

Champlain Valley CROP, SOIL & PASTURE Team



THE UNIVERSITY OF VERMONT
EXTENSION

SPRING 2023 NEWSLETTER



Focus on Agriculture

Joshua Faulkner, Research Assistant Professor and Farming and Climate Change Program Coordinator



FARMERS are quite possibly the most resilient group of people I know. Change, expected and unexpected, is an integral part of their lives, businesses, and operations. From the

changing seasons and pest cycles, to swings in the labor market or milk prices, or a changing climate, they find ways to adapt and deal with all of these.

On the other hand, change is perhaps a little less common for us here at the UVM Extension Champlain Valley Crop, Soil and Pasture Team, but 2022 brought plenty of it. We saw Jeff Carter's retirement and the departure of Kirsten Workman, both of whom poured an incredible amount of their energy into successfully serving the local farming community over many years, and they will definitely be missed.

Also in 2022, we were excited to welcome two new staff to the team: Abigail ("Abby") Augarten (agronomy specialist) and Anna Elewski (soil health and water quality outreach specialist) bring new energy and perspectives. I hope you join me in welcoming them and are as eager as I am in seeing them have an impact in the year to come.

We have also supported and cheered on the reinvigoration of the Champlain Valley Farmer Coalition as they welcomed new staff and leadership. Their future is bright and we look forward to collaborating closely with the board and Executive Director Vijay Nazareth!

As I write, we are reviewing candidates from far and wide who are interested in Jeff Carter's faculty position. Within a few months, we will again be welcoming a new face to the Middlebury office when the selected candidate settles in, hopefully before the peak of the field season. What has not changed, is that through all of this, Cheryl Cesario has continued to provide tremendously valuable education and support to graziers, and Karen Gallott has made sure all our ducks stay in a row in the Middlebury office.

Another constant is our commitment to local, relevant science- and research-based information to help farmers face a wide range of production and environmental challenges. This means continued education, outreach and technical assistance, and diving deeper into several issues through on-farm research and demonstration. To be sure, Extension's work is as relevant and impactful as ever, and we look forward to an exciting year of learning, sharing, and working with the soil, crops, livestock, water and farmers of the Champlain Valley. Please reach out with questions or if we can help. The growing season is right around the corner. We look forward to seeing you out there!

Contact Joshua at joshua.faulkner@uvm.edu.



Cheryl Cesario, Grazing Outreach Professional

I received another round of funding through the Dairy Business Innovation Center to continue the farmer cohort group I began facilitating in May 2020. We started this with emphasis on grazing, and as we move into this two-year session, we will continue to fine-tune grazing work, with a focus on individual farm organizational structure and systems planning, starting with farm mission and vision.

ing specific actions. I have worked with several farms in facilitating this process and am available to work with yours. I can provide an in-depth description of the process and then schedule time to work through the steps. All stakeholders on the farm should be included for optimal results. Getting everyone on the same page is a big part of the process and we often find people are more in agreement than they realize. The real work is turning that agreement into action.

For more information, please
contact me:
cheryl.cesario@uvm.edu.



New Hires and Projects from Extension

Abigail Augarten and Anna Elewski

AGRONOMY SPECIALIST Abby Augarten works with farmers to improve farm viability, agronomic management, and natural resources conservation. She will provide technical assistance and educational programming to farmers in the Champlain and Connecticut River Valleys. Abby is new to Vermont, most recently coming from Wisconsin, where she was an outreach specialist with the University of Wisconsin



Extension's Discovery Farms Program. There she specialized in agriculture, water quality and soil health on-farm research and outreach. She also served two years in the Peace Corps in Senegal as a sustainable agriculture extension agent.

Abby received a bachelor's degree in International Agriculture from Cornell University and a master's degree in Agroecology from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Abby is excited to bring these experiences working with farmers and farmer-led watershed groups, developing on-farm research, and providing workshops and trainings, to her new role with UVM Extension. It's been an exciting first few months of connecting with farmers and collaborating with partners at UVM Extension, conservation districts and watershed groups to provide agronomy programming. Current and upcoming projects include nutrient management planning, neonic seed treatment demonstrations, soil health trials and assessments and one-to-one technical assistance. Interested in participating, or would like to suggest ideas for trainings or research for the 2023 season? Contact Abby at abigail.augarten@uvm.edu.

SOIL HEALTH and Water Quality Specialist Anna Elewski focuses on natural resource conservation and agronomy outreach to support farmers in the Lake Champlain Basin. Before joining Extension, Anna spent time in Oregon working for the USGS doing salmon conservation research and later worked on a two-acre organic vegetable farm. She earned a bachelor's degree in biology from Vassar College in 2021, where she conducted a variety of conservation ecology research projects.

She will also work on the Conservation Effects Assessment Project (CEAP) in Addison County. This paired watershed study is part of a national monitoring and



research network established by the USDA which includes 42 watershed studies across the country. Portions of Dead Creek and Little Otter Creek have been selected for intensive monitoring. Continuous streamflow and water quality sampling occurs during baseflow and storm events, and Anna is collecting data on agricultural conservation practices to gain a comprehensive understanding of the land-management strategies currently implemented in both watersheds.

In Dead Creek, we will be actively working to accelerate conservation practices. Conservation will, of course, continue in the Little Otter Creek, but not specifically targeted for acceleration. The study will help us measure and understand the effects of conservation practices that farmers are using in the Lake Champlain Basin.

Contact Anna at anna.elewski@uvm.edu.



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