



farm^{to}plate

2017 ANNUAL REPORT





Vermonters spend an estimated \$189 million (6.9%) on local food products annually (2014 data).

The farm and food economic sector employs more than 64,000 Vermonters. The sector added 6,400 new jobs between 2009–2016.

The percentage of Vermont households that are food insecure has dropped from 13.6% in 2009 to 11.4% (29,754 households) in 2015.

By many accounts, Vermont has developed the most comprehensive statewide food system development plan in the country and the first of its kind in New England.

In 2009, Farm to Plate Investment Program legislation was signed into law and tasked the Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund with the creation of a ten year plan to:

- Increase economic development in Vermont's farm and food sector;
- Create jobs in the farm and food economy;
- Improve access to healthy local food for all Vermonters.

There has been significant economic growth and development in Vermont's food system since the implementation of Vermont's Farm to Plate food system plan began in 2011. One of the emerging challenges is the lack of workers to fill the jobs that exist in this growing economic sector and addressing it successfully is key to fulfilling the goals of the Farm to Plate legislation.

The Farm to Plate Network is approaching these challenges by addressing a number of the education, workforce, and training needs of our farm and food economy. We believe our approach can serve as a model for responding to workforce development challenges in other Vermont economic sectors.

Vermont Farm to Plate is also in alignment with the Scott Administration's focus on economic growth, making Vermont more affordable, and protecting the most vulnerable.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The first goal of Farm to Plate's enabling legislation is to increase economic development in the farm and food sectors. Since 2009, Vermont's farm and food businesses have added over 6,400 new jobs and 800 new establishments.

AFFORDABILITY

By opening up new markets for producers via trainings for independent retail grocery owners, more local food is ending up on the shelves where most Vermonters shop, at competitive price points and often at better overall value because of freshness. The Rooted in Vermont movement is shifting the local food narrative to be inclusive of how all Vermonters enjoy and acquire food, regardless of income level.

PROTECTING THE MOST VULNERABLE

Locally produced food is available throughout the charitable food system, thanks to efforts by the Vermont Foodbank, Hunger Free Vermont, and a multitude of statewide and regional partners. Farm to School, Farm to Institution, and Farm to Hospital efforts have significantly improved the availability of local food for all Vermonters.

"Farm to Plate has made, and will continue to make, a noticeable imprint in advancing the Vermont farm and food economy as it brings disparate conversations together to explore and establish creative solutions that work for businesses, nonprofits, and consumers. Farm to Plate brings a big picture vision to guide our practical program development and project implementation around a sustainable local food system that is the envy of so many other states and regions. Farm to Plate creates the space to discuss challenging conversations around community development, viable Ag and food businesses, water quality regulations, and the right and value of nutritious local food access to all Vermonters."

Alyson Eastman

Deputy Secretary, Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets



Lt. Gov. Phil Scott speaks at F2P Strategic Plan Release Press Conference, January 2011.

HISTORY OF VERMONT FARM TO PLATE

In 2009, during the Douglas Administration, the Vermont Legislature added the Vermont Farm to Plate Investment Program to the Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund's (VSJF) governing statute (10 V.S.A. § 330). The Legislature tasked VSJF with conducting a public engagement process and writing a 10-year strategic plan for strengthening Vermont's food system. The Farm to Plate Strategic Plan was released in January, 2011 at the start of the Shumlin Administration.

At the 2011 Farm to Plate Strategic Plan release press conference, then Lt. Governor Phil Scott spoke about his interest in "buy local" marketing for food and other products made here in Vermont.

In order to implement such an ambitious plan, VSJF formed the Farm to Plate Network in the Fall of 2011--comprised of over 350 farm and food sector businesses, nonprofits, institutions, and government agencies from across the state. Farm to Plate Network efforts seek to advance new ideas, fix bottlenecks, reduce unnecessary duplication of similar programs, and open new markets for Vermont products in a coordinated fashion. The Network creates the space for strategic conversations and action across multiple stakeholders and audiences to make systematic food system change that no one organization can accomplish alone.

Right: Buy Local Market on the Statehouse lawn in 2015.

Photo: Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets



The background of the entire page is a photograph of the Vermont State Capitol building. The golden dome is prominent at the top, set against a clear blue sky. Below the dome, the white neoclassical facade of the building is visible, surrounded by lush green trees. In the foreground, there's a paved area where several people are gathered, some looking at informational displays or tents, suggesting a public event or fair. The overall scene is bright and sunny.

Why Farm to Plate?

- ✓ Increase economic development in Vermont's farm and food sector
- ✓ Create jobs in the farm and food economy
- ✓ Improve access to healthy local food for all Vermonters

What Are We Doing?

- 1 Meeting Food System Employment Needs in Positive Work Environments** | [page 04](#)
- 2 Improving Viability of Farms and Food Businesses** | [page 07](#)
- 3 Increasing Local Food Availability and Affordability in All Market Channels** | [page 10](#)
- 4 Increasing Consumer Engagement and Demand for Local Food** | [page 13](#)
- 5 Protecting and Expanding Affordable and Environmentally Sustainable Farmland in Agricultural Production** | [page 16](#)

Who Are We?

