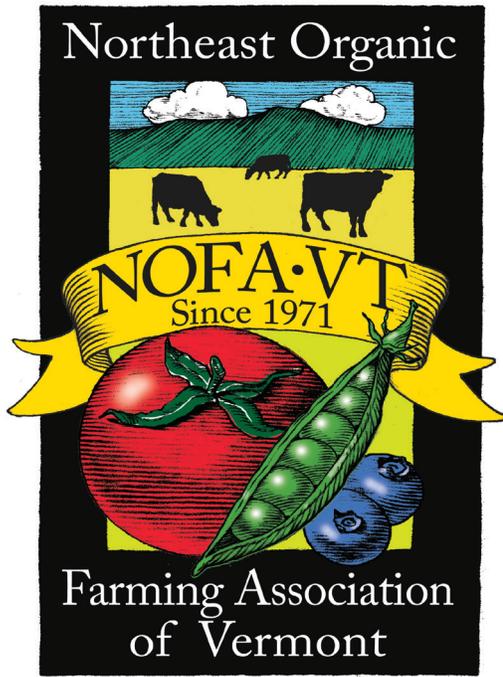


# 2013 Annual Report



## Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont



### This report highlights our program work in 2013 to:

- Increase consumer access to and demand for local and organic food;
- Help farms thrive in Vermont by providing technical assistance & farmer training opportunities, developing strong markets, and advocating for policies that support small farms; and
- Provide education about the benefits of local, organic food, and practical skills to help people meet more of their own food needs.

# Increasing Access to Local and Organic Food

## Making Locally-Grown Foods Available to All, Regardless of Income

By partnering with 43 Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farms, the **Vermont Farm Share Program** linked producers with consumers to provide subsidized shares to more than 870 low-income seniors and 490 adults and children.

On October 3, we held our annual **Share the Harvest** fundraiser with over 73 restaurants, co-ops and stores contributing a percentage of their day's sales, raising over \$15,000 for the Farm Share Program, a 15% increase over 2012.



More than half of Vermont's farmers' markets now accept 3SquaresVT (food stamps) benefits and debit cards. Most markets issue wooden tokens as market currency when these cards are used. These programs bring new customers to farmers' markets and help Vermonters of all income levels access fresh, healthy foods. Photo by Pennie Rand.

## Increasing Consumer Access at Farmers' Markets

NOFA Vermont worked with project partners to enable 4 new farmers' markets in Vermont to accept supplemental food benefits (3SquaresVT) and debit cards by providing EBT (Electronic Benefits Transfer) card readers, bringing the statewide total to 45. Increasing the capacity of farmers' markets to accept food stamps has made fresh, local food more accessible to low-income community members and increased the total sales at farmers' markets. In 2013, these card readers processed nearly \$87,000 in EBT sales, up from \$77,000 in 2012.



## Growing the Number of Certified Organic Producers in Vermont

**Vermont Organic Farmers** (VOF), LLC, the organic certification program of NOFA Vermont, was started in 1985 to help growers and consumers define what it means to produce food organically. VOF is a USDA-accredited certifying agent and certifies most of the organic farmers and processors in Vermont.



In 2013, VOF certified 585 producers on 103,893 acres of certified organic farmland, with gross sales of over \$155 million dollars; organic production continues to be one of Vermont's fastest growing agricultural sectors!

VOF supported the marketing needs of organic farmers by continuing a multi-year outreach project, including developing display materials for co-ops and natural food stores that feature the VOF logo.

We also produced a short film, *Organic Matters*, with Helen Whybrow and filmmaker Michael Sacca. The film features Vermont farmers speaking to the power and importance of organic practices on their farms and in their lives.



(Left) Mimi Arnstein is one of several organic farmers featured in our new short film, *Organic Matters*.

Watch the film at [www.nofavt.org/why-organic](http://www.nofavt.org/why-organic). Image courtesy Michael Sacca.

(Above) These posters and vinyl window decals with the VOF logo were made available to all food co-ops and natural or specialty food stores in Vermont.

**"I see organic farming as a movement with greater goals than simply providing food, which is a huge, lofty goal to begin with."**

**—Farmer Mimi Arnstein in *Organic Matters***

# Strengthening Commercial Organic Farms in Vermont



Vermont farmers visited two innovative Quebecois CSA farms during our Summer Workshop Series, including the small-scale and biointensive farm of Jean-Martin Fourtier at Les Jardins de Grelinette.

