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Notes from editor (not for publication):

HEADLINE ELEMENTS:

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1 Apple growers launch hurricane relief funds

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2 Crowdfunding campaigns rally to support families of
3 Jamaican farm workers at Vermont orchards in aftermath of
4 Melissa

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5 TEXT BODY:

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6 In the wake of the devastation caused by Hurricane
7 Melissa in Jamaica last week, apple growers in Vermont have
8 begun fundraisers to provide direct financial support to their
9 Jamaican team members who annually come to Vermont to help
10 with the harvest.

On Oct. 29, Champlain Orchards of Shoreham announced it is organizing a statewide relief campaign by Vermont apple growers: the Vermont Apple Growers' Support Fund for Jamaican Seasonal Workers.

The crowdfunding, via a [GoFundMe appeal](#), will provide direct financial relief to every worker from Jamaica who work seasonally at participating farms under federal temporary visas for agricultural employment.

For those employees, "100% of proceeds go directly to workers to help them and their families recover and rebuild," Ben Rule, director of sales and marketing at Champlain Orchards, wrote in a news release.

Green Mountain Orchards in Putney, Dutton Berry Farm in Newfane, and Southern Vermont Orchards in Bennington are among the participating Vermont orchards.

"For decades, Vermont's apple industry has relied on Jamaican seasonal workers whose skill, strength, and friendship have helped sustain our farms through the challenges of weather, labor shortages, and economic uncertainty," Rule wrote.

He described them as "not just workers — they are family."

"They've helped raise barns, pick millions of apples, and build lasting relationships across borders," Rule said. "Their dedication keeps Vermont's orchards alive and thriving. Now it's our turn to help them."

The campaign at gofundme.com/f/aid-vermonts-orchard-workers-affected-by-melissa will run through Nov. 12 with a goal of \$150,000. The campaign raised almost \$50,000 in its first four days.

Rule wrote the campaign will be operated "with full transparency: Champlain Orchards will collect and distribute funds across all participating orchards based on verified headcounts," with every eligible worker receiving the same amount of aid.

Scott Farm starts its own relief fund

Scott Farm in Dummerston said it was not participating in the GoFundMe campaign. It is, however, doing its own emergency fundraiser for its eight Jamaican farmworkers.

“Our small crew of eight is the heart and soul of our farm,” wrote Scott Farm Orchardist Erin Robinson in a news release. “Without their tireless effort and immense hard work, we would not be able to successfully harvest and pack the fruit we grow. In essence, they are the glue that keeps Scott Farm in operation.”

Robinson added that “every single one of them — Fredson Brissett (from Trelawny, Jamaica), Michael Johnson (St. Elizabeth), Wevon Welcome (Trelawny), Garfield Marrett (Trelawny), Garth Johnson (St. Elizabeth), Leonard Cooper (St. Elizabeth), Ryan Hutchinson (St. Thomas), and Kamoil King (St. Catherine) — have sustained damage to their homes and farms.”

The Landmark Trust USA, the nonprofit owner of Scott Farm, is managing the fundraiser. Gifts can be accepted via credit or debit card at bit.ly/839-jamaica or by check or money order made out to The Landmark Trust USA, 707 Kipling Rd., Dummerston, VT 05301 with “Jamaican crew relief” in the memo line.

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