- ✓ Farm to Plate Network Leadership | [page 20](#)
- ✓ Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund | [page 25](#)

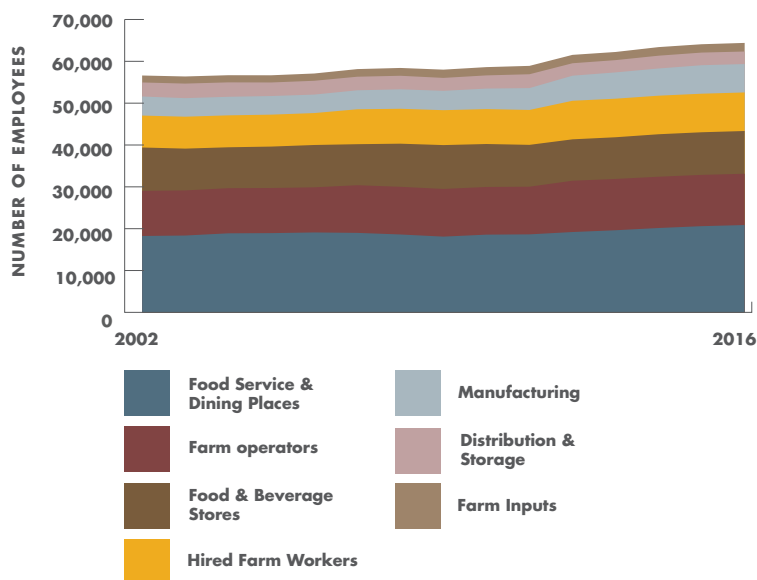
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Meeting Food System Employment Needs in Positive Work Environments



As the farm and food economy grows, more jobs are created which generates workforce opportunities and challenges for both employees and employers. Improving local businesses' ability to find labor, and improving the image of food system careers, will help the local food system grow even further.

Vermont Food System Employment:
6,391 net new jobs added since 2009



"The Farm to Plate Network provides a critical convening for Vermont's workforce development community. By bringing together stakeholders across the sector, the Network supports constructive dialogue, peer networking and professional development informed by a variety of perspectives. By creating a venue for sharing and collaboration, Working Group meetings lead to greater efficiency and coordination as those of us in the field work to achieve our organizational and collective goals."

—Roxanne Vought
Vermont Businesses for
Social Responsibility

Farm to Plate Network Progress

- **Workforce Development, Education, Business (WEB) Partnerships serve to increase connectivity and alignment in workforce development initiatives, at a scale responsive to the diversity of needs in different regions of Vermont**

Originally piloted in Washington County in 2016, WEB partnerships have expanded in 2017 to include Windham County and Northern Vermont.

- The Windham WEB Partnership is piloting the use of the US Chamber of Commerce's Talent Pipeline Management (TPM) platform, in partnership with the Brattleboro Development Credit Corporation, to survey a variety of food system businesses and identify the competencies needed in the local labor market.

"By engaging in the TPM process, our region's economic and workforce development partners are coming to understand the wide range of food system jobs, beyond farming, that play an important role in our regional economy, and to consider food system workforce needs in tandem with others."

—Richard Berkfield, FoodConnects

- The Northern Vermont WEB Partnership project is hosting a series of events to identify gaps between the skills needed by businesses and the skills available in the workforce. They will then share this information with educators and workforce development organizations through workshops that provide professional development and continuing education credits.



As part of its WEB series, Green Mountain Technology and Career Center partnered with Three Crows Farm and Vermont Land Trust to host a community celebration bringing together farmers, the school, and other community members.

- **Career Profiles will help Vermont students, parents, and guidance counselors see the many viable career paths that exist within the food system**



Green Mountain Technology and Career Center students take photos during a visit to an interviewee's farm.

Having identified a need for increased awareness of food systems careers, and for a mechanism for Vermont's high school students to explore these options, the Network developed a curriculum for students to interview members of their community and create career profiles showing the many potential career pathways.

- The project model and curriculum can be adapted to fit many subject areas, class structures, and educational goals. Green Mountain Technology and Career Center (GMTCC) has begun creating a region-specific "coffee table book" as a collaborative project between the school's agricultural students and creative media students.

"This has been a valuable project for our students to gain industry knowledge and practice their unique skills in a work-based learning environment. Our interviewee's stories often help our students solidify decisions in their own career path or widen their horizons by finding out about careers they didn't even know existed."

—Christine Dudley, GMTCC

- The Career Profiles and Pathways Task Force will be working with educators around the state to integrate this project into their classrooms, and will create additional food system career profiles for Vermont students.

► **Ensuring Workforce Development solutions are being addressed by all organizations in the Farm to Plate Network**

The annual Farm to Plate Network Gathering in October featured workforce development as a central theme. Through plenaries, breakout sessions, networking, and conversation, attendees learned about existing initiatives, and identified opportunities to strengthen the system.



In one workshop, participants assessed the value, for both employers and employees, of various training approaches. In another workshop, participants discussed the impact of stable employment and workforce education on community health.

“Workforce issues are serious and solutions are not happening within the system. I learned that these issues need much greater innovation...we need out-of-the-box solutions.”
—Farm to Plate Network Gathering survey respondent

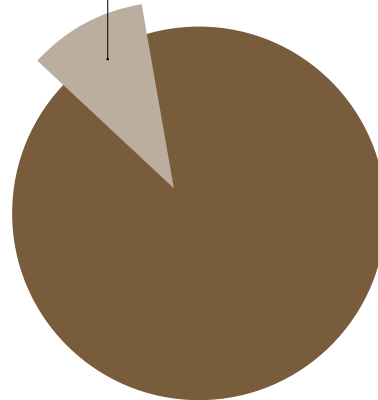
! The Challenge Ahead

Critical need to improve Vermont’s workforce development system:

A larger workforce equipped with the skills required by employers is necessary for Vermont farm and food businesses to grow. Greater connectivity between employers and employees within the food system is essential. As workforce development is addressed in the farm and food sector, it must also be connected to statewide workforce development challenges across multiple industries. The needs of the farm and food sector must be fully addressed in any statewide workforce development and training system redesign and the Farm to Plate Network is ready and well-positioned to provide insight and engagement into these discussions.

300–500

net new workers needed annually by the Vermont food system alone due to economic growth within the food system, as estimated by Farm to Plate. This estimate does not include workers needed for replacement due to retirement.



4,800

net new workers needed annually in Vermont due to economic growth as estimated by the Vermont Futures Project. In total, the Vermont Futures Project estimates an annual workforce gap of 11,000 due to combined factors such as economic growth, retirement, and out migration.

