RESILIENT COMMUNITIES
START WITH EACH OF US

2019 IMPACT REPORT

Center for an Agricultural Economy
Hello friends

Over the past sixteen years, strong community networks and collaborations have helped shape the evolution of the Center for an Agricultural Economy. This approach is the heart of our core belief that a strong local food system starts with understanding the community it serves.

The programs and work shared in this report are based on this foundation of collaboration and ongoing reflection.

Since our inception, our neighbors, area businesses, and local organizations have been CAE’s closest partners. Each of our community programs grew out of these relationships. What began as farm-to-school support for Orleans Southwest Supervisory Union (OSSU) schools has grown into a dynamic collaboration which is rooted in listening, visioning, and coordinated steps towards positive transformation in our rural education system -- a long-term goal that we are deeply committed to.

In the early years, CAE was focused on gathering information to make the case for a statewide level investment in local food. This work culminated in the largest collaboration and network of food system partners in Vermont, the Farm to Plate Initiative. In 2011 the Vermont Food System Plan was issued, which outlines the soil-to-soil approach needed to sustain not only food businesses but their lands and communities. In 2011, we also took on operation of the Vermont Food Venture Center, on the guidance of partners and businesses who identified a need for shared processing and business incubation infrastructure.

The people that intersect with our work are the essential element of all this.

Without them there would be no collaboration. As I write this in 2020, from my home office under the governor’s stay-at-home order, it’s impossible to imagine how CAE could respond to the COVID-19 pandemic without these local and statewide relationships that make our work meaningful and firmly rooted in our place.

The effects of the global health crisis will be long-lasting in many ways, and CAE is here for the long term to support the many farmers, food businesses, and community members whose livelihoods have been threatened. How we operate in the coming months, or even years, will undoubtedly shift in response to emergent needs. But there’s one thing you can count on: every day we are working for Vermont food growers, businesses, and communities.

Jon Ramsay, Executive Director

Cover Photo: CAE staff and community members celebrate the grand opening of the new pavilion at Atkins Field, September, 2019. Photo by Doug McClure

Top Photo: Jon (front center) with the CAE team at Pine Island Community Farm in Colchester VT. All photos are courtesy of CAE unless otherwise indicated.
We are a living laboratory for a working, interdependent rural food system.

FARMERS & FOOD PRODUCERS
Vermont Food Venture Center
Vermont Farm Fund

COMMUNITY BUILDING
Atkins Field
Place-Based Education
Grow Your Own

FEEDING VERMONT
Just Cut
Farm Connex

CAE BOARD MEMBERS (current in 2020)

Helen Beattie
UP for Learning

Meredith Davis
Business Coach & Consultant

Matthew Derr
Sterling College

Pete Johnson
Pete’s Greens

Emily Maclure, Board Co-Chair
Crafts bury General Store

Blair Marvin
Elmore Mountain Bread

Andrew Meyer, Treasurer
Vermont Soy

Ben Nottermann, Secretary
Snug Valley Farm

Margie Prevot, Board Co-Chair
East Hardwick

CAE TEAM (current in 2020)

Sam Banks, Just Cut Production

Reeve Basom, Place-Based Education Coordinator

Michael Bellizzi, Delivery Driver

Kristin Blodgett, Financial Manager

Silene DeCiucies, Farm Business Planner

Bob Duggan, Delivery Driver

Bethany Dunbar, Community Programs Manager

Connor Gorham, Facilities Manager

Mike Heath, General Manager, Farm Connex

Daniel Keeney, Food and Farm Business Advisor

Stephan Leikert, Delivery Driver

Thomas Neel, Just Cut Production Manager

Josh Peets, Just Cut Production

Jon Ramsay, Executive Director

Linda Ramsdell, Bookkeeper

Lylee Rauch-Kacenski, Co-Marketing Coordinator

Katrina Razionale, Development Manager

Neal Renaud, Primary Delivery Driver

Lotty Roozekrans, Just Cut Sales & Accounts Manager

Kate Stephenson, VT Farm Fund Manager

Neil Urie, Delivery Driver and Warehouse Manager
Supporting Farmers & Food Producers at Every Step

