



2022-2023

# Annual Report



**NH FOOD  
ALLIANCE**

# Our story, so far.

## Our Mission

NH Food Alliance (NHFA) is a statewide network that connects the people, businesses, organizations, and communities dedicated to growing a thriving, fair, and sustainable local food system in the Granite State. Together we build relationships, learn from each other, and catalyze collaboration to advance our common goals, respond creatively to challenges, and amplify our collective impact.

## Our Vision

We envision a diverse and well-connected network of trusted partners working together to grow and sustain local farms, fisheries, and food businesses, secure healthy food access for all, build climate resilience, and ensure racial equity in our communities and workplaces.

## Our Impact

We advance our mission and vision by leveraging the connections and relationships we've been building since 2013 across four impact areas: Network Development, Collaborative Action, Communications and Storytelling, and Learning and Leadership. This report highlights the most impactful initiatives, events, and activities from this past year. Thank you to the Kendall Foundation, NH Charitable Foundation, You Have Our Trust, generous individual donors and our network partners for making this work possible.

## Land Acknowledgement

The NH Food Alliance is based at the University of New Hampshire, Durham, on land that is N'dakinna, which is the traditional ancestral homeland of the Abenaki, Pennacook, and Wabanaki Peoples past and present. As we all journey on the trail of life, we wish to acknowledge the spiritual and physical connection the Pennacook, Abenaki, and Wabanaki Peoples have maintained to N'dakinna (homeland) and the aki (land), nibi (water), lolakwikak (flora), and awaasak (fauna), which the University of New Hampshire community is honored to steward today. We also acknowledge the hardships they continue to endure after the loss of unceded homelands and champion the university's responsibility to foster relationships and opportunities that strengthen the well-being of the Indigenous People who carry forward the traditions of their ancestors. For more information about our shared indigenous heritage, please visit Indigenous NH.

## Network Leadership Team

Charlene Andersen, NH Community Loan Fund  
Mike Young, UNH Cooperative Extension  
Elise Bolster, NH Food Bank  
Lynda Brushett, Cooperative Development Institute  
Jess Gerrior, Cornucopia Project  
Tiffany Brewster, NH Hunger Solutions  
Kelly McAdam, UNH Cooperative Extension

Nikki Kolb, NOFA-NH  
Eileen Groll Liponis, NH Food Bank  
Nancy LaRowe, Vital Communities  
Gavin Macdonald, Genuine Local  
Shawn Menard, Seacoast Eat Local  
Allan Reetz, Hanover Co-op Food Stores  
Stacey Purslow, NH Farm to School

## NH Food Alliance Backbone Team

Nicole Tocco Cardwell, Program Director  
Colleen Stewart, Communications Coordinator  
Katelyn Porter, NH Food Hub Network Project Manager

*with support from*  
Erin Hardie Hale, Strategic Advisor  
Tom Kelly, Executive Director, UNH Sustainability Institute

# Celebrating what we've grown together.

It's been 10 years since the creation of the NH Food Alliance. As we hear stories from partners about the beginning days (long before our network even had a name!), it puts all that's been accomplished into perspective. Season after season, this steadfast network of over 160 partners has instilled lasting change for our farmers, fishers, and eaters, ensuring that food grown in the Granite State not only nourishes us, but enriches our local economy and remains a backbone on which our communities thrive.

Like many of you, our team has been busier than ever this past year. We're struck by the sheer amount of opportunities there are to strengthen our food system and all the important work that still needs to be done: farmland to protect, infrastructure to advocate for, systems to develop, businesses to run.

But there is also so much to celebrate: programs launched, complex stories told well, businesses supported, relationships developed. As we look ahead, let's take care of ourselves and each other. Let's remember that together we're greater than the sum of our parts and that real change takes time. Let's take a moment to appreciate the partners and friends around us.

Whether you joined us this year or were a founding network partner, we humbly thank you for your work and unwavering dedication to this network. We can't wait to dig in with you this season and for the next 10 to come!