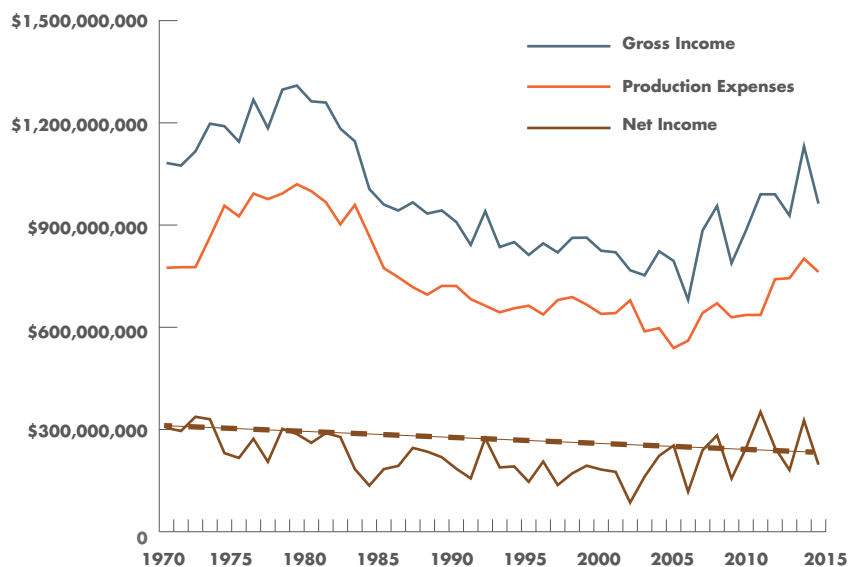
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Improving Viability of Farms and Food Businesses



If farms and food businesses are not profitable, Vermont's agricultural economy cannot be sustainable. Cost and scales of production, sales in different market channels, food safety, business management, infrastructure and equipment, distribution, and environmental impacts all play roles in overall business viability.

Vermont Net Farm Income Trend



"Understanding the market landscape and the economic feasibility of producing and selling a product is paramount to long term business sustainability. Each producer needs information on market and production feasibility. While it is essential for producers to do their own research, we have found it highly valuable to have aggregated information with which producers can compare and contrast their own findings to use as a basis for business planning."

—Rosalie Wilson
Rosalie J. Wilson
Business Development Services

Farm to Plate Network Progress

► Improving marketing and merchandising at Vermont's independent grocery stores



The Independent Grocers Task Force is helping Vermont's independently owned grocery stores increase sales and improve their business viability. [The Take 5 online video trainings](#) and in-store support help improve store merchandising, display, and management as well as help stores source more local products to meet increased consumer demand.

"The Independent Grocer's Project helps stores retool their merchandising and operations for higher levels of efficiency and profitability, with exciting results that are increasing the sale of Vermont products."

—Annie Harlow, Farm to Plate Retail Consultant



See how this also works towards the goal of **Increasing Local Food Availability and Affordability in All Market Channels** on page 10.

► Farm and food financing connectivity with Slow Money Vermont

Slow Money Vermont is developing lending, investment, convening, and communication opportunities which connect farm and food enterprises with investors in their communities. The group organizes workshops to help Vermonters learn how to invest in local farms and food businesses and also offers networking opportunities for farmers and food businesses to connect with local investors. Stay informed about upcoming events on the [Slow Money Vermont Facebook page](#).

► Technical support for farms interested in offering agritourism as a diversified revenue stream

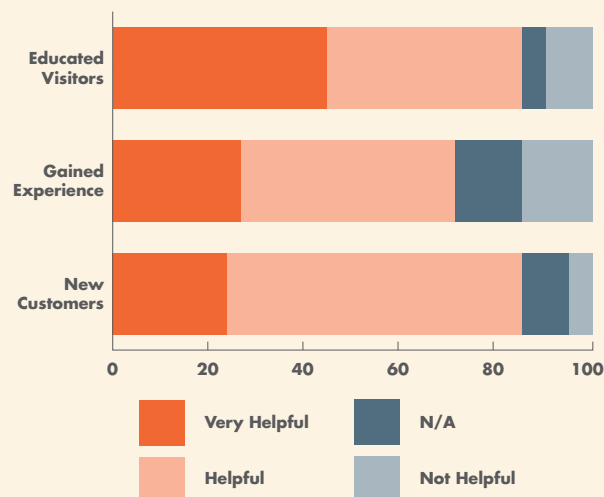


- The Agritourism Task Force worked with University of Vermont Extension and the Farm-Based Education Network to host a series of on-farm workshops for farmers already engaged in agritourism or interested in starting. The workshops were held at successful agritourism destinations around the state and addressed safety, liability, marketing, and much more.
- Open Farm Week was successfully held for the third year in August, 2017 with 43 participating farms. The Agritourism Task Force offered assistance to help the farms hold special events for visitors.



See how this also works towards the goal of **Increasing Consumer Engagement and Demand for Local Food** on page 13.

Was Open Farm Week beneficial to your farm or farmers market in any of the following ways?



► **Streamlining ag-enterprise zoning to increase on-farm diversification**

Making it easier for farmers to diversify and add additional revenue generating activities to their enterprise is key for long-term farm viability, but some diversification options are prohibited or limited in parts of the state due to variations in municipal zoning. The Network is working on ways to create more regulatory consistency across the entire state for ag-enterprise zoning to strengthen farm viability and spur rural economic development that is compatible with community values and goals.



See how this also works towards the goal of **Protecting and Expanding Affordable and Environmentally Sustainable Farmland in Agricultural Production on page 16.**

► **Promoting energy improvements that add to the bottom line**

The Energy Cross-Cutting Team is conducting a series of events with food and energy organizations to explore more mutually beneficial partnerships at the agriculture and energy nexus, and bring attention to successful farm and food energy projects. When viewed as a business investment, rather than a cost, energy improvements can generate revenue and strengthen the bottom line for Vermont farmers.

