



farm to plate

2019 Annual Report



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To: Vermont General Assembly and Governor Phil Scott

Achieving Intended Outcomes

This year's Annual Report features highlights of key projects from 2019, including grass-fed beef industry development, local planning for food access, wholesale markets, and small-scale on-farm composting. You will also see how Rooted in Vermont continues to engage Vermonters through inventive partnerships, the ways we are supporting the future of Vermont's dairy sector, and a snapshot from the latest Census of Agriculture release. These selections are not meant to show the entirety of activity happening in the Network or the food system as a whole, but rather show the breadth of activity and diversity of stakeholders and sectors Farm to Plate is engaged with in strengthening Vermont's food system.

What you also won't see in the pages ahead is the extent of work that is happening in parallel with our normal Network activity, to position us for the next decade of food system development. This work started in May 2019 with the Governor's signing of [Act 23: An act relating to the Farm to Plate Investment Program](#), which extends Farm to Plate to January 1, 2031:

The reauthorization of Farm to Plate is, on one hand, an affirmation of the progress made in food system economic development since Farm to Plate's beginnings in 2009.

- **From 2007 to 2017, Vermont food system economic output expanded 48%, from \$7.5 to \$11.3 billion.**
- **From 2009 to 2018, net new food system employment increased by 6,529 jobs (11.2%).**
- **In total, over 64,000 people and 11,500 businesses are now part of Vermont's food system.**

Yet, reauthorization also acknowledges that there are goals we have not yet achieved and new challenges to be addressed—

Upon completion of all of the briefs, Farm to Plate will undertake a stakeholder engagement process to further refine and prioritize strategies and recommendations to develop a shared vision for the Farm to Plate 2.0 Strategic Plan. A list of high priority recommendations identified through the stakeholder process will be completed by September 2020, with results shared at the 2020 Farm to Plate Network Annual Gathering. The final synthesized report, with high priority strategies, recommendations, and vision statement, will be delivered to the legislature in January 2021 to officially commence Farm to Plate's next 10-year cycle. We are grateful for the continued support from the Legislature and Scott Administration to strengthen Vermont's Food System now and into the next decade.

reflected by a dairy industry in transition, increasing market competition and price pressure faced by producers, significant generational transfer of farmland and farm assets, persistent food insecurity and lack of equitable access to healthy local food—all of which will require sustained and coordinated strategic action.

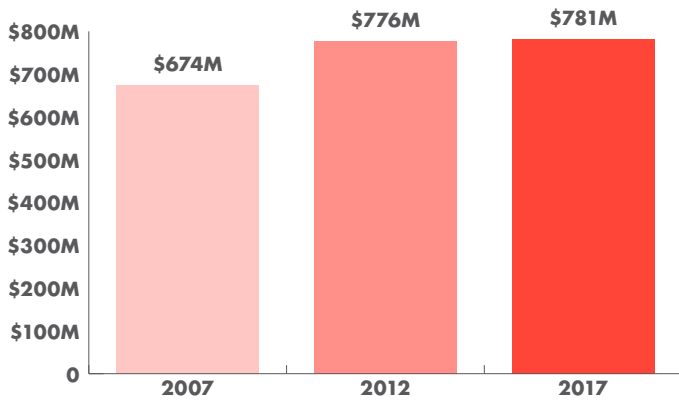
A RENEWED PLAN FOR THE NEXT 10 YEARS IS NEEDED TO RE-ESTABLISH A COMMON VISION AND AGENDA, WITH UPDATED AND PRIORITIZED STRATEGIES AND ACTION STEPS. In partnership with the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets, and in fulfillment of [Act 83: An act relating to agricultural development](#), we are setting the foundations of the next Farm to Plate Plan. Act 83, signed into law in June, includes a stipulation to submit a report of recommendations to stabilize, diversify, and revitalize Vermont's agricultural industry by January 15, 2020, to the Senate Committee on Agriculture and the House Committee on Agriculture and Forestry. In helping to create the Act 83 report, we are also beginning to create the next Farm to Plate Strategic Plan.

Working with food system subject matter experts, the report consists of 23 product, market and issue briefs spanning product areas (produce, grass-fed beef, dairy, hemp/CBD), market channels (institutions, direct markets, retail), and issue areas (climate change, access to capital, land access, soil health and water quality). The briefs cover current conditions, bottlenecks and gaps, opportunities, and finish with recommendations. A second phase of briefs is now underway, addressing product areas and issues that could not be covered in the first phase timeline, with an aim to complete them by April 2020.

Jake Claro
Farm to Plate Director

2017 Census of Agriculture: Vermont Highlights

Market Value



Of the **\$780,968,000** of agricultural products sold in Vermont in 2017:

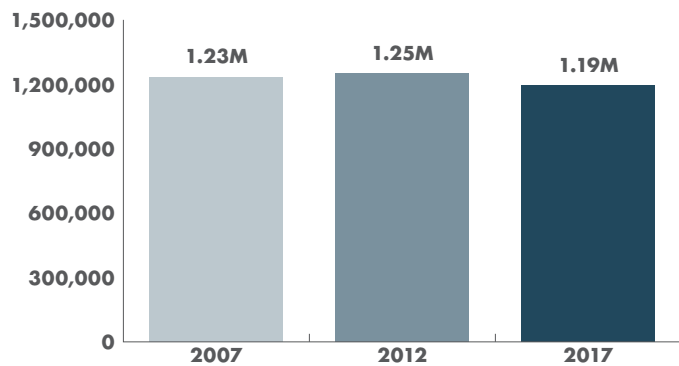
- **\$49,971,000 (6.4%)** was from direct-to-consumer sales.
- **\$54,134,000 (6.9%)** was from sales direct to retail, institutions, and food hubs for local or regionally branded products.
- **\$593,872,000 (76%)** were livestock, poultry, and their product sales (e.g., milk, meat, and eggs.)
- **\$187,096,000 (24%)** were crops, including nursery and greenhouse crops (e.g., grains, hay, vegetables, tree fruits, berries, floriculture, and maple syrup.)

In addition to commodity sales, farms reported **\$49,487,000** of sales from on-farm value added products.

