Building a Locally-based Healthy Food System

Throughout 2011, the Center for an Agricultural Economy (CAE) has encouraged the development of a local food system that meets the needs and aspirations of the community and ensures economic and ecological stability and abundance. We engage the greater Hardwick community through collaboration opportunities, educational outreach and providing infrastructure.

Thank you for your support and participation, especially for the construction and soft opening in 2011 of the Vermont Food Venture Center (VFVC) in Hardwick.

With thanks for your support and partnership, and for that of the many volunteers throughout the year.

Tom Stearns, CAE Board Chair
and
Monty Fischer, CAE Executive Director

VFVC Operations Manager George Keener (photo courtesy CAE staff)

CAE 2011 Key Focus Areas

(1) Value-Added Infrastructure to enhance food production, and distribution locally at the VFVC.

(2) Atkins Field at Cooper Brook is CAE’s 15 acre multi-use property to be an educational center for agricultural pursuits.

(3) Community Outreach allows CAE to focus on food security and access programs through workshops, food access fund and community gardens.

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2011 CAE Highlight—the Vermont Food Venture Center (VFVC) Opens

In 2011 planning concluded and construction of the VFVC was mostly completed. It will serve as a food incubator and business hub. The CAE and its food system work have joined with local leaders and have given this economically depressed corner of Vermont connections, encouragement and new jobs. This has been accomplished by supporting existing agricultural opportunities, reducing the economic barriers to bringing in new small farmers, and creating opportunities for commodity and value-added agricultural products through the VFVC when operational. Construction of the VFVC in Hardwick will increase access to minimally processed local foods for use in Vermont schools, and institutions.

People - Shannon Courtney (from Ontario) Studies Our Food System

“From Rural Survival to Rural Revival” written by researcher Shannon Courtney.

‘We export inspiration!’ I smiled when I first heard this proclamation uttered about Hardwick, Vermont…..What I came to realize during my short stay was that Hardwick doesn’t have secrets; rather it has people willing to work together to overcome hardships, people who still believe they can carve their own destiny, and people who truly value what it is to be part of a community. And that has made all the difference.”

Places - CAE’s 15 Acre Property: Atkins Field at Cooper Brook

“Learning from the past, growing for the future.” The vision is a hub of agricultural, community, and recreational activity interwoven with learning opportunities where individual responsibility exists for certain functions yet the overall management and site control rests with the CAE. This hub is defined by site-use for incubator and micro-enterprise plots, school gardens, greenhouses, grazing, seed demonstrations, composting operations, orchards and berries along with the restored historic granite shed. The site also provides access to summer and winter outdoor trails and festivals.
Tours - Regional Agricultural Operations

“One thing that appeals to people, I think, is that Hardwick is still a real community; it’s not a place that’s organized around tourism,” says Claire’s Restaurant co-owner Linda Ramsdell. “Hardwick and its surrounding towns have working landscapes.” (Boston Globe - Dirk van Susteren, 2011)

And that is why in 2011 so many local people along with visitors took the time to spend a day touring greater Hardwick agricultural places dotted across the countryside, such as Pete’s Greens in Craftsbury. His operation includes an expansive CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) offering, a farm stand, and year-round production of crops for local and regional markets.

Events - Pies for People, Soup for Supper

*Pies for People* and *Soup for Supper*, launched in 2008, has had another successful run. Partner organizations and businesses have shared their resources for this community effort. This 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 Sterling College were again involved in the production process.

Community Garden - Hardwick

Along the banks of the Lamoille River the Hardwick Community Gardens were available for residents to use at an affordable price. Gardening programs were held to assist gardeners and community folks to learn about growing and harvesting produce.

Everything changed in August 2011 when the gardens were flooded out, beyond restoration. Later in 2011 CAE staff and volunteers met with gardeners and people from around the community and based on an evaluation process decided to move the gardens to Atkins Field in 2012.
The Center for an Agricultural Economy

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www.hardwickagriculture.org

Financials

The Center for an Agricultural Economy

2011 Financials
(by category):

Revenue: $1,077,512
CAE 2011 Staff

Foundation Grants: 62%
Programs: 72%
Government Grants: 31%
Facilities/equipment: 11%
Programs Revenue: 7%
Administration: 17%

Based on support from the community and many others, CAE is able to support its programs.