

June
2016

Middlebury Co-op Newsletter

Open 7 Days A Week, 8 to 7
Nine Washington Street
Middlebury, VT

MIDDLEBURY NATURAL
FOODS CO-OP

Come Join Our
40th

Annual Meeting!

Wednesday, June 1, 5:30-7:30pm

AT



Find Out What's Next
For Your Co-op

Enjoy
Flatbread, Salad, Dessert & Drinks
ON US!

Everyone
Welcome!



Dear Members and Friends of Middlebury Co-op,

Welcome June!

The tent for our Green-Up Fest has come down, we are now gearing up for the next major event: our Co-op's Annual Meeting. Middlebury Co-op is 40 years old, a decent age for a small town co-op! Some of our members still remember the Co-op in its beginning stages when we evolved from a buying club into a small storefront, then into a small store, run by a handful of staff members and several handfuls of volunteers.



Many of you remember the “old store”, that is, the store prior to October 2004, when we moved into this beautiful building that we are in now and became what some of us call a *real store*. Of course, we have left behind some of our small-store charm and quirkiness, but I think it is fair to say, we have maintained a supportive community atmosphere, a store where shopping is pleasant and even fun.

Please come celebrate our 40th Co-op Anniversary on Wednesday night from 5:30-7:30 at American Flatbread, located in the Middlebury Marbleworks. Join us to reminisce about times when every single item in the store was price stickered by hand, when 12 staff members shared every single task from ordering to receiving to cashiering; when staff still swept and mopped the floors at the end of each day; and when many a discussion revolved about the issue of carrying white sugar or not. Many things have changed; but our Co-op values of supporting the community and its local agriculture and businesses, doing our best to give good customer service, and providing healthy foods, have stayed the same.

Join us to learn about future Co-op plans. Listen to what other Co-op members have to say and let your own voice be heard. This Co-op, after all, belongs to you... your concerns do matter to the Co-op community! And if you have no specific concerns, come show your support while enjoying some good healthy food and finding out about the election results.

June is National Dairy Month. So it comes as no surprise that we are featuring a Vermont dairy farm and a Vermont cheese maker among three other companies. As always, MNFC members receive a 20% discount on their products during the week the company is featured.

June 2016 is also the month when Co-op member-owners receive their patronage refund... for the first time ever in MNFC history!

In addition to countless sales in the Grocery, Produce, Cheese, and Dairy departments, we will offer some tremendous sales in Bulk Foods: for the beginning of the hiking season, trail mixes will be on sale along with organic peanut butter and other nut butters.



Enjoy gardening.

Plant flowers and kale.

Enjoy the warm weather.

Greet the blue sky.

Look at the stars.

Spend time with friends and family!

Reiner



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Co-op Member Deals

During the Month of June, we will feature five companies that run a good business with responsible practices. During the week of being featured, Co-op members will receive a 20% discount on any item offered by that company.



June 2-8

Vermont Creamery

Websterville, Vermont

Go Local! During June, which is **National Dairy Month**, how could we not feature some of our amazing Vermont dairy producers? The *Vermont Creamery* is one of them. You may be familiar with their fresh chèvre (plain, herbal, and pepper); but do you know the creamery's

excellent not-too-salty goat milk feta and cultured butter?

And you must try the outstanding award-winning cheese they are making...

Couple, made with aged goat's milk, being one of them.

And **Mascarpone**...

... a velvety, rich Italian-style Cream Cheese. It is the magic ingredient in the Italian dessert *Tiramisu*, a delicious coffee-flavored Italian dessert. It is made of lady's fingers dipped in coffee, layered with a whipped mixture of eggs, sugar, and mascarpone cheese, flavored with cocoa. Vermont Creamery Mascarpone is made with fresh, high quality Vermont cream. It is cooked at a high temperature until it is thick, smooth, and sweet. For desserts, whip, sweeten, and serve Mascarpone with fresh berries, or poached pears. Swirl it into soups or fold it into risotto and polenta, mix it with Parmesan cheese and fill raviolis or layer it in lasagna.





