

H.750- Supporting Animal Welfare-Certified Farm Businesses

Strong Farms, Good Food, Consumer Choice

Growth Opportunity: Increasing Demand for Welfare-Certified Products

Consumers are increasingly interested in the origins of their food, especially when it comes to the treatment of farm animals. A 2016 ASPCA survey found that 77% of consumers are concerned about the welfare of farm animals and 74% are paying more attention to animal welfare labels than they were just five years ago. The markets for welfare-certified products are rapidly growing. Some Vermont farmers are already tapping into these markets and the potential for more growth is substantial.

<p>Major companies are committed to sourcing from welfare-certified producers, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Whole Foods Market• Panera Bread• Applegate• Niman Ranch• Pete and Gerry's Eggs	 <p>Farmers win. In addition to providing a strong, welfare-focused management structure, welfare certification can offer access to new markets, a marketing edge against competitors and enhanced credibility with consumers.</p>	 <p>Consumers win. Welfare certification programs allow consumers to easily identify products that are certified to meet more humane standards.</p>	 <p>Farm animals win. Improved animal welfare means higher quality of life, increased ability to perform natural behaviors and more humane methods of slaughter.</p>
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State Policy Action: Create an Animal Welfare-Certified Producer Grant Program (H.750)

Existing, independent welfare certification programs provide consumers with the transparency and higher welfare standards they seek, while offering farmers enhanced access to new markets and providing animals with a higher quality of life. An animal welfare-certified producer grant program would help Vermont farmers gain access to the expanding welfare-certified marketplace, which is good for the Vermont economy. A matching grant investment program could support farm businesses with these transition costs:

- On-farm improvements necessary to meet the standards of a certification program, including:
 - Building and/or purchasing structures
 - Equipment or fencing
 - Installing perches, scratchers, or other enrichment materials for animals



A cow utilizes the scratcher at Animal Welfare Approved Health Hero Farm in South Hero, VT

- Any fees associated with participation in a welfare certification program

Good for Vermont: Backed by the Agency of Agriculture's Market Analysis

A Vermont Agency of Agriculture-funded market analysis¹ of the state's meat processing industry recommended investment and participation in animal welfare certification programs as a way to increase sales of Vermont meat. It said, "Many regional and national brands... have customers (Hannaford, Whole Foods, Walmart, Costco) who require the producer's meat to be safe and to perform

to very, very high standards," citing participation in third party programs like Animal Welfare Approved and Global Animal Partnership as a way to help producers meet these requirements. The report ultimately recommended that producers and processors, "[c]onsider investing in the infrastructure upgrade or management changes necessary to meet third party certification to both production and processing practices so more Vermont meat can meet the requirements of large scale retail buyers."

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"Certification demonstrates the commitment of a farmer to the welfare of their animals and gives consumers the assurance that the products they are purchasing come from animals allowed to live a life truer to their nature."

- Vincent Riva, Animal Welfare Approved Stark Hollow Farm in Danville, VT

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Which certifications are eligible for funding under this grant program?

H.750 defines what it means to be an "independent animal welfare certification program," requiring transparent, science-based animal welfare standards, 100% compliance with these standards to receive certification, and regular on-farm audits to ensure compliance. Existing third-party certification programs that meet this definition include Animal Welfare Approved, Certified Humane, and Global Animal Partnership.

2. Can farmers who are already welfare-certified apply for matching grants?

Yes, farmers who are already welfare-certified may apply for matching grants under H.750. The program aims to help farmers both achieve and maintain their certified status. Therefore, farmers may apply for funding to help cover the costs of maintaining certification (auditing fees, certification fees, etc.).

3. Is demand for these types of products really growing?

Yes! Demand for animal welfare-certified products is growing at many levels. Individual consumers are concerned about the welfare of farm animals and are increasingly looking to welfare certifications for validation of better practices. Well-known companies, brands, restaurants, and grocery stores already require their suppliers to be welfare-certified. Public institutions, including UVM Medical Center and Dining Services, have food sourcing policies that require a certain percentage of their purchases to be from welfare-certified producers. The demand for a higher welfare, more transparent food system is here to stay.

¹http://agriculture.vermont.gov/sites/ag/files/pdf/meat_industry_development/Consumer%20Valuation%20of%20Meat%20Processing%20Market%20Analysis.pdf