The Plan Ahead

By Jake Claro, Farm to Plate Director

A lot has happened in the past year, a lot is in motion, and a lot is planned that sets the stage for the next 10 years of Farm to Plate.

Back in May, the Governor signed Act 23: An act relating to the Farm-to-Plate Investment Program. Act 23 updated the original Farm to Plate enabling legislation. Here are notable changes made to the original enabling legislation:

• The bill now uses the term “sustainable economic development”, and the two economic development outcomes have been consolidated into one;
• An outcome to improving soils, water, and resiliency of the working landscape in the face of climate change was added;
• The food access outcome now officially includes the language “…for all Vermonters.” The original bill simply stated, “Improve access to healthy local foods” and now it states, “Improve access to healthy local foods for all Vermonters.”
• Small changes throughout better reflect current conditions and terminology – e.g., the adoption of food system development rather than agricultural economic development, inclusion of helping develop markets of all types in and out of state, etc.
• The bill includes a sunset clause that requires VSJF to report to the General Assembly on or before January 1, 2031 regarding whether the Farm to Plate Investment Program should continue to operate as authorized by statute or whether the Program should be repealed.

Time for an Update to the Plan

In reauthorizing Farm to Plate, the natural question arose – what happens to the original Farm to Plate Strategic Plan? In our engagement in the lead up to reauthorization with leadership, Network members, and food system stakeholders, the Farm to Plate team saw that a renewed plan for the next 10 years was needed to reestablish a common vision and agenda with updated and prioritized actions steps and strategies.

Before the dust had fully settled on reauthorization and developing a plan for updating the Farm to Plate Strategic Plan, parallel legislative activity – in the form Senate Bill S.160 (Act 83) – created the beginning contours of the plan update process. Act 83: An act relating to agricultural development was born out of the legislatures desire to have policy recommendations for the 2020 session to help stabilize, diversify, and revitalize Vermont’s agricultural industry. Act 83, signed into law in June, includes a stipulation to submit a report of recommendations by January 15, 2020 to the Senate Committee on Agriculture, and the House Committee on Agriculture and Forestry, that includes a summary of “current conditions within particular subsectors, product categories, and market channels that comprise the Vermont food system, including the most recent data synthesis, research, reports, and expert documentation of challenges and opportunities for diversification and growth”.

The report requirements of S.160, in being aligned with the statutory language of the Farm to Plate Investment Programs tasks for creating and periodically updating a strategic plan, made fulfilling S.160 requirements a logical starting point for the beginning stages of the plan update process for Farm to Plate. In other words, in writing the Act 83 report, we are also beginning to write the next Farm to Plate Strategic Plan.

Starting this summer in July, VAAFM, in partnership with Farm to Plate, began working with food system subject matter experts to write 24 “issue briefs” spanning product areas (e.g., produce, grass-fed beef, dairy, hemp/CBD), market channels (e.g., institutions, direct markets, retail), and issue areas (e.g., climate change, access to capital, land access, soil health and water quality). These 2-4 page briefs cover current conditions, bottlenecks and gaps, opportunities, and finish with recommendations.

We also hired Becka Warren part-time to serve as project manager and she has been doing an incredible job guiding the process for us. As of the Gathering we have received the Brief back from all the authors and the Farm to Plate team will begin the work of final editing and layout in preparation for delivery to the Legislature in January.

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The Plan Ahead

The 2020 Update Process Cont. from Page 1

A huge thank you goes out to all of the brief authors and their contributors - it has been a monumental task to put together such a high level of quality content and strategic thinking in what has been a very tight timeframe, and speaks both to the passion and collective expertise and wisdom present in our state on food system issues. Suffice it to say, we are very excited about these briefs and their value to us all over the coming years.

The first phase of briefs will both fulfill the legislative requirements of S.160, and serve as the beginning foundation of the next Farm to Plate Strategic Plan. A second phase of brief development is now in the works addressing product areas and issues that could not be covered in the first phase timeline, with an aim to complete them by mid-April 2020. With a full stack of phase one and phase two briefs in hand, Farm to Plate will then launch a stakeholder engagement process from Spring 2020 to Summer 2020 to further refine and prioritize strategies and recommendations, and develop a shared vision for the Farm to Plate 2.0 Strategic Plan. A list of high priority recommendations identified through the stakeholder process will be completed by September 2020, with results shared at the 2020 F2P Gathering.

