



Vermont Farm to Plate Investment Program

*Presentation to Vermont Senate Committee on Agriculture and
Vermont House Committee on Agriculture, Food Resiliency & Forestry*

1.22.26

Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund 10 V.S.A. §326-330

VERMONT **GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

The Vermont Statutes Online

Title 10: Conservation and Development

Chapter 15A: The Sustainable Jobs Fund Program

§ 326. Findings, policies, and goals

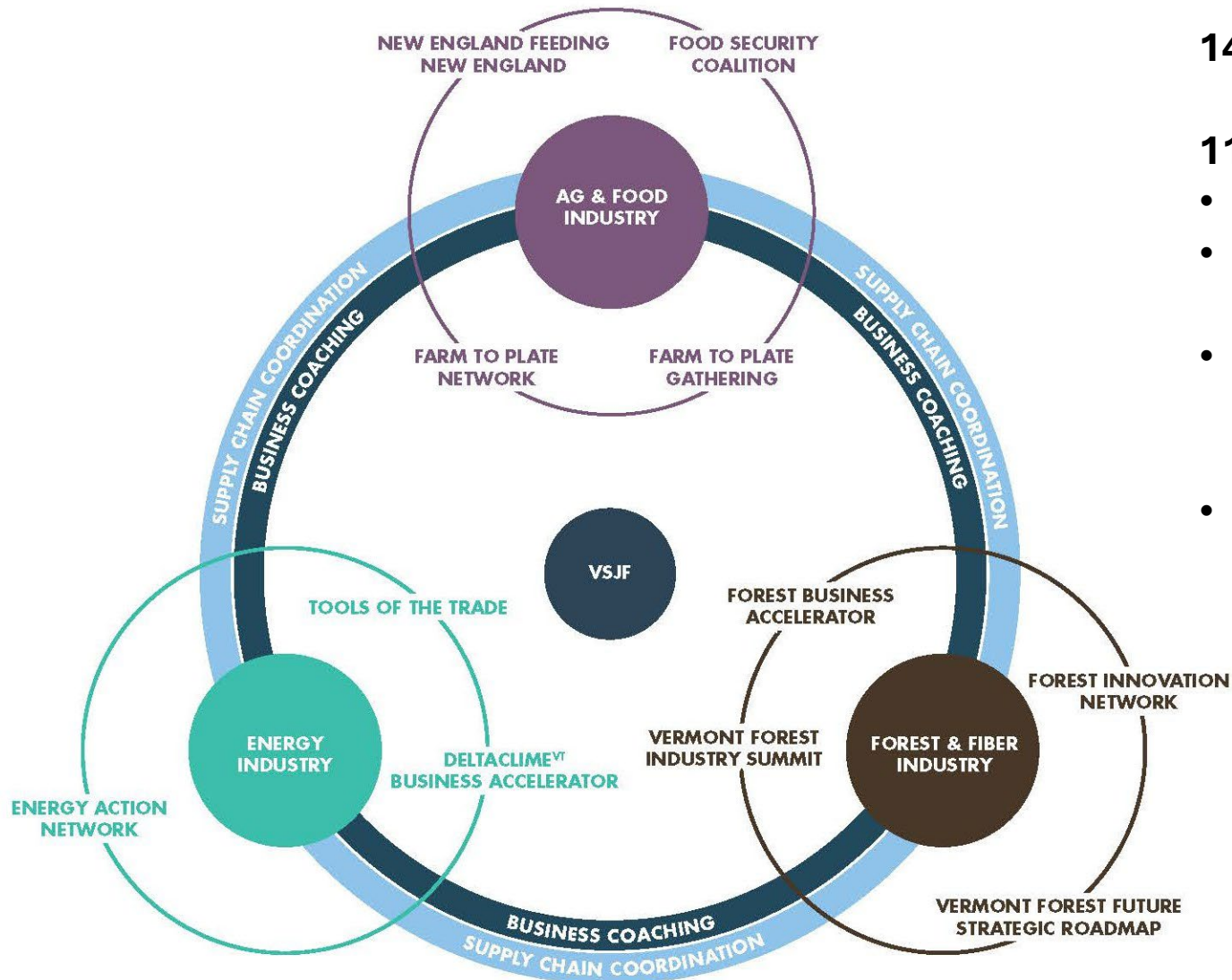
§ 327. Definitions

§ 328. Creation of the Sustainable Jobs Fund Program

§ 329. Annual report

§ 330. The Farm-to-Plate Investment Program; creation; outcomes; tasks; methods

Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund 10 V.S.A. §326-330



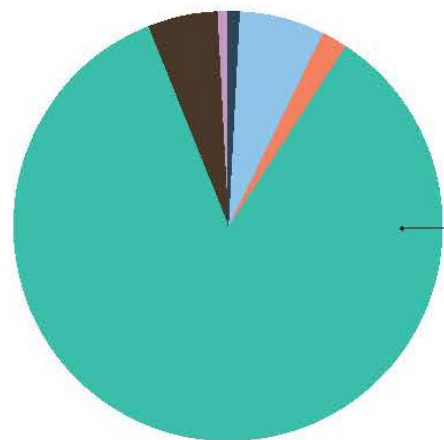
14 Staff

11 Board Members

- Secretary of VAAFM
- Deputy Secretary of ACCD
- ED of Office of Workforce Strategy and Development
- 8 Independent Members

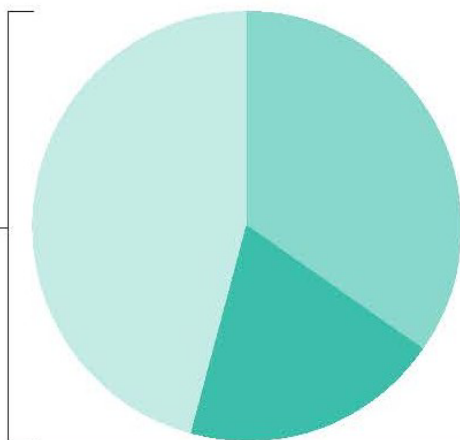
VSJF Financial Report, July 1, 2024–June 30, 2025

VSJF Revenue by Source



VSJF REVENUE BY SOURCE			
	Interest & Misc. Income	\$23,754.21	1.0%
	Fees for Service	\$157,532.32	6.5%
	Special Events	\$39,930.49	1.7%
	Grant Revenue	\$2,048,833.66	84.8%
	Corporate Sponsorships	\$132,418.78	5.5%
	Contributions	\$13,745.97	0.6%
	TOTAL	\$2,416,215.43	

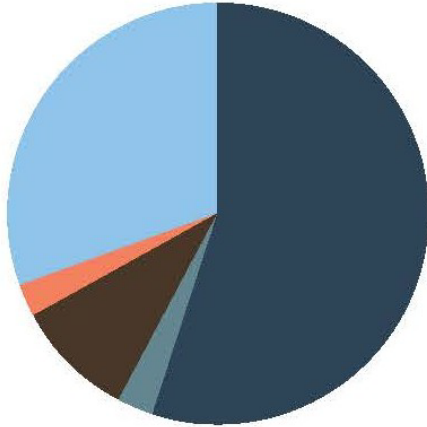
Grant Revenue by Source₂



VSJF GRANT REVENUE BY SOURCE			
	State	\$937,405.48	45.8%
	Foundation	\$714,974.72	34.9%
	Federal	\$396,453.46	19.4%
	TOTAL	\$2,048,833.66	

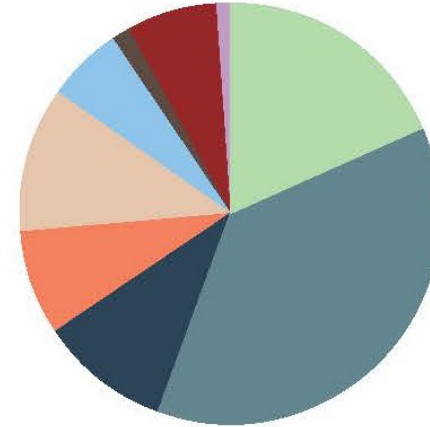
VSJF Financial Report, July 1, 2024–June 30, 2025

VSJF Expenses by Category



VSJF EXPENSES BY CATEGORY			
	Personnel	\$1,353,408.08	55.2%
	Grantmaking	\$63,350.00	2.6%
	Operations	\$227,996.56	9.3%
	Occupancy	\$58,876.51	2.4%
	Professional Services ₃	\$747,120.44	30.5%
	TOTAL	\$2,450,751.59	

VSJF Expenses by Initiative



VSJF EXPENSES BY INITIATIVE			
	Operations	\$454,764.09	18.6%
	Farm to Plate	\$911,638.03	37.2%
	Forests Products	\$243,599.92	9.9%
	DeltaClima ^{VT}	\$196,911.89	8.0%
	Business Assistance	\$271,384.90	11.1%
	Flex Cap Fund—Fund Manager	\$144,867.32	5.9%
	Fiscal Sponsorship ₄	\$31,155.96	1.3%
	New England Feeding New England	\$171,592.65	7.0%
	Wellbeing Economy Alliance of VT	\$24,836.83	1.0%
	TOTAL	\$2,450,751.59	

