



14 April 2026 2025

Re: Testimony on Act 41

Dear members of the House Agriculture, Food Resiliency & Forestry Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on Act 41 and for your continued interest in on-farm composting. I appreciated the opportunity to be with you last week and am providing supplemental written testimony to further share our perspective on the role of on-farm composting in Vermont's agricultural and materials management systems, as well as key considerations for implementation moving forward.

The Composting Association of Vermont (CAV) respectfully requests legislative and regulatory actions to ensure on-farm composting—explicitly recognized under Act 41—can be implemented in a way that is practical, clearly regulated, and economically viable for Vermont farms.

- **Amend the definition of “agriculture” within the Use Value Appraisal (Current Use) Program (32 V.S.A. Chapter 124)** to explicitly include on-farm composting of imported food residuals, consistent with the intent of Act 41, ensuring that participation in this practice does not disqualify eligible farms.
- **Advance the timely development and adoption of clear, science-based rules for on-farm composting**, aligned with real-world farm conditions, to reduce regulatory uncertainty and support informed operational and capital investment decisions.
- **Review and refine soil amendment labeling requirements for on-farm composters** to ensure compliance pathways are practical, workable, and reflective of the biological and nutrient value of compost and compost-based products.
- **Support expanded technical assistance for on-farm composting systems**, including compost production, community engagement, behavior change, and integration of compost use into nutrient management planning. These are all critical components of making this practice function effectively.

Decentralized, local nutrient loops—particularly through on-farm composting of community food scraps and other organic residuals—offer a practical, place-based strategy for advancing environmental health, economic viability, and community resilience. By diverting organics from landfills, these systems reduce waste and associated emissions while returning nutrients to working lands, building healthier soils that reduce reliance on external inputs, improve productivity, and strengthen food security. When properly sited and managed, composting systems also protect water quality by reducing runoff, erosion, and nutrient loss. At the same time, local composting fosters community awareness of the connections between waste, soil, and water, supports food recovery efforts that keep edible food in circulation, and creates new opportunities for farms to diversify income. From an environmental justice perspective, decentralized systems can reduce the burden of waste transport and disposal on over-impacted

communities while expanding access to local soil-building resources. It also contributes to climate readiness, as compost-amended soils improve water infiltration and storage, helping buffer both heavy rainfall and drought while strengthening the adaptive capacity of farms and rural economies.

CAV is a member-based, educational nonprofit founded 25 years ago and based in Hinesburg. Our membership includes farmers, compost facility operators, solid waste entities, community composters, businesses, educators, and residents committed to advancing composting in Vermont. Our mission is to champion the production and use of quality compost to support healthier soils, cleaner water, and stronger communities. Through education, convening, and policy engagement—including the annual [Vermont Organics Recycling Summit](#)—we work to strengthen the systems that connect organics diversion, compost production, and beneficial use.

Through my role as the curator of [Farm to Plate's Food Cycle Community of Practice](#) (FCCoP), CAV has been engaged in advancing on-farm composting as a strategy to build in-state capacity to manage food residuals while supporting farmers, particularly in rural areas where transportation distances and route density present logistical challenges. This work has highlighted the multiple benefits of integrating community food scraps into on-farm systems, including increased diversion, improved soil health, reduced fertilizer dependence, enhanced water quality protections, expanded food recovery, and diversified farm income streams. A 2019–2020 survey of farmers and agricultural service providers helped identify both opportunities and barriers to this practice.

To support implementation of this practice, the FCCoP produced a [Partnering Farms and Communities Guide](#) (2021; pdf provided) to provide practical guidance on regulatory considerations, business planning, composting systems, and community partnerships. Published shortly after the passage of Act 41, the guide underscored the evolving regulatory landscape and the need for clear, workable rules. Since Act 41 passed in 2021, CAV and FCCoP partners have continued to engage with state agencies and stakeholders to support rule development, including efforts to integrate composting into Required Agricultural Practices (RAPs) and ensure alignment with real-world conditions on farms (word doc provided). Ongoing conversations—most recently highlighted at the Policy and Practice session at the 2026 Vermont Organics Recycling Summit—have surfaced persistent challenges with the continued lack of rules as well as with the soil amendment labeling requirements (also in Act 41). CAV and Rural Vermont have a scheduled meeting with VAAF on Wednesday, April 15, to continue these discussions.

Thank you again for your leadership and for the opportunity to contribute to this conversation.

Sincerely,



Natasha Duarte, CAV Director

CC: Dan Goossen, CAV Board President

Related resources:

[Partnering Farms and Communities: A Regulatory and Start-Up Guide for On-Farm Food Scrap Composting](#) (Farm to Plate Food Cycle Community of Practice, 2021). PDF file provided.

[Draft RAP/On-Farm composting Rules](#) (Word document provided).

Webpages:

- [Composting Association of Vermont](#)
- [On-Farm Composting Toolkit](#) (a project of the Composting Association of Vermont)
- Farm to Plate Food Cycle Community of Practice:
 - On [CAV's website](#)
 - On [Farm to Plate's website](#)
- CAV's [On-farm Composting Resources page](#) contains a number of recorded webinars and associated resources about on-farm composting, including [two webinars with VAAFM about Act 41](#) (2022, 2023), as well as some virtual farm tours
- The Cornell Waste Management Institute maintains a very robust [resource page on mortality composting](#).
- As soon as the VORS 2026 Policy and Practice recording is available, I will share it with the committee.