

Michelle Nikfarjam

Food Systems Department | University of Vermont

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EDUCATION

- 2027* **University of Vermont (UVM)**, Food Systems
Ph.D. candidate, Graduate Certificate in Agroecology; GPA: 3.9
- 2020* **University of Oregon**, International Studies
M.S., Graduate Specialization in Food Studies; GPA: 4.0
- 2017* **University of Massachusetts Amherst (UMass)**, Sustainable Agriculture
B.S.; Concentration: Food Production & Marketing; GPA: 3.75

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Agroecology, Agroforestry, Food Systems, Community Development, Climate and Ecological Resilience

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

- 2026* **Lecturer**, Agriculture, Landscape, and Environment, University of Vermont
- 2023-present* **Project and Development Manager**, Pocasset Pokanoket Land Trust
- 2021-2023* **Research Assistant**, Food Systems, University of Vermont
- 2021-2023* **Teaching Assistant**, Food Systems, University of Vermont
- 2021* **Urban Farm Manager**, Green Cambridge, Cambridge MA
- 2021* **Legislative Intern**, Alliance to End Hunger, Washington DC
- 2020* **Child Food Security & Nutrition Intern**, Project Bread, Boston, MA
- 2019* **Agriculture & Livelihood Security Intern**, CECODECON, Jaipur, India
- 2018* **Research Fellow**, Dr. Vandana Shiva, Navdanya, New Delhi, India
- 2017-2020* **Graduate Teaching Fellow**, University of Oregon
- 2018-2019* **Undergraduate Academic Adviser**, University of Oregon
- 2016* **Co-Manager**, Food for All Market Garden, UMass Amherst
- 2015-2016* **Co-Founder & Manager**, UMass Edible Forest Garden, UMass Amherst
- 2013-2018* **Field Worker**, Various Diversified Organic Fruit/Vegetable Farms, MA & OR

PUBLICATIONS

In Review

de Macedo Monteiro, L., Fisher, B., Vieira, D., Barbosa Dias, L. G., Alvez Islas, C., Troast, S., Zeraatpisheh, M., Ricketts, T., Rodrigues, A. A., Alonso-Rodríguez, A. M., Ritzenthaler, C., Manitiús, C., Burke, M., Muldoon, M., Taylor-Burns, R., Maassel, Nikfarjam, M., E., Legg, F., Drummond, L., ... Galford, G. (2026). *A*

Global Systematic Review of Restoration Incentive Mechanisms and Their Outcomes in Open Ecosystems. Journal of Applied Ecology. Manuscript submitted for publication.

Leslie, I. S., Solórzano, G., Nikfarjam, M., Whelan, M. C., Sarwari, B., Vaughn, C., Aaronson-Eves, A., & Denison, S. (2026). *How do LGBTQ+ farmers thrive? And answering similar questions with community qualitative coding*. Manuscript submitted for publication, *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development*.

Mares, T., Nikfarjam, M., Belén-Trineo, K. (2025) *Mentoring in Food Systems, Perspectives from Mentor and Students*. Gastronomica. Special Issue: Decolonizing Food Systems Education.

Manuscripts in Preparation

Nikfarjam, M., Downey, M., Erwin, N., Uribe, P. Lawlor, G., Waters, S. “*Building the Social Infrastructure for Agroforestry: A Case Study of the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation’s Woodlands Connect Pilot Program*”. For submission to *Frontiers in Sustainable Food Systems*.

Nikfarjam, M. Mares, T. Leslie, I. “*Toward Equitable Agroforestry Transitions: Analyzing Historically Underserved Farmer Motivations, Barriers, and Service Provider Roles in the Northeast*”. For submission to the *Journal of Agriculture, Food Systems, and Community Development*.

Nikfarjam, M. “*Seeing the Forest and the Trees: Supporting Agroecological Transitions in Southern New England through a Community Agroforestry Project*”. For submission to *Agroecology & Sustainable Food Systems*.

Blogs & Popular Writing & Media

University of Vermont. (2026). “[Two UVM Doctoral Candidates Are Awarded Prestigious USDA Predoctoral Fellowships](#).” College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. Online.

Nikfarjam, M. (2025, December 11). *Agroforestry and agroecology: Reflections from the 2025 World Congress on Agroforestry in Kigali, Rwanda*. University of Vermont Institute for Agroecology. [Online](#).

Belén-Trineo, K. Mares, M., Nikfarjam, M. (2025). “Looking Back to Look Forward”. University of Vermont. Institute for Agroecology. Burlington, Vermont.

Isaac Sohn Leslie, Jamie Skye Bianco, Marjorie Feld, Kayleigh MacDonald, Michelle Nikfarjam, Grace Oedel, Ang Roell, Jen Salinetti, Stacey Vasquez. (2025) "Three Food Justice Projects Launch In Partnership with UVM's Institute for Agroecology. University of Vermont. Institute for Agroecology. Burlington, Vermont.

