

VHCB's Farm & Forest Viability Program

**Senate Committee on Agriculture
February 1st, 2024**

**Presented by Liz Gleason
VHCB Farm & Forest Viability Program Director**



Mara Hearst, Levy Lamb, Dorset

BUSINESS PLANNING FOR SUCCESS

95 farm, food, and forestry enterprises across over 70 Vermont towns developed long-term plans while building skills in financial management and business planning. On average, clients increased their gross sales by \$64,000 and their net profit by \$11,000 during enrollment.



GRANT PROGRAMS

38 grants, totaling nearly \$900,000 and leveraging over \$4.5 million, were awarded to farm, food, and forest businesses to increase production, adapt to climate change, and meet clean water goals.



RURAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

REDI funds provided grant-writing and planning services to 48 rural municipalities and businesses, resulting in \$8.4 M in leveraged funds.



FLOOD RESILIENCE

Supported working lands businesses in short-term emergency response from flooding and frost, and long-term business planning with climate adaptation in mind



TRANSFERRING FARMS TO THE NEXT GENERATION

94% of farm transfer planning clients reported that their business will continue as a result of participating in the Viability Program.



FOREST HEALTH & CONNECTIVITY

Expanded programming launched in 2023 will reach over 500 forest landowners with land transfer education and one-on-one transfer planning support to combat forest fragmentation.



Farm & Forest Business Planning



Hannah Pearce, Hillside Farm, East Albany

2023 Numbers:

- ❖ 220 total working lands businesses supported
- ❖ 95 enrolled for in-depth, long-term planning
- ❖ These 95 businesses sustain over 300 jobs and generate over \$36 million in sales
- ❖ 100% improved ability to understand financials

“It’s been so reassuring. It’s easy to feel isolated, but they’ve helped me find a path forward and motivated me to keep going.”

~Hannah Pearce



Improvements to financial vitality in 2023

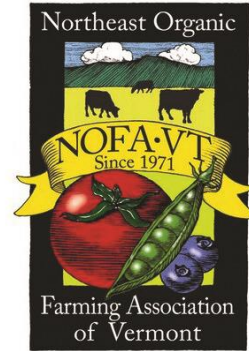


Network Partners

Service Provider Network:

- NOFA-VT
- The Intervale Center
- Center for an Agricultural Economy
- UVM-Extension
- Land for Good

In addition, we partner with a wider network to deliver critical services, such as land access work led by the Northeast Farmers of Color Land Trust and the Vermont Land Trust, and fund farm and food business assistance at VSJF, Food Connects, and Healthy Roots.



Center for an
Agricultural
Economy



Frost, Flood, and Climate Resilience

- ❖ We continue to see the impacts of 2023's frost, flooding, and wet weather
- ❖ Profitable farms have more ability to invest in proactive solutions
- ❖ Farmers want support integrating climate resilience into their business planning
- ❖ Business planning supports adaptation and innovation



Kylie & Sam Rossier, Sunday Bell Farm, Danville

- ❖ 94% of report that transfer planning clients report that the business will continue to operate because of Farm Viability
- ❖ One in ten clients enroll to help access land

Land Access & Farmland Transfer



Lisa MacDougall, Mighty Food Farm, Shaftsbury



Valerie Woodhouse and Eli Hersh, Honeyfield Farm, Norwich



The Baird Family, Baird Farm, Chittenden

Baird Farm, Chittenden

“There are all of these moving parts. It can get very complicated, and Sam has been great navigating all of our family members’ wants and needs. We’re now able to articulate our vision of the farm and figure out how it fits in with my parent’s vision so we can successfully transfer ownership. It’s a complex process, but now we have a plan in place to move the pieces over the next few years.”

