Just like hay, proper storage of fruits and veg starts in the field and continues until you put it in the final storage place. You should always be on the lookout for:

- harvest window
- bruising/cosemctic damages
- cleanliness
- disease
- pests
- moisture

These are just some of the basics. This [article from Penn State Extension](#) provides more in-depth info and lots of great recommendations to keep things streamlined.

And of course, throughout you should ALWAYS be considering Food Safety. Post harvest and storage can be were some of the bigger problems with food safety show up, so if you ever have any doubts about if you're practices or space meet food safety specifications, you can reach out to the [Food Safety Dept at UConn Extension](#)-Indu is always willing to help!

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Happy Harvesting!



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Upcoming:

Partner Events

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

[Solawrap High Tunnel Field Day](#): Aug 25, Marble Valley Farm, Kent- 3PM to 5PM

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

[CT NOFA Tree and Shrub Establishment](#): Sept 14th, The Hickories - 10AM to 1PM

[CT NOFA Soil Health Field Day: Cover Crops](#): Sept 29th, Assawaga Farm - 10AM to 2 PM

[CT NOFA Soil Health Field Day: No-Till Farming Practices](#): Oct 12th @ Sub Edge Farm in Farmington, CT

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](#).

THE VENTURE FARMING INSTITUTE

Venture Farming Institute (VFI) is an intensive training experience designed for new and beginning farmers of color in CT and RI. Starting in February and going until June, a cohort of new farmers went to classes, completed coursework, went on field trips, and overall were prepared to start farm businesses that would thrive, and be a resource to other BIPOC farmers

There was a lot of intense work they did as a group and we thought it would be suitable to take a little space and say CONGRATULATIONS to the folks that were able to finish the course: Mario Peña, Alissa Johnson, Zion Adjua Jones, Jasmine Waugh, Alexis Perrin, Terri-Ann Williams, Keith Simms, Raul "Orly" Infante, Indira Miller, Jacqueline Mercado, and Chandelle Wilson, congratulations and best of luck with where ever your farming ventures take you next!



Video Highlight

Thankfully we haven't had as much rain as last season, but the storms that we get are continuing to have heavy rainfall and impact our farms. How we treat our soils can be a large part of how the rain is disrupted and where our nutrients go. We love this video we did with the NRCS that gives you a perspective of how rainfall effects a variety of field types and what we can keep in mind when we do get heavy rain.

[View the Video here](#)





CONNECTICUT SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT CENTER

Small Business Consultations

The Connecticut Small Business Development Center (CTSBD) is providing no cost services for businesses including technical assistance with the 2024 CT Resilient Food System Infrastructure Grant Program application and other CT Department of Agriculture grant applications.

The CT Small Business Development Center has a team of 19 Business Advisors with expertise covering a variety of topics including small business lending, entrepreneurship, technology innovation, exporting, market strategy, and more. A consultation includes: Business Planning, Product Development for value-added goods, Marketing and Sales, Raising Capital, Grant Assistance namely with applying to DoAg grants, Financial Analysis, Cash Flow Management, and more!

To sign up fill out the form below. For more info contact: ctsbd@uconn.edu | 877-723-2828

[Find our 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 call 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

SAVE THE DATE

UConn Extension
Vegetable and Small
Fruit Growers
Conference: *January 9th*

2nd Annual Farm
Manager Summit:
*January 29th (snow date
Jan. 30th*