



Memorandum of Support

Governor's Commission on the Future of Vermont Agriculture Appropriations

April 10, 2023

The Northeast Agribusiness and Feed Alliance (NEAFA), the trade association representing the agribusiness community throughout New York, Vermont, and New England, supports agriculture appropriations originally included in the Governor's proposed Budget.

NEAFA is very concerned over proposed budget cuts by the Vermont House of Representatives to two critical programs, the Working Lands Enterprise Fund (WLEF) and Grants to small and mid-sized agricultural producers and value-added processors. Funding is key to future growth and loss prevention of agriculture in Vermont, and the Governor's Commission on Agriculture has provided a well-documented plan for funding needs.

Working Lands Enterprise Fund (WLEF) was included in the Governor's proposed budget to receive a \$3,000,000 one-time appropriation, plus the \$1,000,000 base allocation to support grants and contracts for enterprises and service providers across the farm, forest, and food sectors in Vermont. WLEF is essential to strengthening and growing the economy of Vermont's working landscape. The House proposed cutting the requested \$3,000,000 appropriation down to \$1,000,000. The proposed reduction would significantly reduce the amount of assistance available to help growing businesses thrive. Over the last several years, the Working Lands Program received more than \$10,000,000 in applicant requests, demonstrating the ongoing need and interest in this program to support growing businesses and innovation across many industry sectors.

The Governor's proposed budget also included an appropriation of \$10,000,000 to provide competitively awarded grants to small and mid-sized agricultural producers and value-added processors in the meat, produce, and maple sectors. The Vermont House of Representatives proposed cutting this appropriation to \$5,000,000, which again, significantly reduces the amount of assistance available to support under-resourced segments of our agricultural economy. Vermont relies heavily on its farmers, working land businesses, and food producers. Our agriculture community and consumers need these infrastructure investments to support these businesses.

The Governor's proposed investments are critical to preserving, maintaining and growing a strong local food system. The Northeast Agribusiness & Feed Alliance respectfully asks you to consider the importance of Vermont agriculture and our working lands businesses, and to please restore the Governor's requested appropriations.

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