June 9-15

Amy's Kitchen

Santa Rosa, California

Not local but still a company responsibly managed offering healthy food, *Amy's Kitchen* is a family-owned, privately held company that manufactures organic and non-GMO convenience and frozen foods.

In their own words: *At Amy's Kitchen, we make food in much the same way as you do at home. We start out with the freshest, organic vegetables we can find. We purchase high quality pastas, grains, beans and hormone free dairy from cows that are pasture raised. We make everything by hand. Our sauces are prepared in stages; first by heating oil, then adding aromatics and followed by fresh veggies and tomatoes. All the ingredients cook slowly until they reach their fullest flavor.*

Amy's Kitchen was founded in 1987 by Andy and Rachel Berliner, and incorporated since 1988, *Amy's Kitchen* took its name from their then-newborn daughter, Amy. All of Amy's 250+ products are vegetarian and made with organic ingredients. The company makes over 130 gluten-free options.

At the Co-op you'll find a great variety of *Amy's* convenient meals in our Frozen section: from Veggie Burgers to Indian entrées, from Macaroni & Soy Cheese to Shepherd's Pie, from a Broccoli & Cheddar Bowl to Pizza!



June 16-22

Neighborly Farms

Brookfield, Vermont

Go Local!

Established as an operating dairy farm more than 30 years ago, Rob and Linda Dimmick along with their three children Bobby, Bailey, and Billy are continuing the tradition on the family farm. Nestled in the rolling hills of Randolph Center, Vermont, *Neighborly Farms* decorates the countryside with its red barn and white post and beam farmhouse built in the 1800s. The farm operates on 168 acres with cropland and grazing fields to support the



dairy and a sugarhouse for producing pure Vermont maple syrup. The clean and tidy barn is home to 48 Holsteins — the black and white cows that symbolize rural living at its very best.

Rob and Linda are continuing the family farming tradition because they have a passion for the land and animals. The farm is a totally organic farm. This means the farm is run in complete harmony with the land and the animals; no antibiotics, no hormones, and no commercial fertilizers. Just pure and natural techniques that keep the cows healthy and happy and the dairy products wholesome and chemical free. It means that the cheese produced at *Neighborly Farms*; cheddars, feta and Monterey Jack are pure and natural. And the best part? The organic cheeses taste great too!



June 23-29
Tierra Farm
Valatie, New York

Tierra Farm is a Certified Organic manufacturer and distributor of nuts and dried fruits, located 20 miles south of Albany, New York. Their customers

consist mainly of cooperatives and independently owned grocery stores that value working with an employee-owned, environmentally conscious company that manufactures its own products.

Tierra Farm started as a diversified organic vegetable farm in the Finger Lakes region of New York. The organic nuts and dried fruit portion of the business started in 1999, as a way to generate income during the slower winter months.

One of their core values has been to cultivate strong relationships with the best organic farmers in the world. Every year *Tierra Farm* purchases an increasing amount of their nuts, seeds and dried fruit directly from the farms, some of which they have worked with for over a decade. Their level of knowledge and communication with their farmers allows them to preserve their organic integrity and ensure fair business practices throughout the supply chain.

Tierra Farm offers exceptional value through outstanding quality at prices that are fair both to the consumer and to the farmer. Their products are made without added oils or refined sugars, in their peanut-free facility. They manufac-

ture the products they sell: they dry roast and flavor nuts and seeds, blend trail mixes, grind butter, cover nuts and fruits in chocolate, and roast fair trade coffee. Everything is made in small, hand-crafted batches to preserve freshness.

Tierra Farm handles only certified organic products which are grown without synthetic pesticides, genetically modified organisms, or chemical fertilizers. This helps sustain biodiversity, conserves fresh water, and enhances the soil. They generate over 70% of their electricity from solar panels and recycle over 60% of their waste. Their boxes are made from recycled cardboard and their deli cup containers from over 50% recycled material - both are recyclable after use.



