

House Agriculture, Forestry and Food Resiliency Committee

VT Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets Testimony Talking Points
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5/3/24

AAFM refers farmers regularly to Farm First services

- Connecting with Farm First coordinator, farmer peer network, or wellness check-in's
- Serves as a valuable resource as farmers continue to face challenges with finances, transition, emergencies, markets
- We share resources when we are on-farms and in the field
- We also received some suicide prevention and stress management trainings as field staff interacting with farmers

Continue to see the demand grow and the base funding from AAFM remains steady - \$20K per year annual appropriation

- Farming continues to be more stressful
- Farmers are presenting more complex challenges that take more time and professional response
- Increased demand following the July floods (doubled!)
- Valuable relationship building and established trust

Farm and Ranch Stress Assistance Network (FRSAN) supplemental investments with HireAbility and UVM Migrant Health Working Group

- AAFM current FRSAN funding lasts until 8/31/24
 - o Farm First likely to receive ongoing resources to support efforts
- See opportunity for ongoing coalition building to ensure we have an ongoing focus on farmer and farmworker health and wellness services
 - o Partnership opportunities with so many passionate and interested organizations
 - o Want to expand to support farm workers as well as farm owners
- Migrant Farmworker Mental Health assessment in partnership with UVM Extension
 - o Need stabilized funding for outreach programs and physical, mental and social health services
 - o Awareness that services and existing programs are not meeting transportation, language, or cost needs
 - o Specifically lack programming for Jamaican farmworkers (H2A seasonal farm workers)
 - o Desire for more farm safety trainings
 - o Need for housing
 - o Need for training and services provided by Spanish speaking counselors
 - o Need stabilized funding for designated health agencies and changes in health plans for youth to access support
 - o Explore telehealth mental model for this population to access clinicians
 - o Above recommendations focused on migrant farmworker programming would likely cost about \$1M per year