

Jamie Skye Bianco
RambleBramble Farm
3SquaresVT Awareness Day
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House Committee on Commerce and Economic Development

Thank you very much for having me here. My name is Jamie “Skye” Bianco and I am the owner of RambleBramble Farm. I am here testifying in support of \$500,000 in ongoing funding for Crop Cash, Crop Cash Plus, and Farm Share - specifically sharing my story about how Crop Cash Plus has impacted my farm.

RambleBramble Farm sits on 136 acres on top of the mountains just south of Camels Hump in Huntington. I am a VOF (Vermont Organic Farmers) Certified Organic protein producer raising sheep and goats and chickens, particularly for eggs, as well as baking sourdough and focaccia bread. I sell primarily in farmers markets, including Burlington, Winooski, Jericho, Richmond and Middlebury. I also wholesale to other farmers and farm stores, including Trillium Hill (Hinesburg), and Last Resort (Monkton), as well as wholesale to small groceries like Jubilee and 5th Quarter and restaurants like Ida Pizza Pies.

I am committed to producing the cleanest, most nutritious food possible, and my customers expect that from my brand. These practices are labor intensive and expensive, which has historically made clean, nutritionally dense food inaccessible to many folks due to cost. Despite the expense that’s involved in production and delivery, Crop Cash Plus has enabled more customers to afford my products. I am very proud to share that approximately 30% of my lamb and goat meat sales, and 20% of my bread sales, come in through customers who are paying with Crop Cash Plus. I have a lot of conversations with my customers and, while a few are New Americans, most who are purchasing are not constituents of “ethnic markets.” These are people who are purchasing my meats instead of others because they prefer organic sheep and goat and they want nutritious food. We talk a lot about my growing practices, and we talk about their circumstances. And I can share with you that they are very consciously choosing to support the market, the farmers and their own health and well-being.

I had a conversation with one regular customer in Winooski, who, during the federal withholding of SNAP benefits, had visited the local food pantry. He came and told me that he was holding onto his Crop Cash Plus for meat because the pantry could only supply limited protein options. I cannot begin to say enough about how important it is for these folks to have the support of this program in order to access high-quality eggs

and high-quality meat. I have many customers who are disabled, and many with children. They want clean and nutritious food. And, because I also bake bread, they refer to me as a little farmer grocery. And that is accurate as well as uplifting.

Further, it goes without saying that with that high of a percentage of sales being supported by Crop Cash Plus, as a farmer and as a small business, I'm hugely invested and a partner in this program. Let me share that, because of this growth in sales, I'm taking on a part-time person for 2026 in order to increase the number of animals that I'm growing. I am able to offer housing as well. My hope is to become able to support this position full-time. This increase in growth of the farm and farm employment is a direct result of the growth in sales that are represented here and because the demand, particularly for goat, has skyrocketed. This growth is a direct result of increase of sales supported by food accessibility programs.

The farm works with various agencies that support our for grazing but fundamentally the ability to grow my farm is directly dependent upon who's buying my meat, eggs and bread. I cannot urge you strongly enough to support \$500,000 in funding for Crop Cash, Crop Cash Plus, and Farm Share in the FY27 budget. This is going to be the engine for growth for small farms as well as for food accessibility, and it is the ethically right thing to do to feed people nutritionally dense, locally grown food. I thank you so much.