June 30-July 6

Wood's Market Garden

Brandon, Vermont

Wood's Market Garden is an organic fruit, vegetable and flower farm and seasonal market nestled in the quaint town of Brandon, Vermont. Their fields have been producing fresh food for the greater Brandon community for over 100 years!

Known far and wide for delicious sweet corn and plump, sweet strawberries, *Wood's Market Garden* also grows over 50 kinds of vegetables and fruits on over 60 acres of farmland. The food has been grown organically for over 12 years. The farm also has 7 greenhouses for raising bedding plants, ornamentals, vegetable starts and some of the tastiest early tomatoes in the state!

In past years *Wood's Market Garden* has provided Middlebury Co-op with Cucumbers, Summer Squash, Green Beans, Broccoli, Cauliflower, Tomatoes, Yellow Tomatoes, and... Strawberries!! Everything organic! Also available from *Wood's Market Garden* at the Co-op: Organic Dried Black and Pinto Beans... in our Bulk Foods department.



Global Warming and Climate Change A Problem We Can Potentially Solve Part III

Ross Conrad

The dramatic increase in the earth's atmospheric carbon levels and the accompanying weather changes are part of a natural cycle that was described by Hamaker and Weaver in 1982 and is fully supported by all available scientific evidence. As plants and trees grow they remove and sequester atmospheric carbon. Over time so much carbon is removed from the atmosphere that the earth starts to cool down triggering an ice age. As the glaciers grow and move from the poles toward the equator, they cover and destroy huge areas of forest and vegetative growth releasing significant amounts of CO₂ into the atmosphere. As the levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere climb, the overall temperature of the planet will increase eventually leading to a global warming period and a resulting retreat in the glacier ice. As the glaciers melt, they leave behind ground up rocks that re-mineralize the soil helping to nourish plant life that grows in abundance with help from the warmer temperatures and abundance of carbon in the atmosphere. Over time the earth's plants become so abundant they sequester enough carbon to trigger another ice age and the cycle repeats over again.

The difference today is that the increase in atmospheric carbon we are experiencing is a result of human civilization removing it from deep in the ground and burning it in the form of oil, coal and natural gas. Thus, the atmospheric carbon buildup that normally takes place over tens of thousands of years, has occurred in just a few hundred years and regrettably most plants and animals are simply not able to evolve and adapt fast enough to survive the major shift this is causing in our climate.

While the recent gathering of nations in France to address greenhouse gas emissions and climate change issues known as COP21 resulted in some progress, it did not come close to reaching an agreement that is going to quickly reduce atmospheric carbon to a significant degree any time soon. Things are bad and they are going to get worse before they get better. As a result, it is important to start thinking about how to prepare for a significant increase in the kind of unpredictable weather events we have witnessed in the past decade.

Climate risk

Researcher and farmer, Laura Lengnick points out in her book *Resilient Agriculture: Cultivating food systems for a changing climate*, that changing weather patterns have created a new type of risk for agriculture that scientists call climate risk. Climate risk is defined as the increased uncertainty created by increasingly variable patterns of temperature and precipitation and in increase in frequency and intensity of severe weather events associated with climate change. Part of the unpredictability of climate change is that changes are not uniform throughout the world, within various countries, or even in specific regions. The situation is further complicated by the fact that in some areas, the weather patterns have always been fairly unpredictable.

Exposure

To effectively evaluate the degree of your climate you will want to consider your degree of exposure. Your degree of exposure will have a lot to do with the area where you are located. For example, according to Lengnick, “Heat waves are projected to increase throughout most of the United States, and droughts are likely to become more intense in the Southwest. The growing season will continue to lengthen, increasing by as much as a month in many parts of the nation and as much as two months in the West, while the number of frost days will decline by twenty to thirty days in most of the nation and by even more in the West. Dry periods will lengthen, with the greatest increases expected in the Northwest, Southwest and southern Great Plains, and hot nights are expected to increase by more than eighty per year across the southern US by the end of the century.”