The Farm to Plate Investment Program 10 V.S.A. §330

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Farm to Plate Investment Program: Enabling Legislation Passed in 2009

Statute passed in 2009 tasked the Vermont Sustainable Jobs Fund (VSJF) with creating a strategic plan for agriculture and food system development, and establishing the F2P program to fulfill the following outcomes:

- 1 Increase economic development in Vermont's food and farm sector.**
- 2 Create jobs in the food and farm economy.**
- 3 Improve access to healthy local foods.**



Farm to Plate Investment Program: Reauthorized for Another 10 Years in 2019

Legislature reauthorized F2P in 2019, effectively tasking VSJF again to create 10-year strategic plan and support the program to fulfill the legislative outcomes. The outcomes were amended slightly to:

- 1 Increase sustainable economic development and create jobs in Vermont's food and farm sector
- 2 Improve soils, water, and resiliency of the working landscape in the face of climate change
- 3 Improve access to healthy local foods for all Vermonters

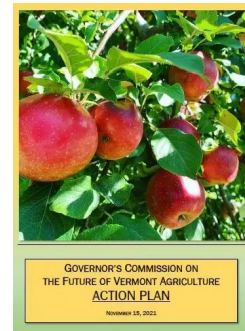


Other Places You'll Find The Fingerprints of 2021-2030 Ag & Food System Plan

The Plan has served as a keystone or source of strategies and recommendations in other state plans, roadmaps, and reports



**New England
Feeding New
England Reports**



**Gov's Commission
on Future of Ag**

Climate Action Plan

INITIAL VERMONT CLIMATE
ACTION PLAN



**Food Security
Roadmap**

Farm to Plate Investment Program: Implementation Through the Farm to Plate Network

- **The Farm to Plate Network is responsible for collectively implementing** the 15 Strategic Goals of Vermont's 2021-2030 food system plan, as well as advancing organizational goals of members. The Network is made up of groups of farms, food businesses, technical service providers, educational institutions, nonprofit organizations, capital providers, and government.
- **Groups of the Network include:**
 - Vermont Food Security Coalition
 - Vermont Food Hub Collaborative
 - Retail Grocers Priority Strategy Team (PST)
 - Agroforestry PST
 - Equitable Access to Farmland and Capital PST
 - CSA and Healthcare Community of Practice (COP)
 - Climate Soil & Environment Topic Exchange (TE)
 - and more!

Farm to Plate Investment Program: Implementation Through the Farm to Plate Network

Farm to Plate staff supports these groups and Vermont's food system by:

- Mobilizing funding, administering grants, and distributing funds
- Providing project management to Network projects and initiatives, and coordinating technical services to farms, food businesses, and non-profit partners
- Providing facilitation, advising, and administrative support to Network groups and partners.
- Serving on state policy committees – including cross-sector committees such as the Climate Council's Ag & Ecosystem Subcommittee and Department of Health's State Health Improvement Plan – and grant committees and advisory boards (e.g., Specialty Crop Block Grant, Sodexo's Vermont First Advisory Board)
- Developing shared measurement, and conducting research and analysis of food system trends and policies
- Managing and providing free communication platforms - including website, e-news, and list-servs
- Providing networking and professional development opportunities (e.g., Annual Gathering)



2025 Network Highlights Across the Three Outcome Areas (Economy, Resilience, and Food Security)

Summary of 2025 Impacts: Economic (Outcome 1)

Farm to Plate relaunched the **Vermont Food Hub Collaborative (VFHC)**. We actively convene and provides technical support to the 6 major food hubs to work on improving coordination, operations, and financial sustainability of their distribution services to farms, food producers, and end customers.

The six members include:

- Addison County Relocalization Network (ACORN) -Middlebury
- Center for an Agricultural Economy: Farm Connex – Hardwick
- Food Connects – Brattleboro
- Green Mountain Farm to School: Green Mountain Farm Direct – Newport
- Intervale Center: Intervale Food Hub – Burlington
- Vermont Farmers Food Center - Rutland

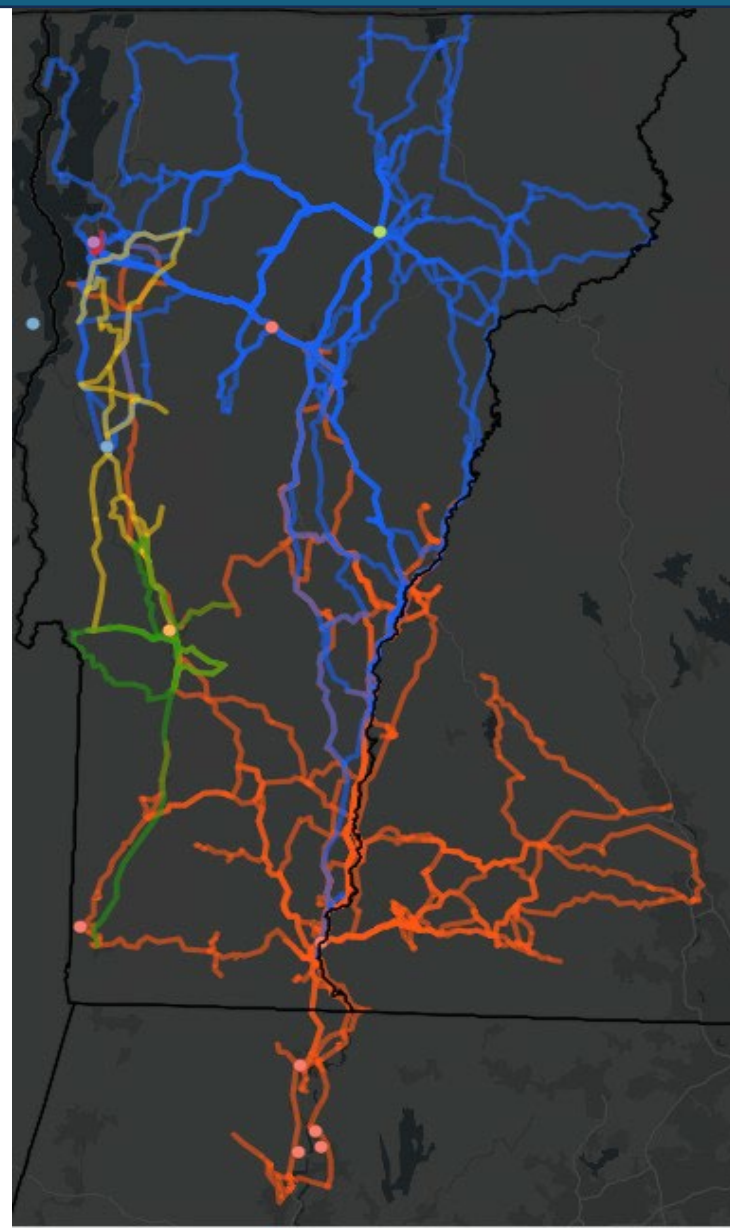


Summary of 2025 Impacts: Economic (Outcome 1)

Why the Hubs Matter to our Food System

The six member food-hubs of VFHC collectively:

- Sell or distribute at least **\$19 million** local and regional food annually
- Work with and serve over **330 farmers and food producers**
- **Sell or deliver to over 550 customers** that includes local schools, grocery stores, hospitals, restaurants, farm stands, and food shelves
- **Employ 50 people** representing a range of occupations including warehouse and logistics management, sales and marketing, and delivery drivers



Summary of 2025 Impacts: Economic (Outcome 1)



As part of the Beef on Dairy Project, a new enterprise was launched - Vermont Cattlemen - and 7 farms received technical assistance on breeding, infrastructure, financial planning, marketing, and cost of production analysis.

Summary of 2025 Impacts: Economic (Outcome 1)



Management and financial analysis tools have been developed and will be available in 2026, including:

- a futures calculator to determine production costs by site, feed ration, and cost per pound of gain
- breeding plans and nutritional protocols to optimize beef quality and consistency, and
- cut sheet calculators for direct-to-consumer marketing and sales

And USDA-ARS and Vermont Cattleman are launching a five-year study to improve "beef on dairy" beef quality, sustainability (reducing emissions and costs of production), and dairy beef cross genetics

Summary of 2025 Impacts: Economic (Outcome 1)



120 people representing over 100 farms and food businesses (e.g., distributors and retailers) participated in retail, distribution, and wholesale readiness trainings and received technical assistance through our **Independent Grocers Project**

Summary of 2025 Impacts: Economic (Outcome 1)

"These classes were AMAZING. We have made a bunch of changes to our store. Holy moly, there has been a ton of movement in our market and we are already seeing improved sales! We had some really low performers that have jumped up in sales.

