

Vermont

Business Programs • Rural Energy for America Program

A Drop of Golden Sun for Foster Farm Botanicals

Foster Farm Botanicals in East Calais, Vermont, has been in the same family for two centuries. Co-owner Peter Backman grew up on the farm when it was a dairy operation and has spent the last five years changing the nature of its product—but not the high quality of its soil or its stunning rural aesthetic.

Together with his wife Annie Christopher, an artist and herbalist, and Farm Manager Ben Uris, an experienced vegetable grower, Backman began converting the land into an herb farm in 2015. Starting with two acres of a few botanicals, they have now expanded the operation to over 50 acres with just 10 employees.

Now, with help from a \$43,600 USDA Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) grant, Foster Farm Botanicals will install a solar array to offset the majority of its electricity usage. REAP grants help farmers, producers and rural small businesses improve energy efficiency, and integrate renewable energy systems into their operations.

Because its herbs are dried immediately after harvesting, Foster Farm's most significant use of energy is from its three large, on-site dryers. The solar panels will be positioned in a field that's too steep for farming, thereby repurposing unused land and nearly eliminating energy costs now and into the future!



With its new solar array, Foster Farm Botanicals will use renewable energy to cover 98% of its electrical load—enough to power eight homes.

Obligation Amount: \$43,600 REAP grant

Date of Obligation: July 27, 2020

Congressional District: Representative Welch, District 1 VT; Senators Leahy and Sanders

Impact: This \$43,600 Rural Energy for America Program grant will help Foster Farm Botanicals become energy independent with a ground-mounted solar array. The renewable-energy system will account for 98% of its operational energy costs.