

# Progress Improving Farmworker Housing

## A summary of activities and progress to date



**Presented to the Vermont House Agriculture Committee**

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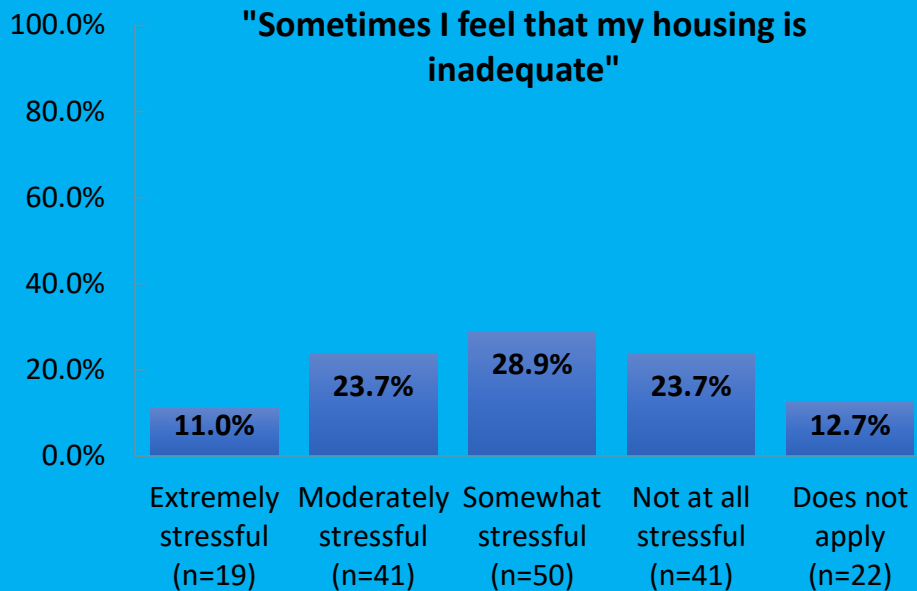
**March 23, 2023**

# Current Projects to Support Vermont Agriculture

- **Dairy Farm Safety** (*funder: Dairy Business Innovation Center*)
  - Farmer short survey
  - Farmworker extended interviews in Vermont and New York State
  - Farmworker Safety training program
- **Farmworker housing** (*Funder: Vermont Housing & Conservation Board*)
  - Outreach, facilitation repairing farmworker housing
- **Migrant Farmworker Mental Health** (*Funder: Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets through the USDA Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network.*)
- **Assessing the transition from Cow Dairy to Goat Dairy** (*funder: Dairy Business Innovation Center*)

# Farmworker Housing Background:

**"Sometimes I feel that my housing is inadequate"**

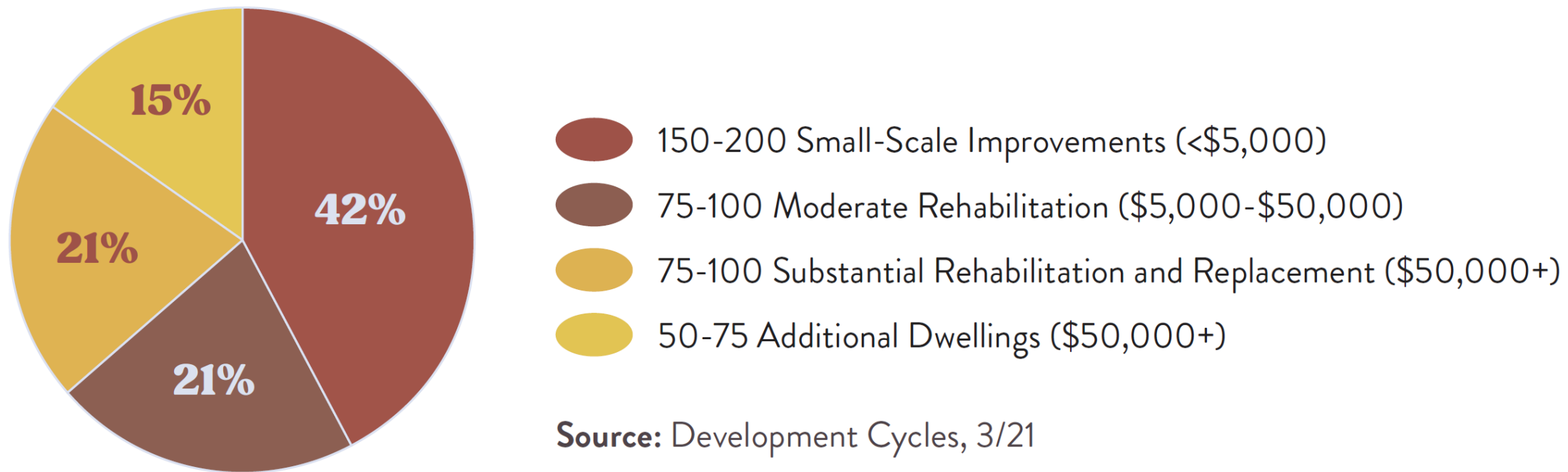


Housing is one of the most common non-wage benefits provided to workers on dairy farms (2018)

