

REDRAFT OF S.160 Section 1

An act relating to agricultural development

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

* * * Strategic Plan * * *

Sec. 1. STRATEGIC PLAN TO STABILIZE AND REVITALIZE THE VERMONT AGRICULTURAL AND FOOD INDUSTRY

- (a) On or before January 15, 2020, the Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets shall submit to the Senate Committee on Agriculture and House Committee on Agriculture and Forestry a series of farm and food sector and market specific summaries of trends and viability strategies across Vermont's agricultural and food industry. These agricultural industry highlights shall be prioritized into a strategic plan for the stabilization, diversification, and revitalization of the agricultural and food industry in Vermont by June 30, 2020.
- (b) The sector and market channel summaries shall be facilitated by the Vermont Farm to Plate Investment Program and the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets and be comprised of research conducted by various industry subject matter experts, partners, and stakeholders. The industry highlights shall:
 - (1) summarize current conditions within a particular sector or market channel, including most recent data synthesis, research, reports and expert documentation of challenges and opportunities for growth;
 - (2) recommend State investment in research and development by universities or other qualified organization to establish new markets, products, or ingredients;
 - (3) recommend methods for improving the marketing of Vermont agricultural products outside the State, outside the region, and outside the country;
- (c) The resultant strategic plan shall outline prioritized next steps and opportunities to assist in stabilizing, diversifying, and revitalizing Vermont's food system. The plan may include:
 - (1) technical assistance resources and capital available to farmers to assist in the diversification of agricultural products produced on the farm;
 - (2) alternatives or methods for encouraging, maintaining, or increasing the amount of land in agricultural production in the State;
 - (3) recommended resources of financing for research and development by universities and businesses of innovative methods for managing and commoditizing manure to mitigate the environmental concerns raised by current manure management techniques;
 - (4) proposed techniques or systems for improving the ecological footprint and environmental sustainability of farming in the State;
 - (5) an assessment of the potential to increase the amount of Vermont agricultural products that are purchased by school nutrition program in the State; and
 - (6) approaches for improving transparency in the agricultural industry so that the public is educated and aware of the need for and effort of certain dairy practices.
- (d) The Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets shall consult with the Vermont Farm to Plate Investment Program and other interested parties in developing the industry summaries required under subsection (b) of this section and shall hold at least four public hearings around the State to

receive public input on priorities for stabilizing and revitalizing the agricultural industries in Vermont to be included in the strategic plan required under subsection (c) of this section.