## Providing Training and Support for Commercial Farmers

Our support for farmers begins with our **Apprenticeship and Farm Worker Program**, an online directory that helps connect those looking for farming work or experience with Vermont farms looking for labor and offering educational opportunities.

Five host farms with 13 apprentices participated in NOFA-VT's **Collaborative Regional Alliance for Farmer Training (CRAFT) Apprentice** project, a regionally-based program that enriches educational opportunities for apprentices by sharing resources on neighboring farms. We accepted 5 new farms, in addition to the 5 farms entering their second year, into the **Journey Farmer Program** to help train the next generation of farmers through farmer mentors, educational activities and stipends.

Our **Dairy and Livestock Technical Assistance Program** provided production technical assistance to over 45 dairy and livestock farmers, including business planning services to 19 farms. We collaborated with organizational partners on a one-day technical conference for organic dairy producers, an economic assessment of organic dairy cost of production, and work that strengthened the value-based meat industry.

The **Vegetable and Fruit Technical Assistance Program** provided technical assistance, enterprise analysis and mentorship to a broad range of organic vegetable, grain, and fruit producers, including business planning services for 8 farms.

In 2013, we began the **Farming Beyond Borders Program** to support farmer-to-farmer exchanges between Vermont organic farmers and farmers beyond Vermont's borders. The program organized two trips to El Salvador and a day-long workshop in Quebec in 2013.

NOFA Vermont's **Revolving Loan Fund**, a program to help farmers establish credit and obtain short-term working capital, made two new loans for a total of \$28,000. Our Farmer Emergency Fund made one zero-interest loan of \$2,500 and awarded one grant of \$4,650.

## Building Direct Markets Between Farmers and Consumers

We strengthened **farmers' markets** in Vermont by providing technical assistance, professional development and on-site support to start-up and existing markets. We held five Farmers' Market Regional Roundtables, attended by over 36 market organizers, to provide networking and professional development opportunities for farmers' market organizers and managers. Additionally, we promoted markets through print and electronic directories, and through statewide promotional campaigns.

The **Vermont Farmers' Market Association (VTFMA)** created a series of three best practices documents to guide the work of Vermont farmers' markets. An online farmers' market directory is compiled annually and all members are listed on the Agriculture and Culinary Tourism Board's DigInVT.com website. The VTFMA collaborated with the EBT at Farmers' Markets working group to promote both statewide markets in general and also EBT availability at 45 of these markets. 64 markets were dues-paying members of the VTFMA, the purpose of which is to promote and strengthen farmers' markets in Vermont. NOFA Vermont serves as the umbrella organization of the VTFMA.

Held a **Direct Marketing Conference** attended by 160 farmers and market managers to provide a networking and educational opportunity for farmers who direct market through CSAs, farmers' markets, and farmstands.

**"I never have an opportunity to connect with other managers, so [the Farmer's Market Roundtable] was perfect." – Roundtable Participant**

## Advocating for Organic Agriculture

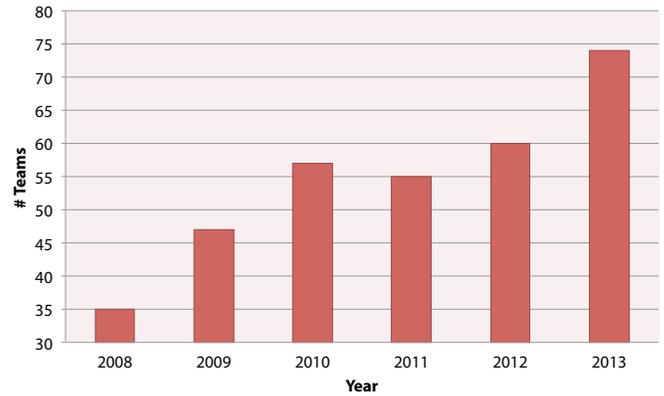
VOF and NOFA staff worked to maintain the integrity of the National Organic Program by organizing farmer responses to proposed standards, participating in national debates and meetings on organic regulations, and developing policy positions on national legislation and regulations that affect organic farmers.