At CAE we work with farms and food businesses in all stages of development, from dream to start-up, growth to transition. We provide specialized support and assistance specific to each business’s needs and readiness. **Viable working farms and thriving food businesses are critical to our future.**

*Top Photo: Fisher Brothers Farm, Shelburne VT (Photo Courtesy of Vermont Farm Fund)*

WAYS THAT CAE SUPPORTS FARMS AND FOOD BUSINESSES:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Business and Marketing Support</th>
<th>Vermont Food Venture Center</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One-on-one technical assistance and business planning</td>
<td>Kitchen rentals, storage, and technical assistance</td>
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<tr>
<th>Vermont Farm Fund</th>
<th>Market Access</th>
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<tr>
<td>Low-hassle, friendly-term loans</td>
<td>Just Cut and Farm Connex</td>
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Live Young Kitchen was a VFVC superstar in 2019. After submitting an inquiry form on October 1, 2018, and an initial consultation with the business services team, Brad Young has connected the dots to create a product line of 16 different sauces, dressings & condiments. Through rounds of R&D to scaling-up batches, Live Young Kitchen booked more VFVC kitchen hours than any other specialty food client in 2019! The CAE team supported Brad with ServSafe and Better Process Control School certification, marketing support, and a 10-week business planning course co-hosted at CAE with the Center for Women & Enterprise.

Karen and Brian Wiseman of Peaceful Harvest Mushrooms.

Peaceful Harvest Mushrooms, a medicinal mushroom farm which grows and processes mushrooms into small-batch fortifying tinctures and powders, sees significant expansion in its future. Working with CAE’s business services team, Karen & Brian Wiseman re-branded their business in 2019 and closed on a new production facility across the village of Worcester from their home farm. Despite an unsettled market due to COVID-19, their vital product feels even more important as Vermonters rely increasingly on local food as medicine. Peaceful Harvest looks forward to 2020 with an exciting schedule of capital improvements, intensive production, and new marketing strategies.

CAE Facilities manager, Connor Gorham (left), and Brad Young (right) with the first batch of Live Young Kitchen’s “Clean & Classic Marinara.”

“Live Young Kitchen was just a vision until I began working with the team at CAE. From the first meetings with Connor, Lylee and Daniel it was clear they care deeply about coaching and providing the necessary training to help start a company. Their passion, talent and connections in the Vermont food scene have been invaluable. I thank them so very much, and highly recommend them.”
— Brad Young, Live Young Kitchen

Brenden and Lindsay Beer of Wilson Herb Farm purchased the old Hazendale Farm in Greensboro in 2019, and have ambitious plans for the property. The now-reopened farm store offers diverse products from their farm and many local producers including Pete’s Greens, Blue Ledge Farm, Butterworks Farm, Snug Valley Farm, VT Switchel, and many others. Brenden & Lindsay worked with CAE to develop a business plan that outlined their vision for Wilson Farm Market at Hazendale Farm, a plan which helped them secure a special low-interest loan for capital improvements and working capital in Year 1 of this new business venture. They are growing bulk herbs for local processors and steadily improving the land as they start their new family - they welcomed baby Lily this March!}

“Daniel and Lylee were invaluable in helping us to define and refine our business model and our approach to making it happen. The guidance and insight they both provided during the process of creating our business and marketing plans supported us as we gained confidence and business skills needed to move forward. Their ability to connect us with other organizations as we began executing our plan made the mountain feel climbable. We are so grateful for the opportunity to work with the amazing people at CAE and we hope to make them proud as we grow.”
— Karen Wiseman, Peaceful Harvest Mushrooms

“We are so grateful to have the support of the team at CAE and Vermont Food Venture Center as we build and expand our business. They have helped us in creating a solid business plan, navigating financial resources and providing us with all the available tools in order to set us up for success. Whenever we’ve had questions along the way, we feel comfortable knowing we can rely on their experience and knowledge to help guide us in the right direction.”
— Lindsay Beer, Wilson Farm
Low-Hassle Loans for Farmers & Food Producers

The Vermont Farm Fund is a revolving loan fund that provides quick and flexible loans to Vermont food producers for strategic growth or emergency recovery. As loans are repaid, they return to the fund and are deployed to the next business in need.

Top Photo: Vermont Alpine Farm, Reading VT. Photo Courtesy of Vermont Farm Fund

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AUGUST 2011 – DECEMBER 2019</th>
<th>TOTAL VALUE OF LOANS</th>
<th>24 EMERGENCY LOANS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>96 LOANS MADE</td>
<td>$1,484,574</td>
<td>69 BUSINESS BUILDER LOANS</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0 LOANS DEFAULTED</td>
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VERMONT FARM FUND
SMALL AXE FARM

Small Axe Farm in Barnet, VT, lost their barn in a tragic fire that also killed a close friend and co-worker who was visiting. An Emergency Loan from the VFF helped them rebuild, covering some of the shortfall between the insurance coverage and the cost of construction.

“The VFF played a critical role in helping our farm get back on its feet after we had a devastating fire. Daniel Keeney was instrumental in making connections for us and helping us with the application during that difficult time. It was great to work with Kate Stephenson on this, the VFF was really flexible with the timing on the loan as well as the parameters of how we utilized the loan. We are so grateful for the CAE and the VFF and all the great work they do.”

— Heidi Choate & Evan Perkins, Small Axe Farm
Community Building

CAE works with key partners in every area of our work. For our food access and place-based programs, this means working closely with a number of partners to connect local and regional resources. Over the years, our work with Orleans Southwest Supervisory Union (OSSU) has evolved from direct farm to school support into a deep partnership working for the long-term transformation of our rural education system.

*Photo: Hardwick Elementary School students transplanting pumpkins in the Hazen greenhouse.*

**ROOTED IN OUR COMMUNITY**

**HAZEN ARTISAN AND ENTREPRENEURSHIP ACADEMY**

The 2019-2020 school year marked the launch of the new [Hazen Artisan and Entrepreneurship Academy](#), a partnership between Hazen Union High School and CAE incorporating community-connected, entrepreneurial classes and opportunities including field trips, guest speakers, collaborative learning, and youth-adult partnerships. **Five new Academy courses were offered in fall 2019, with over 70 students enrolled in the 2019-20 school year.**

**SHARING THE BOUNTY**

**ANNUAL HARVEST DINNERS**

Each year we help schools organize harvest activities for their school community. Students visit farms, glean produce, work in school gardens, prepare dishes to share, and connect with staff, students, families and community members through food.

*Photo: Hardwick Elementary School student and staff at the Harvest Dinner.*
ATKINS FIELD
NEW PAVILION OPEN!

After years of collective visioning, planning and grassroots fundraising, the open-air pavilion at Atkins Field was completed in 2019. We celebrated at a Grand Opening on Sept. 28 with music, neighbors, and heritage foods. The scissor truss design created by Green Timber Works mimics the scissor truss design of the 350-foot-long granite shed remaining on the property. Thanks to the 200+ donors who made this possible!

“It is a privilege to have this space and to get to enjoy so many things here. My Dad has gardened in the community gardens and greenhouse. My brother, Dad and I get to have fun on the pump track and other biking trails around. My family and I have enjoyed Spring Festival, ice skating, block parties and Farmer’s Markets here (where I got to eat one of the best burgers ever). This pavilion will be a great addition to this space and I can’t wait to see what else happens here!”

— Anderson Williams, age 11
“I am a happy kid, with my dirty hands!”
— Song spontaneously sung by Wolcott Elementary School students in the school garden.

CULTIVATING FOOD SECURITY
GROW YOUR OWN
Grow Your Own is a project of the CAE, the Hardwick Area Food Pantry, and WonderArts. Its mission is increased food independence, better health and wellbeing through shared knowledge and experience.

What started as a series of annual skill-building workshops has grown to also include projects building garden beds at apartment buildings owned by the Lamoille Housing Partnership -- to date we have built 13 raised beds in partnership with Hazen Union students and local volunteers.

Grow Your Own also coordinates the annual Pies for People event with Sterling College, using donated ingredients and volunteer energy to bake pies for area food pantries, community meals, preschools and senior housing. Pies for People, which predates Grow Your Own, has provided over 1,200 homemade pies for our neighbors’ Thanksgiving tables over the past 11 years.

Top Right: A garden bed project at Slapp Hill apartments was a collaboration between Grow Your Own and Hazen students.
Bottom Right: A crockpot cooking workshop included a free crockpot for each participant.

GUIDED BY COMMUNITY ORGANIZING PRINCIPLES
NORTHEAST KINGDOM ORGANIZING
CAE is a member of Northeast Kingdom Organizing, a member-led coalition of community and faith based groups from Caledonia, Essex and Orleans counties. NEKO uses community organizing practices rooted in narrative, relationships, and place to bring together the resources required to solve local problems.

In 2019, NEKO officially received its 501c3 status! CAE continues in a new role as one of ten sponsoring partner groups. Community organizing principles and methods have infused our work and initiated an ongoing staff training on equity and racial justice.
Local Food Production

Local food production is only part of the food system puzzle—it’s also critical that Vermont communities have access to locally-grown and made goods. This includes local grocery and general stores, farmers’ markets, and institutional meals at schools and hospitals.

CAE bridges the divide between local farms and institutional kitchens with Just Cut, our farm-to-institution social enterprise. We plan with growers and secure a market for their crops, then aggregate, wash, and prepare the food for easy institutional use. Working directly with farms allows us to source local crops year-round, and, in turn, our contracts allow farms to access institutional markets that have incredibly high barriers to entry. In 2019 we purchased from 16 farms and sold to 24 institutions, processing 22% more produce than 2018 in 4% fewer kitchen hours.

Photo: Produce from Just Cut ready to be boxed and go out into the community.

JUST CUT: FROM OUR FARMERS

“Working with Just Cut allows my farm to reach institutions that I would not necessarily have the ability to be in touch with. Our work together strengthens the local food system which, in turn, creates greater resiliency and community reliance on sourcing local produce. It is extremely gratifying as a grower knowing that my produce can reach thousands of people throughout regional institutions and can offset the need for accessing ingredients from long-distance producers. Together, we reinforce our New England farming tradition and begin to realize the potential that our region can feed itself.”

— Ryan Demarest, Naked Acre Farm

Photo courtesy of Ryan Demarest
JUST CUT: FROM THE KITCHEN

“Sodexo’s VT campuses continue to increase our purchasing commitments to Just Cut, as buying more of their local, minimally processed vegetable products not only helps increase our purchases of local produce, but also reduces labor needs for handling produce. For the 2020-2021 school year, we project purchasing 94,000lbs of Just Cut products, an increase of almost 50,000lbs from the previous school year.”
— Annie Rowell, Vermont First Coordinator Sodexo

Team members from Sodexo’s Norwich University Dining and UVM Dining visit the Vermont Food Venture Center. (Photo Courtesy of Sodexo)

Introducing Farm Connex

In December, CAE purchased Farm Connex, a key piece of local food transportation infrastructure in Vermont. The business had previously been operated by Don Maynard, who over the years has assisted the growth of dozens of NEK-based farms and food businesses.

Most food is shipped in Vermont by distribution companies that buy the food from producers and resell it to retail outlets. Farm Connex is unique in that it operates as a delivery service only, serving small and medium farms and food businesses that might otherwise not have a way to get their products to market. Farm Connex delivers product for over 60 farmers, and also picks up and delivers products for Green Mountain Farm Direct, Deep Root Co-op, and for CAE’s own farm to institution program. Many of the Northeast Kingdom producers we work with rely on this service to get their products to market. Clients include Sweet Rowen Farmstead, Butterworks Farm, Strafford Organic Creamery, Kingdom Creamery, West Farm, and Vermont Beancrafters.

