



Roger Noonan, Middle Branch Farm, New Boston, NH. Roger farms with his wife, Lori, and their two children on over 40 acres. Lori has an off-farm job and helps with the farming; Roger farms full-time. Middle Branch Farm is currently the largest certified organic farm in NH.

“I farm organically because it makes economic sense and I believe in the process. When the focus is on building the soil with compost to feed the plants, instead of relying on bought-in petroleum based, chemical inputs, organic farming makes the most sense. I discovered this back in high school when in my grandfather’s things I found the book, The Organic Method on the Farm by J.I. Rodale, 1949. The book talked a lot about composting and that was very interesting to me. At Marlboro College in VT, a school full of farmer/back-to-the-land types, I was introduced to Plowman’s Folly, by Edward Faulkner. That book focused on the depletion of soils from traditional farming methods that destroyed soil structure and made up for it with chemical inputs; Faulkner explained how natural farming not only builds soil but creates healthy plants that resist pests. It completed the picture for me. Organic farming is more about soil building for me than the pesticide issue. After college I went on to do several other things and then started to farm about 10 years ago.

I grow a full range of vegetables because I run a full season CSA on my farm in New Boston, as well as grow for Local Harvest. I grow a lot of potatoes, winter squash, peppers and tomatoes both for Local Harvest and for some wholesale – if I can focus on several crops instead of all the crops, I can become more effective and reduce the cost of production. That is a plan for the future. We grow some heirlooms varieties and we trial new “old” varieties as they become commercially available to see what is worth growing. We also grow lots of hay for sale and for our beef and pork production.

I encourage my kids to farm. People are becoming more aware of their food and that’s important. People need to be connected to the place they live and eating the food from the farm next door or down the road is a great way to do that. I am eager to see the farmer have a valued place in society once again.”