

# SOLID GROUND NEWSLETTER



## Meet our Consultants

Hi everyone! This is Diane from the newly formed [Farm Viability Service](#) at UConn. Solid Ground has an amazing collection of programs for farmers in our state, but maybe you've wondered, what else does UConn have to offer farmers? That's where I come in!

When you connect with the Farm Viability Service, I can help you get answers to specific questions or more broadly direct you to available resources. Think of me as a generalist who can guide you to experts, programs, and services, plus help you think through bigger-picture farm management issues.

Part of what helps me help you is my own farm experience. I run a small-scale vegetable operation, having started with an abandoned corn field and no infrastructure or equipment. I'm familiar with the steep learning curve many of us go through! In addition to support from UConn, I've received funding from

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## BUSINESS OF FARMING CLASS

We've said it multiple times- no one gets into farming for the "business" side of it. However, this doesn't mean that we can ignore this component of our farms! If you are looking to understand how to strengthen your business- whether it hasn't been started, or been around for 5 years, take a look at our "Business of Farming Hybrid Course." It's a learning experience with beginning farmer peers that fosters informal interactions, knowledge sharing, and relationship building that helps you navigate: How to Write a Business Plan, Statements for Financial Management, Grant Opportunities, Marketing/Branding, Tax Filing and more. [Learn more and sign up here](#)

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the CT Dept of Ag, NRCS, and NE SARE, plus logistical and administrative support from other ag service providers, and am happy to talk through those experiences.

Check out the [FVS website here](#), [sign up for a consultation here](#) and please always feel free to contact me directly at [diane.dorfer@uconn.edu](mailto:diane.dorfer@uconn.edu). I'm excited to be part of the UConn team, and I'm looking forward to hearing from you!

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

## SOLID GROUND

### Upcoming Events

#### Business of Farming Hybrid

**Course:** Launching two cohorts [Jan 2](#) and [Feb 12](#). Virtual and in-person

#### Land Ownership Readiness

**Course:** Cohorts starting [Jan 11](#), [Feb 8](#), and [March 8](#)

#### Farmer to Farmer Conference:

Sat, January 25, 2024  
10:30 AM to 4:30 PM  
at the Meriden Public Library  
FREE!

#### Farm Managers Summit:

Tuesday, January 29, 2025  
(Snowdate Jan 30)  
9:00am - 3:00 PM at the Chrysalis Center, Hartford- \$40/person

#### Ag Mechanics Sign Ups Coming Soon!

Feb 1- *Hand Tool Maintenance and Upkeep*

Feb 4- *2-Stroke Service and Repair*

Feb 11- *4-Stroke Service and Repair*

Mar 15- *Chainsaw Safety & Use*

Mar 29- *Intermediate Chainsaw*

Apr 9- *BCS/Walk Behind Tractor*

# DECEMBER FARM TASKS: SEED ORDERING

The seed catalogs are starting to arrive and we know everyone gets excited and are usually tempted to order more than they need. Crop plans should be the gold standard for your ordering to make sure you get the right amount and variety. Never made a crop plan before? Here's [an article from Utah State Univ. Extension that talks about Crop Planning for CSAs](#), but even if you don't have a CSA, there is good content that you should consider when flipping through these catalogs.

Once you have a crop plan, here are some extra things to consider when ordering seed:

- Place your seed order early
- Look for varieties that adapted to your growing environment
- Focus on productive varieties
- Purchase seed from reputable seed companies
- Check for pelleted, GMO, Organic, heirloom, etc. labels that will fit into your growing practices

These thoughts were taken from an article published by University of Arkansas Extension, and if you would like to read further on why these specific considerations are important, we encourage you to look at the whole article which you can find at their [Center for Arkansas Farms and Food website](#).

In addition, if you are reading this the day it's sent out, there is a seed variety discussion TONIGHT that may help inform you on what has performed best among farmers in CT. Give it a listen and [sign up for it here!](#)

And lastly, we encourage you to try something new and fun that is just for you this year! Yes, we love to provide for our communities through our products, but many of us also love plants, so don't be afraid to order something that is just because you want to try it out!

~Happy Seed Ordering!~





## Upcoming:

### Partner Events

[NCTFA Seed Variety Discussion](#), Dec 12, Online 6:30PM to 8PM

[Jewish Farmers Conference](#): Dec 12-15, Isabella Freedman Jewish Retreat Center in Falls Village, CT

[Urban Farmers Conference](#): Dec 14, Bridgeport O.I.C, 9AM to 3PM

[CTFLT Farm Open House \(Farm for lease!\)](#): Dec 16, Stonington- 12PM to 3PM

[New England Fruit and Vegetable Conference](#): Dec 17-19, Manchester NH

[Meeting of the New England Vegetable & Berry Growers' Association](#): Jan 3, Blue Bonnet Diner, Northampton, MA - 9AM to 3:15PM

