

Revitalizing Vermont's Rural Economy

- Vermont has a tremendous opportunity to build our working lands economy – farming, forestry, and value-added processing – into a cornerstone of job creation and rural revitalization.
- Vermonters overwhelmingly agree that our state's identity is closely linked to the working landscape. We must act boldly now to ensure that this character is maintained for future generations.
- We have already built the foundation for this important work. Recent efforts, such as Farm to Plate, have defined the needs.

The Working Lands Enterprise Investment bill defines how we can pull all of the opportunities, policies, and new plans into one unified, efficient and effective effort.

The Key Elements of the Working Lands Enterprise Investment bill are:

Investment for Growth –Beginning with a \$3 million first-year investment and building up to a sustained \$15 million/year fund, we will ensure significant, sustained, and coordinated public investment into farm, food, and forest enterprise development, which will spur growth across this entire sector.

Leadership from State Government – The Vermont Working Lands Enterprise Board will oversee a newly chartered public-private fund serving as a center point for this strategic investment. The Vermont Working Lands Enterprise Board will unite efforts of VEDA, VAAFM, VSJF, VHCB, and others to leverage start-ups, growth enterprises and infrastructure development. In addition, a new state planning office working with the governor's development cabinet can find and remove barriers to growth and improve communication for this priority across state government.

Incentives to Designated Areas – A new, voluntary Working Lands Designation would offer land owners and communities an incentive to keep valuable working lands in productive enterprise. Similar to the Vermont Neighborhood designation, it would deliver priority for public investment, special tax policies and assistance with regulatory processes to key areas.