Sincerely,

Nicole Cardwell, Katelyn Porter, and Colleen Stewart

NH Food Alliance Backbone Team

“The NH Food Alliance grew out of New Hampshire state breakout session at the 2012 New England Food Summit, convened by Food Solutions New England. By 2013, we were building the foundation of what has become the thriving and impactful state food system network that so many of us know and value. All along the way the trust and collaborative spirit of the relationships, that formed in working together, allowed us all to accomplish far more than we could ever achieve working separately. NHFA's roots continue to grow deeper and stronger at a time when the need for collaborative action has never been greater.”

**Dr. Tom Kelly**

Chief Sustainability Officer, University of New Hampshire

Executive Director, UNH Sustainability Institute



# Network Development

We aim to deepen our existing network connections and actively develop new relationships between individuals and organizations, especially among traditionally underrepresented communities, policy-makers, and groups. This year, we accomplished this through the following events and initiatives.

## 2022 Strategy Retreat at Sweet Beet Cafe

The Strategy Retreat is a time for actively engaged members of the NHFA network to provide guidance about how the Backbone Team can best support network partners. This year's retreat included 35 active network partners participating in four strategic conversations.

1. How do we better collaborate and communicate around policy to support our local and regional food system?
2. How can the Backbone Team amplify network partner communications efforts to better tell the story of the New Hampshire food system?
3. Why aren't BIPOC-led or focused organizations and communities well represented in the NH Food Alliance network? Where are there pockets of leadership happening in the state and how do we align around and support those?
4. How could the Backbone Team further or better support the sharing of information between network partners?

# 86%

of surveyed participants  
said their participation in the  
2022 Strategy Retreat  
strengthened their relationships  
with other network partners and  
provided an opportunity to  
provide feedback, input, and  
insight into the NHFA Backbone  
Team's priorities and workplan

## All Hands on Deck for New Hampshire's Seafood Industry

Creating stronger ties with New Hampshire's seafood industry, a historically siloed sector of the food system, was a priority for the NH Food Alliance team this past year.

- As a supporting partner of the New England Young Fishermen's Alliance (NEYFA), NHFA created state-based educational marketing content for NEYFA cohort members and connected the young fishermen with New Hampshire's food hubs and other viable markets.
- NH Sea Grant and UNH Extension co-hosted a series of conversations in spring 2023 to tease apart some of the complexities and challenges effecting New Hampshire's fishing and seafood industry. The NH Food Alliance Backbone Team participated in these conversations to gain a better understanding of where the network could lend insights and support in marketing, identifying infrastructure needs, advocacy and coalition building.



- In December 2022, NH Community Seafood experienced a series of challenges that put its future at risk. The NHFA network sprang into action in support, helping to prevent its dissolution. Through collaborative communications and networking, NH Community Seafood was able to establish a new Caretaker Board and eventually, hire a new Executive Director. In June 2023, the Board and Executive Director oversaw the re-launch of NH Community Seafood's Community Supported Fishery (CSF), continuing the cooperative distribution of local seafood to communities throughout the state.

## Engaged Students with the Network through UNH Resources and Programs

As a program of the Sustainability Institute at the University of NH, the NH Food Alliance has a unique opportunity to connect its network with the students and resources of the University system. In 2023, NHFA did so in the following ways:

- Hired Isabel Cole ('25) as the first NH Eats Local intern
- Hosted a breakout session at the 2023 NH Food System Statewide Gathering that highlighted university resources and programs to help network partners build capacity in their work
- Created a resource page on the NHFA website for network partners to easily navigate the opportunities to engage with students and utilize university resources
- Judged the EcoGastronomy track at UNH's Undergraduate Research Symposium in April 2023
- Guest lectured in UNH Department of Agriculture, Nutrition, and Food Systems courses (for more, see page 11)



*Alexis Dwyer, Program and Network Stewardship Coordinator, for the UNH Sustainability Institute speaking about the Sustainability Fellowship during the breakout session at the 2023 NH Food System Statewide Gathering.*

