



2021 -

**VERMONT AGRICULTURE &
FOOD SYSTEM STRATEGIC PLAN**

farm^{to}*plate*

2030

ABOUT THE VERMONT SUSTAINABLE JOBS FUND:

The Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund (VSJF) was designated by the Vermont Legislature in 2009 to serve as the administrator of the Farm to Plate Investment Program, with the aim of strengthening Vermont's food system over ten years. In 2019, the Legislature reauthorized another ten years of the Farm to Plate Investment Program to:

1. Increase sustainable economic development and create jobs in Vermont's food and farm sector;
2. Improve soils, water, and resiliency of the working landscape in the face of climate change; and
3. Improve access to healthy local foods for all Vermonters.



ABOUT THE FARM TO PLATE NETWORK:

The Farm to Plate Network is comprised of farms, food production businesses, specialty food producers, educational institutions, nonprofit organizations, funders, capital providers, and government personnel. Our network approach develops strategic conversations and action across multiple sectors and perspectives to make systemic change that no organization can accomplish alone.



ABOUT THE VERMONT AGENCY OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD AND MARKETS:

The Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets (VAAFM) facilitates, supports, and encourages the growth and viability of agriculture in Vermont while protecting the working landscape, human health, animal health, plant health, consumers, and the environment. Currently with 138 staff across six divisions, VAAFM helps to develop a safe, secure, ecologically responsive, profitable, and fair local foods system for Vermont and Vermont customers. VAAFM's staff maintain a leadership position important to the evolving local, regional, and global food system, through regulatory compliance and enforcement, access to and the application of resources (human, financial, social, and environmental), policy development, and by supporting the creation of new markets and innovation opportunities.

Administration Division: 13 staff

Food Safety and Consumer Protection Division: 38 staff

Public Health and Agricultural Resource Management Division: 23 staff

Vermont Agriculture and Environmental Laboratory: 14 staff

Water Quality Division: 29 staff

The Agriculture Development Division (21 staff) provides technical assistance, business and financial planning, contacts, funding opportunities, and resources to help local agriculture and food businesses meet their goals. We strive to meet the needs of Vermont's agricultural community by improving agricultural business capacity, consumer awareness and access, and farmland stewardship through technical assistance, grant funding, promotional opportunities, and collaborative efforts.

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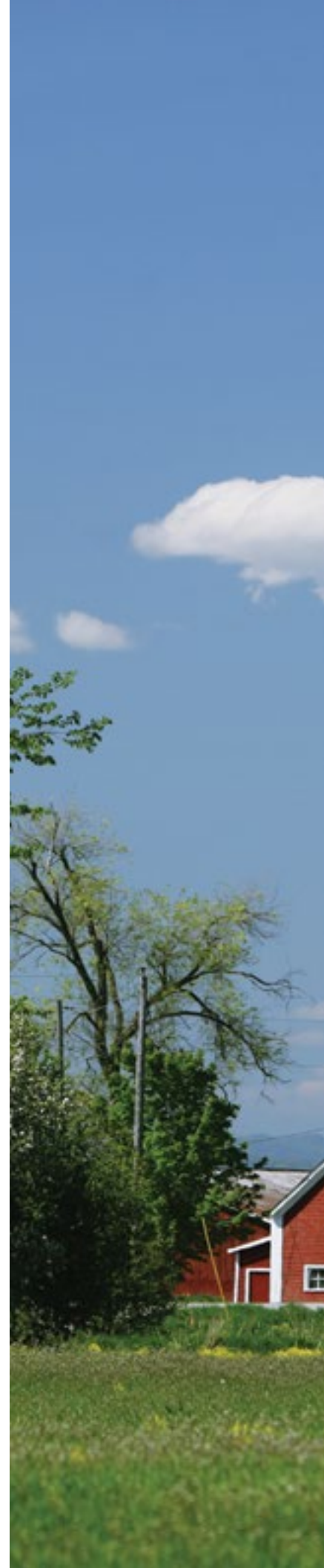


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We are on the land which has served as a site of meeting and exchange among indigenous peoples for thousands of years and is the home of the Western Abenaki People. The Farm to Plate Network honors, recognizes, and respects these peoples, especially the Abenaki, as the traditional stewards of the land and waters. In that spirit, we acknowledge that we are guests in this land. We need to respect and help protect the lands within our use. Those who will implement this Strategic Plan have a responsibility to help make this truth visible, to support efforts toward indigenous sovereignty and well-being, and to dismantle the legacies of colonialism here in Vermont.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Strategic planning for the continued development of Vermont's diverse food system must, by definition, involve the perspectives of those whose lives and livelihoods rely on that food system. This plan has been shaped by farmers, food entrepreneurs and workers, government personnel and elected officials, nonprofit organizations, technical and business assistance providers, educators, researchers, capital providers, and Vermont food consumers. Over 1,500 people, from all of these groups, contributed to the development of this plan over an 18-month period.

We are deeply grateful to the 52 lead authors and 111 expert contributors who created the 54 product, market, and issue briefs contained in the Supplemental Materials section of this document (pages 37–202), the 120 food producers and other food system professionals who participated in focus groups, as well as the 1,159 Vermont residents who contributed to a statewide survey on the future of Vermont's agriculture and food system. Their knowledge, expertise, and passion for our food system built this plan and the action steps we will take together over the next ten years.

We would like to thank Governor Phil Scott and the 2019 Vermont General Assembly for reauthorizing the Farm to Plate Investment Program and providing the impetus for the Vermont Agriculture and Food System Strategic Plan 2021–2030.

Our deep gratitude is also extended to the 21 staff at the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets who wrote and/or reviewed the food system briefs and provided valuable insights and edits to the Strategic Plan.

Our biggest appreciation goes out to all of the farmers, food workers, and food entrepreneurs who work tirelessly to grow, raise, and create the food that graces our kitchen tables and nourishes us all. As the popular American Farmland Trust bumper sticker says, "No Farms, No Food." For all you do every day, 365 days a year, rain or shine or snow, THANK YOU!





Introduction

Vermont's agriculture and food system has blossomed over the past decade. Vermont food is found across the state and region at farmers markets and cafeterias, on websites and grocery store shelves, and in restaurants and food pantries. Vermont's farm and food products now represent 13.9% of all in-state food purchases. The sights, tastes, and character of Vermont's farms also draw visitors from around the world. Dairy, maple, and apples continue to drive the agricultural economy, and Vermont farm products are increasingly available throughout the year. Cheese makers are creating a wider array of cheeses and working closely with dairy farms to do so. Our specialty food and beverage producers continue to win national and international prizes. These are just a few examples of how agriculture and food support Vermont's economic development and our quality of life.

The increase in farm and food sales, jobs, food businesses, and local food consumption between 2011-2020 is a result of the skills of Vermont food business owners and employees, and the effectiveness of statewide collaboration. In 2009 the Vermont Legislature tasked the Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund (VSJF) with administering the Farm to Plate Investment Program ([10 V.S.A. § 330](#)), to "create a strategic plan for agricultural and food system development, which may be periodically reviewed and updated." The Farm to Plate Network formed in 2011, and set about implementing the first statewide Farm to Plate Strategic Plan. We came together out of a love for good food, strong communities, and our working landscape, to intentionally support the farmers, food entrepreneurs, and farm and food workers who provide nutritious, delicious food for us all.

FOOD SYSTEM GROWTH 2011-2020

Vermont's food system economic output **expanded 48%, from \$7.5 billion to \$11.3 billion**, which includes **\$3 billion (26.5%) from food manufacturing**—Vermont's second-largest manufacturing industry.¹

The food system **added 6,560 net new jobs** (11.3% increase).²

More than **64,000 Vermonters** were directly employed by over **11,500 farms and food-related businesses**.³

Local food purchases **rose from \$114 million (5%) to \$310 million (13.9%)** of the total \$2.2 billion spent on food in the state annually.⁴

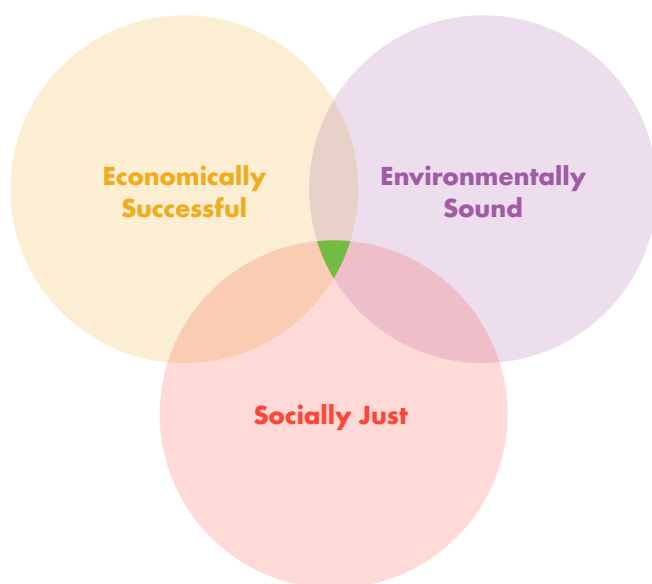
Vermont farms sold **\$781 million** worth of products in 2017.⁵

Top Left: Abenaki elder Aunt Sarah in front of her "Aunt Sarah" cultivar sunflowers (*Helianthus annuus*), with a barely visible "Koas" cultivar cornfield in the background (ca. 1900). Photo credit: Seeds of Renewal Project.

Recognizing the success of the first Plan and the continued importance of agriculture and food to Vermont's economy, environment, and culture, the Vermont Legislature and Governor Scott reauthorized the Farm to Plate Investment Program in 2019. The legislation directs the Farm to Plate Investment Program (Farm to Plate) to achieve the following outcomes by 2030:

1. Increase sustainable economic development and create jobs in Vermont's food and farm sector
2. Improve soils, water, and resiliency of the working landscape in the face of climate change
3. Improve access to healthy local foods for all Vermonters

THE DEFINITION OF SUSTAINABILITY



Sustainable development meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It is development that achieves economic viability, environmental sustainability, and social equity and well-being.

There is much to celebrate and build upon in the coming decade. The resiliency of Vermont's farms and food system during the COVID-19 pandemic is a clear example of the benefits of food system investment and support. Unfortunately, despite Vermont's long history of agricultural production and the recognized strength of our food enterprises, a number of recurring and structural problems threaten the health of our food system.



Development pressure, a generational transfer of farm assets, changing consumer preferences and markets, income inequality, and food insecurity are informing and accelerating the need for strategic action. Vermont's dairy industry—the foundation of our agricultural sector—is in a crisis brought on by sustained low milk prices. Ecological stressors are on the rise, as Vermont will face considerable disruption to the local food system and farm viability because of climate change, and the urgency of controlling nutrient runoff and improving water quality absorbs resources and time across the sector. The continued consolidation of grocery and distribution businesses makes it challenging for Vermont producers to expand out of the state and benefit from high-value sales outlets across the Northeast. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, one in ten Vermonters were food insecure, and many more, while officially food secure, were unable to afford or access local food. Explicitly redressing racial inequity and the historical disenfranchisement and exclusion of Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) from business and land ownership is also essential to local food system development in the coming decade.

The challenges and opportunities we face require bold and decisive action. A thorough strategic planning process was necessary to create an effective new Strategic Plan to guide us through these challenges and achieve a sustainable food system.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE 2021–2030 STRATEGIC PLAN

In 2019, the Vermont Legislature, in [Act 83](#), “An Act Relating to Agricultural Development,” called for the Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets, in consultation with the Vermont Farm to Plate Investment Program and industry stakeholders, to deliver a report with recommendations to stabilize and revitalize Vermont's agricultural industry. Legislators wished to explore additional opportunities to address the ongoing dairy crisis and other significant changes happening within Vermont's agricultural and food sector, and to stimulate more rural economic development as well as

regional market access for Vermont products. The requested report, “Vermont Agriculture and Food System Plan: 2020 Part One,” submitted to the Legislature in January 2020, was also the starting point for the 2021–2030 strategic planning process.

The components of the 2021–2030 Strategic Plan are derived from the knowledge, insights, and expertise of over 1,500 dedicated and passionate food system professionals and Vermont residents. VSJF and VAAFM enlisted 52 subject matter experts to author 54 food system briefs assessing the current conditions of the Vermont food system, and these authors worked with an additional 111 contributing experts. The briefs examine the bottlenecks, gaps, and opportunities for specific products, markets, and food system issues, and recommend strategies to advance them. The briefs are located in the Supplemental Materials section of the Plan, and their recommended strategies are the basis for action over the next ten years.

The briefs provided a framework for robust conversations, stakeholder focus groups, and surveys to inform the Strategic Plan. During three annual Farm to Plate Network Gatherings, 13 industry focus groups, and Network and organizational leadership meetings, food producers and industry experts determined the vision, goals, and objectives to guide us to 2030. Over 1,100 Vermont residents also provided their values, hopes, concerns, and vision for the Vermont food system through a public survey.



INVESTING IN OUR FOOD SYSTEM'S FUTURE

The strategic planning process confirmed that Vermont's residents and elected officials value our agriculture and food system. It affirmed that Vermont's renowned agricultural innovation and leadership can be brought to bear on the challenges of 21st century food production—but farmers and food business owners will need consistent support as they lead the way on sustainable economic growth, resiliency, and food access for all. The Strategic Plan contains the goals,

objectives, and strategies to provide that support, and selected themes are previewed here.

The Plan confirms the need to prioritize our agricultural land base, infrastructure, and food security in order to increase Vermont farm and food system resilience to the impacts of climate change. Bolstering short and reliable regional food supply chains will reduce our exposure to global food system disruptions, and meet the needs of our most vulnerable communities. Additional training, education, financial support, and research will help farmers and food entrepreneurs adapt.



The Plan identifies promising opportunities for business development and diversification across food system enterprises, and recommends strategies to enable farmers and entrepreneurs to pursue them. Research and development is needed, for example, to improve product quality, develop crop varieties and genetic stock adapted to Vermont's climate, and explore new value-added products which entrepreneurs can then commercialize. Farm businesses seeking to diversify or transition to new enterprises, and emergent industries looking to grow (e.g., grass-fed beef, cheese-quality milk, food-grade grains), will also need more technical assistance, processing facilities, shared marketing, etc., in order to succeed. The Plan estimates an additional 33 full-time personnel are needed to provide the identified business and technical assistance support.

