When Vermont farmer Katie Taibi’s partner, Matt Burrell, took a job as a paramedic in Connecticut, they found themselves looking for a place to live and land to farm.

Through the Connecticut Department of Agriculture’s FarmLink Program they found an opportunity to rent a historic home, cultivate a market garden, and learn about raising sheep on the Raymond Family Farm in South Windsor.

“It was a match made in heaven,” said landowner Jessica Glass of the partnership formed through the program. “For us it’s key to have help with the sheep, and Katie and Matt’s use of the resources of this farm so far have been outstanding.”

“We both work freelance jobs and a lot of our work is in New York City,” said Jessica’s husband David Raymond, whose family has been farming land along the Connecticut River in South Windsor since 1832.

About 50 acres are used by the farm owners for pasture and hay for the flock of about 55 sheep. The other 100 acres is rented to other farmers, for corn, pumpkin, and tobacco crops.

“In the 80s you couldn’t make a living on anything like this,” said David, whose grandmother Hildred Sperry Raymond began raising sheep on the family farm in the 1960s. “Now it’s getting better, but we still have to work elsewhere to supplement our farm income.”

The wool is sold through the Connecticut Sheep Breeders Association’s Connecticut Blanket Project and at the annual Connecticut Sheep, Wool & Fiber Festival held each spring at the Tolland County Agricultural Center in Vernon.

“We just sold the last scarf from 2018’s batch through our Etsy shop, GearDownFarm,” said Jessica.

The Raymond Family Farm also sells blankets and sheepskins and a calendar filled with pictures of their photogenic sheep.

“People love to have something unique and local and we always sell out.”

The sheep yielded about 106 pounds of wool when they were shorn in April by blade shearer Kevin Ford of Charlemont, MA, who is the only full time blade shearer in the country. Ford literally wrote the book on blade shearing and without his efforts blade shearing may well have died out altogether in the U.S.

“We are so fortunate that Kevin Ford is our shearer,” said David. “Blade shearing is much better for the sheep, and for the wool quality, when it’s done by a master blade shearer.”

After shearing, the wool is skirted and sold as raw wool, or washed, carded, and spun, and then woven or knitted into finished projects like blankets and scarves.

“We couldn’t make this work without the help of neighbors and tenants,” said Jessica.

Jessica and David listed the availability of the house and land with the requirement to help with the sheep for a reduced rent on Farmlink in the autumn of 2017. They got a few responses and after a month or so they hooked up with Katie and Matt.

“Kip [Kolesinskas of Farmlink] was very helpful and responsive during the listing and communication process,” said Jessica.

Katie has a decade of experience in different types of farming in Vermont and the Hudson Valley of New York State.

“I used to farm full-time,” said Katie. “But not since March [2017] when Atlas was born.”

She is now a busy mom who appreciates the opportunity to learn about wool production from Jessica and David.

In addition to helping care for the sheep, Katie and Matt have cleared a half-acre of overgrown farmland, started a market garden, and set up a roadside farm stand where they sell vegetables, cut flowers, and eggs from the chickens they raise.

(continued on Page 3)
### New England Shell Eggs

Per dozen. Grade A brown in carton delivered store door. (Range)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Xtra Large</th>
<th>Large</th>
<th>Medium</th>
<th>Small</th>
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<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>1.18</td>
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### New England Weekly Agricultural Report

**Slaughter Lambs**

- SLAUGHTER STEERS
  - Hi Choice/Prime 2-3: 109.00
  - Choice 2-3: 104.50
  - Select 1-2: 99.00
  - Bone 80-85% lean: 40.00
  - Bone 90-90% lean: 32.00

- SLAUGHTER COWS Avg. Dressing
  - Breakers 75-80% lean: 40.00
  - Boners 80-85% lean: 40.00
  - Lean 88-90% lean: 32.00

- CALVES - Graded bull
  - No 1 90-130 lbs: 20.00

**Slaughter Lambs: Woolen & Shorn**

- Markets: Choice and Prime 2-3
  - 80-90 lbs: 185.00
  - 90-110 lbs: 180.00
  - 110-130 lbs: 152.00
  - 150-200 lbs: 135.00

**Slaughter EWes: Good 2-3**

- 80-120 lbs: 65.00
- 120-160 lbs: 70.00
- 160-200 lbs: 80.00
- 200-300 lbs: 70.00

**Slaughter Kids: Sel 1**

- 20-40 lbs: 130.00
- 40-60 lbs: 150.00
- 60-80 lbs: 170.00
- 80-100 lbs: 190.00

**Slaughter Nannies/Does: Sel 1**

- 80-130 lbs: 170.00
- 130-180 lbs: 190.00

**Slaughter Bucks/Billies: Sel 1**

- 80-100 lbs: 195.00
- 100-150 lbs: 250.00
- 150-250 lbs: 280.00

### New England Livestock Auction

- **LUCKY 7**
  - 45-50 lbs: n/a
  - 61-75 lbs: 5.00
  - 76-90 lbs: 12.00
  - 91-105 lbs: 20.00
  - 106 lbs. & up: 25.00