“ This internship [with the NH Food Alliance] has helped me learn so much about the NH food system and has helped me make so many professional connections for the future. As a person who is passionate about the interconnectedness of our food system, I have gotten hands-on time learning about farms, food pantries, community gardens, co-op's, policy, conservation work, and all the other important aspects that make up our food system. I have also had the opportunity to work with leaders in these diverse sectors and I have had a chance to find what I want to do in this line of work. The NH Food Alliance is truly a special place that fosters community, collaboration, and hope and has given me direction and resources to get where I want to go in my career.

”

**Isabel Cole, '25 Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems, Native American and Indigenous Studies, and History, University of New Hampshire**



# 2023 NH Food System Statewide Gathering

May 11, 2023 | Plymouth, New Hampshire | The Barn on the Pemi



The NH Food System Statewide Gathering is an annual event hosted by the NH Food Alliance that brings together individuals, businesses, and organizations from across sectors who are dedicated to growing an improved local food system that works for all in the Granite State. 2023 marked 10 years of the NH Food Alliance network; a milestone that was celebrated throughout the gathering in both moments of reflection and moments of looking forward.



*Pictured above, from left to right: Nasteho Mohammed, a Southern NH University student and alumni of Fresh Start Farm's farm internship program, Ben Doyle, a Portsmouth High School student who established the non-profit Seacoast Students for Sustainability, and Isabel Cole, a University of New Hampshire student who is studying Indigenous food ways through an on-campus gardening project growing Indigenous crops to fight food insecurity after welcoming Statewide Gathering attendees.*

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**"The gathering brought many different people together from various food related organizations. It was great for networking and learning more about current initiatives throughout the state that align with my work."**

*2023 NH Food System Statewide Gathering participant*

**181 participants**  
**6 breakout sessions**  
**95 organizations represented**  
**15 event sponsors**  
**95% of attendees rated the gathering 4 or 5 (on a scale of 1-5)**

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"...I loved the focus on our younger generation of leaders. I left with a sense of gratitude for my state and those whose work reflects the values we all want to see in our way of being in this amazing land we call New Hampshire."

*2023 NH Food System Statewide Gathering Participant*



Highlights of the gathering include:

- Three emerging young leaders welcomed attendees with their vision for the future of New Hampshire's food system by sharing stories about their own work and passion related to food, agriculture, and sustainability.
- Participants enjoyed an interactive workshop led by three journalists about how to pitch stories and build better relationships with the media.
- "Climate Resilience on NH Farms," a panel led and moderated by Amanda Littleton of the Cheshire County Conservation District, included four farmers from across the state who have implemented projects to build climate resilience on their farms through various funding sources.
- The "New to NH" breakout session introduced three new initiatives to the NHFA network: the NH Center for Justice and Equity, the North Country Agriculture and Food Council, and the Victory Garden Toolkit by Kearsarge Food Hub.
- In recognition of the NH Food Alliance's 10th Anniversary, Rebecca Brown, one of the founding network partners, shared stories from the start of the network and her hopes for the future.
- An afternoon celebration featured a raffle of prizes donated by local organizations and businesses, snacks and refreshments, lawn games, and a display of Vital Communities' Climate Farmer Stories project (a series of art and recordings showcasing farmers who are focused on climate-friendly practices).

See the full schedule and explore breakout session notes and resources on the NHFA website.



# Collaborative Action

We catalyze collaboration to find shared interests, advance policy changes, generate knowledge, and build collective solutions at the community, state and regional levels through the work of our action teams, workgroups, and the facilitation of various strategic meetings.



Above, from left to right: Jeremy Lougee, SELT-NH, Chelsea Gazillo, American Farmland Trust, Josh Marshall, NH Department of Agriculture, Markets and Food, Nicole Cardwell, NH Food Alliance, and Allen Wyman, NH Department of Agriculture, Markets and Food, outside the NH State House.

