To learn more about the Flex Fund, contact Janice St. Onge at janice@vsjf.org.

Since 2010, Farmers to You (FTY) has connected Vermont farmers with Boston-area families through weekly deliveries of food they order through the FTY website. FTY handles marketing, aggregation, and customer service so that farmers can focus on what they do best—growing quality food using sustainable, organic methods. FTY arranges pick-up, delivery and payment so that farmers can focus on what they need most—time to share quality food with each other. FTY currently delivers high quality, fresh food from Vermont (and some New Hampshire) farmers and value added food producers to an average of 400 families per week.

The Flex Fund’s investment was used to support FTY’s expansion to a new, larger hub facility, purchase equipment, add key staff, and streamline their website. FTY leveraged Flex Fund spending to secure additional royalty financing from key Boston-area investors. In purchasing from over 40 Vermont farmers and value-added food producers, FTY is helping keep an estimated 4,200 farm acres in production in Vermont. FTY is fostering increased processing of locally-grown food, like fresh cheeses, soups, sauces, and frozen vegetables by helping Vermont producers gain access to urban markets like Boston. Since their launch in 2010, FTY has added $500,000 of new revenue to their partner farmers and they project adding another $500,000 in the next year.

“We are very happy to have found a partner in the VSJF Flexible Capital Fund. Seeking outside funding was a delicate process as our business model doesn’t fit well with a traditional debt or equity funding. The Flex Fund’s unique structure works for growing food businesses like ours that are connected to the triple bottom line of profits, people, and the planet. With these investments, we will better serve our partners, Vermont farmers and families in the Boston area, and continue to strengthen our local food system.”

— Gregory Georgakis, Founder and Owner, Farmers to You

Since 2010, Aegis Wind has connected farmers with businesses through project technical design, project financing options, procurement and logistics, installation, maintenance, and client technical training. The Flex Fund’s investment was used to spin off the wind division of a Colorado based solar installation company into a new LLC—keeping 5 full time jobs in Vermont and ensuring the company can stay and grow here. Aegis Wind is a mission-based company that is dedicated to providing small scale, wind-sourced clean energy solutions to their customers—farms, municipalities, schools, and businesses.

To learn more about the Flex Fund, contact Janice St. Onge at janice@vsjf.org.
Today, over 200 organizations—including food system businesses, nonprofits, government agencies, educational institutions, and capital providers—make up the diverse Farm to Plate Network. The six Working Groups, four Cross-Cutting Teams, and a growing number of Task Forces have accomplished a lot this past year, moving Vermont closer to achieving the 25 goals in the 10-Year Farm to Plate Strategic Plan.

- To increase institutional consumption of local foods, the Aggregation and Distribution Working Group held a match-making event with Sodexo and Vermont producers and processors (Goal 2 of the Farm to Plate 10-Year Strategic Plan).
- To support existing processor and producer associations and better serve their members, the Technical Assistance for Producers and Processors Working Group is surveying these associations to access their funding and staffing needs (Goal 19).
- To better align food education with today’s food system careers, the Agriculture and Workforce Development Working Group is planning a new Governor’s Institute on Sustainable Food Systems at Vermont Technical College in 2013 (Goal 24).

The group completed a workforce needs assessment that makes 10 recommendations for developing career pathways in Vermont’s food system (Goal 17).

- To improve dairy viability, the Dairy Development Working Group is developing a guidebook for professional development and technical assistance (Goal 8).
- To stimulate agricultural development and prevent farmland loss, the Land Use Planning Task Force is developing a community resource guide that provides model planning and zoning policies (Goal 5).
- To promote viability and vibrancy of New England’s value-added meat industry, the Meat Processing Task Force, led by VAAFM and NOFA Vermont, were awarded a USDA Federal-State Marketing Improvement Grant for “Scaling Up New England’s Meat Industry” (Goal 7).

One of the VADP’s newest clients, Y Enterprises in Ryegate, illustrates what the program hopes to achieve in supporting the infrastructure of Vermont’s food system. Y Enterprises doesn’t grow or make any food products. Instead, they fabricate, adapt, repair, and maintain the equipment that Vermont’s food businesses need to function. Their clients range from Vermont Soy and Kingdom Creamery, to Green Mountain Coffee Roasters and Gringo Jacks, to the Vermont Food Venture Center. They are treasured by their clients for what they do and have an appetite for doing more of it. The VADP is helping Y Enterprises think strategically about their growth in terms of marketing, systems and organizational development, and capital needs. They have begun hiring new employees to meet the growing need for their services and plan significant expansions in the year ahead.

To date, the VADP clients include:

- AQUA VITEA, SALISBURY / ADDISON COUNTY
- CHAMPLAIN ORCHARDS, SHOREHAM / ADDISON COUNTY
- DEEP ROOT ORGANIC CO-OP, JOHNSON / LAMOILLE COUNTY
- EDEN ICE CIDER COMPANY, W. CHARLESTON / ORLEANS COUNTY
- FREEDOM FOODS, RANDOLPH / ORANGE COUNTY
- GROW COMPOST OF VERMONT, HARDWICK / CALEDONIA COUNTY
- HIRING KIDS, FERRISBURGH / ADDISON COUNTY
- KINGDOM CREAMERY, UPTON / WASHINGTON COUNTY
- PETER’S GREENS, CRAFTSBURY / ORLEANS COUNTY
- RAINBOW FARMS, BURLINGTON / CHITTENDEN COUNTY
- VERMONT FOOD VENTURE CENTER, HARDWICK / CEDARDALE COUNTY
- VERMONT LIVESTOCK SLAUGHTER AND PROCESSING, FERRISBURGH / ADDISON COUNTY
- Y ENTERPRISES, BINGLEY / CEDARDALE COUNTY

To learn more about the VADP, contact John Ryan, vadp@vsjf.org.