



Cultivating Connections

FROM THE DIRECTOR

Ready to Dig In

I am honored and excited to take on my new responsibilities as Director of UVM's Center for Sustainable Agriculture. It's going to be a pleasure because so many bright and energetic people in Vermont are committed to agriculture. And it's going to be a challenge, because the long-term viability of farming in Vermont is far from guaranteed.

The mission of the Center, in a nutshell, is to bring people together to build a positive future for agriculture. Many folks are already at work on this task--producers, consumers, researchers, educators and public officials. Our aim is to enhance these ongoing efforts by forging connections among the players and by facilitating the flow of useful information.

There's plenty of work to do, so let's not spend much time debating the definition of sustainable agriculture. You know it when you see it. If farms have the economic, environmental and social resources to continue from generation to generation, then Vermont's agriculture will endure. The Center has a small yet meaningful part to play in securing this goal. Our expectations are high but not unrealistic. The excellent staff of the Center has already been very productive, as you've read in this newsletter.



As we plan, we must keep in mind the Center's special charge to develop excellent programs and to raise all the funds necessary to implement them. I invite you to help us develop Center programs, create a strong financial base, and make connections to Vermont agriculture. We welcome ideas, donations, and the participation of everyone who cherishes the land and those who work it.

Center Director Now On Board

The Center for Sustainable Agriculture at the University of Vermont has a new director. Dr. Vern Grubinger, an Extension Specialist in sustainable agriculture and small fruits and vegetables was appointed by Lawrence Forcier, Dean of the Division of Agriculture, Natural Resources and Extension. Vern will continue his work with the vegetable and berry producers but will resign his post as Extension Regional Chair in southeastern Vermont to take on the challenge of Center Director. "I am pleased that Vern has taken the Director position," said Dean Forcier, "He has a great rapport with farmers and is very committed to sustainable agriculture. Having Vern in Brattleboro will greatly enhance the Center's ability to promote sustainable agriculture in the southern portion of the state."

Vern holds a Ph.D. in vegetable crops from Cornell University and has been involved with sustainable agriculture throughout his career. In over five years with UVM Extension, Vern has worked with other educators to urge farmers to adopt practices that are environmentally, economically and socially sound. His research and demonstration efforts have included the use of cover crops for soil improvement and the production of niche crops, like garlic and sweet potato, to expand market opportunities.

He has worked with a consortium of New England agriculturalists to implement several sustainable agriculture training efforts. Most recently, Vern worked with Center staff to organize a regional training conference to increase networking among Extension personnel, farmers and a variety of other organizations.

As Director, Vern will provide administrative and intellectual leadership for the Center. He will work closely with Center staff to carry out the Center's mission of expanding sustainable agriculture efforts throughout the state. This will be accomplished by improving the linkages among extension, research, farms, and the non-farm public. ("Center Director Now On Board" continued on page 2.)



("Center Director Now On Board" continued from page 1.)

"As Director, I will work to bolster UVM's ability to provide both technical and social support to sustainable agriculture. This can be accomplished by improving the connection between UVM's research and outreach, and by enhancing our educational network with the people and organizations across the state that share our vision of a vibrant and viable agriculture."

Vern will continue to work out of the Brattleboro Extension office. By involving on- and off-campus sites, the Center will be better able to develop a network of cooperators around the state. Other programs at the Brattleboro site include efforts to facilitate community involvement in sustainable agriculture education. It includes hands-on projects for youth, as well as research and demonstration projects that complement similar on-campus activities in sustainable agriculture.

Vern can be reached at: UVM Extension System, 157 Old Guilford Road, Brattleboro, Vermont 05301-3647; phone: 802/257-7967; or email: vgrubinger@clover.uvm.edu.

Sheep Flock to Pastures

One of the goals of the Center is to encourage cooperative, on-farm research involving farmers and agency personnel as well as folks from the university's extension and research communities. For the last year and a half, Center staff worked with a group of people to initiate a project whose goal is to provide practical information to sheep producers about how to more effectively use pasture to raise sheep. The research team, coordinated by Center staff, was recently awarded a three-year grant from the Northeast Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Program to carry out this project.

