

1 H.167

2 Introduced by Representatives Cole of Hartford, Bos-Lun of Westminster,
3 Burt of Cabot, Durfee of Shaftsbury, Lipsky of Stowe, Morgan,
4 L. of Milton, Morrow of Weston, Nelson of Derby, Surprenant
5 of Barnard, and Waszazak of Barre City

6 Referred to Committee on

7 Date:

8 Subject: Agriculture; food security; local foods; Vermonters Feeding

9 Vermonters Grant Program

10 Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to establish
11 within the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets the Vermonters Feeding
12 Vermonters Grant Program to provide grants to Vermont Foodbank to purchase
13 local food to distribute through the Vermont Foodbank's distribution channels,
14 and for Vermont Foodbank to offer subgrants to Vermont Foodbank
15 community partners to buy directly from smaller local farms, farm stands, or
16 small local farms with a focus on providing culturally preferred foods or local
17 relationships.

18 An act relating to establishing the Vermonters Feeding Vermonters Grant at
19 the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets

1 It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

2 Sec. 1. FINDINGS.

3 The General Assembly finds that:

4 (1) Food insecurity in Vermont, and across the country, has increased in
5 recent years after a decrease during the COVID-19 pandemic.

6 (2) Increased access to produce improves health outcomes for
7 individuals.

8 (3) For local food purchased from Vermont farms, every dollar spent
9 contributes an additional \$0.60 to the local economy.

10 (4) Vermont Foodbank has been administering the Vermonters Feeding
11 Vermonters Program since 2018, injecting \$9.5 million dollars into the
12 Vermont agricultural economy since 2018, by purchasing over 5.7 million
13 pounds of local food, supporting 299 farms in 2024.

14 (5) The General Assembly should ensure the continued operation of the
15 Vermonters Feeding Vermonters Program by Vermont Foodbank by
16 establishing a grant program at the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets
17 to provide ongoing, annual appropriations to the Program.

18 Sec. 2. 6 V.S.A. chapter 207, subchapter 4 is added to read:

19 Subchapter 4. Vermonters Feeding Vermonters Grant Program

20 § 4051. VERMONTERS FEEDING VERMONTERS GRANT PROGRAM

1 ~~(a) As used in this section, "local food" has the same meaning as "local" in~~

2 ~~9 V.S.A. § 2465a(b).~~

3 ~~(b) There is created in the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets the~~
4 ~~Vermonters Feeding Vermonters Grant Program to provide grants to Vermont~~
5 ~~Foodbank to:~~

6 ~~(1) purchase local food directly from Vermont farms to distribute~~
7 ~~through Vermont Foodbank's distribution channels; and~~

8 ~~(2) offer subgrants to~~

9 ~~(A) Vermont Foodbank's network partners to buy directly from~~
10 ~~smaller local farms or farm stands; and~~

11 ~~(B) Vermont Foodbank's partners that buy directly from small local~~
12 ~~farms with a focus on providing culturally preferred foods or local~~
13 ~~relationships.~~

14 ~~(c)(1) The Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets shall report~~
15 ~~annually on or before March 1 to the House Committee on Agriculture, Food~~
16 ~~Resiliency, and Forestry and the Senate Committee on Agriculture regarding~~
17 ~~implementation and administration of the Vermonters Feeding Vermonters~~
18 ~~Grant Program. The report shall include:~~

19 ~~(A) the total amount of food purchased with grants from the~~
20 ~~Program;~~

21 ~~(B) the total number of farms purchased from,~~

1 ~~(C) the total number of sites where food purchased under the~~
2 Program was distributed; and

3 ~~(D) if grants from the Program are used to purchase farm shares, the~~
4 total number of shares.

5 ~~(2) When the Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets reports under~~
6 this section, information regarding persons receiving food under the Program
7 shall be provided in a form that does not disclose the identity of the individual
8 persons, households, or businesses from whom the information was obtained
9 or whose characteristics, activities, or products the information is about.

10 Sec. 3. APPROPRIATION

11 In addition to other funds appropriated in fiscal year 2026, \$2,000,000.00 is
12 appropriated from the General Fund to the Agency of Agriculture, Food and
13 Markets to implement the Vermonters Feeding Vermonters Grant Program
14 established pursuant to 6 V.S.A. § 4631.

15 Sec. 4. EFFECTIVE DATE

16 ~~This act shall take effect on July 1, 2025.~~

Sec. 1. FINDINGS

The General Assembly finds that:

(1) Food insecurity in Vermont, and across the country, has increased in
recent years after a decrease during the COVID-19 pandemic.

(2) Increased access to produce improves health outcomes for individuals.

(3) For local food purchased from Vermont farms, every dollar spent contributes an additional \$0.60 to the local economy.

(4) Vermont Foodbank has been administering the Vermonters Feeding Vermonters Program since 2018, injecting \$9.5 million dollars into the Vermont agricultural economy since 2018 by purchasing over 5.7 million pounds of local food and supporting 299 farms in 2024.

(5) The General Assembly should ensure the continued operation of the Vermonters Feeding Vermonters Program by Vermont Foodbank by establishing a grant program at the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets to provide ongoing, annual appropriations to the Program.

Sec. 2. 6 V.S.A. chapter 207, subchapter 4 is added to read:

Subchapter 4. Vermonters Feeding Vermonters Grant Program

§ 4631. VERMONTERS FEEDING VERMONTERS GRANT PROGRAM

(a) As used in this section, “local food” has the same meaning as “local” in 9 V.S.A. § 2465a(b).

(b) There is created in the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets the Vermonters Feeding Vermonters Grant Program to provide grants to Vermont Foodbank to:

(1) purchase local food directly from Vermont farms to distribute through Vermont Foodbank's distribution channels; and

(2) offer subgrants to:

(A) Vermont Foodbank's network partners to buy directly from local farms of all sizes a variety of agricultural commodities and products; and

(B) Vermont Foodbank's partners that buy directly from local farms of all sizes with a focus on providing culturally preferred foods or local relationships.

(c)(1) The Vermont Foodbank, after consultation with the Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets, shall report annually on or before March 1 to the House Committee on Agriculture, Food Resiliency, and Forestry and the Senate Committee on Agriculture regarding implementation and administration of the Vermonters Feeding Vermonters Grant Program. The report shall include:

(A) the total amount of food purchased with grants from the Program;

(B) the total number of farms purchased from;

(C) the total number of sites where food purchased under the Program was distributed; and

(D) if grants from the Program are used to purchase farm shares, the total number of shares.

(2) When the Vermont Foodbank reports under this section, information regarding persons receiving food under the Program shall be provided in a form that does not disclose the identity of the individual persons, households, or businesses from whom the information was obtained or whose characteristics, activities, or products the information is about.

Sec. 3. APPROPRIATION

In addition to other funds appropriated in fiscal year 2026, \$2,000,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to the Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets to implement the Vermonters Feeding Vermonters Grant Program established pursuant to 6 V.S.A. § 4631. The Agency of Agriculture, Food and Markets may use up to \$67,500.00 of the appropriation under this section for the purposes of administering the Vermonters Feeding Vermonters Grant Program.

Sec. 3. CONTINGENCY ON FUNDING

The duty of the Agency of Agriculture, Food, and Markets to implement Sec. 2 of this act, Vermonters Feeding Vermonters Grant Program, is contingent upon an appropriation in fiscal year 2026 from the General Fund for the specific purposes described in Sec. 2 of this act.

Sec. 4. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on July 1, 2025.