I realized that some of the "methods" I was using were so wrong. I thought I was doing xyz because it was helpful to the customer, but after attending the 3-part series I realized I was actually doing the opposite. So thankful for this program."

Abby Blake, General Manager, Maple Wind Farm



Summary of 2025 Impacts: Environment and Resilience (Outcome 2)

- **64% of the priority actions** advanced by the Agriculture and Ecosystems subcommittee and approved by the Climate Council for the updated Climate Action Plan (CAP) derived from the Strategic Plan due to successful input and advocacy from F2P Network members
- Two critical priority strategies from the Strategic Plan and Vermont Food Security Roadmap - (1) food system supply chain infrastructure investment and (2) a farm and forest emergency relief fund-were identified as **Tier 1 (high urgency, high readiness) recommendations of Vermont's Resilience Implementation Strategy** – a joint effort of Governor Phill Scott and Treasurer Mike Pieciak.



Vermont Resilience Implementation Strategy

September 17, 2025

Prepared by Vermont Agency of Natural Resources and Vermont State Treasurer's Office

Summary of 2025 Impacts: Local Food Access and Security (Outcome 3)

The Vermont Food Security Coalition successfully advocated for multiple priorities in its 2025 policy slate, including:

- **\$450k** in one time funding for NOFA-VT's Crop Cash and Farm Share programs. Crop Cash provides a 1:1 match for SNAP/3SquaresVT dollars at farmers markets and farm stands, and Farm Share allows lower income folks to receive subsidized CSA shares.
- **\$1.5 million** in one-time funding for Vermont Foodbank, including \$500k for the Vermonters Feeding Vermonters (VfV) program.
- **\$1.6 million** in base funding for the Land Access and Opportunity Board to continue their work addressing housing equity and land access for historically marginalized or disadvantaged communities.



Summary of 2025 Impacts: Local Food Access and Security (Outcome 3)

Farm to Plate's CSA and Healthcare Community of Practice was awarded a Bi-State Primary Care Association Food Access and Healthcare Network grant to assess and strengthen Food is Medicine (FIM) programs in Vermont. The project, led by Dr. Deb Kennedy, engaged more than 50 voices across the state – including clinicians, dietitians, community health workers (CHWs), food providers, patients, and representatives of major hospital systems – to explore unmet needs, identify strengths, and chart a path forward to scale FIM programs in Vermont.

- Research indicates that fully scaled FIM medically tailored nutrition interventions **could save Vermont \$53 million annually in health care expenditures** (calculated as saving in annual health care expenditures minus MTM program costs for eligible patients).
- **Full report** with findings and recommendations can be found at:
<https://www.vtfarmtoplate.com/sites/default/files/2025-09/FIM%20In%20Vermont%20An%20Unmet%20Needs%20Analysis%20815%2025.pdf>





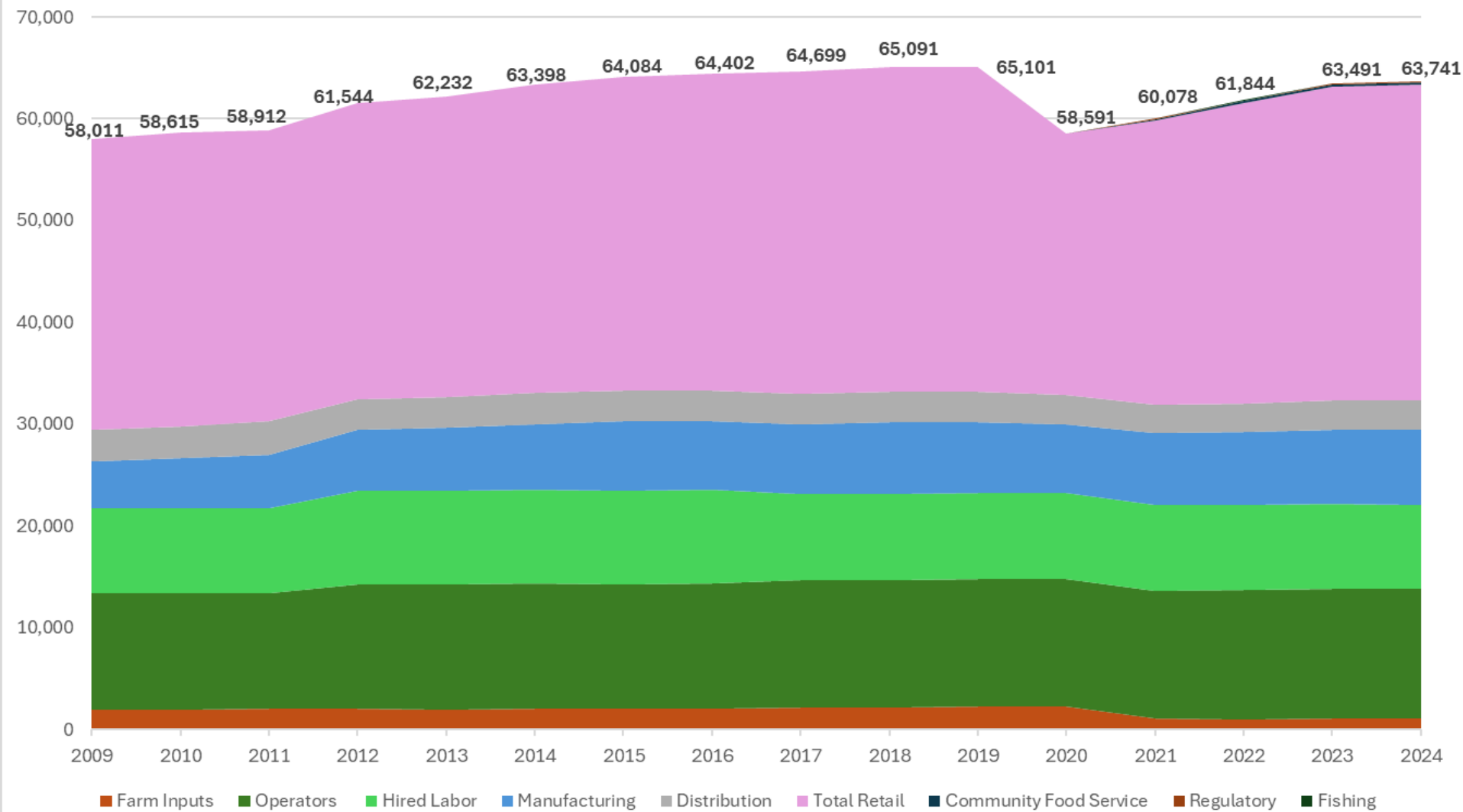
Key Trends and Legislative Priorities Across the Three Outcome Areas

Outcome 1 trends: Increase sustainable economic development and create jobs in Vermont's food and farm sector

Industry	2022 Sales	Industry Aggregate	With Multipliers*
Production & Processing			
Agriculture	\$1,033,194,000	\$5,737,294,000	\$1,537,500,000
Food Manufacturing*	\$4,124,000,000		\$7,359,400,000
Beverage Manufacturing*	\$580,100,000		
Distribution			
Wholesaling + Distribution	\$3,606,468,000	\$3,606,468,000	N/a
Retail & Food Service			
Stores	\$2,214,468,000	\$3,598,468,000	N/a
Food Services + Drinking Places	\$1,384,000,000		
Total	\$12,942,230,000		\$8,896,900,000
Total With Multipliers	\$21,839,130,000		

*Note: Estimates use IMPLAN sales data from Farm Credit East 2024 The Northeast Economic Engine report

