

THE UNIVERSITY OF RHODE ISLAND
COLLEGE OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND LIFE SCIENCES
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION

Agriculture and Food Systems
Fellows Program

2024 Student Profiles



EMMA VENTURA

Middletown, Rhode Island

B.S. Environmental Science and Management, May 2026

Emma worked with the URI Cooperative Extension's Vegetable Production Program, collaborating with Dr. David Weisberger, a crop scientist and Extension agent. Dr. Weisberger is spearheading a project focused on researching and documenting innovative sustainable and efficient farming practices for small farms in Rhode Island. Emma supported this initiative by conducting farmer interviews, producing video content, and developing social media materials. This project plays a critical role in educating local farmers about sustainable practices they can adopt on their own farms, ultimately increasing access to locally grown, sustainably sourced food throughout Rhode Island.



ROWAN VALLE

Providence, Rhode Island

B.S. Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems, May 2025

Rowan worked in Dr. John Taylor's Urban Agroecology Research Lab, which is focused on transitioning food and material goods production from large-scale industrial systems to localized, small-scale, and sustainable processing operations. Rowan gathered Geographic Information System (GIS) data, recruited research participants and conducted informant interviews, translated documents from English to Spanish and conducted comprehensive site inventories of urban gardens. Through these efforts, Rowan contributed to the lab's goal of fostering resilient, community-based agricultural systems that promote environmental sustainability, local food security, and urban ecosystem health.



ELI LAUZON-ARDITO

South Kingstown, Rhode Island

B.S. Environmental and Natural Resource Economics, May 2027

Eli worked with Dr. Patrick Baur at his food system lab at the University of Rhode Island, a research lab focused on sustainable solutions for urban agriculture. In the lab, Eli conducted community outreach and data collection focused on initiatives that support urban communities in gaining greater access to healthy food and agricultural resources. This work involved engaging with community members, gathering critical data to inform research, and contributing to strategies aimed at addressing food insecurity and promoting sustainable urban farming practices.

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HALLIE BROWN

Smithfield, Rhode Island
B.S. Animal Science, May 2026
B.A. Biology, May 2026

Hallie worked in the RI Department of Environment Management's (RIDEM) Division of Agriculture, where she consulted with farmers, visited and evaluated the operations of various farms, and worked on updating the produce safety enrollment registry. The Division of Agriculture is dedicated to ensuring a safe and reliable supply of fresh, locally-grown produce while providing science-based guidance to producers on the critical importance of farm food safety practices. Through her work, Hallie helped promote both public health and safe local farming operations.



AUGUSTE SCHMIDT

New York, New York
B.S Marine Biology, May 2026

Auguste worked at Rhody Wild Sea Gardens, a cooperative focused on cultivating native sugar kelp, a versatile crop that contributes to ecosystem restoration, carbon capture, and sequestration, while also serving as a valuable soil amendment. Auguste led kelp drying operations, which included measuring kelp growth, creating detailed data sheets for on-site measurements, and developing a species identification guide. This work plays a critical role in reducing methane emissions from livestock by incorporating kelp into feed, ultimately contributing to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and supporting sustainable agricultural practices.



SUELLY PIRES

Providence, Rhode Island
B.A Psychology, May 2027

Suely worked at the RI Commerce Corporation, an economic development agency focused on enhancing engagement within RI's food system. Suely contributed to the Relish Rhody Initiative, a state-led, interagency effort aimed at strengthening and improving the state's food system. In addition to its foundation in State-level leadership, the strategy is guided by a diverse and active network of community partners from various sub-sectors who are deeply involved and committed to the initiative. Designed as a comprehensive action plan, the strategy takes a holistic approach to Rhode Island's food system, recognizing its critical connections to public health, economic growth, and environmental sustainability.



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NATALIA OGANESIAN

East Greenwich, Rhode Island
B.S Chemical Engineering, May 2026

Natalia worked at Plantopia LLC, a boutique organization dedicated to advancing plant-based food innovation through expert guidance in research and development, manufacturing scale-up, and quality assurance. Natalia contributed analytical skills and computer software proficiency to shelf-life studies to evaluate product stability and quality over time, and assisted with scaling up food product manufacturing processes. Natalia's work supported Plantopia's goal of ensuring that clients can deliver sustainable, reliable, and high-quality plant-based options to meet the growing demand for environmentally- friendly and nutritious food alternatives.



