



Social Sustainability on the Farm Poster Session

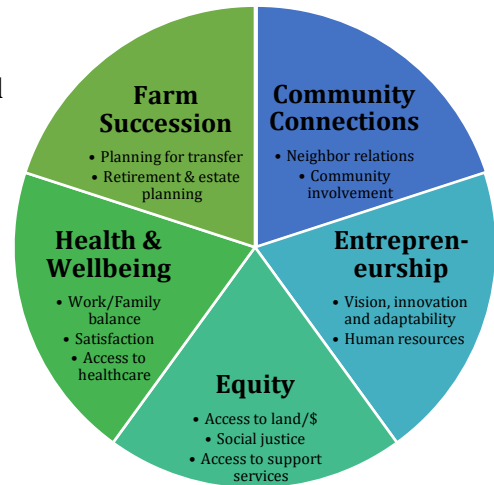
NE-SARE Summer Meeting
July 26, 2016

Improving quality of life is a central component of SARE's mission but what does "quality of life" mean, particularly to our farm families? Although social sustainability concerns are generally deemed important, they are frequently underrepresented in our programming.

The Vermont state SARE program has been focusing on social issues farmers face through its professional development project. Through these efforts, we've sought to better understand this "third leg" of the sustainable ag stool, including defining "social sustainability" (see right).

This poster session describes five themes that comprise social sustainability and features a sampling of Vermont projects funded by NE-SARE that address social issues that farmer face.

Social Sustainability
"The ability of a social system (in this case, a farm) to function at a defined level of social well-being indefinitely."



Breaking Barriers: Building Capacity to Provide Tractor Education

Presented by Beth Holtzman, University of Vermont Extension

This project is developing a new, collaborative model for providing tractor education, and training and supporting agricultural service providers to work across organizations to deliver education that helps farmers gain practical skills, realistically assess and communicate their equipment needs, and make informed decisions, all of which will improve farmers' efficiency, safety and satisfaction with their businesses. (ENE13-127)

Caring Dairy™ Program

Presented by Andrea Asch, Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream

The **Dairy Stewardship Alliance: On-Farm Assessment for Sustainable Practices** (LNE06-243) used a coalition approach to develop an on-farm self-assessment tool that included environmental, economic and social indicators ranging from practices in animal husbandry and energy conservation to farm financials and soil health management. The project helped inform Ben & Jerry's Caring Dairy™ program, including a web-based self-assessment farmers use to evaluate their farm against a comprehensive set of sustainability indicators to identify areas for improvement. More than 300 farms in America and Europe participate in the Caring Dairy™ program.

The Community Market Project

Presented by Erin Buckwalter, Northeast Organic Farming Association of Vermont

This project sought to bolster the stability and sustainable growth of farmers' markets in Vermont by providing professional development and networking opportunities for farmers' market organizers. As a result, participants created or improved bylaws and their boards/steering committees; said they were better prepared to maintain and increase the success of their market management; and got ideas that will help them increase the profitability of their markets. 10 of 18 market managers surveyed (56%) reported an increase of agricultural sales of 10% or more based on implementing what they learned. The project also developed strong relationships among market managers. (CNE12-093)

FarmRaisers: Raising Funds, Kids, and Crops in the Upper Valley

Presented by Becka Warren, Vital Communities

The FarmRaiser is a farm-based alternative fundraiser that builds markets for local farms while providing families with fresh local farm products. The project developed and tested Do-It-Yourself templates for farmer and school use as well as “kid-friendly” marketing materials that included educational information about nutritional and environmental FarmRaiser benefits. FarmRaisers was tested with 5 Vermont elementary schools and 14 Vermont farms. As a result, participating farms grossed a total of approximately \$4654, and schools grossed approximately \$1555. (CNE13-110)

On-Line Farm to Workplace System

Presented by Amanda Landry, Rutland Area Farm and Food Link (Project PI: Tara Kelly, Rutland Area Farm and Food Link)

This project tested use of an on-line farmers’ market as a means of reaching new customers at their work places. NE-SARE funds helped RAFFL hone their role linking the needs and concerns of both the farmers and the worksites to create a system that works well for both groups. As a result, this online market now features 22 farmers and producers, serves 416 customers, and includes 8 additional work sites. (CNE13-107)

The Root of the Problem: Enhancing Food Security among Latino/a Farm Workers in Vermont

Presented by Jessie Mazar, University of Vermont Dept. of Anthropology (Advisor: Teresa Mares)

Latino/a farm workers on Vermont dairy farms often experience isolation and face barriers to basic needs, particularly culturally familiar foods. In this project, graduate student Jessie Mazar is surveying and interviewing workers to better understand the gaps, quantify the food insecurity, and identify approaches to increase food access; she is also developing ways to provide greater access to healthy, culturally familiar food, such kitchen gardens and food preservation education. Results will include a food procurement tool for use by farm workers and owners. (GNE15-109)

Social Sustainability in Agriculture through Engineering: Highlights of 3 NE-SARE Projects

Presented by Chris Callahan, University of Vermont Extension

The practice of agricultural engineering involves leveraging technology to address farmer needs through problem definition; analysis & design; and eventual fabrication and construction. Social sustainability pressures are clearly observed during this process. Farmer adoption of technology is often motivated by labor efficiency in support of quality of life measures like work-family balance, health and stress. Change in on-farm practices are also often necessitated in response to off-farm pressures such as community relations. The poster highlights 3 NE-SARE projects that demonstrate connections between engineering and social sustainability. **Digester Performance Tracking, Analysis, and Lessons Learned Review at Freund’s Farm** (ONE06-053) resulted in improved knowledge, predictability and performance of a small, on-farm digester. **Food Storage Curriculum for Farmers and Processors** (ONE13-176) collected existing resources and developed new knowledge related to postharvest handling and storage of vegetables. **Innovative Impact Assessment of Farm and Food Innovations** (ONE15-230) aims to improve the distribution of farm-based innovation via FarmHack while advancing a design community approach to put novel open-source inventions into the hands of more farmers.

Social Sustainability on the Farm: Vermont State SARE Project

Presented by Deb Heleba, University of Vermont Extension

This project helped Extension educators better understand social issues farm families face, and integrate these issues into their work with farmers. A core group of 17 educators and a total of 101 service providers attended 4 farm-based trainings, which featured farmers as instructors. A follow-up survey of core educators revealed that all but one gained new knowledge (n=14); 71% implemented changes in their work to include social topics. These efforts reached 47+ farmers; 27 reported a better understanding of social issues and/or improvements on their farms, including increased family communication on management decisions; inclusion of happiness and personal satisfaction as part of farm viability discussions; and use of professional mediation for farm transitions. (SNE13-13)