Other Products:
Honey, Seeds, Wild & Foraged Foods, Food-Grade Grains, Mushrooms, Syrup

Purpose: To articulate the unique opportunities and challenges that impact the economically viable production of bees and honey, seeds, wild and foraged foods, food-grade grains, mushrooms, maple syrup and other tree syrups in New Hampshire.

What's at Stake?

Products and crops grown for human consumption, other than vegetables and fruits, make up an important segment of New Hampshire's food system, providing diversity, flavor, and cultural significance to our plates. These crops allow farmers to diversify their operations by capturing niche corners of the market and offering higher-value, unique products that respond to specific consumer demands. Encouraging the growth of these crops and their industries in New Hampshire supports the viability of the state's farmers and food producers, leading to a more vibrant and inviting food system for Granite Staters.

Current Conditions: Bees & Honey

Honeybees are the primary pollinators for a variety of crops, including fruits, nuts, and vegetables; more than a third of the world's food production depends on bees. Honeybee pollination contributes significant dollars to New Hampshire's agricultural economy and provides specialty products such as honey, wax, and propolis, which only honeybees are capable of producing.

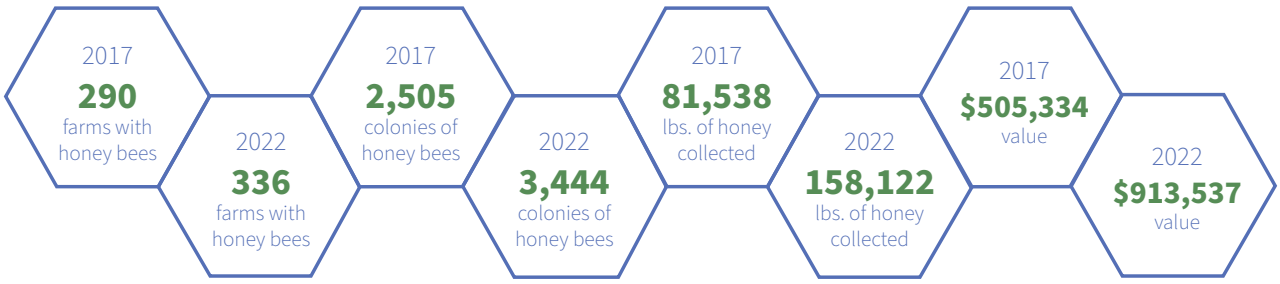
For decades, the honeybee population has been declining at an alarming rate. In New Hampshire, honeybee colony losses have averaged between 45-50% each year. Pesticide use, combined with habitat loss, climate change, and disease, have contributed to this staggering decline. A lack of supportive legislation, loss of communication systems between pesticide applicators and beekeepers after the passing of HB 1698, an optional (rather than mandatory) hive registration program, and lack of a fully operational bee lab in the state further challenge New Hampshire's beekeepers. Increasing collaboration between beekeepers, agricultural service organizations, and state entities is needed to better support New Hampshire's beekeeping industry and protect honeybees before their decline leads to a catastrophic loss of pollinator-dependent agricultural crops.

Recommendations: Bees & Honey

- **Increase legally regulated information sharing between pesticide applicators and beekeepers.** Reinstate and enhance the legal requirements of pesticide applicators to notify apiary owners prior to pesticide application, and develop and implement a mandatory state hive registration program and map where beekeepers will be required to register their hive locations. Pesticide applicators will be required to use the mapping tool to identify hive locations and notify apiary owners prior to pesticide application so that beekeepers can secure their colonies.

- **Establish a state honeybee oversight committee.** This committee will facilitate dialogue between the beekeeping industry, stakeholders, and other organizations and businesses to advocate for the needs of New Hampshire's beekeeping sector.

NEW HAMPSHIRE HONEY COLONIES AND HONEY PRODUCTION, 2017-2022



SOURCE: USDA 2022 Census of Agriculture, *Table 32: Other Animals*. Adjusted for inflation to 2024 dollars using producer price indices.

Current Conditions: Seeds

Being the material from which nearly all food crops are derived, there is perhaps no other natural resource as crucial to human life, culture, and the economy as seeds. Over the last 75+ years, the University of New Hampshire (UNH)'s plant breeding program has been incredibly successful at introducing flavorful, productive, and climate-adapted varieties. Dr. Elwyn Meader alone introduced more than 60 varieties during his time at UNH and exceptional modern hybrids bred by the late Dr. Brent Loy are appreciated and sought after across the globe. Many UNH-bred varieties are commonly available through reputable regional commercial seed companies.

In the case of New Hampshire heirloom and classic open-pollinated seed varieties, many lack available seed quantities for farm-scale use or retail packet purchase. The histories and culinary excellence of these varieties are mostly unknown in today's food, hospitality, and agricultural industries. Likewise, the underutilization of New Hampshire's traditional varieties adds to the broader, alarming trend of food crop variety extinction, which fundamentally threatens food security and resilience.