Nikfarjam, M. (2021) Food Systems and Climate Change. Alliance to End Hunger. Published on Medium: <https://alliance-to-end-hunger.medium.com/its-earth-day-let-s-talk-food-systems-3863d9f72c27>.

GRANTS, FELLOWSHIPS, & AWARDS (total 1.8M)

Academic: External Grants, Fellowships, & Awards

2025 Predoctoral Fellowship. USDA, NIFA; \$120,000
2024 NE SARE Graduate Student Grant, USDA, NIFA; \$15,000
2023 Graduate Student Climate Adaptation & Mitigation Fellow, USDA Climate Hub.
2022 Foreign Language & Area Studies Fellowship, Persian, (*twice*: UC Berkeley & U. Indiana Bloomington), funded through U.S. Dept. Of Education; \$7,500 each
2020 Emerson National Hunger Fellowship, Congressional Hunger Center
2019 Boren Graduate Fellowship, National Security Ed. Program, U.S. DoD; \$29,00
2019 Foreign Language & Area Studies Fellowship, Hindi, (*twice*: U Penn & U. Wisconsin Madison, funded through U.S. Dept. Of Education; \$7,500 each
2019 Critical Language Scholarship, U.S. Dept of State; \$9,000 (*declined*)
2016 School Garden Grant, High Mowing Seed Company; \$2,000
2015 NE Biochar Association, UMass Edible Forest Garden, 2015; \$1,000

Academic: Internal Grants, Fellowships, & Awards (co-author*)

2024* Community-Engaged Research Grant, UVM Institute for Agroecology; \$15,000
2024 Research Acceleration & Professional Dev. Award, UVM Food Systems; \$1,900
2023 Sustainable Campus Fund Graduate Research Grant, UVM; \$12,500
2023 Graduate Fellowship, UVM Food Systems Research Center; RA/ tuition (1 year)
2022- Graduate Fellow, UVM Gund Institute for the Environment
2021- Graduate Fellow, UVM Institute for Agroecology
2021- Graduate Fellowship, UVM Food Systems; TA & RA/ tuition (4 years)
2020 General University Scholarship, U. Oregon; \$3,000
2018 Food Studies Graduate Research Award, U. Oregon; \$500
2018 George & Connie Slape Graduate Research Award, U. Oregon; \$1,000
2017 Promising Scholar Recruitment Award, U. Oregon; \$5,000
2017 Graduate Teaching Fellowship, U. Oregon; TA/ tuition (2.5 years)

- 2017 Undergraduate Sustainability Research Award, UMass Amherst
- 2016 Outstanding Undergraduate Community Engagement Award, UMass Amherst
- 2016 Project Grant for UMass Edible Forest Garden, UMass Stockbridge School; \$7,500

Professional (lead/sole author)

- 2025 Indigenous Approaches to Composting to Support Food Sovereignty in Southern & 2024 New England. Institute for Local Self Reliance; \$15,000 and \$10,000
- 2024 Indigenous Roots Forever: Expanding Composting into Community Gardens with 25 Indigenous Families in Southern New England. Global Alliance for Incinerator Alternatives; \$25,000
- 2024 Massachusetts Manufacturing Innovation Initiative, Sourcing nutshell biomass from Historically Underserved Famers; \$20,000

Professional (*co-author / **contributor)

- 2025** Massachusetts Farmland Partnership Program. Massachusetts Department of Agriculture. Growing Together: Collaboration for Land Access, Farm Viability, and Land Justice in Massachusetts. Submitted with Tufts New Entry Sustainable Farming Project; \$470,343
- 2025* Food Sovereignty in Southern New England. Historically Underserved Farmer/Farming Communities Grant Program. Northeast Sustainable Agriculture and Education. USDA, NIFA; \$150,000
- 2025* General Operating Grant. Regenerative Economies Program. Sustain Our Future Foundation. Washington DC; \$100,000
- 2025* Advancing Farm Viability and Food Sovereignty in Rhode Island. Community Priority Grant. Rhode Island Foundation; \$120,000
- 2024* Indigenous Food Sovereignty: Supporting Backyard Gardening Among Tribal Families in Rhode Island and Connecticut, Ocean Hour Foundation; \$50,000

PRESENTATIONS

Invited

Nikfarjam, M. (2026). *“From Systems Thinking to Ethical Practice: Buddhist Environmental Ethics in Agroecology Education.”* Climate and Ecology Panelist. Interfaith Coalition Conference for Global Citizens, Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations (ICCGC-CoNGO). Srinakharinwirot University, Bangkok, Thailand.

