

Testimony to House & Senate Appropriations Committee re: FY27 Budget  
Submitted by John Roberts, West Cornwall, VT  
February 20, 2026

Thank you members of the House and Senate Appropriations Committees for the opportunity to submit testimony on the FY27 state budget. I'm requesting that you please appropriate \$15.6 million in FY2027 for the Farm and Forest Operations Security Special Fund.

Under President Biden's administration I served as the State Executive Director for the USDA Farm Service Agency (USDA-FSA) for Vermont. In my time there Vermont suffered a series of natural disasters that impacted our agricultural producers. These disasters were varied and included late spring freezes that impacted fruit crops, flooding that destroyed crops, fields and killed livestock, windstorms that impacted sugar bushes and finally, in 2025, a drought. Storm events impacting farmers seem to have become more common because of our changing climate. The financial cost to farmers can be quite devastating.

The federal government has a series of programs, administered through USDA-FSA, intended to assist farmers in recovering from disasters. However, well intentioned as they are, they can be extremely challenging to access and often functionally nonexistent for many Vermont farmers, who need rapidly available support in times of crisis like a natural disaster. One crucial benefit to the Farm & Forestry Operations Security Special Fund is the much shorter timeline in which it is expected to operate, providing payments to impacted producers in a far timelier fashion and when the need is at its most acute. Having a fund at the state level ready to be tapped when the need arises will ensure producers have support they need to rebound when extreme weather and climate disasters happen.

I support the Farm & Forestry Operations Security Special Fund and urge the legislature to pass and adequately fund this program so that farmers have a safety net as extreme weather continues.