Burlington, VT – The University of Vermont and Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont are pleased to announce they have been awarded a Working Lands Enterprise Grant award to support and expand profitable, environmentally beneficial, and well-managed pork production in Vermont.

Vermont’s swine industry has been growing as consumer demand for locally raised pork and specialty products have increased, in some estimates it has grown as much as 900% in the past three years. According to the USDA Ag Census, the number of Vermont farms raising pigs has doubled within the past five years, and the number of total animals has increased by 43%.

This partnership between UVM Extension, the UVM Center for Sustainable Agriculture and NOFA-VT will create greater connection between experienced and new swine producers at all sizes and stages of growth; offer educational opportunities for producers to learn more about swine nutrition, health, housing, and value-added products; and develop further tools and options to aid the success of future expansion.

“Consumers in Vermont and throughout the region want to buy locally produced, humanely raised Vermont pork. We’re excited to help meet this well-demonstrated demand by working with farmers to increase their production of swine in ways that protect soil and water quality, are humane to the animals, and help assure a fair price to farmers,” says Jenn Colby of the UVM Center for Sustainable Agriculture. Joe Emenheiser, UVM Extension Livestock Specialist, concurs. “This is exciting. Everyone involved will be writing history for swine production in Vermont,” he says.

The project team will start their work by establishing the capacity of current producers, and by addressing the challenges that producers report they face, including the need to establish connections between farrowing operations and finishing markets (particularly on a year-round basis), to receive technical assistance for production, information on how to use purchased-grain alternatives such as brewers’ or distillers’ grains, apple pressings, and whey, and to balance management of pigs in pasture and woodlot systems with farm economics and environmental impacts.

Sam Fuller of NOFA-VT adds, “We have the opportunity to innovate in this growing industry and make it more financially viable and ecologically integrated.”

The first workshop for farmers is scheduled for September 10 at Hogwash Farm in Norwich, Vermont. It will feature a presentation by the well-known and highly regarded Ohio State Swine Specialist Dr. Steve Moeller, a farm walk with
hosts Nancy LaRowe and Dave Yesman, and pork cooking demonstration by Howling Hog Barbecue. Online registration is available through www.nofavt.org/events.

Farmers potentially interested in raising swine can get on the mailing list by signing up at the Center’s website: http://www.uvm.edu/~susagctr/?Page=resources/index.php#newsletters.

This work is made possible by a Working Lands Enterprise Board grant awarded by the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets and the Working Lands Enterprise Board.

Established in 1994, the UVM Center for Sustainable Agriculture provides timely information to Vermont communities and the UVM campus. The Center cultivates partnerships, supports innovative research and practices, and informs policy to advance sustainable food and farming systems. Learn more at http://www.uvm.edu/~susagctr/.

#   #   #