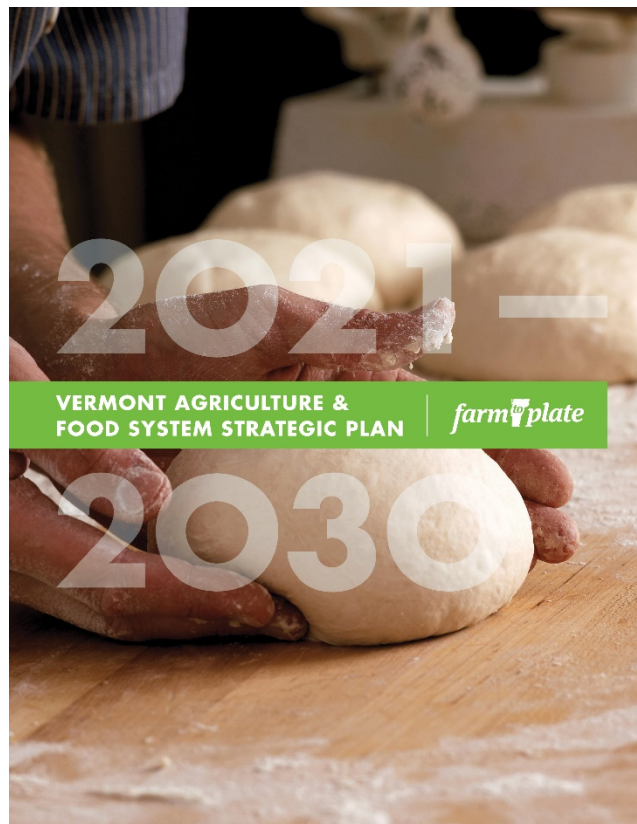


Vermont Agriculture & Food System Strategic Plan 2021-2030



**Presentation to the House &
Senate Agriculture
Committees**

February 11, 2021

www.vtfarmtoplate.com/plan



Presentation Flow

- Opening Remarks & Historical Overview – Ellen Kahler
- VAAFM Remarks -- Secretary Anson Tebbetts
- Walk Through of Plan Elements – Jake Claro
- Q/A Part 1 (until 10:10am)
- Transition to Briefs Presentation – Jake Claro
- Product Technical Assistance – Mark Cannella and Heather Darby + Q/A

- 15 MIN BREAK at 10:30am

Presentation Flow, cont.

- Briefs Presentations
 - Apples (Terence Bradshaw)
 - Meat Processing (Randy Quenneville)
 - Marketing (Rose Wilson, Lauren Masseria)
 - Food Security (Becka Warren, Faye Mack)
- Q/A Part 2 (until 11:45am)
- Remarks on Using the Plan – Abbey Willard
- Closing Remarks – Ellen Kahler

