

Securing the Future of Maine's Organic Farms



*An impact report highlighting
the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association's
Beginning Farmer Training Programs*

February 2016

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USDA Beginning Farmers and Rancher Development Program

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Table of Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Executive Summary | 1 |
| Introduction | 3 |
| Maine - <i>A national leader in organic and beginning farmer training and support</i> | 6 |
| MOFGA - <i>Proven success in farmer education and training</i> | 8 |
| The Journeyperson Program - <i>The future of Maine’s organic agriculture economy</i> | 11 |
| Journeyperson Case Studies | 14 |
| Bahner Farm | |
| Sheepscot General | |
| Fail Better Farm | |
| The Milkhouse Creamery | |
| Conclusions | 21 |
| Appendices | 22 |
| References | 34 |

Executive summary

Beginning farmers are at the forefront of Maine’s emerging agricultural transformation. These new farmers are providing healthy food, creating jobs, and breathing life into our rural communities.

Between 2008 and 2014, Maine added 138 organic farms, more than any other state in the country. The state also added 30,000 acres of organic farmland. In 2014 these farms had annual gross sales of \$54 million, up by 77 percent from 2008.

Nationally, Maine has the second highest percentage of beginning farmers (those who have farmed for less than ten years). These beginning farmers currently make up 33 percent of Maine’s primary farm operators and the community is growing rapidly. These new farms bring jobs to rural communities and provide opportunities for more Mainers to earn a living farming.

This significant growth is largely due to Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association’s (MOFGA) Beginning Farmer Training Programs, which include our Apprenticeship and Journeyman Programs (see page two for program descriptions).

In the last ten years, more than 1,500 people have completed the 3-6 month Apprenticeship Program and 230 have completed the two-year Journeyman Program. A recent survey of journeymen found that 92 percent are still farming, 87 percent in Maine. These journeyman graduates are farming on over 10,000 acres and there are new farms in each of Maine’s 16 counties. These farms have created nearly 800 paid jobs and have the potential to gross \$10 million in annual sales.

MOFGA is proud to lead this agricultural resurgence. MOFGA’s farmer education programs are fueling Maine’s new agriculture economy, creating new jobs, and reinventing the face, role, and possibility of farming in Maine. These innovative programs are attracting thousands of young people to Maine to receive training in production and business skills that lead to economic opportunity and growth throughout the state.

Organic farming: An economic bright spot in Maine

“While government programs can help, many attribute the growth – especially in the ranks of young farmers – to innovative, private-sector programs such as an apprenticeship program run by Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association”

*~Editorial, Bangor Daily News,
September 30, 2015*

MOFGA's Beginning Farmer Training Programs

Apprenticeship Program

3-6 month on-farm training experience

- ❖ Over 1,500 apprentices have participated since program inception in 1978
 - Connects people wanting to learn organic farming with experienced farmers
 - Hands-on learning in the field and at market
 - Free access to weekly Farm Training Project workshops & visits exploring farms throughout the state

Journeyman Program

Two-year intensive production and business training for farmers with 3-5 years of growing experience looking to build their own farm business

- Over 230 Journeyman trained since 1999
- Program participation more than doubled in the past five years

The Journeyman Program includes the following components:

- Individualized mentorship
- Business and production focused targeted learning with topics including:
 - MOFGA's Farm Beginnings® business-planning courses
 - Enterprise budget creation
 - Crop specific expertise
 - Farm taxes
 - Land access and preservation
 - Marketing and market development
- Free access to all MOFGA's educational programming, resources, technical advice, and admission to events
- Free access to shared-use farm equipment pool
- Educational stipend for classes and workshops
- Group purchase discounts

Additional Resources

MOFGA offers a robust suite of educational workshops, trainings, and opportunities throughout the year that are available to apprentices and journeymen at low or no cost. A full list of MOFGA's educational offerings is included in the Appendix on page 33.

Introduction

The Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association (MOFGA) has produced this report to highlight the many contributions that organic farmers are making to the vibrancy of Maine's economy, communities, and agricultural landscapes. With a focus on past and present participants in MOFGA's Journeyperson Program, this report documents the contributions of Maine's beginning farmers and the tremendous impact of their work. Data included in this report was drawn from the 2012 USDA Census of Agriculture, the 2014 USDA Organic Survey, and a 2015 MOFGA Journeyperson Program participant survey.

Organic farming offers hopeful solutions for many pressing global challenges including climate change, access to healthy food, water scarcity, pollution, biodiversity, and world hunger. Most broadly, the goal of organic farming is to maximize the net benefits that society receives from agricultural production of food and fiber and from ecosystem services provided by farms.ⁱ Organic farming has the potential to significantly contribute to the global food supply, while avoiding the detrimental social and environmental impacts of industrialized agriculture.ⁱⁱ On a local and state level, organic agriculture and local food system development offers the added benefit of economic opportunities for farmers through high value sales. This also provides community revitalization through direct market access to food, fiber and forest products, improved soil health, increased biodiversity, and preservation of working farmland.