There is universal agreement that support for food and farm businesses must be coupled with funding and policy to enable low-income consumers to access this local food. Recommended actions to this end include funding for the charitable food system to purchase local products (e.g., Vermonters Feeding Vermonters), programs that supplement 3SquaresVT (e.g., Crop Cash), models such as produce prescription programs, and more.

Public policy that supports new and existing agricultural and food enterprises, protects our agricultural and water resources, improves food access, and expands the reach of our statewide food system is also needed and addressed in detail in the [Priority Strategies](#) as well as the briefs. The Plan

also makes clear that expanding cross-sector collaborations (e.g., with the health care sector) will be crucial to meeting our objectives.

In total, the Plan estimates that additional public (federal and state) and philanthropic investment is needed over the next ten years: approximately \$9.7 million in one-time funding and \$23.3 million in recurring funding. This level of funding will ensure sufficient land access and conservation, climate resilience, food security, infrastructure investments, regional market development, and workforce development to meet the growing needs of the sector. This funding will also support the necessary personnel who can provide high-quality business assistance, marketing support, regulatory capacity, product research and development, grant programs, and farmer-to-farmer educational opportunities. Public and early stage philanthropic funding will also stimulate additional private sector investment.



If we successfully implement the recommended investments, policies, and coordinated cross-sector strategies over the coming decade, we will achieve our goals. Now is the time to come together to ensure our collective food security in the face of climate change, strengthen our agricultural economy and working landscape, and provide healthy local food for all Vermonters.

FOOTNOTES

1. Kavet, Rockler & Associates, *The Vermont Farming, Food Production, and Food Distribution Industries, 2020 Update*, April 2020
2. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2019), *U.S. Bureau Nonemployer Statistics (2019)*, and *U.S. Census of Agriculture (2017)*
3. *Ibid*
4. *2017 Vermont Farm to Plate Local Food Counts*
5. *U.S. Census of Agriculture, 2017*



UNDERSTANDING THE PLAN

The Plan starts with a vision statement articulating our desired future, and then outlines, with increasing specificity, how we will achieve that future—from goals, to objectives, to priority strategies.

The Vision describes the Vermont agriculture and food system we are striving to create. It emphasizes human well-being, environmental sustainability, equity, trust, collaboration, and ingenuity.

The Strategic Goals express the conditions we will create in the food system by 2030.

Objectives measure our progress toward each goal. Objectives help us answer the question, “How do you know if the goal has been accomplished?” Objectives by themselves are not an indicator of whether the goal has been accomplished, nor do they tell the whole story. Rather, in aggregate they give us a starting point to evaluate our progress over time.

Priority Strategies are the recommended programs, investments, and policies which will lead us to meet our objectives and reach our goals. In most cases, the priority strategies are a distillation of interrelated recommendations from the food system briefs.

The Supplemental Materials include the 54 food system product, market, and issue briefs. The briefs contain specific recommended action steps to guide food system development in the next decade.





Our Vision for Vermont's Food System in 2030

Vermont's agriculture and food system will be defined by human well-being, environmental sustainability, equity, trust, collaboration, and ingenuity. It will be based on Vermont agricultural traditions of hard work, self-determination, and neighbor helping neighbor. Farms and food businesses of all sizes will thrive across Vermont, serving our state and region with a diversity of products sold everywhere from local farmers markets and restaurants to school cafeterias and grocery store shelves across the Northeast.



Access to land, infrastructure, education, capital, and technical assistance will be sufficient and equitable, so future generations of farmers and food entrepreneurs can build on the strengths of the past as they bring forward new energy and ideas. All of those who produce, process, sell, and distribute our food will feel at home in Vermont, earn livable wages, and have an economically secure quality of life.



We envision a working landscape where agricultural soils are protected and respected for their ability to sustain us in good times and hard times, in which farming and food production generate clean water, clean air, healthy soils, and ecological diversity. All Vermont residents will share responsibility for reducing food waste and managing nutrients for highest and best use. Agricultural stewardship that builds resilience and benefits communities will be publicly recognized and rewarded, cultivating deep appreciation for our farmland, farmers, and food producers. Connection to a sustainable food system will help our rural and urban areas work in concert to adapt to the changing climate.

We envision a food system in which there are no social, cultural, or infrastructure barriers to obtaining and enjoying local food. All Vermont residents will be well-nourished, and have easy access to healthy and culturally appropriate food. Race, age, gender, ethnic heritage, birthplace, and formal education will not determine who can participate in the food system, from owning a food system business to enjoying the fruits of the land. Vermont's food system will belong to us all.







Vermont Agriculture and Food System Strategic Goals

Fifteen strategic goals articulate the results we will achieve by 2030, in service to the Vermont Legislature’s intended outcomes for the Vermont Farm to Plate Investment Program:

1. Increase sustainable economic development and create jobs in Vermont’s food and farm sector
2. Improve soils, water, and resiliency of the working landscape in the face of climate change
3. Improve access to healthy local foods for all Vermonters

The 15 statewide food system strategic goals are first presented together, and then each goal is presented with its objectives, the measurable improvements that represent progress and will be tracked over time to indicate the degree to which the goal has been accomplished. Some objectives already contain known targets, while other objectives require additional work to establish baselines and set specific improvement targets. The objectives will inform the actions to be taken by the Farm to Plate Network, policy makers, state agencies, and others, and will hold us all accountable to achieving our intended goals. However, they do not tell the whole story about progress toward our goals, and the absence of data should not be used to dismiss individual experiences or delay taking action on an issue. We include one data visualization per goal, with sources listed on page 27. Additional data visualizations will be available on the Farm to Plate website as they are developed. Please note that the goals are not in priority order.

GOAL CATEGORIES

Goals are divided into four categories. The first three correspond with the three legislative outcomes. The fourth is our commitment to racial equity.

- **Sustainable Economic Development**
- **Environmental Sustainability**
- **Healthy Local Food for All Vermonters**
- **Racial Equity**

SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS

- 1. Food system economic output, employment, and establishments in Vermont will increase.**
- 2. Demand for Vermont food will increase.**
- 3. Vermont's production portfolio is more diverse, farm and food businesses of all types will increase their economic viability, and businesses have equitable access to capital and to production, processing, aggregation, and distribution infrastructure appropriate to their needs.**
- 4. Vermont food system jobs provide livable wages, safe, healthy, and supportive workplace conditions, and access to health care and other benefits.**
- 5. Vermont farms and food system businesses have sufficient, diverse, and reliable employees, and there are accessible and equitable opportunities in Vermont to gain the knowledge and skills for food system careers.**

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY GOALS

- 6. Vermont farm and food businesses will increase carbon sequestration and reduce food system-related greenhouse gas emissions, and are able to adapt to climatic changes due to global warming, including floods, droughts, extreme storms, and pest and disease pressures.**
- 7. Vermont farm stewardship is increasing ecological diversity and improving soil and water quality, and farm stewards are supported, compensated, and recognized for their positive contributions to the environment and public good.**
- 8. Vermont's agricultural land remains in productive agricultural use, access to that land is more affordable and equitable, and land-use planning decisions maintain and promote a strong and viable food system.**
- 9. Edible food, food scraps, and other food residuals are used for their highest purpose, and not considered waste.**

HEALTHY LOCAL FOOD FOR ALL VERMONTERS GOALS

- 10. The amount of Vermont-grown food that fulfills the dietary and cultural needs of people in Vermont will increase.**
- 11. All people in Vermont increasingly have the financial resources to access local food, including through programs that provide support for purchasing local food.**
- 12. All people in Vermont are able to access locations in which local food is sold, served, or provided.**
- 13. All people in Vermont can access the knowledge, skills, and resources to select, grow, hunt, fish, forage, process, store, and prepare local food.**
- 14. Vermont's food system is resilient and able to provide adequate and accessible healthy local food in the face of emergencies—including climate-related natural disasters.**

RACIAL EQUITY GOAL

- 15. Food system organizations and stakeholders prioritize racial equity and actions to eradicate structural racism in their work, are accountable to Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) leadership, and support BIPOC participation and representation.**

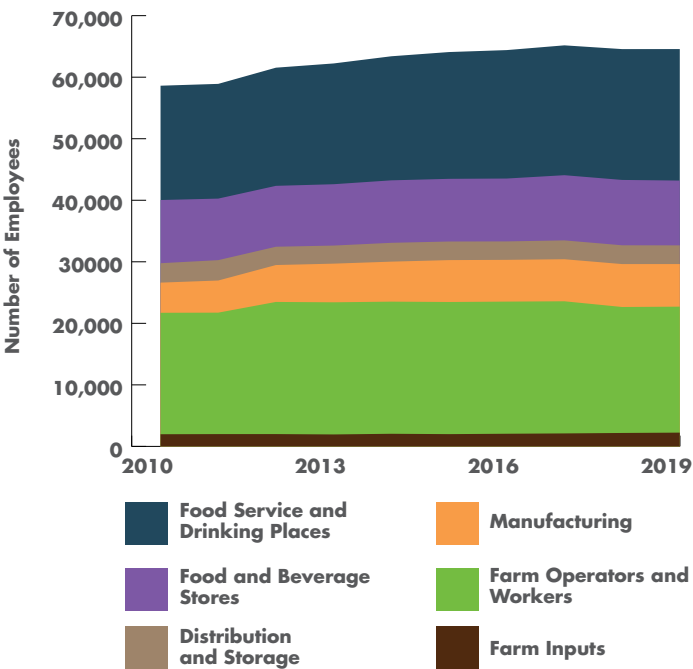
GOAL 1: Food system economic output, employment, and establishments in Vermont will increase.

OBJECTIVES:

- Food system economic output will increase by \$3 billion (a 26.5% increase) by 2030.
- There will be 5,000 net new food sector jobs by 2030.
- There will be 350 net new farm and food establishments in Vermont by 2030.
- The number of farm and food businesses with either employee ownership and/or cooperative ownership will increase.

EXAMPLE INDICATOR:

Vermont Food System Employment



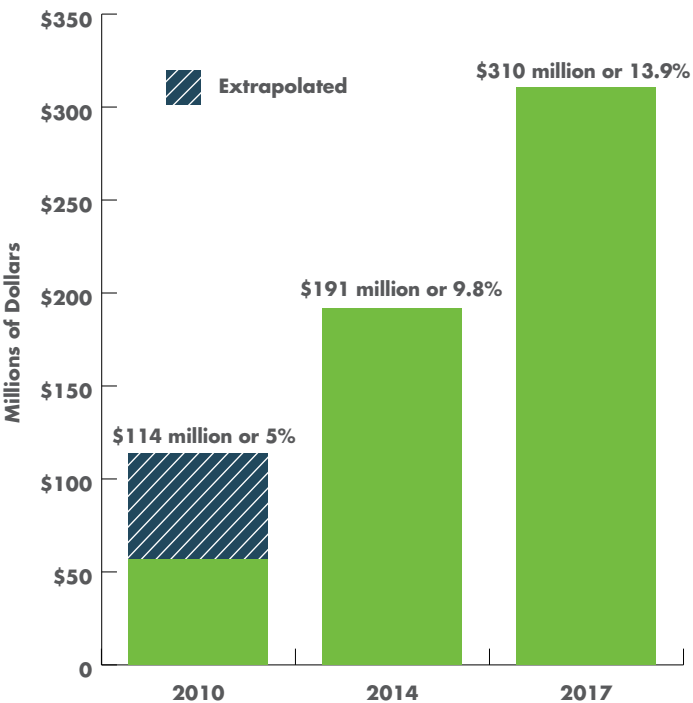
GOAL 2: Demand for Vermont food will increase.

OBJECTIVES:

- By 2030, Vermont food products will be 25% of all in-state food purchases, by dollar value.
- By 2030, the aggregate total of Vermont products sold in the Northeast will increase, by dollar value.
- In-state sales will increase for each product category (e.g., dairy, meat, produce, grain).
- Vermont product sales will increase for each market channel within Vermont.
- Vermont value-added food producers, in aggregate, will increase their total purchases of Vermont ingredients.

EXAMPLE INDICATOR:

Total Local Food Sales in Vermont



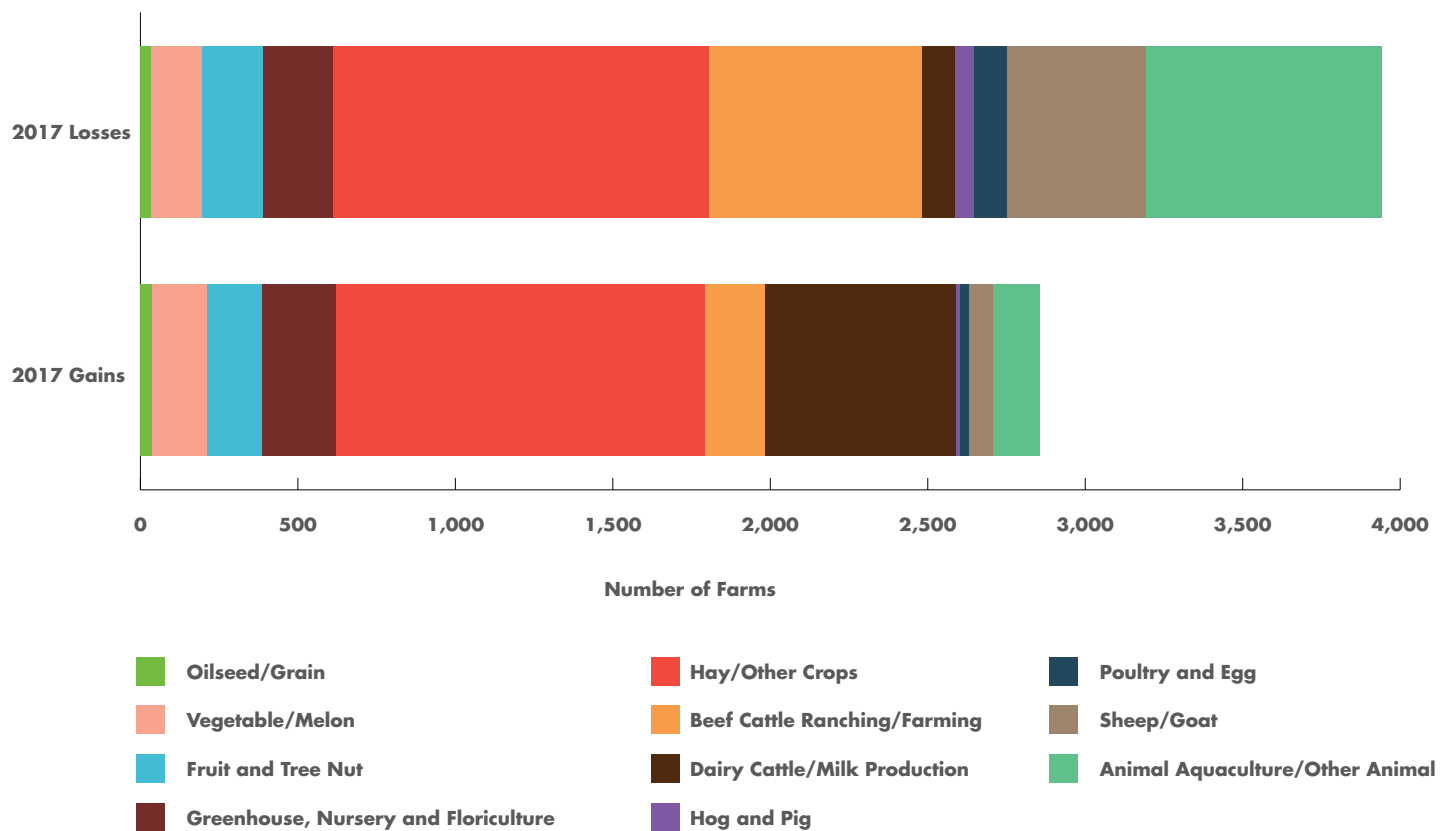
GOAL 3: Vermont’s production portfolio is more diverse, farm and food businesses of all types will increase their economic viability, and businesses have equitable access to capital and to production, processing, aggregation, and distribution infrastructure appropriate to their needs.