Currently, the seeds and produce of New Hampshire-bred varieties are not widely recognized or celebrated in the state for their local origin and high quality. For New Hampshire-bred traditional and modern varieties alike, branding and building awareness for this excellent specialty produce is an exciting opportunity for all participants in New Hampshire's food system. With support and partnerships, including from New Hampshire's network of seed libraries, current and aspiring seed growers can develop a renowned New Hampshire-based seed supply and promote a unique specialty crops marketplace. Connections between seed savers, farmers, researchers, food organizations, respected chefs, and eaters must be strengthened if we hope to enjoy the New Hamphire-originated flavors of the past and future and encourage the state's seed and food economies to reach their full potential.

Recommendations: Seeds

- **Fund stakeholder convenings around breeding needs.** Convene New Hampshire chefs, farmers, and agriculture professionals to foster discussion around breeding needs ("What Needs Breeding?" events) and to showcase the history and flavors of existing fruit and vegetable cultivars originating in New Hampshire. This event would be paired with feasibility presentations and steps to bring these crops to market by name. Funding for the events would include funding for contract production of rare and specialty produce.

- **Develop a voluntary reporting and marketing process to encourage growers to report and boost New Hampshire-bred seed and produce usage.** This will include collaborating with UNH breeders and UNHInnovation, as well as private seed savers and the USDA Germplasm Repositories (to identify older, non-hybrid New Hampshire varieties), create a comprehensive, online list of New Hampshire crop varieties. This data of reported New Hampshire varietal use will be used to create a searchable map of farms and food businesses offering New Hampshire-bred products.

Current Conditions: Wild & Foraged Foods

Wild and foraged foods connect us to the water, soil, and land of the greenspaces and watersheds where we live. They enable us to hand-craft local foods, beverages, medicines, and value-added products from blueberries and blackberries to line caught fish and native fiddleheads, mushrooms, and nuts that generations of first nations and immigrant ancestors relied upon. Wild foods and foraging are finding their ways into local markets and restaurants where consumers are meeting them with enthusiasm.

Wild and foraged foods make up a small and shrinking portion of the typical American diet, as we become increasingly disconnected from the land around us and as genetic diversity of food crops continues to decline. Climate change further threatens traditional land-based industries, like maple sugaring and ash-bark basket making. In order to protect cultural foodways, support cottage industries, promote food sovereignty, and protect biodiversity, we must identify and support the cultivation of traditionally foraged plants both through educating our communities and selling these plants in local markets to boost native plant populations and prevent overharvesting.

Recommendation: Wild & Foraged Foods

- **Build a statewide database of place-based native and heirloom foods.** This database will offer a long history in our region, as well as the critical habitats that support them, through collaboration between first nations, museums, public gardens, land trusts, universities, and other groups. This database could be utilized to educate and engage communities in the appreciation of wild and foraged foods and expansion of critical habitats and practice of rematriation.

Current Conditions: Food-Grade Grains

Grain is a latecomer to the local foods movement, but there is a renaissance underway, as local grain chains emerge across the country connecting consumers more closely with farmers, millers, and artisan bakers. Local grain movements are growing in response to the need to develop climate resilient, regionally adapted crops in the face of climate change and to build a resilient local staple food economy in the face of global disruptions. At the same time, there is an increased understanding of the nutritional and flavor benefits of locally grown grains and the role of grain in environmental sustainability, as it boosts farm diversity and promotes sustainable agricultural rotations.

However, the development of a culinary grain economy in New Hampshire is limited by the lack of appropriately-scaled equipment for harvest and post-harvest cleaning and creating value-added products, adequate storage capacity, aggregation and distribution for market access from both the consumer and business standpoints, and consumer awareness of how to use a diversity of grains and where to find them. Infrastructure investment, technical assistance, and consumer education are needed to reap the environmental, cultural, and economic benefits of this niche market.

Recommendation: Food-Grade Grains

- **Provide funding and support to the NH Grain Collaborative.** This support will incite the development of a culinary grain economy in the state through:
  - Technical assistance for farmers and millers.
  - Coordination of grain producers to aggregate seed cleaning, storage, and distribution.
  - Development of marketing tools and branding for value-added products containing locally grown grains.

Current Conditions: Mushrooms

Mushrooms are a unique crop that provide a distinct source of important nutrients and medicinal compounds that cannot be sourced from other forms of produce. Mushroom production is increasing around the country. In New Hampshire, most growers sell directly to consumers through farmers' markets; a smaller number sell to wholesale customers at larger volumes.

Independent wholesale growers face corporate competition, requiring them to sell at low prices while lacking the same economies of scale. The increasing cost of inputs, challenge of sourcing industry-specific inputs (such as "ready to fruit" grow blocks), high cost of production per square foot because of expensive utilities, and lack of insurance coverage for potentially devastating production issues, like a simple bacterial contamination, inhibit the development of this sector. Support is needed to sustain and encourage independent mushroom producers in New Hampshire in the face of out-of-state corporate market dominance.