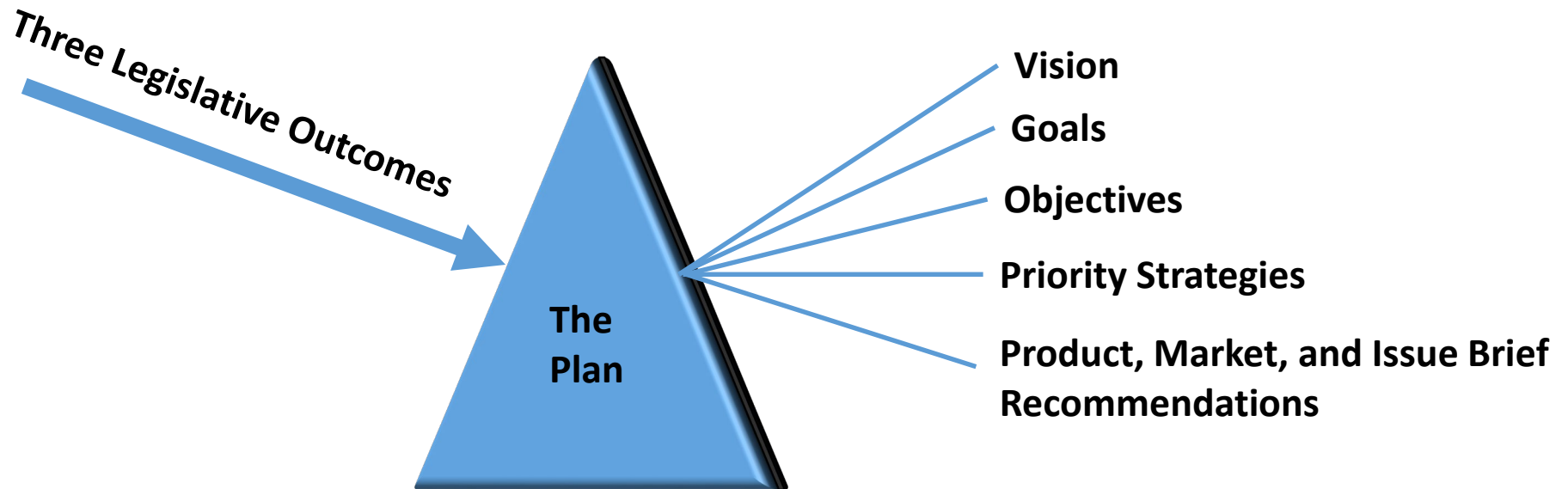


Land Acknowledgement (3rd page, pdf pg 4)

We are on the land which has served as a site of meeting and exchange among indigenous peoples for thousands of years and is the home of the Western Abenaki People. The Farm to Plate Network honors, recognizes, and respects these peoples, especially the Abenaki, as the traditional stewards of the land and waters. In that spirit, we acknowledge that we are guests in this land. We need to respect and help protect the lands within our use. Those who will implement this Strategic Plan have a responsibility to help make this truth visible, to support efforts toward indigenous sovereignty and well-being, and to dismantle the legacies of colonialism here in Vermont.



Understanding the Plan: Prism for Legislative Outcomes (pg 9, pdf pg 11)





Our Vision (pdf pg 13)



Our Vision for Vermont's Food System in 2030

Vermont's agriculture and food system will be defined by human well-being, environmental sustainability, equity, trust, collaboration, and ingenuity. It will be based on Vermont agricultural traditions of hard work, self-determination, and neighbor helping neighbor. Farms and food businesses of all sizes will thrive across Vermont, serving our state and region with a diversity of products sold everywhere from local farmers markets and restaurants to school cafeterias and grocery store shelves across the Northeast.

Access to land, infrastructure, education, capital, and technical assistance will be sufficient and equitable, so future generations of farmers and food entrepreneurs can build on the strengths of the past as they bring forward new energy and ideas. All of those who produce, process, sell, and distribute our food will feel at home in Vermont, earn livable wages, and have an economically secure quality of life.

We envision a working landscape where agricultural soils are protected and respected for their ability to sustain us in good times and hard times, in which farming and food production generate clean water, clean air, healthy soils, and ecological diversity. All Vermont residents will share responsibility for reducing food waste and managing nutrients for highest and best use. Agricultural stewardship that builds resilience and benefits communities will be publicly recognized and rewarded, cultivating deep appreciation for our farmland, farmers, and food producers. Connection to a sustainable food system will help our rural and urban areas work in concert to adapt to the changing climate.

We envision a food system in which there are no social, cultural, or infrastructure barriers to obtaining and enjoying local food. All Vermont residents will be well-nourished, and have easy access to healthy and culturally appropriate food. Race, age, gender, ethnic heritage, birthplace, and formal education will not determine who can participate in the food system, from owning a food system business to enjoying the fruits of the land. Vermont's food system will belong to us all.



Strategic Goals (pgs 13-15, pdf pgs 15-17)

Vermont Agriculture and Food System Strategic Goals

Fifteen strategic goals articulate the results we will achieve by 2030, in service to the Vermont Legislature's intended outcomes for the Vermont Farm to Plate Investment Program:

1. Increase sustainable economic development and create jobs in Vermont's food and farm sector
2. Improve soils, water, and resiliency of the working landscape in the face of climate change
3. Improve access to healthy local foods for all Vermonters

The 15 statewide food system strategic goals are first presented together, and then each goal is presented with its objectives, the measurable improvements that represent progress and will be tracked over time to indicate the degree to which the goal has been accomplished. Some objectives already contain known targets, while other objectives require additional work to establish baselines and set specific improvement targets. The objectives will inform the actions to be taken by the Farm to Plate Network, policy makers, state agencies, and others, and will hold us all accountable to achieving our intended goals. However, they do not tell the whole story about progress toward our goals, and the absence of data should not be used to dismiss individual experiences or delay taking action on an issue. We include one data visualization per goal, with sources listed on page 27. Additional data visualizations will be available on the Farm to Plate website as they are developed. Please note that the goals are not in priority order.

