

2023 Budget

I'm Dan Brooks from West Pawlet and with my wife Laurie who is a visual artist, I own and operate a grass based raw milk dairy, Wayward Goose Farm and market.

Please consider increasing funding for the Working Lands Enterprise Initiative in the state's 2023 budget to 15 million dollars. Early in 2020 we were approved for a Working Lands Grant but a series of dismal events beyond our control, including Covid, made us rethink our business and everything we'd planned. We needed to pivot drastically and we got the OK to change our grant funding to meet the realities of our new situation. So, partially funded by the Working Lands Enterprise Initiative, we upgraded the tiny farm stand inside our dairy barn to a new larger, stand alone structure. The grant funded the purchase of a large display fridge and freezer, a commercial dishwasher for our glass milk jars, and a Point of Sale system for self serve transactions.

This has allowed us to transition from an income based on the production of fluid milk for an outside processor, to a much more diversified farm. We have a sizable raw milk customer base and also raise our own beef, veal, pork and meat chickens which we can now safely display and sell. We make our own baked goods, holiday wreaths, dried and fresh flowers, and grow our own vegetables and pumpkins, all of which we sell direct to consumers in our farm store along with some of Laurie's art.

Most importantly, through our farm store we support at least 20 other local and regional producers, many of whom are beginning farmers, by purchasing their products. In our first full year of operation we spent 70 thousand dollars on goods for resale. Most of this money stays in the local economy in large part due to the flexibility of the Working Lands Enterprise board. Without these grants, it's unlikely we would still be in operation.

An increase in Working Land Enterprise's funding to 15 million dollars could help keep young farm entrepreneurs in VT, and incentivize new folks to begin farming.