OBJECTIVES:

- Aggregate sales of all Vermont products will increase by \$100 million.
- Sales of certified organic Vermont products will increase by 20%.
- The market value of cow dairy farms reporting sales between \$100,000–\$999,999 will increase.
- At least 51% of all Vermont farms will report positive net farm income.
- The total economic output of value-added dairy processing businesses will increase by 10%.
- The number of dairy processing facilities will increase by 10%.
- The total combined throughput capacity of Vermont state- and USDA-inspected slaughter and meat processing facilities will increase 25% by 2030.
- The percentage of farm and food businesses reporting sufficient access to shared-use and/or co-packing facilities will increase.
- The percentage of farm and food businesses who report sufficient access to freight, food hubs, and wholesale distribution services will increase.
- The number of business and technical assistance providers available to support farm and food businesses will increase by 33.
- The amount of financial capital made available annually to farm and food businesses will increase.
- Data points and ways to measure racial equity in relation to access to capital, state and federal funding, and philanthropic funding will be identified and created, under BIPOC leadership.
- The number of farms and food businesses reporting that state regulations are scale-appropriate will increase.

EXAMPLE INDICATOR:

Vermont Farms with Net Gains/Net Losses, 2017



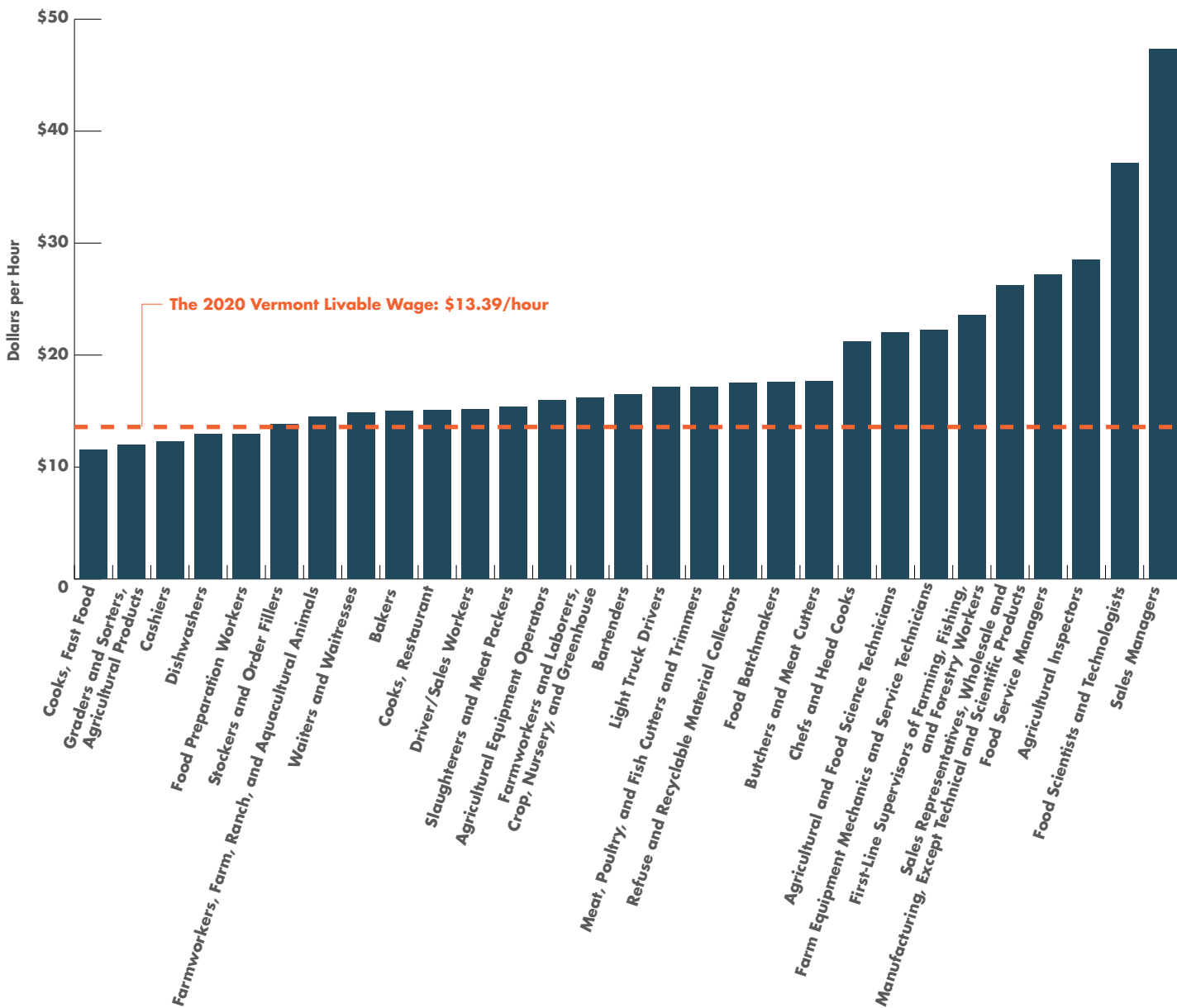
GOAL 4: Vermont food system jobs provide livable wages, safe, healthy, and supportive workplace conditions, and access to health care and other benefits.

OBJECTIVES:

- Median wages for all job categories in the food system will, at minimum, match the Vermont Livable Wage.
- The number of farmers reporting farming as their primary occupation will increase.
- An assessment tool for farm and food workplace benefit availability will be created.
- The number of farm and food enterprises with Vermont Occupational Safety and Health Agency (VOSHA) violations will decrease.
- Data points and ways to measure racial equity in relation to wages and safe, healthy, and supportive workplaces will be identified and created, under BIPOC leadership.
- An assessment tool for fair treatment of food system employees, including those without resident status, will be created.

EXAMPLE INDICATOR:

Median Hourly Wage for Select Food System Careers, Vermont, 2019



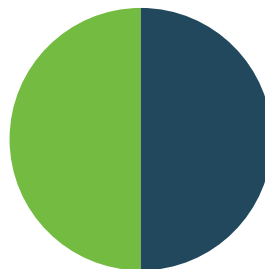
GOAL 5: Vermont farms and food system businesses have sufficient, diverse, and reliable employees, and there are accessible and equitable opportunities in Vermont to gain the knowledge and skills for food system careers.

OBJECTIVES:

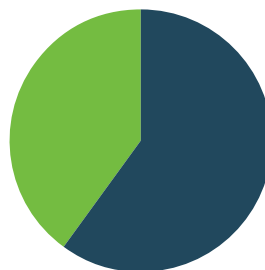
- The number of food system employers who report labor shortages will decrease.
- The number of K-12 schools offering food system-related curriculum and/or career information will increase.
- The percentage of graduates from Career & Technical Education agricultural, natural resource, and culinary programs who are employed or enrolled in further study in their field will increase.
- The percentage of graduates from Vermont's postsecondary food and agricultural education programs employed in Vermont's food system will increase.
- The number of students enrolled in food system-related licensed apprenticeship, certificate, and stackable credential programs will increase.

EXAMPLE INDICATOR:

Labor Shortages in Vermont Food System



50%
of large food system employers say hiring challenges hold back their businesses.



40%
of small food system employers say hiring challenges hold back their businesses.

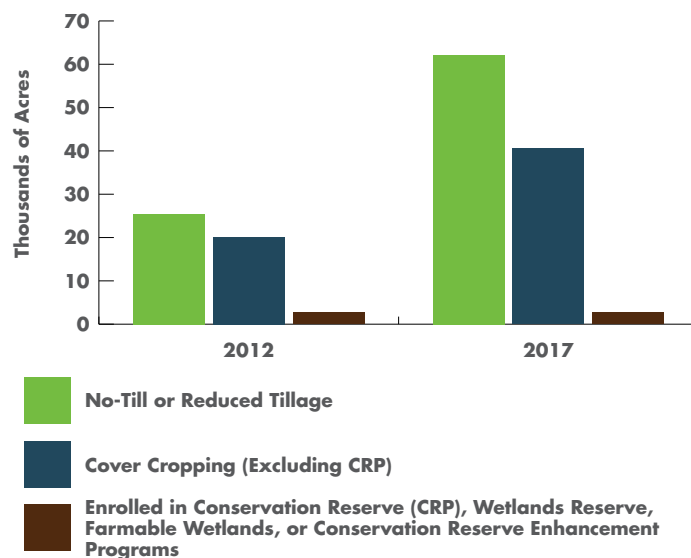
GOAL 6: Vermont farm and food businesses will increase carbon sequestration and reduce food system-related greenhouse gas emissions, and are able to adapt to climatic changes due to global warming, including floods, droughts, extreme storms, and pest and disease pressures.

OBJECTIVES:

- Investment in climate-related research, and adaptive practices, programs, and infrastructure will increase.
- The total acreage in adaptive conservation practices will increase by 35%.
- Aggregate greenhouse gas emissions from agriculture will decrease by 15%.
- Aggregate greenhouse gas emissions from non-farm food enterprises will decrease.

EXAMPLE INDICATOR:

Vermont Farm Acreage Under Select Conservation Practices



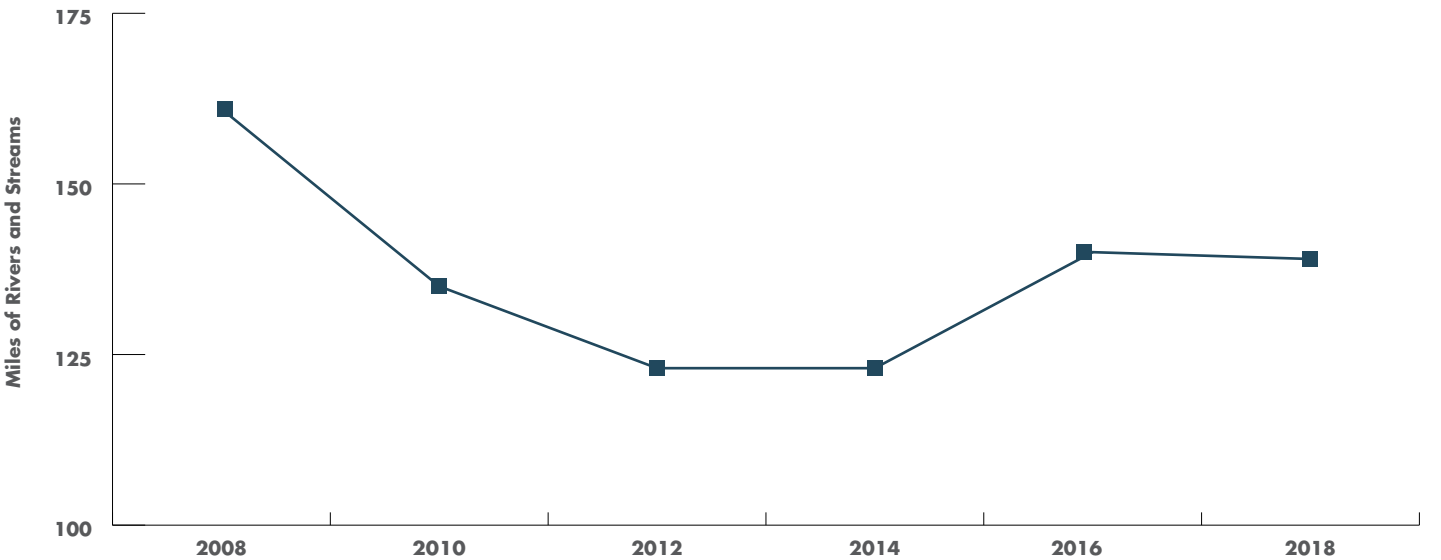
GOAL 7: Vermont farm stewardship is increasing ecological diversity and improving soil and water quality, and farm stewards are supported, compensated, and recognized for their positive contributions to the environment and public good.

OBJECTIVES:

- The Lake Champlain Total Maximum Daily Load (TMDL) goals for agricultural pollutants will be met.
- River and stream miles impaired or altered by agriculture will decrease by 20%.
- A statewide soil health database and monitoring program will be established.
- At least 95% of Vermont’s federal appropriation for Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP) will be obligated each year.
- The pounds of pesticides used per year will decrease by 20%.
- The total acreage and number of farms enrolled in the Vermont Environmental Stewardship Program will increase.
- Vermont will establish a Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) program or join a regional PES program.
- The percentage of Vermont residents reporting that agriculture has a positive impact on environmental quality will increase.
- Vermont will establish a baseline measurement of carbon sequestered on farmland.
- The number of farms utilizing state water quality programs intended to expand nutrient and manure management practice implementation will increase.