“We have been a great match for us. It’s been more than a year since I had to worry about a truck on the road and it is so nice to be able to focus on the cows, the milk, and the crew. Every time we’ve needed something, you’ve made it work. Your drivers are professional, courteous, and just nice people. On top of how well this distribution is working for our company, it’s also a nice feeling to be part of a big VT-food carpool when our truck used to be in long lines at the co-op docks while many of the other producers you carry did their own deliveries. It’s better for the farms and saves them money, but it’s also better for the planet to have one vehicle going somewhere instead of many.”
— Amy Huyffer, Strafford Organic Creamery

Below: Driver Neal Renaud about to set out to deliver Vermont foods across the state.
26 FOOD BUSINESS INTAKE EVALUATIONS

8 FARM & FOOD BUSINESSES RECEIVED IN-DEPTH MARKETING SUPPORT

20 FARMS & 6 FOOD BUSINESSES RECEIVED IN-DEPTH BUSINESS PLANNING SUPPORT

OVER 100 PEOPLE PARTICIPATED IN BUSINESS AND MARKETING CLASSES AND WORKSHOPS INCLUDING:

- CAE partnered with STERLING COLLEGE to teach the Spring 2019 Small Business Management Class.
- CAE worked with regional partners to host a FARMER’S FORUM IN ESSEX COUNTY, an underserved agricultural region.
- 25 clients attended a FINANCING AND RESOURCE PANEL where 12 different financial institutions shared information about lending and support resources.

VERMONT FOOD VENTURE CENTER

2,232 HOURS OF KITCHEN RENTAL TIME

22 PRODUCTION CLIENTS

20 STORAGE CLIENTS

3 SERVSAFE CLASSES AND 25 FOOD HANDLERS CERTIFIED
COMMUNITY PROGRAMS

3 GARDEN BEDS built by Hazen students and grow your own at Slapp Hill Apartments

PIES FOR PEOPLE volunteers made 120 PIES for Hardwick area food pantry clients, community dinners, and care centers.

Thank you to our partners: Sterling College, High Mowing Organic Seeds, Cabot Cooperative Creamery, Buffalo Mountain Co-op, Black Dirt Farm, and 20+ community volunteers

120 STUDENTS participated in the 2nd annual Hazen Service Week at 18 project sites

GROW YOUR OWN hosted 12 WORKSHOPS for food independence in 2019 and has 123 members.

OSSU SCHOOLS coordinated to buy over 1,100 POUNDS of local beef in the 2019-2020 school year

23 HAZEN STUDENTS participated in a two week class co-created by students and adults to explore healthy food through cooking, eating and guest presentations.

Just Cut

Processed 137,633 lbs. of veggies up 22% over 2018

Purchased from 16 local farms sold to 24 institutions

Donated 994 pounds of food to local food pantries & community dinners in 2019

“The Loop”, mural by Tara Goreau, at the CAE, 2014.
# FINANCIAL REPORT

## EXPENSES

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<th>Amount</th>
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<tr>
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## REVENUE

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<td>Just Cut Sales</td>
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<td>Fee-for-Service</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,416,527.71</strong></td>
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Right: Atkins Field from above. Photo courtesy of Kyle Gray
Thank you to our supporters!

As a nonprofit, CAE relies on funding from a variety of sources including government and philanthropic grants, modest fees for service, and individual contributions. Because our work is deeply rooted in our place, community support is important not only for guidance, but to keep these programs running year after year.

We are incredibly fortunate to live in a place so rich in agricultural resources, and with a strong network of support for land-based businesses and food processors. Thank you to the individuals, businesses, partners, and organizations who contribute to this work in many ways.

“Currently students, teachers, administrators, and community partners are working to transform our schools so that learning doesn’t just take place in our classrooms but outside them as well, and students can choose from a variety of authentic multidisciplinary learning opportunities. CAE has been a key community member in helping us realize this vision. Each day they are working with students in each of our schools to move learning out into the community... into our local gardens, into our woods, and into our fields - connecting them to their community and to the natural environment. Our students rely on CAE and CAE relies on you.”

— Adam Rosenberg, OSSU Superintendent

Thank you to the hundreds of community members who gave to CAE in 2019!

You can support this work at www.hardwickagriculture.org to get involved and join our community of supporters.