The goal is to increase profitability for sheep producers through lower cost production methods, alternative marketing, and cooperative learning. The research team includes farmers, representatives from UVM's extension and research communities, and the marketing division of the Vermont Department of Agriculture, Food and Markets. The team has also sought and received input from other producers and associations such as the Vermont Lamb Promotion Board.

During the first year of the project, the research team will work with four sheep producers (also members of the

team) to develop their farms as models which demonstrate the feasibility of grass-based sheep production. Other producers will have the opportunity to observe these practices and contribute their own expertise to the project through farm walks and workshops. More farms will be added as case studies during the second and third years.

Research team members will work with producers to develop and refine record keeping systems that document changes in production methods made to increase the effectiveness of the pasture resource and to document changes in costs and returns. Alternative marketing sources and further development of current markets for grass-raised lamb will also be researched by members of the team.

"Some of us have been doing our own experimenting with raising lamb strictly on pasture. It helps cut feed costs, but takes intensive management of the pastures to produce high quality feed so that the lambs grow to market weight," stated Dave McDonough, one of the producer members of the research team. "We need to develop better ways to improve our record keeping and document our practices so that other producers can also begin adapting these methods. The goal is to reduce costs and protect soil and water resources through controlled integration of land and animals."

The sheep project will utilize the extensive experience of the ongoing UVM Pasture Management Outreach Program (PMOP). One of the PMOP pasture consultants, Sarah Flack, will also be serving as a pasture consultant for the sheep producers. Sarah will be assisting the project's principal investigator, Chet Parsons, UVM Extension Sheep Specialist.

A number of sheep pasture walks are scheduled for this summer and are open to the public. These dates are August 9th at Dave McDonough's Farm in Brookfield; and September 13th at Tom Cope's farm in Bath, NH. All pasture walks will take place from 10:00 am to noon. For more information or directions, contact Kate Duesterberg at 802/656-0037.



Sprouting New Opportunities for Women in Ag

July 1st marked the start of a new program designed to help Vermont's agricultural community become more diverse. The Women's Agricultural Network (WAgN) is a collaborative effort of the UVM Extension System, the Women's Small Business Project and the Center for Sustainable Agriculture. These three partners offer a continuum of services to promote diversity within agriculture, strengthen community networks, and enable participants to evaluate the feasibility of starting or enhancing a farming operation.

To start the program, the Women's Agricultural Network received a five-year grant from the Farmers' Home Administration (Consolidated Farm Service Agency) to help individuals, especially women, own and operate profitable farm and ag.-related businesses. Although the program is open to everyone, it is geared toward women and people of color. In Vermont, women make up 50% of the general population, yet comprise less than 10% of the farm operators in the state. Farms operated by persons of color account for only 0.01% of Vermont's farming community.

UVM Extension, in association with the Center, will provide participants with agricultural technical assistance and education while the Women's Small Business Project (WSBP) will provide education in business planning. "This collaboration enables the Network to offer a comprehensive continuum of education and services," said Mary Peabody, program coordinator of the Women's Agricultural Network. "Our goal is to help participants make informed decisions."

Women's Small Business Project

Based at Trinity College in Burlington, Vermont, the Women's Small Business Project offers educational training programs, primarily to women, with the goal of facilitating economic self-sufficiency and entrepreneurial growth. The focus of WSBP is to give women the skills necessary to start and expand successful micro-businesses while creating jobs in Vermont. "While WSBP has helped launch several agricultural-based businesses, the success rate for this type of business can be enhanced through hands-on agricultural training," said Holly Wilkinson-Ray, Director of WSBP. "This needed training will be successfully met through the University of

Vermont Extension System's course *Growing Places* and agricultural technical assistance. Topics including determining land use, production methods and marketing options will not only increase business owners skills but will also connect them with important statewide resources and support."

Training and Support Offered

The Women's Agricultural Network offers four levels of training and support.

Getting Serious is a four-part seminar designed to explore the possibilities and realities of business ownership where participants assess personal skills and experience, develop business ideas and decide if self-employment meets their goals.



Growing Places, an eight session course, helps participants determine the necessary resources to start an agriculture-related business. Here, individuals explore opportunities within their region, look at marketing strategies, and develop reliable production projections and budgets. They also learn about financing options and meet with representatives from agricultural lending and other agencies that provide support and assistance.