EXAMPLE INDICATOR:

Miles of Vermont Rivers and Streams Impaired or Altered by Agriculture



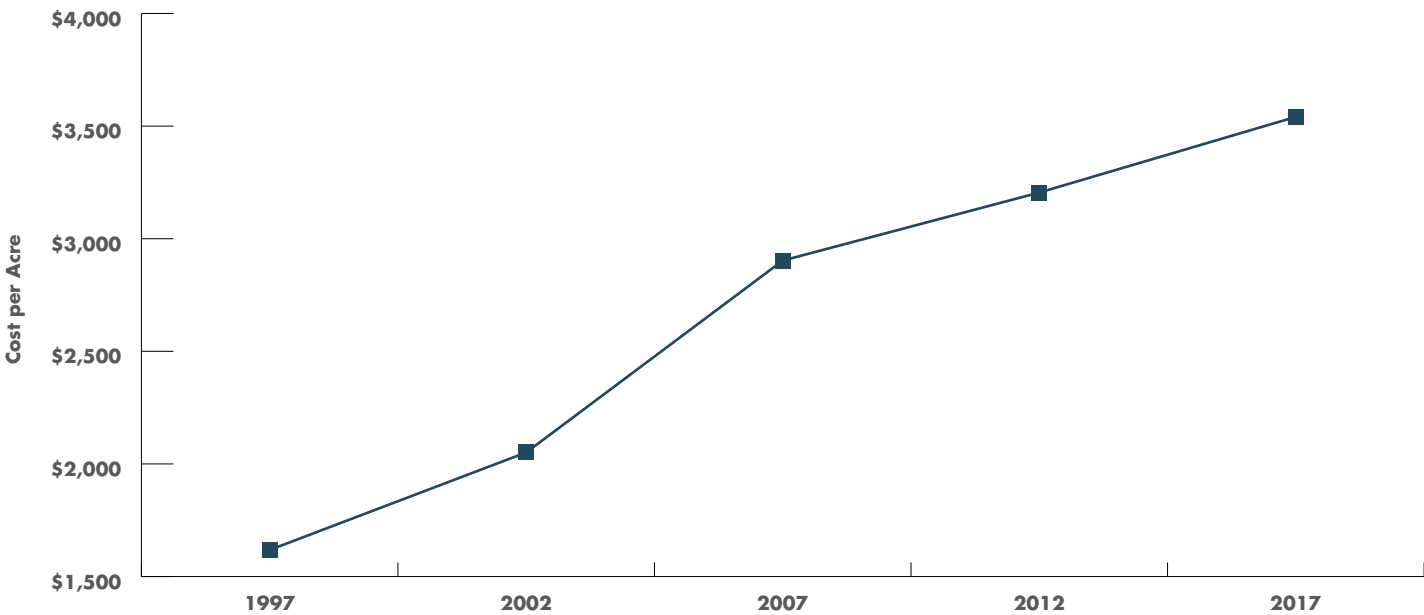
GOAL 8: Vermont’s agricultural land remains in productive agricultural use, access to that land is more affordable and equitable, and land-use planning decisions maintain and promote a strong and viable food system.

OBJECTIVES:

- Total acres of conserved farmland will increase by 30,000 acres.
- The total acreage of actively farmed prime agricultural soils and soils of statewide significance will be maintained or increase.
- The per acre cost of agricultural land will stabilize or increase no more than 10% by 2030.
- The percentage of beginning farmers in Vermont reporting farmland is affordable will increase.
- The number of farmers utilizing the Vermont Land Trust’s Farmland Access Program and other land access-oriented programs will increase.
- Data points and ways to measure racial equity in relation to farmland access and land-use planning decisions will be identified and created, under BIPOC leadership.
- By 2030 the total area of farmland converted to urban and highly developed (UHD) land use and/or low-density residential (LDR) will not exceed 5,000 acres.

EXAMPLE INDICATOR:

Average Market Value per Acre of Vermont Farms’ Land and Buildings



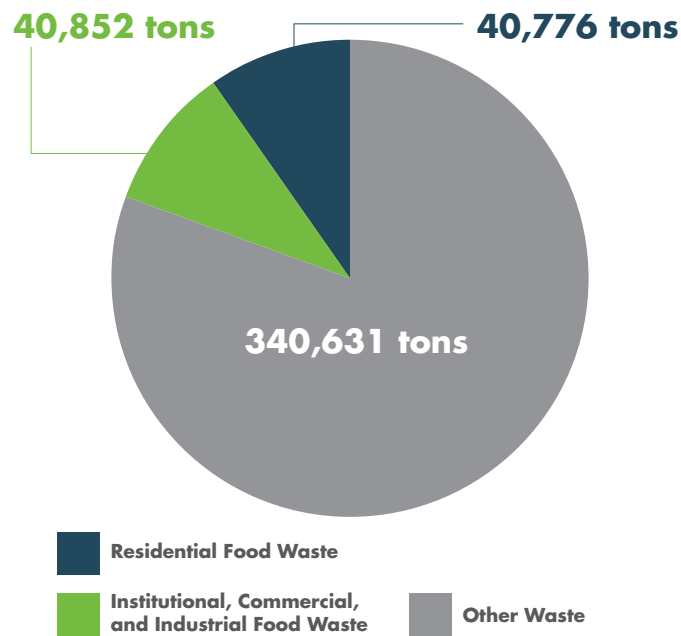
GOAL 9: Edible food, food scraps, and other food residuals are used for their highest purpose, and not considered waste.

OBJECTIVES:

- At least 90% of produce grown in Vermont is sold or donated.
- Food rescued from Vermont farms, processors, distributors, and retailers will increase.
- The pounds per capita of food waste disposed of by Vermont households and commercial businesses will decrease by 55%.
- At least 90% of household food waste will be diverted from the solid waste stream.
- At least 75% of Vermont residents will report that composting or managing food scraps is easy.
- Vermont’s capacity for food recovery, composting, and anaerobic digestion will increase by 46,000 tons.

EXAMPLE INDICATOR:

Volume of Food Waste Disposed of in Vermont Landfills in 2018



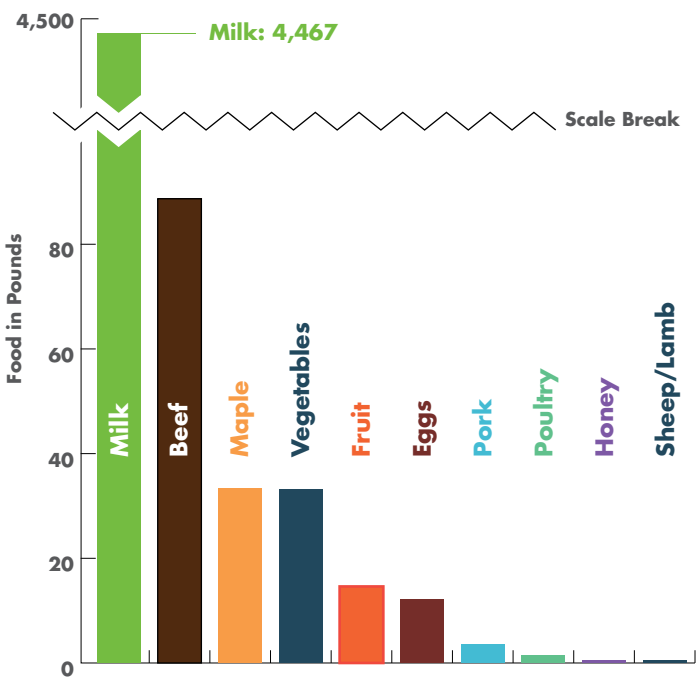
GOAL 10: The amount of Vermont-grown food that fulfills the dietary and cultural needs of people in Vermont will increase.

OBJECTIVES:

- Vermont will produce an increasing amount of food that fulfills the nutritional needs of people in Vermont.
- Diverse cultural groups in Vermont will increasingly report that their food needs are met by Vermont producers.

EXAMPLE INDICATOR:

Pounds of Food Per Capita Produced in Vermont, 2018



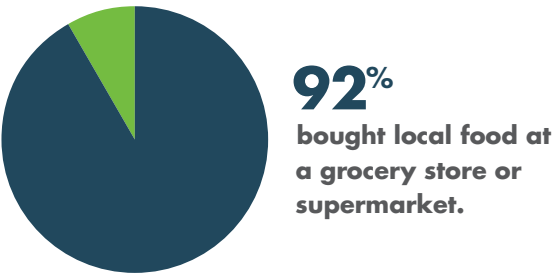
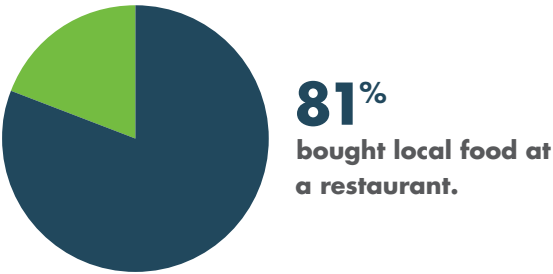
GOAL 11: All people in Vermont increasingly have the financial resources to access local food, including through programs that provide support for purchasing local food.

OBJECTIVES:

- The number of Vermonters earning a livable wage will increase.
- At least 98% of Vermonters will report buying food directly from farmers or buying local food at a retail store or restaurant within the past year.
- Funding for supplemental support programs that provide access to local food (including 3SquaresVT and Health Care Shares, etc.) will increase.
- At least 85% of the benefits made available through Farm to Family and Crop Cash will be utilized, by dollar amount.
- An increasing percentage of those eligible for supplemental support programs in the state will be enrolled.
- Data points and ways to measure racial equity in relation to food access programs and their utilization and efficacy will be identified and created, under BIPOC leadership.

EXAMPLE INDICATOR:

Percent of Vermonters that Have Purchased Local Food in the Past Year



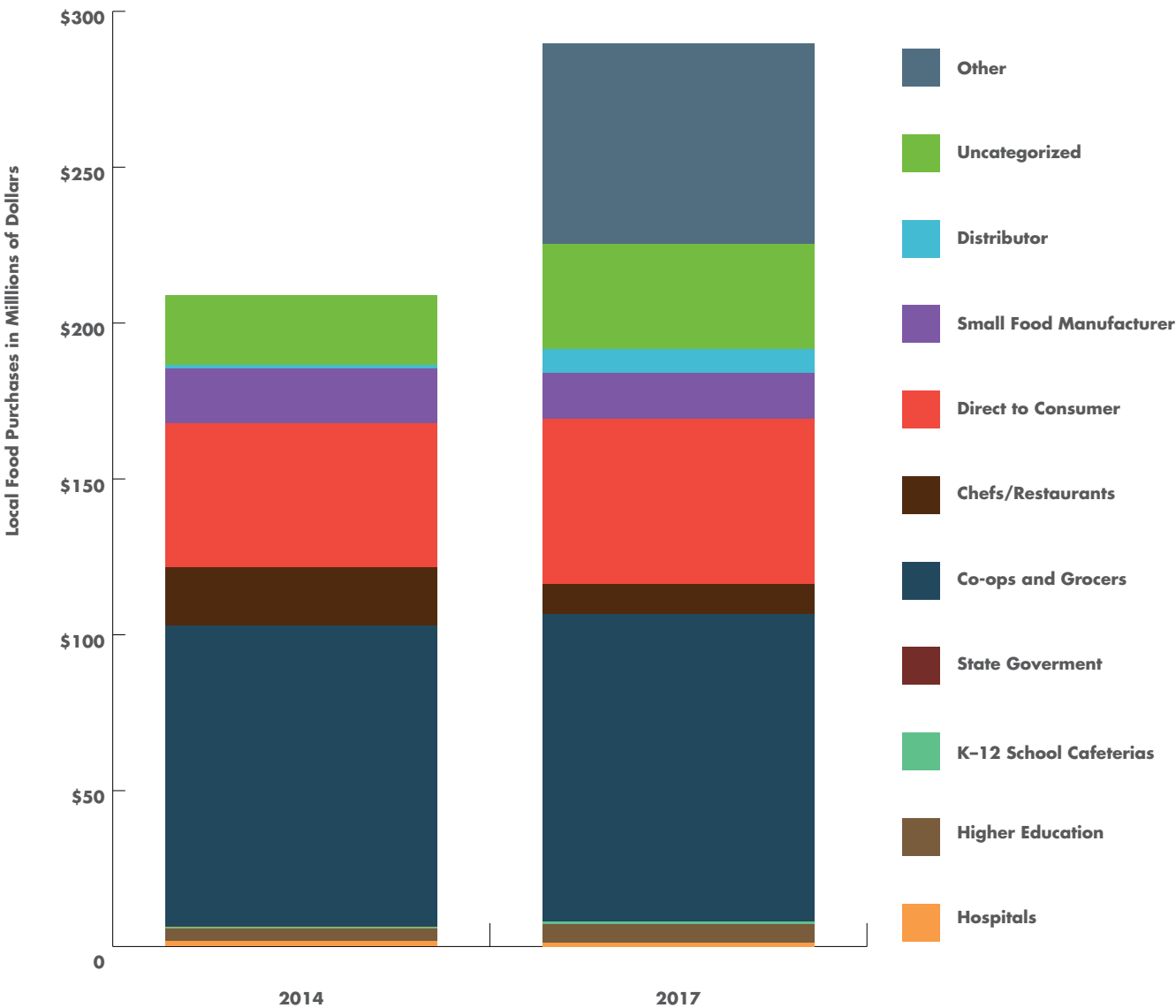
GOAL 12: All people in Vermont are able to access locations in which local food is sold, served, or provided.

OBJECTIVES:

- The number of retail grocers selling local food will increase.
- An increasing percentage of retail locations which accept 3SquaresVT will stock adequate healthy food to serve as a primary food source.
- The percentage of farmers markets and other direct sales venues that accept 3SquaresVT will increase.
- An increasing percentage of Vermont households without access to a car will live within half a mile of a retail market and/or within half a mile of public transportation.
- An increasing percentage of Vermont residents will live within ten miles of a retail market.
- Local food will be available at all food shelves and other charitable food outlets.
- At least 50% of K-12 schools will spend 20% of their food budget on local food.
- The percentage of state colleges which spend at least 20% of their food budget on local food will increase.

EXAMPLE INDICATOR:

Breakdown of Where Local Food is Purchased in Vermont



GOAL 13: All people in Vermont can access the knowledge, skills, and resources to select, grow, hunt, fish, forage, process, store, and prepare local food.