GOAL CATEGORIES

Goals are divided into four categories. The first three correspond with the three legislative outcomes. The fourth is our commitment to racial equity.

- Sustainable Economic Development
- Environmental Sustainability
- Healthy Local Food for All Vermonters
- Racial Equity

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Goals Cont. – Econ and Enviro (pg 14, pdf pg 16)

SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Vermont Agricultural and Food System Strategic Goals

1. Food system economic output, employment, and establishments in Vermont will increase.
2. Demand for Vermont food will increase.
3. Vermont's production portfolio is more diverse, farm and food businesses of all types will increase their economic viability, and businesses have equitable access to capital and to production, processing, aggregation, and distribution infrastructure appropriate to their needs.
4. Vermont food system jobs provide livable wages, safe, healthy, and supportive workplace conditions, and access to health care and other benefits.
5. Vermont farms and food system businesses have sufficient, diverse, and reliable employees, and there are accessible and equitable opportunities in Vermont to gain the knowledge and skills for food system careers.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY GOALS

6. Vermont farm and food businesses will increase carbon sequestration and reduce food system-related greenhouse gas emissions, and are able to adapt to climatic changes due to global warming, including floods, droughts, extreme storms, and pest and disease pressures.
7. Vermont farm stewardship is increasing ecological diversity and improving soil and water quality, and farm stewards are supported, compensated, and recognized for their positive contributions to the environment and public good.
8. Vermont's agricultural land remains in productive agricultural use, access to that land is more affordable and equitable, and land-use planning decisions maintain and promote a strong and viable food system.
9. Edible food, food scraps, and other food residuals are used for their highest purpose, and not considered waste.



Goals Cont. – Access for All and Racial Equity (pg 15, pdf pg 17)

HEALTHY LOCAL FOOD FOR ALL VERMONTERS GOALS

10. The amount of Vermont-grown food that fulfills the dietary and cultural needs of people in Vermont will increase.
11. All people in Vermont increasingly have the financial resources to access local food, including through programs that provide support for purchasing local food.
12. All people in Vermont are able to access locations in which local food is sold, served, or provided.
13. All people in Vermont can access the knowledge, skills, and resources to select, grow, hunt, fish, forage, process, store, and prepare local food.
14. Vermont's food system is resilient and able to provide adequate and accessible healthy local food in the face of emergencies—including climate-related natural disasters.

Vermont Agricultural and Food System Strategic Goals

RACIAL EQUITY GOAL

15. Food system organizations and stakeholders prioritize racial equity and actions to eradicate structural racism in their work, are accountable to Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) leadership, and support BIPOC participation and representation.



Goals With Objectives (pgs 16-26, pdf pgs 18-28)

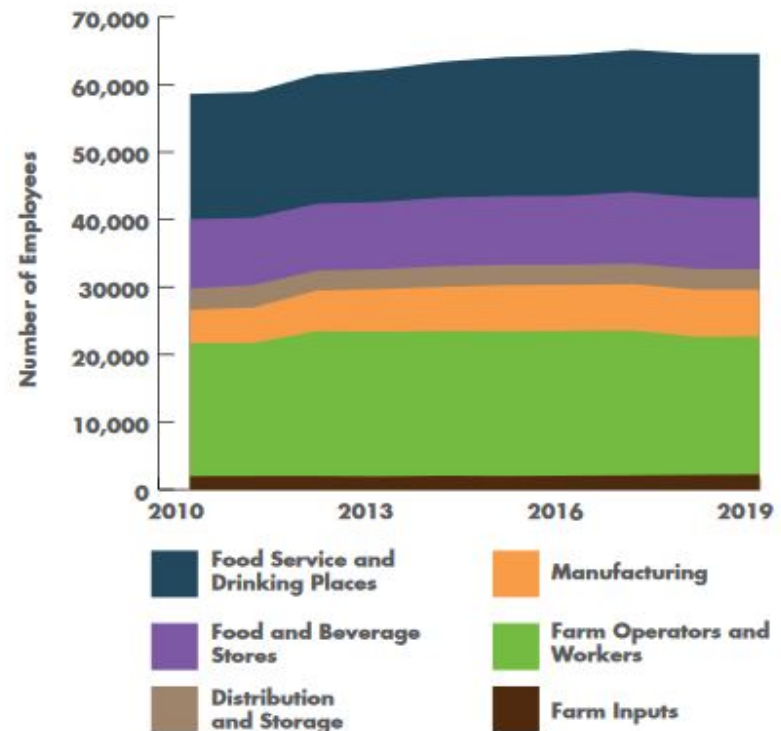
GOAL 1: Food system economic output, employment, and establishments in Vermont will increase.