Total Food System Employment 2009-2024

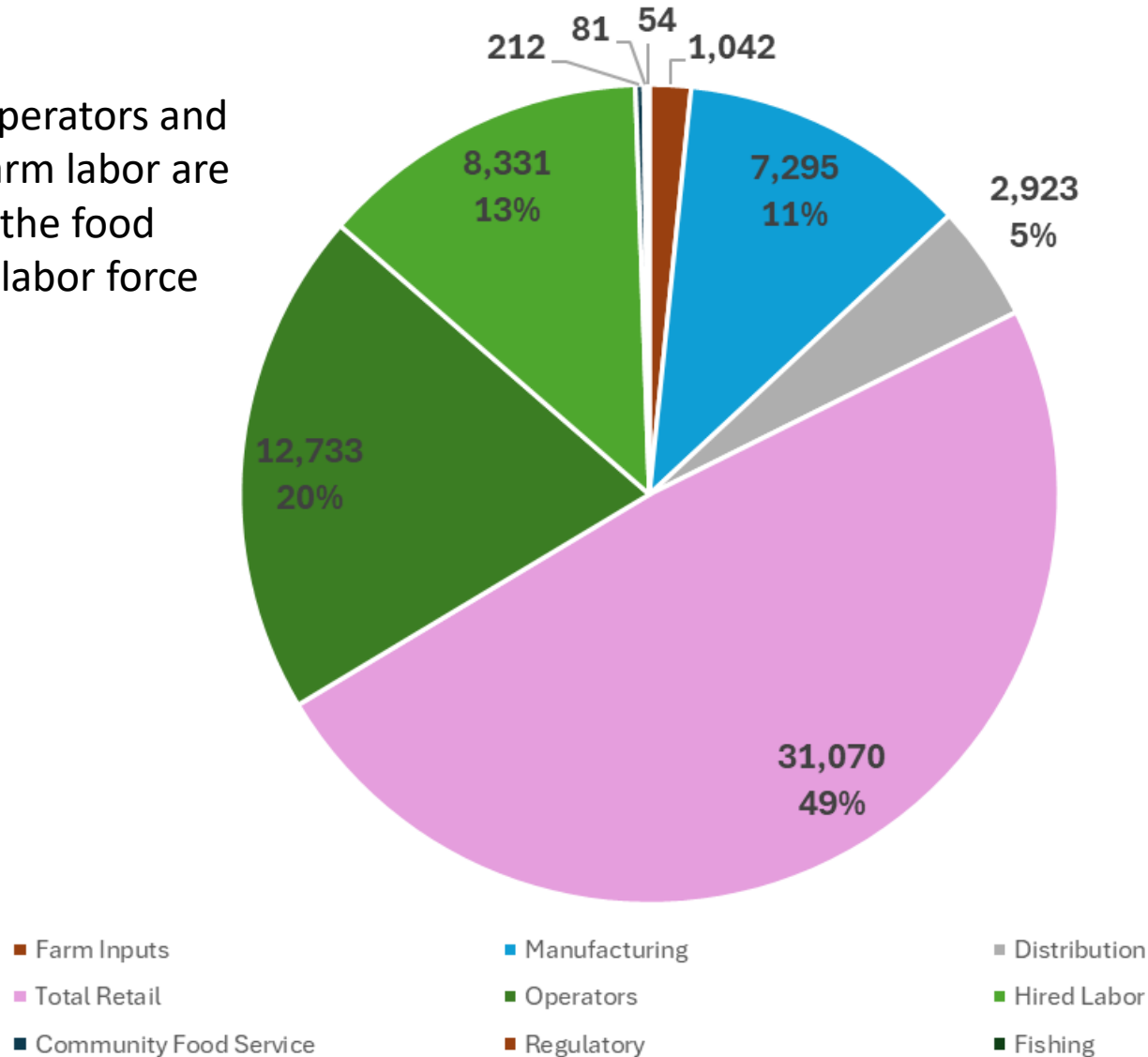


10% increase since 2009

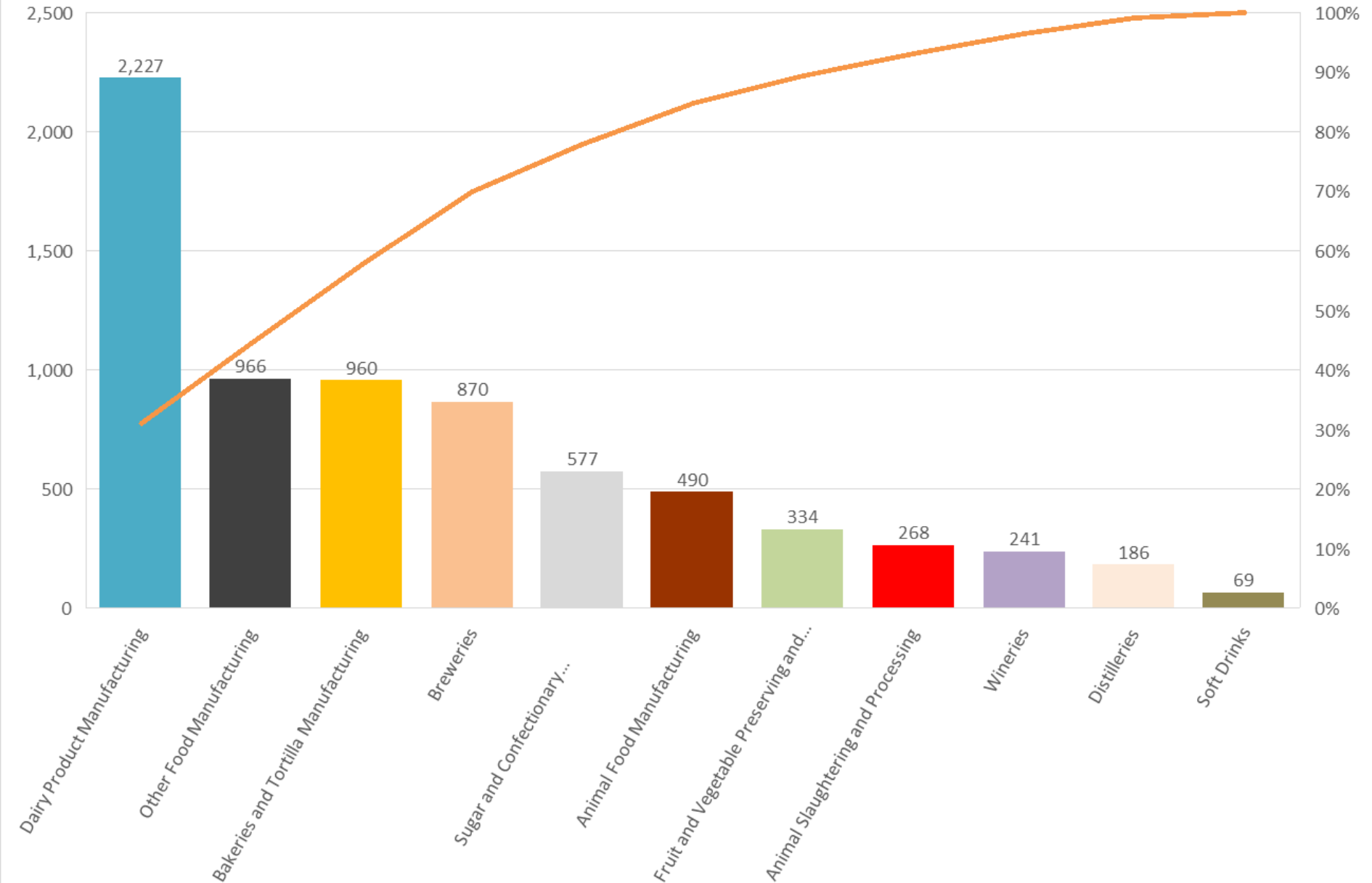
20.6% of total Vermont Employment (private + public sectors)

Outcome 1 trends: Increase sustainable economic development and create jobs in Vermont's food and farm sector