## Supported the Agricultural Land Preservation Program

NHFA convened a quick response team to support the re-launch of the NH Department of Agriculture, Markets and Food's Agricultural Land Preservation (ALP) program. The team of farmland preservation experts, including staff from Southeast Land Trust (SELT) and American Farmland Trust, advised the adjustment of statutory language to allow land trusts to utilize ALP funds to protect agricultural land in New Hampshire through House Bill 221.

The team's work ensured that the \$1.2 million allocated to the ALP program will be eligible for matching funds through the National Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) and other funding sources, doubling the program funding to \$2.4 million and doubling the impact of farmland conservation efforts in New Hampshire. At the time of publishing this annual report, House Bill 221 was approved by both the House and Senate and is awaiting signature at the Governor's office.

## Supported Implementation of Local Food for Schools Cooperative Agreement

In early 2023, the NH State Department of Agriculture, Markets and Food accepted over \$558,000 in federal funding as part of the USDA's Local Food for Schools Cooperative Agreement Program. The funds will support local food procurement at New Hampshire schools with the highest need for free and reduced school lunch, shortening and strengthening local food supply chains in response to vulnerabilities exposed during the pandemic. The agreement funds can be used to purchase foods that are unprocessed and produced, raised, or caught in New England with emphasis on foods produced in New Hampshire by socially disadvantaged producers.

The NHFA Backbone Team is working with NH Farm to School, the NH Department of Agriculture, Markets and Food, and NH Hunger Solutions to support the successful dissemination of the agreement funds by streamlining connections between school food service directors and the farms and food hubs they can purchase from.



## Aligned New Hampshire Food System Professionals around Policy

In December, the NHFA Backbone Team co-hosted the 2022 NH Agricultural Policy Forum with the Monadnock Farm & Community Coalition and the League of Conservation Voters. During the forum, national and state-level experts came together to discuss forthcoming federal and state legislation aimed at building an equitable and robust local food system in New Hampshire and beyond.



## Secured American Rescue Plan Act funds for Meat Processing Infrastructure in NH

From 2021–2022, NHFA convened a group of network partners to develop and submit a three-project proposal for American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) State Fiscal Recovery Funds (SFRF); a project in support of building on-farm climate resilience through infrastructure implementation, a project investing in meat processing facilities, and a project supporting food hub infrastructure.

In fall 2022, the Governor's Office for Emergency Relief and Recovery awarded \$750,000 of ARPA SFRF to the meat processing facilities investment project. The NH Department of Agriculture, Markets and Food has successfully distributed the funds through a grant application process, leading to the funding of eight meat processing projects across New Hampshire, an investment that will create a significant positive ripple effect for New Hampshire's meat producers and processors.



## Envisioned the NH Food Hub Network as part of a Region

In the two years since NHFA began coordinating the NH Food Hub Network, it has become clear that New Hampshire's food hubs are best served through a regional food hub networking effort. New Hampshire is unique in its geographic and logistical connection to its neighboring states; New Hampshire is surrounded by robust agricultural areas and the state's central location makes it an integral partner in the movement of food around the New England region. Simultaneously, there has been a growing need for collaboration among food processors in the region to help food hubs gain access to institutional markets and diversify offerings to retail and wholesale customers.

In response to the above needs, the NH Food Hub Network partnered with Healthcare Without Harm and Kitchen Sync Strategies, who have been working to establish a network of food processors called the Northeast Food Collective, to launch the New England Food Hub and Processors Network. The regional network helps identify and meet the needs and goals of food hubs, processors, and buyers through shared resource creation, organized communications, outreach, and regular network meetings.



NHFA's NH Food Hub Network Coordinator Katelyn Porter leading a food hub focused session at the 2023 Northeast Farm to Institution Summit.

