



2010 Annual Report

"The Greater Hardwick Food System – Feeding Ourselves First"



Planting the fields at Hazendale Farm in Greensboro
Photo courtesy Hazendale Farm



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“Hardwick, Vt., is a riddle. The scrappy working-class town, over the past few years, has morphed into a locavore’s delight. There’s a fabulous heirloom seed company, an organic tofu factory and a high-end commercial cheese cave, all headquartered in the gritty Hardwick area.

The town also plays host to something called the Center for an Agricultural Economy, a nonprofit devoted to building a “locally based 21st century healthy food system.” How did Hardwick, a former granite-mining town with a population teetering on 3,200 souls and a per capita income of \$14,813, become the epicenter for a local foods revival? Ben Hewitt, a local boy, set out to answer this riddle. What he discovers is aptly described in “The Town That Food Saved,” a pleasurable, almost gossipy read that will appeal to anyone au courant with the issues surrounding the sustainable food movement.

The short answer to why Hardwick is thriving, as you might expect, is the people.”

Novella Carpenter, [San Francisco Chronicle](#) (April 11, 2010)



I. LETTER FROM THE CHAIR OF THE BOARD & EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

In 2010 and over the coming years these three core areas will continue to serve as the basis of CAE's mission to revitalize, strengthen, and secure our food system.

Agriculture Incubation, Atkins Field Planning, and Community Outreach

Remembering community agricultural roots and focusing on locally grown food sparked a great deal of local and national media attention. We are proud to say that we have been able to share our vision with many people and hope that we can inspire communities around Vermont and beyond to learn from our experiences. CAE's progress in 2010 has been made possible largely due to our valued members, our generous donors, and the desire of the community and state to seek a healthier food system.

Over this past year we have made important community connections that have resulted in programs that have both been beneficial and educational. By involving local schools such as the Hardwick Elementary School, the University of Vermont, and Sterling College we were able to implement programs including the annual *Pies for People* and *Soup for Supper* project, and move forward with plans for the future of CAE's Atkins Field.

We accomplished a great deal in 2010 and look eagerly to the future to continue to fulfill our mission and put more plans into motion, especially with the Vermont Food Venture Center, scheduled for opening in mid-2011. We are confident that the ongoing pursuit for a healthy, 21st century food system will better the lives of our community, friends and neighbors, as we build on our local agricultural traditions.

Tom Stearns, Board Chair

Monty Fischer, Executive Director

II. 2010 CAE Core Goals & Programs

- **Agriculture Incubation** which engages residents of Hardwick and the surrounding region in the development and benefits of the physical infrastructure needed to support food production and processing, especially through the facilities at the planned state-of-the-art Vermont Food Venture Center, a food business incubator offering kitchen facilities and technical and planning support.
 - **Value-Added Infrastructure** - non-profit partner in opportunities, including the Vermont Food Venture Center, to enhance infrastructure capability for a local agricultural economy (production, consumption and export)

- **Atkins Field at Cooper Brook Planning** is owned by the CAE, made possible through the building of relationships with public and not-for-profit organizations, which allows in the future for this 15 acre multi-use property to be a center for agricultural education, a support location for the local agricultural economy, and a place for community interactions.
 - **Agriculture Education** – community-wide with emphasis on school groups and service organizations
 - **Support site for Agricultural Enterprises** - through incubation opportunities
 - **Greenhouse and Composting Demonstrations** – potential expansion
 - **Seniors and Early Education**- increased access to local foods through demonstration activities
 - **Hardwick Gathering Site** – available for agriculture-related and other events

- **Community Outreach** by implementing a comprehensive series of food security and access programs intended to integrate, coordinate and advance the wide array of food and agricultural initiatives currently underway in Hardwick and surrounding communities, such as the Hardwick Community Gardens, local tours, and educational workshops.
 - **Local Food Systems** - definition and information
 - **Food Pantry** – support and secure donations throughout the year
 - **Tours and Site Visits** - facilitation
 - **Media Inquiries** - clearinghouse
 - **Connector To The Many In-Region Resources** - especially as a first stop for would-be farmers
 - **Collaborations** - with academic and other public and private groups
 - **Survey and Research Key Topics** – including pricing of local food, diet and health, and measurable outcomes related to local food production and consumption

III. Agriculture Incubation: *Vermont Food Venture Center*

The Center for an Agricultural Economy (CAE) is the non-profit hub in a multi-sector effort to create a local and self-sustaining food system. In 2010 final planning commenced for the construction of the Vermont Food Venture Center (VFVC) which will serve as a food incubator and business hub. In recent years, the CAE and its food system work have joined with local leaders and have given one of the most economically depressed corners of Vermont connections, encouragement and new jobs. This has been accomplished by supporting existing agricultural opportunities, reducing the economic barriers to bringing in the next generation of small farmers, and creating opportunities for commodity and value-added agricultural products through the VFVC when operational.