OBJECTIVES:

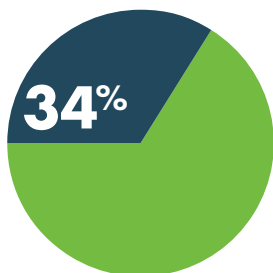
- At least 90% of Vermonters will hunt, fish, forage, grow, or barter local food each year.
- At least 75% of K-12 schools will integrate Farm to School education into their curriculum.
- An assessment tool and metrics to track agricultural literacy will be established.
- More Vermont residents who desire to produce their own food will have the ability to do so.

EXAMPLE INDICATOR:

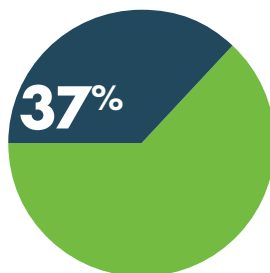
Percent of Vermonters that Acquired Local Food in 2019 through...



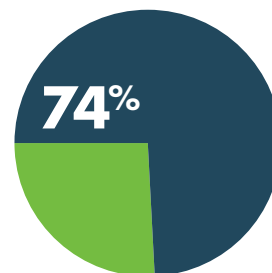
...Hunting



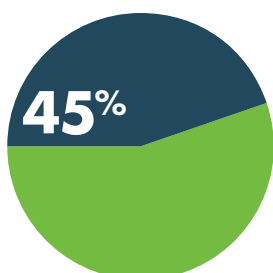
...Fishing



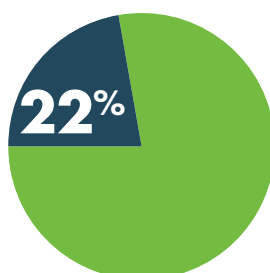
...Growing



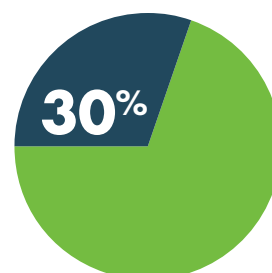
...Foraging



...Raising Livestock



...Bartering



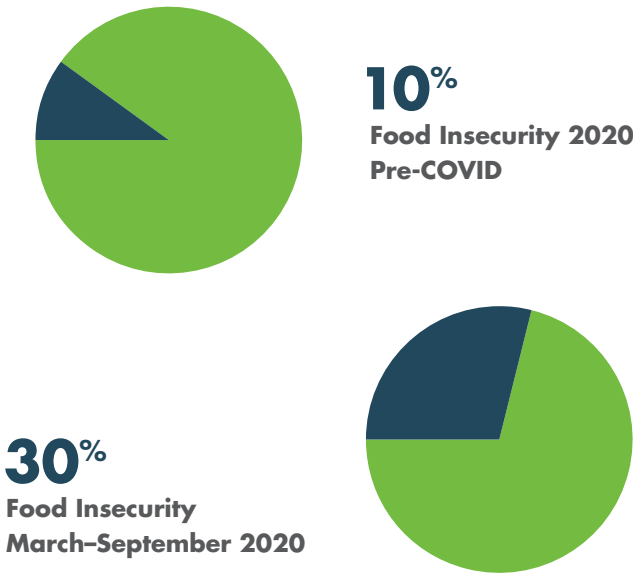
GOAL 14: Vermont’s food system is resilient and able to provide adequate and accessible healthy local food in the face of emergencies—including climate-related natural disasters.

OBJECTIVES:

- Vermont will establish a statewide food security plan.
- The Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets’ Annex in the State of Vermont’s Emergency Management Plan will include protocols for addressing food access and security during an emergency, based on lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- An assessment tool and metrics for food system emergency preparedness will be established.

EXAMPLE INDICATOR:

Food Insecurity: Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic



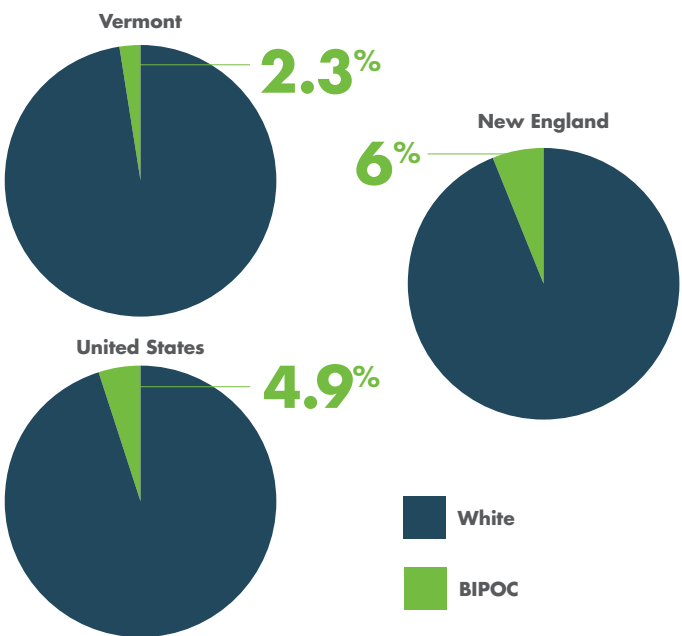
Goal 15: Food system organizations and stakeholders prioritize racial equity and actions to eradicate structural racism in their work, are accountable to BIPOC leadership, and support BIPOC participation and representation.

OBJECTIVES:

- Data points, and ways to measure racial equity in relation to access to capital, state and federal funding, and philanthropic funding will be identified and created, under BIPOC leadership.
- Data points and ways to measure racial equity in relation to wages and safe, healthy, and supportive workplaces will be identified and created, under BIPOC leadership.
- Data points and ways to measure racial equity in relation to farmland access and land-use planning decisions will be identified and created, under BIPOC leadership.
- Data points and ways to measure racial equity in relation to food access programs and their utilization and efficacy will be identified and created, under BIPOC leadership.

EXAMPLE INDICATOR:

Percent of Producers Identifying as BIPOC



Citations for Example Indicators

Goal 1:

Vermont Food System Employment

Bureau of Labor Statistics (2019), U.S. Bureau Nonemployer Statistics (2019), and U.S. Census of Agriculture (2017)

Goal 2:

Total Local Food Sales in Vermont

2017 Vermont Farm to Plate Local Food Counts

Goal 3:

Vermont Farms with Net Gains/Losses, 2017

U.S. Census of Agriculture (2017), Table 75

Goal 4:

Median Hourly Wage for Select Food System Careers, Vermont, 2019

Bureau of Labor Statistics (2019), U.S. Bureau Nonemployer Statistics (2019), and the Vermont Basic Needs Budget and Livable Wage Report (2019)

Goal 5:

Labor Shortages in Vermont Food System

Holly Tippet and Wendy Meunier, Charting a Path: Food System Workforce Needs Assessment, 2013

Goal 6:

Vermont Farm Acreage under Select Conservation Practices

U.S. Census of Agriculture (2012 and 2017), Tables 8 and 47

Goal 7:

Miles of Vermont Rivers and Streams Impaired or Altered by Agriculture

State of Vermont Water Quality Integrated Assessment Report (multiple years)

Goal 8:

Average Market Value per Acre of Vermont Farms' Land and Buildings

U.S. Census of Agriculture (multiple years), Table 43

Goal 9:

Volume of Food Waste Disposed of in Vermont Landfills in 2018

DSM Environmental Services, Inc., 2018 Vermont Waste Characterization

Goal 10:

Pounds of Food Per Capita Produced in Vermont, 2018

USDA New England Agricultural Statistics (2018)

Goal 11:

Percent of Vermonters that Have Purchased Local Food in the Past Year

The Vermonter Poll, 2019

Goal 12: Breakdown of Where Local Food is Purchased in Vermont

2017 Vermont Farm to Plate Local Food Counts

Goal 13:

Percent of Vermonters that Acquired Local Food in 2019 through...

The Vermonter Poll, 2019

Goal 14:

Food Security: Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic

Meredith T. Niles, Emily H. Belarmino, and Farryl Bertmann (2020), COVID-19 Impacts on Food Security and Systems: A Third Survey of Vermonters

Goal 15: Percent of Producers who Identify as BIPOC

U.S. Census of Agriculture (2017), Tables 60 and 64





Priority Strategies

Priority strategies are the recommended programs, investments, and policies which will lead us to meet our objectives and reach our goals. In most cases, the priority strategies are a distillation of interrelated recommendations from the food system briefs and thus, if implemented, may solve challenges in multiple areas of the food system. The [Supplemental Materials](#) contain a table of the priority strategies and the recommendations from the product, market, and issue briefs from which they derive. Each priority strategy is followed by a color-coded numerical icon(s) which indicate the outcome area(s) and goal(s) it addresses. The priority strategies are not listed in order of importance.

In some cases, a strategy may be within the purview and capacity of a specific organization, state agency, or the Legislature. In other cases, implementation of a priority strategy or its constituent parts can only be accomplished through multi-stakeholder collaboration. These strategies will be addressed by the Farm to Plate Network, and will inform the restructuring of the Network in the first half of 2021.

GOAL CATEGORIES

- Sustainable Economic Development
- Environmental Sustainability
- Healthy Local Food for All Vermonters
- Racial Equity

Priority Strategies

1. Provide at least \$1.5 million in annual funding to the Working Lands Enterprise Fund. These grant funds are a unique and critical source of capital that accelerate innovation and sustainability in Vermont food system businesses. 1 3 6 8
2. Establish funding mechanisms (e.g., agricultural loan loss reserve, farm-transfer financing) to address specific food system investment gaps (e.g., for women and BIPOC-owned businesses). 1 3 15
3. Improve funding opportunities and create equitable access for BIPOC organizations and BIPOC-owned businesses by developing multi-year, unrestricted BIPOC-centered grants and loan programs, while removing barriers such as unnecessarily long grant application processes, and combating explicit and implicit bias against BIPOC communities. 1 3 6 8 15
4. Rebuild Vermont's restaurant industry with equitable grant programs and business assistance, and provide local purchasing incentives to support the expansion of farm-to-table relationships. 1 2 15
5. Support stabilization and revitalization of the dairy industry through: (1) a comprehensive dairy products marketing program focused on quality that would assist producers with limited marketing budgets; (2) by expanding opportunities to differentiate the milk supply by supporting farms and processors to increase production capacity for higher-attribute milk; (3) increased capital investment and funding for dairy processing, storage, and co-packing (particularly for cheese, yogurt, butter, etc). 1 2 3
6. To increase the availability of local meat, improve productivity and processing capacity at Vermont meat slaughter and processing facilities through investment in plant upgrades, new facilities, technical assistance, and workforce development. 1 3 10
7. Make significant investment in storage, processing, and distribution infrastructure in order to enhance product innovation and quality across all Vermont food products, expand regional market access for businesses, and increase the resilience of local supply chains. This includes investments in new facilities, upgrades and maintenance to existing facilities, and energy efficiency and renewable energy incentives for food system infrastructure. 1 3 6 8 12 14
8. Support product-specific value chain development. Strategies include bringing producers, distributors, and buyers together at matchmaking events, assisting producer-driven aggregation, distribution, and marketing enterprises, and funding the development of market opportunities in the Northeast. 1 2 3 10 12
9. Expand funding for existing programs dedicated to farmland access and conservation, and leverage this funding to increase land access through flexible and new ownership financing mechanisms, policies, and models. Examples include performance mortgages, shared equity models, ground leases, appropriation of \$3 million in low-cost capital to a Community Development Financial Institution or other lender, policy incentives to encourage multiple tenants or owners on larger tracts of land, and low-cost and long-term farm leasing on publicly held lands. There must be particular emphasis on the needs of beginning, socially disadvantaged, and BIPOC farmers. 1 3 8 13 15

Priority Strategies

10. Fully fund VHCB through the Property Transfer Tax Fund, and allocate \$3 million annually to their Farm & Forest Viability program, expanding their capacity to provide critical business and technical assistance services to farms and forest product businesses of all types across Vermont. 1 3 8 15
11. Fund at least eight FTE additional business assistance provider positions to assist farmers with transfer and succession planning, access to capital, farm management, planning for transition or diversification to other products, and sales and marketing. This estimate includes four FTEs needed to work with dairy farms and two FTEs needed to work with other types of farms, specifically on succession planning. 1 3 8
12. Fund at least 25 FTE additional technical assistance provider positions to assist farmers and other food producers with product-specific needs (e.g., goats, grains) and other forms of technical support (e.g., food safety plans, grazing methods, permitting, marketing, mediation, and crisis management). 1 3 10
13. Increase professional development opportunities for technical and business assistance providers, as well as support service provider organizations, to enable them to better assist clients in addressing issues such as marketing, climate change, racial equity, health care, labor, and accessing capital. 1 3 4 5 6 15
14. Increase usage of and funding for cohort-based training, mentorships, and other forms of farmer-to-farmer/business-to-business education which are proven to be successful, including dairy farmer learning cohorts. 1 3 5
15. Increase funding and technical support for Vermont producer associations to expand and improve their membership services, and determine how services could be shared across associations. Potential services include marketing technical assistance, collaborative marketing initiatives, product-specific training, and connections to associations in other states. 1 2 3
16. Fund coordinated marketing efforts, such as a statewide marketing campaign for local agricultural products, marketing support in emerging metropolitan markets, shared marketing broker positions, a shared communications and content creator position between the Vermont Department of Tourism and Marketing and the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets, and/or marketing materials for specific products or associations. 1 2 3
17. Help individual farms and food businesses reach new customers by developing tailored marketing assistance services and programs specific to various market channels. Funding could go to individual farm and food businesses to improve their branding via graphic design consultants, grants to attend national sales and marketing industry events, and creating a marketing technical assistance and mentorship program focused on the seven P's of marketing. 1 2 3
18. Redesign the state education funding model so that Career and Technical Education centers have independent funding streams and budgets, and create and fund legislation to support other educational programs that strengthen the workforce pipeline, including a range of accessible postsecondary educational models such as apprenticeships, concurrent enrollment, and stackable credentials. 4 5