Linus, the youngest farmer at The Milkhouse in Monmouth, ME

Organic farming and local food systems have **positive economic impacts** on a local, state, and national level. Income and employment growth due to creation of farmers market and farms serving local communities are well documented in local foods research. More specifically, eliminating dollars lost to “middlemen” through farmers’ retention of a higher portion of the food dollarⁱⁱⁱ, and the concept of local food system improvement as a development strategy for rural areas are identified as key factors for economic growth^{iv}.

Overall, the expansion of local food markets implies that **consumers are purchasing more of their food from nearby sources**, and that more of the money they spend remains in their local community^v. This trend is reflected in Maine where 70 percent of journeypersons report marketing the majority of their products within 25 miles of their farms^{vi}.

Organic farming **improves soil health**. Crop rotation, reduced tillage, cover cropping, fallow periods, manuring and balanced fertilizer application, all practices essential to the organic system, restore and maintain soil fertility^{vii}.

Organic farming and local food systems **contribute to community health and vitality**. A growing organic farm economy adds to an enhanced sense of place, helps secure working farmland, and increases community connections formed through farmers markets, community supported agriculture activities, and other direct market food access points. All of these benefits add significant value in local communities.

Between 2008 and 2014, Maine's:

➤ *Total number of organic farms increased*

36%

➤ *Total value of organic products sold increased by*

77%

➤ *Value added organic product sales increased*

126%^{viii}

Several MOFGA journeypersons describe social and community goals in addition to their farm production and growth goals. Ben and Taryn Marcus, for example, developed a café and general store as part of their farm operation in Whitefield, ME to address what they expressed as “a need, especially in rural places, for gathering places that cater to the local crowd” (see pg. 16). This vision and multi-faceted purpose of Maine’s emerging local and organic food economy makes for **creative economic models that place the farm as an essential element of vibrant communities**.

The total value of organic[□] products sold in Maine increased by 77 percent between 2008 and 2014^{viii} (Appendix 3). In addition, *The Locavore Index* in 2015 again ranked Maine #2 in the nation in terms of commitment to healthy local food. This ranking takes into consideration each state's per-capita direct sales of farm product to consumers; along with per-capita numbers of farmers markets, CSAs, and food hubs and the percentage of school districts with farm-to-school programs^{ix} (Appendix 4). This data shows that Maine is at the forefront of an ongoing transformation in farming. As a state, we are well positioned to expand this growing sector provided we carefully identify and develop the resources responsible for these trends.

Organic farming in Maine has a unique face. Though increasing, acreage on organic farms in Maine currently averages 113 acres/farm compared to the national average of 260 acres/farm on organic farms^{viii}. Maine's farms are largely family-scale operations focused on local and regional sales and adding value to their local communities. The priority of Maine's organic farming sector and the focus of MOFGA's educational programs is to strengthen the viability and market share of existing farms while training and assisting new farmers. MOFGA's new farmer training equips farmers with the skills and resources needed to be successful and provides links and other connections to help new farmers obtain the land they'll need to establish new farms.



Organic kale thrives on Bahner Farm in Belmont, ME.

Within the context of current national and state trends in beginning and organic farming, USDA census data provides a compelling story of Maine's powerful new farmer groundswell. Further, MOFGA survey data shows that the Journey person Program is a significant contributor to the state's strengthening organic sector.

Targeted, effective farmer education is one key to the growth of the organic farming sector in Maine and will allow us to expand and deepen these economic, community, and environmental benefits over time. MOFGA's farmer education initiatives are founded on core principals of experiential, peer-to-peer learning models that draw on local expertise, are accessible and engaging to new and established farmers, and build communities of learning that can last a lifetime.

A leader in the organic farming movement for 45 years, Maine ranked first among the states in the latest national organic agriculture survey when it came to adding new organic farms^{viii}. This encouraging feat, accomplished in a sparsely populated state with limited large-scale urban market access, is a testament to the support, resources, and educational programs MOFGA offers to inspire and train new farmers.

* The term "organic" includes both certified organic farms and those exempt by USDA from certification due to grossing less than \$5,000 annually from organic sales.

Maine

A national leader in organic and beginning farmer training and support

A recent editorial in the Bangor Daily News was aptly titled, “Organic farming: Maine’s small economic bright spot.” The editors noted that, “while government programs can help, many attribute the growth — especially in the ranks of young farmers — to innovative, private-sector programs such as an apprenticeship program run by the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association...”^x. MOFGA’s new farmer training programs and partnerships are making this economic bright spot a reality in Maine.

New USDA organic survey data tells a compelling story about the burgeoning organic industry in Maine, Maine’s role as a leader in the organic farming movement, and the ongoing economic potential of this flourishing sector. Between 2008 and 2014, Maine added 138 organic farms, more than any other state. It also increased sales of organic products by 77 percent to over \$54 million and added over 30,000 acres of organic farmland. The state also increased the percentage of farm income earned from organic sales. These significant advances stand in contrast to national declines in the number of organic farms, certified acreage, and more modest sales increases^{viii}. This is due in large measure to the supportive work MOFGA does to build the organic farmer base through its training programs. It also provides strong encouragement to continue fostering and expanding this critical sector in Maine’s economic, environmental, and community life.