In addition, we actively collaborated with national policy organizations and communicated with Vermont's congressional delegation to fashion organic provisions of the federal Farm Bill and food safety regulations. As a member of the Vermont Right to Know GMOs Coalition, we testified in legislative committees and mobilized our members to support state legislation that requires the labeling of genetically modified foods. This legislation was subsequently approved by the Vermont House of Representatives. We also provided testimony on several other bills affecting Vermont's agriculture and local foods.

# Providing Food and Farm Education to All



Growth in Jr Iron Chef Participation



**"[Jr Iron Chef] is a great opportunity for the kids. Our team loved it all, especially our practice sessions. It's a really nice alternative to sports. Thank you so much for making it happen!" – Jr Iron Chef coach**

## Vermont Food Education Every Day (VT FEED)

VT FEED works with schools and communities to raise awareness and build programs supporting healthy school food, Vermont farms, and good nutrition. Our "3-C approach" (working with Classrooms, Cafeterias, and the school Communities) serves as a catalyst for rebuilding health food systems. NOFA Vermont collaborates with Food Works at Two Rivers Center and Shelburne Farms on this statewide farm-to-school project.

### Farm to School Food Education Every Day!



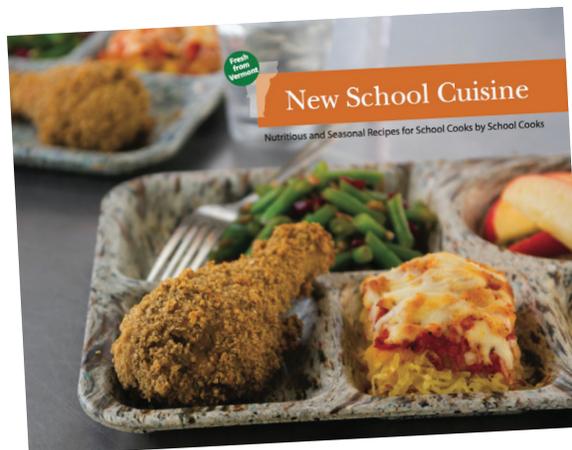
In 2013, VT FEED's on-site trainings, professional development and consultations reached more than 800 Farm to School practitioners, representing over 40 Vermont schools that serve nearly 7,000 students. In addition, during 2012-2013 we offered credit-bearing graduate-level courses to schools and communities in Barre, Chelsea, Northfield, Randolph, St. Johnsbury, and at six different schools in the Brattleboro region.

314 students from 54 schools around Vermont competed on 74 teams at the annual Jr. Iron Chef Vermont, a statewide culinary competition organized by VT FEED and the Burlington School Food Project that inspires students to create healthy, local dishes.

In 2013, in partnership with School Nutrition Association of VT, Agency of Education Child Nutrition Program, and a USDA Team Nutrition grant, we produced two new free resources for schools:

- The cookbook *New School Cuisine: Nutritious and Seasonal Recipes for School Cooks by School Cooks*, developed by Vermont school nutrition professionals with support from the New England Culinary Institute, includes 78 kid-tested and approved recipes that meet new USDA dietary guidelines and feature local, seasonal foods.
- *Serving up a School Culture of Health, Wellness, & Nutrition* is a guide for implementing practices that promote healthy eating, nutrition education and physical activity in K-6 schools.

As part of our continuing work along the Farm to Institution supply chain, we are working with institutions in 3 southern counties to identify ways for them to buy more local and regional products. We are also identifying and providing technical assistance to farmers interested in increasing their production to supply larger wholesale markets, including institutions.



*The New School Cuisine cookbook has been distributed to every public school in Vermont and to school food departments in every state in the US. It is also available to purchase or as a free download.*

*Visit [www.vtfeed.org](http://www.vtfeed.org) to view and download.*

## Farm to Community Mentors

NOFA-VT has nine mentors working in Vermont communities statewide to facilitate connections between farmers, educators, and community members. Mentors help farms and farmers become educational resources; support the viability of farmers by building awareness of and involvement in local agriculture and local food; and increase the economic, environmental, and physical health of communities by promoting an awareness of local, sustainable agriculture.