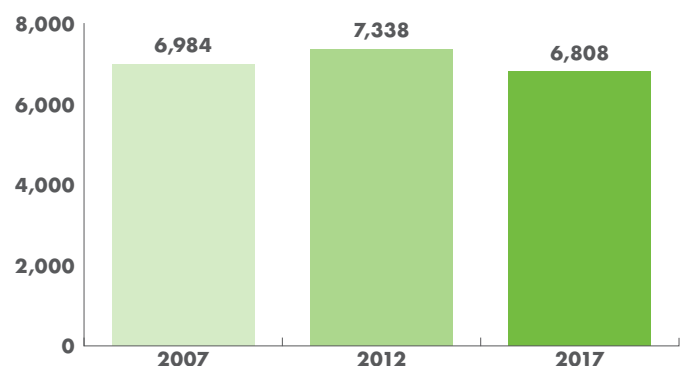
Farm and Lands in Agriculture

Though the Census of Agriculture defines a farm as any place from which \$1,000 or more of agricultural products were produced and sold, many stakeholders in Vermont believe \$10,000 of gross sales is a better threshold and indicator of a farm's commercial status and/or aspirations. Of the **6,808** farms counted in the Census, only **2,852 (42%)** gross more than \$10,000 or more.

Land in Acreage in Agriculture Over Time



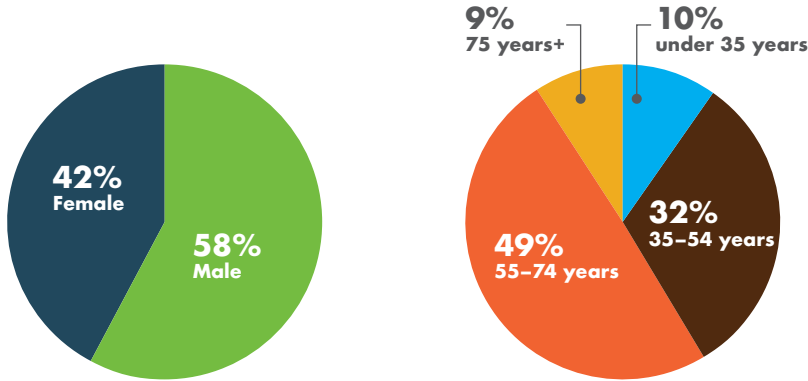
Number of Farms



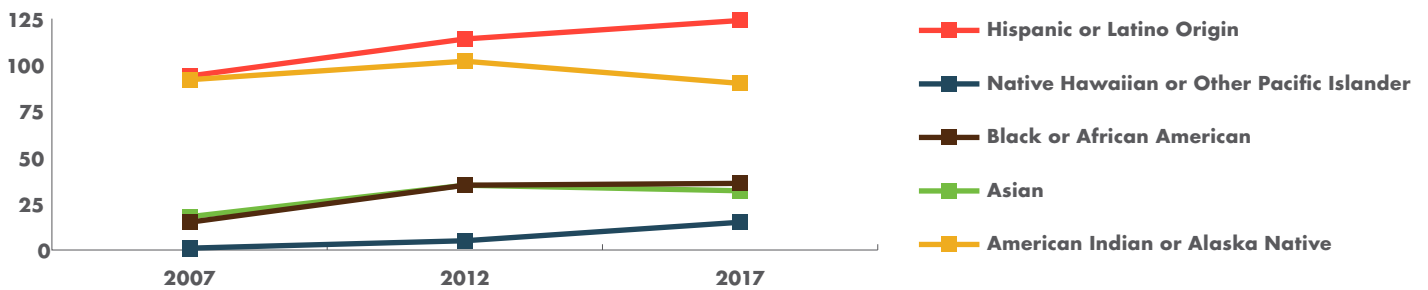
Land in Acreage in Agriculture by Type in 2017



Demographics of Producers



Race and Ethnicity of Producers 2007-2017

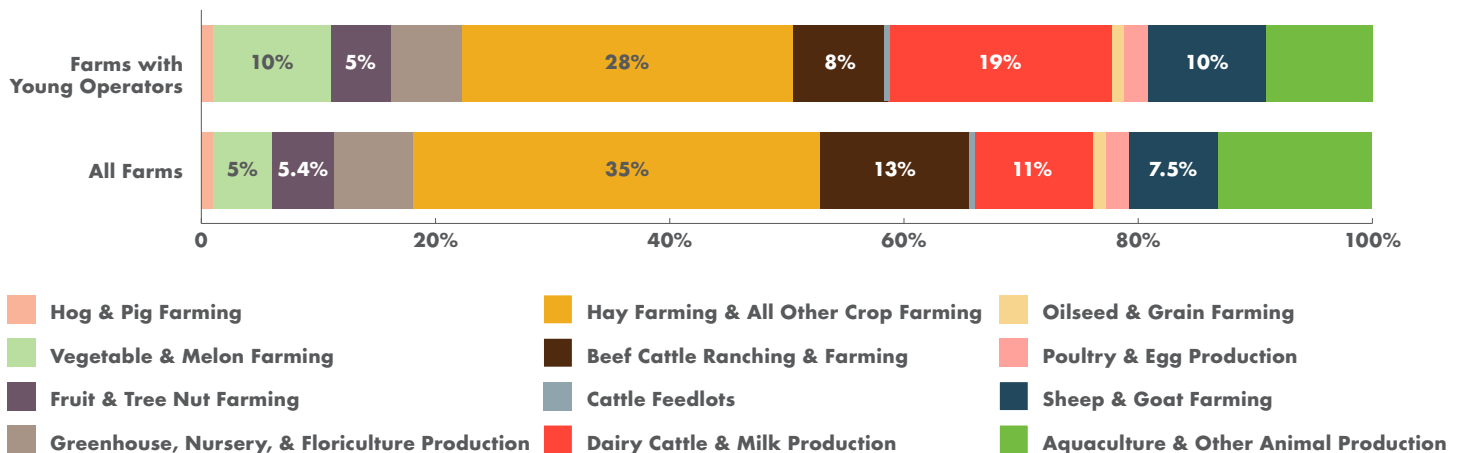


Where Are Vermont's Young Farmers?

15% of farms in Vermont have a “young operator” (age 35 or below). These farms steward **256,363** of **1,193,437** farmland acres (**21%**) and create **30%** of total market value.

When looking by farm type, **31%** of vegetable farms, **27%** of dairy farms, **20%** of sheep and goat farms, **13%** of fruit tree farms, and **9%** of beef farms have young operators. While these figures demonstrate a foundation of youth involvement in farming in Vermont that should not be diminished, they also reveal an equivalent of **937,074** acres of land that doesn't have a producer under the age of 35 involved in the farming of that land.

