

SNAPSHOT OF RURAL VERMONT'S WORK IN 2020

11/24/20

- Establishing a Farmers' Market Relief Fund and distributing \$14,240 to 32 markets across Vermont to support implementation of new COVID protocols
- Being an ally and accomplice to Migrant Justice and the migrant farmworker community and successfully advocating for the creation of a \$5 million Vermont Immigrant Families COVID Relief Fund
- Successfully advocating for \$5 million in COVID relief funds for agriculture businesses (including farmers, meat processors/ slaughterhouses, and farmers markets), value-added food product businesses, forestry businesses, and ag-associations
- Collaborating with local BIPOC led agricultural and non-agricultural organizations; developing an Anti-Racism policy which will be embedded in Rural Vermont's bylaws, committing us to prioritizing this work within and outside the organization, with clear expectations and accountability; sending our Policy Director, and Board member of the National Family Farm Coalition, to Birmingham, Alabama for a Board retreat focused substantively on learning from our allies at the Federation of Southern Cooperatives about the history of black land loss, land and farm based organizing in the movement, racial inequity in Birmingham and the greater US historically, and how to move forward in a country suffering from deep systemic racism
- Continuing to advocate for, educate about, and organize around on-farm slaughter, scale appropriate regulation, and Food Sovereignty: offering slaughter and processing workshops with itinerant slaughterer Mary Lake and local farmers and butchers, doing direct outreach to stakeholders in the on-farm slaughter community, and advocating for addressing the increased demand for local meat and the related capacity issues for meat processing by increasing the number of animals allowed for on-farm slaughter
- Being a plaintiff in a federal lawsuit filed by the Center for Food Safety against the USDA for implementing a federal law preempting the 2016 VT GMO labeling law
- Committing to, and engaging in, relationships with local, national, and international networks, coalitions, and movements: Farm to Plate, VT Young Farmers Coalition, La Via Campesina, National Family Farm Coalition, and US Food Sovereignty Alliance
- Forging intersectional alliances with diverse groups working to increase the affordability of, and access to, healthcare; collaborating to bring scores of agricultural voices into the VT healthcare regulatory process, and into policy conversations about healthcare; lead authoring policy Briefs on healthcare (and childcare) for the VT Strategic Agricultural Plan, and presenting these briefs at the Farm to Plate Gathering; collaborating with VT Legal Aid to offer a healthcare enrollment event for farmers

- Continuing to participate in an intersectional coalition of organizations meeting to strategically reduce the use of and exposure to pesticides and toxics in VT - and putting forth legislation reforming regulations around pesticide use in VT
- Developing a partnership with the Center for Agriculture and Food Systems at Vermont Law School to conduct research on Payment for Ecosystem Services models and other ways to address the intersection of soil and environmental health, climate change, and just farm livelihoods; working with multiple groups in VT and nationally to consider potential policy options for growing soil health, environmental health, and socioeconomic equity in the working lands
- Forging a coalition with NOFA-VT, the Vermont Growers' Association, Justice For All, and Trace VT to advocate for an end to the criminalization of cannabis and a just transition to a tax and regulate system which is agriculturally, economically, and racially equitable, accessible, and reparative
- Continuing to focus on farmland access, affordability, equity, and succession through chairing the Farmland Access and Stewardship Working Group at Farm to Plate, and joining the Stop Corporate Land Grabs Working Group at the National Family Farm Coalition
- Continuing to work with the Poultry Farmers for Compost Foraging to advance the implementation of the Universal Recycling law, along with legislation that allows for the management of food residuals as a poultry forage, a composting component, and a soil enhancement without needing to obtain solid waste permits
- Further embodying our 2018 transition away from an Executive Director based organizational structure to a shared, non-hierarchical, and equitable leadership model
- Hiring Emma Paradis, our new Operations Director!
- Investing in and engaging with youth by becoming a community partner of Regeneration Corps - an initiative offering academic credit to high school students to get onto farms and learn about the intersections of regenerative agriculture, climate change, and racial justice
- Surveying our community to get insight & feedback from our grassroots
- Initiating the development of a long-term Strategic Plan to most effectively enact the change we wish to see, as well as updating our mission and vision statements to better reflect our longstanding and deeply held values of equity, inclusivity, and justice

For a more comprehensive overview of our work, please visit ruralvermont.org.