Start Up is an intensive education program offered by the Women's Small Business Project to those who are starting, stabilizing or expanding a small business. In this course, participants develop a comprehensive business plan. Business management skill development, accounting and book-keeping practices, and business owners resource seminars comprise the 15 weeks of *Start Up*. Participants are able to interact with area business owners, loan officers and micro-business specialists to learn the skills of running a business and explore financing options.

The Women's Ag. Network offers financial assistance awards to help defray the cost of *Start Up*. The financial award program is designed to increase participation by members of underrepresented groups in the areas of farm production and ag.-related business. (Underrepresented groups are defined according to the WAgN funding agency's categories of race, ethnicity, and gender.)

Judy Sheehan produces range poultry and natural lamb and beef at Swallow Quick Farm in Enosburg Falls, Vermont. She shares her experience with *Start-Up*. "I possessed all the ingredients for a potentially successful business in agriculture. I had the land, the buildings and the initial livestock. What I did not have was the experience or the family background in agriculture to assist me with my plan."

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"That is where the Women's Small Business Project Start-Up program made up for my lack of agriculture management experience. It forced me to calculate my expenses, right down to the last bale of hay and to add in costs for equipment,

fencing, raising and processing my animals to market weight. It gave me focus on what my business was and where it was going. It gave me a clear picture of what I needed to raise and how many. It helped me define my customer and forced me to give an honest look at my competition."

Technical Assistance is provided by program staff to support participants during the critical, first years of their business. Outreach assistants help individuals with routine management issues, provide access to expert information, help expand the participants' network, and provide encouragement and support. On-going workshops, seminars and meetings are offered as well to address specific technical issues.

All sections of the Network are designed to function independently so that participants may tailor the program to their individual needs.

The Women's Agricultural Network is located with the Center for Sustainable Agriculture (and the Vermont Farm Youth Corps) at 590 Main Street. On-campus staff are: Lavon Bartel, the project's principal investigator; Deb Heleba, program assistant (Deb also serves as outreach coordinator at the Center); Stella Moyser, secretary; and Mary Peabody, program coordinator. Center program coordinator, Kate Duesterberg will also work with WAgN on special projects. Program outreach assistants for WAgN are: Ellie Barton (located at the Rutland Extension Office), Debra Browning (Berlin Extension Office), and Ann Ogden Hausslein who will cover southern Vermont.

For more information about the program, please call the Women's Agricultural Network at 802-656-3276. ■

K-12 SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE EDUCATION

Inspiring the Next Generation

In this issue of the newsletter, we continue our segment on K-12 education by highlighting another Center project activity that encourages the inclusion of sustainable agriculture curriculum into Vermont's schools.

From A to Z in Sustainable Agriculture



A New Resource for Teachers

In keeping with the Center's goals, we are developing a comprehensive, user-friendly directory of K-12 sustainable agriculture teaching materials to support educators in Vermont and nationwide. In collaboration with local and national educators, Center staff are completing the "From A to Z in Sustainable Agriculture: K-12 Sustainable Agriculture Curriculum Directory." Seventy-five teaching materials, including curricula, videos, books, and lesson plans, cover topics ranging from composting to non-point source pollution and from natural science to consumer studies.

The directory highlights materials that:

- teach a wide range of subjects using interdisciplinary, hands-on learning;
- develop problem-solving & systems-thinking skills; and

And the Winner Is . . .

Thanks to all who entered our "Name That Newsletter!" contest. We received many creative responses. Our winner, Dina Browrahy from Richmond, Vermont receives a pint of Ben & Jerry's ice cream and a "Campaign for Sustainable Ag." tee shirt. We would also like to thank our panel of judges--Beth Holtzman (NE SARE Program), Justin Johnson (Vermont Department of Agriculture, Food and Markets), and Enid Wonnacott (NOFA-VT)--for their time and support.

We hope you enjoy *Cultivating Connections* and appreciate any comments and/or suggestions you may have to improve our newsletter (see page 7).