Nikfarjam, M. (2026). *“Interpreting Agroecology through a Buddhist lens: Toward a Relational Practice of Agricultural Science.”* Landscapes of Transformation: Buddhist-Related Visions of Inner and Outer Renewal. University of Oregon. Eugene, OR.

Nikfarjam, M (2025). Youth and Climate Action Panelist. Interfaith Coalition Conference for Global Citizens, Conference of NGOs in Consultative Relationship with the United Nations (ICCGC-CoNGO). *“Form and Function: Agroforestry as a Lever for Social and Ecological Repair.”* Wonkwang University, Iksan, South Korea.

Nikfarjam, M. (2025). *“Introduction to Agroecology”* Guest Lecture: CDAE1040A: US Food, Social Equity & Development. Community Development and Applied Economics Department. University of Vermont. Burlington, Vermont.

Nikfarjam, M. (2025). Emerson National Hunger Fellowship Alumni Career Panel. *“Exploring Educational and Career Options in Food and Agriculture: Academic Track”*. Online. Congressional Hunger Center. Washington, DC.

Nikfarjam, M. (2024). *“Aligning Agroecological Practice with Public Resource Structures: Convergences and Mismatches in State and Federal Assistance Programs”*. Institute for Agroecology. University of Vermont. Burlington, Vermont.

Nikfarjam, M. (2024). *“Advancing Agroecological Agroforestry in the Northeast: Balancing Conservation, Production, and Social Equity”* Guest Lecture: ALE 3120: Advanced Agroecology. Plant and Soil Science Department. University of Vermont. Burlington, Vermont.

Nikfarjam, M & Blume, S. (2023). *“Lessons from Diverse Social Movements to Support Just Transitions to Agroecology”*. Guest Lecture, PSS:021 Intro to Agroecology. Plant and Soil Science Department. University of Vermont. Burlington, Vermont.

Andersen, J., Burke, M., Caswell, M. Nikfarjam, M. (2023). *Missing the Mark? The Role of Agroecology in the 2022 Global Biodiversity Framework: Lessons and Insights from COP15”*. Institute for Agroecology. University of Vermont. Burlington, Vermont.

Nikfarjam, M. (2022). *“Introduction to Agroecology: Science, Policy, and Practice”*. ENP 200: Sustainability and Environmental Policy. Environmental Studies Department. Champlain College, Burlington, Vermont.

Nikfarjam, M. (2021). *“Role of Farmer Movement and Non-Governmental Organization Partnerships in Facilitating Agroecological Transitions: A Case Study of Smallholder Farmers in Rajasthan, India”*. Food Studies Seminar Series. Food Studies Program. University of Oregon. Online.

Nikfarjam, M. (2019). *“Food Sovereignty in Practice: Experience & Insight from the Field”*, International Studies Seminar Series. International Studies Department, Eugene, OR.

Nikfarjam, M (2019). *“College Campuses as Sites for Climate Resilience Building? Lessons Learned from a Campus Forest Garden”*. Guest Lecture: ENVS 225 Intro to Food Studies. Environmental Studies Department. University of Oregon. Eugene, Oregon.

Nikfarjam, M. (2018). *“Forest Gardens as Teaching Tools on University Campuses”* Guest Lecture: INTL 280 Global Environmental Issues. International Studies Department. University of Oregon. Eugene, Oregon.

Extension Activities (Farmer/Practitioner Facing)

Nikfarjam, M and Graham, D. (2026) *“More Trees on Farms! Getting Started with Agroforestry”* [Workshop]. Northeast Farmers of Color Land Trust Conference, Northampton, MA.

Nikfarjam, M and Viette, S. (2026) *“Grant Writing for BIPOC farmers: Tips, Tricks, and Practical Strategies”* [Workshop]. Northeast Farmers of Color Land Trust Conference, Northampton, MA.

Nikfarjam, M. (2026). *“Grant Writing for Farmers: Finding and Secure Funding”* Southeast New England Agriculture Conference & Trade Show, Bristol, MA.

Nikfarjam, M. Feinstein, M. Pixan Athohil Suk'il, U. (2026, April 4). *“Food Forest Design”* [Workshop]. Global Village Farms, Grafton, MA.

Nikfarjam, M. Ong, T., Wang, D. Ashton, T. (2025, July 6). *“Agroforestry Field Day”* [Workshop]. Woodlands Connect, Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation. Grafton, MA.

Chief Sequan Pijaki, Erwin, N., Mendoza, J. Nikfarjam, M., Peña, R., Pixan Athohil Suk'il, U. (2023). *“BIPOC-centered Community Building for Food Systems in the Northeast”* Northeast Organic Farming Association. Summer Conference. Worcester, Massachusetts.