*Dexter LeFavour, who raises pigs and vegetables on his small farm in Middlesex, shares lunch and conversation with students at the Rumney School. Five farmers representing many different kinds of farming came to the school to share lunch and talk about their farms with students. Some of the farms have provided food for the school, while others host field trip visits. The students had so many questions, the time ran out for answers, and plans were made to return next year and do it again as a part of the annual November Agricultural Literacy Week observations.*

In 2013, mentors coordinated the 9th year of the **Farmer Correspondence Program** where 80 farmers wrote throughout the winter to students in 90 classrooms. Of those corresponding pairs, 21 visited each other with field trips to the farms.

Mentors also worked to develop the second annual **Vermont Agricultural Literacy Week**, the 3rd week of November. The mentors helped communities develop relevant activities, including farmers reading to students at schools and libraries, local food celebrations, and an evening community discussion with local farmers.

**“Ag Literacy is essential for Vermonters to understand and reconnect to Vermont farms and farmers.”**

**– VT Secretary of Agriculture Chuck Ross**

## Serving as an Educational Resource for Farmers, Gardeners, Homesteaders, and Eaters

Over 600 people attended our annual summer workshop series, with 26 seasonal **on-farm workshops** for beginning to advanced commercial farmers, gardeners, and homesteaders. Topics included pasture management, farm and homestead resiliency, commercial high tunnel production, and a tour of two Quebec vegetable farms.

We held our **31st Annual Winter Conference**, “Generations of Innovation,” bringing together over 1,400 organic farmers, gardeners, eaters, and educators. The 2013 conference featured over 70 workshops, roundtables and networking sessions, a keynote by Clara Coleman, and TED-style talks from four food system innovators.

**“I look forward to the conference each year; it is an opportunity to be educated and inspired while honing my skills and hobbies.” – Winter Conference Attendee**

We published **NOFA Notes**, our quarterly newsletter, full of farming and gardening information, local food resources, book reviews, opinion pieces, analysis of public policy initiatives, farm profiles, recipes, and event listings.

At 42 local fairs, festivals, and other outreach events, we served pizza and roasted roots from our **mobile wood-fired oven** to promote local, organic food and provide a unique food experience. Five summer pizza socials highlighted organic and member farms and drew an average of 50 community members.

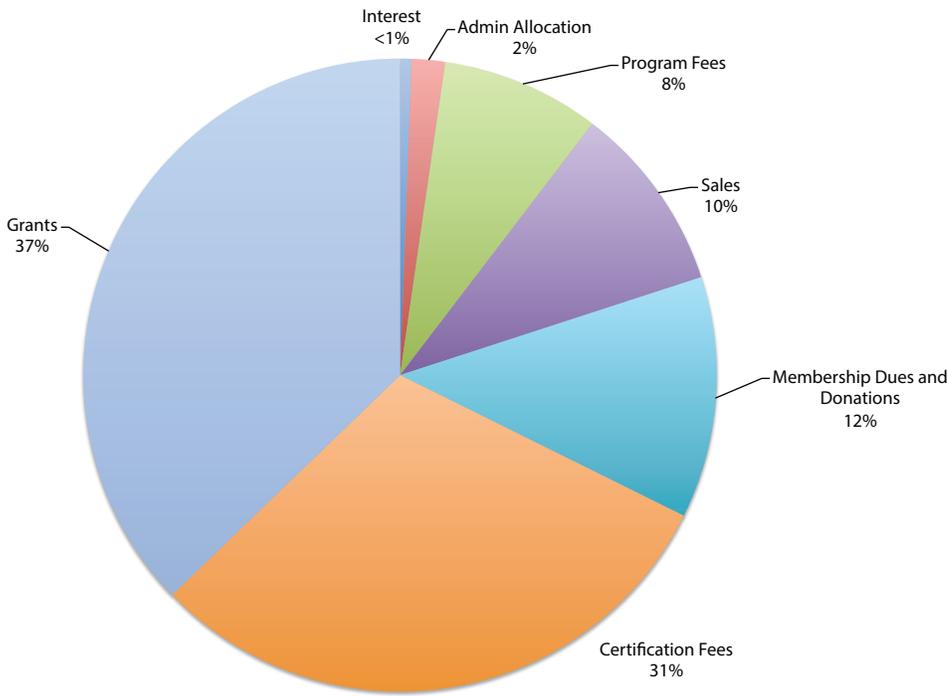
Through our **website** ([www.nofavt.org](http://www.nofavt.org)), we provided electronic resources for farmers, gardeners, and eaters. This included a directory of farmers’ markets, CSAs, and certified organic producers; technical farming and gardening advice; a farm- and food-related events listing; farm employment, land, and other classified ads; and links to other useful websites.

