

Jacob Powsner

Baird Farm
North Chittenden, VT
powsnerj@gmail.com

Happy 2026 Legislative Season! Thank you for your tremendous public service to Vermonters.

My name is Jacob Powsner. I farm with my family on a fourth-generation farm in Chittenden, down in Rutland County, and I currently serve on the board of the Vermont Maple Sugar Makers Association. On our farm, we graze beef cattle, grow Christmas trees, harvest timber, and manage a 15,000-tap maple sugaring operation with a growing agritourism component. Maple is how we pay our bills today.

Last year, I came to the statehouse to testify on the importance of the Farm Security Fund. As the bill has advanced this session, I'm writing to strongly urge you to appropriate the fully requested **\$15.6 million** to the Farm & Forestry Operations Security Special Fund for FY27.

Here's why:

As the "Vermont Food Security: Roadmap to 2035" makes clear, we need farms of all scales and crops to succeed in the next decade. This isn't a goal or a luxury—it's a bare minimum. We need working farms. Without them, Vermonters will face real losses and hardships when it comes to putting food on the table. Farmers need this fund fully funded, and so do eaters. Without adequate funding, we risk the economic stability of our rural communities, where farms provide essential jobs, drive local economies, ensure food security, and build resilience into our local food systems.

The climate is changing and creating crop volatility. We're already seeing this in the maple industry, which stands on the frontlines of climate impacts here in Vermont. Without proper funding, our farms will not bounce back from the next flood or the next drought. Weather events are becoming more frequent, more severe, and more costly. Farms will fail because of them. Small, diversified farms are consistently underserved by federal programs. Crop insurance is inadequate and a poor fit for most Vermont farms. Our smaller, more diversified operations deserve the same systems of support that bolster larger agriculture elsewhere.

Our farmers aren't just growing food—we're stewarding the land that makes Vermont what it is. When we fail to protect our farms from climate disasters, we

risk far more than a season's crop. We risk the environmental benefits that well-managed farms provide: flood mitigation, wildlife habitat, carbon sequestration. We risk the ecosystem services farms deliver and the preservation of working landscapes that define Vermont's character and support our tourism industry.

If this bill is funded at anything less than the requested \$15.6 million, I fear it won't be impactful. Worse, it may set us up for failure from the start. This funding number is well researched. It's calculated from three years of data from Vermont's Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation and the Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets. Farmers and loggers have experienced **at least \$94.01 million in losses** over the last three years—losses compiled from farmer self-reporting and BEGAP funding. I hope that implementing this fund will require the state to better track the impacts of extreme weather on farms over time, providing more accurate data. That data will likely reveal what most farmers already know: **the losses are greatly underreported**. Farmers don't ask for help unless they really need it.

We need it now.

The cost of inaction—measured in lost farms, damaged communities, and weakened food security—far exceeds the investment this fund requires. I urge you to support this vital legislation and protect the future of Vermont agriculture. The policy is only impactful if given the proper tools to effect change.

Thank you!