Distribution of Farms with Young Operators by Farm Type vs All Farms by Farm Type





Exploring More Viable Approaches to Operating a Grass-Fed Beef Business

Grass-fed beef value chain development brings renowned livestock school to Vermont, results in direct investments in grass-fed beef farms and better linkages and specialization between farms to increase throughput, better utilize land, leverage farmers' production strengths, and foster an environment conducive to strategic cooperation.

HOW CAN MEAT PRODUCTION SYSTEMS IN VERMONT BE IMPROVED?

In response to this question, Farm to Plate Network members identified a need to better understand market demand for grass-fed meat products in the Northeast, deliver improved technical assistance, and define viable production models for Vermont livestock operations. The Network conducted [grass-fed beef market research \(2017–2018\)](#) and developed [budgeting template tools to standardize cost accounting for grass-based farmers](#). Building off this work, stakeholders recognized the need for an intensive learning environment to stimulate business growth, management acumen, and industry leadership. To do this, Farm to Plate negotiated with Ranch Management Consultants to bring the renowned [Ranching for Profit School \(RFP\)](#) to the Northeast for the first time.

The weeklong school ran from February 3–9, 2019 with 14 Vermonters attending, out of 45 total farmers and ranchers representing 12 states across the U.S., Canada and Australia. Attendees were brought through what one attendee described as a 7-day MBA program, deeply analyzing cash flow, gross profit margins, human resources and management, technical livestock management practices and grazing concepts to increase animal and soil health.

Upon graduation, Farm to Plate grants were made available to the Vermont cohort to help accelerate implementation of their learning and plans developed during RFP. Nine beef producers received a total of \$66,748 for projects including:

- **Portable animal handling, scales, and fencing** to improve labor efficiencies in handling, sorting, and receiving animals and to improve grazing and land utilization on leased land.
- **Marketing and inventory management improvements** to improve the logistics of online meat sales, labeling and packaging design, inventory management, refrigeration capacity, and marketing capabilities.
- **Grazing management improvements** to further education of grazing practices, implement a new cell grazing plan and allow for better pasture utilization.

> Impacts

Many of the farmers who attended RFP called it a game changer. The grants had immediate impacts on the farms and their ability to scale faster, market more product, improve management efficiencies and reduce costs of production.

“The new corral system allowed us to quickly draw blood samples from the entire herd, and has made sorting, loading, and working much more efficient. It has allowed us to scale our operation and implement the action plan from Ranching for Profit; reducing the labor cost with handling was a key take-away from the school. We are now working with a local distributor on a new local, grass-fed line to expand our markets and sales.”

—Justin Sauerwein
Almanack Farm



“RFP helped us identify where we could fit in the supply chain as custom grazers. The grant we received helped us set up a secure training area with both woven wire and corral panels. Now we can easily take in short term and stocker cattle, and comfortably get them trained to fence and ease the transition onto our farm. We have used this new infrastructure this year to bring in 85 animals to date with 56 more arriving soon.”

—Marc and Cheryl Cesario
Meeting Place Pastures



>> Takeaways and Next Steps

The Ranching for Profit experience not only improved the management of individual farms but led to better linkages and specialization in Vermont between beef farms in order to increase throughput, better utilize land, leverage existing production strengths, and foster an environment amongst farmers that is conducive to more strategic cooperation. The Vermont cohort is helping create a more integrated grass livestock industry in Vermont and demonstrating more viable approaches to operating a grass-fed livestock business. RFP, along with the market research and budgeting tools, are catalyzing the creation of a production supply chain that links multiple Vermont farms together in conceiving, raising, and finishing livestock while simultaneously keeping the working landscape intact and improving its ecosystem services through improved grazing practices and management.

However, challenges still remain for growing Vermont’s grass-fed beef industry. RFP graduates reported:

- Struggles acquiring contiguous land;
- Need for improved genetics programs to breed animals suited for Vermont;

- Issues with importing stockers and feeders from out of state;
- Federal place of origin labeling laws that allow internationally raised grass-fed beef to be labeled as products of the United States;
- Limited marketing resources to educate consumers;
- High upfront costs for infrastructure and deferred income from converting degraded farmland into productive pasture;
- High processing costs that put producers at a competitive disadvantage with national brands; and
- Lack of awareness of the unique skills and competencies needed to successfully raise beef livestock animals on pasture. There’s an assumption that dairy animal management practices are synonymous and compatible with grass-fed beef livestock production, and this is not the case.

In the coming year, Farm to Plate will work to convene grass-fed beef stakeholders again in order to examine these challenges more in-depth, prioritize market development needs, and launch a new phase of strengthening the industry.



Local Planning for Food Access: A Toolkit for Vermont's Communities

Supporting the economic viability of local farms and increasing food access for all community members are often treated as separate, or even conflicting, objectives. The Farm to Plate Network, however, works to address these issues simultaneously, as both are necessary for economic stability and thriving communities. While models can be developed and sometimes implemented by statewide organizations, sustainable change depends on capacity being built within individual communities. Fortunately, Vermonters care about the food security of their neighbors and many communities are proactively looking for ways to strengthen their own local food system. The Farm to Plate Network has spent two years collecting insight from a wide variety of experts to create *Local Planning for Food Access: A Toolkit for Vermont's Communities*, released in November 2019.



One of the best ways for Vermont communities to articulate their collective values and strategically address their challenges is through the local planning process. A municipal or regional plan can influence the local food system in a number of ways, from raising awareness, to prompting residents to take action on concrete projects, to establishing regulations. The food system, including food access, is closely related to many other topics required or frequently addressed within these plans, such as land use, economic development, health, and more. ***Local Planning for Food Access* is a new addition to a series of resources previously created by Farm to Plate on food systems and agricultural land use planning, with a greater focus on food access and especially on strategies that benefit both producers and those facing food insecurity.**

This initiative has been a collaborative effort between over 20 experts from a wide range of food system organizations, state agencies, and regional commissions. The final resource:

- Makes the case for addressing food access at the local level;
- Articulates the relationship between food access, local food production, and other issues of concern to Vermont communities;
- Presents many different strategies for increasing food access, describes how a community can determine the best approach, and identifies sources of support for design and implementation; and
- Highlights success stories from communities all around the state.