The final synthesized report, with high priority strategies, recommendations, and vision statement, will be delivered to the legislature in January of 2021 to officially commence the next 10-year cycle of Farm to Plate. Keep an eye out in January 2020 for the first phase of briefs, stay tuned for more updates, and be prepared to engage next spring and summer as together we develop a new shared vision and plan for Vermont’s food system. Thanks for all you do!
Production & Processing

Two years ago, the Production and Processing Working Group changed the focus of its meetings from high level discussions that impacted all of agriculture to conversations about challenges and opportunities for specific commodities. These more sharply defined meetings have allowed for shared conversations with producers, technical assistance providers, and funders to look at opportunities that will increase the viability and profitability of Vermont farms.

Examples include:

Helping to establish the Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship (DGA) Program in Vermont, which was first established in Wisconsin in 2010. Its focus is on having a formalized training program for the next generation of dairy farmers in grass-based, managed grazing settings and is registered with the U.S. Department of Labor as an official apprenticeship program. Apprentices work for 4,000 hours over two years with their master grazing mentor and through online classwork and networking opportunities. At the end of the apprenticeship, graduates have the knowledge and experience base to start their own operations if they choose to do so. Last year, Mary Ellen Franklin was hired as a part time coordinator for the DGA program in Vermont. She is working under the auspices of the Center for Sustainable Agriculture to sign up master graziers in Vermont and to assist in linking up young or new farmers with those who wish to mentor.

A meeting with a group of beef producers introduced Production and Processing to Ranching for Profit (RFP). This program, in existence for 35 years, focuses on the health and productivity of the land and the financial profitability of meat operations. Leaders from this program came to Vermont this past year for the first time to lead an intensive week long course. The first Vermont cohort graduated from this program and a number are continuing to pursue this connection through RFP’s graduate support programs. The cohort also received small grants for infrastructure, grazing, and marketing assistance to accelerate learnings from the RFP school and improve overall profitability of their businesses.

The demand for locally produced grain continues to increase in Vermont. Brewers, distillers, mills, and bakeries are all showing interest in buying grain from local farms. In the past year, a small group has met with a number of possible end users as well as a grain center in Quebec to understand the demand and potential infrastructure needs for increased grain production in Vermont. A market feasibility study for grain markets is underway this fall and the results will dictate next steps in pursuing this opportunity for Vermont farms.

Recent Production and Processing meetings have focused on challenges for vegetable growers and those choosing to grow hemp. These meetings drew a large stakeholder group and these topics and other commodity discussions will drive meeting activity for the rest of 2019.

It is difficult to find a solution that works well for all Vermont farms. However, by finding opportunities that benefit some farms we are slowly able to move the viability and profitability of our farm community in a more healthy direction. - Regina Beidler, Group Chair

The Farm Viability Indicators Task Force is committed to executing and communicating financial analysis projects that describe valuable benchmarks for agricultural sectors in Vermont. The task force meets to coordinate rigorous and transparent project methods and to identify priority target sectors. Our goal is to provide resources that assist current producers, prospective producers and food system planners. The projects seek to identify and measure the costs, market dynamics, scaling decisions and profitability of farming models. Recent and ongoing projects include: Maple Benchmark (UVM Extension Maple Reports), Grass-Based Beef Economics (Intervale Center Grass Based Beef), Produce Cost of Production (NOFA VT: Cost of Production), Value Added Processing (Center for Ag Economies), Organic Dairy Cost of Production (NOFA-VT/UVM), and Grass-Based Milk Financials (UVM). - Mark Cannella, Group Chair

2019 Ranching for Profit Cohort

The cows head out at Meeting Place Pastures
Farmland Access & Stewardship

In 2019 the Farmland Access and Stewardship Working Group has had two meetings. At our Winter meeting we focused on solar siting in relationship to agricultural land, and land planning in Vermont, and regionally. This meeting included 5 different presenters on this topic - all with different aspects of the issue to discuss: from State and county process development, to regional comparisons of solar siting regulations, to pilot projects exploring grazing and forage growth in solar fields. This meeting also included time for group members in the land access community to discuss how models of, and structures for, land access and tenure are evolving - and for organizations to bring forward questions or comments they have, or which they may have heard from their members.