OBJECTIVES:

- Food system economic output will increase by \$3 billion (a 26.5% increase) by 2030.
- There will be 5,000 net new food sector jobs by 2030.
- There will be 350 net new farm and food establishments in Vermont by 2030.
- The number of farm and food businesses with either employee ownership and/or cooperative ownership will increase.

EXAMPLE INDICATOR:

Vermont Food System Employment





Goals With Objectives (pgs 16-26, pdf pgs 18-28)

GOAL 2: Demand for Vermont food will increase.

OBJECTIVES:

- **By 2030, Vermont food products will be 25% of all in-state food purchases, by dollar value.**



Priority Strategies (pgs 29-33, pdf pgs 31-35)



Priority Strategies

Priority strategies are the recommended programs, investments, and policies which will lead us to meet our objectives and reach our goals. In most cases, the priority strategies are a distillation of interrelated recommendations from the food system briefs and thus, if implemented, may solve challenges in multiple areas of the food system. The [Supplemental Materials](#) contain a table of the priority strategies and the recommendations from the product, market, and issue briefs from which they derive. Each priority strategy is followed by a color-coded numerical icon(s) which indicate the outcome area(s) and goal(s) it addresses. The priority strategies are not listed in order of importance.

In some cases, a strategy may be within the purview and capacity of a specific organization, state agency, or the Legislature. In other cases, implementation of a priority strategy or its constituent parts can only be accomplished through multi-stakeholder collaboration. These strategies will be addressed by the Farm to Plate Network, and will inform the restructuring of the Network in the first half of 2021.

GOAL CATEGORIES

-  Sustainable Economic Development
-  Environmental Sustainability
-  Healthy Local Food for All Vermonters
-  Racial Equity



Priority Strategies





1. Provide at least \$1.5 million in annual funding to the Working Lands Enterprise Fund. These grant funds are a unique and critical source of capital that accelerate innovation and sustainability in Vermont food system businesses.    
2. Establish funding mechanisms (e.g., agricultural loan loss reserve, farm-transfer financing) to address specific food system investment gaps (e.g., for women and BIPOC-owned businesses).   
3. Improve funding opportunities and create equitable access for BIPOC organizations and BIPOC-owned businesses by developing multi-year, unrestricted BIPOC-centered grants and loan programs, while removing barriers such as unnecessarily long grant application processes, and combating explicit and implicit bias against BIPOC communities.    
4. Rebuild Vermont's restaurant industry with equitable grant programs and business assistance, and provide local purchasing incentives to support the expansion of farm-to-table relationships.    
5. Support stabilization and revitalization of the dairy industry through: (1) a comprehensive dairy products marketing program focused on quality that would assist producers with limited marketing budgets; (2) by expanding opportunities to differentiate the milk supply by supporting farms and processors to increase production capacity for higher-attribute milk; (3) increased capital investment and funding for dairy processing, storage, and co-packing (particularly for cheese, yogurt, butter, etc).   
6. To increase the availability of local meat, improve productivity and processing capacity at Vermont meat slaughter and processing facilities through investment in plant upgrades, new facilities, technical assistance, and workforce development.    
7. Make significant investment in storage, processing, and distribution infrastructure in order to enhance product innovation and quality across all Vermont food products, expand regional market access for businesses, and increase the resilience of local supply chains. This includes investments in new facilities, upgrades and maintenance to existing facilities, and energy efficiency and renewable energy incentives for food system infrastructure.       
8. Support product-specific value chain development. Strategies include bringing producers, distributors, and buyers together at matchmaking events, assisting producer-driven aggregation, distribution, and marketing enterprises, and funding the development of market opportunities in the Northeast.       



