



## Vermont Food Security: Roadmap to 2035

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Testimony for House Committee on Agriculture, Food Resilience, and Forestry

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Hello, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Becka Warren, I live in Hartland, and I work at the Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund. I'm the Farm to Plate Network food security project manager. I'm here today with other Farm to Plate staff, and farm to plate members who are testifying, listening in the hallway, and watching online. We are all here bursting at the seams with excitement to bring you the Vermont Food Security Roadmap to 2035. The Roadmap charts the path for the State of Vermont to make policy choices that will ensure food security for everyone that lives here by 2035 - to ensure everyone in Vermont has the food they need, every day.

We are particularly glad to share our excitement with you today. Your decision to create the Farm to Plate Network 13 years ago built the partnerships and strategies that led to this food security roadmap and will lead to food security by 2035. The Vermont Farm to Plate strategic plan directed us to improve access to healthy local food for everyone by creating a detailed, implementable roadmap for food security which we spent 2 years developing. We surprised ourselves with how powerful and impactful a Roadmap we made. Your Farm to Plate vision has led to a powerful coalition committed to working with you to achieve this transformational plan

Today we will give an overview of the Roadmap, you'll hear from organizations about their commitment to executing the Roadmap, and we'll share how our collective action is successful because the State of Vermont took leadership on food security. We will start with testimony from Anore Horton of Hunger Free Vermont, Joie Lehoullier of Foote Brook Farm, and Monica Collins of Feeding the Valley. Then I will give a bit of detail and a walk through of the Roadmap document, and then we will hear from Abbey Willard and Stephanie Bergen about the commitment of the Agency of Agriculture and Department of Health. We do respectfully request that we wait for questions until we have finished our prepared testimony. We have timed our presentation so that we have ample time for discussion, which we are looking forward to.

The Roadmap shows us how to ensure everyone in Vermont has the food they need, and is organized under three goals that we will achieve by 2035. The goals, and the objectives and strategies they

contain, are based on the expertise of over 600 people in Vermont who took the time to share their opinions, expertise, and personal knowledge of food security. The three goals we will reach are:

- Government ensures food security for all in Vermont
- Vermont farms have the resources to be resilient
- Communities have the tools to support food security

Anore, Joie, and Monica are here to share how these goals are important to their work.

Now I'm going to give a short overview of the statewide engagement process used to create the Roadmap and how to read the document. To make the Roadmap, Farm to Plate Network members representing over 120 organizations were joined by UVM researchers, partner organizations from other sectors, and Vermonters who contributed their personal experience with food security. Together we designed and implemented a statewide community engagement effort to gather the successes and obstacles experienced in Vermont, by Vermonters. We gathered guidance from people at food shelves, farmers markets, hunger councils; from farmers, professionals, and people building food security for themselves and their communities. A particular effort was made to gather guidance from people who the Department of Health has identified as most impacted by the lack of food security in Vermont-- people who are black, indigenous, people of color, lesbian, gay, transgender, queer, living rurally, living in poverty, or living with a disability. .

600 people gave their ideas and opinions about how to create food security in Vermont. A UVM professor analyzed all the community feedback, and then small groups built the goals and objectives within the Roadmap out of that feedback. Organizations testifying today participated in the final writing, but the contents of the Roadmap are based on the statewide feedback.

Let's look at the Roadmap now and I'll explain how it is organized. Let's turn to page 14-15. All the pages before page 14 give the background of creating the Roadmap. All the pages after page 15 outline the objectives and strategies that will get us to our three goals and create food security in Vermont by 2035. You can see on page 14 there is the anatomy of an objective. It shows the goal area, the Objective itself, and then briefly explains why this objective is included. The strategies follow on the right side; and then for each objective, and throughout the Roadmap, we provide direct quotes from the community feedback across Vermont.

On page 15 there is a list of all the objectives under each goal. Anore, Joie, and Monica touched on a few of these and there are many more to achieve together.

I want to move to introduce Abbey and Stephanie, who have been incredible partners representing the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets and the Department of Health throughout this process. The state recognized the urgency and need for a shared path to food security in Vermont, and provided significant funding and staff support. Our collective action has been successful because the State of Vermont took leadership on food security. We'll start with Abbey Willard from the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets, followed by Stephanie Bergen of the Vermont Department of Health.

This Roadmap document is here to guide you, and all of us, in making policy decisions to ensure that all people in Vermont have the food they need, at all times and in all circumstances. All of us here today and our coalition partners watching online, at the Vermont Foodbank, the Intervale Center, and NOFA VT are committed to the actions recommended by the Roadmap. The Roadmap coalition will continue to be housed within the Farm to Plate Network and staffed by the Jobs Fund. We are already on the road to food security, and with your leadership, our collective impact will lead to food security for our communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to develop this Roadmap, and to testify today.