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## UVM boosts agricultural entrepreneurs

BY TIM JOHNSON • FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER • SEPTEMBER 24, 2008

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A nonprofit that promotes local food networks will get support from the University of Vermont under a formal memorandum of understanding announced Tuesday in Hardwick.

UVM's support for the Center for an Agricultural Economy will include faculty research, student involvement, and administrative coordination, according to the university.

UVM President Dan Fogel made the announcement at a Hardwick facility that houses Vermont Natural Coatings and Vermont Soy. He called the center a "nexus" of agrarian entrepreneurs devoted to sustainable food systems and value-added agriculture, some of them UVM graduates who use processes patented at UVM.

"This is a real affirmation, and a reaffirmation, of the university's land-grant mission," Fogel said afterward of the agreement, which would make UVM resources available to young entrepreneurs working to revive Vermont agriculture, he said.

Also scheduled to be present were UVM's deans of engineering, agriculture, extension services and continuing education.

Before the announcement, Fogel toured the Hardwick companies and, earlier in the day, Jasper Hill Farms in Greensboro, another center affiliate. The afternoon was to be given over to a tour of High Mowing Seeds in Wolcott, an organic seed producer.

The center, according to its Web site, "seeks to engage agricultural leaders in the emerging 21st century food system to build capacity and inspire the public in supporting and implementing this system. The center expects to, among other things, support research into value-added product opportunities, offer technical training on processing to farmers, and build infrastructure for shared processing, storage and marketing."

Andrew Meyer, who graduated from UVM in 1992, is one of the center's seven board members. Owner of Vermont Natural Coatings and co-owner of Vermont Soy, Meyer said UVM's support will nourish the center's campaign to develop a healthy food system in the Hardwick region.

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