Table of Priority Strategies with Source Reference (pgs 193-200, pdf pgs 195-202)

Priority Strategy	Component Recommendations from Briefs
<p>1. Provide at least \$1.5 million in annual funding to the Working Lands Enterprise Fund. These grant funds are a unique and critical source of capital that accelerate innovation and sustainability in Vermont food system businesses.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Access to Capital</i> Brief: Recommendation #1 • <i>Agriculture and Food Policy</i> Brief: Recommendation #2 • <i>Lightly Processed Vegetables</i> Brief: Recommendation #2 • <i>Specialty Foods</i> Brief: Recommendation #4
⋮	⋮
<p>10. Fully fund VHCB through the Property Transfer Tax Fund, and allocate \$3 million annually to their Farm & Forest Viability program, expanding their capacity to provide critical business and technical assistance services to farms and forest product businesses of all types across Vermont.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Business and Technical Assistance</i> Brief: Recommendation #1 • <i>Farmland Conservation</i> Brief: Recommendation #2 • <i>Farmland Conservation</i> Brief: Recommendation #3 • <i>Racial Equity in the Vermont Food System</i> Brief: Recommendation #2 • <i>Racial Equity in the Vermont Food System</i> Brief: Recommendation #3 • <i>Supporting Future Farmers</i> Brief: Recommendation #3 • <i>Tax and Legal Services</i> Brief: Recommendation #2



Table of Priority Strategies with Source Reference (pgs 193-200, pdf pgs 195-202)

<p>7. Make significant investment in storage, processing, and distribution infrastructure in order to enhance product innovation and quality across all Vermont food products, expand regional market access for businesses, and increase the resilience of local supply chains. This includes investments in new facilities, upgrades and maintenance to existing facilities, and energy efficiency and renewable energy incentives for food system infrastructure.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Agricultural Literacy: K-12</i> Brief: Recommendation #3• <i>Agroforestry</i> Brief: Recommendation #6• <i>Beer</i> Brief: Recommendation #2• <i>Beer</i> Brief: Recommendation #5• <i>Bread</i> Brief: Recommendation #3• <i>Compost</i> Brief: Recommendation #2• <i>Direct Markets</i> Brief: Recommendation #3• <i>Direct Markets</i> Brief: Recommendation #5• <i>Distribution</i> Brief: Recommendation #1• <i>Distribution</i> Brief: Recommendation #3• <i>Eggs</i> Brief: Recommendation #1• <i>Eggs</i> Brief: Recommendation #4• <i>Food Access and Farm Viability</i> Brief: Recommendation #1• <i>Food-Grade Grains</i> Brief: Recommendation #1• <i>Food-Grade Grains</i> Brief: Recommendation #2• <i>Goats</i> Brief: Recommendation #2• <i>Lightly Processed Vegetables</i> Brief: Recommendation #3• <i>Lightly Processed Vegetables</i> Brief: Recommendation #4• <i>Produce</i> Brief: Recommendation #1• <i>Restaurants</i> Brief: Recommendation #3• <i>School Food Procurement</i> Brief: Recommendation #2• <i>Sheep</i> Brief: Recommendation #5• <i>Specialty Foods</i> Brief: Recommendation #5• <i>Spirits</i> Brief: Recommendation #1• <i>Water Quality</i> Brief: Recommendation #4• <i>Water Quality</i> Brief: Recommendation #5
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Table of Priority Strategies with Source Reference (pgs 193-200, pdf pgs 195-202)

