

New Hampshire Farm Link to Merge with New England LandLink

Today, more than ever, there is a need to match farmers who want to sell or rent their farms with people who want to go into farming. Farmland is expensive and hard to find, and there is a younger generation with a desire to farm and supply local food. Some landowners might even make special arrangements for people who showed promise of carrying on their enterprise.

The New Hampshire Farm Link program was organized on June 21, 2000 with the purpose of joining willing farmers to willing renters or sellers of farmland; however, it never really had the financial backing or staffing to fully do the job. After several years of being somewhat dormant and looking for a home, the New Hampshire Farm Link program is going to merge with New England LandLink, run by the New England Small Farm Institute (NESFI) in Belchertown, MA.

The New England LandLink program serves all of New England and eastern New York. Its database currently has 510-plus seekers and over 60 farm offerings. Merging with this regional program will provide a considerably larger pool of prospective farmers and available land and be a win-win situation for everyone involved. There will also be a director, Warren Hubley, available by phone and email, to provide personal contact (warren@smallfarm.org or 413-323-4531).

People who want to list their property or who are looking for land can obtain application forms from any UNH Cooperative Extension office or other cooperating agricultural agencies around the state or from NESFI's website, www.smallfarm.org, under NE LandLink. It costs \$10 to register for the standard LandLink services, which include contact information for any web site listings and advice about new properties.

The New Hampshire Coalition for Sustaining Agriculture, a committee comprised of a cross-section of people dedicated to preserving agriculture in the state, originally proposed the idea of the Farm Link Program.

Tony Mincu, a member of the committee and law student at the time, took on the task of formally organizing the New Hampshire program as part of a community law project in coordination with Franklin Pierce Law School. There have been a few applications kept on file over the years and some informal match-ups, but there wasn't enough staff time to maintain a full-service program.

New England LandLink is a great way to match up new farmers with those wanting to exit the business and maintain a viable agricultural industry in the region. Be sure to take advantage of this opportunity.

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