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My Name is Margaret Loftus. My husband Jonathan and I own and operate Crossmolina Farm - a highly diversified farm in Corinth, Orange County.

Our farm has been a NOFA Member for over 15 years and I am a member of NOFA's Policy and Organizing Steering Committee. Our farm has participated in the Crop Cash, Crop Cash Plus and the Farm Share program.

I am here today to urge you to support \$478,500 in base funding for NOFA Vermont's Crop Cash (Plus) and Farm Share programs.

These programs support **farm viability** because they encourage consumers who would not otherwise be able to do so to participate in CSAs and shop at farmers markets. As a farmer I have seen first hand again and again how these programs bring new folks to our CSA and the farmer's market. Our farm works hard to both be a viable and vibrant business and to ensure that local food is not a luxury item in our community - but instead a staple. Both Crop and the Farm Share program are a big help.

This was particularly true this past season - the expansion of the Crop Cash Program brought a 12 % increase in our farm's sales at the Chelsea Farmers Market. Our Farmer's Market Manager reported at the end of the season that this increase in sales due to Crop Cash and Crop Cash Plus

was market wide. Our farm has participated in the Farm Share Program since we began our CSA in 2013 and we have taken Crop Cash at the farmer's market for as long as we can remember. The number of Vermonters needing and receiving help from these important programs has increased steadily over the years and the financial boost our farm receives is important.

These programs are also important tools in the effort to achieve food security in Vermont. We operate our farm and attend farmers markets in Orange County where there are few options available to buy fresh produce, eggs and meat. There are also many, many folks who struggle to put food on the table. Crop Cash and the Farm Share Program allow us to serve folks who do not have easy access to fresh food and who otherwise would not be able to afford it. I wish you could see first hand how happy it makes people to pick up a CSA share or take home some fresh eggs from the Farmer's Market.

Achieving food security for every Vermonter and building a vibrant agricultural economy are two laudable goals that the state has identified in the recently released Food Security Roadmap. Every transaction that is made possible by Crop Cash and the Farm Share Program helps move us closer to both of these goals at the same time.

In sum, I urge you to view these programs as an important opportunity to help achieve food security and agricultural vibrancy in our state. You should support \$478,500 in base funding for NOFA Vermont's Crop Cash (Plus) and Farm Share programs.