Our summer meeting was a combination of discussion of the Exploration of the Future of Vermont Agriculture report, and a number of presentations and conversation focusing on agroforestry. Agroforestry practices and enterprises present opportunities for farms of all scales in Vermont and regionally, including: product diversification, water quality improvement, flood and drought resiliency and mitigation, biological diversity, climate change adaptation, increased milk and meat production through shade and nutrient rich forage materials, etc. Our different presenters brought us stories, information, and questions about projects, methods, and opportunities locally, regionally, and globally. We anticipate one more meeting this year - likely in early December. Looking towards 2020, the Working Group is considering structural changes as the Farm to Plate Network transitions into its second decade.

- Graham Unangst-Rufenacht, Group Chair

Aggregation & Distribution

The Aggregation and Distribution Working Group’s primary focus has been on Independent Grocers, and a Wholesale Study Report with NOFA-VT and Rose Wilson. The Wholesale Study included a producer focus group, interviews with distributors and buyers, information from industry events, input collected from Working Group members, and regular advisory group calls throughout the year. The final report will be available November 2019, with a presentation at a breakout session at the Annual Gathering. A set of recommendations will be informative for the next steps of the working group and the Network as a whole.

We are rapidly shifting wholesale distribution, especially how it impacts producers and their business planning, and the relationship with the high cost of transportation, especially throughout rural Vermont. The Vermont Food Hub Collaborative is also looking at how to support more Vermont producers by increasing marketing of Vermont food. The Food Hub Collaborative can help with rural transportation issues by getting more product on everyone’s vehicles.

We are continuing support to independent retailers to make local food a bigger part of what they do, improving distributor relationships, and helping producers better understand the retail marketplace through trainings and events. The group is also putting a lot of attention to market development through domestic export as well as bigger picture support of marketing efforts. We are looking at the Taste the Local Difference marketing model based in Michigan. Partnership with the Consumer Education and Marketing Working Group and others is important to moving market development forward, and poses important questions as to how the Network is structured to effectively deal with market development efforts.

- Richard Berkfield & Theresa Snow, Group Chairs

Consumer Education & Marketing

The Consumer Education and Marketing Working Group contains the Agritourism Task Force, Rooted in Vermont Campaign, and the Vermont Food Systems Communicators and Marketers Community of Practice. These three sub-groups are robust, engaging Task Force members throughout the year. The Working Group as a whole is reorienting toward future projects. In particular, the Group focused 2019 on how to respond from a consumer education angle to the call to action presented in the Future of Agriculture report. Two full Working Group meetings were held in 2019, one held jointly with the Aggregation and Distribution Working Group looking at the intersection of wholesale market development trends and how consumer education and marketing efforts can address and complement wholesale market development challenges and initiatives. Join us in 2020 as we continue to plan actions related to the Future of Agriculture report and marketing challenges faced by our farm and food businesses.

- Becca Warren & Jean Hamilton, Group Chairs
Consumer Education & Marketing cont.

Rooted in Vermont

With the goal of creating more consumer demand for local food, Rooted in Vermont has continued to reach Vermonters in all corners of the state as it celebrates all of the great ways that folks are doing local food in their own unique ways. Whether it’s sharing gardening tips and favorite recipes with Vermonters at state fairs and festivals, chatting about hunting and fishing at events with the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife, exploring food found in Vermonters’ backyards with the Vermont Department of Libraries, or celebrating favorite farms, farm stands, and farmers’ markets with Vermont Open Farm Week, a lot of Rooted in Vermont’s work has been made possible because of our partnerships with Vermont Farm to Plate Network organizations and Vermont governmental agencies.

This past year, Rooted in Vermont had a presence at 15 different fairs, festivals, and town celebrations. From St. Johnsbury to Brattleboro to Hartland to Bristol, the different events had more than 7,000 visitors. Visitors to the Rooted in Vermont tent were able to jump behind the Rooted in Vermont photo booth with their kids and friends, share stories about their garden and favorite recipes, and participate in grassroots actions. Rooted in Vermont was also part of the team that helped to organize Vermont Open Farm Week. Over 70 events were held in August where farms opened their barn doors and gates to give hundreds of Vermonters the chance to meet some of the producers, plants, and animals that make their favorite foods possible.

In addition, Rooted in Vermont also partnered up with the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Vermont Department of Libraries to bring a host of events celebrating local food to communities all over. The Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife and Rooted in Vermont banned together to bring, “Field to Fork: Wild Food Cooking Seminar,” to Barre, Middlebury, and Burlington. The seminars brought together dozens of hunters, anglers, and locavores to learn basic skills such as processing and frying fresh water fish to making bear sausage to frying squirrel legs to slow roasting wild turkey legs and more!

Finally, in partnership with the Vermont Department of Libraries, over 20 Vermont community libraries held 25 events centered around the theme of “Exploring Food in Your Backyard.” Ranging from talks with Vermont game wardens to edible plant walks to pot lucks and harvest bingos, the libraries brought together communities around something that is integral in everyone’s life – food!

- Shane Rogers, Rooted in Vermont Project Manager

Communications and Marketing Community of Practice is a task force of the Consumer Education and Marketing Group. We are a social networking page on Facebook. Latest discussions include reaction to an article on state-by-state local food branding (spoiler alert: what’s so special about Colorado?!), social media demographic infographics, recommendations for a local web contractor, workshops and events. The page has 213 members and we’d like to grow to 250 in the next year. We would also like to better plug in to the work of all Vermont Farm to Plate network groups, and establish connections with other existing Vermont communications/marketing forums (email Vicky at vtebbetts@gmail.com if you have any suggestions). Our group name is “Vermont Food System Communicators and Marketers” - Find us on Facebook and invite your friends! - Vicky Tebbetts, Group Chair

Agritourism Task Force: The Agritourism Task Force held a strategic planning retreat in October 2018, where 20 attendees, including farmers, tourism professionals and agricultural service providers, discussed challenges and goals for agritourism in Vermont. That discussion, combined with feedback from a deep dive session on Food Tourism at the November 2018 Farm to Plate Gathering, was used to develop a visioning document and the 2019 work plan. Priorities for the task force for the next five years include technical support and trainings for farms with a focus on marketing, development of regional networks, and tools for understanding the regulatory environment. The need for metrics was also emphasized, along with infographics that illustrate the size, scope, and importance of agritourism in Vermont.

In 2019, the task force met in March at King Arthur Flour in Norwich and in June at Philo Ridge Farm in Charlotte. We practice what we preach by hosting task force meetings at farms and culinary destinations around the state and include a tour of the facility on the agenda. This allows task force members the opportunity to visit new places and learn from farmers and staff.

Planning is underway for a December 2019 meeting.

Vermont Open Farm Week (OFW) is a weeklong celebration of farms and farmers market that takes place in August. In 2019, the fifth year of Open Farm Week, 40 farms participated with a variety of events from farm dinners to craft workshops to pasture walks and more. Half of the participants responded to an online evaluation. When asked how OFW was beneficial, 95 percent of respondents selected “Very Helpful” or “Helpful” for at least one benefit. Specifically, 94% reported OFW was helpful for attracting new customers/visitors; 71% said it was helpful for increasing sales; 53% said it was helpful for increasing profits; 89% said it was helpful for building or strengthening relationships that support the farm; 75% said it was helpful for gaining experience for themselves and their staff; and 95% reported that it was helpful for educating customers/visitors about farms and food. Based on feedback from the survey, we are planning the sixth Vermont Open Farm Week to be held in August 2020.

The task force is also working on resources and tools to support farms and other businesses related to agritourism, including an updated best practices guides, and exploring the best channels and methods to reach farmers who might need this information. Planning is underway for the International Workshop on Agritourism in Burlington in October 2020. The task force intends to use this conference as a launch pad for enhancing global and regional markets for Vermont’s farm products and experiences, which is the topic of a deep dive session that the task force will lead at the 2019 Farm to Plate Gathering.

- Tara Pereira and Lisa Chase, Group Chairs
The Education and Workforce Development Working Group and its regional WEB Task Forces will be focused on promoting attendance at the 12 Workforce Summits that will be taking place around the state from October through November. These summits are sponsored by the 12 Rural Development Councils (RDCs) under the auspices of the Department of Labor. If we want agriculture and the rest of the food system in this state to have a place at the table it is imperative that we are well represented in the broader workforce conversation.

In early 2019, Career Profiles and Pathways Task Force of the Working group released the “Exploring Food Systems Careers” guidebook, a new resource which digs into the wide range of jobs within our food system and where to acquire the necessary skills. The guidebook shows that not only is farming a great career option, but there are also many ways for other interests and skills to be put to use in strengthening our food system, even in jobs not always associated with food and farming.