Sustainable Agriculture Calendar of Events

Date	Event	Place	Contact
July 21-23	Lamoille County Field Days	Johnson	Secretary, 635-7113
July 22-23	Windsor County Agricultural Fair	Springfield	Cynthia Martin, 886-8470
July 29-30	Washington County Field Days	E. Montpelier	Henry Parker, 223-5805
August 1-5	Addison County Fair and Field Days	New Haven	Karen Curavoo, 545-2557
August 2	PMOP ¹ Pasture Walk: Lussier Farm	Swanton	Joshua Silman, 656-0641
August 3	NOFA-VT ² Workshop: Pest & Disease Identification and Organic Control	Fairfax	Dina Bahrawy, 434-4122
August 5	Orleans County Arts & Crafts Fair	Barton	Judy Branch, 334-7325
August 6	NOFA-VT Workshop: Biodynamic Farming and Gardening	So. Royalton	Dina Bahrawy, 434-4122
August 8	PMOP Pasture Walk: Houghton Farm	Lyndonville	Joshua Silman, 656-0641
August 9	Sheep Pasture Walk: McDonough Farm	Brookfield	Kate Duesterberg, 656-0037
August 9	NOFA-VT Workshop: Cover and Smother Crop Demonstrations	Brattleboro	Dina Bahrawy, 434-4122
August 9-13	Caledonia County Fair	Lyndonville	Richard Lawrence, 626-5917
August 10-12	Vermont Maplerama	Colchester	Larry Myott, 656-5433
August 11-13	NOFA Summer Conference	Amherst, MA	Julie Rawson, 508-355-2853
August 11-13	Franklin County Field Days	Highgate	Don Noel, 849-2901
August 12	Looking at the Horticultural Farm in an Ecological Context	So. Burlington	Friends of the Hort. Farm, 864-3073
August 12	Concurrent Ecology and Field Naturalist Workshops	So. Burlington	Friends of the Hort. Farm, 864-3073
August 15	PMOP Pasture Walk: Hill Farm of Vermont	Marshfield	Joshua Silman, 656-0641
August 15	Extension System Pasture Walk	Windham Co.	Willie Gibson, 223-2389
August 16	PMOP Pasture Walk: Tisbert Farm	Cambridge	Joshua Silman, 656-0641
August 16-20	Orleans County Fair	Barton	Phil Lafontaine, 525-3555

August 22	From Farm to Table Tour	Burlington	Deb Heleba, 656-0233
August 17-20	Deerfield Valley Farmers' Exhibition	Wilmington	Kevin Robinson, 464-2819
August 19	NOFA-VT Workshop: Little Greenhouse in the Big Woods	Ripton	Dina Bahrawy, 434-4122
August 20	NOFA-VT Workshop: Growing and Marketing Cut Flowers	E. Brookfield	Dina Bahrawy, 434-4122
August 25-27	Bondville Fair	Winhall	Robert Vail, 297-1882
August 26-September 4	Champlain Valley Exposition	Essex Junction	Fair Office, 878-5545
September 1-10	Vermont State Fair	Rutland	Edward Congdon, 775-5200
September 7	NOFA-VT Workshop: Pastured Poultry in Vermont	Jeffersonville	Dina Bahrawy, 434-4122
September 13	Sheep Pasture Walk: Cope Farm	Bath, NH	Kate Duesterberg, 656-0037
September 14-17	World's Fair	Tunbridge	Robert Howe, 889-5555
September 16	16th Annual Harvest Festival	Shelburne	Shelburne Farms, 985-8686
September 16	NOFA-VT Workshop: Ye Olde Goats!	Westfield	Dina Bahrawy, 434-4122
September 19	Extension System Pasture Walk	Windham Co.	Willie Gibson, 223-2389
September 23	Intervale Organic Food and Garden Festival	Burlington	Intervale Foundation, 660-3508
September 23	NOFA-VT Workshop: Growing School Gardens	TBA	Dina Bahrawy, 434-4122
September 27	590 Main Street Open House: Center for Sustainable Agriculture, Vermont Farm Youth Corps, & Women's Ag. Network	Burlington	Deb Heleba, 656-0233
September 27	Thinking about Vermont, A Special Place	Shelburne	Friends of the Hort. Farm, 864-3073
September 30	UVM Department of Plant and Soil Science Apple Open House	So. Burlington	Deb Heleba, 656-0233
September 30	NOFA-VT Workshop: Cultivated Medicinal Herbs	East Hardwick	Dina Bahrawy, 434-4122
September 30	Vermont Wool Pool	Killington	Chet Parsons, 524-6501
September 30-October 1	Vermont Sheep and Wool Festival	Killington	Dianne Stott, 457-2049

¹PMOP

UVM Pasture Management Outreach Program

²NOFA-VT

Vermont Chapter of the Northeast Organic Farming Association

The Sustainable Agriculture Calendar of Events is published quarterly by the Center for Sustainable Agriculture at the University of Vermont and State Agricultural College, 590 Main Street, Burlington, Vermont 05405-0059. If you would like to post an event, please contact Debra Heleba at 656-0233.



