

**Testimony re: FY27 Funding request for the Farm Security Fund**

Justin W. Rich

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My name is Justin Rich, and I own and operate Burnt Rock Farm, a medium-sized certified organic vegetable farm in Huntington, VT. I want to thank the committee for the opportunity to testify about the importance of adequate funding the Farm Security Fund envisioned in S.60.

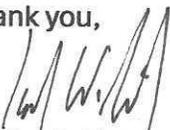
I am asking the committee to please appropriate \$15.6 million in FY2027 for the Farm and Forestry Operations Security Special Fund. In an increasingly unstable climate, disaster aid like this is crucial to help maintain the viability of our working lands businesses.

We farm fields along the Huntington River, most of which rarely see floodwater, as many of the terraces were formed by the river when it was draining a glacier 15,000 years ago. On July 10, 2024, Hurricane Beryl dropped 5.5" of water in 7 hours on our valley, and we experienced catastrophic flooding, unlike any since at least 1938. As a result, we lost hundreds of thousands of dollars of crops and had many acres of fertile farmland destroyed by the rushing waters.

We carry crop insurance – and that helped - but it was not adequate to cover the losses we experienced. Aid from the State of Vermont's Business Emergency Gap Assistance Program (BEGAP) was absolutely instrumental in helping us recover from that disaster, and ensuring that we could afford to clean up and put crops in the ground the next spring.

An adequately funded Farm and Forestry Operations Security Special Fund will codify the supports that we received from the *ad hoc* BEGAP program, and ensure that similar support can be available for others to rely on in the future. Please appropriate \$15.6 million in FY2027 for the Farm and Forestry Operations Security Special Fund.

Thank you,



Justin W. Rich