“Exploring Food System Careers” includes occupational titles and descriptions, wage and job opening data, and potential next steps towards each career, including associate’s and bachelor’s degrees as well as certificate programs and continuing education.

The Working Group has also begun exploring the potential to organize a Governor’s Institute style “camp” for teens next summer that would be covering agriculture as a potential career path. The intent is that the Robtoy Farm in Jeffersonville, which is the lab farm for Green Mountain Technology and Career Center (GMTCC), would be the venue with classrooms/dorms/food service at NVU - Johnson being utilized as well.

There are a number of efforts being organized to offer apprenticeships in food system businesses including the Dairy Grazing Apprenticeship, recently launched in Vermont, and work from outside the state to develop a program for organic vegetables. The Working Group will be supporting their further development and will be looking to help get them launched statewide.

- John Mandeville & Liz Ruffa, Group Chairs

Cross-Cutting Teams (CCT)

Health

The Health Cross-Cutting Team (HCCT) recently completed a statewide inventory of programs that support food security with a focus on programs that are affiliated with healthcare settings. The group also contributed to Vermont’s 5-year State Health Improvement Plan (SHIP), a project led by the Health Department, developing strategies around food as medicine to be included as part of the plan.

The HCCT has since created a plan for group members to work towards implementing the strategies in the SHIP. This has been incorporated into the HCCT 2020 workplan.

The focus of the 2020 meetings will be to learn more about specific linkages between healthcare and Farm to Plate priorities, including providing local foods to the community. We are planning two learning opportunities on 1) food pantries in healthcare settings and 2) on how health systems work (with information from BiState, OneCare, and insurers) and what levers and arguments can be used to increase healthcare system support of local food access.

Specific projects under consideration include developing a toolkit on starting a produce prescription program and supporting existing programs to gather health metric data, among other ideas. The information gleaned from these conversations and tools created by these projects will in turn be used to advance the goal from the SHIP of building support in the healthcare system for food as medicine.

With four years under our belt as a cross cutting team, members have coalesced around key synergies between the healthcare system and farm to plate priorities.

- Ashwinee Kulkarni & Jane Kolodinsky, Group Chairs

Research

The Research Cross-Cutting Team operates differently from other Network groups, in that we respond to requests generated by other Cross Cutting Teams and Working Groups. We would like to encourage other Network groups to utilize the opportunity to post research questions on the FSRC (Food System Research Collaborative) list, operated out of UVM. At the same time, we are looking to engage people who work with students at different colleges and universities around the state to connect them with the Farm to Plate Network.

- Molly Anderson & Alison Nihart, Group Chairs

Finance

The Financing Cross-Cutting Team is in post-production on a webinar focused on Advisory Boards for the audience of farm and food entrepreneurs. On February 6, 2019, the Cross-Cutting Team hosted a convening focused on Farm Transfers: Financing Sticking Points & Solutions. Follow-up and next steps are underway, including a session at the 2019 Farm to Plate Gathering, entitled It’s Never Too Early: Sowing seeds for a sustainable future via succession planning and expanded access to affordable land.

Takeaways from the Farm Transfers Convening address topics like: Assumptions of Farm Seekers & Early Stage Farmers about Land Ownership, Strategies to Identify and Reach Markets, Business Assistance When Navigating Land Access and Transfer Transactions, Where Flexible Capital Could Help Catalyze Farm Transitions, and Payment for Ecosystem Services. Here’s a quote from the Advisory Boards Webinar that was shared by John Hamilton, Vice President of Economic Opportunity at New Hampshire Community Loan Fund: “What I hear often from entrepreneurs that end up proceeding with an Advisory Board is regret that they didn’t do it earlier.”

- Eric DeLuca, Group Chair

Slow Money Vermont, a task force of the Financing CCT, is taking a break from our annual Entrepreneur Showcase in 2019 to focus on creating deeper connections with food system entrepreneurs. In October we plan to unveil our first website, www.SlowMoneyVermont.com with information, resources, and events. We’re also introducing a new program to give entrepreneurs direct access to our Organizing Team members for mentoring and advice on how to raise capital in Vermont.

