

Agri-Mark, Inc.

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agrimark.coop

P. 978.552.5500

October 22, 2021

Agency of Commerce & Community Development
Commissioner Joan Goldstein
One National Life Drive
Deane C. Davis Building, 6th Floor
Montpelier, VT 05620-0501

Dear Commissioner Goldstein,

We deeply appreciate the efforts made by your Agency, Governor Scott and his team, and the Legislature in trying to ensure Vermont has a strong workforce moving into the future.

Along with many Vermont employers, we are struggling to find employees to help us meet our demands. Despite a World Class brand, a mission we are all extremely proud to support, strong wages, and an outstanding benefits package, we have been understaffed for the majority of 2021. The situation is negatively impacting our profitability and creating strain on our existing team.

We are trying everything we can think of to fill the positions we have available, and we feel well-positioned to promote the *New Relocating Worker Grant* in out-of-state markets. Our connections throughout the Northeast include many of our farm families, out-of-state partners, and our Butter Plant in West Springfield, Massachusetts and Cheese Plant in Chateaugay, New York.

Unfortunately, we learned that while we meet all other criteria, the vast majority of our positions are not eligible for the grant as they are not identified by the **Vermont Department of Labor in their Short Term Occupational Projections with the Most Openings**. Despite the critical importance of food manufacturing employees to support the dairy industry, positions in food manufacturing are listed as #311 on the Department of Labor's list – and that is the highest ranking in the Manufacturing Industry. We hope you will encourage the Vermont Legislature to review the New Relocating Worker Grant criteria and remove the occupational requirement.

We currently have more than 50 open positions on our Cabot, Vermont Campus that are absolutely critical to creating value-added products for the farm families in our co-operative. Our farmers' open lands, long-time support of Vermont tourism, and the many other job opportunities they provide are at risk if we can not fill these manufacturing positions.



Owned by the farm families of Agri-Mark who provide their farm fresh milk to their award-winning brands.
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We have participated in the Vermont Dairy Task Force since its formation earlier this year. While the primary focus is on the state's dairy farmers, the Task Force recognizes that farmer success depends on the success of co-operatives and the entire dairy supply chain. Labor constraints have been discussed at length. Ensuring the workforce to add value to Vermont products is a prerequisite to meet our shared goals.

Thank you for any help you can provide in updating the criteria of the Relocation Grant, and for any other ideas you have to fill vacant positions around the state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William T. Beaton".

William T. Beaton
Agri-Mark President & CEO



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