VALUE OF NH MUSHROOM PRODUCTION, 2022

Mushroom sales equaled **$265,740** in 2022
(sales values were suppressed in 2017).

SOURCE: USDA 2022 Census of Agriculture, *Table 39, Floriculture and Bedding Crops*.

Recommendations: Mushrooms

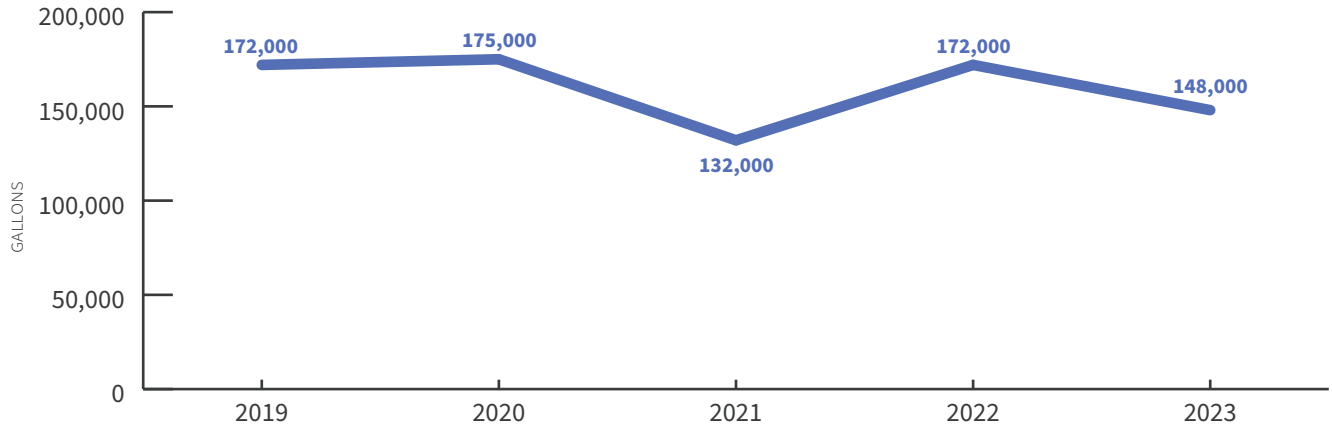
- **Explore avenues for improving insurance coverage options for mushroom growers.** In New Hampshire that includes coverage for plausible issues like bacterial contamination, which is analogous to agricultural crop loss from disease.
- **Fund mushroom growers to reduce their energy costs.** Provide grant support for mushroom growers to obtain renewable energy infrastructure through programs, such as the USDA Rural Energy for America Program (REAP).

Current Conditions: Syrup

Maple and other tree syrups hold cultural importance, contain a variety of health benefits and flavors, encourage forest conservation, and provide farmers with a varied source of income. In New Hampshire, where most syrup producers are small (under 2,000 taps), syrup production provides farmers with a source of income from work done during the winter and early spring months when other farm activities are not in full effect.

Syrup production is extremely weather-dependent. In recent years, weather variability during the late winter and early spring has been more common, causing syrup producers to struggle to determine when to tap their trees. On top of this, while interest in maple production from hobbyists to large-scale sugarers remains high, equipment and startup costs can be prohibitive, finding labor is a challenge, and the state, overall, has a limited amount of quality sites for sugar maple growth, which limits opportunities to develop areas for tapping. While there are not currently any producers in the state producing syrups other than maple syrup, there is an opportunity to develop a market for other types of syrups from trees that may be better suited to future New Hampshire growing conditions, such as birch, walnut, beech, and sycamore trees. Overall, a strong, collaborative network of syrup producers, syrup researchers, landowners, forest managers, support organizations, and state entities is crucial for the health and success of New Hampshire's tree syrup industry.

NEW HAMPSHIRE MAPLE SYRUP PRODUCTION, 2019-2023



SOURCE: USDA NASS, *2023 Agricultural Statistics Annual Bulletin: New England*.

Recommendations: Syrup

- **Increase state support for the NH Maple Producers Association.** This support, in addition to grant opportunities, would increase promotion of Maple Month in March, linking maple syrup to promotion of the foliage tourism season, and promotion of New Hampshire Maple Products in general.
- **Support the production of other tree syrups, such as birch, in New Hampshire.** This support would primarily occur through continued research and market development.

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New Hampshire
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NH FOOD ALLIANCE

This brief was developed through a participatory process led by the NH Food Alliance, a program of the University of New Hampshire. The brief content is comprised of the opinions, perspectives, and information gathered by the authors and participants, and does not necessarily represent those of the NH Department of Agriculture, Markets, and Food or the NH Food Alliance.

For more information, including references and opportunities to get involved, visit the 2025 NH Food and Agriculture Strategic Plan web page on nhfoodalliance.org or scan the QR code on the inside front cover of the print version.