

1 S.60

2 An act relating to establishing the Farm Security Special Fund to provide  
3 grants for farm losses due to weather conditions

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

5 Sec. 1. FINDINGS

6 The General Assembly finds that:

7 (1) In 2023 and 2024, Vermont experienced extreme flooding and other  
8 climate-fueled disasters that devastated farms and other working lands  
9 businesses across the State.

10 (2) Many existing State and federal programs that are designed to  
11 support farms are difficult to access, are administratively burdensome, and  
12 currently do not meet the needs of Vermont farmers in a holistic way.

13 (3) In particular, because federal crop insurance programs are not  
14 designed to serve the needs of smaller scale or more diversified farming  
15 operations, many Vermont farmers are not covered by crop insurance.

16 (4) The State should establish a permanent funding support program to:

17 (A) maintain the viability of farms in Vermont in order to ensure  
18 food security, climate resilience, rural economic vitality, and environmental  
19 health;

20 (B) continuously invest in farms in a way that makes them more  
21 resilient to current and future challenges; and



1           (2) “Farm” means a parcel or parcels of land owned, leased, or managed  
2           by a person and devoted primarily to farming and that is subject to regulation  
3           under the Required Agricultural Practices.

4           (3) “Farm Security Special Fund Review Board” or “Review Board”  
5           means the Board established under section 4634 of this title.

6           (4) “Farming” has the same meaning as in section 2.16 of the Required  
7           Agricultural Practices.

8           § 4632. FARM SECURITY SPECIAL FUND

9           (a) There is established the Farm Security Special Fund to be administered  
10          by the Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets and that shall be managed  
11          in accordance with 32 V.S.A. chapter 7, subchapter 5. The Fund shall consist  
12          of:

13               (1) funds transferred by the General Assembly;

14               (2) funds from public and private sources that the Secretary accepts for  
15          the Fund; and

16               (3) funds from federal government aid for State support of farmers  
17          suffering income loss due to weather conditions.

18          (b) The Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets shall ensure language  
19          accessibility of the Fund through procurement and provision of interpretation  
20          and translation services.

1       (c) All balances in the Fund at the end of any fiscal year shall be carried  
2       forward and remain part of the Fund.

3       § 4633. FARM SECURITY SPECIAL FUND; GRANTS

4       (a) The Secretary, after consultation with the Review Board, shall award  
5       grants from the Farm Security Special Fund to farms that have incurred  
6       financial losses or expenses due to an eligible weather condition.

7               (1) Grants from the fund shall be in an amount that reimburses a farm  
8       for up to 50 percent of uninsured or otherwise uncovered losses due to eligible  
9       weather conditions, up to a maximum award of \$150,000.00 total per year per  
10       qualified applicant farm.

11              (2) The Secretary shall establish criteria for the amount of an award  
12       based on the annual net income of the farm in relation to the median net  
13       income of all farms in Vermont.

14              (3) The Secretary may verify the occurrence of an eligible weather  
15       condition claimed under this section through a site visit or through use of  
16       available data from the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration,  
17       from other federal or State certified weather data sources, or from other public  
18       or private weather or satellite data or models.

19              (4) Losses reimbursable by a grant under this section include:

20                   (A) wages or compensation;

- 1           (B) replacement of lost income from destroyed crops or impacted  
2 livestock;  
3           (C) debt payments or other ongoing expenses;  
4           (D) costs of replanting;  
5           (E) livestock feed replacement costs;  
6           (F) infrastructure or equipment repair and replacement;  
7           (G) repair of farm roads and roads necessary to access farms; or  
8           (H) other losses as determined by the Secretary after consultation  
9 with the Review Board.

10           (b) The Secretary shall develop a streamlined application for awards under  
11 this section that shall include:

- 12           (1) a brief description of the damage that occurred;  
13           (2) attestation of an eligible weather condition or event;  
14           (3) an estimate of losses; and  
15           (4) a year-end report of farm income and expenses from Schedule F of  
16 U.S. Internal Revenue Form 1040.