Over a thousand people signed up for our **E-newsletter** in 2013, bringing the total to almost 4,500 people receiving news and updates about NOFA Vermont events and the local food system each month.

In addition, we continued to increase our online presence in several ways. We launched a **blog** ([nofavt.wordpress.com](http://nofavt.wordpress.com)), giving us more flexibility in online communication and allowing us to reach a broader audience with timely and interesting information. Our presence on social media continued to expand, reaching a wider audience. In addition to *Organic Matters*, we also created and distributed a number of videos highlighting local, organic farms and relevant policy issues.

# 2013 Financial Information

## Sources of Income



## 2013 Totals

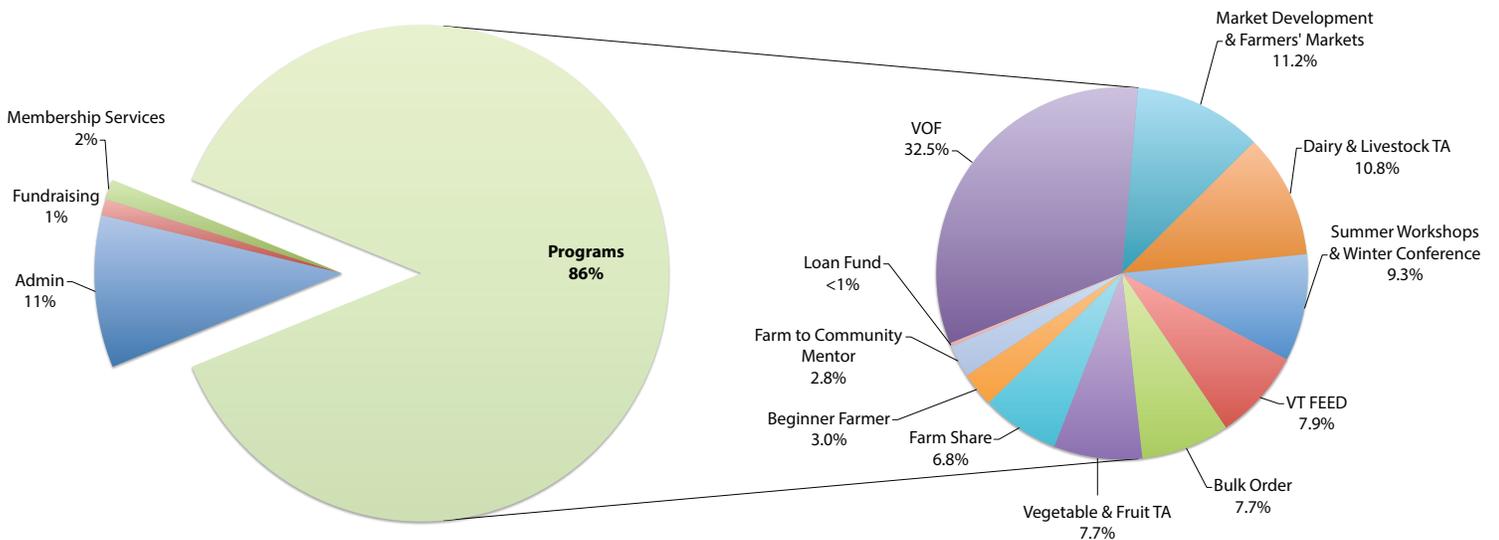
Income: \$1,717,033  
 Expenses: \$1,721,388

## Key Cash & Investments

Beginning 2013: \$2,456,205  
 Ending 2013: \$2,531,119

*These are unaudited numbers.  
 A copy of NOFA's 990 tax form is available upon request.*

## Expenses by Category



# Thank you!

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NOFA Vermont would like to thank our 1,400+ members, as well as all the individuals, businesses, and organizations who have supported us through their generous donations.

