

SOLID GROUND NEWSLETTER



Team Talks

Hi, I'm Saquana Seltzer. I joined the Solid Ground team in November of this past year and am excited to work alongside everyone to launch our **new course** called "**The Business of Farming**." This is a seven-week course which begins on January 19th and will end on March 1st. The course is designed for beginning farmers with 0 - 3 years' experience farming. This unique cohort will connect farmers with information about crafting a business plan, implementing/ forecasting financial projections, marketing, and so many other necessary skills for a farm to succeed as a business.

I look forward to sharing my corporate and compliance management expertise as the Project Coordinator for this course. Our goal is to advance farmers with key insights and lasting business acumen to establish their journey of being a productive farmer.

This Month

- Team Talks- Meet Saquana
- January Farm Tasks: Crop Planning
- [Upcoming events](#)
- [Grants Open](#)
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When to Start

Though it's hard to change gears from the outdoors work of the growing season, Crop Planning should really begin before you order any seeds. Of course, you can make a wish list of all the seeds you'd like from the seed catalogs, but if you end up ordering seeds before your crop plan, you 1) may have more seeds than you need, and 2) may end up over-working yourself to keep up with planting dates!

A little more about me: I am also a farmer! My farm, High Silo Farm in New Hartford, raises heritage breed pigs, goats, ducks and turkeys. This Spring, we are starting our initial market garden of certified organic/heirloom fruits, vegetables, herbs and microgreens.

I am very excited to be a part of the Solid Ground team and to launch this new Business of Farming Course. Though the deadline to join has past, we'll be excited to welcome you at this class in the future as it is added to our yearly content. I hope to connect with you either at our upcoming Business of Farming Course or at one of our future events or outings!

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Upcoming Events

Farmer 2 Farmer Conference:
Jan. 27th, Meriden Public Library- 10:30AM to 5PM

Small Engine Maintenance & Repair: 2-Stroke: Feb 1st & 8th, Middletown High School, 5:30PM to 8:30PM

Advance Welding Using Metal Inert Gas Methods: Feb. 3rd, Rockville High School, Vernon- 9AM to 3PM (FULL-WAITLIST AVAILABLE)

Solid Ground Farm Manager Summit: Feb. 13, Chrysalis Center, Hartford- 9:00AM- 3:00PM

Small Engine Maintenance & Repairs: 4-Stroke: Feb, 29 & Mar. 7th, Middletown High School- 5:30 pm to 8:30 PM

To help yourself prepare, it's always good to look over the past season and assess which crops did really well for you. Those are ones that you want to definitely include in your next growing season. Perhaps some only did okay or you want to include new varieties. This is a great opportunity to compare notes with other farmers through something like the Annual Seed Variety discussion that New CT Farmers Alliance does every year. Unfortunately, it has already passed, but you can [find the recording here](#). And obviously, if something didn't perform well, despite your best efforts and attention, it's probably best to nix it from this year's growing calendar.

How to Build a Crop Plan

There are lots of different ways you can build out a crop plan. From creating spreadsheets from scratch and tracking all the tasks throughout the months, or by utilizing one of many apps and programs available online. The key is to have planting (direct seed or transplant) on the calendar and see if you're capable of seeding the varieties that you have chosen. Obviously, there will always be wiggle room, and the Crop Plan never gets followed to a "T" but it should provide guidance so that you don't get overwhelmed by the spring tasks and you can estimate your time.

Some helpful tools that are currently free to use is the [Seedtime app](#), [a calculator from Johnny's](#), and a google spreadsheet template from [Kat the Farmer](#), and more you can find with a quick google search. You can edit these to include your crops and adjust it to fit your needs, do succession planting, etc. There are many levels of things to try if you're overwhelmed by spreadsheets!

And if you're looking to get an overall view of when you should be timing things, our friends over at the IPM program (UConn Extension) have put together the below pdf which should guide you on general tasks and planting times for your crop planning (click on the photo for the pdf!)



Connecticut Vegetable Crop Calendar

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Disclaimer: This guide is for educational purposes only to assist growers in making planting decisions. We cannot guarantee exact planting or harvesting dates, as there are a multitude of variables that shift year-to-year. Recommendations are generalized and made with the best available knowledge at the time of publishing.

