

Bill Number and Name	Acts Voted Out of Senate Committee on Agriculture in 2023
<p><b>Act No. 42 of 2023 (S.115)</b></p> <p>An act relating to miscellaneous agricultural subjects</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Act No. 42 enacted multiple provisions related to agricultural subjects.</li> <li>• The act authorized the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets (AAFM) to order a quarantine of domestic animals that are suspected of having been exposed to biological or chemical agents that may cause milk or dairy products to be adulterated or otherwise unsafe for human consumption.</li> <li>• The act updated the State’s laws regarding the sale of eggs.</li> <li>• The act increased the maximum amount of an administrative penalty AAFM can assess for violation of laws it administers</li> <li>• The act clarified that municipalities cannot assess stormwater fees on property subject to the RAPs.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Act No. 73 of 2023 (H.472)</b></p> <p>An act relating to miscellaneous agricultural subjects</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Act No. 73 enacted multiple provisions related to miscellaneous agricultural subjects.</li> <li>• The act clarified the process and formula for awards of operational grants to agricultural fairs and field days.</li> <li>• The act amended the time period under which AAFM is required to inspect a weights and measures device by allowing up to 24 months from the date of original application for a weights and measures license for AAFM to do the inspection.</li> <li>• The act repealed the statutory requirements for the issuance of certified livestock brands.</li> <li>• The act required an apiary to be inspected within 45 days of sale of the bees from the apiary, and the act repealed the permit exemption for bees transported into the State when the bees are registered in Vermont, were transported not more than 75 miles from the registered Vermont location, and are imported back into the State within 30 days of transport.</li> <li>• The act required products to improve distinct types of horticultural growing, such as hydroponics, to register with AAFM.</li> <li>• The act required persons in the business of selling, installing, or distributing nursery stock to get a nursery dealer license.</li> <li>• The act repealed the requirements that the Agency compensate owners of nurse stock when the stock is ordered to be destroyed due to disease or infestation.</li> <li>• The act extended for one year the sales tax exemption on advanced wood boilers.</li> </ul>

Bill Number and Name	Bills Voted Out of Committee, But Included in Other Acts
<p><b>H.205</b></p> <p>An act relating to establishing the Small Farmer Diversification and Transition Program</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As passed by the House, H.205 proposed the establishment of a Small Farmer Diversification and Transition Assistance Program at AAFM to provide small farmers in Vermont with State financial assistance to diversify production on a farm or to transition from one form of farming to another. The House proposed a one-time appropriation of \$350,000 for the program.</li> <li>• The Senate Committee on Agriculture proposed that that the Program would be more effectively run through the Working Lands Enterprise Program so that staff of that Program could administer the grant process. The Senate Committee retained the \$350,000 proposed appropriation.</li> <li>• The Senate Appropriations Committee chose not to vote on H.205, but included in the Big Bill an appropriation of \$150,000 to AAFM for a Small Farmer Diversification and Transition Program to be staffed by the Working Lands Enterprise staff.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Dr 23-0998</b></p> <p>An act relating to providing financial assistance to organic dairy farms</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Committee on Agriculture drafted a committee bill to establish a program at AAFM to provide financial assistance to organic dairy farmers in the State.</li> <li>• The language that the Committee drafted and approved was included in Act No. 78, the Big Bill. Under Act 78, \$6,900,000 was appropriated to AAFM to establish an organic dairy farm assistance program.</li> <li>• The application deadline was October 20, 2023. There may be a need for some additional appropriation for the program.</li> </ul>

**Acts Reviewed or Amended by the Committee that Originated in Other Committees**

<p><b>Act No. 64 of 2023 (H.165)</b></p> <p>An act relating to school food programs and universal school meals</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The act provides for free breakfast and lunch under the federal school food programs for all public school students and students attending approved independent schools on public tuition.</li> <li>• The act repealed the ability of a school district to seek an exemption from participation in the federal food programs.</li> <li>• The act also expanded eligibility for participation in the local foods incentive grant program by adding approved independent schools that qualify for the universal meals supplement as entities eligible for participation in the grant program.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Act No. 65 of 2023 (H.270)</b></p> <p>An act relating to miscellaneous amendments to the adult-use and medical cannabis programs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The act made multiple changes to regulation under the adult-use cannabis program, including:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Establishing a new propagation cultivator license that allows cultivation of immature cannabis plants and clones.</li> <li>○ Clarifying that the prohibition against a municipality banning cannabis establishments from operating within its borders includes regulation by the municipality that has the effect of banning such establishments.</li> <li>○ Extending the benefits that have been available to small cultivators to all outdoor cultivators, allowing such cultivators to enroll in the Use Value Appraisal Program regardless of whether the land was previously enrolled prior to the cultivation of cannabis, and entitling such cultivators to a rebuttable presumption that cultivation does not constitute a nuisance under law in the same manner as “agricultural activities.”</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

<b>Committee Bills Drafted and Reviewed by Committee</b>	
<p><b>DR 23-0138</b></p> <p>An act relating to protection from nuisance suits for agricultural activities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This bill proposes to provide that a person shall not bring a court action based on a claim of nuisance arising from an agricultural activity unless the person and the operator of the agricultural activity, at least once, attempt to resolve through mediation the issue or dispute that the person has concerning operation of the agricultural activity.</li> <li>• The bill originally extended additional protections from nuisance suits to agricultural operations but was amended in response to in out from advocates.</li> </ul>
<p><b>DR 23-0139</b></p> <p>An act relating to the authority of the Vermont Milk Commission to set an equitable minimum price paid to milk producers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This bill proposes to amend the authority of the Vermont Milk Commission to clarify the discretionary authority of the Milk Commission to set an equitable minimum price that milk handlers shall pay to milk producers for milk processed and manufactured within the State.</li> <li>• The bill proposes additional procedures that the Milk Commission would be required to follow in setting an equitable minimum producer price, including a producer referendum and public hearings.</li> <li>• The bill also clarifies the procedure that the Milk Commission would follow to disburse the proceeds from the minimum producer price directly to individual producers who are subject to price regulation.</li> <li>• The bill would also appropriate \$800,000.00 to the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets for implementation of the Dairy Risk Management Assistance Program in fiscal year 2023.</li> </ul>

<b>Additional Issues</b>	
<b>Animal Welfare</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There were efforts over the last six months to address the perceived lack of coordination of animal welfare in the State. A bill is likely.</li> </ul>
<b>Accessory on Farm Businesses</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There continues to be requests to amend the authority of farmers to conduct more accessory on farm activities on their farms, such as production of food products, beverages, and other value added products. A bill is likely.</li> </ul>
<b>Pesticides</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New York recently banned the use of neonicotinoid seeds beginning in 2027.</li> <li>• There have also been concerns about the effects of second generation anticoagulant rodenticides and whether their use should be more closely regulated. A bill is likely.</li> </ul>
<b>Timber Trespass</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There have been concerns that the crime of timber trespass has not been adequately enforced. There have been proposals to increase the Attorney General's authority to enforce timber trespass. A bill is likely.</li> </ul>