

*Farmers
Working
Together*



*For a Clean
Lake Champlain
and Thriving
Agriculture*

Champlain Valley Farmer Coalition
Newsletter Update
December 11th, 2015

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It looks like fall is nearing its end, and winter is finally creeping in. But what a good fall it has been. Most soils have been workable and even on the dry side, and the weather has been sunny and mild. Perfect conditions for getting your cover crop in the ground and growing! It seems like even cover crops that were planted late are going into winter with good growth and soil cover.

The CVFC, in conjunction with UVM Extension and the NRCS in Middlebury, did a survey of all member-farms and found that our members planted over 6,700 acres of cover crops this fall! Many farmers planted this fall without participating in any NRCS programs, or took their cover crop payments and used them to do EVEN MORE than what they had agreed to do. This just goes to show that farmers are starting to work out the kinks of making cover cropping work on their farm, and are starting to see the benefits through decreased erosion, better soil tilth, and better crop production.

It is great to see so many farmers trying and embracing cover cropping and reducing tillage on their farms. With the new Required Agricultural Practices coming into effect next July 2016 farmers will be asked to cover crop in floodplains and many farmers will need to cover crop to maintain a tolerabel soil loss on their fields. The more we can try different types of cover crops, different application methods, and different termination methods, the easier it will be to transition to this new system and make it become an economic benefit to your farm. At the CVFC annual meeting on January 13th, 2016 as part of our program we will have a farmer panel that will give everyone insight on different ways farmers are making cover crops and reduced tillage work on their farms!

Upcoming Events

- 12/14/2015- **FDA Food Safety Modernization Act**, 10:00am-4:30pm, 50 Main St, Brattleboro
Join representatives of the FDA for an overview of three final FSMA Rules: Produce safety, Preventive controls for human food, and preventive controls for animal food. Visit go.usa.gov/3SV3F for more information.
- 1/5/2016- **CVFC Board of Directors Meeting**, 10:00am-12:00pm, UVM Extension Middlebury Office
Please join us at our first meeting after the New Year where we will be joined by Laura DiPietro of the Agency of Agriculture as she gives us a FIRST LOOK at the revised Draft RAP proposal.
- 1/13/2016- **CVFC Annual Meeting**, 6:00pm-9:00pm, Vergennes American Legion
Don't miss our Annual Meeting on Wednesday, January 13 at 6:00pm at the Vergennes American Legion! We will elect 3 farm members to serve on the Board of Directors, there will be FREE DINNER, the always popular farmer panel, and an engaging and exciting keynote speaker.
- 2/17/2015 – SAVE THE DATE!!! UVM Extension's annual **No-Till & Cover Crop Symposium** will be held at the Sheraton Hotel & Conference Center in Burlington, Vt.

Field Walks

With winter upon us, and our Field Walks coming to an end, we are now excited to turn our attention inside! If you have or know of any practices that are helping make our farms more sustainable, please let us know!



Draft RAP Proposal

On October 20th, the Agency of Agriculture released a draft of the Required Agricultural Practices, new regulations that will replace the AAP's and ask the farming community to do their part to minimize any negative impacts they have to the environment and the lake. The draft proposal can be found by visiting the website http://agriculture.vermont.gov/sites/ag/files/pdf/water_quality/VAAFM-Draft-RAP.pdf

The CVFC gathered in November and went over the proposed regulations, pointing out issues and brainstorming solutions along the way. After this very productive session, we wrote a response letter that articulated where and what sections we were uncomfortable with and what would be a better fit. This letter covered topics ranging from manure stacking sites, farmer trainings, small farm definitions, and buffer zones and setbacks. This comment letter was sent to the Agency of Agriculture after a public hearing in Middlebury on November 18th and will be used by officials to inform them of changes they should make to the regulations.

The CVFC encourages all farms and businesses to provide their input to the Agency of Agriculture. If you or your farm is interested in providing input on the proposed Draft RAPs, you have until December 18th, and your comments can be emailed to AGR.RAP@vermont.gov.