Priority Strategies

19. Support and expand existing farm and food educational programming, and convene partners and conduct research to: identify the distinct audiences and goals for various initiatives; determine what types of programming, experiences, or information result in greater levels of behavioral change for those audiences and initiatives; and strategically coordinate efforts. 2 7 9 13
20. Incentivize local purchasing by reimbursing K-12 schools on a per-meal basis for purchasing local products above a certain percentage threshold. For example, New York provides \$0.25 per lunch to schools incorporating at least 30% New York sourced or grown product in their meal program. 2 12
21. Create a Local Food Access Funding Program with an appropriation of at least \$250,000 per year, available for programs that support low-income consumers in purchasing local food. Eligible program activities could include funding benefits which increase consumer purchasing power for local food, making wireless EBT machines available at no cost to producers and farmers markets, and outreach about any of these services. 2 11 12 13 15
22. Increase funding for proven ways to alleviate food insecurity, and support these programs in incorporating more local food. Specific known solutions include providing universal breakfast and lunch programs for every Vermont student and increasing local procurement within each school cafeteria, increasing investment in and utilization of public food assistance programs—including efforts to connect these programs with local farmers—and supporting charitable food system efforts to purchase directly from local farms. 2 11 12
23. Build cross-sector coalitions to address issues affecting the quality of life and prosperity of employees in all sectors, including livable wages, child care, health care, student loans, immigration law, worker rights, transportation, and housing. 4 5 11 12 15
24. Develop a Vermont food security plan, centered around a thriving food system and inspired by community-based responses to food insecurity and disruptive events. Involve food insecure individuals as well as farmers in the planning, and investigate questions including, but not limited to, affordable housing, health care, transportation, siting of retail grocery stores, food distribution, and ensuring the continued production of food in Vermont. Work to adopt state and regional level policies, procedures, and plans to ensure that the Vermont food supply is sufficient to withstand global or national food supply chain disruptions caused by climate change and other disasters. 6 8 10 11 12 13 14 15
25. Map Vermont's agricultural land base and production capacity, including geographic data about predicted climate change impacts, aggregation and distribution infrastructure, and regional dietary needs. This information will help inform community land use decisions and the use of state funding and incentives. 6 8 10 12 14
26. To better prepare for and respond to climate change-related events, investigate innovative funding mechanisms for climate adaptation practices (e.g., cover crops, building organic matter in soil), crop insurance for diversified Vermont-scale farms, and emergency recovery following extreme weather events. 3 6 7

27. Continue to support the Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) Working Group, which is poised to be a central point of coordination and connection among the many needed PES research and design efforts. These efforts should focus on PES approaches that regrow or sustain Vermont's natural resource base so that it provides at least three ecosystem services: water quality, flood resilience, and climate stability. **3 6 7**
28. Fund scientific research into how various agricultural practices affect soil and water quality, and how the impacts of these practices can be measured and valued in a Payment for Ecosystem Services program. **6 7 9**
29. Assist food and farm businesses with navigation of municipal and state permit requirements and regulations. This will create a more supportive environment for business growth and diversification, especially as it relates to on-farm accessory businesses, farm employee housing, and development of off-farm processing, distribution, and storage infrastructure. **3 7 8 9**
30. Build a comprehensive and fully aligned state-level agricultural policy roadmap, with public participation throughout the process. Implementation of the roadmap could include an annual review of existing and proposed policy objectives before each state legislative session to ensure policy requests complement each other, align with strategic priorities, and balance reactive and proactive policy needs. **1 3 4 5 8 12**
31. Provide livable wages and improve workplace conditions for all food system employees, especially BIPOC, by developing policies, shared workforce programs, market incentive programs (e.g., Milk With Dignity), and relevant technical assistance for farm and food businesses. **4 11 15**
32. Work with Vermont's congressional delegation on reforming U.S. immigration and labor laws and rules. **4 5 15**
33. Plan, commit to, and prioritize actions—within the Farm to Plate Network and at all food system organizations—to begin eradicating structural racism in the food system, including uplifting and financially compensating the leadership, participation, and representation of BIPOC. It is imperative that initiatives focused on BIPOC be developed with paid partnership and input from the BIPOC community. **15**
34. Allocate significant resources to support more in-depth research, data collection, and investigation of racial equity in the Vermont food system, leading to a comprehensive plan of action. It is crucial that this work and resulting initiatives include BIPOC leaders who are compensated for their contributions. **15**





Vermont Farm to Plate Network: A Collective Impact Approach to Implementing the Plan

The Vermont Farm to Plate Network was established in 2011 to take action on the first Strategic Plan (2011–2020). Today, with over 300 members representing farms, food businesses, educators, nonprofit organizations, capital providers, and government, the Network is well-positioned to collaboratively implement the 2021–2030 Strategic Plan.

Through the Network, members are able to collaborate on high-impact projects that no one organization can do alone, and reach Vermont’s agriculture and food system goals utilizing a collective impact approach to system-level change. Collective impact results from creating and maintaining the following conditions:

A Common Agenda: The Agriculture and Food System Strategic Plan 2021–2030 articulates a shared vision and identifies ways to strengthen Vermont’s food system over the coming decade.

Mutually Reinforcing Activities: Farm to Plate Network activities advance the recommendations in the Plan—and tackle new, emergent ideas—in a coordinated fashion.

Continuous Communication: The Farm to Plate Network and the Farm to Plate website (vtfarmtoplate.com) provide ongoing opportunities for communication and collaboration.

Shared Measurement: Shared, quantifiable objectives and the Results-Based Accountability (RBA) framework are used consistently across Network activities to track progress on the 15 goals of the Agriculture and Food System Strategic Plan 2021–2030.

Backbone Support: Farm to Plate Network activities are facilitated by the backbone support of the Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund (VSJF). VSJF administers the Farm to Plate Network, maintains the Farm to Plate website, receives and manages funding for the Network, provides continuous communication to Network members, manages some Network initiatives, and publishes regular updates of indicators of progress toward the goals and objectives.

Funding: Multi-year funding for the Farm to Plate Network, administered by VSJF, ensures the Plan’s goals can be achieved.

Implementing the 2021–2030 Strategic Plan will require the Network to restructure around the priority strategies and individual recommendations from the briefs. While group names will change, the relationships and established culture of trust, transparency, and collaboration will guide the Network through this transition and into the next decade. Together we can sustain and expand a diverse, equitable, and profitable agricultural economy that provides fresh, accessible food to all people in local and regional markets, and is built on environmentally and ecologically resilient land stewardship. Vermont will need to support its agriculture and food enterprises with new policies, greater collaboration among the education, public, private, and nonprofit sectors, patient and equitable sources of financing and capital, and new, innovative approaches to product development, storage and processing, marketing, and distribution.

The actions and investments detailed in the Vermont Agriculture and Food System Strategic Plan 2021–2030 will put farmers, food entrepreneurs, and food workers in a position to viably manage the challenges of 21st century agriculture and food production. We are grateful and excited to once again have the opportunity for collaborative and aligned strategic action that will make our food system more viable, environmentally sustainable, and socially equitable and just.

Supplemental Materials

Table of Contents

Food System Product, Market, and Issue Briefs.....[see vtfarmtoplate.com/plan](https://vtfarmtoplate.com/plan)
54 food system product, market, and issue briefs that informed the development of the Plan’s vision, goals, objectives, and priority strategies, and the methodology used to create the briefs.

Table of Priority Strategies with Source Reference**193**
The 34 Priority Strategies and the food system recommendations from which they derive.

Definition of Local, Local to Vermont, and Locally Grown or Made in Vermont**201**
In July 2020, the local food definition was updated in Vermont statute. To better define what constitutes Vermont grown or made food, the legislation changed the definition of “local” and equivalent terms like “locally grown,” “local to Vermont,” and “made in Vermont.” The clarity provided by the changes will help protect the value and craftsmanship of Vermont’s food and agricultural producers and processors, and offer opportunities to celebrate Vermont’s brand.



Table of Priority Strategies with Source Reference

The priority strategies are derived from the product, issue, and market brief recommendations. In some cases a priority strategy is a recommendation that appeared multiple times across briefs, signifying its importance to multiple areas of the food system. These may be word-for-word from the briefs, or adjusted according to input from stakeholder input sessions. Other priority strategies are a synthesis of brief recommendations determined to be interrelated or thematically similar. The table provides a bridge from strategies to tactics, helping the reader explore each priority strategy in more depth and detail and identify areas of overlapping and mutual interest which in turn can inform collaboration and collective action.

Priority Strategy	Component Recommendations from Briefs
1. Provide at least \$1.5 million in annual funding to the Working Lands Enterprise Fund. These grant funds are a unique and critical source of capital that accelerate innovation and sustainability in Vermont food system businesses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Access to Capital</i> Brief: Recommendation #1 • <i>Agriculture and Food Policy</i> Brief: Recommendation #2 • <i>Lightly Processed Vegetables</i> Brief: Recommendation #2 • <i>Specialty Foods</i> Brief: Recommendation #4
2. Establish funding mechanisms (e.g., agricultural loan loss reserve, farm-transfer financing) to address specific food system investment gaps (e.g., for women and BIPOC-owned businesses).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Agroforestry</i> Brief: Recommendation #4 • <i>Access to Capital</i> Brief: Recommendation #2 • <i>Access to Capital</i> Brief: Recommendation #3 • <i>Access to Capital</i> Brief: Recommendation #4 • <i>Access to Capital</i> Brief: Recommendation #6 • <i>Alternative Land Ownership and Access Models</i> Brief: Recommendation #1 • <i>Alternative Land Ownership and Access Models</i> Brief: Recommendation #4 • <i>Alternative Land Ownership and Access Models</i> Brief: Recommendation #5 • <i>Farmland Conservation</i> Brief: Recommendation #1 • <i>Farmland Conservation</i> Brief: Recommendation #4 • <i>Farmland Conservation</i> Brief: Recommendation #5 • <i>Racial Equity in the Vermont Food System</i> Brief: Recommendation #3 • <i>Succession</i> Brief: Recommendation #1 • <i>Succession</i> Brief: Recommendation #2 • <i>Succession</i> Brief: Recommendation #5 • <i>Supporting Future Farmers</i> Brief: Recommendation #1 • <i>Supporting Future Farmers</i> Brief: Recommendation #4 • <i>Supporting Future Farmers</i> Brief: Recommendation #5
3. Improve funding opportunities and create equitable access for BIPOC organizations and BIPOC-owned businesses by developing multi-year, unrestricted BIPOC-centered equitable grants and equitable loan programs, while removing barriers such as unnecessarily long grant application processes, and combating explicit and implicit bias against BIPOC communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Racial Equity in the Vermont Food System</i> Brief: Recommendation #3 • <i>Supporting Future Farmers</i> Brief: Recommendation #4 • <i>Farmland Conservation</i> Brief: Recommendation #5
4. Rebuild Vermont's restaurant industry with equitable grant programs and business assistance, and provide local purchasing incentives to support the expansion of farm-to-table relationships.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Racial Equity in the Vermont Food System</i> Brief: Recommendation #3 • <i>Restaurants</i> Brief: Recommendation #1 • <i>Restaurants</i> Brief: Recommendation #2 • <i>Restaurants</i> Brief: Recommendation #4 • <i>Restaurants</i> Brief: Recommendation #5

Priority Strategy	Component Recommendations from Briefs
<p>5. Support stabilization and revitalization of the dairy industry through: (1) a comprehensive dairy products marketing program focused on quality that would assist producers with limited marketing budgets, (2) by expanding opportunities to differentiate the milk supply by supporting farms and processors to increase production capacity for higher-attribute milk, (3) with increased capital investment and funding for dairy processing, storage, and co-packing (particularly for cheese, yogurt, butter, etc.).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Cheese</i> Brief: Recommendation #1 • <i>Cheese</i> Brief: Recommendation #2 • <i>Cheese</i> Brief: Recommendation #4 • <i>Cheese</i> Brief: Recommendation #5 • <i>Cheese</i> Brief: Recommendation #6 • <i>Dairy</i> Brief: Recommendation #4 • <i>Dairy</i> Brief: Recommendation #5 • <i>Dairy</i> Brief: Recommendation #6
<p>6. To increase the availability of local meat, improve productivity and processing capacity at Vermont meat slaughter and processing facilities through investment in plant upgrades, new facilities, technical assistance, and workforce development.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Meat Slaughter, Processing, and Products</i> Brief: Recommendation #1 • <i>Meat Slaughter, Processing, and Products</i> Brief: Recommendation #2 • <i>Meat Slaughter, Processing, and Products</i> Brief: Recommendation #3 • <i>Meat Slaughter, Processing, and Products</i> Brief: Recommendation #4 • <i>Meat Slaughter, Processing, and Products</i> Brief: Recommendation #5
<p>7. Make significant investment in storage, processing, and distribution infrastructure in order to enhance product innovation and quality across all Vermont food products, expand regional market access for businesses, and increase the resilience of local supply chains. This includes investments in new facilities, upgrades and maintenance to existing facilities, and energy efficiency and renewable energy incentives for food system infrastructure.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Agricultural Literacy: K-12</i> Brief: Recommendation #3 • <i>Agroforestry</i> Brief: Recommendation #6 • <i>Beer</i> Brief: Recommendation #2 • <i>Beer</i> Brief: Recommendation #5 • <i>Bread</i> Brief: Recommendation #3 • <i>Compost</i> Brief: Recommendation #2 • <i>Direct Markets</i> Brief: Recommendation #3 • <i>Direct Markets</i> Brief: Recommendation #5 • <i>Distribution</i> Brief: Recommendation #1 • <i>Distribution</i> Brief: Recommendation #3 • <i>Eggs</i> Brief: Recommendation #1 • <i>Eggs</i> Brief: Recommendation #4 • <i>Food Access and Farm Viability</i> Brief: Recommendation #1 • <i>Food-Grade Grains</i> Brief: Recommendation #1 • <i>Food-Grade Grains</i> Brief: Recommendation #2 • <i>Goats</i> Brief: Recommendation #2 • <i>Lightly Processed Vegetables</i> Brief: Recommendation #3 • <i>Lightly Processed Vegetables</i> Brief: Recommendation #4 • <i>Produce</i> Brief: Recommendation #1 • <i>Restaurants</i> Brief: Recommendation #3 • <i>School Food Procurement</i> Brief: Recommendation #2 • <i>Sheep</i> Brief: Recommendation #5 • <i>Specialty Foods</i> Brief: Recommendation #5 • <i>Spirits</i> Brief: Recommendation #1 • <i>Water Quality</i> Brief: Recommendation #4 • <i>Water Quality</i> Brief: Recommendation #5