Lengnick goes on to say “There will be more winter and spring precipitation in the northern part of the US and less precipitation in the Southwest, while summer and fall precipitation is likely to remain about the same or decrease in most regions. Both the frequency and intensity of heavy rainfall events are projected to increase.”

Sensitivity

The amount of climate risk we face is also a factor of the degree that we may be impacted, either positively or negatively by climate related effects. For example, do you live or work in a flood plain or are you exposed to prevailing winds? Do you own or run a business already subject to existing stresses that may be aggravated by financial struggles? How many months or years could your business continue without any income? Thinking about the minimum resource conditions required, before the growth and development of your farm or business declines, will give you a good idea of your climate risk sensitivity.

Adaptive capacity

Once we have an idea of our climate risk and level of sensitivity we can evaluate our ability to cope with the challenges ahead through adaptation. Our vulnerability to climate disruption will be a combination of the potential impact of changes to our situation and the capacity of our operation to adapt. Generally speaking, for farmers the adaptive capacity arises from the management of land, purchased inputs such as fertilizer and insecticides, and government subsidies in the form of education, research, development and extension, insurance programs, and agricultural labor exemptions.

In contrast, the adaptive capacity of less vulnerable and potentially more sustainable farming operations is typically a result of managing a smaller number of acres, most inputs produced on the farm, natural pest and disease suppression through management and genetic tolerance, and social capital (such as direct markets) to produce high value products adapted to local resource conditions. The choices that farmers routinely make about the assets they manage—people, land, types of crops, infrastructure, inputs and finances—will largely determine the ability of the operation to sustain production under challenging climate conditions.

We have to recognize that here in Addison County we occupy a place, which has a unique combination of ecological, social and economic conditions. These conditions will impact our capacity to act and develop new abilities to learn, plan and adapt to changing climate conditions, all of which may increase costs and will likely require a high level of financial and emotional flexibility. This creates unique place-based opportunities that enhance our capacity to adapt.

5 Practical Ways to Apply these Ideas Today:

- ◇ Evaluate your climate exposure (e.g. what weather changes are projected for your area?)
- ◇ Evaluate your climate sensitivity (e.g. do you live in a flood plain or are you exposed to prevailing winds?)
- ◇ What is your capacity to adapt to severe climate fluctuations? (e.g. Do you have a financial buffer available if needed or are you financially stressed?)
- ◇ Evaluate your willingness and ability to take action to reduce your climate risk?
- ◇ Work to improve your functional diversity and your response diversity to climate induced stresses. (e.g. have manual tool back-ups for all power tools you currently rely on)

Successful management under changing and unpredictable climate conditions will tend to be determined by a willingness and ability to take action to reduce climate risk. Once we take action, access to various options and existing knowledge for effective action is the final component of adaptive capacity. For example the development of high value, direct retail specialty markets that reduce climate risk through improved profitability and the development of social capital can also help farms and businesses to respond to, and recover from, climate related damages.

Resilience

In the context of adapting to a changing climate, resilience is defined as the ability of a social or ecological system to absorb disturbances while retaining the same basic structure and ways of functioning, as well as be able to maintain the capacity of self-organization, and the capacity to adapt to stress and change. (Parry, M.L., 2007) The capacity of a system (such as an organic farming operation or a cooperative grocery store) to cope with, recover from, and adapt to stress and change reflects adaptive capacity. The capacity to buffer an operation from the impacts of a changing climate, results in resilience.

Since resilience thinking is focused on the behavior of a system, the scale of one's operation is an important consideration in assessing and managing for resilience. While the number of acres managed by the farmer will tend to define the scale for cultivating resilience in the farm for example, resilient thinking also encourages consideration of related issues such as state and federal regulations which often have a direct influence on performance, activities and the farm as a whole.

