

SOLID GROUND NEWSLETTER



Meet our Consultants

Meet **Kip Kolesinkskas** -our Solid Ground Professional Soil, Conservation, and Land Use Consultant! Kip has vast experience in soil health and land use, and has honed much of his knowledge by working with CT soils for decades. The focus of his recent work has involved efforts to improve land access and affordability, and provide technical services to new and beginning farmers. He serves on the UConn Extension Solid Ground Farmer Training cadre, where Kip provides training, one-on-one consultations, and site assessments on land access, soil health, and climate change.

He is a recognized regional and national speaker on soils and land use planning, farmland protection, climate change adaptation, and farmland access. Kip is the Co-Chair of the Working Lands Alliance and a member of the Connecticut Council on Environmental Quality. In addition to this wealth of professional experience, Kolesinkskas is an avid fisherman, cook, gardener and local foods advocate.

[Meet the Consultants](#)

[Farm Managers Summit](#)

[January Farm Tasks](#)

[Upcoming Events](#)

[TOPP Corner](#)

[Small Scale Poultry Processing Video](#)

[Partner Highlights](#)



One of the things we have heard the most from our more advanced “Beginning Farmers” is that they struggle with finding and keeping good workers on their farm. While there are a multitude of reasons this happens (some of which are out of our control), there are components we can have an impact on: understanding our legal obligations, best practices for crew management, how to handle payroll in an effective way, etc. These topics (and more!) are going to be discussed at the next Farm Managers Summit. Sign yourself and your managers up (discounts for multiple people from the same farm!) at this link here: uconn.edu/farmmanagerssummit2025

Many of our new and beginning farmers have utilized Kip's understanding/knowledge of soil and land use to help them make decisions about viable products their current farmland can produce. Others have benefitted from his expertise before making a land purchase, to make sure it fits their farm goals. Regardless of your soil and land needs, you will doubtless find Kip to be a valuable source of information.

To find out more about FREE consultations from Solid Ground and what we have to offer you as a farmer, visit solidground.extension.uconn.edu/consultations/

SOLID GROUND

Upcoming Events

Farmer to Farmer Conference:

Sat, January 25, 2024

10:30 AM to 4:30 PM

at the Meriden Public Library

FREE!

Farm Managers Summit:

Wednesday, January 29, 2025
(Snowdate Jan 30)

9:00am - 3:00 PM at the Chrysalis Center, Hartford- \$40/person

Business of Farming Hybrid

Course: Cohort start Feb 12-Virtual and in-person.

Land Ownership Readiness

Course: Cohorts starting Feb 8 and March 8- virtual & in person

Ag Mechanics:

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*

Online Climate Smart Adaptation Strategies for Beginning Farmers Course:

[Cohort 1 \(starts Feb 3\)](#)

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

JANUARY FARM TASKS: PRACTICING REST

We recognize that, as one of many farming organizations, we've been sharing a wealth of learning opportunities, conferences, updates, and events through our listserv and various meet-ups. These resources are valuable, and we encourage you to take advantage of them as they align with your goals. However, as farmers ourselves, we understand that January has traditionally been a slower season. With fewer markets to attend, less to tend to for seasonal growers, and a general sense of calm before the busy planning and peak markets of summer, this month often provides a brief window of respite.

Yet, in conversations with some of you, it seems that this moment of pause has become increasingly compressed in recent years. The time that once followed the holidays—a chance to rest and recharge—has been shortened, packed with tasks like crop planning, major purchases, taxes, system setups, repairs, professional development, community engagement and new market opportunities.

This month, we'd like to pose an important question: Are you giving yourself enough time to truly pause? Are you taking a moment to enjoy a quiet cup of coffee before diving into the day's tasks, rather than drinking it while working through your endless "to-do" list?

At Solid Ground, we're far from perfect examples of "restful farmers" in the winter. There have been times when our bodies have forced us to rest—a far less enjoyable experience than choosing rest intentionally. But we entered farming because we care deeply about our communities, the land, and the impact we can make by providing quality products. Rest is essential to sustain this work and to continue making a meaningful difference.

So, this article contains no extra links, no additional to-dos—just a reminder and encouragement to take the time to rest, whatever that means to you. By allowing yourself to pause, you'll be better prepared to approach the coming season with renewed energy and, perhaps, even a little more joy.