17           (c) An application for an award under this section may be made at any  
18 time, and the Fund may only close the application process upon award of all  
19 appropriated funds for the relevant fiscal year.

20           (d) Applications for an award under this section shall be processed in the  
21 order received, but an application shall not be ready for evaluation until the

1 Secretary determines that the application is administratively complete and  
2 includes all documentation required by the Secretary.

3 (e) All administratively complete applications shall be evaluated by the  
4 Review Board. Within 15 days following receipt of an administratively  
5 complete application, the Review Board by majority vote shall recommend to  
6 the Secretary whether to issue a grant to the applicant. If the Review Board  
7 recommends an award under this section, the Secretary shall issue the award  
8 within 15 days following the date of the Review Board's recommendation.

9 § 4634. FARM SECURITY SPECIAL FUND REVIEW BOARD

10 (a) Creation. There is created the Farm Security Special Fund Review  
11 Board, which for administrative purposes shall be attached to the Agency of  
12 Agriculture, Food and Markets.

13 (b) Organization of Board. The Board shall be composed of:

14 (1) the Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets or designee, who  
15 shall serve as chair;

16 (2) the State Chief Recovery Officer or designee;

17 (3) representatives of three agricultural organizations who can  
18 demonstrate expertise in dealing with all sizes and types of farms in Vermont,  
19 whether through granting funds, offering technical assistance or advocacy and  
20 have a proven track record of working with farmers, appointed by the  
21 Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets; and

1           (4) two farmers who have received relief funding, appointed by the  
2           Secretary of Agriculture, Food and Markets.

3           (c) Member terms. The members designated in subdivision (b)(3) of this  
4           section shall be appointed to initial terms of two years. Thereafter, each  
5           appointed member shall serve a term of three years or until the member's  
6           earlier resignation or removal. The members designated in subdivision (b)(4)  
7           of this section shall be appointed to initial terms of one year. Thereafter, each  
8           appointed member shall serve a term of three years or until the member's  
9           earlier resignation or removal. A vacancy shall be filled by the appointing  
10           authority for the remainder of the unexpired term. An appointed member shall  
11           not serve more than three consecutive three-year terms.

12           (d) Powers.

13           (1) The Review Board shall review applications for assistance under this  
14           section, assess the accuracy and validity of the applications, and recommend to  
15           the Secretary applicants who should receive assistance under this section.

16           (2) The Board annually shall report to the House Committee on  
17           Agriculture, Food Resiliency, and Forestry and the Senate Committee on  
18           Agriculture the total documented Vermont farm financial losses from eligible  
19           weather conditions averaged over the previous three calendar years.

20           (3) In order to ensure that the Fund is meeting the needs of Vermont's  
21           agricultural community, the Review Board annually shall review the

1 application process, eligibility criteria, distribution, and accessibility of the  
2 Fund. The Review Board annually shall recommend to the House Committee  
3 on Agriculture, Food Resiliency, and Forestry and the Senate Committee on  
4 Agriculture ways to improve the effectiveness of the Fund.

5 (e) Officers; committees. The Board may elect officers, establish one or  
6 more committees or subcommittees, and adopt such procedural rules as it shall  
7 determine necessary and appropriate to perform its work.

8 (f) Quorum; meetings; voting. A majority of the sitting members shall  
9 constitute a quorum, and action taken by the Board may be authorized by a  
10 majority of the members present and voting at any regular or special meeting at  
11 which a quorum is present. The Board may meet as an advisory body under 1  
12 V.S.A. chapter 5, subchapter 2.

13 (g) Compensation. Private sector members shall be entitled to per diem  
14 compensation authorized under 32 V.S.A. § 1010(b) for each day spent in the  
15 performance of their duties, and each member shall be reimbursed from the  
16 Fund for the member's actual and necessary expenses incurred in carrying out  
17 the member's duties.

18 Sec. 3. EFFECTIVE DATE

19 This act shall take effect on July 1, 2025.