

Meg Davidson
Jericho, VT
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Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

My name is Meg Davidson, and I am a Jericho resident. **I am writing in strong support of S.60 and the FY27 budget request to appropriate \$15.6 million to the Farm & Forestry Operations Security Special Fund.**

I am not a farmer myself, but I have been an active CSA member for many years and have developed deep relationships with the farmers in my community. Over the past two decades, I have worked in community food security in Vermont and beyond—from running a soup kitchen to leading statewide advocacy campaigns to improve access to SNAP benefits. I am a member of the Jericho-Underhill Food Hub, a Meals on Wheels volunteer, a consultant supporting the Vermont Foodbank, and a volunteer at my local foodshelf. Through all of this work, I have come to believe deeply that Vermont cannot thrive unless its farmers do.

Extreme weather is no longer an occasional disruption. It is a persistent and growing threat to Vermont's farms and forestry operations. Over the past three years alone, documented losses to farms and forestry businesses due to extreme weather total more than \$94 million. These are not abstract numbers. They represent destroyed crops, damaged infrastructure, lost income, and mounting uncertainty for the people who keep our state fed and our rural economy functioning.

The data gathered by the Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets and the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation paint a stark picture:

- In 2023, Vermont farms and forestry operations experienced \$57.5 million in losses due to late spring freezes and summer flooding.
- In 2024, additional summer flooding resulted in \$18.5 million in documented losses.
- In 2025, summer and fall drought conditions caused \$18.01 million in farm losses.

S.60 responds to this reality with a practical, data-driven solution. The Farm & Forestry Operations Security Special Fund is designed to provide state-based, rapidly available financial support so farmers and loggers can recover from extreme weather events and continue operating. **The recommended initial appropriation of \$15.6 million (equal to half of the average documented losses over the past three years) is both reasonable and necessary given the scale of recent impacts.**

Beyond immediate relief, the creation of this fund will also strengthen Vermont's ability to track and understand the ongoing impacts of extreme weather on our working lands. Improved data will lead to smarter policy decisions and more accurate future appropriations, helping the state respond proactively rather than reactively.

As someone who volunteers in food access programs and relies on Vermont farmers to feed my family and my community, I see firsthand how fragile our food system becomes when farms are forced to absorb repeated, unrecoverable losses. Investing in the Farm & Forestry Operations Security Special Fund is an investment in food security, rural livelihoods, and the long-term resilience of Vermont's economy.

I urge you to pass S.60 and fully fund the Farm & Forestry Operations Security Special Fund at \$15.6 million in the FY27 budget. Vermont's farmers and forestry workers are doing their part to adapt to a changing climate. They need the state to meet them with the support required to survive and continue their essential work.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Meg Davidson
Jericho, Vermont