

APRIL '25

# SOLID GROUND NEWSLETTER



## Meet our Consultants

Meet **Evan Lentz**! Evan is our Fruit Production and IPM consultant. As an Assistant Extension Educator in the Department of Plant Science and Landscape Architecture (PSLA), he specializes in Commercial Fruit Production and Integrated Pest Management. Evan started his position in 2023 after completing his undergraduate and graduate studies here at UConn in the PSLA department. Evan is a Connecticut native, and his family has a long history of farming in the state. During his time as a student, Evan worked closely with other Extension Educators to meet the needs of commercial fruit growers and developed an affinity for the industry.

Now, as a full-time faculty member, Evan continues his work with commercial fruit growers - helping them solve problems and developing educational programming to meet the growing needs of the industry. Evan has several ongoing applied research projects with

[Meet the Consultants](#)

[Skill Shares: Land Conversion](#)

[April Farm Tasks](#)

[Upcoming Events](#)

[TOPP Corner](#)

[Grants Open](#)

[Marketing Video Series](#)

[Partner Highlights](#)



If you're looking for land to lease or purchase, this Land Conversion Skill Share is for you on **May 18th** and **May 25th**. Learn how to evaluate potential properties for agricultural use by explore three different properties with Solid Ground soil, conservation, and land use consultant Kip Kolesinskas. We will evaluate major soil properties for different types of agriculture, evaluate existing infrastructure, potential water sources, impact of wetlands, neighbors and wildlife, land restoration, topography, local microclimates and more. Kip will also discuss different tools to use to help you evaluate and how to navigate town and zoning laws.

[Find Out More and Sign Up Here](#)

focuses on precision agricultural technology, drone imaging, integrated pest management, alternative production systems, and climate adaptation. He also teaches several classes in the PSLA department including Small Fruit Production, Written Communications in Horticulture, and Plant Pest Control.

If you would like to sign up for a FREE consultation with Evan, or learn more about our consultants 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**

[Land Evaluation and Farmland Access Skill Share \(2 sessions\)](#)

*Date:* Sunday, May 18th

*Time:* 10am-2pm

*Location:* TBD, Greater Hartford Area

*Date:* Sunday, May 25th

*Time:* 10am-2pm

*Locations:*

River Crest Farm,  
534 Oronoque Rd,  
Milford, CT and  
Off Center Farm, 48 Center  
Rd. Woodbridge, CT

## **APRIL FARM TASKS: STARTING A NEW FLOCK**

With the current price of eggs, and some people looking for more local egg options, you may be one of the farmers that decided to keep chickens this spring for the first time! Especially given the H5N1 Avian Flu, starting a poultry flock should include planning and attention to health and safety. Sara Tomis at UConn's One Health – Agriculture and Community Engagement, put together an article with some key pointers that you should consider. To view the [full article click here](#), but for some key points look below:

- Prioritize Hygiene – Always wash your hands after handling poultry, eggs, bedding, or manure. Avoid touching your face before washing your hands.
- Use Dedicated Footwear and Clothing – Have a specific pair of shoes for poultry care and avoid using them elsewhere. Change and wash clothes that come into contact with manure, dirty water, or broken eggs.
- Provide Proper Housing – Once birds are old enough, move them to a secure, well-ventilated outdoor coop.
- Maintain Flock Health – Feed your birds properly, clean equipment frequently, and manage manure to reduce disease risks. Store feed securely to deter rodents, and seek professional help if pests become a problem.
- Practice Biosecurity – Limit interactions between poultry and wildlife, especially waterfowl, which can spread diseases. Reduce contact between poultry and household pets.
- Monitor for Illness – Learn the symptoms of poultry diseases. Do not consume eggs or meat from sick birds, and consult a veterinarian if issues arise. Report suspected avian influenza to the [CT State Veterinarian](#).
- Follow Food Safety Guidelines !

There are a lot of things to consider from a biosecurity standpoint, so if you want to dive even deeper, check out this article by Mackenzie White and Sara Tomis: [Developing a Biosecurity Plan for Your Livestock or Poultry Operation](#) and feel free to reach out to them if you have any questions!

