



Working Lands Coalition Partners

The Center for an
Agricultural Economy

Cabot Creamery Coop

NOFA Vermont

Preservation Trust of
Vermont

Shelburne Farms

Vermont Association of
Conservation Districts

Vermont Association
of Planning and
Development Agencies

Vermont Community
Loan Fund

Vermont Council on
Rural Development

Vermont Farm Bureau

Vermont Land Trust

Vermont Natural
Resources Council

The Vermont
Sustainable Jobs Fund
and Farm to Plate

Vermont Woodlands
Association

The Woodstock
Foundation

Dear Chair Kitchel and the Senate Appropriations Committee,

We are writing to express support for the Governor's proposed budget for the Working Lands Enterprise Initiative for Fiscal Year 2024 of \$1 million in base funding and \$3 million in one-time funding. Please consider restoring this appropriation as you build the Senate's version of the budget for FY24.

WLEB investments are creating jobs – good Vermont-made jobs the Vermont way – the type of jobs that honor Vermont's agriculture and forest heritage and celebrate our working landscape. WLEB investments are supporting entrepreneurs, innovators, and business owners in our farm, food, and forest sectors.

Over the past 10 years, the Working Lands Enterprise Initiative has:

- Funded 418 agriculture and forestry projects
- Distributed over \$13.6 million in WLEF funding
- Leveraged \$22.5 million in matching funds
- Invested in every county in the State of Vermont

In ten years, WLEF grantees:

- Created 539 new (FTE) jobs
- Employed 1,118 people
- Impacted 24,007 acres
- Generated over \$55 million in additional sales for the Vermont economy

The Working Lands Enterprise Fund keeps young entrepreneurs in Vermont and builds new markets for value-added products. It has increased capacity for in-state production and processing and helped to support the development of much needed infrastructure in both the agriculture and forest-products sectors.

We also know that during each of the past three years, the Working Lands Enterprise Board has received over \$10 million in grant applications. We see the need, the demand, and the creative entrepreneurship that Vermont needs to keep our working landscape and our local economy strong.

We ask that you support the Governor's recommendation for the Working Lands Enterprise Initiative.

Thank you for your consideration

Brian Lowe, *VCRD Executive Director*

On behalf of the Working Lands Coalition