



Hi folks,

Here is our Farmer Programs newsletter for February 5, 2021. Please read through our new section, which we're calling "The Farmer Programs Roundup" (yes, we're taking back *that* word!), where we highlight the current work and efforts of MOFGA's Farmer Programs staff – we hope you find this new section illuminating and informative. If you're looking for information that you may have seen in the past, contact Nicolas Lindholm with inquiries. (We are currently transferring archived documents away from MOFGA's new website and will be storing them on drives curated by staff.) Please also send any suggestions, corrections or advice regarding this newsletter to nlindholm@mofga.org.

The Farmer Programs Roundup

- Our Maine Farm Resilience Program (MFRP) has extended the application deadline to February 15 – details can be found in the Educational Opportunities section below.
- Our Journeyperson Program application window has closed and we are reviewing and interviewing applicants.
- Farm Beginnings program is in session, with 19 farms participating in the online class.
- A couple of us are working with the current cohort of MFRP farmers with financial planning tools (namely FarmCalc) in developing and analyzing enterprise budgets and cash flow projections.
- We are beginning to work with agricultural organizations in Maine to build collective impact and accountability to equity goals at our respective organizations. This project focuses on issues such as racial justice and land justice to build a more inclusive Maine farming community, partly through training agricultural service providers.
- The entire MOFGA staff is participating in a series of training sessions with Wabanaki REACH.
- We are planning topics and speakers for the upcoming Spring Growth virtual conference on Food Safety with Attina Diffley, this month's Farmer-to-Farmer-in-the-Field workshop on Farm SOP's, and the second in our new series of online Producer Meetings, which will focus on seedling production. Event details will be posted in MOFGA's weekly bulletin and on MOFGA's website as they develop.
- Our [Shared Use Farm Equipment](#) program is seeing some spring bookings that we facilitate and manage. Reach out if you want to enroll and borrow something!
- Many of us are also planning or developing other outreach efforts, workshops and educational webinars for different events or forums like Boots to Bushels, Common Ground Radio on WERU FM Community Radio, our organic orcharding series, Organic Principles & Practices for Livestock Health and Handling, and more.

- We continue our engagement with many other organizations – like the Maine Federation of Farmers’ Markets, UMaine Cooperative Extension, Maine Farm to Institution, Maine Gleaning Network, Maine Food Strategy, Maine Farmland Trust, CEI, CDI, the National Organic Coalition and more – in planning work for such projects as the new Bumper Crop Employer-to-Marketplace program, Climate Adaptation Fellowship projects, the Maine Food Convergence, a market access analysis project, and renewed funding for continued programming to educate and train new farmers, as well as numerous ongoing projects and policy work.
- As always, please feel free to reach out to any Farmer Programs staff with questions about our work or suggestions for future projects or workshops. Visit this informational [handout](#) for staff contacts and to see what is in store for 2021!

Events

- [Wild Blueberry Conference](#) online event. January 27 through March 17, 2021. Hosted by UMaine Extension, this year’s conference is a series of workshops covering such topics as irrigation, insect pests, fresh-pack line improvements, climate change impacts, pollination, marketing, value-added production and lots more. Separate workshops are scheduled for separate Wednesdays and Fridays throughout the series. Registration required. Free.
- [Maine Food Convergence](#) online conference. February 15 through March 11, 2021. Organized by Maine Farm to Institution, Maine Gleaning Network, Maine Food Strategy, Maine Climate Action Now and Maine Network of Community Food Councils, this new conference will be a series of virtual networking events, centering around interactive group work. Pulling from a wide variety of Maine food system sector organizations, individuals and colleagues, the event will focus on top priorities in the Maine food system, identify specific actions that are needed to work on collectively, and develop systems to support ongoing collaboration. The convergence will take place over three weeks in February and March and will be organized into three main topic tracks: food access, food production and food marketing in Maine. Registration required, sliding scale fee available.
- [Racism, Land and the American Farming Landscape](#) online panel discussion. February 7, 2021. Hosted by Black Heritage Trail of New Hampshire, as part of their Tea Talk series, this event features a discussion that will investigate the contributing factors to the enormous loss of Black farmers and Black-owned farmland during the 20th century including discriminatory practices, such as the denial of USDA loans and the slow handling of civil rights complaints. Presenters will also share the innovative ways Black New England farmers are reclaiming the land and sowing the seeds of health and empowerment. Registration required. Free.
- [Legal Food Hub’s Winter Webinar Series](#) online webinars. February 16 & 23; March 2, 9 & 16, 2021. Hosted by Legal Food Hub, this series features an hour presentation each week covering a legal topic of significance to New England farmers, food entrepreneurs and food-oriented nonprofits. Topics include understanding purchase and sales agreements in real estate transactions, hiring your first employees, opening your farm to visitors, and more. Registration required. Free.
- [Growing Stronger: Collaborative Conference on Organic & Sustainable Farming](#) online event. February 22-27, 2021. Hosted by MOSES, in partnership with Grassworks, Iowa Organic Association, OGRAIN, the