Priority Strategy	Component Recommendations from Briefs
<p>8. Support product-specific value chain development. Strategies include bringing producers, distributors, and buyers together at matchmaking events, assisting producer-driven aggregation, distribution, and marketing enterprises, and funding the development of market opportunities in the Northeast.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Agritourism</i> Brief: Recommendation #1 • <i>Apples</i> Brief: Recommendation #1 • <i>Apples</i> Brief: Recommendation #2 • <i>Bread</i> Brief: Recommendation #1 • <i>Bread</i> Brief: Recommendation #2 • <i>Cheese</i> Brief: Recommendation #1 • <i>College and Hospital Procurement</i> Brief: Recommendation #3 • <i>College and Hospital Procurement</i> Brief: Recommendation #4 • <i>Compost</i> Brief: Recommendation #1 • <i>Dairy</i> Brief: Recommendation #5 • <i>Distribution</i> Brief: Recommendation #4 • <i>Food-Grade Grains</i> Brief: Recommendation #3 • <i>Food-Grade Grains</i> Brief: Recommendation #4 • <i>Grapes</i> Brief: Recommendation #4 • <i>Grapes</i> Brief: Recommendation #5 • <i>Grass-Fed Beef</i> Brief: Recommendation #1 • <i>Grass-Fed Beef</i> Brief: Recommendation #3 • <i>Grass-Fed Beef</i> Brief: Recommendation #5 • <i>Grocers</i> Brief: Recommendation #1 • <i>Grocers</i> Brief: Recommendation #2 • <i>Hemp</i> Brief: Recommendation #1 • <i>Hemp</i> Brief: Recommendation #3 • <i>Hops</i> Brief: Recommendation #4 • <i>Marketing</i> Brief: Recommendation #3 • <i>Meat Slaughter, Processing, and Products</i> Brief: Recommendation #3 • <i>Lightly Processed Vegetables</i> Brief: Recommendation #1 • <i>Lightly Processed Vegetables</i> Brief: Recommendation #3 • <i>Restaurants</i> Brief: Recommendation #2 • <i>School Food Procurement</i> Brief: Recommendation #5 • <i>Specialty Foods</i> Brief: Recommendation #3 • <i>Spirits</i> Brief: Recommendation #1 • <i>Succession</i> Brief: Recommendation #4 • <i>Supporting Future Farmers</i> Brief: Recommendation #2 • <i>Swine</i> Brief: Recommendation #3
<p>9. Expand funding for existing programs dedicated to farmland access and conservation, and leverage this funding to increase land access through flexible and new ownership financing mechanisms, policies, and models. Examples include performance mortgages, shared equity models, ground leases, appropriation of \$3 million in low-cost capital to a Community Development Financial Institution or other lender, policy incentives to encourage multiple tenants or owners on larger tracts of land, and low-cost and long-term farm leasing on publicly held lands. There must be particular emphasis on the needs of beginning, socially disadvantaged, and BIPOC farmers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Access to Capital</i> Brief: Recommendation #3 • <i>Alternative Land Ownership and Access Models</i> Brief: Recommendation #1 • <i>Alternative Land Ownership and Access Models</i> Brief: Recommendation #2 • <i>Alternative Land Ownership and Access Models</i> Brief: Recommendation #3 • <i>Alternative Land Ownership and Access Models</i> Brief: Recommendation #4 • <i>Alternative Land Ownership and Access Models</i> Brief: Recommendation #5 • <i>Dairy</i> Brief: Recommendation #2 • <i>Dairy</i> Brief: Recommendation #3 • <i>Farmland Conservation</i> Brief: Recommendation #1 • <i>Farmland Conservation</i> Brief: Recommendation #2 • <i>Farmland Conservation</i> Brief: Recommendation #3 • <i>Farmland Conservation</i> Brief: Recommendation #4 • <i>Farmland Conservation</i> Brief: Recommendation #5 • <i>Racial Equity in the Vermont Food System</i> Brief: Recommendation #3 • <i>Succession</i> Brief: Recommendation #1 • <i>Succession</i> Brief: Recommendation #2 • <i>Succession</i> Brief: Recommendation #3 • <i>Succession</i> Brief: Recommendation #5 • <i>Succession</i> Brief: Recommendation #6 • <i>Supporting Future Farmers</i> Brief: Recommendation #1 • <i>Supporting Future Farmers</i> Brief: Recommendation #4 • <i>Supporting Future Farmers</i> Brief: Recommendation #5

Priority Strategy	Component Recommendations from Briefs
10. Fully fund VHCB through the Property Transfer Tax Fund, and allocate \$3 million annually to their Farm & Forest Viability program, expanding their capacity to provide critical business and technical assistance services to farms and forest product businesses of all types across Vermont.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Business and Technical Assistance</i> Brief: Recommendation #1 • <i>Farmland Conservation</i> Brief: Recommendation #2 • <i>Farmland Conservation</i> Brief: Recommendation #3 • <i>Racial Equity in the Vermont Food System</i> Brief: Recommendation #2 • <i>Racial Equity in the Vermont Food System</i> Brief: Recommendation #3 • <i>Supporting Future Farmers</i> Brief: Recommendation #3 • <i>Tax and Legal Services</i> Brief: Recommendation #2
11. Fund at least eight FTE additional business assistance provider positions to assist farmers with transfer and succession planning, access to capital, farm management, planning for transition or diversification to other products, and sales and marketing. This estimate includes four FTEs needed to work with dairy farms and two FTEs needed to work with other types of farms, specifically on succession planning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Agriculture and Food Policy</i> Brief: Recommendation #3 • <i>Business and Technical Assistance</i> Brief: Recommendation #1 • <i>Farmland Conservation</i> Brief: Recommendation #2 • <i>Farmland Conservation</i> Brief: Recommendation #3 • <i>Produce</i> Brief: Recommendation #2 • <i>Succession</i> Brief: Recommendation #1 • <i>Succession</i> Brief: Recommendation #3 • <i>Supporting Future Farmers</i> Brief: Recommendation #3
12. Fund at least 25 FTE additional technical assistance provider positions to assist farmers and other food producers with product-specific needs (e.g., goats, grains) and other forms of technical support (e.g., food safety plans, grazing methods, permitting, marketing, mediation, and crisis management).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Apples</i> Brief: Recommendation #4 • <i>Bees and Honey</i> Brief: Recommendation #1 • <i>Bread</i> Brief: Recommendation #4 • <i>Business and Technical Assistance</i> Brief: Recommendation #1 • <i>Consumer Demand</i> Brief: Recommendation #5 • <i>Eggs</i> Brief: Recommendation #1 • <i>Goats</i> Brief: Recommendation #3 • <i>Grapes</i> Brief: Recommendation #2 • <i>Grass-Fed Beef</i> Brief: Recommendation #4 • <i>Grocers</i> Brief: Recommendation #3 • <i>Food Access and Farm Viability</i> Brief: Recommendation #4 • <i>Food-Grade Grains</i> Brief: Recommendation #5 • <i>Hemp</i> Brief: Recommendation #2 • <i>Hops</i> Brief: Recommendation #1 • <i>Land Use Planning</i> Brief: Recommendation #1 • <i>Land Use Planning</i> Brief: Recommendation #3 • <i>Maple</i> Brief: Recommendation #4 • <i>Meat Processing, Slaughter, and Products</i> Brief: Recommendation #1 • <i>Meat Processing, Slaughter, and Products</i> Brief: Recommendation #5 • <i>Poultry</i> Brief: Recommendation #1 • <i>Racial Equity in the Vermont Food System</i> Brief: Recommendation #2 • <i>Swine</i> Brief: Recommendation #1 • <i>Water Quality</i> Brief: Recommendation #1
13. Increase professional development opportunities for technical and business assistance providers, as well as support service provider organizations, to enable them to better assist clients in addressing issues such as marketing, climate change, racial equity, health care, labor, and accessing capital.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Agritourism</i> Brief: Recommendation #1 • <i>Business and Technical Assistance</i> Brief: Recommendation #2 • <i>Child Care</i> Brief: Recommendation #4 • <i>Climate Change</i> Brief: Recommendation #1 • <i>Health Care</i> Brief: Recommendation #2 • <i>Labor and Workforce</i> Brief: Recommendation #3 • <i>Marketing</i> Brief: Recommendation #3 • <i>Racial Equity in the Vermont Food System</i> Brief: Recommendation #2 • <i>Racial Equity in the Vermont Food System</i> Brief: Recommendation #5
14. Increase usage of and funding for cohort-based training, mentorships, and other forms of farmer-to-farmer/business-to-business education which are proven to be successful, including dairy farmer learning cohorts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Business and Technical Assistance</i> Brief: Recommendation #4 • <i>Dairy</i> Brief: Recommendation #1 • <i>Dairy</i> Brief: Recommendation #2 • <i>Direct Markets</i> Brief: Recommendation #6 • <i>Distribution</i> Brief: Recommendation #2 • <i>Grass-Fed Beef</i> Brief: Recommendation #2 • <i>Major Metropolitan Markets</i> Brief: Recommendation #6 • <i>Marketing</i> Brief: Recommendation #5 • <i>Produce</i> Brief: Recommendation #3 • <i>Specialty Foods</i> Brief: Recommendation #1 • <i>Swine</i> Brief: Recommendation #5 • <i>Water Quality</i> Brief: Recommendation #1

Priority Strategy	Component Recommendations from Briefs
<p>15. Increase funding and technical support for Vermont producer associations to expand and improve their membership services, and determine how services could be shared across associations. Potential services include marketing technical assistance, collaborative marketing initiatives, product-specific training, and connections to associations in other states.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Beer Brief</i>: Recommendation #4 • <i>Bees and Honey Brief</i>: Recommendation #3 • <i>Bread Brief</i>: Recommendation #2 • <i>Cheese Brief</i>: Recommendation #5 • <i>Direct Markets Brief</i>: Recommendation #2 • <i>Food-Grade Grains Brief</i>: Recommendation #3 • <i>Grapes Brief</i>: Recommendation #3 • <i>Hemp Brief</i>: Recommendation #5 • <i>Labor and Workforce Brief</i>: Recommendation #1 • <i>Major Metropolitan Markets Brief</i>: Recommendation #4 • <i>Major Metropolitan Markets Brief</i>: Recommendation #5 • <i>Poultry Brief</i>: Recommendation #3 • <i>Produce Brief</i>: Recommendation #5 • <i>Specialty Foods Brief</i>: Recommendation #2
<p>16. Fund coordinated marketing efforts, such as a statewide marketing campaign for local agricultural products, marketing support in emerging metropolitan markets, shared marketing broker positions, a shared communications and content creator position between the Vermont Department of Tourism and Marketing and the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets, and/or marketing materials for specific products or associations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Agricultural and Food Literacy Brief</i>: Recommendation #3 • <i>Apples Brief</i>: Recommendation #3 • <i>College and Hospital Procurement Brief</i>: Recommendation #2 • <i>Compost Brief</i>: Recommendation #5 • <i>Consumer Demand Brief</i>: Recommendation #1 • <i>Consumer Demand Brief</i>: Recommendation #2 • <i>Consumer Demand Brief</i>: Recommendation #4 • <i>Consumer Demand Brief</i>: Recommendation #5 • <i>Direct Markets Brief</i>: Recommendation #1 • <i>Goats Brief</i>: Recommendation #4 • <i>Grocers Brief</i>: Recommendation #3 • <i>Major Metropolitan Markets Brief</i>: Recommendation #2 • <i>Major Metropolitan Markets Brief</i>: Recommendation #5 • <i>Marketing Brief</i>: Recommendation #2 • <i>Marketing Brief</i>: Recommendation #5 • <i>Meat Slaughter, Processing, and Products Brief</i>: Recommendation #5 • <i>Spirits Brief</i>: Recommendation #2 • <i>Supporting Future Farmers Brief</i>: Recommendation #2 • <i>Swine Brief</i>: Recommendation #4
<p>17. Help individual farms and food businesses reach new customers by developing tailored marketing assistance services and programs specific to various market channels. Funding could go to individual farm and food businesses to improve their branding via graphic design consultants, grants to attend national sales and marketing industry events, and creating a marketing technical assistance and mentorship program focused on the seven P's of marketing.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>College and Hospital Procurement Brief</i>: Recommendation #2 • <i>College and Hospital Procurement Brief</i>: Recommendation #3 • <i>College and Hospital Procurement Brief</i>: Recommendation #4 • <i>Consumer Demand Brief</i>: Recommendation #3 • <i>Direct Markets Brief</i>: Recommendation #2 • <i>Direct Markets Brief</i>: Recommendation #6 • <i>Grocers Brief</i>: Recommendation #4 • <i>Grocers Brief</i>: Recommendation #5 • <i>Major Metropolitan Markets Brief</i>: Recommendation #1 • <i>Major Metropolitan Markets Brief</i>: Recommendation #6 • <i>Marketing Brief</i>: Recommendation #1 • <i>Marketing Brief</i>: Recommendation #3 • <i>Marketing Brief</i>: Recommendation #4 • <i>Supporting Future Farmers Brief</i>: Recommendation #2 • <i>Swine Brief</i>: Recommendation #4
<p>18. Redesign the state education funding model so that Career and Technical Education centers have independent funding streams and budgets, and create and fund legislation to support other educational programs that strengthen the workforce pipeline, including a range of accessible postsecondary educational models such as apprenticeships, concurrent enrollment, and stackable credentials.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Agricultural Literacy: K-12 Brief</i>: Recommendation #4 • <i>Agricultural Literacy: K-12 Brief</i>: Recommendation #5 • <i>College and Hospital Procurement Brief</i>: Recommendation #1 • <i>Dairy Brief</i>: Recommendation #3 • <i>Labor and Workforce Brief</i>: Recommendation #1 • <i>Labor and Workforce Brief</i>: Recommendation #2 • <i>Lightly Processed Vegetables Brief</i>: Recommendation #4 • <i>Maple Brief</i>: Recommendation #3 • <i>Spirits Brief</i>: Recommendation #3

