

MEMORANDUM

TO: Environmental Justice Advisory Council
FROM: Nicole Dubuque, COO of Agriculture, Agency of
Agriculture, Food and Markets
DATE: March 8, 2025
SUBJECT: Environmental Justice and Civil Rights Complaints Report

The following is a summary of the Vermont Agency of Agriculture, Food & Markets' (VAAFM) process for receiving and responding to external civil rights and environmental justice complaints, as well as improvements in progress, and relevant complaints received 2022-2024.

Process for receiving complaints: Currently, VAAFM receives complaints under multiple categories on our public facing website linked here: [SUBMIT A COMPLAINT](#) as well as via email at AGR.Helpdesk@vermont.gov. VAAFM will also accept oral complaints and/or other forms of written complaints. The VAAFM communications team reviews complaints submitted to our website or email and contacts the appropriate division for follow-up. If the complaint lacks adequate information and/or there is no way for the Agency to contact the complainant to follow up, the Agency may not be able to investigate the matter.

Total VAAFM complaint submissions by year:

- 2022: 40
- 2023: 60
- 2024: 94

VAAFM addresses civil rights and/or discrimination complaints related to its statutory authority. Also, as a recipient of federal funds, VAAFM is subject to the anti-discrimination requirements of Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. See *also* Act 154 at Sec.1(12). Of the complaints received during the described time frame, one was related to race. The complainant alleged his requests related to 'farm structures' were denied because of his race. VAAFM's General Counsel received the complaint and addressed the concern with the complainant's attorney. VAAFM's position was grounded in open litigation and an active court decision and was unrelated to the complainant's race. The complainant has continued to periodically complain about VAAFM and its employees but has not further addressed the racial allegation and has an open arrest warrant related to the pending litigation.

Improvements completed: VAAFM add a new complaints form specifically for Environmental Justice complaints. <https://agriculture.vermont.gov/form/environmental-complaint-form>. To date, VAAFM has not received any Environmental Justice complaints.

The Agency welcomes the Environmental Justice Advisory Council's feedback and recommendations on how to better capture and respond to future complaints.