University of Wisconsin, and Fairshare CSA Coalition. This conference, which combines five separate conferences for this year, will provide a rich and engaging experience with more than 90 workshops and opportunities to connect through roundtables on food system and farming issues; farmer speed-presentations; a virtual exhibit space featuring suppliers, buyers, certifiers and consultants; and meet-ups and socials. Check out what farmers in the Midwest have to offer on topics including minimal tillage strategies for organic vegetable production, organic row crop management and the biology of soil health, perspectives on pastured poultry, decolonizing science and methodology, organic vegetable seed, managing cover crops for diversity and nitrogen in organic grain systems, and the first regenerative peoples and building authentic partnerships. Registration required. Fee: \$125 (student rates and livestock farmer scholarships available).

- [Harvest New England Farmers Market Management Seminar](#) online conference. February 22-23, 2021. Preceding the Agricultural Marketing Conference & Trade Show (see below), this event features workshops and discussions designed specifically for those managing farmers' markets, new or experienced. Workshops include lessons in conflict resolution at farmers' markets, working towards more inclusive farmers' markets, developing a successful SNAP program and more. Registration required. Free.
- [Harvest New England Agricultural Marketing Conference & Trade Show](#) online event. February 24-25, 2021. Sponsored by six New England State Departments of Agriculture, this is New England's largest agricultural conference solely dedicated to agricultural marketing. Farmers of all types and sizes, new and established, from throughout New England should attend to enhance their marketing and business skills. This year, each of the two days of the conference feature presentations from farmers (including several MOFGA farmers) on timely topics including pivoting markets, diversifying products and effective marketing solutions since the pandemic hit. Registration required. Free.

Educational Opportunities

- [MOFGA's Maine Farm Resilience Program](#) extended deadline for applications! This educational and skill-building program provides individualized support to advanced-beginning farmers (farmers with five-nine years experience, with room for some farmers with 10+ years) grappling with critical questions of scaling up, accessing and adapting to new markets, managing risk, innovation and diversification, and re-strategizing business plans to achieve long-term farm viability. Participation includes: matching with experienced mentors and service providers; six-part seminar series to support goals and delve into risk management strategies addressing financial risk, human risk, marketing risk and climate risk; business development, financial analysis and creation of a farm action plan; and stipends to access advanced educational opportunities, as well as technical, professional and pivot point services. Application deadline: February 15, 2021.
- [Adventures in Farm Business Planning](#) online course. Administered by FarmSmart Maine in conjunction with the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry (DACF), this self-driven, rolling admissions online business planning class is designed to help farmers get from where they are to where they want to be. Featuring a broad range of topics (including business planning, bookkeeping, marketing, managing people, vision and goals, and more) and a simple monthly subscription cost-structure, this new

edition of the course is “designed to help if you're craving the time and headspace to reconnect to the reason you got into farming in the first place while brushing up on your business skills.”

- [QuickBooks for Farms](#) online course. February 15, 17, 22 & 24, 2021. Hosted by UMaine Cooperative Extension and SCORE Maine, this four-part workshop series is tailored to small farms and agricultural businesses. Note: This is a hands-on workshop where you will need a PC computer, as the version being presented will be the PC version (not the Apple/Mac versions) – so you *must* be a PC user and have either the QuickBooks desktop or online version from 2015 or more recent. Registration required. Free.
- [QuickBooks 4-Week Intensive](#) online course. February 22, March 1, 8 & 15, 2021. Hosted and taught by Julia Shanks of The Farmer’s Office. This four-part online series is designed to let you dig deep into QuickBooks and help you get the answers you need to improve profitability and cash flow for your farm and maintain financial sustainability. Both desktop and online versions for Mac or PC will be covered to meet participants’ needs. Farmers will have the opportunity to partner with a business advisor as well as have access to all the online courses and resources available on The Farmer’s Office website. Registration required. Fee: \$399, with sliding scale available starting at \$129.

Marketing Opportunities

- [Maine Harvest Bucks](#) program for Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farmers. Administered by MOFGA, this grant-funded program (which is part of a larger program managed by Maine Federation of Farmers’ Markets and other partners) is for Maine farms with CSA programs. Through Harvest Bucks, you can offer half-price shares to customers who pay with SNAP/EBT, and you still receive the whole share value (supported by the grant funding). While this program does require you to do monthly grant reporting during the CSA season, it has been streamlined compared to past years – plus there is support to get free or reduced price SNAP/EBT processing equipment! To learn more or get set up to participate, please reach out to Hillary Barter at hbarter@mofga.org this winter.
- [Become a vendor at the 2021 Common Ground Country Fair](#). Applications for different areas of the Fair are becoming available, with various deadlines for submission. Check the schedule and vendor resources, and plan for this year’s event (which at this time is being planned for both in-person and online, with a final determination of possibly being online-only to be made in early May 2021).