► **Industry-specific development projects such as strengthening Vermont's grass-fed beef industry**

The Farm Viability Indicators Task Force is working on a project, led by the Intervale Center, to improve the grass-based beef industry. The project team is identifying best management practices, creating financial analysis tools for grass-based production models, and providing direct business assistance to farmers interested in utilizing these management and financial tools. The work of the task force will be paired with already conducted grass-fed beef market research to help chart a course for grass-based beef industry development. Market research revealed an interest from regional meat aggregators to have more animals sourced from Vermont producers, but issues around meat quality, efficient production practices, price point, and distribution logistics remain as bottlenecks.

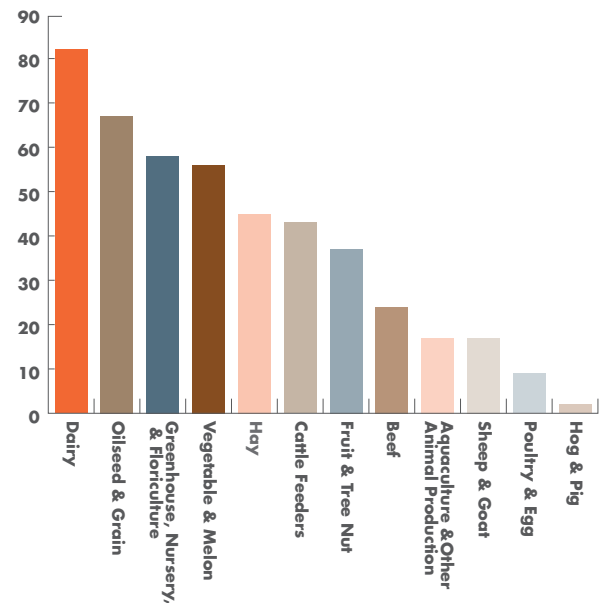


The Challenge Ahead

Many farm types struggle to attain financial profitability:

Certain types of farms, on average, are more profitable in Vermont than others. Understanding the factors behind this are key to prioritizing investments and program support designed to improve the profitability of farm types that need and have potential for development, but also further reinforce the profitability and long-term competitiveness of farm types that are already performing well.

Percent of Farms with Net Gains (Vermont, 2012)



Business succession planning is critical for farms and food businesses who want to remain or grow here in Vermont:

Not only is 30 percent of Vermont's farmland owned or managed by farmers older than 65, but with many growing food businesses emerging as economic drivers in the state, questions and concerns have emerged about who will own and operate these businesses into the future. Planning for ownership changes and exit strategies takes time and should become integrated into overall business planning (rather than retirement planning), but doing so requires additional expertise and funding.

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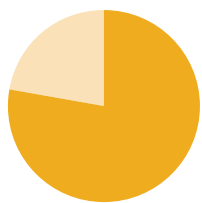
Increasing Local Food Availability and Affordability in All Market Channels



Local food sales currently account for approximately 7% (\$189 million) of total food sales in Vermont. In order for local food to be accessible to all Vermonters, it needs to be more readily available and affordable where most Vermonters purchase food.

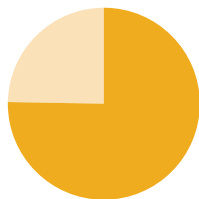
2017 Vermonter Poll Results:

Do Vermonters perceive an increase in the availability of locally produced food?



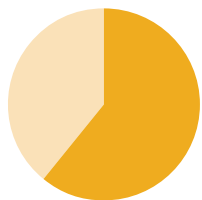
77.8%

Vermonters think there has been an increase in local food at farmers markets/farm stands.



75.4%

Vermonters think there has been an increase in local food at restaurants.



60.9%

Vermonters think there has been an increase in local food at grocery stores/supermarkets.

“One of the most powerful aspects of the Farm to Plate Network is its ability to bring individuals and organizations together so that new connections can be made. I co-chair the Food Access Cross Cutting Team, and as a Cross Cutting Team we have had the opportunity to bring issues around food insecurity, poverty, and food justice to people working in areas of the food system that don’t traditionally address these issues, and through the Network, we are starting from a place of common ground.”

—Faye Conte

Advocacy & Education Director,
Hunger Free Vermont

Credit: Conner and Becot (UVM)

Farm to Plate Network Progress

► Opening new wholesale market channels at independent grocery stores



After working with Farm to Plate's Retail Consultant to improve displays and merchandising, Kingdom Market in Island Pond revamped their produce section to include local farmer signage, Harvest of the Month posters, and flower arrangements to catch people's attention and direct them to local products.

A new series of five minute training videos called Take 5 and in-store trainings have been developed to help independent retailers increase their local food sales. Annie Harlow, Farm to Plate's Retail Consultant, is currently delivering technical assistance to store owners across the state. In Windham County and the Northeast Kingdom, in partnership with area food hubs Food Connects and Green Mountain Farm-to-School, these trainings are improving local product availability. Store owners are also learning how to better identify local products carried by their existing distributors to get more local product onto the shelves.

"It is so exciting to see stores proactively make changes to displays, bring in more Vermont product, and support staff training. It's definitely leading to more Vermont products reaching more consumers."

—Annie Harlow, Farm to Plate Retail Consultant



See how this also works towards the goal of Improving Viability of Farms and Food Businesses on page 7.

► Improving institutional procurement practices and policies in Vermont and New England



The Farm to Plate Farm to Institution Task Force is working with institutions (schools, hospitals, prisons) and other supply chain facilitators to help them source more local food and to track and annually report on these purchases. The task force's Farm to College Procurement Project worked with the University of Vermont to conduct research with Vermont higher education food service operations to identify successes and challenges to inform the development of procurement policies at Vermont institutions of higher education. Sodexo, which has the most college food service accounts in Vermont, has used the results from the research to inform their procurement strategies for their Vermont First program.