Diversity

There are two forms of diversity that are important to resilience: functional diversity and response diversity. Generally speaking, diversity results in redundancy which tends to make systems more stable when facing stress. An example of functional diversity is having a wide variety of crops represented in your farm or having hand-powered equipment on hand for when the power is out or gasoline is in short supply. An example of response diversity is a farm with a wide range of products and markets so that dramatic and sudden shifts in consumer preferences can be absorbed more easily. A diversified farming operation or business that can design each part of its enterprise to relative self-sufficiency by limiting interactions between them promotes the strength and sustainability of the whole. Management strategies that emphasize efficiency over response diversity tend to do so at the expense of resilience. (Lengnick 2015)

Transformation

While resilience practices can be used to maintain an existing operation or system, they can also be used to help guide transformation to new structures, functions and purposes. Practicing resilience tends to bring up important questions about the desirability of a system or process. Does the current system meet management goals and objectives? By stepping back and examining the structure and function of an operation (as well as underlying assumptions and rationalizations), ways to improve performance, reduce costs, or increase benefits may become visible. If the operation is performing well, the goal should be to consider enhancing its adaptive capacity; if it is not fulfilling its purpose well, resilience practices can be used to transform the operation to something more desirable. (Meadows 2008)

Those who choose to manage their operation (be it a farm, food co-op, or whatever) for general resilience will work to enhance three key system behaviors: 1) Response Capacity: the ability to respond to disturbances quickly and effectively; 2) Recovery Capacity: the ability to restore damage relatively quickly and; 3) Transformational Capacity: the ability to transition to a new identity or purpose when necessary.

“...it is important to start thinking about how to prepare for a significant increase in the kind of unpredictable weather events we have witnessed in the past decade.”

Strategies for adapting to climate change are likely to fall along a resistance, resilience and transformation continuum. Actions that protect an existing operation from climate effects are referred to as resistance strategies (e.g. planning for likely weather related hazards by moving crops away from rivers and streams to high ground). Resilient strategies will improve the operation's ability to cope with and recover from climate-related stresses, shocks and disturbances (e.g. developing a back-up electrical supply, or stocking up on critical materials that might prove difficult to obtain during a catastrophic weather-related disturbance). Transformation strategies facilitate the transition of an operation to one that is more resilient to current or projected climate conditions. Typically, some characteristics of all three strategies are found in resilient systems. Taken as a whole, this range of management approaches can be seen as the beginning of a climate change resilience tool-kit.

Additional Resilience Considerations

Weather has always been an important factor in business and even more so in farming, but climate risk—and the damage that may be caused by increased weather variability and extreme weather events associated with cli-

mate change—is a unique hazard that is likely to increase in intensity for the rest of this century. Ironically publicly subsidized programs that ensure against climate risk, (such as insurance) while not requiring investment in climate adaption strategies can act as a barrier to the enhancement of climate adaption capacity.

Our agricultural industry in general does not appear to be economically or environmentally sustainable. (Heller and Keoleian, 2003) Key indicators that support this position include the low genetic diversity of many of the major crops in the U.S., the low profitability of farming generally, the age distribution of farmers, the wide proliferation of agricultural pesticides, and the fossil fuel intensity of the agricultural industry. The U.S. agriculture system operates under the assumption of a stable climate and an unlimited flow of global energy and resources. While we are working to bring our climate back into balance, rather than invest in trying to protect agriculture by resisting disturbances, we might be better off investing in the knowledge and assets that enhance the sustainability and resilience of U.S. farmers. This will likely mean changes in focus such as from optimum to robust; from efficient to redundant; from best practice to learn as you go; and from disposable to reduce, reuse, and recycle.

In the meantime for reasons outlined in this three part series of articles, I will be working to reduce my fossil fuel use, avoid industrial factory farmed foods, and purchase and eat ecologically produced foods every chance I get.

References available upon request, from the editor

Ross Conrad is a member of our MNFC Board of Directors

Green Peppers

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fresh salads, soups, pasta, subs, and more.

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Co-op member receive a 10% discount.

