



Update on Farmland Conservation and Farmland Access

May 13, 2020

- Selling development rights often facilitates transfers to new/beginning farmers or to existing farm operations – more than half of VHCB projects enable transfers
- Demand for farmland conservation funding is strong: VHCB pipeline includes more than 40 projects, with potential requests for more than \$9M;
 - 7 VLT farm applications on hand with total requests for \$1.35M, which will leverage almost \$1.6M of primarily federal, but also local and private funds
 - 4 of these 7 are transfers: 3 to young farmers with existing businesses who are ready to scale up and secure a permanent home for their businesses, and 1 intergenerational transfer of a dairy operation
- Federal funding for farmland protection remains strong: more than \$3.5 million is available right now, for federal FY20, but it must be matched 50% from other sources
- The Covid-19 pandemic has reinforced need for a strong local food system so that all Vermonters have access to healthy food
- While dairies struggle with low prices, diversified livestock and vegetable/fruit farms are experiencing surge in demand. We have an opportunity to help new and emerging farm businesses secure access to land, while growing their operations with support from the Viability program and other partners
- Farmland conservation projects include permanent surface water protections of perennial streams and wetland areas, enhancing water quality. VAAFMs site visits ensure they are in good standing with RAPs, and provide connections to technical assistance to address issues and improve environmental stewardship

Example:

The King family in Fletcher owns a former dairy. They sold the dairy herd 14 years ago and since then have rented the land to another farmer for hay. Hannah and John Doyle established a small, diversified livestock and vegetable operation on their 10-acre homestead in Bakersfield. The Doyles have a contract to purchase the King farm, pending funding for the easement that would reduce their purchase price to an affordable level. With support from the Intervale Center, they have developed a robust business plan and are seeing an increase in demand for their products due to Covid-19. The easement will protect riparian buffers on Lamoille River tributaries.