Farm Operators and hired farm labor are 33% of the food system labor force

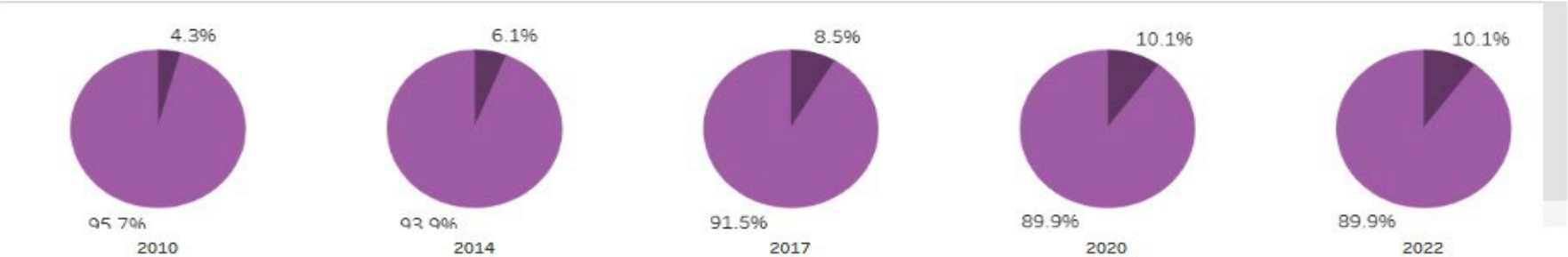


Food Manufacturing Employment 2024, by Industry



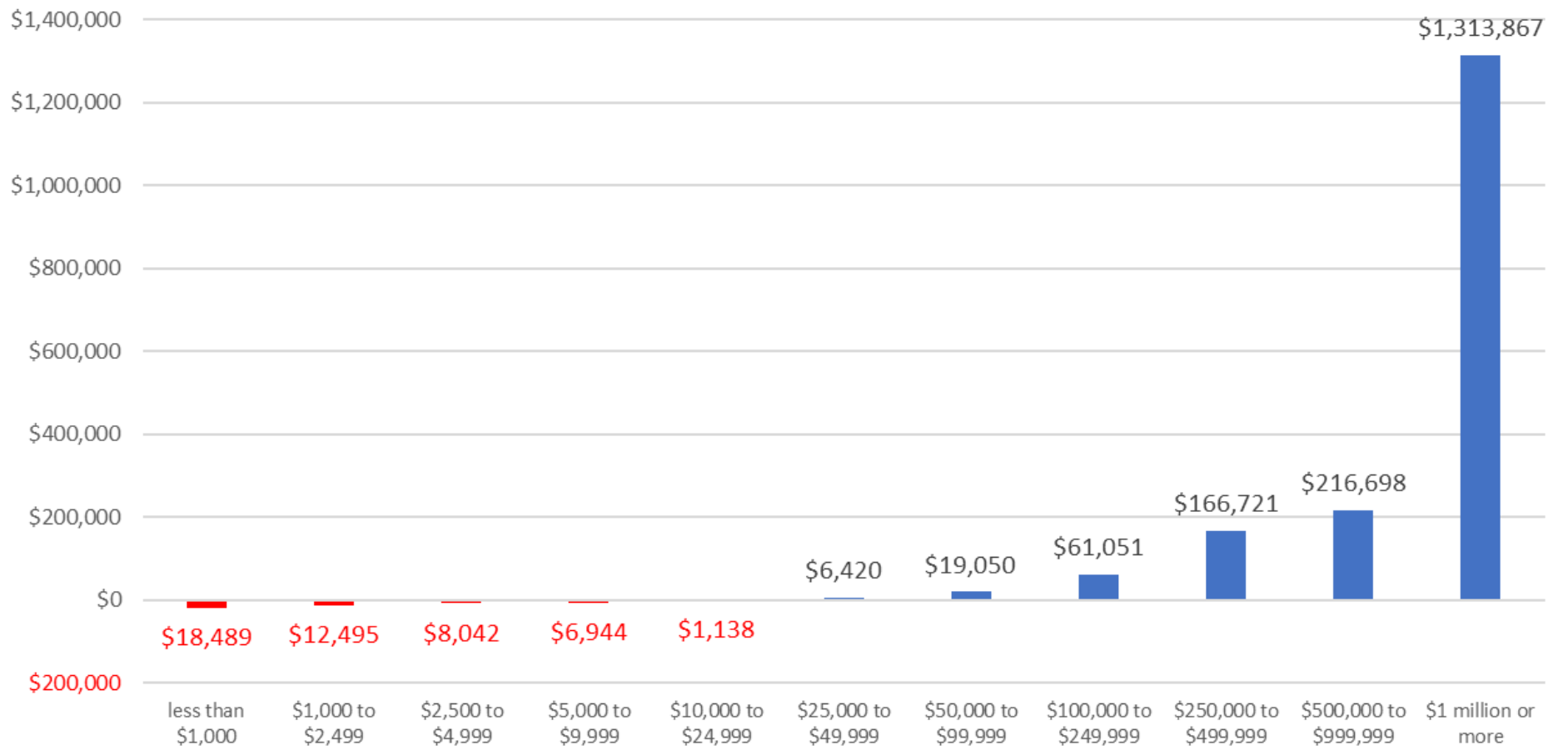
Total Local Food Purchases

Non-Local Food Purchases Local Food Purchases



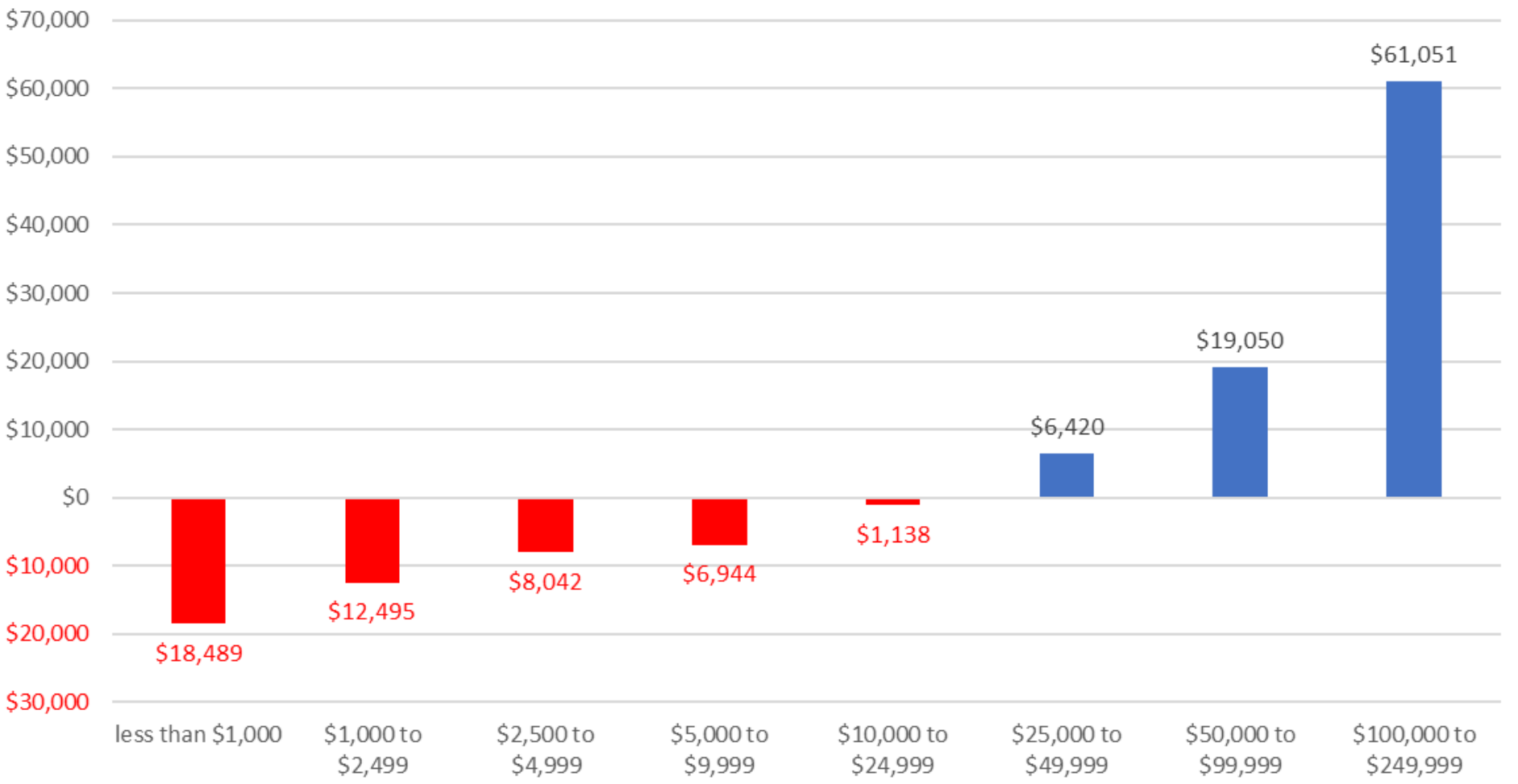
Farm Viability

Net Cash Income Per Farm, by gross sales



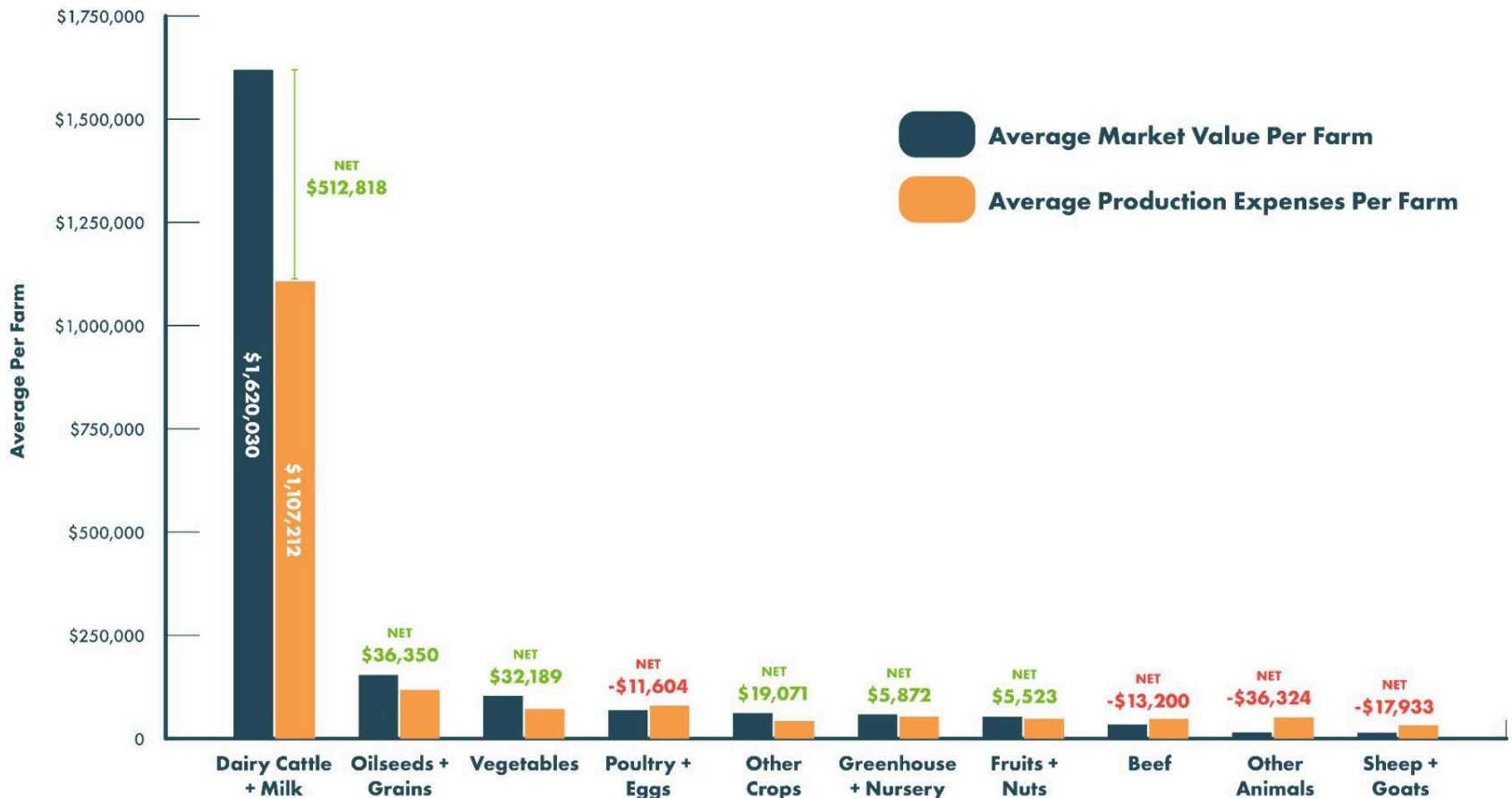
Farm Viability

Net Cash Income Per Farm, by gross sales



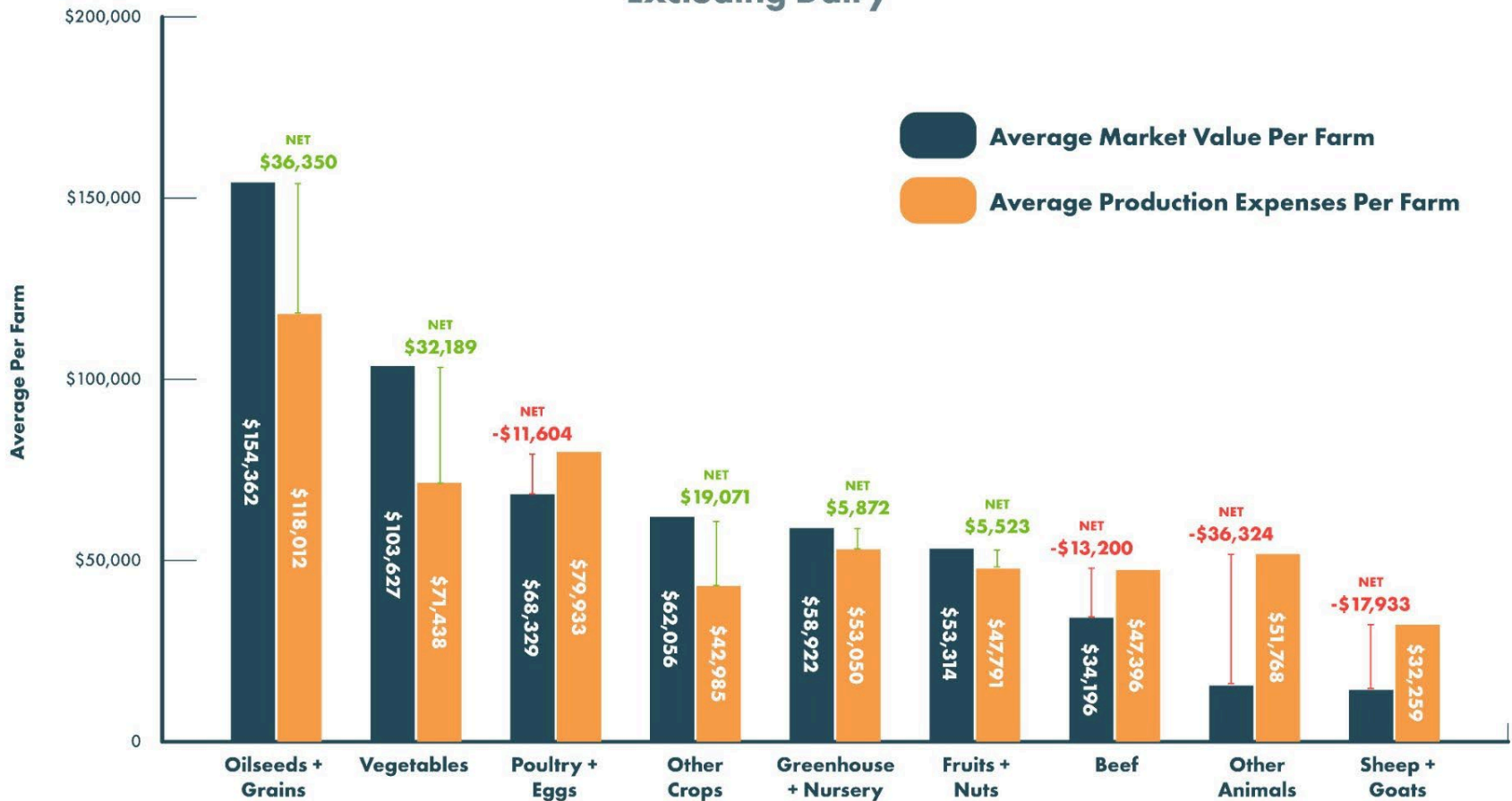
Farm Viability

Average Market Value, Production Expenses, and Net Per Farm



Farm Viability

Average Market Value, Production Expenses, and Net Per Farm Excluding Dairy



2026 Legislative Priorities to increase sustainable economic development and create jobs in Vermont's food and farm sector

- **Increase base funding in FY2027 for the Working Lands Enterprise Fund from \$1 million to \$1.5 million.** Supplement the Working Lands Enterprise Fund with an **additional \$3.5 million in one-time funding** in FY2027 to address backlog and rising demand.
 - WLEF is Vermont's keystone economic development program for agriculture and forestry. Since inception it has distributed \$18.8 million and leverage and additional \$30.9 million in matching funds
 - Impact reporting for the years spanning 2012-2020 discovered that the program helped grantees with employing 1,118 people, create 539 jobs, and generate over \$55 million in sales
 - Funding gap (requests compared to funded projects) for producer focused funds over the last 4 fiscal years has averaged \$3.4 million
 - In FY2024 when Agricultural Development Grant Program was offered to produce meat, and maple producers there was \$43.8 million in requests and only \$2.1 million in awarded funds.

2026 Legislative Priorities to increase sustainable economic development and create jobs in Vermont's food and farm sector

- **Farm Succession – re-examine H.386 and ways to support succession planning and land transfer.** The Strategic Plan identified a need for 6 dedicated transfer planners, along with dedicated legal expertise to effectively steward the transfer pipeline.
- **Explore technical service capacity** with UVM Extension and other partners. There is a clear gap in TA capacity for livestock, with no dedicated livestock specialist focused on genetics, meat quality, and markets (both broadly, and specialization for beef, pork, small ruminants, and poultry).

Outcome 2 trends: Improve soils, water, and resiliency of the working landscape in the face of climate change

2.95°F increase in annual average temperature since 1900s

25% increase in annual precipitation since the 1900s

49% increase in heavy precipitation days since the 1900s

3b Hardiness Zone has completely disappeared. 6a Zone now exists in Windsor.