Resources

- [Micro-Enterprise Business Grant](#) program still accepting applications. Administered through Maine Department of Economic & Community Development (DECD) in partnership with the Maine Small Business Development Centers (SBDC), this program provides grants of up to \$5,000 for Maine businesses with five or fewer employees who have experienced a revenue loss as a direct consequence of COVID-19, with an owner whose income is in the low to moderate range as defined by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Funds are available on a first-come, first-serve basis. Business owners must meet with a Maine SBDC business advisor to determine eligibility and submit an application. Many small family farms will likely be eligible, depending on income.

- [USDA Value-Added Producer Grant Program](#) now accepting applications; due date in March 2021. This national program helps agricultural producers enter into value-added activities related to the processing and marketing of new products. The goals of the program are to generate new products, create and expand marketing opportunities, and increase producer income. Grant (and required matching funds) can be used for planning activities or for working capital expenses related to producing and marketing a value-added agricultural product. Awards can be up to \$75,000 for Planning Grants and \$250,000 for Working Capital Grants. Use the link above to access information and application materials made available from USDA Rural Development. Here in Maine, address inquires to Ivana Hernandez Clukey, Loan Specialist, Rural Development, U.S. Department of Agriculture, 967 Illinois Ave., Suite 4, Bangor, ME 04401. Ivana Hernandez Clukey can be reached by phone at 207-990-9127 or via email at ivana.hernandezclukey@usda.gov.
- [Coronavirus Food Assistance Program](#) (CFAP) newly expanded assistance and eligibility. In mid-January, the USDA announced additional assistance and broader eligibility criteria within the CFAP (round two) for certain agricultural producers whose operations were directly impacted by the coronavirus pandemic. These changes include expanding eligibility for some agricultural producers and commodities (including swine, broilers, laying hens, eggs and turkeys) and updating payment calculations for some producers who already applied for earlier assistance. Applications are to be made through your local Farm Service Agency (FSA) office. Application deadline: February 26, 2021.
- [Payroll Protection Program \(PPP\) Loans](#) newly expanded rule changes. In early January, the Small Business Association (SBA) announced changes to the PPP that will be of benefit to most farms. These changes include reopening the PPP to allow First Draw (first-time) PPP loans to businesses that did not receive them in 2020, new loan calculation for self-employed farmers based upon gross Schedule F income (rather than net Schedule F income), increases to First Draw loans, and a second round of PPP loans (called "Second Draw" loans) to borrowers who have already received a PPP loan. As before, these new payroll protection loans are designed to be forgiven if program requirements are met. If you received a PPP loan in the first round, reach out to the lender you worked with to see what you are eligible for. If you did not apply for the first round but think you could be eligible, reach out to the lender you have the closest relationship with to inquire.
- [Solar Siting Resources](#) webpage. The Maine DACF maintains this page of resources and information regarding the siting of solar/photovoltaic arrays as they relate to farms and Maine's farmland. This robust set of resources is great for anyone interested in learning more about the intersection of solar power and agriculture. You will find technical guidance for developers regarding installation and decommissioning, checklists for farmers considering solar development on their land, and information on dual-use systems where solar arrays are integrated into continuing agricultural production, as well as factsheets and guidelines from Maine Farmland Trust, Maine Audubon, American Farmland Trust and others.
- [Guide to USDA Funding Programs](#) downloadable resource. Newly updated from USDA, this 101-page guide covers 62 government programs and includes program updates from the 2018 Farm Bill. Each program listing provides a description of the program's available resources, information on how to apply, and, in some cases, examples of how the funding has been used. The guide also includes basic information on how to design sound

projects, find appropriate programs and write grant applications.

- [Small Bites](#) – Practical Tips for Farm Resiliency. One new post is available: “Good Ideas Without the Hard Work” by Abby Sadauckas. These are short, informational articles offering practical ideas about stress reduction, improved communication and family well-being written by coaches from UMaine Cooperative Extension’s farm coaching team. Farm coaches are available at no cost to work remotely with farmers and farm families.

Opportunities for Farmer Input

- [Needs Assessment Survey](#) for farms with five to nine years in operation. MOFGA is preparing to apply for a new round of USDA Beginning Farmer and Rancher Development grant funding (this is the multi-year grant that has funded our beginning farmer programs for the past nine years, including our Journeyperson program). This time around, we are partnering with NOFA Vermont and Northeast Farmers of Color Land Trust to continue our Journeyperson and Farm Beginnings programs, start new services and create resources together, and expand our farmer networks. To develop a useful project and secure funding, **we need to hear from those of you with five to nine years of experience** about what kinds of technical assistance and education would be most helpful. The short survey should only take a few minutes.