While much of the resource dissemination, including direct outreach to local planning commissions, will be occurring in 2020 and beyond, a number of workshops have already been presented.

For the project team, the process itself has led to a deeper understanding of the relationship between local food production and community food access, and the diversity of ways in which this manifests across the state. For example, many communities could benefit from a new farmers market. However, because Vermont already has a high density of farmers markets, each of which needs a large enough customer base to make it financially viable for vendors, there are also cases where creating a new market is not an appropriate solution. The Toolkit addresses this consideration and highlights alternatives such as partnering with neighboring communities on mobile markets or helping nearby existing markets accept 3SquaresVT benefits.

“Like water and shelter, food access is one of those things we take for granted until it’s not there. Access to food is more than a function of being able to pay for it. It’s also a function of mobility, land use, local economic conditions and other factors. Can you get to where the food is, or can the food get to you? Do local land use regulations create barriers to food production and access? What kinds of food and food retail does the local economy currently support? Food access requires thoughtful and intentional planning and implementation. This Toolkit provides a foundation for multiple food access planning pathways for citizen planners.”

—Chris Company
Executive Director, Windham Regional Commission

» Takeaways and Next Steps

This project brought together a coalition of organizations with a shared interest in empowering Vermont’s communities to address food access at the local level. *Local Planning for Food Access* not only provides information for those communities ready to get to work, but also illustrates the common ground between those working on food access, economic welfare, housing, transportation, and more.

Over the coming year, Farm to Plate will disperse the resource widely and provide on-the-ground advising for interested communities. Bringing a wide variety of expertise directly into communities is key to making lasting impact, as the project has affirmed that every community’s local food system challenges and opportunities are complex and unique.

Even with Vermonters’ willingness to tackle the issue and the information and expertise available, challenges remain:

- As with most issues of local concern, many communities are eager to address food access in their visioning and planning processes, but have a harder time identifying resources to implement their preferred solutions.

- Communities are especially supportive of addressing food access with local food production. However, many of the barriers that hamper farmers’ ability to offer food at a price point competitive with non-local food, or even to physically offer their food in their own community at all, are well beyond the ability of a municipality to affect. There is only so much progress that can be made locally without broader systemic change in the state and beyond.

Nevertheless, there are solutions that communities can implement as a valuable piece of the puzzle. And the more that Vermonters engage in collective conversation around local food access and integrate food systems into their community vision, the more desire and capacity grows to address those resource gaps and systemic barriers at a statewide scale.



From Field to Woods to Fork: Rooted in Vermont Celebrates Local Food

With the goal of creating more consumer demand for local food, Rooted in Vermont has continued to reach Vermonters in all corners of the state as it celebrates all of the great ways that folks are consuming local food in their own unique ways.

Whether it's sharing gardening tips and favorite recipes with Vermonters at state fairs and festivals, chatting about hunting and fishing at events with the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife, exploring all the food found in Vermonters backyards with the Vermont Department of Libraries, or celebrating favorite farms, farm stands, and farmers markets through Vermont Open Farm Week, much of Rooted in Vermont's work has been made possible because of partnerships with other organizations and Vermont governmental agencies.

IN THE VERMONT COMMUNITY

This past year, Rooted in Vermont had a presence at 15 different fairs, festivals, and town celebrations. From St. Johnsbury to Brattleboro to Hartland to Bristol, the different events had more than 7,000 attendees. Visitors to the Rooted in Vermont tent were able to jump behind the Rooted in Vermont photo booth with their kids and friends, share stories about their garden and favorite recipes, and participate in a grassroots action like declaring what local food they'd like to see more of in the grocery store.

VERMONT OPEN FARM WEEK

Rooted in Vermont was also part of the team that helped to organize Vermont Open Farm Week. Over 40 events were held in August when farms opened their barn doors and gates to give hundreds of Vermonters the chance to meet some of the producers, plants, and animals that make their favorite foods possible.

PARTNERSHIPS WITH THE STATE OF VERMONT

In addition, Rooted in Vermont also partnered with the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife and the Vermont Department of Libraries to bring a host of events celebrating local food to communities all over the state. The Vermont Department of Fish

and Wildlife and Rooted in Vermont organized a "Field to Fork: Wild Food Cooking Seminar," in Barre, Middlebury, and Burlington. The seminars brought together dozens of hunters, anglers, and localvores to learn basic skills such as processing and frying fresh-water fish, to making bear sausage, to frying squirrel legs, to slow roasting wild turkey legs and more.

Finally, over 20 Vermont community libraries held 25 events centered around the theme of "Exploring Food in Your Backyard," as a result of Rooted in Vermont and the Vermont Department of Libraries working together. Ranging from talks with Vermont game wardens, to edible plant walks, to potlucks and harvest bingos, the libraries brought together communities around something that is integral in everyone's life—food.



Supporting the Future of Vermont's Dairy Sector

Vermont's dairy sector, across all scales and production methods, has been impacted by the extended downturn in pricing over the past five years.

Dairy farmers are also faced with several other concurrent, high stakes issues, from water quality and environmental concerns, to a loss of equity for many farms and the inability to maintain equipment or infrastructure due to years of milk checks coming in below the cost of production, to changing consumer preferences away from fluid cow milk. This has created a perfect storm to make the current situation one of the most challenging the sector has ever experienced.

NETWORK EFFORTS

Within the Farm to Plate Network, we have focused on identifying additional product and market opportunities that can supplement dairy farm income or assist transition to new types of production if necessary—such as grass-fed beef production, dairy grazing apprenticeships, and expanding grain production. We've also focused on raising awareness about the variety of good career opportunities that young people can get into from cheese-making, to herd management, to veterinary services.

Many of our Network members have led or participated in a number of efforts focused on supporting the dairy industry over the past two years including the Northern Tier Dairy Summit, the Dairy and Water Quality Collaborative, the Future of Agriculture working group, a positive dairy messaging campaign and a dairy market assessment (2019 Legislative request in Act 83). There is no quick-fix or silver bullet that will solve the current dairy crisis. Instead, a wide range of market development and marketing activities, capital and service provider support, as well as workforce development initiatives are needed.

"[On the 2019 Northern Tier Dairy Summit] It always feels reinvigorating to go to these events. At home on the farm you can get bummed out about milk price and the way things are going but this gives you a second wind and makes me excited about the energy for dairy. There's a lot of people that really want to make this work and I think that in itself is part of the cure to the future of dairy farming in Vermont."