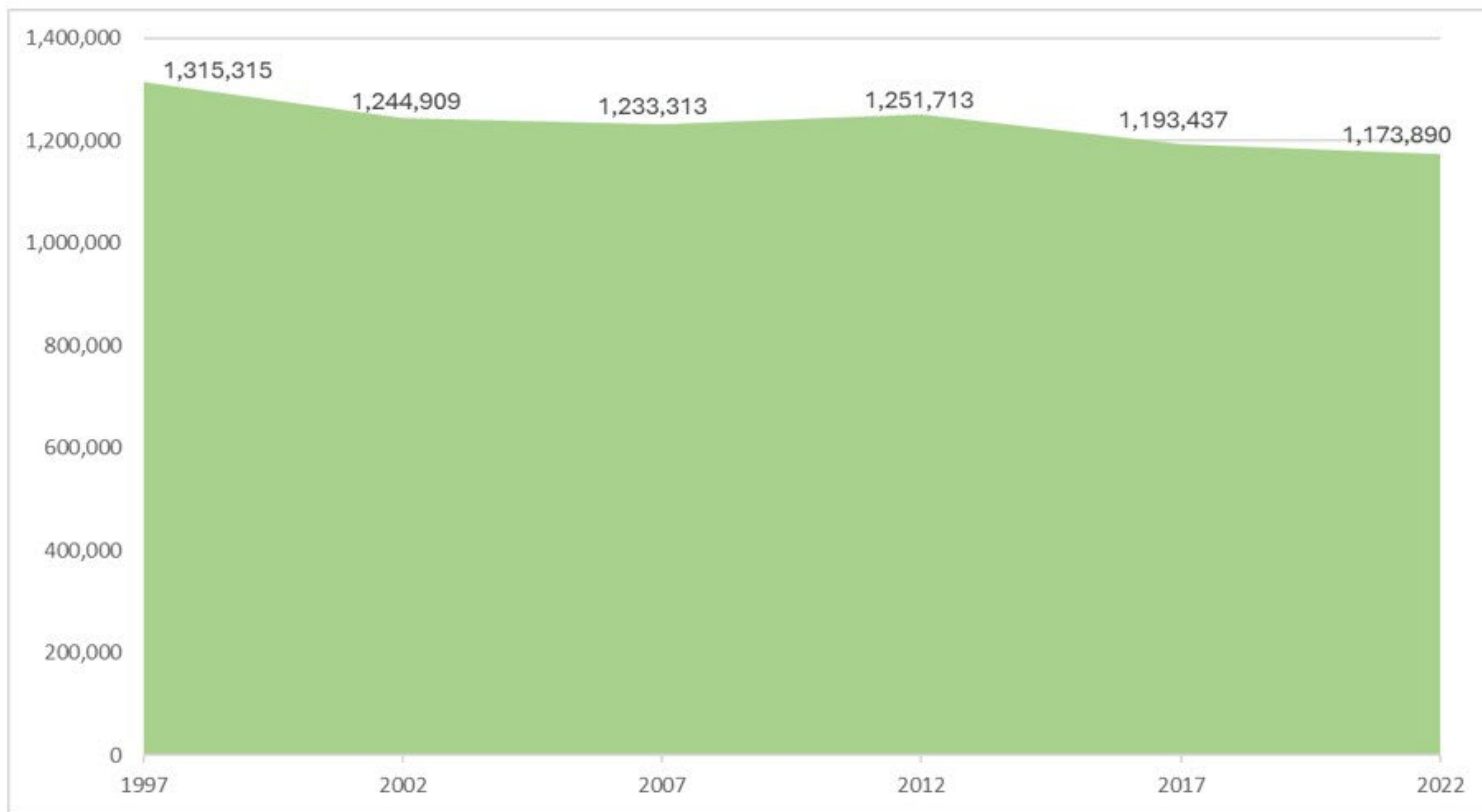
Extreme precipitation also impacts soil erosion and runoff - July 2023 storm delivered **nearly half of the allowable annual phosphorus load** to Lake Champlain **in just one week**

Outcome 2 trends: Improve soils, water, and resiliency of the working landscape in the face of climate change

Over \$74 million in reported losses from flooding and drought over the last 3 years

Outcome 2 trends: Improve soils, water, and resiliency of the working landscape in the face of climate change

Farmland



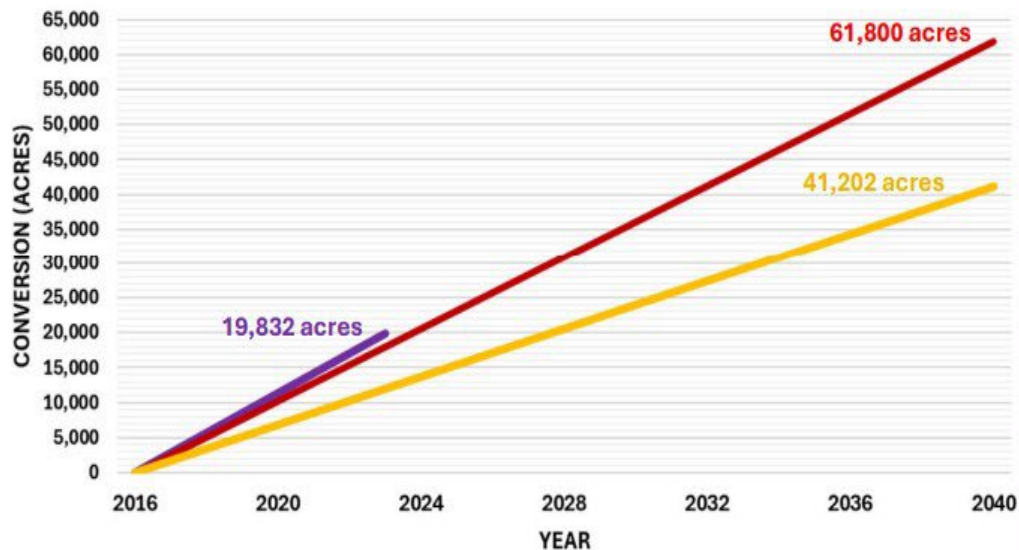
- **10.8% decrease** since 1997
- **6.2% decrease** since 2012
- **1.6% decrease** since 2017

Outcome 2 trends: Improve soils, water, and resiliency of the working landscape in the face of climate change

Farmland Conversion

Farmland Conversion in Vermont

- Observed Conversion (2016-2023)
- Forecasted Conversion 2016-2040 (Runaway Sprawl)
- Forecasted Conversion 2016-2040 (Business as Usual)



Forecasted Conversion (BAU, 2016-2040)	-1,717 acres/year
Forecasted Conversion (RS, 2016-2040)	-2,575 acres/year
Observed Conversion (2016-2023)	-2,833 acres/year

Observed Farmland Conversion (2016-2023)	Forecasted Farmland Conversion (2016-2040)	% Forecasted Conversion Already Converted
19,832 acres	BAU: 41,202 acres	48%
	RS: 61,800 acres	32%

Outcome 2 trends: Improve soils, water, and resiliency of the working landscape in the face of climate change

Farmland Conversion

<u>County</u>	<u>Acres Converted</u>
Essex	154
Grand Isle	544
Caledonia	903
Lamoille	991
Bennington	1153
Windham	1198
Orleans	1237
Orange	1339
Washington	1344
Windsor	1900
Rutland	1993
Franklin	2010
Addison	2392
Chittenden	2674

What type of development is farmland getting converted to?		
Category of Conversion	Acres of Farmland Converted 2016-2023	Percent of Conversion
Developed - Open Space	9,430	47%
Developed - Low Intensity	5,672	29%
Developed - Medium Intensity	3,623	18%
Developed - High Intensity	1,107	6%
TOTAL	19,832	100%

~76%
LDR

~24%
UHD

2026 Legislative Priorities to Improve soils, water, and resiliency of the working landscape in the face of climate change