Upcoming:

Partner Events

Learn to Repair Your Farm

Equipment: Jan 29, United Ag & Turf, Windsor- 8:30AM to 10AM

Business Planning and Financial

Benchmarking: Feb. 6, Tolland County Ext. Center- 9AM to 2PM

The Venture Farming Institute for

Farmers of Color: Application Due Feb 6, Virtual and in person

Farmer Veterans: Go-To Market

Strategy: Approaching Stores, Markets & Restaurants
February 8, Virtual-6PM to 7PM

Farmer Veterans: Website

Makeover: Improving Your Website
February 15, Virtual-| 6PM to 7PM

NCTFA Town Hall with Dept of Ag:

Feb 15, Virtual- 6:30PM to 8PM

Options to Mitigate Farm Financial

Losses: Feb. 26th, Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation Museum- 1PM to 4PM

2024 Urban Farmer Training

Program: Starting March 5- Virtual Tuesday evenings from 6:30 -8:30

2024 FSMA Produce Safety Alliance

Grower Training Course: Mar 6 & 7, Middlesex County Extension Center

CT Compost Conference:

March 14th, Connecticut College, New London- All Day Event

CT NOFA Winter Conference:

Mar. 23rd, Eastern Connecticut State University- 8 AM to 8PM

Grants Open Now

CT Dept of Ag Farmland

Restoration, Climate Resiliency & Preparedness Grant- DUE JAN 31ST

Dairy Promotion Grants for

Farmers- DUE FEB 2ND

Farmer Veteran Fellowship Fund-

DUE FEB 14TH

Dairy Food Safety & Certification

Grant- DUE FEB 22

Solid Ground Online

You've already heard about our NEW Business of Farming Class that has already started, but did you know that we have some other great classes that we run online? These classes run asynchronously so you can fit them in with your schedule!

Starting Jan 31st- **CT Soils and Soil Health Course:** 10 online modules led by Kip Kolesinskas covering soil health, assessing farmland, conservation practices, etc. Sign up online by Jan 30th
Cost: \$60 with \$30 refund at completion of course

Starting Jan 31st- **Climate Smart Adaptation Strategies for Beginning Farmers:** Complete 10 of 12 online asynchronous modules designed for farmers in years 0-3. Learn to adapt climate smart agricultural practices from experts in different fields so that you can be prepared for the changing climate we are all farming in! Sign up by Jan 30.



Video Highlight

Farmers have a never-ending list of projects. One of the ways we want to help you with those is through our DIY video series on our website and youtube. This month, we're highlighting our first project in the series- Coolers built using the Cool-bot system. Each video shows a different way that a space can be used for a cooler and all of them are fitted with AC units that utilize the cool-bot system to help store crops. Give them a look if you're planning on building one during the off-season

View the series here





Partner Highlight

The CT NOFA farm share program is now open for farmers interested in participating for the 2024 season! How it works is CT NOFA provides funds for up to 50% of predetermined farm shares during the summer season, paid directly to you. This makes farm shares accessible to folks in need of financial assistance, while making sure farmers are fully paid.

Eligible Farm Share program recipients pay up to 50% of the total farm share cost upon program acceptance. Payment is made directly to the farm.

If you become a participating farm, you are asked to commit to at least one or two fundraising practices to support a portion of the share cost. We provide farms a custom fundraising link to promote on your website and through social media.

- To sum up Farm Responsibilities:
- Promote the program
- Fundraise
- Communicate with CT NOFA:
- Collect share payment



Find out more here 

See you next month!

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



PLANNING TO HIRE, LEADING A FARM CREW, AND PAYING FOR IT!

WHY:
FARM SUCCESS OFTEN DEPENDS ON EFFECTIVE FARM MANAGERS WHO CAN HIRE AND RETAIN GOOD EMPLOYEES

WHEN:
TUESDAY FEBRUARY 13, 2024
9:00 AM - 3:00 PM

WHERE:
CHRYSALIS CENTER
255 HOMESTEAD AVENUE, HARTFORD

COST:
\$40 PER PERSON
\$25 FOR ADDITIONAL FARM CREW MEMEBERS
LUNCH WILL BE PROVIDED

REGISTER HERE

THE DAY INCLUDES:

- KEYNOTE SPEAKER**
- BREAK-OUT SESSIONS (11)**
 - FARM FINANCIALS**
 - LABOR MANAGEMENT**
- CT FARMER PANEL**



In partnership with:



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