

Social Sustainability on the Farm Tour -- About Our Farm Hosts

Thursday, October 11, 2012

This tour is a professional development training for University of Vermont Extension personnel who work with farmers. The goal of the training is to enhance the ability of Extension agriculture personnel to understand sustainable agriculture, particularly the "third dimension" or social sustainability issues individual farm families face. The social sustainability components we plan to address include: entrepreneurship, farm succession, quality of life, and social integration.

Cedar Circle Farm and Education Center, East Thetford

Cedar Circle Farm & Education Center is a flower and certified organic vegetable and berry farm on the Connecticut River. In addition to 40 acres of cropland, 6 greenhouses and 5 hoopouses, they also house a farmstand, coffee shop, and a licensed commercial kitchen. Cedar Circle Farm also has an explicit and important non-profit mission: education. We will start the tour at Cedar Circle where Kate Duesterberg, farm manager, and Cat Buxton, education program coordinator, will describe the farm's commitment to raising public awareness about locally grown, organic produce; training young and aspiring farmers; and the importance of connecting with community members. We'll also have a chance to enjoy coffee and espresso drinks made with Café Mam, a fair-trade organic coffee, served the farm's Hello Café!

Strafford Organic Creamery at Rock Bottom Farm, South Strafford

Rock Bottom Farm is home to Strafford Organic Creamery. Owners, Earl Ransom and Amy Huyffer graze and milk 50 Guernseys and market their milk in glass bottles and in super-premium, small batch ice cream. The 600-acre farm has been certified organic since 1997 and has been in Earl's family since the 1960s. Twelve years ago, UVM Extension folk visited with Earl and Amy on a similar tour, looking at organic farming operations. Back then, they were starting their family --they now have four boys-- and the order to purchase the milk processing equipment and bottling line from Israel had just been made. On this tour, we will visit the farm and talk with Amy and Earl about how their business and family has evolved since our last visit... and the challenges and joys along the way.

Richardson Family Farm, Hartland

Richardson Family Farm is truly that -- a family farm! The first generation, James Richardson, moved to the farm in 1905 and is now farmed by three generations of Richardsons, including Gordon and Patricia, Jim and Ann, Reid and Audrey and children, and Scott and Amy and children. Together, the Richardsons run a dairy (registered Jerseys), maple operation, and split-rail fencing business on 450+ acres. They received the Vermont Dairy Farm of the Year award in 2009 and have a commitment to educating the public about farming; they are members of the Vermont Farms! Association, regularly host school groups for educational activities, and Amy work as the NOFA VT Farm to Community Mentor in Windsor county and also coordinate the farm to school program at the K-8 elementary school in Hartland.

Cloudland Farm, North Pomfret

Cloudland Farm was originally a 2,000 acre dairy farm purchased by the Emmons family in 1908. Now a 1,000 acre farm, Cloudland is home to Black Angus beef cattle, pastured chickens and turkeys, pigs, horses, a certified tree farm, the Cloudland Farm Country Market, and a farm-to-table dining establishment. The farm is operated by Bill and Cathy Emmons. Their children share in the chores and have their own crops and products for sale including farm fresh eggs. We will learn about the more recent changes on the farm, particularly their on-farm dining operation as we close the tour with dinner on the farm!