

From: Three Crows Farm [threecrowsfarm@gmail.com]
Sent: Sunday, February 24, 2019 10:42 AM
To: Theresa Utton
CC: Abbie Nelson
Subject: Farm to School funding statement

Hi Theresa, Abbie Nelson asked me to pass along my statement on Farm to School funding to you as I am not able to do so in person.

Thanks,

Angus Baldwin
West Farm
Jeffersonville, VT

My name is Angus Baldwin; I am a vegetable farmer at West Farm in Jeffersonville. We supply produce to numerous schools throughout Franklin and Lamoille counties.

I have been involved in agriculture as a career for the last 15 years, but have only become involved with Farm to School in the last two. I have been impressed with the dedication and work that so many people have invested to make Farm to School an integral part of the educational system in Vermont. I have seen tremendous enthusiasm from students and school staff for fresh, quality, local foods.

However, it is obvious that there is much work still to be done, and there remain many hurdles to bringing more nutrition and education to the students in our state. The economies of scale that Vermont faces throughout our agricultural sectors remain formidable. As a career long wholesale producer, I know first hand how far our farming community has to go to develop viable wholesale markets in all agricultural commodities. Besides discrepancy in commodity costs, there are ongoing challenges with distribution, equipment (for example, one school had to buy a tilt skillet just to be able to cook local eggs), training and professional development of cafeteria staff, and student outreach and education. By allocating the requested \$500,000 to the Farm to School budget, the state can make more effective progress towards reaching their goal that by 2025, 75% of VT schools will have integrated food system education and nourishing meals, purchasing 50% of food from local/regional sources.

Our state finds itself in the midst of a long-term crisis, the proverbial frog in the pot of hot water, in our rural communities, our health, and working lands. As a lifelong Vermonter, I've witnessed with dismay as the people who have been the stewards of the land and the economic drivers of our communities, have become disenfranchised and left behind. How children and adults face an epidemic of chronic physical and cognitive dysfunction, due to malnutrition and toxicity (I am of the first generation to have a shorter life expectancy than my predecessors in some time), and how our land base continues to be degraded.

We need to invest in our communities and land base. We need healthy children, we need money circulating through our communities besides those served by tourism or proximity to larger, wealthier populations; and we need a land management system that not only supports those things but also improves them. I strongly believe we have plenty of knowledge, talent, and ability to do this, but we have to curate and develop it with the urgency it deserves. Farm to School is one of the essential bridges to connecting our problems of nutrition, food security, education, and working lands, with solutions.

Thank you for taking the time to listen to my thoughts, I appreciate all the legislature has already invested into Farm to School, and I hope that you consider the \$500,000 base appropriation for Farm to School.