—Henry Pearl
Hill View Farm, Danville, Vermont



Local Foods Wholesale Market Assessment—Trends and Tools for Success

The recently released *Local Foods Wholesale Market Assessment* examines local food trends, provides tools and insights into how wholesale operates for producers and gives the broader food system community a greater understanding of how trends are impacting, supporting, and altering the viability, sustainability, and make-up of our local food system.

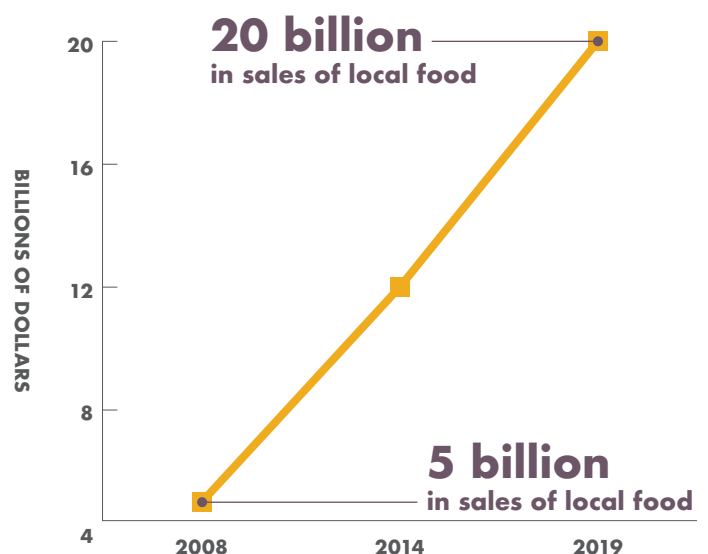
With growing interest in accessing larger in- and out-of-state wholesale markets (institutional and retail), the Farm to Plate Network saw a need to provide farm and food businesses with information on how wholesale markets work and tools to help them better assess the viability of wholesale opportunities. Additionally, as NOFA-VT did for direct markets in 2017, Network members recognized a need to strategically align support organizations and service providers in their wholesale market development efforts with business planning for farm and food businesses. After hosting a session at the 2018 Farm to Plate Annual Gathering, NOFA-VT and Farm to Plate teamed up to commission the Local Foods Wholesale Market Assessment.

WHAT DOES THE REPORT REVEAL?

There is a dynamic and rapidly changing landscape for local food within wholesale markets that poses both significant challenges and opportunities to Vermont suppliers.

While growth is strong for local food, with sales in the U.S. growing from \$5 billion in 2008 to \$12 billion in 2014 and expected to rise to \$20 billion by the end of 2019 (according to *Packaged Facts*), this growth has shifted sales from direct-to-consumer and direct-to-retail, to distributor-serviced wholesale. This means local food is more widely available to buyers at both grocery stores and institutions, but that it is also subject to increasing price pressure, tighter margins, and mainstream market forces such as consolidation that further compound price pressure felt by producers. Consolidation, in combination with increased demand, restricts market access for new suppliers, as larger traditional wholesale distributors prefer fulfilling demand, with existing, often larger, local suppliers rather than seeking out new buying relationships.

LOCAL FOOD SALES IN THE U.S. 2008–2019



Examples of consolidation include Amazon’s acquisition of Whole Foods, a key wholesale market for Vermont suppliers, which was immediately followed by announcements of “slashing” prices and greater centralized buying and supply chain management. Within Vermont, Reinhart’s acquisition of Black River Produce, which in turn is now being purchased by Performance Food Group, is another example of consolidation that is shaking up the local wholesale market and raising questions about access. Consolidation at this scale happening simultaneously at the local, regional, and national levels further diminishes supplier leverage in negotiating favorable terms and prices, and creates barriers for a new supplier’s ability to feasibly access wholesale markets.

While the system is under threat of commoditization and consolidation, demand remains for the values that drove early growth for local. For example, transparency was identified as Mintel’s 2018 Global Food & Drink trend of the year; and Hannaford Supermarkets Inc. identified hyper local—within 50 miles of store, sustainable/organic, animal welfare in meat and dairy specifically, and convenience as the top four consumer purchasing trends they are seeing. Efforts to support these values and principles and ensure a strong and vibrant local food system will remain. Recent efforts have led to the emergence of **‘intermediated markets’—local food marketing channels in which aggregators, distributors, and buyers explicitly base their business model around marketing and source-identifying local suppliers to consumers.**

A note on the use of the term “supplier”

In the global food industry it is standard practice to refer to farmers and food producers as suppliers or vendors. To be consistent with industry nomenclature, this section refers to them as suppliers.

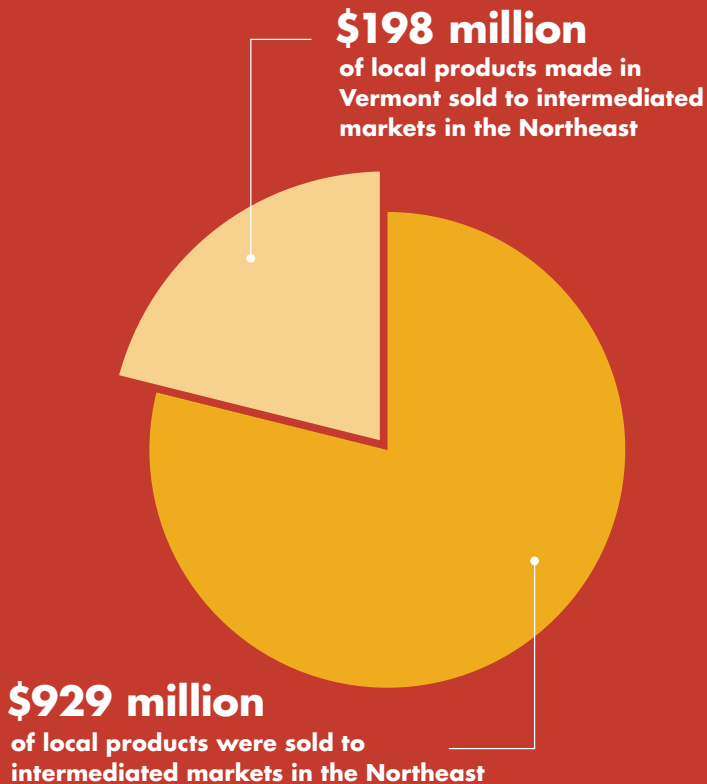
Our food hubs, farm-to-school and farm-to-institution initiatives such as Vermont First and Greenhealth Exchange food, co-ops, distributors such as Myers Produce, and distributor retailers such as Farmers to You are all examples of emergent local food focused intermediated wholesale markets.

