

2025 Farm to Plate Conference

Success from the Ground Up – Building a Strong Food System through Farm Business Viability

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Outline for our time together:

1. Intros
2. Small group discussion
3. Purpose & impacts of the VT Farm & Forest Viability Program
4. What is farm business planning?
5. What do we know about farm financials and financial viability?
6. Small group discussion
7. Investigative journalist style Q&A!!

Table Discussion

What does "farm viability" mean to you? What do you think the key elements of a viable farm are?

What is the VT Farm & Forest Viability Program?

What do we do?

- In-depth, individualized assistance
- Creating achievable long-term plans
- Improving business skills with a focus on financial management
- Succession/transfer planning
- Farmland access
- Access to capital
- Implementation grants

Who do we work with?

- All farm types
- Almost all scales
- In 2025: 111 clients who generated **\$43.6 million** in economic activity and **over 400 jobs**



Sunday Bell Farm



Strafford Creamery



Rebop Farm

2024 Economic Impacts





La Montañuela

Collaborative Network of Partners

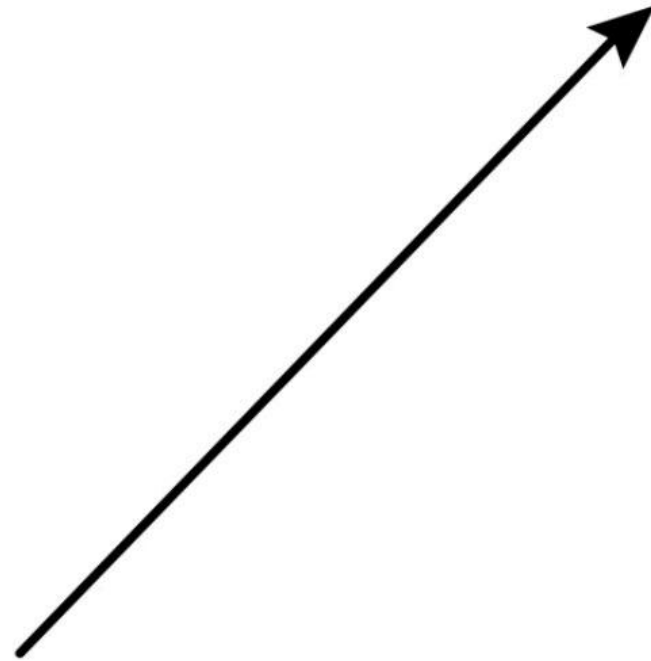
- Center for an Agricultural Economy
- Intervale Center
- Land For Good
- NOFA-VT
- UVM Extension





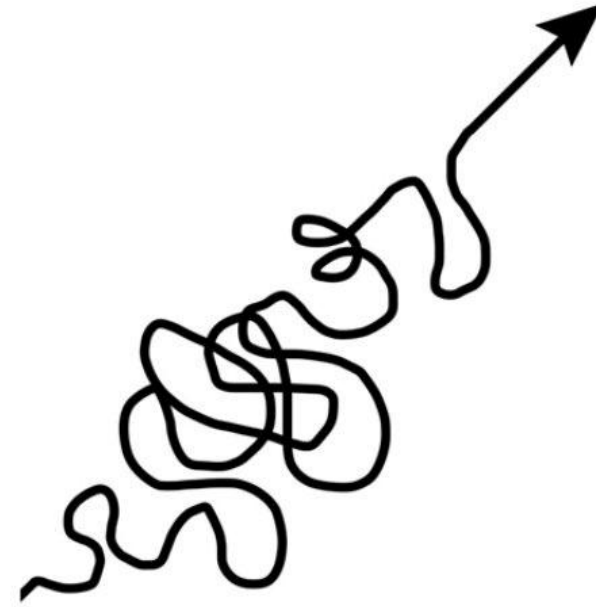
The Business Planning Process

SUCCESS



what people think
it looks like

SUCCESS



what it really
looks like

WHOLE SYSTEM PLANNING

- Enhance profitability, long-term viability & quality of life
- Manage your business + resources + values + goals as a whole system
- Strengthen a “4 legged stool” => economic + social + environmental + personal



Intake & Assessment

Purpose of the Plan

Financial Management

Farm and Land Base

Key Personnel

Record-keeping Systems

Production

Marketing

FIRST MEETING = ON-FARM

- Build relationships
- Walk the farm, understand what the plan will focus on
- Deepen understand of farmers' systems, current position, & capacity



Farm Business SWOT Analysis:

STRENGTHS (internal to business)

WEAKNESSES (internal to business)

OPPORTUNITIES (external to business)

THREATS (external to business)

Quality of Life Goals

SMART Goals

Personal Living Budget

Desired Profit

Regular Farm Review Meetings

Progress Monitoring

Holistic Goal &
Quality of Life
Statements

Non-Monetary Activities &
Commitments

Long Term Planning

SWOT + GOALS + SCENARIO PLANNING => IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Project/Strategy	Who's Responsible	Timeline	Next Steps

ALL THE WHILE...

- Focused on financials
- Building management capacity
- Improving systems
- Integrating non-monetary elements of decisions
- Accessing supplemental technical assistance

FINANCIAL
MANAGEMENT

GRAZING PLAN

COST OF PRODUCTION
ANALYSIS

FULL BUSINESS PLAN – YEAR 1



SOIL HEALTH
MANAGEMENT

IMPLEMENT PLAN

PRODUCTION
EFFICIENCIES



UPDATE BUSINESS PLAN – YEAR 2

QUICKBOOKS

HUMAN RESOURCES

MARKETING TA

EQUIPMENT
MAINTENANCE

CLIMATE ASSESSMENTS

PREWORK:

Farm Name _____

Climate Impacts Assessment:

What impacts of climate change have you observed and experienced on your farm?

Whole Farm	Applies to your farm?	Level of Concern
Wetter Spring/Fall	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Increased seasonal temperatures	<input type="checkbox"/>	
More frequent extreme precipitation	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Infrastructure damage due to wind, snow, rain, or temperatures	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Increased Erosion	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Seasonal drought	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Flooding and/or ponding	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Wildfire frequency or size increase (smoke concerns)	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Other (explain):		
Crops		
Nutrient leaching	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Crop damage due to high winds	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Increased need for irrigation & crop heat stress	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Saturated soils affecting planting, weeding and/or harvest	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Unpredictable frosts, fruit loss	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Pollination mismatches	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Changes to timing of planting/harvest	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Changing pest or disease patterns	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Increased weed vigor	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Other (explain):		
Livestock		
Heat stress	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Animal health/growth decline	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Decreased pasture/forage/hay yield	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Breeds not well adapted to seasonal shifts	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Adequate water source & system available	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Adequate shade & shelter available	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Other (explain):		

Climate Resilience SWOT Analysis:

STRENGTHS (internal to business)

WEAKNESSES (internal to business)

OPPORTUNITIES (external to business)

THREATS (external to business)

BUSINESS PLAN!



Farm Financials