<p>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).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Apples</i> Brief: Recommendation #4• <i>Bees and Honey</i> Brief: Recommendation #1• <i>Bread</i> Brief: Recommendation #4• <i>Business and Technical Assistance</i> Brief: Recommendation #1• <i>Consumer Demand</i> Brief: Recommendation #5• <i>Eggs</i> Brief: Recommendation #1• <i>Goats</i> Brief: Recommendation #3• <i>Grapes</i> Brief: Recommendation #2• <i>Grass-Fed Beef</i> Brief: Recommendation #4• <i>Grocers</i> Brief: Recommendation #3• <i>Food Access and Farm Viability</i> Brief: Recommendation #4• <i>Food-Grade Grains</i> Brief: Recommendation #5• <i>Hemp</i> Brief: Recommendation #2• <i>Hops</i> Brief: Recommendation #1• <i>Land Use Planning</i> Brief: Recommendation #1• <i>Land Use Planning</i> Brief: Recommendation #3• <i>Maple</i> Brief: Recommendation #4• <i>Meat Processing, Slaughter, and Products</i> Brief: Recommendation #1• <i>Meat Processing, Slaughter, and Products</i> Brief: Recommendation #5• <i>Poultry</i> Brief: Recommendation #1• <i>Racial Equity in the Vermont Food System</i> Brief: Recommendation #2• <i>Swine</i> Brief: Recommendation #1• <i>Water Quality</i> Brief: Recommendation #1
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Priority Strategies of Interest: Covid Recovery and Reinvestment (pg 30, pdf pg 32)

4. Rebuild Vermont's restaurant industry with equitable grant programs and business assistance, and provide local purchasing incentives to support the expansion of farm-to-table relationships. 1 2 15
5. Support stabilization and revitalization of the dairy industry through: (1) a comprehensive dairy products marketing program focused on quality that would assist producers with limited marketing budgets; (2) by expanding opportunities to differentiate the milk supply by supporting farms and processors to increase production capacity for higher-attribute milk; (3) increased capital investment and funding for dairy processing, storage, and co-packing (particularly for cheese, yogurt, butter, etc). 1 2 3
6. To increase the availability of local meat, improve productivity and processing capacity at Vermont meat slaughter and processing facilities through investment in plant upgrades, new facilities, technical assistance, and workforce development. 1 3 10
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8. Support product-specific value chain development. Strategies include bringing producers, distributors, and buyers together at matchmaking events, assisting producer-driven aggregation, distribution, and marketing enterprises, and funding the development of market opportunities in the Northeast. 1 2 3 10 12



Priority Strategies of Interest: Increasing Support for Existing Programs/Initiatives (pgs 30-31 & 33, pdf pgs 32-33 & 35)

1. Provide at least \$1.5 million in annual funding to the Working Lands Enterprise Fund. These grant funds are a unique and critical source of capital that accelerate innovation and sustainability in Vermont food system businesses. 1 3 6 8

10. Fully fund VHCB through the Property Transfer Tax Fund, and allocate \$3 million annually to their Farm & Forest Viability program, expanding their capacity to provide critical business and technical assistance services to farms and forest product businesses of all types across Vermont. 1 3 8 15

27. Continue to support the Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) Working Group, which is poised to be a central point of coordination and connection among the many needed PES research and design efforts. These efforts should focus on PES approaches that regrow or sustain Vermont's natural resource base so that it provides at least three ecosystem services: water quality, flood resilience, and climate stability. 3 6 7



Priority Strategies of Interest: New Policies and Investments (pg 32, pdf pg 34)

20. Incentivize local purchasing by reimbursing K-12 schools on a per-meal basis for purchasing local products above a certain percentage threshold. For example, New York provides \$0.25 per lunch to schools incorporating at least 30% New York sourced or grown product in their meal program.

2 12

21. Create a Local Food Access Funding Program with an appropriation of at least \$250,000 per year, available for programs that support low-income consumers in purchasing local food. Eligible program activities could include funding benefits which increase consumer purchasing power for local food, making wireless EBT machines available at no cost to producers and farmers markets, and outreach about any of these services. 2 11 12 13 15



Priority Strategies of Interest: Racial Equity (pg 30, pdf pg 32)

- 2. Establish funding mechanisms (e.g., agricultural loan loss reserve, farm-transfer financing) to address specific food system investment gaps (e.g., for women and BIPOC-owned businesses).**
1 3 15
- 3. Improve funding opportunities and create equitable access for BIPOC organizations and BIPOC-owned businesses by developing multi-year, unrestricted BIPOC-centered grants and loan programs, while removing barriers such as unnecessarily long grant application processes, and combating explicit and implicit bias against BIPOC communities.** **1 3 6 8 15**

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