The *Local Foods Wholesale Market Assessment* also offers farm and food businesses advice and tools for assessing their readiness and fit for wholesaling, including a margin waterfall calculator that helps producers calculate the net revenue per unit they can expect to receive after wholesale pricing and common retail and distribution deductions are accounted for.

» Takeaways and Next Steps

Intermediated markets are a critical foundation and opportunity of growth for local suppliers in the wholesale marketplace. According to USDA NASS’s 2015 Local Food Marketing Practices Survey, \$929 million of local products were sold to intermediated markets in the Northeast and \$198 million of that was made by Vermont suppliers. **How these markets are supported and adapt to the commoditization, consolidation, and competition described above, and whether or not they can maintain differentiation and grow while maintaining core values and providing viable returns to suppliers, will have considerable impact on whether or not the wholesale marketplace is a viable market channel for local suppliers.**

In the next year, Network members will continue to build out wholesale readiness tools, worksheets, and workshops for producers while cultivating strategic relationships to strengthen the supply value-chain for local food. These areas of need related to resources, relationships, and investments will guide the Network as it works to increase the viability of intermediated wholesale markets with producers, distributors, buyers, service providers, researchers, funders, and policymakers.





Resources to Support Small-Scale On-Farm Composting

Network members are exploring how farms can provide composting services to their communities by shifting costs from purchased soil amendments to managing on-farm compost systems that can accept small volumes of food scraps.

Farm to Plate goals include improving nutrient management and using food residuals to support the food system—in effect, to “close the loop” right here in Vermont. This aligns with the state’s values expressed in [Act 148, the Universal Recycling Law](#), which in 2020 will extend to individual households. With this approaching deadline, some communities will be in need of additional composting capacity. Meeting capacity needs requires a diversity of models, from municipal solid waste management facilities, to high-volume composting companies, to community-scale operations to fill in the gaps.

In 2019, a Farm to Plate Network task force began collecting information on the potential of small scale on-farm composting, including interviewing a variety of farms either currently involved in on-farm community-scale composting or interested in becoming so.



INTERVIEW KEY TAKEAWAYS:

- Complying with solid waste management regulations and with organic certification standards is a concern to farmers, but often due simply to a lack of clarity rather than real regulatory barriers;
- Many farmers are in need of technical assistance in designing the system and education around best management practices;
- Many farmers are concerned with the potential for plastics contamination or other mismanagement of food scraps by the generators;
- Farmers engaged in composting, especially those without livestock, need assistance in connecting with adequate sources of carbon feedstock to combine with the nitrogen-heavy food scraps.

Overall, farmers are excited about implementing this model, driven by a need to build their soil, a preference for managing a compost system instead of purchasing nutrient inputs, and a desire to provide an additional service to their communities.

Based on the needs identified to date, the Task Force is creating original materials, and compiling existing ones, into a resource for farmers to be released in early 2020. This resource will include clarification on relevant regulations, sample budgets both with and without door-to-door collection services, an overview of compost systems and how they could work in this context and scale, and materials for advertising to, and educating, community members.

Ultimately, while each individual farm may accept only a small volume of food scraps, this distributed model can, in aggregate, contribute significantly to the state's capacity for proper organics management. Returning food scraps to local farms keeps nutrients within the community and treats food residuals as a resource, rather than a waste. **Perhaps most importantly of all, closing the loop in such an immediate and visible way builds stronger connections between the farms and their communities and increases public understanding of the connection between organics management, soil health, and food production.**



LOCAL FOOD CYCLE



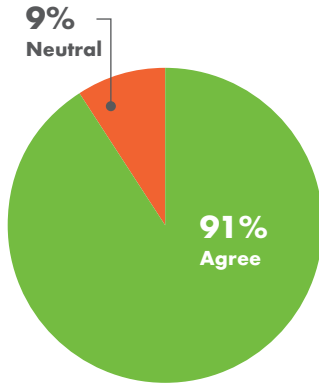


“Over the past 10 years, Farm to Plate has established a network infrastructure for organizations and individuals to work collaboratively towards a more resilient, local, and viable food system in VT and regionally. In looking forward to the next 10 years of Farm to Plate, I see a community of organizations continuing to grow and work together diligently, acknowledging its past successes and challenges, and exploring how to broaden its scope to more deliberately address equity, issues (like healthcare and childcare) which may originate outside of the agricultural sector, and a future deeply affected by climate change.

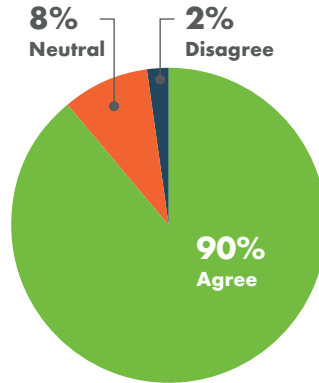
—Graham Unangst-Rufenacht
Rural Vermont

The Value of the Network

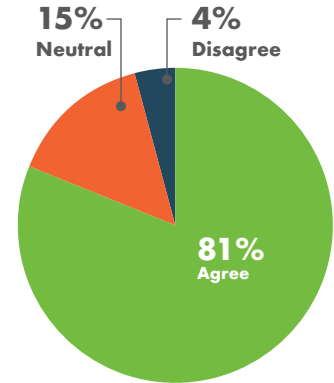
The Farm to Plate Network is made up of 350+ food system businesses, non-profit organizations, educational institutions, funders, and government agencies. In an annual survey of Network members and Gathering attendees, respondents were asked to identify which aspects of the Network they found most valuable.



The Network is helping my organization build stronger relationships with other organizations in the Network and/or the broader food system in Vermont.