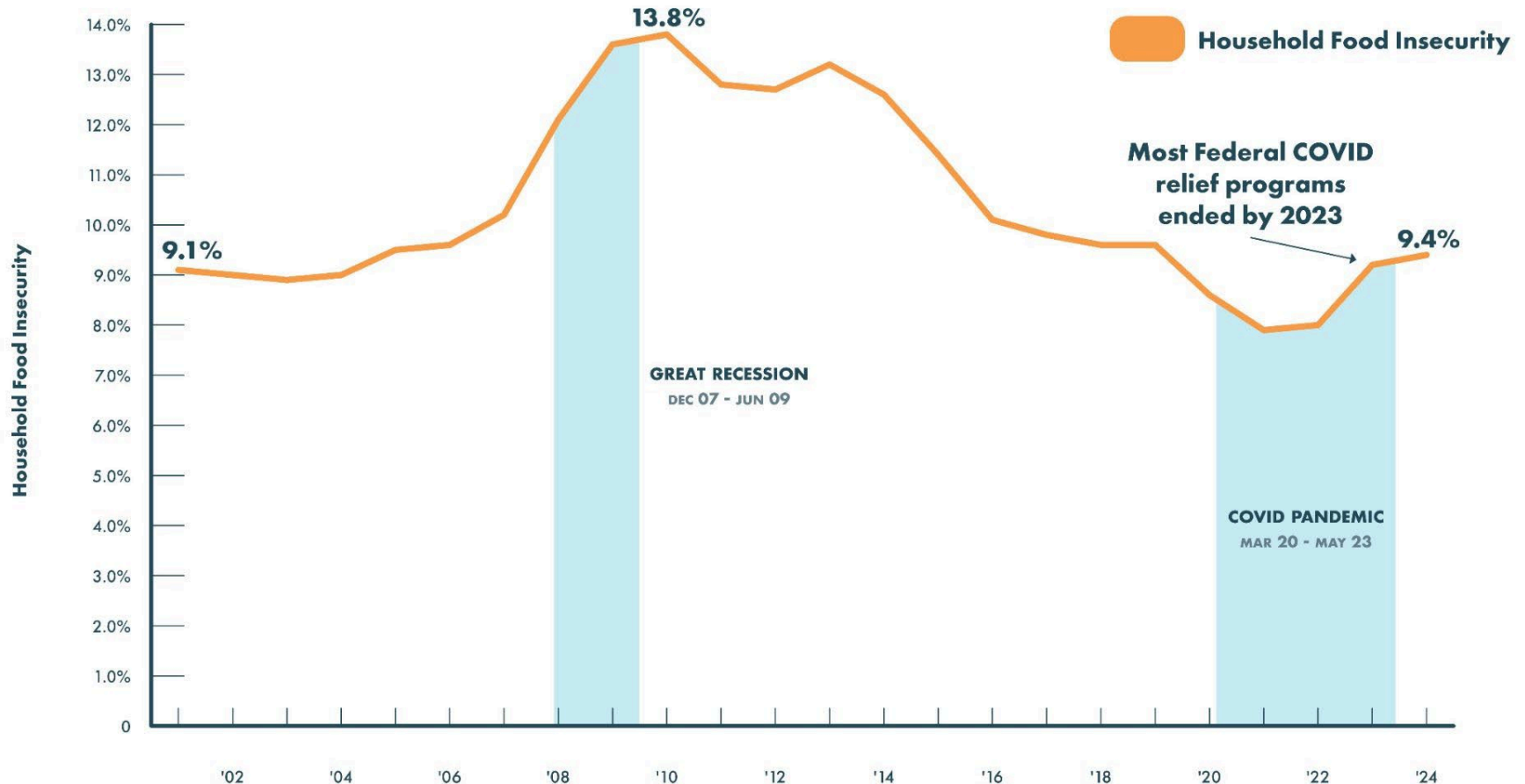
- **Restore** statewide municipal regulation exemptions for agriculture in 24 V.S.A. § 4413
 - A clear and consistent regulatory framework across municipalities is best for farms and towns. A patchwork regulatory environment for farming in Vermont would be confusing for both farmers and municipalities, and act as a continued source of contention and acrimony in our communities.
 - Farmer coalition seeks to clearly define the municipal exemption in Title 24 without substantively changing how it has been implemented and understood for decades by farmers, municipalities, and communities.
 - Once ag land is gone to development it is gone forever - we need to protect and grow agricultural land, not create new ways to threaten its existence.

2026 Legislative Priorities to Improve soils, water, and resiliency of the working landscape in the face of climate change

- **Enact S.60** - the Farm and Forestry Operations Security Special Fund, and **appropriate \$20million** in FY27 to Fund.
- **Fund the Land Access and Opportunity Board** to support operations and programs
 - \$1,784,809 in base appropriation, and one-time appropriation of \$1,432,925 for programs
- **For alternative land ownership and farmland access**, explore how conservation programs and easements can provide **more flexibility for ownership and housing**, and examine lending guideline reforms and incentives that would **provide more flexibility relating to multiparty purchase and operating loans**.

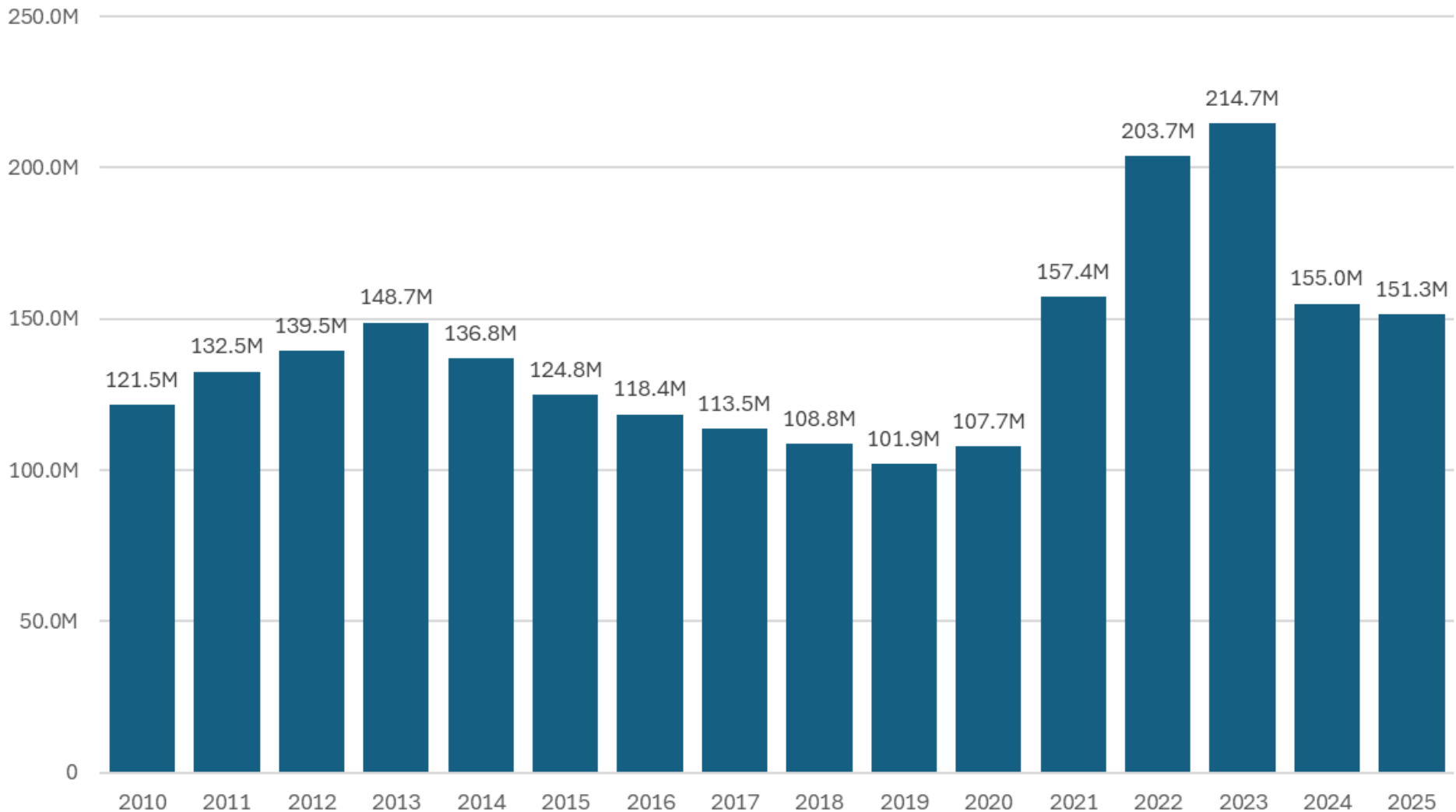
Outcome 3 trends: Improve access to healthy local foods for all Vermonters

Household Food Insecurity in Vermont



Outcome 3 trends: Improve access to healthy local foods for all Vermonters

Total 3Squares/SNAP Benefits Issued, 2010-2025



2026 Legislative Priorities to improve access to healthy local foods for all Vermonters

- **Appropriate \$6.3 million for FY27** (and \$8.4 million in future fiscal years) to meet new Federal SNAP Administration match requirements.
 - Essential to maximizing and leveraging federal funding, and maintain a low payment error rate.
 - Beginning in 2028, states with an error rate at or above 6% will need to cover between 5%-15% of the cost of direct SNAP benefits. Conservatively that could equate to \$7.6-\$22.7 million.
 - Vermont's FY24 error rate was 5.13%, with a ten year average of 5.53%
- **Appropriate \$5.75 million** to expand capacity for SNAP and Medicaid Benefit Assisters

2026 Legislative Priorities to improve access to healthy local foods for all Vermonters

- **Appropriate \$182,000** to the Agency of Education – Child Nutrition Programs for Sponsor Organizations of the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).
 - CACFP is the federal program that provides cash reimbursement to early family child care home providers for eligible meals and snacks
- **Vermont Foodbank - \$5 million in total appropriations** for FY27:
 - Fully Fund Vermonters Feeding Vermonters in Budget Adjustment Act with addition \$1.5 million. Appropriate \$2 million to the program in FY2027
 - Appropriate \$2 million to support VF network food shelves and meal sites
 - Appropriate \$1 million to support Ready Response for food access in emergencies
- **Appropriate \$500,000** to NOFA Vermont to support Crop Cash, Crop Cash Plus, and Farm Share



Thank You!