*Maine is currently #6
in total number of
organic farms, up from
#12 in 2008^{viii}.*

A driving force for the continued growth of organic and direct-market farms in Maine is the strong presence of beginning farmers. Maine has the second highest concentration of beginning farmers in the nation. Ninety-seven percent of beginning farmers, those with fewer than 10 years of farming experience, and many organic farmers in Maine fall into the USDA categories of “small-farmers,” defined as farms with an annual gross cash income of less than \$349,000, retirement farms, and those operated by people who classify their primary income as “off-farm.” Together, these four categories make up 32.5 percent of all farmers in the state and hold 22 percent of the state’s agricultural acreage^{xi}.

*87% of MOFGA-
trained
journeypersons own
and operate farms in
Maine^{vi}.*

The future of Maine’s agricultural landscapes and economies depend on the ongoing attraction, retention, and training of these farmers.

For 45 years, MOFGA has offered programs and services that attract new farmers to the state, keep young people in Maine to start farms, and provide critical skills, resources, and connections that help ensure long-term farm viability. Between 2007 and 2012 the number of beginning farmers nationwide dropped 20 percent. In contrast, the number of beginning farmers in Maine increased, bucking national trends and underscoring the value of the critical resources available in the state to successfully attract and support beginning farmers^{xi}.



Fresh, organic tomatoes and peppers are a mainstay at the Bahner Farm market stand.

MOFGA

Proven success in farmer education and training



Established as the first state-based organic farming advocacy organization in the country, MOFGA has been working with and for farmers for 45 years. Since its inception, MOFGA has led the region and nation and remains the largest organization of its type in the United States.

With over 11,000 dues-paying members including farmers, business owners, gardeners and community supporters, MOFGA serves as the voice of organic farming in Maine, safeguarding organic integrity and connecting expert farmers with aspiring farmers to provide critical hands-on educational opportunities aimed at retaining Maine's organic farms. MOFGA's policy work at the state and national level engages lawmakers, which helps shape legislation that encourages sector growth and protects the interests of Maine's small farmers.

MOFGA offers a continuum of educational activities designed to support new and more experienced farmers and offers skills and resources aimed at encouraging long-term success in production *and* business. Farmer education programs range from introductory workshops to full-time, hands-on learning opportunities like the Apprenticeship Program and in-depth, individualized farm development mentorship and training through the Journeyman Program.

Created in 1978, MOFGA's Apprenticeship Program connects interested people, often with little or no farm experience, with hands-on farm learning opportunities. Mentored learning in the field helps apprentices make informed decisions about whether farming is a path they want to pursue. While many Apprenticeship Program participants elect to pursue other careers, this program brings young people to Maine, deepens appreciation for the challenging business and production aspects of organic farming, and provides a key labor source for Maine's organic farms.

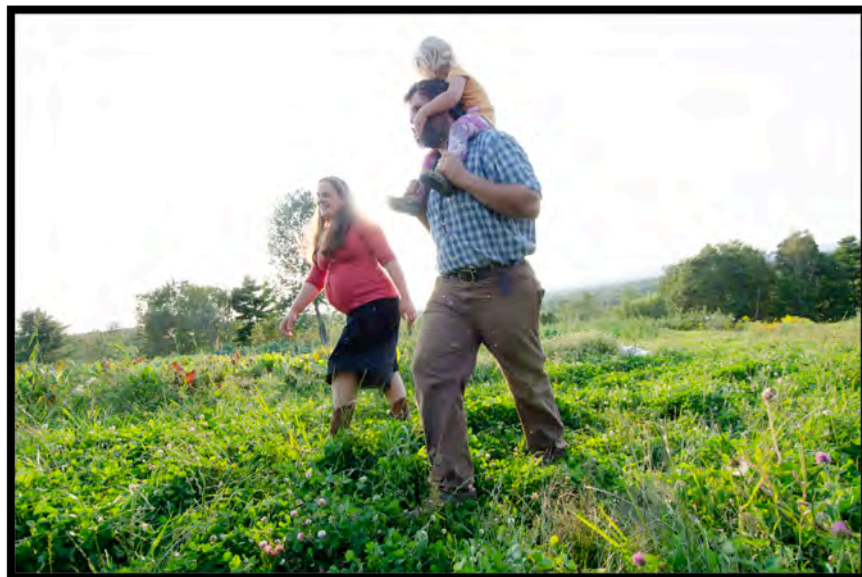


In 1999, MOFGA responded to farm community appeals by establishing the Journeyperson Program to fill the continuing education gap between the stage of apprentice and independent farmer. This two-year educational program provides resources and opportunities for beginning farmers. MOFGA carefully screens applicants from a large pool of experienced and committed beginning farmers to select those who have either completed a MOFGA apprenticeship or who have equivalent farm management or farm work experience. MOFGA selects trainees who have at least two years of hands-on farming background as this base knowledge better equips journeypersons to take full advantage of the comprehensive resources available through the program.

