

My name is Bill Wilson, I live in Manchester VT. The coffee business I started in 2008 is now a Vermont LLC, we roast and ship our coffee from Connecticut. The over 2,000 family farmers we buy our premium coffee from are members of 6 co-ops based in Peru, Nicaragua, Honduras and Guatemala. We ship coffee directly to customers in all 50 states of the union and our sister company in Toronto ships across Canada. All our coffee is independently certified USDA Organic, Fair-Trade and Smithsonian shade grown 'Bird Friendly'. Our business is 'for-profit' with a strong conservation mission and deep dedication to providing our customers with great tasting coffee, paying the family farms we buy green coffee from at a premium rate and only selling coffee that provides habitat for our northern migratory birds when they winter in Latin America.

I have known Vermont for many decades and have now lived here for two years. My daughter and her family live here as does my sister. Having lived and worked around the world, I can testify that Vermont is a very special place. A lovely place.

A big part of Vermont's specialness is the woods and fields, the streams and rivers, the mountains and valleys and the farms and forests. Looking ahead, and with a profound knowledge of the land use issues our country and world face, it will take a great deal of effort to keep Vermont the wonderful place it is to live and work in. A big part of keeping Vermont special is maintaining and growing a vibrant family farming sector. For me organic family farms portend a secure and healthy future for our state.

I think we need to take all steps possible to maintain the heritage dairy sector while we significantly grow organic family farms throughout the state. Over the past two years I have learned a fair amount about Vermont organic family farms. There are long term farmers dedicated to providing us with great tasting and healthy food and - most importantly - a burgeoning sector of young farmers joining the ranks. Holding onto and adding to these farms is critical to the well being of Vermont.

There is a great deal of work to be done to maintain and grow the family farm sector but right now there is an immediate need for special funding to help our farms stay standing. The floods, last year's horrific drought and the uneven provision of Federal funding support are creating an immediate crisis that only immediate supplemental funds can alleviate. I believe that the state agricultural departments and the various farmer associations in the state, in particular NOFA-VT, have a good handle on how much is needed. The money is needed as quickly as possible. And this funding is not a special interest 'ask', it will accrue to the benefit of all Vermonters in helping maintain our state as the beautiful and healthy place it is to live and visit.

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Bill Wilson

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