



Bruce Hennessey
Maple Wind Farm
1148 East Main St, Richmond, VT 05477

Date: March 31, 2025

To: Members of the Vermont Legislature
Subject: Testimonial in Support of the Farm Security Special Fund Bill S.60

Dear Members of the Vermont Legislature,

I am writing in strong support of the Farm Security Special Fund Bill currently under consideration. As the owner of Maple Wind Farm, a pasture-based regenerative livestock operation in Richmond, VT, I have experienced firsthand the devastating impacts of extreme weather events. The recent floods and windstorms in 2023 and 2024 resulted in losses exceeding \$177,000 for our farm, with significant loss of livestock, equipment, buildings, fencing, and essential infrastructure. These financial and operational setbacks threaten not only our farm's viability but also our ability to contribute to Vermont's local food economy. In fact, since we have experienced four 200 year floods in our lowest fields 4 out of the last 6 years, we decided to remove a third of our best pasture from primary production to mitigate potential losses.

The Farm Security Fund Bill is essential to ensuring that Vermont's agricultural community can recover from disasters and build long-term resilience. Despite careful planning and proactive flood mitigation efforts, including early weather monitoring and structural adaptations, we suffered catastrophic losses when floodwaters far exceeded predicted levels. While we received some assistance from state and nonprofit sources, federal aid was either delayed or denied, highlighting the critical gaps in available support systems.

Farmers across Vermont face similar vulnerabilities. The impacts of climate change—more frequent and severe storms, unpredictable flooding, and the threat of highly pathogenic diseases like avian influenza—pose existential risks to local food producers. This bill would provide much-needed financial and logistical support for disaster recovery, insurance access, and infrastructure improvements, ensuring that farms can withstand future challenges.

Agriculture is the backbone of Vermont's rural economy. Without targeted support, farms like ours will be forced to scale back production or even close, reducing the availability of locally produced food, diminishing rural employment opportunities, and weakening our state's food security. The Farm Security Fund Bill is a necessary step to safeguard Vermont farms and ensure that farmers have the resources to adapt and thrive in an era of increasing environmental volatility.

I urge you to support this legislation and provide Vermont's farmers with the stability and resilience they need to continue feeding our communities. Thank you for your time and dedication to our state's agricultural future.

Sincerely,

Bruce Hennessey
Co-Owner/Operator, Maple Wind Farm