Over 1,500 apprentices and 230 journeypersons have participated in these critical programs and many are currently operating successful farms in Maine.

Through the Apprenticeship and Journeyperson Programs, MOFGA directs the significant resources and expertise of the organization's experienced farmer and member network into attracting, training, and supporting the next generation of Maine farmers.

The programs have grown in scope over the past 15 years. Still, the growing number of applicants, combined with new opportunities for advanced training, makes clear that further investment in these programs is crucial to meeting the needs of our emerging organic farmers.



Christa Bahner, a former Journeyperson & Farmer-in-Residence, with her family on their farm in Belmont, ME.

Journeypersons

The driving force of Maine's new farmer economy.

230
new farmers
trained

92%
still
farming

87%
farming
in Maine

Journeyperson

farms...



... create 745 jobs in rural counties



... earn \$2.5 Million/year in sales



... are in all of Maine's 16 counties

... manage -10,000 acres using organic and sustainable practices



70%

sell more than half of their products within 25 miles of the farm

74%

sell direct through farmers markets, CSA's, and, farm stands

The Journeyperson Program

The future of Maine's organic agriculture economy

Typical of many of their peers, the journeypersons profiled in this report are innovative thinkers working collaboratively with their farmer and consumer neighbors to build a new agricultural economy and to make a living growing food and fiber. In doing so, they are helping to ensure that the next generation of Maine farmers preserve working agricultural lands and create viable markets.

The future of Maine's farms, exemplified by Journeyperson Program participants, is a farm economy and landscape that is:

- **Collaborative**
- **Community oriented**
- **Innovative**
- **Entrepreneurial**
- **Successful**

Before entering the Journeyperson Program, aspiring growers often initiate their farm learning by spending time working for established farms and honing their interests, skills, and farm vision. Because of this past experience, when these farmers are accepted into the Journeyperson Program, they are positioned to capitalize on the resources and support the program offers. During their two years of training, these new farmers develop and sharpen their business and production skills to help ensure a secure future for their emerging farm operation.

The educational foundation of the Journeyperson Program is hands-on, peer-to-peer learning that helps new farmers learn to grow top quality produce, manage livestock, and think critically about business development and whole farm planning. When compared to Maine's average beginning farmer, the income generated on journeypersons' farms is 22 percent higher, and journeypersons are 72 percent more likely to succeed in the most critical first five years on the farm^{xi.vi}.

These statistics are not a coincidence. They are the result of MOFGA's innovative and thoughtful educational programming which helps new farmers build successful, well-rounded businesses employing growth-oriented business plans.

The Journeyperson Program helps small, organic, and beginning farmers build strong farm foundations for long term economic and production viability.

“The net effect of the program was that it made me more confident in my ability to run a farm and uncovered a wealth of resources through the networking opportunities it provided.”
~ Ivelisse Rivera,
Journeyperson, 2014

In August 2015, MOFGA surveyed 210 past and present journeypersons. Data collected from the 110 respondents shines new light on the program's strengths and successes. Journeypersons are building and sustaining successful farm businesses in Maine, earn more from on-farm income than beginning farmers overall, and indicate their intention to increase production in the future (Appendix 2).

Ninety-two percent of reporting Journeyperson Program participants are still farming^{vi}, a stark contrast to the national farm failure rate of 53 percent in the first five years^{xi}. Eighty-seven percent of these journeypersons have established farms in Maine, further strengthening rural economies throughout the state. Survey respondents hailed from 22 states and countries. Ninety-four percent did NOT grow up on a farm, and 87 percent hold college degrees^{vi}.

45%
of Maine's organic farmers^{viii} and
70%
of journeypersons^{vi} have indicated their intention to increase organic production in their five-year production plan.

The national average is only
39%^{viii}.

The average age among surveyed journeypersons is 34 compared to a national average age among beginning farmers of 49^{vi,xi}.

MOFGA's Journeyperson Program attracts and trains a critical base of new, young, and beginning farmers from a wide geographic area and helps them establish successful farms in Maine.

Journeypersons are achieving great success on their farms. An overwhelming majority of journeypersons

report increases in:

- **farm income**
- **number of marketing outlets**
- **overall production**
- **land in production**
- **systems efficiencies**
- **number of employees**

Most farmers noted that the Journeyperson Program was crucial or very important in improving their farming practices in target areas, notably whole farm and business planning. Every year, these new farmers are cultivating more land. Seventy-nine percent of journeypersons are farming more than 5 acres, and 12 percent are farming 100+^{vi}.