Latino Workers	100% received housing and utilities
US Workers	Housing provided by 62% of farms, Utilities provided by 53% of farms



**FIGURE EX-1: SCALE OF FARMWORKER HOUSING NEEDS, BY TYPE, 2021 ESTIMATE**



**Source:** Development Cycles, 3/21

# There is no formal statewide group to share research, needs and coordinate planning. In its absence we have an “Ad Hoc Farmworker Housing Group”

Six meetings of this ad hoc group since 2019

Formalizing this group has been a goal since the beginning

In John Ryan’s 2021 farmworker housing report to VHCB and this group he recommended:

- Coordinate efforts
- Develop Stakeholder Commitment
- Create an Action Plan
- Promote Dialogue
- Educate
- Engage existing housing non-profits and programmatic models
- Tailor recommendations to farm scale
- Think creatively

## FARMWORKER HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT



Prepared for the  
VERMONT HOUSING &  
CONSERVATION BOARD  
Montpelier VT

April 2021

# VHCB has taken the lead funding improvements to farmworker housing: Vermont Farmworker Housing Program

## **First round of funding:**

\$500,000 in loan capital funding from Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB) to Champlain Housing Trust (CHT)

UVM Extension is assisting with outreach for the project



# Vermont Farmworker Housing Program

Response to Program has been strong

- 45 farms submitted applications (exceeded available funding)
  - 19 projects approved on 15 farms
  - Types of farm businesses
    - 10 dairy
    - 3 vegetable
    - 1 fruit
    - 1 flower
  - Improves housing for between 110-135 farmworkers

County	Applications received
Addison County	10
Franklin	10
Orange	6
Orleans	4
Washington County	4
Chittenden	3
Rutland	2
Windsor	2
Windham County	2
Caledonia	1
Lamoille	1
Bennington County	0
Grand Total	45

# Current Status of Projects: Round 1

- Several farms have more than one project
  - 8 applications have completed contracting and have begun construction
    - 4 are already close to finishing the project
  - 7 completing estimates from contractors
  - 2 preparing property reports prior to signing contracts
- Most farms will be covering costs over \$30,000 to complete the project
  - 4 farms will be covering costs significantly greater than \$30,000.





# Round 1 Projects

## Applications:

- Windows & doors – 19%
- Insulation – 11.5%
- Structural repairs – 11%
- Electrical Repairs – 11%
- Plumbing – 9.6%
- Bathroom – 9.6%
- Kitchen – 9%
- Roof – 7.7%



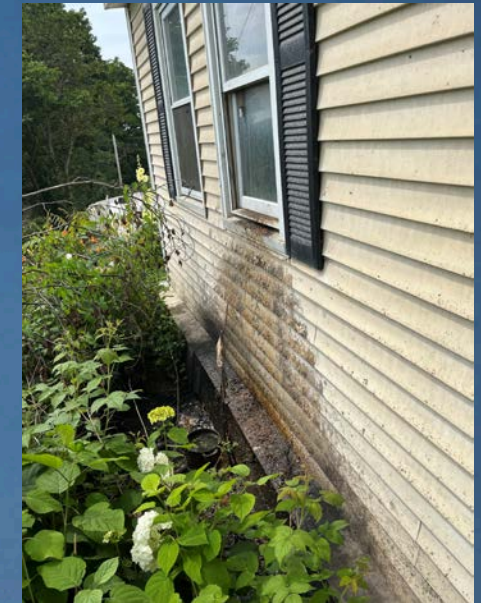
## • Funded projects

- Windows and doors
- Insulation
- Electrical and plumbing issues
- Roof repairs
- Septic systems



# Preliminary Findings and Recommendations

- Substantial need to improve farmworker housing
  - Repair program is needed and can be expanded
- Communication around housing maintenance is often needed
- Whole house replacements/renovations are required on several farms visited
- Substantial demand from farmers for funding assistance
  - Interest in CHT loan program structure
  - Expansion of this model could help farms address the need to provide on-farm housing
- Other weatherization and energy efficiency programs are challenging for farm businesses to access or have long wait times.



# Round 2: Application Process

## Round 2:

- **Expansion of the Repair Program**
  - **Estimated ~25 loans**
- **Pilot whole house replacement program**
  - **Estimated ~5 units**
    - **\$30 K forgivable on \$120K loan**
- Applications available February 15<sup>th</sup>.
- Applications will be prioritized based on urgency and life safety needs

**Due April 15, 2023**

# Farmer Eligibility Guidelines




Be actively engaged in farming



Have a demonstrated need for affordable resources to address their farmworker housing needs



Own farm employee housing currently in need of health and safety improvements



Verify that such housing is currently, or will be upon completion, and will continue to be occupied by farm employees



Supporting Documentation to be included as part of the Eligibility Application

# Closing thoughts

- Housing is one essential element supporting health on Vermont's farms
- It has connections to safety, mental health, labor supply and farm viability.
- Findings from these related projects:
  - Farmworkers want training in a broad range of health and safety topics.
  - Long-term funding for Spanish-language farm safety is needed
  - There is need for farmworker mental health support. Both funding and Spanish-speaking/culturally connected clinicians are needed.
  - The demographics of migrant farmworkers is shifting, with more woman employed or living on farms, along with children