Conference

Schattman, R., Ong, T., Burke, M., Nikfarjam, M., Anderzén, J., Taylor, J., & Klapheke, R. (2026, June 7–10). *Agroforestry for a just transformation of food systems in the Northeast US* [Roundtable presentation]. Just Transformations in Food Systems and Cultures, Joint Annual Meeting of the Agriculture, Food & Human Values Society and the Association for the Study of Food and Society, Burlington, VT, United States.

Nikfarjam, M (2025). “*Seeing the Forest and the Trees: Supporting Agroecological Transitions in Southern New England through a Community Agroforestry Project*”. 6th World Congress on Agroforestry. Kigali, Rwanda.

Haggerty, K. Nikfarjam, M., Rodriguez-Cruz, L., Talib, S. (2024). “*Developing Leadership for Sustainable Food Systems*”. Food Systems Research Summit. University of Vermont.

Mares, T., Nikfarjam, M. Soto-Villanueva (2024). “*Inclusive Mentorship in Food Systems: Perspectives from Mentor and Mentees*”. Paper accepted for presentation at the Association for the Study of Food and Society and Agriculture, Food and Human Values Society Joint Conference. Syracuse University. Syracuse, New York.

Anderzen, J. Caswell, M., Horner, C., Nikfarjam, M., (2024) “*Bridging Perspectives: Locating Synergies Across Political Ecology & Agroecology for Transformative Food System Futures*”. POLLEN Political Ecology Conference, University of Lund. Lund, Sweden.

Burke, M., Curran-Howes, A., Caswell, M., Nikfarjam, M., Anderson, C (2023). “*Prefiguring Post-Capitalist, Just Agroecological Transitions.*” The Great Transitions Conference. Historical Materialism Network. Université du Québec à Montréal, Montreal.

Nikfarjam, M. (2021). “*Seeding Autonomy, Equity, and Climate Resilience: Agroecology and the Politics of Food Sovereignty in Rajasthan, India*”. Paper accepted for presentation at the Association for the Study of Food and Society and Agriculture, Food and Human Values Society Joint Conference. Online.

Nikfarjam, M. (2020). “*Agroecology and Food Sovereignty in India: Challenges, Contradictions and Ways Forward*” Paper accepted for presentation at the Association for the Study of Food and Society and Agriculture, Food and Human Values Society Joint Conference. Online.

TEACHING & ADVISING

Undergrad Advising

University of Vermont

2024- Juliana Costance Akau Batich, Undergraduate Research Assistant

2022-2023 Seanna McGraw, B.S. Agroecology (thesis co-adviser with Dr. Teresa Mares)

2023 Fischer Morrissey, Independent Study (with Dr. Ike Leslie)

University of Oregon

2018-2019 Undergraduate Academic Adviser, International Studies Department

Undergraduate Courses

University of Vermont, Instructor of Record

2026 Introduction to Agroecology

University of Vermont, Teaching Assistant

2025 US Food, Social Equity & Dev., Dr. Ali Brooks

2023 Food and Culture, Dr. Teresa Mares

2022 World Food, Population, and Sustainable Dev., Dr. Dan Tobin

2022 Applied Research Methods in Social Sciences (lead TA), Dr. David Conner

University of Oregon, Instructor of Record

2019 Intercultural Communication (online)

University of Oregon, Graduate Teaching Assistant

2019 & 2020 International Development (lead TA), Dr. Anita Weiss

2018 Global Ethics (co-lead TA), Dr. Stephen Wooten

2017 Global Environmental Issues (lead TA), Dr. Derrick Hindery

SERVICE

Core Group Member, Urban and Community Agroforestry Network (UCAN) Pilot, USDA National Agroforestry Center & Kindred Roots Design, 2026–Present

Reviewer, Grassroots Fund Grant, 2026-present

Reviewer, Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE) Grants, 2025-present

Reviewer, Summer Undergraduate Research Fellowship (SURF), Food Systems, University of Vermont, 2024

Conference Organizing, University of Vermont Institute for Agroecology, Seeding Transformation: A Global Forum on Food Systems & Agroecology, 2023

Coordinating Committee, Agroecology and Livelihoods Collaborative (now Institute for Agroecology), 2022-2024

Committee Member, Equitable Boston Food Ecosystem Project, 2021

Council Member, Boston Food Access Council, 2020-2021

Reviewer, University of Oregon Food Studies Grant Committee, 2019

Department Steward, University of Oregon Graduate Teaching Fellows Federation, 2017-2019

Grad Student Representative, University of Oregon, Intl' Studies Department, 2018-2019

Co-Chair, Environmental Justice Caucus (GTFF Union), 2018-2019

Board Member, Grow Food Amherst, 2014-2016

Conference Volunteer, Northeast Organic Farming Association, 2014-2016

Steering Committee Member, Amherst School Gardens Project, 2014-2016

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

Graduate Women in Science

Association for the Study of Agriculture, Food, & Human Values

International Association of Society & Natural Resources