



Frequently Asked Questions

What is the mission of the Northeast Organic Family Farm Partnership?

The mission is to increase the demand for products made by organic family farms in the northeast. Increased demand will create market security for our region's family farms and ensure their success for generations to come.

What are the 2022 priorities?

In 2022, we hope to successfully increase regional demand enough to help the 135 at-risk organic family farms being released by Horizon and Maple Hill to secure new customer contracts and stay in business.

How does Organic Valley's announcement to pick up 80 at-risk farms affect the mission?

It doesn't. Our mission is to increase the demand for organic milk produced by our region's family farms, so we don't face another crisis like this again in the future. Supporting our 35+ Partner Brands is critical to finding contracts for our at-risk farms and simultaneously building long-term resiliency in our food system.

How much demand is needed to solve the problem of losing the 135 organic family farms?

For perspective, if 10% of Northeast consumers committed to purchasing just one more pint of organic dairy products per week, this would absorb all of the production from the 135 at-risk farms.

How are you actually helping these farms?

In order for the farms dropped by Horizon and Maple Hill Creamery to be offered contracts or find alternative markets for their milk, we need a general increased demand for products made with their milk. The increased demand will trigger processors to sign on more farms, cheesemakers, and other value-added processors to buy more milk, and eventually, inspire the critical investment necessary for building stable markets for our farms.

How does the Partnership work?

We are inviting three types of Partners to commit their support:

Consumer Partners

Consumers can take immediate action to help make an actual difference. Consumers

are invited to sign a [pledge](#) to purchase one-fourth of their weekly dairy purchases from 35 brands. These brands range from large processors like Organic Valley and Stonyfield to mid-sized and smaller brands like Butterworks, Maine Organic Milk Producers, Strafford Organic Creamery, and many others.

Brand Partners

Brand Partners meet at least two of three criteria:

- (a) At least 50% of the milk in the products they sell comes from organic family farms from the area hardest hit by the potential farm closures (from NYC to Bangor ME), and/or;
- (b) Are owned by organic family farmers in the region, and/or;
- (c) have publicly demonstrated a commitment to increase their supply from the region's organic family farms.

See the list of Partner Brands [here](#).

Retail Partners - that's you!

We invite all dairy purveyors (grocers, restaurants, cafeterias, and any outlets that sell dairy products) to become Retail Partners. Retail Partners can proudly display the Partnership Seal at the point of sale and also online to enable easy identification by consumers. Retail Partners meet the following criteria:

- a) Commit to carrying at least one of the Partner Brands
- b) Increase purchases of the Partner Brands in 2022 vs. 2021

Our dairy and cheese cases are crowded. How do we promote the participating brands effectively?

Retail Partners receive an in-store promotional kit with various signage elements, including self strips, mini square tags, stickers, informational posters, door clings, and danglers. We know every store has a unique set of signage needs. Retail Partners are not obligated to use everything in the kit. We only ask that the seal not be used next to non-partner brands (i.e., in front of Horizon or conventional dairy products on the shelf or in advertising). We always welcome your feedback and should be able to send additional materials upon request.

What if we can't sell more product than we did in the past? Are we penalized?

The Partnership is a good-faith effort and does not include fees, royalties, or penalties with participation. The Partnership does not require any Retail Partners to disclose their purchasing/sales metrics. However, if you would like to share reports with the Partnership, it will help the campaign, but it is not required.

How will consumers/shoppers know that a retailer or institution is helping these farms?

Brand Partners will confirm with the Partnership if Retail Partners are increasing their purchases year after year, and the Partnership will conduct assessments of the Retail Partners annually.

Is this the only solution to the crisis of losing organic family farms in our region?

No. In December 2021, a task force representing 27 unique organizations, including state departments of agriculture, university extension, organic processors, organic associations, farm

technical assistance providers, and subject matter experts, sent a list of recommendations to the USDA in response to the contract terminations. The list outlined the critical improvements necessary for processing, innovation, infrastructure, distribution, market development, and farm viability. These recommendations will take years to implement if they are funded, and at-risk farmers' contracts end between February 2022 and February 2023, which means we cannot wait for these recommendations alone. For these recommendations to be effective, we must have regional demand for organic dairy produced in the region, so building awareness is the first and most necessary step toward solving this crisis.

Why do organic family farms matter?

Organic family farms have been certified by specially licensed and trained auditors to comply with USDA organic regulations covering factors such as soil quality, animal-raising practices, pest and weed control, and the use of chemicals. Organic farmers work with nature to allow the soil, crops, pasture, and animals to flourish without chemical fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides, fungicides, artificial hormones, or GMOs. USDA organic regulations expressly prohibit over 700 synthetic agricultural chemicals. Read more about organic [here](#).

How do organic family farms help reduce the effects of climate change?

Because organic farming bans the use of synthetic fertilizer, studies estimate that on a per-acre basis, organic soil management can reduce nitric oxide (N₂O) emissions by over 40%. The manufacture of synthetic fertilizers alone comprises as much as 10% of global agricultural emissions. In short, organic production methods significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions and use less energy because of the decreased use of fossil fuel-based inputs.

Does buying milk from northeast organic family farms hurt local conventional farms?

There is a long list of current conventional dairy farmers who would like to convert to organic milk, but the market is not growing fast enough to support them. When we boost regional organic dairy sales, it will offer all farmers more options and choices.

Is this a stunt by Stonyfield and Organic Valley just to get more business?

Thirty-five brands have initially signed on as Brand Partners and are recognized and promoted on the website. The Partnership promotes all brands equally to strengthen all brands using organic milk sourced from the region.