

1 H.765

2 Introduced by Committee on Agriculture

3 Date:

4 Subject: Agriculture; economic development; agricultural innovation authority

5 Statement of purpose: This bill would establish a Vermont agricultural

6 innovation authority to promote the production and marketing of value-added

7 agricultural products in the state.

8 An act relating to establishing the Vermont agricultural innovation authority

9 It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

10 Sec. 1. 6 V.S.A. chapter 161A is added to read:

11 CHAPTER 161A. VERMONT AGRICULTURAL INNOVATION

12 AUTHORITY

13 § 2957. DEFINITIONS

14 As used in this chapter:

15 (1) “Authority” means the Vermont agricultural innovation authority.

16 (2) “Value-added agricultural product” means any agricultural

17 commodity or product that has been changed, produced, or segregated such

18 that the market for the product has expanded and where the greater portion of

19 the revenue derived from the value-added activity accrues to the producer of

20 the commodity or product.

1     § 2958. ESTABLISHMENT OF VERMONT AGRICULTURAL  
2             INNOVATION AUTHORITY

3             (a) The Vermont agricultural innovation authority is hereby created and  
4             established as a body corporate and politic and a public instrumentality of the  
5             state.

6             (b) The Vermont agricultural innovation authority shall have a board of  
7             directors of 11 members selected as follows:

8                 (1) The secretary of agriculture, food and markets, who shall serve as  
9                 chair of the board of directors; and

10                (2) The following 10 members appointed by the governor:

11                    (A) One representative from each of the two largest  
12                    membership-based agricultural organizations in Vermont;

13                    (B) One member from a group representing the Vermont dairy  
14                    industry;

15                    (C) One member from a group representing the Vermont maple  
16                    industry;

17                    (D) One member from a group representing the Vermont livestock  
18                    industry;

19                    (E) One member from a group representing the Vermont produce  
20                    industry;

1           (F) Four individuals with knowledge of or experience in the  
2 production or marketing of value-added agricultural products.

3           (c) The Vermont agricultural innovation authority's powers are vested in  
4 the board of directors, and a quorum shall consist of six members. The board  
5 of directors shall adopt bylaws for its operation. No action of the authority  
6 shall be considered valid unless the action is supported by a majority vote of  
7 the members present and voting and then only if at least six members vote in  
8 favor of the action.

9           (d) Members of the board shall be appointed for staggered terms of three  
10 years. Any vacancy occurring among the members of the board shall be filled  
11 by the governor for the unexpired portion of the term. A member may be  
12 reappointed, but no member, except the secretary of agriculture, food and  
13 markets, may serve for more than six consecutive years.

14           (e) Board members who are not state employees or whose membership is  
15 not supported by their employer or association may receive per diem and  
16 reimbursement for travel as provided in 32 V.S.A. § 1010 to the extent that  
17 funds are available.

18           § 2959. PURPOSE; POWERS AND DUTIES

19           (a) To achieve the purposes of this chapter, the Vermont agricultural  
20 innovation authority shall:

1           (1) Promote agriculture in Vermont, including the production or  
2           marketing of value-added agricultural products;

3           (2) Coordinate with federal and state agencies and private sources to  
4           make financial resources available to the authority for distribution of financial  
5           assistance for the promotion of agriculture, including the production or  
6           marketing of value-added agricultural products.

7           (3) Distribute federal grant monies for the production or marketing of  
8           value-added agricultural products. Grant monies distributed under this  
9           subdivision may be used for:

10           (A) Technical assistance, including technical, engineering, and  
11           product research services;

12           (B) Assistance in marketing, market development, and business  
13           planning, including advisory services with respect to leveraging capital assets;

14           (C) Organizational, outreach, and development assistance to increase  
15           the viability, growth, and sustainability of businesses engaged in the  
16           production or marketing of value-added agricultural products;

17           (D) Studies that analyze the feasibility of facilities, including  
18           processing facilities, for use by potential producers or marketers of  
19           value-added products in order to determine the size that optimizes construction  
20           and other cost efficiencies.

1       (b) The agricultural innovation authority shall have all the power necessary  
2       and convenient to carry out the purposes of this chapter, including:

3           (1) To consult, contract, or partner with the Vermont economic  
4       development authority to provide financial assistance for purposes authorized  
5       by this chapter;

6           (2) To support the establishment of public-private partnerships for the  
7       promotion and development of agriculture in the state, including the  
8       production or marketing of value-added agricultural products.

9           (3) To support local initiatives to produce or market value-added  
10       agricultural products.

11          (4) To provide resources, financial assistance, and financial incentives to  
12       local, regional, public, and private entities in the form of loans or grants for the  
13       production or marketing of value-added agricultural products.

14          (5) To pursue and coordinate access to regional and local revolving loan  
15       funding and all state, federal, and private funding that is available for the  
16       development of agriculture and value-added agricultural products.

17          (6) To receive and accept grants, gifts, loans, or contributions from any  
18       source subject to the provisions of 32 V.S.A. § 5.

19          (7) To use the services and staff of the agency of agriculture, food and  
20       markets to assist in the performance of its duties with the concurrence of the  
21       secretary of agriculture, food and markets.

1           (8) To contract for support, technical, or other professional services.

2           § 2960. INTERAGENCY COOPERATION AND ASSISTANCE

3           Other departments and agencies of state government shall assist and  
4           cooperate with the authority and shall make available to it information and data  
5           as needed to assist the authority in carrying out its duties. Nothing in this  
6           section shall be construed to waive any privilege or protection otherwise  
7           afforded to the data and information under exemptions to the public records act  
8           or under other laws due solely to the fact that the information or data are  
9           shared with the authority pursuant to this section.

10          Sec. 2. REPEAL

11          6 V.S.A. §§ 2961 (creation of agricultural development commission) and  
12          2962 (agricultural development commission duties) are repealed.

13          Sec. 3. EFFECTIVE DATE

14          This act shall take effect upon passage.