• foster students' understanding of the food system, its relevance to their daily lives, and the concepts of sustainable agriculture.

Teaching materials are organized by major content area and indexed by grade. For each material, the directory gives the author, publisher, a brief description, secondary content areas, and, when available, ordering information.

Appendices include additional resources for teachers, educational catalogues, and a list of sustainable agriculture educational centers and programs in Vermont.

To our knowledge, the directory is the first of its kind in the country.

Educators may order the directory in hard copy or on computer diskette. The computer version was developed using Microsoft Access which can be converted to many common database programs.

Once a critical mass of national schools has access to computer networking, we plan to make the directory available through the World Wide Web and similar graphics-based network services. We anticipate that by providing the directory in a variety of formats, we will be able to serve all local and national schools interested in sustainable agriculture education.

We welcome your critique of the first edition of the directory. If you are interested in reviewing the directory and/or suggesting additional materials, please contact Elizabeth Seyler, Center Education Coordinator, at 802-656-0827 or eseyler@moose.uvm.edu. We would greatly appreciate your help in serving Vermont educators.

The first edition is free of charge. There will be a small fee for future editions.

The directory is funded by a generous grant from the Frost Foundation, Ltd. and by donations from the Perry Restaurant Group and other corporate and private sponsors.

Considerable credit for the directory goes to Shauna Gasunas, a UVM undergraduate student majoring in environmental studies with a concentration in sustainable agriculture. As part of her senior project/thesis and her work-study position at the Center, she has contributed an enormous amount of time, energy, and thought to the directory.

RESOURCES ABOUND!

Sustainable Agriculture on the 'Net

In our second series of Resources Abound!, we look at resources available electronically. The "information super highway" offers many opportunities to retrieve sustainable agriculture information. Here, we will focus on one successful networking venture and an effective way to increase communications within the agricultural community--the electronic discussion group.



As you may know, discussion or mail groups are electronic forums available on-line through the existing network of computer networks known as the "Internet". They allow a wide range of information exchange between extension personnel, researchers, state and federal agency people, and farmers. Discussion groups are formed when a group of people are added to a particular list. Electronic mail (email) messages are sent to one address where it is automatically distributed to all members of the group. All messages--questions and answers alike--are circulated to all users of the group. In this way, members of a group share sources of information and help answer each others' questions.

Sustainable Agriculture Network

The Sustainable Agriculture Network or "SAN" is a leader in providing electronic information regarding sustainable agriculture. SAN is a cooperative effort of university, government, farm, business and non-profit organizations dedicated to facilitating information exchanges in support of sustainable agriculture research and education. It functions to further the goals of the USDA Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) program to provide publications and services to SARE clients through printed and electronic communication tools. It uses a decentralized system that encourages and supports interaction among a diversity of information providers and users, rather than a centralized system with a one-way flow of information.

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Where Do Your Veggies Come From, Chef Gourmet?

The Center for Sustainable Agriculture, NOFA-VT, and the Vermont Department of Agriculture, Food and Markets are teaming up to promote local farms at a day-long tour on August 22nd. The farm tour is designed to teach produce buyers, chefs and consumers more about the high quality products raised right here in Chittenden County for wholesale and retail markets.

Our overall goal of the tour is to generate enthusiasm for local agricultural products and further encourage a regional food system. Produce buyers, chefs, and other wholesale buyers can have a major impact in promoting a strong agricultural economy. A viable "working landscape" will, in turn, continue to draw the tourist dollars upon which these groceries and restaurants rely.



We also hope the tour will help these folks understand and appreciate the local, small-scale farm and the unique production and marketing challenges that growers in New England face.