- **Farm Calves**
  - Up to 110 lbs: n/a

**Veal Calves**

- 110.00

**Meat Steers**

- 70.00

**Beef Steers**

- 62.00

**Butcher Hogs**

- 58.00

**Replacements Cows**

- 140.00

**Replacement Heifers**

- 55.00

**Boars**

- 50.00

**Sows**

- 5.00

**Pigs**

- 10.00

**LAMBS**

- 12.00

**Cattle**

- 10.00

**Feeder Heifers**

- 125.00

**Feeder Steers**

- 69.00

**Feeder Buls**

- 132.50

**Sheep**

- 140.00

**Lambs**

- 250.00

**Goats**

- 347.50

**Kid Goats**

- 150.00

**Canners**

- 50.50

**Cutters**

- 54.00

**Utility Grade Cows**

- 65.00

**Rabbits each**

- 10.00

**Chickens each**

- 17.00

**Ducks each**

- 25.00
For next season, Katie plans to expand the market garden and reach out to a vegetable CSA about offering a flower share. Katie said their partnership with the Raymond Family Farm, made possible through Farmlink, has worked out really well. She would like to get back to farming full-time, but not necessarily on a farm of her own right now.

“I’m definitely open to partnerships, and this one has worked out really well,” said Katie.

Katie said the cost of land and the transition of farms to the next generation make partnerships, like those forged through the Connecticut FarmLink Program, important to the continuation of agriculture in Connecticut.

“Family farms aren’t always passed on to the next generation as farmland because a lot of people are opting out of farming. A lot of land is available in Connecticut, but it’s very expensive here,” said Katie. “So partnerships are one of the best ways for young farmers to get a start because the cost to buy land can be very high.”

The Connecticut FarmLink Program, administered by the Connecticut Department of Agriculture (DoAg) with assistance from the Connecticut Farmland Trust, has been helping owners of farmland partner with farmers looking for land since the program began in 2006.

The program connects owners of farmland with people looking for farmland through a website. Farmers can post information about their land which is available for lease or sale. Farmland seekers can post information about the farmland they’re looking for.

If a farmland seeker is interested in an online posting of available farmland they send an email asking for more information. The contact information of the farm owner and the farmland seeker is not made available to the public through the website.

The FarmLink website currently lists 28 farms for sale, 55 farms for lease, and has more than 300 farmland seekers. Administrative support for the Connecticut FarmLink Program is funded through the 2005 Community Investment Act which provides funding for open space, farmland preservation, historic preservation and affordable housing.

Owners of farmland and farmland seekers interested in participating in the Connecticut FarmLink Program should visit www.ctfarmlink.org, email Lily at lorr@ctfarmland.org, or call 860-247-0202 ext. 227 for more information.

USDA-NRCS DISASTER ASSISTANCE ANNOUNCED FOR PORTIONS OF CONNECTICUT

The USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) announced the availability of federal funding in response to severe rain and flooding that impacted parts of Connecticut in September 2018. Assistance will be available for Middlesex and New London Counties, including the Mashantucket Pequot and Mohegan Tribes.

On September 25, 2018, Connecticut was struck by an extremely heavy rainfall event that went largely un-forecasted. Severe flooding caused extensive damage across a wide area of southern and eastern Connecticut.

NRCS will be accepting requests for assistance through the Emergency Watershed Protection (EWP) Program. The program allows communities to quickly address serious and long-lasting damages to infrastructure and to the land. All projects must demonstrate that they reduce threats to life and property; be economically, environmentally, and socially sound; and must be designed to acceptable engineering standards.

The program also allows NRCS to establish non-traditional partnerships with sponsors to complete projects. A 30-day window allows for individuals and towns from the affected areas to contact Arthur Ramthun, the agency’s state conservation engineer via email at arthur.ramthun@ct.usda.gov or 860-871-4030.

Inquiries must be made by January 14, 2019. Properties will be assessed and if they are qualified, will be submitted to national headquarters for consideration.

DOAG TO HOST FARM-TO-SCHOOL CONFERENCE

The Connecticut Department of Agriculture (DoAg) is hosting the Connecticut Farm-to-School Conference, “Wholesale Readiness and Culinary Trainings: Making Connections Across the Sectors.”

Producers, food service professionals, and others interested in farm-to-school initiatives are invited for a full day of trainings, panel discussion, educational sessions, and networking.

The conference will be held Tuesday, January 22, 2019, 8:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. at the Hartford Sheraton South, 100 Capital Blvd, Rocky Hill, CT.

To register as an attendee, or apply for an exhibit space visit www.cognitoforms.com/CTDepartmentOfAgriculture/_2019ConnecticutFarmtoSchoolConference.

The registration fee is $40 per person which includes breakfast, lunch and all materials. For additional information regarding exhibiting, registration, and scholarships contact Erin Windham at 860-713-2543 or Erin.Windham@ct.gov.

Funding for this conference is provided by a Farm-to-School Grant by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service to train producers and food service professionals on farm-to-school practices.

This annual grant program provides funding to support the use of locally produced food in schools. This project has been funded in part with federal funds from USDA. The contents of this publication do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of USDA, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.

Advertising Rates: Fifteen or fewer words: $3.75 per insertion. More than 15 words: 25 cents per word per insertion. Ads must be related to agriculture in Connecticut and are accepted on a first-come, first-served basis. Payment must be received by noon on Friday before publication the following Wednesday. Make check or money order payable to the Connecticut Dept. of Agriculture, and mail copy and remittance to the department at 450 Columbus Blvd., Suite 701, Hartford, CT 06103. For more information contact Crystal.Morris@ct.gov or call 860-713-2533.

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