

Suggestions for inclusion in Budget Memo to House Appropriations Committee

From: VAAFAM and VSJF

2.16.21

Working Lands Enterprise Fund: Support the Governor's recommend of an additional one time of \$3million for WLEF, in addition to base program funding in VAAFAM budget. Need consistent and reliable funding for this program year over year.

- NOTE: In the Plan, [Priority Strategy #1](#) indicates ... *Provide **at least** \$1.5 million in funding annually to the Working Lands Enterprise Fund. These grant funds are a unique and critical source of capital that leverage and accelerate innovation and sustainability in Vermont food system businesses.*

Farm & Forest Viability Program: Support the Governor's recommend of \$20million in funding in FY22 for VHCB. In addition, we are in support of the revised language VHCB is advocating for with House Appropriations: in Sec.B.1100 FISCAL YEAR 2022 ONE-TIME GENERAL FUND APPROPRIATIONS

(12) \$20,000,000 to the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board to be used **primarily** for affordable housing initiatives. **Up to \$5,000,000 of this amount may be used for conservation projects and Farm and Forest Viability Program activities that support the rural economy.**

- NOTE: In the Plan, [Priority Strategy #10](#) indicates ... *Fully fund VHCB's Farm & Forest Viability program annually with \$3 million from the Property Transfer Tax Fund, in order to expand their capacity to provide critical business and technical assistance services to farms and forest products businesses of all types across Vermont.*
- Funding Priority Strategy #10 would help to fund a portion of [Priority Strategies #11](#) and [#12](#)
 - [Business Assistance \(Priority Strategy #11\)](#): *Fund at least 8 FTE additional business assistance provider positions to assist farmers with transfer and succession planning, access to capital, farm management, planning for transition or diversification to other products, and sales and marketing. This estimate includes four FTEs needed to work with dairy farms; two FTEs needed to work with other types of farms; and two FTE focused on legal and tax support.*
 - NOTE: Dairy Business Innovation Center very recently started funding 2 of the needed FTEs working with dairy farms; it is an example that these additional FTEs can and should be funded through a variety of funding sources and not all expected from general funds).
 - [Technical Assistance \(Priority Strategy #12\)](#): *Fund at least 25 FTE additional technical assistance provider positions to assist farmers and other food producers with product-specific needs (e.g., goats, grains) and other forms of technical support (e.g., food safety plans, grazing methods, permitting, marketing, mediation, and crisis management).*

Restaurant Resiliency: When new federal stimulus funds arrive in Vermont, prioritize some of these funds to support the rebuilding of Vermont's restaurant industry.

- **Priority Strategy #4:** *Rebuild Vermont's vibrant restaurant industry with equitable grant programs and business assistance, and provide local purchasing incentives to support the expansion of farm-to-table relationships.*

Clean Water Fund: Support Governor's recommend of \$4.52 million for the Agricultural Water Quality Special Fund and \$3.43 million in the Capital Bill for AAFM Water Quality Grants.

- **Priority Strategy #26:** *To better prepare for and respond to climate change-related events, investigate innovative funding mechanisms for climate change adaptation practices (e.g., cover crops, building organic matter in soil), crop insurance for diversified Vermont-scale farms, and emergency recovery following extreme weather events.*