In 1996 the VFVC was created in Fairfax, Vermont to provide food production space for developing Vermont companies. In 2011 the CAE, in a multi-year effort with several economic development institutions and private funders, will complete construction of a 15,000 square foot shared use food incubator space. The Cellars at Jasper Hill have leased a portion of the facility for mentoring new cheese makers and dairy processing. Active outreach is underway to attract clients for the bakery, wet pack and raw pack areas and a partnership is developing with Vermont Refrigerated Storage for the development of locally grown, minimally processed foods for retail sales.

Construction of the VFVC in Hardwick will result in providing jobs and economic development opportunities for local agricultural businesses and will increase access to minimally processed local foods for use in Vermont schools, hospitals and other institutions. Success of the VFVC is an essential component for delivery of the mission of the CAE. The VFVC will be a hub for business development and entrepreneurship based on food grown in Vermont and made available to local citizens, as well as shipped throughout the region. Jobs created by the VFVC will include agricultural production and food processing along with the necessary technical assistance needed to support these positions.

"I spent a half-day in Hardwick yesterday with several folks from the Center for an Agricultural Economy. It is exciting to see the growth, the energy and the implementation of ideas. It is also heartening to see the efforts by the Center and UVM in making connections and providing opportunities for students to connect with real world problems. The Food Venture Center (15,000 sq ft) will break ground this summer. A number of UVM Extension personnel have helped along the way with many of the players in the Center. With this latest meeting I see opportunities to continue and to grow this partnership."

Douglas O. Lantagne, Dean - UVM Extension (May 23, 2010)

IV. Atkins Field at Cooper Brook:

A Community Gathering Space

In 2007, the Center for an Agricultural Economy (CAE) purchased the Atkins Field at Cooper Brook property, located in the Village of Hardwick. This 15 acre property is historically significant to the Town of Hardwick as it is the site of the once flourishing world-renowned Woodbury Granite Company. The vision that inspired the CAE to pursue and realize this acquisition comes from its belief in the importance of building an outreach and education center that will encourage and inspire community members to engage in the local food system, and to increase agricultural capacity in the immediate area. This will result in the strengthening of our community, our local economy and our food security.

The CAE believes that the village of Hardwick offers a strategic place to initiate a set of programs to disseminate the principles of sustainable agriculture and spotlight its potential for stimulating economic development. Given the growing number of organic, value-added and other types of sustainable agriculture initiatives underway in this part of Vermont, creation of the Hardwick Sustainable Agriculture Center at Atkins Field would signify to the community and beyond of the importance that these endeavors hold for the local economy.

While particular uses of this facility are still under consideration and being investigated, its purposes are two-fold: to have a place for community ties to be built and reinforced, and to develop and strengthen the local food system and food security. Some of the possible ideas about the use of the property include: facilities for food preservation, community garden, workshops, large community gathering space, indoor year-round farmers market, cooking classes, granite museum, nature trails, music amphitheater, outdoor art displays, and many others to be creatively identified.

The Hardwick Spring Festival was again held at Atkins Field in 2010, attracting over a thousand folks to celebrate Memorial Day and participate in the Sustainability Fair.

By the end of 2010, the CAE will be implementing a survey in Hardwick and the surrounding towns to extract ideas from the community regarding the use of the Atkins field property. The restoration of this property will take great amounts of both financial resources and energy, so it is important to assure that the space is used for activities that the community itself finds important and needed in order to strengthen our community and our food system.

V. Community Outreach: *Food Security*

Made possible by an anonymous donor in 2009, the Food Access Fund continues as a CAE program that has grown out of our partnership with the local food pantry. The existing funding has covered the costs of buying local products to stock the food shelf. Farmers in the area get a fair value for their product, the food pantry benefits from having an increased variety of fresh local food options, and low-income Vermonters gain affordable access to healthy, local products.

Pies for People and *Soup for Supper*, a program that was first launched in 2008, has had another successful run. Various partner organizations and businesses have once again shared their resources for this community effort. Emerging out of the CAE's existing partnerships, the program represents our community's commitment to local foods for local families. Food donated by area farmers and producers is transformed into nutritious pies and soup by a volunteer labor force and then distributed to local organizations that serve families in need.