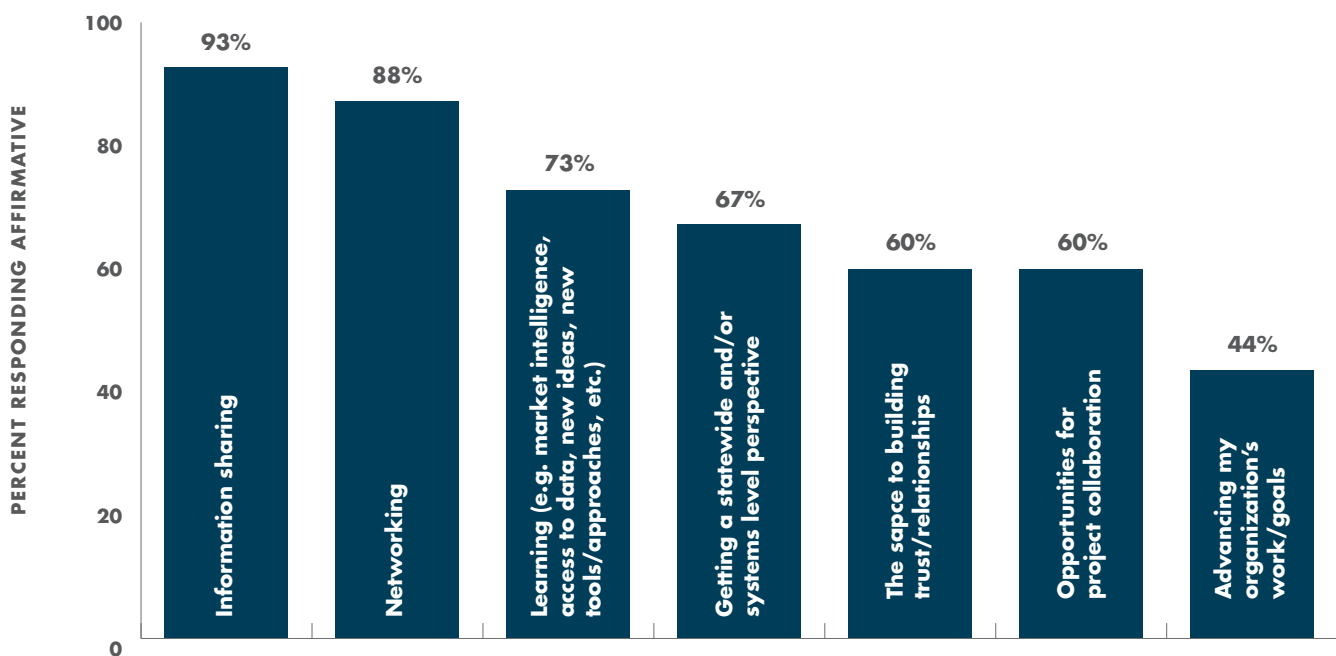


The Network is helping my organization build new relationships with other organizations in the Network and/or broader food system in Vermont.



The Network is helping my organization reach its own goals.

Percent of Respondents who Find Value in Each of these Network Services



Farm to Plate Network Leadership

Shared leadership provides overall network governance and guidance for the Farm to Plate Network. Network chairs and the Steering Committee are responsible for identifying gaps in strategies, developing processes for learning, helping organize the annual Farm to Plate Network Gathering, and shaping the evolution of the Network over time.

● Aggregation and Distribution Working Group:

Richard Berkfield*
Food Connects
Julia Scheier*
Salvation Farms
Theresa Snow
Salvation Farms

● Consumer Education & Marketing Working Group:

Jean Hamilton*
Consultant
Becka Warren*
Vital Communities

● Education and Workforce Development Working Group:

John Mandeville*
Lamoille Economic
Development Corporation
Liz Ruffa*
Merck Forest and Farmland Center

● Farmland Access and Stewardship Working Group:

Graham Unangst-Rufenacht*
Rural Vermont

● Production and Processing Working Group:

Regina Beidler*
Organic Valley

● Energy Cross-Cutting Team:

No chair

● Financing Cross-Cutting Team:

Eric DeLuca
Leverage Point Consulting

● Food Access Cross-Cutting Team:

Erin Buckwalter*
NOFA-VT
Faye Mack*
Hunger Free Vermont

● Food Cycle Coalition Cross-Cutting Team:

Natasha Duarte
Composting Association
of Vermont

● Health Cross-Cutting Team:

Suzanne Kelley
Vermont Department of Health
Jane Kolodinsky
UVM Center for Rural Studies
Ashwinee Kulkarni
Vermont Department of Health

● Research Cross-Cutting Team:

Molly Anderson
Middlebury College
Alison Nihart
UVM Extension

● Agritourism Task Force:

Lisa Chase
UVM Extension
Tara Pereira
Vermont Fresh Network

● Business Viability Indicators Task Force:

Mark Cannella
UVM Extension

● Communications and Marketing Community of Practice:

Vicky Tebbetts
VT Marketing and Communications

● Career Pathways & Image Task Force:

Liz Kenton
UVM Extension

● Workforce Development, Education, & Business Partnership Task Force:

Liz Ruffa*
Merck Forest and Farmland Center
John Mandeville
Lamoille Economic
Development Corporation*
Liz Scharf
Capstone Community Action

● Farmland Access Task Force:

Mike Ghia
Land for Good

● On-Farm Composting Task Force:

Cat Buxton
Grow More Waste Less

● Food Access Planning Task Force:

Faye Mack*
Hunger Free Vermont

● Independent Grocers Task Force:

Annie Harlow
Addison County
Relocalization Network

● Rooted in Vermont Task Force:

Shane Rogers
Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund

● Slow Money Vermont Task Force:

Janice Shade
Slow Money Vermont

** Denotes a Chair who is also a member of the Steering Committee.*

Additional Steering Committee Members:

Megan Camp
Shelburne Farms
Betsy Rosenbluth
Vermont FEED, *representing the Vermont Farm to School Network*
Gaye Symington
High Meadows Fund, *representing the Vermont Food Funders Network*
Anson Tebbetts
Secretary of Agriculture,
Food & Markets
Ted Brady
Deputy Secretary of Commerce
& Community Development

Network at a Glance



Working Groups

Working Groups (WG) are at the core of the Farm to Plate Network, one for each major “systems lever”. Each WG takes responsibility for a set of goals, strategies, and indicators from the Farm to Plate Strategic Plan to further develop, implement, and monitor annually.