Priority Strategy	Component Recommendations from Briefs
19. Support and expand existing farm and food educational programming, and convene partners and conduct research to: identify the distinct audiences and goals for various initiatives; determine what types of programming, experiences, or information result in greater levels of behavioral change for those audiences and initiatives; and strategically coordinate efforts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Agricultural and Food Literacy</i> Brief: Recommendation #1 • <i>Agricultural and Food Literacy</i> Brief: Recommendation #2 • <i>Agricultural and Food Literacy</i> Brief: Recommendation #4 • <i>Agricultural Literacy: K-12</i> Brief: Recommendation #1 • <i>Agricultural Literacy: K-12</i> Brief: Recommendation #2 • <i>Agricultural Literacy: K-12</i> Brief: Recommendation #3 • <i>School Food Procurement</i> Brief: Recommendation #2
20. Incentivize local purchasing by reimbursing K-12 schools on a per-meal basis for purchasing local products above a certain percentage threshold. For example, New York provides \$0.25 per lunch to schools incorporating at least 30% New York-grown product in their meal program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>School Food Procurement</i> Brief: Recommendation #3
21. Create a Local Food Access Funding Program with an appropriation of at least \$250,000 a year, available for programs that support low-income consumers in purchasing local food. Eligible program activities could include funding benefits which increase consumer purchasing power for local food, making wireless EBT machines available at no cost to producers and farmers markets, and outreach about any of these services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Direct Markets</i> Brief: Recommendation #5 • <i>Food Access and Farm Viability</i> Brief: Recommendation #3 • <i>Racial Equity in the Vermont Food System</i> Brief: Recommendation #2 • <i>Racial Equity in the Vermont Food System</i> Brief Recommendation #3
22. Increase funding for proven ways to alleviate food insecurity, and support these programs in incorporating more local food. Specific known solutions include providing universal breakfast and lunch programs for every Vermont student and increasing local procurement within each school cafeteria, increasing investment in and utilization of public food assistance programs—including efforts to connect these programs with local farmers—and supporting charitable food system efforts to purchase directly from local farms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Food Access and Farm Viability</i> Brief: Recommendation #2 • <i>Food Security</i> Brief: Recommendation #4 • <i>School Food Procurement</i> Brief: Recommendation #1 • <i>School Food Procurement</i> Brief: Recommendation #2 • <i>School Food Procurement</i> Brief: Recommendation #3
23. Build cross-sector coalitions to address issues affecting the quality of life and prosperity of employees in all sectors, including livable wages, child care, health care, student loans, immigration law, worker rights, transportation, and housing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Access to Capital</i> Brief: Recommendation #7 • <i>Child Care</i> Brief: Recommendation #1 • <i>Child Care</i> Brief: Recommendation #2 • <i>Child Care</i> Brief: Recommendation #3 • <i>Child Care</i> Brief: Recommendation #5 • <i>Health Care</i> Brief: Recommendation #1 • <i>Health Care</i> Brief: Recommendation #2 • <i>Health Care</i> Brief: Recommendation #4 • <i>Health Care</i> Brief: Recommendation #5 • <i>Health Care</i> Brief: Recommendation #6 • <i>Labor and Workforce</i> Brief: Recommendation #4 • <i>Racial Equity in the Vermont Food System</i> Brief: Recommendation #2 • <i>Racial Equity in the Vermont Food System</i> Brief: Recommendation #5

Priority Strategy	Component Recommendations from Briefs
<p>24. Develop a Vermont food security plan, centered around a thriving food system and inspired by community-based responses to food insecurity and disruptive events. Involve food insecure individuals as well as farmers in the planning, and investigate questions including, but not limited to, affordable housing, health care, transportation, siting of retail grocery stores, food distribution, and ensuring the continued production of food in Vermont. Work to adopt state and regional level policies, procedures, and plans to ensure that the Vermont food supply is sufficient to withstand global or national food supply chain disruptions caused by climate change and other disasters.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Food Security Brief: Recommendation #2</i> • <i>Food Security Brief: Recommendation #3</i> • <i>Racial Equity in the Vermont Food System Brief: Recommendation #2</i> • <i>Racial Equity in the Vermont Food System Brief: Recommendation #5</i>
<p>25. Map Vermont's agricultural land base and production capacity, including geographic data about predicted climate change impacts, aggregation and distribution infrastructure, and regional dietary needs. This information will help inform community land use decisions and the use of state funding and incentives.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Land Use Planning Brief: Recommendation #2</i> • <i>Water Quality Brief: Recommendation #3</i>
<p>26. To better prepare and respond to climate change-related events, investigate innovative funding mechanisms for climate change adaptation practices (e.g., cover crops, building organic matter in soil), crop insurance for diversified Vermont-scale farms, and emergency recovery following extreme weather events.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Agroforestry Brief: Recommendation #2</i> • <i>Agroforestry Brief: Recommendation #3</i> • <i>Bees and Honey Brief: Recommendation #5</i> • <i>Climate Change Brief: Recommendation #2</i> • <i>Climate Change Brief: Recommendation #3</i> • <i>Climate Change Brief: Recommendation #4</i> • <i>Maple Brief: Recommendation #6</i> • <i>Payment for Ecosystem Services Brief: Recommendation #6</i> • <i>Water Quality Brief: Recommendation #4</i>
<p>27. Continue to support the Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) Working Group, which is poised to be a central point of coordination and connection among the many needed PES research and design efforts. These efforts should focus on PES approaches that regrow or sustain Vermont's natural resource base so that it provides at least three ecosystem services: water quality, flood resilience, and climate stability.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Agriculture and Food Policy Brief: Recommendation #4</i> • <i>Agroforestry Brief: Recommendation #5</i> • <i>Bees and Honey Brief: Recommendation #4</i> • <i>Payment for Ecosystem Services Brief: Recommendation #1</i> • <i>Water Quality Brief: Recommendation #2</i>
<p>28. Fund scientific research into how various agricultural practices affect soil and water quality, and how the impacts of these practices can be measured and valued in a Payment for Ecosystem Services program.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Agroforestry Brief: Recommendation #5</i> • <i>Climate Change Brief: Recommendation #2</i> • <i>Climate Change Brief: Recommendation #4</i> • <i>Compost Brief: Recommendation #4</i> • <i>Payment for Ecosystem Services Brief: Recommendation #2</i> • <i>Payment for Ecosystem Services Brief: Recommendation #3</i> • <i>Payment for Ecosystem Services Brief: Recommendation #4</i> • <i>Water Quality Brief: Recommendation #2</i> • <i>Water Quality Brief: Recommendation #3</i>
<p>29. Assist food and farm businesses with navigation of municipal and state permit requirements and regulations. This will create a more supportive environment for business growth and diversification, especially as it relates to on-farm accessory businesses, farm employee housing, and development of off-farm processing, distribution, and storage infrastructure.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Agritourism Brief: Recommendation #5</i> • <i>Agroforestry Brief: Recommendation #3</i> • <i>Land Use Planning Brief: Recommendation #3</i> • <i>Produce Brief: Recommendation #4</i> • <i>Water Quality Brief: Recommendation #1</i>

Priority Strategy	Component Recommendations from Briefs
<p>30. Build a comprehensive and fully aligned state-level agricultural policy roadmap, with public participation throughout the process. Implementation of the roadmap could include an annual review of existing and proposed policy objectives before each state legislative session to ensure policy requests complement each other, align with strategic priorities, and balance reactive and proactive policy needs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Agriculture and Food Policy</i> Brief: Recommendation #6 • <i>Agritourism</i> Brief: Recommendation #4 • <i>Agroforestry</i> Brief: Recommendation #2 • <i>Beer</i> Brief: Recommendation #1 • <i>Beer</i> Brief: Recommendation #3 • <i>Beer</i> Brief: Recommendation #4 • <i>Bees and Honey</i> Brief: Recommendation #3 • <i>Bees and Honey</i> Brief: Recommendation #5 • <i>Cheese</i> Brief: Recommendation #2 • <i>Cheese</i> Brief: Recommendation #3 • <i>Grapes</i> Brief: Recommendation #1 • <i>Grapes</i> Brief: Recommendation #5 • <i>Hemp</i> Brief: Recommendation #4 • <i>Maple</i> Brief: Recommendation #4 • <i>Poultry</i> Brief: Recommendation #4 • <i>Produce</i> Brief: Recommendation #4 • <i>Restaurants</i> Brief: Recommendation #4 • <i>Spirits</i> Brief: Recommendation #4 • <i>Spirits</i> Brief: Recommendation #5
<p>31. Provide livable wages and improve workplace conditions for all food system employees, especially BIPOC, by developing policies, shared workforce programs, market incentive programs (e.g., Milk With Dignity), and relevant technical assistance for farm and food businesses.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Child Care</i> Brief: Recommendation #1 • <i>College and Hospital Procurement</i> Brief: Recommendation #1 • <i>Health Care</i> Brief: Recommendation #3 • <i>Labor and Workforce</i> Brief: Recommendation #1 • <i>Labor and Workforce</i> Brief: Recommendation #3 • <i>Racial Equity in the Vermont Food System</i> Brief: Recommendation #2 • <i>Racial Equity in the Vermont Food System</i> Brief: Recommendation #5
<p>32. Work with Vermont’s congressional delegation on reforming U.S. immigration and labor laws and rules.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Apples</i> Brief: Recommendation #5 • <i>Labor and Workforce</i> Brief: Recommendation # 5 • <i>Racial Equity</i> Brief: Recommendation #2
<p>33. Plan, commit to, and prioritize actions—within the Farm to Plate Network and at all food system organizations—to begin eradicating structural racism in the food system, including uplifting and financially compensating the leadership, participation, and representation of BIPOC. It is imperative that initiatives focused on BIPOC be developed with paid partnership and input from the BIPOC community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Health Care</i> Brief: Recommendation #3 • <i>Racial Equity in the Vermont Food System</i> Brief: Recommendation #2 • <i>Racial Equity in the Vermont Food System</i> Brief: Recommendation #5
<p>34. Allocate significant resources to support more in-depth research, data collection, and investigation of racial equity in the Vermont food system, leading to a comprehensive plan of action. It is crucial that this work and resulting initiatives include BIPOC leaders who are compensated for their contributions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Racial Equity in the Vermont Food System</i> Brief: Recommendation #1

Definition of Local, Local to Vermont, and Locally Grown or Made in Vermont

Act 129 (H.656) was signed into law on July 2, 2020. This legislation changed the definition of “local” and equivalent terms like “locally grown,” “local to Vermont,” and “made in Vermont” to better define Vermont food and is an update from the original 2007 definition. The new definition differentiates food by category and clarifies how various types of food qualify as “local” or “Vermont” food products. The new definition also makes “local” synonymous with “Vermont” with respect to food products, offering opportunities to celebrate Vermont’s brand and recognize the value of buying Vermont products.

Under the new definition, a person’s or company’s food is categorized into one of three areas: Raw Agricultural Products, Processed Food, or Unique Food Products. Each category has its own requirements to be considered local, including consideration of ingredients, manufacturing, and company headquarters for processed food items.

The specificity captured in this new definition should allow growers, producers, and processors to know how to produce “local” food and help consumers, distributors, and retailers understand and appreciate what they are buying. Businesses who sell or market food impacted by the change in the “local” food definition are expected to be compliant with the new definition by January 1, 2021.

Sec. 17. 9 V.S.A. § 2465a.

(a) As used in this section:

1. “Eggs” means eggs that are the product of laying birds, including: chickens, turkeys, ducks, geese, or quail, and that are in the shell.
2. “Majority of ingredients” means more than 50 percent of all product ingredients by volume, excluding water.
3. “Processed food” means any food other than a raw agricultural product and includes a raw agricultural product that has been subject to processing, such as canning, cooking, dehydrating, milling, or the addition of other ingredients. Processed food includes dairy, meat, maple products, beverages, fruit, or vegetables that have been subject to processing, baked, or modified into a value-added or unique food product.
4. “Raw agricultural product” means any food in its raw or natural state without added ingredients, including pasteurized or homogenized milk, maple sap or syrup, honey, meat, eggs, apple cider, and fruits or vegetables that may be washed, colored, or otherwise treated in their unpeeled natural form prior to marketing.
5. “Substantial period of its life” means an animal that was harvested in Vermont and lived in Vermont for at least one third of its life or one year.
6. “Unique food product” means food processed in Vermont from ingredients that are not regularly produced in Vermont or not available in sufficient quantities to meet production requirements.

(b) As used in this section: “local,” “local to Vermont,” “locally grown or made in Vermont,” and any substantially similar term shall have the following meaning based on the type of food or food product:

1. For products that are raw agricultural products, “local to Vermont” means the product:
 - (A) was exclusively grown or tapped in Vermont;
 - (B) is not milk and was derived from an animal that was raised for a substantial period of its lifetime in Vermont;
 - (C) is milk where a majority of the milk was produced from Vermont animals; or
 - (D) is honey produced by Vermont colonies located exclusively in Vermont when all nectar was collected.
2. Except as provided in subdivision (3) of this subsection, for products that are processed foods, “local to Vermont” means:
 - (A) the majority of the ingredients are raw agricultural products that are local to Vermont; and
 - (B) the product meets one or both of the following criteria:
 - (i) the product was processed in Vermont; or
 - (ii) the headquarters of the company that manufactures the product is located in Vermont.

3. For bakery products, beverages, or unique food products, the product meets two or more of the following criteria:
 - (A) the majority of the ingredients are raw agricultural products that are local to Vermont;
 - (B) substantial transformation of the ingredients in the product occurred in Vermont; or
 - (C) the headquarters of the company that manufactures the product is located in Vermont.
- (c) For the purposes of this chapter and rules adopted pursuant to subsection 2453(c) of this chapter, when referring to products other than food, “local” and any substantially similar term shall mean that the goods being advertised originated within Vermont.
- (d) For the purposes of this chapter and rules adopted under subsection 2453(c) of this title, “local,” “locally grown or made,” and substantially similar terms may be used in conjunction with a specific geographic location provided that the specific geographic location appears as prominently as the term “local” and the representation of origin is accurate. If a local representation refers to a specific city or town, the product shall have been grown or made in that city or town. If a local representation refers to a region with precisely defined political boundaries, the product shall have been grown or made within those boundaries. If a local representation refers to a region that is not precisely defined by political boundaries, then the region shall be prominently described when the representation is made, or the product shall have been grown or made within 30 miles of the point of sale, measured directly point to point.
- (e) A person or company who sells or markets food or goods impacted by a change in this section shall have until January 1, 2021 to utilize existing product labels or packaging materials and to come into compliance with the requirements of this section.

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