Forest Economy & Forestland Transfer

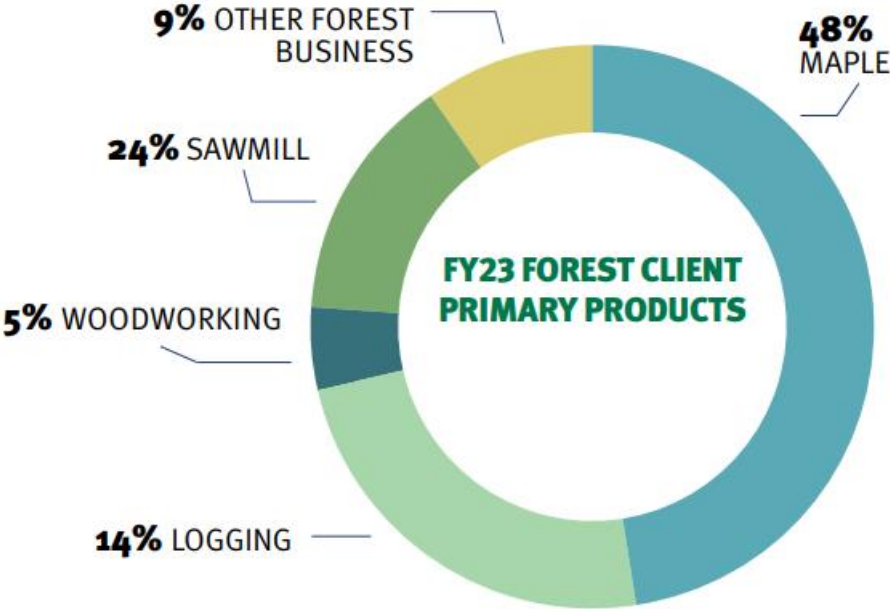


Catherine Emil, Vermont Woodworking School, Fairfax

Forest Economy & Forestland Transfer



Ann Nygard, Hauskaa Design, Burke

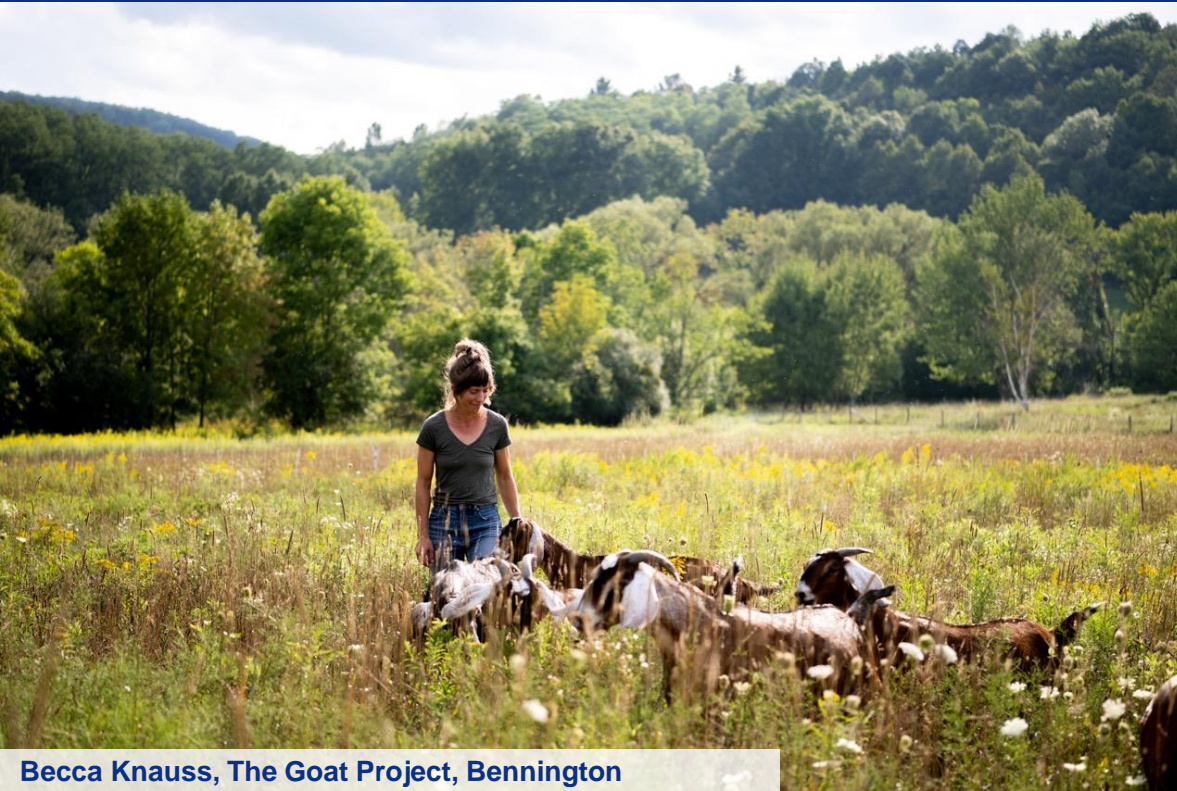


Business Plan Implementation Grants

- ❖ FY23 awards totaled \$142,559
- ❖ Provide capital to bring business planning goals to fruition
- ❖ Priority areas: increasing & improving local farm and forest production and adapting to/mitigating climate change



**Theogene Mahoro,
Mama's Farm, Williston**



Becca Knauss, The Goat Project, Bennington

The Goat Project, Bennington

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Adams Turkey Farm, Westford

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Dave & Judy Adams, Adams Turkey Farm, Westford

Water Quality Grants

- ❖ 2023 grants to 22 farmers will boost soil health, reduce runoff, improve manure management, and reduce reliance on off-farm nutrients
- ❖ \$755K in Capital Bond funds through VHCB leveraged over \$4 million in 2023
- ❖ Over \$4 million awarded since 2017



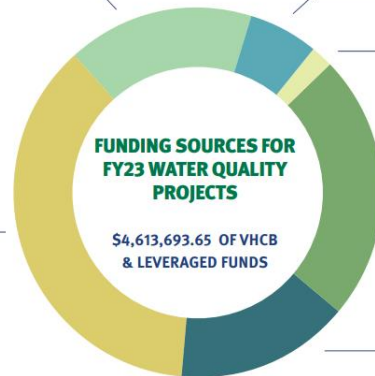
Nate & Kerianne Severy, Severy Farm, Cornwall



Peter Rainville, Four Girls Dairy, Fairfield

\$755,042
VHCB WATER QUALITY GRANT

\$1,669,202
USDA NATURAL RESOURCES CONSERVATION SERVICE FUNDS



\$294,670 FARM CASH

\$102,289 FARM IN-KIND

\$1,083,598
LOAN

\$985,797
VERMONT AGENCY OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD & MARKETS GRANTS

Rural Economic Development Initiative

The Genny, Albany



2023 Numbers:

- ❖ 48 towns and working lands businesses
- ❖ 17 grants secured totaling \$8.4 million
- ❖ \$1 million currently pending

McIndoes Academy Community Center, Barnet





REDI helps farmers expand

“We’ve never applied for a grant, and this would’ve been too daunting without a strong team to help us. This grant will get us to a stage in one year that would’ve taken 5.” – Alex Englert, Maplebrook Farm

Sweet Rowan and Maplebrook Farm



\$800,000 ➔ **\$18,822,078**

REDI FUNDS SINCE 2017

GRANTS TO COMMUNITIES

(LEVERAGED 22:1; \$276,795 AWARD AVG.)

Thank you!