[UConn Extension Vegetable and Small Fruit Growers Conference](#): Jan 9th, UConn Campus, Storrs

[Managing your Farm Finances in the Time of Climate Crisis](#): Jan 16, Auer Farm in Bloomfield- 10AM to 4PM

[Foundations of Shellfish Farming](#): Jan 21-April 6th, online

[Meat Marketing Workshop Series](#): Jan 13-15, online, 1PM

[Vegetable Production Certificate Course](#): Reg Closes Jan 20, course starts Jan 27- online

[Southeast New England Ag Conference and Trade Show](#): Feb 2, Bristol County Agricultural High School, Dighton, MA

### Grant Opportunities

[Climate Smart Ag and Forestry grant program](#) DUE DEC 13

[Historically Underserved Farmer/Farming Communities Grant Program from SARE-](#) DUE JAN 7

[CT Dept of Ag Farm Transition Grant](#) DUE JAN 10

### [East Lyme 2025 Education Programming](#)

Digging Into the Relationship Between Healthy Plants and Healthy Soil- Jan 19, Feb 2, and Feb 23



As we mentioned last time. This is our new TOPP corner! To reiterate: Transition To Organic Partnership Program (TOPP) is a network assembled by the USDA's National Organic Program to support transitioning and organic producers with mentorship and resources.

In addition to many other things happening in our state, CT NOFA and NOFA Mass are collecting information to gauge interest in processing services for certified organic poultry for farms. As the demand for organic products continues to grow, we are exploring the possibility of supporting dedicated facilities for organic poultry processing that meet USDA standards. This could provide a valuable opportunity for your operation to expand into the organic market and tap into new consumer segments.

We are exploring the need of a dedicated USDA-certified organic poultry processing facility in Connecticut and would love your feedback to assess the demand.

Please take a moment to fill out the brief form below by Friday, December 20, 2024

**FILL OUT THE FORM**

# FINANCIAL STATEMENTS



## Video Highlight

Hey! It's almost the end of the year! Which means you're going to be dealing with more farm financials. Isn't it the perfect time to boost your understanding of some basic financial statements that are integral to running your business? Take a moment to comb through this video series with Chris Laughton, of Farm Credit East, as he discusses Balance Sheets, Income Statements, and Cash Flow Statements.

[View the Videos here](#)

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# LIVESTOCK LISTENING SESSIONS

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As we mentioned in last month's newsletter we are excited to have our new Diversified Livestock Specialist, Mackenzie White, join the UConn Extension team. She is eager to hear about the needs that you have on your farms so is having listening sessions throughout the next 2 months throughout the state! Go say hi and let her know what Extension can help you with!

*All Listening Sessions will be open from 10am-2pm unless noted.*

- Thursday December 12th, 2024 - Middlesex County Extension Center, 1066 Saybrook Road, Haddam, CT
- Tuesday December 17th, 2024 - Litchfield County Extension Center, 843 University Drive, Torrington, CT
- Thursday December 19th, 2024 - Windham County Extension Center, 139 Wolf Den Road, Brooklyn, CT
- Thursday January 2nd, 2025 - Fairfield County Extension Center, 67 Stony Hill Road, Bethel, CT
- Wednesday January 8th, 2025 - New Haven County Extension Center, 305 Skiff Street, North Haven, CT
- Tuesday January 21st, 2025 - Hartford County Extension Center, Exchange Building - Suite 262 Building 4, 270 Farmington Avenue, Farmington, CT
- Thursday January 23rd, 2025 - \* VIRTUAL OPTION (4:30-7:30pm) \* <https://s.uconn.edu/livestocklisteningession>
- Tuesday January 28th, 2025 - New London County Extension Center, 562 New London Turnpike, Norwich, CT

Light refreshments will be provided! An RSVP is encouraged, but is not required!

Questions, comments or rsvp's can be sent to [MacKenzie.white@uconn.edu](mailto:MacKenzie.white@uconn.edu)

**Find Out More** 

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

## LAND CAPITAL MARKET ACCESS PROGRAM GUIDANCE RELEASED

Connecticut Department of Agriculture released guidance for a historic new program which will increase access to farm ownership opportunities, market access, and capital funding for socially disadvantaged farmers in Connecticut. Connecticut is the only state department of agriculture to be awarded funding from U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) for the implementation of the Increasing Land, Capital, and Market Access (LCMA) program.

Questions about the CT LCMA program can be directed to Cyrena Thibodeau at [Cyrena.Thibodeau@ct.gov](mailto:Cyrena.Thibodeau@ct.gov) or 860-895-3094 or [visit the website here](#).

## FARM RISK MANAGEMENT COURSE

Farm risk management involves understanding and mitigating factors that can impact agricultural operations, such as climate change, pest management, and financial uncertainties. Through this grant-funded 12-module course you will gain knowledge and strategies to enhance the resilience and sustainability of your farm.

[Learn More](#)