Community Works

Jeanne Montrose



A number of years ago, representatives from HOPE, Middlebury College, Acorn, the local business community, and local farmers got together to discuss the possibility of increasing the amount of locally grown food offered at HOPE's local Food Shelf. Addison County farmers grow vast amounts of beautiful, healthy organic fruits and vegetables often unavailable or too pricey to those who need it the most. Our working group sought to bridge this affordability gap.

Not long after our first meeting, the Middlebury Natural Foods Co-op contributed \$8,000 to HOPE for the purpose of supporting our work to create partnerships with farmers. This was a great jump start and allowed us to hire a part-time staff person to build on the work that had been done on a volunteer basis by the Addison County Gleaning Program. We were also now able to purchase supplies, gather food, and make it into soups at the Hannaford Career Center's *Glass Onion* kitchen. Over the past few years, our local food access program has grown and with it this position of Local Food Access coordinator.

An exciting development in this program came when our former Local Food Access Coordinator, Gretchen Cotell, successfully wrote a grant for the Hannaford Career Center to obtain a mobile flash freezer unit from the USDA. We can now freeze surplus produce for HOPE's clients to enjoy a well past normal growing seasons. Our current Coordinator, Lily Bradburn (who also works in the deli at MFNC!) has teamed up with multiple volunteer groups to process several hundred pounds of carrots donated by *Elmer* and *Gildrien* farms, as well as over 240 quarts of soup featuring donated local produce such as potatoes by *New Leaf Organics*.

Currently, Lily is working with farmers to formulate several creative contracts for produce during the 2016 growing season. This food will be purchased at a cost-effective per-pound price and would include crops that do not typically end up being surplus produce on the farm. The crops which Lily is choosing

HOPE (Helping Overcome Poverty's Effects,) is your locally controlled, locally funded poverty relief organization. HOPE has been serving Addison County since 1965, with a broad range of programs and services. HOPE's purpose is not just to administer its own programs, but to anticipate emerging needs, and to work with others to create a response. HOPE's vision is that all people in Addison County have access to the tools and resources necessary to meet their own basic needs.

are selected for freezing, for use in holiday food boxes, and for making into value-added products such as soups and stews.

Lily will also be setting up events for food shelf users – taste tests, cooking demonstrations, recipe swaps, and more. HOPE's food shelf clients are adventurous and keen to try new vegetables and recipes, especially those featuring produce from farmers they know. We are hoping they will join Lily and other volunteers in the fields and at the *Glass Onion* kitchen. We believe that gaps between our clients and the local food community can best be bridged by forming relationships through hands-on participation.

Lily is also planning to offer clients an intro to the MNFC's bulk section. She hopes to show clients the price differences between certain items at the Co-op and other grocery stores in town. The savings to be had by purchasing the amounts needed, rather than a set amount in a costly package, can be considerable! We believe that even families of very limited means will find value in purchasing many products at the Co-op. We want to help them increase their shopping options in a cost-effective manner.

The amount of locally grown food available at HOPE has increased steadily over the past five years. It has been immensely gratifying to see families that formerly left the food shelf with mostly non-perishable, processed food now able to select colorful armloads of red, orange and green veggies! We are confident that this trend will continue. We are very grateful to the MNFC for helping to jump start this change, and for their efforts to be inclusive of everyone in the community and beyond. Local farmers we have worked with are also monumental in our efforts through their tireless efforts to provide every member of our community with their excess produce. Lynn Coale and Woody Danforth at the Hannaford Career Center have greatly helped our efforts to preserve healthy, locally grown produce for extended periods with the use of their facilities, as well as their technical expertise.

The Co-op is guided by a list of seven principals, the seventh being *concern for the community*. Our Co-op takes this very seriously, as can be seen in its efforts to raise money for local food shelves, its educational efforts, its Food for All Program, and more. We are fortunate to have such a wonderful co-op which works to provide options for everyone. From my perspective, the MNFC is very successful in addressing this concern for our community.

If you would like to lend a hand this coming season — dicing, digging, or picking up produce at farms and farmers markets — please e-mail Lily at lbradburn@hope-vt.org. Thank you!!

Jeanne Montrose is the Executive Director of HOPE.