

## WORKING LANDS TESTIMONY for FY18 BUDGET

### MAPLE WIND FARM

My name is Beth Whiting and I have owned Maple Wind Farm with my husband, Bruce Hennessey, since 1999. We are a pasture based livestock and organic vegetable farm with the unique situation to have our own USDA poultry processing plant on site. We received Working Lands funding to add value to our pasture raised poultry facility by investing in processing equipment, a blast chiller in addition to increased capacity of our storage capabilities.

**I am writing to ask that you include an appropriation of \$1 million dollars to support the Working Lands program in Vermont in the FY18 budget.** Our farm used the funds to create jobs, increased the capacity for other farms to access USDA poultry processed from their farms using our services, and we built new markets for our poultry in Vermont and in the greater New England area in addition to increasing our goal to bring more value added poultry to the marketplace (in our case, more parted birds, ground product and sausage).

Our project allowed us to process up to 20,000 birds in 2016, add value by cutting birds into parts and allow us to produce other value-added meat products for sale to a wider market, increasing our profitability. Our chief aim is to access markets for poultry that have previously been closed to us due to lack of State or USDA inspection. By offering area farmers inspected processing, we will provide others with access to new markets and the ability to increase their production beyond the 1000 bird threshold. Through increased refrigerated and frozen storage, MWF will meet increase production cooling and freezing needs.

Building this facility meant a significant expansion of our poultry and value-added meat enterprises for greater profits, create the need for more labor, and decrease per-bird inspected processing costs through increased efficiencies for MWF. We are confident that these benefits will be passed on to other farms as well.

Employment: Excluding owners, in 2013, we added 2 full time year round employees and 3 additional full-time seasonal staff members and 4 part-time seasonal staff for a total of 9, a 300% increase over 2012. In the 2014 season, we had a total of 12 full-time seasonal staff, far exceeding our 100% increase goal for year three. By 2016, we employed 35 full time and part time seasonal staff!

Photos of finished product from MWF USDA processing unit and production inside the unit



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