Sodexo's Vermont First By the Numbers

13.74% Sodexo spend on Vermont product in 2017

\$2,592,305 spent on local food in 2017

In 2016, the purchasing number was \$2,823,034, 15.42%. The decrease in 2017 totals reflect a change in accounting for local beef and dairy products from 2016. Through Vermont First's innovative and extensive local tracking system, collaboration with its stakeholder Advisory Board, and commitment to transparent data, Vermont First continues to dig deeper into the nuances of the Vermont and regional supply chain and is identifying purchases that will have the greatest impact on the Vermont economy.

► **Improving food access through municipal planning**



Workshop attendees brainstorm ways to incorporate food access in local planning at the Farm to Plate Gathering.

A new task force is creating a guide to incorporate food access and food security into local planning. The resource will be designed to be useful to both professional planners and other interested community members.

► **Leveraging Act 148/Universal Recycling law to strengthen food recovery efforts**



As part of an ongoing conversation, the Food Access Cross Cutting Team and the Food Cycle Coalition made a joint visit to Northwest Family Foods in St. Albans to learn about on-the-ground efforts and infrastructure challenges.

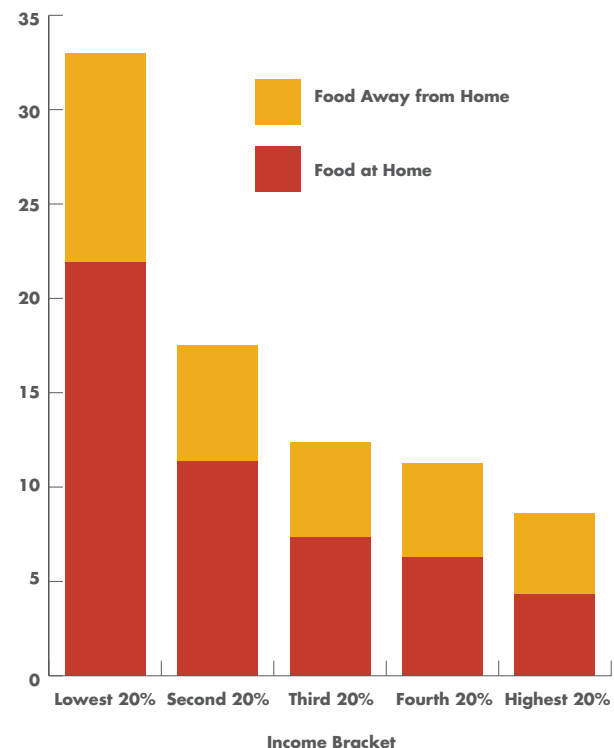
The Network is exploring the connection between solid waste management and food availability. Among other projects, the Food Cycle Coalition supported the Franklin County Hunger Council in developing a Regional Access Toolkit, identifying resources to support communities in following the diversion hierarchy.

! The Challenge Ahead

Balancing farm viability and local food affordability:

Farm viability depends upon farmers receiving fair prices for their food. At the same time, local food should be accessible and affordable to all Vermonters, and national data shows that those in lower income brackets already spend a greater percentage of their income on food. Strengthening the local food system requires tackling these dual challenges in a way that supports both producers and the most vulnerable Vermonters.

Food Expenditure as Percentage of Income (Nationwide, 2015)



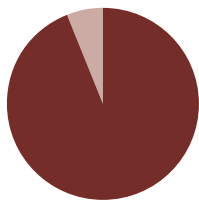
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Increasing Consumer Engagement and Demand for Local Food



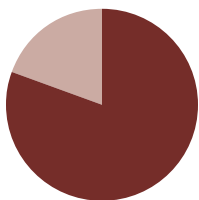
When consumers demand more Vermont food products, it sends a powerful market signal to producers, distributors, and retailers to provide more local food. Purchasing local products keeps more money here in Vermont, in turn creating jobs, supporting the in-state supply chain, protecting our family farms, and making local food more accessible to more Vermonters.

2017 Vermonter Poll Results



93.9%

of respondents said it was important to choose products and services from Vermonters and Vermont companies rather than from out-of-state companies.



80.6%

said they are interested in buying more local food than they do currently.

“The Rooted in Vermont campaign has been an excellent way to highlight the daily contributions of all Vermonters to the local food economy. We often take these daily contributions for granted and don’t recognize our own efforts to eat locally as significant. It’s great to see those efforts acknowledged along with the contributions of our agricultural businesses.”

—Tom Bivins

Vermont Cheese Council

Farm to Plate Network Progress

► Rooted in Vermont includes all Vermonters in the local food movement



The Rooted in Vermont grassroots movement celebrates how all Vermonters acquire and enjoy local food and intends to increase consumer demand so more Vermont food can be available and accessible where most Vermonters shop. By shifting the local food narrative through social media and grassroots organizing in Vermont communities, Rooted in Vermont is helping all Vermonters see local food as their own – not because it is a trend but because it's a part of our heritage.

As Vermonters not already committed to buying local food get more engaged in the Rooted in Vermont movement, education and marketing efforts will encourage Vermonters to demonstrate increased demand. At the same time, as more local food becomes available and affordable in all market channels (retail, restaurants, institutions, direct sale), our projection is that purchases will increase in the Vermont local food economy.

“As a mother, I find Rooted in Vermont content on social media an easy way for my son and me to discuss local food and its connections to Vermont history and heritage. These discussions and some of the ideas on the Rooted in Vermont Facebook page are helping us develop better personal shopping and eating habits. Rooted in Vermont provides a real time pulse of how Vermont communities are developing (or not) in our awareness of who around us produces our food, and how it affects the economy in our state, and the country.”

—Eve Gagne, Johnson, VT

► Delivering a communications and marketing best practices platform for farm and food businesses and organizations



The Vermont Food System Communicators & Marketers Facebook Group formed this year to help anyone working in food system communications and marketing share and learn best practices. Vermont food system communicators and marketers ask for and offer advice in an online community of over 100 members.

► Consumer education connectivity across Vermont



Network Gathering attendees learn from NOFA-VT's direct market report and how to reinvigorate consumer demand in direct markets.