## Racial Equity Action Team

The NH Food Alliance continued to coordinate monthly meetings of its Racial Equity Action team. The team's mission is to promote racial equity in New Hampshire's food system and does so by supporting Food Solutions New England's 21-Day Racial Equity Habit Building Challenge, ensuring diverse voices are represented in the network, hosting and promoting equity-related educational events and resources, and serving as a community of practice for partners working to advance diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice in their communities and workplaces.

## Climate and Food Action Team

NHFA continued to coordinate monthly meetings of its Climate and Food Action Team, which was formed in spring 2020 to bring together advocates at the intersection of climate resilience, food systems, emergency planning and policy development. The team served as an advisory committee for the 2022–2023 Network Café Series (see pages 12–13 for more) which was focused on ways to build a climate-resilient food system.

As of spring 2023, the NHFA Backbone Team is evaluating how to best support climate and food work in the food system, including a transition away from monthly team meetings to hosting an annual Climate and Food Forum to facilitate information sharing about, and community building around, climate and food related work in New Hampshire to a larger, more varied audience.

## Regional Collaborations

NHFA continues to be a voice representing the New Hampshire food system in regional efforts— sharing learnings, projects, challenges and opportunities with our neighbors and colleagues from nearby states.

### Food Solutions New England

The NH Food Alliance team engaged with the work of Food Solutions New England (FSNE) through support of the 21-Day Racial Equity Habit Building Challenge, participation in the FSNE Network Team and Network Leadership Institute, collaboration with FSNE’s NH Racial Equity Ambassador, and participation in the New England FoodComms Community of Practice and the Strategic Collective Narrative (SCONE) workgroup, co-facilitated by FSNE.

### Farm to Institution New England

The NH Food Alliance team engaged with other New England food systems advocates through participation in the 2023 Northeast Farm to Institution Summit Steering Committee, in addition to leading four presentations at the summit (see page 11 for details).

### New England Feeding New England Project

The NH Food Alliance continued participation in the New England Food System Planners Partnership (NEFSPP), including:

- Supported the release and continued dissemination of the much-anticipated New England Feeding New England report, *A Regional Approach to Food Systems Resilience*
- Committed to spearhead the Local Food Count for New Hampshire; of which each New England state has committed to completing, utilizing a methodology developed by Vermont Farm to Plate
- Aided in the inclusion of representatives from each state’s Department of Agriculture in the partnership; Joshua Marshall, Director of the Division of Agricultural Development for the NH Department of Agriculture, Markets and Food, joined as an official partner representing New Hampshire





# Communications & Storytelling

We amplify the voices and missions of our network partners by developing communications platforms that reach food systems professionals as well as a broader audience. Our communications strategies include sharing tools and resources, as well as lifting up storytelling that advances food systems work throughout the state.

## Launched NH Eats Local Team

In January 2023, the NHFA Backbone Team launched the NH Eats Local Team in response to the network's desire for a working group and community of practice focused on storytelling and communications.

The team's mission is to connect Granite Staters to New Hampshire agriculture and working waterfronts and inspire them to support their local farmers, fishermen, and food producers. The NH Eats Local Team does this by telling the stories of New Hampshire's food system through collaborative public relations efforts, aligning on "eat local" messaging and shared content, providing educational opportunities and hosting events.

