



Working Lands Coalition Partners

**The Center for an
Agricultural Economy**

Cabot Creamery Coop

The Intervale

NOFA Vermont

**Preservation Trust of
Vermont**

Shelburne Farms

**Vermont Association of
Conservation Districts**

**Vermont Association
of Planning and
Development Agencies**

**Vermont Community
Loan Fund**

**Vermont Council on
Rural Development**

Vermont Farm Bureau

Vermont Land Trust

**Vermont Natural
Resources Council**

**The Vermont
Sustainable Jobs Fund
and Farm to Plate**

**Vermont Woodlands
Association**

**The Woodstock
Foundation**

Dear Chair Perchlik and the Senate Appropriations Committee,

We are writing to express support for the Working Lands Enterprise Initiative FY'26 of \$3 million in base funding. Please consider this appropriation as you build the Senate's version of the budget for FY'26.

The Working Lands Coalition is united in support of the farm, forest, and value-adding businesses that are at the foundation of the working landscape that benefits all Vermonters.

Working Lands Enterprise Board (WLEB) investments support entrepreneurs, innovators, and business owners in our farm, food, and forest sectors, and are creating jobs – good Vermont-made jobs the Vermont way – the type of jobs that honor Vermont's agriculture and forest heritage and celebrate our working landscape.

Over the past 12 years, the Working Lands Enterprise Initiative has:

- Funded 555 agriculture and forestry projects
- Distributed over \$18.8 million in WLEF funding
- Leveraged \$30.9 million in matching funds
- Invested in every county in the State of Vermont

In 2024 alone, WLEB:

- Received over \$16 million in requests from 345 applicants
- Awarded over \$3 million to 65 working lands grantees
- Leveraged \$6.3 million in matching funds
- Benefited all 14 Vermont counties

The Working Lands Enterprise Fund keeps young entrepreneurs in Vermont and builds new markets for value-added products. It has increased capacity for in-state production and processing and helped to support the development of much needed infrastructure in both the agriculture and forest-products sectors.

The Working Lands Enterprise Board receives millions per year in grant applications. We see the need, the demand, and the creative entrepreneurship that Vermont needs to keep our working landscape and our local economy strong.

We ask that you support the Working Lands Enterprise Initiative with an investment of \$3 million in the FY'26 budget.

Thank you for your consideration,

Denise Smith, *VCRD Executive Director*
On behalf of the Working Lands Coalition