Vermont faces an ongoing need for consumer education around many topics, from the importance of local purchasing and direct markets to nutrition information and food preparation skills. The Network serves as a platform for identifying these varied needs and coordinating educational efforts.

► **Open Farm Week invites visitors to the farm**



The third annual Open Farm Week saw an estimated 1,400 visitors to 43 farms across Vermont. Over 90% of attendees who were surveyed said they now have a stronger connection with farmers because of their visits and 80% said they can see themselves purchasing more local agricultural products based on their experience.



See how this also works towards the goal of Improving Viability of Farms and Food Businesses on page 7.

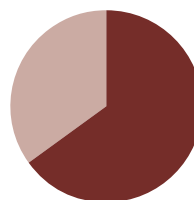


The Challenge Ahead

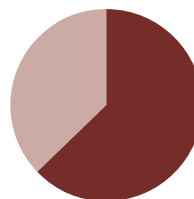
Statewide collaboration and financial resources to continue to increase consumer demand and ensure Vermont products are sold and labeled at all Vermont stores:

Results from the 2017 Vermonter Poll suggest that Vermonters would buy more local food if it was more accessible and available, more clearly labeled and identifiable as local, and if there were more advertisements and education about local food. Rooted in Vermont seeks to address these needs by acting as a two-way communication platform where Vermonters can express their interest in local food and receive information about local food availability. Funding is required for Rooted in Vermont to increase consumer demand for local food to send the signal to retailers and distributors to make more Rooted in Vermont food available and prominently advertised and labeled where most Vermonters shop.

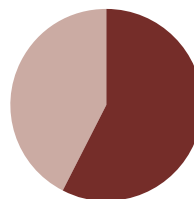
2017 Vermonter Poll Results



65.1%
of respondents want local food to be more accessible and available.



62.8%
want better local food labelling.



57.7%
want more local food advertising and education.

Credit: Conner and Becot (UVM)

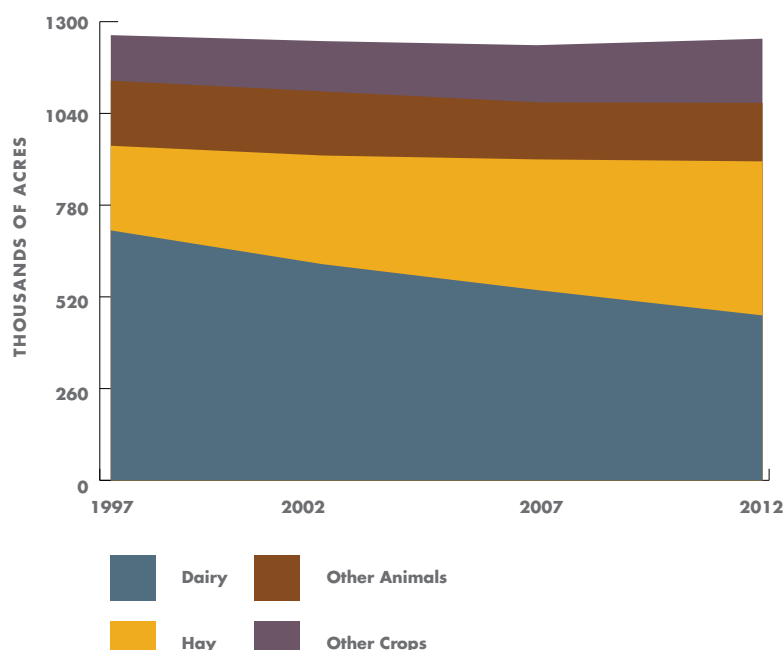
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Protecting and Expanding Affordable and Environmentally Sustainable Farmland in Agricultural Production



Access to affordable and environmentally sustainable farmland is imperative to increase our local food supply and grow our agricultural economy. Helping farmers with transition planning, streamlining land use regulation, and creating incentives for environmentally sustainable practices will help keep farmland in agricultural production for generations to come.

Land in Agriculture by Farm Type, 1997–2012



“As a member and former co-chair of the Farmland Access and Stewardship Working Group, I have especially appreciated the connections made about topics such as farmland access and succession, land use and agriculture, and soil and water quality, among and between partners who do not typically interact or work together.”

—Nancy Everhart
VHCB

Farm to Plate Network Progress

► Farmland succession planning and integration

- The Farmland Access Task Force has been working with farmers without identified successors to help recruit new farmers.
- Members of the Task Force are utilizing funding from Land for Good to run workshops for non-farming landowners and to educate real estate agents on selling agricultural land.
- October's annual Network Gathering included a focus on succession, and several plenaries and workshops explored the connection between business succession and keeping farmland in production



Miles and Allison Hooper share their family story of Vermont Creamery and Ayers Brook Goat Dairy at the Farm to Plate Network Gathering.

► Vermont Land Link connects farmers with available farmland



The Farmland Access Task Force completed a redesign to the Vermont Land Link website (VermontLandLink.org), the online hub that helps connect farmers with available farmland. The website is now responsive for mobile users and provides profiles for both farm seekers and landowners to find the best match. Task force members will be working with farmers to create model profiles in the coming months that will help landowners better identify prospective matches for their property.

"We received 6 inquiries from our posting on Vermont Land Link; interviewed three candidates and are consummating a lease with a part-time farming couple from the Kingdom."
—Bob Bernstein, Meadow Sweet Farm

► Incentivizing and rewarding environmental stewardship

Agriculture has the potential to provide important climate change mitigation and other ecosystem services. The Farmland Access and Stewardship Working Group is working to move the conversation around farming practices beyond reducing environmental degradation to providing essential environmental benefits, and is exploring models for recognizing and rewarding farmers already carrying out transformative work. Among other options, the group is looking at ways to connect these themes with the work of the [Vermont Environmental Stewardship Program](#), the [Clean Water Fund](#), and the Governor's [Climate Action Commission](#).