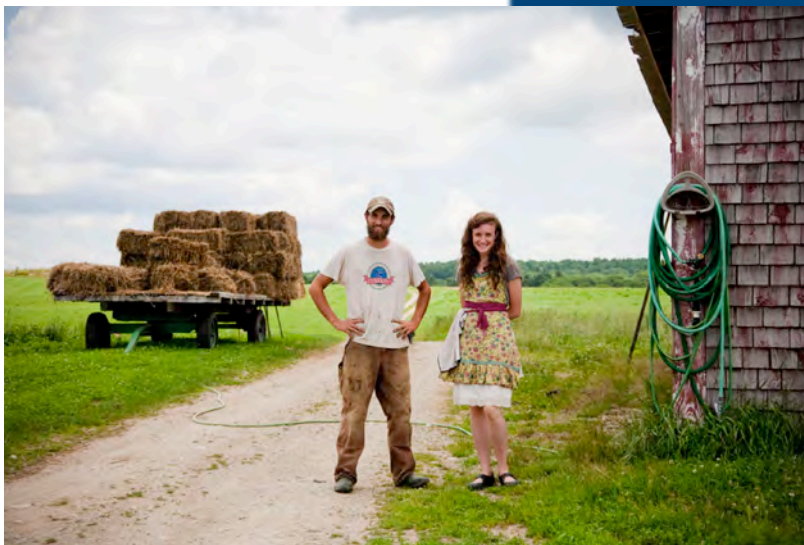
Farms operated by journeypersons are creating jobs in Maine's rural communities today and will continue expanding employment opportunities as their successful farms grow. Seventy-two percent of journeyperson owner/operators in Maine have one or more full-time year round employees. When we include all paid employment (seasonal and part-time in addition to full-time year round), journeyperson-operated farms have created nearly 800 jobs. Seventy percent of survey respondents intend to expand their operations in the coming 5 years, likely creating additional full- and part-time jobs^{vi} (Appendix 2).

Journeyperson alumni report continuous engagement with the community of new and experienced farmers they created during their time in training. The Journeyperson Program provides the opportunity to turn the dream of becoming a farmer into a reality while opening the door to long-term investments in local communities and economies.

These well-educated farmers from all walks of life are choosing to farm, raise families, and extend deep roots in Maine.

Journeyperson farmers are contributing to new job development, local economic growth, and community revitalization in the counties where they farm, market, and live. The following four case studies illustrate some of the variety and ingenuity of journeyperson farmers.

*"The Journeyperson Program exemplifies MOFGA's tradition of practical peer-to-peer education and builds community, expertise, and professionalism among the next generation of Maine's organic farmers. It's no wonder this program inspires similar programs at agricultural organizations across the country."
~Alice Percy, Treble Ridge Farm & MOFGA Board President*



Ben and Taryn Marcus at Sheepscoot General in Whitefield, ME

Journeyperson case studies

Snapshots of four Maine farms



Christa Bahner,
Owner and farmer

Bahner Farm

Belmont, ME

CSA, farm-stand, direct market
Journey person Farmer-in-Residence
2008 to 2010



Christa Bahner is co-owner and farmer at Bahner Farm, a diversified vegetable and small fruit farm located in Belmont, ME. After apprenticing on various farms in Maine while completing her degree in plant and soil science at UMass Amherst, Christa served as MOFGA's Farmer-in-Residence Journey person from 2008 to 2010. The Farmer-in-Residence operates a small organic farm on MOFGA's grounds in Unity, ME. During one of her apprenticeships at Peacemeal Farm in Dixmont, Christa met her future husband Mike, a native Mainer who had also started as a MOFGA apprentice and had worked his way up to crew manager.



According to Christa, "The Apprenticeship Program and the Farmer-in-Residence Program are the most important work that MOFGA does and my current success in agriculture is a direct result of being involved in those programs."

As a journey person, Christa learned tried and true farming skills, and garnered the confidence as a grower and business person she needed to take the leap to start her own farm business. Since purchasing their property in 2009, the Bahners have used creative methods to draw customers. They launched a successful social media fundraising campaign to build a beautiful farm stand and have established a strong, reliable web presence for their farm, which is located just east of Belfast on busy Route 3.

Christa and Mike currently sell produce at three farmers' markets, have 100-plus member summer and winter CSAs, and operate a farm stand which is open 7 days a week from May through October. Their farming practices focus on increasing soil health, crop quality, and production efficiency to provide customers with the best possible produce while providing the farm family and crew with a high quality of life on the farm.

Christa's advice for current or future JPs on their farm journey?

"Lower your shoulder, get to work and know you are doing

From the beginning, Christa has worked towards a farm business that is financially, socially and ecologically sustainable. Christa loves being her own boss and working outside and appreciates that without small farms there would be no local, quality food movement. She enjoys the many aspects of farming; plant and soil science, marketing, mechanics, metal work, manual labor, outdoor work, and the expectation of unknown challenges. Christa and Mike are constantly changing and adapting their business to meet their long term goals of ecological vibrancy, financial stability, and personal and familial joy.

Taryn and Ben Marcus
Owners, farmers, and store
managers

Sheepscot General store & farm

Whitefield, ME

Farm store & café, u-pick
strawberries

Journeypersons 2010 to 2012



Sheepscot General store and farm, operated by journeyperson alumnae Taryn and Ben Marcus, is a contemporary general store situated on a 56-acre farm in Whitefield. Here they grow 6 acres of MOFGA certified organic produce and 30+ acres of hay. The farm and store offers pick-your-own strawberries, sells locally sourced produce and products, and features seasonal, local fare on the café menu.