- Janice Shade, Group Chair
Cross Cutting Teams

Food Access

The Food Access Cross Cutting-Team has spent much of the last two years moving a number of projects forward, with some strategic dialogue sprinkled in throughout the year in response to CCT members' interest. Members of the group have finalized Approaches Towards Food Access, a self-assessment tool and resource guide that helps organizations identify and reflect on the different ways that they are working to address food access. The goal is for this toolkit to encourage organizations to name the ways they are doing work and identify opportunities for new strategies or partnerships they may not have otherwise considered. There will be a workshop on the toolkit at the 2019 Network Gathering, and the subcommittee will also continue efforts to disseminate this toolkit into 2020.

The CCT, along with other Network Working Groups, hosted a training on engaging key stakeholders in early October. The decision to host a network-wide professional development opportunity was the result of learning and discussion over the last 18 months about how the Network and its members can better engage with communities not often engaged in this work, including farmers and individuals who have experienced food insecurity.

As we wrap up our time as chairs of the CCT, we also are wrapping up the projects that have been our focus over the last two years. While some work on the projects will continue in 2020, the group will need to discuss what priorities come next. Given that it will also be the last year of Farm to Plate 1.0, they may be difficult — or very easy — to identify.

While we have many longtime members of the CCT, and new people join often, there remains value in actively recruiting additional people to join the CCT. The leadership transition, space for new discussions and projects, as well as the dialogue around Farm to Plate 2.0 can help bring new energy and faces to the work.

- Faye Mack & Erin Buckwalter, Group Chairs

Food Security Planning Resources Task Force

The Food Security Planning Resources Task Force has developed Local Planning for Food Access: A Toolkit for Vermont’s Communities, which will help community members and those involved in municipal planning work to address food access in their municipal or regional plan. The Task Force has a diverse membership with experts in food access and municipal and regional planning actively engaged. Engaging people who have not traditionally participated in Farm to Plate has been one of the keys to our success and has helped ensure the toolkit will be useful to people outside of the Network. The toolkit was released in November and the Task Force will re-set and develop a plan for dissemination in 2020. This will serve as Part II of the project, and we plan to put equal effort into dissemination as we did in developing the toolkit. The goal is to make sure the planning community is aware of this resource and to also identify and support a few communities in using this toolkit and serve as case studies for other communities.

- Faye Mack, Group Chair

Food Cycle Coalition

The Food Cycle Coalition (FCC) has been working on a number of projects, including developing a toolkit to support on-farm food scrap composting at a volume below the solid waste facility permitting threshold; sponsoring the inclusion of several organic waste management employees in an oral history collection for the Library of Congress; and presenting a panel on food recovery at the annual Hunger Action Conference.

The FCC has also been working on developing a new website (https://vtfoodcycle.com/), that includes and builds on the resources from the Highfields Center for Composting. We have been adding organics diversion resources related to source reduction, food rescue, feed for animals, and anaerobic digestion. The goal is for this website to serve as resource hub for people interested in learning more about how they can turn food scraps that would otherwise be wasted into a valuable resource that supports our communities and local food system.

We have also been following the issues around utilizing food scraps as part of an integrated compost foraging system for poultry as an agricultural practice, and the (2019) advent of exporting organics to Maine to the AgriCycle facility. Both of these issues are challenging the values articulated in the Universal Recycling Law (URL) and are impacting the State’s capacity for meeting the stated organics diversion goals. The FCC is providing a platform to bring stakeholders together on these issues with the goal of identifying constructive ideas for moving forward that support our collective capacity for diverting organics as well as integrated farming practices. As we approach the full rollout of the URL in 2020, providing a platform to help people understand the intricacies of the issues and find constructive ways forward will be an important role for the FCC.

Next year we’ll be looking to the FCC members for creative next steps around implementation of the organics hierarchy in the URL. There is also interest in convening a meeting to learn more about issues around food packaging and its implications, and continuing the conversations around food access.

- Natasha Duarte, Group Chair

The On-Farm Composting Task Force formed in 2019 to support farmers in accepting and managing food scraps for optimal soil health while staying beneath the Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) regulatory threshold that defines a solid waste facility. Based on the needs identified by interviewing a variety of farms either currently involved in on-farm community-scale composting or interested in becoming so, the Task Force is now compiling new and existing materials into a resource for farmers to be released in early 2020. This resource will include clarification of regulations, sample budgets, an overview of compost systems at various scales, challenges and opportunities, and materials for advertising to, and educating community members. This fall we are assisting with crowdfunding campaigns in Hartford for two businesses working together to close the loop within their community: Sunrise Farm, and Willow Tree Community Compost.

- Cat Buxton, Group Chair
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