QUINN JOHNSON

Harvard, Massachusetts
B.S. Environmental Science and Management, May 2026

Quinn worked with the Eastern RI Conservation District (ERICD), an organization focused on promoting sustainability through education and hands-on community engagement. At the AgInnovation Farm, Quinn maintained garden plots and supported educational programs. These afterschool and summer programs equip middle school age students with essential knowledge about soil health and water and air quality, fostering a deeper understanding of environmental stewardship. The farm also contributes fresh produce to the Portsmouth Food Pantry, reinforcing its commitment to sustainability and food security.



KATHERINE HELLENDRUNG

Middletown, Rhode Island
Certificate of Business Entrepreneurship, May 2025 (CCRI)

Katie worked at Farm Fresh RI, a nonprofit organization dedicated to creating a robust and equitable local food system by increasing community access to fresh, locally-sourced foods and supporting the growth of local food enterprises. Katie created informative weekly newsletters for farmers markets, ensuring that community members stayed informed about seasonal produce, market events, and the benefits of supporting local farmers; she developed lesson plans to promote healthy eating and sustainable food practices, contributing to FFRI's goal of fostering a thriving local food system that benefits both producers and consumers.

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KAYLIE MARIE

Phillipsburg, New Jersey

B.S Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems, May 2026

Kaylie worked at Our Kids Farm, where she assisted with data collection, statistical analysis, crop portfolios, and reports. A significant focus of her work was evaluating the effects of biochar as a soil amendment on various crops cultivated using a hydroponic system. Biochar, a carbon-rich material, is known for its potential to sequester carbon from the atmosphere, thereby reducing greenhouse gas emissions from the agricultural sector. By exploring the applications of biochar, Kaylie's efforts supported innovative approaches to mitigating the long-term impacts of climate change while promoting more sustainable and environmentally-friendly farming methods.



MACEY HIGGINS

East Greenwich, Rhode Island

B.S Plant Sciences, May 2027

B.S. Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems, May 2027

Macey worked at Farm Fresh RI's Farm to School (F2S) Network, an initiative dedicated to strengthening connections between local farmers, schools, and communities. The F2S Network works towards three key objectives: 1) increasing the use of locally sourced food in school cafeterias, 2) improving students' access to healthier and more nutritious meals, and 3) providing farmers with greater economic opportunities by supplying their products to local schools. Macey created digital and printed materials in order to engage, inform, and encourage community involvement in the F2S Network and raise awareness of the importance of healthy, local food options in schools.



MAXWELL DELEMONTX

Wakefield, Rhode Island

B.S in Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems, May 2026

Max worked at Earth Care Farm in Charlestown, Rhode Island, a company devoted to sustainable, healthy, and nourishing development for plant and crop growth. Max worked closely with the Field Manager, taking on a variety of hands-on responsibilities including crop maintenance, harvesting produce, and managing the post-production phases such as processing and storing harvested goods. The ultimate goal of this work is to deepen understanding of how regenerative production systems operate, with the aim of encouraging broader adoption of sustainable vegetable production methods across the agricultural sector, ultimately benefiting both the environment and food systems.



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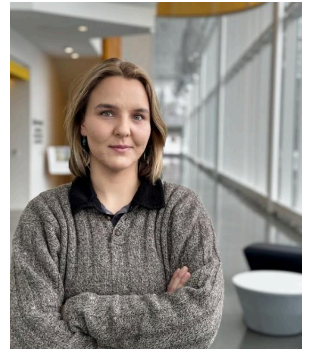
HANNAH REALI

South Kingstown, Rhode Island

B.S. Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems, May 2025

B.S. Environmental and Natural Resource Economics May 2025

Hannah worked at Ocean Hour Farm, an organization in Newport, RI that serves as a center for education, research, and demonstration of regenerative agriculture and land stewardship principles with a focus on highlighting the connection between land and ocean health. Hannah facilitated a feasibility study examining the potential for an ocean-based soil amendment for use in a farming system. In addition, she contributed to agroforestry design projects and provided support to adult and youth education programs. Hannah's contributions supported Ocean Hour Farm in their mission to increase sustainability and resilience of food and fiber sheds on Aquidneck Island and throughout Rhode Island.



SAMUEL CORMIER

North Kingstown, Rhode Island

A.S. Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems (CCRI)

Samuel was placed with the URI Greenhouse and Botanical Center, where he supported both the URI Greenhouse Cost Center and the URI Botanical Gardens. Working closely with the URI Master Gardeners, Samuel contributed to various projects aimed at elevating the gardens' overall educational mission. His efforts enhanced public engagement and learning opportunities within the gardens. In addition, Samuel provided critical support to the URI Greenhouse Cost Center, a resource for Rhode Island's agricultural community, assisting with operational needs and community outreach. Samuel's work helped advance the center's role in supporting the agricultural sector and fostering connections between education and sustainable agriculture practices across the state.