The general store is at the heart of Taryn and Ben’s business. Featuring an array of local vendors including produce from gardeners in town, Ben and Taryn offer real, local flavor and an inventory that represents the tastes and colors of their area. It has evolved into a community hub as well as a destination for people from other parts of the country. Not only does the store offer options for people looking for a bite to eat or to pick up some groceries, it also hosts community events that bring people together around music, art, education, and food. According to Ben and Taryn, “there is a need, especially in rural communities, for gathering places that cater to the local crowd.”



What started as a bare-bones farm store during their time as journeypersons has grown into a thriving hub of local community, economy, and culture. Starting out, Taryn and Ben didn’t have any employees; they were “just working a lot and figuring it out.” In its first four years, the business has grown to include eight employees. After several years of rental agreements, the couple successfully purchased the farm in 2015, a significant landmark in their long-term plan for economic success.

Their journeyperson experience connected Ben and Taryn with expert advice and a network of support through their mentors and the wider community

of farmers and service providers. Through these relationships they learned the details of organic growing methods and retail business operation. Access to MOFGA’s business planning courses and the stipend they received through the Journeyperson Program allowed Taryn and Ben to tailor their learning experience to best fit their farm store business goals. They credit MOFGA - specifically the Journeyperson and Apprenticeship Programs - for the strong sense of community among farmers in Maine. “It contributes to a greater well-being and a sense of community support,” says Ben.

Ben & Taryn’s advice for future JPs on their farm journey?

“Be creative, focused and pro-active. Think about getting good at growing one or a few things at a time, build your name with those things. Be thrifty. Make the farm pay for itself and for you without exhausting either.”

Caitlin Frame & Andy Smith
Owners and farmers

The Milkhouse Creamery
Monmouth, ME

Value added dairy, direct market
Journeypersons 2011 to 2013



Though Clayton Carter grew up on a family farm in Indiana, he did not intend to continue the family farming tradition. Instead he pursued a career as a computer programmer for a space-based telescope. Over time, and with help from MOFGA's Journeyperson Program, Clayton's path has come full circle. He is now a full-time farmer running Fail Better Farm, a small-scale, direct-market farm in Etna, ME. In the ten years since Carter was the Journeyperson Farmer-in-Residence, he's grown Fail Better Farm into a thriving production farm focused on efficiency and long-term sustainability.



Carter has not only been busy raising his seven-year-old son and growing his farm business; he has also been instrumental in the founding of the Waterville and Bangor Farmers' Markets, active on the board of the Orono Farmers' Market, and a key player in the revitalization of the Maine Federation of Farmers' Markets.

Farmers' markets are the lifeblood of Fail Better Farm and provided stability for Clayton and his family as the farm grew and became established. He relishes farmers' markets for the economic opportunities they provide for new and start-up farms. They also help create a social and cultural nexus enabling farmers, families, and neighbors to connect and communicate through food.

The Fail Better Farm of today is a far cry from the fledgling farm started through MOFGA's Farmer-in-Residence program in 2006; Carter credits his early journeyperson farm training with preparing him to successfully transition his farm to a "real" operation. Because of his practical learning experience and proven farming track record, he was able to negotiate financing through the USDA Farm Service Agency, which enabled him to purchase land and stabilize farm assets. Significant paperwork and diligent recordkeeping learned through Organic Certification and training in the Journeyperson Program allowed Clayton to successfully pursue the loans and services and to make important, data-driven decisions on how to grow, expand, and maximize efficiency on his farm.

Carter says, "Maine's sustainable agricultural community and particularly the top quality farmers I've met through MOFGA and the Journeyperson Program are significant assets to my farm's ongoing success." These friends, colleagues, mentors, and apprentices are part of what initially drew Carter to Maine. For almost a decade, Clayton Carter and Fail Better Farm have contributed skills, enthusiasm, energy, and top quality vegetables to help make Maine's agricultural economy and communities thrive. Caitlin Frame and Andy Smith met while working as MOFGA farm apprentices. Hailing from Upstate New York, Caitlin had worked seasonally on farms in the area, but sought more in-depth training. After learning of MOFGA's Apprenticeship Program,

***Clayton's advice for future
JPs on their farm
journey?***

"Work to solidify your farm goals and plans, there are so many resources available to you it's helpful to take the
mc



Caitlin headed to Maine to take advantage of the farmer training resources available through MOFGA's Beginning Farmer Programs. She landed at Long Meadow Farm in West Gardiner and later teamed up with Andy to pursue a farmstead dairy. Andy, who is originally from Pennsylvania, came to Colby College with an interest in native plants and restoration ecology. Leading an effort to reinvigorate the Colby garden helped shift Andy's interest to agriculture and spurred his involvement in MOFGA as a volunteer at the Common Ground Country Fair. After graduation, Andy apprenticed for two years at Villageside Farm in Freedom. There he learned the ins and outs of certified organic farming at a production scale and fell in love with a grumpy cow named Lucy.