Students and staff from our institutional partner Sterling College were once again involved in the process. Many local businesses donated their agricultural products for the effort. The success of this program illustrates how local farmers can help their community, while the community, in turn, supports its farmers. This idea for improving people's access to locally grown and locally made products continues to sprout into something big enough to benefit everyone. Related programs are being developed for the Vermont Food Venture Center when it opens in 2011.



Pies for People, Soup for Supper preparation at Sterling College

VI. Community Outreach: *Engagement*

Community Gardens: For years now the CAE has embraced the concept of community gardens, in which area residents and community members tend plots within a shared garden. Worldwide, the community garden model has become increasingly popular, with people embracing it as way of developing communities through a shared agricultural resource. Locally, the Hardwick Community Garden, continue to bring Vermonters together to share in the process of growing their own food. The Garden provides a place for people who might not otherwise grow their own food to learn about gardening and become agriculturally active. The CAE thanks the Hardwick Electric Company and Hardwick's Town Manager for the use of this land in 2010.

The Community Gardens have enabled us to both bring our message to a wider audience and expand access to locally-grown food. They've also served effectively as a teaching tool and outdoor classroom. The CAE has partnered with area youth in the Garden through the REACH 21st Century after-school program and the Buffalo Mountain School, a program for youth with emotional and behavioral challenges and learning disabilities. Future generations are learning how to cultivate their own food, contribute to their communities, and become active stewards of a communal resource through the Gardens programs. This year has marked another phase of incremental expansion and improvement of the Gardens. We are pleased to see more and more people and organizations getting involved with the Gardens each year, making them a dynamic and on-going local success story.

Tours: The CAE recognizes the interest of individuals and organizations in healthy, local food systems as well as the opportunity of exposure to the ag-based business tours in our area. By combining these interests into informative, energetic tours, the CAE is striving to share its mission, while creating a stream of revenue. In 2010, CAE organized 6 guided tours (many sold out) with a maximum of 25 individuals held monthly May through October. All tours were caravan-style, beginning and ending at the CAE office. The feedback from participants has been overwhelmingly positive.

"I have to say that I haven't stopped talking about it (the tour), plain and simple! It was so inspiring and so much fun that it has energized me beyond explanation. As I share my experience with the people I work with and see on a daily basis I am beginning to hear little stories of community members helping each other be successful, which I felt was a great strength of the Hardwick process".
(N.H. participant)

VI. Healthy Local Food System Summary:

Developing Local Resources



Apples ready for harvest

AGRICULTURE INCUBATION:

Engaging residents in the greater Hardwick region in the development and benefits of the physical infrastructure needed to support food production and processing, especially through the facilities at the state-of-the-art Vermont Food Venture Center, a food business incubator offering technical and planning support.

ATKINS FIELD AT COOPER BROOK:

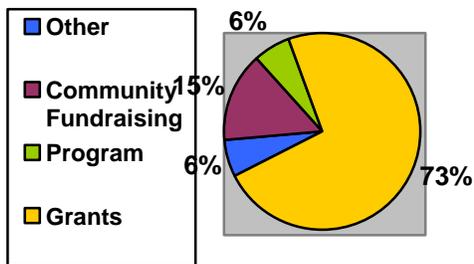
Through the building of relationships with public and not-for-profit organizations, the CAE owns this 15 acre multi-use property that will be a center for agricultural education, a support location for the local agricultural economy, and a place for community interactions.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH:

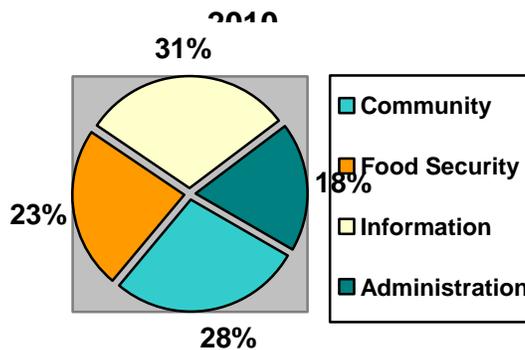
Implementing a comprehensive series of food security and access programs to integrate, coordinate, and advance the wide array of food and agricultural initiatives currently underway in Hardwick and surrounding communities, such as the Hardwick Community Gardens, local tours, and workshops.

VII. 2010 Financials

2010 Revenue



Total Revenue \$303,889



Total Expenses \$180,452

The CAE is especially appreciative of the financial support received from all of its members and donors, as donor support is a key lifeline for CAE's operational success.

The following sources generously supported the CAE throughout 2010: Claneil Foundation; Jane B. Cook 1992 Trust; Preservation Trust of Vermont; Vermont Agency of Agriculture; Canaday Family; Vermont Community Foundation; Boston Foundation; Northeastern Vermont Development Association; USDA; Lattner Foundation; Mazer Foundation; Vermont Housing and Conservation Board; and anonymous donors.

