

RURAL VERMONT 2026 COURSE OF ACTION

Rural Vermont moves into 2026 on the shoulders of four decades of agrarian organizing, educating, & advocating for food sovereignty in Vermont. We are facing rapidly intensifying and intersecting political, ecological, and socio-economic crises. Together, we continue fighting for the local and systemic change we need, following the leadership of our grassroots community. This Course of Action forecasts some priorities for the coming year, and will be adjusted accordingly in response to changing conditions and member feedback. Join our email list to get updates, action alerts, audio recordings, event invites, & more.

State Legislation we will be advocating for:

- **Farmer Emergency Relief Funding** - We are continuing to work with a coalition of agricultural organizations to move forward S.60, a bill creating a state based fund which would support farmers in climate and extreme weather emergency response and recovery.
- **VT Cannabis Equity Coalition** - We are continuing to work on core priorities of: devoting a portion of the excise tax for community reinvestment & social equity; gaining aspects of agricultural status for outdoor producers; implementing essential aspects of market equity such as direct sales for small producers & manufacturers; public consumption; and medical reforms.
- **Fair Share for Vermont** - This coalition, of which Rural VT is a part, is proposing a policy to create a more equitable system of taxation in VT and generate revenue for public needs by increasing taxes on personal annual income for the wealthiest 1% of Vermont taxpayers.
- **PFAS / PFOS ("forever chemicals")** - Led by Vermonters for a Clean Environment, this initiative seeks to ban any expansion of land application of sewage sludge on farmland and establish rights for farmers if contamination were to be detected in agricultural fields or products.
- **Municipal Exemption for Farming** - The Vermont Supreme Court ruled on May 31, 2025 that farming is not exempt from all municipal regulation, overturning longstanding precedent and opening the doors for a patchwork of town-level agricultural regulations across Vermont. We are working in coalition to ensure that the Vermont Legislature ensures that farming is exempt from municipal zoning, as well as the right to food production itself.
- **Bridges to Health Transition**: \$167,700 be included in the FY26 Budget Adjustment Act to aid in transitioning Bridges to Health from their current home at the University of Vermont to a fiscal sponsorship with Vermont's Free Referral Clinics. Bridges to Health is a health outreach and care coordination program for migrant and immigrant workers and families across Vermont who are not otherwise served by existing programs.

State Policy implementation:

- **Neonicotinoid Pesticide Phase Out** - We are working with the Protect Our Pollinators Coalition and others to monitor and influence the Ag Innovation Board and its work phasing out neonicotinoid pesticides (Act 182, 2024).
- **30x30 / 50x50** - Vermont's Act 59 of 2023, also called the "Community Resilience and Biodiversity Protection Act", is a law designed to protect natural ecosystems and address climate change by setting goals to conserve 30% of the state's land by 2023 and 50% by 2050. We continue to monitor its implementation and to raise awareness about shortfalls of the law and lack of public engagement.
- **Regional Planning** - Act 181 of 2024 is a land use law that overhauled Act 250 and set new policies and a planning framework for housing development while also aiming to protect natural resources. The creation of future land use maps is an ongoing effort led by Regional Planning Commissions. Rural Vermont is advocating for protecting farmland through this regional planning effort.

- **On-Farm Composting of Food Residuals** - Act 41 of 2021 changed the definition of farming to include the composting of food residuals. Rural Vermont continues to advocate for the Agency of Ag to release updated rules for this process, and for the decentralized management of food scraps and community scale composting in general.

Federal Legislation: The Livestock Owned By Communities to Advance Local Foods Act (LOCAL Foods Act, S.1212 & H.5341) - would clarify that on-farm slaughter is legal under federal law. Our coalition & congressional champions continue working on this tripartisan, bicameral legislation, despite the lack of a 2025 Farm Bill. Does this impact you directly? Join the National Family Farm Coalition Fly-in to D.C. in February!

State and Federal Policy Watchdog: We extensively monitor legislation relevant to the agrarian community. We build alliances & mobilize farmers to take action & testify on bills that impact them locally & nationally. We provide updates via email, social media, on our website, & audio throughout the legislative session. We work with the National Family Farm Coalition and Vermont's congressional delegation to actively monitor & communicate federal change.

Organizing:

- **Land Equity, Access and Reform** - We are working with community and organizational stakeholders with facilitation from the Land Access and Opportunity Board to understand and assess existing tools and programs around agricultural land access, how they may be improved, and what kinds of new regulatory mechanisms may be important to ensure that farmland, farm housing, and farming itself are accessible and affordable for farmers and farmworkers.
- **Accessory On-Farm Business and Act 250 Stakeholder Group** - We are working with stakeholders and soliciting feedback from the agrarian community on how to reform state law to better support Accessory On-Farm Businesses. This work requires feedback from a diversity of agrarian community members in order to craft a policy that supports the scale appropriate diversification of agricultural enterprises in a diverse working lands community.
- **Essential Needs: Healthcare & Food Access** - Strategizing with Vermont's Federal delegation & a broad group of organizations in VT and nationally whose members will be impacted by the coming expiration of the federal Enhanced Premium Health Credits and cuts to SNAP & Medicaid.
- **Solidarity** - We are in solidarity with farmers, migrant farmworkers, fisherfolks, peasants & eaters locally and globally as we advocate for human rights & work to confront and overcome oppressive and violent corporate and / or governmental forces. Some of our current efforts include speaking out against the genocide in Palestine & US complicity, and our long term work with La Via Campesina.

Education:

- **The People's Agroecology School of Vermont** - an independent project of Rural Vermont - celebrates 3 years of on-farm work brigades, workshops, political education events, and opportunities for local, regional, and international farmer exchange as part of a global network of agroecology schools.
- **On-Farm Workshops and Events** - We currently offer slaughter & meat processing workshops on rabbits, poultry, sheep, and pigs; cannabis cultivation workshops in partnership with the Vermont Growers Association; other events and workshops (from healthcare enrollment support, to storytelling & open mics). All workshops offer producer-to-producer learning, political education and organizing.
- **Advocacy Toolkit** - Check out the online resource, and get inspired to join a 2026 Small Farm Action Day at the Vermont State House to learn more and advocate for issues you care about. During a SFAD

lobby day, farmers and activists have the chance to address their concerns with members of the agricultural committees in testimony and learn about advocacy through training in advance.

- Vermont Wild Kitchen - a cooking program co-presented by Rural Vermont and the Vermont Department of Fish & Wildlife that demystifies the wild and cultivated foods that make up the local foodscape, and seeks to make all of these foods more accessible to more people.