Be well friends, and happy farming- The Solid Ground Team



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

UConn complies with all applicable federal and state laws regarding non-discrimination, equal opportunity, affirmative action, and providing reasonable accommodations for persons with disabilities. Contact: Office of Institutional Equity; 860-486-2943; equity@uconn.edu; <https://www.equity.uconn.edu>

Upcoming:

Partner Events

[Mind-bending Advances in Agriculture w/ Nigel Palmer](#): Jan 19, East Lyme Community Center- 10AM

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

[CT Farmer Veterans-Marketing Trainings](#): Jan 21, 28, Feb 4, and Feb 11, online- 6PM and self paced

[CT Farmer Veterans-Business Trainings](#): Jan 23 and 30th, online- 5PM

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

[Legal Food Hub, Farm Employment Law Basics](#): Jan 29, online- 12PM to 1PM

[UConn Extension Agritourism Webinar](#): Jan 30, online- 2PM to 4PM

[Organic Matter for Successful Growing with Bryan O'Hara](#): Feb 2, East Lyme Community Center- 10AM

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

[Legal Food Hub, Succession Planning](#): Feb 12, online- 12PM to 1PM

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

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

[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



Now accepting applications for Spring Mentorship! Who is this program intended for? Anyone that is:

- interested in organic farming and has owned a farm business for at least 2 years AND want to get certified, or have just gotten certified on your own (you can apply to become a mentee)
- already certified (for at least 3 yrs) and you feel like you have some valuable lessons to share (you can apply to be a mentor to someone that wants to pursue organic farming practices)
- interested in providing guidance on specific topics, skills, or areas of interest to farmers who are transitioning to organic methods.

If you are interested in becoming a mentor or mentee, CT NOFA will connect you with another farm and support you through the process for a year. Farmers on both ends are matched with folks that best fit their operations so that the work is relevant to your business goals.

So if this sounds like you, and what you want for your farm, check out the link below for more info, or email sherlene@ctnofa.org

[FIND OUT MORE](#)



SMALL SCALE POULTRY PROCESSING

Video Highlight

Last summer we went out to Muddy Roots Farm to check out their small scale Poultry Processing operation. Chris and Kristen were gracious enough to let us tag along and share their process of how they go about processing their birds in a safe, sanitary way. Knowing that processing is one of the main hurdles for many producers, we hope that this will inspire folks to think about their operations and if poultry processing is viable for them!

[View the Video here](#)





WEATHER RELATED DAMAGE SURVEY

WEATHER-RELATED LOSSES 2023 & 2024

In December, a resolution was signed into law which secured \$220 million for U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to provide block grants to eligible states, including Connecticut. This funding is intended to compensate producers for expenses and losses incurred due to weather events in 2023 and 2024.

CT Dept of Ag is collecting information from farmers regarding weather-related losses incurred in 2023 and 2024. This data will help us collaborate with the USDA to implement a financial relief program for these losses. Your response will assist in determining the amount of funding Connecticut should request from the federal government, as well as the types of losses that should be covered.

The survey includes questions about losses from specific weather events in 2023 and 2024, as well as losses related to long-term stresses worsened by weather conditions during these 2 years. The survey allows you to report up to 3 separate losses. If you have more than 3 losses to report, please submit multiple forms.

It is essential that we gather comprehensive data to fully represent the scope of losses. We encourage you to participate in this survey even if you have already received grants, loans, or insurance payments for the indicated losses. When the program application is launched, these payments will be considered.

Please note: responding to this survey does not guarantee access to or eligibility for funding. The parameters of state and federal programs are still being finalized. Not all types of losses reported in this survey may qualify for compensation. All responses are subject to the CT Freedom of Information Act. While participation is anonymous, you may provide your email addresses to receive timely notifications about the program launch. The survey will remain open until 11:59 p.m. on Sunday, January 19, 2025.

For any questions, please contact CT DoAg Director of Communications, Rebecca Eddy, at rebecca.eddy@ct.gov.

[Find Out More](#) 

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

Online Climate Smart Adaptation Strategies for Beginning Farmers Course

UConn Extension is coordinating **two** offerings of their **Climate Smart Adaptation Strategies Course**, beginning on **February 3rd**, and **March 5th**. This is an online course designed for new and beginning farmers in CT who have 1-10 years of farming experience. Participants will learn about the impact of climate change on CT Ag and discover a range of adaptation strategies. The price is \$60, with a \$30 refund after completion. **Completion of this course is required to be eligible to apply for the Spring 2025 round of UConn Extension's Climate Smart Adaptations Microgrant Program** (which is limited to farmers in CT with less than 10 years of experience operating their own farm business).

[FIND OUT MORE AND SIGN UP HERE](#)

AFT NATIONAL BIOCHAR SURVEY

Participation in this anonymous national survey is to evaluate the soil, economic and social impacts of biochar application on cropland. Participants will be eligible to win a \$100 gift card as a thank you.