- 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](mailto:equity@uconn.edu); <https://www.equity.uconn.edu>.



## Upcoming:

### Partner Events

[Farmers Market Nutrition Program Farmer Certification Meetings](#): Apr 11, 450 Columbus Blvd Hartford, 10AM-12PM

[Climate Mitigation Field Day](#): Apr 15, Gresczyk Farms, New Hartford- 3PM

[Parasite Management in Sheep & Goats](#): Apr. 15, Virtual - 7PM

[Climate Mitigation Field Day](#): Apr 16, Bishops Orchard, Guilford- 9:30 AM

[Q & A: Soil microbial predators for biocontrol in organic systems](#): Apr. 16, Online- 10AM

[3rd National DisABILITY and Agriculture Conference](#): Apr 16, Camp Harkness, Waterford- 8AM to 4PM

[Farmers Market Nutrition Program Farmer Certification Meetings](#): Apr 23, Jones Auditorium, New Haven- 10AM to 12PM

[NCTFA's Spring Shindig](#): Apr. 27, River Ridge Farm, Cheshire- 4PM to 7PM

[Two-part Live Animal Carcass Evaluation Workshop](#), May 9 & 30, multiple locations - 1:30PM to 4PM

### Grants

[Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure \(RFSI\) Program](#) DUE APR 16

## Pollinators for Livestock Producers

Are you a livestock producer interested in improving habitat for bees, butterflies, and beneficial insects on your farm? Technical and financial assistance is available until summer 2026 to help livestock operations in the Connecticut River Valley with site-specific planning implementation of regenerative ag and conservation practices that support pollinators and productive farmland!

To check eligibility or request more information, contact Julie Michaelson, Pollinator Conservation Specialist at [julie.michaelson@xerces.org](mailto:julie.michaelson@xerces.org).



CT NOFA, UConn Extension, and CT Department of Ag are searching for ways to help grow sales of organic products in the state. Working with researchers and marketing agencies, they will be looking for feedback from both farmers and consumers within the next couple months to understand the needs that are there, to help make organic products become more visible/desirable to shoppers, and help farmers sell more!

Within the next few weeks, you will be seeing a survey going out to farmers that are certified organic, working toward certification, or farming using organic practices but not currently certified. We would greatly appreciate it if you took 5-10 minutes to fill out this survey and share your thoughts. Many of you are doing great work already to market your organic products and we want to learn from your wisdom!

**Survey Coming Soon!**



## Video Highlight

We put out a series of webinars a few years back to help farmers think about different tools, methods and places to market their farms. These videos cover social media, website design, relational marketing and more! If you're looking to beef up some of your marketing skills as the selling season gets underway, give this series of videos a look and perhaps they'll give you that little boost you need for your farm business!

[View the Videos here](#)



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](mailto:equity@uconn.edu); <https://www.equity.uconn.edu>.



## FARM RISK MANAGEMENT

### FARM RISK MANAGEMENT ONLINE 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.

Serving livestock farms, dairy farms, crop farms, fruit & vegetable farms, or anyone seeking to develop a farm, this free course is a must for the modern-day farmer.

UConn's Farm Risk Management Online Course modules are developed in conjunction with UConn's College of Agriculture, UConn's Center for Excellence in Teaching & Learning, and UConn's Academic Program Development & Support unit, and are funded by a grant from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Take one module or all twelve Farm Risk Management online modules. Learners will receive a course completion certificate for each module completed that can be downloaded and printed.

Courses are self-paced and offered 100% online and asynchronous; you can participate in the course at any time of day or from anywhere.

### Find Out More



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

## Forestry Support for CT Landowners

The Department of Energy and Environmental Protection Forestry Division has three Service Foresters available to provide technical advice and assistance to woodlot owners throughout the State. This free service is available to private citizens, municipalities, conservation groups, farms, or other private or public organizations.

Advice and technical assistance to forest landowners is provided in the following areas:

- Forest Stewardship Planning
- Wildlife Habitat Management
- Forest Products Management
- Christmas Tree Management
- Forest Recreation and Aesthetic Enhancement
- Forest Health, Insect and Disease Problems
- Stream and Wetlands Protection

[LEARN MORE](#)