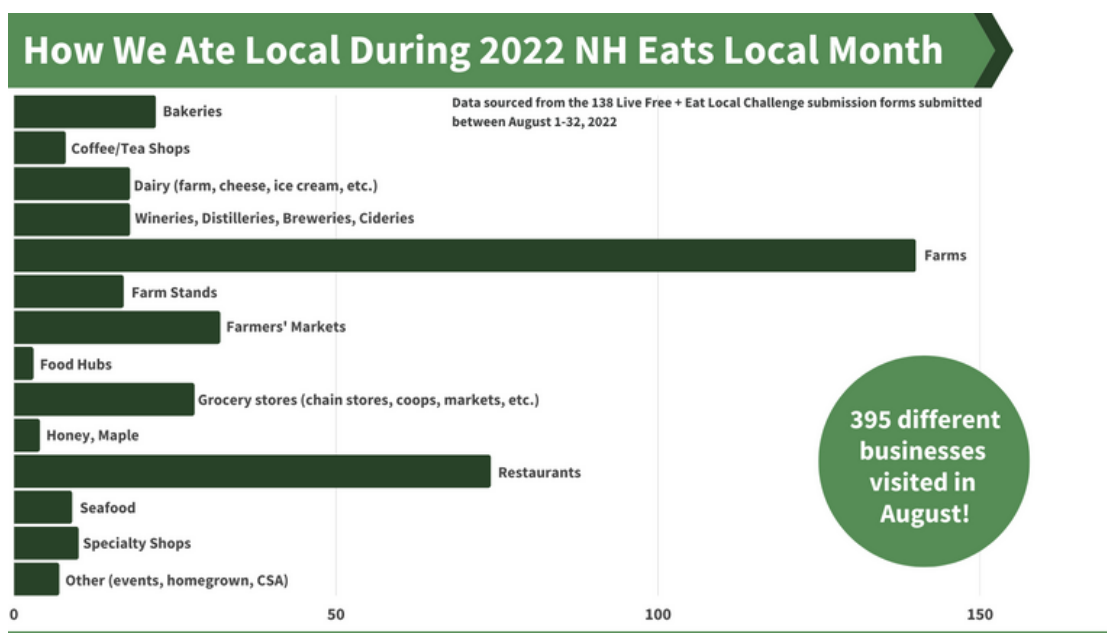
## Grew the Local Food Movement during 2022 NH Eats Local Month

NH Eats Local Month is a month-long consumer marketing campaign in support of New Hampshire grown, caught, and produced foods, hosted by the NH Food Alliance and its NH Eats Local Team, which includes the NH Department of Agriculture, Markets and Food. As part of the campaign, farms, restaurants, fisheries, farmers' markets, and other food businesses and organizations are invited to become promotional partners for NH Eats Local Month. For 2022 NH Eats Local Month, 78 businesses and organizations signed up to partner.



### Live Free + Eat Local Challenge

The focus of 2022 NH Eats Local Month was the first ever Live Free + Eat Local Challenge. New Hampshire visitors and residents were challenged to eat at or from five New Hampshire farm, fish, or food businesses to be eligible to win a prize donated by local small businesses. Throughout August, participants in the challenge visited nearly 400 farm, fish, and food businesses across New Hampshire.



# Learning & Leadership

We foster learning and skill-building among our network partners so that we can be effective leaders, collaborators, and advocates for change in our food system.

## NH Food Systems News You Need to Know

NH Food Systems News You Need to Know, the NHFA's monthly newsletter, reaches nearly 2,300 subscribers. In addition to sharing information from NHFA, the newsletter delivers food system-focused events, news stories, jobs, grants, and other announcements from partners directly into the inboxes of our network. The information shared in each newsletter is housed on the Network News page on the NH Food Alliance website. The Network News page allows network partners to filter and search food system content from across New Hampshire and beyond, making information accessible and available to all.



## Presentations at Food System Conferences and Events

The NHFA Backbone Team presented at a number of conferences and events this past year, including...

...at the 2023 Northeast Farm to Institution Summit in Providence, Rhode Island

- "Food Hub Networks: Achieving a New Level of Scale"
- "Helping our Working Waterfronts Stay Afloat: The Creation of the New England Young Fishermen's Alliance"
- "New England Food Hub and Food Processor Networking Tour & Discussion"
- "Recommendations from the New England Feeding New England Report"

...as part of the NOFA-NH CRAFT Series: "Utilizing and Building Relationships with Food Hubs and Food Co-ops as Wholesale Outlets"

...at the 2023 NOFA-NH Winter Conference: "NH Food Hub Forum," a space for farmers to voice their concerns and share their past and present experiences of working with food hubs

...a presentation and discussion about climate resilience and local food systems with a group of international food system advocates through the World Affairs Council of New Hampshire

...as guest lecturers in classes at the University of New Hampshire:

- Introduction to EcoGastronomy
- Food Systems and Community Resilience

...at the 2023 Northeast Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NEASDA) Regional Meeting about the New England Food System Planners Partnership's report, *A Regional Approach to Food Systems Resilience*

...to the NH Network for Energy and Environment, along with representatives from the New Hampshire legislature, the town of New London, and the NH Department of Environmental Services about building climate-resilience in the food system through reducing and reusing food waste

... to local libraries and community members during 2022 NH Eats Local Month about how eating locally can make an impact, along with Josh Marshall, the Director of the Division of Agricultural Development at the NH Department of Agriculture, Markets & Food.



# Network Café Series

On the first Friday of each month, September through April, NHFA hosts an informal and lively conversation with partners from across the New Hampshire food system and beyond. Network Cafés cover critical issues in the local, regional, and even global food system, and are an opportunity for the NHFA team to respond nimbly to evolving issues, leading to further collaborations and projects, turning talk into action.

The 2022–23 Network Cafe Series had a theme: building a climate-resilient food system, based on the “How Do We Build a Climate Resilient Food System in New Hampshire? Six Ways that Sustainable Food Systems Build Climate Resilience” framework developed by NHFA and its Climate Action Team.

The NHFA network came together each month to learn about the impacts of climate change on a specific food system sector. The first half of each cafe featured a presentation from organizational leaders, policy makers, climate advocates, program coordinators, and others, while the second half offered time to network about what was shared during the presentation, and other related topics, allowing for resources and potential collaborations to be identified.

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## 447 registered participants. Endless possibilities.

Of all Network Café survey respondents...

**94%**

said they learned something new about the topic

**72%**

said they made a new connection during the café

**94%**

said the topic, overall, was useful to their work

**50%**

said they deepened an existing connection during the café

**59%**

said they shared something about their work during the café connected to the topic

# 2022–2023 Network Café Series

## **September 2: Six Ways to Build a Climate Resilient Food System**

Featured Network Partners: League of Conservation Voters

## **November 4: Protecting New Hampshire's Farmland**

Featured Network Partners: Southeast Land Trust of NH, Cheshire County Conservation District, NH Association of Conservation Commissions

## **December 2: Working Waterfronts as part of a Resilient New Hampshire Food System**

Featured Network Partners: New England Young Fishermen's Alliance (NEYFA)

## **January 6: Where Global Climate meets Local Food**

Featured Network Partners: Sustainability Institute at UNH, Vital Communities

## **February 3: Wasting Less Food in New Hampshire**

Featured Network Partners: Legislators, NH Department of Environmental Services

## **March 3: REAPing the Benefits of Energy Efficiency in our Food System**

Featured Network Partners: USDA Rural Development

## **April 3: Growing Food in a Changing Climate**

Featured Network Partners: Vital Communities

"The [Network Café] was highly effective in addressing issues holistically from multiple perspectives and by knowledgeable experts."

"This was very helpful to learn about funding resources that are available to NH farmers and small business owners. Great way to network and make important connections! Thank you for hosting these Network Cafés!"

"This was really useful. Topic was on point, presenter was concise and knowledgeable, and I think the outcome of a group grant writing day, for me at least, solves some of the time concerns about writing such a big grant. Thank you."

"Love all the content, will be talking to a friend/small farmer that could use some assistance with REAP and Agriculture land designation. Thank you!!"



# 160

network partners  
(and counting!)

"NH Food Alliance is a partner, convenor, and innovator with farmers, food producers, and diverse communities across New Hampshire. Its members and leaders help create, foster, and support the most important trends across New Hampshire's food web."

*2023 Network Leadership Team Member*



Thank you for your  
ongoing support of the  
NH Food Alliance.



The NH Food Alliance is a program of the Sustainability Institute at the University of New Hampshire. Our work is made possible by generous support from the Henry P. Kendall Foundation, NH Charitable Foundation, You Have Our Trust and generous individual donors.



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