The CAE also thanks its many volunteers, agricultural producers of all sizes, and friends throughout 2010 who so generously gave of their time and talents to furthering the goals of the CAE, including Julie Ruth (web design), Joe Speidel (UVM), and Steve Patterson and Alison Low (NVDA).

The 2010 CAE Board of Directors has been the guiding force throughout the year to assure a balanced budget and careful management of all CAE resources and assets, and their volunteer hours and leadership is most appreciated.

VIII. Looking Ahead to 2011 and Beyond

The coming year again looks to be an exciting time at the CAE, as we build on the progress we've made in 2010 and move ahead on some of the long-term projects that are still in their infancy. Atkins Fields, for instance, will move out of the planning phase with the Farmers Market considering re-locating to the site in 2011. As more funding becomes available, the agricultural and recreational elements of that endeavor will soon begin taking shape on the landscape. The major intentions for the site will not be realized overnight, but the gradual transformation toward a place that serves more people in more ways, has begun.

Additionally, we are conducting research this year to develop a comprehensive local food system strategic plan to support agriculturally-based economic development strategies in the three counties comprising the Northeast Kingdom (NEK) region of Vermont. Specifically, the CAE seeks to conduct a study and draft a plan to position the agricultural sector in the Northeast Kingdom to participate in and take full advantage of the opportunities to diversify and expand this component of the area's economy. The plan will contain goals, objectives, strategies, and recommendations for the region, and is due for completion in mid-2011.

The continuing success of our tours and the on-going media exposure that we have received over the past year may be an indicator of both our progress and our momentum—our past accomplishments and our future potential. The CAE will continue to promote better public understanding of the connections among food system components and many of the world's current agricultural practices. We look forward to expanding our partnerships, moving ahead on our long-term projects, and furthering our mission-related goals in what promises to be an exciting new year! Your continuing support is most appreciated!

"Ultimately, it's my hope that people will feel empowered by this book. Maybe that empowerment is in the shape of the garden they turn over in their back yard, or maybe it comes in the form of resolve to support the local farmers, businesses and citizens of their community," Hewitt said. "If this book can in any way inspire people to become more engaged in their food and community, I'll be really, really happy."

By Susan Allen, Staff Reporter for the [Times Argus](#) (February 28, 2010)
Reviewing Ben Hewitt's "[The Town Saved by Food](#)"

VIII. CAE Board of Directors & Staff

2010 Board Members (note: affiliations for identification purposes):

Tom Stearns, President (Wolcott – High Mowing Organic Seeds)

Andy Kehler, Vice President (Greensboro – Cellars at Jasper Hill)

Pete Johnson, Treasurer (Craftsbury – Pete’s Greens)

Andrew Meyer, Secretary (Hardwick – Vermont Soy)

Neil Urie, Director (Craftsbury – Bonnieview Farm)

Annie Gaillard, Director (Hardwick – Buffalo Mountain Coop)

Tom Gilbert, Director (Hardwick – Highfields Center for Composting)

Linda Ramsdell, Director (Hardwick – Galaxy Bookstore)

2010 Staff:

Monty Fischer, Executive Director

Elena Gustavson, Education & Community Outreach Program Director

Heidi Krantz, Ag Business Advisor (through partnership with VtSBDC)

Erica Campbell, Project Manager – NEK Food System

Heather Davis, Graduate Research Fellow

Erin Schminke, Intern

Michelle Skolnik, Intern

Heidi Sarazen, Intern

Mitchell Benton, Intern



A Bee's Delight – Globe Thistle

Credit: All photographs in this Annual Report courtesy CAE, or from public sources

The "Poster" for the CAE co-sponsored and co-organized free celebration event, with High Mowing Seeds, New England Culinary Institute and Craftsbury Outdoor Center with much donated seasonally harvested local food from area farms and producers

Kingdom Farm & Food Days Aug 21 & 22

A weekend harvest
celebration of the
Northeast Kingdom's
farms and agri-businesses

Saturday, August 21, 2010:
All day

Farms will open their doors for tours and
workshops

with a bike tour lead by The Craftsbury
Outdoor Center

Sunday, August 22, 2010:
10-6 at High Mowing Seeds
~workshops ~ live music ~bonfire, and

A Local Foods

Showcase

prepared by New England
Culinary Institute





The Center for an Agricultural Economy 2010 Annual Report



The CAE-Owned Granite Shed at Atkins Field, Hardwick

A Vision for a Healthy 21st Century Food System in the Greater Hardwick Community

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Blog <http://hardwickagriculture.blogspot.com/>