*On **January 5th**, the next CVFC Board of Directors meeting, we will be having Laura DiPietro of the Agency of Agriculture come and give us a first time look at the RAP revisions made during the holiday season. Please come and hear firsthand what the Agency is proposing! These rules will take effect next July 2016, so please don't miss this opportunity to have your voice heard!*

CVFC Annual Meeting Announced!

Want to catch up with your fellow farmers about this past cropping year? Want to come hear a great speaker, learn about what great work the CVFC has done, and learn about what new practices people are trying on their farms? Most importantly, do you want a FREE dinner?

Please come CELEBRATE the great work your organization and its members have done this year. **Our Annual meeting will be held at the Vergennes American Legion on January 13th, 2016. A cash bar and social time will start at 5:30pm, dinner and our annual all-member business meeting will start at 6:00pm, and our evening program will start at 7:00pm.**

This year three Board member have terms that are coming to close, and before dinner we will elect (or reelect) three new members to serve on the Board of Directors. ANY FARM-MEMBER IN GOOD STANDING IS ELEGABLE TO SERVE ON THE BOARD. For more information about the election process or the roles and responsibilities of Board members, please don't hesitate to contact us!

Manure Spreading Ban to take effect Tuesday, 12/15/2015

It's just about that time of year again, the Manure Spreading Ban, which lasts from December 15th until April 1st, 107 Days. During that time, farmers cannot mechanically spread any manure on fields, and any unimproved stacking sites must remain 100ft from wells, property boundaries, and surface water, and cannot be stacked on land subject to overland flow. "Winter presents all of us with weather-related challenges, but for farmers, there is a heightened need for vigilance," according the Chuck Ross, Vermont's Secretary of Agriculture. "Safety, stewardship practices, and advance-planning must remain top-of-mind for all our farmers this winter."

To read the full press release, please visit <http://agriculture.vermont.gov/node/1177>.

FARMERS COVERED A LOT OF GROUND THIS FALL

More Than 6,000 Acres of Cover Crops Planted by Champlain Valley Farmer Coalition Farms!

Champlain Valley Farmer Coalition (CVFC) members planted 6,735 acres of winter cover crops this fall on farmland in Addison, Chittenden and Rutland counties to help protect water quality, improve soil health and increase next year's crop yields.

A cover crop is a crop that is planted for the primary purpose of covering the soil to protect fields from erosion and nutrient loss while building soil health when a cash crop is not growing. These cover crops will hold the soil and reduce nutrient runoff and leaching through the fall, winter and spring, when soil and water quality is most vulnerable. The 36 CVFC farms that reported growing cover crops this year planted acreage that ranged from eight (8) acres to 800 acres from as far north as Milton to as far south as Danby. These cover crops were planted many different ways and included a diversity of plant species such as winter cereal rye, annual ryegrass, oats, clover, vetch and even radish and turnip.

Many CVFC farms also participated in ongoing research and demonstration projects in conjunction with the UVM Extension Champlain Valley Crop, Soil & Pasture Team based out of Middlebury; and hosted field days on their farms to help other farmers learn more about the art of cover cropping on different soil types, in different cropping systems and with different equipment. This fall, CVFC member Foster Brothers Farm were the host site for a UVM Extension Soil Health Workshop and Field Day that welcomed nationally renowned soil health advocate, Ray Archuleta, to share exciting soil health concepts followed by a field day in one of the Foster's corn fields to show 16 different combinations of cover crops. The event was attended by more than 80 people, including 40 farmers from around the region.

There are many resources available to farmers interested in planting and learning more about cover crops. UVM Extension, USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service, and the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets all have technical and/or financial resources available to people who want to implement this best management practice on their farms.

Thank you members for your dedication and keep up the good work!

Champlain Valley Farmer Coalition Inc.

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Contact us at info@champlainvalleyfarmercoalition.com or (802)-388-4969 ext 348

www.champlainvalleyfarmercoalition.com

23 Pond Lane
Suite 300
Middlebury, VT 05753