The pair moved up the MOFGA farmer training ladder and became journeypersons working with experienced farmers Paige Tyson and Spencer Aitel at Two Loons Farm in South China. There they made strong connections with their mentors, who continued to provide guidance, expertise and advice as their independent business came to fruition. Their farming venture culminated in the creation of The Milkhouse Creamery. Caitlin and Andy, along with their son Linus, raise dairy cows, pigs and laying hens and make a delectable selection of fresh, certified organic yogurt, recently lauded by the Portland Press Herald for its "addictive texture."

After years with land rental and lease arrangements on other people's property, The Milkhouse relocated in 2015 to its new location in Monmouth.

Due in large part to the connections they made as journeypersons, Caitlin and Andy have been able to tap into a network of peers, government and non-profit services, and essential skills that have allowed them to develop markets, expand their business and pursue their dream of land ownership.

Both Caitlin and Andy were drawn to agriculture through a commitment to building sustainable food systems and the pursuit of a triple bottom line to achieve sustainability across community, local economy, and food.



Their farm and future have evolved and are secure today in a way that felt unimaginable when they met in 2010. Their vision and tenacity, together with the resources, personal connections, and experiences they gleaned as journeypersons have built a strong, viable, dynamic farm business that promises to be an inspiration to the beginning farmers of the future.

Caitlin's advice for future JPs on their farm journey?

“Though farming can be frustrating on the day to day, it is incredibly satisfying to have this incredible thing in front of you at all times. I love having a quality, healthy food product available publically, out in the world for people to eat.”

Journey person farms have real impact in local communities

92% of journey person graduates are still farming, 81% are primary farm owners/operators and 87% are farming in Maine^{vi}.

As highlighted in the case studies above and evident on journey person farms throughout the state, these unique farms are local hubs for economic and market development, job creation, and community revitalization. Journey persons are farming over 10,000 acres of land across all of Maine's 16 counties. Journey person farms support nearly 800 jobs, many in Maine's most economically challenged regions. Additionally, on average Journey person's net cash farm income is 22 percent higher than the average among Maine's beginning farmers overall^{vi,xi}.

According to the USDA 2014 Organic Survey, organic farmers in Maine are averaging nearly \$1,000/acre. Many of Maine's organic and journey person farms operate on systems that focus on labor-intensive, high-value production. Though most beginning farmers are not there yet, with ongoing support for infrastructure, production improvements, and expanded markets, data suggests a potential annual gross sales income of over \$10 million^{viii,vi} on farms operated by MOFGA trained journey persons.

Since the Journey person Program's inception, 230 new farmers have been trained, an average of 14 new farmers each year. However, the number of journey persons enrolled each year has grown significantly since 2011. Increased interest in the program among young people is compelling the organization to seek expanded grant and foundation support to continue evolving this innovative program.

While early cohorts trained 5 to 10 farmers, more recent cohorts trained 15 to 25. This is significant as we examine data released in the 2014 USDA Organic Survey and note that Maine led the nation in new farm creation between 2008 and 2011. A total of 138 new certified and exempt organic farms were created during the period, an average of 23 new organic farms established each year^{viii}.



The farmers market stand of Fail Better Farm - Etna, ME

Maine's sustainable agricultural community and particularly the top quality farmers I've met through MOFGA and the Journeyperson Program are significant assets to my farm's ongoing success."

~ Clayton Carter, Journeyperson Farmer-in-Residence, 2006 to 2008

MOFGA is training the new farmers who are drawing national attention and showcasing the agricultural leadership of Maine.

Though it is difficult to document an exact economic multiplier that accurately captures the many positive impacts of local farm sales, we know that a higher percentage of money spent close to home at local businesses stays in the local community. A 2005 study estimated that each dollar spent at farmers' markets in Iowa generated 58 cents in indirect and induced sales, and that each dollar of personal income earned at farmers' markets generated an additional 47 cents in indirect and induced income (multipliers of 1.58 and 1.47, respectively)^{xii}. The creation of local farms, markets and retail outlets provides

numerous economic and community benefits. At local markets, farmers capture the full dollar of their product sales while consumers are able to locally source nourishing food, share experiences, and obtain services from their neighbors. All of these activities aid in building the social fabric of Maine communities. Journeypersons are selling an overwhelming majority of their products in the local marketplace (Appendix 1, Table 1).

Seventy percent of journeypersons sell more than half of their total farm products within 25 miles of their farm. Not only are they being efficient in their marketing and transport of products, they are establishing mutually beneficial relationships with close neighbors and local businesses. Seventy-four percent of journeypersons sell their products through direct markets including farmers markets, Community Supported Agriculture programs, u-pick operations, and farmstands^{vi}.

While direct, local marketing is currently the strongest market for journeypersons, wholesale marketing is also growing among Maine's beginning farmers as overall sector growth demands ongoing market diversification and expansion. Sixty-two percent of Maine's organic farmers and 78 percent nationally make the majority of their organic sales to wholesale markets^{viii}. A recent survey of organic farmers conducted by MOFGA's Agricultural Services staff indicated that over 50 percent of responding farms were interested in developing or expanding their wholesale markets. MOFGA's Farm Beginning® program, a whole farm and business planning course offered to journeypersons, along with MOFGA marketing and business services continues to support robust business plan development to help farmers meet these changing demands while continuing to serve our local communities through direct sales.