SAN's electronic discussion group is called, "SANET-MG". To join the SANET-MG list, you need to send the following message to: almanac@ces.ncsu.edu

• subscribe sanet-mg

After you have subscribed, you send all subsequent messages to the group--over 700 individuals from farms, universities, non-governmental organizations, etc.--at the following address: sanet-mg@ces.ncsu.edu

The topics addressed on SANET-MG are diverse; everything from philosophical discussions of the definition of sustainable agriculture to highly technical production questions are covered. Recently, for example, a member from Milwaukee, Wisconsin requested information on building and operating a hydroponic greenhouse for an urban area. Another member from Mount Compass, Australia had a question regarding riparian zone plans for areas under management-intensive grazing. Subjects of messages often posted to SANET-MG include recent

publications, new sustainable agriculture events, and internship and job opportunities.

In addition to the discussion of sustainable agriculture, members also receive a variety of newsletters including, "Alternative Agriculture News" from the Wallace Institute for Alternative Agriculture, "ATTRAnews", and "Farm Aid News", among others.



Other Sustainable Agriculture Discussion Groups

SANET-MG is not the only discussion list to address sustainable agriculture. There are many lists available that address the general philosophy of sustainable agriculture and production systems associated with it.

The Center for Sustainable Agriculture recently established a discussion list called, "susag_rap". It is open to anyone who has an interest in sustaining agriculture in Vermont. Generally, the list is used for posting area events and engaging in discussion about Vermont agriculture. There are about 26 members on the list now from the Extension System, School of Natural Resources and the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences.

If you are interested in subscribing to "susag_rap", please notify Deb Heleba at her email address, dheleba@clover.uvm.edu, and she will add you to the list. You may post messages to the list at the following address: susag_rap@clover.uvm.edu.

The following are a sample of other discussion groups that deal with agricultural issues.

- General Agriculture Discussion Group
- Beef Discussion Group
- Dairy Science Discussion Group
- Grazing Discussion Group
- Vegetable Production Discussion Group

For more information on discussion groups and other ways to retrieve information electronically, the publication, "Exploring the Internet: An Introduction to Networking" by Deborah Shaffer is a good start. To receive this publication, send the following email message to the address: almanac@es.usda.gov.

• send internet exploring-internet

If you don't have access to the Internet and want to request specific information, the Center staff has offered to post limited requests on SANET-MG and SUSAG_RAP. If you are interested, contact Deb Heleba, outreach coordinator, at 802/656-0233. ●

A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words

The Center has been at 590 Main Street for a couple of months now and we are finally feeling settled in our new work space. However, the process of sprucing up the building hasn't ended--we still have many blank walls and empty corners.

Would you or someone you know be interested in one of the following?

- Donating a print or poster that depicts some aspect of Vermont agriculture to liven up our office.
- Loaning historical photographs of the University that display its agricultural heritage.
- Showcasing a local artist's work in our conference room or resource library.
- Contributing a house plant.

If you are cleaning out your attic or your greenhouse this summer, keep us in mind. Contact Elizabeth Seyler at 802/656-0827 or Deb Heleba at 802/656-0233 with your ideas. ■

Mark Your Calendars

On Wednesday, September 27, 1995, 590 Main Street will host an open house from 3:00 to 7:00 pm. 590 Main Street is home to the Center for Sustainable Agriculture, the Vermont Farm Youth Corps, and the Women's Agricultural Network.

The open house will be a great opportunity for you to meet the staff, tour the building, sample some Vermont agricultural products, and learn more about the programs we offer. We hope to see you there!



Clip and mail to the address below.

The Center is funded almost entirely through grants, private gifts, and program fees. Please help us support agriculture in Vermont.

- I would like to support the Center for Sustainable Agriculture. Enclosed please find my gift of:
 \$15 \$30 \$50 \$100 other \$ _____

Please make check or money order payable to the *University of Vermont*.

- Comments /suggestions on newsletter: _____

Name _____

Farm/Organization _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Daytime Phone (_____) _____

*Send to: the Center for Sustainable Agriculture, University of Vermont and State Agricultural College,
590 Main Street, Burlington, Vermont 05405-0059.*



The Center for
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at the University of Vermont and State Agricultural College

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