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## **We would like to acknowledge and thank the following foundations for their financial support of our programs through grants, donations, and matching contributions between January 1, 2013 and December 31, 2013.**

- Ben & Jerry's Foundation
- Castanea Foundation, Inc.
- Lintilhac Foundation
- Newman's Own Foundation
- Prudential Foundation
- The Forrest C. & Frances A. Lattner Foundation
- The Franklin Conklin Foundation
- The John Merck Fund
- The Wurster Family Foundation
- Vermont Community Foundation & Funds
  - Peter Backman and Annie Christopher Fund
  - High Meadows Fund
  - Johnson Family Foundation Fund
  - Sustainable Future Fund
  - Nouvelle Fund
- Wholesome Wave Foundation

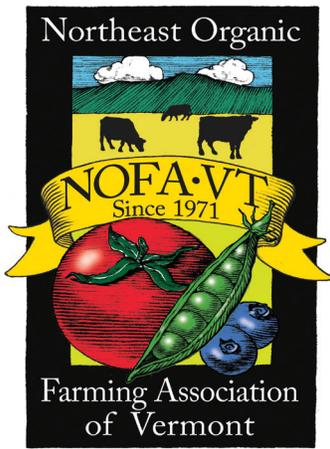
**In 2013, 152 volunteers logged a total of 562 hours helping NOFA with office tasks, garden maintenance, and Winter Conference logistics. Thanks!**



*Students and staff from a local preschool harvest and prepare a salad from the NOFA-VT garden with Abbie Nelson and our 2013 garden intern, Emily Hill. Our office garden provides salads and snacks for staff, learning opportunities for Richmond schools, and donations to the local food shelf.*

## **NOFA Vermont has been the recipient of funds for the following program grants between January 1, 2013 and December 31, 2013:**

- Franklin County Community Development Corp.
- Green Mountain Coffee Roasters, Inc.
- Organic Consumers Association
- Organic Valley/CROPP
- Shelburne Farms
- Stonyfield Farm Inc.
- USDA Agricultural Marketing Service FMPP
- USDA NE SARE
- USDA NIFA BFRDP with prime recipient NOFA NY
- USDA NIFA BFRDP with prime recipient UVM
- USDA NIFA Northeast Center for Risk Management Education
- USDA Rural Development RBEG
- UVM Center for Sustainable Agriculture, contract Grazing Education
- UVM sub award USDA Risk Management Agency
- Vermont Agency of Agriculture NEBI and USDA contracts
- Vermont Agency of Agriculture sub award USDA Specialty Crop Block Grants
- Vermont Agency of Agriculture Vermont Farmers Market Capital Improvement grant
- Vermont Agency of Agriculture Working Lands Enterprise Board grant
- Vermont Department for Children and Families
- Vermont Department of Disabilities, Aging & Independent Living sub award USDA Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program
- Vermont Department of Health
- Vermont Housing & Conservation Board, Farm Viability Enhancement Program



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## The NOFA Vermont Team



### 2013 Board Members

- Mimi Arnstein
- Jennifer Colby
- Paul Costello
- Sona Desai
- Pat Hayes
- Mara Hearst
- Debra Heleba
- Andrew Knafel
- Jack Manix
- Andrea Scott
- Ross Thurber
- Kate Turcotte

### 2013 Staff

Left to right, from top: Rose McDonough, Sam Fuller, Becca Weiss, Lynda Prim, Barbara Richardson, Gregg Stevens, Kirsten Bower, Caitlin Jenness, Caitlin Gildrien, Erin Buckwalter, Abbie Nelson, Dave Rogers, Enid Wonnacott, Laura Nunziata, Vera Simon-Nobes. Not pictured: Nicole Dehne, Libby McDonald.

### And you!

Our work would not be possible without the support of our members and donors. Together, we'll accomplish even more in 2014. Donate or become a member at [www.nofavt.org/join](http://www.nofavt.org/join) or call 802-434-4122.

*The Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont is a 501(c)(3) organization of farmers, gardeners, and consumers working to promote an economically viable and ecologically sound Vermont food system.*

*Our vision consists of small farms and agriculturally-based businesses that are thriving and improving the ecology of Vermont foodscapes, where organic farms and gardens supply local food to all members of their communities, and where everyone knows their farmers.*