Conclusions

Organic family farming has a bright future in Maine. The families of our vegetable, meat, fruit, flower, dairy, forest product, and fiber farms are contributing in so many different ways to improve community health, quality of life, and the agricultural landscape of our state.

This growing movement has strong, lasting economic impact. Already Maine has seen tremendous growth in the number of organic and beginning farms. Organic product sales have more than doubled over a short period of time. If current sales trends continue, *Maine's organic farmers stand to gross over \$95 million in organic product sales in 2020^{viii}*.

These compelling growth projections are within our grasp when we consider that MOFGA's Beginning Farmer Training Programs are keeping young Mainers at home and drawing new talent to the state. The overwhelming success rate of farms operated by journey person graduates provides a hopeful indicator of long-term farm viability. In tandem with critical farmer education delivered through the Apprenticeship and Journey person Programs, MOFGA and the community of organic growers will continue to establish and grow local markets, providing fresh food to local communities and reliable income streams to our new and established farmers.

"I feel very well supported and can see why such a high percentage of Journey persons continue to farm after their two years in the program. THANK YOU so much for offering the Journey person Program and for allowing me to be part of it."

~Sarah Oliver, Even Keel Farm, Journey person, 2014



Ben Marcus of Sheepscot General displaying fresh strawberries from his farm's u-pick operation.

Appendix: Introduction

➤ **Methodology and need for further investigation**

- The data collection and analysis conducted here is critical to the ongoing development and improvement of resources that support new farmer education, land access, and market growth. Measuring impact of programs such as MOFGA's Journeyperson Program alongside sector-wide trends relies on robust data sources and detailed analysis. The following appendices and tables include more detailed data used for analysis in this report.
- The numbers, trends, and data included in this report are drawn from the USDA's 2012 Census of Agriculture, 2014 Organic Survey and a 2015 MOFGA survey of current and past journeypersons. Additionally, evidence and data were drawn from published academic research, and regional and national local food analyses. Anecdotal evidence, though difficult to capture and quantify, is also presented in the form of quotes from past and present journeypersons and case study reports detailing successful journeyperson-operated farms.
- This initial analysis identified a future opportunity to conduct a robust multi-year analysis to further expand our knowledge of current trends and future projections. A more detailed input-output analysis would require expanded resources including time, funding, and specialized expertise. MOFGA welcomes the opportunity to pursue a robust economic analysis of beginning and organic farmers in the region.

➤ **Reach:**

- In August 2015 an electronic survey was sent to all known email addresses of past and present journeypersons. Viable email contacts were identified for 188 journeypersons. The survey received 108 responses, a 57.4 percent response. Of those responses, 101 reported being past or present journeypersons.
- **Question scope:** The questions asked in the survey were intended to give MOFGA an overview of journeyperson farm activities, markets, income streams and future plans as well as providing supplementary program feedback (participants complete content surveys during enrollment). The following categories were represented in the survey. Question responses across the survey and trends indicated by results are outlined in the charts on page 28 and 29 of this report.
 - Personal information (Name, farm location, contact information)
 - Journeyperson program participation information (enrollment years, completion status, pre-participation location and experience)
 - Farm Information (current farm status-owner/operator employed by another farmer, land tenure and security status, # of acres, number & type of employees)
 - Household income and size (# of people in household, total household income, percent of income from farming, off-farm employment status)
 - Market Information (location and type of market outlets)
 - Reflections on farm change over time (increases & decreases in systems improvements, enterprises, employees, land, etc.)
 - Future projections (expansion plans and areas of intended growth)
 - Role of Journeyperson Program in farm success (rating specific areas of farm enterprise and activity and how/if the Journeyperson Program influenced success in these areas)

○ **Journeyperson survey analysis methodology:**

- Data derived from survey responses was applied to estimated numbers of total past and present journeypersons. The total estimated number of journeypersons used for data calculations in this report is 230.
- Most calculations and estimates for total journeyperson impact were derived from reported averages or medians multiplied by the appropriate estimated number of journeypersons.
- Estimates for total numbers of journeypersons in discreet categories (total number still farming, total number of owner/operators, total farming in Maine) were derived by applying the percentages reported through survey data to estimated total number of past and present journeypersons. (i.e. 92 percent reported still farming = $230 \times .92 = 212$)
- The average acreage/farm and age of farmers was generated using the median number in the reported range multiplied by the number of reporting farms in that category.
- The percent of income derived from on-farm activities was calculated by applying the individually reported household income and individually reported percent of household income from on-farm activities averaged across reporting farms.
- When data on specific areas of interest was not readily available from survey responses (as in the case of \$/acre and jobs created) data from the USDA 2012 census of agriculture and/or USDA 2014 Organic Survey was applied to generate estimates.