Cross-Cutting Teams

Cross-Cutting Teams (CCT) gather a few times a year to assess key issues that cut across the entire food system supply chain. CCTs can serve as a “community of practice” to share best practices and information across the Network, organize events, or conduct research to inform future network action.

Task Forces

Task Forces (TF) are formed by WGs or CCTs in order to implement high impact projects that address key objectives and strategies identified in the Strategic Plan. TFs are created and disbanded based on need.

The Gathering November 7-8, 2019



The 9th Annual Farm to Plate Network Gathering brought over 280 Food System thinkers and actors together to take a deep look at the meaning of culture and envisioning ways to move our food and farming culture forward. Keynote speaker Andy Kolovos of the Vermont Folklife Center examined the lived experiences of farmers and agriculture's influence on Vermont's overall cultural identity.



"I value taking the time to learn about new methods for communication, as well as networking with other food systems folks, and feeling inspired by the people and causes we have in our state."

—Farm to Plate Network Gathering Attendee

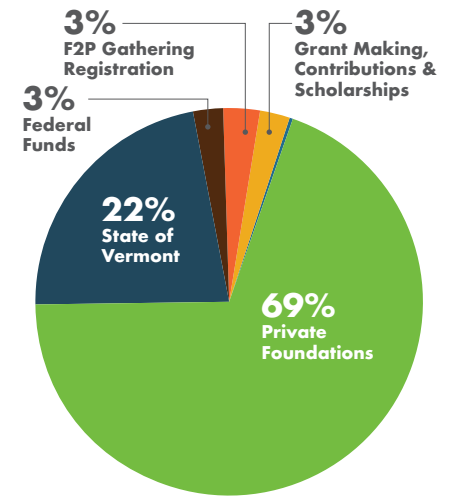




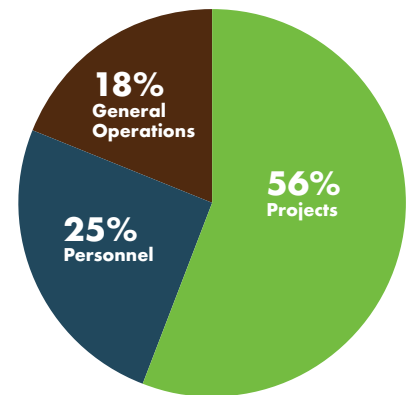
Financials

Revenue	
Private Foundations	\$587,743.45
State of Vermont	\$186,159.01
Federal Funds (USDA)	\$22,125.17
F2P Gathering Registration	\$24,988.75
Contributions & Sponsorships	\$21,670.47
Other Revenue	\$1,348.76
Total Revenue	\$844,035.61
Expenses	
F2P General Operations	\$158,437.92
F2P Personnel	\$212,378.44
F2P Projects	
Farm to Plate Website	\$5,013.68
Farm to Plate Network Meetings / Gathering	\$39,073.96
Farm to Plate Leadership Stipends	\$82,963.57
Rooted in Vermont Consumer Campaign	\$100,467.12
Independent Grocers Project	\$85,024.55
Slow Money VT	\$1,365.61
F2P Support for Other New England States	\$55,059.16
F2P Misc Grant Making	\$103,604.19
F2P Projects Total	\$472,571.84
Total Expenses	\$843,388.20

Farm to Plate Investment Program Revenue



Farm to Plate Investment Program Expenses



Funding Partners

The VSJF and the Farm to Plate Network Steering Committee are extremely grateful to our funding partners who help to fund the work of the Farm to Plate community and are actively engaged in various projects within the Network. Their ongoing support allows us to find creative solutions to complex problems, and grow a stronger, healthier, more prosperous food system in Vermont and the region.

- Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets
- Vermont Agency of Commerce & Community Development
- John Merck Fund
- Henry P. Kendall Foundation
- Vermont Community Foundation
- Sandy River Charitable Trust
- High Meadows Fund
- Angell Foundation
- Canaday Family Charitable Trust
- Jane's Trust
- Holburn Foundation
- Anonymous Foundation

About the Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund

The Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund serves as the administrator and backbone organization to the Farm to Plate Network and manages the analysis and goal tracking of the Farm to Plate Strategic Plan implementation.

VSJF provides the following services to the Farm to Plate Network:

- Guides **VISION** and provides **STRATEGIC GUIDANCE** and **COORDINATION** to Network groups.
- **SUPPORTS ALIGNED ACTIVITIES** and **FACILITATES DIALOGUE** across the Network on key issues to advance new ideas, fix bottlenecks, reduce unnecessary duplication of efforts, and open new markets for Vermont products in a coordinated fashion.
- Implements **SHARED MEASUREMENT PRACTICES** using the Results Based Accountability framework—a planning and evaluation framework used in Vermont by dozens of nonprofits, the legislature, and state government agencies—and tracks progress on the outcomes and goals of the Farm to Plate Strategic Plan.
- **MOBILIZES FUNDING** to support the work of Farm to Plate Network groups and strategy implementation.
- Manages **COMMUNICATION AND OUTREACH** about Vermont’s food system to member organizations and the general public.
- Provides **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT** and **LEADERSHIP TRAINING** opportunities for Network members.
- **BUILDS PUBLIC WILL** to support local agriculture and the food system as key drivers of sustainable economic development in Vermont.

Staff



Left to Right:

- Kelly Nottermann, Communications Manager
- Ellen Kahler, Executive Director
- Shane Rogers, Rooted in Vermont Project Manager
- Jake Claro, Farm to Plate Director
- Lydia Pitkin, Farm to Plate Program Coordinator
- Becka Warren, Farm to Plate Plan 2.0 Project Coordinator & Editor
- Sarah Danly, Farm to Plate Network Manager

“VSJF staff are responsive, dedicated, open to ideas from others,
and really help make sure work moves forward.”

—Farm to Plate Network Survey Respondent

Photography: Cover, clockwise from top left: Pete’s Greens, Maple Wind Farm, Hunger Free Vermont, Pete’s Greens, Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets (VAAF), City Market; Page 6, Meeting Place Pastures; Page 7, Almanack Farm, Meeting Place Pastures; Page 8, Salvation Farms; Page 10, City Market; Page 11, UVM Extension Center for Sustainable Ag Pasture Program; Page 12, Hannaford; Page 14, Willow Tree Community Composting, Sunrise Farm; Page 15, Grow Compost; Page 16, VT Housing & Conservation Board’s Vermont Farm & Forest Viability Program.

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