► **Agricultural enterprise regulatory process alignment**



As Vermont farms continue to diversify their business operations and create on-farm enterprises such as farm cafes, wedding and event spaces, and value-added processing, these business activities often fall into a regulatory grey area that can create uncertainty for farmers, community members, and municipal officials. Network members, including technical assistance providers, farmland access organizations, regional planners, and environmental professionals, are working on ways to address this regulatory uncertainty through guidance documents, educational outreach, and legislative change.



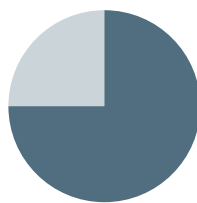
See how this also works towards the goal of Improving Viability of Farms and Food Businesses on page 7.



The Challenge Ahead

Greater statewide clarity and consistency is needed for farmers, service providers, and municipalities as to what types of revenue generating accessory uses are allowed on-farm and under what conditions:

As more farm enterprises explore innovative ways to diversify their revenue base in order to remain in operation, Ag Enterprise legislation is needed to balance the changing nature of farming activities and at the same time address municipalities' needs to manage traffic, parking, and noise issues that may arise from these farm-based activities.



75%

of farmers surveyed by VAAFM want to diversify their operations and recognize that some form of diversification may be necessary to thrive.

Closing the Clean Water Fund funding gap to clean our waters and support our farmers:

Finding a sustainable long-term funding source for the Clean Water Fund is not only important for Vermont's water quality, but also for the health and viability of Vermont's food system. As noted in the viability section, the majority of Vermont farms are not making a profit. Fully funding the Clean Water Fund will help reduce financial stress on farms while helping them meet the state's water quality goals.



**\$40/year=
\$16 million**

Vermonters surveyed by UVM researchers indicated a median willingness to pay of \$40 per year, split between fees on water utility bills and vehicle registration. When added up by household, it would amount to an additional \$16 million annually to improve the health of Lake Champlain.

A woman wearing a green and white baseball cap with a logo, a blue denim shirt, and olive green pants is watering plants in a garden. She is holding a large blue watering can and pouring water onto leafy green plants. The background shows a grassy area and a path.

“The Farm to Plate Network is critical to the development of Vermont’s food system and overall economy. The information sharing, data collection, and analysis that the network provides helps to identify gaps, barriers, and opportunities for strategic and effective investment by a range of partners across Vermont, including the Working Lands Enterprise Initiative, which makes grants and investments in food system businesses, as well as our Viability network of business advisors.”

Ela Chapin

Director, VHCb’s Farm & Forest Viability Program and
Working Lands Enterprise Board Member

Farm to Plate Network Leadership

Shared leadership provides overall network governance and guidance for the Farm to Plate Network. Network chairs and the Steering Committee are responsible for identifying gaps in strategies, developing processes for learning, helping organize the annual Farm to Plate Network Gathering, and shaping the evolution of the Network over time.

● Aggregation and Distribution Working Group:

Richard Berkfield*
Food Connects

Sarah Waring*
Center for an Agricultural Economy

● Consumer Education & Marketing Working Group:

Liz Ruffa*
Northshire Grows

Becka Warren*
Vital Communities

● Education and Workforce Development Working Group:

Kristyn Achilich*
St. Michael's College

John Mandeville*
Lamoille Economic
Development Corporation

● Farmland Access and Stewardship Working Group:

Taylor Foster*
Pete's Greens

● Production and Processing Working Group:

Regina Beidler*
Organic Valley

Jennifer Colby*
UVM Center for
Sustainable Agriculture

● Energy Cross-Cutting Team:

JJ Vandette
Efficiency Vermont

● Financing Cross-Cutting Team:

Eric DeLuca
Leverage Point Consulting

● Food Access Cross-Cutting Team:

Erin Buckwalter*
NOFA-VT

Faye Conte*
Hunger Free Vermont

● Food Cycle Coalition Cross-Cutting Team:

Natasha Duarte
Composting Association
of Vermont

● Health Cross-Cutting Team:

Suzanne Kelley
Vermont Department of Health

Jane Kolodinsky
UVM Center for Rural Studies

● Research Cross-Cutting Team:

Molly Anderson
Middlebury College

David Conner
UVM Community Development
and Applied Economics

● Agritourism Task Force:

Lisa Chase
UVM Extension

Vera Simon-Nobes
Shelburne Farms

● Business Viability Indicators Task Force:

Mark Cannella
UVM Extension

Ela Chapin
Vermont Farm & Forest
Viability Program

● Communications and Marketing Community of Practice:

Nicole Driscoll
Ben & Jerry's
Vicky Tebbetts
VT Marketing and Communications

● Career Pathways & Image Task Force:

Jonathan Kaplan
Lyndon State College

Liz Kenton
UVM Extension

● Workforce Development, Education, & Business Partnership Task Force:

Crystal Maderia
Kismet

● Farmland Access Task Force:

Mike Ghia
Land for Good

● Farm to Institution Task Force:

Abbey Willard*
Vermont Agency of Agriculture,
Food and Markets

Erin Buckwalter*
NOFA-VT

● Food Access Planning Task Force:

Faye Conte*
Hunger Free Vermont

● Independent Grocers Task Force:

Annie Harlow
Addison County
Relocalization Network

● Rooted in Vermont Task Force:

Shane Rogers
Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund

● Slow Money Vermont Task Force:

Eric DeLuca
Leverage Point Consulting

** Denotes a Chair who is also a member of the Steering Committee.*

Additional Steering Committee Members:

Megan Camp
Shelburne Farms

Betsy Rosenbluth
Vermont FEED, *representing the Vermont Farm to School Network*

Gaye Symington
High Meadows Fund, *representing the Vermont Food Funders Network*

Anson Tebbetts
Secretary of Agriculture,
Food & Markets

Ted Brady
Deputy Secretary of Commerce &
Community Development

Network at a Glance



Working Groups

Working Groups (WG) are at the core of the Farm to Plate Network, one for each major “systems lever”. Each WG takes responsibility for a set of goals, strategies, and indicators from the Farm to Plate Strategic Plan to further develop, implement, and monitor annually.

