



WORKING LANDS ENTERPRISE INITIATIVE
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Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets
Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation
Agency of Commerce & Community Development

Working Lands Enterprise Board Position Statement on S.160 Sec .11 6 V.S.A. 4607

To: Senate Agriculture Committee
House Agriculture and Forestry Committee

The Working Lands Enterprise Board unanimously voted at its meeting on 3/19/19 to communicate to the House Committee on Agriculture and Forestry and the Senate Committee on Agriculture our opposition to Section 11 in S.160, *An Act Relating to Agricultural Development*, and to ask that this Section be struck from the final version of the bill.

The Working Lands Enterprise Board (WLEB) is not opposed to certification programs for the humane treatment of livestock. We are aware of the real and perceived added value of these humane certifications to Vermont's livestock farmers.

However, we are opposed to Section 11 of the S.160 bill language as it modifies the powers and duties of the Vermont Working Lands Enterprise Board. Such reference to a specific program focus for the Working Lands Enterprise Initiative would set bad precedent for future legislation to add special carve outs for narrow classes of farmers and processors. The added language is unnecessary as the initiating Working Lands Enterprise Initiation legislation (Act 142) already enables the board to make grants to farmers and processors who wish to pursue third party humane handling certification. We consider humane certification to be included as part of 'value-added agricultural products' in the Duties portion of Action 142. We also already have the capability and capacity to grant funds to service providers to develop humane handling certification programs or support industry participation.

Act 142, the chartering legislation for the Working Lands Enterprise Fund and the Working Lands Enterprise Board, as written allows and enables WLEB the flexibility to respond to dynamic market needs, priorities, and opportunities in the agricultural and forestry sectors.

Adding a narrowly specific focus area of the agriculture economy (in this instance –“independent animal welfare certification program”) to the Board's mission may hinder our flexibility to respond to various emerging market needs.

WLEB wants to reiterate to both Committees that we do support humane certification along the entire supply chain from farmers through processors to the consumer. We believe that a program which only certifies livestock farmers would be insufficient in addressing market demand for these certified products in the marketplace. All aspects from farm to consumer must maintain this humane certification chain of custody in order to have real value in the marketplace.



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WLEB would like to encourage livestock producers, processors and service providers to engage in the WLEI fall 2019 grant round. Project proposals including, infrastructure for animal welfare, certification program costs and fees, marketing and service providers working with groups of farmers or processors would all be acceptable applications and would be competitively considered for funding by the Working Lands Enterprise Board.

WLEB also invites the ASPCA to address the Board, along with prospective farmers they have been working with, about the market potential and opportunities of an animal welfare certification program. It would also be helpful to learn from them whether they have identified gaps in current funding available to producers and processors along the supply chain to capitalize on these opportunities.

In fact, the Working Lands Enterprise Board will proactively convene a panel at the April 2019 Board meeting to better understand the opportunities on this topic. Subject matter experts will likely include Rural VT, NOFA-VT, Maple Wind Farm, Snug Valley, Green Mountain Meats, and Vermont Grass Farmer's Association.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our reactions to Section 11 of S.160 and our desire to see the Working Lands Enterprise Initiative Program remain as is and to allow us to maintain the flexibility we need to effectively support emerging agriculture and forestry industry needs.

Sincerely,

The Vermont Working Lands Enterprise Board

Board Members

Anson Tebbetts, Chair, Secretary Vermont Agency of Agriculture Food & Markets

Alyson Eastman (Designee) Deputy Secretary, Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets

Michael Snyder Commissioner of Forests, Parks & Recreation

Sam Lincoln (Designee) Deputy Commissioner Vermont Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation

Matt Langlais (Designee) Caledonia/Essex County Forester, Vermont Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation

Ted Brady, Deputy Secretary, Agency of Commerce & Community Development

Tim Tierney (Designee) Senior Economic Development Specialist, Agency of Commerce & Community

Eric DeLuca, (Vice Chair) Principal, Leverage Point Consulting Windham County

Bob Lesnikoski, Owner, Vermont Cranberry Company, Franklin County

Siobhan Smith, Vice President Vermont Land Trust, Chittenden County



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John Mandeville, Executive Director Lamoille County Economic Development

Will Belongia, Executive Director Vermont Community Loan Fund, Washington County

Jeremy LaRock, DSD Retail, Cabot Creamery, Washington County

April Lemay, Owner, April's Maple, Essex County

Kathleen Wanner, Executive Director, Vermont Woodlands Association, Rutland County

Dave Hubbard, Salesman, GMC Hardwoods, Windsor County

Megan Camp, Vice President, Shelburne Farms, Chittenden County

Beth Kennet, Owner, Liberty Hill Farm, Windsor County

Jeff Hardy, General Manager, Cersosimo Lumber, Windham County

Charlie Hancock, Consulting Forester Franklin County

Alisha Utter, Co-Owner, Arbor Farmstead, Grand Isle County

Ex-Officio, Non-Voting Members

Jo Bradley, CEO, Vermont Economic Development Authority, Washington County

Sarah Isham, Designee, Director of Agricultural Lending, Vermont Agricultural Credit Corporation

Ellen Kahler, Executive Director, Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund, Washington County

Gus Seelig, Executive Director, Vermont Housing & Conservation Board, Washington County

Ela Chapin, Designee, Program Director, Vermont Farm & Forest Viability Program

The Working Lands Enterprise Board (WLEB) represents a cross-agency, cross-sector network of partners: Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets, Vermont Forests, Parks & Recreation, Vermont Agency of Commerce & Community Development, fourteen designated board members from across the value chains of Agriculture and Forestry, and Ex-Officio members from the Vermont Economic Development Authority, Vermont Housing & Conservation Board, and the Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund.