




Supporting Animal Welfare-Certified Farm Businesses

Strong Farms, Good Food, Consumer Choice

Market 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 animals. A 2018 ASPCA survey found that 76% of consumers are concerned about the welfare of farm animals and 76% are paying more attention to animal welfare labels than they were just five years ago. This consumer demand has translated into institutional and corporate demand, particularly among universities and hospitals. Some Vermont farmers are already tapping into these markets for animal welfare-certified food, but there is a gap in the supply of local, welfare-certified producers to meet growing demand.

<p>Major companies/institutions are committed to sourcing from welfare-certified producers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Black River Meats • Pineland Farms • Whole Foods Market • Pete and Gerry's Eggs • UVM • Middlebury College • Lyndon State College • Sterling College • UVM Medical Center 	 <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: Prioritize Funding for Welfare-Certified Farming

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. Directing existing Working Lands grant funding towards animal welfare-certified producers would help Vermont farmers gain access to the expanding welfare-certified marketplace, both in and out-of-state, which is good for the Vermont economy. Grants could support farm businesses and processing facilities with such transition and expansion costs as:

- Farm/facility improvements needed 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 (audit, labeling, etc.)

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

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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.”



“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 Montpelier, VT

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Which certifications are eligible for grant funding?

An “independent animal welfare certification program” is defined as 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. These are the same certifications accepted by institutional sourcing schemes like *Real Food Challenge*, *Good Food Purchasing Program* and *Healthier Hospitals*.

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

Yes, farmers who are already welfare-certified may apply for grants. The aim is 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.) or expanding certified operations.

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

Yes! In addition to individual demand, multiple Vermont institutions, including UVM Medical Center and Dining Services, have responsible food sourcing policies that require a certain percentage of their purchases to come from welfare-certified producers. Vermont institutions want to buy from Vermont farms. There aren't currently enough welfare-certified farms in the state to meet institutional needs- funding would help Vermont farmers meet this growing demand and increase their viability.

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