Cross Cutting Teams

Cross-Cutting Teams (CCT) gather a few times a year to assess key issues that cut across the entire food system supply chain. CCTs can serve as a “community of practice” to share best practices and information across the Network, organize events, or conduct research to inform future network action.

Task Forces

Task Forces (TF) are formed by WGs or CCTs in order to implement high impact projects that address key objectives and strategies identified in the Strategic Plan. TFs are created and disbanded based on need.

The Gathering

October 26–27, 2017

Over 270 members of the Vermont Farm to Plate Network convened at the 7th annual Farm to Plate Network Gathering to address workforce development and business succession challenges in Vermont's farm and food economy. The Gathering is the premier event of the Farm to Plate year, consisting of workshops, speakers, and networking. It aligns activity by giving Network members and food system leaders an opportunity to collectively learn about, engage in, and influence critical issues in Vermont's food system and agricultural economy.





"At the Gathering it was important for me to hear from other business owners about succession, and to learn about workforce development as well as distribution. All very extremely important topics. The Gathering is also a valuable opportunity to meet and network with so many helpful, friendly people!"

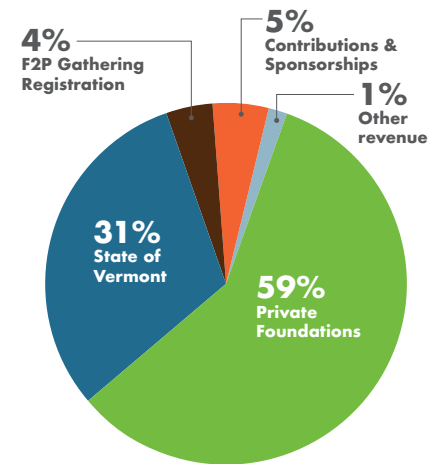
–Farm to Plate Network Gathering Attendee



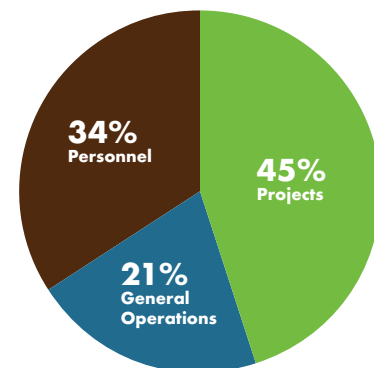
Financials

Revenue	
Private Foundations	\$431,057
State of Vermont	\$226,544
F2P Gathering Registration	\$30,135
Contributions & Sponsorships	\$37,841
Other Revenue	\$10,889
Total Revenue Received	\$736,466
Expenses	
Farm to Plate Website / Food Atlas	\$10,877
Farm to Plate Network Meetings / Gathering	\$32,209
Farm to Plate Leadership Stipends	\$65,065
Rooted in Vermont Consumer Campaign	\$88,817
Independent Grocers Project	\$61,928
Slow Money VT	\$35,308
F2P support for other New England states	\$25,941
F2P Network Grants	\$9,500
Total F2P Project Operations	\$329,646
Total Expenses	\$736,305

Farm to Plate Investment Program Revenue



Farm to Plate Investment Program Expenses



Funding Partners

The VSJF and the Farm to Plate Network Steering Committee are extremely grateful to our funding partners who help to fund the work of the Farm to Plate community and are actively engaged in various projects within the Network. Their ongoing support allows us to find creative solutions to complex problems, and grow a stronger, healthier, more prosperous food system in Vermont and the region.

- Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets
- Vermont Agency of Commerce & Community Development
- John Merck Fund
- Henry P. Kendall Foundation
- Vermont Community Foundation
- Sandy River Charitable Trust
- High Meadows Fund
- Claneil Foundation
- Keurig Green Mountain
- Jane's Trust Foundation

About Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund

The Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund serves as the administrator and backbone organization to the Farm to Plate Network and manages the analysis and goal tracking of the Farm to Plate Strategic Plan implementation.

VSJF provides the following services to the Farm to Plate Network:

- Guides **VISION** and provides **STRATEGIC GUIDANCE** and **COORDINATION** to Network groups.
- **SUPPORTS ALIGNED ACTIVITIES** and **FACILITATES DIALOGUE** across the Network on key issues to advance new ideas, fix bottlenecks, reduce unnecessary duplication of efforts, and open new markets for Vermont products in a coordinated fashion.
- Implements **SHARED MEASUREMENT PRACTICES** using the Results Based Accountability framework—a planning and evaluation framework used in Vermont by dozens of nonprofits, the legislature, and state government agencies—and tracks progress on the outcomes and goals of the Farm to Plate Strategic Plan.
- **MOBILIZES FUNDING** to support the work of Farm to Plate Network groups and strategy implementation.
- Manages **COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH** about Vermont’s food system to member organizations and the general public.
- Provides **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT** and **LEADERSHIP TRAINING** opportunities for Network members.
- **BUILDS PUBLIC WILL** to support local agriculture and the food system as key drivers of sustainable economic development in Vermont.

Staff



Left to right:

Rachel Carter, Communications Director

Lydia Pitkin, Office Manager & Farm to Plate Coordinator

Sarah Danly, Farm to Plate Network Manager

Jake Claro, Farm to Plate Director

Shane Rogers, Rooted in Vermont Project Manager

Ellen Kahler, Executive Director

“Vermont’s Farm to Plate Network is a strong example of a successful economic development effort that has created jobs, fostered new entrepreneurs and demonstrated social impact. Farm to Plate has put people to work, increased investments in agricultural and food-based businesses, and helped conserve our working landscape.”

Michael Schirling

Secretary of the Agency of Commerce and Community Development



 [@VTFARM2PLATE](https://twitter.com/VTFARM2PLATE)

VERMONT SUSTAINABLE JOBS FUND

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